

**SHRI SHRI ANANDAMURTI**

**ADVENT OF A  
MYSTERY**

**PART - I**



**Pranavatmakananda**



Whenever I think of Baba Anandamurtiji, I am at a loss for words to describe his greatness and his vast range of knowledge in virtually every discipline such as physics, chemistry, economics, history, and medicine, among countless others. He was a diamond mine of new ideas on which several Ph.D. theses can be written. In my view, all his books, some two hundred of them, deserve Nobel prizes. Above all, he was a spiritual giant and a man of infinite compassion who offered practical solutions to people's variegated problems. His magnificent legacy is eternal.

**Dr Ravi Batra,**

*World Renowned Economist and The New York Times Best Selling Author*

Two doctrines have failed miserably in this century: free market capitalism and state socialism. The latter is counted out as dead; the former covers itself better by concealing its negative effects better, but the victims are even more numerous. The search is on for something better than these two 19th century Europeanisms. That search will soon lead us, among others, to Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar ...

Sarkar will probably stand out as one of the truly great in this century, so much deeper and more imaginative than most ... He is an intellectual giant of our times.

**Professor Johan Galtung,**

*Winner of the Right Livelihood Award (the alternative Nobel Prize), founder of International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, Norway, co-founder of International Peace Research Association and the World Futures Studies Federation.*

An evocative and deeply personal look at the life of P.R. Sarkar and the revitalization of Tantra, this book invites the reader to walk with the greatest Tantric Guru of the modern age.

**Dr. Justin M. Hewitson,**

*Sarkarian scholar and Assistant Professor at Ming Chuan University, Taiwan*

This book is the best review of Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar's life that I have seen! It is a must read for anyone interested in the complex 'career' of a unique Guru who revolutionised the idea of what it means to be a spiritual seeker at this time in world history!

**Dr. Marcus Bussey,**

*Senior Lecturer, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia*

PR Sarkar has left a legacy of progressive thought and wisdom for future generations. His life as portrayed in this book, is full of Insights and gifts for the present and future generations of human beings and for other life on earth.

**Dr. Jose Ramos**

*Director of Action Foresight, Swinburne University of Technology and the University of the Sunshine Coast.*



This book is a good introduction to the work of one of the most important but least recognized world-class thinkers of our time - P.R. Sarkar. His prophetic ideas about resolving and transcending world problems are highly relevant at this critical time in human history.

**Dr Oliver Markley, Ph.D.**

*Professor and Chairman Emeritus, Graduate Program in Studies of the Future, University of Houston-Clear Lake, Texas.*

A comprehensive biography of the spiritual leader, Baba, told through stories of spiritual practice and devotional struggles. A story of hope, aspiration and inspiration which shows that through deep spiritual relationships it is possible to achieve positive global transformation.

**Dr Robert Burke**

*Associate, Melbourne Business School, University of Melbourne, Australia; Director Futureware Consulting and former CEO, Century Oils Australia and Fuchs Australia.*

An inspired collection of narratives describing the life and times of P.R. Sarkar, the founder of Ananda Marga, that will form the textual corpus of this movement for future generations of devotees.

**Timothy E. Dolan Ph.D., APF**

*Principal of Policy Foresight and former professor and MPA Program Director at Texas A&M International University*

This is one of the most spiritually enlightening books you will have the privilege to read. The overriding message throughout the book is that we should never forget that we are spirit incarnated in an earthly body for only a very short period of time. The spirit lives on. We come from spirit and once our life's mission is complete, we again return to spirit before embarking on our next developmental journey.

Master Baba propounds a beautiful philosophy based on true spirituality that is the ideal philosophy of life, and in doing so, creates spiritual leaders. This will help us to build an ideal society.

**Professor Chris Adendorff PhD, DBA**

*Professor of Commerce, Professor of Futures Studies, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Business School, Port Elizabeth, South Africa*



**Shri Shri Anandamurti**  
**ADVENT OF A MYSTERY**

**Part I**

**Pranavatmakananda**



**Shri Shri Anandamurti**  
**ADVENT OF A MYSTERY**

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*To the One whose inspiration has propelled  
me to undertake this monumental task.*





Once in 1969, a small group of disciples approached their guru, Shri Shri Anandamurti, seeking his assistance to write his biography. The next day he gave them a folded piece of paper, saying that it had all information they would need was therein to write his biography. The disciples were surprised how all the complete information they needed for the biography could be written on such a small piece of in a sheet of paper. Curiously, they opened the folded paper. In it was written:

**“I was a mystery, I am a mystery, and I shall always remain a mystery.”**





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## **Amazon Reviews** – Written by customers on Amazon

**Isabel Franco** (5.0 out of 5 stars)

### ***An excellent Christmas or New Year's gift!***

It's a WONDERFUL book!!! Well-written, excellent content, and so many profound insights derived from reading it. That's why I LOVE it and highly recommend it for everyone! Especially for s/he who is actually smart enough to question the "SEA CHANGE" in full swing right now in our society ... here in the U.S.A. and around the world! BRILLIANT insights into all the chaos, racial divides, and disasters natural and man-made now unfolding right before our very eyes! A universal GENIUS's perspective as to how the WORLD ... or the UNIVERSE ... or LIFE ... really works, regardless of one's religion! It's well worth your money. If you're a true seeker of TRUTH, this is a DELIGHTFUL feast! And, it's a VERY GOOD book on Personal Development!

**Dr Brian Ragbourn** (5.0 out of 5 stars)

### ***A Must-Read***

An extraordinary biography of an extraordinary person. I have never before found so much inspiration, wisdom and education between two covers. A magnificent achievement. You will not be disappointed.

**Brad Smith** (5.0 out of 5 stars)

### ***Must-read for anyone on the spiritual path***

The book introduced me to an entirely different breed of spiritual teacher. These stories brought tears to my eyes and touched the softest part of my soul. The possibilities of all of our potential continues to astonish me. There is so much I do not know about what it means to exist. I feel more pulled towards God, source, the supreme

entity, than ever before. This book has the power to inspire even the most cynical person, if read with an open mind and compassionate heart.

**Amazon Customer** (5.0 out of 5 stars)

***Incredible***

This book takes you on a journey through a range of emotions – happiness, sadness, wonder, awe, fear, seriousness, relief and many others. This is the definitive book on the greatest spiritual master of the 20th century and essential for anyone with an interest in spirituality.

**Luke B** (5.0 out of 5 stars)

***Most profound book***

Incredible and mind blowing. This book has brought so many sweet tears to my eyes, gave me insight into the workings of life and the universe and most of all has brought me to realize my true meaning and purpose, beyond the actions performed by the body, beyond emotions, beyond fleeting thoughts of the mind.

**Niall Macceide** (5.0 out of 5 stars)

***A must-read for any person looking for answers to life's mysteries***

Stunning. One of the most remarkable books on the life of a true spiritual giant ever written.

## **Foreword**

### **The Extraordinary Life of Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar**

Through over a hundred well researched personal stories, this book sheds light on the remarkable life of Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. His life purpose, the millions of people he influenced directly and indirectly, the new directions in global ethics, governance, political-economy and culture, and the long- term future he envisioned, are all explained through the experiences of many of those who met him. The author tells the story, but does not intervene, allowing the voices of those who met this incredible personality to speak for themselves.

How to read such a book? Several ways are possible.

First, as a devotee. Read in this way, this book - every paragraph, every sentence - will fill the mind with bliss. The stories bear testimony to the magic surrounding the life of Prabhat Ranjan. Born an enlightened being, his actions fill the reader with awe and wonder. Are the events described - experiences of death, reincarnation, samadhi, omniscience - even possible? The devotee who did not meet Sarkar has a feeling of lingering sadness and regret for a missed opportunity. But that is a narrow view. The bliss that Sarkar shared, is available at every moment, to each and everyone, according to the author. The key to experiencing this cosmic joy is the development of love. Says Sarkar: "A devotee is a great lover of humanity and all living beings, for she or he sees everything as a manifestation of the divine." Indeed for Sarkar, "Devotion is the elixir of life and the most precious treasure, the inner asset of every human being. It should be protected from the onslaught of dogmas and defective values of life."

A second way to read the book is as someone interested in the spiritual path, but perhaps in need of a nudge. This book inspires. Whether one believes every word or filters it through the lens of a healthy skepticism, the reader will find her or his life transformed. The steps to be taken in order to pursue a spiritual life, while living in the -note comma after "life"—material world, will become clearer. Bliss is near. For Sarkar, Tantra is essentially about identifying the small self with the infinite. He writes: "Every spiritual practice that



has as its goal the attainment of the Supreme, irrespective of its religious affiliation, is definitely Tantra, for Tantra is not a religion; Tantra is the science of sadhana or spiritual practice.”

Thirdly, one can read this book as a story that instructs. As with all stories, one is not concerned with the veracity of the incidents narrated (Baba riding on a tiger, recounting his birth, sharing the news of World War II events before the newspapers reported them, or the endless other incidents that testify to his ability to transcend the limitations of time, space and person), but with how they can help one to lead a better life, one that will benefit all living beings. This book can thus be viewed as a handbook of personal development. Indeed, Sarkar’s life is a fine example for those wishing to develop themselves.

Fourthly, one can read it merely as a story. In this case, the book will fascinate, providing hours of delightful insights into the life and teachings of an exceptional human being. Whether as a story or as mythology, for the characters in this book, it is essentially about embarking on the hero’s journey, about mustering the courage to make efforts to fulfill one’s dreams. Sarkar is both the facilitator and the task master, who lovingly encourages those around him to live their dream and warns them of the pitfalls involved in leading a life devoid of purpose and meaning.

Fifthly, one can read this book as a biography, as a rare glimpse into the life of P.R. Sarkar. Read in this way, one sees the world through the eyes of Sarkar - his views on Indian history, on current events, on extra-terrestrial intelligence, spiritual awakening, his theories about science and the nature of the universe. This book is an introduction to perhaps one of the most intriguing and fascinating human beings who ever walked on this planet.

My own focus was on one of Sarkar’s key ideas: It is the exception that creates the future. The exception creates a rupture in history and constructs the path leading to a new future. The exception challenges not just how we think, but the very framework

of our thinking. The exception challenges the old paradigm and creates new possibilities. I read this book in an effort to understand the inner workings of how the future can be different. As Sarkar reminds us, human history does not recognize the word impossible.

The purpose of this book is therefore not merely to appreciate Sarkar, but to inspire each one of us to become that evolutionary exception. Ultimately it asks us to consider, in the brief moments between birth and death, how we should live our lives, how we should contribute to human welfare, how, in an interdependent, cohesive society, we can be truly human. It offers a path to self-realization and the possibility of a different future for all of us.

**Sohail Inayatullah**

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## Preface

Historical biographies are not easy to write. Writing the biography of the intellectual and spiritual giant Shri Shri Anandamurti, affectionately known to his disciples as Baba, wasn't easy by any measure. The obstacles and challenges I encountered in this work were numerous, among them the chief one was the collection of verified materials for the biography.

The challenge of writing a credible biography was compounded by the fact that during Baba's lifetime, no effort was made to take note of what he said and of the various astonishing events that took place regularly in his presence. He discouraged discussion about his extraordinariness and wanted his disciples to focus on his teachings and ideology rather than his personality. He declared that he was not his physical body and that he could be known only through meditation and by working for his mission. With such an attitude *prevailing*, nobody thought of preserving the details of the amazing events that took place on a regular basis. In order to preserve for posterity the events that happened during the lifetime of this most remarkable person, I conducted interviews with those who had met him or had any association with him, and video recorded their memories and perceptions.

The collection of information about his life started soon after Baba's physical departure on the 21st of October 1990. I spent the next 20 years or so conducting numerous interviews with his close relatives, friends, classmates, neighbours, colleagues, disciples and those directly or indirectly connected with events relating to him. I travelled vast distances over harsh Indian roads and in unforgiving weather. Most of the research was conducted in the gruelling conditions of Bihar where proper roads virtually did not exist. Hence a big part of the over two hundred thousand kilometres that I covered was in Bihar. It was not only physically and mentally demanding but also occasionally dangerous. Several times I encountered perilous situations. That itself is another story.

Interestingly, I also encountered extraordinary experiences in the course of some of the interviews. For example, a few of Baba's early disciples whom I interviewed were spiritually advanced souls. I could not complete some of these interview sessions as they would invariably go into a heightened state of super-consciousness every



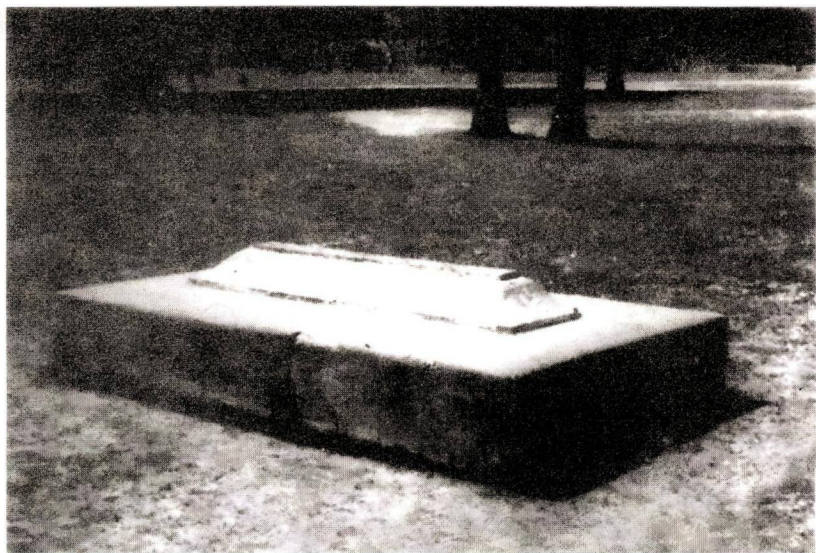


Baba in 1958





Baba in 1963



Tiger's Grave, one of the most iconic places in Jamlpur

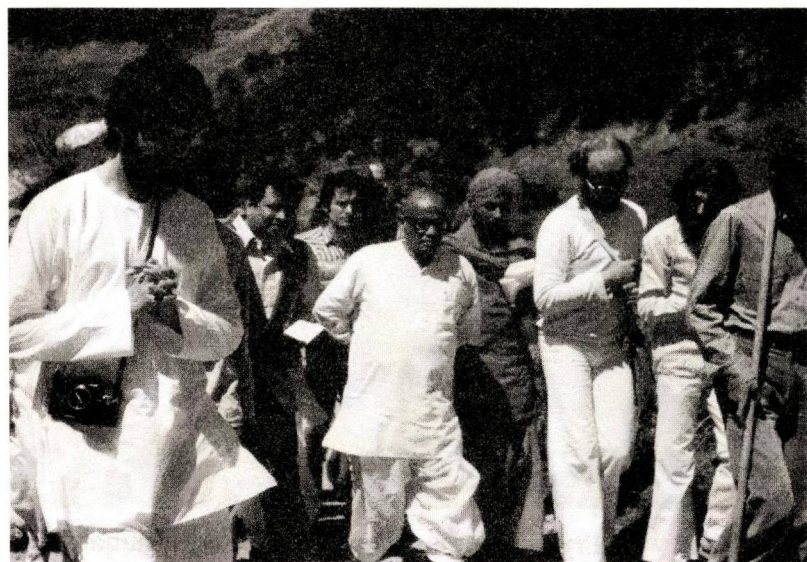


Baba with Pranay Kumar Chatterjee, Shashi Ranjan, Member of Parliament, and others during Field Walk in Ernakulam, Kerala in 1965





Field Walk in Tainan, Taiwan in 1979



Field Walk in Swiss Alps mountainin 1979

time they spoke or thought of Baba, making it impossible to complete the interview. The accounts of their experiences with him would have been an invaluable addition to the existing spiritual literature.

In all, I conducted more than 6,000 video and audio interviews. I deliberately conducted these interviews in an open, unstructured and conversational style to allow the respondents to share their memories and observations about Baba in a relaxed and informal manner. I had to bear in mind that many of them were simple village folk who would not have had the courage to speak if I had interviewed them in a more formal setting. The bulk of this book draws mainly from these interviews. In this initial volume of two parts only a fraction of the materials I collected has been used. Even then, it has taken about six years to put the book together. I hope to write many more volumes in the coming years.

During his lifetime Baba shunned publicity. Only those who were drawn to him through their spiritual practices or were attracted to the ideology he propounded were able to come close to him. Consequently, little is publicly known about his life and much remains shrouded in mystery. People only came to know about him by word of mouth and through his writings.

In the beginning, sometime in the 1950s, the ideas he dictated to a small number of disciples were not understood or appreciated by the majority of them. The concepts he expounded were either too deep or too futuristic. These simple people only wished to be near their guru and bask in the light of his presence. What he said was of secondary importance. Despite this he regularly dictated his ideas to selected disciples, and a whole library of books was developed from the notes they took. His ideas were not only prolific but also diverse in nature. They touched on every branch of knowledge necessary to give shape to his vision of a new, integrated human society based on spiritual ideals. Towards the latter part of his life, he accelerated the speed of his work tremendously, resting for just two hours a day. He dictated a vast compendium of information on philology and linguistics, composed a whole genre of spiritual songs to enrich the devotional and cultural life of society, and created a model of socio-economic development that offered an alternative to capitalism and communism. The speed with which he expounded his views did not leave people enough time to think deeply about them. It was only much later, when most of his ideas had already



been published, that people started to see the whole, and not just the individual parts, of his radical plans for the socio-spiritual transformation of society. They then realised that he had spent his entire life stitching together the blueprint for a new human society through his work and through the personal example he set.

The future society Baba envisioned was multidimensional in nature. At the individual level, it urged people to become ideal human beings guided by a strong sense of morality, fearlessness, and compassion, and tuned to the Supreme Consciousness. At the social level, he envisaged a classless and casteless society built around the overarching concepts of one universal family, love for all creation and a cooperative spirit. In support of this vision, he suggested new forms of local, regional and global governance. For the well-being of the environment he gave the theory of Prama, the theory of balance and harmony, where all forms of life are respected and have their place.

In addition, he propounded several path-breaking theories such as Microvita, Bio-psychology, Neo-humanism and the theory of the Social Cycle, to name but a few. His other contributions in the fields of history, psychology, parapsychology, cosmology, economics, agriculture, science, linguistics and philology, medical science, music and literature add to his mystique.

What also set Shri Shri Anandamurti apart from his peers were the unique methods he employed for disseminating his ideas and theories, both worldly and spiritual. He first created the theoretical framework, and then carried out a series of demonstrations in order to create practical understanding of the idea he was expounding. To my knowledge, no other spiritual master in the past or present has employed such methods for transmitting his or her ideas. In this he stands unmatched.

To date Baba's teachings have been published and translated in over 200 books. Even greater than this vast collection of outstanding works were his contributions to the fields of mysticism and spirituality. From a spiritual perspective he was in a class of his own. Not only did he correct the misconceptions of past spiritual thinkers and philosophers, but he also offered new insights into spirituality. His theories of the nature of mind, cosmology and Microvita show a deep understanding of the nature of Consciousness itself and provide insights into the most fundamental building blocks



of life. He also developed a modern system of spiritual practice to meet present-day human needs.

It is interesting to note that over the last few years there has been an explosion of interest in his ideas and works in many major universities and other academic institutions, particularly in India. Intellectuals have been enthralled and have wondered how it was possible for a man raised in a small town in eastern India, with only an intermediate level education, to possess such incredible knowledge beyond that of the experts, and in such a wide variety of fields. I hope this book offers some clues to address their questions.

Although the task of interviewing people about their reminiscences started rather late, the information gathered was both astounding and prolific. Reconstructing the events that had occurred several decades before was not an easy task, particularly regarding his discussions of subjects such as history and the evolution of races that are often considered dreary. Since these subjects are important and people's recollection of the information was sketchy, some of the knowledge gaps had to be addressed by drawing information from books containing his discourses.

The chapters herein have been arranged both chronologically and by topic. This revised edition is similar to the earlier edition of the book. Typographical and punctuation errors have been corrected throughout the book, and some sentences have been revised or added for clarity and accuracy. This book could not have been written and published without the cooperation of a number of people. They are too many to mention individually. However, I would like to make a special mention of Taraka from Delhi, Birendra from Malaysia and Ac. Malati from the United Kingdom. While Taraka helped me in selecting the appropriate quotes and with the initial editing, Birendra and Ac. Malati were indispensable at every stage of the editing process. Their sincerity and commitment to the task were matchless.

The quotes of Shri Shri Anandamurti have been taken, with permission, from the electronic edition of P.R. Sarkar's works published by the Ananda Marga Publications Department, Kolkata.

**Pranavatmakananda**



## CHAPTER 1

# The Birth of a Mystery

One evening in the middle of 1963, Shri Shri Anandamurti, who was affectionately known to his disciples as Baba, was sitting on the Tiger's Grave in a lonely field on the outskirts of Jamalpur. This local landmark was his preferred meeting place and the destination of his regular evening walks. Two newly ordained monks, Abhedananda and Vijayananda, were with him. The atmosphere was calm and serene, suffused with a feeling of blissful tranquility. Baba was gazing pensively at the sky. Then, breaking the silence, he remarked, "You know, everything has a cause. Nothing that happens in this universe is accidental. My coming to this planet also has a cause. And the fact that you came with me also has a cause. My decision to come to this planet was not taken here. It was made in a far-off world. I have told you many times that life is not confined to the earth alone and that the development of life is a common occurrence in the universe. There are so many planets with life far more advanced than the human beings on this planet.

"It was on one such planet that I took the decision to go to the small planet known as the earth and to do something tangible for the all-round upliftment of the humans and other beings on that planet. So my coming here is not accidental. The fact that all of you came with me is also not without a reason. It may either be the result of an intense desire that you had while we were together on another planet or in an earlier life on this planet. You do not remember the past, but I know everything. Sitting here, I can see everything, including the planet in the sky where I took that fateful decision. One day all of you will attain mukti (liberation) or moksha (salvation). It may be in this life or the next or in any later life depending on your wish, but for me there is no mukti or moksha. I cannot wish for that. I keep travelling in various forms from planet to planet, from star to star and from galaxy to galaxy, to every nook and corner of the universe, to

every place where human beings exist, to guide them along the path to liberation or salvation. For me there is no rest. I would rather say that the word 'rest' does not exist in my dictionary."



It was the full-moon day of Vishaka of the Indian calendar, the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1922, a day when all across India people celebrate the holy birth of Lord Buddha in an outpouring of religious fervour. For Hindus too, this day is very auspicious. In various parts of India people visit places of pilgrimage. Some take a holy dip in the sacred rivers and lakes and others perform special worship in temples.

In Jamalpur, a small township in the district of Monghyr in Bihar, as the sun slowly rose behind the Kali Hill, there was anxious anticipation in the house of Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar. For in the house in a by-lane of Keshavpur, his wife, Abharani, was about to give birth. Lakshmi Narayan's mother, Binapani Sarkar, and Abharani's mother, Indumati Mitra, were present to assist in the birth of the child. Everyone was eagerly praying for a safe delivery. At precisely seven minutes past six in the morning, the child, a male, was born. The birth of a son brought great happiness and relief to everyone present in Lakshmi Narayan's house, especially to the parents. Their first daughter, Hiraprabha, then seven years old, was the family's only surviving child. Their second child, a daughter, Kanaka Prabha, had died of smallpox at the tender age of two and a half, and the third, a boy, had died at birth. After the death of two of their children, Lakshmi Narayan had grown extremely anxious. He and Abharani were both very pious and had been fervently praying in the nearby Shiva temple for a son to continue the family lineage. The entire family had spent several days in a state of nervous expectation. A few days earlier, Lakshmi Narayan had dreamt that a son would be born to them who would bring great glory to the family. They considered the birth of a male child as the blessing of Lord Shiva, a divine gift and the answer to their many ardent prayers.

A few surprises lay in store for them after the baby was born, however. First, the baby did not cry at birth, as a newborn normally does. Instead he smiled, startling everyone present and filling their



hearts with joy. As was customary, the infant had to be fed cow's milk immediately after his first bath. Indumati took the newborn in her lap to feed him, then soaked a piece of cotton in a small copper cup of milk. Drop by drop she dripped the milk from the cotton into the baby's mouth. As she fed him, he unexpectedly reached out and grasped the cup in his hands and drank from it, leaving everyone utterly amazed. "How strange!" gasped grandmother Binapani. "He is just born and is drinking with his own hands! He does not appear to be a newborn baby; he is a burha (old person)," she exclaimed.

Just as she was saying this, the baby let go of the cup and became a normal newborn baby again. Indumati continued to feed him, using the piece of cotton.

Years later in the winter of 1969, the child, who later came to be known as Anandamurti, recounted his earliest memories to a senior disciple, Acharya Amitananda:

"I am in my mother's womb. From there I can see my mother. I know her so well. I can also see my father, my sister, and my other relatives. How well I know them all. I know their names too. Now I am born. Normally children cry at birth. I don't. I am all smiles. In fact, I am happy to be born. I want to address the people around me by their names because I know them so well. But alas, how incapacitated I am! My vocal cords do not permit me to speak. They want to feed me. They have put a piece of cotton in a cup of milk. Drop by drop, they start to feed me. How silly of them! Am I a child to be fed in this manner? I shall drink straight from the cup, not from the cotton. I protest and raise my hands, grasp the cup and start to drink from it. They are all taken aback at what I have done. I realise that I have done much to perplex them, and I return to being a newborn child."

Within a week of the birth of his son, Lakshmi Narayan had an expert astrologer prepare a horoscope for the newborn. "You are indeed very fortunate," said the astrologer after going through the horoscope. "According to the chart, this boy will attain world fame as



a spiritual leader. Your family's name will be glorified because of him. But he will spend his time more with monks and yogis than with the family."

What the astrologer thought would be good news for Lakshmi Narayan, however, did not please him at all. In fact, Lakshmi Narayan was very disturbed and felt that actually God had not answered his prayers for a son to continue the family lineage. Instead, He had bestowed upon him a son who was destined to renounce his life and become a monk. The family had a history of members renouncing the world and taking to the life of an ascetic. He did not want his son, born after so many ardent prayers and religious observances, to renounce his worldly life and become a monk. Unwilling to accept the prediction of the astrologer, Lakshmi Narayan consulted another astrologer and received a similar forecast. The strange events surrounding the birth of the child seemed to confirm the words of the astrologers. Greatly disturbed by their predictions, he decided to burn the horoscope and prohibited his family from talking about it. He even altered the child's date of birth in order to preclude the possibility of anyone finding out what the stars had actually foretold regarding his son's future. In the years that followed, he would say that his son had been born in 1921<sup>1</sup>. When the boy was later admitted in school, the year of his birth was given as 1923 in the admission register. In this way Lakshmi Narayan felt reassured that he had managed to conceal what the stars ordained and took comfort in the thought that he had done everything humanly possible to prevent his son from renouncing the world and becoming a monk.

The two doting grandmothers, however, were not at all bothered by the astrologer's prediction. They were fully engrossed in their grandson, never tiring of recounting to others how the infant did not cry at birth and how he tried to drink milk directly from the cup. News of these extraordinary events quickly spread among the

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<sup>1</sup> Prabhat Ranjan later confirmed to his younger brother Himanshu Ranjan that his year of birth was 1922. Out of respect for his father, however, he had not asked his disciples to change the year his father had announced to everyone. Thus 1921 continued to be his official year of birth.

relatives and in the neighbourhood and later became part of the family lore.

Before he was a year old, the child was given the name Prabhat Ranjan. But Binapani continued to call him Burha, and later affectionately changed it to Bubu. The neighbours and relatives addressed him by that nickname.

Although Lakshmi Narayan had destroyed his son's horoscope in the hope of changing the fate that the stars had ordained for the child, various incidents that took place in Prabhat Ranjan's early years only served to confirm that he was not an ordinary child. Even as a baby, for example, he never cried for things like other infants. On the contrary, he always smiled. While the hearts of his parents were filled with joy at the sight of a constantly smiling child, they were nevertheless baffled by such unusual behaviour. Many more strange occurrences were to follow.

Recounting his early experiences Prabhat Ranjan later said, "Before I was one year old, I already wanted to walk and felt the pain of not being able to do so; I was forced to crawl around, and my elbows and knees ached. Whenever I grew dejected, wondering how much longer I would be forced to suffer such indignities, I would hear a soothing voice speaking clearly into my ears, consoling me, 'Some days more, just a few days more; I know you are in trouble, but just a few days more.'

I would look around, wondering who it was who was consoling me, but could not see anyone. Once I started to walk, I stopped hearing this voice."

### **Strange Experiences**

Prabhat Ranjan started to talk at a very early age. Even before he was two, he could speak clearly and was able to articulate his feelings very well, an ability that appeared to be far beyond his tender age.

At around that same time a range of incidents took place that amazed his parents. Once, in the middle of the night, he woke his mother and told her that strange animals, birds, reptiles and people were coming out of his right ear and re-entering his left ear. Abharani

thought that he must have seen pictures of these strange creatures somewhere and wondered where he had seen them, as there were no such pictures in the house.

He would also describe seeing a vast number of stars and planets streaming out of one ear and then re-entering through the other. At other times he would describe variations of these extraordinary experiences. His parents had no knowledge of the animals, birds, plants and cosmic bodies he described in such vivid detail. One night Prabhat Ranjan woke his mother and related a strange dream, "Ma, I dreamt that I was floating in space, and a ship was floating in the sky and was heading towards me at great speed, and all the passengers on board were clad in saffron-coloured robes<sup>2</sup>."

When he was about four years old, one time he woke up in the middle of the night and saw that he was enveloped in dazzling yet soothing effulgence, in which he felt immersed in a state of indescribable joy. In that divine state of ecstasy, he lost all sense of himself.

His parents were startled to hear this small child speaking in such a strange manner and wondered from where all his ideas came, not to mention the vocabulary to express them so lucidly. Initially, they thought that he had a congenital disorder and consulted several doctors, only to be assured that he was perfectly normal. Then they wondered if somebody had cast an evil spell on the child. They visited several tantrics and holy men in a desperate attempt to cure their son, but to no avail. All the prescriptions of the holy men failed. Despite all their efforts, Prabhat Ranjan's incredible dreams not only continued, but also increased in frequency. Gradually, his parents became accustomed to hearing about his strange dreams and stopped worrying about them. His father was convinced that this was a passing phase and that he would eventually grow out of it. Abharani,

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<sup>2</sup> Many years later, when Prabhat Ranjan created an order of yogic monks and nuns, he prescribed the same uniform for them. This was confirmed by Prabhat Ranjan himself in an answer to questions put to him by his younger brother, Himanshu Ranjan. His mother, Abharani, also related this incident in Ranchi in 1970 at the request of Prabhat Ranjan's disciples.



on the other hand, proudly talked to all her friends and family about her son's extraordinary, creative abilities.

No one had a clue about the reason for these strange happenings. One day, he told his mother of a disturbing dream that he had had the night before. In the dream he saw a raging fire sweeping through a village and several orange-robed monks fleeing the fast-moving flames. Abharani listened to him patiently and took it as another of his outlandish tales. Two days later, however, reports came of a tragic fire that had broken out in a nearby village, injuring and killing many villagers and monks. Abharani then realised that her son's strange dreams were not mere figments of his imagination and that he actually had the ability to see the future. As time passed, Prabhat Ranjan started to display still more and varied paranormal abilities.

This was a somewhat disconcerting discovery for the parents, particularly for his father. He realised that Bubu was no ordinary child and became afraid that the astrological forecasts might actually prove to be correct. His only consolation was that Prabhat Ranjan was not their sole male child.

When Prabhat Ranjan was one and a half years old, Lakshmi Narayan and Abharani were blessed with another son, who they named Sudhansu Ranjan and affectionately called Kanai. In the years to come, they had three more children. The next to be born was a daughter, Bijili Prabha, followed by another two sons, Himanshu Ranjan and Manas Ranjan.

There was a Bhojpuri-speaking family in the neighbourhood that was close to the Sarkars. They were very fond of Prabhat Ranjan. When he was a few months old, they would often take him to their house. Prabhat Ranjan later said that the first language he had spoken was Bhojpuri, which he had picked up from them.

After the birth of her second son, Abharani found it difficult to care for the new baby and attend to Prabhat Ranjan's needs while discharging her regular household duties. So she often entrusted Prabhat Ranjan to the care of the Bhojpuri neighbour, while she did her household chores. The neighbour had a daughter named Radha,

who was about five years older than Prabhat Ranjan. Radha grew very fond of Bubu and spent most of her time with him.

### Binapani's Surprise

Mother Abharani had a great predilection for music. She came from a cultured family and was trained in classical singing. She used to sing Rabindra Sangeet, the compositions of Rabindranath Tagore, to her children. When Hiraprabha was six years old, Abharani wanted her to learn music. Grandmother Binapani, however, was not in favour of it. She felt that girls should marry early and that it was a waste of time for them to learn music. This difference in opinion led to an argument between Abharani and Binapani. Abharani's views finally prevailed, and Hiraprabha started to learn the sitar and *jalatarang*<sup>3</sup> from an accomplished music teacher, Pandit Hiralal Jha.

Five years later, grandmother Binapani again raised the subject and questioned whether Hiraprabha should continue with her musical training. She insisted that the musical training Hiraprabha already received was adequate. She felt that the girl should now be instructed in the art of managing a household, in preparation for her marriage. Abharani, however, disagreed, and the two ladies again started to argue. Prabhat Ranjan, who was then four years old, was sitting beside them. Hearing their discussion, he interjected, "Why are you again arguing about this? Before didi was sent to learn music you had a similar argument and the matter was already settled." He then related word for word what his grandmother had said at that time and what his mother had replied. He asked why the issue was again being raised when a decision had already been made. Bubu's words about an incident they had completely forgotten surprised the ladies. Binapani exclaimed in astonishment, "Bubu, you were not even born at that time. How do you know about that in so much detail?"

"I just know it," he replied evasively.

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<sup>3</sup> The *jalatarang* is a melodic percussion instrument consisting of a set of metal or ceramic bowls filled with water.



Gradually the parents began to realise that Prabhat Ranjan was very different from other children. Even his childhood pranks were unlike those of other children of his age. Everything he did had a valid reason.

Occasionally some wandering monks would visit Jamalpur and set up camp in a field nearby. Fascinated by the holy men, the local people would gather around them, singing kirtan and devotional songs and feeding the monks delicious sweetmeats. To entertain the crowd, in turn the monks would tell inspiring stories of Lord Shiva.

Even as a child of five, Prabhat Ranjan loved the devotional songs and stories of Lord Shiva, but he was infuriated by the monks' greed for delicious sweets, their addiction to smoking marijuana and their touch-me-not attitude towards the untouchables. Unable to tolerate their behaviour, he would throw stones at them from a distance or at times run away with their sweets and distribute them among the other children. The holy men were disturbed by his impish pranks and complained about him to the local people, who then reported the matter to Abharani. Such mischievous pranks would infuriate her and she would run after him to punish him. But the agile little boy would always evade her. Unable to catch him, she would finally give up chasing her naughty child and return to her daily chores, exasperated. Eventually, when her anger had subsided, he would sneak up to her to be cuddled in her motherly embrace. On one such instance he justified his seemingly roguish conduct by explaining that his disrespectful behaviour towards the monks had been prompted by their addiction to marijuana and greed for sweets, which would have certainly enraged Lord Shiva. Holding her face in his little hands, he asked, "So mother, whatever I did, was it not right?" Placated by the child's soothing words, the lingering remnants of her anger faded.

### **Learning the Shiva Dhyana Mantra**

Around the same time, young Prabhat Ranjan started having a mysterious dream that recurred night after night. He recounted the dream much later in a book entitled *Strange Experiences*:

One night I dreamt that I was in the midst of a terrible storm. The storm seemed to whisk me away. After it had carried me for some distance, it deposited me on a huge sandbank along the River Ganges. My eyes and mouth were full of sand. With great difficulty, I slowly opened my eyes and saw standing before me a sannyasi bearing a trident. Looking at me, the sannyasi uttered a mantra and said, "My boy, repeat this mantra."

Defiantly I replied, "No!"

The sannyasi repeated his instruction a little more firmly albeit in a sweet and affectionate tone, "Repeat it, my boy. It will be good for you."

"No, never! I won't say it!" I retorted.

Then the sannyasi raised his trident and commanded, "Say it! You must repeat it."

"No, never! I won't, I won't!" I shot back.

Again, a fierce storm arose and carried me away. After some time it brought me back home, and threw me forcefully down on my bed. The feeling of falling awoke me with a jolt, and I realised that I had been dreaming all the while. In the morning, I could recall the dream clearly in minute detail. The next night the dream recurred, and I awoke afterwards in the same manner. This sequence of events repeated itself for more than twenty days. Through hearing it so many times, the sannyasi's mantra became firmly etched in my memory.

When the same dream recurred daily, I became determined to do something about it. I thought, "Every day the sannyasi raises his trident and threatens me. But I don't seem to be able to do anything about it. That is very shameful."

I resolved that if the dream came again one more night, I would attack the sannyasi. That night the same dream recurred yet again, and one after another the same sequence of events started to unfold. This time, however, as soon as the sannyasi lifted his trident and ordered, "Speak! You must repeat the mantra," I seized the trident from his hands and hurled it at him

with all my might. Suddenly, there was a loud clanging sound, and I looked around...the sannyasi was nowhere to be seen. I saw that the trident had bounced off a stone image of Lord Shiva and had fallen on the ground. The clanging sound came from the impact of the trident hitting the stone statue. It seemed as if Shiva's statue was alive, staring at me and laughing at the futility of my puny action. Full of shame, I broke out in a cold sweat and awoke from my dream.

Some days later, the festival of Shiva-Chaturdashi was celebrated with great fervor and devotion. At that time unmarried girls would fast in the hope of getting a good husband. My elder sister also participated in the fast. After hearing about my recurring dream, my family advised me to fast on Shivaratri day together with my sister. I did so happily. In the evening, when we went to the temple to worship, I suddenly recollected the mantra I had heard from the sannyasi and began to recite it aloud:

*Dhyayet nityam mahesham rajatagirinibham charuchandravatamsam  
Ratnakalpojvalamgam parashu-mrga-varadbhiiti hastam prasannam  
Padmasiinam samantad stutam amaraganaervyaghra krttim vasanam  
Vishvadyam vishvabiijam nikhilabhayaharam paincavaktram trinetrām.*

“One should meditate constantly on Maheshvara, who is as radiant as a silver mountain adorned with the lovely moon,

Whose limbs are shining with the splendour of jewels, axe in hand, protector of animals, bestower of boons.

The ever-blissful one is sitting in the lotus posture, wearing a tiger skin and being worshipped by the gods,

The seed and cause of the universe removes boundless fears, the one with five faces and three eyes.”

The priest, who was busy performing the rituals, looked up in amazement on hearing such a young child chant the difficult Dhyana Mantra of Shiva so flawlessly and melodiously. The other temple-goers were equally surprised and commented on the perfection of the accent and intonation. The priest came over to congratulate Lakshmi

Narayan for making his son so conversant with the Sanskrit language. Lakshmi Narayanan was dumbfounded. Prabhat Ranjan had never been taught Sanskrit and certainly had not been taught the difficult mantra by anyone.

The news of the temple incident soon spread through the neighbourhood, and even after many years, when the neighbours were asked about Prabhat Ranjan's early days, many still remembered this extraordinary occurrence.





## CHAPTER 2

### Can Anyone Ride a Tiger?

In January 1928, when Prabhat Ranjan was five years old, he was admitted in the Bengali Primary School in Keshavpur. His extraordinary intelligence, self-control and strong sense of discipline - qualities that were quite unusual among children of that age - drew the special attention and appreciation of his teachers, Bijon Chattopadhyay and Kamalesh Ghosh.

His unusual abilities and behaviour were not the only distinguishing features that marked Prabhat Ranjan as an exceptional child. Around that time Abharani and Lakshmi Narayan noticed the boy regularly sitting alone doing meditation in the morning and evening. They did not know when and from whom he had learned to meditate. He was also often observed doing long meditation in the nearby Shiva temple.

Another remarkable trait was Prabhat Ranjan's flat refusal to take any non-vegetarian food, even from a very young age. As a toddler he rarely cried. He was always contented and happy. Occasionally, however, he would cry for no apparent reason. His family gradually realised that this only occurred when fish or other non-vegetarian food was being cooked. Owing to this, the preparation of non-vegetarian food became a rarity.

Bengalis are traditionally fish eaters. The staple diet of the people in Bengal is rice and fish. At that time, it was customary to feed children only vegetarian food until the age of five, in accordance with the popular belief that the digestive system of a young child is too delicate to digest non-vegetarian food. When Prabhat Ranjan reached the age of five, Abharani tried to make him to eat fish like the children of other Bengali households. However, try as she would, her son refused to even look at it, much less consume it. Accustomed as

she was to the boy's unusual nature, Abharani took this in her stride. But grandmother Binapani, though herself a vegetarian on account of being a widow, did not give in so easily. There was a traditional belief among Bengalis that fish is "brain food" and hence an essential part of the diet of every child. Concerned that her favourite grandson would become mentally deficient if he did not eat fish, she tried her best to persuade him to eat it. Nothing, however, could change Prabhat Ranjan's mind. When every tactic failed, she deliberately put a piece of fish on his plate when he sat for his meals. But whenever that happened he would angrily stomp out of the room and flatly refuse to finish his meal. One day in exasperation, Binapani said, "You stubborn boy, you are born in a Bengali family and you are refusing to eat fish. What is this?" With these words, she forcibly stuffed a piece of fish into his mouth. Prabhat Ranjan immediately ran outside and vomited up everything in his stomach.

"You foolish boy, if you refuse to eat fish, you will remain dull-witted your whole life," she exclaimed, as she grudgingly gave up all hope of changing him. In response, Prabhat Ranjan shut himself in the room that he shared with Kanai. When he finally opened the door several hours later, he declared that if anyone made any further attempts to force him to eat fish, he would no longer sit with the family at the dining table. That incident put an end to the family's efforts to try to make him eat non-vegetarian food.

Non-vegetarian food was not the only item that Prabhat Ranjan refused to eat. His mother also noticed that whenever she tried to feed him any food containing onion or garlic, he would refuse to touch it, and if they tried to force him to eat it, he would vomit. At first Abharani could not understand the reason for his strange behaviour. As he grew older and started to speak, he clearly told them which items he would not eat, including onion and garlic.

### **Planning the Future Mission**

During his schooldays, Prabhat Ranjan always spent his summer vacation with his elder sister, Hiraprabha, in his father's native village of Bamunpara. The thick vegetation of the place provided a real respite from the searing heat of Bihar. Moreover, Prabhat Ranjan

enjoyed bathing in the family pond, which was surrounded by shady trees. The abundance of fruit trees was an added attraction for the children, who eagerly looked forward to their annual visit to Bamunpara. The huge open fields around the village provided ample space for them to play and roam around. As in Jamalpur, Prabhat Ranjan always looked for lonely places to meditate. His favourite haunt was the slope of the family pond, which was secluded and shaded by a grove of trees. He also enjoyed taking long solitary walks in the evening through the vast fields encircling the village. During the day he would spend hours reclining on a cot in a thatched hut attached to the main building.

One day in the summer of 1929, while vacationing in Bamunpara, Hiraprabha asked Prabhat Ranjan why he was idling away his time lying on the cot all day, doing nothing useful. "I'm reviewing the history of the universe," he replied.

Being used to his unusual behaviour, Hiraprabha was not amused by this strange reply. On another occasion, she taunted him saying that other children of his age spent their time playing or doing something worthwhile, while he merely whiled away his time daydreaming. To this he replied, "I am watching what will happen on this planet in a thousand years."

Finally, one day, Hiraprabha teased him saying, "The only thing you are good at is roaming about in your dream world. I doubt if you even know how to write your own name in Bengali."

Prabhat Ranjan sat up and retorted in a serious tone, "Do you want to see?"

He picked up a pencil and paper and wrote his name in ten different scripts, some Indian and some from different countries around the world. Hiraprabha did not even know most of the scripts. Prabhat Ranjan told her the name of each script. She was shocked and after that never teased her brother again in such a frivolous manner.



Years later he was dictating one of his books to Vijayananda, a monastic disciple, when he suddenly paused and started to reminisce about the past. "Do you know, Vijayananda, the blueprint for the entire ideology and mission of Ananda Marga took shape in my mind as I lay on a cot in Bamunpara during the summer vacation, when I was just seven years old. But I had to wait until after the Second World War to start my work."

Around that period Prabhat Ranjan's personality underwent a perceptible change, and this did not go unnoticed by his parents. From being a playful young boy who bubbled with life and filled everyone with joy and wonder, he started to grow into a very serious youngster whose every word was measured and carried deep meaning. He exhibited wisdom beyond his years, which won him the profound respect of all those who knew him, both young and old. Indeed he often spoke of things beyond their comprehension. He began displaying deep insight in a wide range of subjects and became something of an enigma to anyone who listened to him and a living encyclopedia to those who knew him closely.

### **A Casteless Society**

In those days the caste sentiment in Bihar was extremely strong and binding. A debilitating inferiority complex was so deeply ingrained in the minds of the so-called untouchables that they did not dare to touch people belonging to the higher social strata, and even dreaded to come in their proximity. Their suppression was so severe that they were not even allowed to wear footwear and had to walk around barefoot even when the temperature was extreme. They were also not allowed into temples, as it was considered that their presence would pollute the sanctity of the house of God. These caste restrictions were strictly enforced and anyone who tried to go against them invited strong social disapproval, particularly in a small town like Jamalpur. But Prabhat Ranjan refused to support such discrimination even when he was very young.

Once he invited a classmate belonging to an untouchable caste to his home and made him sit on his bed in his room while he talked to him. After the boy left, mother Abharani expressed her outrage at his socially inappropriate conduct. "Bubu," she burst out, "what you have done goes against our social customs and is completely unacceptable. By allowing that untouchable to enter our living room, you have defiled the purity of our house. Now I will have to purify everything he touched." She then removed the bedcover and pillowcase and washed them. Prabhat Ranjan silently watched her without saying a word. Then he took the mattress and the pillow and also immersed them in water.

"Bubu! What are you doing?" shouted Abharani.

"Since he has polluted everything with his touch, then these are also polluted. So I am cleaning them as well," responded Prabhat Ranjan nonchalantly.

"That is not necessary; only the pillowcase and the bedcover were polluted because the boy touched them; we only need to purify the rest by sprinkling Ganges water on them," clarified Abharani.

"No, that cannot be correct," answered Prabhat Ranjan firmly. "If you say that the bedcover and the pillowcase are polluted, then everything is polluted. Mother, he touched me too, and so have I not also become impure? How am I to get purified? What about the Ganges water? It contains so many impurities, and many of those who you call untouchables bathe in it every day. The untouchables also touch the grains and vegetables we eat every day in the farm or in the market, and they have no doubt also touched the money we use at one time or another. Are they not also polluted? Mother, you all employ a different set of norms when their services are essential to you. For me nobody is untouchable because everyone is a child of God. How can we treat God's children as untouchables?"

Abharani had no answer to her Bubu's seemingly irrefutable logic. In exasperation she said, "Bubu there is no one in this world who can convince you of anything at all!"

On another occasion Prabhat Ranjan was sitting on the porch in front of his house. A person belonging to the untouchable caste was passing by. He stopped and asked Prabhat Ranjan for directions to the house of a certain person. Prabhat Ranjan noticed that the man was standing on one leg. He replied, "I saw him going towards the market a while ago. Please come and sit on the bench. You can wait for him here if you like. By the way, why are you standing on one leg?"

"Khokha Babu (little master)," replied the man, "I cannot sit there. There is a rule that a low-caste person has to remain in this position whenever he goes to the house of a higher caste person." Prabhat Ranjan requested him several times to sit near him, but the man couldn't muster up the courage to go against centuries of repressive social traditions. This psychology of inferiority had built up over hundreds of years and had become engrained in his mind. For centuries low caste people had lived lives of humiliation and insult, and consequently they had grown used to it. Tragically, they had fully accepted this condition as their fate. Prabhat Ranjan knew that no amount of persuasion was going to remove the inferiority complex that was rooted deeply in the man's psychology and refrained from further comment. Profoundly moved by the plight of the untouchables, Prabhat Ranjan made a resolution at that moment, "One day I will wipe out the scourge of the caste system and all other social evils from the face of the earth. I will establish a society where every human being lives with dignity and nobody suffers from a socially imposed inferiority complex."

### **Riding a Tiger**

In January 1932 Prabhat Ranjan was admitted to the Eastern Railway High School. Sachindra Nath Marik, who was two years younger than Prabhat Ranjan and lived a few houses away, witnessed a very mysterious incident that happened when Prabhat Ranjan was about ten years old. He recalled it during an interview:

The local children used to go to the Polo Ground in the evening to play, and Bubuda would come along with us. But while we played, he would disappear somewhere. When we returned home at dusk, he would again join us, appearing as if



from nowhere. In the beginning we did not notice anything abnormal. But when it started to happen regularly, we began to wonder what was going on. When I asked him about it, he avoided answering, and that only increased my curiosity further. So one day I and two other friends decided to watch him closely.

After reaching the playground, while we were busy playing, we noticed that Bubuda was missing. We looked around and saw him walking past the Water Department enclosure towards Death Valley. We immediately stopped playing and followed him discreetly at a distance. To our surprise, we saw him entering the forest in the dreaded valley. We did not dare to follow him further, as we had heard all sorts of frightening stories about the wild animals and ghosts that were believed to roam there. We waited at a distance, as we knew that he would return before dusk. We also felt concerned for his safety. As the light faded we grew anxious. It was starting to get dark and we became impatient as there was still no sign of him. Then suddenly we saw something that left us dumbstruck. Through a clearing in the forest, we saw Bubuda riding on a tiger. He got off at the edge of the forest and patted it, then it disappeared between the trees. As he approached, he asked us what we were doing there. We could not control ourselves and told him that we had seen what he had done.

“What did you see?” he asked.

“We saw you riding on a tiger. We will tell your mother, and you will get a severe scolding today.”

“Are you mad? Me riding on a tiger! Who will believe such a cock and bull story? ‘It will not be me who will be scolded, it will be you.’”

“We have all seen it. You can’t lie to us.”

As soon as we reached home, we told our parents the incredible news that we had seen Bubuda riding on a tiger. But no one believed us and they ridiculed us for making up such stories. Unable to contain ourselves, we went to Bubuda’s

mother and told her what we had seen. She did not believe us either. Even so, she called Bubuda to verify the story from him.

He said, "Ma, how can you believe such concocted stories? They quarrelled with me today while we were playing and so now they are making up stories to get their revenge."

Then Bubuda's mother turned and scolded us, "You naughty boys, don't you feel ashamed of yourselves for lying about Bubu, just because you had a quarrel with him?" We tried our best to convince her that we were telling the truth, but to no avail.

She asked us angrily, "Can anyone ride a tiger? Do you think I will believe such fairy tales?" We told the story to several people, but no one believed us.

The next day Bubuda asked me, "Well, Sachin, did anyone believe you? Was it not you who got a scolding instead of me? Don't ever talk about this to anyone again. Nobody will believe it."

"Can anyone ride a tiger?" I often wondered as I thought of Bubuda.

After that incident Bubuda stopped coming with us to the polo ground. Several days later, I saw him going alone to the areas around the lake and Death Valley where people were terrified to go, particularly when at sunset. I observed this on several occasions, but I didn't dare to follow him as I was afraid of going to those dreaded places. I always wondered how Bubuda could be so fearless despite his young age.

Some years later, I heard about a female tantric who lived in the Kharagpur Hills. People claimed that she had used her occult powers to tame a tiger. I thought that perhaps Bubuda had gone into the forest to visit her. It was only much later when I discovered that our Bubuda was Anandamurti - a great spiritual guru - that his mystifying behaviour as a child began to make sense to me, and I started to make the connection between the strange events of his childhood and his elevated spiritual status.

A few months after this incident with Sachindra, a woodcutter came to Lakshmi Narayan with a strange report. He said that he had seen Prabhat Ranjan riding on a tiger. The woodcutter had great regard for Lakshmi Narayan, as he provided the woodcutter's family with free medical treatment. Lakshmi Narayan did not believe the woodcutter. However, when the man insisted that he was telling the truth, Lakshmi Narayan took a small oil lamp and went inside the house to look for Bubu. It was dark inside and he could hardly see anything in the flickering light of the lamp. As he groped about in the impenetrable darkness, he accidentally tripped over something on the floor, causing the lamp to fall out of his hand. He then heard Bubu's voice. He had been meditating in the room and the lamp had fallen on his right thigh, singeing it<sup>1</sup>. Assured that his son was at home, Lakshmi Narayan went out and told the woodcutter that he was surely mistaken, as his son was meditating in the room. The woodcutter was dumbfounded to hear that Prabhat Ranjan was in the house. As he left, he wondered if he had imagined it all. No, he was absolutely sure of what he had seen, but was unable to untangle the mystery of what he witnessed with what Lakshmi Narayan said.

From his childhood, Prabhat Ranjan showed an unusual love for plants. His family had a plot of land in Keshavpur where varieties of trees and plants were grown. Badri, a retired army veteran, was entrusted with the care of the garden. From the age of four, Bubu used to go to the garden sitting on Badri's shoulders, and helped him to dig the soil and water the trees. He would plant a sapling or tree in any vacant space in the orchard. As he grew a little older, like an experienced gardener, Bubu would examine every plant carefully and make sure that it got the requisite amount of water, nutrients and sunlight. Badri, who himself was an experienced gardener, used to marvel at Bubu's knowledge of the different varieties of plants, which surpassed his own. One day he asked Abharani who had taught the boy so much about plants at this young age, but she had no idea. In

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<sup>1</sup> Many years later, Prabhat Ranjan narrated the entire incident to his disciples and showed the scar.



later years Prabhat Ranjan started a massive garden project and gave a lot of detailed information about agriculture, flora and fauna and their care, filling several books. These books have become a treasure trove of knowledge about the plant, bird and animal kingdoms.

When Radha, the neighbour's daughter, was about fifteen years old, she suddenly fell ill and died. For several years her mother was unable to overcome her grief at Radha's untimely death. One day she expressed her terrible pain to young Prabhat Ranjan. He said that if she so desired, he could show Radha to her for a few minutes. He put three conditions, however. First, she would not attempt to touch Radha. Second, she would not request him to show her Radha again afterwards. Third, she would not tell anyone about it, as he did not want people to pester him with similar requests. She agreed to all the conditions and Prabhat Ranjan then asked her to go into a dimly lit room in the house. There in one corner of the room her daughter appeared. Seeing her daughter alive, she burst into tears and when she finally came out of the room, her grief over Radha's death was greatly alleviated. After some months she requested Prabhat Ranjan to show Radha to her once more, but he replied that it was no longer possible, as Radha had already been reborn. Years later, during an evening walk, Prabhat Ranjan told one of his disciples, Haragovinda, that he had created the image of Radha's body out of the ectoplasm of his own mind and shown Radha to her mother in order to reduce her mental anguish. When Haragovinda asked what had become of Radha, he said that she had been born into a family of devoted disciples, but refused to give further details.

### **My Mind Never Sleeps**

When Kanai was young, he used to sleep in the same bed as his elder brother. Whenever he woke up at night, he would find Bubuda sitting in meditation. Kanai, who grew up to be a sceptic, would later say to those who worked with him at the railway workshop that the family had had several experiences which led them to believe that his brother, even when he was young, knew everything the other family members did or said even when he was asleep at night. Several times

he had seen that even when they talked about something in hushed tones in another room while his elder brother was fast asleep, to their surprise, Bubuda would recount everything they had said the next morning. When Kanai asked Bubuda how he knew what they had discussed while he was asleep, he replied that only his body was asleep, but that his mind was awake.

So, even from the early days there was a firm conviction among Bubuda's siblings that they could not hide anything from him. He would know whatever they did or said even when he was out of the house, and sometimes it worked to their disadvantage. In fact they could not hide anything from him. Abharani would often tell them that they should ask their Bubuda whatever they wanted to know, because he knew everything. Although they wondered how that was possible, they believed her nevertheless. Slowly from experience they started to realise that Bubuda did know everything about everything and they marvelled at his abilities.

What surprised them the most was that Bubuda never showed off his extraordinary powers without a reason. In time, they neither viewed these things as strange nor discussed them with outsiders. They took it all in their stride, since his horoscope had already predicted that he would become a renowned spiritual leader. More importantly, there was a fear gnawing at Lakshmi Narayan and Abharani that the astrologer's prediction might come true after all and they did not want to increase the likelihood of it happening by talking about his mystical abilities to others. In fact they were anxious to avoid drawing public attention to them. This very well suited Prabhat Ranjan's desire to remain obscure and avoid people who would otherwise come flocking at the slightest hint of divinity in anyone.

Even so, news of Prabhat Ranjan's supernatural powers did not remain confined to his home for long, and soon some fellow students started to have glimpses of the astonishing abilities of their unusual classmate. Once they realised that he invariably knew the answer to every question they asked, it became a common practice for them to ask him for help whenever they faced difficulties.

### Knowledge Incarnate

One day in January 1935, when Prabhat Ranjan was in class eight, some of the boys gathered around him during the lunch break. One of them took out the new geography book, and seeing its size, another remarked, "How are we ever going to learn everything in this huge book? Studying a subject like geography is anyway drudgery." Prabhat Ranjan took the book in his hand, quickly flipped through the pages and said, "Who said that this is difficult and boring? See, I have mastered the whole book." No one believed that he could have read the whole book just by flipping through the pages. So they challenged him. He said, "If you don't believe me, ask me a question about anything on any page." His classmate Vimalendu Chatterjee took up the challenge and asked him several questions from different pages of the book. Prabhat Ranjan answered every question correctly, while the others looked on in amazement. Then he said, "That's why I said that geography is not as difficult as you all think. You will find it interesting, if only you apply your mind to it." Vimalendu continued to be sceptical. Prabhat Ranjan then told him the name of his native village in Sylhet District in present day Bangladesh and proceeded to describe the topography of the village in detail. He described the stream that passed through the village and how it twisted and turned. He also described Vimalendu's ancestral house, the village temple, the village wells, and even the location of some old trees in the village. As he described all these things, Vimalendu's astonishment grew. Everything that Bubu said was completely correct.

Vimalendu asked in amazement, "How do you know all these things, Bubu?"

"There is nothing so special about that. You people don't read. Read books and you too will improve your knowledge," responded Prabhat Ranjan modestly.

Young Vimalendu believed that it was indeed possible to find this information in books. He was one of Prabhat Ranjan's close friends and occasionally got an insight into his vast knowledge, which covered a wide range of subjects. Recalling the remarkable abilities



of his amazing classmate, whom he considered to be a knowledge wizard, Vimalendu reported in an interview:

On occasion he would give a detailed exposition of the geography of the ancient world. He described the origin of different continents, how they were all originally joined together, how they drifted apart several millions of years ago and the reasons for it.

Later I realised that when Bubu discussed these subjects, sometime around 1935-36, probably even the geologists of the time did not possess such an in-depth knowledge of these topics. Sometimes he would describe the evolution of prehistoric animals, sometimes the origin and course of the rivers in different countries, or the history of different nations. Bubu had a very deep knowledge of astronomy as well. He told me several things about the stars and how they evolved. One evening, after sunset, he pointed at a star and said that during the Mahabharata War, that star had been in a particular position. He then went on to explain that by calculating the position of the star at that time, one could conclude that the Mahabharata War took place nearly 3500 years ago. All this was fascinating, but what intrigued me the most was Bubu's explanation of the origin of the names of different countries and places and how they had undergone changes over the course of time.

He always led us to believe that we could obtain such information by reading books. But I never saw him read any book apart from those prescribed by the school syllabus. Only much later did I find out that the information that my friend Bubu had shared with us was not available in any book, and even those books which did contained fragments of information were not available in Jamalpur at that time. It was then that I realised that he had intentionally concealed from us the fact that he obtained all this knowledge from a supernatural source. At the time he made it all appear so normal that we never imagined that our thirteen-year-old classmate possessed supernatural powers.

In his memoirs, Prabhat Ranjan's younger brother, Himanshu, related an interesting incident about Bubuda. "One day when Bubuda was in class eight I noticed to my surprise that he had written his name on the cover of one of his notebooks in fifteen different scripts. When I asked him about it, Bubuda explained that the scripts were Bengali, English, Devanagari, Oriya, Punjabi, Gujarati, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Russian, Chinese, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam."

On another occasion Prabhat Ranjan was sitting at the dining table with his siblings talking about the different languages spoken in various places. In the middle of the discussion he digressed from the topic and started to talk about the languages of animals and birds. His brothers and sisters were surprised to hear that animals and birds also had languages. He asked, "Haven't you all heard monkeys shrieking? To an untrained ear it all sounds the same. But they convey different messages through different kinds of shrieks. Suppose the leader wants to give the command to attack another group of monkeys, it makes a particular sound. There is yet another sound that is a signal to run away from danger. Each of their words, such as "kieun", "kiawn", "kwee", etc., has a different meaning. Any sound that conveys information or an idea is called language. Every creature produces several different sounds, which can be called its vocabulary. The number of words or sounds in the vocabulary of an animal depends on its evolutionary stage. The red-faced monkey, the macaque, is the most developed type of ape; it has a vocabulary of about 800 words, while the most undeveloped forest dwellers have a vocabulary of less than a thousand words."

"Dada, how do you know that they make different sounds? To us it all sounds the same."

"I understand the meaning of every sound made by every animal, bird or other creature."

They were amazed to hear such incredible things. In Calcutta in 1985 Prabhat Ranjan again brought up the subject and elaborated upon it in great detail in the presence of his younger brother Himanshu Ranjan and his children. In answer to a question by his

niece, Shamita, he said that he knew the languages of all living creatures.

One of several incidents that demonstrated the veracity of Prabhat Ranjan's words occurred during one of his summer visits to Bamunpara, his ancestral village, which Anil Ghosh, his cousin, recalled:

One day some boys from the village had gathered around Bubuda, and he was talking about how animals and birds communicate. He pointed to a bird sitting in a nearby mango tree, chirping. He asked us, "Do you all hear that bird chirping? Birds don't like the noise of others, so let's all be quiet and listen to the bird."

The bird continued to chirp. Bubuda said, "The bird is making that particular sound to call other birds of its type. Now you will see that many of this species of birds will gather around." The bird continued chirping, and as we watched curiously, we saw many similar birds land on that tree and on the others nearby. Soon there were lots of them, and a loud cacophony erupted. Then everything suddenly fell silent. Bubuda explained, "They are sensing some danger and that is why they have all become silent." After a short interval, one of the birds started chirping again.

Bubuda said, "Now it is giving the signal for them to fly away. This sound is a warning cry to alert them that danger is approaching. You will see that they will all fly away." Hardly had he spoken when there was a noisy flutter of wings, and all the birds flew away.

I said, "Bubuda, both the sounds appeared the same to us."

"There is a very subtle difference between them, which the human ear cannot discern."

One of the boys asked him how he knew that the first chirping sound was to call the other birds and the second was



to warn them about approaching danger. He replied that by the grace of God he could understand the languages of all birds, animals and other living beings. We were very surprised to hear that. If anyone else had said such a thing we would not have believed it. But we knew that Bubuda had extraordinary powers and that whatever he said was true.

I asked, "Bubuda, you said that the bird perceived some type of danger approaching. What was the threat?"

"The threat could either be in the form of a hunter or a snake or a cat or a predator in the sky. If you check the area nearby thoroughly, you will certainly find one of those threats."

There was no hunter around. We tried to see if there was a snake, but there was none. My brother said that maybe our cat had caused the bird to raise the alarm. He checked inside the house and saw that the cat was sitting under a cot on the veranda. From there the cat could have posed no threat to the birds in the tree nor could the birds have seen it. When we reported to Bubuda that we could not find anything which could have frightened the birds, he asked us to check among the banana plants nearby, which we could not see from where we were sitting. When we checked, we saw that the neighbour's cat had climbed one of the banana plants and from there had hopped onto the branch of the tree where some of the birds had been perching. We realised that this was the threat that had caused the birds to fly away. We were all amazed at Bubuda's ability to so accurately interpret the language of the birds.



## CHAPTER 3

### **Solitary Evenings in Dark Wilderness**

Lakshmi Narayan's ancestral village, Bamunpara, was located about 12 km from the town of Burdwan and about 100 km from Calcutta. Eight generations earlier, Lakshmi Narayan's paternal ancestor, Jaychand Asthana, had migrated from the Etawah District of Western Uttar Pradesh to Dacca on the invitation of the Nawab of Dacca<sup>1</sup>, who was impressed by Jaychand's deep knowledge of Arabic and Persian. Jayachand had a son named Harshavardhan Asthana. Harshavardhan acquired a large amount of property in Bhanga Subdivision on the border of Dacca and Faridpur Districts and settled there. His descendant was Madhusudhan Asthana. Madhusudhan's descendants moved to Calcutta and changed their surname to Dev. They established a good rapport with the British rulers and due to this the British made one of the family members the Zamindar of Shobhabazar, an area of north Calcutta.

One of Madhusudhan's sons, Krishananda, had a serious disagreement with the British rulers and decided to move to Burdwan. As he was an expert on land matters, the King of Burdwan appointed him as an officer in his court. His son, Ramananda Dev, was the great grandfather of Lakshmi Narayan. Ramananda Dev got a job as the Sub-Divisional Officer of Chitpur in Calcutta. He married Madhumati, the only daughter of Mukunda Ghosh, the landlord of Bamunpara (originally Brahmanpara). As he loved his daughter dearly, Mukunda Ghosh bequeathed part of his property to her, although this went against local tradition. Madhumati and Ramananda Dev had one son named Gaurhari who gained employment in the court of the King of Burdwan. In recognition of Gaurhari's services to the crown, the King of Burdwan conferred on him the title Sarkar<sup>1</sup>. Thereafter this title became the surname of the

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<sup>1</sup> Prabhat Ranjan himself provided the details of his ancestry.

family. Gaurhari had one son called Kunjabihari Sarkar who married Kailaskamini from a village near Bamunpara. The couple had two sons, Lakshmi Narayan and Nirmal Chandra. When Lakshmi Narayan was about ten years old and Nirmal Chandra was five, Kailaskamini died during the delivery of her third child. A few years after the death of his first wife, Kunjabihari Sarkar married Binapani Sinha from a village in Burdwan District. Binapani did not have any children of her own but looked after her two stepsons, Lakshmi Narayan and Nirmal Chandra, with great love and affection. Although Lakshmi Narayan was only a few years younger than Binapani, he gave her all the respect due to a mother.

Kunjabihari frequently visited Burma on business. While returning from one of these trips, he contracted cholera and died on the ship at the early age of forty-four. After the untimely death of her husband, Binapani, who was a very capable woman, took over the management of the family's agricultural assets in Bamunpara. She ensured the education of her two stepsons. Lakshmi Narayan, after graduating from high school in Burdwan, got a job in the accounts department of the railways in Jamalpur. Binapani encouraged him to learn homeopathy. At her behest, he married Abharani, the daughter of Dr. Upendranath Basu from the neighbouring district of Hooghly, when he was only twenty-one years old. Outside office hours he practised homeopathy, and gained a reputation as an accomplished homeopath. He provided free medical treatment to the poor people. He became an active social worker and took a keen interest in the local affairs of Jamalpur.

Jamalpur was an eponym for Jamal Miya, a Muslim saint, who had once lived there. He was originally from Rajnagar in the Birbhum District of Bengal and was the first to propagate Islam in the area. His tomb is located in the Eastern Colony on the east side of the town. In 1862 the Railway Workshop was established there by the East India Railway Company to manufacture various types of railway equipment. Not long after that, the workshop started to manufacture steam engines, and later grew into one of the largest railway



workshops in India. The primary reason for selecting Jamalpur as the site for the workshop was the fact that the area around the nearby town of Monghyr had a large number of skilled mechanics at the time and was widely considered as the "Birmingham of the East".

The railway line and the station bisect Jamalpur into two parts, each of which is very different in character. On the west side lies the old town with its narrow, crowded lanes and the Rampur Colony, where lower ranking railway employees reside, while on the eastern side quiet and neatly laid out building complexes house the railway workshop and its administrative buildings, the training institute and the quarters and recreation centres of the higher ranking officers. A footbridge crosses the railway lines, connecting both parts of the town. To the north of the station a road bridge crosses the railway line linking the eastern and western parts of the town.

Beyond the building complexes on the eastern side lies a meadow used for grazing cattle. This grassy land was known as Polo Ground, for it was once used by the British for playing polo and was subsequently converted into a golf course. To the left of the Polo Ground there are some railway quarters for officers, and in the middle of the ground lie two tombs about thirty metres apart. One is that of a tiger and the other belongs to a young British hunter who had been an employee of the workshop. He was attacked and killed by the tiger before it died of the wounds inflicted by his rifle. Their bodies were buried at the spot where they each died, and tombs were built in their memory. An epitaph on the Englishman's grave gives the date of the incident as 13<sup>th</sup> June 1864. It is a clear indication of the type of wildlife found in the area at the time when the workshop was built.

Beyond the Polo Ground a stretch of wild, rugged terrain extends for about a kilometre up to a hill commonly known as Kali Pahar. This barren wasteland is dotted with trees of different varieties. A natural lake lies at the base of the hill to the right of the path leading to the summit. A short climb of a few hundred steps leads to the Kali Temple, from which the hill takes its name. Less than a hundred metres to the south of the Kali Temple is a temple of Lord Shiva. There is a natural spring between the two temples, which provides water for three to four months of the year. The range of hills stretches

north for nearly five kilometres, tapering off near the south-eastern edge of the town of Monghyr, south of the River Ganges. From Kali Pahar there are breath-taking views of the entire town of Jamalpur and its surroundings, and on a clear day it is possible to see Monghyr and the River Ganges serenely meandering through the plain a few kilometres to the west, and even the plains beyond. To the east of the Kali Temple, a high plateau extends up to the Rajmahal Hills thirty kilometres away.

In those days the entire region was a thickly wooded wilderness, inhabited by wild animals such as tigers, hyenas, and bears. The children of Jamalpur would go to the Polo Ground in the late afternoon to play, while the elders walked around enjoying the air, but all would always return home before sunset. Occasionally visitors would venture up the hill to worship in the temple of Mother Kali. They would seek the blessing of the 'Divine Mother' by tying ribbons on the branches of an ancient tree nearby and then would offer flowers or pour Ganges water on the symbol of Lord Shiva. They would depart well before dusk after performing their worship. After nightfall an eerie silence would descend over this vast wilderness, punctuated only by the intermittent call of an owl or some wild animal.

To the right of the Polo Ground there is a small mound belonging to the Water Works Department, and beyond that a valley snakes between two partially denuded hills for over a kilometre. The valley became known as Death Valley after hundreds of people died there in a war many years ago. Their bodies were left to rot and provided food for vultures and wild animals for several days. People believed that the ghosts of the dead soldiers still roamed the valley and would haunt anyone who dared to enter their forbidden territory. So they were afraid to enter the valley even during the daytime. After dark the Polo Ground, Death Valley, Kali Pahar and the area beyond became a terrifying, desolate area, where people believed that ghosts and wild animals roamed about freely.

## Lonely Evenings

Over half a century later, on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1985, during a discourse on linguistics in Calcutta, Prabhat Ranjan recounted an experience which gave an insight into the pastimes of his early days in Jamalpur:

“At that time I used to walk in the hills to the east of Jamalpur nearly every day. I would sit on the second hill, which was the tallest. I used to go there in the late afternoon and stay until about eight at night. Then I would cross the forest in the valley between the two hills. It had a small lake. I would cross the hill, walk along the right bank of the lake and then take a shortcut back home. One day, I was sitting on the top of the hill. As it was the bright lunar fortnight, and I knew the path through the forest well, I did not need a torch. Behind me to the east was a high plateau completely covered with jungle. Most of the trees were sal, piyal and palash. In front of me to the west, on the slope of the hill, there was a dense forest of gab trees, and in the valley beyond was an old tamarind tree. Apart from that there was very little vegetation and the hill in front of me was completely bare.

It was a beautiful moonlit night. I was all alone and probably the only person for several kilometres around. To my right was a dried-up spring. The spring had water only for three or four months a year during the rainy season when the water would rush down from the hills above into the valley below. Behind me the jungle-covered plateau was still inhabited by tigers, bears, hyenas, and deer. That evening, however, I did not hear any animals. Most likely they would not make any noise until after ten or so at night. Beside me a path led down the hill which the animals would take to go to the lake to drink....” Then Prabhat Ranjan continued his discourse and narrated an interesting event with a tinge of mystery that took place later that evening.

After dark these terrifying places became young Prabhat Ranjan’s private refuge - a vast expanse of desolation far from the hustle and bustle of the world where no one would disturb him. Often when people returned home around dusk, they saw him walking towards the



hill. At times he would carry a flute and spend hours experimenting with different tunes or playing the sindhubhaeravi raga<sup>2</sup> composed by Lord Shiva 7000 years ago, which had since become defunct. At other times he played meghamallar (a raga capable of attracting clouds and bringing rain) or multani vasanta (a classical Hindustani raga). He spent several evenings alone there experimenting with various ragas and blending them on his flute. Sometimes Prabhat Ranjan's friend, Prasenjit, would accompany him, bringing his esraj (a popular Indian stringed musical instrument). Nobody had ever seen Prabhat learning the flute or any other musical instrument. So it was generally believed that, like everything else, he acquired his vast knowledge of music from a mystical source.

Prabhat Ranjan's classmate, Dr. Radha Raman Haldar, recalled meeting him on one of those enchanting evenings:

People were afraid to go to the Polo Ground after sunset or to venture alone up Kali Pahar even in the daytime because of the wild animals. So in the afternoon we used to play in the Polo Ground and return home before dark. But on several occasions I saw Prabhat walking through the Polo Ground towards Kali Pahar just as darkness descended. One evening, as I was returning home, I saw him coming from the opposite direction. I asked, "Where are you going, Prabhat?"

"Just to the hill," he replied casually.

"Kalipahar! It's getting dark. By the time you get there, it will be pitch-dark. Is this the time to go to such a terrifying place and by yourself at that?"

"I just want to be alone."

"What are you going to do there?"

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<sup>2</sup> In one of his discourses, Prabhat Ranjan said that while playing the sindhubhaeravi raga composed by Lord Shiva one must pay special attention to the ascending and descending notes, and that the reason why it is no longer popular is because it requires great concentration to sing it. Today people prefer to sing different local versions of the darbari raga and consider it to be the sindhubhaeravi raga.

“I’ll just do some thinking,” he said nonchalantly and continued walking.

What he said was beyond my comprehension. How could a boy of hardly twelve or thirteen dare to go alone to such a dangerous place after dark, which was inhabited by harmful nocturnal creatures? Was he not afraid or had he somehow gained control over his fear instinct? He was indeed mysterious and not what he outwardly appeared to be. I mulled it over as I walked home.

Truly Prabhat Ranjan did not have any fear. He used to say, “Fear is caused by ignorance. We fear the dark because we don’t know what lies beyond its veil. We fear death because we don’t know what happens afterwards. Fear is one of the most debilitating weaknesses of the mind. When the mind transcends ignorance, all fears vanish.” Some years later, he said to his disciples that when he was alone at night on Kali Pahar, sometimes tigers, bears and other denizens of darkness would pass by, but they never did him any harm. Explaining further, he said that if you really feel universal love, if your heart throbs for each and every particle of creation, feeling it to be part of yourself, even wild animals will behave like tame ones in your presence. A poisonous snake will no longer bite. There were several instances when this was found to be true in the case of Prabhat Ranjan.

Although Prabhat Ranjan moved about fearlessly in such terrifying places, many who saw him going there were concerned for his safety. Several times people saw Prabhat Ranjan going to Kali Pahar at dusk and informed Lakshmi Narayan about his son’s nocturnal activities. However, when his father questioned him about it, Prabhat Ranjan would politely brush it off, saying that there was nothing to worry about, and that he liked solitary places where he could be alone and think more clearly. Although he tried to hide from his parents his real reason for going into the wilderness at such late hours, they were aware that he was, in fact, going there to meditate. Since they were already familiar with their son’s mysterious ways, they did not raise any serious objection to his daily evening visits to these fearful places.

### Controlling Angry Bulls

Even as a young child Prabhat Ranjan's behaviour was unusual. Manoranjan Banerjee from Keshavpur, who was three years younger, fondly recalled his early memories of Bubuda:

"I started to seriously notice Bubuda when I was five years old. On several occasions I saw him sitting in the Shiva temple at Keshavpur with his eyes closed for hours together. It used to surprise us all. And as he grew up, we noticed that Bubuda was different from the rest of us. He would never waste time in idle chatter like the others and would always tell us interesting things. Although he was not much older than we were, he would sometimes scold us if we made mistakes. So we were even more afraid of him than we were of our parents. We also respected him a lot. There was something about his personality that elicited that kind of respect from everyone. Sometimes we used to wonder how a boy of our age could behave so perfectly and have so much self-control. We knew that he was not an ordinary person. He was really special. Once, an incident happened which made me realise that Bubuda had some extraordinary powers.

"At that time I was studying in class six. One evening, four or five bulls chased me down a narrow lane. I dropped my books and ran for my life. As I ran, I caught sight of Bubuda standing at the end of the street. As I drew near, he asked, 'What's the matter, Mano? Why are you running?'"

"Panting, I said, 'Bubuda, those bulls are chasing me.' Without saying anything he placed himself between the bulls and me. As they came closer snorting ferociously, he raised his hand. The angry bulls suddenly stopped on their tracks and became as still as statues. I was amazed. Then he asked me to go and pick up my schoolbooks. I was afraid to go past the bulls to get my books in case they charged at me."

"Seeing my hesitation, he reassured me, 'Mano, don't worry about the bulls. They won't harm you.' With a palpitating heart I walked past the bulls that were standing completely frozen and quickly picked up my books. As I returned, I cast a furtive glance at



them and saw that they were still totally motionless. Once I was safely behind Bubuda, he waved his hand in the direction of the bulls. They returned to life, turned around and walked away.”

### **The Personification of Knowledge**

Brija Bihari was a friend of Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar. He had a good knowledge of the scriptures and Sanskrit. He got some glimpses of young Prabhat Ranjan’s amazing abilities when he was still a high school student. He later described them to Prabhat Ranjan’s disciples:

“I used to pride myself on my knowledge of the scriptures and Sanskrit, but the depth of Prabhat’s knowledge of Sanskrit, the Vedas and the other scriptures humbled me. It was astonishing that a boy of hardly thirteen or fourteen years knew so much. I also saw several indications of his divine omniscience. I often used to visit Lakshmi Narayan’s house because I enjoyed talking to Prabhat. He was unusually quiet and composed, but when he talked, it was as if pearls of wisdom flowed from his mouth. I very much enjoyed his discussions about the Sanskrit language and his exposition of the Vedas, the like of which I had never read in any book. So I started to note down different verses from the Vedas and asked him to explain them to me.

“At first I would give him the verses on a piece of paper, but gradually I discovered that it was not necessary. Prabhat would start to explain whatever I had noted down without me even needing to take the paper out of my pocket. After some days I even stopped noting down the verses on paper. I would just read some verses from the Vedas in the comfort of my home and would mentally ask him to explain their meaning. He would explain those verses to me that very day. It was absolutely incredible. I was completely captivated by the wealth of knowledge flowing from this young boy who had hardly stepped into his adolescence, and I would forget all sense of time in his presence. Another quality I found in him was that, despite his vast knowledge, he had not a shred of ego as is common in a person who has even a little knowledge. I used to feel that Prabhat was the

embodiment of humility. He intensely disliked publicity, and so I never took anyone with me when I visited him. Strangely, Lakshmi Narayan also never encouraged any discussion about his son's extraordinary abilities. I observed yet another quality in Prabhat. He always thought about the welfare of everyone – about all human beings without considering their caste or colour, and all other living beings as well. I soon realised that he was not an ordinary mortal, but a divine being. Seeing his unique qualities, I used to occasionally address him as Jnanamurti, meaning personification of knowledge, or Shubhamurti, meaning personification of benevolence. He would smile equably at such forms of address.

There were a few occasions where Prabhat Ranjan voluntarily manifested his powers. One day all the brothers and sisters were taking breakfast together. Their pet cat jumped onto the dining table and attempted to make a foray into one of the plates. Prabhat Ranjan asked, "Do you all want to see something interesting?" He then snapped his fingers, and the cat suddenly froze like a statue.

Everyone enjoyed the drama despite being amazed at this incredible feat. They tried to frighten it into running away, but it remained motionless. Mother Abharani emerged from the kitchen and seeing what Prabhat Ranjan had done, rebuked him. "Bubu, you are going to kill it! Let it go!" she exclaimed. Prabhat Ranjan snapped his fingers once more and the cat jumped off the table and ran away. Abharani continued with her work as if nothing unusual had happened.

Other strange incidents occurred during his high school days that added to his reputation. In winter, when the temperatures dropped below five degrees centigrade after sunset, Prabhat Ranjan would continue to wear light clothing, while everyone else had to put on thick woollen clothes to keep warm in the chilling cold. If anyone asked him how he was not feeling cold, he would ask, "When you wear warm clothes to protect your bodies, what do you do with your face? Do you cover your face as well?"

“Our face doesn’t feel cold.”

“Well, the skin of my body is made up of the same stuff as my face. That’s why I don’t feel the cold,” he would explain with casual indifference.

### **Predicting a Friend’s Future**

During his later years in high school, many of Prabhat Ranjan’s fellow students started to catch a glimpse of his mystical personality. Shiva Shankar Banerjee, one of his classmates, witnessed a very strange incident. They were walking together one afternoon on some open ground near their school when a cow started to follow them. Shiva Shankar was afraid that it might gore them and kept turning around to see what it was doing. Prabhat Ranjan assured him that it would not do him any harm. Then after a few minutes, he turned around and touched the cow’s forehead. Immediately its body jerked violently, and it began to jump all over the place. It came to where they were standing and then began running around the field. This happened several times. Shiva Shankar thought that Prabhat Ranjan had done something to hurt the cow, and it was behaving like this because it was in terrible pain. He became upset and started to scold him, but Prabhat Ranjan replied calming him, “Don’t worry! It’s not in pain. On the contrary, it is feeling great happiness.” Then he called the cow over and again touched its forehead. The cow immediately became completely calm. Shiva Shankar then asked Prabhat Ranjan what had happened to it and what he had done when he touched it. Prabhat Ranjan replied that he would explain it to him at the appropriate time.

Dr. Radharaman Haldar recalled how he had become aware of his friend Prabhat’s unusual qualities. “Since the evening when I talked to him while he was on his way to Kali Pahar, I realised that there was something mystical about Prabhat which I had not noticed before. The more I observed him, the more I felt that he had a special kind of charm, and I realised that he was not an ordinary person. The



way he behaved, the way he talked, and the knowledge that he exuded was all quite extraordinary and extremely attractive. Although we had studied together from our childhood, it was only in the higher classes that I started to become aware of Prabhat's special attributes. Earlier, due to my lack of maturity, I failed to notice anything different in him, but as I mentally matured, I understood the depth and seriousness of his personality. What impressed me the most was that he never put on any airs because of his special abilities. Looking back at it now, I would even go as far as to say that he was trying to hide them. As school children we sat side by side on the same bench. Occasionally he discussed philosophical topics, but my young mind was unable to retain all that he said. However, those things that I was able to grasp helped to mould my thoughts in the formative years of my life.

“One day when we were in the ninth standard, Prabhat looked at me during the lunch break and abruptly declared, ‘You are destined to earn a lot of recognition outside India and you will also become very popular.’ At that time I didn't give any credence to what he said, as the idea of travelling abroad was a farfetched dream. Later I studied law and then medicine and started practising it. Suddenly I got an unexpected chance to go to the US, although I didn't have a penny in my pocket. In the US I continued my higher medical studies. As a man of medicine with a legal background, I was able to write many papers on forensic pathology which brought me widespread recognition. In India I had provided my free service to the poor and I continued to do so in the US also. So wherever I went, people liked me. Perhaps I am one of the few people from Bihar who have become so well known in the US. Never in my wildest dreams had I ever imagined achieving any of the things that happened to me in the later years in my life and I feel that my friend, Prabhat, was able to foresee all those events when he made that prediction.”

### **The Earthquake**

In the afternoon of the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1934, a devastating earthquake struck North Bihar and Nepal with its epicentre near Mount Everest on the Nepal-China border. It measured 8.1 on the

Richter scale and caused massive destruction in Nepal and the adjoining districts of Bihar. Although Monghyr was about 270 kilometres from the epicentre, it was not spared. The entire district was in fact very badly affected. No one knew the exact number of casualties, but it was roughly estimated that about twenty thousand people had perished, the majority of them in Nepal. In Bihar over seven thousand people were believed to have died. The initial shock waves struck at around two o'clock in the afternoon and the strongest quake, which caused the most damage, occurred nearly fifteen minutes later, by which time most people had managed to scramble out of their buildings. As a result, the casualties were far lower than they might have been.

As it was the festival of Makar Sankranti<sup>3</sup>, the schools had all closed at midday. Prabhat Ranjan and Kanai were in a nearby playground, and mother Abharani had gone to a friend's house with her other three children when the first shock wave struck. When everything in the house started to sway her friend could not understand what was going on. In a state of confusion, she lay down flat on a bed. However, Abharani understood the danger and dragged everyone out of the house. A short while later the massive quake occurred and the building collapsed. Luckily no one was hurt. Lakshmi Narayan had gone to Calcutta with his daughter Hiraprabha to make preparations for her impending marriage. His house was also damaged in the massive quake and had partially collapsed. His train, which was supposed to have arrived that evening, was also delayed due to the quake. He arrived the next morning. Accompanied by Himanshu and Manas, Prabhat Ranjan went to the railway station early in the morning to meet him. It was an unusually cold winter morning. Even dressed in warm clothes, everyone was shivering, but Prabhat Ranjan, as usual, was fine in just a shirt and dhoti. Lakshmi Narayan sent Hiraprabha home with the two younger children and took Prabhat Ranjan with him on a tour of the town to survey the

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<sup>3</sup> A major Hindu harvest festival that marks the transition of the Sun into the zodiac sign of Capricorn on its celestial path.

damage. He saw that the government hospital was desperately overcrowded. So immediately after returning home, he set up a free medical clinic in the nearby Bengali primary school, of which he was the secretary. Many homeless people were accommodated there. In the afternoon, he took his entire family to Monghyr in a hired vehicle where they saw a painful scene of total devastation.

Deeply moved at the sight of so many people in such severe distress, Lakshmi Narayan and some of his friends took leave from their office and started to organise a massive relief operation. Slowly many others joined them. Prabhat Ranjan, Kanai and their friends also joined the relief effort. As an accomplished homeopath, Lakshmi Narayan put his skill to good use for the thousands in need of medical attention. In whatever spare time he could find, he organised the collection and distribution of relief materials. As more and more relief materials started to pour in, his whole house was converted into a relief store. Seeing his efforts, the district authorities made him the head of the relief committee for the Jamalpur and Monghyr areas. He was so busy helping people that he didn't get time to repair the damaged sections of his house until after the relief work was completed. The marriage of Hiraprabha was also postponed for a year due to this tragedy.

### **Tragedy Strikes**

After a year's delay in early 1935, Hiraprabha was married to Ramani Mohan Basu, an advocate from Chinsura, an hour from Calcutta. Lakshmi Narayan's tireless relief efforts at the time of the earthquake followed by the physical strain of arranging the marriage of his daughter took a heavy toll on his health. He started to suffer from frequent fever, but the doctors could not identify the cause of his illness. They advised him to spend the summer at Mandar Hill in Banka near Bhagalpur, a quiet hill resort some 110 km from Jamalpur, in order to regain his health. So the family rented a house there. The hill resort was a secluded, delightful and soul-enriching natural enclave conducive to complete relaxation and healing. At



about 700 feet above sea level, the temperature was also much cooler than in Jamalpur. Prabhat Ranjan, in his characteristic manner, would climb to the top of the hill every day to meditate in solitude. However, even after spending two and a half months at the resort, there was little improvement in Lakshmi Narayan's health, and the family returned to Jamalpur, where his condition continued to deteriorate. None of the doctors who attended him were able to diagnose his disease, and at around midnight on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1936, he passed away.

Abharani was a very strong and balanced woman. She displayed extraordinary fortitude in the way she handled the tragedy and she was determined that her children would not feel the absence of their father. Financially they faced considerable hardship, so Abharani cut down on some of their expenses and moved the family into a smaller house on the main road of Keshavpur. Lakshmi Narayan had left some funds in the bank which came in handy. The piece of land they had previously used as a garden was sold. Abharani also received the provident fund and gratuity of her husband, but in those days Indian employees did not receive a pension. Abharani came from a financially comfortable background and after her marriage she had also lived a life free from worry. Now, with five growing children, she was determined that whatever difficulties she might face, she would not let anyone know about it.

During Lakshmi Narayan's illness, some worried family members had requested her to ask Bubu to suggest a cure or to use his spiritual power to help his father. They were sure that as Prabhat Ranjan greatly respected his mother, he would not refuse her request. However, she never bothered her son with such worldly matters. Prabhat Ranjan later cited this as an indication of her outstanding qualities.

Assistance was provided to the family by Abharani's brother, Sharat Chandra Bose. Lakshmi Narayan's younger brother, Nirmal Chandra, who was an officer in the Railway Workshop, made it a point of visiting them every Sunday and providing them with any help they needed. Binapani offered to sell part of the Bamunpara land, but

Abharani refused. She also declined offers of help from other relatives and well-wishers who had benefitted from Lakshmi Narayan's generosity. Prabhat Ranjan had just entered class nine when the tragedy struck the family and was too young to shoulder the responsibility for the family. Nevertheless he took on the role of the head of the family so that the younger children would not feel the absence of their father.

