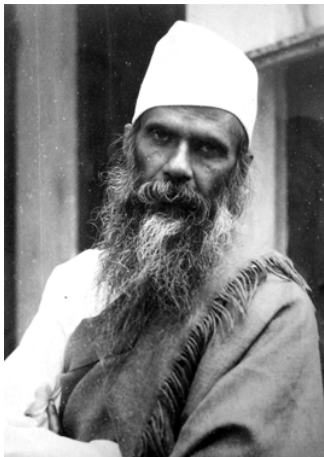


## My Life with Anirvan

### Part - II

From 1954 March to August 1955, I maintained contact with Sri Anirvan by correspondence.



Sri Anirvan

Apart from being a saint, Anirvanji was a great scholar of the Vedas, and of Indian and Western philosophy, psychology and literature. He collected a large number of books for his library. Till now his younger brother Bimal Sankar Dhar was his main supplier of books. Whatever money he received from his friends he would invest it mostly in books. After he came to know us, he would write to us as well, especially when the books were to be purchased from Bombay (now called Mumbai). Most of the books he ordered were on Zoroastrianism, preserved and translated into Gujarati by the Parsi community of Gujarat. Professor Taraporewala, a Zoroastrian, was his teacher in Calcutta University where Anirvanji, as Nirvana Chaitanya Brahmachari, did his M.A. during 1916-1918 with the Vedas as his main subject. He was very much interested in Sanskrit literature, in Vyasa, Valmiki, in Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti and Banabhatta and other Sanskrit poets. While filling up the forms he was going to write Sanskrit literature as his main subject but something within him impelled him to write Vedas instead. Later he told me that it was his Guru Swami Nigamananda who used his spiritual powers to make him choose the Vedas as his main subject of study in M.A.

To digress. The same thing happened again at the end of his studies. After finishing his two-year course, he did not want to go back immediately to the Guru's Ashram in Jorhat, Assam. He wanted to go to Kanyakumari, to the temple of Goddess Parvati, a form of his Ishta Haimavati. The goddess Kanyakumari is depicted standing with a garland to receive Her consort Lord Siva.

The temple of Kanyakumari is situated at the southernmost tip of India, surrounded by three seas, the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. This was the place from where Swami Vivekananda swam to the southernmost island and had his vision of Regenerated Mother India. When Anirvanji went to the Railway Office in Kolkata to purchase the ticket for Kanyakumari or Madras from where he would travel to Kanyakumari, instead of Madras he asked for a ticket to Jorhat. That too was a miracle enforced on him by his guru Swami Nigamananda. Well, to return to the topic. When Nirvana Chaitanya filled up his form for the Vedas M.A. course, another problem arose. The Brahmin professors would not teach Vedas to a non-Brahmin boy. Chaitanya was a Kayastha. He had to approach Sri Ashutosh Mukerjee, then Chief Justice and Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, himself a Brahmin. Sri Ashutosh said, "All right, if they do not want to teach you the Vedas, I will get teachers from South India to teach you the Vedas." In fact, he did invite two Vedic scholars from South India who had no objection to teaching the Vedas to a non-Brahmin boy. When they came to Kolkata, the other Bengali professors too came humbly down from their high pedestal, and from then onwards non-Brahmin students were admitted to the Vedic Department of the University. Thus the ground for Anirvanji's writings on

the Vedas was prepared. In his M.A. classes Anirvanji had read portions of Zend Avesta, the scripture of the Zoroastrian religion. The Zoroastrians or Parsis, as they are known in India, had developed their scriptures in Gujarat after they migrated to Gujarat from Persia (now called Iran) in the 8th century, when the Arabian Muslims conquered Persia and destroyed most of their fire temples and religious scriptures. Anirvanji could easily read printed Gujarati, Marathi, Assamese, Oriya and Hindi languages. Thus he knew almost all the languages of northern India, including Kashmiri. Unfortunately he did not learn the Southern languages, Tamil, Telugu or Kannada. Had he learnt them it would have been easier for linguists to link the ties between the southern and northern languages, almost all of which had come from the Vedic Chandas Bhasha, Pali and Prakrit. Smt Gouri Dharmapal is trying to do this, though she too does not know much of Tamil, Telugu etc. She had almost united them through her study of Panini's Ashtadhyayi (grammar of Chhandas and Bhasha) in her book "The Linguistic Atom and the Origin of Languages."

