

DRAFT – 14.04.2019

Review of
Sri Sri Thakur in my Life
By Panchanan Sarkar

Reviewed and translated from original Bengali
By
Dr. Debesh C. Patra

(This covers only part of book 'Aamaar Jibane Sri Sri Thakur'
in Bengali, as published by Shri Ritesh Nandan Sarkar, in
2011.)

Review of Sri Sri Thakur in my Life – by Panchanan Sarkar

The title bears a personal and intimate tone. It speaks volumes about the relationship Sri Sri Thakur, the Master, used to have with his followers. No doubt that He was the world teacher, the universal Master and the Guide for the whole humanity. His guidance was not impersonal; though multitudinous. Under the umbrella of Sri Sri Thakur's guidance for the humanity, the man was not lost. He guided each one as per one's distinctive need. Let us not mistake that Panchanan Sarkar was a privileged disciple of Sri Sri Thakur; or the only one to get Sri Sri Thakur's exclusive attention. Amongst numerous followers and associates, that Panchanan Sarkar's exclusiveness was not at all breached is a point to take note of. Each life is unique, has its own value and needs to be guided in an exclusive way. Each man is endowed with autonomy, which can be compromised, only at the cost of his growth. That autonomy does not clash with the supremacy of the Creator, as the Creator is benevolent when he is incarnate. He only fulfils; never dictates.

The title also denotes a limitation, limitation of the content. The book is not supposed to be a life story of Sri Sri Thakur, though it speaks volumes about Sri Sri Thakur's ways of dealing with man. As an incarnate of God, the eighty one year life-play of Sri Sri Thakur was a period of demonstration. The disciples or the associates who were privileged to be around the incarnate were the tools or samples of demonstration, as they were. Many significant events and developments did indeed take place in the life of all the associates of Sri Sri Thakur. Life story of each associate is an invaluable lesson for the posterity, as each life has undergone a thorough process of transformation, coming under the influence of Sri Sri Thakur. Each life story carries an indelible imprint of Sri Sri Thakur. At the same time, no life story gives a complete picture of Sri Sri Thakur. What happened with Panchanan Sarkar was only a demonstration of Sri Sri Thakur's play on the earth, which was conditioned by Panchanan Sarkar, the person and the situation in which the whole process played out. Same thing can perhaps be said with respect to innumerable lives which Sri Sri Thakur's divinity got reflected upon. Many stories have been lost, as these have not been captured. Whatever has been captured is a miniscule fraction of what all happened and what was felt. Sri Sri Thakur was infinite in finite form. He was ever dynamic and His influence was too infinitesimal to capture and too expansive to comprehend. That

is one of the reasons, perhaps, as to why none of the close associates of Sri Sri Thakur ever attempted to document His biography. They felt, as if, it is too much to capture Sri Sri Thakur's multi-dimensional activities in the dimensions of time and space ever known to human being. Instead of writing biography, some of the close associates have documented what they saw in Sri Sri Thakur and what process they went through. It is more of a process of recounting of experiences than putting across a chronological events and activities in the nature of a biography. These are jumbles of glimpses and glances of obliged souls, saga of devotion and dedication. Together these volumes of literature record story lines of a revolution at its inception and formative stage.

Panchanan Sarkar writes the following in the introductory chapter of the book, 'Sri Sri Thakur in my life'.

Prelude

Can the 'I' of a man undergo a change?

One school holds the view, no, 'I' can never change. Man essentially remains the same as he was born. A man can hardly become another man, notwithstanding the progression or degradation that might happen to him. Any external influence cannot alter a man, as the environmental impulse is received and absorbed by a man as per his own original possibilities. The originality of man remains unaltered, notwithstanding the fact that the originality inherently carries endless possibilities.

The contrary view also holds ground to the extent that 'self' of a person can never remain static. A man, propelled by the law of nature, is either moving upward or declining downward. No one can draw a limit to one's achievement. Wise people are, therefore, in constant endeavor to extend their domain of achievement, by knowing the unknown and doing the undone. This urge to grow does not stop, even when mind cease to operate. Man continues to strive with a hope that his self can be transformed, to whatever degree possible and by whichever means. A piece of iron gets transformed into a magnet by coming in contact with a magnet. Though the iron piece does not undergo any physical alteration, the atomic properties of the iron does undergo a change. It is a fundamental change, the like of which does take place for human being as it happened to sage Markandeya. The 'self' of a man is a composition of his habits and instincts, thought and action and so on. If these basic features can undergo metamorphosis, then man attains a new life during the same span.

Panchanan Sarkar writes:

Those in Satsang ashram saw me from the beginning, they, including mother Manamohini Devi, started to form the view that today's Panchanan da was not the same Panchanan da. In those early days, the same people, having seen my dealings and behavior, thought it prudent to avoid my company. All of a sudden,

as I recollected my long forsaken past 'self', I wondered as to what happened to that 'self', which was verily mine and that I did not find any longer. Was that 'self' got lost?

After a long gap as I beheld myself,
Looked for my 'self' that was acquainted with me!
Whom I knew as my own for all these days,
How do I console, that has gone away from me?

What is that magic, who knows, how it is lost?
Whose love? as my mind fails to explore!
Who pulled down the steps on my life's edge?
Which I laid with strenuous labor.

I don't know who brought in the ray that shines?
With music so dear to my mind's ear!
Who gave me back my life, as it beats,
Shorn of my 'self', yet full with vigor.

What was that magnet in my life? Whose association did make this impossible transformation a reality? My inner being prompted to say that it was something to be realized; could hardly be explained. But an irresistible urge to speak out by whatever means came from within. I failed hundred times to express and then felt feeble out of frustration. I then accepted my defeat and attempted to tell that which was possible for me. I found no fault in my unsuccessful bid to express as long as I told about Sri Sri Thakur's role in my life.

That was my initial period of staying in Ashram. I volunteered myself to guide a young visitor to ashram. I took him around and helped him to see all the places. I observed to my dismay that nothing could generate curiosity in him. At last he got elated when he spotted a few monkeys in the cage and a dog sleeping on the verandah of 'vishwa vigyan kendra'. In those days, this much was enough to get me worked up. When I saw the visitor off outside the ashram area, I roughed up his both the ears and gave him a lesson for his improper sensitivity. The young man went out unruffled, leaving me behind in a state of remorse. I realized my inappropriate conduct and I submitted the whole affair at Sri Sri Thakur, to clear my sense of guilt.

Sri Sri Thakur gave a grave hearing and said with a mild smile, "nothing much. Only one more nemesis got created and remained in store. That's all."

"What does that mean"? Asked Panchanan.

"You mauled up his ear when you got him alone in your area. It did not occur to you that he would share it amongst his friends and would help to spread it around; though he could not resist here", said Sri Sri Thakur

Sri Sri Thakur paused for a while and resumed in a painful voice. "This incident took its own motion and your vision failed to pursue it. Is it right?"

I was speechless. Sri Sri Thakur kept on saying, "Eighteen years after the event, you are a renowned sage, leading a procession on the 'Baangaalitola' lane in Kashi. At once, from a hidden quarter, a heavy stick hit your head. What a strange misfortune to a saint like you! How did it happen, when you can hardly get a view of an enemy in hindsight, as much back as you could reflect upon? Is it not correct Panchanan da?"

My eyes were unfurled to the view that whatever event taking place all over the world is getting imprint on the mysterious bosom of time. If something happened, it got stored, who can erase that? If I have caused something to happen, its exact picture got recorded with Chitragupta. There is hardly any certainty, as to how much of that exactness can be observed by a person in the light of his glimpse and how much depth into the arena of causality a person can penetrate with his knowledge. The lack of awareness is the cause of all problems and that gives rise to the chaos of illusion and misunderstanding.

What then is truth? What is the yardstick to measure truth and falsehood? While narrating the role of Sri Sri Thakur in my life, I will unveil the mystery of truth to a limited extent. Let me present a prelude to that based on my own understanding.

The truth is never complete, ever relative; yet it is continuously fulfilling and nurturing. This realization, born out of my experience, has pushed me ahead all along in my life. Moreover, the dynamic image of 'truth' is something that can be expressed in words and there lies the charm and taste, if any. Otherwise, I am yet to come across the truth, which is known to be eternal, everlasting, unchangeable and absolute. I could never know the last word about Sri Sri Thakur. That is why Sri Sri Thakur, the simple and humble man, all along appeared new, more beautiful, more charming and more complete before me.

I am infinitesimally small. I was passing through a severe crisis when I came across him. Then it has been a saga of endless discoveries, indescribable ecstasy and at the same time there have been excruciating pain and excessive burning. Every obstacle has invited new creation and fresh achievement. And loss, if any, has also occurred through this cruel process. This is the only way, unique for each of achievement for person of low substance.

This story of 'acquisition through union' is worth expressing, to the extent possible by me and subject to limitation of language. Let me see, what comes out through the unending and marvelous grace of the all-merciful Lord.

Pre-initiation Period

It is now known in Satsang movement that Panchanan Sarkar was a great associate of Sri Sri Thakur. His intimacy with Sri Sri Thakur was preceded by events, which were remarkably significant on two counts. One, the events unfolded to a great degree of clarity that Sri Sri Thakur was the prophet, incarnated for that era in line with the well-known prophets like Lord Rama, Lord Krishna and so on. Second, the event as recorded was the journey of a soul towards its destined ultimatum. The journey as described was simply a saga of ordeal, very commonly experienced by many a devotee. It can be generalized with a large degree of accuracy that journey to divinity is not a pleasure trip. Rather it can be likened to climbing Mount Everest. It is ultimately rewarding in the sense that the journey provides experience of becoming, progressing, evolving and getting refined.

The dominant features outlining Panchanan Sarkar were those of a scholar with a strong conviction of a rational mind. He was argumentative and experimental in approach to new things. It appears from whatever little account is available, from his early days in life; he was inquisitive in mind and non-conformist in approach. His was not a planned and organized career. Born in 1896 in village Habibpur, district Barissal in Bangladesh, he came to Calcutta for higher education. He secured a post graduate degree in Mental and Moral Philosophy from Calcutta University as a non-collegiate student in 1918. For some time, he was a lecturer in Bagerhat College in Khulna. Towards the later part of 1924, he came to Calcutta and joined in Daily Basumati as night editor. During that period, he was conducting coaching classes in daytime. Besides these scholarly and journalistic engagements, he was also a poet and singer.

With the wealth of qualities as possessed by Panchanan Sarkar, one presumes that he was a non-conformist by nature. Therefore, perhaps, he failed to lead a normal life, like anybody else in the society. With ups and down in life, his inquisitive mind made him restless. He was in constant search for a Guide. The traditional faith and religious sentiment attracted him to one or two saints. His brother was also with him in this inquisitive venture. His brother was very religious minded and he loved the company of pious souls. The difference that Panchanan Sarkar appeared to have from his brother is that his brother's faith was more traditional and less exposed to experimentation. Panchanan Sarkar did not accept anything without disbelief and he did not reject any thing out of disbelief.

The story of Panchanan Sarkar's life as narrated by him in this book is essentially a saga of transformation of basic elements of a human being which enabled him to transcend his limitations. In the process of transformation, Panchanan Sarkar passed through concurrent phases of acute realization, which he attempted to communicate with the skill of a poet. In the process, he has encountered landscapes of discoveries, which are worth noticing from the point of view of a psychologist, educationist and cultural sociologist. The first and the most significant discovery was Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra as the Guide, the Master.

Secondly, he discovered the abyss of weakness to which a man either normally or as a victim of passions, can fall into. Third, he also discovered the path, hard yet pleasant, of elevation. Fourth, he discovered the arena of love, shelter and allowance, all in one, under the benevolent guidance of Sri Sri Thakur.

As the reader turns page after page, the life play of Sri Sri Thakur gets unfolded as it was played in the midst of his close associates. Miracles did take place, divine blessing was invoked with boundless grace, experiments were conducted with a view to explore the depth of consciousness and many more things happened.

Panchanan Sarkar's discovery of Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra and his submission at the latter's feet is the turning point in the former's life. But the discovery process was a long and arduous one. The process reveals a lot of things about the both. At the end, it appears both were destined to meet and complement each other. But in the beginning there was a long experimentation and search, which are both interesting and instructive.

At the time when Panchanan Sarkar came to accept Sri Sri Thakur, he was at a severe distressful condition. As he writes, "on the eve of diksha, my psychological state was so distressful that it was unbearable. It always appeared to me as if the ground below my feet is falling apart. The disturbed state of my mind obviously was getting expressed in the talk and dealings. With the reality of the past as I had, there was no hope for the future, without some miraculous magic of any great man. Of course, my behavior was loaded with indefatigable attitude, supported by a bolstered ego. That overconfidence and arrogance kept me driving ahead and did not permit any kind of outpouring at any body. Even if I were to empty out my heart, who is there as a sympathetic friend and listener?"

Panchanan Sarkar was heavily dependent upon his father. His father was his shelter. He had great faith and dependence on his father's extraordinary ability. Even when Panchanan Sarkar was working as a professor in Bagerhat College after completing his M.A., he used to share his father's plate in lunch and dinner.

After father's demise, Panchanan Sarkar was left all alone, physically and psychologically as well. What he writes in this book gives an impression that he became radar less and fell prey to the whims of complexes. It appears he almost ruined himself by indulging into such activities, which appeased his senses and drove him towards a dark future. After three years of his father's demise, Panchanan Sarkar could not measure the abyss of depth into which he lowered himself.

His brother Amritlal Sarkar was then stationmaster in Ishwaradi railway station. He loved the company of saints and therefore used to invite all kinds of saints to his house and used to treat them cordially. Panchanan Sarkar and his wife took initiation (diksha) from a saint. For some time, they went through a whole rituals and ceremonies. But after some time, everything was given up as disbelief set in.

No doubt there was some realization and miraculous acquisition. But what brought in despair was lack of knowledge and love in it.

Panchanan Sarkar gave up the bondage with the saint-guru, but failed to unshackle himself from his inclination to believe. Deep inside there was a hidden current of faith and reliance, flowing beneath the turmoil of frustration and resignation. Gradually he came to believe that the world of spirituality is replete with touts who have made it a field of commerce. 'Sad-Guru' may be something beyond reach.

Panchanan Sarkar reflected on Ramkrishna Paramhansa of Dakhineswar. He just passed away a few decades ago. 'Today the world is deprived of his benign presence. The reign of divinity and chorus of divine rhymes, which was there with him, today are things of the past. What are left today are a few books and some pundits are churning out sermons out of them and are earning plums and public acclaim.'

During this stage, Panchanan Sarkar became argumentative. When his brother got transfer to Chadaikol station by the side of Kustiya, Panchanan Sarkar opened a dispensary over there and started practicing homeopathy.

During this phase, the two brothers took 'diksha' from another saint, who was known to be the disciple of Lalan fakir and was passing through Kustiya on his way to Nandlalpur to attend a Mahotsav. That diksha also did not have a long effect, as they came to know that the Nandlalpur camp is a group of pseudo-spiritualists.

Even at that time Panchanan Sarkar was looking for some kind of miraculous acquisition. It was a desire that something would happen easily without much effort, the kind of things usually one come across in books and also seen in one's own eyes.

Later Panchanan Sarkar reflects on his mental framework as was prevailing then. Today, as he writes this book, he thinks whether at all he had any approach to life? Not that he had no view, but the view was very narrowly focused on himself. He never could see anything beyond self. That 'self' had exhausted everything else in the world and has reduced everything to a shell.

Panchanan Sarkar went to the residence of Jnanchandra Pramanik, a homeopath doctor, to discuss some medical issues. There he came across the garlanded photograph of his guru Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra. A simple photograph, but the eyes were unusually bright, radiating a merciful inviting look. One could hardly divert one's attention from the photo. Totally obsessed, he gazed at the photo for quite some time.

Panchanan sarkar writes:

“This was my first visit of Thakur Anukul Chandra, *albeit* indirectly. My friend is a fine gentleman, may not be of very sharp intelligence. Noticing my interest, he made a plain request. ‘Let’s go, my dear brother, pay a visit to Thakur. It is not that far, seven to eight miles away, across river Padma’.

I reacted to the proposal by saying, “ ‘O’ Thakur, mean the Thakur in flesh and blood just like you all are. Is he the same Thakur, who is in the cult of proclaiming himself as Guru?”

Jnanchandra raised his voice and replied, “No! My dear brother, by Thakur we mean the God himself”.

- “God himself, meaning God the person?”, observed Panchanan.
- “Yes, he is the incarnate for this age, whoever has come close has experienced it. Once known, everyone is engaged in making others known about it, with least reservation.”
- “Do you deny that the same person after a few days has somersaulted and is engaged in calling names of Thakur?”
- “Oh you are perhaps referring to the group led by Kesto Das? What a scandal that group made? These are the same people who once organized ‘Vishwa Guru Mahotsav’ here. This type does happen in many cases, especially when you lead a life with Thakur.”
- “No. Where in scriptures it is mentioned that a life with Thakur necessarily have to be somersaulted. This is sheer madness!”
- “Yes brother. This is nothing but madness.”

Jnanchandra got stuck with the word ‘madness’. Looking up, with a great deal of affection, he wondered, “Do you think anything ever happens without being mad? Moreover, are we really becoming mad in the sense of being enthusiastic? Perhaps no.”

Panchanan observed. “How can you hope to be so? What I observe that you all are fancy disciples. You came to know about God, you have rallied around him. Why to miss, when God is available at hand. You all are too eager to enroll your name in God’s register and just waiting for a windfall, if chanced upon.”

Jnanchandra suddenly looked gloomy. After a while, he nodded his head in approval of Panchanan’s rough and cut comments. He wondered whether they all possess that strong will, which might make God available to them. He wondered,

“what is reprehensible to move around the ocean of elixir and take a chance of developing thirst having seen others drinking to their heart’s content? I only lead people to take a chance.”

Panchanan - “Are you not aware of the misery of taking chance? Without knowing what ‘sadguru’ is, I am no more looking for that ‘horse egg’. My quest is for a physician with eyesight, who can spot the disorderliness in my life; may be you can say a psycho analyst. Jnan da, I want to get rid of the cobweb of my mind. I am opening my psychological state before you, Jnan da, as you are close to me.”

- “I then see that you are looking for no other than Thakur Anukul Chandra.”, said Jnanchandra
- “I do not know. One thing I am sure that I do not want to touch the periphery of those deceits, who have made the cult of Guru as their profession.”
- “Why are you generalizing? There are of course deceits. Does it follow that all will be of the same type?”
- “Dear sir. Sadguru is almost unobtainable stuff. Much less than that, I am not even seeing a person of impeccable character.”
- “Yes, it is hard to spot a real person. Still, there are persons of real stuff.”
- “That is fine. Let me find such a person”, was the closing remark of Panchanan.

A few days later, when Sri Sri Thakur of Pabna came up during discussion by the by, my brother got flared up like ignition touching oil. He reprimanded me by saying “never ever raise name of that place before me. Do you admit that I am in this field of enquiry for a long time by now? There is nothing that is left to be known about them for me. It is only a few miles away across the river, many people frequent that place through this road and every whisper falls in my ear.”

I argued. “Whatever you are saying is hearsay. There are views in the air on both sides, good and bad. Can you afford to lose the good...?”

My brother interrupted me. “Whatever you may argue, there is no point in going over there. Have you not heard about Thakur’s mother? She is exceptionally adept in occult science. The moment you step in, you are turned to a sheep. Are you aware what happened to our Kesto Bhattacharya of Oojeerpur? He is such a scholar; first class first, gold medalist.”

- “I know him well. We all passed all examinations together after matriculation.”
- “Surprisingly, the same Kesto has now turned to a sheep and is thoroughly engaged with Thakur, giving up everything else. Now you see what can possibly happen to those who are obsessed with Thakur.”

- "Of course, when one remains engrossed with Thakur, it may benefit Thakur. It is not expected to benefit the follower."
- "All his near and dear ones have concluded that Kesto is doomed; but Kesto never pays any heed to their views. And, mind you, Kesto is not alone. Whoever goes there is known to fall in line; turn to be either a sheep or a mad."
- "It is very interesting to be really mad for the whole life. All worries, anxieties and liabilities get settled automatically."
- "Of course, all these get settled for you. How does it affect others? Besides, it is not exactly what you feel. It is power of *mantra*."
- "Whatever you may say, brother, everything put together appear to be mysterious. Why don't we have a firsthand experience by visiting the place?"
- "Aha! You're also infected by the disease, as I see. Take a pledge now itself that you will never on your own step into any narrow confines. If obtaining 'sadguru' is destined for us, then he would offer himself on his own."

Panchanan Sarkar concluded the discussion by approving his brother's comment and said, "Yes, if we do not get to know Sadguru this time, we are not lucky in this birth."

A few days after that, Panchanan Sarkar suffered from severe malaria. He lost weight by approximately 10 kg. Deeply scared, He wound practice in that region and came back to Calcutta."

There was anarchy and strife running riot in the inner world of Panchanan Sarkar. He was torn asunder by two conflicting forces in the realm of his core self. On one side, he was pulled by the forces of complexes, a deep rooted desire to indulge in sensual pleasure. On the other hand, his inborn culture and conscience was not able to tolerate the type of complex mongering that he was passing through. He started condemning himself. It was not at all possible for Panchanan Sarkar to ruin the esteem which was there around him in the society. Overall his self was struggling for a psychological balance. 'It was simply unbearable', as was put by Panchanan Sarkar.

Amidst all these disarray, Panchanan Sarkar possessed an inner confidence that he would get rid of these strife. His teacher's blessings and his father's redeeming words propped up his hope for healing.

Panchanan Sarkar reminisced his parents. His father used to recite 'Ban King Episode' from 'Bishnu Puran' which used to cure the boy Panchanan from fever. Once again, when Panchanan Sarkar just joined as lecturer in Bagerhat College,

returned home fever stricken. It was evening and his father just sat down with dinner plate. At father's invitation, the fever struck son started sharing father's plate to his full content. Next day, the son was miraculously cured of the fever. His mother commented, "Your father is image of Shiva. Besides, your grandmother showered benediction on him at the time of passing away."

Panchanan Sarkar felt his father is living in him. His favors could not go waste.

In October 1924, Panchanan Sarkar came to Calcutta and put up in a rented house at no. 6, Jadunath Sen lane. He thought he could live on his medical practice. But at a new place, it was not possible. Then he started coaching class. Classes continued whole day from early morning six 'O' clock to late evening ten 'O' clock. He found himself totally engrossed in teaching. He earned quite a sum, more than what he expected. He could free himself from outstanding loans. His brother was very happy.

After a daylong teaching and reading, he suffered from acute insomnia. It came like a boon, when Panchanan Sarkar got a job of night editor in Daily Basumati. He worked there from eleven in night till early morning. That is how Panchanan Sarkar kept him busy for twenty-four hours without sleep. He said to himself, "If I have to die one day, let me burn myself in work, till the end day comes. Who cares for this shattered life in any way?"

One day his friend Ishadananda Biswas came to Panchanan Sarkar's place and announced, "Do you know Panchanan da, I am going to Pabna Satsang for a few days?"

Panchanan Sarkar said, "Is it, why are you going there all of a sudden? I suppose you aren't initiated as yet".

Ishadananda - "No, I am not initiated. I came to know that our old friend poet Hem Chandra is settled over there with family, having been indoctrinated. More surprising than that is what I hear that he has given up drinking. I am curious to see him."

Panchanan - "Yes, I too have come to know about Hem Chandra. It is bit surprising as I heard that Thakur offered him drinks, purchasing those from town. He never counseled him to give it drinking. Moreover, he cajoled him to drink as much as he

wanted and as long as he wished. He said, 'drinking does not cause a man to be rotten. For example, I smoke; not able to give up. Has it spoiled me?' Finally Hem Chandra was heard of admitting that the absence of prohibition compelled him to give up drinking."

Panchanan Sarkar continued. 'What we hear is public view. If those are true and particularly coming from devotees, then it presents psychology based magic. Those who play God are naturally endowed with such power. General people, particularly ignorant ones, get spellbound. That kind of power is the capital for such valued business. Nothing thrives on chicanery alone. May be the man is blessed with some abnormal capacity. Does that mean that we must run behind him? It is not always that man with supernatural caliber are honest and are bestowed with such love and wisdom that they can be world teacher.'

Ishadananda perhaps wanted to calm down Panchanan Sarkar by saying, 'why are you worried so much? Am I going for discipleship? It is just an opportunity for going around the place for a day or two.'

Panchanan Sarkar still continued and said, 'Still you are into the community of devout believers. I get to hear that there are some magical affairs over there; though it comes from libelers. You are a soft person. It may not be safe for you to go there alone.'

Ishadananda perhaps tried to defuse the talk and said, "I am going for a leisure trip. If eventually I have to go over there, let me at least get a firsthand view of the place. How is the ambience?"

- "My Lord, what do you mean by saying eventually I have to go?"
- "Don't you see how one by one from the heard are falling into submission and thronging over there? Do you consider it to be a welcome sign? That is why, let me go and see the place."
- "Give me word that you will not accept diksha. It is hard to know 'sadguru'. I will first authenticate and then if we do, both of us would surrender together."

Panchanan Sarkar writes about his encounter with Krishna Prasanna Bhattacharya (Kesto).