Every evening after dinner he would spend time with them, telling stories and jokes and making everyone roar with laughter. These stories always had some educative or moral value. He would also hold forth on a variety of subjects, giving them fascinating tidbits of information and insights into different fields of knowledge. He presented these topics in a way they could understand and kept them completely captivated. So every night after dinner they would all eagerly look forward to hearing new, exciting things from their Bubuda. These delightful evenings they spent together gave them a lot of happiness and helped to build a deep bond among them. They also enabled the children and mother Abharani to get over the untimely loss of Lakshmi Narayan.

Prabhat Ranjan also helped to reduce the family expenses by introducing several innovations. He taught them how to make washing and bathing soap at home using local ingredients and suggested different ways of cutting down on expenses. He never let the family feel that he was making these suggestions to ease the financial crisis they were going through and he had a unique way of going about it. Sometimes during their evening gatherings, he would talk about the food value of tomatoes and describe a variety of delicious dishes that could be made from them. He would do that at a time when tomatoes were particularly cheap. Then for several days in a row they would eat tomatoes cooked in different ways. Sometimes he spoke about the food value of kalai dal, a type of lentil, or about another vegetable or cereal, and the dishes that could be prepared from them. Whenever he spoke about a particular food, Abharani understood from experience that this particular item would be cheap and took it as a hint to buy more of it.

### Coaching Tunni

There was a fairly well to do Muslim gentleman in Keshavpur by the name of Rahimddhar Khan. He had a daughter called Tunni, who was aged around eleven. Due to the family's extremely conservative values, Tunni was not allowed to go to school. Seeing the other children going to school, Tunni was also eager to study, but didn't have the courage to ask her father's permission as she knew his attitude. One day Prabhat Ranjan said to her father, "Rahimddhar Sahib, it is a great injustice against Tunni to keep her illiterate. She will suffer her whole life because of your mistake."

"What you say is correct, Prabhat Babu. I have thought about it often. But the tradition in our family does not allow us to send unaccompanied girls outside the house before they are married."

"Then why don't you engage a private tutor to coach her at home so she can at least acquire basic literacy?"

"I have tried to do that, but the problem is finding a proper female teacher. I don't trust any males, not even our relatives, to do private coaching for Tunni." Rahimddhar thought for a while and then said, "Prabhat Babu, if you agree to coach her privately, I am willing to let Tunni have regular private coaching with you. We all have great trust in you. I shall pay you whatever remuneration you require."

"All right, I will coach Tunni," said Prabhat Ranjan. "But I will not accept any remuneration for it. You can spend the coaching fee on education materials for children from the lower strata of society whose parents are unable to send them to school because they can't afford proper clothes, slate, textbooks, notebooks, etc. I will refer the needy children to you."

"I will be very glad to do it," agreed Rahimddhar.

With the tuition fee that was to be paid to Prabhat Ranjan, Rahimddhar helped to educate several children who could not afford basic schooling. This continued for two years at a time when Prabhat Ranjan's own family was in financial difficulties after the demise of Lakshmi Narayan. In 1938 Tunni was married to a doctor from



Calcutta, and Prabhat Ranjan took up some new coaching classes, the remuneration from which he spent on the education of poor children. He continued doing this for several more years.

After Prabhat Ranjan completed class eleven in January 1939, he told his mother that he would take a job to ease the financial hardship of the family. Abharani would have none of it and was adamant that he should continue his studies. Her brother, Sharat Chandra Bose, offered to take Prabhat Ranjan to stay with him in Calcutta, so he could continue his studies there. Abharani accepted his offer, and at the beginning of June 1939 Prabhat Ranjan boarded the train for Calcutta with a new purpose and a new mission. The carefree days of Jamalpur were over. An important task was calling him to the large metropolitan city, which was a hotbed of revolutionary political activity focused on the freedom of India.



## CHAPTER 4

### First Initiation

In June 1939 Prabhat Ranjan joined Vidyasagar College as an intermediate science student. After his arrival in Calcutta, two distinct changes became noticeable in him. One was that his spiritual personality began to increasingly manifest itself, and the other was that he started to express his ideas on several social and political issues of the day. Owing to his extraordinary spiritual and intellectual attributes, he attracted the attention of several prominent and progressive minded people.

His uncle, Sharat Chandra Bose, was a good Tantra sadhaka. Prabhat Ranjan's extraordinary spiritual traits from a very young age immensely enchanted his uncle. So when he proposed that Prabhat Ranjan should stay with him to pursue his studies, he hoped to be spiritually benefited by his company. He loved Prabhat Ranjan like his own son. He was unmarried and his sister, Durgarani, who had married the son of the Diwan of the Hatua Royal Family in Bihar, was staying with him as she had become a widow at a very young age. She spent most of her time in prayer. Both Sharat Chandra and Durgarani gained a great deal of benefit from the frequent spiritual discussions they had with Prabhat Ranjan. Sharat Chandra was amazed at his nephew's interpretation of the different aspects of Tantra, which differed from anything that he had previously heard or read about. Prabhat Ranjan explained to Durgarani that the aim of real devotion was to please the Supreme Entity and that this could be achieved by dedicating every action that one performed to God, thus making one's actions a part of one's worship. The guidance Prabhat Ranjan provided vastly improved the quality of their spiritual life.

Another person in Calcutta who benefited immensely from Prabhat Ranjan's company was an aunt of his, a Vaishnav saint, who was popularly known as Lady Gauranga. She liked to hear his

expositions of the Vaishnav concept of devotion and learn from him about its practical aspects.

His vast knowledge of so many complex and esoteric aspects of Tantra and Vaishnav devotional practices as well as his detailed explanations of spiritual philosophy completely overawed them. They knew that he could not have obtained such knowledge from any known source in Jamalpur; so they would ask him where he had learned about such esoteric matters at such a young age. As usual, his reply was evasive, as if it did not matter.

Prabhat Ranjan's closest companion in Calcutta was his cousin, Ajit Biswas, who was six months older than he was. Ajit was born at a time when his father was actively engaged in the Non-Cooperation Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. In honour of the popular movement against the British he was nicknamed Nonco, which later became Nanku. He too was an intermediate student at Vidyasagar College. Generally Prabhat Ranjan and Nanku would return home from college together in the evenings. Strangely, Prabhat Ranjan never discussed any spiritual matter with him and it was only after some years that Nanku learned about that aspect of Prabhat Ranjan's personality.

In Calcutta, as in Jamalpur, Prabhat Ranjan preferred to spend his evenings alone in secluded areas. His preferred spot was the bank of the River Ganges, which was deserted after dusk due to the fear of thieves and dacoits. This deserted area suited his desire for solitude. In Calcutta this was his favourite haunt and he would spend many evenings there, alone and undisturbed.

### **Reforming a Dacoit**

It was the full moon of August 1939. Hindus call it Shravani Purnima, an auspicious day when sisters tie a rakhi around the wrist of their brothers, and the brothers take a vow to protect their sisters in all circumstances. There are several legends emphasizing the importance of this day.



As usual Prabhat Ranjan was strolling along the bank of the River Ganges in the evening after sunset. After walking some distance, he reached Kashimitra Ghat, a cremation ground on the bank of the river. The sky was partially cloudy and the moon was playing hide-and-seek behind the shifting clouds. Tiny waves lapped against the riverbank, creating mildly hypnotic, rhythmic sounds. The frogs joined in nature's symphony, croaking loudly in anticipation of rain. The leaves on the trees by the river rustled gently in the cool breeze, adding a touch of enchantment to the majestic splendour of the environment. Prabhat Ranjan sat down under a large tree and watched the river swell in the full moon tide. As he immersed himself in the profound tranquility of the nocturnal scene, he heard faint footsteps behind him. Without even bothering to turn around he asked, "What do you want?"

A heavily built, fierce-looking man with a long beard emerged from the shadows and whipped out a dagger that glistened in the moonlight. "If you value your life, hand over whatever money and valuables you have," he demanded.

Unconcerned by the threat, Prabhat Ranjan replied nonchalantly, "I am just a student. What valuables can you expect from a person like me?" After pausing for a moment he continued, "You were once a pickpocket and then you became a thief. Then you took to armed robbery, and now you are a notorious criminal in this area. What have you done with your life? Do you think that you are bringing glory to your human form by doing this?"

The dacoit, who was a terror among the people of Calcutta, was taken aback to hear the lean, young man speaking in such a friendly way, as if he knew him so intimately. He further asked, "Kalicharan, is getting money your only objective in life? Are you ready to commit any crime to obtain it?"

The dacoit was shocked to hear the stranger addressing him by name. In spite of himself, he was unable to remain unaffected by the friendly and charming demeanour of the young man. In a subdued tone he replied, "I know that what I am doing is wrong, but it has become a way of life for me and even if I want to leave it, I can't."

“Who said so? Ways of life can change. Just as you have developed the evil habit of robbing people, if you cultivate good habits, then that will become natural for you in a few days.”

On hearing this, the ferocious dacoit fell silent. To his surprise he found that the young man’s words were creating a big stir in his mind. “I can help you with this. I can help you to develop greater qualities. I can help you to become a great man if you so desire. Think it over,” said Prabhat Ranjan with a mystical smile.

Kalicharan felt the sheer force of Prabhat Ranjan’s words. This man who terrorised others, started to feel completely powerless before the youth. He had initially thought that he could easily frighten him into submission, but now, strangely, the situation had been reversed. He was completely overwhelmed by the hypnotic power of the stranger’s words. He was also completely unnerved by the charming smile of the youth sitting before him. For some inexplicable reason tears welled up in his eyes, and a choking feeling arose in his throat.

“Don’t you know that what you are doing is sinful and that you will have to reap the consequences one day? I have something much more valuable than what you were trying to steal from me. If I give it to you, will you accept it?”

The young man’s words stirred up a feeling of guilt buried deep in the dark recesses of his mind. He felt that he was shedding the burden of all the years he had spent leading a sinful life. As he continued to look at the young man’s bewitching smile, he felt strange and deep changes occurring inside him. In a subdued voice, his eyes full of tears, the dacoit asked, “What is the valuable thing that you have?”

In a deeply affectionate and touching tone Prabhat Ranjan said, “Go and throw away the dagger in the river, take a short dip to clean yourself and then come back.” Involuntarily the fearsome dacoit obeyed the youth. He felt that he was no longer in control of himself and that a powerful force was compelling him to follow the instructions of the young man. A flood of tears was pouring down his

cheeks, drenching him. He couldn't understand why he was crying. He threw the dagger in the river and took a long dip. When he came out of the water, he felt that he was no longer Kalicharan Banerjee, the fearsome dacoit, burdened with the huge weight of his sins. An inexplicable feeling of happiness flowed through his being. With folded hands, he approached Prabhat Ranjan, with water still dripping from his body. Prabhat Ranjan then asked him to sit in front of him and explained to him the purpose of human life and the need for morality. Finally he asked Kalicharan to take an oath that from that very moment he would give up his sinful ways and become an asset to society. Prabhat Ranjan then initiated him into tantric meditation. After completion of the initiation Kalicharan said, "But master, I have heard that there is a tradition to offer *guru dakshina*<sup>1</sup> in the form of gold, money, land or any other property to the guru. But I do not have anything to offer you."

Prabhat Ranjan took out a four anna coin from his pocket and placed it in Kalicharan's hands saying, "This is yours now. Now you give it back to me as your guru dakshina. Then Kalicharan knelt down and with both the hands offered the same coin back to Prabhat Ranjan and said, "I offer this as my humble guru dakshina."

That moment Prabhat Ranjan took the decision that he would once and for ever do away with the age old tantric tradition of giving anything physical as guru dakshina.

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<sup>1</sup> The English language does not have an adequate equivalent for the concept of guru dakshina. Roughly translated, it means "a student's debt or tribute to his or her teacher". It's an offering of gratitude made by student to teacher after a period of prolonged study or training. The offering can be in any form, material or otherwise. The practice of guru dakshina dates back to thousands of years. It is still revered today, particularly in India.

In the yogic tradition, the practice of guru dakshina assumes a much deeper meaning. When the disciple offers daksina to the Guru, he or she surrenders all possessions at the feet of the Guru, and takes a determination to uplift all animate and inanimate beings. It is a practice of self-surrender, and an acknowledgement of one's role as an instrument of the divine.



For some unknown reason, just after his initiation, Kalicharan's tears started to gush uncontrollably, but strangely he did not want to stop it, as it created a pleasant feeling. The torrent of tears appeared to have a magical effect - it washed away all the evil in him and brought about an extraordinary transformation in this man, who until a short while ago had been a dreaded dacoit. His crude mind started to feel the touch of a hitherto unknown, blissful feeling. Reverentially, he touched Prabhat Ranjan's feet and expressed his deep remorse for the life he had been leading for years. Prabhat Ranjan placed his hand on Kalicharan's head and blessed him. The moment Prabhat Ranjan touched the crown of his disciple, Kalicharan felt a powerful vibration descend from the top of his head. Waves of ecstasy flooded his entire being and tears of bliss streamed down his face. Lifting him up lovingly, Prabhat Ranjan said, "From now onwards, Kalicharan the dangerous dacoit is dead, and you have got a new birth."

"Little master, how will I ever atone for the sins that I have committed? Until now there was no one to guide me along the right path," rued Kalicharan sorrowfully.

"God has placed your eyes in the front. Look forward and not backwards. Lead a very strict moral and spiritual life. I am always with you to assist you whenever you need me."

When Kalicharan got up after his initiation, he felt very light as if a heavy burden had been lifted from his head. Yet he was not sure what exactly had happened. His legs were unsteady and he felt as if he was floating in the air. He was in a state of inexplicable bliss.

When Prabhat Ranjan was about to return home, Kalicharan insisted on accompanying him, and when Prabhat Ranjan declined his offer, he said, "Little master, you don't know much about this city. It is full of criminal elements who won't hesitate to harm you even for a little gain." Prabhat Ranjan relented smilingly and allowed Kalicharan to accompany him. On reaching his house, Prabhat Ranjan reminded him to follow all his instructions very strictly and asked him to come back in a few days. Just as Kalicharan was about to

depart, Prabhat Ranjan took his hand and placed a four-anna coin in his palm saying, "Keep this with you."

At these words Kalicharan started to weep and refused to accept the coin. He said, "You have already given me the most precious thing you have. I don't want anything else from you." However, Prabhat Ranjan insisted and Kalicharan finally accepted the coin as a holy gift from his guru.

Prabhat Ranjan explained what happened to Kalicharan that day in a song he composed on the Shravani Purnima of 1990 as well as in some of his lectures. "Kalicharan's mind had become completely crude due to the sinful life he had led for years. I infused a powerful, sentient force in his mind to awaken his consciousness, and this had a powerful effect on his crude mind. As a result, the mist which had shrouded his mind disappeared and he felt illumined." Kalicharan, the dacoit, was the first disciple of Prabhat Ranjan.

When Kalicharan came to see Prabhat Ranjan after a few days, he appeared to be completely changed. Prabhat Ranjan directed him to practise his sadhana very seriously and devote his entire energy to the service of all living beings. Kalicharan followed his guru's instructions very strictly and gradually became a highly advanced sadhaka. After some time, he was ordained as a monk and initiated into an advanced form of tantric meditation known as kapalik sadhana. He was given the name Kalikananda. On Prabhat Ranjan's instruction, Kalikananda went to a forest in Ranchi District and deeply immersed himself in intense sadhana. Although he visited his guru several times in Jamalpur after the founding of the Ananda Marga mission, Prabhat Ranjan never formally introduced his first disciple to the others. The other disciples, from a distance, occasionally saw Kalikananda conversing with their guru. But they never came in direct contact with him. Thus, most aspects of Kalikananda's life remain cloaked in mystery.

Years later Prabhat Ranjan told his disciples, "It is rare for a guru to get a disciple of the calibre of Kalikananda, who follows his every instruction so strictly. Today Kalikananda has become a very great

sadhaka. His intuition is so developed that sitting in one place he can know whatever is happening anywhere in the world.” By choosing a dreaded dacoit as his first disciple, Prabhat Ranjan perhaps wanted to show to the world that the spiritual path that he was propounding could transform even the most degenerate person into a divine being. This was one part of his mission on this planet, which he clearly stated in the concluding lines of his discourse on Shravani Purnima 1980:

“Once again, I repeat that no human being should be considered irrevocably wicked. One should always try to find the good that is latent in all people, because as their good qualities develop, society will respect them more. We should try to reform sinful people and give them an honourable position in society. Those who do not support your endeavour to establish such people in respectable positions will have to be dealt with firmly. And this will not only be for the welfare of those downtrodden human beings, but also for that of humanity at large, and for the happiness of Parama Purusha.”

### **Salvation of the Wandering Tantric**

During his stay in Calcutta, Prabhat Ranjan started to increasingly take on the role of Sadguru. In late May 1940 he went to a village in Bankura District over 200 kilometres from Calcutta. A peculiar incident occurred while he was there that he later wrote about in one of a series of articles entitled Strange Experiences. This collection of enigmatic stories described his paranormal experiences. They were published in a local magazine under the penname of Priyadarshi. In 1959 they were republished in an Ananda Marga magazine under the same name. Although the stories described real events, they were narrated with a mystical touch:

It was a long time ago. As far as I can recall, the year was 1940. It was possibly the month of Jyaestha. I had gone to a village in Bankura District for a friend's wedding. In the evening I was to take part in the groom's procession. My



friend's home was also in Bankura District, and the wedding was being celebrated in a village about eight kilometres from there.

In the evening the groom and I set out for the bride's house. The astrologically ordained time for solemnizing the marriage was late at night. My friends and I decided that no matter how late it was, we would all eat together afterwards.

The feasting began after sunset. In the midst of that restless crowd and all the commotion, I started to feel uneasy and was not really enjoying the programme. So I decided to walk a little by myself. Bankura District has open fields everywhere, so even if one goes out alone there is no problem.

As planned, so done. With flashlight in hand, I picked out a trail following the ruts of the bullock cart wheels. After walking for a few kilometres, I came to a vast, uneven, open stretch of land. There were no signs of habitation anywhere, and small thickets sprouted here and there. A few jackals were roaming about. Myrobalan, sheora and mahua trees and the occasional palash tree dotted the landscape. I must have an addiction for walking, as people do not come to such a place by choice.

From their perch in the trees, the hoot of bhutum owls would now and then pierce the night. Unbroken darkness...mute darkness. The stars were unable to light the path...they only intensified the terror. The cries of jackals and owls punctuated the silence, yet only augmented its depth.

It was just this kind of environment that I ended up in. What is this place? Is it a cremation ground? It seems as though it might be... Why yes, it is! On the right there's a cow's skull, its flesh shredded by the vultures and jackals. Really! Skulls are strewn about in abundance. It is a cremation ground and a dumping ground for animal carcasses too. I thought, "Very good! Let me see how beautiful the terror is. In this place I will find out just how much I am able to love fear."

It occurred to me once that if I had had a companion with me, I could have captured the scene in language for his benefit. Afterwards, the two of us could have sat together and enjoyed the horrific beauty. Shining the flashlight, I located a clear, clean place. In such a place who would not become philosophical? I would have too, but the sudden appearance of another person distracted my attention. Precisely who he was he did not tell me.

I was sitting alone. From a distance I discerned a shadowy figure slowly coming in my direction. "Who is there?" I enquired. No answer. The figure stopped, then after a moment he started to move again. Now he was no longer silent. He broke into a song:

The play of life has ended, brother,  
The festival of the world is over.  
Return, O man of this world, return.

His voice was quite melodious. I enjoyed listening to him. I said, "So who are you? Won't you please come over here?" He slowly walked towards me. As he drew close, I again asked, "Who are you? Where do you live?"

He said, "Babu, the road is my home. A traveller I am, dwelling on the path. Going is as coming to me; coming is as going. Well Babu, I don't want to put on airs, so when I have to introduce myself I tell people I am from the area under Chandil Police Station."

I asked, "What's your name, my friend?"

"Now you want to know my name too," he said. "People say my name is Kamalakanta Mahapatra."

I said, "Please sit down, Kamalakanta, and sing me a song." Then Kamalakanta sang five or six songs to me one after another. Beautiful songs! Kamalakanta had the power to draw

the sweetness of heaven down into the darkness of the cremation ground – this I felt in the core of my heart. Suddenly he stopped and asked me, “Babu, where have you come from?”

I told him I had come from a certain village where I was taking part in a marriage procession.

He said, “That’s quite a distance – nearly six kilometres.”

“Yes, and because of that my feet are dead tired,” I replied.

He said, “Then Babu, please lie down. I will massage your feet a little. After all you will have to walk more.”

I said, “No, let it be. You have come from even farther away, and you must be much more tired than I.”

He said, “No, Babu, I don’t feel any discomfort. I told you the path is my home. Lie down. You’re just a young boy.”

“No matter how tired I may be,” I said, “I don’t think it is appropriate for an older person to massage my feet.”

He said, “All right. Then do something else instead. Put your head on my lap and lie down with your legs stretched out.”

I agreed to do that. I do not know when I fell asleep or when my friend’s wedding was over, or whether the people there were searching for me or not. Supremely serene, in the heart of the cremation ground with my head on a stranger’s lap, I slept. I woke up towards the end of the night with a feeling of intense pain in my feet. I sat up to find that Kamalakanta was clutching my feet with both hands. My head was no longer on his lap and he had placed three human skulls under it.

“Kamalakanta!” I called. “O Kamalakanta! Are you listening? You are sleeping, aren’t you? I told you that I don’t want an older person to serve me. But you didn’t listen to me.”

Kamalakanta gave no reply. What is this? Why isn’t Kamalakanta speaking? Is he sleeping? Is it possible to sleep



sitting like that? Even if it were possible, would it be possible to hold anyone's feet so hard? Kamalakanta was gripping my feet so tightly that I had woken up due to the pain of my circulation being cut off.

Again I called out, "O Kamalakanta, are you listening?" No response. I poked him. With just a small prod his body fell over. Had he fallen unconscious? Whatever little I could think of to do to check, I did. No...his body gave no sign of life. He was ice-cold from head to foot. Kamalakanta was no longer in this world. The one whose home was the path had gone elsewhere on the path beyond the universe. He had gone, moved on. Perhaps the man of this world had left the path altogether, going towards some unknown, unrecognised home.

I got up quickly and started back the way I had come. When I reached the site of the wedding, it was coming up to dawn. My friends were anxiously worrying about me. They had been waiting for dawn to take out a search party. I told them the whole story and then requested, "Everyone, please come with me; let's go and perform the last rites for Kamalakanta."

We all left together and went to that place. The few human skulls, which had served as my pillows, were still lying around, but Kamalakanta's lifeless body was gone. Where had he gone? My friends asked, "Did you drink siddhi-bhang last night?"

What could I possibly say to them?

With these words, Prabhat Ranjan concluded his narration of the incident, leaving what happened to Kamalakanta's body an unsolved mystery.

After many years Prabhat Ranjan told his disciples that although Kamalakanta was a very advanced sadhaka, he did not have a Sadguru, a necessary requirement for attaining the highest spiritual goal. He initiated Kamalakanta that night. After his initiation, Kamalakanta experienced such intense bliss that he involuntarily danced around his guru, while singing with devotion that expressed the intoxicating joy and intense bliss he was enjoying, "Tumi Ananda,

tumi Ananda, tumi Anandamurti” (You are bliss, you are bliss, you are the embodiment of bliss). For a long while he danced around the guru in an ecstatic state known as Mahabhava. He then sat down and started to sing one devotional song after another. As he was already a very highly elevated sadhaka, he achieved nirvikalpa samadhi by the blessing of the Sadguru and attained salvation. Among the known initiates of Prabhat Ranjan, Kamalakanta was the second.

Once during an evening walk in Jamalpur, Haragovinda, a senior disciple, wanted to know what had happened to the dead body of Kamalakanta. He asked Prabhat Ranjan, “In the series of stories published under the title Strange Experiences, at the end of each story you gave a hint about a possible explanation of those strange incidents, but in the case of Kamalakanta you did not say anything about why his dead body went missing. What actually happened to it and how did it disappear?”

Prabhat Ranjan replied, “Haragovinda, many things happened that night that I did not disclose in the story, and everything did not happen exactly the way it was reported. Many details remain a mystery. Maybe it will remain a mystery forever – a secret between guru and disciple.”

Haragovinda was not to be put off, however, and continued probing Prabhat Ranjan about what had happened to Kamalakanta’s body. Prabhat Ranjan finally disclosed, “Kamalakanta was a very highly elevated sadhaka. My meeting him there was no accident. It had a purpose, a great purpose. His death was not a normal death; he passed into the realm from where there is no further rebirth. The first three lines that he sang are pregnant with very significant meaning. It was a metaphor for his intense desire to attain salvation. They meant that the chain of life and death in this world was ending. You know that everything in this universe has come into existence from the unexpressed state of Nirguna Brahma (Supreme Consciousness) and one day has to finally return to that state. In the last line of the song, his mind was urging him to return to that Nirguna state from where he came.

“When I wrote, ‘the man of this world had left the path altogether, going towards some unknown, unrecognised home’, it meant that he had attained the state of Nirguna. It was when he got nirvikalpa samadhi that he grasped hold of my feet so tightly. You have seen in demonstrations of nirvikalpa samadhi that the body immediately becomes stiff like a dead body. The same thing happened with Kamalakanta’s body. But his nirvikalpa samadhi was permanent, and for him there would be no more return to this mortal world. When I got up to leave I felt that the body of a great soul who had attained moksha should not be left lying around in the cremation ground to be desecrated by animals and vultures. How could I allow that to happen? I was also not in a position to cremate it alone without any materials. Where would I get the firewood and fire for a cremation in such a desolate place? So what should I do? I was in a dilemma. As I had no other option, I decided to return the different elements of his body to the universe, and so his body disintegrated and merged into the five fundamental factors of the universe. When I related the incident to my friends, they expressed deep concern about leaving the dead body of a saintly person to rot in the cremation ground in that manner and wanted it to be properly cremated. I did not explain the reason for the disappearance of Kamalakanta’s dead body to those who accompanied me there. Haragovinda, now tell me - do you think that they would have believed me if I had told them what had really happened to the dead body?”

“No, they would never have believed you,” agreed Haragovinda.

On another occasion, Prabhat Ranjan told Haragovinda that he had gone to Bankura only to meet Kamalakanta, to give him what he had long deserved. Attending the marriage was only a pretext for a higher purpose.

### **M.N. Roy and Subhash Chandra Bose**

Thus from a very young age Prabhat Ranjan had amply demonstrated his extraordinary spiritual stature firstly by transforming a fearsome dacoit into an unparalleled spiritualist and then by bestowing salvation, the supreme spiritual goal, on a very



advanced spiritual aspirant. Apart from his role as guru, another prominent feature of Prabhat Ranjan started to manifest during his days in Calcutta. Here, in the heart of India's intellectual and creative consciousness, he started to publicly disseminate his social, political and economic thoughts to the public through the medium of periodicals. He began by publishing his ideas in a leading English magazine of India, *The Modern Review* and its sister Bengali publication *Prabasi*. Kedarnath Chattopadhyay, the editor of *The Modern Review*, was one of the first persons to notice and acknowledge the uniqueness of Prabhat Ranjan's ideas and developed a close relationship with him. The more he learned about Prabhat Ranjan, the more impressed he was by the teenager's towering intellect.

The other prominent newspapers to which Prabhat Ranjan contributed articles were *Searchlight* and *The Statesman*. In his writings he used different pennames such as Ranga Dadu, Priyadarshi, etc. He regularly wrote for an Urdu magazine called *Ittefaq* under the pseudonym of Aftab Uddin. Although he also wrote poems, dramas and literary works, his main focus was social issues.

The progressive and innovative concepts Prabhat Ranjan expressed through these periodicals attracted the attention of many prominent personalities of the day. One of them was an eminent intellectual of Calcutta, M. N. Roy, whose original name was Narendranath Bhattacharya. He was a young contemporary of Lenin and was the founder of the Communist Party of India. He also co-founded the Communist Party of Mexico. It came as a great surprise to him that the person behind these progressive political and economic ideas was a 17-year-old student. When he met Prabhat Ranjan, he was highly enchanted by the breadth and depth of the young man's knowledge. Despite being a renowned intellectual himself and about thirty-five years older than Prabhat Ranjan, he was captivated by the uncommon intelligence and erudition of the youth.

Prabhat Ranjan's younger brother, Himanshu Ranjan, remembered an occasion when he accompanied his brother to the house of an elderly couple, with whom Prabhat Ranjan held deep

discussions about the contemporary political situation of the country. Himanshu later learned from his brother that they were M. N. Roy and his German wife, Ellen. The only thing the eleven-year-old lad noticed was that both the elderly man and his wife showed a lot of respect to his brother, who was hardly eighteen at the time. When he met Prabhat Ranjan, M. N. Roy was in an ideological vacuum. Disillusioned with communism and unconvinced by Gandhi's political philosophy, he was groping about in search of new ideas and directions.

Prabhat Ranjan's early discussions and writings on contemporary issues later formed the basis of Roy's own future socio-economic and political thought. Prabhat Ranjan introduced revolutionary new concepts such as the decentralization of wealth, moral leadership, economic democracy, and the creation of anti-exploitation sentiments with a view to forging unity among the exploited masses. He also advocated the optimal utilization of local economic resources, emphasising local cultures and languages. He strongly urged the elimination of the caste system, among others.

M. N. Roy introduced several revolutionary-minded people to Prabhat Ranjan, among them Arun Chandra Guha, an erstwhile associate of Roy in Anushiilan Samiti, a group of radical youths working for India's independence. Guha later became a member of a revolutionary group called Jugantar and a prominent politician of Bengal after India attained independence. Another was Krishna Chandra Das, a distinguished confectioner in Calcutta, who introduced several influential people from Calcutta to Prabhat Ranjan.

The most famous person to meet Prabhat Ranjan through M. N. Roy was Subhash Chandra Bose, who had resigned as President of the Congress Party due to the lack of cooperation of Gandhi's supporters inside the party. He then established the Forward Bloc, which was composed of the progressive and reform-minded members of the Congress Party. Despite his hectic schedule, Subhash managed to find time for occasional consultations with Prabhat Ranjan, whose vast knowledge greatly impressed him. What attracted Subhash most

to the relatively unknown young man was his astute analysis of the political situation in India and the world, and his uncanny ability to correctly predict the future. Subhash was also fascinated by Prabhat Ranjan's ability to discuss deep spiritual ideas with ease and to analyse the inner workings of the minds of Gandhi, Nehru and other national leaders with a clarity and insight that was not possible even for their close associates. He could even predict the course they were going to take in matters concerning the political future of the country.

In the course of his discussions with Prabhat Ranjan, Subhash gradually realised that despite his youth, he was a spiritual giant. As Subhash himself had also been spiritually inclined since his youth, he therefore looked to Prabhat Ranjan for spiritual guidance as well. The special relationship that developed between Prabhat Ranjan and Subhash Chandra Bose was destined to influence the future direction of Subhash's life. On several subsequent occasions, Prabhat Ranjan told his disciples that Subhash and M. N. Roy had once met him at the Tiger's Grave and explained the details of their meeting to Hemchand Naik and a few others.

In his account of what happened that night Prabhat Ranjan said, "When I reached the Tiger's Grave, M. N. Roy and Subhash were discussing the strategy to be adopted in order to gain India's independence. M. N. Roy was of the view that India should first try to gain economic independence, and political independence would automatically follow. However, Subhash held the view that India should first attain political freedom and only then strive for economic freedom."

Prabhat Ranjan then asked Hemchand whose stand was correct. Hemchand replied that Subhash was right. Prabhat Ranjan said, "No Hemchand, history will say that on this occasion M. N. Roy was correct."

Both Subhash and M. N. Roy then sought Prabhat Ranjan's views on this matter. Prabhat Ranjan pointed out that without the economic emancipation of the people, political freedom would be meaningless. So they should first fight for economic emancipation and incite the



people to rise up against all kinds of economic exploitation, including that of the British. Once India had been freed from the clutches of economic exploitation, political freedom would follow as a natural corollary, because the British were in India only to exploit it economically. They would find it extremely difficult to hold on to the country if it was no longer economically beneficial to them. If it became an economic liability, they would not want to stay there any longer, and the country would eventually become politically independent. Then such a liberated India would be free from all kinds of economic exploitation by both Indians and outsiders. He then stressed that an independent India would only become prosperous if rational leaders, who were strong moralists, led the country. He explained that the highest standards of morality and rationality were not attainable without spirituality.

Subhash agreed with Prabhat Ranjan's view but M. N. Roy opined that if there was a basic sense of benevolence in the leaders, that would be sufficient to provide moral leadership in the country. To this, Prabhat Ranjan replied that any form of morality that was not rooted in spirituality would not stand the test of time. One may not be tempted by small immoral gains, but if the gains to be had were larger, it would be very difficult for people to resist, particularly if they were holding the reins of political power, where opportunities for corruption were much greater. Even a slight deviation by a top leader would have disastrous consequences for society, and would become the cause of the country's inevitable decline. He added that only a firm footing in spirituality would provide genuine rationality and the moral strength needed to resist all such temptations.

The discussion went on for a long time and finally M. N. Roy came round to Prabhat Ranjan's view about the need for spirituality in creating principled leadership. Prabhat Ranjan concluded by explaining that a spiritual base is essential for every human being, as that alone can satisfy the unlimited desires of the human mind.

Sitting on the Tiger's Grave that day Prabhat Ranjan initiated Subhash into the practice of meditation and after that he initiated

M. N. Roy as well. During his initiation Prabhat Ranjan asked Subhash to take three oaths: First, that he would continue to work for the welfare of society and the country without considering his own needs; second, that under all circumstances he would adhere to the principles of morality and spirituality very strictly, and third, that he would always keep the supreme goal of life fixed in his mind even while working in society, and make ceaseless efforts to attain it in this very life. Then Prabhat Ranjan asked Subhash to express any wish that he desired to see fulfilled.

Prabhat Ranjan then asked Hemchand, "Do you know what Subhash wished for? He did not ask anything for himself. He only wanted to see India free from foreign rule." Prabhat Ranjan continued to relate their conversation. He told Subhash that India would certainly gain its independence, but that would require some physical struggle. He asked Subhash to organise an uprising against the British. Subhash remarked that the struggle for India's freedom was not possible unless the masses revolted against British rule. A mass uprising against the British would not be possible without Gandhi's support. Subhash lamented that Gandhi would never support it as it went against his principle of non-violence, and it was due to this policy that Gandhi had not approved of any uprising against the British during the war. Under these circumstances he did not see how India could be freed from British rule.

Prabhat Ranjan suggested that if he could not organise the struggle against the British from inside India, he should do it from outside the country. He said that the best time to launch such a struggle was when the British themselves were fully engaged in war. He added that once India became independent, it would pave the way for the freedom of the other countries of Asia which were also under the yoke of colonial rule. After this, the rest of the world would also be freed from the curse of colonialism. The discussion between Prabhat Ranjan and Subhash continued for some time. Finally Prabhat Ranjan blessed him with the assurance that in this endeavour an invisible power would assist him whenever he would need it, and that he would never feel that he was alone and helpless.

Concluding the narration, Prabhat Ranjan explained to Hemchand that there was a fundamental difference in the way M. N. Roy and Subhash accepted his spiritual teachings. The former accepted it from a logical perspective but did not have any strong spiritual inclinations. Due to a lack of conviction, he did not practise meditation very seriously. Subhash, on the other hand, had had a strong spiritual yearning from his childhood. Spirituality came naturally to him, and this motivated him to practise his meditation seriously.

After returning to Calcutta, Subhash and M. N. Roy continued to maintain contact with Prabhat Ranjan. On a couple of occasions they visited him at the house of his uncle, Sharat Chandra Bose. Subodh Chandra Rai, who lived in Prabhat Ranjan's neighbourhood in Calcutta, recalled that the visit of these iconic personalities had created a great sensation in the locality, but no one knew the purpose of their visit. Prabhat Ranjan met Subhash a few times more at different locations and taught him all the higher lessons of meditation, including the advanced tantric meditation known as kapalik sadhana. During this period, Prabhat Ranjan blessed Subhash with several spiritual experiences, further reinforcing his commitment to spirituality.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1940 Subhash was arrested when he was about to launch a nationwide movement against the British. A few months after his incarceration, he started a hunger strike in jail in protest against his detention. The British authorities feared a mass revolt if something were to happen to Subhash in prison. They did not want another serious law and order problem on their hands, especially when Britain was already heavily involved in the war. Due to the deterioration of Subhash's health, the authorities released him on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1940, the eleventh day of his fast, and placed him under house arrest with strict, round-the-clock surveillance.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 1941, Subhash quietly slipped out of his house after midnight, disguised as insurance agent Mohammad Ziauddin, while everyone was fast asleep. Somehow he managed to evade the posse of guards and intelligence officers posted outside his



house by the British authorities. He left in a car driven by his nephew, Sisir Bose, and headed towards Barari near Dhanbad. The next day he took the Kalka Mail train from Gomoh Station to Peshawar. Years later Prabhat Ranjan told a senior disciple, Acharya Sujit, that he had met Subhash at Gomoh Station before he boarded the train. However, he refused to say what transpired between them.

Many things regarding Prabhat Ranjan's association with Subhash have remained a mystery except for what he has said or shown to his disciples on different occasions. During his two-year stay in Calcutta, Prabhat Ranjan was known to have spiritually guided many other people. However, he did not disclose their details to anyone and very little is known about this phase of his life.



## CHAPTER 5

### World War II Briefings

After completing his two-year intermediate course, Prabhat Ranjan returned to Jamalpur in the middle of 1941. Although mother Abharani wanted him to continue studying, Prabhat Ranjan insisted that as the eldest son it was his duty to assume the responsibility of looking after the family. He therefore joined the Pre-Audit Section of the Accounts Department of the Railway Workshop as a lower division clerk in September, earning a modest monthly salary of Rs. 33.

The first thing his colleagues noticed about Prabhat Ranjan was his unfailing punctuality. Every day he would arrive for work at 8.00 am. sharp and leave the office at 4.00 pm. Some of his colleagues later remarked that they could even set their watches by the time Prabhat Ranjan entered the office. They found it almost unbelievable that day after day, he was able to maintain his office hours with clockwork precision without even the aid of a wristwatch.

As a student Prabhat Ranjan had been known in Jamalpur for his outstanding qualities and exceptional abilities. In the course of time his reputation as a young man with vast knowledge and supernatural powers grew which no one who came into contact with him failed to notice. As a result, within a short time, everyone, including most of the senior officers and his elder colleagues, began to address him respectfully as 'Prabhatda'. Some knew him as an accomplished palmist, while others respected him for his skill in physiognomy and his uncanny ability to tell the past, present and future of anyone by merely looking at them. Before long it became apparent to them that he could even see things that were happening in distant places.

## Daily War Briefings

It all started with his daily briefings during the Second World War. When Prabhat Ranjan joined the railway office, the war was uppermost in everyone's minds. Although the battlefields were far from India, World War II had a deep impact on the daily lives of the common people. Prices had skyrocketed and there was an acute scarcity of many essential items. Many parts of eastern India had already begun to experience severe food shortages due to natural calamities. The war further aggravated the people's misery.

A few days after joining the office, Prabhat Ranjan began to give daily briefings about the war before commencing his office work. These briefings immediately became very popular with his colleagues and his desk became their meeting point and the source of war news. After some time he started to give briefings during the lunch hour as well. The morning briefings were short, while those held in the lunch hour were longer, often lasting for almost an hour. After a quick lunch his colleagues would gather around him, anxious to hear the latest news. Some of the senior officers also could not resist listening to Prabhat Ranjan. However, they had to overcome their initial hesitation to sit with lower ranking colleagues. Those who were unable to attend the briefings would get the information from those who had been present. His close friend, former classmate, and colleague Amar Sen, made it a point to attend these sessions regularly and has described them in some detail. Another colleague, Ram Singh, also attended the briefings and recalled many details.

At that time, the Second World War was in full swing. Hitler's army had swept across most of Europe. After vanquishing the Allied Forces led by France and England, the mighty German army was in control of almost all of continental Europe except for Britain, and a few neutral countries that Hitler chose not to invade. It was also advancing rapidly through Russia. Stalin's Red Army proved to be a poor match for the Germans. Only the rains slowed down their speed. With the assistance of the Italian army, the Germans also swept across the deserts of North and Northwest Africa.



The government had imposed a three-day moratorium on all war-related news, so whatever Prabhat Ranjan said in his briefings would only be reported in the media four or five days later. On different occasions he described how the German army had reached the outskirts of Moscow, or how the different cities in England and Germany had been bombed. The sheer volume and graphic nature of the information that Prabhat Ranjan gave surprised everyone. For many of his colleagues, listening to Prabhat Ranjan's war briefings was far more interesting than eating their home-cooked lunch. So they would finish it quickly and then rush over to Prabhatda's table to ensure they had a good seat during the briefing.

The daily war briefing became a hot topic in the workshop. Everyone would wait in anticipation for the latest war news from Prabhatda. Occasionally someone would ask him how he could see events that were happening so far away. To this his reply would always be, "Is it not sufficient that you are all able to hear the latest news as and when it happens, long before the radio or newspapers report it?"

These briefings were not just limited to the events of the war. While discussing the battles that occurred in a particular place, Prabhat Ranjan would also describe the area's history, geography, psychology, culture and languages, sharing with his audience many unknown facts. The discussions would often leave his listeners spellbound, particularly because of the way Prabhat Ranjan moved effortlessly from one topic to another. The depth of his knowledge simply amazed them. One of his favourite topics was the history of the various races on earth and how they had blended in the course of time.

He not only provided detailed accounts of the progress of the war, but also foretold what would happen. As the German army advanced deep into Russia, his colleagues, especially Ram Singh, a communist, were anxious to know what the fate of Russia would be now that the German army was knocking on the doors of Moscow. During one of the morning briefings, Prabhat Ranjan emphatically declared, "Hitler is a demon and is committing inhuman atrocities in

the countries he has conquered, particularly in the east. The time for the reversal of German fortunes has arrived. Just watch and see how Nature will cause Hitler's defeat."

He added that attacking Russia, while engaged in war in the west, was one of Hitler's biggest strategic mistakes and that an invisible power would make him commit many more such mistakes. Soon afterwards the winter set in, and stuck in the snow of the severe Russian winter Hitler's Russian blitzkrieg came to a grinding halt.

The United States had indirectly entered the war, and Prabhat Ranjan's colleagues asked whether the US would become more deeply involved. He replied that it would not be possible for the US to avoid active involvement in the war for much longer, even though American public opinion weighed strongly against it. He said that certain unexpected developments would compel them to enter the war very soon. When pressed about what those unforeseen events would be, he said that Japan would attack US territory. This would force the US to shed its policy of indirect intervention and actively enter the war. Once again his assertions proved to be remarkably prescient.

A few days later Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, compelling the United States to join the war. From then on Prabhat Ranjan included the war in the Pacific and Asia in his daily briefings. He described the attack and fall of the Philippines, Malaya, Burma and Singapore well before it became public knowledge. He also described the German advance in North and West Africa. In all these briefings he would mention and describe places his colleagues had never heard of.

In the middle of May 1943 Allied planes began to bomb German cities. Prabhat Ranjan said that since the Allied air forces were superior to that of the Germans, the bombings would become increasingly aggressive and they would take revenge for the earlier devastation of British cities by the Luftwaffe, the German air force. Prabhat Ranjan was, however, highly critical of the deliberate targeting of innocent civilians in these bombings.

His colleagues listened with keen interest as Prabhatda described all these events occurring on land, at sea and in the air in distant places. It was as if he was seeing them unfolding before his very eyes.

In one of the briefings he commented, "In the entire history of the human race there has been no parallel to the horror and brutality that Hitler is unleashing in the name of the racial superiority of the Aryans. Hitler says, 'The Aryans are not to be ruled but to rule.' Is this chauvinistic and blind concept of Aryan supremacy supported by the science of ethnology? No. The fact is that modern Germans are not a pure race. They have mixed blood. A careful analysis will show that none of the current races in the world is completely pure. In the thousands of years of their co-existence, there has been so much racial blending. So no race can claim the absolute purity of its blood. Hitler's claims about the purity of Aryan blood are merely designed to hoodwink the people.

"All talk of the 'purity of blood' of a race is meaningless because no race has pure blood, meaning without any intermixing with other races. For that matter blood is always pure. Hitler whipped up racial hatred in an effort to unite the German people and he has largely succeeded in the short-term. However, because he used only negative sentiments and did not include any positive ones, his approach has resulted in a world war. He is dragging the great German people towards the brink of an apocalypse.

"The path of negativity is extremely dangerous and is harmful for society. Society can only be built through positive sentiments. Germany and the entire continent of Europe will have to pay a very heavy price for trusting Hitler. The leaders of England and France were intimidated by his threat of force and trusted his assurances of peace, so they simply allowed him to take over Austria and offered him Czechoslovakia on a platter as part of their appeasement policy. He should have been contained from the very beginning. By the time the other European nations realised his deceitfulness, it was too late."

### **Outcome of the War**

With the Japanese advance into Burma, the war came closer to India. In the middle of 1942 the British government decided to recruit Indian government employees into the Indian Territorial Force (ITF), an auxiliary adjunct of the British Indian army. Young and preferably



unmarried government employees working in important departments such as the Railways, the Post & Telegraph Services and the Public Works Department were eligible to be recruited. They were to be tasked with providing security for their respective government departments if the British administration withdrew the regular security forces for war duty. Those who enlisted received their preliminary training in Bandel near Calcutta, followed by an annual training session of one month in North Bengal and Assam. The ITF was disbanded at the end of the war.

For two days a week short parade training sessions were organised after office hours. Recruits were expected to wear the ITF uniforms in their workplace. They were paid a monthly stipend of twelve rupees and eight annas. As the additional income would help support his family, Prabhat Ranjan enlisted as a recruit. His friend, Amar Sen, also enlisted. They underwent training in Bandel. One evening during a break in the training, Prabhat Ranjan told Amar about the latest war news from Europe, Asia and the Pacific. As he listened to Prabhat, Amar interjected, "Prabhat, I heard that although ours is only an auxiliary force, we may be required to fight in the war if the situation gets worse. I don't want to fight for the British, as I would not be fighting for our own country. The British have exploited us for centuries, so why should I fight for them? I am thinking how to avoid it. What's your opinion?"

"There is no need to worry, Amar. Such a situation will not arise. The Axis forces will be defeated before such an eventuality occurs."

"What will be the final outcome of the war? What will happen to Germany, Italy and Japan?" asked Amar.

"These three countries will be completely destroyed. Nazi Germany will be found guilty of unpardonable war crimes, which will come to light after the war. The philosophies of Nazism and fascism will be destroyed forever."

"What a waste of effort, Prabhat! After causing such horrific destruction, if they themselves get destroyed in the process, what will they have gained from it?"

“Although these countries will be destroyed, they will rise again because they have tremendous dynamism.”

“Then will they again cause destruction?” asked Amar with concern.

“No, no, that will not happen, because people will once and for all reject the defective philosophies that are now driving them down the path to destruction. These defective philosophies are based on the concept of the superiority of a particular race and hatred of those who they perceive as inferior. No philosophy based on a superiority complex or hatred can survive for long. It cannot bring any lasting good to the world. It may appear to benefit certain people for a short time. But in the end it will only cause suffering and destruction from which no one will be exempt, even those who reposed their faith in it, shouted slogans in its favour and accepted all kinds of suffering and sacrifice for its propagation. There are many such defective philosophies in the world today and many more will appear in the future. Like skyrockets they will dazzle people for a short period, but in the end they will cause immense destruction and suffering before they disappear forever from the firmament. Only a philosophy based on love for the entire human race can last and be genuinely beneficial to society as a whole.”

“But if the British win the war, they will become stronger,” ventured Amar apprehensively. “And that will further prolong their exploitation of our country. We were all hoping that the British would be weakened by the war and that India would be able to gain its independence. So does that mean that India will not become independent in the near future?”

“No, Amar, it will be the other way around. Although the war has caused so much suffering and destruction, it will also do a lot of good to the world.”

“Do a lot of good? How can a destructive war do a lot of good to the world?”

"The world needs a psychic jolt to break the shackles of imperialism, and the war will provide just that. Its most important outcome will be the psychological changes it will bring about. There will be an awakening both in the imperialist countries and in the countries that have been under their yoke for centuries. This will make it difficult for them to maintain their imperialistic rule. In fact, they will be compelled to give independence to the countries they have subjugated for hundreds of years. In a matter of a few years after the end of the war, you will see that all the countries currently under foreign rule will become independent one after another, starting with India. The British Empire, where the sun never sets today, will shrink until only the British Isles are left.

Many socio-political changes will take place. The world will be divided into two blocs – capitalist and communist. This division will continue until the demise of communism. Finally, capitalism will also disappear," explained Prabhat Ranjan.

Years later Amar Sen recounted that evening's discussion to some of Prabhat Ranjan's disciples and added, "What my friend said that evening was difficult to believe at the time, particularly what he said about the British Empire getting destroyed so quickly. I thought that it would take nothing short of a miracle to bring about such a change. But then it all happened in a very natural way. So I am absolutely sure that his prediction about capitalism and communism will also come true in due course, because he was able to see the future. Prabhat also told me on several occasions that he would create a philosophy which would fill the void left by the demise of communism and capitalism."

### **A Lesson in Collective Living**

Prabhat Ranjan infused a feeling of camaraderie in the trainees at the camp and instilled positive values in them. He had the natural ability to influence others. He inspired them to share the food they had brought from home. At the camp, rice and roti were served for both lunch and dinner. One trainee from Bengal had great difficulty eating roti, as rice is the staple food of Bengal. To solve his problem, Prabhat Ranjan would exchange his share of rice for the roti. In this



way he inspired everyone to share with others and to help each other. On several occasions Prabhat Ranjan told his disciples anecdotes from those days.

Another trainee, a Brahmin from Muzaffarpur in Bihar, was a little different from the others. He had a selfish streak, unlike the others who willingly shared whatever they had. This trainee had a tin of delicious homemade snacks, which he kept hidden by his bedside. He would quietly eat them while the others slept or when no one else was in the tent, and did not want to share his precious snacks with anyone else.

It is, however, impossible to keep secrets for very long in a tent one shares with others. The other trainees grew annoyed by his selfish behaviour and requested Prabhat Ranjan to do something about it. After listening to their complaint, Prabhat Ranjan devised a plan to correct the youth's selfishness. "Let us do something tonight," he suggested. "After dinner I will invite him to come with me for a walk. On our way back to the tent I will cough loudly. That will be your signal. One of you will sneak into the tent from the back and overturn the tin of food. Make sure you open the lid and make the sound of an animal before you leave the tent."

Then with a mischievous smile he advised them to take a light dinner. As planned, after dinner Prabhat Ranjan found a pretext to take the Brahmin trainee for a walk. On their return, just before reaching the tent, Prabhat Ranjan coughed conspicuously. As both of them drew closer to the tent, they heard a strange noise coming from inside. Prabhat Ranjan stopped walking and caught hold of his companion's hand, pretending to listen intently.

"Prabhatda, did you hear that?" asked the frightened trainee.

"Yes. It sounds like an animal. But where is it coming from?"

"It's coming from inside the tent."

"Let's have a look," suggested Prabhat Ranjan.

Cautiously they went inside the tent and shone their torchlights around, looking for the source of the sound. They saw a tin

overturned near one of the beds. Flashing his torch at the tin, Prabhat Ranjan said, "It looks as if someone has kept some food in a tin, and the smell has attracted an animal. Maybe the lid wasn't closed tightly enough. It seems as if the animal was trying to open it and it fell over in the process. The lid must have come open as it fell. Whose is it?"

"Prabhatda, it's mine. It contains homemade thekua, laddu (both Indian sweets), and nimki (salty snacks)," admitted the Brahmin trainee sheepishly.

"Oh dear! Tsk, tsk, tsk! How sad! The animal must have licked it with its dirty tongue."

"Prabhatda, what should I do? How can I eat food that has been licked by a dirty animal?" asked the trainee in a concerned voice. Brahmins are very particular about such things and do not even eat food prepared by those from lower castes. His high caste complex and obsession with untouchability started to play on his mind.

"No, you certainly can't. I am sure you have never eaten anybody's leftovers in your entire life, and certainly not those of a lower caste person. So how could you think of even touching the leftovers of an animal? It must have been a meat-eating jackal."

"But Prabhatda, they are very good snacks made with pure ghee," lamented the Brahmin trainee.

"Ah, that's it! It's the smell of the ghee that has attracted the jackal. Jackals like ghee very much," remarked Prabhat Ranjan.

"But how can I throw away all those delicious snacks?" asked the trainee in a pathetic tone.

"Yes, that's very difficult, especially when they are made with pure ghee," murmured Prabhat Ranjan thoughtfully. He tapped his forehead with his fingers pretending to think deeply and then said, "I have a solution."

"What do you suggest, Prabhatda?" asked the Brahmin trainee. He thought that Prabhatda would perhaps suggest a way to salvage some of the delicacies so he could later enjoy them alone.

“See, only you and I know that a jackal would have licked the snacks. No one else in the tent knows it. So give them to the others. Tell them that you have brought some good homemade snacks made of pure ghee but had forgotten about them. Then give them the whole tin and ask them all to share its contents. We will say that we have already eaten a heavy meal and will not be able to join them.” As this idea seemed to be better than throwing away the food, the greedy trainee was forced to accept it, albeit grudgingly.

Soon, one by one, his tent-mates strolled into the tent, feigning ignorance of the incident. Once they had all arrived, the Brahmin trainee made a grand show of generosity and invited them to share the mouth-watering snacks. They all took some and invited Prabhat Ranjan to join them. As planned, Prabhat Ranjan excused himself, saying that he had already had a heavy meal. As he got up to leave, he praised the large-heartedness of the Brahmin trainee. Grinning mischievously, they all agreed with him. The Brahmin trainee could only look on as the others enjoyed his delicious snacks and had to be satisfied with Prabhat Ranjan’s lavish praise of his ‘generosity’.

Once, during a parade, the officer in-charge noticed Prabhat Ranjan smiling while standing in line. The officer asked him to fall out and demanded an explanation for his behaviour. In all seriousness Prabhat Ranjan replied, “I am not smiling, sir, my face is smiling.” Confused by his reply, the officer asked him to join the formation.

Prabhat Ranjan wasn’t jesting but telling the truth. Since his childhood, a smile had been synonymous with him. He always had a perfect, iconic smile on his face. Everyone who ever met him noticed this feature. It was so enigmatic that it mesmerized and enchanted them, something they remembered for the rest of their lives.

### **The Beginning of the End**

When Prabhat Ranjan returned to Jamalpur at the end of September 1942 after the ITF training, the state of the world was very gloomy. Almost the entire globe was directly or indirectly involved in the war. Thousands of soldiers were dying every day on the battlefields, and many civilians were also dying due to the impact of



the war. India was facing a severe shortage of food and other essential items. Several parts of Bihar, Bengal and Northeast India were in the grip of famine, and life was becoming intolerable for the common people. The end of the war was nowhere in sight.

Almost the whole of Europe was under the occupation of the Axis forces that had also made significant progress in North and Northwest Africa. In fact, they had made huge advances everywhere. The daily war briefings continued as before. During one briefing session a few days after his return, Prabhat Ranjan surprised his colleagues by saying that very soon the tide would turn against the Axis powers everywhere and it would not be long before they were completely vanquished. Prabhat Ranjan's assertion challenged the general expectation of further Axis conquests. However, as he had foretold, the German and Italian armies lost a decisive battle at El Alamein in Egypt at the end of October 1942 following a massive offensive by the Allied armies. After that the tide turned against the Axis powers and they lost one battle after another in Libya, Algeria and Tunisia. Following these defeats they were continuously driven back.

During another briefing in the autumn of 1942, Prabhat Ranjan foretold that winter would bring huge reverses for the Axis forces in Russia as well. They would take a severe beating in Stalingrad and after that would start to retreat from the east. Then one morning at the beginning of 1943 he said that the German army in Stalingrad had surrendered the day before, and more than half a million soldiers had been taken prisoner by Russia. He added that from now on Germany would continue to be pushed back until it was finally defeated.

In the middle of the year Prabhat Ranjan announced that the Allied armies had landed in Sicily. "From now on the Axis forces in Western Europe will be pushed back." A few days later he said that Mussolini had been deposed and imprisoned. Ram Singh, one of his colleagues, asked, "Prabhatda, will the new government put him to death?"

"No, they have jailed him in a remote place. Soon Hitler will rescue him and reinstate him in Rome. But Mussolini will no longer

have the power and authority that he previously enjoyed. The Italian army has already accepted its defeat and is demoralized. So Mussolini will remain in power only due to the support of the German army. He will die a miserable death at the end of the war." Everything occurred exactly as Prabhat Ranjan had foretold. The new Italian government surrendered to the Allies, and then Hitler sent his army into Italy and recaptured Rome and a part of the country. German commandos rescued Mussolini from prison and reinstated him as the head of a puppet government. The seesaw battle in Italy culminated with the fall of Rome in mid-1944. The retreat of the Germans from Russia and the rest of Europe was sensational news to Prabhat Ranjan's audience.

From 1943 the Allied planes, buoyed by their superiority in the air, began to bombard German cities and decimated the local population. During his briefings, Prabhat Ranjan gave detailed descriptions of the devastation wreaked by the aerial bombing of Germany. These attacks grew increasingly brutal, and civilians became the main target. Tens of thousands of innocent people, mostly children, women and the elderly were killed, and many more were injured. The civilian victims of the war had very little access to medical aid. At the end of July, Hamburg was completely pulverised in bombing raids that continued day and night for about a week. Over seventy thousand people were killed, and the entire city burned for several days. Many more were injured, some of them maimed for life. Although the Allied brutality in indiscriminately bombing innocent civilians was not reported in the radio and newspapers, Prabhat Ranjan discussed it during his briefings. After describing the intensive bombing raids, he said, "The Allied countries are claiming to be fighting against German aggression. The savage killing of innocent children, women and old people testifies to their hypocrisy. After the war the victorious Allies will try the vanquished nations for war crimes and brand them as war criminals. But there won't be even a whimper of protest against the inhuman atrocities they themselves committed in killing hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Those atrocities will never be discussed. They will behave as if they have received a holy dispensation for their own crimes against humanity.

Real justice should demand that all those responsible for inhuman acts against innocent people should be tried as war criminals.”

As he recalled the war briefings, Prabhat Ranjan’s colleague, Nikunja Bhaumik, remarked, “Prabhatda often stressed the need for genuinely moral leadership and a rational philosophy of life to guide society. The essence of what he said was, ‘Honest leadership is a must for any society or nation to progress. One characteristic common to all corrupt leaders is that they divide society on the basis of narrow sentiments. They sow the seeds of hatred among the people and spread ideas based on selfishness and narrow-mindedness in order to exploit the weak. Every society or nation should be extremely careful how it chooses its leaders and guiding philosophy. It is defective leadership and the adoption of a defective philosophy of life that cause all the wars and suffering in the world. Materialistic philosophies like Nazism, fascism, capitalism and communism and all narrow ‘isms’ ultimately divide nations and people by infusing in them the sentiments of hatred and selfishness. They can never create an exploitation-free society. They cannot create ideal leaders. Only a philosophy based on spirituality can create ideal leaders and bring about a society free from narrowness and exploitation. In the future people will reject all the materialist philosophies and embrace a spiritual ideology that is free from all ‘isms.’”

“I then asked him, ‘Prabhatda, are there any ideal spiritual leaders and a spiritual ideology anywhere in the world?’”

“No, there aren’t, and that is why a real society that represents the true spirit of the term *samaja*<sup>1</sup> has not been established anywhere. In the future I will propound a philosophy based on spirituality that will be an ideal philosophy of life and create spiritual leaders. This will help to build an ideal society.”

“When Prabhatda said this, we did not give much credence to it. While we knew that he had extraordinary powers, he was

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<sup>1</sup> Some years later Prabhat Ranjan defined the meaning of the word society as “Inspired by a common ideology, when different individuals move towards a common goal and actively work to achieve it, this can be called a society (*samaja*).”



nevertheless a mere employee and a colleague. We could not believe that he would be able to create a philosophy that would guide society and produce spiritual leaders.”

### **Outbreak of Famine**

Soon afterwards Prabhat Ranjan became deeply concerned about another devastating event. A severe famine had broken out in eastern India in 1943, affecting mainly Bengal, parts of Bihar and Northeast India. It was one of the most serious catastrophes to occur in British-ruled India. A combination of natural and man-made factors was to blame, starting with two years of crop failure and the large-scale export of food from India for use in war theatres around the world. The situation was aggravated by the refusal of the British government to transport emergency food supplies and medical aid to India from donor countries, citing lame excuses such as a lack of transport ships. They also did not permit other parts of India to send their own supplies of rice or ships to the famine-stricken areas.

Prabhat Ranjan laid the blame for the crisis squarely at the feet of the British government, whose sole interest in India was the imperialistic exploitation of her vast economic resources and wealth. He added that immediately after establishing a foothold in India, Britain had turned its attention to the economic exploitation of those states under its occupation. Its main strategy throughout its colonial rule had been to systematically dismantle and destroy all local manufacturing industries such as the weaving industry, the silk and cotton industry, the sugar and salt industry, the manufacturing of machinery, the production of cloth dyes and shipbuilding, among others. Once local industries were destroyed, it was easy to turn the colonies into mere producers of raw materials for industries in England, and markets for their finished products. The manufacturers and skilled labourers who had been employed in all these industries for generations lost their traditional source of income and were pushed into agriculture. The increase in population coupled with the exodus of workers from the industrial sector meant that a rising number of people came to depend on agriculture for their livelihood. This put tremendous pressure on the arable land available and led to

high levels of unemployment in the agriculture sector, which in turn contributed to the general impoverishment of the population. Thus the scene was set for a perfect storm and a disaster on a much larger scale.

Due to the scarcity of rice in Bengal, the provincial administration started to import it from neighbouring Burma, which was one of the largest rice exporters in the region. However, when Japan invaded Burma, the export of Burmese rice to Bengal was disrupted, causing a massive shortfall and hefty price increases. Another immediate cause of the famine was the huge burden of the cost of the war that was thrust upon India by the British government. This necessitated the printing of paper money, which inevitably led to runaway inflation. The resulting massive price increases inflated the cost of food beyond the purchasing power of the already impoverished masses. As the scarcity of food became apparent, greedy traders started to hoard grains to increase their profits and created an artificial shortage in the market. The prolonged scarcity of rice slowly degenerated into a widespread famine.

At that time, Bengal was under the rule of the Muslim League, which was generally perceived to be communal and corrupt. An inefficient and extremely corrupt bureaucracy and the unholy nexus between unscrupulous politicians and greedy traders further aggravated matters. This exacerbated the suffering of the people manifold. The administration was inefficient and unable to gauge the seriousness of the situation, so they did not take measures to mitigate the suffering of the people.

On top of that, generations of Indians had been indoctrinated into a flawed notion of "*Ahimsa*" (non-harming) and filled with fatalistic beliefs that had sapped their will to fight. In abject surrender to their fate, they died of hunger by the thousands without even a thought of protest against the perpetrators of this crisis. In a span of two to three years an estimated four to five million people died of starvation, malnutrition and related diseases. Sadly no one revolted against the exploiters and hoarders of food grains, principally because the people were disorganised and lacked dynamic leaders to motivate them to rise up against the scourge of exploitation.

While millions were dying from starvation in eastern India, Britain's only concern was to stockpile huge reserves of grains in England to feed the liberated countries of Europe. These grains came from all over the world, including India. Churchill's pathological hatred of the people of India, who he contemptuously described as "breeding like rabbits", led him to commit the crime of ignoring the warnings of the impending food crisis and to do nothing to tackle the crisis once the famine had set in.

In one of his discourses Prabhat Ranjan referred to the famine saying, "The suffering of the people reached its zenith. Food, clothes and consumer goods were not only costly but also hard to come by. Millions of poor people died of starvation, their knees buckling as they fell to the ground. No one shed tears over them, even though they saw their suffering. Deaths were so frequent, and people saw so much of it that their tears dried up.

"All consumer items were scarce and the people's purchasing power had become exhausted. In addition, promissory notes valued at millions of rupees were being circulated in the market to help people cope with the situation. The small group of people into whose hands a large part of these notes fell became the nouveau riche, their bellies swollen with affluence. So while there were scenes of extreme poverty and scarcity, there was also an abundance of wealth. As a result the lives of millions of people were reduced to the level of slavery. The dignity of women was trampled in the dirt due to the economic might of greedy people. Poverty destroyed middle-class families."

Prabhat Ranjan was extremely pained to see the terrible suffering of the helpless people. He decided to do whatever he could to help alleviate their intolerable agonies. In comparison to the other provinces in eastern India, Bihar was not very badly affected. Jamalpur was spared the worst of the famine because its population comprised mainly of salaried workers, while those who suffered the most were landless peasants. So Jamalpur found itself hosting a flood of refugees from distant places who came in search of job opportunities and relief from the spreading famine. Under the banner



of 'Yauvanniir' (Nest of Youths) Prabhat Ranjan established a free food distribution centre in Jamalpur to address the needs of the starving. He financed its operations by inspiring the employees of the Railway Workshop to donate a day's salary every month and by giving tuition classes. Ram Singh, who had by then become a great admirer of Prabhat Ranjan, was put in charge of running it.

Furthermore Prabhat Ranjan visited Calcutta periodically, where he stayed with his cousin Nanku in Belgachia. Among the rich people of Calcutta, Prabhat Ranjan was renowned as an astrologer and palmist with an uncanny ability for accurate predictions. Every day a long line of wealthy people would visit him to have their fortunes told. Large, expensive cars belonging to rich businessmen regularly lined up in front of the lane leading to his cousin's house whenever he was in Calcutta. Prabhat Ranjan would not accept any remuneration for his services, however. The only thing he accepted was the symbolic gesture of a betel leaf. Seeing that he was not charging the rich people for his services, Gaur Mohan Biswas, the younger brother of Nanku, approached him with a request, "Bubuda, the people who come to you are very rich. Yet you are not accepting any remuneration from them except a betel leaf. Why do they deserve free service when they have so much money? At least permit me to collect some money from each of them. If you don't need that money, I will keep it."

"Don't even think of it," cautioned Prabhat Ranjan. "Money from these people will bring you no good. It will only bring you misery. Do you understand?"

Gaur Mohan obeyed the instruction and abandoned his plans to collect money from Prabhatda's rich clients. What he didn't realise was that Prabhat Ranjan was in fact not giving free service to the rich businessmen of Calcutta. Instead of accepting remuneration for himself, he would ask them to give large donations of food articles to free food distribution centres in Calcutta that were caring for the victims of the famine. Years later he revealed this to his monastic disciple, Acharya Vijayananda, and commented that his wealthy

clients would unhesitatingly agree to any amount he requested, more out of concern not to offend him than out of a desire to support the good cause. They did not want to lose the services of an astrologer like "Prabhat Babu" who knew a lot more than what the fate lines of their palms or the stars in their horoscope indicated.

Prabhat Ranjan's philanthropic activities continued even after the famine was over. Sometimes an orphanage in the city would be the beneficiary, while at other times some dilapidated school buildings received help with repairs. Sometimes a large number of poor children indifferent schools were provided with educational materials. In all these cases, he insisted the identity of the benefactor remain anonymous. He continued performing such services for several years.

### **Encounter with a Tiger**

Just as the war in Europe was about to take a decisive turn, the unit of the Indian Territorial Force in Jamalpur was called for its periodic training in Assam. Amar Sen, who was also in the training camp with Prabhat Ranjan, reported an interesting occurrence that took place while some of the trainees were on patrol duty in a nearby forest:

One day four or five of us were on patrol duty in a nearby forest as part of our training. Prabhat was leading our squad. He was about twenty-five yards ahead of us and we were walking along a narrow jungle path, when suddenly a tiger leapt down from a nearby slope and came face-to-face with Prabhat. The rest of us were some distance behind him. Seeing him in imminent danger, we immediately trained our rifles on the tiger. We were afraid that it might leap on Prabhat at any moment, so we wanted to shoot it. But Prabhat made a gesture with his hand indicating that we should not harm it. We were transfixed and did not know what to do. In the terrifying moments that followed, Prabhat appeared completely undisturbed. The tiger glared menacingly at him for a while and then to our relief, slowly ambled off into the nearby woods.

We all rushed over to Prabhat. We were very tense as we considered it to be a close call. But we found him calm and serene. One of us asked him, "Prabhatda, we were really scared. For a while we were frozen with fear. We thought that at any moment the tiger would leap on you, and we would be unable to rescue you. But you were quite unconcerned."

"Why should I feel concerned?"

"Why not? The tiger was looking at you so menacingly. We felt very tense. In one leap it could have finished you."

We were all afraid that another tiger might pounce upon us from somewhere in the jungle. Soothing our strained nerves, Prabhat said jokingly, "Actually we were having a friendly chat. The tiger was telling me about its mental agony."

"Is that so? What did it tell you, Prabhatda?" asked one of the boys in an effort to hide our nervousness.

"It said, 'See, human beings think we are ferocious and cruel. In fact we aren't cruel. We kill only when we are hungry and then too only those animals that Nature has prescribed as our food. But humans come to our jungle and kill us, even for sport. They enjoy seeing us die a painful death. They kill other living beings for their own enjoyment. Although Nature has designed the human body to be vegetarian, they eat all kinds of animals, birds and other creatures just for the taste. They not only destroy us and our habitats, but they also destroy other human beings as well due to selfishness and hatred. Yet they have the temerity to call themselves civilized!'"

"Yes, Tigerji," I replied. "What you say is correct. Those people who don't love other human beings and all other living creatures are not human beings in the real sense of the term."

We all laughed heartily at the humourous way Prabhat had described a potentially dangerous situation and this helped us to release a lot of our tension. We then continued with our patrol duty.



### Subhash's Struggle for Freedom

One day, a few weeks after Prabhat Ranjan started his daily war briefings, some colleagues asked him about the whereabouts of Subhash Chandra Bose. In India at that time the popular notion was that he had renounced the world of politics and worldly life and was leading the life of an ascetic somewhere in the Himalayas.

That was a clever piece of disinformation that Subhash himself had deliberately created in order to camouflage his escape from India. Prabhat Ranjan surprised and excited his audience by revealing that Subhash had not become an ascetic, but was in fact in Germany seeking Hitler's support in the fight for India's independence from England. A few weeks later the nation was startled to hear Subhash Chandra Bose's voice broadcasting from Germany on Azad Hind Radio (Free India Radio) and calling on the people of India to rise up against British rule.

One morning in mid-1943 Prabhat Ranjan announced that Subhash had reorganised the Indian National Army (INA) with the help of the Indian prisoners of war from the British-Indian Army who had been captured by Japan. From then on he regularly briefed his colleagues about Subhash's activities. The establishment of the Provisional Government of Free India in Singapore in October 1943 and Subhash's landing on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the first Indian territories to be liberated from British rule, aroused feelings of tremendous hope among his listeners. Subhash gave the name Svaraj Dviip (Freedom Island) to Andaman and Shahid Dviip (Martyr's Island) to Nicobar. INA submarines were also reported to have been sighted off the Indian coast. Excitement mounted in the office when Prabhat Ranjan reported the participation of the INA in the Indo-Burma border war and Subhash's clarion call of 'Delhi Chalo' (On to Delhi). Subhash was pained by the news of the famine and offered to send a hundred thousand tons of Burmese rice to the starving people, but his offer was turned down by the British Government.

Certain political leaders in India criticised Subhash and called him a misguided patriot. Prabhat Ranjan stoutly defended him before

his colleagues, arguing, "Those who call Subhash Bose a misguided patriot have only superficial knowledge of politics and are all too eager to slander him. Britain, France and America sat together at the dining table with the Soviets and discussed the sovereignty of their respective countries even though their professed economic doctrines were poles apart. So what wrong did Subhash do if he, as the representative of a freedom-loving country which was trying to gain independence and which lacked a military force, sought the help of the Axis powers? If we analyse deeply, we will see that this world war is a war between two imperialistic and expansionist forces. Neither the Axis nor the Allied powers are the holy copper vessel and basil leaves that are bathed in the water of the Ganges. Subhash Bose wants to make the best utilization of the opportunities available. To state it more clearly, he is trying to snatch independence by making his adversaries ineffective; he wants to strike at the enemy while the iron is hot."

While the trumpets of the Second World War were sounding in different corners of the globe, the sound of the kettledrums could also be heard in various parts of India. A battlefield also opened up on Indian soil when the INA crossed the border in the northeast. Although this event was fairly insignificant from a military standpoint, it had enormous sentimental and propaganda value, and that made the British afraid. They tried in vain to completely black out all news coverage of the activities of Subhash and the INA when the INA invaded India's northeastern state of Manipur with the assistance of the Japanese Army. The news blackout continued as they laid siege to parts of Imphal and finally entered Kohima.

The common people of India would return home from work after sunset and crowd together around the radio with bated breath, secretly listening to the news about the Indian National Army. The country was teeming with rumours that the INA had penetrated deeper into India. This awakened a new spirit of patriotism among the people and triggered a secret recruitment drive for the INA in many parts of India. People wanted to be ready to support Subhash if he penetrated deeper into the country. Prabhat Ranjan actively

encouraged the recruitment effort. Arun Mukherjee, his junior colleague, recalled Prabhat Ranjan giving him a pile of forms to secretly enrol people in the INA.

Several decades later in one of his books Prabhat Ranjan recalled one of those idealistic young men who were inspired by the INA:

“Shyamal Shasmal heard the unexpected news through the Indian National Army Radio that a people’s government had been formed in Tamluk. When he heard the news he felt restless and finally told me, ‘I can’t remain idle any longer. If I die, please inform my family in my village and my dear elder brother.’

“This man did not want to be a minister. He did not want to be a historical figure with his name inscribed on a metal casket. He was pure gold. I couldn’t even imagine how I would feel sending news of his death to his village.

“This morning I received the news that he had been shot dead by the military while uprooting railway tracks late last night. I suppose that after India attains independence the historical accounts of those who have made great contributions (or even negative contributions) to the cause of freedom will be put in metal caskets and buried in the same way that Emperor Ashoka left his historical accounts inscribed on pillars. There will certainly be nothing of the kind for our Shyamal Shasmal. How many such Shyamal Shasmals have come and gone? Can we afford to think about them? Perhaps only the names of those leaders who were prisoners of the highest class will be recorded in the pages of history, while the Shyamal Shasmals will sink into oblivion.”

The British administration grew paranoid about the INA and confiscated many private vehicles, even bicycles. They also removed all the boats from the shores of Bengal to prevent the INA from capturing them and fortified the coastal areas in anticipation of an invasion, either by land from Burma or by sea from the Andamans. In the meantime the INA made feverish preparations to gain control of the coastal areas of Chittagong and a few other areas. They had almost entirely surrounded the towns of Kutubdia, Sandip and Sharankhola in the Khulna district of East Bengal. The situation was



looking grave for the British. After several years of intense suffering which had broken their spirit and had left them feeling despondent, a new wave of patriotism was rekindled among the common people. In some places like Tamluk they declared independence and raised the flag of the INA. The British used brute force to quell the growing revolt; but the situation was becoming explosive. The British were terrified that if the INA advanced further into India, it would be the spark that would ignite the fire of nationwide rebellion, and an already tense situation in the country would become unmanageable.

When the patriotic fervor whipped up by the INA reached its peak, and the cries of the newly awakened mass reached a crescendo, Prabhat Ranjan's subordinate, Arun Mukherjee, asked him one day, "Prabhatda, will the INA really penetrate deeper into India?"

"It will not, as the war will soon be over," replied Prabhat.

"Then why have you been encouraging us to recruit people into the INA if the war is going to end soon?"

"I am doing it only to arouse the patriotic fervor and fighting spirit of the people."

## **End of the War in Europe**

By mid-1944 the Allied Forces were scoring one victory after another in Africa and Southern Europe. There was a lull in the fighting on the western front. England had been turned into a massive military base, and the huge Allied Army gathered and trained there. From there they planned a massive assault on mainland Europe. Their goal was to retake France as well as the rest of Western Europe and then to make a thrust towards Germany itself. There was a lot of speculation about the place where they would land, and some of his office colleagues asked Prabhat Ranjan about it. He replied that they would land somewhere in France just across the English Channel. At the start of his morning briefing one day at the beginning of June, Prabhat Ranjan surprised his listeners by announcing the incredible news of the Allied landing in mainland Europe. "Just now the Allied Forces are landing on the French coast of Normandy. Hitler's forces will now start to retreat towards Germany."

The next morning the media broke the sensational news that the Allied Army had successfully landed in Normandy.

As the war shifted to mainland Europe, Prabhat Ranjan continued his daily war briefings, providing his audience with detailed accounts of events as they were happening as well as advance information about future events. He talked about the recapture of Paris, the Allies' entry into Germany and the German retreat from the Russian front. All these tidbits of information created a huge sensation among his listeners.

By the beginning of April 1945 it became apparent that the end of the war in Europe was imminent. Prabhat Ranjan's colleagues were curious about the fate of Adolf Hitler. Prabhat Ranjan commented that Hitler would have no option but to commit suicide. He added that the war in Europe would end in Hitler's death. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1945 it was with great relief that the whole world learned that Hitler had died. It was later confirmed that he and his wife had both committed suicide. The next day, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, the war in Europe officially ended with the unconditional surrender of the German forces. Two days earlier the Italian dictator, Mussolini, had been executed by anti-fascist partisans, who hung his body upside down in a public square for the people to jeer at.

With the end of the war in Europe, the Allied Army shifted its attention to Japan and the Pacific. By this time Japan had already started to cede the territories it had occupied in the early days of the war. So the war in Asia became the focus of Prabhat Ranjan's briefings. He reported the American recapture of the Philippines and the other islands in the Pacific. With the Allied Armies gaining the upper hand in Asia, Japan and the INA started to withdraw from Northeastern India and Burma, contrary to the eager expectations of the people. Prabhat Ranjan commented that the main reason for the withdrawal of the INA was the occurrence of disease and starvation and not because of the British Army.

His colleagues were crestfallen to learn that the INA had unexpectedly retreated after entering the northeastern part of India. With the war in Asia nearing its end, the future of Subhash Chandra

Bose and the INA was uppermost in the minds of Prabhat Ranjan's colleagues. They asked Prabhat Ranjan about Subhash's fate after the war and if he would surrender to the British, but for some reason he avoided giving them a direct answer. The only thing he told them was that Subhash had done his duty well and had achieved what no other Indian had even dared to dream of. What he had accomplished would stir the patriotism of the Indian people, and this would eventually help to drive out the British from India.

He said, "Now that there is a new consciousness in the public mind, popular unrest will soon gather momentum, and a social explosion is inevitable. Even though the Allies won the war, they will not be able to deny India her freedom. To govern the country by driving a steamroller over the bodies of discontented people needs such an investment of manpower and wealth that the remedy will be far worse than the disease. The price won't be worth it, and Britain won't be able to afford it. So as a consequence of the patriotism instilled in the hearts of the people by Subhash they will have to quit India willingly or unwillingly, and sooner rather than later they will try to negotiate a peaceful transfer of power."

Prabhat Ranjan added that what Subhash had done for India's independence in a few years was far more effective than what the Congress Party had done in several decades. He often repeated that the British would be forced to leave India largely due to the actions of Subhash Chandra Bose and not because of the Congress Party.

Subhash Bose had created an air of mystique in the Indian mind as no other leader had done before him. The whole of India was eagerly waiting for further news about Subhash when the radio announced his death in an air crash at Taihoku Airport near Taipei on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 1945. This tragic news struck at the heart of the country, and the people reacted with shock, grief and disbelief. The next morning Prabhat Ranjan's shaken colleagues tried several times to seek his views on Subhash's death. He evaded their questions and



did not respond. When his colleagues pressed him for an answer, he surprised them by saying that he did not believe that Subhash was dead. His remarks brought great relief to everyone. However, he adamantly refused to comment any further. His colleagues did not fail to notice that whereas Prabhatda had always been very precise and had gone into great detail when describing the events taking place in the different war zones, he remained uncharacteristically vague about the fate of Subhash Chandra Bose. Despite repeated pleas by his colleagues for clarification, he maintained a stoic silence on the issue.

### **Atom Bomb Will Become Powerless**

Prabhat Ranjan frequently reported on the massive Allied bombing of Tokyo, Okinawa and other cities in Japan. He was highly critical of the needless killing and maiming of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. One day he informed his colleagues that the American forces had just landed in Okinawa, the southern island of Japan. His colleagues thought that it was a sign that the war in Asia would soon end. Prabhat Ranjan, however, disagreed. He said that before the curtain finally fell, America would carry out an act more diabolical than anything it had done so far, but he refused to elaborate. Then one morning he announced that America had completely wiped out the Japanese city of Hiroshima with a new type of bomb. The massive destruction of Hiroshima was announced to the world the following morning. Everyone was stunned. Prabhat Ranjan added that the Hiroshima bombing was not the final act of horror that the Americans would perpetrate and that they would soon drop another similar bomb before the war finally ended. Three days later on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, he told his colleagues that the Japanese city of Nagasaki had also been destroyed that morning with another atom bomb.

The total annihilation of the two Japanese cities and the immense destruction that followed caught the world off guard. This outrageous act of war against the general public incensed Prabhat Ranjan. He said, "The Allied Forces have mercilessly killed more than a hundred thousand absolutely innocent men, women and children in Hiroshima and Nagasaki with their atom bombs. They have thrown innumerable

men, women and children into the jaws of death and poisoned, maimed and mutilated countless others through the nuclear fallout. This is an unpardonable crime against humanity. Those responsible for this black history will never be able to erase the blot of their crime by mouthing hollow, high-sounding slogans and releasing white pigeons of peace.”

The massive destructive power of the atom bomb became a topic of ongoing discussion among the people. Later when the Soviet Union also developed nuclear weapons, numerous international debates and discussions took place about the atom bomb's ability to destroy the world. Such discussions raged in India as well. Naturally Prabhat Ranjan's colleagues were eager to seek his views about the matter. When they asked him about it, he surprised them by saying that in the future far more powerful weapons would be invented and that the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs were only a shadow of the weapons that were to come. He added, however, that humanity had nothing to fear, as the human mind was versatile and would also invent ways to neutralize these weapons.

Years later, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 1978, when the nuclear arms race between the Warsaw Pact and NATO power blocs sparked a serious debate about the future of the world, Prabhat Ranjan discussed this issue with his disciples in greater depth. “The power of the human intellect is far superior to that of an atom bomb. So to imagine that atomic bombs will destroy the human race is to insult human intelligence, to belittle human psychic power. Human beings have made the atomic bomb; they are its creator, so how can an atomic bomb destroy humanity? In the future they will invent other weapons that will counteract the destructive power of the atomic bombs and neutralize them. An atom bomb has no intelligence. In the future human beings will produce equipment, devices and weapons that will have inbuilt intelligence. But even then, the intelligence of those devices and weapons will be less than the human intelligence that created them. So there is no reason for human beings to cry out in fear, ‘Oh, what will happen if there is an atomic war?’”

In another discourse he observed, "In future the mind which has invented nuclear weapons will invent still more powerful ones. Then the people of that time will pass comments about the atomic weapons of today, saying such things as, 'Our forefathers were very brave and innovative people, but they played with firecrackers.'"

Prabhat Ranjan dropped further hints about the future direction of scientific research, particularly regarding the development of weapons, in a discourse he delivered on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1987 in Calcutta. He said that "If the nuclei of protoplasmic cells are split, they will release innumerable times more energy than a nuclear explosion. As living bodies are composed of countless protoplasmic cells, they possess huge reserves of energy. Today this is beyond people's comprehension."

On several occasions Prabhat Ranjan said that if those powerful, destructive weapons were in the hands of sadvipras (spiritual revolutionaries who have only the collective interest of the people at heart) humanity would have nothing to fear from these weapons.





## CHAPTER 6

# Evolution of Races

Prabhat Ranjan's World War II briefings were not limited to the war alone. He also discussed a host of other topics such as ancient history, race and anthropology, the comparative study of cultures, philology and the development of languages, geography, geology, and so on. Recalling those briefings, his friend Amar Sen commented, "Those discussions were not like normal ones, the way we understand them. Sometimes so much knowledge would pour out of my friend, and he would drift effortlessly from one subject to another. It was like taking a dip in the ocean of knowledge which would leave listeners completely mesmerised."

Another person who was captivated by the discussions was Ram Singh, the communist. Because of his ideological leanings initially he loathed Prabhat Ranjan. However, one day due to repeated insistence from Amar Sen, he decided to attend the lunchtime war briefing. Years later he recalled, "What I heard that day was simply mind-boggling. Sitting in Jamalpur, he could see what was happening in different parts of the world. At first I doubted the veracity of his words, but then three or four days later the very same information appeared in the newspapers. After that I attended the briefings regularly and within a few days I became one of Prabhatda's most ardent admirers. I often wondered how a person could be the repository of so much knowledge without reading a single book. After listening to him talk about God and spirituality, I quickly bade farewell to my communist convictions. One of the things that fascinated me the most was his description of the evolution and intermixing of different races. It could have been because there were some interracial marriages in my family."

Prabhat Ranjan later expanded on these topics in several discourses, which were subsequently published. Unfortunately,

however, much of what he said was lost and will become a subject of research in the future.

During one of the lunch hour sessions, Prabhat Ranjan talked about the terrible sufferings of innocent Germans due to the Allied bombings. He lamented, "It is painful to think that Germany will be in a shambles by the time the war ends. This great nation is being ruined because they reposed their faith in the leadership of a demon, a veritable demon in human form. Germany will pay a heavy price for its mistake."

He paused for a while. Then, heaving a deep sigh, he said, "But Germany will rise again from the ruins. It will rise because Germans are very dynamic. They are basically intellectuals. Do you know the name of Germany in Sanskrit?"

None of his colleagues knew that Germany had a Sanskrit name. They waited eagerly for him to continue.

"In old Sanskrit, Germany was called Sharmanya Bhumi, which means the land of intellectuals. In Sanskrit *shrama* means intellectual labour and *parishrama* means manual labour. You know that some high caste people, mainly Brahmins, have the title Sharma. Sharma has come from the word shrama meaning "people who do intellectual labour. A person who is engaged in shrama, who is naturally inclined towards intellectual work (shrama), is called 'Sharma'. So the German race is intellectually inclined. Bhumi means land and Sharmanya Bhumi means land of intellectuals. That is old Sanskrit, not modern Sanskrit. You can see that there is great similarity between the words Sharmanya and Germany. You may have noticed that I did not say that they are intelligent. I said they are intellectuals. There is a difference between being intelligent and being intellectual. An intellectual has a sharp ability to think, while an intelligent person is one whose thinking is guided by wisdom and benevolence. So every intellectual may not be intelligent. Suppose a person's brain is sharp, but he is selfish. We would call him cunning but not intelligent. Generally there is a problem with intellectuals. Many of them have

bloated egos and are not intelligent. I would rather say that they are fools, even though they are intellectuals. If the Germans had been intelligent, they would not have succumbed to Hitler's propaganda about the superiority of the Aryan race.

“To say that the Aryans are a superior race is utterly wrong. The Aryans who migrated to India several thousand years ago also suffered from a superiority complex. The Dravidians and the Mongols (Orientals) had been living here long before the Aryans arrived. Dravidians are a mixture of Austrics (Australoids) and Negroids, and they had been living in India for several thousand years before the Aryans came. It was their original homeland. We can see the arrogance of the fair-skinned Aryans in ample measure in epics like the Ramayana, where the non-Aryans were portrayed in a very bad light. The Dravidians were branded as demons, and those who were short in stature among the Dravidians were called monkeys. Mongoloids were categorized as monsters, and the non-Aryans who practised advanced tantric meditation in the burial grounds were denigrated as ghouls. The non-Aryans performed the Tantra sadhana taught by Lord Shiva, whereas the Aryans observed the rituals of the Vedas or practised different forms of nature worship. Tantra sadhana sharpened the minds of the non-Aryans and developed them spiritually. In fact, they were far more mentally and spiritually evolved than the Aryans who looked down upon them. The non-Aryans were also socially more advanced, as they had wholeheartedly embraced Lord Shiva's teachings of social equality. Even so, the Aryans felt superior to them and did not initially accept Shiva's teachings, as he was not an Aryan. As time passed, some of the Aryans understood the importance of Tantra sadhana in spiritual life and secretly practised it at night, while in the daytime they continued to perform vedic rituals. Such people came to be known as Mishras, meaning those who mixed both tantric and vedic practices. Today there are communities in Bihar and other places who are their descendants and have the title Mishra.



“Shiva was born more than seven thousand years ago into an Aryan-Mongol family. He loved people of all classes, from the highest to the lowest. Irrespective of their background, Aryans, non-Aryans, Dravidians, Austriacs, and Mongols all flocked to Him. Shiva introduced the concept of marriage and created systems of dance, music and medicine. He was indeed the father of human civilisation. In order to create social integration, He married three women, one from each race – Parvati, an Aryan, Ganga, a Mongoloid, and Kali, a Dravidian.”

Prabhat Ranjan’s colleagues were surprised to learn that Lord Shiva was in fact a historical figure and that the Ganga associated with Shiva was actually the name of a woman and not the river Ganga (Ganges). In his later years, in a series of discourses, Prabhat Ranjan gave many more details about the life of Lord Shiva and His teachings.