Then came 6th August 1955. A bolt from the blue, like an atom bomb that fell on Hiroshima on 6th August 1945, fell on the Dharmapals. Bandhu Dharmapal, the founder and leader of Dharma Sangha had an attack of apoplexy, a cerebral haemorrhage. The attack came at 3.00 pm on 6th August, Saturday, and he passed away the same night at about 11.30 pm. A dark cloud of despair and depression descended on us. Under the circumstances, I wrote to Sri Anirvan to come to mitigate our sorrow, and requested him to come and stay with us for sometime in Kolkata if possible. Anirvanji immediately replied, conveying his grief at the passing away of Bandhu Dharmapal and appreciating his ideas and ideals. He assured us that his help and support to our cause would be always there. He said that though he would not be directly connected

with Dharma Sangha, he would do whatever possible to help and take forward the cause of Dharma Sangha as the ideas and ideals of Bandhu were the same as his own. He also informed me that when he comes next to Kolkata in November he would stay with us. The Divine Mother had already prepared the ground for the shifting of his Haimavati to Kolkata, as Sri S.R. Roy, with whom he usually stayed in Kolkata, was transferred to Delhi.

Thus Anirvanji came from Shillong to stay with us for the first time at 6H, Keyatala Rd, Kolkata-700029, on 18th November 1955. He stayed with us till 15th December. He left for Ranchi, a hill resort in Bihar, now the capital of the Jharkhand state; which was then part of Bihar. Anirvanji's college friend Sri Biren Sen, Accountant General of Eastern India, was posted there in his early forties. Almost every year after his leaving his Guru Nigamananda Saraswati's Ashram in Jorhat, Anirvanji would visit Biren Sen wherever he was posted, Ranchi or Delhi. Before 1945, he would stay for long periods in Sen's house. He tutored Sen's son and daughters for sometime, especially when Sri Sen was in Delhi. It was during one of his visits to Ranchi that Anirvanji was discovered by a group of devotees of Sri Aurobindo. One day in August 1942 Anirvanji was going to Ranchi from Kolkata by Ranchi Express. Due to storm and floods in the river Rupanarayan, the bridge was damaged and the train detained for three nights on the Kolkata side of the river, after Bagnan. Very early in the morning, Anirvanji would get out of the train and, after taking his bath in the river, sit below a big tree in meditation or read a book. Some devotees of Sri Aurobindo who were also going to Ranchi by the same train were attracted towards him and sat beside him and heard his satsanga. They asked some questions about Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, especially about The Life Divine- Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus,

which appeared serially in the Arya Magazine and just published. Extremely impressed by Anirvanji's deep knowledge of Indian Philosophy, Vedas and Upanishads, they invited him to talk to them on Life Divine at their class in Ranchi at one Sri Saikat Babu's garden house. There the seeds of the translation of Life Divine in Bengali were sown. It was there in Ranchi that Tapas, then a disciple of Maa Anandamayi met him and later arranged for Anirvanji's stay at Almora, where he finished his translation of Life Divine; where he established his first Haimavati; where Lizelle Reymond had joined him later in 1949-50. Tapas not only arranged for his stay in Almora, she herself stayed with him and served him as his cook, his personal secretary and servant. Anirvanji gave her sannyas and named her Chinmayi. It was in fact, Tapas who suggested the name Anirvan, when they were thinking of a name for the author of "Divya Jivana," the Bangla translation of "The Life Divine." It was in 1949 that the first volume of this translation was published under the name of Anirvan as author. Till then, after leaving the Guru's ashram in 1930, Anirvanji was using different names, sometimes Nirvanananda, sometimes Barda, sometimes Sachchidananda, etc. Tapas left Anirvanji in 1949, when Lizelle came to Sri Anirvan to stay with him. By then Tapas was attracted towards J.D. Krishnamurti. Towards the end of her life in 1973, she almost came back to Anirvanji. In fact, it was through me that she came back to Anirvan. I first met Tapas in August 1960 in Almora, where I had gone for a spiritual retreat and was staying at Haimavati, then occupied by Pierre Oppliger, the Swiss friend of Lizelle, with his American wife Mary. During the period when Lizelle and Anirvanji were staying at Almora, Pierre and his friends of S.C.I. (Service Civil International, a social service organization) used to visit Haimavati as guests. Later when Pierre decided to settle in India, he purchased the house and kept the

name Haimavati. I had become a friend of Pierre when we were together at Pathalipam on the river Subansiri in Lakhimpur District, Assam, where we were working for relief activities during 1950-52. Since 1960, Tapas visited us whenever she came to Kolkata, first at Keyatala Road and then at Fern Road.

Another place Anirvanji would always visit during his travels in the winter was Allahabad, home of another friend of his from his college days in Dacca, Sri Dhiren Dasgupta. Dhiren, Biren and Naren (Direndra, Birendra and Narendra (later Nirvanananda/Anirvan) were great friends during their college days in Dacca, and remained great friends till the end of their lives.

