

ÁNANDAMÚRTIJII
AS I KNEW HIM



Ácárya Vijayánanda Avadhúta

A'NANDAMU'RTIJII ASI KNEW HIM

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**A'CA'RYA VIJAYA'NANDA
AVADHU'TA**



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DEDICATION

To the sacred memory of those
Dadhiicis – my fellow disciples and
colleagues – who laid down their lives
while defending Bhagavat Dharma
against the cruel conspiracies of the evil
forces.

A'ca'rya Vijaya'nanda Avadhu'ta

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PREFACE

It is very difficult to write about my master, Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii. Though I had the opportunity of being in close contact with him from 1961 until his *Maha'pra'yan* in 1990, when it comes to writing it all down, I feel my words are inadequate to truly express how I knew him. There are many stories and many incidents to tell. As I begin to write of one event, a cascade of memories is unleashed, one story after another, and I often don't know where to stop. This chain of stories creates a patchwork of images that, taken as a whole, reflect something of my master's multi-dimensional personality.

Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rtijii was the spiritual guide of millions of followers throughout the world. His revolutionary ideas in philosophy, ethics, economics and science have caught the attention of the thinking public and scholars alike. The Prabhat Samgiit collection, unique in their magic and melody, has set a new trend in the world of music. His extensive writings on language as well as his short stories and essays have pioneered new ideas in the field of linguistics and literature. The full impact of his teachings has yet to be felt. Ma'rga Guru is the Light for the new age.

Ma'rga Guru, a spiritual master *excellencia*, had within his scope many psychic and spiritual powers. He lived for the universal welfare of all; his thoughts, words and actions were in perfect harmony. And most especially, his unbounded love radiated from every fibre of his being. Every trait of his personality shone with a special

glow. He embodied honesty and purity. He was a profound thinker and a man of high organizational calibre.

I have set out this book so that each chapter deals with one of his different outstanding qualities, illustrated with stories and biographical sketches. His never-failing optimism, his habit of using time and things to their fullest, his courage and spirit were all an integral part of his personality, and he used these qualities to set before us an example of living truth. It is my hope that the reader will be able to grasp something of the nature of Ma'rga Guru and use it as an invaluable guideline in his or her life.

I am happy to present to the readers this English version of the Bengali book, *Teachings of Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rtijii* printed on 1 January, 1994.

I offer my sincere gratitude to A'c. Pranavatmak-a'nanda Avadhu'ta for his untiring efforts to research and uncover all the stories that lay hidden in the memories of Ma'rga Guru's disciples. I also wish to thank Avadhu'tika' A'nanda Rucira' A'c., my translator editor and typesetter, without whose tireless efforts this work would not have come out.

A'ca'rya Vijaya'nanda Avadhu'ta

Ananda Marga Ashram

Tiljala, Calcutta

15 May, 1994

RESPECT FOR ONE AND ALL

In my school days, I had to memorize a poem of the poet Hemchandra Bandopadhyaya from my text book. Part of the poem went like this:

*Maha'jina'nii maha'jan je pathe kare gaman,
Hayechen pra'tahasmaran'iiya,
Sei path laks'ya kare sviya kiirti dhvaja' dhare,
A'mra'o haba baran'iiya.*

[We shall be great by following the exemplary lives of the great personalities, the *maha'janas*.]

Who is a *maha'jana* [saint]? The one who possesses the saintly qualities: honesty, simplicity, spirituality, forgiveness, discrimination and sacrifice, and who has an ideal character, deep love for humanity, and the spirit of renunciation. These rare *maha'janas* are at the apex of human development; all of humanity looks up to them. Such people are capable of inspiring humanity. So that our idealism may be ignited by their example we study about them in our youth. The followers of Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rti looked upon him as such a person.

Ma'rga Guru had a very special personality. Whatever he did, whatever he said, was pregnant with meaning. Every moment I spent with him was a learning experience. Through his behaviour and his words I took my example for my own life. In this little book I wish to

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share some of the incidents and stories that impressed upon me some of his special characteristics.

In spirituality it is taken as an ideal that one should treat everyone equally with the same respect and love. I saw that Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rtijii looked upon everyone and even the plants and animals with true love.

Ma'rga Guru dictated all his work – his books, songs, and office work. One of my major jobs was to take down the dictation of his books and songs. For this reason I was blessed to spend many hours in the presence of my master. During these dictation sessions he would often pause in the dictation to give explanations and deeper knowledge about the subjects under discussion.

Once, Ma'rga Guru was dictating a commentary on the Vaes'n'ava saints of Bengal. After he finished, he wanted to know my impression of his essay. In the course of our conversation, I mentioned the name of one saint, Uddharan Datta. Ma'rga Guru touched his forehead with both hands in *namaska'r* and said, "Look, you should not refer to the reverend Vaes'n'ava *maha'janas* in such a casual manner. The correct way is to add the title *T'hakur* to the end of their names. That is, you should say "Uddharan Datta T'hakur, Brindavan Das T'hakur, Narottam Das T'hakur, and so on." I was impressed at his respectful manner and felt I should be more careful in the future to follow this example.

There was another time he demonstrated the type of respect he wished us to have. He once turned to an *a'ca'rya* and asked, "Well, do you know where C—Brahmacarii is now? When will he return from his tour?" The *a'ca'rya* could not help smiling. Ma'rga Guru asked, "What are you laughing about?"

"The way in which you have used the respectful forms of 'he', 'is' and 'return'* in reference to that young worker made me smile," he replied, "I see now that you deliberately used those words just to teach me a lesson."

Ma'rga Guru explained, "Yes, it's proper to speak courteously about persons not present."

Ma'rga Guru always referred respectfully to others in conversations. The *a'ca'ryas*, *avadhu'tas* and others remained alert in this regard while talking with Ma'rga Guru.

He paid respect not only to the venerable persons but to everyone, whether so-called high or low, and he wanted others to follow his example. Many times he struck a blow to the vanity of those who felt themselves above others, especially any devotee who still had to learn this lesson for his or her own spiritual growth. He often quoted Caetanya Mahaprabhu's famous *shloka*:

* In Bengali, there are several forms of speech used for intimate and casual, or formal and respectful relationships. — Eds.

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Trn'adapi suniicena
Tarorapi sahis'n'una'.
Amaninam' ma'nadeyna
Kiirttaniiyah sada' harih.

[Be more humble than a blade of grass,
Be more tolerant than a tree.
Give salutations to all you meet,
And sing the Lord's name constantly.]

It was 1969. Baba had declared the year as "*Sa'dhana'* Year". At that time, Baba was staying in Ranchi. He was giving deeper, more thorough explanations of the diverse aspects of *sa'dhana'* and demonstrating these things before our eyes. Many people had gathered from all over to witness these amazing demonstrations. One day there was present some devotees from different walks of life: a police superintendent from Dhanbad, a few government officers, some doctors and advocates from Delhi and Jaipur. Sitting among them was aged Mathan Mahata from a remote village of Purulia district. Mathan Mahata had never crossed the threshold of a classroom, but he was a very virtuous person – rustic simplicity itself.

After the discourse, the master started talking only with Mathan Mahata. He spoke so intimately that the "VIPs" clearly got the message of his preference for simplicity and devotion than social status and university degrees.

An elderly widow came to Ranchi from Medinipur for *darshan*. Her late husband was an advocate. She was from an orthodox Hindu family. She worshipped all the

deities religiously – Durga', Laks'mii, Ka'li, Sarasvatii, Manasa', Shiitala', etc. and performed all the *pu'ja's* (ritual worship) in the traditional way.

That day, Ma'rga Guru was riding in the car to the *ja'grti*. The widow was slowly walking along with some friends. When his car neared her, Ma'rga Guru had his driver stop. He leaned out the window and called to her, "Mother! it must be difficult for you to walk, please sit inside my car."

The lady and her companions were astonished. This was A'nandamu'rtijii – people come from all corners of the globe just to get a glimpse of him – that very A'nandamu'rtijii wanted to give a lift to a humble lady like herself in his car! Anyhow, the lady shied away and refused to enter the car. He said, "All right then, you come along slowly. The discourse will start after you reach the *ja'grti*."

After she reached the *ja'grti* a few minutes later, Ma'rga Guru started his discourse. He spoke that day about the problems of running a big household.

"If a lady so desires, she can make her home a happy place. She can also make it a miserable place as well. Suppose there are three sisters-in-law in a family. Someone may be good; someone may be bad. Let's say that one of the sisters-in-law feeds her own son with more of the milk that is supposed to be shared equally by all. Immediately a noisy quarrel will start in the family." Ma'rga Guru then turned to the widow, "Mother, do such things happen in a family?" She nodded yes and he con-

tinued, "But such things never happened in Shiva and Pa'rvatii's household. Peace prevailed there all the time."

Turning from philosophy, he started discussing the meanings of words. "Aparn'a' was another name of Parvati," he said. He explained the meaning of *aparn'a'*, and turning to the widow, he asked, "Oh, mother! Is there anybody in your family with this name?" Again she nodded. He went on to give the meanings of a number of names. He explained the philological and philosophical meaning of different names, and each time asked her if she knew anyone by it.

She assented every time. "Yes Baba, this is the name of my youngest daughter-in-law. That is the name of my granddaughter."

After the *darshan*, Ma'rga Guru returned to his home. The lady remained, standing in a thoughtful mood. She came to me and said, "Today, Baba said so many things that indirectly referred to my household. He knows everything about us. It's truly mysterious."

Another story concerns an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer. The system of the IAS was started under the British rule. These high-ranking civil servants are responsible for the administration of the country. They must pass stringent examinations to qualify for their posts. Perhaps an unfortunate result of this was that many are full of pride of their elite position and education. In the years soon after Ananda Marga started in 1955, hundreds were attracted to its rational approach to spirituality. Educated people from all over India joined

Ananda Marga inspired by its universal outlook. Many IAS officers were among them.

Once, an IAS officer had come to the Central Office for *darshan*. He was a good man, honest and spiritually inclined. His love for the ideology was praiseworthy. But he still had some pride about his university education, a flaw shared by many in his position. Gangasharan Sharma, a simple and pious gentleman from Dhanbad, had also come for *darshan*. He, too, had many good qualities, but he lacked a university degree.

At the gathering, A'ca'rya Ks'itiishcandra pointed him out to Gangasharan saying, "Gangajii, you see that gentleman over there. He is an IAS officer and holds a high rank in the offices of the Central government. He wants to do some social service for the mission."

Gangajii approached him bidding *namaska'r*. The government officer avoided him. Gangajii was hurt but remained silent. After some time, Ma'rga Guru came out of his room and stood on the veranda. The officer approached him and touched his feet in respect. Ma'rga Guru looked around and saw Gangajii standing shyly to one side. He beckoned to him to come close. As Gangajii was approaching, the master turned to the other man and said, "Did you know that Gangajii is a famous poet? His poetry expresses many subtle ideas in beautiful, rhythmic way." He continued praising Gangajii for a few minutes. By this time, the gentleman got the unspoken message. A'nandamu'rtijii happily walked on, talking to everyone along the way.

Ma'rga Guru's life was tuned to the keynote of Neo-ethics. He integrated these spiritual values into every action of his life. High and low were the same for him. A senior *a'ca'rya*, a junior worker, illiterate Mathan Mahata, the septuagenarian widow, the IAS officer and Gangasharan – all were of equal importance to him.

*Sama plus'in'a' sama mashakena
Sama na'gena sama ebhistribhir lokae.*

[*Parama Purus'a* thinks equally for the welfare of the tiny termite, the mosquito and the gigantic elephant; He pays just the same amount of attention to the welfare of the entire cosmos – not more than that.]

EVERY MOMENT COUNTS

Ma'rga Guru taught us to use every moment of our life wisely, making the most of our opportunities and our potentialities – physical, mental and spiritual. People generally waste much of their time only for mundane activities and have little left over for higher pursuits. Ma'rga Guru utilized his time fully. Even the time taken in ordinary activities such as bathing or eating was also used for other work.

I remember when we were taking dictation for some children's literature. He was staying in Madhumalainca at Lake Gardens, Calcutta. Over a period of a few months he dictated *Nu'tan Varn'a Paricaya* (a children's reader), *In the Land of Hat't'ama'la'*, and other children's books.

He always dictated quickly regardless in which language he spoke – Bengali, Hindi, English, Sanskrit, or other languages – and regardless the subject – grammar, music, Prout, history or agriculture, or simply the posting orders of the missionary workers. Naturally, some words would get lost in the transcription, and so each manuscript had to be read out to him before sending it to the press. Ma'rga Guru was so heavily engaged in various projects that spare time was non-existent. Having no alternative, the manuscripts were read out to him during his bath, while he shaved, and while he dressed. We spent many a morning standing in front of the closed

door of his bathroom or bedroom reading aloud the latest manuscript.

Ma'rga Guru composed 5018 songs, both the words and the melodies. The remarkable thing is that until 1982, no one realized that he had any music skills at all. In fact, he hid his musical talents from everyone. Many a devotee had sung for him, yet he never gave a hint that he was an authority on Indian classical music. He was also well-acquainted with styles of Western, Chinese, and Middle Eastern music.

On 14 September 1982, he composed the first *Prabha't Sam'giita* (Songs of the New Dawn) in the peaceful environment of Deoghar, Bihar. This was the beginning of a flood of beautiful songs rich in language, ideas, melodies and rhythm. In only eight years, he composed over five thousand songs without neglecting his other activities and many engagements. He was able to do this remarkable feat because he knew how to manage his time to the utmost.

For most composers, a quiet atmosphere is needed to compose songs, but I never noticed anything of the sort in his case. He would be walking in the garden, narrating some botanical history when, suddenly, he would compose a song. Or, once, he was listening to the monthly reports from the district secretaries. One moment he was rebuking some of them for their unsatisfactory work, and the next, started humming a Baul (Bengali mystic) song of the Ajay Valley style. He used to compose songs while walking or eating or even

in the middle of taking reports anytime of the day or night: dawn, noon, evening, midnight nobody could predict when he would call the dictation team to note down his new compositions.

This hectic flow of song composition sometimes had its peculiar moments. Around three o'clock one night at Lake Gardens, the master wanted to dictate some songs. We were sleeping downstairs. Suddenly, his private secretary called out loudly from the balcony "*Ga'n! Ga'n!* (Songs! Songs!)". Some of the neighbours were awakened by the shouting. They mistook the word *ga'n*, for "gun" and thought that Madhumalainca was being attacked by hoodlums. Rushing to their windows, they were surprised that there was no hue and cry, no commotion. The next morning they found out the truth of the matter from us and we all had a good laugh together.

Song composition didn't stop even for meals. On one occasion Ma'rga Guru was sitting for dinner with his family. He called me in and asked me to look up the etymology and meaning of a particular English word from the dictionary. I looked it up the information and gave it to him. He said, "An English song has come into my mind. I want to use that word in this song. The word is not used nowadays in the same sense as it was some time ago." Then he dictated the words as he ate and taught us the melody as well.

Ma'rga Guru used his mealtime break to do several things together. For instance, he would use this time to be with his visiting relatives. He would tell educative or

moral stories, and speak with each family member starting with the youngest. Asking them one by one about their studies and other work. At other times, he would check printing errors by listening to us read out from newly published books or dictate songs. Every moment was used to its fullest.

