

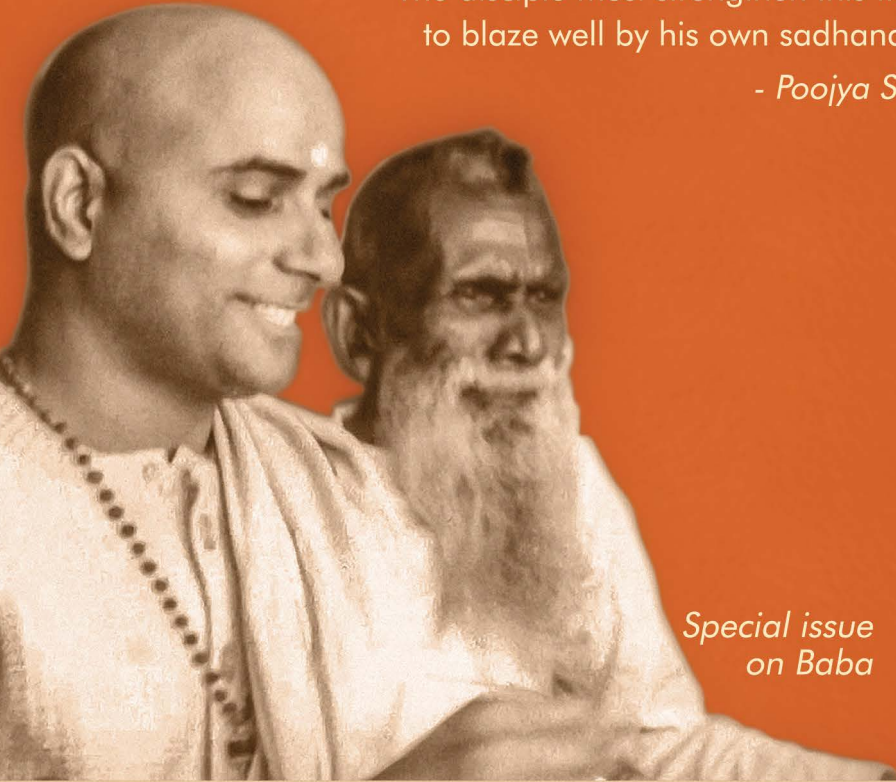
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VICHARA SETHU

The Path of Introspection

"Texts only declare. Deeksha does.
Deeksha is the fire and brilliance that
the Guru lights from himself in the disciple.
The disciple must strengthen this flame
to blaze well by his own sadhana."

- Poojya Swamiji



*Special issue
on Baba*

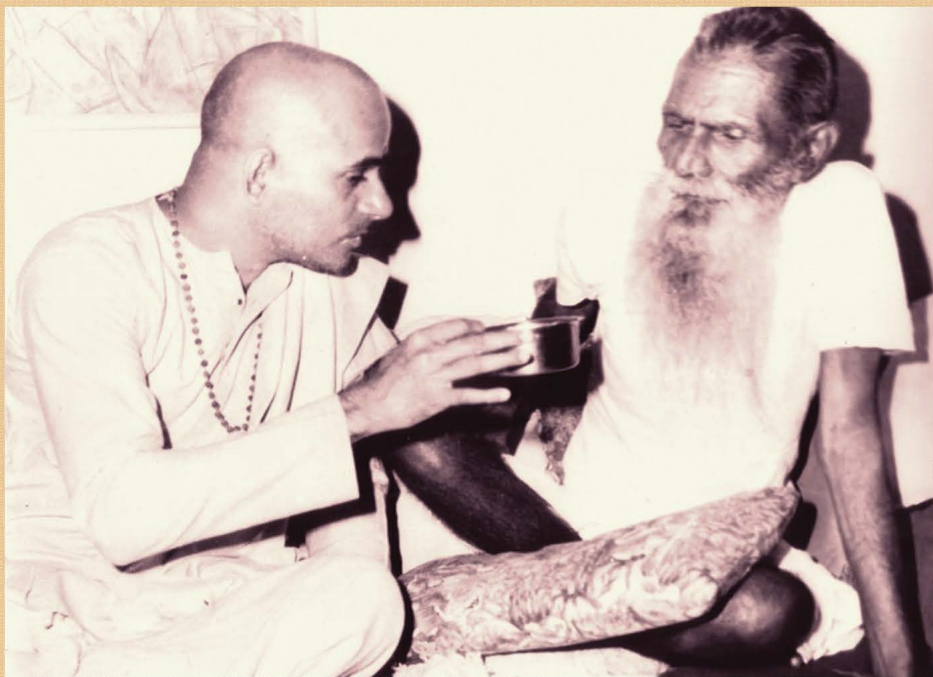


Narayanashrama Tapovanam
Thrissur, Kerala - 680 563

May 2021
Vol 56 No 08



Baba at Inanashram (Paralikkad, 1965)



*Poojya Swamiji with Baba at the house of Smt Ammini and Sri Madhavan
(Jamshedpur, 1970)*

VICHĀRAŚETĤU

The Path of Introspection

May 2021

Vol 56 No 08

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Front cover: Poojya Swamiji with Baba in Jamshedpur (1970)

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News & Notes

88th Jayanti of Poojya Swamiji - 13th May 2021

Poojya Swamiji's Jayanti Day programme will be live-streamed from Ashram. Those wishing to receive programme information by WhatsApp or email should send a message to +918547960362 or ashram@bhoomananda.org

Due to Covid Pandemic, Ashram remains closed to visitors.

SIRD-Malaysia's New Centre: On March 28, 2021, SIRD-Malaysia (Society for Inner Resources Development) shifted to their new permanent Centre, amidst a simple but touching devotional programme viewed on-line by devotees across the world. During the planning, nobody had anticipated what a purifying effect the program would have on a global scale. The actual inauguration will take place later, when Poojya Swamiji visits Malaysia, accompanied by Nutan Swamiji and Ma.

Three days prior to the Entry, devotees gathered at the new Centre for chanting Bhagavad Gita in the morning, 6 chapters a day, and Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma, 3 rounds each evening. Before and after was continuous chanting of *Om Nama: Sadā-śivāya ...* played over the speakers. Poojya Swamiji had firmly reminded the core team that at no point should there be any conversation other than the chanting.

On 28th March morning, as Poojya Swamiji's portrait was being carried from the car to the Centre, devotees on either side showered soft pink rose petals at Swamiji's feet. Swamiji's photo was installed in the shrine to the blowing of conch and ringing of bell. Pādukā (sandal) poojā was performed by Sri Sivagnanam and Smt Devi Manickam. After the Pādukā poojā and ārati, Poojya Swamiji, Nutan Swamiji and Ma addressed the devotees over internet. ■

Hymns on Baba and Poornashram

Composed by Poojya Swamiji

[Before going to Dakshinkhanda for the inauguration of Poornashram reconstruction project on 4th Feb 2018, Poojya Swamiji composed two verses on Baba. The first one was composed in Kolkata on 2nd Feb and the second one in Katwa on 3rd. Ma recited these while Poojya Swamiji garlanded Baba's photograph on the dais on 4th.]

नमामि गंगाधरहंसवर्यं
दयासमुद्रं नतलोकबन्धुम् ।
संभ्रान्तचित्ताय समाश्रिताय
समादिशद्-यः परमात्मतत्त्वम् ॥ 1

I prostrate before Gangadhara Paramahansa Dev, an ocean of mercy, who is a close friend of those who seek His feet with humility, and who instructed the truth of the Paramātmā to the deluded who sought refuge in Him.

पूर्णाश्रमं यस्य तपोनिधानं
जिज्ञासुवृन्दस्य परं शरण्यम् ।
क्षेमाय सर्वस्य च मोक्षसिद्ध्यै
नता वयं नित्यमनन्यभक्त्या ॥ 2

Poornashram, the abode of His austerity, is a sure refuge to seekers and enquirers. We prostrate always with exclusive devotion before Poornashram for the welfare and spiritual redemption of all.

Hariḥ Om Tat Sat

Blossoming under the Grace of Baba

(Poojya Swamiji reminisces on Baba's 126th Jayanti)

My pūrvāśrama days

I was born the last and the seventh child of my parents. Our family was not rich. But we were not poor either. I do not feel we children had suffered from lack of anything, as far as our growth and inner enrichment were concerned. In matters of food, clothing, education, and everything else, there was no lack. We were contented and enthusiastic. We were together in all that we thought and did. As such, I never seem to have had a lack of anything any time.

I am now leading a life where the subject I deal with is education, enlightenment. I have many occasions to think about education of the people of the country, of our students at various levels and disciplines.

In that connection, the other day I told Rajesh: “When I look at my young days, when I was going to school, there was nobody to guide me, even in the primary needs of education like the use of dictionary. I never knew there was anything like a dictionary at all! There was none to give any guidance.” Generally you see others educated and then try to understand many matters from them. They speak the language of the educated, pursue higher interests, goals and aspirations. All this would help the young minds know about life and how it should be steered.

My father had learnt by writing on the floor. My mother had no formal education. **Nevertheless, she taught me Sanskrit verses without a syllable going wrong.** I used to wonder how this was possible. Her father, my grandfather, was a Sanskrit scholar. From our Medini Varma's palace in Kodungallur, some erudite people used to go to him seeking clarifications to their doubts on scriptures. My grandfather was totally given to Ramayanam.

Being his daughter, my mother had inherited certain things, also acquired a measure of knowledge. I was mentioning this in the context of my pūrvāśrama life in my young days and my academic education.

But the whole picture changed within a matter of months when I joined my brothers in Kolkata to commence professional life. This was because I happened to meet my Gurudev Baba there. I cannot remember when exactly I met him. But it was within months of my arrival in Kolkata.

