

RĀMACANDRAPUR'S SĀDHU BĀBĀ

By
Satinath Dutta



DEDICATION

This booklet is offered to the lotus-hands of my most revered father and mother,
by whose grace I have attained the lotus-feet of Śrī-Śrī Bābā.

INTRODUCTION

I had my doubts whether it was proper or not to publish Śrī-Śrī Bābā's (Prabhupāda Śrīla Nikuñja Gosvāmī's) extraordinary life and priceless teachings in a booklet. For many days the stories about Śrī-Śrī Bābā had been locked up in various diaries and notebooks. Although I had the desire to publish a number of times it never actually came to it. I was not completely sure whether publishing Śrī-Śrī Bābā's story for the public in the shape of a book would be disrespectful toward Him or not. Actually nothing is really possible without His inspiration. I also had doubts about my own strength. In this condition a phone call came from Śrī-Śrī Bābā's ashram in Rāmacandrapura (Navadvīpa, Nadīyā). That year was the 75th anniversary of Bābā's birth, so the devotees had a desire to hold a commemorating festival on the 23rd of Āśvina, 1415 Bengali year (October, 2008). Though I wanted to attend the festival it was not possible, but a desire arose in my mind — I felt it necessary to tell the current generation about Bābā. Many want to know about Bābā. I told the ashram-dwellers about my plan and they joyfully welcomed it. First brief sketches of different events were made, then, by the devotees' eager wish, other events and instructions were added to create the current booklet 'Rāmacandrapura's Sādhu-Bābā'. Actually it is not possible for an insignificant soul like me to fully reveal Śrī-Śrī Bābā's full divine form, but I will consider my effort a success if I can show at least a drop of this ocean. His extraordinary life is pervading the knowledge of His innumerable devotees. If they are all published perhaps we can create a garland of His entire life with different flower-like narrations.

I saw Śrī-Śrī Bābā first in the home of my parents in Mau-grāma, near Katwa, when I was very small. An event from that time is given. I advanced a lot on the path of life (I grew up), before Śrī-Śrī Bābā gave His footdust to our home in Mau-grāma, on the initiative of my father, Śrī Rākha-Hari Datta Mahāśaya. I had the chance to see Him from very close by then. Once I saw Bābā's *rudra-rūpa* (form featuring Shiva's divine anger) and got really scared, but my father encouraged me by saying "You have only seen His *rudra-rūpa*, but there is a very tender form hidden within that. You will understand by associating with Him." By regularly going to the *ashram* I got to know Śrī-Śrī Bābā's true character. After taking *ashray* (initiation) from Śrī-Śrī Bābā I had the fortune of being close to Him for just five years. In that short period He took me with Him to Śrī Vṛndāvana, Jaipur, Pushkar and other holy places, and He also brought me to the homes of various devotees, where I got opportunities for devotional service. I must admit that Śrī-Śrī Bābā was able to perceive what was on the minds of his children (disciples) through His inner vision, so I was oft afraid to that He would perceive some offence on my behalf while I was in His presence. If I had a clean conscience in His presence there was no trouble on my mind, though. The activities of one who is both soft as a flower and hard as a thunderbolt are a bit different in the eye of the ordinary folk. He was the lion-like Advaita Acarya Himself, the universal teacher, who promised to teach the world with His divine roars and His divine conduct. He was exemplary in His teaching of the proper purport of the scriptures, maintaining devotional etiquette, preaching the pure type of worship, and above all, revealing the way to properly serve Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Madan Gopāl.

Many thirsty souls, travellers in the desert of material life, came to the soles of His lotus-feet, having lost the way, in search of an oasis. He quenched their thirst by giving them a *mantra* of revival. Now too it is absolutely necessary to get His merciful blessings in order to fill our minds, which are so attached to sense enjoyment and are grasped by old age and disease, with the nectar of devotion. Therefore Śrī-Śrī Bābā's example is the guide to break the network of illusion in the material world and to inundate us in the ocean of *bhakti*. Śrī-Śrī Bābā descended with the full force of Prabhu Sītānātha, who is called *bhakti bhāṇḍārī*, the treasurer of *bhakti*. It is our duty to always increase the beauty of the service of His worshipable Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Madangopāl, whom He loves more than millions of life-airs. Here we attain His loving blessings and our human births will be blessed.

Finally let me express my gratitude to all those well-wishers who have assisted in the publication of this booklet. I express my unlimited trust in the current inhabitants of Śrī-Śrī Bābā's ashram in Rāmacandrapura — this task would not have been accomplished without their encouragement. My fellow-student and special well-wishing friend Śrī Tapan Adhikārī Mahāśaya always encouraged me — I am especially indebted to him. I am also indebted to Śrī-Śrī Bābā's surrendered servant Śrī Tapobrata Mahānta (Kumkum Da), who has given me valuable advice while reading the draft-document. I am also bound with the ropes of gratitude to all those devotees and relatives who assisted me in the publication of this booklet by revealing their stories about Śrī-Śrī Bābā's sacred life. The employees at Varnali Printing Press, Salar, Murshidabad, have helped without reservation in the publication of the booklet — my endless thanks to them too. I take responsibility for whatever mistake there may be in this booklet, I wish to correct them in future editions.

Maugram, Bardhaman (W. Bengal, India)

30th Ashwin, 1415 Bengali (October, 2008)

Humble servant,

Sattinath Dutta

RĀMACHANDRAPUR'S SĀDHU BĀBĀ

A solitary cave in Gomukhi. An old ascetic, older than 80 years. In front of him stands a youthful Brahmacari, with matted locks (*jaṭās*). In his heart the young man carries an unconquerable vow, whose firmness is stamped on his appearance. He wants to spend the rest of his life in the solitary wilderness of Gomukhī fixed in meditation on His *iṣṭa* (beloved deity). But that would not happen because this old ascetic would reverse His life. He asked the young man: आप किस लिये याहा आये है? आप लोकालय मे जाइये! “Why have you come here? Go back to the world of population!! This is not your life's destiny, to sit in a cave of Gomukhī! Go to the populated world and save the people who are afflicted by the influence of the age of Kali there with the power of Your *sāadhanā*!” Thus the *brahmacārī* returned, his dream of a solitary life thwarted, to show the suffering souls the path of their redemption. The young man of that time was none other than Prabhupāda Śrīla Nikunja Gopāl Goswāmī, the crest jewel of Advaita Prabhu's dynasty, who was also known as Rāmacandrapur's Sādhu Bābā, Bel-talār Sādhu-Bābā (who sat under the Bilva tree) or Pagal Bābā (the mad saint). He used to stay in Rāmacandrapura, a quarter in the area of Pracheen Māyāpur (old Māyāpur) in Navadvēp Dhām, and is also named Bel-talār Sādhu Bābā because of spending 16 years under a Bilva tree there, or Pagal Bābā due to his extravagant conduct.

Prabhupāda Śrīla Nikunja Gopāl Goswāmī was born in the 13th generation of direct descendants from Śrīman Advaita Prabhu, who was famous as Gaur Ānā Ṭhākur, the Lord who brought Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to this world. This dynasty also brought forth luminaries like Prabhupāda Śrī Lokanāth Brahmacārī and Bijoy Krishna Goswami. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrīpāda Mādhavendra Purī bestowed unlimited mercy upon this great dynasty in which He appeared. Sādhu Bābā appeared as the youngest son of Pratibhā Devī and Prabhupāda Śrīla Ānanda Gopāl Goswāmī in Nilakānta Kunja, close to the Radha Bazar in central Navadvīpa. Even without counting the history of His dynasty He had appeared to rescue the fallen souls afflicted by the age of Kali, having the full force of Prabhu Sītānāth (Advaita Prabhu) Himself. From his childhood He was different from the rest, as He did not care much for the family tradition (of exclusive *bhakti*). This caused no end of worry to his father and mother. At home there was the service of Madangopal, and Bābā's elder brothers were dedicated to study, but Bābā himself rejected all this and practiced his own *sāadhanā*. He used one room in the house where He practiced different *yoga*-exercises, accepting Lord Shankar Himself as a Guru. Drawing a picture of Devāidēva (Lord Shiva), He was immersed in difficult Yoga *sāadhanā*, which He gradually mastered at the age of 13/14. After that, He practiced one different *sāadhanā* after the other. He did not want to blindly accept the household-deity, but instead performed severe austerities to determine Their glories himself. When after some time He had a vision in a dream that He was swapping a priceless diamond for a piece of glass He embraced Madangopal within His heart unambiguously.

His behavior was reminiscent of that of Prabhu Sītānāth¹ Himself. Immersed to his neck in the Ganges and imagining Himself carrying the footprints of Śrī Viṣṇu on His head,

¹ Sri Advaita Prabhu was so called because he married a lady named Sita.

He roared and offered Tulasi leaves and Ganges water. His roars pierced the coverings of the universe and made Śrī Viṣṇu's throne tremble. Śrī Viṣṇu could not remain calm and descended in the ocean-like womb of mother Śacī in the holy town of Navadvīpa. Word spread around town of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's birth but even after hearing this Sītānāth doubted whether Mahāprabhu was Śrī Kṛṣṇa or not. After all, He had called out for Kṛṣṇa to descend, not for Gaura. His doubt was removed when once He sat in meditation in the temple of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Madangopāl, saw Śrīman Mahāprabhu emerging from the deity and entering into His heart. Being now assured of the arrival of His *iṣṭadeva*, He began to engage Him in the actions He wanted Him to perform (saving the fallen souls through the chanting of the holy name and the development of love of God). In the same way Bābā also wanted to be sure about His *iṣṭadeva* as He had the attitude of 'not chewing others' food-remnants' (not blindly accepting things just from hearing) and became free from doubt.

Also later in his youth this powerful *sādhaka* had a very independent attitude. In Bābā's own words:

“ছোটবেলা থেকেই আমি বাড়ীর বারজন ভাই-এর মধ্যে স্বতন্ত্র ছিলাম । আমাকে দুধ খাওয়ান ছিল সমস্যা । মা দুধ গরম করে বাটিটা বাইরে সেজ জ্যেষ্ঠামশায়ের কাছে পাঠিয়ে দিতেন । সেজ জ্যেষ্ঠামহাশয় চিৎকরে ফেলে বুকুর উপর বসে নাক টিপে ধরে দুধ খাওয়াতেন”

“From My early childhood I was independent among 12 brothers². It was a problem to feed Me milk even. After My mother had warmed milk for Me, she would send it to an elderly uncle of mine, who would yell, sit on my chest, press My nostrils and then pour the milk in My mouth.”

As a toddler and a child Bābā was extremely naughty; He would be endlessly inventive in His child's play, but throughout this time the naughty young boy would be showered by the affection of His mother. In Bābā's own words:

“আমি ছিলাম মাযের ভজনসঙ্গী । উনি যখন ভজন করতে করতে ঘুমিয়ে পড়তেন তখন আমি পিঠে সুড়সুড়ি দিয়ে ঘুম ভাঙ্গিয়ে দিতাম । বাইরে থেকে বেড়িয়ে এসে জামা কাপড় ছেড়ে আমাকে একবার মাযের কোলে বসতেই হতো”

“I was my mother's *bhajan*-associate. If she would fall asleep while doing *bhajan* I would tickle her back and thus wake her up. I would crawl inside, take off My shirt and sit on mother's lap.” He also said:

“সপ্তাহে একদিন আমার জন্য মা পুষ্পান্ন রান্না করতেন । যেদিন পুষ্পান্ন হতো সেদিন মা নিজের হাতে পরিবেশন করতেন । মাযের হাতে না খেলে আমার পেট ভরতো না”

“Once a week mother would cook *puṣpānna*³ for me, and on that day she would serve me with her own hand. Unless she fed Me, My belly would not be full.” In fact, Śrī-Śrī Bābā's mother was an exemplary mother⁴. Reminiscing His mother He would say,

“আমার মা ছিলেন সাক্ষাৎ মাতৃস্বরূপা । একবার নীলকান্ত কুঞ্জ কোন কোন এক উৎসবে মেদিনীপুর থেকে প্রায় একশ জন ভক্ত এসেছেন । রাত্রে তারা একসঙ্গে প্রসাদ পেতে বসেছেন, আর মা ঘুরে ঘুরে তত্ত্বাবধান করছেন । হঠাৎ একজনকে প্রসাদ পেতে না দেখে তিনি অপর ব্যক্তিদের তার না আসার কারণ জিজ্ঞাসা করলেন । তারা জানালো “সে অসুস্থ, তাই আসতে পারে নাই” । তিনি তখন সবার অলক্ষ্যে তার জন্য প্রসাদ নিয়ে গিয়ে তাকে বললেন “বাবা, প্রসাদে খেয়ে নাও - সুস্থ হয়ে যাবে” । লোকটি তখন অঝোরে কাঁদছে আর বলছে “আমার গর্ভধারিণী জননীও এত স্নেহ করতে পারে না”

² Actually Bābā had just 2 brothers and 1 sister, but he meant to say that he was the most independent person in the extended family. Ed.

³ *Puṣpānna* is boiled rice with added sugar and spices like cardamom. ed

⁴ Following family tradition, Bābā took *āshray* (initiation) from His mother.

“My mother was the personification of motherhood. Once there was a festival in Nilakānta kuñja and 100 devotees came from Medinipur district. They all sat down for *prasāda* at night, and mother was walking around sizing the situation up. Suddenly she noticed that one devotee was missing and she asked other devotees where that person was. They said: “He is sick, that’s why he cannot come.” Mother then went to that person unnoticed to bring him some *prasāda*, saying ‘Please take *prasāda* — you will feel better then.’ That devotee then wept loudly and said: ‘Even my own mother was not as affectionate!’”

Just as He did with His mother, Bābā similarly attained the special affection of His father — his father had special faith in Him. In Bābā’s own words:

“একবার বাবার একটি কারবঙ্কল হয়েছিল - তার ছত্রিশটা মুখ হয়েছিল । ডাক্তার কালীকৃষ্ণ মুকুটী দেখে বলিলেন, ওটা অপারেশন করতে হবে । বাবা বললেন ‘আমার সমস্ত শিরা উপশিরা নিকু জানে । সুতরাং ও যদি অপারেশন করে তাহলে আমি বুঝতে পারব না’ । সেইমত আমি সেই কারবঙ্কল অপারেশন করে সমস্ত পচ বের করে দিলাম” ।

“Once my father had a carbuncle, an abcess, which had 36 openings. Doctor Kali Krishna Murkuti decided it should be operated on, but my father said: “Niku knows all my veins and even the subsidiary veins. If He would perform the operation I wouldn’t feel a thing.” In this way I performed the operation and took out all the pus myself.”

Thus Bābā passed His childhood, growing up into adulthood, showered by the affection of His mother and father.