"Sunday is a black day for me, as it is a holiday. My friend Ishadananda lives in a mess at 88, upper Circular Road. They spend their whole of Sunday in playing cards. I also joined in the card club through him.

One Sunday I hit upon Krishna Prasanna Bhattacharya in the same mess. Both of us instantly plunged into war of words. It was a challenge leading into intense debate. I was briefed that he was turned to be a man lost to himself. I thought, if he was turned to a sheep, then he must have been subdued in spirit. But my instant experience proved me wrong. I found him to take arguments head on. He was quite serious and logical in his talk. His appearance was lively; especially his eyeballs displayed a glaze that spoke of his inner spirit. I came to understand that nothing of the past Krishna Prasanna is lost; rather there have been additions and awakening. I realized that all that I heard was unfounded.

I did not leave any scope to tinker with Krishna Prasanna. We started discussing on metaphysical topics like spirituality, inner world, extra sensory feelings etc. We reflected on these topics from our own respective points of view. Krishna Prasanna elucidated the topics in colloquial language without resorting to technical words. In the absence of jargons in his language, I failed to counter him. As I was falling short to measure up to him, I grew more stubborn and obdurate. I could not defeat Krishna Prasanna; nor was I prepared to accept my defeat. I never know of a debate where I was vanquished.”

When the issue of ‘third eye’ or ‘wisdom eye’ in the context of extra sensory realization arose, Krishna Prasanna thumbed the table and made a point that ‘the two eyes what we have are the only eyes, there is no third eye. If we are to view anything, it is by these eyes only.

- “Do you mean that the words like ‘mind’s eye’, ‘wisdom eye’ have no meaning? Do you mean to say that it is possible to have a ‘view of God’ or ‘self-view’ through this external organ that is eye?” I argued vehemently.
- “Exactly that. If God takes a physical form and stands before man, out of his sheer grace, then man can see him in real sense. Man’s eyes can capture God’s physical image and be obliged. Besides this, is there any other way?”
- “What are you saying? What this pair of eyes will see will be the ‘man’. How can that be God?”

Krishna Prasanna argued. “I am saying what fact is and that what happens. Whatever object comes to view, be it God or anything other than God, comes through the eyes. Nothing is seen without the eyes. There is no third eye in human body, as I examined in dissection room, cutting every piece of the body, as a student of physiology. If God is to be seen, then it is best seen in human form. If God has to present himself, he has to appear in human form before man’s eyes. And the person who sees, will first see God as man. Lord Krishna had to stand before Arjun as friend. The friend turned himself to Guru. Then Arjun discerned the divine in Guru. This appears to be the essence of Gita.”

Panchanan Sarkar counter argued, picking up the thread from Gita where Krishna Prasanna left. “Dear Sir, कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयं, is an axiom. God, whoever he is, is one; which means he remains the same in all age. अखंड means he cannot be split;

he is said to be अद्वितीय. All these imply that he is God in the beginning, God in the middle and God in the end. Now throwing all these into the sea, when did God become man? To assume God as man will be an act of sacrilege. Even Arjun sought pardon from Krishna as he considered him friend out of ignorance. Fundamentally, he was anything but man; nor was he a friend. He is God at all times. By coming as human being and as friend for Arjun, God only positioned himself great for Arjun. He became Guru and then God. All these go to prove the quality and caliber of Arjun's perception. We know that God in his unspecified form prevails everywhere. It is possible to view the image of God in everything by someone who has the ability to discover. Therefore the credit is to be imputed to the viewer. Going by your logic, Arjun should be treated a God-maker. Is it a valid proposition? Besides, you are swearing by Gita. That means you, going by your words, you do abide by Gita. The Gita says, दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षूह पश्य मे योगइमेश्वरम. Dear sir, you quoting from scripture and yet denying concepts like दिव्य चक्षु and मनः चक्षु etc. What a strange!

Krishna Prasanna stuck to his physical level argument saying that what you see through eyes is your perception. The views you are referring to are variants of that.

The arguments between two apparently were coming from the rigid standpoint of each, mixed with ego. The discussion took the form of personal attack on high pitch voice, which attracted some curious audience. When Panchanan Sarkar thought that he was riding on a winning spree and had cornered Krishna Prasanna to a point of surrender, Krishna Prasanna got up, sought leave from the debate, as he had to attend to something urgent. He left the place suspending the debate to some indefinite other day.

Panchanan Sarkar drew blank as Krishna Prasanna withdrew himself. But the heat inside was trying to find an outlet. He thought to go to Krishna Prasanna's residence and make him to accept defeat. At that time, a devotee, Kanai by name, a medical student let Panchanan Sarkar know that another disciple of Thakur, who is addressed as Maharaj had just come. Maharaj was known to be wonderful man, having extraordinary ability to convince others. Panchanan Sarkar was elated to get another stalwart to fight with. He took the address of Maharaj, who was then camping at 28 'B', Akhil Mistry Lane, which was the center of Satsang at Calcutta. Maharaj was then not mobile, having a pain in his leg. Therefore he would be always available.

Panchanan Sarkar rushed to Akhil Mistry lane. After half an hour at around eleven 'O' clock, he was in front of the door on the third floor of the building. The door was open and a group of people sitting on a woolen carpet inside. They were engaged

in discussion with another tall person with wide shoulder sitting on a woolen carpet spread on a cot.

The man on the cot was first to greet Panchanan Sarkar and invited him to come in. Panchanan Sarkar was abrasive while enquiring about Maharaj. 'Keep all the niceties away. Let me know who is a Maharaj here?' was a brusque question to the group.

Maharaj presented an image of calmness and serenity. He smiled and replied with humility that people fondly addressed him as Maharaj. In reality he was nobody of sort as the meaning of the word would suggest. He further identified himself saying, "I am Sri Ananta Nath Ray, from Kashipur, neighbouring village of Himaitpur. Sri Sri Thakur liked the arrangement that I made for his smoking and used to affectionately order, 'Maharaj, please arrange my hookah'. Subsequently, the arranging hookah part is dropped and the 'Maharaj' is used by all as my pet name.'

Panchanan Sarkar was amused. He smacked of candidness and sincerity in the introductory talk of Maharaj. He felt for a moment that may be Maharaj is the right person to dialogue with, till he was convinced.

When he expressed his desire to Maharaj, the latter replied, "dear brother, what is there for me to convince you? You are already convinced."

- "Don't mistake. I have not come to you after being convinced," said Panchanan.
- "See dear, those who approach with negative attitude, they first admit the existence of positive and then try to deny it. They necessarily and undeniably carry a strong conviction. I am not mistaken."

Panchanan Sarkar made self-appraisal as he was about to face Maharaj. He said, 'though logically I can be proved to be convinced, in reality it is not there right now with me. I am also aware that if that state of conviction were there with me, then I would be relieved. Despite that, if you still maintain that the conviction is there, then may be it is hidden somewhere in the corner of the mind, or buried under the mountainous garbage; which amount to an elusive existence. I want to pluck the conviction out into broad daylight.'

Panchanan Sarkar continued to make Maharaj know about his need. 'After spending the day in activities, when I shut my eyes at night, I see darkness, of a ferocity which I cannot stand. I crave for the region of light, crossing the region of darkness. Is there anyone now on this earth who is capable to take me over there? Yes, you will say that *Sadguru* is here and you need to log on to him. But the question is, how will this poor, consigned to gloom, ever identify and recognize *Sadguru*? Those who have availed the favour of *Sadguru*, their words, not to speak of their conduct and behavior, hardly carries meaning. For example, Kesto da, one amongst you, whom I spoke to, today few hours back. By way of argument, he said, nothing happens without doing what is required to be done. I understood, you

people resort to this kind of rhetorical axioms. What do all these mean and what purpose do these serve?’

Panchanan Sarkar had long discussion with Maharaj. The exchange between the two became cordial as both of them found to be sharing view from their heart, without caring a bit for formality. It started in continuity of earlier discussion with Krishna Prasanna. It was a very lengthy talk, most of which were left in oblivion by the time Panchanan Sarkar documented this memoir. While recording this lively past, Panchanan felt that many of the points of his argument with Maharaj were no more relevant to be recounted. He however felt necessary to make mention of the type of person Maharaj was.

Maharaj was a wonderful person. He displayed a remarkable patience in listening to whatever Panchanan Sarkar said, however inconsistent those might have been. Hours after hours, Maharaj just listened to Panchanan Sarkar with concentration and empathy. Panchanan Sarkar was also impressed to see the patience and forbearance of all the devotees who were there with Maharaj. They allowed Panchanan Sarkar to have uninterrupted dialogue with Maharaj at the cost of their time. None of them did attempt to impose their views; nor did any one try to mix up his own queries, if any, with those of Panchanan Sarkar. Defying experiences Panchanan Sarkar gathered at earlier religious discourses, the accompanying co-followers of Maharaj displayed extraordinary discipline, which impressed him. He did not find any symptom of excessive propagating enthusiasm.

One more method of Maharaj’s discussion also impressed Panchanan Sarkar. Maharaj was an absorbing listener. He used to patiently listen till Panchanan Sarkar’s viewpoints reached a conclusive stage. He was only supporting Panchanan Sarkar to forward his own logic in a particular direction and was pointing out inconsistency if any. Maharaj was rarely found to bring in his own theory or to quote any scriptural version in to discussion.

“Maharaj was behaving,” writes Panchanan Sarkar, “like an attentive student, keen to understand my viewpoint. I heard of dialectical method of discourses of Greek philosopher Socrates, but I am yet to see a second person adopting the method of Maharaj.”

After discussion with Maharaj, Panchanan Sarkar set out towards west in search of realized souls and learned Gurus. He thought that the caves of Himalayas were known to be places for spiritual pursuits. Panchanan Sarkar writes, “I recollect my experience of a happening at Brindavan, where I approached a saint with a quest and query. The saint was quite knowledgeable and he went on talking. His discourses orbited on his own whims, without touching my enquiry at the least. My patience was subjected to test for a great deal of time, after which I raised a question. The saint advised me to listen first and then talk. When I raised a question second time, he flung himself into a rage of fire. He thundered, ‘you wretched lad, have you come to talk or to listen? I instantly got up and left the place

after bowing down before him for the last time. Before leaving, I replied to the saint that he was saying those stuff what he have memorized from scriptures. This humble self is no stranger to these stuff. What new do I expect to hear from him? I can lecture him these old and rotten scriptural stuff for two to four years.”

Panchanan Sarkar wondered, ‘where from Maharaj learnt the lesson of patience, compassion and the art of discussion? During the course of discussion, the sharp intellect and wonderful realization of Maharaj amazed me over and over again. I was wondering as to how did Maharaj gather so much of knowledge? Which university degree has made him the uncrowned king of the people? I was shocked when I learnt that Maharaj’s education is up to lower primary. He did not have much of learning of English; except writing names; could understand few words after repeated hearing. He was a compounder to doctor; had to learn to copy prescription. Kanai confided this to me on the tenth day when I was returning from Maharaj after conceding my complete defeat. How could a scholar with university qualification got defeated in argument by a lower primary educated man, apparently without substance; that too on subjects of hard philosophy?’ Panchanan Sarkar experienced humiliation of defeat and at the same time exhilaration of seeing the personality of Maharaj.

When Panchanan Sarkar still continued his facile argument, though felt vanquished, Maharaj could sense the mental state of Panchanan. He turned the tenor of discussion and threw a bet of friendship. Maharaj said, ‘dear brother, our seniors said that if two persons walk together for seven steps, they become friends. By that measure, both of us are together for a long while, eating sleeping gossiping in close intimacy. Can you deny the fact that the seed of intimacy has already sprouted between us?’ Panchanan Sarkar affirmed the proposition with a sense of gratification.

Maharaj then sought some clarifications with respect to the Panchanan’s observations. ‘Dear friend, what is the underlying object of the last few contentions that you made?’ Panchanan Sarkar attempted to open up his mind. ‘I humbly do admit that I have been defeated in arguments. I understand out of the discussions that I had with you that all your arguments are flawless. You all are capable of proving your theory by turning and twisting the arguments at random. You all appear to be sweet, friendly, courteous and intensely sensitive. Still I raise question: the inner and hidden blemish of very cunning and super intelligent people are seldom discerned in two four or ten days. Despite all the glorious attributes that you all possess, how does one rule out that you all do not fall in the cunning and intelligent lot?’

A sweet ray of smile flashed on the lip of Maharaj. He said, ‘Fine brother, do you really carry suspicion and suspect us belonging to the group of deceits? Or you are only becoming verbose and taking a position?’

Panchanan Sarkar came down the stairs of ego and went into introspection. He admitted, 'It is right that my suspicion is not anchored on my feelings. It is coming out of fear; fear of falling victim of deception.'

Maharaj felt shivers of pain in his heart when he said, 'You are right. The deceit, the counterfeit do cause harm. They infect the faith and spoil the person. But for a moment come to specific and tell me as to what do I gain in putting you to loss? Are you a man with huge wealth which I want to elope with?'

Panchanan went deeper into his psychological status and countered, 'undoubtedly, opulent I am not. But in public perception, I carry reputation of being a scholar. My name may facilitate to spread the net wide for fishing affluent people.'

The conversation between Maharaj and Panchanan went on for long sequence.

At that time Ishadananda returned from ashram and shared detailed account of his maiden visit to Sri Sri Thakur. The ashram is a paradise almost floating on the river Padma. Love, brotherhood and tranquility filled the air. Especially noteworthy is the motherly affection of Manamohini Devi. Poet Hem Chandra almost got the heaven in his hand when he got Ishadananda. Ishadananda lost his mother at early age. While narrating about mother Manamohini, his eyes got flooded with tears of affection. Mother Manamohini, as if, received her lost child after a long gap. She ran up and down and did everything for Ishadananda out of unbounded affection. The skeptical mind of Panchanan however for a moment thought those expressions were nothing more than over-normal sentimentality of poor Ishadananda. It was perhaps exuberance of relieved feelings by a person who felt profuse motherly affection after losing his mother at adolescence.

Panchanan Sarkar was overwhelmed by the narration of Ishadananda, coming as it did when he was passionately engaged in debate with Maharaj. Panchanan found himself at high warfare where his ego and intellect were at combative determination to laydown Maharaj. He had to earn the glory of winning over the Maharaj; that was the spirit.

Post Initiation Period

As a *ritwik* Maharaj was a reserve type of person. He never used to impart *diksha* easily to any aspirant. He used to allow time to ascertain how genuine the appetite for *diksha* is. As a *ritwik*, he observed that people approached for *diksha* out of detached feeling, arising from struggle and suffering. The detachment induced spiritual quest did not generally last long; got evaporated after some days. Besides,

collision on the path of spiritual pursuit is no less; rather struggle is more intense compared with otherwise normal life. Ever intensifying struggle is a concomitant feature on this path and that becomes the continuous live source for new and newer realization. On the basis of this logic, Maharaj used to look at such people who are of weak mind and have been victim of adversities in life, with suspicion.

After fifteen days of animated debate, Maharaj raised an objection, as he assented to take Panchanan through the *diksha* process. He observed, 'I can impart *diksha* as you want to receive. But looking at your state of affairs, I feel you first visit Thakur; develop bit of concept clarity and familiarity with him.'

Panchanan advanced a counter to this. He observed, 'You see Maharaj, what kind of person I am. Can I recognize the Thakur, in the same way as you all consider him to be? Philosophy says, one's vision gets coloured by mental status of the person. Therefore, it is better that I receive *diksha* and accept Thakur as Guru before I see him. Then I shall look upon him with the eye of a *satsangee*.

Maharaj saw meaning in the Panchanan's proposition and agreed for imparting *diksha*.

Eventually when Panchanan Sarkar made up his mind to accept *diksha*, which means accepting Sri Sri Thakur as Guru with pledge to follow his ideology, he needed a face saving formula. He was so much into the debate, with display of arrogance that it was hard for him to submit and beg for *diksha* openly. Therefore, he contrived a set of conditions and deployed Kanai for facilitating the process. "I will accept *diksha*; that is for certain", Panchanan Sarkar said to Kanai. Maharaj readily agreed to all the conditions, such as, "I would be initiated in a secluded location and the affair would be kept in confidence". It was supposedly absurd; but true that Panchanan Sarkar had to overcome the mountain of inhibition and ego at that time which made him ashamed later, while writing this account.

Wife Bhavatarini was staying with Panchanan Sarkar in Calcutta. He confided at her that he had come across a true person after so long. Still Panchanan Sarkar was in experimental mode. He wanted to get the feel for himself, before leading his family members to the altar. He bore no qualms to jettison the 'initiation' any time, if he feels it no good. "I bear no guilt of sacrilege", Panchanan Sarkar asserted his independence with his wife.

Finally the 'D' day of *diksha* came. Panchanan Sarkar's alertness was at its peak. The initiation process was about to complete, when Panchanan da raised a point. Maharaj instructed to meditate upon the Guru, whose photograph was being worshipped. Panchanan Sarkar was shocked. "How is it Maharaj? How does one meditate upon a person? Life's object is to achieve Godhood; therefore it is God who ought to be the object of meditation"

Maharaj in his calm and unshaken voice replied, "Would you have accepted to meditate on Sri Ramachandra?"

"Certainly, as he is the eternal 'brahma' in its completeness", replied Panchanan Sarkar.

- "What about Lord Krishna?"
- "Of course! Lord Krishna is the God himself; who is not aware of it?"
- "Dear brother! Rama and Krishna; were they not men? You have gone through many scriptures. Have you not heard that:

'Amongst all the roles that Krishna played
human form is the best,
When He comes in flesh and blood
hand with flute and love in chest.'

Have you not heard what Chandi Das sang,

"O' my brother man,
Man is the truth supreme,
And nothing above man."

What magic and meaning the words of Maharaj had in them is not known. For Panchanan Sarkar, the words came like apocalypse. Whole body in sweat, he started trembling. "You still are harbouring the idea", Maharaj continued with a fixed gaze on Panchanan Sarkar, "that even when they were men in form, they were God in essence; it might have taken some time for revelation. How does one know that the same story would repeat with Sri Sri Thakur?"

Panchanan da said with feeble voice, "Yes Maharaj; that is the trouble".

For crest fallen Panchanan Sarkar, Maharaj was like a pole star. Maharaj was an image of love, compassion and support.

"Do you believe me a bit?" said Maharaj.

"I have full faith on you", a voice of submission from Panchanan Sarkar.

"Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra is of course a man, but a man of that class. He is not an ordinary man like you and me. If you believe me, then hold on to him experimentally. By His grace, may be you can feel yourself. Then you will roam around with His message from door to door, the message of love and brotherhood. 'Those who love Him are dear to me', would be your words with stretched arm to embrace the fallen, the poor, the sufferers. That day is not far, dear Panchanan da", said Maharaj in a prophetic emotion.

Panchanan Sarkar writes, "Words and emotion emanated from Maharaj with such felicity as water flew down a tap after it is opened. Out of nowhere a posse of singers with instruments got together and started mass divine song. With song in

chorus in high pitch, large number of people playing high decibel musical instruments, it was ecstasy made free for all. The rapturous group in high emotional surrender to the divine spell struck my inner urge to be sublime and swayed me towards the expanse of freedom. I enjoyed the scene, the sound and another image of my ritwikdev Maharaj.”

“As I came in intimacy with the great Maharaj, the traces of gloom from my mind started to vanish”, said Panchanan Sarkar. He got a direction towards a new life. He renewed his hope, as he got the support from his master, which led him towards a newer and higher level of consciousness. Taking everything together, Panchanan Sarkar, as if, got a new birth. He writes, ‘The news of my accepting ‘diksha’ did not remain confined. A closed door in my heart was flung open, as I mixed with my fellow disciples, the brothers-in-faith and exchanged views.”

After a few days came the poet Hem Chandra from ashram. Panchanan Sarkar had close intimacy with him for a long time before hand. Panchanan Sarkar while doing his Intermediate in Arts in fact resided in Hem poet’s house for two years as tutor to his younger brother. Both were respectful to each other. When poet Hem Chandra came to know that Panchanan Sarkar joined in the discipline of Sri Sri Thakur, he was overjoyed. As if two brothers got reunited after long estrangement. The tie that bound both together appeared to be inseparable. Panchanan observed his old friend and was not surprised to find that Hem was also lost to himself and always remained immersed in Thakur’s ‘japa’ and meditation. Both of them together started doing ‘japa’ and discourses. So much were their absorption that they least cared the traffic while strolling through the busy Amarth Street in Calcutta. Panchanan Sarkar’s new found strength gave him the confidence that no vehicle could hit him when he was absorbed in the ‘holy name’.

Panchanan Sarkar remembered and paid heartfelt tribute to some persons, who played signal role in getting him into Sri Sri Thakur’s discipline, through the process of ‘diksha’. None of these sublime souls were there on this earth any more, as Panchanan was writing these life-turning episodes. Those were: Kanai, Jnanchandra Pramanik, his brother Amritlal. Krishna Prasanna, Hem Chandra and Ananta Maharaj. These persons together helped Panchanan to bring his self away from the clutches of ego and land him on the chariot of glory, which was ‘diksha’. Panchanan admits without feeling ashamed that in the absence of joint contribution of these well-wishers, the fortune of ‘diksha’ would not have smiled on him.

Panchanan Sarkar reflected that his submission to the ‘diksha’ was not at all an insignificant event viewed from the angle of his own life. His lifeboat ultimately anchored onto a berth and how did it happen is a long story. The sailing was so turbulent that the emaciated boat was about to sink. The story was long and so

much eventful that he failed to narrate everything to Maharaj. Non-the-less, he narrated quite a lot to which Maharaj responded by saying, “those who have joined the movement of Sri Sri Thakur during the early part of the Thakur’s life, many of them were driven by an unknown force, of course in congruity with the specific motion of their respective life. They came from all walks of life with varied experiences, all of which might not have been pleasant. They might have come from very humble origin. Some of them might have had the background of a filthy life style. They carried the signs and samples from various corners of the society, whose reform was the avowed objective of any incarnate. The early associates of the prophet were usually the victims of the contemporary time, as they did not fall in line with the flow of the tide. They resisted and got badly battered. They finally came at the feet of the prophet with their painful experience and urge to survive. They found solutions to their problems, which they came with and which remained unresolved till then. When they discovered the all fulfilling ideology and the long sought after image of the ideal, then they embraced the prophet as the most beloved, the most venerable man. Then they forsook everything else and dedicated their lives for the supreme cause and proclaimed this to the rest of the humanity in loud cheer.”

That was a time, when everyone residing in ashram and even those remotely connected with ashram lived in a mental state where philosophical and meaningful thoughts about life were ruling. When Maharaj shared his experience relating to the early apostles of the contemporary prophet at Calcutta center in his inimitable style, amongst the audience was Sri Surendra Nath Pal, who accepted ‘diksha’ on the day Panchanan Sarkar also took ‘diksha’. Surendra Pal later came to be known as a renowned lawyer in Assam. Referring to Maharaj’s exposition, Surendra raised question. “It has been said in Gita that whenever Dharma gets distorted, God descends on the earth with a view to reform and revive Dharma. Dharma is getting distorted in ages after ages and God is also descending again and again. Is it really helping Dharma to gain root? Even if it is happening, it is to what extent? Whether all the past prophets departed with a satisfaction that they had achieved their mission? The author of Mahabharat did not seem to have made observation to that effect. What is that proof that they came with the mission of setting up ‘dharma’?”

Maharaj flashed a smile and said, “the author of Gita has rightly said that ‘He (God) descends with a view to reform and revive ‘dharma’. He does that in splendid way. He sets the trend right, which of course takes a particular shape as per the locality and possibility. Every word that He says and everything He does have a long-standing impact. The shape of things to come in due course of time never remains outside his view. He can see things as settled fact, even ages before the things take shape in reality. Problem besieges persons like us who delimit the incarnates and see the activities of incarnates within the confines of our narrow

understanding. We do not have long sight; we are by nature having practical view of things. Then you can easily see the fate of incarnates, if they are required to provide explanations to people like us. The only means available to man, therefore, is to have faith on God's words, the divine words. Some people come to recognize and believe prophet by virtue of their merits of past lives and by the grace of God. In course of time, some of them get to acquire full knowledge, of course up to degrees, depending upon their ability."

Surendra commented, "Can religion ever take root; which has not happened as yet, despite efforts in all ages? The evil appears to have more pull than that of God".

Maharaj – "The task of putting 'dharma' on track at different times can hardly be evaluated on any objective yardstick. To judge it today and to conclude that the task has not been accomplished fully may not be a correct thing to do. 'Dharma' has taken shape in the manner the need for it has been felt and it naturally varies from place to place. The degree of incarnation and the effectiveness of delivery of his message varied according to the requirement. When the 'aquatic form of incarnation' was enough, the image of Lord Rama or Lord Krishna was not required in that age and therefore it did not happen in those forms. I have understood the theory of ten incarnations in this sense, of course, in my limited intelligence.

It follows from the above that if you have strong urge to see him and to associate with him in every step of your life, then perhaps you own the possibility to obtain him in the like manner. On the other hand, there are those, who are having comfortable life, may not care much for God. If God is presented before them physically, they may indulge into such torturous tossing as you can surely imagine. Even those who accept God, they really get him as per their appetite. Even when the area gets flooded with elixir, one can hold as much as the capacity of the container. Establishing religion is therefore a relative and subjective effort.