By 28 December 1983, Ma'rga Guru had written a total of 1130 songs. During the DMC at Anandanagar, he composed eleven new songs despite the heavy schedule of meetings and programmes. Then he left for a tour of northern India after the DMC. In Deoghar he composed another fifteen songs in five days. He toured all over India from Deoghar: Patna, Betia, Gorakhpur, Allahabad, Kanpur, Agra, Phatepur Sikri (Rajasthan), Goyalior, Banda, Varanasi, Daltonganj (Bihar), Tatanagar and finally returned to Calcutta on 8 April. During this time he inspected many units and branches of Ananda Marga: schools, homes, hostels, presses, master units, ja'grtis and free medical clinics; gave Personal Contacts to many devotees and conducted General Darshans and DMCs in many places. But the songs didn't stop. In three short months, he had written a total of 349 songs.

He visited historical and cultural sites along the way in this tour, and composed exquisite songs in honour of the personalities or the places concerned. He stayed for a short time in Kanpur, a town of the ancient Shurasena kingdom, which was once under the rule of Ugrasena, the maternal grandfather of Lord Krs'n'a. There he composed

a song calling forth the memory of *Vrajaraja* ("King of Vraja") Lord Krs'n'a:

Come, O Lord Krs'n'a,
 To Brajabhumi – the hallowed land you walked and now
 have forgot
 Your favourite River Yamuna no longer swells
 Your melodious flute no longer resounds there.
 Your playmates no longer frolic under the familiar
kadamba trees
 Though *gopiis* no longer cover their butter pots in fear of
 you
 They still believe you belong to them alone.
 The *gopiis* search everywhere for you –
 On the riverbanks, under the *tamal* trees and in the streets
 of Gokul

March is the spring season of *Holii*, the festival of colours. The people of Mathura and Kanpur were happily enjoying the festivities, squirting each other with syringes full of coloured water. Perhaps Ma'rga Guru, seeing their joyous celebration, imagined that Lord Krs'n'a has returned to *Vra'jabhu'mi* (Krs'n'a's native land) in this sweet month of springtime:

I wonder, have you secretly returned
 To Vrndavan in the verdant spring?
 Do you remember your forgotten love
 And those who dearly loved you
 Is that you who has come this dawn to the *tamal* groves
 Spraying the elixir of life through your water toy
 You have inundated the world with the thrilling melodies
 on your flute
 The festive joy of Vrndavan

Has now has spread all over the world

He left for Agra. On the way, they passed the birthplace of Suradas, a great musician. As soon as he remembered this, Ma'rga Guru offered a tribute to the memory of Suradas by composing this song:

You gave language to ideas
 You infused melody to language
 Suradas, you are like a mighty god
 You have annihilated the demon of staticity
 Human beings were degenerating
 And the light of progress was fading
 You showed the way
 And led them to effulgence
 My mind overflows with your rapturous music
 Sitting in this shady bower
 I offer my adoration to you

Then he arrived in February at Agra, home of the Tajmahal. He retold the history of the Tajmahal, a token of Shah Jahan's eternal, radiant love for his late wife, Mamtaz:

Commemorating Mamtaz you built the Tajmahal
 sparkling white
 You were determined to break the barriers of time
 You used all that humans have at their disposal
 Your love-saturated mind was like the lofty Himalayas
 But time will take its toll and people will march on
 pauselessly
 Forever will this duel between humans and time
 continue.

Phatepur Sikri, situated in the middle of the Rajasthan, inspired him by its endless stretches of sandy desert:

The green trees disappear
 The arid desert casts its pall
 Yet I love you, O Rajasthan – land of heroes!
 How sweet and refreshing
 This bond of loving hearts knows no distinction
 Between green trees and dry desert
 Under the canopy of the same sun and moon
 And by the beat of the same resounding drums and bugle
 Our minds keep marching in the same pageantry
 Amid the same joys and sorrows
 In a dancing spree.
 In the cool breeze of autumn
 The white swans come flying from the chill north
 In biting cold and golden sunrays
 Comes the clarion call of the far-off Friend.

From there he went to Bharatpur, the famous bird sanctuary. Wild camels and other animals find refuge and countless multi-coloured birds from distant lands nest there:

Camels, ships of the desert, trudge along the dreary sands
 What a form of beauty in our variegated earth
 They go on working from dawn to dusk under all
 conditions
 The green fields are lifeless here
 The Mother Earth is dreary
 The planet keeps orbiting through the vast blue void
 The bird sanctuary is surrounded by the plum and acacia
 trees
 Warbling birds pour forth from the trees in their delight

Our minds recapture rare moments of love in this magic grove.

On this tour, he climbed up the hills of the Himalayas. On 6 March, travelling from Jammu to Bilaspur by car, he composed the following song on the glory of the *devata'tma* ("infused with divine spirit") Himalayas:

You, the mighty and resplendent Himalayas,
 You are the monarch of all mountains,
 The very soul of the gods and goddesses.
 You are the abode of all serenity
 In awesome grandeur you stand forever sheathed in snow
 You are the glorious abode of Lord Shiva - *Mahakaola*
 Thousands of glaciers roll down your feet
 O guardian angel, ever standing with head held high
 The clouds out of the sea shower upon the plains by your
 grace.

It was part of his daily routine to take an open-air stroll every morning and evening. Time was scarce and work was always piled up. So he used this time for conversations with visitors from distant places, and giving them instructions and necessary advice. He accomplished an enormous amount of work by this means. And many of those works were done in mysterious ways.

Once, Ma'rga Guru stayed at Netarhat, Bihar for about a week. It is a resort situated in beautiful, green hills about an hour's journey from Ranchi. Its ancient spiritual heritage adds to the relaxing atmosphere. Many ascetics used to meditate there. There is still a solemn, spiritually vibrated environment. Twice a day, he took

his walks around the nearby hillocks accompanied by eight or ten Margiis. He would narrate stories of the local history. Sometimes he would chance upon a particular plant or herb, and would stop to describe its medicinal properties.

On one such field walk Sahadev Singh, a veteran teacher of the Netarhat Public School, was walking by his side. He was originally from Bhagalpur, Bihar, and was an inquisitive person deeply interested in welfare of others. Ma'rga Guru always enjoyed the company of this amiable devotee.

They were strolling along when Ma'rga Guru noticed a tiny creeper on a boulder. Pointing to that little plant, Ma'rga Guru said, "It is an infallible cure for hydrocele. Plant this at home and take care of it."

Sahadevjii carefully uprooted and carried it with him. Afterwards he gave it to his domestic assistant and said, "Keep it in your pocket for now, and when I get home, I will plant it." Afterwards both Sahadevjii and his helper became busy and forgot about the plant. About three days later, his assistant found the plant in his pocket and realized that his employer had forgotten about it. Sahadevjii then quickly planted it.

Now, the domestic assistant suffered from hydrocele. For three days he had carried that little plant about in his shirt pocket. To his surprise, he found that his disease was cured! Later on, Sahadevjii cured many hydrocele patients using the medicine made from that little plant.

EVERYTHING HAS VALUE

Everything of this manifest world has been created by *Parama Purus'a*, the Supreme Entity. Every creature has the right to use the wealth of the world. Human beings, animals, birds, worms, insects and plants are all entitled to use the land, water and air for their existence and welfare. But avaricious and thoughtless people abuse Nature's resources for their greedy selfishness. We human beings often deprive the lower species of their natural rights by destroying the clean resources of Mother Nature.

The second fundamental principle of Prout is, "There should be maximum utilization and rational distribution of all mundane, supra-mundane and spiritual potentialities of the universe. " In *A'nanda Su'tram* Ma'rga Guru wrote:

Whatever wealth and resources are inherent in the crude, subtle and causal worlds should be used and developed for the benevolence of the units [individual living beings]. The development of the resources hidden in the five fundamental elements, viz. solid, liquid, luminous, aerial and ethereal, shall be accomplished only through the media of cent per cent honest use and efforts. People shall have to explore land, sea and space, in all earnestness to seek for, discover and manufacture the materials of necessity. The accumulated wealth of humanity should be reasonably distributed with due judgment and deliberation.

He explains about the maximum utilization of the physical world:

This universe is full of material resources. It can provide sufficient food, lodging and all sorts of requirements for the all-round development of not only human beings but also of the entire living world. But until now, we could not find a proper solution because of our undeveloped thought and misguided intellect. This world of ours is like a secret treasure-house, we have to utilize these hidden treasures to the fullest extent for the maintenance and development of all living beings.

But unfortunately due to our "misguided intellect", we do not properly use these hidden treasures and in the long run we shall suffer because of it. One of the most important movements in the twentieth century is the ecological movement. Without question, the root cause of the world-wide pollution and destruction of the environment is the misguided intellect and selfishness of human beings.

He was pained to see any unnecessary waste of resources. I was walking with him one evening through Rampur Colony towards the outskirts of Jamalpur. Four others were with us. As we passed a public water tap, we saw that water was flowing freely from it. Indeed, someone had stolen the faucet. Deeply distressed, Ma'rga Guru said, "See how people abuse the natural resources. You know, Nature becomes angry for this. Nowadays, people are wasting so much water. A day is sure to come when people will cry for water. It is not very far away. An acute water

crisis will engulf the whole world by the end of this century."

Readers must have noticed that even now, the water table in many populated areas has gone down considerably, and continues to go down unchecked. The master used to bring bits of cloth from his house and thrust them into the mouths of public water taps to stop such waste.

Ma'rga Guru wanted that the habit to utilize everything to its fullest should be ingrained in our minds. One day in 1968 or 1969, he was dictating some organizational matters in Ranchi. Someone had come ready with a sheet of foolscap paper and a pen. Ma'rga Guru dictated everything rapidly. When the work was over, he said, "It's better not to use new foolscap paper for dictation or making drafts of letters. There is a lot of scrap paper in our office with only one side used. It's better to use that instead. Perhaps only a few rupees are saved this way, but is that something negligible for our mission?" After this, nobody used fresh paper for dictation or drafts of anything.

It wasn't mere small-minded miserliness that made Ma'rga Guru so careful about every little thing. There is a moral principle called *aparigraha* that states that one should not take from this material world more than one's needs. Many of us waste and misuse a lot of things. The result will ultimately backfire on us when Mother Nature can no longer bear further abuse.

Ma'rga Guru was careful with all his toiletries and personal effects. He was frugal even with a bar of soap. Once when the soap he had been using had worn thin, he called for a fresh bar to be brought. Someone fetched for him a new bar of soap. He held up the old piece and said, "This piece of soap is so small I can hardly hold it." Nevertheless, he did not throw it away. He proceeded to skilfully stick it onto the new bar and started using it. There are numberless instances like this.

A'ca'rya Sarveshvara'nanda Avadhu'ta wrote in his book "*Amrtapurusa A'nandamu'rtiji*":

What seems small or insignificant to you or me was never so with Baba. Nothing was unimportant to him. So he was particularly careful about things being used properly. I noticed that when he finally threw out used, empty tubes of toothpaste or shaving cream, their condition was such that it was impossible to extract even a smidgen of paste from them. He squeezed out every last drop before throwing them out.

The same thing was true for shaving blades. Usually, he used "Gillette" or "King's Bond" blades. He used each blade as many times as possible before finally throwing them out. When he was in jail, other prisoners would collect the rejected blades to use for other purposes. Once, a prisoner took a used blade of his and tried to shave with it, but he found it completely blunt and useless.

After the transfer from Buxar to Bankipur Central Jail in Patna, the condition of Ma'rga Guru's health deteriorated considerably. He suffered from colds off and on. At that time, a "Vick's" inhaler was given to him to use, if he

needed it. When it was used up, workers brought him a new one, but he even did not touch it. He opened the bottom of the old inhaler and extracted the roll of cotton from inside. Then he unrolled it, removed some ointment that remained and applied it onto the end of the cotton. He re-rolled it and replaced it perfectly. In this way, he continued to use the old tube. The new one remained untouched despite repeated requests from us. Whenever Ma'rga Guru was asked, he would give the same reply, "Why? I am carrying on with this one. Let it be finished first, then I'll use the new one".

After about a month, the old tube was broken into pieces by accident. Only then did he start using the new one. But he did not miss the chance to tell us that had it not been broken, he would have been able to use it for another month.

The value of that tiny inhaler tube was no less important to him than had it been an expensive item. So that one does not take more than necessary from this material world, there should be no question of throwing things out half-used. Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rtijii made every action an example of the proper utilization of his time, and he used every object to the fullest.

SPIRITEDNESS

Spiritedness is one mark of a righteous person. When a person saturates his or her life with benevolence for the entire living world, he or she becomes genuinely ideological. Without courage, or spiritedness, how can one fight against the accumulated obstacles, miseries, and injustices that one faces in trying to do something good? This fearlessness was plainly evident during the years of his unjust imprisonment in Bankipur Central Jail, Patna.

In 1972, Ma'rga Guru was under arrest on trumped-up charges, but because of illness was in the Patna Hospital. In April, the Patna High Court issued an order following a court hearing that Ma'rga Guru should be transferred to Bankipur Central Jail.

It was stated in the order that necessary measures must be adopted to protect his health. The heat would be unbearable in Patna by May. Although there was electricity in the jail cell, the jail authorities, under pressure from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), would not supply an electric fan. The master's health broke down completely in the heat.

The CBI officials seemed to gloat over this*. They

* It is Ananda Marga's belief that the CBI and other vested interests were so vehemently opposed to Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rti and his mission that they would go to any extremes to harass him and the members of Ananda Marga. The details of his imprisonment, trial and subsequent release tend to bear out this conviction.
— Eds.

refused to fix a fan, even one provided by his followers. The key person behind this cruel treatment was the Inspector General of Prisons, R.K. Srivastava.

On April 12, the IG, accompanied by his whole retinue, came to inspect the jail. Everyone was in awe of the prison VIP. From all sides one could hear only the sound of salutes snapping. Here someone was paying him *pranam* [obeisances by touching the feet], there somebody was addressing him respectfully.

After inspecting every cell and every ward, the IG, accompanied by the superintendent, jailer and other officials, entered Ma'rga Guru's cell. But there was no ready welcome awaiting them. The deadly silence in this cell had nothing to do with fearful awe. Ma'rga Guru, from a lying position, started a long rebuke giving a step-by-step description of the unhealthy conditions and unnatural life in the prison. He demanded to know why the IG had not acknowledged the receipt of his letters of complaint despite repeated reminders.

This barrage enraged the IG. He bid farewell to all courtesy and decorum and shouted like a fishmonger. "It's my verbal order that you aren't to get any facilities."

Ma'rga Guru angrily replied, "Your verbal order won't stop me from resorting to the law."

Reprimanded by Ma'rga Guru in front of his subordinates humiliated Srivastava beyond words; his wrath crossed all limits. "Don't shout at me!" he shouted back. Then he threatened Ma'rga Guru (who was still lying down) and hastened away.

This IG, in conspiracy with the CBI, was responsible for the attempt on Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rtijii's life in 1973. We already had been getting intimations of his threats, but after this, we had no more doubts about his intentions. Srivastava proceeded to separate the Margiis from Ma'rga Guru and transferr them to other jails. He stopped the supply of Ma'rga Guru's medicines and isolated him in a small, damp cell.