Bābā’s youth is summarized by strict celibacy within and engaging Himself in different elevating missions externally. For this He opened a Yoga-school, to shape the character of young people and improve their physical status. Anyone who attended attained physical skills, strong character and leadership-qualities. Wherever Bābā witnessed injustice or atrocities He courageously protested. Once when He was absorbed in teaching in the school one teacher spoke bitter words about the demeanor of the Goswamis, prompting an immediate and loud response from Bābā. On another occasion Bābā saw the driver of a fire-engine inattentively running over a pregnant cow. He became very upset and gave the driver a proper punishment. He was thus always immediately ready to angrily oppose injustice, wherever He perceived it. There are many other examples of His strong character and His courage in His activities of that time.

There were already many indications at that time that in the future a firmness in the establishment of truth would be revealed in His personality. An event comes to mind in Bābā’s childhood. The *sevāits* of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Ballabha in Maugrām, in the sub-district of Katwa in the district of Bardhamān were devotees of Śrī-Śrī Bābā,⁵ so Śrī-Śrī Bābā occasionally came there. The late Tinkuḍi Bal Mahāśaya, my paternal uncle, lived in Maugrāma; he was a pure Vaiṣṇava and knower of *śāstra*. Bābā was very happy to discuss *śāstra* with him. One day Bābā was sitting alone on a stool in a cottage in Bal Mahāśaya’s estate — He was bulky, wore matted locks (*jaṭās*) and was scantily dressed. A bright effulgence shone from His body and He spoke in a powerful manner. Everyone around was a bit afraid too — the slightest wrong or ambiguous word could reveal their fear. Everyone

⁵ Bardhaman district lies west of Nadiya District and Katwa lies right next to Nadiya, in the far east of Bardhaman.

wanted to admit their offence and thus get freed from their fault. It was all about vegetarian diet. In a powerful manner Bābā said:

“তোরা বরং ছুরি নিয়ে আয়, আমি আমার শরীর থেকে মাংস কেটে দিচ্ছি । তাই তোরা খা । আর জীবহত্যা করে পাপ বাড়ান না । আমার সন্তানরা যদি মাংস খেতে চায় তো আমি নিজের শরীর থেকে কেটে দেব । এটা আমার কর্তব্য” ।

“Better you bring Me a knife, and I will slice a piece of flesh from My own body — you can eat that then! Do not continue the sin of killing other living beings. If My children (disciples) want to eat meat I will slice it from My own body — that is My duty.” It seemed as if He was really ready to slice flesh from His own body. It was clear that He was the shining embodiment of non-violence, powerfully announcing His firmness in establishing the truth and His fearlessness in uprooting misbehavior.

During that time His inner renunciation was covered by an external layer of luxurious dress, hair-do and food. In Bābā's own words:

“পোষাক পরিচ্ছদ ও বেশভূষার ব্যাপারেও আমার বেশ পরিপাটি ছিল । আমি যেভাবে কাপড় ধুয়ে পড়তাম নবদ্বীপে তখন ঐ জাতীয় পোষাক কেউ পড়ত না । বালিগঞ্জের কাছে মুনলাইট সেলুন থেকে প্রতি সপ্তাহে চুল কার্লিং করে আসতাম । সেখানে ইউরোপিয়ান লেডিরা চুল কার্লিং করতো । আমার পাছা পর্যন্ত বুলে পড়া চুলকে কার্লিং করে পিঠ পর্যন্ত তুলে রাখত । যখন আমি পোষাক পরে বাইরে বেরোতাম তখন সবাই বলত Prince যাচ্ছে । তারপর যখন জীবনের অনিত্যতা বোধ আসলো তখন সবকিছু ছেড়ে দিয়ে কৌপিন মাত্র সম্বল করে হিমালয়ে উদ্দেশ্যে রওনা হলাম । ইচ্ছা ছিল সমস্ত জীবনটাই হিমালয়ে কাটাতে । কিন্তু গোপেশ্বর সে ইচ্ছায় বাদ সাধলেন-নিয়ে এলেন এখানে । এখানে লোকালয়ের যত কোলাহল ও সমস্যা সবকিছু সন্মুখীন হতে হচ্ছে” ।

“I was very expert in dressing and ornamenting Myself — no one in Navadweep could dress like Me. I used to go once a week to the Moonlight Saloon near Ballygunj, where the European ladies went, to have My hair curled. My hair, that hung down to My hips, still reached down to My back after it was curled. If I went out dressed like that everyone said ‘There goes the Prince!’ Later, when I understood that life is temporary, I gave it all up and left for the Himalayas with only My loincloth as possession. I wanted to live in the Himalayas for the rest of My life, but Gopeśvara stopped Me and brought Me back here, in the world of people, where I must face all the noise and troubles.”

Regardless of His outer coverings, Bābā was the ideal son — His life was blessed by His mother's benediction. In Bābā's own words:

“আমার জীবনে মা ও বাবার স্থান একটি দড়ির মধ্যে পাক দিলে যেমন হয় তেমনই পঁচিয়ে পঁচিয়ে ছিল । বাবা বলতেন “নীলকান্ত কুঞ্জ একটা সিংহ আছে - দুটা চেন দিয়ে বাঁধা । চেন ছিঁড়ে গেলে যে কি হবে বলা যায় না” । সত্যি মায়ের আঞ্জা ছাড়া কোন কাজ করতাম না । তিনি যদি নিষেধ করতেন তাহলে যত ভালো কাজই হোক না কেন আর আগাতাম না । আমি গর্ব করে বলতে পারি আমার ত্রিশ বৎসর বয়স পর্যন্ত (আমার ত্রিশ বৎসর বয়সে মা নিত্যলীলায় প্রবেশ করেন) আমি কখনও কথায় বা আচরণে মাকে কোন আঘাত দিই নাই । বাবা জানতেন আমার জীবনে মায়ের প্রভাব কতখানি । তাই মায়ের নিত্যলীলায় প্রবেশের পর পাছে আমি কষ্ট পায় এজন্য তিনি আমার সামনে কোন দিন কাঁদতেন না - পাখানা গিয়ে হাও হাও করে কাঁদতেন । একদিন বাবা আমাকে ডেকে বললেন, “জানিস্ তোর্ মাই আমাকে শিখিয়েছে মদনগোপাল কিভাবে দর্শন করতে হয় । তিনি একই সঙ্গে স্বামীসেবা, পুত্রদের সেবা, মদনগোপালের সেবা সুন্দরভারে পরিচালনা করতেন” । সত্যিই মায়ের নিত্যলীলায় প্রবেশের পর মনে হযেছিল বাবা এবার চলে গেলেই ভালো হয় - এ বিরহ সহ্য করা যায় না । বাবা, মা যখন চলে যান তখন আমার চোখের সামনে দুটি সূর্য অস্ত গেল । তারপর একখানা ছেঁড়া কাপড় মাত্র সম্বল করে হিমালয়ের উদ্দেশ্যে বেরিয়ে পড়লাম । জীবনে কোন প্রয়োজনের জন্য কখনও কারও সাহায্য চাই নাই” ।

“I was bound up to my mother and father like a twisted rope⁶ — father used to say: “There is one lion in Nilakānta Kunja, tied to two chains — but what will happen if the chain is broken, no one can tell.” Truly I never did anything without mother's permission — if she

⁶ Two ropes are often intertwined to make a thick combined rope. This is how tight the parents were to Baba.

would forbid something I would not pursue it, no matter how nice it would have been. I can proudly say that in 30 years (I was 30 years old when My mother entered into the Lord's eternal pastimes) I never opposed my mother, either in words or in deeds. My father knew how much influence My mother had over My life. He would never weep in front of Me after mother entered the eternal pastimes, thinking I would suffer. He would weep loudly when in the lavatory. One time My father called Me and said: "You know Your mother showed me how to see Madangopāl by beautifully serving her husband, her sons and Madangopāl, altogether." I surely thought it better if father would also enter the Lord's eternal pastimes after mother passed away — he could not tolerate the separation from her. When my mother and father passed away it was to Me as if two suns had set. After that I set out for the Himālayas wearing just one simple piece of cloth — never in my life I wanted to depend on anyone's help." This was Bābā's exemplary renunciation. Referring to the way in which boys and girls take the wrong path nowadays Bābā often said "How can they grow up without trusting and respecting their mothers and fathers? We must teach them to offer respects to their father and mother."

From Bābā's early youth onwards His physical strength and versatile genius was manifest. He was an extraordinarily expert musician who easily gained expertise in playing various instruments that were held in different ways. He was a great sculptor — devotees were overwhelmed by seeing His flower decorations of the Śrī Vighraha (deity statue of the Lord). He was also an expert cook. The dishes He offered to Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Madangopāl became *mahā-prasāda* of a divine relish.

Many were eager to make this great young man who was so expert in all sciences and who was of such high lineage, a relative⁷. Param Gurudeva and Ṭhākur-mā⁸ were eager to marry their youngest boy. When they had already proceeded far in this endeavor they wanted to know Śrī-Śrī Bābā's views on this. Bābā took one night of His mother and father's time. That night was a great trial for Him, for it would decide His future life. In Bābā's own words:

“সিদ্ধান্ত জানাবার জন্য আমি বাবার কাছে এক রাত্রি সময় নিলাম । তারপর রাত্রে আমার ভজন কুটিরে আমি ধ্যান বসলাম । সমস্ত রাত্রি চলে গেল । কোন নির্দেশ পেলাম না । শেষে জানালাম যদি কোন নির্দেশ না পাই তাহলে আসন থেকে উঠব না । ভোরের দিকে দেখি এক নির্জন প্রদেশে সাধুদের ধুনী জ্বলছে । আমি সেখানে গেলাম । দেখলাম ওঁদের মধ্যে যে বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ সেই সাধুটির হাতে একটি ঘড়ি । তিনি পাশে একটি খাটিয়ায় গিয়ে বিশ্রাম করলেন - মাত্র পাঁচ মিনিটের জন্য । সারা শরীরে কোন আবরণ নাই অথচ হাতে ঘড়ি দেখে বিস্মিত হলাম । প্রশ্ন করে জানতে পারলাম তিনি বার বৎসর অন্তর পাঁচ মিনিটের জন্য বিশ্রাম নেন । ঐ সময়টা দেখার জন্য ঘড়ি রেখেছেন । আমি করজোড়ে আমার অভীষ্ট লক্ষ্যের কথা জানালাম এবং জানতে চাইলাম তা লাভ করা সম্ভব কিনা । তিনি আশীর্বাদ করে বললেন “সবই হবে তবে সাদি মং করো” - সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আমি পরবর্তী জীবনের আদেশ পেয়ে গেলাম । সকালে বাবাকে আমার সিদ্ধান্ত জানালাম । বাবা খুবই মর্মান্বিত হলেন কিন্তু জানতেন আমার এই সিদ্ধান্তের কোন ব্যতিক্রম হবে না । তাই কোন কথা বললেন না । সেই থেকে সংসারী হওয়ার বাসনা ত্যাগ করিলাম ।

“I asked My father for one night so that I could think it over and then tell him of My decision. That following night I sat down in my *bhajan-kutir* to meditate. In this way the entire night passed, but I could not get any clue. Finally I decided I would not rise from my Asan unless I got the clue to my dilemma. As I saw the dawn approaching I saw⁹ a sacrificial fire of a group of *sādhus* burning in a solitary spot, so I went there and saw that the eldest

⁷ To propose a marriage with their daughter.

⁸ Author's paternal aunt or grandmother, i.e. Bābā's parents.

⁹ This vision of Bābā was divine, not phenomenal.

among the *sādhus* had a watch in his hand. He went to a nearby improvised cot to take rest — for just five minutes! I was astonished to see he did not wear anything on his body, yet he was wearing a watch! When I inquired I learned that in twelve years he took rest for just 5 minutes, and for watching that time he was keeping a watch.¹⁰ With folded hands I told him of my calling and inquired if I could attain My goal or not. He blessed me by saying ‘You will attain everything but then do not marry’. In this way I received instructions for my entire future life. In the morning I told my father about my resolution. Father was heart-broken but knew that my resolution could not be broken or compromised, so he did not say anything anymore. From then onwards I gave up my desire to become a householder.”

From age 30 to 36 — these 6 years Bābā spent on the inaccessible Himālayas — this period is very astonishing! Bābā lived in the jungle on one of the Himālayan mountains when a Panjābi woman came and told Him of her sad story. She wanted to become Bābā’s disciple, but she was young and beautiful. Bābā told her to come back the next day and became worried — again there was an obstacle to the solitude He had sought by leaving home. Without delay He left that place and took a train elsewhere — in this way He conquered *māyā*’s temptation.

During his time of solitary practice Bābā had some amazing experiences. He used to say:

“আমি সাধন জীৱনে দুটি চীজ দেখেছি । একবার আমি যে পাহাড়ে থাকতাম সেখান থেকে দেখতে পেলাম কুষ্ঠরোগগ্রস্ত এক ব্যক্তি পাহাড়ে গা বেয়ে নদীৰ দিকে যাচ্ছে । নদীৰ তীৰে এসে কুষ্ঠরোগাক্রান্ত ব্যক্তিটি হাতে দিয়ে ঈশাৰা কৰলেন । সঙ্গে সঙ্গে একখানা মাৰিবিহীন নৌকা অপর পাড় থেকে এসে তীৰে ভিড়ল । তিনি সেই নৌকাৰ চাপাৰ পৰ আৰাৰ তা অদৃশ্য হয়ে গেল” |

“During my life of *sādhana* I saw two things. One time I saw a leper coming down the mountain on which I was staying, going towards the river. When he came to the bank of the river he beckoned with his hand and at once a boat without helmsman arrived and docked there. After boarding the boat he disappeared again.”

On another occasion when Bābā was passing urine he noticed the disciples of one *sadhu*. They went and told their Guruji about Bābā. The *sadhu* told them to bring Bābā to him. When the disciples brought Bābā there, He saw the *mahatma* sitting down with two sacks of peanuts on each of his side. While he was talking he would sometimes stick his hand in one of the sacks and fill his mouth with peanuts from them. He had an axe on his side. When Bābā was leaving the *sādhu* spoke affectionate words to Him and engaged his disciples in serving Him. On one plate they put a bundle of *rotis* and on the other a large amount of pumpkin vegetables. Bābā was speechless when He saw how much it was, but Sadhuji requested Him to eat the whole lot. While Bābā was eating, the *sādhu* ordered his disciples to bring another person to him, but when the summoned person showed up a bit too late the *sādhu* became very angry, picked up the axe standing next to him and killed the man by cleaving his head with it. He then ordered his disciples to throw the corpse in a nearby river. Bābā was terrified as He witnessed the whole event. A while later the *sādhu* told his disciples to take the corpse out of the water by the ears at a certain *ghāṭa*¹¹. There was no limit to Bābā’s astonishment when He saw the disciples carrying out the order and that the person

¹⁰ The meaning of this is — don’t waste time sleeping etc. since life is short.