As for evil, man has got many shades of it. Man has loads of ignorance, darkness, illusion and so on. All these in no way negate the eternal being that craves for bliss and responsiveness. The complexes, which shelter all evils, shroud the being. Evil tends to drag the somnolent being and make it to do all sorts of jobs. Whenever man is in gloom, he is doomed and helpless. So long as he is complacent, he allows evil to prevail on him. Not everyone relishes this state. From the deep recess of darkness, man cries for light, for freedom and for relief. It is then that evil gets emaciated and goes back by few steps. Evil reins outside the domains of light. Darkness flights away with the signing rays of light."

Manohar Basu and Mohammed Khalilur were mindfully listening to the answer of Surendra's question. That was a Sunday, a holiday for them. This house on Akhil Mistry lane was taken on rent by them. They were government officers and brothers in faith. They were staying together and had kept the third floor vacant for the stay of visitors from Himaitpur ashram. From that time for many years, the

Satsang center at Calcutta has been running like this at different homes at many localities. There is no match to their sacrifice and serving mentality. The smiling faces of both of them remain alive in mind's eye.

Manohar then raised a point regarding the early disciples of Sri Sri Thakur. He observed, 'how is it possible that some of the early disciples, who were the first few to spot the divinity in Sri Sri Thakur, got engaged in spreading canards against him at later date? How does one value their realization which led them to recognize the prophet? Some of them even were part of the organizers of *vishwaguru mahotsav*.'

Maharaj could read Manohar aggrieved mind. Manohar was pained with the vilification campaign unleashed by the likes of Krishna Chandra Das and Panchanan Mitra. With a merciful look at Manohar, Maharaj observed "you all know the full story behind their sinful deeds. You only did provide befitting reply to them and fought against opposing situations. There was no misgiving in their first realization about Sri Sri Thakur, which they are even aware. There is no gainsaying the fact that it is a deplorable state for them as well as for us."

Maharaj perhaps wanted to cut the issue at that point. But Surendra insisted Maharaj to continue and elaborate on the issue.

Unwillingly Maharaj continued, "On the first night after wedding, how quickly man comes to know his wife and talks about her beauty and quality to his friends. In most of the cases it is seen that as the initial emotion gets evaporated, the first impression about the newly wed wife undergoes change. Then if you ask the man if his first impression was wrong; may be he would reply, 'What I observed in the first place was true but not complete. It is unfortunate that the not-so-pleasant impression gathered at later times, eclipses the pleasant feelings of earlier days so much so that even the idea that there could be something good and beautiful in her does not come to mind.' Out of sheer selfishness, if a man declares his first impression as baseless and goes overboard to justify those, you can see the play of undue expectation and unfairness in the whole game."

"A little reflection on the subject tells us that those people are like goodtime pigeons. They remain engrossed in light hearted entertaining affairs. Their sole objective is to have merrymaking and self-glorification, without taking a bit of responsibility. Such people are generally devoid of conscience that discriminate transience from permanence. They are least conscious of acquiring wisdom and supreme knowledge, which entails paying high price in terms of painstaking penance and preparations. I therefore consider them as half human. Though they are unfortunate, still they can be rescued, as they are ignorant. Ignorance is not considered to be vice in the encyclopedia of great men."

Maharaj however expressed grief for those who come with intension, without having slightest attachment or affiliation. He however refrained to elaborate on such people, as he felt, these are of that type, by birth and perhaps incorrigible.

Khalil observed, "Is it a must that the first impression and subsequent feelings have to be contrary to each other? If it happens, what could be the basis for that?"

Maharaj turned towards Khalil and said, "There are some blessed souls who tend to lose themselves at His feet at the first visit. Their mind does not entertain any kind of question about initial impression, subsequent impression and all that. Their mind gets obsessed with the urgency of meeting the desire of the supreme beloved. They remain absorbed in japa and meditation every time, day and night, from the moment they visit the Lord. Their submission is such that they have least time to weigh and watch the loved one. There are no less number of such type of people in our group, Khalil Bhai. Their love and lore assume to gather momentum with every passing day, of course with varying speed for different people. There are still other types of people, who get elated at the sight of the love lord. They plunge into a plethora of activities like calling people, arranging meeting, delivering lectures and so on. They ride a wave of satisfaction arising out of their coming to possess God, who is all fulfilling."

"Those who are not endowed with so much inborn purity feel elated when they get to view the living God in the first visit. They get into endless stream of exuberated activities. They have come to possess their most sought after God, the one who can fulfil all their desires. All these are natural feelings. It is natural for anyone to be delighted to get God so closely and intimately."

"The hard point is that the God in hand is a living person, measured by all human faculties including birth and death. This man, having all the features of divinity is living, interactive and watchful. He does not measure up to the fantasy and grandeur of imaginary God, the God in heaven and the magical God of mythology. The God incarnate comes down with a mission. To serve man he looks for a handful of men who would serve as vehicle of his purpose. He dreams of man of integrated life and he mobilizes them by such deft moves which defies any comparison."

Maharaj brought example of the fish incarnate (मत्स्य अवतार). The fish was a tiny size that could be held in cupped palm; but it grew to take a giant size. This Thakur was also so easily available to people within their reach, but gradually became taller and assumed a huge image. Gita also presents the same type. Lord Krishna stood before Arjun as friend, with all intimacy of living together. A sweet companion, going around everywhere in good time and bad time. But the god in human form could not conceal himself for long time. In no time and in a very natural style, the friend turned out to be the Guru, the God. At some time, Lord revealed his own divine image, the cosmic form got unveiled before a stunned and dumbfounded Arjun.

Maharaj continued. “Significant point to observe that Arjun, the hero, faced many odds in life; inflicted himself with barrage of questions; but did not miss the direction and guidance of the Lord. He found himself surprised, puzzled, scared, and anxious; yet he walked with the Guide, following his steps.”

“When God descends, making him acceptable for every soul, can appear subtler than the subtle अणोरणीयान्, without diminishing the least his original image which is greater than the great महतो महीयान्.”

“As per *Vaishnav* (वैष्णव) scriptures, God can never set aside his cosmic and divine image. However they may equalize the different feelings for God, namely, like servant (दास्य), like friend (सखा) and like child (बात्सल्य), the servant feeling towards the Lord is considered basic and the best. Nothing different from this is not up to liking of the incarnate, the living God.”

“Even if these people, like Arjun, were privileged to have intimacy with God and could get him on their palm, yet they found that the mango got bigger than the size that the palm can hold. Their bloated ego and tiny head could no longer carry the big Thakur. That is how their misfortune ensues. Thereafter what remains to be told?” Maharaj concluded with an affectionate address to Khalil.

Panchanan Sarkar was getting more and more appreciative of the clarity of understanding and simplicity of Maharaj’s logic. “The style of his expression and appearance is inimitable”, says Panchanan Sarkar. After few days when Maharaj left for Himaitpur Ashram, being desired by Thakur, the whole group was on the platform to see him off. Little while prior to the steaming off the train, Maharaj requested Panchanan Sarkar, “dear brother, let us go and visit Thakur. He is our supreme asset.” Panchanan Sarkar took the request seriously and pondered over it. When he did not get much inner response, he told Maharaj, “excuse me this time as I do not feel that kind of pull. I give my word, when that pull comes, I will not lose a moment. I have no inhibition as such”. When the train steamed off the platform, Maharaj’s request echoed in Panchanan Sarkar’s mind, helping him to measure the import of his request.

Panchanan Sarkar accepted Thakur’s ‘diksha’. It was a turning point in his life. An inquisitive restless mind was put to rest by Maharaj. Panchanan Sarkar was not conscious of his acquisition; nor was he mindful of deficiencies. In fact, he had no time left for anything other than looking at Maharaj. For the first time he got a taste of his whole view being concentrated at one place. It was a heavenly pleasure that swayed his core being, as he never felt before.

Sometime after Maharaj left, the city of Calcutta was ravaged by the frenzy of communal riots. Everywhere there was clanking of daggers and choppers. During that harrowing times, shivers ran down the spine of any one passing through the lonely Amrahst street at night, especially the Meechu Bazar locality and the corner of Mirzapur park. The heart used to beat heavy, but the compulsion of the move was to gaze at the radiating smiling face of Maharaj. At that time, only one thought kept coming again and again, which was the mind's pull. And that was something that keeps mind obsessed like intoxication and that is much more powerful than the basic need for food, clothing and shelter. Higher that pull, greater is the man.

When Maharaj left, for Panchanan Sarkar, the city of Calcutta turned to be a dinner party just got over. Panchanan Sarkar had nowhere to go, therefore, it was vacuum everywhere. His mind was reflecting, 'why did Maharaj request me to go to Pabna for visiting Thakur as earnestly as he did at the time of departure. He has repeated the same in the letter that he has written after reaching Pabna'.

Till then Panchanan was not able to appreciate the significance of visit to Thakur. For him, this was something excess that Thakur's disciples perhaps do. He argued with himself that so long as he followed the principles and practices Thakur's ideology, then what really matters was the sincerity of his effort and the degree of his concentration. As such he was meditating on the image of Thakur and was repeating his 'name', which is said to be the supreme object in 'kaliyuga'. So where is the meaning of Maharaj's request? He was not able to comprehend the value and significance of personal association with Thakur and rendering service to him. Meditation is of course an integral part of 'sadhana', but that it requires attachment and psychological affinity with the object of meditation, was not quite known to Panchanan Sarkar, as he realized later. He also admitted that he was so much impressed by Maharaj, that Maharaj is enough for him, he thought. The intelligence and sharpness of Maharaj, along with his extraordinary ability to conceptualize, all together did cast such a spell on Panchanan Sarkar, that he was totally fulfilled and did not have any appetite, what so ever, to look for more.

Panchanan Sarkar writes, "As I continued my 'sadhana' with all the determination and devotion that I could master, unexpectedly I landed myself on an island of severe uneasiness. I was repeating holy name uninterruptedly, but meditation was not at all taking form. Maharaj advised to do 'japa' along with meditation. In the beginning, the attempt to meditate was 'meditation', with hope that 'meditation' will be perfected with practice. But after sufficient number of days, far from getting easier, the object of meditation got vanished altogether."

At that time came Radharaman Joardar, another close associate of Thakur, from Ashram. Panchanan discussed the issue with him. He said, "yes, meditation is normally possible". Panchanan checked this with other co-disciples like Manohar and Virenda. Their all-affirmative replies made Panchanan to ponder over the issue. "I am the only exception", said Panchanan to himself, "who is not able to focus Thakur in meditation. The difference between others and me in this context

is that they have got the physical touch of Thakur. By virtue of their close association, Thakur has assumed a reality in their lives. As for me, till now I have not even seen Thakur physically. Therefore, how do I get to feel his own self, the image of the substance?"

From then on what we see in the life of Panchanan is process of convergence with Sri Sri Thakur and resultant revelation and transformation. In the next step, Panchanan resigned from 'Basumati' through a process, which had all the elements of Panchanan quest and conquest.

Poet Hem Chandra was popular among the intellectual mass of Calcutta. It so happened that during that period, poet Hem delivered a week long discourse on 'The Clue to Indian Spirituality' on the college square at Calcutta, being invited by Mahabodhi Society. As sub editor of daily, Panchanan took initiative in publishing the summary of Hem poet's speech in the second page of the Daily. This act of Panchanan reportedly earned criticism from certain section of the management of the Daily. That prompted Panchanan to tender his resignation and sever ties with the Basumati. Hem poet's discourses drove Panchanan's attention towards Vaishnav (वैष्णव) philosophy. He started revisiting 'Chaitanya Charitamruta' (चैतन्य चरितामृत) with mindful attention. The devotees of Lord Krishna not only received Him in their hearts, but also sensed and experienced Him through their sensory organs like eyes, ears, nose, tongue etc. They were fortunate to get the Lord in flesh and blood. Then Panchanan Sarkar could no longer hold him back from the live contact with the Lord on the earth and the incarnate.

Life in Ashram at Himaitpur

Panchanan Sarkar was free from the job in daily Basumati. But his coaching class was continuing. During the Christmas vacation in December 1926, Panchanan Sarkar took train from Calcutta and got down at Kustiya. He was unfamiliar at that place and was wondering how to reach the ferry wharf where boat would be available up to Bajitpur village, which is the nearest landing point for Himaitpur. He was surprised when a young man, well-built and dark skinned, offered his company to travel to Thakur's ashram. He was Abinash Chandra Pal, who is an inhabitant of Himaitpur ashram and was on his way to ashram. He could guess that Panchanan Sarkar was a visitor to ashram and he was new to that place. Panchanan Sarkar got the right lead and started discussing about Thakur, while basking in the winter sunshine on board the vessel, as the boat was sailing on its course to destination. All of a sudden a tempest brewed up. It was a severe storm, typical of river Padmaa. About twenty to twenty-two passengers on board started running helter-skelter out of sheer anxiety. The sailors threatened the unruly passengers with the inevitable fatal eventuality, if they did not maintain balance.

All faces turned pale out of fear of death. Only two persons, Panchanan Sarkar and Abinash Pal, maintained calmness and were praying to Thakur. 'Thakur will save us from this calamity', was their redoubtable belief.

The boat was caught in a swift gale. Drifting from its course, it was moving fast in a tilted position, any time it could turn turtle and hit the swirling current. All of a sudden the boat got a jerk and was grounded on a submerged sand hill. The boat and the passengers were stranded on the sand hill till the storm was silenced. When the boat lowered anchor at the Bajitpur ghat, it was dark. They lost the day, but they saved their life. As per Abinash Pal, it was a firsthand and live experience of Sri Sri Thakur's grace.

Panchanan Sarkar reached his destined place, the Satsang ashram of Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra at Himaitpur on the bank of river Padmaa. It was not possible to have a view of Thakur in the same night, as Thakur was physically indisposed, suffering from fever and was on liquid diet. Thakur was not keeping well for last few days, but he was feeling better towards morning. Therefore, it would be better, thought Panchanan da, to see Thakur next morning.

Next day morning Panchanan Sarkar was getting ready when Sushi Chandra Basu, then Secretary, Satsang and a close associate of Sri Sri Thakur came and accompanied him. At that time Sri Sri Thakur was at the residence of Birajkrishna Bhattacharya; house located in the middle of a field, a little away from Satsang ashram.

Sri Sri Thakur was on a bed in the verandah in half reclining position. His eyes are steady on the pages of a small size book in his hand. From a distance Panchanan Sarkar's inquisitive mind perhaps turned minute and was absorbed in assessment. "Where is the similarity of this figure with that handsome image that I have been seeing in photos all these days?" Panchanan Sarkar asked himself. "The eyes are of course dazzling, but why are there so many shreds of gloom surrounding the eyes? Where is that effulgence radiating from the limbs? Ah, it belies all my expectation!"

Panchanan was shaken awake from his thought, when Sri Sri Thakur was heard reciting a stanza, apparently from the book in hand, in an appreciative tone.

"How charming it is from a far,
yet, dark marks are seen nearer!"

Panchanan stopped there, about ten feet away from Sri Sri Thakur. He could not proceed further towards Thakur, having heard these two lines. His mind benumbed, he did not know what was appropriate to do. "How is it possible that

my own thinking at this point of time is getting expressed in Sri Sri Thakur recitation of these two lines?” Panchanan wondered. In a flash of memory, he recollected having read from *Amiya Vani* of Ashwini Kumar Biswas about Sri Sri Thakur’s ability to read the mind. “Am I encountering something of that sort”, Panchanan’s rational mind was trying to come to terms with Sri Sri Thakur’s presence. “Lo and behold the meaning of these two lines! May be Sri Sri Thakur is letting me know through this event that ‘never roam in the land of imagination staying away at a distance. Come close, however may be his appearance, shoulder his liability.’”

Sushil Chandra bowed down before Sri Sri Thakur and placed himself seated on the floor, as a devout disciple would submit before his teacher. Panchanan was standing still at a distance for quite some time nonplussed. Panchanan wrote, ‘What a state of un-preparedness I found myself in! In any case, I am new to this place, not familiar with the customs. Sri Sri Thakur does not recognize me and surely has not noted my presence. As for others, all are so attentive towards Thakur that hardly they take note of anything else. At this moment, let me give the slip; I can come conveniently later and be formal. Under the circumstances, there cannot be any better strategy than this.’

Bang came a voice from Sri Sri Thakur, “You are into professorship; isn’t it, my dear brother?”

“I heaved a sigh of relief after replying, ‘I was into that; now given up’”, wrote Panchanan. As Sri Sri Thakur broke the ice, I got pushed into the zone of familiarity, took few steps ahead, prostrated before Sri Sri Thakur and got myself seated on the sheet of cloth laid out over there. No one over there felt the need to introduce me as they saw Thakur knowing me; and I also felt like an insider of this place and jettisoned all my fears and inhibitions. Then I got into a different state. I saw Sri Sri Thakur looking at me; a lovely look with a magnetic pull; just look, without any expression. I got glued to that look; I did not know what that look meant for me. That look pierced deep into my mind, unlocked the knots in my mind and unearthed, as it were, a spring of monologues. I went on talking, as if a volley of verbiage rushed out, expressing feelings that were submerged in a heavy heart; being unmindful of numerous anxious listeners in the surrounding. Sri Sri Thakur’s constant gaze flowed over me, like the waters of river Ganga, soaking, washing and purifying my body, mind and soul. Something happened in me, which I cannot express. I went on speaking out; but more than what I spoke, there were heaps of residue remained at the bottom of my heart. I left with a load of unbearable loathing.”

“At last, I found Sri Sri Thakur! By then, I was emptied of all my inborn assets, whatever I was blessed with.”

All the while, Sri Sri Thakur was silent, reclining on a bed, listening to everything that I poured out. He sprang into a feat of anger, when he heard me saying, ‘what is there left for me now?’ Shaken from his relaxed posture, Sri Sri Thakur sat up erect on the pillow and said in a threatening tone, “If you only have to think everything about yourself, what for am I there? If at all I am anybody for you, is it fair to feel helpless anymore? Do you think that you have come over here on your own? If you take for a moment that someone has pulled you over here, then you know that the key is in his hand; and he can wrought havoc in a moment. Do you find it hard to have a little faith on my words?”

“The sweet reprimand that Sri Sri Thakur hurled at me had the force of a moral pressure, backed by an indefatigable logic. I quite did not know as to what happened to me; I felt elated, my heart was lighter; millions of layers of thick gloom within me got fizzled out like a whiff by the intimate words and lively posture that Sri Sri Thakur displayed in his inimitable style. That was a strange experience; that words would hardly convey.”

“I was speechless; overtaken by a tempest of ecstasy; all my well formulated arguments and deeply entrenched thoughts blown out. My vacuous state did not fail the notice of Sri Sri Thakur. Addressing Sushil Chandra, Sri Sri Thakur said, “Instead of crying for help in distress, if man can have a little bit of faith, then help would automatically come. In normal state, man would not step on to this path; but in the midst of turbulent river on the capsized boat, man gets into fast *japa* (repetition of holy name) with unhesitant faith. The divine deity, who remains embodied in the holy name, gets awoken by the earnest call of the distressed. There appears an island, instantly, out of whirling water. The emergent island shelters the sinking boat on its surface. You are of course witnessed to many such instances; aren’t you, Sushil da?”

Panchanan writes, “Earlier I was speechless; now I stood breathless, when Sri Sri Thakur cast his mysterious look on me. So, Sri Sri Thakur was referring to the incident that threatened us and we were miraculously saved. But we have not yet shared that incident with anyone in the ashram. That question is not yet answered. I used to wonder, what prompted the author of ‘Amiya Vani’ to fill up so many pages with narrations of Sri Sri Thakur’s omniscience? Now I know what option the author had for him? It was not miracle mongering; it was rather a spontaneous expression of gratitude of an ordinary author.”

Panchanan reflected on his first encounter and exchange with Sri Sri Thakur in a tone of self-analysis and jubilation. 'Why am I recounting this purely personal feeling?' he asked to himself. He found an answer that was as compelling as it was spontaneous. A bud of lotus has its own urge to bloom. Nature has its own urge to beautify the creation. Sun has its own urge to energize the earth and sprinkle color on the petals of flowers. 'My life story is ugly and indecent. That set the backdrop on which I received the pure, the spotless, the unblemished Thakur. I received Thakur as my own; in my own way. When I speak about my Thakur, I will have perforce to speak about my own self. Thakur and me together brings joy. Real joy touches many minds instantly. The all-pervading image of joy has an urge to spread – I did realize that and that is why I must share my experience.'

Sri Sri Thakur was in his own mood; very unique and inimitable; puffing the hookah from a long pipe. He was gently wandering on many topics. Staring at Sushil Chandra, Sri Sri Thakur said, 'Have you noted Sushil da the manner Panchanan da outpours himself during discussion?'

One elderly mother by the side interjected, 'exactly like Bona's father'. Later on I came to be familiar with that mother as wife of Radharaman da.

Sri Sri Thakur approvingly joined with the mother. 'You said rightly. These are of a separate kind. And you verily know that I like that type.'

'You have said, that was a royal type', Sushil Chandra added his view.

Sri Sri Thakur said, 'exactly that; they are very easy to understand, easy to capture. They also grasp things easily'.

Some other thought episode was winking in mind to come out, but I resisted. I rather allowed some questions on meditation and spiritual attainment. The moment, I broached the subject, a bulky person who was seated by my side, (must be Sri Sri Thakur's disciple, but stranger to me then) made advance to respond to my question. That was his bad luck; he had hardly any scope to escape. My reaction to him was ugly, to say the least. 'Who are you gentleman?' I spitted venom on him. 'My question was addressed to Thakur Anukul Chandra. He alone will reply. I least care who you are and however wisdom you might have acquired. I equally possess the capability of explaining, at least, narrating the bookish knowledge from scriptures, as persons like you do.'

'This came out from me like a bolt from the blue; least expected in the vicinity of Sri Sri Thakur's view and audience. I was however in no position to assess the reaction of the surroundings. Neither do I recall the face of the person. That was

therefore my first and last encounter with that person. I did not get an occasion to unscrew the nail that my wild remark pierced on that innocent person.'

'There was hardly an account of the load of such innumerable misdeeds that I acquired and stored in the bosom of my destiny. Yet I was marching ahead with aplomb and alacrity. Today, I find no measurer of the perplexity that was named as 'Thakur', whom I owned up, despite a shoulder stooped with a monstrous I.'

Panchanan Sarkar recounts his feelings and status during his first visit to Sri Sri Thakur. 'My body was smeared with excruciating irritation; my mind and lip throbbed with arguments supported by whims. Amidst the plethora of self-supporting arguments, as if, the 'cosmic image' appeared for me. All my attention being focused within, I solaced in the fact that 'whatever God does is for the good'. It was heard earlier that it takes years and years of pursuit for man to get his views focused inside. Despite that, the inexorable external world apparently does not grant relief to the mind. But for me, it was, as if, an exception. I distinctly recall, my mind was bubbling with ecstasy, as I advanced towards 'ashram'. It was certain in my mind that my lone retreat from the world for good would end up with a meaningful outcome in near future. There was no shred of doubt in my mind that the boat that I have boarded on is faultless. It was not as if I was unaware of the fact that the boat is made of rejection. I sensed a mind that is cool with breeze of fullness. The ultimate of rejection is renunciation. What else could be the meaning of rejection, if it does not sway mind away from the world?'

'Alas! Who was alive to the fact then that rejection and renunciation are not the same stuff? The other side of attachment is repelled attachment. There was no shred of idea then that repelled attachment is more dangerous than attachment. The other side of supreme attachment is actually renunciation.'

After some time, the seriousness in the ambience got dispersed. Sri Sri Thakur said, 'Hey, Sushil da. Panchanan da is new to this place. No one here knows Panchanan da; there is no understanding; friendship is something far away. But the words, (argumentative and pungent as these are) will sure to invite reaction. No doubt, it is a weakness. The same was there with Anta (Ananta Nath Ray – Maharaj). He had this dangerous tendency; of course got subdued now; mostly rooted out. Not much of complaints come on that account.'

Sri Sri Thakur paused for a moment and said, 'Of course, Panchanan da is much seasoned man; his words are not to be misunderstood.'

Sri Sri Thakur continued with a long breath, 'Men find their way to your place carrying series of bruises on their bosom; is it not true?'

Sri Sri Thakur cast his view wide around and repeated, 'what, is it not true?'

The air got cleared slowly. Sushil Chandra was heard clearing this throat and said with repressed voice, flashing a gentle smile, 'What else it could be? Reality is that we all more or less ...'

Sri Sri Thakur did not allow completing the sentence. 'That is the reason why I tell you all. It is no good just talking. Learn how to talk. Anta learnt very fast; has come up to mark. With continued effort, he will manage the rest.'

'At that time, Sri Sri Thakur got his meal. He got himself prepared to drink juice in the presence of everybody. Sushil Chandra got up to leave Sri Sri Thakur alone for his meal. We also followed and half-heartedly came out.

It struck Panchanan Sarkar, what was the school where Maharaj got this wonderful lesson. 'Oh! This then is the source of the wealth of oratory that Maharaj possesses!'

