

SRI SRI SRI SHIVABALAYOGI MAHARAJ

Life & Spiritual Ministration

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Preface

The genesis of this book lies in my own doubts and misgivings about the spiritual path. In order to resolve these doubts, I submitted a number of questions to my Guru Dev, Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj, and noted down his answers to these questions. Though these questions and answers had been compiled for my own use and reference, it occurred to me that other devotees may have similar doubts and hence it might prove useful to print these in pamphlet form for dissemination to a wider public. At the same time I felt that if a short biographical sketch of Sri Swamiji could also be added to these teachings, it would make the proposed pamphlet more attractive and readable. I submitted this proposal to Sri Swamiji who gave his blessings to the project and also very kindly agreed to answer further questions pertaining to his life and, more specifically, to the period of his Tapas.

Thus began the second session of questions and answers. As the material pertaining to Sri Swamiji's life and teachings steadily grew in volume, I soon realised that a simple pamphlet would not do adequate justice to this subject and hence grew the idea of compiling all of this in a full length booklet. Once again I mooted this proposal to Sri Swamiji; he bestowed his blessings and by his Grace, what had been originally conceived as a pamphlet, is now seeing the light of the day as a small book, setting out his life and teachings.

I have no pretensions to being writer, nor this book is a biography in the sense that this term implies. No doubt, at the appropriate time, a qualified writer will come forward to write a fully researched authentic and eminently readable biography of Sri Swamiji. However, till that happens, it is hoped that this book will serve to fill in the gap.

The life of a Saint is a life essentially of the Spirit; very little of it is discernible because very little of it flows on the surface. And this life of the Spirit cannot be generally known because Mahatmas rarely, if ever, talk about it; only stray glimpses can be caught from the casual utterances of these Divine Personages. Sri Swamiji, on the other hand, has been much more forthcoming than most other Mahatmas in giving an account of his personal experience during the 12 long years of Tapas period. Therefore, the chief value of this book lies in the fact that it contains an authentic and reasonably detailed account of the Tapas of a great Mahatma. That apart, it contains some valuable practical guidance for Dhyana Yoga Sadhana, as taught by Sri Swamiji. For both these reasons, this book should prove interesting and useful reading for all classes of spiritual aspirants, and more particularly, to devotees of Sri Swamiji.

In writing this book, I have freely used Hindi and Sanskrit words in the text. This is because Sanskrit religious terminology does not easily lend itself to translation, and rarely has equivalent English words. These Hindi and Sanskrit words have been explained in the text, and a glossary has also been added at the end of the book for easy reference by the reader. Since the intention is to help the reader in his understanding of the book the meaning given is not necessarily an exact dictionary definition but rather an idea of the sense or implied meaning of the word in the context in which it has been used.

Author

Contents

Preface	1		
Birth Chart of Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj	3		
1. THE EARLY YEARS	3		
Parentage	3		
Birth	4		
Passing Away of Bheemanna	4		
Childhood Days at Adivarapupeta	4		
Grandfather's Influence	4		
Sathyaraju Goes to Live with His Step-Mother	5		
Return to Adivarapupeta	5		
With the Step-Mother again	6		
Sathyaraju leaves his Step-Mother's house for good	7		
A Business Venture: the 'Beedi' Shop	7		
2. INITIATION INTO TAPO MARG	8		
The Initiation — Sunday, 7 th August 1949	8		
The Second Day — Monday the 8 th August 1949	10		
Third Day — Tuesday the 9 th August 1949	11		
Early Difficulties	12		
Sojourn at Pasalapudi Ashram	13		
The Tempest	14		
Move to Burial Ground	14		
3. TAPAS OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS	14		
Bala-Yogi Bitten by Cobra	14		
Collector and Tehsildar Come for Darshan	15		
Construction of 'Dhyana Mandir'	15		
Visit of Tapaswiji Maharaj	16		
Siddhi and Sakshatkara	18		
Yuga Tapas, Dik Tapas and Dik Siddhi	18		
Tapas and Siddhi of Eastern Direction	19		
Tapas of Northern Direction	19		
Surya Sakshatkara and Visit to Surya Mandal	19		
Sakshatkara and Siddhi of Northern Direction	20		
Tapas of Western Direction	20		
Siddhi of Western Direction	22		
Tapas of the Southern Direction	23		
Sakshatkara and Siddhi of Southern Direction	23		
4. COMPLETION OF YUGA TAPAS	23		
Siddhi of Yuga Tapas	24		
Establishment of Adi-Ashram	25		
The Propitiating of Raktha Kali	25		
Sthapana of Siva Linga	26		
Installation of Parvati Murthy	26		
5. PRACHARA	27		
The Tours Start: 1963	27		
Second Tour: 1965	28		
Further Tapas	28		
Mother Parvatamma	29		
6. SOME TAPASWIN DISCIPLES	30		
Bikkini Saraswatamma	30		
Pichiya	30		
Rajmata Rewati Devi	31		
Satya Shivabalayogi	32		
Conclusion	32		
7. MISSION AND UPADESA	32		
Sri Swamiji's Mission	32		
Spiritual Ministration: Some Unique Features	33		
Mass Feeding	34		
'Mowna Upadesa' (Silent Instruction)	34		
The Yoga Vasishtha Ramayana:	35		
8. BHAVA LEELA	37		
How it Started	37		
Bhava and Bhava Samadhi:	37		
Bhava: A Historical Perspective	38		
Uniqueness of Sri Swamiji's Bhava Leela	38		
Benefits of Bhava	39		
Bhava — A Personal Experience	39		
9. DHYANA	40		
Preliminaries to the Practice of Dhyana	40		
Introduction	40		
Dhyana Diksha (Initiation into Dhyana)	41		
Use of Vibhuti	41		
Time for Dhyana	41		
Place of Dhyana	42		
Asana	42		
Physical Fitness and Diet	42		
The Technique of Dhyana	42		
Lakshaya: Aim or Purpose of Dhyana	42		
The Technique of Dhyana	43		
Steadying the Vision	43		
Stilling the Mind	43		
Concentration on Chit	43		
Commencement of Dhyana.	43		
The Guru's Grace	43		
Some Problems and Misconceptions Common to Beginners	44		
Turbulence of the Mind	44		
Steadying the Sight and Concentrating the Mind	45		
Japa and Concentration on Ishta during Dhyana	45		
The Mental Eye and Mental Ear	45		
Progress During the Initial Stages	45		
Obstructions to Dhyana	46		
Sleep	46		
Bliss of Manolaya	46		
Shunya or Void	46		
Mistaking Somnolence for Dhyana	46		
The Influence of the Three Gunas	46		
The Baneful Influence of the Tamo Guna	46		
Heated Brain and Headaches	47		
Attainments through Dhyana Sadhana	47		
Progress in Dhyana	47		
Development of Power given during Diksha.	47		
Visions	47		
Powers	48		
Spiritual Currents	49		
Rise of the Kundalini Shakti	49		
Muladhara Chakra	49		
Swadhisthana Chakra	49		
Manipura Chakra	49		

Anhata Chakra	50	Tapas	51
Visudhi Chakra	50	Sakshatkara	51
Ajna Chakra	50	ASHRAMS	52
The Sahasrara	50	CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS	53
Samadhi	50	GLOSSARY	54
Savikalpa Samadhi	50		
Nirvikalpa Samadhi	51		
Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi	51		

Birth Chart of Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj

Date of Birth 24th Jan 1935
 Place of Birth Adivarapupeta, West Godavari (Andhra Pradesh)
 Time of Birth 2:45 P.M. (IST)

			Lagna	Rahu			Jupiter Sun
Saturn	RASI KUNDALI		Kethu	Moon	AMSHA KUNDALI		
Sun Mercury Rahu Venus							Mercury Venus
		Jupiter	Moon Mars			Lagna Saturn	Kethu Mars

1.

THE EARLY YEARS

Draksharam is a small village in the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. Though little more than a hamlet today, it has an interesting history. According to local legend, Draksharam was known in the past as Dakshawati and was reputed to be the place where Raja Daksha held his great 'Yagna' (sacrifice according to Vedic rites): it was during this 'Yagna' that his daughter Dakshayani or Sati, the consort of Lord Siva, immolated herself when her father slighted Mahadev, her husband. Local tradition also maintains that the great Sage Vyasa performed Tapas and attained Sidhi at Draksharam. The presiding deity of Draksharam is Bhimeshwar Mahadev, manifested in the form of a 'Svayambhu Lingam' (self evolved stone emblem of Siva) known as the Bhimeshwar Lingam. This Lingam is located amidst peaceful surroundings in a shady grove comprising of a Banyan tree and some Margosa trees. It is this Bhimeshwar lingam which inspired the great devotional outpourings of the renowned Telugu poet, Srinath.

A little more than a kilometer away from Draksharam, nestling among groves of Palmyra and Coconut palms, is the quiet little hamlet of Adivarapupeta. A small canal, known locally as the Godavari Canal, flows along the outskirts of this hamlet. In order to reach Adivarapupeta,

one has to travel on the Madras-Howrah railway line up to Raja Mahindram (Raja Mundhry); from here, one has to travel by bus to Draksharam a distance of approximately 45 kilometers; from Draksharam one can hire a taxi, or a rickshaw, or simply walk down. From the direction of Howrah, one has to detrain at Samalkotta railway station and from here take a bus to Draksharam, via Kakinada; the distance from Samalkotta to Draksharam is also about 45 km.

Parentage

The inhabitants of Adivarapupeta belong predominantly to the Devanga community, whose principal vocation is the weaving of cloth, primarily dhoties and sarees, and marketing this produce in the nearby towns and villages. Some three decades ago, there lived at Adivarapupeta a man named Alakka Bheemanna who, like the majority of his fellow villagers, belonged to the Devanga Community; his wife was Shravanamma, who belonged to the village of Bandarulanka, which is located at a distance of approximately 20 km. from Adivarapupeta. As the couple did not have any children, Bheemanna, with the consent of Shravanamma, decided to marry again. His second wife was Parvathamamma, daughter of

Goli Sathyam, who belonged to his own village of Adivarapupeta.

Birth

In due course, Parvathamma bore for her husband two daughters and two sons. The youngest of these four children, a boy, who was born on the 24th January, 1935 was named Sathyaraju by his parents. This boy later became renowned as Sri Sri Sri Sivabalayogi Maharaj. When Sathyaraju was two years old, Shraavanamma, the first wife, who was still childless, got the approval of her husband and of Parvathamma to be allowed to rear Sathyaraju as her own son.

Passing Away of Bheemanna

Bheemanna often used to tell Parvathamma that their younger son, Sathyaraju, was destined to make a great name for himself, and that he would bring great honour to the family, but that he (Bheemanna) would not live to see it. And so it came to pass. In the month of July 1937, when Sathyaraju was barely two and a half years old, his father Bheemanna passed away. The two widowed wives separated and returned to their respective parental homes.

Sraavanamma left for her native village Bandarulanka, and Parvathamma went to live with her father Goli Sathyam. As Sathyaraju was too young to be separated from his mother, Shraavanamma left him with Parvathamma for the time being. Later, when Sathyaraju was five years old, Shraavanamma came to fetch him and took him away with her to Bandarulanka to bring him up as her own son, as had been agreed to earlier. Six months later, Parvathamma came on a visit to Bandarulanka and as Sathyaraju wished to return to Adivarapupeta with his mother, the boy returned to Adivarapupeta with the consent of Shraavanamma.

Childhood Days at Adivarapupeta

As mentioned earlier, Parvathamma was now living with her father, Goli Sathyam. Goli Sathyam was a poor man and with the added burden of having to support his widowed daughter and her children, he found it hard to maintain his family. Therefore, though Sathyaraju was enrolled in the local village school on his return to Adivarapupeta, he had to do his share of work at home also. The daily pattern of his childhood life during this period alternated between work and play. His day began at 5 a.m.; after a bath and a light breakfast of curds and rice, he worked at the looms up to 10 a.m., dexterously weaving cloth in vivid hues, which was a speciality of their family. After a hurried lunch, he would attend school between to a.m. and 4 p.m. When the school was over, the boys went out to play, until they were called home for dinner, which was around 6 p.m. After the evening meal Sathyaraju would sit with his maternal grandfather, Goli Sathyam for an hour or more

and tell him all that had happened during the day. Goli Sathyam listened to the boy's account with interest and also availed of this opportunity to impart valuable advice and instruction to his grandson. Thereafter, around 7 p.m. Sathyaraju would join one of the many Kirtan parties, if they happened to be holding a Kirtan, or he would go out again to play with his friends. At this time of the day the boys would often learn and practice the use of the sword and the lathi, and Sathyaraju proved to be one of the most avid and proficient pupils in this ancient art. Finally, around 10 p.m. the boys used to go to bed. It was indeed a hard life, particularly for a young child who was barely six years old, but it was no different from the life followed by the children of the poor in the most of India's innumerable villages. It was the penalty that had to pay for their poverty.

While poverty has been endemic in India for centuries, it has failed to corrupt or degrade the poor of our country. In fact in rural India, where the poorest of the poor of India live, we often find qualities of character which are conspicuously absent in the more prosperous cities. Thus, though Goli Sathyam was poor, he was a spirited old man with a deep sense of honour and self respect. He would repeatedly counsel the members of his family, and particularly the children, that: "poverty, though unfortunate, is not a sin and hence nothing to be ashamed of. One should never beg or be dependent on others, nor be under any obligation to anybody else. One should live honorably and by honest means, even though such a way of life may be more difficult to follow. Insincerity and falsehood must be shunned at all costs". Sathyaraju loved and respected his Grandfather and as we have already related, he would spend some time every evening in the company of the old man, listening with rapt attention to his worldly wise advice and exhortations. During these sessions, the impressionable young mind of Sathyaraju would soak up the wise counsels of his grandfather and thus Goli Sathyam came to exercise a beneficial and lasting influence on the views and character of his favourite grandchild.

Grandfather's Influence

Sathyaraju adored his Grandfather and Goli Sathyam in turn deeply loved Sathyaraju and predicted a bright future for him. As time went by Sathyaraju came to treat his Grandfather as his most trusted confidant; he would scrupulously abide by the counsels given to him by this Old Man and would unhesitatingly carry out his directions. An interesting example of this can be seen in the following story: Sathyaraju was sent one day to Ramachandrapuram for some work. When he was leaving, his Grandfather told him that though they had many relatives in Ramachandrapuram, they were all likely to show scant courtesy and regard; he should therefore, conduct himself with dignity in their presence and should not visit their homes unless invited to do so. Now it so happened that it was nearly 11 o'clock at night

by the time. Sathyaraju was able to finish his work. In the normal course, he could have gone to the house of anyone of his relatives for the night where he would have been assured of a good meal and comfortable bed. However remembering his Grandfather's counsel, the boy who was barely eight years old at that time, chose to spend the night in the verandhas (portico) of a closed shop, regardless of the inconvenience and discomfort this entailed. and came back home early next morning. When he related this to his Grandfather on return, Goli Sathyam was very happy at the nerve and resolve shown by Sathyaraju and he was reassured more than ever before, that his grandson had a bright future ahead of him.

Sathyaraju Goes to Live with His Step-Mother

In January 1943, when Sathyaraju was in his eighth year, his Step-Mother Shravanamma came on a visit to Adivarapupeta and with the concurrence of Parvathamma and Goli Sathyam she took Sathyaraju with her. At his new home at Bandarulanka, Sathyaraju was admitted in the local village school and he soon established himself as the leader amongst the boys of his group.

Sathyaraju was keen on his studies and proved to be a bright student. However, a promising academic career was cut short when his Step-Mother abruptly decided to withdraw him from the school. Sathyaraju resented this as he was eager to continue his studies but his Step-mother refused to oblige on the plea that she needed his help at home as she was unable to manage her affairs on her own. Sathyaraju soon realised what this 'help' to his Step-Mother meant. He would be awoken early in the morning and set to work to weave cloth; the work quota assigned to him by his Step-Mother was to weave half a saree every day. It must be remembered that Sathyaraju was barely eight years old and working long hours on the primitive and heavy loom imposed a heavy physical strain on the body. As soon as he finished his quota of weaving, Shravanamma would send the boy to the market to buy cotton, or to sell the finished produce of cloth. When he returned from these assignments, he was set to work on house-hold chores. Thus Sathyaraju had to slave for his Step-Mother all day long, nor would she allow him to go out and play with other boys as he did at his native village, Adivarapupeta. That apart, Sathyaraju was in the habit of eating 5-6 times a day and Parvathamma made sure that her children got nourishing and wholesome food. Shravanamma on the other hand, though comparatively much better off, was very niggardly in the matter of food; Sathyaraju had to be content with a light breakfast and two main meals a day and these too were far from substantial. As a result Sathyaraju often remained hungry. The hard work, coupled with inadequate nourishment, led to a marked deterioration in the physical condition of the boy.

Notwithstanding all these troubles Sathyaraju continued to work devotedly for his Step-Mother. However, he was not at all happy and often yearned to return to his Mother and Grandfather at Adivarapupeta. Now it so happened that Shravanamma, unknown to Sathyaraju, had been secretly carrying on an illicit trade in opium. One day, the officials of the Excise Department were tipped off that Shravanamma was in illegal possession of 40 tolas of opium and that she was keeping this hidden in her house. So a search warrant was taken out and a party came to search her residence. In the meanwhile, Sathyaraju got wind of this through some of his friends; he rushed home and informed his Step-Mother about it and asked her point blank whether it was a fact she had this opium hidden in the house. Thoroughly frightened by now, Shravanamma admitted her nefarious activities and showed Sathyaraju where she had hidden the opium. Sathyaraju quickly removed it from the house and so when the search party came, they could find nothing. Though he thus saved his Step-Mother from arrest and humiliation. Sathyaraju was mortified to learn from what his Step-Mother had herself told him that she was, in fact, indulging in dishonest trade practices. He severely castigated her for this and threatened to leave her and return to Adivarapupeta if she did not give up these activities. She appeared to relent and promised to give them up, but this was only a passing phase; Sathyaraju soon discovered that his Step-Mother had gone back to her old ways and was continuing her illicit trade in opium. Seeing that she was incorrigible Sathyaraju refused to stay with her any longer. Shravanamma too had begun to be irked by Sathyaraju's constant criticism of her illicit trade practices and so when the boy sought her permission to return to Adivarapupeta, she readily consented.

Return to Adivarapupeta

Sathyaraju had stayed barely 5 months with his Step-Mother. Though this had been in many ways a trying period, it was not entirely wasted. Shravanamma had good business acumen and with his keen intelligence and observant nature, Sathyaraju managed to gain useful experience in the conduct of business, particularly in buying and marketing of produce. As a result of this experience he became convinced that it was only by taking to business that he and his family could hope to break the shackles of poverty which had bound them for generations. Therefore, though he had been fond of studies and an eager student earlier, he did not rejoin school when he returned to Adivarapupeta. Instead, he decided to devote all his time and energies in helping his family to earn a decent livelihood. He would put in long hours of work at the family looms and though Goli Sathyam kept a watchful eye to make sure that his young grandson did not overstrain himself, Sathyaraju nevertheless managed to put in extra hours of work on the quiet. He would take the finished produce and sell it in villages and markets further afield where he managed

to get a better price. He would then hand over the proceeds from his labour to his Mother and Grandfather. During the summer months, he would attempt to earn extra money by selling sherbet and aerated cool drinks. Thus the compulsions of poverty forced Sathyaraju to work hard to earn a living when other, more fortunate, boys of his age normally went to school or indulged in carefree play. But this is not to say that it was a case of all work and no play. Sathyaraju was an active and intelligent boy who had been good at studies and fond of games. Though he had to perforce give up studies after his eighth year, he continued to participate in games and play along with other boys of his age, and excelled them all in feats demanding skill and athletic prowess. From the early age of six, he learnt and daily practiced the use of the sword and the lathi for offensive and defensive purposes. He had also acquired a reputation amongst his playmates and with the elders of his village for his fearlessness, his bold outspokenness and his deeply ingrained sense of fair play and justice. All these qualities combined to make him a natural leader of the boys of his village. At the same time he was feared and resented by those who were hypocritical or deceitful in their ways because they often became the targets of his ridicule and public exposure.

There is an interesting story of this period which aptly illustrates Sathyaraju's uncompromising devotion to truth as also his fearlessness. Sathyaraju's uncle, who was a powerful and respected man of the village and the head of their family and community, had become attached to a sadhu whom he later accepted as his Guru. Now this sadhu was a boastful and pompous fellow who threatened dire consequences to anyone who crossed his path; one of his constantly repeated threats was that by his curse he would transform any erring mortal, who wittingly or unwillingly incurred his wrath, into one or the other of some low animal species. The simple village folk readily believed this and hence they went about in awe and fear of this angry old man. Naturally, Sathyaraju took an instant dislike to this sadhu for his pompous and bellicose manner and his angry threats; he was convinced in his own mind that the sadhu did not possess any of the powers he boasted of and so he secretly resolved to expose him.

One day, when everybody was seated in the presence of the sadhu and he was holding forth in his usual boastful manner, Sathyaraju asked the sadhu what he (the sadhu) would do if some one were to pinch any of his things; "I will turn him into tiger", said the sadhu promptly. Thereupon, Sathyaraju pretended to express awe and wonder, but remained quiet. A short while later, the sadhu happened to go out and, finding himself alone in the Sadhu's room, Sathyaraju quickly took his bow and arrows and hid them on a ledge just above the place where the Sadhu normally slept; he then sneaked out unnoticed from the room. When the Sadhu returned, he found his bow and arrows missing. Enquiries were

made and a search conducted but they could not be traced. Now the Sadhu lost his temper and began raving and ranting about what he would do to the culprit. Sathyaraju, who was an interested spectator of the whole scene, suggested in a seemingly innocent tone that the Sadhu, by his powers, should be able to locate both his missing bow and arrows, as also the culprit. This only enraged the Sadhu further and Sathyaraju was quickly hustled away by anxious relatives lest the Sadhu pronounce a curse on him.

Awed by the Sadhu's terrible anger and somewhat anxious by now as to what might happen to him, Sathyaraju ran straight to his Grandfather and told him in all innocence: "I have hidden his bow and arrows, if the Sadhu turns me into a tiger then people will hunt me down and kill me, so lie me up inside". Goli Sathyam could not help being amused; he told the boy not to worry, and to wait and see what happens. Thus reassured by his Grandfather, and seeing that nothing had happened to him even though some considerable time had elapsed, Sathyaraju became firm in his original conviction that this Sadhu was a hoax. After sometime he presented himself before the Sadhu and, with not a little trepidation told him in the presence of the usual gathering of his admirers, that he had hidden the Sadhu's bow and arrows (he showed him the hiding place) and, to the astonishment and horror of his relatives, he now challenged the Sadhu to transform him into a tiger, as he had been threatening to do all along. The Sadhu fretted and cursed, but Sathyaraju boldly stood his ground and nothing happened to him. Sathyaraju was soundly belaboured by his uncle and others for his undecorous behaviour, but he had proved his point. This Sadhu never again made such boasts, nor did he ever succeed in terrorizing the villagers again.

With the Step-Mother again

Sometime in the year 1947, when Sathyaraju was in his twelfth year, his Step-Mother fell seriously ill. As she was bed-ridden and needed to be looked after, she sent for Sathyaraju. Accordingly, Sathyaraju left for Bandarulanka and nursed his Step-Mother on her sick bed. She soon recovered but in spite of promises to the contrary, she once again started indulging in illicit opium trade. Though she tried to conceal this from her stepson, it did not take Sathyaraju long to discover her clandestine activities and, as before, he expressed his strong disapproval. This led to friction and tension between mother and son, which was aggravated by other incidents of a similar nature. The matter came to a head one night when Shravanamma, while serving food to Sathyaraju, spoke to him harshly about a particular incident, severely criticising him for his conduct. Sathyaraju was cut to the quick by his Step-Mother's unjustified abuse. He immediately got up, leaving his meal unfinished and announced that he was leaving for Adivarapupeta that very instant. At the same time he

vowed that he would never again set foot in his Step Mother's house. He collected his belongings and came out but as it was raining heavily, he decided to wait until the morning. However, as he had vowed never to re-enter his Step-Mother's house, he resolved to spend the night in the verandah only. Shraavanamma by now had relented; she came out, asked Sathyaraju to forgive her and requested him to come in and sleep comfortably in his room. However, Sathyaraju refused to be persuaded and in reply to his Step-Mother's importunities, he simply reiterated his resolve to never again set foot in his Step-Mother's house.