¹¹ A *Ghāt* is a small wharf or landing place at the river side.

came back to life. When he inquired about this from the *sādhu*, the *sādhu* replied: "That person's life was bound to be finished at that particular moment and there was no other means to bring him back to a new life than by first killing him at that predestined moment." Bābā used to comment on these two events by saying: "এই ভাবেই মহাত্মারা বিচিত্র ভাবে তাঁদের লীলা প্রকাশ করেন" – "In this way the *mahātmas* reveal their pastimes in astonishing ways."

Bābā spent most of that time at the Manasā- and Chandi-mountains of Haridwār, not caring for His own needs, meditating on His beloved deity in solitude and making His life a full success by attaining the mercy of the Guru. Bābā achieved in six simple years what many great saints took a lifetime to achieve. After attaining this high stage of *sādhana* He moved to a solitary place at Gomukhi, but from there He returned to the world of people, on the order of the Mahatma, to the great cemetery¹² of Rāmacandrapura.

All this is now more than 40 years ago. After spending a few years in the solitary wilderness of the Himālayas, Bābā wanted to spend one year in one holy place after the other, so after spending one year in Navadvīpa He set off for Puri-dhām to live there for the following year. When he heard that Bābā had departed from Navadvīpa, Medinipur's Pulin Kākā had a feeling He had arrived in Kharagpur Station, so he went there and brought Bābā back to his own home. From there he brought Bābā to Navadvīpa, where he and some other Guru-brothers from Navadvīpa began to search for a nice plot of land to Bābā's liking. Eventually they found the place where the current Ashram is and told Bābā the place was up for sale, so Bābā went there one day and sat under the Bel-tree there. As soon as He sat down there He entered *samādhi*. After a long time His *samādhi* broke and His mind was filled with transcendental experiences. With a faint voice He said: "Yes, this place is good — you can buy it." So following this endorsement, Pulin Kākā and other Guru-brothers purchased the place. At that time the place was one big jungle, filled with high grass. Bābā placed an Asan under the Bel-tree. There was no roof over His head, while the six seasons showed their prowess, with their successions of cold and heat. Poisonous snakes were crawling hither and thither across the *āshram*, but in a *sādhu's āshram* it is as if everyone forgets about hatred and violence — no one causes any harm there. In Bābā's own words:

"আশ্রমে যখন প্রথম আসি তখন এস্থানে বড় বড় ঘাস ছিল । সেখানে যত্রতত্র সাপ ঘুরে বেড়াত । কিন্তু একদিনের জন্যও তারা কোন অনিষ্ট করে নাই । একদিন শুয়ে আছি - উপর থেকে একটা সাপ পেটের উপর পরে চলে গেল । আশ্রমবাসীরাও কোনদিন ভয় করত না । আর একদিন কতিপয় ভক্তের সঙ্গে কথা বলছি । হঠাৎ তারা আতঙ্কে লাফিয়ে উঠল । তাদের আতঙ্কের কারণ তারা একটি গোত্রো সাপকে আমার পায়ের কড়ে আঙ্গুলটা মুখে পুরে শুয়ে থাকতে দেখেছে । সে আমার কোন অনিষ্ট করে নাই । আসলে ওরা বুঝতে পারে কে ওদের শত্রু আর কে মিত্র" |

"When I first came to the ashram there was long tall grass everywhere and snakes slithered here and there, but they never did any harm. One day I was lying down when a snake fell from up on My tummy and then slithered away. The other ashram-dwellers were also never scared of snakes. One day I was talking with some *bhaktas* when suddenly they jumped up in fear, because they saw a cobra lying down with My toe in its mouth. But the cobra also did Me no harm - they can understand who are their enemies and who are their friends."

There were only a few servants in the ashram at the time. First there was a very fixed-up servant there named 'Jñāna-Dā'. He assisted Bābā in His *sādhana bhajan* and tirelessly

¹² *Mahā-śmaśāna* = great cemetery. Lord Shiva resides in the cemetery.

performed all small duties in the *ashram*. A roof was erected next to the Bel-tree and a picture of Madangopāl was being served there. Many devotees did not gather - actually many were afraid to face Bābā's *rudra-mūrti*¹³. This Jñāna-Dā used to take Bābā to the Ganges and keep Him immersed up to the neck there, keeping a stick next to Him in the ground as a marker. Then he would go to the market for 3-4 hours and come back to take Bābā back out again.¹⁴ In this way Bābā's *sādhana* would continue in the water. Then again Bābā would perform severe *sādhana* night after night at the base of the Bilva (Bel-) tree. One morning long stripes of slice-like wounds could be seen on Bābā's body. When asked about it, Bābā said:

“কাল রাতে কাঠিযাবাবা এসেছিলেন চিন্টি হাতে । আমার যোগের ক্রিয়া ঠিকমত না হওয়াই উনি চিন্টি দিয়ে প্রহার করে শিক্ষা দিয়ে গেলেন । এইভাবে মহাপুরুষগণ প্রায়ই এসে দর্শন দেন”

“Last night Kāthiyā Bābā¹⁵ came here with a pincer in his hand; he found My *yoga* practice insufficient so he taught Me a lesson by striking Me with it. This is how the *mahā-puruṣas*¹⁶ sometimes reveal themselves.”

Externally Bābā maintained His *rudra mūrti* but internally He carried Madangopāl in His heart, performing so many pastimes. How many whimsical desires Madangopāl expressed to His dear servant! In Bābā's own words:

“একদিন রাত্রে মদন গোপালের কিছু ভোগ লাগাবার ইচ্ছা হলো । বিছানায় হাত দিয়ে পাঁচ সিকা পয়সা পেলাম । জ্ঞানকে পয়সাটা দিয়ে বাজার থেকে কিছু আনতে বললাম । ইত্যবসরে গোপাল আবদার করলো, আমার একটু কলাই-এর ডাল আর পোস্ত খেতে ইচ্ছা হয়েছে । আমি বললাম “সবে তো পাঁচশিকা পয়সা দিয়েছ তাতে এত জিনিষ হবে কি করে? আবার পূর্বে বললে না হয় দেখা যেতো । এখন রাত্রিবেলায় কে বাজারে যাবে? আবার পূর্বে বললে না হয় দেখা যেতো । এখন রাত্রি বেলায় কে বাজারে যাবে? এমন সময় পাযখানার বেগ হওয়াই পাযখানা গেলাম । ঘুরে এসে দেখলাম কুটিরের সামনে একটা প্যাকেটে আধসের মতো ভাজা কলাই ও অপর একটি পাত্রে একশ গ্রাম বাঁটা পোস্ত । সেখানে কোন শিলনোড়া ছিল না । আধ কেজি মতো আমান্য করা আলু ও এক গ্লাস গরম চা পর্যন্ত সেখানে রাখা গেছে । মনে হলো যেন কেউ এইমাত্র প্রস্তুত করে রেখে গিয়েছে । অথচ কোন জীবিত ব্যক্তির সন্ধান পেলাম না ॥

“One night I had a desire to offer something to Madangopal, so I found a few paise under the bed and gave them to Jñāna, telling him to get something from the market. At that moment Madan Gopal had a whimsical wish — He wanted *kolāi ḍāla* (a type of pea-soup) and *posta* (a poppy-seed-mixed vegetable dish). I said ‘You have only given us a few paise — how can we buy all that stuff for such money? Then again, earlier You said “We’ll figure something out”. Who will go to the market at this time of night?’ Just at that time I had the urge to go to the bathroom; when I returned I saw a packet in front of my hut, with half a *ser*¹⁷ fried *kolāi ḍāl* along with a plate with 100g ground *posta*. There was no grinding slab there, but still.....there was even half a kilo of potatoes ready for offering as well as a cup of warm tea. It was as if someone had kept this all ready for us, yet there was not a living soul in sight.” This is how the Lord and His devotees play with each other.

On another occasion Bābā woke up Jñān-dā at midnight and ordered him to go to one particular shop in the market to get a certain type of *sandesh*¹⁸. Jñān-dā began to worry where

¹³ Rudra-murti = form of anger, displayed by Lord Shiva.

¹⁴ This was done according to Bābā's wish.

¹⁵ Kathiya Baba = a saint who wears a chastity belt made of wood.

¹⁶ Mahā puruṣa [lit: a great man] great liberated saints who can appear outside of the gross realm.

¹⁷ Ser = Bengali weight measurement, about a pound

¹⁸ Sandesh = milk sweet

to get the sweets in the market in the dead of night — all shops were closed. Bābā said: “মদনগোপাল আদেশ করছেন, তুই যা তে” “Madangopal is giving the order — go now.” Bābā then told him where the sweets were kept, and lo, when Jñān-dā arrived at the shop it was indeed open still. It was open late because the owner was working overtime making new sweets. When Jñān-dā told the shop-owner which sweets he needed the shop-keeper told him he had just finished preparing those sweets. Jñān-dā then astonished the shopkeeper by telling him exactly where those sweets could be found in his shop. The shopkeeper remembered that one customer had left bought sweets behind that morning and that he had left it for him on the shelf. Jñān-dā took those remaining sweets and told him he would pay the balance later. The shopkeeper told him not to bother, for he would come personally to collect the balance. The following day he did show up with a full kettle of extra sweets for Madangopal and he offered obeisances to Bābā as well.

At this time Krishna-Di¹⁹ began to come to the ashram. In intimate circles²⁰ she had heard about Bābā and had come to see Him. Seeing how special Bābā was she decided to dedicate her entire life to Him. At the time she was a school-teacher. There were no facilities for ladies in an *ashram* for *brahmacārīs*, but still Krishna-Di stayed in a simple hut on the grounds of the ashram, causing the *bhaktas* there to face criticism from society. Once a *bhakta* said: ‘Bābā climbed 99 steps to reach out to Krishna-Di. He could not mount the 100th one.’ Still, Bābā called Krishna-Di ‘mā’ (mother). Krishna Di was also not able to give up Bābā, so she decided to keep on coming and going to the ashram. One night it was raining fiercely and Bābā sent Jñāna-Dā to Krishna-Di to bring her home. In the meantime Bābā went to use the bathroom. His oil lamp was extinguished by the rain and he had not taken any water with him for cleaning after the bathroom. Jñāna-Dā used to wait upon Bābā with the water. Bābā was worried — just then he heard Jñāna-Dā’s voice and was consoled. Leaving the bathroom, He saw that Jñāna-Dā was waiting for Him with water and a lamp. Jñāna-Dā served Bābā clay and water to wash His hands and brought Him to His hut, where He went to take rest. After quite a while the real Jñāna-Dā returned to the ashram after bringing Krishna-Di home. Bābā asked him: “Where did you go, leaving Me in My *kutir*?” Jñāna-Dā was speechless, because he had just returned. He told Bābā: “I just came back now!” Bābā then understood what had happened, realizing the fulfillment of the verse in Bhagavad-Gītā - *yoga-kṣemam vahāmyaham* (9:22), in which Kṛṣṇa promises to supply His devotees with all their needs, carrying them on His own head.

Meanwhile other devotees like Tulasi-Di²¹ and Namita-Di also joined the ashram. Krishna-Di gave up her job and came to live in the Ashram fulltime. Jñāna-Dā had left by that time. Gradually other devotees like Kumkum Dā and Ritu Bijoy Da also joined. Ramesh Da also joined, taking his wife Hemā-Di and his little son Bishu with him. They made huts in the ashram and began to live there. A temple building was then constructed for Madangopal,

¹⁹ Krishna Di was the daughter of Prachin Mayapur’s Niranjan Prasad Das, blessed with the grace of Śrī-Śrī Bābā. She gave up household life and joined the ashram. After Śrī-Śrī Bābā entered into the Lord’s eternal pastimes she became the mother of the ashram. She is now deceased.

²⁰ Her father was already seeing Sadhu Baba at the time. Ed.

²¹ Tulasi Saha comes from Prachin Mayapur, was blessed with Baba’s mercy and lives in the ashram. Namita Saha lives in the ashram and was blessed with Baba’s mercy. They are the ashram’s mothers at present.

and a deity was installed in the place of the picture. A royal worship was started — nobody knew how it was all accomplished — Bābā was a detached *brahmacārī* with just simple cloth on. He had neither real estate nor any movable property. He was absorbed all day in devotional service — sometimes He discussed different topics with the devotees. He would never go and give classes for money; he was not a professional reciter nor did he ever listen to any such recital. If a fortunate person had the chance to hear Bābā's devotional lectures such a person would be overwhelmed — they could never hear such quality lectures from a professional. Bābā considered professional, commercial recital a ghastly offence, and He would never give lectures outside of Madangopal's yard. Bābā did not depend on His disciples either — his relationship with his disciples was not like the usual one. He used to say:

“আমি কারও গুরু নই । আমি বাবা । আমাকে কিছু দিতে হবে না । তোমরা বরং মদনগোপালের প্রসাদ পেয়ে কৃতার্থ হও”

“I am no-one's Guru — I am Bābā²² — you need not give Me anything. Rather, you just come here and be blessed with Madangopal's *prasāda*.”

About the Guru-disciple connection He said one day:

“গুরু-শিষ্য সম্পর্ক নিত্য । শিষ্যদের তাঁর ইষ্টের চরণে পৌঁছিয়ে না দেওয়া পর্যন্ত গুরুর দায়িত্ব সম্পূর্ণ হয় না । এজন্য প্রয়োজন হলে গুরুদেবকে পুনঃ পুনঃ জন্মগ্রহণ করতে হয় । এই কারণেই ১৩০৬ সালে ইহলোক ত্যাগ করার পর আবার ১৩৪১ সালে জন্মগ্রহণ করতে হলো । শিষ্যের যেমন গুরুদেবকে প্রয়োজন, গুরুদেবেরও তেমনি শিষ্যের প্রয়োজন । অভীষ্ট সিদ্ধ হলে একের জীবনে আর অন্যের প্রয়োজনীয়তা থাকে না । শ্রীগুরুদেব প্রকট বা অপ্রকট যে অবস্থাতেই থাকুন না কেন শিষ্যের কাছে তিনি সবসময়ই প্রকাশিত । শিষ্য আপন অন্তরে শ্রীগুরুদেবের আসন রচনা করবেন ।

“The connection between Guru and disciple is eternal; the Guru's responsibility is not over unless and until the disciple has reached the lotus-feet of the Lord. Hence, if necessary, the Guru will take birth after birth. For this reason He gave up this world in 1306²³ and took His rebirth in 1341²⁴. Just as the disciple needs Gurudeva, Gurudeva also needs the disciple. When perfection is attained one person does not need the other anymore. Śrī Gurudeva may be manifest (alive) or unmanifest (deceased), to the disciple He is always manifest. The disciple should make a seat for Śrī Gurudeva within his heart.”

