

## INTRODUCTION

THERE IS A SAYING in India that if you want to see God, then look for him in his realized saints.<sup>1</sup> Of course, God is everywhere, and nowhere is he closer to us than within our own sense of existence, but the pathways that lead to that realization are long and steep, and there is nothing more helpful to us in our journey toward the Divine than the company of one who has reached there and can show us the way.

In the fall of 1993 I moved from California to the Anandanagar Ashram in West Bengal, India,<sup>2</sup> and over the next four years I was fortunate enough to be able to pay regular visits to such a man. Whenever I would return home to Anandanagar after one of those visits I would feel that my meditation had somehow been raised to another level. Things that had never been clear to me became clear. The Divine Presence was stronger. I would return convinced that the experiences Dada Chandranath talked about, as

1 Throughout these conversations Dada uses the masculine singular pronoun (he) to refer to the Divine. This is traditional practice in Indian English, and I have preserved his original usage rather than attempting to find a usage more in keeping with contemporary efforts to eliminate sexist language from modern English. In Sanskrit and its modern descendants, such as Bengali, a single pronoun is used for both male and female, thus this problem doesn't arise.

2 Anandanagar is the central headquarters of Ananda Marga. It is a sprawling complex of over two thousand acres located in one of the most backward and undeveloped areas in India — Purulia District in West Bengal. The residents of Anandanagar run over fifty developmental projects, including a hospital, alternative medicine clinic, several orphanages, reforestation center, infrastructure development, agricultural research institute, and numerous educational institutions. Apart from working in the projects, all the residents of Anandanagar are active practitioners of meditation and yoga, making it one of the largest spiritual communities in the world.

if they were the most natural thing imaginable, were tangible and within reach. Most of all, I found in him someone whom I could emulate in every sphere of life. When I saw his humility, his nobility of mind and character, his moral steadfastness, his human warmth, and the light that came from eyes that were always fixed on God, I felt an unbidden desire spring up inside me to mold myself after him. The path is subtle, so subtle sometimes that we easily lose sight of it beneath our feet. The most important things cannot be learned through words and are difficult to understand even through our own practice. But see them alive in another human being and what was unfathomable and inexplicable becomes an image painted into memory, always there to instruct us where words fail.

Whenever I could, I would bring visitors to see Dada. They would bring their questions and with each answer I would learn something new about the spiritual path. One day I was sitting listening to Dada answer a question and I felt a sudden dismay that I didn't have a tape recorder to preserve what my memory was incapable of preserving. I still remember the question. A friend of mine from England was explaining that whenever she would do intense *sadhana* for some time it would always be followed by a period of intense clash.<sup>3</sup> She would often get overwhelmed or discouraged at these times and stop doing such intense practice. Then she asked, "Dada, how to manage?"

"There is nothing to manage," he replied. "You will have to accept the suffering." He paused and looked at her with a compassionate smile. Then he went on to explain that if one does intense *sadhana* over a period of time, then strong clash is bound to follow because when one's speed is increased the resistance will always be greater. It is a simple law of nature. But what happens, he said, is that if you can maintain the intensity of your practice, then eventually you get used to that level of resistance and you no longer experience it as suffering. It is like when someone starts running or lifting weights for the first time. After the first workout, their muscles will ache and they will suffer physically for several days. But if they can keep up with their exercise and not be put off by the difficulties it entails, then eventually their muscles get used to that level of strain and they no longer experience it as pain. Rather, after some time they learn to enjoy the effort in itself. But if they give up and abandon the exercise, and then pick it up again after a gap of several weeks, they will have to go through the same process again and suffer the same aches and pains.

<sup>3</sup> *Sadhana* literally means "effort to complete." It is the most commonly used term for spiritual practice, or more simply, for meditation.

By the time Dada had finished talking I had resolved to get hold of a tape recorder and record his answers for the benefit of all the people who would like to come to India and talk to him but who would never get the chance. Soon afterward I prepared a list of questions with the help of a few friends and paid him a visit at his village home in Gadipur. My next visit was couple of months later at the home of his eldest son in Patna, and between the two visits I had enough material for a book.