Sathyaraju leaves his Step-Mother's house for good

Early next morning, Sathyaraju set off on foot for Adivarapupeta. As he neared the Godavari River, he suddenly realised that he had no money to pay for the boat fare. There was no question of turning back at this stage and so he racked his brain for a solution to this problem. On an impulse, he took off his shirt and decided to offer it to the boatman as payment for the boat fare. Just then, as luck would have it, he found a one anna bit lying on the road. This was the exact amount required for the boat fare and relieved now of his anxiety in this regard, Sathyaraju proceeded happily on his journey.

Sathyaraju was well aware that apart, perhaps, from his Mother and Grandfather, his other relatives would not approve of his having left his Step-Mother to return home again. So, instead of proceeding direct to Adivarapupeta, Sathyaraju went first to Draksharam. He reposed great faith in Bhimeshwara Mahadev, the presiding deity of Draksharam and was deeply devoted to Him. It was natural, therefore, that he should turn to his 'Ishta Deva' in this hour of need. He came and stood before the Bhimeshwara Lingam and silently prayed to the Lord that his relatives would understand the reasons that had compelled him to leave his Step Mother's house. Satisfied that the Lord had listened to his prayer, he then proceeded to Adivarapupeta. As he had anticipated, his uncle and other relatives were very annoyed when they learnt that he had left his Step-Mother and come back. He was summarily ordered by them to return to Bandarulanka and to live with his Step-Mother in fulfillment of his father's pledge to her. However, he fortunately found an ally in his Grandfather, who after listening to the entire account, decided that Sathyaraju had done well to leave his Step-Mother and come away. Thus with the backing and support of his Grandfather, Sathyaraju was able to counter the pressure being put on him by his other relatives. Shortly after his return, Shraavanamma also came to Adivarapupeta and pleaded with Sathyaraju to return, but no amount of persuasion or threats could move him to go back on his vow to "never set foot in her house again". Gradually, the pressure for his return to

Bandarulanka died down and he was able to live in peace at Adivarapupeta.

A Business Venture: the 'Beedi' Shop

One of the driving ambitions of Sathyaraju's life even at this young age, was to redeem his family, and particularly his Mother, from the clutches of poverty. He soon realised that the traditional family vocation of weaving would never bring him the riches that he dreamt of; in fact, in spite of hours of daily slaving at the looms by all members of the family, including even the children, the family was barely able to earn enough money to ensure a subsistence level existence. Sathyaraju had pondered often on this problem, and as mentioned earlier, he had realized at a very early age that business was the one vocation that promised quick and adequate returns. With this at the back of his mind, he was constantly on the look out for an opening to launch a business venture. When he returned this time from Bandarulanka he learnt that one of the boys in the village had opened a 'beedi' shop on a capital outlay of just Rs. 25/-, and his business was visibly prospering. This gave Sathyaraju the idea of himself opening a similar 'beedi' shop and, as was his practice, he discussed this proposal of his with his Grandfather. Goli Sathyam, however, was not pleased with this idea because he felt that running a 'beedi' shop was not a dignified vocation for a member of his family. He told Sathyaraju that if he wanted to do business, he should plan to become a cloth merchant, which would be a more befitting profession for a member of the Devanga Community. In fact, he told him, this was what he had all along planned and hoped for, whenever he thought about his grandson's future career.

Sathyaraju greatly respected his Grandfather's views and opinions and this unexpected opposition from him proved to be a damper on his immediate plans. However, notwithstanding his Grandfather's disapproval, Sathyaraju did not entirely give up the idea of starting a 'beedi' shop and he would often be pre-occupied with thinking about and planning this pet project of his. One day, absorbed in such thoughts, he was walking along when he suddenly espied a copper coin lying on the wayside. Now finding a copper coin in this manner is considered to be a sign of impending good fortune and taking this to be a propitious portent, he picked up the coin, pressed it reverently to his eyes and proceeded to join his playmates for a game of marbles. Whether it was the influence of the copper coin or just his luck, Sathyaraju proved and unbeatable that day. By the time they finished play, Sathyaraju had won marbles worth Rs. 5/-. He sold the marbles forth at amount and pocketing the money, he made straight for the shrine of Bhimeshwar Mahadev at Draksharam. Bowing before his "Ishta Deva" with devotion he fervently prayed to the Lord to grant him success in his proposed venture to start a 'beedi' shop. He then returned and with this initial

capital of Rs. 5/- he started his beedi business. His business prospered from the very start and he was soon making more money than he ever had through weaving. What is more the rival beedi shop, for some reason, was forced to close down and all that custom was also transferred to Sathyaraju 's shop. He started making good profits and he regularly deposited the proceeds from his shop with his Mother and Grandfather, which

pleased them immensely. The objections and reservations that Goli Sathyam had earlier voiced to the selling up a 'beedi' shop, were soon forgotten. Sathyaraju, of course, was highly pleased with the success of his venture and he began to make plans to further expand his business. And so time passed happily for the boy and Sathyaraju soon entered his fourteenth year.

2.

INITIATION INTO TAPO MARG

The life of Sathyaraju so far is the ordinary story of an ordinary village boy. Though Sathyaraju undoubtedly possessed certain exceptional qualities of character, there was nothing discernible in his mental make-up, or in the course his life had taken so far, which would mark him out as one destined for a life of spiritual striving and extra-ordinary spiritual attainments. On the contrary, his ambitions and his endeavors until now were solely centered around redeeming his family from poverty, and on ensuring for them a prosperous future. But fate had decreed otherwise. As subsequent events will show, Sathyaraju had come to this world for an altogether different purpose; he was destined to follow the path trod by the ancient Seers of Bharat Varsha, for he belonged to that elite company of Mahatmas, Rishis and Maha Rishis who have, in unbroken succession, blessed the sacred soul of our country from the very beginning of time.

Those who are interested in astrology and allied sciences would, in all likelihood, be aware of a remarkable collection of writings on this subject known as the Bhrigu Nadi and the Kumar Nadi; The Bhrigu Nadi is reputed to have been written by Sage Bhrigu and is in Sanskrit; the Kumar Nadi, similarly, is reputed to have been written by Kumar Swami and is in classical Tamil. Both these works deal with astrological predictions based on individual horoscopes, and if the relevant horoscope can be traced, an unbelievably accurate and detailed account can be found in it of the past births, present life and future births of the person concerned. In this context it is mentioned as a matter of interest that many years later, when the Bhrigu Nadi and the Kumar Nadi pertaining to Sathyaraju's horoscope were taken out and read, the pundits reading them out, as also those listening to them, were alike awed and wonder-struck by the divine personality of him that the horoscope revealed; it is also interesting to note that both the Bhrigu Nadi and the Kumar Nadi corroborated each other. Speaking of the past, the Nadis revealed that Sathyaraju had taken twenty seven earlier births, which read like a spiritual "who is who". These former births were Sanaka (one of the four sons of Brahma); Suka (Suka Mahamuni, the son of Vyas who propagated the Srimad Bhagawatam to Parikshit); Shivadeva; Gyaneshwara; Jayanti; Tulsidas (renowned as the

author of the Ramacharithramanas); Kabir (the well known poet saint); Rajabhushan; Namdev; Mahadev; Jai Chandra; Mahabala; Nityananda; Bhavananda; Sri Chandra (eldest son of Guru Nanak who founded the Udasi set of Sanyasis; this birth of his is also referred to by Tapaswiji Maharaj as will be mentioned in a later part of this book); Lahiripatti (Lahiri Maharaj, the Guru of Swami Yogananda); Parameshwar Prasad; Rama Shastri; Guru Arjun Dev; Shivaji (the great king and Hero of Maharashtra); Gadadhara (Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa); Pani Mohan Bhattacharya and finally, the present birth as Sathyaraju. Writing about the present birth, both the Nadis accurately describe the initiation into Tapomarga and devote an entire chapter entitled "Balayogibhava Charitra", which gives a detailed account of the Tapasya that Sathyaraju would undertake. After completion of this Tapasya, the Nadis predict a life devoted to spiritual ministration and spiritual upliftment of all mankind, both in India and abroad.

The Initiation — Sunday, 7th August 1949

The foregoing account of the Nadis and their predictions has been included as a matter of interest only. The authenticity one attaches to these is a matter of one's personal belief. In any case at the time we write about, all these events lay in future. On Sunday, the 7th August 1949 (Shravan Shukla Chaturdashi of Virodhi Samvatsara), Sathyaraju was exactly 14 years, six months and 14 days old; nothing had happened in his life so far to presage the extraordinary events of this momentous day, as consequence of which an ordinary village boy was transformed into a Bala-Yogi and was to eventually emerge after a period of 12 long years of Tapasya, as a Siddha Purusha and Jivan Mukta, known to the world at large as Shri Shri Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj and to his disciples and followers as Sri Swamiji. It is best to recount the happenings of this day in Sri Swamiji's own words:—

"On the day preceding the great event, i.e. on Saturday the 6th August 1949, there was no inkling in my mind of what was in store for me in the next day. I was preoccupied with the thought that I had to go to Kakinada to bring back my mother and my Nanaji (maternal grandfather); as I would require money for this trip, I spent most of the day collecting dues from

people who owed me money for purchases made from my shop.”

“On Sunday the 7th August 1949, I had a light breakfast of rice and curds and went out to play with my friends. We played marbles from 6a.m. to 2.p.m. I appeared to have a winning streak that day and won all the games. Around 2 p.m. I began to feel hungry and so I decided to go home. I retained the cash I had won, but distributed the winnings of marbles among my friends. I then bought some vegetables and took them home to my sister, to be cooked for my lunch.”

“While I was waiting for my lunch to be ready, my friend Gangaraju came to my place and suggested that I accompany him for a bath in the Godavari Canal which flows on the outskirts of our village. I replied that I was feeling rather hungry and weak and hence did not feel inclined to go. However, Gangaraju persisted and as my sister said that lunch would not be ready for another half an hour at least, I agreed to accompany Gangaraju. When we reached the canal, we found the game of marbles still going on and we joined in. I again won. It was by now nearing 3 p.m. and as I was feeling very hungry, I purchased and ate two vadas and drank a cup of coffee from a nearby hotel, with the money I had just won.

“We then started off for the canal for our bath. On the way there was a grove of palmyra trees and as we were passing this grove, three palmyra fruit fell down of their own accord. The boys who were with me ran to pick them up and, as I was the acknowledged leader of our group, they brought the fruit over to me. A palmyra fruit can be broken into four equal pieces; as there was twelve of us, including myself and Gangaraju, I distributed the twelve pieces equally, taking one for myself.

“After the snack of vadas and coffee at the hotel, I had lit a cheroot and was still smoking it; with the cheroot stuck in my mouth, I peeled the palmyra fruit and started squeezing it to extract the juice. Just then, for no accountable reason, my body began trembling all over; I was wondering what had happened to me when all of sudden I saw a ‘Jyoti’ (light) emerging from the fruit in my hand; almost simultaneously, the “Omkar Dhvani” (the sound of ‘Om’) also started coming from the fruit. Mesmerised, I continued to stare at the palmyra fruit; the Divine light and sound emerging from the fruit engulfed me in blissful waves, as a result of which the trembling of my body ceased in my mind became calm and peaceful.

“As I continued to observe this strange phenomenon, the fruit I had been holding disappeared and I saw instead a Shiva Linga in my hand; this Shiva Linga was black in colour and approximately a foot or a foot and half in height; the ‘Omkar Shabad’ continued to resound all this while and the Shiva Linga continued to emit the same

dazzling light. I was watching this Shiva Linga intensely when all at once it broke into two half pieces and fell apart, (it was at this time, I think, that the palmyra fruit also fell from my hand), and a man in the attire of a ‘Jangam Devar’^{*} stood before me. This man was well over seven feet tall, with a strong, well knit and beautifully proportioned body. He had a dark complexion and an extremely handsome and attractive appearance, with large and beautiful eyes; his long ‘Jata’ (matted hair worn by Yogis) was piled up on his head in the manner of the Rishis of yore; he had a necklace of Rudraksh beads, with a small Shiva Linga suspended from this necklace resting on his broad chest; he wore a white dhoti, again in the manner of the old Rishis. A bright effulgence emanated from his being which blotted out all other vision; I could only see this Yogi, surrounded by a bright radiance, and nothing else. The Yogi spoke to me in Telugu and asked me to sit down. I asked, ‘Why do you want me to sit down?’ But the Yogi again repeated his command to me to ‘sit’. So I sat down. He then told me to sit in ‘Padma Asana’ (the lotus posture). I replied that I did not know how to sit in Padma Asana. Thereupon the Yogi placed my feet in the correct position and made me sit in Padma Asana. He then told me to close my eyes. I once again protested: ‘Why do you want me to close my eyes?’ He replied: ‘Close your eyes, then I will tell you’. So I closed my eyes. He then touched me at the Bhrikuti, (the spot between the eyebrows) with his middle finger and gently tapped me on the head; immediately I lost outer consciousness and went into deep samadhi. I became totally unaware of my body and my surroundings; all I could see was the same black Shiva Linga that had appeared earlier in my hand, surrounded by dazzling light, and all I could hear was the ‘Omkar Dhvani’; my mind was completely absorbed in this vision and sound, to the exclusion of everything else”.

While this spiritual drama was being enacted, it is interesting to note that the other boys, the playmates of Sathyaraju, heard or saw nothing; they were absorbed in eating their share of the palmyra fruit or in simply playing around. However, they soon noticed that Sathyaraju, instead of joining them in their play, was sitting apart in a yogic posture, with eyes closed. Thinking that he was play-acting the role of a Sadhu, they first began to tease him and when they got no response, they became more rough. Some tried to pull him out of his Padma Asana posture, whilst others punched and slapped him. Finding him unmoved, they then smeared the juice of the Palmyra fruit, as also mud brought from the canal, all over his body. When Sathyaraju failed to react even to this, they carried him bodily to the canal and put him in the water. But Sathyaraju was totally unconscious of this ill treatment being meted out to him by his playmates and hence

* Jangam Devar: A sect of devotees of Bhawan Shankar.

there was still no response from him. By now it became apparent to the boys that this was no play-acting on Sathyaraju's part, but at the same time they could not make out what had come over him. His unconscious and seemingly lifeless condition frightened them. Apprehensive that they might be accused of having caused this condition, they washed off the dirt they had smeared on his body, carried him out of the canal and seated him on the canal bund. They then ran home and informed his relatives that something strange and inexplicable had happened to Sathyaraju.

It will be recalled that Sathyaraju's mother and maternal grandfather had both gone to Kakinada. So when the news about Sathyaraju's strange condition reached his home his uncle, accompanied by four or five other persons, went to the spot where Sathyaraju was sitting in samadhi. Bewildered and not knowing what to do, they simply stood around watching him. One among them, a person named Gora Mallanna ventured to suggest that Sathyaraju was probably possessed by a ghost or a spirit; in order to exorcise this supposed spirit, he began belabouring the boy with a stout, wooden club that he was carrying; in the process, he accidentally struck Sathyaraju on the same spot between the eyebrows where the boy's Divine Guru had touched him. As a result of this blow, Sathyaraju's deep samadhi broke and he regained just enough consciousness of his surroundings to realize that some people were standing around him but that was about all; the vision of the Shiva Linga, surrounded by dazzling light, continued as before and this obstructed his normal vision. He vaguely recognised his uncle among the group around him and he asked him for a dhoti to put on in place of the shorts that he was wearing. His uncle gave him a piece of cloth that he was carrying and when Sathyaraju got up to put on this cloth, two among the group took hold of him by the arms, one on either side, and more or less carried him home. All this while those who had come to see Sathyaraju were pestering him with all sorts of questions, in order to decipher the strange condition in which they found him. Some asked him if he had been possessed by a ghost or a spirit; others asked whether the village deity had possessed him; some others wanted to know whether he had become a Sadhu. But Sathyaraju made no reply; he was only dimly aware of what was going on around him and his mind in any case was almost totally absorbed in the Divine Vision of the Shiva Linga that remained continuously in front of his eyes.

When the party reached Sathyaraju's house, the boy found that his legs had become stiff like wood and he could not negotiate the verandah steps; so he was carried up onto the verandah, but as they tried to take him inside the house, his legs got stuck on the door sill and, try as they might, the people who were with him could neither bend his legs, nor take him through the door. After futile attempts towards this end, for over an

hour, they finally gave up and decided to make him sit down in the outer verandah of the house; even this they accomplished with great difficulty. In the meantime, word of what had happened had spread in the village and people in large numbers thronged to see Sathyaraju. They kept pestering him with the same sort of questions as had been put to him earlier and when their questioning elicited no response from Sathyaraju, they began to conjecture amongst themselves. Some said he was possessed by some occult spirit; others diagnosed it as hysteria and some contemptuously dismissed it as bluff and play-acting. Only one amongst the assembled crowd appeared to have an inkling of Sathyaraju's true state; he was an old man of 60 years, a Harijan, named Peddakamaraju, who made bold to suggest that Sathyaraju, under some Divine influence, had been transformed into a Yogi.

Though Sathyaraju had missed his mid-day meal as a consequence of these unforeseen events, and though he had been very hungry when he started off to have a bath in the canal, Sathyaraju's appetite had vanished; he felt no inclination to eat and declined to take any food. Notwithstanding his refusal, his relatives forced him to take some milk. Then as time passed, the initial excitement soon wore off, and by about 8 p.m. that evening people began to return to their homes though some, more curious than the others, stayed on to see what would happen next. These people kept sitting around Sathyaraju, talking amongst themselves and as the night advanced, dropped off to sleep, one by one. Around 11 p.m. that night, Sathyaraju at last found himself alone, all the others having gone off to sleep. The Divine Vision of the Shiva Linga surrounded by the bright radiance was still continuing and so also was the Omkar Shabad. It now entered Sathyaraju's mind to go back to the canal bund where the Divine Experience had been originally vouchsafed to him. When he got up to go, one of the boys, Govinda, also awoke and tried to follow him, but Sathyaraju gave him the slip and made his way back to the same spot where his Divine Guru had first made him sit down. But when he sat there again, he found that he could not now close his eyes. However, this caused no hindrance to his dhyana for he continued to see the Divine Vision even with his eyes open and his mind remained fully absorbed in this Vision. Soon after he reached the canal bund, it began to rain heavily and the rain continued throughout the night, but Sathyaraju was quite indifferent to all this; even though he was thoroughly drenched, it did not occur to him to move to some other place where he could get shelter from the rain.

The Second Day — Monday the 8th August 1949

Next morning, i.e. on Monday the 8th August 1949, a Harijan boy named Pantapatti Viraraju, brought and offered some raw milk which Sathyaraju accepted and consumed. Soon after, villagers who were curious to

know what had happened to Sathyaraju came to his house and, when they did not find him at home, they came to the canal bund to see him. Finding that the boy was being drenched by the rain, they carried him to a Banyan tree near the village and seated him under the tree; they then placed a palmyra leaf umbrella over him to protect him from the rain. While all this was happening, Sathyaraju was aware of the activity around him, but was totally indifferent to what was going on. As his eyes continued to remain open, he could see the people around him, but only as shadowy figures flitting in the background of the bright vision that remained steady and constant before his eyes. If some faces came into focus, he would vaguely remember that he had seen them some where before but he could neither recall their names, nor did it occur to him that they were his friends or relatives or fellow villagers; for the fact of the matter was that the touch of his Divine Guru had obliterated these thoughts from his mind and, at one go, had snapped all his early connections.

Though it rained throughout the day Sathyaraju was quite oblivious to it; he continued to sit under the makeshift shelter of the palmyra leaf umbrella. totally absorbed in the vision that he continued to see all the time. At or around 9 p.m. that night, some Harijan boys who were passing by heard the 'Om-kara Dhvani' emanating from the spot where Sathyaraju was sitting. Not knowing what this strange sound was, they ran and informed the people in the village. Some villagers came to investigate and they too heard the 'Om-kara Dhvani' coming from that direction; this continued for nearly three quarters of an hour whilst the villagers stood at a distance, listening to it in awed silence. Eventually, when this sound ceased, they made bold to approach Sathyaraju, lifted him up and carried him to his house.

At home, his sister gave him some milk to drink. After he had consumed the milk, the Divine fervor that had gripped his mind so far abated somewhat and as Sathyaraju felt drowsy, he went to sleep. Little did he know then that this was the last proper sleep that he was going to have for a long time to come for, during the twelve long years of Tapas that followed, Sathyaraju hardly ever slept at all. He may have dozed off once in a while, for a few minutes, during breaks in his samadhi, and that too without ever leaving his seat or 'asana', but he never lay down to sleep again during the rest of the Tapas period.

Third Day — Tuesday the 9th August 1949

After a refreshing night's sleep, Sathyaraju got up and at about 6-30 a.m. he partook of a light breakfast of idlies and chutney which his sister had prepared for him. When he had finished his breakfast, the Divine Vision of the Siva Linga, surrounded by light, and the sound of the 'Om-kara Dhvani' once again gripped his mind and so he went back to the canal bund where he had first had the

Divine Experience. On reaching there he felt severe bodily discomfort, which was followed by vomiting and diarrhea. At that time one of his playmates, Govinda, who had accompanied him, looked after him and tended to his needs. Soon after, he became absorbed in contemplation of the Divine Vision.

Later that morning, a lady from the village came to where Sathyaraju was sitting on the canal bund and with firm faith that Sathyaraju was now a Bala-Yogi (boy yogi), she worshipped him with incense and flowers, and made an offering of a coconut. Having finished her worship, she distributed pieces of the coconut as prasad. That same morning some of the villagers of their own accord decided to erect a pandal of palmyra leaves for Sathyaraju, under the nearby Banyan tree. The construction of this pandal was completed by about 3-30 p.m. The same villagers then approached Sathyaraju and requested him to sit under the newly erected pandal; Sathyaraju agreed to their request and took his seat there.

At about 5.30 p.m. that evening, Sathyaraju's mother and grandfather returned home from Kakinada. When they were informed of the strange happenings of the past two days, they became greatly alarmed and immediately rushed off to the canal bund in order to ascertain the true state of affairs. On reaching there, they observed Sathyaraju seated under the Palmyra leaf pandal, beneath the Banyan tree, absorbed in Samadhi. Deeply agitated both Parvathamma and Goli Sathyam repeatedly called out to the boy by his name, but there was no response. Sathyaraju was oblivious of the outer world and totally unaware of their presence. Seeing her son in that condition, Parvathamma could not control herself and became almost hysterical; weeping loudly, she clasped the boy to her bosom and began asking what had come over him to make him behave in this inexplicable manner. The loud wailing and sobbing of his mother gradually brought Sathyaraju back to conscious awareness of his surroundings. Observing that her son was now aware of her presence, Parvathamma beseeched him, with tears copiously flowing from her eyes all the while, to return home with her. Sathyaraju's mind was by now totally detached from worldly relationships and hence he was unmoved by his mother's tears and pleading; he calmly told her that he had embarked on The Divine Quest and that he would not leave this blessed path and go back home. Having said that he sat back, totally detached, and no amount of weeping or protestations by his mother could make him relent. Finding that the boy was firmly resolved to continue on his chosen path, his Grandfather blessed him saying that the path he had chosen to follow was no doubt excellent and hence he should adhere to it resolutely. At the same time he could not help expressing his disappointment. He told Sathyaraju that they had looked upon him as the hope of the family and the prop of their old age; now there would be nobody to

look after them. In reply to this Sathyaraju assured them that they would not have to face any problems, financial or otherwise, and that everything would be well with the family.