'We came back to our respective seats when Sri Sri Thakur's meal was over. I then refrained from wandering here and there and raised a question which was supposedly the master question in my mind.'

- 'It is certain that everyone aims at encounter with God', said Panchanan da.
- 'Certainly; but God is not an object of imagination', said Sri Sri Thakur.
- 'That is for certain. God is what he is. He cannot be made by man at his whim and fancy. Nevertheless, the concept of God is created by diseased mind of weak man. Besides that why do you have to create God? He comes in ages in human form for the sake of men; of course for those who are privileged.'
- 'You said it right, Panchanan da', Sri Sri Thakur said amusingly. His body swayed, advancing towards me, out of deep affection.
- 'So then, we can view the supreme image at the height of our spiritual attainment. Is it not right Thakur?' I brought the discussion back to my point of enquiry.
- 'Of course', affirmed Sri Sri Thakur in a monosyllabic sound.
- 'My query here is: at advanced stage of spiritual pursuit, what image of God we will come across? I do not think anyone has given a description of that image of God; God's own image.'

Sri Sri Thakur gazed at me and gave a simple yet pointed reply. 'The image that you will carry from here; you will see the same image over there, after reaching there.'

I resubmitted the question to Sri Sri Thakur as I could not really fathom what Sri Sri Thakur answered to me in the first place. 'Thakur, if, for example, someone starts with the image of goddesses Kali, then he will see God in mother Kali? Is it so?'

Sri Sri Thakur repeated his answer in a mysterious way. 'The same (what I said); the image that you carry from here, you will see the same image over there.'

Suddenly a new interpretation stuck me and I sought Sri Sri Thakur's confirmation by saying, 'The image that you carry from here..... Does it mean that the image that we are carrying on now is the ultimate image?'

Sri Sri Thakur did not respond to my last question. I observed Sri Sri Thakur casting a unique look over a long range of space, stretching almost up to horizon. His face looked resplendent with a wonderful smile; hard to decipher its meaning and indication.

That was the end of my first visit to Sri Sri Thakur when I got answer to the last question of man.

After that visit of Sri Sri Thakur, I underwent numerous such wonderful experiences that made me to consider my life worth living. For about a fortnight, from some unknown recess in my heart, I kept on hearing a humming sound that sang a verse of Rabindranath: 'what was there in black and white, got painted in colorful sight!'

Whoever came across me in those days could not help feeling that I was into a state of delirium. When that report reached at my brother, he instantly remarked, 'I had a fair premonition that it was waiting to happen'. However, he ruminated on the issue for a moment and said, 'however, let us wait and see; my brother is not a fool; nor was he insane at any point of time.'

At this stage, Panchanan made an assessment of his state and writes the following:

'This experience that I am out to share is actually independent of 'me' or my mental model, which are actually a facade for the outside world. The experience is entirely novel, arrived like a guest and did not pick up anything from my own self and the small 'me'. This experience flew from outside, like nothing out of nothing, but

resolutely possessed me. Never tested before, this was a thrilling experience, beyond expression; nevertheless real. It was a sensation; it remained till date as sensation; never became a perception. These experiences did not compromise with the conventional worldly wisdom, nor did it ride on the ghost of intellect and attempt a rationalization. Though remained hazy, these experiences were never subjected to question; ever new, ever green and were beautiful at all times. These were renewals of the inner self, not amenable to senses, never bitten by intelligence; part of my soul; ever awakened thrill, ever ringing bell. It is melody that is being played, as if on its own; eternal play is its self. This is self-awakening and I have to narrate that story.'

Panchanan Sarkar reflects. 'As such, I am a compulsive obsessive talker. On the top of that I got a license for that. How much did I outpour in a moment! Today I fail to recall if there was well thought out sensitivity in my talk; but I distinctively remember Sri Sri Thakur's unique posture of attentive listening. I got a feeling, it was not only paying his ear to my words; it was an spontaneous urge to embrace me with thousand hands, a sympathetic reception that would reach a traveler, lost in thick fog, at his desired destination.'

'What I viewed and those of my experiences, numerous, strange and spectacular, as these were, are not singular to me. I have come across uncountable such number of people, who carry in their heart *mahabharat* of grief and off load it at Sri Sri Thakur and lighten their heart. Sri Sri Thakur lent his ears, cast his glance, flashed a mild angular smile and that is enough for the issues to be over. Mere listening was an act of grace and listening was an expression graceful solution; I don't think, even the most creative poet on the earth would have ever imagined this. Now I know, if one has to listen, it should be like Thakur did. Words do not erupt from mouth, though these come out of mouth. Do the words of appeal that spurt out of deep recess of wounded heart, need only an ear and meet its end? That day I experienced how the hurt feelings are embraced whole heartedly only by lending an ear. Is everything incomparable seen with the person who stands unique amongst others? Is the extraordinary person exhibits everything that defies ordinary?'

Panchanan Sarkar continued. 'My outpouring is flowing almost spontaneously, at my own pace and urgency; and he is also listening to me in his own unique way. At times at some place, he catches me on some weak points; may speak a word or two; that too, if he feels so, otherwise no. When he speaks, his whole body, every organ including the muscle joins in expression, as if in a rhythm, which is a rare experience for me. The charm of expression and sharpness in communication that I have seen with him is unforgettable and indescribable.'

'Have I ever seen a similar expression, where words flow like a stream, spiced with appreciative symbolic sounds, alternating with pause, reception and confirmation? I saw the *Nataraj* (the dancing *Shiva*) in him and his action is not someone's imagination; it is real and is being played out before me.'

'One more aspect of Sri Sri Thakur's style of communication is worth noting. I wonder how much more meaning he packs into much less words and how little he speaks to solve much large problem! It is known that a huge peepal tree remains ingrained in a tiny seed; but can the story of *mahabharat* be contained in a capsule composition? Even that composition is such that can it be as clear as daylight to the person who enquires? Even if that is possible, where is such a speaker, who can deliver the essence in such a manner that it straight touches the heart of fool and wise alike? And then, who possesses such a charming face that a theory of hard substance blossoms with hundred percent beauty and brightness?'

'During childhood days I heard that the Thakur of Dakhineshwar once observed to a reputed orator, 'What all you speak, round and round, for hours together? What do you talk so much when things can be shown with a pointed figure?'

There is not much of merit in piling up talk on talk. That only makes both speaker and listener fatigued. Instead of piling up talk, if I weave a garland, then also I have to spin my own thought in sequence. So, in any case, it is bound to be expression of self-realization. How does one talk, if one were to suppress one's own self? The celebrated story writers speak their own perceptions of ordinary everyday happenings and bring these out to public notice; that is their skill. Therefore whatever you say is actually about yourself. And especially if I know someone like Thakur, whom I have admittedly owned up; I will naturally speak about him. Thakur himself has demanded, in many ways and under many circumstances that we need to feel him in our own self.'

'Know thy self' is an old adage. 'If you want to see yourself away from the whirlpool of the worldly affairs, then you ought to know yourself', advised such persons who are authority by their own right, of all times and at all places. Sadly, my 'self' is shrouded by wild complexes, which are highly destructive. Therefore that glow of 'self' may remain elusive from my vision for ever. Then, is the old saying 'know thy self' is an empty verbiage? I personally do not think so. The seers of the yore knew that the inherent need of 'self' is to preserve itself, with an urge to grow on unending path. Man ceases to exist, if that urge goes away. That urge is the invaluable wealth of the soul and therefore the only undeniable truth. That urge needs a reflection of its own, a live and pure image, a person epitomized the urge of the soul, to live and grow.'

'Therefore, if I talk about that person, who is reflection of my true self, whose association with me is intimate and lifelong, then it turns out to be a saga of myself. If someone talks about Thakur and does not bring in himself, then has he really

understood what 'Thakur', as an object of talk, is? Therefore Thakur has to be spoken of, in the light of myriads of detailing of our own life.'

Panchanan Sarkar narrates his experience. 'When I reached at the feet of Sri Sri Thakur, I was lost in working out a sum which attempted to find answer to: 'what I had, what happened to me now and what will happen to me?' The focus of my attention was me. As if I am the center of this universe; I am alone and I have no link with anyone else. This was the lesson that I had learnt after years of my time in the school of life. In that state, it is natural that I see only me, whenever my eyes are open. How my eyes met the ever expectant and ever appealing eye balls of Sri Sri Thakur, and that too at a significant moment, I have no words to express that can meaningfully convey. When that happened, my eyes, the pairs, which for long were banished from the overwhelming charm of the world and became almost blind, suddenly got back its light. The unexpected air of liberation that hit my eyesight virtually caused a tempest of joy in my whole being that I can hardly forget. That was the first step of my new life, which ushered in, almost unsought for; it was His mercy. The ever shining moment, as it was, is permanently imprinted in my mind. That was a moment, when the vista of new life flung open for me and my view got a wing of endless horizon.'

Panchanan encountered Hem Chandra in the ashram. He enquire, 'dear brother Hem, how are you in the shelter of Sri Sri Thakur?'

Hem Chandra replied, as if in a contrary sense. 'No shelter, say privilege'.

Panchanan – 'Are you right in saying this as privilege? Do privilege in this ashram not convey derogatory sense?'

Hem Chandra – 'You know Panchanan; poet Hem hardly uses inappropriate words. Man hardly wants shelter. Man looks for privilege. It is that which makes his heart relieved. But he hardly get it. Hardly there is any body on this earth who can provide privilege. Everybody wants those magic stones in hand. It is a wonderful affair dear Panchanan. Man wants to grow big; he wants to be counted within biggies. But he can hardly tolerate weakness in his fellow brother. No one does bear the torture of weakness.'

Panchanan – Well said, as it appears, dear Hem. Are you sure that no body needs shelter?

Hem Chandra – Never, no shelter. Life is no poor for not having shelter. Somewhere and somehow each one manages a shelter. One could become a servant of a great man, if that is acceptable to one. Otherwise, everyone is blessed with shelter of sleep, unlimited.

Hem Chandra then led Panchanan to his place of dwelling in ashram, found a note book from his shelf and read out a brief poem, in an emotional tone, as tears rolled down his cheek.

Oh my life companion, you're ever loveable,
That's why you are great and adorable.
Protection and privilege you have bestowed,
In the guise of shelter, no favour allowed.

Never have lashed this heart, that's center of mine,
Keeping the mind elated, no formal discipline.
You are ever favourable, in all my life affairs,
My eyes now opened, after search of long years.

Panchanan saw the heading of the poem 'Privilege'. After reading out the poem, the poet, blurted out through lips and eyes, in a tone mixed with frustration and futility, 'Is it shelter? Would anybody offering shelter be spared? You perhaps have not seen my real self, Panchanan.'

Panchanan Sarkar shared his experience of living in ashram. That obviously was life changing. 'In my first visit to ashram, I stayed for 3 days altogether. I came to visit Thakur; visit to Thakur was a compulsion for me at that time.'

'What is this 'ashram'? What makes this 'ashram'? Who are the inmates of 'ashram'? Is this the same type of 'ashram' which is generally understood as 'ashram' in the world? These are some relevant information one would like to have; but these were not uppermost in my enquiry.'

'When I reached ashram, these issues were about to crop up in mind; but got repressed by my own undoing. The histrionics conducted by me before Thakur that exposed my indecent identity made me to withdraw those questions. I was scared of the possibility that I might create more such images of mine in the ashram environment, which might turn out to be indecent and inconsistent. I came to realize, in the life of Swami Vivekananda, Vedanta was not as important as attachment on that living man, Sri Ramakrishna, was. This simple fact is a million dollar fact; above everything else. That is a root fact. I realized the same from the life of Shivaji. Patriotism or national awakening was not as significant for Shivaji as

devout surrender to his Guru Ramdas. The discipleship of the despot is the ultimate reality.'

'As far as ashram is concerned, generally people come to the saint gurus. People come and go for various purposes, some of them to take shelter in relatively easy trouble free environment of the ashram. Besides, there is always crowd of pilgrims and *pandas*. I have seen enough of those earlier. There is another type of people who display very odd type of addiction to religion. I was afraid that I should not confront such people and get into reactive and resistive mode due to my habitual intolerance for them. When my mind was struggling with this dilemma, I took a pledge that I have come for visiting Thakur and I will only visit Thakur. I would not look here and there and volunteer myself into such situations where there is possibility of smearing myself with mud. I no doubt put *a priori* restraint on myself, but got into a whirlpool of turmoil unexpectedly. Let me come to that.'

'Here has arrived a good stuff.'

I came to know that the above remark blurted out of Sri Sri Thakur, after I came away from Sri Sri Thakur on the first day of visit. This got spread around the ashram like wildfire. The ashram became agog with curiosity and enthusiasm of high intensity. This remark from Sri Sri Thakur instantly made me an object of attraction in ashram. People started coming to visit me; and there were many whom I would have otherwise not visited. However, I had to engage myself with them by way of exchanges. In the process, I was rather benefited in the sense that my mind got partly filled up or healed up, as the case were, while discussing many things with them. During that process, I developed acquaintance with some people with merit and significance. Two to three days of general interaction and mixing with the people in the ashram made me to realize that world is not uniform, nor is it a homogenous unit. I then realized that the world that I knew earlier was not everything in the world. This caused doubt to erupt in the mind occasionally, as if, I am yet to see and know the world. It was the first scene of a new chapter of admittance and realization in my life; as if first ray of rising sun in the horizon of evolution. Someone from within prompted me, hey; you are yet to get the view and the perspective that is required to know the world and the practical training that is required for that view to come still remains outside your reach.

Perched on a wooden seat, in front of the hut of Brajagopal Dutta Roy, in the open surrounding of ashram, I was massaging myself with oil, preparatory to bathe. An elderly lady from the ashram came from nowhere and stood at a distance. 'Heard, Thakur said, here has come a stuff, do you know anything about him, Priya?' announced the lady. Her voice had the affection and pride of a mother. Subsequently, I came to know her as mother of Kumarkhali and she was addressing to Priyalata, who is lady of the house, wife of Brajagopal Dutta Roy. Priyalata mother perhaps answered her query by pointing her indication towards me.

Innocent, unhesitating and endearing view of Kumarkhali's mother touched every bit of me, from top to toe; as if she was looking for something to collect. 'Of course; it would be when Thakur has said. Has anything without meaning come out of that leap?' said Kumarkhali's mother in a tone of self-approval.

Then commenced a barrage of enquiry; 'where have you come my dear son? Where is your home?' She then commented on her own observation. 'What is the worth of enquiring about home? From now on, this is your home; this is your property. How is it, Priya? Every one of us has gone through this and the same has happened to all of us.'

Then followed, 'what were you doing? How did you reach over here? Who imparted you *diksha*? etc. etc.' I saw no end to her curiosity. And I responded to every query, as I could hardly have escaped. I did not feel anything odd; rather I enjoyed the conversation. Simple, uneducated elderly lady; how much affectionate? What a quick acceptance and sense of belongingness! I had to appreciate that.

All the three days that I spent at ashram in my first visit, I stayed with Brajagopal Dutta Roy, as member of his family and took my meal in his home. This arrangement was made by the then secretary of ashram respected Sushil Chandra Basu. Brajagopal was my friend from the days in Kolkata where we stayed together in rented apartments. We wrote MA examination together in 1915. His subject was Bengali literature and mine was philosophy. I was acquainted with his simplicity, sincerity and honesty from those days. When I came to know his wife at ashram, I was cooled with spontaneous respect for her. I was wondering, how Brajagopal was able to stay unruffled? I did not know the background strength. I thought to myself that some people are born like that. But when came to know the lady in the home, I got a possible easy answer to my complicated question. I came to a conclusion, if God wants to keep someone in peace; he makes arrangement for a worthy soul mate beforehand. Further, unless there is a housewife like this, the man will surely land up to be a pauper, for no reason. Socrates is not born here and there every now and then. During my long stay in ashram, amidst innumerable events, I am indebted to her gracefulness. I therefore held her in high esteem.

My familiarization with her began with food cooked by her; native rice (*baran* type) and curry of *dal* and bottle gourd. *Baran* rice was first for me to taste. What a fascinating red color and endearing taste! Came to understand later, Sri Sri Thakur was fond of this *baran* rice with red color and sweet taste. I now have picture in my mind of scenes Thakur enjoying this rice with a lot of satisfaction. That day curry of bottle gourd remained fresh in my mind for long time for its white color and endearing taste. I have narrated the story of bottle gourd curry at many places and could not resist repeating it here. It was a veritable recipe for owning up others. This may be a small little thing, but has remained with me as an invaluable

experience of my first day in ashram. We usually share what we see, what we hear, what we understand; then why to neglect what I tasted?

While savoring the affectionate food in the company of Brajagopal, I raised the earlier topic. 'What did Sri Sri Thakur mean by 'stuff'?'

Brajagopal started speaking in his unassuming ways. 'In this context, 'stuff' denotes those who are carrying loads of diverse experience with them. It is possible to discover great wealth by cleaning, dusting and arranging those. If that can be done, then many people in the world later will be benefited by those.'

I commented on Brajagopal interpretation. 'You are appropriate in deciphering the literal meaning of the word, but from the point of view of practicality of the case, the word 'stuff' does not stand for 'experience' in my case. Because, mine is not the 'load of experience'; it is a 'mountain of injuries', which do not carry any meaning; nor are those even properly arrayed.'

Brajagopal responded. 'Yes, the import is same. It is of course a heap of ironies, tragedies and injuries. Significance here is that reactions of those have not made you destructive; rather have made you inquisitive. The whirlwind of clashes and calamities have not made you to desert the society, the battlefield of life, and have not made you to wander in hills and forests. Nor have you been led to end your life out of deep frustration with life and for search of eternal respite.'

I joined with Brajagopal. 'True, but not that I have not stepped into those roads of destruction. It is just that those roads have not got my final acceptance. This much in me you can acclaim.'

Brajagopal continued, harping on the point of similarity. 'Verily, Panchanan! That is the place where the lord of the universe presides. That lord, who is also your personal lord, drives the one, your way, whom he wants to drive. He plays the same role in the life of those who have come here; rather who could come over here. Of course, each one has his own type and manner. That is why Sri Sri Thakur says, none of those who come here, do so accidentally.'

I pressed the point further and said, 'Is it true? Does he say so?'

With renewed emphasis yet in his characteristic style marked by simplicity, Brajagopal said, 'he repeatedly says this. Just the other day, he was here. You will also get to hear the words of hope from his mouth. That moment will surely come in appropriate time and place.'

Our meal got over. The last point made by Brajagopal created heat which lasted for some time.

In the meantime, Sushil Chandra came to enquire about my meal. Understood that, he was yet to take his meal; but had come to enquire about the guest. If that were not done, Mother (Mother Manamohini devi) would take him to task. Mother got the whereabouts of me and Sushil Chandra was relieved.

Mother; mother of Sri Sri Thakur, Mother Manamohini Devi.

Unless everyone in ashram got something to eat, whatever was available, Mother never took anything, not even a sip of water. I remember an event of my later days in ashram.

It was late in afternoon; dusk almost dawned. Due to some preoccupation for the whole day, I did not have lunch timely. Having moved around places, when I set my feet on the courtyard of Tapovan, suddenly number of inmates of ashram surrounded me and started hurling their pent up anger on me. 'Where on earth you had been to? People are looking for you here and there everywhere for last two to two and half hours? Why are you oblivious of the fact that you are yet to have your morsel of food?' It was a mass outburst of barrel of enquiry.

I reacted. 'What grossly wrong has happened? I did not have food, as I was busy with some work.'

They said, in a tone mixed with anger and sadness, 'how foolish; Mother is waiting here with the rice plate.'

Nonplussed, I said, 'what are you saying? Such a big ashram, mother is keeping account of who has taken food or nor?'

'Please run. You did not know, is it? Now on, please bear this in mind. Never do this folly again.' I was reprimanded, may be forgiven.

I ran and to my horror, I saw Mother sitting, looking out, the rice plate placed before him. What a rebuke I received that day? Of course, it was a sweet rebuke.

That is Mother!

We profess to be charmed by Thakur. And our Thakur is charmed by his Mother. This view about Thakur is as certain as science. This is the clue, the glowing point, to understand Thakur. Mother Manamohini is not only Thakur's mother, she is your mother, is mine and she is mother of all the people and that is for real.

In my visit to ashram, I visited mother. I did not know how to view; still I remained looking at her. If you are in ashram, you have to see mother; there is no way you can miss her. A curious thought came to my mind, ever since I got the view of mother. I viewed mother; the picture of mother of a just born child, her anxiety to breast feed the child. Countless number of children who lost their biological mother found mother surrogate in her. She plays the role of mother, complete mother, for such children with ease and felicity. She is epitome of motherhood with infinite love and patience. All the inmates of ashram are one on this point. Mother is not at all aware what is science, scripture and sublimity; she only knows that man bereft of mother becomes pauper and then lands himself to be in state of solitary wilderness. And those people at the height of their hopelessness flock over here for relief and refuge. The Mother here renders motherhood to those motherless vagabonds and cools there shattered hearts and that is *dharma* for her. Whoever has come across the Mother, in the first visit itself he has found his own mother.

Of course, every mother on the earth is a complete mother; for her own son; may not be so for other children. But here, the Mother is mother for any child, as if biological mother. How does one explain her image of mother that gets mirrored for everyone, very naturally; irrespective of class, creed and age? Is it on earth possible for this spontaneity to come with anyone? And if that is with this Mother, how on earth has it come? This mother appears to be the original image of motherhood and all mothers on the earth carry her reflection. Remember the portion from Holy Book, where it is written, 'Mother is universal mother; wife is mother in life.' Universal mother literally means that which can measure the universe. And who can measure her? She is immeasurable. One measured expression of her is Thakur Anukul Chandra. The core of that mother that gave birth to पुरुषोत्तम (the prophet) is something that can hardly be said in words. Whoever in later years writes the story of Mother, whatever may the eagerness to capture and portray her, must bear this in mind.

Afternoon when Panchanan encountered Sushil Chandra, discussion hovered around what Thakur referred to as 'stuff'. The summary of what Sushil Chandra said was this: 'Sri Sri Thakur desires to fabricate a boat for ferrying people across the ocean that is life. The wood planks for the boat would be hard, yet malleable, such that it can take desired shape but will not crack. The wood would undergo all kinds of treatment as required, such as slicing, baking, framing etc. Thakur needs that kind of seasoned raw material; is it not?'

While Panchanan was trying to make sense of what Sushil Chandra said allegorically, someone, standing behind Sushil Chandra added, 'If the stuff carries additional properties such that it would float and surf on the waves, would never sink, then it is all the more desirable. Is it not like true, Sushil?'

Sushil Chandra introduced the person as Dr. Jatin Roy, a prominent inmate of ashram in those days and of course, member of ashram council.

Panchanan reflects. 'This is how I got introduced to number of people on one to one basis. These are the people with whom I lived in ashram for long years. The stuff of intimacy with them helped to shape my life in the ashram. That is why; I have to speak about them when I speak about me. I did not know much about them at that time. But today, I must admit that I loved each one of them. What I mean to say is that I received love from them; pure love. The credit of love goes to them. I can earn that credit when I start loving others and others feel love from me. Today, I am narrating the affairs of those days, as I felt then.'

Evening in the ashram is time for *satsang adhibesan* for the inmates of ashram. It is held every day at appointed time in the premise of *matri mandir*. Panchanan says, 'I loved to sing in tune with others, in chorus. I heard some people appreciating my voice. In a day or two, I became one amongst them; not out of conscious move, but spontaneously. In my life, for the first time, I became something, in this process; a process that engulfed me and I enjoyed it.'

'Earlier in the life, in association with Maharaj, I recovered many a jewels that I lost in defeat in the struggle of life. And here I retrieved self-belief. Together these two reinforced my backbone and gave me energy to step ahead.'

Panchanan reflected on his own status. On hindsight, he discovered himself having traversed a lot and transformed quite a bit and was, perhaps, at a point of equilibrium. He made self-assessment and said, 'along with Thakur, I got relief and tranquility. My mind discovered endless wealth that I relished silently and internally. I had energy in heart and support at the back. The intimate association with the inmates of ashram, the fun of give and take, migrated me to an expanse wherein I got enjoyment. For the first time in my life I tasted what is enjoyment. I look past and am amused at my foolishness. I always thought enjoyment comes out of a state of compliance of complexes and ego. Whereas I have read enormous literature that says, 'enjoyment comes with expansion that remains above the self'.

Panchanan then realized that context and environment attach value to the object. He said to himself, 'what a great miss I would have incurred, if I had only kept me confined to seeing Thakur, understanding Thakur and owning up Thakur, leaving aside the stage and surrounding?'

This a great take home from the realization of Panchanan. He got back his life in Thakur and in ashram. Thakur never stays in isolation, if we thought Thakur alone is enough. Thakur lives in his world and the world reflects Thakur. This is perhaps

a message for reclusive devotee. Did not Thakur say, "You are for the Lord and not for others; you are for the Lord and so for others.'

Panchanan now turns to an amusing story. 'The whole ashram was getting reverberated with debate to unearth the meaning and significance of Sri Sri Thakur uttered 'stuff that has come'. In those days, the public at large used to take such interest in anything that Sri Sri Thakur said. It was discussed in groups. I was witness to this practice for many years. Thakur was discussing on Freudian psychology. What a jubilation that caused in people around, cutting across male and female, mother and child and so on. Everyone was talking about this complex or that complex. Again, Sri Sri Thakur spoke about patanjali philosophy and manu sanghita; then the ashram environment used to get charged with those concepts and philosophy.'

