

DIVINE EXPERIENCES

An Autobiography

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Kirkus Reviews

ACARYA PARAMESHVARANANDA AVADHUTA

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ACARYA PARAMESHVARANANDA AVADHUTA



PARTRIDGE

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FOREWORD

Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta is one of the few monks in Ananda Marga who had been close to the Marga Guru. He has taken to monkhood at a young age, in the early days of the Marga when the disciples and followers of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii were few in number. This afforded him the blessed opportunity to have a deep and intimate realization of the Guru and his ways. Although frail in appearance, his ability to translate the instructions of the Guru into action is proverbial. He is among the few who had been selected by the Guru as the medium of spiritual demonstrations. One finds in him the unique blend of an accomplished yogi, a great devotee, and a selfless worker. He has served the mission in various capacities including the position of Central Office Secretary. Later, he was inducted into the highest decision making body of the Purodha Board after the physical departure of the Marga Guru.

I had the rare opportunity of working with Acarya Parameshvarananda when he was the Sectorial Secretary of Ananda Marga in the Manila Sector. I was deeply impressed by his simplicity, sincerity, and courage. His amiable nature, boundless empathy, and loving treatment of all his subordinate workers earned him the admiration, respect and love of the Whole Time Workers and household Margis.

His life as a missionary worker was not a bed of roses. On the one hand, he was graced with many deep, awe-inspiring spiritual

realizations. On the other hand, he suffered from chronic ill health, compounded by the onerous burden of organizational responsibilities. Despite this, we found him to be always composed and ever ready to ensure that all tasks given to him were accomplished.

We had the opportunity of hearing some of his amazing spiritual experiences in different countries of the sector. I am happy that he has decided to write his precious memoirs about the Guru for the benefit of the spiritual aspirants across the world. I am hopeful that it will provide an added fillip to the ardent seekers on the path of spirituality, irrespective of paths and denominations.

Acarya Citkrnananda Avadhuta

Batu Gajah, Perak, Malaysia

July 2014

PREFACE

I was initially hesitant to write my spiritual experiences with Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii, who preferred to be simply addressed as 'Baba'. What can one possibly write about an entity who is at once the goal, the way and the guide? I am convinced that whatever could be said about him can hardly capture the complete truth. When pestered with requests for his autobiography, he smiled and wrote on a piece of paper, '*I was mystery, I am mystery, and I shall always remain a mystery.*'

For several years, many Margiis sought to prevail on me to write down my memoirs of Baba. But I refrained from doing so for the simple reason that the experiences are personal and words can never convey the full spectrum of the experiences. Besides, I am aware of my limitations in writing. One day, however, I was inexplicably consumed with an obsession to write them down. I had just returned from Ranchi from the cremation of a prominent Margi, Dr. Prasad. No sooner had I reached Ananda Nagar a powerful torrent of inspiration came over me to write down my memoirs of Baba. It was eight o'clock at night. I sat down and started to write. I remember distinctly, I wrote without a break until the early hour of four in the morning. The delicious memories of my association with Baba gushed out like an untamed river. I wrote, wrote, and wrote. I wrote continuously for the next forty days, not knowing hunger or thirst,

day or night. Some mysterious force goaded me to write and finish my memoirs.

This book is a precious record of my life-story with Baba. I have tried my best to share the divine splendor of Baba's personality, his omniscience and mysterious ways, his magnanimity and limitless love for all of creation, his utter simplicity, and his incredible organizational skills and ability to solve seemingly intractable problems.

This book is not a philosophical enunciation of his ideology for those who are intellectually endowed but is a humble attempt to share my precious moments and experiences with Baba. I hope that it would be a source of inspiration to the spiritually inclined people who wish to have a glimpse of his advent on earth.

I am indebted to many people who have contributed significantly toward the completion of this book. I wish to place on record my gratitude to Acarya Yatishvarananda Avadhuta, Acarya Vandanananda Avadhuta, Acarya Punyeshananda Avadhuta, Acarya Rudrashivananda Avadhuta, Acarya Abhayshankarananda Avadhuta, Acarya Rupatiitananda Avadhuta, Brother Vashista, and Sister Prabha. My special thanks go to Acarya Kishan Sood, who translated the book from the original Hindi. I also thank Prof. Aditya Kumar Mohanty, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, for his insightful comments on the philosophical aspects of the book. I owe a debt of gratitude to Acarya Citkrnananda Avadhuta, who extended pecuniary support for the publication of the book. I offer my heartfelt gratitude to all who in one way or another have helped me to write the book.

Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta

Delhi, India

August 2010

EDITOR'S NOTE

Divinity is a goal, a process, and an end in itself. The spiritual experiences of Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta, lucidly recounted in this book, tell us of this wondrous journey to divinity, a journey taken by both the disciple and the guru. In this unique voyage to God-realization, the disciple treads on the path while the guru gently holds his or her hand, showing the disciple the ensnaring pitfalls that he or she must avoid and the garden of divine bliss that he or she must aspire to. Acarya Parameshvarananda's spiritual experiences show us the Guru's invisible hand at every step of the journey.

I am privileged to have had the opportunity to edit Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta's amazing stories. It has not been without difficulty, though. Several hurdles had to be crossed. First, the prose had to be made accessible to an English-speaking audience. Second, the extraordinary mystical experiences of the author, unfamiliar to most, had to be deciphered for the man in the street. This was a formidable task indeed. Language is a poor device to describe and decipher the indescribable. The third challenge was the presence of two distinct voices in the book: the author's voice and my own. The author is a ripened soul who has spent countless lifetimes in intense contemplation at God-realization. I am just another person. The difference is stark and the gap unbridgeable.

An apt metaphor for this is a firefly that tries to fathom the sunlight in blissful ignorance of its smallness.

These limitations, among others, distort the breathtaking profundity of the author's deep mysticism.

To say the least, the author's mystical experiences are extraordinary. The Guru has bestowed upon him divine realizations that only the best of saints have experienced. Perhaps more amazing is the fact that he has lived this dizzying variety of spiritual experience within the space of one short lifetime. This is very rare.

Through the lens of the author's exceptional experiences, we get a glimpse of the Guru—a mysterious, all-powerful, all-knowing entity with a specific mission to establish a proper human society on earth founded on the principles of cosmic fraternity and the welfare of all creation. As we turn the pages of the author's fascinating interactions with the Guru, we learn a hard point: a disciple of a perfect guru must be ready to transform himself into a perfect instrument of the guru. The cost of real discipleship is not small. It entails great sacrifice on the disciple's part. A real disciple must be ready to give up personal comforts for the greater good.

Time and again the stories repeat a consistent theme—that a genuine guru is not one who smothers his disciples with soft words and romantic visions. He is a hard taskmaster who demands the best from his disciples. If needed, he corrects his disciples by using a variety of conventional and unconventional methods, always choosing the most appropriate remedy for a disciple. The act of disciplinary correction is a function of his deep love for his disciple. A guru is thus a loving father and a strict disciplinarian at the same time.

To reflect the author's deep reverence for his Guru, all references to the Guru have been capitalized in the book. References to the masculine gender include the feminine and neuter genders.

In the final analysis, this book is a scintillating complement of spiritual classics like *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda, *Tibet's Great Yogi, Milarepa* by Evans-Wentz, and *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse. It is at once an illuminating map of the vast and fascinating spiritual terrain and a ready handbook for those who wish to traverse the path.

Probir Ghosh

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

July 2014

INTRODUCTION

The advent of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii (Baba) on the planet Earth at such an epochal juncture (*yugasandhi*) was part of his resolve to show a beacon of light to humanity, which is engulfed in Cimmerian darkness. He thus founded Ananda Marga, the 'Path of Bliss', which envisages a social order where human beings not only live in loving fellowship with one another but also coexist in harmony with the rest of the creation, including the flora, fauna, and even the inanimate creation. As a God-centered ideology, it has been formulated as the panacea for the ills of the self-centered, matter-centered, and theocratic philosophies of the day.

Human society is one and indivisible. Despite differences in race, caste, creed, color, nationality and gender, human beings, along with the other animate and inanimate forms of creation, partake of the same essence. While marching ahead to the cherished goal, Man should take all the others along with him in the spirit of 'Live and Let Live'. Hence, Liberation of Self (*atmoksartham*) and Service to the Creation (*jagat hitaya*) should be the twin ideals of both the individual and collective lives of human beings.

Ananda Marga is a socio-economic-political-spiritual paradigm, which aims at the holistic and harmonious development of the individual and collective body. The Yoga *sadhana* (Rajadhiraja Yoga) enunciated by Baba lays down the secret of the progressive

psycho-spiritual expansion of the human mind, which enables the seeker to expand the frontiers of love, empathy and compassion. Spiritual progress is possible only when there is a congenial ambience in the physical and psychic spheres.

For this purpose, Baba had introduced new and innovative ideas and institutions to forge a glorious future on earth based on the cardinal principles of the total development of human potentials, ecological balance, global citizenship, universalism, and Neo-humanism, all of which acknowledge that the welfare of the individual is intrinsically linked to the welfare of the collective body.

The Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) propounded by Baba is an alternative to capitalism and communism. It not only envisions a socio-economic order free from dogma, exploitation, social discrimination, and economic disparity but also articulates the appropriate socio-economic strategies to translate ideas into action. Since the Supreme Consciousness permeates every atom of the universe, and we are all offspring of one cosmic progenitor, everyone has the inalienable fundamental right to a fair share of Nature's wealth. Thus, every human being on earth must be provided with the five basic necessities of life -- food, shelter, education, clothing, and medicine -- as well as the freedom of thought and equal opportunity for spiritual growth.

Baba also initiated the Renaissance Universal (RU) movement across the world to awaken the intellectuals to serve as the peer group to guide others along the path of righteousness (dharma). In essence, the Renaissance movement seeks to improve society and the world based on Neo-humanistic values that extend the human being's respect, love and care to all living beings and even to the inanimate objects of the universe.

An innovative institution, Renaissance Artists and Writers Association (RAWA), seeks to restore the true role of art as an instrument of social and spiritual awakening through the medium of value-centric Art, Literature, Music, Dance, etc.

Ek Manav Samaj (EMS) or One Human Society is a movement that offers a forum for human beings to share and care for one another, while providing the opportunity of stewardship of the earth and its resources to human beings, thus giving them the opportunity and responsibility of extending their protective embrace to all non-human life forms.

Another institution, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Plants (PCAP), seeks to sensitize people to be humane in their treatment of plants and animals.

Baba placed great emphasis on education, particularly the education of the young. The Neo-humanistic education programs he envisaged promote the holistic growth of the individual, so that a society of physically sound, psychically expanded, and spiritually elevated people could be created on earth.

There is insufficient space in this brief preamble to write more about Baba's other epoch-making ideas such as Bio-Psychology, Prama, the Pole-shift, Microvita, and Neo-humanism, which constitute an integral part of his comprehensive strategy to salvage the imperiled humanity. Interestingly, this extraordinary personality came silently and worked in camouflage behind a smokescreen of ordinariness. He assembled a core team of missionaries (monks and nuns) and a group of committed spiritual seekers to give shape to his momentous ideas and ideals.

I am deeply gratified that Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta, a great devotee and an indefatigable missionary worker, has come out with a remarkable record of his experiences and interactions with an extraordinary spiritual master. His exclusive moments with Baba and reminiscences of his mysterious ways, as well as the various spiritual demonstrations the Guru had performed on him, provide a passing glimpse of the uncharted domain of spirituality. I am sure that it would titillate the dormant spiritual urge in the seekers to dive into the deeper recesses of spirituality, know more about the ideas and ideology Shrii Shrii Anandamutijii espoused and lived for, and undertake the momentous journey to the cherished goal.

Acarya Pratapaditya
Betiah Hata, Gorakhpur, India
2010

CHAPTER 1

MY EARLY DAYS

The past, present, and future are fused. A probe on the past is illuminating. It throws light on the present and future. As I trace my early life before renunciation, I fondly recall the circumstances that led me to the golden path of spirituality and renunciation in search of the ultimate truth. More importantly, those circumstances provided me with an early introduction to Baba's divine stature and the grandeur of divine realizations.

Initiation: The First Step

Kabir Das, the renowned Indian mystic-poet, said,

If pilgrimage to holy places yields one a fruit of knowledge,

Then the meeting with saints yields two.

Fortunate is the one who has found the *Sadguru*,

That is the surest way to realise the Cosmic Consciousness.

These lines extracted from the book *Kabir* published by the Publications Department, Ministry of Information and Publicity, India express the saint's deep spiritual realizations. They were originally written in the Avadhi and Bhojpuri languages. He emphasizes that the supreme goal of spiritual aspirants can be attained only by the grace of the Sadguru. Effort alone is insufficient.

St. Kabir further explains that the guru is like a potter and the disciple a pot. The potter tinkers with the pot and molds it to the desired shape. He must ensure that it is internally durable as he hammers the outer body to the desired form. If not, the pot will crack in the process of molding it. When the pot is shaped, it is hardened by heating it in a kiln at high temperature. Once hardened and polished, the pot is ready for the market. The potter proudly shows off the attributes of the pot by tapping its sides with his fingers, producing the beats that are characteristic of a strong, durable pot.

Likewise, the Sadguru selects a disciple and slowly transforms his or her personality in the fire of spiritual practice. Through the hearth of sacrifice and nonattachment, the spiritual aspirant slowly attains magnanimity of mind and compassion by the grace of the Sadguru. Eventually, one attains freedom from the cycle of birth and death after merging into the eternally blissful form of the Sadguru.

I am fortunate to have been selected by the Sadguru as His disciple, despite my unworthiness. It is really His inscrutable grace. I do not have any noble deed or quality to my credit to be a recipient of His grace. Yet He has offered me a place at the altar of His lotus feet by His causeless compassion.

Initiation is the prerequisite for progress in spirituality. It is the first step in the long journey. Through the process of initiation,

the Sadguru opens the door to absolute knowledge that leads the disciple to oneness with the Supreme Consciousness. The process of initiation opens up the path and illuminates it at the same time.

I was not like other children. Since my childhood, I had a deep-seated desire to attain God-realization. I was inspired to read spiritual books, especially those about the lives of saints. I did not miss any opportunity to be in the company of elevated souls. Despite suffering serious health problems in my youth, my craving for things spiritual was intense. I wanted to meet the Lord face-to-face. Many a time, overwhelmed by emotion, I would cry for Him. It was against such a backdrop that I met my *acarya* while I was a high school student. My *acarya* was a teacher in the same school. He had a charming disposition, a hypnotic voice, and an attractive personality. In his classes, he occasionally talked about spirituality and Yoga sadhana. Inspired by his talks, I sought an appointment for initiation.

Initiation is a one-to-one process between the *acarya* and the initiate. The *acarya* acts as the representative of the guru. During initiation, he meditated for some time, and after a while, he opened his eyes. He said that I was fortunate to have Parama Purusa, the Supreme Consciousness, as my guru in the name and form of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii, also known as Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. He added that Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii combined in Himself the attributes of both Lord Shiva and Lord Krsna. Ever since childhood, I had a natural attraction to Lord Shiva and Lord Krsna. His words struck a magical chord in my heart. I was instantaneously elated. I thought that I was fortunate that the Lord Himself had accepted me as His disciple.

After initiation, as I practiced my meditation earnestly, I experienced states of spiritual ecstasy and had many spiritual experiences. One fine morning, to my utter surprise, I found that all my health

problems, which I had been suffering from since childhood, had vanished into thin air. I also developed a newfound self-confidence to face all difficult situations in my life. I had lacked these desirable physical and mental attributes as a young boy.

As I intensified my spiritual practices, I once experienced that I was floating on an ocean of ineffable bliss. In this wondrous state, I beheld the hypnotic vision of Bal-Krsna, the Lord Krsna as a child, playing His flute. The sweet melody of His flute was so charming that it caused my mind to be drenched in an indescribable state of bliss. At other times, I would see Lord Krsna in everything—in the leaves of the trees, in the rocks, in every atom. I can say that the bliss one experiences on hearing Lord Krsna's flute defies description.

Slowly I devoted more time to my spiritual practices. I would meditate for long hours. Occasionally I would get different types of spiritual experience. I really enjoyed my meditation. I involved myself in the intensive propagation of Ananda Marga as a spiritual path. I also never missed any opportunity to be in the company of my acarya, whom I respected tremendously.

I grabbed every opportunity to convince my classmates of the benefits of spiritual practice and the Ananda Marga way of life. In this way, many people I knew were initiated. Seeing my spiritual progress, my acarya developed a liking for me. He always inspired me to intensify my spiritual practice. On many occasions we meditated together.

Slowly the number of new spiritual aspirants swelled. Dharmacakra, a weekly spiritual gathering, was regularly held in a *dharmashala*, a pilgrim's inn, close to my acarya's residence. About fifty people would attend dharmacakra regularly. For me, it was the most important event, since it was very inspiring and devotional.

As my acarya was a Kapalika, a practitioner of an advanced form of Tantric meditation, I used to accompany him to the cremation grounds on specific days for his spiritual practice late at night. It was a very exciting experience for me. Whenever I visited my village, we would go to the cremation grounds late at night, accompanied by a few friends. My fear of ghosts and spirits diminished slowly but steadily.

As the days passed, my personality changed for the better. My friends, my family members, and the village community recognized the rapid changes in my conduct and my health. I adopted a sentient vegetarian diet without onion and garlic, as prescribed by Ananda Marga. My family members also decided to follow suit, becoming strict vegetarians. In the Indian context, this was a remarkable achievement, as Indians include a lot of onion and garlic in their diet. Another visible change was the marked improvement in my studies. Due to regular spiritual practice, my concentration and memory improved by leaps and bounds. Although I spent less time studying, my exam results improved greatly. I normally was at the top of my class in examinations.

These positive changes influenced the way people looked at meditation and spiritual practice. They began to believe that there was something in meditation that must be good. I was also encouraged by the changes in my family's and friends' perceptions.

My First Dharma Maha Cakra

The days passed happily. One fine morning, my acarya, Acarya Narendra, disclosed the wonderful news that Baba would visit Raipur for the Dharma Maha Cakra (DMC). I was not aware of what DMC actually meant. All I knew was that Baba would be physically present to deliver a discourse and His blessing to the Margiis. The Margiis

were jubilant to hear the good news. This inspired us greatly, and many more of my schoolmates were initiated. On the appointed day, I went to Raipur, along with my Margii friends. It was December 1960. The DMC was to be held in a dharmashala provided by the government.

Baba arrived by train from Tatanagar with Acarya Nityananda, who later became the first *avadhuta* of Ananda Marga. He adopted the name Acarya Satyananda Avadhuta. Accompanying him were Baba's younger brother Manas and Acarya Kshitish. A tumultuous reception awaited Baba at the railway station in Raipur. He was received amid the deafening chanting of slogans such as "*Ananda Marga Amar Hai!*" "*Manava Manava Ek Hain!*" and "*Vishva Bandhutva Kayam Ho!*" The devotional fervor of the Margiis was unlike anything I had seen before.

Initially, I had some doubt about Baba when I saw Him dressed in a simple white kurta and a dhoti, just like an ordinary man. I had expected to see an intense-looking, otherworldly, bearded, saffron-clad, Himalayan Yogi. I could not imagine that someone looking so ordinary was God in human form. I wondered whether He was really the personification of Lord Shiva and Lord Krsna. I thought that my acarya had lied to me about Baba being God. I had never seen His photograph before this. With such doubt lurking in my mind, I had my first audience of Baba at the DMC. Although I enjoyed His discourse, I could not accept Him as the embodiment of Lord Shiva and Lord Krsna.

The next day, in the evening, I had a strange experience. We were waiting in the hall with about 250 Margiis for Baba's arrival. Most of the people were deeply absorbed in a devotional state of mind as they sang spiritual songs, awaiting Baba. The atmosphere was mystical. There was something electric in the air that I could not

put my finger on. I saw many devotees in tears. Some were rolling on the ground in an extraordinary state of mind. Occasionally, I could hear outbursts of *humkara*, which was a little frightening and made me shiver. As I entered the hall to look for a sitting place, I felt a strange, overwhelming sensation. Moments later, I saw a brilliant, effulgent white light pervading the entire hall. The light permeated every atom in the hall, engulfing me entirely. I was drenched in an unknown bliss, something I had not felt before. I closed my eyes, immensely enjoying the blissful sensations that thrilled every cell of my body. After a while, still drenched in a blissful state, I slowly opened my eyes. Baba had already taken His seat on the dais. He looked majestic and exuded command. I could sense that He was in total control of the situation, of everything. Yet there was something fatherly about Him, something soft.

As my eyes were focused on Him, I saw another mystical vision. From the dais where Baba sat, I saw Bal-Krsna emerging from the dazzling white light that emanated from Baba. The child Krsna was playing an enchanting tune on a wooden flute. The celestial music was intoxicating, deepening the bliss I was experiencing. The vision was absorbing, incredible. Seeing the magnificent form of the child Krsna and hearing the hypnotic melody of His divine flute, I was transported to another world. I was immersed in that wondrous vision for some time, thrilled to the bone. After a while, the vision changed. I saw Lord Shiva emerging from the same blissful, effulgent light emanating from Baba. Lord Shiva was majestic, dressed like a Yogi. By this time, I lost all sense of consciousness. I was in another world. I was not aware of what was happening around me. I really don't know how long I was in that state of mind.

As I emerged from this extraordinary experience, the veil of doubt that had cast a shadow on Baba's divinity vanished. By His grace, I saw the divine forms of Lord Krsna and Lord Shiva in Baba. I

realized that my acarya had told the truth. I felt blessed to have had such an extraordinary experience.

After that divine experience, my devotion to Baba deepened substantially. I practiced my meditation more intensely. This resulted in concrete progress. My love for Baba increased, and I yearned to be in His physical presence all the time.

The spiritual experience had a profound effect on me. Whenever there was any Ananda Marga program, I made sure that I was there. Every program I attended left a lasting impression on my mind. The programs inspired me to dedicate myself to a life of intense spiritual practice. I attended five such camps in all. It was in these spiritual camps that I met Acarya Vandanananda Avadhuta, Acarya Acintananda Avadhuta, Acarya Shantananda Avadhuta, and Acarya Asheshananda Avadhuta. Over time, we became close friends.

I also attended various DMCs, two at Raipur in 1962 and 1964 and one in Jabalpur in 1963. Baba's refreshingly new DMC discourses and the holy vibrations emanating from His Varabhaya Mudra had a profound effect on me. My devotion soared to Himalayan heights. I craved to be close to Him and to do His work. As my devotion increased, my attachment to the world correspondingly decreased. After returning from the first Raipur DMC, I quietly resolved to renounce my worldly life for His mission. However, I did not share this secret with anyone.

The next year, in 1963, I attended another DMC at Jabalpur. I went there along with twenty-five Margiis. My acarya accompanied us. Our group was in the affectionate care of Acarya Ramlal Dani. It was at this DMC that Acarya Keshava became Acarya Shantatmananda Avadhuta when he became an avadhuta of Ananda Marga. Sixteen of my Margii friends also decided to dedicate their lives as missionaries

of Ananda Marga. Their application as trainee monks was accepted. Mine was rejected, however, as I was not yet eighteen years old, the cutoff point. Acarya Arun was Baba's attending secretary at this DMC. He later became Acarya Svarupananda Avadhuta.

After the DMC program, I returned home rather dejected. The fire of my craving for Baba was now burning intensely. The thought of the sweet moments spent in His holy presence lingered in my mind like a waft of fragrance.

Once again, in 1964, I got another opportunity to have an audience with Baba at the Raipur DMC. I got my Personal Contact at this DMC. The DMC intensified my decision to become a renunciant missionary of Ananda Marga.

After returning from the DMC, I thought of Him day and night. I couldn't stop thinking of Him. I wanted to dedicate my life to His mission. Day by day, my detachment from the world deepened. The attractions of the world appeared colorless, insipid. But I struggled with a titanic clash between two opposing forces: the attachment to my family and the desire to become a monk. In the end, however, my desire for renunciation prevailed.

Finally, in 1965, strongly attracted by His divine inspiration, I left home to dedicate my life to being a missionary. I stayed for some time with my acarya and two other acaryas of Raipur, Acarya Ramlal Dani and Acarya Kailash Bhalla. I enjoyed their love and inspiration. From there, I went to Patna to attend the DMC. When I met Baba, I offered myself as a missionary of Ananda Marga. That DMC was unique in that thirty-six Margiis decided to become missionaries and proceeded to Ranchi for specialized training in Yogic monkhood. They included stalwarts such as Acarya Jagdishvarananda, Acarya Vitmohananda, Acarya Pareshananda, and Acarya Shantananda.

At that time, there was no formal training center in Bihar. After spending a few days in Ranchi we traveled to Patna and from there proceeded to the Sigra training center in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. After about a month, I was posted as the Secretary of the Progressive Federation of India in Patna, even before formally qualifying as a full-fledged acarya.

Patna DMC

I arrived at Patna to attend the Ananda Purnima DMC on May 23, 1965. The function was held in the Senate Hall of Patna University. It was the biggest DMC I had ever attended in my life. Before that, I had participated in small DMCs organized locally. More than ten thousand Margiis attended the Patna DMC.

The environment at the DMC was intensely thrilling. The deep devotion of the Margiis and the soothing tunes of the devotional songs and *kiirtan* cast a magical spell on the program. Scores of devotees danced in abandon inside the hall to the hypnotic tune of devotional songs, waiting for Baba. When Baba arrived at the hall, the environment suddenly changed. It became electric and transformed into a frenzy of devotion. I saw many devotees crying uncontrollably. I also heard the mystical *humkara* sound from some of them. This sound is involuntarily uttered by spiritual practitioners as their Kundalini rise. Others were simply dancing, unmindful of the surroundings, and crying out His name in deep reverence. They were all absorbed in divine ecstasy. I too was deeply moved by feelings of love for Him. It was here that I met many elevated souls. In the magical spell of this otherworldly, deeply spiritual environment, I experienced Baba's mystical influence directly.

There and then, I resolved to renounce my life for His mission. This DMC was the most significant event in my life. It was here that I took a vow to be a monk of the order of Ananda Marga.

Field Training

In the early days, it was a rule that new missionary workers undergo practical training under the supervision of a senior missionary worker, a departmental supervisor, or a senior family acarya.

Since it was my first posting, I was assigned to Brother Balram, who was a PROUT volunteer, to be trained for a period of twenty-five days. He took me to several places, including Saharsa, Murliganj, Naugachia, Purnia, Araria, and to their farthest Sikata block and the remote villages situated on the border of Nepal. I had never visited these places before. I slowly picked up the art of public speaking, starting with the villages I visited. I observed that Brother Balram was a fine speaker. He was adept at using couplets from Kabir, Surdas, Nanak, and Tulsidas in his speeches and referred to stories from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* as well as verses from the Bhagavad Gita to convince the people. He propagated the Ananda Marga philosophy and way of life as well as PROUT's socioeconomic ideas to the common people in a charming and charismatic manner.

In this way, I met many senior Margiis. Their simplicity and implicit devotion for Baba inspired me. They told me many stories of their mystical experiences with Baba. Speaking to them and working with them increasingly boosted my confidence to deal with the new environment.

I traveled to the villages of the Sikata block of Araria District with Brother Balram. There were Margiis in each village, and they were all very devoted to Baba. It was then the rainy season. Transport to

the villages was not available. We would usually start our journey early in the morning after breakfast. We walked over the raised boundaries of paddy fields to reach the villages. We traveled throughout the day for eight to ten hours. Initially, I would get tired, as I was not accustomed to walking long distances. My inquiries about the distance of any village typically elicited a response that it was close. The reality was different, however. It would take us many hours of walking to reach the village. We used to traverse long distances on foot for up to ten hours daily.

In those days, fifteen Ananda Marga units were active in the Sikata block. Dharmacakra was held once a week in each of the units. There were hundreds of Margiis in that block, which made it easier for us to propagate Ananda Marga and PROUT. It was quite a pleasant experience for me. We visited the village of Acarya Vishveshvar and learned many useful techniques of propagation from him. There, I met many enthusiasts of Ananda Marga. The village was located on the border of Nepal. The headman of the village was a Margii. He took me to a town in Nepal. This was my first visit to Nepal. After the field training, I returned to Patna. Altogether, I spent about twenty-five days as an apprentice learning the ropes.

Acarya Training

After working for a few months at the Proutist Federation of India (PFI) office in Patna, I was asked to undergo acarya training in Jamalpur. In those days, Acarya Abhedananda Avadhuta was Baba's Personal Secretary. He was a soft-spoken and gentle person. He was also an elevated spiritual aspirant. There were only six trainees, including me. Acarya Dashratha, a senior householder acarya, was our trainer. We were fortunate to enjoy Baba's physical presence every day, both in the morning and evening. It was, indeed, a

blessing that Baba granted me the opportunity to undergo training in His presence.

I was fortunate that Baba used to bless me with Personal Contact almost every morning before He left for work at the railway office. He hinted about the intricacies of spiritual practice and explained how to serve humanity effectively. I had many opportunities to massage Him. Occasionally I would receive His special love and affection and get the opportunity to sit on His lap. Baba's fatherly love for His devotees was unconditional, divine, spontaneous, and blissful. Seeing this, other trainees were sometimes jealous of me. But such jealousy was natural. Every spiritual aspirant had an urge to be close to Him. Everyone craved His attention. Sometimes, even Acarya Abhedananda Avadhuta teased me for the special attention I got from Baba.

On the last day of our training, Acarya Dasharath was supposed to conduct an examination in the afternoon. That day, Baba came to the *jagrti* and asked Acarya Abhedananda to call me to His room. I entered His room as directed by Acarya Abhedananda and prostrated before Baba. I looked up at Baba just as I sat up. His physical form was immensely charming as He sat majestically on the cot. Just then, I saw that the entire room was filled with divine effulgence. His physical form was no longer present. As I beheld that wondrous sight, a feeling of intense bliss overwhelmed me. My mind was completely absorbed in His divine, effulgent form. I was no longer aware of the limitations of time, place, or person. I am not sure how long I was in that transcendental state. After some time, as I emerged from that lofty, divine state, I heard His sweet voice address me as Acarya Rsikesh and inquire after my welfare. I responded that I had yet to qualify as an acarya, as my examination was scheduled to be held in the afternoon. Baba lovingly parried my childlike response and said that I was already qualified as an acarya.

I thought that if He had addressed me as an acarya, then surely I had become an acarya.

Baba then said that He was very pleased with me. He said that all my desires like name, fame, and the attainment of occult powers would be realized instantaneously if I requested them. Hearing His sweet and pleasing words, I was again overwhelmed by a powerful feeling of bliss. Suddenly, I jumped up and sat on His lap like a child. Sheltered in His lap, I told Him that I had no wish to be fulfilled, as I was already blessed to be sitting on His lap. He dodged my response and again expressed His desire to bless me by fulfilling my wishes. But what could I say? I was drenched in divine bliss, and my mind was without any desire. I simply did not know what to ask of Him. All of a sudden, a thought flashed across my mind like a shooting star. I asked Him if he would really grant my wish. He replied that He was duty bound to grant my wish. I then expressed that I wanted to be devoted to Him for all time to come and that I wished to accompany Him to any planet or star that He might visit in the future according to His divine plan. I wanted to be always dedicated to His mission in the service of His creation. Baba then blessed me saying, "*Tathastu*" ("Let your wish be fulfilled"). Upon hearing His assuring words, I lost consciousness and was immersed in the ocean of unspeakable bliss. Soon after, Baba quietly left the room, leaving me absorbed in that divine state of bliss.

Following this divine experience, I tasted the nectarine bliss of samadhi many times over in the following months. Whenever I contemplated Him, I experienced extreme joy, floating like a flower petal on an endless sea of bliss.

Perhaps familiarity with the state of transcendental bliss dulled my appreciation of this extraordinary, hard-to-attain state. At times, I

would get tired of constantly tasting the bliss, but the blissful feeling was irresistibly overpowering.

Of course, all this could happen only by His grace. I now realize how blessed I was to have frequently tasted that divine fruit of contemplation, something that even the great Yogis of the past could achieve only with much difficulty. Such causeless grace of the Guru enabled an ordinary mortal to attain without much effort the apex of spiritual realization. I realized that anything, however impossible, was possible by His grace. The devotee can bind Him with the rope of his or her unconditional love, and He, in turn, allows Himself to be willingly bound.

PROUT Training

My first posting was at the PROUT Department in Delhi in 1965. According to the organizational system then, workers posted in a particular department were subjected to intensive training in Ananda Marga philosophy and extensive training in the operations of that department. Accordingly, I was sent to Delhi to be trained under the supervision of Acarya Ranganathananda Avadhuta. He was then the Chief Training Secretary of PROUT. He conducted regular classes in the ideology and implementation of PROUT for the trainees. The training was exhaustive. It considerably improved my understanding of PROUT and equipped me with the necessary tools, including increased self-confidence, to propagate PROUT ideology in public. The training program was satisfying. There, I had the opportunity to meet Acarya Dhiirananda Avadhuta, the editor of the English-language PROUT magazine. Occasionally he conducted classes on PROUT.

After the PROUT training program was completed, two trainees, Priyabrata Brahmchari and I, were sent to a nearby town to gain

practical experience in propagating PROUT. We began our fieldwork in the village of Mehrauli, with the help of a Margii brother from that area. Our first contact was with a school headmaster. He gave us the opportunity to address a meeting in the high school. From there, we proceeded to a remote village in Gurgaon. There, we met the village head and addressed the village folk. Through these meetings we introduced PROUT and Ananda Marga to the rural communities. As the villagers regarded us as celibate monks, they respected us, fed us well, and offered us milk and sweetened curd water.

We moved from village to village, propagating Ananda Marga to the masses. We then arrived at the district headquarters of Gurgaon. It was Diipavali, the Festival of Lights, that day. We moved into a dharmashala for shelter, but we had no money for food. We did not know anyone in the town. We also did not want to ask for alms. We had no choice but to go hungry that day. What a strange situation we were in! In India, Diipavali is the most important religious festival. The occasion is celebrated with lots of fun, food, and fireworks. Children love this festival the most. Going hungry on this occasion was unthinkable. We took this as a test of the Guru. With this frame of mind, we strolled down the road.

As we walked, we met a man who respectfully greeted us. He asked us to accompany him to his village. In his village, we had a good discussion with the villagers. We were able to introduce Ananda Marga to them.

After the meeting, the family members of our host lovingly served us various kinds of mouth-watering delicacies. We were rather surprised at this remarkable turn of events. We were certain that Baba had arranged to take care of our needs. As we were about to return, our host thrust some money in our hands. It was enough to meet

our basic needs for the return journey. We were overwhelmed with emotion. We silently wept at His immeasurable grace.

DMC at Muzaffarpur

It was in the hallowed land of Muzaffarpur that I was blessed with His divine contact for the first time. The auspicious event occurred on two occasions, the first in 1965 and the other in 1966. My first contact with Baba took place in March 1965 during the Vasantotsava (Holi festival) DMC. I went together with another missionary worker. As I entered His room, the desire to be initiated into Kapalika sadhana became intense. Baba looked at us with a mysterious smile and inquired about our desires. We remained silent, looking at Him. The meeting was short. After a few words, He signaled that we should leave.

I saw how closely Baba interacted with the Margiis at the DMC. As the DMC coincided with the celebration of the Holi festival, there was a festive air, and the mood was joyous. There was much laughter and gaiety all around. And there was fun and frolic among the devotees as they splashed one another with colored powder. What a riot of color! The celebratory mood was not only a feast for the eyes but also an indulgence for the taste buds. There was an astonishing variety of food and colorful Indian sweetmeats on display. Here, I got the opportunity to taste the native *pua*, a popular sweet dish of Bihar, prepared specially for this occasion.

My second contact with Baba took place at the Tunaki Sao Dharmashala in Muzaffarpur, Bihar in 1966. To me, it was a historic Personal Contact. I was then a new worker posted in north Bihar. I was a greenhorn, new and inexperienced. Many senior and devoted Margiis lived in this region. They knew the philosophy very well, and some had deep spiritual realizations. Owing to my

inexperience, I developed an inferiority complex while interacting with them. Sensing my discomfort, Baba Himself introduced me to Acarya Sakaldeva and Acarya Gangasharan, two senior householder acaryas. He told them that I was a young worker, that He was leaving me in their care, and that they should help me if I needed any help. Since then, I received their loving affection and support. I realized how lovingly He looked after His workers, never leaving anyone uncared for.

Baba used to summon me to His room on several occasions. Those moments were special. He lifted the veil of maya and filled my heart with His divine love. By His grace, I started to experience much bliss in my spiritual practice. The intensity of my attraction for Him increased day by day. Indeed, my contact with Him at the dharmashala was both important and historic for my spiritual awakening.

Much later, Baba asked me where I had first experienced spiritual realization. I replied that it was at the Tunaki Sao Dharmashala in Muzaffarpur. Baba mentioned that He still remembered that moment as well as the location of that incident. As He recollected the special event, I lost myself in divine ecstasy.

An Encounter with Kalikananda

I was first posted in Patna as Office Secretary of PFI in 1965. It was a blessing in disguise. I would quite often find an opportunity on one pretext or the other to visit Jamalpur to be close to Baba. On one such visit, I got an opportunity to go on a Field Walk with Him together with two other Margiis.

We enjoyed walking with Baba. As we walked, He talked to us and gave us many useful instructions until we reached the Tiger's

Grave. At the Tiger's Grave Baba took His seat, and the three of us started to massage His feet. As we were massaging Him, I noticed a strange figure materializing from thin air near the huge tamarind tree not far from us. Just as the figure became wholesome and visible, Baba told us that Kalikananda was here to seek His advice on some important matter. Kalikananda was Baba's first initiate on this planet. Baba then proceeded toward the tamarind tree. I was a little afraid and, at the same time, inquisitive about Kalikananda. I wanted to meet him in person.

I had heard from the older Margiis the interesting story of Baba's initiation of Kalikananda. In 1939 Kalicharan, as he was then known, had been a feared and brutal dacoit who terrorized the people of Bengal. Baba had been a college student in Kolkata, Bengal. He was about eighteen or nineteen years of age at the most.

One day, on Shraavanii Purnima, the full moon day, in the month of August, Baba had gone for His usual walk. He strolled along the Ganges in the late evening. In those days, the riverbank had been surrounded by a dense forest, which had been home to dacoits and other antisocial elements. As Baba sat down, a huge, fierce man suddenly appeared from nowhere and confronted Baba. He demanded that Baba hand over all His valuables. Baba calmly addressed the man by name and asked if he would give Him everything he possessed. Baba's request had had a deep spiritual import, as a worthy disciple had to surrender everything to the Guru. Of course, Kalicharan had not understood the inner meaning of Baba's request. However, he'd been momentarily shaken by the young man's unusual courage. Baba then asked him if he was ready to change his life. Kalicharan agreed, and Baba then initiated him into the Tantric path, giving him the new name Kalikananda Avadhuta. This was the amazing story of a dacoit turned ascetic.

After a while, Baba returned and inquired if we wanted to meet Kalikananda. We remained silent, but Baba asked us to follow Him. We followed Him as instructed. When we reached the vicinity of the tree, Baba pointed toward Kalikananda and told us that he was our elder brother and that we should pay our respects to him. We greeted him with *pranam*. I noticed that he had a fearsome appearance, with hair all over his body. We were overawed seeing him at such close range.

Soon after that, he vanished before our eyes as mysteriously as he had appeared. Meeting one of Baba's early disciples was indeed a rare treat. Baba had graced us with the opportunity to see the legendary Kalikananda in person.

Eliminating Pride

In 1965 I was a new worker and had come to Jamalpur to be near Baba. As I reached the city, I felt light and happy. The same day, a wrestler from the vicinity of Jamalpur also arrived to meet Baba. He had just been initiated into spiritual practice. He had heard from his Margii friends that during Personal Contact, Baba would punish His disciples for their immoral actions after pointing out the details of such actions. The fear of punishment was constantly playing in his mind like a record. As he was worried about the punishment, he devised a plan that if Baba were to punish him, he would snatch the cane from His hand. The wrestler considered himself much stronger than Baba. It is generally believed that wrestlers are simpletons, but once they accept something, they remain devoted to that ideal or person.

On that occasion, the wrestler got the opportunity of Personal Contact with Baba. When his turn came, he entered Baba's room and prostrated before Him, as advised by his acarya. As he got up,

he was shocked to see that Baba had a gigantic, fearsome body. He was not the normal Baba who was five feet three inches tall. His body was enormous, and His limbs were equally huge. Seeing Him in this unexpectedly fearsome and gigantic form, the wrestler trembled like a leaf, paralyzed by an unknown fear. Realizing the error of his thinking, he asked for forgiveness, beseeching Baba to return to His normal form.

In an instant, Baba resumed His ordinary frame. Then, like a father scolding his child, He admonished the wrestler for his misdeeds. He took an oath from the wrestler to be an ideal person and to forsake his bad ways. After extracting the promise, Baba lifted him up as if he were a child and put him lovingly on His lap. The wrestler was taken aback at the effortless way in which Baba lifted him like a straw doll. He savored the love and attention that Baba showered on him. While sitting on Baba's lap, he thought that Baba must have surely been experiencing great discomfort due to his oversized body. While thinking in this manner, a surge of emotion swept over him, causing him to cry like a baby. He then realized that Baba was not an ordinary man and that He loved His disciples like His own children, punishing them and loving them at the same time.

Why It Is Difficult to Meditate

Once, in 1965, Baba was surrounded by many devotees in the jagrti at Jamalpur. Those present savored His physical presence, thoroughly enjoying hearing and seeing Him. An environment of heavenly charm pervaded the jagrti. When Baba finished His discourse, a devotee stood up and asked Him why the mind could sometimes concentrate during meditation and derive great happiness and peace, while at other times it just could not concentrate, frustrating the practitioner to the point that he or she would lose interest in meditation.

Baba said that it was quite natural for practitioners to be unable to concentrate the mind while performing their spiritual practices. He explained that the present human life is the result of a long evolutionary march through many lives. The unmanifested reactions of the actions performed during the past lives remain accumulated in the subconscious mind of an individual. These latent reactions cast a disturbing influence on the mind of the practitioner as they manifest, thus disquieting the mind. Baba clarified that this is natural and that spiritual aspirants should not get unduly worried. Aspirants must be regular in their spiritual practices, however. They should not be unnecessarily concerned whether or not their minds become concentrated during meditation. It is important for practitioners to keep their minds fixed on the Supreme Consciousness during meditation, and if they continue to do that, they will surely move forward. Over time, their minds will get concentrated, and the practitioners will experience divine bliss.

Baba also stressed that the performance of spiritual practice entails both an internal and external struggle. A spiritual practitioner is verily a spiritual soldier. The prick of thorns along the arduous path signifies progress. He emphasized that the result of our spiritual practices should be offered at the lotus feet of the Supreme Entity. Sincerity in performing one's spiritual practices is the surest way of attracting His grace, which helps an aspirant to attain God-realization.

Who Is Greater, a Renunciant or a Householder?

In the early days of Ananda Marga, the organization was small. There were only a handful of devotees. Baba was easily accessible to the devotees in those unforgettable days. He kept a personal relationship with them. He was not only their Guru but also their

guide in their daily lives. They used to consult Him on everything, from the intricacies of spiritual practice to personal problems.

Once, a devotee posed a question to Baba: Who is greater, a family person or a renunciant? Baba did not give an immediate answer and instead posed the same question to all the devotees present. They gave varying answers. Some were in favor of family people, while others thought that the renunciant monks and nuns were superior.

Baba then narrated a story.

Once upon a time, there lived a monk and a king. The king had a question. He wanted to know who was superior, the renunciant or the family person. To find a satisfactory answer, he threw a challenge to all his subjects. He announced that anyone who could provide an acceptable answer to the question would win half his kingdom and the hand of his lovely daughter. There was a catch, however. If the answer was not convincing enough, the man would be jailed, and his nose would be cut off as a penalty.

Lured by the prospect of winning half a kingdom and the hand of the beautiful princess, many tried to answer the question but failed in their attempts. They were imprisoned and had their noses cut off. This went on for some time. The jail was burgeoning with noseless suitors. After some time, an old monk came forward and gave a satisfactory response to the king's question. As promised, the king surrendered half his kingdom and his daughter to the monk. But the monk had no desire for the kingdom or the

princess. He was, after all, a renunciant who had renounced the world in the pursuit of divinity.

The monk then suggested to the king that in order to find a truly satisfactory answer to his question, the king would have to live like a monk and move about with him to better understand the life of a renunciant. The king agreed with the monk's suggestion and proceeded to hand over the administration of the kingdom to his son and able ministers. Having done so, he left with the old monk with nothing but the garb of a mendicant.

They walked to different places, seeing different things along the way. After some days, they arrived at a neighboring kingdom. The king of that kingdom had made arrangements for the marriage of his only daughter to an eligible suitor. To commemorate the grand occasion, he invited both royalty and the common people to the event. Many people from all over the kingdom and from other kingdoms came to the event. The large crowd delighted the king. The royalty were seated in specially decorated, cushioned seats. The common folk stood in neat rows on one side of the assembly. Among them were several saffron-robed monks who wished to bless the couple.

The princess then went to the row of splendidly attired princes from kingdoms near and far, all seated elegantly like living mannequins dressed to the hilt in royal regalia, to select her future bridegroom from among them. After a careful

search of all the prospective candidates, she could not find anyone who impressed her. Disappointed at not finding a suitable bridegroom among the royalty, she unexpectedly went over to the teeming columns of commoners who had come to witness the grand event. In the packed crowd of commoners, she saw a handsome young monk to whom she was attracted. The face of the young monk shone like the sun and reflected the charm of his spirituality. Irresistibly drawn to him, she decided that he was the most suitable person in the assembly to be her life partner. With the nuptial garland in hand, she moved toward the young monk to garland him, signifying her final choice.

The young monk realized what was happening to his horror. As an avowed celibate, he did not want to be drawn into a conjugal relationship. To evade this delicate situation, he left the assembly in a hurry. Seeing this, the princess ran after him. Finding no alternative, the young monk ran away into the woods, hoping to flee the princess. The princess, however, pursued him into the woods, eager to catch up with him.

Meanwhile, the old monk and the mendicant king followed both of them. Thinking that they were the king's henchmen, the young monk ran even faster and disappeared into the wilderness. Try as she may, the princess failed to find him and eventually lost her way in the dense forest. She walked and walked and walked. After some time, she was tired and sat down under a large tree in the deep folds of

the forest. She was unable to walk any farther and needed to rest.

It was a cold winter's day, and the warm evening light was slowly fading. The forest was getting dark and desolate and cold, and she was far away from civilization. There was no hope for her to return to the comfort of her castle. Realizing this, she slumped onto the forest floor and cried.

In the meantime, the old monk and the mendicant king arrived. They saw her sitting all alone and crying under the tree. They took pity on her and tried to console her, assuring her that it would be safer for her to rest here for the night than to venture out in the enveloping darkness. They assured her that they would escort her back to her father's kingdom at the first light of the morning. Finding no alternative, she accepted their offer.

The tree housed a nest of three birds—a male and female bird and their offspring. The birds happened to witness the entire drama from their nest perched high up on a branch of the tree. They saw that the three human beings—the old monk, the mendicant king, and the princess—were hungry and cold, without food or warm clothing, and took pity on them. The birds decided that they would try their best to comfort them so that they could pass the frosty night without much suffering. They looked around and saw a fire raging in another part of the forest. They flew to the fire and brought back some burning twigs, which they dropped before their

guests. Seeing their good fortune, the old monk and the mendicant king looked for some dry wood to start a fire. They started a fire, and all three of them gladly squatted around the orange flames for some warmth.

Next, the birds thought of quelling their guests' hunger. As they were too small to catch bigger animals, the male bird offered itself as food for the humans and flew straight into the fire. The female bird thought likewise and flew into the fire. Eventually, the baby bird also decided to offer itself as food and jumped into the fire. Thus, the family of three birds sacrificed their lives for the comfort of their human guests.

At that point, the old monk, pointing to the mendicant king, asked if he understood who was greater—the renunciant or the family person. The old monk explained that neither one was superior to the other. The one who sincerely performed his or her duties and responsibilities was superior. The family of the three birds had proved that they were superior by acting selflessly for others' comfort. The young monk who had run away into the forest was equally great, as he strived to continue to live the life of a renunciant. The princess who had run after the young monk into the forest and put herself in great danger and discomfort was also great. The monk then explained that it was the sincere performance of one's duties that marked a person as a superior being, not whether one was a renunciant or a family person.

The king was very satisfied with the practical answer and returned to his kingdom. In gratitude he decided to release all prisoners in his kingdom as an act of royal pardon.

Shrii Biharilal

I was then a new worker in 1965 and posted as Office Secretary in the PFI department. We were told that Baba was going to visit Patna. Biharilal was the District Secretary of Patna at that time. He was tasked with the responsibility of looking after Baba's comfort. He was extremely delighted at the prospect of serving his Guru. He took meticulous care to ensure that all arrangements for Baba's visit were made, leaving no stone unturned. Biharilal played the perfect host and looked after Baba's needs.

I could see Baba thoroughly enjoying the hospitality of His devotee. It was the first time that I saw Baba enjoying a devotee's love and hospitality. I could see how a devotee was ready to undergo great difficulty just to please his Guru. For the devotee, there was nothing greater than serving his Guru.

When Baba finished taking lunch, Biharilal offered Him a mango from Bihar, a variety that was particularly sweet and aromatic. He thrust the mango in Baba's hands and explained the manner in which it was to be eaten. Baba listened attentively to Biharilal's instructions on the proper way to eat a mango.

The whole scene was amusing, hilarious in fact. Biharilal was not his normal self. He threw all protocol to the winds while serving Baba and instructing Him on the proper way to eat a mango. He obviously derived great pleasure from doing that. Baba, on His part, played the role of the perfect guest. He graciously acknowledged

all the hard work His devotee had put in and made Biharilal feel important.

To me, the whole scene was simply amazing: how Baba interacted so intimately with His devotee and how He gave great importance to such a minor thing as eating a mango.

Avadhuta Initiation

During my acarya training in Jamalpur, I enjoyed Baba's contact and experienced His grace and compassion on a daily basis. I constantly felt a strong attraction toward Him. My mind was always absorbed in thinking about Him.

At that time, I developed a strong desire to become an avadhuta of Ananda Marga. In the tradition of Tantra, an avadhuta is a renunciant who has renounced everything in the service of his guru. I wanted to surrender everything to Baba. I understood that as an avadhuta I would be directly committed to the Guru.

During the Holi festival in March 1966, I received an opportunity to attend the DMC in Muzaffarpur. I was then posted in the PFI office in Patna. Sometime during the DMC, I entered Baba's room along with another worker, harboring a strong desire to become an avadhuta. The omniscient Baba straightaway sensed my desire and asked what I wanted from Him. He asked me what brought me here to Him. I remained silent and did not reply to His question. He then lovingly looked at me and smiled. I was simply overwhelmed by His graciousness and after a while walked out of the room.

Within a few days, Baba came to Patna for DMC and stayed in the residence of Acarya Rambilas Rai, who was then the Deputy Police Superintendent of Patna.

Baba requested another worker, Acarya Prakashananda Avadhuta, who was then the Global Training Secretary, to provide Him the list of names of the prospective candidates for avadhuta initiation. My name was not included in the list.

When the list was brought to Baba for consideration, He instructed Acarya Prakashananda to include my name. I learned this fact from a worker who was present in Baba's room at that time. I was grateful to Baba for His kind gesture and was overwhelmed by His affection. I was subsequently initiated into the ancient order of avadhuta monks, who renounce everything and devote their lives to the service of humanity.

CHAPTER 2

THE ANANDA NAGAR PHASE

Ananda Nagar, the City of Bliss, was the catalyst in the maturation process of my life as a missionary worker. There, I was confronted with the stark realization of what it meant to be a missionary worker of Ananda Marga. This phase of my spiritual growth could be characterized as learning by doing.

It was certainly not a bed of roses. It provided me with a sampling of the hard life of sacrifice required of a renunciant, one who has surrendered everything at the lotus feet of his guru. The spirit of sacrifice is not automatic. It has to be cultivated over time. The quality of a disciple can be measured by the level of his sacrifice. Starting with Ananda Nagar, Baba gave me more and more organizational responsibilities to handle, so that He could mold me into a useful instrument for His mission on Earth.

The 1967 Indian Famine

I was then posted in north Bihar, Mithila, as an Ananda Marga missionary, propagating the message of self-realization and service to humanity. This region abounds with many very senior Margiis and family acaryas. I was fortunate to have had the opportunity of

listening to their mystical experiences and interactions with Baba. I particularly enjoyed the company of the great devotees of Baba, such as the respected Acarya Chandranath, Acarya Nagiina, Acarya Sakaldev, and Acarya Gangasharan. They were spiritual giants.

One day, I heard the painful news of the gruesome murder of five of our monks on March 5, 1967, in Ananda Nagar, West Bengal. A few days after this shocking incident, I was called for a reporting session in Ranchi. Due to the security situation, Baba had relocated His office from Ananda Nagar to Ranchi. I went to Ranchi hoping to be blessed with His physical presence. Instead, the central office informed me of my new posting as the Ananda Marga Relief Organizer in charge of all relief operations in India.

I was momentarily numbed on hearing the news. As a new and inexperienced worker, I was unprepared for such a big responsibility. The whole country was then gripped by a brutal drought and famine, and hundreds of people had died from starvation. It was a mega disaster. I wondered how I could organize the massive relief operations needed to address a calamity of this scale. The whole of Bihar and eastern Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal had been severely affected by the drought.

To address the calamity, Baba established the Ananda Marga Drought Relief Committee, with its headquarters in the residence of Shashi Ranjan, a senior Margii. Hundreds of Margii volunteers participated in the relief operations in their respective areas. The committee organized hundreds of free food camps and cheap food stalls, as well as water supply facilities. I was responsible for inspecting, controlling, and establishing new relief centers in the affected areas.

I was then only a novice missionary worker. For reasons best known to Him, Baba had decided to choose an inexperienced person for this important task. To educate me and to build my confidence, Baba patiently explained how I was to organize the relief centers and manage their operations. His loving guidance was the impetus I needed to accomplish a task that was beyond my capability.

I worked with Dr. Ramesh, the Relief Secretary of the committee. He was a great help. Baba Himself prepared my tour program and guided me on the work that I was to carry out in different places.

The Margiis were inspired to serve the suffering people, and in no time over five hundred free and cheap kitchens were started. Thousands of Ananda Marga volunteers were involved in this massive humanitarian operation.

One day, Baba instructed me on the standard guidelines to follow in selecting the volunteers for the relief operations. He stressed the following points:

1. Beware of anyone who is talkative and sentimental.
2. Rely on those who are of serious disposition, speak after thinking, and are practical.
3. Refrain from depending on people who are emotional and easily assailed by pleasure and pain. On the contrary, involve those who always maintain a balanced disposition in important tasks. These people should be allowed to handle more and more responsibility over time.
4. Choose volunteers who are honest and devoted for additional responsibility.

I followed Baba's guidelines religiously. I was lucky that there were enough dedicated volunteers to do the relief work. Their selfless

service brought much glory to Ananda Marga. Everywhere, our work received appreciation from different quarters.

The late Shrii Jaiprakash Narayan, an Indian independence activist and political leader from Bihar, was himself involved in the relief work undertaken by the government. He too was impressed with the dedication and sincerity of the Ananda Marga volunteers. He appreciated us very much. For any social work needed by the government, he relied on our volunteers.

We also helped the government in the distribution of grains to the masses. Impressed with our dedication and honesty, the Prime Minister at the time, the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi, arranged for hundreds of tons of grain to be distributed to the drought-stricken people through the Ananda Marga Relief Committee. We reached out to the remote, inaccessible regions, such as the Surguja and Bastar areas of Madhya Pradesh, which were badly affected by the drought. These areas were so remote and inaccessible that not a single civil society organization went there for relief work.

To expand the scope of our relief activities, Baba directed me to nominate a Suborganizer for every diocese and a Relief Branch Organizer for every district. Being new to the job, I was overwhelmed by the sheer enormity of the work. Understanding my predicament, Baba Himself provided me with the names of sincere, active, and honest Margiis and acaryas who should be involved in this mammoth task. I informed those concerned that they had been selected to participate in our relief operations and requested them to come to Ranchi for an audience with Baba. All of them promptly reached Ranchi on the scheduled date.

Despite being the youngest and the most inexperienced, I was asked to lead the large group of volunteers. Acarya Narendra Deva, who

was my own acarya, was appointed the Suborganizer of the Raipur Diocese. Acarya Ramlal Dani and Acarya Kailash Bhalla were made the Branch Organizers of Surguja and Bastar, respectively. In carrying out my duty, I was rather hesitant to give instructions to these senior acaryas. I felt uncomfortable telling them what to do.

One day, Baba called all of them to His room. Pointing at me, He said that despite the fact that I was relatively younger and less experienced, I was to be considered His representative and that all of them were required to follow my instructions as if they were His own. In no time, my problems were solved. My own inhibitions were removed. I acted as His medium, and He made use of me to discharge this enormous responsibility. I was amazed at how easily He put everyone at ease and made them happily accept full responsibility and accountability.

I continued my work with the three senior acaryas for many months. Their conduct was exemplary. They earnestly carried out the assigned tasks beyond my expectations. We managed to serve the people in the far-off, drought-stricken villages. Although these acaryas had families to look after, they nevertheless carried out their humanitarian responsibilities with unparalleled devotion. In fact, they were a source of inspiration to all the renunciant missionary workers involved in the relief work. I thoroughly enjoyed working with them and had many exciting experiences.

In August 1967, Baba arrived at Raipur for DMC and stayed in the Ananda Marga School in Bairan Bazaar. I attended the DMC with Acarya Ananda Kishore. I brought with me a proposal to organize relief work in the villages of Surguja District. They were among the villages most afflicted by the drought. Baba took a personal interest in the plan by helping to resolve its shortcomings. He asked the

three acaryas involved with the ongoing relief operations to take the additional responsibility of organizing relief work in Surguja.

Ananda Nagar was equally affected. Our children's home faced an acute shortage of food. I organized and delivered twenty quintals of wheat to the home. Baba was pleased with my action.

I enjoyed the posting as Relief Organizer, as I learned how to organize large-scale volunteer work and how to inspire the volunteers to continue with the good work. I was also blessed to have received His grace.

Following the completion of the massive relief operation, I was transferred to Ananda Nagar as Office Secretary No. 2.

Baba as Samaja Guru

This incident occurred in 1968. I was then assigned to Ananda Nagar, the headquarters of Ananda Marga Pracaraka Samgha, as Office Secretary No. 2. Acarya Pranavananda was the Central Office Secretary stationed at Ranchi, where Baba lived. My work required me to collect the work reports of the workers in Ananda Nagar for Baba's review every Sunday.

Bengal was then governed by a coalition government of fourteen political parties with different political ideologies. The Marxist party had a strong influence within the coalition. The state of Kerala in South India was also influenced by Communism. Globally, Communism had a strong influence in that era. Eastern Europe and Central Europe buckled under the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. In Asia, China was Communist, and so was North Korea. The Indochinese countries also fell under Communist influence. The domino effect was at work. The Communist insurgents waged

a ruthless war in Malaya, while sparking similar movements in the Philippines and Indonesia. Their intention was to bring the whole of Asia under Communist rule. Globally, the Soviet Union hatched a plan to bring the whole world under the Communist banner.

Coming back to Bengal, just a year earlier, on March 5, 1967, the Marxists and their goons, with the help of thousands of armed villagers, attacked Ananda Nagar. The universal spiritual ideology of Ananda Marga was a threat to the growing influence of the Communist ideology in Bengal and the surrounding areas. The simple-minded and superstitious villagers were tricked into believing that Ananda Marga was violent and a threat to their religion. The Marxists convinced the villagers to destroy Ananda Marga.

At the time of the attack, Baba was physically present in His room at the Marga Guru quarters in Ananda Nagar together with several missionaries. Realizing that they were far outnumbered, the monks tried to reason with the large, unruly crowd of bloodthirsty villagers, many of them drunk, but to no avail. The crowd was like a swarm of angry bees. In the ensuing moments, five monks died defending Ananda Marga and Baba. They were mercilessly butchered. After a prolonged trial, eighteen people were found guilty of the crime and sentenced to prison. One of them was an official from the Block Development Office of Purulia.

Following the horrific March 5, 1967, incident, Ananda Nagar lay in shambles. It was like a battered war zone. Most of the buildings were pulverized, some reduced to solitary walls and others to a pile of broken bricks. The place was a painful reminder of the once-proud spiritual heritage that was Ananda Nagar, the City of Bliss.

The destruction of Ananda Nagar was a moral victory for the Communists. They thought that with the destruction of the

headquarters of Ananda Marga, the spiritual movement would surely crumble. Baba was not cowed, however. He devoted much time and energy to rebuilding Ananda Nagar. The missionaries and Margiis were under great pressure to rebuild Ananda Nagar from dust. I was myself under severe pressure to perform. Baba did not accept any excuse or delay in the delivery of work.

At a reporting session one Sunday, Baba gave us a new target to construct buildings to house poultry, pigs, fish, ducks, cows, and silkworms. I found the idea of handling pigs and poultry repulsive and contradictory to the ideals of a monk. Hence, I did not proceed with the work of building the piggery and poultry houses.

At the next reporting session, He specifically inquired about the progress of work on the piggery and poultry structures. I was caught red-handed. I did not have a satisfactory explanation for not starting work on those buildings. Thus, I stood in silence, with my head hanging low. Baba understood my anguish. To put me at ease, He clarified that He was not only a *dharma guru* but also a *samaja guru*, the Guru for society. As a *samaja guru*, He explained that it was His duty to support all activities necessary to develop the rural economy, including the rearing of pigs, poultry, and fish, as agricultural industries were essential for a self-sustaining rural economy. I found Baba's explanation rational. It comforted me a great deal and justified why spiritual aspirants may sometimes have to perform actions that are not consistent with their personal beliefs or motivations. I then understood that Baba was a very practical person who was concerned about the welfare of each and every person on earth, whether or not he or she was a spiritual aspirant.

Baba defined the role played by a *samaja guru* in various discourses. He explained that a *samaja guru* has to utilize his or her extraordinary knowledge, intellectual prowess, personal charm, and organizational

capacity to lead humanity along the path of all-around progress in the three spheres of human existence: the physical, mental, and spiritual planes. Baba, as Taraka Brahma, had all the necessary qualities and powers to take human society to the next stage and ultimately guide humanity toward the realization of the Cosmic Consciousness. It is for this very reason that He propounded the Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT). PROUT is the new socio-economic-political theory that aims to establish the leadership of *sadvipras*—leaders with a moral and spiritual bent of mind who are ready to fight against immorality—and ensure economic democracy, that is, a socioeconomic system based on a decentralized economy that guarantees the basic human requirements of every human being.

An Imposter

I was then working as Office Secretary. My duties covered the entire Delhi sector. They included collecting progress reports of the missionary workers in Ananda Nagar and reporting to Baba once a month in Ranchi. I was made accountable for the progress of work in the field. That responsibility hung over my head like the Sword of Damocles. Baba closely monitored the progress of work in Ananda Nagar. He punished me for the workers' shortfalls and praised me for their rare successes. He brooked no excuse about shortfalls. One can imagine what the pressure was like.

Before my posting to Ananda Nagar, I worked with Dr. Ramesh, who was the Relief Secretary. He was a great devotee of Baba. I was impressed with his dedication, simplicity, and honesty.

Once, Dr. Ramesh sent a rather cultured man to Ananda Nagar with a letter of introduction. In the letter, he explained that the man intended to pursue a doctoral degree on Ananda Marga and that we should assist him in his endeavor. I showed the letter to

the General Secretary, Acarya Sarveshvarananda Avadhuta, and two other workers, Acarya Madhavananda Avadhuta and Acarya Yogananda Avadhuta. They agreed that the man should be well treated. On the strength of Dr. Ramesh's introduction and the recommendations of the other missionary workers, I provided all the information I had on Ananda Marga to our esteemed guest. Occasionally, Acarya Yogananda and Acarya Madhavananda would also provide him with additional information.

The following Sunday, I went to Ranchi for reporting. As usual, I updated Baba about the progress of work in Ananda Nagar. I read the work reports of the two workers, adding that they had met with an outsider. Baba casually inquired more about the person. I informed Him that Dr. Ramesh had sent him to Ananda Nagar and that he was collecting information on Ananda Marga for his PhD degree. Hearing this, Baba became furious and informed me that the man was an undercover intelligence officer. He asked me why I had accommodated him in the ashram in the first place. I was stunned by the fury of His demeanor. In defense, I feebly responded that the man had a letter of introduction from Dr. Ramesh and that I had consulted the General Secretary and other central workers before accommodating him.

But Baba was in no mood for lame excuses that masked a slippage of judgment on my part. I was severely punished for my mistake. Baba also punished the other workers involved. Mentally, I could not accept the harsh punishment, as I felt that I was not at fault. I was emotionally hurt and at the same time feared Him. I was in such a pathetic state of mind that I wanted to be far away from Him.

At that time, I did not realize that the harsh punishment Baba meted out was a conduit to save me from certain death. This is explained later in the book.

Murder of Monks

After the shocking incident of March 5, 1967, the Margiis organized a large protest to prompt the public to act against the senseless murder of the five monks in Ananda Nagar. Baba gave Acarya Narendra Dev the responsibility of organizing and leading the protest. Meanwhile, the police had cordoned off the murder site in Ananda Nagar.

For the protest, five Margiis were chosen to go to the site and meditate there. Soon after they arrived, the police stormed in and arrested them on false charges. The five were sent to Purulia jail. Such protests went on for a few months.

One day, the protests suddenly stopped. At the weekly reporting session, Baba inquired why we had discontinued the protests. I could not give a satisfactory answer. Baba gave me twenty-four hours to get the information and report to Him. I immediately left for Bokaro, where Acarya Narendra was staying, to find out the actual reason for stopping the protests. I got the needed clarification and immediately went back to Ranchi to report to Baba.

After listening to the explanation, Baba requested us to resume the protests. We organized another protest within two days.

I then realized that Baba kept a close watch on every program that we implemented.

A Waste of Time

In those days Acarya Prabhasananda Avadhuta and Acarya Prashantananda Avadhuta, the former General Secretary and Baba's

Personal Assistant, respectively, were posted in Ananda Nagar to fulfill their organizational duties.

As with the other workers, I had to get their progress reports and appraise Baba of the progress of work. Baba was usually dissatisfied with the reports of these two senior workers. Once, He asked me what they were doing in Ananda Nagar. I casually replied that I had often seen both of them playing chess. Upon hearing that, Baba's mood darkened. He said that playing chess was a complete waste of time.

When I returned to Ananda Nagar, I informed the two workers about Baba's displeasure with their work performance. This incident drove home the point that Baba was very particular about His workers' discipline, especially how they used their time. It reminded me that a renunciant renounces everything for a greater cause in the service of humanity, not to enjoy life uselessly.

False Charges

The police tried their best to implicate Ananda Marga and arrest its workers on the slightest pretext. It was a routine affair. We were constantly harassed and arrested on false charges.

Once, Acarya Amitananda Avadhuta, Acarya Cidghanananda Avadhuta, Acarya Svarupananda Avadhuta, and I were arrested on the fabricated charges of stealing a fountain pen and for misconduct with the local aboriginal girls. This fictitious charge was repeated on three occasions, and each time we were thrown in prison. Every time, someone had to post bail to release us. When these cases were heard in court, every case was proven false and subsequently dismissed.

On one occasion, when the trial was ongoing, the police brought a few village girls to the court with the intention of giving false evidence against us. When the magistrate questioned the girls, they informed him that they did not know us and that they had never seen us before. On the sworn testimony of the girls, the magistrate threw out the case and promptly released us.

CHAPTER 3

1969: THE YEAR OF SPIRITUAL DEMONSTRATIONS

The period between 1969–1970 was a special phase in Ananda Marga's history. Baba called it Sadhana Varsa, the Year of Spiritual Demonstrations. During that period, Baba conducted numerous spiritual demonstrations to throw light on the mysteries of the mind and the universe, as well as deep spiritual insights. These demonstrations were conducted through the medium of different spiritual aspirants. Some of them were conducted using my body and mind as a medium. For me personally this period could be characterized as the golden phase of my life. By His grace alone, I was blessed with the transcendental experience of the cosmic form of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii, the different types of spiritual trance or samadhi, knowledge of my past lives, special spiritual insights, and so on.

Spiritual aspirants hold different views on whether or not one should reveal one's spiritual experiences to others. Some are of the view that since spiritual realizations are deeply personal in nature, these gems of experience should remain personal. I hold a different view, however. For me, the inner experiences of the spiritual journey should be shared with others to provide them with evidence that

spirituality is not mere theory or philosophy but is realizable by every spiritual aspirant. In addition, I have a deep desire to explain who Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii really was. I know my attempts at this would be feeble at best due to my inability to verbalize deep spiritual truths. Nevertheless, I shall try to do so, however feebly, for the benefit of the present and future generations of spiritual aspirants. Through these stories, I hope that others will be inspired to follow the spiritual path, and for those who are already on the path, I hope they will continue their struggle until they reach their cherished goal.

Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii's Divine Form

Scriptures have described the Sadguru as an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent entity. He is formless and eternal and is not bound by the limitations of creation. In reality, He is indescribable.

When immorality subdues morality, when evil forces rule, and when crass materialism destroys the very foundation of spirituality, thus creating the conditions for the destruction of the planet, the Sadguru is compelled to take a human form to restore dharma to its rightful position. The Sadguru also manifests Himself in human form when seekers develop a deep craving to know Him.

I was blessed to have had many mystical experiences that revealed beyond a shadow of doubt the reality of the Sadguru and of deep and immortal spiritual truths. In one such experience in 1969, I was blessed with the cosmic vision of the Lord.

I was always intensely attracted to Baba. He had a special charm. Whenever I was in His audience, I would meditate on His physical form and experience a state of transcendental bliss. The physical body of the Sadguru is a special manifestation of the Cosmic

Consciousness. It is capable of generating transcendental bliss in the spiritual aspirants who meditate on the form of the Guru. Sometimes, Baba would instruct me to concentrate on the Sahasrara *cakra* and dive deep into divine contemplation. I would then see His divine form and experience infinite bliss. It was effortless. I know that the attainment of such bliss is not possible without His grace.

I often used to enjoy this special type of bliss. Strangely, after a while, I reached a saturation point. I started to fear His physical form, while at the same time feeling a strong attraction and love for Him. I could not understand this strange paradox. For me, it was very confusing. I wondered why I had to suffer like this. There were times when I cried to realize His divine form. I suffered tremendous mental anguish.

One day, He took away all my pain and graced me with a vision of His eternal, divine form. All my doubts and confusion disappeared in an instant. Despite knowing the inability of a human being to describe the indescribable, I shall nevertheless attempt to narrate the life-changing incidents that relate to the divine form of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii.

This incident occurred on January 4, 1969, during the Year of Spiritual Demonstrations. We were at the jagrti in Ranchi in Baba's presence. There, we were ushered into Baba's room. His room exuded a blissful charm. After we sat down, He called me and instructed me to sit close to Him. I moved up and sat opposite Him. He then touched my Ajina *cakra*, the spiritual center between my eyebrows, with His stick and asked me to concentrate on my Sahasrara *cakra*, the spiritual center at the top of the head. As He spoke, my mind automatically concentrated on the Sahasrara *cakra* by some unknown force. I then attempted to visualize Baba's physical form in my Sahasrara *cakra*. As I was meditating on His form, I had a strange vision that Baba's physical body was dissolving. This bizarre vision

frightened me. I have never experienced this before. At that point, Baba told me not to be afraid but to dive deeper in contemplation. I then saw a brilliant, effulgent white light above my Sahasrara cakra brighter than a thousand suns. At the same time, I experienced immense, unutterable bliss. I was ensconced in that transcendental bliss for some time. Then, I heard Baba command me to go even deeper. As my mind dived deeper, I saw Baba's effulgent, divine form sitting in Varabhaya Mudra just above the effulgent light. It was not His physical body of flesh and blood but a blissful, radiant body of light. I was lost in that divine state for some time.