Talking about the Aryans Prabhat Ranjan continued, “Their original home was in an area in southern Russia east of the Ural Mountains, which is nowadays known as the Caucasus. From there they migrated to different areas around the Black Sea and then travelled up the River Danube to Central and Western Europe. They also settled in Iran, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, North Africa, and Spain and along the Mediterranean coast, spreading out from there across the western part of France and into the British Isles. Later they also migrated to Afghanistan, the Indus Valley, and the Red River Valley in Southwest China. Some of them also settled in Korea and Japan. Gradually the Caucasian Aryans, who spread to various parts of Europe, evolved into three distinct sub-races – the Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean. The Nordics originally lived near the North Pole. They are tall and have high noses, blonde hair and a reddish-white complexion. Their eyes are brown like a cat’s, except for those who live in Scandinavia whose eyes are blue. Nowadays they live in Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Finland, and northern Russia. Alpine Aryans are of medium height, have blackish blue hair (black hair that has a blue tinge in the light), blue eyes, and a milky white complexion. They live in Germany, France, Western Europe and parts

of Asia. They have hooked noses and slightly cooler blood than the Nordics. Mediterranean Aryans have fair skin, black hair, and black eyes; they have cooler blood than the Alpines and are somewhat shorter in stature. The people from Jammu in North India, the south of France, Arabia, Portugal, Italy and the Balkans belong to this Mediterranean sub-race. Of course today due to much intermixing we find Mediterranean Aryans with blond hair and Alpine Aryans with brown hair.

“Human beings are basically the same everywhere, although their appearance varies. Some are white; some are black, some brown and some yellow; some have long noses and some have flat ones. So there is a lot of variation in the features of the different races and sub-races.

“The word Aryan was originally a German word, and was derived from the vedic word ‘*arya*’. The word ‘*arya*’ came from the vedic verbal root ‘*ri*’, which means to cultivate or to plough. So, the meaning of the word *arya* is ‘a person who, or community of people that works as cultivators.’ During the Rigvedic era, the Aryans reared cattle and were only acquainted with barley and a few other crops. At that time, the first waves of Caucasian Aryans left Central Russia and migrated eastwards in search of greener pastures. When the nomadic Aryans reached present-day Iran, which was at that time known as Aranya Vraja, they learned to cultivate wheat and some of them learned how to cultivate rice from the natives, who they called Asuras.

“Who were these Asuras who are described as demons in various epics? They were the non-Aryan inhabitants of Assyria in Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates. They were very hostile to the Aryans, who disliked them intensely. Asuras were not abnormal creatures fifty feet tall, with over-sized noses, ears and teeth, as depicted in the Aryan epics. They were, in fact, ordinary human beings, just like us. During the time of Lord Shiva, they took shelter under Him. They were staunch followers of Tantra. However, they rejected everything Aryan – the Aryan code of conduct, their rituals, religion, etc. Everything related to Aryanism was repugnant to them, and for this reason the Aryans considered it an act of virtue to

kill the Asuras. Even today, some of the descendants of the Asura community can be found in the district of Palamu and some other parts of modern India.

“Although the Aryans became acquainted with paddy when they came to Iran, they did not cultivate it extensively. In the vedic language paddy is called *brihi*. Brihi became rihi, then rihi, risi, and finally “rice” in modern English. The further they migrated towards the east, the more they came to realise the importance of growing a variety of crops. Even so, their staple was generally barley. After coming in contact with different groups of people in Iran, Afghanistan and northwest India, they took up farming. They also developed strategies of warfare. Upon reaching India, they were influenced by the developed social systems of the non-Aryans living there, which helped to refine their intelligence.

“India was attractive to the Aryans because its fertile land was suitable for cultivation and rearing cattle; it also had a moderate climate and an abundance of rivers. Several thousand years earlier, the same features had attracted the Mongoloids, who came to India from the north along the Brahmaputra Valley. In those days civilisations grew up along the banks of rivers. That is why we hear about the Indus Valley civilisation, the Gangetic civilisation, the Nile River Valley civilisation, and the Indo-Tibetan civilisation, which spread out along the Brahmaputra River. The Mesopotamian civilisation flourished between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers and the Chinese civilisation along the Yellow River. Everywhere in the world people settled along the banks of the important rivers. Living close to a river was beneficial for the undeveloped people of those days in several ways. It offered an easier means of communication and helped them to grow food and rear their cattle. The river was the very source of sustenance for the people of that period.

“Rivers usually have three stages – the hill, plain, and delta stages, although a few have only the hill and delta stages. Like a river, a civilisation also originates in the hills. In the plains, where tributaries join the main river, a blending of emerging civilisations takes place, giving rise to a new civilisation. In the delta a further blending takes place to produce a still more advanced civilisation.”



Prabhat Ranjan then discussed how different civilisations blended and flourished along the banks of various rivers in India and how different cultural influences could be found even along the banks of short rivers. As an example, he quoted the Thames in England, where the Norman influence developed on the south side and Anglo-Saxon influence on the north side of the river. He then described how the Aryans migrated along the various eastbound rivers of North India until they finally arrived at the border of Magadha in present-day Bihar. The Aryans could not advance further because of stiff resistance from the people of Magadha, who were fierce fighters and were staunchly opposed to the vedic teachings of the Aryans. They were strong adherents of Tantra.

Prabhat Ranjan then examined the composition of the Vedas by the Aryans, clearing up several misconceptions. "The Rigveda was not composed in India, but mainly in Central Asia and Russia. So it can be regarded as an ancient relic of the non-Indian Aryan civilisation. The Yajurveda was composed in Iran, Afghanistan, northwest India and certain parts of what is called Russia today. Only part of it was written in India. Afghanistan (Gandhar) and certain parts of Russia were part of India at that time. The Atharvaveda was composed in Afghanistan and India. The Rik, Yajur and Atharva Vedas were edited and divided into different sections much later, about 3500 years ago, by the great sage Krishnadvaipayana Vyasa. The oldest compositions were named Rigveda, the intermediate portions were called Yajurveda and the rest was named Atharvaveda after the great sage, Atharva, who was the author of the first part of this Veda. A compilation of the musical compositions of the three Vedas was created to form yet another Veda, i.e. Samaveda, the fourth Veda. *Sama* in Sanskrit means "musical composition". The Samaveda itself is not a Veda.

"Human beings began their journey along the path of civilisation only 15,000 years ago. This can be inferred from the fact that their language began gradually evolving in complexity at about this time. The oldest part of the Vedas belongs to this period. There is a close similarity between the language used in the oldest part of the Vedas

and the language of the people who lived 15,000 years ago. The vedic civilisation is the oldest civilisation in the world.

“The Rigveda was composed approximately between ten to fifteen thousand years ago, the Yajurveda seven to ten thousand years ago, and the Atharvaveda five to seven thousand years ago. The word Rigveda originally came from the word ‘rik’. The verbal root ‘rik’ means ‘to glorify’ (through song or through ordinary language). So ‘rik’ means hymns glorifying gods and goddesses. At the dawn of civilisation, the sages used to regard the various manifestations of Nature as the play of a single God and they composed hymns to that God. At that time script had not yet been invented, so the disciples used to learn by listening to the verbal teachings of the guru. These were all considered to be words of truth, words of knowledge, and since they provided spiritual guidance to the uncultured human beings of the day, they were called Veda or knowledge.

“The meaning of the verbal root *vid* is “to know”. The word Veda is derived by adding the suffix *al* to the verbal root “*vid*”; it means knowledge. And due to the fact that the teachings were all transmitted orally, its other name was *shruti* (*shru + kti*). The verbal root “*shru*” means “to hear”. One meaning of the word *shruti* is “ear”; its other meaning is “that which is learned by listening.” Each *shloka* of the oldest part of the Vedas was called a *rik*. When many *riks* were collected together to create a certain idea or expression, it was called *sukta*. Many *suktas* together formed a *mandala*.

“The Yajurveda is mainly concerned with rites. The word *yajuh* means “that in which rites are predominant.” Atharva was a sage who inspired the composition of this part of the Vedas, so it was given the name Atharvaveda. In Sanskrit *atharva* means “very old”.

“Although the Aryans were polytheists and nature-worshippers, they did not worship idols, not because they understood the philosophical defects of doing so, but because they lacked the refined artistic sense necessary to make the idols. As the Aryans gradually started to adopt Tantra, the Yajurveda era saw the advancement of the Aryan people on all levels and the development of the concept of

monism. During this era, not only was there a noticeable intellectual development among the Aryans in general, but philosophy and spirituality also attained great heights of expression among the sages and seers of the Aryan community. Due to the influence of Tantra, the concept of monism in the Yajurveda was far more clearly defined than in the Rigveda.

“The Atharvaveda was composed in India. At the time of its composition the Aryans were living in close contact with the non-Aryans. As a result the Tantra of the non-Aryans had a marked influence on the Atharvaveda. Being non-Aryan, the Atharvaveda cannot be said to represent the Aryan civilisation. In the subtle philosophy of the Atharvaveda, particularly of the Nrisimha Tapaniya Upanishad<sup>1</sup>, the influence of non-Aryan Tantra is far greater than that of the Aryan Veda.

“The migrating Aryans initially settled in the hills and valleys of northern India after fighting and defeating the ancient tribal inhabitants. Although there was little racial mixing between them, the Aryans were greatly influenced by the local culture. This area was known as Kash. The Aryans renamed it Kashmeru, meaning mountains of the Kash people. Kashmeru later became Kashmira and then much later Kashmir. Although the Aryans of Kashmira did not give up their vedic beliefs, they also practised the indigenous Indian Tantra.

“As the southern part of Kashmira was littered with pebbles resembling the jambu fruit, the Aryans named it “Jambu Dvipa”, which became modern-day Jammu. Subsequently Jambu Dvipa came to mean the whole of India. In the sandy beds of the many rivers that crisscross Jambu Dvipa they discovered gold, and so gold came to be

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<sup>1</sup> This is a minor Upanishadic text attached to the Atharvaveda and classified as a Vaishnava Upanishad. The Upanishad is divided into two parts, the NrisimhaPoorva and the NrisimhaUttara. The first part is devoted mainly in explaining the meaning of the Narasimha Mantra and other related mantras, while the latter part deals with deeper spiritual aspects such as the nature of the soul, the nature of the human personality, and the different states of consciousness.



known as jambunada. When they later spread out across India, they realised that it was ideal not only as a place to live, but also for self-development. So they named it "Bharata Varsha". "Bhara" means "that which feeds"; "ta" means "that which helps in the process of expansion"; and "varsha" means "a vast stretch of land". Thus, Bharata Varsha means "a vast expanse of land which supports the all-round development of its inhabitants." This name indicates how favourable the Aryans found the conditions in India.

"The Aryans did not have their own script and learned about the alphabet only after coming in contact with the Dravidians. The Dravidians of the Harappa and Mohenjodaro civilisations of India were already using a script known as the Saindhavi script. After the Aryans migrated to India, that script morphed into the Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts.

"After coexisting with the non-Aryans for a long period, the Aryans were influenced by them in many ways. In fact there is hardly anything of the original Aryan culture left today. Of course, the non-Aryans also took on certain Aryan traits, among them their fair complexion, their proficiency at various activities and their ostentatious lifestyle, including their noisy ceremonies. From the non-Aryans the Aryans acquired a well-knit social system, subtle insight, as well as spiritual philosophy and Tantra sadhana. Initially the Aryans tried hard to preserve the purity of their blood and made great efforts to keep shudras (enslaved non-Aryans) at arm's length, but such endeavours eventually came to nought. Throughout India there was intermixing between the Aryans and the non-Aryans (the Dravidians, the Austrics, and the Mongoloids), which led to the creation of a new mixed race. That is why dark-skinned Brahmins and fair-skinned shudras are a common sight in India today. Their skin colour testifies to the mixture of Aryan and non-Aryan blood running in their veins.

"In northwest India and Kashmir there are a good number of people of Aryan descent, while in the rest of India they are few in number and are mainly of mixed blood. To locate them today would be quite a challenge."

Prabhat Ranjan described the momentous Aryan conflicts with the non-Aryans and the gradual intermixing of the different races in India. He also reviewed the subsequent several thousand years of demographic changes in India, explaining in what ways the Aryans were influenced by the habits, civilisation, and language of the non-Aryans and how they came to adopt Tantra. He concluded his lengthy discussion with the following words, "Nobody should think about maintaining the purity of any race. There should be an intermixture of the races. I would rather say that people of mixed blood are more intelligent and developed in other ways too. Thus Nature also supports intermixing."

The discussion that had started with a description of the bombing of German cities during World War II lasted almost an hour. During this time, Prabhat Ranjan took his enthralled audience on a knowledge-laden tour of topics pertaining to race and anthropology, history, and geography. It was one of several occasions when he went less into detail about the events of the war and delved more into matters of general knowledge – the evolution and history of different races, the amalgamation of various ethnic groups and the geography of different places, among other things. In those early days, his colleagues were exposed to the vast repository of his knowledge only on rare occasions, while in later years, his disciples had many more opportunities to witness the astounding range and depth of his knowledge.

### **Gondwanaland**

On another occasion, Prabhat Ranjan's discussion focused on the major races of the world in relation to the ancient geology of Gondwanaland. He introduced the topic by saying:

"Human society is one and indivisible. Despite external differences in features, it is natural for people of different races to mix. What Hitler has tried to do using brute force will not succeed, nor has it succeeded in the past. The Aryans who migrated to India several thousand years ago also tried to maintain their racial purity. But India has become the most racially blended society in the world. The chief architect of this blending was Lord Shiva. The first Aryans

started arriving in India a few thousand years before the advent of Lord Shiva. When He took birth more than seven thousand years ago, India was a seething cauldron of racial conflicts mainly between the Aryans and non-Aryans. It was the meeting point of the four major races - the Australoids, Negroids, Mongoloids, and Aryans. Long before the Aryans arrived, a complete blending of the Austriacs and Negroids had taken place. The race that emerged from that blending, the Dravidians, inhabited India at the time of the arrival of the Aryans. The original inhabitants of India were the Austriacs.

“About four and a half billion years ago, when this planet first dissociated from the sun, it was a ball of burning gases. Gradually those gases were converted into liquid, and then slowly a layer of solid formed on that liquid matter. The land mass is only about 2330 million years old. You may have noticed that whenever there is a layer of solid at the top of a pot of boiling milk, the surface is not uniform; it is uneven. At that time the middle part of the earth was in a liquid state. Part of the outer solid layer on top of that liquid came to be known as Gondwanaland.

“In that hoary past there was no Arabian Sea, no Indonesia and no Australia, no Bay of Bengal or any of the islands that we know today. There was no North India, no Tibet, and there were no Himalayas. In the prehistoric past the entire northern part of India, that is, the entire area north of the Vindhya Hills up to Tibet was under the sea. There was only one contiguous land mass stretching from what is now East Africa through South India and Malaysia up to Australia. This land, the oldest land mass in the world, consisted mainly of a long island in an archipelago. The area south of the Vindhya, the present Arabian Sea, South Africa, Australia, and Southeast Asia formed the Gondwana archipelago. The eastern part of Gondwanaland was known as Rarh. Magadha was situated in the northeast corner of prehistoric Gondwanaland. Palamu was in the centre. Tripura is nearly as old as Rarh. Its soil, water, people, and language are the same as those of Gondwanaland.

“The Austriacs inhabited what were the southern regions of Gondwanaland, while the Negroids lived in the southwest. After



living side by side for tens of thousands of years, there was an intermixing of these two races, giving rise to a sub-race, the Austrico-Negroids, the Dravidians of today. They inhabited the central areas. The physical structure of the different ethnic groups indicates the race to which they belong.

“Only the Vindhya mountain range and its sister ranges, the Satpura, Sahyadri, Rajmahal and Ramgarh, existed at that time. These mountains were very high and were always covered in snow. As a result, the rivers issuing from them were full of melted snow-water all the year round. The Suvarnarekha, the Kamsavati, the Rupanarayan, the Damodar, the Ajay, the Mayuraksi, and other smaller waterways were once huge rivers in eastern Gondwanaland, but have become much smaller today. The Krishna, Kaveri and Tungabhadra rivers that today flow through the peninsula of India also existed in Gondwanaland about 300 million years ago. Due to constant rainfall and storms the mountain peaks have eroded.

“Rarh, the oldest part of Gondwanaland that has remained above the sea, later became one of the earliest birthplaces of human beings. The hills of Rarh are also at least 300 million years old. In other parts of what was Gondwanaland, it was extremely cold and there were frequent snowstorms, thus, the environment was not suitable for the evolution of human beings. Rarh had the living touch of warmth, so humans emerged there first. They founded the world’s most ancient civilisation and culture, which we may call the original culture of Rarh. The entire Rarh area was part of old Gondwanaland and included Ranchi, Purulia, Burdwan, Bhanjabhum, Sundargarh and some parts of Orissa.

“Gondwanaland covers what are presently the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, the Indonesian Archipelago, the Deccan Plateau, Southeast Asia and Oceania. It was given its name by geologists because the Gond people of the Austric race live in the central areas of what was Gondwanaland. Today their descendants still live in Chattisgarh in central India. These Austrics were the original inhabitants of Gondwanaland. They were taller than the Austrics living in other places. The word “Austric” is derived from the word

'*astra*', meaning those who carried weapons (*astra*); this was because they found themselves in a hostile world. The names Australia and Austria came from this word. Austriacs are generally of medium build and have pointed noses and black skin. They are shorter than Negroes and their hair is not as curly. The Kols, Bhils, Mundas, Santhals and Birhors of India are Austriacs. The aborigines and Maoris of Australia and New Zealand, and the natives of Papua New Guinea, Melanesia and Micronesia all belong to the Austric race. However, the natives of the Andaman Islands do not. They are a blend of Austriacs and Mongoloids. The Jarvadiis, who live along the Bengal-Burma border, have the same ethnic origin. It is interesting to note that the Aborigines of Australia and the Maoris of New Zealand were introduced to Tantra.

"The Negroids, who were the original inhabitants of what was southwestern Gondwanaland, evolved into three distinct sub-races: the general Negroids, who are five and a half to six feet tall; the Zulus, who are six feet or more in height; and the Pygmies, who are less than five feet tall. Steps should be taken to protect the Zulus and the Pygmies. The Negro race has three branches: western, northern, and southern. There are variations in their facial appearance and hair. Their hair is similar, but there are differences in the curls. The Negroes lived in Africa and New Guinea and near the southern coast of what was Gondwanaland. Their descendants are found in South India and a few of the Andaman Islands, the Malaysian peninsula, and the Philippines.

"Around 30 million years ago, a high magnitude plutonic earthquake occurred. The land where the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea are today was submerged under the sea, and present-day North India emerged. In the same massive earthquake, the hills of Gondwanaland became islands in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. In due course, the land mass drifted across the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, giving rise to the continent of Australia and the Indonesian archipelago. In this way a group of 503 islands, including Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines was formed. Around this time the Himalayas also started to emerge. All this took place about

30 million years ago. So the mighty Himalayas are approximately 30 million years old, whereas the denuded hills of Gondwanaland and Rarh that we see today are 300 million years old.

“Fossils of marine creatures can be found in the Shivalik range of the outer Himalayas. This will prove that at one time these mountains were under water. The Indo-Gangetic plains were formed from the alluvial deposits of the Himalayas. The Sahara Desert in North Africa and the Thar Desert of Sindh and Rajasthan were also previously under the sea, so their sand dunes are of marine origin. These dunes contain the proof that these regions were at one time under the ocean.”

### **The Evolution of Race**

During the war years, there was much discussion about the different races and their prejudices. The British and the Nazis claimed superiority to justify the scourge of colonialism and racism. During his lunchtime talks, Prabhat Ranjan demolished the theory of the superiority of any one race through his talks about human evolution as well as the birth and eventual intermingling of the various races, which ultimately evolved into a broad spectrum of mixed races.

“Those first forebears of the human race have been called *Australopithecus* in ethnology. One auspicious day in the remote past, about one million years ago, the first human beings saw the light of day on this verdant earth. The *Australopithecus* divided into two branches with chimpanzees and orangutans in one, and human beings in the other. The first human beings were born in the vast geographical area between the islands of Java and Palestine. The *Australopithecus* gradually took on a human form, but this great transformation did not take place overnight, or even in one century, but by slow degrees.

“A tremendous psychic change took place on the earth about a million years ago with the evolution of the first primitive humans. However, the humans of today developed only 100,000 years ago and it took them a long time to become civilized.

“Apes and ape-men first emerged in east India in the region around Gaya. There were differences between the humans that



evolved on either side of the Koyel River in terms of intelligence and other qualities. These differences still exist today among their descendants. The dwelling place of the Munda clan of that primitive age was on the eastern side, while on the western side lived the Oraon clan. The Oraon group of languages was spoken by the Dravidians. The Mundas are Austrics, and their language is also of Austric origin. The Birhorh community also took birth in this area in very ancient times. They are also Austrics. The original home of the Malpaharhis is in the north-eastern part of this area. Later they were driven out by other groups and forced to take shelter in the forest at the far edge of the Rajmahal Hills.

“In those ancient days there was a great deal of fighting between the ape-men and the apes. The apes did not know about fire, so they could not use it as a weapon. But once the humans learned how to make fire, they started to burn to death their enemies, the apes, and then ate them.

“There is yet another clan that originated in the Koyel River Basin – the Asuras. They developed their own separate culture. Later they migrated northwest in the direction of Europe. A few words of their language can still be found among the gypsies of Central Asia and in the Romansch language of Switzerland.

“Some time in the unknown past during the Pleistocene Age, the Australopithecus evolved into a new species known as Homo erectus. They were neither Australopithecus nor human beings in form and nature. The fossils of these creatures can be found in different parts of Java and China as well as in East and North Africa. Later in subsequent ages, vast changes occurred in the living conditions on the earth, and thousands of species vanished entirely as a consequence. Because of the immutable law of Nature, these species had to depart from the earth forever, without leaving a trace. But they left behind their descendants, Homo sapiens, who were the first ancestors of human race.

“The first Homo sapiens did not remain in one place. In quest of greater ease, comfort and safety, they spread out from Eurasia to the

Arctic Ocean, from the Bering Straits to Melanesia, and from there again they moved off in different directions, looking for new homes beyond unexplored horizons.

“Thus the single species of *Homo sapiens* spread out across the world. At first there were only slight differences of colour and physiognomy among them. The passage of time and the diverse geophysical conditions created greater differences in their physical structure. Therefore, the apparent diversity of appearance in the different human races today is the product of natural conditions.

“From the time of their advent on this earth, human beings were confronted with hostile natural environments of different types. They had to fight against adverse circumstances for their very survival, and that struggle brought about marked changes in their external physical appearance.

“The greater the heat of the sun, the larger is the amount of ultraviolet rays in the sunlight. Where the sunrays fall on the earth at an angle, the sun gives less heat, and where the sun’s rays fall straight down on the earth, the heat is greater. White-skinned people find it very hard to live in hot countries, because their skin contains less of the chemical melanin and is therefore unable to stand much heat. Skin that has a large amount of melanin turns jet black. In hot countries the irises of people’s eyes are generally brown, because more melanin is required to protect the eyeball from the scorching rays of the sun.

“The nostrils of people in hot countries are also comparatively wide, and the front of the nose is extended. Why are they like this? Because external heat makes the internal air heat up. The body temperature thus increases, and the internal heat tries to force its way out rapidly. As a result of the rapid exhalation of heavy, hot air, the diameter of the front portion of the nose increases.

“People who live in cold countries develop fatty tissue in their bodies which helps to maintain the body temperature. And although their noses are high, their nostrils are comparatively narrow, because if a large amount of cold air enters the body, it will inevitably affect the lungs and vocal chords. Nature has designed the physical structure

of the inhabitants of cold countries in a way that is suitable for their climate. So only the amount of air required is able to enter the body.

“Variations in the natural environment and climate have effected other changes in the human structure. Some people are jet-black, some reddish white, some yellow, while others are brown. The four main races – the Aryans, the Austriacs, the Negroes, and the Mongoloids – gradually evolved due to the climatic conditions in which they lived over the course of hundreds of thousands of years. Although the single species of *Homo sapiens* developed into four distinct races due to variations in living conditions, they all originated from one and the same source – they evolved from *Australopithecus* to *Homo Erectus* to *Homo Sapiens*. The same stock divided into various races – white, black, brown, and yellow. These races are as different from one another as the rivers Ganga, Meghna, Padma, and Bhagirathi, which all spring from the same source, Gangotri in the Himalayas, and are all merely different branches of one river.

“The differences among these races and sub-races can be easily recognised in two ways: by comparing the skull index and the nose index. The skull index is the diameter from the nose around the skull, touching the hollow of the ears; and the nose index is the distance from the base to the tip of the nose. For example, Aryans have a small nose index and a large skull index. Negroids have a large nose index and an ordinary skull index. Their hair is curly due to a slightly higher percentage of mercury in the fat in its root.”

### **The Mongoloids**

In one discussion with his office colleagues Prabhat Ranjan revealed some interesting facts about the people of Japan and the Mongoloid race in general: “The Japanese are one of five branches of the Mongoloid race. The others are the Chinese, the Indo-Tibetans, the Malayans, and the Indo-Burmese. The Japanese race evolved out of the racial mixture of the Ainu - a sub-branch of the Aryans who lived on the banks of the Amur River – with a sub-branch of the



Mongoloids from Korea, and a hybrid community of brown-black people who migrated from Malaya and Indonesia. Japanese people are large with big faces, flat noses and high jawbones. The Chinese have a yellowish complexion with muscular bodies and are quite short in stature. Their skin is yellowish in colour, and they have little hair on their bodies. The Chinese people of today are also a blend of South Russians and Central Asians. The population of Greater China is a mixture of these different communities.

“The structure of the Japanese alphabet is akin to Chinese in that it is pictorial. Each sound is represented by a picture. For example, instead of writing “tree” as we do, a mark is made to signify “tree”. Two of these marks mean “park”. A forest has many trees, so three marks are used to mean “forest”. The languages of Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia have close links to Sanskrit.

The original name of Japan is Nippon, meaning the land of the rising sun. Since in the eastern hemisphere the sun rises first over Japan, the name of the country is Nippon. Some people pronounce nippon as nihon. In Chinese ni is pronounced ji and pon is pronounced pan, so the pronunciation of nippon in Chinese became jipan. The distorted pronunciation of jipan in English gave rise to “Japan”.

“Other branches of the Mongoloid race include the Malays, the Indo-Burmese and the Indo-Tibetans. The Malays, who inhabit Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, have thin figures, small bodies and flat noses. Filipinos have small faces.

“The Indo-Burmese people have flat noses and comparatively large bodies. They inhabit an area covering Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Burma and Thailand. Indo-Tibetan people inhabit an area which includes Tibet, Ladakh, Kinnaur, Nepal and North Bengal. The Garo, Tharu, Gurung, Garhwali, Bhutanese, Newari, Sherpa, Bhutia, Lepcha and Khasia people are all racially Indo-Tibetan. They have flat noses and are good looking. Their languages are a mixture of Sanskrit and Tibetan and make frequent use of nasal sounds. They use the Tibetan script. In the Indo-Tibetan language the sound “Ra” is

rarely used. Indo-Tibetan males have thin beards and moustaches and the females have flat breasts. The girls are very laborious - they can do hard physical work for long periods. Their lymphatic glands are well-developed, and they have a lot of stamina, which enables them to ascend and descend hilly tracts.

“China was the original homeland of the Mongoloids. Later they spread out to areas extending from the Arctic Ocean to the Bering Straits and the White Sea. They could not move westwards due to the high mountain ranges in Asia. So they moved eastwards and southward until they reached Burma, Siam (Thailand), Indochina, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, the Philippines and Japan, where they joined the original inhabitants of those places.

“Spiritual practices spread to China, Korea, and Japan due to the impact of Buddhism which originated in India. In Sanskrit *dhyana* means meditation. In Pali, the language in which Buddha preached, *dhyana* is called *jhan*. It became *chan* in Chinese. *Chan* became *chen* in Korean, and *chen* became *zen* in Japanese. The word “Tantra”, the name of the meditation that was taught by Lord Shiva more than seven thousand years ago, also changed in a similar manner. The root “tan” means “to expand”, and “tra” means “liberator”. The science that liberates you from all bondages - physical, mental and spiritual - is Tantra. In Chinese, Tantra metamorphosed into *taota*. *Taota* metamorphosed further to become *taoa*. In modern Chinese it is *tao*. Thus the Tantra of India became Taoism in China.

“For those who are not only physically humans, but their mind is also equally developed, the tantric style of practice is called *virachara*. *Vira* means brave. So *virachara* means the practice in Tantra that enables one to fight against the fetters of the mind. *Virachara* is of two kinds. In the south of the Himalayas the practice taught by Shiva is known as *virachara*. To the north of the Himalayas - in Tibet, China, Siberia, etc. - the practice taught by Shiva was known as *Chinachara*, that is, “the Chinese style”. One thousand three hundred years ago Maharshi Vashistha went to China to master the Chinese school of Tantra.”

In this way Prabhat Ranjan described the ancient spiritual links between India and China, Korea and Japan.

## Blended Races

In another lunch hour discussion, Prabhat Ranjan debunked Hitler's theory of the racial purity of the Aryans by describing in detail the pervasive blending of races that had occurred throughout human history. "Hitler has fed the German nation spurious notions of Aryan supremacy and incited the Nazis to fight this horrible war by infusing in them feelings of vanity and superiority. He has raised his arrogant slogan: 'The Aryans are not to be ruled but to rule.' But is this blind, chauvinistic concept of Aryan supremacy supported by the science of ethnology? No! A deeper analysis would expose the fact that modern Germans are not a homogeneous race. They are a mixed race. If we analyse the matter carefully, we will find that none of the human races existing today are pure. So talk of the "purity of blood" of a race is meaningless. This sentiment has been used only to hoodwink the German people. No one race can be completely pure. Blood is always pure.

"In the past during various unknown periods of history, different human groups came in contact with each other. This led to the unavoidable intermingling of blood, and ultimately many new races came into being, after living side by side with other racial groups for a long period. The innate migratory nature of human beings has driven them to journey from one horizon to another, from one hemisphere to another. Human beings have broken narrow geographical boundaries and set out for other lands, where they associated with the communities already living there.

"The reason why they intermingled with other races was to preserve their existence and to fight collectively against hostile natural forces. Wars, which led to the expansion of kingdoms, were another reason, while inter-racial marriages that created bonds between people was a third. A fourth reason was geographical proximity, as trade and communications as well as linguistic and cultural exchanges also led to the mingling of races. All these factors brought different groups of people in close contact with one another.



“Guided by their instincts, people of different races freely mixed with each other, and this led to inter-racial marriages. For instance, as a result of the constant intermingling of the blood of the Negroes, Europeans and native Indians in South America, a new race has emerged. Similarly, in Colombia and Mexico, a new Mestizo community has come into being as a result of interracial marriages between Europeans and Indians. The present Filipino race evolved out of the mixing of people from India, Indonesia, Malaya, China, Africa and Arabia. This contact and the close relationship between various groups gave birth to the many sub-races we find today. That is why it is not proper to attach any importance to differences in noses, eyes, hair, height, etc.

“Hitler has propagated extreme anti-Semitic hatred. But he does not know that the Semitic race originated about 15,000 years ago as a result of the blending of the Mediterranean and Alpine Aryans with Central Mongoloids and Negroids. This race is characterised by its perseverance, intellectual capacity and high degree of tenacity. Its original homeland was the central and southern portions of West Asia, excluding Persia.

“The Semitic language is a blend of two languages that occurred around 1500 years ago. The language spoken by the southern group is Arabic and that spoken by the northern group is Hebrew. People of the northern group have fair skin but they are not as fair as the Mediterraneans, and the people of the southern group have dark brown skin. Both the Hebrew and Arabic languages are written from right to left and they are related.”

Prabhat Ranjan went on to discuss the racial blending that occurred in India. “There has been a lot of intermixing of the different races and sub-races of India. Some examples of blended Indian races include the Bengalis, who are a mixture of Austriacs, Mongoloids and Negroids. Fair-skinned Bengalis have Aryan blood. The people from Rarh or western Bengal have less Mongoloid blood, and those in the northeast have more Mongoloid blood. Although the Bengalis are a blend of Austriacs, Mongoloids, and Negroids, the Mongoloid influence diminishes in southwest Bengal and increases in the northeast.

“Other blended races include the South Indian Austrico-Negroids or Dravidians. South Indian Brahmins have a fair complexion as they originally came from the north. The people of Madras are dark in colour, as they are part of the Austrico-Negroid sub-race. Tamil Brahmins are called Iyers and Iyengars. Iyers are Shaivas and Iyengars are Vaishnavas. Both are Aryans who came from Kashmir and blended with the Dravidians. A third example of racial blending is the people of Sirmaur, Himachal Pradesh, who are a mixture of the Mediterranean sub-race and the Austric race. Their colour is blackish. In the past Sirmaur covered the area from Kumaun to Simla.

“In Kinnaur the people’s skin is yellowish or brown and their noses are flat. They are as beautiful as angels are. The word Kinnaur is derived from *kin* + *narsh* meaning, ‘Are they humans or angels?’ As the people were very good looking, the place where they settled was called Kinnaur. Similarly, Tibet is known as Kim Purusha Varsha, which means, “Are they males?” because male Tibetans have scant facial hair. They also wear pigtailed, so it is difficult to distinguish between the males and females. They descended from a variety of tribes including the Shakas, Huns and Kushans and first appeared in the second phase of the Buddhist era during the rule of Kanishka.

“Although the people of Mithila are of Austrico-Mongolo-Negroid origin, in places where the Mongoloid race is predominant, they are heavily built. In Bengal the size of the body becomes smaller the further east we go, but towards the west it increases, and the people are taller. If an imaginary line is drawn connecting Arambagh, Burdwan, Kishanganj and Angara, it will be found that the people living along this line are taller than average. Beyond the River Sone the body again increases in size. In Gaya and Aurangabad people are smaller in comparison to the people of Bhojpur.”

“In India the greatest mixture of blood occurred in Bengal. It is a mixed civilisation, a blending of the Gondwana civilisation of Rarh, the Gangetic civilisation of northern India and the Mongoloid civilisations of Tibet and China.

“Society is continually trying to find a balance of unity in diversity. The natural impediments created by small clans, narrow communal interests, geographical distance and dogmatic customs and

usages – none of these obstacles could hinder the steady and silent movement towards the supreme goal. That is why the policy of apartheid, the vanity of racial superiority, national chauvinism and regionalism cannot thwart the progress of society. The outdated ideals of nationalism are crumbling to pieces today.”

### **Social Unity**

At a time when large sections of the world were dominated by colonial powers, Prabhat Ranjan surprised his colleagues by discussing issues that often extended beyond the narrow confines of nationalism, offering an alluring vision of a united human family. He told his spellbound colleagues, “The entire global population is multicultural in nature – nothing can be considered indigenous to this group or that group. The world will soon move quickly toward internationalism, and no country will be able to maintain its national character. The big cities will be the first to become cosmopolitan. Just as the mixture of the English, Spanish, French, and so on gave rise to the culture of America, similarly a cosmopolitan blending will take place. After that, large-scale cultural blending will take place throughout the world. No group of people and no nation will be able to maintain their national identity in spite of the determined efforts of political entities that will try hard to maintain these differences. They will not succeed. During a flood, ponds, streams, lakes and oceans all become one; in the same way, culture will become one.

“Society is composed of the various branches of all the races. There is no reason whatsoever to consider one race superior to another. The external differences in constitution among these human groups cannot alter their basic human traits – their experience of love and affection, pleasure and pain, hunger and thirst. These basic biological instincts and mental propensities find equal expression in human beings of all hues in all countries and in all ages. A rustic, unlettered, half-naked tribal mother in an unknown hamlet of the Chotanagpur Hills has deep maternal affection for her young children just like a well-educated mother in a locality of New York. The subterranean flow of love and affection exists in all hearts alike.



Everyone cries out in pain when one suffers and everyone feels pleasure on occasions of joy and happiness. In different geographical, cultural, social and other environments, lifestyles may vary – a few special psychic traits of some of those groups may become dominant – but fundamentally, the mental existence of all human beings flows along the same channels of ideas and consciousness. Under the influence of the same cosmic momentum and with the same cosmic inspiration, they have all set out for a tryst with the same destiny.”

Later while talking to his followers Prabhat Ranjan commented, “The newly awakened humanity of today is anxiously waiting for the dawn of one universal society under the vast blue sky. Noble and righteous people of all countries are bound by fraternal ties and are eager to proclaim in one voice, with one mind, and in the same tune that human society is one and indivisible. In this voice of deep unity and magnanimity lies the value and message of eternal humanism.”

“In this universe all entities are divine; only people have to realise it. Nobody is helpless or alone. We have mundane, supramundane and spiritual relationships with the universe. So people are duty bound to expand their mental arena because basically all finite entities have the inherent characteristic of universality. Their goal is the Supreme Entity who is free from limitations. Human beings will have to expand themselves beyond the bondage of limitations. Nobody should nurture an inferiority or superiority complex. Those who preach the racial superiority of any individual or group are committing a sin. They are going against human dharma. Like earth, air and water, Dharma is common to one and all. Human beings will have to become one with the Universal Entity.”



## CHAPTER 7

# The Partition of India

In mid-1945, after the war in Europe had come to an end and the war in the Pacific and Asia was in its final stages, one big question loomed large among the people in India: what would be the future of India? Several colleagues posed the same question to Prabhat Ranjan.

To all of them, his answer was that the British would soon leave India. He also predicted that in the course of time Britain would withdraw from all the other countries it had colonised for centuries. To support his view he analysed the far-reaching political and psychological consequences of the war:

“One of the most important effects of the war will be the psychological changes it brings about. There will be an awakening in both the imperialist countries and the colonies that have been under their yoke for centuries. Subhash’s fervent desire to liberate India from British rule and his strong nationalistic sentiments will create a surge of patriotism among the people of India. This will be the most important effect of the war on India. It will have a similar effect on the people of the other colonised countries as well.

Secondly, there will be a fundamental shift in the psychology of ordinary British citizens, who will oppose Britain’s continued subjugation of her colonies. Thirdly, global public opinion will turn against the scourge of colonialism. In addition, Britain will find it economically unattractive to hold on to India. Given the colossal expenses involved in rebuilding war-ravaged Britain, it will be impossible for the British government to continue to finance the vast administration of India. When the British finally leave India, a change will occur in the collective psychology of the people everywhere, compelling the colonial powers to grant independence to all the

countries they have ruled for centuries. As a result the world will be rid of the plague of colonialism forever. The process of decolonizing the world will start with India.”

Just as Prabhat Ranjan had predicted, the effects of the INA's efforts to liberate India were far-reaching. Although the INA had very little military impact, it triggered great changes in India's political landscape. Until the formation of the INA, the Indians in the armed forces had been considered loyal to the British throne. But Subhash changed that perception by organising tens of thousands of Indian POWs into a formidable force that was more potent politically than militarily. After the war ended, the British administration arrested and charged the INA officers with treason. The trial, which was widely reported in the media, captured the national imagination and had a powerful effect on those serving in the British forces in India. Apart from the courage and idealism of the INA soldiers, what inspired the people most was the fact that Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and even women had put aside their religious and gender differences to join forces against the British under the leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose. The INA's success in forging the disparate sections of Indian society into a strong political force ready to challenge the British was a powerful symbol of unity. This sparked a spontaneous show of support in the form of regular rallies and protests throughout the length and breadth of the country.

While the British Government was grappling with the burgeoning Indian patriotism, another troubling development took place. On 18<sup>th</sup> February 1946 the sailors of the Royal Indian Navy stationed in Bombay revolted, demanding the redressal of certain grievances. They renamed themselves as the Indian National Navy. News of the revolt spread like wildfire to the naval bases in Karachi, Kochi, Madras, Vishakhapatnam, Calcutta and elsewhere. Within a few hours tens of thousands of sailors from across the subcontinent joined the mutiny. There was also a strong show of sympathy by the army units in Jabalpur, Kanpur and some other parts of India as well as among the public, the police, the air force, and the civil service.



This rebellion shook the British Government. Subhash Chandra Bose and the INA became a rallying point for the mutineers and the public. The British administration had to seek the assistance of the leaders of the Congress Party and the Muslim League to bring the situation under control. The sheer magnitude of the uprising shocked them to the core. As the patriotic fervour stirred up by stories of the INA swept across India, it created a new awakening among the demoralized masses in general and the security forces in particular. The newly-elected British Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, received intelligence reports that Britain would no longer be able to depend on the Indian soldiers, the police or the civil service personnel in India in the highly-charged atmosphere. As a face-saving gesture, Prime Minister Atlee decided to make an honourable exit from India before the situation became totally unmanageable. On 20<sup>th</sup> February 1947 the British Government announced the decision to grant India its freedom.

### **Subhash Chandra Bose: India's Liberator**

The Congress Party and the Muslim League lost no time in trumpeting the role of their leaders in orchestrating India's independence. Although the Congress Party could legitimately claim some share of the credit, the Muslim League had almost none. Their role had been mainly opportunistic in nature. In several discussions with his office colleagues and others, Prabhat Ranjan credited India's independence in 1947 primarily to Subhash Chandra Bose. He maintained that it was the tremendous patriotic fervor whipped up by Subhash and the INA that had forced the hand of the British. Years later Prabhat Ranjan, who came to be known as Baba among his disciples, made his views explicit in a discussion with Amitananda, a monastic disciple.

A senior disciple had once told Amitananda that Baba had declared that India gained her independence in 1947 because of the efforts of Subhash Chandra Bose. This had contradicted everything that Amitananda had been taught about the topic at school. The popular notion that most Indians were fed was that India had gained independence through the struggles of leaders such as Mahatma

Gandhi. Naturally he was curious to know the rationale behind Baba's claims, which completely contradicted this widespread belief.

One evening in mid-1964 Amitananda and some others accompanied Baba on his evening walk. As they drew close to the Tiger's Grave, Baba raised the subject of who should take credit for India's independence in 1947. As the issue was still fresh in his mind, Amitananda listened with avid interest to every word Baba said:

“Do you know, Amitananda, a very wrong notion about how India achieved independence has been systematically propagated in order to inflate the role of certain leaders. Although there are several factors that contributed to India's independence, the key to India attaining freedom in 1947 was Subhash Chandra Bose. Subhash had a sharp mind and sensed that the most opportune moment to start a serious struggle for independence was when the British were preoccupied with the war. Gandhi did not support his ideas, as it went against his principle of non-violence. Finally Subhash decided to leave India and organise the fight for India's independence from outside the country. Who would have ever dared to conceive of such a plan to fight the mighty British Empire single-handedly?

“He was in jail when he meticulously charted his plan to escape from India. He started to fast, knowing well that the British would be compelled to release him if his health deteriorated. It all happened just as he had planned. After a few days of fasting he was released and kept under house arrest. One night he escaped so cleverly that the posse of security personnel posted outside his house round the clock did not get even a whiff of it until several days later. Some members of his family also learned about his escape only after some days. He underwent great hardship and had to go through some terrible ordeals before he was finally able to organise an army to fight the British. But he felt that an invisible power was with him at every moment, providing him with guidance and strength. It was his unflinching faith in God, strengthened by his ardent spiritual practice, strong moral character and selflessness that gave him the unshakable self-confidence necessary to undertake such a monumental challenge.

“After overcoming tremendous obstacles, he succeeded in motivating tens of thousands of Indian prisoners of war in the Pacific region and Southeast Asia and built up the Indian National Army to fight for India’s independence. Subhash’s patriotism was infectious. He inspired a large number of civilians of Indian origin, both men and women who were living in Southeast Asia, to assist him with huge human, financial and material resources. When Subhash left India in January 1941, Japan had not yet entered the war, and he had no idea that he would eventually take their assistance to fight the British.

“The INA delivered a powerful blow to the door of India in the Northeast but could not advance further as by then the war was drawing to a close with the surrender of Germany and the retreat of Japan. However, what he had done was sufficient for India to gain her independence. The reverberations of Subhash’s heroic efforts shook the British Crown in London and created a powerful ripple effect that transformed the whole scenario in India. After the suppression of the Quit India civil disobedience movement in 1942 and the arrest of thousands of leaders and activists, the people of India had fallen into a deep slumber. Severe scarcity and great famine had added to their despair. The loud knocking of the INA awakened the Indian people from their slumber and generated a huge wave of patriotism among the general public. What disturbed the British even more was that Subhash had been able to organise tens of thousands of Indian prisoners of war, who had once taken an oath of allegiance to the British Crown, to take up arms against the Crown itself. Stories about the INA’s efforts to liberate India directly inspired the naval revolt of 1946 and caused widespread civilian protests all over India in support of the INA.

“With less than a hundred thousand people of British origin, Britain had managed to subjugate hundreds of millions of Indians for centuries because there were several hundred thousand Indian soldiers, policemen and civilians who were ready to do their bidding. Several dozen princely states had also capitulated to the British. After the developments following Subhash’s jolt in the Northeast, the



British realised that they could no longer depend on the loyalty of the Indian armed forces and civilians. On top of that, after the war the British needed huge resources and manpower to rebuild their own war-ravaged nation and could ill afford to divert any of those resources to India. With the loyalty of the Indian armed forces in question, British Prime Minister Clement Atlee received a report saying that in the highly-charged atmosphere of India, even a small spark somewhere could turn the country into a burning cauldron, which even the might of the British army would not be able to bring under control. So Atlee thought it would be prudent to make an honourable exit before the situation deteriorated beyond their control. For the first time in history, a small army had won a war against a huge and powerful adversary through psychological warfare instead of depending on its military might. Subhash had created a wave of public opinion in India that was hostile to Britain and had shaken the confidence of the British in the loyalty of the Indian security forces and civil service. This technique of political warfare was invented by Subhash Chandra Bose especially to defeat the mighty British Empire.”

Baba paused to give time for this startling information to sink into the minds of his listeners, for whom this was a completely new way of looking at how India had won her independence. He continued, “Now tell me, Amitananda, who was the main person responsible for creating a situation that compelled the British to give India her freedom soon after they had won the war? Was it Subhash or those who are today given the credit for it?”

“Baba, Subhash should get the credit for India’s independence and not the other leaders,” replied Amitananda.

Baba continued, “I would go further and say that Subhash’s actions set in motion a chain of events that not only led to India’s freedom, but also brought about the collapse of the British Empire. As a concomitance of India attaining freedom, the rest of the colonial powers also had to withdraw from their colonies. So it can be said

that the decolonization of the world started with Subhash. If it hadn't been for him, Indian independence would have been delayed by another fifteen years or more."

"Then, Baba, why doesn't that great leader come back now and lead India to a new glorious future?" asked Amitananda<sup>1</sup>.

"Subhash has done his duty by liberating India from foreign rule, a service that no one else could have even dreamt of. While politicians of all hues have scrambled for scraps of power, Subhash, who could have even become the Prime Minister of India had he so desired, gave it all up in pursuit of the highest spiritual goal, *moksha* (salvation). It is impossible to find another leader with the calibre and greatness of Subhash. I should say that after his disappearance, Subhash's life is one of the great mysteries in the cosmic drama. Now do you understand, Amitananda?"

A new feeling of reverence for Subhash awakened in Amitananda after listening to Baba's words. Baba's explanation had answered a question he had long harboured in his mind<sup>2</sup>.

In fact it was none other than Lord Clement Atlee, the erstwhile Prime Minister of Britain who took the historic decision of granting India her freedom, who made a startling revelation that confirmed Baba's view that Subhash was the principal cause of the British leaving India in 1947.

On a visit to India in the latter part of 1956, he disclosed the reasons for Britain's withdrawal to the then Chief Justice of the

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<sup>1</sup> On several occasions Baba told his disciples that Subhash did not die in the plane crash as had been widely reported, but was in fact pursuing his spiritual life with great seriousness in Tibet. In several spiritual demonstrations before his disciples, he also showed Subhash meditating inside a cave in Tibet.

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<sup>2</sup> During a discussion several years later, Amitananda was stunned to learn how Baba had told Hemchand Naik that just after Subhash's initiation in 1940, Baba had asked him to organise the struggle for India's independence from outside India. Baba assured Subhash that he would always feel the presence of an invisible power to assist him, in every situation, and that he would never be alone and helpless. Amitananda also came to know that Baba had met Subhash at the Gomoh Railway Station before he boarded the train to Peshawar in Pakistan at the time of his escape from India.

Calcutta High Court, Phani Bhushan Chakraborty, who was also the acting Governor of West Bengal at the time. Justice Chakraborty later shared this information in a written letter. "While I was the acting Governor, Lord Clement Atlee, who had given us independence by withdrawing British rule from India, spent two days in the Governor's palace in Calcutta during his tour of India. At that time I had a prolonged discussion with him about the real factors that had led the British to quit India. My direct question to him was that since Gandhi's 'Quit India' movement had tapered off quite some time before and in 1947 no new compelling situation had arisen that would necessitate a hasty British departure, why did they have to leave? In his reply Atlee cited several reasons, the principal among them being the erosion of loyalty to the British Crown among the Indian army and navy personnel as a result of the military activities of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. He said that a psychosis of widespread mutiny had been created in the armed forces in the 1945-46 period. Towards the end of our discussion I asked Atlee about the extent of Gandhi's influence upon the British decision to quit India. In response to this question, Atlee's lips twisted into a sarcastic smile as he slowly chewed out the word "M-i-n-i-m-a-l<sup>3</sup>."

After the British Government decided to grant India her freedom, Lord Mountbatten, the then British Viceroy in India, started discussions with the leaders of the Congress Party and the Muslim League about the modalities involved in making India an independent nation. In the ensuing discussions a demand was made to divide India to provide a separate homeland for the Muslims. The events that unfolded during the Partition of India drew Prabhat Ranjan's special attention.

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<sup>3</sup> Justice Chakraborty gave this previously unknown information in a letter to the publisher of JadunathSinha's book *A History of Bengal Volume 2*. This information was also published in a book by Netaji scholar General GD Bakshi entitled *Bose: An Indian Samurai*. However the records of this meeting remain classified by the Government of India and of West Bengal.



**Radcliffe Commission and the Division of India**

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1947 the British Government announced a plan to divide Punjab and Bengal between India and Pakistan, the new nation they proposed to create for the Muslims. Both the nations were to become independent in mid-August. Two boundary commissions, the Punjab Boundary Commission and the Bengal Boundary Commission, were established under the chairmanship of Cyril John Radcliffe, a British barrister with no prior knowledge of India. Radcliffe was given the task of partitioning the states of Punjab and Bengal. Each commission was to be assisted by four high court judges, two nominated by the Congress Party to represent India and the other two nominated by the Muslim League to represent the proposed nation of Pakistan. Radcliffe was given extraordinary powers to implement his task. His decisions, which would seal the fate of hundreds of thousands of people living in the disputed areas, were to be final. He was given a short period of less than five weeks until the 12<sup>th</sup> of August to accomplish this momentous task and was required to submit his final report to Lord Mountbatten within the allotted period.

In his daily briefings to his colleagues, Prabhat Ranjan pointed out how the leaders of the Congress Party had failed to protect the nation's interest before the Radcliffe Commission and how the Muslim League had deliberately provided the Commission with a distorted picture of India's religious demography in order to influence its decisions. He added that this negligence on the part of the Congress Party would lead to unbearable suffering for millions of families.

Many years later in 1972, in a detailed discussion on the same issue with Sarveshvarananda, a monastic disciple, Prabhat Ranjan explained how injustice of monumental proportions had been perpetrated on those living in the border districts, particularly in the districts of Bengal. He pointed out that the suffering of the people residing there had been further aggravated by the failure of the Indian leaders to alleviate their misery. The wrongs done during those few

weeks preceding independence had caused unbearable suffering to several generations of millions of families. On several other occasions Prabhat Ranjan had commented on the injustices done to those trapped on the Pakistani side of the border of Bengal and what he had done to help them at the time. In his discussion with Sarveshvarananda, Prabhat Ranjan related in detail how some of the Congress leaders had betrayed the Hindus. He also described the ruses employed by the Muslim League to get huge tracts of land allocated to Pakistan, as well as the various initiatives he had personally undertaken at that time to try to obtain justice for the people of those border districts.

Prabhat Ranjan first described how the Radcliffe Commission decided to award certain districts of Punjab and Bengal with large Muslim populations to Pakistan. However, in some cases, if the majority of the people in the districts bordering the dividing lines in these two provinces desired to stay in India, the district was to be given to India, and if the majority of the people preferred to join Pakistan, it would be awarded to Pakistan. The areas in districts with a Hindu majority would be awarded to India. Other than the religious demography of the area, the factors to consider in allocating an area to a particular side included the local geography - the direction of the rivers, the latest census report, and the jurisdictions of the police stations.

With regard to Nadia District in Bengal, Prabhat Ranjan explained that it was decided in principle that the areas west of the Mathabhanga River would go to India. However, the Muslim League, which at that time held the reins of power in Bengal, showed a doctored map of the area to Radcliffe. Neither he nor the two commission members representing India were familiar with the geography of the area in question. Based on the defective map, only the Gangni, Karimpur and Tehatta police station areas of the Meherpur subdivision of Nadia District were allotted to India, while the rest went to Pakistan. Another defective map of Chuadanga subdivision showed that only the Krishnaganj police station area should be included in India. According to the correct map, however,

the Chuadanga, Alamdanga, Damurhuda and Jibonnagar police station areas of Chuadanga Subdivision, which had been awarded to Pakistan, should rightfully have been given to India. It was also decided that the areas in Jessore District to the west of the Ichchamati River would go to India, while the areas east of the river would be awarded to Pakistan. Here too, the Muslim League produced a defective map to convince the commission to award the Bagdah Police Station area to Pakistan, whereas by right it should have been included in India.

Another major injustice that Prabhat Ranjan spoke about occurred in Sylhet District, which had a population of 1.8 million Muslims and 1.2 million Hindus. Radcliffe held a referendum to find out the people's views. Since the neighbouring districts were to be awarded to Pakistan, Sylhet would have no contiguity with the part of West Bengal that was to be included in India. Therefore, the choice was to include it either in Pakistan or in Assam, which already had a sizeable Bengali population living in the Barak Valley and several other places. Neither Gopinath Bordoloi, the then Prime Minister of undivided Assam, nor the other Congress leaders of Assam were interested in absorbing more Bengalis into the state, as they were afraid that it would tilt the delicate ethnic balance against the Assamese. Thus, while the Muslim League campaigned aggressively to convince the Muslims to vote for Sylhet to join Pakistan, the leaders of the future Indian nation made absolutely no effort to persuade the people to vote in their favour, despite the fact that several Muslim leaders did not want their area to go to Pakistan. In spite of these anomalies, the referendum showed that the people of Sylhet had voted to join Pakistan by only a small margin. Radcliffe wanted to award East, Northeast and Southeast Sylhet to Assam, given their large Hindu population. Goaded by parochial concerns Gopinath Bordoloi opposed the plan and only agreed to keep the Karimganj Subdivision of East Sylhet in India, thus sending a large number of Hindus to Pakistan.

According to Prabhat Ranjan, the worst injustice was done in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. This area was composed of 97.5% Buddhists,



Hindus and Animists, while the Muslims made up only 2.5% of the population. The area was included in Pakistan on the basis of the feeble argument that there was no proper road connection between Aizawl (in present day Mizoram) in India and Rangamati, the capital city of the Chittagong Hills. The Muslims campaigned for the area to be awarded to Pakistan as it was connected to the plains of Chittagong. This argument went against the wishes of the vast majority of the local people, who wanted the entire Chittagong Hill area to be included in India. Sadly there was no one to fight for the rights of the vast majority of the voiceless non-Muslim population. For three days after the declaration of Independence, the people of Chittagong thought that they were, in fact, citizens of India. When they came to know on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1947 that their lands had been awarded to Pakistan, they were dejected and wanted to fight the Pakistanis. They even requested arms and ammunition from the Indian government for that purpose. Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of the new Indian nation, agreed to help them, but the weak-kneed Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, vetoed it.

Another area that was a victim of grave injustice during the partition was Khulna. Prabhat Ranjan discussed this matter in depth, pointing out that Khulna District contained a majority of Hindus. The argument the Muslim League had placed before Radcliffe was that there was no direct road and rail link between Khulna and Indian Bengal, and so travel between the two areas was only possible through Jessore, a Muslim-dominated area. For this reason the area should therefore be awarded to Pakistan. In fact, Khulna and the surrounding areas with their huge Hindu populations had a long and contiguous border with the areas included in West Bengal. As such, access to India would not have been a problem. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1947 the flag of India was hoisted over the town of Khulna, and the local people thought that they were part of the Indian nation. The local Hindus then decided to resettle the displaced Hindus from the Barisal and Jessore Districts in their district. Two days later, to their utter shock, they found out that Khulna had been included in Pakistan.

The Hindus of East Bengal looked to the Congress leaders of Bengal to come to their rescue. Instead, the incompetent and self-seeking Congress leaders of Bengal proved to be their curse. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, the Congress leader of Bengal, who was poised to become the new Chief Minister of West Bengal, was too preoccupied with the preparations to assume power to bother about the fate of the large number of Bengali Hindus who now were trapped in Muslim Pakistan. The other Congress leaders in Bengal, who were busy jostling for power, proved no better. None of them addressed the plight of the Hindus in the affected areas.

Prabhat Ranjan listed all the injustices done to the people of Bengal as well as the mistakes made by Nehru and the Congress leaders of Bengal and Assam in several letters to Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, an influential Bengali leader who was a cabinet minister in Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's government.

In his reminiscences Himanshu Ranjan stated that he had on several occasions seen letters addressed to Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and the replies lying on his elder brother's table. Being too young to understand their significance, he had taken no interest in the contents of the letters. Neither did he realise the significance of his brother's correspondence with the national leader. In this connection Arun Mukherjee, Prabhat Ranjan's colleague, also recalled, "One day Prabhatda asked me to mail a letter addressed to Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. When I asked him what the letter was about, he mildly rebuked me for showing needless curiosity. Then he said that it was information about the areas that had been unjustly awarded to Pakistan."

Prabhat Ranjan also communicated with Babu Basanta Kumar Das, a Congress Party leader in the Barak Valley in Assam and erstwhile speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, about the injustice being done to the Hindus of Sylhet. Other prominent leaders who Prabhat Ranjan corresponded with about it were Raja Bimal Chandra Sinha and Niharendu Dutta Mazumdar, both ministers in the West Bengal government. Prabhat Ranjan also wrote to Arun Chandra Guha, a member of the Constituent Assembly of India, who he knew

from his college days. In his letters he described the geography of the disputed areas in detail, quoting census data and outlining the boundaries of the police stations in those areas. He also exposed the Muslim League's deception involving the false maps, which was unknown to anyone on the Indian side. In addition, he pointed out the inaction of many Congress leaders, including the betrayal of the Bengali Hindus of Sylhet by Gopinath Bardoli, the leader of Assam, as well as their unwillingness to come to the rescue of these helpless people. He forcefully argued that the lack of accessibility by road should not be considered a valid reason to give these places to Pakistan, as roads could easily be built in the future. He stressed that if Hindu-majority areas were included in Pakistan, the Hindus living there would be subjected to violence and terrible atrocities. They would also have to face religious, cultural and economic persecution as well as forced conversion.

All the leaders Prabhat Ranjan contacted took action at different levels on the basis of the information he provided. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Arun Chandra Guha took up these issues with Prime Minister Nehru, supporting their arguments with detailed facts and figures. When the matter was presented to Nehru he felt greatly embarrassed, as he himself did not have any of the information and data they provided. After checking with official sources, Nehru found that their information was totally accurate. However, he informed Shyama Prasad that since it had been brought to his notice so late, there was nothing he could do.

Shyama Prasad conveyed Nehru's reply to Prabhat Ranjan, who responded, "Better late than never. It is still possible to do a lot for the cause of these neglected people by acting with courage and proper planning." He proposed several courses of action, including taking the matter to the International Court of Justice. He also advocated providing military aid to save the people from mass murder. However, to the great misfortune of the people stranded in Pakistan, Prime Minister Nehru did nothing to protect them from the imminent atrocities. He remained preoccupied with the problems of managing the young nation, where large-scale communal violence had erupted



due to the Partition. He was also more concerned with the welfare of the refugees from Punjab than those from Bengal. Prabhat Ranjan remarked to his colleagues that Nehru's lack of foresight would prove very costly for India in the future. He said that intolerable religious persecution would force millions of Hindus to migrate to India in the future, which would burden West Bengal and other neighbouring states with several million impoverished migrants who would have left behind all their properties and means of livelihood.

Prabhat Ranjan opined that another reason for Nehru's inaction was his concern that his image before the international community would be damaged if he were to challenge a decision that India had already accepted. He added that apart from East Bengal, Kashmir had also suffered due to Nehru's inaction. Finally, in protest against Nehru's inaction in Bengal and the administrative mistakes in Kashmir, Shyama Prasad resigned from the cabinet. The misery caused by Nehru's lack of foresight continues to haunt people until today.

Years later, Prabhat Ranjan told his disciples that Nehru had enquired from Shyama Prasad the source of all the disturbing information he had brought to his attention, which even he, as Prime Minister, had not been aware of. When he came to know that it was one Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, an employee in the Jamalpur Railway Workshop, Nehru ordered his Intelligence Bureau to keep a watch on him because he knew so many matters of national importance about which even the Indian intelligence services were in the dark.

Just as Prabhat Ranjan had predicted, the Hindus in East Pakistan fell prey to a terrifying trail of genocide, massacres and other dreadful atrocities. They were subjected to severe religious persecution and a large number of them were forcibly converted to Islam. In 1971 several hundred thousand Hindus and Bengali Muslims from East Pakistan became the victims of genocide and rape by the Pakistan Army and their collaborators during the movement for the liberation of Bangladesh. The number of people who migrated from East Pakistan to India over the years owing to intolerable persecution and

despair swelled to several million, which was many times more than the number of those who had crossed over to the Indian side in the immediate aftermath of the Partition. The Hindus of Khulna and Sylhet Districts and the Buddhists of the Chittagong Hill Tracts were among some of the worst sufferers. These hapless victims of the Partition were forced to vacate their homeland, leaving behind all their possessions, to eke out a marginal existence in India. The East Bengal Hindus who migrated to India were not the only ones who suffered. The Muslims who migrated from India to East Pakistan also faced agonizing ordeals in their new homeland due to pitiable economic and social conditions. Indeed their dream of an Islamic homeland turned sour. In despair, millions of Muslims migrated to India from East Pakistan and later from Bangladesh in search of greener pastures. Although three generations have since passed, the descendants of most of the migrants still lead miserable lives.

On a positive note, regarding the future of the displaced people from East Bengal, Prabhat Ranjan was optimistic about their long-term prospects. He said that the future of their descendants, including the other victims of the Partition, was not dark. He firmly stated that in the future Pakistan would cease to exist as a separate nation and the divided provinces of Bengal, Kashmir and Punjab would be reunited, enabling many of their descendants to repossess their ancestral properties that had been seized by the authorities. He therefore advised many of his Indian disciples with property in East Pakistan to preserve their land records carefully. Prabhat Ranjan's optimistic vision has sown the seeds of hope that in the future a united, integrated and prosperous Indian subcontinent will emerge, where people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds will live together in peace and harmony.

In one of his books Prabhat Ranjan expressed his optimism about the future while reminiscing about a visit he had made to undivided Dinajpur District before the Partition:

“Many years have passed since then. Much water has flowed down the Ganges. At that time I stayed in the Baluabari area of

Dinajpur on the banks of the Punarbhava River surrounded by the simple people of the land of Barendra. I still remember the scene. A certain Faizal Mian used to supply us with firewood every morning. He never left without conversing with me for a few minutes about his daily joys and sorrows. Every day when he lifted what remained of his firewood onto his head just as he was about to leave, he would ask, 'Sir, do you like this land?'

I would answer, 'Yes, I like it very much.'

To this he would reply, 'Then why don't you settle down here?'

I would just smile. Today that Dinajpur of long ago sometimes haunts the dark alleys of my mind. I wax nostalgic when I remember those dreamy days. I heave a sigh and then I realise that this sigh is futile. It is our fault that the country has been fragmented. Is it impossible for this divided country to be made whole again if we are willing to work to rebuild it? As many wise and learned people say, human history does not recognise the word 'impossible.' The word 'impossible' has no meaning in the lexicon of humanity."

### A New Dawn

Some years later in 1960, in a discourse entitled *To the Patriots*, Prabhat Ranjan summarised his thoughts about the past, present and future of India and indicated how this reunification could come about:

"Today the most important duty of the common people of India is to correct the errors committed by their leaders and unite India through an anti-exploitation campaign. India has got to be saved. This anti-exploitation campaign will not only unite India, but also unite India with Pakistan and with each of the poor and backward countries of Southeast Asia. Through it, a strong nation or group of nations will be formed. It matters little what name is given to that nation or that group of nations."

He added, "If India builds a society for only Indians, Pakistan for only Pakistanis and England for only the English, then three separate societies will exist, but we cannot look upon them as a society for humanity."



Despite the harrowing ordeal of the Partition and the animosity between the divided nations of South Asia, Prabhat Ranjan was always optimistic about the future. He said emphatically that a new society would be born through the people's collective struggles against exploitation. Prabhat Ranjan inspired the creation of social movements to unite Punjab, Kashmir and Bengal on the basis of their common languages, cultures and histories, and fuelled by an anti-exploitation sentiment. On several occasions he also commented that the entire area of South Asia would be reunited in the future and would have a resplendent future.

His optimistic vision of an undivided world extended far beyond South Asia. He also predicted the unification of North and South Vietnam, which has now become a reality. In addition, he foretold the eventual unification of all the countries which are today divided on the artificial basis of religion and pseudo-ideology, including Korea and Ireland.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1979 during a tour of Europe, Prabhat Ranjan visited the Berlin Wall. Standing near the wall, he said to the accompanying disciples, "War is a black spot on the human character. In individual and collective life one will have to struggle, but war is based on hatred and divisive tendencies. Struggle and war are not synonymous. While war springs from hatred, struggle is a part and parcel of life. War blackens everything; it darkens the future. Let life be bright, both individually and collectively. Let us fight these divisive tendencies, which want to darken our life. Light is beautiful because it is bright. When there was no creation, there was only one colour – black. Where there is no life, everything is black. After creation occurred, we see the beautiful play of colours. Why should we lose ourselves in darkness? All human beings want light. One individual human being is more luminous and more vibrant than the whole of the universal darkness. So human beings should always be optimistic. Cimmerian darkness cannot retard your progress; it cannot cover the light of the human heart. Your spirit must move on and on in spite of all obstacles. Kick away the obstacles like pebbles under your feet. You are stronger than those obstacles."

As his followers listened intently, Prabhat Ranjan surprised everyone by declaring, "The Berlin Wall was created out of a destructive war and is an artificial barrier dividing a vibrant society into two. The division of this country is also artificial. Such a situation cannot continue for long and soon East and West Germany will be reunited."

Those present were stunned to hear such an emphatic assertion. They considered it impossible for Germany to be reunited without causing a devastating nuclear war that would engulf the entire planet, as the country was at that time divided between NATO and the Soviet Bloc. They feared that such a war would surely result in the death of millions of people all over the world. To reassure his speechless listeners who doubted the possibility of a united Germany, he instructed, "Send the message to the suppressed people living on the other side of this wall that Anandamurti, a spiritual guru from India, stood next to the Berlin Wall on this day, the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1979 and declared that their days of suffering and separation will soon be over. Germany will be reunited again in the near future."

Prabhat Ranjan's disciples subsequently printed thousands of leaflets in German carrying his message of hope and assurance, and sent them across the border tied to hydrogen balloons. Even as they watched the balloons soar up in the sky and float across the impregnable Berlin Wall carrying his prophetic declaration, none of them could believe that this amazing prediction would become a reality in the very near future without even one drop of blood being shed.



## CHAPTER 8

# The Magic Mirror

Although Prabhat Ranjan tried his best to behave like an ordinary man in his worldly life, he could not hide his extraordinary qualities from those around him for long. Through the amazing revelations he made during the regular war briefings, his office colleagues were among the first to get a glimpse of his special paranormal abilities, apart from his close family members. As time passed, others including those from his native village, neighbours, friends and some of his close relatives were eventually exposed to his extraordinary personality.

Prabhat Ranjan made a practice of visiting Bamunpara at least twice a year. Whenever he came to his ancestral village, all the local people, from the youths to the elders, would gather around him at night to hear him talk. His discussions covered a wide range of topics, and knowledge would flow out of him like a fountain. Naresh Ghosh, his cousin, who was five years younger than him, recalled some of the things that fascinated the listeners the most:

“We all enjoyed listening to Bubuda speaking. Sometimes he would talk about the gradual evolution of words from Sanskrit to Prakrit and finally to Bengali, or he would explain the origin of the names of different places. Sometimes he talked about contemporary issues like the World War, Independence and the partition of the country; sometimes it was the history of places, starting with small villages, gradually progressing to towns, then to kingdoms and countries. At other times he would wax philosophical. He quoted extensively from the Bengali poets whose poems we had learned in our childhood. We were all stunned by the depth of his knowledge and how effortlessly he moved from one topic to another. The beauty of it was that he was able to explain all those things in a way that we villagers could understand and enjoy. Another remarkable thing about Bubuda was that even his discussions of serious topics would be



interspersed with jokes and parodies that made us all roar with laughter. The time we spent with him was so enjoyable that we would lose all sense of time. He was a giant personality and we were just ordinary villagers, yet he was so close to us. Our relationship was so intimate and simple that we never felt that he was different from us. In short, if I would have to describe our Bubuda, I would say that he was a perfect human being. We could not find any flaw in him however hard we tried. His visits to Bamunpara were not very frequent, but whenever he came, he left a very deep impression in our minds, so much so that even today they are our most precious memories which we will cherish for the rest of our lives.

“There was a general consensus that he was a very good palm reader too. But I would say that he never needed to look at anyone’s palm in order to tell his future. I have seen him asking people to stand before him, and he would look the person up and down once, as if he was taking an X-ray, and then would start to tell everything about the person’s past, present, and future. He would say what was inside a person’s body and what disease the person was likely to suffer if he or she was not careful. He would also reveal people’s thoughts. All these feats were very surprising to us. Once my elder brother, Narayan, developed a mental disorder, and we wanted to admit him into a mental hospital. Before doing so, my father wrote to Bubuda to seek his advice. Bubuda advised us against admitting him into the hospital and prescribed some herbal medicine, yoga asanas, and dietary restrictions. My brother was cured merely by following his advice.”

Naresh’s younger brother, Suresh, had an interesting experience of Prabhat Ranjan:

Although Bubuda was very close to all of us, I hesitated to ask him about my future. At the same time I was very eager to know what the future held for me. One day I plucked up enough courage and asked him if he would kindly read my palm.

“I have no need to see your palm. Just tell me what you want to know.”

I was studying in college at that time. I asked him how far I would go in my studies.

“How much do you want to study?”

“I want to do an MA.”

“You will pass your MA, but it won’t be easy. You will have to struggle hard.”

I was a little discouraged by his response. I did not want to struggle to attain my goals.

“What about my future financial condition?”

“You will have money, but in the early part of your life you will be burdened with loans.”

Again, Bubuda’s response was disappointing. I had hoped for a smooth sailing in my life. “What about my reputation, Bubuda?”

“You will have a good reputation, but you will also be unpopular. Strangely, although you will be popular among your friends, your close relatives will criticise you.”

Once more Bubuda’s answer was not I wanted to hear. “How long will I live?”

“You will have a long life, but you will meet with several accidents.

His remark unnerved me. On the whole Bubuda’s responses were not satisfactory. I was disappointed realising that I will have to face a lot of struggle in my life. Just as I was thinking so and feeling dejected, Bubuda interjected. “There is nothing to worry about. Whatever happens, you will feel an invisible power following you like a shadow and helping you whenever necessary. You will never feel that you are alone or helpless.”

What Bubuda said brought a great relief. I felt reassured that in all situations I will have the constant help from divine power.

Everything Bubuda predicted came true. It took me eighteen years to complete my MA. Some of my close relatives have been hostile to me, whereas my friends have always loved me and stood by me. I have met with eighteen accidents, and one was life-threatening - I was in coma for a week. I felt that Bubudaa’s grace was always

with me like a shadow, helping me through all my difficulties. If I were to note down how many times he has helped me, it would be a long list running into several pages. Even today, whenever I am in difficulty, I just think of him.

### Delayed Train Catches Up

Anil Ghosh, Prabhat Ranjan's uncle, had several fond memories of his nephew's visits to their village, some of which he recalled several years later:

Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar was my cousin. Even though Bubu was younger than me, I regarded him highly. His personality was such that he would automatically command everyone's respect. As soon as we heard that he had arrived at our village, we would gather around him. He was so fascinating. Once when I went to see Prabhat Ranjan, he was meditating. As I waited, my aunt, Binapani, related an experience she had had. "Both morning and evening, Bubu sits in meditation for long periods. This has been his habit from the age of about five. Once when he was meditating inside the room, I peeped through the window to check what he was doing behind closed doors. What I saw was something very peculiar. His body was not on the ground. He was floating in the air. I became afraid and closed the window immediately."

Bubu was very friendly and so free from complexes. He used to talk to everyone without considering the person's status or age. Even just watching him speak gave us great pleasure. There were two brothers, Sachidulal Mitra and Gopikrishna Mitra, who were considered to be the most educated persons in our village. They would ask Prabhat Ranjan the most questions. One night we were discussing ghosts. Prabhat Ranjan said that ghosts do not exist. "You see a ghost when your nervous system is weak, or if fear is created in your mind. In such a state, a preconceived notion about ghosts that has been imposed in your mind since childhood creates the hallucination of a ghost." He then took the example of a child. "A child never sees ghosts because it does not have any imposed notions about them. As it grows, the people around it start to impose the fear of ghosts in the child's mind, and then after that it may see a ghost.



If anyone grows up without ever hearing about ghosts, he will never be afraid of them." Bubu further said, "There are some avidya tantrics who practise the lowest form of Tantra. They can make bones and stones fall and start a fire in a house while sitting some distance away. That has nothing to do with ghosts."

When the talk turned to tantrics, Gopikrishna Maitra who was called Gopi, brought up the topic of the miraculous powers of Bamakhyapa, a great tantric from Tarapith in Birbhum District of Bengal. "Once a ticket collector threw him off the train because he didn't have a ticket. When the whistle blew and the driver started the engine, the train wouldn't move. There seemed to be nothing wrong with the engine. The railway authorities were baffled. One of the passengers told the guard that the person the ticket checker had taken off the train was a great yogi. Maybe the train would not move until he was allowed back on the train. Hearing this, the authorities apologised to Bamakhyapa and with folded hands requested him to get on the train. As soon as he got on, the train started to move."

Prabhat Ranjan said, "One certainly needs some type of power to do that, but it is not a very high category of spiritual power. He was a great Tantra sadhaka, no doubt. But the exhibition of such powers is not the criteria for judging one's greatness."

Gopi was not convinced. "Can you do that?" he asked.

At this, Prabhat Ranjan just smiled. Instead of answering, he asked, "When are you going back to Calcutta?"

"I am going tomorrow morning on the 9:45 train," replied Gopi.

"That's good. I'm also planning to go tomorrow. We can go together." The discussion that night ended there.

The next morning Gopi stopped by Binapani's house on his way to Shaktigarh Station. When Bubu saw him, he said, "Oh Gopi, you are here already? I am just getting ready. Give me a few minutes. Anyway, there is no hurry. We have sufficient time."

"No, Bubu, the train starts from Burdwan. So it is usually on time. I have some urgent work in Calcutta, and the next train will come after a long delay. So I can't afford to miss this train."

“Then you had better go ahead. I will catch up.”

Gopi reached Shaktigarh Station just before the scheduled train time. Shortly after he bought his ticket and went onto the platform, the train arrived.

Gopi looked out of the train and saw Bubu some distance away, strolling leisurely along the narrow path beside the railway line. Fearing that Bubu would miss the train, he frantically waved at him to hurry. But Bubu did not appear to notice and showed no signs of hurrying. Meanwhile, the guard gave the signal, and the train blew its whistle. Gopi was disappointed that Bubu would be left behind. He had hoped to enjoy the company of his highly knowledgeable friend up to Howrah. Strangely, however, the train did not move. Gopi kept looking from the guard to the engine and then at Bubu. Despite the repeated signal of the guard and the engine blowing its whistle, the train did not move. In the meanwhile, Bubu reached the station, walking at his normal pace, and bought a ticket. Just as he stepped onto the train, it set off. Gopi looked at Bubu expecting some explanation for this strange occurrence. But Bubu was looking the other way, as if nothing unusual had happened. When the train reached Bandel, Gopi got up to get a cup of tea. Bubu cautioned him, “Gopi, the train will only make a very short stop here today, so it will be better if you don’t get off.”

“I frequently travel by this train. It stops here for at least twenty minutes.” Gopi got off the train and had barely ordered his tea when he heard the train whistle. It started immediately. He had to run to get back on the train. In a puzzled voice, he asked, “Bubu, how did you know that the train would only stop here for a short time today?”

“That is simple. It got delayed in Shaktigarh. Naturally it will have to make up for the lost time,” replied Bubu with a mischievous smile. Gopi shook his head in utter disbelief.

### **Dispersing Dark Rain Clouds**

Although Prabhat Ranjan concealed his extraordinary powers from the members of his family, there were a few occasions when they caught a glimpse of them. It was the full moon day of the month of Shravan, a very holy day in the Hindu calendar. From all over

Jamalpur and the surrounding areas thousands had thronged the Shiva temple on Kali Pahar to worship Lord Shiva. Many had brought water from the river Ganges to pour over the *Shiva Linga*, the symbol of Lord Shiva. Soon dark clouds gathered over the whole area. A few drops of rain started to fall. The worshippers were anxious to protect themselves from the rain.

Manas, Prabhat Ranjan's youngest brother, was with him in the family's back garden at that time. Looking at the sky, he said, "Dada, it's going to rain heavily. Thousands have gathered on Kali Pahar to worship at the Shiva temple. It appears that Lord Shiva is not happy with these devotees. That is why he is sending such heavy rain. All the people will get wet, young and old, women and children, all of them. There is nowhere up there where so many thousands can take shelter."

Prabhat Ranjan heard him in silence and then asked, "Manas, do you want to see some fun?"

"What do you mean dada?"

Prabhat Ranjan picked up some dust from the ground, closed his eyes for a second or two and then threw the dust in the air. Manas asked, "What have you done dada?"

"Just keep watching the sky."

Manas kept looking upwards. The clouds around Jamalpur started to disperse very fast. In a matter of three to four minutes, the sky around Jamalpur became clear without any trace of rain cloud in sight. Manas was puzzled. There was no wind in the area to disperse the thickening rain clouds. So how did the clouds disperse? To his surprise the sun started to shine through a circular area over Jamalpur and Kali Pahar, as if a big hole had been cut in the clouds. Manas looked at his brother and smiled, his eyes wide with amazement.

Prabhat Ranjan remarked, "Let the rain fall in the fields around Jamalpur where it is needed, and not on those people out there in the open." That day it rained heavily all around Jamalpur, but there was no rain in the town itself or on Kali Pahar.

Jiten Mandal was Manas Ranjan's friend, but Manas never mentioned his elder brother's extraordinary powers to Jiten. However,



Jiten learned about the special abilities of his friend's brother after he joined the accounts office. His senior colleagues told him about Prabhat Ranjan's daily world war briefings. He was surprised to hear this, as Prabhat Ranjan's nonchalant behaviour had never betrayed even the slightest hint of anything unusual.

Not long after becoming acquainted with Prabhatda, he too had a glimpse of the depths of his knowledge, which he recalled during his interview:

“Once Prabhatda asked me how far Murshidabad District was from my village of Amra. I replied that Ramnagar village was about four kilometres from our village and that Murshidabad District started there. He then asked me where exactly the border was located. I did not know the answer. He said that after crossing the village of Ramnagar there was a culvert with a big banyan tree. That tree marked the border. Later, I checked and was amazed at the accuracy of his knowledge of the location of a tree in an area which he had never visited.

“Every day before starting our office work and again during the lunch hour, many of us used to gather around him, and he would tell us many interesting things. If he was absent from the office on a particular day, everyone would feel that something was missing. When Prabhatda was there, they would feel that there was someone in the office to whom they could turn in time of need.”

### **Interlocking System**

The simple but practical solutions that Prabhat Ranjan offered to even complex problems attracted many people in need of advice. He was ready to help anyone who really needed it. Some people would approach him directly, while others would approach him through mother Abharani. Once, a young woman from the locality went to mother Abharani to ask how to deal with a problem that she was not able to tolerate. Her widowed mother-in-law was behaving very insensitively and making her life miserable. The woman said that she had to do all the household chores including cooking and cleaning, and still her mother-in-law would always find fault with her. The mother-in-law would keep giving the daughter-in-law orders but

never assist her in any manner. She would be thoroughly exhausted and hungry by the time she finished cooking the noon meal. Then, to harass her further, the mother-in-law would lock the kitchen and go out, supposedly to visit her friends. She would return only an hour or two later. According to tradition, the daughter-in-law had to eat last and so it would be afternoon before the famished young woman would be able to take her lunch. This had been going on for month after month and the young woman was unable to find a solution to her problem. When Abharani heard her story, she did not know what to suggest, but she knew that her Bubu would certainly be able to help.

That night, when Prabhat Ranjan was at the dining table, she brought up the matter and asked him for his suggestions. He said, "Ma, the solution is very simple. Tell her to keep a lock and key ready, and the next time the mother-in-law locks the kitchen, she should put her lock on top of her mother-in-law's lock. She should unlock it only after her mother-in-law agrees to change her behaviour towards her. Her mother-in-law will be extremely hungry and will agree to anything in order to get the kitchen unlocked."

The young woman did exactly as Prabhat Ranjan suggested, and her problem was solved. After that, the mother-in-law changed her behaviour towards the young woman.

### **Bijili's Untimely Death**

In the summer of 1947, Prabhat Ranjan invited Ajit Biswas (Nanku), his cousin and college friend from Calcutta, to Jamalpur to recuperate from a serious bout of malaria. One day younger sister, Bijili Prabha, was serving them food. While serving them, she made a mistake, and mother Abharani became upset with her. "How many times have I told you that it is time you learned how to manage household affairs? You have not even learned how to cook or look after the house properly. When you get married and go to your husband's house, what will your in-laws say if you are like this?"

Prabhat Ranjan came to Bijili's defence. "Ma, she will learn when she needs to after she gets married. Why are you scolding her now?" After finishing their meal, he and Nanku went to his room. When they were alone, Prabhat Ranjan said to Nanku, "Mother keeps

scolding Bijili because she hasn't learned how to cook and manage the house. She thinks that Bijili will have problems when she gets married. But she will not need to learn those things. She will not get married as her life will be short. That is why I want mother to leave her in peace. But I can't tell mother about the impending tragedy."

Nanku paused for a while as he tried to fathom the gravity of this news. He then remarked, "Bubu, it is good that you are able to know things in advance."

"Not at all, Nanku. Actually, it is a blessing of Providence that one is not able to know the future in advance. I know that Bijili is not going to live long and if, whenever I see her, I think about her fast approaching death, how will I be able to behave normally with her? Only a person who can maintain complete equanimity in both happiness and sorrow can remain unaffected by the advance knowledge of an impending tragedy. For others, it is a blessing of Providence not to know the future."

A few days later, Bijili fell ill with a liver complaint. Her condition deteriorated over the course of several months. She was taken to several doctors, but no one could help. Finally, she became completely bedridden. Then, one day, Prabhat Ranjan went to Calcutta for a few days on some important work, accompanied by his younger brother, Himanshu. On their return, they found the family grief-stricken. Bijili had died the previous day. During Bijili's illness, Prabhat Ranjan regularly brought her food and medicine, but for some reason he avoided entering the room where she was lying.

Later he told Manas, "I stopped going to see Bijili towards the end because she was thinking that I would bless her, and that blessing would cure her of her sickness. I knew her end was fast approaching. Her samskaras of this life were over. I did not want to interfere with the law of Nature and extend her life without good reason. Anyway, she will be happier to be reborn in a new body than live in such a sickly body. How could I have told her all this, Manas?"

The family, particularly mother Abharani, suffered these tragedies in silence. She never bothered her son with any unusual



requests, but the neighbours and acquaintances were not so considerate. From time to time people came to Abharani to request help from Prabhat.

### Locating the Missing Girl

A family living nearby had a son working in far-off Bombay. They had not heard from him for several months. As they did not have his address, it was impossible for them to write to him. Naturally, they were very worried. The lady of the house came to Abharani to ask if her son, Prabhat, would be able to provide any information about him. She was so distressed that she started to cry as she spoke. Moved by her plight, Abharani mentioned the woman's concerns to Prabhat Ranjan without telling him that his help was being sought. A couple of days later, Prabhat Ranjan asked Manas to bring a candle and a glass sheet and paint one side of it with coal tar. After Manas had painted it, Prabhat Ranjan asked him to invite the woman into the room. He requested her to sit down in the dim candle light and look at the mirror created in the glass. To her astonishment she saw her son lying down, laughing. Prabhat Ranjan assured her that she would receive a letter from him in three days and that there was nothing to worry about. She left the house with a feeling of peace and happiness in her heart. As foretold by Prabhat Ranjan, she received her son's letter in three days. Manas named mirror the "Magic Mirror".

A few days later, the wife of Pandit Ramchandra Jha, the Sanskrit teacher of Prabhat Ranjan in High School, came to visit Abharani. She was very sad because she had not gotten the chance to see her mother before she had died a few days earlier. Abharani heard about the magic mirror from Manas, so she asked Prabhat Ranjan if he would be able to do anything to console her. He agreed on condition that she would not tell anyone else about it. This condition was communicated to her and she agreed to abide by it. Prabhat Ranjan then fixed a date and time for her to come. When the day came, Manas was ready with the mirror and the candle. Prabhat Ranjan asked her to look into the mirror. In the mirror she saw the image of her mother sitting serenely on a boat. Having seen the image of her mother, the woman was consoled and her grief was considerably relieved.

A few weeks later, the thirteen-year-old daughter of a railway employee, Devanarayan, went missing. Although the parents searched for her everywhere in Jamalpur, there was no trace of her. They were extremely worried and filed a missing person's report at the police station. By that time, Prabhat Ranjan's supernatural powers were already widely known. So after they had spent the whole day searching for their daughter in vain, the distraught parents went to him and begged him to help find the missing girl. Prabhat Ranjan asked Manas to bring the magic mirror and asked the father to look into it. In the mirror he saw his daughter travelling in a train, sitting by the window. He also saw the compartment number. Prabhat Ranjan said that she had been kidnapped and was being taken by train in the direction of Patna. He asked the parents to take immediate action. Soon, with the help of the railway authorities, the train with that particular compartment number was located. The police found the girl and arrested the culprits.

Such requests continued for about three months. Prabhat Ranjan showed dead relatives or close relatives living far away to around twenty people. Manas assisted him in all these cases, but he himself was never able to see anybody in the mirror. Only the persons directly concerned were able to see their kin. One day, after showing someone a dead relative in the mirror, Prabhat Ranjan fell ill. Abharani believed that recalling the dead souls was the cause of his sickness and asked him to stop the practice. Prabhat Ranjan did not argue with her but simply obeyed her order. He instructed Manas to destroy the mirror. That was the end of the magic mirror.

### **Finding a Son-in-law**

Mritunjay Sanyal was an officer in another department of the Indian Railways in Jamalpur. He was about to retire but his mind was not at peace because he had an unmarried daughter. He had been looking for a suitable husband for his daughter without success. Someone suggested that he should discuss it with Prabhatda. Being a Barendra Brahmin and a high-ranking officer, he initially hesitated, but due to great anxiety about this problem he finally decided to approach Prabhat Ranjan. One day Mritunjay came to the accounts section and stood near Prabhat Ranjan's desk. However, he was

unable to muster the courage to talk to him. Seeing his hesitation, Prabhat Ranjan asked him, "How are you, Mrityunjayda? I haven't seen you for some time."

Mrityunjay took this as an invitation to talk. "Yes Prabhat, I have been thinking of talking to you for a while now. You know that I am going to retire in a few months. I have an unmarried daughter and I am very worried about her marriage. I have heard that you know astrology and palmistry, and if you can tell me where to find a good husband for her I will really be very grateful."

Prabhat Ranjan said, "Oh, is that all, Mrityunjayda? That is a very simple matter. Your future son-in-law is sitting there, Maitra." He pointed at a clerk sitting at a desk on the opposite row. "He will be a good husband for your daughter. He is here, so close to you, and yet you are looking around everywhere for a husband. Talk to his father this evening. They live in Baidyapara. The marriage will be arranged without any difficulty."

Mrityunjay did as Prabhat Ranjan suggested. He found that the family was of the same caste and had just begun to look for a wife for their son. The negotiations went smoothly and the marriage was quickly solemnized.

### **Fated to Marry**

Not all the employees of the Indian Railways associated with Prabhat Ranjan had pleasant memories of him. There were some persons whose wishes were unfulfilled and blamed Prabhat Ranjan for their misfortune. Muktinath Das Sharma, a young clerk in the Accounts Department, who wanted to devote his life to study and other higher pursuits, recalled his unusual experience:

I joined the Accounts Department in 1946. I was first introduced to Prabhatda through a colleague, Nikhil, who told me that he wanted me to meet a very humorous and knowledgeable person. And I indeed found him exceptionally knowledgeable and humorous too. I myself had a thirst for knowledge, and studying and reading was my passion. The well-stocked library of the Indian Railways in Jamalpur was my favourite haunt. I used to devour the books from philosophy to politics, from economics to encyclopedias, and from history to



health, and often declared that I would devote my life to study and acquiring as much knowledge as I could.

One day, in the course of my discussion with Prabhatda, I told him that I did not want to marry, as I felt that marriage would curtail my freedom. I also told him that I wanted to devote my time to reading, writing, and meditating. With a mysterious smile he said that I should not go around telling everyone about this decision, because I would get married in the near future.

I said, "Prabhatda, the people here believe that you can correctly predict the future and that whatever you say will come true. But I am challenging you on this point and I am going to prove you wrong."

Prabhat Ranjan replied, "Muktinath, it is impossible for your wish to be fulfilled."

One morning in early 1948, I saw Prabhatda looking at my face and smiling. I asked him why he was smiling. He said that I was going to get married soon. Although I didn't believe what he said, I involuntarily asked him when it would happen. He said, "Within this month, or, to be more precise, in a fortnight."