I have a couple of regrets concerning the scope of this book. The first is that the conversations themselves don't give the reader much of an idea of what it is like to have a chance to spend so much time with such a being. The real communication between a saint and those who go to them to learn about spirituality doesn't take place at the verbal level. The better part of the teaching lies in a transmission that cannot be seen or heard, much less captured on the written page. It can only be felt and experienced in the spark that travels unseen from the mind that is one with God to the mind that hungers for that same experience. I have added a few excerpts from my diary to try to give the reader some sense of the spiritual climate that these conversations took place in, but they barely begin to do it justice. And I will add one anecdote here from a different visit, earlier in the same year. Hopefully it will give the reader an initial glimpse into Dada's personality, although I must point out that Dada is fond of saying that it is not the personality that counts, it is the ideology.

On that occasion I had brought a group of westerners to see Dada, including a senior American monk of Ananda Marga. On the trip up to Patna I mentioned that Dada sat in *nirvikalpa samadhi* four times a day.<sup>4</sup> On the second day of our visit, Dada, myself, and this American monk went out to the porch to do our noon meditation while the women who had accompanied us remained inside to meditate. As we were sitting down, the monk turned to Dada and said, "Dada, Devashish tells me that you sit in *nirvikalpa samadhi* four times a day. Is it true?"

Dada smiled broadly and said, "Devashish knows, I don't know."

4 *Samadhi* means "yogic trance", or the state of union with God. There are two primary types of *samadhi* — *savikalpa samadhi*, where the mind of the spiritual aspirant merges into the Cosmic Mind, and *nirvikalpa*, where the mind dissolves into pure Consciousness and even the sense of "I" disappears. It is said that *nirvikalpa* cannot be described because the mind itself, the experiencer, does not remain, thus Dada's tongue-in-cheek comment a few lines later. This *nirvikalpa* state is the ultimate goal of yogic practice.

Again the monk pressed him. “But Dada, does that mean that yesterday, when we were doing our noon meditation together, you went into nirvikalpa samadhi?”

Then Dada said, “You see, when you come out of nirvikalpa samadhi your mind is abnormal. You cannot immediately eat your meal or talk to people. You need some time for your mind to come back into normal consciousness. Baba always used to tell us that whenever you have to be in public you should remain normal. Let us say you have to go to the ashram for group meditation and afterward you have to give a talk. You should not go into samadhi then. You should remain normal. Or say some people have come to meet you and you have to sit and talk to them and answer their questions. You should not go into samadhi. But in the morning, when you wake up and sit up on your bed for some meditation, then it is okay. After you take bath and sit for your full practice, it is okay. In the evening, when you sit again for full practice, it is okay. And at night, before you go to sleep, it is okay. But Baba always used to say that you must remain normal in public.”

Then the monk asked him how he knew how long he would go into samadhi for. Dada replied that you take a *samkalpa*, a determination or resolve, before you go into samadhi that I will come out after ten minutes or twenty minutes or one hour, depending on the time one has at one’s disposal. Satisfied, we closed our eyes and did some noon meditation.

There were eight or nine guests for lunch that day. During the meal different people were asking Dada questions about spirituality and devotion. After we finished, the monk was asking some general questions about sadhana and then he mentioned that he sometimes liked to do some Dhyana first,<sup>5</sup> before doing the other lessons, and he wondered what Dada thought about that. Dada arched his eyebrows and said, “No, no, nirvikalpa samadhi must always be last. After you come out of nirvikalpa samadhi you won’t want to do the other lessons. You won’t want to bring your mind down to the lower chakras. Nirvikalpa should always be last.”

“But Dada,” the monk replied, “I don’t go into nirvikalpa samadhi when I do Dhyana.”

“Yes, yes,” Dada said, “but you will, you will.”

The other regret I have is that I was there alone to ask the questions.

<sup>5</sup> *Dhyana* literally means “meditation.” In the Ananda Marga system of sadhana it refers to a type of meditation on Consciousness that leads to nirvikalpa samadhi. It is taught as the sixth lesson.

These conversations would have sparked questions in other's minds that never occurred to me. I also wish our conversations could have been more conversation and less of list of questions that often had little to connect them, but for this a little patience is required. The art of spiritual conversation with someone like Dada Chandranathjii takes time to master,<sup>6</sup> and I only felt like I was beginning to get the hang of it at the tail end of the last interview.

Other than this, I wish the reader a happy journey through these pages. May they bring you some measure of the joy they gave me in their creation.

<sup>6</sup> *Jii* is a suffix commonly added to the end of a person's name in north India. It denotes respect.