After this brief conversation, Sathyaraju closed his eyes and again passed into samadhi. The grief stricken mother however, could not bear to leave him sitting there and return home alone. Not knowing what to do next, nor knowing how to resolve this strange situation, she too sat down nearby, perplexed and disconsolate. From time to time she would look at her son and then weep softly into the folds of her saree. On one such occasion, as she looked up towards Sathyaraju, there suddenly flashed before her eyes the entrancing vision of the 'Trimurti' (Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh). Thinking that it was a hallucination, she rubbed her eyes and looked again; the vision was still there in all its dazzling splendor and soul enthralling beauty. Now, whichever way she looked she saw only the 'Trimurti' and nothing else. How long this lasted, she was unable to tell, for time itself had come to a standstill. This vision made her realise that her son was under Divine protection and she need not fear for him any longer. This brought peace to her troubled mind and she returned home happy and contented.

Early Difficulties

Though Parvathamma was thus reassured by the Divine Vision, her motherly heart continued to remain solicitous about Sathyaraju's well-being and so she endeavoured to feed him and look after him. However, Sathyaraju declined to accept her services and went to the extent of dissuading her from visiting him. This grieved Parvathamma, but she had no choice except to comply. At this stage Gora Mallanna, whose house was adjoining the place where the Bala-Yogi sat, took it upon himself to look after the young Yogi. Though well intentioned, Gora Mallanna was totally unversed in spiritual matters; it may be recalled that he was the same person who had awoken Sathyaraju from his initial Samadhi by striking him with a club, in the mistaken belief that he was possessed by a spirit. Now this Gora Mallanna remembered having heard somewhere that the great Rishis of yore, when doing Tapas, used to draw sustenance from Vayu (air) alone. He therefore, advised Sathyaraju to do likewise and Sathyaraju agreed to his suggestion. In pursuance of this suggested course of action, Gora Mallanna began to gradually reduce the meagre quantity of fruit and milk that Sathyaraju was taking. Eventually, he stopped giving him anything altogether, with the result that now Sathyaraju was taking no nourishment at all. When mother Parvathamma heard of this, she was greatly agitated; taking some milk with her she went to where her son was sitting and beseeched him to partake of the milk. Moved by her entreaties, Sathyaraju drank the milk she had brought. This greatly annoyed Gora Mallanna who

remonstrated with the Bala-Yogi but Sathyaraju simply answered that he could not refuse anything when it was offered to him with love and devotion. This further annoyed Gora Mallanna who angrily retorted: "If I bring meat, will you eat that also?" The Bala-Yogi looked at him calmly and then, in a soft voice, said: "Yes; if you offer it with Bhakti (devotion), I shall eat it." Gora Mallanna, however, was not mollified and stomped off home in a rage saying that henceforth he would have nothing more to do with the Yogi. From that day onwards he not only stopped rendering the small services that he was doing for the Yogi, but began to actively deride him also.

It is a strange but an inevitable fact that when an aspirant sets out on the spiritual path, he always finds detractors putting obstacles in his way. This happened in the case of Sathyaraju also. Though the people, by and large, had come to recognise Sathyaraju as a Bala-Yogi, and were treating him with veneration, there were nevertheless some among them who failed to see the light. Prompted by envy, or, simply to create mischief, they would subject the young Yogi to all sorts of torments, when he was immersed in samadhi, particularly when there was no one around to check their misdemeanours. When Gora Mallanna left in a huff mother Parvathamma began ministering to the needs of her son. However, she could not remain by his side all the time and when she left him to go home, some of the boys who had feared and disliked Sathyaraju, but had not dared to show open hostility towards him earlier, would now creep up and beat him to their hearts' content. On one occasion, some particularly venomous individual soaked a piece of cloth in kerosene, set it alight and threw it on the Bala-Yogi when he was sitting in Samadhi. As Sathyaraju was quite oblivious of his body, the neither knew nor felt anything at that time and so the lighted cloth caused deep and painful burns on his hands and legs. Disregarding the excruciating pain from these burns, the Bala-Yogi continued his Tapas as before. When word about this incident spread in the village, one kindly old man prepared an ointment for these burns; he came daily and applied the ointment to the affected parts even while the Yogi sat immersed in samadhi and then quietly went back. Through the ministration of this good man the burns gradually healed up but the scars left by these burns can be seen even to this day.

Though most people by now believed that Sathyaraju was genuinely engaged in Tapas, still there were the usual crop of doubters who scoffed at the whole idea. One such person was a man named Dora Viraraju, a resident of Adivarapupeta. Dora Viraraju decided to take it upon himself to expose the Bala-Yogi and, for this purpose, he solicited the assistance of a friend of his, one Chinta Suranna, who was an Ayurvedic Pundit hailing from Someshwara near Ramachandrapuram. One evening both these persons came to where the

Bala-Yogi was sitting under his pandal of Palmyra leaves, ostensibly for his darshan, and then waited there until everybody had left. As soon as they were alone with the Bala-Yogi, Chinta Suranna, in order to lest the intensity of the Yogi's Samadhi, pulled out his legs so as to unlock the Yogi's Padma Asana posture. He succeeded in pulling out the legs but they remained where he left them. He then tried to awaken the Yogi from Samadhi by prying open one of his eyelids with his fingers; his eyelid too remained half opened, but the Yogi's samadhi continued undisturbed. Having some knowledge of these things, Suranna was by now convinced that the Yogi's Samadhi was genuine and he fell abashed for what he had done. He now tried to close the half opened eyelid and put the Yogi back into the Padma Asana posture but his efforts were of no avail. He struggled at this task through most of the night but could not succeed. Finally, when the Yogi emerged from his samadhi, Suranna fell at his feet and begged his pardon for what he had done. The Bala-Yogi smiled and readily forgave him. Next morning Suranna went to meet Parvathamma. He told her that her son was a 'Mahatma' and he entreated her to look after him well.

Sojourn at Pasalapudi Ashram

The Bala-Yogi put up with these varied torments for full two months without letting them affect his Tapas, but continued disturbances of this nature began to eventually affect his peace of mind. He would often restrain himself from going into samadhi lest his tormentors took advantage of his unconscious stage to inflict further tortures on him. On such occasions, when he was in deep dhyana but not in samadhi, he often caught people in the act of trying to beat him in the mistaken belief that he was lost in samadhi; the startled culprits would then plead forgiveness and he would let them go. Be that as it may, he finally got fed up and decided to move away from there so that he could carry on his Tapas undisturbed. Ruminating in his mind as to where he could find a peaceful place for his Tapas, he remembered having heard of an Ashram at Pasalapudi, a village approximately eight kilometres from Adivarapupeta, where a sadhu was reputed to be engaged in Tapas. Hoping that this Ashram might meet his requirement, he left for Pasalapudi at 10 p.m. one October night, barely two months after he had begun his Tapas. He found the Ashram he was looking for but as he entered, the sadhu who was inside began making weird noises; apparently, the sadhu had assumed that some vagabond youngster was trying to gain entry into the Ashram by stealth and had made these noises to frighten him away. The Bala-Yogi, on the other hand, interpreted this strange behaviour of the sadhu to imply that the sadhu did not want to be disturbed and so the young Yogi withdrew and came and sat outside. Now it so happened that during those days communist bands used to roam the countryside in that area, trying to terrorize the villagers. In self-defense every village had

organised posses of armed men who used to patrol the area around their respective villages and apprehend any suspicious characters who they may find loitering in or around the village. One such posse happened to pass by the Ashram and they saw this young boy, who was obviously a stranger, sitting outside. They immediately surrounded the boy and started interrogating him. In the state of mind in which he was, the Bala-Yogi could barely comprehend what was going on, let alone answer their questions coherently. This strange behaviour of the boy further aroused the suspicion of the villagers and an ugly situation might have developed. Fortunately, just then, one of the men recognised the boy as the Bala-Yogi of Adivarapupeta. When the posse learnt that the Bala-Yogi had come to Pasalapudi to stay at the Ashram, they called out the manager of the Ashram and had the Bala-Yogi conducted inside. After accommodating the young Yogi, the manager asked him that sadhana he was practising. The Bala-Yogi could hardly give a satisfactory reply, because he had followed no specific sadhana; he had simply become immersed in samadhi as a result of the Divine Touch of his Guru. So he simply answered "I don't know." "If that be the case," said the manager pompously, "I shall initiate you. From now on, repeat the Mantra "Sadguru" at all times." With that he left him and went back to bed. The Bala-Yogi, at last finding himself alone and undisturbed, went back into samadhi. Next morning the manager came to see him again and promptly inquired whether the Bala-Yogi had done Japa (repetition) of the Mantra that he had given him. When the Bala-Yogi replied in the negative, the manager was visibly annoyed.

Karri Subbi Reddy, who was president of the Pasalapudi village council and who also controlled the running of the Ashram, visited the Ashram later in the morning. On seeing him arrive, the sadhu who was staying there got up deferentially, did 'namaskar' and urged the Bala-Yogi to do the same. However, the Bala-Yogi continued sitting unconcerned, immersed in Dhyana. Reddy, who was full of his own self-importance, felt offended at being ignored in this manner. Barely suppressing his annoyance, he curtly asked the Bala-Yogi what diet he was taking. The Bala-Yogi replied that his diet was restricted to milk only. There upon he peremptorily told the Bala-Yogi that milk could not be made available for him and that he need not stay at the Ashram any longer. The attitude of these Ashram functionaries made it quite apparent to the Bala-Yogi that his presence there was not welcome, so he decided to return to Adivarapupeta. He started soon after dusk and by 10 p.m. he was back in his native village, after a brief absence of about 24 hours. On reaching the village, he did not return to his original location; instead, he went and sat under a Banyan tree on a piece of land which belonged to his uncle. Next morning, when the people of Adivarapupeta learnt that the Bala-Yogi was back, they were overjoyed and came in large numbers for his darshan.

The Tempest

The East Godavari District, being near the sea, is often subjected to cyclonic storms. One such storm of unusual intensity struck the region sometime in November, 1949. A severe gale, followed by torrential rain swept across the countryside; starting at about 2-30 a.m., it continued unabated until 5.30 a.m. Trees were uprooted. houses collapsed, the whole area was flooded and the people were in great distress. In such calamitous conditions, mother Parvathamma naturally feared for her son's safety and so she ran to where he was sitting even while the storm was in full swing. It was a rash thing to do and she narrowly escaped death when a large branch, tom off by the hurricane, struck her a glancing blow on the head. Though stunned by the blow, she soon recovered and spurred on by her anxiety for her son, she somehow managed to reach the Banyan tree where the Bala-Yogi was sitting. To her great wonder, on reaching there she found that the spot around the Bala-Yogi was an oasis of peace amidst the raging turmoil elsewhere. The Bala-Yogi was immersed in deep dhyana, undisturbed by the havoc all around him. The place where he sat remained calm and clean and not a leaf was disturbed under the Banyan tree. Relieved and not a little astonished, Mother Parvathamma went and sat near him. As the storm abated and the day dawned, she discovered in the growing light that swarms of large red ants had taken refuge in the area where the Bala-Yogi sat. The Bala-Yogi's body was also covered with thick clusters of these ants. This greatly perturbed mother Parvathamma and she started brushing the ants off his body, but the Bala-Yogi told her by a sign not to do so and to leave them undisturbed where they were.

Move to Burial Ground

The Bala-Yogi continued his Tapas under the Banyan tree but once again he found himself the victim of

harassment by the children of the village and even by some of the older people who were not kindly disposed towards him. During the day these people dared not do anything as there was a constant stream of visitors coming for darshan of the Yogi. However, they got their opportunity at night when the visitors and those looking after the Bala-Yogi went home and the Bala-yogi was left all by himself. He was thinking one day on what steps he should take to rid himself of this nuisance when it occurred to the Bala-Yogi that if he shifted to the village burial ground, these misguided people would be afraid of following him there, particularly at night and be might thus obtain peace. So on 18th November 1949, the Bala-Yogi shifted the venue of his Tapas to the burial ground on the outskirts of the village. His intuition proved correct, because people generally look upon burial and cremation grounds with awe and fear, and try to avoid these places if they can. Because of this fear, no one dared to go near the burial ground at night and so the Bala-Yogi was thus relieved of their harassment. But this relief was short lived. for he soon discovered that the burial ground swarmed with insects and rodents who were habituated to feeding on the flesh of dead bodies buried there. When these insects and rodents came across the Bala-Yogi, seated motionless in samadhi for hours at a stretch. they naturally took him to be a corpse and started nibbling at his flesh causing any number of wounds, particularly on the lower parts of the body which rested on the ground. Then, when the Bala-Yogi went for his daily bath in the canal, the fish in the water would nibble at these open wounds. In effect what it amounted to was that though by shifting his location he found relief from the mental harassment caused by mischievous boys, he had to pay for it in physical suffering caused by the insects. rodents and reptiles inhabiting the burial ground.

3.

TAPAS OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS

Bala-Yogi Bitten by Cobra

In December 1949, approximately 15 days after he had shifted to the burial ground, the Bala-Yogi was proceeding to the canal for his daily midnight bath when a deadly black cobra, which was lying across his path, reared up and bit him viciously on his leg. Blood started dripping from the wound but the Bala-Yogi ignored it, took his bath and returning to his seat in the burial ground, went back into samadhi. To begin with the Bala-Yogi showed total unconcern and paid no heed to the snake bite. However, this venom injected by the serpent was bound to react on the body, and so it happened. At first there was a discolouration of the skin, causing

blotches to appear all over the body. Soon thereafter, gangrene set in as a result of which the body started emanating a foul smell. The pain and discomfort that the Bala-Yogi had to suffer on account of all this could well be imagined. Coming on the top of all his other troubles, the physical suffering caused by the snake bite proved to be the last straw. Discouraged and frustrated by all that he had endured and was enduring, he decided to give up his yogic practices and to return home. In any case, it had never been his intention or ambition to tread the yogic path. The 'Tapas' he was presently undergoing,

was at the behest of the 'Jangam Veishadhari',* whom he had come to regard as his Guru. He now felt that the yogic way of life he was following was not worth all the trouble; it was better to return home and lead a normal life. With such thoughts running through his mind, the Bala-Yogi left his seat one night and started off for his home.

Now the fact was that without any previous resolve on his part, Sathyaraju had been made to enter the 'Tapo Marg'; hence it could hardly be expected that he would be left to his discretion to leave it off at his own will. And so it happened: As the Bala-Yogi neared a Banyan tree which stood on the path leading to his home, he suddenly espied the same 'Jangam Veshadhari', his Guru, standing under the tree, barring his way. Seeing his Guru, the Bala-Yogi did namaskar to him. With a faint smile the Guru asked the boy where he was going. "I am going home", said the Bala-Yogi. "Why?" asked the Guru. Thereupon, the Bala-Yogi recounted all his woes and the troubles he had to endure ever since he started his yogic practices; he told him all the suffering he was undergoing on account of the snake bite and ended up by saying that he found it impossible to continue any longer and hence he had thought of discontinuing his Tapas and going home. The Guru heard him out in silence and thereafter continued looking at the boy for some time. When finally he spoke, he told his young disciple to go back and directed him not to abandon the yogic path under any circumstance. He then imparted to the Bala-Yogi the 'Pancha Akshari Mantra' and told him to repeat it dally. He assured the Bala-Yogi that the action of this Mantra would relieve him of the suffering caused by the snake bite and that he would soon be restored to normal health. In obedience to his Guru's wishes the Bala-Yogi returned to his seal in the burial ground. He felt somewhat abashed at the passing weakness which had induced him to leave for his home and he resolved then and there that he would prefer to die following the Yogic path rather than be called a 'Yoga Bhrashta' (one who has failed in the path of Yoga). In order to stiffen his resolve for the future, he took a solemn vow never again to swerve from the path shown by his Guru. Enthused afresh by the blessings of his Guru, and with firm resolve, the Bala-Yogi started chanting the Pancha Akshari Mantra.** He soon passed into deep samadhi and, as his Guru had predicted, the repetition of the Mantra neutralised the effects of the poison, and restored him to his former health.

* This term means: a person wearing the apparel and having the appearance of a 'Jangam Devar'. Until he came to know the true identity of his Guru, Sathyaraju used to think his Guru was a 'Jangam Veshadhari' and hence referred to him as such.

** Mantra is a mystic combination of se letters or sound forms; a Pancha Akshari Mantra comprising five such Is. A Mantra is usually based on the names of a particular Deity and is required to be repeated regu (Japam) by an aspirant as a parhis worship of that Deity. [sic]

Collector and Tehsildar Come for Darshan

The news that the Bala-Yogi of Adivarapupeta had survived the inevitably fatal bite of a deadly cobra, spread far and wide, and soon reached the ears of Sri Bala Sundaram Pillai, the then collector of East Godavari District. Pillai was a deeply religious man and this news, coupled with the other news that he had been hearing about the Bala-Yogi, awoke in him a desire to have darshan of this young saint. He had also learnt that the Bala-Yogi remained absorbed in samadhi for almost the entire 24 hours and that he only emerged from his samadhi around midnight, when he took his daily bath and partook of some light nourishment that may have been placed there for him. Accordingly, some time in January 1950 the collector, accompanied by his Personal Assistant Sri T. V. Satyanarayan Rao and the Tehsildar of Ramachandrapuram, Sri Garga Narasimha Munhy, came one day at midnight to the burial ground for the Bala-Yogi's darshan; no one else had been informed of this visit. The Bala-Yogi had just then emerged from samadhi and so they were able to converse with him.

Before taking his leave, the Collector asked the Bala-Yogi if there was anything he could do for him. As it was customary to sit on a deer skin or a tiger skin seat while doing tapas, the Bala-Yogi asked the Collector to send a tiger skin for his use. By a fortunate coincidence a poacher had been apprehended a few days earlier and a tiger skin found in his possession at the time of his arrest had been confiscated. from him. This was now lying in the Collectorate. The Collector sent this tiger skin the very next day, through Sri Narasimha Murthy the Tehsildar. When Narasimha Murthy came too the burial ground to deliver the tiger skin, he found that the ground on which the Bala-Yogi sat was damp. It became obvious to him that if the tiger skin were to be spread on the damp ground, it would soon start rotting and, consequently, would start emitting a foul odour. In order to obviate this, he had a wooden platform constructed for the Bala-Yogi to sit on and on this he spread the tiger skin. He also got a 'Pandal' (improvised hut) of Palmyra leaves built to cover the wooden platform. The elevated seat provided by the wooden platform relieved the Bala-Yogi from the torments of rodent, ants and insects to a great extent and he was now able to continue his Tapas in relatively greater comfort.

Construction of 'Dhyana Mandir'

Soon after his first Darshan of the Bala-Yogi, Bala Sundaram Pillai, the Collector, was posted out. Prior to his departure, he came once again for darshan. As on the previous occasion, his Personal Assistant and the Tehsildar accompanied him. T. V. Sathyanarain Rao, the P. A. was by now deeply impressed by the young Yogi and before leaving the next day, he discussed with Narasimha Murthy a proposal to construct a 'Dhyana

Mandir' for the Bala-Yogi's use. The land adjoining the burial ground belonged to the 'Zamindar' of Vella village, Vattakoota Pattabhiramanna by name. When the Tehsildar and the P. A. discussed the matter with this Zamindar, he readily consented to the construction of the proposed 'Dhyana Mandir' on his land.

In the meantime, the Bala-Yogi continued his Tapas in the improvised hut that had been constructed in the burial ground, with undiminished intensity. As he sat motionless in Samadhi, day after day, for almost the entire daily period of 24 hours, his hands and legs became stiff and wooden and he soon lost control of his limbs. By the time he completed his first year Tapas, i.e., around July/August 1950, he found it impossible to even move from his seat. In order to enable him to perform his daily ablutions, a bucket of water had to be brought and placed outside his hut. With great difficulty, and with the exercise of immense will power and determination, he would barely manage to drag himself to where the bucket was placed and have his bath; he would then return to his seat and resume his samadhi. Notwithstanding all this suffering, he carried on with his Tapas undeterred.

Around October 1950, the Dhyana Mandir was ready and the Bala-Yogi was bodily lifted and carried to his new abode. At about the same time, a person named Ramakrishna Reddy had a well dug near the newly constructed Dhyana Mandir; this well not only catered for the needs of the Bala-Yogi, but also served to provide pure drinking water for the rest of the village. By now Narasimha Murthy, the Tehsildar, had voluntarily assumed the responsibility for looking after the needs of the Bala-Yogi. In order to ensure that the Bala-Yogi was not disturbed in his Tapas, Narasimha Murthy directed that the door of the 'Dhyana Mandir' would henceforth be closed and locked. The key of the lock was kept with his mother Parvathamma. From now on, he also sent regular donations of money to mother Parvathamma to meet the cost of buying fruits and milk for the Bala-Yogi; these donations were continued by him for the entire period of the Bala-yogi's Tapas and even after. We are also told that Narasimha Murthy was the only person who could arouse the Bala-Yogi from samadhi: all he had to do was gently tap the Bala-Yogi anywhere on his person and this was enough to bring the Yogi back to normal consciousness. It goes without saying that Narasimha Murthy only did this when it became imperative and unavoidable.

Visit of Tapaswiji Maharaj

During this period there lived a saint, popularly known amongst his followers and admirers as Tapaswiji Maharaj. This Yogi was remarkable in many ways. He was born in the royal family of the erstwhile Patiala state. After a full life of action and adventure, this Prince took 'sanyas' in his fiftieth year and entered the 'Udasi' sect of

'Sanyasins' with the monastic name of Vishnudhama. He practiced rigorous spiritual disciplines for a long time, under the guidance of various Gurus. Once, when he was on a visit to Parshuram Kund^{*} in Assam, he met a sadhu who claimed that he had learnt the almost forgotten secret of Kaya Kalpa (the art of rejuvenating the human body), but that he had not yet tried it out on anybody. Tapaswiji, who was by now nearing his ninetieth year and had started suffering from the debility of old age, volunteered to submit to this treatment. The course of treatment was to last for a period of three months: After approximately 21 days of starting this treatment, Tapaswiji passed into a comatose state. When he recovered from his coma sometime towards the end of the three months period, he found to his astonishment that he had been restored to the same state of health and youthful vigour that he had enjoyed as a young man of thirty. Tapaswiji underwent the Kaya Kalpa treatment twice more: once at the age of 120 years and the second time at the age of 150 years. Eventually, he entered Mahasamadhi at Jhansi on 12th October 1955, at the ripe old age of 187 years. During his long life, Tapaswiji successfully undertook a number of spiritual austerities including the Kadeshwari Tapas and the Panch Agni Tapas. It was in recognition of these spiritual accomplishments that he had come to be called Tapaswiji Maharaj by his devotees. (Only a brief life sketch of Tapaswiji Maharaj has been given here. Those interested in more details about his life are advised to read his biography: "The Life of Tapaswiji Maharaj" by Sri T. S. Anantha Murthy).

In January 1951, Tapaswiji Maharaj happened to come on a visit to Vishnu Sevashram, located on the Pithapuram Road in Kakinada. There he heard about the Bala-Yogi of Adivarapupeta and expressed a desire to meet him. Consequently, in this first week of January 1951, Tapaswiji Maharaj, accompanied by Bulusu Sambamurthy, the then speaker of the Madras Legislative Assembly, came to Adivarapupeta from Kakinada and had special darshan of the Bala-Yogi. At the time of their visit, the Bala-Yogi was in deep samadhi and hence Tapaswiji could not converse with him; nevertheless Tapaswiji Maharaj immediately realised the high spiritual status of the Bala-Yogi. He sent for some flowers and devotedly placed them at the feet of the Bala-Yogi, and instructed his companions to do the same. Deeply impressed by this first darshan, Tapaswiji Maharaj came again on a number of subsequent visits, but it so happened that every time he came, he found the Bala-Yogi immersed in samadhi. On one such occasion, Tapaswiji sat in front of the Bala-Yogi and went into dhyana to find out the antecedents of the Yogi. On emerging from dhyana he informed his companions that the Bala-Yogi was a 'Siddha Purusha' who had re-

* Parshuram Kund is water tank associated with the ancient Saint and Warrior, Parshuram.

incarnated himself of his own free will for the spiritual regeneration of mankind. He further told them that in one of his former incarnations, the Bala-Yogi had been born as Sri Chandra, son of Guru Nanak and the founder of the Udasi Sect of Sanyasis; in that birth he (Tapaswiji Maharaj) had been one of Sri Chandra's disciples. The companions of Tapaswiji Maharaj were naturally awe struck and filled with wonder when they were told these facts by this venerable Saint.

