By the Grace of My Guru

By the Grace of My Guru.indd 1 9/19/2026 4:25:12 PM

Praise for the Book

'Hinduism is one of India's homegrown religions that provides spiritual guidance, inspiration and solace to millions of adherents across the world. Therefore, the preservation of this rich religious tradition, including through a proper study of its philosophy and practice, will contribute to the development of humanity in general. In this book, *By the Grace of My Guru*, former Indian parliamentarian Anang Uday Singh Deo relates his experiences as a follower of Hinduism. I hope readers will find it interesting and helpful.' **– His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama**

'Sri Anang Uday Singh Deo has written this lovely book *By The Grace of My Guru*. It's a wonderful attempt to bring together his varied spiritual experiences with great spiritual teachers, including his Guru Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj. I recommend that spiritual aspirants read the book with great attention.' – **Hari Om Sri M, yogi and spiritual guide**

'Anang Singh Deo's book is a fascinating leap into the recesses of the cosmos of which we normally remain unaware. He writes from intense personal experience, and what he records may defy conventional logic but has an undeniable ring of truth. A must-read for those who wish to explore the limitless boundaries of the spiritual and mystic world.' **– Pavan Varma, Former Diplomat & Author**

'I have known the author as an elder brother over the last several decades, and I have known him as a person fully engrossed in the material world and engaged actively in the political arena.

Although I was aware that he, along with his family, was a disciple of Param Pujya Shivabalayogi Maharaj and that his revered father, Maharaja R.N. Singh Deo (former chief minister of Odisha), was among Balayogiji Maharaj's foremost disciples, I had no inkling of the inner spiritual life of the author and his extraordinary experiences till I glanced through a few pages of this book.

The lucid narration by the author sends a clear message of the vital need to enrich our material outer life (howsoever challenging or overwhelming) with a constant and steady inner spiritual life. Human life becomes meaningful, purposeful and veritably successful when it is buttressed and invigorated by spiritual *sadhana* (spiritual practice); and when that sadhana is guided and blessed by an Enlightened Guru, the goal of human existence, God-realisation, cannot be too far.' **– Gajpati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb, Aadya Sevak of Lord Jagannath, Head of the Royal House of Puri**

'In India, multiple dimensions of reality often co-exist in a single space. Living as a householder pursuing a deep connection with the spiritual world, Mr Anang Uday Singh Deo has packed many lives into one and his story is a delight to read. Transparent and full of wonder, digestible and relatable even by those new to his subject, his account of his personal journey is a welcome testimony to the influence that saints can exert on our lives.' **– Robert Svoboda, Author & Ayurveda Practitioner**

'This book makes for fascinating reading as it traces the journey of a person born in royalty, pursuing an active career in contemporary politics, besides holding positions of great responsibility and yet staying firmly in touch with the spiritual side of his persona.

It is obvious that the writer is not merely dabbling in spirituality but has seriously delved deep into various aspects of spiritual practices like dhyana, siddhis and the importance of silent discourse for a serious seeker. The book is a journey and inspiration and a must-read for serious spiritual seekers who are gṛihasthas (householders) and attend office too. Besides, general readers too will find this book very interesting and thought-provoking.' **– Dr Chandra Bhanu Satpathy, former Director General of U.P. Police and lifelong follower of Shirdi Sai Baba**

'Anang Uday Singh Deo's spiritual memoir is a fascinating mixture of gurus, miracles and mystery. A disciple of Swami Shivabalayogi Maharaj, he has gone through a series of spiritual awakenings and experiences. The book will be of interest to those on the spiritual path.' **– Dr Karan Singh, Head of the Royal House of Jammu & Kashmir**

'Anang Uday Singh Deo has succeeded in capturing in a remarkably concise way his deep understanding of the spiritual and mystical aspects of dharma, samadhi, shakti and kundalini. With reverence, he has delineated the lives and teachings of his gurus. No religious and superstitious pollution taints this exceptional and original work.' **– The Late K. Natwar Singh, Former Diplomat, Minister & Author**

'What Anang has written comes from direct experience, as otherwise this would not have been possible. Authenticity is the hallmark of the proposed book. This book will appeal to all those who are aware of the existence of inner life.' **– Pradeep Narang, Chairman, Sri Aurobindo Society**

