

SHRI SHRI ANANDAMURTI

**ADVENT OF A
MYSTERY**

PART - II



Pranavatmakananda

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CHAPTER 24

Amazing Demonstrations

Dasharath was called 'Sanjaya' by the Margis. It was an allegorical reference to the Sanjaya of the great Indian epic Mahabharata, who was bestowed the occult power to see the events taking place on the battlefield in distant Kurukshetra and who would then describe what he saw to Dhrtarashtra, the King of Hastinapura.

Whenever Baba wished to give a mystical demonstration to explain a particular topic or theme, he would usually use Dasharath as a medium and give him the ability to view distant events from the past, present or future. Under Baba's direction, Dasharath's mind would transcend the boundaries of space and time and see any event occurring at any place and at any time. On several occasions Baba also gave Dasharath the intuitional ability to see or perceive things that were beyond the scope of the sensory organs.

In the early days one of the demonstrations that Baba most frequently performed was to ask disciples to see the mental colours of those who were present at weekly Sunday gatherings. Dasharath recalled the demonstration on mental colours in his interview:

Baba taught me the meaning of the different waves that emanated from people. Sometimes I saw green waves around the head of a person, which meant that he was an intellectual. Others were yellow, which Baba explained was the mental colour of business-minded people. Good sadhakas had white rays emanating from them. Baba said that a person's mental colour was the sum total of his thoughts, samskaras and predominant mental propensities.

One day I was sitting on the Tiger's Grave with Baba and three other disciples. One of them was a police officer from

North Bihar who had recently been initiated. Baba asked me to see what kind of a person he was. I focused my mind using a special technique that Baba had taught me and entered the mind of the police officer. I said that bright waves were emanating from the right side of his mental plate and dark waves from the left side.

Baba asked me, "Dasharath, do you know what that means? Is he a good man or a bad man?"

As I did not know the answer, I kept quiet. Baba continued, "It means that he is a good man who is very soft inside. However, externally he pretends to be hard and tough. That is how a righteous person should be. This is the quality of a *sadhu*. The word *sadhu* does not signify an ascetic. A *sadhu* is one who by nature does not harm anyone. If he sees anyone indulging in anti-social activity or doing injustice to others, a real *sadhu* will not tolerate it. He will take a tough stand against all types of exploitation. A true *sadhu* will love every human being and every living being as much as he loves himself. This is also the quality of a true spiritualist."

Baba then lovingly patted the cheek of the Margi officer in appreciation and encouraged him to further develop such qualities.

From 1957 Baba began to use me as a medium for his demonstrations and this continued for as long as he was in Jamalpur. I was able to use occult powers only under Baba's instruction during the demonstrations. Baba would withdraw the occult power from me after the demonstration was over. After a few years, however, Baba allowed me to keep the occult powers even after the demonstration was over. Even without Baba's direction I could see the mental colours radiating from people's heads. In addition, I developed the ability to see people's auras and to read their thoughts. I could see their auras with my eyes open. When I saw a person, I saw his aura at the

same time. During a demonstration of the mental colours, I saw only the aura of the person, whereas with physical eyes I saw the person as well as his aura. By seeing a person's aura, I could immediately know all about his character.

There was a time when I used to see white waves emanating from the head of a Margi who I knew closely. I then understood that his meditation was progressing very well. After a few days, however, I was surprised to see that the colour of his mental waves had darkened, and this puzzled me greatly. Then I heard that he had not been doing his sadhana properly for several days and had been criticizing the Marga. A few days later he left the mission.

Most of the newcomers had very dark auras swirling around them. Their thoughts were also impure. I could hear their thoughts with my inner ear. In a few cases I verified what I had heard and found that the things I had heard internally were indeed what they had been thinking. People started to become afraid to come near me, thinking that I would find out their secrets. Often I was able to discern unseemly thoughts arising in people who I knew very well, and this affected my attitude and behaviour towards them. I found that seeing the auras of others and reading their thoughts was having a negative influence on me. My sadhana was also getting disturbed. Although I found this extraordinary power fascinating, I saw that it was having an adverse effect on me. So I mentioned it to Baba and he instructed me to stop reading minds and seeing auras, saying it could lead to my downfall.

As I got a thrill from using these powers, sometimes I could not restrain myself however and continued to look at people's mental colours and read their thoughts. But it was affecting my sadhana, so I again reported the matter to Baba.

He smiled and said, "Dasharath, I was testing you to see if you were becoming attracted to these powers. That is why after the demonstrations I left your intuitional mind open. Do you

see how harmful these powers are? Only if the mind is elevated enough to maintain complete equanimity at all times can one remain unaffected by them and the knowledge they impart. When I use you as the medium, I protect you from all the negative influences arising out of the experiences you have. Now I am withdrawing these powers from you. From now on you will have these occult powers only when I permit you.'

After that my ability to use the occult powers independently ceased."

Dasharath's fame, however, spread far and wide. News of his amazing intuitional abilities attracted some new Margis to Jamalpur to see for themselves what he could do. Later, when they saw Baba's demonstrations, they realised that Dasharath was only a medium for the demonstrations and that Baba was actually the source of all the amazing powers.

The Divine Flute

On several occasions Baba discussed the different divine sounds that emanate from the Nucleus of the Macrocosm. Among the most important of these cosmic sounds is the *omkara*, the sound of Om. Baba explained that this divine sound symbolises the cosmic functions of creation, preservation and destruction. He said that many people in India erroneously use the Om sound as a mantra for meditation. The omkara is not to be chanted but rather experienced in deep meditation. He also explained that depending on the level of elevation of the mind, one can hear different variations of the omkara. For example, one might hear a sound resembling a flute. Through the blissful sound of this flute, Parama Purusha, the Macrocosmic Nucleus, attracts the entire creation towards Himself. Baba said that the divine sound of the flute is experienced when one attains a particular stage of meditation, and that on reaching that stage, spiritual aspirants would be irresistibly attracted towards the Macrocosmic Nucleus.

On one instance after explaining this, Baba said, "This is the experience as the kundalini crosses the *manipura chakra*. Do you all want to experience the attraction of the sound of the divine flute?"

Everyone replied in chorus, "Yes Baba, we do."

Baba then instructed, "All the women sit on the right side and all the men on the left side."

After everyone took their seats, he continued, "Now all of you close your eyes and meditate."

After a short while he said, "Those of you who do not hear the sound of the flute, raise your hands."

A few raised their hands and then slowly, one by one, put them down a few moments later as they started to hear the sound. Acharya Sakaldev, the Margi lawyer from Muzaffarpur, heard the sound very clearly and felt a strong, spiritually intoxicating feeling attracting him irresistibly towards Baba. Several minutes passed as the Margis experienced deep states of meditation and many had tears trickling down their faces from the outer corners of their eyes. Sakaldev, immersed in a very blissful state, suddenly felt that Baba was leaving, and opened his eyes to check. He looked around and saw that everyone else was in deep meditation and that some had gone into a spiritual trance. He then saw Baba silently departing from the room. Propelled by an overwhelming attraction for Baba, Sakaldev dashed after him and caught up with him just as he was going out of the gate. Tears of ecstasy were streaming from his eyes as he bowed and touched Baba's feet in reverence. At that moment the irresistible attraction that he was feeling for Baba intensified a thousand fold and he felt that it would not be possible for him to live without Baba. The urge to become one with Baba grew very intense.

Gently lifting Sakaldev with both hands, Baba tenderly asked him in a voice full of sweetness, "What do you want, Sakaldev? Ask me anything that you desire."

Sakaldev did not respond, as tears of bliss poured down his face. His voice was choked. Baba again asked, "Sakaldev, what do you want? Do you want mukti? Or if you prefer, you can ask for moksha."

“Baba, I just want to be with you.”

“Tathastu,” Baba replied. “So be it.”

Baba then walked away as Sakaldev sat on the veranda, his eyes still overflowing with tears of bliss.

On several occasions Baba had asked different Margis a similar question: whether they wanted the supreme gift of liberation or salvation or whether they wanted to be with him. In almost all cases their reply was the same – they only wanted to be with Baba and had no desire for either liberation or salvation.

Regression of a Priest

Baba carried out spiritual demonstrations on different occasions and at different places, as and when he deemed appropriate. They were not limited to the jagrti alone, but also took place in other venues and on a range of occasions, such as during Field Walks, at the Tiger’s Grave and even in public streets. Each of these special demonstrations was designed to elucidate a particular subject for the benefit of his audience. Sometimes the demonstrations would answer a particular thought in the mind of a disciple. At other times those that were conducted in a public place made use of an event, item or person to illustrate a particular point to the disciples, for instance, the evolutionary progress or regression of the mind in the next incarnation as a result of one’s actions in the present life.

Once after Sunday darshan, Baba was returning from the jagrti to his Rampur Colony residence with Dasharath, Ram Kumar and a few others. Along the way they saw a crowd gathered in front of a house. As they passed the house, they could hear people wailing inside. Baba asked Dasharath to find out what the problem was, and in the meantime he continued to walk at a slower pace.

After a brief enquiry, Dasharath learned that the head of the family, a Hindu priest, had died a few hours earlier. His relatives and neighbours had gathered and were preparing the body for its final journey. Dasharath reported to Baba what he had learned. Baba made

no comment and continued to walk. There was an opening in the wall surrounding Rampur Colony, which was a shortcut to the jagrti. After they passed through it and entered Rampur Colony, Baba suddenly stopped walking and said, "Dasharath, see what type of body the priest's disembodied mind is going to get next."

Dasharath concentrated for a few moments and then said, "It is going to be born as a dog in its next life, a black dog."

"See how pathetic it is, Dasharath," Baba said shaking his head. "What a downfall that will be from the perspective of evolution. The man was proud of being a Brahmin. He was a priest in the eyes of society and people revered him, but his actions were not pious. He used to cheat and exploit people, taking advantage of their fears and superstitions. He also had many other immoral habits but in spite of them he would instruct others to follow high moral principles. He had a dual personality. He also had a huge superiority complex about his caste and treated people from the lower castes with contempt.

"Do you see what type of reward he will get for his false pride and hypocrisy? This is the recompense he will get for his immoral actions. He will be reborn as a street dog and will scavenge in discarded garbage. If that dog wanders into a gathering of so-called Brahmins, will they not treat it as impure and drive it away? Won't that be worse than the way he treated his fellow human beings during his life? People forget that one day the law of Nature will make them account for each and every evil action they have performed. The law of Nature will not spare anyone. Everyone will have to reap the reward of his or her good deeds and suffer the consequences of their evil actions as well."

Evolution of Animals

On another occasion while returning from a Field Walk, Baba and the accompanying Margis had to pass through a deserted street in Rampur Colony. As they walked, a puppy started following them. The Margis chased it away to prevent it from touching him.

Suddenly Baba turned to Dasharath who was a few steps behind him and said, "Dasharath, see what that puppy was in its past life."

Dasharath looked at the dog for a while and said that it had been a mongoose in its previous life.

"Now tell me, Dasharath, from the perspective of evolution, was that a regression or progression? Answer the question using clear logic."

Dasharath thought for a while and replied, "Baba, according to your philosophy, due to the absence of independent will, there is no scope for regression in animal life but only continuous evolutionary progression."

"A dog is higher on the evolutionary ladder than a mongoose," added Baba. "The human environment in which a dog lives exposes it to greater psychic clash, and this accelerates its mental growth. The natural food of a mongoose is snakes and rodents, which has a very static influence on its mind. Part of a dog's food, however, is not static in nature, and this helps it to develop mentally.

In such ways Baba used the natural environment and its surroundings to explain subtle philosophical points.

Samskara and Parapsychology

Baba's method of teaching the esoteric aspects of spiritual philosophy through the medium of rational explanation and spiritual demonstrations was unique in the entire spiritual landscape of India and indeed the world. One such demonstration highlighted the psychological impact a person's actions and reactions could have on their subsequent birth.

Acharya Raghunath, who was present, recalled the demonstration during an interview:

In mid-1959, while I was in Jamalpur, I met a young man from Chandigarh named Nandalal, who was about twenty-five years old. During the course of our conversation, he said that he felt attracted

to Ananda Marga because he had an inherent interest in Tantra sadhana. The following morning during darshan, Baba asked Dasharath to see where Nandalal had been thirty years before.

Dasharath looked at the boy and said, "Baba, I can see a place, but I don't know where it is. It is somewhere outside India."

"Look around and you will see a signboard. From that you will know the name of the place."

Dasharath paused for a while and said, "Baba, it is Osaka in Japan."

"What is he doing?"

"He is walking along the road. There is a bag hanging from his shoulder."

"Now, see what is in the bag."

"There are two skulls, Baba."

"Yes, he was initiated into kapalik sadhana. But he could not do the sadhana properly and died early. It is because of his attraction to Tantra that he has come on the spiritual path. Most of what we experience in this life is due to the samskaras from our immediate past life, although unfinished samskaras from earlier lives also exert a certain amount of influence. Every single desire that arises in the mind creates a samskara. Until the desire is fulfilled in some life or other, the samskara remains in the mind in potential form. It becomes a bondage for the mind until the desire is fully expressed. What a person is in the present life is due to the good and bad samskaras he or she has acquired in his or her past lives. I will go into the various aspects of the theory of samskara in detail on another occasion."

The next evening I had a chance to go for Field Walk with Baba. I was in the "A" group that sat with Baba on the Tiger's Grave. Nandalal and Dasharathji were also with us. On our return, it was the "C" group's turn to walk with Baba. But that day he asked the "A" and "B" groups to join them. After a few steps, Baba stopped and

asked us to stand in a semicircle. Then he said, "Dasharath, look at the mental plates of everyone and say what colours they are."

Dasharathji looked around at all of us twice and said, "Baba, a few of them are completely white, and the others have different colours in the middle but white around the circumference."

"Yes, through *guru darshan* the mind gets charged with the sentient force, and that is why all of them have a white circumference."

"Dasharath, now see how many of them are green in colour. Don't point at them, just tell the number."

"Three, Baba."

"Green is the colour of intelligence, of intellectuals."

"Now, amongst all of them, how many will get a non-human life if they die right now?"

Dasharathji looked around and after a short pause pointed at Nandalal and said, "He is the only one."

Baba asked Nandalal to come forward and said, "Dasharath, see what he will be reborn as."

"As a fox, Baba."

"Tell me, Dasharath, why will he be reborn as a fox? Look at his chakras and tell me."

Dasharathji looked at each chakra and said, "Baba, I can see a black shadow in his *anahata* chakra (centre of chest). One side of his *ajina* chakra (between the eyebrows) is also black."

"The *anahata* chakra controls the *kapatatha vritti* (instinct of hypocrisy). Now do you all understand why he would be reborn as a fox if he were to die just now? The blackness of the *ajina* chakra is due to constant crude thinking. If the mind remains dominated by the influence of the glandular secretions controlled by the *muladhara*, *svadhishtana* and *manipura* chakras, (located in the navel region and below) the mind becomes crude. This is a vast science and in the

future it will develop significantly. This knowledge can facilitate the evolution of human beings in several ways. It can also be used in psychiatry for reforming criminals.”

Baba asked Nandalal to come closer. He gave him a gentle tap on both sides of his chin and said, “Dasharath, now see the colour of the kapatatha vrtti in his anahata chakra.”

“Baba, now it is not black anymore. It has turned blue.”

“What about his ajina chakra?”

“The black colour is considerably less. There is a white border.”

“All right, Dasharath. He is a young man. He has many years of life ahead of him. If he does sadhana properly, everything will change.”

With these words, Baba continued walking towards Keshavpur with us in tow.

The Lord’s Name Causes an Evolutionary Leap

One Sunday, a new Margi student from Gaya was present during Baba’s discourse. He had been initiated just a few days before. During his initiation his acharya had strongly advised him to abandon any caste feeling that he might have, as he belonged to a high caste family. Despite his acharya’s advice, he continued to suffer from a superiority complex, and considered people from lower castes to be inferior. During that day’s darshan, Baba spoke about the harmful effects of superiority and inferiority complexes and the mental distortions they cause. He explained that one of the sentiments that could induce such complexes was caste feeling; hence, a sadhaka should strictly protect himself from any kind of caste feeling.

Towards the end of his discourse, Baba turned to the new Margi from Gaya and asked why he was harbouring caste feelings. Baba said that this had created a great deal of distortion in the young man’s mind. He then asked Dasharath to see the past life of that Margi. Dasharath looked at him and said that he had been a wasp in his previous life.

Baba continued, "Do you know how he was able to make the evolutionary leap from a wasp to a human being? Once a great saint was doing sadhana and as he meditated, the wasp stung him. Involuntarily the saint hit the spot where he had been stung with his palm, while taking the name of Lord Krishna. At that very moment the wasp died, but since the saint had killed it while chanting the name of the Lord, it made an evolutionary jump and gained a human form, and even became a sadhaka. Dasharath, ask him what his caste was in his previous life."

The student felt ashamed and hung his head. Baba said that he had made this evolutionary leap and found the spiritual path only by the grace of God. He urged him to give up his complexes and perform his sadhana sincerely.

Doubting Demonstrations

Vaidyanath Jha from the village of Dharmagatpur in Muzaffarpur District belonged to a family of Brahmin priests. While growing up, he saw how his father, uncle and cousins profited from gullible people who asked them to perform religious rituals on special occasions. He also saw how they exploited people for financial gain in the name of performing elaborate rituals to remove their sins or to send dead people's souls to a non-existent heaven. What upset Vaedianath the most was that no one in the family actually believed that they could do anything to remove people's sins or send someone's soul to heaven. They were just befooling the gullible people with the sole intention of swindling them of large sums of money. Like vultures, they were constantly on the lookout for unsuspecting victims, and devised elaborate plans to trap them. To this end they performed various complicated rituals such as the ritual marriage of various gods and goddesses, special rituals to appease Yama, the mythological god of death, and other fabricated rituals. Their sole aim was to defraud superstitious people out of their property and wealth by instilling different desires or fears in their minds.

In reaction to their deceitful religious practices, Vaidyanath became very cynical about the dubious claims of religious preachers and priests. Yet at the same time he had an intense desire to lead a spiritual life. His search for a suitable guide led him to Ananda Marga, and he learned meditation from Acharya Kishun Singh, the officer of the Bihar Military Police. The Ananda Marga practice of not accepting money for initiation impressed him greatly, as it was in glaring contrast with the ignoble practices of the greedy priests.

On his first visit to Jamalpur to see the guru, Vaidyanath decided to go barefoot. When he prostrated before Baba during Personal Contact, Baba enquired why he had come without sandals.

“Baba, it is our tradition not to wear any footwear on an important pilgrimage to a temple or at the time of going to see the guru.”

Baba explained, “Ananda Marga does not support the tradition of undergoing physical torture to please God. God will not be pleased to see his devotees suffer in any way. He is not a cruel person. He is the most loving father. So how could He be happy to see anyone making himself suffer in order to propitiate Him? Such practices have nothing to do with devotion to God. They are crude ritualistic practices and are not the way to worship Him. True devotion for the Lord is to constantly feel love for Him in your heart and to perform each and every action with a view to pleasing Him. I also don't like all of you to inflict suffering on yourselves when you come to see me. So now go and buy some shoes, and don't ever repeat such a practice.”

During Vaidyanath's subsequent visits to Jamalpur, he saw Baba perform many different kinds of demonstrations on Dasharath. Because of his deep cynicism about anything religious or spiritual, he doubted the veracity of what Dasharath was describing during the demonstrations. He felt that they had been secretly stage-managed by Baba and Dasharath, including Dasharath's descriptions of what he was seeing during the demonstrations. He wanted to express his suspicions to Baba and waited for the right opportunity to do so.

Years later Vaidyanath reminisced:

I wanted to express my feelings frankly to Baba, but I hesitated to do so in the presence of other Margis, as I was afraid they might feel offended. One day during the rainy season it so happened that I was alone with Baba at the Tiger's Grave. Since I had the habit of expressing my feelings in a straightforward manner, this seemed to be the ideal opportunity to do so, and I didn't want to let the chance slip by. As we sat down on the Tiger's Grave, I said, "Baba, you only carry out your demonstrations through Dasharath dada. Some people feel that there is a prior, secret understanding between both of you about what he will say during the demonstrations."

When Baba heard this remark, he laughed softly and said, "I am doing these demonstrations to clarify different philosophical facts. It doesn't matter to me at all if people think that what I am doing is not real and is just a drama."

I continued, "Baba, you cannot escape like that. We are also your disciples. Are you not showing partiality by only taking Dasharath dada's help in all these demonstrations? You never take the help of anyone else."

"Vaidyanath, in order to be able to be a medium for demonstrations, your body and mind have to be fit for the purpose. By the way, do you want to see a demonstration yourself?"

"Yes Baba, I would like that very much," responded Vaidyanath enthusiastically.

"All right, sit in meditation for five minutes and clear your mind," Baba instructed.

For a while my sceptical mindset led me to think that Baba might even escape while I sat with my eyes closed. After about five minutes, Baba touched me between my eyebrows and asked me to open my eyes and look at the moon. To my utter amazement, I saw the sun in the place of the moon.

Baba asked, "What do you see in the sky?"

"Baba, I can see the sun in the place of the moon and I find it difficult to look at it."

"No, Vaidyanath, that is not the sun; you are seeing the moon. I have increased the luminosity emanating from the moon, and that is why you think it is the sun. Here is the sun in the palm of my hand. I have reduced the light emanating from it."

Baba showed me his palm. In it I saw the sun, and its light was quite dim. In the background, I saw a panorama of planets, stars and galaxies. I could hear the *omkara* sound and was filled with a very soothing, blissful feeling.

"This is the physical universe," said Baba.

Then, shifting to a more serious tone, he continued, "You know, it would take me no time at all to change the position of any planet or star, including the sun, but if I did that, it would upset the balance of the entire universe and create a great catastrophe."

I then understood that he was Mahakala, the Lord of Time, the Creator, the Sustainer and the Destroyer of the universe. I realised that whatever I was seeing was a sublime cosmic experience that was totally different from simply looking at the starry sky and admiring the beauty of nature. Slowly the grand scene began to recede and disappeared from my mind's view. I felt incredible bliss. I don't know for how long I was lost in that divine feeling, but when I regained normal consciousness any lingering doubts that Baba might have enacted the drama of the demonstrations in collusion with Dasharath dada had disappeared. I realised that he was not just any guru but was an all-knowing, all-pervading and all-powerful entity.

While walking back from the Tiger's Grave, I felt tremendous remorse that I had doubted this great being who had come to this world in the form of Sadguru. However, I

consoled myself with the thought that if it had not been for my scepticism, I would not have had the good fortune of being blessed with this divine experience.

Power Struggle in the Kremlin

After his first visit to Jamalpur, Kshitij, the former cardholder and hardliner of the Communist Party, performed his spiritual practice very sincerely. The regular practice of sadhana led to a radical change in him. Among other things, he developed an intense attraction to Baba. So he made a point of travelling from Ranchi to Jamalpur every Sunday to have Baba's darshan.

He recalled a remarkable incident that occurred during one of these visits:

It was in the early days of my association with the Marga. I used to visit Jamalpur almost every weekend. During one of my visits sometime in mid-1957, Baba said during the darshan, "Parama Purusha sees everything in this universe. Nothing is hidden from His eyes. Nobody can think or do anything without Him knowing. Suppose someone thinks that he will perform such and such an action without anybody seeing, Parama Purusha is also watching that. There is an advantage to this as well as a disadvantage. The advantage is that sadhakas who move along the path of righteousness will feel that they are never alone and that their Parama Purusha is always with them. But the disadvantage is that nothing they do is hidden from Him. He even knows a person's innermost secrets. The very moment a thought arises in anyone's mind, Parama Purusha knows it. Sometimes people plan something secretly and then do it sitting in a well-protected place where no one can enter without prior permission. However, even that place is within the reach of Parama Purusha."

Baba continued in this vein for a few minutes and then asked Dasharathji to sit and meditate. Without touching him as he usually did, Baba said, "I am taking your mind to a far-away place. Tell me what you can see."

Dasharathji was silent for a while and then said, "Baba I am standing before the Kremlin in Moscow. I see the huge wall surrounding it."

Baba smiled and replied, "Those walls are intended to provide security to the nerve centre of the Soviet Administration. But neither those walls nor the elaborate security arrangements in place can stop you from entering. Now go inside and describe what you see."

"Baba, I can see a person sitting in his office. From the photographs I have seen, he appears to be Malenkov, the Russian leader."

"All right, now enter his mind and see what he is thinking."

"He is thinking how to remove Khrushchev from power, and is making plans to that end."

Baba smiled and said, "Now go to another part of the Kremlin. What do you see there?"

Dasharathji was again silent for a while before replying, "I see Khrushchev sitting in an office and he appears to be brooding over something."

"See what is inside the drawer of the table in front of him."

"I can see a paper on which something is written. It is in Russian script."

Baba then responded, "I am giving you the ability to read the Russian script. Now I am converting the Russian language into the cosmic language and then re-converting it into *Angika*. Tell us what that paper says."

"According to the paper, he is planning to remove Malenkov from his position."

"Enter his mind and tell us when he is planning to do it."

"Within a week."

With a broad smile on his face, Baba asked the Margis, "Did you all see how things work in the communist setup? They are all secretly

plotting against each other. Both of them were thinking that no one would know what they were planning. They do not know that God, whose existence they don't accept, is watching every single move that they are plotting."

Baba then instructed Dasharath to return to his body.

Unable to contain his curiosity, someone asked, "Baba, which of the two will succeed?"

"Khrushchev will succeed and Malenkov will be permanently thrown out of power within a week."

After returning to Ranchi, I told several Margis about the amazing demonstration I had witnessed, and how Baba had exposed Khrushchev's plan to remove Malenkov from power within a week. I also told many non-Margi friends about it, without telling them that I had obtained the information from my guru. Among them were some comrades from my Communist Party days. As there was no hint of it anywhere in the newspapers, none of them took me seriously, and some even mocked what they called "the bogus claims of Margis to be able to predict the future". However, when the newspapers reported the removal of Malenkov exactly on the date I had predicted, all of them were surprised and asked me how I had been able to make such an accurate prediction. I simply replied that I got the information from an intuitional source. Due to their arrogance and antipathy towards spirituality, the comrades did not accept my explanation. They vainly argued that I or someone else must have calculated Malenkov's fall from power by analyzing some historical events and thereby arriving at the right conclusion.

After that incident, many people thought that I possessed the intuitional ability to predict the future.

Past-Life Skills

In one of his Sunday discourses, Baba talked about the influence of past-life samskaras on the present life. He said, "People who have developed a particular talent or skill in one life may have the same

innate ability in their next life. Suppose a person has an extraordinary singing voice or any other artistic talent. In his next life that person is likely to have an inborn aptitude for music or skill in that particular branch of the arts. Such people are generally called geniuses. This could also occur in other fields of knowledge too.”

Baba then called a student who had come from Rourkela in the state of Orissa. He was in his final year of mechanical engineering. Baba asked him why he had decided to study this particular subject. He replied that he had decided to study this subject because he liked working with his hands. Baba smiled at his reply and asked Dasharath to see what he had been in his past life. Dasharath closed his eyes and concentrated. Then Baba asked him what he could see. He described a big city with many buildings. Baba asked him the name of the city, but he could not reply. So Baba asked him to look for a signboard. After a moment Dasharath saw a signboard and said that it was Bombay. Baba explained that the correct name of the city was Mumbai. In the past, it was a fishing village. The deity of the local temple was known as Mumba Devi. Baba then instructed Dasharath to go further. After some time, Dasharath said that he had reached a large village on the outskirts of Mumbai. There he saw a cobbler making good-quality shoes. He also saw some well-to-do people who had come to buy shoes from him. There were several saddles hanging in his workshop. Baba then explained that in his past life, the student had been a highly skilled cobbler and had made very good quality shoes for wealthy people as well as saddles for their horses. The samskara for skilled manual work had created in him the desire to study mechanical engineering in this life.

Transitory Relationships

Demonstrations relating to reincarnation were a commonplace occurrence in Jamalpur. On many occasions Baba showed the past lives of different sadhakas. There was a special reason behind these demonstrations. Their purpose was to show how a particular trait or an inborn skill in a person's present life was inextricably linked to

qualities he had possessed in his past life. The demonstrations also revealed the transitory nature of human relationships and had the objective of inspiring the Margis to try to establish a permanent relationship with the Supreme Entity.

Damayanti came from a village in Monghyr District; she had lost her young son to a fatal disease. Even after the passage of more than a year, she could not get over the acute grief she felt due to the loss of her child and looked for solace in sadhana. She also regularly attended Baba's Sunday darshans, where she would often see Baba giving demonstrations about the Margis' past, present and future lives.

Damayanti had a friend named Kamini. She would often confide in Kamini her grief about the loss of her son. Kamini was a regular visitor to the jagrti where she sold snacks. Out of sympathy for her deep anguish, Kamini informed Baba about Damayanti's distress during one of the darshans. She pleaded with him, "Baba, she is not able to get over the loss of her son. He was her only child. Please do something to comfort her."

While Kamini was speaking to Baba, Damayanti was overcome by strong emotions and she fell at Baba's feet, crying inconsolably. When Kamini tried to pull her away, Baba stopped her saying, "Let her grief get expressed through her tears."

After she calmed down a little, Baba started his discourse. In his talk he explained that every animate and inanimate entity moves according to its own speed. Owing to the variation in momentum, the relationship between two entities cannot last forever. Everything that comes together moves together for a certain period but is destined to separate one day. In the case of developed living beings, this separation causes pain.

Baba then instructed Dasharath to concentrate his mind on his Ishta chakra. Touching the back of his head, Baba asked him to see the fate of Damayanti's son. After a moment's concentration Dasharath said, "I see that he has been reborn and is now a small baby boy."

“Enter the mind of the baby and see whether he misses his previous family. Find out whether he would want to come back to the mother of his previous birth, if it were somehow possible.”

“Baba, the baby is very happy where he is, as he gets a lot of love and affection in his new family. He would not like to be disturbed or taken away from his present environment. He is not thinking about his previous family at all.”

“What is the baby’s future?”

“The family is affluent. He has a bright future.”

“Where has he been reborn?”

“In Guwahati. The name of the family is”

Precisely at that moment, before he could finish his sentence, Baba pulled away his hand from Dasharath’s head, withdrawing his ability to continue to see into the future of the child.

“If you reveal the location and the name of the family, Damayanti will go there and try to locate the child,” he said. “That will cause needless distress to her and to the family of the child in Guwahati. It will also affect the development of the child’s personality as he grows up. He will experience an identity conflict if he is told about his previous life. That is why Nature does not allow anyone to know about their past lives.”

Baba continued, “Like this, every life is just one of innumerable links in the chain of birth and death. Everyone comes for a certain, fixed period of time and then departs according to his or her samskaras. Thus every relationship lasts for only a short period. It is the samskaras that propel this movement and decide the speed. No two entities can move together at the same speed forever. One has to move ahead, leaving the other behind in tears. It is like a train journey. Suppose you are travelling from Calcutta to Delhi by the Kalka Mail. A person gets on the train at Burdwan and sits down next to you. He is going to Chandigarh, and on the way you talk a lot together. You share your *parathas*, vegetables and *sandesh* with him.

“He says, ‘I have some delicious *mihirdana*, the sweet for which our Burdwan is famous. Please take some.’

“As you travel, a certain fondness for each other may develop. On reaching Delhi you say, ‘I must get down here.’

“Then you exchange addresses.

“‘Please come to Chandigarh some time.’

“‘Yes, we will meet again. Do visit me whenever you come to Delhi.’

“But the fact is that this relationship that developed during the short period you were together ends there. Neither do you bother to go to Chandigarh to see him nor does he come to visit you when he comes to Delhi. You have different rhythms and goals in life and you move accordingly. Such are the relationships we form during the course of our lives. Due to love for each other, people vow to remain together for several lives. But the reality is that their relationship ends in separation.

“Guided by their individual *samskaras*, people move according to their own speed and direction. While you are together you have to discharge your responsibilities to each other. But don’t regard this relationship as a permanent one. The only permanent relationship you have is with Parama Purusha. He has been with you all the time since the moment your mind evolved from matter some hundreds of millions of years ago. He was with you during the innumerable lives that you have passed through in the course of your evolution. He is with you now and He will be with you until you merge with Him forever. So establish a bond with Parama Purusha and look at everyone else as only His temporary expression.”

Damayanti left the jagrti feeling great solace that her son was happy where he was. After listening to Baba’s discourse, she also developed a clearer understanding about the transitory nature of all human relationships and of the fact that God alone is our permanent friend, relative and fellow traveller.

Interchanging Minds

During the end-of-year vacation in 1959, Pradip Bhatnagar and Mahesh Agnihotri, two new initiates of Asthana from Allahabad, came to Jamalpur to see Baba. On the way they were joined by Acharya Chandradev Verma, an officer working at the All India Radio, and Vinod Pandey, an initiate of his, who had just completed his post-graduate studies in psychology. A philosophical discussion ensued during which Vinod said that he did not believe that the mind existed apart from the brain. He was of the view that both were one and the same. He argued that the mind was merely the ability of the brain to function. He added that the mind did not exist after the death of the body, so the concept of rebirth was illogical and he did not believe in it.

His acharya tried his best to convince him about the existence of the mind and the reality of reincarnation through logical arguments, but Vinod refused to accept his reasoning and wanted concrete proof of the existence of the mind and reincarnation. After reaching the Jamalpur jagrti very early in the morning, they took a bath and did their meditation, then took their breakfast hurriedly, as they anticipated that Baba would arrive at any moment. Just as they were about to finish, they heard an excited shout, "Baba is coming, Baba is coming." They quickly washed and rushed out on to the veranda.

All the Margis were lined up in a row with folded hands to greet Baba. He walked past them, accepting their greetings with a sweet smile, and enquired after their well-being. When he saw Chandradev, he paused for a moment right in front of him, touched his chin and looked him straight in the eye, saying, "I understand your problem," before walking into his room.

After completing some office work with Pranay and a few others, Baba instructed Madhav, the ashram manager, to call everyone. There were over 30 Margis assembled in the jagrti. Baba gave a short discourse on the mind and the brain.

He began the discourse by saying, "Some people think that the mind is a mere function of the brain and does not exist after death. That is a defective idea."

Hearing this, Vinod looked at his acharya in amazement and wondered, "Did my acharya talk to Baba about our discussion in the train? But that isn't possible as he didn't have the opportunity to meet Baba until now and could not have communicated our discussion to him. Maybe my acharya was correct that Baba can read the thoughts of others."

As he was thinking this, he saw his acharya smiling at him in a way that enquired whether he now believed that Baba was *antaryami*, i.e. one who is capable of knowing the thoughts, feelings and needs of everyone.

"It is a completely defective idea," continued Baba. "A little deeper analysis of the function of the mind will prove that the mind is not merely a function of the brain. For example, common functions like memory, thought, etc. concern the realm of ideas. It is neither possible to create nor store ideas in a physical structure like the brain. There are several other aspects of the higher realms of the mind such as the faculties of sentiment, rationality, discrimination and the propensities of the mind – all of which cannot be considered as mere cerebral functions. Mind has several psychic abilities such as telepathy and clairvoyance, which go beyond the physical realm. Feelings of pain and pleasure are also psychic experiences. It is wrong to think that every human feeling that one experiences is permanently recorded or stored in a part of the brain. If it were true, then the brain would have to be very large, and new cells would have to be constantly created in order to cope with the expression of new feelings at every moment.

"When the same objects or incidents are recreated in the mind, they are called *smriti* or memory. How does one activate the memory? There are two processes of remembering: internal and external. The internal way is to revive the undistorted image of perceived objects or

events present in the nerve cells. In the initial stage, perception is registered in the unit mind through the nerve cells, and the vibrations of those perceptions remain embedded in them. The nerve cells in the brain differ according to the different vibrations they carry. Some carry the vibrations of knowledge, others the vibrations of action.

“If someone happens to see a white cow, he can easily say after five minutes what the colour of the cow was because the image of the cow is still imprinted very clearly and distinctly in the nerve cells. But if we ask the same person to describe the cow after the lapse of a few days, he will find it much more difficult to recollect its colour because by then the impression of the cow in the nerve cells will have become indistinct. At that stage the image of the cow can no longer be retrieved from the brain; it can only be retrieved from the ectoplasmic mind-stuff or chitta, where it was permanently stored when he first saw it. So the mind will have to labour hard to recreate the image of the cow from its accumulated memories. The ability to do this depends on a person’s psychic power.

“So even if there are no impressions in the nerve-cells, the mind can at will re-vibrate the nerve-cells with its own accumulated memories. It can do so as many times as it likes using its own force. It can also create similar impressions in the nerve cells. As long as these mentally created impressions remain undistorted, it will be easy to remember them. If you are asked what you have eaten today, you can reply immediately, but if you are asked what you ate the day before yesterday, you are likely to take some time to answer. But after you have replied, if you are asked again a little later, ‘What did you eat the day before yesterday?’ you will be able to answer the question very quickly.

“If the external factors necessary for the revival of memory remain undisturbed for some time, one can more easily recreate events that have already been perceived. For instance, if one happens to go to the spot where one saw the cow, one suddenly remembers that a white cow was tethered there. But with the lapse of time, the external factors necessary for the recreation of that image change

drastically and it becomes difficult for the brain to remember the details of the event. At this stage, to recollect the image one has to penetrate the ectoplasm of the unit mind. Of course, once one has recollected an incident or object, its impression remains in the mind for some time before it finally disappears.

“So the brain is merely a physical machine to help the mind recollect and perform other functions. Its different parts assist the mind in a variety of ways. However, memory resides in the chitta, not in the nerve cells or any other chamber of the brain. So even though an impression has faded from the nerve cells, the mind can at will recreate the impression. When the brain assists in the recollection of any event or object, it is called ‘cerebral memory’. “So it is incorrect to equate the mind with the brain. The mind is subtle, and because of that it has to take the help of a crude base in order to function. The crude base is the brain, and it is with the help of this base that our mind is able to work. Mind and brain are so closely connected that one cannot work without the other. Without the mind, the brain ceases to function, and similarly if the mind’s base, i.e. the brain, is not in proper order, the mind will not be able to function. A dead person’s body has a brain but it does not function because there is no mind in it. Similarly, when a person becomes unconscious when under anaesthesia or due to any other reason, the brain ceases to function for some time, and this results in the mind becoming inactive because its physical base, the brain, is not functioning.”

Baba said that some people erroneously attribute the role of the mind to the brain. The brain is only a medium for the mind to function. Hence, if the mind does not exist, it follows that the brain cannot function. He further explained that if, through a special process, the mind of a particular body were replaced with another mind, then, despite the presence of the brain, the entire personality of the person and his memories would cease to exist.

After explaining the theoretical aspects of the subject, Baba asked the two new Margis, Mahesh and Pradip, to come forward and sit on the floor on either side of the bed. Baba instructed Pradip to sit

on the right corner and Mahesh on the left corner. After they sat down, Baba asked their names and what they were doing. Pradip replied that he had completed his medical studies and Mahesh said that he had completed law and was about to start his practice.

“What is your mother tongue?”

“My mother tongue is Punjabi,” replied Pradip.

“My mother tongue is Bhojpuri,” answered Mahesh.

“Do you know Punjabi?” Baba asked Mahesh.

“Baba, I can understand only a few words of Punjabi that I have learned from Punjabi-speaking friends.”

Turning to Pradip on the right, Baba asked, “What about you, do you know Bhojpuri?”

“It is the same with me too, Baba. I understand a little Bhojpuri, as it is close to Hindi.”

Baba then instructed both of them to sit in meditation. There upon he touched their *ajina chakra* (psychic centre between the eyebrows), and they instantly fell over backwards. Baba asked some Margis in the audience to check their pulse and breathing. The Margis examined them separately and declared that they could not detect any breathing or pulse in either of them and that the symptoms showed that they were dead. When he heard that they had died, Vinod became worried. Baba continued, “The reason they are lifeless is because the mind has been detached from their body. Life is the condition in which the body and the mind have attained a state of parallelism. The mind is not a function of the brain. Do you follow, my little boy?” Baba asked Vinod.

Baba then crossed both his index fingers. Everyone waited anxiously to see what was going to happen next, as the anticipation mounted. After a short pause, Baba turned to Pradip, who was lying on the right, and asked in Punjabi, “What is your name?”

There was no answer from Pradip and Baba repeated the question.

Everyone looked anxiously at Pradip, thinking how the dead person could speak.

“Baba, my name is Pradip,” came the reply. The answer left everyone stunned because it came from Mahesh who was lying on the left side of the cot.

Baba looked at Mahesh smilingly and then turning to the Margis said, “What did he say? He is Pradip. But just a while ago the boy on the right said that his name was Pradip. The one on the left said that he was Mahesh.”

There was stunned silence in the room and a puzzled expression on everyone’s face.

“And what do you do?” Baba asked in Punjabi, this time turning to his left.

“I have completed my medical studies.”

Looking at the Margis he said, “Did you hear what he said? Only a while ago, this little boy on my left said that he had completed law and was preparing to practice as a lawyer, isn’t it? And now he says that he has completed medicine. He also said that he knew only a few words of Punjabi but he now speaks fluent Punjabi. Why did he tell a lie before such an august audience?” Baba remarked winking his eyes repeatedly, and with a mischievous smile continued, “You all heard a little earlier from the one on the right side that he is Pradip, and now this boy on the left side says he is Pradip.”

The Margis were completely absorbed in the mystic drama that was being enacted right before their eyes, and pin-drop silence filled the room as they watched the drama unfold with wide-eyed amazement. Vinod was incredulous and at the same time noticeably confused.

Then turning to Pradip who was lying on the right side, Baba gently tapped him with his stick and asked, “What is your name and what do you do?”

“My name is Mahesh and I have completed law and am preparing to set up a legal practice,” replied Pradip in fluent Bhojpuri.

Baba again turned to the Margis with a mischievous smile on his lips and said, “See, see, he too has changed his name and qualification. Only a few minutes ago he said that his name was Pradip and that he had completed his medical studies. He also said that he does not know any Bhojpuri. Now he speaks fluent Bhojpuri and says that he is going to practice law. Were they both not lying to us? Is it not so? What do you say, my little boy?” Baba asked Vinod who was by then mystified.

The demonstration had shattered Vinod’s belief that the brain and the mind were one and the same. He felt utterly bewildered and fumbled for an answer. Baba then turned to the others in the audience and asked them with an enigmatic smile, “What do you all say?”

Pranay, Dasharath, Sukumar and some of the old Margis who had been with Baba for a long time smiled, as they knew exactly what was happening. By then Vinod’s confusion had increased considerably, as he tried to reconcile his views with what he was seeing. As he grappled with his deepening confusion and tried to make sense of it all, Pratibha blurted out, “Baba, you have interchanged their minds. You have transferred Mahesh’s mind to Pradip’s body and Pradip’s mind to Mahesh’s body.”

Baba responded by asking, “Is it so, Pratibha? Are you sure of what you are saying?”

“Yes, Baba. How else could they have swapped their names and personalities?”

The mist slowly cleared from the minds of the Margis as they saw the logic of what she was saying. They were highly amused by the dramatic nature of this amazing demonstration, but the greatest impact was on Chandradev and Vinod. Baba slowly turned his head from left to right looking at all the Margis with a faint smile on his lips, then nodded his head, suggesting that Pratibha’s answer was correct.

Baba also asked both Pradip and Mahesh how they felt. They replied that they felt a bit uncomfortable, as if they had entered a strange place. By now it was clear to everyone that it was actually Pradip speaking from Mahesh's body and Mahesh speaking from Pradip's body.

At that point, Baba touched the ajina chakra of both the persons. Once again, both of them became lifeless and fell backwards. He then turned to the Margis and said, "Now is it clear to all of you that after their minds were exchanged, their identities also changed, and that the brain is only the physical medium of the mind? That is how Pradip's body got Mahesh's identity and vice versa. The identity belongs to the mind and not to the body. From this demonstration, it should now be clear that the memory and the identity of a person are not related to the brain but to the mind. The changing of bodies is called *parakaya pravesha*, which is a highly advanced occult power."

Then Baba turned to Dasharath and pointing at Vinod said, "Dasharath, see the past life of this boy."

Dasharath concentrated his mind on Vinod and said, "Baba, he was a tax collector of the local King of Chittorgarh in Rajasthan."

"See how he died."

"He was bitten by a cobra."

Baba asked Vinod, "Are you afraid of snakes?"

"Yes Baba, I am extremely afraid of snakes, so much so that after sunset I am afraid of venturing into dark places."

"See how the influence of the experiences of a particular life can mould the feelings, sentiments and thinking of a person in the next life as well," Baba remarked.

Baba again asked Dasharath, "Where did the snake bite him?"

"Baba, it bit him on his right wrist," said Dasharath pointing to the exact spot on his own wrist.

Baba then asked Vinod to show his wrist. Baba asked the others to examine his wrist to see if there was any mark. The Margis examined his wrist and were stunned to see a birthmark at the exact spot pointed out by Dasharath.

Concluding the demonstration, Baba turned to the Margis and remarked, "Isn't it interesting? These are matters of future research."

He then touched Pradip's and Mahesh's lifeless bodies and said, "They will wake up shortly in their original identities. They will be in some pain because the blood circulation had temporarily stopped. Give them some warm milk and massage their bodies. That will help to relieve the pain."

After the demonstration was over Chandradev Varma asked his initiate, "Now Vinod, what do you have to say about your earlier contention that the brain and the mind are one and the same?"

"Dada, what I have seen today is really amazing and I have no words to express my feelings," replied Vinod. "But at the same time I am a bit confused. I am still unable to reconcile my views on the topic with what I have seen. Whatever I have learned and believed until now has been proved wrong. It will take some time for me to come to grips with this new understanding of reality."

This was not the only time that Baba performed a demonstration where he swapped the minds and bodies of different persons. He conducted similar demonstrations on a few other occasions as well.



CHAPTER 25

Renaissance Universal

Manas Ranjan, Baba's youngest brother, was initiated by Pranay in August 1956. At the time of his initiation Pranay informed him that the guru of Ananda Marga was Shri Shri Anandamurti. However he did not disclose the guru's real identity to Manas.

That evening, as Baba was preparing to go for his customary Field Walk, Manas informed his elder brother about his initiation, thinking that he would be pleased to hear the news. "Dada, I have taken initiation from an acharya of Ananda Marga." Manas believed that his brother was an important functionary in Ananda Marga. Sometimes he even had a fleeting suspicion that his *dada* might be the guru of Ananda Marga, as he seemed to know everything and possessed extraordinary powers. He had also seen several people meeting his brother for private discussions and the members of Ananda Marga treating him with great respect.

Contrary to his expectations, however, Baba asked, "Who told you to do that? Even if you wanted to get initiated, why did you choose Ananda Marga?"

Manas was caught by surprise at Baba's unexpected response. He thought, "Why is dada unhappy? Maybe I have done something wrong by taking initiation in Ananda Marga. Dada knows everything and if he disapproves of my taking initiation in Ananda Marga, then certainly it is not the right path for me." These thoughts festered in his mind and led him to the conclusion that he should abandon the meditation practice.

However, a day or two later, Baba told him, "Manas, I have thought over the matter. Actually you did not do anything wrong.

Anyway it is not a bad path. So continue sincerely practising what you have learned.”

Manas was relieved to receive the stamp of approval from his dada. “At least I haven’t done anything wrong,” he thought and continued to practice meditation sincerely. Nearly eighteen months passed without Manas realising who the guru of Ananda Marga was. Before attending any DMC outside Jamalpur, Baba would always seek mother Abharani’s permission to attend it. For her part, Abharani would always approve his request. From this Manas realised that his elder brother was an important person in Ananda Marga.

On the 25th and the 26th of January 1958 a DMC was held in Trimohan, the village where Narasingh lived, about 20 km east of Bhagalpur. It was the first time a DMC was being held for two days in a row. With Baba’s permission, Pranay invited Manas to attend the DMC. Manas was eager to see the Marga guru and was told that he would be able to see him at the DMC. Together with some Margis from Jamalpur, Manas left for the DMC with feelings of great anticipation in his heart.

Baba boarded the train for Ekchari Railway Station near Trimohan, after a half day office, in the afternoon of Saturday the 25th of January. Trimohan is situated near the confluence of the tiny river Kowa and the river Ganges. On his arrival he summoned Harindra, Aniruddha’s younger brother, and his cousin Ramkumar and directed them to quickly script a drama depicting the social issue of the taboo on widow remarriage and the evils of the dowry system. As they were unprepared for such a request, Baba had to guide them and provided several satirical tips for the drama. Under his guidance they were able to create a script for the drama in record time. Baba then instructed them to recruit some actors from among the Margis to stage the drama that evening. With barely enough time to rehearse, they managed to prepare a few Margis to act in the drama.

Despite the hasty preparation, the team did a credible job of staging the drama before an audience of about five hundred Margis,

who roared with laughter at the rib-tickling scenes of social satire. The drama was rendered even more entertaining by the hilarious blunders of the ill-prepared actors. The Margis thoroughly enjoyed it, especially because it poked fun at the twin social problems of the social injunction against widow remarriage and the abominable dowry system. It was the first time a social event had been staged at the Marga's spiritual gatherings. Eventually, such programmes to create social awareness became a regular feature of the Marga's spiritual functions like the DMC. Baba also enjoyed the drama from the window of his room on the second floor of Narasingh's house.

Shortly after the drama ended, it was announced that Baba would soon be addressing the gathering. The announcement was followed by a resounding chorus of '*Parama Pita Baba Ki, Jai*' from the expectant crowd waiting for him to arrive. Manas was sitting in the front row with some senior Margis, who on Pranay's instruction were keeping an eye on him. As Baba stepped into the hall, Manas craned his neck, eager to have a glimpse of the guru. When he saw only his dada walking towards the stage accompanied by Pranay and Narasingh, he asked the Margi seated next to him, "Where is the gurudev, Baba Anandamurti?"

"Don't you see the person in *dhoti* and *kurta* accompanied by the general secretary, Pranayda? He is the gurudev Baba." When he heard that his dada was indeed the mysterious guru of Ananda Marga, Manas became highly emotional and let out a piercing shriek. Overwhelmed by the discovery, he fell into a state of ecstasy. Not knowing what had happened to Manas, Sukumar Bose, who had been keeping a close watch on him, reported his abnormal condition to Baba. Baba replied that there was nothing to worry about and assured him that Manas would recover in due course. He instructed that Manas should be left alone.

After a few devotional songs Baba started his discourse, "Parama Purusha, the Supreme Consciousness, is my Father; Parama Prakrti, the Supreme Operative Principle, is my Mother and the universe is my homeland. We are all citizens of this universe."

Baba supported his assertion by explaining the relationship of every human being with the rest of creation and with the Creator.

“The universe is the thought projection of the Macrocosmic Mind. When an individual imagines an object, then that person alone, and no one else, is the owner of the object. As the universe is the thought projection of the Supreme Entity (Macrocosmic Nucleus), the ownership of the universe lies with the Supreme Entity, and not with His imagined beings. None of the movable or immovable properties of this universe belongs to any particular individual; everything is the common patrimony of all, and the Father of all is the Supreme Entity. All living beings can enjoy their rightful share of this property, like members of a joint family.¹

“We must not forget, even for a single moment, that the entire animate world is a vast joint family. Nature has not assigned any portion of this property to any particular individual. Private ownership has been created by selfish opportunists, as the loopholes in this system provide them with ample scope for self-aggrandisement through exploitation. When the entire wealth of the universe is the common patrimony of all living beings, can a system in which some roll in luxury while others who are deprived of even a morsel of food shrivel up and starve to death bit by bit, be said to have the support of Dharma? In a joint family, every member is provided with adequate food, clothing, education and medical treatment as well as other amenities depending on their individual needs and the financial capacity of their family. If, however, any member of the family appropriates more grains, clothes, books or medicines than he requires, will that person not be the cause of distress to the other members of the family? In such circumstances, such actions will certainly be against Dharma; that will certainly be antisocial.

“A member of a joint family cannot be called a social being if he does not have a sentiment of oneness with the other members or does

¹ A joint family is a group of people who are related to each other in one way or another, living under one roof, eat food cooked in one kitchen and hold property in common.

not want to embrace the lofty ideal of joint rights and the principle of rationality. According to true spiritual ideology, the system of private ownership cannot be accepted as absolute and final, and hence capitalism cannot be supported.

“The ambition to become rich by exploiting others is a type of psychic disease. In fact, if the infinite longing of the human mind does not find a path that leads to psychic and spiritual fulfilment, it becomes engaged in accumulating excessive physical wealth by depriving others. If any member of a joint family appropriates food from the larder through physical or intellectual force, he becomes the cause of misery to the other members of the family. Similarly, when capitalists declare, ‘We have amassed wealth by our talent and labour. If others have the capacity and diligence, let them also do the same; nobody is stopping them,’ they do not care to realise that the volume of commodities on the earth is limited, whereas minimum requirements are common to all. Excessive individual affluence, in most cases, deprives others of the minimum requirements of life.

“As members of a joint family, human beings should safeguard this collective property in a befitting manner and utilize it properly. They should also arrange for everyone to enjoy it equally and ensure that all beings have the minimum requirements of life to enable them to live in a healthy body with a sound mind. We cannot neglect even a single living being in this creation, nor can we ignore the smallest part of the universe.”

Baba then entered into a discussion on the need for economic democracy and decentralization of wealth as it was central to the new socio-economic vision he was gradually developing. In his view, the concept of economic democracy required a fundamental shift in thinking that would place the planning, implementation, management and decision-making processes in the hands of local people. The central idea behind economic democracy was a shift in the ownership of the economy from powerful conglomerates and governments to local people, and the need for production to be based on consumption and not on profit. The needs of the local people should be the main focus of production. Such an idea was completely new in India at that

time, as the dominant ideologies were capitalism and communism, both of which promoted economic centralisation. Baba's vision of the economy emphasised among other things that the industrial system should be organised in accordance with the principle of decentralization.

He also proposed industrial and agricultural self-reliance through a restructuring of the economy into self-sufficient economic zones based on shared cultural and economic features. Planning for development should be done at the block-level and not at the national level. Each economic zone would have a network of efficient cooperatives. At that time in India a number of experimental cooperatives were running, but the initiatives failed because they were either overly dependent on the whims of corrupt managers or were beset with difficulties created by the government and powerful industrialists. Baba advocated the creation of a network of cooperatives through which a major section of the economy would function. Complex or key industries, such as mining, would be managed by the local government and only small enterprises would be in the hands of private owners. All the other industries should be managed through cooperatives.

The Margis gathered in that small village of Trimohan were very surprised to hear Baba speak on a subject other than spirituality. While those who had had the opportunity for closer interaction with him were aware of his revolutionary ideas on a wide range of social issues, this was the first time they heard him speak specifically on economic issues. No one in that gathering could even remotely imagine that the revolutionary ideas he expressed that day were the precursor to an all-encompassing socio-economic and political philosophy based on a universal outlook that he would later expound. Indeed, in the very first line of his discourse in Trimohan, he had introduced the essence of his economic theory. That line became the cornerstone of the social philosophy he began to propound more than a year later.

The next day during his morning walk, Baba further clarified what he had said the previous night. As he walked along the banks of

the river Ganges with some local Margis, he suddenly stopped and turned to the Margis who were struggling to keep up with him. He asked, "Did you follow my discourse last night?"

"Yes Baba, a little," one of them replied.

"You see, what can a human being do? Human beings cannot create anything original. They cannot create the five fundamental factors that the universe is composed of. All they are capable of doing is to make physical mixtures and chemical compounds from what has already been created by Parama Purusha, the Supreme Father. He created the entire universe, all the innumerable galaxies, stars and planets. He created this planet and made it suitable for humans to live on thousands of millions of years before their arrival. Now if a few individuals, who have come on this planet for only a short period, try to assert, 'We are the owners of this physical world,' is there anything more foolish than that? It is nothing but the height of ignorance and arrogance. They are blinded by self-interest."

Slightly raising his voice, Baba stated emphatically, "Sooner or later, everyone will have to accept that not only this planet but also the entire universe is the collective patrimony of all living beings and not of the human race alone. It is absolutely essential to build a society based on this concept if living beings are to survive on this earth." To the Margis walking with him who were struggling to imbibe his new ideas, it sounded like a prophetic declaration.

During the morning gathering of the 26th, Baba announced the formation of a new organisation he called Renaissance Universal (RU). It was the first subsidiary wing of Ananda Marga to be established, and its main objective was to provide a platform for intellectuals to discuss the diverse issues facing society, suggest solutions and create a new awakening in the people.

After his discourse Baba convened a special meeting of the educated Margis, youths and students. He told them that in order to revitalise society, it was imperative to bring about an intellectual awakening amongst the educated people, the youth and the students, and to urge them to take on the responsibility of promoting

progressive thinking amongst the general populace. He said that the main duty of the Renaissance Universal movement was to liberate educated people, the youth and the students from the shackles of the various dogmas that plagued society and to inculcate in them the ability to think logically and rationally.

He declared that higher social and human values had been corroded by dogmas, and that the absence of these values had created selfishness, narrowness and hatred between people. Blinded by dogma, they were destroying each other, other living beings and the environment, and ultimately becoming the cause of their own annihilation. Hence the struggle against all kinds of dogma was a prerequisite for building a new society based on moral and spiritual values. He urged the Margis to establish RU Clubs in their respective areas and to organise discussions on issues affecting the life of the general public.

In a discourse entitled "Renaissance in All the Strata of Life", which he gave on the 2nd of January 1986, Baba summarized the aims of RU as follows:

"The real meaning of the word 'renaissance' is reawakening. Humanity has been sleeping, and now it must wake up from its Cimmerian slumber and become active in all spheres of life, in all the strata of existence - the physical, the psychic and the spiritual.

"Nowadays science generally refers to the creation of new weapons which strengthen the hands of warmongers. The real spirit of social progress is to dispel all social disparities. Each and every member of society should enjoy equal rights as members of the same family, but at present there is a glaring disparity, and it is the duty of the Renaissance movement to remove these differences and bring about equality amongst human beings. Society should have coordinated leadership, not subordinated leadership. The Renaissance people will have to immediately start a movement to fight against all forms of inequalities; for example, if fifty percent of the population who are women remain downtrodden, how can there be all-round social progress? So these are the social duties, the social responsibilities of the Renaissance movement. The Renaissance

people will have to wage war against these disparities, these inequalities; they will have to be rooted out of society.”

The events during the Trimohan DMC and following it were indeed a revelation of sorts to the Margis. It slowly dawned on some of the more educated Margis present at the DMC that Baba intended Ananda Marga to be far more than just another conventional organisation propagating spiritual philosophy, social reform and meditation. They realised that through his teachings, he was creating a blueprint to restructure all aspects of society.

One day during his Field Walk in Jamalpur shortly after the Trimohan DMC, Baba spoke about the defects of communism and capitalism. “Capitalism is a defective philosophy just like communism. Both have been the cause of great human suffering. Another consequence of these materialistic philosophies is the grave degeneration of values. A time will come when people will reject both these defective philosophies.”

The Margis found it difficult to relate to what Baba had just said about the fate of capitalism and communism because all the political, economic and social systems of the day were based on one or the other of these ideologies. Pranay was the first to voice his opinion, “Baba, both communism and capitalism are extremely powerful forces.”

“Pranay, no force on earth, no matter how powerful, can prevent the demise of communism and capitalism. As it is the inexorable decree of Parama Purusha, it is sure to happen.”

“Will they both disappear at the same time?” enquired Pranay.

“No, communism will be the first to go. It will be wiped off the face of this earth. Capitalism will also disappear some time later, leaving no trace.”

Harisadhan commented in a mildly challenging tone, “Baba, what is happening is just the opposite of what you are saying. Communism is spreading all over the world.”

“Wait for a few more years. It will disappear before your very eyes,” replied Baba.

A few days later Baba told Kishun Singh that communist rule would disappear first from the European countries and then gradually from China. It would take some time for it to be rooted out of China, but it was sure to happen.

During his darshan the following Sunday, the 2nd of February 1958, Baba announced the formation of the Renaissance Artists and Writers Association (RAWA), saying that it would be an adjunct to Renaissance Universal and that its purpose would be to infuse new life into the field of literature and arts. It had five sub-sections covering the most important of the fine arts: the Artists and Painters Association, the Dramatists and Cinema-Artists Association, the Musicians and Dancers Association, the Writers Association and the Journalists Association.

About a year earlier, on the 14th of February 1957, Baba had started dictating on a topic entitled 'The Practice of Art and Literature.' It was a long treatise in which he explained the real objective of literature. Literature is not the portrayal of the superficial side of social life, nor is it the colourful spell of fantasy. Rather it is the portrait of real life, an external expression of the internal workings of the mind, a bold and powerful expression of the suppressed sighs of the human heart. In order to preserve the sanctity and prestige of its name, literature must reflect the dynamic currents of society.

"The word *sahitya*, loosely translated as literature, can be interpreted as *sa+ hita = hitenasaha*, 'that which co-exists with *hita* [welfare]'. Where there is no inner spirit of welfare, we cannot use the term *sahitya*.

".... Literature is that which moves together with society and leads society towards true fulfilment and welfare by providing the inspiration to serve. The statement 'Art for art's sake' is not acceptable; rather we should say, 'Art for service and blessedness.'"

Baba went on to discuss the social responsibility of an artist or writer. He discussed drama, poetry, short stories, children's literature, painting and the other arts. He also introduced two new categories of

literature – epochal, relating to a particular age, and then that leading to the transcendental realm.

Baba inspired artists not to be afraid of struggle to present the truth even in the face of opposition and persecution. He declared, “The thought of public welfare alone should be the guiding force behind all artistic and literary creation, and that thought will express itself only through artistic joy. Only then can the subtle intellect awaken in crude minds.

“So when artists or *sahityikas* have to create such a flow of delight as they move forward, they cannot afford to cling to any fastidious notions of so-called purity or impurity, for this will retard their progress. Excessive prudery will obstruct their movement. Conservative writers will compose poems about the sea, mountains and moonlight; they will paint literary pictures of the drawing-rooms of the aristocratic Ballygunge [wealthy locality in Calcutta] elite, but it will offend their pens to write about the endless humiliations, the low standard of living and primitive nature of the neglected, uneducated society in the villages, because these matters are unpleasant. The abominable life of corrupt women, the obnoxious environment of the slums, the carnal cravings of antisocial human beasts – all these they seek to avoid because they are unacceptable to their standards of ‘decency’ and ‘decorum’.

“Here it must be noted that artists must seek to exhibit to people the simple form of truth, sweetened with the tenderness of their hearts. But it is a matter of great regret that there is a class of modern artists, who in the realms of poetry, novels, cinema, drama, etc., employ all their artistic talents for the sole purpose of kindling people’s crude sensuality instead of portraying human propensities with the idealistic outlook of a true artist – what to speak of portraying their subtler human feelings. I would say that this class of artists is truly a blot on society.”

In this long treatise on art and literature, Baba emphasised that every artistic expression should always bear in mind that guiding the

entire humanity towards the transcendental goal is the true purpose of any art form.

He concluded with an ardent appeal to writers across the planet:

“Today not even the Pacific Ocean between Asia and America is difficult to cross. The people of Asia and America are touching each other’s minds and have learned to accept each other empathetically as their own. Europe, Africa, Australia, Mercury, Jupiter, the stars, the comets, the constellations – none of them is alien to the other; none is distant from the other. Gradually everyone has begun to realise the vibration of the one Universal Mind.

“It is my firm conviction that the future of humanity is not dark. Every human being will reach that inextinguishable flame that is forever alight beyond the veil of the darkness of the present – and reach it they must. Those who carry the message of that effulgent light will be forever revered by all humanity. I see in the writers and artists of today the potential to become such memorable and venerable people, and that is why I hold them in high regard.”

Baba’s aim in founding RAWA was far-reaching. He saw artists and writers as catalysts that would help to build the pillars of a new society based on higher human values. Owing to their special talents they have the ability to shape the thinking of the general masses, and to awaken in people a universal outlook and the thirst for a society based on moral and spiritual values.

One day during his Field Walk Baba explained to Asthana another role of RAWA - to neutralize the negative influence of pseudo-culture on society. He remarked, “In the future pseudo-culture will be a great threat to humanity. It will propel people towards total degeneration. RAWA will have to rescue everyone from the debasing influence of pseudo-culture.”

Baba devoted much time to translating his literary ideas into a tangible form that artists and litterateurs could use to inspire society towards higher ideals. In this way he contributed immensely to the field of literature, philology, linguistics and music. Through these

As she was about to leave, she gave a ring to the king and said, "Please put this ring on Alarka's finger when he is a young man. Kindly convey to him my message that whenever he is in a great crisis, he should break open the ring and inside it he will find the advice that he needs." With these words Madalasa left the king's palace.

Alarka was brought up by the king, who had immersed himself in material pleasures. After Madalasa's departure Chitrasena degenerated, and sank into a life of indulgence. Naturally, with such a defective upbringing, Alarka developed many bad habits. These became more pronounced as he grew older. When he ascended the throne of Kashi at a very young age after the death of his father, Alarka hardly had any time for his kingdom and the people. He was too engrossed in the pursuit of his own worldly pleasures. The condition of the land and the people deteriorated day by day, and the kingdom suffered greatly. The state officials ruthlessly exploited the people, as generally happens when the king does not spend time looking after the affairs of state. Unable to bear all this, the people longed for a change of administration, but did not know how to bring it about.

Vikranta, who was then living in a hermitage as a renunciant, heard about the miseries of the people of Kashi. He approached the king of neighbouring Koshala and said, "I am the eldest brother of King Alarka. The kingdom actually belongs to me. You also know about the sorry state of affairs in Kashi. I therefore request you to please march with your army to Kashi, conquer it and hand it over to me."

The King of Koshala was a righteous person. He thought the proposal to be a wise one and invaded Kashi. As no one was ready to support the unpopular Alarka, Kashi was conquered without a fight. Alarka then fled the kingdom to save himself.

Vikranta then beseeched the King of Koshala, "I requested you to attack Kashi only to teach Alarka a lesson. My duty is now over. Please hand the kingdom back to Alarka and ask him

to rule it properly and take care of the needs of the people. I hope that Alarka will now rule justly." Vikranta then returned to his hermitage.

Alarka, however, had fled Kashi during the invasion by the Koshala army. To avoid being captured, he hid in various places until he reached a forest. There, helpless and unaccustomed to a life of hardship, he realised that he was in deep trouble. As he pondered over his fate, his eyes suddenly fell upon the ring given to him by his mother, and he remembered her counsel. He was indeed in a grave crisis and badly needed guidance. So, he broke open the ring and found some advice written on a small piece of cloth. The first was, "Do not have any desire, but if that is not possible, then have only the desire for *moksha* (salvation)." The second was, "Do not keep any type of company, but if that is not possible, keep *satsanga* (good company).

Alarka thought, "It is not possible for me to be desireless. And I have committed such evil deeds, so how can I get *moksha*? Regarding the second advice, it is not possible for me to live without company, but let me keep good company. This is what I can do."

Young Alarka gave up all ambitions of regaining the kingdom and went out in search of ideal company. His quest brought him to the jungles of what is today western Birbhum of West Bengal where the great sage Ashtavakra was doing penance. This sacred spot was later named Vakreshvar after the sage Ashtavakra. Alarka asked the sage a number of questions. These questions and Ashtavakra's answers came to be known as the *Ashtavakra Samhita* and appears in the *Markandeya Purana* as narrated by Dattatreya. Alarka was the first person to be initiated into *Rajadhiraja Yoga*, the process of controlling all the chakras and their associated propensities. Due to his *sadhana* and the good company he kept, Alarka eventually became an elevated soul.

Meanwhile, the King of Koshala could not find Alarka. He also had no desire whatsoever to extend the borders of his own kingdom to include Kashi. He therefore decided to temporarily rule Kashi as its regent, and if either Vikranta or Alarka turned up, he would hand over the reins of the kingdom to him.

The King of Koshala ruled Kashi justly. After the passage of a few years, Vikranta thought one day, "I asked the King of Koshala to invade Kashi only to reform Alarka. I guess now he must be ruling Kashi in a proper way. Why don't I go and see him?" With this thought, he set out for Kashi.

At the same time, a thought arose in Alarka's mind, who was by now reformed: "Vikranta must be ruling excellently. He was the one who opened my eyes. I should go and express my gratitude to him for helping me to change the defective course of my life." Thus, Alarka also left his hermitage and set out for Kashi.

On their way to Kashi the two brothers chanced to meet each other. They embraced with great affection and exchanged news about what had happened since Alarka fled Kashi. Vikranta was overjoyed at the great transformation in his brother. They then proceeded towards the court of the King of Koshala. When they arrived, the king hurried to meet them. He said, "You two have really burdened me with the administration of Kashi when I already had enough to keep me busy in my own kingdom of Koshala. Now that you have come, please take back your kingdom and release me from the burden of administering Kashi."

However, neither Vikranta nor Alarka was ready to do this. While Vikranta from the beginning had no attraction for material pursuits, Alarka had eventually acquired a keen attraction for the divine world. Both of them expressed their unwillingness to rule Kashi, and requested the King of Koshala to continue to govern it as part of his kingdom. Left with no choice, the king acceded to their request.

Before concluding this narration, Baba commented that the history of Madalasa, Alarka, and Ashtavakra had been distorted in several stories of the Puranas. He then ended by asking a question. "There are four people here – Madalasa, Vikranta, Alarka, and the King of Koshala. Now tell me which character in this story would inspire the common man the most and give me the reason why."

The Margis expressed their personal views. Everyone had a different opinion. Some selected Madalasa because although she belonged to a royal household, she had inspired all her children to become sadhakas. Others chose Vikranta because although he was a sannyasi, he did not forget society. When it was necessary, he came back to fulfil his responsibilities to society. Yet others favoured the King of Koshala as he was a dharmic ruler and a righteous person.

After listening to all their views Baba said, "All of them were great human beings. However, the most inspiring character is the one who is not only great himself but whose life can also motivate others. Common people cannot identify themselves with Madalasa, Vikranta, or the King of Koshala, but Alarka has that characteristic. A great majority of people, in fact almost everyone, commits mistakes. Most people feel repentant and want to change their lives, but lack the will power to do it. Alarka will inspire all such people. They will get new hope when they think that if a fallen man like Alarka could rise to such great heights, why can't they? Alarka will be a source of encouragement for them to rebuild their lives in a nice way."

After concluding the story, Baba paused for a while and continued, "I want Ananda Marga to offer this type of hope to people on the lowest rungs of society who are struggling physically, mentally, and spiritually. I am not worried about those who have a spiritual path, even if it is not a perfect one. Today or tomorrow, in this life or the next, they will find a perfect path and attain the Supreme Goal. I am more concerned about those who haven't got any path and are drifting towards degeneration, who are falling into the trap of negative *pratisaincara*¹. I came to this planet mainly to show

¹ Negative *pratisaincara* - Regression from the level of human beings to lower forms of life.

the right direction to those who are treading the path of degradation. Nothing pleases me more than to see a degenerate person find hope in our Marga and follow the guidance that the Marga way of life offers to everyone.

“Rukundeshvar was leading a wicked life. But when he was initiated, he turned over a new leaf. During his PC in Jamalpur a few months ago, after making him atone for his past mistakes, I made him promise to lead a virtuous life. And I have been observing that he has tried to keep his promise with all sincerity, although it has been a great struggle for him. How can I ignore that? He had a strong desire for me to stay in his newly built house. I could not disappoint him. Moreover, I wanted to encourage him in every way. Rukundeshvar’s transformation will inspire degenerate people with the hope that they too can make a big change in their lives if they adopt the path of spirituality. Now, do you all understand why I took the decision to move the programme to Rukundeshvar’s place?”

With these words Baba got up and started to walk. The Margis followed him with tears in their eyes. His clarification had deeply touched their hearts.

Grand Welcome in Arraha

Early in the year, two local acharyas, Dipanarayan and Natkat Kedar, submitted a request for a DMC to be held in their native village of Arraha in Saharsa District in north of Bihar. It would prove to be yet another eventful DMC in the history of the Marga.

Baba arrived at Mithai, the nearest railway station, on the morning of the 27th of March 1959. Dipanarayan had arranged for a troupe of musicians and two elephants to be present at the station. Baba and Pranay sat in the howdah atop one elephant, while Bindeshvari, Nagina, and Asthana mounted the other one. A few jeeps and several bullock carts carried the other guests in Baba’s entourage.

The procession, to the sound of conches and accompanied by music from the band, set off for Arraha village which was four kilometres away. Hundreds of Margis who came to receive Baba followed on foot, singing devotional songs and dancing to the beat of cymbals and drums, adding to the festive atmosphere.

Women received Baba at the entrance to the jagrti compound in traditional style, waving lamps and singing devotional folk songs. He

inaugurated the newly built jagrti by cutting a string made from stitched mango leaves. Then a group of Margi women led by Jivaccha Devi, the wife of Dipanarayan, welcomed him performing arati with burning camphor and blowing conches.

Uganlal's Spiritual Vision

Many Margis from neighbouring districts came to attend the DMC in Arraha. Uganlal, a newly initiated Margi from Kutera village in Sikti Block of Purnea District was one of them. He was an extraordinary sadhaka. Acharya Vishveshvar, a teacher from Araria in North Bihar, had initiated him only a few months ago.

Ugan was a simple, good-hearted farmer, who eked out a living from hard labour. Despite his back-breaking work, he regularly spent long hours in meditation. Even before his initiation he had been a great devotee of Lord Krishna. Some months after his initiation, Acharya Vishveshvar was in Sikti for some Marga work. On his arrival, he heard that Ugan badly wanted to meet him. Ugan was unable to travel to Araria to meet his acharya due to lack of money and the inability to take leave from his work.

Vishveshvar found an opportunity to visit Kutera village. When he reached Ugan's humble dwelling, he found him sitting cross-legged with his eyes closed. Hearing the voice of his acharya, Ugan got up and greeted him in the traditional manner by touching his feet. Vishveshvar saw that tears were slowly trickling down Ugan's face from the outer corners of his eyes. Vishveshvar had heard from Baba that there are two types of tears – one caused by pain or an emotional state of mind, where the tears flow from the centre of the eyes, and the other caused by spiritual ecstasy, where the tears appear at the outer corners of the eyes. Vishveshvar found it hard to believe that his new initiate could be shedding tears of ecstasy only a few months after his initiation and immediately thought that Ugan was in pain. He asked, "Ugan, what is the matter? There are tears in your eyes. Are you in pain?"

"No, Master Sahib, they are not tears of pain. In fact, for the last few days whenever I do sadhana, an inexplicable feeling of happiness overwhelms me."

What Ugan said surprised his acharya and he felt proud of his new initiate. "I got a message that you wanted to discuss something with me. What's the matter?"

"Master Sahib, about a week back I was tilling the land. Before taking lunch, as usual I washed and sat for meditation under the shade of a tree. When I got up after doing long and deep meditation, I saw a person with a very fair complexion wearing a *dhoti* and *kurta* standing before me. He had a radiant face. There was a charming and very sweet smile on his face. I felt a strange attraction pulling me towards him. He blessed me by raising his right hand. Seeing the lustre on his face, my first thought was that he was a divine being who had descended from another world. Then I noticed that he was wearing glasses and a ring with a yellow stone. So I thought that he must be a human being."

"Ugan, were your eyes open or closed when you saw that person?"

"Of course, Master Sahib, my eyes were open at that time. I saw him just as I opened my eyes after meditation. He was standing only a few feet away from me. His appearance was so radiant that I got lost in bliss as I kept gazing at him. Then he slowly vanished. I don't know what happened to me after that. I have been in a state of divine ecstasy ever since. I feel an inexplicable bliss inside me whenever I recollect that scene, and my eyes become wet with tears."

