

TALES
OF
TORTURE

An abstract graphic design in shades of orange and yellow on a textured, aged paper background. The design features several vertical, slightly curved lines that resemble stylized figures or structures. A thick, horizontal orange band crosses the upper part of the design. From the base of the vertical lines, numerous thin, radiating lines extend outwards, creating a fan-like effect. The overall composition is minimalist and evocative.

THE PERSECUTION OF ANANDA MARGA IN INDIA

HISTORY BEARS TESTIMONY THAT WHENEVER PERSONS STATED THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH IN ANY SPHERE OF LIFE, WHETHER IT BE SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC OR OTHERWISE, SOUGHT CLARIFICATIONS OF DOUBTS OR PROTESTED AGAINST INJUSTICES AND WRONGS, THE EVIL FORCES FORTHWITH PLOTTED AGAINST THEM, ADMINISTERED POISON TO THEM, AND SLANDERED THEM, JUMPED ON THEM WITH RAGE, MISUSED THE AUTHORITY AGAINST THEM AND MERCILESSLY DEALT THEM BLOW AFTER BLOW. BUT THE BLOWS BOOMERANGED AND ULTIMATELY THE EVIL FORCES WERE ANNIHILATED BY THOSE VERY BLOWS.

REMEMBER, BY AN UNALTERABLE DECREE OF HISTORY THE EVIL FORCES ARE DESTINED TO MEET THEIR DOOMSDAY.

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JANUARY 1, 1974

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TALES of TORTURE

THE PERSECUTION OF ANANDA MARGA IN INDIA

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TO BABA

INTRODUCTION.

Ananda Marga (The Path of Bliss) is a socio-spiritual organisation founded in India in 1955 and since grown to an international mission with centres in over 80 countries world-wide. These centres serve as a base for the teaching of the philosophy and practices of yoga and meditation by trained teachers called Acaryas, who are monks and nuns of the movement under the guidance of its founder and spiritual head, Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii.* Anandamurtijii has not only propounded a system of spiritual development, but has given practical guidelines for constructing a more progressive social system to overcome the injustices and exploitation of the present human society. He emphasises that individual development must be accompanied by dynamic social action, and so the social programmes of Ananda Marga are very comprehensive, including Education, Fine Arts, Disaster Relief, Welfare, Food for All, Tribal Relief, etc.

The goal of Ananda Marga's service work, from its inception, was not simply to fill minds and bellies and to bandage wounds, but to engender a dynamic, spiritual society. It dispensed inspiration, love and hope, along with bread and milk. "You are the child of a great Father, the whole universe is your home; you have every right to use it to the fullest." This raised expectations among the people and offered the means for realising them. At the height of its popularity, Ananda Marga had two million members, many of them intellectuals and government officials dissatisfied with India's **slow growth** and pervasive corruption. Even the Congress Party newspaper, "Current", reported that half of the police Superintendents in Bihar State were members of Ananda Marga. This situation greatly disturbed the then central government, since Ananda Marga was becoming much more specific in its criticism of the government and the social structure.

In 1969, the central government, fearing this ever-expanding and increasingly popular movement and its charismatic leader, tried unsuccessfully to ban all government employees from membership in Ananda Marga. The government claimed that Ananda Marga was itself a political organisation. However, the Supremo Court stayed the government ban order, declaring it unconstitutional.

*Called "BABA" (Beloved One) by His devoted followers.

Elsewhere, Ananda Marga's opponents were taking more direct action. Ananda Nagar, the headquarters located on a large tract of land in rural West Bengal, was running a children's home, primary school, higher secondary school, liberal arts' and technical colleges, leper's home, medical clinic, ashram and printing press. These programmes gave it a strong local influence, and local officials sought its support for their own careers. Rebuffed, they began a campaign of public denunciation and harassment of Ananda Marga, stirring up the villagers and tribespeople with tales of land-grabbing and sacrilegious acts by the Margiis. They succeeded in inciting a mob which attacked Ananda Nagar and killed five unarmed workers on March 5, 1967, while the police stood by, watching. After several years of legal wrangling, nine of these local officials were convicted and given sentences ranging from three years to life imprisonment, while none of the 65 charges brought against the Margiis could be proved.

In other parts of India, many cases were brought against Ananda Marga workers, which were ultimately proven false. Offices and social service institutions were ransacked; slanderous propaganda was disseminated. The campaign to wipe out Ananda Marga increased in intensity.

But all these harassments only inspired even greater missionary dynamism in the Margiis, so the enemies of Ananda Marga decided to cripple the movement by silencing Shrii Shrii Anandamurtijii who, they realised, was the movement's fountainhead of inspiration. Despite His quiet demeanour, there was no ignoring the powerful and increasing effect He was having on Indian society. The enemies of Ananda Marga were not only corrupt officials and wary politicians. Conservative Hindus, also, reacted against Anandamurtiji's programme to abolish the caste system; prosperous businessmen and landowners felt threatened by His socialist ideals; and, most importantly, Communists found His organisation eroding their base among the poor and among disaffected intellectuals. The Communist Party of India (CPI, the pro-Soviet bloc), was an important factor in Mrs. Gandhi's rising power, and it was not adverse to contributing its power to the suppression of Ananda Marga. Ananda Marga has accused the KGB of organising much of the anti-Ananda Marga activity; recently the Soviet press carried articles denouncing Ananda Marga and calling for its abolition not only in India but throughout the world.