One day mother Parvathamma informed the Bala-Yogi, about the frequent visits of Tapaswiji Maharaj and his keen desire to meet him. The Bala-Yogii readily agreed to this meeting and the news was conveyed to Tapaswiji Maharaj at Kakinada. Tapaswiji Maharaj came the very next day and this time when he arrived, the Bala-Yogi was not in samadhi. When Tapaswiji Maharaj entered the Dhyana Mandir the Bala-Yogi did 'namaskar' with folded hands; in fact, so far, the Bala-Yogi had continued to follow the customary practice of greeting all his elders by doing 'namaskar' to them. But when he greeted Tapaswiji in this manner, the Saint reverently told the Bala-Yogi: "You are a Mahatma whereas I am only an ordinary sadhu; you must not do 'namaskar' to me; in fact, you must not do 'namaskar' to anybody in future." From that day the Bala-Yogi discontinued the practice of greeting his elders by doing 'namaskar.' Tapaswiji then sat on the wooden platform, facing the Bala-Yogi, and had a heart to heart chat with him. Among other things he told the Bala-Yogi that he had met a number of 'Tapaswins' in the Himalayas who were engaged in similar Tapas as the Bala-Yogi and that all of them took some form of regular nourishment, albeit in limited quantities. He therefore advised the Bala-Yogi to take a measured quantity of milk every day. If he did not do so, and if he continued to starve himself as he was doing at present, it was very likely that his body would perish for want of nourishment within the next 15-20 days. Before leaving, Tapaswiji bought a cow and presented it to mother Parvathamma so that she could have an assured supply of milk for the Bala-Yogi. Later, at a public meeting held in his honour at Kakinada, Tapaswiji Maharaj extolled the spiritual status of the Bala-Yogi of Adivarapupeta in highly laudatory terms and also informed his audience that the Bala-Yogi had been his Guru in a previous incarnation. Such eulogy from a deeply venerated saint like Tapaswiji Maharaj naturally raised the Bala-Yogi in the esteem of the people of the area and they began to flock to Adivarapupeta in even larger numbers for his darshan.

Sometime later that year (1951), the Bala-Yogi was suddenly afflicted by a burning sensation all over his body. The agony became unbearable and although he clenched his teeth and made a determined effort to retain mastery over his emotions, tears began to involuntarily stream from his eyes. While he was thus writhing and weeping with pain, he passed into samadhi. Though he was now unconscious of the intense pain, his

body continued to burn and became hot to the touch as though it was being scorched from within; at the same time a foul smell began to emanate from it. At this time Tapaswiji Maharaj was residing at his Ashram in the Nandi Hills near Bangalore. He saw the plight of the Bala-Yogi in his dhyana and immediately left by train for Kakinada, with a bottle of medicated oil that he himself had prepared. From Kakinada he came straight to the Dhyana Mandir and with his own hands applied the oil he had brought all over the Bala-Yogi's body. The application of this oil immediately relieved the burning sensation, and the bad smell that was emanating from the body also disappeared. Tapaswiji later explained that some one out of hatred or jealousy had practised black magic on the Bala-Yogi and the burning sensation and smell were caused by that. That apart, as the Bala-Yogi used to sit in almost continuous samadhi with his palms joined and his fingers interlocked, they had gradually become stiff and rigid and eventually they got locked in that position. With the application of the oil brought by Tapaswiji Maharaj a certain degree of suppleness and flexibility was restored to the palms of his hands and he was eventually able to separate them, though he still had no control over his limbs.

Tapaswiji Maharaj again visited the Bala-Yogi in the month of October 1952. On this visit, he offered to impart the 'Surya Upasana Mantra' to the Bala-Yogi and the Bala-Yogi readily agreed. Accordingly on the 'Kartika Poornima**' of the year 1952, Tapaswiji Maharaj initiated the Bala-Yogi in this Mantra. During the same period, the Bala-Yogi's Divine Guru also appeared on one of his periodic visitations. The Bala-Yogi informed him of what had happened. His Guru approved of his doing Japa of the Surya Mantra but told him that the Mantra imparted by Tapaswiji was incomplete; he then initiated him into the full and proper Mantra. When the Bala-Yogi next met Tapaswiji Maharaj he informed him of his error of omission in imparting the Surya Mantra, and Tapaswiji readily admitted his error. From then on the Bala-Yogi started doing Japa of the Surya Mantra daily for two hours; the rest of the time he spent in his normal Tapas.

The Dhyana Mandir which had been constructed for the Bala-Yogi was a small, single room structure, measuring 12ft x 12ft. It had no windows or ventilators and as the door was kept locked in order to prevent disturbance, it became very hot and stuffy inside the room. During the summer months particularly, the heat inside was almost unbearable. Sri Garga Narasimha Murthy discussed this problem one day with Tapaswiji Maharaj and asked him what should be done about it. Tapaswiji suggested that

* A Mantra meant for the worship of Surya Devata, i.e. the Sun God.

** Last day of the bright fortnight of the Indian month of Kartik, corresponding to October/November.

a 'Gopuram'^{*} should be built on top of the Dhyana Mandir. In accordance with Tapaswiji's directions, a Gopuram was constructed by Seshagiri Rao, an engineer, who happened to be one of his disciples. The Gopuram was completed on the day of Maha Shivaratri of 1953, and, thereafter, the effects of the heat caused by the burning rays of the sun were greatly reduced inside the Dhyana Mandir.

Siddhi and Sakshatkara

The Divine Guru, whom the Bala-Yogi continued to regard as a Sadguru of the Jangam Devar sect up to almost the very end of his Tapas, used to visit his disciple once in every 3 or 4 months; sometimes sooner, in case some particular necessity arose. The main purpose of these visits was to give fresh directions for the continuance of the Tapas, or to remove any difficulties or obstacles that may crop up from time to time, or to infuse fresh courage and enthusiasm in the young disciple whenever he felt disheartened or his resolve wavered.

As has been mentioned earlier, around July/August 1950, when he had barely completed one year of his Tapas, the Bala-Yogi had lost control over his limbs as a result of which he found it impossible to attend to even his basic minimum requirements of taking nourishment, having a bath, or attending to his bodily functions. The Bala-Yogi endured this crippling handicap for three long years but sometime in June 1953, he got sick and tired of it all and, so to speak, went on strike. He stopped the various spiritual practices he was doing, discontinued his samadhi and just sat around in a dejected mood.

Sure enough, this brought the Divine Guru promptly onto the scene and, even though he must have known what was irking the boy he, in a teasing mood, asked his rebellious disciple what was troubling him now. The Bala-Yogi seized on his opportunity to give vent to all his frustrations and told his Guru of the difficulties he was facing on account of his incapacitated limbs. As usual, the Guru smiled benignly and then ran his hands over the arms and legs of his disciple. Lo and behold! No sooner had he done that, then the limbs which had been virtually crippled for almost three years, were now whole again and once more perfectly under control. The Bala-Yogi found to his relief that he could move about once again and could attend to his basic needs without the requirement for assistance. Whereas the rest of his limbs became normal, the fingers of his hands continued to remain bent as, over the years, the flesh of the joints of his fingers had grown into each other in such a way that they became permanently bent and they remain thus bent to this day.

The Bala-Yogi now resumed his Tapas with fresh vigour. Around the end of September/beginning of October 1953, he went into deep Nirvikalpa Samadhi. This samadhi became continuous and even the short break that he used to take every day at midnight, for his daily bath and refreshment, was dispensed with. The Bala-Yogi remained thus, in continuous samadhi, for one whole month. On the night of Wednesday, the 28th of October 1953, he was aroused from his deep absorption by a tap on his leg. As he slowly returned to consciousness he became aware of a bright effulgence, of intense luminosity, illuminating the entire Dhyana Mandir. He gradually began to perceive that this effulgence was emanating from a Divine Presence, but it was so intense that he found it difficult to look in that direction; then, as his eyes got accustomed to the light, he beheld standing before him the snow white and divinely beautiful form of Shankara Bhagavan. The Bala-Yogi's whole being thrilled at that wonderful vision and his heart overflowed with joy. Though thus enraptured, the Bala-Yogi was nevertheless perplexed as to the identify of this obviously Divine Person, because he had never seen, known or heard of anyone like him before. He intuitively felt within his heart that the Person standing before him was none other than the great God Shankara, but in order to confirm whether his intuition was correct or not, he asked the Divine Being who He was. Maheshwara gave an amused smile and said: "They call me Shankara Mahadev." Lord Shiva then expressed appreciation of the resolute manner in which the Bala-Yogi had carried out his Tapas and asked him if he required anything, or whether he wanted to ask for any boon. The Bala-Yogi replied that he wanted nothing, nor did he wish to solicit any boon. Shankar Bhagvan then sat on the wooden platform opposite the Bala-Yogi and conversed with him for some time. Finally, telling him that his Guru would come and direct him what to do next, Shankar Bhagvan disappeared. The Bala-Yogi spent the rest of the night quietly, in ecstatic contemplation of the Divine Vision that had been vouchsafed to him. This 'Sakshatkara' (realisation) of his Ishta Deva established the Bala-Yogi as a Siddha Purusha (Realised Soul) and marked the culmination of the first phase of his Tapas.

Yuga Tapas, Dik Tapas and Dik Siddhi

According to the 'Yoga Shastras', a period of twelve years is known as a Yuga Parva and Yuga Tapas entails doing Tapas for a full period of twelve years. During the course of this Yuga Tapas, a Yogi is required to do Tapas facing each of the four directions in turn; this is known as Dik Tapas. Each particular Direction has its own specific Mantra, which is repeated when doing Tapas of that Direction. The Tapas of a particular Direction is to be continued until Siddhi is attained; this is known as Dik Siddhi. The peculiarities of Tapas of each of the four Directions are summarised, very briefly, below:—

^{*} 'Goparam' is the name given to the pointed roof structure, normally seen in the temple architecture of India.

- (a) Eastern Direction — When doing Tapas of this direction the Yogi has to face problems and difficulties but these are, comparatively speaking, of a minor nature. Siddhi is gained soonest by doing Tapas facing East.
- (b) Northern Direction — This is the best direction from the Point of view of ease of Dhyana. The Yogi faces little or no problems or obstacles, enjoys good health and experiences 'anand' (bliss) during dhyana.
- (c) Western Direction — This is the most difficult direction for doing Tapas and is fraught with danger. The Yogi has to cope with seemingly insuperable mental obstacles, and/or endure almost unbearable physical afflictions; in addition, he is also subjected to severe tests.
- (d) Southern Direction — This is a neutral direction, having no particular benefits, nor any obstacles. Dhyana continues normally; there being neither 'Ananda' nor 'Ashanti' (lack of peace).

Tapas and Siddhi of Eastern Direction

During the initial few years, the Divine Guru gave no formal instructions to his disciple to sit facing towards any particular direction. However, as a result of His unspoken will it so came to pass that the Bala-Yogi sat facing East for the first four years of his Tapas, i.e., from 7th August 1949 to 28th October 1953. Consequently, when the Bala-Yogi attained Siddhi on 28th October 1953, he also thereby, attained 'Dik Siddhi' of the Eastern Direction.

Tapas of Northern Direction

At midnight on 29th October 1953; the Divine Guru again appeared before the Bala-Yogi. The Bala-Yogi recounted to his Guru all that had transpired the previous night, the darshan he had of Shankar Bhagavan, and the conversation that took place between him and Bhagavan. The Guru appeared well pleased with all that he heard. He then told the Bala-Yogi that as he had acquired Siddhi of the Eastern Direction, he must now resume Tapas facing North. He instructed him to discontinue Japa of the Panchakshari Mantra, and imparted to him a new Mantra, appropriate for Tapas of the Northern Direction. That apart, he instructed the Bala-Yogi to observe Mowna (silence) from that day onwards. Having thus initiated him into Tapas of the Northern Direction, the Guru disappeared.

One of the results of gaining Siddhi of the 'Pancha Akshari Mantra' was that the Bala-Yogi, as of that day, became immune to the venom of snakes and other poisonous creatures. He experienced a dramatic demonstration of this beneficial effect shortly after he commenced Tapas of the Northern Direction. One night, while he was proceeding to the well for his usual

midnight bath, a Naag (Cobra) bit him on the leg and struck to it. Undaunted, the Bala-Yogi pulled the snake away and threw it to one side. This time, notwithstanding the vicious nature of the bite, the venom injected by the serpent had no effect and he continued his Tapas undisturbed.

Surya Sakshatkara and Visit to Surya Mandal

As recounted earlier, from the Kartika Poornima of 1952, the Bala-Yogi, with the approval of his Guru, had been doing Japa of the Surya Mantra for two hours daily. This continued for almost two years. Then, in the month of Kartika (October) 1954, the Divine Guru appeared one night on one of his periodic visits and told the Bala-Yogi that his Japa of the Surya Mantra would soon bear fruit and that ten days hence, Surya Dev would manifest before him. And so it came to pass; on the Kartika Poornima of 1954, the Bala-Yogi had Sakshatkara of Surya Dev and thereby gained Siddhi of the Surya Mantra.

The next night the Divine Guru appeared again and, as was his wont, the Bala-Yogi recounted to him the happenings of the previous night. After that, on a sudden impulse, the Bala-Yogi asked his Guru if he could take him to the Surya Mandal (the sphere of the sun) as he wanted to see what it was like. The Guru readily agreed to take him there. Before starting, he instructed the Bala-Yogi to close his eyes and not to open them until he (the Guru) told him to do so. The Bala-Yogi thereupon closed his eyes. In no time at all, it seemed, the Guru told him to open his eyes again. When the Bala-Yogi did so, he found himself looking down upon a landscape very similar to that on earth; he saw mountains clothed in forests and interspersed by and river valleys; he also remembered having seen some of the mountain peaks covered with snow. After a brief sojourn, he asked to be taken back. However, for the return journey, he did not close his eyes. The Divine Guru made the Bala-Yogi sit on the palm of his hand and they shot back towards Earth with almost the speed of thought. On the way back they had to pass the blazing orb of the Sun; they flashed past in the fraction of a second, but the heat was so intense that the Bala-Yogi felt he would have been reduced to a cinder, had it not been for the protection of his Divine Guru. Notwithstanding this protection, and even though the exposure to the fiery orb of the Sun was for the briefest possible time, the Bala-Yogi suffered intensely from the heat. Therefore, in order to give his disciple relief, the Divine Guru gave him a dip in every river that they happened to cross, both in the astral sphere as also on earth. As the Bala-Yogi had never, so far, travelled away from home he could not recognize any of these rivers; the only river he recognized was the Godavari, when they dipped in it near Raja Mundhry. This process of bathing in all the rivers that they passed appears to have established a precedent because, ever since then,

Shri Swamiji (as the Bala-Yogi is now called) cannot resist having a dip in any and every river that he happens to cross over.

Recalling this experience in later years, after he had completed the full twelve year's Tapas, Shri Swamiji said: "It is possible in the state of samadhi to travel to the Surya Mandal and return alive; this is in my own experience. Those wishing to achieve this can do so by practicing dhyana." In the same context he cautioned those who aspire solely for such experiences that: "People should strive for Atma Jnana (Self knowledge); they should strive to know themselves and their True Nature, which alone will bring peace to the world."

Sakshatkara and Siddhi of Northern Direction

The Tapas facing North proceeded apace. During this entire period the Bala-Yogi enjoyed good health and experienced great 'ananda' (bliss) during samadhi. Around 15th July 1955, the Bala-Yogi once again went into deep, Nirvikalpa Samadhi which continued without a break for 15 days. On the night of 1st August 1955, the Bala-Yogi once again had Sakshatkara of Shankar Bhagvan and thus attained Siddhi of the Northern Direction. As on the previous occasion, Shankar Bhagvan conversed with the Bala Yogi for some time. Before leaving, Siva asked him if he wanted anything but the Bala-Yogi replied that he desire nothing; Bhagvan then disappeared.

Tapas of Western Direction

Though the Bala-Yogi attained Sakshatkara and Siddhi of the Northern Direction on 1st August 1955, his Guru did not appear immediately to give fresh directions for the continuance of the Tapas. Knowing the rigours that lay ahead, the Guru apparently wanted his disciple to rest and recoup for a few days before starting on the next phase of Tapas. So the Bala-Yogi had a break and rest from 1st to 6th August 1955.

On the midnight of 7th August 1955, the Divine Guru appeared again. He informed his disciple that in the next phase, he would be required to do Tapas facing West. He warned the Bala-Yogi that he would have to face many difficulties and obstacles in this phase of the Tapas, which may at times be severe, but he should not lose heart and must on no account give up. He then reassured his disciple that whenever he needed help, he (The Guru) would come to his assistance. Finally, he imparted to the Bala-Yogi the appropriate Mantra for Tapas of the Western Direction and, with a parting word of good cheer, the Divine Guru Disappeared.

When he warned his disciple about the dangers that lay ahead the Divine Guru was reiterating and re-affirming the warnings contained in the scriptures about the dangers and difficulties that lie in store for a Yogi who undertakes Tapas of the Western Direction. Many well

known Tapaswins have come to grief when doing Tapas of the Western Direction, the best known instance of this being the great Sage Vishvamitra; for it is said that it was while doing Tapas of the Western Direction that the Apsara Menaka seduced Vishvamitra and thereby succeeded in making him break off his Tapas. Be that as it may, the Bala-Yogi got a foretaste of what was in store for him on the very next day of his starting the Tapas; for, suddenly and inexplicably, he developed a severe stomach ache. Then, as if this was not bad enough, he was once again afflicted by the burning sensation that he had experienced earlier. Agonising as they were, these were only the beginning of a series of bodily afflictions that the Bala-Yogi would have to suffer, almost continuously, throughout the entire period of this phase of his Tapas.

On 15th August 1955, i.e., within eight days of commencement of the Western Tapas, the cow that had so far been providing milk for the Bala-Yogi, suddenly died. A new cow was bought but that too died within the next fifteen days. Thereafter, as soon as a cow would be bought for the Bala-Yogi, or any cow whose milk would be procured for the Bala-Yogi, would die. This posed a big problem as the only nourishment that the Bala-Yogi was taking was a measured quantity of milk, once a day at midnight. To compound this problem, the Bala-Yogi soon developed nausea for milk and would immediately throw up any milk that he tried to consume. As a consequence he was soon reduced to carrying on his rigorous Tapas without any nourishment at all. Obviously, this state of affairs could not continue for long; some way had to be found out of this impasse and that too soon, else the Bala-Yogi was unlikely to survive for long. This dilemma was finally resolved by D. Sillayamma, the wife of D. Ramakrishna Reddy, who hit upon the idea of substituting Horlicks in place of the daily glass of fresh milk. When this was tried out, to the immense relief of all his devotees, the Bala-Yogi was able to consume the glass of Horlicks without any adverse effects, and so a major problem was thus resolved. From that day onwards, for the entire duration of his Tapas of the Western Direction, the Bala-Yogi subsisted solely on this daily glass of Horlicks.

On 12th October 1955, Tapaswiji Maharaj attained Mahasamadhi at Jhansi, but the Bala-Yogi was not yet aware of this sad fact. At midnight of the same day, as the Bala-Yogi opened the door of the Dhyana Mandir to go for his daily bath, he saw a huge Naag (serpent of the cobra family), of a shimmering amber hue, lying coiled up across the doorway. The moment this Naag saw the Bala-Yogi, it reared up with a loud hiss and, spreading its massive hood, it began to sway to and fro, intently watching the movements of the Yogi. Now it is an inviolable rule in the cult of the Yogis that when faced with an obstacle on their path, they may either remove it, or they may avoid it by going round it, but they must never be deterred into turning back, particularly if such

action smacks of fear. Thus it happened that when the Bala-Yogi found this Naag barring his path, he calmly looked round for some way to circumvent it, but there was no way he could do so. Finally, finding no alternative, he stepped on the coiled body of the serpent and walked across. That, of course, was asking for trouble and with an angry hiss the Naag bit the Bala-Yogi on his left thigh. Undeterred, the Bala-Yogi proceeded to the well and had his bath. When he returned to the Dhyana Mandir after completing his bath, he found the Naag still there coiled up across the doorway. Once again he had no alternative but to step across the Naag in order to re-enter the Dhyana Mandir and this time also the Naag bit him; this second bite was on the big toe of his right foot. Unperturbed by what had happened, the Bala-Yogi closed the door of the Dhyana Mandir, preparatory to resuming his samadhi, but by this time the poison from the two bites had begun to take effect and before he could take up his 'asana', he fell unconscious on the wooden platform.

The Bala-Yogi had earlier informed those looking after him that during the current phase of his Tapas, they could enter the Dhyana Mandir only on the third Saturday of every month, between 7 p.m. and midnight, for cleaning and other purposes and to receive any specific instructions that the Bala-Yogi may wish to convey. On all other days, a glass of Horlicks was to be slipped in through the window; nobody was permitted to enter or disturb the Bala-Yogi in any other way. The third Saturday of October 1955 was yet four days away with the result that the Bala-Yogi kept lying unconscious on the wooden platform all these days, without any one coming to know about it. Finally, at 6 p.m. on the fourth day after the snake had bit him, which also happened to be the third Saturday of the month, the Divine Guru appeared and aroused the Bala-Yogi from his unconscious state. The Bala-Yogi sat up and resumed his usual Asana, but he felt extremely weak as a consequence of the ordeal he had just gone through. At 7 p.m. mother Parvathamma and other members of the committee formed to look after the Bala-Yogi entered the Dhyana Mandir. They found the milk of the past four days lying untouched. When they inquired from the Bala-Yogi the reason, he conveyed to them by signs, all that had transpired. He was then informed about the passing away of Tapaswiji and this news must have saddened him, because he had developed great regard and affection for this venerable Saint. The coincidence

did not escape him that he was bitten by the Naag on the very day on which Tapaswiji attained Mahasamadhi.

Throughout the entire period of his Tapas of the Western Direction the Bala-Yogi continued to suffer from various ailments of the body. He could disregard these when in samadhi because, during that period, he was unconscious of his body and its aches and pains. However, when he emerged from the samadhi state, he became acutely aware of the pain caused by these afflictions and this quite naturally caused him distress and 'ashanti' (lack of peace). This ashanti was often aggravated by news he received from time to time of the passing away of friends and relatives, or of various troubles being suffered by them. The Bala-Yogi, therefore, decided that the best way of mitigating his suffering was to reduce the period when he was out of samadhi to the barest minimum and, to the extent possible, to cut off contact with the outside world. With this in mind, he conveyed to his mother and to the members of the committee looking after him that he was passing through a difficult and crucial phase of his Tapas and hence he wished to be left completely undisturbed. He instructed them that if they found his body decomposing or emitting the stench of death, then they should inter it and perform the last rites as prescribed for a Yogi; otherwise, he should be left strictly alone. Having sent them away with these grim instructions, the Bala-Yogi shut himself in the Dhyana Mandir and, notwithstanding the extreme agony or body that he had to suffer, he resolutely continued his Tapas.

As is customary with yogis, when the Bala-Yogi went to the well for his midnight bath, he used to carry with him his 'Kamandlu' (water pot) and his 'yoga-danda' (a forked arm-rest). One night, when he was half way through his bath, a very old man came there and asked the Bala-Yogi to give him water to drink. The Bala-Yogi discontinued his bath and poured out water for the Old Man from his 'kamandlu'. When the Old Man had drunk his fill, he asked the Bala-Yogi his name. The Bala-Yogi motioned with his hand that he did not know. The old man then asked the Bala-Yogi to leave him home. The Bala-Yogi again conveyed by signs that this was not possible. Suddenly the old man flared up: "Why do you keep making these signs? Why don't you speak to me? Come, you must accompany me to the village." With these words he grabbed the Bala-Yogi by the arm and with surprising strength began dragging him towards the Bala-Yogi's former house in the village. This placed the Bala-Yogi in a quandary because, due to the intensity of his Tapas, and because of the various illnesses that he had suffered, the Bala-Yogi had barely enough strength left in his body to attend to his daily bath and other needs; he could hardly hope to resist this amazingly powerful Old Man. In desperation, therefore, he seized his 'yoga danda' and with all the strength that he could muster, he struck the Old Man a blow on his arm to make him release his vice like grip. The 'yoga danda'

By the repetition of the 'Panch Akshari Mantra' the Bala-Yogi had undoubtedly obtained immunity from the venom of snakes and other poisonous creatures, but this Naag was no ordinary snake; it was the same Naag that hangs round the neck of Shankar Bhagavan in the form of a garland. When Shankar Bhagvan gave darshan to the Bala-Yogi at the conclusion of his Tapas, the Bala-Yogi recognised the Naag and pointing to it, he told Shankar Bhagvan that this was the serpent that had bitten him. At that the Naag hung its head in embarrassment. The Naag had obviously been sent by Shankar Bhagvan to test the Yogi's fearlessness.

broke into two on impact and, at the same time, the Bala-Yogi momentarily lost consciousness. When he recovered a minute or so later, he found the Old Man had disappeared. Thinking no more of this incident, he completed his ablutions and returned to the Dhyana Mandir. To his surprise, he found the other half of the broken 'yoga danda' lying on his Tiger Skin asana. The Bala-Yogi then realised that the Old Man had come to test his resoluteness and his strength of purpose.