I vehemently protested, "Prabhatda, I have already told you that I don't intend to get married. So it is impossible that what you say will happen. Even if I do ever decide to get married, I will not do it now as I am hardly twenty-two and too young to marry." Prabhatda just smiled and asked me to meet him in a fortnight.

Nothing happened for a week and every time I saw Prabhatda, I mentally told him, "See, with each passing day, I am closer to proving your prediction wrong." Immediately he would look at me with a mischievous smile. No words were exchanged. On the eighth day, my father unexpectedly arrived in the evening with a telegram from my grandfather saying that my marriage had been arranged, and the date was fixed for exactly the day Prabhatda had predicted as the day of my marriage. However hard I tried to stop it or even delay it, my father would not relent. He was adamant that I should accompany him the same evening to make preparations for the marriage. Inside, I was

seething with anger against Prabhatda, as I was sure that it was all his doing and that he had used his supernatural power to arrange my marriage within a fortnight to fulfil his prediction.

When I returned to the office after getting married, I deliberately avoided looking at Prabhatda. Although I was embarrassed by the failure to keep my promise of being unmarried and resented the fact that Prabhatda had been proved right, I was trying to pretend that I was angry with him. When this happened a few times, he said with a mischievous smile, looking at someone else, "What if someone does not look at me, but the marriage did indeed take place within a fortnight?"

I could not restrain myself and burst out, "Prabhatda, it was all your doing! You have arranged everything using your supernatural power."

"No, that is not true, Muktinath. It was your fate, and I could see it. That's all."

### **Tracing the Undelivered Letter**

Numerous were the ways through which Prabhat Ranjan demonstrated his omniscience. Once Acharya Sarveshvarananda, a senior disciple, was travelling from Kiul to Jamalpur by train. There were only a few passengers in the compartment. Soon after the train left Kiul, a man travelling in the same compartment greeted him and asked if he was a disciple of Prabhatda. Sarveshvarananda answered in the affirmative and then asked the elderly man who he was and whether he knew Prabhatda.

The man introduced himself as Banibrata Basu. He then asked, "How could I not know Prabhatda? Who does not know him in Jamalpur? Moreover, I am working in the workshop. He loved me very much. Whenever I faced a difficult problem, I went to him for advice and he always gave me an appropriate solution. Not only I, but anyone who had a serious problem would go to him for help, and he would suggest very practical and usually simple solutions."

Out of eagerness to hear more about his guru, Sarveshvarananda asked if Banibrata had had any interesting experiences with Prabhatda. Banibrata replied:

“There are many such incidents, but there is one incident that happened long ago, which often comes to my mind. I am from a remote place in South Bihar. Due to poor transportation facilities, it used to take about two days to reach there from Jamalpur in those days. My elderly mother and the other members of my family lived there, and I was alone in Jamalpur. My father had died and my aged mother was very dear to me. Once, I got the news that she was very ill. With great difficulty I managed to get leave. When I reached home, I saw that she was indeed seriously ill with age-related problems. I immediately arranged for her to get medical treatment. With proper treatment slowly she started to improve. By the time my leave was exhausted, she had yet to recover fully. I had to return to Jamalpur, though unwillingly, leaving her in the care of others. If I did not return to the office in time, I would lose my job, as that was the British period and the rules were very strict.

“However, I had no peace of mind. I was constantly thinking about my mother and became more and more anxious as the days passed. I requested my family members to inform me by letter after she had recovered completely. I also sent them a letter enquiring about her condition, but received no reply. In those days, there were no telephone or telegraph facilities in a remote area like ours. Although I went to the office regularly, my mind was restless. Every day, I would eagerly wait for a letter from home, but none came. It went on like this for more than two months. I became very worried, and at times tears would well up in my eyes. I even started to think that perhaps my mother had died and that was why there was no news. Perhaps my family did not want to tell me the sad news.

“Finally, I decided to go home and see for myself what was going on. I applied for leave, but my application was rejected, as I had taken long leave only three months earlier. I thought that if my mother was no longer there, there would be no need of a job. If I gave up my job, I would be able to find another one later. But if anything happened to my mother due to lack of proper treatment, I would not be able to



forgive myself for the rest of my life. So in a fit of frustration I decided to give up my job. I thought of submitting my resignation the next morning and leaving for home immediately. After taking this decision, I went to the office with the resignation letter in my hand. But something inside me told me again and again that before I submitted the letter, I should seek the advice of Prabhatda, as he always gave very good advice.

“So I went straight to him and told him everything. He listened to me patiently and looked at me with deep sympathy. Then in a gentle tone he said, ‘Banibrata, there is no need to worry. A few days after you returned from your home, your mother was completely cured and a letter was sent to you informing you about it. But due to the inefficiency of the postal department, it has taken a long time for that letter to reach you. It is finally reaching Jamalpur today and will be delivered to you tomorrow. So go home after office and rest peacefully.’”

Reminiscing over that day's events, Banibrata said, “What Prabhatda said was not Veda Vakya (wise words) but Brahma Vakya (divine words). Anything may go wrong in life, but what my Prabhatda said always happened exactly as he said it would. We in the office all knew that very well. For the first time in a long while, I was able to relax peacefully at home that evening and eat properly. The next morning, I waited eagerly for the postman to come. He came at the normal time and gave me the letter which had been posted from home more than two months before. As I read it, I started to cry. I cried for a long time, for I was not only happy to receive the good news about my mother but also awed by Prabhatda's omniscience. He could even see where the letter sent from my home two months before was at that very moment.” As he said this, his eyes again filled with tears.

Sarveshvarananda was completely absorbed in Banibrata's fascinating story. Suddenly he realised that his eyes were also moist.

### **Solving an Accounting Problem**

Prabhat Ranjan continued working in the pre-audit section of the Accounts Department until the beginning of 1948. While he was there, one of his colleagues, Mantu Babu, faced a serious problem. It

was the end of the month, and he was supposed to prepare the pay-sheet for disbursing the salaries to the employees the next day. He and an assistant had spent several hours preparing the pay-sheet, which was forty-three pages long, and when they finished, they found that the accounts did not tally. In those days there were no calculators, and calculations had to be done manually. The two men went over all the forty-three pages of the accounts repeatedly, but failed to locate the problem. Although it was about eight in the evening and the air was chilly, they broke out in a cold sweat. They were worried that unless the accounts tallied and they completed the pay-sheet in time, the staff would not be able to get their monthly salary the next morning. That would cause great inconvenience to many employees.

By then all the other staff had already left the office, but they could not leave until the problem was solved and the pay-sheet was finalized. In desperation Mantu suggested that they should contact Prabhatda, who was well known for his mysterious ability to know things that nobody else could see or know. Several of the staff had gone to him with their problems before, and he had given them very apt and practical solutions. Several times Mantu had also taken help from Prabhatda in solving complicated problems. He knew that according to his routine he would be at the Tiger's Grave at that time. So he and his assistant went there in search of Prabhatda. When they arrived, Prabhatda was talking to someone they did not know. As soon as they explained the problem to him he said, "Mantu, the problem is simple. On page eighteen in the seventh line, a number three is missing. If you correct it, the account will tally."

Greatly relieved, they rushed back to the office and checked the place where Prabhatda had indicated they would find the error and found that he was right. They corrected the mistake and made a fresh calculation. The accounts balanced, and they prepared a new pay-sheet before leaving the office. The next day all the staff got their salary on time.

### **Appreciating Courage**

Manas was a student of class ten. Some boys from the Muslim community regularly taunted and harassed one of his friends. On his way back from school, they would pinch his cheeks and hassle him

as he passed through the area where they usually hung out. He later confided his problem to Manas, who could not accept that his friend was being troubled regularly. Manas told the friend that he would accompany him from school and help him face the bullies.

When the ruffians tried to harass Manas's friend, Manas came to his rescue. A big scuffle ensued as Manas took on four or five of the bullies single-handedly. However, he was overpowered by them and was badly beaten. His body was covered with bruises and his shirt was torn. When he returned home and told his mother what had happened, Abharani and Kanai scolded him for taking on the bullies alone. They were angry that he had gone to help his friend and thought he should have left him to his fate or allowed him to handle it in his own way. Everyone at home, including his grandmother, scolded Manas for getting into trouble unnecessarily. As they were discussing it, Prabhat Ranjan arrived home from the office, and Manas told him the whole story. He supported Manas and said it was his duty as a human being to help his friend. He said that if anyone attacked another person, it was not manly to close one's eyes and pretend not to see it. That was cowardice, and even God would not like it. One should always fight against injustice and never keep quiet out of fear.

He patted Manas for doing his duty courageously and promised to buy him a new shirt to replace the torn one. He then went to meet the senior members of the Muslim community and informed them about the misbehaviour of some of their youths. He requested them to keep the wayward youths under control and warned them that failure to do so would lead to serious consequences for all of them. He cautioned them that at that stage the situation would spin out of control and would no longer be within their power to solve the problem. They apologised for the bad behaviour of the unruly boys and assured him that they would take the necessary steps to discipline the youths. The bullies did not create any further problems after that.

### **Partitioning Sylhet**

Rasmay joined the accounts office in October 1947. Just as he was writing his admission report, Vishvanath Bose, another employee, came over and told him that Prabhatda was calling him.



Rasmay said, "Who is Prabhatda? I don't know him. Anyway, please take me to him." Vishvanath accompanied Rasmay to meet Prabhatda.

As Rasmay stood before Prabhatda, he asked, "So you are Rasmay? Where are you from?"

"I was born in my paternal village in Sylhet District, but I did not live there long as my mother passed away soon after my birth. I was brought up in my uncle's house in Sadarassi village, which I regard as my native place."

"Is Sadarassi the village which is about three kilometres from the town of Karimganj, bordered by the Kussera River on the north side and a canal on the south side?" Prabhatda asked, while at the same time describing in detail the village and the surrounding areas.

Rasmay was surprised at the detailed description of his village given by this stranger, who he had met only a few seconds before. Even he did not have such deep knowledge about the village where he grew up. He thought that perhaps the stranger had visited his village and stayed there for a few days, as he knew it and the surroundings so well. "You seem to know my village so well. Did you ever visit Sadarassi?"

"No, I haven't visited the place. But I intend to go there sometime in the future."

Rasmay was surprised to hear that. "This information is not available in any book. Then how did he know so much about my village and the places nearby", he wondered. "He is certainly an extraordinary person who has the ability to see things that are far away."

Prabhatda continued, "Most parts of your district were included in Pakistan during the Partition due to the inaction of the Congress leaders in Assam, particularly Gopinath Bardoli, who was Prime Minister of Assam at that time. It is a great injustice to the people of Sylhet, and I have written to Basanat Kumar Das, the local leader, advising him to fight for the rights of those people who have unwillingly been included in Pakistan. I am in regular correspondence with him. Let us see what he is able to do. In fact, according to the policy drawn up by Sir John Radcliffe, who was appointed to

partition the country, the entire southern part of the Kussera River, which includes more than half the district, should have gone to India. But near Adityik village the river suddenly ceases to be the boundary line. Anyway, if not now, at some time in the future Pakistan will cease to exist and all these places will again return to India. So it is my suggestion that those who own property in East Pakistan should not sell it. After unification, their descendants will be able to repossess their property.”

Years later, reminiscing about that first meeting, Rasmay said, “I was so overwhelmed by those first few minutes I spent with Prabhatda that I mentally accepted him as my guide in every matter.”

In February 1952, Rasmay took initiation from Prabhat Ranjan. Sadarassi village became a strong base of Prabhat Ranjan’s work in the later years. On 16<sup>th</sup> February 1965, on the occasion of a spiritual congregation in Karimganj, Assam, Prabhat Ranjan visited the nearby Sadarassi village. That was his first and only visit to that village.

### **Mysterious Mendicants**

Many of the employees in the Railway Workshop came from outside Jamalpur and were strangers to the town. They often had a hard time finding a place to stay. Their colleagues would advise them to contact Prabhatda on their arrival in case they faced any difficulty, as he was very helpful to everyone. Gauripada Mukherjee, a young man from Asansol, was referred to Prabhat Ranjan when he was transferred to Jamalpur in 1946. He later recalled his experience:

“There was a young men’s hostel in Rampur Colony called ‘Yauvan Neerh,’ which meant ‘nest of the youths.’ It was started due to the inspiration and guidance of Prabhatda. He also gave its name. He was regarded as the guardian of the hostel, and everyone staying there respected him greatly. His was indeed a unique type of guardianship. He used to know everything about what we did, and when we made mistakes he would lovingly advise or even scold us. There was such love in his voice even while scolding that people felt fortunate to receive his care and attention. From time to time he visited the hostel and gave much advice and moral guidance to the residents.

“Prabhatda used to charm us in many ways with his fathomless knowledge and explanations of the origin of different names, sometimes connecting them with the history of the place, sometimes with the geographical location and sometimes with a mythological story. He would also explain how, as times changed, the names had also undergone a transformation. There was no topic which he did not discuss with us.

“Prabhatda started a handwritten quarterly magazine in Bengali by the same name of Yauvan Neerh. He did it to encourage the literary skills of the employees there and he also regularly contributed poems and articles to the magazine. He personally allotted the duties relating to the magazine to some colleagues. They gladly accepted their responsibilities because they loved Prabhatda. I was made the editor although I didn't have any skill in editing. But Prabhatda guided me and helped me with everything. I was required to write the editorial and arrange the order of the articles and poems. At his behest, several people wrote articles on different subjects, for which they also took his help. In fact, he infused life into the magazine in every way<sup>1</sup>.

“If anyone came to him with any problem, he would talk to him in his local dialect and in the local intonation, as he knew all the local languages and dialects of Bihar and Bengal. Because of that, all the colleagues used to feel very close to Prabhatda.

“Most of the people in Jamalpur had come from other places to work in the workshop. One difficulty they faced was cremating the dead when anyone in the family passed away. Jamalpur did not have a cremation ground, because the people considered it holy to cremate dead bodies by the side of the River Ganges in Monghyr. Thus, the people had to carry the dead bodies for almost ten kilometres to Kashtaharni Ghat, the large cremation ground on the banks of the Ganges, for cremation.

“Since most of the people in the workshop were outsiders, they did not have relatives to help them carry the dead bodies to the

<sup>1</sup> Two pages from this hand-written magazine containing a couple of poems by Prabhat Ranjan, preserved by Gouripada Mukherjee is at present kept in Baba Museum in Calcutta.



cremation ground. In those days it was not customary to transport dead bodies by vehicle. Carrying the dead over such a long distance was a very strenuous task, and there were insufficient people available to help. So Prabhatda organised and motivated a band of people to volunteer as pallbearers, who could be called if anyone needed help. Several times I have seen Prabhatda also helping to carry a dead body to Monghyr.

“One such occasion was when the wife of a colleague died. When we reached the cremation ground, I saw a strange thing. There were some people there who looked like mendicants. Prabhatda was standing at a distance, and one by one those strangers went over to him, touched his feet and then quietly went away. They did it very discreetly, in a way that nobody could easily notice. First, one of them would come and casually sit near the place where he was standing and on some pretext move his hand along the ground and touch his feet. They appeared to be Aghoris. Except for me, maybe no one else had noticed the scene, as Prabhatda was standing some distance away from where the cremation was taking place. At the time I wondered why those mendicants were touching his feet. When one of them did so, Prabhatda murmured something which I could not hear. Then the man folded his hands in reverence and left. I asked him who they were, but he did not reply. At that time hardly any of us knew that he was a spiritual master.

“Although Prabhatda tried his utmost to hide his spiritual greatness from his colleagues, many others who were not his colleagues found out about it. One day in August 1947, everyone in the office was surprised to see Jagjivan Ram and Krishna Ballabh Sahay<sup>2</sup> entering the office, accompanied by the Workshop Accounts Officer. They came to where Prabhatda was sitting and touched his feet and received his blessing.”



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<sup>2</sup> Jagjivan Ram was a former freedom fighter and social reformer, who in 1946 became the youngest minister in Jawaharlal Nehru's provisional government. After Independence, he became the Labour Minister in Nehru's cabinet. K. B. Sahay later became the Chief Minister of Bihar.

## CHAPTER 9

### Early Disciples

Prabhat Ranjan started his role as spiritual guru from his college days, as early as 1939. During his stay in Calcutta, he initiated several early disciples, most of whom were unknown. After returning to Jamalpur on the completion of his college education, he continued to initiate more people into spiritual practice on a selective basis. While Prabhat Ranjan later disclosed some information about the initiation of his early disciples, he did not reveal their identities. The only thing he would say was that they were very highly evolved spiritual aspirants who had been tasked with the special responsibility of keeping the lamp of spirituality aglow in the world.

Among his later disciples, these enigmatic initiates came to be known as Brahma Avadhutas. Other than Kalikananda, the feared Calcutta dacoit-turned saint, the other Brahma Avadhutas were more myth than reality to the Margis, as nothing was known about them. Besides the scanty information Prabhat Ranjan himself ventured to reveal, the little that was known about them came from some of Prabhat's later disciples who chanced to meet a few of these mysterious mystics.

There is another interesting fact: other than the Brahma Avadhutas, several highly advanced yogis and Tantrics who were not disciples of Prabhat Ranjan, secretly visited him to seek his blessings and guidance. Most of his disciples were not aware of these covert interactions because he usually met them alone under the cover of darkness during his lonely evening walks in the outskirts of Jamalpur.

It was only in the second half of the forties that Prabhat Ranjan began to play his role as spiritual guru a little more explicitly by initiating some of his office colleagues and guiding them on the path of spirituality.

### **Pranay Kumar Chatterjee, the Non-Believer**

Pranay Kumar Chatterjee, a sharp-minded young man of twenty-two, joined the Railway Accounts Office in the first week of June 1947. He hailed from Bhagalpur town, which was about 60 kilometres east of Jamalpur. His grandfather was a Brahmin priest who had migrated from Bengal to Bhagalpur to cater to the religious needs of the local well-to-do Bengali population. Although Pranay was from an orthodox religious family, he had developed an iconoclastic attitude from his early youth - anything remotely religious was anathema for him. He had an inherent aversion to his grandfather's profession and considered all religious activities as dogma. He took pride in being a sceptic, which he considered progressive and scientific.

Pranay was assigned the desk two rows from Prabhat Ranjan. At lunchtime on his first day at work, he noticed many of his colleagues gathering around Prabhat Ranjan's table. Curious, he enquired from a colleague sitting next to him what was going on. "Oh, you are new, that's why you are asking. That is Prabhatda, an erudite scholar. The depth of his knowledge has no limits. Everyone enjoys listening to him. He is also a good palmist and can accurately tell anybody's future. Why don't you give it a try," suggested the colleague.

Pranay's immediate reaction was one of outright cynicism. "What is this scholar and fortune teller doing here as a clerk, earning a paltry salary?" he wondered. "He should be in a city or large town, making a lot of money." He kept his thoughts to himself. However he continued to watch the scene with great curiosity as he savoured his homemade lunch. He noticed that his colleagues treated Prabhatda with great respect. This ignited his curiosity even further. After a quick lunch, he got up to have a closer look at what was going on. He saw that Prabhatda's colleagues were listening to him with keen interest. Despite his avowed aversion to all things religious, including astrology and palmistry, Pranay felt a sudden urge to have Prabhatda read his palm and say what fate had in store for him. Seeing an opportune moment, Pranay put aside his pride and scepticism, and



placing his hand in front of Prabhatda, he asked, "Can you please read my palm and tell me my future?"

Prabhatda turned to Pranay and with a faint smile gently pushed his hand aside without uttering a single word. He then continued talking to the others. A strange thing happened, however. The moment Prabhatda touched his hand, Pranay felt an indescribably soothing sensation pass through his body. He had never experienced such pleasant feelings before. At the same time, however, he was stung by Prabhatda's refusal to utter a single word, which he considered a rude rebuff. As he returned to his seat, Pranay resolved not to have any further association with Prabhatda.

Despite his decision to dissociate completely from Prabhat Ranjan, Pranay could not detach his thoughts from the incident, and wondered whether Prabhatda had foreseen something on his palm that he did not want to disclose before the others. Was there anything ominous lurking ahead? Such thoughts whirled about in his mind like a storm and started to torment him. The lingering fear of an approaching tragedy robbed him of his peace of mind, and despite his best efforts, Pranay could not brush aside this gnawing worry. A couple of days later, he saw Prabhat Ranjan standing alone on the veranda of the office. Seizing this opportunity, he went up to him and asked with some hesitation, "Prabhatda, was there something about my future that you did not want to divulge the other day?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Yes, of course. I have been very worried about it."

"All right, meet me at the National Library reading room at about seven thirty this evening."

When Pranay entered the reading room that evening at the appointed time, he saw Prabhatda flipping through the pages of an English-language daily newspaper. There were some other newspapers lying open in front of him too. As Pranay did not want to disturb him, he stood hesitatingly near the entrance of the room, hoping that Prabhat Ranjan would notice him. Without looking up Prabhatda said, "So you have come. Come on, let's go for a walk." He got up, arranged the papers in proper order and walked out.

As they walked Pranay asked, "Prabhatda, were you just looking at the headlines?"

"No, I have been reading the news and articles."

"Reading? You were flipping through the pages so rapidly that it would not have been possible to complete reading even the main headlines."

"If you have any doubt you can ask me about any news in today's papers."

Unable to believe his words, Pranay asked a few questions about some of the news articles he had read that morning. To his utter amazement, Prabhatda answered all his questions as if he was quoting verbatim from the paper that he had read.

As they headed towards the field beyond the officers' colony, Prabhatda described the history of Bhagalpur, which was Pranay's birthplace. The conversation then turned to different topics such as geography, linguistics, culture, politics and philosophy. Prabhatda's ease in switching from one subject to another left Pranay amazed. "It is no wonder that everyone considers him a great scholar. He is indeed more widely read than anyone I have ever met," thought Pranay.

They kept walking on and on, and Pranay was completely immersed in the stream of knowledge that was flowing like a fountain from Prabhatda. It was only when they sat on the Tiger's Grave that Pranay realised that Prabhatda had talked about everything except what he really wanted to know. Pranay hesitantly reminded him, "Prabhatda, I came to find out what you saw in my palm that day that you were reticent to say."

Prabhatda immediately became serious and asked, "Do you really want to know?"

"Surely, that's why I am here."

"Very well then, tell me, what is the purpose of your life?"

"It's very simple. Enjoy life to the fullest. Be happy and make merry."

Prabhatda laughed at his response. "The path you are treading is defective. If you persist in your ways, you are heading towards an abyss and I can see that you will soon meet with your downfall."

In a concerned tone Pranay asked, "If that is so, is there any way I can forestall it?"

"I am seriously concerned about you. Let me think over the matter. Meet me again tomorrow at the same place and time."

Pranay was in a restless mood the whole of next day, as misgivings continuously arose in his mind, "Why didn't Prabhatda tell me yesterday what my future is? What is the calamity that is going to befall me? Should I pay any credence to Prabhatda's warning about my impending downfall?"

That evening he again joined Prabhatda for his evening walk. On reaching the Tiger's Grave, Prabhatda took out a piece of paper from his pocket and gave it to Pranay. "This is Shiva's dhyana mantra. Chant it faithfully as per the instruction I am going to give you now. This will help you to avert the imminent calamity." Prabhatda then explained the method of chanting the mantra. Pranay tried to read it with the aid of his flashlight and promised to practise it.

On reaching home he read the mantra again. As he chanted it, a feeling of resentment arose in his mind like a dark cloud. He thought over how he had steadfastly resisted every effort by his parents to compel him to practise the rituals enjoined for a Brahmin. He deeply disliked the multitudes of gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, which he considered to be mere figments of the imagination. He had always prided himself on being a rational minded person. And now he was being asked to practise another ritual. He could not make up his mind whether or not to memorize the mantra of Lord Shiva. He then analysed where it had all begun. "It all started with me showing my hand to Prabhatda requesting him to tell me my future. I don't believe in astrology or fortune telling. Why should I worry about his warning that I am going to face danger? Come what may, I shall not give up my rational attitude." Despite such thoughts, the fear of an impending danger tormented his mind. "Prabhatda is known for his correct



predictions, and everyone believes that whatever he says comes true," he reflected. "What if an unforeseen misfortune befalls me?" Vacillating between two conflicting feelings, he made a few half-hearted attempts to memorize by heart the mantra, but as he did not have any faith in it he eventually gave up.

On the third day when he reached the office, he saw Prabhatda standing at the entrance, glowering at him. "You worthless, insincere fellow. Why did you disrespect the sacred mantra of Shiva after promising to practise it sincerely? If you are not going to practise it with complete faith, give it back to me."

Pranay was stunned at this sudden, unexpected outburst. He apologised for his negligence and asked Prabhatda how he had come to know about it.

"A *sadhu* with matted locks and a long beard told me."

Pranay was puzzled as to who that *sadhu* might have been and how he had come to know about this matter. "How do I return the mantra to you, Prabhatda?"

"Immerse that piece of paper with the mantra in water either in a pond or in a river."

Pranay did as instructed. That evening he dropped the piece of paper Prabhatda had given him in a pond near his residence and felt a deep sense of relief. At least he would not have to practise it any longer. He then made up his mind not to have anything more to do with Prabhatda.

However, try as he might, he was unable to keep to that decision for long. As the days passed, Pranay felt an irresistible attraction drawing him towards his mysterious colleague. Eventually he joined the others to listen to Prabhatda's morning and lunch-hour talks on different topics, trying to lap up as much knowledge as possible in the process. He even became nostalgic about the few evenings he had spent alone with Prabhatda, and thirsted for them to return. Finally one day he asked Prabhatda if he could accompany him on his

evening walks. Prabhatda agreed. After that, Pranay accompanied him almost every evening for his walks.

As the days passed, he felt increasingly attracted by Prabhatda's eloquence, fathomless knowledge, and mysterious charm. Soon the evening walks with Prabhatda became the main attraction of his life. Although these talks covered almost every aspect of human knowledge, Prabhatda kept returning to the subject of spirituality, stressing its importance in human life. However, spirituality was the topic that least interested Pranay. One day he said, "Prabhatda, spirituality is the recourse of idle people who think about a world that we can't see or feel. What attracts me most is the comfortable life of the people in England and America. I want to enjoy life like they do."

"No, Pranay, sensual enjoyment is the umbra and penumbra of real happiness. A person who lives like that is no better than a dog whose gums bleed as it chews a dry bone, and all the while it thinks that it is feasting on delicious food. In fact, it only tastes its own blood."

Prabhatda's words struck a chord in Pranay's mind. Although he did not entirely agree with Prabhatda, he felt that there was some truth in it. More than a year had passed since he had accompanied Prabhatda on his Field Walks. Towards the middle of 1949, Pranay started to feel an indefinable confusion growing inside him for some unknown reason. He did not know the reason for it. Slowly, the troubling confusion turned into a gnawing despair.

Independence had brought about many changes in the office environment and in the life outside. There was a general atmosphere of optimism and expectation, but strangely, Pranay felt a growing emptiness inside. A conflict was brewing within him whether what he was hearing from Prabhatda was correct or whether the beliefs he had held over the years were the right approach to life. Eventually the deep internal conflict overpowered him. The frequency of his evening walks with Prabhatda dwindled to almost zero.

It was the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1949. Everyone in the office was preparing to celebrate the second anniversary of India's independence. The whole office was in an exuberant mood. Unable to

reconcile himself to the general atmosphere of patriotic fervour, Pranay sat in his chair, sunk in gloom.

“What’s the matter with you, Pranay?” The sudden, unexpected sound of Prabhatda’s voice jolted Pranay. He felt as if he had been abruptly brought out of a deep cavern.

“Oh, nothing, Prabhatda,” muttered Pranay, trying to hide his surprise.

Placing his hand on Pranay’s shoulder, Prabhatda recited something in Sanskrit.

“Prabhatda, I didn’t understand what you said. Please say it clearly.”

Prabhatda reached out and gently touched Pranay between the eyebrows with his index finger. Pranay instinctively looked at him. He saw a powerful beam of light flash from Prabhatda’s eyes. He then experienced a sudden jerk caused by a powerful energy passing through his body and saw a powerful, dazzling stream of light, incredibly brilliant, as if countless suns were exploding all at the same time all around him. Almost instantaneously he was immersed in an ocean of intense bliss and lost all external awareness. Sometime later, when he returned to a normal state of consciousness, the waves of bliss were still surging through him. It took him quite some time to return to a completely normal state after that incredible mystical experience. He thought deeply about that mysterious incident. Tears welled up in his eyes as he realised, “There is indeed a spiritual world beyond this perceivable world that has remained veiled from me. This is the ultimate truth. I have always been denying its existence. I have been groping in the dark until now. I should find that spiritual world; otherwise, my life will be meaningless. For this I need the guidance of a great man.”

He looked across the hall at Prabhatda, who was at his desk engrossed in his office work. Suddenly a new realisation dawned on him about Prabhatda, whom he had considered only as a friend and colleague. He realised that Prabhatda was in fact very different from what he appeared to be, hidden behind the façade of ordinariness.



Pranay slowly got up and staggered across the hall to Prabhatda's desk. He bent down and touched Prabhatda's feet with reverence. "Prabhatda, I surrender to you. Please accept me as your disciple and guide me. Whatever I have been arguing with you in the past was due to my ignorance. I have been treating you only as a friend and colleague. I have now realised that I have been wrong. I have no one else to hold onto except you. Please give me shelter."

Prabhatda smiled sweetly and said, "Very well. Come to the field tonight. We will talk more there." That evening sitting on the Tiger's Grave Prabhatda initiated Pranay into the practice of meditation. He also instructed him to follow certain dietary restrictions. He had to stop eating food such as meat, fish, eggs, onion, garlic and mushrooms. After initiating him, Prabhatda blessed him by touching the crown of his head. Pranay immediately felt an indescribable ecstasy, even more intense than that which he had experienced earlier in the office.

That night, he couldn't sleep. Again and again the extraordinary events of the day flashed before his eyes - the mysterious flash of light in Prabhatda's eyes, the incredible effulgence like the explosion of countless suns and the blissful experience that followed, his solemn appeal to Prabhatda to accept him as his disciple, his initiation at the Tiger's Grave and the incredible ecstasy he had then experienced. He kept asking himself, "Who is this mysterious man who could give me such astonishing experiences?" But he could not find an appropriate answer.

The next morning in the office, Prabhatda asked Pranay to accompany him to the field again for his evening walk, as he had something more to teach him.

That night when they reached the lamppost at the edge of the field, Prabhatda stopped and took out a piece of paper from his pocket and handed it to Pranay.

"These are the ten principles of *yama-niyama*, the moral code of conduct that a sadhaka has to follow strictly."

Pranay glanced through it quickly. "Prabhatda, these rules are for sadhus living in the forest. It is not possible to follow all of them in modern society."

“What are you saying?” asked Prabhatda. He then raised his finger and ordered in a commanding tone, “You will have to follow them! You will have to follow them!” Suddenly Pranay found himself surrounded by numerous figures of Prabhatda, each reproaching him with the same upraised finger. Prabhatda’s commanding voice, “You will have to follow them, you will have to follow them!” reverberated in his ears.

Stunned, he touched Prabhatda’s feet in submission. “All right Prabhatda, All right, I promise that I will follow your command.” As he said this, the multiple forms of Prabhatda that surrounded him instantly vanished.

“Come on, let’s go!” said Prabhatda in a softer tone. At the Tiger’s Grave, Prabhatda taught Pranay the guru mantra, the second lesson of sadhana in Ananda Marga and its application. After that, he remarked, “Pranay, it seems that you didn’t sleep last night. You look tired.”

“Yes Prabhatda. I kept thinking about the experiences I had yesterday. So I couldn’t sleep at all the whole night.”

“Come and rest your head on my lap and lie down for a while.”

Pranay was extremely tired and could not resist the invitation of his guru. He lay down on the grave with his head on his Master’s lap and immediately fell asleep. It was past midnight when Prabhatda woke him up, “Get up Pranay. It’s very late now. We have to go to the office tomorrow.”

Pranay had slept very soundly. He had never had such refreshing sleep before. On their return, Pranay had another strange experience. As he followed the Master, he felt very light, as if he was walking on air. He also felt as if a heavy load had been removed from his head. He was in a highly ebullient mood.

Recalling his experiences that night decades later, Pranay said, “That was the most peaceful sleep that I can remember. While coming back from the field that silent night, I was feeling as if I was walking with the king of the universe.”

Some years later Pranay asked Prabhatda why he had taken more than two years to give him the mystical experience that finally cleared all his doubts about spirituality. Prabhatda answered, "In my scheme of things everything is pre-planned - what will happen, when it will happen, how it will happen and why it will happen. There is a reason for each and everything that others may not know of. Things simply unfold according to that plan."

Although Prabhatda had initiated several disciples before Pranay, they were not allowed to have any contact with his later disciples. So he became the first publicly recognised disciple of Prabhatda. However, he was instructed not to reveal to anyone that he was Prabhatda's disciple. The veil of secrecy surrounding Pranay's initiation was not lifted until some years later.

Pranay was also instructed not to be too inquisitive about the people who came to meet Prabhatda from time to time or enquire about their relationship with him. Even though these meetings remained cloaked in secrecy, Pranay could easily guess that some of the visitors had been initiated. He recalled, "Once I went to the Bandhav Sammelan, the boarding house of an office colleague named Kesto. Earlier Kesto had been a voracious eater of meat and fish. This time I saw that he had stopped eating non-vegetarian food as well as onion and garlic. I also saw that he no longer wasted time gossiping. There were big changes in the way he talked and behaved. I saw the same change in Sukumar Bose and several others who were staying in the same boarding house. From their behaviour I understood that all of them had been initiated by Prabhatda. Jokingly I would tell myself, 'They have fallen in Prabhatda's net.' But as per the instruction of gurudeva, I was not supposed to ask anyone anything and they were expected not to reveal that they had been initiated; so it remained secret for the time being."

Pranay kept an eye out for noticeable signs of change in a person and discovered several people whose conduct and food habits had markedly changed. He concluded that they had also become disciples of this mysterious guru.



A few days after Pranay's initiation, Prabhatda informed him during the Field Walk, "The guru should not be addressed by his personal name."

"Then by what name should I address you?"

"Call me Baba."

Pranay felt a bit strange, as that was how one addressed one's father in Bengali. Prabhatda explained, "'Baba' has come from the root word '*bapra*', which means a person who you love very much. The father is loved by the son. So in Bengali, the father is addressed as 'Baba'. The guru is dearer to a person than anyone else is. The guru is father, mother, brother, sister and friend. To the disciple he is even closer than the closest person is. So the guru should be addressed as 'Baba'. But you will call me 'Baba' only when we are alone. In the office, I am your Prabhatda."

### **Haraprasad Haldar, the One Who Was Fated to Die**

Haraprasad Haldar from Krishnanagar in Bengal was transferred from the Kanchrapara Railway Workshop on the outskirts of Calcutta to the Mechanical Section of Jamalpur Railway Workshop in late 1947. He was a draftsman by profession. One day in early May 1950, he went to the accounts section of the workshop for some work. There he saw some people gathered around Prabhatda's table. He had heard about Prabhatda's extraordinary abilities from the other employees. As Haraprasad was passing by his table, Prabhatda called out to him, "Oh little boy, come here." Haraprasad felt somewhat miffed that Prabhatda had called him "little boy". Nevertheless he went over to him. Prabhatda then asked him his name and other personal details. When he said he was from Krishnanagar, Prabhatda said, "I see. Do you know Sukendranath Naik, Manas Mohan, Shyama Chand Ganguly, Anil Banerjee, and Manoranjan Sen?"

Haraprasad was astonished to hear their names from Prabhatda. All these people were his close associates. "How do you know them, Prabhatda? Have you ever been to Krishnanagar?" asked Haraprasad in surprise.

“No, I have never been to Krishnanagar. I just got to know them by the way.”

Haraprasad was amazed. How could Prabhatda know them? He had never been to Krishnanagar and they had never come to Jamalpur. This incident sparked his curiosity and interest to know more about Prabhatda. It is noteworthy that the five persons who Prabhatda had mentioned became his disciples later.

After that first meeting, Haraprasad felt a strange attraction towards Prabhatda. Two days later he again went to see him. “Haraprasad, I am giving you a choice of five subjects – linguistics, geography, anthropology, history and philosophy,” said Prabhatda during the conversation. “Select any one of these and I can make you a world-renowned scholar in that subject.”

“Prabhatda, I am not interested in becoming a world-renowned scholar.”

“Why not? That is what you have been thinking about - that it would be good to become a very renowned person and attain name and fame. There are two other desires which afflict your mind very much. One is your desire to get psychic powers and the third I will reveal at the proper time.”

Haraprasad was surprised – how could Prabhatda know his innermost secrets which he had never shared with anyone? As the curiosity deepened, he was drawn more and more towards his mysterious colleague. Another day he noticed that Prabhatda was staring at his forehead. “What’s the matter, Prabhatda? You have been staring at my forehead for quite some time.”

“I am seeing that you are destined to have only a short life. Your end is fast approaching and you are fated to leave this world in less than a month, precisely on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May.”

Prabhatda’s words shocked him deeply. He felt as if the ground under his feet was giving way like quicksand. He knew that Prabhatda had a reputation for making accurate predictions. So he feared that this prediction would also come true. Seeing that he was shaken

Prabhatda said in a consolatory tone, "There is nothing to worry about. Now that you have come in my contact I will take care of it. Meet me exactly one month from today at the Tiger's Grave at eight in the evening. We will talk more then."

Although Haraprasad was well aware of Prabhatda's ability to foretell events accurately, he did not believe that Prabhatda could change the fate that Providence had in store for him. Prabhatda's assurance that he would take care of Haraprasad's destiny did not provide him any consolation at all. He was shaken to the core at the thought of his approaching end. He wrote to his close friend, Sukhendranath Naik, about Prabhatda's reputation and forecast about his impending death as well as Prabhatda's assurance that he would alter his fate. Sukhen was one of the five people whose name Prabhatda had mentioned to Haraprasad in their first meeting.

Sukhen thought that his friend had fallen prey to a tantric and immediately reported the matter to Haraprasad's father. It was then decided that his elder brother would immediately go to Jamalpur and bring him back to Krishnanagar. When Haraprasad returned to Krishnanagar, Sukhen noticed that he was impassive and resigned to his fate. One evening when they were together Haraprasad expressed his fear, "Sukhen, Prabhatda assured me that he would protect me from death. But I have serious doubts about his capacity to challenge Yama, the god of death, if it is indeed my destiny to die." The other members of his family tried to convince him that Prabhat Ranjan was an evil tantric, and advised him to keep away from him.

As the 25<sup>th</sup> of May passed uneventfully, Haraprasad gained some confidence and agreed to return to Jamalpur. He made a firm resolve not to have any further contact with Prabhatda. One evening three or four days after his return, he was sitting in the boarding house when he felt somewhat restless. Although it was a beautiful full moon night, Haraprasad was not able to enjoy the beauty of the evening. In order to calm his mind he decided to go to the National Library reading room and do some reading. However, as soon as he stepped inside, to his great surprise he saw Prabhatda sitting in a corner of the room flipping through a newspaper. The very sight of Prabhatda brought a



chill to his spine and reawakened his fear of death. Determined not to have any further contact with Prabhatda, he quickly turned around and left the library as fast as his legs could carry him. He wanted to get as far away from this dangerous tantric as possible, as he felt that the very sight of him boded ill. Haraprasad walked and walked, oblivious of where he was going. A large patch of clouds had covered the moon and it was dark everywhere. He walked for a long time. Suddenly he heard a voice, "Have you come? Good, sit down."

These words jolted Haraprasad and brought him back to his senses. In the dim light of the cloud-covered moon, he saw the very person he was trying to avoid, sitting on something that appeared to be a tomb. The shock of seeing Prabhatda, the mystery of how he had ended up in such a strange place and the eerie atmosphere of the tomb unnerved Haraprasad. The only thought in his mind was to escape from this evil tantric.

In a gentle and reassuring tone, Prabhatda said, "There is nothing to worry about, Haraprasad. Do you remember that I asked you to meet me here in one month? This is the day, the place and the time."

Prabhatda asked him sit on the Tiger's Grave and explained the necessity of spirituality in life. Mustering his courage, Haraprasad asked, "Prabhatda, what about your forecast about my death?"

"That was your destiny, but it changed after you came in my contact. Your life has been extended for a purpose."

"What is that purpose?"

"You have a spiritual destiny now. Your life is for spiritual practice."

Haraprasad accepted his words, thinking that at least it had saved him from death. For several years he had nursed a desire to do spiritual practice. He had even gone to the Himalayas in search of a spiritual guru, but had to return disappointed. So what Prabhatda said was not abhorrent to him, though he was still eager to get away from this tantric.

"Before I initiate you into the practice of spirituality, you will have to agree to give up non-vegetarian food from now onwards." Haraprasad readily agreed.

Prabhatda then asked, "What is the caste of the God you worship?"

"None," Haraprasad replied.

"Since God is the Supreme Father and all are His children, how can His children be divided into different castes? You will have to give up your caste feeling."

Haraprasad nodded his agreement to everything Prabhatda said though he was only half listening. He was ready to agree to anything just to get this over with. Prabhatda then asked him to remove his sacred thread, a symbol, wearing which is mandatory for every Brahmin. Haraprasad became apprehensive at this suggestion and thought, "This sacred thread is my only protection from this tantric here in this lonely place. If I remove it, my last shield will be gone and I will be completely at his mercy." So he refused to remove it. "I promise you that I will remove it later but not right now."

Prabhatda tried to reason with him but Haraprasad stood his ground. By no means was he going to remove his sacred thread, the last bastion of his security in this dreadful place. By then he had become terrified that Prabhatda might do something to him with his tantric powers and there was no one to help him here. Finally, breaking the chain of his thoughts Prabhatda exclaimed, "What foolish things are you thinking!" and touched him between the eyebrows. As soon as he felt the touch, a strong and soothing current engulfed him and he experienced a wave of intense bliss he had not known before. This sublime state of mind lasted for several minutes and when he returned to normal consciousness all his doubts and fears about Prabhatda vanished. Without any hesitation he took off the sacred thread and placed it at Prabhatda's feet. Prabhatda then initiated him. Within a few minutes of ideating on his mantra, a stream of intense bliss again engulfed Haraprasad and he lost all sense of time, place and his individual existence. He was in that supremely blissful, transcendental state for quite some time. It was well past midnight when he came back to his senses. Seeing Prabhatda still sitting beside him, he asked, "Prabhatda, you are still here?" The intensely blissful experience gave Haraprasad a new

awareness of being one with the Divine. He now felt a profound reverence for Prabhatda, whom only a short while ago he had looked upon with great suspicion.

Prabhatda smiled at him without saying anything and signalled that they should now make their way back home. As they slowly walked back, Haraprasad was still absorbed in a God-intoxicated state. Everything around him—the field, the trees, the buildings, the roads and the scavenger dogs on the roadside - appeared as different manifestations of the one Supreme Consciousness. Prabhatda accompanied Haraprasad up to Bandhav Sammelan, his boarding house. Some of his fellow boarders were still awake, worrying about his whereabouts. They were curious to know where he had been, but he was in no mood to respond and went up to the roof, wanting to be alone to enjoy the spiritual ecstasy that was still coursing through his being. That night he couldn't sleep at all and spent his time alternately meditating and pacing back and forth, reflecting on the unexpected turn of events. Tears of ecstasy continuously streamed down his face; they seemed to wash away his past and usher in a new dawn in his life. He also felt strangely light, as if a big weight had been removed from his head and he was floating in the air.

Morning brought no change in Haraprasad. He continued to be lost in an unknown world and did not want to talk or eat. His roommates grew worried, as they didn't know what to make of his strange condition. They thought that he had become ill and advised him to take rest for a day or two. Haraprasad directed the cook to prepare vegetarian food separately for him. When his condition showed little sign of abating even after a few days, his fellow boarders started to feel more concerned about his wellbeing, but had no idea what had caused him to become like this. One night, a neighbour invited the residents of the boarding house to attend the worship of the Lord Satyanarayan. The inmates of the hostel wanted Haraprasad to come along with them to the prayer session in the hope that it would change his odd behaviour, but he told them that he himself was Lord Narayan, and that he would accept their worship sitting in his room. This sacrilegious statement shocked them deeply



and made them question his sanity. Haraprasad, for his part, felt that it was very unfortunate that no one except Prabhatda could understand his God-intoxicated state.

That evening, while all the boarders were attending the worship of Satyanarayan in the neighbour's house, Prabhatda dropped by to enquire how Haraprasad was doing and took him to the roof of the building for some privacy. There Haraprasad caught his feet and cried, "Prabhatda, how can I ever repay what you have done for me? What a great change you have brought about in my life. Since that night, I have constantly been in a God-intoxicated state. The only problem is that no one understands my condition and people keep disturbing me."

"Don't worry, Haraprasad. Sooner or later they will all understand. Now as long as I am here, no one will disturb us."

Prabhatda clarified many questions Haraprasad had and taught him the second lesson of meditation. Finally, as Prabhatda got up to leave, Haraprasad prostrated before him. Prabhatda touched Haraprasad's crown with his right foot, and Haraprasad felt the same intense, ecstatic vibration pass through his body, engulfing his entire being.

When his fellow boarders returned after the worship, they found that Haraprasad's condition had gotten worse. They asked the cook what had happened while they were away. The cook told them that a person with spectacles wearing a dhoti and kurta had come while they were out and had taken Haraprasad to the roof.

After hearing this, the boarders kept a close watch on Haraprasad and discovered that he was closely associating with Prabhatda and frequently accompanied him to the field at night. They concluded that Prabhatda must have cast a tantric spell on Haraprasad and was secretly teaching him some occult practices.

### **Sadhan Dey, the Musclemán**

The boarders decided to teach Prabhatda a lesson so that he would keep away from their friend Haraprasad. Sadhan Dey, a tough character, volunteered to take the responsibility to do the needful. He

found out about Prabhatda's regular evening walks after sunset and thought that this would be the best time to confront him. So one evening Sadhan carefully tucked a knife underneath his shirt and left the boarding house early, planning to intercept Prabhatda in the lonely area beyond the railway footbridge. However, even before he reached the bridge, Prabhatda suddenly surprised Sadhan by accosting him near the Jubilee Well. Sadhan was taken aback when he heard Prabhatda calling out his name and greeting him as if he were a well-known acquaintance, although they had never met before.

"Sadhan, why don't you join me for an evening walk?" he proposed in a friendly manner that surprised Sadhan even more. Although it was not the way he had planned to encounter Prabhatda, he reluctantly agreed. As they walked, Prabhatda asked him about each of his family members by name, and told him about the life of his great-grandfather, about whom Sadhan knew hardly anything. It was as if Prabhatda knew all his relatives very well. He also described many details about Sadhan's native village Noakhali in East Pakistan, and talked to him in the local dialect of the area. All along the way he recounted many little-known facts about that area, while Sadhan listened spellbound. The subjects that Prabhatda discussed were so absorbing and the way he spoke was so intimate and heart touching. Slowly Sadhan began to fall under the charm of this person whom he had come to threaten and felt a growing reverence for him. Finally he thought, "How can I ever think of harming such a charming person?" As he pondered over this, he lost track of what Prabhatda was saying.

Breaking his reverie, Prabhatda asked smilingly, "You seem to be lost in another world, Sadhan. What's the matter?"

"Yes, Prabhatda, I got a little distracted by other thoughts," agreed Sadhan, trying to hide his nervousness.

When this happened a few more times along the way, Sadhan became even more nervous as he wondered whether Prabhatda could read his thoughts. By the time they reached the Tiger's Grave, Sadhan realised that he would not be able to even think of harming this person whose charismatic personality had completely captivated him in such a short time. After sitting on the Tiger's Grave, Prabhatda

asked very affectionately, "Sadhan, do you still think you will have any need of the knife that is hidden under your shirt?"

"What are you saying, Prabhatda?" Sadhan replied, unnerved. He pretended that he did not understand the question.

"Yes, I am talking about the knife you have hidden under your shirt. If you think you won't need it, take it out."

Realising that he could not hide anything from Prabhatda, he reluctantly took out the knife and sheepishly placed it in front of him. Then in a very gentle tone Prabhatda said, "Sadhan, you and your companions are harbouring a misconception. There is nothing wrong with Haraprasad. I have taught him yogic meditation and he is enjoying the spiritual bliss that one derives by practising it. That's all. If you wish, you can also try it and find out for yourself what the effect is." He went on to explain the benefits of yogic meditation. By then Sadhan was completely captivated by Prabhatda's charming behaviour and detailed knowledge of places and people known to him without having visited them. He was ready to accept anything that Prabhatda might say. He unhesitatingly agreed to learn meditation. After initiating him, Prabhatda touched the chakra between his eyebrows and Sadhan entered into an unknown world of bliss, just as Haraprasad had experienced a few days earlier. It was very late when Prabhatda accompanied a spiritually-intoxicated Sadhan up to the gate of the boarding house. Sadhan's companions were anxiously waiting for him. As soon as he entered, everyone gathered around him, eager to hear how he had roughed up Prabhatda and taught him a well-deserved lesson. One of the boarders, Kesto, asked eagerly, "Was the lesson you taught him severe enough to deter him from meddling with the life of the poor Haraprasad from now on?"

"Did you have to rough him up?" asked Sukumar, another inmate, enthusiastically.

"Did you get him to promise that he will not contact Haraprasad hereafter?" asked a third one.

How strange! Not a single word came out of Sadhan. All they could see was that his upper garments were drenched with the profuse tears he was shedding, tears caused partly by profound ecstasy and



partly by the remorse he felt for the ill feelings he had earlier nursed against Prabhatda. "He also seems to be a lost case," remarked one of the boarders in despair. Some of the others nodded in agreement.

The first thing Sadhan did after he became somewhat normal was to instruct the cook to prepare for him from then onwards the same vegetarian food that Haraprasad was taking. Later he explained to everyone what had happened that evening. In the course of time, one by one almost all the boarders of the Bandhav Sammelan boarding house became Prabhatda's disciples. They would be some of the early pillars of the mission he would later create.

### **Shiva Shankar Banerjee, the Incorruptible Police Officer**

Shiva Shankar Banerjee, the old classmate of Prabhat Ranjan, was employed in the police force as a sub-inspector posted in the colliery belt near Sahebganj. He suffered from acute respiratory problems, aggravated by the pollution of the coal mining area. Treatment by specialists at the coal mine hospital and elsewhere did not bring him any relief. Shiva Shankar was desperate to find a cure. Towards the end of 1951 he came to Jamalpur on leave to recuperate from a serious asthma attack. While there, he chanced on Prabhat Ranjan. During the course of their conversation, Prabhat Ranjan enquired about his health. Shiva Shankar explained that he was suffering from a severe respiratory problem and expressed his desperation to find a cure.

"I can cure your illness," said Prabhat Ranjan, giving him a ray of hope.

"Really Prabhat? Where did you learn medicine?"

"It is some kind of yogic practice. But there are certain conditions you need to fulfil before I teach you the process."

"Tell me what they are. I am ready to accept anything as long as it cures me. I am absolutely desperate to get rid of this problem as it is ruining my life."

"I will teach you certain yogic practices, and you will have to practise them regularly. But before that, you have to accept me as your guru."

“You as my guru! When did you become a guru?” asked Shiva Shankar incredulously. “But if just doing that can cure me of my illness, I am ready to do it.”

“I can guarantee you that it will cure you completely,” assured Prabhat Ranjan.

He then instructed Shiva Shankar to come to his house the next morning and there he taught him meditation and certain yogic exercises. He also prescribed a strict vegetarian diet without onion and garlic, as well as some herbal remedies.

Shiva Shankar followed his friend’s instructions, and to his great surprise and delight, within just a few days he was cured of the disease he had been suffering from for several years. After returning to his workplace he continued his practices very strictly, but the environment was not conducive to sadhana.

Corruption and immorality were rampant throughout the coal belt, from top to bottom. The writ of the coal mafia ran in the entire area. In such an atmosphere, he found it extremely difficult to be honest. Even then, he strictly followed the principles of yama-niyama that his friend and guru had taught him. When he refused to accept bribes or ignore any wrongdoing, he was victimised by the higher authorities. Unable to tolerate the persecution, he decided to seek a transfer to a relatively peaceful post, which was free from corruption and immoral practices.

### **Chandranath Kunwar, an Earnest Seeker**

Chandranath Kunwar, a native of Gaddopur village in North Bihar, had a tension-free job as sergeant-major in the Bihar Military Police. He was posted in Dumka, about 150 km from Jamalpur. Although he was contented with his lot in life, he felt that something was missing. From his early youth his soul had thirsted for inner peace. He understood that it could be attained only through the guidance of a qualified spiritual guru. He was in his late 20s when he started to search for a guru who could guide him on the spiritual path. His quest led him to several saints and monks, but most of them could

not satisfy him philosophically. He was also disillusioned by some of those he met because of shortcomings in their behaviour. However, there were some saintly people he considered as possible candidates to be his guru. But strangely, every time he sought initiation from them, some unexpected obstacle or the other blocked his path.

During one of his visits to his native village of Gaddopur, he heard that a saintly person by the name of Maharaj, who had a large following in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, was camping in the village. Drawn by his natural attraction towards spiritual people, Chandranath went to meet him. In the course of discussion, the saint told him, "Human life is very valuable. Its purpose is to achieve self-realisation, i.e., to know your true identity – that you are not just the human being that is caged in the physical body but you are yourself the Supreme Entity, you are Shiva. One should not waste time going on pilgrimages, counting beads or in performing idol worship or other rituals, as the realisation that you are divine cannot be gained in those ways." Chandranath then asked him the way to achieve self-realisation. Maharaj replied that one should do sadhana in order to attain it. Chandranath said that he had been in search of such a practice, and requested him to teach it to him. The saint closed his eyes for a while and then said in Bhojpuri, "*samay ayii ta milii*" ("When the time comes, you will get the guru.").

That was in the year 1951. In March 1953, Sergeant Major Chandranath was upset when he heard that Shiva Shankar Banerjee, a sub-inspector on active duty in the police force, had been transferred to Dumka and was posted under him. He protested to the district superintendent of police, saying that it was unjust for such an experienced police officer to be given such a lowly post in the Bihar Military Police (BMP). Rather, he should have been assigned to a police station where his experience could have been put to greater use. The superintendent explained that Shiva Shankar himself had asked for this transfer. Chandranath was surprised that a police officer with a lucrative post in the colliery area, where the income from bribes far exceeded his salary, had opted to be transferred to a side post like the BMP. He thought that perhaps the sub-inspector was



trying to avoid major responsibilities. To his surprise, however, Chandranath found that Shiva Shankar was a diligent officer, who was sincere in his job and a person of exemplary character. Chandranath was highly impressed when he heard that the new officer had deliberately chosen an unprofitable posting in the BMP because he disliked the corrupt atmosphere of a police station in the colliery belt.

In the evenings Shiva Shankar used to hold philosophical discussions with his superior, Company Commander Kishun Singh, who was an ardent follower of Arya Samaj. Chandranath joined their discussions as a silent spectator. The logic and clarity with which Shiva Shankar explained philosophical concepts such as soul, bodiless minds and the illusory nature of ghosts impressed Chandranath. After listening to him for several days, Chandranath asked him where he had learned these ideas. Shiva Shankar replied that he had obtained this knowledge from his guru, who had also taught him meditation. Chandranath developed an intense desire to meet this guru who had created such a strong sense of morality and dutifulness in his subordinate. He had a hunch that his long search for a guru was coming to an end. He hoped that finally the prediction of Maharaj would come true. However, Shiva Shankar was reluctant to disclose the name of the master or give any other details about him. Learning that Shiva Shankar needed to get prior permission from the guru before he could disclose any details about him, Chandranath immediately granted him leave to meet his guru in person and to seek his permission.

Shiva Shankar returned the next day and informed Chandranath that his request to meet the guru had been granted, and gave him the date and time of the meeting. Shiva Shankar introduced the guru by saying that he lived in Jamalpur and that people considered him to be a repository of all knowledge. He could predict any event accurately, give simple solutions for all kinds of complex problems and cure any disease. Chandranath was not interested in any of this. He wanted a genuine guru and felt that he had found the right one.

Before leaving Dumka on the appointed day, he mentally bowed before the guru. Earlier when he sought initiation on several occasions, he failed to reach his destination at the appointed time

owing to unforeseen circumstances and blew the chance to get initiation. He prayed that it should not happen again this time, and indeed he reached Jamalpur without any difficulty. Shiva Shankar had drawn a detailed map of the area to help Chandranath locate the house. When he arrived in Keshavpur, he followed the map and arrived at the destination. With some hesitation he entered the veranda of the house, unsure whether it was the right one. He saw Kanai sitting in the front room and briefly mentioned the purpose of his coming, and enquired if he was in the right house. Kanai confirmed that he was in the correct place and cordially invited him inside. After offering him a seat, Kanai went to inform his elder brother about the visitor.

Moments later Chandranath heard someone say in Bengali, "Has the time come?" Like lightning, the words that the saint Maharaj had uttered two years before flashed in his mind: "When the time comes you will get your guru." Even before he could think any further, a very attractive, radiant person entered the room. Chandranath intuitively knew that this was the guru for whom he had been waiting all these years. He had come to the right place and his search of over six years was finally over.

Chandranath rose from his seat and greeted the guru reverently. After returning his greeting, Prabhat Ranjan asked politely, "Please tell me what I can do for you. If you have any questions, please ask. Although I am not a scholar, I will try my best to answer them."

"I haven't come with any questions," replied Chandranath. "I am here in search of a guru. I am presenting myself before you as your disciple and I desire to be initiated."

Hearing this, Prabhat Ranjan's mood changed abruptly. In a commanding tone, he asked him to close the doors and windows. He then sat on a chair and directed Chandranath to sit in front of him on the cot with his legs crossed. He explained yama-niyama to him and told him that he should practise these fundamental principles of morality very strictly. He said that henceforth he should avoid all kinds of non-vegetarian food, onion and garlic, and take only sentient food. He then ordered Chandranath to remove his sacred thread, a

symbol of his high caste<sup>1</sup>. Prabhat Ranjan explained that Parama Purusha, the Supreme Father, is the creator of all living beings, including human beings. So to divide society on the basis of caste, creed, religion, . etc., would amount to denying the supreme fatherhood of Parama Purusha. Prabhat Ranjan then initiated him into the process of yogic meditation. Chandranath felt that he had finally found the path for which he had been yearning for such a long time.

Prabhat Ranjan then commented, "You have spent several lives enjoying worldly pleasures. Devote this life to spirituality." In a more serious tone he said, "It is through the conduct of the disciple that a guru becomes known. Preserve the lustre of my face. Don't darken it by your conduct. Yama-niyama is your moral shield. You should follow yama-niyama very strictly and become pure and perfect."

He then quoted a verse in Bhojpuri composed by the saint Kabir, which posed some deep philosophical questions and answers.

"Where did the unit consciousness (hamsa) come from, and what is its final destination? Where is its abode between these states? With what does it associate itself? The unit consciousness came from the Qualified Supreme Consciousness (Saguna) and it will finally merge in the Unqualified Supreme Consciousness (Nirguna). In between it makes the physical body its abode and associates itself with the world of illusion (Maya)." Baba then told him, "Chandranath, you should always remember this truth."

"For doing meditation, solitude is very essential, but for that, you don't have to go to the jungle or the Himalayas. Shut yourself in a room and do your meditation. Spirituality should be practised while living in society."

As Chandranath stood up to pay his respects before taking leave, Prabhat Ranjan said, "Do as much sadhana as you can and serve all the creatures of this world. Take every opportunity to serve people. Finally, remember the words of the saint Tulsidas: 'When you came

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<sup>1</sup> In Bihar and in some parts of India, people from the higher castes other than Brahmins also often wear the sacred thread. Chandranath was from a Kshatriya family.



into the world you were crying and the world was smiling; live your life in such a way that when you leave this world, the world will be weeping and you will leave smiling.”

He then remarked, “You are destined to have a short life. But you don’t need to worry about that. It is my problem now. The next time you come, come in the evening. Then you can accompany me during my evening walk.”

Chandranath prostrated before the guru and left the premises spiritually invigorated. He took a vow to follow the guru’s instructions sincerely and practised meditation regularly and rigorously.

A few weeks later Prabhat Ranjan initiated Kishun Singh, the BMP company commander, who together with Chandranath had taken part in the philosophical discussions with Shiva Shankar.

### **Dr. Sachinandan Mandal, a Lifelong Friend**

Many years earlier, in January 1930 young Sachinandan Mandal was admitted to Standard III in the Bengali Primary School in the same class as Prabhat Ranjan. His father had recently been transferred to the Jamalpur Railway Workshop. Young Prabhat Ranjan was the first person in the class to greet him. To calm his initial fears, Prabhat Ranjan held Sachinandan’s hand and made him sit beside him. That was the start of a close, lifelong bond between the two. They had contrasting personality traits, however. While Prabhat Ranjan was calm, composed and an introvert, Sachinandan was an extrovert, always inclined to play games and join in other childhood activities. In spite of the stark difference in their characters, their friendship was very deep. They called each other by their nicknames, Bubu and Nandu. Years later, recalling his early memories of Bubu, Nandu said, “In later years in school I heard Bubu talk about the history of various places, but I never understood where he had learned those things. While everyone played or chatted with their friends during the lunch hour, Bubu spent his time explaining different things to his classmates. I was not interested in those things and spent my time playing. Both of us were bright students.”

Bubu would often tell his friend, "See, Nandu, I want you to always score higher marks than me, as you have to pursue higher studies." That was exactly what happened. Nandu would normally top the class in the examinations with Bubu just behind him.

After completing high school in Jamalpur, Sachinandan went on to study medicine. In 1951, after a long gap of 12 years, he came back to Jamalpur and set up a private practice there. Bubu, his childhood friend, would occasionally visit him at the clinic when he passed by.

Gopi Kishore Banerjee, one of Prabhat Ranjan's neighbours from Keshavpur, told Sachinandan one day, "Once I went to Bubu for clarification about some matter. He explained it in such detail. It is beyond my understanding how a person can have such limitless knowledge."

"That is surprising indeed," said Sachinandan with great interest. "When we were young, I heard him talk on various subjects, but never paid serious attention because of my immaturity. I never knew that he had acquired such vast knowledge."

On another occasion, Sachinandan was coming down the stairs after visiting a patient, while Prabhat Ranjan happened to be going up at the same time. As they passed each other, Prabhat Ranjan remarked, "The patient is suffering from pain on both sides, isn't he?" Surprised at this observation, Sachinandan thought for a moment that Bubu might have watched him through the window as he examined the patient on both sides with his stethoscope. On deeper analysis, however, he realised that it would have been physically impossible for him to do so, given the height of the window.

A few days later, in January 1952 Subodh Chatterjee, a schoolmate, was sitting in Sachinandan's clinic as Prabhat Ranjan passed by. Subodh asked, "Do you know Bubu?" Sachinandan jokingly replied that he did not know him. Subodh continued, "I know that you both studied together and were very close to each other. But forget that. He is no more the Bubu of those days. Now he is a great spiritualist with supernatural powers. He gives new and beautiful interpretations of many philosophical concepts. He is a guru now.

Many people go to see him alone at the Tiger's Grave, and he has initiated many people into spirituality." Sachinandan was surprised to hear all this, as he knew nothing about it.

He decided to verify the matter for himself. A day or two later Prabhat Ranjan happened to walk by his clinic again. Sachinandan seized the opportunity and called him inside, then started talking to him in the same way as in their school days. "Bubu, I hear that you have become a big philosopher nowadays. Teach me something too."

"Who said that Nandu? I don't know anything, so what can I teach you?"

Sachinandan could not persuade Prabhat Ranjan to teach him anything. After a few days, Prabhat Ranjan came by his clinic again, affording Sachinandan another opportunity to talk to him. This time Prabhat Ranjan said, "If you are really interested, I will refer you to a tantric in Nathnagar near Bhagalpur. He will be able to teach you something."

"No Bubu, if I learn anything, it will only be from you. Please teach me whatever you wish."

Prabhat Ranjan did not reply. Again after another three to four days, Sachinandan said, "Bubu, I heard that you can also read palms. Can you tell me what my fate is?"

"What do you want to know?" asked Prabhat Ranjan. Sachinandan did not give an immediate reply, as he did not know what to ask. "Nandu, I am giving you three choices – good health, good company or happiness. Out of these three, choose one."

"Life needs all the three."

"All right, I assure you that you will have all the three."

"What about my request to teach me something?"

"What is the use of learning anything from me? If you set up practice at any place on the other side of the river Ganges, you will be able to make a lot of money."

"I don't need a lot of money. I'll stay here. All I want is for you to teach me something."



Based on what he had heard from others and from his own observations, Sachinandan understood that his friend was an extraordinary person and was trying to hide himself behind the glitter of worldly attractions. As the days passed, Sachinandan began to accompany Prabhat Ranjan to the field during his evening walks. There he was given glimpses of the unparalleled knowledge that poured from his childhood friend. As they walked, the memory of Prabhat Ranjan's talks on the history of various places and people during their school days bubbled up in his mind. He regretted that he had not been able to benefit from Prabhat's vast knowledge at that time, as he had been too distracted by games and other childhood activities. He resolved that he would not waste his chance again and pursued his friend relentlessly.

After three months Prabhat Ranjan gave Sachinandan a piece of paper containing instructions on yama-niyama written in his own handwriting, and asked him to follow it sincerely. After another three days Prabhat Ranjan instructed Sachinandan, "Before you take lunch today, you should first feed a hungry person and only then take your food." Before lunch Sachinandan went in search of a beggar, with a packet of food in hand. However, even after a lengthy search he could not find a single beggar. Disappointed, he returned home and decided to skip lunch if he could not offer food to someone. As he neared his house, he saw a sickly dog approaching him, wagging its tail. He gave the food to the dog. Later that evening Prabhat Ranjan asked him if he had fed anyone. Sachinandan explained what had happened. Prabhat Ranjan said, "You fed a hungry and needy being. That is real service and that will do. Come to my house tomorrow in the afternoon and I will teach you something."

The next afternoon Sachinandan went to Prabhat Ranjan's house. Strangely Prabhat Ranjan's appearance that day evoked a strong feeling of reverence in his mind. He could no longer consider him as a mere friend and classmate. Prabhat Ranjan was sitting on a cot and asked Sachinandan to take his seat in front of him. However, Sachinandan hesitated to sit in front of Prabhat Ranjan due to the

deep veneration he had started to feel. Again Prabhat Ranjan asked him to take his seat, this time more emphatically, and Sachinandan obeyed. Prabhat Ranjan then initiated him.

Sachinandan found it inappropriate to continue addressing Prabhat Ranjan as Bubu or Prabhat. A few days later Prabhat Ranjan told him that the guru should be addressed as Baba. Gradually, on Prabhat Ranjan's instruction, all the disciples began to address him as Baba.

### **Nagina Prasad Sinha, the Ekalavya**

Nagina Prasad Sinha was Chandranath's distant cousin. They were not only related by blood but were good friends too. They had studied together all through school right up to college. While Chandranath joined the Police Force, Nagina took up a job in the Customs and Central Excise Department. Although they were close friends, their personalities were very different. Chandranath was sober and simple, while Nagina was aristocratic and extravagant.

Once in April 1953, when Nagina was posted in Bhagalpur as superintendent, he went to visit Chandranath in Dumka. He noticed that his friend had become a strict vegetarian and was practising meditation. The drastic change in diet surprised Nagina, as Chandranath had been a non-vegetarian from his childhood. Despite repeated requests for clarification, Chandranath did not explain the reasons for his new diet and also refused to say whether he had learned the meditation from a guru.

In the first week of October 1953, Chandranath came to Bhagalpur on an official visit. At the time Nagina was having a very troubled working relationship with his higher authority, the corrupt assistant collector. From the beginning Nagina would never bow before anyone, especially a corrupt official. His boss, who was vindictive and overbearing by nature, could not tolerate his unyielding attitude. So he was on the lookout for any opportunity to humiliate his proud subordinate. On that day, the situation in the office had reached a climax. Nagina was in a very disturbed state of mind when he reached home in the evening. Not in a mood to eat, he

retired early. Just as he was trying to get to sleep, he heard a knock on the door. As he opened the door, he saw Chandranath. Seeing his dear friend, Nagina felt a sense of relief and unburdened himself to him. Chandranath could not believe what he heard and remarked in surprise, "You .... afraid, Nagina! It is not in your nature to be so." Chandranath knew Nagina to be a bold and courageous person who was never willing to bow before anyone. But it was a different Nagina he was now seeing, one who had grown fearful about whether he would be able to continue his service in the department. On Chandranath's request they dined together.

The next evening too, Nagina told Chandranath about his tussles with his boss that day, which had crossed all the limits of tolerance. On hearing his words, Chandranath remarked self-assuredly, "Nagina, why are you afraid of a corrupt officer? A corrupt person can't do anything to you as you are honest and not at fault. Have confidence in yourself. I would challenge anyone to do any harm to me like this. Even if God Himself wanted to harm me, He would have to think a thousand times." The confidence with which Chandranath spoke surprised Nagina.

After ablution, as Chandranath retired to another room for his evening meditation, Nagina reclined on his bed, musing over what his friend had said. This was certainly not the Chandranath he had known all these years, who had been a humble and unassuming person and not one to indulge in bragging. He wondered from where he had derived such inner strength and conviction that he could even challenge God. His eyes were closed and as he became deeply absorbed in these thoughts the clear image of a man clad in a *dhoti* and *kurta* appeared in his mind – a man who was short in stature, fair of complexion, with his hair combed backwards and his eyes framed by black-rimmed glasses. He was around thirty years old and his attractive face had an unusual lustre.

Nagina had never seen this man before. He kept looking at the attractive, radiant and smiling face. As he continued to gaze at the vision, he got lost in an unknown world of joy. He lost all sense of



time and had no idea how long he was absorbed in that wonderful, ebullient state of mind. Neither was he asleep nor was he dreaming. It was a strange experience indeed.

Nagina's tranquil reverie was broken by the sound of the household assistant announcing dinner. He got up feeling thoroughly refreshed. A soothing calmness and a feeling of inner strength pervaded his being. When he came out of the room, he was surprised to see that it was past eight. He had been lost in that unknown world for more than two hours. Chandranath was patiently waiting for him for dinner. Seeing Nagina's invigorated, energized face, Chandranath asked in surprise, "In which world have you been lost? You look very fresh! I have been waiting here for more than half an hour." Nagina was not sure what had happened; nor could he understand who that strange person was whose vision had filled him with such peace and inner strength.

At the dining table, Nagina again brought up the subject of Chandranath's meditation practice. But Chandranath cut him short, saying that it was just a type of yogic meditation. When Nagina asked if he had a guru, he merely nodded but refused to divulge any details, saying that he was not permitted to do so. Although Nagina was disappointed to see his friend so unforthcoming, he suspected that the person in his vision had something to do with Chandranath's guru. He said, "I will tell you about the features of a person. See if you can tell me who he is." He then went on to describe the features of the man who had appeared in his vision.

After listening to his description, Chandranath asked in surprise, "Since you know him so intimately, why have you been bothering me for the last six months with so many questions?"

Nagina was surprised at Chandranath's remarks and realised that his hunch was true. He then described everything that had happened while Chandranath was meditating. He concluded by saying how the experience had given him a feeling of deep peace and inner strength and the conviction that he could now face any challenge. "It is possible that the situation in my office will turn into a battlefield in the coming days," declared Nagina, "but now I feel that I can face it

unwaveringly. I am not going to allow anyone to cow me into submission anymore.”

Listening to Nagina’s experience and seeing the radical change that it had brought about in him, Chandranath said, “If the mere vision of that person could bring so much change in you, don’t you think that you could even challenge God like I did if you had his blessings?” His words had a magical effect on Nagina. Upon his earnest request for information, Chandranath said that the guru was in Jamalpur. Nagina proposed that they take a night train and meet the guru there in the morning so that he could take initiation and get his blessing.

“That won’t be possible, as a new person cannot be taken to the guru without his prior permission,” said Chandranath.

“Then please go there alone tonight and seek permission for me,” pleaded Nagina with a note of urgency in his voice.

“Nagina, not only are you my cousin, but since our childhood you have also been my close friend. Moreover, you are going through a difficult period. So I’ll certainly take up your request with the guru, but I can’t assure you that his reply will be favourable and that he will give you time immediately. It may even take several months.”

It was past midnight when Nagina saw Chandranath off at the railway station with a final request to tell the guru all the details of what he was going through and to make an appeal on his behalf – “This Nagina, who is arrogant, intransigent, obdurate, ambitious, conceited and quarrelsome, who never bowed his head before anyone, humbly surrenders at your feet. Whether you consider me worthy to be accepted as a disciple or not, I, like Ekalavya in the Mahabharata, have accepted you as my Master. Please grace me if it pleases you.” Nagina returned home with a feeling of gratitude towards Chandranath, who was going through all this trouble for his sake. He was also very anxious to know if the guru would accept his humble plea.

The next day was an eventful one for Nagina. On his arrival at his office, he heard that the inspection authority had been called by

his boss purely to target him and to find a way to get him suspended or demoted. He passed an anxious day waiting for Chandranath to return. Chandranath arrived by evening and called from the railway station to give a brief message that the guru had given Nagina permission to go for initiation. The guru had also asked Nagina to face all the problems boldly and had assured him that everything would turn out well. Chandranath said he would tell him the rest of the news when they met later. That night he provided Nagina with more information about the guru, especially his name and where he worked and lived. He also said that the guru was to be addressed as Baba. He then gave a detailed account of what had happened in Jamalpur.

Chandranath explained that it was supposed to be a brief meeting, as Baba had other engagements. But Baba had spent almost the entire time talking about Chandranath's sadhana, and he was not getting the opportunity to raise the issue about Nagina. When the time was over and Baba got up to leave, still talking, Chandranath wondered how to bring up the topic of Nagina, which was the actual purpose of his visit. Then suddenly Baba changed the subject and himself asked, "You have come to talk about Nagina, isn't it so? When he has already accepted me as his guru, where is the need to grant him permission? But there is a small problem. Nagina does not have time to come to Jamalpur for the next nine days, and after a couple of days I will be away from Jamalpur for about two weeks. Tell him to come any day after the 24<sup>th</sup> of October."

When Chandranath told Baba that Nagina was seeking his blessing, he said, "Generally I don't bless anyone before initiating them. But since he has already accepted everything, initiation remains just a formality. All right, tell him that he should boldly face whatever comes, and everything will turn out in his favour in the end."

Nagina was reassured by the message. He felt that it carried the force of an invisible power, and he became very confident of successfully facing the problems that he was likely to encounter in the coming days.

Meanwhile the inspecting authority started a thorough inspection the next day, which continued for more than a week. On the



instigation of Nagina's boss, he tried hard to find some lapse in Nagina's work, but failed to do so. As directed by Baba, Nagina faced the official enquiry boldly. He was not worried as he felt an unseen force protecting him, and he came out unscathed.

Just before the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, Nagina developed severe back pain and was unable to move. Because of this, he had to delay his visit to Jamalpur. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of November Chandranath heard that Nagina had yet to go to Jamalpur due to his back pain. He was annoyed with him and immediately directed him to go to Jamalpur even if he had to be carried on a stretcher. On the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, with great difficulty Nagina presented himself at the address given by Chandranath. He was ushered into the drawing room, where he met the guru for the first time. Nagina was extremely delighted to see him; it was the same attractive, radiant and sweetly smiling face that he had seen in his vision a few weeks earlier. He was completely captivated and unhesitatingly prostrated before the guru.

During the process of initiation, Nagina suffered from an attack of severe back pain. He was compelled to sit hunching forward. He informed Baba about it. Baba advised him to drink only hot water until he recovered fully. After his initiation was over, Nagina asked if it was necessary for him to be vegetarian in order to practise meditation. Baba said that giving up all non-vegetarian food would be very helpful. He also said that onion and garlic were even more harmful than meat and that they too should be avoided. Nagina then expressed doubts about whether he would ever be able to do that, as he was a voracious meat eater. With a smile, Baba said, "Until now, you have only thought of eating different delicious preparations of meat but have never thought that you would also be able to give it up. Try thinking that you can give up meat and then see if you can do it or not."

As he stepped out of Baba's house, Nagina took a vow not to touch non-vegetarian food again from that moment. However, he ignored the direction to drink only hot water, as he disliked it. Moreover, he thought, "When elderly persons see children become sick, their first advice is always to drink hot water. Perhaps Baba also considers that I am a small boy and therefore suggested hot water."

So he continued to take the medicines prescribed by a doctor. Despite taking them, the pain increased significantly and he eventually became bedridden. Even breathing or turning over in bed became painful. He could not even sit up to meditate. His doctor could not diagnose the source of the problem and suggested that he should consult a specialist in Patna. However going to Patna in that condition was unthinkable.

More than three weeks passed in that miserable condition. One Saturday Chandranath dropped by Nagina's house on his way to Jamalpur. Nagina informed him about the critical condition he had been in since his return from Jamalpur. He requested Chandranath to convey his salutations to Baba and to inform him that due to severe pain he wasn't able to sit properly for meditation.

The next evening Chandranath returned to Nagina's house visibly upset. He asked, "Nagina, when Baba asked you to take only hot water, why have you disobeyed his direction and gone to the doctor instead?" He then instructed the domestic helper to return the medicines that were unused and threw the rest into the dustbin. He also directed Nagina's wife to give him only hot water and nothing else. Still upset, he said, "Do you know what happened in Jamalpur? As soon as I saw Baba, he asked, 'How is my Nagina?' I then explained your condition. Hearing it, he remarked, 'What can I do if Nagina disregards my instruction to drink only hot water and instead reposes his faith in doctors? Ask him to strictly take only hot water. He needs no other medicine.'

Realising his mistake, Nagina took only hot water and by the next morning, his condition had improved greatly. His pain completely disappeared within a day.



## CHAPTER 10

# Death of Stalin

On one occasion in 1952 during his regular lunch hour discussion, Baba analysed the defects of communism, declaring that it went against the fundamental characteristics of the human mind. In conclusion he asserted that it would not last very long and would in the not too distant future be wiped from the face of the earth. He added that in the process the Soviet Union would disintegrate into many nations.

At that time Stalin was at the peak of his power and the Soviet Union was a formidable global force. It had developed atomic weapons, and about half of Europe was under its control. It also held sway over China, which had become communist. On top of this, many newly independent nations were drifting towards communism, and therefore it appeared to provide a beacon of hope for middle class and poor people everywhere. Many progressive minded people were rapidly falling under its spell and it even appeared likely that most of the world would soon turn communist. So the idea that communism would disappear and the Soviet Union would disintegrate was inconceivable at that time. Naresh Chandra Ganguly, who worked in Prabhatda's office, could not believe it. He asked, "Prabhatda, do you think that all these things will happen in our lifetime?"

Baba replied, "The collapse of communism will happen during my lifetime, but the disintegration of the Soviet Union will take place after I am gone. You will see it<sup>1</sup>."

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that no Western expert, scholar, historian, political scientist or politician foresaw the impending collapse of the Soviet Union in the years leading up to 1991. Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar made the startling assertion of the Soviet Union's demise in 1952. He passed away on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1990. The Soviet Union was dissolved into a series of independent republics on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 1991. In March 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the leadership of the USSR. On his ascension to the top post, he introduced two new policies, one political and the other



Baba expressed his appreciation for Karl Marx's love for humanity but condemned his philosophy. He told his colleagues, "Marx was pained by the suffering of exploited people. He developed his theory out of compassion and a strong desire to alleviate their misery. However, it was not rooted in reality and he did not understand its practical implications when he propounded it. His ideas reflected his concern for the downtrodden, and leaders like Lenin and Mao took up the task of materializing them. Initially their intentions were good, but they encountered many practical difficulties when they tried to implement them. They became disillusioned when they realised that the theory was inherently defective and that the common people were unwilling to embrace it. So eventually they committed many atrocities in order to force people to accept it. These atrocities will continue until communism is eradicated from the face of the earth. Stalin, unlike the other communists, is a demon who has killed millions of his own people. All the repression and oppression that have occurred in communist societies are due to the flaws inherent in Marxism."

During his lunch-hour talks, Baba would stress that the lack of spiritual understanding was the main reason why demons in human form like Stalin were allowed to take over power while the others remained mute witnesses to the inhuman atrocities they perpetrated.

### **A Warning for Stalin**

In the second week of February 1953, Sadhan Dey was with Baba during his evening walk. Along the way Sachinandan turned up but

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economic, to transform the Soviet Union into an open, productive and prosperous nation. The first was *glasnost* or political openness, which eliminated the conventional Soviet repressions on its citizenry. The second was *perestroika* or economic restructuring, which opened up the economy to greater private initiative and foreign investment. Underpinning both sets of policies was Gorbachev's desire for a more moral Soviet Union that could reverse the spiritual decline and damaging effects of its Stalinist past. Gorbachev also loosened his grip on the Soviet satellite states. The political conditions in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union changed rapidly with the Soviet leader's decision to loosen the Kremlin's hold on the countries of Eastern Europe. This eventually led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the overthrow of communist rule in Eastern Europe.

hesitated to greet Baba, as the rule was not to do so if someone was with him. However, Baba greeted him and asked him to join them. As they walked he introduced the two men to each other as brother disciples. This was one of the rare occasions when two fellow disciples who did not know each other had the opportunity of accompanying Baba on his evening walk. Baba sat on the Tiger's Grave and started talking about the Chinese occupation of Tibet and its repercussions for the Tibetan civilisation, which he said was very ancient and was heavily influenced by Tantra. He averred that the Chinese communists would try to destroy every trace of the spiritual civilisation of Tibet and impose their materialistic culture upon the Tibetans. He opined that ultimately communism would disappear from China and that Tibet would be a free country. He added that China too has a deep-rooted association with Tantra. The Taoism of China had originated from Tantra. It is a cosmic decree that after the end of Communist rule in China, spirituality will once again take root and flourish in the previously Communist countries.

Baba then stopped talking and looked at the sky. After a short pause he asked Sadhan to sit in meditation and concentrate on the chakra between his eyebrows. Sachinandan was a new initiate and was curious to know what was happening. He saw that Sadhan was absorbed in deep concentration. Baba directed Sadhan to take his mind to Moscow and then to the Kremlin, the headquarters of the Soviet Government, and describe what he was seeing.

"Baba, I can see Stalin sitting in his office deeply engrossed in thought."

"Enter his mind and see what he is thinking."

"Baba, he is planning to spread communism throughout the world. In order to do that, he is contemplating a strategy to attack the neighbouring countries including India."

"Tell Stalin to desist from this plan; otherwise it will mean disaster for him," said Baba in a stern voice.

"Baba, I have warned Stalin<sup>2</sup>."

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<sup>2</sup> Over the years, Margis had witnessed several spiritual demonstrations performed by Baba where he sent a person's mind into the mind of another person in a location far away to know what that person was thinking or feeling.

“Now bring your mind back.” Baba did not say anything more about Stalin that day but continued his discussion on Tibet. Neither Sadhan Dey nor Dr. Sachinanadan Mandal found out what happened to Stalin after that until several years later.

### **Stalin, Nipat Jao**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March of the same year Haraprasad was with Baba at the Tiger’s Grave. Baba was explaining the difference between death and the projection of the mind outside the body. He said that after death the mind leaves the body and wanders around in the vastness of space. As it has dissociated from the brain it cannot function, because it needs the medium of a brain to think. Projecting the mind is an occult power where a part of the mind is projected outside the body. It can wander anywhere in the cosmos before returning to the body. In the middle of their discussion Baba abruptly asked Haraprasad if he would like to have an out-of-the-body experience.

Haraprasad was nervous at the thought of anything similar to death and politely declined. Baba assured him that there was nothing to fear, as he would bring his mind back to his body after the demonstration. Even then Haraprasad was not prepared, since Baba’s prediction of his impending death still haunted him. He was apprehensive that his mind would not be able to come back to his body after wandering so far away.

At that moment a person wearing the Indian Territorial Army uniform happened to be walking past the Tiger’s Grave. Baba called him over and asked him in Bhojpuri to sit on the ground near the grave. He started to talk to him about his village and family and then suddenly crossed both his index fingers, whereupon the soldier

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After performing the demonstration, Baba would explain the science behind this occult phenomenon. Throwing some light on the phenomenon, Baba explained that the human mind is composed of five layers or sheaths. If a person establishes control over a particular layer of his mind, he will gain the ability to influence the thinking and functioning of that layer and the lower layers of the minds of other people.



collapsed on the ground. After a short while Baba asked Haraprasad to check his pulse and heartbeat. He found no sign of life in the soldier and felt extremely worried about what would happen to him.

“There is no reason to worry,” reassured Baba. “I will bring him back. But first I will bring a disembodied mind into this body.” With these words Baba touched the lifeless soldier between the eyebrows with his right toe. Almost immediately his body quivered to life. He then ordered the bodiless mind, “Go to Moscow and tell us what you see there.”

“I see Stalin sitting alone contemplating deeply about something.”

“Enter Stalin’s mind and see what he is thinking about.”

“Stalin is preparing for a big war and plans to invade the neighbouring countries. One of his targets is India. His plan is to spread communism in all these countries. He has decided to start preparations for the war.”

Baba raised his voice and said sternly, “Stalin is planning massive destruction, but he will not be allowed to do it. Warn him immediately to desist from this course of action; otherwise it will be disastrous for him.”

“Yes, Baba, I have warned him,” he replied after a short pause.

“What was his reaction?”

“He was shocked and very nervous.”

Haraprasad watched the whole scene in utter disbelief.

Baba then discussed *samskaras* and how in one’s next life one has to undergo the consequences of his or her actions in the previous life. After more than half an hour, Baba stopped the discussion and turned to the soldier lying motionless on the ground.

“Go and see what Stalin is doing now,” Baba instructed the motionless body.

“Stalin has overcome his fear and has decided to give the final order to start preparations for war.”

Hearing this, Baba became very serious. Raising his voice he said, "Although I have warned him repeatedly, he has not learned his lesson." He then quoted a Sanskrit proverb:

*Vinashakale Viparita Buddhi.*

'When one's destruction is imminent, one entertains evil thoughts.'

"Now his time has come." With these words he raised his right index finger and made a cutting movement in the air as he said in a stern voice, "*Stalin nipat jao,*" meaning "Stalin, be destroyed." Baba appeared to be very angry, and seeing his mood, Haraprasad was afraid of asking him anything further. Baba then ordered the bodiless mind to leave the body of the soldier. A little while later he said that he was bringing the soldier's mind back into his body. After a few moments the soldier's body showed signs of life and he sat up groggily, trying to take in his surroundings. He looked tired and confused and did not know what had happened to him. Baba asked Haraprasad to massage his body. Soon he was able to stand. He excused himself and walked away with a disoriented gait.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> March Haraprasad again accompanied Baba during his evening walk. After leaving Baba at his residence, he returned to his boarding house. Along the way he saw an unusually large crowd in front of Hira's Sweetshop listening to the news on the radio. Out of curiosity Haraprasad joined them and enquired from a bystander what had happened. The man exclaimed that Stalin had died. Haraprasad's mind froze in shock. He felt like shouting at the top of his voice that he had himself witnessed this event a few days earlier when his guru had warned Stalin to abandon his plans for war, including an attack on India. He wanted to tell everyone that his guru had taken away Stalin's life, as the tyrant had not heeded the warning. However, he restrained himself. Who would believe him anyway? Moreover, Baba wanted to keep away from the public eye, and because of that he had no right to make the matter public. Keeping his emotions in check, he slowly walked away towards his boarding house.

Several years later in January 1970 Bhaktavatsalam, a senior disciple from Salem in South India, was with Baba during his evening

walk in Ranchi. Baba was talking about history. As they walked Baba asked, "Bhaktavatsalam, do you know how Stalin died?" Without waiting for a response he continued, "I was sitting on the Tiger's Grave one evening when a little boy from the Himalayas sent me a telepathic message: 'Baba, Stalin is planning to attack India. He will destroy India. Please save India from this demon.' So Stalin was given a warning. Three weeks later I was sitting on the Tiger's Grave when again that little boy sent me a telepathic message: 'Baba, Stalin is finalising his plans to declare war on India and other nations. Please save India from destruction.' Do you know what happened, Bhaktavatsalam? Stalin died some time after that. But the announcement about it was not made immediately after his death because of the ongoing power struggle between Beria, the Deputy Prime Minister who controlled the security apparatus of the Soviet Union, and Khrushchev, who later became the General Secretary of the party."

A few months later during one of his regular discourses in Ranchi Baba said, "Everything happens due to the wish of the Supreme Being. Not even a blade of grass can move without His wish. He has given different powers to different created entities. We should always remember that it is His power that is working through every created object. If He wishes, He can in no time withdraw from any entity its ability to function."

He then asked Vinayananda, a monastic disciple, to stand up and say something about Ananda Marga meditation. As Vinayananda spoke, Baba made a slight circular motion with his index finger and suddenly Vinayananda's voice stopped. He was unable to utter a single word.

As he stood there helpless, Baba explained with a smile, "I have withdrawn his power to speak, and he will not be able to say even one word unless I permit him to do so. So, one should never develop vanity about one's actions. The power to act is derived from the Supreme Being." With these words Baba made another short circular motion with his index finger, and Vinayananda was able to speak



once again. Baba then gently touched his forehead, and Vinayananda fell backwards in an ecstatic spiritual trance.

Baba got up as if to leave but then suddenly sat down again and said, "The means by which Vinayananda's ability to speak was stopped is the Cosmic Scissors. By applying this, Parama Purusha can stop the functioning of anything and everything in the entire universe. In the *Markandeya Purana* this power is called *Chandika Shakti*."

He paused for a few moments before continuing, "When Stalin died, the artery supplying blood to his brain was cut off using the Cosmic Scissors, and that led to his death." Baba then got up and departed from the room, leaving most of the Margis present wondering about the meaning of what he had just said. Only a few of them had heard about the events that had taken place in the early days before the founding of Ananda Marga.