That was the time when my pūrvāśrama brother, who was later anointed Swami Poornananda Tirtha, and I were in our flat. My eldest brother, who later became Swami Purushothama Tirtha, and his family of four, had gone back to our farmhouse in Wadakancheri, Thrissur. So, the two of us hosted Baba for some weeks. Hosting Baba brought a significant difference in my life. **Should I call it a difference or a significant beginning in my life?**

I did not know anything about spirituality then, although I was very religious. I had known about religiosity to some measure. I remember sitting with Narayanaswamy, my neighbour friend in Wadakancheri, on a mango tree in the garden of his house when I was young. We were discussing something. I told him: “Narayanaswamy, I am not able to find any interest in anything. Nothing seems to be appealing to me. Sometimes I feel this is a crisis, unable to be interested in anything. I move about with children of my age from my village; but the interest is somehow lacking.”

Narayanaswamy was given to astrology. He said: **“This is called vairāgya, dispassion. One who has dispassion will have moksha.”**

The words vairāgya and moksha entered my life then, from my friend – Vairāgya is necessary for moksha. This was a great knowledge for me. I wondered whether what I had was

vairāgya, dispassion, and I was heading for moksha! It was certainly a new exposure, a stunning possibility, although I could not understand much about it!

The first meeting

Seeing Baba meant something very significant and positive, especially in the background of my vairāgya and the possibility of being entitled for moksha, as judged by my friend! Do instances in life portend such a sequence? Do even small instances have a decisive role to play in the life of an individual? Are the hands of Nature so careful and powerful to shape young minds, leading them to where they should reach? In village or town, whether young or old, everyone is growing under the canopy of Providence that shapes the mind and intelligence with abundant care and concern!

Baba's contact had an unimaginable impact on my heart and mind. I always found him stay in a room with closed doors. My brother used to go in and close the door behind. They used to spend many hours together. I was wondering what they were doing. They must have been talking. I was wondering how they could talk for so many hours! And on what subject? But I did not enquire about it.

One day I asked Baba: "How to concentrate the mind?"

"Oh, concentration! It is the last thing in life," he said.

I had a restless mind. I wanted to do something to make it restful and peaceful. When I asked Baba about it in my own innocent manner, the answer was: "It is the last thing in human life. And you are too young."

Baba went away after a few days. Meanwhile, he had initiated my brother into Brahmavidyā sādhanā.

Deeper influence

Every morning and evening, I scrupulously did my *sandhyā*

vandanam (daily rituals). In the morning it would take a little longer. I used to recite Gāyatrī 108 times. Along with other paraphernalia, it would need 40 minutes. In the evening, Gāyatrī chanting would be 64 times. So, the duration would be less. Baba had seen me perform *sandhyā vandanam*. Apparently he was impressed by my performance.

I continued my contact with Baba. I used to write letters to him; only because I liked him. **I had fondness more than respect for Baba.** This communication stood in good stead in my life. Every letter I wrote, Baba would reply immediately.

One day, I had a mystic experience when I was performing my Gāyatrī japa. I felt the time had come for me to get initiated by Baba. I knew about initiation (*deekshā*), as Baba had initiated my brother. My brother used to keep a diary after his initiation. He had written there in the beginning: **“The school of Nothingness, primary class”**. I wondered what this “school of Nothingness, primary class” meant.

Being written by my brother, who was educated, what did this mean? However, I did not ask him anything. But seeing this book, and these words, certainly meant something deep about his initiation in the hands of Baba. **Was initiation a search into something unknown, but to be known? Did it start from zero? Where would it lead one to?** Thoughts like these must have paraded my mind, evoking a note of curiosity - may be something more, unknown to me till then!

I felt something mystic, mysterious, about it. Why did Baba come to our flat? Why did my brother bring him? What transpired between them in the form of initiation that led my brother to keep a diary, titling it “School of Nothingness, primary class”? This meant that we had to be initiated if we were to attain knowledge or *moksha*!

That initiation would be the primary level of the search. So,

all that I knew, I did, I had learnt, if at all, was a BIG ZERO. I had to start all afresh with a primary class of learning into the Unknown. The words seemed to have great meaning and purpose. So, I wanted to have deekshā.

And Baba gave me deekshā. May be, he found me no more young, as he felt earlier in our flat. Now I had grown and become fit for deekshā, though I was still young!

Deekshā sādhanā grips

I grew under that deekshā. All the growth in my life was after I got initiated. As I have told earlier also, I told Baba: “Do not ask me to read any book. You have given me deekshā. I don’t look to any other source. And reading is not my way. You have given me the practice. **I will be true to my practice. I will pursue it with full heart and mind. And the goal that has to come to me or I have to go to, should come from this.**”

To my surprise, or may be to my harmony, Baba said: “Of course you need not read. Do the sādhanā. But when the time comes for reading, the book you have to read will reach your table. You may open it then and read.” I just heard it, did not respond.

And many events came to pass thereafter. I was the seventh child born in our family. I was one amongst the literate in our village. I had gone to Kolkata seeking employment. This was all I was. **But, after I got initiated and started doing sādhanā intensely, my whole life was transformed.** The transformation was fast. Very fast, I should say.

I had no doubt, no scepticism, no intolerance. But, I was impatient, no doubt.

There was nothing to deter, distract, dissuade or delay me. At that time, my brother and I were living in Kolkata in a single room. There was nothing like a family as such. I used to cook my morning food on a stove. In the evening, I would go to a

mess for dinner, after my meditation. I was very zealous in doing sādhanā. I do not know how many years passed. Deekshā must have had its impact. I too must have had my yearning or curiosity.

Exposure to lofty scriptures

One day I found Mundakopanishad on my table. I opened it and started reading. I was good in Sanskrit. I was good in English too. These were the two subjects that offered my heart some interest. When I went to Kolkata, and even before that, I used to think Sanskrit was of no consequence. So, I had said good-bye to Sanskrit.

When I opened Mundakopanishad, I found it was in Sanskrit with English translation. Whatever I read was inspiring, challenging, and involving. **Every line disclosed what human life was meant for.** The distance I had felt for Sanskrit vanished instantly from my heart. I found I had to refurbish my Sanskrit, with a renewed interest and calling!

The use of English was for doing work for others, meant for generating money. But **Sanskrit was to serve the need of my own heart,** to quench its thirst and fulfil the search of my intelligence. What a great contrast! Sanskrit found a greater place in my life. It is this Sanskrit, along with English, that has taken me everywhere I have visited, in our country as well as abroad.

I started reading the biographies of Ramakrishna Dev, Ma Sharada Devi, the complete works of Swami Vivekananda, various Upanishads – all published by Ramakrishna Mission. Then there was ‘Rambles in Vedanta’ written by B.R. Rajam Iyer. Most of the reading I did while travelling in tram.

Before going to bed, for about an hour or more, I used to read. Besides Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita – the most essential and the ultimate of our scriptural treasures – I had read Aparokshānubhūti, Dṛg-dṛśya Viveka, Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, Upa-

deśa-sahaśrī, Vedānta-sāra, Yoga-tārāvalī, Svātma-prakāśikā, Sarva-vedānta-siddhānta-sāra-saṅgraha, Vijñāna-noukā, Anātma-śrī-vigrahaṇam, Prauḍhānubhūti, Aṣṭāvakra-samhitā and many others. They included some devotional hymns as well. I also read some books on Indian philosophy, prescribed for university courses. All this I did while I was still working.

Upanishads are such a lofty composition that you have to learn them under a spiritual teacher. But I read all of them myself keeping Baba in my heart. I read them, reflected upon the message, imbibing their power and inspiration more and more every time. More than ideas conveyed, I found they were spiritual splendour tending to enlighten the intelligence and purify the mind. **The Upanishads became an inseparable part of my life. They intensified and shaped my seeking. They led me faster and faster every day. I was moving in an unknown direction. But there was clarity in my mind.**

Conversations with Baba

The contact and association with Baba became more intense. There were occasions when I went and stayed with him. I would go during the weekends and return on Mondays.

Baba was not a good conversationalist. But he would speak when called for. And he was a treasure of scriptural wisdom. Yet I did not learn any scriptures from Baba. There was no opportunity for it. Now and then, I would hear Baba utter Sanskrit verses from our scriptures. One śloka was:

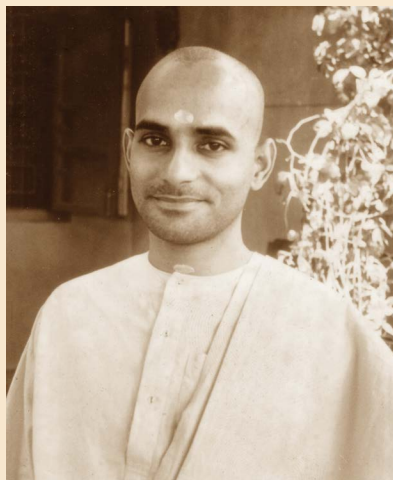
*cañcalaṃ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad-dṛḍham .
tasyāhaṃ nigrahaṃ mānye vāyoriva suduṣkaram .. (BG 6.34)*

I had not known about Bhagavad Gita then. Similarly, “*yadā yat kartuṃ-āyāti ...*” from Aṣṭāvakra-samhitā, and some others from here and there. I used to ask him very pertinent questions about sādhanā and fulfilment: What is fullness of wisdom and how would a wise man be? The last question I did not have to

ask because I was seeing a wise person right in front.

Baba became my sole refuge

Ever since I met Baba, I became fond of him. He must have blessed me also. My contact was growing and growing. And after getting initiated and pursuing sādhanā full-heartedly, Baba became everything in my life. I did not have to look for any other source – a person, agency, or abode. I was quite seated. I did not want to meet anybody further. **Nor did I wish to see God. If at all there was a God - a personal God - for me, it was and is Baba.** I once wrote to him about my feelings.



Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha (1960)

I think, the sight of Baba, the subsequent association with him, must have cut short decades of my sādhanā. Who was he? I did not know initially. My brother introduced him to me with the words: “He is a great Brahma-jñānī”. That was the first time in my life I heard the word ‘Brahma-jñānī’.

I had not known about brahma-jñāna. As my brother described him as a brahma-jñānī, he was so for me. What was Brahman and what is meant by brahma-jñāna – all this unfolded to me during my sādhanā and association with Baba.

For all these concepts, goals, for everything indeed, Baba was the pivot, the fulcrum. I did not have to look to any other source. I was so simple, innocent and honest that I had no thought of any further God. **I was already a devotee of God. It was that devotion which climaxed and led me to Baba.** So, after having

been close to Baba, there was no question of any impersonal God distracting me. That was not necessary.

See and learn how a spiritual contact works, how deekshā works, how association with a Guru works. I would like you to think about this. God is impersonal. He is everywhere. But nobody sees Him. He permeates you and surrounds you. You cannot miss His presence anywhere, either inside or outside. Yet, none knows Him.

So, God remains an unknown presence. Whereas the Guru is totally known and present. Tell me which is the better of the two and more useful. The sight of Baba, my interaction with him, gave me so much of fullness, assurance, hope, confidence, fulfilment – it gave me everything. My association with Baba, whatever he spoke to me, whatever words of correction, approval, consent or approbation he expressed, all are physical facts in my life. I do not think anyone can get such verdicts, such directions, from the impersonal God.

I want you to understand this. **Everything in my life has been the outcome of my association with my Guru.** I got inundated, and then started the flow therefrom. It is all due to Baba, my devotion to him.

Brief and precise directions

I remember, once in Dakshinkhanda, a critical point about one's life was being discussed. At a point, Baba cited a verse from Bhagavad Gita:

*yad-ahaṅkāram-āsṛitya na yotsya iti manyase .
mithyaiṣa vyavasāyas-te prakṛtis-tvām niyokṣyati .. 18.59*

It firmly states that any rigid stand like 'I will not do this' is basically wrong and disharmonious – as Arjuna told Krishna in the beginning that he would not fight the Mahabharata war. Any such assertion is under the influence of the ego. Prakṛiti, whose creation is the world, and whose qualities hold everyone

under its sway, would compel one to act in its way.

The wholesome message these words contain was instilled in me then by Baba. The flow of a river is the best when it is smooth, and not turbulent. This indeed is a warning, caution and direction forever!

It is true that my body was born of my parents. And they had raised me. But for my parents, I would not have been born; but for their caring and nurturing, I would not have grown. This is the truth about the body. But this is not the truth about my mind, intelligence and the heart. When I come to think of my inner personality, I think everything has happened because of my association with Baba. My association with him was very intimate. And I always felt I was a receiver, Baba was the giver.

He had told me, opening his heart about every aspect of his life, all that I had to know. I had never found any reservation in him. In the same manner, I also had none. I found him with no reservation; and so I thought non-reservation was the true nature of a Knower of Truth. I was already an open-minded person; my open-mindedness got confirmed, and so I remained open-minded. Because of this, I have no problem. I can commit a mistake. And I will say I have done a mistake. Both in committing mistake and seeking redemption from it, I am open-minded.

To all questions about God, God-realization, Jeevanmukti, Self-realization and Jñāna, I found answer in Baba. **He was my anchor when he was in his body; he is my anchor ever since he has shed his body.**

I have never been formal about my association with Baba. I do not make a routine of worshipping him. Routine worship is irrelevant to my mind. **I am what he wanted me to be. I am a shadow of him.** Will the shadow worship the object that causes it? So, there is a kind of relationship that transcends all

kinds of routine and formality. My effort was to become like him and to do what would delight and fulfil him. This kind of a rubbing stone he was for me. I do not think anybody can make God such a rubbing stone!

Fortunate are those who can have a Guru like this, who can make their association complete and fulfilling. I am these days writing on Sanskrit compositions of a masterly dimension, where some verses are strange and some exceedingly lofty. I do not know wherefrom my words come, the dimensions I strike and expressions emerge!

From where the lofty bhāvas flow

What I am writing marks the end and pinnacle of the journey of spirituality. If there is a voyage of knowledge, this is the last, the ultimate, wherein you are heading to the supreme Goal, content and essence of the world. Only in spirituality, such a finale is!

What an amazing text Yoga-vāsiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa is! I am writing on the last section – Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa. What all truths and findings Sage Vasiṣṭha has conveyed in this! How is it that I like to read it, I understand it?

Sometimes I find - this is not the right word or expression. Wherefrom do I get such inklings, findings? I think it is all due to my association with Baba, and the fullness, unreservedness with which I nurture it in my heart. I had a reasonable time to spend with Baba. I was not an explorer. I have never made any notes about my Baba or what he said. Unfortunately, the letters he had written to me are not with me now. Sometimes seeing Ma record and preserve many things, I feel I was a fool. Even now I am!

Some of the things I wrote are lost. I had written in Malayalam about Karna and Kunti. I analyzed their relationship in poetry. When Kunti Devi went and told Karna: “I am your mother, I

gave birth to you”, her breasts began to shed milk. While portraying it, I had written: “It was like deaf man hearing a loud lightening thunder for the first time.”

How do I write all this? Was my life meant for this? I feel how great it would have been if during my primary schooling somebody had introduced me to books and literature, and given me a dictionary!

I tell parents about the need to expose young minds to the treasure of knowledge, to kindle in them a thirst, quest and resolve to gain it. **Children should rejoice in gaining knowledge.** Study should not be to pass examinations, but to feed the mind and intelligence with nourishment. **A love for the subject is what the teachers must instil and intensify.** When will our teachers come to know their mission in building the Nation and the society?

Thank God, I did not want to be a book-worm. I only wanted to be a good, kind, fulfilled individual. This, I have been able to, as Krishna says (B.G 3.22):

nānavāptam avāptavyaṃ varta eva ca karmaṇi

“I have nothing to attain that is not attained; even then I remain active.” So, there is such a life of fulfilment, and it is possible to live it. In fact, this is India’s excellence and specialization!

This morning or last evening, I wrote in the Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi commentary I am writing now – Self is an idea; body is another idea. Or put it the other way – body is only an idea in the mind; Self is another idea. The Truth is beyond both. **Ideas are produced by the mind. The source of these Ideas is the Truth and not the idea itself.**

Like this, you repudiate everything. God is an idea, world is an idea. ‘I’ is an idea; ‘You’, another idea; ‘he, she, it and they’ also are ideas. Everything is an idea. All ideas spring in the

mind and subside there itself. But the source and the terminus of all these do not! Look for it.

You cannot see it, think of it, cannot even understand it with your intelligence. Nevertheless, you have to hit upon it, like an arrow will its target.

I do not know how I write. Words come from nowhere. It is such a beautiful, fulfilling expression. It is like fresh breath.

Sometimes I read a verse, it is too simple, in anuṣṭup metre. What shall I write on this? But I want to write at least a page on it. **My life is only meant to communicate spiritual wisdom and share it with others.** Articulation is the first part, communication in the form of writing is the second. Besides these, I do not have any other role to fulfil.

This spiritual life sprang up from my association with Baba, like a plant growing and blossoming with the first flower. It comes as a bud, then blossoms. Similarly, a bud came up from the plant after initiation and it started blossoming.

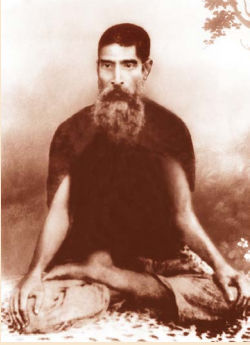
I left Kolkata, started my wandering life. From then on, the streets of India were greeting me, the invisible Providence was gracing me. They are alert even today! I always remember Baba's words: **"Be prepared for a sword and a garland."**

How could I plunge into such a life? Why? I think all the answers lie in my simple, innocent, straightforward, wholesome association with my Baba, which resulted from my fondness for him and his acceptance of my fondness.

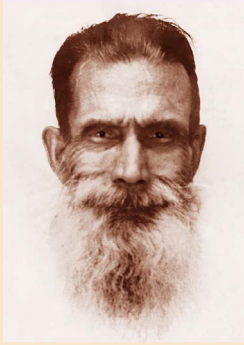
This is what I have to tell you on this great occasion of Baba's Jayanti.

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

Guru-paramparā – Our Lineage



Swami
Narayana Tirtha Dev



Baba
Gangadhara Paramahansa



Sri
Kshitish Chandra Dev

Brahmavidyā or Self-knowledge is the Knowledge of the supreme Reality which is our own real Identity. By acquiring the knowledge of any object we do not become the object. But by the knowledge of the Self we realize what we really are. So, the Knower of Brahman ‘becomes’ Brahman.

Self-knowledge is like a ‘blazing fire’ (*Jñāna-agni*) that burns all our constrictions, desires, and delusions. As a picture of fire cannot burn or illumine, mere theoretical knowledge of the Self cannot free us from our impurities, bondages and ignorance. This knowledge has to be lived. It has to be experiential knowledge, a first-hand discovery and realization.

This flame of Self-knowledge has been preserved from pre-historic times. Through *Guru-śishya paramparā* (Teacher-student lineage), it was passed on from generation to generation over thousands of years. Guru lights the flame in the disciple. Disciple through *sādhana* gains realization and lights the flame in the next generation of seekers. So, *Guru-śishya-paramparā* is of supreme importance in the preservation and dissemination of *Brahmavidyā*.