Nearly a year later, on 12 February, Srivastava acted out his threats. Ma'rga Guru was poisoned with an overdose of medicines administered by the jail doctor. He miraculously survived the poisoning, but from then on fasted under protest. His fast lasted for five years, four months and a day. His body weight went from 68 kgs to 44 kgs, but he adamantly kept his solemn vow to continue fasting until justice was done.

When one worker came to visit him, he said, "In every situation of life you should be a tiger and never a goat." On other occasions, he used to say, "An earthworm digs a pit where the mud is soft; a dog licks the face of a kind person. Everyone in this world will submit to a strong person, but will brag in front of a weak one." He impressed these words on our minds so that we should act fearlessly in the face of harrassment and danger.

When senior officials, such as the Jail Reforms Commissioner, IG, or Superintendent of Police would come to visit or inspect, Ma'rga Guru would simply lie on his cot with his face turned away. He would not speak a single word with any of them. Officials would come striding into his cell, but would leave shuffling away.

He made it clear that by being party to the injustice perpetuated against him, they were unwelcome and unimportant to him. His attitude was a clear and silent rebuke: as you do to others, so you will get yourself.

Around eight o'clock one evening, Ma'rga Guru was walking in the open space in front of his cell after his meditation. He was talking to Dadajii Sarveshvara'nanda and other Margiis on the developments of the mission. Just then, the Inspector General, accompanied by the super-intendent, jailer, and other officials, were walking up the way from the other end of the yard. They occupied the whole path without paying any courtesy to the "rules of the road – keep to the left". One Margii said to M'arga Guru, "Baba, the IG and his officials are coming this way. It's better if we move to the other side."

Ma'rga Guru was annoyed to hear this. "Why?" he said. "We are walking along the left side of the road. We are correct. They are taking up the whole path and they should move. Why should we?" Ma'rga Guru and the Ma'rgiis continued to walk along the same track. Soon enough, the visiting officers were compelled to change their course; they moved over to the right side.

It was the Emergency* period. Everybody was panic-stricken under the martial law. The government in power was extremely powerful and did anything it liked. The

* To save herself from political downfall the Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, declared martial law in India. This period, called "the Emergency", lasted from 1975-1977. – Eds.

Emergency had cast its pall even inside the prison walls. The jail authorities, if they liked, would beat any prisoner black and blue on any pretext. A pervasive cloud of fear weighed down on thousands of prisoners, but not Ma'rga Guru. He always acted with calm resolution.

Some officers of Bankipur Central Jail behaved gently with the Margiis, but others, loyal to the CBI, picked fights with them at every opportunity. Ma'rga Guru, on his part, was courteous with the polite officers, but he did not miss a chance to cut the arrogant ones down to size.

It happened once that the lawyers, having received the necessary court permission, were to come to meet Ma'rga Guru. According to regulations, a jailer must remain present during interviews. The law stipulates that the guard should stand close enough to see, but far enough away so as not to be able to hear the interview.

Now, the assistant jailer was a very cruel, impudent man and was intimate with the CBI officers. When Ma'rga Guru learned the lawyers were coming, he informed the jail authorities of his stipulations. The jailer would have to stand at a distance while the consultation with the lawyers was going on. This meant that the guard would have to stand outside the cell under the scorching heat of the sun during the whole interview. The jailer was furious when he came to hear of it. Surely he thought his prestige would be lowered, not to speak of the discomfort. He insisted that he be allowed to sit in a corner of the cell. But Ma'rga Guru remained absolutely firm. "How is it possible? We are going to have a confidential conversation regarding my lawsuit. We

cannot jeopardize our case by concerning ourselves with anyone's personal advantages, disadvantages, or honour and prestige. Besides that, it is the law. The legal provision is that jail officers must stand beyond audible distance during interviews. So, why should there be an exception in this case?"

The situation was a stand-off. Ma'rga Guru would not change his mind. The assistant jailer insisted on his demand. The lawyers had come with a written court order; and if they were refused the interview, the jail authorities would be charged with contempt of court. Finding no alternative, the jail superintendent was compelled to issue a written order to his stubborn subordinate. The assistant jailer was forced to stand in the exposed compound in the heat of summer midday. After that, he softened his attitude to some extent.

Ma'rga Guru's policy in such occasions followed the Bengali proverb: "Like sage, like offering." which approximates the sentiment "Tit-for-tat." Ma'rga Guru was only able to modify that bully's behavior through teaching him a lesson of "tit-for-tat".

Ma'rga Guru's daily routine of taking a walk in the fresh air twice a day helped him maintain his health under the constant stress of his work. He kept up this good habit throughout his life. His walks were usually about half an hour long. When he was staying at Lake Gardens in Calcutta, he used to go to the park and stroll along the Ravindra Sarobar (a lake surrounded by a park in South

Calcutta). It was during one of these evening walks that a sharp retort was in order.

The Communist Party (CPM) was in power at the time (1980's), and it took every opportunity to harass and disturb its opposition.* One evening, the master was walking in the park. Some Margiis were with him. The police knew of Ma'rga Guru's regular habit and were ready for him. A group of policemen had been following and harrassing them. Some Margiis went and requested the police to stop disturbing them. Yet a few minutes later, the torches were again playing lights in their eyes. Although the police were well aware of whom they were confronting, they interrogated the group.

"Who are you?" they asked.

"Who are you to disturb us?" retorted Ma'rga Guru
Oozing arrogance, they replied, "We're policemen."

Promptly Ma'rga Guru flashed back, "And we are gentlemen."

Thoughtlessness and discourtesy also got a quick reply from Ma'rga Guru. In 1966, after the DMC at Karimgange

* Sometimes the efforts of the CBI and others to harass Ananda Marga took a humourous turn. Ma'rga Guru was giving the DMC discourse "*Para Brahma and Aparā Brahma*". A man had entered the DMC *pandal* (hall) under false pretences. Being completely ignorant about the etiquette of Ananda Marga, he started roaming about, instead of sitting, attentively listening to the master's talk. The security volunteers noticed his odd behavior, and asking around, came to understand that he was from the CBI. The volunteers collared him and confiscated

in Assam, we were on our way to Jamalpur. We boarded the Barouni passenger train and arrived in Jamalpur at about 10:30 p.m. There was still some time before the train left and Ma'rga Guru had gone to the toilet. We (A'ca'rya Ra'ma'shrayajii and myself) packed our baggage and prepared to get down from the train.

Two young men had flung their enormous hold-alls right up from the platform, blocking the exit of the carriage – very thoughtless, indeed. Consequently, Ma'rga Guru could not get out of the toilet, we were unable to get off the train and those two were unable to enter the compartment. An awkward situation! I was shocked to see Ma'rga Guru force his way out of the toilet. Very briskly he pushed aside the heavy luggage and set his feet on the platform. He grabbed the right hand of the one and the left hand of the other. Giving a them mild shake, he scolded them. "Are you trying to show-off or what?" The two were completely stupified. Their hands, utterly benumbed, dangled down. The train started. Their luggage was on the train, but the two remained standing on the platform in a daze. We walked away and were met by nearly a hundred followers that had come to welcome Ma'rga Guru. Talking with them,

his notebook. He had written in it the heading, "Upper Burma and Lower Burma". It seems that with his mind on espionage, he had thought Ma'rga Guru was discussing political strategy, not spirituality. Presumably, he heard *Apara Brahma* as "upper Burma" and was certain that when the master would finish discussing "upper Burma", he would move on to "lower Burma".

Ma'rga Guru left the station. I could not help thinking over how the mere touch of Ma'rga Guru had rendered those sturdy youths helpless.

From the beginning of Ananda Marga, the master was continuously busy. As the eldest son of his family, he was responsible for certain financial and social family obligations. And up to 1966, he had his job at the railways office as well as the work of his mission to oversee. He would turn to the dictation of his books after efficiently finishing his office work.* In this way, he didn't waste a moment. Yet he never neglected his duties because of the dictation. Despite his popularity with his colleagues, there were still a few that were jealous of him and tried to obstruct him in whatever ways they could.

* When the mission started in 1955, it had no books of its own. Ma'rga Guru gave a series of discourses that were then compiled into the first books of Ananda Marga philosophy. A'ca'rya Shiva-shaunkar (a high-ranking police officer) compiled the first book, *Ananda Marga Elementary Philosophy*. The next book, on morality, was *Jivana Veda* (A Guide To Human Conduct). Two more books, *Tattva Kaomudii* and *Ta'ttvika Praveshika'* were compilations of philosophical discussions, questions and answers with several of his disciples. Ma'rga Guru gave extensive discourses in the first DMCs on different subjects such as metaphysics, ontology, mind, life, Tantra and Vedas. Everything was written down. Later at the office he would finish his work, and removing himself from others, sit with someone to work on his books. Afterwards, Ma'rga Guru used to amend the discourses and prepare them for publication. Sushil Dhar. The series that came out from these discourses were called *Subhas'it'a Sam'graha*.

One supervisor, Mr. Raunganathan, held a higher rank than Shrii Prabhat Ranjan [Ma'rga Guru]. He was a good man, but his one major fault was jealousy. Ma'rga Guru's popularity in the office made Mr. Raunganathan green with envy. He thought his problems would be solved if only he could get him transferred. He managed to confirm the transfer order by running after his bosses in Calcutta. Excited by his success, he eagerly sent off a telegram to Shrii Prabhat Ranjan telling him to get ready for transfer within a few days.

Ma'rga Guru's colleagues were pained to hear this news. He had always been ready to help solve their problems and they had come to depend on his happy presence in their office. It was a blow for them to bear the idea that he was going. But Shrii Prabhat Ranjan remained calm. "Wait a little – just see who transfers whom!"

Ma'rga Guru took a few days off. Soon, two telegrams came from the head office: "The transfer of Prabhat Ranjan cancelled" and "Raunganathan transferred to —." After enjoying his short leave, Shrii Prabhat Ranjan was back at the office doing his work as usual.

Distraught, Raunganathan, came to his office and sobbed, "Mr. Sarkar! Your transfer order is canceled, but what about mine?"

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan without removing his eyes from the files, said, "What can I do about it?"

Utterly dejected, Raunganathan slowly returned to his own desk.

TRUE TO HIS WORD

One day in August 1992, I was sitting in the main hall of our Tiljala *ashram*. I heard that one gentleman was expected from Baghbazar (in Calcutta). He was supposed to have been close to Ma'rga Guru. In the 1950s he had introduced Ma'rga Guru to a number of distinguished persons of North Calcutta back then. I was delighted to hear about him and thought I could get from him the names of all the people Ma'rga Guru was introduced to back then. An aged gentleman entered the hall. He introduced himself:

My name is Samar Bose. I live at Nivedita Lane in Baghbazar. I first came in contact with your Gurudeva in 1949. At that time, Prabhat Babu was 28 years old and I was 41. His personality struck me as something special. I admired three things in particular about him: first, he was always true to his word; second, he avoided eating in other people's houses as far as possible; and third, he always preferred to sit on a hard wooden chair, rather than a soft one or sofa, whenever he attended gatherings.

I was a bit surprised to hear this. Those of us close to Ma'rga Guru knew how strictly he followed these three things. I discovered for the first time that somebody outside our Ananda Marga noticed some of our guru's special qualities. Mr. Bose told us how he met Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rtijii:

Prabhat Babu's sister was married to my brother-in-law. She often spoke about his many talents. He was supposed to be good at astrology and palmistry, an expert in astronomy, extraordinarily knowledgeable in all branches of science and arts. She said that whatever he predicted about somebody would always come true.

Hearing her praise her brother again and again, I was attracted to Prabhat Babu. In those days, I was the sound engineer of a certain cinema company, and was very busy shooting *Mejdi*, written by Sharat Chattopadhyaya. For lack of professional skill, I was suffering financial losses in my work. I was extremely depressed and thought I must meet this Prabhat Ranjan at once. I had word that he had arrived in Calcutta from Jamalpur. I got the address and the next day went to meet him. After introducing myself, I opened my heart to him. He listened to me attentively. Although Prabhat Babu was much younger than me, he was a gentle, steady and self-possessed man. There was a clear mark of firmness and self-confidence in his words and conduct.

"How long will this financial crisis continue?" I asked him.

"This is the ultimate financial crisis of your life. After this, you will not experience such severe difficulties again."

I talked with him some more and just before leaving I asked, "When can I meet you again?"

"We shall meet again a year from now."

One year passed. I had not seen Prabhat Babu in that time and had long since forgotten his words. He came to visit his sister at Baghbazar. By chance, I met him there.

He greeted me happily. "Hello, Samar Babu! How are you? Do you remember you came to see me exactly one year ago this day?"

I checked my diary and saw the date of our first meeting. I knew then that whatever Prabhat Ranjan

said would come true and that he was always true to his word.

Samar Babu did not miss a single chance to introduce Shrii Prabhat Ranjan to the circle of intellectuals of North Calcutta. He told us that in those days many persons of stature used to gather in the drawing room of Mr. K.C. Das, a business man of the area. There were always some interesting discussions going on. Many subjects were covered in the fields of philosophy, literature, art, spirituality and science. Professor Nirmal Basu, in later years the private secretary of Mahatma Gandhi and Shrii Vijaybihari Mukhopadhyaya, father of Chief Justice Prashantabihari Mukhopadhyaya, were a few of the notables that used to join in those meetings. Whenever Shrii Prabhat Ranjan came to Calcutta, Samar Babu brought him to those meetings. He also gave some talks in a number of public meetings around Calcutta. Many intellectuals joined in because of Samar Babu's enterprise. Occasionally, special gatherings were held at Shrii Ajit Kumar Basu's house, the proprietor of Aurora Cinema Hall. Shrii Prabhat Ranjan joined in those meetings as a special guest.

There are stories in the epic *Maha'bha'rata* about the keeping or the violating of promises. Lord Krs'n'a always kept His word, Karn'a and Bhiis'ma also. King Drupada was a fatal exception. Some readers may remember the story of Guru Dron'a'ca'rya (the martial arts trainer of the royal family of Hastinapura) and King Drupada.

They were students together under their teacher and were close friends. Dron'a, more ambitious, would always come first in their studies and Drupada second.

Once, in a burst of friendship, young Prince Drupada said, "When I'll be king, I will share my kingdom with you. I shall rule one half and you will rule the other." Later on after the death of his father, Drupada ascended the throne. But Dron'a remained a poor *Brahman*. When Dron'a came to know that his old friend Drupada had ascended the throne, he went to meet him. He reminded him of his promise.

Drupada, now an adult, burst out laughing and said, "How can I keep such a childish promise? Is it possible to give away half the kingdom to just anybody on account of a childhood friendship? Would that be proper? Yet, if you, a poor *Brahman*, are begging for some wealth, I will grant that wish."

Pride-filled Dron'a was humiliated and held fast onto that grudge. Now, if the humiliation of Draupadii during the gambling away of her family's fortune can be considered as a major factor behind the war of the *Maha'bha'rata*, then the second most important one would be King Drupada's broken promise and the events that followed that bitter enmity.

Ma'rga Guru considered it a great virtue to fulfil one's promises. A proverb says: "An elephant is known by its tusk and a man by his words." A person who is not true to his or her words will not be respected in a civilized society. One should do what one has promised even if it takes a lifetime.