Tears trickled down his cheeks as Ugan described his mysterious experience, and his voice became choked with emotion. After somewhat regaining his composure, he continued, "I am a bit confused, Master Sahib. Who is that person whose mere darshan has filled me with such divine bliss? I am sure about one thing. Whoever that person might be, there was a divine lustre in his face."

Vishveshvar understood that Ugan had seen Baba. In order to confirm that he was indeed telling the truth and that it was not a product of his imagination, Vishveshvar remarked, "Ugan, from your description it seems that the person who appeared before you was Baba, our gurudeva. But one thing you said did not match his description and that is he does not wear glasses or a ring."

“No, Master Sahib. I am very confident that the person I saw wore black-rimmed glasses and a ring studded with a yellow stone.”

Vishveshvar knew that what Ugan said was indeed correct. Baba wore glasses with a black frame and a ring with a yellow stone.

“All right Ugan, in a few days Baba will be coming to Arraha. Please attend the programme there and see for yourself if the person you saw was really Baba or not.”

On the 27th Ugan went to Araria and joined his acharya and some Margis for the trip to Arraha. In the train along the way he was constantly absorbed in meditation, and tears trickled down his face non-stop. After some time, he opened his eyes and said excitedly, “Acharyaji, I again saw the same radiant person just now in my meditation. I am sure he has black-rimmed glasses and a ring with a yellow stone.” Vishveshvar just smiled.

On their arrival in Arraha, they went straight to the jagrti and prostrated outside Baba’s room, then sat down on the floor. Through the partially opened door, they could see that Baba was giving some instructions to Indradev, Chandranath, Pranay, and a few others. Uganlal suddenly grabbed Vishveshvar’s hand and said elatedly, “Master Sahib, he is the one; yes, he is the one I saw in the field and a little earlier today in my meditation. It is the same radiant face. See the black-rimmed glasses and the ring with the yellow stone. Everything is exactly the same as I saw that day. Yes, it was Baba who appeared before me.” He repeated it a few times and then fell backwards in samadhi.

Opposition from the Fundamentalist Camp

In Arraha there were a good number of Margis, but there was also a large group of fundamentalist Hindus who disliked the Marga. The reason was its rule requiring prospective initiates to remove their higher caste insignia such as the sacred thread and topknot before initiation. In addition, they could not accept the Marga’s views on widow remarriage and other progressive ideas. To counter Ananda Marga’s influence in Arraha, they had organised themselves under the banner of ‘Rama Camp’. Around noon, they set up their camp about a hundred metres from the jagrti. They started by singing religious songs

through loudspeakers. Then after some time they began to hurl abuses at the Margis, denouncing them as heretics bent upon destroying the Hindu religion and warning the people to beware of them.

Hearing the commotion, Baba came out of his room and enquired what was going on. The Margis explained the situation to him. Baba smiled and shook his head. "Don't worry," he said, "the more they shout 'Ananda Marga', the more publicity they do for us."

The Rama Camp had invited Dr. Shankarananda Shastri, a crafty Hindu scholar, to challenge the Marga. He came from the Jaunpur District of Uttar Pradesh. Wherever he introduced himself, he never failed to prefix his name with a special title such as Bhayankara Prativadi, meaning the terrifying debater, or Bhayankaracharya, the awesome preacher. Through such titles he overawed any opponent who challenged him to a debate even before it began. He thought that such tactics would have a similar effect on the Margis as well.

Taking the mike, Shankarananda fired his first salvo, launching into a long diatribe against the Margis, accusing them of being atheists and destroyers of Hinduism. He then sent a note to Pranay challenging Baba to a scriptural debate with him.

The Margis were upset by Shankarananda's unwarranted abuses and wanted to react strongly and forcefully. The senior Margis, however, counselled patience, as any disturbance would ruin the DMC programme in their village, which was the main intention of their adversaries. When the matter was reported to Baba, he smiled and quoted a couplet, "*When the elephant walks carefree through the market, many street dogs bark.* There is no need to worry because wherever there is a challenge of ideas, if any party loses its cool, it is a sure sign of their weakness and impending defeat. By hurling abuses at Ananda Marga, your opponents are showing that they have lost their cool, and that is a clear sign that they have lost the intellectual debate even before it has started."

He then summoned two senior acharyas, Chandranath and Prof. Indradev Gupta, and instructed them to represent Ananda Marga in the debate. He said, "Every point he will make is the same that you all face regularly when you go for *prachar* work, and since both of

you are well-versed in the answers, there should be no problem. Remember one thing - in any intellectual debate, maintaining your cool is essential to establish domination over your opponents. You will see that soon Shankarananda will try to provoke you by hurling abuses when he realises that he is losing the debate, and if you remain calm, it will stir up his anger and make his mind unstable. You know that a disturbed mind is incapable of arguing logically in a debate.”

“Baba, I heard that Shankarananda is a Sanskrit scholar and wants the debate to be conducted in Sanskrit. Both of us are very weak in Sanskrit,” lamented Indradev. Baba then called both of them close to him, and assuming a special *mudra* touched their anahata chakras with his left little finger, while keeping his right thumb on his own anahata chakra.

He then instructed them, “During the debate, ideate upon me in your anahata chakra and talk fearlessly. You will be able to speak in any language that you need, and knowledge that was unknown to you previously will flow like a fountain from inside you. His linguistic challenge will be faced by Indradev and in his philosophical challenge Indradev will be assisted by Chandranath. Whatever one of you says should be reinforced by the other to ensure that it enters the minds of the audience. You will find that all the ideas you need for the debate will flow from within. Keep one thing in mind - your main objective is not to defeat Shankarananda. It is to convince the misinformed public about the greatness of your ideology. Now go and be victorious.”

With these words Baba blessed the two acharyas. They prostrated before taking leave. They felt tremendous confidence, buoyed up by Baba’s encouragement and blessings, and sent a message to Shankarananda’s camp that they were ready for the debate. It was fixed for the afternoon and was to be held in the hall of the high school. A large number of Margis and members of the public assembled there. All the educated people of the village were present, curious to see how the Margis would face Shankarananda Shastri, the renowned scholar and fearsome debater.

Shankarananda opened the debate by asking a question in Sanskrit, but neither of the acharyas understood a word of it. Shankarananda's gambit appeared to have paid off. Indradev was a little perplexed. How could he reply to a question that he did not understand at all? Suddenly, he remembered Baba's instructions, "During the debate, ideate upon me in your anahata chakra and talk fearlessly....." In order to calm his mind and ideate on Baba properly he needed to buy some time. He therefore proposed that before starting the debate some norms should be established. The most important one was to appoint a president to moderate the debate and some judges to decide the result. It should also be decided who is the proponent and who is the opponent. A topic of debate should be chosen as well.

Shankarananda accepted all these suggestions and proposed an elderly retired headmaster as the president and three teachers as the judges, all of whom he considered to be his supporters. He also proposed that the topic would be the caste system. He would be the proponent and the Margis, the opponents. This discussion on how to set up the debate took a few minutes, and in the meanwhile both the acharyas ideated deeply on Baba in their anahata chakra. As he ideated, Indradev got a flash of intuition about the question asked by Shankarananda and how he should respond to it. Shankarananda repeated the question and the judges fixed ten minutes for each side to present its views on each of the points raised.

Indradev stood up, focussed his mind on Baba and started to speak. He felt a flow of ideas rising from the depths of his mind. He started to reply in Sanskrit, "The question that Shankarananda Shastri has asked just now is from the Brahmanas of the Rigveda. It is a question related to Vedic grammar and has nothing to do with the issue on which we have decided to debate." Indradev then quoted the remaining lines of the verse recited by Shankarananda and then translated it all into Hindi for the benefit of the audience. "Now I ask all of you present here to judge for yourselves how Shankarananda Shastri has been trying to deceive all of us - we the respondents, the judges, and you, the public - by asking a totally irrelevant question on

an obscure and pedantic topic. His intention was to confuse and overawe us, the respondents, by asking us an unrelated question in Sanskrit, which no debater would understand unless he was very well versed in the entire Vedas. This is a deliberate act of deception.”

Although Indradev’s words were quite forceful, he spoke with a smiling and nonchalant expression. Immediately, the audience erupted in loud shouts and angry jeers. “Yes, we understand his mala fide intentions,” burst out an angry teacher. Shankarananda became very nervous and uneasy at being exposed before the people. Even in his wildest dreams he had not expected the acharya to give such a wonderful exposition of this obscure part of the Vedas.

In order to cool the tempers of the audience, he craftily replied, “Yes, it is true that the question was not related to the topic of discussion. I asked this irrelevant question to test the opponents’ knowledge of Sanskrit and the scriptures. Now that I am satisfied that they have a good knowledge of both, I propose that the remaining part of the debate be held in Hindi, so that everyone can understand what we discuss.”

Indradev replied teasingly, “Just as Shankarananda Shastri had the right to test our knowledge of Sanskrit, I propose that the rest of the debate be held in French, so that I can also test if Shankarananda really studied in France as he claims. What we discuss could be translated into Hindi later for the benefit of the audience.” He then started to speak in French. A nervous Shankarananda made repeated requests for the debate to continue in Hindi only. Even before the start of the debate it was clear that Shankarananda was on slippery ground and much of the self-confidence he had displayed earlier had been dented. Having scored a point, Indradev agreed to continue the debate in Hindi.

Shankarananda then heatedly accused the Margis of going against the caste system that had been created by the gods themselves. He quoted a Rig-Vedic verse which stated how the higher castes had been created from the head, limbs and trunk of the Supreme Entity and the lower castes from His feet. In their response, Indradev and Chandranath ridiculed this assertion by pointing out the

inherent contradiction in the verse. How, they asked, can the Supreme Entity, which is infinite, have a head, hands and feet, which would make Him a finite being? They explained that on the basis of their inherent nature and aptitudes, people all over the world can be classified into four psychological types - *shudras* (labour class), *kshatriyas* (warrior class), *vipras* (intellectual class) and *vaishyas* (businessmen). They supported their claims by quoting from the Bhagavat Gita. These psychological classes were not based on family lineage, and in one family there could be people from all four psychological classes. They gave some examples from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. They further argued that when the Supreme Father is the creator of all, it would be an insult to Him to divide human beings into higher and lower castes and treat some people as superior and others as inferior, impure and untouchable.

There was a loud cheer from the audience and the judges too nodded in approval, acknowledging the strength of the acharyas' logic. Realising that he was losing the debate, Shankarananda accused the Margis of heresy for opposing idol worship. In reply Chandranath quoted a verse from the *Kularnava Tantra*, which stated that the highest form of worship was to be in a state of God-consciousness and next came ideation on the Supreme Entity and meditation. Reciting God's praises and mechanical chanting were inferior to these, while idol worship was the most inferior form of worship. He also quoted from several other scriptural texts and then asked how the infinite God could be worshipped in the form of an idol made from a rock. While human beings are supposed to meditate on the Supreme Creator, idol worship is the worship of something created by human beings. The force of the acharyas' logic and their calm demeanour throughout the debate won over most of the audience.

Shankarananda was put in a tight spot by the rational arguments presented by the two acharyas and realised that he was progressively losing the support of the audience whom he had considered to be mainly traditionalists. In a bid to save his precarious position, he accused the Margis of corrupting society by giving prostitution a respectable status. He quoted from *Ananda Marga Caryacarya* where

it was stated that society should give greater respect to a person who married a prostitute. He argued that society would be ruined if these ideas were implemented.

In reply Chandranath said, "Shankarananda Shastri is misrepresenting what is said in *Ananda Marga Caryacarya* by claiming that it provides respectability to prostitution. Because women are being denied their social rights and because they are economically crippled, some women are compelled to take to prostitution. Although there are also many other reasons for the existence of this profession, these are the two primary ones. Ananda Marga considers that women should be treated at par with men. In addition, the Marga wants to encourage women to become economically independent of men. Any social system that allows characterless men to swagger about while fallen women are denied proper opportunities to improve their condition despite their sincere desire to lead an honest life can never be supported in a just society.

"Women who desire to lead an honest life must be given the opportunity to lead a respectable life. While immoral people force respectable women into prostitution for a number of reasons, the Marga is trying its best to rescue them. What the Marga wants to do is to bring them back into society and help them to gain social acceptance by encouraging people to marry them, so that they will not be forced to continue to lead a degraded life. Through such means Ananda Marga seeks to protect the society from moral degeneration. I want you, the audience present here, to decide whether the act of forcing a woman into prostitution is reprehensible or whether the Margis wanting to rescue her from her wretched state and re-establish her as an acceptable member of the community is blameworthy."

Almost in unison, the audience erupted in cries of approval for the Margis' stand and the judges thumped the desk as a sign of their approval too, commenting, "Well said, yes, very well said."

Shankarananda understood that defeat was staring him in the face. This was something that had never happened before and his reputation was at stake. In desperation he launched into a tirade against the Margis, accusing them of trying to destroy Hindu beliefs. As he spoke, some members of the audience stood up to defend

Ananda Marga. One of the judges even told Shankarananda that people like him were feeding the public with cock and bull stories and trying to push dogmatic beliefs down their throats. If Shankarananda could not convince them logically about the need for the sacred thread, he would discard his own sacred thread.

At the start of the debate Shankarananda had anticipated an easy victory over the Margis, but things had not gone as planned. The support of the audience had waned as the debate progressed and had shifted to his opponents. He had to save himself from further humiliation at any cost. So in order to rescue himself from the situation, he suddenly shifted gear and declared that the clash of ideas between intellectuals was a never-ending one. So nothing could be gained through debates, except for providing some entertainment to the audience. Since it was already half past four, he was closing the debate.

In a false show of appreciation, he embraced Indradev and left the place in a huff without even waiting for the president to declare the debate was over or for the judges to announce their decision. After a short deliberation they declared unanimously that on all the issues at hand, the Margis had convincingly won. The audience welcomed the verdict with a loud cheer. The villagers, who had been hostile to Ananda Marga at the start of the debate, now became supportive and sympathetic to them.

After it was over, Indradev and Chandranath and the other senior Margis went to Baba to report what had happened. Baba said with a smile, "Indradev, I did not know that you speak Sanskrit and French so well."

"Neither did I," replied Indradev with a hearty chuckle and the others joined in. "Baba you know only too well how puzzled I was by the very first question. Then, when I started to ideate upon you, I felt a flow of ideas that were unknown to me well up from inside me, just as you had said it would. I even knew things that I had not known before."

"The Rama Camp wanted to defeat me in a debate," said Baba, "but their choicest person was no match for my disciples. This will be a good lesson for them."

After this episode there was no further disturbance to the DMC from the Hindu fundamentalists. The Rama Camp became very subdued and did not show their face in public for the remainder of the programme.

The DMC that evening was held inside a *pandal* erected in the jagrti campus. The Margis' victory in the debate had sparked great enthusiasm among the public to learn more about the Marga. As a result, many people came to listen to Baba's discourse. For their benefit loudspeakers were fitted outside the *pandal*. Those who initially had serious misgivings about the teachings of Ananda Marga were fully convinced after listening to Baba's discourse on the "Devotee and the Lord".

In his DMC discourse, Baba spoke about several rare aspects of Tantra. He also revisited the theme of the debate saying, "When one's cognitive faculty becomes so subtle that one sees Brahma (the Supreme Consciousness) in all manifested entities, then alone can one play a meaningful role in the practical world. Only at this stage does one realise that no one in this universe is inferior, because all are the children of the same Supreme Father and Supreme Mother. Brothers and sisters from the same family cannot belong to different castes. So those who support casteism are atheists. Those who want to perpetuate economic disparities are also atheists. No parent would sincerely want any one of their children to become fabulously rich and wallow in opulence, while another slowly starves to death." After listening to Baba's discourse those villagers who had had reservations about the teachings of Ananda Marga were thoroughly satisfied and all their doubts were dispelled.

Late that night, Shankarananda Shastri quietly sought out Indradev Gupta and apologised for his antagonistic accusations during the debate. "I want to express my appreciation of the extensive knowledge that you all have of the scriptures. I never thought for a moment that you would be able to catch my ruse to defeat you in the very first question. I had been told that the Margis had very poor knowledge of the Hindu scriptures, but I see that in reality you have far greater knowledge than many scholars. I came to tell you that I have nothing against the Marga. I was paid 500 rupees and given a

train ticket to debate with you on the scriptures. I just did it as a job. I am leaving early tomorrow.”

The next morning in response to an appeal from the devotees, Baba went around the village visiting the houses of the Margis. Wherever he went, a large crowd of Margis and the public followed him. In each house, the Margi women had with great devotion prepared food to offer him. Baba blessed it by touching it and asked everyone to share the food. As he walked through the village, the non-Margi women also came out of their homes with plates of dried fruit, nuts, sweets, and fruits to offer him, and he also blessed them. Ambika Devi, the wife of Natkat Kedar, had prepared a bowl of sandalwood water to wash Baba's feet. When she saw Baba enter her house, she became so overwhelmed with devotional feelings that she lost her senses. She brought a plate and requested Baba to stand on it with bare feet. In a daze, instead of sandalwood water, she washed Baba's feet with the milk that she had prepared for him to drink. Baba kept quiet with a smile until she finished and then said, “Mother, now that you have finished washing my feet with milk, can you also do it with some water so that I can put on my sandals?” Only then did she become aware of the mistake she had committed. After repeatedly apologizing, she again washed his feet with sandalwood water.

Later that morning, as Baba left Arraha, the Margis gathered, singing devotional songs, and many of them sobbed uncontrollably. In contrast to the antagonism they had displayed before the debate, the entire village lined up on both sides of the street to wish Baba farewell. Their devotional exuberance was in sharp contrast to the commotion created by his arrival. Singing and dancing, many of them now accompanied the Margis to the station.

Baba was taken to Mithai Station by car. He had to change trains at Barauni. He waited for his connecting train in the air-conditioned railway saloon of Shyam Narayan Srivastava, a high-ranking officer in the railways. There were about ten Margis with him.

Baba addressed them, saying, "You all should learn a lesson from the opposition that we faced in Arraha. Antagonism to the Marga will increase over time. You should all organise yourselves and become strong. Even physical force will be used against you. I want to remind you all that I am not like Buddha who encouraged people to be passive. I want you to become physically and mentally prepared. Buddha gave an impractical definition of Ahimsa by equating it with non-violence. The passive response to an aggressor was one of the serious flaws of his teachings. Due to this, even a small band of opponents were able to attack the Buddhists and loot their property or dishonour their womenfolk, as they knew full well that the Buddhists would not retaliate. After several such incidents had occurred and his disciples brought their plight to his attention, Buddha realised that his definition of Ahimsa was defective. I have not committed that mistake.

"What is the concept of Ahimsa according to our philosophy? Suppose someone slaps you, what have I taught you to do? You have to give him two slaps in return – one is to return his slap and the other is the interest on his slap. If someone gives you something, don't you give it back with interest? If a sentient person does not cloak his sentient nature with the outer cover of the aggression of the rajoguni (dynamic) force, it will not be possible to survive in this world. Without it, one's sentient nature will not endure. Buddha committed three other fundamental mistakes.

"His second mistake was that he initially propagated his philosophy among the kings and the elite class and only after that amongst the common people. As a result, as long as Buddhism received the patronage of the kings, it flourished in India. Once royal patronage diminished, its life force waned. In our case, we are spreading Ananda Marga in the first phase among the common people, and only after it is established among them will the Marga be accepted by the rulers of the land.

"Buddha's third mistake was that he did not give women the same social status as men, and consequently in Buddhist society they were subjugated and exploited by men. According to Buddhist doctrine, women are not eligible to attain enlightenment. To attain it,

a woman has to be reborn as a man. I have categorically stated that being a woman is no disadvantage as far as spirituality is concerned, and they are equally entitled to achieve the highest spiritual goal. In Ananda Marga, I have given equal status to both men and women. Furthermore, I have mentioned in *Caryacarya Part I* that ‘Men and women have equal dignity,’ and that women enjoy equal rights and are entitled to perform all the duties that men perform in our social functions. Thus in the Marga society, women will not be subjugated by men.

“Buddha’s fourth mistake was that he did not give any clear philosophical concept of God or a spiritual process to attain the divine goal. As a result, some branches of Buddhism propagated atheism. In contrast, Ananda Marga teaches that spirituality is the base and summum bonum of life with a clearly defined philosophy explaining the relationship between God and His creation and a systematic process of spiritual practice to help people attain the divine goal.”

Finally, Baba cautioned them to beware of dogmatic people who may try to suppress and oppress Ananda Marga because of its revolutionary and progressive thinking, and warned them that unless the Margis remained united and organised as a disciplined community, they would have to face much hardship.

Marriage: An Essential Characteristic of the Sadguru

As mother Abharani advanced in age, she started to feel weaker and her eyesight deteriorated. She was concerned about the absence of another woman to take care of the household. She therefore brought up the topic of marriage directly with her son and also through his elder sister, Hiraprabha. Initially, he showed no interest in her proposal. But seeing his mother’s difficulty in managing the house and after hearing her repeated requests, Baba eventually gave his consent to being married. In the meanwhile, Hiraprabha, his elder sister who lived in Chinsura, had already started negotiating with the family of Kali Krishna Dutta, the superintendent of the Postal Department in Bandel, for the hand of their daughter, Uma Devi.

In mid-1959, a final agreement was reached by the two families. Baba sent his cousin and friend from college days, Nanku, to discuss the marriage details and finalize the arrangements for the marriage.

The main condition was that it would be a simple civil ceremony. There would be none of the religious ostentation so common in Indian marriages. In addition, he strictly prohibited any form of dowry. Except for what the bride's parents wished to give to their daughter, nothing else would be accepted. The bride's father agreed to all the conditions but requested that the groom should at least agree to a simple social ceremony in accordance with the local custom. The date of the marriage was fixed for the 15th of June 1959.

The Margis were oblivious of Baba's marriage plans until Baba himself gave a hint about it to Pranay. However, Pranay did not realise that Baba was referring to his own marriage. A few days later, Vaidyanth Rai, an advocate disciple, gave Pranay the stunning news of Baba's impending marriage. He said that the girl's family had been making very discreet enquiries about their prospective groom. Then suddenly one afternoon, Baba informed Pranay that he would be leaving for Chinsura for three or four days. Pranay then noticed Baba's wedding invitation card in his suitcase. That was the final confirmation that he was indeed getting married. What surprised Pranay the most was that nothing in Baba's behaviour indicated that anything out of the ordinary was going to happen.

As soon as Baba departed for Chinsura, Pranay circulated the news of Baba's impending marriage amongst the senior Margis. The news spread like wildfire among the Margis far and near. Their initial reaction was one of shock and disbelief. Nobody had imagined that Baba would get married. They had always assumed that he would remain an ascetic in both spirit and action. They had failed to take note of the statement regarding the Marga guru's marital status in *Caryacarya*, which Baba had dictated in 1955.

In order to clear up the misconception that a spiritual guru should remain unmarried, Pranay drew their attention to the first part of *Caryacarya* which stated, "Marriage is not a hindrance to dharma sadhana; marriage is a dharmika ceremony.... No disciple should harbour any inferiority complex about being married, and to this end, every disciple should consider that the guru of the Marga is married."

In a discourse in 1960, elucidating the qualities of the Sadguru, Baba pointed out being married was a necessary qualification of a Sadguru, as he should set an example for the householders, who

constitute the vast majority in society. Furthermore, remaining unmarried or being a monk is not a prerequisite for spiritual practice.

In Jamalpur, Pranay found out which train Baba was returning by, and a large group of Margis gathered at Bhagalpur Railway Station when it arrived. Pranay, Chandranath, and a group of senior Margis paid their respects to Baba. They had expected that a host of relatives would be accompanying him. To their surprise, the only person with him was a woman sitting with her head and face veiled by one end of her sari. It was obvious that she found all the commotion a bit strange, even though she knew that her husband was the guru of the Ananda Margis. Ramsvarath, a devoted Margi from North Bihar, was standing outside the compartment observing Baba closely. He had been initiated about a year before by his superior officer, Acharya Amulyaratan.

As Ramsvarath watched Baba, he was plagued by doubts about the Sadguru getting married and wondered whether Baba would lose his spiritual powers. That very instant he felt a surge of vibration ascending through his spine, inundating him in a wave of ecstasy. His body began to shake severely, and Chandranath had to hold him to keep him from falling. When he returned to a somewhat normal state, all his misgivings about Baba's divinity had vanished. His ecstatic state continued unabated in varying degrees for several days.

Pranay, Chandranath, and several others escorted Baba and Uma Devi to Jamalpur. Some of the senior disciples kept watch over the others to ensure that everyone maintained a dignified decorum, so as not to bewilder the newcomer.

After arriving in Jamalpur, Pranay asked Baba how the Margis should address his wife. Baba said she should be addressed as 'Marga Mata'. Pranay then secured permission from Baba to hold a large gathering of Margis to give them the opportunity to see the Marga Mata. Baba told Uma Devi that she should look upon all his disciples as her sons and daughters. Baba gave a short talk, which was followed by a few words from Uma Devi in Bengali. Then she gave a sitar recital in which she had acquired some skill.

Marriage brought no visible change in Baba. His brother Himanshu, who worked in another town about four hours away, visited Jamalpur on weekends and public holidays. In the book that he later wrote, he commented that while there was a noticeable

change in the rest of the family after Uma Devi came to live with them, he could see no change whatsoever in Baba. His life continued in exactly the same way as before - his daily evening walks with his disciples, his visits to different places for DMC, his visits to the jagrti to attend to organisational work, giving darshan to disciples, conducting Personal Contacts and so on. There was no hint that anything had changed in his life.

Although gradually the Margis started to consider Uma Devi as the Marga Mata, they were uncertain of her status as the wife of the Marga guru. Some of them asked Pranay if in the DMCs she could sit with Baba on the dais. When Pranay placed the request before Baba, he said firmly, "Anandamurti is a singular entity, be it during DMC or elsewhere; there is no place for any second entity." That came as a revelation to those who grasped the significance of his words, for they understood that Uma Devi did not enjoy a special spiritual status by virtue of being the wife of the guru. On some rare occasions, however, she was permitted to address the gathering of Margis in a DMC before Baba's arrival, where she would give a short discourse in Bengali.

As mother Abharani advanced in age, the household chores kept Uma Devi very busy, with little time for anything else. In accordance with local traditions, the mother-in-law did not approve of Uma Devi going out of the house except for a very important reason. She therefore appeared before the Margis only on special occasions such as during the Marga festivals and occasionally in some DMCs. Overall, her role in the Marga remained peripheral.

Moreover, Uma Devi herself did not show any interest in attending the weekly Sunday darshans, as she was preoccupied with her son Gautam, who was born on the 9th of July 1960. Consequently, while the disciples witnessed or experienced many of the amazing parapsychic and spiritual demonstrations that Baba conducted during his darshans, she did not have the opportunity to witness them herself. Therefore, her understanding of Baba was mainly as a husband and a family person. She did not have the opportunity to see Baba as an omniscient and omnipotent Sadguru with unlimited spiritual powers.

CHAPTER 32

Tales of Testing

Sincere Margis who were willing to devote part of their time for Marga work were encouraged to take acharya training in Jamalpur so that they could teach people basic Ananda Marga philosophy and initiate them. They were also trained to conduct various Marga social functions as per *Caryacarya*. As Baba expanded his philosophy and more books were published, the acharyas had to undergo training in philosophy. It was called tattvika training. As more and more books began to be published qualifying as a tattvika became mandatory before anyone underwent training as acharya. After the training classes, which were mostly conducted by Dasharath, a preliminary examination was held by the trainer or the general secretary before the final examination which was conducted by Baba himself. In these tattvika and acharya examinations, the most essential quality that Baba looked for in a disciple was control over the ego and the ability to surrender. The trainees were generally informed about this prerequisite, and if anyone had the slightest shred of ego, he was sure to fail when he came before Baba, however great a scholar he might be. In the tattvika and acharya examinations the pass mark was thirty. Hardly any candidate ever managed to score more than ten. However, people were able to pass due to grace marks if they had their ego under check and had an attitude of surrender. As time passed, the Margis realised that in order to pass Baba's exam, more than the knowledge of philosophy, the surrender of their ego was the most important criterion. During his discourses he would often remind them, "Control over one's ego is one of the most essential requirements for a spiritual aspirant, as it is the greatest obstacle in spiritual life. Ego builds a wall around the mind, and this impedes the process of psychic expansion which is fundamental to spiritual practice."

Baba kept a close watch over the disciples to make sure that they did not develop ego under any circumstances. Baba employed a

variety of methods to teach the Margis how to keep the ego under check and develop the spirit of surrender. The tattvika and acharya examinations also provided him a good opportunity to reinforce this fundamental teaching.

Ego is a Liability

Mashin Bahadur, who was employed in the Bihar Military Police (BMP), was the first acharya from Nepal. Being very simple by nature, he got through Baba's examination without any difficulty, while those who were much more intellectually qualified and scholarly failed. After becoming an acharya, Mashin Bahadur would regularly take leave and go to Nepal for prachar. Since he was not able to devote his full time to this work, a few days after becoming an acharya he recommended Giridhara Upadhyaya, one of his initiates from Nepal, for acharya training. He felt that a second acharya in Nepal would immensely facilitate the Marga work there. Baba approved his candidature and asked Mashin Bahadur to train Giridhara in Nepal before bringing him to Jamalpur for the final examination. As Giridhara was a reputed scholar, he completed the acharya training course under Mashin Bahadur without any difficulty. Mashin Bahadur thus expected his trainee to pass the final examination effortlessly.

However, Giridhara was a conceited man. It was not unusual for him to put on scholarly airs due to his learning. He was confident that with his mastery of philosophy, he would pass Baba's examination very easily. The exam took place at the Tiger's Grave. Baba asked, "Giridhara, are you regular in your meditation?"

"Yes, Baba. I do at least one hour sadhana, both in the morning and at night."

"That is very good. Then you must remember your mantra?"

"Yes, of course, Baba."

"Then tell me your mantra."

Try as he might, Giridhara was unable to remember his mantra. He began to perspire.

Turning to Mashin Bahadur Baba said, "It appears that his training is not yet complete. Continue training him for a few days more."

Mashin Bahadur couldn't believe that his initiate was unable to even remember his mantra. As soon as they were alone together, he asked, "What happened to you Giridhara Babu? You weren't able to say your mantra."

Giridhara was shaken by the experience. "I don't know what happened. The moment Baba asked me my mantra, my mind went completely blank, and I couldn't remember anything."

"It is your ego. It has become your liability," Mashin Bahadur said without mincing words. "You were over-confident about your intelligence and thought that you would pass the exam easily. Baba does not permit ego to sprout in his disciple's mind. Cultivate the attitude of surrender. Think that whatever the guru wants, only that will happen. Your intellectual capacity is given by God, and you are a mere tool in His hands. You will only be able to pass if you think like this when you take the exam again."

Giridhara took his acharya's advice seriously and started to cultivate an attitude of surrender to Baba. After a couple of days, Mashin Bahadur sent Giridhara alone to the Tiger's Grave to appear for the exam. As he drew close to the Tiger's Grave, Baba said aloud, "Giridhara, go to the general secretary and collect your acharya certificate."

A similar case occurred in mid-1960. Pratapaditya, the advocate from Gorakhpur, had an MA degree in political science. He went to Jamalpur for tattvika training and attended classes on PROUT¹ and spiritual philosophy. Before going to the Tiger's Grave for the examination, he told Dasharath, who had conducted the classes, "I am confident I can pass the PROUT exam without difficulty, but I am not so confident about spiritual philosophy."

¹ Acronym for Progressive Utilisation Theory, the socio-economic theory propounded by Baba in 1959 for the happiness and all-round welfare of all.

During the examination, however, he was unable to answer a simple question about the PROUT view of nationalism and internationalism. Although he had earlier read about this topic in the books *Problem of the Day* and *To the Patriots* and had taken part in several discussions about it, he could not remember it at the time of the examination.

“Keep studying and come again in two days,” Baba told him. Pratapaditya realised that without Baba’s grace, it was not possible to pass the test. Even if the answer was a familiar one, he would not be able to remember it if Baba did not wish him to. Two days later, before going to the Tiger’s Grave for the exam, he did Guru Puja after meditation and said mentally, “Baba I am offering all my pride about my knowledge to you. It will be possible to pass the exam only by your grace and not by any ability of mine.”

Pranay assigned Pratapaditya to Group A. As he took his seat beside Baba on the Tiger’s Grave, one of the Margis present told Baba that the general secretary had sent Pratapaditya for the exam. Baba asked for Pratapaditya’s tattvika application form and wrote ‘passed’ on it. Not a single question was asked.

Test of Surrender

Baban, a constable of the BMP, had a very unusual acharya examination. As he was a very simple-minded Margi, ego was not his problem. For his acharya exam Baba put him through a different kind of test.

On the day of the exam, Pranay sent him to the Tiger’s Grave with Gopen. When Gopen announced that Baban had come for his examination, Baba got up and said solemnly, “Baban, follow me.”

Baba took him to the top of Kali Pahar. “Go to the edge of the rock and meditate for five minutes and then jump off the cliff,” Baba instructed him, pointing to a particular place.

Baban hesitated. “Don’t worry, you won’t get hurt,” Baba reassured him.

Hearing this, Baban did not feel any further apprehension. He walked straight to the rock and sat down in meditation. After about five minutes he did Guru Puja and walked to the edge of the rock,

then jumped off the cliff yelling "Baba". As he was falling, he felt an invisible force holding him and helping him to land softly on a small patch of mud. Baba arrived shortly and asked, "Baban, are you hurt?"

"No Baba. Except for the mud on my clothes, I am fine."

As Baba helped him out of the mud, Baban asked, "Baba, what about my acharya exam? Will it be held this evening?"

"Baban, that was your exam, and you have passed it. I now declare you an acharya."

'No Cheating in Examination'

Prof. Indradev recalled two tattvika tests which he had witnessed:

Haradev Bahari, PhD and DLitt, was a professor and the head of the Department of Linguistics of Allahabad University. He came to Jamalpur for tattvika training. He had a bloated ego about his knowledge of linguistics and philosophy. He took the tattvika exam three times. Each time he was asked three questions, but he was unable to answer even a single one. His stay in Jamalpur was getting prolonged without him receiving any clear indication as to how and when he would pass. Exasperated, Pranayda gave me Haradev's application form one evening and asked me to take him to the Tiger's Grave and to ensure that he somehow passed this time, as he had to leave the following day. When we reached the Tiger's Grave, Baba was already there, talking to the Margis of the 'A' group. After we prostrated, he asked, "What's the matter, Indradev?"

I said, "Baba, Haradev Bahariji has come for his tattvika exam. He has passed the preliminary tests."

"Yes, but when I tested him, he failed three times. He was not able to answer even a single question. So let him attend some more classes, and then he can appear again for the exam."

"Baba, he has to leave tomorrow morning, so should he go back without passing the exam?"

"The tattvika exam is held in the jagrti, not here," replied Baba curtly.

"Baba, there have been exceptions before and in his case too you could make one."

Appearing to relent somewhat, Baba said, "There is no examination form here."

"I have brought one." I took out a form from my pocket and handed it to Baba.

"Who gave you this form?" Baba asked.

"The general secretary told me that I should make sure that he somehow passes this time. Baba, until now he has failed every exam. Now please hold an exam that he can pass."

Baba had a faint smile on his lips and began to test Haradevji. The first two questions were on philosophy, which he could not answer. The third question was on linguistics. He could not answer that either.

Trying to excuse his failure, he pleaded, "Baba, this question is not in the syllabus."

Baba replied, "Haradev, you are a D.Litt. in linguistics, so is this question outside your syllabus? All the earlier philosophical questions were from the syllabus, but you were not able to answer any of them. So I asked a question related to the subject that you teach at the university."

Haradevji stood with his head bowed. Baba was silent. He appeared to be in a pensive mood. Nearly a minute passed. I was curious to see what Baba would do next. Haradevji stood there looking tense.

Happily, Baba's mood changed suddenly. He said, "Haradev, you are more fortunate than the others."

We did not understand what he meant and looked at him enquiringly for clarification. "The others scored five or ten marks, and I had to give the remaining marks as grace marks

to bring the score up to thirty, which is the minimum mark required for passing. You scored zero and have received all the thirty marks as grace. You have passed.”

I laughed at Baba’s humorous remarks. Haradevji too seemed very relieved that he had finally passed the exam.

My own examination, held in mid-1957, was still more unusual. After completing the tattvika training classes, I attended Baba’s darshan one day. At the very outset, Baba asked me a question in English: “The human body is composed of living cells. Because these cells have life they possess life force as well as mind. Is the human mind, then, a conglomerate of all the minds of each of the cells?”

Because the question was difficult and it was asked in English, I didn’t understand it properly. I therefore remained silent. Baba said, half-annoyed, half-smiling, “It’s your tattvika examination. Think carefully and answer.”

Since I didn’t know the reply, I mentally asked Baba the answer to the question and immediately received an answer in my mind. I simply parroted whatever information I had received: “The human mind is an independent mind. Those living cells which you mentioned also have independent minds that have the possibility of becoming human minds, but they are in an undeveloped stage. The human mind is therefore not a composite mind but an independent entity.”

“Answer without consulting anyone,” said Baba, again partially annoyed and partially smiling. It was characteristic of him to scold with one eye and enchant with the other. Everyone was puzzled, as they did not see me consulting anyone. I was feeling amused, but tried to conceal my smile.

Baba asked a second question, “Through the sensory organs does the unit mind enjoy the original object or the shadow of the object, or its shadow’s shadow? Explain logically.” Since I couldn’t answer this question either, I again asked Baba mentally and immediately received the answer.

Again I repeated it aloud, "The unit mind does not enjoy objects in their physical form. Through the sensory organs the mind enjoys the *tanmatras* (waves carrying inferences) emanating from the physical world composed of the five fundamental factors. So the mind does not enjoy the original object, but rather its shadow, that is the *tanmatras* of the object. But this physical world itself is a shadow of the Cosmic Mind. So it can be said that the unit mind does not enjoy the original object, the Supreme Consciousness. Nor does it enjoy its shadow, the physical world. What it actually enjoys is the shadow of the shadow. In other words, it enjoys the *tanmatras* emanated by the physical world."

The answer was correct, but this time Baba pretended to be very upset. "I said there should be no cheating. You should not consult anyone before giving the answer," he said in a rebuking tone. Again everyone except me was puzzled by Baba's words.

Then Baba asked a third question. "What is the difference between Purushottama and Nirguna Brahma from the point of view of philosophy?"

I didn't know the answer to this question either. As Baba had rebuked me the last time I had answered, I didn't dare to consult him internally again. Baba kept asking me to answer the question.

Finally I said in jest, "Baba, it seems that the person I consulted doesn't know the answer."

Baba burst into laughter, his entire body shaking. He then repeated all the three questions one by one and gave detailed answers to all of them. Then he smiled and asked with a wink, "Does the person you consulted know the correct reply?"

I laughed. Everyone else was puzzled. Pranayda could not contain himself any longer. "Baba, who did he consult before answering and how did he do it?"

“After every question he mentally asked me for the answer. He also mentally received the reply,” said Baba, resolving everyone’s confusion. Then they all burst into peals of laughter.

Extreme Tests

Taming the ego was not the only reason that Baba subjected his disciples to different tests. Some of the tests were quite extreme in nature.

One evening, while sitting on the Tiger’s Grave with Baba, Kishun Singh, the BMP officer, asked, “Baba, I have heard that tantric gurus ask their disciples to eat rotten meat and other similar things. What’s the reason for that?”

Baba explained that different gurus subject their disciples to diverse tests for a variety of reasons. “Such extreme practices are followed by certain kinds of tantric gurus, mostly avidya tantrics, to test their disciples’ control over some debilitating mental propensities like aversion, hesitation, fear, and so on. These tests are designed to enable the disciple to gain control over mental weaknesses. There have been a few occasions when I have also subjected my disciples to such kind of tests. Mostly they were those whom I initiated before starting the Marga. But instead of rotten meat, I used sweets, and with the help of Maya I made them appear and smell like rotten meat. Once the sadhaka managed to overcome his feelings of extreme aversion and tried to eat it, the cover of Maya was lifted and he saw that it was actually a delicious sweetmeat. I have put disciples through various kinds of severe tests as well. Through such tests I helped them to conquer *ashta pasha*, the eight fetters, and *shat ripu*, the six enemies, which create tremendous obstacles in a person’s spiritual life. A sadhaka has to achieve mastery over them in order to make serious progress.”

Dilip Bose, the young nephew of Sukumar, was also subjected to several tantric tests.

“One evening Baba asked me to come to the Tiger’s Grave very late at night. When I arrived, he wasn’t there. Since he had

specifically instructed me to meet him, I decided to wait. It was close to midnight when Baba arrived. I saw him coming from the direction of Death Valley and not from the town. He took his seat and said, "Dilip, can you do something for me? I forgot a matchbox at the entrance of the Kali temple. Can you go and get it?"

I agreed and asked for his torch. He replied that the torch was not working, and so I would have to go there unaided. Even in the daytime, I wouldn't have dared to go to Kali Pahar alone because of the frightening stories we have all been told about the area since our childhood. It was therefore unthinkable to go to such a place in pitch darkness. But none of the frightening ideas people had about Kali Pahar came to my mind at that time. The only thought in my head was that Baba had asked me to do something, and I had to do it. So without a second thought, I set out for Kali Pahar without any assistance except Baba's name. Climbing the steps up the hill in the dark was nearly impossible and was fraught with danger as there was no railing. So I had to grope my way around in the pitch dark. Finally, after more than an hour's struggle, I managed to find the matchbox. There were hardly a few matches in it and it was really not worth the hard effort to get it in the dead of night. I then realised that it was Baba's mysterious way of testing my fear.

On another occasion at the Tiger's Grave Baba said, "Dilip, I feel like drinking hot tea. Can you get me a cup of hot tea from Hira's shop?"

Baba gave me some coins. As I got up to leave, Baba said, "Wait, there is one condition. You should not wear any clothes when you go to buy the tea."

I was a bit surprised by this outlandish condition. Initially I hesitated, but then I made up my mind to go right away. Baba meant everything to me, and there was no question of disobeying him. Without further hesitation, I took off all my clothes and walked to the market stark naked. Most of the people in the town know me and if they saw me walking about naked, they would think that I had become mad. I would have been embarrassed to death. But my mind was so focused on Baba that I did not care about anything else. And so, pushing aside my embarrassment, I walked to the market.

However, a strange thing happened. Neither the people at the market nor those in Hira's shop looked at me strangely. It was as if everything was normal. I couldn't understand it. How could they behave normally when I was there in a public place without a stitch on? It just didn't make sense.

Bewildered as I was, while walking back with the tea in an earthen cup, I tried to analyse the situation. "Baba does not drink tea. Then what is the purpose of this strange request for tea at this late hour, and asking me to go without any clothes? He must be testing my propensity of shame."

By the time I reached the Tiger's Grave, the tea was cold, and offering that as an excuse Baba did not drink it.

Another time when I was alone with Baba he pointed to a decomposed human body lying near the Tiger's Grave and asked me to eat it. That was an extreme test, and I was not ready for it. Then he scooped out some flesh from the belly and asked me to close my eyes, take his name and eat it. He said that if I could do it, I would achieve victory over the propensity of revulsion. I obeyed him, and when I put it in my mouth, I was surprised to find that it tasted very sweet and delicious. I opened my eyes and saw that the dead body was no longer there. In its place there was a packet of sweets. And Baba was smiling mischievously.

Due to these extraordinary tests, I changed a great deal. I became a completely transformed person. I was able to gain mastery over many of my mental complexes, such as fear, shame, aversion, and so on, and my faith in the guru became much stronger. In addition, the quality of my sadhana improved tremendously.

Tests to Qualify as Renunciants

Dr. Subodh Chatterjee faced a different kind of test when he expressed his desire to become a sannyasi, a renunciant monk. He had studied with Baba during his high school days and after completing his medical studies, he set up a practice in Jamalpur. He was initiated by Baba in 1952 and was known to be a sincere sadhaka. When he heard about the mysterious people visiting Baba at the Tiger's Grave,

it created in him a desire to renounce the world and devote himself exclusively to spiritual pursuits. As he did more and more meditation and had more opportunities to be with Baba, the desire to renounce the world started to grow in him. Finally, he decided to relinquish his worldly life but wanted to obtain Baba's approval first, since Baba had kindled the flame of spirituality in him.

One evening in mid-1957 he accompanied Baba to the Tiger's Grave. Baba talked to him about various aspects of the medical profession, but Subodh's mind was focused on looking for an opportunity to express his wish and to seek Baba's permission to become a sannyasi. Finding an opportune moment, he voiced his desire.

"Subodh, you are married and have family responsibilities. How can you think of leaving everything?"

"Baba, my mind is feeling detached from all worldly attractions. I want to pursue the spiritual path more vigorously."

"You don't need to renounce your family to do that. Moreover, family life is no obstacle to your spiritual pursuits. Rather, it can be complementary. Your desire to run away from family life is an act of escapism."

"I am not finding the proper atmosphere to pursue my spiritual practices at home. And actually, I am feeling great attraction towards the life of a sannyasi. So please do not say no. I need your blessings before I embark on such a life."

Subodh was not ready to listen to any of the arguments that Baba used to dissuade him from taking such a step. He kept pleading with Baba for his blessing.

In the end Baba said, "The life of a monk is very hard. And you will need to overcome several mental propensities."

"Baba, I am ready for anything and everything. I can control my mental propensities without much effort, as I already have a strong spiritual base."

"Let me test for myself how much you can control your complexes. You know the complex of shame is a powerful mental propensity. I want to see how much you can control it."

"Yes Baba, you can test it."

"Remove your shirt and place it here beside me."

Subodh did as directed.

"Now also remove your undershirt."

Subodh removed it and kept it beside Baba.

"Now remove your pants as well."

Subodh hesitated, wondering what kind of test Baba was going to take. Surmounting his initial reluctance, he removed his pants.

"Now remove your underwear too."

Subodh hesitated for a while. Baba repeated his instruction once more.

He looked around to see if anyone else was watching. Assured that there was no one around, he removed his underwear a little unwillingly. He was visibly uncomfortable, thinking that he was standing naked in an open place.

"Now go and touch that tree over there and come back."

Subodh looked around again and again to see if anyone was lurking there watching him.

Unmindful of his embarrassment, Baba repeated his order once more, along with a severe rebuke. Subodh slowly started to walk towards the tree nearby. Just as he drew close to the tree, someone shone a torch on him, and suddenly he felt there were people laughing and howling nearby. He wanted to run back and grab his clothes and put them on quickly. But fearing that Baba would be angry with him, he stood there hesitating for a moment, uncertain what to do.

In his confusion, he started to run in the opposite direction towards the road. To his utter embarrassment, he felt that the light of the torch was following him. With the light falling upon him, he thought that people would see his nakedness even from a distance. So he increased his pace. Soon he found himself on the road, which was completely deserted. Since there was no question of returning to the Tiger's Grave, he started running along the road. In order to avoid the main thoroughfare, he took a completely empty route along narrow lanes.

Gripped with fear and embarrassment, he finally reached his house in Monghyr Road. Silently, he slipped through the gate and knocked on the door. His wife opened it, and in the dim light shining inside, she saw a naked man standing there. Subodh tried to talk to her in a low voice, so as not to wake up the neighbours.

She was so shocked to see a naked man that she didn't realise it was her husband. She quickly shut the door, then ran inside and bolted herself in her room. She was alone at home and was terrified that a criminal was trying to take advantage of her. Subodh had to raise his voice to reassure his frightened wife that it was he and no one else. Finally she realised who it was and came out of her room, opened the door and let him in. She was thoroughly bewildered to see him stark naked. He cooked up a story to appease her. There was no way he could have told her the truth - that his coming naked was the outcome of his desire to leave her and the family to become a monk.

A few minutes after Subodh left, Haraprasad turned up at the Tiger's Grave. He was surprised to see Baba sitting alone with a pile of clothes lying by his side. He asked, "Baba, why are you alone here at this hour, and whose clothes are these?"

Baba succinctly replied, "They belong to Subodh. He just left. Please deliver them to him personally tomorrow morning without letting his wife know."

"Why did he leave his clothes behind?"

"You can ask him that yourself. Now let us go back."

Baba got up and walked towards Jamalpur, with a puzzled Haraprasad following close behind him.

The next morning, after receiving his clothes, Subodh took Haraprasad aside and told him the whole story of the previous night. Both of them had a hearty laugh. Then Haraprasad suddenly stopped and said, "You know what happened last night? I was sitting in my room. Then suddenly I had an urge to go to the Tiger's Grave. I felt that Baba was there. And in fact, when I arrived just after you left, Baba was sitting there alone. But I did not see anyone who might have shone a light on you at the Englishman's grave or anywhere nearby. And anyway, at that time of night, nobody would dare to go to those places except us."

“I don’t know who it was,” said Subodh. “It is possible that Baba created an illusion in my mind. Actually, thinking about it later, I was also surprised by the unusual intensity of the feeling of shame gripping and clouding my mind. Maybe Baba had created that as well. I was so scared to come to Monghyr Road via the normal Jubilee Well route. So, instead, I took DD Tulasi Road, which was pitch-dark, except for the moonlight. Then I crossed the railway line at Naya Gaon and came home along the narrow lane. I am thankful to Baba that nobody saw me in that state along the entire way. There weren’t even any street dogs, whose barking could have attracted people’s attention. Anyway, my desire to leave home and renounce family life has disappeared once and for all after returning home in such a predicament and failing my very first test.”

Failing to Fulfil a Condition

Another Margi, Harisadhan Ghosh, had to face a different kind of test when he expressed a similar desire.

Harisadhan was an important medium for spiritual demonstrations in the early days before Baba chose Dasharath for that purpose instead. Because of this, the Margis used to respect him a great deal. Some even felt it was a privilege to offer him food. As a result, vanity took root in his mind. Gradually, he started to consider himself as someone special.

One day at the beginning of 1958, he approached Baba with an unusual request. “Baba, I have a strong desire to become a monk. Can you please initiate me into the system of sannyas?²”

“Harisadhan, do you know that the life of a sannyasi is very tough and requires a strong sense of sacrifice and firm perseverance? Will you have the tenacity to withstand the rigours of a monk’s life?”

“Yes Baba, I am sure I will,” said Harisadhan emphatically.

“Very well, then. For the next twenty-four hours do not eat any food except what is offered to you by others. There is one more condition. You will not ask anyone for food. You may accept it only if people offer it to you on their own.”

“All right, Baba, I will do as you say.”

² The order of renunciants had not yet been introduced in Ananda Marga at that time.

He was confident that many people would want to offer him food, as they usually did. In a short while he began to feel hungry. He went to Rasmay's house where they usually offered him food. Strangely, that day Rasmay's wife did not ask him to eat. Pangs of hunger started to bother him. He then went to Haragovinda's house where he was always warmly welcomed. There too no one asked him to eat. After that he went to a few more Margis' houses in the hope that someone would offer him food without his asking. But no one offered him anything to eat.

Finally, unable to control his intense hunger, he went to a restaurant and ordered a full meal. As he left the restaurant, a feeling of guilt began to torment him. He knew that he would not be able to face Baba. Baba might somehow find him if he stayed in Jamalpur; so he took a train to Nathnagar and went to Chandranath's house.

A few hours later, Baba arrived at Chandranath's place on a surprise visit, accompanied by Pranay. As soon as he heard someone shouting "Baba has come," Harisadhan rushed to the bathroom, thinking that he would be safe there. He hoped to stay there unnoticed by Baba and then quietly sneak out through the back door when an opportunity arose. However, even before sitting down in the room, Baba said he wanted to go to the bathroom for a wash. Chandranath escorted him to the bathroom and found it occupied. He knocked on the door saying that Baba wanted to use it, and asked the occupant to open the door. There was no reply, however. Chandranath continued knocking and calling out to the occupant to immediately open the door, as Baba wanted to use the bathroom. Harisadhan was in an embarrassing situation and could find no way out.

Finally he opened the door and came out timidly. Seeing him, Baba asked with a playful smile, 'Harisadhan, you are here! I believe you are following your twenty-four-hour restriction without any break?'

Without looking at Baba, Harisadhan replied meekly, "Baba, kindly forgive me. I have understood that I don't possess the qualities to become a sannyasi."



CHAPTER 33

Unveiling the Secrets of Creation

In 1959 Ananda Marga philosophy was still in an embryonic stage although the organisation was spreading rapidly in Bihar, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and many other parts of India. During the bi-annual DMC in Muzaffarpur in May 1959, it was announced that there would be a ten-day senior Tattvika training class for selected acharyas, starting on the 27th of May. About fifteen people were selected to attend. Baba conducted the classes sitting on a wooden cot on the veranda of the jagrti after an early evening walk. The classes covered a wide range of topics relating to the creation of the inanimate and animate world and were conducted in English with occasional explanations in Hindi. The subject matter was tough and to illustrate some difficult topics Baba drew diagrams on a blackboard. At the end of the ten days, Acharya Raghunath made a compilation of the notes taken by the attendees and gave it to the general secretary. The Margis had not been able to take proper notes due to the difficulty and unfamiliarity of the topic. They were not proficient in English, either. The use of several unfamiliar Sanskrit terms made the subject even more incomprehensible.

Hence in subsequent weeks Baba dictated the entire topic afresh to Anil Bhattacharya, who was nicknamed Goba. Baba dictated a portion every evening by candlelight, sitting on the Tiger's Grave. Goba found the task very challenging because of the complex subject matter and his lack of fluency in English. When he expressed his difficulty, Baba asked him to sit in front of him on the ground. Then with his right foot he gently pressed between Goba's eyebrows. Immediately the untrained amanuensis felt a new dimension opening up in his mind, and he was able to understand the subject and take dictation without any further difficulty. Baba named the book *Idea and Ideology*.

Idea and Ideology was a unique philosophical treatise containing a logical and scientific analysis of a range of difficult metaphysical and spiritual subjects. It shed light on several hitherto unknown facts about the creation of the inanimate and animate worlds and provided many new and innovative insights into aspects of philosophy that no philosopher or spiritual master had previously addressed. On top of that it analysed some fundamental tenets of philosophy that had never been discussed by any of the schools of Indian philosophy, going as far back as the Sankhya philosophy of Kapila about 4000 years ago, and addressed questions that all these philosophies had left unanswered. It also rectified several misconceptions created by these philosophies. The book *Idea and Ideology* interpreted several difficult metaphysical and spiritual subjects logically and scientifically. The most important topic discussed in it was the theory of “*Srishti Chakra*” or the “*Cycle of Creation*”.

In the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* of the Vedas, the process of creation is described as a cycle, but there isn't any explanation of how it takes place. Through the various topics discussed in *Idea and Ideology* and also discourses delivered on the subject on several occasions, Baba gave a clear concept of the entire process of creation, describing it as a continuous, unbroken chain of cosmic events. The knowledge that he shared in this unique philosophical treatise has helped to bridge the gap between the material world and the supramundane and spiritual worlds.

He elucidated how, from a state of singularity, this universe of multiplicity came into being, and how it again terminates in singularity. In the process, he also provided answers to a number of questions that have puzzled yogis, philosophers, and scientists alike. The foremost among them are the questions of the origin of the universe and the process of its creation and evolution, a clear answer to which has eluded scientists until today.

Baba set out by explaining that the universe had its origin in the Supreme Consciousness and then described how the various stages of creation occurred. He referred to this process as a “cycle” because its starting and culminating points are the same. According to this theory, the entire creation originates from the absolute, unmanifested

state of the Supreme Consciousness and flows in an extroversive direction until it reaches the final point of crudity, where solid matter becomes extremely condensed. After reaching the zenith point of crudity, the direction of the creative flow enters a new phase when mind forms from that crudest state of matter. After that the mind slowly evolves through different stages until it finally merges back into the Supreme Consciousness once again. Thus Baba divided the process of creation into two phases. The first phase is called the centrifugal phase, where the flow of creation is from the stage of absolute subtlety to the stage of absolute crudity. In the second phase, the centripetal phase, the movement is from maximum crudity to maximum subtlety.

During the extroversive or centrifugal phase, the Supreme Consciousness or *Brahma* is gradually metamorphosed into matter. When the crudest state of matter is reached, the introversive or centripetal phase begins to operate with the emergence of mind from matter. Thereafter, through an elaborate, lengthy process, the mind evolves progressively by incarnating in a variety of physical bodies until it reaches the stage where it acquires a human body. Once it reaches this stage, the mind evolves to progressively subtler levels until it finally merges into the Supreme Consciousness.

The Creative Principle

The Supreme Consciousness is composed of the Cognitive Principle or Pure Consciousness called *Purusha* in Sanskrit and its Operative or Creative Principle called *Prakriti*. The Cognitive Principle is indescribable and incomprehensible because it is the subtlest entity and does not come within the scope of perception. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, it can be said that Pure Consciousness is eternal, infinite, indivisible, and unchanging. It is also the ultimate state of effulgence and bliss.

The Creative Principle is composed of three creative forces – the sentient, mutative, and static. Before the process of creation starts, the three forces exist in an unexpressed, quiescent state, flowing parallel to each other within the Pure Consciousness. As long as their waves flow parallel to each other, the act of creation cannot take place. This absolute, unmanifested state, where infinite, pure Consciousness

remains free from the influence of the three creative forces, is known as *Nirguna Brahma* or Unqualified Consciousness.

The Creative Principle functions only when sanctioned by the Supreme Consciousness. Owing to the wish of the Supreme Consciousness, the three forces lose their parallelism and start to interact with each other, with the result that they begin to influence and modify the Pure Consciousness.

In philosophical parlance, when Consciousness comes under the influence of the Creative Principle, it is known as *Saguna Brahma*, Qualified Consciousness or the Macrocosm. In his book *Ananda Marga Elementary Philosophy* published in 1955, Baba explained the nature of *Saguna Brahma* by giving the example of an iceberg. "Due to variations in climatic conditions, some of the ocean water turns into an iceberg. If we compare the ocean with *Nirguna Brahma* or Non-Qualified Consciousness, the iceberg may be compared with *Saguna Brahma* or the Macrocosm or Qualified Consciousness. The ice is comparable to Consciousness in the Macrocosm, and the weather conditions that freeze the water can be compared to the Creative Principle. The unfrozen water of the ocean can be compared to the Pure Consciousness in *Nirguna Brahma*. The ice and the remaining water in the ocean are merely two different states of the same thing, the sole difference being that the weather in some places is able to turn the water into ice, while in other places it cannot. Although ice is actually only another form of water, we cannot call it water; it has to be understood as a changed form of water. Similarly, we cannot call *Saguna Brahma* or the Macrocosm the state of Pure Consciousness."

The Word Was God

According to this cosmological theory, creation is the thought projection of *Parama Purusha*, the Macrocosmic Nucleus. In philosophical parlance, the thought projection of the Macrocosmic Nucleus is called the Cosmic Mind. The Macrocosmic Nucleus controls and guides the entire creative process by exerting the influence of the three forces of the Creative Principle in varying degrees upon Pure Consciousness. When these three forces transform

Consciousness into matter, the Creative Principle is known as the extroversive force or *Avidya Maya*. Thus whatever takes place in the centrifugal phase of creation, i.e. from Pure Consciousness to condensed matter, occurs due to the influence of *Avidya Maya*. When it transforms matter into mind and then mind into Consciousness, the Creative Principle is called the introversive force or *Vidyamaya*. Hence everything that is a part of the centripetal phase of creation, i.e. from matter to Pure Consciousness, is the result of the influence of *Vidyamaya*.

In the initial stage of creation, the sentient force exerts its influence over the Supreme Consciousness, creating within the Cosmic Mind a sense of its own existence. This Cosmic 'I-feeling' is called *Mahat* in philosophy.

This subtle, sentient force of the Creative Principle moves in a linear flow, and hence creation at this stage also flows in a straight line. It is in this realm of *Mahat* that the *omkara*, the cosmic sound of the Macrocosm, begins to manifest. While explaining the *omkara*, Baba said that when the New Testament of the Bible states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God," it actually refers to the *omkara*.

As the thought projection of the Cosmic Mind advances to the next stage, the influence of the sentient principle on Consciousness wanes in a certain portion of the Cosmic *Mahat*, and gradually the mutative force starts to predominate. As a result, the flow of creation becomes curvilinear and subsequently smaller and smaller curves are created as the influence of the mutative force increases. In this process, more and more curves gradually begin to emerge in the flow of the Cosmic Mind. At this point the ever-increasing influence of the mutative principle transforms the pure awareness of existence, i.e. the feeling "I exist", into the more dualistic or objectivated feeling of "I and mine". Consequently, diverse forms of self-expression arise in the Cosmic Mind, which gives rise to the cosmic sense of performing actions. Thus, the Cosmic Doer or Ego emerges. This stage is called Cosmic *Aham* in spiritual philosophy. It is important to note that the Cosmic *Aham* acts only in the subjective realm, as the physical aspects of creation have yet to come into being.

What is the essential difference between Consciousness in Nirguna Brahma and Consciousness in the Mahat stage of Saguna Brahma? A clear expression of Consciousness in the form of pure effulgence can be found only in the Cosmic Mahat. This stage can be experienced when the mind becomes very subtle through intense sadhana. It is beyond the ability of the mind to conceive of or perceive Nirguna Brahma. The stage of Nirguna Brahma is beyond attributes, beyond perception and conception. The mind cannot perceive or conceive of Nirguna Brahma.

On several occasions Baba gave demonstrations of savikalpa samadhi. In this state the mind becomes one with Saguna Brahma and feels, "I am the Supreme Brahma." Waves of supreme bliss flood the mind. Baba also performed several demonstrations of nirvikalpa samadhi and explained the difference between these two states of transcendental consciousness. In the nirvikalpa state, the mind becomes one with Nirguna Brahma. It ceases to exist, and no "I" feeling remains. As the mind does not exist and breathing, heartbeat, and other biological functions stop, the body becomes stiff like a dead body. It is only after returning from the state of nirvikalpa samadhi that a sadhaka realises that this state is an indescribably blissful one, as intense waves of bliss continue to inundate the mind for a long time afterwards.

As the thought projection of the Cosmic Mind continues to unfold, the influence of the mutative force diminishes in a certain portion of the Aham. The static force then begins to assert its domineering influence. As a result, a portion of the Aham is metamorphosed into a state referred to as *Chitta* or Cosmic Mind-Stuff. The Chitta assumes the form of whatever is imagined by the Cosmic Mind. At this stage, Consciousness becomes objectivated, meaning that a sense of subject and object is created in the Cosmic Mind. The static principle continues to exert its influence with ever-increasing intensity, and as a result, the creative process eventually reaches a state of inertness.

The evolution of the objectivated Consciousness is a long process that can be divided into two distinct stages. First, the gradually increasing dominance of the static principle on Consciousness causes the emergence of increasingly smaller

curvatures in the flow of the Cosmic Chitta. This results in the creation of distinct psychic realms within the Cosmic Mind. The second stage occurs when the influence of the static principle over the mutative principle increases to the point at which the evolution of the physical universe starts. The process of transformation continues until matter is finally created. This is the final stage of the centrifugal phase of the Cosmic Imagination.

The Cosmic Magician

How does this cosmic drama actually take place? Baba compared it to a magician performing the legendary Indian Rope Trick in the street. "The magician appears to throw a rope into the air, where it remains suspended. His assistant climbs the rope with a sword in his hand and disappears. After a while, the assistant's head and trunk fall from the air, one after another, smeared in blood. The audience is deeply shocked. The magician weeps and wails over the loss of his assistant as he gathers the severed limbs in a bag. He then collects four times the amount of money he would normally have obtained because of the sympathy he has aroused in his audience. Soon after, to the utter amazement of the audience, his assistant is seen emerging from the crowd. This trick was very popular in India some years ago.

"How does the magician do it? The entire scene is enacted in the presence of a number of people and therefore it is difficult to consider it as false. Yet it is such a strange show that one's mind cannot accept it as real. The doubt that one might have been deceived is dispelled by the fact that so many others have witnessed the same incident. Surely, everyone could not have made the same mistake. We must analyse what exactly it is that makes such an absurd thing appear real. A rope cannot remain suspended in the air, nor can anyone climb such a rope. Even less believable is the idea of someone being brought back to life after his limbs have been severed from his body. How then can one see all this so clearly?

"Everyone sees the show with the help of their eyes. If the magician makes use of the supernatural power which he has obtained through meditation in this life or the previous one, he can expand his

mind to such an extent that he is able to hypnotize the mind of every individual in the audience and stop it from functioning independently. The expanded mind of the magician controls the minds of all the individuals, who now only see what he wants them to see. If the magician imagines the entire performance, his individual mind-stuff will take the form of those imagined events, and the audience will see the same show as imagined by him. As long as the spell of the magician's imagination lasts, this show will appear to be real to the onlookers because his ego is working in place of theirs. As a result, the show appears to physically occur. If the capacity of the magician's mind to project itself is limited to a radius of a hundred yards, only people within this periphery will come under the influence of his expanded mind, and only they will see the show. Those outside this circle will be beyond the magician's mental influence, and so they will not see the same event as those within the arena of the magician's hypnotic influence. They will only see the magician standing quietly with his eyes closed. There will be no trace of the wonderful magic. In fact, the only reality in the entire show is that the magician is standing still with his eyes closed, imagining the show which his audience sees as an actual event and believes to be real."

Collective hypnotism does not work on those who are outside the magician's sphere of influence or on those who are mentally stronger and more elevated than the magician due to their advanced sadhana. There have been a number of instances where efforts to perform collective hypnotism have failed to have any effect on the audience in the presence of Margis. One day in the mid-1960s two monastic disciples of Baba, Acharya Vandanananda and Acharya Nirmeghananda, were walking along a street in the town of Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh, when they saw a magician performing his tricks before an audience. The people gathered around were clapping their hands in amazement. Out of curiosity, the two monks joined the crowd watching the performance. As they stood there, they briefly meditated on their second lesson of meditation. To his dismay the magician found that he could no longer perform his tricks. He looked around and saw the two monks and immediately understood that because of their advanced sadhana he was not able to influence the

minds of the audience. He walked over to them and with folded hands pleaded with them to leave, saying, "I am doing this for my livelihood and because of your presence I am not able to perform any magic." As the two monks walked away, the magician resumed his performance and continued to entertain the crowd.

The Indian Rope Trick is a good example of the fact that although this material world is only the imagination or thought projection of the Cosmic Mind, it appears real to us just like the thought projections of the magician. There is a fundamental difference between these two forms of reality, however. The universe that has come into existence due to the imagination of the Cosmic Magician is not unreal like the illusion created by the magician but neither is it the absolute truth. Rather it is a relative truth for the created beings, who themselves are also products of the imagination of the Cosmic Mind. Those who are beyond the magician's sphere of influence do not see the imaginary show, but only the truth behind it. Similarly, those who have gone beyond the scope of the Aham of the Cosmic Mind by dint of their sadhana see this crude universe in its true form as an expression of Supreme Consciousness. They alone are able to realise the ultimate reality of the universe.

The Seventh Heaven

The physical universe is the final stage in the evolution of the different layers of the Cosmic Mind, which are known as *lokas* in Sanskrit. There are a total of seven principal layers or realms, the first and subtlest being *Satyaloka*.

All the functions of the human mind and all its desires, thoughts, emotions, and propensities, as well as those of other living beings, are created in the various realms or lokas. The different forms of spiritual experience, wisdom, discrimination, renunciation, and so forth - in fact everything that human beings do, think or experience - have their origin in one of the seven lokas. The mind cannot have any experience that is outside the ambit of these lokas.

This vast and seemingly immeasurable physical universe is only a very negligible part of the entire creation. It is only a very tiny island in the ocean of the unexpressed Macrocosmic Consciousness and it has its origin in the lowest realm of the Cosmic Mind.

The highest realm is Satyaloka. It is the collective name for the Mahat and Aham portions of the Cosmic Mind. The six other lokas constitute the Cosmic Chitta. Many religions, both occidental and oriental, refer to seven heavens and believe that God in the form of effulgence resides in the seventh heaven. In reality, the seventh heaven is Satyaloka, the realm where Consciousness is in its most effulgent, transcendent state within the Cosmic Mind. In Tantra it is said: "In Satyaloka the Supreme Entity is without form and is an ocean of effulgence." Satyaloka is that state where the all-pervading absolute truth alone is experienced. It is the highest state of tranquillity.

The other six spheres represent different stages in the process of creation. As creation progresses, duality is created in the Supreme Consciousness, and as a result, Consciousness is gradually transmuted into myriad objects with innumerable forms and hues that constitute the vast universe. Due to its innate tendency to create countless entities in the non-dual Consciousness, the Creative Principle is called Prakriti in Sanskrit. The prefix "*pra*" stands for "*prakaram*", which means "varieties" and the verb "*kr*" means "to bring about". Therefore, Prakriti means that which creates differences or variety. The feeling of duality, whereby the singular Supreme Consciousness becomes many objects, originates in the higher lokas of the Cosmic Mind. Gradually, this feeling of duality expresses itself in an ever increasing number of ways. So when in the flow of creation the physical plane manifests, duality is expressed through the creation of innumerable objects. The created world becomes perceptible to the sensory organs only after the creation descends to the physical level.

Unfolding Panorama of the Lokas

Although the higher lokas are extremely subtle spiritual or mental worlds, it is possible for the mind to perceive them when it attunes itself to their subtlety through sadhana. Perception of these higher lokas, with varying degrees of effulgence, evokes different types of blissful experiences in the sadhaka.

As the flow of the Macrocosmic thought process continues, a part of Satyaloka is metamorphosed and the next loka to emerge is

called *taparloka* or the Subtle Causal Sphere. Here the blazing effulgence of Satyaloka is transmuted into a less intense, blissful, golden radiance. In this loka the feeling of objectivity appears for the first time. Baba has described the state that one experiences when the mind reaches this loka: "On reaching this stage the mind experiences the closest proximity to the Infinite Self within, and a person's desire for union with the Supreme becomes unbearable. In this stage of mind, we see the greatest reflection of the Supreme Consciousness. When the sadhaka reaches this point, the mind becomes one with that subtle causal mind. As a result the unit mind becomes one with the Cosmic Mind and becomes all-knowing. This is because the unit causal mind and the causal layer of the Cosmic Mind are one and the same. The person experiences the divine current of supreme happiness and attains divinity. This is the fullest expression of humanity. This is the aim of life."

When the static principle influences part of the *taparloka*, the next cosmic sphere that is created is known as *janarloka* or the Subliminal Mental Sphere. In this loka the mind experiences a semblance of the ultimate bliss. This sphere is the source of wisdom, discrimination, conscience, and detachment. These characteristics exist in every human being, but are eclipsed by the increasingly coarser traits of the lower lokas.

Maharloka or the Supramental Sphere is the next layer of the Cosmic Mind. It is the inspiration from this sphere that arouses in a person's mind the longing to attain the Supreme and he or she experiences the initial desire to perform sadhana. The countless desires that lead to the experiencing of samskaras by all created beings originate in this realm. It is the storehouse of all samskaras that people have created by their past actions. However, while the samskaras originate in this loka, they find their expression in the *svarloka*.

Svarloka, the Subtle Mental Sphere, is the next level of the Cosmic Mind to emerge under the influence of the static principle. It is the realm where samskaras are experienced through pain and pleasure. This loka is named "*svar*" in Sanskrit, as the word refers to the radiant outer space beyond the sun. It is the place where people

believe they will go after death if they follow the rules and rituals of their respective religions. According to religious mythology, after the death of the physical body, people go to *svarga* (heaven) or *naraka* (hell). However, according to Baba, *svarga* and *naraka* are mythological places, but the *samskaras* expressed in this *loka* will determine the experiences of a person in his or her next life. The mind cannot experience pain or pleasure unless it is associated with a brain. Hence after death, one cannot enjoy anything in the so-called heaven of *svarloka*, as one does not have a brain. The belief in the pleasure of heaven and the pain of hell are just myths, and so the belief that a person after death will enjoy heavenly pleasures is the height of delusion.

The next *loka* to emerge is *bhuvarloka* or the Crude Mental Sphere of the Cosmic Mind. All the actions that are performed by the physical bodies of living beings are governed by the Crude Mental Sphere. This is the stratum of the Cosmic Mind that is engaged in the creation, maintenance, and destruction of all objects in the physical universe. All crude mental desires associated with the physical life of animals and human beings such as hunger, greed, sleep, indolence, and the reproductive urge, as well as the sensations experienced by the sensory organs, take place in this realm.

Bhurloka is the final and crudest stratum of the Cosmic Mind. It comprises the entire physical universe. It is important to note that although this realm appears to us as a physical plane, for the Cosmic Mind it is only a part of the Macrocosmic thought projection and is its crudest manifestation. The entire physical universe is located within this *loka*.

All the above-mentioned higher realms, including the subtlest realm of *Satyaloka*, can be experienced by making one's mind very subtle through *sadhana*.

Demonstration on the Primordial Stage of Creation

Those selected to attend the classes on *Idea and Ideology* were among the most philosophically knowledgeable people in Ananda Marga at that time. However, even they found the topics difficult to comprehend. On the 3rd of June, the eighth day of the gruelling

classes, Baba gave a lecture about the creation of the universe. In his talk he explained in detail the primordial stage of creation, starting from the point where the first impulse of the creative process issued from the non-qualified state of Nirguna Brahma. It was enthralling for his listeners, who were hearing such novel ideas for the first time.

As Baba was about to conclude the class, one of the participants, Professor Indradev Gupta, interjected, "Baba, these things are too abstract and remote for us to comprehend. Would it be possible for us to have a tiny glimpse of that state?"

His companions were concerned that Baba might get angry at such an audacious request. On the contrary, however, Baba merely smiled. Then, as the seconds ticked by, they noticed his face becoming increasingly radiant. Suddenly, he raised his hands in the position of Varabhaya Mudra, his most powerful tantric gesture of blessing. Everyone present instantaneously felt his mind being lifted to another plane of existence, a blissful realm suffused with divine effulgence, whose brilliance and blissful intensity was beyond expression or imagination. Recalling this incredible experience several decades later, Indradev explained, "A tide of ecstasy swept over me, and an inexplicable transformation took place in my being. I was no longer the Indradev confined within the cage of my body. I felt that I was the Supreme Consciousness. The entire creation was within me, surging forth in an eternal cycle of creation, preservation, and dissolution and I felt that I was in each and every particle of creation. I am unable to express in words this incredible experience. This experience was accompanied by the primordial sound of the cosmos - 'Om'. As we lost all sense of our individual existence in that ecstatic state, Baba quietly got up and walked away, leaving us to dwell in that supreme bliss undisturbed. When our self-awareness finally returned after some time, we found that Baba's cot was empty, but the blissful waves that he had unleashed were still surging in our minds."

Later, as he recalled this incident, Professor Indradev was asked how he had mustered the courage to request Baba for such an experience. He replied, "That was what the other Margis asked me too, because everyone knew that Baba did not like anyone to request

him to give them any spiritual experience. I was aware that Baba could give us the experience of the highest spiritual realm by his mere wish. I had heard how he had demonstrated nirvikalpa samadhi on a few occasions. So I knew that by his mere wish he could transport anyone beyond the periphery of the Macrocosm to the state of Nirguna Brahma. For someone who could do that, to give us an experience of Saguna Brahma would be a simple matter.