In our lineage, the spiritual current imparted and imbibed during initiation is verily responsible for experiential manifestation of the inner power and brilliance in the disciple's life. This is the supreme brilliance, which was imparted by a Himalayan Saint in Haridwar to **Swami Gangadhara Tirthaji** (of Puri, Orissa), and from him it came down to **Swami Narayana Tirthaji**, the founder of Jñāna-sāadhanā Maṭh (in Faridpur, Bangladesh, the erstwhile East Bengal).

The same brilliance was imbibed by **Baba from Sri Kshitish Chandra Dev of his village**, who was much younger to Baba and took Baba to meet his own Gurudev Swami Narayana Tirthaji. Sri Kshitish Chandra Dev left his body at a very young age. The story of his amazing tolerance vis-à-vis Baba's 'aggressive' enquiry, and the **unique Guru-śishya interactions** between them, have been touchingly narrated with unusual openness by Poojya Swamiji in his book "My Beloved Baba" (also its Hindi version "Mere Pyare Baba" and Malayalam version "Atmasaraniyil").

- Swami Nirviseshananda Tirtha

All those initiated into our Brahmavidyā lineage carry the spiritual flame lit from the prehistoric Vedic times. Imagine the ineffable nature and effect of such an inheritance. Different from *āṇava* and *śākta*, it is the *sāmbhava* deekshā, with its instantaneous and wholesome effect. It is also called *Vedha-deekshā*, meaning the deekshā meant to break the spiritual knot of ignorance and delusion. It instils a subtle inner, spiritual vibration, which through a self-generated inner process purifies, sublimates and elevates the initiated seeker, leading him to spiritual enlightenment and fulfilment.

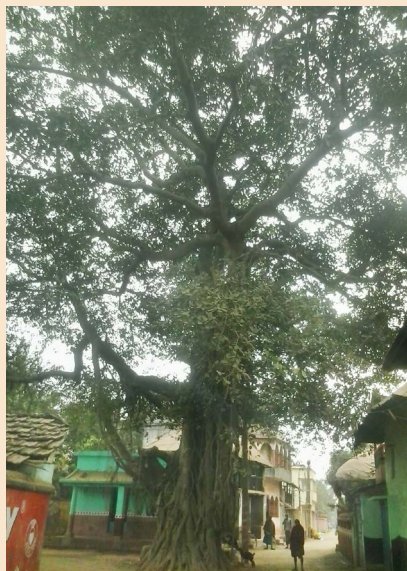
- Poojya Swamiji

Eternal Magic of the Great Magician

At the cross road near Poornashram, even now stands a huge Banyan tree – the tree that was witness to the great turning point in Baba's life. Baba, an accomplished young magician of yesteryears, was performing a magic show in the village during a festival. But that day, he failed in the highpoint of his show – “thought reading” by holding the wrist of anybody volunteering from the audience.

The volunteer that day happened to be Sri Kshitish Chandra, a young school teacher of Dakshinkhanda and a disciple of Swami Narayana Tirtha.

After the show, when crestfallen Baba asked



The Great Banyan Tree in Dakshinkhanda

Kshitish Chandra to explain the cause of that day's failure, Kshitish Chandra pointed to this Banyan tree and said: **“What magic you are showing! Why don't you enquire into the Grand Magic of the Great Magician who has produced this huge tree out of the tiniest seed?”**

Baba was humbled. He pleaded with the young school teacher to give him spiritual initiation and reveal the mystery of the Great Magician.

– From “A Great Association”

Love at First Sight

(Taken from two satsangs: “Guru – Indispensable for Spiritual Sādhana” on 09.03.2021 and “Unfathomable Dimensions of the Guru” on 16.03.2021)

Swami Nirviseshananda Tirtha

The Enquiry

I think I was born a seeker of Truth. As far as my memory goes, I have been thinking about the Truth from about 5 years of age. I remember some of my thoughts and enquiries while walking along Kosi Road (Jamshedpur) where we shifted when I was about 5 years old. Later, our parents used to take us to listen to the talks of a few Saints who visited Jamshedpur.

Soon, I started reading some spiritual books. I specifically remember Swami Vivekananda’s ‘Jñāna Yoga’ which touched me deeply. It was a small sized book and I used to carry it everywhere I went.

I had taken up and studied Physics only to know the Truth. I had my own way of analyzing things and coming to conclusions. I would not read śāstras to learn the verses by heart or to know what is written there. I would read very little but it used to inspire me to think and think and find out what is true and what is not.

Perhaps I had developed a lot of ego that I had found my own theory of the Truth. It was not expressed openly, but such a conviction and bhāva must have been there in the mind.

After completing post-graduation, when I joined PhD, there was some free time during the selection of the research topic. That was the time Ajit Da, our family friend from Jamshedpur, had asked me to get a particular book on Sāṅkhya philosophy from Calcutta University. It was a very thick book written by

Sāṅkhya Yogāchārya Swami Hariharananda Aranya. Since the book was lying with me, I started reading it.

It was basically on Patanjali Yogasūtras and their interpretations. The detailed analysis of human mind and the rationality of presentation attracted me deeply. Soon I was engrossed in the study, but felt that the thoughts, concepts, and particularly the sādhanā were not matching with my own ideas. My mind was having some doubts and contradictions: “Which way shall I proceed?”

As far as I remember, the doubt was very intense for quite a few days. Then I thought that the śāstras say: “Whenever you have a doubt, you should go to a Knower.” The question was: “How do I find a Knower?”

In search of guidance

Immediately I remembered our Poojya Swamiji - Swami Bhoomananda Tirthaji. I had listened to him in 1966 during my final year in school. In one of his talks in Gujarati Sana-tana Samaj in Jamshedpur, he had spoken about his Gurudev, Baba. Whatever he spoke about Baba touched me very much.

When Swamiji came down from the dais, I had asked him: “Swamiji, who is this Baba you were talking about?” He had said a few words in reply. I remembered the name of Baba’s village - Dakshinkhanda. From whatever Swamiji described, it appeared to me as if there was some Rishi sitting in some remote corner of Bengal, absorbed in Brahma-niṣṭhā. This must have been working in my mind in a latent manner. When the doubt about sādhanā arose, I remembered Swamiji’s words. Dakshinkhanda was not very far from Kolkata (about 150 km).

So, the next morning I packed a spare dress in my shoulder bag and went to the railway station; enquired about the train to take and the station to get down. The name of the station is ‘Jhamatpur Baharan’. Many of the names on this route are

associated with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's Leela. It was a very strange but interesting journey by a vintage train. Finally, after about 8 hours the train reached the station. There was no platform; I had to jump from the train on to the non-existing platform.

I washed my hands and face with cool water from a hand pump under a huge Banyan tree, and started walking along the mud pathway through the paddy fields. Asking people the way, finally I reached Baba's hay-thatched cottage "Poornashram", about two miles from the station.

Love at first sight

When I jumped down from the train in Dakshinkhanda, after touching the ground itself I felt as if the whole world had come to a standstill. There was peace enveloping me. I could hardly hear the train leave the station. Even now, I can generate that feeling I had that day. While walking on the uneven path, I felt my feet were not touching the ground at all - I was simply flying.

When I entered the room where Baba was sitting on his huge tiger-skin āsana, looking at me with his piercing but merciful eyes, time stopped. **I was back in the Upanishadic age standing in front of a Rishi in his hermitage.**

I did not think or know how great he was, or whether he was a Jñānī or would be my Guru. Or even, whether I needed a Guru or not. Nothing! I only wanted to know about the way to the Truth, but that enquiry too I had forgotten at that time. It was simply love at first sight.

Baba had very sparkling eyes. With a piercing look he asked, "Baba, kothā theke esechho tumi? Āmār kāchhe keu to ekhon āsenā!" – Wherefrom have you come my son? Nobody comes to me nowadays!

I said, "Swami Bhoomananda Tirthaji had talked about you. I

came to know about you from him.”

With a big smile he said, “Oh! Bhooma! Yes, Bhooma sometimes sends some devotees to me.”

Spiritual Laboratory

Baba asked me why I had come. I told him whatever I had thought about the ultimate Reality. I don’t know, I must have been very egoistic, feeling like “I have thought a lot about this Truth, and have my own theory about it.” At the same time, my enquiry was genuine, and I was humble too.

Baba listened to me very patiently and said, “Whatever you have learnt from the śāstras, heard from the Mahātmās, or have thought yourself, is all on the right track. But, being a student of Physics, **don’t you understand that there is a difference between studying the laws from a book and verifying the laws in the laboratory?**”

I said, “Yes! Experimental verification is the last word, I understand.”

Baba said, “**Deekshā or initiation is putting you in the laboratory of spiritual experiment.** You have to do the experiment yourself and you have to discover first hand. Initiation means putting you on the practical path of Self-realization. You have to walk the path.”

So far, I had never thought about Deekshā. Deekshā is very common in Bengali families, and that is why perhaps I had not given it an honourable position. But, if Deekshā is stepping into the spiritual laboratory as Baba explained, then certainly that is what I needed most.

It was getting dusk, I asked for permission to leave. Baba said, “What? You are going? Will you not stay even one night here?” I said, “I would very much like to, Baba, but was wondering whether it will inconvenience you!”

I left Dakshinkhanda the next afternoon. Baba asked me to come back after about a month on a specified date for my initiation.

After my initiation, Baba had showed me a Bengali book called “Deekshā-sāre Guru-tattva O Anubhūti Saṅgraha”. In this book, all the spiritual experiences an initiated seeker may have are recorded and corroborated with a lot of ślokaś from various śāstras. When I asked Baba if I could read the book, he said: “No! You are all scientists. When you read and you have some experience, you will say ‘it happened only because I had read about it’. You can read the book after some time and have the confirmation of your own experiences.”

Later, Baba had given me the book, which I have even now.

Śishya bhāva

Before giving initiation, Baba told me, “If you are making me your Guru, you have to follow my instructions.” That was a great statement for me. Immediately my mind thought: “If he asks me to get married or to take up sannyāsa?” Obviously, I was against both. All the resistance in my mind popped up.