In this way He always kept the spiritual relationship between Guru and disciple beyond the material level of giving and taking. He was aloof from external receiving of charity from anyone, regardless of how vast the donation could be. If, however, someone wanted to give even the slightest donation with a mind immersed in devotion, he would be in great ecstasy. Bābā used to say:

“কেউ লক্ষ টাকা নিয়ে এলেও মনে হয় পুরিয়ে ছাই ফেলি । এতলোক দান করিতে চায় কিন্তু তোমার (ইন্দু বাবুর) দানটা যতটা হুঁটচিতে নিতে পারি আর কারও তা পারি না । আর একজন আছে তার নাম মাধাই । খুবই গরীব - সাত আট জন পোষ্য । সে যখন নিত্য সেবা নিয়ে আসে তখন চোখ দিয়ে জল গড়িয়ে পরে । এত অভাবের মধ্যে মদনগোপালেকে স্মরণ রেখেছে - দেখে আনন্দ হয় । দানের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে দাতার রূপটিও চোখে ভেসে আসে । তার দান গ্রহণ করা যাবে কি না গোপেশ্বর ঠিক জানিয়ে দেয়”

²² Baba in India also means 'father'. Baba indicated he wanted a warm and loving relationship with his disciples.

²³ 1306 Bengali year is 1899 Christian year. This is the year that Vijay Krishna Goswami, another famous descendant of Advaita Acarya, passed away.

²⁴ 1341 Bengali year is 1934 Christian year. This is the year that Sādhu Bābā appeared in this world.

‘Sometimes someone may come with one lakh of rupees and I feel like burning that wad of cash to ashes. So many people want to donate but I feel more joy from accepting it from you (Indu Babu)²⁵ than from anyone else.’ There was another person named Madhai Das²⁶ — he was extremely poor and had to maintain 7-8 persons in his family. He always came to serve while tears rolled from his eyes. Even in such dire straits he remembered Madangopal and I was very happy seeing that. Tears came to My eyes when I saw the donor along with the donation. Gopeśvara Mahādeva would make it clear to Me whether I could accept his donations or not.”

Bābā was totally dedicated in establishing the etiquette of Bhakti Devi. External obstacles could never stand in his way — He proved that in truth at the time He gave *dikṣā* to Advaita Dā from Holland. He did not consider birth here at all. He used to say: “কোন ভালো আধার দেখলে সেখানে যদি ভক্তিবীজ আরোপ না করি তাহলে ভক্তিদেবীর কাছে আমি যে অপরাধী হয়ে যাব” ‘If I saw a good receptacle and I would not plant the seed of *bhakti* there I would be an offender to Bhakti devi.’ He also said: “যে চোখের জলে লক্ষ নাম করে তার কি পূর্ব সংস্কার মুছে যায় না?” “If someone does one *lakh* of *nāma*²⁷ will his previous impressions²⁸ not be erased?”

We can also get to know Bābā’s revolutionary attitude when observing the privileges our sisters received in serving Madangopal in the *ashram*. Whoever had a true passion for Gopāl was eligible for His devotional service — there was no distinction in race or gender. This was the full application of Advaita Prabhu’s prayer for the upliftment of women, *sūdras* and the fallen (outcastes).²⁹ Bābā would never distort the truth just to please people. Bābā’s aim was to reveal the truth about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the true path of worship (*bhajana prañālī*) and how young men and young women should remain unsmelled flowers, regardless of whether such sermons would bring in any funds or not. He did not even lift an eyebrow at that. As more devotees began to gather, they needed to be offered lodging, so gradually buildings were erected that we currently have on the ashram grounds. It was difficult afterwards to ascertain who gave what for these buildings. In Bābā’s own words:

“এই আশ্রমের সমস্ত বিল্ডিং-এর আনুপূরিক হিসাব যশোদা বাবার কাছে পাবে । কেহ বলতে পারবে না এই বিল্ডিং-এর জন্য আমি এত টাকা দিয়েছি” ‘You can get the whole account, from beginning to end, of all these buildings from Yaśodā Bābā³⁰. No one can say ‘I gave that much money for this building’.

Fully depending on Madangopal, Bābā held festivals for His disciples’ benefit. Bābā resumed the festivals in honour of Prabhu Sītānātha’s advent day. Though He was resourceless, the festivals were huge and lasted for 11 to 15 days. Whatever wishes His disciples had, Bābā would inform Madangopal of it and fulfilled them. Apart from the festival for Sītānātha’s advent, the ashram also hosted festivals for Rādhāṣṭamī, Akṣaya tṛtīyā’s establishment day of Madangopal, Guru Pūrṇimā and the separation (disappearance-day)

²⁵ Indubhushan Saha from Yoganath Tala was very devoted to Baba. He is now deceased.

²⁶ Madhai Das was an exclusive devotee of Śrī Śrī Baba. He was a carpenter. He is now deceased.

²⁷ One lakh of name is 1,00,000 names, practically it means chanting 64 rounds.

²⁸ Cultural conditioning from one’s culture of birth, which usually catches up with the spiritual practitioner.

²⁹ Advaita Prabhu, when offered a boon by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, prayed: *more yadi var dibe prabhu visvambhara – strī-sūdra adhamera āge kṛpā koro* – “If you truly offer Me a boon then first offer Your grace to the women, laborers and the fallen (outcastes).”

³⁰ The building contractor.

festivals of Śrī-Śrī Parama Gurudeva and Ṭhākur-mā. There was an amazing event coinciding with the first time that Bābā became resolved to hold a festival for Ṭhākur-Mā's disappearance day. In Bābā's own words:

“মাযের বিরহ তিথিতে মহোৎসব করার বাসনা হলো । জগদীশ গিয়ে কলকাতা থেকে প্রায় দেড় হাজার টাকার মতো বাজার করে আনল । চারজন রাঁধুনী ব্রাহ্মণকেও বলা হয়েছে । পরদিন মহোৎসব । রাত্রে মা দেখা দিয়ে বললেন, “তোকে এসব কে করতে বলেছে । তুই বরং চিড়ে দই দিয়ে আমার ভোগ দে” । আমি তো মহা সমস্যায় পড়লাম । যে টাকা পাওয়া গিয়েছে সবই তো করছ হয়ে গিয়েছে । এখন কি দিয়ে চিড়ে দই ইত্যাদি কিনব? । পরদিন যথা সময়ে চারজন রাঁধুনী হাজির হয়েছে । আমি তাদেরকে উনুন ধরাতে বারণ করলাম । বললাম, তোমরা কেও যাবে না - এখানেই অপেক্ষা করো । বেলা বাড়তে লাগলো । তারা তো অস্থির । আমি একাকি চলে গেলাম গঙ্গার ধারে । সেখানে পলির উপর এই বলে শুয়ে পড়লাম যে, যদি তুমি মান রাখ তাহলে আশ্রমে ফিরে যাব, আর না হয় এখানে থাকব । কিছুক্ষণ পর বিশু গিয়েছে ডাকতে । কারণ বাজার থেকে কে ত্রলিতে করে সমস্ত মাল পাঠিয়েছে । ত্রলিরালারা আমার খোঁজ করছে । এসে দেখলাম এক বস্তা চিড়ে, এক দেড় মন মত দই, কয়েক কাঁদি কলা ও গুড় কে যেন পাঠিয়ে দিয়েছে । ত্রলিরালারা আমার হাতে একটা চিরকুট দিল । তাতে লেখা আছে বেচুে রালা সাধুবাবা লেনে রালা সাধুবাবা । সমস্ত মাল নামিয়ে আনা হলো । তারপর রাঁধুনীদের বললাম চারটি বালতি নিয়ে ঐ সমস্ত চিড়ে ধুয়ে ফেলতে । এদিকে লোকজনও সব এসে গিয়েছে । সে সমস্ত চিড়ে, দই দিয়ে সকলকে প্রসাদ দেওয়া হলো । এইভাবে মা তার ইচ্ছা পূরণ করলেন” ।

“I had the desire to hold a festival for the separation (demise) of My mother, so Jagadish went to Kolkata and brought things from the market there worth about 1,500 rupees³¹. I had called for 4 brahmin cooks already — the next day the festival would be held. At night, however, My mother appeared to Me and said: “Who has told You to do all this? Better You offer me chipped rice and yoghurt.” Now I was in a big dilemma — I had already spent all the money available for the festival — how could I now still buy all this chipped rice and yoghurt? The following days the Brahmins appeared on time, so I held them up and told them to keep the stoves off for now, not to leave and just stand by. Time passed by and they all got impatient. I went to the bank of the Ganges, alone. There I lay down and thought: “If you want to save My face then I will go back to the Ashram, and if not then I will just stay here. After a while Bishu was called away, because a trolley had brought all the required goods suddenly and the trolley-driver was searching for Me. When I came there I saw one sack of chipped rice, 1½ maund of yoghurt, clusters of bananas and a lot of *guda*³² had been sent from the market. On the bill I received from the driver was written ‘Seller — Sādhu Bābā, purchaser — Sādhu Bābā. Everything had been delivered exactly (as was needed). I then told the cooks to wash the chipped rice in four buckets. Meanwhile all the guests had also arrived and everyone was served a feast of the chipped rice and yoghurt. In this way mother had her desires fulfilled.”

In this way there were regular festivals in the Ashram, without any previous planning, and even after such great festivals were completed it was seen that Sītānātha's storehouse is inexhaustible.³³

Not only during festivals but even on ordinary days there was an ever-increasing crowd coming, because in Bābā's presence everyone's misery was mitigated. Bābā made everyone forget their worldly sorrows and gave them transcendental bliss. Bābā used to say: “এই আশ্রমে এলে তোমাদের মনের প্রসার হবে । সঙ্কীর্ণতা দূর হয়ে যাবে । অন্যান্য আশ্রম থেকে এই আশ্রমের এইখানে তফাৎ” ‘When you come to this ashram your consciousness will expand and narrowness will go

³¹ This was in the 1970s – it would be worth much much more now.

³² Brown sugar

³³ There is a narration to that extent in Caitanya Bhagavat. Ed

far away. That is the difference between this ashram and others.” Most folks who came to Bābā's darshan aimed at the mitigation of their material suffering. Many came to Bābā with life and death emergencies, when all doctors had been unable to help them. Bābā told them to do Mānasik³⁴ for Gopeśvara and abide by a discipline. In this way they were benefited. I have heard from Bābā's lotus-mouth that he cured terminally ill people and even brought them back from the gates of death. In Bābā's own words:

“সেদিন রাধাষ্টমী - সকাল থেকে আমি উপবাসী আছি । এমন সময় তুষারের বাবা এসে কেঁদে পড়ল আমার কাছে । তার ছেলে তিন দিন অজ্ঞান হয়ে আছে - তাকে মর্গে পাঠান হযছে । যে কোন ভাবে ছেলেকে বাঁচাতে হবে । তার কান্না দেখে আমি বললাম, ঠিক আছে - আমি দেখছি । আশ্রমের মায়েদের বললাম তোমরা গোপেশ্বরের মন্দিরের পশ্চাৎ দিকটা একটু পরিষ্কার করে ওখানে একটা ধূপকাঠি জ্বালিয়ে দাও । আর লক্ষ্য রাখ আমার এই দেহটি যেন কেহ স্পর্শ না করে । এই বলে আসনে বসলাম । তারপর দেহ ছেড়ে বেরিয়ে গেলাম । মর্গের মধ্যে ওর দেহে প্রাণ সঞ্চার করে ফিরে এলাম । ও মর্গের মধ্যেই কথা বলে উঠল । সকলে তো খুব আনন্দিত । কিন্তু এটি করতে আমাকে রীতিমত সংগ্রাম করতে হয়েছে । বাইরের কেহ এসব কিছু বুঝবে না”

“On Rādhāṣṭamī I had been fasting since the morning when Tushar's father came to Me weeping. His son had been unconscious for three days and was already sent to the morgue. Somehow his son needed to be revived. Seeing him weep I said ‘Alright, let Me see.’ I told the women in the ashram to clean the place behind the Gopeśvara Mandir and light a stick of incense there, making absolutely sure that no one would touch My body there. Saying this, I sat down, left My body, travelled to the morgue, infused life into Tushar's body and then returned here. Tushar got up into the morgue and began to talk — everyone was very happy, but in order to do that I had to struggle hard — no one can understand that on the outside.”

In this way the people that were thus benefited and those who heard of His superhuman powers, started gathering around Bābā. Bābā instructed them all to tread the religious path and established the right philosophy to them. Though devotees desiring liberation thus attained success, it meant trouble for the community of selfish seekers — their religious business was thus jeopardized, so they began to make trouble for Bābā in different ways. In Bābā's own words:

“আমার উপর যে তন্ত্রের ক্রিয়া হচ্ছে তা বেশ বোঝা যাচ্ছে । সাধন মার্গের একটু উপরে উঠলে সকলের ঈর্ষার কারণ হয় । আমি যা বলি তা তাদের স্বার্থে আঘাত করে । সেজন্যই তারা শত্রু হয় । কিন্তু তাদের জন্য তো আমি সত্যের অপলাপ করতে পারি না । এইসব কারণে আর থাকতে ইচ্ছা করে না । এই নোংরা জগতে সাধুদের স্থান নাই”

“The *tantric* practices against Me have been a burden. Everyone gets envious if you make progress in *sadhana*. Whatever I say conflicts with their selfish interests, so they become My enemies. But I cannot suppress the truth just to please them. For all these reasons I do not wish to stay here. There is no place for *sadhus* in this despicable world.”

Bābā engaged Himself in the welfare of the world with His saintly mind, but people are so shrewd, they act shrewdly even with *sādhus*, giving them a lot of distress. Bābā told us once of such cunning and shrewd behavior:

“বেইমান মানুষ গোপেশ্বরের সঙ্গে কপটতা করে । এইতো আজই পড়োমাতলার তোমাদের এক গুরুভাই এসেছিল । দেড় বছর আগে তার ছেলে বাড়ী থেকে চলে যায় । আমি তাকে বলেছিলাম গোপেশ্বরের কাছে কিছু মানসিক করে যাও - আর প্রতি সোমবারে গোপেশ্বরের মাথায় জল দিও । কি মানত করলে আমাকে শোনাবার দরকার নাই । তাঁর কান আছে - তিনি

³⁴ *Mānasik* = A sacrifice or offering promised to a deity on condition that one's prayer be granted.

ঠিকই শুনবেন । দেড় বৎসর পর তার ছেলে এসেছে - এখন সে বলে আগামী কাল সোমবারে জল দেওয়ার পর আর কি আসার প্রয়োজনীয়তা আছে । মানতের কথা তো বললই না ।

“Unfaithful people cheat Gopeśvara. Today one of your Gurubrothers from Porama Tola came here. 1½ years ago his son ran away from home. I told him to do a Mānasik to Gopeśvara and pour water over Him every Monday³⁵. There was no need to tell me their Mānata³⁶ - He has ears — He will be able to hear properly. 1½ years later his son returned home. Now he said: “What is the use of coming to pour any more water tomorrow, on Monday? He did not tell the promise.” He told us another instance of cheating Gopeśvara — “এইসব যে অপরাধ হচ্ছে এর দায়ভার আমাকে বহন করতে হবে না? গোপেশ্বর কি ছেড়ে দেবেন?” “Do I not have to bear responsibility for all these offences that are going on? Will Gopeśvara leave me out of these offences?” Just as He could not bear to see cunning cheats and hypocrites, He had deep affection for those who were *sarala-prāṇa* (innocent, sincere, simple, honest). For this reason he had more affection for modern young men and women than for the aforementioned religious pretenders. Once these sincere and simple youngsters of Pracheen Mayapur faced trouble, having come in the grasp of a Tantric, so in the end they took shelter of Bābā. Bābā extended His *abhaya hasta*³⁷ and protected them from all danger. As they were thus sprinkled by the stream of Bābā's affection, they became greatly attached to Him in devotion.