As I was seeing the divine form of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii, I lost myself in the ocean of infinite bliss and entered into the state of *nirvikalpa* samadhi. This is the highest state of spiritual realization, the trance of nonqualified, absolute bliss. It is beyond imagination or description. Words, intellect, and feelings cannot describe this exalted state, because it is beyond the human mind.

After I regained normal consciousness, Baba asked me to explain to the best of my ability what I had experienced. Normally, it is not possible for the human body and mind to function so quickly after experiencing *nirvikalpa* samadhi. But I was able to do so by the grace of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii. As I was describing the divine experience, Baba explained that I had experienced the real form of Anandamurtijii, the Lord of Sahasrara Cakra. He said that Anandamurtijii could be realized in deep meditation only by His grace. He is the embodiment of bliss. He is Kalyanasundara, blessedness personified. He is not bound by any fetters. For Him, there is neither good nor bad. No one is a sinner or virtuous to Him. All are His children. Everybody has the right to sit on His lap. He cannot hate anybody, as all exist within His Cosmic Mind.

I have been blessed to realize the divine form of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii. I can say with certainty that the love of the Supreme Entity for His creation is immeasurable, matchless. It exceeds by far the mortal love between mother and child or any other expression of human love. He knows intimately the feelings, fears, and aspirations of each and every human being. Out of compassion, He assumes a human form to liberate human beings from all bondages, whether physical, mental, or spiritual. He comes to restore dharma on earth. In the Skandha Purana, Lord Shiva replies to Parvati's query thus:

Listen, O Parvati,

And know it for certain that the fact that I state
three times without any doubt

That Guru alone is the Lord of all,

Guru is Dharma personified,

And an uncompromising faith in the sanctity of
Guru alone is supreme service and sacrifice.

Describing the greatness of the Guru, Saint Kabir said that of all the great virtues, the grace of the Sadguru is incomparable, infinite, and causeless. Three things are causeless—the Supreme Entity, His creation, and His grace.

Guru's Cosmic Form

Our knowledge is constantly undergoing metamorphosis as new facts become known. Accepted theories are discarded as new ones take their place. What is right today may not be so tomorrow. Our

conception of the universe and understanding of how things work are always changing.

The earliest views of the universe are found in Eastern traditions, which viewed the universe as an ocean of conscious, creative energy. The spiritual thought of the East, particularly the ideas enshrined in the Upanishads and the wealth of empirical experience that resulted from the practice of Yoga and Tantra, reveals that the universe is a conscious entity and that its parts are interrelated. About 3,500 years ago, Lord Kṛṣṇa revealed that the Supreme Entity takes the human form to redeem dharma on earth and to ensure the victory of good over evil. This revelation posits a Supreme Entity that is not just sitting in the skies watching listlessly over creation but one that is actively involved in His creation, continually responding to situations that go out of balance and require correction.

Sometime in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with the advent of the scientific revolution, European scientists began to conceptualize the universe as a vast machine operated by mechanical laws. Such a materialist worldview of the universe does not accommodate the idea of a conscious, responsive universe.

New observations and research findings today point toward the reality of a conscious, living universe, where everything seems to be alive and is interconnected in a network relationship, where matter and consciousness are unified, and where physics and metaphysics are integrated. It appears that everything emanates from one source.

Consciousness is a reality. Over time, the integration of consciousness and matter will eventually move from the fringe to the mainstream of scientific thinking. I hold the view that there will be ample evidence in the near future to bring the perception of consciousness

within the range of human experience and the so-called supranatural phenomena within the ambit of common human knowledge.

Baba gave many practical demonstrations, especially in 1969, on the subtler realms of the universe and on deep spiritual realities.

One demonstration was performed on me on April 29, 1969. On that eventful day, Baba arrived in the Ranchi jagrti at six o'clock in the evening, with many devotees awaiting His arrival. The atmosphere was charged. He sat down and delivered a talk.

In the midst of His discourse, He told us that He was going to conduct an incredible demonstration shortly. He explained that about 3,500 years ago Lord Kṛṣṇa revealed His cosmic form, Vishvarupa Darshana, to Arjuna. Baba said that the same demonstration would be conducted once again today. He then called me and instructed me to come closer to Him and sit in a special meditative posture called Baddha Padmasana, while keeping my spine straight. He touched my Ajina cakra and asked me to concentrate my mind on my Sahasrara cakra. As He spoke, my mind instantly went up to the Sahasrara cakra, as if by some mysterious force.

Then He directed me to focus my concentrated mind within my physical body and to see the flesh in my body. I followed the instruction and visualized my own body from my toes to the top of my head. At that point, He asked me to describe what I was seeing internally. I answered that I saw Baba sitting in Varabhaya Mudra in every cell of my body from my toes to the top of my head. His body was not a body of bone and flesh but an effulgent body of white light. The scene was incredible. Baba's divine form permeated every iota of my flesh. He looked incredibly majestic, divinely sublime.

After that, He commanded me to focus my concentrated mind on my blood and to say what I saw. I replied that in every blood corpuscle I saw Baba seated in Varabhaya Mudra. He then asked me to focus on my bones, nerves, and bone marrow and to explain what I visualized internally. I responded that He was present there too in every particle of my bones, marrow, and nerves in His incredible, ethereal form. Then He requested me to see each and every pore of my body and to tell what I saw. I replied that I saw the same effulgent form of Baba in Varabhaya Mudra in every pore of my body.

Thereafter, He commanded my mind to go beyond my physical body into the physical factor of the universe and to articulate what I saw. As He uttered the command, by some mysterious force my mind expanded far, far into space, bringing the whole universe into the periphery of my mind. The spectacle I witnessed was incredibly breathtaking, exceedingly beautiful. Words fail to describe the celestial beauty of the vision. Billions of planets, stars, galaxies, nebulas, and other celestial bodies came within the scope of my mind. The whole universe was brimming with life and beauty. So awe-inspiring was the celestial vision that it was as if I was witnessing a gallery of the heavens. As I was absorbed in this awesome cosmic vision, He commanded me to go beyond the solid factor into the liquid factor. Again, my mind went on its own volition into the liquid factor of the universe. I found that the liquid factor was more pervasive than the solid factor. Subsequently, my mind entered into the luminous, aerial, and ethereal factors, respectively. I found that each stage of matter was more pervasive and subtler than the preceding stage. Finally, He ordered my mind to see each and every particle, even the minutest of particles, in the universe. There too I saw Baba's effulgent form in Varabhaya Mudra.

As I was envisioning this incredible spectacle, I experienced an ocean of ineffable bliss. My petty self expanded beyond the frontiers of

the created universe into the Supreme Consciousness, into which I merged in nirvikalpa samadhi. I do not know how long I remained in that blessed state, as neither time nor location had any meaning for me. It was an incredible experience, beyond creation, beyond time, and beyond imagination.

In the meantime, Baba left for His residence. He left strict instructions that I must return to normal consciousness within twelve hours, otherwise I may attain *moksa*, spiritual salvation, from whence there is no return to the cycle of life and death. He further instructed that I should be fed warm milk thereafter. I became partially conscious at five in the morning. I felt someone feeding me warm milk. Slowly, as I reluctantly consumed the milk, I regained a greater degree of consciousness. I lost my appetite for food. I lost my attraction for the created universe. It is not possible to describe the state of nirvikalpa samadhi. All I wanted was to remain in that indescribably blissful state forever. Anyone who experiences this ultimate state of spiritual realization does not want to return to the human body, which is simply a cage for the soul.

Following this demonstration, I continued to occasionally enjoy that supremely blissful state for several months to come. I wanted to be in that state of supreme bliss only, as the created world appeared dull and colorless and had lost its luster for me. Even now, when I recall that blissful experience, I occasionally enter into samadhi.

This little I can say: Only the one to whom He gives this special spiritual realization knows Him. Knowing Him means being Him.

The Golden Lion

The demonstration of the golden lion took place at the Ranchi jagrti in 1969. As Baba entered the jagrti, there was a commotion

among the Margiis. This is the normal response of spiritual aspirants as they come in physical proximity to Baba. An air of devotional exuberance pervaded the atmosphere. Baba took His seat as usual in a regal manner. A sweet fragrance emanated from Him and filled the room, magically transforming the mundane setting into a mystical environment. The devotees sat there drinking the nectar of His divine charm.

At one point, He called me and told me to sit before Him in Padmasana, with my spine erect. Then He touched my Trikuti with one end of His magic cane. He instructed me to concentrate my mind on the Sahasrara cakra. I obeyed His instruction accordingly. All of a sudden, without any effort on my part, my mind attached itself to the Sahasrara cakra. It was a very unusual but blissful experience. There, on the Sahasrara cakra, I beheld Baba's effulgent form sitting majestically in Varabhaya Mudra on a floating, brilliant light.

Then He commanded me to pierce all cakras below the Sahasrara cakra with my mind and to focus on the Muladhara cakra and describe what I experienced. Effortlessly, my mind pierced all the cakras one by one until it reached the Muladhara cakra. At the Muladhara cakra, I beheld a strange sight. I saw a golden lion from which a golden light emanated. Every pore of the lion was effulgent with brilliant golden light. As I beheld the magnificent splendor of the lion, I started to lose my consciousness due to the surging waves of bliss. After a while, Baba asked me to concentrate my mind on the golden lion and to express what I saw. As I focused on the lion, I saw a bright light on top of the lion over which Baba was seated in Varabhaya Mudra.

Baba informed us that it was His Nrsingh Rupa. He explained that *Nrsingh* refers to the supreme human form. It is erroneously

depicted as half lion and half human in various Indian scriptures and philosophical texts.

Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii had assumed a Samkalpa Deha, that is, a body created for a purpose. His physical form was the object of ideation for all spiritual aspirants. This is the way to supreme realization.

Yada' yada' hi dharmasya gla'ni bhavati bha'rata,

Abhyuttha'nam' adharmasya tada'tmanm' srja'myaham

Paritra'na'ya sadhu'na'ma' vina'sha'ya ca dushkrta'm'

Dharmasanstha'pana'rtha'ya sambhava'mi yuge
yuge

It means:

O Bharata! Whenever and wherever there is
the decline of Dharma (righteousness) and the
ascendance of Adharma (unrighteousness)

At that time I manifest Myself in visible form

For the protection of the righteous and destruction
of the wicked

And for the sake of establishing Dharma again

I incarnate myself on earth from time to time

That is why in the form of Kalki or Nrsingh, the Supreme Entity controls the entire universe through Ota and Protā yoga, seated on the Muladhara cakra of all.

The Nrsingh Rupa of the Lord is depicted in various Indian scriptural and philosophical texts. However, it is impossible to understand its true import without experiencing it.

Krsna as a Child

From my early childhood, I craved to see Bal-Krsna, Lord Krsna as a child. Pictures of the child Krsna enthralled me. Sometimes, I would imagine Him frolicking in the forest and playing His magical flute, mesmerizing the forest dwellers and animals. At other times, I would imagine Him sitting on a branch playing an enchanting tune on His flute. Hearing the music of His flute, I would sometimes lose consciousness. Inspired by these visions, I would look for Him in the real world.

After I became a renunciant in 1965, the desire to see Lord Krsna as a child remained unfulfilled like a seed waiting to sprout. The grinding pressure of work as a missionary of Ananda Marga pushed this desire to the rear chambers of my mind. And work went on.

This changed a few years later. My forgotten desire was fulfilled to my heart's content in 1969. During one of Baba's practical demonstrations of a spiritual nature, He summoned me to sit close to Him in Baddha Padmasana. He instructed me to sit with my spine erect. He then touched my Trikuti with the tip of His cane and asked me to concentrate on the Ajina cakra. After that, He ordered my mind to go back 3,500 years in the past and told me to describe what I visualized. As He spoke, my mind involuntarily reeled back

the pages of my past lives like a moving panorama. My mind went deeper and deeper and finally rested at the Anahata cakra.

At that point, Baba told me to focus my attention on the Anahata cakra and describe what I saw in my mind's eye. I saw an enchanting forest with many varieties of trees, some tall and leafy, resplendent in their verdant green hue, while others stood proudly with sprays of multicolored flowers. A river flowed in the middle of the forest. Then I saw a boy of about seven or eight years playing with some other little boys. This boy had a special glow about him that differentiated him from the others. On his waist hung a bamboo flute. Intuitively, I knew that I was seeing Lord Krsna as a child in the woods of Vrindavan.

My mind soared at the magical sight of the child Krsna frolicking with His friends. It was incredible. Beholding His dazzling child form, I collapsed in samadhi and was in that state for a long time. When I regained normal consciousness, the room was empty. Baba and the others had left.

Astral Travel

Baba conducted a demonstration of astral travel one evening sometime in 1969 at the Ranchi jagrti. Baba's room seemed to have a special milky-white glow. A crowd of devotees, mostly from the Delhi sector, was present. Among them were three Margiis from the Philippines: Dr. Perry Lim, a senior physician, also known as Brother Priyadarshi; Mr. Wilson, a very senior administrative officer in the government of the Philippines, also called Brother Kamalanayan; and Mr. Pestoral, a leading businessman, also known as Brother Gunananda.

Baba was then speaking about the esoteric science of mentally journeying to distant places while the body remained motionless in another place. To demonstrate this occult science, He instructed me to come close to Him and sit with my spine erect in the Siddhasana posture. I followed His instruction. Then He pressed my Trikuti with His right thumb, following which He instructed me to concentrate on the Ajina cakra. My mind zoomed to the cakra without much effort on my part. At that point, He directed my mind to move out toward the east. He told me that I should describe whatever I saw along the way.

I suddenly realized that my mind had moved eastward on its own accord. I saw several lighted buildings in a large town. It was nighttime. Baba asked me to go near a shop and read out the name of the town from the signboard. I read out the name aloud and said that it was Calcutta. Baba affirmed my response and said that at this point my mind was passing through Calcutta.

He directed me to keep moving farther east. After some time, I told Him that I was seeing water everywhere. Baba nodded and said I was passing over the Bay of Bengal. As I kept moving farther east, I saw the streetlights of another big city, which was sparkling with bright neon lights. Like before, He asked me to read out the name of the town. I read the signboard and was surprised to see that it was Bangkok.

Then I crossed the Pacific Ocean and came close to another large city. There also, I read the signboard and found that it was Metro Manila. Baba told me that I was in the center of Metro Manila at that point in time. Then He ordered me to proceed toward the west. As my mind went westward, I reached a crossing and read out the name of the street. At that point, Brother Gunananda jumped up from his seat involuntarily. He seemed to be emotionally charged

after hearing the name of the street crossing. He confirmed that it was the street crossing next to his house. Following this, Baba guided me to take a right turn and look at a huge building situated there. When I described the view of the building that appeared before my mind, Brother Gunananda again lost control of his emotions and could not help but jump up again in amazement. He yelled out that it was his house. Then Baba directed me to enter the building. I entered the building, and inside the drawing room I saw a young, chubby, and fair-skinned boy seated on a chair, resting his chin on the cupped palms of his hands. His elbows rested on the drawing table. As I described the features of the boy, Brother Gunananda was flabbergasted and cried out that it was his son.

Baba then commanded me to enter the boy's mind and to tell all present what he was thinking at that moment. I entered his mind and read his thoughts. I narrated that the boy was thinking that his father had left home in a rush to be with Baba in India without taking care of his needs, particularly the payment of his school fees. He had a university examination coming in two days.

As I finished speaking the sentence, Baba called off the demonstration abruptly and started to leave. Soon after this event, Brother Gunananda hurried to the nearby general post office and spoke to his son over the phone. He inquired about his well-being. Then he asked him what he was thinking at the time of the demonstration. The boy narrated his thoughts to his father, which confirmed what I had said at the demonstration.

It was a very interesting demonstration. Perhaps in the future, human beings in general will develop the ability to travel astrally over large distances just as naturally as we use our legs to walk today.

Brother Kamalnayan

On the following Sunday, there was a large assembly of Margiis at the jagrti from many places. Baba spoke in English that day. At the end of the discourse, He pointed to Brother Kamalnayan and asked him to explain the discourse. Kamalnayan, a Filipino Margii, spoke very well and covered each point that Baba had dealt with. It was an awesome feat. The Margiis present were impressed by his memory.

As soon as Kamalnayan finished his explanation, Baba remarked that Kamalnayan had felt a tinge of pride at his remarkable powers of memory and intellectual ability as he was delivering his commentary. Baba then emphasized the point that pride is the greatest enemy on the spiritual path. He said that human capability is very limited. Human beings have a small cranium, so how much knowledge can a human being assimilate in his small brain, he asked. He further said that it is unbecoming of good people to consider the little knowledge they have acquired as a great achievement.

Then He instructed Kamalnayan to come close to Him. Kamalnayan complied. At that point, He asked me to sit facing Kamalnayan and to concentrate my mind on my Ajina cakra. I did as instructed. My mind was instantly concentrated on the cakra. Then He asked me to enter Kamalnayan's mind and to explain what I saw. As soon as He finished speaking, I saw a blue light in Kamalnayan's mind. Baba explained that it indicated intelligence. "Kamalnayan is intelligent and has a good memory. But he is also proud of his qualities," Baba remarked. Then Baba said that He was withdrawing Kamalnayan's faculty of intelligence. He uttered a mantra while doing so. Sometime later, pointing to Kamalnayan, Baba asked him what his name was. Kamalnayan looked at Him and tried in vain to reply but could not utter a word. Baba repeated His question, but Kamalnayan appeared confused and could not respond.

Then He commanded me to enter Kamalnayan's mind again. I complied and responded that this time his mental color had changed to black. Baba remarked that black indicated stupidity, a mind devoid of intelligence. He said that Kamalnayan, in this condition, did not know his name. Then Baba uttered a mantra to restore Kamalnayan's memory and intelligence. He asked me once again to enter Kamalnayan's mind. When I reentered his mind, I saw the same blue effulgence that I had previously seen, indicating that his faculties of intelligence and memory had been restored.

With regard to this incident, I recall that Baba had previously commented that earth was like a mustard seed in the great universe and that a human being was so small that he was almost invisible in this tiny planet. He also mentioned that human beings are very weak. They possess very little knowledge and intelligence, but their pride is as big as a mountain. This pitiable condition endangers their existence.

Past-Life Demonstration

Also in 1969 Baba performed a past-life demonstration. As usual, Baba came to the Ranchi jagrti for His evening program. The atmosphere at the jagrti became charged and ecstatic as soon as He entered its premises. The devotees ran after Him into His room to drink the nectar of His divine charm. At one point during His discourse, He called on me to come close to Him. He then touched my Trikuti with His cane and asked me to concentrate on my Ajina cakra. He then instructed me to take my mind back 1,100 years into the past. Upon hearing His command, my mind automatically started to roll back like a film reel, going through my past lives. It stopped at some point on its own.

Then Baba called me by name and asked me to describe what I was seeing. I replied that I saw a dense forest and a hillock in the forest. I also saw a Yogi meditating on the hillock. He was sitting calmly in an erect pose. The Yogi had long flowing hair and beard.

Baba then mentioned that it was one of my past lives as a spiritual aspirant. He added that I might have forgotten my past lives but that He has known me for all the lives that I have lived.

On several occasions, Baba had remarked in His discourses that Margiis had not come to Him by accident and that they had been with Him for several lives in the past. They may have forgotten, but Baba remembered.

He explained that there is a natural law that makes human beings forget their past lives. The law is benevolent. If human beings remembered all their past lives, they would likely lose their mental balance and go insane.

Subhas Chandra Bose

I have heard that Baba conducted several demonstrations where He showed that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was still alive and that he had devoted himself to a life of spiritual practice in a Himalayan cave near Tibet.

Baba conducted one such demonstration at the Ranchi jagrti during His morning discourse sometime in 1969. Baba had arrived at the jagrti after finishing a series of Personal Contacts. He went into His room and reclined on the bed while addressing the devotees present. They were already seated on the floor, feeling blessed in His holy presence. In the midst of His discourse, He called upon a Margii to

sit near Him. Baba touched his Ajina cakra and requested him to describe what he was seeing in his mind.

The Margii described in detail the scene he was visualizing. He said that he saw a big mountain. Baba directed him to look carefully at the mountain to see if he could see anything else. He replied that he saw a cave on one side of the mountain. Baba instructed him to enter the cave and to see if anyone was there. As directed, he entered the cave and saw a human figure sitting serenely in meditation. Baba asked him to go near the person and describe him. He replied that the person was a Yogi sitting in the lotus posture, with his eyes closed and palms placed in dhyana mudra. He had a deeply spiritual aura about him. Baba then inquired if the Margii recognized the Yogi. After a while, the Margii replied that he looked like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Baba directed him to enter the mind of the Yogi and ask him whether he wished to return to the world. After some time, the Margii replied that the Yogi indicated that he did not want to return to the world. At this point, Baba instructed the Margii not to disturb the Yogi any more in his spiritual practice.

Unity in Diversity

Baba conducted a demonstration to reaffirm the age-old aphorism of unity in diversity. The universe is apparently diverse, but fundamentally, it is one. The Vedas, the oldest Indian scripture and possibly the world's oldest scripture, repeatedly affirm the truth that the unitive Supreme Consciousness has manifested itself in this universe of diversity; the One has become many. Whether seen or unseen, crude or subtle, the origin of everything is that single, eternal, transcendental entity.

The differences among the created beings—between plants and animals and between animals and human beings—are caused by the

binding influence of maya, which has created a variety of samskara to create differentiation among created beings.

Once, at the Ranchi jagrti, Baba explained that the wide variety of entities created in the universe is due to the differences in the samskara of each entity. Essentially, there is only one undivided, transcendental entity. That Supreme Entity has metamorphosed itself into this created universe of variety by virtue of Sadrshyaparinama, that is, curvilinear evolution, thus creating differentiation among the different species due to their inherent samskara. He further explained that if by any process the samskara of two different entities could become identical, they would not be able to maintain their separate existences.

He then instructed two Margiis to sit near him. He asked them to sit erect in the lotus posture and to fix their minds on the Ajina cakra. At that point, Baba took away their individual samskara and infused in both of them a common samskara of love for God. Slowly, both Margiis moved toward each other and held on to each other tightly, as if wanting to merge their bodies. They lost consciousness after a short while. At that point, they were devoid of a sense of separate existence.

Baba then explained that while they had two different bodies, they possessed identical samskara. If they were left in this abnormal state for some time, they would not be able to maintain their separate existences and would have to die and be reborn as another person.

Continuing the demonstration, Baba then infused the propensity of anger in one person and the propensity of shame in the other. Soon after, they loosened their grip and shied away from each other in a hurry. After some time, with the restoration of their individual samskaras, they resumed their normal identities.

Baba went on to explain that the differences that exist in the entities, such as the different species of animals and plants, whether terrestrial or aquatic, are caused by their individual samskaras, whether inborn or imposed. Among the human beings, the propensity of fear or shyness predominates in some, while the propensity of infatuation colors the minds of others. In yet others, the propensity of hatred and anger might prevail. If Parama Purusa, or the Supreme Entity, so desires, He can infuse the same samskara in all the created beings of the universe. In such a situation, all created beings would be merged into one single entity. Such an action would obliterate the great variety and diverse beauty of the universe. It would be unnatural. Baba stressed that the Supreme Entity deliberately created a universe of countless variety. As such, the universe will never end; it will continue to exist for eternity.

Kaunkalamalinii Samadhi

It was one of those blissful Ranchi evenings. The jagrti was devotionally charged, with Margiis and missionary workers awaiting His arrival. As soon as Baba arrived, He took His seat in the room. The Margiis sat around Him.

Baba then began His discourse. He spoke on a particularly interesting subject—the different states of spiritual realization of advanced spiritual aspirants as they progressed on the path. Never leaving such important matters to mere philosophical speculation and intellectual inquiry, He gave a demonstration on some of these exalted spiritual states.

He called my name and commanded me to sit near His bed. He then pressed my Trikuti with His right thumb and commanded me to focus on the Ajina cakra. After that, He instructed me to bring my mind down to the lower cakras. As He commanded, so it

happened. My mind effortlessly went to the Anahata cakra and was concentrated there. He then touched the cakra and instructed me to describe what I was experiencing.

As soon as He touched my Anahat cakra, waves of divine ecstasy flooded my entire being. In the meantime, I perceived an effulgent white light encircling the Anahata cakra. As I was drenched in the rising waves of bliss, I beheld in my mind's eye the form of a strangely attractive feminine figure that looked like the goddess Kali, adorned with a garland of human skulls. It was not a fearsome image by any measure but a very sweet, charming, and divine one, extraordinary in her beautiful demeanor. As I continued to envision her blissful appearance, waves of indescribable bliss flooded my mind. Soon, I lost consciousness and entered into a state of samadhi, which Baba termed *Kaunkalamalinii samadhi*.

In His earlier discourses, Baba had informed us that Kali was a consort of Lord Shiva when He assumed human form on this earth more than seven thousand years ago. In the Tantric tradition, the Divine Mother represents the Supreme Shakti.

Strangely, when I descended to the normal plane of consciousness, I felt excruciating pain all over my body, so much so that I was even afraid to sit down. Despite the pain, the residual waves of bliss from the experience of samadhi continued to flood my mind, transporting it to a higher, blissful world.

During the demonstration, Baba explained to the spiritual aspirants present that I was experiencing the state of *Kaunkalamalinii samadhi*. He added that this was a very special, blissful experience, which Lord Shiva had imparted to His consort Kali more than seven thousand years ago. The same transcendental bliss was imparted today.

Madhura Bhava Samadhi

We waited patiently for Baba to arrive at the Ranchi jagrti. After a while, we heard the horn of Baba's car announcing His arrival. As the car came to a halt, Baba alighted from the car and proceeded straight to His room for the scheduled Personal Contact sessions with the new Margiis. After the session, He sat up on the bed and waited for the Margiis to come. They streamed one by one into His modest room in great anticipation and took their seats on the floor. He then spoke on some enlightening devotional topic, which was followed by a demonstration.

In the midst of the discourse, He called me and asked me to sit in Siddhasana, a particular meditation posture. I happily complied. He then brought out His cane, touched my Trikuti, and directed me to focus my mind on the Ajina cakra. As He spoke, I found my mind being pulled toward the Anahata cakra. As my mind settled in the cakra, I envisioned divine effulgence encircling the Anahata cakra, which glowed in its own resplendence. As I focused my attention on the effulgent light, a blissful experience permeated through my mind, taking me to a different state of consciousness. It was as if everything in the world had become exceptionally beautiful and sweet, as if everything was secreting divine nectar. A sweet feeling and taste pervaded every iota of my being.

This spiritual experience made me realize that human life is inherently divine and exceedingly sweet, where even the thorns are as beautiful as the petals and the bitter fruit as sweet as nectar. Nothing in the created universe is unpleasant or imperfect.

This needs a little explanation, however. Duality is the nature of the created universe—pain and pleasure, hot and cold, old and young, disease and well-being, war and peace, and so on. Each state of

duality has its specific role in creation. However, when a spiritual aspirant, by dint of spiritual practice, transcends the state of duality, he or she experiences an all-pervading divine sweetness and cosmic love. This divine sweetness and love unites all things in creation. This captures the essence of the transcendental state of *Madhura Bhava* samadhi.

One in Many

In 1969 thousands of Margiis assembled at Ranchi for the Ananda Purnima DMC. The environment sparkled with the devotional sentiments of the spiritual aspirants.

On this occasion, Baba spoke about the role of Mayadiisha and His maya. He said that maya functioned according to a predetermined law. It was, however, always subordinate to the Supreme Entity, to Parama Purusa. Those who took shelter under Mayadiisha would go beyond the binding influence of maya. Hence, the future of Ananda Margiis was safe and bright.

He then called upon an avadhuta who was seated on the dais. He asked the avadhuta to stand up and face the audience. Baba asked him what he was seeing. He replied that he could see a crowd of Margiis in the front. Then Baba pointed His cane toward him and asked him the same question. This time, however, his response was different. He said that he now saw only Baba and nothing else. At that point, he collapsed on the floor of the stage and entered into the divine trance of nirvikalpa samadhi.

Before departing, Baba gave some instructions regarding the avadhuta who had entered nirvikalpa samadhi. Finally, looking at the Margiis, He once again repeated that our future was safe and bright.

Aumkara Dhvani

Baba showered me with infinite kindness and grace and with a variety of wondrous spiritual experiences. Sometimes, I wonder why I was a recipient of His endless grace. I am, after all, just one of His countless children.

Among the many divine experiences He demonstrated using me as the medium is *aumkara dhvani*, also known as *pranava dhvani*. He conducted this demonstration on several occasions, sometimes individually and at other times in a small group.

I really have an irredeemable debt to the Ranchi jagrti, as it was in its haloed premises that I was graced with many sublime spiritual experiences. This sacred place, humming with the ambrosial devotion of His devotees, stands as a silent witness of those golden moments of my life.

The occasion this time was one of Baba's noontime sessions. His discourse that day centered on the subject of *pranava dhvani*. He explained that *pranava* is an internal sound that comes within the range of the auditory experience of those devotees who are able to pull the Kulakundalinii beyond the Ajina cakra by the grace of the Guru. On hearing the divine sound, the mind loses itself in the macrocosm, the Universal Mind. The spiritual aspirant then experiences the divine state of *savikalpa samadhi*.

Immediately after His discourse, Baba called me and instructed me to come closer. I maneuvered through the crowd and made my way near Him. He then commanded me to sit erect in Siddhasana. After that, He touched my Ajina cakra with His cane. By the magic touch of His cane, my mind was at once focused on the cakra. Within seconds, I started to hear the cosmic sound of aum *dhvani*.

The sound came in waves. As the divinely soothing sound of aum flowed, I began to be inundated in waves of unspeakable bliss. I cannot remember for how long I was immersed in the bliss of the cosmic sound, as I entered into the state of samadhi following this experience. The intensely blissful feeling persisted for several days.

Divine Effulgence

That evening Baba's discourse was on the subject of Brahma Jyoti, the Supreme Effulgence. He said that the path of spiritual practice is the path of enlightenment and of knowledge and of liberation from all sorts of bondages. Human beings acquire the resources to move on that path and receive the requisite courage and strength from Him from time to time. The *prakrta sadhaka*, the spiritual aspirant who traverses the path of *prakrta*, surrenders to the Supreme Being. The *sadhaka* implores Him to pull him from darkness to light.

Asado ma sad gamaya,

Tamso ma jyotirgamaya,

Mrtyor ma amrtam' gamay

O Lord, take me from untruth to truth,

Darkness to light,

Mortality to immortality.

"Who is that effulgent entity?" Baba asked. "It is Niskala Brahma. Its dazzling effulgence is white in color." Baba explained that the light of all glittering entities in the cosmos is derived only from that Supreme Effulgent Entity. The spiritual aspirant, by the grace

of Parama Purusa, the Supreme Entity, can behold that divine effulgence, that Brahma Jyoti.

Na tatra suryo bha'ti, na candrata'rakah

(The sun and the moon lose their luster before that Supreme Resplendent Entity)

Nema' vidyuto bha'nti, kutohyamagni

(Lightning meets with the same fate, what to speak of the fire)

Tameva bhantamanubhati sarvam'

(All derive their brightness from His resplendence)

Tasya bha'sa' sarvamidam' vibha'ti

(His resplendence alone makes all entities bright)

Like the experience of aum *dhvani*, Baba imparted this awe-inspiring realization of Brahma Jyoti Darshana to me on several occasions. Once, Baba bestowed the same experience upon me at the Ranchi jagrti. He explained that Brahma is the embodiment of Jyoti, the divine effulgence. Jyoti Darshana is tantamount to Brahma Darshana. Sometimes, Jyoti Darshana is associated with the experience of divine fragrance. It simply means that at that point the Lord has shifted His nucleus to that place, thus imparting to the elevated spiritual aspirants the experience of divine fragrance.

During one such demonstration in the Year of Spiritual Demonstrations, Baba asked me to sit in Padmasana and

contemplate on the Ajina cakra. I followed as directed. In a very short while, I spontaneously beheld dazzling white effulgence at the cakra, the Brahma Jyoti. The whiteness and brightness of the light were exceptional. Simultaneously, I experienced a kind of spiritual exaltation. Baba continued to explain that experiencing Brahma Jyoti is possible only by His divine grace.

It is my experience that immediately after such demonstrations, my mind would lose consciousness and enter into the state of samadhi. I also discovered that my body and nerves would react and feel excruciating pain following the demonstration. This painful state would be followed by a lingering euphoria, transporting my mind to a mystical land of overwhelming delight. This transcendental state of supreme bliss would pervade every pore of my mind, making it soft, peaceful, and happy. The initial pain I suffered would vanish, replaced by this wonderful, euphoric bliss.

Baba also graced other spiritual aspirants with some of the demonstrations He performed on me. Some of them used to look at me with a sense of awe. A few envied me. Knowing what they were thinking, Baba mentioned during a discourse that when a spiritual aspirant's body and mind are not well prepared, utilizing him or her for such demonstrations might be harmful to the spiritual aspirant.

Matsya Bhava

One of the spiritual demonstrations Baba conducted at the Ranchi jagruti was focused on vibrations. On that occasion, Baba explained that the created universe is a blend of a countless range of vibrations, forms, and colors. If the wavelength of any object is changed by any means, that object will undergo a process of transformation accordingly.

He called me to come forward and to sit near Him. He touched my Trikuti and commanded me to “be a fish,” Matsya *bhava*. To my utter surprise, as soon as He finished speaking, I felt that my body was being transformed into a fish. I developed a craving to immerse myself in water. Suddenly, a strong feeling that I may not survive any longer without water seized me. What a strange and frightening feeling it was. By this time, my body was twisting and turning involuntarily, and I felt severe pain all over my body.

In the meantime, Baba informed the Margiis present that He had changed the vibrations of the *tanmatras*, the inferential waves of the five sensory organs, that is, smell, taste, form, touch, and sound. This caused me to think and behave like a fish.

Everything in creation, including our bodies and minds, is a series of oscillating waves vibrating at different frequencies. Great gurus can transform one vibration to another, one form to another, at will.

Prerequisites of Salvation

The Year of Spiritual Demonstrations in 1969 was a unique event in Ananda Marga’s history. Through a series of amazing demonstrations conducted throughout the year, Baba unveiled the deep and hidden secrets of mysticism to the spiritual aspirants who were fortunate to witness them firsthand. He brought within our reach direct evidence of the highest truths of spirituality, the deepest secrets of mysticism, and some of the unexplained mysteries of the universe. Perhaps this was the first and only time in human history that a fully realized spiritual master conducted such awesome demonstrations on the hidden aspects of spirituality for the benefit of spiritual aspirants and the world at large.

We used to await these demonstrations with bated breath. It was such as exciting time. One could never guess what Baba would speak on and what demonstration He would conduct.

One enchanting evening, Baba spoke about the prerequisites for attaining salvation. In essence, He commented that *jnana*, karma, and bhakti—that is, knowledge, action, and devotion—are essential prerequisites for attaining salvation.

He then called out the name of an acarya who was sitting among the audience to come near Him. The acarya came and sat down close to Baba, keeping his spine erect in Siddhasana. Baba then touched his Trikuti and gave him Divya Dristi, divine vision. Then, Baba requested another acarya and a Margii to come forward and sit near the first acarya. Baba commanded the first acarya to look into one of the past lives of the second acarya. He asked the first acarya to explain who the second acarya had been in his past life and what he had done.

Immediately the first acarya had a vision of the second acarya's immediate past life. He saw that in his past life the second acarya had been a great Yogi who had devoted his life to intense spiritual practice and to different kinds of austerities from his youth. Because of his long and intense spiritual practice; he had become spiritually elevated. In his old age, however, he realized that while he had spent his life in austerities and spiritual practices, he had not served the created world. Such a realization could occur because he had already been spiritually elevated and had realized that the created universe was nothing but a manifestation of Narayana, the Supreme Entity. Baba explained that this shortcoming of the Yogi, the fact that he had not served creation, was the cause of his rebirth. In this life, as an acarya, immense opportunities to be of service to the world had opened up for him so that he could attain liberation in this very life.

Next, Baba directed the first acarya to look into the mind of the Margii and to say something about his past life. Again, the acarya had a vision of the Margii's past life. He saw that the Margii had been a great Karma Yogi in the previous life. He had spent his entire life in the service of humanity, particularly the needy and distressed. He had performed his acts of social service in a detached manner, without the ego of performing great works of humanitarian service. Sometime before his death, he realized that while he had served Narayana in His manifestation as human beings, he had failed to devote time for spiritual practice. This shortcoming was the cause of his rebirth in this present life. This was why he was now engaged in doing much meditation.

This demonstration showed us clearly that to attain salvation, the final goal of human life, spiritual aspirants had to achieve a balance between knowledge, social service, and spiritual practice, a balance between *jnana-yoga*, *karma-yoga*, and *sadhana*. All three are important, as their continued practice ultimately results in devotion. Humanitarian service cleanses the mind and makes a person humble and pure. Proper spiritual practice is only possible for the pure and the humble. Intense spiritual practice and extensive social service culminate in devotion. The spiritual aspirant then becomes eligible for salvation.

He Is Always with Us

The Guru is the most compassionate of beings. His mere touch floods the minds of devotees with indescribable bliss. His mere touch can liberate a spiritual aspirant from physical, mental, and spiritual bondages that bind him or her to the perpetual cycle of life and death. Once the Guru accepts a disciple, He keeps a close watch on him or her to ensure that the disciple moves on the straight and

narrow path and is not sidetracked. The Guru will be by the side of the disciple until he or she attains the cherished goal of salvation.

The incident described here relates to the Seminar Year of 1970. The central office had promoted me as the Central Social Security Secretary and Relief-in-Charge. The first thing I had to do was to put in proper form a guidebook to explain the tasks to be performed by the Regional Secretary. Two other workers had also been assigned to the task.

The three of us got down to the assigned task at Saccidananda Bhavan, which was situated a little distance from the Ranchi central office. The two workers lacked discipline, however. Daily, I would return to the central office at ten in the morning for Baba's holy audience. The two workers, however, preferred to go to a nearby hotel for lunch. I was not comfortable with their lackadaisical attitude but could not say anything to them. Personally, I consider it inappropriate for missionary workers to behave like householders. They should be strictly guided by an acarya's code of conduct.

We would reassemble in the afternoon to continue with our work. Before we started work, the two workers would describe the delicious lunch they had taken at the hotel. They would sometimes pass acrid remarks and scold me for not joining them. They tried their best to break my resolve not to join them for lunch. This situation continued for ten days.

Once, despite my protests, they forcibly took me to the Curu Hotel for lunch. I had no choice but to follow them. On our way back, not far from the hotel, we met Acarya Vijayananda Avadhuta. Baba had sent him to look for us, giving him specific directions where we would be. When he found us, he was visibly upset and told us that Baba was waiting for us at the jagrti. We became a little scared

and meekly followed him back to the jagrti. I felt guilty for having succumbed to my colleagues' pressure.

It was two in the afternoon. Baba was already waiting for us. We entered His room nervously and sat down after prostrating before Him. Baba was not smiling. He shot several questions at the two workers. Both of them lied through their teeth in their replies. After some time, He told them to leave the room but asked me to stay back. As soon as they had left, Baba asked me why I had not completed my seminar program in all the districts of Bhopal Diocese. I was caught red-handed. It was true that I had failed to conduct the seminars. I conceded my oversight. Baba then punished me for my blunder. The punishment had a miraculous effect on me. It relieved me of a lingering guilt I had been carrying for some time. I felt as if a ton had been lifted off my shoulders. It was so purifying. To my surprise, within minutes of the punishment, I experienced a state of indescribable bliss that transported me to a higher state of consciousness.

What a contrast! Just minutes before, I had been reproached for my mistakes. And shortly afterward, Baba graced me with transcendental bliss.

I was fortunate that Baba had saved me from possible moral decline. I was punished for my errors, which purified me. The two workers, however, were not so fortunate. They paid dearly for their lack of discipline and faith in the Guru. They left the organization within a few days.

First Senior Acarya Training

In September 1969 I had just returned to the central office in Piska Morh, Ranchi after a long and tiring journey. I was posted there as the

Central Social Security Secretary and Relief-in-Charge. Those were the days when Baba started to impart advanced training to a select group of senior acaryas. Among them were Acarya Chandranath, Acarya Raghunath, Acarya Dasarath, Acarya Shraddhananda, Acarya Pranavananda, and Acarya Vijayananda. The classes were conducted from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and again from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. Deep in my heart, I wondered why I was not chosen to participate in the advanced training for acaryas.

One day, the then Central Office Secretary, Acarya Pranavananda, was in a hurry to attend the classes. He advised me to look after the office and quickly left. I was tired after the long journey and just sat on the verandah. I was the only person present in the office that day.

Suddenly, at about three in the afternoon, I was thrilled to hear the bleat of blaring horns and knew that Baba was arriving at the office premises. It was an unscheduled visit. I had no time to greet Him in proper attire and just rushed to the main gate to allow the car to enter the premises. The car drove right into the office compound. I ran out to open the door and greeted Him. Baba smiled and gracefully alighted from the car. He walked straight into His office and sat down.

I was overjoyed to see Him. Baba was in a pleasant mood that day. He asked me something about the senior acarya classes. I replied that I did not know, as I was not a participant. Baba persisted, however, and asked me what the acaryas said about the classes. I replied that I had heard them speaking about the most awesome class this morning. They had remarked that Baba had blessed them by making them acaryas and that the real training was only taking place now. Baba then said that He would enrich Ananda Marga philosophy to such an extent that it would inspire generations of humanity to

come. He also mentioned that He would create a strong organization that would be the nucleus of dharma and service to the world.

His inspiring words vibrated my mind and body. I was speechless and just kept looking at His resplendent face. After a while, Baba took leave of me, saying that He must go, as the trainee acaryas were waiting for Him.

How gracious He was. Baba knew my heart's desire. He felt the pain that was lodged in my heart like a thorn and softly lifted it. He knew my inner desire to participate in the senior acarya training sessions.

Personal Contact

Once, I got the golden opportunity to assist in organizing Personal Contact sessions when Acarya Pranavananda Avadhuta was away from office on some work. I had to prepare a list of devotees for Personal Contact and ensure that the sessions went smoothly.

After I compiled the list, I informed Baba accordingly. The first person scheduled for Personal Contact was a rich, middle-aged Margii. The second and third on the list were two students; one was a gold medalist, and the other, from Bettiah, had strong leadership qualities.

Baba looked at the list and decided that the student from Bettiah would be the first to get Personal Contact, given his leadership qualities. He mentioned that the other student was likely to devote himself to building his career rather than serving society, so he could wait for his Personal Contact. The rich man could also wait for his turn.

As advised, I sent the student first. He was a brave, young, and energetic boy. He remained with Baba for about forty minutes. During the Personal Contact, Baba told him about personal information regarding his past and pointed out the mistakes he had committed. He was punished for his mistakes. Baba then extracted a promise from him to be an ideal boy in the future. Baba then showered him with a lot of love, which inspired him very much. He came out of the room in tears.

I noticed a remarkably positive change in the student after the Personal Contact. He proved to be a great asset to the mission. He popularized Margii ideals in various schools and colleges. He also helped to strengthen the Universal Proutist Students Federation in his locality.

Baba prioritized Personal Contact for those with a potential to help society. He wanted to create social champions who could help in transforming society, those who could lead by example and by the strength of their character.

Bhopal DMC

The Education, Relief, and Welfare Section (ERAWS) of Ananda Marga is the vehicle for propagating neo-humanist education and providing relief to the needy in the event of a disaster.

In 1969 I was newly posted by the central office as the Principal of the Ananda Marga Primary School in Bhopal and as Diocese Secretary of Bhopal. Bhopal is the capital city of Madhya Pradesh. Before leaving for Bhopal, I sought Baba's blessings. On entering His room, I prostrated before Him and sat down. He informed me that He had given me a new posting as Diocese Secretary of Bhopal and that I would have to start a school there. He added that He would

visit Bhopal after some time. I then took my leave and started for Bhopal.

In Bhopal, the Margiis warmly welcomed me. There was a new but strong team of enthusiastic Margiis. The core team of Margiis comprised officials working at the Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd., a government-linked engineering company also known as BHEL Bhopal. Acarya Chitle, a householder acarya, was posted as Superintending Engineer in the company. When I informed the Margiis of Baba's desire to start an Ananda Marga school in Bhopal, they immediately got down to work, raising the funds and seeking a suitable plot of land for the school. Acarya Chitle and his wife helped me greatly to establish the school. Finally, their concerted efforts bore fruit. They succeeded in acquiring a plot of land donated by the management of BHEL Bhopal. After the paperwork was completed, construction work on the school started. Upon its completion, many local children were admitted to the school.

One day, barely three months after my posting, I received a call from the central office informing me that Baba would be coming to Bhopal for Dharma Maha Cakra. I was thrilled, and so were the Margiis. Everyone was so excited. Deep in their hearts, they had been praying that one day Baba would grant their desire for a DMC to be held in Bhopal. They could not believe that He would satisfy their hearts' desire so soon. They prepared a detailed plan for making the DMC a grand success and initiated actions to execute the plan.

Acarya Chitle's house was large and equipped with adequate facilities; hence, it was decided that Baba would stay with Chitle's family. For the DMC program, we were permitted to use the campus of the regional engineering college. The campus was large, well equipped,

and well maintained. Indeed, it was the most appropriate location for the DMC function.

Baba arrived in Bhopal just before the program. He was driven straight to Acarya Chitle's residence. Scores of Margiis who yearned to see Him were waiting to greet Him. When the car reached Acarya Chitle's residence, Baba unexpectedly flew into a rage without rhyme or reason and demanded to be housed elsewhere. We were thunderstruck. We were at a loss for what to do. Acarya Chitle's family was heartbroken. They wondered what sin they had committed to deserve such punishment. Acarya Chitle even went up to Baba to appeal for a change of mind, but He was unrelenting.

We wondered where else we could house Him but could not come up with any satisfactory solution. Baba must have known our predicament. To our surprise, He came to our rescue and said that He would prefer to stay where the Margiis were staying. That was a big hint. We immediately launched a search for an appropriate place and found a room with an attached toilet and a kitchen close to the DMC hall. The place was isolated and complete in itself. It was ideal. We booked the place and moved Baba there. Baba must have liked the place. Soon after moving in, He resumed His sweet and smiling demeanor.

The DMC program was very inspiring. It was a blessed occasion. The Margiis got His grace through the auspicious Varabhaya Mudra.

On the last day of the program, just before He left, Baba reminded me that He had kept His promise of being in Bhopal.

Sadhana Piitha Training

Baba was never short of programs to keep us on our toes. The acarya and local full-timer training program was then ongoing. At that time, the program did not include some vital elements necessary for creating dedicated renunciants, especially those who could face up to any eventuality or circumstance, however difficult. Baba wanted us to be prepared for any untoward, unexpected incidents and to be able to serve society in such a situation. He wanted us to be free from the defects of prestige, vanity, arrogance, shyness, and hatred. He wanted us to be able to survive and serve in the most difficult of circumstances.

For this purpose, He introduced a new program called Sadhana Piitha Training (SPT) to be followed by all householder acaryas and renunciant missionaries. The program has thirteen characteristics:

1. The duration of the program is seven days.
2. The program is compulsory for all full-timers (renunciant missionaries) and householder acaryas.
3. Participants' personal belongings must be left behind before starting the program.
4. A participant of the program should have no more than one *laungota* (Yogic underwear), a dhoti, and a begging bowl.
5. Every participant must go out and beg for his or her food from the public. No cooked food shall be accepted.
6. Program participants will say 'Hari Aum Tat Sat' when begging for food. Talking is not allowed. Mauna Vrata must be maintained strictly when begging for food.
7. In case it is necessary to speak to someone for some reason or other, no food shall be accepted from that person.
8. Participants will cook their food from whatever they get only once daily.

9. No utensils shall be used except for an earthenware pot.
10. Participants should spend all their time in *kiirtan/sadhana*.
11. Participants should only use mud for cleaning the body and *datuna* (neem or babula) for cleaning the teeth. No soap, toothpaste, oil, comb, or shoes should be used. Participants must sleep on the floor.
12. Under no condition can participants retaliate, even verbally, when abused or scolded on their begging tours. Participants must keep calm. *Hari Aum Tat Sat* is their only weapon.
13. In the evening, they should go out for dharma *pracara*.

I proceeded from the Ranchi central office to Varanasi for my SPT. Acarya Ramananda Avadhuta, Acarya Parashivananda Avadhuta, Acarya Dhiirananda Avadhuta, and some others accompanied me. Acarya Prajnananda Avadhuta was the trainer at the Varanasi training center. We followed the system as prescribed by Baba.

Every morning at seven o'clock sharp, we would go to the villages in the vicinity for alms collection. We would then return with whatever raw food we'd managed to get and cook our meals on fires we each prepared individually.

We went out for dharma *pracara* in the evening. It was very stimulating. We met many good people. A few came forward for initiation.

How quickly the time passed. We went to the banks of the Ganges and enjoyed watching the waves rolling endlessly and performing our spiritual practices at Dashashwamedh Ghat.

Once, while on an alms tour, I encountered a person who scolded me harshly. He was abusive. He did not even bother to look at my face while scolding me. I immediately left the place. The incident

only made me more humble and devoted to Him. I realized that saintliness is an outcome of sustained humility and calmness.

I can say without any hesitation that SPT is a great boon for developing devotion, humility, and surrender.

Seminars, Seminars, More Seminars, Still More Seminars

After working for eight months as Bhopal District Secretary, I went to Ranchi to attend the Review, Defect, Solution (RDS) meeting that was being organized. I was transferred to the central office in Ranchi as the Social Security Secretary. Baba had just initiated the Seminar Program. All the missionary workers and Margiis in India made every effort to ensure the success of the program. Attendance at seminar programs was compulsory for every Margii. Occasionally, Baba would visit the seminar venues near Ranchi. The popular seminar slogan was “Seminars, seminars, and more seminars, still more seminars, village-level seminars.” To emphasize the importance of seminars, Baba included participating in Ananda Marga seminars as part of the sixteen points to be followed by all Margiis.

This was the first time for me to be a central worker. Baba gave me the responsibility of organizing a seminar in Maharashtra State, with Acarya Jagdihsvarananda Avadhuta as the trainer. Before we departed for our respective seminar destinations, Baba summoned us to His room. Baba informed us that for the provincial-level seminar, the minimum attendance was five hundred participants for it to be considered successful. If the minimum number was not achieved, the acarya concerned would be held accountable and would be penalized accordingly.

In the early days of the program, we were expected to organize one seminar per state, followed by village-level seminars. The state

seminar in Maharashtra was scheduled to take place in Kolhapur, a city situated in the southwestern part of the state. Getting together five hundred Margiis under one roof was a challenging task indeed, as the state was big and the Margiis were widely dispersed all over the state. I had to visit each district headquarters to ensure that I got the required attendance at the seminar. I even went to the extent of meeting the Margiis individually to convince them to attend the seminar. I worked on them for two long months. Even then, we only managed to get about 350 Margiis to attend the seminar, far short of the minimum number.

After the seminar was over, we returned to Ranchi. The organizers and trainers of each state-level seminar stood before Baba to report the results of their state seminars. Those of us who did not secure the minimum attendance were punished. The punishment was to do one thousand sit-ups within twenty-four hours. We were shocked at this impossible command. We had no choice but to obey. Most of the workers left after completing about fifty to one hundred sit-ups.

Acarya Shraddhananda's condition was indeed deplorable due to his advanced age. I pitied him. As for myself, I took Baba's instruction as Mantramulam, that is, the Guru's words are mantra. I accorded the same reverence to His instruction as I would to a mantra. I continued with the sit-ups even after coming out of His room. I was determined to follow His instructions no matter what. In those days, I would go to the cremation grounds for Kapalika sadhana almost every midnight. Before performing the Kapalika meditation, I would do three hundred sit-ups.

As soon as I completed the set of three hundred sit-ups, Acarya Pranavananda Avadhuta told me that Baba had condoned my punishment and that I was not required to continue doing the sit-ups. By that time, however, I had already completed seven

hundred painful sit-ups. It took a toll on my health, given my weak constitution. My muscles and nerves stiffened, and I experienced excruciating pain all over my body. I cried out in sheer agony. I could neither stand nor sit. Even performing my morning duties became a torture. I was very angry with Baba, at His unkindness. But my seething anger could not find a voice. How could I express my anger at the Guru?

Baba knew my mental condition, however. The same day, He called me and affectionately consoled me by saying that I should not have done so many sit-ups. His compassionate words did not help to alleviate my wretched mental condition. In fact, they confused me even more.

Days passed, and my physical condition worsened. I recall sometimes crying out in pain and mentally cursing Him for my suffering.

After some time, I was assigned the responsibility of organizing a seminar in Ajmer in the state of Rajasthan. Despite my poor physical condition, I immediately proceeded to Jaipur, the capital city of Rajasthan. I had difficulty walking and could not sleep properly.

From Jaipur I went to Tonk, a town about sixty miles south of Jaipur, where I met Acarya Manohar Lal and his family members. He was a householder acarya. They served me well. At Tonk, my condition worsened. I was taken to a hospital and was treated by a renowned doctor. He operated and removed a tumor from my thigh. It took twenty-five long and miserable days to recover from the operation and to be free from my pathetic health condition.

After my recovery, I returned to Ajmer and busied myself with the preparations for the seminar. But I was not in the proper frame of mind to carry on in this way. I just could not take it anymore. I

mentally begged Baba to relieve me of my central posting and to post me to a peaceful location where there was not much pressure. I was really finding it difficult to discharge my duties as a central worker. Amazingly, as I was thinking like this, Acarya Sadananda Avadhuta arrived from Ranchi to relieve me from my post on Baba's instructions. He advised me to proceed to Ranchi immediately. I handed over the responsibility of organizing the seminar to him and immediately left for Ranchi.

Upon my arrival at Ranchi, Baba called me to His room. He filled my heart with unspeakable love and bliss. He told me that whenever I called out to Him in pain and desperation, He felt my pain. Saying so, Baba embraced me, as a father would his crestfallen child. I cried uncontrollably. The dark cloud of my ill feelings vanished, bringing forth the new light of joy. Baba graciously explained to me that each person must undergo his or her own samskara, the latent reactions of past actions. He then informed me that He was posting me to a cool city in South India. I was simply delighted at this amazing turn of fortune.

I was subsequently posted to Bangalore as Diocese Secretary. Bangalore is the capital city of the state of Karnataka and is a bustling metropolitan city. Upon my arrival at the city, I fondly recalled Baba's words that I would be transferred to a city with an "air-conditioned climate." Bangalore is a beautiful city with a moderate and cool climate throughout the year. The city has many tree-lined roads and beautiful gardens. It is aptly called the Garden City of India.

Bangalore Posting

Acarya Yatishvarananda Avadhuta, the Regional Secretary of Bangalore, was my superior authority in Bangalore. He introduced

me to the local Margiis and briefed me about the activities of the diocese.

At that time, we were managing an Ananda Marga school with sixty children. The school was located in a rented building in Rajaji Nagar. We also managed a children's home with ten children. As our financial position was weak, we faced heavy pressure in meeting the cost of the rental and maintaining the children. To lighten our financial burden, I contacted the local institutions to assist us in providing sufficient food, vegetables, and fruits for the children's home.

After some time, Acarya Keshavananda Avadhuta replaced Acarya Yatishvarananda as the Regional Secretary of Bangalore. Several other acaryas, such as Acarya Tadbhavananda Avadhuta, Acarya Karunananda Avadhuta, Acarya Nigamananda Avadhuta, and Acarya Mahaviirananda Avadhuta, were already working in Bangalore. We enjoyed being together and working collectively to establish Baba's mission. Our relationship with the Margiis in the city was also very cordial. Brother Lal and his family, Sarvashrii Ramayya, Dr. Chari, Venkateshmurti, Kamle, Anantabhattacharya, and Ramu, were very devoted Margiis. They were always ready to help us accomplish our tasks. Every month we fed about 250 poor people. Owing to the Margiis' commendable social activities, many new people became interested in Ananda Marga.

I decided to build a jagrti, an Ananda Marga spiritual center, on a plot of land a Margii had donated. I commenced construction of the building as soon as possible, as I was determined to construct the building. By His grace, the jagrti was built in record time. Baba was very pleased with the outcome of my effort.

But the hard work took its toll on my frail health. I developed severe stomach problems and suffered badly. I consulted Baba on my illness, and He prescribed some herbal remedies to treat it. After taking the medicine, my illness was cured. However, after about a year, I fell ill again. I suffered from excruciating pain all over my body. I found it difficult even to get up from bed. I was taken to Patna for treatment. I was treated by the doctor for two long months before my illness was cured.

After I recovered from my illness, Baba transferred me to Bhagalpur as the Diocese Secretary.

Working in Bhagalpur

I came to Bhagalpur in 1972. Bhagalpur figures prominently in the history of Ananda Marga because a number of senior householder acaryas came from the city, such as Acarya Pashupati, Acarya Ananta, Acarya Krsnananda, Acarya Gauriishankar, and Acarya Deviicanda. Although they were householders, they dedicated their lives to the mission of Ananda Marga. I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity of meeting them and hearing from them directly their experiences with Baba during His Jamalpur days.

Being the largest town in Aunga Desha near Jamalpur, Baba focused His attention on Bhagalpur. In the Bhagalpur diocese, there were sixty active Ananda Marga units. Throughout the year I would move from unit to unit to convey the new programs that Baba had introduced.

At that time, Baba was being held in the Bankipur Central Jail in Patna. The government kept a close watch on Ananda Marga. As a result, our social work was dreadfully impeded. Contacting the Margiis in the different units became an arduous task. Yet we were

determined to continue with our work despite the difficulties we faced.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the main investigating police agency in India, poisoned Baba in Bankipur Central Jail. In protest, Baba went on a long fast. Margiis and workers were worried about the adverse impact of the fast on His health. His incarceration in prison had weakened Him considerably. The Indian government arrested Baba and many Margiis and missionary workers under false charges during the infamous Emergency period. We did not have the opportunity to bring their cases before a court of law, as emergency laws were in force.

As Baba continued to suffer in prison, with no hope that He would get a fair trial, a few monks and nuns of Ananda Marga decided to immolate themselves in order to bring Baba's case to the attention of the world. These renunciants were great devotees of Baba. They were greatly pained at seeing the Guru treated inhumanly. They were Acarya Divyananda Avadhuta, Acarya Dineshvarananda Avadhuta, and Acarya Atulananda Avadhuta, among others.

To protest the authorities' constant harassment of Baba and the Margiis, a series of protest rallies were organized in Delhi and Patna against the state and central government. I participated in several of the protest rallies.

Once, after Baba was poisoned in Bankipur Central Jail, we organized a protest rally at Chief Minister Abdul Gafoor Khan's residence. In response, he ordered the police to retaliate against the unarmed protesters. The police baton-charged us, severely injuring more than eighty people. All of us were arrested on false charges and imprisoned in the Fulbari Sharif Jail. Jailing us did not dampen our spirits, however. On the contrary, it strengthened our resolve to fight

the immoral forces and emboldened us to stand up for justice and fair play. While in jail, we decided to establish Sadvipra Samaja, a society of moralists and spiritualists. Of course, it was only symbolic, as the world does not have enough moralists to form a society of moralists. We also published a daily newsletter. After spending some time in prison, we were released on bail.

We continued to put pressure on the government to release Baba or to charge Him formally in a court of law. The campaign to secure Baba's release expanded beyond the shores of India to different parts of the world. Later, some non-Indian monks and nuns also made the decision of self-immolation to draw the world's attention to Baba's unjust incarceration in prison. Ananda Marga and its allied organizations were banned by the Indian government. The Indian diplomatic missions in other countries spread false information on Ananda Marga to the foreign governments, in the hope that they too would ban Ananda Marga. The government's strategy was to cripple the movement by imprisoning Baba and His followers and banning the organization. It was a concerted effort by an inimical government to destroy Ananda Marga. It does not take much imagination to imagine the suffering that we went through. It was a period of utter turmoil in the organization. The inimical attitude of the Indian government contrasted sharply with that of other civilized governments, which pressed for an investigation into the self-immolation of the monks and nuns of Ananda Marga.

When Acarya Dineshvarananda Avadhuta immolated himself at the Old Fort of Delhi, thousands of Margiis rallied in New Delhi. Acarya Dineshvarananda was my intimate friend. He was a dedicated worker bent on getting Baba released from prison. A day before his self-immolation, he gave me his bag, saying that I should keep it as a memento, as we may not meet again. I took his unusual gesture rather lightly, thinking that he was overly stressed.

I comforted him as much as I could. The next day, when I heard of his self-immolation, I regretted not doing anything to prevent it. A similar situation played out with Acarya Atulananda Avadhuta. He too committed self-immolation, something that I was powerless to prevent.

About the same time, Acarya Tyagiishvarananda Avadhuta was arrested in a conspiracy in Bhagalpur and was jailed. At the insistence of the CBI, he was subjected to inhuman torture. He died as a result of the torture in jail. Baba was pained by his death. He said that Tyagiishvarananda was brutally tortured in jail. Every part of his body was seriously injured due to the police's severe beatings. I was broken on hearing the news of his death. I lost my composure, and my self-confidence was shaken. It is difficult to find someone with so much integrity as Acarya Tyagiishvarananda. He was a man of few words but full of action.

During my posting in Bhagalpur, I secretly desired that a Dharma Maha Cakra should be held there. But such a wish did not materialize until 1979, when Baba was released from prison. After Baba recovered from His long incarceration in prison, He sent me as the chief organizer of the DMC program in Bhagalpur. In this way, He fulfilled my wish.

Mystical Origin of Akhanda Kiirtan

The year 1971 was designated as the Year of Utilization, Katha, Kiirtan (UKK). Baba desired to create Margiis with a yearning for social service. Just as in previous years, Baba conducted many spiritual demonstrations to clarify the deep mysteries of spirituality, particularly the theoretical concepts of Ananda Marga philosophy. He also introduced new spiritual practices to help humanity accelerate its evolutionary pace. Some of these practices do not

exist in the classical Yogic and Tantric systems or in any system of spirituality known to man.

What is compelling about Baba is the unique approach He employed to explain the deepest spiritual truths. First, He introduced the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the deepest mysteries of spirituality and related them to our daily lives. Then, He introduced special spiritual techniques for spiritual aspirants to practice so that they could realize the truth of these assertions. Finally, He conducted practical demonstrations on major aspects of these spiritual truths. I am not aware of any spiritual master in the past seven thousand years who has employed such a complete approach to enlighten spiritual aspirants on the cosmic truths.

Perhaps the most dramatic feature in Baba's approach was the spiritual demonstrations that He conducted over the course of several decades. He performed these amazing demonstrations much like a classroom teacher explaining an experiment to students. Through these demonstrations, He verified the immutable reality of the eternal spiritual truths and laid the foundation for practical realization of these subtle truths beyond mere intellectual or philosophical inquiry. For instance, He demonstrated many different kinds of samadhi or spiritual trance, some of which were not familiar even to the advanced spiritual aspirants.

I take the liberty to explain one spiritual practice that Baba revived in a new light—the practice of *kiirtan* as a path to spiritual realization. Until October 1970, there was no system of *kiirtan* in Ananda Marga, although Baba often spoke of its importance in spiritual practice. *Kiirtan* is the melodic singing of a Siddha mantra before performing one's spiritual practices. It is extremely beneficial for meditation and a powerful tool of spiritual realization.

The origin of kiirtan is shrouded in the opaque mist of history. The great Bengali saint Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who lived between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is popularly known as the “Father of Kiirtan” for popularizing kiirtan. Baba often quoted from his devotional Sanskrit verses known as Shikhsastaka. Earlier, between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Maharashtran saint Namdev was said to have been an adept in the practice of kiirtan.

To appreciate the emergence of kiirtan as an essential part of the spiritual tradition, it is important to have an idea of the social conditions that prevailed in those hoary days. In the olden days, a spiritual aspirant lived a hard and austere life, one that demanded strict discipline and utter devotion to the guru. The guru’s word was law. His instructions had to be obeyed without question. In those days, the guru did not simply initiate a disciple into spiritual practice. He would test the devotion of his disciple for twelve years before deciding if the disciple was ready for initiation. Such was the situation then.

Over time, however, either because of the lack of qualified spiritual masters or eligible disciples, several dogmatic and superstitious practices crept into the spiritual traditions, making it difficult to discern what was essentially spiritual and what was plain dogma. Dogma and ritualistic practices passed off as pristine spirituality, and the masses followed such dogmatic practices without question. A case of the blind leading the blind! One could say that spiritual practice slowly but surely started to lose its rational foundation and dynamism. Under these circumstances, exploitation slowly crept in, and people eventually began to lose faith in spirituality.

The twentieth century also suffered from such distortions. The general masses were misled by many so-called spiritual masters who either exploited their flock for personal benefit or propagated

dogmatic traditions that had little spiritual value. Baba was born in such an environment, where priests and soothsayers held society in the grip of crushing dogma and superstition. He wanted to revitalize the pristine spiritual traditions by removing the cobwebs that shrouded its shining glory. Accordingly, He introduced new and revolutionary ideas and spiritual practices to liberate the human mind from the stranglehold of superstition, blind faith, and dogma. Baba also desired that spiritual practice should be soft and sweet and full of devotion, not a mere routine or drudgery. This was the backdrop in which the philosophy of Ananda Marga was born.

An amazing incident in September 1970 relates to these points. I was then posted as a central worker in Ranchi. One day, Baba informed us that He wished to take a rest from His daily hectic schedule. He instructed us to look for an isolated place, where He could be alone with His family members. After a search, Acarya Sarveshvarananda Avadhuta found an ideal place in the forest in Amajharia, Ranchi. He proposed the location to Baba, and He immediately agreed. Reservations were then made with the Forestry Department, which supervised the guesthouse.

Baba told us to keep the location secret to avert the possibility of crowds of devotees congregating there and disturbing His rest. Preparations were then made to transport Baba and His family members to the forest guesthouse. Baba's Personal Assistant and a few others accompanied Baba as well.

Despite all the measures taken to keep the trip confidential, news somehow leaked out that Baba was at the Amajharia guesthouse with His family members. The Margiis in the area rushed over to the guesthouse for Baba's audience. There was nothing we could do to prevent this.

They were with Baba all the time and accompanied Him for His morning and evening walks amid the breathtaking natural surroundings. Baba stayed there for several days.

On the evening of October 7, 1970, Baba was sitting on a raised platform with a few devotees outside the guesthouse, enjoying the splendor of the lush surroundings of the forest. The environment was serene, infused with divine charm. Not a sound could be heard, except for the rustle of leaves and the occasional birdsong. Everyone was soaking in the still, celestial beauty of the forest surroundings.

Suddenly, Baba broke the silence. He pointed at the distant sky and said that it was as if the wind carried a sweet melody. He asked the devotees present to listen carefully if they could catch the melody. Everyone strained his or her ears, and after a while, we could hear an indistinct melody in the air. Baba instructed us to concentrate harder. Within seconds, we could clearly hear the words *Baba Nam Kevalam* sung to an enchanting melody.

Baba inquired whether we knew from where the melody was coming and who was singing. We looked around but could not see anyone. Baba explained that what we were hearing was the divine sound of kiirtan, the melodic chanting of a Siddha mantra. Baba further explained that the melody of the Baba Nam Kevalam kiirtan emanated from space. It was being sung by *gandharvas* and *kinnaras*, two types of spiritual entities. We continued to listen to the mystical kiirtan for some time. After a while, Baba asked the Margiis present whether a twenty-four-hour Akhanda kiirtan could be arranged the next day. They heartily agreed.

Acarya Brahmadeva, a local householder acarya, was among the spiritual aspirants present that day. He was responsible for informing the Margiis living near Amajharia. Scores of Margiis streamed in

the next day to participate in the Akhanda kiirtan program. A tent was erected to accommodate the devotees. The place was beautifully decorated with wild flowers and mango leaves gathered from the forest. The kiirtan then started with full devotional fervor. Baba's presence added to the magical charm of the moment. The kiirtan was sung to the beat of local tunes and musical instruments, creating an enchanting atmosphere. The flow of the devotional sentiment was simply unimaginable.

Another inexplicable incident occurred as the kiirtan reached its climax toward the end of the program. The Margiis noticed that Baba's car, which was parked near the tent, was moving toward the tent, apparently on its own volition. This miraculous incident took everyone by surprise. Baba's young son, Gaotama, who was playing outside, also saw the empty car moving on its own, as if it were alive. He shouted at the top of his voice, calling out to Baba to see the strange incident. Baba and His Personal Assistant came out to see what the matter was. As Baba looked at the car, it came to a halt.

Later, He explained to the Margiis that kiirtan of the Nama mantra directly affected all created things in the universe, whether animate or inanimate. It vibrated every atom and cell, including that of inanimate things as well as living things like plants, animals, and birds. Nothing was unaffected.

After the completion of the Akhanda kiirtan program, Baba returned to Ranchi. At the evening discourse on Diipavali, Baba said that kiirtan had now been empowered to benefit humanity spiritually. He stressed that it was our duty to propagate the practice of kiirtan throughout the world.

Lucknow Prison

During my posting in Lucknow as Diocese Secretary, the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, declared a state of emergency in India on June 26, 1975, suspending elections and civil liberties. It gave her the power to rule by decree. This dark phase in Indian history lasted for twenty-one long months. Thousands of people, whom she perceived as a threat, were imprisoned without trial. They included the leaders and workers of opposition parties, organizations, and individuals opposed to her iron-fisted rule. Organizations such as Ananda Marga and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh were banned.

In those days, the management of a kindergarten was one of my organizational responsibilities. One morning, I was busy administering the intake of new students into the kindergarten. As I was registering the new recruits, I suddenly noticed that the police had surrounded the kindergarten. Without any warning, they barged into the kindergarten premises and arrested me under the Defence India Regulations Act. I was subsequently sent to Lucknow Central Jail. There, I met many Margiis and volunteers of other organizations and leaders of political parties. Over time, the inmates developed a close camaraderie and helped one another to adjust to life in prison.

The situation in India was rapidly deteriorating due to the imposition of emergency rule in India. Arrests without trial were common. Human rights were openly violated in the name of emergency rule. Fear was widespread; freedom a distant dream. One day, fourteen of us, including some top leaders of political parties, were unexpectedly transferred to the Adarsha Jail in Lucknow. We expected the worst, as the authorities could do anything to us under the cover of the emergency. Many had lost hope of the future. Being the breadwinners in the family, they worried about the fate of their families, not

knowing how their families would look after themselves. I felt their pain and took it upon myself to console them. I told them that we were unjustly imprisoned, that we had committed no crime, and that one day the perpetrators of such wrongdoing would have to face up to their unholy actions. I assured them that this situation was temporary and that we would be freed one day. Seeing the gnawing worry etched in their faces, it dawned on me that those who lacked faith in God, whether they were top leaders or wealthy persons, suffered from an uncertain future.

For me, this was a godsent opportunity to intensify my spiritual practices. I devoted myself to intense spiritual practice every day. I had ample time for my meditation, kiirtan, and asanas. I was fortunate to be assigned to library duties by the Deputy Superintendent of Prisons. This gave me an excellent opportunity to catch up on reading.