Some days later, once again at the time when the Bala-Yogi was having his daily midnight bath, an entrancingly beautiful girl approached him at the well and requested for some water to drink. As he remained absorbed in contemplation at all times, it did not occur to the Bala-Yogi to inquire what a young and beautiful girl was doing at that time of the night, all alone, at the village well. He simply drew some water, filled his Kamandlu and poured it out for the girl to drink. All this while the girl tried in various ways to engage the Bala-Yogi in conversation, but the Bala-Yogi did not respond. She then tried various artful ways to make him break his 'Mowna' and speak to her, but she was equally unsuccessful in this. With an apparent show of disappointment, she left the place and the Bala-Yogi, having finished his bath, wended his way back to the Dhyana Mandir. As he neared the Northern door of the Dhyana Mandir compound, he found to his surprise the same girl standing on the path and barring his way. He tried to skirt round her, but whichever way he tried to go, she would run and playfully bar his way again. Nonplussed, the Bala-Yogi went round and entered the compound from the Southern door. As he approached the Dhyana Mandir, he heard the rhythmic and pleasing tinkling of 'nupur' (bells tied around the ankles and the waist when dancing) coming from within. Somewhat puzzled, he opened the door and to his surprise and consternation, he discovered the same girl standing inside in a dance 'mudra' (pose); a strange luminosity appeared to emanate from her, which filled the inside of the Dhyana Mandir in a glow of light; bathed in that light and standing in that graceful 'mudra', the girl looked captivating and divinely beautiful. Suddenly, responding to the beat of some unseen choir, the girl broke out into an ethereal and disturbingly alluring dance. By now the Bala-Yogi had realised that this was another test he was being subjected to. So, ignoring the girl and her dance, he quickly went and sat down on his 'asana', closed his eyes, withdrew his mind from external awareness, and was soon absorbed in samadhi.

The above incident took place on or around the 24th May 1956. The next night the Divine Guru appeared and the Bala-Yogi related to him all that had happened since his last visit, particularly dwelling on the strange visitations of the Old Man and, on the previous night, of the Dancing Girl. The Guru simply smiled on hearing all this. He then told the Bala-Yogi that he should now merge his mind in continuous samadhi and only emerge

from it when Shankar Bhagavan came and aroused him from the samadhi state. He further added that Bhagavan would appear before him in about a months time.

After the Divine Guru had left, the Bala-Yogi told his mother to fetch the other members of the committee. When they arrived, he informed them that he would be in continuous samadhi for the next one month and that he was not to be disturbed during this period, under any circumstances. He then sent them away and locked himself in. By now he had completed well over nine months of his Tapas facing West. During this period, his body had been racked by illness and afflictions of all kinds and it was, by now, on the verge of collapse; the skin had cracked open at a number of places exposing deep fissures and wounds which used to bleed regularly; in fact, the body had reached the limit of its endurance and it was a wonder that it kept going at all. But the woes of the body did not disturb the serenity of the Bala-Yogi's mind, for he had long ago realised through direct, personal experience that he was not the body but the indwelling Atman, which was not afflicted by the afflictions of the body. Firm in this realisation, he continued his Tapas, totally indifferent to whether the body survived or whether it perished. But the worst was by now over and the goal was in sight. He sat calm and unconcerned on his Asana and, as directed by his Guru, passed into deep Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Siddhi of Western Direction

The Nirvikalpa Samadhi continued without break for one month. Then around midnight of 25th June 1956, the Bala-Yogi felt a light tap on his person which slowly brought him back to consciousness. As he began to become aware of his surroundings, all he could see was a dazzling light; he could not quite decipher whether the light came from within himself or was without; he was sunk in untellable peace and bliss and he might have once again passed into samadhi, when he felt another light tap. This time he opened his eyes and there, standing before him in Nataraj Swarup, were Girija and Natesan, i.e., Gauri and Shankar dressed in the garb of the jungle folk. This Sakashatkara of Gauri Shankar caused divine bliss to well up in the Bala-Yogi, making him speechless with joy and wonder. As the Bala-Yogi looked on with unsatiated gaze, Shankar Bhagavan said with an approving smile: "I have been trying to wake you up, but you would not get up." "Is that so?" replied the Bala-Yogi, somewhat surprised. "I knew or felt nothing at all until now, when you tapped me." Then both Natesan and Girija sat opposite the Bala-Yogi on his tapas platform and talked to him for a while. Finally, Shankar Bhagavan told the Bala-Yogi that he should continue his Tapas until he had completed the full period of twelve years; after that he would tell the Bala-Yogi what he wanted him to do. Natesan and Girija then disappeared.

Tapas of the Southern Direction

The Bala-Yogi obtained 'Sakshatkara' of Gauri Shankar and Siddhi of the Western direction on 25th June 1956. The next night, i.e., on 26th June 1956, the Divine Guru again appeared and told him to sit facing South and to commence the Tapas of the Southern Direction. He then vanished.

The month long samadhi from which he had just emerged had cured all the bodily afflictions of the Bala-Yogi and he was now at ease, both in body and mind. He had to face no serious obstacles and his Tapas continued undisturbed. However, serpents of the Naag family had dogged his path from the very beginning of his Tapas and during this period also, he encountered a Naag one midnight sitting across his path, when he was proceeding to the well for his bath. Unconcerned, he picked up the Naag and threw it aside. In this process, the Naag bit him on the hand, but the venom had no effect on the Bala-Yogi.

Sakshatkara and Siddhi of Southern Direction

The Tapas of the Southern Direction continued for a little over 10 months. In May 1957, The Bala-Yogi again had Sakshatkara of Shankar Bhagavan and this marked the attainment by him of Siddhi of the Southern Direction. With the completion of the Tapas of the Southern Direction, the Bala-Yogi attained Dik Siddhi of all the four directions. According to the Yoga Shastras, it requires a minimum period of four years to attain Siddhi of any direction, which means that it would take a minimum of sixteen years of Tapas to attain siddhi of all the four directions. As compared to this the Bala-Yogi attained Dik Siddhi of all the four directions in little less than eight years, which in itself is an indicator of his spiritual eminence, and of his perseverance and resolute will in doggedly following the 'Tapo Marg', in accordance with the directions of his Divine Guru.

4.

COMPLETION OF YUGA TAPAS

On the day following his attainment of Siddhi of the Southern Direction, the attainment of Dik Sidhi of all Four Directions by the Bala-Yogi was celebrated by ceremonially breaking one thousand and eight coconuts in each direction. This ceremony commenced at 7 a.m. and was completed by midnight. When it was over, the Baja-Yogi broke his 'Mowna' by melodiously chanting the 'Omkar Shabad'.

The next day, at midnight, the Divine Guru again appeared. As the Bala-Yogi had been observing Mowna since 29 October 1953, he had only been able to converse with this Guru in sign language so far. Now that he had broken his Mowna, he could converse with him more freely and easily. That apart, up to now the Bala-Yogi had been completely absorbed in his Tapas, to the exclusion of everything else. Therefore, neither had any doubt arisen in his mind about the true identity of his Guru, nor had it ever crossed his mind to question him about it. As we have mentioned earlier, when the Divine Guru first appeared before him on that fateful day of 7th August 1949, the Baja-Yogi had taken him to be a 'Sadguru' of the 'Jangam Devar' sect, and he continued to hold onto this belief throughout these first eight years of his Tapas, i.e., up to May 1957, when he attained Dik Siddhi of all the Four Directions. But now a doubt arose in his mind as regards the real identity of his Guru and he proceeded to question him about it.

Bala-Yogi: "Who are you? What is your true identity?"

Divine Guru: "Don't you know who I am?"

Bala-Yogi: "No I don't; and I am further perplexed by your behaviour and your appearance. You suddenly

materialise before me as if out of thin air, and just as suddenly you disappear again. That apart, in your features and to all other respects you look exactly like Shankara Bhagvan; the only differences that I can see between you and Bhagvan are that Shankara Bhagvan has a snow-white complexion, whereas you are dark, and whereas there is Tejas (luminosity) emanating from Shankar Bhagvan, there is no such Tejas emanating from you. I find this quite mystifying and hence a doubt has now arisen in my mind about your actual identity."

Divine Guru: (with an amused smile) "After all that I have done for you, do you still have a doubt? All right, I will clear your doubt after you complete the full twelve years of the Yuga Tapas."

As there were still four years left for completion of the Yuga Tapas, the Divine Guru directed the Bala-Yogi to do Tapas for this remaining period facing the East. He also told the Bala-Yogi that from now on he could start initiating aspirants into Dhyana and that he need not continue his present practice of remaining in samadhi for all the 24 hours; just 12 hours a day would suffice.

In accordance with the above directions of his Guru, the Bala-Yogi now started adhering to the following daily routine:—

- (a) From 4 a.m. to 4 p.m. he did Dhyana, during which period he was mostly in samadhi.
- (b) From 4 p.m. to midnight, he gave Darshan to devotees; during this period Kirtan was also organised at the Dhyana Mandir.
- (c) From midnight to 1 a.m. he attended to his ablutions and had his daily bath.

(d) From 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. he would rest.

So far, the Bala-Yogi had restricted his diet to consuming a measured quantity of milk once every day, after his midnight bath. He now started partaking of a milk and fruit diet, twice a day: once at 3 a.m., before sitting for dhyana and the second time at 4 p.m., when he got up from dhyana.

As hitherto, the serpents continued to favour the Bala-Yogi with their attention. One night during this period, a snake entered the Dhyana Mandir while the Bala-Yogi was in samadhi, apparently through the water outlet, and bit him on the hand, tearing away a bit of the flesh in the process. The Bala-Yogi only became aware of this when he got up from samadhi and found his hand bleeding profusely. However, he suffered no ill effects from this bite.

From the earliest days of commencement of Tapas, people used to come to Adivarapupeta in large numbers for the darshan of the Bala-Yogi. Now that he had started giving public darshan the stream became a flood and an ever increasing number of people started thronging the Dhyana Mandir for the daily darshan and kirtan.

The Bala-Yogi had always derived special satisfaction from feeding people; consequently, at his behest, mass feeding of the devotees and the poor was organised regularly every year on 24th January (the Bala-Yogi's birthday), on Maha-Shivaratri, on 7th August (date of commencement of Tapas) and on many other occasions in between. Like the darshan and the kirtan, mass feeding had also become a regular feature of the activities surrounding the Bala-Yogi from the very earliest days of his Tapas.

Thus Tapas and spiritual ministration continued side by side for the next three and a half years and soon time turned the corner into the year 1961; on 7th August of this year, the Bala-Yogi would complete the full twelve years of his Yuga Tapas.

Siddhi of Yuga Tapas

From about January 1961, the Bala-Yogi started losing inclination for even the very restricted diet of milk and fruit that he was taking. First the fruits were deleted and he reverted back to his original pure milk diet. Gradually even this was reduced and soon he had restricted himself to consuming an occasional glass of milk, often only after an interval of many days. On most days he merely drank some water when he went to the well for his daily midnight bath and apparently this seemed to suffice. At the same time, the period of samadhi began to increase again.

Around the beginning of June 1961, the Bala-Yogi became absorbed in continuous Nirvikalpa Samadhi which lasted unbroken for two full months, i.e., for the

whole of June and July 1961. At midnight of the 1st of August 1961, the Divine Guru came and aroused the Bala-Yogi from his deep samadhi. When he saw that the Bala-Yogi had returned to normal consciousness, the Divine Guru smiled and said: "You had a doubt about my true identity, didn't you? All right now watch closely."

As he said these words a dazzling light, like lightning, flashed forth from the Guru's body and instead of the dark hued Jangam Devar, there stood before him the snow-white and bewitching form of his Ishta Dev, Shankar Bhagvan. It was thus revealed to the Bala-Yogi that his Divine Guru had been no other than Shankar Bhagvan himself, who used to come and guide him in the guise of a Jangam Devar.

Having cleared the Bala-Yogi's doubt on this point, Shankar Bhagvan and Mother Parvati, who had accompanying him, sat on the Dhyana Platform and began to converse affectionately with the Bala-Yogi, whom they looked upon both as their disciple and their child. Shankar Bhagvan told the Bala-Yogi that his period of Tapas was over and he was now free to roam at will and to act as it pleased him: "You may go wherever you like and do whatever you wish to," said Bhagvan. To this the Bala-Yogi replied that he had no wish to go anywhere or to do anything in particular.

"Do you have any wish in mind?" Shambhu then inquired, "You may ask for anything and it shall be granted to you." Again the Bala-Yogi replied that he desired nothing at all and that he would do whatever Shankar Bhagvan wanted him to do.

Well pleased with this answer, Shankar Bhagvan complimented the Bala-Yogi on his steadfastness in Tapas and then told him that henceforth his mission would be to rouse the dormant spirituality of the people in general, and to help sadhakas (aspirants) who were struggling on the spiritual path to gain liberation from the yoke of Samsara. To this end, he should travel around and give darshan to people; such darshan would help in weaning them away from the materialistic to the spiritual path. He should initiate aspirants into the secret and mystic path of Dhyana Yoga and guide them so that they are able to gain liberation in this very life. He should give so-lace to those who grieved and heal those who suffered from the myriad afflictions of the mind and the body; this process of healing should be effected by giving the sufferers sacred vibhuti, which should be blessed and consecrated by him for this purpose.

Shankar Bhagvan then told the Bala-Yogi that henceforth he should use the name 'Shiva Bala Yogeshwara.' (Bala is another name for Mother Parvati, so the name signified "the Lord of Yogis", devoted to Siva and Parvati). Later, the Bala-Yogi on his own changed the name given to him by Shiva to 'Shiva Bala Yogi Maharaj' as he felt that the use of the title 'Yogeshwara' in the name might be misunderstood by

many to imply that he was being equated with 'Ishwara', the Supreme Lord.

Finally, Shankar Bhagvan told his disciple that he would make him sit for Tapas from time to time, as the need arose in future. Then giving their blessings and bidding an affectionate farewell, Shankar and Bhavani disappeared. It is significant that Sri Sivabalayogi Maharaj, from that day, started exhibiting in his own body the 'Ardhanarishwara Swarup',^{*} i.e., one half of his body shows the characteristics of a man and the other half has many characteristics peculiar to a woman, thus signifying in his own person the union of Parvati and Parameshwara.

As the day for completion of the Yuga Tapas by the Bala-Yogi drew near, thousands of people began streaming into Adivarapupeta for the darshan of the Yogi. By the morning of 7th August 1961, a vast crowd numbering well over three hundred thousand had assembled in and around the Dhyana Mandir and they waited in joyous expectation for the Yogi to emerge. At 8 that morning, the Bala-Yogi, or Shri Shri Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj as he was now named, marked the completion of the twelve year period of Yuga Tapas by chanting the 'Omkar Shabad' in a melodious voice. The doors of the Dhyana Mandir were then thrown open and he was escorted to a high wooden platform, which had been especially constructed for this occasion. As he emerged from the Dhyana Mandir, a mighty roar went up from the assembled multitude. Unused as he was to walking, and considerably weakened by lack of nourishment during the two month long samadhi, Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj had to be helped up onto the darshan dais. Then, as the Yogi came into full view of the vast assembly, thunderous cheering broke out and the countryside reverberated to the ecstatic "Jai Jaikars" that issued forth from three hundred thousand throats. This adoration of his devotees nearly sent the Yogi into samadhi again and he had to be literally held up to prevent him from falling. Standing there with eyes closed, in a semi-conscious state of spiritual ecstasy, Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj silently showered his blessings on the people who had assembled for his darshan. And as the crowd pushed and jostled to get a closer view of the Mahatma, they saw standing before them a Yogi whose body, though emaciated and almost deformed by the rigours of his intense Tapas, nevertheless shone with a strange lustre and visibly exuded peace and spiritual grace.

Establishment of Adi-Ashram

After the completion of the Yuga Tapas. Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj felt no immediate inclination to go anywhere and so he continued to reside for the time being at Adivarapupeta. The work of spiritual ministration, which had commenced immediately after the Yogi attained Dik Siddhi of the Four Directions in May 1957, now acquired added impetus as people began coming for the Yogi's darshan in ever increasing numbers. A need was soon felt to organise a proper Ashram, so the area surrounding the Dhyana Mandir was acquired, a compound wall built and thus a regular Ashram came into being; this is now the Adi Ashram of the Shri Shri Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj Trust. An Ashram Committee was also formed which was made responsible for organising the daily Darshan, Kirtan, Dhyana Diksha and other Ashram activities.

The Propitiating of Raktha Kali

On 19th January 1962 a family from Rajamundhry came for the darshan of Shri Swamiji. They brought along with them their teenaged daughter, aged about 18 years, who appeared to be in a trance-like state. The parents explained to Shri Swamiji that their daughter was an ardent devotee of Mother Kali and that lately she had been keeping 'Upwas' (total abstention from food) as a part of her worship of the Mother. A day or so earlier, the girl suddenly went into a trance and started asking for blood to quench her thirst. Naturally, this strange behaviour of their daughter frightened the parents and so they had brought the girl to Shri Swamiji. While the parents were explaining all this to Shri Swamiji the girl sat quietly, reclining against the wall at the back. All of a sudden, like one jolted by an electric current, the girl was jerked into an erect posture. Then, like one possessed, she started grinding her teeth in a violent and frightening manner and began swinging her body from side to side. It was apparent from her behaviour that she had lost her normal consciousness and had become totally unaware of her surroundings. As she obviously appeared to be possessed, a devotee sitting nearby asked her who she was? In a thundering voice she replied: "I will not tell; who are you?" When the devotee concerned announced his own identity, the girl stated that she was Somalamma, known as Shyamalamba of Rajamundhry; that she had now come as Raktha Kali; that she would first devour herself then kill the people of Adivarapupeta including the Swamiji and then she would devastate the whole country; only thus could her present consuming thirst for blood be satisfied. Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj, who had been watching and listening quietly all this while, now addressed Raktha Kali in the person of the girl; he assured her that he would give her all the blood she required to quench her thirst, so she should leave the devotees alone and come to him. He then extended his left arm for Raktha Kali to slake her thirst. With a vicious smile, Raktha Kali seized his arm and bit into the

^{*} This term means: 'Half God-Half Goddess Form'. This is one of the forms of Shankar in which one half of His body appears as Shiva and the other half as Parvati: this form signifies the union of Parvati and Parmeshwar, i.e. the Supreme Lord and His Shakti.

extended palm of his left hand. Blood spurted out from the palm and Raktha Kali began to suck it greedily as though she were tormented by an insatiable thirst. This blood drinking went on for almost two hours and, all this while, Shri Swamiji continued to quietly converse with her. In reply to one of his questions, Raktha Kali said that his blood was sweet as nectar and that she had quenched her thirst for the next two thousand years. Finally, Raktha Kali appeared satisfied and was pleased; she blessed Shri Swamiji, bestowed all her powers on him and took her leave. Immediately this happened, the girl became her normal self again.

Sthapana of Siva Linga

At the behest of the devotees, Shri Swamiji agreed to install a Shiva Linga and an icon of Mother Parvati in the Dhyana Mandir, to commemorate according to religious tradition, the place where he had done his Tapasya. Soon after this decision was taken, a beautiful Shiva Linga appeared before Sri Swamiji in his dhyana; it was simultaneously revealed to him that this was the Shiva Linga meant for installation in the Dhyana Mandir and that it would be found in the Narmada River, near the Sangam (confluence) that adjoins the famous Omkareshwar Temple. On the basis of this revelation Sri Swamiji briefed two devotees, Gauri Shankar and Satya Narain Reddy, on how and where to find the Shiva Linga and dispatched them to the Narmada River with instructions to locate the Shiva Linga and bring it back with them. In spite of an intense search, these devotees could not find a Shiva Linga conforming to the description given by Shri Swamiji and so they were compelled to return empty handed.

When these devotees failed to find the Shiva Linga, Sri Swamiji summoned Sadhu Narain Das, an initiated disciple of Tapaswiji Maharaj. He gave him an exact description of the Shiva Linga and this time, in order to ensure that Narain Das would succeed in his mission, Sri Swamiji instructed him to sit in dhyana on the banks of the Narmada, opposite the Sangam near the Omkareshwar Temple; Sri Swamiji assured Narain Das that the location of the Shiva Linga would be revealed to him in his dhyana. With high hopes, Sadhu Narain Das left for the Narmada River and, as instructed by Sri Swamiji, sat in dhyana at the place he had indicated. Though he continued to sit thus for twenty days running, no revelation came and he felt thoroughly dejected at the thought of having to go back without accomplishing his task. Rather than return empty handed, he decided that he would select a Shiva Linga of his own choice and take it along when he went back. Looking around, he soon found a beautiful Shiva Linga, with a natural luster emanating from it, and so he picked it up to take back with him as a substitute for the one he had failed to find.

Though Sadhu Narain Das was somewhat consoled at having found a good substitute Shiva Linga, the thought

that he had failed to find the Shiva Linga described by Sri Swamiji continued to weigh on his mind; this made him sad at heart. On the night before he was due to leave, Sadhu Narain Das felt restless and unhappy and so he strolled across to the spot where he had sat in dhyana all these days. The thought of his failure continued to press his mind and he sat staring out at the River in a disconsolate mood. As he watched the dark waters of the River tumbling and gurgling past, his mind soon became calm and peaceful and he went into deep dhyana; suddenly, he had the vision of 'jyoti' (light) and felt that this jyoti was emerging from within him and lighting up the whole area around. Startled by this vision, he opened his eyes and saw that a ray of brilliant light was actually emanating from his forehead and was being beamed towards the centre of the River. Looking along this beam of light, Sadhu Narain Das saw to his joy and wonder that the light was playing upon a beautiful Shiva Linga that was bobbing up and down on the water, in the centre of the River, reflecting back brilliant hues of silver and gold. With a throbbing heart Sadhu Narain Das waded out into the River and though the Shiva Linga was rather heavy (under normal circumstances at least 2-3 men are required to lift it), he found no difficulty in picking it up and bringing it out. Next day, with a joyful heart, he left for Adivarapupeta with both the Shiva Lingas: This sacred Shiva Linga, revealed to Sri Swamiji in his dhyana and found by Sadhu Narain Das in mysterious elevating circumstances was installed by Shri Swamiji in the Dhyana Mandir on the Maha Shivaratri of 1962, (25th February 1962). He consecrated the Lingam by the power of his Tapas, thereby making it an awakened and living manifestation of the Great God Shiva. This 'Svayambhu Linga' (self manifested Linga), also known as Atmalinga, has a silver sheen on one side and a golden sheen on the other; the silvery coloring is representative of the snow-white complexion of Siva and the golden colouring is representative of the golden complexion of Mother Parvati; thus this Siva Linga exhibits the Ardhanarisvara Swarup of Shankar Bhagvan.

Installation of Parvati Murthy

While the search for the Shiva Linga was going on, an icon of Mother Parvati which had been specially commissioned for the Adivarapupeta Ashram was being sculptured in Mysore. The installation ceremony of this 'Murthy' (statue) was scheduled to take place immediately after the Sthapana of the Shiva Linga on 25th February 1962, i.e., on the Maha Shivaratri Night.