'Anang Singh Deo takes us through a deep and unexpected spiritual journey across many planes and dimensions. It records

a highly successful life at the material level, as a family man and as a politician, while simultaneously opening the windows of perception to explore the esoteric metaverse under the guidance of his guru, Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj, and the blessings of Sri Anandmayi Ma and others.' **– Namita Gokhale, Indian Fiction Writer, Editor & Publisher**

'"*Sab parde me rakho, dhyan karte chalo,*" says Sufi Baba to the author, which sums up the Sufi resonance in the author's thinking. The spiritual face of Islamic thought, so often described as Islamic mysticism, is no monopoly of Islam. The Quran itself decrees that this is gossamer that binds the revelatory traditions of all faiths (Al-Quran 2:3). Yet, as Anang Uday Singh Deo so beautifully demonstrates as a devout Hindu in this book of self-revelation, India's own spiritual tradition, even though diverse, merges with Sufi universality in its quest for the divine.' **– Wajahat Habibullah, Former Chief Information Commissioner of India**

'Anang's book remarkably explores spirituality, faith and personal growth. Having had the privilege of knowing the author for the last few years, it was only through this book that I came to fully appreciate the profound experiences that have shaped his spiritual journey. His deep connection with spirituality resonates throughout the narrative, offering readers a window into his transformative path.

The book weaves a compelling tapestry of faith and the ability to interpret cosmic signs, illustrating how these elements converge to create a profound sense of connectivity between the external world and the inner self. Anang's reflections invite readers to consider the unseen forces at play in their own lives and challenge them to align with the universe's subtle signals.

One of the most striking aspects of the book is Anang's candid recounting of personal spiritual miracles. These extraordinary experiences – while unexplainable to the uninitiated – serve as powerful testimonies to the depth of his journey. For believers or those seeking a deeper spiritual awakening, these accounts provide inspiration and validation of the mystical nature of faith. Anang's writing is both eloquent and accessible, making complex spiritual concepts relatable without diminishing their significance. His sincerity shines through, establishing a genuine connection with the reader. The book stands as a testament to the possibility of transformation through faith, perseverance and an openness to the divine.

For anyone yearning to bridge the gap between the seen and unseen or to deepen their understanding of spirituality's role in personal growth, this book is an invaluable resource.

Anang's journey will not only inspire but also challenge readers to embrace their spiritual path with renewed vigour.' – **Dr Jagpreet Singh, Headmaster, The Doon School**

'I was very blessed to meet Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj several times when he visited the United States in the 1980s. I had heard of Him when I was living in India in the early 70s, but never had a chance to have His darshan. He told me that my guru, Sri Neem Karoli Baba, had visited His village before He was born, and told His mother about the greatness of her coming son, and how to take care of him during his sadhana. He also said that she couldn't remember what she was told by Babaji. The lilas of the great ones are beyond our understanding. It is only by the grace of the guru that we can remember them. Reading about the lives of the devotees brings that grace to us in the form of the presence of the guru.' **– Krishna Das, International Musician and Devotee of Neem Karoli Baba**

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A.U. Singh Deo

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By the Grace of My Guru.indd 7 9/19/2026 4:25:12 PM

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In reverence of the Guru,
Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj of
Adivarapupeta, Andhra Pradesh, India

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With the blessings of my guru,
I dedicate this book to you:
the reader, the seeker
and all those walking the path within.

By the Grace of My Guru.indd 9 9/19/2026 4:25:12 PM

By the Grace of My Guru.indd 10 9/19/2026 4:25:12 PM

Contents

Foreword by Shashi Tharoor xiii

Author's Disclaimer and Caveat: A Personal Statement by the Author xvii

On the Meaning of Maiku xxi

Introduction xxv

1. My Parents and Childhood 1
2. Our Spiritual Influences 16
3. Swami Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj 35
4. The Nature of Bhava Samadhi 75
5. The Magic of Meditation 95
6. Secrets of the Body: Part 1 139
7. Secrets of the Body: Part 2 192
8. Dreams, Darshans and the Akashic Records 219
9. The Spirits of Sanur Beach 273
10. The Lord of the Universe 289

11. Conversations with Swamiji, 1974 296
12. By the Grace of My Guru 304

Epilogue 315
Annexure I: Excerpt from Autobiography of a Yogi 323
Annexure II: Gurus and Saints Who Have Influenced Me 325
Annexure III: Lieutenant General Hanut Singh, PVSM, MVC 345
Acknowledgements 349
Glossary 353
Notes 359