In the instant case, everyone is curious to know what did Thakur mean by 'stuff that has come'. Many imaginary and creative meaning came out during the discussion.

Someone was heard saying, 'Thakur's target audience of that statement is those who were present at that time with Thakur. The meaning could be, you all have built ashram. Now one person (stuff) has come. You all have to manage him.'

When Panchanan heard this version of interpretation, he felt little out of place. He said to himself, 'what odd have I committed, that takes me that way?'

Someone else reportedly observed, 'What Thakur meant by 'stuff' is something like wrestler. What Thakur meant was that a wrestler has come on the stage. He would bring the desired strength to fight against evil. Many more such wrestler would come, if we could bring them over here.'

Another interpretation came from someone. Ashram is akin to a hospital. And Thakur meant to say that another critical patient has come. Of course, Thakur would treat the patient. But he wanted others to be aware about the patient, as his liability. Each of the inmates of ashram was a type of patient. Like each one expected from others, similarly, you all would provide that help to the new patient.

One more interpretation was, Sri Sri Thakur has a divine and foresighted view. His view encompasses the past, present and future at once. He stands above the time cycle. His view is holistic. Therefore, you and me, can hardly fathom his view point.

There was a view to counter the above. Thakur has said this in a tone of affection. It is sure that he has identified the person and he is very dear and near to him. He just indicated that to all of us.

Panchanan could sense that the environment was getting heated up.

Someone drew analogy from the life of Thakur Ramakrishna. 'Didn't you notice, the Thakur of Dakhineshwar went to Vidyasagar's home number of times along with his associates? But ironically, Vidyasagar did not return his visit even once, by stepping on to the soil of Dakhineshwar. Surprisingly today, that unusual Thakur has got recognition of God world over.

The three days Panchanan spent in ashram was deep in terms of his acquaintance with the inmates of ashram. He enjoyed the company of people around as people found interest in him. He returned to Kolkata with a summary impression of those living in ashram. He writes, 'The look of everyone in ashram remains towards Thakur. That is why they are great, even though on worldly parameters, they are next to pauper. They are colored by Thakur; their body, mind and soul in unison. All of them were re-born in ashram, that is how, they belong to one class. Each one of them with one's individuality and diversity constitutes the whole body of ashram. Thakur is the brain and all others carry His indications. Together all of them constitute the organs of the huge soul, the Thakur, each one retain one's individuality, to the extent it is.'

Panchanan could feel a difference in ashram social setting. He enjoyed the company of the inmates of ashram, with whom he developed very intimate relationships. The fragrance of that acquaintance remained fresh with him for a fortnight after leaving ashram. He remained in a different world, the world where one has both hope and hype. Occasionally, he used to murmur songs of Rabindranath, which sings:

What was there in me, only black and white;
Whose color made me splendid and bright?

Panchanan was spellbound when he heard few stanzas in the melodious voice of Divakar, son of Viraj.

Your image has trained my eyes to stare,
It was your voice that made my ear to hear.

First time in life, Panchanan went through that kind of enchanting experience. He asked, 'Divakar, whose expression and experience is this?'

Divakar – ‘Composed by Hem Chandra; but experienced by each one of this ashram.’

Panchanan did appreciate the depth and diameter of the feelings and experience that the song expressed splendidly, rather genuinely. He said to himself, ‘it is true that the experience is common; but whoever has voiced it out and composed it must be a poet par excellence.’ He further enquired, ‘How many songs like this he has composed?’

Divakar – ‘Countless; the poems flows from him like perennial stream. That alone is his engagement here. Not only that, he also occasionally is scripting drama, based on Sri Sri Thakur’s idea.’

Panchanan disbelievingly sought confirmation. ‘Did you say drama?’

Divakar – ‘Of course, He scripts drama and makes Sri Sri Thakur to hear. And Sri Sri Thakur is seen to savour and enjoy those. Thakur has said that this time mothers in the ashram will cast the drama and play it on stage.’

Panchanan could not repress his surprise and retorted, ‘Mothers! Will females play the male role?’

Divakar - ‘No, how can that happen? Sri Sri Thakur desired that the drama will have no male role. The theme has to be skillfully brought out with all female characters.’

Panchanan saw no end to his puzzle. Who is this Thakur? What he is up to? In those days, what kind of liberating role Thakur was playing with respect to each person? He got a fertile field in Hem Chandra and was engaged in cultivating that in his own hand. What enthusiasm, hope and confidence Sri Sri Thakur displayed? A flood of imagination was seen in the life of Sri Sri Thakur for a small person and he was Hem Chandra.

‘*Karmadevi*’ was a drama, storyline was based on the ideas of Mother Manamohini devi, scripted by Hem Chandra. The drama was staged by the ladies in the ashram with unprecedented success. It was a maiden attempt by the female inmates of ashram. The drama was directed by one person that was Hem Chandra. The star cast was purely amateur. Therefore, Hem Chandra had to make the actresses learn the basics of acting including singing and dancing. Next year, they staged ‘*Sanghamitra*’. It became an annual feature in the ashram. Year after year, for many years, the drama staging episode continued.

Panchanan reflected on the way Hem Chandra went about staging his drama. He scripts his drama; then does a solo and mono acting before Sri Sri Thakur. Creative constellation of Sri Sri Thakur’s devotees like Krishna Prasanna, Sushil Chandra,

Brajagopal, Ratneswar including Panchanan used to be invariably present during those shows. One person whose presence was must and her view was considered to be final was mother Manamohini devi. Without her it always remained incomplete. Sri Sri Thakur used to point out if there were any psychological error and Hem Chandra, who otherwise was hardheaded person, was seen to accept all corrections gladly. Then again he would play the script out before Sri Sri Thakur. 'Everything put together, there used to be air of festivities and liveliness in the ashram that I could hardly forget. How can I miss the lead character Hem Chandra in these affairs; author, teacher, singer, instrument player, dancer, actor, director and above all a student and devout disciple, all in one, the eye of all?'

That was Hem Chandra!

During the initial phase of Panchanan's stay in ashram, when he was not counted amongst the inmates, he was taken aback once when he heard from one of the veterans Mr. Jatin Ray that if one asked gotra (clan) of Hem Chandra, he would not say clan of his own, rather he would say that gotra (clan) is to be traced to Sri Sri Thakur. He had that kind of organic offspring like cord with Sri Sri Thakur.

Panchanan felt slightly perturbed on this approach of Hem Chandra. He encountered him by asking, 'what is the fault of you own gotra (clan)?'

Hem Chandra countered with force and vigour. 'Are you asking for fault? The flaunt of origin that has not vaulted me towards progress, rather has glided me downwards, since the time consciousness dawned on me, is not a derogatory lapse on my part, dear Panchanan. Leaving that aside, I have been blessed with a re-birth since when I pledged *brahma-diksha*. Let the ferocious past remain buried under the present. Why on earth should I be burdened with the legacy of the past?'

This was the assertion of Hem Chandra! Who can stand before the mountainous knowledge and logic of Hem Chandra? Everyone likes to adore and love the thought leader Hem Chandra.

This time Panchanan visited Hem Chandra in his cottage prior to his leaving ashram. Hem Chandra had a simple habitat in the simple environment of ashram. All the time in the day was meant for the Lord; in the company of the Lord and in affairs of the Lord. With the poet's view, Hem Chandra viewed many panoramas in Sri Sri Thakur that hardly can be described. As if, he got a new sight. The insights getting scripted on reams of papers; his whole time is engaged in timeless writings.

Panchanan could not suppress his curiosity. He said, 'When will your heaps of writings see the light of the day?'

'My writings may get published or not is not my concern. Do you want to know what drives me to write in sleepless nights, forsaking food, burning the lamp with begged kerosene?'

Panchanan's curiosity got whetted.

Hem Chandra said, 'I write as I can't but write. I have no other go. This is the truth above all truths; the cream in the vase. I have no clue as to what joy Brahmaa (ब्रह्मा) felt when he created this expansive universe; but I can vouch for the ceaseless joy that keep me sieged, in a manner that may even humble the Brahmaa (ब्रह्मा).'

Panchanan matched with the wit of Hem Chandra by saying, 'yes, Brahmaa (ब्रह्मा), the great grandfather, would not mind to bow down before the great grandson. One development that I am sensing is that your thirst for drinks has taken a watery grave in the ocean of your love for Thakur.'

Hem Chandra retorted, 'Panchanan, your observation is not unfounded. But some foolish people make observations stating that I have undertaken great sacrifice and have turned out to be a monk. I fail to understand what people see and what people say!'

Hem Chandra switched the topic and observed, 'Now that you are out to return to Kolkata, you did not share your experience of days in ashram. How did you find the ashram? It has become a sort of addiction; and by nature, we love to hear about what we love.'

Panchanan could notice that, Hem Chandra's eyes gathered drops of tears in the corner. He also could sense from Hem Chandra's look that he was expecting some favorable comments from him.

Panchanan in his characteristics candidness said, 'Have you not heard about my experience in ashram and my feelings for Sri Sri Thakur and everything around here expressed before many people earlier?'

Hem Chandra said, 'I have; still you are my old time close friend; I crave to hear from you firsthand'.

Panchanan said, 'I am not a poet; that I can give a voice to my view. I am afraid that my words should not down size my thoughts and I end up losing my own thoughts.'

Hem Chandra – ‘it is not unknown to Hem kavi about your oratory. It is just that I like hearing your experience; it will enchant me and that’s it.’

Panchanan, unwillingly, kind of made a reality appraisal of ashram and those living in the ashram. He said, ‘Hem, if at all I have to say, I will say that you all are living here in the ashram as symbiotically as the elements of nature stay together. As if the ashram is a body and all those living in constitute the natural components and are in perfect harmony. It is such a great wonder that I could never think that it was ever possible.’

Hem Chandra – I see a wonderfully appropriate simile in your reply. It is your own discovery. People say I am a poet; but this observation has never occurred to me.

Panchanan – You are very much part of this. You never had time to assess yourself. Besides, there was no doubt about this in your mind.

Hem Chandra instantly felt elated; a spark of joy took over his body, mind and soul. He complimented Panchanan, by quoting a portion from Gita, that praises Guru by saying that His grace transforms dumbness to rhetoric and enables handicapped to scale mountain. He said to Panchanan, ‘Go back and reach well. Share your experience with Ishada and Bishwesar. Without them, the cup of joy remains incomplete.’

Hem Chandra raised a question to Panchanan at the time of departing. ‘When are you coming again?’

Panchanan – The mind’s hegemony is hitting hard inside. Let me see, when that gets subsided.

Hem Chandra retorted. ‘It is grave error Panchanan. The mind’s hegemony is not something that gets receded involuntarily. That is the very purpose, why we are undergoing the grinding here. I was otherwise enjoying my previous innings; wine in one hand and divine in the other, both the poles honoring their unique enjoyment zones.’

Hem Chandra got emotional, as he was lost in reflection. Few drops of warm tears rolled down the corner of his eyes and tossed the ground. In a show of spontaneous sympathy and a soft bravery, Panchanan said, ‘it’s merit earned during last few births that has finally brought us here, at His feet, with all the baggage and still on the way. Wise people say, it is foolish to form impression, unless you see the end of anything. Whatever might have been the journey and the experience, if at the end we get a taste of elixir, then it is ultimate satisfaction.’

The past life of Hem Chandra got flashed in the mind of Panchanan. What all he has not seen and not done? Today his face and eyes blossom with shining

equanimity and divine aura. This is a rare and wonderful phenomenon. Panchanan heard this earlier, now he is witnessing this.

That is Hem Chandra!

Few days in Kolkata, Panchanan could not stay any more without internal turmoil. He found himself again at the feet of Sri Sri Thakur in *Baisakh* (April -May) 1924.

'How is it that you are still in formals? Have those changed.' was the first observation of Sri Sri Thakur.

Panchanan – What to do with the shoes?

Sri Sri Thakur – 'Yes, change that too; let your body directly come in touch with the air and dust of this place. Let the elements of nature over here be familiar with you and so be you with the nature. Wherever one lives, one has to own up the nature of that place. Have not you witnessed, people after returning from outstation, bare themselves up, throw out all trappings and gasp the free air?

Panchanan became one amongst the inmates of ashram; alike in dress and food. A different kind of joy possessed him. After moving few steps here and there, Panchanan came to Sri Sri Thakur. Addressing Krishna Prasanna, Sri Sri Thakur observed, 'Kesto da, is not Panchanan da looking very fine and fresh?' Krishna Prasanna joyously said, 'He is now thoroughly one of all, here. His face and look says so; as if he is back at home.'

Sri Sri Thakur – 'you said it. It is not enough to take Thakur's name in words alone, one has to be one with Thakur, together with all those who are around him. One has to be identified with Thakur and with all his associates. Is it not true Panchanan da?'

Panchanan reaffirmed Thakur's observation by saying, 'Certainly, without that there is no charm. One more beautiful, nay, heart touching part is that everyone here, though not so familiar with me, is found to be fond of me, as if they got moon in their hands. No prior acquaintance is required.'

Krishna Prasanna added. 'Those who worship God have common feelings. They enjoy more of worship and more worshippers.'

Panchanan in a tone of agreement with Krishna Prasanna said, 'Of course, we do feel. In our home, at the time of Kali puja, we, all members of family always wanted the place of worship to be decorated, crowded and filled with flurry of activities. Let

there be shops with varieties of commodities from different places. Let the place of worship be swelled with visitors.'

Panchanan observed Sri Sri Thakur bursting with joy. He responded to his observation by saying, 'Did you see Kesto da! The substance (referring to Panchanan da) is most appropriate, as required. It is not for nothing that I observed the same no sooner than did he come here. He stands here, devoid of dress, just like one of you all. I think, Panchanan da should also trim his hair. What do you feel Kesto da?'

Panchanan heard echo of his own sensation. Expressing his elated feelings, he said, 'let me hurry up now and get hair cut'.

Sri Sri Thakur consented and added, 'Size your hair to minimum. Let the gentle breeze touch your skull.'

The ashram, on the north bank of river Padma in the dry days of *Baisakh* is flooded with gale blowing from south. Panchanan writes, 'I can hardly describe my feelings of freedom that I felt when the breeze swarmed me around, particularly after I had the haircut.'

Around 11 'o' clock, Panchanan took a pleasant bath, dipping in one of the deep streams of Padma, flowing just beneath the embankment. In empty stomach, in expectant mood for the clink of bell in *Anand Bazar* (ashram community kitchen), Panchanan felt the wrath of hunger. To his surprise, he observed, no one else in the ashram exhibited any bout of appetite; rather were seen to be quite immersed in gossip. Panchanan also followed suit and whiled away in languor.

The much awaited kitchen bell came alive to ring when the hands in clock took 3 'o' clock position. All the inmates ran in swarm and Panchanan was one amongst those. Reaching in the designated courtyard, he saw the brothers took their seats on the carpet of dust, swept a while ago, steel plates placed in front. All of them seemed to be enjoying to their heart's content.

Panchanan, having grabbed a plate for himself, perched himself on the dusty ground, being unmindful of his clothes. When the spirit is surfing on the waves of joy, you do not mind your arms and attire. Then came the rice, in a bowl with long handle. It was coarse rice, a native product of Pabna, unlike the fine grain of Barisal. In taste, the rice was nothing short of nectar. A mug of dal was poured on the mound of rice and the plate was filled up to the brim.

On closer view, Panchanan observed to his astonishment, the content of the dal had more water than the pulse grain; not even shred and colour of dal was visible. Panchanan observed others sitting in the row mixing a little of salt, squeezing the rice in to morsel, lifting a handful and pushing into their bloated mouth with great enthusiasm.

Panchanan joining the group, started enjoying food, sauced by appetite. His mind was filled with contentment as his empty stomach was getting topped up by food in *Anand Bazar*. An internal justification was building in the mind for not having any curry or vegetable as part of the meal. It appeared to be a complete meal, though at times there was a longing for a green *mirchi*. But in the ambience of unquestioning enjoyment, Panchanan felt constrained to ask for a green *mirchi*.

Water was served in jug at the end of the meal. Panchanan topped up his stomach with water. Then he saw everyone picked up the plate and proceeded towards the river. They all washed their mouth, cleaned the plates and deposited those in *Anand Bazar*. Thereafter Panchanan gathered that there was no such provision of dinner at night. All would get next meal next day at around three in the afternoon.

In the first visit to ashram, Panchanan had no scope to take meal in *Anand Bazar*. During that period of stay, he was invited for food by the inmates of ashram in their respective homes. But this time around he came to know that the families living in the ashram also manage their meals in *Anand Bazar*. Not that they separately cook in their homes regularly.

In this new inning of life, Panchanan spent the daytime in the new place in a new spirit. The evening also passed in the similar way. But when, the darkness grew and evening drew into night, Panchanan felt the need to sleep; but where? He looked for places in the ashram to stay. He ultimately got a place of his choice after a thorough survey of the ashram premises. His findings and descriptions as presented below partly provide a graphic description of living condition and living style of the inmates of ashram. The narrative also brings out the philosophy of spontaneity, naturalness and intimacy of people living in the ashram voluntarily.

In the spacious courtyard outside the ashram premise, towards the north, there was a room, cemented floor, aluminum roof, used as dispensary. It was in two parts; the part in the east was the bigger part, which was allopath section. The western part, relatively smaller in area, was homeopath section. Homeopath doctor Haripad Saha sleeps in that part of dispensary on a folding cot. The road skirting the corner of the dispensary leads to Himaitpur village. At the beginning of the road towards right is straw thatched earthen house, which is known as library. Librarian

Prabodh Bagchi sleeps in that house at night. That house also is his place for daytime activities.

On the eastern side of the road, there is a small straw thatched house of earthen wall. That house was built by Muhammad Khallilar Rehman, a close devotee of Sri Sri Thakur. There are two beds in that house; some people live in that house.

Two straw-thatched houses are there on the west of the road; these are long in size. The house on the left side stores documents, paper and registers of Satsang Philanthropy office. It is of earthen floor, on which one can sport holes of either rats or snakes. It is natural that nobody lives in that house and that is why it is not regularly cleaned.

The sprawling courtyard is of course swept every morning by a middle aged person by name Charu Sarkar. The house on the right hand side was partly used by the Charu Sarkar. He stored lot of things in the verandah and also inside and used the house like a godown. He lives in the house and leads an uneventful life. His only work was to keep the courtyard clean which he does regularly without any breach, even if he is not in good health.

Here and there on the courtyard stand some *babla* trees, spreading their winding branches all around, unhindered. These trees provide shade and coolness to the area. Whenever *pandals* are erected on the ground during *utsav*, these trees were given protection. Not a single of these trees was cut; nor a twig was trimmed. Everyone in the ashram was aware of the fact that snapping a leaf or a breaking a shoot from these trees pained Sri Sri Thakur. Sri Sri Thakur felt for each element in ashram. His sensitivity was so sharp that he screams out of pain, even if he was at a distance, anywhere in the ashram, if anyone hurt a tree. Everyone in the ashram experienced this and took care that Thakur was not subjected to this kind of painful experience. Panchanan also had occasion to experience this first-hand.

There is a building facing the embankment on the river bank, named as Matri Mandir. The building has three rooms. The room towards west houses Satsang People's Bank. The room towards east is occupied by a foreigner. The room in the center is used for satsang meetings (discourses). The floor of the verandah is paved by bricks, not yet cemented.

There are two cottages, one on each side of Matri Mandir. One cottage is known as Karta's (Head of family; namely Sri Sri Thakur's father) and the other one is known as Mother's (Sri Sri Thakur's mother). Thakur's father passed away; that is why Father's cottage mostly remains locked. The cottage is seen to remain open only when the *zamindar* of Muktagachha Shri Jatindra Narayan Acharya Choudhury comes with his associates. Mother stays in her cottage, with everything that is hers. The cottage has open verandah; a bedstead (cot) is permanently placed on the verandah, on which Mother takes rest whenever required, daytime or night. She is on that cot at night, in all seasons. The verandah gets full sun light

during day time and remains hot during night. Even strong wind out of tempest also is not enough to cool down that verandah. On the other part of the verandah, on the floor, sleeps Bankim Rai, after day's hard and restless labour.

The walkway on the left side of Mother's cottage leads to ashram. Towards left of the way, on western side, there is a long house, of canister tin, gives appearance of a warehouse. The large part of the house is occupied by Nafar Chandra Ghosh, a manager in ashram from the time of Karta (Thakur's father). Nafar is the sole custodian of all stores in ashram. One has to enquire with him to know what is there in ashram and what is not there. Nafar is a simple person and has his own way of understanding things. His tongue never exhibits sweetness and everyone in ashram is familiar with that roughness. However his devotion and loyalty to Sri Sri Thakur is unquestionable and therefore everything else becomes pardonable. There are anecdotes that narrate that Nafar at times attempted to speak sweet, but those talks sounded awkward with others. Some people apparently got so terrified that they forebode some ill happenings. 'What is this? Has Nafar's nature got dislodged? Are these the omen before the end?'

There is a kind of narrow chamber of four into six hands dimension adjoining Nafar's house. There is bedstead of one and half hands width placed over there, towards north. That bed is fixed for Shri Krishna Prasanna Bhattacharya. There are few (two to three) shelf inside the chamber, which holds papers of Krishna Prasanna.

Sri Sri Thakur had no designated place to live in the ashram. There are some sheets of tin which are framed as roof here and there wherever Sri Sri Thakur wants. Long clothes are surrounded as walls. A narrow wooden cot is placed on the ground of that makeshift camp. The bed spread on the cot becomes the resting place for Sri Sri Thakur.

Towards the east on the embankment besides river bank, there is a temple. That is where Huzur Maharaj, the guru of Sri Sri Thakur's mother, is worshipped every day. There is a *neem* tree adjoin the temple that becomes landmark from a distance.

Behind the temple, towards east, there is an in enclosure in which a dynamo is stationed. That dynamo illuminates the front part of ashram at night with electric light.

Now Panchanan narrates about his dwelling. 'All these as far as housing goes. I of course had my beddings that I carried from home. That was placed in the small house of Krishna Prasanna. But where do I spread my bedding? I observed a

shade, where I could lay myself down straight, towards the west on the embankment. Gentle breeze; no riot of mosquitoes. I thought it was possible to spend the night there, under the canopy of open sky. All that I needed was a pillow under my head and nothing to cover the body. On my own I occupied the vacant shade; after few days, others could know that I have been using the place; nobody ever disputed that place.'

'I used that place regularly for taking rest at night. As time passed, I observed others who otherwise have got a house to stay also regularly come here, the open sky by the embankment, spread a mat, place a pillow and sleep the whole night.'

Rain occasionally spoils the comfortable arrangement. As rain comes, every one packs the mat and pillow below the arms and stands on the verandah of *Matri Mandir*. Alternatively, they lay on the brick on the ground and spend the night.

No one felt any inconvenience; nor was there any scope for ill feelings. Ashram provides the privilege to those who have voluntarily resolved to take shelter, having known very well as to what is there and what is not there in ashram. Everything in ashram is natural; no binding to put on; no refrain from leaving.

Question however became real when it started raining. The trouble and inconvenience during rain could hardly be avoided. After some days, when the subject was brought up before Sri Sri Thakur, he said, 'what is the use of a pillow, my dear brother? There are so many bricks lying around, one of those below the head would serve the purpose. Brick remains as brick; but can be put to multiple use, depending upon need and occasion. Inconvenience has no place where convenience is not sought. The root of inconvenience may even be uprooted by means of habit. And that is still better; isn't it brother?'

Panchanan replied, 'Of course it is. I have since long mastered the habit of unquestioning adaptability with regard to food. And I also have spent nights, days after days, sleeping on bench, putting a dictionary below the head, during my student life. There was no threat from mosquitoes. I had to change my bedding because a stranger used it once.'

Thakur said, 'See how it is? You all are blessed children of supreme father. You have mastered these habits and by virtue of that you have landed here. That is why, you have not felt anything like inconvenience even in the midst of myriads of inconveniences.'

Panchanan gleefully added, 'Thakur! Not to speak of inconvenience; there is a sense of immense glory in this living.'

Thakur said, 'that is precisely the reason, when anyone comes from outside, comes in association with you all, all of them relish taste of deliverance; they heave

sigh of relief. Life following Lord hardly bears meaning if there is no willingness to accept anything of this kind.'

Panchanan recollected the words in *Satyanusaran*, 'Be agreeable to everything; you will hardly grieve'.

Panchanan Sarkar in Himaitpur Ashram, new inmate, not yet been counted amongst the regular workers.

He is in way a discovering the spirit of Ashram as much as finding his identity in the Ashram surroundings. He provides scene of a road under construction, below the embankment, down on the stretch where river bank transforms itself into marshy land with pits filled up by bushes. The bush filled pits provide permanent habitation to possess of swine. There is a raised portion around, which does not usually get dipped in water even under cyclonic rain. That was the remains of a kiln, which baked bricks used for construction of matri-mandir and the embankment raised to save Ashram from the erosion about to be caused by the river Padma. The leftovers of the bricks and cinders are being laid over the road that runs to *Tapovan* (school). The walkway to *Tapovan* is depressed and gets knee deep waterlogged. Sri Sri Thakur desires that walkway to be made concrete. Sri Sri Thakur is standing nearby. Huge crates filled with brick pebbles are being loaded, devotee-workers carrying the baskets, some on head some on shoulder, and laying the pebbles on the road.