# Part One

Gadipur



## June 3, 1997

IT WAS MID-MORNING WHEN I arrived in Mahua and hired a rickshaw to take me to Dada's farmhouse in the small village of Gadopur. Dada was waiting for me in the courtyard when the rickshaw pulled up, and after a quick bath I joined him on the veranda to enjoy a late breakfast of litchis and mango from his orchards and yogurt from his dairy. While I ate, Dada explained to me about the different farm activities that were going on at that time of year, and in the meantime I watched a pair of farmhands in the courtyard practice the age-old art of separating the *dal* from the chaff. They were squatting by the side of a huge mound of mung pods with towels wrapped around their heads, Egyptian-style, seemingly impervious to the heat and the glare. Each of them had a flat wicker basket, open at one end, in which they would place a handful of mung pods and then flip them up in the air and catch them as one might flip a pancake and catch it in a pan. With each toss a few more beans would separate from their pods and move back toward the closed end of the basket. When the chaff was fully separated they would toss the separated beans into a second pile and grab another handful.

By the time the meal was over I found myself feeling as much at home there as I did anywhere else in the world. The closest I had ever gotten to being a farmer was watching my garden grow in Anandanagar, and occasionally giving instructions to my gardener about what to plant, but after listening to Dada talk about what was happening on the farm it felt like the most natural life in the world. Perhaps I have some farming history buried in the forgotten memories of past lives, but I'd rather think it was Dada, transmitting the farmer's love for the nature he lives with, that made me feel that way. We spent the rest of the morning talking about the farm and farming, and I felt as happy as I knew how to feel.

When it was time to break for noon meditation and lunch, I pulled out my list of questions and showed it to him, asking him if he remembered that I had once said that I wanted to do a book of questions and answers with him. He looked it over for a minute or two, smiled, and then said, “Yes, but it is better if you get the answers from within. It’s not very difficult. With a little thinking and concentration it is very easy to get the answer from within oneself. And that answer is the real answer.”

“But Dada,” I said, “these answers aren’t for me. They’re so other people can get a chance to read what you have to say.”

There was a bright gleam in his eye. “Yes, we will answer your questions, no doubt, but still, it is better if the answer comes from within. One day, when you get time, you come here for a longer period. Come for fifteen days, twenty days, one month, and enjoy the spiritual environment. After that you won’t have any more questions.”

I spent the afternoon with Dada’s grandson, Hrishikesh, who took me to visit the cottage of a local mahatma, or saint, who had died more than forty years earlier. The cottage and the garden that surrounds it have been preserved as a shrine that people still come to visit from different parts of India. The caretaker is the great-grandson of that mahatma, a devout Brahmin who performs all the daily rituals but doesn’t meditate. While I could feel the spiritual vibration of the cottage and the grounds, I felt a little strange seeing how little interest the caretaker had in spiritual matters apart from his daily offices. Still, I was glad that I had seen the place. It added a visual context to the story that Dada had once told me about his initiation. He had begun searching for a guru in earnest in 1950 or 51 but had not been able to find anyone that satisfied him.<sup>1</sup> In 1952 he returned to Gadopur on leave and went to meet this mahatma who had by then become a well-known saint with disciples from all over India. He was greatly impressed and ended up asking him for initiation. The mahatma, however, declined to initiate him and told him in Bhojpuri, *Samay aya ta mili*. — “You will get it when the time comes.” A year later he heard about Baba from a fellow employee and went to visit him for the first time. When Chandranathjii arrived at Baba’s house, Baba’s brother, who was sitting out front, ushered Dada into the front room and then went into the back room through a curtained doorway to get Baba. Just before Baba passed

1 Spiritual teacher. *Guru* literally means “dispeller of darkness.”

through the curtain to enter the room, Chandranathji heard him say in Bengali: *Ki, samay hala?*—“Has the time come?”