On the night of 24th February 1962, i.e., on the night previous to the installation, Sri Swamiji was sitting along in the Dhyana Mandir when Bhavani (another name for Parvati) appeared before him and demanded that two blood sacrifices be performed to propitiate Her during the installation ceremony. But Sri Swamiji promptly

refused; reverently though firmly he informed the Mother that a blood sacrifice was not acceptable to him and hence no blood sacrifice would be performed within the precincts of the Ashram. At this, Mother Bhavani simply smiled and vanished. As subsequent events will show, the Mother was determined to have Her own way in spite of the objections of Her recalcitrant son.

On the day of the installation ceremonies, i.e.. on the Maha Shivaratri Day of 1962, people began arriving at Adivarapupeta from early morning onwards and, as the day wore on, a vast multitude had congregated at the Ashram. At about 4 p.m. in the afternoon, a stout sadhu arrived with his party to witness the installation ceremony. 'Kirtan' (devotional singing) was going on at that time and a large number of devotees, lost to the outer world in 'Bhava Samadhi',* were dancing ecstatically to the beat of the devotional music. The sadhu observed all this for sometime and then announced with a sneer, to all those who would care to listen, that these people who were supposedly in Bhava Samadhi were in fact humbugs and were faking this condition to attract attention to themselves. To prove his point more emphatically, the Sadhu struck the man nearest to him with one of his wooden sandals. By this somewhat drastic action, the Sadhu obviously hoped to deflate the person and thereby expose what he assumed to be mere pretence on his part. Unfortunately for the Sadhu, the man he struck happened to be in 'Hanuman Bhava.' This man immediately snatched the same wooden sandal from the sadhu's hand and retaliated by striking the Sadhu a resounding crack on the head with such tremendous force that the Sadhu's head split open and he fell unconscious to the ground. This caused an immediate commotion as people crowded round to see what had happened. The Sadhu was some-how extricated from the crowd and carried in that unconscious state to Sri Swamiji. Blood was pouring from the Sadhu's head in a copious stream and as soon

as Sri Swamiji saw the sudhu, he recalled Bhavani's demand for a blood sacrifice. He was rather upset and remonstrated with the Mother saying, "I told you there should be no blood sacrifice in the Ashram and now look what you have done!" Sri Swamiji then liberally applied consecrated vibhuti to the wound and tightly bound up the Sadhu's head. This saved the Sadhu's life and, after sometime, he regained consciousness.

Later that night, as Sri Swamiji sat alone in the Ohyana Mandir, Bhavani again appeared before him and told him that she was thirsty, and that she wanted blood to quench Her thirst.

"Haven't you had enough?" asked Sri Swamiji. "See how much blood that poor man lost."

"No," said Bhavani, "only half my thirst has been quenched; I want more blood".

"In that case," said Sri Swamiji, "I will give all the blood you want. Please leave the devotee alone."

He then extended his left hand; Bhavani bit into his left fore arm and with great relish started sucking the blood that began to flow out. Eventually, as it approached midnight, Sri Swamiji requested Bhavani to let him go as the time for the installation ceremonies was approaching. Thereupon Bhavani smiled and blessing her Yogi son, she disappeared.

The unique and mysterious circumstances attendant on the installation of the Shiva Linga and the Murthy of Mother Parvati, which have been related above, are a clear proof that Shankar and Bhavani are manifest in the Dhyana Mandir as living presences. Therefore, to obtain darshan of the Dhyana Mandir and the deities installed therein, is in itself a great blessing.

* See Chapter 8.

5. PRACHARA

The Tours Start: 1963

After completing the Yuga Tapas on 7th August 1961, Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj continued to reside at the Adivarapupeta Ashram for the next two years. In 1963, one Sri Bhag Singh Lamba, who was the Salt Commissioner for that region as also the President of the Adivarapupeta Ashram Committee, submitted to Sri Swamiji that he had acquired a suitable site for an Ashram at Dehra Dun and was keen on donating it to him. With this in view, he requested Sri Swamiji to plan a short visit to Dehra Dun stating as an added incentive that the place he had selected was in a secluded spot with quiet and peaceful surroundings. Sri Swamiji tentatively agreed to this request, but as he had

promised Tapaswiji Maharaj that he would visit his various Ashrams when he completed his Tapas, Sri Swamiji decided to go to these Ashrams first. It was thus that Sri Swamiji started on the first of his many tours, which were to eventually embrace the length and breadth of India.

This first tour started on 21st March 1963. Sri Swamiji went first to Kakinada, where he stayed for four days in Sri Tapaswiji Maharaj's Ashram. From there he proceeded to Madras halting en route at a number of places. At Madras, Sri Swamiji stayed at the Padmanabha Temple at Adiyar and gave public darshan for three days. From Madras Sri Swamiji proceeded to Sri Tapaswiji Maharaj's Ashram located in the Nandi Hills. After staying for approximately 19 days at this

Ashram, Sri Swamiji came to Doddaballapura, where he opened a small branch Ashram of the Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj Trust. He stayed at this Ashram for 45 days. During this period, a large number of visitors came from Bangalore for the darshan of Sri Swamiji. Among these visitors was one Sri Kasetti Srinivasalu, proprietor of the Sita Lakshmi Hall, who made repeated requests to Sri Swamiji to come to Bangalore and open an Ashram there. Sri Swamiji agreed to this request and so Sri K. Srinivasalu donated an acre of land for the proposed Ashram on the Bannerghatta Road and had an Ashram building constructed on this land. This Ashram was opened by Sri Swamiji on 7th August 1963.

After opening the Bangalore Ashram, Sri Swamiji decided to stay on for a few days. The fame of Sri Swamiji spread rapidly in Bangalore, both by word of mouth and through the local press, and people began coming to the new Ashram in large numbers. This soon attracted the notice and envy of some of the older Ashrams in and around the city of Bangalore, particularly for the reason that their own adherents started flocking to the new Ashram at Bannerghatta Road as a result of which attendance at these Ashrams dropped down sharply. In order to counter this trend, they at first tried to spread slanderous lies about Sri Swamiji and about the activities of his Ashram. But this only served to further advertise Sri Swamiji's Ashram; many, who had not heard earlier about Sri Swamiji, learnt about him from the propaganda being done against him and so, merely impelled by curiosity, they went to see the new Swami; they were so impressed by what they saw that they eventually stayed on and became devotees. Dismayed by the fact that their hostile propaganda was only serving to enhance the popularity of Sri Swamiji, the more unscrupulous among the 'Math-Adipatis' (Heads of Maths) stooped to hiring 'goondas' (ruffians) to intimidate the devotees going to Sri Swamiji's Ashram and to disturb and break up the Kirtan parties there. This plan also did not work because devotees, particularly those who were under the influence of 'Bhava' during the Kirtan, belaboured these goondas and drove them away from the Ashram. When all their nefarious designs were thus frustrated these Math-Adipatis, in desperation, hired a band of notorious goondas to beat up the inmates of the Ashram, including Sri Swamiji himself!

As Sri Swamiji remained immersed in samadhi most of the time, he was usually unaware and indifferent to what went on around him. Because of this, Sri Swamiji was not yet in the know of the various attempts made so far to intimidate the residents of the Ashrama as also the devotees who came there for darshan. However, when matters started taking an ugly turn, some of the devotees who had accompanied Sri Swamiji from Adivarapupeta had no alternative but to apprise him of what was happening. As we have seen, from his very childhood Sri Swamiji had always rebelled against injustice and could never be cowed by threats.

Therefore, when he came to learn about the hostile activities of the Math-Adipatis, which were totally uncalled for, the same childhood qualities apparently reasserted themselves. Under Sri Swamiji's directions, steps were first taken to effectively thwart the nefarious designs and activities of these misguided Heads of Maths who were attempting to malign and throw out Sri Swamiji from the Bangalore Ashram. Thereafter, more as an act of defiance against the intimidatory tactics of these people than for any other reason, Sri Swamiji decided to extend his stay at Bangalore indefinitely. It was thus that circumstances contrived to make the Bangalore Ashram the chief centre and base of Sri Swamiji's future activities.

Second Tour: 1965

When Sri Swamiji started for his tour on 21st March 1963, the plan originally had been to go on to Dehra Dun, after visiting Sri Tapaswiji Maharaj's Ashrams, but this tour had to be prematurely terminated at Bangalore for the reasons mentioned above. Sri Swamiji continued to reside at Bangalore for the next one and half years. Eventually, in 1965, Sri Swamiji went to Adivarapupeta for the Shivaratri celebrations and from there left for Dehra Dun. Travelling via Vijayawada, Bombay and Delhi, Sri Swamiji reached Dehra Dun in May 1965. Here he was put up at the Garden Cottage of Sri B. S. Lamba, located in Mokampur, on the Dehra Dun to Haridwar Road. During his stay at this Cottage, Sri Swamiji was invited one day to visit Ananda Mai Ma's Ashram located on Rajpur Road, Dehra Dun. Maharani Kailash Kumari Devi of Patna (in Orissa) was a regular visitor to Ananda Mai Ma's Ashram. When Sri Swamiji came there, she had darshan of Sri Swamiji and at once recognised his spiritual eminence. The very next day the Maharani Saheba came for his darshan at the Mokampur cottage. She took dhyana diksha from Sri Swamiji, and from that day became one of his most ardent and devoted disciples. In fact, Maharani Saheba, her husband the late Maharaj Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo and, through them, the rest of their family, became pre-eminent devotees of Sri Swamiji. Maharani Saheba entreated Sri Swamiji to spend a few days at her residence on Rajpur Road and so, towards the end of July 1965, Sri Swamiji came and spent a few days at the Maharani Saheba's residence at 180-C Rajpur Road. This house was eventually convened into an Ashram, after extensive additions and renovations, and donated to Sri Swamiji by Maharani Kailash Kumari Devi on the Maha Shivaratri Day of 1972 (13 February 1972).

Further Tapas

At the time of completion of the Yuga Tapas, Shankar Bhagavan had told Sri Swamiji that he would make him sit in Tapas from time to time, as required. Accordingly, on 24th July 1968, the Divine Guru appeared before Sri Swamiji and told him to do Tapas for one year,

commencing from 7th August 1968. As directed by his Guru, Sri Swamiji sat for Tapas at the Bannerghatta Road Ashram in Bangalore. His room was locked and no darshan was permitted during this one year period; however, Kirtan and other activities continued in the outer precincts of the Ashram. Exactly after one year, i.e., on 7th August 1969, the door of the Tapas room was unlocked by late Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo, the then Chief Minister of Orissa. There was a radiant and perceptible glow on Sri Swamiji's face as he emerged from the Tapas room and stood on a high platform to bless the vast multitude of people who had gathered on that occasion for his darshan.

That apart, Sri Swamiji undertook a 40 day Tapas each during the Indo-Pak War of 1965 and the Indo-Pak War of 1971. The Tapas on both these occasions was undertaken for 'Desh Raksha' (protection of the Motherland) and for the early re-establishment of peace. The victories won by India in both these wars and the early termination of the conflict on both these occasions testify to the efficacy of the blessings bestowed by Sri Swamiji through his Tapas.

Mother Parvatamma

The unswerving and devoted service rendered by Mother Parvathamma during the twelve long and difficult years of Sri Swamiji's Tapas have already been recounted. Ever since she had the darshan of the Tri-Murthy, she ceased to regard Sri Swamiji as her son; she recognised him as a 'Mahatma' and paid him all the regard and reverence due to a Saint. Therefore, it can be said with justification that Mother Parvathamma was the first of Sri Swamiji's disciples and the foremost 'bhagat' (devotee) among his 'bhagats'.

When Sri Swamiji shifted his centre of activities from Adivarpupeta to Bangalore, Mother Parvathamma also joined him there. Though she was staying in a separate house located at some distance from the Ashram, she nevertheless supervised the entire running of the Ashrama, particularly the care and comfort of Sri Swamiji. By virtue of being Sri Swamiji's mother, she was naturally placed on a high pedestal by the devotees and given all the reverence and regard due to her. But all this adulation did not affect her in the least; she continued to be the simple, unsophisticated, motherly lady that she always had been. Her motherly love embraced all who came to her and, remembering her own days of poverty and want, she had a particularly soft

corner for the poor and the destitute. Generous and loving by nature as she was, no person who went to her for help ever returned disappointed. She unstintingly gave to the poor and the needy whatever they asked for — whether it was food, or money, or clothes. During the early days after the establishment of the Ashram, there were many occasions when there wasn't enough food or money for herself and for the others who were staying with her, but she preferred to go hungry rather than turn away a poor man empty handed. Such unfailing love and generosity could not but strike a responsive cord in the hearts of all those who had the opportunity of coming in contact with her. In fact it could well be said that whereas people were drawn to the Ashram by the spiritual eminence and powers of Sri Swamiji, they were equally attracted by the solicitude and affection shown to one and all by Mother Parvathamma.

The remorseless passage of time leaves no one untouched. The hardships and anxiety that Mother Parvathamma had to face during the earlier years left their scar and she eventually developed a heart condition. She did not allow this to interfere with her activities in any way, but she now knew that she did not have long to live. Often when alone with Sri Swamiji, she spoke to him in this strain, saying that the body was now old and deceased and he should release her from the shackles of this worn out body. But Sri Swamiji would make light of the matter and tell her that he wanted her to stay on for some time yet. Finally, her wish was granted; on 15th June 1976, Mother Parvathamma had a severe heart attack in the early hours of the morning and at 7-30 a.m., she attained 'Mahasamadhi'.

Mother Parvathamma had been the mother not only of Sri Swamiji, but of all his devotees, and the news of her sudden passing away created widespread shock and sorrow. Vast crowds of mourning devotees gathered for her funeral. She was laid to rest in the presence of Sri Swamiji, with all the religious rites due to a saint, in the precincts of the Bannerghatta Road Ashram. A samadhi has been erected over the place where she was buried and a Shiva Linga has been installed there by Sri Swamiji with his own hands, on the Shiva Ratri Day of 1978. This samadhi has thus become a shrine to the Mother who so lovingly, selflessly and devotedly served Sri Swamiji and, later, also his disciples.

* Mahasamadhi means 'great samadhi'. This term is used to indicate the passing away of a Saint.

6.

SOME TAPASWIN DISCIPLES

Whereas a Guru can show the path leading to liberation, attainment in the spiritual realm is directly dependent on the earnestness and resolution with which the disciple carries out the instructions of the Guru, and to the extent to which he exerts himself to attain Realisation. It is true that success on the spiritual path depends on the Grace of the Guru, but this Grace is ever present and ever-flowing; it is for the disciple to make himself worthy of receiving this grace and this is done through 'sadhana' (spiritual practice); the more sincerely and earnestly a disciple strives, the more strongly will the Guru's Grace manifest itself and carry him forward. Therefore, though Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj has initiated lakhs of people into dhyana, what each one attains is dependent on how each one of them strives. That the Grace of Sri Swamiji enables a sincere sadhaka to attain the goal of his Sadhana is beyond doubt; this is amply illustrated by the lives and strivings of some of Sri Swamiji's Tapaswin disciples; these lives are briefly narrated in this chapter.

Bikkini Saraswatamma

Bikkini Saraswatamma is the daughter of Bikkini Venkat Ratnam, a resident of Singurukshan Village in the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. Her father used to come regularly to Advivarapupeta and participate in the kirtan at Sri Swamiji's Ashram. On one such occasion, Saraswatamma requested her father to take her along for Sri Swamiji's darshan and the father readily agreed. This initial darshan of Sri Swamiji had a profound effect upon the girl. Immediately following the darshan, both the father and the daughter participated in the kirtan that was going on at the Ashram. During the course of the kirtan, Saraswatamma got 'Hanuman Bhava' and slowly passed into deep 'Bhava Samadhi'. From that day onwards, Saraswatamma used to be in a state of continuous 'Bhava' all the twenty four hours of the day.

The continuous state of Bhava being experienced by Sarswatamma was an indication of her spiritual propensity and so Sri Swamiji decided to initiate her into dhyana with a view to making her sit for Tapas. On the 19th May 1962, Sri Swamiji initiated Saraswatamma and directed her to go to Singurukshan, her native village, and to sit there for Tapas. At the time of her initiation, Saraswatamma was approximately 14 years old. In accordance with Sri Swamiji's instructions, Saraswatamma returned to her native village and sat there for Tapas. By the Grace of her Guru, she soon reached the samadhi stage. She completed twelve years of Tapas on 19th May, 1974.

Pichiya

Pichiya, a young man of approximately 20 years of age, belonged to Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. He had made it a regular practice to walk from Guntur to Advivarapupeta every year, a distance of approximately 200 miles, reaching Advivarapupeta about one month prior to Maha Shivaratri. He used to then white-wash the Dhyana Mandir and get it ready for the annual Shivaratri celebrations. One month after Shivaratri, he used to walk back to Guntur. He repeated this routine for a number of years.

In 1966, during his annual visit to Advivarapupeta, Pichiya requested for a private audience with Sri Swamiji. Accordingly, at 10 p.m. one night, he was allowed a special darshan. During this audience Pichiya requested Sri Swamiji to make him sit for Tapas. Though his eagerness was quite evident, Sri Swamiji wanted to make certain that he also had the spiritual potential for such an undertaking. Consequently, he made him to sit in his presence for dhyana to test his fitness. Pichiya apparently passed this test because Sri Swamiji approved of his undertaking Tapas. Soon thereafter, Sri Swamiji initiated Pichiya into Tapas; he then directed him to go back to his home at Guntur and sit for Tapas there.

Pichiya left for Guntur next day and as he walked along, he found to his joy and wonder that he was being preceded by a Jyothi (light); he continued to experience this phenomenon throughout his journey to Guntur. On reaching a place called Sangargunta, which lies within the Municipal Area of Guntur, Pichiya observed that the Jyothi which had preceded him all the way from Advivarapupeta, had stabilised at a particular spot in this area. Taking this to be a Divine direction, Pichiya decided to sit for Tapas at that very spot. By the Grace and Blessings of Sri Swamiji, Pichiya made rapid progress and was soon absorbed in continuous samadhi for twenty hours a day.

This sudden transformation in Pichiya naturally aroused wonder, not unmixed with disbelief, among the local residents. Those who knew Pichiya, had always regarded him as a very ordinary youngster; nor had he shown any spiritual propensity so far which could be interpreted as marking him out for a life of intense spiritual striving, or for the Tapas on which he was now engaged. Therefore, it is no wonder that many regarded Pichiya's Tapas as an inspired act of gimmickry. Some of these disbelievers, in a foolish attempt to test the genuineness of his spirituality, decided to poison the milk he used to take for his daily nourishment. This happened not once, but on a number of occasions, but

each time Sri Swamiji came to know of it and by his Grace, Pichiya was saved from the fatal consequences of the poison. Unfortunately, in 1968, when Sri Swamiji had sat for his one year Tapas, Pichiya was once again poisoned. This time Sri Swamiji himself was in Samadhi and so the information that Pichiya had been poisoned could not be conveyed to him. Consequently, the poor boy died, a victim of the stupidity and malice of some misguided people.

Rajmata Rewati Devi

On the demise of her husband the Maharaja of Patiala, Rajmata Rewati Devi of the erstwhile Patiala State had moved to Dehra Dun and had become a permanent resident of this town. Her step-daughter, Maharani Kailash Kumari Devi of Patna, used to speak to her about Sri Swamiji in glowing terms, as a result of which she felt greatly attracted towards him. When Sri Swamiji visited Dehra Dun, in the month of June 1966, Rajmata Rewati Devi went for his darshan and also took dhyana diksha from him. Thereafter, she would go daily for darshan and sit for dhyana in Sri Swamiji's presence. One day she got the 'Nagendra Bhava' and this Bhava became continuous, for the entire twenty four hours of the day. This was a clear indicator of her spiritual potential and as the Rajmata was keen to pursue spiritual practices seriously, Sri Swamiji initiated her into Tapas in November 1966. From then on, she came to be known by the name of Nagendra Swami.

As a result of the continuous Nagendra Bhava that she experienced, Nagendra Swami soon developed the power of being able to read the mind and thoughts of any person who came before her, like an open book. Again, because she remained constantly under the influence of this Bhava, she could not control or restrain her speech. When she met anyone, she would rattle out whatsoever she saw, by the power of her intuition, about that person's character, habits, thoughts and activities. This soon started become extremely embarrassing for the people concerned, particularly for her relatives, because they found her blurting out in public some of their most personal and closely guarded secrets, as also many of their unsavoury private affairs. Therefore, in order to cloak their own exposure and consequent embarrassment, they spread word around that Rajmata Rewati Devi had become mentally deranged.

On one occasion, some relatives of Nagendra Swami requested Ananda Mai Ma to "cure" the Rajmata of her seeming aberration and took her to the residence of Nagendra Swami for this purpose. As Ananda Mai Ma got down from her car, one of the devotees of Sri Swamiji standing nearby got the 'Nataraja Bhava'* and in

that Bhava he drew a line across the entrance to the house. By this act an invisible barrier appears to have been raised which Ananda Mai Ma was unwilling or unable to cross. As she herself could not enter the house, she called out to Nagendra Swami to come out to where she was standing. Nagendra Swami replied that she was in Nagendra Bhava and hence was unable to get up from her seat. She told Ananda Mai Ma: "You are known as Jagat Mata; if truly you are Jagat Mata then why don't you come in and take me out of the Nagendra Bhava?" But Ananda Mai Ma remained where she was. Quite obviously, she was unable to enter the house let alone remove the Rajmata's Bhava. Finding herself powerless to intervene in the matter, Ananda Mai Ma returned to her own Ashrama.

The following year, when Sri Swamiji came again to Dehra Dun, he was informed about the power that Nagendra Swami had developed and the embarrassment she was causing to people by openly proclaiming what she intuitively read of their minds and character. In order to put a stop to this, Sri Swamiji directed Nagendra Swami to observe 'Mowna' (silence). After a year or so of the observance of this Mowna Sri Swamiji permitted Nagendra Swami to speak again but Nagendra Swami found the observance of Mowna so beneficial to her 'sadhana' (spiritual practices), that she decided to continue observing it indefinitely.

When Sri Swamiji initiated Nagendra Swami into Tapas, he had prescribed for her a rigorous schedule of sadhana. By assiduously following these directions, and as a result of her other spiritual practices, she became totally transformed. Whereas earlier she had been known and feared for her quick temper and sharp tongue, she now exuded an aura of peace. Those who had known her in the days preceding her Tapas, could hardly recognise the former Rajmata in the saintly and affectionate Nagendra Swami.

Her spiritual development proceeded apace, and she was well set to complete the prescribed twelve years of Tapas when suddenly, a tragedy struck. On 9th January, 1975, word was received at the Sri Shivabalayogi Ashram at Dehra Dun that Nagendra Swami had been murdered that morning, by an unknown assailant. Sri Swamiji had just returned from a tour of Sri Lanka and was at that time in Bangalore, when this sad and shocking information was relayed to him. The news of this gruesome murder came as a shock and surprise to all those who heard it. It appeared to be the handiwork of some demented or mentally deranged person, because it was unthinkable that anyone in his right senses would undertake the cold-blooded murder of an old lady, who had by now become universally recognised as a saint. The police were unable to trace the murderer and this heinous crime remains unsolved even to this day. Inscrutable is the play of Fate.

* Nagendra Bhava: Bhava of the Naag which remains coiled like a garland round the neck of Shiva; also see Chapter 8 for elucidation of 'Bhava'.

Satya Shivabalayogi

Satya Narain is a resident of Kondangi Village in the Krishna District of Andra Pradesh. In early 1965, he came to the Bangalore Ashram for darshan of Sri Swamiji and took Dhyana diksha. He was deeply impressed by this first contact and requested to be allowed to stay on in the Ashram. His request was granted by Sri Swamiji and so he stayed on, doing odd jobs in the Ashram and regularly attending the dhyana classes. By dint of unswerving practice, he started making good progress in dhyana.