An amusing incident occurred one day. I was meditating under the banyan tree, which was close to the site where prisoners were hanged. While I was in deep meditation, a squirrel accidentally fell from the tree onto my lap. The impact of the falling squirrel caused my body to jerk involuntarily, and I jumped upward. One of the security guards witnessed the incident and thought that I was levitating. He ran and informed the others that he had seen Swamijii levitating during his meditation. The news spread like wildfire. I became famous overnight. The jail staff and prisoners had great respect for me after the incident.

In general, the prison inmates and jail staff were impressed with our Yogic way of life, which was grounded on simplicity, regular spiritual practice, sentient food habits, and sweet and smiling behavior. I was fortunate that the jail doctor was also impressed with my lifestyle and recommended a special diet for me.

When the political situation improved some time later, the prisoners were accorded better treatment. However, not all prisoners were treated equally. While the political leaders were accorded B-class facilities, Margii prisoners were not. This unfair treatment frustrated me. I mentally complained to Baba that while the other prisoners had the support of their relatives, the renunciants, who had renounced everything, including family ties, only had the Guru for support. Amazingly, within a day and without any prompting, an inmate who was a senior political leader approached the authorities to upgrade me as a B-class prisoner. The authorities upgraded me within three days, and I enjoyed the same facilities as the others. This is another example of how Baba took care of His children and lightened their burdens.

A few days later, we were again shifted to another jail, this time the city jail. There were about six hundred political prisoners there. Here too, the inmates developed camaraderie, helping and comforting each other. There were altogether eight Ananda Margiis here, including myself. Our strict adherence to the norms of spiritual life inspired the other inmates. Many prisoners requested initiation. Our ideological lifestyle and camaraderie served as a powerful antidote to the depressing conditions in prison. Occasionally, we would pressure the prison authorities to provide us with better facilities. The renunciants of Ananda Marga fast four times a month, while the general Margiis are required to fast twice a month. During our fasting days, we would save our food and distribute it to the other prisoners. We did a lot of kiirtan in jail. Kiirtan had a magical effect. It sanctified the environment and made us joyful. Even the workers of political parties such as the Socialist Party and Bharatiya Lok Dal and an aged member of the Congress Party would join us in Nagar kiirtan regularly. Nagar kiirtan is a special form of kiirtan performed in a procession.

We were permitted to receive news from outside, including Baba's *vani*. One day, we received the shocking news that Baba had been sentenced to life imprisonment by the court. The Margiis were deeply saddened by the news. There was a general sense of hopelessness among them. I too was deeply distressed by the court's decision. Soon after, I had a dream in which Baba appeared and consoled me and told me not to worry.

To our delight, after a few months, the state of emergency was lifted, and Indira Gandhi announced the government's decision to hold parliamentary elections. With the lifting of the Emergency, some restrictions such as press censorship, prohibition of public meetings, and political detentions were relaxed. Political prisoners and those of us who were held under emergency laws were subsequently released from prison.

It was a jubilant time for all of us. Freedom was like a ray of light that illuminated the darkness of prison life. As soon as the Margiis were released, concerted efforts were made to recover our properties from government custody. During the Emergency period, the government confiscated all our properties. The former prison inmates who were leaders of political parties helped us greatly in this respect.

CHAPTER 4

TANTRIC EXPERIENCES

Spiritual experience is vast and varied. One can discern an inherent difference between the nature of Yogic and Tantric experiences. From the perspective of this book, the Yogic experience can be categorized as the “soft” face of spiritual realization, one that deals with experiences like samadhi or Yogic trance, devotion, cakras, kundalini, psychic visions and perceptions, knowledge of past lives, demonstrations on life and death, microvita, and so on. Tantric experiences, on the other hand, can be labeled as the “hard” face of spiritual experience, one that deals with the extraordinary and sometimes terrifying experiences of a spiritual aspirant in cremation grounds, such as dealing with hostile occultists and their bizarre practices, experiences with luminous bodies and other spiritual entities, and so on.

Tantra is a complete system of spiritual practice. Baba clarified that Lord Shiva had systematized Tantra into a coherent system of spiritual practice about seven thousand years ago. Before this, it existed as disparate practices, not as a systemic body of knowledge and practice. Tantra frees the human mind from the bondage of propensities and leads to liberation. Propensities are one of the main causes of action. Every action has a reaction. Our actions

result in unserved reactions that are stored in the mind until they are manifested in one form or another. The momentum of action-reaction-action keeps human beings tied to the cycle of life and death. Life after life, human beings have to take physical bodies to express the unserved reactions of their past actions. These reactions are called *samskara* in Sanskrit. The cycle is only broken when the spiritual aspirant has exhausted all his unserved reactions, which dispenses with the need for a human body. Such a person is a free soul, a god-man.

Although Tantra and Yoga have the common goal of liberation, their approaches to liberation differ. Yogic methods focus more on purification of the body and mind and restraint over the senses and desires. Tantric methods, on the other hand, focus more on controlling and ultimately transcending binding instincts such as attachment, craving, aversion, and the fear of death.

In Ananda Marga, Baba has blended both the Yogic and Tantric systems of spiritual practice for the attainment of liberation. This chapter is devoted to a description of the Tantric experiences I have had and offers readers a glimpse of the hidden, normally inaccessible world of Tantra.

Lucknow Terror

This terrifying incident took place in Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh. Even now, when I recall the incident, it sends a cold shiver down my spine.

One day, a brother acarya and I were preparing to go for our Kapalika practice. This special meditation is done after midnight. We wanted to go to a very remote cremation ground. We made several inquiries

and were informed of a remote cemetery a distance from where we resided.

At that time, we were staying in the Ananda Marga School in Aliganj, Lucknow. Our destination was very isolated and located far from where we lived.

It was Shravani Amavasya, the darkest night of the year. The day holds special significance for Tantric practitioners. On this day, most Tantrikas, both of the right-hand and left-hand paths, would go to the cremation ground to perform their practices.

The weather that night was dreadful. Despite the bad weather, we went to the cremation grounds on a motorcycle. With some difficulty, we reached the burial grounds at about twelve thirty that night, about half an hour later than planned.

The burial ground was dark and desolate. The wind was blowing furiously, howling like a pack of hungry wolves. Deafening claps of thunder and blinding streaks of lightning punctuated the night sky. To make matters worse, it started to rain heavily. It was as if the skies had been ripped open by an invisible hand.

We were prepared for a rough time. We looked for a suitable place to perform our practices. As we walked toward the cremation grounds, we could hear a strange sound all around us, as if warning us of an impending danger. The atmosphere was unfriendly and chilling. We shivered, as we were unaccustomed to such eerie experiences. To build our confidence, we grasped each other's hand as we walked.

Although we were frightened, we tried to keep our poise, our mental balance. We talked about the haunted cemetery and the horrifying situation. But talking didn't help very much. We felt that we were

walking into an unknown danger created by the evil designs of a black magician. Many Tantric practitioners of the left-hand path, Vama Marga, who seek occult powers, perform their Tantric rites in burial grounds too.

As we walked deeper into the cemetery, we heard bloodcurdling voices all around us. It was petrifying. We were paralyzed with fright. We felt helpless and did not know what to do.

We wanted to turn back and flee this terrifying, dangerous place. But we were of two minds, whether or not to run away. We thought about it for a while and decided to stay, confident of Baba's protective cover in the face of danger. Running away would have been an act of cowardice and would have reflected badly on the Guru, who taught us to be fearless in all circumstances. We decided to face whatever challenge might come our way, even death. Armed with this new confidence, we kept walking and eventually reached the center of the burial ground.

At the center, we were gripped by another terrifying incident. We suddenly found ourselves surrounded by hundreds of bizarre, beast-like human beings of different shapes and forms. All of them carried big rods. These beastly beings appeared to be running hither and thither, screaming at the top of their shrill voices that they would catch and kill us.

One cannot imagine how frightening it was. We trembled like leaves. We tried hard to regain our composure and rationalize the incident. We had been told earlier that this burial ground was notorious for the thieves and dacoits who took refuge and roamed there freely. Looting and other crimes were a common occurrence. We thought that the villagers must have mistaken us for these dacoits, so we

should face them with a calm mind. We must convince them that we were *sanyasiis* who had come here for our spiritual practice.

Strangely, none of those bloodthirsty beings came near us. We could see them running all over the place, screaming wildly. This strange scene continued for about an hour. All the time, we stayed on the same spot, petrified. Kapalika meditation must be performed within a specified time frame. Time was running out, but we could not perform our practices in such a situation.

After some time, we became tired and sat down on the ground. We noticed that the frequency of the spine-chilling screams lessened over time. They occurred infrequently. Just as we thought that things were getting better, we saw a group of unusual-looking people moving about on motorcycles. Strangely, they appeared to vanish just after crossing the railway line near the entrance of a village. This bizarre drama played out for half an hour. We realized that time was running out fast for us. It was already two in the morning, and we had to finish our practices within the short time that was left. We finally decided to begin our practice and do it one at a time. The other acarya went first, and I stood guard while he performed his practice.

He did his Kapalika meditation without incident. It was my turn now. As soon as I started to do my meditation, I saw flames engulf my entire body. I was shocked. Seeing the flickering fire surround my body, I lost my composure. Where did the fire come from? Strangely, though, I did not feel any burning sensation. To calm my fear, I constantly recited the name of the Lord. After a while, I realized that it was nothing but the psychic projections of an Avidya Tantrika, who intended to scare us and chase us away from the cremation grounds. I rationalized that it was impossible for a fire to be in such a desolate place. As I thought like this, the fire

shifted away from me and slowly moved toward the village, where it disappeared in thin air.

Just as I was recovering from the shock of seeing the vanishing flames, I heard the sound of rippling water, as if someone was swimming in a pond. I looked toward the source of the sound and saw someone in white apparel swimming in a pond. Slowly, he emerged from the pond and walked toward me. He stopped about thirty feet from me and, to my utter amazement, suddenly transformed himself into a snorting buffalo with fiery eyes. The animal was unusually huge, with an angry glint in its eyes. It looked at me with anger and disdain and then started to stomp forcefully on the ground, all the time bellowing aggressively. I feared the wild buffalo. I thought that if it were to charge, it would surely kill me. As I was thinking of the potential danger, a strange sense of calm descended upon me. I regained my composure and confidence.

Having failed to break me down, the black magician uttered some mantras, magic incantations, while making some strange gestures with his hands, with the intention of casting a powerful spell to intimidate me. Suddenly, I felt a burning sensation all over my body. As I grappled with my fear of being burned alive, the thought of finishing my spiritual practice in time was foremost in my mind. I was determined to complete my practice. By His grace, I somehow managed to complete it.

After my practice, I tried to leave the place but found that I could not move. I was petrified with fear, unable to move a muscle. At that moment, it dawned on me that I should sing kiirtan. Hearing the sound of my kiirtan, my companion, who was waiting for me some distance away, came toward me. I asked him if he had seen anything abnormal. He replied that he had seen me engulfed in flames.

After some time, we slowly made our way back to our residence. On the way, we saw a group of people huddled by the roadside, whispering among themselves. As we passed them, we heard them say that these monks must surely possess great occult powers and that they must be disciples of a very powerful guru. They were surprised that we had not been defeated despite their best efforts to frighten us.

When we returned, I informed Acarya Shraddhananda Avadhuta about the incident and asked him to mention it to Baba. When Baba heard the story, He smiled. I had the opportunity to meet with Baba after a few days. I entered His room and prostrated before Him. Baba then inquired about the incident in the Lucknow cremation grounds. I explained the whole incident in detail. Baba told me that the Avidya Tantrika had applied all his psychic force on me that night to prevent me from performing my Kapalika meditation and, having failed to do so, had finally resorted to using the *marana* mantra to kill me. The mantra is a special technique Avidya Tantrikas use to kill their enemies. Baba mentioned that even the application of the *marana* mantra had failed to produce the desired result, as I was a *vidya* sadhaka, a spiritual aspirant following the divine, right-hand path of Tantra.

Bhopal Cremation Grounds

A similar incident occurred in Bhopal. I was then staying at our school premises in Bhopal.

One night, I was preparing myself to perform Kapalika meditation at the cremation grounds in Bhopal. The cremation ground was about ten kilometers away from the school, at the far end of the town. It was a dark, desolate place located in the woods.

It was drizzling that night. Some Margiis decided to follow me to the cremation grounds. As we entered the grounds, I felt a strange heaviness all over my body. A chilling sensation pervaded the air.

I sensed something ominous about the place. I did not say anything to the Margiis, however, as I did not want to alarm them. We walked farther into the cemetery, and to our surprise, we saw a strange bull bellowing, making a muuhhrrr sound, in the far corner of the cremation ground. We wondered what a bull was doing in the middle of a graveyard in the middle of the night. It was peculiar indeed. We decided to ignore the bull and walked into the center of the graveyard for our practice.

When we reached our destination, I instructed the Margiis to sit in a circle at a particular spot. I then left them to do my Kapalika meditation in another part of the burial ground. Midway into my meditation, I heard piercing screams from the Margiis. In between the incoherent screams, I could discern that they were calling out to me to save them.

I was very disturbed and wondered what might have happened. A graveyard was not exactly a friendly place in the dead of night. I rushed to the Margiis only to see them cuddled together tightly, whimpering in fright, and uttering incoherent sounds. Obviously, something had frightened them so much that they were trembling in a trancelike state. I was worried when I saw their abnormal condition. I assured them that everything was all right, as I was with them. I tried to ask them what had happened but got no coherent response. They were paralyzed with fear, mumbling incoherently.

It took a while for them to regain their composure. Then one of them narrated what had happened. He explained that as soon as I had left, they had started their meditation, sitting in a circle.

Within moments of closing their eyes, they heard a loud thud, as if something had dropped on the ground in front of them. In shock, they opened their eyes. What they'd seen in the dark light of the night had terrified them. A large piece of stinking flesh had fallen right in the middle of the circle. Suddenly, the block of meat had broken up into several tiny pieces. Each piece had become alive, jumping up and down, making an eerie sound that sounded like jhing, jhing, jhing, jhing.

The terrifying incident had been just too much for them to bear. A primal fear had gripped them, paralyzing their bodies, minds, and rational faculty. They had swooned in a semiconscious state.

The psychological condition of the Margiis improved somewhat after they had recounted their grotesque experience to me. I suspected at once that this was the work of an Avidya Tantrika who was disturbed by our presence and wanted us to leave the cemetery. He must have cast a hypnotic spell on the Margiis to scare them into leaving the place.

I looked around to see if I could see anyone in the vicinity but saw no one. Not wanting to risk the safety of the Margiis, I decided that we should return. I returned the following day to complete my Kapalika practice, this time alone.

Police Occultist

The practice of Tantra has achieved some degree of notoriety due to the lack of understanding of the proper practice, philosophy, and holistic nature of Tantra. It is also due to the lack of proper gurus who can guide their disciples on the path of dharma. To compound the matter, the practitioners of Avidya Tantra have thrown the noble practice of Tantra into disrepute.

I recall one interesting incident that occurred in Bhopal. I was then newly posted as the Diocese Secretary of Bhopal.

One day, I learned from the central office about Baba's arrest in Cooch Behar by the Communist government of West Bengal. The Margiis were shocked to learn of Baba's arrest. Nobody had anticipated the brutal action of the government.

In response, we decided to organize a nonviolent public rally to denounce the Marxist government's undemocratic action. However, it was unfortunate that at that time there was some tension between the Hindu and Muslim communities in Bhopal. Because of this, the authorities had banned public meetings and rallies. Hence, our plan for a public rally was scuttled.

While our hands were tied, we had to do something. We had to find a way to get Baba released from prison. After a few days, a local Margii and I visited the Police Superintendent's office to explain our reasons for holding a public rally. We assured him that we would follow the law and that the rally would be a peaceful one.

The police officer was an experienced and impressive man. He was also the President of the Mesmerism Society for Western India, established by the internationally renowned Indian magician P. C. Sorcar. Seeing me in the orange robes of a renunciant and knowing that Ananda Margiis practiced Tantra yoga, he bragged about his own knowledge of Tantra. He claimed to be able to control anybody by dint of his occult power.

He went on and on about how much he knew about the occult practices of Tantra. I had no interest to engage him in the subject, as my sole purpose was to seek permission for a public rally. But he continued to talk about his views on Tantra, hypnotism, and magic.

I politely listened to him. After some time, I expressed my opinion and told him that Avidya Tantra was just a waste of time, as it did not lead a practitioner to higher spiritual attainments. As I expressed my views, his face turned red, and his demeanor changed. Perhaps my statement was a challenge to his beliefs.

I was seated in front of him, and the Margii was by my side. The police officer tried to hypnotize me and to bring me under his control. He exerted his mental force with all his might to bring me under his control but without success. I could see beads of perspiration running down his cheeks, his face pale like a lifeless mask. He was by then completely exhausted and dizzy. I was afraid that he would faint.

After some time, however, he regained his composure and immediately sought forgiveness for his impetuous act. He then called upon his assistant and dictated an order to allow us to hold the public rally. He also invited me to visit him at his home. After a couple of days, an initiate of mine, who was a Deputy Superintendent of Police, happened to meet him. He informed my initiate that he had tried his best to hypnotize me but had failed to do so and had suffered for it. He also mentioned that the meditation taught by Ananda Marga is very powerful.

The news confirmed that positive force always overcomes the force of negativity.

A Black Magician and a Mad Elephant

I am fortunate to have experienced different kinds of spiritual and Tantric experiences, which have helped to deepen my understanding of the path.

The incident I am about to describe occurred in 1966, when I had newly become an avadhuta. Avadhutas are initiates of the ancient Tantric tradition of Kapalika sadhana. Not much literature is available on this tradition, as its practices are kept secret.

Being a new Kapalika initiate, I performed my meditation zealously. I enjoyed meditating in isolated cremation grounds whenever I had the chance.

I was then posted in Bihar. A senior family acarya and practitioner of Kapalika meditation, Acarya Ksitish, worked in Hazipur, North Bihar.

One day, during the new moon, I accompanied Acarya Ksitish for Kapalika meditation at the Kanaora Ghata cremation grounds. As we entered the site, we saw an Avidya Tantrika, a black magician, doing his meditation. When he saw us, he became rather agitated and ordered us to leave. I have observed on several occasions that whenever a practitioner of the right-hand path of Tantra comes face-to-face with a practitioner of the left-hand path, the latter tries to drive out the former at all costs. Somehow, our presence disturbs them.

We ignored him and continued to walk, looking for a suitable spot for our meditation. After a short search, we found a good spot on the banks of the Narayani Gandaki River. We then sat down for our practice.

The black magician would not leave us alone, however. He was an adept in his practices. He applied his occult power on us to scare us, so that we would leave the place. As he exerted his psychic force, the shore of the riverbank in front of us split open with a deafening

roar, creating a trench in the muddy soil. We were in a precarious situation indeed. We did not know what else he might do to harm us.

While the threat was real, we decided to continue with our practice, confident of Baba's protection. After some time, we noticed that the black magician was preparing to leave the place. One can surmise that the holy vibrations emanating from our combined Kapalika practice had somehow disturbed the occult practices of the Avidya Tantrika, who finally left the place in exasperation.

After finishing our meditation, we made our way back. On the way home, we saw a crazy elephant running about wildly on the edge of a dense forest. It was trumpeting loudly in an agitated tone. It appeared to have broken free from its chains. A part of the chain was still attached to its leg. We were careful to stay out of its path, so as not to agitate it further. It was a scary sight indeed. Fortunately, we reached home without incident.

A Famous Yogi

I remained confined in the Lucknow jail for eighteen months during the Emergency period. I was released in April 1977 soon after the Emergency was lifted.

After my release, I had the privilege of meeting an elevated and well-known spiritual personality who was revered as a saint. He was known as Roti Baba. He lived in a remote village in Raibareilly, Uttar Pradesh. The local people considered him as Subhash Chandra Bose in disguise, one of India's most famous freedom fighters.

He was tall by Indian standards, more than six feet in height. He was also very good-looking. The people of the region considered him a great Yogi. He always remained bare bodied.

A new Margii told me about this saint. After hearing about him, I wished to personally meet him. One day, I had the opportunity of meeting him at his residence. I went with the Margii and Acarya Apurvananda Avadhuta.

We arrived at the Yogi's ashram very early in the morning. We introduced ourselves as monks of Ananda Marga. He welcomed us warmly and took us into his personal chamber. We sat down facing him and paid our salutations.

He started the conversation by profusely praising Baba, stressing the point that we were very fortunate to have Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii as our Guru. At that time, Baba was still in prison. He said that Baba would be released very soon and that no power on earth could confine Him against His will. He stressed that we should remain sincerely devoted to Him and that our lives would be successful if we did so.

We were rather surprised to hear a non-Margii saint praising Baba. We were even more surprised at his foreknowledge of Baba's release from prison. It was as if he could tell the future.

He offered us fruit and sweets for breakfast, hospitality that we gladly accepted. After we finished breakfast, we left the ashram.

Swami Bhutanath

Another well-known Tantrika whom I had the opportunity of meeting was Swami Bhutanath. He lived in an impressive ashram near Chinhat, a little distance from Lucknow. He was one of the most famous Tantrika gurus of his time.

The late Mrs. Indira Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India, used to visit him occasionally. Swami Bhutanath gave her a garland of *rudraksha* beads empowered by special mantras, which she wore around her neck. An empowered *rudraksha* necklace is believed to bestow protective powers on the wearer. Many well-known Indian political leaders and senior government officers used to visit him for various reasons.

I went to visit him at his ashram accompanied by two other acaryas. When we arrived, an attendant informed him of our arrival. He greeted us warmly and took us into his personal room. He was very courteous and respectful toward us. He inquired about our welfare and asked about Baba. After a brief discussion, we paid our respects and thanked him for agreeing to meet us.

His parting statements to us were prophetic. Like the Yogi Roti Baba, he also said that Baba would soon be released from jail. Then, facing the two avadhutas who accompanied me, he said that they would not continue for long with the Guru and that they would desert Him. He then turned toward me and said that I would remain with Baba until the end and would consequently receive His grace.

At that time, I found such talk quite disconcerting. If it were true, he likely had an occult power called Karna Pishacinii Siddhi. This occult power enables a Yogi to know the past, present, and future and to read the minds of people. The occult practice to attain this power falls within a branch of Avidya Tantra.

As he predicted, the acaryas concerned left Ananda Marga after some time.

CHAPTER 5

POST-EMERGENCY PHASE

During the Emergency period, Ananda Marga was forced to go underground due to the Indian government's relentless persecution. Thousands of missionary workers and Margiis were arrested and imprisoned without trial. Some of the workers were inhumanly tortured. I omit a description of such torture in this book as it is too gory and defies civilized behavior. Our buildings were also forcibly occupied by the government. Some were destroyed. Our social service and spiritual programs were halted. However, in countries outside India, missionary workers who were not under arrest were still doing good work. Even that was difficult, as the Indian foreign offices in other countries spread vicious lies about Ananda Marga to foreign governments. The Emergency was a dark and painful phase in Ananda Marga's history. In that dark period, the institutional landscape was virtually a desert.

After the Emergency was lifted, green shoots of life sprung up everywhere, both in and outside India. Baba was honorably released from prison on the auspicious day of August 2, 1978, after being acquitted of all charges. The workers and Margiis were released unconditionally. Ananda Marga renewed its social and spiritual activities all over the world with much vigor.

This section of the book describes some of the fascinating incidents that occurred during that dynamic phase and how Baba's invisible hand guided everything. Ananda Marga flourished as an organization and a mission all over the world.

Escaping the Jaws of Death

Baba's grace knew no bounds. Whenever a devotee called out to Him earnestly, He was sure to respond, just as a father would when he hears his child's cries.

I recall an incident in which Baba saved a devotee from the clutches of death. It occurred sometime in 1978.

After the Emergency was lifted, I was released from jail, together with many political prisoners. I was then posted as the Regional Secretary of the Allahabad region, Uttar Pradesh. There, I met a good Margii family, Dr. Ramchandra and his wife. They were from Mau, a town in Uttar Pradesh. Although he was a new Margii, he was a good and sincere devotee. He did very good work for Ananda Marga and established a unit in the town. Dharmacakra was held at his house weekly. His wife too was a good Margii. I visited their place regularly.

One day Dr. Ramchandra's wife was bitten by a deadly cobra when she tried to get some wheat flour from a box in the kitchen. A cobra is a highly venomous snake, and its bite is potentially fatal. If untreated, death can occur within thirty minutes.

After being bitten by the snake, she dashed out of the kitchen, screaming in pain. She was in shock and suffering excruciating pain from the snakebite. On hearing her cries, her husband rushed to her

side and saw the poisonous snake coiled ominously inside the box containing the wheat flour.

The family members in the house were seized with fright at seeing the snake. They knew that death was certain if she did not get timely medical help. They carried her and laid her down, trying their best to treat her while consoling her. Within minutes her body turned blue, and she lapsed into unconsciousness.

In desperation, the family members called out to Baba for help, seeking His intervention to save her life. In the meantime, they did whatever they could to treat her while she lay motionless. All family members were by her side tending to her the whole night.

Miraculously, she regained consciousness the next day. Her condition improved quickly, and within a day, she'd recovered to a great extent.

I happened to visit the family after a few days and learned of the incident from her. She explained excitedly how Baba had saved her from certain death. She clarified that when she had been unconscious, she'd had a vision in which Baba appeared to her and assured her that she would soon recover from the snakebite.

This is one of many instances when Baba came to the rescue of His devotees and saved them from certain death.

A New Lease on Life

Baba was acquitted from the Patna jail on August 2, 1978, after the charges against Him were quashed by the Patna High Court. It was a historic moment, symbolizing an immutable truth—the victory of good over evil. Thousands of jubilant Margiis from all over the world thronged the prison gates to welcome Him.

As the car carrying Baba reached the gate, the Margiis surged toward the vehicle to welcome Him amid deafening chants of "Param Pita Baba Ki, Jai!" ("Victory to the Supreme Father!") He was driven to His residence in Patna. All along the route elated Margiis joined the procession in a convoy, triumphantly raising slogans of victory. Even members of the public joyously joined the procession, while others looked out from their houses.

Baba spent some time to recover from the adverse effects of His poisoning in prison. The prison doctor had poisoned him with an overdose of barbiturates. Following this Baba had undertaken a long protest fast. The effects of the poison had caused serious health problems that had left Him weak and bedridden.

Soon after, sometime in September, He called for a meeting to discuss organizational matters. This was the first meeting He chaired after nearly seven years. All the workers were excited and anxiously awaited His audience. For many workers, this was the first time for them to meet Baba.

When I found out about the meeting, I rushed to Patna. I managed to reach the venue shortly after the meeting had begun. When I arrived, I saw Baba intently listening to the progress reports of the workers inside the hall. Outside the hall, a respected Margii, Bhaktapravar Bindeshvari, who was a very senior spiritual aspirant, was inspiring the Margiis with his contagious devotion. By mere touch, he was awakening the kundalinii of those near him. Such was Bindeshvari, an advanced, childlike devotee, who was most of the time absorbed in very high states of devotion and spiritual ecstasy and often raised the kundalinii of other spiritual aspirants. What a strange, mystical environment it was!

Meanwhile, during the meeting, Baba suddenly remarked that Bindeshvari was going to die shortly and that he was unaware of his impending death. Baba's unexpected assertion shocked us, piercing our hearts like a cold blade. We were stunned. As the gravity of the statement slowly sunk in, a dark wave of anguish swept over us.

Baba, however, was normal, unaffected in any way. Soon after, Baba left the hall and went into His room. We informed Acarya Ramtanuk, a senior family acarya, about what Baba had mentioned. He was also pained at hearing Bindeshvari's fate.

Unable to accept the news, he immediately went to Baba and beseeched Him to save Bindeshvari's life, as his worldly duties were still unfinished and there was no one in his family to take care of his young children. We also joined Acarya Ramtanuk and pleaded for Baba's divine intervention to save Bindeshvari.

Baba, however, was not persuaded by our persistent pleas. He nonchalantly responded that birth and death were natural and that He could not intervene in such matters. Undeterred, we continued to plead for His intervention to alter Bindeshvari's destiny.

Meanwhile, Baba proceeded to the hall to address the Margiis. While He was delivering a discourse, Bindeshvari suddenly dropped dead in the verandah just outside the hall. There was a sudden commotion among the Margiis when they realized that Bindeshvari had died. Some of them rushed into the hall to inform Baba of Bindeshvari's demise.

The Margiis pleaded with Baba to revive him. Margiis and acaryas alike respected and loved Bindeshvari as an elder brother on the path of spirituality. The scene at that time was chaotic and high-strung. Everyone present joined in chorus to plead for Bindeshvari's life.

Baba, however, remained unmoved by our pleas. Nonetheless, we continued to plead for His mercy.

After a while, perhaps due to our incessant entreaties, Baba changed His mind. He told us that if we could fetch a few red hibiscus flowers, He might try to do something to save Bindeshvari. He instructed that Bindeshvari's corpse be brought inside the hall and placed in front of Him.

In the meantime, a Margii who was Baba's security guard at that time brought the flowers from the compound of the jagrti and handed them to Baba. Baba took the flowers and stared at them for a while. He crushed the flowers between His palms while murmuring some inaudible mantras. He then put a few drops of the juice of the crushed hibiscus flowers on Bindeshvari's lips. As soon as the juice entered his lips, we could see some muscular twitches in his body. Slowly, other vital signs of the revival of his life-force appeared.

Baba then asked the Margiis to hold Bindeshvari's feet and legs firmly. Bindeshvari's body then convulsed uncontrollably, a welcome sign of life. Breath returned to his body, and he began to take long inhalations and exhalations. After a while, he tried to get up, as if he had just awoken from deep slumber. Seeing this, we could not hold back our excitement. We were overjoyed that our beloved brother had been resurrected from the dead and deeply grateful to Baba for giving him a second life. This incident was the second time Baba resurrected him from death. Altogether Baba saved Bindeshvari three times from the jaws of death.

Earlier, Baba had instructed the Margiis not to reveal anything about the amazing incident to Bindeshvari or the fact that he had died.

Baba told us that He had extended Bindeshvari's life by a few years. Those who witnessed the event felt blessed. Even today, whenever I think of this incredible incident, my body trembles with devotion to Him. How fortunate Ananda Margiis are to have been devotees of the Sadguru, who was the Lord of life and death.

RDS Meeting

The first Review, Defect, Solution (RDS) meeting that Baba chaired after His release from prison on August 2, 1978, was held in the Patna jagrti. The RDS meeting was a periodic reporting session with Baba where work-related matters were discussed and problems resolved.

I was extremely delighted to receive the instruction to attend the meeting in September 1978. I desperately wanted to have His divine audience and fatherly love, which I deeply missed when Baba had been imprisoned.

During the RDS meeting, Baba was very annoyed with us for our poor work performance. He admonished us and made it clear that He was very unhappy with us for doing nothing to help the suffering humanity during His imprisonment. I could clearly see the pain written across His face due to our inaction. It was almost as if we had betrayed His trust.

Baba was uncompromising when it came to organizational and service work and accepted no excuse for delays or shortfalls in delivery. He had reminded us so many times before that the monks and nuns of Ananda Marga donned orange robes as a symbol of personal sacrifice for the larger human family and that we were not to look after our own comfort and convenience.

I was a little shaken by the severity of His scolding. After such a long absence, I had expected Him to be more loving toward us, knowing that the Emergency period was a dark phase in Ananda Marga's history and that we had been forced to go underground to escape imprisonment. At the least, Baba could have pointed out our shortcomings a little more gently.

Such negative thoughts festered in my mind for a few days and made me depressed. One day, after lunch, the toxic thoughts played up in my mind again, and I was feeling very upset with Baba for not understanding our difficult situation during the Emergency and scolding us unnecessarily. As I was thinking like this, I received word that Baba wanted to see me. I immediately rushed to His residence. I entered His room and prostrated before Him. Straight away, Baba asked me why I was so angry with Him. Without waiting for a reply, He gently explained that as Guru He had accepted a heavy responsibility to ensure our welfare. He added that He had to be a hard taskmaster against His wishes, just to get work done and to improve our capabilities, so that we could become better instruments of God. He then lovingly pulled my arm closer to Him and asked me if Baba liked to punish His workers. He stressed that He had to punish us for our welfare and that His love for us compelled Him to correct us through punishment.

I was moved by Baba's simple but powerful explanation. I realized that Guru loves all as His children. Just as a father would correct the misbehavior of his child, so Baba constantly watched over us as He rectified our mistakes and weaknesses in order that we might become perfect instruments of the Supreme Entity.

I considered myself really fortunate to have had a glimpse of Baba's compassion. I vowed never to react to His reprimands in future.

Joshimath School

The activities of Ananda Marga in the Himalayan hill station of Joshimath were under my supervision. We had a school there.

Joshimath is in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It is situated more than six thousand feet above sea level and is a gateway to several Himalayan centers of pilgrimage. It is one of the four monasteries established by Sri Shankaracharya, the eighth century Indian saint-philosopher. It is also the base station to trek to the famed Valley of Flowers.

We had a problem brewing at the Joshimath School between the parents and the school authorities that had to be resolved. The local volunteer at the school invited me to help sort out the issue. Despite my deep attraction to the Himalayas, I was reluctant to go to Joshimath because of its freezing climate. Joshimath was very cold even in March, and I would invariably suffer because of my weak constitution. I therefore sent another worker to Joshimath in my place. He went as instructed but was unable to resolve the problem.

Once, during the RDS meeting in March, Baba summoned me to His room and inquired about our school in Joshimath. He mentioned that Joshimath was a difficult place and that I must take special care of the school. During the conversation, He asked me if I had personally visited the place. I replied that I had yet to go there. Baba was unhappy to learn that I had never been there. He instructed me to proceed immediately to Joshimath to take stock of the situation and to resolve the school's problems.

As instructed, I immediately proceeded to Joshimath. I went through Rishikesh and Haridvara at the foothills of the Himalayas in northern India and through magnificent hill towns like Devprayaga, Rudraprayaga, Karnaprayaga, and Nandaprayaga.

This was the first time ever that I had encountered the celestial splendor of the Himalayas and visited places of such breathtaking natural beauty.

When I arrived at Joshimath, the acarya posted there was happy to see me. After talking with him, I assessed the situation carefully and decided to call for a parents-and-teachers meeting to discuss the problems facing the school. At the meeting, I sought their help to solve the problems so that the school could continue to operate normally. Fortunately, the parents expressed their willingness to find a solution. In this way, the problems facing the school were resolved.

Before I left Joshimath, the acarya took me to the cave of Shankaracarya. There, I met the then Shankaracarya of Joshimath, Swami Shantananda. He was well acquainted with our school and the acarya and carried a good impression of our educational activities.

I stayed there for some time to enjoy the natural scenic beauty of the place. From there I also went to Vishnuprayaga, which was ten kilometers away. The exquisite beauty of the sparkling white, snow-clad mountains and deep emerald-green lakes was hypnotic. I stayed there for four days and thoroughly enjoyed my spiritual practice. I now understood why Yogis had made the Himalayas their home. The Himalayas are not only a place of surreal beauty but also possess a natural holiness that is difficult to define. These qualities make it an excellent place for spiritual practice.

My visit to Joshimath was eye-opening. Despite my fear of cold weather, I had been compelled to go there by Baba. And there I experienced heaven on earth and shed my fear of the cold. Our volunteers in Joshimath were also very inspired by my visit, which helped to resolve the problems at the school.

The main lesson I learned from this incident was to discharge my responsibilities dutifully and not to delegate my responsibilities to others for any reason. At the following RDS meeting, Baba was pleased to hear that the problems at the Ananda Marga School in Joshimath had been amicably resolved with the support of the local community.

Resolving Disputes

Baba guided us in everything, from personal to organizational issues and from mundane to spiritual matters. Below I recount several incidents where Baba personally guided us in resolving disputes with the authorities.

The first was a land dispute in Jarva, Uttar Pradesh. The state government had awarded Ananda Marga with a parcel of state land to start a kindergarten and children's home for the destitute children in Jarva. For some unknown reason, the government later went back on its decision and informed us that it wanted the land back.

The government's reversal was shocking. We already made preparations to construct the buildings. I immediately informed the then Ananda Marga General Secretary of the problem and sought his advice. He informed Baba about the government's decision. At the next RDS meeting, Baba advised me to meet a particular government officer and instructed me to explain the problem to him. He said that the officer would be able to help me in finding a solution.

I met the relevant officer and explained the problem we were facing. He was very helpful and suggested a solution. Ultimately, the problem was resolved, and we got our land back.

The second incident took place in Allahabad, a large metropolitan city in Uttar Pradesh. As in the previous case, the municipality of Allahabad had also leased a piece of land and a building to us to start a school.

When the Emergency was declared in 1975, Ananda Marga was banned. The missionary workers and Margiis were summarily arrested and imprisoned. All our social activities came to a grinding halt. Taking advantage of the situation, a senior government official, the Additional District Magistrate, made arrangements to take over for himself the plot of land the local council had given to us.

After the Emergency was lifted in April 1977, we took up this case with the government, with a view to having the land reinstated to us for our social service projects. However, we met with strong resistance from the concerned official. He was unwilling to return the land to us.

Acarya Girijananda Avadhuta was the Regional Secretary of the Allahabad region at that time. He pursued this matter with the officer but failed to convince him to return the land to us. We thus took up the matter with the higher authority, the minister of the concerned department. We met him and explained the problem to him. He was fully aware of the matter and agreed to help us. He called the Additional District Magistrate and advised him to return the leased land to Ananda Marga. The official was not willing to oblige, however.

The minister then took a firm stand and suspended the official for abusing his powers. Eventually, the government returned the plot of land and school building to us. Baba followed this matter very closely and guided Acarya Girijananda on the appropriate line of action to adopt. Later, when I became the Regional Secretary

of Allahabad, Baba instructed me to remain vigilant about the properties of Ananda Marga.

The third case involved our own property, a school building in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh. Similar to the previous case, the state government allowed the armed police to occupy the school building during the Emergency period.

When the Emergency was lifted, the police were unwilling to return the property to us. Acarya Girijananda informed Baba about the problem. Baba directed him to approach several ministers to help resolve the problem. With their intervention, our building was recovered.

Kanyakumari

My visit to Kanyakumari, formerly known as Cape Comorin, in the state of Tamil Nadu, was inspired by the biography of Swami Vivekananda, who visited the place during his extended pilgrimage all over India.

Kanyakumari is situated at the confluence of the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea at the southernmost tip of the Indian peninsula. It is an enchanting place, where one can see the magnificence of the sunrise and sunset and the beauty of the vast, open sea.

It is said that Swami Vivekananda, the Indian monk who first introduced Yoga and Vedanta philosophy to the Western world, visited Kanyakumari. He walked all over India and reached Kanyakumari sometime in December 1892. He was on a pilgrimage on the instructions of his guru Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

The story goes that upon reaching Kanyakumari, he had no money left to take a boat to his final destination. He thus swam across the shark-infested sea to reach his destination, a mid-sea rock. When he finally reached the rock, he sat on it and meditated. In his meditation, he had a strange vision in which he saw the past, present, and future of his beloved motherland India float before his eyes as well as the causes and solutions to India's malady. He felt that the solution to India's many problems and abject poverty lay in what made India great in the first place, that is, her spiritual consciousness. Sitting on the rock, he resolved to go to the West to propagate India's immortal spiritual heritage and to seek the help of the Western world to get India's millions out of the poverty trap.

This historic incident in the life of Swami Vivekananda inspired me greatly when I was a young boy. I was so inspired by the story that I decided that I would one day visit the rock and meditate on it, as had Swami Vivekananda more than a hundred years ago.

A temple had been built on the rock in Swamiji's memory. It is now an iconic tourist destination and a place of pilgrimage.

Rama's Bridge

I recall reading as a child the mythological story of Lord Rama constructing the bridge connecting India to Sri Lanka. The story is narrated in the popular Indian epic *Ramayana*.

In Sanskrit, the bridge is known as Setu Bandha Rameshvaram. In reality, the bridge is actually a magnificent geological formation of a chain of limestone shoals and coral reefs that connects Rameswaram Island, located in the southeastern coast of Tamil Nadu in India, to Mannar Island, located off the northwestern coast of Sri Lanka.

When I was a child, the story deeply inspired me. A desire formed in me to see the bridge for myself one day. My childhood desire was realized when I went to Sri Lanka with Brother Bhaktvatsalam of Salem for Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT) relief work.

The town of Rameswaram has an awe-inspiring beach, which attracts thousands of tourists all year round. I found the view from the beach simply breathtaking. I did my meditation there and thoroughly enjoyed it.

From there, we went to the Rameswaram Temple, which is located about twelve kilometers from Rameswaram. The walls of the temple are high. It is reputed to have the longest temple corridor in India, with over four thousand pillars.

On our return journey, we visited the Miinaksii Amman Temple, another famous tourist icon that draws tens of thousands of tourists daily.

I enjoyed my visit to Rameswaram and greatly appreciated the opportunity of seeing Rama's Bridge for myself as well as the historical temple structures, which are architectural wonders.

Kalpataru: The Wish-Fulfilling Tree

It was 1979. I was then working as a sectorial worker of the Seva Dharma Mission (SDM), an Ananda Marga organization. Acarya Vinayananda Avadhuta was the Chief Secretary of SDM.

Baba had just returned from His hectic tour of eighteen Dharma Maha Cakras. I had attended fourteen of them. The DMCs had

one common characteristic—they awakened a spine-tingling flow of devotion among the Margiis.

At that time, Baba was frequently conducting review meetings with the central workers to gauge the progress of work under their supervision. He was displeased with our poor work performance, particularly regarding work related to the propagation of Ananda Marga and the Education, Relief, and Welfare activities. Being an SDM worker, I was also implicated.

On December 11, 1979, the Central Training Secretary, Acarya Satyaparananda Avadhuta, was asked to present his progress report to Baba. Baba was then residing in Madhumalainca, Lake Gardens, Kolkata. In his report, he gave detailed information on each trainee who was undergoing acarya training at the training center in Varanasi. During the report, Baba interjected and inquired about a boy who had promised to become a missionary worker during his Personal Contact at the Tripura DMC. Baba asked whether the boy had reported for training.

He replied in the affirmative and clarified that the boy had left the training center after a short stint, as he could not adjust to the strict conduct rules and the spartan lifestyle at the center.

Baba then inquired whether he knew anything about the boy's personal life history. He replied that he did. He went on to describe the trainee's name, qualifications, permanent address, information regarding his parents, and so on.

Baba smiled and asked whether he knew about the boy's past lives. Acarya Satyaparananda kept silent and did not respond. Baba quipped that the Central Training Secretary should know about the past lives of all the trainees under his supervision.

Baba then asked him to hold the big toe of His right foot. When he held Baba's toe, Baba described in detail fourteen past lives of the boy and seven past lives of the boy's father and mother. He again stressed that the trainer should know the past lives of all his trainees.

Baba quipped that He was illiterate and lacked worldly knowledge, but by dint of the acarya's occult powers, He could know the past lives of the trainee. With a mischievous grin, Baba asked him how he had acquired such a great power.

Acarya Satyaparananda remained silent. Baba then asked him to invite the rest of the workers waiting outside the room. He added that perhaps they might be able to provide the answer to His question.

We were all eagerly waiting outside Baba's room. As soon as the acarya informed us that Baba was calling us, we rushed into His room.

We paid our salutations in the usual manner. Baba then informed us that He had a knotty problem for us to resolve. He said that the Central Training Secretary knew some magic and that by dint of that magic, Baba could narrate the past lives of a trainee after the concerned acarya had grasped His big toe. He then asked us if we knew how that had happened.

We were all enjoying Baba's light, playful mood, while taking cognizance of the deeper significance of His demonstration. In a single chorus, we replied that it was His divine sport and because He was omnipotent and omniscient, He did not require any external aid to accomplish what He desired.

Baba then changed the subject. There was a dramatic shift in His countenance, from a playful mood to a serious expression. Somehow,

the environment in the room also changed. He told us that He would grant us a special boon and that He would fulfill whatever we desired in our hearts. Hearing this, we were thunderstruck as the gravity of His unexpected offer sank in. We did not know how to respond and just continued to gaze at His face, speechless. After what seemed to be an eternity, Baba said that He would assume the form of Kalpataru, the mythological wish-fulfilling tree, for a period of five minutes and, in that state, we should each request a boon from Him. He then made a strange mudra, a hand gesture I had not seen before, while imploring us to ask for anything we desired.

As He waited for our reaction, the moments ticked away slowly in a state of suspense. No one spoke a word. The silence was deafening. Time seemed to have frozen in its tracks. At that moment, we were only conscious of Him, nothing else. In that state of one-pointedness, we did not realize that the five minutes had lapsed. Baba broke the silence by saying that we had missed a golden opportunity, as no one had taken up His offer of a boon. He then repeated that He wished to give us another chance to redeem the lost opportunity and again assumed the form of Kalpataru for another five minutes.

As before, no one spoke. No one took up the offer, and again, the time lapsed. Then, slowly, Baba turned toward Acarya Asiiimananda Avadhuta and said that being the Central Press Secretary, he was always under pressure to establish a printing press in every diocese. He should thus request the Kalpataru for Vak Siddhi, a spiritual power that ensures that whatever one says becomes a reality. Baba added that with that spiritual power, Acarya Asiiimananda could establish as many printing presses as he wished just by wishing it. Acarya Asiiimananda replied that he did not require any occult power to accomplish his work, as everything happened by His grace alone. Then Baba turned toward the then Dharma Pracara Secretary and suggested he ask for Anima Siddhi, another spiritual

power. Baba clarified that through this spiritual power the acarya would not have to spend any money on postal expenditures, as he would be able to convey messages to the Margiis telepathically. He too politely declined the offer. Next, Baba turned to the ERAWS Secretary, Acarya Keshavananda Avadhuta, and then to Acarya Ramananda Avadhuta and requested they ask for a boon from Him. Both declined the offer. Finally, Baba turned to me and said that He would grant me the power of Antaryamitva Siddhi, the spiritual power to know everything and by which people would be attracted toward me. I replied in the same way as the others.

Seeing that no one had taken up the offer of the Kalpataru, He became more emphatic and again pressed us to request for any boon, any spiritual power that we might desire. We were adamant, however, and said that we wanted nothing but Him.

Baba appeared to be happy with us and explained that a spiritual aspirant should never ask for anything from the Sadguru. And even if the Sadguru insisted on giving a boon to a devotee, he or she should only ask for *para bhakti*, complete devotion, and nothing else. He further explained that when a spiritual aspirant attains *para bhakti*, he or she indeed attains everything. Those who possess *para bhakti* attain the supreme goal.

Leaving Baba

Sometime toward the end of 1979, the central office advised me to apply for an international passport. My application for a passport was approved by the authorities and was ready for collection on December 21, 1979. Accordingly, I informed Acarya Pranavananda Avadhuta, the then Office Secretary, that I could collect my passport anytime. He informed me that I should prepare to go to the Berlin sector for my next posting.

His response was disturbing. Mentally, I was not prepared to go to the Berlin sector, as I was worried about the cold climate in Europe and the excessively materialistic lifestyle of the people. I was unsure of my ability to adjust to these difficult conditions, which would pose a hurdle in accomplishing Baba's mission in the country.

These vexing thoughts worked up a storm in my mind, and I wondered why Baba had become so heartless. Why did He choose to chase me away from Him? I did not know a single Margii there. In addition, because of the choking grip of materialism, I was unsure if I could arouse the sentiment of devotion in the hearts of the people. I was unsure if I could win their love and affection. My mind was swirling with such niggling thoughts.

Those were the early, heady days of *madhura* sadhana, when Baba would shower us with His love and affection. I wanted to be near Him always and dreaded the possibility of losing that privilege. I thus requested Acarya Pranavananda to delay my departure a little, at least until the New Year DMC.

Acarya Pranavananda became annoyed with me and warned me that if I persisted with my request to delay my departure, he would inform Baba that I was unwilling to accept my new posting. His response was discomfoting. I was in a state of helpless melancholy. I mentally blamed Baba for my plight.

My flight was scheduled on December 24, 1979. I did not want to be away from Baba and to take up my new posting. I was feeling very depressed. In the afternoon on the day of my departure, Baba called me. I went before Him with a heavy heart. Looking straight into my eyes, He gently raised the subject of my new posting in the Berlin sector. As soon as He mentioned it, I began to cry. He consoled me and asked me what was troubling me. He said that I was going to the

Berlin sector as His representative in order to expedite that pace of establishing His divine mission. He said that I would be successful in whatever I did there and that I would not find it difficult to adjust with the food or the people. He said that the Margiis there would love me just like the Margiis in India and that the Margiis in Europe and India were similar in nature. He also told me not to worry that I would be leaving Him for a distant land, as He lived in my heart. He stressed that He was not far away from me. Saying that, He assured me that whenever I called Him, He would be there physically.

Baba's words were soothing and dissipated all my worries. Then He blessed me. At that moment, an electric bliss vibrated my body, saturating every cell. My heart was flooded with His divine love, exploding through every cell. In that state of transcendental bliss, I unconsciously massaged His lotus feet.

Suddenly, something strange happened. Baba's body became transparent and had a pink hue. I could see a bundle of nerves permeating His whole body. His blood was pink too. Baba then commanded me to smell His feet. The strong aroma of fresh *kevada* flowers emanated from His feet. It was an intoxicating but sublime feeling. Then He extended the palm of His right hand and asked me to smell it. It smelled like fresh roses. After that, He asked me to smell His head. It smelled like *candan* flowers. Lastly, He asked me to smell His navel, which emitted a strong smell of the lotus flower.

This divine experience transported me into another sublime world. I went into spiritual trance (samadhi) and lost awareness of the physical world. I must have been in samadhi for a long time. When I regained consciousness and opened my eyes, I found that Baba was softly massaging my body.

After some time, I dimly heard Acarya Pranavananda say that my taxi had arrived and that I should go immediately. By that time, my consciousness of the mundane world was clearer, and I had somewhat regained control of my physical body. I hurriedly got up, prostrated before Baba, and went out to the waiting taxi. I saw that my luggage had already been placed neatly in the trunk of the taxi.

We reached the airport after some time. After the immigration and airport formalities, I was on the plane to Germany. The plane landed in the Snow Field Airport in East Germany. From there, I took a train across the Berlin Wall and reached Berlin in West Germany.

After taking up my new position in the Berlin sector, I realized the truth of Baba's words that I would be able to adjust to the new environment without much difficulty and that the Margiis there were similar in nature to the Margiis in India.

CHAPTER 6

DHARMA MAHA CAKRA

Dharma Maha Cakra (DMC) means “a great circle of those following dharma.” DMCs were very special spiritual events where Baba gave a series of spiritual discourses and a special blessing through the Varabhaya Mudra, a special spiritual gesture Baba used to give the blessing of fearlessness and all-round protection to those present. Many extraordinary things happened at DMCs. There was probably no forum to partake of Baba’s blessings so freely as in a DMC. One really had to be there to experience it. Words alone cannot adequately describe the magical atmosphere at a DMC.

I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend several DMC functions. The most significant ones for me were those that took place in 1978 and thereafter. This is because by then I had matured spiritually to better appreciate His noncausal grace. I was inducted into a special assembly of senior spiritual aspirants known as *Madhura Gosthii*, whom Baba considered worthy of attaining the lofty state of *radha bhava*. Radha bhava is the penultimate stage of realization that a spiritual aspirant has to transcend before attaining liberation and merging with his or her goal.

Having realized the singular significance of DMCs, I did not want to miss out any opportunity to participate in such special functions.

Baba's unconditional release from prison on August 2, 1978, gave a tremendous boost in confidence to the Margiis and expedited the organization's activities and service projects a thousandfold.

After a brief period of recuperation, Baba embarked on an all-India and world tour between 1978 and 1979. It was an unforgettable time. He conducted twenty-four DMCs during that phase and released an unprecedented wave of devotional inspiration and bliss to all Margiis through these DMCs. In the first phase, four DMCs were held, one each in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai. The other twenty DMCs were conducted in several locations in India and in specific cities outside India.

The DMCs were magical. In some of them, tens of thousands of Margiis from all corners of the world congregated in the intoxicating, mystical environment. There was an ocean of devotees. The intense spiritual vibrations that Baba emanated through His Varabhaya Mudra sent Margiis into heightened states of spiritual ecstasy and devotion.

Recharged by the spiritual vibrations of the DMCs, Margiis and missionary workers of Ananda Marga launched notable service projects throughout the globe.

Of the twenty-four DMCs, I participated in fourteen of them. I witnessed firsthand many mystical demonstrations that He conducted at the DMCs and the effects of the divine vibrations of His Varabhaya Mudra, something that defies description and explanation.

Delhi DMC, November 19, 1978: Improving Work Performance

Delhi is the capital city of India. It is very large in area and is one of the most populous cities in the world.

At that time, I was posted as the Regional Secretary of the Allahabad region. The central office instructed me to proceed to Delhi to attend the DMC and to bring along as many Margiis of the region as possible.

When I informed the Margiis about the Delhi DMC, they were all very enthusiastic and eager to go. The Margiis and their families made immediate preparations to travel to Delhi. I could understand their excitement. Margiis had been deprived of DMCs during the period of Baba's incarceration in prison.

As soon as I reached Delhi, Baba instructed me to report the organizational work that I had accomplished. One cannot understand the immense joy I felt just to be near Him and to serve Him.

Baba informed me that He loved me very much and that since He loved me, He would utilize me as His medium. He lamented that some of the missionary workers had slackened in their work performance during His physical absence due to poor human resource management. He said that He would use me as the medium to punish the erring workers. He then inquired if I would be disturbed by this. I replied that I would. He said nothing, and after a short while, He asked me to leave the room.

Soon after, Baba's Personal Assistant called me and told me to go into Baba's room. As soon as I entered, Baba admonished me for the poor performance of the Diocese Secretaries of Meerut,

Bareilly, and Jhansi. He said that the schools under their supervision were substandard and poorly managed. The Diocese Secretary of Meerut, who was standing just outside the room, was asked to present himself to Baba. Baba scolded him harshly for his poor performance and punished him. I was punished too for having failed in my responsibility of supervising his work. I was his immediate supervisor.

The news of the punishment spread like wildfire and created a stir among the missionary workers to improve their work performance.

The following day, Baba summoned all the workers to a meeting to discuss their deplorable work performance. At the meeting, He instructed me to inform Him of the shortcomings of my subordinate workers. As I revealed the workers' faults one by one, He punished me severely and told the workers that He was punishing their superior officer for their faults and poor performance.

On hearing this, all the workers present appealed to Baba not to punish me, as I was not at fault. They promised Him that they would now work much harder and make up for lost time.

This assurance satisfied Baba somewhat, and He stopped punishing me. However, He continued to punish the other workers. Baba's punishment had the desired effect on the workers. They vowed to work sincerely and accelerate the speed of missionary work.

In contrast, Baba's demeanor during the DMC was much lighter. At the DMC, He released a surge of blissful vibrations for the benefit of all present. He created such a powerful spiritual wave that it penetrated into the core of every devotee's heart.

I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity of being utilized by Baba as the medium to correct and reenergize erring missionary workers.

Bhopal DMC, February 22, 1979: Fatherly Love

Bhopal is the capital of the state of Madhya Pradesh. It is a beautiful city with many lakes and is one of India's greenest cities.

This was my second DMC. About ten years earlier, I had worked as the Diocese Secretary of Bhopal, when I had been the main organizer for a DMC there in 1969. This time, however, as a sectorial worker, I was given the task of preparing a group of Margiis to participate in the *kaoshikii* and tandava dance performances before Baba.

Acarya Narendra of Raipur attended this DMC together with hundreds of Margiis, who were members of the Chhattisgarh Samaja. I arranged for the group to meet Baba.

The DMC program at Bhopal went very well. Everyone was overjoyed. The Margiis and workers who attended the program basked in the warmth of being close to Baba. On His part, Baba showered them with fatherly love and affection. I too experienced His boundless grace and love.

Jammu DMC, February 26, 1979: Nothing Can Keep Him Away from His Devotees

Jammu is the largest city in Jammu and Kashmir, the northernmost state of India.

Baba was recovering from His prolonged fast during His incarceration, which had adversely affected His health. Despite His

failing health, Baba was back at work just after a few days of rest. He was the epitome of hard work and kept clockwork regularity in implementing organizational, social, and spiritual tasks. He slept only about two hours a day. His waking hours were utilized in administrative work and strengthening the foundations of the various organizations under Ananda Marga's oversight, monitoring the numerous service projects, dictating notes on different subjects of interest, and guiding His devotees, among other tasks.

Baba's incarceration in prison and the long fast He undertook in response to the government's mistreatment had taken a toll on His health. Despite that, He paid no attention to His fragile health and continued to hold meetings with the workers and Margiis and bless His devotees. Nothing could keep Him away from His devotees. I saw how He inspired them to work harder and extracted promises from them to accomplish seemingly impossible targets.

Baba took a flight to Jammu. In Jammu, He stayed at the residence of Dr. Sehgal, who was a devoted and active Margii. This was my first visit to Jammu. I found the DMC very inspiring. Baba showered His love and blessing on me on several occasions during His stay in Jammu. I can hardly describe the immense joy that I felt and how blessed I was to be a recipient of His love and grace.

Kanpur DMC, March 20, 1979: Baba's Displeasure

Kanpur, situated on the banks of the Ganges River, is the largest industrial city of Uttar Pradesh.

The DMC in Kanpur held a special significance for me, as I was its Central Coordinator. It was my responsibility to ensure the success of this DMC.

Fortunately, I had previously worked in this region as Regional Secretary and hence had developed an intimate relationship with the Margiis there. Kanpur had a good team of active Margiis who worked day and night to ensure the success of the DMC. I recall the names of a few active Margiis, including Sarvashrii Arun Gupta, Upendra Jha, Jagdish Bhalla, Professor Kevaldhari, G. L. Sharma, and Tomar. Besides them, many others contributed significantly to the development of the Marga in Kanpur.

For a DMC to be held certain conditions had to be fulfilled. They include having a jagrti building, an Ananda Marga school, the Marga Guru quarters, and a printing press. If any of these conditions were unfulfilled, Baba would generally decline to conduct a DMC in that location.

The Margiis of Kanpur were determined to make the program a success. They coordinated their energies and efforts to fulfill all the requirements. First, they worked at establishing a printing press. Subsequently, they took action to address the other requirements.

On the scheduled day, Baba arrived at the Kanpur Airport. Many Margiis turned up at the airport to welcome their Guru. He was then driven to His residence.

No one anticipated the surprising turn of events that was in store for us. Arun's family had prepared Baba's meals. They had prepared many local delicacies with much love. However, when the food was served, Baba refused to take it. He made it clear that He refused to eat the food because they had failed to comply with certain conditions.

The Margiis, particularly Arun's family members, were distraught and did not know what to do. To pacify Baba, they gave Him a

written assurance to execute the required actions within a stipulated period that was agreeable to Him. With this assurance, Baba happily took the meal that had been prepared.

The DMC program was a resounding success. The Margiis enjoyed being close to Baba and hearing His discourses, which touched the inner core of their hearts.

Sometime later, Baba gave me the responsibility of contacting all the workers who had renounced missionary life. He asked me to inspire them to return to the life of a renunciant missionary worker. I contacted them, and by His grace, three workers agreed to return to the fold.

Kolkata DMC, June 15–17, 1979: Madhura Gosthii

After Baba was unconditionally released from prison, He placed special emphasis on holding DMCs in as many places as possible. Several DMC programs were drawn up to cover the whole of the Indian subcontinent as well as the different regions of the world.

This particular DMC is firmly etched in my mind, as it was a historic event when Baba first introduced Madhura Gosthii in Ananda Marga. Briefly, Madhura Gosthii is a special group of devotees among the acaryas who are inclined toward madhura bhava. Later, I will explain a little more about this special state of mind.

The Ananda Purnima DMC in 1979 was held in Park Circus, Kolkata. A large number of Margiis and workers attended the function. The first meeting of the Madhura Gosthii was convened on the day of the DMC on June 17 at the Rat-Din Hotel. The hotel was selected as it was located close to the DMC venue. Seven acaryas were present at the first meeting. They were Acarya Bhaskarananda

Avadhuta, Acarya Karunananda Avadhuta, Acarya Keshavananda Avadhuta, Acarya Ishvara Krishnananda Avadhuta, Acarya Satyatmakananda Avadhuta, Acarya Rameshananda Avadhuta, and Acarya Pranavatmakananda Avadhuta.

The second meeting of the Madhura Gosthii was held on June 19, 1979. About 13-14 persons, including Acarya Pranavatmakananda Avadhuta and myself, were present at the meeting. It was held in the Marga Guru quarters at Lake Gardens. I recall that I was then busy with an organizational task. A worker came to me and informed me that Baba had requested six missionary workers, including me, to report to Him as soon as possible. All of us quickly gathered at one place and then left for Baba's residence at the Lake Gardens. When we arrived, we entered His room. Baba was waiting for us. As usual, we prostrated before Him and then sat down quietly.

We all observed that something was pleasantly different about the room. The atmosphere was infused with blissful vibrations. A faint smile played upon Baba's lips as we sat down. He seemed to shine with a special glow. Baba was irresistibly attractive, drawing us to Him like moths drawn to light. The whole scene was bewitching and intoxicating.

As we were absorbed in beholding His charming form, He asked us in a soft and sweet tone, "Why has the Lord come to this planet?"

We were taken aback at this unexpected question. None of us knew what to say. As we were groping for a suitable answer, He revealed, "Parama Purusa is here in human form to create a flood of devotion in this planet."

The sheer gravity of His words sank in slowly. Here we were, small as we were, sitting before the almighty Lord, who had just revealed

to us the true purpose of His advent on earth. Could anything be more momentous?

Baba continued by saying that He was going to leave such an incredible surge of vibrations on the dusty soil of this planet that all its inhabitants would soon realize that they were extremely fortunate to have been born at this auspicious time. He explained that spiritual aspirants attained spiritual realization through diverse states of ideation, such as *dasya bhava* (engaging oneself as the servant of the Lord), *sakhya bhava* (feeling of friendship with the Lord), *vatsalya bhava* (feeling oneself to be a child of the Lord), and *madhura bhava* or *radha bhava* (a feeling of inseparable love and sweetness for the Lord).

In the first three stages, a feeling of duality prevails between the devotee and his or her supreme goal. However, in *madhura bhava*, a spiritual aspirant feels oneness with the Lord. Baba clarified that this stage of realization was the highest ideation for a human being. For a spiritual aspirant, the goal of devotion was to be established in *madhura bhava*.

Baba further elaborated that these stages of spiritual realization are usually attained through the grace of the Guru. However, by dint of intense spiritual practice and *kiirtan*, a spiritual aspirant could awaken the highest stage of *bhava* or spiritual ideation. Baba then explained the importance of *kiirtan* in spiritual realization.

The human being is the most evolved creature on this planet. To support life on earth and to make it meaningful, humans have developed a complex web of relationships with fellow human beings, with other creatures of the world, and with the Creator. These relationships range from physical to spiritual in different permutations. An ordinary human being relates to the world only

through the physical and mental planes of existence. Hence, a human being's association with the world is confined to relationships between mother and father, brother and sister, friend and foe, husband and wife, master and servant, humans and nature, giver and taker, and so on.

There is, however, another realm of existence beyond the physical and mental: the spiritual realm. In this subtler realm, a human being relates to the Supreme Entity through a uniquely spiritual relationship. This special relationship between the devotee and the Lord is expressed in four categories of association. The way a particular spiritual aspirant relates to the Supreme Entity depends primarily on his or her *samskara*, or reactions of his or her past actions. The four categories are:

1. *Dasya bhava*—Here the devotee considers himself or herself as a servant of the Lord, of Parama Purusa, as depicted in the mythological story of Hanuman and Lord Rama. Although this is a higher stage of devotion, duality remains between the devotee and the Supreme Entity.
2. *Sakhya bhava*—In this stage, the devotee conceives the Lord to be his or her friend. Although the devotee considers himself or herself inseparable with his or her supreme goal, having two bodies but one life-force, the feeling of duality remains. A depiction of this bhava can be found in the story of Lord Krsna and Sudama or Lord Krsna and Arjuna depicted in the *Mahabharata*.
3. *Vatsalya bhava*—In this stage, the devotee assumes himself or herself as the father or mother or foster father or foster mother of the Lord. Here too, there is duality in the relationship. This bhava is illustrated in the relationship of Vasudeva and Devakii, who were the father and mother of Lord Krsna.

4. *Madhura bhava*—In this bhava, there is no duality between the devotee and the Lord. The relationship between Radha and Lord Krsna or between Miira and Lord Krsna captures the essence of this special bhava. It is a relationship based entirely on the love between two entities.

Devotees of madhura bhava always yearn to please the Ista, their ultimate goal. They are considered to be in the highest category of spiritual realization. This stage of realization is described as *ragatmika bhakti*. When the devotee craves to realize Parama Purusa with single-minded devotion, he attains the final goal. This strong attraction of the devotee toward Parama Purusa likewise compels the Lord to pull the devotee to Him by His intense love for His devotee, enabling the devotee to merge with the supreme goal. The ideation to realize the supreme goal as the supreme love of his life by total self-surrender is called *maha bhava* or *radha bhava*. In this stage, duality ceases to exist. Radha and Krsna identify themselves to be one entity. In this stage, there remains only the intense desire to merge with the supreme goal. This stage is characterized by the feeling of intense attraction and single-minded love for the Lord, where the feeling of separation from the Lord becomes agonizingly unbearable. A devotee of radha bhava perceives this created world to be Rasamaya, that is, full of sweetness, blissful, and the embodiment of Mohana or charm.

Baba explained the history of kiirtan, which is closely associated with spirituality and devotion. During the time of Lord Sadashiva about seven thousand years ago, humanity led a life largely based on the pursuit of *satya* or truth. In the age of the *Mahabharata* 3,500 years later, however, the social environment became crooked and complex. Lord Krsna thus put maximum emphasis on Prapatti, total surrender in the attainment of liberation and salvation. Kiirtan had not evolved then.

Baba mentioned that kiirtan started in the Pauranika age. The oft-repeated *shloka*, Sanskrit verse, below has been taken from the Vishnu Purana:

Na'ham tis'tha'mi vaekunthe yogina'm hrdaya na ca

Mad bhakta' yatra ga'yanti tatra tis'tha'mi na'radah

The verse refers to Lord Vishnu's advice to Narada:

O Narada, I do not dwell in Vaikuntha

Nor do I reside in the hearts of Yogis

But wherever My devotees sing My glories.

According to the mythological story in the Puranas, Narada, who was also an exponent of kiirtan, popularized the practice of kiirtan among the common people.

Then Baba said that He would create a special group to propagate devotional sentiment in the world. It would be called Madhura Gosthii. That is the background of the establishment of the Madhura Gosthii.

Baba further said that by His grace, we had been given the opportunity to witness such a historic event and that it was now our responsibility to spread devotion among the masses and also to enroll eligible members into the Madhura Gosthii. He then blessed us with the experience of *madhura* bhava. The bliss of His special blessing cannot be imagined. The experience that day was so intense that I enjoyed that blissful state for many days thereafter.

As I contemplated the momentous revelations, it seemed to me that His sweet voice was like a drenching shower of nectar. Given the historic importance of what He was saying, I wrote down the messages in my diary for safekeeping and future reference. However, I have somehow lost that important diary. What I have written down now on this lofty subject is what I vaguely remember. Fortunately, Shri Vashistha's book *Bhakta and Bhagvana* jogged my memory. That was sufficient for me to recapture some of the messages Baba gave on that historic day.

I propagated His message of love among the Margiis and missionary workers to the best of my ability. Often, He would inquire about the progress of the Madhura Gosthii.

I used to publish articles on Madhura Gosthii in our publication *Shankhanada*. The senior members of the Madhura Gosthii actively engaged in propagating the greatness of kiirtan and devotion. Baba conducted regular meetings of the Madhura Gosthii to inspire the members.

When news of this unique forum spread, many Margiis and workers approached us to propose their names for inclusion in the Madhura Gosthii. I conveyed their desire to Baba. Sometimes, Baba would instruct either Acarya Keshavananda Avadhuta or me to include a particular worker. At other times, He would personally identify a worker and include him as a member of the Madhura Gosthii.

Once, I went to Him and recommended the names of some acaryas as members of Madhura Gosthii. However, Baba informed me that they were spiritual aspirants of a different bhava or ideation. He clarified that it would be better for them to continue with their spiritual practices according to their own state of ideation.

Ernakulam DMC, July 15, 1979: Demonstration on Tanmatras

The DMC in Ernakulam was held on July 15, 1979. Before that, a couple of DMCs were conducted in Luthiana on July 9, 1979 and in Jaipur on July 12, the same year.

Ernakulam is located in Kerala State in South India. It is a large city and serves as the commercial and financial center of Kerala.

I traveled by train to Ernakulam. It was a long and arduous journey.

All departmental and sectorial heads were required to attend every DMC. This was Baba's rule. Hence, I made every effort to attend all DMCs. At this DMC, my task was to conduct the collective performance of *kaoshikii* and tandava dances that were to be performed before Baba. Acarya Ananyananda Avadhuta was one of the workers under my supervision who assisted me here.

All the workers busied themselves with their own departmental programs when they arrived in Ernakulam. We were eager to ensure that all the necessary preparations were completed before Baba's arrival.

When Baba arrived at Ernakulam, He stayed at the residence of Gopalkrishnan, who was the District Sessions Judge in Ernakulam. Gopalkrishnan and his wife were both sincere devotees of Baba. Mrs. Gopalkrishnan prepared Baba's meals, a task she considered an unexpected privilege and implemented it with passion.

At Ernakulam, I was again blessed with the opportunity of massaging Him. While I was massaging Him, I informed Him about the Marga's activities in the region.

A three-hour Akhanda Kīrtan was organized. I led the kīrtan program. It was very inspiring, with so many Margiis dancing joyfully to the enthralling tunes of the kīrtan. Apart from the kīrtan and the inspiring atmosphere of the DMC, another point kept my mind in a constantly high state of devotion. This marked the first anniversary of the establishment of Madhura Gosthii. Since my induction into the Madhura Gosthii, I frequently experienced the highest states of devotion, which were characterized by bouts of intense bliss. I wanted to share with all devotees the intoxicating joy that I had experienced and wanted every devotee to taste that state of intense joy. I thus tried my best to develop the devotional sentiment of the Margiis so that one day they too would be able to dive deep into that ocean of bliss.

Besides those activities, I was also responsible for organizing the Personal Contact sessions. Several Margiis had been selected for Personal Contact with Baba. Among them, a university professor stood in the queue, anxiously awaiting his turn for Personal Contact. This brother secretly wanted to test Baba. He went in with that intention. When he came out, he appeared to be somewhat confused. On the other hand, the Personal Contact of an illiterate villager had been very inspiring. He was overwhelmed by the experience because Baba spoke to him in his local dialect of the Malayalam language. Baba knew more than two hundred languages of the world. In fact, that may be an understatement. Each language has several dialects, sometimes numbering more than ten, and some dialects are obscure and spoken only by a few people. I believe Baba knew all the local dialects of all the languages of the world. He proved it on a number of occasions when He spoke to some devotees in their own, sometimes little known dialects.

The DMC speech that Baba delivered at Ernakulam was very inspiring. It touched the core of the Margiis' hearts. They were all very inspired.

Apart from the very inspiring and devotional atmosphere of the DMC, Baba conducted several spiritual demonstrations during the meetings with the missionary workers. For example, He demonstrated how *tanmatras* could be converted from one state to another. *Tanmatras* are the inferences of sound, touch, taste, form, and smell with which a human being senses the objective world. The tanmatras are sensed with the help of the sense organs.