After we got back I went for a walk with Dada. He took me to the field where DMC had been held in 1982,<sup>2</sup> and then on to the mango orchard. When we got back to the house we sat down under a huge mango tree, heavy with fruit, that stands directly across from the courtyard. For some reason, Dada said, he enjoyed sitting beneath this particular tree very much. He found it quite cool. A few meters away there was a small thatch shed where a carpenter was busy making chairs from Dada’s *sesam* trees. We sat there watching the carpenter practice his craft and enjoying the shade of the towering mango at the end of a hot Indian summer day. Dada began talking about how the pleasure that one gets from artificial things cannot compare with the pleasure one gets from nature. He mentioned the city festivals, all that noise and revelry that makes it hard to even think sometimes. But when a person learns to get pleasure from nature they find a pleasure these festivals cannot begin to give. “Look at that tree,” he said, “how straight and tall it is. How it points to the sky, as if it were pointing to the Infinite, reminding you of the presence of God. Can you get this from any artificial thing? Even a pop song describing God cannot give you the thrill that you get from looking at this tree.”

While we were sitting there, two local Margis arrived on scooter from a nearby town to visit Dada.<sup>3</sup> He gave a few last-minute instructions to the workers and then asked Ram Pirit, a village boy in Dada’s employ, to pull up some chairs from the veranda and set them up in the courtyard. By that time the sun had fallen behind the house and the two towering mango trees that rise above it on either side, and the entire courtyard was out of the sun’s reach. I gathered up my tape recorder and my papers and went to sit with them, feeling a tingle of anticipation. Dada began talking in Maethili, the local language, inquiring after their welfare and discussing whatever it was they had come to discuss, but after some time he began singing a few lines from a Prabhat Samgita.<sup>4</sup> His eyes were half-closed and

2 *Dharmamahacakra* — “the great circle of Dharma.” This was a spiritual program held at certain times during the year. It would generally last several days and during the program Baba would give spiritual discourses twice a day.

3 Practitioners of Ananda Marga sadhana.

4 Shrii Shrii Anandamurti composed 5018 devotional songs between the years 1982 and 1990. They are collectively known as Prabhat Samgita. Samgita means “song”; Prabhat was Baba’s first name. Traditionally in India, the songs of a particular composer are known by his or her first name followed by samgita.

I swore I could see a certain light coming from his face.

When he opened his eyes, he looked at his two visitors and started explaining the song, but inexplicably he was now speaking English. I wasn't even sure that they understood, but they were as quiet and as attentive as I was. Puzzled but thankful for my good fortune, I reached over to the small table in front of us where I had set my Walkman and pushed the record button. Dada continued talking to them but he didn't switch back to Maethili until it was time for them to go and the conversation turned to more mundane topics.

C: *Nirava* means “no sound.” When nobody is there, there can be no sound. So *nirava rate*. I am alone. There is no sound. No one is there.

*Tomari sathe*—But I am with you. Is there any sound when you go into samadhi? Is there anybody else with you? Is there anything around you? No. *Nirava rate*. But you are there, God is there. When a sadhaka, a devotee, goes into samadhi there is nobody there, there is no thought, there is no sound. But he is with them. So the devotee sings *nirava rate tomari sathe, na bala katha anek rayegecche*—In the silent night, alone with you, so much was left unsaid. Why? When there is nobody to disturb us and you are with me, then why did these talks remain unspoken? Because the mind is not there. Who will talk? When you come out of samadhi, and your mind starts working again, you feel this—Oh, so much remained unsaid. There is so much you wanted to ask him. But again, when you go into samadhi, you cannot talk. *Nirava rate tomari sathe, na bala katha anek rayegecche*. The devotee wants to ask these questions, but how can they when they have no mind? The mind is lost in him, the mind is merged in him. There is no one there to ask the questions.

Sing Prabhat Samgita and try to understand the real meaning—not the literal meaning, but the real meaning. You will feel very happy. You will enjoy it.

There is one song: *Ami base achi nadir tiire tahari ashay, he karnadhar katham?* *Karnadhar* means “one who takes you across the river in a boat”, “helmsman.” Now who is *karnadhar* in this universe? He alone. *Katham*—where are you? O my Lord, where are you? I am sitting by the riverbank waiting for you. The devotee, the spiritual practitioner, is waiting for him to come, feeling his absence. Before you reach samadhi, when you are struggling to enter into samadhi but not getting it, you feel like this.

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For example, Rabindranath Samgita refers to the songs of Rabindranath Tagore.

*Base achi nadi tiire tahari ashay he karnadhar kathay?* Where are you, my Lord? I am waiting for you at the bank of the river, waiting and waiting.

So when I hear these songs, when I go through these songs, I feel so much happiness, so much joy, such a deep satisfaction. I feel like reading them over and over again.