After practising this for 6 months, Satya Narain requested Sri Swamiji to initiate him into Tapas. Sri Swamiji had been watching his progress and seeing that he was fit to undertake serious sadhana, Sri Swamiji initiated Satya Narain into Tapas on 7th August 1965. He then directed him to go back to his village and to carry on his 'sadhana' there. Satya Narain, who is now known as Satya Shivabalayogi, soon attained the

samadhi state and was able to proceed with his Tapas undisturbed. By the Grace of Sri Swamiji, he successfully completed twelve years of Tapas on 7th August 1977. He was raised from Tapas by Sri Swamiji on 5th September 1977 and is now doing Prachara in accordance with the directions given by Sri Swamiji.

Conclusion

Though only a thumb sketch of the lives of the Tapasvin Disciples of Sri Swamiji has been given in this chapter, these lives adequately exemplify the spiritual benefits that are to be gained by obtaining the diksha and Grace of Sri Swamiji. It will be a source of solace and joy for all serious aspirants on the spiritual path to know that, in Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj, they have access to a Sad-Guru who is munificent in bestowing his blessings, and who can ferry them to the farther shore of this misery filled ocean of 'samsara' (the cycle of birth and death).

7.

MISSION AND UPADESA

* The term 'Upadesa' means spiritual guidance or spiritual instructions given by a Guru.

Sri Swamiji's Mission

When Sri Swamiji completed the full twelve years of his Yuga Tapas, Shiva and Parvati came to give him darshan and to bestow on him their blessings. On that occasion, Shankara Bhagvan outlined to Sri Swamiji the mission for which he had been sent to this world. All this has been recounted in some detail, in Chapter 4. From then on, Sri Swamiji has been devoting his time and energies to faithfully carrying out the directions of his Divine Guru.

In order to fulfill the mission given to him by Shankara Bhagvan, Sri Swamiji ministers to the spiritual and material needs of the people in the following four principle ways :—

- (a) Darshan.
- (b) Giving consecrated vibhuti for curing of mental and physical ailments, and for amelioration of mental worries.
- (c) Kirtan and Bhava Samadhi.
- (d) Dhyana Diksha.

Darshan: At his Ashram at Bangalore, and wherever he is camping during his many tours in India and abroad, Sri Swamiji gives darshan at fixed timings every day, usually in the evenings. If there is adequate seating place available for all the people then those who have come for darshan are permitted to sit in his presence. If, as is the usual case, the crowds are large and seating space is limited, then people are asked to file past the

place where he is seated for darshan. Though Sri Swamiji appears on these occasions to be seated quietly, apparently absorbed in himself, he is keenly observant of all that is going on around him. Each and every individual who comes for his darshan receives his Grace and Blessing, albeit silently. And whether the person concerned realises it or not at that time, the silent benediction that he receives during darshan sets in motion a subtle and intangible force, which exercises a profound influence on the mind of the devotee and this, in time to come, brings about a total change in his mental outlook. Some of the benefits that accrue as a result of Sri Swamiji's darshan and blessings are freedom from worries and attainment of peace of mind; elimination of bad or undesirable habits and attachments attainment of mental poise; development of bhakti and a yearning for following the spiritual path.

Though it is hard to believe that mere darshan can achieve all this, there are hundreds who are willing to testify to the efficacy of Sri Swamiji's darshan and the far reaching benefits that his blessings have conferred on them and their families. In this context it would be pertinent to quote Sri Ramana Maharshi's words on this subject: "What do you think of a man who listens to a sermon for an hour and goes away without having been impressed by it so as to change his way of life? Compare him with another who sits in a Holy Presence and goes away after some time with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is better; to preach loudly without effect or to sit silently, sending out inner Spiritual Force?" It is this inner Spiritual Force, which is radiating from Sri Swamiji all the time, which changes the entire

outlook of a person and diverts his mind along spiritual channels. It is also a fact that those who have once had Sri Swamiji's darshan are so charmed by his Divine Personality, that they come again and again to repeat the experience, and to savour the peace of His Presence.

Dispensing Consecrated Vibhuti: Worldly life is full of misery and the large majority of those who come for Sri Swamiji's darshan have some tale of woe or suffering to relate. And they all come with the hope that Sri Swamiji, by his blessings, will ameliorate their suffering. In this they are not disappointed. Sri Swamiji listens patiently to each individual's complaint or petition; he then instructs an attendant to give the person some Vibhuti (holy ash) which has been blessed earlier by Sri Swamiji, along with directions on how that Vibhuti is to be used.

In the treatment of physical and mental ailments, use of the Vibhuti in accordance with the directions given by Sri Swamiji has effected miraculous cures and thousands of people have been benefitted by this. There are also innumerable cases on record where patients who had not responded earlier to normal treatment, and whose disease had been pronounced incurable by medical practitioners, have been fully restored to health by the use of the Vibhuti given by Sri Swamiji. As the Sri Sri Sri Sivabalayogi Maharaj Trust proposes to bring out a separate book containing the recorded experience of devotees in this regard, no specific cases are being cited as examples. Such instances are in any case too numerous to be included in a single chapter.

Apart from physical and mental ailments, devotees approach Sri Swamiji with all manner of personal problems and seek his advice and blessings. Sri Swamiji rarely, if ever, advises such a person to follow a particular course or not to follow a particular course; he tells the individual to make up his own mind as to the course he wishes to follow and then blesses him by giving him sacred Vibhuti which, if used as directed, will help him to overcome his problems.

Kirtan and Bhava Samadhi: Wherever Sri Swamiji gives darshan, kirtan is also held. Because of the powerful spiritual vibrations emanating from Sri Swamiji, a large number of people participating in the kirtan go into Bhava Samadhi. This happens even when Sri Swamiji is not present at that particular place. As this is a unique feature of Sri Swamiji's spiritual ministration, it merits more detailed explanation and hence it is being dealt with separately, in a subsequent chapter.

Dhyana: Sri Swamiji's primary mission is to set people on the path of Dhyana Yoga. The other three aspects of his mission mentioned above can, in fact, be considered preliminary steps meant to prepare people for following the path of dhyana by purifying their minds, and by relieving them of their ailments and mental worries. It is

a measure of the earnestness with which Sri Swamiji pursues this mission that he has, to date (May '77), initiated two million people into Dhyana Yoga, in India and abroad. As this is the principal aspect of his spiritual ministration, a separate chapter has been devoted to Sri Swamiji's teachings on the technique and practice of dhyana.

Spiritual Ministration: Some Unique Features

There are some unique features about Sri Swamiji's spiritual ministration which require special mention, and for those not familiar with these aspects, some elaboration and explanation; these unique aspects are covered in the paragraphs that follow.

The Guru Shishya Relationship: From what we know by personal observation, and from what we hear of and read from the scriptures, it becomes evident that the great Gurus of yore were very selective in choosing their disciples; it was only after a long period of testing and after close personal observation of the aspiring disciple by the Guru, that an aspirant was given initiation and accepted as a disciple. Considering all this, it is indeed very remarkable that Sri Swamiji gives diksha to all and sundry who come to him for initiation, often to thousands of people at a time. When questioned about this, Sri Swamiji explains that he grants initiation to all-comers because these are the directions given to him by his own Guru, Sri Shankara Bhagvan. Elucidating further Sri Swamiji says the initial initiation is given in 'Mitra Bhava' (attitude of a friend). Thereafter, to those sadhakas who take earnestly to the practice of dhyana after receiving this initial diksha, and who approach him for further guidance and grace, Sri Swamiji imparts grace in 'Guru Bhava' (attitude of a Guru) and then guides them in their further progress.

Again, there are many sadhakas who are eager to take diksha from Sri Swamiji, but are hesitant to do so because they have already been initiated earlier by a different Guru. For the benefit of such as these, Sri Swamiji has explained that:

- (a) If the former Guru is no longer available to guide the disciple, or, the Guru has taught all he knows and the disciple wishes to progress still further, there is no bar to his accepting another Guru and taking initiation from him.
- (b) Even for those who wish to continue under the guidance of their present Guru, taking initiation from Sri Swamiji is no bar because, as explained earlier, the initial initiation is given by him in 'Mitra Bhava' and hence this need not affect the relationship with or allegiance to their present Guru; at the same time, they can derive immense benefit and help in the practice of their sadhana from the spiritual power received by

them from Sri Swamiji as a result of the initiation.

Rules of Conduct: In most forms of sadhana, an essential pre-requisite to serious spiritual practice is cultivating the rules and principles of good conduct, the 'Yamas' and 'Niyamas' as they are called. As opposed to that, Sri Swamiji does not lay down or insist upon any specific rules of conduct by the regular practices of dhyana all undesirable habits will be automatically eliminated and the sadhaka, motivated by an inner compulsion, will soon start following virtuous practices.

Effect of Spiritual Power: The manner in which the spiritual power imparted by Sri Swamiji acts in the furtherance of a sadhaka's dhyana practice has been detailed in the chapter on dhyana. The other unique benefits conferred by this spiritual power are:—

- (a) During the early stages of the practice of dhyana, a sadhaka is usually afflicted by a dryness of mind because of lack of adequate incentive, and by despair caused by lack of any apparent signs of progress. Therefore, in order to motivate the sadhaka and spur him on to further efforts, Sri Swamiji vouchsafes divine visions and other spiritual experiences to a sadhaka during dhyana.
- (b) Normally, only very advanced sadhakas can undertake and successfully practice the 'Nirgun Upasana' (worship of the Attributeless Absolute); others can only hope to scale these heights by gradual and suitably staged spiritual practices, which are in turn are dictated by the spiritual maturity of their minds at the commencement of the practice. However by the Grace of Sri Swamiji, manifesting through the spiritual power imparted by him, a sadhaka following the Dhyana Yoga taught by Shri Swamiji is able to directly undertake the Nirgun Upasana without having to go through the preliminary disciplines.

Bhava Leela: This is, perhaps, the most unique feature of Sri Swamiji's spiritual ministration. As it constitutes a subject by itself, a separate chapter has been devoted to explain the Bhava Leela of Sri Swamiji.

Mass Feeding

'Anna Daan', i.e. the gift of food, has been extolled in our country from time immemorial and has become a part of our heritage. The giving of food to a needy person has been lauded as the greatest of charities and it has been enjoined upon house-holders never to turn a hungry man away from their door. This is of course understandable as far as house-holders are concerned, but it is interesting to note that most of the great saints appear to derive great pleasure and satisfaction from feeding others, whether they be their devotees and

disciples, or simply poor people in need of a hearty meal.

In the case of Sri Swamiji, feeding of devotees and the poor has always occupied a special place in his scheme of spiritual ministration. As has already been recounted, mass feeding of people has become a regular feature of Sri Swamiji's Ashram from the very early days of his Tapas. This practice still continues. Every year on Sri Swamiji's Birthday (24th January), on the Maha Shiva Ratri Day and on the Anniversary of the Commencement of Tapas (7th August), devotees and the poor are fed in their thousands at all the Ashrams run by the Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj Trust; no one who comes to the Ashrams on these days is allowed to leave without partaking of the 'prasada' (consecrated food). That apart, wherever Sri Swamiji goes, he takes great pleasure in feeding the devotees. Explaining this particular fondness of his, Sri Swamiji says that on account of prolonged Tapas, intense internal heat is generated in a Yogi's body; by feeding people, this heat is neutralized to some considerable extent, as a result of which the Yogi experiences great peace and satisfaction. It would appear from this statement that just as the fire of hunger in an individual is appeased by his taking food, the consuming fire of Tapas in a Yogi is appeased by the food offering consumed by him through the innumerable mouths of his devotees and the poor, for the Yogi looks upon all creation as only a manifestation of his own Atma (Self).

'Mowna Upadesa' (Silent Instruction)

A large majority of those who visit sadhus, go there not only for their darshan, but also to gain enlightenment by listening to their 'Pravachan' (spiritual talks or lectures). The sadhus also, by and large, cater to this public hankering by giving talks and discourses. Therefore, devotees who come for Sri Swamiji's darshan, and who are not yet familiar with his methods, are somewhat non-plussed to find that Sri Swamiji gives no spiritual discourses. People are allowed to have his darshan and may, thereafter, participate in the 'Kirtan' (devotional singing) if they so feel like it. Those who are further interested and seek spiritual guidance, are instructed to come at the time of the regular dhyana classes and to take initiation into dhyana; however, there are no lectures or discourses. This is often a source of disappointment to those who have come with the hope of being treated to a religious discourse, and the less discerning among them at times complain that Sri Swamiji only sits silently and gives no instructions. Those who complain thus are obviously ignorant of the nature of spiritual instruction and hence this aspect needs some elucidation.

According to our scriptures, 'Mowna' or silence is considered to be the best and most potent form of 'Upadesa' (instructions). This is exemplified in the story

of 'Dakshinamurti'^{*} in which it is told how Bhagvan Shankara appeared as a youthful Guru, in the form of Dakshinamurti, to grant peace to the Four Maharishis — Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanat Kumar and Sanat Sujata, and how he revealed to them the Truth through 'Mowna Updesa'.

Again, when Sri Ramana Maharshi was once asked why he did not go about preaching the Truth to the people at large, he replied, "How do you know I am not doing so? Does preaching consist in mounting a platform and haranguing the people around? Preaching implies communication of knowledge, and that is best done through silence. What do you think of a man who listens to a sermon for an hour and goes away without having been impressed by it so as to change his life? Compare him with another who sits in a Holy Presence and goes away after some time with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is better; to preach loudly without effect or to sit silently, sending out inner Spiritual Force? Again, how does speech arise? There is Pure Knowledge whence arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought; and thought leads to the spoken word. So the spoken word is the great-grandson of the original Source, which is silence. If the spoken word can produce effect, judge for yourself how much more powerful must be the preaching through silence."

So, in the tradition of the great Gurus of yore, Sri Swamiji also employs the power of Mowna Updesa to carry out an inner transformation of those who turn to him for guidance. This is not to say that Sri Swamiji is averse to giving spiritual instruction of any sort; if a sadhaka or disciple has some genuine problems in his sadhana and approaches Sri Swamiji for a solution of these problems, he receives simple and practical instructions which help him to overcome his problems. However, this is mainly in the sphere of practical guidance; Sri Swamiji does not encourage theoretical discussions, particularly if such discussions are indulged in merely as a philosophical exercise and not for the purpose of clearing up any genuine doubts that a sadhaka may have about the spiritual path. If he deigns to give any instructions, these will usually be practical guidelines, meant to help a sadhaka in the purposeful conduct of his sadhana. Otherwise, Sri Swamiji's answer to most problems will be simply: "Do more and more dhyana." Indeed, this is normally the best and only remedy because, as a sadhaka will himself realise, all problems get automatically resolved when a sadhaka learns to surrender his all to the Guru and devotes himself increasingly to the practice of dhyana.

The Yoga Vasishtha Ramayana:

As Sri Swamiji attained the highest Realisation without any previous instruction or grounding in religious

philosophy, he attaches little or no importance to theory in the instruction and training of his disciples. However, those who continue to importune him to give some 'Upadesa', or who wish to know his views on spiritual theory, are referred by him to the 'Yoga Vasishtha Ramayana': "Read the Yoga Vasishtha", he says, "Swamiji's philosophy is fully expounded in that Scripture." So, for those who want to know more about this Scripture, a few introductory words on the 'Yoga Vasishtha' are given below.

Sri Rama, after obtaining permission from his father King Dasaratha, proceeded on a long pilgrimage during which he visited all the holy pilgrimage centres of India, as also the Ashrams of the Great Rishis of his time. Returning from this pilgrimage, Sri Rama was seized by an overwhelming spirit of 'Vairagya' (renunciation or detachment from mundane affairs). King Dasaratha was sorely troubled to see Sri Rama in this condition and so he requested the 'Kula Guru' (Family Guru) of the Raghus, Vasishtha, to give suitable instruction to Sri Rama. The 'Upadesa' (instruction) given by Sage Vasishtha on that occasion to Sri Rama, over a period of several days, has been enshrined in the 'Yoga Vasishtha Ramayana'. It is to this day considered the finest exposition of 'Advaita Vedanta' in the whole vast history of Indian religious literature; the abstruse truths of the Advaita Philosophy have been explained at length and in great detail with the help of a wealth of stories and anecdotes.

An uncommon feature of the 'Yoga Vasishtha Ramayana' is that when giving his Upadesa, Vasishtha Mahamuni was in communion with the Infinite and hence all his utterances have to this day the power of a 'mantra', and can infuse enlightenment in a sadhaka of matured mind who reads or listens to this dialogue; in fact, towards the closing stages, the Sage tells Sri Rama in a state of rapture that it was not Vasishtha who was speaking to him but that it was the Atma of Sri Rama which was instructing him through the Sage.

The Yoga Vasishtha is divided into six 'prakaranas' (sections): a brief survey of each of these prakaranas is given in the succeeding paragraphs.

'**Vairagya Prakarana**' (Section on Renunciation): This section opens with a description of the mental state of Sri Rama on his return from pilgrimage. Sri Rama is summoned by Dasaratha, in the presence of the Sages Vasishtha and Vishwamitra. When Sri Rama arrives, Sage Vasishtha asks him to explain the reasons for his melancholy state of mind and his indifference towards all worldly affairs. On being thus asked, Sri Rama lays bare the thoughts and reflections that have been troubling his mind and which give him no peace. In fact, his words and attitude of mind reveal the awakening of a burning 'vairagya' (dispassion). However, Sri Rama has serious doubts about the soundness of the conclusions he has reached. He, therefore, solicits his Guru to instruct him

^{*} Meaning 'The Southward Facing': this is one of the names of Siva.

and thereby dispel the gloom of his heart. As Vasishta Mahamuni begins his Upadesa, all the legendary Sidhs and Maharishis descend to Dasaratha's court to listen to this heavenly dialogue.

'Mumukshu Prakarana': (Section on the 'Mumukshu'; a 'Mumukshu' is an aspirant who longs for liberation). This section deals with the preparatory disciplines that a sadhaka must undertake, and the moral and mental qualities that he must cultivate, in order to qualify for the spiritual path. According to the Yoga Vasishta, 'Shanti' (quiescence and peace of mind), 'Santosh' (contentment), 'Satsanga' (association with realised stages) and 'Vichara' (enquiry into the nature of the Atma) are the four sentinels who guard the gates to 'Moksha' (Liberation). The attitude that one is hampered by destiny in not being able to follow the spiritual path is severely condemned and the sadhaka is urged to rely on 'purushkara' (personal exertion) for progress on the spiritual path. The sadhaka should not shun action, but should learn to be indifferent to the fruits of action; he should not be affected by the pleasures and the pains which are an inevitable accompaniment of action. The sadhaka is advised to keep holy company and to study the 'shastras' (scriptures), particularly those dealing with 'Atman Vidya' (Self Knowledge).

'Utpatti Prakarna': (Section on Origin or Creation). This section deals with the origin and nature of the 'Jagat' (Universe). According to the Yoga Vasishta, this universe with its multitudinous objects, its concepts of time and space, and its varied laws, is only a creation of one's own mind. Just as the mind creates a world in the dream state, so also it creates an imaginary world in the waking state; the only difference between the dream state and the waking state is that dreams are short and the waking state is relatively longer. Time and space are only ideas of the mind; through the power of the mind a 'Kalpa' (age) may pass as a moment, or a moment in time in the waking state may be experienced as years in the dream state; the same is applicable to the concept of space. All these facts are illustrated by a number of interesting and revealing stories.

'Sthiti Prakarna': (Section on Firm Abidance). This section discusses the place of the jiva (individual soul) in the scheme of creation. Vasishta points out that the jiva is no other than the 'Ahamkara' ('I' thought or ego sense). This 'Ahamkara' is the chief impediment to 'Atman Sthiti' (firm abidance in one's True Self); it is because of 'Ahamkara' that human beings fail to recognise themselves as they really are and, as a consequence, suffer misery. It is only when the 'Ahamkara' is extinguished that a sadhaka attains 'Atman sthiti'. The body and the senses are inert; it is the reflected light of the Atman ('Chidabhasa') that gives life to the body and makes the senses perform their functions. It is further pointed out that the objects perceived by the senses are also not different from the

Atman; in fact, the perceiver and the objects perceived both originate from the Atman and hence are identical. When a sadhaka gains firm comprehension of this Truth, he then realises that nothing exists apart from his own Atman or Self; this Atman is then realised as the originator of this universe and its enjoyer as well. When this knowledge becomes firm, the sadhaka is freed from the duality of happiness and sorrow. 'Bhramacharya' (contenance), 'Abhyas' (constant practice) and 'Vairagya' (dispassion or desirelessness) have been stated to be the means for attaining this knowledge, which in turn leads to 'Alman Sthiti' (firm abidance in the Self).

'Upashanti Prakarna': (Section on attainment of Quiescence) The Sthiti Prakarana sets out the goal; the Upashanti Prakarana gives instruction on the ways and means for attaining that goal. As pointed out, the chief impediment to realisation is the false identification of the Atman with the body (dehatmabodha); this false identification is because of 'Ahamkara' or the ego sense. This section gives practical guidance for the elimination of this 'Ahamkara' and a number of methods and Yogic processes are described for this purpose. The chief of these are 'Vichara' (enquiry into the True nature of the Self), 'Samadarsana' (seeing all creation with an equal eye as varied manifestations of the one Brahman), considering oneself in all conditions of life and at all times as 'Chit' or Pure Consciousness, and performing one's allotted duties in life without any attachment. When, as a result of these practices, a sadhaka becomes perfectly 'Asanga' (i.e. not attached in any way to the fruits of one's actions), all attachments, aversions and fear disappear and he becomes qualified for attaining the samadhi stage.

'Nirvana Prakarna': (Section on Liberation). This section is divided into two subsections, viz. Purva Bhaga and Uttara Bhaga.

The Purva Bhaga explains that the Atman is the true 'Swarupa' (form) of the Jiva. The sadhaka is instructed to give up all ideas of diversity, and to still the movement of the mind. Having thus rendered the mind quiescent, he should persist in remaining absorbed in the Atman in the form of 'Chit' or Pure consciousness. As a result of this practice, a stage comes when the sadhaka perceives the identity of this own Atman with Brahman. He sees the manifest universe as non-different from Brahman and perceives that like the subtle tree that lies embedded in the seed, this whole universe in the form of created and uncreated beings lies in subtle, seed form in his own heart. This sub-section also incorporates the highly instructive teachings that Maheshwara (Shiva) imparted to Sage Vasistha. At this stage of the discourse, Sri Rama becomes absorbed in deep dhyana.

In the Uttara Bhaga, Sage Vasishta explains that true vairagya is achieved only by the awakening of 'Atman Gyan' (Self Knowledge), as a result of which, there is an

automatic cessation of all actions and their fruit; the sadhaka no longer identifies himself with the body, nor seeks enjoyment in worldly objects. It is only when he realizes his own identity with the 'Param-Atman' (Supreme Self) and remains firmly established in this knowledge, that he attains 'Param Nirvana' (Supreme Liberation). The Sage also narrates his own experiences of samadhi thus: "In this state the sense of separate identity is lost; he knows himself as one with 'Chidakasa' (Pure Consciousness) and with the attainment of this knowledge, everything else becomes known to him; he sees himself as existing everywhere and in all places and hence he feels no need for locomotion as he has nowhere to go to; though devoid of the sense organs, he can see everything with his 'Gyana Netra' (me eye of wisdom) and he thus perceives that the innumerable universes of myriad names and forms exist within the 'Chidakasa' as his own body."

As the discourse nears its end, Sri Rama's doubts and mental agitations are all gone; and when Vasishta Mahamuni starts discoursing on 'Nirvana', Sri Rama and those in the assembly who had been regularly listening to this 'Updesa' are all lifted to a blissful plane of consciousness.

Sri Rama, freed from the distressing thoughts that had been weighing upon his mind, is at this stage absorbed in samadhi and has no more questions to ask. And as the Great Sage concludes his discourse, Sri Rama exclaims in rapturous joy: "Ah! I have attained the most wonderful state of Nirvana, which is the end and the purpose of life. I am always in 'Swarupa', but in the extremely peaceful myself there is nothing that is now covetable to me." Vasishta then goes on to explain that having attained the state of Nirvana, Rishis are endowed with 'Sahaj Samadhi' (natural state of samadhi) which allows them to mix with people and to perform their allotted duties in life, without in any way affecting their samadhi state; that Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara are likewise carrying out their respective functions and that it now behooves Sri Rama to remain firmly established in Brahman always and to joyfully carry out his work and duties in the true spirit of a 'Jivan Mukta'.

