AGHOR FOUNDATION

Personal Retreat at Abheda Ashram, Varanasi

Dear Friend,
We are looking forward to your visit to Abheda Ashram in Varanasi, India. In anticipation of your stay, we are providing some information that may be helpful to you as you plan your visit.

Who We Are:

The word *Abheda* represents the state of being "without dualism." It is a reaffirmation of our mission: to serve all beings as manifestations of the same Divine essence. We thank you for being part of this journey of unity and compassion.

Our service is rooted in the ancient Sanskrit wisdom of non-difference. We believe that there is no separation between the self, the Divine, and the world around us.

As a sister ashram to Sonoma Ashram in California, U.S, we carry forward the Aghor tradition of selfless service. Whether we are providing education, healthcare, or sustenance, we do so with the recognition of Unity in Diversity—serving every individual as a sacred manifestation of the whole. At Abheda, our work is our worship, and our community is one.

The Ashram was founded by Baba Harihar Ram, affectionately known as “Babaji,” in 2001 as a safe home for boys living on the streets in India. Babaji is a disciple of Aghoreshwar Bhagwan Ram, a modern saint in the Aghor tradition. He is the spiritual teacher (Guru) in residence at Sonoma Ashram in California (founded in 1991) and at Aghor Foundation while in India. Babaji is a role model and spiritual beacon for anyone seeking inspiration and guidance. He radiates love and embodies living with purpose.

In addition to serving as Babaji’s home in India, the Ashram is a nurturing safe home for up to 10 boys and young men ranging in ages from 6 to 19. The Ashram is also headquarters for the Aghor Foundation, which oversees and administers social service programs in Varanasi, and serves as a platform for the Foundation’s spiritual, cultural, vocational and social programs. Adjacent to the Ashram grounds are Sanskar Gurukul (primary school) and the Amrit Sagar Holistic Center.

The Ashram welcomes day visitors from all parts of India and from around the world throughout the year and has accommodations for short or longer-term stays.

Main Contact information:

- **Teijbal Pandey: +91 98398 46938 (Phone & WhatsApp)**
- **Sudhanshu: +91 78976 29400 (Phone & WhatsApp)**

Where We Are:
Maheshnagar Colony, Samne Ghat
Lanka, Varanasi U.P. 221005

- Abheda Ashram is situated in the southern part of Varanasi. The city, also referred to as Benares or Kashi, is known as the "City of Shiva". It is the oldest continuously habituated city in the world, and is considered to be the spiritual capital of India. Varanasi attracts thousands of pilgrims throughout the year and yogis have mediated on the banks of the sacred Ganges River since time immemorial. The stillness and silence here is palpable and you can connect with it at any moment, even amidst what appears to be a bustling and chaotic city.

- The nearest airport is Varanasi (Lal Bahadur Shastri) International Airport, approximately 20 miles from Abheda Ashram. Due to heavy traffic through the city center, it can take up to 1.5 hours to reach the Ashram by taxi, depending on the time of day. We highly recommend allowing us to arrange your transport as the Ashram can be difficult for unfamiliar drivers. Please send your flight details to arrange an airport pick-up. The approximate charge is between 1,000 to and 1,200 rupees (about $15-20 USD). Please note that if your flight is delayed, the cost could be higher. We can settle the payment with the driver on your behalf and you can reimburse the Ashram during your stay.

- Abheda Ashram is in the district of Lanka, approximately 1.5 miles from Assi Ghat, the start of the main tourist area of Varanasi, which is accessible by walking or a short rikshaw/tuktuk ride. The Ashram is also close to Benares Hindu University, the largest academic institution in Asia and a beautiful campus which is worth visiting while you are here.

What We Are:
In addition to being home for Babaji and the resident young men, Abheda Ashram is an "ashram", a place where visitors come to offer their greetings to the Guru and divinities and where spiritual seekers are practicing their *sadhana*. Abheda Ashram provides an opportunity to engage in *seva* and learn more about our social service projects that are supported by friends like you. Abheda Ashram's campus also includes Sanskar Gurukul, Shakti Project Workshop & Beauty Facility, Amrit Sagar EcoPark and the Amrit Sagar Holistic Center.

In this spirit, we provide some basic guidelines to be mindful of which will help to maintain the right environment for all:

- Dress modestly. Avoid tight or revealing clothing. Short or long-sleeved tops are preferable to tank tops or sleeveless shirts. It is customary for both men and women to wear shawls when they are in the temple and in the presence of Babaji.

- Speak softly. We aspire to maintain a place of peace for all. Throughout the day, the boys living at the Ashram have dedicated responsibilities as well as school work to attend to. Individuals come to the Ashram for meditation, prayers and puja (worship) in the temple or around the grounds throughout the day. When Babaji is in residence, many come for *darshan* - to speak with him and receive his blessing. We ask that guests to the Ashram respect the sacredness of the space and the activities throughout the day by being mindful of when, how and what they are speaking.

- Walk gently. The Ashram grounds are sacred to those who visit and those who live here. If possible, remain without shoes while on the Ashram grounds, particularly in the temple area, *darshan* areas, and main building.

What happens at the Ashram:
- The Ashram day starts early! Most days the boys start their day at 5:00am with exercise, yoga, seva and breakfast before heading to school each day.
- You are welcome to attend any yoga classes and meditation in the temple. Please ask for the current schedule.
- We would be pleased to give you a tour and additional information on any of our service projects, including the Sanskar Gurukul, Shakti Project (Women's Empowerment), Shanti Niketan Girls Hostel (approximately ½ mile from the Ashram) and the Amrit Sagar Eco-Center.
- Morning and evening meditation take place in the temple and are open to all. Times vary seasonally but typically are around: 7:30am and @6:00pm.

Meals at the Ashram

- All meals are served in the downstairs dining hall. Breakfast is self-served. Lunch and dinner will be announced with a bell.
- Please let Tejbal or Sudhanshu know if you will be outside of the Ashram for the day and/or will not be joining us for the daily meals.

What we have & what you should bring:
The Ashram rooms will be accommodated with sheets, towels and toilet paper. **We ask that you are modest in your use of all three in respect of resources**. All rooms are furnished with locks and lockable drawers for securing your belongings.

While all basic necessities are available in India, we have found that it is helpful to bring the following.

- Bug spray: Depending on the time of year, there may be mosquitos at evening time.
- Coffee: We have a small French press that is available for guest use. As U.S.-style coffee can be expensive and hard to find in Varanasi, we suggest you bring ground coffee or instant coffee packets with you if you wish to have coffee during your stay.
- Easy on-off shoes: As general custom in India, shoes are not worn inside ashrams, temples, homes and many shops.
- Plug adaptor. Note: The voltage in India is 220 volts, which is different from U.S. voltage. Please keep this in mind when selecting which appliances to bring
- Water bottle: The Ashram has filtered water that is available for all throughout the day.
- Shawl: It is a custom to always wear a shawl in the temple and around Babaji.

Other helpful tips:

- Laundry service through a local provider is available. You may also handwash your clothes at the Ashram and line dry. Please ask Tejbal or Sudhanshu for additional information
- The Ashram has WiFi service available for guests. As we need to control the number of users on the network, we limit access to the WiFi password. We can provide the current password to you when you arrive. Please do not share it with anyone.
- A nice way to see and travel to downtown Varanasi is by boat. Please speak to Tejbal or Sudhanshu to organize.