Prabhat Ranjan was twelve years old. Hiraprabha, his elder sister was about to get married. He was extremely fond of her. Their parents busy preparing for her marriage. Activities were in full swing. They bought new, gorgeous clothes and ornaments for her trousseau.

Prabhat Ranjan went to his sister. "*Didi* [sister], I want to get you some ornaments, too."

Hiraprabha exclaimed, "What are you saying! You are my little brother. How can you give me jewellery? The tradition is that the elders are supposed to give gifts to the young ones, not the other way around."

She did not place much importance on the words of her younger brother. Many years passed and each went on with their lives. The sister's domestic life and the brother's missionary life had, in their own ways, faced so many obstacles and impediments.

It was the festival of Brother's Day in 1985. Ma'rga Guru went to Chinsura to be with his sister on that day. Hiraprabha's health was poor, but she was still cheerful and happy. After a little while he turned the others and asked to be left with his sister for a few minutes. He had prepared a pair of excellent gold bangles and now presented them to her with the request that she wear them all the time. Fifty-two years had passed, yet he never forgot his pledge to his dear elder sister.

A pledge is a precious gift to receive from anyone. How much more so the promise of the master's. Rameshvar Vaetha lived next to Ma'rga Guru in Jamalpur and was initiated directly by him sometime before 1955. He was

employed in Monghyr and commuted daily. In 1959, he suddenly got a transfer order to join his employer's branch office at Danapur without delay. Danapur was a long way from Monghyr. His monthly income was low and if he went there, he would have to maintain another rented room. It seemed impossible for him to maintain two households on that tiny income. Feeling dejected, Rameshvarjii told his dilemma to the master.

Ma'rga Guru said, "As it is, it's better you go to Danapur. I don't think it will be very difficult for you."

But still Rameshvarjii hesitated. "Baba, if I go to Danapur, it means that I will be far away from you."

"Why should it be so? I am within reach wherever you are and whenever you need me."

Rameshvarjii had nothing to say after this. He went to Danapur, though he was a bit reluctant to go. Sometime later, Ma'rga Guru was to go to Danapur for DMC. Rameshvarjii went along with other Margiis to the Danapur airport to welcome him. Getting off the aeroplane, Ma'rga Guru went directly up to Rameshvarjii and said with a smile, "Rameshvar! I have come to your Danapur!" The words spoken by the master in Jamalpur came rushing back to his mind. The affectionate words vibrated his heart and he could not hold back his tears.

Sometime after that, Rameshvarjii was transferred to Purnea. Ananda Marga was rapidly expanding in Purnea and Saharsa districts, and Margiis were making arrangements for a big programme there. Ma'rga Guru's programme to visit Purnea was made. Thousands of Margiis were waiting at the airport to receive him. Rameshvarjii

was also there. As he got down from the plane and entered the arrival hall, he met Rameshvarjii. Right away Ma'rga Guru said, "Rameshvar, I have come to your Purnea, too!" Rameshvarjii wept as he remembered those sweet words of Jamalpur.

A few more years passed and Rameshvarjii was transferred to Jamshedpur. Ananda Marga was growing there, too, and DMC was arranged. Once again, as soon Ma'rga Guru met Rameshvarjii, he said, "Rameshvar, I have arrived at your Jamshedpur, too!" No words can describe Rameshvarjii's feelings.

Through the endless love and grace of Ma'rga Guru, Rameshvarjii's life passed happily. His daughters had married good husbands and his only son became a government officer. Rameshvarjii has had a life of blissful meditation and chanting, and he enjoys looking back now and then to the sweet memories of his days with Baba.

People make so many promises, but too easily, these are forgotten and remain unfulfilled. Ma'rga Guru never forgot his promises, and, he never forgot the pledges that were given to him.

A young man met Ma'rga Guru in Personal Contact. Ma'rga Guru observed the symptoms of the initial stages of tuberculosis in him. Without telling what he saw, he instructed the youth to observe specific dos and don'ts that would check the disease. The young man promised to follow the instructions exactly. At first, he got better to some extent due to the treatment, rest and nourishing

food, but he did not continue following those instructions. About five years later TB took a strong hold. He was emaciated and vomiting blood. It was even difficult for him to walk, take a bath or eat.

DMC was being held at Jamshedpur. More than a hundred workers crowded into the room for a reporting session with Ma'rga Guru. Everyone was waiting and ready to begin.

Suddenly, Ma'rga Guru inquired, "Where is V—?" Someone was sent to find out about him. That day, the young man's condition had taken a bad turn; he was hardly able to sit up. When the master was informed about his condition, he sent for the youth. "If he is unable to walk, he should be carried."

All reporting stopped. We were surprised to see Ma'rga Guru's concern. Two strong Margiis carried that man to the meeting room. Patiently, Ma'rga Guru asked about the full details of his condition. In a trembling voice, the youth told him everything.

Ma'rga Guru said to him, "Do you recall, five years ago in Jamalpur, I urged you repeatedly to follow certain things. Even at that time, I knew you were susceptible to tuberculosis. It was for your own good that I gave you those instructions. And you also promised you would follow through. But you were not conscientious to observe those instructions, and invited this trouble onto yourself." He remained silent for a few moments deliberating. Then he turned to us and said, "Do you want that this boy should die a premature death at this tender age?"

"No, Baba! We want that this boy should recover his health and become normal."

"But you don't understand where his trouble lies." Ma'rga Guru said, "This boy doesn't keep his word. So, even if I make him all right this time, he will again cause himself trouble by violating the dos and don'ts of his cure."

The boy sobbed in his quavering voice, "No, Baba, from now on, I will be very strict in following all your instructions."

Everybody had been watching this drama unfold with bated breath. Ma'rga Guru came to a decision. "Stand up," he said. Some workers helped the youth stand erect. The master turned his gaze to the diseased body for some moments, then he touched those parts very lightly with his stick.

He asked him, "How do you feel now?"

"I feel a very cold soothing touch," the young man replied.

By the grace of Ma'rga Guru, that young man got well. Nowadays, he helps with the welfare work of our mission, and, since that time, has always kept his word.

I AM AN INCORRIGIBLE OPTIMIST

A poet once wrote this message of hope: *Nishidin bharasa'ra'khis ore man habei habe.* ["Hold fast to your faith day and night, O mind, and surely you will succeed."] Poets, artists, and social workers inspire us with encouragement to go on moving forward on the path of self-knowledge. It often happens in an individual that a negative flow of mind prevails. Artists and poets inspire both individuals and society as a whole not to falter in their progress towards their goal.

Our human mind is created by the Cosmic Mind and is continuously evolving along the current Cosmic flow. The mind forever moves, and it will move either in a positive flow towards sublimity or negatively towards materialism. In the unconscious mind are memories of its past animal lives. A person is pulled in one direction by the momentum of those base instincts or in another by the melodious call of life divine. Because of this internal tug-of-war, one sometimes speeds towards the Absolute exhilarated by the affirmation of life, and at other times is pulled down by the instincts, which cause frustration, depression, and hopelessness.

One of the teachings of Lord Shiva, the first guru of Tantra, was: *Phalis'yatiiti vishva'sah siddherprathama laks'an'am.* ["Firm determination is the first mark of success."] If a spiritual aspirant intends to reach his or her goal, he or she must have unwavering determination.

Truly, this is the key to success. Those who venture along the path of truth must have unshakeable optimism in their hearts. Spiritual seekers established in hope and faith are quick to attain virtue and true inner happiness.

The aspirations of a truth-lover surely get fulfilled. The deceitful may or may not get their dreams. The sage Patanjali, the author of the *Yoga Sutras*, said in unequivocal terms, *Satya pratis't'ha'ya'm' kriyaphala'shraya-tvam*. ["If a person is established in satya (truthfulness), the Supreme Being will facilitate his/her success in any undertaking."] The conditions for success depend on one's optimism. And a human being must have it to move along the path of righteousness. Violation of this is painful. *Mithyava'dii sada' du'khii*. ["A liar is always unhappy."]

Ma'rga Guru once said, "I am an incorrigible optimist." Ma'rga Guru inspired us to vigorously embrace optimism in everything we did, whether big or small. He always exhorted humanity to adopt a positive outlook. I myself never heard him speak negatively on any occasion. It angered him to hear any worker or Margii speak doubtfully or of negative thoughts. He would scold severely if anyone did so.

Once in the early days, when we were barely a few hundred members, Ma'rga Guru was discussing the future of Ananda Marga. Some of us sat in a little group around him listening in wonder as he said, "Someday in the near future you will see the ideology of Ananda Marga spread beyond the boundaries of India to all the other continents of the world. Thousands of boys and girls from different

corners of the world will accept Ananda Marga as the ideology of their lives and will work unitedly to build a new world. " He looked to a new worker seated in the front row. "And you know, my little boys and girls, they will accomplish this lofty task. "

About 9 o'clock that evening, Ma'rga Guru went on a field walk with a few Margiis. One of them was an IRS. officer. He seemed to think highly of a university education. He said doubtfully, "Baba, if a person intends to accomplish such marvellous deeds, he ought to have made profound studies and acquire high university degrees."

Disgust marked Ma'rga Guru's face. He said, "What do you know what one can do and what one cannot do! I believe in the infinite potentialities of human beings. What can a person not do if he strives to awaken his latent potential by sincere practice. A self-confident, optimistic person can accomplish many great deeds in this world through sheer determination. Humanity or greatness has nothing to do with ostentatious degrees from universities." The Margii remained silent after that.

Optimism runs through all Ma'rga Guru's works especially in his *Prabha't Sam'giita* and juvenile literature. Even the children's rhymes are full of affirmation.

I was speaking once with Ma'rga Guru's brothers and classmates about his childhood. They said that whatever team he played on was sure to win no matter what the

game was – football, *ha-doo-doo*, swimming or wrestling. At the very beginning of the game he would rally his teammates with a pep talk. "Hey! We have to win this game at any cost. No defeat for us. We want victory." This indomitable determination worked like nothing else to spur his teammates on to victory every time. Himaun'gshurainjan Sarkar, his younger brother, wrote in his biography of Ma'rga Guru:

Once there was an exhibition stick-fight between my elder brother and his playmate Sunil Kumar Sarkar. My brother was then about thirteen years old and Sunil Sarkar was sixteen. Sunil was taller and stronger. But what did that matter? A person triumphs through will power and skill. The fight started. For some time there was no clear winner. Everybody, myself included, took it for granted that Sunil would win. All at once, my brother skilfully aimed a strong blow to Sunil's leg. Sunil plopped to the ground with a thud. My elder brother won the match; it was only through his will power that he won.

Ma'rga Guru lost his father in 1936. He was a student of class nine, just fourteen years old. His father, Laksmi Narayan Sarkar, was the only breadwinner and the family – his mother, grandmother, three brothers and two sisters – had depended mainly on that income. But Shrii Prabhat Ranjan was never worried. With his strong, optimistic outlook he was able to help pull the family through those rough times. In the natural course of life, worries and anxieties come and they pass away in due time.

From the beginning, struggle has been an inevitable part of Ananda Marga's establishment. The only way to face these obstacles would be through unflinching optimism.

Ma'rga Guru set out certain ideal objectives of the mission: (1) common spiritual ideology, (2) strict moral code, (3) dharma in family life, (4) world fraternity, (5) socio-economic equality and security, (6) no barriers based on caste, creed, community, country or geography, (7) no dogmas or superstitions. But some orthodox Hindus could not accept Ananda Marga's universal and non-dogmatic approach to spirituality. As early as 1955, Hindu conservatives started publishing malicious statements against Ma'rga Guru and his mission. Hindu agitators tried to disrupt a number of DMCs in northern India. But Ma'rga Guru was undaunted. In order to spread new, liberal thoughts and ideas such ideological opposition is inevitable.

This type of conflict is a sure sign that one's movement is truly progressive. Ma'rga Guru used to say:

*Ha'thii cale ba'za'r men men kutta bhunke ha'ja'r.
Sa'dhuyon ka' durbha'v nahiin jab ninde sam'sa'r.*

["The stately elephant lumbers through the bazaar along unheeding the barking dogs that follow at its heels."]

Similarly, a righteous person should proceed towards his or her *summum bonum* of life without looking right or left. It is useless to get flustered by what detractors may say. Ma'rga Guru put this into practice throughout his life and instructed his devoted followers to do the same.

It took some time before the mission could get its own offices, *ja'grtis*, libraries, presses and the like. All the work was managed from rented houses, and owing to this, many difficulties had to be faced. In 1957, the Margiis of Jamalpur, Monghyr and Bhagalpur raised with much difficulty about twenty thousand rupees and purchased about 1 acre of land. They built the first central office and *ja'grti* there. Some local anti-social gang forcibly occupied that piece of land. When Ma'rga Guru came to know of it he issued strict orders to the General Secretary of the mission to recover their legitimate property at any cost and drive away the troublemakers. On the other hand, the gang contained the most notorious hooligans of the locality. They were quite strong and had everything – manpower, money and arms. Moreover they were supported by the local religious and political leaders – a perfect match. But Ma'rga Guru held fast to his own outlook: Fight against injustice; your victory is assured.

Inspired to righteous action, a number of young, strong Margiis came in from Monghyr, Begusarai and Bhagalpur. Led by A'ca'rya Ramtanuk, A'ca'rya Kuladiip and the student, Ramakanta, they chased those rowdies (who were armed with sticks, spears, etc.) out from that place. The gang fled away. Then boundary walls were raised within twenty-four hours, and the inauguration ceremony was celebrated on 28 December under a canvas pavilion.

Seeing the outcome of that incident, Margiis and non-Margiis alike understood that Ma'rga Guru is a man of

his word, a stern personality. At Ma'rga Guru's workplace, thousands of workers of the Railway Company passed the word around that Shrii Prabhat Ranjan is a master of yoga and Tantra and has mystic occult powers – what he says, he does.

Even in the face of apparent disaster Ma'rga Guru remained optimistic. By 1967, Ma'rga Guru had left Jamalpur and had moved the central office of the mission to Anandanagar in Purulia District, West Bengal. Ma'rga Guru's presence in any place meant that there was a tremendous flood of activity. The workers at the office, some well-wishers of the neighbouring villages and the students were working together enthusiastically. There was much to be done to turn the barren land into a model project. Schools, hostels, orphanages, hospitals, leprosy clinics and homes for the handicapped were all under development. And the infrastructure also had to be built: roads, ponds, dams and the like.

The communist cadres in Purulia were bragging that once they come to power, they will "teach the Margiis a good lesson. We'll chase them out from the entire Purulia District." Ananda Marga had aroused the ire of the leftists because of its staunch stand against godless communism. The leftists defeated the Congress Party and won the election. They formed a coalition government called the United Front. Ajoy Mukhopadhyaya, of the Bengal Congress Party, became the chief minister and Jyoti Basu, the leader of the communists, became the home minister. No sooner had they come to power than they

incited the local party cadres to fall upon Ananda Marga. The local administration was confident that if they launched a campaign to crush Ananda Marga, the communist home minister would be grateful.

And so the plot was implemented. The local block development officer (a close relative of the Deputy Commissioner of Purulia District) sought the alliance of the communists to instigate the local people. The villagers, who were simple-minded and illiterate fell under the sway of the false accusations made against the mission by such big officials. This continued for some time.