“After attending these classes for more than a week on subjects that were so abstruse, we were getting a little tired. Some of the classes were no doubt very enchanting because we were able to learn many things hitherto unknown. After listening to taxing theoretical discussions day after day, several times during these classes I wished that he would give us a practical demonstration of those topics. But that did not happen. So I thought of requesting him for an actual experience but could not gather the courage to do so. Finally, when Baba was about to conclude the class on the creation of the universe, I felt that this was my best chance to request him to give us an experience of the early stages of creation. At the same time, I braced myself for an angry rebuke from Baba. But it was his grace that he was not upset by my request and blessed us all with such an unforgettable experience.”

Between the years 1969 and 1971, demonstrations of savikalpa samadhi, nirvikalpa samadhi and other spiritual experiences of the different realms of the cycle of creation were a common occurrence during Baba's darshans.

Through these practical demonstrations, the Margis realised that the philosophical ideas that Baba had expounded at different periods were not just abstract theories but could be actually experienced as a tangible reality. Through these vivid experiences, the theory of the cycle of creation was brought alive. Furthermore, his revelations regarding hitherto unknown aspects of the evolution of the physical universe were truly astonishing.

Descent of the Creation from the Psychic to the Physical

Even before commencing the classes on *Idea and Ideology*, Baba gave some valuable insights into the process of creation in the book *Ananda Marga Elementary Philosophy* and in several discourses as

well. In a discourse entitled "The Expansion of Microcosm", delivered on the occasion of the DMC held in Muzaffarpur on the 28th of January 1957, Baba explained various aspects of the centrifugal phase of creation, thereby answering several questions that had been puzzling scientists. According to him, one of the fundamental laws of creation was that the process of expansion causes a substance to become more subtle. Conversely, the process of contraction causes the substance to become cruder.

Baba explained that as the Macrocosmic thought process evolves due to the increasing influence of the static principle, the creative process descends from the abstract psychic world to the finite world of manifest physicality. Thus after the higher lokas come into being, the cosmic drama unfolds through the evolution of the five fundamental factors of bhurloka. The first of these is the ethereal factor, the sphere of subtle energy. With the creation of physical matter, the creation comes within the limitations of time and space. At this stage, creation still does not have any noticeable physical expression, but exists only in an abstract form. It is not possible to perceive this realm through our sensory organs because their range of perception is limited. Baba has said that by increasing the mind's range of perception through special yogic practices, an advanced human mind can perceive the different manifestations of the ethereal realm. He also said that in the future it would be possible to verify the existence of the ethereal factor with the assistance of highly advanced scientific instruments.

Once the creative process reaches the ethereal stage, the ever-increasing pressure of the static principle compresses the ethereal factor. This results in the development of two opposing forces - one centrifugal and the other centripetal. The centripetal or "interial" force maintains the structural solidarity of the object, while the centrifugal or "external" force is fissiparous in nature and has the tendency to split the object into many parts. In the early stage of development of the ethereal factor, there is an even balance between the mutually opposing interial and external forces, which means no resultant emerges from this clash. Hence there is no scope for any

physical expression arising out of a clash between these forces within the ethereal factor. This is why Baba said that the ethereal factor is beyond the scope of normal perception.

However, as the static principle continues to exert an increasing influence on the ethereal factor, a slight condensation occurs within a certain portion of it. This intensifies the clash between the interial and external forces within that portion of the ethereal factor, and as the interial force slightly predominates, a resultant is created which engenders in the ethereal factor the capacity to produce sound. The recent scientific research about the discovery of sound in the interplanetary and interstellar space shows some intriguing similarities with these ideas.

As the static force continues to exert ever-increasing influence on a part of the ethereal factor, the subatomic energy particles in that particular area of the ethereal factor are transmuted into the atoms and molecules of the aerial factor.

Although the molecules in the aerial factor are scattered, external pressure gradually builds up due to the continuing influence of the static principle, and this causes a clash between the interial and external forces. Baba explained that in the ongoing clash between these two belligerent forces, the interial force is always predominant. As a result, perceptible changes occur in the aerial factor, such as a decrease in the inter-atomic and inter-molecular spaces, as well as an increase in the physical and chemical properties. This results in the aerial factor developing the capacity to carry tactual vibrations in addition to the ability to carry sound waves.

Under the influence of the static force, the atoms and molecules in a certain part of the aerial factor are further compressed due to the contraction of the inter-atomic and inter-molecular space. While external pressure mounts upon the scattered molecules and atoms, a corresponding force develops and grows within that part of the aerial structure that resists the external pressure. However, the external pressure is comparatively stronger, and this leads to further decrease in the inter-atomic and inter-molecular spaces within that portion of the aerial factor. This process is called crudification because it results in the formation of ever grosser elements.

In the continuing process of creation, the aerial factor is metamorphosed into the luminous factor due to greater static bondage. From this luminous factor emerge the stars, or self-luminous celestial bodies. With the evolution of this factor, a third attribute, that of luminosity, emerges in addition to the earlier attributes of sound and touch. Baba explained that the galactic clouds out of which the stars have evolved are a part of the luminous factor and not the aerial factor as is commonly assumed. While stars and nebulae are both part of the luminous factor, stars are much cruder than nebulae. The crudest stage of the aerial factor and the subtlest stage of the luminous factor almost coincide.

As the clash between the interial and external forces intensifies, the stars gain greater luminosity, and their physical and chemical properties correspondingly increase. Gradually, some of the burning celestial bodies begin to condense and in the process they are converted into a liquid ocean of fire. An example is our Planet Earth, which was in a liquid state for a long period of time after it dissociated from the sun. This is the initial stage of the liquid factor. Here new types of vibrations come into existence that can be sensed by the faculty of taste, further increasing the diversity of the physical and chemical properties of creation.

While discussing the formation of the liquid factor during the *Idea and Ideology* classes of 1959, Baba shared some interesting information about the initial stages in the development of the earth as a planetary body. "In its infancy the earth was in a state that can neither be described as luminous nor liquid. Gradually, it was converted into a liquid body and slowly the outer surface became solid. Its inner body is still in liquid form, and in the more interior portion the luminous and gaseous (aerial) substances are being slowly converted into liquid." In 2014, scientists discovered that xenon gas is trapped in the inner core of the earth.

As the influence of the static force increases, the inter-atomic and inter-molecular spaces shrink further, gradually transmuting the liquid factor into the solid factor. The continuing decrease in the space between particles is responsible for converting one fundamental factor into another fundamental factor. As the static force continues to exert itself on the solid factor, this results in further contraction

within the physical structure. The clash between the interial and external forces intensifies in proportion to this increasing contraction. Consequently, a much wider variety of objects with distinct physical, chemical, and other properties are created, producing vibrations that can be detected by the sense of smell. A physical object contains all the five inferences of sound, touch, light, taste, and smell, thus making it perceivable by all the sensory organs. These inferences are perceivable in varying degrees, depending on the crudity of the object.

Inferences

The fundamental factors are known by their characteristics. Each can be differentiated from the others by the number of inferences it carries. The more subtle the factor, the fewer inferences it carries. For example, the ethereal factor, which is the subtlest factor, carries only one inference - that of sound. Those factors that carry the two inferences of sound and touch are collectively known as the aerial factor, which is not visible to the naked eye. The luminous factor carries three inferences - sound, touch, and form (light) - and due to its greater crudity comes within the scope of visibility. The crudest of the fundamental factors, the solid factor, carries five inferences.

Another feature that distinguishes the fundamental factors from each other is the number of physical and chemical properties that each contains. The more physical and chemical properties an object has, the greater the level of crudity of the object.

There are variations in the degree of crudity within each fundamental factor. As a result, the crudest stage of a particular factor and the subtlest stage of the subsequent factor are similar in nature. For example, the crudest stage of the aerial factor (hydrogen clouds) and the subtlest stage of the luminous factor (nebulae) are almost the same. This is because each factor is going through the process of a gradual metamorphosis in the flow of creation.

The sensory inferences are the outcome of the clash between the interial and external forces within the five fundamental factors. While discussing the ability of these five fundamental factors to transmit inferences, Baba explained some interesting facts. He said that the

quality of the inferences arising out of the five fundamental factors is not the same for all the factors. For example, the quality of sound arising from the ethereal factor and that from the aerial factor differs substantially. As the ethereal factor is comparatively more subtle than the aerial and other factors, the sound produced by the ethereal factor is correspondingly subtler than that produced by the other factors. Thus, the nature of the sound and other inferences carried by the different fundamental factors is also not the same.

So, while we are able to hear the sounds associated with the cruder fundamental factors, it is not possible to hear the sounds generated in the ethereal sphere with our ears. For that, one will have to take the aid of highly advanced scientific equipment. Similarly, as creation reaches a cruder level, the vibrations it carries become cruder, which increasingly brings them within the range of perception of the sensory organs.

Another fascinating observation that Baba made is that the total capacity of inferences that can be carried by the fundamental factors always remains constant. For example, the ethereal factor has the capacity to carry a certain percentage of inferences, say 100%, which is entirely utilized for carrying the various sound inferences. When the succeeding factors - the aerial, luminous, liquid and solid factors - develop, that 100% is divided among the inferences they carry. This is because the total quantity of inferences that a fundamental factor can carry is constant for all the factors. The quantum of inferences that the ethereal factor carries will be the same as that of the solid factor, in other words without any change in the original fixed capacity of 100% inferences. So, for example, in the solid factor, that same fixed quantum of 100% will be divided amongst the five types of inferences, namely sound, touch, light, taste and smell. Due to external static pressure, the number of attributes of these inferences increases, but not the overall capacity, which always remains unchanged.

A New Definition of Energy

As explained earlier, the greater the pressure of the static principle on an object, the greater the internal friction created by the interial and external forces. Baba defined this clash or play of forces

collectively as *prana* in Sanskrit, meaning energy. Prana exists in all forms of matter in varying quantities, depending on the amount of pressure exerted on them by the static force. This energy or material force manifests in different ways and exists in different states. It is not only active as a force but also as a crude state of matter.

Everything that we see in the physical world is the effect of the sentient, mutative and static forces of the Creative Principle exerting their influence on Consciousness. Ultimately, through a process of extensive metamorphosis, clash arises in all physical structures between the interial and external forces. As a result, myriad objects with countless forms and attributes are created, which make the physical universe colourful and attractive. Even the laws governing the universe as a whole are also the outcome of this clash between the interial and external forces.

Origin of the Mind

As the relentless onslaught of the static force on the solid structure continues unabated, at a certain stage when the contraction within the solid structure increases to its utmost extent, the inter-atomic and inter-molecular spaces totally disappear. Hinting at the extraordinary extent of contraction when it reaches this zenith point, Baba gave a startling analogy to clarify the significance of such an occurrence in simple terms in his discourse entitled "The Expansion of the Microcosm". He said, "If the ethereal, aerial, luminous, liquid and solid factors that form the physical structure of a six foot tall human being are condensed to such a degree that the inter-protoplasmic or cellular gap becomes completely non-existent, that healthy gentleman will be a billion times smaller than a poppy seed."

Baba further explained that at this zenith point of contraction, the friction between the interial and the external forces becomes so extreme that they become evenly balanced. In this extremely condensed state, neither light nor any other sensory waves are emitted from that compressed solid matter, and it becomes invisible and imperceptible. From this point onwards no further crudification is possible.

At this stage a change occurs in the evolutionary process, with one of two possible outcomes. In one branch of the evolution, a turnaround occurs in the direction of the creative process when the Macrocosmic Nucleus starts to attract a certain portion of the solid structure through *Vidyamaya*, the introversive force of the Creative Principle. As a result, the solid structure attracted by the Macrocosmic Nucleus is pulverised and is sublimated into primordial mind-stuff.

Baba illustrated this process by giving an example. "Suppose five hundred people have been closely bound together with rope and they start jostling and fighting amongst themselves. If their movements become more violent, their bonds will snap open. In much the same way, the atoms and molecules within a certain sphere of an extremely compressed solid structure generate violent internal clash. This clash creates tremendous friction within the solid structure and causes it to split up, which results in the pulverisation of the condensed solid matter, further transforming it into innumerable crude unit minds."

This splitting of the atomic and molecular structures causes a sudden expansion of the inter-atomic and inter-molecular space. This expansion is the direct result of the influence of the introversive force of the Creative Principle. This instantaneous expansion of the solid factor crosses a stage beyond the ethereal factor and finally terminates with the creation of a very undeveloped mind. Thus the rudimentary mind is one stage subtler than the ethereal factor. So the immediate consequence of the impact of the introversive force on the crudest solid matter is the birth of the crude mind. This aspect is a special feature of Ananda Marga philosophy – the theory that mind emerges from matter.

Explosion of Compressed Matter

The second branch of the evolutionary process takes place in those extremely condensed solid structures that do not evolve into mind-stuff. In this process, as the contraction has already reached its zenith point, no further compression is possible. In that extreme state, due to the relentless onslaught of the static force, the pressure exerted

by the interial force creates a corresponding increase in the external force as well. Since the inter-molecular and inter-atomic space is completely non-existent, further compression is impossible. Thus when the ever-increasing interial force continues to apply further pressure, it creates an even more powerful external force. Because this compression is so powerful, the predominance of the external force results in a massive explosion of that physical structure. Baba called this phenomenon *jadasphota* - the bursting of the solid factor. It is like a balloon that, when compressed by a child more and more, finally bursts at a certain point.

The three forces of the Creative Principle – sentient, mutative, and static – function in both the centrifugal phase governed by the extroversive force of Avidya Maya and the centripetal phase governed by the introversive force of Vidyamaya. The centrifugal phase begins with the initial domination of the sentient force. It then wanes, leading to the predominance of the mutative force. Thereafter, the static force slowly takes over. The centripetal phase begins with the supremacy of the static force. Gradually this force decreases and the mutative force becomes predominant. Finally the mutative force also gives way to the sentient force.

The Future of the Universe

Baba further said that one day all the stars, planets, satellites, and other celestial bodies would ultimately have to follow one of these two evolutionary courses. Those entities that are attracted by the introversive force of Vidyamaya of the Macrocosmic Nucleus become pulverised and sublimated into mind-stuff. Those entities that are not attracted by the Macrocosmic Nucleus meet the fate of *jadasphota*. Proceeding along either of the two tracks is the inevitable fate of every celestial body in the universe.

Regarding the future of the earth, Baba said, “Take the case of our Planet Earth, which is composed of the five fundamental factors, and where the living beings who reside here are presently able to live and progress towards the path of salvation or liberation. When the earth’s environment becomes uncongenial for life because of the crudifying influence of the centrifugal force of the Creative Principle, the earth’s environment becomes uncongenial for life,

living beings will no longer be able to subsist and progress here. A day will come when the planet and its atmosphere will gradually get condensed and will become so small that it will no longer be recognisable as a planet.”

One day, just like the fate of every extremely condensed celestial body, an extremely condensed earth will also have to follow either one of the two above-mentioned courses.

Baba described jadasphota as the recoiling of the cosmic creative process. As a result of jadasphota, the solid factor breaks down into the ethereal, aerial, luminous and liquid factors, and sometimes even into the less condensed states of the solid factor. Baba said that jadasphota can be either instantaneous or gradual. Furthermore, it can occur in the entire solid structure or in only a part of it. This is because the intensity of the static force is not uniform everywhere. Jadasphota causes the internal force of the material structure to be suddenly released, and this generates tremendous heat in some portions of the universe.

Baba then explained how these fundamental factors that are re-created through jadasphota again go through the entire process of evolution and give rise to new galaxies, stars, planets, and other celestial bodies. In this way, matter again gains the opportunity to be sublimated into mind-stuff. Thus, when the centrifugal phase of creation nears its culminating point, solid matter is either converted into mind-stuff or repeatedly meets the fate of jadasphota. This process goes on endlessly until the solid factor is finally converted into mind-stuff in the incessant flow of the Macrocosmic thought process.

No Thermal Death

There is a remarkable parallel between Baba's concept of the absolute compression of matter and what astrophysicists call a 'black hole'. What is more intriguing is that Baba gave clear descriptions of what occurs in that state of absolute staticity, providing answers to several cosmological puzzles, including the theory of a cosmic doomsday that some astrophysicists have speculated about. They

predict that the entire universe will one day undergo thermal death and that this will be the end of all life as we know it.

Baba refuted such apocalyptic hypotheses and advanced two arguments for his views. The first was that creation is an endless process, with new celestial bodies constantly being created in the Cosmic Mind. The second argument was made in a Renaissance Universal discourse in Patna on the 15th of May 1966 entitled "The Future of Civilisation". In that discourse he postulated that mankind would continue to survive, arguing that: "The destruction of a particular planet or solar system does not mean the end of the human race. There are numerous other stars and planets in the universe. With advances in science, human beings will build inter-planetary rockets and move to other planets. What is a dream today will become a reality tomorrow. The inherent desires of individuals and the collective body will finally take a concrete shape..... Some people argue that a day will come when due to the constant radiation of heat and light, nothing will be left to maintain the temperature of the entire universe and this may lead to the thermal death of the universe. Therefore, in the absence of external heat, the universe may cease to exist, and humanity will also perish.

"However, this cannot happen. There will be no thermal death of the universe. The solidification of the stars and planets will lead to jadasphota, which will release tremendous heat and energy, and new galaxies and stars will be formed as a result. So there is no cause to fear. The earth may one day cease to exist, but humanity will not be destroyed. Human beings can be rest assured of their continued existence."

Baba thus gave a firm reassurance that in this way, the process of creation would continue eternally according to the divine urge of the Macrocosm and that there is no possibility of the thermal death of the universe ever occurring.

When Baba delivered his discourse on the "Expansion of the Microcosm" in January 1957, knowledge about cosmology was in its infancy. Astronomers discovered only recently that quasars radiate tremendous energy from black holes. This re-ionizes the hydrogen

atoms that are even outside the host galaxy's periphery. They are seeding the formation of new galaxies, stars, and other celestial bodies many thousands of light years away. Although the science of astronomy has made remarkable progress, astrophysicists today are still groping for answers to various puzzles, as they ponder over several hypotheses regarding the ultimate fate of black holes. In addition, the phenomenon of the release of massive amounts of energy from quasars, equivalent to several billions or trillions of suns, defies explanation and remains a mystery. In several of his discourses, Baba gave titbits of information relating to the extreme compression of matter and how it leads either to the formation of mind or to jadasphota. This information can help resolve some of the mysteries that have been puzzling physicists, microphysicists, and astrophysicists alike about black holes, supernova, neutron stars, pulsars, quasars, and various other baffling phenomena occurring in remote parts of the universe.

Not only were Baba's ideas extraordinary, but also the inconspicuous style in which he delivered such highly significant scientific information in essentially spiritual discourses was paradoxical. Many ideas of great scientific interest were interspersed in some of the DMC discourses. For example in the DMC discourse of January 1957 entitled "Expansion of Microcosm", when Baba discussed some of the secrets of creation, there was a gathering of about two hundred disciples. This gathering, which was held in the quarters of Acharya Kishun Singh of the Bihar Military Police, comprised of mostly village folk. These simple-minded devotees were only interested in seeing their guru and were less concerned with what he had to say. However, it is unlikely that even the few educated officials and students present understood the true import of his remarks on subjects relating to the abstruse aspects of astronomy and astrophysics. Sometimes the Margis would tell Baba that the subjects he dealt with were beyond their comprehension. Baba often remarked that his words would be better understood and accepted by future generations. On several occasions he reiterated that it would take at least two hundred years before human beings would be able to understand the true significance of many of the things he had said.

The Mysterious Microvita

In a number of informal discussions with Margis during Field Walks, Baba talked about the mysteries of creation. He remarked that it would not be possible for any branch of physical science to penetrate into spheres more subtle than the physical universe and that what is beyond the physical universe cannot be analysed in a science laboratory. It can only be understood in the mental laboratory, by developing one's intuition. Baba said that human beings would one day develop this ability to penetrate and understand these subtle realms. In a discourse in May 1983, he further commented, "That golden day is sure to come when a clear understanding of the intra-atomic world will be reached, when human intuition will realise that the essence of the sub-atomic world is pure Consciousness."

Rajendra Kumar Asthana, the younger brother of Virendra Kumar Asthana, was then the district magistrate of Fategarh in Uttar Pradesh. He had an intellectual disposition. On the 5th of October, 1965 Baba went to Fategarh to convene a DMC and stayed in his official residence. A question had been haunting Rajendra Kumar's mind for several years about which he wanted to seek clarification from Baba. One evening he accompanied Baba on his Field Walk. Finding a suitable opportunity, he asked, "Baba, in *Idea and Ideology* and in other discourses, when you explained about the formation of mind-stuff and jadasphota, you described the formation of mind as the culminating stage of the evolution of the physical world. However, you did not discuss the exact point where the evolution of the physical world started. You merely mentioned that from the bhavarloka or the Crude Mental Sphere of the Cosmic Mind, the creative process descends to the physical level with the formation of the ethereal factor. That is a bit vague. Can you kindly shed further light on the primordial stage of the creation of physical matter?"

"Rajendra, do you want to know about all the secrets of creation from me?"

"Baba, scientists all over the world are groping in the dark on this subject. Moreover, the particular stage of creation that you have hinted at touches the psychic world. So I don't think that the

scientists of today will ever understand anything about it, as their research is confined only to the physical plane.”

“But to discover it is the job of the scientists. Why should I say something about it? Let them find out.”

“Baba, you have explained how the mind is formed and about jadasphota without waiting for them to discover it. The scientists on their own would never have been able to discover some of the things that you have revealed. So kindly tell us about that primordial stage of matter where creation first descended from the psychic level to the physical plane.”

Baba smiled at his logic and said, “All right, I will talk about it sometime in the future. In a nutshell, I will say that since creation is a continuous flow, there is no clear distinction between the final phase of one stage and the beginning phase of the next stage. So the crudest stage of the psychic level of the Cosmic Mind, which is also the crudest part of bhavarloka, and the subtlest stage of the physical realm, which is the ethereal world, are indistinguishable. That stage is very subtle and to comprehend it fully would require a highly evolved and conceptually developed mind or the aid of very advanced scientific equipment.”

More than two decades later, on the 31st of December 1986, Baba delivered the groundbreaking Renaissance Universal discourse “Microvita, the Mysterious Emanation of the Cosmic Factor” during a DMC programme in Calcutta. The concept of microvita is an epochal idea that will one day revolutionize our understanding of all branches of science. Different types of microvita evolve at different stages of the Cosmic Cycle. Baba explained that one category of microvita comes into existence just between the stage of cosmic mind-stuff or ectoplasm and the electron, but they are neither mind-stuff nor electrons. Furthermore, they are far tinier than an electron. So this category of microvita can be considered as the tangential point between Bhavarloka, the crude mental sphere of the Cosmic Mind, and Bhurloka, the crudest stratum of the Cosmic Mind, where the creation descends from the psychic to the physical level. Scientists have long been searching for the primordial stage of the

physical universe. In this discourse Baba suggested that microvita is the fine line between the psychic and physical stages of creation, the incipient stage of the physical world.

Baba gave further hints about the wide-ranging research in the science of microvita that people in the future would conduct, which will unlock new information on the origin and evolution of the universe and life. Giving an insight into the far-reaching changes it would trigger in the landscape of scientific research, he said, "Billions of microvita produce a single carbon atom. Not only carbon atoms, but also all other kinds of atoms are created from microvita. Naturally, after gaining a greater understanding of the science of microvita, chemistry, biochemistry, and all related sciences will undergo a revolutionary change. A day is sure to come when an omega of mathematics will coincide with an omega of biochemistry. All formulae and scientific theories created up till now will have to be reformulated, redefined, and reclassified once the science of microvita develops."

After explaining the theoretical foundations of the concept of microvita, Baba conducted a series of amazing demonstrations on the various categories of microvita to elucidate their role and nature in the universe. Through these demonstrations, he showed how different categories of microvita effect fundamental changes, either positive or negative, in the physical, mental and spiritual strata of individuals and society.

Ascending Phase of Creation

As mentioned earlier, the creation of the unit mind-stuff from the extremely compressed solid matter signals a turnaround in the direction of the evolutionary process, with the end of the centrifugal phase and the commencement of the centripetal phase. From this point onwards, the creative flow changes direction with the beginning of the evolution of the animate world. Gradually the unit mind-stuff - which is nothing but transmuted Consciousness in the first place - begins to awaken from its dormant state and slowly evolves back towards the Supreme Consciousness, the starting point of creation. This is the centripetal phase of the creative process, wherein the crudest mind-stuff evolves through different stages back to its source.

Baba elaborated further, saying that the cycle of creation enters the centripetal phase with the creation of mind. Thereafter the Macrocosmic Nucleus starts to attract the newly created mind back towards itself through the influence of the introversive force, also known as Vidya Maya. It is this attraction of the Macrocosmic Nucleus that provides the initial impetus for the mind to evolve and facilitates its gradual evolutionary ascent towards the Supreme Consciousness.

When mind is created anywhere in the universe, it exists in a near-dormant state. It needs a physical body and a congenial environment to express itself and to evolve. The Cosmic Mind therefore creates a suitable environment in different celestial bodies of the universe to enable the evolution of life. It also provides each unit mind with an appropriate physical structure to facilitate its progress on the evolutionary ladder. The Macrocosmic Will controls the evolutionary process both in the inanimate world and the evolutionary journey of the animate world. By itself, the newly-created mind is unable to find a physical body and a congenial atmosphere for its continued evolution in this vast universe of innumerable celestial bodies. The Cosmic Mutative Force of the Creative Principle facilitates its evolution. It does so by providing it with a suitable biological structure in a congenial environment on one of the celestial bodies of the universe. A planet or other type of cosmic body must have a congenial environment to support life. Once a congenial environment exists in a planetary body to support life, Nature will provide the biological structures of living beings with the requisite amount of the five fundamental factors to enable life to develop in a variety of forms. To maintain the biological and psychological functions of the living structures, the static force of the Cosmic Creative Principle infuses in all animate structures an energy known as vital energy or *pranah* in Sanskrit. This vital energy, which is a composite of ten different energies, acts as the link between the body and the mind of all living creatures.

The newly created undeveloped mind begins its long evolutionary march by initially associating with the most undeveloped physical structure, the unicellular organism. Two types of evolution occur

simultaneously – the evolution of the physical structure or the body and the evolution of the mind. When the body dies, the mind does not perish along with it but instead transmigrates to another suitable physical structure and continues its evolutionary march. So the evolution of living beings is, in fact, bio-psychic in nature. The mind is not purely a biological phenomenon as is commonly understood by biologists. Here Baba made a clear distinction between biological evolution and mental evolution. From the viewpoint of the Cosmic Cycle, the very purpose of biological evolution is for Nature to provide a suitable structure to enable the mind to ascend the cosmic evolutionary ladder until it finally merges into the Supreme Consciousness.

As the organism evolves, its self-awareness gradually awakens. In simple cellular structures, the mind can only express itself in a few simple ways, such as through the instinct of survival. These basic urges enable the organism to protect itself from environmental pressures and to reproduce. It is because of their strong procreative proclivity that unicellular organisms are equipped with great reproductive ability. Both male and female reproductive functions are combined in one body. Similar is the case in the plant world.

At this early stage in the evolution of life, one important factor that facilitates the development of the body and mind is physical clash – the physical struggles that a living being undergoes in its efforts to survive and multiply.

Gradually, a unicellular organism evolves into a multi-cellular one, and as its physical structure increases in complexity, its mind also dilates. Consequently, these relatively more evolved beings gradually develop an increasing number of ways of expressing themselves.

The Macrocosmic Will

As evolution progresses in the animate world, the attraction of the Macrocosmic Nucleus plays an increasingly important role. In a discussion about the animate phase of creation, Baba clarified that this phase of evolution has two inter-related functions, both of which are anchored in the Macrocosmic Will. The first is the continued

expansion of the unit mind in terms of depth and complexity. The second is the guidance of the Cosmic Mind that enables the expansion of the unit minds. Thus, every facet in the evolution of the animate world occurs only with the approval of the Macrocosmic Will, which is eternally guiding the flow of creation.

Baba cited an example, saying, "One important factor that impacts the evolution of a species is its collective urge. However, the mere existence of a collective urge in a species is not a sufficient condition for the evolution of any species. For evolution to take place, it requires both the collective urge and more importantly the support of the Macrocosmic Will. Suppose a particular species living in water in a certain environment for centuries together develops a collective urge to fly. The creatures of that species will develop that ability only if the urge is sanctioned by the Macrocosmic Will. So the Macrocosmic Will actually controls the entire evolutionary process and guides it along a continuous path of progress."

In the early evolutionary stages of a living organism, its progress is extremely slow, though steady. It takes hundreds of millions of years for the physical structure and the mind to advance even a few steps along the evolutionary ladder. This is because at that stage the living organism is dominated by the static force of the Creative Principle, where the speed of the evolutionary movement is extremely slow. Secondly, the crudity of the mind is also at the maximum level, again due to the dominance of the static principle. As a result, the attraction the organism feels for the Macrocosmic Nucleus - an important determining factor in the evolutionary process - is negligible. Additionally, physical clash is minimal in the early stages of evolution. While the speed of evolution of an organism's mind and body is extremely slow at this stage, nevertheless, it is one of steady progress.

In multicellular organisms, the number of ways that the mind can express itself gradually increases due to the increasing complexity of the mind. Initially the creature's mental expressions tend to relate primarily to the preservation of its physical existence. Gradually, new forms of expression develop due to the physical clash

that occurs as the animal tries to satisfy its basic urges. Slowly new species evolve, and the dormant consciousness of these organisms starts to express itself in novel ways. As evolution progresses, living beings develop physical and mental traits that help them in their struggle to survive in hostile environmental conditions. The Macrocosmic Will also creates specialized behavioural patterns in the different living beings to help them survive the various environmental challenges they face and progress on their evolutionary journey. So the physical structure, and with it the mind, go on developing and becoming more and more complex. The pace of evolution gradually accelerates due to increasing physical clash and the ever-increasing attraction of the Macrocosmic Nucleus.

As higher mammals evolve, the static principle slowly loosens its grip on the process of evolution. It is then replaced by the mutative principle. At this stage, a new evolutionary force comes into play, that is, psychic clash. Basic intelligence and emotions start to develop in the minds of living beings. Together with increasing physical clash, the psychic clash that is created in their minds due to an increased sense of pain and pleasure leads to the evolution of advanced living beings with more developed minds. As the influence of the dynamic mutative principle over the mind increases, evolutionary progress picks up speed. Along with the basic instincts of hunger, sleep, fear, and procreation, more and more complex instincts and propensities develop which increase the number of ways the animal can express itself, thereby expanding its mental arena. After a long evolutionary march that started billions of years ago, human beings emerged on this planet about one million years back.

With the expansion of the psychic horizon, the ability to express continues increasing and finds its highest expression in human beings. Lower entities are slaves to matter; they can make adjustments within their environment, but cannot mould it. The degree of their physical awareness depends on the level of mental expansion they have attained. As their minds expand, their ability to understand that "I am the doer" also increases concomitantly, until gradually they become capable of manipulating the environment to

their advantage. An ape can throw a rock or the branch of a tree to protect itself, but a snake has to rely solely on its poison gland. In animals, the capacity to manipulate tools to their advantage also develops as their awareness expands.

With the augmentation of psychic ability, there is a corresponding reduction in physical strength. Human beings depend more on the power of the mind to protect themselves than on the body. Although tendencies acquired from earlier animal stages of development still play an important role in the life of human beings, the developed ego-consciousness or intellectual faculty finds greater expression in their behaviour. Moreover, only human beings have the power to think, discriminate, and introspect about the real nature of their existence.

Evolutionary Exceptions

After propounding the revolutionary concept of microvita, Baba gave several discourses in which he discussed different manifestations of these mysterious entities. In one of these discourses, delivered in February 1987, he described the functions of various types of microvita and said that they could be divided into three broad categories – subtle, medium, and crude. Baba also discussed several new theories about microvita. Among them, a significant revelation was that a particular category of crude microvita is instrumental in seeding life throughout the cosmos. Baba revealed that this particular type of microvita created a stir in a physical structure, activating the mechanism of life. Subsequently, enormous changes took place in the physical structure due to clash and cohesion and this led to the emergence of diverse life forms, from dinosaurs to mammals and finally intelligent human beings.

In the course of evolution, now and then certain “great exceptions” have occurred which have caused evolution to deviate from what had been the norm for hundreds of thousands or even millions of years. All of these great exceptions have created a turning point in the evolutionary journey. The Macrocosmic Nucleus has produced these exceptions by creating a stir in the physical structure of various living beings through the medium of certain types of

microvita. The changes created due to the influence of microvita have led to different evolutionary paths branching off from the mainstream. At different stages, microvita have also brought about a quantum leap in the evolutionary process. Baba commented about these great exceptions:

“In every sphere of life, in all motion and in all existence, one finds an exception to the rule. Since the days of the Australopithecine, a new kind of creature slowly evolved - The proto-ape or ape-man. At a certain stage of evolution, one of these creatures became an exception to the norm of the community, resulting in some evolving into chimpanzees, some into orangutans, some into gorillas, and some into human beings. All of these creatures are tailless. These diverse evolutionary branches occurred due to an exception somewhere along the path of evolution. In order to facilitate progress to higher levels, the tail had to disappear. This enabled the creature to stand erect, and an erect spinal column was a prerequisite for the rapid development of the brain. That is why the Macrocosmic Will caused the tail to disappear, and this was a great divergence from the norm of hundreds of millions of years of evolution.

“Various types of fish have evolved from a variety of the coelacanth, the primordial ancestor of fish. One would think that having all evolved from the same source, all fish would have the same appearance, but this is not the case. Due to the occurrence of many exceptions along the path of evolution, different species of fish have emerged. If such exceptions had not occurred, all the fish, all the chimpanzees, gorillas, etc. would have been of the same type. These exceptions were not accidental or random, but were caused by the Macrocosm to bring about certain specific changes in the process of evolution. Had there been no such exceptions, there would have been no major evolutionary changes.”

Baba discussed the different aspects of evolution in greater depth in an important discourse delivered in a DMC on the 1st of January 1989 during which he said, “In the past, many hundreds of millions of years ago, especially in the Cretaceous Age and the early part of the Tertiary Age, there were many gigantic animals and plants. Those huge trees and animals possessed very simple living cells

which lacked complexity; most of the cells were of only one type. There are some trees even now which have the same kind of simple cells, for example, ferns. These types of plants were multi-cellular, but their protozoic structure was uniform in character; the same was also the case with some other living beings. For example, there were gigantic animals like dinosaurs, brontosauruses, *kaktesiyas* (prehistoric reptiles), etc., which possessed very simple physical structures; the number of cells in their bodies was large but the intercellular variation was negligible.”

These simple cells were slowly transformed into more complex and specialized cells due to their gradual mental development as a result of an increase in physical and psychic clash. Baba also described other factors that facilitated the evolutionary process: “In the course of the evolution of the animate world, the psychic metamorphosis of those beings significantly influenced their biological changes. The reverse is also true - that biological transformations led to psychic changes in living beings. Thus, there is always a close interconnection between the changes in the physical and psychic structures of living beings.”

Baba elaborated further: “The Cosmic Mind has, on several occasions, brought about environmental and climatic changes on this planet to advance the evolution of living creatures. These environmental changes created major biological changes in them, which in turn accelerated their psychic development.

“The creatures underwent transformations according to changes in time and space, as well as changes in climatic conditions not only on this earth but also on other planets inhabited by living beings. Suddenly between one age and the next, an abnormal situation was created by an ice age, during which the temperature fell far below zero. During that ice age, the animals went into hibernation. Many became extinct and subsequently disappeared. Because of their intellectual deficiency, those gigantic creatures of the Cretaceous Age had to leave the world – they were vanquished in the struggle for existence.

“Those that survived underwent physical changes and also psycho-physical or bio-psychic changes. The complexity of their cells increased, their bodies gradually became smaller and eventually their mental power also increased. That is, the physical body first became very large. Then, after attaining a particular shape, the structure became complex. In the next phase, as they advanced along the path of evolution towards the Macrocosmic Nucleus, their physical bodies went on diminishing in size and their psychic bodies developed, so their intellect increased.”

Baba explained, “For example, huge reptiles, which came onto this earth hundreds of millions of years ago, gradually became lizards, crocodiles, alligators, and salamanders. Another huge creature that gradually decreased in size was the mammoth, which evolved into an elephant. However, it did not become an elephant overnight. There was an intermediate stage between the mammoth and the elephant. So big animals became extinct and smaller animals took their place.

“As evolution advanced, the body underwent significant changes. The greater the physical evolution, the more complex the physical structure became. The human structure is highly intricate because the body and mind are the vehicles for a wide range of thoughts, and ways of expressing them. A mind that wants to think many things requires a developed brain and cranium. Not only that, it also requires a nervous system capable of carrying a range of thought-waves from the brain to different parts of the body. And besides the nervous system, there have to be glands capable of interacting with the thought processes in a new way. The presence of glands implies the secretion of hormones, and that in turn produces a variety of chemical substances in the body. Thus, the human structure has become progressively more complex. Of all the structures of living beings on this planet, the human body is the most elaborate, as it has to act as the vehicle for a sophisticated mind which expresses many kinds of thoughts and emotions. This is how the equilibrium between biological structures and their psychic metamorphosis is maintained.”

The Advent of Human Beings

According to Baba, the arrival of human beings on this planet occurred due to an evolutionary exception triggered by microvita. Speaking about the great exceptions that created several turning points in the march of evolution, Baba said that one such exception triggered the evolution of human beings on this planet. "About a million years ago, the darkness of the evolutionary night began to fade when the first ape-like creature deserted his tree branch kingdom and shambled out into the light of the plain. He was guided by something he could not understand, something un-ape-like and impossible for his comrades to comprehend either. Somehow, somewhere in his seething body chemistry, something had changed. In his brain lay the seeds of humanity, and in his strangely bright eyes the dark shadow of a hidden dream.

"Time passed slowly. The new creatures developed and multiplied. The wonderful changes in their bodies and minds continued; their brains, nerves, and glandular systems grew in complexity and specialisation. New behaviour patterns evolved and after some time, emotions and feelings unknown and denied to all previous forms of life found a means of expression. The Dawn of Man was reached at that auspicious hour. The waves of thought generated by that first human expression vibrate even to this day in the unconscious mind of every human being. Every one of us carries within ourselves the hidden memory of that first sunrise, and what lies even beyond it in the darkness of antiquity. Through this primordial memory, which is part of our human heritage, we are intimately connected to all forms of life."

Cycle of Births

One Sunday in mid-1965, Baba gave a discourse about the interconnectedness of all forms of life, followed by an amazing demonstration which brought this cardinal truth alive. In his discourse he said that life is in a constant state of evolution, both physically and mentally. The physical body dies at the end of each life, and the mind then associates with another body. Every human being has passed

through this process of evolution, spanning thousands of millions of years. All the information about the innumerable lives that they have passed through is stored in their unconscious mind. By developing the ability to penetrate the unconscious mind, one can know about all these lives.

Baba then explained the different aspects of human evolution. At the end of his discourse, he turned to a new Margi, Yadunandan Mishra, who was from a village in East Champaran, Bihar, and instructed Dasharath, "Dasharath, look at this boy and say what he was five hundred million years ago."

Dasharath looked at him for a while and said, "Baba, I can see only water everywhere."

"Go deep into the water and tell us what you see."

"There is a small worm twisting and curling; he was that worm."

"Yes, he was a worm deep in the ocean. Now see what he was two hundred and fifty million years ago."

"I can see a big rock in front of me."

"There is a crevice in the rock. Go deep inside the crevice and tell us what you see there."

"Baba, I can see an insect inside that crevice in the rock and he was that insect."

Baba then asked Dasharath to see what Yadunandan had been a hundred and fifty million years ago.

"Baba, he was a huge type of chameleon."

Then Baba asked him to see what Yadunandan had been fifty million years ago.

Dasharath replied, "I can see a bird like a kite, eating a reptile. He was that kite."

"See what he was five million years ago."

"He was an animal resembling a cat. It is sitting on a rock."

"Come forward and see what he was one million years ago."

"I can see a primate, like a chimpanzee, hopping about on a tree."

"See his life one thousand years ago."

“He was a farmer, tilling a field.”

Baba then asked Yadunandan, “Do you understand how valuable your human life is? Have you been making proper use of it? Shall I disclose to everyone how you have been misusing this precious human life?” The youth bowed his head, and tears started trickling down his face.

Then Baba turned to everyone and said, “Now do you all understand the enormous struggle that a person has to undergo before attaining a human life? The value of a human life is beyond the comprehension of human beings. After several hundred million years of evolution, a living being gets a human body. When such a heavy price has been paid to get this human life, what should one do with it? Suppose a boy studies hard for about twenty years and becomes a highly skilled doctor. What should he do? Should he do menial work and clean the drain? Or should he do the work of a doctor, the most valuable job which he is capable of? A living being has to pass through innumerable lives and endure the sufferings of living as different creatures for several hundred million years before it attains a human form. That is why human life is extremely precious. Its value is immeasurable.

“What should be the proper utilization of such a precious life? Is it to be wasted in merely running after ephemeral pleasures or other meaningless pursuits? Should acquiring material wealth and worldly pleasures be the sole object of human life? Human beings have to fulfil their physical and psychic needs in order to survive, but this should not be the only aim of their lives. Human life is the penultimate stage in the march towards perfection; it is the most advanced stage in the long evolutionary journey towards the ultimate state of perfection, which is the Supreme Consciousness.

“The expressed universe has originated from the Macrocosmic Nucleus and one day it will again become one with the Macrocosmic Nucleus. Human beings should realise that human life is the result of hundreds of millions of years of evolution. Hence, they should celebrate their birth as a human being and make proper use of it.”

From Imperfection to Perfection

In this way, Baba constantly stressed the rarity of human life and the importance of utilizing it properly once it has been attained. In a discourse on the psychic order of the evolutionary process he declared, "All entities started from the Supreme Consciousness, and after passing through innumerable phases, through so many cycles of physical and psychic metamorphosis, they have attained their present position on the evolutionary scale. But they will still undergo many rounds of metamorphosis until they are finally one with the Supreme Consciousness, the starting point. So many changes need to take place – physical, mental, and spiritual. Animals that were undeveloped became developed animals, buffaloes, cows, monkeys, apes, australopithecine, gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans, primitive humans, modern civilized and highly-developed humans, and finally a human being who merges with the Supreme Consciousness. This is the psychic order of evolution."

The evolution from a unicellular organism to a human being is a gradual movement from imperfection to perfection. In the evolutionary ascent towards perfection, human beings occupy the highest position. Evolution reaches a turning point when a living being develops the capacity to think independently. The feeling of "I am the doer", and the ability to discriminate between right and wrong and between good and evil are some of the qualities unique to human beings. With the development of an independent ego, humans, unlike animals, have to bear the results of all their conscious actions. Animals lack an independent ego and are therefore not responsible for their actions. Due to their developed ego, humans are the masters of their evolutionary fate and have to steer their own course to the culminating point of the centripetal phase of evolution, the Macrocosmic Nucleus. Their actions can propel them either forward towards that supreme goal or backwards, even back into the depths of darkness that they were once in during the early stages of evolution.

The actions of a human being will determine whether their next life will be that of a more developed human being or whether they will degenerate to the stage of a lower living being. Just as *jadasphota* reverses the centrifugal process of evolution, negative

human actions can lead to a reversal in the centripetal process, thus causing a regression to a lower form of life. In such a case, they may have to go through the painfully slow process of evolution all over again.

In the process of evolution, the Creative Principle gradually withdraws the bondage exerted by the static principle, and the mutative principle takes over. Then once the evolutionary process reaches the stage of the human being, the sentient principle gradually asserts its influence over the human mind. The higher qualities of the human mind, which make a human distinct from an animal, are due to the effects of the sentient force. Thus, in the centripetal phase, evolution progresses from the state of crudity to subtlety, a movement from imperfection to perfection. Evolution starts from the most undeveloped unicellular organism and eventually progresses to the highly evolved human being. This gradual process is on occasion catalyzed by microvita.

While describing the role of microvita in facilitating the evolution of different species of living beings, Baba declared that they not only caused periodic evolutionary jumps, but also facilitated several turning points in human civilisation. Such changes always lead to faster progress along the path of evolution. During a seminar class held in Calcutta in June 1990, Baba elaborated further on the functions of microvita. He said that human beings arrived on this planet about a million years ago and for the greater part of their existence, evolved very slowly. Then around 15,000 years ago, at the start of the Rig-Vedic period, there was a sudden transformation in the civilisation. This was caused by the influence of microvita, which not only created a stir in the physical structure of the human beings of that time, but also stimulated a new line of thinking among some of them. Baba further said that in a similar way, microvita have caused several watersheds in the history of human civilisation. In the future, microvita will continue to do so under the guidance of the Macrocosmic Will. Baba further clarified that through the application of various types of microvita, the Macrocosmic Nucleus can bring about any kind of progressive change in the psyche of individuals, as well as in the collective psychology of an entire society anywhere in

the universe. Baba pointed out that one such example was the unanticipated and abrupt rejection of communism all over Eastern Europe.

Baba constantly reminded everyone that the goal of human life was to move towards the supreme state of perfection. After obtaining a human body, the main purpose of life is to further accelerate one's evolution by making sincere efforts to transform one's mind into the Supreme Consciousness. This can be achieved by a scientific process which increases the influence of the sentient force to the maximum and reduces that of the static force to the minimum. This process is the sadhana known as yoga.

In this connection Baba clarified that the speed of the mutative force is significantly faster than that of the static force and that the speed of the sentient force is incomparably greater than that of the mutative force. By enhancing the influence of the sentient force in our minds and bodies through the various practices of yoga, spiritual aspirants can greatly accelerate the process of their evolution towards the Macrocosmic Nucleus.

The Macrocosmic Nucleus is the abode of bliss which is nothing but limitless happiness. Thus, through the process of evolution, as human beings draw closer to the Macrocosmic Nucleus, the innate desire for never-ending supreme happiness becomes the basic trait of their mind. It is this desire for infinite happiness that creates the thirst for limitlessness in every human mind. This urge for limitlessness is the reason why human yearning never ceases. This is why the human mind keeps hopping from one object of enjoyment to another in search of limitless happiness until it finally realises that real happiness does not exist in any of the material objects of enjoyment. The yearning for limitless happiness will not be satiated until the mind reaches the Macrocosmic Nucleus, the abode of supreme beatitude.

As the sentient influence on the minds of spiritual aspirants increases, they are drawn closer to the Macrocosmic Nucleus. In that lofty state, the divine attraction of the Macrocosm becomes irresistible and becomes the very *raison d'être* of the sadhaka. At the same time, this divine attraction awakens reciprocal feelings of love

and devotion for the Supreme in the aspirant. With the development of devotion, the influence of the sentient principle on the mind increases manifold, greatly accelerating the sadhaka's movement towards the Macrocosmic Nucleus. A stage eventually comes where the sadhaka becomes so close to the Macrocosmic Nucleus that there remains hardly any gap. In that state the sadhaka feels, "I am the infinite Supreme Consciousness that pervades everything. All of these creations are emanating from my mind, their existences are etched on my mental plate and they are all dissolving in me. I am that Brahma, eternal and unchanged." Thus, the aspirant experiences oneness within the diversity of the universe. Finally, the mind of the sadhaka merges in the Supreme Consciousness. In this way, the aspirant transcends the state of duality to reach the ultimate state of non-duality. Non-duality is the state wherefrom the entire panorama of creation originated. Once that coveted state is attained, the mind reaches its final goal and attains either liberation (*mukti*) or salvation (*moksha*), thus ending the process of hundreds of millions of years of evolution.

This is the culminating point of the long journey of a microcosm. It is also the end of the centripetal phase of the cycle of creation. Thus the starting point and the terminating point of the cycle of creation coincide in the Supreme Consciousness.

Baba commented about this state in the following words, "As soon as one's mental darkness is dispelled, the light of knowledge will dawn and one will see everything as pure effulgence. The entire universe will appear as an unbroken, infinite, radiant entity. There will be no difference between night and day, between real and unreal. Diversity will merge into singularity. All finite expressions will merge in the Macrocosmic Entity.

"This destiny is not just for individual salvation while society languishes in darkness. Humanity has been advancing collectively as a single entity and will keep advancing in the future as well. Gradually the glandular structure of human beings will undergo further development; the endocrine system will become more complex; the cranium will undergo changes in size, and so forth."

Moving Towards Collective Salvation

The evolution of over billions of years, which has finally culminated in the advent of human beings on this planet, will not terminate here. It will go on continuously as the flow of evolution advances ever closer to the Macrocosmic Nucleus. As the process of evolution accelerates and more and more developed human beings are born on earth, the people of the future will be vested with greater spiritual potential. To attain mukti or moksha the human beings of yore, due to their less developed minds, had to perform sadhana more rigorously than they do today. Compared with the society of olden times, human society today has significantly advanced mentally and physically and is still continuing its forward march. This evolutionary movement is continuing even today. Due to this collective evolution, the people of the future will attain mukti or moksha with far less effort than the people of today.

Baba assured everyone that a glorious spiritual future lay ahead not just for the entire human society but also for all living beings on earth. He concluded, "So, in this phase of the introversial movement, when the crude physicality is transmuted into the psychic phase of evolution, we can expect that the day is sure to come when the whole world will advance from the subtle psychic realm to cross the threshold of the still more subtle spiritual world. And that glorious day is not far off when the entire living world, dashing through the transitory phase of the psychic realm, will become spiritual."



CHAPTER 34

Samgacchadhvam – Moving Together

When Baba conducted classes on *Idea and Ideology*, several books of his DMC discourses were already in print. In those days tape recorders were not readily available, so Baba chose eight people to take notes from his discourses. Out of the eight, at least three had to attend every DMC and it was their duty to write down the speech in longhand. From these notes Acharya Haragovinda would put together a rough draft. During the lunch break in his office, Baba would summon Sushil Dhar, a Margi who worked in the workshop and who was one of Baba's official amanuenses, and ask him to read the draft aloud. Baba would then dictate the entire discourse afresh. This mode of recording Baba's discourses continued until 1960 when Pranay collected sufficient money to buy a tape recorder from Calcutta.

Baba always gave the dictations in Bengali. They spanned several days, as they were much more detailed than the original discourse. The dictations usually took place several months after the DMC. On several occasions Baba commented that he preferred the scriptures of Ananda Marga to be written in the Bengali language because of its inherent capacity to express intricate spiritual ideas in greater depth. There are several reasons why this was so: ninety three percent of Bengali words have their origin in Sanskrit, making it closer to Sanskrit than any other language. Of all the Indian languages, it has the largest vocabulary and, unlike the others, modern-day Bengali has very rarely distorted the meaning of words of Sanskrit origin. In addition, it does not contain many compound words where one part of the word is from Sanskrit and the other part is from another language. Due to the close link between Sanskrit and Bengali, it is much easier to translate new philosophical terms from Sanskrit into Bengali. Baba has enriched the Bengali language considerably by adding thousands of Sanskrit terms. What is worth noting is that, rather than speaking in the old, heavily sanskritized

literary Bengali, Baba gave his talks in the vernacular, and he introduced the new Sanskrit vocabulary in a way that could be easily understood by the ordinary Bengali listener.

While the common theme of the early Ananda Marga books was spirituality, each book had a different focus. The first book entitled *Ananda Marga Elementary Philosophy* published in early 1955 was an introduction to Ananda Marga philosophy and addressed some of the basic philosophical questions that have confounded past thinkers.

Baba's discourses during DMC were published under the title *Subhashita Samgraha*, which means a collection of enlightening, inspirational discourses. This series of books provided a modern-day explanation of different aspects of spiritual life and intuitional science. The first edition of the book was published in 1957. By mid-1959 several volumes of *Subhashita Samgraha* had been printed. They formed the main body of literature on Ananda Marga's spiritual philosophy and way of life. This series contains more than twenty five volumes.

Idea and Ideology is a philosophical treatise that expounds on the theory of creation in greater detail, discussing hitherto unknown concepts such as the layers of the mind and their functions, the process of sensory perception, and the creation of life, death and samskaras. In this book Baba explained several fundamental points of philosophy that had never been discussed by any of the six schools of Indian philosophy. He then went on to address a variety of questions and philosophical conundrums that these established philosophies did not explain, and rectified many of their inherent defects. He also gave a logical and scientific interpretation of several difficult metaphysical and spiritual subjects.

While the first nine chapters of the book dealt with metaphysical and spiritual topics, the last two chapters digressed from this theme to give an insight into Baba's social thought. In one of these final chapters he discussed *sadvipra* leadership, a novel concept of spiritual leaders that he had first mentioned in the book *Problems of the Day*. He defined *sadvipras* as follows: "Those spiritual revolutionaries who work to achieve progressive changes for human

elevation on a well-thought, pre-planned basis, whether in the physical, metaphysical or spiritual sphere, by adhering to the (moral) principles of yama-niyama, are sadvipras.”

He opined that in various phases of social evolution, different classes such as warriors, intellectuals or capitalists play a dominant role, which eventually leads to exploitation and the degeneration of the entire social fabric. Baba said that only sadvipras would have the outstanding qualities necessary to create an exploitation-free society. Sadvipras are not a social class but individuals who are universally respected due to their moral and spiritual qualities, their work for the welfare of society and their non-compromising stand against exploitation.

In the final chapter Baba discussed how a universal society should be established. He stated that true spirituality does not recognise any unnatural distinctions between human beings and stands for universal fraternity. All fissiparous tendencies and group or clan philosophies, which create the shackles of narrow-mindedness, are not in any way connected with spirituality and should be discouraged. He believed that only those ideas which lead to greater unity between people should be encouraged. All human beings have a common destiny - to attain the supreme beatitude. The path towards this common, cosmic destiny is the cosmic ideal. So the cosmic idea is a unifying force for human beings.

There will always be regional differences of traditions, customs, likes and dislikes. These differences are natural and should be encouraged for the sake of greater social cohesion and the development of indigenous communities. But under no circumstances should there be any compromise regarding the creation of a universal sentiment.

According to Baba, it is impossible to inspire people with a cosmic sentiment until some important physical problems are first resolved, and this will have to be done in a collective, humanitarian manner. He also said that some specific criteria would have to be fulfilled before a universal society could be established. These include a universally accepted philosophy of life, a common constitutional structure and penal code, as well as the availability of the minimum essentials of life for everyone.

Universally Accepted Philosophy of Life

A universally accepted philosophy of life must be based on the premise that the development of the human personality involves evolution in all three spheres – physical, mental, and spiritual. Baba said that since human longing is limitless, only spiritual development can fulfil people's limitless desires and that if they try to satisfy them through the acquisition of physical wealth, it will have disastrous consequences. First, the unbridled pursuit of material pleasure will ultimately end in frustration and also lead to one's moral downfall. Secondly, if people are given a free hand to acquire unlimited material wealth, it will lead to massive social disparities and the exploitation of the weak by the strong.

A philosophy based on spirituality should therefore be evolved to deal with the physical, psychological and socio-economic problems besetting society. It should be thoroughly rational and progressive in nature and deal with all three spheres of human development – spiritual, mental and physical. Of course, the details would vary according to the social conditions. However, it should not recognise any of the man-made barriers that have until now divided the human race into groups, clans and nations. It should be universal in character.

Same Constitutional Structure

In spite of various obstacles, the social blending of humanity is already in progress. A global constitutional structure is now required to cement the solidarity of the human race. In addition to local and federal governments, the formation of a world government is crucial to resolve the many interregional and intraregional issues. A world militia should be created for maintaining peace between countries and in future maintaining inter-planetary peace.

Common Penal Code

The creation of a common penal code based on cardinal human values is essential to the establishment of a global fraternity. Cardinal values emerge after one transcends the normal state of mind and briefly attains a link with the blissful, spiritual realm. Those who

desire to create a universal society should try to reduce the gap amongst cardinal, moral and human laws.

Crimes are actions forbidden by the law, but lawmakers everywhere are profoundly influenced by the traditions, customs, and attitudes of their local culture in their concepts of virtue and vice.

Our understanding of what constitutes a crime is thus related to the concept of virtue and vice in our society. From a universal standpoint, those actions that help people in their spiritual, mental and physical growth should be considered virtuous, while those which inhibit it should be regarded as a vice.

Minimum Requirements of Life

Accessibility to the minimum requirements of life is vital not only for achieving world brotherhood but also in the development of the human personality. Every human being has basic needs such as food, clothing, medical care, education and housing. Furthermore their availability must be guaranteed in order to give people the opportunity to utilize their energy for subtler pursuits. For a healthy society sufficient individual purchasing capacity will have to be created to enable the entire population to meet its needs.

While the basic requirements are the same for everyone, diversity is also the law of Nature. Special amenities should, therefore, be provided to people with special skills and intelligence to enable them to fully utilize their gifts for the benefit of society. It will be necessary to pay them higher wages as an incentive, while at the same time there should be a constant effort to reduce the gap between the highest and lowest income brackets. Constant efforts should also be made to increase the minimum standards of living to keep pace with technological and other advances. Endeavours to balance economic development should be encouraged to create a social environment that is conducive to the physical, mental and spiritual advancement of the people, which will in turn encourage them to develop a positive feeling for the cosmic ideal and global fraternity.

A socio-economic system based on the maximum utilization and rational distribution of resources would give people full liberty of

expression in the spiritual and mental spheres because spiritual and psychic wealth is unlimited. Hence, no matter how much a person possesses in these spheres, it will not hamper the progress of others. But the supply of physical goods and services is limited, so if a few people are allowed to acquire an unrestricted amount of physical wealth, there is every possibility that the vast majority of people will become have-nots, which will hamper not only their own development but also the development of a balanced society. In the physical sphere limits must therefore be placed on individuals' right to accumulate wealth to safeguard the all-round progress of the larger society. However, people's liberty must not be so restricted that it inhibits their spiritual, mental and physical growth.

Baba concluded the dictation of the chapter on cosmic brotherhood with the following lines: "Thus, the social philosophy of Ananda Marga advocates the development of the integrated personality of the individual and also the establishment of world fraternity, which will inculcate a cosmic sentiment in human psychology. The Marga advocates the progressive utilization of all the mundane and supra-mundane factors of the Cosmos. The society needs a stimulus to give it life, vigour and progress, and for this Ananda Marga advocates the Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT), which promotes the progressive utilization of all resources. Those who support this principle may be termed 'Proutists'."

That was the first time that Baba had mentioned the word PROUT, the acronym by which his social philosophy came to be known.

Soon after the completion of the dictation of *Idea and Ideology*, Baba instructed Pranay to print the book immediately. So during one of the Sunday gatherings at the end of July 1959, Pranay appealed to the Margis to assist with the printing costs. The following Sunday, Makhan arrived with a packet containing a bunch of currency notes and coins. He handed it to Pranay with the request to use the money to print the *Idea and Ideology* book. Pranay counted the money and found that it was a little more than a hundred rupees, which was more than half the amount required to print the book. Pranay expressed his surprise, "Where did you get so much money, Makhan?"

"I have saved this from my salary for nearly two years after sending home money every month for the family expenses. I had kept it in case any special need arises. What could be more special than printing Baba's book?"

Pranay returned the money saying, "Makhan, you need this money more than the organisation. I have asked the Margis for help and that help will be forthcoming after they get their next month's salary. Moreover, *Idea and Ideology* is in English and you can't read English. So why are you so eager to see that book published?"

"Dada, I am illiterate and I won't be able to read the book even if it is in Hindi. But I want others to read Baba's ideas."

Not convinced that a poor man like Makhan should sacrifice his entire savings, Pranay declined the donation. However, Makhan insisted on him accepting it. The information reached Chandranath's ears and he requested Pranay to accept Makhan's donation, which he was giving out of devotion for Baba. He assured Pranay that he would later reimburse Makhan for that amount.

Ananda Marga's first book in the English language was thus printed with the help of Makhan's humble donation. Later, on several occasions, Baba explained to the Margis how the Marga had been built with the great sacrifices of the Margis, and then as an example, he would quote Makhan's sacrifice in publishing the book, *Idea and Ideology*.

The Margis gradually began to realise that Baba was not just a spiritual guru in the traditional sense. They came to this conclusion after listening to his social thoughts about such topics as the rational distribution of wealth, the sadvipra leadership of society, cosmic brotherhood, and various other ideas that were recorded in the book *Problems of the Day*. Some of them wondered, "Are these ideas merely stray thoughts or the precursor to something bigger? Will Baba also create a programme to implement these wonderful ideas in society?"

Shashiranjan, a devoted disciple from Muzaffarpur who was also an important political figure in the ruling Congress Party, tried to

sound Baba out about this. Baba replied, “Shashiranjana, wait for some time. You will get the answer to your question.” Acharya Prithvisharan, an energetic youth and devoted Margi, had a similar query. Baba also requested him to wait and watch what the future would bring. Several other Margi youths speculated about the relevance of such wonderful spiritual and social ideas to the hunger and suffering they saw all around them. They wanted to see concrete plans to solve the multitude of social problems humanity was facing. To all those who expressed such feelings, Baba’s answer was always the same, “Wait and watch.”

In the middle of August that year, Sudhir, a college student from Motihari, came to Jamalpur for a few days. He was a very active Margi who was always bubbling with enthusiasm to learn more and more about Baba’s teachings. He had heard that during the *Idea and Ideology* classes Baba had given two discourses on important social topics. Like several others, he too was curious to know whether the ideas outlined in the book *Problems of the Day* and in occasional discussions with disciples were merely academic or would have an actual impact on society. He wanted clarification from Baba himself. On Sunday the 16th of August, just after Baba’s discourse, Sudhir found Baba alone in his room. Seizing the opportunity, he went in and prostrated before him. Baba looked up and asked, “Sudhir, what’s the matter? Something seems to be troubling you. What is it?”

Sudhir sat down and then voiced his question, “Baba, will these wonderful social ideas that you have talked about remain mere ideas or do you have a plan to implement them in society?”

Baba didn’t immediately reply. He paused for a short while and said, “All right, Sudhir, come with me for the Field Walk this evening.”

That evening after Baba crossed the footbridge across the railway line, he stopped and directed one of the accompanying Margis, “Go to the jagrti and fetch some paper, a pen, a candle, a chimney of a kerosene lamp and a matchbox, and then join us at the Tiger’s Grave.” With that he continued walking. When he reached the Tiger’s Grave, he instructed everyone from the B group to sit down

together with the Margis from the A group. Not long afterwards the Margi arrived with the items that Baba had requested. Without further ado Baba instructed Sudhir to take notes and started dictating.

“The principles of PROUT depend upon the following fundamental factors:

No individual should be allowed to accumulate any physical wealth without the clear permission or approval of the collective body.

There should be maximum utilization and rational distribution of all mundane, supramundane, and spiritual potentialities of the universe.

There should be maximum utilization of the physical, metaphysical, and spiritual potentialities of the unit and collective bodies of the human society.

There should be proper adjustment amongst these physical, metaphysical, mundane, supramundane, and spiritual utilizations.

The method of utilization should vary in accordance with changes in time, space, and person, and the utilization should be of progressive nature.

Hence ours is a Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT).”

After completing the dictation, Baba asked Sudhir to read out his notes and corrected some spelling mistakes. He then turned to a young Margi engineer and instructed him, “Vaidhyanath, leave immediately and take the night train to Bhagalpur. In the United Press in Bhagalpur preparations to print the book *Idea and Ideology* have been completed, and the printing will start tomorrow. So get there when the press opens in the morning and append this to the last chapter of the book entitled “Cosmic Brotherhood”.

Everyone was curious to know what it was. Unable to contain his curiosity, Sudhir asked, “Baba, what is PROUT?”

“This is the answer to the question you asked me in the jagrti. PROUT is the abbreviated form of the Progressive Utilization Theory, which is our social philosophy. These are the fundamental principles of a new social order which will be led by sadvipras.”

While returning from the Field Walk, Baba informed the Margis that the five principles of PROUT would eliminate all the imbalances in the world, and for the first time in history establish a balanced society where everyone would be able to progress physically, mentally and spiritually. He said that the all-round development of the people was essential for the creation of a true society. In spite of Baba's explanation, the Margis could not fathom how these five social principles would be able to effect a complete change in the world's social and economic landscape. This nagging thought haunted Sudhir in particular.

A month later a Dharma Maha Chakra was scheduled in Motihari where Sudhir was studying. He was eager to seek further clarification from Baba regarding this matter. Baba arrived there on the morning of the 14th of September and convened a meeting of students and youths. In his address he explained how crafty politicians were misguiding and exploiting their youthful energy by instilling defective sentiments in their minds without their realising it. "Students have tremendous vital energy. If it is not used for constructive activities, it is bound to become engaged in destructive ones. Vital energy cannot sit idle. When students do not have any constructive plans of their own, they are easily deluded by the illusions created by selfish opportunists and feel a misplaced sense of pride in allowing themselves to serve as their instruments.

"The immorality which permeates social life certainly hinders the natural growth of students. Hence spirited students should be zealous and ever-ready to wage war against economic injustice, immorality and corruption of whatever type, as they are the root cause of various kinds of sufferings. This is the proper way to utilize your vital energy.

"You should always remain alert and guard against the exploitation of your vital energy. You should carefully consider whether your actions are opposing immorality and corruption, or whether you are joining forces with a particular party. Only if you fight against immorality, then alone will that be the proper utilization of your vital energy."

Baba concluded by saying that students should only choose students as their leaders and that they should not allow any politician to misguide them into supporting any political party or narrow 'ism'.

He then urged them to form an association that would work for the benefit of students and asked them to suggest a name for it. Different names were put forward, but Baba did not approve of any of them. Finally he gave it the name Universal Proutist Students Federation, abbreviated as UPSF, and gave several Margi students responsibilities relating to it. Acharya Lalan, a research scholar in Tantra, was appointed as the Chief Secretary. Baba then informed them that the five fundamental principles of PROUT had been included in the newly published book entitled *Idea and Ideology*, and advised them to study it carefully and then formulate a plan detailing how to apply the principles in society.

The full implications of the word 'universal' in the name of the UPSF were beyond the comprehension of the margis attending the DMC, so later Baba explained the inner spirit of the term. "All living beings, all human beings, all microcosms come from the same Macrocosm, and finally they will all become one with the same Singular Macrocosm. So those who want to build a proper human society should always remember this supreme truth: that actually they are one - the one Supreme Entity expressing Itself through so many different corporeal structures. A society that imbibes this spirit alone can be called a society in the proper spirit of the term. And establishing such a society is the loftiest mission of all human beings. Those who do not want to recognise this fact or those who ignore this truth are actually doing immense harm to human society. Those who support casteism, racism, provincialism, parochialism, nationalism and even internationalism, are the enemies of the larger human society. So, as travellers on the spiritual path, you all should accept only one 'ism', and that is universalism. That alone can expand the mind to 360 degrees."

The next morning, Baba took a walk along the side of the lake in Motihari accompanied by Sudhir, Lalan, Guru Prasad, Indradev and some others. Everyone was eager to learn more about these new

ideas. That day Baba talked about capitalism. “One day people will have to accept the inevitable truth that the fate of everybody, not only in this world but also in the entire universe, is inseparably linked. I foresee a time when the people on this planet will be compelled to accept this immutable truth. If people are irrational and unable to realise this, circumstances will compel them to do so. With advances in technology and with the development of sophisticated communication systems, the globe will shrink and become smaller and smaller. Then people will realise that the growth of a collective spirit is inevitable and is necessary for their very survival.”

“Do you know the key for creating this collective spirit?” Baba asked the Margis. They kept silent, not knowing what to say.

On not getting a response, Baba continued, “Guarantee of the minimum requirements of life to one and all and the rational distribution of wealth. Suppose there are several members in a joint family. If a few of them wallow in luxury while the rest live in abject poverty, will there be a collective spirit in the family? Can you call that a joint family? For the redistribution of wealth, there has to be a suitable socio-economic philosophy, and that is PROUT. PROUT alone will be able to guarantee the minimum requirements to each and every human being without any kind of discrimination.”

Baba continued, “Marx was a good man. He had strong feelings of sympathy for suffering humanity, and out of a deep desire to do something to alleviate the suffering he saw around him, he developed his theory of class relations and social conflict. However, it was not practical. He did not understand the deeper implications of his theory when he propounded it. The theory of Marxism reflected his concern for the downtrodden sections of society, and his work influenced many people. Leaders like Lenin and Mao took up the task of materializing his ideas in society. They were not bad men, but in their efforts to materialize Marx’s theory they encountered many practical difficulties. When they realised that the theory was inherently defective, they became frustrated and committed many atrocities. Stalin was a demon who killed millions of people. These occurred because of the defects inherent in Marxism. In the future people everywhere will reject communism.”

Baba then stopped walking and declared in a firm tone, "PROUT will not have any such defects. Gradually people will realise that it is a comprehensive philosophy because it recognises the limitless nature of human longing and proposes spirituality as the means to satisfy those limitless desires. If people do not practice spirituality, they will try to satisfy their desires by acquiring unlimited wealth, and since physical wealth is limited, this will lead to the exploitation of other people."

As Baba spoke, a doubt arose in Lalan's mind. He thought that the mere elucidation of five principles could not possibly make for a comprehensive socio-economic theory or philosophy. Just as he was thinking this, Baba turned to him and said, "What I have given so far are just the most basic ideas. Gradually new concepts will be added and it will eventually develop into a comprehensive philosophy. I will develop it in stages. Then no one will be able to challenge PROUT ideologically. It will have answers to all the problems humanity is facing now and will face in the future."

The Margis then realised that the five fundamental principles of PROUT were a precursor to something much greater in the future.

The topic of the DMC discourse in Motihari held on the 15th was the Samgacchadvam mantra from the Rig Veda. The principles of PROUT reflected the spirit of this mantra. Baba explained that Samgacchadvam expressed the quintessence of the Marga's collective spirit. "Parama Purusha is the creator of everything, the Supreme Father of all living beings. The inner spirit of Samgacchadvam is to live like one family and use the entire material wealth of the universe as members of a joint family. That will be the ideal society and that alone makes the Creator happy. He will not be pleased by lavish rituals and offerings of ghee in a fire. However, if we offer the ghee to the needy, that will please Him immensely. Those who love the Supreme Creator should feel the hunger pangs of others and work tirelessly to alleviate their sufferings."

He concluded with the following words, "You are social beings. You cannot live in isolation from others. When you feel thirsty, you can't make a spade, dig a well, and draw water all by yourself. One

person will make the spade; another will add the wooden handle, and yet another will dig the well. That is how we work together. That is the way we live. In all spheres of human existence, in the aesthetic sphere as well, human beings should live collectively. You should live in harmony. You should dance together to the same music. You should move together in one psychic flow. Together you should fight against your common enemies. Together you should face all problems, both mundane and supramundane. In a word, your lives should reflect the spirit of harmonious, collective living as prescribed by the Vedic mantra Samgacchadhvam.”

When Baba began to introduce his social thinking through his discourses, it became increasingly clear to the Margis that he was quite different from traditional gurus. First, the philosophy he was propounding was substantially different from conventional religious teachings. It was a blend of progressive social thought and rational spiritual theory supported by a scientific system of sadhana. What set Baba apart was his unique ability to bring his teachings to life through practical demonstrations. The Margis were also deeply impressed by his uncompromising stand against all kinds of dogma including the traditional rituals of religion, the caste system, and idol worship. A third special feature of Baba’s teachings was his contention that a sadhaka should always maintain adjustment with the objective world as one advances along the path of spirituality. He repeatedly reminded the Margis that it was wrong to focus only on one’s own spiritual elevation and neglect society. Human existence has two aspects, the inner subjective world and the external objective world, and one should maintain a balance between the two. A sadhaka should consider his own welfare and that of humankind and all other living beings.

Discourses on PROUT

A month after returning from Motihari, on the 17th October, Baba convened the first conference of the Proutists. Every evening for six days he gave discourses on social topics that were later compiled into the first book on PROUT. This small book proved to be one of the most revolutionary writings of Baba. It was the first time in

India's spiritual history spanning seven thousand years that a spiritual guru had given practical policies and programmes for the material welfare of society. Through these classes, Baba defined the position of PROUT on several contemporary issues.

In his first discourse on the 17th of October he discussed the oneness of all beings, explaining that all are manifestations of the Cosmic Mind. He then elaborated on the concept of the cosmic family and described the values on which the cosmic family is based. The most important point discussed was that all the physical wealth of the entire universe is for the proper utilization of all the inhabitants of the cosmos. Discussing the psychology behind capitalism Baba said that it was rooted in the human desire for endless pleasure and that unless this desire is diverted towards intellectual, artistic and spiritual pursuits, it cannot be restrained. The primary responsibility of PROUT is to deliver basic justice in the daily lives of the common people.

He further suggested that all "isms" such as casteism, provincialism and nationalism are the expressions of a single disease – a narrow, selfish mindset. He proposed the adoption of universalism to overcome such narrow sentiments.

In the second discourse Baba compared nationalism and universalism, stating that the cultures of all the different countries around the world are fundamentally the same, as they are just different expressions of basic human psychology which is similar everywhere. This singular human culture takes myriad forms depending on the local environment.

He concluded with the following words:

"Our approach should be to adopt a constructive ideal, and we should wage a ceaseless and pactless struggle against all anti-human and antisocial factors. We are to fight capitalism and not the capitalists. We are to wipe out this 'ism' from the face of the earth because this 'ism' is paralysing humanity. Capitalists suffer from a sort of mental disease, and it is our foremost duty to cure them by diverting their physical thirst towards psychic and spiritual pursuits."

In his next discourse he exposed the illusions of the pseudo-socialists. Bluntly denouncing the socialism of capitalist controlled democracies as a sham, he exposed the weaknesses in the prevailing policy of industrialization. He considered this policy to be incapable of eradicating poverty due to the centralisation of industries. The concentration of industries in a few places inevitably leads to regional inequality and inter-regional exploitation. He concluded that without industrial decentralization, genuine freedom from the shackles of poverty is impossible.

It was at this point that he introduced for the first time the Three Tier Economic Order of PROUT. The key industries are in the first level. They are controlled by the provincial or local government and run on a “no-profit, no-loss basis.” The second and largest sector is the cooperative sector. In contrast to the communes of communism, they are not government controlled. Incentives are provided to workers, but they should not lead to an ever increasing gap between the maximum and minimum wages. Furthermore in a Proutist economic order the increasing mechanisation of the workplace will not cause unemployment, as the number of working hours will be steadily reduced.

Baba also deplored the dowry system and suggested a remedy – the economic empowerment of all women. He suggested a similar approach to solving the problem of prostitution.

With characteristic forthrightness, Baba embarked on his next discourse:

“In all walks of modern life, the dark shadows of immorality are fast taking a definite shape and hampering the progress of humanity. A very strong moral force is required to wipe out this filth of immorality. One cannot expect this moral force to come from any government functioning within a democratic structure. We expect it to arise from a non-political source. The government, be it fascist, imperialist, republican, a dictatorship, bureaucratic or democratic, is sure to become tyrannical if there is no moral force to check the capricious activities of the leaders or of the party in power. The immoral activities of the government will lead to a mass uprising.”

He then introduced the most revolutionary aspect of PROUT – the concept of the sadvipra or the spiritual revolutionary who fights for the all-round progress of society.

In a discussion about population growth, Baba made an astounding prediction about the future of human society:

“A time will come when human babies will be created in laboratories. Children will be sold in laboratories. Human progress will occur naturally. Once laboratory babes are produced, Nature will slowly snatch away the child-producing capacity of men and women. There will be no fathers and mothers. The whole social order will change. The reproductive urge of human beings will be channelised into higher and subtler pursuits. Those laboratory boys and girls will be more mentally and spiritually developed than the mortals of today.”