What lesson can spiritual aspirants draw from the experiences in the Personal Contact sessions? One point stands out. Baba often cautioned us that spiritual aspirants must constantly guard against vanity and arrogance, as they will only weigh down an aspirant's spiritual progress. He helped devotees by crushing their little egos and refining their personalities so that they could become better instruments of the Lord. The Lord responds sweetly to true devotees and often graces them with bliss. Only complete surrender and devotion can command His grace, nothing else.

Visakhapatnam DMC, July 18, 1979: Car Runs on Thin Air

From Ernakulam, Baba proceeded to Visakhapatnam via Madras. At Madras, Baba spent the night at Brother Shiva Bhagwan Goenka's house.

Visakhapatnam, abbreviated to Vizag, a port city in southeast India, is one of the largest cities in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

The accompanying acaryas and I planned to travel by train to Visakhapatnam early in the morning, while Baba was to take a flight at nine in the morning the same day.

This arrangement was inconvenient, as I would not be able to welcome Him when He arrived at Visakhapatnam. I was a bit distressed by this, but there was nothing I could do.

Strange as it may be, Baba missed the flight that morning. I later learned that He had called His Personal Assistant later than usual after completing His spiritual practice. This resulted in His late arrival at the airport, causing Him to miss the flight.

Baba regretted missing the flight and asked the Personal Assistant and Brother Goenka to make alternative travel arrangements. He said that His devotees were anxiously waiting for Him at Visakhapatnam. Along the way, He stressed the same point several times.

It is true that a devotee's desire to meet the Lord is immeasurable. It cannot be quantified. The Lord reciprocates such devotion by His intense desire to meet His devotees. Genuine love is reciprocal. That is why Baba willingly traveled a distance of more than one thousand kilometers by car without considering His own comfort.

Midway, a strange incident occurred. The car ran out of petrol. As there was no petrol station for at least another sixty kilometers, the driver did not know what to do. They were stranded in the middle of nowhere. To compound the matter, Baba was already delayed, and a break in the journey now would make it impossible for Him to be present at the DMC on time. As there was no other solution, Baba instructed the driver to proceed with the journey. Surprisingly, the driver was able to start the car and drove without a drop of petrol for

the next sixty kilometers until he reached a petrol station. Indeed, this amazing incident was nothing short of a miracle.

It had earlier been planned that Baba would take His meal in a town called Tadipalligudam. However, due to pressure on time, Baba instructed that they must proceed to Vizag without stopping for meals.

What I was worried about did not materialize. I reached Vizag in the evening, well before Baba's arrival. I could after all welcome Him to Vizag. Upon my arrival, I wasted no time in immersing myself in the preparatory work to welcome Baba.

The Margiis organized a small group to welcome Baba as soon as He reached Vizag. Owing to a miscommunication, however, the welcoming party led by the *Bhukti Pradhana* somehow missed Baba's car at Vizag. The car went straight to the residence that was arranged to accommodate Him. By the time He arrived, it was after two in the morning. The Margiis performed *kaoshikii* and tandava dances to welcome Him. Baba liked the performances very much.

I was very happy to see Baba and to have had the opportunity to welcome Him. It was really proof of His grace that He fulfilled my desire to welcome Him at the place chosen for His stay.

That night, Baba called me and inquired about the preparations for the DMC and the progress of service projects in that area. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to be with Him alone for some time, enjoying the nectar of His company. After that, I was so charged up with energy that I sat for meditation until daybreak. He graced me with incredible bliss in my meditation.

After breakfast, Baba went for His morning walk. Upon His return from the walk, He addressed all the Margiis, who had earlier assembled at the hall. The atmosphere there was simply enchanting. Baba began by saying that He had traveled a long distance just to be with them. His words touched the core of their hearts. Everyone present was happy beyond expectation. He then talked on a subject that I do not presently recall.

The DMC program was well managed. Baba delivered a discourse entitled "Trio in Spiritual Progress." He concluded the discourse by blessing the devotees with these words: "By the grace of the Supreme Lord you will easily surmount this dangerous maya. So, even the ordinary human beings, who take shelter in Parama Purusa's all-pervading compassion, are sure to attain the supreme excellence of spiritual grandeur. Nobody has any reason to be disheartened. The Supreme Entity always calls anybody and everybody, 'O, human beings, O, painstaking human beings, don't be afraid, don't be disheartened. I am for you. O, human beings, please come near Me; you please come and sit on My lap. I am for you.'" For me, this DMC was very special. It was charged by a wave of honey-like devotion that is difficult to describe. There, a large contingent of people representing the Chhattisgarh Samaja came from Raipur. Acarya Narendra Deva led this group.

Nagpur DMC, October 16, 1979: A Lesson in Truth

After being released from the Bankipur prison, Baba increased the speed of the Marga's activities manifold. He introduced many new activities to revitalize the organization. Among them was a program that required the establishment of additional Ananda Marga offices in every block called tri-offices. The reason for establishing the new offices was to enable the workers from different departments within Ananda Marga, including traveling workers, to have a place to stay.

He did not want them to stay with Margii families any longer, as it was inappropriate for ascetics to live with householders. Baba made this a condition for holding future DMCs.

The DMC to be held in Nagpur City had been approved earlier by Baba. Nagpur is a large city located in central India in the state of Maharashtra. However, we had to deal with this new requirement, and it put us in a fix. First, establishing an office required funds, of which there were very little. Second, preparing for a DMC was a major task that required the cooperation of everyone. We had to deal with the issue of locating a suitable DMC venue. Then we had to install the infrastructure and related services to facilitate the DMC. Then there was the issue of the accommodation and food arrangements for the hundreds, even thousands, of participating Margiis and their families. Then we had to plan for security, Baba's living arrangements, and a host of other things. We were really in a quandary about what to do and how to meet the requirements of both conditions. We really had no choice—either establish the new offices or forget the DMC.

Already, the central workers were constantly pressurizing the sectorial workers to provide written acknowledgement that these new offices had been established in all blocks under their supervision.

To ensure that the DMC was held and not disappoint the thousands of Margiis in the region, all the workers conspired to give a written statement to the central office confirming that the new offices had already been established in all the blocks. This was untrue, of course, but we planned to establish the new offices in due time.

When the central office received our written acknowledgement, Baba agreed to convene the DMC in Nagpur. We heaved a sigh of

relief. The Margiis and workers then got down to the nitty-gritty of preparing for the grand occasion.

Baba arrived in Nagpur as planned. As was customary, He was welcomed with tandava and *kaoshikii* dance performances. As soon as the preliminaries were over, Baba convened a meeting with all the workers and asked them specifically whether the additional offices had actually been established in all blocks.

We all responded in chorus, “Yes Baba.” But Baba was not easily fooled. How could we bluff one who was omniscient, whose eyes saw where even sunlight could not penetrate? He exposed our little plan by asking if that were the case, how was it that only a few Margiis in Nagpur had registered for the DMC? We searched sheepishly for a suitable answer but could not find one. As we did not have a satisfactory reply, Baba became increasingly annoyed. He remarked gravely that we had invited Him to Nagpur for a DMC based on a pack of lies. He threatened to call the Margiis and expose us as liars and tell them that, due to that, He would not convene the DMC. He emphatically made the point that *sanyasis* or ascetics should never lie and that they should live a life based on *satya*. In ordinary circumstances, *satya* can be termed honesty, a life based on the principle of truthfulness. But *satya* is more than just being truthful. It means the use of words in the spirit of welfare.

The atmosphere in the room was grave and somber. We were thunderstruck to learn that Baba would not hold the DMC in Nagpur. How would the Margiis feel? What would we tell them? How would we explain to them that Baba had been compelled to take such a drastic measure due to our dishonesty?

Baba must have sensed our mental anguish. He softened a little after the bout of heavy scolding. He then asked us to take a vow that we

would never again resort to falsehood. We took the vow by placing our right palms over the hearts. Finally, He agreed to hold the DMC.

The whole drama that He enacted was a lesson in truthfulness painfully learned. Those who walk the path of spirituality should never resort to falsehood in any circumstance. It is better to face the music for our shortcomings than to tell lies. Those who are habituated in telling the truth and using words in the spirit of welfare will find it much easier to move on the path of bliss.

The DMC was blissful. The Margiis and workers did a good job in making the necessary preparations for the DMC. Everything went smoothly after the initial worry that the DMC would not be held. During the DMC, Baba released waves of bliss that engulfed everyone present. The inspiration He planted in the hearts of the devotees inspired them to improve their spiritual practice and render more and more service to humankind.

Raipur DMC, October 18, 1979: Inspiring Message

The DMC at Raipur had its own flavor. Raipur is the capital city of the state of Chhattisgarh in India.

At Raipur, hundreds of Margii volunteers of the Chhattisgarh community welcomed Baba with revolutionary zeal at the Mana Airport. Acarya Narendra, a great devotee and competent organizer, led the welcoming party.

Soon after His arrival, Baba called a meeting of the workers where He stressed the need to ensure that the tri-offices were established in every block and *panchayat*, a unit of administration in India. The Nagpur incident was still fresh in their minds. They remembered how Baba had threatened not to convene the DMC if the tri-offices

had not been set up. The workers did not want history to repeat itself in Raipur. This time around, they took the instruction very seriously and did everything in their power to establish the additional offices.

I was blessed to get an opportunity to serve Him. He asked me to complete the process of the Bhukti Pradhana/*Upabhukti Pradhana* elections for the entire region. I wasted no time in getting down to the task.

Baba appeared to be very happy with the arrangements made for the DMC at Raipur. Acarya Narendra, Acarya Ramlal Dani, and Acarya Kailashchandra Bhalla organized the program well, taking into account everyone's needs.

The DMC was inspirational. In particular, Baba's message to the Chhattisgarh community inspired all present: "I want that the present distressed condition of Chhattisgarh should come to an end and that it should have a very bright future. Let the people from other parts of the world come here and learn how far the people here have achieved progress and how they will bring about progress in other spheres of life. Let the light of Chhattisgarh be ever effulgent, like a luminous star in human society, so that all may learn and be benefited by it."

The devotional flow that Baba released at the DMC was extraordinary. When He delivered the departing discourse, all the Margiis and workers cried uncontrollably. The scene was very touching.

Varanasi DMC, October 29, 1979: The Introduction of Avartha Kiirtan

The DMC at Varanasi was historic. It was here that Baba first introduced Avartha kiirtan, which is an essential part of madhura

sadhana. *Madhura sadhana* is a special type of spiritual practice introduced by Baba to enhance the devotional quality of the practitioner.

Since then, Avartta kiirtan has become an essential component of collective meditation. The collective performance of Avartta kiirtan creates a sweet environment that inspires blissful waves of devotion in the practitioners.

I was appointed the Central Organizer of the Varanasi DMC. I took this as a God-given opportunity to serve Him and tried hard to achieve the goals that Baba set for conducting the DMC.

When Baba arrived at Varanasi, a group of Margiis received Him with colorful garlands. It was a grand welcome and characterized the intense devotion the Margiis had for the Guru.

Soon after His arrival, Baba initiated a meeting with the workers. At the meeting, He reprimanded the workers for their unsatisfactory work performance. He was so annoyed with us that He refused to take the snack that was prepared. As the organizer, I felt it was my responsibility to ensure that He took some light food.

With this in mind, I entered the room and started to massage His feet. While massaging, I informed Him about the arrangements made for the DMC and how much the Margiis of Varanasi looked forward to the program. I then found the opportunity to tell Him that the Margiis of Varanasi had prepared a special snack called *gol gappa* for Him. *Gol gappa*, also called *panipuri*, was a popular snack. Actually, I recalled that He once had said that when He had been a student, He would occasionally eat *gol gappa* as a snack. This impelled me to ensure that Baba was served this delicacy when the opportunity arose.

Baba then inquired whether spicy water and potato as well as the condiment made from spiced chickpeas had been prepared. When I replied in the affirmative, Baba agreed to take the snack.

I immediately informed the Margiis to bring the snack into Baba's room and to serve Him. Baba relished the *gol gappa*. This brought immense joy to those who had prepared it.

A strange incident occurred the night before the DMC. The Bhukti Pradhana of Allahabad, Shrii Ashoka, who was assigned as Baba's sentry, was standing guard outside Baba's room on the night of October 29. Sometime late at night, Ashoka woke me up and informed me in an excited tone that he had seen many strange people conversing with Baba in the room. I thought that the statement was a little outlandish and doubted its veracity. How could anyone enter Baba's room without the knowledge of the sentry, who stood guard just outside His room? I then questioned him how that could be possible. He replied in all earnestness that he had not dreamed it up and that he was sure of what he had seen. I then thought that these strange people might have been *devayonis*, luminous beings, who had come to seek His guidance. There had been several similar cases prior to this incident. What added to the mystery was that Baba usually requested His Personal Assistant to make the necessary arrangements before He retired for the night. That night, however, Baba had not asked the Personal Assistant for any help.

The next morning, Baba emerged from His room earlier than usual, at around nine o'clock. He then asked the sentry to call all the workers into His room. All of us went in promptly and found Baba sitting up on the bed with a graceful charm. His face shone with a special glow, and a sweet smile played upon His lips. After a short pause, He explained the reason for summoning us. He said that He

wanted to introduce a new spiritual practice called *Avartta kiirtan*. He described the process of performing this new style of kiirtan. We then collectively performed Avartta kiirtan before Him.

Sometime later, when He spoke about the inner secrets of madhura sadhana, He said that He had received many queries from both Margiis and missionary workers about why the process of madhura sadhana is confined to only a few privileged spiritual aspirants. While madhura sadhana is practiced exclusively by the monks and nuns of Ananda Marga, Baba permitted the general Margiis to perform Avartta kiirtan, which is a part of madhura sadhana.

Significance of Avartta Kiirtan

Baba introduced Avartta kiirtan for the first time at the Varanasi DMC. It is an essential part of madhura sadhana.

In Ananda Marga, there are essentially two special categories of kiirtan. One is Akhanda kiirtan and the other is Avartta kiirtan.

In Akhanda kiirtan, the practitioner moves in a counterclockwise direction, while centering his mind on his Ista, his final goal. His Ista becomes the nucleus of the kiirtan. The reason for this is that in the human body, the Kulakundalinii is located in the lowest vertebra at the base of the spine, the Muladhara cakra, wound up in three and a half coils in a clockwise direction. The Kulakundalinii is the fundamental spiritual force that resides in the Muladhara cakra as the sleeping divinity, which, when awakened, rises up the spinal column to enable the spiritual aspirant to develop his or her spiritual potentiality. Kiirtan is a practice to awaken this sleeping divinity and goad it toward the Sahasrara cakra, the highest cakra, located at the crown of the head. The inherent spiritual force of the Siddha mantra in kiirtan awakens and goads the upward movement of the

Kulakundalini. In one discourse, Baba clarified that to vanquish any negative force the opposite force should be applied. In Sanskrit, this principle is called *Samgrame Vaeparitiam*, that is, adopting the opposite stance in battle. For example, to defeat a crude idea that may be in vogue in society at a particular time, the opposite idea, that is, the idea of divinity or consciousness, must be propagated widely in society. This is a law of nature.

In the case of Avartta kiirtan, the devotee moves in different directions, each with a special ideation. The devotee, with all his shortcomings, becomes the nucleus and moves toward his or her supreme goal, his or her Ista. In this way, the devotee's mind becomes introverted and finally surrenders everything to Parama Purusa, the Supreme Entity.

In Avartta kiirtan, the movement is clockwise. The spiritual aspirant fixes his or her mind on the Sahasrara cakra, while dancing in Lalita Marmika and singing kiirtan. While remaining in one spot, the devotee turns clockwise in all four directions, singing kiirtan to a different tune in each direction. When the devotee has completed singing kiirtan in all four directions, he or she returns to the original position. In the fifth direction, the devotee continues to dance and sing kiirtan in a different tune, this time facing upward. Finally, in the sixth direction, he faces downward while singing kiirtan in yet another tune. The duration of singing kiirtan in each direction should more or less be the same. The specific ideation for each of the six directions is as follows:

1. "I have an innate love for Parama Purusa."
2. "I am a sincere person."
3. "I purify myself in the fire of sadhana."
4. "I am ready to face all kinds of difficulties, whether internal or external."

5. "I surrender unto Parama Purusa."
6. "I take shelter unto Parama Purusa."

The main objective of Avartta kiirtan is to dissolve our individual self into Shiva, the Supreme Consciousness.

Ahmedabad Dharma Maha Sammelan (DMS), November 4, 1979: Trance of Tanmatrika Samadhi

The spiritual program in Ahmedabad was declared by Baba as Dharma Maha Sammelan (DMS) and not as Dharma Maha Cakra (DMC). This was because He was unhappy with the work performance of some of the workers. The difference between a DMC and a DMS program is that in a DMS program Baba does not give the blessing of His Varabhaya Mudra.

Ahmedabad is the largest city in the state of Gujarat. The Margiis of Gujarat, led by the *Bhukti Pradhana* of Ahmedabad, made the necessary arrangements for the program. They made excellent arrangements, taking into account board and lodging for the participants and their families.

On His arrival from Gwalior, the Margiis ceremoniously welcomed Baba in the native Gujarati tradition. As elsewhere, Baba conducted the meeting with the workers to assess their work performance and conducted a spiritual demonstration as well.

On this occasion, He demonstrated *tanmatrika* samadhi by using the form and smell tanmatras or subtle inferences as the medium. The spiritual aspirant on whom the demonstration was performed then entered into a state of spiritual bliss. Baba had also demonstrated different types of *tanmatrika* samadhi on other occasions.

The material universe is a collection of countless inferential waves or vibrations. All of creation is vibrational. Matter is nothing but vibration in different frequencies. Albert Einstein, one of the twentieth century's greatest scientific minds, also stated that everything in life is vibration. Yogis have known this fundamental truth for thousands of years. All forms of matter and thought are an unending series of vibrations, a perpetual dance of colorful waves. Another theoretical physicist, Michio Kaku, has characterized the universe as a symphony of vibrating strings. Mainstream science is slowly coming around to the fact that matter is not what it appears to be and that the material universe is more like a conscious hologram, in which "reality" is nothing but a projected mirage. Baba stated that the created universe is an endless ocean of waves, which comprise the generic essence of the rudimental factors of matter known as *tanmatras* in Sanskrit. The created universe is composed of five rudimental factors: the solid factor, the liquid factor, the luminous factor, the aerial factor, and the ethereal factor. Baba avoided the use of the terms 'illusion' or 'mirage' to describe the created universe and preferred to call it 'relative reality' instead.

The size of the universe is relative to the five rudimental factors. If the liquid factor were removed from the universal matrix, the size of the universe would shrink to a mere fraction of its original size, perhaps one part of a thousand or even less. If the luminous and aerial factors were removed, leaving only the solid and ethereal factors in place, the universe would become as small as a mustard seed. And when the most subtle factor, ether, is removed, leaving only the solid factor, the once vast universe would be reduced to a mere dot. In Sanskrit, this dot is called *bindu*. The whole universe becomes a tiny dot that is superdense or ultracompact. One way to understand the idea of superdense matter is the neutron star. A neutron star may have twice the mass of our sun and have a diameter

between fifteen and twenty-five kilometers only. It is so dense that a cubic meter of the star weighs about four hundred billion tons.

Baba stated that all tanmatras have their origin in the Cosmic Mind, which is the controller of tanmatras. Through deep and constant meditation, when the mind becomes one-pointed, a spiritual aspirant is able to control the various tanmatras associated with the different rudimental factors. Through the medium of inferences, the spiritual aspirant attains a kind of spiritual bliss associated with the tanmatras. Such spiritual bliss or samadhi is categorized as *tanmatrika* samadhi, the samadhi of inferential bliss. An example of tanmatrika samadhi is *sarupa* samadhi, in which the spiritual aspirant feels that he or she has caught hold of Parama Purusa, the Supreme Consciousness, and as a result attains the bliss of tactual contact with divinity.

Baba gave many interesting demonstrations on different types of *tanmatrika* samadhi. On several occasions, Baba asked different devotees to smell different parts of His body. Each experienced a particular divine aroma. The spiritual trance that results from such an experience is known as *Gandhi tanmatrika* samadhi, a spiritual trance caused by the smell tanmatra. On one occasion, He asked a devotee to sit close to Him. Baba then touched the devotee's Ajina cakra with His cane and asked him to smell His thigh. Strangely, instead of smell, the devotee heard the sound of music emanating from Baba's thigh with his nose. Baba had altered the smell tanmatra to the sound tanmatra. During another demonstration, Baba asked another spiritual aspirant to use his ears to smell. Using his ears, the aspirant could smell the divine aroma of a flower. The aroma was simultaneously intense and very subtle, unlike the fragrance of any earthly flower. After some time, the devotee's mind went into a state of spiritual trance, and he experienced a special type of bliss. The point I wish to stress is that in all types of tanmatrika samadhi,

the nerve cells and nerve fibers play a crucial role for the aspirant to enjoy the spiritual bliss associated with the particular tanmatra.

There is another special category of spiritual trance known as nontanmatrika samadhi, or noninferential bliss. When the Cosmic Mind vibrates the mind of an aspirant, the aspirant attains a special type of spiritual bliss, which is noninferential in nature. Here, the source of bliss is the Cosmic Mind, not tanmatras. To experience such bliss, the nerve fibers and nerves cells of the human body have no role at all. The mind experiences the spiritual trance independent of the nerve cells and nerve fibers.

Through these demonstrations, Baba proved unequivocally that He was the controller of all tanmatras in the universe and that He could alter any tanmatra or sense organ as He pleased.

The DMS function in Ahmedabad was very inspiring for the Margiis. From Ahmedabad I proceeded to Coimbatore, a city in Tamil Nadu, the southernmost state in the Indian subcontinent. The train journey from Ahmedabad to Coimbatore took a grueling forty hours.

Coimbatore DMC, November 9, 1979: Divine Effulgence

In Coimbatore Baba stayed at the residence of Shrii Rajgopal, a good devotee and a sincere spiritual aspirant. The Margiis had planned the DMC well. Here too, Baba was received with devotional fervor manifested in the South Indian cultural style.

As was customary, Baba had a meeting with the workers to assess the progress of work accomplished. During the meeting, Baba conducted a demonstration on me to clarify the mysteries of the divine effulgence of the Supreme Being. In Sanskrit, the divine

effulgence is known as Brahma Jyoti, the Light of Brahma. The Supreme Entity is known as Brahma. In this demonstration, He touched my Ajina cakra, which is situated between the eyebrows and is associated with the pituitary gland, and asked me to concentrate my mind on the Vishuddha cakra, situated at the throat and associated with the thyroid gland.

As soon as I fixed my mind on the Vishuddha cakra, I visualized brilliant white effulgence encircling the Vishuddha cakra. The experience was overwhelmingly blissful. After a short while, I lost consciousness. The conscious mind just could not contain the intense flow of bliss and merged into that bliss.

Baba told the workers present in the demonstration that I was visualizing and experiencing Brahma Jyoti, the divine effulgence. Eventually, after some time, I entered into bhava samadhi, a spiritual state of trance beyond description.

Baba said that this special spiritual realization is attainable only after a spiritual aspirant has performed long and arduous spiritual practice spanning many lives. Even now, whenever I try to visualize that divine effulgence, I enter into a state of transcendental bliss.

Hyderabad DMC, November 10, 1979: The Feet of the Guru

From Coimbatore, our next stop was Hyderabad, the capital city of the state of Andhra Pradesh in South India.

Here, Baba stayed in Shrii Ram Chandra Reddy's house. He was a good devotee, a staunch moralist and disciplinarian, and a sincere Margii. He retired as the Chief Engineer of the Andhra Pradesh state government.

Baba was in a very happy mood here. Here too, He conducted a meeting of the workers and inspired them to accelerate the pace of their work. He instructed them to strengthen the organizational structure and devote themselves to the service of humanity.

As in several DMCs, I was blessed with the opportunity to massage His feet during this DMC. It is appropriate to clarify the significance of a guru's feet in spirituality, lest people get the wrong idea that touching a guru's feet is a superstitious ritual.

Only a devotee can appreciate the importance of the feet of a guru; an intellectual will not be able to comprehend why a guru's feet are indispensable in the spiritual path. For a spiritual aspirant who is a devotee, the guru's feet are everything to him or her. The devotee sits at the feet of the guru to acquire mundane, supramundane, and spiritual knowledge that throws light on the mysteries of the spiritual path. The devotee surrenders at the feet of the guru his or her entire existence and petty I feeling, so that he or she can be freed from the physical, mental, and spiritual bondages. A guru transmits blessings to the devotee through the medium of his feet. Massaging his feet is the highest form of service to a guru. In spiritual practice, a guru's feet are both physical and nonphysical. Clarifying the nonphysical feet of a guru, a saint once said that the real feet of a guru exist only in the heart of the devotee and to hold onto these feet incessantly is real happiness. The greatest worship is worshipping the guru's feet that are within oneself, the inner, holy feet.

Baba delivered a very inspiring discourse at the DMC. The topic presently escapes my memory. But I recall that the Margiis were greatly inspired by Baba's DMC speech. When Baba departed from Hyderabad, the Margiis became very emotional, as if they were losing their father. What a devotional scene it was.

Etah DMC, November 17, 1979: Baba's Drama

Etah is a town in the state of Uttar Pradesh in North India. The district of Etah is not very developed, and most of the people are engaged in farming.

For me, the Etah DMC was both important and awe-inspiring. I was the Central Organizer for this DMC. I tried very hard to make the DMC a success with the support of the Margiis.

However, things did not go as planned. The representation of the Margiis at the DMC was anything but encouraging. Hardly fifty Margiis were present at the DMC hall a day before Baba was to arrive at Etah. When Baba was informed of the poor attendance record, He was unhappy and enacted a small drama just to drum into the Margiis' minds the importance of participating in a DMC.

Baba told His Personal Assistant, who then informed me, that since only a handful of Margiis had taken the trouble to attend the DMC, He would not go there. This meant that the DMC would not be convened. Baba's scheduled flight from Delhi to Agra was canceled. A traveler had to pass by Agra before going to Etah.

In the meantime, arrangements had already been made for the welcoming party to escort Baba from Agra to Etah. The Margiis became demoralized when I informed them of the latest developments. They had an emergency meeting to resolve the crisis. At the meeting, it was decided that a team of senior acaryas and Margiis would be assembled to persuade Baba to change His mind and to bless Etah with the touch of His holy feet. The team was led by Jayprakash Bhajji and was comprised of Acarya Shankarananda, Acarya Dhyaneshananda, and me.

We reached Delhi at ten at night. There, I met Baba's Personal Assistant and requested him to persuade Baba to conduct the DMC in Etah. A day had already been wasted. The Margiis were dejected, crying for His presence. The Personal Assistant then went into His room and apprised Him of the situation in Etah. He also informed Baba that Brother Jayprakash had come all the way from Etah, together with several sectorial workers, to see Him about this matter.

Baba then summoned Brother Jayprakash into the room. Jayprakash earnestly implored Baba to bless Etah with the touch of His holy presence. Baba was unrelenting, however. He asked why He should go to Etah, as nothing had been done to prepare for the DMC and not a single organizational target had been fulfilled. In response, Jayprakash promised Baba that the Margiis would complete all the unfinished tasks. Such promises could not change Baba's mind.

Acarya Shankarananda then went into Baba's room to try to persuade Baba to agree to conduct the DMC. He too failed in his attempt. Then Acarya Dhyanesananda made a determined effort to change Baba's mind, but this also ended in failure.

Finally, when our efforts were collapsing, I went into Baba's room to massage Him. While massaging Him, I took the opportunity to ask Him to hold the Etah DMC. Baba was unmoved by my feeble attempt and stressed that the number of participating Margiis was far below His expectations. As this drama was going on, He inquired whether Arun from Kanpur and the Bhukti Pradhana of Bareilly and that of Meerut had arrived in Etah. I quickly responded that they were on the way and would be there in the morning.

After a short pause, Baba again asked why He should go to Etah. I thought for a while and replied that it was His affectionate Braja Bhumii, His affectionate land, where He had playfully interacted

with His devotees in His previous manifestation as Lord Krsna. I emphasized that the Margiis of His Braja Bhumii were His beloved devotees and were waiting anxiously for His divine presence.

Baba appeared to be pleased with this response. He said that my logic was irrefutable. He then summoned His Personal Assistant and asked him to make the necessary flight arrangements to Agra.

We were immensely relieved. The Etah DMC was going to be held after all. Brother Jayprakash and the workers left for Etah immediately at about two in the morning. I decided not to join them, as I was feeling unwell.

I left for Etah the next morning and arrived sometime in the evening. Upon reaching Etah, I was informed that Baba had not taken His lunch. The Margiis were depressed that Baba had not taken the food that had been lovingly prepared. They did not know why He had refused to take lunch.

I then went into His room and informed Him that the Margiis were very depressed because He had not taken the food that they had lovingly prepared. In response, Baba assured me that He would take His meal at night to make the Margiis happy. As soon as I emerged from His room, I told the Margiis not to worry, as He had come to His own Braja Bhumii and that they should feed Him a sweet delicacy known as *makhana mishri*, Lord Krsna's favorite food. *Makhana mishri* is fresh white butter sprinkled with sugar.

On the third day before General Darshana, Baba called a meeting of the workers. When we entered His room, we felt a special spiritual vibration that engulfed the whole room. The environment in the room was different, flooded with special vibrations. Baba's physical body had a special charm today. He was so irresistibly attractive

that our attention was automatically drawn to His divine form. While we were waiting with pregnant expectation, Baba graced us by conducting another demonstration on the tanmatras of form and smell. This time, He conducted the demonstration on two workers.

While the spiritual demonstration was in progress, one Margii sister, who was overwhelmed by devotion for the Lord, inadvertently entered the room with a plate full of *makhana mishri*. She did not seek anyone's permission to enter. On seeing this unexpected intrusion, Baba feigned annoyance. This must have brought her back to her senses and made her realize that she had made a mistake by entering the room without permission. Seeing Baba's displeasure, she started to shiver and accidentally dropped the plate full of delicacies on the floor. Realizing what had happened, she hurriedly left the room. Baba continued with the demonstration, and after the demonstration, we collectively performed Aavartta kiirtan.

When I met her after the meeting, the sister started to cry. She regretted that she had inadvertently disturbed Baba in the midst of His demonstration. I consoled her by saying that she was really blessed to witness a mystic demonstration and that others did not have such a rare opportunity.

Baba later took the meal that the sister had lovingly prepared. After He finished eating, He called all the sincere and active Margiis for a group meeting in His room and blessed them.

Everyone was overjoyed to have the opportunity to receive His boundless love and blessings.

Gwalior DMC, November 22, 1979: Another Demonstration on Tanmatras

Gwalior is a major city in the state of Madhya Pradesh. Baba arrived at Gwalior to a thunderous welcome by scores of Margiis. They had come a long way from the hinterland of Braja and Bundelakhanda to welcome Baba.

Following His standard practice, Baba took stock of the work accomplished in the region. He admonished the poor performers and extracted a promise from them that they would work harder in future.

During the reporting session, Baba conducted a special demonstration on a worker to explain the subtle inferences of form and smell. We all felt greatly inspired after witnessing the demonstration.

The DMC function went very well. A special devotional flow was created in the Margiis who participated in the DMC. They went back very inspired.

CHAPTER 7

EXPERIENCES IN EUROPE

Germany, My First Overseas Destination

I left India for my new posting in the Berlin sector on December 24, 1979. I felt comforted by Baba's assurance that everything would be just fine in Europe and that the Margiis there were no different from the Margiis in India.

I took the Russian Aeroflot to my destination. It was the cheapest flight I could get. From East Germany, I crossed the Berlin Wall to go to Berlin in West Germany. Dada Kesheshvarananda was traveling with me. While we were traveling to our sectorial office, the police stopped and questioned us. We were attired in our saffron uniforms then. We must have looked strange to them, two Indian men in flowing orange robes and matching cotton turbans. They asked us to follow them to the police station for questioning. After about two hours of questioning, they contacted the Office Secretary, Acarya Bhuvaneshananda Avadhuta, to verify our statements and to escort us to the sectorial office.

I certainly did not expect such an unfriendly welcome in Berlin. I wondered why this should occur, despite Baba's assurance that I would be warmly welcomed in Germany.

I stayed in Berlin for two days. Then I made my way to Oslo, the capital of Norway, via Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. I reached Copenhagen on December 29, 1979. It was unbearably cold, and it was snowing heavily. It was dark and desolate throughout the day and night. It was depressing.

I was worried that the cold climate would affect my health and that I may not be able to do Baba's work properly. I was depressed and questioned why Baba had sent me to this inhospitable place. Everything here was very different from India—the food, lifestyle, worldview, clothing, mannerisms, and climate. I could not even see the sunrise and daylight for many months, as it snowed all day long.

Copenhagen was the global headquarters of Proutist Universal. Proutist Universal is an Ananda Marga organization responsible for the propagation of PROUT, the socioeconomic theory propounded by Baba for the all-around welfare and happiness of human beings. Acarya Sadhanananda was the Office Secretary. There were many Margiis there who were full-time volunteers of Ananda Marga and who implemented many development projects. Kiirtan was held daily in the mornings and evenings. The Margiis there tried to keep me in good humor and encourage me by saying that everything would be fine once I adjusted to the new environment.

Acarya Karunananda then introduced me to a sister called Jyoti. She looked after me like my elder sister. She taught me about the psychology, mannerisms, and way of life there. She encouraged me to be positive, as everything would be fine in a couple of days. She inspired me by saying that since Baba had posted me to this sector,

He would have embedded an enabling environment so that I would be successful in spreading His mission.

After staying in Copenhagen for some time, I proceeded to Oslo. Acarya Karunananda advised me to open my headquarters there. Oslo was far colder than Copenhagen. Here, I met the Bhukti Pradhana, the Margii in charge of the Ananda Marga unit in Oslo, and informed him about the purpose of my visit. He did not agree with my proposal to establish my office in Oslo and asked who would take care of me here. He advised me to return to Germany.

I was taken aback by his curt reply. I did not expect such an unfriendly response from a Margii. But what could I do? I was at the mercy of a new, unfamiliar environment. To add to my misery, I had very little money to support myself.

I blamed Baba for everything that was happening, all the unpleasant things and the lack of love and warmth in human interactions. I asked Him mentally if this was what He had planned for me in my new posting. At that time and in that frame of mind, I could not see through the dark curtain of His divine play.

One day, as I was brooding over my miserable situation, Vasudeva, a Margii brother, came over and lovingly invited me to come along with him. He said that he would arrange everything I needed and asked me not to worry. This gesture was unexpected, a gift from the blue. I then realized that Baba was keeping His promise of taking care of me.

Vasudeva took me to a lovely Margii family. They were Brother Ravi and Sister Shashi. They welcomed me warmly and looked after me. I stayed with them for three days. I told them of the plans and programs of the organization. They were motivated and took me

to several places to propagate Baba's teachings. They had excellent contacts. I was also acquainted with several old and new Margiis of the region. I addressed many meetings, initiated many people, and established many new Ananda Marga units.

I visited Kongsberg, Christiansand, Fredrickstad, Bergen, and Trondheim in Norway and was able to carry out my planned activities to my heart's content. I am obliged to Brother Ravi and Sister Shashi, who made the initial introductions possible.

I returned to Oslo after twenty days. The Bhukti Pradhana of Oslo had heard of the good work I had done in other places and was inspired. He subsequently helped me in my organizational work.

I recall reading about the sixteenth-century Indian poet-saint Tulasidas, who said, "Ja'para Krpa' Ra'ma Ki Hoi, Ta'para Krpa' Kare Saba Koi," which means the eligible one who is able to invoke the grace of Parama Purusa receives the unconditional help of the whole world.

The first three months were trying. My patience often ran thin, and I sometimes questioned my ability to do any work here. At times, I thought of dropping everything and returning to India. I had a return ticket in my possession.

Slowly, I was able to adjust to the different lifestyle and the biting cold of Norway. My pessimistic frame of mind vanished. It was replaced by a fresh outlook in which everything appeared to be natural in the context of its environment. The grueling challenge of adjusting to a new environment had broken down my pride and freed me from a binding constraint. Unknowingly, I had carried the pride of being an old and senior monk for a long time. By His grace,

however, I realized that the Lord's help was easily accessible when one surrenders to Him completely.

In the next three months, the dark clouds of pessimism slowly vanished, and the light of optimism appeared on the horizon. The Margiis bought a first class Eurorail ticket for me. It was valid for three months. It enabled me to move about everywhere in Europe to implement Baba's mission. I got many invitations to speak from all over Scandinavia. After some time, I became quite well known in that region. In this way, my time in Europe was spent happily.

I also attended the sectorial RDS meeting in Germany with all the workers in the region. This was a very happy occasion for me. I later traveled all over Europe to spread the spiritual ideals and attended several spiritual retreats in Germany, Holland, France, and Italy. It was an opportune time to be acquainted with the Margiis in the region. I was happy to see some tangible success in organizational work while progress in missionary work gained momentum. In the course of time, I developed a special affinity for Scandinavia. Slowly but surely, I started to experience His grace at every step.

Once, I visited Bergen in Norway. There, I met Sister Niiti from Lapland. Lapland is a region largely within the Arctic Circle and stretches across Norway, Finland, and Sweden. It is an ice-clad region for most of the year, about nine months annually. She told me that one saw the midnight sun for six months and darkness for the remaining six months there. As she described the uniqueness of Lapland, a desire to see the place arose in my mind.

Journey to Lapland

Lapland is located some three thousand kilometers away from Oslo. I accepted Sister Niiti's invitation to visit the region. I traveled by

train to a city called Narvik located in Northern Norway inside the Arctic Circle. Thereafter, I traveled to Harstad by bus, a distance of about 130 kilometers.

It was May. Under normal circumstances, there would be sunshine at night. But that day, it was dark even at eleven at night, as it was snowing heavily. Many travelers from other regions had come there to see the unique phenomenon of the midnight sun. All the hotels were fully booked. Not a single room was available. I had nowhere to stay.

I mistakenly believed that it would not be that cold and that I could tolerate the climate. On the contrary, it was extremely cold due to the heavy snowfall. I went to a nearby park and performed my meditation. As I was in a desperate situation, with nowhere to stay and an unbearably harsh climate, I mentally asked Baba to help me out of my dilemma. I thought that if I did not get any help, I would surely freeze to death.

It was around midnight. As I sat in the park brooding over my misfortune, a shabbily dressed man staggered close to me with an unstable gait. He looked blurrily at me and asked from where I had come. He was obviously punch-drunk, with bloodshot eyes and a strong smell of liquor. The words tumbled from his mouth, barely distinguishable. Not wanting to offend him, I replied that I had come from India and that I was here to watch the midnight sun. I also told him that I did not know anyone here. He looked at me from tip to toe and said that it was a snowy night and that I would surely die of exposure to the cold if I stayed outside. He offered to arrange a place for me for the night.

In the meantime, I talked to him about Ananda Marga. In a short while, another drunkard joined us. He was obviously more

intoxicated than the first drunkard was and was almost senseless. The second drunkard invited me to go with him and said that he would find me a place to stay.

Weighing the two options, I thought that the second man was more firm in his offer and decided to follow him. As I was about to go with him, the first drunkard cautioned me that the man was a murderer. In my mind, I thought that it would be better to go with this man than to die frozen in the bitter cold. I followed the man to several places, such as hospitals, retiring homes, and restrooms, but all were closed for the night.

It was a wild goose chase. As the search was fruitless, he apologized and said that he could not help me. He then said that there was only one option left: his house, which was about twenty-five kilometers away. I thought about the offer for a while and decided to accept it, as I had no choice. It was already very late at night. I told him that I had no objection on condition that he drop me at the Harstad port at seven the next morning, as I had a boat to catch. I had to travel to Hammerfest the next day.

He agreed, and we left for his house. It was located in an isolated place. Just as we entered his house, he closed the door and locked it. We sat down at the dining table facing each other. As I sat there, he suddenly took out a revolver and pointed it menacingly at me. I froze and remembered what the other drunkard had cautioned. I repeated my Guru mantra and Ista mantra and called upon Baba to save me from this perilous situation. Both these mantras are applied in specific lessons taught by Ananda Marga.

In that tense moment, a thought arose in my mind that the man was terribly depressed and that he should be approached with empathy. I mustered all my courage and sweetly reminded him that I was his

guest and that a good man should not treat his guest in this manner. I then got up slowly, went behind him, and started to gently massage his back. As soon as I got the opportunity, I removed the revolver from his hand and kept it away from him. Miraculously, he calmed down and made all the arrangements for my rest.

The next morning, I took my bath and completed my spiritual practices. Subsequently, I went to him and asked him to take me to the Harstad port. He got ready in a short while and dropped me at the port in time. I thanked him for his help.

I left for Hammerfest by ship and arrived in two and a half days. Sister Niiti was waiting for me at the dock. I was glad to see her. We then went straight to her home, where she lived with her parents.

There, I encountered another difficult situation. When she introduced me to her parents, they were upset that their daughter had brought home a heathen clad in orange robes without their prior permission. Niiti's parents were Orthodox Catholics, who considered an Indian monk to be an accomplice of Satan. They would have nothing to do with me.

Sister Niiti was pained by their unbecoming attitude. Unlike her parents, she was open-minded and progressive and viewed the world with a wide-angle lens. To address the delicate situation, she installed a waterproof tent near a lake about a kilometer from her house. She brought food for me daily and accompanied me to meet other people who might be interested in Yoga and meditation.

The people whom I met in the town were rather conservative and were averse to new ideas. I could not make much progress in these circumstances and wondered what to do. I felt that I had let Baba down, as I had nothing to show for progress. As I sat in the tent

contemplating the difficult situation, I remembered Him and earnestly asked Him to make proper use of me for His mission.

Amazingly, soon after, a person came to me for initiation. I taught him the process of Yogic meditation. Gradually, many young people came to meet me at my tent to learn meditation. Altogether, I initiated nine people. It was quite an achievement, given that this was a very remote and orthodox place. I was happy that I'd had the opportunity of planting the seed of Yoga and meditation in this isolated village.

I had another interesting experience there. Once, as I was doing my spiritual practice on a hillock near the lake early in the morning, I heard an unusual sound. When I opened my eyes, I noticed a herd of about a hundred reindeer watching me intently from afar. At first, a fear crept into my mind that they might attack me. As I raised my hand in self-defense, they scattered and ran in all directions. It was a delightful sight.

During my stay there, I wanted to visit an Eskimo village and learn about their way of life. I was informed that they lived in a village about one hundred kilometers away. One morning, we left for the village by bus. On reaching our destination, we sat down in a field just outside the village for our spiritual practice. But giant mosquitoes disturbed our meditation and peace of mind.

After completing our meditation, we went into the Eskimo village. There, we met an old man who was tanning reindeer skin. I asked him about the big mosquitoes. He laughed and said in jest that the mosquitoes only disturbed outsiders, not the local inhabitants. It occurred to me that since these Eskimos covered their bodies with reindeer skin, the mosquitoes did not get a chance to bite them. Another reason could be that as Eskimos bathed very infrequently,

perhaps once in two months, their pungent smell kept the mosquitoes at a safe distance.

As we walked into the village, we attracted a group of young people to whom we introduced the subject of Yoga and meditation. They were quite curious about what we had to say. While we were talking, a fat woman holding a javelin suddenly appeared from nowhere. She glared at me with an unfriendly glint in her eyes while stroking the javelin menacingly. Speaking in her native tongue, she warned us to leave the place immediately.

It was an unpleasant situation indeed. The young people to whom we were talking told us that she was the village head woman and that we should leave the place immediately, lest she called the other villagers, who might harm us. The Eskimos consider the people of Norway as exploiters. On further inquiry, we were informed that the Eskimos, who are Orthodox Catholics, are wary of those who might try to convert the young to a different faith. To neutralize the potentially difficult situation, we decide to leave. We returned later though.

On one occasion, I visited another town. I talked to the people about Yoga and meditation. I was wearing my saffron uniform. Among the crowd, I heard one person mention the name of Ananda Marga. When I asked him how he knew about Ananda Marga, he said that he had attended a program by Acarya Karunananda Avadhuta at Oslo University. He was a student of the university. He added that he desired to learn meditation but had been told that he had to adopt a vegetarian diet before meditation could be taught. Because of this strict condition, he'd decided not to learn meditation. He added that he was surprised to see Ananda Marga working in such a remote place.

I promptly replied that Ananda Marga was omnipresent. I then initiated him and taught him the practice of meditation. I also initiated his partner.

Overall, I was happy that Baba had utilized me to propagate His mission in such remote places and in such strange circumstances.

Altogether, I spent twenty-five days in Lapland. I visited many islands there together with Sister Niiti and met many different people. There, I initiated another ten people, after which I returned to Oslo.

Ananda Marga in Iceland

Just after I returned from my tour of Lapland in July 1980, I received an invitation from the Margiis of Iceland to visit their country for two months. The period from July to August is perhaps the best season in the whole of Europe and Scandinavia. It is akin to the spring season in India.

The Sectorial Secretary of Ananda Marga in that region also wanted me to visit Iceland. Hence, I decided to go there. When I reached the airport in Reykjavik, the capital city of Iceland, Brother Rajesh received me and took me to the Ananda Marga jagrti. It was a very beautiful place and well maintained. Four Margii brothers lived there, three of whom were local full-timers. They ran a kindergarten and a cooperative, among other things. Both the institutions were very popular among the public.

I was told that both Ananda Marga and PROUT were well received in Reykjavik due to their scientific and progressive ideas. Sister Aditi was the Bhukti Pradhana and Brothers Rajesh, Jyoti, and Mahaviira were the dedicated local full-timers.

I had the opportunity to move all over the city of Reykjavik as well as a number of islands. I initiated about fifty people there. I noticed that the people of Iceland were a happy lot and easy to get along with. They were open to new and progressive ideas and approaches.

Ananda Marga in Greenland

The introduction of Ananda Marga in Greenland is shrouded in mystery. Acarya Karunananda Avadhuta, the Sectorial Secretary of the Berlin sector, once attended the World Review, Defect, Solution (WRDS) meeting in Kolkata. WRDS meetings were gatherings of senior workers from all over the globe to report the progress of work and to find solutions to work-related problems. Baba, as the President of Ananda Marga, presided over the meetings. It is pertinent to say that Baba wore different hats based on the different roles He played. In one role, He put on His administrative hat as the President of a worldwide organization. In another, He wore a spiritual hat as the Guru, where He helped spiritual aspirants to reach their supreme goal in life and propagated new concepts and practices in spirituality. In yet another, He adorned a social hat, through which He expounded new ideas for the betterment of human society. These included new ideas and approaches in history, geography, philosophy, literature, music, economics, governance, science, medical science, cooperative living, and so on.

When Acarya Karunananda presented his progress report, Baba inquired whether Ananda Marga units had been established in all countries in the Berlin sector.

Acarya Karunananda confidently replied in the affirmative. Then Baba asked whether an Ananda Marga unit had been established in Greenland. Acarya Karunananda replied no. Baba then asked if Greenland was outside the scope of Acarya Karunananda's sectorial

responsibilities. Acarya Karunananda could not give a proper answer to this question, as he knew that Greenland was within his administrative supervision. Thus, he could only nod his head in response.

Baba was annoyed with Acarya Karunananda for misleading Him and for the shortcomings in discharging his duties. Baba punished him accordingly. Baba then gave him twenty days to establish a unit in Greenland.

Acarya Karunananda returned to the Berlin sector after the conclusion of the meeting and instructed the Regional Secretary of the Oslo region, Acarya Dharmavedananda Avadhuta, to go to Greenland as soon as possible to promote Ananda Marga's ideology and to establish a unit there.

It was a tall order indeed. Greenland is the biggest island in the world, with an area three times the size of India. Its population was hardly forty thousand then. Located near the North Pole, it has a harsh and inhospitable climate, with ice covering most of the land area for most of the year. The temperature ranges from minus forty degrees Celsius to minus eighty degrees Celsius. You can imagine how harsh and inhospitable living conditions are in Greenland. Greenland has four different types of habitats, all of which are fragile. The coastal areas are warmer, and the majority of the population lives there. The other regions—the Arctic tundra, the cold deserts, and the polar areas—cannot support human life.

A small population of Eskimos lives in the southwestern shore of Greenland, where the warm waters from the Arctic Ocean flow. The climate here is more suitable for human habitation. The Eskimos are nomads, moving from place to place in search of food and a

hospitable living space. Life is very difficult here. The rest of the gargantuan island is not suitable for human life.

Greenland is home to several unique animal species. One can see different varieties of whales, sharks, and seals close to the shore. There are also a variety of land animals, such as polar bears, arctic wolves, arctic foxes, musk oxen, and reindeer, among others. It has several species of birds, like ravens, and several species of eagles and falcons. I was surprised to see that even insects like mosquitoes, bees, and flies exist here. It is interesting how animal life adapts to the cold weather and harsh living conditions. Some animals have two coats of fur to cope with the chilly climate. Somehow, animals can adapt to brutal living conditions better than human beings can.

As several Ananda Marga units had already been established in Iceland, Acarya Dharmavedananda Avadhuta informed the Icelandic Margiis about Baba's desire to propagate Ananda Marga in Greenland. The Margiis then arranged for him to fly to Greenland. There was a flight from Iceland to Greenland once a week. When Acarya Dharmavedananda reached Greenland, he organized a meeting in a community hall. About thirty people attended the talk. From among them, one sister was initiated. This sister helped him to propagate Ananda Marga in Greenland.

After a week in Greenland, Acarya Dharmavedananda returned to Iceland. Following his footsteps, Brother Shatrupa, who was a local full-timer in Ananda Marga, went to Gotabe, now Nuuk and the capital city of Greenland, to see what more could be done to spread Ananda Marga's ideology in this vast island.

In 1980, Acarya Karunananda again went to Kolkata to attend the World Review, Defect, and Solution (WRDS) meeting. At the meeting, Baba expressed the desire to conduct Dharma Maha Cakra

at four locations in the Berlin sector. They were Lisbon, the capital of Portugal; Luxemburg, a small country between Belgium and Holland; Helsinki, the capital of Finland; and Nuuk, the capital of Greenland.

Again, this was a very difficult task to achieve. There was very little propagation of Ananda Marga in the four locations where the DMCs were to be organized. There were so few Margiis there.

I was responsible for looking after Scandinavia, so Acarya Karunananda made me responsible for organizing the DMC in Greenland. I was disturbed when I was entrusted with this big responsibility. Greenland was a huge island covered with ice for ten months of the year. Traveling to Greenland was very expensive. In addition, there were very few Margiis there. How was I going to get the place ready for DMC in such a short time?

I immediately wrote to Acarya Dharmavedananda and asked him to help me organize the DMC in Greenland. I also obtained the address of Sister Kadambari of Greenland.

In October I went to Copenhagen to catch a flight to Nuuk. As soon as I left the counter after checking in my luggage, a ground staffperson at the airport approached me, looking rather surprised. She asked me if I was really going to Greenland. She even asked me if I was sure where I was going.

Of course, I was dead certain of my destination; otherwise I wouldn't have bought the ticket in the first place. In response, I told her that I was going to Greenland. She replied that it was a brave decision, as severe snowstorms started in October and continued for several months thereafter. Tourists generally returned to Europe from Greenland during this period to escape the severe winter.

From Copenhagen, I flew to the Armstrong Airport in Ontario, Canada. A heavy snowstorm greeted me at Armstrong. It was so cold that I was frozen even in the comfort of the airport. From Armstrong, I took another flight to Nuuk, Greenland. When I reached Nuuk Airport, Brother Shatrupa and Sister Kadambari were waiting for me.

Despite the daunting challenges, I had a gut feeling that Baba was surely going to get work done through me.

I got down to work immediately. By Baba's grace and with the assistance of two dedicated Margiis, I managed to conduct several meetings at the university, colleges, and clubs. I was also interviewed by the local radio and TV stations. By then, the people of Nuuk had come to know of an Indian Yogi who was in Nuuk to teach Yoga and meditation. Nuuk was a small town with a population of about ten thousand people, so it was not that difficult to reach the population, especially with the help of the electronic media and radio.

In addition, Sister Kadambari was able to introduce the union leader to me, whom I later initiated. I gave him the Sanskrit name Janak, which he was pleased to get. Janak was the education minister in Greenland. He helped greatly in the propagation of Ananda Marga's neo-humanist education system. Neo-humanism envisages a social order where human beings extend the embrace of their loving empathy to flora and fauna and even to inanimate objects.

My time in Greenland was well spent. Good progress was made to propagate the ideals and philosophy of Ananda Marga. Within a month, I initiated about forty to fifty people and created two local full-timers to help with the work of Ananda Marga. They promised to start a school based on neo-humanistic education and

to be responsible for making all the arrangements for Baba's visit to Greenland.

Just before I left Nuuk for Oslo, I asked Sister Kadambari what had attracted her to Ananda Marga. As soon as I posed the question, she started to cry. When she composed herself, she narrated the strange circumstances that had brought her to Ananda Marga.

She had enrolled in a university in Nuuk. After completing her tertiary education, she returned to her hometown in the southern part of Greenland, some four thousand kilometers away. In Greenland, a big town is defined as a town with a population between five hundred to six hundred people.

The extreme weather in Greenland affects people's moods. It is very depressing to endure six months of severe cold and darkness. The sun sleeps during this season, and darkness takes over the land throughout the day and night. She explained that this was why people took drugs and alcohol to escape from their misery. The regular consumption of alcohol and narcotics weakens the nervous system and the brain and ultimately results in severe depression and other forms of mental illness. In many cases, people develop suicidal tendencies.

Sister Kadambari had also been affected by depression and melancholy. At one point, she decided to end her life. She obtained some cyanide, a highly toxic chemical, with a view to consuming it to end her life. Before she took the poison, she decided to sleep. In her sleep, she had a strange dream. She beheld a divine being in immaculate, radiant white clothes and thick-rimmed glasses. This divine being came close to her and lovingly caressed her head, saying that she should not be depressed and should banish all thoughts of committing suicide. He said that committing suicide was a sin, as

life was to be celebrated. Again, He impressed upon her that suicide was not the answer and that she must now look forward to living a useful, productive life. The divine being further said that He was going to send someone within twenty days and that she could learn meditation from him. He clarified that thereafter her life would be transformed. He also mentioned that she had a spiritual mission and that through her many others would benefit from pursuing spiritual practice. The divine being then showed her the face of a monk dressed in orange robes who would initiate her.

She then woke up. She remembered the strange dream and felt uplifted. Magically, the thought of committing suicide vanished like smoke. When Acarya Dharmavedananda Avadhuta came to Nuuk and delivered a talk on Yoga and meditation at the community hall, she became speechless. She immediately recognized him as the monk in her dream. She then requested to be initiated into the spiritual practices of Ananda Marga.

One point is interesting in this amazing episode. In her dream, she saw a radiant divine being attired in dazzling white clothes and wearing thick-rimmed glasses. This is an exact description of Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii. Prior to this incident, she had no knowledge of Baba, much less His physical appearance.

After I completed my preparatory work in Greenland, I returned to the central office. There, I received a message from Acarya Karunananda that I was required to go to India for the forthcoming WRDS meeting and New Year DMC. I immediately left for Ananda Nagar, India, where the meeting and DMC were to take place.

When I reached Ananda Nagar, Baba's nephew Paltu approached me and said that Baba wanted to meet me to ask about my experiences in Lapland and Greenland. The following day, when I got the

opportunity to meet Him, He asked me why Iceland was not really an ice land and why Greenland was not a green land. In other words, why was Iceland green and Greenland icy?

I replied that the coast of Iceland had a subpolar oceanic climate, which made the temperature warmer than the rest of the island. Greenland, on the other hand, was in reality a white land, where ice was pervasive.

Baba seemed to be satisfied with my reply. He looked at me lovingly without saying anything. I felt very happy.

Leon, South France

In 1979, I visited the Ananda Marga office in Leon. The town of Leon is located in the southwest of France. The Margiis there informed me about the circumstances that had led to Baba's stay at the jagrti in Leon during His historic European tour.

When Baba arrived at Leon, the Margiis had already booked a good hotel to accommodate Baba and His entourage. When they brought Baba to the hotel, He refused to stay there, as nonvegetarian food was served. He insisted that He would instead stay at the jagrti. Arrangements were immediately made to shift Baba and His entourage to the jagrti. Despite the lack of conveniences, Baba was very happy with the environment at the jagrti. He blessed the jagrti before He left Leon.

His visit to Leon had greatly inspired the Margiis and accelerated the pace of social work there.

CHAPTER 8

MANILA SECTOR: "I WILL MEASURE THE DEPTH OF YOUR DEVOTION"

I spent about a year in Europe after Baba's tour to Europe. In January 1981, I went to India to attend the WRDS meeting and DMC at Ananda Nagar. I longed to see Him, as I had not seen Him for some time.

The meeting was held in January 1981 at the Marga Guru quarters in Lake Garden, Kolkata. I was at the meeting when Baba called me to His room. After my salutations to Baba, I got up and went to massage His feet. While massaging Him, He informed me that He was pleased with my work performance in the Berlin sector. Then He said that He wanted me to shoulder a big, new responsibility. Hearing this, I remained silent and continued to massage Him. I then spoke about the good news from my sector, hoping that He would not give me a new posting.

He listened carefully to the news about my sector and then said that He was posting me as the new Sectorial Secretary of Manila sector. Hearing the news, I was momentarily stunned. My mind was disturbed. I remembered how difficult it had been for me to adjust to the new environment in Europe. Now He wanted me to go through

the grinding mill of change once again, to adjust to a completely new set of circumstances, different food habits, different lifestyles, and different mentalities. *Will I be able to cope a second time?* I thought.

Of course, I was like an open storybook before Baba. I could hide nothing from Him. He saw everything, even things one might hide under a pile of distractions. Baba understood the state of my mind and consoled me. He lovingly asked me to come closer to Him. As I moved up a little closer, He gently explained that He had posted me to the Manila sector as Sectorial Secretary of Ananda Marga after taking into account all factors—my strengths, my shortcomings, my fears, and my aspirations. He assured me that I would be successful in my new post and that I would not face any difficulty in discharging my duties, as the Margiis and workers in the sector would extend their wholehearted cooperation.

His words were comforting and convincing, like raindrops on parched soil. They gave me confidence. I immediately felt immensely relieved, and my anxiety vanished. Armed with a new confidence, I took leave of Him and made the necessary preparation to go to the Manila sector.

When the DMC was over, all the workers returned to Kolkata. By that time, my air tickets to Bangkok and other cities within my sector had been reserved. On the day of my departure, I bade Him farewell and received His blessings. As I sat down, I saw that He was in a pensive and rather uncompromising mood. Then, in an unexpectedly stern tone, He told me that He was going to measure my devotion to Him based on three things: first, the amount of funds I would be able to raise for the construction of the Tiljala jagrti; second, the number of plants I could contribute for His garden project; and third, the number of artifacts I could obtain for

His museum initiative. He stressed that He would measure my work performance in my new position based on these criteria.

I was a little perturbed when I heard this. I knew that it was a test for me, a tough one. I was very new to the sector and did not know any Margiis there. How would I be able to fulfill His wishes? Further, the stern tone of His voice frightened me and chiseled away at the little confidence I had earlier developed. I wondered if I could ever pass His tests on my own without His grace.

He kept this strange, stern posture for the whole time I was there. Then He told me that it was time to leave and that I should make my way to the airport. I was caught in a peculiar position indeed. On the one hand, I was unsure whether I could deliver what He desired; on the other, I wanted to be in His holy company forever. Leaving Him was painful, unbearable. Even after I left the room, I continued to weep and kept wondering why He had been so stern with me. Had I failed Him in any way?

After some time, I reasoned that being remorseful would achieve nothing, so I made up my mind to pass His tests, however difficult. Even then, my sadness at leaving Him continued. I wept all the way to the airport and sobbed silently in the plane.

When I arrived in Bangkok, I received a warm welcome by some Margiis and workers. The warm reception eased my concerns somewhat and made my mind lighter. They took me to the jagrti, where we had collective meditation. They asked me to speak about Baba. When I started to speak, a strong feeling overpowered me, and I wept. I quickly controlled myself and spoke about my experiences with Baba. The Baba stories inspired them tremendously.

From there, I proceeded to Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. Here too, the Margiis warmly greeted me. After Dharmacakra, the Margiis asked me to speak. Strangely, just as in Bangkok, I could not speak and just cried. The Margiis were very inspired by the Baba stories I narrated.

My next destination was Singapore, roughly 250 miles south of Kuala Lumpur. The Margiis of Singapore also greeted me at the airport. They took me straight to the jagrti for Dharmacakra. There were many Margiis at the jagrti. They were all good devotees. Again, I was asked to say something about Baba. Once again, as in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, a powerful wave swept over me and caused me to cry out to Baba in a state of intense devotion. The environment was deliciously infectious. Many Margiis were overwhelmed by the strong devotional wave in the room. The atmosphere at the Dharmacakra was so inspiring that the Margiis returned the next day to hear more Baba stories.

From Singapore, I went to Manila, the capital city of the Philippines and my sectorial headquarters. The Margiis received me at the airport in large numbers. Here too I remained in a very high state of devotional bliss, which had a very positive effect on the Margiis.

I stayed in Manila for two and a half months, which was inspiring for everyone. After that, I returned to Kolkata to attend the WRDS meeting. This time around, I managed to acquire many rare plants from the Southeast Asian countries for Baba's garden project.

From the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport at Kolkata, I took a cab to Madhu Malainca, the Marga Guru quarters in the Lake Gardens in Kolkata. Baba's attending secretary was eagerly waiting for me at the gate. It was a little strange because no one knew of the date or time of my arrival at Baba's residence. Seeing

me, he virtually grabbed me by the collar and pulled me to Baba's room, saying that Baba was waiting for me.

As I entered the room, I prostrated and sat down nervously, unsure of what to expect. This time, however, Baba was in a delightful mood. He smiled at me in such a mysterious way that I can still visualize that poignant smile even today.

Seeing Him this time, I noted the black-and-white difference between my previous and present audience with Baba. Baba then inquired about my tour of the new sector. I replied that it had been successful by His grace. As I spoke, I was again overcome by a powerful devotional wave and broke down. Baba lovingly pulled me toward Him and comforted me like a doting father. I will never forget His fatherly gesture.

Then He asked me what I understood by devotion. Without waiting for my reply, He clarified that real devotion was to dance to the tune of the Lord and to fulfill His wishes.

Baba's Garden Program

Berry Plant with Thorns

Following Baba's instruction to get plants from all over the world for His garden project, I used to bring many different species of plants from the countries in my sector. Baba gave each plant a Sanskrit name.

Once, I brought a particular species of berry plant from the Philippines. Baba named it Maharlika Maha Badari. It was duly planted in the garden. However, due to negligence, the plant did not survive. When Baba learned of the plant's fate, He was very annoyed

with the missionary worker who was the gardener. He was also annoyed with Acarya Asiiimananda Avadhuta, who was the worker in charge of the garden.

Acarya Asiiimananda then informed me to get another plant of the same species as replacement. I tried my best to acquire one but failed. Because I could not get the plant, I was also punished. The other workers in my sector used to tease me for my failure to get the plant.

Eight months passed without any success. At every WRDS meeting, I would be punished for failing to get the plant. I was really at my wits' end what more to do. Once, as I was being punished, I asked Baba for the botanical name of the plant, so that I could look for it in the botanical gardens in Manila. Baba stopped punishing me, smiled, and told me that I could not find it in big botanical gardens, including the botanical gardens in Manila. He said that this plant was a typical berry plant with thorny leaves. He then instructed me to look for it once again and said that I would be successful in getting it this time.

When I returned to Manila, I went to Davao to see Acarya Cidananda Avadhuta, who was the trainer at our training center. I explained what Baba had told me. Both of us then took a jeep to the forest in search of the plant. Somewhere near the forest, we met an old gardener. When we explained the characteristics of the plant we were looking for, he replied that he had the plant in his garden. We were overjoyed. We went to his garden and ordered fifty plants. I had a worker deliver the plants to Baba in Kolkata. Baba was pleased. Through the worker, He praised me for locating the plant.

I then realized an age-old truth: the Lord helps those who help themselves. His grace is available to anyone who has tried his or her best to do something.

Rafflesia Arnoldii

Once, Baba asked me to get the *Rafflesia arnoldii* plant for His garden. There are sixteen known varieties of *Rafflesia*, but *Rafflesia arnoldii* has the largest flower. It is the largest flower on earth. It measures more than one meter in diameter and can weigh up to more than ten kilograms. It has an obnoxious odor akin to decaying flesh. The plant is a parasite and grows on a special vine found only in the primary rainforests of Borneo, including in Sabah and Sarawak in Malaysia and in Sumatra, Java, and Bali in Indonesia. It is one of the three national flowers of Indonesia.

When I returned to my office in Manila, I immediately initiated a search for the rare plant. I asked the workers in the sector to look out for it. Acarya Citkrnananda Avadhuta took the challenge of obtaining the plant.

After an exhaustive and difficult search in the jungles, he managed to get the plant. It was immediately sent to Kolkata to be placed in Baba's garden. The plant did not survive, however, due to improper care. Baba was very annoyed at the gardener's improper handling of the plant and punished him.

I was then instructed to get a replacement plant of the same variety. Try as I may, I failed to get another plant. I was punished at every WRDS meeting because I failed to get the plant. Even after seven months, we could not locate a plant of the same species.

After many attempts, I was informed that a few plants were available in Java and Sumatra, but the law prohibited the removal of the plant from its natural habitat. It was an endangered species and a protected plant. As it was a rare species, the Indonesian government used to be inundated with requests of the plant from other countries. I was

told that the Japanese Prime Minister had offered US\$100,000 for the plant during his visit to Indonesia but had been politely turned down.

One can understand how difficult it was to get hold of another plant of that species. But Baba brooked no excuses. The plant had to be obtained one way or another.

Finally, after courting the friendship of a government official in Bali, Acarya Citkrnananda managed to get another plant of the required species. He immediately informed me of the good news. You can imagine my joy at hearing the news. Acarya Citkrnananda carried the plant with him and flew to Kolkata to deliver it personally to Baba. Baba was delighted and blessed Acarya Citkrnananda.

Nothing is impossible by His grace. He continually tests our patience and sincerity. With strong determination, everything is possible.

Golden Chicken Fern

The golden chicken fern is also known as the woolly fern. It is a tropical and subtropical species of fern found in several countries, including Indonesia, Peninsula Malaysia, China, Japan, Northeast India, Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam. The subterranean stem of the plant looks very much like a golden chicken, hence its name.

Baba asked me to get the plant for His garden. I looked for it and found it after several months. We then sent it to Baba as our contribution to His garden project.

Baba's garden contained many species of plants from all over the world, some of which were rare. It had many plant species, including flowering and fruiting plants, cacti, creepers, water-based plants,

montane plants, and so on. The garden project accomplished many things. First, it was a truly remarkable feat, a sort of Noah's Ark for plants. Second, it tested our determination and ingenuity to obtain the plants, especially the rare varieties. Baba often stated that spiritual progress was impossible without firm determination. Third, when all efforts failed to procure a plant, and we surrendered to Him, Baba would intervene and pave the way to obtain the elusive plant. I observed this on a number of occasions.

A Truckload of Plants

The WRDS meeting this time was held in Patna, Bihar. The Sectorial Secretaries of the nine sectors in the world were present to report on the progress of work in their respective sectors.

Baba was displeased with our progress in the plant program. We had failed to reach the targets He had set. It was not easy to get rare plants of different species and to bring them to India. Not only was money an issue, but getting them across into India was a big challenge because of quarantine procedures.

As punishment, we were instructed to get a truckload of plants from Hazipur near the city of Patna. We were already exhausted from traveling to India from our sectors. In addition, we had no money left to pay for the cost of buying the plants from the nursery. The total cost was estimated at 45,000 rupees, a princely sum indeed, particularly when our funds were low.

We could hardly share Baba's enthusiasm for His plant program. Our focus was on the many social service and spiritual projects Baba had given us to implement in our sectors. Transforming the society to a higher level of consciousness was our main goal. And transforming society in an age of gross materialism and spiritual darkness was

an almost impossible task. Despite the daunting challenges, we found many people thirsting for spiritual knowledge and experience in every corner of the globe. It seemed that the Supreme Being was slowly preparing human society to enter a new age of higher consciousness, into a spiritual age.

At that time, we failed to see the significance of His plant program. Our vision was narrow. His was universal. On hindsight, Baba's plant program was a necessary component of His futuristic plan to create a new, more evolved human society, His idea of neo-humanism.

Coming back to our story, we were then in a dark mood. One day, we sat in Baba's room with grim, weary faces, waiting for Him to come. We expected the worst. As we were brooding, He suddenly came into the room and saw our gloomy faces. Baba, on the other hand, was like a burst of sunshine. He was smiling sweetly and appeared to be in a light mood. He then addressed us in His usual singsong manner and said, "No knot is a knot for my naughty boys."

His sweet charm and cheery manner immediately lightened the dark mood in the room. We all laughed heartily at His amusing comment. We were again our usual jovial selves.

The next morning, a truckload of plants that we had ordered arrived from Hazipur. We were relieved. We then left Patna for our home sectors in a happy mood.

Tiljala Jagrti

The Tiljala jagrti was the second criterion Baba imposed on me as part of my responsibilities in Southeast Asia.

Getting money was never easy, especially when the Margiis in the region were not well off. In addition, we needed money for the many social projects that we were implementing in the region. Financially, we were stretched to the maximum. This new demand to obtain funds for the construction of the Tiljala jagrti was a heavy burden on me.

The construction of the Tiljala jagrti took a long time due to the lack of funds. The constant pressure from the central office for construction funds was agonizing. It affected the mood of the Margiis and workers in the region. I was equally disturbed by their persistent demands.

Due to the intense pressure, I mentally implored Him to relieve me of this almost insurmountable burden. Strangely, Baba seemed to answer my plea. Somehow, and sometimes in unexpected ways, my sectorial funding targets were met.

After two long years, the construction of the Tiljala jagrti was finally completed. What a relief that was.

As in the case of the garden project, the stark lesson that I drew from the Tiljala fund-raising project was that the Lord would always come to our rescue if we failed in any given task after giving it our best shot. For this to happen, a devotee must surrender everything to the Lord. Surrender is the key to success.

A Kaleidoscope of Experiences in Southeast Asia

A kaleidoscope of colorful experiences characterized my tenure as the Sectorial Secretary of the Manila sector. One point emerged from the pile of experiences: Baba was always there for us - helping us, correcting us, guiding us, protecting us, and loving us. His

ever-watchful eyes never slept. His invisible hands were ever-present as a safety net, holding us when we fell off the cliff. He played the diverse roles of Guru, administrator, friend, and father masterfully to enable us to become better instruments of the Lord in the service of humanity.

For all the years that I served Baba, I have come to realize that He is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. Beyond that, He is omnicompassionate. His compassion and grace are immeasurable, beyond comparison, beyond comprehension. Human beings can only fathom a drop of His limitless compassion for His creation. Yet, while possessing these divine attributes, He hid behind an air of ordinariness. Humility cannot find a better definition than that. These are not just romantic visions of His greatness. Many of His devotees have come to realize the same thing in their lives as disciples of this mysterious Guru.

I will narrate some of the extraordinary incidents that I can still remember to give the readers a glimpse of Baba's mysterious ways. These incidents occurred in 1982, when I was serving as the Sectorial Secretary of the Manila sector.

Singapore Ordeal

The first incident happened in Singapore. I was then staying in the jagrti with two other workers. One day, at noontime, a woman came to the jagrti and insisted on cooking our meals. Although we usually cooked our own meals, her insistence to cook for us overshadowed our better judgment. We thought that she must be a Margii sister who wanted to be helpful.

However, even after acceding to her request, I had an apprehensive feeling about the whole thing. I felt that the woman had bad intentions.