On 5 March 1967, several thousand incited villagers and provocateurs came armed with bows and arrows, spears, axes and other weapons. Five workers, including the master's Personal Assistant (PA), A'c. Abheda'nanda Av., went out to meet the villagers in hopes of a parley. But the bloodthirsty mob was in no mood for reasonable discussion. They mercilessly attacked and butchered the unarmed workers. That day, twenty-five other missionaries were critically wounded with poisoned arrows defending the ashram and central office. This was the first occasion that the threats against Ananda Marga had turned into tragic violence. The five missionaries, A'c. Abhedananda Avadhu'ta, A'c. Saccidananda Avadhu'ta, Avadha Brc. Bharat Brc. and Prabhas Brc. became the first *dadhichis** of Ananda Marga.

* *Dadhichi* means "someone who sacrifices his or her life for a great cause". — Eds.

The attack devastated the Margiis. They stood with tears in their eyes, looking towards Ma'rga Guru for hope in this moment of hopelessness. The words he spoke standing amid the dead and wounded was a balm of peace in their grief. He began with the words that Lord Krs'n'a addressed to Arjuna benumbed with grief at the death of his son.

*Sadasi va'kpat'uta' yudhi vikramam
Vipadi dhaeryyam' purus'asya laks'an'am*

[When you are in a debate you should possess the gift of gab; when you are on the battlefield you will have to be valourous. When you are in danger you must possess tremendous patience.]

Ma'rga Guru continued, "You should not permit yourselves to give way to depression. Problems come and problems go. You are fighting for the cause of righteousness. And when you fight for the cause of righteousness these troubles certainly come. You must take this challenge and I know that victory will surely be yours." After he spoke these words everyone's heart was lifted and they could face the crisis calmly.

Ma'rga Guru taught us to be extremely optimistic in all aspects of life. A noble ideology is not established overnight. Only at the cost of overcoming so many obstacles, harassments and of many sacrifices can great ideas get established. Through his inspiration, Ananda Marga was able to face many dark periods of persecution and intolerance. His optimism shined through especially during

the period he was detained in jail under trumped-up charges.

It was December 1971. Events were leading up to the eventual arrest and subsequent imprisonment of Ma'rga Guru. He had been residing at Pataliputra Colony in Patna. I was living at Anandanagar and visited Patna only once in a while. On the tenth, Ma'rga Guru gave the Sixteen Points for spiritual practices and made them mandatory for all spiritual aspirants.* At Anandanagar, the General Secretary explained the Sixteen Points to everybody. As part of proper diet, tea and coffee was

* Spiritual practice implies a physico-psychic process. The progress of spiritual life depends on gradual physico-psychic purification. In 1956, Ma'rga Guru had given a few instructions about keeping the body and mind pure, society, meditation, etc. in *Carya'carya*. In 1971, he compiled a number of conduct rules and called them the Sixteen Points. Those conduct rules were, 1) Wash the urinary organ with water after urination; 2) Men must pull back the foreskin; 3) The joint hair must not be removed; 4) Adults must always use tight fitting underwear (*Kaopiina (langota)* for men); 5) *Vya'pak shaoca* (half-bath) must be done before meals, meditation and sleep; 6) Bath should be taken according to the prescribed system; 7) Only a sentient diet should be followed; 8) Observe fasting according to the prescribed system; 9) Meditation should be practised regularly; 10) Observe non-compromising strictness regarding the sanctity of *Is't'a*; 11) Observe non-compromising strictness regarding the sanctity of Ideology; 12) Observe non-compromising strictness regarding conduct rules; 13) Observe non-compromising strictness regarding the Supreme Command; 14) Remember your oaths daily; 15) Attend weekly Dharmcakra (collective meditation) without fail; 16) C.S.D.K. (C=conduct rules, S=service, D=duty, K= *kiirtana*) should also be observed.

now prohibited totally for sanyasiis and missionary workers. (It is not restricted for householders.) I was habituated to drink tea since childhood, but from that day, I stopped. That night, I boarded a train to Patna and arrived the next morning. I was standing at the gate of the *ja'grti* about 11 a.m. when Ma'rga Guru stopped his car nearby and said, "Come along! Let us go for a walk outside." I sat next to Ma'rga Guru in the back of the car and we drove off.

He asked after my well-being, When did I reach Patna? How is everyone there? Did everyone in Anandanagar hear about the 16 Points? What were their comments? and so on. I answered all those questions in brief.

I said, "Yesterday, everybody heard about the 16 Points. Everybody is happy that rules of conduct are now included a fixed part of spiritual practices. They have started following them sincerely."

Then he said, "The 16 Points have been invented after scrutinising all the aspects of psycho-spiritual life. I believe that if a spiritual aspirant follows them sincerely, he or she is sure to be benefited. The *yatis* (*sannayasins*) and the *vratiiis* (missionaries) are sure to be benefited. I have determined that those who observe these rules with sincerity and devotion will certainly make spiritual progress. They can be cent percent confident about their spiritual progress." What he said next stopped me completely. "So, henceforth, you will stop your habit of taking tea?"

I said, "Yes, Baba! Last evening after I heard the rules I have given it up. I will never touch tea again."

Ma'rga Guru said, "You did the right thing. As a habit, the use of tea is not so praiseworthy. But you gave up such an old habit suddenly. You may get some headache until three o'clock today, but after that you will be rid of headaches for the rest of your life."

The headache I had been suffering since morning had already started to go away from the time I sat next to Ma'rga Guru. It was already 80% healed, and by the time we had returned to the *ja'grti*, it was gone.*

Now, we had just left for the walk. We had gone about a half kilometre when we passed a middle-aged man standing under a big tree. Ma'rga Guru said, "Mark that man." Further on near the college another man

* I had many such experiences in my life. Once in 1965, I was fortunate to travel with Ma'rga Guru on his journey to Karimganga, Assam for a DMC. We boarded an aeroplane at Calcutta's Dum-dum Airport for Shilchar, and from there drove to Karimganga. I had had almost no sleep during the previous three nights and was suffering from a serious headache. The car was speeding, making the ride unbearable for me. I leaned back against the seat to brace myself. I did not say anything nor did Ma'rga Guru look my way, but I understood that he had detected my headache. A few moments later, I felt a gust of cool wind gently bathe my head. After a few minutes more, a cool, sweet breeze washed over my forehead, neck and throat again. Two or three minutes passed. For a third time, healing breeze washed over my whole body. My headache had vanished.

Just before we arrived, Ma'rga Guru said to me, "You will have much hard work in the DMC. Is your health all right?"

"Yes, Baba."

Suppressing a smile, Ma'rga Guru said, "We have reached Karimganga now."

was standing at the junction of Fresser Road. And pointing to a big shop by the roadside, Ma'rga Guru said, "Someone is waiting in that shop too." Ma'rga Guru knew them all. He said, "Do you know? Their only duty is to keep a note of when my car crosses this road. These fellows have been watching my movements for the past one month."*

After about half an hour, while returning back to the *ja'grti*, Ma'rga Guru continued, "In 1967, the West Bengal communists made our headquarters at Anandanagar as their target. They thought that if they could destroy the headquarters by raid and arson and beat a few workers of the mission, the whole organization would collapse. They committed murder, what to speak of destruction, yet the mission grew several fold. A few Congress Party politicians who are close to Moscow and the CBI officers have studied the matter thoroughly. They have discovered that the actual headquarters of Ananda Marga is not situated at Anandanagar, but in the brain of Ma'rga Guru A'nandamu'rti. Hence they have now made me their target. You can't imagine what an

* One day, the spy, whose duty was to watch the Pataliputra junction, entered the restaurant owned by a Margii to have his meal. He carelessly forgot his diary on the dining table. Another Margii, who had come to dine, found it. Out of curiosity he read a few pages, and wondering what it was all about, turned it over to the Ananda Marga office. In it were entries on different dates something like this: 11:30 a.m. with two passengers; 11:40 a.m. with three passengers; 11:35 a.m. two passengers; etc. It tallied exactly with what Ma'rga Guru told me.

extensive net of conspiracy have they been spreading against me and the mission." A deep, mysterious smile played on his lips. "But you should know that their evil designs won't hold good," he continued. "We are following the path of virtue and righteousness. Nothing is greater than dharma. Some day you will see that Ananda Marga will triumph, moving ahead at tremendous speed we will break their widespread conspiracy."

We reached the Pataliputra *ja'grti*. A few hundred Margiis were waiting there for darshan. Ma'rga Guru was in a very jovial mood and spoke on many interesting things. Looking at the faces of those simple, virtuous people, started me thinking. I thought that their minds are not the least bit shadowed by any premonition of the conspiracy plotted by the Indian government against Ma'rga Guru and his mission. Nor had Ma'rga Guru given any hint to anybody except the few persons closely attached to him. Even though he knew everything that was about to happen, he remained silent. This was so very characteristic of his nature.

Ten days passed. It was the twenty-second of December 1971. Ma'rga Guru summoned his personal assistant and the General Secretary. When they came in, he said, "Listen. I'll tell you something that until now I kept to myself, but I feel the time is ripe. I must tell you now. Take note of this suitcase placed before me. In it my clothes and other daily necessities are kept. I don't know whether you realize this or not, but the CBI under pressure from the Soviet KGB has been plotting against us. This time, I am their target. They may arrest me any

day. So when they come don't leave this suitcase behind. One more point. If they arrest me, they won't spare the General Secretary either. So you should also get ready." Then he smiled and added, "This time, the fight between virtue and vice will be something to see. You will see how all their plots and intrigues are baffled. As you watch all of this you should keep in mind, '*Dharmasya Suks'ma Gatih*' (The workings of the righteous force are very subtle), nobody can stop the progress of Ananda Marga."

On the twenty-eighth at five in the morning, CBI officers along with a big force of police came to arrest Ma'rga Guru. A few dozen policemen stood outside Ma'rga Guru's home with the arrest order in their hands. Within a few minutes Ma'rga Guru got ready. That suitcase accompanied him in the police car. Ma'rga Guru turned to everyone and with optimism ringing said, "You go on working as before. Let them do what they want to do. We will go on doing our work. The victory of dharma and the downfall of *adharma* (unrighteousness) are inevitable. We are on the side of dharma; we will triumph." Even in the face of terrible calamities, Ma'rga Guru's optimism never wavered.

Earlier I mentioned that Ma'rga Guru knew of his impending arrest but did not speak except to a few people about it. There are innumerable instances in which Ma'rga Guru preferred silence to protect others. He never wanted that a situation should bring despondency in our minds. Ma'rga Guru had a sister about six years younger than

him. Her name was Bijaliiprabha, but her nickname was Dora. She was an innocent girl and she was quite attractive. She had just entered college. Her studies and music were her special interests.

In those days, girls married at a young age. Mother Abharanii Sarkar instructed Ma'rga Guru, her eldest son, to find a suitable husband for Dora. Prabhat Ranjan said, "There is no reason to be worried; everything will be arranged at the right time." A cousin of his came to visit Jamalpur. Abharanii availed herself of this chance. "Ajit, now Dora has grown. She should get married. Please, find a prospective bridegroom for her. I have asked Bubu [Prabhat Ranjan's nickname] a number of times, but it seems he doesn't take any interest. Please, you both do something."

At an opportune moment, Ajit spoke to Shrii Prabhat Ranjan. Grimly, Prabhat Ranjan said, "Nanku [Ajit's nickname], this is between you and me, I will tell you something, but don't leak out this to anybody else. Dora has come to this earth with a very short span of life, her days are numbered. So, it won't be wise to entangle her in worldly affairs. I object even when somebody reproaches her. Let the few days she is upon this earth pass smoothly and happily."

Having heard this pronouncement, Ajit became speechless. But he promised that he would not say anything. He started thinking about how his cousin Prabhat Ranjan bore it and withheld such bad news. Bijaliiprabha met an accidental death before she was eighteen. After some

time, Ajit raised the topic with his aunt Abharanii and other cousins.

Ajit said to Prabhat Ranjan, "How lucky you are! You can foresee everything."

Ma'rga Guru replied, "You are wrong. Is it pleasant to foresee evil news? I have known that some mishap is going to occur to my dearest sister, but I can't say anything about it I have to keep quiet even though I know everything, it's not at all easy to bear. Rather, you are in better off not knowing anything."

From 1972, a case built on trumped-up conspiracy charges rolled on by force, fraud and the evil machinations of the CBI. In 1975, the Emergency was imposed on the entire country. Indira Gandhi banned all her opposition, Ananda Marga included. Thousands of her political opponents were arrested under martial law and hundreds of Margiis and wholtime workers found themselves in jail without having committed any offence except for being members of Ananda Marga. Many a Margii family suffered because the breadwinner of their family was jailed. Nearly all of the workers were jailed, though some were able to escape in hiding. There was not a single person outside the jail who could consult with advocates.

The government wanted to avail itself of the Emergency situation to dispose of the case hastily. In the name of justice, a farce was staged in the court of a certain Judge R.P. Singh in Patna. Through the efforts of Margiis outside of India, the British barrister Mr. W.T. Wells was permitted to be present in the court as an

impartial observer. Another lawyer from Canada, Mr. William Sheppard, also observed the proceedings. Both of them stated in their independent reports that the government side was determined from the very outset and that they appear to be using the case to publicly malign Ma'rga Guru and Ananda Marga. They reported that the case appeared fabricated, and that under the existing Emergency law, it could not be expected that a fair trial would be conducted. No undertrial prisoner could expect a fair judgement during the Emergency.

On the 26 November 1976, the judge was to give the verdict. In the court was standing room only. A silence hung heavy in the room. Ma'rga Guru, fasting by then for three and a half years, was seriously weakened. Still, it was mandatory for an accused to appear in court to hear the verdict. So he was brought by ambulance and carried inside the court-room on a stretcher. The judge, under the pressure and instructions of the CBI, read out the verdict that Shrii P.R. Sarkar was guilty of abettment to murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

A enigmatic smile played across Ma'rga Guru's face when the verdict was read out. He knew that the judgement had not come from the brain of the judge, rather it was a product of others'. The judge had only signed under pressure. His lawyers, Shrii Nageshwar Prasad and Shrii Vasanta Kumar Bandopadhyaya turned to him with disappointment looking for his reaction. A brief reply came from Ma'rga Guru, "It's all right. There's nothing to worry about. Soon you will see the tide of events turn."

The reaction of the self-possessed Ma'rga Guru was published in all the Bengali, Hindi and English dailies of India. Onlookers at the court were astounded to see the cool, stoic reaction of Ma'rga Guru. But really, what is there to wonder about? For one who knows the temporal; nature of things, who knows that the ultimate outcome of any struggle is for the good of all there could be no other reaction.

A few months later, Indira Gandhi, thinking that she had her opposition crushed, called for elections. The Emergency was withdrawn and the opposition leaders were released. With only a few weeks to organize their campaign the opposition moved full speed ahead. Censorship was lifted and the Indian news media burst out of its restraints. They published detail after detail of the misdeeds of the Administration during the Emergency. The entire nation was inflamed in anger and agitation. The Indira Gandhi's Congress Party was completely washed out in the election. Before surrendering her power to the next prime minister, Indira Gandhi lamented that her greatest blunder was lifting the state of emergency. Realizing that the new Janata government might apply the Emergency rules to herself, she hastily withdrew the state of emergency.