Imagine the state of mind of a devotee, when they feel *base achi nadi tiire tahari ashay he karnadhar kathay*. Oh my Lord, where are you? I am sitting here, waiting for you at the bank of the river. You might have heard about Lord Krishna who told Arjuna: *Daevyasha gunamayi mamamaya duratyaya, mameva je prapadyante maya metam tarantite*. This *maya*—this universe with all its attractions is *maya*—this *maya* is very difficult to cross. It is like a turbulent river or ocean. It's very difficult to cross. But one who submits to me, who surrenders to me, *mameva je prapadyante*—who seeks shelter in me—they cross it successfully. That is the idea here. *Base achi nadi tire tahari ashay, he karnadhar kathay?* I am waiting for you, because you are the only person, rather the only existence who can take me across this turbulent river.

If you can understand the real meaning and feel the happiness that this brings with it, it is very helpful in sadhana. There is another song. *Priya amar, priyatama tumi mor, ghana tamasay jhainjha jhatikay, sathe acho Cita-chor*. You are dear to me. Oh, you are dearest to me, not only dear. You are dear to me, you are dearest to me. *Priya amar, priyatama tumi mor. Ghana tamasay*—even in the darkest night. *Jainjha jhatikay*—in the storm and rain, lightning and rain. *Sathe acho Cita-cor*—you are with me, O Cita-cor. *Cita-cor* means “one who has stolen my mind.” My mind is lost in you, so you have stolen my mind.

You are dear to me, you are dearest to me, and you are always with me, even in the darkest night, even when there is cyclone and rain. Cyclone and rain and darkest night are symbols for our worst days, our most troublesome days. So even when I am passing through the darkest of times, passing through the most troublesome of periods, you are with me. O my dear, O my dearest one, you are always with me.

These are the songs of a devotee. They help to elevate their mind.

*At this point Dada started singing a song in Sanskrit, an old chant of Shankaracharya — Bhaja Govindam. Again his eyes half-closed and I could feel my own ideation soaring, carried away by the vibrations coming from the saint and his song. After he finished singing, he remained silent for a minute or two and then opened his eyes as he had done before and started explaining*

*the meaning of the song in English to his visitors while I kept the tape recorder running and listened, completely enchanted by the mood and the devotional feeling behind his words.*

Nobody has come to this earth to stay forever; everybody has come here for a certain period, a limited period. And what can you do within this limited period? You can't do many things. You can't do much. You can do something.

You are not all-powerful, you can't do everything and anything. You can do something.

And what should that something be? That something should always be *bhaja Govindam, bhaja Govindam, bhaja Govindam, mor*—O fool, remember him, remember him, remember him.

Always keep in mind that you have to leave this earth someday. Don't forget him and don't become enmeshed in the pleasures of this earth. Remember him, keep him always in your mind, and then work. And what should your work be? *Atma moksartham, jagat hitayaca*. For your salvation do sadhana, and for the good of the people, for the good of the world—not only human beings, but birds, animals, plants also—for everybody, everywhere, do such work that benefits them. Feed the plant. Don't allow the plant to dry out. Water the seedling so that it can grow into a healthy tree. Help everybody and everything. That should be the motto of life. Sadhana, or spiritual practice, for yourself, for your salvation, but not only sadhana. Do good to others also.

Baba told a story once during DMC at Bhagalpur in July 1955. The topic was *Dharmatattva*. Do you know the definition of Dharma in Ananda Marga?<sup>5</sup> It does not mean religion. It doesn't mean Hinduism or Christianity or Sikhism or Islam. Dharma means the constant desire of the human being to achieve something infinite. If you get a certain amount of money you will not be completely satisfied; you will want more. If you get a good house you will eventually want a better house. There is no end to our desires. Today we eat something tasty; tomorrow we again have the desire to eat something tasty. It's endless. We want everything in infinite form. But nothing is infinite in this universe except him, except the Lord, except God. So, unknowingly, the human mind is always aspiring toward God, because it is always aspiring toward something infinite. And he is the only infinite existence. Whether we are aware of it or not, we all aspire for

<sup>5</sup> Dharma is used colloquially to mean “religion” in the north Indian languages. Its etymological meaning is “the essential or true nature of any entity.”

him. So, when we have to stay here for a certain period, the motto of life should be “sadhana and good deeds.” *Atma moksartham, jagat hitayaca.*

The story Baba told was about a man called Dhruva. Dhruva was the son of a king in ancient times. When Dhruva was very young he began devoting himself to spiritual practice. When the sage Narada Muni heard about this, he approached Dhruva and said, “Dhruva, you are the son of the king. Why are you doing such rigorous spiritual practice? Why don’t you go and enjoy the comforts of the palace. Be a king and rule for many years. Enjoy this world as king, and then in your old age you can devote yourself to spiritual practice.”