Thinking it to be nothing, I brushed aside my apprehension and focused on what I was doing. When she had finished cooking, she informed us that lunch was ready. Accordingly, we made our way to the dining hall.

After lunch, I returned to my room to rest. Within moments, I felt a sharp, caustic sensation inside my body, as if my whole body was on fire. I writhed in pain. I felt my consciousness slowly slipping away. In that state of agony, I called out to Baba for help.

In the meantime, the other workers laid me down gently on the floor. They closely monitored my condition. If it worsened, they would take me to the hospital. After a few hours, however, the pain slowly subsided, and I recovered.

What was strange was that I was the only one adversely affected by the food. The other workers were unaffected.

What surprised us even more was that the same woman returned in the evening to cook our dinner. This time, however, we were very apprehensive of her offer. The two workers politely but firmly told her that we were not hungry and that we would skip dinner. Seeing that our resolve not to have any food was firm, she left the place and never returned.

Jakarta Meal

The second incident took place in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. I left for Jakarta immediately after my tour of Singapore. In Jakarta, I stayed with the local worker, who was posted as the Regional Secretary of Ananda Marga in Indonesia.

There, he took me to the house of a Muslim sympathizer of Ananda Marga. This gentleman was enthusiastic about our social and spiritual activities in Indonesia and lent his support to our activities.

When we arrived at his house, he welcomed us warmly. We went in and sat down, discussing different aspects of our social service projects, as well as the topic of spirituality and Baba. My words inspired him, and he asked us to dine with him. He assured us that the food would be strictly vegetarian and sentient.

Again, I was not comfortable with his offer of food, but declining it would be impolite and might affect his enthusiasm and support for our activities in Indonesia. We thus agreed to have a meal with him.

Again, as in Singapore, but less intensely, I was adversely affected by the food. I suffered for a few days after taking the meal.

After Jakarta, I returned to my office in Manila. On retrospection, I thought that something must surely be wrong with me, as none of the other workers in Singapore and Indonesia had been adversely affected by the food. I put this thought aside and eventually forgot about the two incidents owing to the pressure of work.

Exposed in Kolkata

After some months, I was again requested by the central office to attend the forthcoming WRDS meeting in Kolkata, India.

I went to the meeting as instructed. After a bout of reporting by the other workers, it was my turn to report on the progress of work in my sector. While I was presenting my report, Baba suddenly asked me about a whitish substance that I had consumed at the Singapore jagrti on a specific date. Hearing this, the other workers

started to laugh. In their minds, they might have thought that I had inadvertently consumed some static food item, which was prohibited for monks. Baba noted the attitude of the other workers and informed them that I had not consumed any prohibited food item. Then He turned toward me and asked me what the white-colored food substance had been. I replied that it was tofu. Again, everyone laughed.

Baba then probed further into the incidents. He specifically mentioned that despite the fact that I had suspected that the food prepared by the Singaporean woman would be harmful to me, I had ignored the inner voice and consumed the food. He added that for an avadhuta this was unforgivable. He punished me for my mistake and continued to speak.

Baba told those present that I had committed the same error again, this time in Jakarta. He said that despite the warning of my inner voice not to take the food that had been offered, I had again ignored my conscience and consumed the food and, as a result, had suffered physically and mentally. Baba stressed the point and asked me pointedly why I didn't have the courage to refuse the offer of food. Was it so necessary to please the man that I should have to suffer? He asked.

I had no answer and put my head down. He gave me another round of punishment for my error. It was an invaluable lesson not only for me but also for all avadhutas.

“When Have You Been Permitted to Use Scented Oil?”

The third incident occurred in Manila. It is a standing rule that the monks and nuns of Ananda Marga are prohibited from using scented soap or scented oil. I usually had an adequate supply of unscented

coconut oil from India for my personal use. It happened that once my supply of oil ran out. I then decided to consult two senior acaryas, the late Acarya Cidananda Avadhuta, who was the trainer at our full-timer training center in Davao, and Acarya Japananda Avadhuta, who was the trainer at our local full-timer training center at another location about sixty kilometers from Manila.

To address my problem, Acarya Cidananda suggested that as an alternative I could use baby oil, as it was only lightly scented. Acarya Japananda agreed with the suggestion. Although the argument did not fully convince me, I used baby oil as an alternative to unscented coconut oil simply because I had no option.

After some time, I was requested to attend the WRDS meeting in Kolkata. When I presented myself before Baba, He directly questioned me about the subject of discussion I had had with other senior workers in Manila.

I did not reply to His question. Baba then asked me why I had used scented baby oil when I was not at all convinced with the reasoning of the other workers. “When have you been permitted to use scented oil?” He questioned.

I acknowledged my mistake and assured Him that I would never repeat this error in future.

Peanut Folly

The fourth incident concerned peanuts. Once, Baba punished me for eating peanuts. Peanuts are not a prohibited food item for the monks and nuns of Ananda Marga. In fact, we used to consume a lot of peanuts when we went outside the ashram in Tiljala, Kolkata, as it was difficult to find sentient food.

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However, peanuts do not agree with my system. I get an allergic reaction after consuming them and end up with an upset stomach.

At a workers' meeting one day, Baba exposed my folly and said that I had knowingly consumed a lot of peanuts although they do not suit me. I was not spared the stick for my folly. The workers present thoroughly enjoyed the peanut drama.

I must say something about Baba's cane. Baba's cane was a multipurpose tool. He used it to punish, to heal, and to perform spiritual demonstrations. Ironically, it is called Dukhaharana in Sanskrit, which means "that which removes pain." We devotees came to realize that Baba's cane had multiple functions. On the one hand, it was a means to correct our lethargy and our errors, both omissions and commissions. On the other hand, the very act of inflicting pain through punishment was a means He employed to exhaust our samskaras, the adverse latent reactions of our past actions. He also used the same stick to demonstrate different kinds of spiritual trance on deserving spiritual aspirants by raising their Kulakundalini to different cakras.

Bali Setback

Baba posted a worker in Bali, Indonesia, as the trainer of the training center there. At that time, I was staying in the Singapore jagrti. The newly appointed trainer met me in Singapore and informed me that Baba had instructed him to establish a local full-time training center in Bali.

I informed him that it would not be possible to do that, as there was not a single Margii in Bali. I could see the disappointment in his face. To brighten his mood, I told him that I would send some senior workers to Bali to propagate Ananda Marga practices and

ideology and that once the critical mass of spiritual aspirants was created, he could set up the training center. I advised him that in the meantime he should work in Malaysia and assist in the construction of the jagrti there.

He agreed with my suggestion and went to Malaysia. In the meantime, I assigned a few senior workers to Bali to set up Ananda Marga units there. They tried their best for a period of six months but were unsuccessful. So I thought that it would be best to send the trainer to Manila to continue with his missionary work.

Meanwhile, I went to Kolkata for the WRDS meeting. During my reporting session, the first question Baba asked me was about the progress of the training center in Bali. I dreaded this question, as no work had been done due to our failure to create any Ananda Marga units there. I kept quiet. Seeing no response from me, Baba probed further. As I had no answer to His pointed queries, I kept quiet.

Baba was infuriated at my deafening silence and in an exasperated tone asked the other workers how He should respond to the fact that the trainer had failed to go to Bali as instructed and, as a result, no training center had been established there.

Baba then reprimanded and punished me for my failure to discharge my duties. While scolding me, He said, "This worthless fellow has slowed down My mission in Bali by six months."

Then He asked me in how many hours I could establish the training center, to which I replied two hundred hours. Baba was displeased with my response and continued to punish me, asking me why it would take so long to perform such a simple task. I then replied that it would take seventy-two hours to fulfill the task. Baba seemed to be satisfied with the reply and stopped punishing me.

I immediately telephoned the trainer, who was in Manila then, and asked him to go to Denpasar, the administrative capital of Bali, as soon as possible. I explained to him that Baba was unhappy with me for having delayed the progress of his missionary work in Bali. He took the next flight to Bali and got down to work as soon as he arrived. Amazingly, within fifteen days, he had initiated sixty people. In two months, he had initiated another 150 people and started weekly Dharmacakra in five different Ananda Marga units. During Dharmacakra, Margiis would gather at the jagrti and perform collective meditation, followed by a spiritual discussion.

Given the astounding success of the acarya in establishing several Ananda Marga units in Bali, he was able to establish a training center by renting a house for the purpose.

I was delighted to hear this good news. Again I had to go to Kolkata to attend the WRDS meeting. This time, I went with a light mind, given the success of my effort at establishing the local full-timer training center. I believed that it was a good job done and that Baba would surely be happy. So when I reached Baba's quarters in Lake Gardens, I couldn't wait to report the good news to Baba.

I was ushered into Baba's room by the attending secretary, and after my usual salutations to Him, I got up and sat down smugly, facing Him. I was eager to tell Him the good news. However, to my surprise, Baba turned His face away from me, indicating that He was displeased with me. Baba's displeasure was unexpected, a bolt from the blue. I was shocked, as I had thought that He would be satisfied with the result of our hard work.

After a short while, Baba said that He was aware that I was eager to inform Him about the good news of the new local full-timer training center in Bali but that the plain fact was I had delayed His

mission in Bali by six months because I had stopped His medium from going to Bali for that purpose. Baba pointed out that all the people the acarya had initiated had been destined to be initiated by him.

This was a big spiritual lesson for me. I realized three important things in the process. First, I should always follow the Guru's instructions to the letter. Once He gives an instruction, my responsibility is to fulfill it in a timely manner, whether or not it appears logical, because He has embedded the seeds of success in His instructions. Logic, after all, is only a function of the human mind. The Sadguru's grace overrides logic.

Second, the Sadguru has predetermined everything—when an action should begin, when it should end, the role-players, and the outcome of the action. He has come to this small planet with a specific mission, that is, to establish a proper human society. I have come to realize that His mission is precise in terms of its content, process, direction, and timing. He has preplanned everything to the dot. My lapse of judgment delayed His mission in Bali by six months.

Third, does this mean that human beings are mere automatons without self-determination? No, certainly not. Human beings are the crown of creation, and nature has provided them with the faculty of intelligence and free will. However, the free will is qualified; it is not absolute. It is subsumed within the cosmic will. If an action based on our free will is not consistent with the cosmic will, then it will not be successful. The cosmic will overrides our free will. However, if an action is consistent with the cosmic plan, it will bear fruit.

The question then arises how my action could seemingly supersede the Sadguru's predetermined plan. The answer to this, I believe, is that He allowed it to happen to dramatize a lesson for my benefit and for the benefit of all spiritual aspirants. The essence of the lesson was the need to follow the Guru's instructions without question. In Tantra, it has been stated, "Mantra Mu'lam Guru Va'kyam, Moks'a Mu'lam Guru Krpa", which means that the Guru's words are the root of mantra and the grace of the Guru is the root of salvation.

A Thought of Suicide

It was 1982. I was then the Sectorial Secretary of the Manila sector. The position carried a heavy responsibility. I was responsible for implementing all the social service and development projects in the region and of meeting the financial needs of the organization. I had to look for money one way or another. Depending on donations alone was insufficient, particularly because the Margiis in the region were not well off. To compound the matter, there were requests for funds from the central office in India. The financial pressure was agonizing. It was a constant source of worry for me and robbed me of my peace of mind.

As I was hopeless with money matters, I often sought the advice of those workers who were conversant with the art of making money. In our discussions, they suggested many moneymaking ideas to solve our critical shortage of funds. Once, some workers suggested venturing into business. They told me that I had to raise 25,000 Malaysian ringgit for that purpose, which they promised to return within three months. The present value of 25,000 ringgit is approximately US\$8,500. I agreed to their proposal, as I did not have a better idea how else to raise the funds we badly needed.

I had excellent relations with the Margiis in my region. I got in touch with a Malaysian Margii, Brother Gyaneshvara, for a loan. I assured him that I would repay the loan in full within three months. He readily agreed to advance the loan, as he trusted me. On securing the funds, I handed the money to Acarya Citkrnananda Avadhuta and Acarya Arghyananda Avadhuta. They invested the funds in the proposed business. However, the business was unsuccessful, and all the money was lost.

Monks, by nature, do not make good businessmen and yet, due to the pressure of circumstances, may have to dabble in business ventures to raise funds for their social service projects. Depending on charity alone is insufficient and unreliable.

When they informed me of the loss, I was terribly disappointed. Not only was the opportunity for funds lost, but more importantly, I would not be able to keep my word to repay the loan. The thought that I would not be able to honor my commitment disturbed me. The more I thought about it, the more disturbed I got. As a result, I developed insomnia and lost my peace of mind.

Acarya Citkrnananda and Acarya Arghyananda consoled me and assured me that they would do their best to return the money to me. By that time, I had developed a negative outlook and did not believe that they could return the money as promised. In fact, the thought of committing suicide played upon my disturbed mind.

In that helpless state, just before I went to sleep, I called upon Baba to intervene to solve the problem. That night I had a dream. In the dream, Baba came up to me and lovingly massaged my head. As He was massaging my head, He told me to be brave and to relinquish the thought of committing suicide. He stressed that it was a sin to think of committing suicide. He advised me to speak to the person who

had loaned me the money and to explain the real situation to him. He said that he would understand my problem and that it would be amicably resolved. Then He disappeared.

At that point, I awoke. Surprisingly, I felt light and refreshed. The thought of committing suicide did not pester me anymore. As instructed in the dream, I contacted the Margii and explained the situation to him. He understood my problem, and the issue was resolved, to my relief.

I then decided that I would never again take a loan.

Behind the Bamboo Curtain

Baba wanted the ideals and philosophy of Ananda Marga to penetrate the Communist bloc. The governments of those countries made it very difficult for ideologies other than Communism to operate. Among others, they strictly prohibited spirituality and Yoga. Ideas other than Socialist or Communist ideas were considered a national threat.

Baba kept up the pressure on us to bring spirituality to the people living behind the Bamboo Curtain. I therefore sent some workers to Vietnam and Cambodia to assess the situation and to see what we could do there. Several attempts to do something ended in failure. It was very difficult to do anything because we were always followed by the secret police. We could not hold any public talk or forum. The environment was stiflingly restrictive. In addition, the people who were interested in learning Yoga and meditation were afraid of being discovered and penalized by the authorities.

At one of the WRDS meetings, I informed Baba about the lack of success in our attempts to penetrate the countries under Communist

rule. Baba then suggested that I should focus my attention on serving the Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees staying at the border of Thailand.

It was a brilliant idea. I returned to Manila and immediately dispatched some workers there. Our efforts paid off this time. Many Margiis were created among the refugees, and many Ananda Marga units were established.

This unexpected success happened during the tail end of my tenure in the Manila sector. For me, it was especially pleasing because after several unsuccessful attempts, we finally succeeded in getting a foothold in those countries.

Baba's Greatness

Baba once had mentioned that the Philippines' original name in Sanskrit was Maharlika. The current name, the *Philippines*, was derived from King Philip II of Spain in the sixteenth century.

The Margiis of Maharlika were very devoted to Baba. They loved Baba with all their hearts. Baba too loved them and blessed them. Many times, the Maharlikan Margiis asked me to convey their desire to Baba that a Dharma Maha Cakra should be convened in Maharlika.

During a WRDS meeting in Kolkata, I conveyed the respects and good wishes of the Maharlikan Margiis to Baba. I told Baba that the Margiis of Maharlika had requested Him to conduct a DMC in Maharlika. Baba acknowledged their greetings and good wishes. The first thing He asked me was to justify why He should conduct a DMC in Maharlika. I replied that His devotees in Maharlika desired the touch of His lotus feet to sanctify the land of Maharlika.

Baba's response to my statement overwhelmed me. He said that if He so desired, He could enable the spiritual realization of all beings in the universe just by sitting in His room in Kolkata.

While Baba's astounding assertion has many dimensions beyond human comprehension, in the context of the Margiis' request for Him to conduct a DMC in Maharlika, I believe that what He meant was that if He so desired, He could transmit the spiritual benefits of a DMC to the Maharlikan Margiis just from His room in Kolkata. And if He wished, He could bestow on them the supreme spiritual realization of *moksa* or salvation by a mere drop of His boundless grace.

This is something our little human minds cannot fathom. Indeed, Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii is a mystery. No one can fathom His greatness, more so because He deliberately hides behind a façade of ordinariness.

By His grace, I have come to realize that He transcends time, space, and personality and that He can give a deserving spiritual aspirant the highest spiritual realization faster than the blink of an eye. I have also realized that He is really the force behind the success of our endeavors, even our failures. Our best efforts are only the conduit of the grand plan that He has chalked out for this planet at this phase of its evolution.

Be Lionhearted

Baba always encouraged His disciples to be lionhearted. Tantra is the way of the brave.

One day, in 1983, after the conclusion of the WRDS meeting, the senior workers who had attended the meeting were waiting in the

car park to get His blessings before they returned to their respective sectors.

It was the system that before we left, each of us had to offer Him a garland of flowers and seek His blessings and permission to leave. At that time, Baba had just left for a Field Walk, so we were waiting for Him to return for His blessings, garlands in hand.

When He returned, we welcomed Him with the colorful garlands, just as He alighted from the car. Seeing us, He smiled broadly and asked, "What do my goody-goody boys and girls have to say?"

We did not respond but just looked at Him in silence, enjoying His fatherliness. He continued, "Goody-goody means those who are gentle and good. They want peace and justice but lack daring capacity to fight injustice. My children should be lionhearted. Do you understand?"

We all laughed and understood the spirit of His words. He came to create *sadvipras* to establish a proper human society. *Sadvipras* are those brave souls who are ever ready to fight injustice, exploitation, repression, and suppression. They are guided by the dictum "Peace is the result of fight. Therefore, the peace lovers of the world never shy away from fight."

Never Tell a Lie

Baba was very particular about the need for spiritual aspirants, especially renunciants, to be truthful in all circumstances. The habit of telling the truth has strong character-building properties and strengthens willpower. It is an indispensable asset for spiritual aspirants.

In 1982, I got a lesson from Baba that I will never forget on telling the truth.

Baba had started a new genre of music that year. He called his collection of songs *Prabhat Samgiita*, or *Songs of a New Dawn*. The whole collection comprised 5,018 songs in eight languages, a remarkable feat by any standard. They were composed in different melodic styles such as Baul, *jhumur*, kiirtan, *tappa*, *ghazal*, *khayal*, and *qawalii*, among others. They also included Chinese, Middle Eastern, Iberian, Persian, and Scandinavian tunes. Baba clarified that some of the tunes had been lost to humanity for the past fifteen thousand years. The songs were essentially devotional in nature, some superimposed with social and cultural themes. *Prabhat Samgiita* is an enduring cultural legacy He left for the present and future generations.

The Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore was said to have composed more than three thousand songs. In comparison, *Prabhat Samgiita* outnumbers Rabindra Sangeet by far.

Baba composed the first song on September 14, 1982, at Deoghar, a small town in the state of Bihar, now in the state of Jharkhand. He composed his final song on October 20, 1990, a day before His physical departure from earth.

Prabhat Samgiita created such a momentum in His devotees that they waited eagerly every day for Baba to compose a new song. Baba Himself would dictate the tune and lyrics to a group of workers specially selected for this purpose. He would then have them memorize the tune and lyrics and sing before Him. He would correct any mistakes immediately.

Baba also inspired everyone to learn these songs and sing them individually or collectively. Many *Prabhat Samgiita* concerts were organized throughout the nine sectors in the globe.

We organized a *Prabhat Samgiita* concert in Manila. Leading musicians and singers participated in the program. The concert was very successful. People enjoyed it very much.

I felt very satisfied that we had successfully organized a *Prabhat Samgiita* concert in the Manila sector. I wanted to convey the good news to Baba as soon as possible. I got the chance to do so when I attended the WRDS meeting.

At the meeting, I waited patiently for Baba to call me. It was my experience that whenever I came for reporting, Baba would find time to see me for a short while. This time, however, I waited for two days without any indication whether He would see me. I became very anxious and inquired from Baba's Personal Assistant, Acarya Ramananda Avadhuta, if Baba could see me. He then informed me that Baba had imposed a new condition for workers to meet Him. It stipulated that before any worker could meet Him, he or she had to organize at least five *Prabhat Samgiita* concerts.

This new condition disturbed me very much. It meant that I could not see Baba this time, as I had organized only one *Prabhat Samgiita* concert. In desperation, I decided to alter my progress report to match the new requirement. This would enable me to meet Baba personally.

The revised report was forwarded to Acarya Ramananda. Accordingly, he informed Baba that five *Prabhat Samgiita* concerts had been held in the Manila sector. As the report met the criterion

for meeting Baba, He agreed to see me the next day at five o'clock in the morning.

The next morning, I went before five o'clock to His quarters and waited for permission to see Him. After getting permission, I entered the room, prostrated before Him as usual, and sat down. Baba was relaxed in a reclining position. The first question Baba shot at me was if I had actually organized five concerts in my sector. I kept quiet, as I did not want to lie to my Guru.

Baba then sprang up from His bed in an irate mood, as if breathing fire and brimstone. He rebuked me with such forceful intensity that it felt as if the walls of the room were trembling and might collapse at any moment. The shock of His blistering rebuke made every bone in my frail body tremble with fear. I wanted to run away as far as I could.

In a thundering tone, He asked me why I had lied. I could only whisper in reply that I had lied to be in His physical presence. Hearing my reply, He softened His scorching stance somewhat. He then instructed me to fasten the latch on the bedroom door. Again, He asked me the real reason why I had lied in the report. Again, I explained that I had wanted to see Him at any cost and revising the report to meet the new criterion was the only way to do so.

By this time, Baba was in a much more relaxed mood, and the tone of His voice was less harsh. I was immensely relieved. He advised me that I should never again resort to lying for any reason, even to meet Him. He stressed that the life of a *sanyasii*, a renunciant, should be based on truth alone.

I promised Him that I would never again resort to falsehood. Thereafter, He blessed me.

For me, there was an invaluable take away from this incident. A spiritual aspirant, particularly a renunciant, should always strive to be established in truth in all circumstances and not allow even a small opening for falsehood to take root. Falsehood is the precursor of one's downfall.

Dharma Samiiksa: A Unique Event in Human History

Following the Ananda Purnima DMC in May 1981, Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii introduced a new and unique program known as Dharma Samiiksa. Dharma Samiiksa is a program of spiritual scrutiny by Baba, a thorough review of the spiritual aspirant at the physical, mental, and spiritual levels. Through this program, He scrutinized the past and present samskaras, the unexhausted reactions, of the spiritual aspirant; identified the hindrances in the person's spiritual progress; and recommended the solutions to remove them. For this purpose, He advised the person on the right food to take, the right asanas or Yoga exercises to do, the right way to live through self-restraint, and the natural remedies to use. Sometimes, He would prescribe some form of punishment for serious errors committed. He would expose the details of such errors before He prescribed the punishment. The punishment was actually a means of exhausting the deep-rooted samskaras of many lifetimes, thus lightening the burden of the spiritual aspirant in his or her march to liberation.

Baba explained that this was the first time in fifteen thousand years of human civilization that Dharma Samiiksa has been introduced. Human beings first appeared on the earth about one million years ago. Human civilization is relatively new and started about fifteen thousand years ago. He clarified that He did not want spiritual aspirants to carry their load of samskaras for eternity and that they should have the opportunity to attain liberation as quickly as possible.

In this regard, Baba explained that the purpose of Dharma Samiiksa was to make a spiritual aspirant Dagdhabijja, that is, one whose samskaras have been completely exhausted. Yogis spend lifetimes trying to exhaust their samskaras through intense spiritual practice in order to make headway on the spiritual path. In most cases, however, they achieve only partial success, as it is difficult to exhaust all samskaras in one lifetime. The coveted status of Dagdhabijja can only be achieved by the causeless grace of the Lord.

I was in the Manila sector when the Dharma Samiiksa program was introduced. I was then suffering from an acute and incurable form of blood cancer. I was emaciated and did not have the energy to travel long distances. When I learned of the Dharma Samiiksa program, I decided that I must go to Kolkata at any cost. Due to the severity of my illness, the doctor advised me against going. But I was adamant and stuck to my decision to go. I informed the General Secretary, Acarya Sarveshvarananda, about my health condition. I then arranged to fly to Kolkata via Bangkok. Unfortunately, I missed the flight, as I fainted just as the plane was about to leave. The plane left without me. When I regained consciousness, I made reservations to fly the next day.

I managed to get on the flight without incident this time. Upon reaching Kolkata, I took a taxi to Baba's quarters and, to my surprise, found Baba's Personal Assistant waiting for me at the gate. As soon as I got down from the taxi, he grabbed me by the wrist and brought me straight away into Baba's room.

I prostrated before Him and took my seat on the floor facing Him. Baba looked at me and inquired after my health with tenderly love. Almost as a reflex action, I replied that I felt good. Baba immediately retorted, "What good?" He then asked me to stand up and examined

me from the tip of my toe to the top of my head using His x-ray vision. He said nothing but asked me to return the next day.

The next day, I went to the central office at Jodhpur Park, where Dharma Samiiksa was being conducted. Hundreds of Margiis from India and abroad were present. They patiently stood in queue every morning and evening in the hope that they would be called for Dharma Samiiksa. The Sectorial Secretaries of the nine sectors were there too.

Baba then entered the room. Seeing the large crowd assembled there, He said that as the Sectorial Secretaries had come from far-off places, they should be considered special guests and be allowed to stand close to Him, so that they could watch the process of Dharma Samiiksa at close range.

We took our place as directed and enjoyed the mystical drama that unfolded before our eyes as Baba conducted the program. I recall one incident that occurred during the Dharma Samiiksa of a Margii from Bengal. Baba began by asking him whether he fasted regularly on Ekadashi, the eleventh day of the lunar fortnight, when Yogis are required to fast.

The Margii affirmed that he did. Baba reminded him of an incident one fasting day in summer when he had felt very hot and thirsty and had jumped into a pond to have a bath. Baba then said that the Margii had not been able to resist the temptation of quenching his thirst and had secretly consumed some water while in the pond, thinking that no one had seen him. Baba said that He had been there in the Margii's mind and had witnessed the incident. He then asked the Margii whether the fast could be considered a fast while consuming water. Without waiting for a reply, Baba answered that

it was not. At the conclusion of the process, Baba asked him if he deserved punishment for his mistake. The Margii nodded.

I witnessed many similar incidents involving Margiis and workers alike during the process of Dharma Samiiksa. It proved Baba's omniscience beyond a shred of doubt. It was simply amazing to put it mildly.

Cured of Blood Cancer

My turn for Dharma Samiiksa was on July 22, 1981. That was indeed the golden day of my life.

I was asked to stand before Baba for my Dharma Samiiksa process. Pointing His index finger at me, Baba told everyone present that the day before when he had asked about my health condition, I had replied that I was fine. Baba then said that actually, I had just another twenty-four hours to live and that my life on earth would end after that. Baba clarified that blood cancer had totally consumed my body and that I was standing on the verge of death. He added that the cancer had destroyed all my blood cells and that there was no way I could live. He said that if anyone had reported my health condition to Him earlier, he would have advised me what to do. As nobody had informed Him of this matter, I was now dying due to my own samskara. "Let him die. What can I do in such a situation?" He asked.

Baba's terse remarks on my fate sent a cold shiver down everyone's spines. I could see the deep concern reflected in their faces. For me, however, my imminent death was not my main worry. I was more concerned on how we could further expand Ananda Marga in the Manila sector and bring more people to the path of spirituality. I

relished every moment of His holy presence, and I stood like a statue under His cosmic scrutiny.

As He spoke, I intuitively felt that He would not let me die in front of Him. In a serious tone, Baba asked why nobody had informed Him of my serious condition when my blood cancer had first been detected. Nobody said anything, so I replied that I had informed the General Secretary of my health condition. Hearing this, Baba harshly scolded Acarya Sarveshananda Avadhuta for failing in his duty to inform Him about such an important matter regarding an important worker.

Baba then took out His Dukhaharana cane and touched different parts of my body with it. As He was doing so, Baba narrated in detail the suffering that I had undergone from my childhood. He said that I had suffered from many severe and not-so-severe diseases, including typhoid, TB, acute stomachache, and so on. With regard to the leukemia I was currently suffering from, He said that there was no chance of my survival. However, as He wanted to utilize me for His mission and because I was a devotee and a dedicated worker of His mission, He would not let me die. He stressed that medical science did not have the solution to save me from the jaws of death and that He would do whatever was required to save my life.

Baba then touched my Anahata cakra with the cane and kept it there for a long time with His eyes closed. I could feel a very pleasant sensation all over my body. I also felt a new, powerful life-force entering my body, permeating every cell. I thought that with such a powerful force in me, I could crush mountains. Meanwhile, I could see that Baba's body was perspiring profusely and that He was getting tired.

Finally, after about forty-five minutes, He said that my blood cancer was cured and that I had to wait for twenty-one days for the new cells to grow before I could regain my normal strength. In the meantime, I should be well looked after.

He then instructed Acarya Vijayananda to take care of me while I was recuperating. The late Dada Vijayananda took care of me very well, for which I am grateful. Occasionally, Baba would check on my progress. Whenever I stood before Him, I could feel a powerful life-force entering me, which made me feel rejuvenated.

After a period of twenty-five days, I felt that I was completely healed and that I should return to the Manila sector to continue with my work. I told the General Secretary of my desire to resume my duties. He informed Baba accordingly. Baba endorsed my suggestion with three points of advice: first, I had to take care of my health; second, I had to eat nutritious food; and lastly, I had to follow the conduct rules strictly.

The news of my miraculous cure from the dreaded blood cancer echoed throughout the nine sectors of the globe. It made news. The Margiis of the Manila sector, especially, were eager to see me and gave me a warm welcome when I reached the Manila International Airport.

Baba was merciful, compassionate beyond comprehension. I have only these words to say: “He makes the dumb speak and the lame conquer mountains. I surrender unto that ever-graceful Madhava [the Supreme Lord of the universe], the personification of bliss.”

Yet I know that this description falls far short of His compassion for all creatures of this world, nay, even inhabitants of the visible and invisible universes. Words fall back when they try to describe Him.

Snippets of the Future

Once, at a WRDS meeting, Baba made some prophetic comments about the future of several countries in the different sectors.

Regarding the Hong Kong sector, which includes countries like China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and others, He said that they had a rich cultural and spiritual tradition. He said that thinkers like Confucius, Lao Tze, and others had enriched the people's minds, while Buddha had instilled a strong spiritual urge in them. Baba said that in general the people in this sector had spiritual urge. He added that Japan, Taiwan, and Korea continued to progress materially.

During the session for my sector, He spoke about the rich sociocultural heritage of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Vietnam. He added that Singapore was economically developed and that Malaysia was steadily advancing economically. Regarding the Philippines, He said that its culture had been damaged by the influence of pseudo-American culture.

With regard to the other sectors, He said that the Suva, Berlin, and New York sectors were economically developed. The countries of the Nairobi sector had been incessantly exploited socially, culturally, and economically. The so-called developed countries exploited the rich natural resources of these countries for their selfish benefit. This resulted in most of the countries being economically and socially neglected.

He said that the so-called developing countries like India, China, Brazil, Mexico, and Indonesia were rich in mineral resources and economic potential and that after thirty-five years, they would eventually become the newly developed nations of the world, while the so-called developed countries of today would lag behind. He

added that today, the rich places in the world like America, Europe, and Australia made fun of the economically backward countries but that a time would come when the power and economic might of these countries would be sapped. Then the once-powerful and rich countries would become the laughingstock of the world. He added that nothing is permanent in this world, that everything is a passing show, a changing reality, and a moving panorama.

How and why would this change of fortune occur? He clarified that the so-called rich countries had utilized and exploited their own resources maximally. Their economies were rapidly moving toward a point of saturation. The developing countries, however, had huge stocks of unexploited and untapped natural resources. By using science and superior technology, the developing countries of today would get wealthier in the future. He said that India had a bright future and that it would lead the world spiritually in the future. He added that India's cultural and spiritual wealth was unparalleled.

Today, one can see some of these prophecies unfolding on the world stage.

Passing the Baton

It was the last leg of my posting as Sectorial Secretary of the Manila sector. During my tenure, some concrete progress had been made. A number of schools, children's homes, cooperatives, and master units had been established in different parts of the sector. New projects were being planned. The sector was expanding at a rapid rate. Thus, the pressure of securing sufficient funds to implement the projects was tremendous.

As the head of the organization in the Manila sector, the responsibility of securing the required funds fell squarely on my shoulders. I had

to contemplate alternative sources of funding. Depending on public donations alone was unreliable. I lacked the mental disposition for this task, however. I am incapable of doing business.

Baba asked me and a few other workers to come to the central office in India to discuss the financial situation of the organization in the Manila sector.

When we reached India, we were asked to go to Ananda Nagar for Baba's blessings. There, Baba chided me for my lack of equanimity and added that the position of Sectorial Secretary required a person to have the qualities of an administrator, a fund-raiser, a moralist, and a spiritual leader, all rolled into one.

I lacked the ability to make money. Perhaps others had stronger administrative capabilities. Acarya Citkrsnananda Avadhuta eventually took over the post of Sectorial Secretary in the Manila sector in 1983. I was very happy to be relieved of my administrative duties in the sector.

A Summary of the Work in Southeast Asia

As I look back and assess the work that was achieved during my tenure as Sectorial Secretary of the Manila sector, I get a sense of satisfaction that much had been accomplished within a short period of two and a half years. I must add, however, that every successful venture was by His grace alone. I was only His medium to initiate humanitarian work in the sector and to propagate the ideals of Ananda Marga to as many people as possible. Baba wanted us to propagate Ananda Marga to every household on earth, so that the critical mass of spiritual aspirants would be created in the shortest possible time to enable humanity's ascent to a new, golden age. I knew that no success was possible without His will. He made

this abundantly clear on several occasions. I recall the time when every effort to procure the rare thorny berry plant proved futile but magically became successful when He intervened.

During my tenure in the Manila sector, I also realized that lack of funds was not a barrier to success. We needed a huge amount of funds to run our development projects on a sustainable basis. But finding enough money was an onerous task indeed, as the Margiis in the sector were not wealthy and donors were few. Many could hardly eke out a decent living. We were always short of cash. But somehow, we managed to have just enough money to keep our social projects going. Sometimes, this happened in unexpected ways. We would get an injection of much-needed funds at the last minute from a Good Samaritan. The lesson that I can draw from this is that help will come one way or the other if your intentions are selfless.

Another significant event occurred in this period, perhaps the most important thing in my life. I was plucked from the jaws of death and granted a new lease on life when He cured me of an incurable disease. I have come to realize that He was the Lord of life and death.

I was appointed as Sectorial Secretary of the Manila sector in January 1981. Initially, I was doubtful that I could deliver what was expected of me. I thought that the task was beyond my means. Baba knew my predicament and assured me that the Margiis of the region would welcome me to their sector and cooperate with me and that I would be successful in my mission. That encouraged me to take up the challenge.

The countries in this sector were the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. These were the ASEAN countries. The region was heterogeneous, consisting of many ethnic groups, religions, cultures,

languages, attitudes, social mores, political inclinations, and economic systems. The regional landscape spanned from very poor countries to rich ones, from democracies to dictatorships, and was home to all the major religions of the world. The needs, aspirations, and problems facing each country were unique. To meet these ends, a single, one-size-fits-all approach was not possible.

Initially, I toured the countries to assess their situation and to see how we could get a foothold to start our spiritual and social work. The first set of countries I visited was Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines. As I traveled to these countries, I noted that what Baba had said was true: the Margiis and workers warmly welcomed me. I was very encouraged by this development.

I then visited the other countries in my sector. Except for Brunei, the other four CLMV countries—Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam—were relatively poor.

At that time, the Philippines had the most number of Margiis. After the Philippines, the Singapore region comprising Malaysia, Singapore, and North Sumatra had the most significant Marga presence.

Let me begin with the Philippines. After India, the maximum number of devoted Margiis is found in the Philippines. Ananda Marga is very popular here. Although devoutly Christian, the people are open to new ideas and have welcomed Yoga and meditation. They find our system of spiritual practice logical and attractive, devoid of superstition, rituals, and dogmatic persuasion. Ananda Marga is also very well known for its relief activities during emergencies through the work of the Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT), which includes feeding the poor and our free medical camps.

In Davao, located in southern Philippines, we constructed three jagrtis, a full-timer training center to create new acaryas, three Ananda Marga Schools, a children's home, a disadvantaged children's home, and the Marga Guru quarters. We also conducted relief missions in collaboration with the Red Cross. One notable achievement of Ananda Marga is that the local government of Mindanao has acknowledged the efficacy of our neo-humanist education system and has asked us to conduct meditation and Yoga classes in government schools.

Next, I shall evaluate the work we did in the Singapore region, which included Malaysia, Singapore, and North Sumatra in Indonesia. Economically, Malaysia and Singapore were the most developed in the Manila sector. In Malaysia, we established centers in both East and West Malaysia and started many social service projects, including schools and medical camps. In Singapore, we started many Yoga classes. In Medan, Indonesia, we also organized many Yoga classes and opened several schools.

One interesting incident stands out that proves His omniscience. At that time, the Margiis of Malaysia were looking for a suitable piece of land to construct the Marga Guru quarters. After an exhaustive search, a piece of land was located in the district of Batu Gajah, in the state of Perak in northern Malaysia. Strenuous efforts were made to raise the funds to buy the land and to construct the building. A modest building was constructed for that purpose. When the task was completed, a devoted Margii brother, who had played a key role in establishing the Marga Guru quarters in Batu Gajah, went to India to present the land title to Baba. Baba was very pleased with the effort. Baba then casually remarked that His room in the Marga Guru quarters should have an attached bathroom. This had been left out in our haste to construct the building. When the Margii

returned to Malaysia, he quickly contacted the contractor and added an attached bathroom.

Next, I shall assess the Jakarta region in Indonesia, an expansive region comprising about eighteen thousand islands. In 1983, Indonesia had a population of about 181 million people, where about 88 percent were Muslim, 9 percent Christian, 2 percent Hindu, and the rest Buddhists and others.

Ananda Marga has established several new Ananda Marga centers, children's homes, and schools in this region during my tenure as Sectorial Secretary. In Bali alone, there were seven active Ananda Marga centers, some of which were established during my tenure. Indonesians of all faiths have been attracted to our spiritual practices.

Let us now look at the Bangkok region in Thailand. The Thais are Buddhist. The form of Buddhism practiced here is Theravada Buddhism. Generally, the Thais do not welcome new ideas other than Buddhist ideas. We have tried very hard to gain a foothold in Thailand since 1972 but have had little success. We have established two schools and some children's homes there, which have been recognized by the government for their good work. Sometime after my tenure in the Manila sector, the work of the Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team had gained prominence in Thailand, especially during the 2004 tsunami that seriously affected Thailand, with an estimated eight thousand people dead and thousands more injured and displaced.

The next region in my sector was the Rangoon region in Myanmar. At that time, Myanmar was governed with an iron fist by a military dictatorship. Myanmar was 90 percent Buddhist, 4 percent Christian, 4 percent Muslim, and the rest Hindus and others. Ananda Marga has made some headway in Myanmar despite official restrictions,

as the people are receptive to new ideas and practices. We have also implemented several successful social service projects there.

Finally, in the Vietnam and Cambodia region, we have also had many official hurdles to cross and have had to keep a low profile. Communism pervades the official thinking. However, as the people hunger for spiritual knowledge, we have been able to establish several active centers in both countries, and hundreds of people have been initiated into our spiritual practices. Vietnam, for example, is now thriving with scores of very dedicated Margiis. A new spiritual wave is slowly taking shape.

The main lesson I have drawn from my Manila sector experience is that we must totally surrender to Him in all our actions if we want success. When we perform an egocentric action, the action may or may not be fruitful. But if we take His name in performing an action, it will be successful.

Overall, I am pleased with the success of Ananda Marga's efforts in the Manila sector, despite the many challenges we have faced.

World Tour

After I handed over my responsibilities as Sectorial Secretary of the Manila sector, I was given a new position as a global worker in charge of the workers' discipline and the local full-timer training center in Manila.

During a WRDS meeting, Baba rebuked the Secretary General and me for failing to improve organizational discipline and the pace of work in the sector. Baba asked us what we had been doing in Manila.

Unexpectedly, He turned to me and asked me why I had not gone on a world tour. I replied that my job was local and did not require me to travel abroad, as I was only responsible for conducting the training of the local full-timers in the Philippines. Baba appeared not to be convinced with my response and instructed me to go on a tour of Europe and America.

I then worked out a tour plan and sought the permission of both my organization's Secretary General and Baba to go to Europe.

I visited many countries, including Greece, West Germany, East Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Yugoslavia, and Austria.

During the tour, I met many Margiis and workers and did my best to inspire them to contribute to the organization. I held numerous discussions with them on expanding our activities in Europe. I also contacted many new people and developed good personal relationships with many influential people. Such relationships were helpful for organizational work. I was satisfied with the results of my tour and thereafter went to India before returning to Manila.

The actual reason why Baba wanted me to go on a world tour remains a mystery. Perhaps He wanted me to experience for myself the immutable cosmic truth that while the world comprises a wide variety of peoples, cultures, attitudes, and systems, everything is somehow interconnected and interdependent, giving expression to the adage of unity in diversity. We may be separated by vast distances, but there is an invisible thread that links our destinies.

A Yogi in Jail

During my tour of Europe, the West German police arrested me for an immigration oversight. I spent fifty-five days in prison.

I shared the cell with other prisoners, many of whom were chain smokers. It was very difficult for me to adjust with the static environment in the cell. To compound the matter, they served me beef for my meals. I informed them that, being an Indian Yogi, I was a vegetarian. The jailor did not bother about my plea and just left the food tray on my bed and walked off.

I kept the plate of food below my bed. This scenario repeated itself for three days despite my repeated pleas for vegetarian food. For three days, they haughtily told me that I had no choice but to eat what was prescribed by the prison manual. They thought that my willpower would wilt under the pressure of hunger. But I persevered. By the third day, seeing that I was bent on continuing with my fast, the prison authorities became worried that I might starve to death, which would create many problems for them. The Superintendent then invited me to his office and asked me why I did not take the prescribed meals. I explained that being a Yogi I was a lacto-vegetarian and that I would prefer to die than to consume nonvegetarian food. The officer was quite surprised at my firm resolve to continue with my fast if I had to. He explained that they could not deviate from the dietary prescriptions of the jail manual, which provided for vegetarian food only on Sunday.

After a short while, he said that he would bring me some fruit and milk from his house. I was fortunate that subsequently the authorities served me bread, butter, milk, and fruit on a daily basis. At least one problem was solved. I then asked him to move me to a different cell, as the smoke in my current cell adversely affected me. Within a day, I was transferred to a different cell, this time an air-conditioned room.

From my room, I could see the snowcapped mountains. What a beautiful sight it was. My stay in prison gave me the opportunity

of doing long hours of meditation and other spiritual practices like kiirtan. I also had ample opportunity to read.

Strangely, the bliss that I derived from doing kiirtan in jail was unmatched. I had never experienced such powerful waves of bliss from kiirtan before. One day, during kiirtan, I experienced the rare state of bhava samadhi.

After fifty-five days my immigration problem was resolved, and I was released from prison and deported to India.

CHAPTER 9

LESSONS ON THE PATH

Saved from Cancer

This incident took place between 1983 and 1984. Brother Pradyumna was an old Margii from Purnia, Bihar, India. All members of his family were ardent Ananda Margiis. Once, when Baba was in the vicinity, He stayed in their parental home. During that auspicious occasion, they had the uncommon opportunity to serve Him.

I met Pradyumna in Kolkata during a WRDS meeting. When I asked after his family, he replied that his wife suffered from cancer and had been admitted to the Patna Medical College Hospital. To console him, I informed him how Baba had cured me of the incurable disease of leukemia. I encouraged him to bring his wife to Kolkata as soon as possible, so that she could be in Baba's holy presence.

He returned home immediately and brought his wife to Kolkata within three days. She was very ill and weak. Despite her illness, she was full of devotion for Baba. That morning, as usual, Baba emerged from His room to go for His Field Walk. He went on Field Walk twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening. Before

boarding the car, Baba would lovingly inquire after the welfare of the devotees present. Many devotees used to stand nearby, waiting for a glimpse of Baba. Pradyumna and his wife were among the devotees standing there to greet Him.

As He passed Pradyumna, He stopped for a while and inquired about his family members. I could see that both the husband and wife were overwhelmed by His love and affection. I watched the whole incident from a distance as Baba affectionately talked to them.

Later, I learned that they had stayed in Kolkata for three days after meeting Baba and that his wife had showed signs of recovery during that period. After some time, she was completely cured of cancer.

It is interesting how Baba showers His mercy on His devotees.

Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii, the Lord of Devotion

One cannot grasp the essence of devotion through rational analysis. Devotion is felt in the core of the devotee's heart. It is the path of blissful love and surrender to the Supreme. In Sanskrit, devotion is called *bhakti*. Bhakti yoga is one of the principal paths of spiritual realization in the Yogic tradition.

Baba spoke about devotion and its primacy in the spiritual path in several discourses. These invaluable discourses throw light on this fascinating subject to make it intelligible to spiritual aspirants. Once, during the Demonstration Year in 1969, Baba revealed how He was the embodiment of devotion. He said that the universe was His mental creation and that all beings had equal right to sit on His lap.

On another occasion, Baba asked some devotees about the purpose of His advent on earth. As no one could answer, He provided the

answer Himself. He clarified that His principal mission on earth was to saturate the world in a flood of devotion.

At that time, I was not sure about the true nature of devotion. Neither did I know how to achieve it. I knew that I could not attain devotion just by reading or by intellectualizing it from a philosophical standpoint. I was not even sure if I had any devotion. However, I was intuitively aware that devotion was indispensable on the spiritual path and that no amount of personal effort could guarantee success.

This inadequacy bothered me for a long time. One day, I got the answer from Baba Himself. He told me that real devotion was to dance to His will to please Him. To follow His every word and to please Him was devotion.

Perhaps devotion is the privileged property of human beings, perhaps not. An incident that occurred in the Philippines in 1969 indicates that even less developed creatures are affected by devotional waves and may even possess some devotion for the Supreme Being.

This amazing incident occurred on April 24, 1969. Baba was then on a visit to the Philippines. For His Field Walk the Filipino Margiis decided to take Him to the Manila American Cemetery in Taguig City, Metro Manila, one of the largest overseas cemeteries for American soldiers who died in World War II.

While He was walking, Baba spoke on the importance of devotion in one's spiritual life. Baba said, "Academic qualification, academic knowledge cannot help a man in his progress. Devotion is far stronger than academic knowledge or even worldly knowledge. Finally, worldly knowledge also cannot help a man ..."

At the cemetery, Baba sat under a banyan tree, while His devotees sat around Him. It was a windless day. The cemetery, with rows and rows of solemn and silent graves, was transformed into an enchanting enclave by His divine presence. Inspired by His holy presence, the devotees sang a devotional song. As they sang, the crescendo of their devotion reached a climax. The atmosphere of the cemetery became spiritually charged, sublime. Then the Margiis noticed something strange. The leaves of the banyan tree, under which Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii sat, were quivering, and the tree itself was swaying in unison with the rhythm of the song. What was stranger was that all the other trees nearby stood perfectly still.

One of the devotees present could not contain his amazement and asked Baba the reason for this strange phenomenon. With a bewitching smile, Baba said that the tree and its leaves were also enjoying the sweet melody of the song, just as everyone else was enjoying it.

The Magic of Bathing

Baba was very particular about physical cleanliness. He laid down the rules of bathing for all spiritual aspirants.

I got a lesson on this that I will never forget. During one of the WRDS meetings I was suffering from a high fever. I therefore decided not to attend the meeting until I recovered. Baba noticed my absence and asked the others why I was absent. They informed Him that I was ill and could not be present.

Baba expressed His displeasure at my absence to the General Secretary, who promptly informed me about it. The next day, I decided to attend the meeting, although my fever was still running high.

As we were standing in rows to present our reports, Baba asked who among those present had yet to take a bath. I raised my hand in acknowledgement. When Baba asked why I had not taken a bath, I responded that I was suffering from high fever.

Baba was unhappy with the response and reprimanded me for my negligence. He informed all the workers that bathing was not optional for a spiritual aspirant and that one must bathe even when suffering from fever.

Amazingly, immediately after the chastisement, my fever and body ache mysteriously subsided, and I felt well again.

Crossing a Big Hurdle

Humility is one of the greatest assets of a spiritual aspirant. It is indispensable. Baba constantly reminded us to be as humble as a blade of grass if we wished for success on the spiritual path. Humility conquers arrogance and transforms selfishness into selflessness. It lightens the steps of a spiritual aspirant as he marches on the long road to liberation.

I was once at a reporting session during the WRDS meeting in Kolkata, India. I was proud of my achievements in the Manila sector. I not only had inspired three people to adopt the life of renunciants and undergo the rigorous training needed to become missionary workers but also had implemented several new social service projects. Baba always demanded good news from His workers. This time, I was confident that I had met the quota of good news. Naturally, a sense of pride swept over me.

I just couldn't wait to report the good news to Baba. I looked forward to hearing the music of His praise for my good work. I also secretly

savored the satisfaction of outdoing the other Sectorial Secretaries in work performance and the delicious prospect of receiving an extra share of His affection for the good work that I had done.

I proudly stood in line with the other senior workers, eagerly waiting for my turn to present my report. At the meeting, Baba fired the first salvo by asking the number of full-timers created in each sector. I could see the concern in the workers' faces. None had any good news to present on this score. Then my turn came. I proudly informed Baba that I had created three new trainee full-timers in my sector. I also rattled off the projects that I had successfully implemented.

I looked at Baba's face for any sign of satisfaction and waited to be praised. However, Baba did not respond to my report as I had anticipated. Instead of praise, He heaped ridicule on me and gave me a stinging rebuke for my work performance. Compared to the others, I was ridiculed more, despite the fact that my report was markedly better. Everyone was surprised.

I went back and thought hard about the baffling treatment I'd received. After some soul-searching, I realized that my unbridled pride was the reason Baba had responded harshly to my report. I was on an ego trip, blinded by arrogance. And in my blinding conceit, I thought that I was solely responsible for the success of my actions. The dark cloud of arrogance had made me forget that we were nothing but His instruments and that we had to become perfect instruments through our intense effort and humility.

What a timely realization it was. The earlier we realize that we are instruments of the divine, the better. He is the real doer, using our bodies and minds as a medium to realize His mission on earth. With such realization, egotistic and self-centered thinking does not have a platform to manifest.

I realized that the Sadguru used a variety of methods to purge His devotees of arrogance and self-centered thoughts. For some, He might use sweet words, for others it was a stinging rebuke, and for yet others it could be a harsher form of punishment, depending on the need of each individual.

As soon as I realized my mistake, I repented and mentally asked for forgiveness. Amazingly, that evening He called me and in a fatherly manner taught me the essence of humility and complete surrender to the Guru. He stressed that egotism and arrogance were the greatest obstacles on the spiritual path.

I am ever grateful to Baba for the invaluable lessons He taught me to ease the crunching burden of my spiritual journey.

Foot Fault

I once had a dilemma: Was it wrong to point one's feet toward the photograph of the Guru when sleeping?

The problem cropped up once when I had to sleep in a room where Baba's photographs were hung on all four walls of the room. I did not know what to do. I could not sleep that night, feeling uneasy. All the while, I kept asking for Baba's forgiveness for such uncouth behavior.

The next day, I attended a WRDS meeting to report on the progress of my missionary work. During the reporting session, the first thing Baba said was that one should avoid pointing one's feet toward photographs of the Guru. However, if the Guru's photographs were hung on all sides of the room, one need not worry and should sleep without guilt.

Reviving Jamaica

Sometime in 1983, I learned that I was being transferred to Proutist Universal as the Global Office Secretary. The global headquarters of Proutist Universal is in Copenhagen, Denmark. The main aim of the organization is to promote the new socioeconomic paradigm known as the Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT). In essence, PROUT aims to ensure the welfare and happiness of all human beings by implementing a basic-needs economic approach predicated on the principles of economic democracy and to establish a society free of exploitation and led by moral leaders. PROUT was first propounded by Baba on June 5, 1959, in His discourse “The Cosmic Brotherhood”, wherein He set out the five fundamental principles of PROUT. The discourse was given in Jamalpur, Bihar, India.

As I was just about to leave for Copenhagen from Manila, I got a telephone call from the central office in India informing me that my posting had been changed and that I was to report to Baba in Kolkata immediately. I then booked a ticket to Kolkata.

That afternoon, Baba called me and inquired how I would feel if I were to be posted to Jamaica instead of Copenhagen. I replied that it was up to Him where He wanted me to work.

Baba appeared to be pleased with my response and told me that I would be posted to Jamaica instead. He said that at the beginning I might face some trouble and that I should not be alarmed by it. He assured me that all would be fine after some time. His assurance “I am always with you” gave me a lot of confidence in taking on this new challenge. He told me to prepare myself for the new mission and to leave within four days.

One of the first things I did was to talk to Acarya Sarvananda Avadhuta, who had worked in Jamaica for ten years. He told me that things were not the same now as ten years ago, when Baba had visited Jamaica and conducted a DMC there. The Margiis then had been very active and implemented many good social and spiritual programs. Things had changed, however. The Margiis were now no longer supportive of Ananda Marga. He said that the main reason for this was that the then Bhukti Pradhana of Jamaica, Sister Shanti Devi, who suffered from breast cancer, had lost faith in Baba and consequently became inactive in Ananda Marga. Being wealthy, she had financially supported many of our programs in Jamaica, including the rent of our jagrti. When she had been diagnosed with cancer, she had become depressed and lost faith in Baba. To make matters worse, her family members and friends had taunted her and made snide remarks that her Baba had abandoned her when she needed Him the most. Affected by depression and the contagious attitude of her family and the Margiis, she had stopped funding the programs and refrained from participating in any of our spiritual activities. Many Jamaican Margiis had followed suit and left Ananda Marga.

Faced with a futile situation, Acarya Sarvananda had returned to India. Another worker had been posted to Jamaica in his place. However, having heard of the difficult situation in Jamaica, that worker had requested Baba give him a different posting, a request that Baba had conceded. Such was the backdrop of Baba's decision to send me to Jamaica.

The Sectorial Secretary of the New York sector was responsible for arranging my ticket to Jamaica. He informed me that it would take between twenty to twenty-five days to raise the money for the ticket. I could not wait that long, as Baba had instructed me to leave in four days. As a missionary worker, I considered Baba's words as an order.

I did not want to be in a situation of disobeying His commands. I therefore decided to buy the ticket with the little money I had at that time.

When I arrived at Kingston Airport in Jamaica, Janak, a local Margii, received me. He took me to the jagrti. It was a huge place, with a stately mansion and a large compound. There was a mango orchard in the compound and a big tamarind tree right in front of the house. The building was situated in the most prestigious neighborhood in Jamaica, close to the official residence of the Prime Minister and the stately homes of the well-heeled politicians and businessmen. The building had a regal aura about it. It belonged to the Chief Justice of Jamaica, from whom we rented it.

Despite its obvious majesty, the property looked derelict and forlorn due to long neglect. The compound was overgrown with weeds and shrubbery, and the building was in a sad state of disrepair. It looked like an abandoned, haunted house. The property owner was very unhappy with us for not paying rent for almost a year and for neglecting the upkeep of the property.

The next day, I met the Bhukti Pradhana who had replaced Sister Shanti Devi. I told him that I had come to see how we could revive our organizational activities in Jamaica. He was indifferent to what I said and told me to my face that the Margiis of Jamaica had lost faith in Baba when the previous Bhukti Pradhana had developed cancer. He said that several workers had come previously but that none had had a lasting impact. He added that they had decided to return the property to the owner, as they did not want to maintain the jagrti any longer. He strongly advised me to return to India, as they did not require my services.

He was a bearer of bad tidings. His pessimistic frame of mind was discouraging. To make matters worse, I only had US\$100 left for my personal expenses. There was no way I could survive on my own or pay the rent without help from the Margiis. Jamaica was a costly place to live.

The situation was depressing. In my dark hours, I recalled His prophecy that I would first face some difficulty and that things would improve subsequently. I remembered His radiant and smiling face as He spoke. Remembering His reassuring words, I was immensely encouraged. I knew that the tide would ultimately turn in my favor.

With quiet confidence, I told the Bhukti Pradhana that I had been sent to Jamaica by Baba Himself to advance the mission of Ananda Marga and to serve the Jamaican society and that I did not intend to return to India, no matter what difficulties I faced. I told him that I would be grateful for any help that he might render in this respect.

He remained staunchly unconvinced, however. Before he left, he said in a sarcastic tone that I could stay if I wished but I should not expect any help from the Margiis. He again stressed that I should go back to India. I did not give in to his unhelpful comments. I replied firmly that I would remain in Jamaica to fulfill the Guru's wish and that I was certain of getting His help if needed.

He left after a short while, surprised by my steely confidence. For me, it was a trying time indeed. Despite the difficulties I encountered, I had to protect the image of Baba and Ananda Marga in the eyes of the Jamaican society. Simply put, I could not fail.

I got down to work immediately. My daily routine was to work on the overgrown garden. It took many hours of daily drudgery to get the garden right. The daily toil under searing heat and with a frail

body sapped every ounce of my energy. I would collapse like a rag doll from sheer exhaustion at the end of each day. Neither did I have any mental rest. My mind was constantly thinking about how to revive the mission of Ananda Marga in Jamaica.

I spent five grueling days in this manner. One evening, a big, impressive sedan entered the jagrti compound. The car stopped at the porch, and a tall, aristocratic man of European descent emerged from the car. He introduced himself as the owner of the house. He then unleashed a barrage of criticism at us for not paying rent for ten months, for spoiling his house, and for destroying his beautiful garden. He threatened to evict us if we did not settle the unpaid rent by today.

It was a tense moment. I knew the odds were heavily against me. The amount of unpaid rent was substantial. Money was also needed to get the jagrti in a decent state of repair. Despite the difficulties, I was determined to keep the building, no matter what. Again, I remembered Baba's reassuring words and humbly told him that I was grateful to him for renting the property to us and that I would settle every cent that we owed him within two months. I also informed him that I would take steps to paint the house and beautify the garden. I assured him that if I failed to keep my promise for any reason, I would leave the place.

Somehow, my firm resolve convinced him. Before he left, he emphasized that he would return in two months' time and if my promises were not kept, he would kick us out of the house.

Now, my pledge to the Chief Justice was like an inaccessible Himalayan peak, impossible to reach. How would I raise so much money in such a short time? If I failed, it would reflect very badly on

Ananda Marga, and even the slightest hope of reviving the mission in Jamaica would be crushed. I had no choice. I had to do something.

In desperation, I wrote to my sympathizers all over the world for financial assistance, clarifying my difficult situation. Fortunately, the Margiis whom I contacted came to my rescue. Somehow, the contributions I received were just enough to pay the rental debt. Those who contributed toward this noble cause included Ravi and Shashi of Oslo, Shankar and Vasudeva of Oslo, Prabhakar and Avaniisha of Sweden, Sister Jyoti of Finland, Devanshu of Munich, Dr. Chitra of Singapore, Rene Punsalan of the Philippines, the late Brother Kumarakuru of Malaysia, Brother Srinivasan of Malaysia, and Brother Mantreshvara of Los Angeles. I also cannot forget the support of Acarya Devashraddhananda Avadhuta and Acarya Shankarananda Avadhuta.

When the Chief Justice returned to collect the rent, I paid the debt in full. He was delighted that I had kept my word. He pledged his unstinting support to us and told me that from now on I was his friend. I also informed him that I would repair the building and give it a new coat of paint.

Apart from this, I had another gnawing problem on my hands. I had to deal with the inimical staff of our Ananda Marga school who had not been paid salaries for several months owing to our tight financial situation. However, after they saw that I had settled the rental debt and repainted the jagrti, they regained confidence in the mission.

The staff was the third major hurdle I crossed in Jamaica, the first being the difficult encounter I had with the Bhukti Pradhana and the second being the threat of expulsion from the jagrti. In all the encounters, I could see Baba's invisible hand very clearly.

The next phase was the phase of growth. I did my best to contact several institutions of higher learning, clubs, nongovernment organizations, and influential people. The effort bore fruit. Many people visited our jagrti to learn meditation, among them some important people. The Margiis became active again and came for our weekly meditation sessions regularly. I managed to inspire five Margiis to become local full-timers and trained them accordingly. They became invaluable assets of our mission.

At the same time, several people came forward with offers of free buildings to start new Ananda Marga, neo-humanistic schools in Jamaica. I assigned the trained local full-timers to manage the new schools. They did a very good job in running the schools efficiently.

Once, a wealthy Margii came up to me and said that he wanted to help the Ananda Marga mission in Jamaica. I told him that if he wanted to help, he could assist in buying the rented building to be used as our own jagrti. He agreed to extend financial support for this purpose.

One day, I was surprised to see Sister Shanti Devi, the former Bhukti Pradhana, at the jagrti. She was impressed with the good work done. She told me about her experiences with Baba when He had visited Jamaica. She had been the Bhukti Pradhana in Jamaica then and had looked after Baba's food requirements. She had received Baba's love and affection. However, after she'd developed breast cancer, and due to pressure from her family, she lost faith in Baba. She said that she was very impressed with the transformation that had taken place.

I then told her that I had suffered from leukemia and even then had never lost faith in Him. To everyone's surprise, He had intervened and cured me completely from this dreaded disease. I emphasized

that she should perform her spiritual practices regularly, with full faith in Him, and that everything would be fine in the end.

I think that our discussion had a positive effect on her. She invited me to her home to meet her family. I narrated my experiences with Baba, and they were all inspired and resolved to continue with their spiritual practice.

In hindsight, the turn of events in Jamaica was amazing, resembling the proverbial journey from darkness to light. Many new and dynamic people were attracted to Ananda Marga, among them young professionals, academicians, and the like. They were actively involved in many of our new social service projects in Jamaica. Ananda Marga regained its lost image in this beautiful Caribbean island and went on to become a popular socio-spiritual movement.

With the turn of events and with Ananda Marga's public image restored, I believed my mission in Jamaica had ended. By His grace, I had been able to play a role in His plans for Jamaica. The main lesson I could draw from the Jamaican episode was that Baba Himself had preplanned everything and that my only task was to implement His commands.

Sometime later, I returned to India. When I was in Kolkata, Baba called for me, and I told Him about the positive developments in Jamaica. He praised my efforts and said that I had done the right thing to inspire the Jamaican youths.

CHAPTER 10

THE MAKING OF GRACELAND

Ananda Shila Master Unit

The Sadguru's ways are mysterious. The way Baba manifested His grace on a devotee was amazing. He dispensed His grace in several ways, either in the form of a sweet candy or as a bitter pill. Bitter or sweet, His blessing significantly lightened a spiritual aspirant's march on the road to spiritual realization. I saw firsthand the different manifestations of His grace. For some, He administered grace through a loving word or two or a kindly glance. For others, He dispensed it through the stick, by way of punishment. For yet others, His blessing came through organizational postings and assignments. The posting of missionary workers to different sectors was done with His approval. I have observed that when Baba was physically present on earth, new postings or assignments of the workers not only gave them the opportunity to learn new skill sets and acquire new knowledge but more importantly served as a means of exhausting their accumulated samskara. Many were His ways to transmit His blessings.

I was posted as the Rector of the Ananda Shila Master Unit in Ranchi, Bihar, India, in July 1986 after completing my stint in

Jamaica. The late Acarya Nigamananda Avadhuta brought me there and helped me to take charge of the master unit. It was a new chapter in my life. It was here that I learned the fundamentals of developing a master unit.

Baba emphasized the creation of master units in all corners of the world. A master unit is a self-contained spiritual community founded on the principles of sustainable development and a holistic lifestyle. The aim of a master unit is not only to give shelter to a community of spiritual aspirants but also to elevate the quality of life of all people and living beings in the vicinity, including animals and plants. In this regard, a master unit is the local representation of the global mission of Ananda Marga. Baba formulated detailed guidelines for the establishment of sustainable master units.

The development of the Ananda Shila Master Unit was a thorny test-bed for me. It tested my ability to handle the impossible. My duty was to develop the existing master unit, which involved construction and new infrastructure. Construction involved money. I did not have access to the enormous financial resources needed nor the experience for such an undertaking. The task was beyond my ability.

Ananda Shila was as inspiring a place as it was challenging. I enjoyed the peace it offered compared with the pressures of my overseas assignments and the urban life of cities like Kolkata. The master unit was located in the tribal belt of Jharkhand, stretching over 104 acres of land. At that time, it contained an enchanting forest of sal trees, a small rivulet flowing through the site, and a Tantra Piitha called Brgu Piitha located on its bank.

The master unit had some ongoing activities. There was a training center for missionary workers, a farm, a school for tribal children,

a children's home, a basic hospital called Abha Seva Sadana, and a dairy farm with five desi cows.

The ownership of the land in the master unit was disputed. The Forest Department and the tribal people seized the slightest opportunity to usurp our land. To make matters worse, the local police kept a close watch on our activities, particularly the training center. They frequently harassed us and tried very hard to curtail the growth of Ananda Marga.

One can hardly imagine the agonizing pressure we encountered in our effort to develop the master unit. We had to face a challenging collusion of adversaries. First, I had to find the money for the construction work. I also had to secure the place from hostile elements. To make matters worse, the principal trainer, Acarya Shambhutananda Avadhuta, was on tour, leaving me alone to manage the development work. Perhaps the most challenging problem was the lack of hands for such a big job. Notwithstanding these problems, Baba pressured me to develop the Ananda Shila Master Unit.

Security Concerns

My troubles began right from day one when I was posted as Rector of the master unit. I went to Kolkata to report to Baba immediately after my new posting. When I met Him, Baba instructed me to erect a barbed wire fence around the master unit as soon as possible.

This was a challenging order indeed. Fencing 104 acres of land required an enormous amount of funds. I estimated it needed about 100,000 rupees, which was a princely sum of money in those days. Where would I find the money? Come what may, I was determined to carry out His command to the best of my ability. I wasted no

time in raising the funds for the construction of the fence. Deep down inside, I felt that He would not allow me to dangle helplessly when He had allotted the task to me. I was dead certain that His blessings were with me.

After seeing Baba, I proceeded to the master unit. On the way, I stopped by Ranchi in the hope of collecting some funds. At Ranchi, I informed the Margiis about Baba's instruction to erect a barbed wire fence around the master unit. They immediately agreed to do something to raise the funds for the project. After a lot of effort, the Margiis managed to raise the money.

With the money in hand, I crossed the first hurdle. Erecting the fence around the master unit was no mean task. The landscape was dotted with thick bushes that had to be removed before the fence could be erected. I recruited thirty laborers for the job. It took me six months to complete the task.

Having completed the task, I went to Kolkata to report the good news to Baba. To my surprise, instead of being pleased, Baba said that a barbed wire fence alone was insufficient to ensure security and that I would have to construct a brick wall all along the boundary of the master unit to bolster security. He instructed that I should begin the construction work from the western front and then proceed with the rest of the work. He did not explain the reason for this.

Naturally, I was stunned to hear this. I did not know what to do and just looked blankly at Baba. I have already faced great difficulty in getting the funds for the barbed wire fencing. Now how would I raise the money for a far more costly project? The cost of the project would not be anything less than fifteen times the cost of the barbed wire fencing, I estimated.

In desperation, I looked at the General Secretary, who was standing beside me, for a way out of this sticky problem. He could not help. Standing there, I was feeling as forlorn as a stranded ship tossed about by giant waves.

I then looked at Baba. He was in an unyielding mood and would have no excuses whatsoever. To make matters worse, He insisted that this new task must be completed within one month. In my mind, I thought that the instruction was unrealistic. It was simply impossible to accomplish. How could we build a brick wall around the master unit in one month when it had taken six months of backbreaking work to erect the barbed wire fence?

I had no choice, however. It was the Guru's instruction. I just had to follow the Guru's commands as best as I could and leave the rest to Him. As the cacophony of thoughts raced in my mind, I made a firm resolve to give it my best shot.

I stepped out of Baba's room determined to do my best. Surprisingly, as soon as I emerged from the room, I saw brother Prabhakar from Norway waiting just outside the door. Spontaneously, I approached him about contributing toward the cost of the project, emphasizing that it was Baba's instruction. To my utter surprise, he agreed to donate 100,000 rupees without a second thought. Encouraged, I contacted another Margii sister, Dr. Chitra from Singapore and some other Margiis from Singapore and Malaysia and managed to collect a good sum of money for the project.

I then sought the help of a few workers to assist me in the task. Having secured the start-up fund, I gaily proceeded to the Ananda Shila Master Unit that very evening. I was determined to embark upon the task on a war footing. Upon reaching Ananda Shila, I engaged the labor and materials needed for the job.

As soon as the construction work started, those who had opposed our presence in the locality banded together to stop us. They took the help of the local mafia. Luckily, we worked with lightning speed and completed a mile-long brick boundary on the western side within a fortnight.

The villagers were taken by surprise. They had planned to occupy the western portion of our land by cutting through the barbed wire fence. However, their plan fell flat after the high brick wall was built. In this way, we avoided a potential standoff with the villagers and the local thugs, which might have been dangerous.

It then dawned on me why Baba had insisted that I should begin the construction of the wall from the western side and why He wanted me to complete the work within a month's time.

Dairy Farm

On one occasion, Baba inquired about the number of cows and the amount of milk produced in Ananda Shila. I replied that we had six desi cows, the indigenous breed of cows in India, which supplied only three liters of milk.

Baba was not satisfied with my response. He asked me to establish a healthy dairy farm with a sufficient number of Jersey cows. I did as Baba instructed. I managed to establish a proper dairy farm at the master unit with healthy cattle.

Baba Demands a Gift

Once, I visited Kolkata without an official program. When I reached Kolkata, Baba requested to see me in the afternoon. When I went into His room, He told me that although He had saved my life

on two occasions, I had yet to return the favor. He said this in a nonchalant manner, but I understood that He was serious.

I was stunned. I did not know how to respond to this obligatory situation. I wondered how I could repay such a big debt. He broke my train of thought by asking me to promise Him that I would build two biogas plants and an oil extraction mill in the master unit.

The request was overwhelming. However, I had no choice but to agree. I did not know how I would raise the funds for these projects. I had virtually exhausted all my sources of funding. Where would the money come from for these insanely costly projects? To make matters worse, they were technical in nature and were beyond my capability. I had neither the experience nor the expertise to implement them.

I emerged from His room dazed. As I sat pondering my next step, I miraculously met two Margii brothers, Mantrashvara and Manohar from Norway. It was as if it was preordained, magically arranged that they were there at the right time. Seizing the opportunity, I informed them about the new projects in the hope of getting some financial support. Surprisingly, they agreed to help. I then contacted several overseas Margiis, all of whom lent a helping hand. They included, among others, Brothers Avanish and Prabhakar from Sweden; Brother Vasudev, Sister Sulocana, and Sister Jyoti from Finland; Brother Shankar from Norway; the family of Ravi and Shashi from Norway; Sister Ranjiita from Germany; Brother Kamaleshvara from Italy; Brother Vishvabandhu from Guatemala; Dr. Chitra of Singapore; Brothers Kartika and Devanshu from Germany; Brother Kumarakuru from Malaysia; and Brother Rene Punshelan from the Philippines.

Upon my return to the master unit, I plunged into the task with vigor. I was determined to accomplish it in a timely manner. The first thing I did was to meet the block development officer, who supervised the government's development programs in that area. I informed him about the projects that we intended to initiate. He was delighted with the proposed biogas project and informed me that the government would contribute 60 percent of the total cost of the project. He also assigned two technical officers to install the equipment. The biogas projects were installed and commissioned within the stipulated timeframe.

With regard to the oil extraction mill, an order was placed to buy it from Ghaziabad. This too was commissioned in a timely manner.