Finally in the sixth chapter he ends with a simple *cri de coeur* of all the human beings who gaze up at the vast night sky studded with stars and endless worlds: “We want a cosmic society, a cosmic tie of fraternity.”

The compilation of the notes from the classes was published as a book entitled *A Discussion*. The book was withdrawn from circulation after a few years on Baba’s instruction. Later, after some amendments, it was reprinted under the title *Discourses on PROUT*.

Acharya Dhruvadeva Narayan, a college lecturer from Balurghat in West Bengal, was curious to know why Baba made changes to the book *A Discussion*. Baba explained that “People kill snakes because they are afraid that their bite might be fatal. But why do people also destroy their eggs even though they cannot harm anyone? That is because an egg today will become a snake tomorrow. So when people see snake eggs, they destroy them then and there. The Marga is in its formative stage like an egg. Our revolutionary ideology will one day root out all forms of exploitation from society. If vested interests realise that the Ananda Marga ideology can become a threat to their narrow self-interest, they will try to uproot it before it develops deep roots. So we have to exercise extreme caution. These changes are that kind of precaution.”

Little Prabha Immortalized

Prabha was the eldest daughter of Acharya Vivekananda, the railway employee in Jamalpur. In 1956 at the age of fourteen years, she took initiation from Acharya Nityananda. From her childhood she had exhibited extraordinary spiritual qualities. Unlike other children, she would withdraw from worldly activities and remain introverted for hours, as if she was absorbed in deep contemplation.

After her initiation, she surprised everyone by doing very long meditation. Sometimes she would fall into samadhi while meditating. In the beginning her parents thought that she had fainted. But after she awoke from samadhi, the experiences of spiritual ecstasy that she described puzzled them. "How could a young girl of her age have such advanced spiritual experiences?" they wondered. They were afraid that she was abnormal in some way.

Vivekananda reported the matter to Baba, and Baba assured him that Prabha was normal and that whatever she said about her spiritual experiences was indeed true. She had been a highly evolved spiritualist in her previous life. Baba instructed Vivekananda to take special care of her and to provide everything she needed for sadhana. A few months later he instructed Vivekananda to teach her the second lesson of sadhana. Soon after that she fell into samadhi again. Gradually she went into samadhi more and more frequently.

In the jagrti immediately after Baba's darshan, she would fall into a trance. Baba treated her very affectionately and always called her 'my little Prabha'. In 1958 while the jagrti was being built, one day Pranay held a meeting with the Margis and requested them for financial help to complete the building. Without a second thought, Prabha immediately donated her gold earrings, the only jewellery she possessed. Her noble action inspired several other Margis to make special sacrifices for the construction of the jagrti building beyond their means. Later, when she was asked about her decision, she replied that building a jagrti was far more useful to the Marga than her wearing earrings to adorn herself.

Her behaviour was different from that of other girls her age. She always carried herself with great dignity like a highly evolved soul. Her

family members all felt that she was different from the others and treated her accordingly. Her extraordinary spiritual qualities endeared her to all of them and to the Margis. One day towards the end of 1958 she fell into samadhi while doing meditation and did not wake up again. After some time a doctor was summoned and he declared her dead. It came as a big shock to her family. Baba visited the house in the evening. Vivekananda's wife, Kausalya, was inconsolable. She fell at Baba's feet crying, "Baba, please take me also. I don't want to live."

Baba consoled her, "No Kausalya, you should not think like that. You have a lot of work to do. You have to take care of your other children. Prabha came to this world only for a very short time. In her past life she was a highly elevated saint and had very little sadhana left to do. She had no desire to remain in her physical body and so I have given her salvation. It is your great fortune that you could be the mother of such an elevated soul and be the indirect cause of her salvation." Baba's words brought great consolation to the bereaved parents.

Some years later Baba dedicated the book *A Discussion*, the first book on PROUT, to the memory of 'little Prabha' and through it immortalized her name.

Universal Being

After the formation of the Universal Proutist Student Federation (UPSF), the Margis started to talk about PROUT and UPSF to their colleagues, friends and relatives. Margi students established UPSF units in their colleges in Bihar, Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. They found that whenever they talked about UPSF to the general public, questions would invariably be raised about the significance of the word 'universal' in the name of the organisation. Similar questions were also raised during the propagation of the ideals of Renaissance Universal, the intellectual wing of Ananda Marga. Sometimes cynical remarks were made by members of the public regarding the use of the word 'universal' in the names of the subsidiary organisations of Ananda Marga.

This was because at that time people were unfamiliar with the concept of universalism. The organisations that they knew about were

mostly at the provincial, regional, or state level. At most, they were national level organisations. They thus found it rather odd that the Ananda Marga affiliated organisations had used the word ‘universal’ tagged to their names, particularly when the Marga was a mere fledgling organisation. When the Margis brought this matter to Baba’s notice, he simply remarked that a person following the spiritual path should have a universal outlook because human beings are basically universal in nature. While Baba’s reply was logical and to some extent satisfied the Margis, they still harboured lingering doubts over the use of the word ‘universal’ in the names of these organisations.

One Sunday during his darshan, Baba spoke at some length on a topic entitled “Dharma is Universal.” He declared, “Human longing everywhere is limitless. Limitless desire is a basic characteristic of every human being irrespective of their gender, caste, creed, colour, nationality or faith. It is a basic trait of human beings everywhere in the universe, whether on this planet or on any other planet of this vast universe. The spiritual path, which is the only means of quenching the thirst for limitlessness, is Dharma. So the Dharma of all human beings is the same everywhere in the universe. Seen in this perspective, every human being is essentially a universal being. Dharma means spirituality and spirituality is the expansion of the mind.

“While treading the path of expansion, one should maintain parallelism with one’s social outlook as well. Caste feeling, provincialism, nationalism, even internationalism all suffer from narrowness. Narrow feelings of any kind are an obstruction to the expansion of the mind. Caste sentiment is one of several kinds of narrow feelings that commonly afflict the people in our society. One should guard against its influence.”

Baba then stopped his discourse and asked a new Margi in the audience, “What’s your name?”

“My name is Shivilal Yadav, Baba.”

“What do you do?”

“I am a sub-inspector of Police.”

“Who is your acharya?”

“Acharya Kishun Singh.”

“At the time of initiation did your acharya not tell you that a sadhaka should not cling to any narrow feelings such as caste sentiment?”

“Yes, Baba, he told me.”

“Then why do you still suffer from the complex of caste feeling?”

Shivlal remained silent.

“You not only suffer from caste feeling. You also discriminate between people on the basis of their caste. While discharging your official duties, you favour people belonging to the Yadav caste. You are sometimes cruel to people belonging to the so-called Bhumihaar, Brahmin and Rajput castes. You seem to suffer from a pathological dislike for people of higher castes. Is it not true?”

Again Shivlal remained silent.

“When people belonging to higher castes come to complain against a person belonging to the Yadav community, you do not even entertain their complaint. Is it not so?”

Shivlal nodded in silent agreement.

“That is not the way an honest officer should discharge his duties. Don't you know that such mean thinking does you a lot of harm? Such an attitude causes the degeneration of your mind.”

Shivlal murmured that he would not repeat such an error.

“Sit down, close your eyes and do meditation,” ordered Baba.

As he started to meditate, Baba touched Shivlal's *trikuti* with his stick. “Now tell me what you feel?”

There was a sudden jerk in Shivlal's body. He replied, “Baba, I feel that my mind is changing rapidly.”

“Now tell me what caste you are? Are you a Yadav?”

Shivlal was silent for a moment. Then he answered, “No, Baba, I am beyond the scope of castes, nationality, or any other narrow feeling. I am a universal man.”

As he spoke, his face shone with an unusual lustre, signalling a profound, inner transformation.

“Now what do you feel?” Baba asked.

“I feel that I should do good to everyone, not only to human beings but to all living beings, as they are all a part of me.”

Baba then slowly looked at everyone present and asked, “Did you all understand? When the real spiritual awakening takes place and a person attains the height of spiritual realisation, the only sentiment that remains is a universal sentiment. You want only the good of everyone and of all living creatures. That is the highest feeling of humanism. You no longer have any narrow feeling of belonging to a particular caste or a province or nation. Your mind goes even beyond the feeling of internationalism. You become universal. Your heart deeply feels the pain of one and all. You should all understand that human beings are fundamentally universal beings and that sadhakas should never allow any kind of narrow feeling to affect their mind. Narrow sentiments are contrary to the path of spirituality.”

Baba then touched Shivalal’s shoulder with his stick. He slowly opened his eyes and looked at everyone in a slightly disoriented manner.

After the demonstration, Baba continued his discourse. “I told you earlier that Dharma is common to all human beings. The people on other planets have the same desire for limitlessness as those on this planet. That is why, despite physical variations, people are intrinsically the same everywhere. On the mental level the variation is somewhat less, and on the spiritual level there is very little variation. People everywhere in the universe are bound together by the thread of Dharma. You are on this planet in this life. It is possible that you will be reborn on another planet in your next life. Will your Dharma be different at that time?” As he said this Baba looked around and asked, “Why isn’t Dasharath here?”

“Baba, he has gone to Bhagalpur with Pranayda for some work,” replied Madhav, the ashram manager.

Baba then turned to Harisadhan, who was sitting in a corner, and ordered, "Harisadhan, come closer." Harisadhan came and sat in front of Baba's cot. Baba then took his stick and brought it close to Harisadhan's forehead. Then suddenly he pulled it back and put it down on the cot saying, "Some people here think that there is some power in the stick, and that this stick gave Shivalal the spiritual vision a short while ago. Does the cable through which electricity passes have any power of its own? The power comes from the place where it is generated, for example, from a generator. So a demonstration can be done even without the help of a physical medium."

Then Baba pointed at a well-dressed, fair-skinned gentleman and said in Bengali, "Harisadhan, look at him and see what he was a hundred and fifty years ago." The man was Sripati Rai, a fairly well-to-do person from a family of farmers from Ballia district in Uttar Pradesh. He was an inspector of Customs and Central Excise and Nagina's subordinate officer. On Nagina's suggestion, Sripati had taken initiation from Baba in November 1954.

Harisadhan stared at Sripati Rai for a while and said, "I am seeing a person who looks rather different from the people on earth. Some of his features appear quite unlike ours."

"Yes, he was from a planet of the star Vishaka in his past life. What was he doing?"

"Baba, he is sitting with his eyes closed. From his posture he appears to be meditating."

"Yes, that is true. He was a sadhaka in his past life too. That is why in this life from a very young age he had a desire for spirituality."

Turning to the gentleman, Baba asked, "Sripati, at what age did you start practising meditation?"

"I was about thirteen, Baba."

"Who taught you the process?"

"No one taught me. I learned the process of meditation from a mysterious source inside me."

“Now do you all understand? He was practising sadhana in his immediate past life on another planet. So in this life too, at a very early age, he received guidance from an unseen source residing inside him. Who is that unseen power within everyone?” asked Baba smiling.

Madhav replied, “Baba, it must be you.”

After a short pause Baba continued, “All of you should remember that not a penny of the physical wealth that you amass in this life will go with you to your next life. You will have to leave everything behind. What does go with you are the good and bad samskaras that you have acquired through your actions in this world. The physical skills that you acquire in this life may also be present to some degree in your next life.

“Suppose a person is a singer in this life. It may happen that he will have an inborn talent for singing in his next life as well. Regarding mental characteristics, if, for example, a person is very kind to everyone, there is a good chance that he will be born with the trait of generosity in his next life too. Similarly, if a person is very proficient in mathematics in this life, in his next life he may also have a flair for it. When people see someone who has a special inborn skill or talent, they call him or her a genius. In fact these are qualities that they inherited from their previous life. However, there is no guarantee that a person will inherit the skills of his past life because that depends on various other factors as well. But in the case of a sadhaka, it is certain that the person will have spiritual tendencies in his or her next life as well.

“Those who have the guidance of Sadguru in their lives are sure to get Sadguru in the next life as well. But here too it all depends on whether the sadhaka is reborn as a human being. Suppose due to one’s actions a sadhaka degenerates and does not get a human body in the next life, then in the next human birth, even if it occurs several lives later, the sadhaka will continue his spiritual life from the point he had reached in the previous human life. So spiritual wealth alone is like a permanent bank account. Physical wealth is transitory, lasting for one lifetime at the most.

See how foolish people are to run after physical wealth and even commit crimes to get it. The immoral actions that they perform to acquire it cause them to degenerate into lower forms of life. They may or may not carry their intellectual wealth with them into their next life. Only spiritual wealth is permanent. The reason for this is that Nature wants to assist everyone to evolve spiritually and become one with the Supreme Nucleus, Parama Purusha. That is the ultimate goal of the entire creation.

“In the case of Sripati, he was a sadhaka in his past life and had the guidance of the Sadguru. That is why early in this life he received internal guidance about sadhana and then came to the path of Ananda Marga. The true identity of human beings is that they are all universal beings. So the only real ‘ism’ that one should keep in one’s mind is ‘universalism’.”

Baba then turned to some students present and asked if they had found their answer regarding the significance of the word ‘universal’. Later he also added the word ‘universal’ to the names of several new Proutist organisations that he asked the Margis to establish.

This was the last spiritual demonstration where Harisadhan was the medium.

In the meantime Sripati Rai changed and earned great respect as an honest and hardworking public officer. He later resigned from his job and joined the monastic order of Ananda Marga where he was given the monastic name Shraddhananda.



CHAPTER 35

Let Suffering be Your Asset

While Baba was away in Motihari, a thief broke into the house through the back door that was not properly latched and decamped with a trunk containing Uma Devi's ornaments, which had been kept underneath the bed where she slept. The next morning it was found lying open on the ground outside the house with clothes strewn everywhere and the ornaments missing. Uma Devi was very distraught that all her jewelry was gone. She also felt responsible for what had happened as the trunk had been stolen from the room where she was sleeping, and worried about how she would explain her carelessness to Baba. She requested her mother-in-law, Abharani, to inform Baba about the theft and ask him the identity of the thief. She hoped that with the help of the high-ranking police officers who were his disciples, the stolen ornaments would be recovered.

When Baba returned from Motihari, Uma Devi served him dinner. Immediately after dinner Abharani informed him, "Bubu, the night after you left, a thief broke into the house." Baba did not make any comment and simply got up to wash his hands. Abharani followed him with Uma Devi a few steps behind. "The back door was not properly latched. The thief took off with a trunk that was under the bed," she added in an effort to elicit a response from her son. However, he expressed no interest in the theft. He finished washing and then wiped his face with the towel Uma Devi offered. Hoping for a reaction from her son, Abharani hesitantly added, "The trunk contained Uma's ornaments. In the morning we found it lying outside and all the ornaments were gone."

However, Baba did not react to this news either. He walked to the veranda of the house followed by the two ladies. This was not what Uma Devi had expected. She had thought that Baba would name the thief and assure her that the stolen goods would be immediately recovered. But he appeared to be the least bothered about the matter.

They waited expectantly near the door. Baba sat down on a chair, then turned to his mother and said, "Proper care should have been taken to latch all the doors and windows, particularly when there were no male members in the house. What is the use of lamenting after the event? Tell Kanai to file a report in the police station tomorrow." Baba gave neither any hint about the identity of the thief nor any assurance that the ornaments would be recovered, as they had hoped. The following morning Kanai filed a report in the police station.

The next day Abharani again indirectly brought up the topic of the theft, but Baba did not comment on it in any way. For another couple of days she indirectly alluded to the theft several times, but never asked him to find the stolen jewels. Seeing her son's complete lack of concern about the matter, she finally gave up hope of recovering the stolen ornaments and stopped talking to her son about it. The thief was not caught, and the ornaments were never recovered.

From his very early childhood Mother Abharani had been aware of the extraordinary abilities of her Bubu, but had never harboured any desire that he would use them to ease the family's difficulties. After the founding of Ananda Marga, news about the incredible experiences of Baba's disciples gradually began to reach her ears. Female disciples like Pratibha, who visited Baba's residence when he was out, reported to Abharani a variety of incidents which demonstrated her son's divine abilities. She was well aware that her son would never fail to fulfil any of her desires, but she never approached him with any worldly request.

The rest of the family displayed a similar stance. Even when they were in extreme difficulty, they never expected Baba to use his divine powers to alleviate their problems. Once while studying in college, Manas developed facial paralysis. The left side of his face was badly contorted. When treatment by local doctors did not yield any result, Baba took him to Calcutta. In an interview Manas later recalled how Baba had performed his responsibility as a dutiful brother. "Dada took me to Nilaratan Medical College Hospital in Calcutta. There was a huge crowd. He patiently waited in line to show me to the doctor. The doctor prescribed some medicine, which did not solve the problem. Dada knew that I wouldn't be cured by any

medicine. He had told our cousin Nankuda about it even before he took me to Calcutta. I understood that he took me there as part of his duty as a brother.

“I knew that dada could have cured me if he had wanted to. We had great regard for him. We were also aware of his supernatural powers. We knew that he would take care of everything we needed without us having to ask. So none of us, including our mother, ever asked him to do anything for us. Our family suffered many tragedies, such as our father’s untimely death that left the family in dire financial straits. My brother-in-law also passed away when his children were still very young. Dada and Kanaida gave a part of their meager salary to support the children. Then Bijilidi died in the prime of her youth. My mother accepted all these tragedies with equanimity. We also imbibed this attribute from her. So I also never asked dada to cure me. I knew that if he wanted he could cure me and there was no need for him to take me all the way from Jamalpur to the crowded Calcutta hospital and stand in a long line to consult the doctor.”

What Manas said was indeed true. In later years the Margis witnessed thousands of cases where Baba cured his disciples’ diseases, some of which were deadly.

Years later in 1964, Vireshvarananda, a new monastic disciple, once had the chance of talking to mother Abharani at Baba’s residence. He asked her what the most extraordinary thing was that she had seen in her son. She just smiled in reply. Vireshvarananda repeated the question and insisted on her answering. She said, “My son is extraordinary among you people. At home he behaves like a normal person. We also do not ask him to use his extraordinary powers for the benefit of the family. We want him to lead a normal life at home.”

“Thakurma, does that mean you have never seen anything extraordinary in him?” asked Vireshvarananda.

“Why not? I have seen him behave in an unusual manner many times right from his childhood. Even as a child, we all knew that he was extraordinary. To tell the truth, there was nothing that he did not know. He knew everything - even the language of the birds and

animals. Not only that, he would sometimes tell us what a particular animal or a bird was going to do. And immediately afterwards it would do exactly what he said it would do. He knew what we talked about or did when he was not at home and he would describe everything exactly as it happened. So we all knew that we could hide nothing from him. Whenever any of my children wanted to know something, I would tell them to ask Bubu because there was nothing he did not know. Is that all not extraordinary? But we have never asked him to use his exceptional powers to help us through any of the difficulties we have faced in life. He has also cheerfully put up with the challenges confronting our family. We have suffered several tragedies, but I have never asked my son to use his special powers to help us.

“He exhibits his powers among you disciples. Pratibha, Kausalya and others often tell us what he has done in your ashram. We don’t have any problem if he does not use his powers to help the family. We accept whatever he does, as he knows what is right and wrong.

“See, some time back my daughter-in-law’s ornaments were stolen. She hoped that my son would say who the thief was, as he knew everything. He has several high ranking police officers as his disciples. So with their help the stolen ornaments could have easily been recovered. But when I brought the theft to his notice, he just listened and remarked that we should have all been more careful. Due to pressure from my daughter-in-law, I raised the subject several times with my son. But he did not show any interest in it. I understood that he did not want to be bothered about it and that he had a reason for that. Is it not unusual that you have extraordinary powers and never use them for your own sake or to help your family?”

She paused for a while before continuing, “At home he is a very dutiful son and performs his duty to perfection. I can’t imagine a son more obedient than he, even at his age. Before going to your Marga functions even today, he asks my permission. I get severe pain in my legs due to age. Every night he massages my legs to relieve my pain. There has never been an occasion when he disobeyed my wishes. But I also don’t disturb him with any of our personal problems. My other children are also careful not to disturb him in any way with their problems.”

During one of the evening walks Vireshvarananda reported the feelings of Thakurma to Baba. "Baba, Thakurma said that you are very strict about not using your powers to help your worldly relatives, although you do it for the Margis. She and your other family members respect your wishes very much and never try to bother you with their problems."

On hearing this Baba smiled. "Yes, it is true that my mother is very understanding and never troubles me with her worldly desires. She has also trained the others to do the same. That shows the superior quality of a person."

Vireshvarananda continued, "She said that the only time she bothered you was when Margamata's ornaments were stolen. But she understood that for some reason you were not interested in recovering them, and they accepted your decision gracefully."

"She had developed a lot of fondness for the ornaments. So, in a way, the theft of the ornaments was for her good. That is why I did not do anything to recover them, although I knew who had stolen them and where they were kept," Baba replied.

While Baba remained indifferent to the theft of Uma Devi's ornaments, when the same thing happened to a disciple who was completely helpless and dependent upon him, he dealt with it in a totally different manner, using his omniscience and sending a mysterious messenger to help him.

Guarding Luggage

In the summer of 1959, a few months before the theft of Uma Devi's ornaments, Sukhdev Paswan, the Margi welfare officer posted in Ramnagar, was travelling by train. He had to change trains at Barauni Junction on the north side of the river Ganges. He reached Barauni late at night and had to wait until morning for the connecting train to Ramnagar. Since it was a very hot summer night, he removed all his clothes except his large-sized underwear and undershirt and kept them in his suitcase. He was exhausted from the journey and felt very sleepy. So he spread his towel on an empty bench on the station platform. Before he fell asleep he ideated upon Baba for a while and

said, "Baba I am very sleepy. I am leaving my luggage in your care. Please look after it." With a feeling of confidence that Baba would protect his luggage, he lay down to sleep.

When he woke up in the morning, he found that his suitcase was missing. He was left with only the undergarments he was wearing, without any money or even a train ticket. He wondered how on earth he was going to reach Ramnagar in that condition. In a fit of frustration he vented his anger at Baba. "Before I went to sleep I left my suitcase in your care. Now see what you have done. Did you also sleep? My entire luggage, including my money, ticket and clothes, are gone. How will I go back home in my underwear, without a single penny?" He put his hands on his head and sat there scolding Baba and worrying what to do.

Just then an elderly man came and tapped his shoulder asking, "Hey mister, why are you scolding your guru for the problem you created by your own carelessness? Run quickly to the bus stand nearby. You will find the person who has stolen your luggage." Sukhdev stared at the old man, wondering who he was and how he knew that his luggage had been stolen and that the thief was at the bus stand. He was still rather sleepy and was trying to come to terms with all these happenings. He was about to ask the stranger who he was, but before he could open his mouth the old man chided him loudly, "Why are you idling? Get up and run quickly. The thief is waiting to catch his bus. If you delay, he will be gone." With these words, the stranger walked away and disappeared into the thin crowd on the platform.

Sukhdev immediately asked for directions to the bus stand and then walked as fast as his legs could carry him. On his arrival he spotted someone carrying his suitcase. Hiding his face with the towel, he went up to the thief and pounced on his suitcase, shouting that the man was a thief who had stolen his luggage. Initially the thief put up a struggle to hold onto it and did not want to let it go. But seeing that a crowd was starting to gather around them enquiring what the matter was, he bolted, leaving Sukhdev's luggage behind. Sukhdev opened the suitcase and found everything intact, including the money in his purse and the train ticket. He was unable to find that stranger at the

station again although he tried. He considered the stranger to be a messenger sent by Baba.

The next time Sukhdev went to Jamalpur, during the course of his Sunday Darshan, Baba remarked, "Margis test me in various ways. Sometimes while they sleep carefree at night on the station platform, they want me to guard their luggage. But if I take their test, hardly anyone will pass." He then looked at Sukhdev who understood what Baba meant. When Baba got up at the end of the darshan, Sukhdev caught hold of his feet and said, "Baba, I am guilty of troubling you and should have been more careful with my luggage. Please pardon me, Baba, please pardon me." Baba lifted him up, patted his cheeks with great affection and with a sweet smile walked away.

Desire for Liberation Leads to Sadguru

Shivaji Trivedi, a classmate of Sudhir from Motihari, was one of those who came in contact with Baba during Baba's visit there. He had been searching for a spiritual path since his youth. His father practised yoga, and Shivaji too had a thirst for spirituality. During his college vacations he would go to different places in search of a genuine spiritual guru.

He learned Tantra sadhana from a guru in Varanasi and practised it for several months. However, he soon realised that these practices were Avidya Tantra and that it would bring him worldly powers but not spiritual progress. During his next vacation he visited Nepal in search of a guru, and came in contact with a Buddhist lama who taught him Buddhist Tantra. That too did not satisfy his intense spiritual yearning. Then, from a third saint from Allahabad he learned another kind of meditation, but even that could not quench his spiritual urge. His inability to find a genuine spiritual master left him feeling disheartened.

In the meanwhile he heard about Ananda Marga meditation from Acharya Sarju Prasad, whose son he was tutoring. But the acharya was unable to convince him about the effectiveness of Ananda Marga spiritual practices. On many occasions Sudhir, a fellow student in his class, also tried to convince him about Ananda Marga, but to no avail.

Finally, frustrated by his failure to find a proper guru, he went to an old Shiva temple beside the lake in Motihari one evening and sat in meditation with a firm resolve not to get up until he received divine guidance regarding his spiritual path. Several hours passed and still he did not receive an answer. So in a state of acute frustration, he decided to end his life if he did not get a divine response before dawn. He then continued meditating. Just before sunrise Shivaji fell into a kind of spiritual trance, and the vision of an unknown person's face appeared in his mind. The face was radiant and extremely attractive. He told Shivaji that he had been pursuing the wrong path all the while and asked him to follow the guidance of his friend Sudhir. After conveying this message, the face disappeared. Shivaji was certain that the person who had appeared in his meditation was a divine guide and felt that he should obey his instructions.

After sunrise, Shivaji went straight from the temple to meet his friend, Sudhir. He told him that he wanted to be initiated immediately. Sudhir was surprised at his sudden desire for initiation, as his previous attempts to convince Shivaji about the effectiveness of Ananda Marga meditation had failed. Since it was a Sunday, he took him to Acharya Sarju Prasad, who had also been trying in vain to convince Shivaji. Acharya Sarju wanted to know the reason for his sudden interest in Ananda Marga meditation. Without giving a detailed explanation, Shivaji merely said that he had received a divine call to be initiated.

After learning meditation, Shivaji practised it diligently, and from his experiences in meditation he realised that he had indeed found the right path. In September 1959, a few days after his initiation, he heard that the guru was coming to Motihari. So together with Sudhir and the other Margis, he went to the railway station to receive Baba.

When Baba alighted from the train, Shivaji was stunned. It was the same smiling face that he had seen in his meditation, who had directed him to follow Sudhir's advice. Suddenly his mind was overwhelmed by the realisation of Baba's divine nature, and he was transported into a world of ecstasy. He followed the joyous procession with the others, all the while holding the bonnet of Baba's

car. All along the way Shivaji remained in a state of ecstasy. It was only after the procession had reached Sarju's house where Baba was to stay that he became normal.

Mahaprabhu's Tantra Pitha

On the 16th of October 1959, a full moon day, Baba held DMC in Kirnahar, a fairly large village in the Birbhum district of West Bengal. This was the native village of Dr. Sachinandan. Baba came from Jamalpur to Ahamadpur by train, accompanied by Pranay, Kshitij and some others. Dr. Sachinandan went to Ahamadpur station with some Margis to receive Baba. There they all boarded the narrow gauge train to Kirnahar. A couple of kilometres before Kirnahar the train stopped, as some repairs were being made to the track ahead. Baba suggested to the Margis that instead of waiting in the train for the repairs to be completed, they should go for a walk. He alighted from the train and started to walk briskly through the fields, and the Margis followed. They wondered where Baba was going in such a remote area. Some became apprehensive that the track repairs would be completed and that the train would leave without them. After walking for about fifteen minutes Baba reached an isolated temple surrounded by huge trees. He informed them, "The name of this place is Phullora Tola. It is a powerful Tantra Pitha."

He then took the Margis to a cremation ground nearby. The entire area, including the temple and the cremation ground, was surrounded by thick vegetation. Even in the day time this desolate place, far from human habitation, had an eerie feeling to it. However, the Margis felt strangely serene there. "The cremation ground is called Kankalamalini Ghat," said Baba. "It is a very good place for Tantra sadhana." Then he pointed to a particular spot in the cremation ground and said, "This is the place where Chaitanya Mahaprabhu used to regularly meditate throughout the night. He was a great Tantra sadhaka. This fact was suppressed by his Vaishnava followers because Tantra sadhana was taught by Lord Shiva, and Shiva was anathema to the Vaishnavas. Mahaprabhu meditated in this area for over six years and achieved great spiritual heights. He developed intense divine love and could not bear to see people suffering. In the course of his practice, he realised that rigorous tantric meditation was simply not

possible for ordinary people. They just did not have the aptitude and stamina to perform the difficult practices. He felt a strong urge to do something to help them and pondered over how to do it. After meditating all night, a sudden intuition came to him, and the mantra "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare" flashed through his mind. He had a deep feeling that people should be inspired to sing this mantra and dance to its tunes and that it would develop divine love in them. It was then that he began to inspire everyone to do kirtan together in public."

The First Security Threat

While Baba was talking about Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Pranay began murmuring something to some of the Margis accompanying them. Baba noticed the distraction and said, "Pranay, tell them not to worry. The train will not leave without us," and then continued his discussion about the life of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Finally they returned to the train after more than an hour. As soon as they sat down, it started to move. A large number of Margis were waiting for Baba at Kirnahar station. Arrangements were made for DMC and for Baba to stay in the local government high school. In the afternoon he called some senior Margis and reminded them about how the performance of Kabigan had created a new awareness amongst the public in Amrah a couple of years earlier and asked them to hold one in Kirnahar too. He divided the Margis into two groups and taught one group to sing songs to explain the ideology of the Marga and told the other group to argue on behalf of the traditional beliefs and ridicule the Ananda Marga philosophy. Afterwards he asked both sides to compose more such songs for the Kabigan.

A public announcement was made that the Kabigan would be held that night. As part of the programme Baba gave a spiritual discourse at noon. Some youths from the local zamindar's (landlord) family tried to force their way into the school premises but were prevented from doing so. They saw this as an insult to their prestige. That evening as Baba was preparing to start his evening meditation, there was a loud explosion in his room. The Margis rushed inside and found the whole room full of smoke and an acrid smell of chemicals

used in firecrackers. Baba appeared completely calm and unruffled. He said that someone had thrown a mumphataka (a locally sold firecracker) through the window. After completing his meditation he went to deliver his evening discourse. There was great consternation among the Margis about this incident. On enquiry it became clear that it was the handiwork of the youths from the zamindar family who were upset because they were being prevented from entering the DMC area.

After dinner the villagers gathered in their hundreds when they heard the drums beating in the open ground nearby. By the time kabigan was over, the general public knew the main tenets of the Ananda Marga ideology and the defects and demerits of their traditional rituals. The event turned out to be a very memorable one and remained etched in the villagers' memories for a long time.

The next morning, the news of the previous night's explosion reached the senior family members of the zamindar. A group of people headed by Raja Chandra Sarkar, the head of the family, came to meet Baba and apologised for the behaviour of their insolent youths. After a short discussion they understood that Baba was a great scholar. Before departing they again expressed their deep embarrassment at the conduct of their family members, saying how pained they were that a great person like him, who was an honoured guest of the village, had been treated in this manner.

Baba decided to hold DMC on the morning of the 16th so that Margis coming from distant places with their families could leave during the daytime. For the benefit of the general public, loudspeakers were placed outside the DMC area so that they too could listen to Baba's discourses. Later Baba called a meeting of the senior Margis. In the wake of the attack by the zamindar youth, the Margis felt the need to create a security wing of the Marga.

When Baba left Kirnagar early in the morning of the 17th, many Margis came to see him off at the station. The station was small with hardly any shelter. As they waited for the train, they saw dark clouds approaching and thought they would all be drenched. Just then, Baba looked up at the sky and the rain came pouring down. But to the Margis' utter astonishment they saw that it was pouring all around

them, but not a drop fell on the station or the area around it. None of them got wet. They considered this strange phenomenon to be Baba's grace and that he had protected them from the rain.

Being a small station with a narrow gauge line, Kirnahar had no platform in those days. The level of the compartment was several feet above the ground. In his hurry, Sachinandan forgot to bring a stool to help Baba climb onto the train. So when the train arrived, he decided to lift Baba onto it. He solicited the help of some well-built Margis. Two muscular villagers held Baba's thigh while Sachinandan held him above the stomach, and they all tried to lift him. To their surprise, as hard as they tried, they could not lift him even an inch off the ground. Sachinandan called two more villagers to assist. They held Baba below his knees while the others held him above his waist and together they tried to lift him. The result was the same. With a mischievous smile Baba asked, "What's the matter, Sachinandan? I am lean and thin, and yet I am so heavy that the five of you are unable to lift me?"

Sachinandan understood from experience that one of them must have thought that he could easily lift Baba and that by increasing his weight, Baba was removing his arrogance. Sachinandan asked everyone to stand back. He then mentally ideated on Baba and said, "Baba if you decide, you can become heavier than the entire universe. You also can become lighter than a feather if you so wish. So please do not test me." He then tried to lift Baba and found that he had become completely weightless. All by himself the frail Sachinandan effortlessly lifted Baba onto the train. Later, Kalindi, a hefty Margi from a village near Indas, admitted that he had been confident that even alone, he could easily lift Baba who was lightly built into the compartment.

On the way back, Baba said to Pranay, Kshitij and others, "In future there will be more attacks on Ananda Marga from different quarters. Many will feel threatened by our PROUT philosophy and our opposition to the caste system, religious dogmas and other social evils. Initially it will be difficult for even many right-thinking people to accept our revolutionary ideas. As our ideology spreads more and more, many vested interests who exploit society and benefit from the

defects in the social system will feel that we are a threat to them and will try to harm our Margis in order to suppress our movement. So we will have to organise a security force for our protection.”

After reaching Jamalpur on the 17th, Baba started giving a series of radical socio-economic discourses on PROUT to a select group of Margis who had been specially invited for the occasion. On the conclusion of the discourses, he said that with the propagation of these radical ideas of PROUT, threats to the security of the Marga would increase exponentially. He again reiterated the crucial need for a security wing of the Marga.

A month later at a DMC in Gorakhpur, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, Baba gave a clear idea of the security wing he intended to establish. He named it Vishva Shanti Sena (VSS) meaning Universal Army of Peace. Later he renamed it Volunteers Social Service. He also designed a uniform for them and gave details about the organisation's structure, chain of command, duties and functions. Nityananda was given the overall responsibility for this new department. In early December, a training session was organised in Bhagalpur for the VSS volunteers. The Margi members of the Bihar Military Police and some young Margi volunteers from the surrounding areas were given three days training by Ramakanta, the nephew of Chandranath.

Baba came to Nathnagar on the outskirts of Bhagalpur on the evening of the second day of the training. The next morning, shortly before sunrise, accompanied by Chandranath, he visited the parade ground where the training was taking place. As the sun rose, the newly-trained volunteers braved the biting chill of the early winter morning to march in front of Baba. From the dais he took their salute, then came down and inspected them from one end to the other. He followed the inspection with a short talk encouraging the volunteers to safeguard the righteous, protect the weak and serve the needy.

From 29th December, a five-day VSS camp was held in Ranchi, attended by several dozen enthusiastic Margi youths from different parts of Bihar. They followed a strict routine of spiritual, mental and physical training prescribed by Baba. In addition to the collective meditation sessions and classes on ideology, the camp was enlivened

by regular physical training sessions. Several additional rules for holding camps and for the VSS organisation were formulated at this time.

On the 29th morning Baba, who had been in Ranchi for a DMC, visited the camp, and after reviewing the parade delivered a short talk which was long remembered by the participants for the valour and triumphant spirit it infused in them. Baba then left for Jamalpur in Akhori's car and on the way stopped for lunch at the home of Rambahadur, the deputy superintendent of police in Barhi. While he was there, Baba inspired Rambahadur to visit the camp and give training to the cadres. As Baba was about to leave, Rambahadur approached him with a request, "Baba, as per your direction, I am leaving for Ranchi to attend the camp. Please bless them with a message."

Baba paused for a few moments and said, "All right, bring me a piece of paper."

Rambahadur ran to get some paper and Baba wrote a stirring message on it for the trainees:

"As a soldier you must not search for worldly pleasure or comfort. Be ready for all sorts of suffering. Let suffering be your asset. Suffering will help you in establishing the Sadvipra raj [order]. You must not argue, you must not think twice. You should do or die. I do not want to see the face of a defeated son in flesh and blood.

Yours affectionately,

Baba"

Although ostensibly the message was meant for the volunteers attending the VSS camp in Ranchi, it eventually became the inspiration and beacon for all VSS volunteers.



CHAPTER 36

History of Lord Buddha

“Harindra, for the last few days I have had an intense desire to see Baba, but I am not able to go to Jamalpur because I don’t have the money and I don’t want to ask anyone for help. Last night I dreamt that Baba came to Nathnagar,” said Shivakumar to his friend Harindra. Shivakumar was the nephew of Chandranath. He was studying for his MA degree and staying with Chandranath in Nathnagar. He and Harindra were cycling back from Bhagalpur one Sunday in mid-1959, when the discussion turned to Shivakumar’s dream of Baba.

Harindra replied, “Baba’s dreams are not ordinary ones. They have a special significance.”

“I do hope that my dream will come true. But I know it’s just wishful thinking.” There was a note of scepticism in his voice.

As they approached Chandranath’s house, they saw from a distance a large crowd standing in front of the house. As they came closer, they realised why the crowd was there. They looked at each other and smiled. Harindra said excitedly, “Shivakumar, it appears that your dream has come true. I think Baba has come because the people standing outside are all local Margis.”

They rushed inside, and after a quick wash entered Baba’s room and prostrated before him. As they got up Baba remarked, “Shivakumar, did I not tell you in your dream last night that I would be coming?”

Shivakumar’s eyes filled with tears as he realised that his Baba dream had not just been wishful thinking.

Who Is a Real Gentleman?

Madan Prasad Jaiswal from Bhagalpur was also a college student at around the same time as Shivakumar. His experience with Baba was quite different, however:

I was in college when I was initiated. At that time I was very immature. From the beginning, I felt a deep attraction to Baba and went to Jamalpur whenever I could find the time. One Sunday, as I was on my way to Bhagalpur, I broke my journey in Jamalpur. I was dressed very smartly and after getting off the train, I went to a betel shop outside the station. I caught sight of my appearance in a mirror hanging in one corner of the shop and was very impressed by my elegance. I put on my sunglasses and thought that if I also had a cigarette in my hand, I would appear even more elegant. For a fleeting moment I felt that it wouldn't be proper to buy a cigarette but immediately dismissed the thought, justifying my desire to buy one on the grounds that I was going to smoke only to look more stylish. I bought a cigarette and took a few puffs, then looked in the mirror to see how I looked. I was really impressed by my suave appearance. After that I threw the cigarette away and continued walking to the jagrti.

Along the way, a voice in my mind warned me, "You wanted to become a gentleman. You will know about it when you meet Baba."

Heeding this mental warning, I decided to wash my mouth and hands immediately on my arrival to remove any trace of the cigarette smell. However, when I reached the jagrti, there was a volunteer stationed at the gate and it was closed from the inside. It was quite unusual. The volunteer informed me that I would not be allowed into the jagrti premises. I argued with him but he said that the jagrti-in-charge had been instructed by Baba not to let me in.

It was only then that I realised that Baba was inside. I knew that he was angry with me for smoking and reproached myself for my foolishness. Not knowing what to do, I decided to take punishment by holding my ears and doing knee bends in front of the gate. As I did them, I mentally asked Baba to forgive me. Hardly had I done fifteen or twenty of them when someone came running from inside and told the volunteer to let me in. I went in immediately, had a quick wash, and sat down at the back of the room where Baba was giving a discourse. With a smile on his face he imitated how I had acted in front of the mirror a short while ago. Everyone roared with laughter.

Turning to me Baba asked, "What was the brand of that cigarette?"

Out of shame I kept quiet. Without waiting for a reply he said, "Yes, it was the new brand, Panama, wasn't it? With the sunglasses you looked like a real gentleman in the mirror, didn't you?"

I hung my head in remorse.

"When you were doing all these things, were you not aware that Baba was watching you?" Turning back to the audience he asked, "What makes a person a gentleman? Is it the dress and external appearance behind which so many defects and imperfections lie hidden?"

When everyone kept quiet, Baba continued, "A person is a real gentleman when there is no difference between his thoughts, words, and actions. Do you all understand?"

Everyone nodded in agreement. "One should never do anything for external show. One should not be gold-plated but should become real gold, 24-carat gold, both inside and outside. A person who does something just to show off can never be a real gentleman. A sadhaka should be a real gentleman in the true sense of the term."

For my immature mind, it was a big jolt as well as a good lesson, which I never forgot.

Field Walk in Kushinagar

Going on Field Walk with Baba provided the Margis with the opportunity to learn all sorts of new ideas. His talks would cover a whole range of subjects from history, geography, philosophy, linguistics, and astronomy to other intellectual topics, and he would delve deeply into different aspects of each subject, sometimes going back thousands of years. In addition to the fascinating knowledge he shared with them, the Margis enjoyed just watching Baba, captivated by his beautiful and charming expressions, fascinating gestures, and the ease with which he could shift from one topic to another.

While visiting Gorakhpur in November 1959, Baba went to Kushinagar for a Field Walk. Sachidananda, the local magistrate,

drove the car. On the way, Baba directed him to stop and asked if he knew the name of the place where they were. He replied in the negative. Baba then explained, "This place is called Sonavarsha. There are so many places in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar which have the name Sonavarsha, Sonanali, Sonabasha or Dharahara. All these places are associated with Buddha. Many places where Buddha delivered lectures came to be known as Sonavarsa. *Sona* means gold and *Varsha* means rain. So Sonavarsa literally means the place where gold rains. People considered Buddha's teachings to be as valuable as gold. There are also several rivulets that have the name Sonanali or Sonabasha because Buddha washed his feet there. Wherever he spent a night, the place was called Dharahara, meaning a place which has turned green. It was widely believed that the mere touch of Buddha made a place fertile and green. This indicates how much reverence and regard the common people had for him."

At Kushinagar Baba pointed out the exact location where Lord Buddha left his mortal frame. He then started talking about the final minutes of Buddha's life:

"In those days this area was full of sal trees¹. Buddha was very sick. He told Ananda that he would soon be leaving his body and asked him to arrange for a hammock to be made between two sal trees for him to lie on. Ananda had heard that some Brahmins in the surrounding areas, who were opposed to Buddha's teachings, were planning to attack them.

He expressed his concern about this to Buddha. Buddha replied that before the hostile people could mount an attack, his disciples from a nearby kingdom would come and protect them."

Saying this, Baba turned to Pratapaditya and asked, "Is there a place near Gorakhpur beginning with 'dom'?"

"Yes, Baba, there is a place called Domingarh."

¹ The botanical name of the sal tree is *shorea robusta*. It is also known as sakhua, shala or cannonball tree.

“Yes, that was the place where the ruler and the people were disciples of Buddha. They arrived just after Buddha passed away and gave his disciples protection.”

Baba then continued walking. A few steps later he stopped again and said, “Buddha practised austerities for a long time in Magadha in the areas of the Barabar, Brahmayoni and the Gradhrakut mountains. The severity of his austerities at one period brought him to the point of death. Sujata, who fed him rice pudding and saved his life at that moment, was his cousin and the wife of a certain feudal king of Magadha. There are very few people who struggled as hard as Buddha to realise God. Buddha had attained complete control over his body by establishing mastery of his *kurmanadi*. It is a subtle energy channel related to the vocal cord. Complete control over the *kurmanadi* gives one the power to remain completely still for long periods of time. Oxen have natural control over their *kurmanadi* and hence can remain as still as a statue for hours. Due to Buddha’s ability to control his *kurmanadi*, he was able to sit motionless in meditation for extended periods of time. Buddha had also attained perfect composure of mind and was unaffected by those who criticised his teachings.”

Then Baba related an anecdote illustrating Buddha’s qualities:

“Once, when Buddha was preaching in an area near Varanasi, a certain wealthy youth was particularly attracted to his teachings and became his disciple. This youth had a friend, a rich young merchant, who was engaged in antisocial activities. After his friend became a disciple of Buddha, this rich merchant was alone and started to miss his companion in crime. Gradually his frustration turned to anger against Buddha, as it was he who had changed his friend’s character and turned him into a disciplined disciple. Finally, unable to restrain himself, he went to the place where Buddha was preaching and started to abuse him. But Buddha did not react to any of his insults. He just kept smiling.

Finally, the boisterous young merchant became tired and said, ‘I have abused you so much, but I have not seen even the slightest

reaction from you. All my insults have gone in vain. You could have at least shown a little anger and protested strongly, and then I would have been satisfied.'

Buddha chuckled and said, 'Look. Let's say you want to give somebody a golden chain. If the person accepts the chain you offer, then to whom does it belong?'

The youth answered, 'It belongs to the person I gave it to.'

'Now, let us imagine that he does not accept the chain. He says, 'I am unwilling to accept your gift.' Then who does the chain belong to?'

The rich youth replied, 'The chain stays with me.'

Buddha smiled and said, 'While you were hurling your abuses just now, I was unwilling to accept them. So they remained with you, and you can keep them.'

'Good Lord! What will I do with so much hateful abuse?' responded the youth.

'You can wear it proudly as an ornament or use it for whatever purpose you like,' replied Buddha. 'I have nothing to say about it, no objections one way or the other.'

Impressed by Buddha's composure and wit, the abusive friend also became his disciple."

Then Baba led the Margis into the sanctum sanctorum of a nearby temple where there was a huge Buddha statue in a lying position. After coming out, Baba asked, "Do you all know why the Buddhist idols are generally large in size compared to Hindu idols? The Buddhists had the notion that if they wanted to project Buddha as a great personality, they should make his idols large. All these idols are symbols of what those who made them wanted to express. It also helps you to understand the development of the people's thinking in those days. You will find many idols of Buddha belonging to a later period where Vishnu is seated on the head of Buddha. During that period Buddhism was on the decline, and the Vaishnava religion was on the ascent. So the Vaishnava followers wanted to show that Vishnu was superior to Buddha."

Baba asked the Margis if they knew the name of the place where Buddha had attained enlightenment. Everyone said, "Bodhgaya."

"That is the name it got after Buddha. What was its original name?"

When no one could reply, Baba said, "The name of the place was Urubilva. It was a village on the bank of the river Niranjana, which is now locally known as Lilanjan. Another river, the Mohanika, joins the Niranjana near Urubilva, and from that point it is known as the Phalgu. In those days the Phalgu was very large, but 2000 years ago there was a huge earthquake which changed the topography of the area, and, as a result, the river Phalgu became much smaller. Another reason for this was the complete deforestation of the Phalgu Valley. The shriveled Phalgu River that we see today is very different from what it used to be. The hills of southern Magadha were once covered with dense forests. Beyond the mountains, which run from north to south, the river valleys were also thickly forested. Due to the dense forests, Magadha used to enjoy an abundance of rainfall and the rivers were full of water all twelve months of the year. There was also no problem of soil erosion, and because the trees held the water, there was little chance of severe flooding. These forests were very rich in medicinal herbs. Due to human greed and thoughtlessness, the forest got denuded, and today, it is difficult to imagine how lush and green Magadha once was."

Sachidananda asked, "Baba, is the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya the one under which Buddha got enlightenment?"

"No. Several centuries later Shashanka, the Hindu King of Bengal, cut down the tree. He was a fervent Shaivite (follower of the Shiva cult) and intensely disliked the atheism of Buddhism. He not only cut down the original Bodhi tree and dug up its roots, but also poured honey into the hole where the tree had been. The ants that ate the honey also ate any remaining roots, thus precluding any chance of it growing back. Prior to this, Emperor Ashoka's son, Mahendra, had taken a branch from the original tree to Ceylon. That branch grew

into a second Bodhi tree, and a branch of that tree was later brought back to Bodh Gaya and planted. The present Bodhi tree has grown from that branch.”

Pradapaditya asked, “Did Buddha have a guru?”

“Yes, he did. Acharya Sanjaya who came from Nawada in Magadha was his guru. He was a teacher of Samkhya philosophy. So, some of Buddha’s ideas were also influenced by the Samkhya philosophy. It is generally believed that Buddha started preaching in Saranganath, which later became known as Sarnath, and initiated his first disciples there. But in actual fact, he gave his first initiations on the soil of Magadha – to Sariputta, the son of Rupasari, and Mahamoggallan Arhan, the son of Mahamoggali. In those days, Magadha society retained some matriarchal traditions, and children were known by the name of their mother, not their father.

“Similarly, Pataliputra was the son of Patali. He was a rich philanthropist who on the suggestion of Buddha, built the township of Pataliputra, now known as Patna, near the confluence of the Ganges and Sone rivers. The original name of Pataliputra was Kusumpur. It was destroyed in a massive flood, and a new city of Pataliputra was constructed in its place. Pataliputra was also destroyed repeatedly in severe floods, as the River Sone kept changing its course time and again.

“One notable feature of Buddha was that he preached in the local language of the people called Magadhi Prakrita. Later it came to be known as Pali. The word “pali” originated from the Tamil word ‘palli’, which means village. Pali means ‘rural’, ‘rustic’ or ‘unsophisticated’. It was the language spoken by the common people in the villages. Sanskrit was known only to the very learned people and they wanted Buddha to preach in Sanskrit. But he refused to oblige them and continued preaching in the language of the common folk. The first books on Buddhism were written in Magadhi Prakrta, that is, in the Pali language using the Brahmi script in vogue at that time.”

Baba then embarked on a lengthy discussion about the Pali language and made a comparative analysis of Pali and the other languages of Bihar as they were spoken during the time of Buddha.

The Margis were enthralled by Baba's illuminating discussion, which continued for almost an hour. He explained many obscure historical facts and described the languages and geography of the area during that period. Suddenly, he stopped walking and picked up a plant, saying, "This is a medicinal plant that is generally found in the forest. If the juice of the leaves is applied to a wound, it will heal very fast. The dacoits living in the jungle use it and so it is called *dhakhubutti*, which means herb used by dacoits."

Such was the nature of a Field Walk with Baba – always intellectually enriching. It was also very enjoyable to see how Baba would effortlessly move from one topic to another, giving fascinating tidbits of information from his vast ocean of knowledge. Sometimes, the topics he touched upon during a walk were totally unrelated, but the way in which he wove them together, as if they were part of a single tapestry, would leave his listeners awestruck.

From Gorakhpur, Baba went to Allahabad accompanied by Asthana, where, by special invitation from the university, he addressed the staff and students of the Department of Philosophy. In his lecture, he spoke about the relationship between the mind and vital energy, and how one could control the mind with the help of different breathing techniques. The audience was spellbound by the profundity of Baba's knowledge. It had great philosophical depth, yet was also very practical in nature and gave everyone, from the students to the senior lecturers and professors, a lot to reflect upon. Later, R.N. Kaul, the head of the department, remarked that Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar was an exceptional philosopher and scientist, and that he would one day be recognised as one of the greatest thinkers that India had ever produced. This was one of only two occasions where Baba addressed those who were not his disciples.

Punishment for Reformation

A few days after Baba's return from Allahabad, Sudhir and Shivji Trivedi accompanied him to the office. As they walked, out of a desire to be of service, Sudhir requested Baba to let him carry his tiffin box. When he took it from Baba, he noticed a swelling on Baba's right hand and asked him about it.

Baba replied, "Yesterday, a young Margi from a village of Champaran District came for PC. Although he was only in his early twenties, he had committed a number of crimes, including a murder. In order to remove his accumulated samskaras, I punished him very severely. First I beat him with a cane, but it broke. Then I continued beating him with my hand. That has caused the swelling."

"Baba, how is it possible for a person with such a criminal background to become your disciple?"

"Although the boy had committed many evil deeds, he repented his wicked ways. He used to constantly pray, 'God, please save me from my wicked ways. I am not mentally strong enough to change by myself. Lord, you alone can save me and no one else.' You see, anyone who truly repents for his misdeeds will be saved by the grace of God. Nobody is basically bad. Most of the time it is circumstances and the environment that lead people into bad ways."

Later when they went to the jagrti, the other Margis furnished them with the details of the young man's PC. A few minutes after he entered Baba's room, Baba had furiously dragged him out by his ear and hauled him in front of the Margis who were standing around outside the door. Baba was in an extremely fierce mood and told the shocked Margis, "See, this creature is lower than an animal. Even at such a young age he has committed many abominable crimes."

In the same severe tone he asked, "Should I hand him over to the police? If he is put on trial, he will be hanged for what he has done. What do you all say?"

There was a stunned silence in the room. Nobody dared to open their mouth. In that crushing silence, the young man started to wail loudly and pleaded, "Yes Baba, I have committed unpardonable crimes and that is why I have come to you. I deeply repent what I have done and want to become an ideal person. So kindly punish me in any way you wish and help me to reform myself. But please do not turn me over to the police."

When Baba heard his desperate pleas, Baba's mood suddenly changed. He released the young man's ear, caught hold of his hand

and took him back inside the room. When he finally emerged again, the young man was in tears. From that day on his life was transformed and he became an ideal Margi.

Baba later explained that in order to reform delinquents and social deviants, society would have to adopt a different approach from what was currently the international norm. He said that what was needed was correction and not punishment. He further commented that while jails were called correction centres, nothing was being done inside the jail to reform the criminals. On the contrary, the prisoners were treated in an absolutely inhuman manner. Most of those who spent time in jail turned into hardened criminals and posed a greater threat to society than before. However, if they had been provided with the healing touch of spirituality, even these criminals could have one day become great assets to society. Such is the power of spirituality.

Redemption of Disciples

Ashish Nath Chowdhary from Sundargarh in Orissa met Baba for the first time in December 1959. His initial feeling was one of repulsion for Baba's public exposure of the mistakes of the Margis. He decided to leave the place forthwith and never to have any further contact with the Marga. In his interview, he recalled his first experiences:

I was initiated in Tatanagar at the end of 1959 and saw Baba for the first time at the December DMC in Ranchi. Baba was staying at the house of Acharya Devichandji. During his General Darshan, Baba publicly pointed out the mistakes the Margis had committed. There was a new Margi present, who was a deputy superintendent of police. He was posted in the highway patrol. During the darshan Baba asked him, "Why have you been indulging in immoral activities? You have been coercing people to pay you bribes."

The police officer denied the charge.

Baba became furious and snarled, "You have been sinning and now you are denying it? Do you think I can't see what you have been doing? Just see the immoral actions that you have been committing."

Baba then pointed his finger at him and ordered him to tell everyone what he was seeing. At first he was ashamed to say anything. When he did not receive a response, Baba shouted at him, "Tell us who it is and what he is doing."

In a very low voice he murmured, "It is me."

"What are you doing and where?" thundered Baba.

"I am standing on the highway taking a bribe," said the officer, hanging his head in shame.

"Just now you said that you have done no wrong. Now look around and see if you are able to see me somewhere there."

He turned his head from side to side and said, "Yes, Baba."

"Speak loudly. Where am I and what am I doing?" Baba asked.

"You are standing on the parapet of the nearby bridge with your hands folded behind your back and you are watching me."

Then Baba asked him to look at another scene. He said, "Yes, Baba, I can see it."

"What can you see?"

"I am stashing something inside a pillow in my bedroom."

"What are you stashing?"

"Some money."

"Not some money. Say 'bribe money'. Look around and see where I am."

He turned his head and said, "Yes, Baba, I can see that you are watching me from the wall nearby where some photos are hanging."

"Now do you understand that nothing you do is hidden from Baba's eyes? Even where the sun's rays do not penetrate, these two eyes of mine are watching everything. Nothing happens in the entire universe that is hidden from these eyes."

The officer hung his head in shame. As punishment Baba instructed him to rub his nose on the floor. After he had done it,

Baba's mood suddenly changed. In a very affectionate tone he said, "You are my son. Forget your past and be a good person from now on. Do your sadhana sincerely and follow the principles of yama-niyama very strictly."

I was very upset to see Baba exposing people's mistakes publicly like this and kept thinking that I did not want my wrongdoings to be exposed in front of others. Just as I was thinking this, Baba asked me to stand up and enquired about the mistakes that I had committed. He even gave some hints about them. Although by then I had realised that he was all-knowing, the gravity of my mistakes and my lack of moral courage made me deny them. I hoped that by doing so, Baba would not pursue the matter.

Baba paused for a few moments and then said, "After doing so many sinful actions, now you are committing another mistake by denying them." He then related in detail all the mistakes I had committed – the nature of the mistake, when it occurred and where it took place. I was terribly embarrassed at the public disclosure of my sins. I realised that it would be better to accept my shortcomings than to deny them in order to avoid further disclosures. So I admitted my mistakes. Baba was furious with me. Seeing his angry mood, Devichandji asked me to take punishment by doing knee bends. I obeyed him, more to escape further humiliation at Baba's hands than out of remorse.

Deep inside, I was very hurt by the public disclosure of my mistakes. It was too much for me. I therefore decided to leave the place. After the darshan was over, I quietly left without informing anyone and with the idea of catching the last bus to Tatanagar. I also decided to stop doing sadhana and sever my association with Ananda Marga forever. However, when I reached the bus stand, I heard that the last bus to Tatanagar had been cancelled. Helpless, I went back to the place where the Margis were staying, took some food and went to sleep without telling anyone what had happened. I decided to leave early the next morning instead.

That night I repeatedly dreamt that someone I could not see was telling me not to leave. The next morning all the Margis were getting

ready to attend the darshan. I had no desire to go, but Acharya Chandradevji from Tatanagar compelled me to accompany him, and I obeyed unwillingly. When I reached Devichandji's place, Pranayda informed me that Baba wanted to see me. So I went to his room where he was taking his breakfast. As soon as I stepped inside, Baba said that if I was in a hurry to go back, I should have told him so and he would not have arranged for the last bus to Tatanagar to be cancelled.

He said, "I intentionally had it cancelled to force you to stay."

Then he asked me if I remembered the dream that I had the previous night in which someone kept telling me not to leave the next morning. Until that moment, I thought that he only knew about events that had happened in the past, so I was surprised that he also knew what was happening in my dreams and was even able to influence them. By then my faith in him was complete. By the time Baba left Ranchi there was a radical change in me. I was spiritually charged and felt light, as if I was floating on a wave of ecstasy.

If I had reacted that night and left, it would have been the end of my spiritual life. I had decided to stop doing sadhana and to never again visit the guru. By making me miss the bus, Baba compelled me to stay, and that changed the whole course of my life.

Ashish later became an acharya and did a tremendous amount of work for Ananda Marga.



Grace of the Tantric Guru

“Human beings have some benevolent qualities and some debasing ones as well. It is indispensable for spiritual life to increase the benevolent ones and contain the debasing ones,” pronounced Baba during his *darshan* one Sunday in mid-1959. “Through tantric practices one can control the debasing qualities of the mind and increase the benevolent influences. The practice of Tantra is a very efficient way to achieve this.”

Baba defined Tantra¹ thus: “The word ‘*Tan*’ means crudity and ‘*Tra*’ means expansion. So Tantra essentially means to liberate the mind from crudeness and guide it towards the Macrocosmic Nucleus through the process of mental expansion. Thus any practice that helps the mind to expand towards infinity is Tantra. In human beings two mutually opposing forces operate simultaneously. One is the introversive force known as *Vidya*, while the other is the extroversive force called *Avidya*. *Vidya* is the sentient force that assists in the development of benevolent qualities and helps the spiritual aspirant to move towards the supreme goal, while the extroversive force of *Avidya* increases the debasing qualities and leads one down the path of degeneration.

There is a constant clash between the introversive and extroversive forces in the life of every human being. When one tries to tame the debasing tendencies of mind through *sadhana*, the *Avidya*

¹ The scriptural definition of tantra is *Tam jadyat tarayet yastu sah tantrah parikiirttitah* (“Tantra is that which liberates a person from the bondages of staticity”). *Tam* is the acoustic root of staticity.

Tantra has another meaning as well. The Sanskrit root verb *tan* means “to expand”. So the practical process that leads to one’s expansion and consequent emancipation is called tantra. Thus *sadhana* and Tantra are inseparable.

force asserts itself more strongly before it can be subdued. The clash between Vidya and Avidya is more pronounced in a sadhaka. The practice of Tantra is the best way to bring the negative tendencies under control, as the mind expands towards the supreme spiritual goal. So the most important feature of Tantra is the spirit of struggle. Struggle is the essence of sadhana. Expansion in the spiritual arena is possible only by struggling against the extroversive pull of *Avidya Maya* and by developing *Vidya Maya*. The tantric practices which help to increase the influence of Vidya Maya are collectively known as Vidya Tantra.

“It is not possible to achieve anything in this material world or in the psychic world without a struggle. So whether in the crude sphere or in the subtle sphere, struggle is the essence of life. It is the duty of human beings to harness and control all crude forces or tendencies. Thus not only is Tantra an asset in the spiritual world, but even in the material and crude spheres of life one has no other recourse except to accept the tantric ideal of struggle against the forces that try to impede progress. Every sadhana where the goal is the attainment of the Supreme, irrespective of its religious affiliation, is definitely Tantra, for Tantra is not a religion; Tantra is simply the science of sadhana.

“Vidya Tantra has six different aspects. They are to awaken a benevolent intellect, to develop noble propensities, to create feelings of humility, to arouse a sense of Dharma, to instil a feeling of surrender to the Supreme and to ignite a desire to assist others spiritually by guiding their thoughts in a positive direction.”

In the middle of 1959, Baba delivered two important discourses on Tantra from the platform of Renaissance Universal. The first, entitled ‘Tantra and Indo-Aryan Civilisation’, was given on the 29th of May on the occasion of the DMC in Muzaffarpur. In this discourse, Baba revealed the crucial role Tantra played in the evolution of civilisation in India. The second discourse entitled ‘Tantra and its Effect on Society’ was delivered at the DMC in Bhagalpur in August of the same year. In it, he discussed, amongst several other things, the process of creating ideal leaders using the principles of Tantra. On

several subsequent occasions, Baba discussed different intricate aspects of Tantra that were hitherto unknown.

The different processes of sadhana that Baba taught were intended to develop Vidya and decrease the impact of Avidya on the mind. The more advanced the sadhana, the greater the struggle against the distracting tendencies of mind. In any practice where the conscious effort to tame the mind is absent, the element of struggle is also absent. Hence the progress attained by the sadhaka is minimal. The greater the struggle, the greater the spiritual height attained.

Ananda Marga sadhana is essentially a struggle against the force of Avidya Maya and a spirited effort to increase the influence of Vidya Maya and finally establish the sadhaka in the Supreme Consciousness. In addition to the six lessons of Ananda Marga meditation that Baba made available to everyone, he taught several higher practices of Tantra sadhana to selected disciples to help them to struggle even more intensely against their mental weaknesses.

Higher Tantric Practices

Jatashankar, a small-time trader from Madhepura, had only one objective in mind when he learned meditation from Acharya Natkat Kedar. Since his youth he had harboured a desire to gain occult powers and had long been searching for a guru who could teach him a tantric meditation that would bestow such powers. He thought that the sadhana of Ananda Marga would help him to fulfil his long cherished dream. However, even after practising sadhana sincerely for several months, he did not develop any occult powers, although he noticed deep internal changes in himself. He therefore decided to stop meditating. It was at that time that he heard that Baba would be holding a DMC in Arraha in Saharsa District within a few days. He decided to attend the DMC in the hope of being able to directly ask the guru for occult powers. He was a man of enormous stature with long flowing hair, a necklace of large *rudrakhsa* beads and a thick twisted moustache. His light orange attire and unpolished utterances added a touch of idiosyncrasy to his huge and fierce appearance.

What he saw in the DMC initially made him feel ill at ease. The Margis were singing devotional songs and dancing with great

devotional fervor. "This is the practice of the Vaeshnavas, people who seek the path of devotion" he thought to himself, "whereas the path that I am looking for is a method to acquire divine powers. It does not seem to be what I want. Did I come to the wrong place?" he wondered, his mind full of serious doubts. The next day he was scheduled to have Personal Contact with Baba. During Personal Contact he asked Baba if he could teach him higher tantric sadhana.

Baba responded, "You know that this special meditation has to be done alone in the cremation ground on the night of the new moon, the darkest night of the month. Will you not be afraid?"

Happy to have finally found someone willing to teach him higher Tantra sadhana, he replied, "No Baba, I will not be afraid."

"All right, take permission from your acharya and come to Jamalpur after two months." Baba then touched Jatashankar's right hand. As soon as Baba touched him, Jatashankar saw a powerful light emanate from Baba's forehead, and a strong spiritual current engulfed him, inundating him in waves of bliss such as he had never experienced in his entire life. Even after emerging from Baba's room, he was still overwhelmed by feelings of bliss. He found this ecstatic experience far more attractive than the charm of occult powers, and the desire to attain them began to recede from his mind. After the exceedingly blissful experience in his Personal Contact, he gave up the notion of acquiring occult powers and started to perform his sadhana with total sincerity. His desire to learn higher Tantra sadhana to advance his spiritual life intensified.

On the 5th of July, Jatashankar reached Jamalpur along with Acharya Harivallabh, a lawyer friend, who was also eager to learn higher tantric practices from Baba. His acharya, Natkat Kedar, who by chance happened to be in Jamalpur, refused to grant permission for Harivallabh to meet Baba, as Baba had only granted permission to Jatashankar to learn. Harivallabh was crestfallen because he had come there with high hopes. Jatashankar was indignant that the acharya had refused to grant Harivallabh permission to learn Tantra sadhana, so he decided to return home with his friend without meeting Baba. Both of them went to the train station and bought

tickets for their journey home. However, at the station they felt a powerful force urging them to meet Baba before leaving, so they decided to return to meet Baba.

In the evening they presented themselves at his residence in Rampur Colony just as Baba was leaving for his evening walk. Seeing them, Baba said with a gentle smile, "Jatashankar and Harivallabh, didn't you both buy tickets to go home? How is it that you are here?"

"Baba, perhaps your power of attraction has changed our mind."

"All right, come with me then."

Turning to Kedar, who was standing some distance away, Baba said, "Kedar, go back now. Your time will come soon."

Along the way, Jatashankar informed Baba why they had come.

Sitting on the Tiger's Grave, Baba explained the purpose of higher tantric meditation. "The human mind has different propensities, some of which are good, some bad and some neutral. Many of these qualities have been acquired by the mind as it passed through various stages of evolution before getting a human body. More than 7000 years ago, Lord Shiva taught a method of accelerating the evolution of the human mind that would help overcome mental weaknesses and speed up its spiritual progress through the practice of certain special spiritual techniques. He also taught several methods of developing the finer qualities of the mind and purifying all its expressions by directing them towards the Supreme Entity. Collectively, these practices are known as Tantra sadhana.

"Tantra has two principal branches, Vidya and Avidya. Lord Shiva formulated systems of both Vidya and Avidya Tantra. Vidya Tantra sublimates the mental propensities and brings the negative ones under control. It has several sub-branches. It also helps people to overcome some of the most debilitating weaknesses of their mind such as fear, hatred and shame, and develop tremendous moral courage and self-confidence. If a person is liberated from the clutches of the three weaknesses of fear, hatred and shame and their positive qualities increase, this will be of great benefit for the development of their personality.

“With this end in view, Lord Shiva invented a type of higher tantric sadhana called *kapalik* sadhana, which has multiple benefits.” Baba specified that this meditation had to be practised in an isolated cremation ground after midnight on the new moon night. “Practising this sadhana in a cremation ground on the darkest night of the month creates great fear, and this in turn generates an enormous amount of energy. Through a special tantric process, that energy is forthwith converted into spiritual energy, which gives tremendous momentum and accelerates a person’s progress towards the spiritual goal. So in this kind of Tantra sadhana, aspirants are made to directly confront their mental weaknesses and channelise them towards the spiritual goal.” In this manner Baba explained the various scientific and spiritual aspects of *kapalik* sadhana and clarified how it affects the different levels of the mind.

Sitting on the *tantra pitha* between the three palm trees, Baba first initiated Jatashankar and then Harivallabh into *kapalik* sadhana. He then asked both of them to sit on his lap. Initially they hesitated, as Jatashankar alone was more than twice the weight of Baba. However, he insisted, so both of them sat on his lap, and he touched all their chakras and blessed them. As Baba purified their chakras, they experienced indescribable bliss. Baba directed them to practice their *kapalik* sadhana every night for an initial period of one month. It is known as the ‘compulsory period’. The meditation had to be performed in any isolated and dark cremation ground, graveyard or forest between midnight and three in the morning. After the completion of the ‘compulsory period’, he instructed them to practice it once a month on the new moon night.

News of Jatashankar’s and Harivallabh’s initiation into higher Tantra sadhana spread quickly amongst the other disciples, sparking their interest. In the next few months Baba initiated many acharyas into *kapalik* sadhana. Two more who, like Jatashankar, were not acharyas, were also taught *kapalik* meditation. Baba personally selected the candidates for this practice. Occasionally a disciple would express the desire to learn *kapalik* sadhana, but Baba alone decided whether the person merited it or not.

Amulyaratan was one of those who learned kapalik sadhana. During the evening Field Walk following his initiation into this meditation he asked, "Baba, what is the actual meaning of kapalika? Can those who practice Avidya Tantra also be called kapalika?"

"It would be reasonable to think that those who practice Tantra sadhana using skulls are called kapalikas because the word kapalika has come from the word *kapala*, meaning skull. But in fact the meaning of kapalika is not that. *Ka* is the acoustic root or *bija* mantra representing the created cosmos and *palana* means to sustain. So the word kapalika essentially means those who undertake the service and protection of the entire created world as the mission of their life. The purpose of Avidya Tantra is the complete antithesis of kapalik sadhana. An avidya tantric uses the power he has gained from his tantric practices for negative purposes and not for the good of society."

"Baba what is the basic difference between the approach of Tantra and that of the Vedas?"

"Tantra teaches the practitioner to struggle against the debasing tendencies of his mind and helps him to conquer his mental weaknesses. In this respect Tantra differs from the Vedas. Tantra does not accept the teachings of the Vedas that human beings should move internally, and carefully avoid any association with their environment. Rather, Tantra suggests that spiritual aspirants should rid their minds of fear from the very beginning. Because of this, practitioners of Tantra become elevated and attain mastery over a hostile environment. The process of Tantra gradually develops a person's inherent positive qualities and eliminates his defects.

"What does a follower of the Vedas do? In contrast to the practitioners of Tantra, he surrenders to the forces of Nature. That is why you will see that the *Karma Kanda* of Veda is full of methods of worshipping the different forces of Nature. The Aryans worshipped the various forces of Nature due to fear of the unknown. In ancient time, people were afraid of the darkness of the night, as they lived in an environment that was infested with dangerous, wild animals. Danger was ever present. When the sun rose in the morning, it

brought them great relief and a sense of security. So they worshipped the sun.

“What does Tantra teach you? Tantra advises, ‘Jump into your environment without the least hesitation. Don’t be afraid. Go to the cremation or burial ground alone on the darkest night of the month and meditate. Fear will leave you step by step. Tomorrow you will not be as fearful as you are today. The day after you will be even less fearful, and ten days from now you will find that you are completely fearless.’ This is the process of Tantra sadhana. The very first night that a tantric goes to the burial ground, he is stricken with fear; he has gooseflesh all over his body. But when he returns home after completing his sadhana, his mind is much lighter than before. When he goes out for sadhana the next night, he is much less fearful. Thus he slowly and steadily overcomes fear. This is the practical nature of Tantra. Through various practices, the practitioner of Tantra will overcome all his mental weaknesses. Indeed Tantra encourages spiritual aspirants to try to rid their minds of all weaknesses from the very beginning.

“The Vedas maintain, however, that fear will gradually disappear from the mind through the performance of sadhana, but who knows when that auspicious moment will come? It is not desirable to wait indefinitely for that. Moreover, while following this path, something unexpected might happen that could be detrimental to individual and collective growth. Tantra is a subtle blend of internal sadhana, which is an ongoing psychic process, and physico-psychic sadhana, which places the aspirant in a situation where he or she is compelled to fight and conquer his or her weaknesses. In the Vedas, however, physico-psychic sadhana is totally absent; only psychic sadhana is practised, and this may even lead to difficulties. The spirit of struggle found in Tantra is completely lacking in the Vedas.”

Meditating in a lonely cremation ground on a new moon night, however, was not without its hazards. The kapalikas encountered many serious problems but at such times they invariably experienced Baba’s grace. Almost every kapalika had some experience or other to tell, a few of them quite remarkable, about how they were helped by

the grace of the guru when they found themselves in difficulty during kapalik sadhana. There were also instances of Baba deliberately creating challenging situations to remove ego from a disciple's mind.

Tiger Test

Prabhas Chandra was initiated into kapalik sadhana in early 1960 when he was just a college student in Muzaffarpur. A few weeks later Sakaldev, a lawyer, was also initiated into kapalik sadhana. Baba designated a cremation ground across the Buri Gandak River, which flowed through the town, for them to perform their kapalik sadhana. Both of them had an incredible experience to tell about its mysteries.

One new moon night in mid-1960, they went for their kapalik sadhana and took the last bus to the other side of the river. However, when they reached the river, they saw to their dismay that a heavy downpour had caused a flashflood that had submerged the low-lying bridge and made it impassable to traffic. The pitch darkness of the new moon night and the raging waters of the river made it impossible to even contemplate crossing the river on foot. They were in a dilemma and did not know what to do.

As they stood helplessly on the bank of the river, a flickering light suddenly appeared near the riverbank some distance away. They thought that maybe someone was there who could help them to cross the river, so they started walking towards the light. However, as they drew closer, they saw to their amazement that it was moving ahead slowly in a purposeful manner. When it reached a certain point on the bank of the river, it floated across. Initially the two were gripped with fear thinking that it was a ghost. However, they gradually overcame their fear and decided to follow it. The light floated across the river, slowly zigzagging across the raging waters. To their great surprise, they found that the water was only knee-deep where they crossed. The light guided them safely across through a shallow ford in the river and led them to a tree near the cremation ground, then disappeared. The two kapalikas sat down in different locations some distance from the tree and performed their meditation. They decided that after completing their practice, they would meet under the tree and look for a way to go back. When they returned to the tree and

pondered how to cross the river again, to their utter surprise the light reappeared and guided them safely back across the still-raging river. As soon as they reached the other side, it disappeared.

When Prabhas came to Jamalpur on his next visit, during the Field Walk he took the opportunity to ask Baba about the mysterious light that had helped them to cross the swollen river that new moon night. Baba explained, "It was a *devayoni*, a kind of luminous body which comes to the assistance of sadhakas in difficulty and encourages them in their sadhana. Devayonis were great spiritual aspirants in their earlier lives, but they meditated to fulfil certain desires other than the desire for Parama Purusa, the Supreme Entity. Due to that, after their demise they obtained a body comprising of only the ethereal, aerial and luminous factors. As such, they are not able to do sadhana because they do not have a normal human body with all five fundamental factors intact. Despite the lack of a physical body, they can still enjoy spiritual vibrations and are therefore attracted to places where people meditate or where strong spiritual vibrations are present." Baba referred to that incident in a discourse in 1981 and explained that the light the two kapalikas saw was a *siddha* devayoni and not a ghost, as ghosts do not exist.