Much of the anti-Ananda Marga work in India has been carried out by the C.B.I. (Central Bureau of Investigation). The CBI is a political police. In the guise of an organisation designed to investigate and uproot corruption from government departments, it silently and secretly worked to finish off whomever the government considered a potential danger for its safe existence. So although Ananda Marga was not involved in any type of political fight, the CBI was entrusted with the task of removing the Marga's very trace from Indian soil.

Serious harassment of Anandamurtiji began in June 1971. A series of false murder cases were concocted, in which Anandamurtiji was supposed to have conspired to murder several of His ex-disciples, and He was arrested along with four of His devoted followers. The entire case was so flimsy that the High Court quashed the commitment hearing because of the numerous "inconsistencies and discrepancies" in the prosecution argument. But the CBI managed to reinstate the case.

Every form of inhuman torture was practiced on Anandamurtiji to eliminate Him, culminating in His poisoning in February 1973 in Ban-kipur Jail in Patna. He survived all these vicious attempts and began a fast on April 1, 1973 demanding, among other things, a judicial probe into the attempt to kill Him by poisoning.

Ananda Marga's work continued unabated despite all these adversities and acts of oppression. All the persistent persecution instilled new vigour and inspiration in its followers. The Margis all over the world vehemently fought these cruel injustices in legal battles, and by means of peaceful demonstrations and protests including three self-immolations. They succeeded in arousing considerable world sympathy and support, and many influential world leaders raised their voices to seek justice for Anandamurtiji and His followers.

At this critical juncture, when Mrs. Indira Gandhi found that she could not suppress this dynamic movement, nor the other forces of popular protest in India being mobilized by Jayaprakash Narayan, she declared the Emergency in June 1975. Using the unlimited powers which this tyrannical Emergency provided, the government totally banned Ananda Marga and its affiliated groups.

The Emergency provided a free reign to the opposing forces to vent their full rage on Ananda Marga. The ban on Ananda Marga brought

its activities to a grinding halt. Thousands of wholetime workers and family members were thrown into prison under MISA, "Maintenance of Internal Security Act," which gave the government full powers to arrest anyone without cause and hold them indefinitely in jail without trial or bail. All Ananda Marga's schools, medical centres, welfare units, presses, and offices were closed. Slanderous propoganda was spread against the Mission to thoroughly discredit it. Through government media such as newsreels distributed to cinema halls by the Ministry of Broadcasting, and Information, and pamphlets printed by the government and distributed not only throughout India but throughout the world through the Indian embassies, Ananda Marga was portrayed as a blood-thirsty and depraved cult whose members used human skulls for their weird rituals* and whose founder ordered the murders of his followers. In this way the public became totally confused and misled about the real aims of the movement.

The government took advantage of the climate of fear and repression and manipulated three publically-known cases in particular in an effort to finish off the organisation. One was the case of Anandamurtiji Himself who was finally brought to trial during this period and convicted. The other two were political cases, those of the murder of the Railway Minister, L.N. Mishra, and the attempted murder of the ex-Chief Justice of India, A.N. Ray. In both of these famous cases, the government implicated Ananda Marga in order to finally destroy the previous good image of the organisation in the eyes of the public, in all the three cases, the Emergency and ban were used as weapons to suppress and concoct information, to produce false witnesses under torture, threat and bribery, and to prevent sympathetic witnesses from coming forward in defense. The charges against Anandamurtiji and various Ananda Marga workers in the Ray and Mishra cases were upheld by approvers who were tortured and then bought by the police and CBI for a pardon and the promise of a "good life" instead of a life of torture in jail.

In the case of L.N". Mishra, the government went to the extreme lengths of ordering the release of two self-confessed accomplices in the crime, Arun Thakur and Arun Mishra. These two persons had been ar-

*In fact, the use of skulls for higher meditation practices to induce the feeling of renunciation and non-attachment in the mind and also to overcome fear-complex, has been practiced by elevated yogis in India for thousands of years.

rested by the Bihar Police and the Delhi Crime Branch who conducted the initial investigations. After they had been detained for several months and gave full **confessions**, the CBI took over the case, and their names strangely disappeared from the charge-sheets. Then the CBI arrested several Ananda Margis instead (see their subsequent accounts) and transferred the facts from Arun Thakur's confessional statement to implicate the new parties. After the Emergency was lifted, the widow of the late Mishra made public statements revealing a plot, involving certain "VIP's" as high up as the Prime Minister herself. Mishra's widow rejected the idea that Ananda Margis were responsible for her husband's murder, saying it was simply an **"eye-wash"** to cover up the real facts and protect the real culprits. Throughout history, the forces which seek to bring about social reform on the earth and establish a society of truth and justice have always been scandalised and persecuted by those powerful groups who are enjoying the fruits of their exploitation of others. Ananda Marga is no exception. In its effort to uplift humanity it has been vigorously opposed by vested interest groups; its image has been blackened and hundreds of innocent spiritualists have suffered lives of deprivation and cruel tortures for months on end, for their non-compromising belief in their universalistic ideology.

The stories contained in this booklet expose the brutalities of physical and mental tortures committed by the CBI and police against the brave monks and nuns and general members of Ananda Marga under the specific guidance from the ruling party of India. This booklet is a tribute to the unyielding spirit of the men and women who bore inhuman atrocities to uphold the honour and integrity of their Ideology and spiritual Master.