Foreword

Shashi Tharoor

Despite having led an extraordinary life and left an indelible imprint on the sociopolitical landscape of his home state of Odisha, Anang Uday Singh Deo pens *By the Grace of My Guru* as neither a royal nor a politician, but as a humble seeker after spiritual truth. Compelling us to realise that we ought not to 'cloak ourselves in secrets', born less of malice and more of fear ('of judgements, of misunderstandings'), Anang takes us on a whirlwind spiritual tour, helping us navigate many a complex spiritual terrain. Spurred by his extensive study of religious works and spiritual accounts, as also by the long years he has spent serving his compatriots, Anang seeks through this volume to empower us to look 'beyond the illusions of this world, to touch the ultimate reality that shimmers just beyond the horizon'.

While there are several ways to peruse *By the Grace of My Guru*, not least as a fascinating blend of personal and

By the Grace of My Guru.indd 13 9/19/2026 4:25:12 PM

spiritual memoir, I delighted in reading it as Anang's ode to his spiritual master, a wellspring of spiritual iridescence: Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj. Perched at Maharajji's feet, his head – brimming with questions and apprehensions about the nature of the divine – bowed in obeisance, Anang gleaned a series of spiritual verities, which he has dexterously distilled in this volume for our benefit. Anang says of Maharaj, 'I see him as a phenomenon, one who achieved the highest levels of Dhyana Yoga as described in the sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.' In this regard, perhaps, Anang's pursuit is redolent of that of one of his inspirations: Sri M, who, in *Apprenticed to a Himalayan Master: A Yogi's Autobiography,* similarly seeks to fathom his spiritual master's transcendent divinity into a lucid account, one apt to entrance both theists and atheists.

One of Maharajji's most crucial lessons for Anang features as a recurring motif in *By the Grace of My Guru.* Recounting how, many years after his passing, Maharajji appeared in Anang's dream and urged him to write this book, Anang writes that perhaps his gurudeva sought to 'show that it is possible for the spiritual and material worlds to coexist. We often believe that spiritual achievement is out of reach, hidden behind a veil of mystery that requires us to leave ordinary life behind. But in truth, they are complementary'. This deeply resonated with me as one who firmly believes in the Bhagavad Gita's tenets of nishkama karma and karma yoga, which teach us not to abjure the material world, where our life's work is cast, but

to carry out our duties – our dharma – earnestly, without material desires, all while contemplating the divine reality in whichever form or manner we venerate it. In having spent the better part of his life serving his fellow Odiyas, Anang has aspired to be a true karma yogi – and this, more than anything, enables him to straddle both the material and spiritual realms, doubtless in line with the ideals his gurudeva instilled in him.

Charting a discursive and delightful course through his life and his wide-ranging spiritual encounters, Anang chances upon a simple yet charming verity, writing, 'Faith, as I have come to understand it, is not the simple acceptance of things unseen. It is an enlightened awareness, a quiet knowing that life is more intricately woven than our eyes can comprehend. It asks us to release the ego's relentless grip on control and trust in the divine order that hums beneath the surface of all things.' This, in my view, is the kernel of *By the Grace of My Guru*, and Anang sportingly tries to guide us towards this 'enlightened awareness'. At the same time, he underscores the fact that spirituality is always an interaction between the devotee and the divine: a sublime tryst into which we must never be afraid to pour ourselves wholly. At the same time, in our search of the divine, we also act, as Allama Muhammad Iqbal wrote in his stirring *Shikwa*, as the breeze that whirls the rose's – God's – fragrance round the universe.

Elegantly written, vividly detailed and cogently reasoned, Anang Uday Singh Deo's *By the Grace of My Guru* – a

stellar addition to the ever-expanding literature that hopes to decrypt spirituality – is an essential, stimulating read for all those who wonder who or what God is, and what one man's relationship with the divine reality has been.

By the Grace of My Guru.indd 16 9/19/2026 4:25:12 PM

Author's Disclaimer and Caveat

A Personal Statement by the Author

This book is an entirely personal and autobiographical record of the author's own spiritual experiences, reflections and inner journey, as perceived, understood and remembered by the author alone. It has been written solely as an act of personal expression and remembrance. It is not intended, and must not be read or construed, as instruction, guidance, exhortation, prescription or suggestion of any kind directed at any reader.