He then asked, "Prabhas, weren't you initially afraid when you saw the luminous body, thinking that it was a ghost?" Prabhas tried to hide the truth and bragged, "No, Baba, I am not so weak that I would be afraid of a luminous body. For that matter, even if a tiger comes during kapalik sadhana, I will not be afraid."

Baba said with a smile, "Is that so? Very good. That is very courageous of you."

Coincidentally, that very evening was a new moon night. Prabhas and Lalan, another kapalika, went to Death Valley for kapalik sadhana. After asking Lalan to sit just at the entrance to Death Valley, Prabhas went farther inside the valley. Shortly afterwards, as he started his meditation, he heard the sound of an animal growling. It came closer and closer. Prabhas was terrified as it came very close and circled him at a distance of about ten metres. Although it was pitch dark, Prabhas could see the outline of a tiger. He was absolutely

petrified. At the time of kapalik initiation, Baba had told him that while doing this sadhana, the sadhaka would be protected from all harm by the power of the guru as long as he stayed within the area demarcated for the sadhana. However, in that terrifying situation, the guru's assurance was the last thing on his mind. He even forgot that only a few hours earlier he had bragged in front of Baba that he would not be afraid even if a tiger came during his kapalik sadhana. He froze in terror and screamed, "Baba, save me. Save me or else I will die." He continued screaming hysterically for several minutes, sure that the tiger would pounce on him at any moment. By then he was almost senseless. Shortly afterwards, when he regained his senses, he saw that the tiger was no longer there and that everything was still and quiet. He strained his ears but could no longer hear it growling. Somehow he managed to complete his sadhana and scampered back to the place where he had left Lalan. Lalan asked him why he had been screaming during his kapalik sadhana. Prabhas could not reply and only mumbled incoherently. He was too shocked and disoriented to say anything. He was not even sure if what he had heard was the growl of a real tiger or just a mental illusion created by Baba to test him.

The next morning when Baba arrived at the jagrti, Prabhas was standing at the entrance of the room with hands folded in the gesture of namaskar. Before entering, Baba went up to him and remarked with a gentle smile and a wink, "So my Prabhas is so courageous that he is not even afraid of a tiger. Is it not so, my boy?" He then entered the room.

The remorse of boasting about his valour sunk deeply into Prabhas. He realised that it had been foolish of him to brag before the guru and mentally apologised for his imprudent behaviour.

There is an age-old dictum warning the disciple: "If one does not obey the guru's wish or displays arrogance before the guru, one can fall into danger at any moment."

The implication of these words was felt by kapalikas more than anybody else, as going alone to meditate in a lonely and frightening cemetery or cremation ground in the darkness of the new moon night

was always fraught with danger. From experience they realised that it was the grace of the guru alone that saved them from harm during kapalik sadhana. In due course, every kapalika progressively developed an attitude of surrender to the guru.

Feeling the Guru's Presence

It was not infrequent for luminous bodies to assist kapalikas. Once, in the second half of 1960, Acharya Pashupati from Bhagalpur needed to cross the rain-fed Garua River a short distance from Bhagalpur in order to reach a cremation ground to perform his kapalik meditation. Although the river was not very deep, the current was strong, especially in the rainy season. He searched for about half an hour but couldn't find a place that was shallow enough for him to cross. He became exasperated and sat down on the sandy bank wondering what to do. All of a sudden, he saw a curious sight a short distance away. One area of the riverbank unexpectedly lit up. Intrigued, Pashupati went to investigate and was surprised to see the light moving across the river. He considered it to be help sent by Baba and followed it. To his relief, he found that water was less than knee-deep in the area the floating light crossed, and he was able to cross the river and return safely after performing his kapalik sadhana.

During his next visit to Jamalpur, Pashupati asked Baba about the mysterious light.

"There have been some anti-social elements in that area, and some murders have taken place there. Since some of our kapalikas usually go there for their midnight meditation, devayonis of the siddha category keep a watch over the area to protect them." Baba's explanation astonished Pashupati, as he had never heard of these mystical beings before.

Some kapalikas would occasionally report to Baba that they had seen a mysterious light hovering around them while they performed their sadhana. At first these strange sights scared some of them. Baba allayed their fears by explaining that the lights were siddha devayonis that were attracted by the spiritual vibration created by their sadhana.

Acharya Vaidyanath Jha of Dharmagatpur in Muzaffarpur District had a different type of experience during kapalik sadhana, which revealed another mysterious aspect of the guru. He described it during an interview:

Sometime after I became an acharya in the second half of 1960, I received an invitation from Jamalpur to come and learn kapalik sadhana. After teaching me the sadhana, Baba described the exact location in the cremation ground outside my village where I should practice it. Baba instructed me, "From your house go towards the west, then turn left and walk straight ahead till you come to the cremation ground. When you enter, you will see a large pipal tree. A few feet to the west, there is a berry tree and then a mango tree. Do your kapalik sadhana between the berry and mango trees as that is a spiritually vibrated place."

I had gone to the cremation ground several years before and did not remember seeing a berry or a mango tree at the location indicated by Baba, so I did not give much credence to Baba's words. Immediately, as if responding to my thoughts, Baba rebuked me, "Do you know better than me? Go and verify it."

I said, "Baba, in the tantric tradition, the guru accompanies the disciples to the cremation ground while they perform kapalik sadhana. How will I be able to go to such a frightening and dangerous place all alone?"

"What you say is the tradition of ordinary gurus. I don't need to physically go with you all. Your fear will disappear after a few visits to the cremation ground. It is caused by ignorance and preconceived notions about ghosts and spirits and it will vanish. Even then, if you feel the need, think of me and you will feel my presence then and there."

"Baba, that is merely an assurance," I replied with scepticism. "If two or more kapalikas need your help in different parts of the country at the same time, how will you be able to be present in both places?"

“That will not be a problem. I can reach a thousand different places or more simultaneously.”

“Isn’t that merely a claim? How is it possible to be at several places at the same time? I can’t believe it,” commented the habitual sceptic in me.

“All right, I will visit you in the cremation ground during your compulsory period. But there is a condition. You must start your meditation at exactly twelve midnight. If you are late by even one minute, you will not see me.”

After returning home, I went to the cremation ground to check if the berry and the mango trees were really there and was pleasantly surprised to see the two trees a few feet to the west of the pipal tree, exactly as Baba had indicated. Every night during the compulsory period I reached the cremation ground a few minutes before midnight. One night a very strange thing happened. Just as I was about to enter the cremation ground I heard a voice but could not see anyone. The voice asked me to stop. Then it asked me where I was going. Although I couldn’t see the owner of the voice, I replied that I was going to meditate. It tried to allure me with many occult powers, but I didn’t show any interest. The voice then tried by different ways and means to dissuade me from doing my meditation. I asked the owner of the voice to identify himself but there was no response.

Just as I was starting to feel a little afraid and perplexed, I saw Baba some distance away. His face appeared resplendent, so much so that even in the darkness I could see him clearly. I started to quickly walk towards him, but he turned and walked away from me. I followed him walking faster, but he walked away very fast, always maintaining some distance between us. Then afraid that he would leave the cremation ground, I started running after him calling loudly, “Baba, Baba.” To my dismay, he did not turn round. I became exhausted, and stopped, panting for breath. At the edge of the cremation ground, Baba stopped walking and turned to face me. He then told me in a

mildly rebuking voice to start my meditation and disappeared. I had very good meditation and experienced a powerful spiritual wave that was totally different from what I had experienced on the previous days. That night as I lay on my bed, I reflected about that mystifying incident in the cremation ground for a long time. It was nearly dawn when I slowly drifted off to sleep.

After the compulsory period for kapalik sadhana was over, I went to Jamalpur with many questions in my mind about that night's experiences. During the evening walk, even before I opened my mouth, Baba said, "That night, exactly at twelve, I came for inspection but did not find you doing sadhana. You have failed my test. So your compulsory period is extended up to the next new moon."

"Baba, how many times I called you that night, but you did not stop. You know that I was detained by a strange voice which asked me some questions and tried to distract me in different ways. What was that voice and where did it come from? I did not see anyone."

"It is called *karna pishach* and is a lower category of occult power that a person can gain through crude tantric rituals. Such powers are used to try to divert a sadhaka from the spiritual path and drag him towards the material world. You should not have paid any attention to it. Instead you should have given it a severe rebuke and continued on your way or asked if it could help you to attain Parama Purusha. That would have silenced it." Baba then started to talk with the others, and I did not get the opportunity to ask any more questions about Karna Pishach or whether there was an avidya tantric nearby who was applying this power.

During my extended compulsory period it rained heavily one night, and the nearby river began to overflow and flooded the path leading to the cremation ground. Wading through the water was very difficult, as it was deep in some places, and the

current was strong. I was in a serious predicament as I did not want to miss my kapalik meditation for even one night, as it was the extended compulsory period. Finally I stood on some elevated ground, wondering what to do and prayed to Baba to show me the way. I said, "Baba, you assured me that you would come to my aid if there was any need during kapalik sadhana. Now I'm in serious difficulty. I am unable to reach the cremation ground and there is no one here to help except you."

As I stood praying, I saw a luminous body approaching me. It passed me and moved ahead. I felt that Baba had sent it to guide me and followed it. It guided me through a safe area where the water level wasn't very deep, and slowly I reached the cremation ground. I sat down for meditation on an elevated spot. After completing my meditation, I waited there praying to Baba to send the luminous guide once more. Soon it appeared before me and guided me safely back to my village.

The next time I went to Jamalpur I asked Baba about the luminous being that had come to my assistance. Baba said, "That was a luminous body called a siddha. Siddhas are very elevated souls with bodies composed of only the ethereal, aerial and luminous factors. Due to certain samskaras they don't get a normal human body for a certain period of time. Normally they are not visible to the human eye. They help sadhakas in their spiritual journey. There are various other kinds of luminous bodies, and I will share more details about them with you all in the future."

Whisper of the Wind

Harindra's cousin, Ramkumar, who was also from Trimohan, received his kapalik initiation in January 1961. By then Baba had reduced the compulsory period of practice from one month to the period up until the next new moon after the kapalik initiation. That period could be as short as two or three weeks. Ramkumar's compulsory period lasted twenty-four nights.

The wintery nights were extremely cold. The cremation ground was on the banks of the River Ganges. The frigid waters of the Ganges made conditions all the more unbearable. Meditating after midnight, night after night, was a real nightmare in such temperatures. On the last night of his compulsory meditation period, Harindra, who had learned kapalik sadhana the previous year, accompanied him to the cremation ground.

As they returned after completing their meditation, Ramkumar heaved a sigh of relief. "Thank God this hell is over. What a torture it has been to meditate every night in near-freezing temperatures beside the cold Ganges without any protection from the cold. Now I will only have to put up with this torture once a month."

Harindra asked, "Why are you speaking so disrespectfully about kapalik sadhana? Baba will not take such comments kindly."

"There is nothing to worry about. Baba must be deep asleep in Jamalpur now. So how is he going to hear it anyway?"

Towards the end of February, Baba was on his way to Calcutta en route to Krishnanagar by the Danapur Fast Passenger train. As usual, a crowd of Margis from Trimohan and the surrounding areas assembled at Ekchari Station for Baba's darshan. Both Harindra and Ramkumar were in the crowd. After the Margis had offered garlands and flowers to Baba and paid their respects, he called Harindra and Ramkumar into his compartment.

With a warm smile he said, "On the last new moon night, I was asleep in Jamalpur. Sometime after midnight, a breeze blew from the direction of Trimohan and with it came a voice which appeared like Ramkumar's. It said, "Thank God this hell is over. What a torture it has been to meditate every night in near-freezing temperatures beside the cold Ganges without any protection from the cold. Now I have to put up with this torture only once a month."

Baba continued smilingly, "But I know that my Ramkumar would not say such disrespectful things about kapalik sadhana. I called you just to verify that it was not your voice. Am I not correct?"

With folded hands, Ramkumar apologised for his indiscreet remarks. Baba then gave him a gentle pat on both his cheeks. Just then, the train whistled, jerked forward and rumbled back to life. From his window, Baba bade a final namaskar to all the Margis assembled on the platform. With eyes full of tears, Ramkumar and Harindra quickly got off the train.

The Guru's Test

From mid-1962, Baba began creating an order of monks who were completely dedicated to the spread of the mission of Ananda Marga. After they had worked for a certain period, Baba initiated all of them into kapalik sadhana. Ramakanta had just crossed adolescence when he became a monk. As a student he had heard about the exciting experiences of several kapalik sadhakas. Inspired by this, he too wanted to learn this form of meditation. In fact, that was one of the factors that had inspired him to become a monk. His first posting was in Nepal. A few months after he took up his posting, he came to Jamalpur to request Baba for kapalik sadhana.

One evening he was with Baba at the Tiger's Grave. Seeing an opportune moment, he expressed his wish to Baba. Baba replied that kapalik sadhana was very difficult to practice and that one would have to conquer several mental complexes such as fear, hatred, shame, etc. in order to be able to do this type of meditation. In response Ramakanta said that he was confident that he would be able to overcome these complexes.

Baba then said, "Is it so? Now get up and walk in the direction of the lake. About 200 metres away there is a palm tree and underneath that there is a rotting corpse. Tear out some flesh from it and eat it. If you succeed in doing that, I will consider that you are able to surmount the mental complexes of fear, hatred and shame and are ready to learn kapalik sadhana."

Ramakanta got up and started walking towards the tree as directed by Baba when fear suddenly gripped him, and he was almost about to turn around and flee. However, he remembered that he had confidently claimed that he would be able to conquer his mental

weaknesses, so he steeled his mind and continued walking. He firmly resolved not to turn back come what may. As he walked he ideated on Baba, and the fear vanished. Walking onward, he was gradually overwhelmed by a nauseating stench that filled the air. He intensely focused upon Baba and pressed on, undaunted by the obstacle on his path.

By the time he reached the tree, the stench of rotting flesh had become unbearable. It was pitch-dark and he could not see anything clearly. Kneeling on the ground, he groped around for the corpse and after some time felt the stiff flesh of the decaying corpse. By then, the stench of rotting flesh was so nauseating that any normal man would have turned away in disgust. However, Ramakanta was driven by the single-minded determination to prove that he could carry out Baba's commands whatever the consequences. His mind fixed firmly on Baba, he tore some flesh from the decaying body and with great difficulty put it in his mouth. The moment the foul-smelling flesh touched his tongue, a miracle occurred and the fetid rotten flesh was transformed into a sweet-tasting delicacy. Suddenly he found that a sweet aroma had replaced the nauseating stench of putrid flesh around him. Then he touched the flesh in his hand and found it to be very much like a sweet. Eagerly he reached out to feel the body and to his shock could find nothing.

At that moment he understood that it was the tantric guru's test. When he returned to the Tiger's Grave he saw Baba sitting there laughing. With folded hands he asked, "Baba, do you think that I am now ready to learn kapalik sadhana?"

"Spiritually you are eligible, but you'll have to qualify organisationally too. Come again after starting a school in your region and then you will receive kapalik initiation."

Ramakanta returned within two months after opening a school, and Baba initiated him into kapalik sadhana, giving him the monastic name Rameshananda.

Encounter with an Avidya Tantric

The dark night of the new moon is significant for tantrics of both right- and left-hand paths, the vidya and avidya tantrics. On that night

all tantrics perform their practices in the desolation of cremation and burial grounds. The kapalikas of Ananda Marga also perform their kapalik sadhana on that night between twelve midnight and three in the morning.

Vidya and avidya tantrics pursue different goals when they practice this special midnight meditation. Vidya tantrics do it to conquer fear, that most fundamental of mental weaknesses, and to destroy other fetters of the mind. Fear is primal and is at the root of many other mental weaknesses, such as anger, shame, etc. Through intensive sadhana, the vidya tantric tries to overcome the mental fetters that shackle him or her to the perpetual cycle of life and death and attain the supreme goal of liberation. Avidya tantrics, however, perform their meditation in order to acquire psychic powers and not to attain liberation. Many degenerated avidya tantrics employ their hard-earned psychic powers to bring people under their control or to harm them.

It has been observed that whenever a kapalika goes to the cremation ground for his meditation, if there is an avidya tantric doing his practice in another part of the cremation ground, he invariably feels disturbed and makes every effort to chase the kapalika out of the place using fear tactics or through the use of occult powers. This often leads to a psychic confrontation between the vidya and avidya tantric. Such encounters are common among the kapalikas of Ananda Marga who visit cremation grounds frequented by avidya tantrics.

Baba did not teach his kapalikas how to apply the occult powers obtained from kapalik sadhana and there was a very good reason for it. It was to prevent them from misutilizing those hard-earned powers for mundane gains or harming others, as this would inevitably cause their spiritual downfall. Instead, he taught his disciples a way to fend off occult attacks by avidya tantrics. Baba also categorically assured them of his divine protection whenever they faced danger. He said that if any avidya tantric used occult power to threaten any kapalika, it would rebound on the perpetrator with debilitating force. He further emphasised the point by saying that even the most powerful avidya tantric would be

powerless before a new kapalika of Vidya Tantra, even one who had learned the practice only a few days earlier. This is because the power of Vidya Tantra is far greater than that of Avidya Tantra.

The experiences of the kapalikas of Ananda Marga provide considerable empirical evidence to support this assertion. On several occasions kapalikas have been saved by Baba's protective power, when avidya tantrics used their psychic force to try to harm or even attempt to kill them. News of Baba's power spread among the avidya tantrics, so they carefully avoided going to the cremation and burial grounds frequented by the kapalikas of Ananda Marga.

Once in the mid-sixties, Acharya Adveshananda, a monk who had recently learned kapalik sadhana, went to meditate at the edge of a forest near Amarkantak, the source of the river Narmada. As soon as he sat down for meditation, he heard a threatening cry a short distance away. The forest was inhabited by wild animals, venomous snakes and other nocturnal creatures, and was already very frightening; so the loud, threatening noise from an unknown source in such a desolate place added to the terror that gripped Adveshananda. Since he had already started his meditation, he was not supposed to interrupt it. So he decided not to pay any heed to the threat and continued to meditate. The threatening voice continued to disturb his meditation.

A short while later he heard someone scream and run away from the place. After that it became very quiet. Slowly, as his mind became concentrated, his fear vanished and he continued meditating for more than an hour. On his return after his meditation, he bubbled with enormous energy. He felt as if he had won mastery over fear and that he could boldly face any threat. As he neared Amarkantak, a man rushed out of the darkness and caught hold of his feet, pleading for forgiveness. Adveshananda flashed his torch on him and saw a saffron-robed man with long hair and a beard, wearing a necklace of rudraksha beads partially covered in gold. From his appearance it was clear that he was a monk of affluent circumstances. For a while, Adveshananda could not understand what was going on. He asked, "Who are you? Why are you asking me to forgive you?"

Introducing himself as the head of a local ashram, the man replied, "I mistook you for someone like me who practices tantric rituals to gain powers, and tried to harm you. Since such a person would have been a competition, I tried to disturb you by threatening you. Normally, the other person practising tantric rituals would not have wanted a conflict and would have quickly left. But I saw that you stayed put and would not budge. So in order to scare you away, I applied some power and tried to create a ring of fire around you. But instead of affecting you, it rebounded on me and I feel as if my entire body is burning. I realised that you are practising a much more powerful sadhana before which my powers are useless. So please forgive me and relieve me of the burning pain."

Advshananda had no idea what to do to relieve the man's agony. He closed his eyes and ideated on Baba. Immediately the image of a *pratik* appeared in his mind, and Baba directed him to remember his guru mantra and draw the shape of the pratik on the avidya tantric's chest with his right middle finger. He instructed Advshananda to first take a promise from the avidya tantric that he would never again misuse his powers to harm others, failing which, he would again be instantly afflicted with the same burning pain. Advshananda followed Baba's instructions and the tantric immediately started to feel relief. In a short while the burning sensation was completely gone. He again fell at Advshananda's feet. Advshananda lifted him gently and advised him to take shelter at the feet of Lord Shiva and not at his feet. While walking back together, Advshananda asked him, "By the way, why did you try to harm me?"

"Maharaj, generally there is a lot of rivalry and competition between people practising such tantric rituals. I use this power to attract people in various ways and when I see another person practising tantric rituals, I feel threatened because he might acquire similar powers and become my competitor. So I try to disturb his practices."

"Why don't you give up the negative use of tantric powers? Instead of running after name, fame and wealth, practice sadhana for the attainment of Supreme Beatitude. It is clear that you became a monk only for that purpose."

“It is true, but I have not had the good fortune like you to get the guidance of a proper guru and got misled onto this path. Now I have gone far too deep to retrace my steps in this life, so I cannot go back to the pursuit of real spirituality.”

The avidya tantric then invited Adveshananda to stay with him, but he politely declined and departed.

Locking up Tantric Powers

While addressing a meeting of kapalikas during the DMC in Monghyr in May 1963 Baba reminded his disciples, “Through the regular practice of kapalik sadhana one will very quickly experience tremendous spiritual energy. I want to caution you that even practising such sadhana for just a few days will enable you to develop some psychic powers and some spiritual powers as well, but that should never become the purpose of your meditation. Indulgence in them will cause you to deviate from the spiritual path. You should keep your mind firmly focused on attaining your spiritual goal - that is the supreme beatitude. And nothing should cause a sadhaka to stray from the path to that goal, including the development of these powers. I will be strictly watching you all in this regard.”

One evening Acharya Shivananda Avadhuta, a monastic disciple, was one of four people in the A group who were to sit with Baba on the Tiger’s Grave. They were waiting for him there when it suddenly started to rain. None of them had an umbrella, so they were all drenched, and the blissful evening that they all had hoped to enjoy in Baba’s company was ruined. Shivananda had been practising kapalik sadhana every night for several months and had consequently developed some occult powers. As there was no shelter nearby to protect them from the rain, he wanted to save the Margis from getting wet. So he applied his spiritual power and stopped the rain. The Margis, who were sitting on the Tiger’s Grave, had no idea why the rain had suddenly stopped and thought that it had happened naturally. A few minutes later Baba arrived, accompanied by a few more Margis. The moment he sat on the Tiger’s Grave he rebuked Shivananda sternly, “Shivananda, the power gained through sadhana is not meant to be used for any worldly purpose, not even for helping

others. Don't you know that it will cause your downfall? You fill a bucket drop by drop and drain it out in one go, and that too for nothing. Moreover, you have no right to use your spiritual power to interfere with the functions of Nature."

"Yes Baba, I realised I made a mistake and will not repeat it," replied Shivananda meekly.

Baba remained silent for a while and appeared to be brooding. Then he said, "The lure of spiritual powers is a temptation that can affect anyone of you in the future. It can cause your spiritual downfall. In the past several great sadhakas suffered a spiritual downfall due to misuse of the spiritual powers they had attained. In the Marga there have been instances of Margis misusing their spiritual powers. It can cause society to degenerate if instead of seeking spiritual enlightenment people run after such ephemeral things. So from now on I am withholding the power that all of you have gained through your sadhana. I will keep these powers safely under lock and key. None of you will be aware of your powers or be able to use them unless I allow you to do so. The difference between Vidya Tantra and Avidya Tantra is that the powers gained through Avidya Tantra can be used only for worldly purposes, whereas the power of Vidya Tantra can help you to attain the Supreme Entity. But if anyone misuses the power of Vidya Tantra for worldly purposes, it can cause their spiritual downfall."

Instances of avidya tantrics misusing their powers were quite common in India in those days. Many people who fell victim to avidya tantrics reported strange incidents like offal, blood, bones and stones appearing mysteriously from nowhere in their homes. Others reported hearing strange noises and seeing ghostly apparitions. Yet others witnessed the occurrence of mysterious fires and furniture moving in their homes. Some people employed avidya tantrics to either attract or drive away specific persons, while others used them to inflict physical and psychological illness or other misfortunes on their enemies or even kill them through occult means. Some caused their victims to appear to be possessed by goddesses or demons. Common people erroneously attribute such events to ghosts and evil

spirits. When such cases were reported to Baba, he clarified that they were the work of avidya tantrics. He also said that one way to address the problem was to locate the avidya tantric, who would normally be sitting with closed eyes within a certain distance of the affected place. He said that they should be physically hit with a stick or by the hand to break the flow of their concentration. Once their nefarious activities were exposed, they would normally leave the area, thereby resolving the problems they had created by the misuse of their tantric powers.

In October 1970, Baba introduced a special spiritual practice called *kirtana*, which involves the singing of a mantra that has been specially sanctified and empowered by him. The singing of the mantra is accompanied by a subtle spiritual dance. Kirtana helps to create a tremendously powerful spiritual atmosphere. It has several effects, one of which is that it protects a person from the nefarious powers of avidya tantrics by creating a strong spiritual vibration. Baba said that usually a neighbour or relative of a victim of Avidya Tantra would engage the services of an avidya tantric to achieve some wicked purpose. Some years later Baba instructed the Margis to wear a locket engraved with the pratik, the sanctified emblem or *yantra* of Ananda Marga, around their neck for their safety and welfare.

“One of the benefits of wearing the pratik,” Baba said, “is that it will shield you from the negative powers of an avidya tantric.”

Armed with such assurances, the Margis never hesitated to meet avidya tantrics head on whenever the occasion arose. Margis also organised kirtana programmes to neutralize what was believed to be possession by spirits or the haunting of houses, where bones, stones and other objects had mysteriously appeared, disrupting the lives of the inhabitants.

Due to the pervasive abuse of tantric powers by unscrupulous avidya tantrics, people were generally apprehensive about Tantra, which they equated with black magic. Through rational explanation, Baba dispelled these commonly held misconceptions. “In the days of Lord Shiva more than seven thousand years ago, long before science and technology developed, he created some psycho-physical

practices, which became known as Avidya Tantra. Its purpose was to establish control over matter or the material force purely for the welfare of human beings. Avidya tantrics used psychic forces to save people from various kinds of danger and cure their diseases. Even today, hypnotism, which was originally part of Avidya Tantra, is used to treat some diseases. While Avidya Tantra can be taught by any tantric, in the case of Vidya Tantra, the guidance of the Sadguru or at least a self-realised person is absolutely necessary. In the absence of a proper preceptor or guru, many advanced practices of Vidya Tantra almost became extinct about 1200 years ago. What remained was a distorted and degenerated form of Avidya Tantra, which was practised to develop crude psychic powers. These powers were used to harm or exploit people for financial gain and other selfish purposes. Such abuse of Tantra led people to view the esoteric practice of Tantra with suspicion and they generally considered it to be black magic." Baba strictly prohibited his disciples from practising any kind of avidya tantric techniques.

As stated above, it was not unusual for kapalikas to encounter avidya tantrics while meditating in cremation grounds on new moon nights. Encouraged by Baba's assurance of protection, some of them would voluntarily confront avidya tantrics who terrorised or harmed innocent people.

Acharya Vitamohananda had an encounter with an avidya tantric, which he recalled during an interview:

In the mid-1960s I was posted in Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh, where I was running an Ananda Marga school. Pinky, the youngest daughter of my neighbour, Darshan Singh, was a former student of my school. One morning Darshan Singh and his wife came to see me looking very frightened. Seeing the anguish in their faces, I asked, "What's the matter, Darshan Singhji? You both seem to be very disturbed. Is there anything wrong?"

"Dadaji, we have a serious problem. Last night, locks of hair started to fall off Pinky's head, as if someone had cut them. And then suddenly her clothes caught fire. We immediately doused her with water. Then the same thing

started happening to other members of our family as well. Our whole family is panic-stricken. None of us have had any sleep and we have spent the whole night in a state of terror.”

Acharya Ramakrishnananda, who was also working in Himachal Pradesh, was visiting my school at the time. On hearing this, he replied in a casual tone, “There is nothing to fear; it’s just a simple matter. The dark hand of an avidya tantric is behind all this. We can easily solve the problem.” I agreed with him. Darshan Singh asked hesitantly, “How much will it cost?”

“Cost? You don’t have to spend a single penny, and the problem will be immediately solved,” I replied.

Darshan Singh, however, did not respond to our assurances and walked away without saying anything. We were a little surprised by his behaviour.

Two days later he and his wife again visited me at the school. This time they looked more terrified than ever. Seeing their wretched condition, I asked, “What’s the matter, Darshan Singhji? Did the problem subside?”

Darshan Singh hesitated to answer. His wife said, “Dadaji, the problem has got worse. We just don’t know what to do.”

“We told you the other day that it is only a small problem and that we can easily solve it. You didn’t listen to us, but just walked away without saying anything.”

“That was the problem, dadaji,” interjected Darshan Singh. “When we heard the casual tone in which you both said that it was only a simple problem that could easily be solved, we couldn’t believe it. Moreover, you said that it would not cost anything. We feel that a powerful ghost is at work which cannot not be controlled as easily as you had claimed, and that too without the need to spend anything. So we contacted a famous exorcist in town who asked us for a bottle of alcohol, a pigeon and a few other costly items, including gold. He said that these items were needed to propitiate the goddess, as very

powerful ghosts were haunting the house. Yesterday we got everything he ordered and he performed an elaborate ritual, sacrificing the pigeon and offering its blood and the alcohol to please the goddess Durga. He then collected a hefty fee from us and left saying that the ghosts would not bother us anymore. But again last night the problem recurred, and we are all very afraid and don't know what to do."

In the course of the discussion Darshan Singh revealed, "The day the problem started Pinky was alone at home, and a mendicant in black robes came asking for alms. Pinky was frightened by his appearance and didn't open the door. He was very annoyed by her behaviour and threatened her with dire consequences. I think he has unleashed a powerful ghost on us."

By the time Darshan Singh had finished narrating his story, we were pretty sure that the mendicant in black robes was an avidya tantric and that he was behind all these occurrences. "This information makes the solution a lot simpler. Now we know where to look for it," said Ramakrishnananda. We pondered over the matter for a while. Incidentally, that day was a new moon day and we knew where to locate the avidya tantric. He would certainly be in the cremation ground that night performing his practices. We decided to confront him there when we went for our kapalik sadhana. We assured the terrified family that their problem would be resolved that very night and asked them to rest in peace.

At around midnight we stopped at Pinky's house on our way to the cremation ground. With a sharp knife we drew an image of the Bhairavi Chakra, a six-pointed star, on the ground outside the front gate. Hearing the screeching sound of the knife on the stone the family came out to investigate and opened the gate. They were relieved when they saw it was us. But they were still very afraid and said that the terrifying incidents were still continuing and that they hadn't had a wink

of sleep. We reassured them that we were on our way to solve their problem and that in about half an hour everything would be resolved once and for all. We drew an image of the Bhairavi Chakra in front of the house door as well and advised them that no one should step over these tantric symbols until we returned the next morning.

On reaching the cremation ground, just as we had anticipated, we saw a man with long hair and beard and a fierce appearance performing some rituals in front of a fire. The man fitted the description of the mendicant given by Darshan Singh. Upon closer inspection we saw that there were several piles of leaves neatly stacked beside him. He was cutting the corner of each leaf one by one with a pair of scissors and then throwing them into the flames. All the while he was chanting some strange mantras. We silently crept closer to him and then suddenly pounced on him with a loud cry. He was completely taken by surprise. Flooring him, we sat on him and threatened to kill him then and there for harassing a defenceless girl and her family. Kneeling over the avidya tantric in a menacing manner, Ramakrishnananda raised his arm as if he was going to assault the tantric severely, all the while threatening him loudly. To show that we meant business, we gave him a few hard slaps to frighten him into submission. I helped Ramakrishnananda by grabbing the tantric's ankles with an iron grip and pinning him to the ground. Now it was his turn to be terrified. He begged us to spare him and promised to never again carry out such misdeeds. After giving him a severe thrashing, we released him and threw away the skull and other avidya tantric paraphernalia he had with him. We warned him that if he ever attempted to harm anyone again, we would not spare him and ordered him to leave the place and never to return. He repeatedly begged us not to harm him and quickly ran out of the cremation ground. We then completed our kapalik sadhana and returned in a triumphant mood, mentally paying our obeisance to Baba.

We went to Pinky's house in the morning to enquire if the problem had been solved. As soon as we reached the house, we defaced the Bhairavi Chakra with a knife, as its purpose had been served. They explained that the problem had become less severe just after we left and that it had completely stopped about half an hour after that, just as we had assured them. We explained what the actual problem was and how we had dealt with it. Then, a visibly relieved Darshan Singh said, "Dadaji, to tell the truth, until the problem stopped we did not believe that you people, who take care of small children, were capable of dealing with powerful ghosts and ghouls." Hearing this, everyone laughed.

With the absolute assurance of Baba that the occult powers of even the most powerful avidya tantric would be ineffective before those who regularly practice Vidya Tantra sadhana, even Margis not initiated into kapalik sadhana became emboldened. They too began to take on any black magician or avidya tantric who was using tantric powers for negative purposes.

Acharya Vindhyachal Pandey was an officer in the Bihar Military Police. When he was posted in Muzaffarpur, his initiate, Mahesh, from the nearby village of Musauri, approached him one evening with a strange problem. Mahesh managed a bicycle workshop. His entire family had taken initiation from Acharya Vindhyachal about a year before. Mahesh said, "Acharyaji, our house is haunted by a ghost that is trying to drive us out. Every day the food that we cook mysteriously disappears. It seems to be a hungry ghost and it is eating all the food. So we have to cook three to four times the amount of food that we normally prepare daily."

It was the first time in his life that the acharya had heard about a hungry ghost and was amused. Mahesh continued, "Acharyaji, the problem does not end there. When we are asleep at night, buckets of water are mysteriously poured on us by someone we can't see. Everyone is terrified. We consulted an exorcist brought by my uncle. He performed elaborate rituals at great expense, but still there is no

relief. The exorcist said that there is a powerful ghost in the house and that it wants to drive us out of the place. He has advised us to abandon the house to the ghost before it does more harm to us and to move to another place. I am afraid and confused and don't know what to do. I just can't afford to leave the house and go somewhere else."

"Mahesh, first tell me, are you all practising your sadhana regularly?"

"No, Dada, I practised it seriously before, but for the past few months I have only been doing it occasionally. After the ghost started to trouble us, I have been far too disturbed to sit for meditation. The same is the case with the other members of my family."

"Mahesh, your problem would not have occurred if you had done your meditation properly. First start doing your meditation regularly twice a day." Then Vindhyachal closed his eyes and ideated on Baba. Within a short while, a vision appeared in his mind. In it he saw a very thin man with disheveled hair and a large vermilion mark on his forehead.

He then internally heard Baba's voice telling him that the man who was causing the problem was an avidya tantric. Vindhyachal asked Mahesh, "Do you know anyone who is very thin with a large vermilion mark on his forehead and long disheveled hair, and who practices black magic?"

"Yes, my uncle practices black magic. He fits the description that you have given. He is very thin and has long, unkempt hair and a vermilion mark on his forehead.

"Now it is clear. It isn't a ghost that is creating the problem. It is your uncle who is behind all these mysterious happenings."

"My uncle! What can I do to stop him? He will not admit it if I confront him."

"Yes, that is true. But you don't have to talk to him about it at all. Just do your sadhana strictly, and that will bring the rat out of the hole where it is hiding."

Mahesh couldn't understand how meditation could resolve the problem. Nevertheless, he decided to practice his meditation strictly

as directed by his acharya, and to ensure that everyone else in the house did the same. Then Vindhyachal added, "In case the problem persists, draw a line around your house while continuously chanting your guru mantra and remembering its ideation. Meet me after a couple of days."

After two days Mahesh cheerfully reported, "Acharyaji, the problem stopped within a day of us performing our meditation. I didn't have to draw the line around the house. I just couldn't imagine that there is so much power in meditation."

"See Mahesh, the meditation that you have been taught is the practice of Vidya Tantra. Avidya Tantra or black magic cannot stand before its power. So as long as you are all regular in sadhana, you will never be affected by the power of any avidya tantric."

Mahesh assured his acharya that from then on he and all in his family would do his meditation regularly.

A few days later, Acharya Vindhyachal was sitting on the veranda of his house. A very thin man came and stood before him with folded hands. Vindhyachal asked him what he wanted. In a humble tone he replied, "My name is Ramashish. I am the uncle of Mahesh. Master, please forgive me. It was I who was causing trouble to my nephew, Mahesh."

Vindhyachal recollected that he was the avidya tantric who he had seen in his vision a few days before. He asked, "Why did you give such trouble to your own nephew?"

"I don't have a house of my own. So I applied some tantric powers to frighten Mahesh and to force him to abandon his house so that I could stay there. But when I applied the power a few days back, I suddenly felt something mysterious had happened to me, and I have been feeling restless since then. A strange fear has been haunting me ever since. I feel as if I am going to die. I know that it is because the guru of Mahesh is angry with me. So please forgive me on his behalf so that I can have some peace of mind. I will not do any more harm to Mahesh."

Vindhyachal ideated on Baba for a while and said, "Go home and take an oath before Lord Shiva's picture that from now on you will stop using this power to harm people. Then alone will you be free from the guru's anger. If you ever break the oath, your problem will immediately reappear. Keep this in mind."

Ramashish promised to follow his instructions implicitly.

Shava Sadhana

Some years before establishing Ananda Marga Pracaraka Samgha, Baba had initiated Pranay into kapalik sadhana. As Pranay did not brag about his esoteric practices and experiences, a quality that endeared him to the guru, no one had any inkling about the higher meditation lessons he practised or the progress he had made on the spiritual path. Years later, while recording his reminiscences, a lot of coaxing was needed to make him talk about his mystical experiences.

From the beginning Pranay practised long hours of meditation. Baba encouraged him to intensify his sadhana as much as possible. Pranay's widowed mother became afraid that if her only son became deeply immersed in sadhana, he would certainly renounce worldly life and become a monk. So she tried to obstruct his meditation in different ways. Seeing his difficulties in practising intensive meditation at home, Baba asked Pranay to use the railway quarters in Rampur colony that had been allotted to his younger brother, Kanai. After that, Baba taught Pranay several higher spiritual practices, such as the advanced vishesh yoga. Later Baba also taught him kapalik sadhana and even its higher lessons such as *shava sadhana*. Shava sadhana is an advanced practice of kapalik sadhana in which the practitioner sits on a corpse during meditation. It is performed only once, while sitting atop a fresh and completely intact dead body. At a certain point in the practice, due to the special nature of the sadhana, the corpse comes to life, which is very scary for the practitioner.

Earlier, during his college days and sometime later in Jamalpur, Baba had taught shava sadhana to some of his unknown early

disciples. These mysterious disciples of the early years became great sadhakas, but remained mostly outside the ambit of Ananda Marga. They were initiated into this advanced tantric practice long before Pranay. Later two more people were initiated into shava sadhana, one of whom was Harivallabh, who was an acharya and a lawyer from Saharsha in north Bihar.

After learning shava sadhana, Pranay asked Baba where he could find a dead body. Baba directed him to go to the tantra pitha at the Three Palm Trees in the polo ground, saying that he would find a fresh, unclothed dead body there. Pranay then enquired what he was supposed to do with the dead body after completing his sadhana. Baba rebuked him saying that it was not his concern to think about such matters.

Pranay strictly followed Baba's instructions regarding the performance of this advanced but dangerous meditation. After completing it, he was highly energized and was filled with tremendous strength. He felt as if he could easily defeat any enemy or surmount any obstacle. Pranay who was initially sceptical about this highly advanced tantric practice, realised that it was indeed an unparalleled sadhana.

While walking back after his meditation, he wondered whose corpse it was and how it came to be placed exactly at the site of his meditation. It was as if someone had prepared it just for his meditation. This question preyed on his mind the whole night. So, in order to solve the mystery, he returned to the same spot early the next morning in the hope of finding someone who could provide him with more information about the naked corpse - who he was, how he had died and how his body came to be in that place. To his utter surprise, however, there was absolutely no trace of the corpse. The only thing he saw was the disfigured *tantric yantra* he had created before starting his sadhana. The mystery of the missing corpse had deepened considerably, and Pranay could find no explanation for the many questions that it generated in his mind. He did not dare to ask Baba about it for fear of receiving another stinging rebuke. It was several

years before he brought up the matter during an evening walk to the Tiger's Grave, in the hope that Baba would finally clarify what had happened to the missing corpse.

Baba explained, "In Vidya Tantra it is the duty of the guru to provide the dead body for the disciple to use for shava sadhana. It may be a real body or one created out of the guru's samkalpa, i.e. creation by thought projection. In Avidya Tantra the responsibility for finding a dead body lies with the disciple. During the Buddhist period and in the post-Buddhist era as well, innocent people were sometimes killed by avidya tantrics so they could practice shava sadhana. Avidya tantric sadhakas do not do it for spiritual progress, because no spiritual progress can be obtained by causing suffering to other people or living beings. The sole objective of these avidya tantrics is to gain psychic powers, but they suffer very serious consequences at the hands of Nature for their heinous actions."

Baba's explanation was enlightening indeed. However, Pranay's burning curiosity about the mystery of the missing corpse still remained unanswered. As they walked back, Pranay concluded that as Baba had hinted, the dead body must have been created by his mental projection and vanished when he withdrew this mental projection immediately after its purpose was fulfilled. Just as he was thinking this, Baba stopped and turned to him. He pointed his right index finger at him and asked, "Now is the mystery solved, Pranay?" and then continued walking.

Later, Baba taught the initial lesson of kapalik sadhana to his monastic disciples of both genders. However, for the female monastic disciples, he relaxed the condition of practising kapalik sadhana in the burial ground. For his lay followers, Baba prescribed only the six lessons of Asthanga yoga sadhana (Eightfold path).



CHAPTER 38

Hari – The Stealer of Sins

The mysterious people who came to see Baba during his evening Field Walks addressed him by different names. One of the names was 'Shri Hari'. At that time the Margis could not fathom the significance of the term 'Hari'. Only later when Baba explained what the term actually signified did it become clear to them. It is said that the Lord takes on Himself the negative *samskaras* of His devotees due to His boundless compassion, and that this is crucial for their spiritual progress. Thus He is known as Hari, the stealer of *samskaras*.

In a discourse on the actual import of the term 'Hari', Baba explained, "Hari is one of the names of the Lord. It means 'the one who steals'. What is stealing? Stealing is taking things that belong to others without their permission. What does the Lord steal? Why should He steal when everything belongs to Him? He steals the sins of His devotees. "*Harati papani ityarthe Harih.*" One who steals others' sins to lighten their burden and help them move along the path of liberation is called Hari. Why does Hari steal sins? He steals the sins of His devotees to help them; otherwise, they will never attain liberation and will continue to suffer from the reactions of their sins for many lives together. As they have surrendered everything to Him, He wishes to relieve them of the burden of their sins. He wants to say to His devotees, 'My dear children, give me all your sins. You can't carry such a heavy load. Remember that you have been committing sins for many lives continuously, and it will take you several lives more to undergo the consequences of all those sins. So give them to me and be free of your burden.' The Lord wants his devotees to unburden themselves by giving Him their sins.

"However, a true devotee will say, 'Oh Lord, I can give you my all, but I can't give you my sins. Let me carry the load myself. How could I possibly hand over my sins unto You? I am the one who has

committed them, so why should You have to carry that load? No matter how much You love me, under no circumstances can I give You my sins.'

"The fact is that the Lord loves His devotees very much, so much that maybe He even loves them more than He loves Himself. So what does He do? He steals the devotees' sins without their knowledge. He has no other option, as the devotees refuse to give them to Him voluntarily. The devotees who love the Lord intensely want to offer only their happiness to Him. They may offer all the good things in their life - all that they love to the Lord - but under no circumstances will they part with their sins, with their sufferings. So the Lord is compelled to steal the devotees' sins; He takes them away without the devotees' knowledge, and the devotees suddenly feel as if a heavy burden has been lifted from their head. They do not know that this feeling occurs because the Lord has taken away their sins unbeknownst to them. One who steals others' sins is called Hari."

Those Margis who had the opportunity of being in Baba's physical presence often had many strange and wonderful mystical experiences. Every sadhaka who had Personal Contact, attended General Darshan, received his *Varabhaya Mudra* blessing during DMC or joined him for Field Walks invariably noticed several unusual phenomena. For instance, after being with Baba even for a short while, they felt as if they had suddenly been relieved of a heavy burden. They felt very light as if they were floating on air. It was a feeling they had never experienced before and was a unique spiritual experience. Such unusual phenomenon is not known to have been described in any spiritual literature or philosophy. Some even had their weight checked, thinking that they had somehow lost weight. To their surprise, however, there was no change in their weight. This left them wondering what the reason for their buoyant feeling was.

Another common feature was that after contact with the guru, particularly after Personal Contact, most of them would cry profusely. It was extremely rare to see someone coming out from Personal Contact whose eyes were not wet with tears. What was surprising was that even rational and highly educated people, who were generally not

given to emotional displays, emerged from Baba's room with tears in their eyes, some of them weeping uncontrollably. A third notable characteristic was an overwhelming feeling of bliss. The fourth characteristic was a feeling of one's mind expanding. This created a corresponding awakening and enlargement of one's power of discrimination or conscience. It also lifted one's spiritual awareness far beyond anything they experienced in their meditation. Another noticeable effect of being in Baba's proximity was a spontaneous and irresistible attraction for the guru. Contact with the guru also resulted in a marked increase in the quality of their sadhana and a sense of detachment from the material world. Yet another remarkable feature of contact with Baba was the dramatic changes that occurred in their behaviour.

This inner transformation did not go unnoticed by their friends and family members, and it became an important topic of discussion among the Margis. These strange effects that defied explanation initially baffled them. In the course of time, Baba explained the reasons for these strange phenomena.

The Proud Professor

Shri Hari Damodar, a professor of English at TNV College in Bhagalpur, was initiated in 1959 by Acharya Pashupati. He had often heard about people weeping during and after their Personal Contact. Damodar considered crying a sign of weakness. He proudly proclaimed that self-respecting people like him would never cry under any circumstance, as crying was a feminine attribute. He rejected the Margis' assertion that crying during Personal Contact was involuntary and uncontrollable. When the Margis of Bhagalpur proposed that he should have Personal Contact with Baba, he proudly declared that he would prove that it was possible to have contact with Baba without shedding a tear.

After a few days his opportunity came, and Pashupati accompanied him to Jamalpur for Personal Contact. Damodar was the third person in line for Personal Contact. He saw the first person emerge from Baba's room wiping away his tears. As he patiently waited for his turn, he boasted to Pashupati, "I will show you that if

a person has a strong mind, he will not cry.” Pashupati merely smiled, knowing that Baba would teach this vainglorious professor a humbling lesson. The second person to emerge also had tears flowing down his cheeks. As he was the next, he confidently walked into Baba’s room sure that he would never display such effeminate behaviour. However, he was hardly inside Baba’s room for ten minutes when the door opened and he came out crying like a baby. Pashupati rushed over to him with a smile, curious to know what had happened. Damodar gestured to him that he did not want to be disturbed and sat down in a corner, crying unabashedly. It took more than an hour for him to calm down. Later he explained that just as he entered Baba’s room, he felt an intense attraction pulling him irresistibly towards Baba. It was as if he was meeting someone extremely close whom he had known for ages, and spontaneously tears started streaming down his face. He continued crying throughout the Personal Contact. Towards the end Baba showered him with immense affection and love, and the trickle of tears became a veritable torrent. Just like everyone else, he too felt that a heavy load had been lifted off his head. The professor finally admitted to Pashupati that he had been wrong and wondered why he had not been able to contain his emotions in Baba’s presence.

The Cause of Spiritual Tears

Once, while dictating a book to Acharya Vijayananda, Baba’s official amanuensis in the later years, he explained why spiritual aspirants often weep when they are in the presence of the Sadguru. “If you meet someone who is extremely close to you after a very long time, what happens? Don’t tears automatically well up in your eyes? You have been connected with me since the beginning of creation, and that relationship is deeper than anything you can imagine. There were times when some of you were with me in a different form on another planet, but you do not remember it. I remember everything. I never forget anything. When sadhakas see me for the first time, those whose sadhana is good spontaneously feel a deep connection with me from the distant past. That is because I give them a slight

hint about their true relationship with me, which creates a stir in the depths of their being, causing tears to flow. Vijayananda, now do you understand what happened to you at the Krishnanagar Railway Station when you saw me for the first time?"

Baba's reference to a long forgotten incident that had occurred more than twenty-five years before, filled Acharya Vijayananda's eyes with tears. After pausing for a while, Baba continued, "The bond between me and all of you is eternal. Before creation came into existence, you were all part of me in the non-qualified state of Nirguna Brahma and when you finally attain salvation, once again you will be part of me in the Nirguna state. If anyone is able to realise the true nature of his or her relationship with me, it will become impossible for them to maintain a separate existence in that state of intense spiritual intoxication."

Absorbing Sins

Whenever Baba gave large numbers of people Personal Contact or when he conducted *Dharma Samiksha*, Margis who had the privilege of participating in those programmes felt as if a heavy load had been removed from their head and they felt euphoric. Dharma Samiksha was an extraordinary spiritual programme that was conducted in 1981. It was the first time in human history that such an incredible event occurred. It was clear that Baba absorbed vast amounts of negative samskaras from his disciples during this programme because he would invariably fall ill for a short period afterwards. Those who were close to him witnessed innumerable instances where Baba suffered in one way or another after taking on the sins of others, particularly after giving Personal Contact to a person with a very dark past.

Having observed this baffling phenomenon for some time, Baba's close disciples took special care to prevent such people from having any contact with him, fearing that he would again fall ill after taking over their negative samskaras. Anyone suffering from any serious ailment was also strictly prohibited from meeting Baba. If, by chance, a sick person somehow managed to come close to Baba, he would be cured either immediately or shortly afterwards, but Baba

would immediately fall ill. On many occasions it has been observed that even if the organisers did not permit such people to have Personal Contact, Baba would insist on it, and there would be a sort of tug-of-war about the issue between Baba and the organisers. However, in such cases Baba as the guru always had the final word.

Initially the disciples did not realise that the reason for their buoyant feeling immediately after coming in Baba's contact was due to the fact that he had secretly absorbed their negative samskaras. Gradually the Margis began to share the mystical experiences they had after having contact with the guru and found that they had similar experiences. To solve the mystery, Sukumar raised the matter with Baba for clarification during an evening Field Walk, "Baba, when the Margis come physically close to you, they feel that a heavy burden is removed from their heads. It is a very strange feeling and has been reported by almost all the Margis who come in contact with you."

Baba explained that as guru it was his responsibility to remove the sins of the devotees in order to help them to advance on the path of liberation. Otherwise it would be impossible for them to exhaust all their accumulated samskaras in the space of a single lifetime, and they would be perpetually ensnared in the inescapable noose of action and reaction without any hope of liberation. Baba further explained that real devotees would never agree to give the heavy load of their sins to him. So he had to steal them without their knowledge. He elaborated:

"To receive initiation means to come under the shelter of the Sadguru, the Supreme Shelter. It is the duty of the Sadguru to steal the samskaras of his beloved children. Hence it is said, '*Kuryat papakshayam tatah*', meaning that after receiving initiation, one's load of accumulated samskaras gets exhausted. So initiation from the Sadguru is a must for everyone. The buoyant feeling is due to the removal of a large amount of the past samskaras of the sadhaka."

Baba's explanation created a question in Haragovinda's mind, "Baba, you have quoted a verse from the Tantras to explain that according to cosmic law nobody can escape from the bondage of their samskaras even after several ages, unless they undergo the reactions

of their good and bad actions. Then, isn't what you have just said a negation of the cosmic law?"

"What the Tantras describe, Haragovinda, is the cosmic law that governs the entire creation. What I am talking about now is an exception to the law of creation to assist those who tread the path of liberation. The Creator changes His own law out of love and compassion for His devotees, as they have taken shelter in Him. Have you not read in the Bhagavat Gita that Lord Krishna assured spiritual aspirants that those who surrender completely to Him and take refuge in Him will be released from the burden of all their sins and attain salvation?"

On several occasions, the Margis observed that those suffering from serious diseases who came close to Baba would invariably be cured, while he would fall ill and inexplicably recover within a few days without taking any treatment. On several occasions they asked Baba about it. They eventually found out that he had absorbed the negative samskaras of a particular sadhaka and had consequently suffered from an ailment that would appear and then disappear just as quickly after the samskaras had been exhausted.

Unable to see Baba suffer, some Margis begged him to stop the practice of absorbing the samskaras of others. However he summarily dismissed their pleas saying, "As guru, I always wish to see the welfare of everyone. I want everyone to become spiritually elevated and ultimately merge in the Supreme Consciousness. Now if I see that some negative samskaras are creating an obstacle to someone's spiritual life, it is my duty to remove those samskaras and free him or her from the burden."

Dasharath was one of those who made such an appeal during Baba's Field Walk. He pleaded, "Baba, it is agonizing to see you suffer due to all our negative samskaras. If it is at all necessary for you to take away our samskaras, can't you neutralize them and spare yourself the suffering?"

Baba stopped walking and turned to Dasharath saying, "It is definitely possible for me to neutralize those samskaras if I want. Let me ask you a question. Suppose you are walking through the market

and you see someone whom you love dearly carrying some very heavy bags. What would you do? You would rush over to him and even without asking his permission, take some of the bags and carry them yourself. You would assist him by personally taking some physical trouble. You could just as easily have hired a porter to carry the bags, but since you love that person dearly you prefer to carry the burden yourself. Is it not so? Dasharath, the relationship between the Sadguru and the disciple is the closest of all relationships in the world. The Sadguru loves the disciples so deeply that when he sees them suffer due to the burden of their sins they have accumulated over so many lives, he thinks, 'My dear disciples are suffering due to the burden of their sins. Now that they have taken shelter in me, let me share their suffering by taking part of it from them.' The relationship between Sadguru and disciple is very special; it is sublime and has no equivalent anywhere in the world. The disciples are always thinking how best to please the guru, and the guru is ever alert to help them progress on the spiritual path. Even your nearest and dearest one will not willingly share your suffering as the guru does. In worldly relationships what people generally consider as selfless love is not truly selfless at all. There is always an expectation of something from the other person. But the guru does not want anything from his disciples. The only thing he desires is the disciples' all-round welfare and to help them attain their spiritual goal."

"Baba, we cannot bear to see you suffer like this. So kindly share these negative samskaras with some of us," persisted Dasharath.

"Dasharath, I have come to this world to remove the sufferings of others and not to give my suffering to anyone. The negative samskaras that I am absorbing from others are mine, as I have taken them of my own free will, so how can I make you all suffer by sharing them with you? Besides, the samskaras that I take are so terrible that if I transferred them to this rock, it would instantly get pulverised and turn to ashes due to their impact," said Baba pointing at a roadside rock. "Their effect on my body is not very severe. Through a slight illness or a little suffering I can burn a lot of the negative samskaras that I have taken on."

Absorbing the negative samskaras of his devotees affected Baba's physical body in different ways. Dasharath recalled one particular instance of how the absorption of samskaras had affected Baba:

Once some of us were sitting on the Tiger's Grave and Baba was teaching kapalik meditation to someone in the tantra pitha between the three palm trees. After the initiation was over, Baba joined us, and in the moonlight we could see that his face had darkened considerably. Only a short while before, when I accompanied Baba to the field from his residence, his face was very radiant. I wondered how Baba's divine countenance could have changed so much in such a short time. I always talked very freely with him, as one does with someone very close. So without any hesitation I asked him why his face had changed so drastically.

He explained, "When I teach kapalik meditation, I absorb a lot of negative samskaras from the person, and that is why my face becomes dark afterwards." Then I asked him why he persisted in doing so, as he would have to suffer those negative samskaras in the form of different illnesses.

Baba replied, "See, people come with a huge burden of accumulated negative samskaras, which can be a great hindrance to their spiritual progress. So I have to lighten the burden of their dark past. Otherwise they will not be able to practise such kinds of advanced sadhana. Tell me, Dasharath, do you also want to learn kapalik meditation?" he asked smilingly.

I replied, "Baba, in the past I had a desire to learn. Now, after hearing that while initiating us into kapalik meditation you absorb our sins and undergo our suffering yourself, I no longer want to. I don't want you to absorb any of my sins."

Baba laughed at my reply, "No, no, I do not absorb negative samskaras from everyone. I only assist those who have accumulated so many negative samskaras that they are not able to bear the burden by themselves."

We could all see changes in Baba's appearance every time he gave Personal Contact. We realised that he was absorbing the negative samskaras of his disciples during Personal Contact. At the same time, everyone who had Personal Contact would invariably come out of Baba's room with his face glowing and feeling as if he was floating on air. Margis who had the opportunity of seeing Baba in General Darshan also reported similar experiences.

The exact effects of Personal Contact became clear to me from one of my own experiences. Under Baba's guidance I used to see the mental colours of different spiritual aspirants. After some time, I developed the ability to see them of my own accord without his assistance. On one occasion I had the opportunity of seeing the mental waves of a new, young Margi both before and after his Personal Contact. Before meeting Baba his mental waves were quite dark. Afterwards the waves were much brighter with streaks of white rays. I understood from this that Baba had cleansed his mind and absorbed a lot of his negative samskaras during his Personal Contact.

The Margis noticed changes in Baba's appearance on other occasions too, such as after General Darshan, DMC and Dharma Samiksha. When he arrived for those events, his face was always resplendent. However, at the time of leaving, the lustre of his face had dimmed considerably, while the Margis were spiritually super-charged and buoyant after these occasions.

Baba employed a range of methods to remove the Margis' negative samskaras. Usually he was very discreet about it, and people were not aware that anything had happened until a short while later, when they started to feel as if they were floating in waves of bliss. This was always accompanied by a feeling of bliss. It would only be then that they would realise that Baba had secretly absorbed their samskaras and charged them spiritually.

Occasionally he removed negative samskaras through punishment, which could range from a severe rebuke, a twist of the

ear or asking the person to do knee bends holding the ears with the arms crossed across the chest, to more severe methods. On some occasions, he resorted to caning to remove negative samskaras of a serious nature.

While punishing the Margis, Baba would point out some of the actions for which they were being punished. A cane, nicknamed 'Dukhaharan' by the Margis, was usually kept under a bolster near his seat. Dukhaharan means 'remover of sorrow.' The intensity of pain inflicted through caning varied in accordance with the nature of the samskaras that Baba removed. Most of the time, the disciple received only a symbolic punishment in the form of a light tap of the cane. In some extreme cases, however, a severe caning was administered to save the disciples concerned from far greater suffering at the hands of Nature. That is why Baba's stick was called Dukhaharan. The Margis considered any punishment from Baba as a blessing, as they realised that without his intervention, they would have had to undergo a very serious reaction from Nature for their misdeeds.

Baba's intervention to save Margis from suffering the consequences of their samskaras became a common feature of organisational meetings in the later days. By his mere wish or the touch of his stick Baba cured even the most serious and life-threatening diseases of Margis who were actively involved in the work of the Mission. He did it to enable them to continue the Marga's work unimpeded by any ailment. There were also several occasions when Baba took the suffering of the Margis upon himself while they were engaged in Marga work.

Once, Dasharath, Indradev Gupta and Vivekananda Singh went to Ranchi to propagate the Ananda Marga ideology. Shortly after they arrived in Ranchi, Dasharath fell ill with a raging fever. Strangely, within a few hours the fever disappeared on its own without any medication. They stayed in Ranchi for a week meeting people, holding ideological and spiritual discussions, and giving initiations, after which they returned to Jamalpur.

Soon after their return, Dasharath fell ill again, this time with flu. Pranay visited him to enquire about their work in Ranchi. During the course of the conversation, he asked Dasharath whether he had fallen ill soon after they reached Ranchi. Dasharath described what had happened and was surprised how Pranay knew about his illness in Ranchi.

Pranay explained, “Baba suddenly developed high fever the morning after you all left. But in spite of the fever, he came to the jagrti. Seeing his condition, I suggested calling a doctor, but he gently declined the offer. Asking me not to worry, he said, ‘This is not the normal kind of fever which requires medication. Dasharath has fallen ill in Ranchi with high fever. The entire *prachar* team will have difficulty in doing their work if he is bedridden. So I have taken his illness upon myself to enable them to do their work without hindrance. As long as they are in the field doing *prachar* work, I want all of them to remain in good health.’”

There were numerous instances of Baba taking upon himself the *samskaras* the *Margis* had accumulated in earlier lives. The main lesson they drew from this was that he loved his disciples dearly and was ever willing to suffer the consequences of their negative actions. He wanted to lighten their load and expedite their spiritual progress to enable them to achieve liberation in this lifetime instead of having to wait for several lifetimes. The *Margis* realised that there was no love greater than the love of the *Sadguru* for his disciples.

Absorbing the Samskaras of a Colleague

Besides absorbing the negative *samskaras* of the *Margis*, Baba also took upon himself the *samskaras* of non-*Margis* who approached him with their sufferings.

Dr. Sachinandan accompanied Baba on his Field Walk one day sometime in 1954. As they walked, Baba developed a bad cough just as they entered the field. That day he did not walk for very long and returned home quickly. The following day too Sachinandan accompanied Baba, and again Baba started to cough just as they entered the field. Sachinandan asked Baba what made him cough for two consecutive days as soon as they entered the field.

Baba explained, “Recently, while I was in the office, I saw that a colleague of mine had a very bad cough. He had been suffering a lot for some days. One day, he came to me coughing. I asked him, ‘What’s the matter? You have a very bad cough.’

He said, ‘Yes, Prabhatda, this cough is killing me. I have tried several remedies, but it is only getting worse. I have become extremely weak. Please suggest a cure if you can.’ I pitied him and told him that he would get better soon. He was cured immediately, and his cough subsided. But somebody had to take the burden of his samskara.”

Sachinandan then said, “Baba, I can get you some medicine from my clinic on our way back.”

“No, Nandu, medicine won’t work. I will have to undergo the samskara that I have taken from him. I cough a few times a day. The reason why I cough when I enter the field is because it is colder here than on the street. A samskara needs a physical channel and a proper environment to express itself. It will take another six or seven days for the samskara to be fully exhausted, and then I will automatically recover without any medicine. As it does not bother me very much, it is better to exhaust the samskara as quickly as possible.”

Exhausting Samskaras through Punishment

There were occasions when Baba would dispense punishment to help an erring disciple to exhaust his load of negative samskaras, which was the result of serious misdeeds or crimes he had committed in the present or previous lives. Baba would usually give him the option of choosing to be punished by him or receive punishment from Nature. Sometimes, in lighter vein, he would ask the disciples if they would take punishment from Yamaraja, the mythological god of death. Mindful of the fact that the punishment of Nature was far more severe, experienced Margis would ask Baba to administer the punishment. However, there were occasions when a new person would make the grievous error of requesting Baba to allow Nature to punish him.

Once in the latter part of 1959, Sachidananda Srivastava, a superintendent of police, brought his boss, the deputy inspector general of police (DIG), to Jamalpur to meet Baba. The DIG was newly initiated. Both of them had been assigned to the 'A' group and sat with Baba on the Tiger's Grave. Ramsvarath, a government employee from Samastipur, and Sahadeva, a college student from Patna, were also in the group.

After talking with the others for some time, Baba turned to the DIG and asked, "What have you done with this precious human life? You have ruined your life through so many corrupt and immoral deeds. Do you want to know what you would become if you were to die now? It would take you several animal lives to become a human being again."

The police officer was visibly shaken by Baba's unexpected outburst and kept silent, not knowing how to respond. Baba continued in a cutting tone, "You thought that nobody was watching you when you were doing all these immoral acts. But my two eyes were watching everything you did or thought. If you want, I can even give you the numbers of the currency notes that you accepted from the trader who was caught selling adulterated goods. You let him go after taking bribe. Your duty is to protect society from anti-social elements. But you accept bribes from them and allow them to continue to harm the people. You are in such a high post in the Police Department, but your actions are detrimental to society. You are yourself an anti-social element and a danger to society. Is it not so?"

By then, beads of sweat had started to form on the face of the police officer even though it was a cool winter evening. The others could clearly see that he was completely rattled. Being a very senior police officer, he had not expected Baba to expose him so bluntly before complete strangers and his subordinate officer.

In an unrelenting tone, Baba continued to expose many more of his misdeeds and finally said, "At the very least, after learning meditation you should have changed your sinful ways and become a good person, but you didn't. You are not doing your meditation properly either. Don't you deserve severe punishment for your wicked actions?"

The officer kept quiet, as he was unsure how to deal with a spiritual master who knew his dark secrets and did not seem to care about his high status. Breaking the silence, Baba asked him, "Do you want to take punishment from me or from Nature?"

The police officer was in a state of shock and was thoroughly embarrassed by Baba's public revelation of his misdeeds. He wasted no time in seizing the opportunity to escape from this uncomfortable situation, and with folded hands replied, "Baba, I will take whatever punishment Nature gives me."

As an experienced Margi, Sachidananda understood that his boss was making a terrible mistake and tried to warn him through a mild pinch that it would be better if he changed his response. But the officer repeated that he wished to be punished by Nature. Hearing this, Baba laid the matter to rest and did not say anything else to him for the rest of the evening.

After some time, when Ramsvarath visited Jamalpur again, Madhav, the jagrti manager, asked him, "Do you remember the DIG who told Baba that he wanted to take punishment from Nature for his misdeeds? A few days ago he was suspended from the police force on charges of corruption. He is sure to face either dismissal or demotion after the completion of an official enquiry. If he had accepted punishment from Baba that evening and rectified himself, he would have received far less painful treatment from the compassionate guru."

Ramsvarath agreed with Madhav's comments and added, "Madhavji, suspension is not the end of that DIG Sahib's troubles. A far worse fate lies in store for him. That evening Baba said that due to all his misdeeds, he would be reborn in lower forms of life several times before he gets a human body again. It is really unfortunate that he did not surrender to Baba and agree to turn over a new leaf when he had the opportunity to do so."

Dagdhabija Sadhakas

While freeing Margis from the burden of their samskaras, Baba wanted them to follow in his footsteps as well. He not only urged

them to free themselves from the bondage of their own samskaras, but also encouraged them to help others to lighten the crushing load of their samskaras. He wanted them to become *dagdhabija* sadhakas, spiritual aspirants who have exhausted all their samskaras and are in a position to carry the burdens of others by absorbing their samskaras.

Baba urged the Margis to share the karmic burden of others saying, “There are so many grades of sadhakas. Some say, ‘O Paramatma (Supreme Entity), please exhaust my samskaras as soon as possible. Give me whatever is there in my fate.’ Others say, ‘I am ready to bear the fruits of my own actions and I am also ready to bear the samskaras of others.’ In accordance with their level of spiritual elevation, people have different feelings. Some want to carry the burdens of others so that those struggling with the heavy load of their samskaras will not face any trouble. Sadhakas are at different stages, and their feelings reflect the stage they have reached.

“While doing sadhana, sadhakas reach a stage where they feel absolute devotion for the Supreme Entity. Then they are able to remain unaffected even in the face of a cyclone of misery. They may feel unbearable mental torture but they care little for it, considering it as the blessing of Paramatma. They derive bliss from the torture. A sadhaka who has reached that stage is called *dagdhabija*.”

“Do not worry about your personal problems. Be prepared to carry your own burden and also that of others. Then alone will you be brave. Be *dagdhabija*. Everyone has his or her own personal problems. Do not try to pass your burden onto others. On the contrary, try to take the load of others. No one is your enemy. Be ready to bear the burdens of others.”

On several occasions, while talking to the monastic disciples about doing service to all living beings as part of one’s spiritual practice, Baba explained that a devotee should serve every living being as an expression of the Supreme Entity. In an advanced stage of devotion, “Remove the sufferings of one and all” becomes the very motto of a sadhaka.

On the subject of serving others in this way, Baba said, "When sadhakas are intoxicated with devotion for the Lord, they become totally devoid of concern for their individual self. In that exalted state they desire to carry the burden of others' samskaras. They pray, 'O Lord, I don't want to share my suffering with anyone, not even with You. Rather I want to take the suffering of others upon myself so that they will be relieved of it. O Narayana, the suffering people and all the suffering living beings are only Your diverse expressions. I cannot bear to see You suffering in different forms. So please transfer the suffering of others to me and let me carry their load.' Nothing pleases the Lord more than such selfless prayers from His devotees. He may or may not grant them such sincere prayers, but He will certainly free them from whatever remaining samskaras they have and grant them salvation."

Such was the extent of the selflessness and sacrifice that Baba expected from those of his disciples who had attained a high level of spiritual elevation. He used to give the example of several great spiritual aspirants such as Sri Ramakrishna, who cared little about the suffering he went through and welcomed it as the blessing of the Almighty.

The great saints of the past had always emphasised the insurmountable nature of the Law of Cause and Effect and of the near impossibility of crossing the vast ocean of *Maya* by one's own efforts. The Law of Cause and Effect keeps everyone, whether a saint or sinner, perpetually sailing on the high seas life after life. No one is free from this immutable law. A good action generates a good reaction while a bad action begets a bad reaction. Lord Buddha explained this principle clearly to his disciples. He even attributed the inequality that exists in the world to the Law of Karma, which determines the results of one's own past and present actions, and explained that each person must undergo the reactions of his or her actions. Much earlier, Tantra explained this important principle, stating that unless one's good and bad samskaras are completely exhausted, it is impossible to attain salvation. Every individual must

experience the consequences of his or her actions. And the reactions will be exhausted only when they are expressed and experienced by the individual.

Baba repeated this point on numerous occasions in his discourses and demonstrated how the Sadguru assists his disciples by absorbing their load of samskaras, thus accelerating their journey towards liberation. By his mere wish he could free anyone from the cycle of birth and death, and demonstrated this unique quality several times during his lifetime. Mangala Devi, Chandranath's aunt, was one of the many to whom he granted liberation by freeing her of her remaining samskaras at the time of her death. Baba also bestowed this supreme gift on several other disciples.

In addition to freeing individual spiritual aspirants from the chain of their samskaras, in September 1965, for the first time in human history, Baba introduced 'The Supreme Command' in which he guaranteed the divine gift of liberation from the cycle of life and death (mukti) to all sadhakas who fulfilled three prerequisites. The first was for the sadhaka to perform sadhana twice a day regularly. The second requirement was to strictly follow the moral code of yama-niyama. The third was to guide others along the path of righteousness (Dharma). Through his unique spiritual guarantee, Baba opened the path of liberation to all human beings on this planet, not just to a few highly evolved souls. In the entire history of humanity, it is the first time that an absolute guarantee of mukti (liberation) has been given by any spiritual master.



CHAPTER 39

Science of Karma

One Sunday darshan in mid-1959, Acharya Bhuvaneshvari, the veterinary doctor, brought a new initiate of his named Rampal, who came from a village in Gaya District. Rampal was suffering from a severe skin disease, with patches of lichen in several places that made his appearance repulsive. He was also suffering from a serious liver disorder. Even after prolonged treatment by several doctors from different schools of medicine, the disease had only worsened. This made him very depressed. Often he would sit in his prayer room and weep, asking God what sin he had committed that had caused him to suffer like this.

His desire to learn sadhana was thus partially fuelled by the hope that the practice of meditation and asanas might help to cure his diseases. A few days after his initiation, he heard from his acharya that Baba could cure any disease by his mere wish. So, he nurtured a secret desire that Baba would cure him of the health problems which had been tormenting him for years.

In the darshan that day, Baba's topic of discussion was the eight fetters of the mind. "Every human being should be aware of these fetters, as they can do a lot of harm to oneself and to others. The fetters are hatred, doubt, fear, shyness, hypocrisy, vanity of lineage, vanity of culture and a false sense of prestige. These fetters are qualities that people acquire from the society they grow up in. For example, a child does not have an innate fear of ghosts. Such fears are infused in the child by those around it as it grows up. The other fetters are also acquired as a result of social conditioning, and some of them may become predominant in a person. They are the most harmful qualities that human beings develop because they cause division, great suffering and destruction within both the family and society."

After explaining how each of these fetters can lead the mind towards degeneration, Baba instructed Dasharath to sit in meditation and to see the past life of Rampal about eleven hundred years ago. Dasharath concentrated for a few seconds and said, "Baba, I can see a centipede crawling amid the dry foliage on the floor of a forest. He was that centipede."

"See what he was in the life before that."

Dasharath again concentrated and said, "Baba, he was the chief of a big village."

"What is the name of the village?"

"Rudrapratapuri. It is located on the banks of a river."

"Yes, it was on the banks of the River Ganges and was completely destroyed in a massive flood about nine hundred years ago," commented Baba. "Look at the village chief and see what caused such a degeneration in his next life."

"I see that part of his *manipura chakra* is extremely dark," replied Dasharath.

"What does that mean?"

"He was gripped by acute hatred and jealousy."

Baba explained, "Usually hatred and jealousy are companions. Enter his mind and see who his hatred and jealousy were mainly directed towards."

After concentrating for some moments, Dasharath replied, "It was mainly directed against his younger brother and his family."

Baba continued, "Yes, he was very jealous of his younger brother, who was well loved because he was kind to everyone in the village. So the village chief hated his altruistic brother and family. Driven by hatred and jealousy he inflicted a lot of harm on them. He also directed his hatred against several others. It is the hatred that he nourished against his brother and his family as well as several others in the village that led to his degeneration in his next life. After the life of a centipede he spent several lives as invertebrates, crawling on the

ground. Later he became a vulture, and slowly evolved into a jackal, then finally, now, again into a man. For over a thousand years he passed through various lower forms of life. The reason he took birth as each of these less evolved creatures was to exhaust a certain type of samskara that he had acquired during his life as the village chief. For example, to face the consequences of the hatred he had had for others, he spent several lives as invertebrates, the sight of which arouses revulsion in others. To exhaust the samskara he created by forcibly grabbing the wealth of his brother and others, he became a vulture and later other animals that tear flesh off a carcass. This is the way Nature exhausts different types of samskaras in a person. In this life too, he is still suffering a lot in order to finish the remainder of his previous samskaras."

With tears streaming down his face, Rampal entreated Baba to free him from the remaining samskaras, as his suffering had become unbearable.

Baba was silent for a few moments. He then turned to Bhuvaneshvari and asked with a sympathetic look on his face, "Bhuvaneshvari, as his acharya, what do you say? Should I release him from the remaining suffering that he has to undergo?"

"Baba, he has suffered for over a thousand years to atone for his sins. Please have mercy on him and release him from the rest of his suffering."

"What do you all say?" Baba asked the Margis. "Should he be released from the rest of the samskaras from his past actions?"

"Yes Baba, please have mercy on him," everyone responded in unison.

"In fact, the actions that he has done, due to which he has been suffering all these years, are unpardonable. He should have been made to finish the samskaras in a natural manner. But because you are all requesting me, I must listen to you," Baba said with a smile.

He then took his stick and drew three circles on Rampal's chest, saying, "All right, I have now freed you forever of fifty percent of your previous samskaras. Twenty-five percent is linked to your sadhana, and the remaining twenty-five percent will be taken care of

if you serve society. As long as you do your sadhana, twenty-five percent of your afflictions will be kept at bay. And as long as you serve society, you will be free from the remaining twenty-five percent. If you fail to do your sadhana or perform service, the disease will partly recur. Always keep this firmly in your mind and make sure that you never fail to do any of these two actions.”

After the darshan was over, Rampal asked his acharya what kind of social service he should do. His acharya replied that he should try to convince more people to adopt the path of spirituality, as there was no greater service than that. He should also try to help people in need.

By that evening Rampal's skin disease had considerably eased. After returning home, he began to follow Baba's instructions very strictly, and soon he was completely relieved of his skin disease and liver problem.