That was an age where every devotee was a worker. Labour for love was the spirit. Every work, manual, physical or of any other form, is a service rendered to please Sri Sri Thakur. Men, women and children all together formed the team of workers, who never knew what tiredness is. They worked non-stop till a particular assignment got completed; many times, it happened without having a morsel of food. That was era of hectic activities, with mass participation under Sri Sri Thakur's direct observation. Some devotees during this period accomplished miraculous feat, seen to be outcome of devotion, dedication and disciplined adherence. The *mantra* was to please Sri Sri Thakur, to carry out His desires and be a tool in His masterly hand.

Panchanan then was a novice. He still carried with him a bit of air of being a professor and a doctor and was not averse to look at the work around him as worthy of daily wage earner; so is the impression carried by Ashram brothers. No one till then persuaded Panchanan to join in the road laying activities.

Panchanan got curious as he saw Sri Sri Thakur over there. One huge filled crate then just left the filling yard and yet to make its round back. No sooner did I step

on there, than Sri Sri Thakur said, 'how much is the weight of the crate?' Atal, with shovel in his hand, who is engaged in digging the brick-pebbles and filling the crate, replied that a crate could weigh anywhere between forty to eighty kilo.

Sri Sri Thakur said, 'Oh, is that? Come, lift the crate on to the head of Panchanan da; hold carefully.' Sri Sri Thakur then held one side of the crate; Atal another side; together they lifted the crate and put on Panchanan's head, in no time, without any prop and preparation.

Panchanan recounts. 'The unprecedented, unexpected and rare experience of that day is ever live in my memory. Dumbfounded, finding myself beyond my senses, I held the crate on my head steadfast, pulled up my whole body in multiple jerks and got myself up right.' Bang came Sri Sri Thakur's voice, 'did you see? It is for nothing that is said that the tiger from Barisal!'

Sri Sri Thakur is leading me the way. I am walking with the load behind Sri Sri Thakur. The path is unknown to me. It is a distance, up to *Tapovan*, of about half a mile, may be slightly less than that.

Satsang medicinal garden is adjacent to *Tapovan*, behind *Tapovan* girls' school. Kaviraj (doctor) Laxmikant Sen remains available there always. Having seen me carrying the crate, he came running, 'what are you up to? Give me; put the crate on my head'.

Sri Sri Thakur interrupted, 'No, Laxmi dear, this will be carried by Panchanan da only.'

Panchanan touched the boundary of *Tapovan*; surprised to view the festive environment prevailing over there. The students and teachers of *Tapovan* together are out on the road, piling the mixture of brick and mortar with hammer, wearing energetic spirit on their face.

Panchanan is on reflection on his newly discovered strength. "Since my conscious memory, I have never placed a load on my head; never such a huge one like the crate. I had experience of carrying some load, depending upon necessity, on my shoulder. I fixed an idea that load on the head might lead to suppression of mind's power. And due to this idea, I used to hit the ball only by leg on the football ground; never on head. I carried the impression that hitting the ball on head might lead to dull head."

'My reading of psychology helped me to recall that fixed idea or obsession causes to stall efficiency; germinates the tendency of inability and inaction.'

Sri Sri Thakur hammered and banished the long sheltered obsession in one stroke; did not allow a moment to halt and hesitate. Did Sri Sri Thakur applied a psychological method to uproot mental block?

Panchanan experienced a flash of His grace, unsolicited, wonderful and in abundance. He recalls, “needless to say, sometime later in time, together, we have filled the long courtyard of *Vishwa Vigyan* Kendra with five to seven hundred cratesful of earth. That was another occasion of celebration.”

About a week passed in the Ashram, amidst some such activities. Panchanan Sarkar came across new inmates of Ashram and developed bondage and cordiality.

Outside the Ashram area, one walkway stretches itself to some unknown distance. Both the sides lined by such thick vegetation that it remains dark even during day time. Compact close knit bamboos at some stretches make the road fearsome. No habitation, no homestead can be traced anywhere in the vicinity. The alleyway hardly seem to be traversed by anybody any time in recent past.

Landscape towards north of ashram was low lying and created a pool for rainwater. The walkway seemed to dip and float on the water body for few months in a year. The bamboo leaves created shallow lake with decomposed leaves which was breeding ground for large leeches. Once a leech gets stuck on the leg then it is hard to get rid of it. That is the only passage to access one home from another home. If there is a place without water logging, then there is knee deep mud pile. Out of ashram, if one were to go anywhere during monsoon, then one has to face this hurdle. It was a great problem to reach *Tapovan* from ashram. There is only one way of District Board, running by the side of river bank. That road becomes a canal on which people ferry on boat when Padma swells. When it is not flooded, the road had layer of packed sand and freed of mud. That road, skirting *Tapovan*, meets the raised the highway that leads to Kashipur. ‘This was the road I trudged on with load of bricks on head and reached *Tapovan*’, remembered Panchanan.

Panchanan recalled, ‘I have been seeing mother Manamohini devi walking around and moving sometime at around one or two o clock in the morning with a torch in hand.’ He enquired and came to know, that she used on her beat round, covering every nook and corner in the ashram, crossing the same watery and muddy road at dead of night. She used to keep watch on everyone and used to know every details of happenings to the inmates of ashram. Mother used to guard the ashram every night; she did that till her last breath.

There was a post office in ashram. Mother used to wait till 10 o clock every day for money order to come. If some money comes, then mother used to arrange food for ashram (*anand bazar*) using that money. There were days, when no money order came, mother used to arrange alms and prepared food for the ashramites.

Mother would ask some elderly ladies of ashram to go around the village, seek alms door to door, and collect rice, dal etc. In those days, when provisions for *anand bazar* were arranged by begging, then the bell in the *anand bazar* would ring at 9 o'clock in the evening not at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Food in Mother's *anand bazar* was available once a day, either at 3 in the afternoon or at 9 in the evening. Mother used to run *anand bazar* by uncertain means like collection in the donation box, donation by subscription or from voluntary contribution. If there arises shortfall after exhausting all these sources, then mother used to unleash her own store without any restriction.

Panchanan reminisces mother. 'Mother has slipped away from our sight. Mother's disciplinary order has also become a thing of the past. Each of us is having time, as if with a license to do things as per one's whim. That impending fear of mother's summon and calling for instant explanation is no more live. The fear would stretch to the extent of getting few strikes from stick or from a bunch of twigs. Now it is a state of freedom. But where is the joy from the freedom? Has the freedom anytime brought a sense of glory? But mother's disciplinary tenure and abiding sense of accountability to her kept us all carefree and peaceful. There was no conflict in mind. The affectionate face of mother that cleansed our mind is no more shining. The loss can never be expressed. I always felt that my mind without mother's leash on it was bereft of goddesses Laxmi's luster. Mind had no place to anchor to. Today only place where one could bounce on was Sri Sri Thakur. One could perhaps relate to the mood and pleasure of Sri Sri Thakur. But has anyone easily come across the unpleasant face of Sri Sri Thakur? Hardly anybody knows what is that which repels Sri Sri Thakur and brings out his displeasure. How many blessed souls on the earth has witnessed the ferocity of Lord Shiva in Sri Sri Thakur? Who has come so close to Sri Sri Thakur to read his displeasure? Most of us have taken Thakur as a path to tread on. We are indoctrinated to Thakur's ideology. That japa, meditation and self-disciplines are required to be followed are understood. This is of prime duty for us. Who is making us reminded of this every moment? This used to be the principal query of mother amongst all queries. Who sits for meditation for how long? How much one relishes meditation? How to practice meditation? She used to discuss all these with people, all the time; one to one basis impromptu. She used to remind us, you have come here, forsaking your family and homestead; and then this (meditation) is the main work. Of course, you must carry out what Anukul wants you to do. But, if you do not practice meditation regularly, nothing constructive will build in you. It hurts trying your hands in wiping off accumulated dirt. Besides, without practicing japa and meditation, you will hardly understand what your Thakur says and what is the objective of those. Japa and meditation makes the intelligence sharp and mind alert. Above all, japa and meditation help create divine sensation. Unless this joy occupies your being, how would the pleasure of passion lose its grip on you? Have you not heard the adage that says the person has no interest in molasses mixed with thrashed rice, once he tests *rasagolla*. Mother used to huddle her children and explain these stuff every day.'

'She used to tell veterans about the next level of *diksha*, that is *bhajan diksha*. That is pursuit of 'connect by words' (sabda yoga). That is the specialty of our cult. Unless the sound and light view comes, no other achievement would be enough. Reach the zone of light and enlightenment, surpassing the zone of bleakness. Do everything wholeheartedly. You will come to possess everything, by the grace of supreme father. You must be and have. You all are born with that fortune that makes you worthy. How are you here otherwise? Anukul says, as I heard, that no one comes here just like that. That means this only. Isn't it? Mother used to say so many things like this. If everything about Mother is said, a book will be written. I therefore put a stop to it here and now.'

Panchanan recounts the days when inmates of ashram used to live in happiness in empty stomach. Each of the inmates were dedicated hero and were living in state of ecstasy in absolute penury. That was a contrast and was a reality too. The reality was that Sri Sri Thakur transformed lives of people who found higher meaning in life of dispossession. They sacrificed their own life and obtained new life given by Sri Sri Thakur. Panchanan writes, 'I used to have lunch at 3 in the afternoon in *Anand Bazar* and used to eat up to brim. That's how there was no need for dinner and there was no arrangement for dinner at night. Only time I used to feel like putting something in mouth was at 8 in the morning. But for that there was need to have some coin in the box. In those days for many of us in the ashram, we were spared of the worries to keep a box at home.'

Sriman Kanailal Das was in the team with Panchanan in the ashram. Kanailal was son of Kali Prasanna Das, a renowned lawyer in Pirozpur. Before coming here, Kanailal he was reading in a medical college in Kolkata and was living in mess. He gave up study and came to ashram, though much against the wish of his father. His father was remitting some money every month, lest his son would have painful living in the group of ascetics. Kanailal made proper use of the sum, but clandestinely. He treated Panchanan as one of his close mates. For some days, both the friends used to sneak away in the early morning to Rajan's sweet mart opposite to Sashadhar Karmakaar's house. They used to relish *rasagolla* (delicacy sweet) and stealthy return to ashram. Though they realized that they were into some demeaning acts, it took quite some time before they desisted from *rasagolla* eating. One day, Kanailal announced, 'Panchanan da! It is not done any more. I have asked father to discontinue remittance. It is a losing proposition to have an active pocket here.'

Panchanan saw dark; he felt need for something to eat. But where is money? 'Should I stretch palms at Thakur?' Panchanan thought it was not worth, as the amount is too meagre, an *anaa* or two. (One *anaa* means 6 paise) He thought that he needed to apply some innovative intelligence. Then Panchanan recalled that a

team in empty stomach started roaming in the courtyard of ashram in the morning looking for some offerings from unknown sources. Offerings did indeed used to come. May be an encounter with a visitor to ashram. Two *annas* requirement used to be met from his pocket. Then, a sprint up to the shop of Sricharan in Haldar pada. The pioneer of this informal team in search of breakfast was Nibaran Bagchi. In no time, he would arrange a packet-full of puffed rice and some mixtures, spread the whole stuff on a spread out newspaper. The venue was in the corner of a barrack in front of hospital. That used to be celebration of shared breakfast of about eight or ten pauper like inmates in the ashram. In those days, this was part of daily activities of Panchanan and his friends in the ashram.

Panchanan reflects those days from today's perspective and highlights an important part of daily *sadhana* of each devotee of Sri Sri Thakur, which is *istabhrity*. He raised a question for readers, 'if there was no coin in pocket, how were you offering *istabhrity*?'

Panchanan answers the question, 'The concept *istabhrity* as a formal practice did not evolve by then. Further, those who used to impart *diksha* (*ritwik* word came much later), did not advise to offer *istabhrity* daily as a part of *sadhana*.

Question – How is it that, one could take food without offering anything to the Lord, in those days?

Panchanan provides a historical perspective to this question. That was the early age of Sri Sri Thakur's movement. Society at that time was passing through a phase when there was clash between western culture and our culture. Notwithstanding the fact that society was debilitated and dependent on others, it was forced to fight for independence. People at large were moved by blind temptations. It was hard for them to feel the urge for enquiry; to see a faint ray of consciousness by themselves. Sri Sri Thakur came on this backdrop, and that was a strange situation. It was never so bad for Indian society. Who was there to recognize and accept Sri Sri Thakur? Who would talk about him? Who had that power of conviction and courage in those days to speak truth? It was not the time, when people would respond to your call, even it comes from ashram. And ashram was passing through hard times, as far as material resources were concerned. On the top of that, ashram was shrouded by local innuendos and canards. Therefore, who was that fortunate guy, who would overcome all barriers and come here only with an overpowering sense of possessing the jewel that was Thakur? Of course, few came, only handful, at infrequent intervals. Amongst those who came, most of them were separated from their relatives and came with lot of residual animosity for them. Husband came without wife's consent. Son came against the wish of father. Father came, when children became mother centered. That was how, may

be, one or two from a village and few from a district came. Many of them stayed put up in Sri Sri Thakur's house. Overall, in the public perception, these deprived lot in the ashram were to be sympathized. And for ordinary people, inmates of ashram were having no worth whatsoever. And before the elites of the country, they were undoubtedly very inferior.

'For this team, Sri Sri Thakur, the ista, was the only recourse. Sri Sri Thakur was the stay of their life. They were engaged all along for serving Sri Sri Thakur; for meeting his requirement, for arranging things for his pleasure. With all their being, both consciously and sub-consciously, whatever they could do for Sri Sri Thakur is to be called as *istabhrity*. They have been observing this *brat* (penance) all along. Of course, accomplishment was varying from person to person, to the best of each one's capacity, up to their fortune and indirectly linked to the degree of Sri Sri Thakur's grace on each one.'

In course of time, as the ashram boundary got expanded, people understood the mission and then people came in groups and got rallied. People then came having blessed with formal *diksha*. They came with diverse expectations. Sri Sri Thakur observed them and found: 'these people have been blessed with *diksha*, they also visit Thakur at the end of the year; may be once or twice during the year. But these people are all along engaged with their own self and in the interest of their livelihood. When and how would they serve the Lord's interest?'

Then Sri Sri Thakur introduced a new process of *diksha*; came the concentric photo for meditation, *swastyayani* for all round welfare of being and formal *istabhrity*.'

Panchanan briefly wrote how the spirit was converted to substance and substance got its shape, as Sri Sri Thakur proceeded with his mission and movement.

With the passage to time in the ashram, Panchanan was experimenting with his life and was discovering his self. A non-conformist and outspoken Panchanan, one day had the following conversation:

Panchanan – Now a days, I don't like much to be around people. Some where someone is defaming you and doing that with much aplomb. Once I get to hear this, I lose myself. It then becomes almost impossible for me to reason anything with cool mind. At times, I get angry and its expressions create ugly and shameful situation, to say the least. It doesn't not augur good for me, Thakur!

Sri Sri Thakur – Why not good? To me it bodes hope. It is a symptom that some liking has developed.

Panchanan – you are saying liking. Which means not love?

Sri Sri Thakur – In the first view, both are same; of the same type. But what do you do when you lose your head, hearing despicable comments on Thakur? Jatin da, at some time, you also had to face the same temperamental situation? Isn't it?

Dr. Jatin Roy said, 'yes Thakur. How many times, have I not ran to thrash people, hearing them talking ill of you? It is hard to maintain cool.'

Sri Sri Thakur smiled and said, 'At one time, Ananta and Kishori used to get fired, hurl curses and also at times used to beat up. Of late, I hardly get to hear such incidents. Is it correct, Ananta?'

Ananta Maharaj came to the site and was standing behind, which was not noticed by Panchanan. Ananta Maharaj had a hearty smile and nodded in agreement with Sri Sri Thakur. 'It is natural be perturbed in such situations. But now, it comes to mind that we should conduct ourselves so mindfully that surroundings cannot but appreciate Sri Sri Thakur and his qualities; let alone spreading ill thoughts about Sri Sri Thakur.'

Sri Sri Thakur listened the discussion and said, 'Then Panchanan da's question should have been, why have I created scope for people to talk ill of my Guru? People have got room for that out of their experience from my conducts, hearing my words; why is it happening so? If I am in love with my Guru; if it is my solemn duty to carry his load, then the responsibility of managing his image spontaneously rests on me. All my actions and conversations must be so well meaning and endearing that there would not be any scope for anyone to get any negative impression of my Guru. I see you all talking all the time. What trembling that is causing in my Guru's heart and compelling him to stand aloof at not so distant horizon; have you ever thought about that?'

Panchanan went into self-analysis. He confessed to himself that he carried a compelling urge to get into conversation, mostly auto initiated. Despite holding interest, he had not been able to banish that. It typically occurred to him only when some untoward consequence out of his lose talk happened. Sri Sri Thakur perhaps hinted at this weakness of Panchanan and raised a question, 'Hey, can you tell what all aspects to be mindful while having a conversation with someone?'

Panchanan reflected on the question for a momenta and said, 'First thing to be seen is the place. Conversation to be meaningful needs a setting. Then time. Unless the time of conversation is appropriate, it may lead to contrary outcome. Then the factors to watch out is the person who is being discussed with. How much capable the other person is to get the meaning of discussion.'

Sri Sri Thakur interjected. 'All these are integrated. Are these separate, only because you are enumerating those one by one? For example, you are here, this is a specific moment, for some intense purpose, carrying a particular mood. Each of these factors are closely related with each other.'

Appreciating the point made by Sri Sri Thakur, Panchanan added, 'the dose of talk matters as well. Because, the receiver has a limit of comprehension.'

Sri Sri Thakur reiterated Panchanan's view and said, 'You said it right. Listener's appetite has to be kept live. Therefore, take pause, before appetite gets extinguished. The same principle applies for the speeches you deliver in meeting and the *kirtans* that you hold. Never commit mistake of continuing *ad nauseam*, being driven by audience's cheer.'

Hem Kavi came and stood nearby. Sri Sri Thakur asked him. 'Hey, Hem da. Panchanan da till now was enquiring how to hold discourse with people. What does scripture prescribe on the subject?'

Hem Kavi said, 'ना पृष्टः कस्यचित् ब्रूयात्, न च अन्यायेन पृच्छतः। Don't force yourself into a conversation, without being sought for. Don't raise such issues which is not part of one's personal life problem. But there are garrulous people, whose objective is to create debate. It is futile to participate in such conversation.'

Panchanan Sarkar made a reality appraisal. We all know that society has diverse kind of people, including those who pathologically are prone to find fault with others. Secondly, it is also an old adage that a prophet is seldom appreciated in his own country and during his lifetime. Therefore, there was no dearth of people unleashing slanders against Sri Sri Thakur. Sri Sri Thakur, from very early age, had been target of endless tortures; which he received in smiling face. He in fact used to make use of those ill-conceived hurls from others. Sri Sri Thakur was heard saying, 'it is good that my detractors have no clue as to how much I benefit from them. If they had known, they would not have been so enthusiastic in heaping vilifications on me. The smears indicate me how much I have progressed and which path I need to adopt.'

In continuation of the subject, Sri Sri Thakur also said, 'I am devoid of formal education; not certain how much knowledge and intelligence I am possessed of. Despite all these, I am moving ahead, step by step, and that credit goes to the disparagers. I fail to understand why do you all not view those who create hurdles on my way with sympathy?'

Panchanan reviewed his experience. He has seen people rushing from far off places, having heard about Sri Sri Thakur's glory from distance. To their

misfortune, they landed here (in Pabna) and came in the company of such people who poison their mind. 'Mr., are you proceeding to Satang? Is it a place for a gentleman like you?' Prejudiced, misguided, misinformed, some people retracted and fled away. Some fortunate and even headed persons may overcome the fence and say, 'Okay, having come all the way and with so much expectation, let me experience firsthand. It may not be so bad, as you are saying.'

Whichever way we may look at nitpickers, but Sri Sri Thakur's forgiving face used to turn vile, whenever we decry anyone before him. In such situations, Sri Sri Thakur used to say, 'You love me, whereas you cannot tolerate my dear ones. You are tempestuously engaged in my propagation work, whereas you are not inclined to work with your colleagues shoulder to shoulder. If you are having these features, then closely reassess yourself who you are.'

By way of summarizing the above subject, Panchanan writes, 'Spreading canard is certainly anti devotional. It causes self-inflicted harm. What can be more suicidal step than to deflate the base of those who are verily yours and who have come forward to be in your company? Sri Sri Thakur has penned down about this in *Satyanusaran*. He further said, 'there is no better means to cause grief, consternation, depression, desperation and persecution to him than spreading canard about anybody before him.'

'Sri Sri Thakur has arranged my ek-mik pressure cooker, primus stove, a bucket, a plate and a (rounded and necked) bowl (that holds water). These all constitute my household items, in a single room with (straw) thatched roof. I do self-cooking, clean the utensils, sweep the house and take care of myself, everything in this hut. I do all these so meticulously, that no one would know my amateur status in these activities.

Panchanan Sarkar continued his stay in ashram. Days were passing. Every day with a new discovery. A sense of ceaseless placid relaxation. At the same time there was anxiety to plunge into some activities. There was no company to trigger any activity. Of course, one friend was Sri Sri Thakur, with whom Panchanan Sarkar maintained intimate relations. Whenever any thought comes to mind, Panchanan would run up to Sri Sri Thakur and opened out his heart.

In one such unbearable state of anxiety, Panchanan blurted out, 'Thakur! Something strange has happened to me. All my motor organs have rallied together and are agitating against my being and are accusing, how long will it continue like this? We need something to work on.'

Sri Sri Thakur showed a masterly and mysterious face. Everything on earth, from personal to public, from atom to universe, is in Sri Sri Thakur's knowledge. He smiled at Panchanan's desperation and solaced, 'yes, the motor organs are exasperating. Because, Supreme Father has receded the base from their feet suddenly.'

Panchanan sought solution, the way to move ahead. Sri Sri Thakur resumed. 'Those damn organs have lost their path; their maneuverability choked; these are rebelling. Nothing needs to be done. Let those remain captured and suppressed for some time. Those had unfettered field day to reign. Those sense organs are fed and maintained at your expense; those find their shelter in you. Yet they never accept your hegemony. They even do not submit themselves to the lordship of your Lord. Those have become rule unto themselves, having absolute control on you. Don't you see that I have lined them up?'

Panchanan heard Thakur. Didn't have much to react. But, his petulant self kept on perturbing him. He asked, 'Be that as it may; what do I do now?'

Sri Sri Thakur reassured Panchanan and said, 'Hold on for some time, on your own unalloyed self. And carry on practicing the 'name'. That's enough and nothing else.'

Panchanan got a direction and was assured. He went on the path of japa and meditation, eschewing other thoughts and urge for actions. Other side, the book, 'Santwana', collection of letters from Ananta Maharaj was under publication. Ananta Maharaj requested Panchanan Sarkar to check the 'proof' of the book under publication. Coming from Ananta Maharaj, it was a request and an opportunity to be engaged in literary works. Panchanan used to go to Ananta Maharaj's house, sit there for the whole of afternoon and at any other free time and used to do the proof reading. And the practice of japa was going on uninterruptedly.

Days passed on. Not much later, there came a time when it appeared to Panchanan Sarkar that his upper brain was jammed. The strange experience frightened him. As if the brain was enveloped by a lump of solid cloud. Memory got obliterated. No ability to think, imagine and judge. Everything of acquired leanings and formed skills of the past had erased. He even could not attempt a simple arithmetic; could not work out an elementary theorem of geometry. He was reduced to an idiot. Perhaps he suffered from amnesia. Movements became aimless; living was meaningless. He could not respond to a question from the other person easily; as if the mind that receives, process and responds to stimuli had been corrupt.

Panchanan surveyed himself and found his life arid like a desert. All symptoms of past life, where there was tastes for give and take, energy for doing and moving, had been dried up. No interest in things happening around. It took time even to sense my own name, if someone addressed me taking my name. Hunger and thirst was coming to bid bye. Overall, Panchanan passed through an unbearable state.

A numb Panchanan found himself by the side of Sri Sri Thakur. No sooner than he reached, Sri Sri Thakur *suo motto* raised his voice. 'That's all; be there. No need to speak anything. You have no permission to speak. Go away from here. And never come here again.'

Panchanan, in a state that was shattered, blurted out, 'What is way out? I can no more bear with myself.'

The graceful Thakur thundered. 'You have no option but to bear. You have to necessarily pass through the state of bleakness. My jewel, my gold. No purpose will be served, if you actively mind things and look for recourse. Go on accelerating japa; with more vigor and splendor. Instantly go away. And never turn towards this end. No use being here.'

Panchanan had no option. He got a stern mandate. He stayed put at a distance from Sri Sri Thakur; went on repeating the 'name' and went around examining the proof of Maharaj's book.