Accepting somebody as your Guru means you have to listen to him. You have to follow his words in every field, wholesomely. Also, you have to be absolutely open before him. Taking refuge in a Guru means you must have the faith that the Guru knows better than you as to where lies your welfare.

If you say – “I shall follow the Guru’s words only for meditating, but not in any other matters of life” – then it is not a proper discipleship. Baba often used to say (in Bengali), “Guru mele lākhe lākhe, śishya nāhi mele ak” – Gurus are available in lakhs and lakhs, but it is extremely rare to find a real disciple!

What it really means is: Guru-bhāva is very common with people. Before we know anything, we start preaching. Before we have understood and actualized a knowledge, we start talking about it. But, the śishya-bhāva – to have the humility and

openness to learn every moment – is rare indeed. We should always remember that what we do not know is far far greater than what we know.

Later, on one occasion, I have shed profuse tears for days together having failed to follow Baba's advice readily. The people in Dakshinkhanda village had their own interpretations as to why I was crying. They would not even imagine that I was shedding tears because I felt I had failed in my śishya-bhāva.

What determines the Guru-śishya bond

Don't think that when I approached Baba, I applied any criteria to understand whether Baba was a brahmajña Guru or whether I was fit to take initiation from him. Such thoughts or assessments never peeped into my mind. Never!

Then what determined the relationship? It was perhaps simple sincerity of both. It was natural like the flow of two rivers and one joining the other led by earth's natural contour. If the seeker is genuinely seeking the Truth and nothing but the Truth, if he is innocent and straight-forward, then he will certainly be led to his right Guru.

This has been my sādhanā. It was not led by instructions from the scriptures, though the scriptures I valued most. It was guided by the simple enquiry with which, fortunately, I was born. With that simple enquiry I have gone wherever I have gone. I have received with wholesome faith, whatever has come to me.

Baba told me once, "When you have some doubt, you will find that you will get your answer from even a mad man or a drunkard." And, it happened exactly like that – more than once. I understood what Baba meant: **I should never devalue anybody; I must honour everyone.** If I am open to receive, then I will get whatever is needed. It does not matter from whom I get. If I devalue someone just because he is dirty or poor or eccentric, then I am not simple.

Immersion in Deekshā sādhanā

Staying three days in Dakshinkhanda, when I came back to Kolkata after initiation, I got completely immersed in sādhanā.

Baba had told me that Swami Narayana Tirtha Dev used to say: “*dhyān korte hoi nā re, dhyān hoi*” – **One does not have to do meditation, meditation dawns.** That has been our experience also - meditation dawns. Initially, it used to dawn anywhere, any time - even on the road, or while at work. Baba had cautioned, “Don’t get into any accident. Be very careful.” If it happened on the road, I would go away from the road, sit on some rock and remain absorbed within.

Once I wrote to Baba: “Baba, relatives feel concerned that my body is getting emaciated.” Baba replied: “Don’t heed to what people say. The body will not get emaciated. It will only get purified and grow with new elements. Don’t fear (*mā bhai!*)”

Baba’s grace – my parents and others

As soon as I started realizing the great value and significance of Deekshā in the life of a seeker, I wrote to my parents what revolutionary change had taken place in my life. They immediately wrote back: “For many years we have been looking for a Guru. Now we understand why it has not happened. Now that you have got the refuge (*āśraya*) under a Sadguru, please take us also to Him as soon as possible. Tell Him about our appeal, if He considers us fit.”

I communicated their request to Baba. Baba replied, “*tomāro icchā karo he poorṇo āmāro jeevano mājhe* – May your wish be fulfilled through my life (Rabindra-sangeet). Your father and mother will certainly be good receptacles (*uttam-ādhār*). It can take place on coming 24th Falgun (8th March 1974), Dol-poorṇimā (the full moon day of Holi) morning. Bring them along with you two/three days earlier.”

Accordingly, my parents got initiated, and that transformed

their lives forever. Following their Deekshā, quite a few of our friends and acquaintances also had the fortune of being graced by Brahmavidyā Deekshā from Baba.

Sahaja bhāva

Baba said on the day of initiation, “So many things will happen. You will find that things will happen like magic. People talk about these as super-natural. Actually, there is nothing super-natural about it. **When your mind is in harmony with Nature, things happen by themselves in a beautiful order.** You don’t have to struggle at all.”

He would repeatedly say: “*Sob āpnā-āpni hoye jābe*” – Everything will get done naturally by itself. He used to say that our path is called “*sahaja yoga*” (the yoga of natural ease). His fond advice was: “**Rām se lāgi raho bhāi; banat banat bani jāi**” – **Always remain connected to Ram, love Ram, and you will gradually get transformed into Ram naturally.**

Baba never wanted anything. He was contented to be left alone in the corner of his thatched cottage. Very few people knew him. Still fewer had any inkling of his rare greatness. **His mantra was: “Kicchui chāi nā” – I don’t want anything at all.** And the framed poster over his door read: “Come to a man of Business. Talk of Business. Finish your Business. Leave the man of Business to his own Business.”

Baba had named his hermitage ‘Poornashram’, because he felt that spirituality must make one’s life full (poorṇa). He used to say, “People misunderstand spirituality as getting away from the world in disgust. But the truth is: One can live life fully in the right spirit only with spiritual Knowledge.”

Jai Guru

Baba – The Guide and Refuge

Ma Gurupriya

I was 23, doing research in Physics in Delhi University. At home, we were a happy family – parents and two brothers. Apparently, there was no cause for disinterestedness, but disinterestedness grew in me. Having everything in worldly life which makes one contented and happy, I was sorrowful at heart. The thought that this world with all its objects is transitory, would hold me back from enjoying anything. I used to feel like a helpless child who had lost the mother. At times, I felt as if I was standing in a deserted field all alone, not knowing which path to take.

At this point I had come to know of Baba. I still remember that night – the night following the conversation when I was told about Baba. In my sleep, I woke up several times seeing a vision. I saw a courtyard where a white bearded man was seated on a cot with his legs down. I was shedding tears profusely keeping my head on his feet. Is this Baba, I wondered! **Most of the night I kept awake with tears rolling down my cheeks. I never knew that tears could be so blissful, bringing deep peace and sublimity. I felt I had the glimpse of an anchor.**

I wrote my first letter to Baba.

Never did I feel that I was writing to an unknown person. I was certain he would accept me, give me shelter and guidance. I placed all my load, my helplessness, at his feet. I requested him to guide me and asked whether deekshā from a Guru was indispensable.

Within a few days, came Baba's reply – a short letter in shaky handwriting. As I read on, my eyes became full, making the words and lines hazy. The letter was full of warmth, love and concern.

Baba wrote: “Mā-go (as we lovingly address our mother in Bengali), take my śivāshis. I feel concerned reading about your state of mind. **To realize the meaninglessness of this objective world and to have vairāgya is very rare and fortunate.** Let your prayers be fulfilled.

“To learn any vidyā, you know, a teacher is required; but all the doubts about the necessity of a teacher or Guru arise in the case of this supreme vidyā? Yes, Guru is indispensable. In submitting to a Guru, ‘the superior’ is recognized and ego (ahāṅkāra) gets sublimated. Come, if you have time and convenience. I shall hear you and help you as far as possible.”

I felt like running to Baba, but there was no scope for it. Who would accompany me and where was the permission from parents? My parents thought this to be disorderly – taking interest in spiritual path suddenly and at such an early age. When it was overwhelming darkness all around, having spotted the lighthouse, there was no means of going near it physically. But I could write letters, and that I did, because by then my Lord had instilled in me this firm belief that “this is the way and I must hold on to it firmly and sincerely. Salvation lies only in this”.

Baba wrote again in his second letter: “...I feel concerned and touched reading your emotional letter. But what is to be done, I do not know. As long as there is hindrance, one must think that the time for initiation has not yet come. **Parents are also like Guru; they are your well-wishers; why would they hinder your well-being?** Maybe now considering your age, they do not agree. Never should you get irritated. Pray at His feet with all your heart to give you the opportunity. He will set everything right.

“Before the treatment of a patient, the doctor has to go through the case carefully and patiently. Then only the right medicine can be prescribed. **This is a great responsibility. Unless I meet you and listen to you, how can I prescribe the medicine for**

you? Otherwise, it may not be effective, may even be harmful.

“This eagerness for deekshā is also a sādhanā. Mentally keep on chanting this mantra: ‘**O Lord, give me deekshā!**’ From this alone, everything else will come to you by itself. Do not be disappointed; have no fear; the Lord resides within your own heart.”

Even then, I was growing more and more impatient about initiation. He wrote again in response to my third letter: “... I bless you; let your desire be fulfilled. But there is a little delay; do not worry about it at all. Proceed as I have written in my earlier letter; you will find that there are so many things to be experienced within. These are all milestones, not the destination. Slowly, the confirmation of all these you will find in śāstras. But do not be impatient about this path now. Presently be attentive to your studies and research. Ultimately you will find that ‘all roads lead to Rome’ ...

“Even if I do not live till you attain the goal, some jñānī – pre-ordained – will tell you the rest and fulfil your desire.”

Baba was quite old at that time; writing was a strain for him; but still he used to send a few lines in his shaky, wavy handwriting. The first of these letters and then the following ones gave me such relief and peace as were completely unknown to me till then. Now, when I look back, I understand that it was with a strong faith I had sought refuge under him, regarding him as my Saviour. Strangely enough, I knew nothing about Self-realization at that time; I only knew that Baba was the person who could save me from my feeling of disinterestedness and loneliness and bestow upon me eternal peace. And, that had been the image of Guru in my heart, where I had installed him with love, regard and devotion. I worshipped my Gurudev with flowers of gratitude; it has been so ever since.