After the three assignments were completed, I informed Baba. Baba was very happy and blessed me.

From my experiences in the Ananda Shila Master Unit, I realized that the greatest accomplishment in spiritual life was to follow the Guru's commands in toto without question. To materialize Guru's will is called *Guru puja*, and to implement His wish after obtaining His permission is known as *Guru-gata*. A devotee who is able to follow the Guru's commands completely is truly blessed.

Construction Work Continues

The pace of work to develop the master unit accelerated greatly. We constructed several new buildings, such as a new training center for missionary workers, security posts at strategic points, a hospital, a veterinary clinic, and a sericulture center. A vegetable farm was also established. We bought a jeep for our transport needs.

An idea once occurred to me that we should supply Baba's kitchen with vegetables grown in the Ananda Shila Master Unit. I took it upon myself to make sure that the vegetables Baba relished would be supplied exclusively from the master unit.

With all these ongoing projects, the master unit became a functional, self-contained area to support a thriving spiritual community.

Baba's Personal Assistant told me that Baba had made a complimentary remark about me. Baba had said that the Rectors of all master units should emulate me. I was extremely delighted to hear this.

Water Scarcity

Baba was the epitome of practicality. He translated ideas into practice. He had a knack for simplifying something that was difficult and complicated and making concrete what was abstract. He provided practical solutions to mundane and supramundane problems.

The Ananda Shila Master Unit in Ranchi suffered from a perpetual water problem. The problem became acute in summer from March to July annually. The severe water shortage in the Master Unit resulted in acute problems for the inhabitants, given the need to share this precious resource to accommodate competing human and agricultural needs.

To address the problem, I once asked Baba how I could solve the water problem the master unit faced. Baba immediately retorted by asking me why I had raised this problem to Him, as He was not an engineer who could provide a practical solution to my query. I did not pursue the matter any further.

After some time, Baba told His Personal Assistant to convey to me that I should look for the source of the water to the north, as the river flowed from the north. He hinted at the construction of a dam on the river as a partial solution to the water problem.

When the news was conveyed to me, I failed to grasp the embedded hint in the message. Instead, I spent a lot of money to construct boreholes near the river. This approach resulted in dismal failure, despite a large sum of money being spent.

Sometime later, I followed Baba's suggestion and worked with Acarya Sadhaneshvarananda and the General Secretary to construct the dam. This time, I was successful. I managed to solve the water problem to some extent.

Self-Reliance

Baba allowed us to learn at our own pace. He gave us the hints and broad directions to resolving specific problems and left it to our ingenuity to work out the details. For Baba, the lack of knowledge, skills, or funds was not a hindrance to the accomplishment of an allotted task. He expected us to bridge our deficiencies by acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, equipment, and so on. On several occasions, He advised us that spiritual aspirants should plunge themselves to work for humanity whether or not they possessed the necessary resources to do so. He assured us that the Supreme Entity would provide what was necessary for the successful accomplishment of any noble task.

Once, Baba inquired about the land and water situation in the master unit. He asked me what could be done to make the master unit self-reliant. I replied that the land in the master unit was infertile. In

addition, it did not retain water due to its sandy nature and was termite-ridden.

Baba then advised me to create an orchard and to grow fruit trees. He also said that a sericulture program should be started on the master unit. I followed His advice and planted Shahatuta trees and different types of fruit trees such as mango, papaya, banana, lemon, jackfruit, guava, and so on. In addition, I constructed a building for our sericulture program. Although I tried my best, my knowledge in sericulture cultivation was inadequate. For this reason, I did not succeed in establishing the sericulture center properly.

Preparing for His Visit

Once, we heard that Baba would visit Ranchi. As the master unit and Ranchi were relatively close, we thought that we would invite Baba to visit the master unit. Everyone worked very hard to make the place suitable for the Guru's visit.

There was a flaw in our preparations, however. As I was busy supervising the housekeeping work, I could not go to Ranchi to personally invite Baba to the master unit. When I went there, Baba informed me that He was aware of the preparations being made for His visit but that He could not come this time due to His busy schedule. However, He stressed that He was pleased with the effort made.

Pleasing Him

The office of the Women's Welfare Department was located in an isolated place on the outskirts of Ranchi. It was unsuitable for living, particularly for women.

Once, the *didis*, the nuns of Ananda Marga, met at the Ranchi jagrti. It happened that I arrived there during the meeting. Baba then told the workers that I would be able to resolve the *didis*' problem.

I took Baba's comment as a form of blessing and immediately arranged to obtain the necessary funds for the purpose. When we had sufficient funds, I went with some Margiis to look for a suitable piece of land. We found a good piece of land in Kadru, not far from Ranchi. A Women's Welfare Department center was constructed on the land.

I was happy that I could do something to help the *didis*. More importantly, I felt blessed that He had given me another opportunity to serve and please Him.

Improving the Master Unit

Building an operational master unit is a never-ending task. The work evolves in accordance with the need of the hour.

Once, Acarya Shraddhananda Avadhuta and Acarya Kinshuk and his family visited the master unit. At that time, we could not accommodate Acarya Kinshuk and his family members due to the shortage of suitable living space.

I was a bit embarrassed that I could not accommodate them properly. After they left, I was determined to construct two more rooms at the Marga Guru quarters so that Acarya Kinshuk and his family would not face any trouble when visiting the master unit in the future.

Acarya Sadhaneshvarananda Avadhuta

Acarya Sadhaneshvarananda Avadhuta was a strong source of support in the development of the Ananda Shila Master Unit. His untimely demise at a young age saddened me.

I must say that Acarya Sadhaneshvarananda was a pure soul, mild-mannered and simple, who possessed the qualities of a renunciant in good measure. To commemorate the demise of this good soul, we constructed a memorial in his name at the master unit.

My Last Offering

As I look back, I feel very happy that Baba gave me the golden opportunity to be part of the pioneering team to build the Ananda Shila Master Unit in Ranchi.

Installing the foundation stones of the master unit from scratch was a daunting task indeed. Obtaining adequate funds for the purpose was a big challenge for me. We were always short of money. We depended on the generosity of the Margiis and well-wishers to raise funds for our development projects. In addition, we faced security issues.

We were constantly thinking about how to improve the facilities and security at the master unit. The principle I followed strictly was to build or expand facilities according to the need. There was no room for extravagance.

After much thought, we decided to construct a students' hostel for the benefit of the local community. I went about the task of raising the funds needed for the project. Building the hostel was a good idea. It attracted many students from afar, particularly from all over

Bihar state and Jharkhand state. Even today, the school and students' hostel are the centerpiece of the master unit. The students' hostel was my last project in the Ananda Shila Master Unit.

Master Unit Blueprint

One day, at a workers' meeting sometime in 1990, Baba called the Rector of the Thano master unit and me to His room and asked us to write down the guidelines for developing master units. Thano is a village in Dehradun district in the state of Uttarakhand.

He had earlier laid down the fundamental principles of establishing master units and asked us to incorporate the essence of our on-the-ground experience in preparing the blueprint.

We prepared the integrated paper accordingly, which has now become the authoritative guideline for the development of master units all over the world.

The Broken Cane

The missionary workers of Ananda Marga and several Margiis were recipients of Baba's grace dispensed through the unlikely medium of punishment. Baba punished us for failing to meet our work targets, for our moral lapses, and for a host of other reasons. Sometimes, the punishment meted out seemed to be unfair, without rhyme or reason. At other times, Baba punished us for the flimsiest of reasons.

A tantric guru's way to help a spiritual aspirant scale the high walls of liberation are many—some ordinary, some miraculous, some paradoxical, and others beyond mortal comprehension. For most people, however, considering punishment as blessing is inconceivable. However, those familiar with the Tantric path are

fairly well acquainted with the strange methods a tantric guru might employ to help a disciple traverse the long road to liberation. Gurus help their disciples to negotiate obstacles on the path, which take many forms—some visible, some hidden. Obstacles exist at all levels, physical, mental, and spiritual. They are closely tied to our samskaras, the potential reactions of our past actions, which we must exhaust to move forward. From this perspective, a guru's "punishment" is actually a boon to help exhaust a disciple's negative samskaras.

I recall the wise words of the late Acarya Nagina: "When a bad samskara is redeemed, it disturbs the sadhaka [spiritual aspirant]. But if the sadhaka tightly holds on to the lotus feet of Sadguru, then the sadhaka attracts His noncausal grace. As a result, the sadhaka is able to serve his samskara rather naturally."

An unforgettable incident in my life reflected the truth of Acarya Nagina's assertion. My case, however, was far more serious, beyond human endurance. In essence, I contracted an unknown, agonizingly painful disease, which according to Baba had an extraterrestrial origin, caused by negative microvita originating from another planet.

The incident I am about to narrate occurred on June 2, 1988, at Ananda Nagar. At that time, the Ananda Purnima Dharma Maha Cakra was ongoing. It concluded on June 4, 1988.

Normally, Baba would call for a meeting of the *Madhura Gosthii* immediately after the DMC. This time around, the responsibility of organizing the meeting rested on Acarya Keshavananda and me. We fixed the date, time, and venue of the meeting on June 4 at 5:00 p.m. at Baba's official residence in Ananda Nagar. I informed Baba that fifty-five members of the gosthii would participate in the meeting.

On the day of the meeting, we gathered at the hall and waited for Baba's arrival. For some reason or other, Baba was delayed. In the meantime, one of the participants went out to ease himself. Just after the acarya had left the room, Baba arrived and took His seat at the dais. Once Baba entered the room, the door had to be shut, and no one was allowed entry. This meant that the acarya who had left to ease himself would not be allowed to reenter the room.

Baba then began the process of this special spiritual gathering. He released concentrated waves of transcendental bliss that drowned everyone present in an unspeakable ambience of bliss and devotion for the Lord. We were absorbed in this superconscious state of intense joy for what seemed to be eternity until Baba gradually lessened the intensity of ecstasy that He emanated. Slowly, our minds returned from the high pedestal of bliss to a normal state. After some time, when we returned to full normalcy, Baba gave us some special instructions on our spiritual practice and missionary work.

The whole session took about an hour. In a state of transcendental bliss, however, time has no relevance. Even five seconds in that intoxicatingly blissful state seems to be endless.

After the conclusion of this mystical session, Baba blessed each of us individually. After everyone had left, Baba charged me for giving Him wrong information about the actual number of participants. He pointed out that only fifty-four people had attended the session, instead of fifty-five as I had earlier informed. He accused me of being a liar. "Being a *sanyasii*," he said, "why did you lie?"

I defended myself by explaining the situation to Him. I clarified that fifty-five people had actually attended and that one person had to leave the room to ease himself and had not been able to reenter the room after the door had been shut. Baba was in no mood for

explanations or dainty defenses, however. He rejected my reasoning and punished me for engaging in falsehood.

It was Baba's habit to walk on the rooftop in the evening, while throngs of eager onlookers would gaze at Him from the perimeter of the fence at His residence. That evening, He summoned me to the rooftop and humiliated me in front of everyone for apparently no reason.

I was upset with Baba's unjust treatment. I sulked. Acarya Keshavananda, Baba's Personal Assistant, was aware of my frame of mind. At night, when he had the chance to meet Baba, Acarya Keshavananda informed Him that I was upset with Him. Baba replied that He was aware of the situation and that He would do what was necessary. Baba instructed Acarya Keshavananda to call me at six o'clock the following morning before He left Ananda Nagar for Kolkata.

I was elated when Acarya Keshavananda informed me of this good news. I was at Baba's residence well before time and waited eagerly to see Baba. At the appropriate moment, Baba summoned me inside His room. He asked me to call another junior acarya who was also waiting outside the room. That acarya was then posted as the Diocese Secretary of Assam.

The acarya entered the room as instructed. Baba pointed out his lapses in not following the conduct rules of an acarya strictly. Baba then turned to me and asked me why I had failed in my duty to supervise this junior acarya, implying that I had neglected my responsibility.

I was taken aback at the accusation, as the acarya was not one of my departmental workers, and as such, his work and conduct were

not my responsibility. I informed Baba that the acarya was posted in Assam, while I was Rector of the Ananda Shila Master Unit and therefore had no jurisdiction over him.

Baba simply replied that as a senior member of the Madhura Gosthii, I was responsible for the conduct of the junior members of the gosthii, whether or not they were my departmental workers. I accepted the logic of His assertion and humbly acknowledged my mistake.

Baba then punished us for our mistakes. He caned us with His walking stick, which was crafted from the stem of a *candan* tree. As He was punishing us, the force of the blows broke the cane. Baba immediately called for His Personal Assistant, Acarya Keshavananda, and complained to him, "These boys have broken My walking stick."

As a seasoned worker, I was used to Baba's mysterious ways. However, I was not sure how this would affect the junior worker.

Spontaneously, I informed Baba that I would replace the broken cane and give Him a spare one as well. Baba asked Acarya Keshavananda to take note of my promise to replace the *candan* cane. He asked how long it would take to replace the cane. I replied that it would take ten days.

After this drama, He got ready to leave for Kolkata. When Baba left, I returned to the master unit. I requested one of my initiates to look for a *candan* cane for Baba. One day, Acarya Keshavananda informed me by phone that one of my initiates had delivered two new *candan* canes well before the stipulated time and that Baba was very pleased with me for keeping my word. He told me that Baba treated the gift like a gift from heaven. He also informed me that Baba had praised me for keeping my word although I had been punished.

I was delighted to hear this news. At that time, I did not realize the real reason for Baba's harsh treatment, although I intuitively knew that there must be a strong reason for everything He did.

Alien Virus

Work went on as usual. One day, two months after this incident, I was suddenly inflicted with a dreadful, unknown disease. As the disease progressed, the pain became unbearable. I could neither eat nor sleep. In that wretched state, I cried out to Baba to relieve me from the excruciating pain. However, I was mindful to plead to Baba not to exhaust my negative samskara by transferring my pain onto His body. I did not want Baba to suffer the pain that I was suffering.

To help a disciple exhaust his or her negative samskara, the Sadguru would transfer the disciple's suffering onto His own body, where the samskara would manifest, ripen, and ultimately wear out.

I recall reading a similar incident in Swami Rama's book *Living with the Himalayan Masters*. In that incident, the guru had asked his disciple for a cane and had punished the disciple for a mistake to redeem him of the negative effects of his own actions.

Within a few days, at a meeting with the workers, Baba informed them of the dreadful pain I was suffering. He mentioned that the cause of the disease was a type of negative microvita, an insidious alien virus that had originated from a different planet and had settled on earth. He described the symptoms of the disease in detail. He said that the disease affected both body and mind. He explained that a person afflicted by this disease would not only suffer excruciating pain all over his or her body but also lose his or her memory and later become raving mad. Baba said that the person would usually die within fifteen days of contracting the disease. He then turned to

me and said that the disease caused by this particular type of alien virus would not recur on this planet for another one thousand years. He bestowed that special blessing on humanity.

Baba then told the workers, "Parameshvarananda has been pleading with Me not to take his samskara onto My body. He thinks that it will be very painful for Me. Can he suffer on his own the excruciating pain caused by this dreadful disease? I am duty bound to take care of him and steal his samskara even without his asking."

I remember that Baba once said that human beings naturally undergo the reactions of their past actions, whether in the form of suffering or enjoyment, which binds them to the endless cycle of birth and death. Thus, human beings have to be reborn repeatedly to exhaust their load of samskara. He clarified that since He had no samskara, He could take away the samskara of human beings and relieve them from the endless cycle of birth and death.

As the days went by, the pain intensified a thousandfold. I felt that every cell of my body was on fire. Slowly, the condition worsened and spread to my mental faculties. I was rapidly losing my memory and mental stability. It was such a wretched, unbearable condition that death was a preferred option. As I think about it now, to say that it was unbearable is to put it lightly.

On the morning of July 15, 1988, Baba informed His Personal Assistant and the General Secretary that He would initiate a new program on microvita sadhana, a process of controlling microvita for spiritual elevation and human welfare. Baba had introduced the concept of microvita two years earlier in 1986 through a series of discourses on the subject. At that time, He had explained that it was the first time in human history that the concept of microvita had been introduced for the welfare of humanity.

Baba was the first and only spiritual master to introduce the mysterious subject of microvita. It is a futuristic body of knowledge with wide applications in every branch of life, science, and spirituality. The concept is so subtle that we are still grappling to understand it. Future human beings will be better equipped to comprehend it more deeply and, through proper research, apply the new knowledge to enhance human welfare and the quality of life on this planet.

Beyond the knowledge about the role and nature of microvita, Baba also introduced a new spiritual practice based on microvita. Baba Himself taught the secret practice to a select group of individuals, both renunciants and family people.

He announced the names of several workers and Margiis for initiation into this new form of spiritual practice. He stressed that they would be called individually on a specific date and time for this purpose. The General Secretary of Ananda Marga informed me that Baba had selected me to be initiated in this new spiritual practice. He told me to inform five other Margiis whom Baba had selected for the program: Acarya Harishankar, Acarya Amulyaratan Sarangi, Dr. Ramesh, Sudhanshu, and Ranglal Datta.

The news of this new spiritual program spread like a raging wildfire throughout the Margii community all over the world. The frenzied excitement of the Margiis was understandable. Everyone hoped to be selected for initiation into this new spiritual practice. They used every conceivable means to be selected, putting undue pressure on Baba's gatekeepers, His Personal Assistant and the General Secretary.

Baba was firm on this matter, however. He had chosen 155 individuals from all over the world for this special practice.

At this time, I was suffering so badly from my microvita-inflicted disease that I lost all hope of living. I asked myself again and again why I should suffer this dreadful disease, being a monk who had renounced everything for his Guru. Perhaps it was the result of my sins committed during past lives, I thought. Day and night, I prayed to Baba to grant me the kinder gift of death than to suffer such unbearable agony.

I continued to suffer for more than two weeks, with each passing day increasing the intensity of pain and mental agony. On September 25, a worker came to the master unit and asked me to go to Kolkata immediately. I was very happy to hear the good news. My only hope was Baba. With great difficulty, I proceeded to Kolkata the same day.

I reached Kolkata the following morning and arrived at Baba's residence at about six o'clock in the morning. I found Baba's Personal Assistant, Acarya Keshavananda Avadhuta, waiting for me at the gate. He advised me to take a bath before meeting Baba.

After my bath, I went straight into Baba's room. I prostrated before Baba and sat down facing Him. Baba instructed me to come closer to Him. Strangely, as I sat before him, my memory began to return. The pain in my body started to subside, and I could think normally. In the short time I was there, I regained control of all the faculties that had been destroyed by the debilitating disease. All the unbearable pain I had suffered for several weeks vanished as if by magic. I felt much better physically and mentally, as if I had a new life.

Baba then instructed me to sit in the lotus posture and taught me the process of microvita sadhana. Baba imposed on us the need to maintain strict secrecy about the process. Thus, I cannot say very

much about the practice. It took more than two hours to learn it in my case.

For me it was a very blissful experience. Baba blessed me with the spiritual experience of Divyajyoti, with the sight of the divine effulgence of the Supreme Consciousness. As I experienced the blissful light, my mind soared into a state of ineffable bliss.

After regaining normal consciousness, Baba asked me to leave the room, as others were waiting to learn the process of microvita sadhana. Hearing this, I became afraid. I thought that I would again suffer the excruciatingly painful condition if I were away from His physical presence.

Sensing my fear, Baba lovingly told me, "I am aware of the agonizing pain that you are suffering from. It is the result of your samskara accumulated over several lifetimes. I want you to undergo the suffering of the samskara while I am physically present on earth. However, if you insist, I shall relieve you of this unbearable suffering right now."

He added, "You know that I love you. Can a madman cry for help while taking My name and holding on to My feet? Is it not My grace?" He revealed that He knew about my feeling of impending death at any moment but assured me that He would not let me die. He said that I would soon recover. He ended by instructing me not to tell anyone what had transpired in the room.

Hearing His soothing words, I regained my broken confidence. I could feel His fatherly love and compassion for me. As I was about to leave, He looked gently at me, drenching me with His love. In His parting words, He instructed me to win just an iota of His grace and asked me if I knew how to get His grace. He answered, "Cry

to get His attention. Just hold on to His lotus feet, and be ready to suffer for Him and beg for His grace.” Baba said that by doing so, the Supreme Entity would be compelled to bestow His grace on me. He further explained that the secret to winning His grace was to snatch it from Him and not wait for it to be bestowed.

As I came out of His room, I saw Chandranarayan, Acarya Paritoshananda Avadhuta, and Acarya Divyalokeshananda Avadhuta waiting in line for their turn to be initiated into microvita sadhana. As instructed, I did not speak to anyone and left immediately for the master unit.

As the days went by, I found to my dismay that my condition had aggravated, contrary to Baba’s assurance that I would be cured. I was like a madman, preferring loneliness to human company. Daily, I would go to a wooded area near the river that flowed through the master unit and sit for hours, staring into the wilderness. In that condition, I would cry out in sheer agony and helplessness. Strangely, despite the crunching physical and mental agony, I was blessed with deep spiritual experiences. I would feel His warmth and physical presence. I felt that He was so close to me, protecting me while I suffered from this devilish torment.

Another strange thing happened. In this period of agonizing pain, I sometimes dreamed of Him coming to me and teaching me a special process of meditation to cure me of the disease. These occasional dreams lightened my misery considerably and gave me hope to live another day. Later, I came to understand that He had taught me parts of the process of microvita sadhana in my dreams even before He had formally initiated me into the process.

Despite these occasional bright streaks, my condition continued to worsen steadily. The intensity of my pain increased exponentially, and

my state of dark melancholy descended to new depths. Ultimately, due to the loss of appetite, I was reduced to a walking skeleton, a frightful frame of skin and bones.

Not knowing what else to do, I decided to seek medical help. That was of no help, however. The doctors were unfamiliar with the symptoms of this disease and did not know how to treat me. I went back even more dejected and helpless. I suffered from this miserable condition for three long months.

Finally, as a last resort, I confided in the General Secretary about my strange disease and told him that I was unsure how long I would survive. I requested him to relieve me of my duties as Rector of the master unit and to post someone else instead.

Understanding the gravity of the situation, the General Secretary informed Baba about the seriousness of my condition. Baba simply informed him that He was aware of my condition. From that day, Baba took daily reports on my condition. Later, He monitored my condition several times a day.

As the disease progressed in severity, the General Secretary advised me to come to Kolkata immediately to seek Baba's blessing. When I arrived at Baba's residence, He invited me in and inquired after my health. I explained my condition to Him. That day, Baba asked for reports about my condition several times. I spent the next few days under His direct surveillance.

On the fifth day, Baba asked me to come into His room accompanied by Acarya Vijayananda Avadhuta. When I entered the room, I saw that Baba's Personal Assistant, the General Secretary, and Acarya Tapeshvarananda Avadhuta were also present. Baba then requested Acarya Vijayananda to note down what He was about to say. He said

that the virus of this disease was of extraterrestrial origin, and due to divine intervention, it would not recur on this planet for another one thousand years. Nevertheless, He stressed that the nature of this extraterrestrial disease should be noted down for the information of human beings.

He then described the symptoms of the disease in detail. He mentioned that no one on this planet had survived the effects of the disease and that anyone who contracted the disease would suffer miserably, lose his or her memory, and then become mad. An infected person usually died a painful death within fifteen days. He clarified that one who suffered from the disease preferred to stay alone and became scared of people. Such a person should be allowed to remain alone in an open and natural environment. He mentioned that the victim of this virus became very weak and stressed. However, despite the victim's weakness, he or she must perform his Yoga exercises four times daily, as prescribed.

He then prescribed the Yoga asanas that I should perform in the morning, noon, evening, and night. He also mentioned the herbal remedies for the disease and the appropriate diet. Baba said the infected person should eat boiled rice instead of raw rice. The infected person could also take the water of boiled pulses. Baba stressed that the victim should consume only freshly cooked food.

Baba concluded by saying that He had cured me of the disease and that it would take some time for me to recover completely, as the virus had affected my vital organs and nerves. Baba said that since I was a dedicated worker of His mission, He would do something for me.

He then touched different points on my body with His cane. As soon as His cane touched my body, I felt a soothing power surging

through the tip of the cane into my body. He held the stick for a long time on different parts of my body. I could see that He was getting tired after some time, with beads of perspiration rolling down His face. He temporarily stopped the treatment to regain His energy. During the interval periods, He explained the nature and impact of the disease, while Acarya Vijayananda took down notes of the discussion. Baba resumed the treatment after that.

After finishing the treatment, He assured me that He was always with me and that I should not be worried about anything. He emphasized that I should not leave the master unit without His permission, no matter what the circumstances. He instructed me to keep discharging my duties and asked me to remember Him with my heart and soul while holding on to His lotus feet. He again assured me that I would receive His grace.

I returned to the master unit with renewed confidence. I stayed there for another three years while I slowly recuperated. In the meantime, I continued to discharge my responsibilities to the best of my ability. I received much assistance from the Margiis and particularly Acarya Sadhaneshvarananda Avadhuta in developing the master unit. I was pleasantly surprised at the master unit's progress during my three-year confinement. I could feel His grace at every step.

During the period of my recovery, I had ample time to reflect on things. The amazing things that had transpired in my life as a missionary worker confirmed His paternal care, protection, and love for me. In the context of this mysterious disease, I recalled the inexplicable punishment I had received from Him just before I contracted the disease. I now know that the "punishment" was a protective shield to diminish the fatal severity of this extraterrestrial disease. It was a cosmic trade-off of sorts. I suffered some pain from the lashing but escaped the jaws of death, which would have been

the end result of the disease. The “punishment” phase could be categorized as the first phase.

The second phase was the unbearable suffering and divine grace I experienced as the disease progressed. As my physical and mental condition worsened, I experienced the deepest spiritual experiences a human being could possibly attain. It is my view that such experiences are not possible even with many lifetimes of intense spiritual practice. It was a clear demonstration of His noncausal grace.

The third phase was treatment. I could feel the healing power surging from His cane as He held it on different parts of my body. His detailed explanation of the nature of this alien disease was illuminating. It will certainly help future medical researchers to understand it better.

The fourth phase was recuperation. While He was treating me, He assured me that I would be cured but that it would take some time to achieve full recovery. That came true to the dot. Even today, more than a quarter of a century after the incident, I do not suffer from similar symptoms. Mysterious are the ways of the Sadguru.

In the final analysis, I believe that this alien disease had an impact at two levels: one, it acted as a purifying agent for me, a blessing in disguise to pave the way to liberation and final salvation; two, the disease would have spread all over the world, killing a large portion of the human race, but owing to His love of humanity, Baba somehow contained the disease within my body to stop it from spreading.

I now know that there is nothing more important in life than to catch His lotus feet, come what may, and to snatch His grace from Him.

My interactions with Baba during my suffering reminded me of the lives of past great sages such as Mirabai and Kabir Das.

Mira sang:

O Hari! I am madly in love with You,

The people of the world fail to appreciate my pain
of separation.

Kabir expressed the same sentiment slightly differently:

Friends, stop laughing and start to love, crying for
Him

That lover and true friend is unattainable without
crying.

Microvita, the Mysterious Cosmic Emanation

The theory of microvita is new to science and spirituality. Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii propounded this theory for the welfare of humanity. Even the words *microvita* (singular) and *microvita* (plural) were coined by Baba to explain this mysterious entity.

Microvita literally means “microlife.” Baba first introduced the concept of microvita in His discourse entitled “Microvita, the Mysterious Emanation of Cosmic Factor” in 1986. Baba explained that microvita is the ultimate particle of consciousness that carries the seed of life to different celestial bodies in the universe. Essentially, microvita are living entities and serve as the building blocks of the universe. They exist, multiply, and die. They act as the bridge between matter and mind. Baba mentioned that microvita

exist at the border between the animate and inanimate worlds. From the viewpoint of mass, Baba said that when billions of microvita are solidified, a single carbon atom is formed. From this description, we can understand how small and subtle a microvita is. Baba further clarified that microvita manifest within the physical and psychic realms. In the physical realm, a microvita is far subtler than a subatomic particle such as a proton, electron, positron, or neutron. Its position is between the electron and ectoplasm. In the psychic realm, it is subtler than ectoplasm or mind stuff.

Essentially, the theory of microvita is a new science of reality. Based on the current understanding of science, everything in the universe is composed of atoms and subatomic particles, and the atom is nothing but condensed energy. Tantra defines matter as being composed of five fundamental factors: the solid, liquid, luminous, aerial, and ethereal factors. The theory of microvita takes our understanding of matter and mind a step further by postulating that atoms are actually particles of consciousness and that microvita are responsible for creating both matter and mind. It is thus a revolutionary concept that completely changes our understanding of the universe and how things work at the most fundamental level.

In expanding this novel theory, Baba postulated three types of microvita: positive, negative, and neutral. He elaborated on their characteristics and on the nature of their movement. I do not intend to go into the theoretical aspect of the concept of microvita here but would like to say something regarding their operational aspect, that is, how microvita relate to our spiritual practice.

Positive microvita enter a human being through the lunar plexus, Ajina cakra. They generally move downward but can move up to the occult plexus, the Guru cakra, by the will of the Supreme Consciousness alone and not on their own volition. Negative

microvita, on the other hand, enter a human being through the sidereal plexus, Vishuddha cakra. They move downward to the lower cakras, nerves, and glands. In spiritual practice, positive microvita influence the higher propensities in a human being and can be used to bring about spiritual advancement. Taken collectively, positive microvita can lead to social evolution and set the foundation for the spiritual advancement of society.

Of the three types of microvita, *prakruti*, the creative force of the Supreme Entity, utilizes negative microvita on created beings, while the Supreme Entity utilizes positive microvita.

Ego Crusher

Baba used various means to help a disciple cross the perilous ocean of samskara to attain liberation. Among the tools He employed, transfers and postings of missionary workers featured prominently. In my case, at my mental request, He transferred me to a new department and used that occasion to break down my ego.

At that time, I was working in the Ananda Shila Master Unit. I had already spent three years there, slowly building up the place brick by brick. One day, I thought that it was time for me to be posted in the central office, where I could be closer to Baba. Amazingly, within a day, I received orders from the central office that I had been posted as the Global Secretary of Hari Pari Mandal Gosthii, an allied Ananda Marga organization headquartered in Kolkata responsible for the propagation of spiritual practices. I psyched myself for the new responsibility. Within twenty-five days, however, my posting was changed again, and I was appointed as the Central ERAWS Secretary.

Those were the early days of Ananda Nagar, the City of Bliss. Baba was focused on constructing the central office in Ananda Nagar. He laid out the construction plans for each of the buildings in detail and gave the responsibility of constructing the different departmental offices to the Departmental Secretaries.

ERAWS was responsible for building 104 buildings to house the various programs. Baba stepped up the pressure for progress. He took progress reports twice a day on a daily basis. He kept us on our toes. Each department was responsible for securing the funds for the construction work. That was a gargantuan challenge those days due to the paucity of Margiis and funding sources. Baba tolerated no excuses whatsoever, real or imagined. Punishment was the norm in those heady days. We were punished for failing to meet work targets. The pressure that Baba put on the central workers to achieve our targets was unbelievable. Baba was like a fire-breathing dragon. Proximity to the dragon meant being burnt all the time.

My enchantment with a position in the central office slowly vanished as I realized the daily pressure of being a central worker. Mentally, I asked Baba for a transfer from the central office.

My colleague and I would compete with each other to produce satisfactory work on a daily basis. Baba once said that the ERAWS Secretary was a simpleton but his colleague in the department was spoiling him. He was referring to me as a simpleton. Both of us were then punished.

One day, Baba was very annoyed with both of us. He punished us severely for our failings. To make matters worse, He withdrew our avadhutaship. Immediately after that, I was transferred to the Ananda Shila Master Unit. For me, it was a relief and a welcome

change. There, I dedicated myself with renewed vigor to develop the master unit.

This episode at the central office was a blessing in disguise. It freed me from the prison of self-centered thinking. I realized that it was best to go with the flow and let the Guru decide everything in my life. As a missionary, I was to perform my allotted tasks to the best of my ability and not make demands upon the Guru. He knew what was best for each disciple. Like a master potter, He shaped each pot according to the quality and quantum of the clay. I am grateful that Baba intervened to crush my hidden ego, which would otherwise have remained undetected and might have risen like a phoenix to obstruct my progress on the spiritual path. Ego is the greatest enemy on the spiritual path.

The Magic Cane

Baba's cane was an enigma. He used it as a walking stick, a disciplinary device, a healing tool, and as a medium for spiritual demonstrations. One stick, many uses.

It is thus natural for one to ask what this all-purpose magic wand really was. This question came to the fore at the WRDS meeting in Kolkata in 1988. The RDS meetings were not just reporting forums. Baba utilized them to deepen the desire for liberation by illuminating various spiritual topics and conducting diverse spiritual demonstrations. In essence, an RDS meeting with Baba was a deeply mystical session couched in administrative tones.

Punishment was a constant theme at almost all RDS meetings. Baba set work targets and key performance indicators for all sectors of the globe and made the Sectorial Secretaries accountable for achieving those targets. We were never able to meet the work targets to His

satisfaction. There were always shortfalls that provoked punishment. Sometimes, Baba used the occasion to correct erring disciples for their moral lapses.

On that occasion, the Sectorial Secretary of the Berlin sector was presenting his progress report to Baba. As he was speaking, Baba unexpectedly interjected and, pointing to His cane, asked him whether the cane was matter or consciousness. The question came out of the blue. The subject had never been discussed before, whether in the context of philosophy, spirituality, or science. Thus, the Sectorial Secretary had no reference points on which to frame his response. He had to manufacture the answer himself to the best of his ability. After pondering for a moment, he gave what he thought was the most logical response. He said that the cane was composed of matter.

Baba motioned him to come closer. He then touched the acarya's Ajina cakra, the third eye, with His cane and requested him to look at it again and say whether it was matter or consciousness.

What he saw was incredible. This stick of inert matter had magically transformed into a living entity, pulsating energetically with numberless microscopic particles, all flowing in a specific direction. He saw millions of minute particles flowing along the body of the cane and within each particle smaller particles revolving around a nucleus. The surreal dance of minuscule particles produced a peculiar sound as they moved and collided with each other. He felt that the particles were alive.

What a magnificent sight: a world within a world. His notions of what was animate and what was not began to blur as he witnessed this wondrous scene of a hidden, living world within matter. Through

the activation of his supersensory faculties, he also became aware of the strange sound of moving atoms and subatomic particles.

After resuming his normal state of consciousness, he answered that the stick was living spirit. The acarya became a transformed man after this amazing demonstration. His vision of the universe and his understanding about the so-called division between the animate and inanimate world were completely changed. He had been graced to see an underlying unity and continuity in everything.

Gifts for the Guru

As the Sadguru with a singular mission to create a proper human society on earth and the enabling environment for human beings to evolve spiritually, Baba was a hard taskmaster and disciplinarian. He employed the carrot-and-stick method to elicit the best responses from His missionary workers. He virtually pushed them through the wall to deliver work targets. As a true leader, He demonstrated leadership by example. He Himself worked beyond human endurance, hardly sleeping two hours a day and spending His waking hours on the myriad tasks of His mission.

Reviewing His contributions for humanity both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, one wonders how He managed to do so much in the space of one lifetime. His unique contributions for the betterment of humanity include new ideas in the areas of cosmology, spirituality and mysticism, ethics, psychology, history, geography, education, economics, ecology, agriculture, health care, music and literature, governance, and science. Add to this dizzying list the immense opposition He had to confront in the course of implementing His mission, and one does not have to be a rocket scientist to see that it is just not humanly possible for one person to

contribute so many new ideas in so many fields in the short span of one lifetime without divine inspiration.

Baba wanted His workers to be like Him, performing superhuman tasks with whatever little resources were available. He wanted us to acquire the requisite knowledge, skills, and resources to help us undertake our society-building responsibilities more effectively. On several occasions, I saw how He would silently intervene when we were unable to perform our allotted tasks with the given resources. His grace was the X Factor to success when all else failed. But I must stress one point: we had the right to seek His grace only when we had used to the maximum the God-given resources.

The missionary workers of Ananda Marga have to be 100 percent missionaries. There is no space for a missionary to think of his or her own comforts and convenience. This implies total surrender to the Guru. Total surrender means total sublimation of the ego. In an imperfect world, the twin forces of temptation and distraction compound the task of sublimating the ego. Every missionary worker has to undergo this constant struggle. To help the devotees cross the tumultuous ocean of maya, the power of nature that creates the illusion that finite objects are the ultimate truth, Baba's two eyes always followed them wherever they went. He pointed out moral lapses whenever and wherever they occurred and took the necessary remedial action so that the faltering spiritual aspirant might correct his or her imperfect behavior to become a better instrument of God. There is more than adequate empirical evidence of this, as His workers and Margiis will attest.

Besides Baba's corrective role, He would occasionally show us His soft side—His role as a loving Guru and as a doting father figure to the missionary workers, who had given up their worldly families and personal comfort to serve humanity. I would like to relate one

incident that occurred just one month before His departure from His physical body. Note that I did not use the word *death*. Death refers to an event beyond human control. The Sadguru chooses the time of His “death” and the way He leaves His mortal frame. The constrictions of nature cannot bind Him.

One day, Baba informed His Personal Assistant and the General Secretary of Ananda Marga that He wished to see the missionary workers who had not gotten the opportunity of His audience during the past four years. He instructed that they should come to Kolkata within eight days.

The General Secretary then prepared a list of forty workers based on the given criterion. He informed them accordingly and stressed the need to arrive at Kolkata within the stipulated period. These workers were from all nine sectors of the globe.

For them, the special invitation was an unexpected blessing. Many of the missionary workers lived a hand-to-mouth existence, but they somehow managed to collect just enough money for their travel expenses to India. They would not miss this exceptional opportunity even if they had to starve.

On the day of the meeting, the General Secretary informed the workers to assemble at the hall in Baba’s residence. It was about ten o’clock at night. I was also informed of the gathering.

I quickly prepared myself to attend the meeting. By the time I reached the hall, I saw that Baba was already there with several workers. From the forty workers present, five had brought gifts for Baba from their home sectors. The gifts varied in price, ranging from the inexpensive to the costly. They presented the gifts to Baba, who graciously accepted them. Like a happy father, Baba joyfully showed

off the presents while individually acknowledging the workers who had brought the gifts. He gave special attention to every gift, focusing on the loving sentiment behind the gift rather than its cost. This gave much satisfaction to the givers.

One example comes to mind, an inexpensive wall clock from Africa. Baba was so pleased with the gift that He instructed His Personal Assistant to hang it in His room. He stressed that He would henceforth use it to keep track of time. The natural joy that Baba exuded while showing off the gifts was infectious. It made everyone lighthearted and happy.

After much ado over the gifts, Baba explained, with a charming smile, that what mattered to Him most was the filial sentiment behind the gift, not its monetary value. He explained that while different people from different continents bought the gifts at different prices, the singular thought of pleasing Him was the thread that strung together the gifts like a garland. By saying this, He showed how much He cared for the efforts made by His children, especially those who came from the poorer regions of the world.

In hindsight, this seemingly ordinary incident was a hint we failed to see of His planned departure from His mortal frame. At that time, nobody guessed the underlying significance of Baba's request to see the missionary workers. We thought that it was just another rare opportunity to get His audience. Little did we realize that He was preparing to tie up the loose ends of His mission on earth and give His workers the final opportunity to see Him before He left His mortal frame. In fact, Baba dropped hints to several workers prior to His physical departure, but no one caught them.

Creating Missionary Workers

The following story is another indication of His planned departure, which we did not realize at that time.

This incident occurred sometime in the beginning of 1990. At that time, Baba was pressuring us to create new missionary workers to strengthen the cadre of missionaries in Ananda Marga. This task was an addition to our already heavy workload.

Once, after a reporting session, Baba called me to His room and asked me if the task of creating new missionary workers was an impossible task that He had imposed. He said, "I have not asked you to pluck the stars from the sky, nor did I ask you to reverse the flow of the Ganges. I am only asking you to inspire the Margiis to work dedicatedly for the mission."

I could see the pain in His eyes as He spoke. Seeing His pained expression, I firmly resolved to inspire the Margiis to serve full-time in the mission as renunciants and local full-time workers. By His grace, my determined efforts met with some success. I was pleased that I could please Him.

Disturbing Premonition

Somehow, I was one of the few individuals to whom Baba gave a hint of His impending physical departure. These premonitions were very disturbing for me personally. I just could not adjust to the thought that He would leave me.

This incident occurred when I was still at the Ananda Shila Master Unit, sometime after the Ananda Purnima DMC in 1990. I was then suffering from severe illness and could not properly discharge

my duties as Rector of the master unit. At that time, work to build the master unit was going on at a feverish pace.

During those days, I made it a point to visit Kolkata for two main reasons: to collect funds for the master unit project and, more importantly, to be in Baba's physical proximity.

Owing to the severity of my illness, I was advised by many of my coworkers to seek medical treatment in Kolkata. One senior worker, the late Acarya Nigamananda Avadhuta, however, advised me to go to Varanasi for treatment. Varanasi had a number of renowned Ayurvedic centers. He argued that the drinking water in Kolkata was contaminated and unsuitable for my physical condition. His argument was compelling. Most of the inhabitants of Kolkata depended on the highly contaminated and saline groundwater, which posed long-term health risks. I therefore decided to go to Varanasi and sought Baba's permission accordingly.

In my absence, another worker was appointed to manage the development of the master unit. I focused entirely on regaining my health. At Varanasi, I was well looked after by Acarya Nigamananda, Acarya Vandanananda, and his team. He arranged for my treatment at the Banaras Hindu University Ayurvedic Hospital.

I recovered quickly under the able care of Dr. K. P. Singh. As my health improved, I regained the ability to derive bliss from my spiritual practice. I started to enjoy my meditation more and more. Strangely, however, whenever I performed my meditation, the image of Baba leaving His body would appear in my mind like an ominous bubble. The same image recurred in my dreams too. It was disturbing. The thought of His departure pained me so much that I could not sleep properly many a night. I used to cry for Him

and could not understand why. This strange condition persisted for several weeks.

After I recovered my health, I returned to the master unit. After spending a few days there, I proceeded to Kolkata for His audience. As soon as I reached His residence, I was hurriedly ushered into His room. Baba then spoke of things that rattled my confidence, which I shall narrate in detail in the next story.

At that time, Baba was not keeping good health. Four Margii doctors looked after Him. For reasons unknown, Baba was also disallowing His workers from leaving Kolkata. He gave maximum opportunity for them to have His audience. No one realized that He was quietly preparing to leave the world, giving us the final opportunity of seeing Him physically. I managed to visit Him several times during that crucial period.

On October 21, 1990, I got the shocking news that Baba had left His physical body. Margiis and workers all over the world were thunderstruck, many not believing the news.

On October 25, the day of His cremation, the scene in Kolkata was indescribable. Thousands of Margiis assembled at the Tiljala ashram in a state of absolute shock and agony. The pain of the realization that He would no longer be with us pervaded the air, tears and emotions flowing freely. The scene was simply heartrending.

While His departure was a shock to me too, I consider myself more fortunate than the others. At least, my mind was better prepared to accept the fact of His departure. For a couple of weeks, He had blessed me by preparing my mind through the strange and disturbing experiences in my meditation and dreams. When the

occasion finally came, I was mentally better prepared than most and was in a position to console inconsolable souls.

Future Organizational Crisis

Two months before His departure, Baba gave me a hint of future organizational problems. For me, the meeting that day holds great significance. It was the last time that I would see Him physically.

As soon as I entered His room, Baba looked at me intently and informed me that I would face serious problems in my organizational life. He added that Ananda Marga as an institution would be plagued by critical problems. This revelation was as shocking as it was disturbing. It frightened me. In my mind, I thought that a spiritual organization would be problem-free, bent on achieving its objective of serving humanity. I could not reconcile how it could go offtrack, mired in intractable problems.

At that time, I could not grasp the full import of His warning. He said that I should not be alarmed when these organizational problems erupted, as they were part of the cosmic script. He emphasized that eventually everything would be fine and that Ananda Marga would shine like a thousand suns to lead humanity in the future. He added that in that phase of the institution, I would play a crucial role in resolving the problems. The last thing He stressed was that when I became old and weak, unable to devote much time to organizational matters, I should apply myself wholeheartedly to spiritual practice, seeking refuge at His lotus feet and remembering Him constantly. Doing so, I would surely attain the cherished goal of my life.

His prophetic words that day have become a reality. After His departure on October 21, 1990, seemingly insurmountable problems have surfaced in the organization. I am playing my role to help

address the organizational crisis to the best of my ability. Difficult as the situation may be, I take comfort in His assurance that all will end well and that Ananda Marga, for which I have devoted my entire life, will play a central role in building a resplendent human society based on spiritual ideals.

Baba also mentioned similar messages of hope to several senior workers. Acarya Pranavatmakananda Avadhuta informed me that Baba had told Acarya Mantreshvarananda Avadhuta that He had taken birth on this planet to fulfill His mission of creating a Mahavishva, a great universe. Baba said that just as Lord Krsna had written the script of the *Mahabharata* almost 3,500 years ago, He had also written the script for Mahavishva and had chosen the protagonists and core events of this cosmic play on earth.

Baba had explained to another senior missionary worker, the late Acarya Samanvayananda Avadhuta, who had been perturbed by the petty differences that had emerged among the missionary workers even during Baba's life, that in the beginning Ananda Marga had been like pure Ganges water and that with the passage of time it had become polluted. Baba had stressed, however, that the organizational contamination was also in accordance with His master plan for the world. He added that the circumstances created by the problems would compel the righteous people within the organization to learn how to wade in troubled waters and emerge even stronger as spiritual leaders to guide society.

In my mind, I am certain that the present crisis that has gripped the organization is part of His unfathomable plan. Everything happens according to His will and for a reason. To resolve the current crisis, Margiis and missionary workers alike must go back to the basics, that is, emphasize our goal and ideology as the twin pillars of our

mission. We must be vigilant about our personal conduct and follow the precepts set out in *Carya Carya* in our personal and organizational life. Only then will it be possible to establish the glorious mission of Ananda Marga as Baba intended.

CHAPTER 11

GEMS OF DEVOTION

Call of Devotion

Devotion is the cornerstone in the life of an Ananda Margii. Although the spiritual practice of Ananda Marga yoga integrates aspects of Tantra yoga, raja-yoga, Rajadhiraja yoga, Astaunga yoga, Kriya yoga, madhur sadhana, hatha-yoga, karma-yoga, jinana-yoga, bhakti yoga, and a special form of spiritual practice introduced by Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii called microvita sadhana, Baba placed singular emphasis on bhakti, devotion.

All the spiritual practices Baba introduced revolved around the cultivation of the devotional relationship between the Guru and the disciple, between the Supreme Consciousness and the devotee, which blooms as a sweet bond between father and child. For a devotee, remembering Him in every facet of life, whether painful or pleasurable, is the cornerstone of success. He or she sees the divine will in everything. For the devotee, the Supreme Consciousness is not an abstract, impersonal entity but a personal entity with whom he or she can relate and interact.

Devotion came with a cost, however. The Sadguru constantly tested devotees to gauge the depth of their devotion.

The following stories illustrate the supreme importance of cultivating devotion in our journey on the spiritual path. In the life of an Ananda Margii, devotion is indispensable.

This incident occurred in one of the many RDS meetings in Kolkata. On this occasion, a senior worker was presenting his progress report to Baba. His report was unsatisfactory and Baba was utterly dissatisfied with his work. While admonishing him for his poor output, Baba commented, "This boy does his spiritual practices regularly and spends much time performing them. But why is it that his devotional call does not reach Me?"

The workers present were quite surprised to hear Baba's remarks. They were aware that the acarya was strict in his spiritual practices. Yet Baba hinted at not being satisfied with his effort.

Following the senior worker's report, another worker stood up to present his progress report. He was a relatively new and young worker. Baba was also displeased with his work output but remarked, "This boy does his meditation properly. His devotional call reaches Me. This is because, in his meditation, he cries out with all his mind and heart yearning to be one with Me. His intense desire to merge into Me gives Me much pleasure."

Baba made it clear that real devotion was the only way to reach Him. One could do lifetimes of difficult spiritual practices and enjoy many types of spiritual experiences and yet not achieve salvation, the cherished goal of spiritual practice.

Gaya Incident

In the early days before Ananda Marga was institutionalized, Baba Himself initiated the spiritual aspirants. As the number of aspirants grew, Baba trained some eligible people as acaryas, so that they could act as His medium to initiate deserving spiritual aspirants. The early acaryas were householders, both men and women of impeccable character. Within five years of the inception of Ananda Marga as a spiritual organization in 1955, Baba had created 125 acaryas to assist Him in His spiritual mission. The early workers were sent to the different districts in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Bengal to propagate the ideals, practices, and way of life of Ananda Marga. Baba was then stationed in Jamalpur in Bihar State.

One day, He requested three acaryas to propagate the mission in Gaya District in the state of Bihar. Today, Gaya District borders the state of Jharkhand. Gaya is an ancient cultural center that is mentioned in the great Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Lord Buddha and another great soul, Vardhamana Mahavira, a contemporary of Gautama Buddha, propagated their ideals and practices in the Gaya region.

In those early days, the workers did not have the assistance of published Ananda Marga literature as an aid to their work. Baba Himself used to provide notes on subjects of common interest to help the workers give public lectures. He would also drill them in the responses to questions that people might ask in a public forum.

The three acaryas had to address a forum organized by the Theosophical Society in Gaya, an institution founded in 1875 to explore occultism and mystical phenomena and propagate the concept of universal brotherhood and the oneness of life. Their members comprised many well-read people and local intellectuals.

Naturally, the prospect of facing a crowd of knowledgeable people was a source of worry for the acaryas, who were ordinary people. To help build their confidence, Baba specified the topics of their speeches and clarified the points so that they could make a convincing case about the ideas and ideals of Ananda Marga.

One of the three acaryas was not confident of his ability to speak in public. He asked Baba if he would be successful in addressing the public forum. Baba's reply to his query is instructive. He stressed that all of them would be successful if they delivered their speeches after performing their spiritual practice of Guru dhyana. Within the framework of Sahaja yoga as taught by Ananda Marga, Guru dhyana is the sixth lesson.

Armed with new confidence, the acaryas went to Gaya. They followed Baba's instructions and performed Guru dhyana accordingly. They were surprised to discover that all three of them delivered convincing speeches that moved the crowd, even the one who was not so confident in the beginning. The public became very interested to learn more about Ananda Marga philosophy, and several people took initiation into Ananda Marga spiritual practice. Subsequently, the three acaryas went to many smaller towns in Gaya District and initiated many more people. They spent fifteen days touring the various towns in the district.

They returned to Jalampur after a successful tour. They wanted to report the good news to Baba and approached the then General Secretary, Acarya Pranay, to arrange a meeting with Baba. Acarya Pranay told them, however, that Baba was ill with a raging fever and that they should go to Baba's residence for reporting. They went to Baba's house as instructed. Baba received them cordially and invited them into the living room. They reported what had happened in Gaya. Baba was pleased to hear of their successful mission.

After the reporting session, Baba excused Himself to take a bath and after that rested on the bed. In those days, it was considered inadvisable to take a bath during a fever, as it was thought to result in pneumonia. They could not understand why Baba had taken a bath when He was suffering from a raging fever. Out of concern, they raised this issue with Baba.

In response, Baba assured them that nothing would happen to Him, as they had successfully returned from their mission in Gaya. At first, they could not fathom the meaning of Baba's response. A few moments later, however, it dawned on them that while they had been in Gaya, all three of them had suffered from high fevers that had mysteriously disappeared after some time. Had their fevers continued, their mission in Gaya would doubtlessly have faltered. They gratefully realized that Baba had freed them from the suffering of their fevers by transferring the fevers onto His body, thus enabling them to implement the planned program without any hindrance. Baba suffered from fever for three days.

Two things stand out regarding this incident. First, spiritual aspirants should realize that the pain and pleasure they experience is the manifested result of their past actions, whether in this life or in past lives. Good actions result in favorable reactions, and bad actions beget painful reactions. That is the immutable law of samskara from which no human being, whether saint or sinner, is free. As mentioned earlier, the Sadguru, who has no samskara of His own, can grace His devotees by taking their samskara onto Himself to lighten their burden on the road to liberation. Second, the intelligent spiritual aspirants realize that nothing is possible without the Sadguru's grace. In several discourses, Baba stated that not even a blade of grass would grow without the will of the Supreme Entity. He demonstrated the reality of this assertion several times to help spiritual aspirants inculcate the spirit of godhood in every

action. Hence, complete surrender to the Sadguru is an essential prerequisite to liberation. The Upanishads, a motley collection of early spiritual and philosophical texts on the nature of ultimate reality, explain this point in the following verse taken from the Shvetasvatara Upanishad:

Sah eko jalavana iisat iishanibhih
 Sarvan lokan iishat iishanibhih
 Sah eva eko udabhava sambhave ca
 Etad vidurah amrta'ste bhavanti

The One who spreads the net,
 Who rules alone by His powers,
 Who rules all the worlds by His powers,
 Who is one and the same at the time of creation and
 dissolution of the worlds,
 They who know Him become immortal.

This verse refers to *maya*, the creative power of the Supreme Consciousness, as *jala* or a net. Metaphorically, the creation of the universe is seen as the casting of the net. The Supreme Consciousness creates, sustains, and dissolves the universe through the power of His creative force. He also controls and guides the evolution of His creation through this creative force. Hence, the one and indivisible Supreme Consciousness appears as innumerable forms. Those spiritual aspirants, through their intense love for Him, realize that their individual selves are a spark of the Universal Self or Supreme Consciousness and ultimately merge into Him. This is the state of immortality.

Devotion Drowns Defects

In the early days of Ananda Marga, one new initiate was a Police Inspector named Sukeshvara Prasad. After his initiation, he slowly learned more about the Marga Guru—His personality, His vision, His ideas, and so on. Slowly, he became more and more attracted to Baba's charismatic personality and regularly visited Jamalpur for His audience.

Over time, as he diligently performed his spiritual practices, he developed a devotional relationship with Baba. On one of his visits to Jamalpur, he requested Baba to conduct Dharma Maha Cakra in Patna. Baba smiled in response without saying anything.

On his next visit to Jamalpur, Sukeshvara Prasad had the opportunity of accompanying Baba for a Field Walk. As they were walking toward the open field, Sukeshvara decided to press his demand that Baba hold DMC in Patna. He stood defiantly in front of Baba with his request that Baba agree to visit Patna and convene DMC there.

Baba's response was as gracious as it was psychological. He replied that the General Secretary was the person responsible for arranging DMCs and that Sukeshvara should approach him with the request. After the Field Walk, Sukeshvara accompanied Baba back to His residence. Immediately after that, he proceeded to the ashram and met the General Secretary with his request that Baba hold DMC in Patna. He stressed that he would be responsible for all arrangements, including Baba's board and lodging. He requested the General Secretary to fix a suitable date for the occasion.

In response, the General Secretary informed Sukeshvara that before he fixed a date for the function, he would visit Patna and discuss the matter with all the Margiis there.

When the General Secretary visited Patna, he met the Margiis and in consultation with them fixed the date and venue of the proposed DMC. During the discussions, Sukeshvara humbly offered his house as the DMC venue and as Baba's residence during the function. The Margiis strongly objected to his proposal, arguing that his house was unsuitable to host Baba and a spiritual forum like the DMC, as it had been bought by money earned through improper means. As in other countries, police officers in India were prone to corruption.

The Margiis' lack of tact hurt Sukeshvara's feelings. It was true that he had been a corrupt official before, but he had stopped taking bribes since the day he had been initiated. He wanted to turn over a new leaf. Despite his failure to convince the Margiis to hold the DMC program in his house, he found solace in the fact that he had played a leading role in bringing Baba to Patna. This feat was no mean achievement.

The Margiis worked feverishly to prepare for the auspicious occasion. They rented a large hall and decorated it beautifully. Everyone chipped in to ensure that the program was flawless and that Baba would be pleased with their effort.

Meanwhile, Sukeshvara made counter arrangements to prepare his premises for the DMC program, hoping against hope that a miracle would take place and that the DMC would be held at his residence.

The auspicious day eventually arrived. Baba came to the DMC venue wearing an immaculate white dhoti, a traditional Indian garment worn by men. As He entered the tent, the atmosphere became highly charged with an electric enthusiasm. As Baba took His seat on the dais, the devotees waited with bated breath, savoring the splendid sight of their beloved Guru. Among the throng of devotees, Sukeshvara sat in a corner of the tent together with members of his

family. He was overwhelmed with emotion as he watched Baba sitting majestically on the dais in a charming disposition, listening intently to the sweet strains of sacred songs that permeated the air.

As he watched Baba, Sukeshvara's desire that Baba visit his house surged uncontrollably. He mentally pleaded with Baba to visit his house, as he had made all the necessary preparations to equip the premises for the grand occasion. Strangely, a few minutes later, the Margiis were surprised to see a marked change in Baba's disposition. He seemed to be visibly upset with something. He summoned the General Secretary, who was seated close by, and told him that the DMC venue was unsuitable. He then turned to Sukeshvara and asked him to make the necessary preparations to convene the DMC at his residence and to ensure that it was suitable for Him to stay.

This turn of events was unexpected. Sukeshvara was dumbfounded, as was everyone else. He knew in his heart that Baba had listened to his fervent prayer. Without a second thought, he happily agreed to take responsibility for the change in venue to accommodate the DMC program.

In the meantime, Baba proceeded to Sukeshvara's house. The sudden change in the venue for the DMC program did not pose any problem to the organizers, as Sukeshvara had made early preparations to host the program. The DMC program continued in the new venue with devotional fervor. The devotees were drowned in the devotional waves of His physical presence. Everyone was contented.

Truly, Baba was the Lord of devotion. This incident clearly showed that Baba placed great importance on devotional sentiment and would forgive the defects of a devotee if he or she had unblemished devotion to the Guru.

Do You Need to Lift the Curtain to See Me?

The fifteenth-century female mystic poet and saint Mira Bai once said:

O Krsna! I have built a house in my eyes,
I have spread a bed of my eyeball,
A curtain of my eyelids,
And I have attracted my lover to visit me.

Her devotional songs and poems symbolize her unblemished, divine love for her Lord, songs in praise of Lord Krsna. One can only fathom the intensity of her longing for her Lord through the lens of a pure heart that permits the clear light of love to shine through.

Another Indian saint of that era, Kabir Das, said, "A devotee keeps repeating His name and loses consciousness unto Him. His name indeed is so powerful and sweet that one keeps seeing Him in everything." Such was the spiritual realization of these great souls.

Acarya Ramananda Avadhuta, the then Personal Assistant of Baba, recounted the following story. It shows how devotion is the only sentiment that can move the Lord. The incident occurred during a public holiday at the Marga Guru's quarters, Madhu Malainca, in Kolkata, India.

The Margiis of Kolkata assembled at the hall of Baba's residence, eagerly awaiting Him. The hall vibrated with the melodious strains of *Prabhat Samgiita*, devotional songs composed by Baba, and kiirtan, the tuneful chanting of the Baba Nam Kevalam Siddha mantra. Everyone was lost in devotional fervor.

When the hall was full, Acarya Ramananda informed Baba that the Margiis were waiting for Him to come. Baba was, however, annoyed with the Margiis for their work shortfalls and refused to meet them. Despite Acarya Ramananda's gentle persuasion to reconsider His decision not to meet the Margiis, Baba did not relent. He instructed Acarya Ramananda to shut the door as He wanted to rest.

Acarya Ramananda had the difficult task of informing the Margiis of Baba's displeasure. Disappointed, they returned to their homes. Among them, one sister named Riina was deeply affected by Baba's absence and pined to see Him. She was adamant about having Baba's audience at any cost. With single-minded zeal, she approached Acarya Ramananda to allow her to see Baba, even for only a while. Acarya Ramananda tried his best to dissuade her, knowing that once Baba had made a decision, it was virtually impossible to change His mind. Despite his attempts, she persisted with her request and positioned herself just outside Baba's room, refusing to move until she had seen Baba.

Acarya Ramananda was moved by the intensity of her devotion to the Guru. He hatched a plan to enter Baba's room under some pretext and lift the curtain at His bedside, giving her the opportunity of seeing Him for a fleeting moment. Sister Riina happily agreed with the plan. He went into Baba's room and quietly lifted the curtain that hung from His bedside. Baba was then resting. As Acarya Ramananda lifted the curtain, Baba inquired who it was. Acarya Ramananda replied that it was Ramananda and that he wanted to clean the toilet. Baba did not say anything and just turned over to the other side, faking sleep. Riina managed to catch a glimpse of her beloved Baba. She was immensely contented to have had the golden opportunity of seeing Baba. She felt blessed.

The next morning, before His routine Field Walk, Baba informed Acarya Ramananda that He wished to pay a visit to Sister Riina. He instructed, however, that the plan must be kept secret. Immediately after the Field Walk, Baba proceeded to her house.

Riina lived in an apartment on the third floor of the building. The apartment was a low-rise building without a lift. Baba walked up the staircase with Acarya Ramananda in tow. Upon reaching the apartment, He asked Acarya Ramananda to knock on the door as He stood behind him. When Riina opened the door, she was shocked to see both Acarya Ramananda and Baba at her doorstep. She was numbed with disbelief. Had the Lord really deemed it fit to come to her humble abode?

While she was thunderstruck, frozen into immobility, Baba entered the apartment and sat on the couch in the living room. The house was in a state of disarray, as she had not been expecting any visitor. Regaining her senses after a few moments, she rushed to find a new cover for the sofa to make it more presentable to accommodate her Guru. Baba summarily dismissed her effort to do so, saying that there was no need for any formality, as He was only visiting His daughter.

Then, in a fatherly manner, Baba asked, "Mother, do you really need to lift the curtain to see Me?" referencing how Acarya Ramananda had lifted Baba's bedside curtain to give her an opportunity to see Him.

This incident again illustrates that Baba knew everything and that love transcends all. To see the Supreme Consciousness physically and spiritually, it is necessary for spiritual aspirants to be regular in their spiritual practice, which, over time, will bloom into a devotional relationship with the Guru. This is the stage of the maturation of

spiritual practice. The Guru is the physical manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness. By the grace of the Guru, spiritual aspirants may one day be bestowed with the incomparable experience of the blissful, infinite, and effulgent Supreme Consciousness. Only at that stage, one understands the true meaning of devotion.

The Omniscient Lord

It must be said at the outset that Parama Purusa or the Supreme Consciousness is beyond description. As the Supreme Being, He transcends all creation. Any attempt to describe the infinite, limitless, immutable, and eternal entity is folly. Notwithstanding the impossibility of describing what is essentially indescribable, human beings limit the Supreme Consciousness by ascribing cosmic attributes to It. By doing so, what is essentially incomprehensible comes within the scope of human comprehension. In a way, it is like trying to describe the sun by looking at its reflection in a pond.

One special attribute of the Supreme Being is omniscience. In general, omniscience is the ability to know everything about anything. It means complete knowledge about people, places, and objects in any part of the material and nonmaterial universes. It means complete knowledge about objects from the subatomic particles to the largest celestial bodies. It also means complete knowledge about the past, present, and future. Baba demonstrated this quality countless times for the welfare of His devotees.

Acarya Akhaori Himanchal Prasad, a family acarya, recounted this story. Acarya Akhaori was then a senior police officer in the state of Bihar. He made it a point to visit Baba in Jamalpur whenever he got the opportunity. Whenever he visited Jamalpur, Baba would always inquire after his welfare. A question once arose in Acarya Akhaori's

mind: *If Baba is truly omniscient, why does He need to ask after my welfare?*

A few days later, Acarya Akhaori and his family went to Jamalpur to visit Baba, together with other devotees. Baba addressed the devotees and left the hall after delivering His discourse. Acarya Akhaori and his family members positioned themselves strategically in the hallway so that they could offer their salutations to Baba personally.

As Baba walked down the hall, Acarya Akhaori and his family members bade *namaskar* to Baba. Baba ignored Acarya Akhaori's salutations. He deliberately turned His face in the other direction. However, Baba cordially returned the salutations of his family members and the other devotees, exchanging a few pleasantries with them and inquiring after their welfare.

Acarya Akhaori was perturbed by Baba's uncustomary neglect of his presence. He tried several times to get Baba's attention without success. The pressure of Baba's disregard of his presence hurt him very much, to the point that he was on the verge of breaking down. He tried very hard to hide his emotions, but internally he was a broken man.

Baba left the ashram without looking at Acarya Akhaori. As Baba moved away from the ashram gate, Acarya Akhaori wailed uncontrollably. He could not take it anymore. Suddenly, Baba turned around and approached Acarya Akhaori. Baba patted his cheek and tenderly inquired after his welfare. Then Baba explained that there was no doubt that Acarya Akhaori's Baba was all-knowing. However, as long as He assumed a physical body, the human beings who were blessed to meet Him would naturally desire that He inquire after their welfare and express some words of comfort. A kindly word or two from Him would become the greatest treasure in

their lives. Baba stressed that it was His duty to ask after the welfare of His devotees.

Baba's explanation removed every trace of doubt in Acarya Akhaori's mind about His omniscience. He was ever grateful to Baba for removing a thorn in his mind.

Devotion and Service

Devotion is a state of constantly remembering Parama Purusa in the form of the Sadguru, following His every command, and surrendering everything unto Him, including the fruit of one's action. Spiritual aspirants must cultivate the habit of remembering Him always, in every thought, word, and deed. Even feeling that one has done great service to humanity is a form of subtle conceit that could potentially become an obstacle in spiritual progress. Taking responsibility for one's action and surrendering the result of such action to the Sadguru is the safest path to spiritual success. Remembering Him while performing an action is the best way of transcending the ego. The more one becomes established in this practice, the faster one moves toward Him. The Bhagavad Gita amply clarifies this point. Baba too constantly reminded us of this truism.

This incident occurred in 1967. That year, a severe drought struck several Indian states, particularly Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh, and southwestern Madhya Pradesh. The most affected were the poor and vulnerable communities. The Ananda Margiis quickly organized relief activities to help the drought-stricken communities. They worked day and night to operate food camps, medical camps, and clothes-distribution camps as well as other social service activities. Their humanitarian actions brought much relief to the affected people.

An acarya who was engaged in these relief activities felt pleased with his work. He thought that Baba would surely be very pleased with his service and congratulate him for the good work done. Upon the completion of the relief program, he went to Ranchi for Baba's audience. When he reached the ashram, Baba was just about to go for His routine Field Walk. The acarya took the opportunity to position himself close to Baba so that he could offer his salutations to Him. As Baba passed him, He walked ahead without acknowledging him while turning His face to the other side. Disappointed, the acarya went into the ashram and waited for Baba's return, when he could again offer his salutations. When Baba returned, He went straight into His room, without giving the worker an opportunity to offer his salutations. The acarya thought that Baba might call him later. He waited in vain for Baba's call.

By then, he suspected that something was wrong. Baba must be unhappy with him for some reason. He wondered whether he might have unintentionally committed a mistake that was the cause of Baba's ire. He thought hard about it but could not find any. Baba's silent rebuke was too much for him. He broke down and cried.

Just then, Baba's Personal Assistant knocked on the door and informed him that Baba wished to see him immediately. He pulled himself together and rushed to Baba's room. After offering his salutations, he sat down facing Baba. Baba looked straight into his eyes and remarked that while he had done some good work serving the drought-stricken communities, he had failed to realize that Baba's two eyes were always watching him and that he should never take pride in his actions. Baba stressed, "Service without the ideation of Narayana [the Supreme Being] is a waste of time."

CHAPTER 12

EPILOGUE

After Baba's departure from His mortal frame, the Margiis wanted some of His holy ashes to be installed in every jagrti and Marga Guru quarters all over the world. The central committee in Kolkata was responsible for deciding on this matter. After deliberating on this, they decided that Baba's ashes would be distributed to every Marga Guru quarters in the world.

When the Margiis of Ranchi learned of this decision, they formally requested the central committee for some of Baba's ashes for the Marga Guru quarters in Ranchi. Baba was very fond of Ranchi. It was associated with many nostalgic memories of the close interaction between Baba and the Margiis. He stayed there continuously from March 1967 to June 1970 and sporadically thereafter.

Accordingly, the Margiis of Ranchi held a meeting and made the following decisions:

First, five Margiis from Ranchi would be selected to go to Kolkata to bring back Baba's holy ashes. They would be met at the Ranchi railway station by a delegation of Ranchi Margiis upon their return.

From there, the urn bearing Baba's ashes would be taken in a procession to the Marga Guru quarters.

Second, a three-hour Akhanda kiirtan program would be organized at the Marga Guru quarters before the ashes were formally entombed in a specially designed crypt in Baba's room.

On the scheduled day, the Margiis assembled at the railway station and accompanied Baba's ashes to the Marga Guru quarters. However, instead of a three-hour Akhanda kiirtan program, the Margiis began to leave after an hour.

I arrived there at about the time the Margiis were leaving the premises of the Marga Guru quarters. I was a little late for the program, as I'd had some urgent work to complete at the Ananda Shila Master Unit. Acarya Amulya Ratan Sarangi too arrived at about the same time. Looking at the situation, we understood that something was not right and intervened to remedy the situation. We emphasized that it was highly improper for the Margiis to leave prematurely, contradicting a collective decision to convene a three-hour program and that it demeaned the sanctity of Baba's holy ashes. Our argument struck the right chords. We managed to convince them to return to the hall and complete the kiirtan program.

The Margiis streamed back into the hall with renewed vigor. They sang devotional songs from the *Prabhat Samgiita* collection and danced to the tune of kiirtan. I noticed that the kiirtan was turbocharged, electrifying the environment in the hall. Imagine the energy of four hundred highly charged voices melding into a single surging sound wave! It moved the earth. The devotional flow was so overwhelming that it was as if Baba were physically present. Many Margiis clearly felt His presence. They were swept by the powerful devotional flow. Most of them were crying uncontrollably, overcome

by devotion to the Guru. I was also affected by the contagious devotional energy, with tears streaming down my cheeks as I looked steadfastly at the urn bearing Baba's ashes and remembered Him.

Suddenly, something strange happened. Instead of the urn, I saw Baba smiling at me most compassionately. He was dressed in His usual attire, looking bewitchingly attractive. I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought that it was an optical illusion, but Baba's three-dimensional form continued to look at me. Beholding His precious physical form, I cried even more loudly, drawing the attention of the others around me. The vibration in the hall became supercharged by His unexpected physical presence. As my eyes were fixed on Him, Baba spoke to me and asked me whether I would have behaved in this disrespectful manner in His physical presence. "Am I not present in the form of My ashes?" He asked. His tone was taunting. He referred to the fact that, like the others, I too had been negligent in keeping my vow of performing a three-hour kiirtan.

I was speechless, numbed by the shock of His unexpected physical presence after His physical departure. I was not sure if I was the only one seeing Baba's physical form. I looked at the other Margiis and saw that most of them were in an abnormal state of mind, absorbed by an intense wave of bliss. Then, as suddenly as He had appeared, He disappeared from my sight after taunting me. At that very moment, I heard the sound of Guru puja being sung by someone, indicating the end of the meditation session. I joined the others in Guru puja.

I then spoke to the Margiis of my strange experience of seeing Baba's physical form a while ago and His taunting remarks to me for failing to honor my pledge of performing a three-hour kiirtan session. The Margiis were so moved by my experience that the Bhukti Pradhana

knelt down and begged for Baba's forgiveness for their insolence. The whole scene was as incredible as it was instructive.

I recalled that once Baba had asked His then Personal Assistant, Acarya Keshavananda Avadhuta, how he would feel when He was no longer present on earth. Acarya Keshavananda had replied that the Margiis would experience His presence more intensely.

The sixteenth-century poet-saint Tulsidas echoed a similar sentiment in his verse:

Only those persons realize Him to whom He
bestows His grace.