When the political situation in Navadvīpa began to take terrible shapes and there were constant clashes between Prācīn Māyāpura and Pratāp Nagar, we have seen youngsters from both sides sitting with Bābā. Though they were enemies of each other, in Bābā's presence they all behaved as good boys. Bābā brought many youngsters that were stained by banditry and anti-social behaviour back to the path of *sādhana*. He encouraged them to establish a deity in the temple of Ādya-Mā³⁸ — He never thought much of anyone's criticism. This behavior made many think that Bābā was partial, but Bābā used to say: “কেহ যদি পূর্বকর্মের জন্য অনুতপ্ত হয়ে সাধু হতে চায়, তাহলে আমরা কি তাকে সাহায্য করব না । এ জীবনে যদি একজনকেও সাধু হতে সাহায্য করো তাহলেই জানবে তোমাদের জন্ম সার্থক হয়েছে” “If someone repents his previous activities and wants to become a sadhu, should we not help him? If you help someone become a sadhu even once in this life, you should know that your birth has become a success.”

Hence everyone — high or low, Brahmin or shudra, rich or poor, saint or bandit, got a place at Bābā's broad chest.³⁹

When all these buildings were constructed in the ashram and all nice arrangements had been lined up for Madangopal's service, many thought that perhaps Bābā had become attached to luxury, like an ordinary householder is attracted to wealth. But we got the proof for His detachment on the day when we saw 10-12,000 Rs worth of golden ornaments stolen from Madangopal in broad daylight. When Bābā was informed of this He simply took a Gobā⁴⁰ in His hands and danced around with it, completely undisturbed, saying: “মদনগোপাল যখন দিয়েছেন তখন আমরা আর ভেবে কি করবো । আবার যখন ইচ্ছা হবে তখন যোগাড় করে নেবেন” “When

³⁵ Monday is traditionally the day of Shiva. Ed.

³⁶ Mānata = promise made to the deity in secret. Ed.

³⁷ Abhaya hasta = hand which bestows fearlessness.

³⁸ Ādya-mā = mother Durgā.

³⁹ A place in his broad heart.

⁴⁰ Gobā = stringed instrument, like an Ek-taar.

Madangopal has given then what is the use of any more thought on it? Then again whenever He likes He takes it back again.” Gaura-Dā⁴¹ then came to see if Bābā really was not upset by checking whether He had increased bloodpressure, but he found that His pressure was the same as on any other day.

We have also seen the limit of detachment in the way in which Bābā entered the Lord's eternal pastimes. Whatever He planned was all for increasing the beauty of Madangopal's devotional service. He always kept Himself far above worldly matters. Hence when He understood that the reason for which He had come to this world was fulfilled, He was resolved to enter into the Lord's eternal pastimes. He said:

“আমি এখন দেহের দিক থেকে দুর্বল হয়ে পরলেও মনের দিক থেকে অযুত গুণ শক্তি পেয়েছি । আমি এখন quite OK, well prepared. প্রথম ধাক্কাটা সহ্য করতে পারবে না বলে কিছুদিন সময় নিলাম । এখন কল্যাণ বাবু দেখে যাওয়ার পর গোপেশ্বর যা আদেশ করবেন তাই হবে । সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে আমার কিছুমাত্র অসুবিধা নাই”

“Though I am physically weak My mind is millions of times stronger. I am now quite OK, well prepared. I took some time, thinking you would not be able to tolerate the first shock. Now, after speaking with Kalyan Babu (Dr. Kalyan Chatterjee) — whatever is Gopeśvara's order — I will follow. It is not a problem at all for Me to accept the inevitable.” Bābā took this heart-breaking resolve on Monday-morning, the 2nd of Kārtika, 1393⁴². The tithi was Kṛṣṇā tṛtīyā⁴³. He took our leave with His gross body, but He stayed with us in His subtle body. In Bābā's own words: “আমি লীলা সম্বরণ করলে কি তোমাদের কাছ থেকে চলে যাব মনে করেছ? বরং এখন কয়েকজনের কাছে আছি - আর তখন সূক্ষ্ম দেহে সবার কাছে ছড়িয়ে পড়ব” “Do you think I will leave you after winding up My pastimes? Rather I am still with some persons right now — and then I will pervade everyone in My subtle body.” And factually Bābā does pervade everyone right now. He is in the kingdom of the devotees' transcendental experiences, He is present in His words and in the example He established.

What is that *vāṇī*,⁴⁴ and what is that example that keeps Him manifest to the devotees even now, and will continue to do so in the future? It is very difficult to answer that question, because we try to explain Bābā's example with our sensual minds. In this way He will not be fully experienced or understood, for in Bābā's own words: “আমি অতি দুর্বোধ্য বস্তু । আমাকে বুঝেছ একথা কেও বলিতে পারবে না । মনে করেছো ১০/১৫ বৎসরে বাবার কাছে থেকে বাবার সবকিছু জেনে গিয়েছ - কখনও না”

“I am very difficult to comprehend — no one can claim he has fully understood Me. You thought you have fully understood Bābā by staying with Him for 10 to 15 years? Never!” Nevertheless I am putting 2 to 4 *vāṇīs* of Bābā here for the devotees to follow in earnest.

Indicating where the desire to perform *sādhana* comes from after the desire arises to live a spiritual life, Bābā said: “সাধনের স্পৃহা জাগে প্রথমতঃ আত্মার মুক্তির অনুসন্ধিৎসা থেকে । আত্মদর্শন না হলে আত্মার মুক্ত সম্ভব নয় । একমাত্র আত্মদ্রষ্টা পুরুষদের কৃপাতেই আত্মদর্শন সম্ভব” “The desire to perform *sādhana* comes first of all from a soul's search for liberation — unless one can see the Self the Self can not be liberated — the Atma or Self can only be seen by the mercy of a seer of the Self.”

In order to become a traveller on the spiritual path we need to destroy pride and conceit. In this connection Bābā said:

⁴¹ Gaura Da = Gaur Bhattacharya, a disciple of Sadhu Baba who was a doctor

⁴² In the western calendar October 20, 1986.

⁴³ Tithi means a Vedic lunar day. Kṛṣṇā refers to the dark quarter of the moon. Tṛtīyā is the third lunar day.

⁴⁴ Vāṇī means not just words or teachings, but divine teachings by a Guru or sadhu.

“দম্ভ, অহঙ্কার, কুরূচি নিয়ে আধ্যাত্মিক পথে অগ্রসর হওয়া যায় না । এগুলি সমূলে বিনাশ করতে হবে । এগুলি বর্তমান থাকলে কলহ অনৈক্য তো স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই দেখা দেবে”

“You cannot progress on the spiritual path while there is pride, conceit and vulgar indecency — they need to be uprooted and destroyed. If they are present there will naturally be discord and quarrel.”

If we want to progress on the spiritual path there needs to be a single aim. In this connection Bābā said:

“সাধক নিজেই নিজের গুরু । নিজের কাছে ভালো লাগাই সর্বাবস্থায় শান্তি আনতে পারে । বাইরের লোক কে কি বলল সেদিকে জ্ঞপ্তি করলে চলবে না । কোন জাগতিক পরিচালকের নির্দেশ মেনে না চলে একমাত্র তার নির্দেশই মান্য করা উচিত”

“The *sādhaka* is his own Guru. His own satisfaction can give him peace of mind in all circumstances. You don't get anywhere if you bother about what outsiders say. We do not bother about what worldly rulers say and should only bother about what His⁴⁵ indication is.”

We have set out on the spiritual path and set our target — now we have to make progress and become mentally prepared. Explaining how the *svarūpa* of the *sādhaka* will come about Bābā said:

“সাধক হবে বিদ্রোহী, স্বীয় সাধনা ও পৌরুষের জোরে সে সমস্ত সঙ্কট অনায়াসে অতিক্রম করবে । বাধাই তাকে প্রেরণা যোগাবে । মনটি ঠিক জায়গায় ন্যস্ত করতে পারলে বাইরের কোন বস্তুই বাধা সৃষ্টি করতে পারে না । পারিবারিক ও বৈষয়িক সমস্ত চিন্তাই মনকে বাইরের দিকে আকর্ষণ করে আর ইষ্টমুখী চিন্তা ভিতরে নিয়ে যায় । দিনের বেলায় কর্মবিপাকে মনসংযোগ করা সম্ভব না হলে রাত্রে ঐ কাজে ব্রতী হতে হয় । আর কোন সময়ই ইষ্ট চিন্তায় মন সংযোগ না করতে পারলে নিতান্তই দুর্ভাগ্য জানবে”

“The *sādhaka* will be a rebel who will easily overcome all dilemmas on the strength of his own *sādhana*. Obstacles will only increase his enthusiasm. If you can fix the mind in the right place no external things can cause any trouble. Worries about the family and sensual matters will pull the mind to the outer sphere and thoughts of the Lord take it to the inner sphere. If it is not possible to control the mind in the daytime due to having to concentrate on one's work, one must be dedicated to this at night. If at any time you are unable to concentrate your mind on the Lord you should know yourself to be very unfortunate.”

Is it easy to concentrate the mind on the lotus-feet of the Lord? Can we actually perceive Him at all? How can we meditate on something we do not perceive? To these questions Bābā answered:

“শ্রীগুরুদেবের শ্রীচরণ ধ্যানই একমাত্র সাধনা । এরূপ সাধনা করতে করতে যখন শ্রীগুরুদেবের সঙ্গে একাত্ম হয়ে যাবে তখন তিনিই শিষ্যের স্বরূপ চিনিয়ে দেবেন । এবং তার উপাস্যদেবতার রূপ শ্রীগুরুদেবের মাধ্যমেই প্রকাশ পাবে”

“The only *sāadhanā* is meditation on the lotusfeet of Śrī Gurudeva. If by doing that we become one soul with Śrī Gurudeva He will reveal the disciple's *svarūpa* and he will have the form of the Lord revealed within the form of Śrī Gurudeva.” He also said:

“শ্রীগুরুদেবের মূর্তিখানি সর্বদাই অন্তরে বিরাজ করলে সাধন ভজনের আর কোন প্রয়োজনীয়তাই নাই । এই মূর্তিকে জাগ্রত করার জন্যই সাধন ভজন । শ্রীগুরুদেব যতদিন প্রকট অবস্থায় থাকেন এবং তাঁর সাক্ষাৎ দর্শন লাভ হয় ততদিন তাঁর সেবাপূজা করাই শ্রেষ্ঠ । যখন তিনি অপ্রকট হন তখন উপলব্ধি করতে হবে তাঁর প্রদত্ত মন্ত্রের মধ্যেই তিনি অবস্থান করছেন । সেই মন্ত্রের সাধনেই তখন সমস্ত শক্তি নিয়োগ করা উচিত । সাধককে একমুখী হতে হবে । শ্রীগুরুদেবই হবেন তার কাছে সর্বস্ব । এই একমুখী ভাব নিয়ে চললে সমস্ত কিছু অধিগত হয়ে যায় । অর্জুনই একমাত্র লক্ষ্যভেদ করতে পেরেছিলেন - তার কারণ তিনি পাখীর চোখ সহ মাথা ছাড়া আর কিছু দেখতে পান নাই । অন্য সকলের ব্যর্থ হওয়ার কারণ তাঁদের মন বিভিন্ন দিকে বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়েছিল”

⁴⁵ His = one's *iṣṭadevatā* or chosen deity.

“Those who always keep the divine form of Śrī Gurudeva within the heart and mind need not do any *sādhana bhajana*. *Sādhana bhajana* is done for awakening this *mūrti* (divine form of Gurudeva). As long as Śrī Gurudeva is manifest (alive) and His personal audience can be achieved, it is best to do His *sevā puja* (worship). When He has become unmanifest (deceased) His presence needs to be experienced within the *mantra* He has given. It is then proper to engage all one's energy into the practice of this *mantra*. The *sādhaka* needs to focus — Śrī Gurudeva becomes his all-in-all. If one can focus like that, all will be attained. Young prince Arjuna had that single focus — he could not see anything else but the eye of the bird. The reason for others' failure was that their attention was scattered in all different directions.” In this context Bābā also said:

“একমাত্র গুরুকৃপাতেই সমস্ত কিছু অসাধ্য সাধিত হতে পারে । গুরুকৃপার মধ্যেই সাধু বৈষ্ণব পিতা মাতা ইত্যাদি সকলের কৃপা লুক্কায়িত আছে । গুরুকৃপা না থাকলে অন্য সকল কৃপাও স্থায়ীত্ব লাভ করতে পারে না । শাস্ত্রসমূহ ও গুরুকৃপায় অধীত হয়ে যায় । মায়াময় সংসার থেকে একমাত্র উদ্ধার করতে পারেন শ্রীগুরুদেব । তিনি মায়াজালের মধ্যে একটি ছিদ্র করে দেন । ঐ ছিদ্রপথে শিষ্যের উদ্ধারের উপায় থাকে । সংসার থেকে মনকে সরিয়ে লওয়া যায় একমাত্র গুরুকৃপা বলে”

“Only by the grace of the Guru whatever is impossible to accomplish becomes accomplished. The mercy of *sadhu*, Vaiṣṇava, father, mother etc. is all hidden within the mercy of the Guru. No one else's mercy can be permanent unless the mercy of the Guru is there. The scriptures are also only studied by the grace of the Guru. Only Śrī Gurudeva can deliver us from this illusory material world — he will provide a passage out of this labyrinth of illusion. This passage will be the means of delivery for the disciple — only on the strength of Guru's mercy the mind can be taken out of worldly illusion.” He also said:

“মিথ্যা বাস্তবকে ধরে থাকার থেকে অবাস্তব সত্যের কল্পনা করা অনেক ভাল । ঈশ্বর আছেন এই বিশ্বাস এবং তাঁর লীলাগুলির সত্যতা সম্পর্কে বিশ্বাস আমাদের শক্তি যোগাবে । বিশ্বাসের মূলে আছে শ্রদ্ধা । দৃঢ় শ্রদ্ধা থেকে বিশ্বাসের স্থায়িত্ব আসে । বিশ্বাস না থাকলে এপথে অগ্রসর হওয়া যায় না । শ্রীগুরুদেবের মাধ্যমেই শিষ্য এই বিশ্বাস লাভ করবে এবং তাঁর মধ্যেই সত্যদর্শন করবে । এই প্রসঙ্গে আদৌ শ্রদ্ধা ততঃ সাধুসঙ্গ.....শ্লোকটি স্মরণীয়”

“It is much better to think something insubstantial to be real than holding on to something false to be true. We get strength by believing that God exists and that His pastimes are real. The root cause (main source) of belief is *śraddhā* or firm faith. From firm faith one's belief strengthens. Grounded faith becomes stable due to belief. Unless there is belief one cannot advance on this path. Within Śrī Gurudeva the disciple will get this faith and within Him he will see the truth. In this connection one should remember the verses *ādau śraddhā tathā sādhusaṅga*⁴⁶.”