During one of the evening walks in Jamalpur, Haragovinda asked Baba why he had punished Stalin but spared other warmongers like the American president. Baba said that what Stalin had been planning to do was extremely destructive. Stalin was a *mahapataki*, a heinous criminal. His intention was to bring about massive destruction in the countries that he planned to invade and to subjugate them completely. Millions had either died or had suffered terrible agony at the hands of this demon in human form. If he had been allowed to carry out his destructive plan, tens of millions more would have either died or suffered tremendously. Not only that, he would have forcibly suppressed the local culture and religious way of life of the people and imposed an atheist culture on these countries. His death was essential in order to save humanity from enormous destruction.

Baba concluded by saying, "I warned him a few days earlier. I told him that he would not be allowed to disturb world peace, but he did not pay heed. There were other bad and immoral leaders in the world who were doing great harm to humanity, but none of them was as bad as Stalin, who was a veritable demon in human form."

Some time later during a discourse at the Jamalpur *jagrti* Baba touched the back of Dasharath's head and directed him, "Dasharath,

take your mind backwards in time and see the events that happened before Stalin's death."

Dasharath concentrated for a while and said, "I see Stalin addressing some top ranking military officials and explaining something on a map."

"See what was in his pocket when he died."

"There is a paper with something written in the Russian script."

"It was a dangerous plan, and I can even make you read it, but there is no need, as he was not able to put it into action. If he had been allowed to execute that plan, he would have created massive destruction in the Soviet Union and many other countries around the world, including India. But by the will of Parama Purusa, Stalin died before he could give the order to carry it out<sup>3</sup>"

Of the many fascinating events that occurred in the early days, this historical incident was among the most widely discussed topics among Baba's disciples.



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<sup>3</sup> In 2003 on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Stalin's death, the BBC sent a team to investigate the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death. There was a striking similarity in several facts reported by the BBC correspondent Leonida Krushelnicky and what the Margis remembered about the incident, based on accounts of the spiritual demonstration by Baba and the information he provided on the incident during several Field Walks. The most significant fact in the BBC report was that there were indications that Stalin was indeed preparing for a "Third World War." Another important fact to emerge was that there were indications that Stalin had died of a stroke, which would have been caused by a sudden interruption of the blood supply to the brain. This correlates with what Baba said during the demonstration in Ranchi. The third interesting fact to emerge from the BBC report was that there was a time gap between the occurrence of the stroke and the official announcement of his death. This point corroborated what Baba told Bhaktavasalam during a Field Walk in Ranchi.

## CHAPTER 11

### I Decide the Transfer of My Disciples

From the beginning of 1954 Baba slowly began to bring more and more people into his spiritual fold. In January that year he urged Dr. Sachinandan to return to his native village of Indas in the Birbhum District of West Bengal to propagate spirituality in the area. At that time Baba had not yet given a formal philosophy. Nor was there any written material on spirituality that Sachinandan could use as a reference for his public lectures. All he could do was to rely on the notes he had scribbled from Baba's impromptu talks during the evening field walks. So Baba advised Sachinandan to read a commentary on the Bhagavat Gita by Panchanan Bhattacharya, a senior disciple of yogi Lahiri Mahasaya, and some books on Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in order to get an idea of the basics of spirituality, and then use these ideas in his talks.

Those who were interested in taking initiation and who could afford the trip to Jamalpur were asked to come there after obtaining prior permission to be initiated by Baba. Sachinandan was asked to bring the name, address and certain other details of those who couldn't afford the journey, during his monthly visit to Jamalpur. Baba would prescribe their mantra and the ideation as well as the chakra they should use as a concentration point. Sachinandan was authorised to initiate them using the information Baba provided. Baba introduced similar methods for initiating people from far-off places. Dr. Vishvanath, posted in Champaran District in North Bihar, was another person whom Baba authorised to initiate in this way. A few more persons were permitted to initiate others like this.

#### **Celebrating Demotion of Boss**

In January 1954 Nagina's conflict with the corrupt assistant collector reached a flashpoint. The charge of corruption that Nagina brought against him was upheld and he was transferred pending further action. Nagina was very glad to hear this and heaved a sigh



of relief, thinking that this would be the end of daily dissension and mental tension. He mentally requested Baba to assign a new boss with whom he could get along.

The corrupt officer was later suspended and subsequently demoted. When Nagina heard this news, he celebrated by holding a party with some of his friends. A day or two later Chandranath visited Jamalpur. During the evening walk Baba said, "Nowadays Nagina is afflicted with malice and pettiness. Ask him not to indulge in such meanness. A sadhaka should always be very restrained in his behaviour."

On Nagina's next visit to Jamalpur, Baba again brought up the matter. "Nagina, you have a right to fight your adversary to protect yourself from the wrongs he commits, but to celebrate his defeat is very mean. A sadhaka should be careful not to indulge in such kinds of malicious behaviour."

"Baba, is it not natural to feel happy at the defeat of an enemy?"

"Your enmity should not be directed at the person but at his bad conduct. You should bear this in mind at all times."

"Yes Baba, I understand. I shall rectify myself."

"Nagina, now you are no longer needed in Bhagalpur. So be ready for your transfer."

Baba's words came as a jolt to Nagina. Nagina objected, "Baba, I don't want to be transferred out of Bhagalpur because I will be far away from you."

"Whether you stay in Bhagalpur or go elsewhere is not your choice. You will go where I want you to go."

"If that is so, Baba, please make sure that I stay close to Jamalpur so that I can come to see you often."

Nagina continued to beg Baba for an assurance that he would not send him far away. After much pleading, Baba relented, "All right, I will see."

Within a few days, Nagina received a transfer order to Begusarai on the other side of the River Ganges. Although Begusarai was closer than Bhagalpur, it took a little longer to reach Jamalpur because of the extra time needed to cross the Ganges by steamer.

Apart from Nagina, there were many other instances of Baba's disciples being 'officially' transferred to places where he wanted them to be. There were also cases where their transfer order was cancelled after they requested Baba to intervene.

There was always a deeper reason behind a transfer. On a few occasions Baba explained the reason to his disciples, "I decide the transfer of my disciples according to my need, so that my work can be done in different places."

### **Virendra Kumar Asthana - The Aristocrat**

Virendra Kumar Asthana, a young officer posted as assistant collector of Customs and Central Excise, was very upset when he received a transfer order to Bhagalpur after only a four-month stint in Nagpur. He and his wife were used to city life. The spacious bungalow and the club life of Nagpur very much suited their aristocratic taste, and they had hoped to stay there for at least three years, which was the normal period an officer was posted in a particular place. Asthana had very high level contacts and was confident that he would be able to get an order either retaining him in Nagpur or moving him to a city in a state other than Bihar. He had a psychological allergy to Bihar, which he considered to be very backward and conservative. However, all his efforts were in vain. His friend, Jitendra Tyagi, a rich businessman from Bhagalpur, called him and assured him that he and his circle of friends would provide him with entertaining company in Bhagalpur. Tyagi also nursed the hope that his friend's presence as assistant collector in Bhagalpur would help his business interests in the area. Finally, when all efforts to stop his transfer to Bhagalpur failed, Asthana accepted it and arrived in Bhagalpur in August 1954.

When Nagina heard he was getting a new boss he hoped that at least that this boss should be someone with whom he could get along very well. A week after Asthana's arrival, he called a meeting of the officers in the area. Nagina, who was posted in Begusarai, was also present. After the meeting was over, someone mentioned that Nagina practised meditation. The next day Asthana called Nagina to his office to learn more about his meditation. When he heard that a guru

from Jamalpur had taught him his practice, he expressed interest in meeting the guru. Nagina said that he would have to take the guru's permission before he could take him there. On his way to Begusarai that evening, Nagina dropped by Jamalpur. During the evening walk he told Baba about the interest his new boss had shown in learning meditation. Baba said that he would have to wait, as his time had not yet come.

In his next meeting with Nagina, Asthana enquired whether he had been able to obtain the guru's permission, and Nagina conveyed what his guru had said. Asthana again asked Nagina to request the guru on his behalf. So during his next visit to Jamalpur, Nagina again mentioned his boss's request. Baba asked, "Nagina, why do you keep asking me when I said that his time has not come. Is it because he is your boss? In the path of spirituality everybody is the same. When the time comes, I will inform you."

A few days later when Nagina met Asthana, he again enquired if the guru had granted him permission for initiation. With some hesitation, Nagina told him that Baba said he would call him at the proper time. Asthana did not give up and asked him to request his guru one more time, this time presenting his appeal a little more forcefully. So during his next visit to Jamalpur, Nagina reluctantly said, "Baba I am getting sandwiched between two bosses, one the spiritual boss and the other the official boss."

Hearing this, Baba laughed. Later that evening as Nagina was taking leave he said, "All right Nagina, give Virendra my address and ask him to come here without any assistance from you. I will initiate him."

On the day Asthana planned to go to Baba, he was on an official visit to Monghyr with Nagina. Asthana set out from his office in the evening, driving the car himself. He invited Nagina to join him. Nagina expressed some hesitation, "But sir, as per the guru's direction you are to reach his house without assistance from anyone. I have given you the address. So now you have to go there without asking me or anyone else."

Asthana agreed, "All right Nagina. Just sit beside me. I will not take any help from you or anybody else in locating the house." Nagina agreed and sat next to his boss in the front seat but turned his



face to the left so that Asthana sitting to his right would not get an indirect hint of the direction from his facial expression. Nagina was surprised that upon reaching Jamalpur, Asthana took the correct turn towards Keshavpur. But on reaching Keshavpur he continued to drive past Baba's house. Then suddenly he stopped the car and said, "Nagina, I think I have passed the house." Nagina did not respond or even look at him. He simply watched as Asthana got out of the car, walked back and entered Baba's house without asking anyone.

Recalling the incident several years later, Asthana said, "I had the address, P.R. Sarkar, Keshavpur, Jamalpur, but no further details. As it was my first time to visit Jamalpur, I had no idea where to go. Before setting off, I prayed to the guru to guide me and as I drove, I felt someone prodding me inside and I drove ahead. When we reached a particular crossroads, I felt that this was the way and I turned into it. After some distance I suddenly felt the urge to stop the car and I obeyed that feeling. Then I felt that I had passed the house, so I walked back. As I walked, I felt drawn to a particular house. Before knocking on the door, I stood there for a few seconds hesitating, thinking if it was the right house. Then I heard a boy behind me saying, "Yes, this is the house of Sarkar Babu."

Manas opened the door and welcomed Asthana into the living room, then disappeared inside. In a short while Baba entered, wearing a lungi and T-shirt. As soon as he saw Baba, Asthana felt a strong urge to prostrate before him. Later he couldn't help wondering why he did that before a stranger, as he had never prostrated before anyone in his life due to his superiority complex. His first impression about Baba was that he was just a Bengali astrologer who was capable of making accurate predictions and had a spiritual background.

After sitting down, Baba explained to him the real purpose of life, about moral principles and the need to follow them. As he explained the process of meditation, Asthana started to feel an overpowering vibration emanating from the guru and was engulfed in it. He felt an inexplicable ecstasy rising within him. On the return journey to Monghyr, Asthana did not say a word to Nagina, as he was completely overwhelmed by his experience.

A few weeks after Asthana took initiation, Nagina got an urgent message from Asthana asking him to meet him immediately in the Government Circuit House in Monghyr. When Nagina arrived around noon, he found that his boss had shut himself in a room and was unwilling to come out or let anyone come inside the room. His wife, Shrirama, was with him. As soon as he was informed of Nagina's arrival, Asthana called him inside. Nagina was perplexed by what he saw. His boss was sitting on the bed, informally dressed, his hair dishevelled, tears streaming from his eyes and looking completely disoriented. Shrirama informed Nagina that her husband had been like that since he took his bath in the morning. She had no idea what had caused it, as he didn't want to tell her anything. He only said that he wanted to meet Nagina immediately.

Nagina asked, "Sir, what's the matter? Are you unwell?" Asthana wanted to talk to him in private and asked Shrirama to wait outside.

When they were alone, he said, "Nagina, this morning after taking my bath, I went to the mirror to comb my hair. What I saw there completely shocked me. Instead of seeing my reflection in the mirror, Baba appeared smiling, his right hand raised in blessing. I couldn't believe it and rubbed my eyes. But Baba's image was still there in the mirror. It was there for over a minute before it slowly vanished. Since then I have been feeling a soothing sensation in my heart and an intense feeling of ecstasy, which I cannot express. I have also been feeling an inexplicable attraction to Baba since then. And I have not been able to stop the tears that have been streaming from my eyes since morning. I don't want to go out of the room. What will people think if they see me in this condition? Nagina, I thought Baba was just an ordinary guru like anyone else. But he is not. Who is he that just his vision can create such a surge of ecstasy in me?"

'Who is he?' was a question to which Nagina also did not have a clear answer. He said, "Sir, I will go to Jamalpur in the evening and report your condition to Baba."

"No, Nagina, don't do that. I am afraid that if you inform Baba, he will withdraw this wonderful feeling from me. I don't want it to

end. I want it to last as long as possible.” Asthana did not allow Nagina to go to Jamalpur even for a personal visit, as he thought that if in the course of the conversation Baba found out about his condition, he might decide to withdraw this ecstatic state. Finally Nagina proposed that Asthana and his wife Shrirama should go with him to Begusarai and stay in the Circuit House for a day or two till he became normal again. Asthana agreed. In Begusarai it took him three days to become completely normal and only then did he return to Bhagalpur.

Nagina explained Asthana’s spiritual experience to Shrirama to remove her confusion. Soon after, she too took initiation from Baba. After Asthana’s initiation many more people from the Customs and Central Excise Department were initiated over the next few years.

Years later during an evening Field Walk, Baba told Asthana how he had been watching over him long before he was initiated and that it was he who had arranged his transfer from Nagpur to Bhagalpur. Asthana asked, “Baba if that was so, why did you tell Nagina twice that my time had not yet come.”

“That was because your mind was still not ready to practice meditation, as you had a big superiority complex. I asked you to come to my house without taking Nagina’s assistance to create a feeling of surrender in you. When I saw that you were driving past my house and Nagina was looking the other way, I created an urge in you to apply the brake and then guided you to the house.”

### **Bindeshvari’s Strange Experience**

Bindeshvari Singh was a distant cousin and close friend of Nagina. He was a small-time contractor for the railways. He resided in Jamalpur near the Jubilee Well. From his early life he had a desire for spirituality, and when he heard that Nagina had a guru he expressed his eagerness to be initiated. During one of the evening walks, Nagina conveyed his request to Baba. Baba paused for a while and said, “Nagina, he is destined to live for only a short time more. What can he do in such a short time?”



Nagina was taken aback to learn that his friend would soon die. Bindeshvari seemed quite healthy. Nagina knew that if there was anyone who could save Bindeshvari, it was Baba. So he persisted. "Baba, however long his life will be, you can give him salvation if you so wish. You can even extend his life and give him the chance to do sadhana and work for his salvation. So please be gracious to give him initiation." Baba didn't answer. A few days later Nagina again pleaded with Baba to initiate Bindeshvari. This time too Baba remained silent. Nagina did not give up, and again after a few days he requested Baba for the third time. Finally, Baba relented and asked him to bring Bindeshvari for initiation.

It was September 1954. Nagina accompanied him to Baba's residence and waited outside while Bindeshvari went inside. After nearly an hour the door of Baba's room opened, and Bindeshvari staggered out. He appeared to be in an abnormal state of mind. Nagina rushed to assist his cousin and enquired, "What's the matter, Bindeshvari? Are you not well?" Bindeshvari did not answer. Tears were flowing from his eyes.

As they left the building, Bindeshvari turned around and asked, "Nagina, do you know who is in that room?"

"What do you mean?" Nagina expressed his surprise. "It's Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, of course."

"No, my friend. He is hiding his true identity," Bindeshvari said emphatically, "He who came as Shiva, he who came as Krishna, he is sitting in that room. He is hiding his true identity from everyone."

Nagina wondered what made him say that. Bindeshvari just kept repeating, "Don't believe his external appearance. He's hiding his real identity." Assisted by a puzzled Nagina, Bindeshvari slowly walked out of the house and then turned back, crying, "Baba, Baba, Baba." All along the way he kept repeating, "Baba is not what he appears to be," as his tears flowed non-stop.

For several weeks Bindeshvari remained in such a spiritually intoxicated state that he was unable to do any work. Whether sitting, walking or lying down, he just kept repeating, "Don't believe Baba's

external appearance. He is hiding his real identity.” He would lie on his bed for hours muttering, “Baba, Baba, Baba,” over and over again with tears pouring down his face. This caused great consternation to Bindeshvari’s family, and Nagina had to take leave from work to stay with him for several days. To the family’s great relief, he gradually became normal again.

Whenever Nagina attempted to find out what had happened in Baba’s room that day, Bindeshvari would go into a state of spiritual ecstasy and just keep reiterating that Baba was not what he appeared to be and that he was hiding himself from the world. Bindeshvari’s spiritual ecstasies alarmed his family and they accused Nagina of being the cause of his madness. Not wanting to disturb them further, Nagina finally stopped probing. After that Bindeshvari became very reluctant to talk about his experience at the time of his initiation. The rest of Bindeshvari’s family took initiation some years later. Eventually they understood the reason for Bindeshvari’s ecstatic state.

Several years later Kranti, a devoted disciple of Baba, who was very close to Bindeshvari, somehow coaxed him to tell what had happened during his initiation. He explained, “When Nagina led me into the room, I saw a person in civilian dress who I presumed to be Baba. As I prostrated and got up, I was stunned to find that Baba was not there and in his place I saw Lord Shiva in person. For a few seconds I was completely taken aback and thought that it was an illusion. I rubbed my eyes, but the form of Shiva was still there. Then gradually Shiva’s form disappeared. I again saw Baba sitting before me with a glowing face and sweet smile. After that experience, I was in shock and a bit disoriented during the entire initiation process. Afterwards I prostrated again and when I got up I had yet another shock. This time I saw the beautiful form of Lord Krishna in place of Baba. I sat gazing at Krishna in stunned amazement. Again after a few seconds Krishna disappeared and Baba’s smiling face reappeared before me. Baba blessed me by placing his hands upon my head. I felt waves of bliss inundating my being and lost all sense of time or place. I don’t know how long I was in that ecstatic state.

“Finally I was brought out of that state by Baba’s voice calling me sweetly, ‘Bindeshvari, wake up! Nagina is waiting for you outside.’ I was spiritually supercharged after this powerful mystical experience and staggered out of the room like a drunkard. I was indeed drunk, drunk with spiritual nectar after that incredible experience and was unable to steady myself.”

After relating this incident, Bindeshvari cried out loudly, “Baba, Baba, Baba!” several times and fell backwards in *samadhi*.

In those incredible days the powerful, ecstatic experiences that Baba showered upon his disciples so early in their spiritual life attracted them to the guru and also helped to motivate them to perform their sadhana sincerely.

### **Timing the Arrival of Rain**

Some of the most enjoyable moments for the early disciples were when they had the opportunity to join Baba during his evening walks to the Tiger’s Grave. On those occasions they were able to have informal talks with Baba and to get a glimpse of the endless knowledge that flowed from him. The short time they spent with Baba engulfed them with a blissful feeling that lingered on long after the field walk ended. As days passed these “Field Walks” became an iconic feature of the life of the disciples.

Nagina always felt an irresistible attraction to Baba and even after his transfer to Begusarai continued going to Jamalpur at least one weekend every month. And on every visit he invariably arranged to go on the evening Field Walk with Baba. On one of these walks a strange incident occurred that gave him a realisation of Baba’s powers to control the forces of nature:

It was a few weeks after I moved to Begusarai. One afternoon I set out for Jamalpur. Although it was the rainy season, the sky was quite clear, and so I decided not to carry an umbrella. On the way, however, clouds started to gather. By the time I reached Jamalpur, the sky had become overcast, and there was intermittent thunder and lightning. I regretted my decision not to carry an umbrella. I went straight to Baba’s residence and waited near the veranda of his house,



worrying that the rain would spoil the joy of spending the evening with him. Just as I was thinking this, the door opened and Baba came out. I reverentially greeted him. Seeing me, he said, 'Oh Nagina, you have come. Have you brought an umbrella?'

"No Baba, the sky was clear when I started from Begusarai, so I didn't bring one," I said, trying to cover my lack of forethought.

"This umbrella cannot shelter two people. The rain is going to be very heavy. So it's better if we sit here and talk for a while." I cursed myself for not carrying an umbrella, as it had ruined my evening walk with Baba for which I had come all this way. Just as I was thinking this, Baba looked at the sky and stood up, saying, "Come on, Nagina. Let's go. We will see what to do if it rains." I felt that Baba was responding to my frustration.

I said, "Baba, I have only this set of clothes with me. I don't have a spare set to change into. I plan to stay in Jamalpur tonight and leave early in the morning. I will be in great difficulty if it gets wet and doesn't dry before morning."

He listened with a smile and said, "Let's go anyway." He again looked at the sky and set off. My heart brimmed with joy at the opportunity of accompanying him for his walk but at the same time was concerned at what would happen if it rained. I then decided to put my fears out of my mind and thoroughly enjoy the time I would spend alone with Baba. After our walk around the field, as we sat on the Tiger's Grave, Baba said, "The evening I don't go for a walk, I would skip my dinner. So mother wants me to go for a walk every evening even in a rain or in a storm. If I had not gone for a walk this evening, I would have forgone my dinner, and mother would not have liked that. An evening walk is compulsory for me, whatever the weather."

Baba then embarked on a new topic, and I enjoyed every bit of it. All the while the rumbling of the clouds and lightning continued to intensify, and the clouds grew ominously darker. It appeared as if a mysterious power was stopping them from pouring down. By increasing the intensity of the thunder and lightning, it was as though

the clouds were seeking permission to burst. Although I enjoyed Baba's talk immensely, I was worried that it would rain at any moment and that we would be completely drenched. In the rainy season my clothes would certainly not dry by morning. How would I be able to return home wearing wet clothes? I may fall ill. These thoughts repeatedly distracted me, and I was not able to pay full attention to what Baba was saying. He was reclining on the grave, totally unconcerned, as if nothing was happening. At 9.30 pm, his usual time to return home, he looked at the sky and said, "Let's go, Nagina. It may start to rain at any moment. Where will you stay tonight?"

"I am going to stay with Bindeshvari."

"Come on, I will drop you there and thereby I will also be able to see where he lives."

We walked back from the Tiger's Grave at our usual pace. Baba accompanied me as far as Bindeshvari's gate. The house was about fifty to sixty feet beyond the gate. Baba stopped there and said, "Nagina, from here run quickly to the house. The rain is not going to wait any longer."

I touched Baba's feet reverentially and ran those fifty to sixty feet. Just as I stepped into the veranda of the house, the skies burst open and a very heavy downpour started. If the rain had arrived even a second or two earlier, I would have been thoroughly wet. Standing under the canopy of the veranda, I looked back towards the road. Holding his umbrella with one hand and lifting the bottom of his dhoti with the other, he started to walk. Not a drop of rain had fallen on me, and now he was walking in the heavy rain. I knew that despite the umbrella he would get wet, as the downpour was very heavy.

That night I couldn't sleep until very late. I relived the happenings of that evening over and over again. One question kept coming in my mind: "Had Baba controlled the weather and decided when it would rain?" Dark clouds had gathered and it had been thundering with flashes of lightning even before we left for our walk. Yet, even so, Baba decided to go for his walk. At the Tiger's Grave

too it had appeared as if it would rain at any moment. Yet Baba had been so relaxed and started back only at his usual time. The rain that appeared to have been held back for almost three hours, started with a heavy downpour the very moment I stepped inside the house, not a second earlier and not a second later.

I was forced to conclude that the weather had obeyed Baba's command. I felt it had been very silly of me to get distracted and worry about my clothes getting wet when a person who could control the weather was with me. Tears welled up in my eyes as I thought how he had delayed the rain for me but not for himself. He had to walk nearly a kilometre back to his house after leaving me and certainly must have got wet in the heavy rain. If he had wanted, he could have delayed the rain until he reached home. Thinking thus, I mentally bowed my head to him and lay down to sleep.

### **Reforming a Wayward Youth**

In those early days several people who came in contact with Baba had many extraordinary experiences. His reputation spread far and wide, particularly amongst the railway employees who gradually realised that he had amazing powers, such as the ability to enthrall everyone with his fathomless knowledge on any subject and the capacity to see people's future. But Baba always shunned publicity.

After Himanshu completed his education, he also joined the railways. At the end of 1951 he was posted to Sahebganj, a three-hour train ride from Jamalpur. One of the few people who was close to Himanshu in Sahebganj was Ram Ranjit Bhattacharya, a senior colleague. He had a wayward younger brother whose nickname was Bubai. His widowed mother was very worried about Bubai's future. Himanshu carefully concealed from others the fact that Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar was his elder brother. However, since Ram Ranjit was a close friend, Himanshu confided in him. One day in October 1954 Ram Ranjit's mother expressed her worry about Bubai to Himanshu and requested him to ask his famous brother about Bubai's future and what the family could do to reform him. The next weekend when he visited Jamalpur, Himanshu found an opportunity to broach the matter with Baba.



After listening to him, Baba kept quiet for a while. Then he described Bubai's appearance. "The boy is fair of complexion, tall and thin, but his bones are strong; he has a broad chest; his head is small in comparison to the size of his body and his eyes are small and sunken." Baba described his features in minute detail and Himanshu nodded, as everything Baba said about Bubai was correct.

Then Baba went on to describe his character, "His behaviour is in general very bad. He only keeps the company of bad characters and has picked up all their habits." Baba then described several of Bubai's defects.

"But he has some good qualities too. He is very kind-hearted and helpful to others. At times he is very selfless." Baba then enumerated many of his good qualities. "Tell his mother his good qualities and tell her that whatever bad habits he has will be rectified immediately. She need not be worried."

He paused for a while and asked, "What time is it, Himanshu?"

"It's a quarter to three."

"He will remember this particular time. When you meet him next, you should enquire from him what he remembers about this moment."

"Dada, I will be meeting him after two or three days. How will he be able to exactly remember anything about this moment?"

"Oh, he will remember. You just ask him."

On Monday evening after his return to Sahebganj, Himanshu met the worried mother and disclosed to her everything Baba had told him. He also conveyed to her his brother's assurance that from then onwards, Bubai would be a changed person. As Himanshu was leaving the house, he saw Bubai walking in. Putting his hand on his shoulder Himanshu said, "Hello Bubai, I was just thinking about you. Let's go for a walk together."

After exchanging a few pleasantries, they set off. Along the way Himanshu enquired, "By the way, do you remember if anything happened to you two days ago in the afternoon?"

Bubai was taken aback. Then regaining his composure, he said, "Yes, I vividly remember a strange incident that occurred that afternoon. It was a quarter to three. I was reading a book and suddenly something strange happened. I felt I was not in my body. I don't know what actually happened to me and where I got lost. For sure I wasn't sleeping. When I regained my senses, it was five past three. For about twenty minutes I was lost in an unknown world. I even lost awareness of myself. It was a strange experience which I am unable to express properly in words. After that, I felt as if something inside me had changed. But tell me, how did you know about it?"

Himanshu gave an evasive answer and left. After that experience there was a radical change in Bubai. He completely gave up the bad company and all his bad habits. His mother was relieved to see that her son had turned over a new leaf. Himanshu gained a new understanding of his brother from this incident. Until then he knew that nobody could conceal anything from Bubuda and that his knowledge had no limits. He had also heard Manas describe how he had thrown some dust in the sky and dispelled the rain clouds around Jamalpur. Himanshu had also personally witnessed many of Bubuda's extraordinary powers. But this was the first time that he saw his brother effect a change in someone's mind from a distance.

Baba occasionally visited Sahebganj. One evening during Baba's visit in Sahebganj, he was walking through the market with Himanshu. As they were walking, Himanshu noticed a man coming from the opposite direction intently looking at his dada. The man continued to stare at him even after he passed them. Curious, Himanshu asked Baba, "Dada, why is that man staring at you like that?"

"He is a hypnotist. He practices Avidya Tantra. When he looked at me, he realised that I am more powerful than he is. That is why he kept looking at me, wondering who I was."

As they continued to walk, Himanshu again turned back and saw the hypnotist standing beside the road, still staring at Baba. A little perturbed he said, "Dada, he is still looking at you."

“He is a conman. Do you know what he will do next? He will go to a Bata showroom and use his hypnotic power to convince them to give him a few expensive pairs of shoes and then walk away without paying for them. That is how he misuses the power he has gained through the practice of Avidya Tantra.”

The next evening at around the same time, Himanshu was walking through the market. He went to the Bata shop and enquired if there had been any theft the previous evening. Surprised, the person at the counter said, “Yes, yesterday evening around this time a man came into the shop pretending to buy a pair of shoes. He was actually a conman. He said that he wanted to show a few pairs of shoes to his family at home for their advice before he made a final selection, and took away several pairs of shoes. We never allow such practices. But somehow, we don’t know why, we agreed to his request although he was a complete stranger. Perhaps he cast a spell on us. How do you know about the incident? Do you know him?”

Himanshu was about to tell them that the man was a hypnotist and that he had hypnotized them. Then suddenly a thought flashed across his mind that he might unwittingly get himself into trouble if he told them, so he denied all knowledge about it.

That evening Baba asked him, “Nitai<sup>1</sup>, did you check with the people at the Bata showroom about the hypnotist?”

“Yes, dada, I did. He somehow convinced them to allow him to take a few pairs of shoes home to show his family and walked out without paying anything. The people in the showroom are confused about it, wondering how they could have permitted him to do so, as he was a complete stranger. Dada, I felt an urge to tell them that he was a hypnotist, but restrained myself thinking that I would be inviting unnecessary questions. But I feel bad that we are allowing him to go scot-free, knowing that he is a conman. Should we not expose him?”

“Don’t worry, Nitai. His cup of sin is almost full. He has been duping people like that in different places for a long time. Very soon he will be caught for many of his crimes and put behind bars for a long time,” Baba assured.

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<sup>1</sup> The nickname of Himanshu Ranjan Sarkar.



### Delaying Official Action

Nagina's former boss bore a deep grudge against Nagina due to his demotion and took revenge by pursuing the fabricated charges he had earlier brought against Nagina. He used his influence with certain very senior officials in Delhi, and in the month of September he managed to get Nagina demoted on the basis of those trumped up charges. A close colleague from Delhi informed Nagina about the top-level decision to demote him and told him that the demotion order would be issued within a week.

Nagina was dismayed and did not know what to do, so he immediately wrote a letter to Baba informing him about the impending order for his demotion. He added, "I would prefer to die than to get humiliated like this." Nagina was very conscious of his post and authority and could not bear to even think of accepting the demotion.

On receiving the letter, Baba summoned Bindeshvari and briefed him about it. "Bindeshvari, I want you to go to Begusarai immediately and convey my instructions to Nagina to apply a certain mantra that I taught him some time ago. It will cause the demotion order to stay where it is for the time being."

After Bindeshvari explained Baba's instructions, Nagina applied the mantra immediately. A few days later he heard that the order for his demotion had been temporarily withheld. Nagina was aware, however, that the transfer had only been temporarily deferred and that it was hanging over his head like the sword of Damocles.

The next time he went to Jamalpur, he went on the evening Field Walk with Baba. As they walked, Baba said, "Nagina, the power of the mantra that I asked you to apply to delay your demotion can work only for a certain period. Such mantras only have the power to delay the inevitable experiencing of any bad samskaras for a certain period. These samskaras are based on cosmic laws, and mantras or any other process may delay the reaping of the samskaras for some time, but cannot avert them forever."

“Baba, when I have done no wrong to warrant such an action being taken against me, why should I suffer such a fate? The only thing I did was to fight against an immoral boss, and you know very well that the corrupt assistant collector has retaliated and got me demoted on fabricated charges. How can it happen to me when I am totally free from blame and especially when I am under your protection?”

“Nagina, it is true that you have not done anything in this life to deserve it. But you should realise that you are being forced to suffer this humiliation because of some samskaras from your past life.”

“Whatever it may be, I cannot tolerate the humiliation of being demoted. Please save me from this situation.”

“Nagina, since it is your samskara from your past life to suffer such a humiliation for a short period, it is wise to undergo it and finish the samskara.”

But Nagina was not ready to accept it under any circumstance. He repeatedly pleaded with Baba to save him from such a humiliation.

Baba finally said, “All right, Nagina, I give you a guarantee that this action against you will not be carried out until you agree to accept it.”

As Nagina returned from the Field Walk, he felt quite relieved after receiving Baba’s assurance. He thought, “I will never agree to face such a humiliation. So after Baba’s categorical guarantee, the demotion, even if it is ordered by someone at the highest level, will never take effect until I agree to it.”



## CHAPTER 12

### First Gathering

As the end of 1954 approached, the number of people initiated by Baba reached nearly a hundred. Apart from a few, all of them were employees of the Railways, the Police Department and the Central Excise and Customs Department. From the beginning Baba had emphasised that spirituality should be practised by the entire family. He said that women were equally entitled to and as capable of pursuing the spiritual path as men, a complete departure from prevailing Indian attitudes which had marginalized women for centuries. As a result most of the wives of the married initiates also learned meditation. In several cases the wives were attracted to their husband's sadhana after seeing the positive effects it had on them.

Although many of the early initiates had a general idea that Baba was quietly widening the circle of disciples, they were not formally introduced to each other. Starting in late October, Baba invited those individuals who came to meet him to attend a gathering on Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> of November at seven in the evening at quarter No. 339 EF of Rampur Railway Colony. This was the official quarters of Baba's brother, Kanai, but Baba had asked Pranay Kumar Chatterjee to use the place for his sadhana, as he was facing opposition from his mother and other family members who objected to him spending long hours in meditation. That evening a little over twenty people assembled there. Most of them, out of curiosity, came early.

Many were employees of the Railway Workshop and were therefore known to each other. They were pleasantly surprised to discover that without realising it they had been following the spiritual teachings of the same guru. There were a few new faces as well. Those who knew each other exchanged information about the effects of their sadhana and their experiences with the mysterious Master. An air of great anticipation slowly built up as they waited for the guru.



Just at the appointed time Baba arrived from Keshavpur, about a ten-minute walk away, accompanied by Pranay. A fresh bedcover had been spread on a small wooden cot, the sole decoration in this humble setting. As soon as Baba took his seat everyone prostrated. After welcoming them, he formally introduced all of them to each other.

He then posed a question which led to a discourse. "What is the attribute of the Supreme Consciousness or Brahma? Brahma is the personification of bliss. The entire creation has its origin in Brahma. It passes through an evolutionary process until it finally merges back into Brahma. So the created universe originates in bliss and culminates in bliss."

Baba then quoted the sage Bhrigu from the *Taittiriya Upanishad*:

*Anandam brahmeti vyajanat*

*Anandadyeva khalvimani bhutani jayante*

*Anandena jatani jivanti*

*Anandam prayantya bhi samvishantiiti*

"This universe has emanated from the supreme bliss; it is being sustained in bliss and will finally dissolve into bliss. Human life is the final stage before the creation merges back into the Supreme Consciousness. So the goal of human life is to attain the supreme beatitude. The desire for supreme bliss is a fundamental characteristic of every human mind and it is this innate desire which is the actual motivating force behind each and every human action.

"Brahma, the embodiment of supreme bliss, is everywhere; it is our closest companion and is hidden within our minds. So in order to quench the thirst for supreme bliss, the mind has to be directed inwards; in other words, it has to be introverted. No amount of running after sensory pleasures will satiate the human thirst for supreme bliss. Sensory experiences have the capacity to give only very limited pleasure, but the mind is always in search of limitless happiness. Only a limitless entity can provide limitless happiness. Brahma, the Supreme Consciousness, alone is limitless and so it alone can be the source of limitless happiness.

“The truth is that knowingly or unknowingly, all human beings are seeking that supreme bliss, that Supreme Consciousness. By running after sensory enjoyment, people are actually seeking ultimate happiness, but since they are searching in the wrong place, their search is sure to end in frustration. In order to attain the Supreme Entity a suitable method is needed and that is the ancient practice of yoga or spiritual meditation. It is a process of introverting the mind, of searching for the Divine Entity that is hidden inside. This process of introversion is the path of *anandam*, the path of bliss. As one advances along the path of introversion, one starts to have varying degrees of intense, ecstatic experiences called samadhi.”

Baba then went on to describe the different types of samadhi that a sadhaka may experience en route to the supreme bliss. He explained that human life has three aspects – physical, mental and spiritual. Although every human being has physical, psychic and spiritual desires, the physical and psychic desires should be channelised into a purely spiritual desire. So while fulfilling our physical and psychic needs for our survival and the welfare of humanity, we should never forget our higher goal. That goal is to quench our spiritual thirst by attaining the supreme bliss.

Baba’s speech was brief but very clear, to the point and logical. He then asked Pranay to come forward and sit in the lotus posture and instructed him to concentrate his mind at his ishta chakra, the point of concentration used in meditation. Then, lifting his index finger, Baba commanded in Bengali, “O kundalini, I, Yogeshvara Anandamurti, order you to leave the *muladhara* chakra (at the base of the spine) and rise to the *svadhishthana* chakra (at the base of the genital organ).”

Pranay’s spine suddenly straightened and became rigid, and his body began to tremble. Most of the audience was new to the science of yoga. But a few more knowledgeable followers like Haragovinda had heard about a yogi being able to raise his kundalini through intense yogic practice. However, they were astonished that a person could raise another’s kundalini by merely ordering it. It was unheard of! Everyone strained his neck to see what would happen next.

“O kundalini, I now order you to leave the *svadhishthana* chakra and ascend to the *manipura* chakra (at the navel),” continued Baba.

Pranay’s body started to tremble more intensely.

“O kundalini, now leave the *manipura* chakra and rise to the *anahata* chakra (in the centre of the chest).”

Pranay could no longer sit erect and fell backwards, his legs still crossed in the lotus posture. He lost outward consciousness and started to make deep sonorous sounds of *hum, hum*.

“O kundalini, now leave the *anahata* chakra and rise to the *vishuddha* chakra (at the throat).”

Pranay now became completely silent and motionless. His face was radiant. It appeared that he was in total peace.

Baba then commanded his kundalini to rise to his *ajina* chakra (at the midpoint between the eyebrows). Pranay’s face became completely resplendent. As he lay there motionless Baba said, “Enjoy the supreme bliss.”

Baba then turned to the other awestricken disciples and said, “This is *savikalpa samadhi*, the highest state of bliss that one can attain through yogic practice. A person in this state experiences *Brahmananda*, supreme bliss. This is what yogis throughout the ages have been trying to attain through years of intense sadhana. In this state the individual mind merges in the infinite Cosmic Mind, and the feeling of ‘*Aham Brahmasmi*,’ ‘I am the Supreme Consciousness,’ arises in the person’s mind. You too can attain this state if you practice your meditation with diligence and full application. When the mind becomes permanently established in this state, it is called *mukti* or liberation, and after attaining it, there is no rebirth.”

Then Baba discussed the practice of yoga in greater depth. A one-pointed mind is required to achieve this state. The mind becomes concentrated when all its thoughts, sentiments and desires are focused on the Supreme. After talking for a few minutes, Baba turned toward Pranay and said, “He is indeed fortunate to enjoy this. Now kundalini, descend to the *vishuddha* chakra.” Baba then ordered Pranay’s



kundalini to descend from one chakra to another. When it descended to the anahata chakra, Pranay began to wail and begged Baba to allow him to remain in that ecstatic state. Baba said, "All right, enjoy it for some time more."

After a few more minutes Baba said that it was time for Pranay to return to this world. Pranay again beseeched him to be allowed to remain in that state. Suddenly Baba's mood changed. He severely rebuked the kundalini and commanded it to descend to the muladhara chakra. After some time, as Pranay slowly got up unsteadily, which indicated that the kundalini had returned to its original position in the muladhara chakra, he said in a whimper, "Baba, I did not want to return from that supremely blissful world. Why did you bring me back?"

Baba placed Pranay's head on his lap and patted him gently. "You will again get similar experiences. Don't worry." Then he turned to the others and said, "If you practice sadhana regularly and sincerely, you can all attain that state." He then blessed them all with *Varabhaya Mudra*, the significance of which they did not understand at that time. Everyone felt a strong spiritual current emanating from both of Baba's hands. Some started to cry, while others uttered the sound "hum, hum." A few sat in silence with tears of bliss trickling down their faces. After bidding everyone *namaskar*, Baba got up to leave. As he placed his feet on the floor, Pranay, who had not yet fully recovered from his divine experience, prostrated before him.

Taking the cue, everyone came one by one and prostrated before Baba. He blessed them all by placing his hand on the crown of their heads. At his touch each of them felt a powerful vibration wash over them, filling them with a hitherto unknown feeling of ecstasy. They felt as if they had been transported to another world, a world of infinite bliss. Their eyes filled with tears. Smiling sweetly and with hands folded in *namaskar*, Baba slowly walked out of the room leaving them in an ecstatic state. From there he proceeded to the Tiger's Grave for his regular evening walk, accompanied by Sukumar Bose, Shishir Dutta and a few others.

It took everyone quite some time for the significance of that evening's experience to sink in. They were all astounded and awe-struck by what they had seen and experienced, things which none of them in their wildest dreams could have imagined. They were also thrilled to hear from Pranay, who was still disoriented, about his experience of savikalpa samadhi. Such things were completely new and until then had only existed in their minds as a fable. What baffled them the most was how Baba had been able to raise Pranay's kundalini by his mere command. They had heard that sadhakas had to do several years of intense meditation to be able to raise their own kundalini. But raising the kundalini of another person by one's mere command needed spiritual power of a completely different dimension, they conjectured. Many of them lingered on discussing the guru and his powers.

The significance of the word Anandamurti was also a mystery to everyone, and it was the first time they had heard it. Another question that puzzled them was that yogis were known to reverentially worship the kundalini as a goddess, so how could Baba have the authority to rebuke the kundalini and make it obey him? Nobody had a satisfactory answer. They all returned home that night with several mysteries unresolved. Something else had changed too - the way they looked upon the guru had undergone a radical transformation that evening.



## CHAPTER 13

# Death Is Not Painful

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, before leaving the Rampur Colony quarters, Baba informed everyone that there would be a similar gathering on the following two Sundays. After the first gathering, noticeably more people started to accompany Baba on his Field Walk. This was a marked departure from the earlier instruction that if any unknown person was seen accompanying Baba on his evening walk, no one should join them.

A couple of evenings later Nagina, Harivansh Jha, who was a colleague from the Central Excise Department, and Shishir Dutta were with Baba. A few days earlier a report had appeared in a local newspaper that a flying saucer had landed somewhere in Italy. There was speculation that this spaceship might have come from Mars. The spectacular news evoked a lot of curiosity in Nagina, so he took the opportunity of the evening Field Walk to find out the truth of the matter from Baba. “Baba, there was a report in the paper that some extraterrestrial humans from Mars have landed in Italy. Is it true that there is developed life on Mars?”

Baba replied, “No, Nagina, it is not true. Although life exists in this solar system, it is not developed. The elements necessary for life to start on our planet actually came from Mars billions of years ago. However, due to the absence of a congenial environment, life did not develop there. A congenial environment is essential for the development of life on any celestial body. There are advanced beings on a large number of planets and other cosmic bodies where there is a congenial atmosphere. You have heard about the constellations *Vishaka*<sup>1</sup> and *Ashvini*<sup>2</sup>. They have planets where there are human

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<sup>1</sup> Alfa Librae – It is a binary star in the constellation of Libra and is about 77 light years away from Sun

<sup>2</sup> Constellation of Aries.



beings who are far more advanced than those on this planet. The universe is teeming with life. The evolution of inanimate celestial bodies such as stars and planets forms only half the cycle of creation. The other half starts with the creation of the unit mind and its evolution through a variety of lives on different cosmic bodies. So life is an integral part of creation and without it the cosmic cycle of creation would not be complete. It is an interesting subject and I will go into it in detail later.” Nagina’s curiosity remained only partially quenched that day.

About twenty-five years later, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1979, during a morning Field Walk in the Alps near the village of Fiesch in Switzerland, Baba started talking about how life had evolved in the Alpine region. As the Margis present were enjoying the blissful company of Baba and the cold mountain air, an accompanying disciple asked how life originated on earth. Baba stopped walking and said, “In my opinion the seed of life on earth came from the planet Mars. The microbial form of life first entered the earth’s atmosphere and settled on the Alps, from which the evolution of life on earth started. Today Mars is a dying planet. You know that Mars and the earth were together in the formative period of the earth. In ancient times when the earth was still a ball of fire and the surface was either fluid or very soft, part of the earth was ejected and thrown some distance away, and that mass started to revolve around the sun and not the earth. That is why one name of Mars in Sanskrit is Kuja. “Ku” means “earth” and “Ja” means “to take birth”. So “Kuja” means “that which is born out of the earth.”

On the morning of Sunday the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1954, Asthana went to Baba’s house hoping to clarify some doubts regarding his meditation. Baba was just beginning to answer those questions when the discussion was interrupted by the sudden appearance of a young man at the door. When Baba saw him, his mood changed abruptly and he started to shout at him. “You worthless swine, who asked you to come here? I don’t want to see your face anymore. Go away.”

Asthana was taken aback at the sudden shift in Baba’s mood. He had always seen Baba as an affectionate, tranquil, and composed

person and was not prepared for this unexpected outburst. The young man ignored Baba's outburst and rushed inside. He caught hold of Baba's feet and pleaded with him. "Forgive me, Baba. I couldn't avoid it. Give me any punishment you wish, but please do not send me away."

Baba softened a bit. "By disobeying my instruction, you have committed a serious mistake and deserve severe punishment for it."

"Yes, Baba, I will accept whatever punishment you decide," said the young man with folded hands, visibly relieved that Baba had relented. Baba asked Asthana to bring one of his shoes and hand it to the young man. He then ordered him to "Lick the shoe." Asthana was shocked. The young man, however, did not show any sign of revulsion and was about to execute the order when Baba stopped him and said, "What you have done is unpardonable, but still I forgive you. Don't ever violate the directions of the guru again." His tone softened further as he continued, "There is a gathering in Pranay's Rampur Colony quarters at seven this evening. Come there." The young man prostrated and, with eyes overflowing with tears, left the house.

After he had gone, Baba told Asthana, "He has committed a serious mistake, but I have forgiven him." He then continued the discussion on sadhana as if nothing unusual had happened. Before Asthana left, Baba instructed him to attend the evening programme. As he departed, he couldn't help but marvel at Baba's ability to instantaneously change his mood from that of an affectionate guide to a fierce disciplinarian and back again.

Even before the scheduled time, the room in the Rampur Colony quarters was full to the brim. Word had gone around about the demonstration that Baba had done the previous Sunday, and nobody who had heard about it wanted to miss the next *darshan*. Expectations grew as they all waited for Baba. As the clock struck seven, Baba arrived accompanied by Pranay and Shiva Shankar. With some difficulty, the disciples made space for him to walk to the cot. Following Baba's earlier instruction, Pranay asked everyone present

to mentally prostrate before Baba, as there was no space to do it physically. After taking his seat, Baba looked around the room with a sweet smile. His face was radiant. A spiritually intoxicating aroma permeated the entire room. By then everyone was aware that it was emanating from Baba's body.

Baba then spoke about life, death, and the function of the vital energy in the body. He started by posing a question, "What is life?" and then gave a discourse in answer to the question. "Life is the combination of mind and body. When parallelism is established between the waves emanating from the mind and the body, life comes into existence. If either a physical cause such as illness or an injury, or a psychic cause such as the sudden shock of bad news, or a traumatic event disturbs this parallelism, then death occurs. In the future as science advances, it may be possible to bring a dead person back to life if his death is due to a physical cause. However, if the cause of death is psychic, then it will not be possible to revive the dead person by bringing back his original mind into his body.

"By a certain tantric process one can temporarily endow a corpse with a portion of one's mind. When these newly introduced psychic waves are made parallel to the physical waves of the corpse, it will seem to regain life for a short time. In the future it will be possible to revive a person who has died due to a psychic cause by using certain scientific techniques. However, the person who regains life in this manner will not have the original mind of the dead person. He or she will be a new individual with a new personality.

"Birth and death are natural phenomena. Apart from the fundamental instinct of self-preservation, there are two reasons why human beings are afraid of death. One is that they will be permanently separated from everything they consider as theirs. During the course of an individual's life, a person develops attachments to so many animate and inanimate entities, and derives pleasure from those relationships. But it is not possible for anyone to enjoy any of these relationships permanently, because all the objects are moving at different speeds according to their respective



characteristics and their varying degrees of crudity or subtlety. The speed of one is never identical to that of another. A banyan tree does not grow at even one-thousandth the speed of a gourd plant.”

“As one advances at one’s own pace, one comes close to other entities. The acquaintance or relationship created is only temporary, yet people refer to these entities as ‘my this’ or ‘my that’. Animate entities appear to enjoy each other as long as they are together. However, the person who you live with, sharing all the warmth of your life, or the things you think of as yours, will ultimately leave you or you will leave them. Due to the difference in speed, one will go ahead and the other will lag behind, and as a result, after being together for a certain period, one will not find the other. From an unknown realm they all come in contact with each other and into an unknown realm they will again disappear.

“Confronted with this grim reality, one should be very cautious about selecting one’s objectives in life. The Supreme Entity alone should be the goal of one’s life. For movement to occur, at least two entities must be present, and there must be a change of place in at least one of them. The question of difference in speed does not arise in the case of the infinite, singular Supreme Entity, Parama Purusha. The question of one either advancing or falling behind arises only where there is a difference in speed. Speed varies among those entities which come within the domain of time, space, and person. However, Parama Purusha is beyond the relative factors because time, space, and person are embedded in Him, and so the question of speed does not arise. Those who love Parama Purusha and consider Him as the sole goal of their lives will not be afraid of being permanently separated from Him; they will not fear death as He is with them in this life and He will be with them in the next life too. In fact, the Supreme Entity is with everyone from the beginning of his or her existence and remains with them until they become one with Him in the final stage of their existence. That is why I say that those sadhakas whose only goal in life is Parama Purusha and not any of the animate and inanimate entities of this transitory world, will not fear death.

“Another reason why people fear death is due to the misconception that death is very painful. In reality it is just the opposite. Death is a very peaceful experience. When a person approaches death, all physical or mental pain ceases and they feel complete peace. It is similar to going to sleep. The outward appearances of agitation, the navel breathing, the rattling sound produced in the throat, etc. are due to the dislocation of the vital energy, which are known as *vayus* or energy currents. There are altogether ten of them which operate in unison, with each *vayu* governing a specific function. Of these ten *vayus*, five are internal and five are external. The collection of ten energy currents in the body is collectively known as vital energy. It is the link between the body and the mind. The mind controls various functions of the body with the help of these vital energy currents.

“The five internal energy currents, i.e. *prana*, *apana*, *samana*, *udana*, and *vyana*, play a vital role in the body. *Prana* *vayu* is situated in the area from the navel to the throat. It helps with respiratory functions and the circulation of vital energy. *Apana* *vayu* functions in the area below the navel and controls the excretion of urine and stool. *Samana* *vayu* is situated at the navel region and maintains the equilibrium between *prana* and *apana* *vayus*. *Udana* *vayu* is situated in the throat. It facilitates vocalization and the expression of thought. *Vyana* *vayu* pervades the whole body and maintains the circulation of the vital fluids and blood as well as assists in the perception of sensory experiences through the help of the sensory organs.

“The five external energy currents are *naga*, *kurma*, *krakara*, *devadatta*, and *dhananjaya*. *Naga* resides in the joints and is responsible for jumping and extending the body. *Kurma* is found in the different glands and enables the body to contract like a tortoise. *Krakara* works throughout the body, increasing and decreasing the air pressure and is responsible for yawning and stretching. Yawning before you fall asleep and stretching the body after waking up from sleep are the functions of *krakara*. *Devadatta* increases and decreases

the pressure of food and water in the stomach, and arouses the feeling of hunger and thirst. As a result of mental or physical labour, the body feels the need for sleep. The feeling of drowsiness is caused by dhananjaya, which pervades the entire body. In the future, people will gain a clear understanding of all these vayus and learn how to control them. This will help immensely in the treatment of disease.

“If due to illness, old age, or a serious injury the region of the body controlled by prana degenerates, prana will no longer be able to function properly. In this unnatural condition, it will strike against the samana vayu, causing it to lose its equilibrium. As a result, samana which governs the navel area, and prana which governs the upper body, will leave their respective controlling regions and merge. Then together they will put pressure on apana. Due to the combined pressure of prana, samana and apana, udana will lose its ability to function normally, and a rattling sound will be produced in the throat. We call this navel breathing. At the time of leaving the body, the four vayus – prana, apana, samana, and udana – merge with vyana, which is present throughout the body. These five vital energy currents, after having left their normal positions in the body, now prepare to leave the body together after vacating their respective positions. This is a clear indication that death is imminent. As the internal energy currents leave the body, four of the five external energy currents join them, and together they leave the body. Only dhananjaya, the vayu that induces sleep, remains in the body. As the dead body is now in a state of permanent sleep, dhananjaya remains in it until it is cremated or until the body completely decomposes in the grave.”

Then Baba elucidated many esoteric details regarding the yogic concept of life and death. After explaining the details, he looked around and said, “Kesto, come and sit near the cot.”

Asthana saw that the person who responded was the same young man who Baba had scolded that morning. His full name was Krishna Chandra Pal. He hailed from Ramrajatala near Calcutta and was an employee of the Railway Workshop. He came forward and Baba asked the others to move aside to create some space around him.



Anticipation started to mount among all those gathered there, as they knew that Baba was going to do another eagerly awaited demonstration. "Kesto, sit in the lotus posture and concentrate your mind in your ista chakra." Kesto did as directed. "Prana vayu, leave your position and strike at samana vayu," said Baba in a commanding tone. Kesto started to breathe heavily. "Prana and samana, merge and strike at apana vayu." Kesto's breathing became heavier. His navel area began to rise and fall with his breathing. Everyone glanced at each other in surprise.

"Apana, merge with the other vayus and strike at udana." Kesto fell over, a rattling sound issuing from his throat. There was a hushed murmur from the audience.

"Now, vyana, merge with the rest of the vayus and leave your position." Kesto became completely silent. His breathing stopped and following the cessation of his breath all other bodily functions ceased to operate. Baba then instructed Dr. Sachinandan, "Nandu, come forward and examine Kesto. See if there is any sign of life in his body."

Dr. Sachinandan examined Kesto for a while and then looking perplexed declared in a solemn tone, "Baba, Kesto is dead. There is no breathing, heartbeat, or pulse. All the vital signs are missing."

A cloud of apprehension descended upon the room. Many of those present struggled to control their emotions and looked around to see the reaction of the others.

Baba looked at everyone with a smile and said, "No, Kesto is not dead. It is true that all the vital signs are missing. But that does not mean that he is dead." He paused for a few seconds and looked around again. His audience stared at each other in disbelief. "How is it possible that when there is no breathing, heartbeat or pulse, he is not dead?" they wondered.

"Yes, Kesto is not completely dead. His prana vayu is suspended in the spinal area. This condition is called clinical death. In such cases the person has no vital signs. He appears to be dead, but actually he

is not. This happens in rare cases when the nerve cells are still functioning even after the heartbeat and breathing have stopped. It also happens in the case of injuries causing excruciating pain such as snakebite and smallpox. It may also happen, but very rarely, in normal cases as well. For this reason, in some parts of India it is the tradition to tie the bodies of those who have died of smallpox or snakebite to a raft and float them down the river in the hope that they will revive. If the prana vayu is suspended in the spinal region, a clinically dead person may be revived due to the cooling effect of the water on the spine.

“There have been several cases where a clinically dead person was mistakenly thought to be dead and taken for burial or cremation, and then suddenly woke up before the cremation or burial could take place. In countries where burial is the tradition, under certain circumstances it is possible for a person to revive after he has been interred in the grave. There have been instances where, when the coffin was exhumed, scratch marks were found on the coffin’s interior. In other cases the skeleton was found in a changed position. In such cases, people normally attribute this to ghosts. The fact is, however, that people were declared clinically dead when they were buried, but revived afterwards. Such people suffer dreadfully before actually dying. That is one of the reasons why I am in favour of cremation because there is no chance of a clinically dead person suddenly waking up inside the coffin and then suffering horribly before dying a second time.”

Everyone in the room was completely mesmerised by this intriguing information. What Baba had revealed challenged their age-old, deeply entrenched beliefs in ghosts and spirits.

Baba then raised his index finger and ordered the prana vayu to leave Kesto’s body. His head tilted to the right and his mouth opened slightly. “Now he is really dead.” Baba paused for a while and looked around. “One of your brother disciples has passed away. You should all make arrangements for the cremation of the body,” he said with an air of finality.

Slowly the brutal reality of Kesto's death dawned upon everyone in the room. There was a visible sense of uneasiness in the awestruck audience. Many people wondered if Baba had things under control or if something had gone wrong beyond what he had intended. Sukumar looked at the police officers present, i.e. Chandranath, Shiva Shankar and Kishun, to see their reaction. Dr. Vishvanath wondered if what he was seeing was indeed real, as it was unheard of that a person's life force obeys the verbal order of another person. Rasmay, a simple-minded follower, was terrified beyond description. Kesto's newly married wife had accompanied her husband to Jamalpur that morning and was staying with Rasmay's family, until Kesto found suitable accommodation. What was he going to say to her? How could he disclose to her that her husband's life had been taken away by his guru and that she was now a widow? In the meantime, some people pleaded with Baba to bring Kesto back to life.

"How can I do that? Don't you all know that a dead person can never be brought back to life? He can only be reborn in another body." With these words, Baba got up and retired to the adjacent room.

As Baba left the room, panic spread like a contagion among the audience. A few followers were worried about what would happen if the police found Kesto's dead body in the house. From his seat in a corner of the room, Bindeshvari crooned, "Don't believe this bespectacled guru. This is his drama. He is not just an ordinary guru like anyone else." Everyone turned to Bindeshvari. He was in a state of semi-trance with his eyes half closed. "Those who are giving way to fear are fools. Can't you understand that one who can remove a person's life force by his mere thought can restore it as well? Baba is not what he appears to be. He can do anything and everything."

Bindeshvari's cryptic words brought some solace to the frightened followers. By now, many of them had realised that Bindeshvari possessed far greater intuitional insight than the others did. Some were smiling as they watched the incredible, high-tension



drama being played out in the room, and appeared to be completely unconcerned. Pranay, Haraprasad, Sadhan, Shiva Shankar, Chandranath and Haragovinda were among them.

Pranay, Nagina and Sukumar followed Baba into the adjoining room. Baba instructed them to massage his hands and feet as he sat on a blanket spread out on the floor. Baba asked Pranay if there were any ants or insects in the other room. Pranay replied that there were big black ants everywhere. Baba directed him to ensure that no ants entered Kesto's nostrils. Then he lay down and asked them to massage his body. As they massaged him, Baba asked them to do it more vigorously. Suddenly his body stiffened like a corpse, which surprised everyone. However, they continued to massage him. Seeing his inert body, they wondered what had happened to him. He remained in that state for nearly half an hour. Slowly his body started to show signs of movement. After some time, he got up and returned to the other room where the disciples were anxiously waiting. He instructed them not to touch his body. He then sat down on the cot, touched the crown of Kesto's head with the big toe of his right foot, and ordered him to open his eyes. To everyone's great surprise and relief Kesto opened his eyes. Again Baba touched Kesto's head with his toe and asked in Bengali, "Who are you?"

The name he gave in reply was not Kesto. To everyone's astonishment, he uttered the name of a world-renowned, nineteenth century yogi from Bengal.

"Why are you here?" Baba asked.

"Because you wanted me to come and protect this body," he replied.

"Well, since you are already here, do something for us before you go. Take your mind to the planet Mars and see if there is any developed life there."

After a short while he responded, "No, there is no developed life here."

"Now go to the moon and tell us what you see."

After a pause the voice said, "I am on the moon. It is completely barren with some mountains here and there."

"Is there any life?"

"No, there is no oxygen here, which is essential for life."

"Go below the surface of the moon and tell us what you see."

"It appears that there is some water."

"Go still deeper and say what is there."

"There is gold in the soil."

"Now go to a planet in the constellation of Ashvini and see if there is advanced life there."

"Yes, Baba, there are very advanced human beings on this planet. They look different from the human beings on our earth and have a slightly reddish complexion. They are far more advanced than the human beings on earth. They are spiritually very advanced as well."

"Now come back to earth. Cross the Himalayas to Tibet, go towards Lhasa. On the way, there is a place called Ling Po. There is a Buddhist monastery and a cave nearby. Go inside the cave and tell us what you see there."

"Baba, the cave is dark, and someone with long hair is sitting and meditating."

"Go near and see who it is."

"It is Subhash Chandra Bose."

A wave of exhilaration spread across the room to the enraptured audience. The people could not control their excitement. There was a mysterious smile on Baba's face. He said, "Ask him whether he would like to come back to India."

"Baba, he is shaking his head."

"All right. Don't disturb him any further. He is very deep in his sadhana. Now go to Moscow and go inside the Kremlin. What do you see there?"

“I see Premier Malenkov sitting in his office.”

“Enter his mind and see what he is thinking.”

“He is planning to spread communism by the use of military might.”

“Tell Malenkov that he should not attempt to disturb world peace. Otherwise he will meet the same fate as Stalin,” said Baba in a severe tone.

“Yes, Baba, I have created that feeling in him.”

“All right, you have done a lot of work for us. Now you may go,” Baba commanded the mind that was functioning through Kesto’s body. Again the body became lifeless.

“In order to revive Kesto, I have to bring his mind here from wherever it is in the cosmos. Before that, I have an instruction for you all. Nobody should tell him that a death demonstration was performed on him. When he comes back to life, he will feel severe aches all over his body because his blood circulation had stopped for a long time. A few of you should massage him for a while and then give him some warm milk.”

Everyone nodded in agreement. Baba raised his index finger and said in a commanding tone, “Kesto, wherever you are, come to Planet Earth. Now come to India. Come to Bihar. Now come to Jamalpur. Come to Rampur Railway Colony. Come to quarter number 339 EF and enter your body.”

A short while later there was some movement in Kesto’s body. Everyone heaved a sigh of relief. Slowly he sat up with the assistance of the others.

Baba asked him, “What happened to you, Kesto?”

“I think I was in deep sleep, Baba, but I don’t remember how and when I fell asleep. I feel very tired and have pain all over my body.”

“All right, go to the next room and take some rest. Take some warm milk now. Don’t take any solid food tonight. Take only liquids.”

With some assistance from the others, Kesto got up and went to the next room. In accordance with Baba’s instructions, some disciples massaged Kesto’s body and offered him some warm milk.



Then Baba said to everyone, "Now did you all see? He felt as if he had been in a deep sleep. If he had felt pain at the time of death, he would have remembered it. So, all of you should remember that there is no need to fear death, whenever it comes. It is an experience not much different from falling asleep."

Baba blessed all those present with Varabhaya Mudra. Everyone came to Baba one by one and prostrated. Baba blessed them all again. The atmosphere in the ashram was spiritually charged. Baba slowly walked out of the building leaving everyone dazed. After he departed, they were speechless for a while as they tried to digest all that had happened that evening. "Netaji is alive in Tibet and meditating. What thrilling news!" exclaimed Anil Bhattacharya.

Haraprasad remarked, "Many of you feared harassment at the hands of the police. Why should we fear anyone when Baba is here with us?" Several disciples agreed with him including those who had been afraid. The person who was the most relieved by this strange turn of events was the simple natured Rasmay, who had been saved from the deeply painful duty of having to inform Kesto's wife about his death.

Haragovinda said, "Last week we saw that the kundalini obeyed him; now he has shown that *Yama* (the mythological god of death) also obeys him. Not only that, what about bringing another mind into the body, which I never imagined was possible. I have heard about the *parakaya pravesha* by Shankaracharya when he left his body and entered another body and then again returned to his own body. But this is much more than that. He takes the life out of someone's body and then brings another mind into that dead body." Dilip Bose, the nephew of Sukumar Bose, said excitedly, "What about the mind travelling in space at unbelievable speed, reaching a distant planet in the constellation of Ashvini in no time, just on Baba's command?"

Hearing all these comments, Bindeshvari said, "Did I not tell you all, he is not what he appears to be. He has been playing a drama with us, concealing his true form. There is nothing he can't do, not only on this earth but in the entire universe."

After that evening, everyone who had been present at the demonstration felt that Baba was indeed not what he appeared to be. There was nothing he could not do. He did not appear to be bound by the limitations of time and space.

Asthana was reserved in publicly expressing his astonishment about the events of that day. However, privately, he told his subordinate, Nagina, that he believed that Baba was the greatest guru that the world had ever seen. He was inquisitive to know the reason why Baba had scolded Kesto so severely, and Nagina advised him to ask Baba himself. So the next time they were together with Baba during an evening walk, Asthana asked, "Baba, on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>, you were furious with Kesto and that evening you demonstrated death on him. Is there any connection between the two?"

"When I initiated him I forbade him to marry as he was destined to have only a short life," Baba explained. "You know very well the pitiable condition of a widow in India. They are not allowed to remarry like men. They are barred from all social functions and are forced to live a life of seclusion. A widow is considered a burden in her own family, is ill-treated by her husband's relatives, and discriminated against by society. If Kesto married, that girl would soon be widowed and forced to undergo needless suffering due to no fault of hers. But he disobeyed me and got married due to the pressure of his family. I pitied the girl and decided to exhaust his samskara of dying at a young age. That was why I did the demonstration of death on him and then altered his samskara a little bit and gave him a new life. Now he will live for a long time."

"Baba, could you not have changed his samskara to die without doing the death demonstration?"

"Certainly I could have, but I thought I would teach you all some things through that demonstration."

Nagina wondered why Baba had asked the three of them to massage him vigorously after he went into the adjacent room. Baba explained, "My mind was withdrawing into the state of nirvikalpa samadhi. If I had allowed that to happen, it would have taken me a long time to come back to normal consciousness, and by then his

body would have begun to decompose. That would have made bringing his mind back to his body very difficult. I wanted you to prevent me from going into samadhi for that reason. I asked you to massage me vigorously to keep me conscious of my body. Despite that precaution, I still went into samadhi for a short while.”

What Baba revealed sounded very mysterious to Asthana. He thought, “The guru who has demonstrated that he can command the forces of nature by his mere wish is trying to behave as if he is guided by external factors. He is indeed a mystery.”

Although Baba had forbidden his disciples from disclosing details of the death demonstration to Kesto, they could not contain themselves for long. In the course of five or six months, one by one, they started to enquire from Kesto if he knew what had happened to him that evening. The first time he was asked about it by Rasamay, he was surprised. “Why do you ask? I thought that I fell asleep while I was meditating.”

“No, Baba demonstrated death on you! You were dead! It happened in front of all of us,” Rasmay informed him.

Soon others started asking Kesto similar questions. Initially he did not believe them, but as more and more people confirmed it, he realised that it must be true. Asthana once broached the subject of that day’s incident with Kesto and related what Baba had told him.

“Yes, it’s true,” replied Kesto. “I went to my native village for the Durga Puja holidays. On my arrival I learned that my family had already arranged my marriage, and the preparations were almost complete. I objected vehemently but to no avail, as it was already too late to call it off, and so I had to yield to their wish. Throughout the whole ceremony and afterwards I felt guilty because I had disobeyed my guru. So after arriving in Jamalpur, I left my wife on the station platform and went immediately to Baba to tell him what had happened and to seek his forgiveness. As you saw, there was no need for me to tell him anything. He already knew the whole story.”

Kesto did indeed live a long life. He died in August 2008.



## CHAPTER 14

# Nirvikalpa Samadhi

Two incredible demonstrations held on consecutive Sundays created a sensation amongst Baba's disciples in Jamalpur, resulting in an even larger gathering on the following Sunday, the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1954. The room was overflowing, and people spilled out into the adjoining rooms. Baba arrived on the stroke of seven. The topic of his discourse was "*Savikalpa* and *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, the Highest Spiritual Attainment."

He started by explaining, "Savikalpa samadhi is the state where the mind merges in the Cosmic Mind. The Cosmic Mind is under the influence of the three creative principles - the sentient, mutative and static. Beyond the Cosmic Mind lies the Supreme Consciousness. The creative principles lie quiescent in that stage and hence the Supreme Consciousness is free from its influence. When the mind merges in the Supreme Consciousness, it is called nirvikalpa samadhi. In that state the mind ceases to exist, as it has merged in Nirguna Brahma. It is the state of non-duality from where the process of creation originated. Since only the Supreme Consciousness remains and there is no scope for duality, the mind no longer exists. So you should carefully note the difference that in savikalpa samadhi the mind still exists in its most expanded state as one with the Cosmic Mind. In that state of spiritual trance the body is still alive, as the mind still exists. In nirvikalpa samadhi, however, the mind ceases to exist. Hence, the body is no longer alive.

"What is the condition of the body in nirvikalpa samadhi when the mind ceases to exist? It becomes like a corpse - there is no breathing, heartbeat or pulse. The only difference is that after a person goes into nirvikalpa samadhi, the body becomes stiff within a second or two, unlike a dead body where rigour mortis takes two to four hours to set in. However, if there are karmic reactions (known as

samskaras) still stored in the mind of the spiritual aspirant, he will have to return from nirvikalpa samadhi to reap the consequences of that karma. Since the mind ceases to exist during this type of samadhi, the aspirant does not experience bliss. However, when he comes back to normal consciousness, he feels that he has been in an indescribable state of bliss, and waves of intense bliss continue to ripple through his mind. Seeing his ecstatic condition, one is led to conclude that the state he has experienced was an extremely blissful one. If all the karmic reactions are exhausted at the time when a sadhaka goes into nirvikalpa samadhi, it becomes permanent. That is known as *moksa* (salvation). The other day I explained that when the mind attains permanent savikalpa samadhi it is called *mukti*.

“One cannot attain nirvikalpa samadhi through yogic practices alone. Nirvikalpa samadhi involves piercing through the bondages of the three binding principles - sentient, mutative and static. Even mantras come within the influence of the sentient principle. So a mantra cannot take a sadhaka beyond the boundary of the three binding principles. To go beyond their influence, one needs the assistance of an entity that is beyond the scope of these principles. In philosophy that entity is called Taraka Brahma. Where is the position of Taraka Brahma? Philosophically speaking, Taraka Brahma is located at the tangential point where Nirguna Brahma turns into Saguna Brahma just as it comes under the influence of the sentient principle. On one side of this tangential point is Nirguna Brahma and on the other side is Saguna Brahma.

“When Taraka Brahma takes a physical body to guide human beings along the path of Dharma, He is known as Sadguru or Dharma guru. In His role as Sadguru, He can grant sadhakas salvation, i.e., permanent nirvikalpa samadhi. In His role as Dharma guru He provides guidance to the entire human race in every sphere of life – social, economic, political, moral, cultural and spiritual. He also provides everything society requires for its progress and unites society by breaking down all social barriers and divisions. His main purpose in taking birth is to guide suffering humanity towards all-round liberation.

“One becomes eligible for the grace of the Sadguru only through total surrender and absolute devotion or *kevala bhakti*. When the highest form of bhakti develops in people’s minds, the Sadguru graces them by liberating them from the influence of the three creative principles and blesses them with salvation.”

Thus Baba explained nirvikalpa samadhi, the highest goal of yogic practice. He then asked Pranay to come and sit near the cot in the lotus posture and to meditate; then ordered his kundalini to rise chakra by chakra. As it rose, Pranay experienced different physical reactions. When it crossed his manipura chakra (navel) he fell backwards. When it reached his ajina chakra, (between the eyebrows) Baba said that this was the highest point a sadhaka could attain through yogic meditation. He then directed the kundalini to rise to Pranay’s sahasrara chakra (at the crown of the head). Suddenly there was a loud ‘hummm’ sound and then Pranay fell completely silent after that.

Baba asked Dr. Sachinandan to examine Pranay’s body. After examining him thoroughly, Sachinandan said, “There is no sign of life, and the entire body has become very stiff. Medically speaking, he is dead.”

Baba explained, “Pranay’s mind has become one with the Supreme Consciousness. This is the ultimate goal of the entire creation. After evolving through different stages it finally merges with the Supreme Consciousness, the state from where everything has originated. Thus, this is the culminating point of evolution.”

He then asked in jest, “Shall I leave him in this state permanently and give him moksha? What do you all say?” Everyone laughed and looked at each other, not knowing what to reply. Baba continued, “One should deserve this state by attaining it through one’s own effort. Pranay still has many accumulated samskaras to undergo. He will get moksha, not now, but in the future. Mukti or moksha is the birthright of all of you, of all human beings, of all other living beings as well. Through the process of evolution the mind of all living



beings will obtain a human body one day and become eligible for mukti or moksha by the grace of Parama Purusha.”

He then ordered Pranay's kundalini to descend to the lower chakras, one by one, until it reached the muladhara chakra at the base of his spine. After a few minutes Pranay regained normal consciousness. Baba asked him how he was feeling. Pranay was still in a disoriented state and waves of bliss were surging through his whole being. With his eyes half closed, he murmured, “Unparalleled bliss! It is *Brahmananda*.”

After the demonstration Baba asked the Margis to massage Pranay's body and give him a glass of warm milk. As Baba got up to leave, everyone present lined up and prostrated before him one by one. He then blessed them individually. They all felt a powerful spiritual vibration flood through their being when they received Baba's blessing.

### **Vajra Bhairava**

After seeing the death demonstration on Kesto, a question lingered in Asthana's mind: after death is it possible for the mind to remember its identity in its previous life? He had always believed that the identity of a person's past life ends with his death. So he wondered how the great yogi who had entered Kesto's body during the demonstration could remember his former name. This question haunted his mind for several days. Finally during one evening Field Walk he asked, “Baba, can the mind remember its previous identity after the death of the physical body?”

“Yes, normally the mind can remember its previous identity in the following life until new memories eclipse the old ones. Past life memories are called extra-cerebral memory. Every child can remember its previous life. New memories gradually start to predominate, and by the time a child reaches the age of five, memories of its previous life usually disappear. Only in rare cases do memories of the previous life linger on beyond the age of five. If this

occurs, the child will identify with his or her former self. It is important to help the child forget his past life before he reaches the age of eleven or twelve, as he starts to fully develop his new personality by that age. Two identities cannot co-exist in one body.” Baba then asked Asthana, “Now is it clear how the yogi who entered Kesto’s body was able to remember his past identity?”

A few years later when Asthana was posted in Allahabad, an office colleague recounted how a relative’s son remembered his past life and gave many details of a life in a village near Varanasi. Strangely, he could even speak Bhojpuri, the local language of that area. The boy was taken to that village and to everyone’s surprise he was able to identify all the relatives of his past life and recollect many events that had occurred in the village. Following Baba’s counsel, Asthana advised his colleague to make every effort to make the boy forget his past life as quickly as possible.

On another occasion, Asthana, Nagina and Harisadhan were with Baba during his Field Walk. Nagina took the opportunity to try to find out more about the great yogi who had spoken through Kesto Pal’s body during the 14<sup>th</sup> November death demonstration, “Baba, it is common knowledge that he attained salvation a long time ago.”

Baba replied, “No, that is not correct. He still had some karma left to exhaust. Although he was a very advanced sadhaka, he had not yet overcome caste feeling, and so his sadhana was not complete. Due to this, he became a luminous body after his death. Normally a living being is composed of five fundamental factors – ethereal, aerial, luminous, liquid and solid. But if any entity is composed of only three factors - luminous, aerial, and ethereal - and has no solid or liquid factor, then that entity is called a “luminous body”. He would appear before me when I sat on the Tiger’s Grave and request<sup>5</sup> me to grant him salvation. He pleaded with me again and again with great earnestness. I told him that it would not be possible for him to get salvation without completing his sadhana, and to do sadhana he would need a human body. He then pleaded for a human body, saying that separation from God had become unbearable for him. His urge

for liberation had become very intense. When I saw that he had such a strong desire, I created a body from the five fundamental factors of the universe and asked him to use that body for his sadhana. I instructed him to do it in a few places around this area – under the mango tree beside the lake, near the neem tree at the entrance to Death Valley, on the *tantra pitha* under the three palm trees and at various isolated spots around the lake. Not only that, I have also guided him in his sadhana. He does it the whole night.

“Since he is already spiritually very advanced, he is making rapid progress. After he finishes his sadhana, I will dissolve the temporary body back into the five fundamental factors. Every night before I leave the Tiger’s Grave, I again provide him with such a body for his meditation. Besides him, there are also others whom I have helped to complete their sadhana in a similar way. I have named such sadhakas Vajra Bhairavas. We may call this particular sadhaka “Vajra Bhairava of Nadia”, as in his previous life that world-famous yogi was born in the Nadia District of West Bengal.”

“Baba, is it possible to see these Vajra Bhairavas?” asked Nagina.

“Yes, it is possible. Their body is created out of the five fundamental factors by samkalpa or thought projection, but such bodies can only perform very limited functions, and one of them is to do sadhana. Since these bodies have been created for a special purpose, their appearance is not exactly the same as a normal human body. They may appear frightening and that is why they are asked to do sadhana only at night and that too in secluded places where people don’t go. Even I get frightened by their appearance,” joked Baba with a wink of his eye. Everyone laughed. “Although their appearance is frightening, they are very compassionate and love you all as brother disciples. One day I shall introduce the Vajra Bhairava of Nadia to some of you. Nagina, will you be afraid to see him?”

Hardly had Baba finished saying this when Harisadhan said impetuously, “Baba, I also want to see him. I won’t be afraid.” Baba was annoyed with Harisadhan for this unrestrained, impulsive outburst. He glanced at him sharply, and Harisadhan realised that he had made a serious mistake. With that, Baba’s talk about this



interesting and hitherto unheard of topic ended, and he changed the subject. After the Field Walk, Nagina and Asthana chided Harisadhan for spoiling Baba's mood, as he had been ready to say many more things about Vajra Bhairavas.

Several months later Nagina asked Baba about the Vajra Bhairava of Nadia. Baba said, "His sadhana is now complete, and he has merged with the Supreme. The Vajra Bhairava of Nadia has left the world of forms and has merged into the formless Supreme Entity. You will no longer have a chance to meet him."

Years later Baba was returning from an evening Field Walk accompanied by Dr. Vidyarthi and a few others. He talked about the great saint from Nadia and took them to the tantra pitha under the three palm trees. He pointed at the spot and said, "Vidyarthi, this is the sacred place where that great sadhaka finally became free from the bondages of Prakrti and attained salvation."

From time to time the Margis saw very strange-looking beings coming to the Tiger's Grave and touching Baba's feet. These beings had a frightening appearance. Before they came any closer, Baba would ask the Margis to go and sit on the Englishman's grave, saying he wanted to be alone with the visitors. There were times when these strange visitors quietly joined the Margis sitting on the Tiger's Grave just for Baba's darshan. Once, Dilip Bose, a Margi from Jamalpur, was present when this happened. He asked Baba who the strange-looking person was. Baba dismissed his query and told him not to be unnecessarily curious. Similar occurrences took place in the presence of Pranay, Haragovinda and a few others as well.

Because Baba did not speak much about the Vajra Bhairavas, little is known about them apart from the information he had shared. Until today the Vajra Bhairavas remain a mystery.

### **Haragovinda's Jyoti Darshan**

Baba would inspire serious disciples to spend long hours in meditation. Pranay, Haragovinda, Chandranath and several others spent many hours meditating and began to have different types of spiritual experiences. Haragovinda recounted one such experience.

“It was the end of 1954. I meditated at least three times a day, sometimes up to four or five hours. Once I was doing sadhana at night. After meditating for a long time, I felt a very strong attraction to Baba, and suddenly the entire room was filled with light. When I opened my eyes, I saw Baba standing before me, and an indescribably radiant and powerful light was emanating from his eyes. I watched the light for a few seconds and became immersed in an intense wave of bliss. I fell into samadhi. Several hours passed before I regained consciousness, and the waves of bliss were still flooding my mind. A sweet aroma permeated the entire room for several hours.

“After a few days, I had an overwhelming desire to see that effulgent light coming from Baba’s eyes again. So I got up very early in the morning and sat for long meditation. But I was not graced with that experience. At noon I sat for long meditation, hoping to see the divine effulgence. But still it eluded me. Again in the evening I sat for a very long meditation, but to no avail. Unable to quench my thirst for that divine experience, I went to the Tiger’s Grave and found Baba sitting there with some disciples. I kept looking at his eyes hoping for a glimpse of that dazzling, effulgent light, but was disappointed. I didn’t have the courage to ask Baba about it.

“Finally Baba called me over and said, ‘Haragovinda, it is harmful to see the divine effulgence frequently. Although one does not see it with one’s physical eyes, and one requires special power to see it, if a person sees it frequently it can affect the eyesight unless he is highly advanced in his sadhana. Moreover, if you keep desiring to see the divine effulgence, that will become the object of your meditation instead of Parama Purusha. So you should not have desire for it. If and when the need arises, I will give you that experience again.’”

Pranay too started to regularly do intense meditation and did Guru Dhyana for several hours at a stretch. The long hours of dhyana created a powerful devotional feeling in him. He would become spiritually intoxicated, and his entire body would emit a sweet fragrance. Many others also had similar extraordinary experiences. The disciples observed that Baba’s body was always emanating a

divine fragrance. What was most remarkable was that each part of Baba's body emitted a different kind of fragrance. They also noticed that the fragrance emanating from Baba's body had a spiritually intoxicating effect on them. Due to these mystical experiences, the quality of their meditation improved manifold. Through such mystical experiences, Baba created a stronger inspiration in them to do longer meditation.

### **Mantra Can Be Chanted Everywhere**

The radical changes that occurred in the lives of Baba's early disciples inspired many people to learn meditation. In fact, in those days, when the disciples were not permitted to openly speak about their guru and his actual identity, and there was no literature to spread his ideas, the phenomenal transformation that occurred in them was the only means of attracting people to Baba. One such person was Dipanarayan, an inspector of Customs and Central Excise, newly posted under Nagina. Many years later he recalled his early experiences:

I had heard from my senior colleagues that earlier Nagina Babu had had an aristocratic temperament and had been an extremely arrogant and short-tempered person. He could not do without non-vegetarian food three times a day. Then suddenly he changed into a simple, polite and mild-mannered officer and became a strict vegetarian, which greatly surprised everyone. Gradually it became known that he had been practising meditation, and this was the cause of all the changes in him. When I heard this, I became curious to learn more about it, but he was not readily forthcoming about the spiritual practice he was doing.

Finally during a discussion sometime in August 1954 Nagina Babu revealed that he had a guru. After that, seeing my avid interest in spirituality, he often used to talk to me about the greatness of his guru. Whenever he mentioned about the guru, I noticed that his face would light up with an unusual glow. He would go into a very devotional mood as he talked



about the role of the guru in the life of a sadhaka. I wondered how a person who was known to be arrogant and unyielding, even before his superior officers, had become so enamoured of a guru. I was also quite curious about how this person who had an aristocratic lifestyle and who was addicted to non-vegetarian food, could become so simple and sociable and a strict vegetarian. I came to the conclusion that the person who had been able to effect such a radical change in someone like Nagina Babu must definitely be a great man, and I developed a kind of fascination for him. On 24<sup>th</sup> November 1954 I was sitting with Nagina Babu in Mihirpur Railway Station waiting for the train. As we waited, he talked about meditation and the need for the guidance of a guru. After listening to his words, I asked, "Nagina Babu, could I also have the good fortune to receive guidance from such a great person?"

"Certainly you can, but there is a condition. I will have to take permission from the guru before I take you to him, and before that you will have to give up eating meat."

I was very fond of non-vegetarian food. However, I thought that if just by leaving non-vegetarian food I could get such a guru, I should agree without hesitation. So I replied, "I resolve that from this very moment I will not touch meat or fish again."

"I am glad to hear that. I will place your request before the guru. You should also ask him mentally to grace you by accepting you as his disciple."

That night I prayed to the guru who I did not know to grace me by accepting me as his disciple. Within a few days I received confirmation that permission to visit the guru had been granted. Nagina Babu gave me all the details and the address of his friend, Bindeshvari saying he would give me any help I needed. On 12<sup>th</sup> December I visited Jamalpur. All along the way I was thinking how my life would be

transformed after initiation. Bindeshvari Babu gave me directions to the guru's house and also told me that the guru should be addressed as Baba. I was expecting that he would have long hair and a beard, rudraksha beads around his neck and sandalwood paste on his forehead. He would have an attractive ashram with a beautiful garden and a lot of people in attendance.

What I saw was just the opposite and initially I felt terribly let down. It was a very ordinary tiled house, without even electricity. I was quite unimpressed. I had been asked to keep some distance from the guru while he was with his disciples. I decided to wait outside as I saw him talking with some people in the front room. Baba's appearance was very different from what I had imagined too – a simple-looking person in normal gentleman's attire. After a short while I saw him emerge from the house with some other people and start to walk briskly. Although I was tall, I had to almost run to keep pace with Baba who was much shorter. He proceeded to a house in Rampur Colony. It did not have the ambience of an ashram. It was a small railway quarters, and I was not at all impressed by the appearance of the place. Five or six people were already there. A short while later I was ushered into Baba's room. I prostrated before him as instructed and sat down. Then Baba began to explain the process of meditation. Halfway through, I felt that I was being transported to a different plane of existence and was lost in a world of unimaginable bliss. When I regained my senses, I was lying on the floor in the entrance room and was sweating profusely, although it was a very cold winter's day. I removed all my upper garments to cool down. I was not aware of when or how I had been brought out of the room or how long I had been in that state. Intense ecstasy was still surging in my mind. It was a very strange experience, since I did not have the faintest inkling about such a state beyond what I had read in books. I was completely disoriented.

“Sukumar, give him a glass of warm milk,” Baba called from inside the room. After drinking the milk, I became a little more normal. The intensity of the experience slowly started to recede. About an hour later I tried to get up, but what a surprise! I was completely sapped of energy. I had been a weightlifter in my college days and was very strong. But I could not even stand up.

“What has happened to my energy?” I wondered. As I sat there, unable to rise from the floor, I tried to recall all that had happened after I went into Baba’s room. I also tried to remember when exactly I got lost in the feeling of intense bliss that overtook me while Baba was explaining the process of meditation. After thinking about it for some time, I recalled that it had happened precisely when I started to repeat the mantra according to Baba’s instruction. I had repeated it for a few minutes and an intense feeling of bliss had welled up inside me. Gradually I had become completely overwhelmed by it. It was a heavenly experience. The place, for which I had initially felt so much aversion, now appeared like heaven. I did not want to leave and for some time I lingered on in that heavenly bliss. Then, with the help of the other disciples, I got up and started to walk with faltering steps. Slowly I reached Bindeshvari Babu’s house.

Drawn by a strange and irresistible attraction to Baba, I decided to extend my stay in Jamalpur. I continued mentally reciting the mantra non-stop throughout the day because I did not want any disruption of the blissful feeling it generated in me. Even when I was in the toilet attending the call of nature the next morning, I was still repeating the mantra. It went on automatically. Then a thought occurred to me: “This is a dirty place. It is not at all suitable for such a sacred mantra.” So I stopped repeating it.

That evening I went to attend Baba’s darshan. He gave a short discourse. At the end, he said, “The mantra that each of



you has been taught should be repeated as per the system. It is good if you can repeat it constantly, with every breath, wherever you are. No place should be considered as impure. It can be repeated even in the toilet.”

Then Baba turned to me and asked, “Do you understand?” I was pleasantly surprised to see that Baba knew the thought that had flashed through my mind. I had my first realisation that the guru knew what was going on in the minds of his disciples. Such experiences in those initial days increased my regard and attraction for Baba manifold. Two days later Baba reviewed my lesson, as he said that I had gone into samadhi before he could complete the process of initiating me.

Slowly the number of people taking initiation started to increase. It did not escape the notice of Baba’s family members that those who came to meet him were seeking guidance from him. Seeing the extraordinary abilities of their brother, Himanshu and Manas asked him how he was planning to disseminate his ideas. Baba said that in the future he would start an organisation through which he would propagate these ideas. This organisation would run different service projects to benefit different sections of society. It would spread all over the world. What Baba said amazed those youths who had been born and brought up in the middle class environment of the small, nondescript town of Jamalpur.



## CHAPTER 15

# Salvation and Service

One evening in the middle of December 1954, Baba was walking in the field with Pranay, Chandranath and a few others. He surprised everyone by saying, "Now your numbers will grow rapidly, and you will have to create an organisation in order to spread your ideals far and wide." That was the first indication the disciples received from Baba that he planned to start an organisation. He conveyed this information to other disciples during subsequent evening walks. He then directed them to make preparations for the founding of the organisation.

### Drafting the Constitution

As the New Year drew closer, Baba informed Pranay and a few others that the philosophy he was propounding would be known as Ananda Marga, meaning the Path of Bliss. He declared that the official name of the organisation would be Ananda Marga Pracharaka Samgha, "the society dedicated to the propagation of Ananda Marga philosophy". Baba entrusted Pranay with the task of drafting the constitution and bylaws which would be needed for the registration of the organisation. Pranay called a meeting of a few selected disciples on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, which was a holiday. That morning Nagina unexpectedly arrived in Jamalpur together with veterinarian Dr. Vishvanath, a newly initiated friend of Nagina. They along with Dipanarayan went to meet Baba.

Baba informed them, "Today some of our people are going to write the constitution of our organisation. Go and help them and then see me afterwards."

On their way to the Rampur Colony ashram, they stopped at Bindeshvari's house for an early lunch. Smoking was a weakness Nagina could not give up even after one year of meditation. Strangely,

Baba never asked him to give it up. Nagina, however, was careful not to smoke in the presence of other disciples or in the Rampur Colony quarters, which had begun to serve as their ashram. Every time he went to the ashram or went to see Baba, he deliberately left his cigarette packet behind at Bindeshvari's house. That day, however, Vishvanath advised Nagina to take the cigarette packet with him, as they had long hours of brain-racking work ahead of them. Nagina hesitated, knowing that it would be in breach of his self-imposed code of conduct and violating the sanctity of the ashram.