In Bengali, the word ‘Baba’ means ‘Father’. Later in life, I had wondered how was it that it never occurred to me to worship Baba with flowers and garlands, with incense sticks, camphor

and sandal paste! Although I wonder, I do not feel a loss, because my flowers and garlands were the tears of gratitude. An unwavering flame of belonging which was becoming brighter and more intense every day, had been my āraṭi-lamp. What I used to feel without offering external flowers at Baba's feet, the same feeling I have now when I offer flowers at Swamiji's feet. For long now, Baba and Swamiji have merged into each other in my heart.

21st February 1975. Early in the morning we boarded the Salar passenger train from Sealdah station, Kolkata. We were going to Dakshinkhanda village, where lived our Baba. A remote village in Burdwan district, the nearest famous railway station being Nabadweep where lived the great saint Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. I was going to meet Baba for the first time.

For nine months, I had only written letters to him and received his loving replies. My intense yearning to receive deekshā from Baba was fulfilled the day after my arrival in Baba's abode. Baba blessed me with initiation. All these months whenever I had remembered Baba and mentally sought his blessings, my eyes had shed tears of gratitude. The blessed moment of being in his holy presence had come now!

Initiation in the spiritual path gave me a strong assurance that my life ahead had a specific purpose transcending that of a usual human life. My outlook towards life underwent a spontaneous transformation. I felt that my life was meant for a wholesome spiritual sādhanā – to spiritualize every moment through austere spiritual routines, meditation and introspection, even while leading a normal day-to-day life. Everything thereafter proceeded with that attitude.

Till Baba attained Mahāsamādhi in April 1979, we used to go to Poornashram in Dakshinkhanda quite frequently. **How delightful and purifying those visits had been! Even now, the memories of our visits to Poornashram would sweep through the**

mind like a cool refreshing breeze: That small railway station Jhamatpur-Baharan standing pensively amidst vast open fields merging with the sky; the pure enlivening breeze welcoming us as soon as we would alight from the train; the tube-well by the side of the platform from which we would invariably drink cool refreshing water, after washing our hands, feet and face; the energetic lightness of our body and mind while walking towards Baba's village about two miles away; the dusty village road through the vast paddy fields; the charming green ripples created by the paddy swaying merrily in the wind; the scorching sun and the cool shade of the huge old trees on the way; the serene vastness coupled with the occasional dispassionate breeze instilling profound disinterestedness (*vairāgya*) in the mind. Above all, the quietude that would grip our minds right from the railway station, growing deeper and deeper till we reached Baba, where all words, all queries, would dissolve into the unfathomable fullness that surrounded him!

Reaching Poornashram, we would immediately go to Baba's room upstairs. Baba would greet us with a wide smile, enquire about our welfare, and ask us to take food first. During our stay, we would spend some cherished moments beside his āsan and meditate, occasionally listen to his advice through relevant stories. I can still hear him exclaim "Jai Guru Narayan" and "Harih Om Tat Sat" at times, breaking his long absorbed silence. Above everything, I can still feel the touch of his hands on my head giving assurance, strength and refuge.

Baba left his body within five years of my association with him; but in this short period, what he imparted has remained in me as treasure and strength. The few words spoken and written to me, come as flashes of light from a powerful torch, illuminating the path every moment through proper discrimination and right understanding. **Above all, the love, the divine love, that he showered has given an unshakable refuge, loyalty and**



Great Meeting – The Last and the First

(From Ma Gurupriya's book "In the Company of My Lord")

Baba's 'Bhooma' – our Swamiji – was to arrive at Poornashram within a few days to see Baba after the completion of the annual Jñāna Yajña at Jamshedpur. We had already reached there hearing Baba was very sick. Swamiji had been coming to Jamshedpur every year for Jñāna Yajña. Right from the beginning of our association with Baba, we had heard from him a great deal about our Swamiji. I had seen a picture of Swamiji kept near Baba's bed. It was taken just after he took sanniyāsa. But, I had not met him personally.

We were eagerly waiting for Swamiji's arrival. It was night by the time Swamiji arrived with his disciples – Ammini aunty and her daughter Lata, Sukhavanam uncle, Ponna aunty and Smt. Rajam Thyagarajan. After washing his hands and feet, Swamiji went straight to Baba's room on the first floor.

All of us followed. It was a memorable sight – the meeting of a Guru and his dearest disciple. The Guru was lying on his bed; sitting close to him was the disciple. Both were talking heartily to each other and frequently bursting into loud laughter. **The brilliance and ānanda which radiated from These Souls permeated the whole atmosphere.**

I do not remember all the details of that Divine scene; but to this day, the reunion of a Guru and a realized Śishya lingers



belonging. We felt owned by him forever, in the most natural manner.

Baba's body has fallen no doubt, but it has left a 'chinmaya Presence' within – very dear, very near. And it is this Presence in which Baba and Swamiji have got merged into each other. ■

deeply in my memory as a scene of light, light and only light – a light brighter than a thousand suns. Was that a glimpse of the Sat-Cit-Ānanda? I wonder. **It was the most unique REUNION I have ever witnessed.** This single great event had gone deep into my heart giving a touch of the wonderful bond – the loving and affectionate relationship that can and should exist between a Guru and his disciple.

This particular reunion of Baba and Swamiji was in a way significant, because it happened to be their last meeting. And it was my first meeting with Swamiji.

The next day early morning, Baba called us to his room and introduced us to Swamiji. Swamiji was sitting on the floor beside Baba's bed, near his head; the other devotees were also there. After prostrations at the feet of both Baba and Swamiji, we took our seats. I sat near Baba's feet. Baba asked me to tell Swamiji about my mind's confusion. I narrated everything – my conflict, my fear, my apprehension, despondency and above all, my inability to overcome all these.

After hearing me, Swamiji asked me to sit quietly for some time closing my eyes. The mind that had been very restless for quite some time became light and quiet slowly. I told him so. Swamiji then took us to the adjacent room and spoke to us for a long time.

Swamiji left in the afternoon. In the evening, when I went to see Baba, he asked me whether my mind had been quietened. I nodded with a relieved 'yes'. What could I say except to feel fortunate and grateful!

This was our last meeting with Baba. While we were coming away, he said “Good bye” with a significant shine in his eyes. Within one and a half months, he left his body.

How did we feel at that time! Inwardly, there was no loss – because Baba's presence in the heart was as vivid and living

as ever. He was so close within! Outwardly, in our lives, a chapter ended.

The Eternal Flame

A chapter in our life was over. But, a new chapter had already begun – our association with Swamiji. Had not Baba wisely and lovingly placed me under Swamiji's spiritual guidance, I would have surely felt an immense loss in Baba's physical absence. Holding my hand securely, Baba had led me to a certain point on the spiritual path, and then, when it was time for him to take leave, he entrusted me to Swamiji – his own inseparable Form. **Baba and Swamiji merged together in the same eternal flame – the flame that was illuminating my heart and mind, showing me the right direction.** Whether the wick is renewed or oil added, the flame does not change, nor does its brilliance dwindle.

Years later, Swamiji told me that on that fateful day itself, Baba had handed me over to his care with the specific words: "Look after her very well. She needs your care and guidance." When I heard this, I remembered the letter Baba had written long back: "... Even if I do not live till you attain the Goal, some jñānī – pre-ordained – will tell you the rest and fulfil your quest."



Poojya Swamiji along with Nutan Swamiji and Ma paying homage to the Guru Paramparā in Ashram Vijnana Bhavan on Gurupoornima day (2019)

Letters from Baba

Ma Gurupriya

When I first received a letter from Baba, I knew in the heart of my heart that although a letter, it was the most precious and valuable one compared to all letters I had received so far. I preserved the letter with great devotion considering it to be an invaluable treasure.

Many letters followed the first one. Baba was very prompt in replying. His reply would generally arrive within seven days. All letters I preserved in a bunch considering each of them to be a divine prasāda. Quite frequently I would read them one by one and feel his presence.

Later, Nutan Swamiji handed over to me the letters he had received from Baba which he too had preserved devotionally as pieces of invaluable treasure. Initially, Baba used to write in his own handwriting. He was quite old at that time and the handwriting was shaky. Later, when he could not write himself any more, he would dictate and somebody else would write. However, he was never late in replying letters.

Years have passed by. I thought that devotees would be benefited by going through the translations of the letters written to us in Bengali.

In most of Baba's letters, there used to feature one advice – perhaps to safeguard against my impatience about spiritual fruition: **“Don't do anything suddenly. Patience bears fruit.** Why not wait and see? Everything will be all right. All roads lead to Rome. *Mā bhāi*: (Have no fear)!”

**Baba's reply (7 Aug 1977) to my letter
written on Gurupoornima day**

“I am happy to receive your letter written on the occasion of

Gurupoornima. Whatever you have written are the words of any sādḥaka seeking paramārtha (the ultimate goal). I know what your true aim is, but it takes time to reach that. You are quite on the right path – I have my watch on it.

“Think of the effortless dead body floating on the sea. The waves of the sea sometimes drown it and sometimes push it afloat. Such are also the waves of this saṁsāra (world). Those who swim against the tide have to suffer more. Difficulty is less for those who float with the tide. In this world, one has to pass through both high and low tides. **A jñānī (wise) experiences ānanda (bliss) even while coursing through sufferings, but an ajñānī (ignorant) is not able to do that – there lies the difference.**

“Keep on doing the remaining ‘useless work’ with all sincerity. **What you think useless is not useless indeed.** To reach the Truth or to attain Parā-śānti (supreme peace), one must pass through and transcend all that appear to be against truth and peace. If we try to eschew the suffering amidst world-objects as something non-spiritual, then it will not be possible for us to attain the undifferentiated (nirviśeṣa) Brahman or Truth.