What is an acceptable means of livelihood (*upajīvyā*) for a devotee? In this regard Bābā said:

“সেবামুখী মনোভাবই ভক্তের একমাত্র উপজীব্য । দশ হাজার নাম জপ করে যে অগ্রগতি হবে, সেবা বিপরীতমুখী মনোভাব থাকলে তার থেকে অধিক পিছিয়ে আসবে । আশ্রমের সামান্য একটি ঘাস তুললে যে কাজ হবে অনেক ভজন সাধন করেও তা হবে না”

“The devotee's only means of livelihood is a service attitude. The advancement caused by chanting the Lord's name ten thousand times will backfire on you even more if you are averse to service. Performing a great *sādhana* will not accomplish as much as just weeding a little grass in the *ashram*.” He also said:

⁴⁶ Two verses in Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.4.14-15, that describe the 9 stages of devotional advancement.

“সেবা করতে হবে ইঙ্গিত বুঝে । নরোত্তম ঠাকুরের একটি প্রার্থনাতেও একথা বলা হয়েছে । ইঙ্গিত বোঝার জন্য চাই প্রথর বুদ্ধি । স্থূলবুদ্ধি দিয়ে সেবা করা যায় না”

“One must serve on hints and indications — that has been mentioned in one of the prayers of Narottama Ṭhākura too. One needs to be really smart to understand these hints — with a gross mind one can not serve.” Bābā alerted His devotees by saying:

“নিজেকে কখনও প্রভুর আসনে বসিও না । অপরের সেবা লওয়ার মনোবৃত্তি থাকলে অনেক পিছিয়ে যাবে । শ্রীগুরুদেব যা আদেশ করেন তাই পালনীয়, তাঁর আচরণ অনুকরণ করা উচিত নয়”

“Do not ever sit on Prabhu's⁴⁷ throne. You will suffer a severe backlash if you desire to enjoy others' service. The orders of Śrī Gurudeva must be carried out, but it is not proper to imitate Him.”

Pointing out the *svarūpa* of Śrī Gurudeva and Śrī Bhagavān, Bābā said:

“শাস্ত্র অনুযায়ী গুরু ও ভগবান এক বস্তু । শ্রীল সনাতন দাসের শ্রীগুরু বন্দনায় আছে, “জীবের নিস্তার লাগি নন্দসুত হরি । মহিমায প্রকাশ হন গুরুরূপ ধরি” । সুতরাং তত্ত্বের দিক থেকে গুরুকে ভগবানের স্বরূপ বলেই মনে করা উচিত । কিন্তু গুরুসেবার সময় শ্রীগুরুদেবের প্রত্যেক অঙ্গকে পৃথক পৃথক ভাবে চিন্তা করতে হবে এবং সেই অনুযায়ী সেবার ব্যবস্থা করা বাঞ্ছনীয় । অপর দিকে বিচার করলে দেখা যায় শ্রীগুরুদেবই শিষ্যের মধ্যে ভগবদ্ভক্তি জাগরিত করেন । তাই ভগবৎ উপলব্ধিতে সাহায্যকারী শ্রীগুরুদেবই শিষ্যের কাছে ভগবান স্বরূপ”

“According to the scriptures Guru and Bhagavān are the same thing. In his Śrī Guru Vandana, Śrīla Sanātan Dās says ‘Nanda's son Hari saves the conditioned souls assuming the form of Guru, revealing His greatness.’ Thus, from the philosophical point of view, it is appropriate to consider the Guru to be the form of Bhagavan. But while we are serving Guru we must meditate on each limb of Śrī Gurudeva separately, and serve Him accordingly. That is the desirable way to serve Guru. If we consider it from the other point of view, we can see that Śrī Gurudeva awakens devotion to the Lord within the disciple. Hence, since He assists in realization of the Lord, Śrī Gurudeva is the form of Bhagavān.”

One day Tulasi Dās mentioned in one of his *Doñhās*⁴⁸ “Ego is even more harmful than *māyā* (illusion) — ego caused many Munis and Rishis to fall down. Hence ego is to be given up first of all.” As an example he mentioned: “A cyclone is able to uproot huge trees but not tiny blades of grass.”

One day Bābā discussed the topic of *samaṣṭi-guru* and *vyāṣṭi-Guru*, saying:

“শ্রীমন্ মহাপ্রভু সমষ্টিগুরু বা সাম্প্রদায়িক গুরু । ব্যষ্টিগুরু আচার্যদেবগণ । আচার্যদেবগণ সমষ্টিগুরুর নির্দেশমত স্ব স্ব শিষ্যকে গড়ে তোলেন । সমষ্টিগুরু যখন স্বরূপাবিষ্ট একটি ভক্তকে দেখেন তখন তিনি অত্যন্ত আনন্দিত হয়ে তাকে বুকে জড়িয়ে ধরেন এবং তাঁর প্রভুর চরণ অর্পণ করেন । ভক্তকে রাধাকিঙ্করী স্বরূপ দান করিতে পারেন একমাত্র শ্রীমন্ মহাপ্রভু । তাই তিনি (শ্রীমন্ মহাপ্রভু) বলেছেন, “আমা বিনা অন্যে নারে ব্রজ প্রেম দিতে” । এই ব্রজ প্রেমের পরাকাষ্ঠা দেখিয়েছেন ব্রজগোপীগণ । প্রত্যেকেই আমরা প্রকৃতি - পুরুষ একমাত্র স্বয়ং ভগবান । এই ভাব আসলে রাধাকিঙ্করীগণ তাঁদের স্বজাতী হিসাবে সাধককে গোষ্ঠীভুক্ত করে নেন । এটি সম্পূর্ণ ভাবের ব্যাপার । অন্য কোনরূপ চিন্তা নিয়ে এপথে অগ্রসর হওয়া যায় না” ।

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the *samaṣṭi-guru* (aggregate Guru) or *Sāmpradāyika* Guru (teacher of the entire tradition), and the individual *Ācāryas* (Gurus) are the *vyāṣṭi-gurus*. On the indication of the *samaṣṭi-guru*, the *ācāryas* train their disciples. If the *samaṣṭi-guru* sees a devotee in *svarūpāveśā*⁴⁹ He is very blissful, embraces him at the chest and offers him at the feet of the Lord. Only Śrīman Mahāprabhu can bestow the *svarūpa* of a maidservant of Rādhā. Hence He (Mahāprabhu) has said: ‘No one but Me can bestow the

⁴⁷ Prabhu can be either the Lord or the Guru.

⁴⁸ *Doñha* = medieval Hindi couplet

⁴⁹ *Svarūpāveśa* = absorption in one's eternal spiritual form.

love of Vraja”. The *gopīs* of Vraja show the limit of Vraja-*prema*. Each one of us is *prakṛti* (ontologically feminine), only Bhagavān Himself is *puruṣa* (ontologically male). When this feeling comes to the *sādhaka*, the maidservants of Rādhā will assimilate him into their group and count him/her among them. It is entirely a matter of feeling; any other thought or feeling will not help us advance on this path.” He also said:

“শ্রীভগবানের দুটি রূপ - ঐশ্বর্য ও মাধুর্য । এই দুয়ের মধ্যে মাধুর্যই শ্রেষ্ঠ । শ্রীভগবানের মাধুর্যের প্রকাশ শ্রীবৃন্দাবনে । মাধুর্যরূপী এই ভগবানকেই আমরা উপাসনা করি । চতুর্বিধ রসের - দাস্য, সখ্য, বাৎসল্য ও মধুর দ্বারা তাঁর উপাসনা হয় । ক্রম অনুযায়ী মধুর রসই শ্রেষ্ঠ । মধুর রসের পরাকাষ্ঠা দেখিয়েছেন ব্রজগোপীগণ । আবার ব্রজগোপীদের মধ্যে মহাভাব স্বরূপিণী শ্রীরাধিকাই সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠা । মধুর রসে প্রেমই একমাত্র অবলম্বন । এই প্রেমের কাছে ভগবান ধরা না দিয়ে পারেন না । প্রেমের উৎকর্ষ প্রদর্শনের জন্য সময় সময় তিনি ক্ষুদ্রও হয়ে যান । তাই শ্রীরাধিকার চরণ পর্যন্ত ধারণ করতেও তিনি দ্বিধাবোধ করেন নাই । মধুর রসে ব্রজগোপীগণ শ্রীরাধার দাস্য অবলম্বন করেছেন । শ্রীরাধিকার চরণ লাভ করতে পারলে অনায়াসেই গিরিধারীকে পাওয়া যায় । কেননা শ্রীকৃষ্ণের প্রাণেশ্বরীই শ্রীরাধিকা । তাঁর প্রাণেশ্বরীর কৃপা লাভ করলেই তাঁর কৃপা পাওয়া যায় ।

Śrī Bhagavān has two features — prowess and sweetness — of the two, the sweet one is the greater. The sweet feature is manifest in Śrī Vṛndāvana — we worship the Lord in this feature. He is worshipable in four flavours — service, friendship, parenthood and amorous love, in order of superiority, culminating in amorous love. The *gopīs* of Vraja show the limit of such spiritual amorous love, and again amongst them, Śrī Rādhikā, who is the embodiment of *mahābhāva*, is the greatest. *Prema* is the only support of this amorous love, and it is impossible not to capture the Lord with *prema*. Sometimes the Lord even takes a subjugated role to show the excellence of *prema*, so He will not hesitate to grasp Śrī Rādhikā's lotus-feet. In the *madhura rasa*, the *gopīs* of Vraja take shelter of Śrī Rādhā's devotional service — when Her lotus-feet are served Giridhārī is easily attainable, for She is the love of His life. His mercy is attainable when His heart's beloved's mercy is attained.”

About the importance of studying *sāstra*, Bābā said:

“শাস্ত্রপাঠের মাধ্যমে শ্রীভগবানের রূপ ও গুণের পরিচয় পাওয়া যায় । সাধন ভজনের দ্বারা সেই রূপ মূর্ত হয়ে ওঠে । সাধক তখন ইহ জগতের মানুষের মতো তাঁকে প্রত্যক্ষ করেন, তাঁর সঙ্গে কথা বলেন, প্রেম প্রীতি নিবেদন করেন”

“By studying *sāstra* one becomes acquainted with the Lord's transcendental form and attributes, and through *sādhana bhajana* this form becomes visible. The *sādhaka* can then perceive Him as a person from this world and talk to Him, offering his love to Him.”

Prabhu Sītānātha brought the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha to the mortal world, where He flung Him into the ocean of ambrosial devotion to Śyāma. The original Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa descended in a golden form — what is the dearest thing to this Gaura? The holy name He has brought, not his own (Gaura-) name! In this connection Bābā said:

“তাঁর নাম করিলে গৌর সুখী হন না । তাঁর আনা নামেই তাঁর প্রকৃত সুখ । সুতরাং গৌরকে সুখ দিতে হলে তাঁর নির্দেশ মেনে চলাই প্রকৃত কাজ । গৌরের নামে আমাদের আত্মসুখ হলেও গৌরের সুখ হবে না । ভক্তের প্রধান লক্ষ্য তাঁর ইষ্টদেবতাকে সুখী করা । তাই গৌরের প্রীতি উৎপাদনের জন্য আমাদের কোন স্বতন্ত্র পন্থা অবলম্বন না করে তাঁরই প্রাণপ্রিয় শ্রীনামের উপাসনা করা কর্তব্য ।

“Gaura will not be happy if we chant His own name. If we chant the name He brought⁵⁰ He is truly happy. If we want to make Gaura happy it is our natural duty to respect His suggestion. Even if we ourselves are happy by chanting Gaura's name it will not make Him happy, and it is the primary target of a devotee to make His beloved Lord happy.

⁵⁰ The holy name of Krishna.

Hence, to make Gaura love us we should not take shelter of invented independent paths, but worship (practice) the Holy Name that is dearer to Him than life itself.”

When, during His Gambhīrā pastimes, Mahāprabhu heard ‘Gaura nāma’ from Sītānātha’s mouth, He was unhappy and gave the following warning to the devotees:

*chāḍi kṛṣṇa nāma ki koro kīrtan,
svatantra īśvara bhāvīyā bhāsāle bhuvana*

“What are you chanting, giving up the holy name of Kṛṣṇa? You make the whole world float in a concept of an independent Lord!”⁵¹ Bābā quoted that in this context.

About the purport of Śrīmad Bhāgavata Bābā said:

“শ্রীমদ্ভাগবত বিড়ু এবং সর্বাশ্রয় । শ্রীমদ্ভাগবতের মতবাদ উদার ও অসাম্প্রদায়িক । শ্রীমদ্ভাগবতকে সঙ্কীর্ণ পেটির মধ্যে আবদ্ধ করে রাখা উচিত হবে না । শ্রীমন্ মহাপ্রভুই শ্রীমদ্ভাগবতের ধারক ও বাহক । ব্রজের নিগূঢ় প্রেম বিতরণ করাই ছিল মহাপ্রভুর উদ্দেশ্য । শ্রীমন্ মহাপ্রভুর প্রদর্শিত পথে ষড় গোস্বামীদের অনুসরণ করে শ্রীকৃষ্ণ ভজন করাই আমাদের অভীষ্ট”

“Śrīmad Bhāgavata is universal and everyone’s shelter. Śrīmad Bhāgavata’s philosophy is liberal and non-sectarian. It is improper to lock Śrīmad Bhāgavata up in a narrow box. Śrīman Mahāprabhu is the carrier and container of Śrīmad Bhāgavata. Mahāprabhu’s intention was to distribute the confidential love of (Kṛṣṇa in) Vraja. Our main purpose is to worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa by following the footsteps of six Gosvāmīs with adherence to the path demonstrated by Śrīman Mahāprabhu.”