And the knower cannot remain separate from Him
after knowing Him.

Instantly, one identifies with Him.

The Valley of Flowers

Since childhood, I have been attracted to the Himalayas. I love the stark beauty, solitude, and purity of the mountains. I have also heard that the Himalayan mountain range has been home to great Yogis who have sanctified the place with their intense spiritual practices. At the same time, I feared the freezing climate of the Himalayas. Even in childhood, I suffered from frail health. I instinctively knew that despite the alluring beauty of the majestic mountain, I would not be able to tolerate the glacial temperature.

I recalled how Baba once sent me on an inspection tour of the Ananda Marga school in Joshimath, a Himalayan town located more than six thousand feet above sea level. Joshimath is the gateway

to many important pilgrimage sites. It was winter then. Despite my fear of the cold, I had no choice but to go there, as it was the Guru's instruction. After some initial difficulty in adjusting with the montane, winter climate, I was somehow able to tolerate it. Slowly, I lost my fear of the cold after the visit to Joshimath, a fear that had developed since childhood. Feeling braver, I then desired to go to Badrinath, the famed Himalayan pilgrimage town situated along the Alaknanda River. However, as it was in the midst of winter, the mountain path to Badrinath was closed. The road was impassable. I had to forsake my intention of going to Badrinath this time around. But the seed of my desire to go there remained latent.

After Baba left His physical body, my dormant desire to visit the Himalayas erupted like a volcano. I fervently desired to experience the sacred environment of the magnificent mountain and perform my spiritual practices there. I planned to go there with Acarya Cidghanananda Avadhuta and Acarya Kalyaneshvarananda Avadhuta. We applied to the General Secretary for approval of our tour program, which he graciously approved. We started the journey in August.

The journey to the Himalayas was arduous, snaking along winding mountain roads and steep valleys. Our journey began from Ananda Nagar. We made our way to Haridvar in the state of Uttarakhand, nestled in the foothills of the Himalayan range. From Haridvar, we took a bus to the Ananda Marga Thano Master Unit in Dehradun. The master unit was situated in an enchanting natural environment near a lush forest range. The natural scenery was so captivating that my meditation was effortless, and I easily dived deep into the still, blissful ocean in the depths of my mind. I lost track of time and place, soaring into the blissful regions of the mind, completely lost in the thought of the divine.

From Thanos we traveled to Rishikesh and then to Joshimath. After a night's rest at Joshimath, we went to Badrinath. The journey to Badrinath was tiresome and sometimes frightening. We crossed miles and miles of narrow, rugged mountain tracks, some parts so steep that a wrong maneuver could see us hurtling down thousands of feet below. The journey was as perilous as it was exciting.

Badrinath was as amazing as we had imagined it to be. It was heavenly, mind-bending. Located more than ten thousand feet above sea level, it was ringed by imposing, snowcapped, silver mountains that glittered in the sunlight. The whole environment was alight with surreal effulgence unlike anything I had seen before. Here, it seemed that heaven and earth had fused. No wonder a continuous stream of pilgrims make the arduous and dangerous journey to Badrinath and other Himalayan towns. If there were to be a heaven on earth, it must be here in the mighty Himalayas.

Our next Himalayan destination was Managaon, about ten kilometers from Badrinath, situated some 10,200 feet above sea level. Mana is the last village in the Indian border that separates India and Tibet. The great Yogi Maharishi Vyas is said to have composed the Brahmasutra in a cave in this picturesque place. We were unable to visit the cave of Maharishi Vyas due to security restrictions. We then found an appealing place to do our meditation. Meditation was effortless here. Sense withdrawal was automatic, and contemplation was a natural outcome of the serenity and purity of the environment.

From Badrinath we passed through Pandukeshar, a village in Joshimath. It was the meditation site of Pandu, the father of the Pandavas. From there, we passed through a small Himalayan village called Govindaghata and then to Hemkund, the meditation site of Guru Govinda Singh. From there we braved a sixteen-kilometer ride along steep mountain tracks on the back of a mountain pony. The

journey was as arduous as it was frightening. The gravel tracks were narrow, in some places just wide enough for the pony to cross. A false step would have seen the pony and the rider hurtling down the mountainside. But the pony was surefooted, well trained for the task.

After a six-hour ride, we reached the village of Ghangaria, where we had our lunch and took a breather. From Ghangaria, we took the track up to the valley, a distance of about five kilometers. When we finally reached the Valley of Flowers, the effects of bruised muscles and sheer exhaustion disappeared. A magical blaze of multicolored, aromatic alpine shrubs and wild flowers greeted us. Something about the flowers was special. They shone with an unusual glow when the sunlight danced on their waiting petals. And there was the enchanting fragrance of wild flowers all around. Really, it is not possible to describe the otherworldly beauty of the valley. One has to be there to experience it.

After spending some time in the exotic environment of the Valley of Flowers, we made our way back. It was a long, grueling journey back to Ananda Nagar.

Ideologies of a Bygone Era

Baba was emphatic about this: human needs cannot be served by capitalism or communism, and a new socioeconomic system is needed for human society to bloom to its full potential. He clarified that capitalism makes a person a beggar, while communism makes a beggar a brute. He propagated the Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) as an alternative to capitalism and communism.

An impartial assessment of the two economic systems makes it abundantly clear that neither one can serve human needs and aspirations due to their inherent defects. Market capitalism widens

wealth inequality in society, with some enjoying excessive wealth while most worry about eking out a living. In addition, the excessive consumption that capitalism encourages is a key factor in destroying the environment. The evidence for this exists both in the developed and developing countries. Capitalist economies are on the cusp of a colossal collapse that is likely to affect all countries in a globally connected world. There is mounting evidence of an approaching global economic winter.

Communism, on the other hand, has failed miserably as a suitable economic system for human progress. It is outmoded and terribly inefficient as an economic system and kills the incentive to work hard. More damaging perhaps, it dehumanizes the individual to become a production machine sheared of all human sensibilities.

I do not intend to discuss the strengths and defects of capitalism and communism. However, I wish to describe some personal experiences on the negative impact of communism on the human mind, based on invaluable insights gleaned from my tour of several Eastern European nations.

I will begin with my experience in Poland when I went there in 1999 to inspect our organizational activities in the countries of the Berlin sector. The then Sectorial Secretary of the Berlin sector, Acarya Artpremananda Avadhuta, and another worker, Acarya Arghyananda Avadhuta, accompanied me on the trip. We drove all the way from Berlin to Poland.

On the way, we stopped at a gas station to fill up the tank and to ease ourselves. My two companions went to the restroom while I waited in the car to look after our belongings. While waiting, three street peddlers selling woolen clothing came up to me to sell their wares. I politely declined, but they insisted that I buy

something. When I refused, they forcibly opened the door of the car and snatched the baggage. I was afraid that they would harm me. So I got out of the car and yelled at the top of my voice to catch the attention of the people nearby. That did not deter the peddlers at all. I then approached some people standing nearby for help. To my utter surprise, instead of coming to my aid, they mocked me. This emboldened the thieves, and they were about to escape with the loot. By then, the two acaryas had returned to the car. They came to my help and grabbed the thieves by their collars. In the scuffle, the thieves fell down. Seeing that an easy escape was impossible, the culprits quickly picked themselves up and scooted from the scene. This incident shows how matter-based communist values deprave the finer human sentiments.

The second incident took place in Romania in the same year. I went there to inspect two Ananda Marga children's homes. One day, I went to the market in the capital city, Bucharest. A worker posted to the region accompanied me. In one corner of the market, we saw a stall selling watermelon. The melons were neatly heaped on the floor. Romanian watermelons were famous for their exquisite taste and were exported all over Europe, so we walked over to the stall to buy some. There was a long queue of people waiting to buy the melons. As I waited, I saw an old woman casually stealing a few of the melons from the heap while the shopkeeper was busy attending to his customers. She stole the melons in full view of the others, without the slightest trace of guilt. What was even more hilarious was that this thieving grandmother was shamelessly smiling as she lifted the melons and put them in her bag. I couldn't believe my eyes. The other customers waiting in line were also smiling.

Looking at this strange sight, I drew the acarya's attention to the puzzling incident. He told me that such behavior was common here and tolerated by society. This was because communism had sheared

the mind of human traits. Morality is not a natural social norm in a communist society.

Another incident deserves mention. A five-acre plot of land, where fruits, flowers, and vegetables were grown, surrounded our children's home. One evening, I stood at the verandah enjoying the cool breeze, the magnificent sight of fruit-laden trees, and the intoxicating splash of color from rows of flowering plants. The enticing aroma of ripened fruit wafted in the air. What a healing environment it was! The next morning, there was a commotion among the children. Someone had stolen all the fruits, vegetables, and most of the flowers. The well-stocked garden had been reduced to a piece of barren land in the space of one night.

Theft is a common occurrence in communist countries. Part of the reason for this is that jobs are hard to come by and poverty is pervasive. People are forced to steal to feed their families. Besides being fundamentally flawed, a communist system does not have the necessary tools to develop the higher nature of a human being. This is because in communism a human being is considered an economic machine, a factor of production. Higher human sentiments like altruism, morality and spirituality do not figure at all in the communist ideology. This backward ideology has no place in the twenty-first century. It should be buried in the dustbin of history.

This point was emphasized by an incident that occurred at the Moscow Airport on my way home. While I was waiting at the airport to catch my plane, a bearded and turbaned Sikh man sat down next to me. We struck up a conversation. I learned that he had come to Moscow to meet his younger brother, who worked as an engineer. He himself was a leading advocate from the city of Patiala in Punjab, India. In the midst of our conversation, he explained how he had been a victim of theft in Moscow just a few days ago. As he

spoke, his face turned fiery red, and he flared up in rage, swearing loudly at the Russians. He said that the people had no morality and behaved like animals and that the country was lawless, ruled by thugs. He kept swearing at them and said that communism had turned the Russians into demons.

I was afraid that his abusive words would attract the attention of the people nearby, who might react violently. His words might even get us in trouble with the law. I tried my best to calm him down but to no avail. To my relief, he quieted down after some time.

This incident serves as a dramatic reminder of the fundamental defects of communism as an ideology, a system of governance, and a value system. It emphasizes the need for a new ideology that caters to the trifarious needs of human society—mundane, mental, and spiritual.

CHAPTER 13

IN REMEMBRANCE

This chapter is my personal recollection of those people, both renunciants and family people, who served untiringly to propagate the mission of Ananda Marga in their personal lives. As spiritual aspirants, they stand out as the epitome of service, sacrifice, and sadhana. Although they are no longer living, their ideal lives inspire us to this day. I take this opportunity to convey my deepest respects and *namaskar* to these great souls.

Missionary Workers

Acarya Parashivananda Avadhuta

I was highly impressed with Acarya Parashivananda Avadhuta from the day I met him. His simple, straightforward, and reserved personality left an indelible mark on my mind. Although he was an elevated soul, he did not have any trace of arrogance or self-importance and had a childlike innocence about him.

He was born in 1939 to an aristocratic family in Varanasi. He completed his master's degree in sociology and worked for a while at Usha Martin, where he rose to a senior position. Acarya Kedar

initiated him in 1964, and within only a month of his initiation, he expressed the desire to become a monk of Ananda Marga.

I became close to him when I served as the Diocese Secretary of Bangalore. He was posted in Kolar in the state of Karnataka, India. When he visited me, he narrated a strange experience he had had in Kolar. Baba had instructed him to open a kindergarten there, which he'd done after much effort. Shortly after, a thief came to the kindergarten on a regular basis and stole his meager belongings, including articles belonging to the school. The theft perturbed him greatly. He thus decided to take his own life to end his misery. Without telling anyone, he went from Kolar to the Bay of Bengal in Chennai and wanted to jump into the ocean. As he was about to jump, Baba suddenly appeared from nowhere and pulled him to safety. Baba had saved him from an untimely, watery end.

I slowly developed a close relationship with him. Over time, our acquaintance bloomed into a deep bond of friendship. Being close to him, I could see that he was indeed a great soul, one who lived by the dictum of simple living and high thinking. One could see his nobility and natural greatness quite easily. One characteristic that struck me the most was his resolve to curb his desires. Once, he visited me at Bangalore and told me that he wished to go to a restaurant for a meal of *dosa*, a savory South Indian pancake made of rice batter and black lentils. We went to the restaurant for the meal. After the meal, he revealed that he had come to Bangalore out of greed for *dosa*. He told me that greed was a hindrance in spiritual practice and that a spiritual aspirant should never allow himself to be a slave of his desires. There and then, he took an oath never to partake of salt again. Salt adds taste to food, and a diet without salt is the best remedy to curb greed. It is not easy for one to make such a drastic decision. I was amazed at the strength of his

conviction. Despite my attempts to get him to reverse his decision, he maintained it for the rest of his life.

Another similar incident deserves mention. I once fell sick in Bangalore. When he learned about it, he came to Bangalore and took me to Kolar for treatment. He took care of me in Kolar until I recovered fully. After I recovered from my illness, he prepared a sweet milky dish called *kshiira*. We gobbled up every bit of the tasty dish to our heart's content. Again, just after the meal, he told me that a Yogi should never be under the intoxicating spell of his desires. He pledged never to consume any sweet food again, a pledge he maintained for the rest of his life.

Indeed, Acarya Parashivananda Avadhuta was a giant among men. He used his body and mind entirely in service and spiritual practice. He never wasted a moment, spending his time in spiritual practices and performing his Kapalika meditation every night in the cremation grounds. He was known among us as an ardent Kapalika. He had many different kinds of spiritual realizations and experiences but preferred not to speak about them. He remains a beacon of light to all spiritual aspirants.

He passed away on June 29, 1984. On the day of his demise, Baba mentioned that He had honored His word to give Acarya Parashivananda Avadhuta the supreme goal of human life. Baba granted him salvation and freed him from the cycle of birth and death.

Acarya Shraddhananda Avadhuta

Acarya Shraddhananda Avadhuta was one of the several senior disciples of Baba. He was initiated by Baba in 1954. He was then a senior government officer attached to the Customs Department of

India. In 1964, he decided to renounce his family life and become a monk of Ananda Marga. Two years later in 1966, he was initiated as an avadhuta by Baba.

Acarya Shraddhananda was a devoted worker and served the mission wholeheartedly. He always had a smile on his face, even in the most trying of circumstances. He had a passion for literature. He was the author of several books such as *Mahavishva*, *Solah Vidhi*, *Shraddha Suman*, *Manimala*, and *Bhojapuri Vyakarana*. He served as the editor of *Ananda Yuga*, a widely circulated Ananda Marga magazine, until 1990.

He was also appointed as the Secretary of the Purodha Board, the highest decision-making body in Ananda Marga. After Baba's physical departure, Acarya Shraddhananda was elected to lead the organization as its *Purodha Pramukha*, a position he served in until his demise on October 15, 2008.

As a senior disciple of Baba, he had many kinds of spiritual realizations. He proved that old age was no barrier to spiritual realization of the highest order, including *Nirvikalpa samadhi*.

Acarya Samanvayananda Avadhuta

Formerly known as Acarya Shivananda Avadhuta, Acarya Samanvayananda Avadhuta was initiated in 1957 by Acarya Amulya Ratan Sarangi. Then a householder, he worked as a government officer in the office of Acarya Sarangi.

He became a renunciant of the mission in 1960, renouncing family life. He became an avadhuta in July 1962. He was the second avadhuta of Ananda Marga after Acarya Satyananda Avadhuta.

Acarya Samanvayananda Avadhuta used to perform long meditation, sometimes up to twenty hours a day without break. He made much progress in his spiritual practice. He also acquired many occult powers. It must be emphasized, however, that the attainment of occult powers is not a mark of spiritual progress; it is a side effect of spiritual practice. From time immemorial, spiritual masters have warned spiritual aspirants against the abuse of their hard-earned occult powers. Baba repeatedly stressed that spiritual aspirants must never hanker after occult powers and that the only goal of spiritual practice was to merge with the Supreme Consciousness. In many cases in the past, the abuse of occult powers was the direct cause of the downfall of spiritual aspirants.

During the twenty-one-month Emergency period in India from 1975–77, when the government cracked down on Ananda Marga and other organizations, Acarya Samanvayananda dissociated himself from Ananda Marga and founded his own spiritual organization known as Prema Marga in Dehradun at the foothills of the Himalayas. After some time, he realized his folly and disbanded his organization. He then returned to Ananda Marga as an acarya. Baba forgave him for his lapse of judgment.

Acarya Samanvayananda had a philosophical bent of mind. He collated his ideas in the book *Ananda Shatakam*, which means "Verses on Bliss." In the preface of the book, he explained how he went for Baba's audience in Bankipur Central Jail in 1972. On entering the cell, he prostrated and then stood before Baba. Pointing at him, Baba informed those present that Acarya Samanvayananda had composed several philosophical verses in Sanskrit and that no one else was aware of this except Acarya Samanvayananda and Baba. Acarya Samanvayananda also wrote a book on Tantra in two volumes called *Tantra Rahasyam*, including two other books,

Guru-Tattvam and one on the establishment of cooperatives for people-centered development.

He was a great devotee of Baba. He worked hard all his life for the growth of the mission. Baba selected him as the Marga Guru representative on two occasions to address the Dharma Maha Sammelan. I had the occasion to travel all over India with Acarya Samanvayananda to propagate the mission of Ananda Marga to the public.

He passed away on November 3, 2006, at the Bokaro Hospital, Bihar.

Acarya Sambuddhananda Avadhuta

Acarya Sambuddhananda Avadhuta was the third most senior avadhuta in Ananda Marga. All his life, he searched for a real guru to lead him on the spiritual path. By Baba's grace, Acarya Kedar initiated him into the spiritual practice of Ananda Marga in 1961.

One day, before he became a monk, Baba punished him for secretly eating *jalebi* and curd without first performing his spiritual practices. It is a rule that one should perform one's spiritual practice before meals.

In 1965, he was appointed Superintendent of the first Ananda Marga Children's Home in Patna. In 1966, he became the Central ERAWS Secretary.

He was a great devotee of Baba. In many ways, his devotion to Baba was unmatched. In serving his Guru, he did not bother to consider personal security and convenience. One notable illustration of his devotion to Baba occurred in 1967.

On the fateful day of March 5, 1967, when Baba was in Ananda Nagar, thousands of tribal villagers from the vicinity of Ananda Nagar stormed the Ananda Marga hermitage and mercilessly attacked its defenseless inmates. The Communists, who were trying to destroy Ananda Marga, instigated them to attack the hermitage. A few days prior to this incident, agents of the Communist Party had quietly spread the news among the villagers that Ananda Marga was anti-Hindu and had slaughtered several cows, which were sacred to the Hindus, and strewn the carcasses of the cows about in several villages. The diabolical strategy of the Communists succeeded in inflaming the simple-minded villagers to attack the hermitage. Despite the impossible odds, the inmates of the hermitage courageously defended the Guru against the attack and in the process sacrificed their lives. Five people died as martyrs that day and hundreds more were severely injured.

Baba remained in His quarters during the violent confrontation. He was calm and tranquil despite the bloody violence. It was as if He was the director of the drama and aware of every scene.

As the mob of unruly villagers advanced closer to Baba's quarters, Acarya Sambuddhananda rushed to Baba, held His feet, and begged Him to intervene to prevent the loss of more lives. Baba approved his appeal. He chanted a mantra while performing a special mudra. Baba's intervention had the desired effect. It restored a sense of calm in the violent mob. At that point, Acarya Sambuddhananda seized the opportunity and drove Baba away from the scene to Ranchi.

This day is celebrated annually in Ananda Marga as Dadhiici Divas in commemoration of the five great souls who laid down their lives to protect the sanctity of Guru and Ananda Marga ideology.

Acarya Sambuddhananda spent his final days in Brazil. He constructed a jagrti in Petropolis near Rio de Janeiro, from where he conducted intensive propagation and social service programs. He died on July 2002 in Petropolis, Brazil.

Acarya Pranavananda Avadhuta

Acarya Pranavananda Avadhuta was the fourth avadhuta initiated in the Ananda Marga order of monks. Acarya Chandra Dev Verma initiated him in Allahabad in 1961. The following year, he took to the life of a renunciant.

He worked hard all his life to please the Guru. He was both a good devotee and a very competent person. He played a leading role in the organization. He became the Central Office Secretary in 1967 and held the post for eighteen years. Baba once remarked, "Pranavananda has tremendous capacity and capability." Pranavananda also suffered much at the hands of the police and the Central Bureau of Intelligence of India during the dark days of the Emergency period. He was a courageous soul who struggled hard against the immoral forces to protect the sanctity of the Guru and Ananda Marga ideology.

Acarya Pranavananda was credited with the construction of the Tiljala central office and several buildings in Tiljala. He was directly involved in bringing the supply of electricity to Ananda Nagar.

In his final days, he was engaged in developing the Ananda Marga unit in Kullu, in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

He died on February 7, 2010, in Chandigarh, India.

Acarya Vijayananda Avadhuta

Acarya Vijayananda was initiated in 1961 by Acarya Shacinandan Mandal. The following year, he took the vows of a renunciant and became an avadhuta of Ananda Marga.

He was a very learned person and an erudite scholar. He had a scintillating intellect and a photographic memory. He led the Publications Department of Ananda Marga, which was responsible for the publication of Ananda Marga literature. It is not farfetched to say that Acarya Vijayananda and the publication of Ananda Marga literature are synonymous.

Baba also taught him the science of physiognomy, that is, the assessment of a person's character or personality from his external appearance. Baba gave him the opportunity of deepening his knowledge in this science during Dharma Samiiksa, when he was asked to note the detailed physical features of devotees undergoing the process of Dharma Samiiksa and then provide an assessment of their character.

He was also selected as the Marga Guru representative for a Dharma Maha Sammela program.

He died in July 2002.

Acarya Cidananda Avadhuta

Acarya Cidananda Avadhuta was initiated by Acarya Vishvamohan in 1958. At that time, he worked as the manager of a company. After some time, he decided to become a missionary worker and later became an avadhuta in 1965. Since then, he worked hard to propagate the mission both in and outside India.

Owing to his disciplined lifestyle and dedication, he was made a trainer of monks. He took up the position of Trainer at the Ananda Marga Training Center in Davao, Philippines, where he trained more than six hundred monks and nuns. He is also credited with establishing the Baba Foundation, an NGO aimed at developing the underdeveloped islands of the Philippines. The foundation manages several social service projects for the poor and deprived people of the Philippines.

He wrote his memoirs in *Unforgettable Memories*. Acarya Cidananda Avadhuta was loved by the people because of his deep spirituality, profound sensitivity for the suffering of the poor and deprived, his ability to sacrifice his comforts for the welfare of others, and for his all-embracing love that extended to the animal and plant kingdoms.

He died on April 19, 2008.

Acarya Cidghanananda Avadhuta

Acarya Cidghanananda Avadhuta, who was initiated by Acarya Lalan, decided to become a monk in 1961. He spent most of his missionary life in the service of the people of Rarh, Bengal. He taught the English language at the Ananda Nagar high school and college.

Acarya Cidghanananda was victimized by the Communists in Bengal and suffered tremendously at their hands. He was also jailed several times on concocted charges.

He was a great devotee and scholar of Ananda Marga philosophy. He passed away on October 17, 2006.

Acarya Amitananda Avadhuta

Acarya Amulya Ratan Sarangi initiated Acarya Amitananda Avadhuta in 1960, when Amitananda was an engineering student. After graduation, Amitananda worked for a while as an electrical engineer at Hindustan Motors in Kolkata. He became a monk in 1963.

He came from a well-endowed family. His father was the Sales Tax Commissioner in Bihar State. When Amitananda decided to become a missionary worker, his family members tried hard to dissuade him but failed.

His first posting as a missionary worker was at the Ananda Marga Institute of Technology in Ananda Nagar. He was also the founding editor of the spiritual magazine *Bodhikalpa*. Once, at the annual Dharma Maha Cakra at Patna, Baba declared him as the best *tattvika* in the organization.

He had a powerful personality, with a sharp and probing mind. His appetite for work was phenomenal. Being a strict disciplinarian, the people in and around Ananda Nagar adored him. They nicknamed him the Tiger of Ananda Nagar.

After some time, he became Rector Master of Ananda Nagar. Much of the redevelopment of Ananda Nagar after the Emergency period took place under his leadership.

In 1975, he represented Baba as the Marga Guru representative on the occasion of Dharma Maha Sammelan in Kanpur.

He passed away in 1982. Immediately after his demise, Baba visited Ananda Nagar and remarked that He missed Amitananda. He enjoyed a close relationship with Baba.

Acarya Asiimananda Avadhuta

Acarya Asiimananda Avadhuta was initiated in 1963 while he was a student at the agriculture university in Kanpur. He became a missionary worker in the same year.

His first posting was in Hyderabad. Among those he initiated and inspired to adopt a spiritual life were Ram Chandra Reddy and Acarya Bhaveshananda Avadhuta.

He served in several portfolios in the central office of the organization, including the education, agriculture, and finance portfolios. Owing to his extensive knowledge in the field of agriculture, he was appointed as the Agriculture Secretary of Ananda Marga and was responsible for the implementation of Baba's garden program. Baba initiated this unique program in 1980. Under the program, missionary workers all over the globe were required to bring at least four hundred varieties of plants for Baba's garden every month. Acarya Asiimananda catalogued the plants. As Ananda Marga's leading agricultural scientist, he spent several hours a day with Baba noting Baba's comments on the plants, including their countries of origin; their behaviors; their special properties; their scientific, Sanskrit, and common English names; and so on. These notes provide rare gems of information for future agricultural research.

Through the garden program, Baba transformed His residence in Kolkata into a delightful botanical garden, with many varieties of common and rare species of plants, vines, and so on. Through the program, Baba encouraged agriculturists to conduct further research in agriculture, particularly in seed production, crop breeding, intercropping, tissue culture, acclimation of foreign crops, biofertilizers, and so on.

Acarya Asiimananda was a gem of a monk. He was endowed with many admirable qualities. What marked him as a model worker was his selflessness.

He was brutally murdered by the Communist terrorists on April 2, 1990, in the Chatka Village of Ananda Nagar, West Bengal, after returning from an inspection tour of our Dimdiha farm unit. On the loss of this model worker, Baba remarked, "Asiimananda was a great agricultural scientist. It is a great loss to the world. He is irreplaceable."

Acarya Tadbhavananda Avadhuta

Acarya Parasnath initiated Acarya Tadbhavananda Avadhuta in 1965. Acarya Tadbhavananda had a brilliant mind. At the same time, he was deeply affected by people's suffering, so he used his probing intellect to look for ways to end people's suffering. He was disturbed that, despite much progress, people suffered under the yoke of defective economic, political, and social systems as well as cultural tyranny. In Baba and His ideas, he found the answers to his many questions on life, spirituality, and solutions to humanity's problems. He was particularly attracted to Baba's Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT). He subsequently decided to dedicate his life as a renunciant and missionary worker of Ananda Marga.

Acarya Tadbhavananda is fondly remembered for his contributions to the establishment of PROUT in many countries. He established the global headquarters of Proutist Universal in Copenhagen, Denmark. He also established PROUT offices in several states in India.

He authored several books on PROUT including *Samaj: A New Dimension in Politics*, *Ananda Marga: A Way of Life*, *Shraddhainjali*,

and *The Fall of Materialistic Theories and the Rise of Progressive Socialism*.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in India arrested him on false charges and imprisoned him in Kolkata. The unsalutary conditions in prison took a toll on his health. He finally succumbed to his illness and died on November 20, 2007.

Acarya Kiirtyananda Avadhuta

Acarya Shiveshvarananda Avadhuta initiated Acarya Kiirtyananda Avadhuta in 1964. Two years after his initiation, Kiirtyananda became a monk of Ananda Marga.

He had a consuming interest in history and archaeology. With Baba's inspiration, he dedicated his missionary life to rediscovering the history of the ancient Rarh civilization. He spent most of his time looking for ancient relics and artifacts of the Rarh civilization. Baba once stated that in its time, about fifteen thousand years ago, Rarh was the most advanced civilization on earth. He said that today, however, they were backward and poverty-ridden. Baba desired that the glory of the ancient Rarh civilization should be acknowledged and reestablished.

Acarya Kiirtyananda accompanied Baba in His historical tours within and around Ananda Nagar. Baba taught him the proper methods of archaeological investigation, research, and documentation. The newfound knowledge helped him to discover many artifacts of ancient Rarh, including lost relics of the Jain religion. For the interest of readers, the Jain religion had several teachers, the first of whom was Rishabha. Vardhamana Mahaviira is considered as the last of the great teachers of Jainism. He lived in the fifth century BC and was a contemporary of Gautama Buddha.

Acarya Kiirtyananda also organized a festival in commemoration of the sage Maharishi Kapil, the original proponent of the Samkhya philosophy. He convened the festival at Jhalida, West Bengal, the birthplace of the great sage. Maharishi Kapil lived in the sixth or seventh century BC. The festival has since then been organized regularly at Maharishi Kapil's cave near Jhalida.

Acarya Kiirtyananda was the editor of *Ananda Rekha*. His research work on Rarh was published as *Raktmrttika'ra Rarh*, which was published in several volumes. He also published his memoirs on his relationship with Baba.

He passed away in 2006.

Acarya Arteshananda Avadhuta

Acarya Arteshananda Avadhuta became a missionary worker in 1963. His first posting as an acarya was in Rewa, Madhya Pradesh, where he did excellent work.

He was one of the several missionary workers who were arrested on trumped-up charges by the Central Bureau of Investigation and subjected to torture. The police released him after failing to find evidence proving his alleged wrongdoings.

After his release from prison, he dedicated himself to implementing social service projects in New Delhi. Among others, he was responsible for the construction of the Vinod Nagar jagrti and the Gadaipur Marga Guru quarters.

He died in 2004.

Acarya Devashrddhananda Avadhuta

Acarya Devashrddhananda Avadhuta became a missionary worker in 1966. He was a person of quiet inner strength.

He worked in the New York sector as the Sectorial Secretary and in other positions as well where he made significant contributions to propagate the mission of Ananda Marga. He was a kindly soul in nature and took special care of the workers subjected to pressure when the organization was being persecuted.

He died on November 24, 2008.

Acarya Abhipremananda Avadhuta

Acarya Abhipremananda Avadhuta became a monk of Ananda Marga in 1971 at twenty years old. In fact, he was active as a social worker much earlier. I met him in the Purulia jail when he was only sixteen. He had been imprisoned for participating in a protest march against Communist rule in lands belonging to Ananda Marga.

His first posting was as the Diocese Secretary of Akola in the state of Maharashtra in central India. He served the organization as a central worker for many years. He was also posted overseas.

He always had a smiling face, even under pressure of work. He died on September 18, 2003.

Acarya Rudreshvarananda Avadhuta

Acarya Savitananda Avadhuta initiated Acarya Rudreshvarananda Avadhuta in 1975. A year after, Rudreshvarananda become a local

full-timer of Ananda Marga. Shortly after, he decided to renounce his life and become a missionary worker of Ananda Marga.

He spent most of his missionary life in the service of African nations. He toured forty African nations to propagate the ideals of Ananda Marga. He inspired many people to adopt a spiritual lifestyle and trained several local full-timers from Africa. Many of his initiates later became missionary workers.

His developmental contributions to enhance the quality of life of the African people have been widely acknowledged. Among other things, he helped in uplifting the standard of many village communities. He constructed rural roads to enhance connectivity, installed potable water supply systems in several villages, established cooperatives, health centers, Yoga houses, and safe maternity homes in several African countries. He also trained the village women to become nurses.

He was like a human dynamo, always working, serving selflessly. The word *rest* was not in his vocabulary. He served the downtrodden in Africa selflessly. For all his contributions to the African peoples, one could safely say that he was one of the unsung heroes in Africa.

He died in 2005.

Acarya Nigamananda Avadhuta

Acarya Nigamananda Avadhuta was initiated by Acarya Pashupati in 1964. Two years later, in 1966, he became a monk of Ananda Marga.

He was an efficient and hardworking missionary worker who never rested until he had satisfactorily completed the task given to him.

This constructive attitude helped him to accomplish a great deal of work for the mission. He was both a Karma Yogi and a devotee.

Acarya Nigamananda was the Trainer at the Varanasi Full-timer Training Center for many years. He trained many monks and nuns of Ananda Marga. One of his notable qualities was his paternal affection for other workers. He also held various important positions at the central office.

He passed away on May 25, 2011. His body was brought to Ananda Nagar for cremation. A huge gathering of Margiis and workers was present at the cremation.

Acarya Dhruvananda Avadhuta

Acarya Dhruvananda Avadhuta became a monk of Ananda Marga in 1963. He was a very dedicated worker who put missionary work above everything else. Despite suffering from ill health, he accomplished a great deal of work for the mission. His most notable characteristics were his simplicity, morality, and devotion.

For several years, he was the Diocese Secretary in Jamalpur, Baba's birthplace. In 1979, he became the Trainer at the Sweden Training Center. He was responsible for collecting funds to construct the main building of the training center. In 1998, he was transferred to the central office. Two years later, in 2000, he became the General Secretary of Ananda Marga. He was also elected to the Purodha Board, the highest decision-making body in Ananda Marga.

Acarya Dhruvananda was the author of *Baba Loves All*, an inspiring recollection of his experiences with Baba. He passed away on May 16, 2012, in Ranchi.

Acarya Rameshananda Avadhuta

Acarya Rameshananda Avadhuta from the Philippines was a devoted missionary worker, a neo-humanist, a nature lover, and an artist. He saw the world as a living organism, where everything was interconnected and where the world was part of the larger universe and the universe an integral part of the Supreme Consciousness.

He became a missionary worker in 1984. Before that, he worked for a long time as a local full-timer in Los Bonos, Philippines.

He was a gentle soul, a humble person who shunned the limelight. He worked quietly with a steady hand, a clear eye, and a focused mind. He was an active worker with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Plants (PCAP International), an Ananda Marga initiative that promoted ecological issues. His paintings reflected his ideas of neo-humanism.

Apart from his ecological and artistic work, he established several schools for the poor. He died on April 20, 2010.

Acarya Vratadhiirananda Avadhuta

Acarya Vratadhiirananda Avadhuta from the Philippines was trained as a monk of Ananda Marga in 1970 at the Davao Training Center.

His first posting was in Brazil, where he worked as a missionary worker until 1998. Subsequently, he went to Kenya, where he did commendable work. He was a good worker, at once an intellectual, an artist, and a poet.

He passed away on July 2, 2008.

Acarya Aksharananda Avadhuta

Acarya Aksharananda Avadhuta was initiated by Acarya Pasupati in 1964. He was then a college student. He became a missionary worker in 1966.

As a missionary worker, Acarya Aksharananda had an illustrious organizational history. He served in several capacities, including in senior organizational positions, such as Sectorial Secretary. He worked in the Delhi sector as well as in Africa.

His illustrious missionary work was not without costs, though. In 2008, he was shot in a robbery attempt in Nairobi, Kenya. After recuperating in India from the gunshot wounds, he returned to resume his organizational duties. He also suffered from cerebral malaria in Africa. In his case, it was fatal. He died in Arusha, Tanzania, on September 20, 2012.

Acarya Vibhasananda Avadhuta

Acarya Vibhasananda was a very dedicated missionary worker, focusing his energies on developing the education sector, in which he spent a good 35 years. In 2007, he was posted to Simdega in Jharkhand state, where he took charge as Principal of the Ananda Marga School.

He had a likeable personality, always smiling and straightforward. He was highly regarded by the Margii and local communities where he served.

He died in October 30, 2011.

Acarya Divyeshwarananda Avadhuta

Acarya Divyeshwarananda Avadhuta was initiated by Acarya Kstish Chandra in 1964. He became a missionary worker in 1967.

He was a dynamic and devoted worker. He was first posted to an Ananda Marga School in Ranchi. Subsequently, he was posted to Gumla in Jharkhand. As a missionary worker, he served in many other capacities. His final posting was in Finland in the Berlin sector as Sectorial Secretary of Sevald, a wing of Ananda Marga responsible for training young men and women as local full-time workers.

He died on April 4, 2012.

Acarya Asheshananda Avadhuta

Acarya Asheshananda Avadhuta was initiated in September 17, 1963, by Acarya Narendra. He was then holding a responsible position as an employee of the government in Chhattisgarh. Shortly after, on January 18, 1964, he became an acarya after a training stint at Ananda Nagar.

He was first posted in Raipur, Rajasthan. He was then posted to Punjab, South India, and Maharashtra, respectively. In 1964, he worked in the Cairo sector, after which he was posted to the Manila sector. He worked in Thailand for several years, where he did commendable work focusing on education.

Acarya Asheshananda was a hardworking and dedicated missionary worker with a great sense of humor. He served the mission for forty-eight years. He passed away on September 2, 2012.

Acarya Pranakrsnananda Avadhuta

Acarya Pranakrsnananda Avadhuta was born in 1943 in Chicago, United States. After completing high school, he briefly worked with a group of Catholic workers before returning to university, where he studied theatrical performance. He later graduated in Gestalt psychology at a university in Australia.

Those who knew him remember his humorous, kindly, and instructive personality. He believed in a world without borders, in a world where every human being lived a decent life, in a world where everyone was part of a larger family, and in a world where spirituality was the central feature.

Before becoming a monk, he worked as an English teacher. In 1971, at the age of twenty-eight, he went to Varanasi, India, to be trained as an acarya of Ananda Marga. He qualified as a monk in early 1972, adopting the name Acarya Pinakpani Brahmacari.

His first missionary assignment was in Bangkok, Thailand. After three years, he was posted to Maharlika (the Philippines) and later to Malaysia, where he worked for a long time. In 1985, he became an avadhuta of Ananda Marga, taking the name Acarya Pranakrsnananda Avadhuta. The Margiis of Malaysia still remember him with great affection.

Acarya Pranakrsnananda Avadhuta was an excellent worker with an infectious personality. He was very convincing. He had the uncommon quality of using humor to put people at ease. He initiated scores of people in Asia, where he worked for over thirty years. As a missionary worker, he worked in thirty-one countries for over forty years. He later worked in Europe and Australia, serving many people and bringing messages of hope to those afflicted by

physical and emotional pressures. In 2009, he moved to New York City in the United States.

Perhaps no image captures Acarya Pranakrsnananda's dramatic personality and social vision more than his involvement in the Occupy Wall Street protest together with more than seven hundred other protesters. On October 1, 2011, he was the first protester to be arrested by the police as he sat in deep contemplation before a large crowd at the Brooklyn Bridge. Over his flowing ochre robes, he wore a shirt that read, "People who profit from the sufferings of others are immoral." He practiced what he preached.

He passed away on November 18, 2012.

Avadhutika Ananda Bharati Acarya

Avadhutika Ananda Bharati was the first female renunciant acarya or nun of Ananda Marga. She became a renunciant in 1966.

She had a fascinating background. She was born to an aristocratic, noble family in Allahabad. Since birth, she wallowed in the lap of luxury, living a life of wealth and leisure. Following upper-class Indian tradition, she patronized the fine arts, particularly music and painting.

One trait, however, differentiated her from other girls from noble families. Since childhood, she had a deep, consuming interest in spirituality. She had the privilege of meeting several holy men and great Yogis, among whom the most notable were Ramana Maharshi and Swami Ramdas. The sage Ramana Maharshi was one of the most famous South Indian saints from the state of Tamil Nadu. He had left home for a life of asceticism at the tender age of sixteen. He was a great saint. Swami Ramdas from the South Indian state of

Kerala was a disciple of the sage Ramana Maharshi. He was also a well-known Indian saint and philosopher.

Before becoming an Ananda Margii, Avadhutika Ananda Bharati was a disciple of the sage Ramana Maharshi and lived in his hermitage in Arunachala in Tamil Nadu for several years. The sage guided her in the methods of self-inquiry and meditation. While receiving his direct guidance, she felt that she must continue her search for her guru.

One day, by chance, she came across Ananda Marga. She learned something about Ananda Marga's spiritual practices and about Baba from the acarya who spoke at a gathering. That meeting struck a special chord in her heart. She wanted to learn and practice the spiritual practices of Ananda Marga. She did not say anything to the acarya and went back to the hermitage after the forum.

She deeply thought about the information she had gleaned from the meeting. Her desire to learn Ananda Marga's spiritual practices grew intensely in the days that followed. There was a nagging doubt that troubled her, however. Despite her deep interest in Ananda Marga, she was hesitant to follow her heart's desire because she considered the sage Ramana Maharshi to be her guru. She wondered if it would be proper to learn the spiritual practices of Ananda Marga while she was a disciple of the great sage. This tortured state of mind tormented her for several days.

One day, she had a vivid dream. In the dream, she saw a young monk with a glowing countenance immaculately dressed in the gleaming white attire of dhoti and kurta. The sage Ramana Maharshi was standing beside the monk. Then the sage indicated to her that she should touch the feet of the young monk. In the Indian tradition, touching the feet of a person was a mark of respect. As she bowed

to touch his feet, she heard a divine voice say that the Supreme Consciousness had graced her.

Sometime later, she attended an Ananda Marga function in Jaipur. As she entered the hall, she was shocked to see the same young monk in the same attire as in her dream. The monk was Acarya Krishn Murari Brahmachari, who was then posted in the PROUT department in Rajasthan. He later became Acarya Ramkrishnananda Avadhuta. She realized that her dream was a premonition of sorts. Without wasting a moment, she asked Acarya Krishn for initiation.

She realized that her initiation into the spiritual practices of Ananda Marga was divinely ordained. Since then, the only desire in her mind was to see that every human being on earth was conferred the divine blessing of initiation. She played her part by getting many of her high-society contacts in Mumbai initiated into Ananda Marga's spiritual practices.

Within a few months of her initiation, the desire to renounce the world arose in her mind. She expressed her desire to Baba and secured His approval to become a nun of the Ananda Marga order of renunciants. Eventually, when the Women's Welfare Department of Ananda Marga was established, Baba appointed her as its first head. She did admirable work in her new role and enjoyed Baba's blessings. Everything she did was crowned with success. Baba acknowledged her good work by calling her personally to convey His instructions and offering a chair to her whenever she came for His audience.

In her old age, she became almost invalid, unable to walk. Baba told her that her only duty now was to wipe the tears from the faces of the suffering and distressed human beings who came into her contact. Such was the blessing that whoever came to meet her returned greatly inspired.

Baba once said that she was a remarkable person, that while she was steeped in a life of luxury, she had the rare determination to renounce the good life and adopt the austere life of a nun. She passed away on January 15, 1990.

Even today, when she is no longer with us, her personal room has a special vibration that elevates any spiritual aspirant who is there.

Householder Acaryas

Acarya Chandranath

Acarya Chandranath was a towering *grihi* acarya. As a young man he sought a guru to initiate him into spiritual practice. An elevated saint in his village once told him that he would be initiated at the right time.

When the opportune moment came, Baba initiated him into the practice of Tantra Yoga in 1953. Acarya Chandranath practiced it with sincere dedication. Over time, he mastered many difficult spiritual systems like Vishesh yoga and achieved various kinds of deep mystical realizations, including *Nirvikalpa* samadhi. Many senior practitioners of the higher Yogic systems consulted him for deeper insights into their practices and experiences.

Once, Baba extracted a promise from him to spend at least one and a half hours per sitting in his spiritual practices twice daily. He kept his pledge throughout his life.

Acarya Chandranath was a strict disciplinarian in his personal life. He was a stalwart of the mission who was able to balance his life as a householder and as a missionary. He was an ideal disciple of Baba. He commanded the respect of both Margiis and workers from

all over the world for his simplicity, humility, and deep spiritual realizations.

Acarya Chandranath was elected as a member of the Ananda Marga Central Committee, where he provided invaluable suggestions to propagate the mission and ideology of Ananda Marga. He passed away on March 24, 2007.

Acarya Nagina

Acarya Nagina was another of those early great souls who helped to lay the foundations of the mission. He too was a householder acarya of Ananda Marga.

He was born on February 15, 1918, and was initiated by Baba on November 3, 1953, at the age of thirty-five. He was then working as a senior government officer in the Customs Department. His strict adherence to morality earned him the respect of his colleagues and the community.

Acarya Nagina was a man of sterling qualities. He was a strict moralist and an ardent spiritualist who was totally dedicated to the Guru. He never hesitated to question Baba whenever a question arose in his mind, and Baba always responded to his queries in a loving manner that satisfied him completely. He always relied on Baba for both spiritual and mundane matters after discovering that Baba provided perfect solutions to both mundane and spiritual problems.

Acarya Nagina was the author of *Ananda Katha*, an invaluable guide for spiritual aspirants. It described rare, closeup accounts of Baba in His early days. Acarya Chandranath once opined that he

was perhaps the greatest among devotees in modern times. Baba too characterized him as a largehearted man and a true lover of justice.

He passed away on May 11, 1998.

Acarya Rampari Devi

Acarya Rampari Devi was the wife of Acarya Chandranath. She was born in the village of Bela Mohanpur in the Gaya District of Bihar in September 1918.

Baba initiated her in 1954 in Jamalpur. She was perhaps the first female disciple of Baba and the first female acarya of Ananda Marga. When she became an acarya, she asked Baba how she would initiate people, as she was illiterate. Baba replied that literacy was not a necessary qualification on the spiritual path and that many highly literate persons would come to her for initiation and spiritual guidance.

When she first met Baba with Acarya Chandranath, she followed her husband in performing *sastaunga pranama* to Baba, that is, prostrations to the Guru. Baba then taught her the correct process of *sastaunga pranama*. She was the first female devotee to have learned the process of *Guru pranam*.

Acarya Narendra Deva

Acarya Narendra Deva was my acarya, the one who initiated me into the path of spirituality in 1961. He was a *grihi* acarya, an acarya who was a householder.

I remember him as a multifaceted, towering personality, at once a revolutionary, a freedom fighter, a social activist, a writer and

journalist, a sportsman, a teacher, and a spiritual aspirant par excellence. I offer my heartfelt homage and petals of my love to him for guiding me on the spiritual path in my formative years.

Acarya Narendra was born in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, on September 14, 1923. He was initiated into spiritual practice by Acarya Haridutta Pant in 1959. A year later, Baba made him an acarya of Ananda Marga. In the space of twenty years, he inspired more than ten thousand people and initiated them into the spiritual path, out of which fifty became renunciant missionary workers.

Such was his revolutionary zeal and devotion to his Guru that in 1967 he left his teaching job and immersed himself entirely in the establishment of the Chhattisgarhi Samaj, a social movement to develop the Chhattisgarhi community on all fronts. He was the leading light of the movement. In fact, he led the movement from May 16, 1965, when he worked as a teacher in a government school. He was also founding editor of a local magazine called *Chhattisgarhi Sevaka*, which ran from 1964 to 1984.

In the same year, a great famine broke out in several Indian states, including Chhattisgarh in central India. Acarya Narendra took charge of the relief operations of Ananda Marga in the state and, with the cooperation of the Margiis, opened food distribution centers and free kitchens in the most downtrodden areas.

In 1968, not caring for his personal safety, he led a protest movement against the Communist government to free the Painca Dadhichi Hill in Ananda Nagar from the evil clutches of the Communists. Five missionary workers of Ananda Marga were brutally murdered at the hill on March 5, 1967. The Communist Party of India then ruled the state of West Bengal with an iron fist, perpetrating a wave of fear, violence, and bloodshed, the stuff of gutter politics

condemned by civilized society. What was remarkable was that he defeated the Communist government against all odds, with almost nothing but lion courage, good strategy, and total faith in his Guru. From Bokaro, Acarya Narendra sent five Margiis daily to Painca Dadhichi Hill as a sign of protest against the government's illegal occupation of the hill. This went on daily for a period of one year. The peaceful protests weakened the government's resolve to occupy the hill, and after a year, they quit the hill. We then regained possession of the hill and built five monuments in commemoration of the five missionaries who had laid down their lives.

Acarya Narendra led scores of public protest marches, protest fasts and hunger strikes, and other forms of nonviolent movements against the authorities. The tribal population of the Chhattisgarhi community was among the most poverty-ridden communities in India, with dismal levels of literacy. His main intention was to bring the social and economic plight of the community to the notice of the authorities, who had been doing nothing to alleviate poverty and ignorance among the people. All in all, he struggled for thirty-six years in the upliftment of the community. His heroic efforts culminated in the victorious march to the Indian Parliament on July 24, 2000. Thereafter, the new state of Chhattisgarh was born.

Baba appointed him as the Marga Guru representative for the Ananda Purnima Dharma Maha Sammelan in Varanasi in 1977.

This great man passed away on December 19, 2009. His body may be one with the earth, but the light of his courage and revolutionary spirit continues to inspire thousands to this day.

Acarya Ahilya

Acarya Ahilya was the wife of the well-known Margii Acarya Ram Tanuk, who handled Baba's legal cases. She was a fine example of a great devotee. Despite suffering bouts of misfortune, her love for Baba never wavered. In fact, she deepened her spiritual practice every time misfortune struck its cruel blows. Lesser mortals would have wilted under such circumstances.

In 1965 she attended the Dharma Maha Cakra in Patna. She went to the Ganges to take her bath, together with her children and other Margiis. As she was bathing, her son, Ashok, disappeared in the river. His body was never found. He was presumed to have drowned. Although deeply saddened by the tragedy, she did not let it sway her dedication to spiritual practice. On the contrary, she deepened her intuitional practices.

After some time, she had another son, Ananda. Ananda grew up to be a fine young man. He subsequently got married. He had two young and beautiful children. One day, Ananda met with a tragic accident and died. His death was a second major blow to Acarya Ahilya. Despite the pain she suffered, her faith in her Guru never wavered for an instant. Such a woman of steel she was!

On another occasion, her husband, Acarya Ram Tanuk, came home in a dejected state one day. He explained that he could not raise sufficient funds for Baba's case that was to be heard in court the next morning. Without second thought, she went into the bedroom and handed Ram Tanuk her gold ornaments and jewelry to pay for Baba's case.

This remarkable lady passed away on April 9, 2014.

Acarya Hari Shankar

Acarya Hari Shankar was a devotee par excellence. Although he was a householder acarya, he worked more like a renunciant missionary worker, sacrificing his time for the mission. He did a lot to propagate Ananda Marga in the surrounding villages of Ranchi, India.

He was initiated by Acarya Kapileshvara. He was staunch in his spiritual practices and ensured that his children were married in accordance with Ananda Marga's marriage system. The revolutionary marriage system advocated by Ananda Marga aims to build a united human society based on spiritual ideals by awakening a new sense of social responsibility in society and by rejecting man-made differences of class, wealth, social status, and so on. The system thus rejects the dowry system and caste biases that are common in India. In Ananda Marga, a marriage with any of the following characteristics would be considered revolutionary—intercaste marriages, interracial marriages, interreligious marriages, intertribal marriages, international marriages, widow remarriages, marriage with a lady forsaken by her husband, and marriage with a shelterless woman. Acarya Hari Shankar was appointed as the Secretary of Ananda Marga's Marriage Bureau.

Baba stayed at his house in Ranchi for a few days following the deadly March 5, 1967, incident in Ananda Nagar. Acarya Harishankar had on three occasions met with potentially fatal accidents while riding his motorcycle. He was miraculously saved each time, however. On all three occasions, Baba visited him at the hospital.

He died in August 1999.

Acarya Devakinandan (Basti)

Acarya Raghunath initiated Acarya Devakinandan from Basti, Uttar Pradesh, in 1960. He became a householder acarya of Ananda Marga in 1962.

He worked as an officer in the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission. He initiated hundreds of people in Gorakhpur, Devaria, and Azamgarh. He was elected as the Bhukti Pradhana of Gorakhpur and Azamgarh.

Baba once said that Acarya Devakinandan was a great devotee. Before Baba left His physical body, He called the Margiis from all over the world for an audience. Of course, at that time, nobody realized that Baba would be leaving His body shortly. Fortunately, Acarya Devakinandan made it a point to have Baba's audience then.

Acarya Devakinandan passed away on July 2, 2009.

Acarya Devakinandan (Muzaffapur)

Acarya Devakinandan of Arah, Bihar, was one of the leading acaryas of Ananda Marga. He was initiated in 1961 and became a householder acarya in 1963. He was initiated by Acarya Shyamnandan Lal Das.

He worked as a police officer in Bihar. Despite the pounding pressure of work and family responsibilities, he demonstrated steely determination to lead an ideal life as an acarya of Ananda Marga. He was a great devotee of Baba and sacrificed a lot for the Mission. His relationship with the Marga Guru could be described as *sakhavata*, as a close friend.

He also had a poetic bent of mind. One day, he wrote Baba a letter in the form of a poem. Baba responded to his letter with some practical advice, which he followed religiously.

Once, on a Field Walk in Ananda Nagar, Baba mentioned that Devaki had become *devata*, a spiritual being, meaning that he had attained a high level of spiritual realization.

Devaki built the first children's home in Patna. He also helped to construct the jagrti in Arah and the Degree College in Ananda Nagar. From the day he became a householder acarya, he tried his best to lead an ideal life of a spiritual aspirant. He initiated thousands of people on the path of spirituality. His large family of eighty people, comprising his children and grandchildren, are dedicated Margiis. His wife, Acarya Janak Kishori, who is ninety-four years old, continues to live an ideal life of a spiritual aspirant.

He passed away in 1976 on Ekadashi while he was performing kiirtan during *paincajanya*. Ananda Margiis and Yogis of all orders observe fast on Ekadashi. He was a rare soul indeed.

Acarya Keshava Prasad

Acarya Keshava Prasad was initiated by Acarya Raghunath in 1961. He was a good devotee. Baba blessed his family by staying with them on five occasions.

A Dharma Maha Cakra was once conducted in the courtyard of Acarya Keshava's house.

He passed away February 7, 1992.

Acarya Trptinarayan

Acarya Trptinarayan was an ardent spiritual aspirant. He was an active social worker and a neo-humanist.

His social work among the poor touched people's hearts. Even today, the people of Deogarh in the state of Bihar remember him with reverence.

Baba would lovingly address him as Trpti, which means a person who is satisfied.

He died on April 11, 2005.

Acarya Manohar Lal

Acarya Manohar Lal was initiated by Acarya Lalan in Jaipur, India. He became a householder acarya in 1963 and was a great devotee of Baba.

There is an interesting story about his initiation into the Tantric practices of Ananda Marga. Prior to his initiation into Ananda Marga yoga, he was a Shakta Tantrika, an initiate into the practices of Shakta Tantra. Broadly speaking, Shakta Tantra is one of the five main schools of Tantra, which are Shaiva Tantra, Shakta Tantra, Vaisnava Tantra, Ganapatya Tantra, and Saora Tantra.

Shaiva Tantra stresses the cognitive development of the spiritual aspirant, with a view to freeing him or her from the binding force of the propensities and other bondages. It stresses the attainment of the Supreme Consciousness, or Shiva, as the goal of intuitional practice. It lays emphasis on the faculty of knowledge. Shakta Tantra, on the other hand, lays emphasis on shakti, the operative principle of

the Supreme Consciousness, as the objective of intuitional practice. The attainment of occult power and its proper application is the focal point of this spiritual approach. In Tantra, shakti has been personified into different feminine deities such as Kali, Durga, Prakrti, Tara, Bhagavati, and so on, with each form having its own ritualistic and mystical practices. The Shakta Tantrika stages a fight against the depraving forces of the mind by propitiating shakti through his or her practices and acts of devotion. Vaisnava Tantra has a different approach to liberation. It leads the spiritual aspirant to liberation through the cult of sweet, divine bliss. It transforms the gross into the subtle, human passion into devotion for the Supreme Entity, sensual pleasure into divine bliss, and attraction to beautiful things to attraction for the Supreme Entity. Ganapatya Tantra lays emphasis on the development of leadership qualities of the practitioner in order that he might enkindle the latent divinity in others. It gives inspiration to people who are divided into various social groups to work together as a collective group. Saora Tantra lays emphasis on medical treatment and astronomy.

As a Shakta Tantrika, Manohar practiced the Tantra associated with the goddess Kali. When Acarya Lalan inspired him to learn the process of Brahma sadhana, the spiritual practice of the Supreme Consciousness, Manohar Lal responded that he would first seek the permission of the goddess Kali before he accepted initiation into the proposed practice.

He was an advanced practitioner of Shakta Tantra and had direct contact with the goddess Kali. In a state of trance, he had the audience of the goddess Kali, who told him that if he desired his personal supreme welfare, he must seek initiation from the acarya, as the acarya's Guru was the manifestation of the Supreme Entity. The goddess then urged him to seek initiation from the acarya.

Upon obtaining the goddess Kali's permission, he approached the acarya for initiation. He performed his spiritual practices diligently after his initiation and tried very hard to live the life of an ideal Ananda Margii.

Once Baba pointed to a college in Jaipur as He passed by and remarked that it was Manohar's college. A few days later, Manohar Lal became the Principal of the college.

Manohar Lal passed away on January 23, 1996, just after he completed Guru puja, the practice of offering one's mental colors to the Guru after meditation.

Acarya Bhisma Deva

Acarya Bhisma Deva was a good spiritual aspirant and had a poetic bent of mind. His poems have been published in several publications such as *Parivartan*, *Tarannum*, *Bal-Batika*, *Jagav Chhattisgarhia*, and *Kusum Kalyan*.

He was born in the village of Dhansa, Balaghata, in the state of Madhya Pradesh. After his initiation, he taught in the Jagadapur Ananda Marga Primary School. He managed the school as a local full-timer. He later became a householder acarya. He initiated many people who later became good spiritual aspirants.

He died on June 30, 2005, in Raipur in the state of Chhattisgarh.

Acarya Sakaldiip

Acarya Sakaldiip was born in 1935 in Varanasi and was a devotee of Lord Shiva. Acarya Chandra Dev initiated Acarya Sakaldiip in 1958.

At the time of his initiation, Acarya Sakaldiip worked as an Assistant Engineer in Chaibaba, Bihar. He was a dignified person with a childlike personality. These qualities attracted many people to him. In 1964, he became a householder acarya of Ananda Marga. He initiated several thousand people into Ananda Marga's system of meditation.

He maintained a good balance between his family life and organizational life. In 1996, he was adjudged as the best Bhukti Pradhana.

He died on July 13, 2008.

Acarya Pasupati

Acarya Pasupati of Bhagalpur, Bihar, was initiated by Acarya Chandranath in 1957. He was then working as a government officer.

He was one of the most senior householder acaryas of Ananda Marga, a great soul indeed. Baba initiated him in all the lessons of Vishesh yoga in 1960. Baba also initiated him in microvita sadhana. Acarya Pasupati spent many hours a day performing his spiritual practices and made great advances on the spiritual path.

What marked him out from the rest was his dynamic nature and his total devotion to Ista, the goal of spiritual aspirants. He had a great appetite for work and accomplished many things for the mission. He propagated the philosophy of Ananda Marga widely in and around the vicinity of Bhagalpur in Bihar. He initiated more than fifteen thousand people. Many have become missionary workers of Ananda Marga. He also played a leading role in the construction of the Marga Guru quarters called Madhu Angika.

Pleased with his work and moral fiber, Baba conferred on him the title of Dharmamitram. During the Dharma Maha Cakra at Bhagalpur on February 2–3, 1987, Baba informed Acarya Pashupati that He was pleased with him. As far as I know, such a comment by Baba is rare.

Another indication of his eminence as a spiritual aspirant was during Dharma Samiiksa, a special program conducted by Baba to scan the physical, mental and spiritual defects of spiritual aspirants, with a view to lighten their paths to liberation. Baba remarked that Acarya Pashupati was one of the best workers of Ananda Marga and hence He could not punish him for organizational defects. However, Baba punished him for his misdeeds in past lives.

Acarya Pashupati passed away on January 24, 2014, at eighty-four years old.

Acarya Kailashchandra Bhalla

Acarya Kailashchandra Bhalla of Raipur was initiated by Acarya Haridutta Pant in 1958. He became a householder acarya in 1961.

He was a great devotee of Baba and inspired many others to adopt the spiritual path. Several of his initiates have become missionary workers. In the early days, the weekly Dharmacakra was held in his house. He encouraged his only daughter, Avadhutika Ananda Giita Acarya, to become a nun of Ananda Marga. He also donated all his properties to Ananda Marga. The Women's Welfare Department of Ananda Marga now runs a children's home and master unit on his properties.

Acarya Kailashchandra was not only a devotee but also a Karma Yogi, a spiritual aspirant actively involved in social service to lighten

the burden of other people. He was a dynamic person, full of love for everyone. I am personally obliged to him for inspiring me spiritually when I was not yet a renunciant. In fact, I stayed in his house before I went to the training center to become a missionary worker.

He passed away on May 1, 2013, at ninety-one.

Acarya Amaresh

Acarya Amaresh of Bettiah, Bihar, was initiated by Acarya Vishwanath in 1959. He first became a renunciant missionary worker of Ananda Marga. Sometime later, however, he decided to get married and became a householder acarya after his marriage.

He did a lot of work in the state of Himanchal Pradesh in North India. Baba liked him very much. Acarya Amaresh tried very hard to balance his family life with his organizational work.

He died on March 18, 2013, in the house of his eldest daughter.

Acarya Bhuvaneshvari

Acarya Vishwanath initiated Acarya Bhuvaneshvari of Bettiah, Bihar, in 1956. At that time, he was working as a government officer in the Animal Husbandry Department. A year later, he became a householder acarya.

He was a good soul—simple, honest, and ideological. He propagated Ananda Marga widely in the areas where he was officially posted by the government. In this way, he created many Margiis. He was blessed because Baba stayed in his house on several occasions. Once, when Baba first visited his house, he offered Baba fresh butter in a silver pot, saying that Baba had been fond of butter in His previous

life. What he meant was that Baba, in His previous incarnation as Lord Krsna about 3,500 years ago, loved to eat butter. In response, Baba replied, "I do not eat this butter but eat your ego." Here, Baba was referring to the fact that the Lord helps His devotees to attain liberation by taking away their binding ego.

Acarya Bhuvaneshvari considered the room that Baba stayed in as sacred. He was careful to maintain the sanctity of the house in general and the room in particular. In fact, he desired to die in that room while uttering His holy name.

Acarya Bhuvaneshvari was uncompromising in his honesty. As a government officer in the Animal Husbandry Department, he was entitled to three liters of fresh milk daily. After his initiation, however, he refused to accept the free milk to which he was entitled. He felt that it was morally wrong to accept it even though he was entitled to it as an officer of the department.

He passed away on August 25, 2012, while singing kiirtan in the room where Baba had stayed. What was remarkable was that he died in the exact way he had desired.

Acarya Ramlagan

Acarya Ramlagan was initiated by Acarya Chandranath in 1957. He became a householder acarya the following year. Both his wife and he were good devotees.

He was a government official who initially worked as a Block Agriculture Officer in Buxar, Bihar. He was later promoted as a Block Development Officer in Ranchi. He propagated a spiritual lifestyle wherever he went. In Buxar, he established an Ananda

Marga unit and a school. In Ranchi, he helped to develop the Ananda Shila Master Unit.

As he was very involved in Ananda Marga's social and spiritual activities, he was constantly harassed by the authorities. He was implicated by the government, particularly by the Central Bureau of Investigation, in several false charges. During the Emergency period, he was arrested and imprisoned without trial.

Following his retirement from the civil service, he worked in Ananda Nagar to develop the area's agricultural potential. He worked closely with Acarya Asiimananda Avadhuta. He also assisted in building the garden at the Marga Guru quarters in Ananda Nagar.

He died on September 3, 2010.

Acarya Kishun

Acarya Kishun was a direct disciple of Baba and one of His elevated disciples. Baba initiated him in 1954. He was a very elevated spiritual aspirant and had many deep spiritual realizations immediately after his initiation.

In this life, he was already a liberated soul, a spiritual aspirant who had attained mukti, or liberation. Baba once said that his life's mission had been completed and that the present life was his last before he was permanently freed from the cycle of birth and death, merging with the Supreme Consciousness in the final state of *moksa*. Baba declared that Acarya Kishun was an acarya for life.

Acarya Kishun was one of the several people present at the Tiger's Grave in Jamalpur when Baba was about to leave His physical body in 1955. Acarya Nagina was also present on that occasion. Realizing

that Baba was about to leave His physical body, Acarya Nagina begged Him to bless earth by retaining His body for another fifty years.

It was on that occasion that Baba informed those present that Acarya Kishun was a liberated soul and that this life was his final life.

He passed away in 2010.

Acarya Sakaldeva

Acarya Sakaldeva was initiated in 1957. He became an acarya in the same year. He led a balanced life as a householder and as an acarya of Ananda Marga.

Baba initiated him into the practice of Kapalika meditation. He performed it diligently throughout his life. He had an enormous capacity for work, sacrificing his personal comforts to propagate the ideals of Ananda Marga. He led a very simple life and was ready to sacrifice everything for his Guru and ideology. He can be characterized as a Sthitaprajina sadhaka. Such a spiritual aspirant is one who has transcended duality, that is, one who is not affected by pain and pleasure, by victory and defeat, and by profit and loss. He or she remains in a balanced state all the time.

Acarya Sakaldeva left his body on April 14, 2004.

Acarya Devichand

Acarya Devichand was another unforgettable family acarya. He was born in Badgaon in the district of Hamirpur in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Before he was initiated on the path of spirituality, he was an accomplished Avidya Tantrik, one who pursued occult practices

to gain psychic powers. In his time, he became famous for defeating many gurus by applying his psychic powers on them.

One day, he met Baba. In that encounter, Baba requested him to apply the combined force of all the psychic powers he had attained through the practice of Avida Tantra. It was a challenge he could not refuse. He applied the full force of his powers on Baba but failed to achieve the desired result. This was the first time in his life that his hard-earned powers had failed him.

He then understood that Baba was no ordinary guru and that He was far greater than all the other gurus he had ever met and defeated. At that point, he submitted himself completely to Baba and surrendered at His lotus feet. He accepted Baba as the Guru and his divine refuge.

As his surrender was total, Baba granted him the blessing of His blissful, divine form. Devichand was immersed in that blissful state for some time. After that fateful incident, he became a new man.

Baba instructed Acarya Chandranath to inspire Devichand to live the life of an ideal spiritual aspirant. He was subsequently initiated. He performed his spiritual practices diligently. He made good progress in his spiritual practice and became a devout disciple of Baba, propagating Ananda Marga to the masses. In 1957, Devichand became an acarya of Ananda Marga. Baba acknowledged his good work and blessed him by agreeing to stay in his house in Ranchi on four occasions. Baba also agreed to stay in his house on three other occasions when he moved to Sabour, Bihar.

Acarya Devichand decided to write about his spiritual experiences with Baba in his memoirs. When he brought the matter up to Baba, Baba asked him if he wanted the tender sapling of their sweet and

affectionate relationship to be exposed to the crude glare of the world. He understood the inner spirit of what Baba meant, that the mutual bond between Guru and disciple, between father and child, based on love, devotion, and compassion, was something that would be beyond the comprehension of the common masses and should be left unspoken, so as not to stain the purity of such a platonic relationship.

In his last days, Acarya Devichand once made a trip to Kolkata to see Baba. He was then suffering from a serious stomach ailment. Baba blessed him by touching his stomach with His cane. Baba also instructed him to visit Him once a month on a regular basis. Acarya Devichand made it a point to see Baba once a month. One day, however, he missed a scheduled visit due to some work. He died that month on December 3, 1986.

What was interesting was that during his final visit to Baba, when he was accompanied by Acarya Kuldip, he requested Baba to take his young children onto His lap. He wanted them to be settled in life and to grow up as responsible spiritual aspirants who were assets to humanity. Baba lovingly patted his cheeks and assured him that his children were His responsibility and that He would look after them.

Acarya Dhruvanarayan

Acarya Dhruvanarayan was initiated in 1957. His deep longing for a life marked by spirituality and social service made him an ardent spiritual aspirant. He became a householder acarya in due time. He was initiated by Baba into the practice of Kapalika meditation after some time.

He was a scholar and taught in Balurghat College as a professor. Like several others, he succeeded in leading a balanced life as a responsible householder and an ardent spiritual aspirant.

He died on September 8, 2008.

Acarya Kamalakanta

Acarya Kamalakanta of Jamalpur was initiated in 1957. At the time he was in public service with the Department of Cooperatives in Bihar. He later became a householder acarya. He was initiated into Kapalika sadhana by Baba sometime later.

He was a gifted poet and author and could write in seven languages. He was very close to Baba and dedicated his life to His service. Being a seasoned spiritual aspirant, he had many spiritual experiences.

He passed away on April 24, 2012.

Acarya Raghunath

Acarya Dvarka Prasad initiated Acarya Raghunath into Ananda Marga's spiritual practices in 1959. Before being attracted to Ananda Marga, Acarya Raghunath was an active volunteer of the Rashtriya Svayamseva Samgh, a right-wing nationalist organization. He was a dynamic student leader during his student days and an accomplished orator.

He was a brilliant student and earned a postgraduate degree in two subjects. He was subsequently employed as a lecturer in a college in Gorakhpur. After some time, he rose to the position of Professor, where he carved out an illustrious academic career.

Since childhood, Acarya Raghunath had a spiritual bent of mind, which drew him to Ananda Marga's philosophy and practice. He was particularly attracted to Ananda Marga's rational views and new insights on defining issues that confronted humanity. Within six months of his initiation, he became a householder acarya. He successfully managed to balance his personal, professional, and spiritual lives.

Over time, his desire to serve Baba's mission full-time transcended his personal ambitions. He thus decided to renounce his job and serve the mission full-time. He was such a committed person that even imprisonment and persecution in jail during the dark days of the Emergency period did not dissuade him from his commitment to the ideology and mission of Ananda Marga. Ultimately, he was appointed as the President of Ananda Marga Pracaraka Samgha, a position he held until his demise.

Acarya Raghunath accompanied Baba during His tour of North India in 1984. He did a magnificent job of compiling Baba's thoughts on various aspects of Indian culture and history.

The Tenth World Futures Studies Federation Conference held in Beijing, China, on September 3–8, 1988, extended a special invitation to Baba to address the distinguished gathering of more than three hundred leading intellectuals from all over the world to discuss future global trends. Baba appointed Acarya Raghunath to represent Him at the conference. The People's News Agency in China reported that Acarya Raghunath had created a stir among the delegates with his scholarly speech on PROUT and neo-humanism and that many scholars were now interested in learning more about these new subjects.

Acarya Pratapaditya

Acarya Raghunath initiated Acarya Pratapaditya in 1959. Acarya Pratapaditya became a householder acarya shortly after that.

He was then working as a renowned advocate and law lecturer in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. In addition to his legal expertise, he possessed in-depth knowledge on the philosophy of Ananda Marga.

Owing to his expertise, he served as Baba's attending secretary on several occasions. When he accompanied Baba to Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh, Baba disclosed several unknown facts about Lord Buddha to him. Kushinagar is reputed to be the site of Lord Buddha's last sermon.

Acarya Pratapaditya was attached to Ananda Marga's publications department. He contributed many scholarly articles for several Ananda Marga publications. He also translated several of Baba's books into Hindi.

He passed away on July 20, 2012, at the age of seventy-nine.

Acarya Akhori Himanchal Prasad

Acarya Chandranath initiated Acarya Akhori Himanchal Prasad of Jharkhand in 1957. Shortly after his initiation, Acarya Akhori became a householder acarya of Ananda Marga. His wife was a householder acarya too.

Acarya Akhori worked as a high-ranking police officer in Bihar. He retired as Deputy Inspector General of police. He assisted in the construction of the Jamalpur jagrti, as well as the first children's home in Patna.

By Baba's grace, he was blessed to have many inspiring divine experiences. His spiritual experiences inspired me as well.

He passed away on April 2014 at the age of ninety.

Acarya Kuladeep

Acarya Kuladeep of Jharkhand was initiated in 1962 by Acarya Harinarayan. At the time of his initiation, he was a police officer.