Soon all the Margiis were released from their detention, and an appeal was made in the higher court against the verdict of Ma'rga Guru's case. After a few hearings, the contrived charges became evident to the appeal judges, The Patna High Court turned over the decision on the case on 4 July 1978, and on 2 August,

Ma'rga Guru was honourably released. Fourteen thousand Margiis assembled in front of the Bankipur Central Jail. Ma'rga Guru came out of the gates wreathed in smiles to greet the devotees. There was a spontaneous outburst of joy from the throng. People overflowed the roads. For ten kilometres, from the jail to the Patna *ja'grti*, Margiis and bystanders clogged the roads. Offices and shops closed, and taxis and rickshaws stopped running. The whole city looked on from rooftops and windows as rejoicing Margiis escorted Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rtijii to the *ja'grti*.

Ma'rga Guru broke his long fast with a small amount of fruit juice given to him by his sister Hiraprabha. Then he was not yet able to digest any solid food and was extremely weak and exhausted. The next day, he appeared before the thousands of people awaiting his *darshan*. He was in an amiable mood and smiling to all he took his seat. He spoke only for fifteen or twenty minutes. In spite of the innumerable humiliations and afflictions CBI and politicians, he spoke no bitter words nor did he censure them.

He addressed the people with his characteristic optimism: "Move ahead, don't look back. Don't be afraid of any power on this earth. *Parama Purus'a* [God] is with you. A bright future awaits you."

SAMYAK KARMA'NTA

On 22 June 1970, in General Darshan at Mokameh, Bihar, Ma'rga Guru spoke on one of Buddha's eight limbs to perfection, *samyak karma'nta* (proper finishing of work). He said that all actions should be done in the spirit of welfare. Every living being has to act. A being pulsing with life cannot go performing action – for, even to breathe is an act; nor can there be any action without life. It is in karma or action that a person attains his or her greatness.

Now, one has to act, so he or she should do all actions properly. Any work you leave unfinished, will have to be finished sooner or later, so it should be done perfectly. *Samyak karma'nta* means that perfection in action is attained when each work is done well and finished properly. There should be no defect or laxity in its performance. Its beginning, middle and end should all be done meticulously.

Recently some of us who had worked closely with him were discussing Ma'rga Guru's unique ways. We remarked that every action of his was impeccable. He was an artist of perfected action. Each work that he began he saw through to its end with a brushstroke of grace.

There is a story about the artist Nandalal Bose, a doyen of Indian art. One day he was getting ready for his art classes in the university. He took his bath and meal and was busy preparing his materials for class. A young student appeared at the door.

"Sir," he said, "Would you please look at my work. I have brought my art to this point through much effort. Could you advise me on it?" The professor was doing his own work and just glanced at the artwork. Then, he stood up to leave. As he was about to go, he turned, looked, then picked up a pencil and drew a line on the student's work. The picture sprang to life – just a single line changed the drawing from something ordinary to something superb. Ma'rga Guru's actions were like that perfect touch.

Everyone has got their own way of working and this uniqueness is the beauty of each personality. His thoughts, words and actions were in harmony. He was a constant source of inspiration for us to live up to. What he taught about *samyak karma'nta*, he followed himself to the letter in his personal life.

One of the people close to Ma'rga Guru in Jamalpur was Vimal Kumar Maitra. During his long friendship with Ma'rga Guru, Vimaljii was continually awed by him. He told us about the way Ma'rga Guru would hold discussions.

Prabhatda' had a wonderful way of discussing anything. He used to delve deep into every point with unusual attention to details. With every point he went straight to the heart of the matter. Almost everyone in our Jamalpur office was impressed by his talking style. Sometimes he used to train us how to frame intelligent and probing questions so as to take out the inner thoughts from minds of others. It was as though he was a veteran journalist.

One time we started discussing some topic. At one stage the discussion stopped, but some questions on my mind had remained unanswered. When we were about to separate, Prabhatda' suddenly asked, "Do you still have any doubts about anything? Do you feel some questions are yet to be answered?" We resumed our unfinished discussion which continued for sometime. When at last I had all my questions answered satisfactorily, he left me. Such things happened innumerable times. Maybe I would have some urge to ask about something on my mind but didn't have the courage to approach him. He would ask me if I wanted to know from him anything. It is my personal experience as well as the experience of others that our thought-waves were reflected in his mind like a clear picture on a screen.

In 1968, Ma'rga Guru stayed at Ranchi for a few weeks. The Central Office, the *ja'grti* and Ma'rga Guru's house were all situated in the same locality -- at Piscamore, Hesal area. Ma'rga Guru used to come every day to the office from his residence and sit for an hour or two with the workers for reporting sessions. After that he would go to *ja'grti* for General Darshan. In *darshan*, he would speak on different topics. These discourses of Ma'rga Guru were later published as *Talks on the Mahabharata* and other books.

One day Ma'rga Guru came to the *ja'grti* as usual. Everyone was anxiously awaiting for General Darshan. We noticed when he arrived that he had something special on his mind.

He called the *ja'grti* manager. "Look," he said, "I have some work to do today. Can you check if a young woman from Sahebganj [Bihar] has come or not. Her name is

S—. She is teaching at our school there. If she is here, then call her together with Avadhu'tika' A'nanda Bha'rati A'ca'rya'. (the head of the Women's Welfare Department). I will speak with them."

They promptly entered into Ma'rga Guru's room and paid obeisances to him. Avtk. A'nanda Bha'ratiji was slightly nervous as she thought that there might be something wrong and that Ma'rga Guru was about to scold them. But soon they knew differently.

"Well," Ma'rga Guru said to S—, "you address me as Baba and I know that you have deep love for me. Now tell me, will you permit me to do something for your welfare?"*

The young woman was trying to restrain herself, but after hearing the affectionate words of her guru, she broke down and wept. It seemed that her prayers had come true.

* This line triggers my memory of another incident that took place in 1963. Ma'rga Guru was in Jamalpur. He had just created a new department of social welfare in Ananda Marga, the Education, Relief and Welfare Section (ERAWS). ERAWS was to be active in all types of social service, emergency relief and education activities.

One Margii passed away. He was the head of a family with three children. There was no provision for their future. The master's concern for the welfare of the family was characteristic of his whole outlook.

He turned to me and said, "You see, out of love for me, people [depend on me and] call me "Baba"["father"]. Yet until now, if the breadwinner of the family died, they all would be exposed to starvation. Children of the unfortunate family were deprived of the bare necessities of life – food, clothes, accomodation, education and medical care. This made me extremely sad. I decided I would

S— was from a refugee family from Bangladesh. Her family had seen better days in undivided Bengal. They had their own house, land, prestige – everything. Later following communal riots, they had to leave their ancestral home and everything behind. They came to India as penniless refugees. Her elder sister got married and lived in Sahebganj. This young woman managed, despite all setbacks, to complete her college studies.

Following the death of her parents she was forced to move in with her sister. They did not like her there – especially her brother-in-law. On many occasions they harassed her and made her life miserable. Meanwhile, she got a job in the Ananda Marga primary school at Sahebganj. She learned meditation and was regular in her practices in order to get peace of mind. Gradually she developed self-confidence and began to find some meaning in her life. She had faith in and love for Ma'rga Guru. Everyday during meditation she used to pray, "O *Gurudeva* [a term of deep respect], you know everything

have to do something as soon as the opportunity arose. Now that Ananda Marga has grown to some extent I am able to give the structure to set up children's homes, etc. If any parent dies, their children will not be left helpless. We will be able to provide the essential requirements of life to the orphans in our children's homes.

"Actually, society is responsible for these provisions, but, unfortunately, our human society is not yet progressive enough so that the affluent families open their doors to the needy."

I was deeply moved to hear my master speak in this way. I thought if only 8 or 10% of the people of our society were socially conscious, this dusty earth of ours would be a paradise. But alas, we have yet a long way to go.

that's going on with me. Please bless me and help me to escape from this tortuous hell to a better life." She passed many hours weeping in this way.

Now standing there in front of her *gurudeva* she was speechless. Tears rolled down her cheeks. Not a single word came out of her mouth. Shrii Shrii A'nanda-mu'rtijii, kind-hearted and understanding, told her to wait outside in the hall.

Next, Ma'rga Guru called one *a'ca'rya*. "Can you call M— to come here. He is about 25 years old and has arrived today from Sahebganj."

A healthy, handsome man entered and gave *pranam* to the master. Ma'rga Guru said, "Do you know why I have called you here?" The young man stood with hands folded in *namaska'r*. "Suppose I give you a great social responsibility. Are you prepared to shoulder it?"

The man answered immediately. "Yes Baba. It is a matter of great pride and joy for me to shoulder any responsibility you give. I would consider it as your blessing."

Ma'rga Guru said, "One of our girls is suffering from harassment because of her dependence on others. I want you to accept her as your responsibility. I think this will be good for both of you." The young man consented. Ma'rga Guru asked him to wait outside the room.

In the meantime, the Margiis were waiting in *ja'grti* for darshan. No one had any idea what was going to happen. The *ja'grti* manager and Avkt. Ananda Bharatijii rushed out to buy new clothes and some accessories for the wedding ceremony. In less than an hour everything was set-up. The *ja'grti* was transformed into an improvised

marriage hall with festive decorations and flowers. The bride and bridegroom, dressed in their new garments, took their seats. Two *a'ca'ryas* presided over the nuptials. Everything happened in an hour. Then the newlyweds were brought before Ma'rga Guru for his blessing.

Now the next question was, where will the newly married couple stay? How will they maintain themselves?

The boy was from the elite Brahman caste and the girl was from a Kayastha family. His family was from Bihar, a bastion of orthodox casteism. Orthodox Hinduism forbids inter-caste marriages. It was sure that the boy's conservative parents would oppose the marriage. The newlyweds would have to start their life together without the support of their families.

Ma'rga Guru called one devoted Margii and said, "You just witnessed this marriage. The question now is, where can they find living accommodations? Can all of you get together and arrange some sort of place? They need only a room with a kitchen and bath. Just a few square feet will do."

The Margii thought it over. He owned land and had a good job. He said, "I have only recently built a house. It has six or seven big rooms with kitchen, and bath. I can easily accommodate them in my house. I'm sure, they won't feel any inconvenience."

Ma'rga Guru then called another Margii and said, "It is certain that the boy's family will probably not accept the bride. He has had some education, but no job or income. They will have difficulty maintaining themselves

without help. Can you find a modest job for the boy? Just 500 or 600 rupees a month will all that will be required for now."

"I think I can help, Baba." replied the Margii. "One of my friends is a senior officer here in Ranchi. With his help I will easily be able to find him a job. Rest assured, Baba , we will take care of them."

Ma'rga Guru arranged a marriage for a helpless girl. He saw that the newlyweds had all they needed for setting-up house and that some kind of financial arrangements were made. It was well past his lunch time before he was at last satisfied that everything was taken care of for the couple's new life together.

He came out of his room, happy and smiling. "I am sorry that I could not sit with you all today," he said to everyone. "I know you were all waiting, but I had some special work to do.

"What about the marriage ceremony? How did you like it? You should pray for the welfare of the couple so that their life becomes happy and peaceful." With those parting words he left.

In 1991, I was busy one day writing in my room at Tiljala. A family came to see me. They introduced themselves. The husband said, "How are you, Dada? Do you recognize us? Twenty years ago Baba himself arranged our marriage in Ranchi. You were there, too." They then introduced their children.

The scene of the Ranchi *ja'grti* twenty years ago flashed before my mind's eye. What a wonder to see them now! I gathered from them that they were well off;

the husband had worked hard to establish himself financially. The children are all intelligent and spiritually oriented. The eldest one was in college studying with an honours in chemistry, and the younger children in high school. I was touched to see this happy, contented family and remembered the blessing they received from Ma'rga Guru.

Yogah karmasu kaoshalam. ["Yoga is the secret to successful action."] Lord Krs'n'a, standing on the Kuruks'etra battlefield said to Arjuna, "Be an ideal yogi." "Yogi" does not mean a wandering mendicant, begging alms from door to door. A yogi is not an escapist running from the duties of worldly life. Here, "Be an ideal yogi" means to be an ideal human being active in carrying out one's duties. An ideal yogi knows that perfect work is action that is well thought out and done with the welfare of the entire Cosmos in mind. This leads to perfection of action and perfection of spirit. It is better to do one's duty with this outlook than to do nothing. All action of a yogi should begin ideally and end perfectly.

Towards the end of Ma'rga Guru's incarceration in Bankipur Central Jail, large numbers of visitors from all over India came to Patna to see their master. They would come by the bus load from different parts of Bihar and Bengal. Hundreds of Margiis came from every corner of the globe to see their guru. Professionals and labourers alike would come for Ma'rga Guru's *darshan*.

Some political leaders also came to see Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar in the jail. The prison convicts looked in wonder

at what they saw. How can it be? When so many VIPs come to the prison to pay their respects to Ma'rga Guru, why is such a dignified person being detained? These visits and many other incidents made a deep impression on the prisoners.

Many of them were very curious to know more about Ananda Marga and its system of meditation and yogic practices. There were some *a'ca'ryas* in jail with Ma'rga Guru and they taught meditation to interested prisoners. Many got initiated in this way. As morality and regular practice forms a part of Ananda Marga spiritual practices, a "mini-ashram" soon grew within the jail walls.

Now, there are some different steps in the Ananda Marga system of meditation that should be taught to a spiritual aspirant. Tantric practices differ from the Vedic system. The Vedic system involves more external rituals. In Tantra, the externals are kept to a minimum. The main emphasis is on internal surrender, devotion and contemplation. Spiritual seekers learning meditation take oaths and the process includes such aspects as *diipa'ni*, *mantra caetanya* and *purashacarana* [different parts of spritual practice].

One day a young prisoner approached an *a'ca'rya* for spiritual lessons. The *a'ca'rya* taught the main parts of the initiation, but decided that the jail environment was not appropriate for some parts of the lesson and that he would learn it later after he would be released.

Later that day the *a'ca'rya* told to Ma'rga Guru that he taught K— meditation and that he would join in the

collective meditation. "But you didn't teach him everything properly," Ma'rga Guru said. "I saw through my inner vision that you gave him the Tantric initiation, but did not teach the last item. Remember this: in the sphere of *sa'dhana'*, nothing should be left out.

"You go and do it now. Teach him the last item right away. He will benefit from it immensely."

He said that in order to attain success in the practical field of action a sentient person should invariably possess two qualities – absolute sincerity and high degree of competence. Both are admirable qualities. Sincerity is more important than competence. Someone may have abilities and may be competent, but if he or she is insincere in speech and action, he or she will never attain success. And if one has only mediocre talents, but if one is sincere, he or she will finally succeed. Every one should develop this extraordinary sincerity. Ma'rga Guru was happy when he saw his disciples as sincere as himself.

He was Neohumanist through and through. He showed his affection and concern for animals and plants as much as he did for humans. He knew the thoughts and feelings of the plants just as he knew our thoughts and he watched over his garden with much care.

Ma'rga Guru often gave precise instructions regarding the care and development of the gardens and also encouraged others to develop gardens in their own places. He advised his relatives and friends to plant trees and flowers wherever there was any unused ground. Ma'rga

Guru's eldest nephew, Amal Kumar Basu, wrote, "Whenever he visited our house at Chinsura he insisted on planting trees on our vacant grounds." Himangshuranjan Sarkar, Ma'rga Guru's brother, said that whenever his brother came to his railway quarters to visit him, he would insist on planting trees in the empty spaces between the bungalows.