How we can proceed into the kingdom of *sāadhanā*, holding our *Guru-rūpa sakhi*⁵² by the hand, Bābā quoted the example of Śrīnivāsācārya Prabhu and his disciple Rāmacandra Kavirāja. The disciple sat down to perform *sāadhanā* to find out why Śrīnivāsācārya’s *samādhi* was not breaking. When absorbed in meditation he understood why Śrī Gurudeva’s *samādhi* was not breaking and thus he/she assisted Śrī Gurudeva. In this way they both met to serve Śrī Rādhikā and thus give Her loving pleasure. In this way Śrī Gurudeva and his disciple assisted each other in *kuñja*-service in *svarūpāveśa*.⁵³

Bābā wanted to show the importance of *niṣṭhā* (fixation and loyalty) in the life of the *sādhaka* by saying:

“নিষ্ঠা সাধকের জীবনের একটি উল্লেখযোগ্য বৈশিষ্ট্য । শ্রীভগবানের বিচিত্র রূপের প্রতি সাধকের শ্রদ্ধা থাকলেও একমাত্র নিজের অভীষ্টের প্রতিই তাঁর সর্বাধিক নিষ্ঠা থাকে”

“In the life of a *sādhaka*, *niṣṭhā* is a noteworthy speciality. Though the *sādhaka* has faith in all the various forms of the Lord, he is most of all fixed in that of his own chosen deity.” In this regard he told the story of Bilvamangala.

Because we are always surrounded by our mundane relatives in our material lives we forget about our relatives in the spiritual world. Indicating the difference between them, Śrī Gurudeva said:

“জাগতিক জীবনের আত্মীয়স্বজনদের সঙ্গে আমাদের সম্পর্ক স্বার্থের । এই সম্পর্ক মৃত্যুর পূর্বকাল পর্যন্ত বর্তমান থাকে । মৃত্যুর পর শ্মশানে শরীরটি ভস্মীভূত করার পর আর কোন সম্পর্ক থাকে না । আর আমাদের প্রিয়জন বিয়োগ জনিত য দুঃখ

⁵¹ The verse is found in Caitanya Caritamṛta Madhya 1,269-270 in a slightly different reading but with the same purport.

⁵² Śrī Gurudeva’s eternal female form as a maidservant of Smt. Rādhārāṇī.

⁵³ Absorption in one’s eternal spiritual identity.

তা ও বেশী দিন স্থায়ী থাকে না । এই দেহটি শ্মশানে তুলে দেওয়ার পর আমাদের সহায় আর কিছু থাকে না - শুধুমাত্র কর্মফল ছাড়া । কর্মফল অনুযায়ীই আমরা ইষ্টকৃপা লাভ করি । মৃত্যুর পর এই পরম আত্মীয়ের কৃপা লাভ করার জন্যই আমাদের সাধন ভজন । সাধন ভজনের মাধ্যমে ইষ্টদেবতার সঙ্গে আমাদের সম্পর্ক গড়ে ওঠে । এই সম্পর্ক এত ঘনিষ্ঠ যে ইষ্টবিরহে সাধক নিরন্তর অশ্রু বিসর্জন করেন । এর প্রমাণ আমরা দেখেছি শ্রীমন্ মহাপ্রভুর জীবনে । শ্রীমন্ মহাপ্রভু পুরীধামে যখন গরুড়ের স্তম্ভ থেকে জগন্নাথদেবকে দর্শন করতেন তখন নিরন্তর তাঁর চোখ দিয়ে অশ্রু নির্গত হতো । এই অশ্রুজলে ঐ স্তম্ভের নীচে অবস্থিত একটি খাল পূর্ণ হয়ে গিয়েছিল । চোখের জলের মাধ্যমেই তাঁর সেবা যথার্থরূপে করা যায় । অনেক নাম জপ করে যা না হয় দুফোঁটা চোখের জলে প্রভুর চরণটি সিক্ত করতে পারলে তাঁর অধিক কৃপা লাভ করা যায়” ।

“Our connection with our relatives in this worldly life is selfish and will last only until our deaths. The connection is gone as soon as our bodies are burned to ashes in the cemetery, and the sorrow of separation from our departed loved ones does not last long either. No one and nothing can help us after our bodies are carried off to the cemetery — all that remains is the results of our previous activities (*karma*). It is according to our activities that we may get the mercy of the Lord, and we practice *sādhana bhajana* to receive the mercy of our Supreme Relative after death. We create a connection with our beloved deity through our *sādhana bhajana*. This connection becomes so close that the *sādhaka* constantly sheds tears of love in separation from his beloved deity. We see the evidence for that in the life of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. When He had *darśana* of Lord Jagannātha from behind Garuḍa's column in the Jagannātha temple in Puri, tears constantly streamed from His eyes, and filled a drain below the pillar. Devotional service is fulfilled through such tears. What may not be accomplished even by chanting many rounds, can be accomplished by sprinkling some tears of divine love on the lotusfeet of the Lord. If one can do that one can achieve greater mercy.”

Our aim is to establish a connection with our our beloved Lord. To define the situation of the *sādhaka* once this connection is established, Bābā continued:

“ইষ্টদেবের সঙ্গে যথার্থ সম্পর্ক গড়ে উঠলে বাহ্যিক সমস্ত আচরণ লোপে পেয়ে যায় । তখন আর দেহাবেশ থাকে না । এই দেহ দিয়ে তাঁর স্মরণ ছাড়া আর কিছু করা যায় না । পরিপূর্ণ দেহাবেশ নিয়ে তাঁর চরণে পৌঁছান যায় না । ভজন সাধনের মাধ্যমে সিদ্ধ দেহ লাভ হলে সেই দেহে তাঁর চিন্তা করা যায় । এই অবস্থায় সাধকের জীবন ধারণ করা বা না করা একই কথা । যখন ইচ্ছা হয় তখনই স্থূলদেহ ত্যাগ করে নিত্যলীলায় চলে যায় ।”

“Once a real connection is established with the beloved deity all external behavior vanishes, along with bodily consciousness — nothing else is done anymore with this body other than remembering Him. His lotusfeet cannot be reached in full bodily consciousness. Through *bhajana sādhana* the perfect (spiritual) body is attained — for this one needs to think of that body. In that condition it is the same to the *sādhaka* whether he lives or dies. He can leave the gross body whenever he wants it and enter into the Lord's eternal pastimes.”

Before He entered into the Lord's eternal pastimes, Bābā revealed the true identity of truth behind death. If anyone would say ‘my Gurudeva has died’, Bābā would ask him: “তোমার কাছেও কি তিনি মৃত?” “Is he really dead to you?” He also said:

“সাধকের কাছে শ্রীগুরুদেব কখনও মারা যান না - যদি তিনি মারা যান তবে সাধকের আর কিছুই থাকে না । জীবিত অবস্থায় তিনি প্রত্যক্ষ প্রকটলীলা করেন আর দেহাবসানে অপ্রত্যক্ষ অপ্রকট লীলা করেন । সাধকের কাছে দুটি লীলায় সমান । তিনি তাঁর সাধন বলে অপ্রকট লীলাকেও প্রকট লীলার মত দর্শন করবেন - অন্য এর কিছুই বুঝতে পারবে না” ।

“For the *sādhaka* Śrī Gurudeva never dies — if He would die there would be nothing left for the *sādhaka*. During His life He performs His manifest pastimes and after He leaves His body He performs His unmanifest pastimes. For the *sādhaka* these two kinds of pastimes

are the same. On the strength of his *sādhana* he sees the unmanifest pastimes just like the manifest pastimes — he cannot understand anything else.”

He reminded us:

“মৃত্যু মানে একটা পর্দার আড়াল । পর্দাটা সরিয়ে দিলেই আবার দেখা যাবে । সৃষ্টিদেহে সবকিছু দেখা যায় - সর্বত্র বিচরণ করা যায় - স্থলদেহে তা সম্ভব হয় না । সাধকের কাছে মৃত্যুটা অতি তুচ্ছ ব্যাপার । এ দেহেরে প্রয়োজন মিটে গেলে দেহ রাখা না রাখা তাঁদের কাছে একই কথা”

“Death means moving behind a curtain. If you shove away the curtain you will be seen again. In the subtle body you can see everything and move everywhere — this is not possible in the gross body. For a *sādhaka* death is a very insignificant affair. When there is no more use of the body it does not matter anymore whether you keep it or not.”

One devotee asked: “Sometimes we see *sadhus* weep when someone dies. Why is this then?” Bābā answered:

“কেহ মারা গেলে সাধুরা যে কাঁদে সেটা তার প্রতি মায়াবশত নয় । তাঁদের কান্না আসে এই চিন্তা করে যে, একটা জীবন মাযার দাসত্ব করে চলে গেল, ভগবৎ উপলব্ধি হলো না”

“If the *sadhus* weep because someone has died it is not because they are subdued by *māyā*. When they weep they think this person has wasted his life as a slave of *māyā* and could not attain the Lord.”

Drawing the discussion towards his private life, Bābā said:

“হাসি মুখে মরতে পারবো বলেই সংসার করি নাই । তোমরাও আমাকে হাসি মুখে বিদায় দেবে - তবেই তো আমি সুখী হবো । তোমাদের চোখে মাযার জগতের লোকেদের মত জল আসবে কেন? বরং তোমরা চেষ্টা করবে আমার আদর্শ তুলে ধরতে”

“I did not marry, so I can die with a smile on My face — you must also take My leave with a smile on your face — then I will be happy. Why need you shed tears like people from this illusory world? Rather, you should try to follow My example.”

He told his servants that lived in the *ashram*:

“জগতের লোক তোমাদের কাছে আসবে বিভিন্ন সমস্যা নিয়ে । তারা যদি তোমাদের চোখে জল দেখে তাহলে তারা কোথায় যাবে? তোমরা হাসিমুখে তাদের সমস্যার সমাধান করার চেষ্টা করবে”

“The people of the world will come to you with their various problems. If they see tears in our eyes, then where else can they go? Try to solve all their problems with a smile on your face.”

Bābā explained very clearly that ‘I’ and ‘this gross body’ are not one and the same. If someone asked Him ‘How are You?’ he would say ‘I am fine’ and if someone said: “I heard You are sick” He would reply:

“দেখুন, কোথায় অসুখ আছে? অসুখটা দেহের - আমার নয় । আমি সর্বদাই সুস্থ আছি, আনন্দে আছি । আর এই যে অসুখটা এটা স্থলদেহের । দেহের ধর্ম তো দেহ করবেই - তার উপর আমার কোন কর্তৃত্ব নাই”

“Look, where is My disease? The disease is in the body, not in Me — I am always healthy and blissful. The disease is only in the gross body, which will act according to its own laws — I have no influence in that.”

Bābā was totally averse to preaching. The forest flower got wilted right in the forest where it bloomed. Baba withdrew from the sight of the modern preaching media and went far away into the jungle to absorb Himself in Madangopal's service. Still, just as one can not hide the aroma of a blooming flower, Bābā's glories manifest themselves to sensitive devotees. Even though they wanted to take Him to pompous religious festivals He would never agree to join. Once the devotees wanted to celebrate His birthday, but Bābā told them:

“আমার জন্মদিন নাই - কারণ আমি জন্মহীন । আমি অনাদি, অনন্ত, অসীম - অতএব আমি জন্ম, মৃত্যু, জরা, ব্যাধি অতীত । তাই আমার জন্মদিন প্রতিপালন করা মানে আমাকে অবমানন করা”

“I have no birthday because I am free from birth. I am without beginning, without end and without borders — hence I am beyond birth, death, old age and disease. Hence observing My birthday would be an insult to Me.”

In this way He gave up the narrow circle of ‘the small me’ and revealed the identity of ‘the huge me’.

The above words do not just show Bābā's spiritual wisdom, it evolved out of His life's experience, so if it emanates from Bābā's sacred mouth it gets a fresh (deeper) meaning. Bābā Himself was the embodiment of these sacred words (*vāñī pratimūrṭi*). Blessed we are that we were so fortunate to see with our own eyes such a *sādhaka*, absorbed in meditation on His beloved Lord, in such a mature state.

About four months before He entered the eternal pastimes of the Lord, Bābā once sat on the veranda in front of His hut. It was the 8th of June, 1986. In front of Him sat bhaktas like Nirañjan Jyetha Mahāśaya⁵⁴, Kṛṣṇā-Di, Bābul-Dā, Nimāi-Dā, Gaur-Dā, Cintāharan-Dā, Viśvanāth-Dā, Nārān-Dā, Mihir-Dā, Tulasī-Di, Yugal-Di and Gītā-Di. Nirañjan Jyetha Mahāśaya asked Bābā: “What will happen to the ashram after You are gone? We were all on father's lap — how can we survive without father? And why should we call Madangopal ‘the compassionate Supreme Lord’?” To this Bābā replied:

“না বাবা, তিনি সব সময়ই করুণাময় । আমাদের সুখের সময় তাঁকে করুণাময় বলা আর দুঃখের সময় না বলাটা স্বার্থপরতা । স্বার্থপর হলে তাঁকে পাওয়া যায় না”

“No Bābā, He is always compassionate. To call Him compassionate when we are happy and not to call Him compassionate when we are unhappy is simply selfishness, and He cannot be attained by being selfish.” Bābā continued:

“আশ্রম যেমন ভাবে চলছে তেমনি ভাবেই চলবে যদি আশ্রমবাসীরা নিজেদেরকে তৈরী করতে পারে । আর তা না হলে এখানে ভাড়াটেরা এসে বসবে । এ আশ্রমের স্বতন্ত্র কোন পরিচয় নাই - সাধুবাবার আশ্রম ছাড়া । এখানে যারা থাকবে তারা সবাই হবে সাধু । তারা হবে শক্তমনের অধিকারী । তাদের চোখে কোন সময় মায়ার জগতের দুঃখকষ্টে জল আসবে না । যেমন দেখ তোমাদের নমিতা । বাবার বিয়োগের পরও এক ফোঁটা জল ফেলে নি । এই রকম স্থির থাকতে হবে । বাইরে থেকে হাজার হাজার লোক আসবে বিভিন্ন রকম দুঃখ নিয়ে । আশ্রমবাসীদের দেখে তারা যেন দুঃখ লাঘব করতে পারে । এই হবে এদের আদর্শ”

“The ashram should be run as it is run now, if the residents of the ashram can prepare themselves for that. If not, then folk will come here simply to rent space. There is no other identity to this ashram than Sādhu Bābā's Ashram. Whoever will live here will be a sadhu, qualified for strong minds. Tears from this illusory world should never appear in their eyes, like you see here your Namitā — even after she heard her father had deceased she did not shed one teardrop. One needs to be that steady. Thousands and thousands of people will come from outside with different types of problems — they should be able to relieve their problems by seeing the residents of the Ashram. This type of example they must give.”

After speaking like this non-stop for a long time, Bābā consoled everyone by saying:

“আমি চলে গেলেও আমার আদর্শ মেনে চললে কোন অসুবিধা হবে না । আমার সন্তানদের জন্য তিল তিল করে এ দেহ বিলিয়ে দিয়েছি । এখন এরা খুব সহজে যে জিনিষ পাচ্ছে পরে তা লাভ করার জন্য কঠোর সাধনা করতে হবে । দাঁত থাকতে কেহ দাঁতের মর্যাদা বোঝে না । এদের মানুষ হওয়ার জন্য আমার চলে যাওয়া দরকার”

⁵⁴ The father of Krishna Di, who lived in Prachin Mayapur. He was a devotee who knew shastra well. He is deceased meanwhile.