Two weeks passed. During this duration, Panchanan counted everyday with anguish that was comparable with death pang. No relief, no change in his inner numbness. At some time, it so appeared to Panchanan, as if this was going to be a never ending episode. He involuntarily took few steps in the direction of Sri Sri Thakur. The moment he came within the sight of Sri Sri Thakur, Sri Sri Thakur commanded, 'didn't I say, not to advance in this direction. Don't you fathom the tricks of those wretched villains? When you come closer to my side, these (villains) would flee away; can't capture those. Go away right now; drive the 'name' (Japa) with alacrity. Make the villains restive to the point of extinction.'

Retraced and distressed, Panchanan submitted, 'Thakur, I can hardly stand'.

The graceful and vigilant Thakur heartened Panchanan. 'Hey, I am there for you. What are you afraid of? Where will you run away to? Certainly, not outside the boundary of my notice.'

Panchanan returned. Days became week and then two weeks passed. This time around, there was hardly any craving for reaching up to Sri Sri Thakur with burning grievance. Sri Sri Thakur's assurance, 'I am there for you' was a powerful support and solace.

During this phase, one day Panchanan was standing on the verandah of his hut, after coming from Ananta Maharaj's house, where he did proof reading. Sri Sri Thakur appeared from nowhere. It was noon, Panchanan was sweating and standing. Sri Sri Thakur clasped the neck of Panchanan, bent it forward and gave a bite on a particular spot at the origin of spinal cord. It was a close bite; Sri Sri Thakur's nails were pressed hard on the spot. Releasing the mouth off the neck, Sri Sri Thakur looked for water. 'Hey, give me water; water fast, I will have to wash my mouth. Panchanan's body has lot of salt deposit.'

At that apocalyptic moment, Panchanan's world turned topsy turvy. No one knew, no leaf turned aside, no movement in the surrounding. The generous sky above the head remained silent witness to the liberation that occurred to Panchanan. What a delectable deliverance! The mental jam was never felt again.

Same day, another memorable experience happened to Panchanan in the night. When he reached at Sri Sri Thakur, the latter said, 'you are saved. The damn villains laid tentacles and seized your being, every cell of your body and mind. Today, after long duration, those were exorcised.'

Was it a treatment, a mystery, a miracle? No one would know.

Panchanan responded to Sri Sri Thakur's narration of what happened. He said, 'There were two villains; receded from two sides.'

Sri Sri Thakur said, 'Yes, one was the dispelled villain and another was his mate siren.'

Panchanan – 'Dispelled villain! What is that?'

Sri Sri Thakur – 'Nothing else; but beaten complexes.'

The transcendent experience that Panchanan underwent was unspeakable and unforgettable. His whole being was dispossessed of the villain, touching every cell, exiting from both sides in forceful retreat.

Panchanan did not have a fully occupied schedule in ashram. Of course, during daytime, he kept himself engaged in some works. He used to spend the evening with himself, lying on a platform that was temporarily erected by the side of river embankment. Closing his eyes, he used to enjoy the cool breeze blowing from south.

That was moonlit evening in *Baisakh*. Sky was dotted with thinly spread white cloud. Down on the earth, the vast expanse of river bank was dazzling with silver

sand. The water puddle here and there, on the river bed that was sleepy in its flow, created a dreamy scene of lagoon.

After day's unbearable heat, the time was for relaxation. Panchanan was lying, eyes shut, a brick under his head. Brick for Panchanan in those days substituted pillow. He found it very useful, as it was easily available here and there.

Panchanan was jolted by some pull, got up to a scream, a familiar tone. 'Is it what is the eventuality of your coming under the spell of Sadguru?' the voice was condemning Panchanan, as much as charging Sri Sri Thakur. 'I heard that surrender to Sadguru opens the gateway for all attainment. And is it what you have gained. Even a pillow is not there in your fate! Is this your state of fulfilment?'

Panchanan opened his eyes and to his utter surprise, saw his brother Sri Amritlal. His brother came to ashram without prior information. Amritlal possessed a high pitch voice. When he screamed in anger, his tone was so rough that it drew people from nearby areas. In a mindless state, Panchanan got up and touched the brother's feet. By the time, he stood straight on the ground and raised his head, he saw Shri Bankim Roy on the spot. Bankim Roy forcefully embraced Amritlal, attempted to pacify him. 'What has happened, gentleman?' Bankim Roy tried to engage Amritlal in conversation. 'Even if something has happened, are you trying to deal with it only with lung power?'

Amritlal interjected. In a mood that spewed belligerence, he replied. 'Do you think, the scream springs without any cause? My younger brother Panchanan was an acclaimed scholar. He had no less reputation as a professor. Of late, he was possessed by an insatiable urge to come under the benevolence of Sadguru. While departing from home, he boastfully announced that his quest for Sadguru was greeted with triumph at Himaitpur. I therefore wanted to satisfy myself with my own visit. What is there in this ashram that could ever benefit anybody? What for he has been here, having forsaken everything of his own. Now I see that he has turned insane.'

Bankim Roy – So you would like us to believe that ashram over here is a prize in the air and there is nothing meaningful in reality.

Amritlal – Not that ashram is without any possession. There are too much hyperbolic assertions and pseudo existence. On the verandah of a thatched house, there is a jumbo size kiln, surrounded by two to three large pitchers and that is known as 'Satsang Chemical Works'. There is tin sheet shaded enclosure of seven by ten feet. Inside there are some wires, some tools and machineries and it is known as 'Vishwa Vigyan Kendra' (World Science Centre). May you call it center or point, by all reasonable perception that I just had, it does exist, devoid of its organs. One thing is undeniable; the names are plump.

Amritlal had a hearty laugh out of his own sense of satire.

Bankim Roy – Dear brother! Nomenclatures cannot be subject of derision; rather these are symbolic of substance. In the beginning, there was Word. The name gave image to what the creator intended. And subsequently, the name became prelude to the creation.

Amritlal – Much appreciate brother for what you just said. You possesses uncanny capacity to create web of words.

Again, Amritlal burst into laughter; that amused Panchanan.

An intrigued Bankim Roy displayed his anguish; gently countered the satire. 'Please bear in mind that you are transcending the boundary of civility. You have to have strength to stand retribution, if and when it comes.'

Panchanan Sarkar could not help noticing that his brother's eyes narrowed as his demeanor looked softened. Amritlal remained serious and sad. Bankim Roy held him around his waist and said, 'come dear brother. Let's move aside. Both the brothers must deal with each other closely, away from the public gaze'.

At eleven at night, Bankim Roy bid adieu to Amritlal at Bajitpur steamer station. His request to Amritlal to stay in ashram overnight fell on deaf ear. Amritlal worked in railway. He came to ashram, pulled by attachment for his brother, just for a day, arranging a proxy at duty. After lot of argument, he came to conclusion that his brother indeed did not turn insane. And ashram was not a place for turning people crazy. Insane people would not be able to advance logic for hours together. Nor would they, thriving on meagre subsistence, be able to engage themselves to bring sense to a disgruntled person. Amritlal left ashram with word that he would be back soon here to trace the end. And at that time, he would first look for Bankim Roy.

This episode remained as a living memorable of Panchanan Sarkar's ashram life, of course, with compliments to Bankim Roy.

Panchanan Sarkar's elder brother Amritlal Sarkar visited ashram three times within a month. In his third visit, he brought with him the group who constitute the hardcore maligners of ashram. Unless this group was convinced, it was exasperating for Amritlal to live in his society and yet associate with ashram, if at all he decided to do so. It was important for Amritlal to attenuate the mocking feelings from that group.

Panchanan Sarkar was familiar with that accompanying group of his brother since the time he was practicing medicine. The group appeared to be excited and inquisitive. They reported to Panchanan about their visit. 'Dear doctor, we heard a lot about ashram, but never had an opportunity to get a firsthand experience of it. Then we observed that Amritlal, after several visits, showing tilted towards ashram side. We are here to see Amritlal, may be for the last time in his current state.'

Panchanan Sarkar noticed his brother silent and grave. He could make out that this time his brother came to assess and experiment through this group. The group's inquisitive and skeptical eyes would be used for inspection and investigation. The group was not known for its honesty and sanity. They came with the objective of preventing and precluding Amritlal from any influence that ashram would have cast on him. The group was the self-appointed shield for Amritlal and Amritlal used the group as testing tool. This appraisal of Panchanan was later admitted by Amritlal.

However, Panchanan Sarkar did not allow hope to be overshadowed by his own assessment of the situation. He led the group to Kashipur village to meet the great devotee Kishori Mohan. He wanted to group to see and hear the eventful life and the thrilling experience from Kishori Mohan himself. He thought, 'nothing wrong in hoping and trying for something better'.

It was folk tale in Satsang that Kishori, prior to coming in contact with ashram, was a terror in the village. That Kishori was metamorphosed to be an epitome of peace and salvation for the village. That happened as he passed through intense spiritual practice, in the aftermath of being Sri Sri Thakur's disciple. He loved Sri Sri Thakur unquestioningly after some grueling tests and then Thakur prevailed upon him like sometime ghost does on some people, as was heard in horror stories. The persona of Kishori Mohan strangely turned out to be a sweet reception; his talk, dealings, doings everything transformed magically. Then he became a rallying point for people for twenty four hours a day. People liked his company; heard his experience and listened to his stories of discoveries.

Kishori Mohan was not seen to very much in favour of mechanical pursuit of spirituality. 'What for this pursuit, dear brother?' he would murmur in an unassuming demeanor. 'Touch of the magical gem, by luck, can make gold out of iron or rubble.' At times, he used to burble, 'attachment with that person is the essential substance. You don't have to worry much, once you are attached with Sri Sri Thakur. Change of human nature is a small thing that must happen. More than that, numerous newness gets ushered in; myriads of mishaps can fly away and all these would happen under your view.'

It was past noon, when Panchanan Sarkar and his brother together with the group reached Kishori Mohan's house. He was ready after having his lunch, as he was informed *a priori*. He walked few steps closer, received the visiting team and said, 'you all are inquisitive, devoted and pure souls. I am humbled by your visit. I am at a loss as to how do I receive you all. I presume, Panchanan has taken care of all of you as he himself has accompanied you. Therefore, I am at peace.'

The group exchanged pleasantries and sat circling around Kishori Mohan. One of the group members said, 'may I raise questions related to the person whom you all address Thakur, if you don't take it offensive.'

Kishori Mohan replied with smiling face. 'Where is scope for me to mind the offence, when you have not committed one? More you talk about Thakur, better it is. Generally people indulge into wasteful talk that remains devoid of Thakur.'

The member of the group – Let's then talk with heart open.

Kishori Mohan – This is all the more enjoyable, as hardly people talk with bare heart. I often have seen people talk reflecting surface of their mind. People perhaps have forgotten to bring their heart to the talk. In a sense, people hardly look for heart.

The member of the group – Our question is that the one whom you call 'Thakur' (meaning God), is he in any way different from a person as he appears, talks, walks and go about his work?

Kishori Mohan – Of course, he is a man; a complete man and that is what we speak of him.

The member of the group – What do you mean? His disciples attribute godhood in him and that is how he is projected as. Moreover, you may mean anything about him, but what is the case in spreading words like this about him?

Kishori Mohan – Rather you may say, why do his disciples hold him up as 'human God' or 'God like person'? Yes, they speak that about him that way and they do for the sake of brothers like you who are shattered and sufferers, cursed and sinners.

Someone from the group- what does this mean?

Kishori Mohan – Say for instance, I am a patient. I am not cured even after serving a number of doctors. And finally, I got relief by your treatment. And then if I get inclined to wax eloquent about you, will someone come on the way? And what for? At whose interest?

Someone from the group – What you said is a matter of common logic.

Kishori Mohan – Yes brother. For common people, everything in this world is normal. All problems are only for those who view things with turbid mind. And you know this very well.

Someone from the group – That is fine. Let him be propagated as a doctor. What is the compulsion in holding him up as God and why should he be worshipped?

Kishori Mohan – Let's assume that someone having been benefited by him develops love on him. With that perspective and after further association with him, one discovered something more in the doctor. It all happened something like this. You can understand something more from your own experience, if you want to.

One from the group – We are not here to view things from experience. It is a straight question, do you really feel that Thakur is God?

Kishori Mohan – For a foolish like me, it is beyond me to know what really God is. Where can God reveal himself and where cannot? But it is known to me as said by great people that God incarnates himself in ages to get himself closer to people. A few fortunate come to know about it, get attached to him. Notwithstanding how much of God they come to know about, they title him as God, on the basis of whatever they get to see and know.

One from the group – Do you then like to say that your Thakur is God?

Bursting into some inimitable style of laughter was a notable characteristic of Kishori Mohan. Suppressing an irresistible laughter, Kishori Mohan said politely, 'I have not acquired expertise that enables me to distinguish who is God or not. I have not ever tried to know about all these things. But out of long hard experience, or may be out of my good luck, whatever I have seen in the person Thakur Anukul Chandra, I have come to know that he is God. Nothing could deter me in expressing my fond desire to call him as God. I don't need any God, other than him.

Kishori Mohan's expression turned into emotion, as tears dropped off his cheek. With chocked up throat, he hurriedly added, 'I don't need any other God.'

Kishori Mohan took a pause, then started. 'Dear brothers, do you know another secret? We love him. We have come long way with him in love. We got everything, as he is there with us. Without him, we have nothing of our own. That love is carrying us along; knowingly, unknowingly and unabashedly. Whether he is God or not is no more a question for us. Now, even if someone proves with irrefutable logic that Thakur Anukul Chandra is not God; or someone else has come up with such qualities that unmistakably makes him God, then also, those beliefs and credence would make little for us. We are kind of intoxicated by the love for Thakur. We can't go an inch away from Sri Sri Thakur. We won't regret, if our Thakur is not endowed with exclusive God position. Above all, all our needs and appetite have been blown away by the boundless love flowing from Sri Sri Thakur. We are submerged in infinite expanse of the ocean of ecstasy; without losing our sense, consciousness and awareness about self and surrounding. Panchanan, what remains to be worried about? Which question is left unanswered? All thirst is

quenched; all desired extinguished; as our feet remains steady on the surface set by eternal alertness and supreme consciousness.'

Panchanan Sarkar found it engaging; his gaze fixed on the charged face of Kishori Mohan. He broke his silence and said, 'Be that what you said. The team's question is not exactly pinned over there. Let me now speak on their behalf. Everyone has a zone of blindness somewhere or other. By the same logic, you all have a blind faith on Sri Sri Thakur and therefore, it is not surprising that Sri Sri Thakur remains unimpeachable for you. Unquestioning acceptance in many cases tantamount to being in state of numbness. That can as well be state of super consciousness; a common subject in psychology. Besides, people of each community usually place their Guru on God's pedestal and propagate him or her that way. A bit of self-prize backs up such assertion. It avers that my Guru, the subject of my devotion, must be ahead of others and must be superior to others; in no way less than the God. This is an atypical ailment in the world of devotion, whose exceptions are rarely seen. Now the moot point is this: you may crown your Guru and install him in the temple of your mind, in whatever way you like, with surfeit of devotion. It is a purely personal affair and you enjoy every freedom for doing that. You remain immersed in the oceanic depth of love or perch yourself on mountainous filial affection. You assign yourself at his feet, or reduce yourself to a drop of insignificance for his sake. No one would mind on any of these postures for your Guru. Hold on here. If you go overdrive in popularizing your loved Guru as the Guru of all the people at all places, do you feel that everyone will acquiesce with your point of view?'

Panchanan Sarkar observed approving signs on the face of the team of Amritlal's friends. He raised the pitch of this argument and continued. 'Kishori Mohan! How are you entitled to generalize individual experience? A single person's problem, however complex may it be, might have found solution. By what logic would it mean that all people of the world will find solution to all their problems here? It is an implausible extension. Say you are a doctor. You have just successfully treated an incurable disease. Does that mean I attribute you with capacity to treat all diseases and announce you God? Will it be right?'

'Summarily stated, what wealth have you seen in the person whom you address Thakur, besides of course, the treasure of his love, the heart touching affection? What is that which has drawn your mind and heart out and laid down at Thakur's feet? What compelled you to forsake and disrupt your social and family ties? How are you worshipping a person who is younger than you, whom you have seen from childhood days, whom you addressed by name, seen going to school with the school kit under his arms, and so on? How have you placed that person on the seat of God and are encouraging others to do so?'

Panchanan Sarkar spelt out the questions that lied in others' mind. They almost synchronously burst out saying, 'Yes, rightly put forth by the doctor. What would interest us is the anecdotal undistorted account from the personal experience of Kishori Mohan. We will like to remain outside the zone of logic, scriptures and

arguments; there is no dearth of those which we have indulged in. Man's own impression gets camouflaged and come out in the form of supporting evidence. We do not want any biased opinion. We will hear Kishori Mohan straight from his heart.'

Panchanan Sarkar suddenly observed a flash on the face of Kishori Mohan. Kishori Mohan, as if got spruced up from drowsy state and perched himself in an unknown arena. Kishori Mohan's sonorous voice hit the puzzled sense of the group, as he said, 'Panchanan, you have hit at a sensitive spot. You have wedged me to speak truth that can hardly be voiced in gossip. We all need to transport ourselves to that realm where these narratives spring from. Inquisitive devotees as you all are, please bless me, as I prostrate before you hundred crores times.

Kishori Mohan bowed down before the group with ease, rolled his eyeballs up slightly, took a long breath, straightened his vertebra, quivered up his whole body, and started in his own inimitable style and words.

Panchanan Sarkar was startled to view wonderful eloquence and etiquette of Kishori Mohan that day. Kishori Mohan was adept in composing his words like a magician. With calibrated and meaningful words, his expression was precise and piercing. But he was not conscious of all these. He used native language. His pronunciation and articulation was natural. As if a tribal girl, adorning wreaths of choicest blossoms from the woods, stood there overjoyed, sparking with beauty and dignity. As he spoke, Kishori Mohan resonated symphony between his physical organ mobility and sensory faculties. Panchanan Sarkar says, 'it is beyond my expression to present the wonderful features displayed by Kishori Mohan during the discussion. As he weaved and spread the net of charm over the audience, he raised spectacles of his body swaying with his expression, the muscles of his body including the long crop of hairs on his head springing up with his emotions.'

Kishori Mohan was known for his reticent reclusive style of living. But the situation he found himself in, where his conviction was tested, he started pouring out for hours together. He placed himself in such an enclosure, where there was no entry for normal human feelings like shame, hatred and inhibition. The group was in no position to notice that the insanity of their question was veiled in the quietness of the moment. Kishori Mohan went on to narrate his life story, in his animated style and the group went on devouring flabbergasted. The freeman wandered freely in unfolding his exceptional life.

Kishori Mohan brought out lively accounts that were unheard of and exceptional. Everything put together would make a long saga, which could hardly be reproduced. Panchanan Sarkar, however, scripted the following in his own language.

'Being urged by Anukul Chandra, a group was formed taking likeminded peers from neighboring villages. *Kirtan* used to begin in the evening in the room of Kishori Mohan and then spilled over to the courtyard and attained crescendo in the late night. No one missed the *kirtan* event even for a day. They used to sing popular lyrics; but towards later part Sri Sri Thakur composed few songs. All the wonderful songs composed by Sri Sri Thakur, having all time appeal, were crafted during this period. Those songs created renewed enthusiasm and new ripples in the *kirtan* ambience.

That is a time, when he was hardly addressed as 'Thakur'. Everyone used to address him by first name. Of course, he was darling to everyone, without exception. His charming behavior endeared everyone. His worst enemy never had raised dispute on this account.

Since then, the beginning of *kirtan* era, everyone encountered strange and mysterious developments, diverse and multiple episodes as these were, with Anukul Chandra, as he was known then. Very quickly, on real time and on material substance basis, he acquired different images. Overall, there appeared cluster of near impossible happenings, anecdotal and factual, supernatural and miraculous occurrences. How was it possible? Where from did this young man acquire so much of wealth and power in him? No one did feel such bewitching pull and such enticing love earlier. These were of unheard type; not read in any scriptures. How could we, the villagers, ever attribute Godhood in the lad of Shiv Chakravarty? How could Anukul, the boy, be worshipped, even when he is proved to be endowed with rare godlike features? Did the mind, tarnished by traditions and impaired impurities, ever be inclined to accept the purity and clarity? It was a state of acute dilemma, neither could swallow nor could scrap? Of course, the mind to an extent was mend by modicum of love, humility and circumspection. Deep inside the mind, cross currents of suggestions and imaginations reared turmoil. Then came a resolution; let us experiment and see.'

'And then commenced subjecting Anukul to test. Anukul was evaluated in innumerable innovative ways. New experiments were conducted on him. It was, in the first place attempted to be ascertained if Anukul Chandra indeed was knower of everything, including reading the thoughts going on in someone's mind. Hard to harder episodes were contrived to determine if Anukul Chandra is a mind reader. One after another ploys were set and Anukul Chandra underwent through those traps, without any demur. He in fact volunteered himself and supported those trying tests with a view to find truth. He wanted to limit the skeptical mind to certain level of confidence, so that the mind did not indulge into denying the incontrovertible facts.'

'The experimentation reached climax at the time of *samaadhi* time, when Sri Sri Thakur went into state of suspended animation. Whoever witnessed the *samaadhi* episodes of Sri Sri Thakur unambiguously admitted that the spectacle of *samaadhi* was unique, unheard off and unprecedented. During the passage of *samaadhi*, Sri

Sri Thakur became senseless; his body numb, heartbeat knocked off, respiration ceased. As per medical certification, he was in a state of death. Surprisingly, the same body sprang into various yogic postures. At times, the body took a circular shape and rolled over the ground. Sometime, the organs of the body got inverted and the body assumed the shape of a ball and moved in different directions like a rubber ball would move. At some other time, the body lying still would catapult itself and fall flat at a distance; or the body would remain suspended up in the air, in horizontal position. People around were stunned and would take care to ensure that the body was not hurt.'

'A magnificent development happened around that time. Series of utterances poured out of this moribund state; pronunciations in different languages. When words about this mysterious happening went around, people started congregating from all over the places. People viewed the awesome scenes and could hardly comprehend anything. Brindaban Chandra Adhikaree, the veteran advocate from Nazirpur said, 'the voices, notwithstanding what and how of all these, appear to be precious. You will do well to pen the voices.' People around got alerted by his words and started transcription. Three to four people started noting down whatever they could capture. Those have been later published in 'The Holy Book'.'

At this point in narration, Kishori Mohan detoured and observed, 'see the powerful capacity of mind to disbelieve. And look at me; the rugged person that I am. I do not really fathom my own sense of mischief. I wanted to test the hardest way; with a view to unravel the bewilderment. I pressed a cinder and pressed at multiple places on the body, when the body was lying placid on the ground, at the time of Samadhi. The portions of the skin got burnt; but where were the symptoms of pain?'

Kishori Mohan's voice got choked; emotions overwhelmed; he burst into wailing.

Friends took leave of Amritlal Sarkar and went away from ashram. To Panchanan Sarkar it occurred that their points of argument were obliterated; not the dichotomy of their mind. At the time of departure, their parting observation was, 'you all are fortunate. Keep blessed eyes on us, so that our minds are mended.'

Amritlal Sarkar, after seeing off his friends, on way back towards ashram, expressed his desire that he would get into Sri Sri Thakur's spiritual discipline, that is accept *diksha*, provided Sri Sri Thakur personally imparts *diksha*.

- It is fine, Go to Sri Sri Thakur and seek his blessings.

It was dusk. Darkness was dawning. Sri Sri Thakur was seating under opens sky, east of the *neem* tree that is besides the temple of Huzur Maharaj. Reclining on a bench, he enquired Panchanan Sarkar about his brother. 'What is the view of your brother? Panchanan da!'

Amritlal Sarkar submitted his prayer at Sri Sri Thakur. Sri Sri Thakur then said, 'You are supplicating for *diksha*, only because you have regarded me as Guru. Is it not, dada?'

'Yes, Thakur', came the reply.

Sri Sri Thakur said, 'then if I direct to get my precept from a dog, then that will be way for your *diksha*'.

When Amritlal Sarkar admitted, Sri Sri Thakur joyfully announced, 'Did you observe Panchanan da that brother's instinct continues to be normal? His views got mended in one stroke. This is the way to go.'

Sri Sri Thakur turned towards Amritlal Sarkar and said, 'See dear brother, donation is crowned with success, only when it is unconditional. When 'self-surrender' is the best form of donation, then it has to be total and unconditional.'

Being directed by Sri Sri Thakur, Panchanan took his brother to Ananta Maharaj. When Amritlal Sarkar's *diksha* was solemnized, Panchanan's mind was unburdened.

Panchanan received a letter from his brother after some days. When Sri Sri Thakur was readout the letter, he suggested Panchanan to visit his native place, together with his brother and see his mother. It was fixed that Panchanan will cross the river basin on foot up to his brother's place next day morning and then together with brother will travel to native place.

Early morning next day, when Panchanan reached at Sri Sri Thakur to take leave from him, Sri Sri Thakur enquired if he had taken food.

Panchanan - 'It is too early for any food now. I will take bath and have food with my brother and that will be around 3 in the afternoon.'