Unraveling the Mysteries of the Science of Action

Such demonstrations involving the removal of Margis' samskaras increased in frequency as the days passed. Yet, many details regarding samskaras, rebirth, and so on, remained shrouded in mystery. On the 25th of January 1959, during his Sunday darshan, Baba clarified many points relating to this topic in a rare but important discourse. It was unusually long for a Sunday darshan, and in the course of it, Baba dispelled several misconceptions that people had regarding action, reaction, death and rebirth. As the topics were very interesting, Asthana compiled detailed notes afterwards. Baba began by explaining the process of action and reaction:

You all know that every action has an opposite reaction. This law applies to actions in both the psycho-physical, i.e. where both body and mind are involved, and the psychic realms, where only the mind is involved. Normally, when a person performs an action consciously, whether good or bad, it creates a certain type of distortion in the mind. This distortion is a reaction in potential form and is known as samskara or reactive momentum. The mind regains its equilibrium by experiencing the reaction of that action. In order to remove the mental distortions, a person experiences good reactions for the

good deeds and bad reactions for the bad deeds he has done. Generally, a person does not experience the reaction of his actions in the same life. After death, the mind takes a new body that is suitable for the expression of those reactions.

For instance, a certain man called Rama has performed a number of good and bad deeds. After his death, he has to be reborn in a body that is suitable for expressing the reactions of all the good and bad deeds he has done in previous lives. So let us say that for this purpose he is reborn as Shyama. Suppose that due to Rama's actions, Shyama has to experience a certain amount of pain when he reaches the age of seven. In order to suffer that pain, Shyama meets with an accident and fractures his leg. And for a particular good deed of Rama in his next birth as Shyama, he has to enjoy a certain amount of happiness at the age of twelve. So at the age of twelve he gets a reward which brings him a lot of happiness. Then, because of a sin he committed in his previous life as Rama, Shyama has to suffer intense pain at the age of fifteen due to the loss of someone very close to him. His mother dies at that time, and it causes him acute distress. Through all these experiences, the reactions of Shyama's past actions are neutralized and equilibrium is restored in his mind.

Here it should be understood that the exact events through which one experiences either suffering or enjoyment are not predetermined. For example, if Rama has stolen something from Yadu, it is neither preordained that in his next life he will have property of the same value stolen as a reaction, nor is it essential for Shyama to repay Yadu the amount he had stolen as Rama. The reaction will be in proportion to the mental suffering Rama inflicted on Yadu by stealing his property. Thus the result of any action, good or bad, is measured in terms of the amount of pleasure or pain it creates in others. The actual manner in which it will be experienced is not a factor.

Suppose that in his past life, Shyama has done great harm to Yadu, and Yadu is reborn as Madhu. There is the possibility that Madhu might become a cause of suffering for Shyama.

Such things do happen, but only very rarely, and that too under special circumstances. In accordance with the law of action and reaction, the Cosmic Mutative Principle or *Rajoguna Shakti* arranges suitable conditions for everyone to undergo the reactions of their actions. Whatever a person suffers or enjoys is due to the samskaras they created either in the previous life or in an earlier life. When any action is performed, the samskara created by that action remains in potential form in the supra-mental or *atimanasa* layer of the unconscious mind.

Before the reaction can be undergone, the seed of the samskara has to germinate. Three factors can cause this to happen:

1. The conscious mind is dissociated from the body either due to death or a prolonged period of unconsciousness caused by an illness or any other reason.

2. When a person attains a state of very deep concentration in his meditation, the conscious mind temporarily dissociates itself from the body.

3. When a person performs an action that is out of character and is highly contrary to his nature, the reaction may germinate and even be undergone in the same life.

So it can be said that a person's life today is determined by what he did yesterday, and what he does today will determine his life tomorrow. In other words, what a person experiences today is the result of the actions he performed in his past life or lives. And what he does in this life will determine his experiences in his future life. So he is the master of his own fate. It is generally believed that a person's fate is decided at the time of his birth. Actually speaking, one's fate, meaning the method and time of undergoing the consequences of past actions, is decided even before birth at the time of the germination of the seeds of the accumulated samskaras. After that, the body is selected in conformity with the pain and

pleasure that one has to undergo in order to exhaust those germinated samskaras. However, the pain and pleasure a person experiences will not necessarily occur in the same sequence as the actions that created those samskaras in a previous life.

Suppose Shyama has to experience a certain amount of pain and pleasure in order to undergo the reactions created by the actions of his past life. He will go through some of these reactions alone, while some of them are linked to the samskaras of others. For example, let us assume that according to his samskaras, Shyama is destined to suffer the loss of his mother at the age of fifteen. In order to do that, he has to be born in a family where the mother's samskara is to die when he attains that age, and where the others in the family will also have the samskara to suffer her loss at that particular time. Similarly, in the case of an incident involving several people, their samskaras will have to coincide. So rebirth cannot take place indiscriminately just by acquiring a body. The new body will have to be able to provide the opportunity for the living being to experience the reactions that have germinated.

As it is due to the laws of *Prakrti* that everyone experiences these reactions, it is the responsibility of *Prakrti* to provide an appropriate body and environment for them to experience the reactions. It should be emphasised that *Prakrti* chooses the way and order in which a person exhausts his samskaras, with the welfare of the person in view and with the aim of motivating him or her to reflect upon the purpose of life and seek the path to enlightenment.

Broadly speaking, actions are of two kinds – original actions and secondary actions. Original actions are performed by people of their own free will for which they will have to reap the consequences. Original actions create distortions in the mind, thereby disturbing its equilibrium. The disturbance in the equilibrium of a single mind has a knock-on effect on a much larger scale, and ultimately disturbs the equilibrium of the entire universe. Maintaining the equilibrium of the universe is the function of the Cosmic Mutative Principle.

In order to re-establish the equilibrium of the universe, it has first to be restored in each and every unit mind. Hence, the Cosmic Mutative Principle propels everyone to perform certain kinds of actions according to their reactive momenta or samskaras. These are secondary actions which are the consequences of the person's original actions, and one is compelled to perform them by one's samskaras.

Secondary actions are carried out mechanically due to the pressure of circumstances. These actions are done unintentionally, and either the performer of the action or someone else experiences the result, which may be either painful or pleasurable. Original actions create a distortion in the mind, thereby disturbing the equilibrium of the mind. However, the consequences of secondary actions remove the distortion, thus restoring the equilibrium that was lost when the original actions were performed earlier.

Since secondary actions are not performed of one's free will, there is no reaction. The indirect or subconscious will of a person forces him to perform secondary actions in order to restore equilibrium in the mind and, hence, in the universe. This indirect will is created by the force of one's samskaras that seek their expression. Human beings also continue to perform new original actions, while experiencing the reactions of their previous actions.

So now the question is how one can escape from the bondage of the chain of action and reaction? For that, in Ananda Marga, you all have the second lesson of meditation, which is known as Madhuvidya. Through Madhuvidya, you take spiritual ideation while performing each and every action, thus converting them into a spiritual action. On several occasions I have told you all that since spirituality is an infinite realm, the law of action and reaction cannot operate there. The principle of action and reaction only operates in the finite sphere. So, through the practice of Madhuvidya, one can

perform actions without being burdened with the consequences of their reactions.

Atonement is a means of reducing the severity of one's reactions. Immediate atonement of a proportionate nature can considerably reduce the reaction that one has to undergo for committing a sin. Suppose you have hurt someone through offensive words and you immediately become conscious of your mistake and apologise or take punishment for it, you can decrease the severity of the samskara created through sincere atonement. This is because atonement reduces the distortion in your mind. The greater the delay, the greater the degree of suffering required to atone for one's sins.

One acquires a physical body according to the nature of one's samskaras. A human being who behaves like a swine or a vulture may be reborn as a swine or a vulture in his next life. This is because this type of animal body is the proper base for the expression of a particular kind of latent samskara. Hence, it is not at all impossible for a human being to be reborn as a hog, a worm, a tree or any other lower life form. The samskara-laden mind is reborn in an environment where the samskaras can find the opportunity to express themselves. This is the infallible law of creation.

The theory of action and reaction is guided by the universal principle that every action has an opposite reaction. An action has an equal and opposite reaction only if the reaction is immediate and there is no change in time, space or the person concerned. If there is any change in time, space or person, the reaction created by certain kinds of actions increases with the passage of time. If the action takes place on a purely mental level, the reaction also occurs only on the mental level, and is of the same magnitude as the original action even with the passage of time. However, if the action is psycho-physical and involves the body as well as the mind, the reaction will also be psycho-physical, and the extent of the reaction will increase with the course of time. In the case of an

action that is purely physical and unintentional, where the mind is not involved in performing it, no reactive momentum or samskara will be created because the mind does not undergo any distortion and remains unblemished.

After death, the mind, together with all its samskaras in potential form, is propelled by the Cosmic Mutative Principle to immediately search for a suitable body and an appropriate environment to express those samskaras. Such a body may be available in one day, or it may even take millions of years to find it. This is because the mind cannot be reincarnated until a body and environment become available that correspond to its requirements, as determined by its past samskaras. So, it is never possible to say where and when one is going to be reborn after one's death. There are innumerable planets where life exists. The bodiless mind, with its potential reactions, may find a congenial environment on any of them. Thus, it is not at all certain that a person will be reborn on this earth. Every environment is conducive for experiencing the reaction of one action or another, but not every environment is conducive for experiencing every type of reaction.

Baba then explained how the bodiless mind obtains the physical body in order to undergo the reaction of its past actions.

First of all the basic physical structure is first formed in the uterus of the mother's womb. This structure has potential energy and emanates a wavelength. It receives its potentiality from the momentum of the spermatozoa. Spermatozoa get their motivity from the vital potentiality of the male body, and that is why the living being is said to reside first in the seminal fluid of the male and then in the mother's womb. After that, when the child is born, it is received into the bosom of Mother Earth.

Since the physical structure starts from the spermatozoa, which has positive motion and therefore, a wavelength, the physical structure thus formed must have a corresponding

wavelength. The bodiless mind also has a wavelength (in a potential form) and a momentum, which has to be expressed. The dissociated mind needs parallelism with a physical structure in order to be able to express itself, and therefore the Cosmic Mutative Force causes the dissociated mind roaming in eternal space to enter a suitable physical structure, and then the physical life-form grows in the mother's womb. This is how life is physically created.

Generally the mind is reborn in the same planet, but in the absence of a conducive environment in a particular planet, the mind can be reborn on another planet where a conducive environment for the expression of its *samskaras* exists.

This process of undergoing the reactions of one's actions takes place in accordance with the universal law of creation. Human beings cannot change this law. No amount of rituals or prayers can prevent a person from undergoing the reaction of his past actions. Certain processes can temporarily delay the manifestation of a particular reaction. However, such methods will only delay the inevitable expression of the reaction, but not erase the *samskara*. The longer the delay, the greater the reaction, as it grows in magnitude with the passage of time. So it is better to undergo the reactions of one's actions quickly, although some of them may be painful. It is said in Tantra:

*Na bhuktam kshiyate karma kalpakoti shatairapi,
Avashyameva bhuktavyam krta karma shubhashubham*

“Unless one undergoes the consequences of an action, the reaction created will not cease to exist even after the passage of several billions of years. One will inevitably have to experience the result of one's actions, whether good or bad.”

When people experience the result of their actions in a subsequent life, but cannot recollect their original actions, they call it *adrishta* in Sanskrit, which means “unseen fate”. So sometimes when calamity strikes, they blame *Parama Purusha*.

“O Lord, why did you create this calamity in my life? How could you be so cruel to me?” They lament thus, holding Parama Purusha responsible for any tragedy that befalls them. Parama Purusha can never be cruel. His benevolence is at work even behind the Law of Karma due to which people suffer the consequences of their sins.

Through all the experiences of pain and pleasure they have to face in this transitory world, He is telling His created beings, “O My children, rise above this world of pain and pleasure and come into My permanent shelter. Be one with Me. The world of infinite bliss is awaiting you there. That is your ultimate goal. It is your birthright to be established in that cosmic stance, your permanent abode.”

Immediately after the death of any living being, be it an insect, an animal or a human being, it starts to search for a new body. Is the mind suspended until it finds a new body? No, even in that state it is engaged in action, but only one action – the action of searching, searching, searching ... searching for a new body.

Baba then turned to Dasharath and directed him, “Sit in meditation and concentrate. Then tell me what you see.”

Dasharath replied, “I am seeing countless bodiless minds of varying degrees of brightness drifting around all over the place.”

“Look at the bodiless mind in front of you now and tell me who or what it was before its death and when its death took place.”

“Baba, it is the mind of one Rama Avatar Shastri, a retired schoolteacher from Bhagalpur. He died of a heart attack less than an hour ago.”

As the Margis sat spellbound by Dasharath’s narration, Baba further explained, “These bodiless minds cannot think without the medium of a body. Each of them has a vibration that depends on its samskaras, and that indicates a certain urge. Dasharath, I am now enabling you to feel the vibrational urge of that bodiless mind. Now enter the mind and see what vibrational urge it has.”

Dasharath concentrated for a while and then replied, "It is feeling restless without a body. So it has an urge to get a new body."

"What is the next life that the mind is going to get?"

"Baba, the mind is going to be reborn as a female child in the village of Suryagada."

Baba commented, "The teacher was not a bad man, but he committed certain mistakes. He did not treat his wife properly because of the traditional practice of subjugating women. His wife bore her suffering in silence and never expressed her pain to anyone. But his actions were not outside the ambit of the universal law of action and reaction. The reactions of the actions were immediately registered in the *Vijnanamaya kosha* or subliminal mind, which is the place where the reactions of actions are stored. Now, in his next life as a woman, he will undergo the consequences of the torments that he inflicted on his wife, and that alone will neutralize the samskara that has been acquired by mistreating the wife in the woman's previous life.

"He had another defect in the form of a superiority complex because he was a Brahmin. In his next life he will be born in a so-called low caste family, where he will suffer the same pain of social ostracism, which he perpetrated against people of lower castes. He also did several good deeds and he will reap their rewards as well. Now I am enabling you to see the urge in another bodiless mind. Tell us about it."

"Baba, it is the mind of a cow that died in Monghyr just a few minutes ago."

"See what the urge of that bodiless mind is."

"It is also restless to get a new body."

Turning to the rest of the Margis, Baba said:

Do you all understand? In both cases, death occurred less than an hour ago and the immediate urge in these bodiless minds was to get a new body so that they can express themselves again. That is why I said that the search for a new

body starts right after death because the mind is propelled to search a new body to express its samskaras. Do you all understand?

Some people say that after death, the soul lingers in the vicinity where it died, waiting for food, clothing and other valuables to be offered to it through a priest. People are made to believe that whatever is offered to the priest will reach the departed soul. Now suppose you ask the priest where the soul of a particular person who died a few days ago is, so that it can receive the food and clothing offered to him, the priest will not have an answer. But now you all know that either it will have already acquired another body or is somewhere in the vastness of space waiting for a suitable body through which it can express its accumulated samskaras. You should all know that after its death, the mind cannot experience any pain or pleasure, as it lacks the medium of a brain. So where is the question of its enjoying the food offered to a priest? Do you all see the fallacy of such ideas?

There are others who say that the soul will have to wait until the Day of Judgement to be either sent to hell or transported to heaven. Whatever may be your past, you have to lie in the grave awaiting the Day of Judgement at the end of the world. Now you have all seen how eager the mind is to get a new body immediately after the death of the previous one. Propelled by its samskaras, the mind passes through the cycle of birth and death.

And what about the body buried under the ground? The body will turn into soil. In a dead body the bones around the knees, elbows and some other parts take about eight to ten years to decay. The rest becomes part of the earth much earlier. So within a few years, no part of the body remains in the grave. Then how is the body that has turned into soil ever going to rise up even if there is a Day of Judgement, which is anyway an illogical concept? The body cannot rise up, since it has turned into soil within a few years of its burial. And the mind would have found another body within a certain period. The mind

cannot stand still, nor will it remain suspended in a graveyard awaiting the Day of Judgement. So these ideas are contrary to logic and reason. Those who spread such ideas lived at a time when the knowledge of science was primitive. But in our modern age knowledge has developed a lot, and through the rational application of one's mind one can easily understand what is right and what is wrong. So an intelligent person should not accept such illogical ideas.

The created universe is called *jagat* in Sanskrit, meaning 'that which is in constant motion'. Everything in the universe moves. Movement is a fundamental characteristic of creation. So it is this characteristic of constantly being in motion that makes the Cosmic Mutative Principle propel the bodiless mind to search for a body. It is essential for the mind to express its *samskaras* in order to move forward towards its final destination, which is *Parama Purusha*, or the Supreme Consciousness.

Suppose a person degenerates, and subsequently regresses for a few million years as a result. From a cosmic perspective it is also part of the evolutionary movement. So there is no question of that person lying in a grave for eternity waiting to be punished on the Day of Judgement. Where there is a graveyard today, we may find paddy fields tomorrow, or a building or a factory the day after.

The concept of Doomsday is also a fallacious idea. Such total destruction will never happen because it would block the process of *pratisaincara*, the centripetal phase of movement towards the Supreme Consciousness, and thus the cycle of creation would remain incomplete. It is the destiny of every mind to evolve into higher and subtler states until it finally merges in the Supreme Consciousness, the culminating point of *pratisaincara*.

Life exists when the body and mind are able to maintain parallelism and work in unison. When this parallelism is disturbed, death ensues. When can a person be considered dead? Death takes place when the nerve cells, nerve fibres, heart and lungs cease to function. The nerve cells continue to

function for some time after the breathing and heartbeat stop. During that period, all the accumulated memories stored in the subconscious layer of the mind rewind very fast like a roll of movie film and the sum total of those memories creates a panoramic view of the samskaras of this life. This is called *samskara darshana* or the vision of the sum total of one's samskaras. Finally, the combination of the samskaras creates an image in the mind, which is the last thought that a person has before the mind departs from the body. This image determines the type of body the dead person is going to get in the next life.

This process is not within the control of the dying person. In other words, one cannot decide what thought one will have before one's death, nor can the thought be infused from outside by the prayers of the people surrounding the dying person. At that stage, all the sensory organs have ceased to function, and no thought from the outside world can in any way affect the mind. Just now, when I asked Dasharath about the next life that the dead teacher from Bhagalpur was going to get, he saw the image that had been created in the mind of the teacher just before he died.

Occasionally, although the nerve fibres, the heart, and the lungs have stopped functioning, the nerve cells continue to function for some time longer. In this case, the doctor might pronounce the person dead, but actually he or she is only clinically dead and not truly dead. In a few rare instances, the clinically dead person may come back to life after two or three hours and in some extremely rare instances, it can happen even after two or three days. When this occurs due to an impulse from the brain, the other functions of the body may start up again. So it is only when the nerve cells stop functioning that the mind dissociates from the body, and then alone can the person be considered actually dead. The bodiless mind starts to search for a new body immediately after the mind dissociates from the body. This process of birth and death and rebirth continues until finally one becomes one with the Supreme Consciousness, which is the final goal of the entire creation.

There was a stunned silence amongst the Margis when Baba completed his discourse, which had been unusually long and laden with several valuable and hitherto unknown facts. This discourse provided them with a remarkable insight into the cycle of action, life, death, and rebirth and the processes behind it.

Altering Samskara

Although all the Eastern philosophies speak of the inviolability of the law of karma, with the grace of Sadguru even the law of Nature governing the cycle of action and reaction can be overcome. At different times, Baba gave nuggets of information about how samskaras function. One of the things he often discussed was how on occasion he changed the samskaras of his disciples either by absorbing them and undergoing them himself or by neutralizing them. There were innumerable instances of this. There were also quite a few cases where Baba actually changed a person's samskaras. This second process involved changing the samskaras of other people as well. For example there was an extraordinary instance in Nagina's life that was widely known to the Margis, which threw some light on how Baba modified the samskaras of members of a family in different ways. Nagina recounted part of that incident in an interview:

When I was posted in Begusarai, my daughter Manju developed a peculiar problem. If any of her wishes were not fulfilled, her face would turn bright red. Then it would contort, as if boiling anger had exploded somewhere deep inside her, creating deep furrows in her face, and shortly afterwards she would faint. I consulted several doctors but they could not understand what the problem was and just said that as the child grew up, she would become normal. During one Field Walk, I informed Baba about Manju's problem and what the doctors had said about it. Baba said that the doctors were wrong. He said that if her condition did not improve after some time, she would become mentally retarded.

I became very concerned and asked, "Baba, what kind of life will she have as a mentally retarded person?"

“Don’t worry. Give her a bath by completely immersing her either in a river or a pond or in a tub. If you do it for three days, she will be temporarily cured, and if you continue for thirty days, she will be permanently cured.”

Baba paused for a while and then assured me, “Nagina, you will not suffer the pain of the death of a child.”

In Begusarai there was no pond where we could bathe her as per Baba’s instructions. I searched continuously for more than a month for a tub big enough to immerse Manju in. Although I couldn’t find a tub, there was a radical change in Manju. From the day I talked to Baba about her, the problem stopped and did not recur. Thinking that she had been cured permanently by Baba’s grace, I gave up looking for the tub.

About two months elapsed. Then one day, one of my bosses came to Begusarai, and the next morning I went to see him off at the station. As the train was late, I had to wait at the station until about twelve noon. I thought I would go home and take lunch there before going to the office. As I approached my house, I saw that many people had gathered outside, and a number of my office colleagues were among them. One of them came running over to me. Holding my hand he said that Manju had died.

His words struck me with the force of a thunderbolt. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing, as she had not been suffering from any major illness. Shocked and infuriated, I asked him what nonsense he was uttering. He repeated the same thing and said that they heard about it when someone came to the office looking for me. I dashed into the house and saw many neighbours milling around with dark, sombre faces. Some of them tried to comfort me. I suddenly remembered Baba’s categorical assurance about two months before that I would not suffer the pain of a child’s death, so how could this be true?

I screamed, “No, it can’t be true. It can’t be true. Baba, you said that I would not suffer the pain of a child’s death. I

thought that even Yama, the god of death, obeys your command, so how can this happen? No, it can't be true." Shouting like a madman I raced through the house and asked the people there where Manju was. They pointed at a table where she was lying motionless covered with a white sheet. The image of death was devastating. I rushed over to her wailing "Manju, Manju".

Suddenly, Manju sat up crying "Father, father," and the sheet fell off her. I ran over and embraced her. Holding her tightly, I cried, "My Manju is not dead. She is alive. My Manju is alive. Baba has brought her back from the clutches of Yama."

Everybody gathered there was stunned. I held Manju tightly in my arms. Seeing this miraculous recovery from death's door, the doctor who had attended to Manju immediately wrote a prescription and instructed a colleague of mine to rush to the pharmacy and bring those medicines. Meanwhile, our household assistant told me that my wife, Usha Devi, was lying senseless in the next room. I carried Manju to her and revived her by sprinkling water on her face. As soon as she returned to her senses, she saw Manju and took her on her lap, crying uncontrollably.

Later, I was told that two doctors from the neighbourhood had checked Manju and declared her dead. Several others had also checked her and confirmed that she was dead. Everyone present was convinced that a great miracle had taken place. Once the din died down and the situation in the house returned to normal, I told my wife that we should immediately follow Baba's instructions regarding Manju and get a tub from somewhere, so that we could immerse her in water daily for a month. After a search, we managed to find a tub and followed Baba's instructions to the letter. With that, Manju's problems disappeared forever and she grew up to be a perfectly normal child.

A few years later, Harivansh Jha, an inspector of customs and central excise and a colleague of Nagina, asked Baba for an explanation regarding the mystery surrounding this incident.

“Actually speaking, Manju was destined to have only a short life,” Baba explained. “When Nagina brought her condition to my attention, I knew that she would become mentally retarded and die after a few years of suffering. I thought that after he had requested my help, it would not be proper for her to suffer such a fate at this young age, so I decided to do something about it. Various people’s samskaras had to be altered – Manju’s, Nagina’s, his wife Usha’s and those of some other members of the family. I assured Nagina that he would not suffer the loss of a child and prescribed a very unconventional treatment for Manju, but even that Nagina did not carry out.

“Then Nature arranged the episode of Manju’s premature death while Nagina was away from the house for an extended period. She exhausted her samskara to die in that manner. Manju was actually clinically dead, and her breathing and heartbeat had stopped, but her nerve cells had not stopped functioning.

“Usha’s samskara to suffer the pain of her daughter’s death was exhausted in the couple of hours that she suffered after hearing about Manju’s death. The same was the case of the other family members. However, as I had completely removed Nagina’s samskara to suffer the death of a child, Manju revived just when Nagina entered the room.”

The Margis were amazed to learn about the mysteries surrounding the intricate play of samskaras and Baba’s power to alter them at will as if he were the Cosmic Controller.

Failing to Keep the Vow

Generally, Baba did not change the samskaras of a Margi without imposing certain terms and conditions. Most of those he helped were actively working to spread the Marga ideology. In the case of the less active followers, they were required to agree to practise sadhana strictly and to dedicate sufficient time for serving humanity and other living beings.

Nripen Bhattacharya of Guwahati was suffering from epilepsy when he came for Personal Contact in Jamalpur. During his Personal Contact Baba said, “Gaurishankar, did I not tell you that you would come back again in human form?” Nripen wondered why Baba

addressed him as Gaurishankar. Then Baba showed Nripen his left palm. In Baba's palm he saw the image of a person rolling around a *Shiva linga* crying, "Save me, Shiva, save me, Shiva."

Clarifying it, Baba remarked, "This was you in your past life. You were a zamindar in Bengal. Your name was Gaurishankar. You treated people with great cruelty and sometimes would even strangle those who could not pay their taxes in full. In the latter part of your life, you realised that you had committed abominable crimes and repented your sins. Then in a nearby Shiva temple, you rolled on the ground around the Shiva linga asking for God's forgiveness for several days. Then one day you heard a voice inside you assuring you that you would come back again in human form and have the opportunity to become a good human being. I gave you that assurance from within your mind. This is your chance. Your epilepsy is also the consequence of your past actions. Now tell me, do you want to be free from this disease?"

"Yes, Baba, I want it so much," replied Nripen.

"All right. From this moment live the life of an ideal human being and make proper use of the human frame you have been given by divine grace. It was because of your sincere repentance that you have gained a human body in this life and have been blessed with the spiritual path as well. Make proper use of these blessings."

Then Baba directed him to place his hand on his chest and take a vow: "I promise that from this moment, I will shun the bad company I have been keeping. I promise that I will practise sadhana very strictly and perform service to every single human being."

After Nripen had taken the vow, Baba blessed him by touching his forehead and said that 75% of his epilepsy had been cured and that the remaining 25% would be cured if he strictly adhered to the vow he had taken. Baba also warned him that if he deviated from the spiritual path, the disease would return.

Nripen became very strict in his sadhana and did a lot of social service. Just as Baba had assured, he did not suffer from epilepsy again. A few years later, however, he gradually fell into bad company again in Guwahati and consequently drifted from the spiritual path. To justify his downfall, Nripen started to criticise Ananda Marga. The disease that had disappeared for some years recurred. One day, while taking a bath in his house, he suddenly suffered a severe

epileptic seizure and fell into the large water storage tank in the bathroom and drowned.

Rescued from Death

There were innumerable incidents during which Baba altered his disciples' samskaras. He performed this remarkable spiritual feat only to motivate his disciples to actively work for humanity.

One incident in which Baba changed the samskara of an active Margi and several other people occurred in early March 1962. At that time, there was a strike by the railway employees of the Jamalpur Workshop. To break the strike, the government arrested and detained several employees of the workshop.

Amulyaratan and Kedarnath were worried that Baba would also be detained and so came to Jamalpur with the intention of inviting Baba to Ranchi to save him from possible detention. Baba declined, saying that as the striking workers often came to consult him on various matters, he could not leave Jamalpur. He asked them to return in a week's time, as the strike would be over by then. Exactly a week later the strike ended. As proposed, Kedarnath and Amulyaratan came by car to take Baba to Ranchi.

As they were leaving Jamalpur they saw Dasharath by the roadside. Baba directed them to pull over and instructed Dasharath to get into the car. Dasharath obeyed without question. As they were driving, Dasharath thought that Baba wanted him to accompany them for a short distance only. However, only when Baba said that he wanted Dasharath to come to Ranchi for some work, it dawned on him that he was accompanying them all the way. He felt concerned because he had neither informed his family about his sudden departure nor applied for leave from work. However, as he was in Baba's company, he was determined not to dwell on these concerns.

When they reached Ranchi, Baba said, "Dasharath, you have to stay here until I leave."

This added to Dasharath's worries. He therefore sent a telegram to his family informing them of his absence. He followed it up with a letter explaining the circumstances for his sudden departure and providing information about his whereabouts. He also enclosed an application for leave to be delivered to his school authorities.

The next morning, Baba went on an archeological and anthropological tour of the valley of the Suvarnarekha River about seventy kilometres from Ranchi, visiting several villages on the way. As they walked along the banks of the river, Baba said, "This is one of the most ancient lands on earth. It is in this place that the earliest human beings first took birth about a million years ago. The land was so conducive to life that people did not have to migrate to other places in search of food. Anthropological research can find evidence of an unbroken chain of evolution in the valleys of the Suvarnarekha, Kamsavati, Rupnarayan, Damodar and various other rivers of Rarh. No other area in the world has been able to provide sustenance for its people for such a long period as this land of Rarh. Even today, you will find traces of the people of different periods who lived in all these valleys, and many remnants and archaeological artifacts lie hidden beneath the soil throughout the entire area, waiting to be discovered. In the future, archaeologists will find all this evidence¹."

Baba took the Margis to see the ruins of several one-to-two thousand-year-old Jain temples that were scattered around the area. He described the temple architecture and explained the meaning of the *mudras* or hand gestures of the gods and goddesses that were elegantly carved in the walls of the ruins. He also gave a detailed description of the anthropological history of various groups of people who had lived in the area. Recalling those tours, Amulyaratan remarked that Baba's talks were fascinating to say the least. He and the other Margis who were part of the tour had never imagined that history, geology and anthropology, usually considered dreary topics, could be made so interesting and lively. They thoroughly enjoyed it even though the tour was long and gruelling and spanned several days.

Five days into the tour, however, Dasharath fell seriously ill and was bedridden. Baba's tour continued for a few more days and finally, after a stay of ten days, he left for Jamalpur in Kedarnath's car. By

¹ In 1981 Baba delivered a series of thirty-one discourses entitled '*Rarh – the Cradle of Civilisation*' in which he provided much more information about the history of those places starting three hundred million years ago, and about the continuous chain of human settlements along the various rivers of Rarh. In 2003, a team of archeologists from Calcutta University excavated part of the Suvarnarekha riverbank and discovered a significant number of historical artifacts of ancient human settlements from several different periods, dating back as far as one million years.

then, Dasharath had recovered and so he accompanied Baba. On reaching Jamalpur Baba told him, "Dasharath, there was an important reason why I took you with me without giving you time to inform your family. Actually you were destined to die of food poisoning in Jamalpur while I was away. So I took you with me to Ranchi. I changed your fate and instead made you undergo an illness lasting for four days. Your family would have suffered a certain amount of pain if you had died. They did not receive your communication from Ranchi. Your telegram did not arrive because the person whom you had entrusted with the job of sending it wrote the address incorrectly. Your letter also did not arrive because of a mistake on the part of the Postal Department. But the actual reason was that your family had to suffer the pain caused by your death. That samskara has now been exhausted by a few days of suffering the anguish of thinking that you have died in an accident. Go home immediately and tell them everything."

Just as Dasharath was leaving Baba said, "As your leave application was also not delivered, you have been away from your job without prior notice. Meet me later and I will tell you what to write so that no action will be taken against you."

The next morning before Dasharath left for work, Baba dictated the letter to him explaining the reason for his absence from work without prior notice. The headmaster accepted the explanatory note and no action was taken against him.

New Definition of Sin

Baba did not agree with the traditional view that a violation of scriptural injunctions was a sin. He also rejected the idea that the performance of rituals as ordained by the scriptures is virtue. Baba's interpretation of sin was straightforward - doing harm to others by thought, word or deed. This added a new dimension to the concept of sin.

Baba explained his views in a discourse, saying, "*Papa* is a general term. It has two meanings. I would say that any action that harms other humans or any other creature or an action that obstructs their evolution and progress is a sin or *papa*. In Sanskrit, there is a word *pratyavaya* which has a similar but not identical meaning. In common parlance, we use the term *papa* to mean both *papa* and *pratyavaya*, which refer to different types of sin. In English, it can be

loosely said that the violation of proscriptions is *papa* and the failure to follow prescriptions is *pratyavaya*. Broadly speaking, to fail to carry out one's prescribed social duty is *pratyavaya*. As a human being living in society, certain things are expected of everyone. You have some duties towards your fellow beings, and they are called *vidhi* (prescription) in Sanskrit. To go against such commandments is *pratyavaya*. For example, everyone should help a person in distress. Not to do so is *pratyavaya*. Other examples include feeding the poor, serving the sick and raising your voice against those who exploit the weak. These are all *vidhi* or positive orders. You should serve the sick but when you fail to serve them for any reason, then you are going against a particular commandment. As a human being you should always serve people in need. To violate this principle is *pratyavaya*. If you do not serve a person in distress, you are committing *pratyavaya*.

Conversely, in society, you are prohibited from doing certain actions and that is called *nisheda* (proscription) in Sanskrit. An action that goes against *nisheda* is *papa*. There are some things that society prohibits you from doing, but you do them anyway. That is also called *papa* or sin. Don't steal; don't cheat others; don't do any harm to anyone – these are all part of the social code, and to violate that code of proscriptions is *papa*. In English, we can say that *papa* is an act of commission and *pratyavaya* is an act of omission. Nowhere in the world is *pratyavaya* or an act of omission treated as an offence in legal jurisprudence. But from a spiritual standpoint, *pratyavaya* is more abominable than *papa*.”

Baba emphasised the duty of human beings in several discourses. “Human beings have a responsibility towards society because they live, grow and derive their sustenance from society. But as travellers along the spiritual path, you have greater responsibility towards society, as the clarion call of the Supreme Entity has awakened your consciousness. So you should not be self-centred, just thinking about your own future. You should not be insensitive to the suffering of others. I don't want to see you thinking about your own spiritual development alone. You will be recipients of God's grace only if you serve all living beings in every possible way. The progress you experience in your spiritual life is directly proportional to the amount of service you render to other living beings. As a *sadhaka*, you should always feel the pain of others as your own pain.”

Thus Baba made social service an integral part of Ananda Marga's sadhana. A sadhaka should feel the pain of others as their own pain.

Baba illustrated the concept of pratyavaya through numerous examples. Once during an evening Field Walk in the spring of 1959, some Margis were sitting with Baba on the Tiger's Grave. Samarendra Yadav, a young man with a muscular body from a village in Dhanbad district, was one of those present. Bhuvaneshvari, the veterinarian, had initiated him about a year earlier. Coincidentally, Bhuvaneshvari was also present that evening.

During the course of his discussion, Baba suddenly turned to Samarendra and burst out, "You boy, you are responsible for the death of a person."

Samarendra was stunned by the sudden outburst. "Why is Baba making such a charge against me?" he wondered.

After a short pause Baba continued, "You may not be guilty before the eyes of the law, but you are guilty from the viewpoint of Dharma."

Samarendra did not understand what Baba was alluding to, as he could not recall any incident where he had been responsible for the death of a person.

Baba elaborated, "Six months ago, while you were on your way home from Dhanbad, you saw two people assaulting a trader. He was shouting desperately for help but nobody, including you, went to his rescue. You knew that the trader was being assaulted, yet you decided to look the other way instead of saving him from his assailants."

"Baba, they were armed with knives. They would have attacked me too if I had gone to defend him," Samarendra said in self-defence.

"You could have picked up stones from the street and thrown at them. Did you not feel several times a strong urge to do so?"

Samarendra nodded in agreement.

"You also thought of organising the public who were mute witnesses to the crime and rescuing the person. Isn't it a fact?"

Samarendra again nodded.

“Then why did you not do it? Due to fear, isn’t it?”

Again Samarendra nodded.

“Even after the assailants ran away, you did nothing to help the injured man. You should have taken him to the hospital for treatment immediately. He later died because medical assistance was delayed. I hold you partially responsible for the death of that trader. You behaved like a coward. Your behaviour was not worthy of a human being, much less a Margi.”

Samarendra was stunned by Baba’s disclosure of an incident that had happened several months earlier. He was also deeply embarrassed.

Turning to Samarendra’s acharya, Baba asked, “Is it not to be expected that a human being will come to the assistance of a person in trouble? What do you say, Bhuvaneshvari?”

“Yes, Baba.”

“Suppose one evening you come home tired after work. A villager comes running to you desperately seeking your help to treat his seriously ailing cow. What will you do? Will you rush to help the hapless villager or will you tell him that you are tired and ask him to come back tomorrow?”

Bhuvaneshvari did not reply, as Baba was referring to an actual incident that had happened just a few weeks ago. The scene flashed across his mind’s eye. One evening after a hard day’s work, he was resting at home when a poor villager from a nearby village came and requested Bhuvaneshvari to immediately accompany him to his village to treat his cow that was in urgent need of attention. As he was exhausted, Bhuvaneshvari said that he would only be able to visit the village the next day. The poor villager was virtually in tears as he pleaded with him to come and treat the sick cow. Bhuvaneshvari, however, refused to go. The cow died sometime in the night.

By then Bhuvaneshvari realised that Baba was pointing to his mistake in failing to attend to the sick cow. Baba then explained the disease the cow was suffering from, as well as the treatment that should have been administered to save it. Bhuvaneshvari was surprised at Baba’s detailed knowledge of veterinary science. While marvelling at Baba’s omniscience, he felt a sharp pang of guilt for failing in his duty as a veterinary doctor.

Baba continued, "Timely treatment could have saved the cow, which was an important source of livelihood for the family of that poor villager. It is natural for every human being to have some expectations from his fellow human beings. It is the bounden duty of every human being to help those in need or in distress. Failure to perform one's duty is pratyavaya. And I will say that pratyavaya is more serious than papa or sin as it is generally understood."

On another evening Field Walk in April 1960, Baba was sitting on the Tiger's Grave with some Margis discussing various subjects. Acharya Ram Prasad, a block development officer, and Acharya Suresh Prasad, a government doctor posted in North Bihar, were among those present. Baba was talking about a Margi's responsibility towards society. He explained that a Margi, as a sadhaka and a follower of the sublime ideology of Ananda Marga, has a great responsibility to ensure the welfare of society. He added that an acharya has a greater responsibility to society than a Margi. An acharya has to lead by example, i.e. guide others by setting an example through his personal conduct.

After explaining various aspects of the conduct of an acharya, Baba asked, "Did everyone understand what I have just said?"

The Margis replied that they understood what he said and would follow his instructions strictly from then on. Then Baba turned to the two acharyas present and asked them if their behaviour reflected the standard of conduct expected of an acharya. Both of them cringed and did not reply.

Annoyed by their silence, Baba pressed them, "I want a clear answer from you."

As they were compelled to say something, they replied that they were trying hard to live according to the norms and values of an acharya and would try seriously to be exemplary acharyas in the future.

"What do you say, Ram Prasad? Is what you did about three months ago in keeping with the conduct of an acharya?"

At first Ram Prasad did not understand what Baba was referring to. Baba then took his stick and gently tapped his head and asked, "Now do you remember what I am talking about?"

Suddenly, an incident flashed in Ram Prasad's mind and he said, "Yes, Baba, now I understand."

"When that poor widow came to you seeking your help, why did you treat her so harshly?"

Ram Prasad did not answer.

"Knowing well her pathetic condition, why did you not show any sympathy to her? Did you forget that the government gives you a salary to help people? More than anyone else, it is the needy whom you have to serve."

Again Ram Prasad kept quiet.

"As a government officer and the highest ranking officer in the block, and even more so as an acharya, you were duty-bound to help a person in trouble, but you did not do anything to help the widow. Do you know how much the poor woman suffered because of your negligence? By not helping a woman in great need, you are guilty of pratyavaya. It is more serious than papa."

Ram Prasad regretted his mistake and immediately apologised, assuring Baba that he would be more careful in the future and would not repeat his mistake.

Baba was not satisfied with his reply and said, "It is not sufficient to say that you will not do so in the future. Immediately after going back, call that woman and undo the injustice you have done to her. You should not hesitate to help her even if you have to break government regulations or incur someone's displeasure for this. I will protect you. Do you understand?"

"Yes Baba, I realise my mistake. As soon as I return I will see that justice is done to that poor woman."

"The samskara that one accrues due to pratyavaya is terrible." Baba paused for a while before continuing, "Do you remember that sickly dog that used to roam around your neighbour's house? You got your orderly to bury it when it died recently?"

"Yes Baba. It was very sick and was always hanging around near my quarters."

"Do you want to see what it was in its previous life?"

"Yes, Baba."

Baba gently touched his forehead with the stick. "Tell me what you see."

"I see a very fat man getting his body massaged by two people. From the appearance of his house, it appears that he is a wealthy person."

Baba said, "Not just wealthy. He was a very, very wealthy person. He was a Marwari businessman from Calcutta. He had his business establishments in several parts of North India and Nepal. Do you know what caused his pathetic condition in his next life? He was guilty of *pratyavaya*. Even though he earned a huge amount of money, he never helped anyone in need. On his instruction, his guards would drive away people coming to him for help. He was very stingy with his workers too. But when it came to his own life, he had a very lavish lifestyle. That is why I often say that every human being has a responsibility towards all his fellow beings. God has created this world for everyone, not only for human beings but also for all other living beings. To behave in a manner that violates this fundamental truth is *papa* as well as *pratyavaya*."

As Baba spoke to Ramprasad, Dr. Suresh reflected upon his own conduct, how on several occasions he had been guilty of the wilful dereliction of duty as a doctor and of his failure to help people in distress. He understood that he had also committed serious mistakes and mentally asked for Baba's forgiveness. As atonement for his sins, he took a vow to devote a part of his life to providing free medical service to the needy.

After finishing with Ramprasad, Baba turned to Dr Suresh² and said, "So I think you too have understood? Maintain your vow."

"Yes Baba, I will."

On various occasions, Baba impressed upon the Margis the need to carry out their duty towards other living beings. He often reminded them that as *sadhakas* and as human beings with developed consciousness, they had greater responsibility for the well-being of all living creatures.



² In the latter part of his life, Dr. Suresh spent some years in the Ananda Marga centre in Calcutta offering free medical service to the poor.

CHAPTER 40

Yama-Niyama - The Foundation of Morality

Since the inception of Ananda Marga, Baba stressed the importance of following yama-niyama, the yogic moral code. It is composed of ten principles which are rigorous and it was hard for the Margis to follow them in the then prevailing social conditions where corruption was rife. Baba was fully cognizant of the Margis' shortcomings and kept a close watch on their moral conduct. They were keenly aware of this, as well as the fact that Baba would instantly know of their slightest deviation from the path of morality.

A good number of the early initiates worked in the Police, the Customs & Central Excise, the Income Tax, and the Public Works Departments, which were considered by the public to be among the most corrupt government departments in the country. Several high-ranking officials from the Indian Administrative Service and other government agencies were also initiated into the sadhana of Ananda Marga, and some of them became acharyas.

To emphasise the need for yama-niyama, Baba regularly exposed the moral failings of the Margis and dealt with them according to the gravity of their violation. In serious cases, he punished the offender either publicly or in the privacy of Personal Contact. Nothing escaped his two eyes. The Margis were always on guard to ensure that their conduct met Baba's strict criteria and took pains to rectify any lapses. Many of them also faced daunting challenges as a result, such as the hostility of corrupt colleagues and other government officials, who felt threatened by their exemplary conduct. Another challenge for some Margis was the temptation to acquire wealth by immoral means, which on occasion overcame their better judgement and moral sense. They soon found out that leading an exemplary life based on morality was no easy task.

Because of the Margis' strict adherence to yama-niyama, the public developed a positive attitude towards Ananda Marga and

generally considered the Margis to be incorruptible. Those Margis who did not follow the moral code were afraid to face Baba and gradually distanced themselves from Ananda Marga. To encourage all the Margis to adopt an ethical lifestyle, Baba would inspire them thus, “You must have a flaming moral purpose so that greed, oppression and exploitation shrivel before the fire in you.”

Yama-Niyama Is a Constant Endeavour

Poor salaries and widespread poverty was a significant factor in the development of a culture of corruption in India. Some newly-initiated Margis found it difficult to adhere to the uncompromising moral standards Baba expected of them. They considered adherence to the principle of honesty to be an obstacle to a better life, and this attitude clouded their moral sense. Some acharyas observed that the requirement to strictly follow yama-niyama actually discouraged people from joining Ananda Marga.

Realising the difficulty that such moral intransigence posed for the propagation of Ananda Marga, Acharya Vishvanath concluded that the best way to attract people to the mission would be for Baba to become easily accessible to the public like other gurus. He thought that if people listened to Baba’s discourses and saw the amazing demonstrations, they would automatically be inspired to take initiation and become good Margis. However, it was very difficult for the public to gain access to Baba. One had to learn meditation, then practise it and also follow certain conduct rules before being allowed to attend DMC. So once during an evening Field Walk, Vishvanath suggested to Baba that if he permitted people to attend his discourses without having to be initiated, they would come in large numbers. He contended that once they came in contact with Baba, they would automatically be inspired by his divine personality and become Margis.

Baba smiled at his innocent suggestion and said, “Vishvanath, there are two reasons why I do not appear in public. I have already said on previous occasions that if the public sees me doing spiritual demonstrations, it will create huge propaganda about me, and large numbers of people will always be crowding around me with many

worldly requests. This will prevent me from doing the work that I have come to do on this planet.”

“Baba, what is the work that will be impeded by so many people gathering around you?”

“I have come to give many things to this world that will help society progress for several thousand years. I want to enrich every sphere of human knowledge before I leave.”

“Then how will the people in general know about you and your teachings?”

“That will happen after I leave this world.”

As Vishvanath mulled over Baba’s words, Baba interrupted, “Vishvanath, you have seen several people go into a spiritual trance in my presence. That is due to the awakening of their kundalini. If someone who is not practising sadhana gets such abnormal experiences, they may even become mentally imbalanced.”

Vishvanath was not convinced by Baba’s arguments. He thought, “Baba is just making excuses. He regularly comes in contact with scores of people in the office, and they don’t go into a trance. So if they attended DMC or General Darshan, why would they go into a trance?”

Baba interrupted his thoughts saying, “Vishvanath, there is a big difference between the vibrations that I emanate in the office and during General Darshan or DMC. In the office I am just another colleague, and I perform the duty that is expected of me. But when I am with you all, I function as guru. I love and punish you and sometimes I am extremely fierce. Without them being aware of it, I absorb the Margis’ samskaras when I see that it is difficult for them to carry the burden of their past actions. I also keep a constant watch on all of you, wherever you are. I constantly emanate spiritual vibrations which resonate in all your chakras and affect your hormonal secretions. I purify the different layers of your mind so that when any of you come to me, you experience spiritual bliss. That awakens many people’s kundalini and they become slightly abnormal. Some laugh, some cry loudly, and others weep, while yet others make

sounds like ‘hum’. That is why I said that when I am amongst you all, I am not the same person as when I’m in the office or at home.”

Vishvanath understood. “Yes Baba. We can see that you are very different when you are with us, and many of us have been amazed at how perfectly you play different roles in different places.”

Suddenly Baba stopped walking, looked at Vishvanath and asked, “Do you want to know the secret of how I do it? The secret is that I give a hundred percent to whatever role I perform, and there is absolutely no ambiguity in what I think, say and do.”

With these words he continued to walk towards the Tiger’s Grave. After they sat down, Vishvanath started to massage Baba’s feet and occasionally got a whiff of the spiritually intoxicating fragrance they emitted. “How nice it would be if ordinary people could know about this great guru,” he thought as the fragrance wafted into his nostrils. He had tried to convince many people about the benefits of meditation. However, while they said they liked the sadhana of Ananda Marga, they found it difficult to follow yama-niyama. Some of them even commented that it would be difficult to survive in society if they followed it strictly. He had often thought that if like other gurus Baba did not include yama-niyama as a compulsory part of sadhana, many people would join the Marga. He felt that this was the right opportunity to ask Baba about it. Mustering his courage, he said, “Baba, I have another request to make. Kindly consider it.”

“What is it, Vishvanath?”

“There is one more obstacle to our *prachar* work. Many people are eager to learn meditation, but are put off by their inability to follow yama-niyama. Can the requirement of strict adherence to yama-niyama be relaxed so that more people could become Margis?”

Baba remained silent for some time. Then, heaving a deep sigh, he said, “Vishvanath, I want to show you something. Bring your forehead close to my right foot and press my toe on your forehead.”

Vishvanath bent down and did as directed. Suddenly, he felt his mind expanding and was instantly transported to a distant town.

“What do you see?” Baba asked after a short pause.

“Baba, I can see a narrow lane lined with shops.”

“Do you recognise the place? You have seen it many times in your younger days.”

Vishvanath tried hard to remember, but could not identify the place.

“Go down the lane. Now what do you see?”

“I can see a temple. Now I recognise the place. I am standing in front of the Vishvanath Temple in Varanasi. The lane I was walking along was Vishvanath Gali.”

“What do you see in front of the temple?”

“I see a lot of beggars sitting in a row.”

“Now what do you see?”

“I see two lepers whose faces are completely disfigured and whose fingers and toes have dropped off due to the advanced state of their disease.”

“I will show you the past lives of these two people.”

Baba paused for a while and then asked, “What can you see now?”

“I can see two white-skinned people. One has a wig on his head and the other, from his aristocratic demeanour, appears to be a high level official.”

“Both of them were from England. The one with the wig was a judge and the other was a commissioner posted in India. The judge accepted bribes for favourable verdicts in several cases, while the commissioner was debauched. He cheated on his faithful and loving wife, who was a very simple-minded lady. What they are suffering in this life is the consequence of their immoral conduct in their past life. Do you still say that I should relax my strictness regarding yama-niyama and allow the people who come to me to suffer such a fate? People who violate yama-niyama may even regress to an earlier evolutionary stage and be reborn as animals, birds, insects, plants or even as much less evolved organisms. Haven't you seen the dog which was the relative of Dasharath in its previous life? The cause of

his degeneration was that he led an immoral life. Large numbers of people today regress to an earlier stage of evolution and are reborn as animals, birds or other creatures.

“Because sadhakas have a developed understanding about what is proper and what is not, Nature punishes their mistakes even more severely. Do you want Margis who do not follow moral principles to degenerate and be reborn in lower forms of life?”

“No, Baba, no!” replied Vishvanath, shaking his head emphatically. “I will not make such a request again. Please forgive me.”

“Vishvanath, I want Ananda Marga to be a man-making mission and not a disciple-making mission. No good can come to society from people who do not follow the principles of morality. Those who think they can practise spirituality without following yama-niyama do not understand that sadhana is impossible for those who do not follow the moral code. People who do not follow the principles of morality cannot steady their minds sufficiently to do the sadhana of the Supreme Consciousness. So morality is a fundamental prerequisite for spirituality, and those who don't follow yama-niyama will eventually stop doing their sadhana anyway.

“Immoral people can't do any good in the world, and, despite all their high-sounding talks, they cause immense damage to society. If people whom society depends upon for guidance commit even a small mistake, its repercussions will be enormous. You see, if the foundation of a building is weak, it can cause structural damage to the whole building. One day their immoral deeds will be publicly exposed and will cause incalculable harm to the collective social psyche. So the ideology of Ananda Marga depends on sadvipras who are strong, spiritually minded moralists. Vishvanath, I foresee that the leading personalities of the society of tomorrow will be people who are guided by a rational philosophy and a sadhana based on the principles of morality.”

The Need for Morality

According to Baba, morality is a benevolent and dynamic force. It is not static. In a certain place during a particular period, a distinct form of morality may evolve to maintain balance in that specific social and natural setting. As the environment changes, the needs and

priorities of society also change. Thus, in order to maintain the balance in society, amendments to the moral code are occasionally required. The moral principles that evolve in a particular environment or at a certain point in time should not be allowed to become dogmas that stunt the rational thinking of people and shackle their minds.

The concept of morality was first introduced by Lord Shiva, who also propounded the system of Tantra for the spiritual development of the people of his time. He considered the practice of morality an essential part of spiritual life alongside asanas, mudras, tandava, pranayama, etc., as it makes the mind pure and clear and helps to accelerate spiritual progress. In that undeveloped society over 7000 years ago, Shiva taught people how to develop simple moral qualities such as *sadhuta*, i.e. simplicity and honesty, *saralata*, i.e. straightforwardness, *tejasvita*, i.e. indomitable, lustrous spiritedness, and *sama-samaja tattva*, i.e. to love and treat everyone equally without discrimination.

In several talks Baba gave about Lord Shiva, he said that people considered Shiva to be an embodiment of these qualities. At the time of Shiva, India was a cauldron of racial conflicts between the Aryans, Mongoloids, Austriacs, and Austriaco-Negroids or Dravidians. Through his teachings Shiva brought about social harmony in the deeply divided society of his time and laid the base for the spiritual development of the people. Thus, the importance of morality as an integral part of sadhana was recognised from the time of Shiva.

Baba commented about the morality of ancient India, saying that as the people's minds became increasingly complex with the passage of time, the moral principles governing society should have changed to keep pace with the increase in mental complexity. However, this did not occur. Three thousand five hundred years later Lord Krishna took birth in a more complex society where righteous people were still following a simple form of morality, although it was no longer suitable for the needs of the time. Furthermore, it was devoid of feelings of benevolence, and this made it difficult for Lord Krishna to establish a righteous society in India.

Lord Krishna understood that the simple morality of good people stood little chance before the unscrupulousness of the immoralists. He also knew that unless moral values were practical and guided by a spirit of welfare, they would not benefit society. So he taught that a righteous way of life should be based on a set of dynamic principles that were free from dogma. He therefore reformed the principles on which society's values were based, as they were overly simplistic and rigid, replacing the simple morality of the day with spiritual morality whose underlying spirit was the welfare of the people and the establishment of righteousness or Dharma. Through the Bhagavat Gita, Krishna preached the highest principles of morality and spirituality on the battlefield of Kurukshetra in order to inspire Arjuna to fight his immoral cousins and their allies. And on the battlefield itself, he set several examples of spiritual morality which were at variance with the prevailing principles of simple morality.

Defective Interpretations of Ahimsa

About a thousand years after Lord Krishna, during the post-Vedic era, new and highly impractical notions of morality developed. A case in point was the introduction of the moral codes prescribed by two of the world's great religions, Jainism and Buddhism. Their founders taught their disciples a set of moral principles to create social harmony and facilitate their spiritual progress. However, in time, the essence and purpose of the moral codes were taken to extremes. Gradually they lost their practical value due to the way they were interpreted by subsequent religious teachers, who turned morality into a set of rigid rituals and dogmas that neither helped society grow in a wholesome manner nor assisted people to progress in their sadhana.

The concept of ahimsa was at the heart of the teachings of the two religions. Vardhaman Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, included ahimsa as one of his five great vows of yama. He interpreted it as the complete abstention from causing any harm directly or indirectly to any living being, even under the most compelling circumstances. In due course, the interpretation and practice of ahimsa by the followers

of the two religions became increasingly impractical and sometimes even ludicrous. For example, Jains were discouraged from tilling the land because it would result in the death of many insects and worms. They were told that tilling the land was against the precepts of their religion and that they should employ lowborn labourers to do it for them so that they could remain free from the sin of destroying life.

Another example of the extreme behaviour that came into vogue at that time was the prohibition of killing disease-causing bed bugs. The twisted logic advanced in support of such a practice was that not sleeping on a bug-infested bed was tantamount to starving the bugs to death, and this was interpreted as a violation of ahimsa. To avoid violating ahimsa, the people from the higher castes forced low caste people to sleep on the bug-infested beds, so that the bugs would not die of starvation. People were also urged to wear facemasks to avoid killing air-borne microbes in the process of breathing. Before walking, they were required to sweep the street in front of them in order to avoid stepping on an insect or other creature.

Buddhism, which was founded around the same time as Jainism, propagated a similar unrealistic and defective doctrine of ahimsa. Such preposterous and impractical interpretations of ahimsa were practised in India for a long time, unnecessarily burdening ordinary people and causing them to fear the ahimsa-dominated religions. The result was obvious - the common people turned away from Dharma and adopted an atheistic outlook to ease the burden that such absurd interpretations of ahimsa imposed upon their lives.

More than 2000 years ago, the sage Patanjali, from Patun village in Burdwan District of Bengal, redefined the philosophy of Yoga in a treatise called 'Yogasutra'. In it, he reformulated the concept of morality and codified it into the principles of yama-niyama.

Long before Patanjali, yama was recognised as an integral part of spirituality. Patanjali's contribution to the development of the concept of morality was to add five new principles under the label niyama. Yama referred to the principles defining how a person should behave in society while the niyama principles described how to purify

one's internal world. While Patanjali's contribution was notable, he did not define these principles in depth, which later resulted in their misinterpretation.

One of the first major tasks Baba embarked upon after founding Ananda Marga was to redefine the ancient cardinal principles of yama-niyama, in order to remove the confusion created around them and to place them in a modern context. His definitions were logical and detailed. He called the treatise *Jivan Veda - A Guide to Human Conduct*.

Baba was, in fact, the first preceptor after Patanjali to do this. He repeatedly emphasised that morality was the foundation of all intuitional practices and pointed out that it should have a practical base in order to make the practice of Dharma or righteous living a realistic possibility. He stressed that impractical interpretations of Dharma were antithetical to its very spirit and should be discarded at all costs. In his view, flawed interpretations of ahimsa had done incalculable harm to society in the past, weakening it considerably.

He explained that the Mahabharata War that occurred nearly 3,500 years earlier had significantly depleted the warrior classes, and that against this backdrop the flawed interpretation of ahimsa propagated during the Buddhist and Jain periods had, predictably, sapped the fighting spirit of the non-warrior classes. This was a major reason for the conquest of India by different invaders over the next millennium. In Baba's opinion, a similar defective interpretation of ahimsa propagated more recently by some prominent leaders of the Indian independence movement had delayed India's independence from the British. He added that if it hadn't been for the revolutionary struggle of Subhash Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army, the independence of India and end of colonialism would have been further delayed by several years.

Baba's new interpretation of ahimsa was based on the idea of not causing intentional harm to any innocent creature through one's thoughts, words, or actions and was a complete departure from traditional thinking. He supported his argument by reasoning that in the performance of one's daily tasks it was impossible not to cause

harm to another creature and quoted the examples of ploughing the land to plant crops, and the act of breathing and taking medicines, all of which would invariably kill millions of insects, worms, microorganisms, germs, and protoplasmic cells. Whether or not one is aware of it, every action a person performs unintentionally results in the loss of life of innumerable microorganisms and living cells.

Baba contended that the use of physical force to defend one's country against an invader is also not against the spirit of ahimsa. To refrain from taking action would encourage the unfriendly country to intensify hostilities, which would increase the suffering of countless innocent people. The same applies to individuals. Baba further elaborated the point by saying that killing animals, birds, and fish for food violated ahimsa, as people could subsist on less developed forms of life such as vegetables and grains. He explained that although plants are also alive, the amount of pain they suffer is minimal, as their consciousness is not as developed as that of an animal. Baba then pointed out that potentially harmful creatures often live in areas inhabited by humans and may therefore pose a threat to their survival. Naturally, the humans need to take measures to protect themselves from those creatures. Even the use of physical force in such cases will not violate the spirit of ahimsa because the intention is not to cause injury or harm to them, but to prevent them from harming people. However, hunting animals in the forest is certainly a violation of ahimsa, as the forest is their natural habitat. Baba elucidated this principle clearly by quoting various examples.

The Right of All Living Beings

Ramkumar, the cousin of Aniruddha from Trimohan, was returning home one evening along a narrow path in a bushy area. On the way he saw a poisonous snake with raised hood blocking his way. Since rocks flanked the path on both sides, he could not take a detour. Gripped by fear, he cried out loudly, "Baba! Baba!" To his surprise, the snake slithered into a nearby hole underneath a rock. Ramkumar then took a stick and attacked the snake, killing it, before continuing on his journey.

A few days later, Baba was passing through Bhagalpur Station by train on his way to Calcutta. As the train stopped, Baba saw Ramkumar standing at a distance. He asked Acharya Krishnananda, who was standing near the window of his compartment, to bring Ramkumar into the coach. Krishnananda and Ramkumar entered Baba's coach and paid their respects to him. Baba then asked Ramkumar, "That evening you took my name and when the snake let you pass, why did you kill it?"

The image of the venomous snake blocking his path flashed before Ramkumar's mind. He was astonished that Baba was referring to an incident that had occurred several days ago when he was walking home alone on a lonely village path. As he didn't know what to say, he remained silent.

"After you took my name, the snake let you pass. It neither posed a threat to you, nor did it block your path. Still you beat that innocent creature with a stick and killed it. See the consequences of your action."

Baba partially lifted one side of his upper garment exposing part of his back. Several red marks were visible on his back. He explained, "I had to save the snake from the pain of your blows and instead took the pain on my own back."

Seeing this, tears welled up in both Ramkumar's and Krishnananda's eyes. Ramkumar immediately dropped to his knees and held Baba's feet, crying.

"When you go into an area which is the natural abode of snakes, you are the trespasser. No one should kill it there, even if it is a dangerous creature. In the wild, animals are in their natural habitat and human beings are intruders. Their right to exist in their natural environment is inviolable."

Ramkumar continued to wail. "Baba, what a sin I have committed. Please give me the punishment that I deserve for this."

Baba gently patted his head and said, "Calm down, Ramkumar. Then and there I took the samskara of your action upon myself. Be free from the feeling of guilt. But in order to purify your mind, for

the next week offer half of your daily food to birds and other living beings. From now on, be kind to all creatures, including dangerous ones like snakes. You can kill them only if they threaten your life. Otherwise you will be violating the code of ahimsa.”

Misinterpretation of Brahmacharya

Another principle of morality that had suffered from gross misinterpretation was brahmacharya, which had been erroneously interpreted to mean celibacy. This flawed interpretation had deterred many people from performing sadhana. To correct the flaw, Baba proffered a rational definition of brahmacharya. According to him, the real spirit of brahmacharya is to see all living and non-living entities as different expressions of the Supreme Consciousness. When this is done properly, the unit mind resonates with the cosmic mind, and the person's every action is transformed into a spiritual action due to his or her constant ideation on the Supreme Entity. As a result, his or her spiritual progress is greatly accelerated.

Baba extended the practice of brahmacharya by introducing a special process called *madhuvidya*, a yogic method of ascribing godhood to every action. This is the second lesson of the Ananda Marga sadhana and aims at preventing people from accumulating the reactions of their actions, both good and bad. Madhuvidya thus makes it possible for a spiritual aspirant to attain liberation even while leading a worldly life. Ahimsa was traditionally considered the most important aspect of yama sadhana. However, Baba laid special emphasis on brahmacharya, as it brings the mind close to Brahma, the Supreme Entity.

Baba's definition of certain principles of yama-niyama also reflected the spirit of spiritual morality. He constantly stressed the strict adherence to it, and in some cases he took corrective measures if he saw the Margis straying from the path of yama-niyama.

Monitoring the Moral Standard

When Baba corrected the Margis' mistakes through various forms of punishment, it had an immediate, uplifting effect on them.

In July 1961, Baba went to Betiah in North Bihar to conduct a DMC, stopping on the way in Patna. A darshan was arranged at noon in a hall. The Margis were delighted to have the opportunity of Baba's holy audience. Two senior officers from the Customs and Central Excise Department, Superintendent Bhuvaneshvar Prasad and his deputy, Shyam Bihari Sharan, were also present at the gathering. When they arrived, Baba was already in the middle of his discourse, so they quietly sat down near the rear entrance of the hall. A short while later, Baba concluded his talk. He then instructed both the officials to stand up. Pointing at Bhuvaneshvar, he asked, "Tell me what you did three years ago in the guesthouse in Dalmiya Nagar."

Bhuvaneshvar couldn't recall anything and scratched his head, trying hard to recollect.

"Don't you remember? What was in the packet that the businessman offered you?" Baba raised the pitch of his voice and asked, "Now do you remember? Tell me what was in that packet."

Shocked and embarrassed, Bhuvaneshvar fumbled for an answer. He knew what Baba was referring to.

"You took a ten thousand rupee bribe from that businessman in return for doing him a favour. You thought that no one was watching you and so you did not feel any compunction in accepting the bribe. You did not know that two eyes were seeing what you were doing in that closed room. They were also witnessing what you were thinking."

Baba then disclosed the precise details of the incident and what Bhuvaneshvar's thoughts had been at that moment. Bhuvaneshvar realised that he could not hide anything from Baba and admitted that he had made a mistake in accepting the bribe and promised not to do it again.

Bhuvaneshvar's reply triggered Baba's fury and he roared, "You were drawing a salary from the government, and yet you cheated the government of a huge sum of tax revenue by obliging an immoral man. Now you have the temerity to say that it was a mistake. What you have done is a sin and not a mistake. It is an anti-social act."

Trembling with fear, Bhuvaneshvar had no option but to agree. As punishment, Baba ordered him to do knee-bends holding his ears.

Then, turning to Shyam Bihari, Baba asked, "Where were you three Sundays ago?"

"I was with some friends," replied Shyam Bihari timidly. Having seen how Bhuvaneshvar was publicly exposed, he was trembling with fear at the thought of having his own misdeeds exposed.

"Were they friends or something else?" Baba asked in a harsher tone.

"Traders," he replied.

"All right, now tell me what was that coloured liquid in the glass you were holding?"

Although the day was cold and cloudy, Shyam Bihari started to sweat and cast about for an answer.

"Come on, tell me. What was the coloured liquid in that glass?" Baba repeated growing impatient.

Finding no escape, Shyam Bihari finally admitted with trepidation, "It was alcohol."

"Don't you know that a sadhaka is not supposed to drink alcohol?"

Shyam Bihari nodded his head in agreement. "Then why did you drink it? Didn't someone tell you that what you were doing was wrong and that you should leave that place immediately?"

As Shyam Bihari could not recall anyone advising him against consuming alcohol, he replied that no one had advised him not to take it.

Baba continued, "Think again deeply."

After some thought, he replied, "Yes, Baba, my conscience told me not to do it and to leave the place immediately."

"Why did you not obey your conscience? Due to your former habit of consuming alcohol, you felt an attraction to it and took a couple of sips. Then, you heard the voice of your conscience saying

that what you were doing was a sin and urged you to desist and leave the place forthwith. Is it not so?"

"Yes Baba. It is true."

"I might have pardoned you for taking the first two sips because of your old habit. But what you did after that is inexcusable, because you disobeyed the clear instruction that came from inside you. After you took two sips of the alcohol, it urged you repeatedly to leave the place immediately. Yet still you disobeyed. What else did you do there?"

By then Shyam Bihari had become very nervous, and trembled like a leaf as Baba probed deep into his dark secrets.

"Should I expose it before everyone?" asked Baba raising his voice.

"What I did was a sin. Please forgive me," entreated Shyam Bihari, and started to do knee-bends holding his ears without waiting for Baba to give him punishment. Baba smiled at his cleverness.

Doing knee-bends holding the ears was a form of punishment that Baba frequently gave to the Margis when correcting them in the presence of others. He explained that this was a way of sublimating the ego that was adversely affecting their minds and preventing them from receiving his blessings. In those days, nobody knew that doing knee-bends also had a beneficial effect on the brain.

As they left the place after the darshan was over, Shyam Bihari commented to his senior colleague, "Sir, it was a mistake to go before such a guru when we have so many failings. If we had stayed away, Baba would not have been able to expose us publicly in such a manner."

Initially Bhuvaneshvar agreed with his colleague's assertion. However, a few moments later he said, "Shyam Bihari, although the punishment that Baba gave me publicly was painful, I feel as if I have been internally purified and a load has been taken off my head. In fact I feel unusually happy."

"Yes sir, so do I," agreed Shyam Bihari.

That afternoon, Baba was scheduled to catch a steamer to cross the River Ganges en route to Bettiah. Many Margis came to the pier to see him off. Bhuvaneshvar and Shyam Bihari also felt an intense desire to see Baba off, so they too went to the pier. Baba was sitting inside the cabin of the steamer and the Margis were crowding around him. Bhuvaneshvar and Shyam Bihari stood at a safe distance watching. Baba asked them to come closer and then addressed the Margis gathered there, "Don't think I can punish you only if you are near me. I can see everything wherever you are in the universe, and I can punish you there too. Nothing is hidden from me. Nothing is far from me." Baba then turned to both of them and asked, "Do you follow?" Both Bhuvaneshvar and Shyam Bihari understood that Baba was responding to their earlier comments about it being a mistake to go before him when they had so many failings.

Baba continued, "When I see that you have accumulated a big load of samskaras that can hinder your spiritual progress, it becomes imperative for me to reduce your burden. When I punish you, I do so only for your good, and I remove many of your samskaras that can be an impediment to your spiritual life. It appears that I am punishing you for one or two of your misdeeds, but in the process I take away a big load of samskaras that you have accumulated through a variety of actions you did in the past. In order to exhaust those samskaras in a natural way, you would have to undergo far greater suffering, maybe even for lives together. I just end it with a token punishment. I want to see you all become great. Follow yama-niyama strictly and do your meditation sincerely, and you will all have a glorious future." With these words, Baba blessed everyone.

Just then the captain signalled that it was time for the boat to depart, and the Margis disembarked. As the boat pulled away from the pier, Rameshvar Baitta and a few other Margis, who were colleagues of Bhuvaneshvar and Shyam Bihari, came over to where they were standing. As they stood watching the boat leave, Shyam Bihari remarked, "What a strange guru! It is neither possible to stay with him due to the severity with which he deals with us, nor is it possible to stay away from him because of the intensity with which he attracts us." The others nodded in agreement.

The Marga Needs Quality People

Throughout his life, Baba was unrelenting in dealing with any deviation by Margis from the path of morality, particularly when their actions harmed others. He valued their moral standard above everything else, be it their social status, educational qualification, or any other worldly attribute.

One Sunday, Taraknath Ghosh, a deputy superintendent of police, was attending darshan at the Jamalpur jagrti. During his discourse, Baba suddenly turned to him and asked him to stand up. Taraknath meekly obeyed, realising that he was about to undergo a spiritual dissection at Baba's hands.

“Do you do sadhana twice a day regularly?”

“Yes, Baba, whenever time permits.”

“What do you mean by ‘whenever time permits’? Do you skip your meals and other needs due to lack of time? Sadhana is more essential than food. That is what you should forgo if you are short of time and not your sadhana. What do you think about while you are doing sadhana? Very rarely is your mind fixed on your mantra and its ideation.”

“Yes, Baba, I cannot concentrate at all in meditation. It keeps wandering uncontrollably.”

“Do you follow yama-niyama?”

“Yes, Baba,” replied Taraknath in a muted tone.

“What did you say?” asked Baba, raising his voice. “Do you think that I don't see what you have been doing? Do those who follow yama-niyama take bribes?”

Taraknath was at a loss for words. He knew that his misdeeds were about to be exposed.

Baba raised his tone even higher.

“Only a week ago, you forced a helpless trader to give you a bribe of Rs.1500. Do you want me to tell you the serial numbers of the notes that you accepted and still have in your drawer?”

Tarakanath was mortified to see Baba so furious and did not know what to say. "Should I expose more of your misdeeds and immoral actions?"

Tarakanath begged for forgiveness, assuring Baba that he would correct all his mistakes.

"Return the trader's money," thundered Baba.

Then suddenly, softening his voice, he said, "You are not able to concentrate in your meditation, and one of the main reasons is that you are not following yama-niyama strictly. If you follow it strictly, your mind will become more stable during meditation. Do you follow?"

Tarakanath nodded his head in acquiescence.

Then Baba turned to another Margi, Shivacharan, from a village in Bhagalpur District, and said, "Stand up. Do you do sadhana regularly?"

"Yes, Baba, I do it every day without fail."

"When do you do your sadhana?"

"I have to work hard every day to take care of my worldly responsibilities. I tend the cows of some of the other villagers. When the cows rest at noon, I sit for meditation. At night also, after I finish all my work, I take a bath and sit for meditation. Only then do I eat."

"How do you enjoy your meditation?"

"I enjoy it very much. I cannot live without it. I never fail to do sadhana, even if I am very tired."

"Very good! Do you follow yama-niyama?"

"Baba, I try to follow strictly whatever I have understood about yama-niyama from my acharya. I always speak the truth; I don't consciously harm any creature, and I don't steal anything from anybody, no matter how much difficulty I may be in."

Turning to the Margis, Baba said, "In Ananda Marga we need quality people like him and not corrupt officials. True and tested moralists and spiritualists who don't compromise or deviate from their principles even in trying situations, no matter if they are only a

few, will carry the ideals of our mission a long way. Without yama-niyama, sadhana is impossible, and without sadhana, you can't do real and lasting good to society. Do you all understand?"

Everyone nodded their heads in affirmation, including Taraknath. He later became an honest person and a devotee.

During Field Walks, Baba elaborated further on the importance of strictly following yama-niyama. "As a spiritual aspirant moves along the path towards perfection, several debasing tendencies will attempt to pull him or her back. The force that tries to pull the spiritual aspirant back towards the darkness of imperfection is called *Avidya Maya*, or the force of ignorance. So for a beginner on the spiritual path who is embarking on a struggle against the force of *Avidya Maya*, yama-niyama is the armour. It also provides the impetus to advance and break the chains of the degrading tendencies that inhibit a person's spiritual progress. So it is necessary to develop a non-compromising stand against immorality." This is the reason why Baba called yama-niyama the ten weapons of a sadhaka against the force of *Avidya Maya*.

Definition of Theft

Baba also gave a rational interpretation of satya, another principle of yama which is commonly defined as truthfulness. In Sanskrit, the word for truthfulness is *rta*. Baba said the spirit of satya requires a person to keep the welfare of others or of society as a whole in mind when they speak. He added that if telling a fact truthfully caused harm to others, it would contravene the spirit of satya.

Baba also gave a detailed analysis of the meaning of asteya or non-stealing and described four situations that could be categorized as theft:

a) The first is physical or material theft. Under ordinary circumstances, those who steal material objects are thieves. But thieves are not only those who flee with stolen objects or commit armed robbery. Whatever is unjustifiably taken from someone else by using brute force, arms, one's intellect, or one's power and authority,

or by any other means, is tantamount to theft because these actions are committed with the intention of taking the property of others deceitfully. Baba further pointed out that if a person who renders a service during an emergency, for example medical service, takes advantage of the situation by overcharging the helpless victims of a tragedy, such an action is also tantamount to stealing. And if a trader hoards essential goods in times of scarcity, overcharges customers or indulges in black marketeering, such actions should also be regarded as theft.

b) The second category is psychic theft. In this case, a person does not actually take an object that belongs to others due to fear of the law or of public criticism. However, as he or she planned to steal it, such action is considered as mental theft and is a violation of the principle of asteya.

c) The third category of theft is depriving others of their rightful dues. In this case, the wrongdoer should also be held accountable for the loss.

d) Finally, even the act of planning to deprive others of what is rightfully due to them is theft.

He also gave a novel and logical explanation of how the five principles of niyama sadhana should be applied in our daily lives. In several discourses, he discussed the close connection between the various principles of yama-niyama and the other practices of sadhana:

One day in November 1959, Satchidananda Srivastava, the superintendent of police, accompanied Baba on his evening Field Walk. As they sat on the Tiger's Grave, Baba asked, "Satchidananda, why did you accept the offerings from the puja performed for the goddess Durga?"

"Baba, the puja was organised by our police staff. That was why I attended it."

"I am not asking you why you attended the puja. But why did you take the offering made to the idol of the goddess? You could have walked away without partaking of the offering."