This was the itinerary of Anirvanji during his first visit to our place in Kolkata, 18<sup>th</sup> November to 15<sup>th</sup> December; Ranchi from 16<sup>th</sup> December to 7<sup>th</sup> January 1956; Patna from 8<sup>th</sup> January to 14<sup>th</sup> January. At Patna, Anirvanji used to stay with Sister Pushpa, Principal of Nivedita Girls' College. She was a friend of Tapas, and visited Haimavati at Almora, during her summer or October puja vacations. She too had taken up sannyas, but continued with her college work till she passed away. From Patna Anirvanji went to Allahabad, 15<sup>th</sup> January to 28<sup>th</sup> January; then to Delhi from 29<sup>th</sup> January to 6<sup>th</sup> February. From Delhi he went to Almora and Loharghat near Mayavati, in the Himalayas, for the last time. He stayed there till 12th February and returned to Allahabad where he again stayed till 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Anirvanji returned to Kolkata on 23<sup>rd</sup> February and stayed with us till 29<sup>th</sup> February when he left for Shillong by plane up to Gauhati and from there by bus to Shillong by the first week of March.

When Anirvanji was with us in December 1955, Swami Chinmayananda, a sannyasi sadhu, connected previously with Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission, who too was introduced to us in December 1954 by our astrologer friend Jitendra Kumar Bhattacharya,

came to stay with us. Swami Chinmayananda, after leaving Sri R.K. Math and Mission, also lived in Almora, and knew Anirvanji very well. Though Chinmayananda talked much about Anirvanji, even criticized him for staying with Tapas and Lizelle, Anirvanji never spoke anything for or against him. He always kept silence, the silence which we came to know later as *Akasha Bhavna*, remaining ever quiet and aloof like the peaceful sky, unperturbed in all circumstances.

Though this was Swami Chinmayananda's second and last visit to our house in Keyatala Road, in December 1955, it became a difficult problem for us how to accommodate two Swamijis together. Fortunately for us, the problem was automatically solved as Chinmayananda according to his extrovert nature preferred the small front room and Anirvanji was happy to stay in the inner larger room, like a cave, where Bandhu lived.

As to satsanga, we first sat with Swami Chinmayananda who read the Gita without interpreting it, according to the Bhashya of Shankaracharya following his uncompromising monistic Advaitism. After his class was over, we sat with Anirvanji, who during that first visit talked to us on Ishopanishad in his way of synthesis. Anirvanji then spoke in English, as many friends who joined the classes could not understand his Bangla commentary properly. However, from his second visit on in 1957, he talked in his natural beautiful Bangla.

In the afternoon and evening, visitors came to meet both the Swamijis. As there were separate entrances for both the rooms, there was not much difficulty. A greater number of visitors came to meet Anirvanji as he had already become popular in Kolkata, especially in the Aurobindo circle because of his Bangla translation of *The Life Divine*. Anirvanji had also started lecturing at Sri Aurobindo Path

Mandir at their Saturday evening meetings. During the fifties he talked there on *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* of Sri Aurobindo. He himself wrote down the lecture notes, which were published in "Bartika," a quarterly magazine of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, entitled "Divya Jivana Prasanga" and "Yoga Samanvaya Prasanga," the best commentaries on Sri Aurobindo's "Life Divine" and "Synthesis of Yoga." From 1961 onwards, Sri Anirvan began his talks on "Savitri," the epic poem of Sri Aurobindo. These continued till the first week of August 1971, when he fell ill and could not continue further. His notes were so extensive that by then he had not finished even the first volume of "Savitri."

"Savitri" had taken so much hold on him, that whenever he would read "Savitri" for the classes he would go into a trance. One morning, he even fell down during a trance. Fortunately, I saw him slowly slipping down, trying to catch hold of the door, and immediately ran and helped him to the bed. That was on a Saturday morning in January or February 1962.

This first visit of Sri Anirvan to our home at 6H, Keyatala Road was like an elixir to all the three remaining members of the Dharmapal family; Sudha Dharmapal, wife of Bandhu Dharmapal with her two children, myself and Sharad Dharmapal, the only two Dharmapals who had remained with Bandhu Dharmapal out of the ten Dharmapals who had taken vows of a Dharmapal for dedicating their lives for the cause of Dharma, according to the principles, ideas and ideals of Dharma Sangha. Sri Anirvan's presence strengthened our determination to continue with the work of Dharma Sangha. We were assured of Anirvanji's help and guidance on our path. He became our Acharya in the Vedic sense.

*To be continued...*

**-Sri Gautam Dharmapal**