Overwhelmed by the enormity of the task at hand, Vishvanath continued to persuade Nagina of the need to take the packet of cigarettes along with them and even offered to carry it for him. He argued that he did not want Nagina to go out for a smoke in the middle of the work. They joined Pranay, Sukumar, Shiva Shankar, and Shishir in the ashram and immediately started work on drafting the constitution of the new organisation. There was a table in the room on which a framed photo of Baba in varabhaya mudra was kept. They spread a blanket on the floor in front of the table and sat down on it to deliberate over the matter. Nagina was entrusted with the task of taking notes of their discussion.

After a few hours of strenuous work, Nagina was exhausted and wanted to be excused so that he could go out for a smoke. Dipanarayan suggested that he should smoke inside the room instead to avoid wasting time, while the others continued to work. Although the proposal was logical and tempting, Nagina hesitated, as he had never dared to smoke inside the ashram premises. He took it as a form of sacrilege. Due to time pressure, however, a few of the others supported Dipanarayan's suggestion. Although Pranay knew that it was not right, he hesitantly went along with the majority in order not to interrupt the flow of work. To reduce his guilt, he asked Shishir to remove Baba's photo from the table and take it to the next room. Then, feeling satisfied, he said, "This way we will not be showing disrespect to the guru."

Meanwhile, Vishvanath brought the cigarette packet that Nagina had left on the window ledge. Pranay quickly arranged for a



makeshift ashtray. Unable to resist the urge to smoke, Nagina pulled out a cigarette from the pack, lit it up and took a puff or two, but to his great surprise the cigarette went out before he could take another puff. He tried to light it again but failed. He lighted it a few more times without success. Finally, with a shrug of his shoulders, he left the cigarette in the ashtray and sat down to continue the work.

They continued to discuss the content of the constitution but somehow something seemed to have changed. They all felt that the flow of ideas had stopped. However much they tried, they couldn't proceed any further. Finally they decided to leave the rest of the work for another day. Nagina and Dipanarayan wanted to take the opportunity to visit Baba.

On their arrival at Baba's residence, they were both alarmed to see that Baba was looking furious. As Dipanarayan went forward to prostrate, Baba stepped back and roared, "Don't come near me! Get out of here!" Baba's words were as sharp and cutting as they were unexpected. They did not anticipate such a fierce reaction from Baba for no apparent reason. Numb with shock, they stood there with folded palms, not knowing what to do. They had no idea why Baba was so upset.

"Go now. Meet me at the ashram in the evening!" he commanded angrily. They retreated in silence and proceeded to Bindeshvari's house, wondering what might have sparked Baba's anger. Until then Baba had always treated all of them very affectionately. Nagina in particular was very disturbed. He had never seen Baba so angry. Unable to take it anymore, he sat alone in Bindeshvari's house and prayed, "Baba I can bear anything in the world but not your angry face. I am ready to give up anything if it will please you, including the attachment to my official post." A few months ago, when he heard that a decision to demote him had been taken by his superior authority, he got Baba to agree to stop his demotion. Baba assured him that the order of demotion would not come into effect until he was willing to accept it. Now if it would please Baba, Nagina was even ready to accept his demotion. He mentally surrendered to Baba his attachment to his official post. He spent about an hour pondering

over all that had happened that day until Dipanarayan interrupted his soul-searching reverie, saying that it was time for Baba's evening darshan. They rushed over to the Rampur Colony ashram and Baba came a short while later. He was still looking very stern. After taking his seat, he immediately directed someone to note down a dictation.

Nagina got out a pen and paper. "Punishment order number one!" thundered Baba, going straight to the point without going into the formalities of explaining why. "Nagina will not touch my feet until further notice and he will not participate in *guru puja*." An appalled Nagina tried to keep his hand steady as he wrote down the order. "Punishment order number two: Dipanarayan will not touch my feet for a period of four days. Punishment order number three: Pranay and Shishir will not touch my feet for a period of three days." Unable to control himself Nagina started to sob while the others trembled, seeing Baba's fury.

Baba then revealed the cause of his anger: "This afternoon my whole body was burning. I was suffocating with cigarette smoke and could not breathe properly. Do you think that by removing my photo I will not see what is happening here? I have not brought you all together to make an organisation of sheep and jackals. I want you to be ideal human beings so that society would be benefitted by your service." He rebuked Pranay severely for not maintaining the sanctity of the ashram. Nagina promised Baba that he would not touch another cigarette again in his life. Baba calmed down a little and got up to leave for his evening walk. None of the disciples present dared to accompany Baba that evening, and he left alone.

A week later Nagina was officially informed that he had been demoted from his position as superintendent. The order had been passed on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December. It did not escape Nagina's attention that, just as Baba had assured him, the actual order for his demotion was issued only after he had become mentally ready to accept it. The very next working day after he had mentally surrendered his attachment for his official post to Baba, the order for his demotion was issued from the headquarters in Delhi, although the actual decision had been taken a few months earlier. Despite accepting the

situation, Nagina was very upset by the demotion. When he was no longer able to control his feelings, he wanted to surrender his worries at Baba's feet, but because of the ban imposed on him, he was hesitant to touch Baba's feet even mentally without taking prior permission. So he wrote a letter to Baba asking if he was permitted to mentally touch his feet. Baba wrote back granting him the permission to do so. In a second letter to Nagina, Baba wrote that he should never allow the sanctity of the ashram to be violated again under any circumstances. A week later Dipanarayan brought him a third letter from Baba lifting the ban and advising him how to get his demotion overturned. Nagina followed Baba's suggestions and was eventually restored to his post as superintendent.

### **Beginning of a Spiritual Awakening**

In the meanwhile, on Baba's instruction, Pranay and Shiva Shankar informed all the initiates that a gathering would be held at the railway quarters on the evening of the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1955. At the entrance, a cardboard sign was hanging bearing an instruction, "Smoking not permitted in the ashram premises". Those who had heard about the incident of 25<sup>th</sup> December did not fail to notice the significance of this. Next to it was a second sign with a Sanskrit couplet: *Shivoruste gurustrata, Guraurustena kaschana*. Many wondered about this and asked Pranay what it meant. Pranay explained, "It means that if God is displeased with a sadhaka, he can seek the shelter of the Sadguru (the manifestation of Taraka Brahma) to protect himself from the wrath of God. But if the Sadguru is angry with a disciple for any reason, even God cannot protect him. So one should always be alert to make sure one is following the instructions of the Sadguru. Baba guaranteed the other day that those who follow the directions of the Sadguru are under his complete protection at all times, and no harm whatsoever will come to them from any source, as there is no power in the universe greater than that of the Sadguru. We should always remember that, truly speaking, the Sadguru and God are one and the same. In the Sadguru we have an omniscient and omnipotent God as well as a Supreme Guide to help us at every step of our lives." Hearing Pranay's explanation, the listeners had a new understanding about the importance of the Sadguru in one's spiritual life.



Around sixty odd disciples had gathered in the ashram, braving the chilly evening of the New Year's Day. Since the room could not accommodate so many people, an enclosure was erected in the open part of the compound to protect everyone from the cold. For the first time ever some of the disciples brought their wives along who had been initiated by Baba. Some of them had come for the first time, as they had heard about the amazing demonstrations Baba had performed during the previous three gatherings in November. Just after dusk Baba arrived, accompanied by a couple of disciples. He took his seat on a cot in the verandah and greeted everyone first in Bengali and then in Hindi. "I hope you are all in the best of spirits. I hope you are feeling blissful on this beautiful New Year evening."

Everyone felt a perceptible change in the ambiance as Baba took his seat and slowly gazed from left to right. A sublime atmosphere permeated the entire enclosure and a feeling of blissful tranquility descended upon everyone. Soon everyone felt that the severity of the cold had considerably abated. Baba spoke mainly in Hindi, occasionally interspersing his talk with Bengali, presumably for the benefit of some of the women who were not well versed in Hindi.

"We have all gathered here with a great mission, a lofty goal, and that is to bring about a new spiritual awakening in society based on a spiritual ideology. This awakening will usher in a new chapter in human history. This spiritual ideology I have named 'Ananda Marga'. 'Ananda' means infinite bliss and 'Marga' means the path. So the objective of this ideology is to impart a spiritual touch to every aspect of human life. In order to spread the ideology we have decided to create an organisation and call it Ananda Marga Pracharaka Samgha. Do you all approve of this name?"

"Yes Baba!" Everyone voiced their approval in unison.

Baba continued, "Everyone who is a follower of Ananda Marga has two important missions in life. That is *Atma Mokshartham* and *Jagat Hitayacha*. Every one of you should sincerely carry out your spiritual practices and strive to attain the liberation of your mind and become one with the Supreme Entity. The other aspect of life is that everybody has a responsibility to work for the welfare of society.

Here by society I do not mean only the society of human beings. As human beings are the most developed living beings, we all have a responsibility to work for the welfare of all beings, including the entire flora and fauna of the universe. Do you all understand?"

"Yes Baba."

"Very good. All right, Pranay will give you further details. He has been given the responsibility of serving as the General Secretary of the organisation. I hope you will all extend your full cooperation to him in running the organisation and assisting in its growth."

"Yes Baba, we will," everyone responded enthusiastically.

Baba then began his discourse by explaining the gradual evolution of society, how it passes through different phases of the social cycle, and how in each phase a particular social class such as the warrior, intellectual, or business class dominates and exploits the others. He explained that if a particular class dominates society, it would certainly exploit the others. Before concluding the discourse he gave a short summary of the primary purpose of the new organisation:

"Ananda Marga envisions a society without divisions or discrimination, where everyone will enjoy equal rights and opportunities. For humanity to progress, a harmonious social system is most essential. Due to financial difficulties, how many meritorious students are forced to abandon their education and how many artists are compelled to suppress their talent before it is expressed? This happens due to defects in the social order. Such a situation cannot be allowed to continue any longer. The system of division and discrimination is like the tightly woven nest of the weaver bird; it must be broken into pieces forever. Only then will human beings be able to lead the entire human race along the path towards spiritual welfare. Until that happens, perhaps only a handful of people will be able to attain the pinnacle of spiritual glory, but it will be extremely difficult for all humanity to attain the supreme stance.

"In a harmonious social order no one will run after fame or wealth like a mad dog. A congenial physical environment will help them to achieve mental balance, and, as a result, people's psychic poverty will gradually decrease.

“O human beings, try to understand your human needs and build an appropriate social system. Do not try to do anything for petty personal or group interests, because nothing done with a narrow outlook bereft of cosmic ideation will last. The cruel hand of time will obliterate all your achievements and plunge them into an oblivion you cannot fathom. It is not necessary to study books to know how to move, what to build, what to break, what to preserve. You should look upon every living being of this universe with sincere feelings of love and compassion. Only then will you realise that whatever you do, build or preserve is already contained within and vibrated by the flow of the blissful Macrocosmic Entity. Through action mixed with devotion and knowledge you will discover the life of your life, the supreme treasure of your inner being, that Supreme Entity, which you have unknowingly kept hidden in the golden temple of your heart.”

The disciples noted the significance of the fact that in this very first official function of the soon-to-be-founded organisation, Baba departed from his earlier practice of speaking on a purely spiritual subject. Instead he began by discussing the dominance of various classes in different phases of the social cycle and how this had led to the exploitation of the rest of society, as well as how to put a stop to endless social injustice. He stressed that the elimination of inequality is a prerequisite for leading the entire human race along the path of spiritual welfare. Even though Ananda Marga was still not officially formed, the disciples understood that Baba's ideas were not confined to spiritual matters alone, but also included radical and progressive thinking about the structure of society, economics, and other issues.

After the function was over, food was served to everyone. First, a plate of food was offered to Baba. Baba blessed it by touching it and asked for it to be shared by everyone. He made an announcement that on the evening of Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> there would be a gathering of all the sadhakas, and an official declaration of the formation of Ananda Marga would be made. He asked everyone to inform the other disciples who were not present. Then he got up and left for his usual Field Walk accompanied by Chandranath, Asthana, and a couple of others. Before leaving the premises he joked, “In one matter



none of you should follow my example, and that is, like me, you should not leave without taking your food.”

Though the disciples were only a few in number, they had become highly inspired by the positive effects of meditation in their own lives and overwhelmed by the extraordinary powers of their guru. So when Baba announced the decision to establish an organisation to spread his spiritual ideals, it sparked tremendous excitement in them. They felt that through the decision to create an organisation to spread Ananda Marga's ideals, Baba had responded to their own internal urge. It was remarkable how in a matter of only a few days they had identified themselves so intimately with Baba's teachings and the way of life he prescribed. This created a close bond amongst the disciples and soon they started to identify themselves as Margis.

### **Inauguration of Ananda Marga**

As announced by Baba, a second organisational function was held on January 9<sup>th</sup>. The gathering had swelled to over eighty, so the enclosure that had been erected for the previous gathering had to be extended to accommodate everyone. A simple cot was placed on the veranda with a cover spread over it. There was no decoration of any kind. No flowers, not even a garland, were offered to Baba that day. A thin tarpaulin was spread over the grass for everyone to sit. Baba spoke in immaculate classical Hindi, and everyone was fascinated not only by the topic but also by the beauty of his language.

One of the recurring themes of Indian philosophy is the relationship between Purusha (Pure Consciousness) and Prakrti (the Creative Principle). In this first discourse about Ananda Marga philosophy, Baba explored the nature of Prakrti and the three principles that she is composed of – the sentient, mutative, and static. The characteristics of the sentient principle are knowledge of one's existence and imparting happiness and a sense of relief. The mutative principle is characterised by endless action designed to keep the “I” or “self” busy, and the characteristic of the static principle is to experience and enjoy the result of the action.” In a flower, for

example, the bud blossoms due to the action of the mutative principle. When the flower is in full bloom, this is the state when the sentient principle is active, and when it starts to wither, it is due to the action of the static principle.

In Indian philosophy Prakrti is traditionally considered to be synonymous with illusion or *maya*. This type of thinking has inevitably led to the development of a pessimistic outlook among the people of India. Baba explained that Tantra, on the other hand, regards Purusa and Prakrti as one entity, like milk and its attribute of whiteness.

Depending on which of the three principles predominates in a person's mind, it will have a specific colour and correspondingly a different psychology. These mental colours have been wrongly described as either physical colours, as in the case of racism, or as representing different castes. Baba stressed that the goal of every sadhaka was the absolute state of Consciousness beyond the influence of these principles. Therefore, the followers of Ananda Marga should not differentiate people according to caste or any other narrow consideration.

In his discourse Baba used the word '*devata*', meaning gods and goddesses in its feminine form. Dipanarayan, who was a postgraduate in Hindi literature, felt uneasy that while speaking such beautiful Hindi, Baba had committed the simple grammatical mistake of using the word *devata* in a feminine form, as in Hindi *devata* was considered a masculine term. Hardly had the thought crossed his mind when Baba digressed from his subject of discourse and looking at Dipanarayan, said, "In Vedic Sanskrit, '*devata*' is feminine in gender." He then returned to his discourse. Dipanarayan was taken aback by such a fast response to his thought. He was surprised that even while discussing such a profound topic, Baba was fully aware of what everyone was thinking.

In the course of his discourse, Baba explained the significance of *omkara*. Clearing up the general misconception that *omkara* was a mantra to be chanted during meditation Baba explained that it was the primordial sound of creation and not a mantra. In the process of

liberating oneself from the principles of the Creative Force, every sadhaka experiences this cosmic sound, the omkara. Omkara encompasses the sentient, mutative, and static realms of creation as well as the realm of the pure Consciousness beyond.

As Baba elucidated this concept, a few people in the audience heard the cosmic sound, as if it had wafted in from infinite space. They wondered what it was, as they had never heard it before. Baba then recited some Sanskrit verses describing the glory of omkara and explained its meaning:

“The supreme spiritual state, which all the scriptures have described, and for which sadhakas have undergone much hardship and practised cosmic ideation for lives together, can be described in by the single word ‘Om’. This is the state of the Supreme Entity. Knowing this Supreme Shelter, one becomes firmly established in the Supreme Consciousness.”

Baba concluded by exhorting the disciples to make sincere efforts to elevate themselves towards divinity through their sadhana and devotion, saying that through sadhana and devotion they would be able to merge in the endless stream of divine effulgence. Baba’s concluding words of his discourse touched the heart of the new initiates:

“From distant ages you have been moving towards the Supreme Beatitude. You have suffered untold privations, and today you have the greatest opportunity to become worthy human beings.”

After concluding his discourse Baba paused for a while and then continued, “Some of you who have reached a certain level in your sadhana will now hear the Om sound. Soon the others too will hear this cosmic sound according to the stage of sadhana they have attained. The primordial sound omkara resonates through various chakras of the body as per the state of your sadhana and appears as different sounds. The initial sound is like that of the cricket. Slowly, as the mind rises through various chakras, it changes and becomes the sound of ankle bells, then the flute, the sound of waves of the ocean and then the gong. In the final stage of sadhana one hears the pure omkara alone.”



In a short while everyone present heard one of these sounds in accordance with the stage of sadhana they had attained. As they became deeply absorbed in it, some went into a spiritual trance, uttering cries of "hum!" and "Baba!" Several minutes elapsed while they were immersed in the blissful, divine trance. Baba then ended their meditation by intoning a Sanskrit mantra. When they opened their eyes, Baba said, "These are the experiences that one can have as the kundalini rises through the various chakras. Later I will explain this topic in greater detail."

Baba then asked Shiva Shankar Banerjee to come forward and instructed him to sit erect and meditate. He commanded Shiva Shankar's kundalini to rise and pierce the chakras one by one. Initially Shiva Shankar's body writhed like a snake. As his kundalini started to rise, his body slowly calmed down. As it reached the ajina chakra between the eyebrows, he fell backwards in a blissful trance and became motionless, while Baba explained the various stages that one could experience as the kundalini rises through the chakras. Finally, as Baba ordered the kundalini to return to its normal position in the muladhara chakra, he gradually regained his normal consciousness.

When the demonstration was over, Pranay led all the disciples in performing guru puja for the first time. Earlier, Pranay saw that some of the initiates had brought fruit and flowers to offer to the guru, as was the tradition in Hindu society. He explained to them that Baba did not approve of physical offerings. He then explained how mental offerings were to be made to the guru during guru puja. He instructed them to offer mental flowers with a different colour after each repetition of the mantra to symbolise their attachments and desires. At the end of guru puja, they should offer a mental lotus of pure white colour symbolizing a mind free from all attachments, and ask the guru to free them from the burden of those desires and attractions that had been hindering their spiritual progress.

After guru puja everyone went to Baba one by one and received his blessing. As he stood in line waiting for Baba's blessing, Dipanarayan felt a powerful surge of devotion well up inside him and tears started to trickle down his face. When his turn came, Baba

asked, "Dipanmarayan, what spiritual experience do you want? Do you want *savikalpa samadhi*. *nirvikalpa samadhi* or any of the *mahabhava samadhis*? Say, what you want. I will give it to you." Dipanmarayan's eyes filled with tears of devotion but he remained mute, unable to utter a single word. Later Dipanmarayan explained how in that extremely blissful state, the only desire he had was to surrender to Baba. He did not feel like asking anything from him, not even *nirvikalpa samadhi*, which is the highest spiritual state.

A blissful tranquillity pervaded the entire place. For the newcomers it was the first such experience in their lives. A collective meal had been prepared. They offered food to Baba first. As he had done before, he touched it and blessed it and then asked everyone to share it as *prasad*. All the disciples, from high ranking officers to very ordinary people, sat in the same row and enjoyed the delicious food together. Asthana, Chandranath, and several other officers sat together with many lower ranking employees of their departments. This programme marked the beginning of a new society based on the concept of one universal family.

Before he left the place, Baba called Dipanmarayan aside and told him that his wife was not well, and asked him to go to his village without delay. When Dipanmarayan reached his home in Arraha, North Bihar the next evening, he found that his wife, Jivaccha Devi, had suffered a miscarriage and was in a very delicate condition. His arrival was thus timely.

Although Shiva Shankar had yet to fully recover from the demonstration of *samadhi* done on him earlier, he nevertheless accompanied Baba for his customary evening Field Walk together with some other devotees. Before reaching the Tiger's Grave Baba paused and recalled an incident from their high school days. "Shiva Shankar, do you remember the incident with the cow when we were students in high school? When I touched it, the cow began to jump. At first you thought that it was in pain. I told you then that I would explain what happened at the proper time. That day I raised the *kundalini* of the cow slightly, and as a result the cow experienced intense bliss and expressed it by jumping and running around. Raising

the kundalini of an animal is not easy because an animal body is not designed to enjoy bliss.”

“Baba, why was the cow following you that day?”

In reply Baba quoted a mystical song and then explained its meaning, “It is not possible for human beings to know all the secrets of God, but there is a cause for everything. Some things always remain beyond the comprehension of the human mind.” He left the rest of that day’s events a mystery<sup>1</sup>.

Following the November gatherings, a group of disciples started to accompany Baba on his evening walks to the Tiger’s Grave. During that occasion, Baba would then share different aspects of his philosophy with those who accompanied him. Baba later expanded on these ideas, which became part of his philosophical legacy. The fundamental concept around which all of Baba’s teachings revolved was that the ultimate goal of human life is the attainment of infinite bliss, and that the Supreme Entity is the source of this bliss for which every human being is searching directly or indirectly. So the attainment of infinite bliss is the dharma or innate characteristic of all human beings.

At the same time, he stressed that while moving towards this subjective goal, one also needs to maintain proper adjustment with the objective world. The disciples who regularly listened to Baba realised that his teachings went far beyond those of the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavat Gita, Tantras, and other Indian scriptures.

The way Baba explained these conventional philosophical and scriptural treatises was also very different from the conventional style of the Indian preachers. The Margis found Baba’s ideas not only rational, but also refreshingly different from orthodox Hindu beliefs. They eventually came to realise that true spirituality had no connection with ritualistic worship. They realised that true

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<sup>1</sup> This incident of Baba’s high school days was the first known instance of Baba raising the kundalini of another living being. Strangely, this mystical demonstration was done on a cow. Later there were hundreds of instances where Baba raised the kundalini of his disciples at will.



spirituality, which had taken root in India several millennia before, had no connection with the blind worship of imaginary gods and goddesses that was based on a psychology of fear or the expectation of some divine favour, or with the confusing array of elaborate rituals. It was neither concerned with the allurements of heaven and the fear of hell nor with any form of Nature worship.

Through regular discussions with his companions during the evening walks, Baba gradually formed the foundational ideas of the Marga's philosophy and defined its guiding precepts. What attracted the Margis to Baba's interpretation of Indian philosophy was the way it transformed the obscurantist ideas of ancient India into living spiritual practices based on rationality, compassion and universalism.

With the advent of Ananda Marga philosophy, the Margis realised that their ancient Indian heritage was brimming with deep philosophical underpinnings that were not shrouded in a mesh of blind orthodoxy and dogmatic beliefs, but were in fact rational and scientific in outlook. They came to realise that Baba's teachings were built on a set of universal principles and practices that transcended the narrow walls of national identity, culture, and religion. Baba stressed that the ideas he was articulating formed the philosophical base essential for every human being. Gradually, a new understanding of spirituality dawned in their minds.

Some of Baba's discussions at the Tiger's Grave were published in booklets entitled "*Shunun aur Shunan*" (Listen and Tell Others), published in Bengali, and "*Yug ki Pukar*" (Call of the New Age), published in Hindi. Soon after, two new bi-monthly magazines were published, one in Hindi called "*Ananda Dut*" (Messenger of Bliss) and another in Bengali called "*Pragati*" (The Progress). These booklets and magazines propagated the ideals of the Marga and its opposition to all kinds of religious exploitation, superstition, and dogma. They expressed support for widow remarriage and staunchly opposed child-marriage and the dowry system, which they denounced as social evils. The booklets also decried the commonly held belief of possession by ghosts, spirits, and gods and goddesses as mere superstition; they explained such phenomena as conditions that occur

due to the play of the different layers of the mind. Through these booklets the basic tenets of the Marga were first made public. These magazines unequivocally declared, "Ananda Marga is opposed to all kinds of man-made divisions in society based on caste, creed, or colour. All living beings are the children of one Supreme Father."

As the days passed, the Margis gradually realised that they had a guru who could do everything, from resolving the most mundane of matters to gracing them with the highest spiritual experiences. The realisation that they were under the guidance and protection of an all-powerful guru gave them a new-found optimism and confidence.



## CHAPTER 16

### A Life Extended

Immediately after the founding of Ananda Marga, one of the things that Baba focused on was providing philosophical literature and a social code describing the lifestyle that the Margis were expected to follow. Sitting on the Tiger's Grave in the evenings, he dictated a series of philosophical discourses, which Shiva Shankar Banerjee noted down in detail. The subjects dealt with the nature of the human being, the cosmic cycle of creation, Baba's concept of the world as a thought projection of the Supreme Consciousness and many other deep philosophical concepts. Upon reaching home, Shiva Shankar made a fair copy, adding from memory whatever he had failed to record. He then made a second fair copy and read it to Baba, who made any changes he felt necessary. These notes were compiled into the first book of the new organisation entitled *Ananda Marga Elementary Philosophy*. Thus the first literature of the Marga came into being.

The book started by posing a fundamental question 'What is the dharma of a human being?' Baba explained that the word 'dharma' literally means 'characteristic or nature or property of an object.' He further elucidated, "The nature of fire is to burn or produce heat. To burn is the characteristic or property of fire and so it can be said to be the dharma of fire. Similarly, what is the dharma or nature of human beings?" Baba dealt with this basic philosophical question in the opening chapter.

"Human beings are the highest-evolved life forms. They possess clearly reflected consciousness, and this makes them superior to animals. With the help of their consciousness they can distinguish between good and bad and when in trouble they can find a way out. No one likes to live in misery and suffering, and human beings have the capacity to find ways of solving their problems. People wish to live a happy life, free of sorrow and suffering. Everyone is searching



for happiness; in fact, it is fundamental to human nature to seek happiness. Now let us see what people do to achieve it and whether it is achieved by those means.

“People are initially attracted by physical enjoyment. They amass wealth and try to achieve power and position to satisfy their desire for happiness. A person who has a hundred rupees is not satisfied with it and will strive to get a thousand rupees. But even the possession of thousands of rupees does not bring lasting satisfaction. One then wants a million, and so it continues. Then it is seen that a person who has influence in a district wants to extend that influence to cover a province. Provincial leaders want to become national leaders and when they have achieved that, a desire for world leadership arises in their minds. The mere acquisition of wealth, power and position does not satisfy a person. The acquisition of something limited only creates the desire for more, and the quest for happiness finds no end. The hunger to possess is unending. It is limitless and infinite.

“The Cosmic Entity alone is infinite and eternal. It alone is limitless. And the eternal longing of human beings for happiness can only be satiated by the realisation of the Infinite. The ephemeral nature of worldly possessions, power and position only leads one to the conclusion that none of the things of the finite world can set at rest the everlasting urge for happiness. Their acquisition merely gives rise to further longing. Only the realisation of the Infinite can satisfy the eternal longing. The Infinite can be only one, and that is the Cosmic Entity. Hence it is only the Cosmic Entity that can provide everlasting happiness. The quest for this is the characteristic of every human being. In reality, behind every human urge is hidden the desire, the longing to attain the Cosmic Entity. This is the very nature of every living being. This alone is the dharma of every human being.”

In other chapters, Baba went on to explain in detail that creation is the thought projection of the Supreme Entity and that there is a purpose behind it, including the advent of human beings on this planet. Mind has evolved from matter and slowly developed by associating with unicellular and multi-cellular organisms over the course of hundreds of millions of years. In later chapters Baba

analysed the different aspects of the human mind and their functions. He also discussed the science of karma, according to which one has to undergo the consequences of one's actions, and the futility of praying to God to fulfil one's desires. He also stated that the culminating point on the path of evolution is when the mind merges with the Supreme Consciousness from where it originated. In order to attain this goal, one must perform sadhana under the guidance of a qualified guru. Baba dispelled the false notions that deter people from taking up spiritual practice. He said that some people avoid learning meditation because they think that in the prime of their life they should concentrate on earning money, and then later in their old age they could devote their time to God. Baba explained that in old age the mind is weak and set in its ways, and hence it is difficult to take up a spiritual lifestyle. At that time too the mind tends to focus on memories of the past and is preoccupied with physical ailments, and hence lacks the vitality and freshness of youth, which are essential for spiritual progress.

### **Caryacarya**

Even as the dictation of *Ananda Marga Elementary Philosophy* was going on every evening at the Tiger's Grave, Baba started to dictate the social code for Ananda Margis. From the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1955, only two weeks after the inauguration of Ananda Marga, he started work on the formulation of a social code during the office lunch hour. It was named Caryacarya and contained guidelines governing the personal and social life of the Margis. It included a compendium of social observances ranging from the naming ceremony of a baby to funeral rites, to planting a tree, to laying the foundation of a building and entering a new house. It was initially written in a handmade book stitched together from waste paper obtained from the railway office<sup>1</sup>.

This social code contained a complete set of guidelines describing what the Margis needed to do to fulfil their social responsibilities, and was as revolutionary and progressive as his

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<sup>1</sup> This original manuscript is at present preserved in the Baba Museum in Ananda Marga Headquarters, Kolkata.

thoughts were in other areas of life. First and foremost, it eliminated elaborate and meaningless rituals and the role of the priest class in the conduct of religious ceremonies, which had in many societies led to economic and other kinds of exploitation. All the ceremonies and social functions were very simple compared to the ones prescribed by tradition, thus eliminating the back-breaking financial burden many of these rituals imposed on people. In fact, they became so inexpensive that even the financially weaker sections of society could afford them. Baba strictly prohibited anyone from taking loans to pay for a social ceremony.

It was also Baba's instruction that in the absence of an acharya (person trained by Baba to teach meditation), even the Margis were authorised to solemnize any social ceremony. He strictly forbade those officiating at ceremonies from taking any kind of remuneration, and designed them in a way that would bring people closer together. Rather than restricting attendance to Ananda Margis alone, it was his instruction to invite the entire village or local community to such social events. In every Ananda Marga ceremony he infused the spirit of collective responsibility for the well-being of all the members of society.

Besides these distinguishing features of Ananda Marga ceremonies, another pivotal difference is that Baba has reminded the participants about their need to demonstrate responsibility towards the environment, all living beings and society at large. For example, on the occasion of a child's naming ceremony or during a marriage ceremony, all those present were asked to promise to take joint responsibility for the welfare of the child or the newly-married couple. In the event of the death of a family member, Baba entrusted society with full responsibility for the cremation, so that the grieving family would not face any additional financial burden. He also assigned the responsibility for the provision of social support for the bereaved family to the local community. The same spirit is evident in each ceremony described in *Caryacarya*.

Another special feature of the Ananda Marga ceremonies is that every participant feels a sense of involvement in them, as they are very simple and there are no mystifying and elaborate rituals, Baba



made the use of the local language compulsory so that everyone can understand the full significance of every aspect of the ceremony. In Ananda Marga, all the prescribed functions and observances are rooted in spiritual ideation, and always begin with collective meditation.

Every aspect of the social code was infused with a deeply humanitarian spirit. It granted equal rights and dignity to women and conferred on them an equal role in conducting ceremonies, which hitherto had been the sole domain of men.

In another path-breaking departure from tradition, Baba required society to provide women with complete protection from all kinds of exploitation. He exhorted his male disciples, "Set an example of manliness by marrying a shelter-less woman. Do not under any circumstances allow her to lead a disrespectable life."

According to *Caryacarya*, every human being has a responsibility for the well-being of all the members of society and for other living beings as well. It is thus the duty of an ideal householder to arrange for the care of the hungry, the needy and the disadvantaged, as well as to provide food for animals and birds.

Baba based his social code on the principle that the universe is the common patrimony of everyone. He clearly stated, "You should always remember that you are members of a joint family, so you should utilize all the property of the universe collectively. Remember, you have direct or indirect responsibility for every child and every human being in society, so do not try to avoid contact with others. Those who do not utilize the wealth of the universe properly and misuse it solely for their own benefit deliberately transgress the will of the Cosmic Father by depriving His other children, who are their own brothers and sisters, of their legitimate share. In fact, such people suffer from a psychic ailment. You should try to bring all social exploiters to the path of honesty through mental and spiritual education. If necessary, force them to follow a virtuous path by creating circumstantial pressure, and then give them spiritual guidance to permanently eradicate their psychic disease from their

minds once and for all. Never forget that this sort of rectification is impossible unless you have genuine love for humanity.”

The idea that the universe is the common patrimony of everyone became the cornerstone of the economic philosophy that Baba later propounded.

Once during a Field Walk he told Pranay, “The purpose of social ceremonies is to create a strong social structure, refine every aspect of community life and create harmony between people and the natural world around them. Present-day social codes have failed to meet this objective. Ceremonies and observances have been turned into meaningless rituals, sometimes involving the inhuman slaughter of innocent living beings in the name of propitiating imaginary deities. This has only added to the environmental disruption. These rituals have also placed a huge financial burden on the head of the family. A time is sure to come when people’s rationality will develop, and then they will discard such meaningless rituals and adopt the systems prescribed in *Caryacarya*.”

The overriding spirit of *Caryacarya* was summed up by Baba in the preface. “For the physical, mental and spiritual progress of humankind the first requirement is a healthy social order. Bearing in mind the suffering of the common people and considering their innate tendencies, Ananda Marga has set itself the task of creating a new social order. Whatever is true and natural has been encouraged; at the same time, some means of social rectification have been suggested. No support has been extended to the ulcers that fester in the body of society, where social ills and mental diseases lie concealed under the cover of false civility. It is my firm conviction that all educated and discerning people on earth, especially the young generation, will unhesitatingly support it. Indeed, they are anxiously waiting for something like this.”

When Baba first gave his social code, the number of Margis was very small, and they had all been following the Hindu way of life. So several Margis asked Baba why he had given such a detailed social code when they were only a few hundred in number. Baba answered, “I foresee a time when our *Ananda Marga Caryacarya* will serve as

the new social code for common people. In the future there will be a big psychic change that will make the people reject the dogmatic beliefs and exploitative rituals that have been in vogue for centuries in different societies around the world. The purpose of a social code should be to unite and strengthen the social structure and to enable everyone to develop physically and mentally, as well as to help them to move towards the supreme spiritual goal. Today's social codes have weakened society by dividing it into many castes and classes. The priests and clerics fleece money from the gullible public in the name of meaningless rituals to propitiate imaginary gods and goddesses, and by exploiting their fear of the unknown, especially by instilling in their minds the fear of hell and the allurements of heaven. As a result of all this, people have lost sight of the supreme goal of life and run after ephemeral objects. All this will surely change one day when people understand what the true purpose of life is. Then they will embrace the spirit of living together. Whatever I am doing now is for the benefit of the society of that time."

Baba paid special attention to creating a collective spirit through social and spiritual events. The most important way that he did this was through the introduction of a weekly collective meditation, which he made compulsory for every Ananda Margi. This weekly meditation was named *dharmachakra* (the wheel of dharma). He prescribed a Sanskrit verse from the end of the Rigveda to be sung in chorus before the collective meditation:

*Samgacchadhvam samvadadhvam samvomanamsi janatam;  
Devabhagam yathapurve samjanana upasate.  
Samaniiva akutih samana hridayanivah;  
Samanamastu vo mano yathavahsu sahasati.*

["Let us move together, let us radiate the same thought-wave,  
Let us come to know our minds together, let us share our wealth  
without differentiation like the sages of the past,  
So that all may enjoy the universe. Let our aspirations be united,  
Let our hearts be inseparable, let our minds be as one mind,  
So that we may live in harmony and become one with the  
Supreme."]



This verse became the quintessence of the philosophy of Ananda Marga that Baba was slowly unfolding before the eyes of his disciples.

From the very outset Baba strongly opposed all kinds of religious and social dogmas, particularly those that created artificial divisions in society, harmed social integration, or suppressed certain classes of people. Accordingly he rejected the caste system that had been in vogue in Indian society since ancient times. He made it mandatory for those seeking initiation into Ananda Marga meditation to discard caste insignia like the 'sacred' thread and the tuft of hair on the back of the head, which denoted that they belonged to a higher caste. He also opposed the elaborate rituals imposed by the Hindu clergy, as they were exploitative. While he rejected these religious ceremonies, he did not make their rejection a precondition for initiation. Baba's firm policy was never to hurt the religious sentiments of any community. Instead, he provided rational explanations to expose the fallacy of such dogmatic and exploitative practices in the hope that the Margis would reject them once they were more established in their spiritual practice and became acquainted with a rational spiritual philosophy. One of the principal maxims of Baba's social thinking was "Human society is one and indivisible".

Eventually the Margis began to see the ugly underside of these dogmatic practices as they deepened their spiritual practice, and rejected them of their own accord. This did not go unnoticed in the local community and invited a hostile reaction from diverse orthodox groups who turned against the Marga. Despite the hostility mounted by different groups of orthodox Hindus, Baba remained unrelenting in his stand against all forms of dogma. His resounding battle cry was "Dogma no more, no more."

Baba exhorted his disciples to always think logically and often quoted a verse from the *Yogavasishta*<sup>2</sup> which meant, "If a young boy

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<sup>2</sup> A philosophical composition of the 6<sup>th</sup> century explaining the subtle spirituality of Tantrasadhana, composed by the great sage Vashistha.

says something logical, you should accept it, and even if Brahma, the Supreme Creator, says something illogical, you should reject it.”

In the beginning, nobody had an inkling of the depth of Baba's thought in so many fields. Even in his later years, every time he spoke on any new topic, it came as a surprise to everyone. Another remarkable fact about Baba's style of conveying his thoughts was that it was mostly through discourses, which he gave during Ananda Marga congregations or by way of dictation to a group of disciples. He never penned a single line. As Baba's thoughts on various subjects were new and beyond the grasp of even the educated Margis, he would hold a series of classes and additional discourses to further elucidate the topics about which he had spoken. One thing was clear to the Margis: the source of his astounding knowledge was certainly not mundane; it seemed to flow spontaneously from an unknown, cosmic source. Baba never had to pause to think or later make any correction after he had already dictated something.

Evening walks provided another occasion for Baba to gradually expound his philosophical thoughts to the disciples accompanying him. Sitting on the Tiger's Grave, Baba would regularly discuss some aspect of philosophy. These discussions later formed the basis of his social and spiritual philosophy.

Propagating the new philosophy was the next task to which Baba turned his attention. He slowly started to prepare the minds of his disciples to accept greater responsibility for the spread of the fledgling mission. He said that soon many people would join the Marga and so he would have to train people to teach meditation as his representatives. They would be known as *acharyas*. Their service to society as acharyas would be voluntary and they would receive no remuneration for this service. By the end of January, Baba had trained Pranay as the first acharya. In February Baba trained five more acharyas - Chandranath Kunwar, Shiva Shankar Banerjee, Sukumar Bose, Shishir Dutta and Chandranath's wife, Rampari Devi. Soon more acharyas were trained and were assigned to different areas to spread the mission. As the Marga began to expand rapidly, Baba

instructed everyone not to reveal the identity of the guru to the public because he did not want to be disturbed by people seeking favours coming to him with worldly requests. He was to be known publicly only as the president of Ananda Marga.

Occasionally, during larger spiritual gatherings, after Baba addressed the disciples, he would bless them using a special spiritual gesture called *varabhaya mudra*. Through this mudra Baba generated tremendous spiritual energy, arousing the kundalini of many of the disciples present. Many could be seen crying uncontrollably and rolling on the ground or exhibiting other occult symptoms, as they experienced different forms of spiritual bliss. This larger spiritual gathering was called Dharma Maha Chakra, which was abbreviated to DMC. Baba suggested holding a DMC every month on the Sunday closest to the full moon and it was decided to hold the first such DMC on the occasion of full moon in Bhagalpur on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February.

### **Bindeshvari's Second Life**

On the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> of February, Baba arrived with Pranay at Chandranath's sprawling official residence in Bhagalpur. Immediately upon his arrival, Baba asked Chandranath to call all those in the house who had yet to be initiated. His wife, Rampari Devi, had already been initiated some years earlier. Chandranath lined up his three children, Amarnath, Ramananda and Gita, as well as Nagendra Prasad, his nephew, for initiation. Chandranath's 84-year-old aunt, Mangala Devi, and his household assistant, Makhan, were also initiated. Makhan went into a spiritual trance immediately after his initiation to the great surprise of the Margis present, as he was a humble and unassuming person from a very humble background. Under normal circumstances, the attainment of spiritual trance or samadhi may take several decades or even lifetimes of self-purification through rigorous sadhana. It is very difficult to attain and is usually the outcome of long sadhana.

After breakfast Baba went for a walk with Asthana, Harisadhan, Shiva Shankar and a few others. As they walked, Baba talked about Chandranath. "He is an extraordinarily principled person and a strong



moralist. He has inherited all the qualities that you now see in him from his previous life. In that life he belonged to an aristocratic family from Bengal. His name at that time was Mahendra Narayan Roy. Although he was the zamindar of the area, he was not afflicted by the vices that you would normally find among landlords. He was very pious and kind-hearted to everyone and was therefore widely respected. He had a guru who taught him sadhana. Due to the guidance of the guru, he became a staunch moralist and a good sadhaka. In this life too he has inherited all these qualities.”

“Baba, which place in Bengal did he belong to in his past life?” asked Harisadhan inquisitively.

“If I reveal that information, someone may try to contact his former family, and that would do no good to either Chandranath in his present life or to his relatives from his past life. Nature puts an end to the memories of each life for a purpose. It is not possible to maintain two personalities in one body; the personality of the previous life and that of this life cannot coexist in the same body. In early childhood the memories of the past life remain in the mind, but as the child grows and develops a new personality, Nature erases those memories. Only in rare cases do past life memories linger on, and the child is able to recollect the events of the previous life. But every effort should be made to help the child forget those events before he reaches the age of twelve, when the new personality starts to fully develop.”

Baba also revealed that Makhan had been a great sadhaka in his previous life. Baba requested those present not to reveal this information to the others. He explained that Chandranath would not be able to take household work from him if he knew about Makhan’s spiritual past.

Other than Chandranath’s family, about thirty others were present in the DMC. Nagina came, bringing his cousin, Bindeshvari, along. At first, Bindeshvari did not want to come but yielded when Nagina insisted on it. In the DMC discourse entitled “Karma and Karmaphala” (Actions and their Reactions) Baba discussed a

complex philosophical problem that had bothered oriental philosophers for millennia: liberation from the chain of birth, death and rebirth is not possible unless one has exhausted all the reactions one has accumulated from one's past actions. Since it is not possible for anyone to live without performing actions, and every action creates a reaction, every reaction becomes the cause of another action. The problem is how to escape from the chain of actions and reactions. In his discourse Baba explained various methods to enable spiritual aspirants to break the chain while living and continuing to perform action in the world. One unique and novel method was *madhuvidya*, a spiritual technique that Baba had invented to enable spiritual aspirants to break free from the cycle of actions and reactions.

Baba included *madhuvidya* as the second lesson of Ananda Marga meditation. It is a special process of taking spiritual ideation before performing any action. He explained the science behind it, saying that the principle of action and reaction is applicable only within a finite field. However, since the spiritual realm is infinite, the principle of action and reaction does not apply in the spiritual world.

When Baba delivered his discourse, Bindeshvari was seated just to the left of his cot. Halfway through the talk, he developed breathing difficulties and started gasping for air. Nagina became worried, as he knew that Bindeshvari suffered from a weak heart. So he kept a vigilant eye on his cousin and was thus unable to pay much attention to Baba's discourse.

Suddenly Bindeshvari cried out, "No, Baba! No!" Everyone turned to see what the commotion was about. Baba paused, turned to look at Bindeshvari for a few seconds, and then continued his discourse. Meanwhile Bindeshvari slowly dragged himself towards Baba and collapsed with his head on Baba's lap. Baba placed his hand on Bindeshvari's temple, closed his eyes for a few moments and said, "There is no cause to worry when I am here." He then motioned to Nagina to take Bindeshvari out of the room. With the help of Dipanarayan and some of the Margis, Nagina carried the limp body

of Bindeshvari into the drawing room and laid him on a sofa, while Baba continued his discourse. As he lay motionless on the sofa Bindeshvari muttered something incoherently. The only words Nagina could understand were, "No! No!" In the meantime, the others returned to the hall to listen to Baba's discourse, leaving Nagina to watch over him.

After the discourse Baba blessed everyone through *Varabhaya Mudra*. One by one they came and paid their respects by offering him flowers. When Dipanarayan's turn came, Baba motioned him to come closer and touched the chakra between his eyebrows. Immediately he fell backwards in a state of spiritual ecstasy and remained in that super-conscious state for about an hour.

Years later he recounted his extraordinary spiritual experience that evening. "As soon as Baba touched my ajina chakra, I felt as if I was being transported into a world of incredible effulgence. I felt something jumping from one chakra to another, then a powerful wave of bliss completely engulfed me, and I lost all bodily awareness. When I came back to my normal consciousness, I found myself alone in the room. I had no idea how much time had elapsed. Someone offered me a glass of warm milk and massaged my body. I had intense physical discomfort, but internally I felt as if I was still floating in an ocean of bliss."

After the programme was over Baba went for his customary evening walk. Nagina accompanied him and broached the subject of Bindeshvari's physical condition. Baba said, "Nagina, you did a good thing by compelling him to come to the DMC. He was supposed to have died today; in fact, I would say that he was almost dead when he collapsed on my lap. But since it happened in the middle of the DMC, I decided to give him another lease on life."

Nagina was surprised by Baba's revelation and greatly relieved that by his grace a great tragedy had been averted.

Baba continued, "I have given him a small part of my own life force and my own mind (*chitta*). However, he will act very strangely



from now onwards. Although he's an adult, he will behave like a child. Often he will go into ecstatic states. So you'll have to take care of him. One more thing - don't tell him that his life has been extended. Just ask him what he experienced."

On their return, Nagina went to check up on his cousin. He found Bindeshvari surrounded by a small group of Margis. He was alternately laughing and crying. Seeing his cousin, he said, "Nagina, today Baba saved me from the jaws of death."

"What are you talking about?" asked Nagina.

"What I say is true. I suddenly felt my heart palpitating very fast and I was gripped with fear. So I crawled onto Baba's lap, sure that I was about to die. I wanted to breathe my last in his lap. As soon as I reached Baba's lap, my life force left my body. I clearly felt it. Then I felt that I was again being thrust back into my lifeless body, and I regained full awareness of my body."

He then said in a whimper, "Baba saved me from the jaws of death." And he kept repeating it over and over again.

After some time he calmed down somewhat and said, "Nagina, it is because you insisted on me coming here that I am alive now. If you had not forced me to come to the DMC, I would have certainly died. The whole thing was a strange but unforgettable experience."

Nagina went to Baba and reported what Bindeshvari had said. "Baba, Bindeshvari is telling everyone that you have given him a new lease of life."

"Let him say whatever he wants. But you must strongly refute it. I don't want such information to spread and create a commotion around me, attracting people who I don't want to bring into the Marga at this stage."

### **Saltless Supper**

Makhan had been in a spiritually intoxicated state throughout the day. Chandranath's wife, Rampari, assisted him in the kitchen to prepare food for a group of about 25 people. In his semi-intoxicated

state, Makhan forgot to add salt to two of the main dishes he had prepared for the guests. After Baba finished his meal, he left for Jamalpur with Pranay. The others then sat down to eat. It was only then that they realised that there was no salt in the two dishes. Chandranath was embarrassed that he had served saltless food to Baba. The next time he went to Jamalpur, after paying his obeisance to Baba, he said apologetically, "Baba, please forgive us. There was no salt in the food on the DMC night. We realised it only when we sat down to take our own food."

"Is that so? I did not notice it at all; I found the food delicious. Did you not see how I asked for a second helping, and how I ate with great relish?" Baba asked with a sweet smile.

After the Bhagalpur DMC was over, Bindeshvari remained in a heightened state of consciousness for several weeks. One moment he would laugh and the next moment he would cry. At times he would utter "Baba! Baba!" and instantly go into a spiritual trance. There were times when he would declare that he was Baba, and ask people to pay obeisance to him. When Nagina informed Baba about this, Baba instructed him to inform the Margis that nobody should prostrate before Bindeshvari.

Following his demotion Nagina had taken long leave from his office. He put his free time to good use to look after Bindeshvari who often behaved like a child. His abnormal behaviour alarmed his family, who thought that he had gone mad. They blamed Nagina for his condition. As Bindeshvari's condition did not improve even after some time, Nagina brought up the matter with Baba. Baba directed him to bring Bindeshvari to see him.

When Bindeshvari came before Baba, he became completely abnormal. Baba rebuked him and warned him that the blissful feelings he had been enjoying would stop if he did not maintain restraint in front of others and behave normally. This calmed him down to a great extent and he sat down quietly in a corner. Turning to Nagina, Baba instructed, "Keep him away from my presence until his condition improves. When he comes near me, his kundalini starts

to rise. His body and mind are not yet prepared for it, and that is why he behaves abnormally. From now on, whenever he starts to behave strangely at home, tell him that I will be angry with him.”

This had a telling effect on Bindeshvari. He gradually became somewhat normal. However, whenever he came near Baba or talked about him, his kundalini would rise and he would experience a higher state of consciousness. In that exalted state, he would touch people's ajina chakra, saying “Baba! Baba!” and they would instantly go into a spiritual trance.

It was a common sight at DMCs and in other spiritual gatherings to see Bindeshvari surrounded by scores of people, many of whom would go into a trance at his mere touch. To curious onlookers, he would say, “It is Baba's power that is working here and not Bindeshvari's. He is just a zero without Baba.”

As time passed, his occult powers developed further. Whenever he was in a state of spiritual trance, he acquired the ability to read people's thoughts and effect miraculous cures. Some Margis were upset by this frivolous display of spiritual powers and complained to Baba about his behaviour. But Baba would either dismiss them with a gentle smile or advise them to leave him alone.





## CHAPTER 17

### Deliverance of an Addict

Jitendra Tyagi was a businessman with a wide network of operations in Bhagalpur, Calcutta, Delhi and many other places in northern India. He was happy when he heard that his friend, Virendra Kumar Asthana, had been posted as assistant collector of Central Excise and Customs with a jurisdiction over many districts of Bihar. He thought that having his friend in a key position might help him to expand his business. Asthana, for his part, was shocked to see that Tyagi had become an alcoholic and was causing his family a lot of worry. A couple of months after Asthana was initiated, he suggested that Tyagi should also learn meditation and practice it regularly to try to overcome his addiction. Although Tyagi had little interest in spirituality, he agreed to take initiation due to his friend's repeated persuasion. When Asthana proposed Tyagi's name to Baba, he was initially unwilling to accept it. "Why do you want to send me a person who has no inclination for spirituality? He spends most of his time drinking, so how will he practice meditation? Besides, he has ruined his health due to excessive drinking and will find it difficult to sit for meditation."

"Baba, you can cure him of this bad habit if you wish. Please give him an opportunity to turn over a new leaf," pleaded Asthana. After some thought, Baba finally agreed, and Tyagi was initiated in early October 1954. Baba also taught him some yogic exercises.

Before initiating him, Baba cautioned, "Jitendra, you have been ruining your life through alcohol. You have to put an end to this habit; otherwise it will put an end to you."

"Baba, I have tried to kick the habit several times, but failed."

"Try again. Do meditation sincerely. If you do, I assure you that you will be able to get rid of it." Tyagi promised that he would

meditate regularly but did not keep his word. Every time he tried to sit for meditation, the thought of alcohol disturbed him. Finally, unable to concentrate properly during meditation, he gave it up and continued drinking as before.

In the month of November, Baba sent Tyagi a message through Shiva Shankar Banerjee. The message carried a word of warning and a piece of advice. He warned Tyagi that he had contracted tuberculosis in both lungs and that it had already become very acute. If he wanted to live, he had to give up alcohol forthwith and start meditating. Tyagi was shaken by the message, but he knew that to give up drinking was simply out of the question. For the previous few weeks he had been coughing constantly but had ignored it, thinking that it was due to the severe winter weather. Every time he coughed, he found the magic remedy in a glass of whiskey. In spite of pressure from his family and friends, he refused to see a doctor, because he knew that the doctor would certainly instruct him to give up drinking. And that was beyond his capacity. A few days later, he developed a fever and took to his bed. Within a few days he became too weak to walk. One day Asthana dropped in unexpectedly. Seeing his friend's pathetic condition he suggested, "Tyagi, your remedy is with Baba. Follow his instruction to do meditation regularly and practice the yoga exercises he has prescribed."

"How do you expect me to meditate and exercise when I can't even sit properly? My problem has only become worse after I was initiated," replied Tyagi peevishly. A few days later he began to cough up blood. Realising that he was fast running out of time, he decided to go to Calcutta for a check-up by a specialist. In Calcutta, he contacted his close friend, Raghuvir Prasad, the collector of Central Excise and Customs, who was also Asthana's boss. Raghuvir took him to see Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy, an eminent specialist, who was also the Chief Minister of West Bengal at the time. He confirmed what Baba had already told him – Tyagi was suffering from an advanced stage of tuberculosis in both lungs. The doctor prescribed some treatment as well as a strict dietary regime. However, Tyagi failed to respond to the treatment and his condition continued to

deteriorate. Finally, giving up all hope, Dr. Roy said, "Frankly speaking, medicine can't do anything for you at this stage. So pray to God. At this point, I don't see any other hope for you except to take shelter in the Divine."

That night Tyagi could not sleep at all. As he tossed and turned in his bed, he visualized his impending death. Everything that he had lived and striven for in his life was coming to nought. The words of the doctor rang loudly in his ears. "Yes, it is true," he said to himself. "Other than God, there is no one who can help me now. I should take shelter in Him." He regretted that he had not paid heed to Baba's directions and realised that he had committed a big mistake. He started to cry unremittingly. After some time the turbulence in his mind settled down and he dozed off.

Suddenly he heard Baba's affectionate voice, "Jitendra, why are you running away from me, my son? Come to me. I am your shelter." Baba extended both his arms invitingly. Screaming "Baba!" he tried to rush to Baba and embrace him, but then woke up and realised that he had been dreaming.

As the day advanced, he heard Baba's voice continuously reiterating the same call inside him. By the afternoon he had made up his mind to go back to Bhagalpur. He rang up Raghuvir to inform him that he wanted to leave.

"Tyagi, you can barely walk. Where will you go now in this condition and for what?" objected Raghuvir. "Please stay here and we will see what else can be done medically."

"No, Prasad Sahib, I have to go where my destiny is dragging me. I have decided neither to take any more medicine nor to see any more doctor."

Seeing that Tyagi was adamant, Raghuvir asked his orderly to accompany him. Tyagi took an overnight train to Bhagalpur. As soon as he arrived home, he phoned Asthana to inform him what the doctor had said and concluded, "Medicine is not going to work in my present state. Except for divine help, I don't have any recourse. Please take



me to Baba. If he cannot save me, I will give up all hope and go to Delhi and wait for my death.”

That evening Asthana drove Tyagi to Jamalpur and proceeded directly to the Rampur Colony jagrti. A few Margis were there having a meeting with Pranay. Tyagi sat silently in a corner while Asthana briefed Pranay and the others about his condition. They discussed how and where to raise the matter with Baba. While they were in the middle of the discussion, Baba unexpectedly walked in, greeting them all with *namaskar*. Then he said sweetly, “I hope all of you are well.” After everyone had prostrated, Baba took his seat and started conversing with some of those present, including Asthana, but appeared to ignore Tyagi altogether. Just as Asthana and Pranay were looking for an opportunity to bring Tyagi’s health condition to Baba’s notice, Baba said that he wanted to be left alone for a while. Disappointed, everyone went out into the courtyard and began to discuss what to do. A minute or two later, a shout went up, “Tyagi Sahib, Tyagi Sahib, Baba is calling you inside.”

Assisted by the Margis, Tyagi entered Baba’s room and prostrated. After the others retreated from the room, Baba asked, “Jitendra, why are you running away from me, my son?”

They were the same words that Baba had said to Tyagi in his dream the previous night. Stunned, he did not know what to reply.

“Are you ill?” asked Baba.

“Yes, Baba, the doctor has given me only a few days more to live,” replied Tyagi in a choked voice, with tears rolling down his face.

“Who said so? Even if Yama (the mythological god of death) takes you away, I will snatch you back from him. Now remove your upper garment. Let me see what the problem is.”

Baba then stretched out his left leg and gently pushed Tyagi’s chest with his foot.

“Now go and eat as much as you want and be merry.”

Tyagi prostrated and left the room. As he emerged very much energized, everyone was stunned by the dramatic change in his

appearance. Asthana asked in amazement, "What has happened to you, Tyagi? You look young and energetic and completely different in a matter of three to four minutes."

Tyagi responded with a smile, "It's all Baba's grace! He has saved me from dying of tuberculosis. But now I am dying of hunger. I want to eat something."

After Baba left, Bindeshvari invited everyone to his house. Everyone was impatient to hear what had happened to Tyagi inside Baba's room, so they all followed him to Bindeshvari's house. As they walked, Asthana observed his friend keenly. There was no trace of illness in his appearance. Tyagi ate a hearty meal, the first good meal he had eaten in months.

"What did you actually feel when Baba's foot touched your chest?" asked Asthana, after Tyagi had finished telling his story. "Did you feel as if an electric current was passing through you?"

"No, nothing like that. I suddenly felt a voracious appetite like a wolf. That's all."

### **Spirituality, the Philosopher's Stone**

A few days later Tyagi returned to Calcutta. Raghuvir Prasad was amazed to see a completely different man. When Tyagi recounted the story of how his guru had cured him, Raghuvir could not believe his ears. "Curing such a deadly disease by the simple touch of his foot," he wondered. "It's incredible! It's completely unheard of!"

Not able to believe what he had heard, he took Tyagi to Dr. Roy for a fresh check-up. The doctor was pleasantly surprised to find that all traces of tuberculosis had disappeared. "It's nothing short of a miracle," he proclaimed in amazement. "Your x-ray indicates that you have had TB but have been cured. Who treated you and that too in such a short time?"

"No one treated me," replied Tyagi. "Doctor Sahib, perhaps you might remember that the last time I was here, you had lost all hope that medicine could cure me. You asked me to pray to God. Well, I

did just that. It is by divine grace that I am alive and healthy today.” The doctor shrugged his shoulders in utter disbelief.

On their way home, Raghuvir Prasad kept thinking, “If indeed a person with such powers exists, I should meet him immediately. If there are feet whose mere touch could cure such a deadly disease, I should immediately take shelter under such holy feet.”

Although Raghuvir came from a very well-known family in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh with strong spiritual moorings, he had strayed after being appointed to a very high post in an important government department, where he wielded immense power and authority. However, in the core of his heart, he nourished the desire to have a guide who would bring his derailed life back on track. Immediately upon reaching home, he phoned Asthana and expressed a desire to meet the guru and take initiation at the earliest opportunity.

When Asthana informed Baba of Raghuvir’s request, he said that he would be visiting Bhagalpur the following weekend and instructed Raghuvir to meet him alone at sunset at a particular spot on the bank of the Ganges. On the appointed day when Baba arrived there by rickshaw, Raghuvir was already waiting. After explaining the necessity of sadhana and moral principles in life, Baba said, “Raghuvir, you have been leading an immoral life.” He paused for a moment and continued, “I don’t subscribe to the traditional belief about the Ganges’ ability to wash off people’s sins. Even so, take a symbolic bath and come back here.”

Raghuvir took a dip in the river and, with water still dripping from his body, sat before Baba for initiation. After it was over, Raghuvir prostrated before the guru and said, “Baba, you know how dark my past has been. I don’t know if I will ever be able to atone for all the sins I have committed.”

“Raghuvir, God has given you eyes in the front and not in the back. Always look forward and not backwards. Once in a while, if you take a cursory look at the past, it will help to remind you that you should never return to that sinful life again. With regard to your past actions, I have cleansed you of all of them today. Treat this as a new



birth, and think that from now on you are a new man. The sadhana that I have taught you, like the legendary philosopher's stone that turns anything it touches into gold, will transform anyone who practices it with earnestness into a great person. Practice it sincerely and follow the principles of morality. The rest is my responsibility."

After Baba left, Raghuvir noticed that he was feeling quite strange. He felt light-headed, as if a heavy burden had been removed from his being. A powerful surge of ecstasy engulfed him. This was a completely new experience for him and he realised that a deep-rooted change had occurred inside him that he couldn't explain. He was no longer the same Raghuvir Prasad with a dark past. He had been granted a new life, and he realised that that day was a turning point for him. The regular spiritual practice that followed his initiation brought great change in Raghuvir. He started to strictly follow everything Baba had taught him and became one of the most ardent and sincere followers of the guru.

In contrast to his earlier nature, he became very soft and gentle in his behaviour. He was highly respected among all the Margis for his simplicity and saintliness. In the Customs department where he worked, he was highly regarded for his unwavering moral principles. It was well-known to everyone that he would never accede to the corrupt demands of the high and mighty of the land. All these qualities endeared him to Baba as well.

Tyagi, however, was not as resolute as his friend Raghuvir. A few months after being cured, the ghost of alcohol again surfaced and started to haunt him. "After all, Baba has asked me to eat and be merry. That certainly includes the license to have an occasional drink as well. Now that I have been cured of my disease, there is no harm in taking a drink once in a while in a controlled manner."

With such baseless logic, he dismissed the lingering remnants of resistance to alcohol that he still had. His good sense blinded by the irrepressible craving that had been held in check for several months, he walked into his favourite bar. Without a second thought he ordered a glass of whiskey. As he was about to take his first sip, he thought

of how much he had been missing it all this time. Yet strangely, the very smell of his favourite drink was repulsive to him. Nevertheless he ignored it and quickly forced a few sips in. However, unable to tolerate its taste, he threw up right there. Leaving the rest of the drink on the table, he walked out of the bar very embarrassed. From then onwards, every time he thought of alcohol, an intolerably nauseating smell would strike his nostrils, and he would vomit. At those times he would also hear Baba's voice ringing in his ears, "Why are you running away from me, my son?"

Later he would reminisce, "Several times I tried to run away from Baba and go back to alcohol, but each time Baba made the alcohol run away from me. That was why the object of my former obsession became repulsive to me."

On a later occasion in 1956 there were four or five Margis with Baba on an evening Field Walk. Asthana, and Jiyalal Gupta, who had recently replaced Asthana as assistant collector of Customs and Central Excise in Bhagalpur, were among them. As they approached the Tiger's Grave, the discussion turned to Jitendra Tyagi. Asthana said, "Baba, Tyagi says that every time he attempted to run away from you and go back to alcohol, you made the alcohol run away from him. Finally even the smell of alcohol made him feel nauseated."

Baba laughed and stopped walking. Becoming serious, he said:

You see, Jitendra was not very strict in sadhana. That is why the attraction to alcohol kept returning to him again and again. So I decided to make some changes to his hormonal secretions. Because of that, now he can't even stand the smell of alcohol. Such addictions are due to the effect of *tamoguna*, the crude force. In order to counter it, all that is needed is to increase the sentient influence upon the person. Unless one is strict in sadhana and remains in a sentient environment, it is difficult to overcome such kinds of addiction.

I will give you an example of an alcoholic who tried to give up drinking, and that will give you an insight into their psychology. Everywhere he went, this person saw signboard

saying, 'Drinking is bad' or 'Alcohol can kill', so he decided to stop drinking. After some deliberation, he went to see an astrologer. "Sir, I am going to take a very important step. Can you please tell me when the next auspicious day is?" he asked.

"Certainly," replied the astrologer. "It's Durga Saptami (Hindu festival) in about four months' time."

The alcoholic thought, "That would be a wonderful day to give up drinking. So why should I trouble myself by abstaining from it in the meantime?" So he doubled the quantity of alcohol he was consuming, thinking that soon he would be giving it all up anyway. Four months later the auspicious day arrived. At six in the morning, after downing a bottle of wine, he bathed and went to the temple. Standing before the deity, still a little inebriated, he resolved, "Oh God, this is the end of it. No more alcohol for me from this moment." Later that day, he walked past a wine shop. "No problem," he thought, "I've decided to stop drinking from today and I have achieved complete control over it." He applauded himself on his victory over alcohol.

That evening when the clock struck six, again he congratulated himself for being so strong. "Well done, mind! Even as I marched past the wine shop, you didn't ask for wine, and even though it's already six in the evening, you still aren't asking for a glass. Such self-discipline is unthinkable except in saints and great souls, and it certainly deserves a reward, and what could be a better reward than a bottle of wine?" Soon he was back in the wine shop. Now, do you all understand the psychology of those who are addicted to intoxicants?"

Everyone roared with laughter at the Baba's humourous story. He then launched into a detailed account of the history of alcoholism in India:

People practice meditation to sharpen their intellects and intuition and to achieve greater expansion of mind. The consumption of liquor destroys these faculties and is



detrimental to their all-round development. It destroys the glands, sub-glands, nerves and nerve cells. Alcohol is expelled from the body partly through perspiration, partly through defecation and partly through urination. Poisonous nicotine from tobacco is expelled in a similar manner after damaging the body in a variety of ways. That is why the perspiration, faeces and urine of alcoholics and smokers smell very bad. If a drunkard or a heavy smoker enters a room, one can easily understand that he is addicted to intoxicants.

Addiction to alcohol was prevalent in the vedic age. People drank a fermented juice called *somarasa* and ate meat; they even ate beef. After the advent of Shiva, at the time of the *Yajurveda*, people were encouraged to only keep cows for their milk and to discontinue eating meat. However, many people of that age were alcoholics, and those religious functionaries who were tasked with performing religious rituals had great difficulty in carrying out their duties because they got drunk in the middle of the ceremony. Consequently it became compulsory for priests to wear a deerskin called *upavita*<sup>1</sup> over their shoulders. Those wearing the *upavita* were not to be served alcohol during religious ceremonies. The *upavita* worn during a *yajina*, or sacrificial ritual, came to be known as *Yajnopavita*. Gradually over the course of time the deerskin was replaced by a thread made of cotton. Today this thread is the symbol of the Brahmin caste in Hindu society.

The consumption of alcohol continued during the pre-Buddhist era. Indeed it increased somewhat during that period. Buddha opposed the consumption of alcohol and other vices in an outspoken manner out of concern that it would destroy refined taste and culture. Owing to the widespread influence of his ethical doctrine, there was a significant decrease in alcoholism, prostitution and gambling. When people from other countries visited Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka), the only

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<sup>1</sup> *Upavita* is the sacred thread composed of three or more cotton strands worn by Brahmins and certain other higher castes of Hindu society.

surviving Buddhist country in South Asia, for the first time, they were amazed to see the high moral standard of the Ceylonese Buddhist population. There was hardly any alcoholism, no visible prostitution and no gambling in the country. It is clear that Buddha infused a sense of morality in people's psyche. However, it is not enough to propagate morality alone. It is also essential to have moralist leaders who are capable of keeping society in check. If there are no controls in social life, morality will disappear like a flash of lightning. It will not last. This is exactly what happened during the Buddhist era. Towards the end of the era, the Buddhist Tantric Vamachara and Kulachara practices lost their purity, especially when it came to alcohol.

When the Puranic religion (Brahminical religion) gained influence in India, its leaders made no attempt to stem the flow of alcohol. The rulers drank freely, and that habit adversely influenced their subjects as well. By that time the Jain and Buddhist ethical doctrines had become extremely weak in society. While the consumption of alcohol was not popular among the emperors of the Pathan era, they made no effort whatsoever to control its widespread consumption among their subjects.

Due to the influence of Mahaprabhu Chaitanya alcoholism decreased significantly in ancient Bengal. Even today drinking is abhorred by the Bengali Vaishnavas as well as the Muslim community. If any Vaishnava or Muslim becomes addicted to alcohol, he loses all his social prestige. It is worth noting that in those places in Bengal where there is a strong Vaishnava or Muslim influence, raw sugar is prepared from the date palm and the palm tree, while in other areas the people prepare toddy i.e. cheap alcohol made from the sap of these trees. In pre-British India, the police used to take action against anyone who was found to be inebriated in public, but that system went out of vogue after the Mughal period, as many Mughal emperors and kings were alcoholics.

Baba then went on to give a lengthy description about various aspects of alcohol production and consumption – its history and production in various parts of the world in different eras, the agricultural practices relating to its production, its economic, medicinal, and industrial utility, its effects on the glands and other parts of the body, its moral and cultural significance in different societies and ways of curing oneself of the addiction to alcohol. His talk lasted for nearly an hour.

Finally before concluding, Baba talked about the Western influence on India. “With the influx of the Western civilisation approximately four hundred years ago, alcoholism also took firm root here. Although the Western social outlook has been beneficial for India in many ways, one of its most harmful aspects is the unbridled sensual indulgence it imposed on Indian society, of which the consumption of alcohol is one of its worst manifestations. It has gradually spread its tentacles into the different strata of social life, and many poor and middle-class families have been washed away in a flood of alcohol, their future burnt to ashes in the fire it lit. In the future Ananda Marga will wipe out alcoholism from the face of this earth once and for all.”

After leaving Baba at his residence, the Margis went home. Asthana and Jiyalal Gupta walked back to the Railway Guest House where they were staying. “My God, it is unbelievable!” exclaimed Jiyalal Gupta in complete disbelief. “Asthana Sahib, I never expected this. A spiritual guru talking non-stop for almost one hour about a mundane subject like alcohol! It’s really incredible! And look at all the aspects of the topic he explored during that time. He took us on a tour of the entire world, describing the history of different countries, the people’s habits, their agriculture, industry, economics and a host of other subjects, all while talking about alcohol. Only a person who has seen it can believe it, otherwise not.”

“See Jiyalal Gupta, when the Margis say that Baba knows everything, it is not without good reason,” said Asthana. “What you have seen today is just a tiny glimpse of his omniscience. He can talk



about any subject on earth. He is truly a walking encyclopedia; rather, I should say that he is much more than that. One evening about three months ago, I was walking with Baba, and there was a discussion about the humble potato. Like today's talk on alcohol, he spoke for almost an hour about the variety of dishes made from the potato in different places from Northeast India up to Afghanistan and then in the rest of India. After that he also described potato dishes from other parts of the world. It went on for an hour, and we were stunned at the extent and depth of his knowledge. In the same way, I have heard him talk about a wide variety of subjects like the evolution of languages, the different castes of India, agriculture and so many other things. But our mind is too small a receptacle to hold such a vast ocean of knowledge. It fills up the mind in no time and then overflows, and finally nothing is retained. It's a pity that these things are not recorded in book form."

In later years, much of the knowledge that Baba shared with his disciples on various occasions was in fact published in books.



## CHAPTER 18

### Direct Approach

With the introduction of a social code, it slowly dawned upon the disciples that through Ananda Marga, Baba was laying the foundations of a new society based on spirituality. However, the scale of his plans and how they would all come about were unclear in their minds. Occasionally Baba would give them a glimpse of what the future held in store.

One evening early in the spring of 1955, Chandranath was accompanying Baba on his evening walk. "A day will soon come when your ideology will spread very rapidly and go outside India," Baba declared. His words took Chandranath by complete surprise and he couldn't help but smile in disbelief. "Here we are, only a handful of disciples in a remote corner of India, and already Baba is talking of Ananda Marga spreading to foreign countries," he mused.

"One day our mission will hold dharmachakra in New York, Rome, Moscow and in other big cities and small towns around the world," continued Baba, adding to Chandranath's incredulity.

"How is that possible, Baba? Westerners are *tamoguni* (static or indolent in nature). They are not spiritually minded like the people of India."

"No, that is not true," corrected Baba. "People in the west are generally *rajoguni* (mutative). The characteristics of people influenced by rajoguna are courage, confidence, agility, active habits and so on. In western societies these qualities are very noticeable. Rajoguna is closer to *sattvaguna* (sentient principle) than tamoguna. So when they embark on the spiritual path, they will be able to make faster progress."

## Spreading Wings

By April 1955 many more people had become acharyas, enabling them to teach Ananda Marga sadhana. Meanwhile Baba was leading an extremely busy life. In addition to attending to work in his office, he spent most of his remaining time in organisational work. Every morning he went to the Ashram to attend to the work of the Marga. While there were many acharyas who were entitled to initiate newcomers, Baba occasionally initiated people. This continued for another four months. He asked the newly created acharyas to take leave from their jobs and devote themselves to the spread of the Marga in different parts of Bihar, followed by Bengal, then north-eastern India. Baba personally supervised all the work.

Every Margi who had experienced a positive change in their life due to sadhana talked about it to their friends, relatives and acquaintances. In the early days this was the chief method by which the Ananda Marga's ideals were spread. The organisation that was hardly four months old was rapidly spreading its wings, and the Margis watched the speed of its growth in amazement.

Baba's outspoken candour regarding the pernicious effects of orthodox religion and his revelations about the history of the prevailing superstitions created a great stir amongst the people. As a result the reactionary religious conservatives in society started to vehemently oppose Ananda Marga.

While Baba exhorted Margis to strive for their spiritual progress, he constantly reminded them that service to all living beings was a part of spiritual practice. In the book *Caryacarya*, Baba declared that service to all living beings was an indispensable part of a person's daily life. During the DMC discourse in Bhagalpur in March 1955, Baba declared that service was an integral part of sadhana. He explained that there were four types of service to be done by human beings, namely physical service, the service of providing security to the weak, intellectual service, and financial or material service. Thus from its very inception, social service was an integral part of Ananda Marga. At Baba's behest, the Margis established a food cooperative



in Jamalpur in early 1955. Soon afterwards a free medical clinic was started in Bhagalpur. It was named 'Abha Seva Sadan' after Baba's mother. This institution became very popular, and soon another was opened in Jamalpur as well. In the course of time, similar service activities were launched in other centres of the Marga. Food distribution programmes also sprang up to serve the poor. Baba named them *Narayan Seva*, meaning 'Service to the Lord', and he made food distribution a compulsory aspect of all Ananda Marga functions. As time passed, he initiated more and more service projects, just as he had earlier told his family he would do. In the years that followed, social service gradually became one of the major features of Ananda Marga.

### **Some Who Refused to Become Vegetarian**

The Margis tried to keep pace with Baba's speed by enthusiastically propagating the mission amongst their friends and relatives. Bandhava Sammelan, the boarding house where Kesto Pal, Haraprasad and Sadan resided, was one of the initial recruiting grounds. Haragovinda Mandal, Jiten Mandal, Prabodh Mitra and some other boarders had already been initiated, so discussions about meditation and Ananda Marga became a regular feature of life in the boarding house. There were also occasional discussions about the omniscient power of the guru. In accordance with Baba's strict instructions, the initiates took care not to reveal his identity to others. If the topic ever came up for discussion, they said that the guru was from South India.

Jiten's cousin, Nityananda, who had recently joined the brass-finishing section of the Railway Workshop as a foreman, moved into the boarding house. He was not at all enthused about the meditation that Haragovinda and Haraprasad tried to convince him to learn. He intensely disliked the Margis' vegetarian diet, and in an effort to convince the others to give it up, he organised the other non-vegetarians in the mess as an opposing force. They often behaved aggressively towards the Margis, thinking that these bullying tactics would frighten them and they would return to a 'normal' diet. Haragovinda reported the matter to Baba, who then asked Kishun

Singh, the BMP officer posted in Jamalpur, to send some of his constables to Bandhava Sammelan to spend some time with the Margis there. One Sunday morning Nityananda saw about a dozen robust and muscular people talking to the Margis in the boarding house, and he became apprehensive that they might complain about his intemperate behaviour. After spending about half an hour with the Margis, the constables left the premises, throwing menacing glances at Nityananda and his crew who had been harassing them. Some of the constables even twisted their moustaches in front of Nityananda as they walked out. Baba's tactic had the desired effect on Nityananda and the rest of the bullies. From that day on the harassment stopped. Gradually Nityananda began to show interest in the philosophical discussions that Haragovinda and the others conducted, and soon became a frequent participant. Inspired by what he heard about the guru, he too wanted to meet him.

"You can't meet the guru unless you are initiated," said Haragovinda. "First practice meditation and when the guru comes from the south to visit Jamalpur, you will be able to see him."

"That means that, like all of you, I will have to give up eating fish and meat, which I can't do," said Nityananda apprehensively. "There is no way I am going to do that."

"No, it is not compulsory to give up eating fish. You can stop doing it if you feel the inspiration to do so after practising meditation."

"All right, let me think it over." But Nityananda did not have perseverance and kept procrastinating about learning meditation.

A few days later, while he was standing near gate number six of the Railway Workshop, Nityananda noticed a person with an extremely attractive and resplendent appearance entering the gate with a tiffin box in one hand and an umbrella in the other. Until he disappeared into the accounts office, Nityananda couldn't take his eyes off that charming person who walked with such a majestic gait. It was as if he was under that stranger's spell. Just then, from afar he saw his cousin, Jiten, approaching. Nityananda rushed over to him

and asked, "Jiten, did you see that person with the tiffin box and umbrella? Did you notice what an attractive personality and powerful energy he has?"

"Haven't you seen him before?" asked Jiten. "He is Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, the president of Ananda Marga." From that moment Nityananda developed an intense desire to see him again. The next morning he waited at the gate for Baba to arrive. When Baba came, Nityananda's eyes were instantly drawn to his extraordinarily serene and shining face. Nityananda felt an intense attraction to him. At that point Baba turned his head round and for a fleeting moment looked directly at Nityananda. The young man felt a tremendous power in that passing look and had to lower his eyes. Later as he sat in the office, he mused, "If the president of Ananda Marga is such a powerful personality, how much more powerful must the guru be? I should definitely see him." That evening Nityananda asked Haragovinda to arrange for his initiation, but with the stipulation that he wouldn't be compelled to become vegetarian.

Haragovinda took him to Acharya Arun Mukharjee, a lanky young employee of the workshop, and Nityananda was initiated. After only two days of practising meditation, Nityananda discreetly informed the cook in the mess to include him in the list of vegetarian inmates of the hostel. He later confided to Haragovinda that he was no longer able to tolerate the smell of non-vegetarian food, as it made him feel nauseous.

Nityananda was not the only one who initially refused to give up non-vegetarian food. Rabin Ghosh, the brother of Harisadhan and an employee of the workshop, was initiated in early 1955. He too was obsessed by non-vegetarian food, which continued even after he started meditating. One day he and some others were accompanying Baba from the Rampur Colony Jagrti to his residence in Keshavpur. Along the way, they had to pass by a market selling meat and fish. As they walked past the place Baba said, "Rabin, do you notice the stench here? How can people eat non-vegetarian food when it has such a repulsive smell?"



“Baba, I am also non-vegetarian and I don’t feel it’s a stench because I am used to it.”

“Rabin, you have already been practising meditation for a few months, but still you are unable to give up eating meat?” queried Baba.

“Baba, I can give up my meditation and the spiritual path but cannot imagine relinquishing non-vegetarian food.” Baba kept quiet, although the others were offended by his insolent remarks to the guru. Later that night, when he sat down to eat his dinner, his wife, Binapani, served him non-vegetarian food as usual. He started to eat with great relish. But lo! The moment he started to chew a piece of meat, an unbearable stench entered his nostrils and he rushed outside where he threw up everything he had eaten. Binapani tried the food herself and it tasted all right. She was afraid that her husband had fallen ill and wanted to get him some medicine from the neighbourhood doctor. However, Rabin forbade her. “I am not sick, nor is there anything wrong with your cooking. I know the reason why I vomited. It is all Baba’s work. I spoke to him earlier today in a challenging tone about my fascination for non-vegetarian food.” That was the last time he ever attempted to eat anything non-vegetarian. After that even the thought of meat or fish was repulsive to him.

### **Lord Krishna Was Not Dark**

A few days after Nityananda was initiated, his boarding house mates informed him that their guru, Shri Shri Anandamurti, would be visiting Jamalpur on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May on the occasion of his birthday. There would be a spiritual congregation called DMC in Monghyr in the palace belonging to the erstwhile local king. When Nityananda arrived at the palace on the appointed day, eager to see Anandamurti, he heard that the guru was already there and that all the new disciples would shortly be getting a chance to meet him personally. Jiten asked Nityananda to stand in line with those desirous of a personal meeting with the master. There was a long line of devotees, both men and women, waiting to see the guru. Nityananda’s heart started to pound

heavily as he stood there in the scorching heat of summer, ardently desiring to see the guru about whom he had heard so many astonishing stories. The senior disciples went around instructing those in the queue regarding how to greet the guru in an appropriate manner. The males were required to do a full prostration while the women were to kneel and bend forward in a posture called Dirgha Pranam, the traditional manner in which Indian women greet their guru or God. Chandranath was at the door checking the people as they entered the room and giving them a final briefing about the protocol to be followed, and Shiva Shankar was fanning Baba with a bamboo fan.

As each disciple had his or her turn with Baba, he asked their names and other details. He asked some of the male followers to sit on his lap and showered them with affection. The women placed their heads on his lap, and he patted their head affectionately. Some of them were given advice, while others were given guidelines to follow in their lives. Then he blessed each of them by placing his hand on the crown of their head. Almost all were in tears as they walked out of the room. The whole process took barely a couple of minutes for each disciple.

As Nityananda entered the room, he was startled to see that the guru was none other than Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. Hurt by the trick that his friends at the boarding house had played on him, his initial impulse was to walk out and avoid any Marga gathering in the future. How could he accept a colleague from the workshop as his guru? However, a force inside him prevented him from leaving. As he stood there feeling confused and thinking what to do, he found that he was the next in line to meet Baba.

In a most affectionate tone Baba asked him to come closer. "Come here, Nityananda. Come! Come closer!" and gestured to him to come closer. Nityananda stood a few feet away transfixed and determined not to prostrate before a mere employee of the workshop. Baba suddenly reached out and grabbed hold of him. Then, seating the bewildered Nityananda on his lap, Baba gave him an affectionate hug. Suddenly Nityananda burst into a flood of tears. He felt

embarrassed and confused. Why was he crying like this and that too due to the hug of another employee from the workshop? Slowly he was overwhelmed by a strange sensation, and a veil of darkness was lifted from his mind, filling him with an extremely blissful feeling. He then understood that the person who he had taken for a mere employee of the workshop was indeed not what he appeared to be. He had never experienced anything like the ocean of love that was exuding from the guru.

“When you were a child, you used to pray to God to show you the right path to attain Him,” Baba said interrupting the chain of his thoughts. “Don’t you remember? Now you have got that path. Follow it diligently. Human life is very rare. Do something great with this life.”

Baba then placed his hand on Nityananda’s head and said, “Shubhamastu. Now you may wait outside.”

Nityananda felt a compelling urge to prostrate before Baba despite his earlier decision not to do so. As he came out of the room after prostrating, Nityananda felt that his whole being had been transformed. He was feeling extremely light. He could not understand the reason for this feeling and was perplexed. How was it possible to feel such a sudden change? Until then he had never imagined that such things were possible. For a while he sat alone trying to control his tears, not wanting to be disturbed by anyone. Later he remembered that as a young boy, he used to pray to Lord Krishna to show him the path to God-realisation. “Was this path the answer to those prayers?” he wondered.

A short while later Baba entered the hall where a few hundred Margis had assembled. Some devotional songs were sung and then Baba delivered his discourse. The topic was ‘The Supreme Base and Relative Truth.’ Towards the end, Baba spoke about the ephemeral nature of the created world, which he said is merely a relative truth ensconced in Satyaloka, the sphere of pure consciousness. By way of an explanation he added, “It has been observed that place and form are not the supreme truth. Now let us consider the time factor. To



what extent can a historical event be said to be true? Suppose the Mahabharata was fought 3253 years ago. Now, it is a fact that we see things with the aid of light. The stars in the sky become visible to you only when their light falls on the retina of your eyes. Suppose the light-waves of the Mahabharata will take another eight hundred years to reach a certain star. At this time, if you look at the earth from there with the help of a telescope, what will you see?

“You will see that the Mahabharata has not yet been fought, and that it will not take place for another eight hundred years. What is past for one is present for another and future for a third. All these are relative truths.

“Where there is action, there is motion. Time is the mental measurement of dynamic action. Where there is neither action nor mind, there is no time. If you are unconscious, you will not be aware of the lapse of three hours. Action and mind are relative truths, and consequently time is also a relative truth. Time is dependent on space and person, and space and form are dependent on time. It is incorrect to say that time is eternity without end and without break or limit. Time cannot exist without space and person.

“Human beings derive or try to derive pleasure from objects great and small but they cannot get eternal bliss from a relative truth. It is for this reason that sages devote themselves to the entity that is free from the bondage of time. One has to practice sadhana in order to establish oneself in the entity which is free from the bondage of time.”

After the conclusion of the discourse, Pranay informed everyone that since the number of people attending the DMC was far greater than on any other previous occasion, instead of filing past Baba and offering flowers at his feet everyone should offer the flowers mentally from wherever they were seated. As advised, the Margis collectively did Guru Puja. One of the senior disciples led the chanting of the mantra and the rest followed in a chorus.

After Guru Puja, Baba blessed everyone with the special *Varabhaya Mudra*. Following that, some devotional songs of Lord

Krishna were sung. Baba then called Kesto to the dais and touched his forehead, whereupon he fell over backwards in samadhi. Baba said, "Now he is in samadhi, and his mind is experiencing the supreme bliss. Normally a person does not have any awareness of the external world, nor does he respond to anything that is happening around him while in that state. But I will awaken the part of his mind that he uses to explain his feelings." Baba then touched his forehead and asked, "Kesto, what do you feel now?"

"I feel that I am the infinite Supreme Entity. I am enjoying unimaginable bliss."

Turning to the Margis, Baba said, "When the mind merges into the non-qualified Nirguna Brahma, that state is called nirvikalpa samadhi. Nirguna Brahma is beyond the influence of the three creative principles – the sentient, mutative, and static forces. In that state the mind ceases to exist. And when it merges in the qualified Supreme Consciousness, which is under the influence of the cosmic sentient principle, that experience is called savikalpa samadhi. There are different levels of experience in savikalpa samadhi. Kesto is now experiencing the highest level of savikalpa samadhi, where the feeling is 'I am the infinite Supreme Consciousness.'

Baba then asked if someone could sing devotional songs, and songs on Lord Krishna composed by the 16<sup>th</sup> century saint, Meera Bai, were sung. Baba listened intently with his eyes closed. In a short while the atmosphere in the room changed dramatically and everyone was engulfed in waves of spiritual ecstasy. Some were crying uncontrollably, overwhelmed by the powerful vibration.

After the singing concluded, Baba said, "The goal of human life is the supreme bliss, a wee bit of which you are all experiencing now." Baba again turned to Kesto and said, "Kesto, go back in time. See the condition of the earth four hundred crore years ago<sup>1</sup>."

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<sup>1</sup> A crore is equal to ten million in the Indian numerical system.

“Baba, it is extremely hot and is unable to support any life.”

He then asked him to come forward in time a hundred crore years and describe what he could see.

Kesto said, “Baba there is water on the earth. Oceans have come into existence.”

Baba asked him to advance by another hundred crore years and describe what life forms existed then.

“There are tiny undeveloped life forms in the ocean.”

“Come forward to a time fifty crore years ago and tell us what you see?”

“There are more complex forms of life, and some vegetation has appeared on the earth.”

“See the condition ten crore years ago.”

“I see giant-sized animals and birds and very huge trees around me.”

“That was the age of huge prehistoric animals called dinosaurs,” Baba explained. “Now see what the earth was like one crore years ago.”

“There are different species of apes.”

“See what was there a hundred thousand years ago.”

“There are humans who walk upright.”

Baba then addressed all the Margis, “See how many hundreds of crores<sup>1</sup> of years of evolution it has taken to achieve this human body. This body is extremely precious, and its purpose is to attain the supreme state from which everything has originated. So do not waste even a single moment of this precious human life.”

Baba paused for a while and then again instructed Kesto, “Take your mind back nearly three thousand five hundred years. What do you see?”

“Baba, I see Lord Krishna walking along the banks of the river Yamuna. He is holding a flute in his hand.”



“Does he look dark as is normally believed?”

“No, Krishna is not dark. His complexion is very fair; it is yellow with a tinge of green like a tender banana leaf.”

Baba then sang a Sanskrit song written by a devotee of the Kurma (sheep herding) tribe of South India in praise of Lord Krishna.

Naviina megha sannibham suniila komalakcchavim;  
 Suhasa ranjitadharam namami Krishna sundaram.  
 Yashoda-Nanda nandanam surendrapada vandanam;  
 Suvarna ratna mandanam namami Krishna sundaram.  
 Bhavabdhi karna dharakam bhayartti nashakarakam;  
 Mumukshu mukti dayakam namami Krishna sundaram.

“Salutations to Krishna the beautiful, who is like the dark patches of clouds which appear as harbingers of hope after the scorching heat of summer. He brings peace to the mind, delight to the eyes and joy to the heart with his sweet, enchanting smile. Salutations to Krishna the beautiful, who was an object of delight to Mother Yashoda, whose lotus feet are worshipped by the gods, and whose body is adorned with precious gems. Salutations to Krishna the beautiful, the most reliable helmsman in the ocean of this universe, who removes the fear of annihilation and who grants salvation to aspiring souls.”

After singing these lines, Baba entered into samadhi and slowly fell over onto his back. Pranay, who was sitting near Baba’s seat, tried to lay Baba’s body in a comfortable position. Nityananda and a few others sitting in the front row rushed to help. As they touched Baba, they felt a strong spiritual current pass through them and they were engulfed in waves of bliss. After a short time Baba returned to his normal state. Someone brought him a glass of hot milk. Baba took a few sips and then stood up. Kesto was still in a deep spiritual trance. Baba went over to him and with the toe of his right foot touched Kesto’s navel point and said ‘*Punah Manusyo Bhava*’ – ‘Be a human being again.’ Slowly Kesto showed signs of returning from his elevated state of consciousness. Baba instructed Shiva Shankar to give Kesto a glass of warm milk after he became normal. Then bidding everyone *namaskar*, he walked to the car that was waiting to take him back to Jamalpur. For Nityananda and most of the other

first-timers it had been an incredible experience, which they took several hours to digest.