Satchidananda kept quiet, as he did not understand what was wrong with accepting an offering made to a goddess.

Baba continued in a mildly admonishing tone, “Do you know how the food for the offering was arranged? Several policemen went to some small traders and threatened them with severe consequences if they did not provide materials for the offering to the deity. What they did was worse than theft. The food for the offering was obtained through sinful means and it was offered to the idol. Since the idol is dumb and lifeless, it did not reject it. But you are not dumb or lifeless like that idol. God has given you discrimination. You know how things are done in your department. You should have first verified how the food for the offering to the idol had been procured. Why did you not do that? As the highest police authority in the district, you have to take responsibility for what your people do.” Satchidananda realised his mistake and promised to be more careful about what happened under his jurisdiction in the future.

In the early days of the Marga, Baba was like a sculptor minutely carving and shaping the personal lives of those who came in his contact. He made painstaking efforts to create in the Margis an awareness of the need for morality in their day-to-day dealings.

Destined To Be Reincarnated As a Vulture

Rectifying Margis who violated the principles of morality was always a high priority for Baba. He did it in a variety of ways. Sometimes he punished them physically, while at other times he publicly exposed the offender’s mistakes. Often he would warn the Margis of the dire consequences of their moral failings.

One night in early 1961, Baba was returning from a Field Walk with Arun, a postgraduate student, Dasharath, and several others. A new Margi from Kanpur, who was the superintendent of the Central Excise and Customs Department, had also joined them in the ‘C’ group. As Baba stood in front of his Rampur Colony residence having a final word with some of the Margis, he suddenly pointed at the Margi from Kanpur and said, “Dasharath, see what he would be reborn as if he were to die just now.”

Baba touched the back of Dasharath's head to assist him, as he was taking some time to enter the Margi's mind. Then Dasharath looked at him and said, "Baba, I can see a tall palm tree."

"See what is on the tree."

"Baba, there is a vulture sitting on one of the branches of the tree."

Baba remarked, "Yes, he would be reborn as a vulture. Ask him what kind of actions he has been doing to deserve such a fate."

By then the Margi from Kanpur had started to sob. Everyone else was silent.

Breaking the silence, Baba revealed, "He is in the habit of exploiting people in difficulty and employs all sorts of immoral means to extract money from them. He is an extortionist and an antisocial person."

Baba paused for a while and then continued, "A vulture has the habit of tearing flesh from the body of a dead animal. He is in the habit of extracting money from people by force, which is like tearing flesh off a carcass. That is why he would be reborn as a vulture."

The Margi was trembling with fear and thought that he was about to die. He wept uncontrollably. Baba then comforted him by saying, "You don't have to fear. You are not going to die now. But unless you mend your ways, atone for the sins that you have committed and do sadhana properly, this will be your fate in your next life." The Margi promised Baba that he would turn over a new leaf from that very moment.

Such demonstrations not only served to rectify the faults of the Margi concerned, but also acted as a warning to others who might think of straying from the straight and narrow path of Dharma.

In another example that took place in mid-1962, an Allahabad High Court advocate came to Jamalpur for Personal Contact. Another Margi, Master Dhiren, was sitting near the door of the room where the Personal Contact was being held so that he could rush in and get a seat near Baba when the Margis were called for the darshan.

Naturally, he could hear everything that was going on inside the room. A short while after the advocate entered Baba's room, Dhiren heard Baba shouting at him angrily.

Baba ordered the advocate to confess the sin that he had committed a few days earlier. The advocate, however, did not reply. Annoyed by his silence, Baba threatened to call everyone in and expose his crime in front of them all, but even then he kept quiet. By this time Baba was visibly irritated. As the advocate continued to maintain a stony silence, Baba asked him angrily, "Did you not trick your brother's widow into signing over her property to you ten days ago?"

As the lawyer fumbled for words, Baba shouted, "Tell me, you sinner, is this not true?"

"Yes Baba, it was my mistake."

"Mistake? You say it was a mistake? Cheating your widowed sister-in-law who trusted you and trying to usurp her property, you say is a mistake, you sinner? It is an unpardonable sin. Do you understand, you swine?"

The lawyer then admitted that what he had done was an unpardonable sin.

In a stern voice Baba ordered, "Go back immediately and destroy all the deeds that you have made transferring the property to your name."

The lawyer nodded his head.

Baba paused for a few seconds and said, "I warn you that if you think you can somehow cheat me and not destroy those papers, I will order Nature to punish you very severely then and there. You will die immediately and be reborn as a swine, eating dirt in the street."

"Yes, Baba, I will do it as soon as I reach Allahabad," replied the advocate meekly, thoroughly shaken by the experience.

"Don't waste a single moment. Leave for Allahabad immediately."

Before he left the room, the lawyer tried to prostrate before Baba.

Baba stopped him. "Don't prostrate before me. I will have to bless you if you do that. You don't deserve that now. Come back after obeying my instructions. Only then will I complete your Personal Contact, and you will also receive my blessing at that time."

The lawyer left the room, his face ashen. Baba gave a few more Personal Contacts, and then all the Margis entered his room for darshan. The lawyer also entered. While everybody else prostrated, the lawyer, fearing a stinging rebuke from Baba, sat down quietly in a corner. As soon as Baba saw him, he shouted, "Did I not tell you to leave forthwith? Then why are you still here? I don't want to see you here even for a moment." The lawyer immediately got up and left.

After his departure, Baba told everyone, "Externally he appears to be a gentleman. In fact, he is a polished satan. His brother died some time ago, leaving behind a wife and three children. The wife is very simple and has been struggling hard to bring up the children alone. About ten days ago this scoundrel used a ruse to get her to sign some papers transferring all the property that she had inherited from her husband to his name. She trusts her brother-in-law implicitly and is not aware that he has cheated her.

"When I ordered him to go back and destroy the papers immediately, he agreed to do it, but was thinking not to do it. So I instilled fear in him by warning him that Nature would take severe action against him if he didn't do it. That fear will force him to destroy those papers. There are many people who cheat others of their wealth and some even cheat people of their livelihood. They don't realise that they will have to suffer severe consequences at the hands of Nature. They will not get another human birth so easily. What is the use of wealth obtained through such sinful means? It causes unimaginable suffering. You should all be extremely careful because if Margis carry out such acts, the samskaras created are even greater than those experienced by an ordinary person. This is because those who practise sadhana have a developed conscience. If a person with a developed conscience commits a sin, the degree of the reaction he will have to undergo will be that much greater."

Reforming a Criminal

The greater the crime, the more severe was Baba's punishment. However, many of those punished regarded their punishment as a blessing, since it enabled them to lift themselves out of the morass they had been trapped in, and helped them to become ideal persons. Usually it was during their Personal Contact that Baba cleansed them of their dark past and set them on the right path.

Once, Baleshvar from Muzaffarpur arranged for his nephew, Shivanath, an officer in the Bihar Military Police, to be initiated. When Baba subsequently visited Muzaffarpur in May 1959, Baleshvar encouraged his nephew to join the line of Margis waiting for Personal Contact. Shivanath, however, was unenthusiastic and tried to find an excuse to avoid it. Baleshvar could not understand why his nephew was so reticent and repeatedly urged him to do it, saying that Personal Contact with the guru would help him immensely in his sadhana. Finally, after much persuasion, Shivanath agreed to put his name on the list. Dr. Nagendra, a local acharya, was in charge of organising the Personal Contacts. After some time, Shivanath's turn came. A few minutes after he went in, the Margis outside heard Baba shouting at him. They could also hear Baba caning him severely and Shivanath crying in pain. A short while later Baba called Nagendra inside and asked for another stick, saying that the one he had was broken. Once the new stick arrived, the caning continued mercilessly.

After a while, the door to Baba's room suddenly burst open, and the police officer ran out, followed by Baba, cane in hand and shouting. The fat officer crouched down in a corner, begging for Baba's mercy. Baba caught hold of him and started to cane him in front of everyone, shouting, "Mercy? Why do you deserve it? Did you show any mercy to that woman when she begged you for it? Shall I hand you over to the authorities and get you hanged for your crimes?"

The Margis watched the drama in stunned silence. Some of them cringed in fear at the sight of Baba's torrential fury and withdrew, as if taking shelter from a severe thunderstorm. Shivanath fell at Baba's feet begging for mercy. Baba thundered, "Touch the feet of all the Margis here and beg them for forgiveness. Start by touching the feet of the women because what you have done is a crime against the entire womanhood."

In a grave tone he continued, "If even a single person refuses to pardon you, I will not show you any mercy."

Wailing loudly, Shivanath went to each of the Margis present and, one by one, caught hold of their feet and begged their pardon. Many were much younger than him and tried to avoid being touched, as they felt embarrassed to see an older person catching their feet and begging for mercy.

Baba ordered, "Touch the feet of everyone, young and old, both men and women."

After he had touched everyone's feet, the Margis said that they had pardoned him although they knew nothing about the crime he had committed.

Shivanath then fell at Baba's feet crying loudly, "Baba, please have mercy on me. Free me from the samskara of the terrible crime that I have committed."

His cries grew louder and louder. Baba softened a little and took him back into his room to complete the process of Personal Contact. He was crying uncontrollably when he finally emerged from Baba's room.

Under normal circumstances, Personal Contact is a private matter between guru and disciple. This was one of the rare occasions where a part of the Personal Contact took place before others for reasons known only to Baba.

A couple of years passed and Baba again visited Muzaffarpur. A thin man approached Dr. Nagendra and asked, "Acharyaji, do you recognise me?" Seeing that the doctor was having difficulty in remembering, he said, "I am Shivanath, the nephew of Baleshvarji."

The doctor could not believe his eyes. The fat, crude-looking man had been transformed into a much fitter person with a radiant face.

"What a change has come about in you! You look completely different now!"

"Yes Acharyaji, I am a different person from the one you sent for Personal Contact. That day was a turning point in my life. When I went in for Personal Contact, I was carrying the heavy burden of

several dreadful sins that I had committed. Merciful Baba lifted me out of a veritable hell and brought me to what I would consider heaven. My whole life completely changed after I got Personal Contact. I gave up all my vices. I do sadhana regularly now. I never miss it even if I have a heavy schedule and I don't touch any static food. I feel that there is a great purpose in my life. When I compare my life today with what it was earlier, I can say without any hesitation that my earlier life was truly rotten."

Later that evening during the Field Walk, Nagendra mentioned to Baba how much Shivanath had changed since his Personal Contact about two years ago. Baba said, "See, Nagendra, he had committed the dreadful crime of raping and murdering a woman, for which he would have been sentenced to death. For that I gave him severe punishment. Now he is an asset to society. At the end of his Personal Contact, I made him promise to finance the education and marriage of three poor girls as part of his atonement, and he has sincerely fulfilled that task. In our system, punishment is for rectification and not to take revenge for what a person has done. He was punished to free him from the samskaras of the terrible sins he had committed.

"We don't believe in a penal system. The objective of a judicial system is to rectify a person. Let Nature punish according to the intensity of the wrong the person has committed. In his case, my punishment washed away a major part of that samskara and twenty-five percent was removed by his sincere repentance when he asked everyone for forgiveness. It is the law of Nature that genuine repentance and atonement reduces the intensity of the reaction created by the action. I reduced the load of his samskaras further by making him do sadhana regularly as well as social service to atone for his crime. He was carrying a heavy load of negative samskaras due to several misdeeds he had committed. I have removed a lot of it and whatever remains will be within his capacity to tolerate."

Abuse of Railway Pass

While the Margis were under Baba's constant supervision, he did not spare his erring colleagues either. The employees of the Railway Department were issued with free travel passes whenever

they made official visits. The ticket checker had to put his signature on the pass to validate it. The validity of the pass would expire after the completion of the journey.

During one of his official journeys, the rail pass of one of Baba's assistants, Nikunj Bhaumik, was not endorsed. He took advantage of the situation to use the pass again for a private journey. As soon as he returned to the office, Baba asked him why he had used the official pass for personal travel. Nikunj explained that the ticket checker had not checked his pass during his official journey and so he had used it again. Baba rebuked him, saying that his action amounted to theft of railway money. He then instructed Nikunj to buy a train ticket for the same value and tear it up. In that way Nikunj was made to reimburse the railway department for the financial loss it had incurred due to his unethical action.

There were several other occasions where the conduct of Baba's colleagues came under his scrutiny. Fearing his disapproval, they were always on their toes to avoid violating official regulations as well as the principles of morality, as they realised that nothing could be concealed from all-knowing Prabhatda.

Correcting Erring Disciples

Baba employed a variety of methods to correct his wayward disciples. Some were person-specific, which meant that they were used only on one person. Despite his insistence on disciples following yama-niyama strictly, some Margis interpreted the rules of morality according to their convenience. Baba, however, would not tolerate any attempt to dilute the moral code. Every Margi had a story or two to tell about the way in which Baba's ever-watchful eyes had exposed their follies and how he had corrected their conduct.

Niren Banerjee, one of the earliest disciples from Jamalpur, recalled the way Baba had once rectified one of his serious mistakes when his daughter was only a few months old:

Once, my young daughter, Mosami, became seriously ill and was being treated by Dr. Haldar, the most renowned specialist in Jamalpur. The doctor said that if the child's

condition did not improve, there was a great possibility that her heart would be permanently damaged, and she would be crippled for life. That night I could not sleep, worrying about her. I took her in my lap and sat before Baba's photo. I started to weep and asked him, 'What wrong have I done for which you are giving me this punishment?'

Suddenly, I felt as if Baba was telling me about some pieces of iron rod that I had wrongly taken from the Railway Workshop a few months earlier. I thought that taking a few iron rods from the workshop would make no difference to the department, but would be a great help to me. Baba said, "Was it not a violation of yama-niyama? Promise to rectify your mistake and your worry will be over."

There and then I vowed to return the stolen property to the workshop and to never do such a thing again. Immediately I felt a powerful vibration fill the room. The entire room was filled with a sweet fragrance, indicating Baba's spiritual presence. From then on my daughter started to improve. By the next morning, she had completely recovered and there was no need for any further treatment.

I took the iron rods back to the workshop early that morning. The person in charge of the stock section tried to dissuade me from returning them and advised me to keep them, saying that no one would notice they were missing. But having learned my lesson, I replied that I would not keep them even if they were made of gold.

Deliverance and Regression

Baba showed immeasurable compassion in cleansing the Margis of the adverse effects of their negative actions. He would first expose their mistakes and then advise them to genuinely repent and ask for forgiveness. Only when they truly repented did he take steps to rectify them in the hope that they would not repeat such mistakes.

Sadly, however, some Margis who benefitted from Baba's blessings failed to learn their lesson and subsequently returned to

their old ways, recreating the karma from which they had been freed. Some Margis with a dark past got the opportunity to come before Baba. Although they did not deserve any mercy due to the nature of their sins, Baba would nevertheless cleanse their negative samskaras during Personal Contact, Field Walk, or General Darshan and caution them against repeating such actions. Sometimes he would sternly warn those who were likely to return to their old ways that if they did so even after realising the value of morality and spirituality, he would direct Nature to instantly punish them. The story of Gajananda Mandal is instructive in this regard.

Gajananda Mandal was from Kutehra village in the Araria subdivision of Purnea district in Bihar. He was the leader of a gang of feared armed robbers who terrorised the villages of the area. Such was the web of terror created by the gang that their victims feared retaliation if they lodged a complaint against them. Some of the local Margis, however, managed to convince Gajananda to give up his life of crime and mend his ways. He was initiated and started regularly performing his sadhana. This brought about a noticeable transformation in him. Seeing that Gajananda was serious about his meditation, his acharya, Vishveshvar, inspired him to go to Jamalpur to see the guru, saying that it would give a major impetus to his spiritual life.

Accompanied by Chitrabodh Mishra and a few local Margis from the neighbouring village of Sonapur, Gajananda went to Jamalpur. Acharya Vishveshvar had specifically instructed Gajananda's companions to make sure that he got Personal Contact with Baba. So on their arrival, the Margis included his name in the list. He was the fourth person in line for Personal Contact. The first and third candidates had very short Personal Contacts. The second person in line was a police officer from South Bihar. Gajananda was waiting just outside Baba's room and heard the police officer crying in pain, while Baba caned him for his misdeeds, which he exposed one by one. As Baba continued to punish him, the police officer confessed to all of them.

Hearing all this, Gajananda feared that he would soon face a similar fate in his own Personal Contact. He therefore decided not to confess to

any crime that Baba accused him of. He dreamed up a variety of ways of avoiding the guru's efforts to frighten him with his past.

Finally Gajananda's turn came. As soon as he entered Baba's room, he prostrated and then got up. Baba quickly completed the formality of asking his name and a few other details. After a short pause, he asked sternly, "Is thieving an action befitting a human being?"

"No Baba, it is not proper," replied Gajananda, trying his best to prevent Baba from delving further into his past.

"And what about misbehaving with helpless women?"

Gajananda knew that he could not evade Baba's scrutiny any further and thought, "However much I may try to evade him, it appears that this guru will not let me escape." Having no recourse, he remained silent.

"I am asking you for an answer," said Baba, raising his voice.

"I don't do that," Gajananda blurted out instinctively.

Baba then took out his cane from underneath the bolster and said, "Yes, you don't do it nowadays. But what about the past? Thieving is a crime, but it can still be condoned if it was done out of penury. If even after hard labour, a person is not able to feed his family and meet their basic needs, he may be forced to take to crime. If there are mitigating circumstances, his offence may yet be pardoned. But you did not plunder and loot to survive. So in your case those offences cannot be pardoned."

Gajananda could not say anything. He hung his head and stared blankly at the floor, trying to avoid Baba's powerful gaze.

Like a thunderbolt, Baba roared, "Look up! Look at me, you animal! What sort of despicable and terrible sins have you committed, ruining your precious human life?"

The man who had once been a fearsome gang leader now began to tremble before Baba like a frightened lamb.

With a fearsome expression on his face, Baba shouted, "When you looted the house of Svarup Singh, his wife took off all the jewellery she was wearing and handed it to you, didn't she?"

"Yes Baba," mumbled Gajananda.

"Even after that why did you try to misbehave with her?"

You may have succeeded in escaping the clutches of the law because your victims were afraid of you or feared the social stigma and kept quiet. But I am not going to spare you."

With that, Baba assumed his most terrifying form that Margis normally call 'the face of Rudra' or the angry face of Lord Shiva, and began to mercilessly beat Gajananda. The once hardened criminal begged for mercy as the blows rained down upon him.

"Whenever you set out to commit a crime, did you not hear a voice telling you to desist from such actions and warning you that you would one day have to atone for your sins?" roared Baba as he continued to beat him severely.

Gajananda cried from the intense pain of the beating and from a rising sense of remorse for his actions. After a while Baba stopped and asked, "At the time when you and your gang looted Resham Lal's place, what did you do?" Realising that nothing was hidden from Baba, he kept quiet.

"His family members gave you whatever valuables they had - all their jewellery, gold, silver, and cash. Yet you molested his teenage daughter. Did you not know that you would have to pay for your sins one day?" Baba asked, again raising his voice, and started to beat him once more. It seemed as though he would skin Gajananda alive.

Gajananda pleaded for forgiveness. "Forgive me Baba! Forgive me!" But Baba did not relent; he kept on beating him mercilessly. As he beat him, he disclosed one dark misdeed after another. Baba recounted more than a dozen of his evil actions as he continued to punish Gajananda.

Gajananda's companions could hear everything that was going on in Baba's room and they grew afraid due to the severity with which Baba was dealing with the once feared villain. After some time there was a pause and then silence.

The Margis wondered what had happened to Gajananda. Chitrabodh, who was waiting outside the room, said to the other Margis from Araria, "It was a mistake to bring a person with such a dark past for Personal Contact, as we well knew that Baba would not spare him. After such a severe punishment he will surely react when he goes back."

The others agreed. They waited anxiously for Gajananda to emerge from Baba's room. Suddenly, the door opened and Gajananda ran out with tears streaming down his face. Chitrabodh and the others rushed forward to console him. Unable to speak coherently, Gajananda exclaimed, "Baba is God! Baba is God!" and he continued repeating this over and over again as he sat down in a corner of the hall and began to meditate. Everyone was surprised at his unexpected behaviour.

After the other Personal Contacts were over, Madhav, the ashram manager, requested everyone to come inside the room for darshan. After a short discourse, Baba directed Sudhir, the college student from Motihari, to come forward and sit in meditation. Dasharath, who Baba normally utilized for his demonstrations, was away on some organisational work that day. So Baba used Sudhir for the purpose instead.

Baba asked him to say what would have been Gajananda's next life if he had died with the samskaras he had accrued before his Personal Contact. Sudhir said that he could see a vulture sitting on a tree on a densely forested mountain.

Baba concurred, "Yes, that's right. He had acquired the samskaras of a vulture — looting and eating. What's the habit of a vulture? It tears flesh from a carcass. So that is why a person who has the habit of snatching things from others by force will acquire the samskara of being reborn as an animal or bird that tears flesh from the body and eats it."

Turning back to Sudhir, he said, "Now see what his future life will be if he continues the way he is now after his Personal Contact."

Sudhir concentrated for a while and replied, "Baba, I can only see shining effulgence and nothing else. It is an extremely blissful state."

“Yes, that is correct. If he continues to practise his meditation very strictly and follows yama-niyama, he will not be reborn again. After this life, he will become one with the Supreme Entity.”

Baba then turned to Gajananda and said, “Remember this: you should never go back to the hell from which you have been rescued through the spiritual touch that you have received. Always shun the company of bad people. Only keep contact with good people. Follow the principles of spiritual life and serve humanity. If you follow these instructions, you will have my grace. But if you violate your promise to follow yama-niyama and do anything immoral, Nature will punish you then and there. Even I will not rescue you. Be on constant guard to make sure that you never stray from the spiritual path; it will protect you from downfall. To further protect yourself, engage in as much social service as you can.”

Gajananda assured Baba that he would perform his sadhana strictly and never do anything to violate yama-niyama again. Later, when he described his experience in Personal Contact to the Margis, he said, “Although Baba’s caning was painful at the time, afterwards I felt completely cleansed of my sins. I felt extremely light and inexplicably blissful. Through whatever he did, Baba purified me internally and gave me an experience of divine bliss. After punishing me, the amount of love and affection that he gave me cannot be expressed in words. He knew all about my dark past, and yet he showed me so much love and affection that it is humanly impossible. Only a divine being can purify a sinner like me by his mere touch and give so much love and affection.”

After returning to his village, Gajananda became a good Margi and practised sadhana and followed the conduct rules very strictly. He also changed his food habits. Gajananda was a completely transformed man. His transformation became the talk of the area and brought much public appreciation for the Marga. People were amazed at how a hardened criminal had been magically transformed into a moralist and sadhaka. They gave the credit for this remarkable transformation to the Ananda Marga way of life.

Gajananda continued his sadhana and followed the moral principles for a couple of years. However, after some time he began to slacken. His meditation became irregular and after some time stopped completely. The sentient food habits that he had acquired after Personal Contact also changed. He secretly contacted his old gang members and started to meet them again. It was not long before he returned to his wicked ways. Ignoring the promises he had made to Baba during his Personal Contact and the warning Baba had given him, he returned to a life of crime and put together another gang of thieves.

One day, while staying at the house of one of his gang members, he tried to misbehave with the man's wife in his absence. She reported the matter to her husband the next morning. That night, as they were on their way to their first criminal operation, the aggrieved gang member shot Gajananda from behind, killing him instantly out of revenge for his misbehaviour.

Raising the Standard of Morality

Acharya Harindar was employed as the head of a section of the Electricity Department. He was a devotee and a moralist. Businessmen and industrialists frequently tried to get favours and preferential treatment by offering bribes to the department heads, but Harindar was well known for his uncompromising honesty. He recalled an incident that demonstrated the very high standard of morality that Baba demanded of the Margis:

One Sunday evening in the winter of 1962, I was with Baba during his evening walk. I was enjoying listening to him talking about a wide range of subjects and was so enchanted by the flow of knowledge that was pouring out of him that I did not notice that we had entered the Polo Ground. Suddenly, Baba stopped and turned to me saying, "Harindar, so you have also started to accept bribes nowadays?" I was stunned to hear that from Baba, and in a state of shock I said I didn't remember ever consciously taking a bribe from anyone.

Then Baba smiled. "The person who rejected Rs. 200 accepted six annas as a bribe."

I was surprised and puzzled by Baba's words. As I wondered what he was alluding to, Baba clarified his point, "Two chumchum sweets are four annas and a cup of tea is 2 annas. So a total value of six annas bribe was offered to you, and you accepted it."

Immediately my mind went back to an incident that had happened not long before.

There was a big hosiery manufacturer in Deogarh, where I was posted at that time, and the owner applied for a fifty horsepower connection for his newly constructed rice mill. He offered me a bribe of Rs. 200 to bypass the usual procedures and speed up the sanctioning of the electricity connection. I scolded him severely for trying to bribe me.

One Sunday a few months later, I was walking past his newly opened rice mill while returning from my lunch. Seeing me, the Marwari businessman invited me inside and said, "Sir, I have installed my machine. Please come in and have a look at the mill." I felt a little sympathy for him as I had scolded him only a few months before. So I went in for a while. As I was leaving, his mother came with a plate full of sweets, and, addressing me as 'son', requested me to accept the sweets. Although I resisted at first, she forced two sweets into my hand saying that I should accept them and treat her as my mother. Not wanting to disappoint her, I accepted them. Just then a cup of tea also arrived and I accepted that too. I immediately had an uncomfortable feeling after accepting the food she offered me. I regretted taking anything in the businessman's house as I feared that he might take advantage of me in the future.

When Baba referred to this as a bribe, I was shocked, as I had not considered it to be a bribe. Clarifying further, Baba said, "He should have fed it to the poor beggars in the street who had no shoes and whose feet had painful cracks due to the cold. Instead of offering the sweets to such needy people, he offered them to you, even though he knew that you had just

eaten a big meal a short while before. While you were eating his sweets and sipping his tea, do you know what that businessman was thinking? ‘This man, who refused my two hundred rupees, has accepted the sweets and tea that I offered him through my mother. After this he will be favourably disposed towards me and if I need any further help from the electricity office, he will not be able to turn me away like before.’

So Harindar, do you understand the true intention behind the businessman’s hospitality? It was conditional. That is why a principled person should avoid accepting the hospitality of immoral people. The next time he approaches you for any favour, you will not be able to say no with your head held high, just as you did the last time. Don’t you know the story from the Mahabharata how Duryodhana wanted to lavishly host Lord Krishna when he went to negotiate for peace before the war started? The Lord declined his hospitality because Duryodhana was an immoral person. Instead, he chose to stay with the simple but virtuous Vidura, a minister in the Kaurava court, and his wife who was a great devotee.

“Everyone who performs sadhana should be very careful when selecting the source of their food. Even sentient food offered with impure thoughts will harm you. Not only that, even the thoughts that one has while cooking the food will affect the sadhakas who eat it. But it isn’t practical to be so particular about your food. That is why I have given you all a shield of protection. Tell me what that shield is?”

I could not guess the answer. Baba asked everyone else the same question one by one. No one was able to answer. Finally, he asked Dasharath dada, who replied, “Baba, our second lesson is that shield.”

Baba said, “Yes, Madhuvidya, the second lesson, is the shield. If you take your second lesson before eating and keep the spiritual ideation of the second lesson in your mind till you finish eating the food, you will not feel any negative effects from it.”

That evening's experience was a big lesson for me, and that day I realised the high standard of morality that Baba expected from us. From then on, I became extremely cautious about accepting anyone's hospitality, particularly if he was a businessman or had any work with our office.

Such were the methods Baba employed to teach the Margis to strictly follow the principles of morality. Gradually, Ananda Marga gained a reputation amongst the public as an organisation of strict moralists. Several officials with a questionable reputation underwent a complete transformation in their personal and working lives after joining the Marga. As a result, there was a general perception among the public that the Marga Guru did not tolerate any immoral conduct amongst his disciples.

In 1958, on the occasion of Ananda Purnima, Baba talked about the need for morality in one's personal and social life. He said, "In the transitional period of a civilisation, honesty in individual life is of paramount importance. We shall have to remain ever vigilant to ensure that the darkness of petty self-interest does not destroy this supreme human treasure. In the absence of honesty, civilisation too will not survive; the long sadhana of the human race will go in vain, and all intellectual achievements will become meaningless. Bookish knowledge that cannot be utilized in one's life has no value."

For the Margis, such advice was not just theoretical in nature but also practical, as it implied a style of behaviour they were expected to follow in their daily lives. It is for this reason that Baba called Ananda Marga a 'man and woman-making' mission.



CHAPTER 41

Devotion – The Elixir of Life

Baba emphasised several aspects of spirituality which he considered important for the spiritual development of a sadhaka. The most important of these was devotion. Devotion is the development of an irresistible attraction for Parama Purusha, the Macrocosmic Nucleus. Baba cleared up several prevailing misconceptions regarding true devotion, explaining that to feel an attraction for something is the natural tendency of every entity in creation. The vast universe maintains its balance because of the mutual attraction of the stars, planets and other cosmic bodies. Attraction is a fundamental characteristic of physical existence. Living beings are attracted by a variety of entities around them. For example, the sweet fragrance of the flowers attracts honey bees. Human beings are attracted to ephemeral objects, which they consider to be a source of happiness and security. Due to the irresistible pull of the force of attraction, they run after money as it can buy them material comforts and provide them with a sense of security.

Every particle of a material structure is attracted by its nucleus. Similarly, the Macrocosmic Nucleus attracts every living and non-living entity towards itself. The force of attraction is the most powerful force in this universe. Cosmic attraction plays a major role in the process of evolution, from the unicellular amoeba to the human being. As living beings advance along the path of evolution, their attraction towards Parama Purusha, the Macrocosmic Nucleus, progressively increases. At the human stage, the intensity of this attraction increases even further. Finally it reaches a stage where a person develops an intense urge to please the Supreme Entity through every action and in every possible manner. Such an urge is the hallmark of true devotion. As a person's devotion intensifies, it radically changes his attitude to every action he performs.

Baba analysed the word *bhakti*, the Sanskrit term for devotion, as follows: "Bhakti has come from the root word '*bhaj*', which means to move towards the Supreme Entity single-mindedly without any second thought. When all your sentiments, all your aspirations, are directed towards that Singular Entity without any distraction, that psychic movement is called *bhakti*."

"Thus the true meaning of *bhakti* is rendering service to Parama Purusha, the Supreme Entity, and to think about Him constantly with a feeling of genuine love. Real *bhakti* has nothing to do with worshipping an idol or a painting representing a form of God with flowers, leaves, water or other articles. Nor does heaping praises on God constitute an expression of true love. There is no feeling of devotion involved in such forms of praise; it is merely mechanical chanting. Suppose a father is openly praised by his sons and daughters. He may actually be angry with them for trying to flatter him. Such praise will certainly not please him."

The more one thinks about the Supreme, the closer one will get to Him. As the proximity increases, devotion also increases in the heart of the *sadhaka*."

Absolute Devotion

There are various stages in the evolution of devotion. Even undeveloped human beings have a deep connection with the Supreme Entity, which manifests itself through a yearning for limitlessness. Baba explained that the highest type of devotion evolves "when all the propensities of the mind are withdrawn from all other objects and are diverted towards the Supreme Goal; that is true *bhakti*."

"You may have noticed that people sometimes establish a kind of devotional relationship with God out of selfishness. We can see that there are different types of devotion. For example, there is *tamasik bhakti* or static devotion. People sometimes wrongly pray to God, 'Lord, I am your devotee and I am willing to do this and that to propitiate you. Such and such persons are my enemies. Let harm befall them.' Here the thinking is fundamentally defective. There is no doubt that the ideation relates to Parama Purusha. However, the person does not want to attain Him, but wants Parama Purusha to help

him to harm his enemies. Here you are moving towards Parama Purusha; you are even mentally speaking to Parama Purusha, but your goal is not to attain Him. Under these circumstances Parama Purusha may or may not grant your prayers, but one thing is certain - you will not attain Parama Purusha because you do not really want Him. This type of devotion is called *tamasik* or static devotion. A genuine sadhaka should not practise this type of *tamasik* devotion because it leads to the degradation of the mind.

“The second type of devotion is *rajasik* or mutative devotion. Here also there is devotion, no doubt, but the mind does not want to attain Parama Purusha either. The aspirant prays to Parama Purusha, ‘O Lord, bless me with a better political future or with more profit in business or grant me a promotion in my job; please help me to do well in the examination or arrange the marriage of my daughter without difficulty.’ In this type of devotion you do not pray to Parama Purusha to help you to harm your opponents, and that is good, but still you do not want to attain Him; you want something for yourself. And for this reason you will not attain Parama Purusha. Similarly, there are people who perform religious rituals with great pomp and show in order to show off to others. They don’t do it out of love for Parama Purusha but for name and fame. This is no doubt a type of devotion, but of a low category. How can one attain Parama Purusha through such actions?

“Then there is a third type of devotion, which is called *sattvik* or sentient devotion. In this type of devotion you do not ask Parama Purusha for anything. You do not want him to harm your opponents, nor do you expect anything from Him. This type of devotion is better in that sense. An old man feels that if he does not carry out his religious observances, he is likely to be criticised by his neighbours. So he recites his prayers in order to avoid the criticism of others. There are also people who recite prayers or chant mechanically. Their mind is not associated with what they do. Suppose a person says, ‘I have to chant such and such a prayer so many times,’ and the mind is focused on the number of repetitions and not on the prayer. This is a sort of devotion. There are yet others who pray to the Lord, ‘O Lord, I have been on earth for a long time; I have to face so many

problems in life. Please, O Lord, take me in your lap.' Here the person praying wants his or her worldly afflictions to end. So there is also a defect inherent in this type of devotion.

"You cannot attain Parama Purusha with this sort of prayer either because you are not saying that you want Parama Purusha alone. Such ideation will not serve the purpose. None of these kinds of devotion has any significance on the spiritual path. Why?

"To take an analogy, a little child is crying for its mother, so what does the mother do? She immediately rushes to the child and gives it a few colourful toys. The child stops crying immediately. But if the child insists that it does not want anything except its mother, the mother is compelled to take the child on her lap. So devotees with true bhakti in their hearts do not ask Parama Purusha for anything. Even if Parama Purusha offers this or that, the sadhaka will say, 'No, Lord, I don't want anything but You. I want to be with You. What You are offering to me is a trivial thing; I want You and You alone, nothing else.'

"When a person advances spiritually through the practice of Yoga or Tantra, he or she comes ever closer to Parama Purusha, the Macrocosmic Nucleus. In such an exalted state, the desire to ask Parama Purusha for anything worldly does not arise in their mind. In that state the predominant desire is to come even closer to Parama Purusha. Gradually even the thought of being separated from Him becomes unbearable to the devotee.

"In that sublime state, every action that the sadhaka does, be it worldly or otherwise, has only one purpose and that is to please Parama Purusha in all possible ways. Suppose one is eating something. The desire to enjoy the food is eclipsed by the desire to make Parama Purusha happy. So through the action of eating, the devotee desires that Parama Purusha will enjoy the food. In this way, slowly the mind gives up all desires for worldly enjoyment and races towards Parama Purusha, the Macrocosmic Nucleus. That is true devotion.

"Now even within this ideal state of devotion there are two categories. Suppose you ask a devotee, 'Why do you love Parama Purusha like this and think of Him always and perform every action only to please Him?'

“The devotee replies, ‘I love my Parama Purusha intensely and do everything only to please Him because by doing so I get indescribable bliss.’ It is a fact that when true devotion develops in a person, one starts to enjoy bliss. This type of devotion is called *raganuga* bhakti. Although it is one of the higher categories of devotion, it is not altogether free from a tinge of selfishness. Even those who have this ideal sort of devotion perform actions to please Parama Purusha, because by worshipping Him they are able to enjoy bliss. So a trace of selfishness remains because the person’s devotion for Parama Purusha is tinged with the expectation of attaining bliss.

“There is yet another type of devotion which is free from even a trace of selfishness. Here the devotee says, ‘I worship my Parama Purusha and serve Him through every action that I perform because I want to make Him and Him alone happy through my devotion, my service and my worship. I don’t want anything for myself.’ Here the ‘I’ feeling is diminished and ‘He’ becomes more dominant. This type of devotion is called *ragatmika* devotion. This is also called *kevala* bhakti or non-attributional devotion, and those who have this kind of devotion are called *gopa* in Sanskrit.”

In order to clarify the nature of *ragatmika* devotion, Baba told the following story:

Once, Lord Krishna fell seriously ill and was suffering from a severe headache. Nothing could cure Him. Eminent doctors also tried, but they too were unsuccessful. When everything else failed, those around Him asked Krishna for advice, saying, “Dear Lord, please tell us what will cure you.”

Krishna replied, “There is only one remedy. If you bring dust from the feet of my devotees and apply it to my forehead, I will be cured.”

Who would ever be willing to give the dust from their feet to apply to the forehead of the Lord and suffer the sin that they would acquire by doing so? So it was a very difficult task. Narada was given the duty of travelling round the world to search for devotees who were willing to give the dust from

their feet. Everyone Narada approached said, "My goodness, how can I agree to such a proposal? How can I possibly give dust from my own feet to smear on my Lord's forehead? Is there any greater sin than this? I will have to suffer the tortures of hell for ages if I do that. I can't even think of committing such a sin, so I categorically refuse to give you any dust from my feet."

Finally Narada came to Vrindavan where he saw some gopis tending their cows. When they saw him approaching, they rushed over and asked, "O sage, how is our dear Lord Krishna?"

Narada replied, "The news is not very good. The Lord is sick."

"What is the problem? What's being done to cure Him?" asked the worried gopis.

Narada told them about the headache that had not responded to any treatment, "So far, everything we have tried has failed. Lord Krishna told us that if dust from the feet of His devotees is smeared on His forehead, then alone will He be cured. Would you be willing to give me some dust from your feet?"

"Why not?" replied the gopis. "O sage Narada, we don't know whether we are worthy to be called His devotees or not, but please take the dust from our feet and smear it on our Lord's forehead. If we are worthy of being called His devotees, it will certainly cure Him."

"That is fine. But tell me, are you not afraid of committing a sin by giving the dust from your feet to smear on the Lord's forehead? Isn't this an act of great sacrilege?"

"Why should we be afraid, O sage Narada?" replied the gopis. "Our Lord is in great pain. If dust from our feet can cure Him, what else can we wish for? We don't care if it is an act of great sacrilege for which we will be doomed to live in hell.

We will happily go to hell. It's all the same for us. We love our Lord so much that He too will have to come to hell to be with us. We don't discriminate between heaven and hell or between virtue and vice. All that matters to us is that the Lord should be pleased and freed from His suffering." This is kevala bhakti, true selfless devotion.

Summarizing the transformation that takes place when kevala bhakti is developed, Baba said, "When a sadhaka moves towards Parama Purusha with the help of kevala bhakti, his mind unknowingly and gradually becomes transformed. A caterpillar does not know when it changes into a butterfly. Similarly, the mind of a sadhaka does not know how it changes; one day it simply realises that it is no longer a unit mind. When individual and personal feelings are sublimated and directed towards the Supreme, at that moment a person begins to very rapidly advance towards Parama Purusha and realises oneness with Him.

"What is the final goal of kevala bhakti or absolute devotion? It is to become one with Parama Purusha, the Macrocosmic Nucleus. That is the final stage of non-duality."

Thus Baba analysed the various grades of devotion that people cultivate and guided the Margis towards the attainment of kevala bhakti, the highest form of devotion. The most remarkable work in exploring the various nuances of devotion began in 1982. In that year Baba started to compose a new genre of devotional songs called Prabhat Samgita, which finally became an incredible collection of over 5000 songs. Through those devotional songs, he described every expression of devotion that one can possibly feel for the Macrocosmic Nucleus.

Stages of Samadhi

As a sadhaka progresses on the path of devotion, he experiences several stages of spiritual realisation. During one Sunday darshan in early 1957, Baba explained these different types of spiritual realisation in detail. He then called Haridutt Pant, an army officer from Almora in the Himalayas, and asked him to sit in meditation, then made an upward movement with his left index finger. Haridutt's

body suddenly jerked. Baba asked Haridutt to describe what he was experiencing. Haridutt replied, "Baba, I am feeling an intense attraction for Parama Purusha. It is very blissful. I can also hear a 'tik, tik' sound."

Baba explained, "When the kundalini, also known as the sleeping divinity, lying in the muladhara chakra at the root of the vertebral column, is awakened due to intense devotion, a sadhaka begins to experience profound bliss. The vibrational flow of creation pulsates in every atom and molecule of the universe, and this creates a collective cosmic sound called the *omkara*. Diverse sounds are created at different stages of creation depending on the subtlety or crudity of the vibrated objects. As a person advances along the spiritual path, depending on the level of subtlety of his mind and body, he can hear different manifestations of the omkara. When the mind and body become subtle through spiritual practices, the kundalini starts to rise, causing these sounds to become audible. The muladhara chakra is the controlling psychic centre of the physical body. As the kundalini rises from the muladhara, the omkara resonates through the veins, nerves, arteries, blood, lymph, etc., and a certain sound which resembles the sound of the cricket insect (tik, tik, tik) is created. It is that sound that Haridutt is hearing now."

Baba then pointed his left index finger at Haridutt again and made another upward movement with it, then asked him to describe his experience. "I am in a divine world of effulgence, which is even more blissful. I feel the divine presence in the entire universe. I feel Parama Purusha is attracting me through each and every object in the universe. I am able to hear a beautiful sound of ankle bells," said Haridutt.

Baba then explained his experience, "This is the feeling that one gets when the kundalini reaches the next chakra, the *svadhishthana*. In that state, a spiritual aspirant feels the presence of Parama Purusha in the entire creation. It is known as *salokya samadhi*. A sadhaka experiences salokya when the kundalini reaches the svadhishthana chakra. The sound that he is hearing now is somewhat similar to the sound of ankle bells. In the absence of devotion, the awakening of the

kundalini is not possible. Knowledge, education, learning – all these will become meaningless if devotion is missing. The yoga of a yogi is futile and so are the esoteric spiritual practices of a tantric who is devoid of devotion. If there is devotion, even if one lacks knowledge and learning, one can become established in the height of spirituality.”

Through another upward movement of his left index finger, Baba again ordered Haridutt’s kundalini to rise and asked him to describe his experience.

“Now I feel even more attraction for Parama Purusha,” said Haridutt. “I feel closer to Parama Purusha than before. I hear the sweet sound of a flute floating in from somewhere. I feel even more bliss than before.”

“This is the experience when the kundalini rises to the *manipura* chakra in the navel region,” explained Baba. “This is called *samipya* or proximity to Parama Purusha. In pleasure as well as in pain, a devotee always feels close to Parama Purusha. This was the stage the gopis of Vrindavan had attained. Lord Krishna played the most enchanting notes on His flute. The intoxicating waves of spiritual attraction that emanated from his music pierced the innermost recesses of their hearts and aroused deep feelings of love in the devotees. Each devotee felt that the sound of the flute was calling him or her alone. ‘I can no longer afford to ignore the sound of the flute and stay away, for the flute is calling me by name,’ and they would forget everything and oblivious to all sense of time and propriety would rush to Krishna. The gopis of Vrindavan constantly heard the divine sound of the flute even when Krishna was not playing it, as they were established in the state of *samipya*. This stage is attained only when a person’s devotion becomes very intense.”

Baba once again gestured upwards with his index finger directing the kundalini to rise to the next chakra, and then asked, “Tell us, Haridutt, what you feel now?”

“I feel that Parama Purusha is extremely close to me. I am in physical contact with Him. I see divine effulgence all around me. I am able to hear the sound of the ocean waves. It is an extremely soothing sound. The feeling of bliss has grown more intense.”

“This is the state of *sayujya*, where a person feels extreme proximity to Parama Purusha,” commented Baba. “This is the experience one has when the kundalini reaches the *anahata* chakra. A devotee feels, ‘Parama Purusha is my personal entity.’ This was how the gopis felt in the presence of Lord Krishna. They felt an intense attraction to Him and looked on their relationship with Him as a very personal one. When the kundalini reaches this chakra, one can either hear the sound of the ocean waves or the rumbling of clouds.

“As one’s devotion increases, one starts to feel, ‘Parama Purusha belongs to me.’ At this stage there are three different categories of devotional possessiveness. If a C category devotee is asked, ‘Why do you think that Parama Purusha belongs to you?’ he will say, ‘As the Cosmic Father, He is the creator of everything and everyone. So, He belongs to one and all, and therefore He belongs to me too, as I am also His creation.’

“However, when a person’s devotion grows more intimate he or she starts to feel, ‘He is my Supreme Father, so He belongs to me. He is the Supreme Father of everyone else too, so He belongs to others as well.’ These devotees are of the B category.

“Finally, when devotion becomes more intense, the devotee feels, ‘My Supreme Father belongs to me alone and to nobody else. His relationship with me is an extremely personal one. Sayujya is the stage when this kind of personal relationship starts to take deep root in the mind of a devotee. When a devotee develops such a deep, personal relationship with the Lord, he or she thinks, ‘Whatever I think or do is only to make Him happy and is not to please anybody else. Nothing gives me greater happiness than doing something to please my Lord.’ This is the beginning of the ultimate stage of devotion. This is the thinking of an ideal devotee. Let us see what happens when this kind of devotion increases in intensity.”

With a motion of his finger Baba directed Haridutt’s kundalini to rise further. “Now tell us what you feel.”

“I can see Parama Purusha, the personification of effulgence, in each and everything and wherever I look, I feel that I too am Parama Purusha. It is indescribably blissful. I am hearing the sound of a gong - tam, tam, tam.”

Baba said, “At this stage the kundalini reaches the *vishuddha* chakra in the throat region. It is known as *sarupya*, and one can see Parama Purusha in each and every particle of the universe. In this state, there is hardly any difference between the devotee and the Lord. It is about this state that the devotional poet, Vidyapati of Mithila, said:

Madhava Madhava Anukhana Sumari Sundarii Madhava Bhelii

‘While constantly ideating on Madhava¹, Radha finally realised that she had become Madhava.’ This is the final stage of raganuga bhakti.”

Baba added that a devotee who develops raganuga bhakti attains sarupya samadhi.

Baba then described the different types of devotional relationship which blossom at this stage. “When the relationship with the Supreme Entity becomes personal, a devotee can look at Parama Purusha in a variety of ways. Not everyone may want to consider Him as the Supreme Father. There are several types of feeling which can colour their devotional relationship with the Supreme Entity. Some may regard the Lord as their master and consider themselves as His servant. This is the type of relationship that many of Lord Shiva’s devotees had with Him. In such a relationship, there is a mental gap between the Lord and the devotee. Another is the feeling that the Lord is my closest friend. Arjuna and Sudama had this type of intimate relationship with Lord Krishna. Here too, there is a distance between the Lord and the devotee. Another type of relationship is like the intimate tie between a mother and her son. The relationship between Yashoda and Lord Krishna is a good example of this. The gopis of Vrindavan had a deep and intimate connection with the Lord. Such a relationship is known as gopibhava. When this type of relationship increases in intensity, it is gradually transformed into *radhabhava*. What happens when *radhabhava* becomes intense?”

As he posed this question, Baba again gestured with his left index finger directing Haridutt’s kundalini to rise, this time to the

¹ One of Lord Krishna’s names.

ajina chakra, and then he asked Haridutt to describe his experience. This time it took him some time to respond. His face was glowing with the intensity of the ecstasy he was experiencing. Finally he said, "Now the sound of the gong has merged into the omkara and I can hear the eternal sound of the omkara. The effulgence is like millions of suns shining all at the same time, but the feeling is extremely soothing. I cannot express in words the bliss I feel." Haridutt paused for a while and then continued, "I am Parama Purusha... All of creation is part of me... I pervade the entire creation." Haridutt's voice began to fade and he became more and more incoherent.

Baba explained, "This stage is called *sarshthi*, and this feeling comes when the kundalini reaches the ajina chakra. At this point, the sounds of the cricket, ankle bells, flute, ocean and gong all merge into the omkara. One should carefully note the difference between sarupya and sarshthi. In sarupya the feeling is 'I too am Parama Purusha', but in the sarshthi stage the feeling is 'I am Parama Purusha'. There is a slight feeling of dualism in sarupya. That is why the 'I too' feeling exists. In sarshthi the feeling that 'I too am Parama Purusha' is replaced by the feeling 'I am Parama Purusha'. What is unique about sarshthi is that the feeling of 'I' starts to disappear. It is the culminating stage of savikalpa samadhi, the highest state one can achieve through one's sadhana. Salokya to sarshthi are the different stages of savikalpa samadhi. The ultimate purpose of yoga is to withdraw one's mind from all mundane objects and to direct all of one's physical, psychic and spiritual propensities towards Parama Purusha. Yogis merge their individual existence into the Macrocosm in different stages and feel that the Macrocosmic Nucleus, Parama Purusha, is their nearest and dearest. In that state the devotee does not even have the desire for liberation. It has got no importance for him or her. His or her only desire is to serve the Lord and His creation. This is the result of cultivating radhabhava."

"As devotees continue to experience radhabhava, a stage comes when they feel in their heart of hearts that their existence is meaningless if they cannot attain Lord Krishna, that they cannot survive a single moment without feeling His blissful presence. At this point they have attained the stage called "radha". The word radha has

come from ‘*aradhana*’, which means the process of *sadhana* by which devotees attain a stage where they forget themselves completely. Sometimes devotionally intoxicated devotees completely forget themselves as they run after the Lord. This is known as ‘*aradhana*’. At this stage, there is still a slight feeling of separation. The devotee feels, ‘Whatever I do is to please my Lord’. In this state, the devotee remains oblivious of everything except the Lord. So a person who is permanently established in *aradhana* is *Radha*. *Radhabhava* is the highest stage of devotion; it is *ragatmika* devotion.”

Baba then, with an upward movement of his index figure, again instructed the *kundalini* to rise further beyond the *ajina chakra*.

“There is bliss everywhere, and I am the very personification of bliss. I am *Paramananda Svarupa* (Supreme Bliss incarnate),” murmured *Haridutt* several times. Gradually his voice grew fainter, and after a few seconds he slowly keeled over and collapsed on the floor with a loud cry of ‘*Baba*’.

“*Haridutt, Haridutt,*” called *Baba* several times, but there was no response. *Baba* then remarked, “How will *Haridutt* respond? He no longer exists. His mind does not exist. Absorbed in the pursuit of the Lord, *Radha* is oblivious of herself. In this stage of *radhabhava*, the devotee starts to enter the state of *kevala bhakti*. Totally absorbed in the thought of the Lord, *Radha* loses even the slightest feeling of separation. Until this stage of *sarshthi* is reached, the devotee feels, ‘Serving my Lord gives me bliss.’ At this stage, however, the devotee feels, ‘Whatever I am doing is to please my Lord and my Lord alone.’ The desire to enjoy bliss disappears. The remaining ‘I’ feeling becomes ‘You’, that is, the Lord. That is the ultimate state of *Kaevalya* or *Nirguna*.”

Baba continued, “When the microcosmic mind comes close to the Macrocosmic Nucleus, the two points can no longer remain separate; they merge into one. The unit mind merges with *Krishna*. In this way, duality ultimately ceases to exist. It simply cannot survive.

This is the state of non-duality from where creation originated. The unit mind becomes one with Nirguna Brahma, non-qualified Supreme Consciousness. It is the stage of nirvikalpa samadhi.”

“Nirvikalpa is beyond sound or feeling, as at this stage the mind no longer exists. In the earlier stages of savikalpa samadhi it is also not normally possible to describe the experience, but I kept a portion of Haridutt’s mind active so that he could share his experiences. In the state of nirvikalpa that is not possible because the mind does not exist.”

Baba then asked a Margi sitting nearby to check Haridutt’s breathing, heartbeat and pulse. The person informed Baba that there was no sign of life and that his body had become stiff just like in rigor mortis.

“Normally after death, rigor mortis sets in within two to four hours. But in the case of samadhi it is instantaneous,” explained Baba. “It is not possible for the kundalini to rise if the person does not have devotion. Devotion is developed through the practice of sadhana. Until it reaches the ajina chakra, the kundalini is lifted by the devotion that develops through sadhana.

“Through the meditation that you all perform daily, you can become established in the permanent awareness that you are the Supreme Consciousness. But to go beyond that state, one has to practise the sixth lesson of *Guru Dhyana* intensely. When a devotee reaches this stage, he or she wants Parama Purusha and does not desire anything from Him, not even liberation. When one develops kevala bhakti, forgetting the ‘I’ and thinking only about ‘You’, one gets drawn closer and ever closer to Parama Purusha, the Macrocosmic Nucleus. Finally one is drawn into the Macrocosmic Nucleus and completely loses one’s separate identity. The devotee becomes one with the Lord. This is called moksha or salvation. So salvation is the natural outcome of kevala bhakti.

Suppose Parama Purusha says, ‘O devotee, what do you want?’ the reply should be, ‘I want You.’ One should not even say, ‘I want mukti or I want moksha,’ because if one says that, one may or may

not get it, but one will not get Parama Purusha. Which is more valuable, mukti, moksha or Parama Purusha? Parama Purusha of course! This is known as absolute love for God. This is kevala bhakti. Only at this stage does devotion reach its culminating point, and there is only one desire left in the mind of the devotee – ‘I want to please my Parama Purusha at every moment of my existence, through each and every action I do.’ There is no desire for personal happiness. When such intense love for the divine arises in the mind, even the desire for liberation vanishes. At that moment the Sadguru, whose position is in the guru chakra that is touching the sahasrara chakra, attracts the kundalini and the sadhaka attains the ultimate state of nirvikalpa samadhi. In Tantra, it is called kaevalya, meaning the state of absolute oneness with the Supreme.

The starting point of ragatmika devotion is sarshthi and its culminating point is kaevalya. Every human being, knowingly or unknowingly, is moving towards the ultimate goal of either sarshthi or kaevalya. Those who do so knowingly accelerate their movement towards the Macrocosmic Nucleus by performing spiritual practices. And devotion gives the most powerful thrust to this acceleration. Those who do not practise sadhana or follow the path of devotion towards Parama Purusha are also moving towards the Macrocosmic Nucleus. However, their progress is very slow as it follows the course of collective evolution through which the entire animate world is being drawn very gradually towards the Macrocosmic Nucleus.

“Human beings have been evolving and will continue to evolve forever. Due to their evolutionary progress, a day will surely come when, with very little spiritual practice, they will be able to bridge the gap between themselves and the Macrocosmic Nucleus. This will happen in the natural course of their evolution without any conscious effort being required on their part. But this process is extremely slow and can take ages. So if one consciously tries to get there by practising sadhana seriously, one will be able to attain Parama Purusha, the Macrocosmic Nucleus, in this very life or in the next.

“All are moving towards the Macrocosmic Nucleus, whether or not they are aware of it. This movement towards the Macrocosmic

Nucleus is a natural tendency borne out of attraction for Parama Purusha. It is natural to love the Supreme Entity. Intelligent people develop this natural propensity through persistent effort in sadhana. To be established in sarshthi or kaevalya is the final goal of all human beings. I am sure that one day everyone will be permanently ensconced in that state. So nobody should develop an inferiority complex. You are all His loving sons and His loving daughters. You are sure to get Him; it is your birthright to be one with Him." With these words of assurance, Baba concluded his discourse.

Haridutt Pant remained in nirvikalpa samadhi for a long time. When he finally came out of it, he was a changed man. He wept for a very long time. When he described to the curious Margis the various extraordinary spiritual experiences he had been blessed with, he said, "Unlike the different states of savikalpa samadhi, when I was in nirvikalpa samadhi I was completely unaware of it. But I am sure that it was an extremely blissful state because ever since I came out of it, I have been experiencing a feeling of intense bliss which I cannot express in words."

From that day on, Haridutt frequently went into a spiritual trance. It was a common sight to see him fall into samadhi while doing meditation. Tears would stream down his face whenever he talked about Baba. To the other Margis, his behaviour appeared to be slightly abnormal. Sometimes he would touch one of them on the forehead, muttering "Om Baba, kuti, kuti," and that person would immediately fall into a yogic trance. Soon he too joined the ranks of elevated sadhakas like Bindeshvari and a few others around whom the Margis flocked in the hope of experiencing an instant spiritual high.

Haridutt's sudden transformation after that day's demonstration of samadhi initially created a conflict in his professional life in the armed forces, but with the passage of time his colleagues and authorities realised that a spiritual transformation had taken place in him, and gradually got used to his unusual behaviour. The Margis had very high regard for this extraordinary devotee. Even before he experienced nirvikalpa samadhi, Haridutt was highly respected by

everyone for his strict adherence to morality. He was also an example of dedication and sacrifice. Later, after becoming an acharya, he laid the foundation for the work of Ananda Marga in the state of Madhya Pradesh, where he was posted.

In those days on numerous occasions, Baba blessed the Margis with various types of spiritual experiences, including the lofty state of radhabhava and the samadhi associated with each of the higher states of consciousness. Generally the devotees who experienced an exalted state of intense bliss did not want to come out of it and desired to remain in that state forever. This made it difficult for them to carry out their worldly responsibilities. One of the methods Baba employed to wean them from the lingering effects of these exalted states was to keep them extremely busy in worldly activities.

Impact of Hladini Shakti

During the DMCs, Baba used to unleash a small amount of *hladini shakti* whenever devotional songs were sung. Its effect was amazing. The Margis would feel an overwhelming surge of devotion and would dance uninhibitedly, forgetting their social status, position, wealth and everything else. Many openly wept, carried away by a surging tide of ecstasy. Others laughed uncontrollably out of sheer joy. Young and old, men and women, high and low, all danced in abandon, forgetting their complexes. Senior government officers danced alongside simple village folk, something that one normally would not see in India. When Baba released the exhilarating waves of devotion, every devotee present would be affected in one way or another. To those not acquainted with spirituality the scene would appear completely abnormal.

While on a visit to Jamalpur towards the end of 1959, Acharya Akhori Himachal Prasad, the superintendent of police, remarked to Baba that he was deeply missing the devotional climax he had previously experienced at DMCs.

“Akhori, don’t worry,” said Baba reassuringly. “In the coming DMC in Ranchi you will have a taste of it. You will forget everything and dance in bliss.”

At the time of the DMC, which was held on the 28th of December, Akhori recalled Baba's words and thought, "Baba said that I would dance in devotional ecstasy. I want to see if this feeling develops due to Baba's wish even if I don't consciously desire it." He then decided to hold himself in complete check and not allow himself to be carried away by the devotional mood of the moment.

The atmosphere during the DMC was extraordinary, and many started crying, laughing or exhibiting other occult symptoms. At the end of the programme Baba blessed everyone with his characteristic Varabhaya Mudra, engulfing the entire gathering in an overwhelming devotional wave. Just then Kshitij started to sing a devotional song, and Baba raised his hands in a special mudra, crossing both his index fingers. Suddenly there was a sudden surge of devotion and the whole gathering went wild; everyone jumped up and started to dance. Akhori too felt an irresistible impulse to dance, caught up in the electrifying devotional mood. However, he applied every ounce of will power he possessed and resisted the intense desire to dance together with everyone else. For a while it appeared that he had succeeded. Then suddenly he felt a powerful energy lifting him up and compelling him to dance. However much he tried to resist it, he could not. Soon he too was dancing with full abandon like the rest of the crowd. Even after the singing had ended and Baba had left the premises, Akhori continued to dance in ecstasy, oblivious of his surroundings. When he finally regained his senses, he found that most of the Margis had left and he was lying alone on the floor with tears streaming down his cheeks due to the intensity of his devotional feelings. The bliss for which he had been longing for so long had now filled his soul.

The next morning there was a brief gathering of the Margis before Baba's departure. Kshitij sang a deeply devotional song describing how desolate the people of Vrindavan felt at the time of Lord Krishna's departure for Mathura.

The Margis were inconsolable and many started to cry uncontrollably. Seeing this, Baba told Pranay to ask Kshitij to stop singing, as Baba too was being affected by the devotional mood and

was unable to control himself. The crying and wailing continued unabated as Baba got into Akhori's car, which was to take him back to Jamalpur. As Akhori drove past the wailing Margis, Baba asked him in Angika, "Well, Akhori, could you resist the urge to dance last night in spite of all your efforts?"

Akhori did not answer. He had still not completely recovered from the effects of the spiritual trance he had experienced the previous night. As he relived the bliss of his incredible experience, tears started to trickle down his cheeks, and his voice became choked with emotion.

In Ranchi, the Margis were still grief-stricken several days after Baba's departure. It was an unusual experience for them. They felt that someone who was a part of their very existence had been forcibly snatched from them, and the pain of their loss was agonizing. Many of them cried regularly in their meditation, yearning for Baba's presence. A week later, Baba sent Pranay to Ranchi to soothe their deep anguish, but he was unable to do so. So on the 12th of February 1960, Baba returned to Ranchi on a surprise visit and stayed with them for three days. Gradually their desperate longing for Baba's physical presence subsided.

Such experiences were common in the early days of Ananda Marga. The Margis slowly realised that Baba could increase the intensity of their devotion by his mere wish. Gradually they began to realise that they should only ask the guru for more devotion and nothing else.

God as Personal Entity

As the Margis' relationship with Baba matured, it often evolved into a close, deeply personal one, which expressed itself in different ways according to their individual samskaras. Some considered Baba as a close friend, while others looked upon him as their loving father. A few older Margis considered him as their son and a close member of their family, while with others he had a more intimate relationship as the beloved of their hearts. For them, to treat Baba in a formal

manner as the guru created a painful distance which they found distasteful and unacceptable. Baba also reciprocated according to the type of relationship they had with him.

For example, Ram Khilavan's family considered Baba as an intimate family member. Each member of his family had his or her own distinct, special relationship with him. Ram Khilavan's wife, Ramtanuka, loved Baba as her son and would admonish him publicly if she ever felt displeased with him for some reason or other. Baba too gave her the respect and privilege normally accorded to a mother and obeyed her wishes.

Ramtanuka recalled several incidents that illustrated the special nature of her relationship with Baba. The new jagrti that was rented after shifting from the Rampur Railway Colony quarters was a dilapidated house, which leaked when it rained. Whenever this happened, the Sunday Darshan was shifted to Nityananda's quarters, which was also located in Rampur colony. This was before the Margis bought the Olipur land. On one such Sunday, when Ramtanuka came for darshan, Baba was in the room at the back of the house, engaged in a discussion about organisational matters with Pranay, Sukumar, Dasharath and some others. The Margis had gathered in the large hall and were patiently waiting for darshan. After some time the door of the back room opened and Baba emerged. He entered the hall followed by the others.

Pranay announced to the waiting Margis, "Baba is very upset that we still don't have our own jagrti. So he has decided not to sit for darshan until we have it."

There was great consternation among the Margis, but they accepted Baba's decision. They assured him that they would immediately search for some land for the jagrti. Ramtanuka was sitting in a corner. She did not accept Baba's decision, so she got up and said in an admonishing tone, "Baba, I have performed idol worship since my childhood. But after coming to know you and your teachings, I relinquished everything for you. The whole society turned against me, but I did not bother about that. Now if you want

to keep away from us, why did you descend on this earth from the divine realm where you belong? It would have been better if you had stayed there.”

Alarmed by her sudden outburst, Dasharath tried to prevent her from speaking, but Baba told her to continue. When she finished, Baba said in a most affectionate tone, “Ma, you are absolutely correct. All right, I am changing my decision.” Like an obedient son, Baba took his seat and started his discourse with the following words, “I do not belong to the realm of pure spirituality, nor do I reside in Vaekuntha, the divine realm. In short, if I have to say where I belong, I belong to you all; I live in the hearts of each of you.....”

On another occasion, a new Margi from Suryagada had come for Sunday Darshan in the newly constructed jagrti. His vibration was very crude and completely different from that of everyone else in the room. He was covered with a blanket which reeked of the strong, nauseating stench of *ganja*. Everyone was visibly upset and feeling uncomfortable in his presence. At the end of the discourse, Baba put his legs down and stretched out his feet to put on his shoes. All of a sudden, the new Margi made a quick dash to the front of the room with the intention of catching hold of Baba’s feet. Seeing him, Baba immediately lifted them up again to prevent him from touching them. Ramtanuka, who was present, asked, “Baba, other than your feet, is there any shelter in the entire world for a fallen person? So why are you withdrawing them? Offer him shelter there.”

Meanwhile Bindeshvari intervened, “Don’t you smell the stink of *ganja* from his blanket? His vibration is so *tamasik*.”

“Dada, Baba might have given you the special ability to see the vibrations emitted by people, but for me he is a simple devotee trying to seek shelter at the feet of our Baba.”

Baba immediately put his feet down again and said with a sweet smile, “Ma, let it be according to your wish.” The new Margi fell at Baba’s feet, and Baba blessed him.

Actually Baba never discriminated against people whose past was very dark. In fact, during Personal Contact, he spent more time

with such people, cleaning the big load of negative samskaras they had acquired in this life or in earlier lives, and infusing in them a new spiritual force. In contrast, the Personal Contact of people who had led a purer life was generally very short. Sometimes it was shocking to know to what depths a person had sunk in his life before he came for Personal Contact. However, afterwards he would feel as if he had been lifted out of a dark abyss and transported to a world of divine effulgence.

In one of his discourses Baba said, "Parama Purusha is the Father of the blessed, of the virtuous. He is their supreme shelter. But isn't He also the Father of those who are not virtuous and who are sinners? Certainly He is their Father as well. He is the Father of the sinners too. Otherwise where will the sinners go? He must give shelter to them as well. He knows the past of all His daughters and all His sons. Even then He loves them, doesn't He? Suppose the Supreme Father says that He is only the Father of the virtuous and not the Father of the sinners, is He justified in saying that? Has He got the right to say that? If He does, the sinners will challenge His authority. They will say, 'No, Supreme Father, you have no right to say that you are not the Father of the sinners, because if You are the Father of the universe, do the sinners live outside the scope of the universe? No!' Then the sinners may say, 'O Father, if You are not the Supreme Being, if you are not our Father, please expel us to a place outside the universe.'"

There was a standing instruction that the Margis were not allowed to bring any food for Baba. But there were exceptions, and Ramtanuka was one of the very few Margis whose food Baba accepted without reservation. Often she would bring some homemade delicacies that she had prepared for him with great devotion and which he accepted with great delight. One Sunday, before going to the jagrti, her husband Ram Khilavan asked her for a cup of tea. When he drank it, he found that there was no sugar in it, so he asked her for some. She replied that there was no sugar in the house and asked him to buy some when he went out. Before going to the jagrti for darshan she made some orange juice for Baba. Since it was not sweet enough, she added some sugar that she had kept aside

especially for this purpose. Ram Khilavan was surprised to see her adding sugar to the drink. A fleeting thought passed through his mind that she was favouring Baba over him. Immediately he corrected himself and thought, “I shouldn’t think like this. She did the right thing because Baba should always get priority.”

When Ramtanuka arrived at the jagrti, Baba was busy discussing organisational matters with Pranay and some others. She therefore waited outside his room for an opportune moment to serve Baba the drink. After a while Dasharath emerged from inside. She immediately requested him to take the fruit juice to Baba. Dasharath took the glass of fruit juice to Baba but came out shortly afterwards saying, “Baba will not drink the juice today.” Ram Khilavan, who was standing near the door, immediately understood that Baba had refused to drink the juice because of the inappropriate thought he had had while his wife was preparing it. Ramtanuka was unable to accept that Baba would not drink the juice she had specially made for him with great devotion. How could Baba refuse to accept it? She was upset and said in a loud voice, “Dasharath dada, it is better for you to break the glass in front of Baba’s door. I am not taking back the juice I have made for him with so much love.”

Just then Baba called out, “Dasharath, bring the juice. I don’t want to see her angry.” Dasharath took the juice inside and Baba drank it with great relish.

Ramtanuka’s niece, Kranti, recounted an incident involving Ramtanuka that she had personally witnessed:

One day my aunt took some *pera* (delicious sweets made from condensed milk) for Baba. When he was about to get up after his Sunday discourse, my aunt sprang up from her seat. Unfolding the end of her sari, she brought out a packet made with a leaf and offered the sweets to Baba, saying, “Baba, I have brought something very special for you. I know you will like this very much.”

“What have you brought for me, mother?” Baba asked affectionately.

“Some *pera*. They are only for you. I will not allow you to share them with anyone else because I know you like them very much.”

"Really? It is true that I like pera very much. But now it is time for my lunch," Baba responded in a loving tone, declining the sweets. "If I eat them now, I won't be able to take my lunch."

"Baba, I am not going to listen to any of your excuses today. Please accept these sweets."

"My lunch is waiting for me at home. What shall I tell my mother who has taken so much trouble to cook for me?"

"Baba! I am not going to listen to any of your excuses. Please accept the sweets."

"Oh, mother, no, not today."

"I will not listen. If you do not accept them, I'll have to feed you the pera myself," she insisted. "Now please open your mouth." She took a pera in her hand and tried to force it into Baba's mouth. Baba kept refusing but aunty continued to insist.

Finally Baba relented, "All right, mother, I give up. You can feed me if it makes you happy." With these words, Baba opened his mouth. Beaming with satisfaction, my aunt tried to put the pera into Baba's mouth which was wide-open. Suddenly, something strange happened. We saw to our amazement that her hand froze in mid-air as she gazed into Baba's mouth. As we looked on in wonder, she collapsed on the ground. Before departing, Baba said that she was in a spiritual trance. My cousins and I carried her out of Baba's room and laid her down on the veranda."

"For quite some days, whenever we asked my aunt what she had seen inside Baba's mouth that day, she would just burst into tears, unable to utter a single word. She would then involuntarily go into the ecstatic state of samadhi. It was only after several weeks that she became somewhat normal and was able to describe what had happened that day.

"What she saw in his mouth was beyond belief. She saw the sun and the planets revolving around the sun, as well as

innumerable stars that kept appearing and disappearing as they revolved inside Baba's mouth. As she gazed at this incredible sight, she lost consciousness and fell on the ground in a deep spiritual trance."

Even several decades later, when Ramtanuka sat down to record her experiences with Baba, she could not control her emotions and wept copiously, with the result that the recording had to be halted several times to enable her to regain her composure.

Soaring to Celestial Heights

Another Margi who was renowned for his simplicity and intensity of devotion was Chandranath's cook, Makhan. He was a simple rustic who had never crossed the threshold of a classroom, but was a very sincere and highly elevated sadhaka. During his recording, Chandranath's son, Ramananda, described Makhan's spiritual experiences, "From the very beginning, Makhanda performed his sadhana diligently and followed yama-niyama very strictly. Initially we did not understand the level of spiritual attainment he had reached even before he was initiated. At night, after all of us retired to bed, he would take a bath and then sit for long sadhana. Everyone in the house provided all the encouragement and assistance that he needed to sincerely carry out his spiritual practice."

Once during one of the Sunday Darshans, Acharya Svamisharan from Samastipur asked Baba the significance of the spiritual Vrindavan, where Lord Krishna is said to be always present. Baba said that the Vrindavan where Lord Krishna is ever-present playing His divine flute is a spiritual world and not the physical Vrindavan near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh. Baba explained, "A sadhaka can experience the spiritual Vrindavan through sadhana and devotion alone. The experience of this realm starts when the kundalini crosses the manipura chakra on its upward journey, and it extends to the point when the devotee becomes one with the Supreme Desideratum. In this realm, the spiritually intoxicating sound of the divine flute is always heard." Baba said that the gopis of Vrindavan had such deep love for Lord Krishna that it permanently established them in the state of the spiritual Vrindavan. The devotional saint, Mira, also frequently experienced that state.

Talking about the permanent Vrindavan, Baba gave further details in one of his discourses, saying: "Today, all His devotees can attain the spiritual Vrindavan. And Lord Krishna is always there, for He said, '*Vrindavanam parityajya padamekam na gacchami*', meaning I won't go anywhere from Vrindavan, not even one step. When through spiritual practice and devotion, the devotees will one day rush to Him and realise that the One who had been attracting them from behind each and every object was actually Krishna, who was always close by and never far away. On attaining this realisation, the devotee attains Him and becomes one with Him." In later days, Baba gave the experience of the spiritual Vrindavan to a few of his disciples.

Makhan had heard Baba's discourse about the permanent Vrindavan and was eager to know more about it, so he asked Pranay. Pranay advised him to request Baba for more information. Makhan, however, did not want to bother Baba with such questions. About a year later, Baba was in Bhagalpur during one of his many visits to Chandranath's residence. Makhan was massaging Baba's body. While he was massaging Baba's feet, Baba asked Makhan to touch his toes with his (Makhan's) forehead. Makhan did as directed and placed his forehead on Baba's feet. Then Baba asked him to sit in meditation. Almost immediately he went into samadhi, and his consciousness soared into a spectacular sphere of divine bliss and radiance. He didn't know how long he was immersed in that blessed state of divine consciousness. When Baba left Chandranath's house for Jamalpur, Makhan was still in a state of divine intoxication. During his return journey, Baba commented to those accompanying him, "Makhan wanted to know more about the spiritual Vrindavan, but he never expressed the desire to me. Today I gave him the practical experience of the spiritual Vrindavan."

After that blissful divine experience, Makhan would spend long hours in meditation. Often he would skip dinner, as his sadhana would only be completed long after midnight. On several occasions, Chandranath and his wife, Rampari Devi, found him lying on the floor deep in samadhi when they got up in the morning. After the ecstatic experience of the spiritual Vrindavan, the frequency of

Makhan's experience of samadhi gradually increased with the passage of time. They usually occurred at night, and he would still be in an ecstatic state the next morning long after emerging from samadhi. Seeing this, Rampari Devi would take over his kitchen duties and allow him to remain undisturbed, savouring his blissful experience, until he became completely normal again.

A few days after Baba gave him the experience of the spiritual Vrindavan, Makhan started going into samadhi at any time and in any place - while cooking, sweeping or carrying out any other household chores. The moment he fell into samadhi, his entire body would become very stiff. The other household assistants were used to his spiritual experiences and they would forcibly straighten out his stiff body and lay him on his bed.

Chandranath later described some of Makhan's experiences. "In early 1957, I was transferred from Bhagalpur to nearby Nathnagar. There, a strange incident happened in my official residence. One night after midnight, we were woken up by Makhan's loud cries of 'Baba, Baba.' We heard him open the door and run to the gate calling, 'Baba, Baba, Baba.' We got up and raced after him, thinking that Baba had come. The house had a very large compound, and the gate was a few hundred feet away. On reaching the gate, we saw Makhan lying in prostration. Nobody else was there. His body was very stiff. We realised that he was in samadhi. The orderlies then carried him back to his room. The next morning he explained that while he was doing sadhana, he saw that Baba had come and was leaving the house. So he ran after him shouting 'Baba, Baba' and prostrated before him. Later Baba confirmed that he had indeed visited our house that night in his spiritual body and not in his physical body. A similar incident happened a second time during my stay in Nathnagar."

Before taking any food, it was a common practice among the Margis to mentally offer it to Baba. On several occasions, it was found that Makhan's hand containing the uneaten food remained frozen near his mouth, as he had fallen into samadhi while mentally offering his food to Baba. His body would immediately stiffen like a statue.