“So, receive everything as His loving gift. Do not consider worldly activities as botheration. Regard all these as part of sādhanā and go ahead. All seekers progress like this. There is no other way. Do not worry at all.”

One of Baba's letters to Nutan Swamiji

Dakshinkhanda, 12.12.73

Dear Son,

Stambha (stillness/stability like a pillar), sveda (perspiration), romaṅca (thrill/hairs standing on end), svāra-bheda (manifestation of sounds), vepathu (vibration), aśru (tears), vaivarṇa (change of skin complexion), pralaya (dissolution) – **these are eight Sāttvika transformations (sāttvika-bhāva-vikāra) that**

manifest as experiences in the seeker, and inspire him on the path of seeking.

There is no certainty that any of these experiences will come back again. But, some unprecedented ones or higher and subtler ones will appear. Everything about this path - 'timetable' - is there in the Śāstras. You will come to know in time.

These experiences are mile-stones, not destination. Go forward, walk farther! The path is like razor's edge, and very far too. But, there is nothing to fear, nothing to fear – these words, this message, is from that Master Controller of everything.

The Vaiṣṇava Śāstra “Chaitanya-charitāmṛta” says:

“Sei prem-āsvādan, tapta ikshu carvan; Mukh jvale, nā jāy tyajan.”

(Taste of that Love is like chewing hot sugarcane! It burns the mouth, but one cannot cast it off.)

Narayana Gita (words of Swami Narayana Tirtha, Baba's Paramgurudev) says:


“Loke dakhe tār boroi abhāv, mone tār kichhu thāke nā abhāv;

Se je mukta hoye sakal abhāv, sadānande thāke bhese.”

(People think he lacks so many things. But his mind does not feel any lack. Freed from all insufficiencies, he floats in constant ānanda.)

Don't heed to what people say. The body will not get emaciated. It will only get purified and grow with new elements. *Mā bhai:* (Don't fear)!

Do not look for experiences. Whatever is to come, will come automatically. **Like the dead Babool tree standing on the bank of a river, go on seeing the various boats passing along the river, carrying different kinds of travellers – only as a Witness, but never as a doer or performer.**

Āśīrvād, Baba. 

A Śrottriya* Brahma-nishṭha Saint

Swami Nirvisheshananda Tirtha

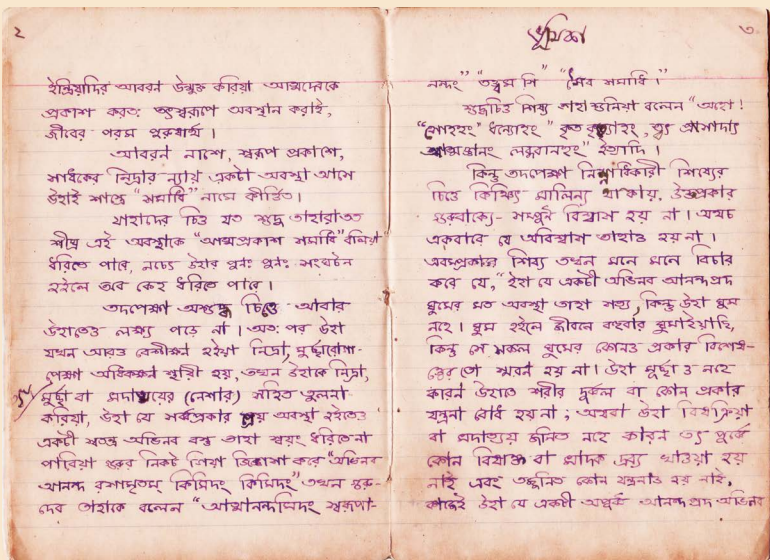
During our visits to Dakshinkhanda, handling some of Baba's books and reading the brief revealing notes written on many pages of the books gave us a glimpse of Baba's vast knowledge and experience. In many of the books, he had inserted a few extra pages containing a detailed hand-written list of contents. Particularly, Baba's Yogavāsishṭha Rāmāyaṇa book we brought with us after his Mahāsamādhi, contains his exhaustive list of contents specifying important revelations about spiritual life and sādhanā.

Often in reply to our questions, Baba would ask us to go to the library downstairs and open page X of a book kept on rack Y of the cupboard Z, and read his hand-written comments there. It was such a wonderful way of exposing us to the depths of our unfathomable scriptural treasure!

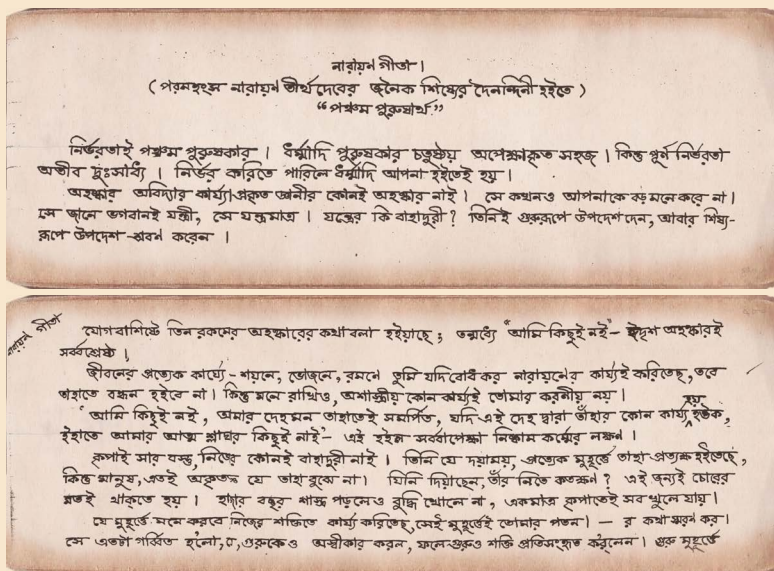
We also came across a few unpublished manuscripts: 'Samādhi-Nirṇaya' and 'Adhyātma-Krishnalīlā' by Sri Kshitish Chandra Dev (Baba's Gurudev), and 'Adhyātma-Bhāgavatam' by Baba himself. About the first two titles, Baba had told us that the books, if published, would greatly benefit the seekers.

While glancing through Baba's 'Adhyātma-Bhāgavatam', we came across a wonderful appendix titled 'Nārāyaṇa-Gītā' – excerpts from informal Satsang of Swami Narayana Tirtha Dev (Baba's Param Gurudev), recorded in the form of a diary of a disciple. Written in simple Bengali, it deals with śaraṇāgati (total surrender) in a most inspiring and sublimating way, designating 'surrender' as the 'fifth puruṣārtha', surpassing even mokṣa, the fourth.

*Śrottriya - one who is not only well-versed in scriptures but also has realized the essence of all scriptures.



Manuscript - 'Samādhi-Nirṇaya' by Sri Kshitish Chandra Dev



Manuscript - 'Adhyātma-Bhāgavatam' by Baba

Reminiscences of Five Divine Days

[Here is a letter from Late Ammini Madhavan to Swami Nirvisheshananda Tirtha (fondly called Nutan Swamiji). Smt. Ammini's reminiscences of the 'five divine days' in the company of Swamiji and Baba reveal to us some additional aspects of the picture of Baba's first visit to Jamshedpur during the 1970 Jñāna Yajña, about which Swamiji himself has written in Chapter 16 of "My Beloved Baba". The two pictures showing Baba and Swamiji sitting together on a couch were taken at that time in the residence of Smt. Ammini & Sri Madhavan, where Swamiji used to stay during the Jñāna Yajñas.]

28 September 1996

Respected & very dear Nutan Swamiji,

... Swamiji, I have an urge to write to you since I got back from the Ashram. There we had been talking about Baba quite often, and the conversations always seemed to remain incomplete. I feel like sharing some personal anecdotes with you. The endearing picture of Baba and Swamiji in Vicharasethu (August 1995) stirred up many, many memories.

Baba's first visit to Jamshedpur is so vivid in my memory despite two and a half decades rolling past, that sometimes I feel, time has no meaning at all! The plan for bringing Baba to Jamshedpur during Swamiji's Jñāna Yajña was there for about a couple of years, and finally the wonderful event occurred in 1970 February, almost suddenly.

Swamiji had already arrived for the Annual Jñāna Yajña and the main series of discourses in Madras Sammelani was to start after two days. Suddenly a telephone call was received at 7 PM that Baba was arriving by train that night at 11 PM. Satsang was going on in the house and the electric effect of the telephone message was to be seen! I am seeing Swamiji's face lighting up in full divinity and joy. His body sprang up

from the couch and started instructing some of us what all was to be done, while his eyes reflected his mind being already immersed in Baba.

We rushed through Swamiji's dinner and Swamiji along with a number of devotees in two cars went to the station. The train was late by a couple of hours. It was one of those cold February nights. We were unaware of the external discomfort as we were with Swamiji and were waiting for the rare meeting of the two Saints – the great Guru and his great Śishya. Swamiji's mood was alternating between ecstasy and serenity. Baba was frail and weak. Swamiji envisaged that he would not be able to walk to the car. So, we had kept a cane armchair ready.

Finally, the train came and we witnessed the blessed meeting. Swamiji touched Baba's feet as Baba embraced Swamiji. Time stood still for us. Baba greeted each of us as we were introduced. His toothless smile and childlike innocence touched the core of our heart in the very first meeting. Baba was going on talking as he was made to sit on the armchair.

As Swamiji and some other devotees carried the armchair, Baba was amused and he started shouting "*Hari bol, Hari bol !*" – as it is done in Bengal, but while carrying a dead body!

The few railway staff present in the deserted station at that unearthly hour watched curiously the strange procession. **Did they know that the reminder about mortality of the body was coming from an Immortal Soul while being carried by another Immortal Soul? But the rare radiation of ānanda had visibly touched and engulfed everybody around.**

Baba was taken to the residence of his disciple Aurobindo Ganguly at Sonari, where he was to stay. Swamiji and rest of us took leave of Baba. One or two hours were left before the beginning of next day's busy schedule.