When Dhruva heard this he asked Narada, “Can you give me the guarantee that everyone” — this is a principle we are talking about and this principle is for everybody — “can you give me the guarantee that everyone will live to old age, that no one will die prematurely?”

“No, how can I give you this guarantee?” Narada replied.

“Then let me practice while I’m young,” Dhruva said.

After narrating this story, Baba went on to say that one’s *shaeshyavastha*, that is, one’s childhood or youth, is meant for education and dharma sadhana. Not only education. Even when you are a student you should do spiritual practice. So, study and spiritual practice in your *shaeshyavastha*.

Then you become a young adult, *jubavastha*. What should you do in that period of your life? *Arthoparjan* [earning] and dharma sadhana. You have to earn a living in order to provide yourself and your dependents with food, clothes and shelter. But not only earning. Earn your living and do your spiritual practice.

The third stage is *prodhavastha*. Now you are neither old nor young. You have become mature, let us say above forty, above forty-five, above fifty. You are moving from young adulthood to old age. During that period you should do *samajik prathistha* and dharma sadhana, that is, social service and spiritual practice. You have learned many things in the course of your life and developed your capabilities. Use that capacity and knowledge to help others through social service and do your spiritual practice.

And then comes *Barddhatva*. *Barddhatva* means “old age.” When you become very old, say seventy-five, eighty, eighty-five, then your limbs become weak. You no longer have the capacity to move about and work. In that stage one should do only dharma sadhana, only spiritual practice. A man like me can be said to be in his *barddhatvavastha*.

So a person should work according to their age, but at no stage in their life should they neglect their spiritual practice. Study and spiritual practice.

Earning and spiritual practice. Social service and spiritual practice. And then, in the last stage, in the last lap of your life, only dharma sadhana, only spiritual practice.

And everybody should remember that a person should begin doing spiritual practice in their childhood. Nobody should wait for old age to begin their spiritual practice. That is why Baba has said in *Caryacarya* that when a child attains the age of five they should be initiated into meditation.<sup>6</sup> Let them practice Namah Mantra [a introductory meditation technique], because this is as much as they can understand at this point. This will create an impression in their mind. Their mind will be trained for further, more rigorous spiritual practices later on.

So the children should not be neglected. They should start spiritual practice at the age of five, and this is the guardian's responsibility. A child of five does not know what they have to do. They only know that they are a student, that they have been sent to school, that they have to study. Yes, study, but do some spiritual practice also. Suppose the child begins their studies at seven o'clock. Then prepare them for spiritual practice at six-thirty or quarter-to-seven. Ten to fifteen minutes is sufficient to begin with.

*Here Dada switched back to Maethili but before we broke for evening meditation he switched back to English one more time.*

*Tumi andhar nishiithe dhruvatara, tomare dekhile smarane rakhile keu nahi hay dishahara. Dishahara* means "one who has lost their way." But a traveler, wherever they may be, whether in the desert, in the jungle, or sailing in the ocean, when that traveler sees the pole star they know what direction they are headed in. The pole star points the way north. *Andhara nishiithe* means "in the dark night." *Tumi dhruvatara*—you are the pole star. *Tomare dekhile*—one who sees you. *Smarane rakhile*—and one who remembers you. One who sees you and one who remembers you, such a person never loses their way. *Tomare dekhile, smarane rakhile, keu na hay dishahara.*

So you see, these songs are meant for sadhakas, for spiritual practitioners. They are not simply songs. They are a part of spiritual practice.

*It was quite late, well after nine, when I finished my evening meditation and Dada came to fetch me for dinner. This is not unusual in India, especially at Gadopur where Dada and Didi rarely finish their spiritual practices before*

6 A book delineating basic practices and observances for practitioners of Ananda Marga sadhana, including various social codes.