It was a common sight to see Makhana fall in samadhi while thinking or talking about Baba. Once he was visiting Chautham, the village where Chandranath's elder sister, Acharya Taradevi, lived. Gopal, Taradevi's relative who was present at the time, recalled the strange incident they witnessed. "As Makhanda was making roti in the kitchen, the children and womenfolk of the house gathered around him, requesting him to tell them his experiences of Baba. As Makhanda recounted his experiences, he suddenly became quiet. His hand was on the pan where the roti was being baked. All of us were puzzled by his sudden silence, as we were seeing such a thing for the first time. Soon fumes started to come from the burnt roti, while both of Makhana's palms were still on it. We all shouted at Makhanda to remove his hands from the smoking pan, but he gave no response. Seeing him completely motionless, we shook his body. It had become stiff and with a gentle push, it fell over. At first, we thought that he was dead, but then we saw that he was still breathing. That was when we understood that Makhanda was in a spiritual trance. By that time the roti on the pan had burnt to a cinder. When Makhanda awoke from his samadhi, we saw that he was still in a divinely intoxicated state. We checked his hands and found that there was no sign of burn marks on his palms."

When Makhana started going into samadhi with increasing frequency whenever he thought or talked about Baba, the Margis became very careful not to allow him to talk about Baba when he was near the fire. The sight of Makhana going into samadhi attracted a lot of attention during DMCs and other spiritual functions.

One day Chandranath brought the subject up with Baba, "Baba, Makhana often goes into samadhi. He is an evolved soul. We all feel very bad about asking him to do our household chores. What should I do?"

"Makhana has a family who needs the income that he is receiving from you," replied Baba. "If he no longer works for you, he will not accept any remuneration from you even if you offer it to him. So let him do what he wants to do, and don't instruct him to do anything. He is highly responsible and will do the work you need on his own."

Makhan spent the last few years of his life at Ananda Nagar. Getting him to recount his spiritual experiences was an extremely difficult task, as he would invariably go into a spiritual trance whenever he tried to recollect them. During his stay there, several futile attempts were made to get him to describe his experience of the spiritual Vrindavan in order to preserve the information about such a rare experience in a video for posterity. However, each time he tried to describe it, he would invariably go into samadhi. Most of the time, he was not even able to complete a single sentence. Once he managed to say a few lines. He began, "There was a beautiful garden and there was a river in between. Baba came on a boat and asked me to sit in it and took me across" Before he could complete the sentence, he was again in samadhi. It was not possible to complete the interview.

Margis from different parts of India and the world, who were eager to see someone going into samadhi, would visit Makhan and ask him to tell them about his experiences. He would smile in reply and say, "Before I complete even one or two lines I will leave this world." However, they would insist that he should at least try to describe it. Being extremely simple natured and not wanting to disappoint the Margis, he would try to say something, but the moment he tried to recollect the experience, his body would sway gently and then with an exclamation of 'Baba', he would slowly drift into samadhi and his body would stiffen like a rod. He would remain in that divine state for at least half an hour and sometimes even longer. After he regained some degree of normality, the Margis would serve him warm milk and massage his body to help restart his blood circulation.

When a person experiences the divine state of samadhi, his blood circulation immediately stops. So Makhan suffered from severe body pain every time he returned from samadhi. When Makhan's physical suffering after experiencing samadhi became apparent, the Margis were forbidden from asking him about his experience of the spiritual Vrindavan. However, Makhan continued to experience samadhi during his meditation, albeit with less frequency.

Baba would often say that when devotion develops in a sadhaka, many qualitative changes take place in the person. One quality that develops is that one can never do injustice to others or remain a mute witness to the injustices perpetrated by others. A true devotee will never aspire for name and fame. Whatever action the sadhaka does is to please the Lord. Real devotees do not feel proud of their actions, nor do they indulge in any kind of frivolous display of their devotion. A devotee is a great lover of humanity and all living beings, as he sees everything as a manifestation of the Supreme Being. There is no ambiguity in what such a person thinks, does or speaks. Another quality that a devotee develops is fearlessness, as he sees the Lord in everything. Baba would sometimes ask why a devotee should fear anyone or anything when the Lord, who the devotee loves intensely, is feared by fear itself. These attributes start to manifest in a sadhaka after he or she attains a certain level of spiritual progress. Makhan was a classic example of fearlessness.

Makhan developed complete dependence on Baba for everything in his life. No worry or problem ever bothered him. One evening Baba was sitting on the Tiger's Grave with the Margis of A, B and C groups. Makhan was among those present. Baba asked them how a person could become fearless. Rajeshvarnath, a strong and well-built police officer, said that physical prowess made a person fearless. Baban and some others agreed with him. Baba smiled and told the police officer, "You are physically strong, and I think you are also fearless."

"Yes Baba. It is part of the training in the police force to be fearless."

"I see, that is very good," said Baba approvingly. He then pointed to a palm tree over a hundred yards away and told him, "Go and touch that palm tree and then return." The officer got up and with a manly gait walked towards the tree. However a couple of minutes later he ran back panting. Baba asked, "What's the matter? Did you touch the tree?"

"No, Baba. There was an animal that looked like a leopard sitting under the tree. It growled at me. So I didn't dare to go near the tree."

Baba laughed and said, “You are a strong and muscular person and you could have handled the leopard if it tried to attack you.”

“No, Baba, dealing with a leopard is a different thing altogether,” said Rajeshvarnath blushing, ashamed of his earlier vainglorious utterances.

Baba then asked the other Margis one by one if they wanted to try. Everyone declined. Baban, who was also in the police force, was ready to go. Plucking up his courage, he walked towards the tree. He too beat a hasty retreat after seeing the ferocious animal sitting under it. Nobody else dared to volunteer. Baba then asked the frail-looking Makhan, “Makhan, do you want to try?”

“Baba, if you ask me to, I will do it.”

“All right, you try.”

Makhan then got up and calmly walked over to the tree and after a few minutes returned just as calmly.

Baba asked, “Well, Makhan, did you touch the tree?”

“Yes, Baba, I did.”

“Did you see an animal there?”

“Yes, Baba, I saw the animal.”

“Weren’t you afraid of it?”

“Baba, why should I be afraid? I saw you in that animal. You were also in the tree and in everything else around it. So there was nothing to fear.”

Baba then asked the Margis, “Now, do you all understand what makes a person fearless?”

Makhan was not only fearless. He was well-known among the Margis for childlike simplicity and innocence.

Radha Bhava of Durga

Fearlessness is only one of several special qualities that a devotee gradually develops. When a person’s devotion increases in intensity, he is able to maintain his equanimity in all circumstances, both in

intense happiness and in extreme sorrow. They treat both happiness and sorrow as a blessing of the Lord. In this context Baba quoted the example of several great devotees such as Shri Ramakrishna, who cared little about the suffering they went through and welcomed it as a blessing of the Almighty. Several times, Baba quoted a composition of the great sage and devotional poet, Rabindranath Tagore, who welcomed a devastating personal tragedy as a blessing of the Lord:

Well done, O Pitiless One, well done.
 Scorch my heart with intense heat.
 If incense is not burnt, it won't pour its essence.
 If the lamp is not lit, it won't give light.
 When the mind is unconscious,
 A rude awakening from You is only a blessed touch.
 Ignorant, infatuated, ashamed, I don't see You.
 Strike a light to remove the darkness from me.

On the 17th of November 1962, Baba was on his way from Jamalpur to Gazipur by train. Nawal Kishore was accompanying him as his secretary. Vishvanath, the veterinary doctor, and a few others also accompanied him up to Patna. A few stations after Jamalpur the train stopped at a small station called Karza. The scheduled stop was only for a couple of minutes. However, strangely, the train did not move even after the guard gave the green signal. The Margis who had gathered at the station were happy to have the opportunity of spending more time with Baba, but those accompanying him understood that there must be a special reason why train was not moving despite the guard's signal. Baba was intently looking out of the window. The others wondered what had drawn his attention. Just then they saw a woman running towards the station. As she drew closer, they saw that she was Durga, a very devoted Margi from a village some distance away. As she came near, Baba got up saying, "She has come." He got off the train and stood on the platform. Durga came running and fell at his feet. She held onto them and started to cry profusely. Some Margis came forward to remove her, but with a gesture of his hand Baba stopped them. He just stood there and repeated several times, "I am always with you, my Durga, I am

always with you. Now stand up.” The Margis watched the drama in complete silence.

Finally, after crying for several minutes, Durga raised her head and untied the end of her sari. She brought out some flowers from its folds and offered them at Baba’s feet saying, “Baba, I don’t want anything except you. You have already taken everything I had. Now only you are left. Take me also into your shelter.”

Baba blessed her by placing his hands upon her head. He then motioned to the others to help her stand up. Slowly, with the assistance of some of the women, she got up. Baba said very affectionately, “Your wish will soon be fulfilled, Durga. Now permit me to leave. I have a long way to go. The Margis will be waiting everywhere along the way. Do not grieve; I am with you.”

Just as Baba entered the compartment the train whistled. Durga came up to the window and placed her head on the windowsill, repeating again and again, “Baba, I want only you. Take me into your shelter.” Baba instructed some Margis to accompany her home, saying that she would need their assistance there. The train slowly moved off, gathering speed as it went. Baba kept looking at Durga out of the window until she faded from sight.

Everyone was curious to know what had happened between Baba and her and the significance of the assurance Baba had given her. However, seeing that he was in a serious mood, they did not disturb him. After a while Baba turned to them and said, “You know, Durga was living alone with her young son. Her husband died three years ago and she had only two attachments left – one was her son and the other is me. Her son fell ill two days ago and died this morning. The body has not yet been buried. She knew that I was passing this way, so she left her son’s body at home and rushed over here. But even here she was not crying for her dead son. She was overwhelmed to see me. She was worried that because she was late, the train would depart before she arrived. Even at the time of such a terrible tragedy, she is thinking only of me. How could I have left without fulfilling her wish?”

“She is a widow, and her only son has been snatched away from her. Baba, providence has been very cruel to her even though she is a great devotee,” remarked Nawal Kishore.

Baba looked at him sternly and replied, “There is a benevolent reason behind everything that happens in this universe. In order to know that, you must first understand the secrets of creation. But that is beyond the capacity of the human mind. Durga has only a few more days to live. Since her initiation she has spent long hours doing sadhana every night. She is an exemplary devotee. I do not want her to be reborn. I want her to attain the final state of supreme beatitude. Her son was an attachment for her. When she leaves her body, she should not have anything else to think about other than me. Had her son been alive, she would have worried about him and about who would take care of him after she was gone. That would have been a distraction for her mind at the last moment. Now that her son is gone, she will only think of me as she finally leaves her body. And that will be the end of her eternal journey.” Baba closed his eyes, took a long breath and heaved a deep sigh. The others were annoyed at Nawal for making such an impetuous remark but were greatly relieved to hear Baba’s words about Durga.

After a few months, news reached Jamalpur that Durga had passed away. One morning after performing her sadhana, she did guru puja and did not wake up afterwards. When Sukumar conveyed the news of Durga’s demise to Baba during his evening walk, Baba stopped and did a long namaskar. Then he turned to the Margis and said, “In her past life, she was a very advanced sadhaka from Nepal and a great devotee of Lord Krishna. Because of the samskaras of her past life, from a very early age she developed a strong spiritual inclination. Towards the end of her life she was in a permanent state of radhabhava. Because of the depth of the devotional state that she was in, she was not affected by the personal tragedies that befell her. Now she has attained salvation and is one with the Supreme Desideratum and will not be born again.”

Besides Durga, Baba blessed several other Margis with the rare state of radhabhava. One such person was Kranti, Ram Khilavan’s

niece. Widowed at an early age, she channelled all her worldly attachments towards Baba and soon attained the highest state of devotion. Although she was a lecturer in philosophy at a college in Monghyr and belonged to a higher social stratum, she did not have any complex about her social position. During DMCs, it was a common sight to see Kranti stand up and with closed eyes dance in ecstasy whenever devotional songs were sung. Initially some of the women tried to prevent her from exhibiting her feelings so unabashedly, but Baba instructed them to leave her alone.

During an interview, Kranti explained her apparently strange behaviour, “I don’t know what happened to me in Baba’s presence. Whenever the devotional songs started, I was unable to sit quietly despite my best efforts. I would feel an irresistible force pulling my mind towards Baba, and in that ecstatic state I would dance, forgetting my surroundings and everything else. For me at that moment only my Baba and I existed and no one else. I would be immersed in an indescribable state of bliss. The dance that the Margis have seen me doing was quite involuntary, and I was not in a normal state of mind at the time. I used to flow in a supreme flow of divine attraction that Baba induced in me.”

Such were the extraordinary experiences of many ordinary men and women from different backgrounds. Some were very simple people like Haridutt Pant, Ramtanuka, Makhan and Durga, while there were others like well-educated Akhori, the high-ranking police officer, and Kranti, all of whom Baba blessed with the highest states of devotion. Those who had the great fortune of experiencing those exalted devotional states clearly understood how worldly attractions pale before devotional realisation. In that state of divine ecstasy, they could fully understand the inner meaning and true import of Baba’s words: “Devotion is the elixir of life and the most precious treasure, the inner asset of every human being. It should be very carefully developed and protected from the onslaught of dogmas and all the baneful values of life.”



CHAPTER 42

The Supreme Guide

The Margis were generally conscious of the fact that Baba was ever watching over them. They were always on guard to ensure that nothing in their behaviour displeased him. However, despite their best efforts, they made many mistakes. As with everything else, Baba had his own inimitable style of rectifying them, which left a lasting impression not only in their minds but also in the minds of the other Margis who heard about their experiences.

One evening in September 1958, Vaidyanath Prasad, a lawyer from Begusarai, was in the "B" Group accompanying Baba from his Rampur Colony residence to the Tiger's Grave. As they approached the Tiger's Grave, Baba stopped and turned to him, saying, "Vaidyanath, why haven't you been doing Guru Dhyana during your morning meditation for the last three days?"

Surprised, Vaidyanath protested, "No, Baba, I have been doing Guru Dhyana strictly every day, including the last three mornings."

"What kind of Guru Dhyana were you doing that even when you thought of me I didn't know about it? Do you know that whenever anyone, sitting anywhere in the universe, thinks of me, I immediately know about it? And you say that you were doing Guru Dhyana and I did not know anything about it."

Vaidyanath vehemently insisted that he had done Guru Dhyana on all the three days concerned. Abruptly Baba's tone changed and became stern. He said, "Vaidyanath, sitting in the posture of Guru Dhyana and thinking about how you will argue the pending cases in the court does not constitute Guru Dhyana. Do you understand? Indeed, you have been sitting in the Guru Dhyana posture, but each time you sat, you were only thinking about the arguments you would present in the cases that were going to come up that day. It is not only

on these three days that you have been doing Guru Dhyana in this manner. On many occasions I have seen you sitting in dhyana but thinking about worldly matters.”

Baba then revealed many details about what Vaidyanath had been thinking about during his morning meditations. He even mimicked the style in which Vaidyanath was planning to place his arguments before the judge. Everyone laughed at the sight of Baba parodying the court scenes so flawlessly.

“You know, Vaidyanath, I was standing at the entrance of your mind, each time thinking that you would now stop mulling over the case and do Guru Dhyana. But you did not think of me even once. After waiting for the entire time that you were in the Guru Dhyana posture, I finally had to leave disappointed,” said Baba with a smile.

Baba’s words had a profound effect on Vaidyanath. With tears rolling down his cheeks, he grasped Baba’s feet and begged for forgiveness, promising that he would be more careful about his sadhana in the future.

Turning to the Margis, Baba remarked, “When you sit for sadhana, so many distractions come and try to disturb you. Thoughts that never bother you at other times will suddenly arise in your mind. A sadhaka should learn how to struggle against these distracting tendencies. Sadhana is a constant struggle. It is the biggest struggle that a human being can undertake. So, face it resolutely and with determination. Victory in this struggle will crown you with the highest success in life and establish you at the altar of the Supreme.”

Is Baba Far Away?

Several incidents happened that proved to the Margis beyond doubt that Baba was always with them watching their thoughts and actions. They realised that he was even aware of what they thought about in their meditation, whether they thought about him or about something else.

However, Ramnarayan, a Margi youth from a village near Betiah, felt differently. One day in March 1961, when he visited Jamalpur, he

expressed his feelings of frustration to Arun, a new Margi from Muzaffarpur. He lamented that he could not feel Baba's presence and felt that Baba was far away from him. Because of this, he was unable to do sadhana properly.

Years later Arun recalled his subsequent experiences with Baba:

I was with Baba on a Field Walk one evening. Ramnarayan was also with us in the "B" group. It was a very cool, pleasant evening with the moon playing hide-and-seek behind the silvery clouds. Baba was talking about several interesting subjects, effortlessly switching from one topic to another. We had just entered the Polo Ground, when he suddenly stopped and turned to Ramnarayan saying, "Ramnarayan, direct your mind inwards and tell me what you see."

Ramnarayan closed his eyes and concentrated for a moment. Then, in an excited voice he said, "Baba, I can see you. You are sitting inside my mind in Varabhaya Mudra."

Baba's response evoked a sense of wonder in everyone, "Yes, I am in your mind. I am in the mind of everyone in subtle form. I am within each and every particle of this universe. When you forget me, the distance between us becomes so great that it cannot be measured, but when you remember me, the distance between us becomes so small that it cannot be conceived. Then you and I merge and become one. 'I' and 'you' become one, become one and indivisible."

Baba paused for a moment before continuing in a rhythmic tone, quoting a passage from a Bengali poem, "I don't come or go. I am neither invited nor rejected. I do not spin on the potter's wheel, nor am I broken beneath the blacksmith's hammer. I was, I am and I will always be. I have neither a beginning nor an end. I am ever-existing; I am eternal."

Everyone listened closely to Baba's mystical revelation in awe. He paused for a while and then continued walking towards the Tiger's Grave. After a short distance, he stopped again and turned to Ramanarayan saying, "Look at the sky."

Everyone looked up at the sky. The moon was just then emerging from behind the clouds. Pointing at it, Baba said, "Do you see? The clouds cover the moon for a certain period and then again it comes out. The moon is playing hide-and-seek with the clouds. I also do that sitting in your mind. Sometimes you feel my presence and sometimes you don't. But you should never think that I am not with you. Do your sadhana properly. Even if you are not able to concentrate in your sadhana, sit for the specified period. Your sadhana will slowly improve and you will feel my presence."

Baba then gave Ramnarayan some tips for improving his meditation and after obtaining Ramnarayan's assurance that he would follow his instructions strictly, he continued walking towards the Tiger's Grave where we met the Margis from the "A" group. Baba directed us to sit on the tomb with them.

Ramanarayan later informed me that from the moment he internally saw Baba in Varabhaya Mudra, his mind gradually became more and more introverted, and the quality of his sadhana improved considerably.

Snake Guide

Baba guided the Margis in several ways, depending on their individual needs. To some he conveyed his guidance directly; others received it indirectly.

Ratneshvari, a Margi from Srinagar Village in Saharsa District in North Bihar, was the leader of the Yadavs, one of the dominant castes of his village. For several years the Yadavs had been in conflict with the Rajputs, another major caste in the village. The tenuous truce between the two castes would sometimes break down and a physical fight would ensue.

Once, Ratneshvari was invited to attend a meeting to discuss an urgent problem relating to the caste conflict. The meeting was convened late at night in a house on the other side of the village. As it was already late, Ratneshvari decided to take a short cut through a field near his house and set off quickly, taking a flashlight with him.

Along the way a cobra crossed his path, raising its hood and swaying ominously from side to side. Not wanting to take any risks, Ratneshvari retraced his steps and took the village road. Once again a snake appeared and obstructed his path, hissing and swaying from side to side. So he backtracked once more and took another route, but again found a snake barring his path. When he looked at the snake more closely, it appeared to be the same snake that had blocked his way twice before. The snake appeared twice more. Every time he took a new route, the snake mysteriously appeared and blocked his path. By now, Ratneshvari was late for the meeting. When the snake appeared for the fifth time and again blocked his path, he picked up a stone and threw it at the snake to frighten it away. This time the snake slithered off into some bushes and did not reappear. Ratneshvari pondered over the significance of this unusual occurrence, wondering if it was a warning of sorts. He immediately dispelled the thought from his mind and hurried on to the meeting place.

A couple of months later, when he went to Jamalpur for Baba's darshan, Baba admonished him, "Ratneshvari, haven't I told you that Margis should not get involved in village politics and caste conflicts? Why did you violate my instructions?"

Ratneshvari was puzzled. He did not understand what Baba meant or why he was annoyed with him. Professing his innocence, he replied, "Baba, it's not true. I don't get involved in caste issues in my village."

"What? Not true? Then tell me what that meeting you attended that day around midnight was all about?"

Ratneshvari had completely forgotten about the meeting. Baba's sharp rebuke jogged his memory. He now knew exactly what Baba meant. He remained silent.

"Didn't someone try repeatedly to stop you from going to the meeting?"

"No Baba. Nobody tried to stop me," protested Ratneshvari.

"Try to remember," said Baba.

After some thought, Ratneshvari bowed his head and replied softly, "Yes, Baba, now I remember. A snake tried to stop me."

“How many times did it block your path?”

“Five times,” he replied.

“It came as a friend to guide you. And what did you do?”

“I picked up a stone and threw it at the snake to drive it away.”

By then Ratneshvari had realised his mistake in engaging in village politics and caste issues. He expressed his remorse to Baba. He promised never to commit such mistakes again and to keep away from all caste-related politics and narrow sentiments from then on.

For the benefit of all the Margis, Baba then explained the consequences of such actions: “If sadhakas entertains even a little bit of caste or other narrow sentiment, it will become a big impediment on their spiritual path and ultimately cause their mental degeneration. You should always keep this in mind.”

Disbeliever to Devotee

Ramlakhan Mishra was a Brahmin by birth. He had a close friend called Ramchandra Gope, who was a new Margi from Sahebganj, which was at that time in the district of Bhagalpur.

Several times Ramchandra tried to persuade his friend to learn meditation, but failed. Ramlakhan was content with his religious observances and had no interest in learning it. After a lot of effort, however, Ramchandra finally managed to convince him to learn meditation.

He said to Ramchandra, “All right, I agree to learn meditation. But I want to meet your Baba and ask him something. I will follow your Ananda Marga only if Baba answers me correctly, otherwise not.”

Ramchandra was not put off by this challenge. He told his friend, “My Baba is all-knowing. You can verify it if you wish. He lives in Jamalpur. If you want, we can go there together. Even if you don’t ask your question, Baba will answer it.”

“That is a challenge,” replied Ramlakhan, “and if what you say is true, I will accept him as my guru and follow Ananda Marga.”

Ramchandra used to go to Jamalpur every alternate Sunday to attend Baba’s darshan and gladly agreed to take Ramlakhan along the

next time he went. Accordingly, the next Sunday morning they took the train to Jamalpur. As the train approached Jamalpur, Ramlakhan began to feel that his legs had become very heavy like those of an elephant. By the time they arrived at the station, he was unable to move. The other passengers were busy getting off the train but Ramlakhan could not move and remained rooted to his seat. Ramchandra grew worried that the train would soon leave the station. In a desperate attempt to help his friend to get off the train, he shook Ramlakhan vigorously. That helped somewhat. Ramlakhan got up from his seat and with Ramchandra's help he alighted from the train.

Ramchandra brought Ramlakhan to the jagrti with some difficulty. Several Margis were already waiting there for Baba and after some time they heard an announcement that Baba was coming. Some newcomers listed their names for Personal Contact. One by one, they entered Baba's room as soon as their names were called. Ramlakhan noticed that all those coming out of Baba's room were in tears. He wondered what it was that made them cry like small children. He then began rehearsing all the questions he had planned to ask Baba. His chain of thought was suddenly interrupted by a cry of "Ramlakhan from Sahebganj."

He entered Baba's room and prostrated before Baba as directed. As soon as he got up, Baba asked him his name.

"Ramlakhan Mishra," he replied.

Baba then asked the usual personal details, such as where he was from, what he was doing and so on.

Ramlakhan replied to all of Baba's questions, feeling sure that Ramchandra's claims about Baba's omniscience were a lot of hype and that Baba did not know anything about him at all. He thought, "Ramchandra declared that Baba is all-knowing, but he has failed the first test, as he did not even know my name."

As he was thinking this, Baba said, "So you are Ramlakhan Mishra. You have come here to test me, you immoral creature, you sinner! You have come to test me?"

Ramlakhan was taken aback by this unexpected outburst. He thought, "Ramchandra must have told Baba something bad about me.

But how can that be possible? He was with me all the while. It is also improbable that he could have sent advance information from Sahebganj.”

His train of thought was suddenly broken by Baba speaking in a stern voice. “Ask me what you have come to ask.”

Ramlakhan tried to recollect what he had planned to ask Baba. But alas, he was unable to remember any of the questions which he had rehearsed in his mind only a few moments earlier. His mind was blank, and he could not utter even a single word. He just stared at Baba dumbly, unable to think.

Not getting a response, Baba repeated his question, “Ask, ask, you sinner, ask what you want to ask me.”

Ramlakhan remained silent, his mind frozen.

Then Baba said, “All right, if you don’t want to ask, then I will ask you. Tell me, one by one, all the sins that you have committed.”

Again Ramlakhan kept quiet, although he remembered many of his immoral actions. Seeing that Ramlakhan was not responding, Baba took out a cane from under his bolster and commanded him to look at the wall. Then he struck him with the cane and said again, “Look at the wall.”

To his utter amazement, on the wall there appeared the picture of him committing a robbery. Then Baba struck him once more and asked “Who did this?”

Ramlakhan watched in silence the “movie” of him cheating someone. After that a film of his sins involving robbery, cheating, drunken behaviour and many other immoral actions was replayed before his eyes, one after another. Even he himself had forgotten many of the events that Baba showed him.

“Were these sins not committed by you?” asked Baba in a severe tone, pausing for a few moments.

Ramlakhan was dumbstruck and could not answer. Baba continued to punish him. Finally, after some time, Baba stopped caning him and dramatically changed the tone of his voice from fury to fatherly affection. He said, “Whatever you may be, you are my son

and you should be a good boy from now onwards.” Then, gently lifting Ramlakhan onto his lap, Baba talked to him lovingly and tenderly stroked his back, greatly easing the pain of the punishment. Ramlakhan thought that even his own parents had never talked to him so lovingly.

“You committed all these misdeeds motivated by a desire for worldly happiness. Now see what lies beyond this ephemeral world which you can enjoy if you do your sadhana very strictly.”

Saying this, Baba touched the chakra between his eyebrows. Immediately, Ramlakhan’s mind reached new heights of consciousness and finally dissolved in an ocean of unimaginable bliss. He lost all consciousness of the external world and had to be carried out of Baba’s room.

Ramchandra saw his friend being brought out of Baba’s room. Being a new Margi himself, who was yet to see Margis fall in samadhi, he became very nervous and thought that Baba had beaten Ramlakhan so severely that he had died. In a state of panic and confusion he thought, “What shall I tell his family?”

Just then Ramlakhan’s limp, lifeless body was placed on the veranda. The Margis who had carried him instructed Ramchandra to leave him undisturbed as he was in samadhi, and said that he would become normal after some time. Ramchandra felt greatly relieved to hear that.

Sometime later, when Ramlakhan regained consciousness Ramchandra excitedly enquired, “What did you experience? How do you feel about Baba now?”

Ramlakhan declared, “I have met the Supreme Being today and I don’t have any words to express my feelings. I have committed many mistakes in my life. Not only did Baba know all about them, he also showed them to me one by one, as if I was watching a movie about myself. A film of all my past sins was played before my very eyes. All that I can say is that he is God. Even though he knew every detail of all my misdeeds, he still gave so much affection as no one else could. The wonderful spiritual experience that he gave me afterwards is indescribable. I am still intoxicated with spiritual bliss

and wonder if everything I have experienced was real. I feel as if I was in a surreal world because everything that happened just now is too strange to be true.”

This intense spiritual experience entirely transformed Ramlakhan's life. He put his ignoble past behind him, practised his sadhana diligently and tried to ensure that his conduct was in line with the moral code prescribed for sadhakas. Later he became a full time worker of the Marga in his locality.

Strange Cure for a Serious Addiction

Baba had his own inimitable style of dealing with the weaknesses of Margis. Every Margi had his own story to tell.

Bhuvaneshvari, a veterinarian who was instrumental in bringing several people into the Marga, was initiated in 1956. His wife, Kusumdevi, also learned sadhana a short time later. However, even after meditating for a few months, Bhuvaneshvari could not overcome his overwhelming craving for non-vegetarian food, which he ate at every meal. Although he was aware that a sadhaka is permitted to take only sentient food, he could not understand how anyone could survive on a purely vegetarian diet. Performing spiritual practices regularly for several months did diminish his craving for non-vegetarian food, however, he was unable to give it up entirely. Both his wife and he continued to eat meat and fish frequently.

A couple of years passed. At the time, Bhuvaneshvari was posted in Jamtara in South Bihar. Kusumdevi suffered from chronic ill health and was constantly afflicted by one illness or the other. She consulted several doctors, but no amount of treatment made any difference. Her illness was not only causing her great suffering but also made her feel that she was becoming a burden to her husband. She was so depressed that she decided to end her life by jumping into the well in the courtyard of their house. She waited for a suitable moment to carry out her plan.

One day, when her husband was out at work, she decided that she would take her life that very day. Before doing so, she did her

meditation and asked for Baba's forgiveness. She also requested Baba to continue to guide her as her guru in her next life. Then she went to the well and was about to jump when to her utter amazement she saw Baba's face in the water, smiling sweetly at her. She couldn't believe what she was seeing. The vision was so intense and soothing that she was completely transfixed. At the same time, a strong feeling came over her that Baba was forbidding her from taking such an extreme step and indicating that a sentient diet would help her to live a healthy life. Greatly encouraged, she stepped back from the well and abandoned her decision to end her life.

That evening when Bhuvaneshvari returned home she told him all that had transpired and how Baba had saved her life. After listening to her amazing story, Bhuvaneshvari's devotion for Baba increased exponentially. Both of them took the decision to take only sentient food from then on. However, it was not so easy for him.

Not long afterwards, Bhuvaneshvari became an acharya of Ananda Marga. Being an acharya required great discipline, sacrifice and strict adherence to conduct rules. But his desire for meat still remained. As an acharya he forced himself to abstain from non-vegetarian food. Once, due to illness, he grew very weak and his mother insisted on him taking meat and eggs to help him to regain his health. Weak-willed Bhuvaneshvari yielded to her wishes in violation of his resolution not to eat non-vegetarian food. Slowly the habit of taking a non-sentient diet took hold of him once again and he started to take non-vegetarian food on a regular basis. At the same time he was tormented with deep feelings of guilt, compounded by the fact that he was an acharya, one who society looked up to for guidance and spiritual instruction.

Although he made repeated attempts to overcome his weakness, try as he would, all attempts to conquer his desire for non-vegetarian food ended in failure. Each time he made a new resolution to stop, after a few days of self-control the urge to eat meat and fish would overcome his better judgement. Accepting defeat, he constantly prayed to Baba for help. To his dismay, however, there was no sign of divine assistance.

In the meantime, he continued to regularly visit Jamalpur where he had ample opportunity to meet Baba. During those visits, he would sometimes observe how Baba would point out the Margis' defects and take appropriate measures to correct them. He often wondered why Baba did not point out his weakness even once despite the fact that he was an acharya.

It was then sometime around mid-1959. He was posted in the District of Gaya in the central part of Bihar. One day he went to Patna on an official visit. While returning by train to Gaya, he developed a strong urge to eat meat. He tried his best to control this urge by reasoning with himself about why he should not eat it. But the craving only got worse. He was puzzled why such a mean desire was tormenting him so suddenly without any reason. He spent the whole journey struggling with two conflicting thoughts - whether to take non-vegetarian food or not - and when he alighted at Gaya, he was uncertain which way his mind would be swayed.

He decided to go home from the train station. On the way, he passed by a big non-vegetarian restaurant. As he walked past it, he was seized by a strong urge to enter the restaurant. He put up a feeble fight against the onslaught of this debasing desire by remembering his position as an acharya of Ananda Marga. He thought that his best defence would be to sit in the general area, where members of the public sat to eat. He was well known in society as an acharya of Ananda Marga who was not supposed to eat non-vegetarian food. The fear of being caught publicly eating non-vegetarian food would surely discourage him from ordering such food, he reasoned. As he sat down in a corner and waited for the waiter to take his order, a strong desire to eat meat flooded his mind. Unable to control himself, he got up and walked over to a closed cabin which was secluded from the public gaze. He understood that the battle was lost and nothing would prevent him from eating meat.

When the waiter arrived, he reluctantly ordered fried chicken. By then, he was consumed by intense guilt and an acute moral conflict was raging in his mind. He wondered how as an acharya he could

allow himself to stoop so low and felt disgusted with himself. He sat down with his head bowed. A few minutes elapsed. Then suddenly, he felt a force lifting his head up, and he was shocked to see Baba's image on the partition of the cabin staring sternly at him. He could not believe what he was seeing. Was he hallucinating? He rubbed his eyes to make sure that it was not just his imagination. He continued to gaze at the image of Baba in disbelief. He could not believe that Baba would appear before him in such an impure place. Tears welled up in his eyes as Baba's image slowly faded. The sight of Baba gave him a severe jolt. He wondered how he could have allowed himself to be so degraded. These thoughts brought tears to his eyes and he sat there covering his face with a handkerchief.

A short while later the waiter walked in and placed the meal he ordered on the table. Bhuvaneshvari could not look at it. Even the smell of the fried chicken made him feel nauseous. Wiping his tears, he asked the waiter to take it back and to give it to any hungry person outside. The odour in the hotel created a feeling of revulsion in him. After paying the bill, he rushed out of the place. The air outside was refreshing.

After that profound experience, Bhuvaneshvari could no longer tolerate even the smell of non-vegetarian food. He was finally freed from the burden of guilt that he had carried for so long. Musing over the incident later, he felt that an unseen force had heightened his desire for non-vegetarian food that evening only to free him from his craving forever.

A month later Bhuvaneshvari was in the "B" group of Margis accompanying Baba to the Tiger's Grave. After talking to some of the others, Baba turned to him with a sweet smile and said, "So, Bhuvaneshvari, I think the dark cloud that was hovering over you has finally been dispelled."

"Yes, Baba, it has happened only by your grace."

"Do you know, Bhuvaneshvari, that Tantra is a system of practices to engage the mind in a struggle against internal weaknesses and to establish victory over them? Do you know how a Tantra sadhaka attains

victory over his mental weaknesses? Suppose a particular mental propensity is bothering a sadhaka, for example, fear, which is one of the most debilitating weaknesses of any human being. The guru places him in a situation where he feels sheer terror, like in a cremation ground, alone in the darkness of the new moon night. Such a place generates tremendous fear in the person, and this releases a great amount of energy. Through a special tantric process, the intense energy generated due to fear is sublimated into spiritual force.

This has a double advantage - one is that the fear is brought under control, and so the psychic potential of the person increases immensely. The other benefit is that greater spiritual force is generated, which accelerates the progress of the sadhaka. So on the spiritual path of a Tantra sadhaka, the guru creates obstacles, and if the sadhaka struggles against all the odds and emerges triumphant, he develops greater capacity. Hence for a sadhaka who is willing to struggle against all odds, obstacles are not hindrances; rather they are friends.”

“But Baba, I never struggled at all. I was about to surrender before the weakness. It was only your grace that changed everything.”

Baba suddenly stopped walking and said, “In Tantra, the guru is everything. A sadhaka has only a minimal role to play. I would even say, only a very negligible role.” Baba showed a very small pinch with his fingers and then gently patted Bhuvaneshvari’s cheek as he continued to walk towards the Tiger’s Grave.

Misuse of Mantra

On many occasions, Baba warned Margis against the abuse of the power gained through sadhana. He emphasised that a sadhaka should practise meditation and perform other related practices only for spiritual progress and not for worldly attainments. He stressed that if sadhana is abused for mundane gains or for acquiring psychic powers, it would surely lead to degradation and ultimately the downfall of the sadhaka.

Despite the guru’s caution, the potential for spiritual ruin is ever-present, lurking in the shadows. Owing to this, Baba would always intervene to help any sincere devotee who might unknowingly wander towards the edge of the precipice.

Acharya Raghunath recalled his own experience:

Once in August 1959, a student of mine suffered from a psychiatric problem. Someone asked me if I could use my spiritual power to help him. I agreed and asked the parents to bring the boy to me at a certain time after I had completed my spiritual practices. I ideated on my guru mantra and used a specific technique to cure his illness. Within minutes he was all right.

A month after this incident, I accompanied Baba by train to a DMC in Motihari in North Bihar. He was resting after taking his lunch.

Suddenly he motioned me to come close to him and asked, "Raghunath, why did you misuse the power of Shiva for worldly purposes? Such abuse of spiritual power causes one's downfall, don't you know that?"

I did not understand what he was referring to. He continued, "If anyone is sick, his sickness should be treated through medical means and not by using the power of a mantra that is intended solely for spiritual practice."

I now realised that Baba was referring to the fact that I had used my guru mantra to cure the psychiatric problem of my student. I replied, "Baba, my only intention was to help him. I had no personal interest in it."

Baba replied firmly, "If you commit robbery, I may still pardon you, but not if you misuse the power of mantras. These mantras are meant for spiritual elevation and are not to be used for any worldly purpose. You could have taken the boy to a psychiatrist where, instead of two minutes, it would have taken two months to cure him."

Realising my folly, I caught hold of Baba's feet and begged his pardon. I remained in that position for a very long time, repenting my mistake. Finally, he gave me a gentle tap on the chin and said that nobody has the right to misuse the power of spiritual mantras and that I should never do it again.

An Unforgettable Lesson

Baba placed a lot of emphasis on Margis acting in a dignified and benevolent manner. He constantly watched over their behaviour and pointed out even small lapses in their conduct. He wanted them to become exemplary in thought, word and deed. In *Caryacarya Part 2*, he underlined this point by hinting at the boomerang effect hurting others would have on a person, knowingly or unknowingly:

“Do not try to appear superior by belittling others, because the other person’s inferiority will become lodged in your mind.”

One Sunday evening, after weekly *dharmachakra* at the Jamalpur jagrti, Harisadhan was assigned the task of giving the customary short talk on philosophy. His talk had some noticeable errors in philosophical reasoning, which did not escape the attention of some of the more knowledgeable Margis. They exchanged sarcastic smiles and sneered at his lack of knowledge of Ananda Marga philosophy. Harisadhan was acutely embarrassed by their scornful looks.

Coincidentally, the Margis who had earlier mocked Harisadhan were selected to accompany Baba that evening for his Field Walk. They were listed together in one of the three groups of Margis.

On reaching the Tiger’s Grave, Baba instructed all the three groups to sit with him on the Tiger’s Grave and others on the ground. As was customary, the Margis were about to prostrate before Baba when he sharply ordered, “Wait.” Everyone looked up at Baba, stunned by his acerbic tone.

In a grave voice he commanded, “Vishvanath, Sukumar, Dilip, Arun and Ramesh will not prostrate, but the others may do so if they wish.”

While the others prostrated before Baba, the five Margis felt greatly distressed. They knew that Baba was angry with them but did not know why. They were well aware of the blessings obtained by prostrating before the guru. The situation was unbearable. No greater misfortune could befall a Margi. Feeling extremely upset, they dropped to their knees in supplication, waiting for Baba to tell them what mistake they had committed.

Baba continued, "You should all remember to behave in a dignified manner at all times. You should have control over every action and expression."

The Margis were still unclear what mistake they had committed to earn the guru's ire. "When Harisadhan was giving the talk after dharmachakra, I saw the four of you smiling sarcastically. Although Ramesh did not express his contempt, he felt disdain for Harisadhan because of the lack of refinement of his knowledge of philosophy. When I saw the contemptuous feelings sprouting in the five of you, I wanted to deal with you then and there. But it was time for my meditation. Then I saw your names on the list to come for the evening Field Walk with me. So I decided to deal with you here instead.

"Though you were only smiling, your feelings of contempt were so intense that I could feel them while I was sitting at home. What Harisadhan said was perhaps philosophically incorrect. But your arrogant expression was much more improper. He definitely felt hurt. On an occasion like that, you should have maintained proper decorum. After the talk was over, you could have called him aside and corrected him. Anybody can make mistakes, but your reaction to that should not have been rude. Moreover, nobody should be the object of your contempt for any reason whatever."

The Margis concerned admitted their mistake and begged for forgiveness. Baba then softened his stance saying, "All right, since you have realised your mistake, you may do prostration if you so wish."

Recalling this incident several years later, Dr Vishvanath said, "Incidents such as these made the Margis realise how careful we all should be, as nothing could be hidden from the guru, not even mildly arrogant behaviour."

Baba had highlighted the need to overcome feelings of contempt and hatred in an earlier DMC discourse which he had given in Bhagalpur in 1956:

"The so-called high and low, rich and poor, Brahmins and untouchables, men and women, old and young, Russians and Americans are all His manifestations. He abides equally in them. Do not look down upon any of them. No one should be the object of your

contempt or hatred. If you despise even the smallest or meanest entity, remember that you are despising Parama Brahma Himself."

Saved from a Python

In February 1960 Baba was returning to Jamalpur after a surprise visit to Ranchi. Kedarnath was driving and Rambilas Ray and Balendu Bushan Sinha were also with Baba in the car. They were passing through the jungle of Hazaribagh when Baba suddenly asked Kedarnath to stop the vehicle. Without uttering a word, he got out and rushed into the jungle beside the road. The Margis ran after him. About fifty metres inside the jungle they could hear someone shouting, "Baba save me! Baba save me!" As the Margis advanced in the direction of the sound, they saw a young man in the deathly grip of a python. He was struggling to escape as the constrictor enveloped him in its coils.

Baba ordered the serpent in Bangla, "Leave him! Leave him!" and he motioned to the python to release its victim. Slowly the python unwound itself, released the youth and slithered away into the thicket nearby. The youth was trembling in fear and was unable to speak. Baba rebuked him harshly in the local Bengali dialect, "When you were doing immoral actions, you never thought that someone was watching you at every moment and that you would have to pay for your sins. Now you shout, "Baba, save me! Baba, save me!" While you were doing those immoral actions, why did you not shout, "Baba, save me from doing immoral actions? Had you done so, you would have been saved at that moment."

The young man was still trembling with fear and did not reply. He was surprised to see Baba. Baba rebuked him in an angry tone, "You have got a human body. So behave like a human being and not like an animal."

"Yes, Baba," mumbled the youth in a muffled voice.

"Do you give me your word that you will mend your ways from this very moment and do sadhana regularly?"

"Yes Baba, I give you my word," he replied, still trembling.

"If you violate your word, you will immediately be punished," thundered Baba.

The youth responded with a slight affirmative nod of his head. Baba then turned around and walked briskly back to the car with the dumbfounded Margis at his heels and continued on his journey to Jamalpur. The Margis were naturally very curious about this strange incident.

Unable to contain his curiosity, Kedarnath asked, "Baba, who was that young man?"

"He is an initiate from a nearby village. His name is Shivacharan Mahato. After his initiation he did sadhana sincerely for a few days. He has attended a couple of DMCs too. However, he later fell into bad company. Urged on by some degenerate youths from the village, he began to indulge in immoral activities. Occasionally he felt that he should give up their bad company and resume his spiritual practice, but he did not have the psychic stamina to do so. He often went into the forest to gather medicinal herbs and earned a small income selling them, but wasted it all in the company of the bad youths of the village. Today too he was in the forest in search of herbs when the python caught him. Now after this jolt, he will do his sadhana regularly, and there will be a change in his life. But he should keep away from bad company if he is to progress on his spiritual path."

Direct and Indirect Teaching

Every Margi had his own mystical experience of Baba's guidance. Acharya Kshitij described two such personal experiences during an interview:

I was in Ranchi in those days. After office hours, I would do the Marga's work and come home late. In the evening when I was hungry, I would buy some sweets from a particular hotel.¹ Sometimes when I was in a hurry, I would eat while walking, and occasionally the syrup from the sweets would drip onto my shirt, creating a stain.

One day I forgot to take some money with me, which I noticed only after I had finished eating. Although I was a

¹ It is common to call a restaurant "hotel" in India

regular customer at the hotel, I did not know the cashier who was on duty that day. As I had no money, he asked me to leave my wristwatch behind as a guarantee.

During every DMC program, Baba would convene a meeting of the acharyas. In the course of the meeting he would point out the mistakes of various acharyas and instruct them how to lead their lives in a befitting manner. At the acharya meeting during the Ranchi DMC in May 1958 Baba said, "*Acharanat pathayati yah sah acharyah*, meaning that acharyas are required to teach others by their own exemplary conduct. Only then will their teachings be properly assimilated by their students. So you should all be very careful how you behave in public. Everything that you do will have an impact on society."

Continuing in the same vein, he said, "There is nothing wrong with an acharya eating sweets, but he should make sure that he has money in his pocket before buying anything. Is it not shameful if an acharya is asked to leave his wristwatch as surety? An acharya should also be careful when eating in public. Eating while walking in the street is not proper behaviour for any human being, what to speak of an acharya. And what will people think if they see sugar syrup from a *jilebi* dripping from the acharya's mouth onto his shirt? Certain animals eat while walking, but humans do not. Acharyas are to teach others by their own ideal conduct. What do you all say? Do you all agree?"

Everyone replied in chorus, "Yes, Baba. We agree."

"Kshitij, what do you say? Am I correct? Is this not the way an acharya should conduct himself in public?"

Tears welled up in my already moist eyes and my voice was choked with emotion. I said mentally, "Yes, Baba, I understand my mistakes and I will never repeat them again."

Concluding his narrative, Kshitij added, "All these small things helped us so much by reminding us constantly that even if the general public did not notice, Baba was always watching our thoughts and actions. We should be careful about everything we think and do.

On another occasion, Acharya Kshitij faced a different kind of problem. His boss, who was also a senior acharya of Ananda Marga, did not follow the strict rules of morality required of an Ananda Margi. As an employee of the Agriculture Department, he had to travel to various places. He used to submit inflated travel vouchers and other allowance claims, drawing more than what was actually due to him. Such practices were quite common in Bihar. But for an Ananda Margi, particularly for an acharya who was supposed to have high moral standards, it was definitely inappropriate and immoral conduct. Kshitij's junior colleagues would make disparaging remarks about him and the Marga, even though their own conduct was no better. Kshitij felt extremely embarrassed to hear their taunts and was unable to reconcile the unethical behaviour of the senior acharya with the high moral principles of the Ananda Marga code of conduct. Worse still, the acharya's conduct was adversely affecting the Marga's public image. This was something Kshitij felt deeply disturbed about. However, he did not have the courage to point out the acharya's mistakes to him, as he was his boss as well as a senior acharya. Left with no alternative, he mentally requested Baba to intervene and help the acharya to mend his ways and save Ananda Marga from further public discredit.

It so happened that Baba visited Ranchi just around that time. Kshitij was tasked with supervising the Personal Contacts. One of the candidates for Personal Contact was a government employee. A short while after he entered the room, Kshitij, who was sitting just outside the door, heard Baba shouting and rebuking the Margi. Then he heard Baba loudly calling for him. He quickly entered the room and saw Baba holding a cane and glaring at the Margi with fiery eyes. He then turned to Kshitij and asked angrily, "Kshitij, why did you not check properly whether the Margi was following yama-niyama before permitting him to have Personal Contact?"

Kshitij simply stood there staring, wondering what the moral failing of the Margi could possibly be that had upset Baba so much. Without waiting for an answer Baba continued, "He is a government employee and, do you know, he cheats the government by submitting false travel vouchers so that he can draw extra money. Kshitij, is that not an immoral practice and a violation of yama-niyama?"

“Yes, Baba, it certainly is,” agreed Kshitij.

“Was he not properly taught about yama-niyama at the time of his initiation?” enquired Baba.

“Why are you violating yama-niyama? Didn’t your acharya tell you that you have to follow yama-niyama strictly?” Kshitij asked the Margi.

“Ask him who his acharya is,” ordered Baba.

Kshitij repeated the question. The Margi told his acharya’s name. As it happened, it was Kshitij’s boss, who was himself guilty of the same corrupt practice. Baba commanded angrily, “Call the acharya here.”

Kshitij rushed out to look for the acharya. He understood that Baba was cooking a piquant broth and laying a trap for the acharya as well. As both of them entered the room, Baba directed his fury at the acharya and angrily asked him, “Did you not properly explain yama-niyama to your initiate? See, he indulges in the disgraceful practice of stealing government money. Ask him about it.” The acharya started to feel nervous but was compelled to ask him what he had done to violate yama-niyama. When the Margi gave the details of his misconduct, the acharya was taken aback. Baba asked, “Now, as his acharya, what do you say? Is it not deplorable for a Margi to behave like that?”

The acharya remained silent, realising that he had been caught like a mouse in a trap, and that Baba would expose his own misdeeds sooner or later. Baba then took out his cane and caned the Margi once, saying, “Promise your acharya that you won’t repeat such immoral practices and ask him to forgive you for violating yama-niyama. Until he forgives you, I will keep punishing you.”

Baba started to cane him intermittently and in between the blows repeatedly ordered him to ask for forgiveness from his acharya.

The Margi begged for forgiveness but the acharya, caught on slippery ground, remained silent while Baba continued to intermittently cane his initiate. Although Baba was caning the Margi, his acharya was feeling more pain than he did and began to perspire profusely. Kshitij understood the predicament the acharya was in and

sympathized with him but could do nothing about it. Meanwhile the Margi kept pleading for mercy, telling the acharya that he would never repeat such a mistake. Between blows Baba asked the acharya if he had forgiven his initiate. Finally, seeing no escape, the acharya feebly mumbled that he had pardoned him. Hearing that, Baba stopped the punishment.

Baba then blessed the Margi with much affection and extracted a promise from him that he would henceforth conduct himself properly. After the Margi had left the room, Baba turned his gaze on the acharya and said in a severe tone, "You see, only a person who is himself not guilty of such mistakes has the moral authority to forgive another. Do you understand?"

Nodding his head in agreement the acharya fell in prostration, holding Baba's feet and mentally promising him that he would never again violate yama-niyama. Indeed, he had learned his lesson well. He never again indulged in such corrupt practices. Kshitij could not help but marvel at Baba's unique methods of correcting or remedying the defects of Margis.

Such were Baba's inimitable styles of rectifying his disciples. In the course of time, Baba's direct and indirect methods of rescuing his disciples from every minor and major lapse, sometimes even using an outside medium, led to a growing dependence on him, increasing their devotional bond with him. Their reliance on him to advance them spiritually continued to deepen until a stage was reached where it became total.

In order to explain the complete dependence of the disciple on the guru Baba cited an allegory, comparing their relationship to that of a mother cat who carries its kitten protectively in her mouth. In contrast, he pointed out the relationship of a monkey's offspring, which clings to its mother's back. Here, there is a chance that the baby monkey might lose its grip on its mother and fall crashing onto the forest floor. The kitten, on the other hand, is totally helpless because it is born blind and hence is completely dependent on the mother cat. The kitten cannot cling onto the mother for dear life. So the doting mother never releases her tender but firm grip while

carrying her baby. Baba assured the Margis that if, like the kitten, a disciple completely depends on and surrenders to the guru, then he will assume total responsibility for the disciple. This special relationship starts symbolically at the time of initiation, when the disciple offers everything he or she has - physical, psychic and spiritual - to the guru. The guru then takes full responsibility for the disciple not only in the spiritual sphere but also in their worldly life. Many Margis developed such an intimate relationship with Baba that he became the person they loved the most in their entire life.

Gradually the formal guru-disciple relationship vanishes and is replaced by an intimate one where the guru becomes the disciple's nearest and dearest one. Such a sublime relationship is truly the deepest relationship a person can ever have, far more profound than any other type of relationship in this world.

In Baba the disciples had an ever-watchful guardian, their closest friend and guide who they could fully trust, in whom they could confide all their fears, worries and sorrows and who was ever eager to take on their burden by absorbing their samskaras and taking their suffering upon himself. The special, intimate relationship that develops between the disciple and the guru has no equal in the spiritual history of this planet.

Gradually the devotional feeling the Margis felt towards Baba was transformed into a deep commitment to work for the mission of Ananda Marga. In order to strengthen that commitment, Baba declared, "If you want to know me, do my mission because I am merged with my mission. I am not this physical body; this physical body is not me. I am in your hearts and you are in mine."



GLOSSARY

- Acharya** – A spiritual teacher of Ananda Marga, qualified to initiate and teach all lessons of meditation.
- Aham** – The ego or the portion of the mind that performs actions and feels that it is the doer i.e. the “doer I”.
- Ahimsa** – One of the points of morality: to refrain from purposefully inflicting pain or hurt on anybody by thought, word or action.
- Ajina Chakra** – The psycho-spiritual plexus located between the eyebrows at the pituitary gland.
- Akhanda Kirtan** – Kirtan done continuously for three or a multiple of three hours, while dancing in a clockwise direction.
- Anahata Chakra** – The psycho-spiritual plexus situated in the middle of the chest.
- Ananda Marga** – The path of bliss; the organisation Baba founded to disseminate his teachings.
- Ananda Nagar** – Situated in the hilly terrain of Purulia District (West Bengal) amid beautiful natural surroundings, it is the registered headquarters of Ananda Marga, where multifarious welfare activities such as education, relief, ecological preservation, integrated village development, etc., are conducted. Many old Tantra piithas (spiritual meditation sites) are located here.
- Ananda Purnima** – Full moon of the Bengali month of Vaishaka (around May). This was the day on which Baba was born.
- Anima Siddhi** – The first of the eight major occult powers, which is the power to become small enough to enter any physical particle as well as the mind.
- Angika** – One of the several local languages of Bihar.
- Anna**– One-sixteenth of a rupee. The anna was discontinued in 1957 when India adopted the metric system for its currency.
- Antaryami** – The last of the eight major occult powers, the power to know the inner thoughts and needs of any entity.

- Aparigraha** – To renounce everything except the necessities for the maintenance of the body.
- Arati** – A Hindu form of ritual worship in which the light from a wick soaked in ghee or oil or from camphor is waved in a circle around a deity.
- Asanas** – Yoga postures for curing physical and psychic problems and balancing the hormonal secretions.
- Ashram** – A place of spiritual retreat or monastery.
- Asteya** – Not to take possession of what belongs to others without permission; non-stealing.
- Asura** – A derogatory term meaning “monster”, used to refer to certain non-Aryan peoples (originally Assyrians).
- Atharva Veda** – The last Veda, composed between seven thousand and five thousand years ago. It was first developed by the sage Atharvan.
- Atma, Atman** – Soul, unit Consciousness.
- Avarani** – An expression of *Avidyamaya* which creates delusion in the mind.
- Avidya** – Ignorance.
- Avidyamaya** – The centrifugal or extroversive force; the aspect of the Cosmic Operative Principle that guides the movement from subtle to crude.
- Avidya Tantra** – The branch of Tantra that concentrates on developing occult powers.
- Baba** – Affectionate name for Shrii Shrii Anandamurti.
- Bhakti** – Devotion.
- Bhava** – A special type of ideation that purifies the mind and arouses the latent love for the Supreme Being.
- Bhava Samadhi** – A category of spiritual trance.
- Bhuloka** – The crudest portion or seventh layer of the Macrocosmic Mind; the universe.
- Bhuvarloka** – The second crudest sphere or the sixth layer of the Macrocosmic Mind.

- Bidi-** A type of cheap cigarette made of unprocessed tobacco wrapped in leaves.
- Bija Mantra** – Every action in the Cosmos, and every action or psychological propensity in individuals, is associated with a subtle sound called a *bija mantra*. Sadhakas learn these sounds and use them in meditation to gain control over the propensities.
- Bindu** – Point or dot. In spiritual practice, it refers to specific points of concentration.
- BMP** – Bihar Military Police.
- Brahma** – Supreme Consciousness.
- Brahma Chakra** – The cycle of creation.
- Brahmacharya** – To keep the mind always absorbed in Brahma is Brahmacharya; sometimes used in the sense of continence.
- Brahma Jyoti** – Cosmic or divine effulgence.
- Bubu** – Baba's nickname, used by family and close friends.
- Bujhali** – A short sword.
- Burha** – An old person.
- Chakra** – Psycho-spiritual centre. There are seven main centres located along the spinal column. The concentration points for the cakras: (1) for the muladhara cakra, the base of the spine, above the perineum; (2) for the svadhisthana, the base of the genital organ; (3) for the manipura, the navel; (4) for the anahata, the mid-point of the chest; (5) for the vishuddha, the throat; (6) for the ajina, between the eyebrows; and (7) for the sahasrara, the crown of the head.
- Chitta** – The mind-stuff or objective mind; the crudest part of the mind.
- Dada** – Literally, "elder brother"; also refers to an Acharya of Ananda Marga.
- Dagdhabiiija** – Burnt seed; one whose samskaras are totally exhausted.
- Darshan** – The audience of the guru.
- Deva** – Mythologically, a god, a deity; philosophically, any vibration, or expression, emanating from the Cosmic Nucleus.

- Devayoni** – Luminous bodies, disembodied entities having a structure composed of only three (out of five) factors – luminous, aerial and ethereal. When sadhakas are distracted from the spiritual path due to various attractions, after death they become devayonis. The seven varieties of devayoni are yaksha, kinnara, gandharva, vidyadhara, prakrtiina, videhaliina and siddha. These types of devayonis are created due to attachment to wealth, beauty, music, knowledge, physical objects, escape from physical afflictions and occult powers respectively.
- Dharma** – The innate characteristic of an entity; spirituality; the path of righteousness in social affairs.
- Dharmachakra** – A gathering of spiritual aspirants for collective meditation.
- Dharma Mahachakra (DMC)** – A gathering of spiritual aspirants for collective meditation and other spiritual programmes that is held on special occasions and only in the physical presence of the reverend Marga Guru where blessings through the Varabhaya Mudra are given.
- Dharma Prachara** – Propagation of spiritual ideology, also known as Prachar.
- Dharma Samiksha** – Analysis of the inner or essential characteristics of spiritual aspirants. A special programme of spiritual scrutiny started by the Marga Guru in 1981, with the aim of freeing spiritual aspirants from the bondage of samskaras.
- Dhoti and Kurta** – A traditional men's garment worn in South Asia.
- Dhyana** – A yogic term used in Ananda Marga to refer to the sixth lesson of Ananda Marga meditation, also known as Guru Dhyana.
- Didi** – Elder sister; also refers to a female acharya of Ananda Marga.
- Dirgha Pranam** – A yogic posture as well as the manner in which females pay respect to Guru or God
- DMC** – Dharma Mahachakra.
- Ekadashi** – Eleventh day after the new or full moon.
- Ganja** – Dried leaves of the hemp plant; smoked or chewed as a hallucinogenic drug.

- General Darshan** – A semi-formal programme where Baba would sit with his disciples and deliver a discourse.
- Gopa or Gopi** – Village cowherd boy or girl respectively; devotees of the Lord Krishna.
- Guna** – Binding factor or principle; attribute. Prakrti, the Cosmic Operative Principle, is composed of sattvaguna, the sentient principle; rajoguna, the mutative principle; and tamoguna, the static principle.
- Guru** – ‘Gu’ means ‘darkness’, ‘ru’ means ‘dispeller’; hence ‘dispeller of darkness’; spiritual master.
- Guru Bhrata** – A fellow disciple.
- Guru Chakra** – The chakra located on the inner side of the pineal gland.
- Gurudeva** – Respectful way of addressing guru.
- Guru Mantra** – The second lesson of Ananda Marga meditation.
- Guru Puja** – The spiritual practice of offering one’s mental colours to the guru.
- Hamsa** – Literally a swan; metaphorically, it symbolises the unit Consciousness.
- Hari** – Literally, the one who steals; one who steals others’ sins to lighten their burden and pave the way for their liberation; another name of Parama Purusa.
- Harijans** – Those belonging to the lowest social class in India.
- Hladini** – The force of Vidyamaya which propels a spiritual aspirant towards the Supreme Consciousness at an accelerated speed.
- Ideation** – Concentration on a very subtle object.
- Ishvara Pranidhana** – Surrender to the Cosmic Controller through meditation; the first lesson of Ananda Marga meditation.
- Ishta** – The form of the Supreme Entity whom a sadhaka loves as the most Beloved One.
- Ishta Chakra** – The chakra for meditation.
- Ishta Mantra** – One’s personal mantra.
- Jadasphota** – The explosion of matter when it reaches the state of maximum condensation.

- Jagrti** – Literally, a place of awakening; Ananda Marga spiritual centre.
- Janarloka** – The subliminal mental sphere; the third layer of the Macrocosmic Mind.
- Jilebi** – A coiled, syrupy sweet.
- Jyoti Darshan** – The vision of divine effulgence.
- Kapalika** – Those spiritual aspirants who take the noble vow of serving all in the living and non-living worlds; a practitioner of higher Tantra sadhana.
- Kapalik Sadhana** – A form of spiritual practice that causes the aspirant to confront and overcome all the inherent fetters and enemies of the human mind. Here it refers to a technique of Tantric meditation that Baba taught to selected disciples.
- Kapata Vrtti** – The instinct of hypocrisy.
- Karma** – Action; sometimes used to mean samskara.
- Karna Pishacha Siddhi** – A special occult power by which one can read the thoughts of others and know the actions they have performed.
- Kevala Bhakti** – The highest form of devotion; the culminating point of devotion.
- Kirtan** – Devotional singing of the Lord's Name whereby one establishes an intimate relationship with the Lord.
- Kosha** – Layer of the mind.
- Krishna** – Literally, the entity which attracts everything in the universe towards itself; Parama Purusha who came in physical form around 1500 BCE to establish the rule of Dharma.
- Kundalini** – The fundamental spiritual force residing at the base of the spine.
- Lathi** – Long stick used by the police and others to control crowds.
- Lila** – Divine play.
- Loka** – Sphere or layer of the Macrocosmic Mind.
- Lungi** – A long piece of brightly coloured cloth (cotton or silk) used as a garment below the waist in India, Pakistan and Burma.

- Mahabharata** – Great India; the name of a military campaign guided by Lord Krsna around 1500 BCE to unify India; the epic poem written by Maharshi Vyasa about this campaign.
- Mahabhava** – A form of samadhi in which the spiritual aspirant feels himself or herself to be within the embrace of the Supreme Consciousness.
- Mahakaola** – A tantric guru who can raise not only his own kundalini, but that of others as well.
- Maharloka** – The supramental sphere or the fourth layer of the Macrocosmic Mind.
- Mahat** – The highest realm of the Macrocosmic Mind and the unit mind where the existential 'I' (the feeling of 'I am' or 'I exist') originates.
- Makar Sankranti** – The winter harvest festival.
- Manipura Chakra** – The third chakra located at the navel.
- Margi** – One who follows the Ananda Marga way of life and practices Ananda Marga meditation.
- Maya** – The Operative Principle; the creative energy of the universe, sometimes called Prakrti.
- Microvita** – Mysterious entities which come within various levels of the physical and psychic realms. Some are smaller and subtler than atoms and sub-atomic particles, and in the psychic realm they may be subtler than ectoplasm (chitta, or mind-stuff).
- Moksha** – Permanent spiritual emancipation or salvation or merger with the unqualified Supreme Entity (Nirguna Brahma).
- MP** – Member of Parliament.
- Mudra** – A meaningful gesture of the hands sometimes used for spiritual blessings.
- Mukti** – Liberation; merging one's individual entity with the qualified Supreme Entity (Saguna Brahma).
- Muladhara Chakra** – The lowest and first psycho-spiritual plexus located at the mid-point of the last vertebra of the spinal column.

- Namaskar** – A method of salutation to greet everyone as the manifestation of the Supreme Entity.
- Naraka** – Hell.
- Narayana** – A name of God or the Supreme Consciousness.
- Neo-Humanism** – A worldview characterised by the love for the Supreme, which overflows onto all manifestations of the Supreme Consciousness in this universe.
- Nirguna Brahma** – The Supreme Consciousness from whence creation originates and terminates.
- Nirvikalpa Samadhi** – The highest spiritual trance of absorption in the bliss of Nirguna Brahma. It is the total dissolution of the mind, which can either be of a temporary or permanent nature.
- Om-kara** – The cosmic sound of creation; the divine sound experienced in deep meditation by spiritual aspirants that irresistibly attracts them to the Supreme Entity.
- PA**– Baba's personal assistant.
- Padmasana** – The lotus posture.
- Pandal** – A big tent.
- Pandita** – Literally, "one on the path of self-knowledge"; a Sanskrit scholar.
- Parama Purusha** – The Supreme Consciousness.
- Paramatma**– Supreme Soul.
- Paratha** – A north Indian flatbread.
- Parakaya Pravesha** – The occult power to leave one's body consciously and enter a new one.
- Paramatma** – Paramatma or the Supreme Self is also the Macrocosmic Nucleus and the witnessing entity of the entire cycle of creation.
- Pasha**– Fetter. The asthapasha are the eight mental fetters learned from society: hatred, doubt, fear, shyness, hypocrisy, vanity of lineage, vanity of culture, and the sense of prestige or self-importance.
- PC** – Personal contact with the guru.

- Prabhat Samgita** – A body of 5018 spiritual and psycho-spiritual songs composed by Shri P.R. Sarkar (Shri Shri Anandamurti).
- Prachar** – The propagation of spiritual practices and philosophy.
- Prakrta** – The seven spoken languages that developed from Sanskrit in the South Asian subcontinent.
- Prakrti** – The Supreme Operative Principle, which is the cause of creation. It is comprised of three gunas: sattva (sentient), rajah (mutative), and tamah (static).
- Prana** – Vital energy.
- Pranayama**– Yogic technique of breath control.
- Prasad** – A spiritually sanctified food article.
- Pratisainchara** – In the Cosmic Cycle, the step-by-step introversion and sublimation of Consciousness from the state of solid matter to the Supreme Consciousness. (*Prati* means ‘counter’ and *sanchara* means ‘movement’.)
- PROUT** – Progressive Utilization Theory. The socio-economic philosophy propounded by Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar.
- Proutist** – An adherent of PROUT.
- Purana** – Hindu scriptures containing mythological stories with a moral import; educative fiction.
- Puranic Age** – The Medieval period around 500-1300 CE when Hinduism was dominated by the Puranas.
- Radha Bhava** – The devotional attitude of Radha as the beloved of Lord Krishna; an exalted state of devotion in spirituality.
- Radhika Shakti** – Also known as Hladini Shakti; the force of Vidyamaya which propels a spiritual aspirant towards the Supreme Consciousness at an accelerated speed.
- Raga or Ragini** – Scales or modes for improvisation in Indian classical music; compositions based on those modes.
- Rajadhiraja Yoga** – The process of controlling all the chakras and propensities was invented by Astavakra over two thousand years ago. He called this process Rajadhiraja Yoga.
- Rajoguna** – The mutative force, one of the three gunas or binding forces of Prakriti which causes restless activity.

- Rakshasi** – A demon; a derogatory term used by the ancient Aryans to refer to the indigenous Dravidian Indians.
- Ramayana** – An epic poem of India. It is the story of King Rama written first by the sage Valmiki.
- Rarh** – The territory (mostly in Bengal) stretching from the west bank of the Bhagirathi River to the Parasnath Hills; the oldest landmass which was part of Gondwanaland three million years ago.
- Rigveda** – The oldest Veda, composed over the period between fifteen thousand and ten thousand years ago.
- Roti** – A traditional flat Indian bread.
- Rsi** – Sage; one who by inventing things broadens the path of progress of the human society.
- Rudraksha** – The seed of the genus *Elaeocarpus* tree used for making strings of beads.
- Sadguru** – The guru who is established in the supreme stance and who can lead others to that supreme state of Consciousness.
- Sadhaka** – Spiritual aspirant, spiritual practitioner.
- Sadhana** – Spiritual practice.
- Sadhu** – A virtuous, saintly person.
- Sadvipra** – A spiritual revolutionary.
- Sahasrara Chakra** – The plexus of one thousand petals; the seventh and highest chakra located at the crown of the head.
- Saguna Brahma** – The qualified Supreme Consciousness.
- Sahitya** – Literature; all those literary manifestations of the popular mind that always move along the path of welfare.
- Samadhi** – A state of indescribable bliss resulting from the absorption of the unit mind into different levels of Consciousness. Savikalpa Samadhi is the spiritual trance resulting from the absorption of the unit mind into the Cosmic Mind. Nirvikalpa Samadhi is the spiritual trance of absorption of the unit mind into the Macrocosmic Nucleus.
- Samaja Cakra** – Social cycle.
- Samaja** – Society.

- Samaveda** – Sama means “song”; the song portions of three Vedas collectively made up the Samaveda.
- Samskara** – Potential mental reaction of a past action.
- Samvit** – An expression of *Vidyamaya* by which one has a sudden realisation that human life has a higher purpose.
- Sandesh** – A milk sweet.
- Sannyasa** – The act of renouncing worldly life.
- Sannyasi** – A monk; a renunciate.
- Sannyasini** – A nun.
- Santosha** – Contentment in all circumstances.
- Sastaunga Pranam**– Full prostration before the guru as a sign of surrender.
- Satsaunga** – Good or spiritual company.
- Sattvaguna** – The sentient principle.
- Sattvik** – A thing that has sentient property.
- Satya** – The benevolent use of words with the intention of others’ welfare.
- Satyaloka** – The first layer of the Cosmic Mind; the all-pervading absolute truth where there is no trace of dualism.
- Seva** – Service.
- Shakti** – Divine energy; Prakrti.
- Sharanagati** – Complete surrender.
- Shat Ripu** – Enemy. The shatripu are the six inborn, mental enemies: physical desire, anger, avarice, infatuation, vanity, and jealousy.
- Shaucha** – Purity of the body and of the mind.
- Shravani Purnima** – Full moon on the month of the Bengali calendar called Shravan; around August.
- Shiva** – Parama Purusha who came in physical form as a great tantric guru around 5000 BCE; the first guide of human society who introduced the institution of the family, dance, music, medicine and Tantra yoga as a means of social advancement.
- Shiva Linga**– A symbol of Shiva worshipped in temples.

Shloka – A Sanskrit couplet.

Shubhamastu – “May it be auspicious”; a blessing sometimes used by Anandamurti at the end of a discourse.

Shudra – People having the working-class mentality.

Siddhi – Occult powers.

Siddhi-bhang – An intoxicating drink prepared from the marijuana plant, often taken on festive occasions.

Srishti Chakra – The Cycle of Creation.

Sutra – Aphorisms embodying a particular theory or philosophy.

Svadhithana Chakra – The second chakra situated on the spinal column at the root of the genital organ in males and six fingers up from the base of the spine in women.

Svadyaya – The study, with proper understanding, of scriptures and philosophical books.

Svarga – Heaven.

Svarloka – The subtle mental sphere or the fifth layer of the Macrocosmic Mind.

Svastika – A symbol of victory.

Tamasik – Static.

Tamoguna – Static force.

Tanmatra – Inferential waves that convey the senses of hearing, touch, vision, taste and smell.

Tantra – A spiritual tradition that originated in India in prehistoric times, which was first developed and systematized by Lord Shiva. Its vigorous practise expands the mind through a struggle against the internal and external propensities that are degrading - both through the different techniques of spiritual practice and through a confrontation with hostile situations - to overcome all fears and weaknesses; also, a scripture expounding that tradition.

Tantra Pitha – A highly vibrated place where a spiritual aspirant has practised long meditation.

Tantra Sadhana – A vigorous spiritual practice to free the mind of all fetters for the purpose of attaining liberation.

Tantric Yantra – A sanctified symbol used for performing advanced tantric meditation.

- Tapah** – One of the points of yama-niyama which means to undergo trouble or accept physical discomforts in order to serve others or to reach one's spiritual goal.
- Taparloka** – The second layer of the Macrocosmic Mind; the subtle causal sphere.
- Taraka Brahma** – The tangential point linking the realm of Saguna Brahma with Nirguna Brahma; the Supreme Consciousness in its liberating and devotional aspect.
- Tattva Sabha** – A public gathering for a philosophical discourse with a scope for debate and discussion.
- Tattvika** – One who is well versed in spiritual philosophy and can teach it to others; a teacher of Ananda Marga elementary philosophy.
- Trikuti** – The spot between the eyebrows, sometimes called the "third eye". It is considered by yogis to be the seat of the sixth chakra; Ajina cakra or pituitary gland; the controlling point of the mind.
- Upanishad** – Certain philosophical sections at the end of the Vedas that deal with spiritual subjects.
- Vaishnava** – One who worships the god Vishnu of the Hindu religion.
- Varabhaya Mudra** – A powerful blessing involving a special gesture given by the Marga Guru.
- Vayu** – Ten basic energy flows or vital airs in the body performing specific functions.
- Veda** – Literally, "knowledge"; hence, a composition imparting spiritual knowledge. Also, a religious or philosophical school which originated among the Aryans and was brought by them to India. It is based on the Vedic hymns and emphasises the use of ritual to obtain the intervention of the gods.
- Vidyamaya (Vidya)** – The centripetal or 'introversial' force of creation; the aspect of the Cosmic Operative Principle that guides the movement of the created beings from the crude to the subtle spheres.
- Vikshepa** – A force of Avidyamaya that leads one away from the Supreme Being.

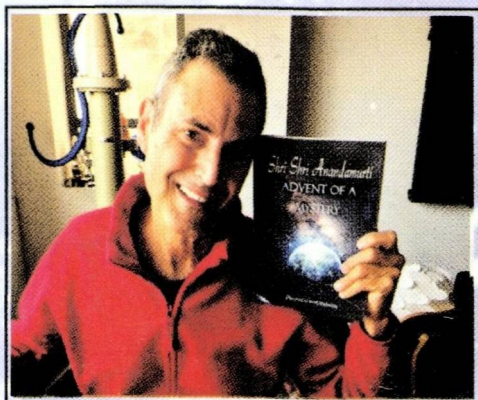
- Vishesh Yoga** – The most advanced process of the Ananda Marga system of meditation.
- Vishuddha Chakra** – Fifth psycho-spiritual centre situated in the region of the vocal cord and the thyroid and parathyroid glands.
- Viveka** – Conscience; the power to discriminate between what is good and what is evil.
- Vrtti** – Mental propensity.
- VSS** – Volunteer Social Service; the security wing of Ananda Marga that also provides volunteers for service and relief activities.
- Wholotimer (WT)** – A dedicated monk or nun who works full-time for Ananda Marga; also called “wholetime worker.”
- Yajina** – One meaning is ritual sacrifice. Another meaning is an action aimed at serving the living beings.
- Yajurveda** – Veda composed over a period between ten thousand and seven thousand years ago.
- Yama** – The mythological god of death.
- Yama-Niyama** – The ten principles of moral conduct. Yama is divided into five parts, i.e. (1) Ahimsa (to refrain from purposefully inflicting pain or hurt on anybody by thought, word or action.), (2) Satya (benevolent use of words), (3) Asteya (non-stealing), (4) Brahmacharya (to keep the mind always absorbed in Brahma) and (5) Aparigraha (to renounce everything except the necessities for the maintenance of the body). Niyama is also divided into five parts, i.e. (1) Shaoca (internal and external purity), (2) Santosa (contentment in all circumstances), (3) Tapah (austerities undergone to serve the needy), (4) Svadhyaya (study of enlightening scriptures) and (5) Iishvara Pranidhana (surrender to the Cosmic Controller through meditation).
- Yantra** – Literally, machine; a mystical diagram used in tantric practice.
- Yoga** – Spiritual practice that leads to unification of the unit atman with Paramatman.
- Yogi** – A practitioner of yoga.
- Zamindar** – A feudal landlord created during the British era and empowered to collect taxes on their behalf.

About the author

Pranavatmakananda, the author, became a disciple of Shri Shri Anandamurti in 1967. He joined the monastic order of Ananda Marga in 1970 and held various responsibilities in the organisation in India and other countries.

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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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