Sri Sri Thakur – 'What is this? Will you remain unfed till such late hours? Please go, take dip in Padma and come soon. Let me see, if I can arrange something till then.'

Panchanan was pleasantly surprised to see, after returning from bath, that Mother Surama standing behind Sri Sri Thakur, with a plate, full of steaming rice. Then someone put a wooden plank for him to sit on. A glass full of water was placed besides the rice plate on the ground. Sri Sri Thakur made himself seated on the wooden frame at the doorway of the house. Some devotees including Khalil bhai were available around the place. Addressing towards them, Sri Sri Thakur announced, 'let us view the sight of Panchanan da eating'.

Panchanan was relishing the steam rice sprinkled with ghee, meshed boiled potato and fried brinjal. Sri Sri Thakur was observing every gulp of Panchanan's savour. The rice and vegetables almost over, stomach full, Panchanan was about to get up, when he heard Sri Sri Thakur saying, 'Hey, a morsel of rice is seen to be left on the plate. Ha! Little bit of ghee can pull those up.'

Khalil bhai – I have ghee, let me fetch it.

The moment Khalil bhai brought the ghee pot, Sri Sri Thakur said, 'pour it out'. In a moment, the pot was emptied out on the plate.

Bankim Banerjee of Nanda, who was bystander and witnessed the scene, went running and brought a ghee container from his home. Sri Sri Thakur said, 'Bankim da, hey, what is in it. Is it ghee? Spout it out'.

There was insufficient rice on plate to have proportionate mix with the quantity of ghee poured on the plate. Panchanan was at a loss. Sri Sri Thakur enacted a demonstration as to how to scrub the liquid on the plate, take on the conch sized palm and funnel in to the mouth.

When Panchanan cleared the plate and got up, Sri Sri Thakur was observed to heave a sigh of relief and said, 'done. Now something is set down in the stomach. But stomach might get warmed up a bit.'

Panchanan was having a uphill task to cross the sandy river basin walking eight miles. He felt little lazy, heavy and nervous. Sri Sri Thakur appeared to have read Panchanan's trouble and suggested, 'Hey, Sitanath da over there is out to ferry up to Kustiya by a boat. Go and get on with him.'

As Panchanan proceeded to board the boat, Sri Sri Thakur unexpectedly called from behind and said, 'Never mind my voice from behind; as I heard that if parents and Guru call from behind does not bode ill. It is good that you are going to your home. I must caution you. You are a short tempered person. You often tend to speak out many things out of emotion. May be till date those have remained muted in terms of their outcome. Please do not indulge into impulsive conversation. Now for all act of yours I am there in your shade. Be careful of what you say and what happens.'

Panchanan Sarkar, on board the boat and under the shade of the canvas, fell fast asleep. He was apprehensive of his imminent illness. He however did not have any symptom of stomach upset. Sitanath observed, 'Sri Sri Thakur has fed you, casting notice on each gulp. How will you feel uneasy after that? You had *maha-prasad* (bounty of benevolence); graceful gift of God. How can that cause suffering?'

Village Habibpur was fifty miles away from Barisal town in south west direction. That was the birthplace of Panchanan Sarkar. None of family members continued to live there, except the mother. Mother preferred to remain there alone, as that was the ancestral home of her husband. She felt to earn lot of merit if she would breathe her last over that home and hearth.

Mother got into rapturous ecstasy having got her both the sons together after long waiting. She plucked a robustly grown jackfruit from her orchard and kept in kitchen. The orchard was carefully maintained by her. The jackfruit was the choicest homegrown item, full with aged mother's love for the grown up children, who stay away from home. The jackfruit was an unseasonal yield, yet the fruit was curvilinear and was sporting yellow, giving an impression that the fruit will ripe in a day or two.

The beauty of the jackfruit was irresistible. Panchanan instantly visualized how much pleased Sri Sri Thakur would be if he gets this unseasonal fruit. When he expressed his desire before his brother, Amritlal instantly agreed. 'We will then offer this jackfruit to Sri Sri Thakur', announced brother Amritlal.

How to bring the jackfruit to Himaitpur? Panchanan, being advised by Sri Sri Thakur, would return via Kolkata. He was scheduled to meet Mr. Bipadbaaran Babu, owner of 'Dasabhujaa Jalachhatra'. He would hold discussion about setting up tube well in ashram at Himaitpur. Alternatively, if Amritlal carries the jackfruit to his workplace, then it would be fifteen days before which the jackfruit cannot reach ashram. Will the climacteric fruit like jackfruit remain fresh and not get spoiled by then?

Amritlal expressed his conviction. 'When I have resolved that the jackfruit will be offered to Sri Sri Thakur, it will remain fresh till then.'

Mother then was compelled to pluck two more jackfruits, smaller in size and less mature than the first one. She placed those two in the kitchen besides the first one. Both the jackfruits got ripen in natural process and were consumed on third and

fourth day, one by one. The first jackfruit was observed to remain in its previous state.

On completion of ten days, brother Amritlal carried the jackfruit and came to workplace Chadaikol and Panchanan took off to Kolkata. After finalizing the deal at Kolkata for ashram's tube well, Panchanan reached Chadaikol after sixteen days. His sister-in-law announced that the jackfruit has ripen and it is enchanting the ambience with its fragrance. Panchanan planned to reach ashram with the jackfruit tomorrow by ten in the morning; that would be before Sri Sri Thakur take lunch. He consoled to himself by saying that if the jackfruit was ripe then there was no cause to complaint.

It was quite late in the morning, for some rare misfortune. By the time the rowers moored the boat at Bajitpur steamer station, it was two and half in the afternoon. 'The jackfruit missed the day today; late for Sri Sri Thakur's lunch. Will it remain fresh, without being spoilt till tomorrow?' Panchanan was in deep anguish. He stepped into ashram, saw Sri Sri Thakur from a distance. Appeared, Sri Sri Thakur was standing, eagerly waiting for someone.

No sooner Panchanan prostrated before Sri Sri Thakur, than Sri Sri Thakur called mother. 'Oh, mother, Panchanan da has brought the jackfruit just in time. It is a wonderful jackfruit; its fragrance enraptures the whole area'. Having said this, Sri Sri Thakur walked along the rear side the father's cottage.

Mother Manamohini voiced out directing Panchanan to place the jackfruit without delay in the kitchen, in the hand of daughter in law (Sri Sri Thakur's wife). Mother also announced that Sri Sri Thakur just moved ahead for lunch.

When Panchanan paced in with the jackfruit in hand, he viewed Sri Sri Thakur about to start his lunch. As the mother (Sri Sri Thakur's wife) received the jackfruit, she peeled it off, took a handful of portions out and placed before Sri Sri Thakur in a stone plate.

As Panchanan glanced the serene and lovely view unfolding before him, with spectacular grace and grandeur, profuse tears flew on his cheek unabated.

Panchanan Sarkar attempted to make an introspective analysis of this surprising incident. This jackfruit episode happened during the initial phase of his tenure in ashram. That episode made a dent on his ego and compelled him to take a bow before him. This was actually Sri Sri Thakur's grace on Panchanan.

That kind of miracles did happen often as experienced by many. When people narrated those episodes, Panchanan, as admitted by him, remained unfazed. He said, 'new, strange and unprecedented developments get procreated from every

movement of the arms of this man (Sri Sri Thakur), as he remains in state of endless possibilities. Lucky are those who get to observe those; it is hard to describe and still harder to do anything with those.'

In this regard Sri Sri Thakur once told Poet Hem Chandra, 'My dear! Never attempt to establish credential of the supreme father by highlighting these development. There remains a veiled ego behind all these narrations, which try to proclaim; see you all, how dear am I to Thakur! So much of His play is getting expressed through me. No one from those who listen to the stories either get benefited from the stories. They may get sensitized with those stories which make them active for few days. Some become expectant for those unusual things to happen for them. Some people get down to subject Sri Sri Thakur through some experiment. They also get disappointed when either Sri Sri Thakur does not admit those experiments or may not pass through, in their perception. In either case, they do not mind slightest rejecting Sri Sri Thakur. The stories of miraculous happening are not symptoms of faith; nor do those help create faith.'

Panchanan Sarkar recalled Sri Sri Thakur's often repeated saying, which goes like this. 'There is nothing like miracle in true sense. Everything that happens on this earth, do so by following valid process, ordained by nature. And if someone does something special under certain specific situation, he does that by following the process as required under that law of nature. Sri Sri Thakur always did provide scientific basis for narration of any miraculous happening.'

Six years after the jackfruit event, one day Sri Sri Thakur was sitting on the verandah of newly built cottage of wood piles. Dr. Jatin da just finished his discussion about practice at Kolkata and Nafar was arranging hookah, standing close to Sri Sri Thakur. Panchanan raised few issues with Sri Sri Thakur.

Panchanan – How is that the jackfruit that was supposed to have ripen in couple of days, did not mature for long time, contrary to principles of nature?

Sri Sri Thakur blossomed in smile and observed in his natural and superb style, 'That one you recall; your brother did pledge the fruit to Thakur's offering (*bhog*) and took an undertaking that the fruit won't ripe prior to that. If he asserted that way, how could the jackfruit ripe? I have said this earlier also, Panchanan da!'

Second question (from Panchanan da) – I have observed that you take lunch at eleven; as if following the clock. Why did you on that day remain unfed till three in the afternoon?

Sri Sri Thakur – (in the same natural voice, as earlier) Recall, you made an appeal that day that you would feed the jackfruit to Thakur on the same day. May be that was the point of diversion which deferred my lunch up to three.'

These answers did not convince Panchanan Sarkar that day. He wanted to hear Sri Sri Thakur saying, 'You know every well that nature works under whose order. He applied his prerogative and tinkered nature's natural movement for honouring the loving demand of his devotees'. This explanation would have measured up to naive estimate of Panchanan about Sri Sri Thakur.

Panchanan Sarkar averred that he was used to get this kind of self-effacing pronouncement from Sri Sri Thakur all the time. But the devotees always wished to get a view of his true image and unalloyed identity. In those days, Sri Sri Thakur's that image was also seen and heard quite profusely. That was the era of revelation and manifestation. Sri Sri Thakur never harbored any kind of discomfiture and inhibition in expression of his natural self. It is imperative for the incarnate to assume his own self with a view to work his mission, which normally remains well planned. If welfare of the masses, fulfilling the specific requirement of special groups and person, is the motto of the incarnate, then he has no option but to unveil himself out and out, and definitely so in specific situations. There arises the issue, unless and until Sri Ramachandra volunteered to reveal his self-identity, how could the kind of vanaras Sugriva tie up friendship with Sri Ramachandra? How could Hanuman, the one from the group fleeing the Rushyamuk mountain, become intimate devotee, and displayed such unmatched valour that made him as most adorable hero? Srimad Bhagavat Gita is the saga of Lord Krishna's revelation for Arjun.

Though Sri Sri Thakur's explanation was not up to the satisfaction of Panchanan Sarkar; the episode made Panchanan Sarkar to realize the power of 'my Thakur'. 'My Thakur' was a powerful reality. If 'My Thakur' stood up and made a pronouncement, that could never be drifted.

In the same vein, Panchanan Sarkar realized the power of words pronounced by him, as someone dedicated to Thakur. He heard once Thakur saying, a devotee once cursed someone, 'Your mouth which is voicing canard will vomit blood to death'. With these curses, the devotee was instrumental in causing death of three persons and even Thakur could not save them. Panchanan Sarkar found resemblance of this with incidents of monks and saints hurling curse or awarding boon available in mythological stories. He realized that these were not something that could be wished away.

Word of caution from Sri Sri Thakur reverberated in Panchanan Sarkar's ears. 'Never make undesirable use of power earned through some merit or blessings. If someone's existence is hurt, however small and insignificant it could be, the pain is inexorably felt by your beloved Thakur. Thakur also feels happy; happiness touches Thakur's heart; if one becomes really happy. It does not hold any meaning for Thakur, if a person's existence does not get embellished; instead only philosophy or words of wisdom, tacitly supporting complex, go around. If that were to happen, then the field is to be vacated for evil, giving evil a free hand. The fire and ice exercise which you all are going through with me will get defeated. Also

will be defeated the much assured mission of putting up a meritorious and just order on this dusty and disordered earth.'

Panchanan Sarkar reflected and asserted that he experienced such strange and uncommon flavor with Sri Sri Thakur that led him to conclude that his birth and life attained unqualified triumph. As a sequel, an intense feeling coming from the stanza of Rabindranath Thakur started oozing out from some undiscovered recess of his inner self. The stanza sings, 'what was black and white till date, now got glowing by your paint'. Whoever saw me during those days got convinced that I went berserk and had all the symptom of being delirious. When my perceived state was brought to the notice my brother, he was said to comment, 'I was aware beforehand that this state would happen to him (Panchanan).'

After a bit of deep thought, brother Amritlal, commented, 'whatever it may be, my brother is not a fool. Never was he found to be devoid of his mental balance. It is worth waiting to observe, where it ends at'.

Panchanan Sarkar further reflects, 'What I am presenting here as experience, is actually a decorated display of my puny self and my mind set, which are afflicted by hope, aspiration and imagination. However, the newness that came from Sri Sri Thakur is independent of the past and, as it, it intruded as a guest. The experience post coming into Thakur, flew from outside and nested in me. It is something out of nothing, forcibly weighing on the head, springing a heavenly thrill that Panchanan Sarkar never felt earlier. It was unspeakable sensation, could never translate itself to perception. The new experience was not overshadowed by the mechanism of conventional understanding and intellect. The new experience though oscillated between conviction and doubt, but remained alive, lively, charming and unquestionable. The new experience had association neither with senses, nor with mind and intellect. These were core to my heart, came with eternal glow, with melodious orchestra, playing for ever like inherently automatic organic process. Everything said, the experience remained mute and incomplete to external world.'

Panchanan Sarkar continued his introspection. 'I am outspoken by nature. And now, as if, I got a license to speak out my mind. I poured out my heart before Sri Sri Thakur and it was a huge volume vented out in a moment. Today, I am not able to ascertain if my utterances came from well thought out feelings and expressed with sensitivity. But what I vividly recall is a wonderful and inimitable listening style of Sri Sri Thakur. It was a scene of not only hearing through ears. He embraced my words in thousand hands whole heartedly. With considerable interest, his listening, as if, lands a frost afflicted bewildered traveler at its desired destination.'

Panchanan Sarkar says that he has undergone through similar experiences times without number. He says, 'I am not alone. I have seen innumerable people

offloading the mountain of pains at Sri Sri Thakur. He used to redress all those, just by lending his ears, or at times just casting his glance, or by flashing a smile on his face. What a bounty of curative affluence an ear can have! I do not think the greatest of imaginary poet would have captured this. Yes, it does make immense sense today, that this is the way to listen. Do words rippling out of mouth indeed originate in the mouth? Likewise, getting words in through ear is not hearing. Just by accessing the ear cavity, the suppressed and accumulated pain in the heart that finds way through mouth does not get mitigated. The cries of helplessness hardly contains the heart's appetite. First time I saw with Sri Sri Thakur, how to hear the prayer by embracing the sufferer wholeheartedly. The same ear is used. Question winks in the mind: is everything of him is incomparable, if the subject is incomparable? Is everything of him is unique, if the subject is unique? If everything of him is uncommon, if the subject is uncommon?

Panchanan Sarkar goes on talking in his mood and Sri Sri Thakur listens in his own style. At time, Sri Sri Thakur interrupts and speaks something. When Sri Sri Thakur speaks, it is not that he speaks through lips. His whole body, all muscles in the body, particularly mouth, eyes, hands and legs, every organ, as if, moves in a meaningful wave in unison. It is a rare speaking sight to see. The nature of his speech, its sweetness and symphony, its expression and emotion are to be seen, to be celebrated and can hardly be described.

Panchanan Sarkar says, 'the magical dance performance of Nataraj is certainly not reflected in any poetic imagination. I can vouch for that originality from the glimpse of Nataraj's (Sri Sri Thakur's) performance. My pair of eyes are sanctified by what it has viewed.'

Another aspect of Sri Sri Thakur's speaking skill is noteworthy. Panchanan Sarkar says, 'I was wonderstruck to observe how Sri Sri Thakur used to provide solution in few words to gigantic problems. He used to express himself in a few words. It is undeniable that a huge peepal tree remains imprinted in a seed; the possibility remains in potential form. But can a Mahabharat be said in a seed form; by an expression of equation? And that too such simple and intelligible way, making clear like day light, touching the other person's heart. Where is a speaker, who can articulate that pithy statement in such a way that it appeals to all spectrum of people, irrespective of their knowledge and stature? Who on earth put on such an animated and communicative face as to reveal the essence of the message up to hundred percent clarity as he speaks?'

Panchanan Sarkar recalls what he heard from a teacher of his childhood days, which narrates an observation made by the Thakur from Dakhineshwar to a renowned public speaker. 'What all do you spin during speech that lasts for hours together? Why so much lecture on something that can straight be pointed out and shown on the spot?'

‘आत्मानं बिदधिवि’ a classic adage, pronounced by those who have acquired mastery of all time of all places. It conveys, ‘if you want to escape from the immersion in whirlwind in the world ocean, then you have to know yourself’. But our self remains all the time shrouded by thousands of deleterious web of complexes. The self-glow may therefore never come across our view.

Is then ‘आत्मानं बिदधिवि’ an empty aphorism? No, it may not be so. Sages were alive to the primal urge of human being that called for upholding the distinctiveness of each self. Each human being gathers and uses the feed resource from the surrounding and wants to exercise control on the surrounding. And thereby wants uninterrupted fulfilment of self and be on a progressive tenor. It is urge for affiliation. Homo sapiens would lose its genre, if the urge for fulfilling affiliation is robbed of. Life hardly would have meaning devoid of the urge for becoming and belonging. This urge requires company of someone in whom we can get to see image of the unpretentious self.

Panchanan Sarkar reviews how his eye sight was bless to renew its ability to see, as he writes. ‘During the first three days of his visit to Sri Sri Thakur, his eye sight, which was banished from viewing the marvelous art works of the world for long time, suddenly retrieved its glow. It was something unforgettable to experience the unexpected deliverance from darkness. The deliverance blew a storm of joy, covering my entire being. That was how my first step in new life was taken with much excitement, arising from the kindness that I could not have asked for more. The ever dazzling moment comes live occasionally, the moment when I found the door of my mysterious mind open. I got clue to right vision and came to know how the view was unfurled to righteousness. That is why, I have repeatedly recited the stanza composed by the devotee-poet Hem Chandra:

Your image has trained my eyes to stare,
It was your voice that made my ear to hear.

Does it then follow that this is the way to vision, followed by all those who view things rightly and know to view absolute right? Science of philosophy holds the view that the inner essence of things, deciphering the external glimmer, can be viewed if seen through ‘His’ eyes; similar to a child views the world looking at mother’s face. Mother is the personification of supreme self. The day I first visited Sri Sri Thakur, the lost picture of my dream-heaven was flashed in my mental horizon momentarily. That was the first hammer on my venom tooth of my fabricated knowledge of past years.’

Coming away from Sri Sri Thakur’s presence, when Panchanan asked to Sushil Chandra (Basu), the latter observed, ‘Whoever comes to Sri Sri Thakur, either by natural forces or by some compulsion, do experience the same. Therefore, this is everyday story over here.’

Panchanan reflected on the subject laying on the bed at night. He watched Sri Sri Thakur's photos of various postures. Never any of these photos give rise to these feeling. What then is the difference between lively live image and the silent picture? Can the humanity ever recover from the loss from the absence of the live personality? Thakur manifested the spectacle of universal image in a flash. Will the humanity ever be graced by the benevolence from the stone statue crafted by sculptures, who are carrying thousand year's impressions? What a worrying hiatus between prophet past and prophet present?

Man plays myriads of tricks and manipulations to manage some benefits. Every man displays this tendency through various efforts, made consciously or unconsciously, knowingly or unknowingly, in action or in dream. That is why there is competition world over to acquire skill and capability. Rational mind says, there is nothing wrong in this endeavor. This is the way and this will continue like this.

Panchanan Sarkar was no exception in making headway in this trend. He dabbled and earned proficiency in many fields. He mastered literature in English, Bengali and Sanskrit. He got into drama and music. He played instruments like harmonium, flute and violin. He also plunged into subjects like science, philosophy, occult science, palmistry, astrology, hypnotism and mesmerism. None of these escaped Panchanan Sarkar's versatile talent and curiosity to earn expertise. He then learned multiple vernacular languages like Hindi, Odiya, Telugu, Assaami, Maithili, Arabi; and also foreign languages like French and Germany.

No education can stand a person in good stead, if it is not supported by a sound personality. With this firm conviction, Panchanan Sarkar undertook serious exercise for self-development. He practiced all canons of self-restraints, ब्रह्मचर्य and योग. On hindsight, he confessed that he found himself deficient in purification of mind and senses, as he did not find an appropriate and acceptable guide. The need for a guide (गुरु) was something that did not come to him as clearly as it was required. That a competent guide was indispensable for self-development, was not much emphatically available in books. It was a tragedy for Panchanan Sarkar and travesty of his intellect.

Panchanan Sarkar scrutinized वेद, वेदान्त, उपनिषद and न्याय, सांख्य, पातंजलि with interpretations. He however did not find the most significant lead that could have led him to someone who made everything meaningful. He relished the experience of *rishis* (the sages), roamed around with their chanting beads; never did he care for the *rishi* (the sage). No one did alert him then that without reaching the आचार्य, one cannot reach the उपनिषद. On reflection, Panchanan Sarkar had no reason to find fault with the scriptures; he only referred to the fault line on his forehead.

The contemporary priests and preachers (पंडित) are engaged in delivering the culture and scriptures, instead of carrying the wisdom in the persona. Panchanan Sarkar observed many such purveyors of cults and isms. They have made it their occupation. They recite stanzas and portions from scriptures; carry the audience with their power of persuasions. They are *gurus* and they are focused in building the number of their camp followers. If they could conduct few miracles and display power to dispense favours, then the गुरु was nothing less than the ब्रह्मग्न्य. The gurus have no shame in herding ignorant, ravenous, credulous and expectant flocks and exploiting their limitations.

Panchanan Sarkar was repulsive of recalling his perilous state before coming to Sri Sri Thakur. He found himself in a vacuous state when he started practicing the bookish principles for shaping his behavior and manners. He went around in a popular way, without subjecting those to doubt.

It took long time for Panchanan Sarkar to realize that much of his troubles were rooted in the committed deeds and past habits. Unadjusted habits continued for long time were incorrigible. He felt remorseful and almost was crying silently. In one of those days, when he found himself before Sri Sri Thakur, Sri Sri Thakur beckoned him in a menacing voice.

'What all these you are into? You damn. Seems, your mind is not coming aligned with intent', said Sri Sri Thakur.

Panchanan – What is wrong? I have committed endless sins. Shouldn't I repent?

Sri Sri Thakur – Lo and behold. What this mad boy wants to say and what is he actually saying? What you are indulging is called 'regret', not 'repent'. There is a gap between these two like that between heaven and earth. At one time, I too strayed into this stupidity. No wonder, as nerd I am. Where would have I got a person like you, conversant with scripture and evidence based knowledge? I then solely depended on conventional knowledge based on hearsay. Some days later, I found myself beaten badly. Supreme father however arrested the downfall and rescued me. It then dawned on me that as you allow self-deprecation and go on building negative image about yourself, those negative self-impression started getting deep rooted. It is tragic indeed to think oneself as 'sinful soul', 'engaged in sinful work' and 'probable sin' etc. The moment, I realized this, I shook it off and exited from the sinful thought in a momentary feat and with fistful resolve. I said to myself, no, I am not a sinner, I am not sin probable. I am offspring of the supreme father. Weakness has no shelter in me; never. I was relieved after all these.'

Panchanan – Thakur, what is repentance then?

Sri Sri Thakur – Repentance is to unravel and understand the causes of what happens due to what and how. Thereafter, to know what action takes mind away

from drift and tends towards propitiousness and repeated practice of that is called repentance. This kind of repentance causes sin to die.

Panchanan - What will happen to those which have been committed and consigned in the past?

Sri Sri Thakur - There is nothing much that can be done with something what is in the past and is out of hand. *Diksha* (initiation) is called new birth, *brahmic* birth (ब्रह्म जन्म). From there begins an uninterrupted upward journey with new action, backed by fresh understanding and resoluteness. This is the penance (व्रत) undertaken by those seeking higher status of consciousness (ब्रह्मचारी).

Panchanan - Thakur, the memories continue. Those are not erased.

Sri Sri Thakur - Those of course will be retained, as those are imprinted in the record of Chitragupta. Those will be used as experience, which you have earned after making lot of churning and facing lot of flaks. Now these evocations will act like compass for others in the future. These will be resources for providing flash guidance to others who would be falling like as you did.

Panchanan – Let that be so Thakur! Do memories not cause flaming?

Sri Sri Thakur – Dear Panchanan da! Flame of memories is nothing but subdued attachment. We must give those up; yet we are not able to.

Panchanan – Right Thakur! There appears to be some juice in it.

Sri Sri Thakur – Bravo, you are superb. Now you know, tragedy is an addiction. It is allurements. One takes credit to make life a tragedy.

Sri Sri Thakur had a hearty laugh.