A few days after his initiation, he was blessed to have the opportunity of Personal Contact with the Marga Guru. On that occasion, Baba instructed him to forget his past misdeeds and to become an ideological person. Baba then extracted a promise from him that he would work for Baba's mission. Acarya Kuladeep promised Baba that he would henceforth be incorruptible and an ideal son of Baba.

To appreciate Acarya Kuladeep's promise to Baba, it must be seen in the light of his work environment. As a police officer, he was exposed to corruption on a daily basis. It was almost impossible to resist the strong temptation to enrich himself through corrupt means. In fact, being an honest police officer could potentially invite danger, as honesty threatened the wicked livelihood of corrupt colleagues and other vested interests.

Acarya Kuladeep was then working on a project that involved the coal industry. The industry was infested with corrupt elements. Despite the temptations, he kept his word and avoided corruption like the plague. His ethical stance was an unacceptable hindrance to the corrupt. In desperation, they made several attempts on his life. However, every attempt on his life ended in failure. Baba's protective net made him bolder to pursue an honest life and to be a fearless moralist.

His moral stance won him much praise from society. Baba too was pleased with his transformation into a fearless moralist. Acarya Kuladeep did his utmost to work for the mission, as he had promised, initiating hundreds of people and actively engaging in social service.

He died on February 1, 2013.

Acarya Indradeo

Acarya Indradeo was initiated in 1956 in the early phase of Ananda Marga. Soon after his initiation, he became a householder acarya. Baba also initiated him in the system of Vishesh yoga, an advanced system of Yogic practice.

At that time, he taught at the Hindi Language Department of DS College in Katihar, Bihar. He later rose to the rank of head of department. The academic community in Bihar considered Acarya Indradeo a reputable scholar. Being spiritually minded, he used his social reputation and scholarship as an aid to propagate spirituality. Owing to his popularity, he initiated more than a thousand people. Many of his initiates became missionary workers of Ananda Marga, including Acarya Vishveshvar, Acarya Suryanarayanan, and Acarya Jagadish. Despite being a householder, he worked for the mission like a renunciant missionary worker.

During those early days, he played an important role in noting down Baba's discourses delivered during the Dharma Maha Cakra programs. He also helped in editing many of Baba's books. In addition, he wrote a commentary on *Ananda Sutram* in Sanskrit. *Ananda Sutram* is a collection of forty aphorisms given by Baba and forms the basis of Ananda Marga's spiritual and social philosophy.

An interesting fact about Acarya Indradeo was that Baba selected him as Ananda Marga's representative in a public debate on the philosophy of Ananda Marga. The challenger was Swami Bhayankar Acarya, a well-known spiritual figure. In the debate, Acarya Indradeo trounced his rival convincingly. Admitting his defeat, Swami Bhayankar attested to the superiority of Ananda Marga's philosophy. He later confided that an orthodox Hindu organization had asked him to malign Ananda Marga in a public forum.

Acarya Indradeo passed away in 2005.

Acarya Surya Narayan

When he was a student, Acarya Surya Narayan from Katihar, Bihar, was initiated by Acarya Indradeo. After completing his studies, he became a teacher in a public high school. In 1962, he became a householder acarya.

He was an active social worker who engaged in many public service programs during natural calamities. He spent his free time propagating spirituality among the people.

He died in 2004.

Acarya Ananta Thakur

Acarya Chandranath initiated Acarya Ananta Thakur, an officer of the Customs Department, in 1958. Shortly after his initiation, he was elected as the Bhukti Pradhana of Bhagalpur, Bihar. He later became a householder acarya of Ananda Marga.

He was responsible for the establishment of the first Ananda Marga library in Bhagalpur and maintained it throughout his life. He also

established the medical unit in the *didis'* jagrti, a Yoga house for women, in Bhagalpur.

He was a very service-minded person and was respected for his service to the needy. He was also an excellent orator. Acarya Shraddhananda Avadhuta utilized Acarya Ananta's oratory skills in public forums. Acarya Ananta had deep knowledge of Ananda Marga philosophy.

He died on September 4, 2005.

Acarya Ramtanuk

Acarya Ramtanuk of Bihar was a founding member of Ananda Marga Pracaraka Samgha and is considered an elder statesman of the mission.

He was a respected lawyer and served as the legal representative of Ananda Marga. He defended Baba in several court cases filed by the Indian government.

Acarya Ramtanuk was present during the first PROUT conference from October 17–22, 1959. He was one of the six notetakers at the conference. The deliberations at the conference were eventually published in the book *A Discussion*. The book stands out as the first publication on PROUT. It was republished as *Discourses on PROUT* and was included as part of the PROUT in a Nutshell series.

Both Acarya Ramtanuk and his wife were great devotees of Baba. He passed away on January 5, 2012, at seventy-five.

Acarya Rameshwar

Acarya Rameshwar of Jamalpur, Bihar, was one of the early householder acaryas of Ananda Marga. Baba initiated him on January 19, 1955. Acarya Rameshwar's late wife, Gangeshwari Devi, was initiated in May 1955.

A few months later, in September, he became an acarya. In April 1958, Baba initiated him in the lessons of Vishesh yoga. He then worked in the Customs Department.

He lived in Baba's neighborhood. He used to meet Baba frequently but never realized that Baba was the Sadguru. In the early days, Baba kept His real identity hidden from public view. He took pains to adorn the disguise of an ordinary man. He quietly selected and initiated His disciples one by one. In fact, the early devotees did not know that they had the same Guru. It was only later that Baba brought all of them together during an assembly. Only then did they realize that they were devotees of the same Guru.

Acarya Rameshwar had many wonderful experiences of Baba, which he recounted in his book *Baba Katha (Stories of Baba)*, which is an interesting account of his spiritual journey and his divine experiences.

Both he and his wife were great devotees of Baba. He passed away on January 7, 2013, at the ripe old age of ninety-three. He was an active Margii until his last breath. When he was alive, he used to say that he did not want to be bedridden and cause trouble to others. Baba granted him his wish.

Acarya Rajmohan

Acarya Deepnarayan initiated Acarya Rajmohan of Daltonganj, Jharkhand, in 1957. Acarya Rajmohan became a householder acarya in 1958.

He was a senior government officer. In the Margii community and among his professional colleagues, he was known for his simplicity, honesty, and spirituality. His character was exemplary. A government minister once remarked that Acarya Rajmohan was such a simple, honest, and spiritual man that he felt inclined to touch his feet as a mark of reverence.

Acarya Rajmohan enjoyed a close relationship with Baba. During Baba's stay in Ranchi, Patna, Delhi, and Amjharia, he looked after Baba's personal needs, particularly His meals. He also served as Baba's attending secretary on several occasions.

One interesting event comes to mind. When Baba first introduced the practice of kiirtan at Amjharia, Palamu, Jharkhand, Acarya Rajmohan was present. Baba explained to the small group of Margiis the glory and benefits of kiirtan and demonstrated how to perform it. The mystical origin of the Baba Nam Kevalam kiirtan is recounted in chapter 3.

He passed away on December 30, 2012.

Margiis

Brother Pranay Kumar Chattopadhyaya

Pranay Kumar was the first General Secretary of Ananda Marga Pracaraca Samgha. He worked in the Accounts Department of the Indian Railways, together with Baba.

Pranayda was initiated by Baba in 1948. He is the first known Ananda Margii. When Ananda Marga Pracaraka Samgha was founded in 1955, Pranayda became its first General Secretary.

He was blessed to have been initiated by Baba in many systems of Yogic and Tantric meditation. This included all four lessons of Kapalika meditation, in which only a handful of devotees have been initiated. This is because there is a lack of qualified spiritual aspirants to practice the higher lessons of Kapalika meditation in the present age.

Pranay had the inclination of a renunciant, that is, to remain celibate throughout his life. However, on Baba's insistence, he married Sister Pramila. Baba personally taught her all the lessons of Sahaja yoga just two days after their marriage. He later initiated her into all four lessons of Kapalika meditation. She is still alive today and lives on the outskirts of Kolkata.

Upon the registration of the land in Ananda Nagar, when the global headquarters of Ananda Marga was established at Ananda Nagar, Pranayda resigned from his job and moved to Ananda Nagar.

Baba had a very special relationship with Pranayda. He once sent a basket of flowers and fruits to Pranayda, who was then staying in the outskirts of Kolkata. This incident took place just a few weeks before Baba left His physical body. When Pranay realized the significance of Baba's gesture, he regretted that he had been unable to meet Baba before His departure.

Dr. Rameshwar Prasad

Acarya Akhaorii Himacal Prasad initiated Dr. Rameshwar Prasad in 1957, when Dr. Ramesh was posted as a medical officer in Deogarh.

Dr. Ramesh was a very service-minded person and conducted many social service programs for the benefit of the community. When ERAWS was established in 1963, Dr. Ramesh was co-opted to the relief committee of the organization. Later, he was appointed as Secretary of the Bihar Relief Committee. Soon after, Baba established the Ananda Marga Relief Committee (AMRC), which rendered commendable service to thousands of drought-stricken people in Bihar during the 1966–67 severe drought. AMRC was the precursor of Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT) and Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team Ladies (AMURTEL).

Baba Himself selected Dr. Ramesh to head AMURT as its Chairman, a post he held until his death. He was also a member of the medical board of Ananda Marga. Once, Baba remarked that Dr. Ramesh was a sadhu, one who thinks, speaks, and acts in the same way.

Dr. Ramesh was also actively engaged in the development of Ananda Nagar. He passed away on January 29, 2010.

Brother Aniruddha Prasad Singh

Aniruddha Prasad Singh was a very senior and well-known Margii and a great devotee of Baba. His father was a great devotee of Baba too. Acarya Chandranath initiated him in 1956.

Aniruddha met Baba regularly at the Tiger's Grave during the early days of Ananda Marga and had many wonderful stories to share regarding his spiritual experiences. He published his experiences with Baba in his book *Ba'ba' Na'ma Kevalam*.

His devotion to Baba was a source of inspiration to all Margiis, workers, and householders alike. He served as the Chairperson of the Jamalpur Dharma Maha Sammelan until his demise.

Baba graced his home in Trimohan, Bhagalpur, by conducting a Dharma Maha Cakra at his house. Baba also inaugurated the Renaissance Universal movement at his house on January 26, 1958, where He delivered the inaugural Renaissance Universal lecture published in *Problems of the Day*.

All Aniruddha's family members are active Margiis. His brother, Harendra, is one of Ananda Marga's early Kapalikas, spiritual aspirants practicing Kapalika meditation.

Aniruddha Prasad Singh passed away September 10, 2009, at approximately eighty years of age.

Tejpal Singh Kushwaha

Acarya Shuddhasattvananda Avadhuta initiated Brother Tejpal Singh in 1968. Tejpal Singh was a senior Margii from Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. He was then employed at the Weights and Measures Department in Madhya Pradesh after completing his master's degree in economics from Agra University.

Tejpal Singh was a very devoted Margii, ready to sacrifice his comforts for the sake of the mission. He was also an ideological Margii, propagating Ananda Marga ideology and its mission wherever he was posted. He inspired many people on the path of spirituality and helped to establish several Ananda Marga units. His wife and children are good Margiis too.

He died on March 3, 2014.

Brother Arvind Nath Shahdeo

Acarya Harishankar initiated Brother Arvind Nath Shahdeo in 1965. Arvind came from an aristocratic family in Chotanagpur, Bihar.

He was a staunch devotee, steadfast in serving the cause of the Marga. He made significant contributions toward the construction of the master unit in Baghima, Gumla District, Jharkhand. He was also the Secretary of Chotanagpur Samaj and once served as Bhukti Pradhana of Ranchi. He also served as Baba's security guard on one occasion.

Arvind was imprisoned on several occasions because of his association with Ananda Marga. However, this did not dampen his spirits. He was indebted to Baba for being saved from the jaws of death. He was once involved in a near-fatal accident in Netrahat, Jharkhand, but was miraculously saved. He considered his postaccident phase as his second life.

He died on September 25, 2009.

Note about Service to the Guru

At this juncture, it is opportune for me to explain a point for the benefit of readers. Going through the stories, there are many instances of Margiis holding very senior positions in the public sector, private sector, and academia happily performing what might seem to be menial tasks for the Guru, such as serving as His driver, security guard, cook, masseuse, and attendant to His personal needs. To the layman not familiar with the intricacies of the spiritual path and the special guru-disciple relationship in Tantra, such tasks might appear to be trivial and beneath the socially lofty positions of a CEO

of a multinational company, the Secretary General of a government ministry, or a Member of Parliament.

In olden times, a disciple would be required to render service to the guru for at least twelve years before he was considered for initiation into the mysteries of the Tantric path. During the period of apprenticeship, the disciple would be required to serve the guru in every way. The guru would test the disciple in different ways during the apprenticeship, sometimes very severely, in order to gauge the disciple's strength of mind, devotion to the guru, and conviction to the spiritual path. The disciple had to undergo tremendous hardship at the hands of the guru. The reason for putting a prospective disciple through such hardship was to wean him off his psychological obsessions and societal relationships and to cleanse him of his past samskaras, in order to lighten his path to liberation.

In the modern context, Margiis consider an opportunity to serve the Guru as a rare blessing.

Brother Baldeo Rathi

Baldeo Rathi was initiated in 1965. He was a good Margii who rendered a lot of service to the Marga. He had the golden opportunity of accompanying Baba's entourage in His tour of Europe, South America, and Jamaica.

Baba was pleased with his services. He would smile whenever Baldeo performed tandava before Him. Baldeo was a stout man. Baba once remarked, "Baldeo is a fat man but very dependable."

In his final moments, Baldeo told his wife not to worry, as Baba had made the necessary arrangements for her survival. His wife responded by encouraging him to think only of the Lord. Baldeo

retorted by asking, "Who else is there for me except Him?" He died on January 16, 2010.

Brother Shashi Rainjan

Brother Shashi Rainjan was a devotee par excellence. He was born on June 30, 1918. Acarya Nagendra initiated him in 1957.

He was actively engaged in politics from 1966 and was elected as Member of Parliament for two terms on a Congress ticket. At Baba's request, he became Chairman of the Proutist Bloc of India and resigned from the central government in 1969 to contest the election as a representative of the Proutist Bloc, a relatively new political party.

As a Member of Parliament representing the ruling government, he was in the limelight. Jumping ship from a comfortable political position into unknown waters was a brave decision on his part. It was a huge blow to the then Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, who tried her best to dissuade him from resigning his parliamentary post. However, Shashi remained adamant in following Baba's advice.

Baba graced him by staying at his official and personal residences on several occasions. On one occasion, Baba gave him a target of opening Ananda Marga schools in all blocks, administrative subdivisions, in Patna within a specified time. He accomplished the task in a timely manner. Baba mentioned this incident in His discourse on Guru Vandana published in *Sabda Cayanika*, describing it as the highest stage of devotion.

He passed away on April 12, 1992.

Brother Pandeya Raghuvir Prasad

Pandeya Raghuvir Prasad was born to an aristocratic family in Bareilly in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Despite his aristocratic background, he was a simple man at heart, an uncompromising moralist, and a social activist. He held a senior government position as Collector of Customs in New Delhi. He was popularly known as R. Prasad in the Margii community.

Baba Himself initiated Raghuvir into spiritual practice in 1954. Raghuvir was very devoted to Baba. He demonstrated his devotion with actions that not many can follow. He was a courageous person. For example, when the then Communist Chief Minister of West Bengal ordered Baba's arrest in 1968, Raghuvir rushed from New Delhi to West Bengal to bail out Baba from prison and arrange for legal assistance.

For several years, the government tried to depict Ananda Marga as a violent organization bent on overthrowing the elected government by unconstitutional means. The government mounted a vicious propaganda campaign to influence the public against Ananda Marga. The police initiated many false charges against Baba personally and against Ananda Marga as a socio-spiritual movement. The reasons for the government's suppression of Ananda Marga are too complicated to be explained in this limited space, but suffice it to say that Ananda Marga's increasing popularity among the masses and its call for moral leadership in India were seen as a threat to the corrupt and ineffective government leadership at that time. Baba's arrest was one such attempt among many that followed.

In 1969, the central government of India took the unusual step of banning all government employees from becoming members of Ananda Marga. The reason for this was that many senior

government officials were staunch Ananda Margiis, a position contrary to the government's official view that Ananda Marga was a violent organization.

As an affected government official, Raghuvir challenged the order in the Supreme Court of India and got a stay. Humiliated by the court's decision, the government blocked his promotion.

In 1975, the government of India banned Ananda Marga together with other organizations when it imposed the infamous twenty-one-month Emergency period. In that dark period, all civil liberties and personal freedoms were curbed and elections suspended. Indira Gandhi took advantage of the situation to imprison her opponents, who had no recourse to a fair hearing.

At that time, Raghuvir Prasad had already retired from government service. Upon receiving the news of the ban on Ananda Marga, he went to the Prime Minister's residence to plead with her to allow Margiis to perform their spiritual practices while the ban on Ananda Marga was enforced. He was unable to meet the Prime Minister and was instead arrested. He was subsequently imprisoned in Tihar Jail in New Delhi. His family then approached the government for leniency. After protracted discussions, the government agreed to free him if he gave a written assurance that he was no longer a member of Ananda Marga. When his family members approached Raghuvir with the government's offer, he rejected it outright, saying that it was impossible for him to say that he was not an Ananda Margii when he was one. He gladly opted for a life in prison than forsake his ideology. He served time in prison until the Emergency was lifted in 1977.

He passed away in 1985. After his demise, Baba remarked that He missed Raghuvir's presence in New Delhi.

Brother Rajendra Kumar

Rajendra Kumar was initiated by his brother, Acarya Virendra Kumar Asthana. Rajendra Kumar was a senior government official and retired as Secretary of the Public Works Department of Uttar Pradesh.

He contributed several articles in the PROUT journal under the pseudonym Kanada, a name Baba had given him. He was trained as a *tattvika*, a person well versed in the elementary philosophy of Ananda Marga. He also established many Ananda Marga schools, children's homes, and so on.

Baba graced him by staying at his residence for a week. He passed away on April 6, 1980.

Brother Anant Ram

Born in 1922, Anant Ram served the Punjab National Bank as an accountant. He was initiated by Acarya Satyananda Avadhuta in 1958.

Since his initiation, he performed his spiritual practices diligently. Subsequently, he became a good devotee and dedicated social worker and actively propagated Ananda Marga's socio-spiritual lifestyle to the masses.

In a Personal Contact session, Baba blessed him by saying, "You are a good and brave boy. You will bring good name to the Marga."

Anant was also a largehearted person. He donated a piece of land for the Ananda Marga High School at the Ananda Shila Master Unit.

His wife and children are all good Margiis. One of his daughters has become a nun of Ananda Marga.

He died on January 18, 1989.

Brother Omkar Nath Kaul

Brother Omkar Nath was initiated by Acarya Kstish Chandra in 1962.

Since his initiation into spiritual practice, he gradually developed the personal qualities of bravery and selflessness. He was also a staunch moralist.

He served as a government officer in the Agriculture Department in the state of Kashmir and Jammu.

Following in his footsteps, his wife and children have become good Margiis. He died in November 2004.

Brother Faguram Sahu

Brother Faguram Sahu was born on August 20, 1944. Since childhood, he was spiritually inclined. Acarya Kailash Chandra Bhalla initiated him in 1967.

For several years, he was the Bhukti Pradhana of Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh. He had the opportunity of Baba's blessings on several occasions, for example, Dharma Samiiksa, the garden program, and several Field Walks with Baba.

He retired from public service as the Deputy General Manager of the Telephone and Communication Department of India.

He died on September 27, 2007.

Brother Vrijalal

Brother Vrijalal was born in Jamshedpur, India. When he was transferred to Chhattisgarh, he came across Ananda Marga and was initiated by Acarya Ramlal Dani in 1962.

He was a sincere devotee. What marked him out as a devotee was his special liking for kiirtan. In fact, kiirtan was the mainstay of his life. He would grab every opportunity to participate in kiirtan. And not only that, he would also bring his whole family in tow to participate in kiirtan programs.

On the Golden Jubilee celebration of Akhanda kiirtan, the Margiis of Jamalpur organized a fifty-day kiirtan program. Vrijalal participated in the program for forty out of the fifty days. Prior to that, he had participated in a nine-day kiirtan program in Jamshedpur. He himself organized numerous kiirtan programs.

In this decadent age, the veneration of matter, power, position, and wealth is the prevailing social sentiment. Spiritual practice is relegated to an insignificant position in the social psyche. Despite these challenging circumstances, Vrijalal enjoyed the support of his family members for his spiritual endeavors.

He passed away on November 17, 2006.

Brother Kunj Bihari

Kunj Bihari of Raipur was affectionately known as Kunju Ustad by his relatives and friends. Acarya Narendra Deo initiated him in 1963.

In his younger days, Kunj Bihari was a professional wrestler. He was also an expert in treating bone dislocations and sprains. He was a simple man, but his love for Baba was sincere and deep.

He participated in many Dharma Maha Cakra programs, where he served as Baba's personal bodyguard. On one such occasion during the Bhopal DMC, Baba presented him with a garland for his dedicated services.

He was a good devotee who was very serious about his spiritual practices. He ensured that his family members were also regular in their spiritual practice.

He passed away on October 11, 2007.

Brother Sunil Bhagi

Brother Sunil Bhagi was another good Margii. He was born in the village of Jarao, Ludhiana, on August 24, 1957, and later initiated by Acarya Shankarananda Avadhuta.

He studied in the Ananda Nagar High School. Later, he pursued his education in the field of commerce.

He was regular in his spiritual practice and dedicated his life to the propagation of dharma, or spirituality.

He died on December 25, 2008. At the time of his death, his mind was said to be focused on the Supreme Consciousness.

Brother Sharat Chandra Pradhan

Brother Sharat Chandra Pradhan was an accomplished poet, litterateur, and thinker from Orissa, India. Acarya Nirmohananda Avadhuta initiated him into the spiritual path of Ananda Marga.

During his lifetime, he composed more than six hundred devotional songs, as well as songs founded on the ideals of Ananda Marga. Famous Indian singers such as Kumar Sajan and Saroj Nanda sang many of his songs. His devotional songs, sung in the golden voice of Laksmi Kant Palit, were compiled under the title *Bhakti Sarita*.

He was a good devotee of Baba. He used to propagate the tenets of Ananda Marga philosophy widely to the masses. He also published the book *Guru Giita* depicting the sweet relationship between Guru and disciple.

He passed away on December 16, 2013.

Brother Ram Chandra Reddy

Ram Chandra Reddy was a devotee par excellence. Acarya Asiimananda Avadhuta initiated him in 1965.

Although he held a senior government position as Chief Engineer of the state government of Andhara Pradesh, he led a simple life. As a government officer, he was constantly harassed by the authorities for his involvement in Ananda Marga. During the Emergency period, he was held under house arrest for being an Ananda Margii.

He propagated the ideals of Ananda Marga to the people and inspired them to adopt spiritual lifestyles. He was involved in several social service projects. For instance, he established an Ananda

Marga school, a jagrti, a children's home, and several Ananda Marga institutions.

Baba blessed him by staying in his house on two occasions. About him, Baba once remarked, "Ram Chandra is a brave person. He is the tiger of Telangana."

He passed away in 1981.

Brother N.R.K. Raju

Brother Raju of Andhra Pradesh was initiated in 1964. He was a good devotee, ever ready to do anything for the mission.

What marked him out as a great Margii was his concern for the welfare of the missionary workers of the Marga posted to Vizag. He treated them as his own children. In fact, Baba advised new missionary workers posted to Vizag to call on him.

When Baba visited Vizag for the Dharma Maha Cakra program on two occasions, Raju and his wife took charge of Baba's personal needs. His wife cooked delicious Andhra delicacies for Baba, much to Baba's delight.

He died on April 18, 2009.

Brother Amir Chand Nirankar

Amir Chand Nirankar was born in the village of Manihari, Katihar, Bihar State. He was initiated by Acarya Indradeo in 1961, when he was a student.

Brother Amir Chand was irresistibly drawn to the lofty ideals of Ananda Marga. He studied law at Bihar University and, after his graduation, became an advocate in the Patna High Court. He was a well-known advocate in Bihar.

He married in accordance with the Ananda Marga marriage system, where caste considerations, social status, and the dowry system are forbidden. He had three children, all of whom are advocates.

He was a dedicated devotee of the Marga. He passed away on March 7, 2010. The last word he uttered was *Baba*.

Sister Sumitra Devi

Sister Sumitra Devi was one of the notable female devotees of Baba. She was initiated by Acarya Cinta Devi in 1961. She was a senior female *tattvika*, a teacher of Ananda Marga elementary philosophy. Her husband was Himanshu Prasad, a well-known devotee of Baba.

She was active in implementing programs for the women's wing of Ananda Marga in her area. She was like a mother to the missionary workers, taking care of all their basic needs. She also donated the land to construct the Marga Guru quarters in Deoghar.

One feature that marked her was her love for *Prabhat Samgiita*, the devotional songs composed by Baba. She could sing more than 1,200 songs from the 5,018 songs composed. By any measure, this was a remarkable feat. She was among those who were present when Baba gave the first *Prabhat Samgiita* song, "Bandhu He Niye Calo," on September 14, 1982. In fact, after composing a new song, Baba would sometimes ask Sumitra if she liked it.

She had several opportunities to have Baba's audience. She had the opportunity to cook for Baba and garland Him when he visited Deoghar. Baba once remarked about Sumitra, "She is very active and hardworking. She loves all. She also loves Me. She is very particular in attending to the needs of the workers."

She passed away on January 6, 2005.

Sister Shashi Prabha

Sister Shashi Prabha of Ghazipur was another good devotee of Baba. Since her initiation in 1962 by Acarya Indrajeet of Ghazipur, she was determined to lead an exemplary life, consistent with Ananda Marga's ideals of spiritual practice, service, and sacrifice.

She was the Vice Principal of the government girls' school in Ghazipur. Being in the education sector, she was very involved in the educational activities of Ananda Marga. She donated the land for the construction of the Ananda Marga girls' school in Ghazipur. She also financially supported the construction of the school. Her husband, Ranjiit Prasad, is also a sincere devotee.

She departed on June 30, 2007. Before her demise, she was absorbed day and night in kiirtan. When she died, there was a special glow on her face.

Sister Kranti Devi

Sister Kranti Devi of Jamalpur was one of the leading female devotees of Baba. Acarya Shishir initiated her in Jamalpur in 1964.

She was an active Margii who participated in most of the mission's activities. She was a respected figure in the local community and was the Principal of Mahila College in Jamalpur.

The quality that differentiated her from other devotees was the high state of her devotion. The holy vibrations emanating from Baba's physical presence would elevate her mind to a blissful state, so much so that she would lose consciousness just by seeing Baba's physical form. When she regained consciousness, she would dance in divine bliss. This phenomenon occurred several times during the Dharma Maha Cakra programs.

She had a special affection for the missionary workers of Ananda Marga and considered them as His representatives.

She passed away on October 17, 2000.

Sister Vidya Nirankar

Sister Vidya Nirankar of Patna was a good spiritual aspirant who lived her life in accordance with the Marga's ideals. She was initiated by Acarya Abhedananda Avadhuta in 1962. She performed her spiritual practices regularly and was involved in many social activities.

For instance, she was the General Secretary of the People's Council of India. She was also the Chairperson of the Jharkhand Vikas Foundation. She was also a member of the Bihar State Welfare Advisory Board.

A journalist by profession, she was the editor of the *Consumer Times* published in Patna.

She came from a family naturally inclined toward spirituality. Her elder brother was the legendary Acarya Abhedananda Avadhuta.

During her final moments, she was in a blissful mood. Her face shone with the glow of divine love.

Sister Snehlata Goenka

Sister Snehlata Goenka was the wife of Brother Shyam Sunder Goenka. She was initiated in Mumbai in 1965 by Acarya Shantananda Avadhuta.

She was an ardent spiritual aspirant and was involved in many social service activities. Baba visited her house in Mumbai on five occasions. These special occasions accelerated her spiritual momentum and deepened her devotion and service-mindedness.

She passed away in 2002.

Sister Shanti Devi and Brother Abhilash Singh

Shanti Devi and Abhilash Singh from Etah were a devoted Margii couple. Shanti was initiated in 1963 by Acarya Satisha.

Both were service-minded and were involved in many social service activities. They were ideal devotees of Baba. When Baba visited Etah for the Dharma Maha Cakra program in 1979, she had the opportunity to cook for Him and serve the meals.

Abhilash Singh donated 125 acres of land for the construction of the master unit in Etah.

He passed away on August 2, 1994, while Shanti died on February 11, 1996.

Brother Brajbihari

Brother Brajbihari, who hailed from Bhagalpur, was a great devotee. He was initiated in 1960 by Acarya Prem Bahadur Mathur.

He was a very senior officer in the state government of Bihar. He had a very close and personal relationship with Baba and had many opportunities to serve Baba during his lifetime.

In Patna, Brajbihari was Baba's guardian. He also made significant contributions to fight Baba's legal cases in court together with Acarya Ramtanuk and to the propagation of the Marga.

He passed away on March 21, 2002.

Brother Laksmi Chand Anand

L. C. Anand, as he was fondly called, was initiated in 1964 by Acarya Chandra Dev Verma. He was from Mumbai.

He enjoyed a very close relationship with Baba. He would seek Baba's advice on every matter, even family matters. Once, when one of his sons wanted him to take early steps to divide his personal assets among the children, L. C. Anand responded by saying that his son should approach Baba for advice on this matter. For him, Baba was at the center of his life.

The warm relationship was mutual. Baba too had a special affection for him. Baba personally invited him to the marriage of Acarya Kinshuk Ranjan Sarkar, Baba's adopted son. Baba also blessed him by staying in his house on four occasions.

When Baba left His physical body, L. C. Anand established an institution to cater to the needs of children with special needs. The organization continues to operate from his residence in Bandra, Mumbai, managed by a family trust.

He passed away on August 24, 1995.

Brother Chamanlal Munshi

Brother Chamanlal Munshi of Mumbai was initiated by Acarya Chandranath in 1965. From the day of his initiation, he intuitively felt that Baba was the manifestation of Lord Krsna, a human manifestation of the infinite Supreme Consciousness. As he progressed in his spiritual practices, his mind was occupied more and more in the contemplation of Baba and His mission on earth. He regarded Baba's mission on earth as a society-building mission.

He did much work for the mission. He contributed toward the purchase of the Marga Guru quarters in Andheri, Mumbai. He assumed the position of Chairman of the Proutist Bloc of India upon the demise of the first Chairman, Shashi Ranjan. Baba also graced him by staying at his house.

Like many other Margiis and Ananda Marga workers, he was not spared the ruthless actions of the Indian government. He was imprisoned during the Emergency period and suffered in jail. He was, indeed, a courageous person.

He died on September 9, 1978.

Professor Chandra Prakash Atreya

Brother Chandra Prakash Atreya, a professor of physics at the Devanagri College, Meerut, was initiated in 1964 by Acarya Shuddhananda Avadhuta.

He found the spiritual practices, ideas, and ideals of Ananda Marga so liberating that he propagated them widely to his college faculty members, students, and associates whenever he got the chance.

He used to visit Baba frequently in Jamalpur. Once, a thought arose in his mind that it was strange that people came from all over India to seek His divine audience, while the local people did not know Him. Unable to contain his curiosity, he raised this matter with Baba during a Field Walk. In response, Baba smiled and whispered in his ear, "If the people knew the truth, how would work be done?" Professor Chandra then understood that Baba came to this earth to fulfill a specific mission and not to seek praise or popularity.

Professor Chandra was an interesting blend of intellectual, devotee, social activist, songwriter, and spiritual practitioner—a multitalented man. He edited a weekly spiritual journal called *Mahasambhuti*. He also propagated the ideals of Ananda Marga to the people in Australia and the Philippines. His essays on PROUT ideology are popular. The devotional songs that he composed, laced with social messages, reverberate in the minds of Margiis in northern India even today.

He passed away on August 31, 2002.

Brother Gopal Krishnan

Acarya Pranavananda Avadhuta initiated Brother Gopal Krishnan, then serving as a District Sessions Judge, in 1964.

He was a good spiritual aspirant and devotee of Baba, quietly propagating spirituality among the people. Baba graced him by staying in his house when He came for the Dharma Maha Cakra in Kochi, Kerala. Both Brother Gopal Krishnan and his devoted wife got an opportunity to serve Baba during those memorable occasions. Once, Baba referred to him as “a silent worker and devoted *sadhaka*.”

Brother Rajgopalan

Brother Rajgopalan of Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, was initiated in 1966. He was the driving force of the growth of Ananda Marga in Coimbatore.

Being a sincere devotee, he ensured that the basic requirements of the missionary workers posted in Coimbatore were met. His disciplined lifestyle attracted many others to Ananda Marga.

He was also very courageous. Like several others, he was imprisoned during the draconian Emergency period.

Brother Gopalmana Shrestha

Brother Gopalmana Shrestha was initiated in 1966 by Acarya Giridhar Narayanan. He was the main person responsible for establishing the roots of Ananda Marga in Nepal.

He translated several Ananda Marga books into the Nepali language. He also authored two books, *Yoga Tantra* and *Kalki Avatar* that

describe the spiritual lifestyle prescribed by Ananda Marga and the role of Baba in elevating the collective consciousness of the world.

He was a strict moralist who encouraged his entire family to adopt a life based on ethics and spirituality. His disciplined lifestyle and service-mindedness motivated many people in Nepal to take to spirituality.

He passed away on September 27, 2007.

Brother Kanaiyalal

Acarya Shraddhananda Avadhuta initiated Brother Kanaiyalal in 1962.

Brother Kanaiyalal contributed significantly to the mission. For instance, he donated a piece of land in Thakurganj, Bihar, for the construction of an Ananda Marga primary school and served as its Secretary. He also established a master unit in Thakurganj.

He also helped edit a book on Bhojapuri grammar by Acarya Shraddhananda Avadhuta.

He passed away on January 19, 2001.

Brother Umakant

Brother Umakant was initiated in 1966 by Acarya Amulya Ratan Sarangi. He was both a devotee and spiritual aspirant and an ideologically driven person.

He was an active volunteer in the Aungika Samaj and the Proutist Federation of India. He served as the Secretary of the Samaj.

During the infamous Emergency period, he was arrested and imprisoned. He suffered much during his imprisonment.

He was blessed to have had the opportunity of Dharma Samiiksa in 1981. Dharma Samiiksa was an extraordinary three-month program Baba conducted to review the health and conduct of thousands of Ananda Margiis as well as to provide advice on the remedial solutions required to address the defects.

He died on July 16, 2005.

Brother Kumarakuru

Acarya Pranakrsnananda Avadhuta initiated Brother Kumarakuru, who hailed from Ipoh, Malaysia, in 1980. Brother Kumarakuru was then a high school teacher.

A Malaysian of South Indian origin, Kumarakuru married a Malaysian Chinese sister, Amrta, who was also a teacher. Both were ardent devotees of Baba and had devoted their lives in the service of the mission. They played a big role in establishing Ananda Marga in Ipoh, Malaysia.

During the 1980s, Kumarakuru's house was a whirlpool of orange energy. It provided shelter to Ananda Marga's missionary workers who visited Ipoh. It was almost like an ashram, with saffron-clad missionaries flowing incessantly through its premises. The house reverberated with an uncommon spiritual energy from the presence of the acaryas and the many spiritual activities that were conducted there.

Kumarakuru was blessed to have had the opportunity of Personal Contact with the Marga Guru in 1986. During the Personal

Contact, Baba informed Kuru that He was aware that Kuru's wife was Chinese. This revelation proved to Kuru Baba's omniscience.

Inspired by Baba's divinity and Ananda Marga's lofty ideals, he endeavored to establish the Marga Guru quarters at Batu Gajah, Perak, Malaysia. He faced a colossal challenge in raising the funds for the purchase of the land and the construction of the building. Somehow, he managed to collect sufficient funds for the purpose and single-handedly managed the construction of the building.

When the construction work was completed, he went to India to present the land title to Baba. Baba was very pleased with his effort but casually remarked that a bathroom was needed in His room for His convenience. It suddenly dawned on Kumarakuru that he had overlooked this vital point in the rush to complete the building. Upon his return to Malaysia, he immediately rectified his oversight and constructed the bathroom. Some of Baba's holy ashes have been consecrated in His room in the Marga Guru quarters in Batu Gajah.

Kuru passed away on November 9, 2001.

Brother Chandra Bhusan

Brother Chandra Bhusan was one of the oldest Margiis in Manila. He was initiated by Acarya Sumitananda Avadhuta in 1970.

He was a dedicated Margii, working more like a missionary worker in establishing Ananda Marga in the Philippines. He organized several poverty-alleviation projects for the benefit of the depressed communities in the country. He supported his family by operating a printing press.

At one point, he became the President of Ananda Marga Pracaraka Samgha in the Philippines. He passed away in 1990.

Brother Parmeshvara

Initiated in 1979 by Acarya Yuktेशvarananda Avadhuta, brother Parmeshvara from Germany worked tirelessly as a local full-time worker. He was a qualified medical professional and was married to an Indian sister, Hema, who hailed from Gujarat, India. They led an ideal family life, balancing the twin objectives of building a progressive family unit and pursuing their individual spiritual practices.

He died in 2010.

Brother Himansu Ranjan Sarkar

Brother Himansu Ranjan Sarkar was Baba's younger brother. He served the Railway Department in Jamalpur from the start of his professional career to his retirement.

Himansu's position was interesting. He was Baba's brother and at the same time considered Baba as his Guru. He related to Baba both as a brother and as a disciple—two seemingly incompatible roles he managed to balance admirably. It is not easy for anyone to consider a family member as a divine personality, especially when interacting with that family member on mundane matters on a daily basis. There are rare instances of this in spiritual literature.

Himansu began by seeing Baba as his elder brother, to whom he was very devoted. He used to consult Baba on every little thing, never making a decision without Baba's views on the matter. Baba too kept His role as Guru carefully hidden from His family members, deftly playing His role as a filial son and brother to His siblings. It

was only much later when Himansu realized Baba's position as a dharma guru that he accepted Baba as the Guru. Both Himansu and his late wife, Kalyanii, had several divine realizations of Baba. Himansu narrated his family relationship and divine experiences of Baba in a book written in Hindi. It is a popular book, one of the few accounts of Baba's personal life.

The point to stress here is that a disciple's acceptance of the Guru is not the result of blind faith or automatic, uncritical acceptance of His divinity but is a consequence of evidence of His divine qualities.

Himansu passed away on October 22, 2012, at eighty-two.

Brother Mangal Bihari

Brother Mangal Bihari, a very senior Margii from Jaipur, was initiated by Acarya Lalan Prasad in 1962.

He held several key government positions, including the post of Additional Defense Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, India. He was a senior member of the premier Indian Administrative Service.

Brother Mangal Bihari possessed excellent strategic, administrative, and thinking skills, which he employed in his service to the mission. He wrote extensively in Ananda Marga publications and had a popular column in the daily newspaper *Rajasthan Patrika*. He wrote about his life in *Tumahara Kam Ho Gaya (Beyond Prayer and Praise)*.

He was a great devotee and worked actively for the mission. He helped to manage the ashram and food requirements for the missionaries at Tiljala, Kolkata. He was also blessed to host Baba on several occasions.

He passed away on April 5, 2014, at the age of ninety.

Brother Thakur Singh

Thakur Singh from Jamshedpur, state of Jharkhand, was initiated by Acarya Kishun in 1964. He was very ideological and was imprisoned during the Emergency period for being an Ananda Margii.

He was a very devoted Margii, always ready to help the mission in any way.

He died on December 5, 2013.

Brother Khush Mohammad

Acarya Bhaskarananda Avadhuta initiated Brother Khush Mohammad in 1981 at Ananda Nagar. He was from Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh.

Khush Mohammad was a Muslim by birth. Despite coming from a conservative background, he was an ardent spiritual aspirant. He was not satisfied with mere rituals and the emotional comfort he derived from religious observances. He wanted something more. He wanted proof of God and the firsthand experience of mysticism. He intuitively knew that the initiation he received through the medium of Acarya Bhaskarananda Avadhuta was the first step in his spiritual journey.

Khush Mohammad took his spiritual practices seriously. He tried to follow to the best of his ability the prescribed lessons of meditation and ethical conduct required of an Ananda Margii. He also immersed himself in social service activities. Baba emphasized social service as one of the key prerequisites of liberation. Khush Mohammad was blessed to have the golden opportunity of participating in a Dharma

Maha Cakra held in Ananda Nagar, where he had his first audience of the Guru.

In due time, he bloomed spiritually and derived much inspiration to deepen his spiritual realizations. He eventually became an ardent devotee of Baba, having seen His divinity firsthand on several occasions. He was also attracted to the selfless service the missionary workers and other Margiis performed. Convinced of Ananda Marga's divine mission, he worked hard to bring others to the path of spirituality. His family members too became strong spiritual aspirants.

His spiritual activities did not escape the notice of some of the ultraconservative members of his conservative community. They mounted sharp opposition against his spiritual practices and association with Ananda Marga, which they considered heretical. Despite the fierce opposition, he continued his spiritual practices and eventually won over his critics.

Brother Khush Mohammad had an inexplicable mystical experience upon learning that Baba had left His physical body. He was overcome by grief to learn of Baba's demise. As he was trying to stabilize his emotions and come to terms with Baba's physical absence, he suddenly saw Baba appear before him in physical form, smiling sweetly in His characteristic manner. The vision vanished after a few minutes. That spiritual experience convinced him beyond a shred of doubt that the Guru exists perpetually even after He has discarded His mortal frame.

He passed away on May 19, 2012.

Sister Miirabai

Sister Miirabai from Maharlika (the Philippines) was initiated by Acarya Adveshananda Avadhuta in 1973.

She actively served Baba's mission, first as a trained local full-timer and then, after her marriage to Brother Surendra, in an Ananda Marga enterprise known as Saffron Trading. The couple ran an Ananda Marga kindergarten in Sanjuan, Manila. Both of them were also active Proutists and did a lot of volunteer work with AMURT in the Philippines.

Miirabai was like an elder sister to the Margiis in Maharlika. They used to call her Mommy.

She passed away on February 19, 2011, at fifty-six.

Sister Gargii

Sister Gargii from Italy was initiated by Avadhutika Ananda Mitra Acarya in 1970.

At the time she was introduced to Ananda Marga, she was attached to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. It was sometime in the early 1970s during an official visit to Ranchi, India, that she first heard about Ananda Marga. On the flight to India, she was seated beside Sister Madhuri, who later became Acarya Ananda Mitra. Sister Madhuri told Gargii that she was going to India to meet her Guru. Inspired by Sister Madhuri, Gargii decided to visit Baba as well. Baba gave her the Sanskrit name Gargii when she met Him.

Gargii was the first Margii from Italy, and she was the contact person for the first acarya to be posted to Italy. She assisted the mission greatly, helping the missionaries in many ways.

During her final days, her mind was said to be constantly attached to the Supreme Consciousness as she ideated on her Ista mantra. She passed away on June 27, 2012.

Brother Arjuna

Brother Arjuna from Los Angeles, United States, was made a *tattvika* after successfully completing a training course in Ananda Marga basic philosophy.

He was a devoted Margii who organized weekly meditation sessions in his house and tutored weekly Yoga classes for the public. He also helped greatly in establishing a master unit in Los Angeles. He was very fond of *Prabhat Samgiita*, devotional songs Baba composed.

Brother Nirmal Prasad

Nirmal Prasad of Basti, Uttar Pradesh, was initiated in 1960 by Acarya Amitananda Avadhuta. He was one of the early Margiis and devotees of Baba.

He performed commendable work for the mission, engaging himself in Ananda Marga's many spiritual and social activities. He was also very strict with his spiritual practices and made notable progress spiritually. He was both a devotee and Karma Yogi.

One day before his death, he revealed to his family members that during his meditation he used to hear *aumkara dhvani*, the cosmic sound of aum that advanced spiritual practitioners hear.

The next day, on September 15, 2012, he passed away peacefully.

Brother Vimal Rajasthani

Brother Vimal Rajasthani of Bettiah, Bihar, was initiated when he was young by Acarya Kishun in 1957.

Vimal Rajasthani was an accomplished writer and poet. He contributed many articles to newspapers, journals, and Ananda Marga publications.

There was an interesting story about his meeting with Baba. When the acarya who was then Baba's personal attendant informed Baba that Brother Vimal wished to see Him, Baba informed him that Vimal's actual name was Purusottam Sharma and that Vimal Rajasthani was his pseudonym. When the personal assistant narrated what Baba said, Vimal was surprised, as no one knew of this fact. From the very start, Vimal was exposed to Baba's all-seeing, all-knowing nature.

He passed away on March 6, 2011, at the age of ninety.

Dr. Maheshwari

Dr. Maheshwari of Bettiah, Bihar, was the younger brother of Acarya Bhuvaneshvari. He was initiated by Acarya Viswanath in 1956, making him one of the early Margiis.

From his student days, he had a courageous streak. He was also very dynamic and was involved in ideological and social issues. His elder brother, Acarya Bhuvaneshvari, inspired him on the path of spirituality.

As a student, he was involved in the United Proutist Students Federation, an organization to propagate the ideals and ideas of

PROUT among students. Once, in April 1961, he attended an Ananda Marga camp at Lake Sareyaman. He and another student Margii were required to carry some training materials to the campsite. They had to cross a dense forest to reach the campsite. On the way, a group of armed dacoits accosted them. Luckily, the two Margiis had the presence of mind to run away from the dacoits, thus protecting the materials necessary for the functioning of the camp.

Dr. Maheshwari later became a renowned medical doctor. He inspired many people on the path of spirituality. He passed away in December 2011.

Brother Baleshvar Prasad Singh

Baleshvar Prasad Singh of Bettiah, Bihar, was initiated by Acarya Nagdeo in 1962. He was the son-in-law of the renowned Acarya Sakaldeo Singh.

His father, Ramnarayan Singh, was also a good devotee of Baba. Baleshvar was directly involved in several Ananda Marga projects. He was responsible for sorting out the legal formalities concerning the acquisition of the Marga Guru quarters land in Bettiah. He also helped to construct the boundary fencing for the children's home. He was not spared the government's harsh treatment of Ananda Marga. He participated in a civil protest to free Ananda Nagar from the government's illegal occupation. He was jailed for several months in Purulia along with other Margiis for joining the protest.

He died in March 2012.

Sister Chandramani Devi

Sister Chandramani of Ranchi was initiated by Acarya Satyananda Avadhuta in 1956. She was the wife of the well-known Margii brother Anantaram.

The members of her family were not only devoted but also ideological Margiis, fully committed to the Mission. Her youngest daughter is a missionary worker of Ananda Marga.

She was graced with many divine experiences of Baba. One incident of her dedication to Baba stands out. When Baba was falsely implicated in a concocted offence, the Indian High Court granted Him bail. However, the organization had no means of raising the funds needed for the bail. When she learned of this predicament, she mortgaged all her properties and jewelry to raise the funds. She stood as Baba's bailer. Baba was subsequently released from prison after posting bail.

This great lady passed away on May 12, 2013.

Sister Mahesvari

Sister Mahesvari from the United States was a devoted Margii who contributed much to the mission.

She was actively engaged in humanitarian service through various channels, including AMURT/AMURTEL. Despite facing many personal challenges, she devoted her life to serving the less fortunate.

She was blessed to have met Baba in India with her daughter. She passed away in India during the Ananda Nagar Dharma Maha Cakra.

Other Contributors

Many others who contributed significantly to the mission have expired. Some of them, like Brother Bindeshwari, were towering spiritual personalities with rare and deep divine experiences. Baba raised Bindeshwari from the dead on three occasions. Bindeshwari was often immersed in very high states of spiritual ecstasy, his mind soaring like an eagle at the highest levels of spiritual realization.

Other acaryas, both renunciants and householder acaryas, and Margiis include:

Renunciants

Avadhutika Ananda Deepanvita Acarya from the United States; Avadhutika Ananda Sukrti from the Philippines; Acarya Vijaksarananda Avadhuta from Finland; Acarya Kritvidyananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Sujayananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Viirabhadrananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Advishananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Bhudevananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Hitavratanaanda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Subhabodhananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Satyatmananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Dhyotananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Adidevananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Sadhaneshvarananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Ranaviirananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Ajarananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Praneshananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Vrtiishananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Gopeshananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Sandarbhananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Amohananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Amritananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Gunanmritananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Suchitananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Adyananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Anantabhodananda Avadhuta from

West Bengal; Acarya Nitanavinananda Avadhuta from India; Acarya Karunketan Brahmachari from Uttar Pradesh, India; and Acarya Jivapriya Brahmachari from India.

Householder Acaryas

Acarya Hariduttant from Uttarakhand, India; Acarya Sachchidanand from Uttar Pradesh, India; Acarya Ramchandra Tiwari from Uttar Pradesh; Acarya Vindyanchal from Uttar Pradesh; Acarya Gautam from Uttar Pradesh; Acarya O. P. Sethi from Uttar Pradesh; Acarya Ratnesh Bhat from Uttar Pradesh; Acarya Shyamnandan Shirvastav from Uttar Pradesh; Acarya Shankarsvrupa from Bihar, India; Acarya Sahdeo from Bihar; Acarya Bhagwat from Bihar; Acarya Vishambhar from Bihar; Acarya Prembahadhur Mathur from Bihar; Acarya Rambahadhur from Bihar; Acarya Rambilash Ray from Bihar; Acarya Baban Tiwari from Bihar; Acarya Ramnaresh from Bihar; Acarya Saryu Prasad from Bihar; Acarya Paramananda from Bihar; Acarya Shyamnandan from Bihar; Acarya Vishnu Deva from Bihar; Acarya Sukdeva (Dharmamitram) from Bihar, India; Acarya Ganga Sharan from Bihar, India; Acarya Harendra from Bihar; Acarya Baidyanath from Bihar; Acarya Swamisharan from Bihar; Acarya Naval Chandra from Bihar; Acarya Giriidhar Narayan from Bihar; Acarya Dr. Suresh from Bihar; Acarya Yogendra Prasad from Bihar; Acarya Jawala Prasad Singh from Bihar; Acarya Shyam Sunder Lal Das from Bihar; Acarya Gagan Deva from Bihar; Acarya Surya Narayanan from Bihar; Acarya Gyan Mohan from Bihar; Acarya Mahadeva from Bihar; Acarya Rupanarayan from Chhattisgarh, India; Acarya Ramananda Shukla from Chhattisgarh; Acarya Kedarnath from Jharkhand, India; Acarya Dasrath Ojha from Jharkhand; Acarya Chandradeva Verma from Jharkhand; Acarya Narayan Swami from Tamil Nadu, India; Acarya Masin Bahadur from Nepal; Acarya Ramnajar Rao from Uttar Pradesh; and Tattvik Ramananda from Bihar.

Margiis

The late Margiis who contributed significantly to the mission include Gayananda from Nepal, Makhan Dada from Bihar, Mangal Prasad from Bihar, Sahadeva from Bihar, Dr. Suresh Prasad from Bihar, Dr. S. K. Pathak from Bihar, Paramananda Ray from Bihar, Kunj Bihari Sahay from Bihar, Ramsvarupa from Bihar, Jaideva Singh from Bihar, Satrughna Singh from Bihar, Khublal from Bihar, Jagarnath from Punjab, Madan Gopal Chawala from Punjab, Ladli Prasad Bhargav from Haryana, Balendu Bhushan from Jharkhand, Laxman Prasad Agrawal from Jharkhand, Mahapatra from Jharkhand, Ambika Prasad from Jharkhand, Professor Kawaldhari from Delhi, B. M. Sinha from Delhi, B. S. Bhati from Rajasthan, Ram Chandra Seth from Tamil Nadu, V. C. Narasimma Chari from Karnatak, P. C. Mehta from Gujarat, Sister Vidya Jain from Maharashtra, Sister Puspakale from Maharashtra, Bhagawat Pande from Uttar Pradesh, Tattvika Ramchandra from Uttar Pradesh, Ramjilal Subedar from Chhattisgarh, Rati Lal from Chhattisgarh, B. P. Gupta from Uttar Pradesh, Subhash Bharadwaj from Uttar Pradesh, B. D. Ranjan from Uttar Pradesh, Regeji from Madhya Pradesh, Raijada from Madhya Pradesh, P. Chaturvedi from Madhya Pradesh, Gopal Shastri from Andhra Pradesh, and Satyanarayan from Telangana.

Owing to constraints of space, it is not possible to write more about each of these illustrious personalities. I pay my humble tribute to them.

GLOSSARY

Acarya—One who teaches others by his or her exemplary conduct; spiritual teachers of Ananda Marga qualified to give initiation and teach all lessons of meditation.

Avadhuta—One who is thoroughly cleansed mentally and spiritually; a monk or a nun of an order close to the tradition of Shaiva Tantra.

Ananda Purnima—Full moon.

Ajina cakra—The psycho-spiritual plexus located slightly above the eyes at the pituitary gland. Also known as the lunar plexus.

Anahata cakra—The psycho-spiritual plexus situated in the middle of the chest. Also known as the solar plexus.

Aumkara dhvani—The cosmic sound of creation. The divine sound of aum experienced in deep meditation by advanced spiritual aspirants that irresistibly attracts them to the Supreme Entity.

Akhanda kiirtan—Continuous kiirtan. Kiirtan done continuously for three or a multiple of three hours, while dancing Lalita Marmika in an anticlockwise direction.

Asanas—Yoga postures for curing physical and psychic problems.

Anima Siddhi—The first of the eight major occult powers, which is the power to become small, small enough to enter any physical particle as well as the mind.

Antaryamitva Siddhi—The last of the eight major occult powers, which is the power to know the inner thoughts and needs of any entity.

Avartta kiirtan—A special type of kiirtan introduced by the Marga Guru where the devotee becomes the nucleus and moves toward his or her supreme goal.

Ashram—Hermitage or monastery.

Baddha Padmasana—Bound lotus posture.

Bhakti—Devotion.

Bhava—A special type of ideation that purifies the mind and arouses the latent love for the Supreme Consciousness; mental flow during intense devotion.

Bhava samadhi—A category of spiritual trance.

Bhakta—Devotee.

Bhukti Pradhana—Head or chief.

Bindu—Point or dot. In spiritual practice, it refers to specific points for concentration.

Brahma Jyoti—Cosmic effulgence.

Brahma Darshana—Visualization of Brahma or the Supreme Consciousness as white effulgence.

Braja Bhumii—An area in the Western part of Uttar Pradesh where the Braja language is spoken. Lord Krsna was born in this area about 3,500 years ago; hence, this area has deep historical and spiritual significance. Literally, it means the Land of Bliss.

Cakra—Psycho-spiritual center.

Candan—Sandalwood.

Dagdhaiija—Burnt seed. One whose samskaras are totally exhausted.

Darshana—The audience of the Guru.

Dasya bhava—The devotional attitude of looking upon oneself as the servant of the Lord.

Devata—One who has many good qualities. Also refers to a god or goddess.

Devayoni—A spirit entity with a number of divine qualities.

Dharma—Characteristic property; spirituality; the path of righteousness in social affairs

Dharmacakra—A gathering of spiritual aspirants for collective meditation.

Dharma guru—A guru who establishes Dharma, or righteousness, and destroys Adharma, or wickedness, in the world.

Dharma Maha Cakra—A gathering of spiritual aspirants for the collective performance of meditation and other spiritual programs that is held on special occasions and only in the physical presence of the reverend Marga Guru.

Dharma Maha Sammelan—A gathering of spiritual aspirants for the collective performance of meditation and other spiritual programs that is held on special occasions but not in the presence of the Marga Guru.

Dharmashala—A religious rest house or sanctuary for pilgrims and travelers.

Dharma pracara—Propagation of spiritual ideology.

Dharma Samiiksa—Analysis of the inner or essential characteristics of spiritual aspirants. A special program of spiritual scrutiny started by the Marga Guru in 1981, with the aim of freeing spiritual aspirants from the bondage of samskaras.

Dhoti—An Indian dress for males that replaces pants.

Dhyana—Deep meditation in which the psyche is directed towards the Supreme Consciousness.

Dhyana mudra—A special gesture for meditation.

Didi—Elder sister. Refers to a female acarya or nun in Ananda Marga.

Diipavali—An ancient Indian festival that signifies the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. It is also known as the Festival of Lights.

Divya Dristi—Literally, divine vision. A special type of vision by which one can see any object or event in any part of the world. A type of occult power.

Divyajyoti—Divine effulgence. An immensely effulgent, divine light seen in deep meditation by a spiritual aspirant. The sight of this divine effulgence is usually accompanied by immense bliss.

Dukhaharana—A special stick or cane used by Baba to remove the negative samskaras of devotees and infuse positive microvita for the purpose of healing and inducing different types of spiritual trance.

Ekadashi—Eleventh day after the new or full moon.

Gandharva—A class of luminous beings that creates an absorbing interest in music in human beings.

Gandhi tanmatrika samadhi—A special type of spiritual trance.

Grihi acarya—Married spiritual teacher.

Guru mantra—A special mantra learned as the second lesson of Ananda Marga meditation.

Guru puja—The offering of mental colors to the guru.

Guru cakra—The cakra located on the inner side of the pineal gland. Also known as the occult plexus.

Guru dhyana—Meditation on the form of the guru.

Ista—The ultimate goal of a spiritual aspirant.

Ista mantra—The mantra used in the first lesson of Ananda Marga meditation.

Jagrti—Literally a place for awakening; Ananda Marga spiritual center.

Jinana—Spiritual knowledge.

Kalpataru—The mythological wish-fulfilling tree.

Kalyanasundara—The representation of Shiva embodying the true spirit of blessedness.

Kaoshikii—A special dance-exercise the Marga Guru created for women to develop the glands, strengthen the nerves, and to overcome complexes.

Kapalika—Those spiritual aspirants who take the noble vow of serving all in the living and nonliving worlds.

Kapalika sadhana—A form of spiritual practice that causes the aspirant to confront and overcome all the inherent fetters and enemies of the human mind.

Karma—Action.

Karna Pishacinii Siddhi—A special occult power by which one can read the thoughts of others and know the actions they have performed.

Kundalinii—Literally “coiled serpentine”; sleeping divinity; the fundamental spiritual force dormant in the lowest vertebra of the body, which, when awakened, rises up the spinal column to develop one’s spiritual potentialities.

Kaunkalamalinii samadhi—A special type of spiritual trance of a high order. This special trance was first realized by Kali, the consort of Lord Shiva.

Kiirtan—Devotional singing in which the name of the Lord is sung either individually or collectively.

Kinnara—A type of positive microvita that influences people to have an extraordinary fascination for beauty, fashionable clothes, and costly ornaments.

Kurta—An Indian shirt for males.

Laungota—A traditional kind of underwear commonly used in India.

Lalita Marmika—A dance that expresses the feeling of surrender. It is performed while singing kiirtan.

Madhura bhava samadhi—A type of spiritual trance of high order. In this special spiritual trance, the spiritual aspirant realizes that every atom or particle of creation is immersed in divine sweetness. Everything becomes sweet for the spiritual aspirant.

Madhura Gosthii—A special group of spiritual aspirants in Ananda Marga who are inclined toward madhura bhava, a high state of spiritual ideation.

Madhura sadhana—A particular type of meditation in which the practitioner experiences a sweet aroma and the mind feels peaceful or composed.

Maha Bhava—Highest state of devotional intoxication

Mauna Vrata—The practice of silence.

Marana mantra—A special mantra used in Avidya Tantra to kill one's opponents.

Matsya bhava—The ideation that one is a fish.

Maya—Creative principle and its power to cause the illusion that the finite created objects are the ultimate truth.

Moksa—Spiritual emancipation or salvation. It is spiritual liberation of a permanent nature.

Muladhara cakra—The lowest and first psycho-spiritual plexus located at the midpoint of the last vertebra of the spinal column.

Mudra—Meaningful gesture.

Mukti—Spiritual liberation. Merging one's individual entity with the qualified Supreme Entity.

Nagar kiirtan—A kiirtan procession through the streets of a town or city.

Nama mantra—The preliminary lesson of Ananda Marga meditation.

Namaskar—A method of salutation that takes everyone as the manifestation of the Supreme Entity.

Niskala Brahma—Without seed; beyond gunas and samskaras.

Nirvikalpa samadhi—The highest spiritual trance of indeterminate absorption or total suspension of the mind.

Nrsingh Rupa—An incarnation of the Lord according to Indian mythology whose upper portion of the body resembles a lion and the lower portion a human being.

Ota Yoga—The Supreme Entity's intimate relationship individually with each and every unit entity in the universe.

Padmasana—The lotus posture.

Paincajanya—A special system of early-morning meditation introduced by the Marga Guru.

Panchayat—The ruling council of a village.

Para bhakti—The highest form of devotion to the Supreme Entity.

Parama Purusa—The Supreme Consciousness.

Prabhat Samgiita—A collection of 5018 songs composed by Baba.

Prakrti—The supreme operative principle, which is the cause of creation.

Prakrta sadhaka—A spiritual aspirant who sees Brahma or the Supreme Consciousness in each and every particle of the universe.

Pranam—A traditional form of greeting.

Pranava—The first sound of creation. See **Aumkara dhvani**.

Prota Yoga—The association of the Supreme Entity with all unit entities in the universe collectively.

Puranas—Fictitious tales in Indian spiritual literature that have an important educative value.

Purodha Pramukha—A very senior spiritual teacher who serves as the head of Ananda Marga Pracaraka Samgha after the physical departure of the Marga Guru. Literally, the head of purodhas.

Purodha—A senior spiritual teacher.

Radha bhava—The devotional attitude of Radha as the beloved of Krsna; a very high grade of spiritual ideation.

Ragatmika bhakti—A form of high-grade devotion where the spiritual aspirants try to get close with their beloved, the Supreme Entity, with everything they possess.

Rudraksha—The seed of a large evergreen broad-leaved tree traditionally used as prayer beads in India.

Rasamaya—Creation as a cosmic flow.

Sadhaka—Spiritual aspirant

Sadhana—Literally, ‘sustained effort’; spiritual practice

Sadvipra—A spiritual revolutionary.

Sadhana Varsa—Baba declared 1969 as Sadhana Varsa, the Year of Spiritual Demonstrations.

Sadguru—The highest spiritual guru.

Sadvipra Samaja—Spiritual society; a new order led by spiritually elevated moralists

Sahasrara cakra—The plexus of one thousand petals; the seventh and highest cakra, located at the crown of the head.

Sakhavata—Like a friend.

Sakhya bhava—The feeling of friendliness that draws the creation close to the Supreme Consciousness. The spirit of sakhya bhava is that the Supreme Consciousness is the sole friend of humanity and that human beings are the only friends of the Supreme Consciousness.

Samadhi—“Absorption” of the unit mind into the Cosmic Mind

Samaja guru—Social preceptor, that is, one who leads society by virtue of his or her extraordinary intelligence, deep wisdom, towering personality, and leadership ability.

Samkalpa Deha—The special human body used by the Supreme Consciousness to incarnate itself on the earth.

Samskara—Psychic reactive momentum or potential mental reaction.

Sanyasii—A monk or nun; a renunciant; literally, “one who has surrendered one’s everything to the Cosmic Will”.

Sarupya samadhi—The fourth of the six stages of spiritual realization, when the spiritual aspirant feels that there is hardly any difference between himself or herself and the Lord.

Sastaunga pranama—The method of salutation involving prostration before the Marga Guru.

Satya—Proper action of mind and the right use of words with the spirit of welfare.

Shakti—Energy; Force; Cosmic Operative principle

Shravani Purnima—Full moon on the month of the Bengali calendar called Shravani.

Shloka—Verse that expresses an idea.

Shrii—Honorific.

Siddhasana—Siddha posture.

Siddha mantra—A mantra that has been infused with spiritual power by a guru.

Sthitaprajina sadhaka—A spiritual aspirant who is not affected by pleasure and pain, victory and defeat, profit and loss, and so on.

Tandava—A vigorous dance for male spiritual aspirants invented by Lord Shiva that facilitates the development of courage and fearlessness.

Tanmatra—Inferential wave; the minutest fraction of a given fundamental factor. The various types of tanmatra convey the senses of hearing, touch, form (vision), taste, and smell.

Tanmatrika samadhi—A special type of spiritual trance.

Tantra—A spiritual tradition that originated in India in prehistoric times and was first systematized by Shiva. It emphasizes the development of human vigour, both through meditation and through confrontation of difficult external situations, to overcome all fears and weaknesses.

Taraka Brahma—The Supreme Consciousness in its liberating and devotional aspect.

Tathastu—A blessing given by the Marga Guru meaning “So be it.”

Tattvika—One who knows spiritual philosophy and can explain it to others. A teacher of Ananda Marga elementary philosophy.

Trikuti—The midpoint between the two eyebrows that is the seat of the mind.

Upa Bhukti Pradhana—A head or chief of an administrative block.

Vak Siddhi—The capacity or power that whatever one says comes true.

Vama Marga—A school of Tantra that tries to overcome maya through fight but without a clear goal.

Vanii—Spiritual messages.

Varabhaya mudra—A blessing involving a special gesture given by a spiritual master.

Vatsalya bhava—The devotional attitude of looking upon the Lord as one's child.

Vidya sadhaka—A spiritual aspirant who follows the path of dharma.

Vishuddha cakra—The fifth psycho-spiritual plexus located at the throat region.

Vishvarupa Darshana—Visualization of the universal form of the Supreme Consciousness.

Vrtti—Mental propensity, proclivity

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta is a very senior Yogic monk of the socio-spiritual movement of Ananda Marga, with over fifty years of experience. By the grace of his guru, he has had the opportunity to experience many types of extraordinary divine experiences. Like a prized vase, he can be likened to an exquisite product of the Master Potter worthy of Him.

ABOUT THE BOOK

- In this age of dark materialism, crumbling societies, and growing chaos, the spiritual experiences of Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta offer a ray of hope for humanity.
- His mystical experiences proffer hard proof of a hidden world beyond matter, a world of light and indescribable bliss—in short, a divine world beyond anything mere mortals have ever known.
- His fascinating spiritual journey is a gripping account of his titanic struggles against the many tests, trials, and tribulations on the path, and his glorious victory in attaining the highest spiritual realizations is testimony of his guru's grace. Indeed, it is an extraordinary account of an extraordinary spiritual aspirant that takes the reader through a remarkable journey beyond common perception.
- In sum, it is a must-read book for anyone interested in investigating the hidden inner world of mysticism and spirituality.

BOOK REVIEW BY SOHAIL INAYATULLAH

Autobiographies of yogis are meant to be inspiring. This book certainly is. Autobiographies of yogis are meant to take us to the mystical, the heart of the divine. This book certainly does. Autobiographies of yogis are intended to instruct, show us how we can become better, deeper versions of ourselves. This book clearly does that. From every page, we learn lessons of humility, of surrender, of deep acceptance of the nature of reality.

But this book is different. It is not just for the mystical but also for the activist, for the person who wishes to make a profound difference to the suffering of others on the planet. The stories that Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta tells do far more than inspire and instruct, they challenge. Whether it is his ability to stop a drunk, a potential murderer or a callous jail warden or stories about violent mobs, he takes us to the edge.

There is no sugar coating here; while he dances with ecstasy, he shows us how to surmount life's most difficult challenges. To live every day in mental bliss even if our daily material reality is painful, even if our health is decaying. He takes us on a journey from the mundane to the impossible. As Nelson Mandela said: Everything is impossible until it is done. Acarya Parameshvarananda's life is a testament to creating the impossible. This is a true autobiography of a yogi.

Sohail Inayatullah,

UNESCO Chair in Futures Studies;

Professor, Graduate Institute of Futures Studies, Tamkang University,
Taiwan;

Associate, Melbourne Business School, the University of Melbourne;

Adjunct Professor, the University of the Sunshine Coast; and

Co-director, Metafuture.org

BOOK REVIEW BY DR RAVI BATRA

Title: Divine Experiences: An Autobiography

Author: Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta

Publisher: Partridge, a Penguin Random House Company, 2015

The book *Divine Experiences: An Autobiography* is as wonderful as it is divine. It is an autobiographical work of a genuine and living saint.

Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta is clearly a yogi of the highest order. Before a person meets or realizes God, he or she has to face unimaginable trials and tribulations. The yogi has to undergo extreme penance and encounter hurdles at every step of his long journey. *Divine Experiences* reveals that his successful journey was and is no exception to this rule. The book is a virtual encyclopedia of inspirational, and occasionally painful, stories. It is a tale of his life as well as the unparalleled greatness of his guru Shri Shri Anandamurtijii.

His humanitarian work for the sick and suffering became as extensive as his spiritual practices. Pleased by his hard work in every aspect of spirituality, Baba Anandamurtijii fulfilled every spiritual longing of Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta. He had one mystical experience after another, including the rare and highly coveted vision of God's universal form. However, his life was as painful as it was blissful.

Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta's life is as great, lofty and inspirational as that of any renowned saint. It is our good fortune that he is alive and has revealed to us his varied spiritual experiences.

Dr Ravi Batra, Professor of Economics, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

Dr Batra is the author of six bestselling books, two of which were featured on the New York Times bestseller list, with one (The Great Depression of 1990) reaching #1 in 1987.

KIRKUS BOOK REVIEW

TITLE INFORMATION

DIVINE EXPERIENCES

An Autobiography

Avadhuta, Acarya Parameshvarananda

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BOOK REVIEW

An autobiography of a longtime Yogic monk and missionary.

As an early disciple of Indian philosopher and spiritual teacher Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii (known as “Baba” to his followers), the author has been associated with the teacher’s idea of Ananda Marga (“the ‘Path of Bliss’”) for more than 50 years. Ananda Marga advocates a social order in which human beings coexist in harmony with other people, animals, plants, and inanimate objects. The author writes of how he overcame his sickly childhood through meditation and spiritual experiences. As others witnessed the changes in his physical, spiritual, and even intellectual trajectory, they began to emulate his spiritual practices, so that the author became a missionary even as a teenager. Despite his many spiritual, divine, and blissful experiences—detailed in great length throughout his autobiography—his path was not always smooth and easy. As he worked for Ananda Marga all over the world, including countries such as Iceland, Singapore, and Jamaica, he sometimes faced government persecution and other personal challenges in his quest to expand its acceptance. As he overcame these hindrances, the author’s blissful experiences increased and his devotion to Baba grew.

Students of Eastern spiritual practices will find this autobiography fascinating and enlightening. It includes a chapter, "In Remembrance," that shares the fates of many people with whom the author practiced, as well as a very useful glossary.

An intriguing but dense spiritual memoir.





Divinity is a goal, a process, and an end in itself. The spiritual experiences of author Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta, recounted in *Divine Experiences*, tell of this wondrous journey to divinity, a journey taken by both the disciple and the guru.

Acarya Parameshvarananda's mystical experiences offer proof of a hidden world beyond matter, a world of light and indescribable bliss, a divine world beyond anything mortals have known. In *Divine Experiences*, he shares his fascinating spiritual journey—a gripping account of his titanic struggles against the many tests, trials, and tribulations on the path and his victory in attaining the highest spiritual realizations.

An extraordinary account of an extraordinary spiritual aspirant, this collection of memoirs takes us on an extraordinary journey beyond common experience. Investigating the inner world of mysticism and spirituality, *Divine Experiences* shares Acarya Parameshvarananda's spiritual experiences with spiritual aspirants and those with an interest in mysticism.



Acarya Parameshvarananda Avadhuta is a senior Yogic monk of the socio-spiritual movement of Ananda Marga with more than fifty years of experience as a missionary. By the grace of his Guru, he has had the opportunity to experience many types of extraordinary divine experiences.



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