Next morning, after dropping Madhavan at his office, I went

straight to Baba to take him to Swamiji. Baba was waiting ready and was surprised to see this driver. He started shouting delightedly, “Onu, O Onu, *dakho dakho ke esechhe āmāke niye jete Bhoomār kāchhe!* (Onu, O Onu, see who has come to take me to Bhooma!)” Onu is Aurobindo Ganguli’s wife Anjali.

Baba was in a big hurry to sit in the car. We made him comfortable on the rear seat. As I drove, Baba went on talking and laughing. Amidst all this ‘hulla’ (noise) Baba suddenly asked me: “How do you like my Bhooma?”



Baba with Poojya Swamiji in Aurobindo Ganguly’s home (Jamshedpur 1970)

For a moment I was non-plussed, and then said slowly, “He is my God”. Baba’s joy and ‘chatter’ increased and suddenly he leaned upon the backrest of my seat and kissed me on my left cheek. The magical effect is locked up in my heart! All this, in the midst of driving!

Swamiji was staying on the first floor. Baba climbed up fast, I holding on his hand. Swamiji was sitting on the couch, having Satsang with devotees. Swamiji and the devotees welcomed Baba and led him to the chair kept for him. But Baba would not sit on the chair; he went and sat near Swamiji on the couch. That is the scene you see in the photographs.

This scene continued throughout the five days of Baba’s stay in Jamshedpur. It is not in my power, Swamiji, to describe all that happened during these days. **During the Satsangs in the house, while Swamiji talked, Baba would sometimes close Swamiji’s mouth with his hands and start singing or talking. Soon Swamiji would interrupt and try to continue the subject, but Baba would do the same thing again and again with laughter and jokes.**

Baba was brought every morning and taken back to Ganguly's residence at night. He enjoyed the South Indian food very much and fondly asked for all his favourite dishes. In the afternoons, Baba used to retire in Swamiji's room itself. It was just wonderful!

During the discourses at Madras Sammelani, Baba was taken to the hall and was seated in front on a side from where he could see and hear Swamiji clearly and see the audience as well. **On the first day, the book "Brahma-vidyā Abhyāsa" was released by Baba.** His radiant face revealed great joy and fulfilment – he was releasing the unique book written by his Śishya Bhooma!

Unlike the Satsangs in the house, here Baba was listening to the lectures in rapt attention. I still wonder who would have enjoyed more - Swamiji or Baba? ...

– Ammini



Baba with Poojya Swamiji in the house of Smt Ammini and Sri Madhavan (Jamshedpur 1970)

Poojya Swamiji reminisces (Jamshedpur, 1970)

When Baba visited Jamshedpur during my annual Jñāna Yajña, one day in a satsang arranged in Meera Ghosh's house, the subject was God and God-realization. I was emphasizing that as God is all-pervading, what is there within your body is God and God alone. God cannot appear again. To think of a further presence is wrong, ridiculous.

He is closer to you than the body, mind, intelligence and ego. You can never meet or see God anywhere except in your own within, as your very Self. Yes, the 'I' you utter frequently is God Himself. Say that, and jump and dance with joy ...



Baba with Poojya Swamiji in Meera Ghosh's home (Jamshedpur 1970)

The session was over. Baba was taken to the garden in front. I was standing close to him. He said: "If you speak the truth so openly, people will put fire into your mouth." I smiled and said: "This would have been done in Socrates's time, Baba. Not now. Will not the truth be endearing to the pure heart?"

* * *

Baba was taken to Telco Ram Mandir where I was to speak. He was lifted in a chair up the hill. In the end, the sponsors wished that Baba speak a few words.

He said: "My Bhooma has spoken to you the supreme truths about meditation, and how to realize the Self. I have nothing further to add. In spiritual life, the sādhanā Guru initiates you into, is everything. Hold on to it with full heart. I bless you all for your progress in sādhanā."

Poornashram – Baba’s abode

Ma Gurupriya and
Swami Nirvisheshananda Tirtha

Our Baba lived in Dakshinkhanda, a remote village in West Bengal. It is in Burdwan District, near Katwa on the Nabadveep route. Baba’s abode “Poornashram” was a double-storied mud cottage with thatched hay roof. Baba lived in the long room upstairs.

One of the two small rooms downstairs hosted Baba’s library that contained exhaustive collec-



Part of Poornashram in 2012, when it was not in use any more.

tion of Śāstra granthas (scriptural texts). The other adjacent room carried the memory of his intense tapasyā – reading the śāstras and contemplating on Brahman, remaining in śeerśhāsana (head-stand). He would simply remain in that room, receiving food through a small hole. By the time we started visiting Poornashram, this room had normal doors and windows.

Poojya Swamiji writes in ‘My Beloved Baba’:

“When I first met Baba in Kolkata, he had retired as an Engineer from Cossipore Gun & Shell Factory. He was speaking in English, singing in Bengali, and quoting scriptures in Sanskrit. He was slim and bony, but never weak, remaining mostly in śeerśhāsana (head-stand) day in and day out. Early morning till his bath, after meals, during mid-day, in the afternoon, towards dusk, late at night – every phase of his 24-hour day

became a natural head-stand. Standing on his head, Baba would recite verses, chant mantras, sing devotional songs, and even play his sitar held upside down.”

Across the courtyard was another small double-storied cottage with a tiled roof. This building housed the kitchen and store. The wide verandah overlooking the courtyard served many purposes – vegetable cutting, dining, and most importantly, Baba talking to devotees and villagers, sitting in his reclining chair. This chair had special planks for him to rest his legs raised.

On one corner of the courtyard was a bathroom. There was a tube well and handpump, which were used to fill water into a small tank raised at medium height. From there, running water used to come to the taps in the kitchen and toilet. One tap connection was given to the “wash basin” created by scooping out the floor of the verandah. We had to squat on the floor to use this unique wash basin. There was no electric supply to the village till 1975.

In 1978 there was a devastating flood in West Bengal during which all the surrounding area except Dakshinkhanda got devastated by the river Ajay. After this incident, Poojya Swamiji sent money for a pucca building to be built so that Baba and others could shift there during any such eventuality. A double storied brick & mortar building was constructed with one room in each floor and a bathroom in the ground floor. Only this building exists to date, where many books and other items used by Baba are preserved.

Baba's āsan was a huge Royal Bengal Tiger skin complete with its big head, tail and nails. The huge open mouth showed the rows of sharp teeth. The sparkling eyes and protruding tongue, artificially grafted, gave a ferocious look. Over the tiger skin was the mattress covered with a bed sheet, and a few pillows to support his emaciated body. This is how he was lying in the last few years of his life, almost all the time absorbed into

himself. After Baba's Mahāsamādhi on 27 April 1979, a big photo of Baba was kept on this āsan, leaning against the backrest which he used for sitting up during the last few months.

Pilgrimage to Dakshinkhanda – Restoration of Poornashram

Although the original thatched hermitage 'Poornashram' does not exist anymore, the place is truly the *Go-mukha* – source of the invisible *Jñāna-gaṅgā* that has spread its cooling streams all over the world through Poojya Swamiji's *loka-saṅgraha*. Poojya Swamiji says repeatedly: **"Whatever has happened in my spiritual life, the seed lay here, where Baba did rare austerity for decades and lived a life of exclusive jñāna-nishṭhā."**

After the place was transferred to Narayanashrama Tapovanam Trust on 10th October 2017, an inaugural function for restoration of Poornashram was organized there with the help of local residents on 4th February 2018. It was a memorable pilgrimage, in which Poojya Swamiji's devotees from all over the world assembled at Kolkata and travelled together to Dakshinkhanda.



Poojya Swamiji along with Nutan Swamiji, Ma and devotees from around the world entering Dakshinkhanda. (Feb 2018)

About 150 devotees from Malaysia, California, Washington DC, Texas, London, Australia, Nairobi, Singapore, Jamshedpur, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Mumbai, Pune, Vishakhapatnam, Varanasi, and various parts of Kerala participated. Including Dakshinkhanda residents and Baba's relatives, about 300 devotees attended the function held under a sublime orange and white pandal put up on the land of Poornashram.

In the afternoon, more than 2000 poor families from 12 neighbouring villages were given rice and blanket.

During the programme, the architectural plan for reconstructing "Poornashram" was presented before the audience. Seekers from near and far may visit the place which has the imprints and radiation of a Vedantic Saint, immersed in the unfathomable depths of spiritual austerity and wisdom - rare to find. It is such associations that kindle the fundamental spiritual search in good and noble hearts, who later become the custodians of our great Knowledge and culture. ■

"Baba was an embodiment of simplicity and innocence. One would not have found any strangeness in his talks or behaviour. He was a childlike soul, and being so, represented God in the most approachable and endearing form."

- Poojya Swamiji

Printed by Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha, and Published by him for Narayanashrama Tapovanam, PO Paralam, 680563, Thrissur, India & printed at Sastha Printers, Venginissery, PO Paralam, Thrissur & published at Thrissur. Owner & Editor: Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha.

“There are people who weep even while taking delicious food. Again, there are others who live happily on puffed rice, full of husk. There are men who enjoy the happiness of living in a palace while sitting under a tree. There are others who, remaining in a palace, spend their day in weeping and lamenting. When the duties of life are performed with vichāra (introspection) it will certainly bring happiness.”

- Baba

“Baba had been to me an embodiment of refined spiritual wisdom as well as personal experience. Ancient scriptural knowledge shone in him in an apparently modern background. There are many for whom so-called mystic or supernatural powers exhibited by a Saint make strong appeal. Fortunately, I have never noticed in my Baba even the slightest inclination towards them.”

- Poojya Swamiji