*eight-thirty.*<sup>7</sup> Afterward Dada came to my room to make sure I had everything I needed to be comfortable for the night. He was sorry, he said, that he didn't get the opportunity to answer any of my questions that day, but that we would begin our work tomorrow for sure. Then he told me this story:

C: In 1956 Baba told me to go to my village home and hold a *tattvasabha*.<sup>8</sup> I said, "Baba, what is a *tattvasabha*? We don't know what this is." The Marga had just been founded the previous year. So Baba explained to us what he meant by *tattvasabha* and told myself, my wife, another lady acharya, Ajinadevi, and Acharyas Harisadhan, Shiva Shankar and Ram Tanuk to go to Gadopur. Before we left Baba told us what questions the pundits would ask and dictated the answers to us. We did as Baba directed. The six of us went to Gadopur, held a gathering in the village square and had a debate on spirituality and Ananda Marga with the priests. They were satisfied. Pundits are never satisfied, but the people attending the conference, they were satisfied, and many people took initiation. We remained busy till noon the next day. That evening a few people from the village came to me and asked me if I would explain to them the following morning about the significance of *astapash* and *satripu*.<sup>9</sup>

I agreed, and I was glad that I had time to think it over. You see, in those days we had no philosophy, nothing of the kind. Today you have a vast literature, you can educate yourself. But in those days our only treasure was whatever Baba had told to us. Now I had heard about *astapash*, the eight fetters, and *satripu*, the six enemies, from Baba, but they were not fully set in my mind. So when I went to bed that night I started thinking about them, one by one, and explaining them to myself. It was a sort of mental rehearsal for the next morning. And while I was rehearsing I fell asleep. During the night I had a dream, and in the dream Baba explained to me the meaning of *astapash* and *satripu*. When I woke up I was very happy because I had gotten the answer, the complete answer.

This is how knowledge comes. It may come through thinking, through

7 Didi means "elder sister" and here refers to Dada's wife, Acharya Ram Pari Devi, who was the first female initiate and first female acharya in Ananda Marga. It is used for women in the same way as "Dada" is used for men.

8 *Tattvasabha* means a public conference on spirituality and spiritual philosophy.

9 *Astapash* means "the eight fetters"; they are: fear, shame, hatred, doubt, bondage of lineage, complex of culture, vanity and backbiting. *Satripu* means "the six enemies"; they are: longing for earthly objects, anger, avarice, attraction, pride and envy.

dreams, through realization. Nobody knows in what form it will appear, but it will come. In those early days I didn't have the capacity to think so deeply, or to realize so much, so it came to me through a dream. Of course, Baba had already told us what questions the pundits would ask. "They will have no other questions, apart from these questions," he had said. And then he dictated the answers to those questions. When we arrived in Gadopur, the questions the pundits asked were the exact same questions that Baba had coached us for. So it was a successful *tattvasabha* and my visitors the following morning were quite satisfied with my explanation of *astapasha* and *satripu*. Baba did it but I got the credit. Actually, I got the credit for doing nothing. I was just a medium. It was he who was explaining through me, answering through me.

So, this can happen and will happen in everybody's life. You will also get the answer one day to all the questions that arise in your mind. You will get the answer from within yourself.

Do you know the history of Newton? Newton was known as a great scientist. But how did he know that the earth had gravitational force? Where did this knowledge come from? Not from any book, not by hearing it from somebody. It came from within himself. He started concentrating on a particular point; when his mind was fully concentrated on that point, the flow of knowledge came from his unconscious mind to his conscious mind, and he gave the world the theory of gravitational force. So it is with everyone. Everybody has all the knowledge of the universe hidden within themselves. You need only know how to access it. Yogis learn how to do this through meditation. So go on meditating, go on meditating. One day you will develop the ability to know the answers to the questions that arise in your mind.

D: But in the meantime we can take the easy course and ask you.

C: Yes, yes, that's true. To save time, it's just saving time. To save time you ask those who are capable of giving you a reply. Or you consult such books and treatises that give you the answer.

What might otherwise take you ten years to learn, you can learn in one year by asking the right questions or through study. So it's not bad; it's quite good, in fact. Asking questions in order to know the reply, or looking into books, authoritative books, is quite good because it saves you time. Otherwise you might have to go on concentrating, or thinking, or meditating for years together before you get that same answer. But if you ask the

right question you can know it immediately. However, there are times or circumstances when you don't have the opportunity to ask that question. In that case you have no alternative but to think and think and meditate.

You are tired now. I will not disturb you any more.