And he did not stop at that. He would check the plants regularly. Were they were flowering on time? Were they being treated properly for parasites and diseases? Were they being treated properly? He would inquire minutely about all such details. And if anybody asked, he gladly gave advice for treating the specific diseases of the plants.

In 1969, Ma'rga Guru visited the Philippines and conducted the first DMC outside India. In 1979 he toured Europe visiting Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland and Iceland. and conducted General Darshans and DMCs in those countries. In 1980 he toured the world and visited Taiwan, Thailand, Hong Kong, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Spain, Denmark, Germany, Iceland Jamaica, Venezuela. Ananda Marga runs a number of branches and social service projects in those countries. It was in this time that he began the Garden Programme, collecting every kind of flower, plant and tree from all over the world.

Ma'rga Guru spent a week in Caracas, Venezuela. One day he passed a huge cotton tree. It attracted his attention. This tree was special in that its flowers were golden

instead of the usual red. Ma'rga Guru was interested in this unusual species and told Avtk. Ananda Karuna A'c. to get hold of its seeds. She carried some seeds with her on their return trip to India. Eleven plants germinated and Ma'rga Guru planted one of them in Madhumalainca with his own hands. Today, in a bit over ten years, if you visit the garden you will see a huge tree on the right side of the house. It looms over the lush garden and is the tallest tree in the neighbourhood.

I would like to add that I brought tea-plants from Taiwan, sugar maples and red oak and redwood from the USA, tuberose from Mexico and coconut from the Philippines for my master's gardens. It pleased me when Ma'rga Guru took an ongoing interest in those plants. He paid attention to each and every plant and tree. It was because of his close supervision and sincere care that even cold climate plants survived.

Avadhu'tika' A'nanda Karuna' A'ca'rya', a senior *a'ca'rya*, told us her observations about Ma'rga Guru's exacting care in everything he did. Along with her numerous duties in the central office, she also oversaw the gardening in Ma'rga Guru's residential gardens. She said, "While working in his different gardens (Madhumalainca, in Lake Gardens, Calcutta, Madhukoraka, in Tiljala, Madhumalaya and Madhukarnika, both in Anandanagar), I noticed that Baba would pay meticulous attention to all the plants, orchids, fruits and flowers. Because of his thorough supervision and care, many delicate plants were saved."

Madhumalainca is on a small plot, the building occupies about two-thirds of the space and just a bit is left over for a garden. Ma'rga Guru set up his research garden in this tiny space. Thousands of trees, plants, vines and herbs were planted in the ground, in flower boxes and in pots hanging from every available wall and balcony. Orchids of many species were collected from different parts of the world. Even on the septic tank eight small boxes were made. Some custard-apple trees from the Philippines were planted there. Five years passed, but still one of the trees did not fruit and this was reported to the master. He replied, "The roots are not finding any soil beneath them." He then instructed Avtk. Ananda Karunajii A'c. to uproot and replant it where the roots will find earth below.

The plant had already grown about two metres tall and Didi A'nanda Karuna'jii doubted whether it would work. However, she followed orders and prepared to transfer the plant to a new place. As she uprooted the tree she saw that indeed the roots were coiled around the bottom of the box. She thought, "Ah, the roots didn't find earth below. It had somehow managed to survive, but it was unable to bear any fruit."

Unfortunately, while in the process, she inadvertently damaged one of the taproots. Didi A'nanda Karuna'jii was afraid that perhaps a major root had been cut. Luckily it turned out alright. Ma'rga Guru had given clear instructions that whenever uprooting any plant, all the roots plus the earth clods around the base of the plant should be gathered up together. Another thing was that

the plants' roots should not be exposed to the cool air as it may shock the plants and kill them. He began to ask daily about the tree's condition. It thrived in the new box and the next year bore fruit as it should. The fruit was presented to Ma'rga Guru. It was sweet and delicious.

Ma'rga Guru's minute knowledge of orchids, flowers and fruit trees amazed me. How could he know so much about so many different things?

Another time a special flowering plant was brought from Maynaguri in North Bengal. It was a wild species that grew in the mountains. He gathered information about the plant and gave it a Sanskrit name, *laghuka'minii*. Although the flowers look like the *ka'minii* plant they are without any fragrance.

He had it planted in the Madhumalainca garden. After that, he regularly inquired about its development. After a few weeks it stopped growing. He inspected the plant carefully. There were bruises and parasites all over it. Then and there Ma'rga Guru performed a major operation to save it. He fed it its favourite nutrients and applied some plant antiseptic. Then he banded it. He said that as it was a alpine plant, it finds difficulty in adapting to the plains climate. Every day he personally examined and nursed the plant. After four months of careful nurturing the plant flowered. Perhaps it was just an ordinary flower, but when it came to Ma'rga Guru's garden, it was given a place of honour.

In 1981 Ma'rga Guru spent over a month in Thailand and Taiwan in connection with DMCs there. Avtk. Ananda

Karunajii A'c. was included in the team of workers that accompanied him. In Thailand one morning, some guava was served for his breakfast. This Thai guava was large and sweet, and bigger than the Indian varieties. He was delighted with it and instructed Didi A'nanda Karuna'jii to collect the seeds. Every morning at breakfast, he would set the seeds to one side. Didi'jii saved them and brought them to India. They were sown in the Madhukoraka garden. *

In 1981, I was taking down the dictation of *In the Land of Hat't'ama'la'*, a children's story. It is an excellent piece of writing intended to provide both joy and

* Ma'rga Guru was exacting in his directions for good gardening. An example is the instruction he gave to germinate the guava seeds which he taught to the late A'c. Asiima'nandajii Avt. and Avtk. A'nanda Karuna' A'c.

First dig a hole 2x3 inches deep and fill it with a mixture of animal compost, preferably cow manure and soft soil. The seeds can be germinated in the ground or in a pot. Before sowing the seeds they should be soaked in lukewarm water overnight. The next day the wet seeds should be taken out of water and smeared with dry soft soil and sown in the prepared hole.

Didi A'nanda Karuna'jii sprouted the seeds according to Ma'rga Guru's instructions. The seeds sprouted a few days later. Ma'rga Guru left instructions that when the plants showed three leaves they should be brought to him. We brought the plants to him in Allahabad. Despite his heavy schedule, he took time to graft some of those plants. They were then planted in Madhukoraka. In just two years, one of them bore a single fruit. It was huge. In subsequent years, the tree bore many fruits, though none as large as that first one.

education to the young. One of the features of the story is the clever way in which he weaves in the names of so many different things to ignite the imagination of the child. Here is Mr. Bo...Bo...Bo...Bodha Mukherjee listing the names of a dozen varieties of saris:

Bo...Bo...Bo...Bodha Mukherjee said, "M'Lady, as soon as I got word of your intended trip to Dhaka, I went and purchased 700 different types of sari from the boutique. Your 732,432 saris in the cupboard will remain untouched.

Madhumita listened in utter amazement. One person needs so many saris! She asked Bo...Bo...Bo...Bodha Mukherjee: "Hey, brother, how can someone possibly need such a large quantity of saris? Where do they all come from?"

Bo...Bo...Bo...Bodha Mukherjee said: Every year 20 million rupees are budgeted for purchasing saris.

"There are muslin saris from Bishnupur; grey-coloured saris from Burdwan; close knit, wide red bordered saris from Contai; finely woven saris from Antpur; finely striped saris from Phorashdanga; 500 kinds of old-fashioned saris from Dhonekali, made of cotton interwoven with silk; cotton saris from Santipur with wide silver and golden coloured borders; 100 kinds of Santipur saris for casual wear; fully embroidered saris from Mushidabad with traditional multi-pattereded designs; the Baluchar varieties of heavy silk saris, all kinds of saris from Dhaka, saris from Bajitpur, 2000 kinds of saris from Tangail. Besides all these there are pure silk saris from Mushidabad; coloured, pure silk saris from the loom; saris with very bright borders from Boshoa-Bisupur; the best kind of silk sari from Bankura-Bishupur; raw silk saris from Tantipara. And

besides all these there are the most modern saris which earthly beings have yet to see."

That day he explained so many things to us about saris and various kinds of cloth. He asked me if I had ever seen those different types of saris. I said that I had never seen them all. The discussion shifted to *dhotis* (men's wear). I was ignorant of those varieties, too. Ma'rga Guru wanted to show me the design and texture of one in particular, *khati-dea dhoti*. He had one in his wardrobe which he rarely used, but that day it wasn't there. He called his PA and learned that it had been sent to the laundry. He could not show me the cloth just then.

However dictation was over for the day and he had other work to attend to. Later, I was finally sitting down for my evening meal at the central office after a long day's work. Suddenly I was called to the front gate. I hurried down the stairs. Ma'rga Guru had just returned from his field walk and had the driver stop at the office. Hundreds of devotees had surrounded the car. He called me from the car to come closer. "Vijayananda, look here. This is the *khati-dea dhoti* I was telling you about. See the particular design and texture? It came back from the laundry tonight and I immediately thought of you. Why should I leave a thing undone? I decided to show the handiwork before I returned home. Now you understand what a *khati-dea dhoti* is? "

"Yes, Baba."

Ma'rga Guru drove off. I looked at the clock. It was well past 11:00 p.m. I realized that he had not yet taken his own evening meal, yet he wouldn't consider his day's

work finished until he showed me that cloth. How could he deviate from *samyak karma'nta*?

TEACHING PEOPLE IN VARIOUS WAYS

Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii had a special blend of love and sternness in his dealings that came through in everything he did. He understood human foibles and genuinely had the spiritual welfare of the individual in mind. I felt tremendous compassion emanating from him if ever I was rebuked for any mistake and I am sure others felt it, too. His manner and words were geared to the psychological make up of the person he was talking to. Sometimes he would be harsh, sometimes gentle. Sometimes with a touch of humour playing about his eyes. But always with compassion and love. I felt that his only desire was the spiritual development of each person that came in contact with him.

Rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. To maintain unity and peace in a community, people must be aware of their responsibilities while they enjoy their rights. Where people disregard their social responsibilities, lawlessness and disunity prevail. This applies especially to the etiquette one should follow in public places.

While one has every right to walk freely along, one must not obstruct the peaceful movement of others. One may drive on any highway, but one must not recklessly endanger the lives of those driving along the same way. People traveling on public buses, trains and planes should remember that they are not entitled to create

inconvenience and disturbances to their fellow passengers. People should become aware of public manners and not play loud music, have rowdy behavior or litter to others' dismay.

Once in the peak of summer, I was travelling by express bus from Midnapore to Dogha. It was scorching outside and we all were baking inside the bus. I shared the front seat with one gentleman. As soon as the bus started going, he began to puff away billows of smoke on his cigarette. In that oven of a bus, it was really very annoying. Just in front of his eyes was posted a clear message: No smoking, please! I politely raised my objections. The gentleman didn't heed my request. My irritation drew the attention of the other passengers. Some youths finally compelled him to respect the civic laws. Ironically, he was a magistrate by profession.

I had the opportunity to travel thousands of miles by every sort of transportation with Ma'rga Guru. At every stop, thousands of Margiis with bouquets and garlands in hand would crowd the stations, boat jetties and airports just to catch a glimpse of him. Throughout all those travels I saw that Ma'rga Guru was always careful not to cause any inconvenience to others. On the contrary, he would assist fellow travellers in need.

Once Ma'rga Guru was flying to Delhi after a DMC in Allahabad. The plane left in the evening. As the flight neared Delhi, it became apparent that the inclement weather was not going to permit a safe landing and the plane had to turn back. The Margiis received word that Ma'rga Guru was returning. It was quite late by the time

they reached Allahabad.

Alighting from the aeroplane, Ma'rga Guru and his PA were greeted by everyone who had turned out in the late night to receive him. They were about to leave the lounge when he spotted Prof. Nirmal Bose. Prof. Bose taught at Rabindranath Tagore's Shanti Niketan University. He once was the private secretary of Mahatma Gandhi. He was reputed for his erudition, was an authority on Gandhi and Gandhism. Ma'rga Guru became acquainted with him in 1951 when they both attended the gatherings in north Calcutta. But due to some altercation long ago, they hadn't communicated for over thirty years.

He now stood with his briefcase in hand, undecided where to go at such odd hours. Ma'rga Guru sent his personal assistant with a request that if he had no objection, the professor was welcome to spend the night with them. Prof. Bose gladly accepted the invitation.

He stayed the night in the same house with Ma'rga Guru and the next morning they flew to Delhi together. After that, whenever Prof. Bose came to Ranchi as a Tribals' Development Commissioner for the government, he contacted our Ranchi office. He and I had long talks about welfare projects for tribals. Once he found time to visit our Ananda Shiila Master Unit, the tribal welfare centre of Ananda Marga.

In the early 1980s, a DMC was held in Patna. On that occasion Ma'rga Guru stayed for three days in Patna. As usual, he would go on his field walks with a few Margiis accompanying him. This was also an opportunity for some devotees to get contact with Ma'rga Guru through

chauffeur his car. One young man got his chance to drive Ma'rga Guru's car and decided to do a sterling job of it. He was earnest to please Ma'rga Guru but he had yet to learn the manners of the road.

He had heard, in fact, that Ma'rga Guru really appreciated speed and dynamism, that he disliked people who were lazy and sluggish. The young man thought it over carefully. Once behind the steering wheel, he took off down the crowded streets of Patna. The car was careering at break-neck speed. He was so eager to show his "speed" that he even violated traffic laws and courtesy in his desperate attempt to overtake other cars. He thought that Ma'rga Guru must certainly be pleased with his "dynamism".

It seems that the young man had heard only half of the speed principle. What Ma'rga Guru must have been thinking, I can't say, but he took things in hand. He began by explaining to that hasty fellow that human life is short and to complete one's tasks in this short time one needs not only speed but system as well. Someone who follows system but has no speed will not be able to accomplish very much in life. Conversely, if a person has speed but no system it may lead to a serious accident.

Ma'rga Guru concluded by saying, "I want people to be active and dynamic. It's true that they should have more and more speed. But at the same time, I also want that their speed does not create any hazard to others. That is not the way an ideal citizen should be. You should drive the car in such a way that it does not cause inconvenience to others on the road." In this way, he

gently explained to that eager devotee to slow down. Ma'rga Guru was indeed fond of speed, but one needs system at the same time. The young man learned his lesson.

Impartiality is another trait of Ma'rga Guru. We find, for example, in the *Maha'bha'rata*, blind King Dhritarastra was valiant and well-versed in the scriptures. He had tremendous political sagacity and was a patron of learning and charitable works. But his great downfall was that he would not see the faults and defects of his sons, especially his eldest, Duryodhana. Not only was he physically blind, he was also blind with parental attachment. And for this he suffered miserably throughout his life.

Another major *Maha'bha'rata* character that concerns impartiality is Dron'a'ca'rya. Though an expert in the scriptural knowledge and martial arts, he failed in his duty because of favouritism. In *Discourses on the Mah'abha'rata*, Ma'rga Guru pointed out: "Teachers should, as a rule, have equal love and affection for all their students, but Dron'a'ca'rya was clearly partial to Arjuna. Still later, when he discovered to his displeasure that Arjuna was growing to be a greater warrior, he disclosed some secret military skills to Ashvatthama, his own son."