“Even after I am gone there will be no problem for you as long as you follow My example. To My children⁵⁵ I have sacrificed Myself (given Myself away) little by little. Now they can easily get that which they will have to perform harsh practices for later. No one understands the value of teeth as long as they have teeth. It is necessary for Me to leave this body for their own growth.”

He furthermore said in this regard:

“জগতের বিষ গ্রহণ করার জন্য সীতানাথের আবির্ভাব । সেই কাজ করেই সে চলে যায় । আবার জগৎ যখন বিষ ভরে জর্জরিত হবে তখন তোমরা তোমাদের সাধনা দ্বারা তাঁকে নিয়ে আসবে । এজন্য প্রয়োজন হবে কঠোর তপস্যার”

“Prabhu Sītānātha appears in this world to take its poison⁵⁶, and after completing that task He goes again. Again when the world is afflicted by the weight of the poison you will bring (invoke) Him again through your *sādhana*. For this severe austerities are required.”

In the morning of the 10th of June, 1986, Bābā sat on the veranda in front of His *kuṭir*, surrounded by some devotees who fanned Him with hand-fans. Just then a dove was calling in the distance. He pointed everyone's attention to it, saying:

“এরকম ডাক গিরিরাজ পরিক্রমার সময় পুছরির কাছে ফাঁকা আখক্ষিত থেকে শোনা যায়”

“Such songs can be heard on the Girirāja Parikramā close to Puchari on the open sugarcane fields.” Then, when He heard another bird sing, He said:

“ওটি রাধাকুণ্ডের পাশে ভজনস্থলীর কাছে অবস্থিত একটি বৃক্ষ থেকে ভেসে আসে”

“This comes straight from a tree near the *bhajan*-place next to Rādhākunḍa.”

In this connection Bābā said:

“এই শরীর দিয়ে গিরিরাজ পরিক্রমা করা সম্ভব না হলে গিরিরাজ কি কৃপা করবেন না? একবার মনে মনেই পরিক্রমা করে এলাম”

“Will Girirāja not bestow His mercy if it is not possible to physically do Girirāja *Parikramā*? Once I came there to do *parikramā* mentally.”

Then He gradually reminisced the sights He had seen on His pilgrimages like Govindaji Mandir in Jaypur, the natural beauty of Galtaji⁵⁷ as well as the beautiful sight of Puskar Tīrtha. Of the two mountains flanking Galtaji He said:

“ওখানে যারা সাধনা করে তারা কত নিভীক । নিভীক না হলে ওসব জায়গায় গিয়ে তপস্যা করা যায় না । হরিদ্বারের নিকটবর্তী পাহাড়ে যখন অবস্থান করতাম তখনও ঐরকম নির্জন পরিবেশ বিরাজ করত । এইসব জায়গাতেই ভগবৎ উপলব্ধি হয়”

“Those who do *sādhana* there are really dauntless, otherwise they would never perform austerities at such a place. When I was staying on the mountain near Haridvāra there was also such a solitary surrounding. It is in such places that you can realize the Lord.”

Through the abovementioned discussion we were able to perceive the external manifestation of one of the *sādhaka*'s state of *svarūpa*.

On 17th June, 1986 the discussion was about the temporary nature of life. Bābā said:

“আমাদের জীবনে তিনটে কাল আছে - শৈশব, যৌবন, বার্দ্ধক্য । যৌবন খুবই ক্ষণস্থায়ী । এই ক্ষণস্থায়ী যৌবনকে ধরে রাখার জন্যই সাধনা । কাল তার অমোঘ নিয়মে চলেবে । কলির প্রভাব মুক্ত হওয়া একপ্রকার অসম্ভব । কলির প্রভাবেই দেহে এক সময় বার্দ্ধক্য নেমে আসবে”

⁵⁵ Disciples.

⁵⁶ Just as Lord Shiva drank the poison from the milk ocean, Lord Advaita, who is Lord Shiva incarnate, took the poison of material life out of the peoples' lives during the manifest pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Ed.

⁵⁷ Galta is in Rajasthan, a waterfall on a mountain close to Jaypur.

“In our lives there are three phases of time — childhood, youth and old age. Youth is very brief. *Sāadhanā* is meant to keep the youth which is so transitory, which lasts for a short time. Time will flow unfailingly (with its infallible rule/unfailing nature). It is almost impossible to get rid of the influence of Kali. Due to the force of Kali old age will descend into the body at one time.”

On 18th June, 1986, Bābā discussed the following:

“বেশী নাম ছোট ভাল নয় । নাম প্রচার হলেই পিছনে শত্রু লাগবে । যেমন সক্রিটসের হয়েছিল । সেজন্য অপ্রচারিত থাকা ভাল । শত্রুরা বিষপ্রয়োগ ও অন্যবিধ উপায় অবলম্বনও করতে পারে”

“It is not good to spill (spread) the Holy Name too much. After preaching the Holy Name enemies will come, as has happened with Socrates. Hence it is better not preached. Enemies may use poison and other types of ways.”

The topic of discussion then changed to the ability to leave one's body and then to re-enter it, and how this is a real fact. However, He said:

“তবে এ জিনিষ করার যোগ্যতা খুব অল্প লোকেরই আছে”

“There are very few people who are able to do this.”

22nd June, 1986. Seeing the heavy faces of the devotees, Bābā said:

“ওরা রোগীর সেবা করতে অভ্যস্ত । সাধুসেবার কি জানে? সাধুসেবা ও রোগীসেবা এক নয় । আমার মধ্যে যে ঝড় বইছে তার খবর কেউ জানে না । সে একমাত্র আমি জানি । আর আমার অন্তর্যামী জানে । তোমাদের যখন তা ঠেকাবার মত সাধন শক্তি নাই তখন আমাকে ভুগতে দাও । আমি তো সকলের প্রারন্ধ খণ্ডন করেছি । এখন আমাকে ভোগ করতে হবে না । আমি তো ইচ্ছা করলে এখনই দেহ ছেড়ে দিতে পারি । আমাদের দেহ ছাড়া না ছাড়া একই ব্যাপার । আমাদের কাছে “মরণ রে তুহু মম শ্যাম সমান” | যাতে আমি আনন্দের সঙ্গে লীলা সম্বরণ করতে পারি তার ব্যবস্থা করা প্রয়োজন । আমি যেন দেখে যেতে পারি গোপালের, গোপেশ্বরের সেবা ঠিকমত চলছে”

“They are practiced in nursing the sick — do they know how to serve a *sādhu*? Nursing the ill and serving the *sādhus* is not the same thing. No one knows what tempest is raging within My body — only I know it and My *antaryāmi*⁵⁸. When you do not have the power of austere practice (*sādhana śakti*) to stop that then let Me suffer. I have destroyed everyone's *karma* from their previous lives (*prārabdha karma*). Now isn't it my turn to suffer? I can leave my body right at this moment if I want. For us, either to keep the body or to leave it, it is the same. For us, death is the same as achieving Śyāmasundara - *marāṇa re tuhu mama śyāma samāna*". It is necessary to make arrangements for Me to blissfully end My pastimes now. I need to see that the service of Gopāla and Gopeśvara is going on nicely.”

26th June, 1986. Bābā resides inside His *kuṭīr*, surrounded by some devotees — Nirañjan Jyāthā Mahāśaya, Bābul-Dā and others. He discusses the following:

“সন্তদাস মহারাজ, ধনঞ্জয় মহারাজ ইত্যাদি সাধকের মৃত্যুর পর তাঁদের আশ্রম কি চলছে না? আমারও অপ্রকট হয়ে যাওয়ার পর তোমরা সমস্ত অনুষ্ঠান এই ভাবেই করবে - বরং এর থেকে বেশী করার চেষ্টা করবে । তবেই তো আমার আদর্শ বজায় থাকবে”

“Did not the *ashrams* of *sādhakas* like Santa Das Mahārāja, Dhananjay Mahārāja, etc. go well after their deaths? You should continue all our festivals also after I become unmanifest (expire) — better even you try to increase them. Then My example will remain intact.”

To this, Bābul-Dā asked: “We might increase the festivals fourfold even, but along with this you see so much infighting and litigation arising in different ashrams.”

⁵⁸ Antaryāmi – God within everyone's heart, witnessing everyone, the 'Inner Administrator'.

To this Bābā answered:

“তোমরা নিষ্কপট হলে তা কোনদিন হতে পারে না । আমার এই আশ্রমের মাধুর্য কোনদিন নষ্ট হবে না । ঐশ্বর্য এখানে প্রবেশ করতে পারবে না । তোমাদিগকে আদর্শের প্রতি অবিচল থাকতে হবে । আমি তো বলেছি প্রয়োজন হলে এই আশ্রমের চতুর্দিকে উঁচু প্রাচীর দিয়ে ঘিরে তার মধ্যে অবস্থান করবে । বাইরের সঙ্গে কোন সংশ্রব রাখবে না । শুধুমাত্র গঙ্গা জল, তুলসীপত্র দিয়ে মদনগোপালের পূজা করে তাই পেয়ে দিন কাটাবে । সম্পূর্ণ তাঁর উপর নির্ভর করে চলবে । বাইরের কাহারও কোন সাহায্যের অপেক্ষা রাখবে না । বিষয়ীর অন্ন কদাচ গ্রহণ করবে না । তোমাদের মদনগোপালের উপর অবিচল নিষ্ঠা থাকলে কখনও অসুবিধায় পরতে হবে না”

“This can never happen if you are all honest and sincere. The sweetness of My Ashram will never perish — luxury (*aiśvarya*) will never enter here. You must remain fixed in that example. I am telling you — if necessary you stay in this ashram by surrounding it with high walls all around, not associating with any outsiders at all. Simply offer Ganges-water and Tulasī-leaves to Madangopāl, consume that and spend your days like that, fully depending on Him. Don't depend on the help of any outsider and never eat food-grains from the materialistic enjoyers. If you are fixed in Madangopāl without wavering you will never have any trouble.”

In the evening of the 5th July, 1986, Bābā sits on the veranda in front of His *kuṭīr*. Nārān-Dā and Gaur-Dā sit in front of Him, serving His feet, and some others of us stand around Him. The discussion turns to tantric practice. Bābā indicates from whom and through whom these things are being done. Then He says:

“আমি থাকতে থাকতে তোমরা মানুষ চিনে নাও | সকলকে একেবারে মাথার উপর তুল না | নিজের গোপনীয় কথা সকলের কাছে প্রকাশ করো না । তাহলে বিপদের আশঙ্কা আছে”

“Beware of people as long as I am alive. Do not carry just everyone on your head (don't just trust everyone). Do not reveal your secrets to everyone, or you will live in fear of disaster.”

Nārān-Dā asked: “Bābā, how can we combat *tantra*?”

Bābā replied:

“মন্ত্রশক্তির দ্বারাই তন্ত্রকে পরাস্ত করা যায় । নিয়মিতভাবে ১০০৮ বার করে একাসনে বসে মূলমন্ত্র জপ করতে পারলেই যথেষ্ট”

“*Tantra* is defeated by the power of *mantra*. It is sufficient to sit on an *Āsan* and do *japa* of the *mūla-mantra*⁵⁹ 1,008 times in one session, as a rule.”

The only protection against this, either at home or outside, is uninterrupted *sādhanā*. In the course of the discussion this matter was revealed.

Sunday 20th July, 1986 — three months before entering into the Lord's eternal pastimes, Śrī-Śrī Bābā sat on the veranda in front of His *kuṭīra* in the morning, discussing various topics, reminiscing His past. He narrated two stories of how He showed His physical prowess in His youth, how He practiced *yoga* through breathing exercises, and how He became detached from life after His mother and father passed away. He narrated how attempts were made on His life and how such attempts all failed, in what condition His *puruṣāṅga*⁶⁰ ended up due to yogik practice and how it was restored to its natural condition through an operation. He then changed the subject and said:

⁵⁹ 18-syllable Gopāl mantra [10-syllables for Brahmins]

⁶⁰ Puruṣāṅga – male organ. Due to Bābā's breathing exercises His organ had withdrawn into His underbelly, which caused problems in urinating. It was cured through an operation.

“আগে সঙ্গীতের প্রতি বিশেষ ঝোঁক ছিল । হরিদাস স্বামীজির আশ্রম থেকে একজন বড় সঙ্গীতজ্ঞ এসেছিলেন বৃন্দাবনে - আমাদের আশ্রমে । তিনি এসে আমাকে বুকে জড়িয়ে ধরে কত আনন্দ প্রকাশ করলেন । তাঁদের আশীর্বাদই আমাকে এপথে সাফল্য এনে দিয়েছে । ভারতবর্ষে এমন কোন যন্ত্র নাই যা আমি আলাপ করতে পারি না । বিখ্যাত বাদ্যকার পার্বতী কর ছিলেন আমার বীণার গুরু । জীবনটা সঙ্গীতের সাধনা করেই কাটাতে - এই ইচ্ছা ছিল”

“I used to have a special inclination towards music. A great musician came to our ashram in Vṛndāvana from Haridas Swamiji's Ashram. He showed so much happiness embracing Me to his chest — by his blessings I have become successful in this (musical) path — now there is no musical instrument in India that I cannot play. The famous musician Pārbatī Kar was My Vīṇā-Guru — I had a desire to spend My whole life making music.”

His love of music was fulfilled when He attained the relish of the flute-sound of Śrī Vṛndāvana's youthful Cupid, Muralīdhārī.

After discussing all this Bābā withdrew for a few days, absorbed in meditation on His beloved Lord. After that, in the beginning of Niyam Sebā⁶¹ He took leave of this uncertain world and headed for the world of the gods, keeping His extraordinary life and priceless teachings here for his children (disciples).

In this way Śrī-Śrī Bābā showed the *sādhakas* the way to go through His extraordinary life and priceless teachings. Those lucky persons who saw Him personally and managed to receive His mercy are blessed, and even those who attained His mercy in various other ways are blessed. Today, as Kali is ruling all over with his full vigour (youthful vigour), at the same time Bābā is protecting everyone by stretching his fearless hands, speaking this *abhaya-vāṇī* (words of fearlessness) which are like a nectar of revival — “এই আশ্রমের ত্রিসীমানার মধ্যে কলি প্রবেশ করতে পারে না” “Kali will not be able to enter the boundaries of this *ashram*”. Whenever we have the opportunity in our busy lives to stop and think we can experience that Sādhu Bābā of Rāmacandrapura accomplishes the spiritual welfare of His children even today, telling travellers who have lost the way:

“পথিক তুমি পথ হারিয়েছ? এসো এই পথে”

“Oh traveller, you lost the way? Come on this path!”

Thus ends Satinath Dutta's 'Sadhu Baba of Ramacandrapur'

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⁶¹ Holy month of Kartik (October-November), in which vows (*niyam*) are taken.