The next day Sachinandan went to see Baba. Baba asked him, "Nandu, how was the DMC?"

"Baba, there was such a powerful spiritual wave that many went into samadhi."

"Yes, Nandu, that is true. Some people couldn't do Guru Puja, as they were in deep *bhava*."

"Yes, Baba, I couldn't do Guru Puja either, as I was in a state of indescribable bliss."

"I am aware of that. That is why I asked you about your experience of DMC."

### **Search for a Perfect Guru**

Ram Khilavan, a small-time businessman and farmer in his mid-30s from Olipur in Jamalpur, was in search of a guru who could initiate him into the path of spirituality. In Bhagalpur, he met Baba Bhutnath, a well-known tantric guru, and requested him for initiation. Bhutnath told him that he did not consider himself eligible to be his guru and that he would get a perfect guru. He added, "You will find your guru there in Jamalpur. There is no need to search for him far and wide."

Several months passed, and Ram Khilavan would occasionally remember Bhutnath's assurance that he would find a perfect guru in Jamalpur. In the back of his mind, however, he doubted that it would ever come true. "Is such a guru alive anywhere in this world, let alone in a small town like Jamalpur?" he would ask himself. "It is possible that Bhutnath said that just to avoid teaching me."

One day his close friend, Dasharath Singh, a soft-spoken teacher in the local high school, came to visit him. Dasharath too was earnestly searching for a spiritual path. They often had long spiritual discussions. Ram Khilavan said, "Dasharath Babu, my feeling is that if ever we accept anyone as our guru, he should be a perfect guru, as such a person alone can guide us to God." Dasharath agreed. "If God

graces us, we may even get such a guru here in Jamalpur without going anywhere to search for him," said Ram Khilavan. He did not mention Bhutnath's prediction because he was sceptical about its veracity.

A few months passed, and one evening Dasharath came to meet Ram Khilavan with exciting news. "Ram Khilavan Babu, do you remember how a few months ago you said that if God graced us, we would find a perfect guru without going anywhere in search of him? God has graced us, my friend! I have found such a guru and he is right here in Jamalpur."

Ram Khilavan was thrilled to hear this news, but kept his feelings in check. He asked, "Are you sure that he is a perfect guru?"

"I feel that if he is not a perfect guru, it won't be possible to find one anywhere in the world." Dasharath's confidence was contagious.

Ram Khilavan replied with great exhilaration, "If what you say is true, then please take me to see him. Where is he? How soon can we meet him? You know how long I have been waiting to find a perfect master."

"That is not so easy. Nobody is allowed to meet him or even know about him without his prior approval. First we have to give the name of the interested person to him, and he will scan the person's samskaras from this life as well as from his past lives and only then will he decide if he is fit for initiation. He will approve only those who have strong spiritual samskaras from the past."

"That is interesting if a person can see my past. Please place my appeal before the master at the earliest, and if God graces me, he will approve my name. I'll be anxiously waiting for his response."

That night before going to bed Ram Khilavan mentally prayed, "Most revered guru, I don't know who you are or where you are, but you know that I have been anxiously looking for you for many years. Please grace me by accepting me as your disciple. I bow before you with all the reverence and humility of my heart."



The following Sunday, Dasharath attended Baba's discourse at the Rampur Colony quarters. After it ended Baba turned to Dasharath and said, "A person from Yamuna Babu's family has approached me directly requesting initiation. You know that there is a system for that. Tell him that he should come according to the system."

Dasharath asked in surprise, "Who is it, Baba?"

"You name the members of that family and I will tell you who it is." Dasharath named all the members of Yamuna Babu's family one by one and as he said each name Baba shook his head to indicate it was not the one.

Although Dasharath thought of his friend Ram Khilavan's name, he didn't mention it because he thought that it was unlikely that Baba was referring to him. He thought, "It was only the other day that my friend entrusted me with the task of placing his name before the guru and he does not even know who the guru is." When Dasharath ran out of names, he finally mentioned Ram Khilavan's name. The moment he said this name, Baba nodded with a gentle smile. "Yes, he's the one. Tell him to come through the proper channel."

Dasharath was surprised and a little upset to hear this. Having entrusted him with the task of seeking permission from the guru, why had Ram Khilavan approached him directly? Dasharath had already informed him that the prior approval of the guru was needed for initiation. Concealing his annoyance with Ram Khilavan, Dasharath said, "Baba, in fact he had requested me to ask you to accept him as your disciple. I was waiting for a suitable opportunity to mention the matter to you."

"All right, tell him that he has permission. Take him to any acharya and arrange for his initiation."

That evening Dasharath met Ram Khilavan and expressed his annoyance with him. "Ram Khilavan Babu, I agreed the other day that I would place your request before the guru. Instead of waiting for my reply, why did you directly approach him yourself?"

“Me? Approach him myself? What are you talking about?” asked Ram Khilavan in surprise. “You didn’t even tell me who he is or where he lives. So how could I approach him myself?”

When the mystery could not be solved, Dasharath recounted his conversation with Baba. Suddenly Ram Khilavan remembered how he had prayed that night and explained to Dasharath what had happened. They both laughed, realising that his prayer had been the direct approach to the guru. Ram Khilavan was now convinced that a guru who could receive even the mental prayer of an unknown person was indeed a perfect guru. He was initiated the next day by Acharya Shishir Dutta. Ram Khilavan had a weak constitution and had been suffering from chronic indigestion for several years. Shishir taught him some asanas, and in a matter of days his digestion became normal and his general health improved tremendously. That further added to his inspiration to do sadhana.

After practising meditation for about three months, Ram Khilavan understood its importance for his life and wanted everyone in his house to learn and practice it. First he encouraged his wife Ramatanuka to take initiation. One day his second daughter Ahalya and her husband Ramtanuk Singh came to visit them. Ram Khilavan talked to them about meditation, and they also took initiation. He urged his youngest daughter Nirmala to learn it too. However, Nirmala had developed an allergy to some of the gurus who had visited their house in the past. So when her father asked her to take initiation, she was reluctant. In addition, from her childhood she had viewed Shiva as her God and guide and was unwilling to accept the guidance of anyone else. When Ram Khilavan’s gentle persuasion failed, he tried to convince Nirmala by talking about Baba’s miraculous powers. Even that did not bear the desired result. Nirmala thought that if the guru was indeed all-knowing, he would understand why she was reluctant to be initiated.

One day she had an argument with her father about this matter. In order to escape from her father’s constant pressure, she said that she would be ready to take initiation if Baba himself told her to. Upset by his daughter’s arrogant demand, Ram Khilavan said, “What

do you think, you silly girl? People are not allowed to even know about him unless they take initiation. Do you think that he is going to come to you to ask you to get initiated? If you are not initiated, he will not lose anything. But for you it will be a very great loss."

Nirmala was sure that the guru was not going to come to her house just to ask her to take initiation. She had always been a very obedient girl, so Ram Khilvan was incensed by what he considered as plain disobedience. In exasperation, he reported everything in detail to Baba that evening during the evening walk.

After listening to him Baba said, "Ram Khilvan, don't force Nirmala to take initiation. If she wants to hear from me directly, I will come to your house and talk to her."

"Baba, I don't want you to take so much trouble just to please that silly girl. You don't meet anyone unless they are initiated. And you want to keep your identity a secret. If you come to our house, there is a chance that the neighbours will come to know that you are the guru of Ananda Marga."

"All right, let me think what can be done," replied Baba, concluding the discussion.

Meanwhile after the exchange with her father, Nirmala had been feeling disturbed that she had disobeyed him as she had always held him in very high regard. That night before she went to sleep, she wept and mentally told Lord Shiva, "My Lord, you know that I have never before disobeyed my father. But my mind is not able to accept his insistence that I should take initiation. You are my guide. Please show me the right path."

As she slept, she dreamt of a person with a radiant face, attired in a white kurta and dhoti and wearing glasses. He told her that practising meditation would do her a lot of good and asked her to take initiation. The next morning she felt unusually fresh and very relaxed after her dream.

After finishing her morning prayers, she asked her father, "Papa, does the guru of Ananda Marga wear a white kurta and dhoti and



glasses and have a shining face?" She then described in detail the features of the person she had seen in her dream.

"Where did you see him?" asked Ram Khilavan in surprise.

"Papa, I am ready to get initiated. The guru has personally asked me to take initiation." Then she recounted her dream of the previous night.

Ram Khilavan's eyes filled with tears as he related to her his discussion with Baba. "Yesterday evening I told the guru how obstinate you were and how you would only take initiation if he told you to do it personally. He offered to come to our house to talk to you, but I dissuaded him, thinking that it would be disrespectful to trouble him due to your meaningless obstinacy. But I never thought that he would come in your dream and fulfil your wish." The other members of the family heard about this incident and were deeply moved.

That evening Nirmala was initiated by Acharya Shishir Dutta. Eventually the other family members including Ram Khilavan's niece Kranti, were initiated, and all of them became great devotees of Baba.

### **Past Life Vision**

Baba stopped initiating people personally from July 1955 as more and more people were being trained as acharyas. By then there were more than two dozen acharyas. The Marga's work was growing very fast in Bihar and the neighbouring states of Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Baba continued to encourage the acharyas to take leave from their jobs, and to go to different places to spread the ideals of the Marga. In mid-1955, he assigned Shiva Shankar the duty to go to Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh. One of his early initiates there was Sachidananda. He belonged to a well-known local family, who owned one of the reputable hotels in Gorakhpur. Because of Sachidananda's reputation and integrity, the British Government had made him an honorary judicial magistrate.

Sachidananda experienced very rapid internal changes after he started to practice meditation. Among other things, he felt a strange

attraction to the guru, about whom he knew nothing. When the desire to meet him became intense, he left for Jamalpur. For two consecutive days he had the chance to go on the evening walk with Baba. The love that Baba exuded overwhelmed him. He was also enthralled by Baba's unfathomable depth of knowledge, of which he received a glimpse both evenings during the Field Walk. That first visit left an indelible impression in his mind, and it became his habit to go to Jamalpur at least twice a month. Once during the evening walk, Sachidananda was sitting alone on the Tiger's Grave with Baba. He said, "Baba I felt deeply attracted to you even before I met you for the first time. I can't understand the reason for that."

"You know, Sachidananda, your association with me is not from this life. You were with me in your previous life as well, but you do not remember."

Sachidananda had been brought up to think logically and did not understand what Baba was saying. He looked at Baba with a confused expression on his face and said, "Baba, I don't understand what you mean."

Baba said, "Close your eyes and concentrate your mind at your Ista Chakra, then tell me what you see."

Sachidananda did as directed and after a few seconds of concentration he said, "I see a skeleton, which is slightly different from a human skeleton."

"Now what do you see?"

"I see flesh growing on the skeleton."

"And now?"

"Slowly the figure of a person is appearing out of it. He is standing erect but does not look exactly like a human being."

"That was you in your previous life when you were with me on another planet."

Sachidananda was very excited and said, "It does not look like the human beings of this planet."

“Yes, that is true. There are human beings on a large number of planets in this universe, and many of them are more advanced than the humans of this planet.”

Then Baba discussed how the evolution of life on planets in other solar systems was an integral part of the creative process, without which the cycle of creation could not be complete. Sachidananda returned from the Field Walk that evening enriched with a wealth of information on a hitherto unheard of topic.

On a number of occasions, Baba shared similar information about life on other planets. One such instance took place during an evening walk during which Haragovinda was present. Haragovinda asked, “Baba, are the humans on our planet the most advanced? Scientifically and in other ways they have made a lot of progress.”

Baba said, “No. There are far more advanced humans on many other planets. For example, there are planets in the solar systems of the stars Vishaka and Ashvini where the human beings are much more advanced than the ones on this planet.” Baba then pointed out several other stars in the sky, saying they have planets revolving around them that are inhabited by advanced human beings.

“Advancement does not mean only physical progress,” he continued. “They are very advanced mentally and spiritually as well.”

“Do they look like us?”

“Their appearance may vary, depending on the environment on each planet. Even on our planet, the races that have evolved in different climatic conditions have different features. Some have dark skin while others are fair. Some have noses with a high bridge, while others have flat ones. The features of modern human beings have developed in accordance with their needs over hundreds of thousands of years of evolution. Even today their features keep changing according to the conditions in which they live. Some features are common to human beings on all the planets. All humans, and for that matter, even developed animals, have sensory organs capable of receiving the five inferential waves of sound, touch, vision, taste, and smell. They also have five motor organs. Their location and shape



may differ according to the conditions under which they live. Another common feature of all human beings is an erect spine. This is because a vertical spine is essential for the development of the human brain. You can see on this planet also that when primates started to evolve and develop their brains, they slowly became erect, and gradually their tail disappeared. With a tail, it is not possible to stand completely erect. So Nature took away the tail from the chimpanzees, orangutans and gorillas. While in the womb, the human fetus also has a tail in the beginning. After the fourth month, the tail becomes smaller and by the time of birth, a human baby has only one tail bone, which grows inside the body and not outside.

“The early humans were not completely erect. As they evolved and their brain developed more and more, their spine became completely erect, and their head increased in size to accommodate a larger brain. An erect spine is a prerequisite for spiritual development. In order to do sadhana and for the kundalini to rise, all the chakras should be in a straight line. That is why Nature made the human spine erect. Nature has designed the human structure in a way that will enable it to do sadhana and a wide range of mental work. So while doing sadhana or studying or any other mental work, one should always keep the spine erect.

“The longing for infinite happiness is common to humans on all the planets of the universe, and this is what propels them onto the spiritual path. Some of the basic mental attributes are also the same. Humans everywhere have several things in common in the psychic and spiritual spheres. Some of them are so advanced spiritually that they can easily attain savikalpa samadhi. One day the people on earth will also attain that stage of evolution.”

On several other occasions Baba gave snippets of information about life on other planets. What was notable was that he referred to the advanced beings on other planets as human beings and not as aliens. Such was Baba’s concept of universalism.

### **Do I Know All the Languages of the World?**

Baba’s discussions often covered various branches of knowledge. Normally, he would give discourses on various topics during the

darshans every Sunday, when a large number of Margis would gather, some of whom came from neighbouring districts. Field Walks were another occasion where he would take the opportunity to talk about different subjects. In this way, the Margis got a glimpse of Baba's unlimited knowledge.

When Dasharath was still a new Margi, there was some discussion in the jagrti about Baba's fathomless knowledge. Someone said, "Baba knows all the languages of the world."

On hearing this, Dasharath laughed derisively and said, "How can anyone know every language?"

Pranay interjected, "No, Dasharath Babu, it is true that Baba knows every language and all the scripts of the world."

"How is that possible? I can't believe it!" replied Dasharath. "At the most, he may know some Sanskrit-based Indian languages." Nothing Pranay could say was able to change Dasharath's opinion.

The next day, when Baba came to the jagrti, the topic of his discourse was linguistics. He started by writing the Sanskrit letter 'Ka' in the Devanagari script and then explained its origin. From there he launched into a lengthy comparison of different languages and then wrote a few words in Chinese, Latin, Hebrew, and some other languages and explained their similarities and differences. Pranay looked at Dasharath and smiled. He thought that now finally Dasharath would believe that Baba knew all the languages of the world. Seeing this, Baba asked, "What makes you smile, Pranay?"

"Baba, yesterday I told Dasharath Babu that you knew all the languages of the world and he did not believe me."

"Do I know all the languages of the world? That is surprising news to me. I was not aware of it. Thank you for letting me know," said Baba with a wink. Everyone laughed, and Baba joined in.

Linguistics remained one of Baba's favourite subjects of discussion throughout his life. In later years he spoke extensively about the evolution of languages, phonetics, comparative philology, phono-semantics and so on. His discourses on these subjects have filled more than three dozen books.

### **An Intimate Family Member**

The relationship between Baba and his disciples was not just a formal guru-disciple relationship. Many Margis considered him as an intimate friend or family member, whose love was incomparable, and to whom they felt irresistibly drawn. While the sadhana and philosophy that Baba propagated were extraordinary, what attracted the Margis the most was Baba himself. They felt that he embodied the quintessence of their spiritual practices and philosophy. The experience of Vishvanath, the veterinary doctor, is a case in point:

The experience I had during my initiation left an indelible imprint on my mind and created a powerful attraction in me for Baba. Whenever I was away from Jamalpur, I would become restless to see him again. The separation from the guru would become unbearable. On my return from each trip to Jamalpur, I would be constantly wondering when I might have the opportunity to see him again. At times, I would skip my work for a few days to stay longer in Jamalpur. After a day or two, Baba would order me to return home. Even to hear these words was very painful for me and I would start to sob. Seeing my pain at the thought of leaving him, he would relent. I invented different alibis to extend my stay for at least a week. It went on like this for almost a year. Once, when I was posted in Narkatiaganj in North Bihar, I stayed in Jamalpur for more than a month without taking leave from my work. Baba repeatedly asked me to go back. I was in a spiritually intoxicated state in his presence, and as usual made up an excuse to avoid leaving. One day Baba said, "Vinod and Navakumar are sick. You should return home immediately as your wife is alone and in need of help. She is worried and needs your assistance to take care of your sick children."

"Baba, when you are there to take care, why should I worry about my children?"



A couple of days later he saw me as he entered the jagrti. He remarked, "Vishvanath, how many times have I told you to go back, yet still you haven't obeyed me."

"Baba, my mind becomes restless when I am away from you. What can I do?"

"For those who realise my real form, I am never far away." It was several years before I understood the deep significance of what he meant by those words.

When even after several weeks I didn't show any inclination to return, Baba instructed the general secretary to send me back. "Pranay, he has been refusing to go home. Send some people with him and see that he is put on the train to Barauni. The train will not move today unless he is on board." So I was compelled to obey Baba's instructions, and when I reached home my wife informed me that my children had indeed been very ill, but had recovered without any medication.

Before going to the office the next day, I felt sure that I had been suspended from my job for being absent for so many days without permission. I was very surprised that when I went to the office there was no mention at all about my long absence without leave. I also learned from my colleagues that there had been an office inspection while I was away. I was certain that I would have to face the consequences of my long absence but did not dare to ask anyone what had happened during the inspection. I was in fact waiting for someone to tell me the bad news that strong departmental action had been taken against me. The whole day, however, everyone behaved as if nothing unusual had happened. I suspected that something untoward had happened and called for the inspection register to see what adverse remarks had been made about me. I was dumbfounded to see that there was no mention at all in the report of my absence from the office. I was even more stunned to see my signature in the register on the day of the inspection. A little later I checked some other office records and attendance registers and saw my signature in various places in the different registers during the whole period of my absence.

Seeing this miracle, I wept profusely and felt deep regret that my actions had given Baba trouble and that he had had to protect me in this manner. I vowed that I would never again behave so irresponsibly.

On my next visit to Jamalpur I caught hold of Baba's feet and wept. I apologised over and over again for causing him so much trouble. He just patted me on the back and said, "Vishvanath, were you in this world at that time? You were floating in the spiritual world, oblivious of all worldly responsibilities. How could I allow you to be put into trouble?"

Whenever I had a problem, I would rush to Baba. I always felt that I could share all my problems with him. Once when I was in Jamalpur, Pranayda did not include my name in the list for the evening walk, as there were many new Margis going that day. My attraction for Baba was so intense that I felt restless the entire evening.

After his walk, he came directly to the jagrti and called me, then held my cheek and said very affectionately, "Vishvanath, don't you know that I am always with you and that you are never apart from me." It was extremely touching. I embraced him tightly and cried like a child. He patted and consoled me like a most affectionate father.

From the very first day I never felt that he was my guru in the conventional sense. The love he gave me was many times more than that of my father and mother. He was my deeply trusted guide, friend, and a support that I could always rely on. I felt closer to him than to anyone else in the world, and knew in the core of my heart that he loved me the most and was deeply connected to my innermost self. I have heard similar stories from every devoted Margi. What was surprising was that everyone felt that Baba loved him or her as no one else could. He was the centre of every Margi's life, and unknowingly everyone felt drawn to him by his divine, magnetic attraction.

During DMC or General Darshan his words would clear any doubts in our minds. I would note down some of my doubts and questions about philosophy on a piece of paper and keep it in my pocket. In the course of his lecture he would always answer all the questions. At the end of the DMC, he would ask with a smile, "Well, Vishvanath, did you get the answer to your questions?" This was not something that happened only to me. Several others told me they had similar experiences.

When this phenomenon became a regular occurrence, I asked Baba how it was possible that his discourses answered the questions in the minds of everyone present.

Baba replied, "I never prepare any discourse in advance. When I sit on the DMC dais, I just scan everyone's mind, and then I speak in a way that answers the questions they have."

### **Mangala Devi's Liberation**

During the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1955 DMC programme held in Bhagalpur, while Baba was taking his lunch, Chandranath's aunt Mangala Devi entered his room and sat down on the ground. She had been initiated earlier in the day. Baba said to her, "Mother, do your sadhana as long as possible and the rest of the time continue to mentally repeat your mantra."

She replied, "Baba, my body is very frail and I am in poor health. How much sadhana can I do at this advanced age? I wish I had learned it earlier."

"Mother, just do the best you can and I will take care of the rest."

Mangala Devi took Baba's words to heart and practised her meditation sincerely. When she was not meditating, she would sit with her eyes closed chanting her mantra. Gradually she became completely withdrawn from worldly matters, and no one bothered her with any mundane issues.

One Sunday in October 1955, Chandranath's wife Rampari Devi went to Jamalpur alone for Baba's darshan, as her husband had some pressing official work. While Baba was leaving after the discourse, he



went up to her and said, "Now your aunt's time on this earth is drawing to a close. The end will come suddenly. Be ready."

On reaching home, Rampari conveyed Baba's words to Chandranath. In the past few days Mangala Devi had become very weak, so the family was careful not to leave her alone. Two or three days after Baba's caution, she collapsed in the bathroom. Makhan, the household assistant, carried her to her bed, while Rampari Devi sent a message to Chandranath's office informing him of the incident. By the time Chandranath arrived, her breathing had become very faint but she was still conscious. Chandranath brought a picture of Baba in Varabhaya Mudra, held it in front of her and said, "Aunty, ideate on Baba's image." Mangala Devi then closed her eyes.

"Do you remember your mantra?" he asked. She nodded in the affirmative.

"Just keep repeating your mantra," he said in her ear. A few minutes later her head fell to one side, and she breathed her last.

The following Saturday Chandranath went to Jamalpur. During the evening walk, he described Mangala Devi's final moments to Baba. Baba listened to him in silence. Then he stopped walking and turning to Chandranath, said, "Chandranath, now she is with me. She has attained liberation and will not be reborn again."



## CHAPTER 19

### Weaning Through Divine Attraction

Aniruddha Singh was a landlord from Trimohan, a village about 21 km from Bhagalpur. He was also a large scale contractor engaged in government construction works. In order to carry out his work smoothly, he had to entertain corrupt government officials, most of whom were addicted to alcohol and other vices. In time Aniruddha too picked up those vices. He took initiation at the insistence of Chandradev, a new Margi who was the section officer in the Public Works Department. Aniruddha had absolutely no inclination towards spirituality. The only reason he agreed to be initiated was because he thought that it would be prudent to keep this key officer favourably disposed towards him, so that he could get his construction bills cleared by Chandradev's department without any difficulty.

In December 1956, a few days after his initiation and on Chandradev's urging, Aniruddha went to Monghyr to attend the DMC organised on the occasion of the full moon. In accordance with the system of those days, at the conclusion of the program, the Margis filed past Baba to offer their salutations and receive his blessing. When Aniruddha's turn came, Baba motioned him to come closer and asked, "What's your name?"

Aniruddha did not respond immediately, as he was wondering why the guru was only asking him his name and not any of the others who were in the line ahead of him.

"You are Aniruddha, aren't you? You live in Bhagalpur, but you are a native of Trimohan," continued Baba without waiting for his reply.

Aniruddha initially thought that the guru might have obtained this information from Chandradev. As he pondered over this, Baba asked, "Can you meet me tomorrow in Jamalpur?"

“I am a very busy man. If I am away from my work even for one day, I stand to lose thousands. In fact, because I took leave from work today, I have lost a lot of money.”

Despite Aniruddha's reluctance, Baba kept insisting on him coming. However, he continued to refuse the invitation. Then, without even excusing himself, he walked off. On the way back to Bhagalpur, he found out that it was Chandradev's first darshan too and thus never had a chance to talk to Baba about Aniruddha's particulars. Chandradev commented that it was a matter of great fortune that in the very first darshan, the guru had called him and insisted that he should definitely go to Jamalpur the next day.

Aniruddha silenced him with a warning, “Chandradev, you know that it is not in my nature to run after gurus. If you continue to push me into the trap of these gurus, I will use my influence at the top to get you transferred. The guru has called me alone because he knows that I am a rich man and he has his sights set on my money.”

Normally, every evening Aniruddha would be at the bar, where he would play host to some of the top government officials, treating them with food, drinks, and other forms of entertainment. But the next afternoon he was taking rest after lunch when he was suddenly overcome by an intense urge to go to Jamalpur, as if a mysterious force was driving him. He got dressed and went to the station to catch the train to Jamalpur. Before he left the house he stuffed three thousand rupees in his pocket thinking that the guru would certainly ask him for money.

As Aniruddha got off the train in Jamalpur, someone approached him saying that he had been sent by the general secretary to take him to the jagrti. Upon arriving at the Rampur Colony jagrti Aniruddha found that instead of the opulent ashram that he had anticipated, it was a nondescript quarters of a railway colony, which was totally unsuitable for an ashram in the eyes of the rich contractor. Thoroughly disappointed with the unimpressive atmosphere of the building, he decided to return home. He got as far as the railway station when suddenly he felt a powerful force pulling him back. Unable to resist, he returned to Rampur Colony.



Baba had informed Pranay that Aniruddha would be accompanying him during the Field Walk. So after sunset someone escorted Aniruddha to Baba's residence. He was the only one accompanying Baba that evening.

Years later, during an interview, Aniruddha recalled the strange events that occurred that evening as well as on the subsequent evenings:

As I was walking through the dirty, chaotic, and cluttered by-lanes of Jamalpur, which were much worse than the ones in Bhagalpur, a feeling of revulsion for Jamalpur arose in my mind. My guide led me through the bazaar, and I was asked to wait on the road in front of a house. He said that this was where the guru lived. I felt humiliated at being made to stand on the road like that and fumed with indignation. After a short while Baba emerged from his house, "Aniruddha, you have come," said Baba with a disarming sweetness that melted my anger considerably.

"Did I have any other choice after you compelled me to come yesterday? Now can you tell me why you have called me?" Baba evinced no reply but set off walking at a brisk pace with me in tow. When he saw that I was struggling to keep up with him, he slowed down a bit to enable me to catch up. We crossed the railway footbridge. On the other side of the bridge, it was very quiet and lonely. I felt nervous, unsure what Baba wanted from me. Again I asked, "What do you want from me? Where are you taking me?"

Baba did not reply and that made me feel more uneasy. Suddenly, he turned around and asked, "Come on. Are you afraid?"

"No, no," I replied, although I was shivering inside. Finally, we reached what appeared to be a grave. Nervously I looked around in the moonlit night and understood that I was all alone in this desolate place with this strange man, and there

was nobody to help me. I thought that this tantric had trapped me in this frightening place to extort money from me, so why not offer it to him even before he asked for it to preclude the possibility of him harming me.

Thinking that this was the best strategy, I asked, "How much do you want from me to let me go – a thousand ... two thousand ... or five thousand – tell me?"

He just smiled but gave no reply. Then he said in a firm tone, "Remove my sandals."

Reluctantly I obeyed, more out of fear than anything else.

"Now, massage my feet," he commanded, stretching his feet out in front of me.

I felt that he was asking too much of me and told him so. "See, I am in the habit of getting my servants to massage my body and have never myself massaged anyone in my life."

Not in the least bothered by my protests he ordered me to obey him, and out of fear I just followed his instructions and started to massage his feet. In an effort to escape from the trap of this tantric, I raised the amount I was willing to offer him. "See, if you want more money, you can say that frankly. I am willing to give you whatever you want. Will ten thousand rupees be sufficient to let me go?" He just kept smiling and did not reply.

"If that is not sufficient, I can give you twenty or even twenty-five thousand. I have some money in my pocket now. You can take it now and I will send the rest with my employee tomorrow."

Still there was no answer. He simply continued to smile sweetly, and by now, I was becoming increasingly exasperated and helpless. What could I do to make him let me go? There was only one way I knew how to escape from any exigency of this nature and that was to offer money, more and more money,

and that was what I did. "I can give you even fifty thousand. I promise in the name of my father and mother. I will go to hell if I don't fulfil a promise I make in the name of my parents."

He simply chuckled but gave no answer, not a single word.

Thinking that my offer was insufficient to meet the expectations of this dangerous tantric, I asked him to name his price for my release, "All right, you tell me how much you want. If you don't trust me, you can keep me confined in your ashram and tomorrow someone can carry a note from me and collect the money from my people in Bhagalpur. Then you can release me after you get it. So now kindly take me out of this place."

He laughed a little louder. I wondered why he did not respond to my offer of such a large sum of money. Actually speaking, paying money to get things done was something that came naturally to me. I used to feel that I could get anyone to do anything I wanted by paying them money. But it did not seem to be having any effect on this strange tantric who I hardly knew anything about. I had absolutely no idea what to do to make him relent. All my pleas seemed to have no effect on him. He simply kept smiling sweetly without saying a word.

I noticed another strange thing about him. Despite being very cold, and I was almost shivering in my warm attire, he seemed to be comfortable in his light clothing of dhoti and kurta. As I continued to massage him, I became aware of a variety of intoxicating fragrances emanating from different parts of his body. Initially, I felt repugnance, thinking that being a guru he was using expensive perfumes on different parts of his body. I mustered up my courage and asked, partly out of suppressed anger and partly to free myself from his domination, "People say that you are a guru and yet you are using perfumes on your body?"

"I never use any perfume."

"Then what is this? Each part of your body has a different fragrance."



“Those are natural. You will learn about them later when you do deep meditation.”

I did not believe him but refrained from prolonging the argument and continued to massage his body. Slowly, I started to feel that the fragrance from his body was having a strange effect on my mind, and I was feeling exhilarated and highly energized. I lost awareness of the time ticking by as I remained engrossed in that strange feeling of happiness. After I had massaged his body for more than an hour, I began to feel exhausted. Breaking the silence, he asked, “Do you want to see something strange?”

“Show me whatever you want,” I said with visible disinterest.

“Shall I introduce you to someone? Will you be afraid?”

“No, why should I be afraid?”

“Then close your eyes and open them only when I ask you to do so.”

His instruction made me very nervous. I thought that while I sat with my eyes closed he would slip away, leaving me alone in this dreadful place. So after a couple of minutes, I slowly opened them to see if he was still there. He rebuked me harshly and ordered me to close them again. This time I complied with his order. After a few more minutes, he asked me to open my eyes. To my surprise, in the dim light of the night I saw a tall and heavily built man with a long beard standing in front of us. His appearance only added to the frightful atmosphere of the place.

Gripped by a paralyzing fear, I involuntarily yelped, “Baba, Baba,” and embraced him tightly. That was the first time the word ‘Baba’ came out of my mouth. Baba shone the torch on the stranger and moved it up and down, and to my horror I saw that the fierce-looking man was growing taller and taller. I was filled with terror as I watched him grow into a

giant. He must have grown almost as tall as a palm tree. I did not know whether what I was seeing was real or a hallucination caused by fear. I caught hold of Baba's feet pleading, "Baba, please let me go. Don't harm me, Baba. I am ready to do anything you ask of me. I can give you one lakh rupees if you allow me to go away from here." I implored him again and again to let me go.

Baba reassured me, "You told me just now that you wouldn't be afraid. Don't worry. He won't harm you. He is your *gurubhrata*." He then waved the torch downwards and the man returned to his normal size. He came close to Baba and prostrated before him. By now it was clear to me that Baba was a tantric and I thought that this apparition was a ghost that he had under his control. I continued to look at the stranger with mounting fear and kept offering larger and larger sums of money in return for my freedom. Both Baba and the stranger laughed. The stranger's laughter boomed like the mocking laughter of a giant. Baba calmed me down saying, "He is Kalikananda, a disciple of mine. You have nothing to fear from him."

"So you also have giants as your disciples?" Both of them continued to laugh, seeing my paralyzing panic. After a short while Baba asked him to leave. He again prostrated in front of Baba and in no time he was gone.

"It is time for us to go back, as you have to catch the train back to Bhagalpur," said Baba to my great relief. "If you had not been with me this evening you would have consumed a lot of kebabs, other non-vegetarian food, and alcohol, and misused your time."

"So Chandradev has told you all this. Baba, he is also a veteran in these things and now he is pretending to be a decent person and is complaining about me."

"No, no, he did not tell me anything about you."

"Then how did you know all that? Yesterday, you addressed me by name and related many of my personal details.

Are you God to know all these things without anyone telling you?" Baba merely smiled in reply.

The person who had received me at the station earlier was waiting as we stepped off the footbridge. He had brought the handbag that I had left in the jagrti. Baba said, "He will show you a place where you can get proper food."

"What food? I have to catch my train or I will get stranded in Jamalpur."

"The train will not leave until you finish your dinner. Now go and eat peacefully."

I said derisively, "Do you think that whatever you say will happen? It is already eleven and well past the time for the train."

"Come again tomorrow."

"I am not going to come again after all that has happened today."

"You must and you will come tomorrow," said Baba with an air of authority.

"Tell me how much you want to leave me alone."

"I don't need any money."

"Then why do you want me to come back?"

"You must come tomorrow," he said emphatically and walked away. I was very relieved that the ordeal was finally over and that I was unharmed. The Margi took me to a vegetarian restaurant.

I had an intense dislike for vegetarian food and was disgusted at being brought to this type of restaurant. I said impatiently, "What is this place? I don't eat this kind of food."

He replied, "All the Margis are expected to eat only sentient food."



“I am not a Margi. I don’t eat this rubbish food. Sometimes we feed our cattle such stuff.”

The Margi ordered some vegetable *pakora* (a fried snack) and some other spicy dishes. Although I didn’t find the food at all palatable, due to acute hunger I gulped down some food. I then gave the man some money to buy a first class ticket.

“Margis travel by third class only. We follow a simple life style,” he said in a counselling tone.

“Let the Margis go to hell. I have my own standard of living,” I retorted with growing irritation. Just as I entered the platform, I saw the train slowly steaming into the station.

The next day I met Chandradev in his office. I scolded him in an abusive tone for introducing me to such a guru. Finally I said, “Your Baba has called me again today but I don’t intend to go.”

He was surprised, “Baba has not called me even once and he has called you on two consecutive days. You are indeed very fortunate.”

“He thinks that I am a rich man. His eyes are on my money. Chandradev, don’t tell me again to go to Jamalpur. I have decided to keep away from him once and for all.”

In the afternoon after lunch, I was taking some rest in my house in Bhagalpur when suddenly I was overcome by a feeling of restlessness. As on the previous day, a strong urge to go to Jamalpur took hold of me. However much I tried to avoid going, I could not restrain myself. Before leaving home, I took ten thousand rupees with me to give to the guru in case he harassed me further. After taking care of some work in town, I caught a late train and arrived in Jamalpur at around seven. That day, instead of going to the jagrti, I went straight to Baba’s residence. Just as I arrived, I saw Baba coming out of his house. After greeting me, he said that henceforth, before coming for Field Walks, I should get permission from the

general secretary. As I walked with Baba towards the Tiger's Grave, I no longer felt afraid as I was on the previous day. When we reached the Tiger's Grave, without waiting for his instruction I removed his footwear and started to massage his feet. That evening the whole atmosphere was very calming and relaxing, and I didn't have any fear. The fact was that I had started to develop a kind of fascination for Baba. I asked, "Baba, why have you called me?"

"There was no specific reason for it."

"When you don't want anything from me, why are you calling me again and again?"

"Because I love you so much."

"When you have known me only for two days, how can you say that you love me so much?"

"Only those whom I want, and with whom I have had a relationship for several lives can come to me. Others cannot."

"What is the relationship that you are talking about? What was my relationship with you in my past lives?"

"You will come to know later." He paused and then continued. "You have several bad habits and you have to get rid of them. You drink a lot and it is ruining your liver."

"I can't give up these habits as I have indulged in them for several years. They are also essential for my professional success."

"Just try and you can do it. Another thing that I can't allow you to do is to continue visiting dancing girls. It is very immoral and you should stop doing it from now on."

I kept quiet. I knew that what he was asking me to do was beyond my capacity. I lived by the bottle and my job required me to entertain my influential guests. So it was impossible for me to give up my way of life. As I did not want to upset Baba, I decided to forget everything for the time being and continued

to massage his feet. Soon the fragrance from his body wafted into my nostrils creating a spiritually intoxicating sensation in my entire being. I felt as if slowly my entire existence was dissolving in it, and I started to enjoy the feeling immensely. I realised that the different sensory pleasures that I had been running after for so long paled into insignificance before this divine experience.

Before I left that day, Baba asked me to come again the next day. After the blissful experience of that evening, I no longer felt any fear or confusion about Baba in my mind. My attraction for him was slowly increasing. My daily visits to Jamalpur continued uninterrupted for about three weeks. Even afterwards I continued to visit him frequently. In his presence, I felt overwhelmed by a kind of divine intoxication. After two or three days Baba asked me to give up eating meat, and strangely, after that the desire for non-vegetarian food vanished. Within a few days, I became a totally changed person. I stopped taking alcohol and visiting dancing girls.

The impact of my changed lifestyle was most noticeable on my wife. Although she was spared the quarrels that would ensue every night after I returned home drunk, and despite my home being peaceful, she was afraid that I would eventually become a monk. She secretly tried to persuade the top-level officers who I had entertained daily with alcohol and non-vegetarian food to try to lure me back into my old habits. She argued that otherwise they would be the ultimate losers. And many of them did indeed try hard to persuade me to return to my decadent ways.

One high-ranking engineer awarded me a very large construction project with an inflated budget without calling for a tender, with a view to tempting me to return to my earlier corrupt lifestyle. But my attraction to Baba had become so intense that all their efforts had no effect on me at all. This went on for over three months. Then came Holi, the colour festival. On that day several top-ranking district officials



invited me to join them for the Holi celebrations at the Officers' Guesthouse in Sultanganj in Bhagalpur District. Initially I hesitated to go, as I knew full well what happened in such places. But I received repeated invitations from officers with whom I had a lot of official work, and I could not ignore them.

When I arrived there, I found the atmosphere repulsive; it was at great variance and not at all conducive to my new way of life. There were a number of non-vegetarian dishes and alcoholic drinks, but what disturbed me the most was the presence of fifteen dancing girls who were there to entertain the guests. I immediately felt an urge to leave the place. Then I thought that the officers who had invited me might take offence if I left. I therefore decided to stay but avoid any indulgence. However, after being there for a short while, the old attractions lurking in some dark corner of my mind reared their heads. Soon my resistance collapsed and I succumbed to the temptations.

I returned home well past midnight. I could not sleep as my conscience was pricking me severely. I sat for meditation but was unable to concentrate, as my mind was very restless. This continued the next day as well, so I thought of going to Jamalpur. However, I couldn't muster the courage to visit Baba. For the next four days I was in a state of intense internal turmoil.

On the fifth day, however, I felt as if a strong force was pulling me to Jamalpur, and in the evening at around seven I found myself in front of Baba's house. Shortly after I arrived, Baba came out and I stepped forward and greeted him reverentially. He did not even look at me and set off at his usual fast pace. I had to run to keep up with him. It was quite apparent that he was extremely upset with me. Not a word was spoken on the way.

When we reached the Tiger's Grave, I wanted to remove his footwear. He jerked his feet forcefully and I withdrew. He

then reclined on the grave. Slowly I extended my hand to massage his feet, but he pulled them back. I knew the reason for his anger only too well, but even so I was impudent enough to ask him the reason for it. He started to scold me harshly and I was completely taken aback by the severity of his tone. Until that evening, whenever I met him, he had shown me a lot of love and affection, and that was one of the main reasons why I had been so attracted to him. Although I knew that Baba would be angry with me, I had not expected such a drastic change of attitude. I have never been scolded by anyone except my father and that too only in my childhood. All my life I have only scolded others and have never tolerated even the slightest insult from anyone else. That day, after so many years, someone was scolding me harshly and it was very severe in both words and tone, yet I felt a deep affection behind Baba's anger. A soothing feeling started to arise inside me. I could not understand the reason for such a strange experience. Finally, he asked, "Why did you go to the Sultanganj Guesthouse on the night of Holi?"

"I did not go; I was taken there," I said weakly, trying to defend myself.

"Maybe so, but when you saw the atmosphere was not conducive why did you stay there? You had an urge to leave, didn't you? You should have excused yourself and left after greeting the others. That was why your resistance crumbled and you drank alcohol and indulged in your previous vices with your old acquaintances."

Despite knowing that I could not hide anything from Baba, I involuntarily denied it.

He became furious at my denial. "You know that you cannot hide anything from me. Still you have the temerity to deny it, you scoundrel."

Then he went on to reveal the names of several officials who had been present. I was surprised to hear so many details.

“How do you know all this? Were you also there?” I blurted out. He gave me a hard slap. Shocked by his reaction, I immediately understood that it was not proper of me to ask the guru such a question.

“Where am I not present? I am everywhere, watching everything. I wanted to punish you then and there, but thought that it was not entirely your mistake that you had gone there. You were pressured to go there. But today you have to decide one way or the other. Either you give up your vices or you give me up.”

“I cannot give you up but I am also not capable of taking a firm determination to give up my vices. If you are as powerful as you appear to be, remove these weaknesses from me.”

“Are you trying to test me?”

“I am not testing you. You know that my profession is such that I have to associate with such kinds of people. So having indulged in these vices all these years, sometimes I may fall prey to them again. That is why you have to remove these bad habits from me. Otherwise I will have to give up my profession. And then how will I maintain my family?”

“Yes, I know that you need to mix with such kinds of people for your livelihood. You know that the lotus grows in mud but the muddy water never sticks to its leaves. You should also become like that, unaffected by a polluted environment while remaining in it.”

“Baba, I am not a lotus leaf. I am a human being with all my failings. I cannot guarantee that I will remain unaffected by these things. If you have the power of God, please save me from the decadence of the society I live in. I leave it entirely up to you.”

He paused for a while. “All right, when you leave it entirely up to me, I will have to do something.” With that he



lifted me up and seated me on his lap, then showered me with a lot of love and affection, more than I had ever received even from my parents. It was a divine experience, heavenly bliss, and I got lost in it. I don't know how much time had passed. I woke up when Baba interrupted my ecstatic state, calling, "Wake up, Aniruddha. It's time for us to go back, as you have to catch the train."

On the way back he suddenly stopped. He looked at me and said, "I see that in your house there is a lot of opposition to your spiritual life."

"Yes, Baba, no one in my family likes my new way of life. My wife would like me to return to my old ways. My father is upset that I stopped performing the few traditional rituals I used to do earlier. For the last three months he hasn't talked to me."

"But your father is a very good man. Don't worry. The time will come when all your family members will also follow this path."

He accompanied me up to the station. Before departing he reminded me, "Keep away from bad people except where it is absolutely essential for your profession."

As I watched him walk away I felt that my heart was being wrenched, as if a part of me was leaving with him. "Who is he?" I wondered, but could not find a clear answer. One thing I did understand, however, that he is closer to me than my deepest self.

From that day, I developed an acute aversion to non-vegetarian food and alcohol. My other vices also disappeared. Several of my old companions tried repeatedly to induce me to return to my old ways. But due to my intense attraction to Baba, I developed enough mental strength to withstand all their efforts. Soon, one by one, all the members of my family except my father learned meditation and started to practice it sincerely. Consequently, I felt that the fog that had enveloped our house

until then had vanished. The atmosphere in the house changed completely for the better. But my father still continued to be a staunch opponent of Ananda Marga. I waited for the materialisation of Baba's prediction that he would eventually embark on the spiritual path.

### The Reluctant Devotee

Throughout his life, Aniruddha's father, Narasingh, had been very devoted to God. When his eldest son took initiation in 1956, he was happy to see the dramatic change in his character. At the same time, however, he was disturbed to see him abandon idol worship and other traditional religious practices. Aniruddha often told his father that since he was already a great devotee and did long *kirtan* of Lord Krishna every day, he would make rapid progress if he practised meditation. However, Narasingh resisted, saying that he would never accept anything that went against the traditional ways. This frequently led to arguments between the father and the son, and finally Narasingh even stopped talking to Aniruddha. His anger was exacerbated when his second son, Harindra, also took initiation shortly afterwards on his brother's urging.

One day in mid-1957, Narasingh visited Aniruddha in Bhagalpur. He made a surprise request to Aniruddha to take him to his acharya, Chandranath. He said that he wanted to have a discussion with the person who had initiated his son into the path that had brought so many unexpected changes in him. After a short discussion with Chandranath, Narasingh decided to take initiation. Soon afterwards he went into a spiritual trance for several hours. When he returned to a normal state, he told his son with tears in his eyes, "Aniruddha, I should have learned meditation long ago when you first told me about it. It was a big mistake; I wasted time arguing with you for so many precious months. It was like wasting so many lives."

A day or two after his initiation, he insisted on Aniruddha taking him to see the guru. Aniruddha hesitated, as his father was a very new initiate, and he wanted to take permission from Baba first. But Narasingh insisted and refused to take any food until his son agreed

to take him to Jamalpur that very day. Finally, Aniruddha yielded to his father's wishes. After reaching Jamalpur, he explained what had happened to his father to Pranay, and took permission for him to join the Field Walk. They then went to Baba's Keshavpur residence and waited. As soon as Baba saw Narasingh he said, "Narasingh, so you have finally come. I have been waiting for you for several years. I asked Mahadev from Bhagalpur, who is originally from Ekchhari near your village, to bring you. But he never tried to contact you. Anyway for everything there is a proper time<sup>1</sup>"

Narasingh was in tears until they reached the Tiger's Grave, and upon reaching there he held Baba's feet and wept profusely. Baba gave him tremendous affection. When Narasingh became a little normal he said, "Baba, generally it is not easy for a son to pay back the filial debt he owes to his father, but my son, Aniruddha, has more than repaid me by bringing me to you. I am eternally indebted to him for that."

From the day of his initiation, Narasingh was very sincere in his sadhana. He practised meditation for a very long time each day. He would be up early in the morning and after taking a bath he would sit for hours in sadhana. This was a routine which he never broke, and Baba once commended him saying that after his initiation, Narasingh had never seen the sun rise even once, as he would always be doing sadhana at that time. He had a special devotional relationship with Baba and would go to Jamalpur as frequently as possible. Once when he went to Jamalpur, he took some mangoes from his garden for Baba. When Baba saw them he said, "Narasingh, don't you know that Margis are not permitted to bring anything when they come to see me?"

"Baba, you are the real owner of my property and I am only the custodian. So what I have brought actually belongs to you and not to me."

Baba smiled and fell silent. Thereafter Narasingh was given permission to bring whatever he wanted to Baba, and he was one of

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<sup>1</sup> Mahadev later admitted that Baba had informed him about getting one Narasingh of Trimohan initiated, but he had not taken it seriously.



the very few who had such a privilege. Every time he visited Baba, he would bring some food or the other. Sometimes it was home-made *pera* (a milk sweet) or fruits, at other times fresh vegetables or grains from his field. Because of this, he came to be known as Pera Baba among the Margis. In those days, there was a strict rule forbidding the Margis from bringing anything for Baba when they came for *guru darshan*. But in the case of Narasingh it was just the opposite – there was a standing instruction in Baba’s house that whatever he brought should be accepted. He also had blanket permission to go on Field Walk with Baba. While everyone else needed prior permission from the general secretary, Narasingh needed none. He also attended all the DMCs, to the point that once Baba humourously commented, “It is only Narasingh and myself who do not miss any DMC.”



## CHAPTER 20

# Strangers at the Tiger's Grave

One thing that greatly intrigued the Margis in those early days was Baba's association with a variety of mysterious visitors. The Margis knew very little about these people, except for the few shreds of information that Baba himself occasionally volunteered. From time to time these strangers would come to Jamalpur to meet him. In fact, they added another dimension to the mystery of who Baba was. Sometimes these mysterious individuals stayed in Jamalpur for an extended period, but kept aloof from the general populace.

### **The Madman of Keshavpur**

The earliest that anyone remembered seeing these unknown people in Jamalpur was in the mid-forties when Rameshvar Baita, a resident of Keshavpur and a classmate of Manas Ranjan, noticed some strangers who looked like mendicants, sitting on the veranda opposite Manas's house. The sight of wandering mendicants was not unusual in Indian towns. But what was unusual about these people was their strange appearance and the fact that they frequently sat on the same veranda opposite the house of his classmate Manas. Rameshvar was too young to attach any significance to this curious sight. He would see them there either in the morning hours or in the late afternoons or evenings. While passing by the house on his way to the playground or on his return, he sometimes saw Prabhatda, Manas's eldest brother, sitting on the veranda reading a newspaper.

Late one afternoon in the winter of 1944, as Rameshvar was returning from school with his friend Ganesh, who was also a resident of Keshavpur, they saw a man dressed in tattered clothes sitting opposite Manas's house. Rameshvar had seen him there for the past several days, and the local boys thought he was mad. Some youths were playing cards at the other end of the veranda. Ganesh dragged

Rameshvar over to watch the game. Rameshvar was not at all interested and wanted to leave, but Ganesh requested him to stay a few more minutes. After a minute or two Rameshvar said that he was in a hurry to get home. Again Ganesh requested him to stay for a few more minutes. The madman, who was sitting at the other end of the veranda singing, suddenly burst out laughing and said, "How foolish the people of Jamalpur are. The Lord of the Universe has taken birth in Jamalpur and is playing His divine drama here. Without even trying to know Him, these foolish people are wasting their time like this. These fools call me mad, but actually it is they who are mad." And he laughed uproariously.

"See, the madman says that the Lord of the Universe is here," said one of the youths grinning, and was joined by the rest who guffawed with laughter. As Rameshvar pulled Ganesh away and started to walk home, the youths were still making derisive comments and mocking the madman. But the words of that madman were still reverberating in his ears. To Rameshvar, neither his demeanour nor his words appeared to be those of a deranged person. Subsequently, whenever he passed that way, he would keenly observe the man, and what he had said would ring in his mind. After a few days the mysterious man disappeared and was never seen again.

In July 1955 Rameshvar took initiation from Baba. He heard from the other disciples that from his early days Baba had had many disciples who were great yogis. He then remembered the "madman" and seeing Baba sitting outside on the veranda, flipping through the pages of the day's newspaper. "Now I can understand what that 'madman' said," thought Rameshvar. He realised that the strange people must indeed have been great yogis or early disciples of his guru, who were sitting there hoping to catch a glimpse of the Master.

### **Service a Must for Salvation**

During the evening walks it was not uncommon for the Margis to see strange people waiting for Baba along the road leading to the polo ground. They were dressed in different ways. Some wore a shirt and pants, while others were clad in a dhoti and kurta, and yet others had a shawl or cloth wrapped around them. Occasionally a visitor



came in tattered clothes, looking like a beggar. Their manner of paying their respects to Baba also varied. Some lifted their hands above their heads and addressed him as "*Prabhu*". Others greeted him as "*Jai Shiva Shankar*", while yet others greeted him as "*Shri Hari*". Sometimes these mysterious visitors would come to the Tiger's Grave and wait at a distance. Baba would then ask the Margis to go and sit on the grave of the British hunter, a few feet away. At this distance, they could only see the silhouettes of these figures as they prostrated before Baba. They sat down on the ground in front of him unlike the Margis who always sat beside him on the Tiger's Grave. What transpired between each visitor and Baba remained largely unknown. Kalikananda was one of those mysterious people who visited Baba once in a while. Apart from him and four others, the identity of rest of the visitors remained a mystery.

On several occasions these strangers waited for Baba on his way to the Tiger's Grave. Then he would ask the accompanying Margis to either return home or walk behind at a distance, while he spoke with the mysterious visitor. Although the Margis were very curious about them, Baba seldom revealed who they were. Even upon repeated requests, he never provided much information about them except to say that they were great sadhakas from faraway places. Some of them were disciples he had initiated before he founded Ananda Marga. They had become highly elevated due to intense sadhana. Others were not his disciples, but were highly evolved souls who had come for his *darshan*. Several of these great souls came to get Baba's permission to finally depart from this world and permanently merge in the Supreme Consciousness.

Generally, the Margis would restrain their curiosity and not enquire further, knowing that Baba would not appreciate their excessive inquisitiveness. But a few, such as Nagina and Haragovinda, sometimes took the liberty to probe further. Only rarely did Baba oblige them by providing a few details. Years later Nagina recounted one such experience:

On a few occasions during our evening walk, I saw mysterious people waiting for Baba along the way. Whenever

they appeared, Baba would ask us to go back. That was very exasperating and we always felt great disappointment because to miss those blissful moments with Baba was very frustrating. Our frustration was further aggravated by the fact that we did not know who they were. Whenever we asked Baba about them, his standard reply was that we should not be too inquisitive and should not try to know more than he wanted us to. One evening Lalan, Vindhychal and I were with Baba during the Field Walk. At an intersection in the east colony, we saw someone sitting beside the road with his face turned away from us. As we passed, he stood up and stretched, saying, "Hari, Hari, my back hurts because I have sat here for such a long time."

Baba turned, and with a slight nod gestured for him to follow. He then continued walking. I saw the man following us at some distance and felt anxious that again this stranger might take our precious time with Baba. So I mentally started to plead, "Baba, don't do it this time. Please don't send us back again today."

Hardly had I finished thinking this when Baba stopped and turned to me laughing, "Nagina, how would it be if I sent you all back now?"

I protested, "No Baba, I am not going to go back. You can't keep doing this. You have sent us back from the field several times already. I am not ready to go back today."

Baba spoke in a very affectionate but persuasive tone, "See, Nagina, he has walked such a long way just to see me. You cannot imagine how much trouble he has gone through to come here. So if I don't give him time, won't he be hurt? All of you see me very frequently, but they see me only once or twice in their lifetime. He has something important to discuss with me. That is why you should all go back now."

Seeing Baba in such a gentle mood, I saw an opportunity to probe further. I said, "Baba, at least tell us who he is."

“He is a great *siddha* yogi from a place near Viratnagar in Nepal. He has come from so far, mostly on foot.”

Realising the great struggle he must have gone through walking so far, we unwillingly agreed to go back.

As we walked past him on our return, I tried to observe him closely by the light of the moon. He had a beard and wore rags, but his face was radiant. Normally people would take him to be a madman or a beggar. I became very curious to know more about him, and when we reached the intersection, I hit on an idea which I discussed with the other two. “See, every time these mysterious people come to meet Baba, we don’t find out anything about them, as Baba does not allow us to have any contact with them. Now this is our opportunity. Why don’t we each position ourselves on one of the three different routes he will have to take on his return? After finishing his talk with Baba, the stranger will have to walk past one of us, and whoever sees him first will intercept him. Then we can learn more about him and his relationship with Baba which Baba does not want to reveal.”

They agreed to the plan, and each of us waited at a different spot hoping to catch the stranger. More than an hour or two passed but there was no trace of the mysterious stranger or Baba. As it was getting late, I went up to where the other two were to enquire if they had seen the stranger. No, the stranger had not crossed their path, and we were all equally frustrated. Together we slowly walked towards the Tiger’s Grave to see if Baba and the stranger were still there, but to our surprise, the place was empty. As we stood there not knowing what to do, I felt that the tomb and the trees nearby were laughing at us mockingly. I felt frustrated and baffled as to how Baba and the stranger had so mysteriously given us the slip.

Some days later I again had a chance to go on Field Walk with Baba. As we walked, Baba asked, “Nagina, the last time after you returned from the field, I think the three of you made a plan to catch that *siddha* yogi who came to meet me. Were



you able to talk to him? Did he tell you any of the secrets which you were so eager to know?"

"No, Baba," I replied, a little embarrassed at being exposed. "We kept watch until it was quite late, but somehow he slipped past us unnoticed. We could not understand how you also left without us seeing you."

Baba laughed. "You were three. Even if you had been three hundred, you would still not have been able to catch him, unless he wished to be caught. He was a highly elevated soul."

I begged him, "Baba, kindly tell me what work he had with you that was so important that he walked all the way from Nepal to meet you."

"That stranger was a God-realised person. For several years he has been practising sadhana very intensely. His sadhana is complete, and he wanted to leave his physical body and attain liberation. He came here to ask my permission."

I wanted to know what it meant to "leave his physical body".

Even before I could ask Baba began to explain. "The physical departure of such great men is different from the death of others. Normally people die due to some physical or psychic cause. When these spiritually evolved persons leave their body for the last time, there may or may not be any physical or psychic cause, but the main reason is spiritual in nature. After attaining God-realisation, when they leave the body, that is the end of the chain of birth, death and rebirth. They renounce their body of their own volition using a special yogic technique and become one with the Supreme Consciousness. That is called *mukti* (liberation) or *moksha* (salvation). So their death is not the same as what is commonly understood by the term. It is the culmination of the eternal journey that began from the Supreme Consciousness. That is the final desideratum, the final goal of all human beings; it is the ultimate goal of all living beings and of the entire creation. Such final passing away is called *mahamrityu* or death due to a spiritual cause."

"Baba, was the Viratnagar yogi your disciple?"

"No, I did not initiate him. His guru is not alive. He too has attained liberation."

"If you are not his guru, then why did he have to take permission from you to renounce his body?"

"There are some rules governing the spiritual realm. When the Sadguru is physically present on the planet, if any sadhaka wishes to leave his body and merge with the Supreme, he must ask the Sadguru's permission in person."

"How did he know that the Sadguru is present here?"

"Sadhakas who are very advanced in their sadhana are able to see me in their meditation."

"Do all these strange people who come here to see you, only come to take permission to give up their body and attain liberation?"

"Not all. Some of them come here just to see me. Nagina, you are all extremely fortunate to have my company so easily, whenever you wish. Generally only those who are very advanced in their sadhana are able to come and see me and that too for a short period once or twice or three times in their lives."

Seeing that Baba was in the mood to talk about the secrets of these mysterious visitors, I tried to investigate further.

"Then what happened, Baba?"

"Although he had completed his sadhana, he had not done any service to humanity. So I asked him to keep his body a while longer and do some service. Previously this was not necessary. One could attain liberation through intense sadhana alone. I have changed the rule."

"What is the new rule?"

"Everyone is indebted to society, as we live and grow here. So what we owe society has to be paid back before we finally

depart from this world and merge with the Supreme. That is why I have made a new rule that one cannot attain liberation by sadhana alone. It is now compulsory to serve society selflessly in order to achieve liberation.”

“How long does he have to do service?”

“I asked him to do social service intensively for three months. But Nagina, when a person attains the state of God-realisation, due to the intense attraction of the Macrocosmic Nucleus, i.e. Parama Purusha, the desire to merge with the Supreme becomes extreme. In that state it becomes unbearable to maintain one’s separate identity. So he told me that he would not be able to maintain his separation for so long and begged me to reduce the time period. Therefore I reduced it to one month. He said that to maintain separation from Parama Purusha even for that long would be unbearable, and pleaded with me to reduce it further. I then reduced it to two weeks. He again begged me to reduce it further, and only when I reduced his period of service to three days did he agree. Before departing, he said, ‘Even three days of separation from the Supreme is unbearable, but to honour your instructions, I accept it.’

“Nagina, I know that what he said was the truth. In the state he was in, it becomes impossible to resist the attraction of the Supreme. Like a meteor rushing towards the earth attracted by its powerful gravitational pull, the mind wants to race back to Parama Purusha, but the only difference is that the intensity of the attraction for Parama Purusha is infinitely greater than the attraction of the meteor for the earth.”

“Baba, what is the service he has been asked to do, and where will he do it?”

“I cannot tell you that. I have already told you many things. Now you should restrain your curiosity,” said Baba, ending the discussion.

After a few days news came that the body of an elderly sadhu had been found near the railway tunnel at the edge of Jamalpur. Some



days later Haragovinda, who had heard the story from Nagina, asked Baba, "Is the old person who was found dead near the railway tunnel the sadhaka from Viratnagar who had come a few days before to seek permission to leave his body?"

"Yes, he is the one," Baba confirmed. "After giving up his body, he has merged with the Supreme Consciousness forever."

One moonlit evening Acharya Raghunath and some other Margis were also witness to a similar incident. While sitting with Baba on the Tiger's Grave, they saw the silhouette of a person a short distance away. As he came closer and prostrated before Baba, the Margis saw that he was wearing tattered clothes and had long hair and a beard. Baba asked the Margis to make space for the stranger. Instead of sitting on the Tiger's Grave, he sat on the ground in front of Baba. For a while he stared silently at Baba, his eyes full of tears. The Margis remained silent, watching him closely. He then closed his eyes and fell over in a yogic trance. Hesitatingly Raghunath asked Baba about him. Baba said that he was their brother disciple but did not divulge any further information. Over an hour passed before the yogi came out of his trance. Then, as Baba got up to leave, he prostrated before him. The Margis observed that there was no verbal communication between them.

A week later, Raghunath again got the chance to go with Baba during the evening walk. As they neared the Tiger's Grave, Baba suddenly stopped and did *namaskar*. As the Margis couldn't see anyone, they were curious to know who Baba had greeted but were afraid to ask, so they waited hoping that Baba would volunteer the information. As they sat on the Tiger's Grave, Baba asked Raghunath, "Do you remember the last time a stranger came to visit me, I said he was your brother disciple?"

"Yes, Baba, I remember."

"Now he is free from all the bondages of Prakriti and has attained liberation. That day he came to ask permission to leave his body."

"Baba, we did not hear him say anything to you," said Raghunath.

“Whatever he wanted to say, he communicated to me mentally, and I answered him in a similar manner. Since you were all here, he did not want to communicate verbally.”

“Baba, who is he? And where is he from?”

“His name is Nageshvar Jha, and he is from the Mithila area. He did not have a place to call his own. He was working as a cook before I initiated him during my student days. After that he practised intense sadhana deep in the Himalayas and became totally disconnected from the world. There have been many people like him who have meditated like that.”

“Baba, you don’t give them any duty to serve society?”

“Certainly I do. They have all been given specific assignments to keep the light of spirituality aglow in this world. Their contributions will remain unknown to people at large, and their names will not appear anywhere in history. They care nothing for such trifles.”

Unknown sadhakas such as these continued to appear from time to time for as long as Baba lived in Jamalpur. But their identities remained a mystery. The only thing Baba would say about them was that they were great spiritual aspirants from the Himalayas or from different parts of India who wanted to remain unknown to the world.

### **Totapuri’s Physical Departure**

There was, however, one person, who came to see Baba one evening sometime in the middle of 1961, who was very well-known. Haragovinda, who was one of the three people with Baba that evening, related what happened:

“One evening during Field Walk, Haraprasad, Sushil and I were with Baba. As we approached the church near the field, we saw a tall sadhu standing at the side of the road under a tree. He had matted locks tied on top of his head and was half-naked, with something tied around his waist. As we came near, he raised his hands above his head in salutation. Baba accepted his greeting and motioned him to follow. He asked us to walk a few steps behind, saying that someone had come to see him. Instead of taking the usual route through the polo ground

towards the Tiger's Grave, Baba took the road around the side of the ground, accompanied by the sadhu. After going round the entire field, he sat on the Tiger's Grave. He asked us to sit on the grave of the Englishman. We were intensely curious to know who this stranger was and for what purpose he had come to see Baba.

The stranger stayed for a long time, and we saw him prostrate before leaving. Baba left the Tiger's Grave immediately afterwards, much earlier than usual. On the way back, I asked Baba who the sadhu was. Baba said that he was Totapuri, the guru of Shri Ramakrishna. We couldn't believe that Totapuri could still be alive. Baba said that he was about 270 years old, a great hatha yogi and Tantra sadhaka. It was due to the power of all these practices that he was able to live so long. Baba's words took some time to sink into my mind. Extremely curious, I asked why Totapuri had come to see him.

Baba said "He has completed his sadhana and the work that he has been assigned. He came to take permission to leave his body and attain salvation. Totapuri will not be born again after this."

I asked Baba where Totapuri was going to leave his body.

Baba said that he had designated a specific place for that, but he refused to disclose the exact location. After that we did not have the courage to ask anything further<sup>1</sup>."

It was not uncommon for such people to come to meet Baba during his evening walks. On several occasions, Margis accompanying Baba during the Field Walk had witnessed these things while sitting on the Englishman's grave. Normally such occurrences caused little discussion among the Margis, but the sensational news

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<sup>1</sup> Among the series of interviews with Haragovinda, one was specifically regarding the incident in which Totapuri requested Baba's permission to leave his physical body permanently and attain salvation. Sushil who was present at the meeting that momentous evening in 1961, also participated in the interview with Haragovinda. They were requested to relive the incident to the best of their ability, particularly to ascertain the exact spot where Totapuri waited for Baba, and how they walked around the polo ground. The interview was video recorded.



of Totapuri's visit created a big stir for two reasons. One was that Totapuri was known as the guru of Shri Ramakrishna, a great saint of the nineteenth century. Secondly, the fact that he was alive after all these years was unbelievable. The news spread far and wide, and even Margis in distant places heard about it.

Manoharlal Agarwal, a lecturer in a college in Jaipur and an *acharya*, was one of those who heard this news. He was excited to hear that such a great person had come to see the Sadguru to take his permission to leave his physical body. He shared the news with a friend of his, Dr. Rajesh Chauhan. Dr. Rajesh ridiculed Manoharlal for believing such incredible stories. He said that when Totapuri initiated Shri Ramakrishna, he was already believed to be more than a hundred years old, and Shri Ramakrishna had been initiated about a hundred years ago. He asked Manoharlal, "How can an educated person like you believe such a cock-and-bull story? The disciples of all sorts of gurus create such stories in order to prop up the guru's image, and this is one of those stories."

Manoharlal was influenced by his friend's words and thought that what he said made sense. He concluded that the story of Totapuri coming to take permission from Baba had been fabricated by some over-enthusiastic disciples in Jamalpur. He felt very bad about it and chided himself for believing such an incredible story. His faith in the Marga was shaken, and he grew cynical about many of the stories that the Margis talked about.

A few days later Dr. Chauhan went on pilgrimage to Varanasi and some other places for a few weeks. One day he unexpectedly showed up at Manoharlal's door. Even before Manoharlal could invite him inside he apologised to him.

"Agarwal Sahib, I want to apologise for accusing the Margis of fabricating stories about your guru. I do pranam to your great guru and ask for his forgiveness."

Manoharlal stared at him in surprise. "What happened to create such a change of heart in you, Rajeshji?"

Rajesh explained, "During my pilgrimage I visited Varanasi. In Varanasi, I came to know that the information about Totapuri coming to take permission from your guru to leave his body must indeed be true."

"How did that happen?" asked Manoharlal with great curiosity.

"In Varanasi I went to see Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, who is a great scholar and an authority on Tantra. While introducing myself, I told him that although I live in Jaipur, I originally came from Haryana. Hearing this, Pandit Gopinathji commented that Haryana had produced great saints like Totapuri. To my surprise he said that Totapuri left his body only very recently and that he had lived for more than two hundred and fifty years.

"That gave me a jolt. After that, nothing that Pandit Gopinathji said registered in my mind, as all the while all I could think about was what you had told me about Totapuri coming to take permission from your guru to leave his body. I then realised that what you had said must be true. Otherwise how did the Ananda Margis know that Totapuri passed away only recently and that he had lived for over two hundred and seventy years? Immediately I mentally apologised to your *gurudeva* and begged him to pardon me for making insulting comments about him and his disciples. That is why I have rushed over to see you, even though I arrived only this morning. I am again begging your apology for the insulting remarks I made about your guru and his disciples."

In June 1965 a group of Margis from Cooch Behar in North Bengal went to Jamalpur. One evening during their stay there, these Margis gathered around Abhedananda, Baba's Personal Assistant, and requested him to tell them some of his very strange experiences with Baba.

He said, "Something strange happened one evening a few years back. While we were sitting on the Tiger's Grave, Baba suddenly folded his hands and did namaskar, as if he was greeting someone. We didn't see anyone else around, so I asked him who he was greeting. Baba said, 'The great yogi, Totapuri, has just now left his body and attained salvation. I was paying my respects to Totapuri.'"

This stunning piece of information about Shri Ramakrishna's guru astounded the Margis. They did not know what to make of it and what else to ask. Abhedananda got up begging to be excused, so that he could complete his evening meditation. After walking a few steps, he turned around and said, "Only a few days before that evening Totapuri had come to take permission from Baba to seek his salvation."

## CHAPTER 21

# Conversion of a Communist

With the start of the New Year of 1956, an increasing number of Margis began to volunteer to become acharyas and devote time to spreading the ideals of Ananda Marga. Inspired by Baba, some of the womenfolk also offered their services to propagate the mission. Rampari Devi, the wife of Chandranath, became the first female acharya of the Marga. Many more women followed suit. The Marga started to spread extensively throughout Bihar and Bengal and also gained entry into new states such as Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, and Assam. It was a period when the only Marga literature at that time, *Ananda Marga Elementary Philosophy*, was in Bengali. So the only way to propagate the Marga was by word of mouth. Many of the early initiates were relatives, friends, or acquaintance of the Margis.

Harindar, the twenty-five-year-old cousin of Chandranath, had a gnawing pain in his heart. His mother had died when he was only fourteen. Three years later he lost his father as well. There was no one in the world who could give him the same love and affection as his parents, and he missed them dearly. He was lonely and helpless, and often anguished over why he had to suffer the miserable fate of an orphan. He had to struggle hard to make ends meet. On top of that, he developed some physical ailments. He suffered from acute pain in his ears, and his hearing was becoming impaired. He also suffered from chronic pain in his right heel, which made walking difficult. He was unable to get proper medical treatment because of pecuniary difficulties. Due to all this, a feeling of utter hopelessness took hold of him.

One day, in an extremely depressed state, he decided to visit his cousin Chandranath. Seeing his melancholic state, Chandranath introduced him to the Marga and to meditation, but Harindar's initial reaction was one of scepticism. However, Chandranath gradually



convinced him about the benefits of meditation, and he was initiated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1956. Surprisingly, within a week after starting meditation, the pain in his ear vanished. A couple of weeks later, the pain in his heel also disappeared. He considered this to be due to the effects of meditation. The unexpected improvement in his physical condition, coupled with the effects of his meditation, lifted his depressed spirits. A month after his initiation Chandranath invited him to attend a DMC in Jamalpur, where he would receive the blessings of the guru. It was held in the premises of a local school. When Harindar arrived, the first thing that drew his attention was Bindeshvari singing with an admixture of crying and laughing at the same time. Harindar thought that just as he had been cured of his physical ailments, this madman had also been brought there to be cured of his madness. A short while later, Pranay asked some of the Margis to take Bindeshvari out onto the veranda. As he was being taken out of the hall, he said, "Pranayda, you may remove me from the hall, but I dare you to try to remove me from Baba's heart."

The hall had no decoration to signify a special occasion, apart from some flowers strewn on the bed where the guru would sit, and a few sticks of incense burning in a holder. These were the only ostentation at a seemingly austere function. As had many newcomers before him, Harindar thought that Baba would be a holy man draped in orange robes with flowing hair and a long beard. When he first saw Baba, he was disappointed and somewhat disillusioned to see that the guru was an unassuming, clean-shaven gentleman in immaculate white dhoti and kurta. "How could such an ordinary-looking person be a guru? On top of that, the flamboyance that I generally see at the programmes of spiritual gurus is entirely missing. Perhaps this guru is ordinary and not very powerful," he mused. Harindar's confusion increased further when Baba sat on the cot and looked around from one side of the room to the other, whereupon many of those present started to behave abnormally. Some began to cry, while others laughed, and yet others started to dance. A few were emitting loud guttural sounds of 'hum, hum' that pierced the air. Harindar was bewildered by their odd behaviour. "Did I come to a gathering of raving lunatics?" was his initial thought, but then consoled himself

with a sobering thought, "If that had been the case, my sensible cousin, Chandranath, would not have recommended the Marga so highly."

After Baba's discourse, the Margis performed Guru Puja. Shortly afterwards, Baba withdrew to the next room. Pranay then asked everyone to enter the room one by one to receive Baba's blessing. When Harindar's turn came, he entered the room, and as he prostrated, he slowly drifted into a deep spiritual trance. When he regained normal consciousness after a while, he heard a very sweet voice saying, "Harindar, get up, my boy, get up." There was no one else in the room except him and Baba. Tears started gushing down uncontrollably, but he couldn't understand the reason for it. He slowly got up and went out of the room. He then realised that something in him seemed to have changed. First, he noticed he had become very light, as if he was floating in the air. He also observed that inexplicable waves of happiness permeated every fibre of his being. He felt an intensely powerful attraction pulling him back towards Baba. Although the words he had spoken were only very few, Baba had flooded him with an intoxicating brew of love and affection that he had never experienced before, which left a powerful, lingering impression on him. After the DMC programme he followed the other Margis to the railway station. At the station, he again felt a powerful force pulling him back to Baba. He told the Margis that he wanted to go back to Baba. It was only with great difficulty that they managed to restrain him.

After his first meeting with Baba, the feeling of hopelessness and emptiness that had haunted Harindar ever since the untimely demise of his parents vanished completely. The parental love and affection that Baba showered him with far exceeded anything he had experienced in his whole life.

Those days, such experiences were common among new initiates who came to see their guru for the first time.

### **First Tattvasabha**

"I am thinking of introducing a new method of prachar. It will be called *Tattvasabha*," Baba informed Chandranath during an evening Field Walk at the end of April 1956.

“Baba, what is a Tattvasabha?” enquired Chandranath.

“A Tattvasabha is a public meeting where different speakers talk about various aspects of our philosophy. At the end of the talk, the speakers will field questions from the audience. Organise a Tattvasabha in your village.”

Chandranath came from a village called Gaddopur, about sixty kilometres north of Patna. “Yes Baba, I’ll do it,” he agreed.

“It might also turn into a debate about your philosophy, because some of the questions that the audience might ask may challenge your ideas. So everyone should be well prepared and be able to answer all the questions convincingly and also respond to criticism very calmly. You should welcome healthy criticism, because if you manage to give a convincing answer, while those who criticise you may not accept your logic, there will be others in the audience who will appreciate the rationality of your ideas. Your main motive should be to make the people understand what is right and what is wrong. As far as possible the speakers should speak in a language that can be easily understood by the local people, because if it needs to be translated, the impact of the ideas will be reduced,” Baba explained.

“During the Tattvasabha you should try to engage the local pundits in an open discussion to debate the merits of Ananda Marga philosophy as against the traditional Hindu ideas. Do not attack their beliefs. Explain your ideas logically. Generally, these pundits hold sway over the public’s view of traditional religion. If you establish the superiority of your ideas in a discussion with the pundits, the intelligent and rational-minded among the gathering will immediately accept the Marga’s ideals. Take Shiva Shankar, Harisadhan, and Ramtanuk with you. You should also take your wife and Ramtanuk’s wife, Ahalya, to contact the women. Before you leave, come and meet me, and I will give you some guidance about how to present your arguments.”

Before leaving for Gaddopur, Chandranath took everyone to Baba’s house in Keshavpur to receive his blessing. Baba again briefly summarized the concept of Tattvasabha and said, “Harisadhan should



give the opening lecture which will be about the merits of yoga sadhana. Shiva Shankar, you will speak about the practical value of sadhana and remove the wrong notions that people have about spirituality. Ramtanuk, you will talk about how human society is one and indivisible. Chandranath, you will answer the questions of the pundits and general public. The sort of questions that you are likely to face will be why we don't support idol worship and the caste system, and why before giving initiation we insist on the removal of the sacred thread and the *shika* (topknot). In any debate one important factor is to maintain one's cool, even if the opponent becomes aggressive. In fact, if the adversary loses his cool, that will be to your advantage. You should all remember this always."

Baba then dictated the answers to questions that were likely to be asked, and provided references from the scriptures to support his arguments. Turning to Rampari and Ahalya, Baba said, "You will go door to door and talk to the women, because many of them will hesitate to come to the open meeting. You all know that spirituality should be practised by the entire family, and village women traditionally lack exposure to new ideas." Baba then blessed them one by one.

Upon reaching Gaddopur, Chandranath informed all the villagers about the Tattvasabha, and the men of the village, both young and old, gathered in a mango grove in front of an ancient temple. Keeping in mind Baba's instructions, Chandranath had sent special invitations to the pundits of the village. They were dressed in dhotis, kurtas, and turbans, and they all had grave faces. They sat separately to show their special status. Some of them were well versed in Sanskrit and had a superiority complex because of their knowledge of the scriptures.

Harisadhan, Shiva Shankar, and Ramtanuk spoke along the lines dictated by Baba. Then Chandranath invited questions from the public. The most knowledgeable of the pundits, who had been given the title "Suvakta", meaning 'adept speaker', due to his proficiency in the scriptures, took the lead in asking questions. He asked the same questions that Baba had dictated the previous day. Since Chandranath

was well prepared, he replied logically to each question and quoted from the scriptures in support of his points. The pundit was at a loss what else to ask, as all his questions were adequately answered by Chandranath. Sensing his defeat in the debate, he lost his calm. He had not expected a police officer to quote so beautifully from the Vedas and other scriptures in support of his assertions. Showing unrestrained ire, he blurted out, "Why do you teach yoga sadhana to family people when it is only for those who renounce the world?"

Chandranath replied calmly, "Panditji, where has it been said that householders cannot practice yoga sadhana? The Bhagavat Gita, the highest philosophy of yoga, was expounded by Lord Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Was Arjuna a renunciant? The Bhagavat Gita was preached to convince Arjuna, who wanted to run away from his worldly responsibilities, that the lofty principles of yoga could be practised by all without renouncing their worldly duties. In fact, the Gita says that adherence to the highest ideals of yoga philosophy requires a person to take full responsibility for his worldly duties. So, yoga is beneficial for everyone who is living a normal family life and carrying out his or her worldly responsibilities."

This answer received resounding applause from the audience. Such a show of approval from the public infuriated the pundit further and he started to abuse the Margis, accusing them of being atheists and heretics who violated the dictums of the Vedas. Incensed by the undignified outburst of the pundit, Janak Kumar, a retired teacher and a respected elder of the village, said, "Panditji, we have heard enough of you parroting the same thing for years. You are like a bullock going around an oil mill, and we are tired of it. What these young men say is logical and rational. You seem to have no arguments to counteract what they are saying and instead you are attacking them. Please stop that right now." The villagers showed their approval for the rebuke given to the pundit through loud applause.

A large number of people showed interest in learning meditation, and all the six acharyas initiated people until late into the night. When they finished, some elderly people came to Chandranath and

requested him to explain *ashtapasha*, the eight fetters, and *shatripu*, the six enemies, which Harisadhan had mentioned in passing during his speech. Although Chandranath had heard Baba explain these two words some months back, he could not recall exactly what Baba had said. In order to avoid embarrassment, he replied that since it was very late, they should come back in the morning to discuss the topic. Before retiring to bed, he mentally requested Baba to save him from the discomfiture of not being able to explain *ashtapasha* and *shatripu*. That night he had a dream in which Baba explained them in detail and what one should do to overcome them. In the morning when Chandranath woke up, he vividly remembered everything that Baba had said in the dream. The curious elders showed up a short while later and Chandranath simply repeated whatever Baba had told him in his dream. They left completely satisfied.

After returning from Gaddopur, the acharyas met Baba and exuberantly recounted everything that had happened during the Tattvasabha. They explained in detail how the conceited pundit had been humbled by the public rebuke and how many of the villagers, including the women, eagerly learned meditation. Baba beamed in delight and kept nodding enthusiastically as they related every detail. After they finished and were about to leave, Baba motioned to Chandranath to come closer and asked with a wink, "And what about *ashtapasha* and *shatripu*? I think you had no difficulty in explaining them?" Chandranath was pleasantly surprised at this unexpected question. The others, who knew nothing about the incident, wondered why Baba had asked about it. Chandranath's eyes filled with tears, and he was unable to answer Baba, as the words of gratitude choked in his throat.

### **Measuring the Ocean of Knowledge**

Kshitij Chandra Singh had been a passionate believer in Marxism from his college days. He held the post of district secretary of the students' wing of the Communist Party, the Students Federation of India, while doing his postgraduate studies in agriculture at Sabour Agricultural College in Bhagalpur. He took pride in being a communist party cardholder. In 1956, he joined the Department of



Agriculture in Ranchi as an officer. A few days later, Devichand Sharma, an acharya of Ananda Marga, was transferred to Ranchi and became Kshitij's boss. One day Shambhu, a colleague of Kshitij, said, "Kshitij, the new officer talks a lot about God and meditation. He has invited me to a discussion. Would you like to join us?"

Kshitij enjoyed poking fun at anyone who talked about God, so he readily agreed. He thought this would be a good opportunity to attack Devichand's beliefs and to expose the hollowness of spirituality. Devichand gave a short introduction to meditation, explaining it in a scientific manner, and invited the audience to test its efficacy by practising it for a few days as an experiment. He added that if they were not satisfied, they were free to give it up at any time. He challenged his listeners to see for themselves if there was any value in it. Impressed by the scientific explanation of spirituality and Devichand's challenge, Kshitij decided to try it out to see if Devichand's claims were indeed true. He also wanted to find out its defects, so that he would be in a better position to challenge the acharya. He therefore took initiation. However, due to his communist convictions, he had a deep-seated conflict with the concept of meditation and spirituality, and hence did not practice it seriously enough to carry out the experiment.

One day Kshitij had some official work at the Sabour Agricultural College near Bhagalpur. Devichand advised him to pass by Jamalpur on his return to have Baba's darshan. By that time Kshitij had heard many extraordinary things about the guru from his acharya, but he did not believe any of it. He thought that at least this would be an opportunity to verify or disprove some of the claims. Years later, he recalled the memories of his first visit to Jamalpur:

When I reached Jamalpur, I learned that Baba was in Monghyr and so I proceeded to go there. My initial attitude was one of suspicion. When I arrived, I saw a woman who, after paying her obeisance to Baba, started to weep profusely while her body trembled and shook uncontrollably. I couldn't understand such peculiar behaviour. I also prostrated in the way my acharya had instructed me to do, although only half-

heartedly. The moment I got up, I felt a soothing energy pervade my being and my skin shuddered with horripilation. It was a very pleasant sensation. I wondered about the cause of this mysterious feeling, but could not find an answer.

Baba gave a short discourse about the need for sadhana in our life. "Human beings' thirst for happiness is limitless, and that is why the mind is never satisfied with anything. It always hankers for more and more. What is the means by which human beings search for limitless happiness? They do it through the sensory organs. But do the sensory organs have the capacity to provide limitless happiness? The reality is that their ability to provide enjoyment is very limited, as they become tired very quickly.

"Suppose you think that if you eat some delicious rasagulla you will get pleasure. How many can you eat? After a little while both the sensory organs and the mind will get tired of eating. Then you start to search for another source of sensory pleasure. Soon you realise that it too can no longer satisfy you. But your craving for limitless happiness remains unquenched, and you waste a major part of your life running from one object of pleasure to another. Gradually, you understand the futility of pursuing ephemeral sensory pleasures and feel a deep urge to search for a higher truth. In that worn-out state, you start to seek out the path of spirituality. But drained of physical and psychic strength, you find that you are incapable of persevering on that path. That is why I say that sadhana should be started at a very early age, when one is full of physical and psychic vitality." Baba then quoted a Sanskrit verse saying that dharma should be practised right from one's childhood.

I returned to the Jamalpur jagrti in Rampur Railway Colony. That night I could not sleep. I kept thinking about my unusual experience in Monghyr. The mysterious, blissful experience was haunting me and the words of Baba's discourse were still ringing in my mind. I felt, "Yes, it is true that sensory

pleasures are not the be-all and end-all of life.” I began to feel that there was some truth in Baba’s words. It is a fact that human beings cannot attain true happiness by running after sensory pleasures. I felt that there was a deeper reality beyond the perceptible world, which I had been vainly denying until that moment. “The ideals of communism have transformed me into a cynic and nihilist. I have indeed wasted a precious part of my life,” I rued. For the first time, I realised that my belief in communism had blinded me to the higher truth of life, and I decided from then on to actively search for that higher truth.

With this resolve firmly rooted in my mind, I sat down to meditate in Baba’s room at the jagrti. I became completely absorbed in my meditation and stayed there for a very long time. The more I meditated, the more I felt attracted to it. I realised that meditation was not the dogma that I had considered it to be and felt great remorse that I had not taken it seriously earlier. Tears streamed profusely down my cheeks, and despite all my efforts, I couldn’t check them. Somehow the tears seemed to wash away the old Kshitij, the incorrigible communist and avowed atheist. “I must change my attitude and find out what spirituality is all about,” I decided. I continued to meditate despite tremendous physical discomfort. By morning I felt as if a complete transformation had taken place in my inner being that was now lost in tranquillity and bliss. I composed a song expressing my new-found feelings.

Later that morning Baba came to the jagrti and gave a short discourse extolling the virtues of devotion. I wondered how, if what he said was true, one could develop devotion. The moment I finished thinking, Baba turned to me and said, “Devotion develops through the process of sadhana. Do you understand?”

I was surprised to realise that Baba even knew my thoughts. After the conclusion of the discourse, he asked me to sing the song that I had composed in the morning. Again I was pleasantly surprised that nothing can remain hidden from Baba.



In that song there was a line which said that I was an insignificant entity. Baba stopped me when I reached that line and said that nobody should think that he or she is insignificant or a sinner. "Everyone is immortal, and all of you are the children of the Supreme Entity. No one should ever think that he is Ramadas, the servant of the Supreme Entity; one should think he is Ramasvarup, the personification of the Supreme. Similarly, one should never entertain the thought, 'I am a sinner. I am a sinner.' I might have committed sins in the past, but I am the progeny of the Divine Father. When I have taken shelter in Him, I don't have to worry about anything else."

While I realised that Baba was able to know our thoughts, I still doubted that he was all-knowing as had been claimed by his disciples. I had a small sapling of magnolia with me. I wanted to test him properly before accepting him as an all-knowing guru. As he was leaving the jagrti, I took out the sapling and showed it to him, and asked, "Baba, what is this plant and its botanical name?"

Even an expert would have found it difficult to correctly identify that small sapling as the leaves had not yet taken a distinct shape. I pretended that I didn't know and wanted to learn from him. To my astonishment, Baba immediately replied that it was a particular variety of magnolia, and then proceeded to give a long talk about the different varieties of magnolia around the globe, their local names, their botanical names, the utility of the flower, and the method of extracting its scent to make perfume. His talk went on for nearly half an hour. Finally, he said the botanical name of this particular variety was *Magnolia Grandiflora*.

I was flabbergasted by the sheer depth of his knowledge. Even an expert would not have known so many details about the magnolia, its history and practical utility.

After he finished speaking, he looked into my eyes, "Do you think that maybe Baba knows a little bit?" he asked,

holding his finger and thumb close together to show a tiny pinch, and then walked away with a sweet smile.

I felt embarrassed that I had tried to measure the vast ocean of his knowledge with my miniscule intellect. While returning to Ranchi that evening, I realised that the ghost of communist dogma had been totally exorcised from me and my conversion to spirituality was complete.

Kshitij later became an acharya and a pillar of the Marga in Ranchi and then in several other places where he was posted for work. Even after his retirement he continued to be a source of inspiration and guidance to the Margis.

### **Rectifying Margis' Faults**

As the days passed, Baba started to address the shortcomings of the Margis as well as the problems they faced in their individual and family lives. His aim was to help them to become ideal people, and he had his own inimitable way of going about it. Seeing his fatherly concern, the Margis considered Baba not only as a spiritual guide but also as a member of their family, and even turned to him for advice on simple family matters. On some occasions, the way he treated them made them feel that he was also their guardian. For example, one day Baba was in his house in Keshavpur talking to Pranay about organisational matters. Suddenly he paused and said, "See, Viveka is mistreating his wife Kausalya, and she is shouting, 'Baba help me! Baba help me!' Come on, let's go to their house."

Vivekananda Singh was an employee of the Railway Workshop. He had been initiated by Baba in early 1954. Later everyone else in the house was initiated as well. Baba and Pranay rushed over to his house in Rampur Colony. From the gate Baba called out, "Viveka, Viveka." Hearing Baba's voice, Kausalya ran out, followed by Vivekananda. Both of them were very surprised to see Baba standing at the gate. Kausalya fell at Baba's feet crying, "Baba, save me. I have no one except you." And she started to sob loudly. Baba glared at Vivekananda and scolded him severely, "You brute! You are

behaving inhumanly with your wife. Is that your manliness? You should be ashamed of yourself for behaving like this with a helpless woman. Do you know what your children will think of you when they grow up if they see their mother is being ill-treated by their father? They will lose all their respect for you. They will also lack the finer human qualities and will ultimately be ruined. Is it good for a sadhaka to behave like this with any woman, and particularly with his wife?"

Seeing how much his behaviour had upset Baba, Vivekananda hung his head in shame. He said that he had realised his mistake and promised to mend his ways, and that he would never ever repeat such behaviour in the future. After Baba cooled down, he told Kausalya, "Kausalya, the women of the house have a greater role to play in maintaining the peace and tranquillity of the house than the men. So you should always be careful that none of your thoughts or actions disturbs the peace of the family."

Turning back to Vivekananda, Baba said, "Viveka, manliness lies in protecting and maintaining the honour of the weak, and not in taking advantage of it. A man who ill-treats women or the weak betrays his status as a man; he is unchivalrous, and such behaviour shows that he is a weakling. Remember, I will be watching you every moment to ensure that you honour your word and really change your ways. If you ever fail to honour the word you have just given me, you will face severe consequences. I will instruct Nature to punish you then and there. Remember it."