The author does not, through this work, canvass, advocate, promote, prescribe or recommend any particular belief, spiritual practice, discipline, ritual, course of effort, endeavour or spiritual path. No outcome, be it spiritual or otherwise is assured, promised, implied or suggested as arising from following any belief, activity or way of life described or referred to in this book.

The experiences, perceptions and understandings set out in this book are entirely unique to the author. They have

By the Grace of My Guru.indd 17 9/19/2026 4:25:12 PM

arisen from his own distinctive upbringing, life experiences, family environment, circumstances and personal life journey. The author does not claim that such experiences are capable of being replicated, mimicked or reproduced by any other person. He neither encourages nor remotely suggests any attempt to do so.

This book is, in essence, a written record of the author's subjective journey. It is not a manual, guide, teaching, course of study or doctrine of any nature. The acceptance of the narrative as literal truth, symbolic reflection, personal belief, metaphor or as a work of subjective, interpretative or creative narrative is entirely at the reader's discretion. The author places no obligation on any reader to accept or believe the experiences described herein. Reader discretion is expressly advised.

India's ancient spiritual and philosophical traditions, including those recorded across the broad spectrum of Hindu thought, scripture and practice, recognise countless and diverse paths followed over centuries by sages, rishis, munis, saints and seekers in their quest for truth, enlightenment, realisation or liberation from the cycle of birth and death (*moksha*). Some among them chose to teach or preach; others remained silent seekers. The references which appear in this book are indicative only of general contextual background and not as endorsement, comparison, critique or exposition of any particular doctrine, institution or tradition.

The author recognises and respects that these traditions do not prescribe a single or uniform doctrinaire path. Each

By the Grace of My Guru.indd 18 9/19/2026 4:25:12 PM

individual is a seeker in his or her own right and is entirely free to choose a personal course of faith, belief, inquiry or even to refrain from any form of spiritual practice, while living a sincere, ethical and dutiful life. No uniform spiritual model, obligation or hierarchy is asserted or implied by anything contained in this book.

The author is not, and does not represent himself to be, a guru, preacher, teacher, mentor or spiritual authority of any description. He is a family man who has lived an ordinary life, fulfilled his professional and public responsibilities and yet retained a personal sense of faith and belief. His spiritual inclinations and experiences have been shaped entirely by his private family environment, upbringing, education and the personal and fortunate exposure through his parents and forebears to the presence and grace of revered saints and gurus. These circumstances are entirely personal and incidental.

The author does not claim, and expressly disclaims, any state of realisation, enlightenment, attainment, godhead or exceptional spiritual status of any kind. He continues to regard himself only as a seeker of truth and inner peace.

The author places on record his deepest and most sincere respect, reverence and gratitude for all saints, gurus, spiritual teachers, seekers and other individuals referred to, described or mentioned in this book. All such references have been made exclusively in a spirit of personal gratitude, humility, devotion and remembrance.

Nothing contained in this book is intended as or should be construed as a commentary upon, representation

By the Grace of My Guru.indd 19 9/19/2026 4:25:12 PM

of, evaluation of or statement regarding the teachings, doctrines, institutions, followers, successors, legacies or standing of any saint, guru, spiritual teacher, religious figure or individual. The views expressed are the author's own personal impressions and beliefs, and they carry no authority beyond his individual experience.

The author is mindful of the diversity of beliefs, traditions and sensitivities that exist among readers and communities. It is neither his intention nor his desire to offend, hurt or disrespect the sentiments of any person, community, faith or tradition. Any content that may, unintentionally and despite the author's best efforts, cause any discomfort is deeply regretted in advance, and it should be understood only in the personal and devotional spirit in which it has been written.

This book records the author's personal memories, perceptions and beliefs as experienced and understood by him. While every care has been taken to be accurate in matters of fact and respectful in matters of sentiment, the author does not accept responsibility for any act, omission, decision or consequence arising out of a reader's reliance upon, or interpretation of, any content in this book.

This book is intended primarily as an autobiographical memoir for the author's family, descendants, friends and well-wishers. It is not intended as professional, legal, medical, psychiatric, psychological, financial or spiritual advice, and must not be so relied upon.

Anang Uday Singh Deo

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