Another example of Drona'ca'rya's biased behaviour is with the *shudra*, Eklavya. Eklavya had profound regard for guru Drona, but when Drona came to know that Eklavya was from a so-called low caste family, he

refused to accept him as a student. This blatant refusal to accept a qualified student is totally unbecoming any teacher. Not just anyone can qualify for the rank of *a'ca'rya*, and partiality on the part of an *a'ca'rya* (teacher) is a very serious allegation. Once Dron'a'ca'rya discovered Eklavya's extraordinary skills, and, in fact, fearing that he would some day be a challenge to his own students, connived to stop him. Eklavya in his simplicity attributed all his accomplishments to Dron'a'ca'rya whom he had mentally accepted as his guru. Dron'a'ca'rya took advantage of this devotion and in the name of *gurudaks'ina* (guru's fees) demanded Eklavya's right thumb. Thus, Dron'a'ca'rya spoiled the promising career of a talented student. The cause and effect of his own flawed character brought upon himself the manner of his death. Lord Krs'n'a manoeuvred his demise with a stroke of masterly diplomacy.

In this regard, Shrii Shrii Anandamu'rtijii would often quote the *shloka*: *Ayam' nijah paro veti gan'anva' laghucetasa'm*. ["Only an inferior person discriminates between relatives and others."] Through all my years with him I saw that he gave more attention to ideologically strong disciples than others, even if they were his relatives.

In 1963, there was a quarrel between one of the Sarkar family's children and a neighbour's child. Both families got themselves embroiled in this issue. After finishing General Darshan, Ma'rga Guru returned home and heard all about it. He called both children and listened to their

stories. After that, he pointed out to his nephew his mistake and placed the blame for the whole affair on his shoulders. He also reprimanded his family for their biased involvement.

After one DMC in Lucknow, Ma'rga Guru was leaving for the next destination. A car was ready to take him to the railway station. The General Secretary, Pranay Kumar Chattopadhyaya was travelling with him. One of his near relations was also there. He was a good man, but not as regular in *sa'dhana'* as he should have been. He, too, was in a hurry to catch a train. He asked the GS for a lift to the station. Seeing that there was enough room, the GS agreed. After all, he was a very close relative of Ma'rga Guru.

They got into the waiting car and surrounded by hundreds of Margiis bidding farewell, sped away. After a few minutes, Ma'rga Guru asked Pranayjii, "Who is sitting in the front seat?" As soon as Ma'rga Guru heard the name, he became annoyed. He said, "Why did you allow him to sit in the car? I have told you before not to bring those people who are not regular in *sa'dhana'* in my contact. You know that he is not at all sincere in his practices."

In this way, Ma'rga Guru continued to belabour the point to GS all the way to the station. As they neared the station, the relative tried to get out of the car before they reached the parking lot. He gestured to the driver to stop. But Ma'rga Guru was in no mood to be accommodating. "We have almost reached the station, why didn't you get out earlier?"

The car had by then reached the station and a couple hundred Margiis were already there to give him a send-off. After he took his place in the train, he said, "Well, Pranay, now I think he has had a good lesson. I hope he will be more strict in his practices from now on."

Spiritual progress in individual life depends much on the foundation of morality, honesty and noble conduct. In *Human Society, Part I*, Ma'rga Guru explains the import of *niiti*, or morality, for society and the individual:

The derivative meaning of the word *niiti* or morality is that which has in it the principle of leading. It is the starting point on the path of *sa'dhana'*, which is the persistent effort to establish spiritual contact or communion with Supreme Entity. But this is not the only significance of morality. Morality is endowed with the distinct faculty of leading human beings towards perfection. If morality fails to provide human beings with sufficient provision to move towards perfection, then it does not deserve to be called morality. Because morality must have an inspirational quality, it cannot afford to lose its dynamic nature by limiting itself to a specific time, place and person. Morality is thus a living force, the practice of which is capable of establishing human beings in supreme subtlety, in Supreme Cognition, through the medium of all-pervasive contemplation. However, there is a predetermined limit to the extent to which morality can lead human beings along the path of perfection. Morality is only worth the name if it can inspire people to reach that limit.

Morality is not the dreamy fantasy of the idealist nor is it the means of fulfilling the mundane needs of the

materialist. Rather it gives people the possibility of merging their aestheistic objectivity into supramundane subjectivity.

He stressed importance of following the cardinal moral principles, *Yama* and *Niyama*.^{*} Before 1955, when he personally initiated many into *sa'dhana*', he used to write down these ten points and give one copy to each of his disciples. He was adamant that individual and collective progress was only possible with a firm base of morality. He watched over his followers carefully to help them become well-established in morality and honesty. Morality should come not as merely second nature to a person, but as first nature. It should be so ingrained in one's character that immoral ideas don't even arise in the mind. One of the first books he wrote was *A Guide to Human Conduct*, which is a treatise on morality.

Asteya is one of the principles of *Yama*. *Paradravya'-paharan'atya'go'steyam*. ["Not to appropriate the things belonging to others is called 'asteya'."] It means "non-stealing". He was always very strict in observing those principles of honesty and morality and would see that those around him also followed them. His colleagues

* There are ten items of morality. *Yama* had five principles *ahims'a* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (ascription of *Brahma*-hood to all objects and actions), *aparigraha* (non-accumulation of superfluous objects). *Niyama* has also five principles: *shaoca* (all-round cleanliness), *santos'a* (contentment), *tapah* (penance), *svadhyaya* (scriptural study), *iishvara pranidhana* (meditation on the Supreme Entity).

from the Jamalpur railway office still tell stories of his honesty.

In those days, the British Eastern Railways set up and ran many big hospitals, mechanical workshops, railway institutes, etc. They would allocate millions of rupees for those projects. But misappropriations of money do happen in any big operation and the company needed to send out auditors. Unfortunately, the company's project inspectors and auditors were often easily bribed and the problems would continue as before. Shrii Prabhat Ranjan's honesty was well-known. The authorities would send him for auditing. Shrii Prabhat Ranjan then formed his inspection team from honest and impartial employees. He introduced a rule that his team members would stay only at the railway company's guesthouses and must never accept hospitality outside the official arrangements.

Once it happened that two members of his team out on inspection of a hospital ate a sumptuous meal as the guests of the local officials. As soon as Shrii Prabhat Ranjan came to know of it, he sent them back to Jamalpur. He explained his actions to the railway authorities and had replacements sent.

Whether in the railway company or among his own organization, he opposed all sorts of dishonesty. He had an uncanny knack of asking for the very files and cashbooks where irregularities were to be found. He knew what registers to search or questions to ask to uncover any misutilization of funds, much to the dismay of those audited.

Ma'rga Guru had a flare for drama and knew how to use it for the best. I still vividly recall an event that took place in Jamalpur, in 1962. I was attending a week-long Tattvika training course that he was conducting. About sixty of us were there. Other Margiis also came for General Darshans. One day the *ja'grti* manager was worried about something. He came to Ma'rga Guru and said, "Baba, until now no one has ever dared to steal anything within our *ja'grti*. It seems that someone has come from outside who makes a habit of stealing. A watch has been stolen. I asked around but I couldn't find out who it could be." Ma'rga Guru listened patiently but he did not say anything. He went to give the class. After a few minutes he stopped and called forward a young man who was sitting in the rear.

"What's in your right-hand pocket?" he asked. We could see the man start to sweat. Ma'rga Guru told him to step closer. Quickly he slipped his hand into the man's pocket and pulled out the missing watch. He held it up for all to see. "Is this your watch or someone else's?" Now the young man was quite flustered and admitted that it wasn't his watch. Ma'rga Guru asked, "Tell me, is this the first time that you've stolen a watch?" The man hesitated. He continued, "This is the eighth time you have taken a watch. All the other times you've managed to safely escape, but this time you are caught. Now take it from me that if you steal once again you will be found out." Ma'rga Guru continued scolding him for some time and then told him how to rectify himself to become a good man in the future.

Ma'rga Guru came to Ranchi for a fortnight in 1962. He used to stay with A'ca'rya Amulya Ratan Sarangi, a sub-divisional officer, whenever he came to Ranchi. A'c. Amulya Ratanjii is one of Ananda Marga's family *a'ca'ryas*. Ma'rga Guru used to take Amulya Ratanjii with him to visit various Jain temple ruins and other archaeological sites near the West Bengal and Bihar borders. He was able later to use the information in his books on Ra'r'h research.

While he was there he was able to "catch two birds with one stone". He was giving Personal Contact to a young man employed in the government's Agriculture Department. Through his clairvoyant insight, he studied his *sam'ska'ras*. He explained to him what he saw. On one hand he had many good qualities but at the same time he has done some mistakes. Then the master went on to describe how he travels third class, but submits expense vouchers for first class tickets and false medical bills. Ma'rga Guru scolded him. He then asked, "Who introduced you to Ananda Marga? Didn't he tell you about *Yama* and *Niyama*?" The man explained that his supervisor had brought him and that he had explained *Yama* and *Niyama*, but...

Marga Guru said, "If your supervisor is around, go and call him in here." That gentleman came and prostrated before the master. He looked at him from head to foot, surveying his psychic and physical layers and could see that he, too, wasn't very strict in morality.

"See, though I appreciate this young man's virtues, he still has a few bad habits. You are the one who brought

him into Ananda Marga and advised him to follow *Yama* and *Niyama*. I want to tell you that he doesn't follow the moral codes. He deserves punishment. But, if you excuse him and take responsibility for his future conduct, I will not punish him."

Now the official was in a fix, for he was just as lax for the same reasons. He could not say yes or no and kept silent. The young man began to beg him over and over again for his pardon.

Under pressure, the man agreed. "Yes, Baba, I will pardon him."

"All right. When you have pardoned him," Ma'rga Guru said, "I have nothing more to say. But from this time onwards, it is your duty to see he changes."

Ma'rga Guru dismissed the youth then turned to the older man still standing nervously. He said, "Now that you have excused him, tell me whether you have the right to do so? In my opinion, the only person who can pardon others is someone who is free from defects themselves. Are you honestly free from those faults?" The man turned red, then finally gave his word that he would change himself from then on.

Sometimes Ma'rga Guru used the public forum to shock people into realizing their mistakes. One Sunday, in 1956, about four hundred Margiis were attending General Darshan at the *ja'grti* in Ranchi. The topic was on morality, spirituality and society. He was stressing the importance of how the moral force is necessary to build a healthy and powerful society. He explained a *shloka* of

Kathopanis'ad: Na'yama'tma' balahiinene lathyah. Na medhaya' na bahura' shrutena. ["The *a'tma'* or unit self cannot be realized by one devoid of moral and sentient force."] He paused and said, "Since the founding of Ananda Marga, I have stressed the need of morality. Whenever someone strays from *Yama* and *Niyama*, I get extremely annoyed." Then he looked at a gentleman who was about thirty years old, sitting in the back of the room. Ma'rga Guru said, "You, boy, stand up!" The gentleman stood. Ma'rga Guru asked him, "What is your name? What do you do?"

"I am an employee in the Postmaster General's office."

"Do you know the principles of *Yama* and *Niyama*?"

"Yes, Baba."

"Do you follow the principles strictly? Do you at least try to follow them?"

"Yes, Baba."

"Last Wednesday you received something in an envelope from a certain person? What was in that envelope?"

Silence fell in the hall. The gentleman became nervous. Ma'rga Guru fixed his piercing eyes on that Margii. The man looked as though his thoughts were flying in all directions. The master didn't stop there. He threatened, "Confess what you did or else I will divulge all your secrets."

He broke down. "Yes, Baba. I violated *Yama* and *Niyama*."

"I know that the salary you draw is enough to maintain your family. Why are you so greedy for money?"

The man bent his head in shame and repeatedly asked

for forgiveness.

"After this you mustn't indulge in such willful violations of *Yama* and *Niyama*."

Nothing could be hidden from the the master. If ever he was constrained to expose a person, we felt his love permeating the room. We didn't feel the harshness of his scolding as much as we could feel his compassion and his desire that we should grow to our fullest potential. Needless to say that after a few demonstrations of this sort, the Margiis became more careful to follow morality.

Dharma Shamiiks'a was in full swing at the central office at Jodhpur Park, Calcutta in July, 1982. Thousands of men and women streamed in from all over the world for this once-in-a-lifetime chance to have a personal meeting with the master. Nobody wanted to miss this opportunity. At these unique Dharma Samiiks'as, Ma'rga Guru would thoroughly study the physical, mental and spiritual bodies of an individual and prescribe whatever was needed for their all-round welfare. It was an unforgettable experience for all those who were there. Several Central workers were required to observe the proceedings. Ma'rga Guru came twice a day to the Central Office from his house and conduct the Dharma Shamiiks'as thoroughly.

One day, about 12 people were sitting in front of Ma'rga Guru. We were also seated in one corner of the room. One young woman was waiting for her turn. When she came forward, Ma'rga Guru asked her name, profession, academic qualification and other personal data. She answered all the questions.

"I see that you are a good and intelligent girl," he said. "You have studied a lot and now you are working as a school teacher. As a teacher you teach the school children lessons in morality.

"I would like to tell you something. As you know, I see each and every good quality of a person, but I look at the negative aspects, too. When I look at you I see a picture forming again and again. There is an educated young woman, about 26 years old, standing in a stationary shop and bargaining with the shopkeeper. He is a little absent-minded and not watching carefully. I see her hiding some pens and notebooks in the folds of her sari. I am certain you know who that adept shoplifter is. Now tell me, who is that young woman?"

It was impossible to hide anything from Ma'rga Guru and she was shamed because her secret vice had been revealed. Without looking up, she said, "I am that woman, Baba."

Ma'rga Guru softened. "I understand you are feeling ashamed," he said, "because you stand exposed to so many people. But remember, everyone here is your well-wisher. Nobody minds it. Rather they will be happy to see you rectify your mistakes. Suppose had you been caught shoplifting red-handed. How much trouble would you have landed yourself into, and how would that public exposure have affected you?"

The young woman was pained beyond measure. Ma'rga Guru continued on a softer note. "Now that you have realized your mistake, let us close this chapter. Let the past be buried. From now on, give up all your bad

habits. Be a good and ideal girl from today, from this very moment.

"And by the way, do you teach Madalasa's famous lullaby to your school children? 'Shudho'si buddho'si nirainjano'si: Be pure, be enlightened, be absolutely free from blemish.' Forget your ignominious past totally. You have had the opportunity of higher education, so do something good for humanity. You are young and have a long life ahead of you. If you continue doing good works, you will build a mountain of virtue in your life; you will get mental peace. And the society will also benefit from your efforts."

She changed completely after that. Later on she married to a good man is raising her children. Occasionally we meet each other at different Ananda Marga festivities. I have seen her become a shining example to others of service and sacrifice.

I was fortunate to have the chance of working closely with my master. I was able to observe his manner and the special ways he dealt with every type of person, with every type of situation. There was no difference between his teachings and his actions. Whatever he asked others to do, he did himself. He was cent percent a true *Maha'jana*, a great yogi. His teachings will go on inspiring spiritual aspirants for years to come. It is my hope that people, inspired by his example, will attain their own desired inner goal of life.

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