As Baba got up to leave, Kausalya brought a glass of milk for him and Pranay. Baba declined it, saying that since the tranquillity in the house had been broken, he would not accept any food there. Then he quoted a Sanskrit verse signifying that food from a place where the peace is disturbed is harmful to both body and mind.

There were many other occasions like this where Baba took a strong person to task for tormenting a weaker one.

### **Humbling Vanity of Physical Strength**

Once, Hanuman Prasad Singh, a young Margi from a village in Dharbanga district who had a very strong and muscular body, came for Baba's darshan at the Rampur Colony jagrti. Baba gave a short



discourse explaining that it was the energy of Parama Purusha that makes the sun and moon shine. Even the wind blows due to His power. The lightning also gets its energy from Parama Purusha as do the stars and planets. From a tiny ant to a colossal galaxy, everything is only able to move because of the power it derives from the supreme source of everything. Baba quoted from the Vedas in support of his statements. He then turned to Hanuman Prasad and asked him to stand up. But Hanuman Singh did not move. Pretending to be angry, Baba rebuked him, "Stand up, stupid."

Still he did not move at all. Pranay, Sachinadan, and Dasharath told Hanuman to obey Baba and stand up, but he continued to sit there. Everyone was annoyed at his rude behaviour. He just sat blinking at everyone without saying a word. Baba said in a remonstrating tone, "You have great pride because you have a lot of strength and you always bully weak people. Is it for this purpose that you have been given such a strong physical body? Let everyone see how much strength you have. I am ordering you to stand up now."

As the others grew increasingly puzzled by his unresponsiveness, Baba continued, "How will he stand up? All his strength has been seized and he can't even move his limbs or even open his mouth. He never misses a chance to show off his physical strength in front of others. He also has the bad habit of mistreating others without any reason. He thinks that by doing so, he will be able to establish his superiority over them. See what a defective psychology that is. Now let him show us his physical strength. This is the consequence of having pride in one's strength and harassing innocent people."

Tears flowed down from the young man's eyes as he sat motionless. Baba then commanded him to give his word that he would never again use his physical strength to intimidate innocent people and that he would do good to everyone. He indicated his assent with a slight movement of his head.

Then Baba said, "All right. Now I am restoring your strength. But if again I see you bullying others, all your physical strength will be seized then and there and you will become an invalid. You should

always remember that there is an Entity that controls all the power in the universe, and you also derive your strength from that Entity. Your physical prowess has not been given to you to harass innocent people but to protect them from wrongdoers." Baba then restored his normal physical abilities.

Hanuman Singh prostrated before Baba and resolved to mend his bad behaviour. He had learned a big lesson that day.

### **Discarding Conventional Worship**

Often, after practising meditation for some days, the Margis would start to feel that the ritualistic worship they had been performing all along was a waste of time, so they gave up these traditional practices and continued with their sadhana. However, there were cases where Margis found it difficult to renounce their previous forms of worship completely.

Pratibha was an employee of the Health Department in Jamalpur. Like any other Hindu household, Pratibha's house had a prayer room full of pictures of gods and goddesses. To propitiate them all, she would routinely burn incense sticks and camphor, and together with a lighted oil lamp wave them around the pictures of all the deities. After learning meditation, she realised the futility of praying to so many imaginary gods and goddesses, and replaced their photos with a photo of Baba. However, although she stopped performing rituals to please the gods and goddesses, she could not give up her traditional style of worship and continued to wave incense sticks and camphor, and lit lamps in front of Baba's photo instead. She wanted her children, who were devoted Margis, to do the same but they refused and asked her to stop performing such rituals before Baba's photo. However, she could not forsake her old habits.

One evening she returned home late and saw that there was no lamp in front of Baba's picture, so she scolded her daughters Shyamali and Nirmali for their lack of regard for their guru. The eldest daughter, Shyamali, replied, "Ma, Baba is in your heart. You should worship him there."

Pratibha admonished her, "You are showing disrespect to the guru by keeping his room in darkness during the night and giving such logic to hide your shortcomings. Baba will be angry with you for your arrogance." Then Pratibha lit the lamp, incense and camphor and waved it around Baba's photo.

When she attended darshan the following Sunday, the topic of Baba's discourse was the futility of ritualistic worship. Baba said, "These are lower forms of worship." Quoting a verse from the Tantras he continued, "The highest form of worship is to constantly ideate on the infinite Brahma. Dhyana and dharana are second best, while repetitious mechanical incantation (japa) and prayer are lower forms of worship, and idol worship is the lowest of all. Moreover, one should be God-loving and not God-fearing. You should not think that if you don't practice such and such a ritual, it is an affront to God and that He will be angry with you or curse you. Your relationship with Parama Purusha should be one of devotion and not one of fear. If this relationship is based on love all external show like the burning of incense and camphor or the waving of lamps will have no meaning. Rather it is irksome to God."

He then continued with a smile, "Suppose you are the deity, and someone burns an incense stick or camphor in front of your face. Won't you feel suffocated and great discomfort? Won't you ask them to stop, as it is causing you great inconvenience? Don't you think that the deity is in an awkward predicament when you do that?"

Pratibha could not control herself and chuckled. She whispered to the woman beside her that she had been doing exactly that in front of Baba's photograph.

"Yes Pratibha, I am referring to what you have been doing," said Baba turning to her. "Do you think that such rituals please me? What does please me is to see your devotion, that you are regular in your sadhana, and that you follow the rules of spiritual practice strictly."

"Baba, I understand. I will not do it again," said Pratibha, bowing her head. Her daughters winked at each other and smiled, happy that Baba had endorsed what they had been telling their mother.



In this way, Baba taught the Margis about the futility of the ritualistic practices that were deeply rooted in traditional Hindu society. One of the most dominant traditions among the higher castes was the wearing of the sacred thread and the chanting of the *gayatri mantra*, which was considered sacred. On several occasions Baba explained in detail the history behind the custom of wearing the sacred thread and the real meaning of the *gayatri mantra*. He said the *gayatri* was not a mantra but a prayer to the Supreme Entity to guide the mind onto the spiritual path. Baba's explanation was an eye-opener to the Margis, who had earlier performed traditional rituals. Baba also explained the history and significance of various religious ceremonies. As the arguments he gave to support his points were very rational, the Margis who still clung to some of the traditional practices didn't hesitate to give them up in favour of *sadhana*. They quickly realised that spirituality was an effective tool for bringing about the internal transformation of a caste-ridden society steeped in suffocating rituals and dogmas.

All this did not escape the notice of the traditionalists, and opposition to the Marga started to build up steadily. Some accused the Margis of going against Hinduism and trying to destroy the Hindu way of life. Ram Avatar Shastri, the owner of the Navajivan Press and the editor of a local magazine, was one such person. He wrote an inflammatory comment in an article, "Ananda Marga is a young, poisonous snake. If it is not killed now, in the future it will replace the Hindu way of life." There were also serious attacks against the Marga from various tradition-bound individuals and groups. However, with the help of Baba's ideas, the Margis were able to defeat them effortlessly in philosophical debates. This helped the Marga that was hardly two years old to make deeper inroads into Hindu society.



## CHAPTER 22

# The Mysterious Ship

By the beginning of 1957 Ananda Marga had begun to spread far and wide. Its followers were no longer only from a few government departments such as the Railways, the Police Force and the Customs and Central Excise Department. It attracted people from all walks of life - from students and youths to government officers, traders, villagers, housewives and general office workers. Although it was initially the meditation and scientific philosophy that attracted them to Ananda Marga, it was Baba's magnetic personality that impressed them the most. Each had a fascinating story to tell about how Baba had charmed them and eventually transformed them into ideal human beings.

### The Sceptical Follower

Not everyone who took initiation was willing to accept Baba as Sadguru straightaway. Several people refused to believe what they had heard about him from the other Margis. Suresh from Bhagalpur, a radical-minded college student who had just entered his twenties, was one such person. His friend Harindra from Trimohan introduced Ananda Marga and Baba to him. Suresh was highly sceptical of Harindra's claims that Baba was the Sadguru with all the amazing powers attributed to him. "It's too farfetched to think that in today's world there could be anyone great enough to be called Sadguru with all the powers that you ascribe to him," he responded with cynical disbelief to Harindra's enthusiastic overtures. Still, on Harindra's repeated insistence, he agreed to meet Acharya Shiva Shankar Banerjee in nearby Nathnagar for a casual discussion on spirituality. When they met, Shiva Shankar explained the science of meditation to Suresh. He listened carefully to Shiva Shankar but was not sufficiently convinced to be initiated into the practice of meditation.

In spite of that, Harindra persisted in his efforts to persuade his friend to take up spiritual practice. "Why don't you learn meditation and practice it for a few days as an experiment and then decide if you want to continue?" asked Harindra in a last-ditch attempt.

Suresh agreed. "All right, I am willing to learn meditation but on one condition, and that is I will never be asked to accept your Baba as my guru."

Harindra knew that if his sceptical friend regularly practised meditation, Baba would take care of the rest. So he accepted this condition, and Suresh learned meditation from Shiva Shankar Banerjee. A few days after the initiation, the acharya invited him to attend *dharmachakra*. Suresh declined, saying that he did not want to be part of any organisation and did not wish to be disturbed in any way, as he was busy with his studies.

A few weeks later Harindra informed Suresh that Baba was scheduled to come to Nathnagar for DMC. Suresh again declined the invitation, as he was busy preparing for his final year examinations.

However, as the DMC date approached, he felt a compelling urge to attend the programme a compelling urge to attend the programme. After much thought and consideration, he decided to go to the DMC. His first experience in a congregation of Margis was disquieting to say the least. He saw people crying and laughing and behaving as if they were insane, so much so that he began to wonder if he had come to a gathering of mentally deranged people. As he was mulling over these thoughts, Baba suddenly arrived. The Margis were ecstatic when he walked through the room to take his seat. As he walked past Suresh, who was seated at the back of the hall, Baba accidentally brushed against his left knee. This fleeting contact created very pleasant and soothing sensation in Suresh's entire body. He also observed that Baba's appearance was very simple, devoid of the pomp and grandeur that gurus were normally known to exhibit. Yet his face was radiant and his body appeared to be very light.



Baba's discourse at the DMC was entitled 'Form and Formless.' By way of an introduction, he explained that matter was actually energy in an inert state and that it was the varying influence of the static force of the Creative Principle that was responsible for the multifarious expressions of creation. Yet through spiritual practice, if a person was able to see beyond names and forms, he or she would realise that in fact only one infinite Supreme Entity had manifested itself in all the myriad forms and colours of this vast universe. As Baba discussed this complex subject in a logical and systematic manner, Suresh observed that his presentation was very different from the traditional style of speaking of most spiritual gurus. Baba developed his ideas in a rational and precise way, and everything he said appealed to Suresh's analytical mind. He was particularly impressed by the manner in which Baba analysed spirituality and how he countered irrational dogmas. Suresh mused, "This guru appears to be different from other conventional gurus both in his appearance and approach." So he became very curious to know more about Baba.

A few days after the DMC, Harindra and some other Margis visited Jamalpur and mentioned to Suresh that Baba had enquired about him. He didn't believe them, as he had not been formally introduced to the guru. He thought that it was a ploy to draw him closer to the Marga. However, when some more Margis told him the same thing, he decided to go to Jamalpur after his examinations to verify the facts for himself. Without informing anyone of his plans, he left for Jamalpur one afternoon and managed to locate the jagrti in Rampur Colony. Suresh's initial experience at the jagrti was not very pleasant. He met Pranay there and was grilled about why he had not brought an introductory letter from the local acharya. Then, when questioned about yama-niyama, he could not recollect all the points. Pranay was therefore not inclined to allow him to meet Baba. However, seeing the determination of this intelligent young man to meet the guru, he reluctantly granted Suresh permission to accompany Baba on his evening walk and gave him directions to Baba's house. As he waited in front of Baba's residence, a few others joined him one by one. He guessed that they were senior disciples and

thought that in their presence he stood no chance of having any personal interaction with the guru. Exactly at seven, Baba came out of his house with a radiant smile. Pointing his torch at Suresh, who was sitting on a culvert on the other side of the road, he gestured in a familiar manner, "Come on, let's go."

As the others walked along with Baba, Suresh fell a few steps behind, thinking that since the others were senior disciples, they should take precedence. After a few steps, Baba commented, "That boy has also come," and turned around and looked at Suresh. Suresh took the cue and moved closer to Baba.

"Have you come from Bhagalpur?" Baba asked.

"Yes, sir."

"What's your name?"

Suresh did not respond. Baba asked his name a second time. Again Suresh did not answer. "Will you not tell me your name?" asked Baba in a gentle tone full of sweetness and affection.

Suresh still did not reply. "Everyone coming back from Jamalpur has been telling me that Baba enquired about me. If that was indeed true," he wondered, "how come Baba does not know my name. Since I have come to Jamalpur only to verify this, I am not going to tell him my name. Let me see if he really knows me or not." So he did not respond to Baba's repeated enquiries. Meanwhile the other Margis felt annoyed by his impudent behaviour. Someone remarked, "Baba is asking your name, so why don't you answer him?" Still Suresh maintained a stony silence. By now everyone was seething at this young man's affront to the guru, but could not utter a word in Baba's presence. After climbing the steps of the footbridge, Baba abruptly turned around and asked everyone else to go back, saying that he wanted to be alone with the newcomer. The Margis were deeply disappointed that they had lost their opportunity to be with Baba that evening because of this new person. Miffed, they threw a sharp glance at the arrogant youth as they turned round to return to their homes.

Suresh was delighted at the prospect of being alone with the guru. Baba walked a few steps and then turned around and remarked, "You still haven't told me your name." Suresh did not reply. Baba continued walking. Suddenly he turned around again, put his arm on Suresh's shoulder and said, "Come on, Suresh, tell me how you are."

That was exactly what he had been waiting to hear – Baba calling him by his name. A sudden thrill passed through Suresh's body. Baba added to his delight by saying, "It is quite strange that while one of your uncles is a disciple of Kambal Sadhu and your father is a theosophist, unfortunately, you have become my disciple." He continued, "You can gain nothing worldly from me. You will lose everything and become a pauper if you stay with me. Even now there is time for you to turn back if you want."

He turned to Suresh who was a few steps behind virtually running in an effort to keep up and asked, "What do you intend to do?" Suresh looked at Baba in amazement and continued to walk.

As they were walking, Suresh noticed to his surprise that Baba's eyes were closed, yet he was walking at a brisk pace. Suresh recalled that Baba said something about a congregation of Lord Buddha that had taken place in that area about two thousand five hundred years before. Beyond that he could recollect nothing that Baba spoke about. He was totally engrossed in watching Baba, afraid that he would trip over something in the dark as he walked with his eyes closed. He thought that he should be ready to catch Baba if he fell.

When they reached the Tiger's Grave, Baba asked him to sit beside him on the tomb. As Baba talked, Suresh kept nodding and repeating, "Yes sir."

"Don't call me 'Sir'. I know that as a student you are used to calling your teacher 'sir'. I am your Baba. I am your father and you are my son."

These words created a very touching and intimate feeling in Suresh. He felt very close to Baba. After a short pause Baba said, "My arms are aching. Can you massage them?"



“Why not Baba, surely,” replied Suresh with alacrity and started to massage Baba’s shoulder and arm.

As he massaged Baba, he was surprised to find that Baba’s body was initially as hard as a rock but slowly became soft and very cold. Soon his entire arm had become soft and spongy like a flower. To his further astonishment, it felt as if Baba had no bones at all. Suresh was amazed and very puzzled.

“How can a human body be like this?” he wondered.

Baba interrupted his thoughts to ask in a sweet voice, “Can you massage my legs too?” Suresh then started to massage Baba’s legs and feet. Again, to his utter amazement, Baba’s legs were also incredibly soft and light. He had read somewhere that the bodies of great spiritual people were very soft. But what he was experiencing by massaging Baba’s hands and feet surpassed everything that he had ever known.

As he continued to massage Baba, another incredible experience awaited him – slowly he felt the sweet scent of sandalwood emanating from Baba’s body. At the same time a spiritually intoxicating feeling started to overwhelm him, permeating every cell of his body. He began to feel an incredible spiritual attraction for Baba. The feeling was indescribable; it was as if his innermost self was being irresistibly drawn towards Baba. As the experience intensified, he was immersed in a state of divine bliss that was beyond expression. Unable to restrain himself he suddenly grabbed Baba in a tight embrace and started to kiss and knead him all over his body. He felt a very strong spiritual urge to merge into Baba. He then realised that the person sitting before him was no ordinary man but a divine being. Streams of tears started to pour uncontrollably down his face. All the while Baba was a picture of silent serenity. Once in a while he would say lovingly, “You are my little boy. You are my beloved son.” It was as if his every word exuded an ocean of love. After a few minutes, Suresh became still and silent, lost in a world of divine ecstasy.

He was still absorbed in that exceedingly blissful state when he heard Baba say, "Do you have any more questions in your mind?"

"No Baba. I have none."

"Ask me anything you want."

Suresh thought, "It's ironical that only a while ago he said that I would have to lose everything and become a pauper if I stayed with him. Now he is telling me to ask for anything I want."

After having the deep spiritual experience of divine bliss and realising Baba's divine stature he replied unhesitatingly, "Baba, now that I have got you, I want nothing else in this world. The whole world pales before you. It's certainly your grace that even an insignificant person like me could attain you without any effort and without hoping for it - something that I couldn't have imagined even in my wildest dreams."

"Anyway, ask me for something," Baba insisted.

"Baba, now that I am the richest man in this world because I have got you, what else do I need? Still, if at all you want to give me something, please help me to keep your ideation constantly in my mind even till my last breath."

Baba blessed him saying, "*Tathastu*", meaning, "So be it." Then Suresh embraced Baba even more tightly. Holding Baba in a deep embrace he cried for a long time, wondering what he had done in his life to deserve such a divine guru. Waves of inexplicable bliss surged through Suresh like a raging river and in a short while he became senseless to the external world, completely absorbed in transcendental bliss. Almost an hour had passed and still Suresh was immersed in that exalted state of divine ecstasy. "Suresh, get up. Let us go now," urged Baba gently, bringing him out of the profoundly blissful state. After Suresh regained some semblance of normalcy, they got up and left the Tiger's Grave. As they returned home, Suresh was infused with a compelling desire to devote his entire life to Baba and to work only for his mission. He felt as if devotion for Baba was filling up his entire existence.

As they walked under the street lights of Jamalpur town, Suresh noticed to his dismay that Baba's clothes were full of reddish betel stains. Suresh habitually chewed betel leaf and nut. He felt remorseful that he had inadvertently stained the guru's immaculate clothes.

That special hour at the Tiger's Grave remained his most cherished memory and was a major turning point in his life. On Baba's advice Suresh pursued a degree in engineering. After completing his studies, he became a full time worker of Ananda Marga. Some years later he became the principal of the Ananda Marga Institute of Technology.

### **Scanning All Minds**

While some accepted Baba and Ananda Marga gradually, others embraced his teachings more readily. In the spring of 1957, Amulyaratan Sarangi was working as a project executive officer in Ramnagar, North Bihar, when he first heard about Ananda Marga from Bhuvaneshvari, a civil service colleague who was also the local veterinary doctor. A few days later he took initiation from another veterinarian, Acharya Vishvanath, and right from the start practised his meditation with great sincerity. He would get up at three in the morning and spend long hours meditating. Within just a few days he made considerable progress. One day during his meditation, he had a vision of himself sitting on the seashore. A ship appeared in the distance, sailing towards him. The next day he saw the same vision in his meditation, but this time it was much closer. This vision recurred several times in his meditation over the next few days. As the ship came closer each time, he could see that it was beautiful and shone with brilliant effulgence. Initially he did not give any importance to the vision, but when it recurred daily in his meditation, he wondered if it had any significance.

A month after his initiation he was informed that a DMC would be held in Monghyr on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May. He decided to attend the event and accompanied his acharya to Monghyr. On the way he asked the acharya many questions about spirituality that had been on his



mind since his initiation. Finally he asked, "What does Baba generally speak about?"

"Baba speaks about different spiritual topics, but he does not decide the subject in advance. After sitting on the dais, he first scans the mind of everyone present and then speaks in a way that answers the burning questions in their minds," replied Vishvanath.

"That sounds a bit incredulous," thought Amulyaratan. "I have never heard of any spiritual guru doing that. Will he then answer my question about the mysterious ship that I have been daily seeing in my meditation?"

They reached Monghyr in the evening and made their way straight to the DMC site. As soon as he entered the DMC hall, he felt that a powerful spiritual vibration had enveloped the entire place. Strangely, although he was a total newcomer, he felt an extraordinary spiritual bond with everyone present. It was unlike any of the previous meetings or social gatherings he had attended, which had been organised by his colleagues or by the public.

Seeing Baba for the first time, Amulyaratan was amazed to see how simple and radiant he was. In the course of his long discourse, Baba quoted about twenty lines from *Mahanirvani Tantra*, but he explained the meaning of only the last two lines:

*Tvamekam nidhanam niralambamiisham  
Bhavambodhi potam sharanam vrajamah*

'We are running and shall continue to run to take shelter aboard the only dependable ship on the ocean of the physical universe - the Supreme Entity.

That Supreme Entity is the only shelter of everyone. We have no one but Him; we have no other desideratum.'

Amulyaratan was keenly listening to every word of Baba's discourse. He was stunned by these words. "Yes, this explains the vision of the mysterious ship that appears in my meditation. Baba is saying that the Supreme Entity is like a ship that can help us cross the

*Bhavasagara*, the ocean of worldliness of the created universe. The ship is a symbol of the Supreme Entity. So what my acharya said is true – Baba actually does scan the minds of the disciples and then selects a topic that clears up their doubts.

The next day Amulyaratan had the opportunity to get Personal Contact with Baba. He was spiritually charged and purified by Baba's blessing, and the intensely blissful feeling he felt during the Personal Contact made it a deeply memorable experience, something he did not anticipate. What made it even more unforgettable was the fact that after it was over, just as he was about to leave the room, Baba surprised him by asking, "Is the significance of the ship clear to you after last night's discourse?"

Amulyaratan was surprised and thrilled by the question, and as he walked out of Baba's room his mind overflowed with indescribable emotions. A few weeks later he took training as an acharya and eventually became a strong pillar of Ananda Marga. Baba loved Amulyaratan very much because of his honesty, integrity of character and devotion.

Another person who was in line for Personal Contact was Kedarnath Sharma, a new Margi from Ranchi. He had taken initiation the previous month after attending a lecture by Dasharath. He had been a ruthless police inspector during the British period and had been fiercely loyal to the crown. During the Quit India Movement of 1942, he had harshly treated Bir Chand Patel, a freedom fighter. After independence, Patel became a minister in the Bihar state government and used his position to take revenge on Kedarnath, persecuting him in many ways. Since Kedarnath had an excellent reputation as an honest and efficient officer, the chief of the state police force did not like the vindictive behaviour of the minister, but was helpless to stop it. He advised Kedarnath to apologise to him for his behaviour during the British rule. However, Kedarnath refused outright and instead chose to resign from his job. Subsequently he became a successful insurance agent. At a certain period of his life, he became frustrated and emotionally disturbed due to serious domestic problems. At one

point he even contemplated committing suicide. It was at that moment that he chanced to hear about Ananda Marga in a lecture by Acharya Dasharath. Dasharath's words offered him a ray of hope. After initiation he plunged deeply into his sadhana and as a result he came out of his depression in a short time.

As Kedarnath stood in line for Personal Contact, some Margis saw something strange – a part of his brand new sacred thread was protruding from his shirt. The use of the sacred thread by people of some higher castes and any kind of caste symbol was disapproved of in Ananda Marga. So this raised many eyebrows. When Pranay was informed about this matter, he quietly pulled Kedarnath aside and asked, "Don't you know that Margis are supposed to discard the sacred thread before learning sadhana? Didn't your acharya tell you about it at the time of initiation?"

"Truly speaking, I don't wear a sacred thread as I don't believe in it," replied Kedarnath. "That was perhaps why my acharya did not mention anything about it. But I thought that the guru might become upset to see me without one. So I bought it this morning and put it on before coming here. I shall only be too glad to remove it as I don't have any faith in it at all." With these words he took off the sacred thread, threw it in a corner, and rejoined the queue.

During his Personal Contact Baba pointed out his past mistakes, particularly his harsh treatment of the freedom fighters during the Independence movement. Baba also pointed out a few instances of how he had treated criminals in an inhuman manner when he was in a position of authority. "I know you later felt great remorse for your actions. But still, don't you deserve punishment?"

Tears welled up in Kedarnath's eyes due to his deep feelings of remorse for his past wrongdoings. He said, "Baba, I did not have a clear understanding of what was right or wrong at that time. I realise that I have committed many unpardonable sins. I am ready to atone for them in any manner you wish."

Baba then took out his stick and brought it down with great force, but just touched Kedarnath gently. Wiping the tears that were



trickling down his disciple's face, he said affectionately, "Kedar, forget the past. I have cleansed you of those past samskaras. Now look forward and not behind; God has given you eyes in the front. Be an ideal human being from now on. You can do a lot of good to humanity if you become an ideal person."

Kedarnath felt overwhelmed by Baba's love and the trickle of tears turned into a veritable torrent. Crying loudly, he embraced Baba, overwhelmed by a powerful feeling of love.

Finally at the end of the session, Baba lifted him onto his lap. At first he resisted, thinking that his heavy body would hurt Baba. However, Baba insisted. "Don't worry Kedar. You are not heavy. Sit comfortably," he said.

Kedarnath felt like a dwarf sitting on the lap of a giant. As Baba continued talking, the intensity of his love slowly overpowered Kedarnath. This man who was known for his pride and self-respect couldn't stop crying like a baby. Baba patted him affectionately as Kedarnath embraced him tightly.

Struggling to control his tears, he said, "Baba, please bless me with the capacity to fulfil the greatest desire of my life, which is to live and work for you alone and to spread your ideals and teachings among the people." Baba blessed him by placing his hands on Kedarnath's head. Sometime later Kedarnath was trained as an acharya and became one of the pillars of the Marga in Ranchi. He donated a large piece of land and a good amount of money for the construction of the jagrti there, which became a very important centre of the Marga in the years ahead.

### **You Are Never Alone**

Before taking initiation, Harindar, Chandranath's cousin, suffered from a constant gnawing pain in his heart. After the untimely demise of his parents, he felt lost and alone in the world. One evening as he sat with Baba on the Tiger's Grave, Baba asked him, "Harindar, do you remember your father's last words when he was on his deathbed?"

"Baba, my father died in 1947. Ten years have passed and I am unable to recall his last words."

"Try to remember."

Harindar tried hard to recollect his father's dying words but failed to do so. Baba urged him to try again.

"Baba, the only thing I can remember is that there were tears in his eyes."

"All right," said Baba, "tell me who was present at that time."

"Three of my uncles, an old man from the village, two of my cousins' wives, a house helper and myself."

"There was one more person who you couldn't see." As he said this, Baba gently touched the back of Harindar's neck. Suddenly his father's last words flashed across Harindar's mind like a ray of light. But even before he could utter them, much to his amazement Baba spoke those last words of Harindar's father:

"Harindar, I am pained that I could not do anything for you. Always try to maintain good relations with everyone. Work hard and keep the company of good people."

Harindar wondered who the other person at his father's deathbed was. Almost immediately the realisation dawned on him that the invisible person at his father's last moments was none other than Baba himself.

Another day, while he was sitting with Baba on the Tiger's Grave, Baba said, "Harindar, there was a mother and her daughter in your village who were both called Radhiya. They were widows. They were great devotees of God and they both practised sadhana. They used to take a bath in the small river in front of your house. At that time there was a ghat in front of your house."

"Baba, the water in the river is unfit for bathing."

“In those days the river flowed well, and boats used to sail on it. Later, people started to empty drain water into it, and because there is less inflow of rainwater these days, it has become unfit for human use.

Harindar remembered that during the excavation of a well, the remains of an old boat were found. When he returned to his village of Kurnahi, he enquired from several people about the two Radhiyas, but no one seemed to have heard of them. Then he approached the oldest man in the village, who was a hundred and six years old. He was surprised by Harindar’s enquiry and said, “When I was studying in school, I have seen a mother and daughter who were both named Radhiya. I also saw them regularly taking their bath at the ghat in front of your house, and after bathing they would spend long hours in meditation. They were both widows and did not have any progeny to continue the family lineage. But nobody today has even heard of them. So how did you learn about them?”

“I heard about them from a saint,” replied Harindar, concealing further details from the curious old man.

One evening while sitting at the Tiger’s Grave, Baba advised Harindar, “One should always shun bad company and only keep the company of virtuous people. The company of virtuous people will inspire you to do good deeds and that of bad people will lead you astray. Do you remember how, when you were a student of class eight, after seeing a documentary at school one day, you went with Raghunandan Paswan and stole some mangoes from the orchard of Rudra Singh? It was because of his bad company that you were led astray.”

Harindar was surprised to hear Baba relate this event, which he had completely forgotten. He had been about thirteen at that time. As he returned home after seeing the documentary film, there was an unexpected summer storm. Raghunandan had invited him to go to Rudra Singh’s mango grove, as many mangoes would have fallen after the storm, and they could gather them and have a delicious feast



of mangoes. When they reached the orchard, they found to their dismay that only a few mangoes were lying on the ground, so Raghunandan climbed a tree laden with luscious ripe mangoes and shook the branches vigorously. They quickly gathered the mangoes and went home triumphantly with their booty.

After returning home, Harindar was consumed with fear that the orchard owner would discover the theft and complain about him to his father. He couldn't sleep that night and tossed and turned fitfully. For several days afterwards he felt deep remorse for his actions.

When Baba reminded him of this incident, Harindar said, "Baba, that boy cheated me. He didn't tell me in the beginning what he planned to do."

"Yes, I know," Baba replied. "That is why one should always shun bad company and only keep the company of the virtuous."

Baba paused for a while and then remarked, "Never think that you are an orphan, Harindar. You have never been alone. I have always been with you in an invisible form. I was with you when you lost your worldly mother and also when your worldly father passed away. Whenever you felt you were alone and there was no one in the world to guide you, I was there internally inspiring you to choose the right path and I never allowed you to go astray. When you were in a hopeless and depressed state, it was I who prompted you to go to Chandranath's house where you learned about Ananda Marga and were initiated. I am your eternal father, mother and friend. I have been with you in this life and in all your past lives and I will be with you until eternity. So never again think that you are alone and helpless."

Baba's words were so affectionate that Harindar embraced him tightly and wept. From that moment he never again felt that he was an orphan or that there was no one to guide him. He gradually became a very devoted Margi and contributed immensely to the development of the Marga. If anyone just started to talk about Baba, his eyes would fill with tears.

In this way, most of the people who came in contact with Baba eventually became ideal and devoted Margis and shared the responsibility of spreading the Marga's ideology in society.

### **Baba's Two Watchful Eyes**

"For the next fortnight my two eyes are going to keep a constant watch on all of you," Baba announced one Sunday in March 1957. "Your progress on the spiritual path is proportionate to your strictness in following yama-niyama and all the rules enjoined for Margis. I want to see that it becomes natural for you all to follow yama-niyama and all the other rules, particularly those of you who have been meditating for some months. So for the next fortnight, wherever you may be, I am going to watch all of you strictly. In particular those who have been meditating for at least three months should be very careful. If necessary, I will take corrective measures immediately. At the end of the fortnight, if anyone practising meditation for more than three months is found to be violating any of the rules, steps will be taken for their rectification. But all of you, whether new or older Margis, should ensure that during this period you make extra efforts to follow yama-niyama and all the other rules of a sadhaka and become established in them. Within this period you should all try to overcome whatever small defects you still have and become ideal people."

While most of the Margis took Baba's instructions seriously, there were a few notable exceptions. Dasharath was among those who violated the rules. He recalled his experience:

"Before coming in contact with Baba, I used to regularly take *khaini* (tobacco mixed with lime). Even after joining the Marga, I did not give it up. Every time I left home for the jagrti to attend Baba's darshan I used to pop some *khaini* in my mouth and chew it along the way, then spit it out just before entering the jagrti premises. But my hand and mouth used to smell of tobacco and I used to touch Baba with those reeking hands. Such things occurred almost every day. After a few days, while doing sadhana, a feeling arose in my mind that it

was inappropriate to touch Baba's feet with impure hands. So I gave up chewing tobacco and did not touch it again for more than a year."

"Then one day in March 1957, some external invigilators came to our school to supervise the students' examinations. During the break all of them took khaini. One of them offered me some, but I politely declined, saying that I had given it up. However, he insisted and the rest of the teachers also requested me to take some just for keeping them company. The desire for khaini was still lurking in some dark corner of my mind, and I yielded to their entreaties. After that, the craving for khaini, which had been under control all this time, reared its ugly head once again, and I started taking it two or three times a day. I felt very guilty, as Baba had asked us to take extra care to keep our bad habits under control. Due to this feeling of guilt I stopped going to see Baba. This went on for three or four days, and then one day after taking khaini I dosed off in the teachers' room.

Suddenly I saw Baba entering the room. I got up in haste and prostrated before him and then offered him a seat. Baba called me close to him. With a fierce expression he asked, "How many times a day have you been doing this – two or three times?" Although I understood what he was alluding to, I did not have the courage to reply to his question and pretended not to understand him. Then Baba imitated the action of mixing tobacco and lime to make khaini, and putting it under his tongue repeated the question. I remained silent. His face turned red and his expression became extremely angry. I was very scared and started to tremble.

He then rebuked me severely. Finally he said, "Are you not ashamed that as an acharya you should be the one to guide others onto the correct path, rather than allowing yourself to be misled by them?" I realised that I could not continue to feign ignorance and fell at his feet, promising that I would never do it again. After Baba walked away, I woke up with a startle and



was somewhat relieved to find that it had only been a dream. However, I strictly stuck to the promise I had made in the dream and stopped taking khaini.”

Sukumar Bose had been practising meditation for about five years and had become an acharya. One day, a few days after Baba’s instruction to the Margis to follow yama-niyama diligently, he was resting at home. He saw a stray dog enter the kitchen through the back door. He took a thick stick and gave the dog a heavy blow on its back, badly wounding the animal. The dog ran away yelping in pain. Hardly had Sukumar gone a step or two when he slipped and fell down, injuring his hip so badly that he was confined to bed for several days. Immediately after falling, he felt Baba telling him, “This is your punishment for hurting a dumb animal.”

When he went to the jagrti the following Sunday, Baba remarked during his discourse, “It is natural for a dog to look for food; it cannot discriminate between right and wrong. If it enters someone’s kitchen looking for food, what should a sadhaka be expected to do, even more so if he is an acharya? Should he beat it with a heavy stick and wound it? As a discriminating person an acharya should offer it some food outside the kitchen, thinking that it is also an expression of the Supreme Entity and that he is feeding the Supreme Entity in the form of the dog. He should think that it also feels pangs of hunger and that what it deserves is food and not a beating. The blow on the back of the dog was so heavy that it suffered excruciating pain for two whole days. From the instantaneous punishment you received, you should have realised how unbearable that creature’s pain was. Beating an animal that is looking for food is against the principle of ahimsa, one of the rules of yama-niyama. One of the foremost qualities of any sadhaka is compassion for all living beings. Everyone should always keep this in mind. Do you follow?”

From the corner of his eye, Baba glanced at Sukumar. Tears welled up in Sukumar’s eyes. He felt great remorse for his action and mentally accepted his mistake. He resolved that he would never again do such a thing and would always show compassion towards all living beings.

One evening during the two-week period of Baba's moral scrutiny of his disciples, Nityananda happened to be standing in the jagrti portico talking with Anil Bhattacharya, who was also known as Goba, and an irregular Margi called Dwarakanath. As they talked, a strong urge to take snuff arose in Nityananda's mind. In keeping with Baba's instruction to everyone to adhere to the rules of moral conduct, Nityananda had resolved that he would give up taking snuff. However, at that moment he found it hard to control his craving for it. He asked Dwarakanath, "Can you lend me your snuffbox, please?"

"Only the other day you told me you had resolved to stop taking snuff," replied Dwarakanath.

"I have a strong desire for it now and my head is heavy. I need to take just one shot to get rid of the desire and to relieve my headache."

Dwarakanath handed over his snuffbox to Nityananda, advising caution, "It would be better for you to stick to your resolution, as you were very determined to kick the habit."

Suddenly, just as Nityananda was about to take a pinch of snuff, Dwarakanath started to scold him harshly. What was most surprising was that his words and gestures were similar to Baba's.

"Nityananda, you are ignoring my instructions to all of you. Do you think I don't see what you are doing when I am not physically present? Wherever I am, I am watching every action and thought of yours at all times. You can't do or think anything that is hidden from me. Do you understand?"

Nityananda and Goba opened their mouths in utter surprise. "How strange!" exclaimed Goba, drawing a long breath. "Baba has entered Dwarakanath's body and is chiding you."

Goba then ran inside the jagrti yelling repeatedly, "Baba has entered Dwarakanath's body. He is speaking just like Baba."

Everyone rushed out of the jagrti to see what all the commotion was about. Meanwhile Nityananda panicked and quickly put the

snuffbox back in Dwarakanath's pocket, while Dwarakanath stood with a stern look on his face and, with both hands behind his back, continued to reproach Nityananda for succumbing to baser temptations. Then, just as suddenly, Dwarakanath became his usual self again.

"What happened to you? Why were you speaking and behaving so strangely?" asked Nityananda with a puzzled look on his face.

"What? I don't remember anything," replied Dwarakanath looking equally perplexed.

"Really? You don't remember anything?"

"Certainly not! But I feel as if I was not in my body for some time."

The Margis were baffled. What had happened before their eyes defied all logic. They attempted to find different explanations for the strange phenomenon. Finally, they concluded that Baba had taken over Dwarakanath's body in order to admonish Nityananda.

Nityananda, however, harboured doubts about the incident. "Since we were discussing about Baba just before that," he thought, "Dwarakanath must have hallucinated about Baba and that made him speak and behave like him."

He decided to test Dwarakanath again to prove his hunch. When Dwarakanath left the jagrti, Nityananda followed him and invited him to his house. On the way home, he deliberately did not discuss anything about Baba or any related matter. Then, just as he reached home, he once again asked for the snuffbox.

Again, just as Dwarakanath was giving him the snuffbox, his voice changed abruptly and took on an admonishing tone, "Nityananda," he said in a stern voice, again imitating Baba's posture and gestures, "don't you know that I am always watching each and every action of yours, and that you cannot do or think anything without my knowledge?"



Stunned, Nityananda instinctively threw the snuffbox out of the window. Within moments Dwarakanath returned to being his normal self again. When Nityananda enquired about his strange behaviour just moments ago, Dwarakanath could not recollect anything. It was as if the events of those few seconds had not registered in his mind.

When the Margis met Baba at the end of the period of moral scrutiny, he asked for a blackboard and wrote the names of some of the disciples on it before starting his discourse. Next to each name he wrote the corrective actions to be taken. In a grave tone, he announced that those people had violated the rules during the previous two weeks and instructed them to take the remedial measures he had prescribed and make a strong resolve never to repeat their mistakes. At the end of the list he wrote down the names of Dasharath, Sukumar and Nityananda, but then struck them off the list.

When Pranay asked why their names had been deleted, Baba replied, "Dasharath committed a mistake and was given a severe scolding for it. Sukumar violated the principles of yama-niyama and received instant punishment for it. Nityananda was about to commit a mistake. In fact, he had already committed the mistake in his mind, but an unseen power gave him a stern warning and that acted as a deterrent. Mental action does not deserve physical punishment. Since these three people have been appropriately dealt with, I am not giving them further punishment."

Pranay then asked why each person had been dealt with differently. Baba explained, "Each of them has been given what he needs to help him to avoid repeating such mistakes. Now it is hoped that they have all learned a big lesson and will be more cautious in the future about their conduct. All of you should learn from your mistakes. Always remember that I am watching every one of you at every moment. You can do nothing that is hidden from my two eyes. Be ever vigilant to make sure you don't make a slip in an unguarded moment. You should always keep in mind that strict adherence to yama-niyama is a most essential aspect of your spiritual journey."

### **Kalpataru<sup>1</sup>: The Wish Fulfilling Tree**

“Ask whatever you want. Do you want occult powers or immense wealth and knowledge?” enquired Baba of an informal gathering of five or six disciples at the Rampur Colony Jagrti one evening at the end of April 1957. To everyone’s surprise Baba announced that he would become the Kalpataru for a short while and invited them to ask for whatever they wanted, assuring them that their desires would be fulfilled.

“Shishir, what do you wish for?”

“Baba, please bless me with knowledge so that I can know whatever I want to know,” replied Shishir.

“You want knowledge? All right, you will have it.”

Next he asked Vivekananda Singh, “See, Shishir has asked for knowledge. Viveka, tell me what is your wish?”

“Baba, I have no desire for any of this.”

“Why not?” asked Baba. “With occult powers you can be in ten different places at a time. While your body is in Jamalpur, you can project your mind in your native village and several other parts of the world. You can be in different places simultaneously without a passport or visa. You can also do many other amazing things with these occult powers.”

“Baba, what will I do with occult powers? I don’t want any such powers. I am able to be with you and that is worth more to me than all the powers combined,” said Vivekananda.

“Then shall I make you a rich man? In one day you will earn more than what you are presently able to earn in your whole lifetime.”

“Will all that wealth help me to attain the Supreme Entity, Baba? If not, I am happy with the simple life that I am leading at present.”

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<sup>1</sup> The mythological wish-fulfilling tree. In spiritual literature it refers to the special posture adopted by the guru to grant the wishes of a disciple, particularly those wishes that are spiritually beneficial.

“Then, like Shishir, ask for the boon to be the most knowledgeable person in the world. I can give you that power instantly.”

“Baba, will such knowledge help me to acquire knowledge of the Supreme Entity? If not, of what use is it?”

“Vivekananda, you are refusing to accept everything that I am offering you. Then ask me for whatever you want.”

“Baba, will you really give me what I ask or are you simply saying it to entice me?”

“Certainly! Ask me for whatever you want, and you will get it.”

“Baba, please give me your word that I will develop devotion and will remain at your feet all my life.”

Baba was very pleased with Vivekananda’s response. “Tathastu! So be it!” he said and asked Vivekananda to come close to him, then blessed him.

He asked everyone the same question one by one, but everyone declined his offer. Some, however, asked Baba to bless them with devotion.

Finally, Shishir retracted what he had earlier requested from Baba, “Baba, I now realise that it was a mistake to ask for anything worldly. So I want to retract what I have asked earlier.”

Baba smiled and said, “Indeed, it would have been a great mistake if any of you had asked for anything worldly because it would have led you away from me and the spiritual path. Not only that, it would have set you on the path of degeneration. See, the Puranas and Ramayana are full of instances of people, who, after several years of penance to attain God, asked for worldly things such as enormous physical strength. That happened in the age of the kshatriyas or warrior class, and that was why they asked for unimaginable physical strength. Although the stories in the Puranas and Ramayana are not actual historical events, they do contain many



educational messages. What happened to all those people who acquired enormous powers by divine grace? After acquiring them, they degenerated and started to indulge in sinful activities. They wrought great destruction on society, which ultimately led to their own destruction as well. In today's world, people perform many rituals to propitiate a wide range of gods and goddesses and to ask for wealth. That is because this era is dominated by the vaeshya or capitalist psychology where money alone matters. The only thing that you should ask from God or the Sadguru is devotion and nothing else."

### **Baba Hosted Only by Moralists**

Baba kept a watchful eye on his disciples to make sure they did not deviate from the conduct rules he had prescribed. In September 1957 a DMC was scheduled to be held in Katihar, northeast Bihar. At that time, several acharyas were working for the Bihar Military Police in Katihar. Avadh Bihari Sharan, the superintendent of police, was initiated and offered to put Baba up at his official residence during the event. He was an incorrigible alcoholic who relished non-vegetarian food and had several other vices as well. Despite being aware of some of his shortcomings, the local acharyas accepted Sharan's offer, thinking that Baba's presence in his house would transform him into a good Margi.

Baba arrived in Katihar at around ten at night. As soon as he went into his room and sat down, his mood changed dramatically. He immediately got up and asked his secretary, Vivekananda Singh, why he had been brought here.

He was angry with the acharyas for arranging his stay in the house of a sinner and declared that he would prefer to stay under a tree than in the house of a morally degenerate person. The distraught Margis immediately arranged for him to stay in the police guest house, where visiting acharyas occasionally stayed.

Sharan was immensely disturbed over Baba's refusal to stay in his residence. The next morning he requested a personal meeting with Baba. When he entered Baba's room, he caught hold of Baba's feet and started to weep. He lamented, "Baba, I am a sinner, but I am still your disciple. Please save me."

Baba then extracted a promise from him that he would become an ideal person, be strict in his sadhana and take only a sentient diet. After he agreed to all these conditions, Baba instructed him to sit on his lap and then showered him with more love than he had ever received in his entire life. Baba asked him to forget his past and to start a new life from that very moment and blessed him. When he came out of Baba's room, Sharan felt as if his life had been transformed. Indeed he strove hard to become an ideal man, giving up alcohol and non-vegetarian food and practised meditation very strictly.

### **Hiding His Identity**

Although some years had elapsed since the founding of the Marga and the organisation was growing rapidly, the people of Jamalpur still did not know that Prabhatda was the guru and the founder. Even his neighbours and many of his colleagues had no idea about it. They thought that he was an important functionary of Ananda Marga and some thought that he was the president of the organisation. Even his office colleagues held this view. Lakshmi Charan, Baba's next-door neighbour, tried discreetly to find out his position in Ananda Marga. When he was unable to do so, he asked his old school friend Rameshvar Baita about it, as he knew that Rameshvar occasionally accompanied Prabhatda on his evening walks. Several other people also questioned him about Prabhatda, but Rameshvar always avoided giving a clear answer. It was becoming difficult for him to hide the truth for long, so during one of the evening walks he asked Baba if it was proper for a sadhaka to avoid telling the truth.

Baba looked up at him and said, "Certainly not. Why are you asking?"

"Baba, my conscience is bothering me. Almost every day someone or other asks me if you are the guru of Ananda Marga. I either deny it or try to avoid giving a direct answer."

"Rameshvar, you are not doing it out of self-interest. You are doing it for my sake. I want to do my work without being disturbed by people who are looking for personal gain. If I allow people to bring me all their mundane problems, I will be surrounded by a large crowd of self-seekers. That will prevent me from doing the work that I want to do for the suffering humanity."

Rameshvar wondered what exactly Baba wanted to do for humanity. As if answering his question Baba said, "Rameshvar, I have come to this planet with a great mission. It is not just to create a few disciples and build some ashrams. The ideas and the systems that I will give before I depart from this world will enable people to build an ideal human society for the first time in human history and will guide humanity along the path of all-round development for thousands of years. Those who come to me with worldly desires will not be able to do my work. I need people who can suffer and make sacrifices for the sake of a great ideology and not people who come to me with worldly expectations."

Rameshvar could not grasp the deep significance of Baba's words, as his worldview was limited to his daily experiences in a small town of North India. On top of that, by early 1957 Baba had only given a few new ideas which had been published in two or three books. Despite this, he knew in the core of his heart that Baba's statements were prophetic and that he did not have the capacity to visualize the scope of Baba's plans for humanity.

### **Amarnath's Miraculous Recovery**

For those who were willing to devote time and energy to the propagation of his ideology, Baba took a different approach.



Throughout his lifetime, there were several instances when he blessed them to alleviate their worldly problems. Chandranath recounted an incident that took place in October 1957 that was highly instructive in this regard.

“Once when I was posted in Nathnagar, I was out of town for some Marga work. I returned home very late at night to discover that my eldest son, Amarnath, was seriously ill. My wife and other children were in Gaddopur, my native village. In our absence my neighbour had summoned the local doctor who administered some medicine, and Makhan, my household assistant, was looking after him.

“When I arrived, I relieved Makhan of his duties so that he could meditate and have his dinner. Then I sat down beside the bed watching Amarnath. I had heard from the neighbours that his condition was very serious. He had breathing difficulties and chest pain and was very restless. The doctor had also said that Amarnath’s illness was a cause for concern. I was very worried, as the nearest hospital was about seven kilometres away, and it would be difficult to arrange proper transport to take him there in the cold night if there was an emergency. I could not sleep at all due to worry. Finally, realising that worrying would not solve the problem, I decided to leave him in Baba’s care. I then sat on a chair beside his bed and meditated.

“At around midnight something strange happened. A light appeared on the wall beside Amarnath’s bed. At first, I thought that it was the flashlight of a relative or acquaintance who had come to check on him. I looked outside but could not see anyone. I kept looking at the mysterious light, wondering from where it had come. Then, to my surprise, I saw Baba’s figure in Varabhaya Mudra slowly appearing in the centre of the light. It remained there for about fifteen seconds. I immediately knelt down doing namaskar. As I gazed intently at the form of Baba’s figure surrounded by the light, it faded and gradually disappeared. At the same time the light began to slowly dim until it also vanished.

“By then Amarnath was in deep sleep. After this mysterious experience, I was sure that he would be all right. He woke up shortly afterwards. Although he was a little disoriented, overall he was much better. By the next morning he was almost normal except for a little weakness.”

### **Yogic Treatment**

In November 1957 Baba started to give dictation on a new subject – how to cure diseases by applying yogic techniques and the use of easily available natural remedies. Sukumar Bose took the dictation during the lunch hour amidst the hustle and bustle of office activities. Baba’s colleagues maintained a respectable distance from them, realising that Baba was giving dictation on an important subject. The book was named *Yogic Treatments and Natural Remedies*. Altogether Baba dealt with about forty of the most common diseases, describing their symptoms, causes and treatment through diet and yoga exercises. In some cases he also prescribed simple remedies that could be made at home. Baba’s approach to healing was quite different from conventional medical practices. His goal was primarily to rejuvenate malfunctioning organs and strengthen the immune system as well as rebalance the mind.

In the preface, Baba explained the objectives of the book. “The goal of all healing is to cure a patient, both physically and mentally. So the main question is not to uphold any particular school of medical science; rather, the key task is the welfare of the patient. Just as diseased body organs can be restored to a normal state by administering medicines internally or externally, they can also be healed more safely and more perfectly with the help of yoga asanas and mudras. The aim of this book is, therefore, to make the general public aware of yogic methods of treating the various illnesses.

“My purpose is to let people cure themselves by practising the asanas and mudras described in this book. People are requested not to take the risk of practising asanas and mudras by themselves, but rather to do so under the guidance of an experienced acharya. Ananda

Marga acharyas will always be ready to help without any remuneration. Detailed instructions for practising the asanas and mudras, for bathing, etc. have been given in Part Three of *Ananda Marga Caryacarya*. If necessary, the reader may consult that book.”

Baba’s diagnosis and treatment of diseases is special. It involves a trilateral method of treating the body and the mind of the patient through diet, exercise and the administration of natural medicines and other substances. The methods of treatment prescribed in this book were unknown in those days.

According to Baba, the root cause of most diseases that are discussed in the *Yogic Treatments* book is the accumulation of toxins in the body. Baba clarified that in most cases, disease starts because of a sedentary lifestyle coupled with an acidic diet, which make the blood and body acidic. Such acidic diets generate many different toxins in the body, leading to the malfunction of various organs. In the treatment of almost every disease Baba has stressed the importance of an alkaline diet. He advised that one of the simplest ways to create an alkaline environment in the body is to take lemon water with salt a few times a day. Only in recent times has research proved the benefits of an alkaline diet. The greater alkalinity of the body helps in the absorption of oxygen, which is essential to the health of every organ, whereas increased acidity of the body hinders the absorption of oxygen and leads to various diseases. In the case of an insufficiently alkaline diet, our body has to extract important minerals from our bones, teeth, and organs. This can compromise our immune system, cause fatigue, and make us vulnerable to viruses and disease. When the body is in an alkaline state, one will be less prone to cellular damage and disease. A largely alkaline diet is essential for the all-round health and immunity of the body.

The principal method Baba proposed to treat diseases was to rectify the non-functional part of the body through yogic exercises. He prescribed different sets of asanas and mudras for each disease, which were to be practised in the morning and in the evening. These yogic exercises rectify the defects in the diseased organ and improve



the functioning of the glands that control the physiology of the body. In some cases Baba prescribed meditation as part of the treatment for a particular disease, as many diseases are psychosomatic in nature. He also prescribed a change in diet and a course of natural remedies.

Baba also treated diseases at the psychic level. Impure thoughts and emotional disturbances release harmful hormones into the bloodstream, make the blood acidic, and changing the metabolic system, all of which have a negative effect on the body. He emphasised the need for mental purity and emotional balance, the absence of which invites disorders of the stomach, heart, brain and other physical organs. To preserve the purity of the mind and emotional balance, Baba prescribed a three-pronged approach – doing selfless service, following a moral code of conduct and practising regular meditation. In this way patients learn to cure themselves.

During a Sunday discourse in late 1959 Baba noted that a person's physical and mental health also depended on their adherence to the moral principles of yama-niyama, and that violating them would damage the body. Dr. Rameshvar Prasad Sinha, a new initiate and a paediatrician working in Dumka, Bihar, was present in that gathering. "What is the link between yama-niyama and physical health?" he wondered.

Almost immediately Baba turned to him and said, "Following yama-niyama makes the mind pure; violating it leads to mental impurity. Impure thoughts cause the secretion of hormones that create toxins in the body. As a doctor, you very well understand how toxins are harmful to physical health. Ramesh, do you follow now?"

Such an immediate and logical explanation in response to a mere thought left Dr. Rameshvar<sup>2</sup> pleasantly surprised.

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Rameshvar Prasad Sinha became a devoted Margi. He was commonly known as Dr. Ramesh. Baba blessed him with the intuitive ability to understand the medical problems that small children were unable to express. This enabled him to become one of the most renowned paediatricians in India. In recognition of his ability he was decorated with several awards, including the President's national award.

On several occasions Baba informed the Margis that some of the medicines that he included in the *Yogic Treatment and Natural Remedies* book had been added at the suggestion of Kalikananda, Baba's first initiate. Once, Kshitij and Arun from Muzaffarpur accompanied Baba on his Field Walk. There was some discussion about Kalikananda. In the course of the discussion Arun enquired why Baba had not given Kalikananda organisational duties unlike the Margis who had been tasked with many different duties. Baba was angry with Arun for making such a remark without knowing the facts, and ordered him to immediately leave. Seeing how upset Baba was Arun walked back without saying a word.

He had taken only a few steps when Baba told Kshitij, "See, it is not his fault. He does not know what work Kalikananda has been doing. So call him back."

Kshitij then called out to Arun to return. He apologised to Baba for his indiscreet remark about Kalikananda. Baba then told them about Kalikananda's special responsibilities.

"Kalikananda would study the medicinal qualities of different herbs and would report them to me. I have incorporated the information he gave me in the book, *Yogic Treatment and Natural Remedies*. He also appears in different places in different forms to help sadhakas who are in difficulty. He takes especial care to help those practising higher Tantra sadhana when they go to the burial ground for meditation on new moon nights." This information was news to everyone.

Throughout his life Baba continued to suggest methods of treating different diseases, mainly during Field Walks. While walking through a field or along a street he would suddenly stop and pick up a plant or shrub and explain its medicinal properties. Interestingly, he also interspersed a lot of medical information in his philological discourses, which was later compiled into another book on medicine entitled *The Natural Medicine*.

As Ananda Marga completed its third year, an increasing number of Margis had close proximity with Baba. There was an increase in the number of people coming every day to Jamalpur to see Baba. The most suitable time for them to have close contact with Baba was during his evening walk. So on Baba's instruction Pranay divided the Margis wanting to go for Field Walk into three groups of A, B and C. Each group comprised four people. The B group accompanied Baba from his residence to the Tiger's Grave, while the A group waited for him at the Tiger's Grave and sat with him there. The Margis in the B and C group waited at the Englishman's grave, which was a short distance away. Sometimes, if Baba had something important to discuss, he would call all the Margis to the Tiger's Grave. Then some sat on the grave itself with Baba, while the others sat on the ground. On his return home, the C group accompanied him, while the rest followed a few steps behind. On a few rare occasions Baba permitted additional persons to join them. There were a few exceptions to this arrangement, however. Dasharath, the school teacher and Narasingh from Trimohan were never formally included in any group. They were always considered as one of the extras.

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## Opening the Third Eye

One of the hallmarks of Baba's teaching style was the demonstrations he conducted to bring the philosophy alive. Through these practical demonstrations, he explained many esoteric aspects of spirituality, which until that time had remained virtually unknown and were found only in a few obscure spiritual texts. Such methods were unheard of in the annals of spiritual history. Baba employed this unique style of teaching throughout his life.

The demonstrations varied so much in range and depth that the Margis soon realised that Baba was not just omniscient, but omnipotent as well, and that nothing was impossible for him. By his mere wish, he could make a person's mind transcend the limits of time and place or go to any part of the universe in a matter of seconds.

Such demonstrations not only encompassed every strata of the physical universe, but included the higher realms of creation as well. On several occasions, Baba also gave demonstrations of the state beyond creation. Sometimes the mind of the sadhaka who was the medium of a demonstration was transported to different metaphysical, psychic, or spiritual planes. These demonstrations helped the disciples understand various kinds of parapsychological or occult phenomena or gain an insight into different realms of the spiritual world, which had hitherto remained beyond the comprehension of ordinary spiritual aspirants. By his mere command, Baba could raise the kundalini of anyone and demonstrate various kinds of *samadhi*. The highest of *samadhis* that Baba demonstrated was *nirvikalpa samadhi*, where the mind merges into Nirguna Brahma, the non-qualified Supreme Consciousness. In that ultimate state of consciousness, the body stiffens and becomes like a corpse, as the mind ceases to exist.

From the early days of Ananda Marga, such amazing demonstrations were commonplace. Although the main purpose of the demonstrations was to bring to life the philosophical knowledge he was imparting, on occasion they also served to remind the disciples of the serious consequences of even the slightest moral lapse. As they watched in awe, the disciples realised that whatever Baba was teaching them was not mere theory but higher truths that could be experienced and comprehended by developing the subtlety of mind.

Baba's discussions were wide-ranging, as were the demonstrations he conducted to illustrate the points he was making. During his days in Jamalpur, Baba put much emphasis on the concept of reincarnation - how human life was just one link in a long chain of innumerable lives, and how the mind acquired a human body after a long and slow process of evolution. These demonstrations served to explain the effect of past actions on one's present life and show how our future life is influenced by our daily thoughts and actions. Their main purpose was to constantly remind the disciples that the ultimate aim of human life is to become one with Parama Purusha, the Macrocosmic Nucleus.

Many demonstrations showed the defective nature of some of the dogmatic beliefs prevalent in society, and helped the disciples to develop a clear understanding of the metaphysical, psychic, and spiritual worlds. Others lifted the veil of mystery surrounding death and the after-death state. The demonstrations also proved the imaginary nature of heaven and hell. In later years, the main themes were parapsychological and spiritual phenomena, and dealt with various kinds of occult powers and samadhi. In the last few years of his life, Baba's demonstrations centred around the epoch-making theory of microvita. These mysterious and minute cosmic emanations are formed during various phases of the process of creation and play a vital role in the different stages of the Cosmic Cycle. Baba indicated that in the future an in-depth study of microvita would shed light on many aspects of the creation of the universe, which would radically alter our understanding of the various branches of science.

Some demonstrations gave his disciples an experience of the wide range of subtle inferential waves of cosmic sound such as the sound of ankle bells, the divine flute, and the omkara as well as the different types of divine aroma emanating from the Cosmic Nucleus, and the influence of these inferential waves on the glands and the mind. These were all related to the various realms of the spiritual world, which no spiritual master had hitherto ventured to discuss in seven thousand years of spiritual history. In the early days, Pranay was one of those chosen as the medium for the spiritual demonstrations. Others included Kesto and Harisadhan, but from 1957 Dasharath, the schoolteacher, became Baba's preferred medium and remained so for the rest of his stay in Jamalpur.

Before starting a demonstration, Baba would ask Dasharath to sit in meditation. He would then touch Dasharath at the back of his head or between his eyebrows. Sometimes just a verbal command from Baba would suffice. Dasharath would then feel as if a dense fog had cleared from his mind and would experience the unfolding of its deeper layers. His mind would immediately be transported to a different place or time and would have the ability to enter the minds of the people there in accordance with Baba's instruction. He would then be able to see a person's actions at a given time, even in lifetimes hundreds or thousands or even millions of years ago. Sometimes Baba would give Dasharath the special ability to penetrate the higher psychic and spiritual worlds and ask him to describe his experiences. In some significant demonstrations, Dasharath was shown a vision of Lord Shiva and Lord Krishna, which set right the incorrect notions people had about their physical appearance. Usually as a demonstration progressed Dasharath would be asked to describe what he was seeing or experiencing.

One day after watching Baba perform a demonstration on Dasharath, the Margis present were curious to know the significance of touching the space between the eyebrows or the back of the head of a person upon whom the demonstration was performed. They had seen how at other times just a command from Baba sufficed to carry out a demonstration without the need of touching any part of the body.



Baba explained, "The chakra between the eyebrows is the *ajina* chakra, the controlling point of the mind. Between the *ajina* chakra and the back of the head is the cranium. You can say that it is the physical location of the mind. The mind functions through the medium of the brain. By developing this chakra one can awaken the intuition of a person. Symbolically it is called the third eye. When the kundalini reaches this chakra, one attains fully developed intuition and becomes an all-knowing person. You can see in the pictures of Lord Shiva that a third eye is drawn in the location of the *ajina* chakra. It was not meant to show Lord Shiva as a strange-looking person with a third eye between the eyebrows. It was a symbolic way of showing that His intuitional mind was open always and that He could see everything of the past, present and future. Shiva was an all-knowing entity. When I touch either the *ajina* chakra or the back of the head of Dasharath before starting a demonstration, I open his intuition to the required extent. It is not necessary for me to touch any part of the body. A mere verbal or mental command is sufficient. But I do it in order to indicate that it is the physical location of the mind.

### **Freed of an Addiction**

Before utilizing him for demonstrations, Baba prepared Dasharath by putting him through several arduous tests to remove his weaknesses and develop an attitude of surrender to the guru. In a series of interviews, Dasharath recounted some of the experiences through which Baba prepared him for his role in the spiritual demonstrations and the opening of his intuitional eye:

Baba never tolerated any kind of weakness in me. He took immediate corrective action to rectify any mistakes I made. There was a two-week period when he kept a particularly strict watch on all the Margis. At that time he rebuked me in a dream for taking *khaini*, a mixture of tobacco and lime. For a few months afterwards I was very strict about keeping this bad habit in check. Then one day a physical instructor from Darbhanga came to our school for some work. He was an old friend of mine and I was seeing him after a long time. He knew

that I used to take khaini but was not aware that I had given it up. He offered me some and although I told him that I had stopped taking it, he insisted on me taking it just once to keep him company, saying that he had made some very good quality khaini. As he insisted, I thought that I should not disappoint an old friend. However, the truth was that the old habit, which I had kept under control for so many months, was rearing its head again. I rationalised that there was nothing wrong in taking it just once. After all, I had given it up voluntarily and could do so again at any time. With such thoughts in my mind, I accepted the khaini. After some time I felt guilty and mentally requested Baba a number of times to cure my bad habit forever. I begged him to give me the moral strength to overcome the temptation to take tobacco.

That evening I went to the jagrti. Baba was there talking with some Margis, and two new people were among them. When I entered, Baba was talking about the ill effects of smoking. He said that the dark coating that forms on the kitchen walls due to the smoke from a wood oven is similar to the coating that lines the lungs due to smoking cigarettes. He said that the smoke of tobacco was even more harmful to health. Its constant use in any form can cause cancer. Its prolonged use weakens both the nerves and the mind, and it slowly becomes an addiction. He also explained the ill effects of alcohol. He was talking like an affectionate father making his children understand the harm caused by tobacco and alcohol. Then, turning to the two new Margis, he asked if either of them smoked. They simultaneously replied they did not.

Hearing their reply, Baba's demeanour changed instantaneously. "Aren't you both in the habit of smoking cigarettes and until two days ago didn't you smoke regularly?" he thundered. Lowering his tone, he continued, "It is true that for the last two days you have not smoked, but that is because you have not found any scope to do so, as you have been staying in the jagrti. But the desire to smoke has often come in

your mind, and I know that you have been trying hard to keep it in check.”

Realising that they could not hide anything from Baba, they admitted that everything he said was true. Baba made them promise that from that very moment they would not even think of cigarettes. Then he called them closer and touched their anahata and vishuddha chakras with his stick, saying that he had removed the negative effects of their smoking habit. He then cautioned them not to indulge in any kind of bad habit again. After that he got ready to leave. As I watched the incident, I was gripped with the fear that Baba might expose my bad habit before the others and that it would be a blot on my image. So I kept mentally asking him to forgive me and promised that I would never touch khaini again.

Just as he was about to get up Baba burst out laughing, “From today Dasharath has also stopped taking khaini,” he said. Although I joined in the laughter, I felt a severe mental jolt. In Guru Puja I mentally offered my attachment to tobacco at Baba’s feet and took a strong determination never to touch it again. And indeed I was never again disturbed by the desire to take khaini.

### **Crushing My Vanity**

Sometime at the end of 1955 I passed my Tattvika exam. After that I was invited to speak at a *Tattvasabha* in a place nearby. I delivered my speech on the basis of the knowledge I had gained during my evening walks with Baba. Once the meeting was over, someone accompanied me part of the way home. As we walked, he confided, “Several people in the meeting had a very strange experience. They had a negative view of Ananda Marga and planned to ask some questions with the intention of provoking you. But what you said in your speech allayed all their doubts and changed their perception of



the Marga. They did not feel like asking you anything after that.”

I felt proud of being able to convert people's negative opinions into positive ones. I spoke at several other meetings and everywhere I went, I received accolades. Gradually, I became one of the most preferred speakers on Ananda Marga philosophy. In those days even the first book, *Ananda Marga Elementary Philosophy*, was not yet available in Hindi. So whatever I said was based on what I had heard from Baba at the Tiger's Grave during the evening walks.

On one occasion Haragovinda and I were asked to address a Tattvasabha in Bariyarpur, a small town about twenty kilometres from Jamalpur. Haragovinda was the first speaker. His speech was more or less in the traditional style of Hindu preachers. I felt upset about the old-fashioned style of his presentation, when Baba's ideas were so modern and logical. I thought that nobody would be impressed by what he said and decided that my speech would have to make up for the defects in his presentation and convince everyone. Thinking thus, I waited restlessly for his “boring” speech to be over. I also decided not to share a dais with Haragovinda again until he learned how to speak properly at a public gathering.

Soon my turn came and I stood up and started to speak with an air of confidence. My speech was similar to many others that I had given elsewhere, which had been greatly appreciated by the audience. That day, however, I felt that the force and confidence with which I had spoken in other places was missing. I also felt that the audience wasn't impressed by my words. I wondered what had happened to me and started to sweat. Totally drained of confidence, I concluded the speech in a hurry and sat down. There were several critical remarks from the audience, and I did not feel confident enough to answer

their questions. To my great surprise, a stranger stood up and answered all the questions on my behalf in a very logical manner, clearing up everyone's doubts. I felt very relieved and mentally thanked him for coming to my rescue. What surprised me most was that Haragovinda's speech that I had considered mediocre won the appreciation of many of the listeners.

The next evening I met Baba during his Field Walk. I expressed my anger and frustration at being publicly humiliated. He replied with a smile, "Don't you know Dasharath, Arjuna once developed a lot of vanity about his physical and mental prowess. Then, when confronted by his enemies, suddenly he found that he could not even lift his famous bow, Gandiva, what to speak of stringing an arrow and taking aim. He did not know that it was Lord Krishna's grace that had made him so mighty. Krishna withdrew the physical strength of Arjuna in order to remove his ego. You should know that vanity and Parama Purusha's grace cannot co-exist."

I understood my mistake but was still smarting from the previous day's humiliation and was not ready to give up. "Baba what you say may be correct. But I went there as your representative to propagate the mission. Am I supposed to get insulted at a public gathering?"

Baba smiled and replied, "Dasharath, one only gets insulted in public and never in private. It never happens when you are alone. But you did not face the difficult situation alone. Wasn't there at least one person who helped you in your difficulty?" A mystic smile lit up his face as he spoke. Suddenly, I vividly recalled the face of the person who had helped me out several times during some very awkward moments, and I became transfixed. "Dasharath, one of the names of Parama Purusha is *Darpahari*, which means destroyer of vanity," Baba continued, interrupting my stupor. "He does not tolerate vanity in his devotees because vanity is a big

obstacle on the path of spirituality. It creates a barrier between the sadhaka and Parama Purusha. Spirituality is a process of continuous expansion of the mind, and vanity builds a strong wall around you preventing that mental expansion. That is why, when Parama Purusha sees that His devotee is suffering from vanity, He immediately takes measures to remove it from that devotee's mind. Now that you have understood everything clearly, will you allow vanity to creep inside you again?"

"No Baba. I shall be careful from now on."

Baba gently patted my cheek and said with a charming smile, "Not just careful, but very, very careful, as vanity can peep in through any gap or crack at any moment, even without you being aware of it. You cannot be the medium for Parama Purusha's great work if you develop vanity."

I took his words as a mantra and his advice has remained permanently etched in my mind, helping immensely in shaping my conduct. Since then I have been constantly on guard to prevent vanity sneaking into me through some means or another.

### **Containing Anger**

One day some of my neighbours misbehaved with me without justification and abused me. Their offensive behaviour hurt my feelings, and I was furious with them. In that angry state of mind I went to the jagrti to attend Baba's darshan, arriving in the middle of his discourse. He was talking about samskaras - how each and every action creates an opposite reaction, and how these reactions are stored in the unconscious mind. My mind was so disturbed that I could not concentrate on what he was saying. Even while the discourse was going on, I kept thinking about my neighbours' bad behaviour, and I grew increasingly incensed. For a fleeting moment the thought of cursing them arose in my mind, but immediately I felt that it would not be proper to do that and controlled myself by



ideating on my guru mantra. Just as the thought of cursing them arose in my mind, I saw Baba look at me angrily, and without interrupting his discourse, he picked up the stick lying beside him. Then after a short time he put it down.

I tried to calm my mind and fix my attention on what Baba was saying. However, my anger with my neighbours welled up inside me once more, and again I wanted to curse them, but this time too I immediately remembered my guru mantra and calmed my mind. However, my attention was momentarily diverted and when I turned to look at Baba, I saw him staring at me with fury in his face and again holding the stick. After a short time he again put it down.

Baba continued his discourse without interruption. I still couldn't concentrate on it, and again started thinking of my neighbours' insulting behaviour. Once more I wished ill of them, but immediately controlled the feeling with the help of my guru mantra. Again I saw Baba look at me angrily, pick up the stick and then a bit later put it down.

I wondered why he had looked at me so angrily, lifted the stick, and then put it down again. "Have I done anything wrong?" I wondered. Somehow, it never occurred to me that Baba's fury might be connected with my thinking ill of my neighbours. What surprised me the most was that when he turned in my direction for a couple of seconds he looked angry, but as soon as he turned away he continued his discourse with a smiling face. Because his anger lasted only for a fleeting moment and was quickly followed by a smile, no one in the audience noticed it and enjoyed the discourse. After the darshan was over, when everyone left the room, I stayed behind. Once I was alone with Baba, I approached him and asked, "Baba why did you look at me so angrily and pick up your stick? Did I do anything wrong?"

"Anything wrong?" he exclaimed. "You almost committed an unpardonable sin for which I would have punished you

severely. As the anger started to build up in your mind, I was watching to see whether it was actually taking shape. But then I saw that you were controlling it with your guru mantra and not allowing it to create a samskara. If you had cursed them, I would have immediately given you heavy punishment. You have no right to hate or think ill of others, even if they have hurt you. A sadhaka should never think of cursing others. As a sadhaka, if you curse anyone, that will harm them tremendously. Wishing others ill will harm you too. Not only that, you would be squandering the power you have earned through your sadhana for a negative purpose. You should leave it to *Prakriti* to punish them for their mistakes. Due to anger you wanted to curse them in retaliation for their actions, whereas Nature's law is always just, and its retribution depends purely on the seriousness of the action. Is it clear to you?"

I learned a big lesson from this incident and it has helped me to always keep my anger under control.

### **Baba Tests My Faith**

From the very beginning of my spiritual life, it was my good fortune to have numerous opportunities to be with Baba, and this helped to increase my devotional sentiment. That in turn enabled me to maintain constant spiritual ideation, immensely enhancing the quality of my meditation. However, a time came when my attraction for the guru started to wane. As a result, my devotion and faith in Baba, which at that time was the elixir of my life, vanished like a rivulet in the desert sand. I was unable to understand the reason for this sudden change. I felt dry inside, even after long periods of meditation, but continued to meditate, albeit mechanically. My desire to see Baba in the jagrti or accompany him on his evening Field Walks also diminished significantly. During that period, I gradually developed a feeling of revulsion towards Baba's physical presence. Although I forced myself to be with him as

much as possible, the blissful feeling that I had previously experienced in his company was missing. My mind was flooded with negativity, and that created tremendous conflict within me. I was deeply worried about this sudden change in my attitude and mentally requested Baba to rescue me from this miserable situation and to restore my sadhana and balance of mind. However, to my great dismay, there was no change in my condition.

My mind was wrecked by turbulence, and I didn't know who to turn to for help with the crisis that I was going through. Finally, I decided to talk to Baba himself about it, but did not know how to tell him that I was losing my devotion and faith in him. Somehow with great difficulty I managed to tell him indirectly. In response Baba advised, "All your doubts and internal conflicts will disappear with the help of *ishta mantra* and *guru mantra*. Practice them diligently." For several days, I strove hard to ideate on the two mantras as instructed, but it brought no change in my negative feelings towards Baba or my sadhana. The flames of my inner conflict continued to rage unabated.

Then one day my faith and attraction to Baba mysteriously returned and I began to yearn to be close to him once more. The darshans in the ashram and the evening walks with him became blissful once again. My meditation also became very enjoyable.

After a few days, however, to my great consternation the problem recurred. Again I was beset by doubts about Baba and lost my attraction for him. I felt like avoiding him. I also lost interest in sadhana, and the ghost of negativity returned to haunt me in full force. I avoided going for evening walks with Baba, and my meditation became a mechanical routine, a shadow of what I had previously enjoyed. Although I forced myself to go to the jagrti, I felt completely dry inside and lacked even an iota of devotional sentiment. These



developments worried me greatly. My fervent prayers to Baba also did not bring about any change in my condition.

After a few days, I again decided to bring up the topic with Baba. He suggested the same remedy as before. This time too I did my best to follow his instructions assiduously, but try as I might, the result was the same. I was plagued with doubts about Baba and this once again had an adverse effect on my spiritual life. My plight continued for a week or so. Then suddenly, one fine morning, I felt that my faith in and devotion to Baba had mysteriously returned. This state of affairs recurred for some time. I oscillated between feelings of attraction and repulsion for the guru and for my spiritual practices. Whenever my faith in Baba disappeared, doubts about his omnipresence and omnipotence began to trouble me. This had a distinctly negative effect on my sadhana. I intensely missed the spiritual bliss that I had formerly experienced in Baba's proximity and during my meditation.

I longed to return to the days when my sadhana and devotion for Baba was at a peak and I felt like I was floating in a spiritual paradise. I wondered what had happened to me. "Maybe an *avidya tantric* has used some negative power on me, and that is why I am losing the inspiration to do my sadhana," I thought. I expressed my fears to Baba when I told him about my problem for the third time.

"No *avidya tantric* in this world has the power to harm my sons and daughters," declared Baba with an air of authority. "Anyone imprudent enough to attempt to harm my disciples will have to immediately face retribution from Nature," he said emphatically. He again instructed me to continue my normal sadhana and said that in due course, everything would be fine. Once more I made efforts to perform my sadhana and other related practices with utmost sincerity. To my utter disappointment, despite all my endeavours, there was no change in my condition. Gradually, my visits to Baba became

rare, and I began to lose the motivation to do meditation. It had been three to four months since this crisis had erupted, and I did not know how to resolve it. I began to feel extremely depressed. My sadhana had become purely mechanical, and I constantly appealed to Baba to rescue me from what was a veritable hell.

One day Baba sent for me. When I reached the jagrti, he called me into his room and asked me to sit in front of him. He touched my ajina chakra and said, "With this, half of the internal conflict you are experiencing will be gone and the remaining half will disappear if you do sadhana properly like before."

The moment Baba touched my ajina chakra I felt as if I had awoken from a deep slumber, and my mind suddenly opened up. The waves of ecstasy, which had earlier inundated my being in Baba's presence, returned. I felt that I had become extremely light. When Baba left after giving his darshan, I meditated in the room for a long time and did not want to open my eyes. The quality of my meditation also improved immensely. Within two or three days, I was in my previous spiritually ebullient state once more. The intense crisis that I had just passed through now appeared like a nightmarish dream.

One day, after meditating in the jagrti, I tried to analyse what I had gone through and why. I realised that Baba's mysterious hand was behind everything. But I did not know why I had to go through such a hell. The thought that Baba might again put me through such a harrowing experience terrified me, and I decided to do something about it.

The next day when Baba came to the jagrti, I entered his room when he was alone. As he saw me he said in a jovial mood, "Hello, master sahib, I hope everything is fine with you." Instead of answering him, I went straight to him and caught hold of his feet. He asked, "Dasharath, what are you doing? Let go of me! Leave me alone!"

“No, Baba, I will not let you go just like that. First you have to promise me something. Only then will I let go of you.”

Pretending to be angry with me, he asked, “What are you doing? What promise? Don’t you know it is against the discipline to behave like this? Now let me go.”

“No, Baba, I am not going to let go of you today, come what may. You cured me of an intense internal crisis just by the touch of your hand, and I know that it was you who created the crisis in the first place. In the future you may give me any kind of suffering, but promise me that you will never again snatch away my faith in you and create a distance between us. Promise me this, Baba.”

Tears welled up in my eyes as I beseeched him repeatedly, while tightly holding on to his feet. Baba’s mood changed. With a sweet smile and great affection he lifted me up and placed my head on his lap, patting it gently. Tears streamed down my cheeks like a torrent, wetting Baba’s clothes.

“Dasharath, don’t worry. I will never leave you,” he assured me lovingly and continued to pat my head gently. “No force in this universe can make that happen. You will stay close to me as long as you remain in this mortal frame and after that you will become part of me in the unexpressed world for eternity.”

I embraced him and continued to weep. All the while Baba patted my back with deep affection and repeated his words of reassurance. I don’t know how long I continued to weep. By the time the Margis gathered for darshan, all my fear of losing faith in Baba had been dispelled completely.

A few weeks later, while sitting on the Tiger’s Grave one evening, I took the opportunity to ask a question that had been lingering in my mind for a while.



“Baba, what happened to me during those few months? Why did I lose my faith in you for no apparent reason?”

With a sweet smile he replied, “The Sadguru tests all the disciples in several ways in order to see if they really have firm determination to move forward on the spiritual path. He creates various kinds of doubts, distractions, temptations, and obstacles on their path to check whether they can remain committed to attaining the spiritual goal despite these obstacles. Most people fail these tests and give up the spiritual path. Those who are able to pass, move ahead with greater vigor and determination. The speed of their progress increases.

“Of all the tests, the withdrawal of faith in the guru is the most difficult to overcome. A disciple may be able to pass the other tests due to the strength he derives from sadhana and faith in the guru. But in this test, all the support is withdrawn, and the disciple becomes totally helpless. The only way one can pass the test is through *sharanagati*, complete surrender. One has to mentally catch hold of the Sadguru’s feet and say, ‘Whatever obstacles you create in my path, I refuse to leave you.’ If the disciple steadfastly holds on to the guru even in the midst of this crisis, the guru becomes duty-bound to lift him out of it and hold him in his tight embrace.”

This experience strengthened me internally, and my devotion to Baba grew manifold.

### **Baba’s Astral Visits**

Following the gruelling test I went through, Baba encouraged me to intensify my meditation. I made it a point to get up early in the morning before four and, after performing my ablutions, I would meditate for about three hours. Such long meditation in the early hours helped me to develop my spiritual life very much. On many occasions during my meditation, I experienced different kinds of divine fragrance all

around me, like the ones that emanated from Baba's body. These fragrances would intoxicate me spiritually. One morning I woke up before four as usual and was preparing to start my meditation. Then, all of a sudden, I was amazed to see Baba standing in the room. I turned round to fetch a chair for him. When I turned back after picking up the chair, I saw that he was no longer there. I rushed to the door thinking that he may be leaving the house but was surprised to see that the door was bolted on the inside and that everyone else was asleep.

I wondered how Baba could have entered the house when the door was closed and then disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared without saying a word. Was it a hallucination? I thought about it for a long time and finally concluded that it was no hallucination, as I had seen him vividly with my eyes wide open. I regretted that I hadn't prostrated before Baba or welcomed him properly. I could not understand how he had entered and departed. I decided to solve the mystery by asking Baba himself. That evening I accompanied him to the Tiger's Grave. Nityananda was also there. Seizing an opportune moment I asked, "Baba, did you come to my house early this morning?" Baba did not answer, so I repeated the question. "Baba, please tell me whether you came to my house."

Then Baba said, "Yes, I came to your house this morning."

"Baba, why did you leave so quickly and suddenly?"

"Dasharath, it was not my normal physical body made of flesh and bones that could sit there and eat the mangoes you offered. I had to visit another twenty seven places within half an hour. So there wasn't enough time."

As Dasharath recalled the words of Baba during his interview, he started to weep profusely.

"Baba, the door was bolted on the inside, so how did you come in and go out?" I asked.

“In the subtle body I can go anywhere unimpeded by any barrier and I go to different places to give darshan to my disciples. In a still more subtle form, I am present everywhere, but you can't see that form with your physical eyes. That's why I came in a form that you would be able to see and hear.”

Then Nityananda said, “Baba, I too had a similar experience. One morning I saw you in my room just as I was about to sit for meditation, and then you suddenly disappeared. I thought that perhaps I had been hallucinating.”

Another day, early in the morning, before sitting for meditation, I prostrated before a small photograph of Baba and unintentionally fell asleep in that position. My sleep was suddenly broken by the sound of Baba's voice calling me. I clearly heard him call me three times. By the time he called for the third time, I was fully awake. I rushed to the door and opened it thinking that he had come to meet me. However, there was nobody at the door and everything was still and quiet. It was only then that I realised that I had fallen asleep while prostrating and Baba's mysterious call had come to wake me up for my meditation. On another occasion Baba told me that he used to visit the houses of sincere sadhakas to wake them up from sleep so that they could do their sadhana.”

### **Effulgence of Divine Worlds**

One evening in early 1957, some Margis and I were sitting with Baba on the Tiger's Grave. He was discussing the different stages of the creation of the Cosmic Mind. He said, “The entire creation is the thought-projection of Parama Purusha. He thinks, and creation comes into being with the help of the sentient, mutative and static forces of the Supreme Creative Principle. So the entire creation takes place within the mind of Parama Purusha, and His mind is called the Cosmic Mind. There are seven strata of creation. They are *bhurloka*, *bhuvarloka*, *svarloka*, *maharloka*, *janarloka*, *taparloka*, and *Satyaloka*.”



“Bhurloka is the manifested universe, the physical realm of the Cosmic Mind. Beyond the threshold of the physical universe lie the other six realms that are purely mental or astral realms of the Cosmic Mind. The five higher *lokas* are the different stages of creation. Each of the *lokas* has a separate function in the process of creation and has a different vibration, subtle sound, and effulgence. These are the stages before the physical universe comes into existence. Human beings tend to think that bhurloka, which they perceive through their sensory organs, is the only truth and beyond that nothing exists. The fact is that even in the physical world, the human sensory organs are only capable of perceiving vibrations within a certain range. They do not have the ability to perceive very subtle and very crude vibrations. So how can they understand the higher planes?”

I have always talked freely to Baba, so without any hesitation I asked him, “Baba, can these planes be experienced in meditation?”

“Certainly it is possible, and they can be experienced when the mind becomes subtle through sadhana.”

“What kinds of feelings arise when we experience these *lokas*? In the scriptures there are various kinds of explanations about them.”

“Do you want to see these subtle, vibrational planes?” Baba asked me.

“Baba, if you would be so kind as to grace me, I would like to see them.”

“It is not possible to see those subtle planes with the physical eyes. I will provide you with a subtle, psychic eye for that purpose.”

Baba then touched the chakra between my eyebrows. Immediately I saw extremely powerful effulgence. Slowly, the effulgence grew brighter and brighter as Baba lifted my mind

to higher lokas, all the way up to the taparloka. At every loka I felt an ineffably blissful feeling, which intensified as I entered the higher lokas. When he finished showing me the effulgent realms, I thought that this must be *brahma jyoti*, the effulgence of the Supreme Consciousness. So I asked him if it was so.

“No, this is not brahma jyoti. Brahma jyoti is the most effulgent radiance of Saguna Brahma, the stratum just at the start of the creative process of the Cosmic Mind. It is called satyaloka. In order to perceive that supreme effulgence, you will need a still more subtle psychic eye. I shall provide you with that as well.”

Baba then gently tapped my forehead and said, “Look at my two big toes and ideate as you do in *dhyana*.”

I gazed at Baba’s toes for a few seconds and saw indescribably powerful effulgence radiating from both of them. I also felt an inexpressible, blissful feeling.

“Seeing the powerful brahma jyoti for too long even with the subtle psychic eye can harm the physical eyes as well, unless one is highly evolved. So now I will reduce the effulgence. On the right side there will be three quarters of that original effulgence and on the left, one quarter of the effulgence of the brahma jyoti.”

I saw effulgence emanating in different magnitudes from each of his big toes – very powerful from the right toe and less powerful from the left. Slowly, I became fully immersed in that blissful realm. I don’t know for how long I remained in that supremely blissful state. Later, the others told me that I had been in that transcendental state for about an hour. When I came back to normal consciousness, Baba said, “Dasharath, the brahma jyoti that you have just seen is called “*bharga*” in the *savitri rik*. The Savitri Rik is called the *gayatri mantra* in the Vedas. The extremely effulgent and blissful experience that you have had just now is the experience associated with that

supreme state. That is why the Supreme Consciousness is called the personification of effulgence and bliss.”

Years later, while relating the memorable events of that evening, Dasharath was asked about the difference between the brahma jyoti that emanated from Baba’s toes and the effulgence of the subtler realms. Dasharath replied, “The effulgence of the subtler planes was no doubt extremely bright and made me feel very blissful. But it could not be compared with the effulgence that came from Baba’s toes, which was beyond description. That effulgence was like several thousand suns all shining together but the feeling was indescribably soothing, and I was lost in a transcendental world of bliss. I don’t have the words to express it. It’s beyond description. I was absorbed in that divine ecstasy for almost an hour.

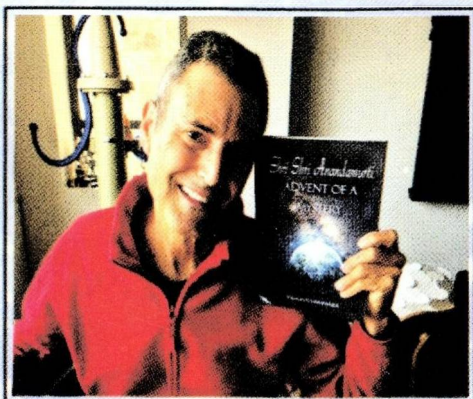
“On the way back from the Tiger’s Grave I was unable to walk unassisted. For several days afterwards, I saw only effulgence everywhere, as the blissful vibrations continued to reverberate in my mind. That was the first spiritual experience I got by Baba’s grace. I think that through that experience Baba opened my intuitional eye somewhat because since then I started to have intuitional insight about everything, and with a little concentration I could see the inner truth of everything. A few days after that Baba started to perform demonstrations through me.”





## Advent of a Mystery

**Shri Shri Anandamurti**  
**ADVENT OF A MYSTERY**



Every once in a long while, a book comes along that changes the way you think, the way you act, and the way you see the world around you. And once in a very long while, you come across someone who is truly extraordinary — mysterious, preferring anonymity, but one who impacts the world through the sheer weight of his exceptional knowledge, wisdom, cosmic outlook, and love for humanity.

The biography *Shri Shri Anandamurti: Advent of a*

*Mystery* is an eloquent portrait of one of the most intriguing spiritual masters in the 20th century. It comes at a time when people are groping for the meaning of life and the role of spirituality in life and evolution — why we are here, where we are going, what's the end destination, and how to get there? While the book gives convincing answers to these and other questions, what makes it different is that the theory is verified by practical demonstrations, making the stories immensely compelling.

As you turn page after page in wondrous delight, you begin to wonder if what is written is possible - from riding a tiger to raising the dead to ending Stalin's life to prevent communism from engulfing the world and much more. Are all these incredible stories possible? Is there a case for cosmic intervention in human history and in the workings of the universe? Are destiny and evolution products of chance or cosmic design? Is death the end or the beginning of life? Is reincarnation real? Are psychic and spiritual powers real or imaginary? And, if they exist, what is their purpose in the scheme of things? Do extraterrestrial civilizations exist or are we alone in the universe?

These and many more such topics in the book fascinate the reader and make him question his own premises and assumptions of life, truth and reality. I once said that the problem with the paranormal is that it's so weird. This book takes it a step further.

Apart from enchanting readers with the cosmic experiences associated with heightened consciousness and demonstrations on life and death, the book also presents an impressive array of new knowledge in the field of cosmology, the evolution of races, the concept of causality, and interesting snippets of information on World War II, among others.

*Advent of a Mystery* isn't a bedtime story book by any measure. For serious students of spirituality, this book is an authoritative guide.

**URI GELLER**

*Uri Geller is the most investigated and celebrated psychic in the world, who baffled the world of physics with his extraordinary psychic abilities.*

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