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## CHAPTER I

# ARRIVING IN INDIA, OUR SPIRITUAL HOMELAND

India is not something you can describe in words; it is an experience. There is much there that may seem difficult if you look only on the outward surface. But the true essence of India is a spiritual experience. It is something that seeps into your being, almost without your knowing it, until suddenly you are fully in that magnetism, and you feel, “Oh, now I know why Gurudeva so much loved India! *This* is his India; *this* is the land that was able to produce a being like my beloved Guru.”

Years ago when our blessed Master [Paramahansa Yogananda] was with us, sometimes in the evenings — especially in those early years in Encinitas when he was a little more free from organisational duties — he used to spend hours in the dining room or the drawing room with all of us gathered around him; and many

of those happy times were spent talking about his beloved India. He told us about his early life there, but most of all what we enjoyed hearing from his lips were the stories about the divine souls he had met in that land, which has produced so many exalted sons of God.

He often told us, “I love all the saints. They are all my own, for in each one I see just that one Divine Beloved. But I am always loyal to my Guru. I pay homage to all who reflect the Divine; but my heart, my thoughts, never for one moment leave the blessed Guru to whom God has drawn me.”

That was the wonderful experience we ourselves had when meeting these divine ones of India. It was strange: Though their personalities were so great and wonderful, through them we only felt more strongly our inner bond with Master. And the more we were in their presence, the more we felt *his* presence. I remembered Guruji telling us that God, in the ultimate sense, is the only Guru. He may use many sources to inspire you with deeper love and desire for Him; but after He has given you the channel of a true guru, then always as you approach nearer

*Interior of Paramahansa Yogananda Smriti Mandir  
(memorial shrine) at the Ranchi YSS Ashram*

to Him through inspiration from any source, you find that inwardly you are automatically receiving through the channel of your own guru, the one whom God has selected for you. That was what we felt — that the great inspiration and love that came to us from these saints of India was just merging us in our own blessed Master. It was such a beautiful experience.

## YOGODA MATH ON THE GANGES

We arrived in Calcutta [Kolkata], \* at our Yogoda Math in Dakshineswar, on July 27, 1961, which happened to be Guru Purnima day.† In India, this day is specially set aside as a time when everyone honours their own guru. Religious societies and individuals all over the country hold special pujas, services, and meditations, special

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\* The old spelling of the city names “Calcutta” and “Bombay” are retained throughout this narrative for historical accuracy.

† The party had entered India in Bombay [Mumbai] four days earlier.

*Sri Daya Mata (centre), Sri Ananda Mata, and Sri Mrinalini Mata arrive at Calcutta airport, 1961. Behind Daya Mataji is Sri Binayendra Dubey (later known as Swami Shyamananda). At far right is Sri Mohini Chakravarti, an official of the High Court in Calcutta, who had met and become a follower of Paramahansa Yogananda during the Guru’s 1935 trip to India.*

offerings of love and devotion, dedicated to their guru. So we reserved that day for Master. We had a service and meditation, and a meeting where Daya Mataji spoke beautifully of our blessed Master to a gathering of about two thousand people.

### **VISIT TO PARAMAHANSAJI'S BOYHOOD HOME**

On August 1, Sri Daya Mata conducted a YSS service at Tulsi Yogoda Ashram,\* after which we were guests in the home of Master's brother, Sananda Lal Ghosh. He and his family reside in the family home at 4 Garpar Road, which Master wrote about in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*. There we had a delicious Indian meal, served on banana leaves. We visited the little attic room that Master said "had witnessed so many scenes in my turbulent sadhana [path of spiritual discipline]." Here our hearts fairly burst with the sacred presence of Guruji. The blessings one feels in this tiny shrine! Paramahansaji's spiritual greatness first began to manifest itself in this attic room, and a realisation of his divinity overwhelmed our minds, hearts, and souls.

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\* Located on the grounds of the family home of Tulsi Narayan Bose, childhood friend and lifelong disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda. The centre, now known as Yogoda Satsanga Dhyana Kendra—Garpar, is adjacent to Paramahansaji's boyhood home at 4 Garpar Road.

*Attic shrine in Paramahansa Yoganandaji's family home at 4 Garpar Road, Calcutta*