As stated earlier, these are only distilled remarks, designed to introduce the sadhaka to this great scripture. Those who wish to know more about the profound teachings embodied in this Scripture, particularly with a view to gaining a better understanding of Sri Swamiji's Teachings, would do well to make a more detailed study of the 'Yoga Vasishta.'

8.

BHAVA LEELA

How it Started

One day, shortly after he had completed the Yuga Tapas, Sri Swamiji was giving public darshan when a small group of people came to the Ashram and began questioning Sri Swamiji on various spiritual matters. One of the topics discussed was the question of free will; some from among those participating in the discussion maintained that each one of us was free to act as he willed. Having listened to their talk for some time, Sri Swamiji interjected at this stage that: "Let alone being free to act according to our individual will and desire, even this body that we regard as our own is not ours."

He then looked at a particular individual in the group, who had been taking a leading part in the discussion, and asked him pointedly: "Well! Is this body yours?"

Somewhat bewildered, the man replied: "Why, yes of course. If my body is not mine, then whom else does it belong to?"

Sri Swamiji smiled and said: "If that be the case then let me see you control it and move it as you like."

With these words Sri Swamiji, through his spiritual power, induced the state of Bhava in all those sitting directly in front of him. Under the influence of this Bhava, they soon forgot themselves; they started swaying to the music of the bhajans and without any

previous resolve or will on their part, their hands automatically started to adopt various 'Mudras' (poses of the hand). Sri Swamiji told them to control themselves and remain still, but in spite of themselves they could not and they continued to act as though they were being controlled by some mysterious power from within. After this had gone on for some time, vibhuti was applied to their foreheads, between the eyebrows, and they immediately regained their normal state of consciousness. By this means Sri Swamiji dramatically demonstrated to all those present that men were mere playthings in the hands of the Divine and, therefore, foregoing egoity, we should surrender ourselves to the Divine Will in everything we do.

This was the beginning of Sri Swamiji's unique method of bringing people round to the spiritual path by inducing Bhava in them. Today, this is no longer regarded as a strange phenomenon; in fact it is one of the common features of congregational bhajans conducted by devotees of Sri Swamiji.

Bhava and Bhava Samadhi:

The term Bhava implies a mood or an attitude of mind. When used in the context of spiritual practices, it connotes spiritual moods or attitudes, as explained below:

- * In one sense, the term Bhava is used to denote the devotional attitude that a sadhaka adopts towards his Ishta (Chosen Ideal of the Supreme Godhead). These devotional attitudes have been categorized into five different types, viz: 'Sant Bhava' or the saintly attitude of devotion such as adopted by the Rishis of yore; 'Dasya Bhava' or the attitude of a servant towards his master as exemplified by Sri Hanuman; 'Sakhya Bhava' or the attitude of a friend as exemplified by Arjuna and Udhava towards Sri Krishna; 'Vatsalya Bhava' or the attitude of a mother towards her child as exemplified by Kaushalya towards Sri Rama and by Yasodha towards Sri Krishna; finally, 'Madhur Bhava' or the attitude of a woman in love as exemplified by Radha and Meera towards Sri Krishna.
- * In another sense, the term Bhava is also used to denote the spiritual mood characteristic of one's Ishta, e.g., 'Ram Bhava' or 'Shiva Bhava' or 'Gauri Bhava' and so on.
- * Finally, Bhava denotes the mood of ecstasy and self surrender which is induced by the maturing of devotion to one's Ishta.

The depth of the Bhava experience varies with different individuals and depends on the spiritual maturity of their minds. Very broadly speaking, the Bhava experience could be categorized into three stages as follows:

- * In the first stage the sadhaka experiences peace and spiritual exaltation; it is a very desirable experience which he wants to repeat again and again, which in turn motivates him to further effort on the spiritual path. As he progresses, he may also start experiencing 'ananda' (bliss) in varying degrees.
- * With further deepening of the Bhava, the sadhaka experiences the second stage during which he sees visions of his Ishta Deva and other Devis, Devatas and Saints. These visions and spiritual experiences purify the sadhaka's mind and prepare him for the third and final stage.
- * Finally, in the third stage, when the Bhava has fully ripened, the sadhaka experiences 'Bhava Samadhi'.

(For an understanding of the samadhi state, see the chapter on Dhyana).

As the state of Bhava develops, a sadhaka gradually gets rid of the dross in his mind and with that he acquires spiritually desirable qualities such as Faith, Renunciation and Strength of Character. His whole personality undergoes a transformation and, in many cases, even bodily changes take place. However, it needs to be pointed out here that outward

manifestations are no indicator of a sadhaka's inner development. The less mature sadhakas are usually unable to absorb spiritual experiences and in their case it is often seen that even a minor or passing spiritual experience creates a mental and physical upheaval; as opposed to this, spiritually mature sadhakas may have profound spiritual experiences, but they will not exhibit any outward signs which may be indicative of the depth of their experiences.

Bhava: A Historical Perspective

There is nothing new or unique about Bhava and Bhava Samadhi; they are as old as spiritual practice itself. The characteristics of Bhava and Bhava Samadhi have been visibly manifest in almost all followers of the 'Bhakti Marg' (the path of devotion); these characteristics are also manifest in followers of other spiritual paths, but to a some what lesser extent.

Those who are familiar with religious literature will have read accounts of the manifestations of Bhava in the kirtan parties led by Sri Chaitanya and his chief disciple Nityananda. In more recent times, Sri Ramakrishna was a living embodiment of Bhava and all that it implies; his biographers have recorded that in accordance with the directions of the Divine Mother, he lived in Bhavamukha all his life, and this notwithstanding the fact that he had attained to the ultimate non-dual state through Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Uniqueness of Sri Swamiji's Bhava Leela

Seeing that Bhava has been a common feature of spiritual practice through the ages, what then is the uniqueness of Sri Swamiji's Bhava Leela? Simply stated, it is in the widespread and unstinted manner in which Sri Swamiji employs Bhava to bring people to the spiritual path. No doubt we read about Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna inducing Bhava in others, often on a large scale, but this was usually restricted to their chosen disciples and followers. In the case of Sri Swamiji, Bhava spreads like an all engulfing wave whenever kirtan is held by his devotees, and almost all those present are affected by it to a greater or lesser extent. Thus is observed the extraordinary sight of men and women of all ages, and particularly children, lost to the outer world in ecstasy, dancing to the beat of the devotional music, and exhibiting in themselves the characteristics of the Puranic Gods and Goddesses, and of the ancient Saints and Rishis. Another unique feature is that Sri Swamiji's physical presence is not at all necessary for the manifestation of this Bhava. He will usually be sitting in the darshan hall, or even in his own room, whilst kirtan may be going on in a separate room or in the courtyard of the Ashram, and yet the manifestation of Bhava will go on just as if he was present. In fact Sri Swamiji may be miles away, at a different place, and yet by his Grace devotees will

experience Bhava whenever and wherever they may chose to conduct kirtan, after invoking his blessings.

Some interesting and often incredible features of the Bhava induced by Sri Swamiji are that a throng of people will dance and move about entranced for hours on end, without any signs of fatigue, and without so much as running into each other or tripping or disturbing any of the other devotees. Those devotees who get Hanuman Bhava, or some other simian Bhava, can be observed climbing up slender trees, dancing atop fragile branches, dangling from them in simian fashion and finally jumping down without so much as a scratch. Once the bhajans and kirtan are over, those who were in deep Bhava are brought back to normal consciousness by applying consecrated Vibhuti on the point between their eyebrows.

Benefits of Bhava

Those who are blessed by Sri Swamiji with Bhava, derive a number of invaluable benefits; these are as follows:—

- (a) Diseases, including chronic diseases, are cured.
- (b) God-consciousness is instilled.
- (c) The ego sense is subdued and is replaced by a spirit of self surrender to the will of God.
- (d) An absolute and implicit faith in God is instilled.
- (c) Pain and misery, due to mental or physical causes, are removed.

Bhava — A Personal Experience

In order to explain better what Bhava is and to illustrate how it works, one of the devotees has written a vivid account of his personal experience of Bhava, which was vouchsafed to him through the Grace of Sri Swamiji, and of the beneficial effects of this Bhava on his life and on his subsequent spiritual development. This account is given below for the benefit of those readers who would like to have a clearer understanding of this phenomenon.

“I arrived one evening at our summer house at Dehra Dun, literally dragged by my parents, to meet a Sage who was staying there as their guest. Reluctant as I was, I had resolved to come only for a day, more as a courtesy to my parents rather than from any personal desire to meet this Saint, and had planned to be off the same evening, back to Lucknow.”

“On entering the house I witnessed some strange scenes: I saw some of my relatives, as also some outsiders, standing around in fancy dance poses, or just walking around and smiling; it was strangely reminiscent of the Ranchi Mental Institute which I had once visited. Though basically religious, I was somewhat skeptical of the many sadhus of our times and so, keeping my opinions to myself, I walked into the house with strange

misgivings. Little did I know then that as I went into the house, I was moving steadily and surely towards one of the most moving and profound experiences of my life.”

“I wanted to have a bath, but I was told that mental cleanliness takes precedence over bodily cleanliness, and was led straight into the last bedroom which had been temporarily convened into a Darshan Room. I walked towards the room with a mental picture of a fat old Sadhu, preaching a sermon on some hackneyed religious subject, with the audience, though half asleep, showing forced reverence. I entered and was amazed to see a youthful figure, silting on a tiger skin, gaily laughing and joking with a lady in white who was vigorously pleading with the Yogi on some matter. Others were seated around the Yogi in a large semi-circle and were enjoying the spectacle.”

“A feeling of familiarity arose within me about this Yogi, but I just could not seem to place him. Suddenly, he looked at me; his powerful eyes seemed to grip mine, and this feeling of familiarity that I had been experiencing took concrete shape in the thought: ‘I know him; I have known him always, since bygone ages.’ But this was a fleeting thought which flashed through my mind and was gone; the Yogi was back to chatting with the lady in white, and I went back to my strange misgivings.”

“Evening came. During the darshan, one of the Yogi’s devotees sang a few catchy bhajans and kirtan. I saw some of my relations, and some others whom I did not know, sway with the rhythm of the music; watching them, I felt rather dubious about the whole affair. Nevertheless, I was intrigued to see them dancing gracefully and vigorously in the confined space of the small room, without bumping into each other, or disturbing any of the others seated there. Some among them touched other devotees on the forehead and, thereby, appeared to transfer spiritual grace. The Yogi sat with his eyes closed as if unaware of the strange happenings around him. As the kirtan progressed, the atmosphere in the room became heavy, as if charged by some powerful and pure radiation. I felt a compulsive urge to close my eyes; when I did so I found that all the myriad thoughts of my mind were rapidly evaporating, making the mind peaceful and quiescent. The Bhajans began to sound pleasing to my ears, and an inner peace began to flow within me. I felt blissful and was beginning to enjoy this experience when, suddenly, my hands involuntarily began to rise, as if moved by some mysterious force. I opened my eyes with a shock and looked at the Yogi, but I found no change in him; he continued to sit as before, with his eyes closed. Somewhat shaken by this strange experience, I dared not close my eyes again, so I sat out the rest of the evening watching what was going on around me.”

“The next day, being Sunday, some of us youngsters had planned to go on a picnic. As a large number of

people came for darshan on Sundays, we youngsters moved into an adjoining room, from where the Yogi was not visible. We enthusiastically planned our programme and discussed where we should go to, once the bhajans were over. I felt a trace of guilt that, at such a holy hour, we were engaged in talking about frivolous things, so I told the group to pretend to do dhyana for a few minutes, as otherwise my relatives would mind it. Thereupon, we closed our eyes and began to do dhyana. After about fifteen minutes had passed, all the others opened their eyes but I was unable to do so. I could hear the others talking; they began to jeer at me and told me not to pretend any more. Irrked by what they were saying, I tried to open my eyes but found that they remained forcibly closed. Soon a soothing feeling began to take hold of me and I began to reel with the music, without even the slightest effort on my part. I heard my friends laughing, but I was past caring.”

“I made a final effort to control myself and to hold myself still; just then I got a big shock on my right toe, as if it had been inserted into an electric plug. I recoiled, but found that a steady force was climbing up both my legs. I was unable to move; my body became rigid. The force came right up into my stomach, accumulated there, and began to rise higher. I began to black out; a suffocating feeling engulfed me; a tremendous force started shaking me from within. I rose clutching my stomach. People around me were alarmed; they thought that I had got an attack of colic. My eyes were still closed but a force began to impel me forward. My limbs were no longer under my control. I believe I trampled over a few people as I moved forward under this involuntary forwarded propulsion, until soon I was brought to a standstill.”

“My eyes opened and I found myself standing near the Yogi. I was shivering involuntarily. Once again his

powerful eyes looked at me as if penetrating into my very being. He motioned me to sit down and gave me some consecrated vibhuti to drink, mixed in water. Immediately the force within me subsided and I began to sway with the music, enjoying the peaceful calm that once again enveloped me. In the mind's eye came visions of many Gods and Goddesses and of many ancient Sages. This was my first experience of Bhava Samadhi.”

“Later I found that my personality had undergone a complete change. Gone was my desire for worldly things; instead, I felt a strong urge to take up sanyas. It was as if my life had taken a complete about turn. This intense feeling of renunciation remained with me for over six months. During this time, I was constantly engaged in religious pursuits and barely ever stepped out of my house. Thereafter, this feeling gradually diminished and I returned to a more worldly plane, whereby I could attend to my mundane duties. My subsequent experience has shown that this Bhava Samadhi I was vouchsafed has helped me greatly in the practice of dhyana; it has also come to my aid in countless ways, pre-warning me of dangers, mentally preparing me for catastrophes and always giving me peace, calm and mental poise during times of distress and duress. That apart, while in Bhava Samadhi, I have often been used by Sri Swamiji as a medium to heal diseases and to transfer spiritual power to others.”

“I am ever grateful to Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj for giving me this vivid experience, which has certainly proved to be a turning point in my life. The benefits of this Bhava Samadhi have been so many, and the experiences vouchsafed to me so spiritually elevating, that these can hardly be put down in words.”

9.

DHYANA

Preliminaries to the Practice of Dhyana

Introduction

Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi Maharaj initiates and guides sadhakas essentially on the path of “Dhyana Yoga.” In the perception of most people Dhyana is a mysterious and esoteric path, which they regard with awe and reverence, but which they nevertheless consider to be beyond their ken and understanding. This, in turn, makes them hesitant and reluctant to undertake the practice of Dhyana. Even among those who are persuaded to take to Dhyana, there exist many doubts and misunderstandings, which are compounded by pretentious and confusing statements by people who though themselves quite ignorant, yet pose as advanced

sadhakas and pseudo gurus, purporting to teach others when in fact they only add to their confusion.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to clear such doubts and misunderstandings, and to provide a guide with the help of which earnest sadhakas can do abhyas (practice) of dhyana; the contents of this chapter are based on the teachings and guidance imparted by Sri Swamiji from time to time. However, it needs to be stressed that only aspects of general applicability have been covered; advanced sadhakas, who seek personal guidance, should refer their problems direct to Sri Swamiji.

The contents of this chapter are essentially practical guidelines for dhyana; no attempt has been made to setout any basic underlying theory or philosophy. This is as it should be because, whereas in other yogas theory

guides practice, in Dhyana Yoga practice unfolds theory and a sadhaka acquires automatic understanding of spiritual matters and the deepest spiritual truths as he progresses in his dhyana.

Dhyana Diksha (Initiation into Dhyana)

Aspirants who wish to take Dhyana Diksha are made to sit facing Sri Swamiji. All present are then asked to close their eyes and a disciple, after receiving Sri Swamiji's blessing, touches each aspirant on the spot between the eyebrows, which is known as the Bhrikuti, and instructs him to concentrate his sight and mind at that spot. The aspirants are then required to do dhyana in the presence of Sri Swamiji for approximately one hour. Through the touch given between the eyebrows prior to the commencement of dhyana, and by his look of Grace during the dhyana which follows, Sri Swamiji imparts spiritual power to the aspirant which will be of great value and assistance to him in his future sadhana and his further practice of dhyana.

It is the recorded experience of many thousands who have received diksha from Sri Swamiji in this manner, that they have been blessed with some form of spiritual experience during the period of dhyana following the Dhyana Diksha; this experience can take many forms, e.g., seeing of colours, or having a vision of light, or, in the case of many advanced aspirants, having a vision of their Ishta Dev. In fact, failure to see any vision during the Dhyana Diksha is primarily due to some shortcoming in the aspirant; either there is lack of faith (many come not as genuine aspirants but primarily to test Swamiji's powers); or the aspirant is unable to still his eyeballs and gaze steadily at the root of the eyebrows; or his mind is diverted by thoughts or worries and he is unable to achieve 'ekagratha,' i.e., concentration or one pointedness of mind; or he is fidgety and moves his body or opens his eyes, thereby breaking his concentration. Undoubtedly, those who have had no previous practice or training in dhyana will inadvertently make, one or more of these mistakes and hence are unlikely to get any very vivid experience.

On the other hand those who can successfully concentrate their sight and mind at the Bhrikuti during the Dhyana Diksha, will certainly be vouchsafed a spiritual experience; this will usually come as a momentary flash sometime towards the close of the one hour dhyana period. But, whether they get a spiritual experience or not, almost every aspirant experiences a deep feeling of peace during the dhyana which in itself is a clear indicator of the spiritual benefit and power of the diksha given by Sri Swamiji.

As it is generally customary to give a mantra during diksha, many aspirants are curious to know why Sri Swamiji does not give 'mantra diksha.' There are two reasons; firstly, as will be discussed later, a mantra is not necessary for doing dhyana when one follows the

technique of dhyana as taught by Sri Swamiji; secondly, in the case of those aspirants whose personal inclinations and other factors require the imparting of a mantra for the furtherance of their sadhana, the correct mantra will be spontaneously and automatically manifested to them during their normal practice of dhyana.

Use of Vibhuti

At the conclusion of the dhyana diksha, the sadhaka is given some vibhuti which has been blessed by Sri Swamiji. This vibhuti must at all times be regarded as very sacred; if it is accidentally spilt on the ground or defiled in any other way, it will lose its potency. Before commencing the practice of dhyana, the sadhaka must first do puja to this vibhuti with incense and coconut. Thereafter, the sadhaka must apply a tikka of this vibhuti at the spot between the eyebrows, whenever he sits for dhyana.

Time for Dhyana

Dhyana may be done any time of the day or night. However, Sri Swamiji advises that the sadhaka must do a minimum of one hour's dhyana at any one sitting. The reasons for this stipulation are obvious. A sadhaka will find that during the early stages of his practice, almost the entire period of one hour — often more — will be required to still the sight and mind and to concentrate them at the Bhrikuti. Also, as will be explained subsequently, dhyana proper does not commence till such time as this stillness and concentration of sight and mind have been achieved. Therefore, merely sitting with eyes closed for half an hour or so, and then getting up thinking that one has done the required dhyana for the day, is only deceiving oneself. In fact the basic criteria for fixing the minimum period of dhyana should not be just the time factor of one or more hours; it should be based on the time required by the sadhaka to achieve 'Ekagratha' and, thereafter, to remain in the state of dhyana, as described subsequently, for at least 15 to 30 minutes. This being the case, the sadhaka himself is the best judge of the time that he requires to achieve this.

Those who wish to seriously pursue the practice of dhyana, must increase the period of dhyana gradually, with the aim of doing at least 10-12 hours dhyana daily; more if possible. This 10-12 hours need not be in one stretch; it can be broken up into periods of 2-4 hours, depending on the capacity of the sadhaka. In this context it needs to be stressed that the sadhaka should not forcibly sit for dhyana for long periods; the increase in the period of dhyana should be a natural process, in keeping with the development of his dhyana practice.

The early hours of the morning, and the hour of dusk are the best times of the day to do dhyana as the mind is naturally calm and composed during these periods. However, those who cannot, for any reason, do dhyana

at these times, may choose any other time that suits their convenience. But whatever time they may choose, it is very desirable that sadhakas do dhyana at a fixed time every day. Cultivation of such a habit will assist them in their sadhana because, just as one feels hungry at one's regular meal time, so also will one feel a natural urge and inclination to do dhyana at the habitual dhyana time.

Even more important than having proper, fixed timings for dhyana, is the need for regularity in practice. To illustrate the harm that irregularity in sadhana can do, if a sadhaka misses out one day in his dhyana practice, it will take him seven to ten days to make up the set-back caused to his progress by that single day's irregularity.

Place of Dhyana

Dhyana should be done in a secluded spot or a quiet room where there is no disturbance or distraction caused by people coming in, or going out, or talking in the vicinity. The room should also be darkened to the extent possible as this is helpful for the practice of dhyana.

Asana

We next come to the question of the correct 'asana' or posture to adopt while doing dhyana. In this regard it is preferable that the sadhaka adopts either the 'Padma Asana,' or the 'Siddha Asana,' or the 'Veer Asana,' during his dhyana practice. However, if he finds these asanas difficult, he may adopt any asana or posture that he finds easy or comfortable. The main points to keep in mind regarding asana are:—

- (a) The spine should be kept erect.
- (b) The weight of the body should be evenly distributed on the underside of the thighs and buttocks; if the weight is kept too far back then the main burden will be borne by the spine, as a consequence of which the sadhaka will tire quickly.
- (c) The body must be completely relaxed and at ease; if any part of the body is kept artificially stretched and taut, this will lead to early tiring of the concerned muscles, which in turn will lead to cramps and pains in that part of the body.
- (d) The face must be held level or even lifted slightly upwards; it should never be allowed to droop downwards. If the face is allowed to droop down, then it becomes difficult to retain concentration of the sight and mind and there will be a tendency to fall asleep.

If, due to fatigue, muscular pain or other reasons, a sadhaka cannot retain a steady posture, he may change his asana and continue dhyana. However, he must be careful not to break the concentration of his sight and

mind at the Bhrikuti, particularly the sight, during the process of changing the asana.

Physical Fitness and Diet

It goes without saying that unless a sadhaka is in sound health, he cannot hope to undertake dhyana because bodily ailments will distract the mind and prevent concentration. In case of illness, a sadhaka should take sacred vibhuti, mixed with water and the illness will be cured.

Prolonged sadhana requires bodily strength and energy. Hence it is essential that a sadhaka takes a nutritious and balanced diet, in moderate quantities. Dhyana should preferably be done on an empty or light stomach as an overloaded or full stomach tends to make a sadhaka mentally and physically sluggish.

For those who practice dhyana for long hours, it is desirable that when they terminate their dhyana, they should drink a glass of milk or partake of some other light repast; thereafter, they should rest for a while before resuming other work.

Once the foregoing essential preliminaries have been grasped, the sadhaka should commence serious practice of dhyana. To do this it is first necessary to clearly understand the basic 'Technique' of doing dhyana.

The Technique of Dhyana

Lakshaya: Aim or Purpose of Dhyana

When a person embarks on any quest he must, from the start, know what he is seeking, else he is likely to falter or go astray. Similarly, dhyana can only be practiced purposefully when the sadhaka is clear from the very start as to what he should strive to attain. In other words, he must be clear about the 'Lakshaya' or aim of dhyana. It is because of misunderstanding or confused thinking on this basic aspect that sadhakas wander off into incorrect practices and, consequently, go astray in their sadhana.

All our scriptures declare that the mind is the cause of our bondage and that 'Manonash' or destruction of the mind is Mukti (release from bondage). If we try to analyse this mind we find that the mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts; if we can successfully eliminate the thought waves of the mind then, like a lamp that is extinguished for want of oil, the mind, as we know it; will subside and die and we will attain realisation of the Atman, which is our real and eternal nature.

The aim or purpose of dhyana, therefore, is to achieve the destruction of the mind by controlling the 'Mano Vrittis,' i.e., the thought waves of the mind. In essence, what is implied is that the sadhaka, during dhyana, should aim at stilling the mind by eliminating all thoughts;

when thought is thus eliminated, only Chit or Pure Awareness remains; once this state of Pure Awareness is attained, the sadhaka should strive to focus his entire mind on this residual Awareness, and keep it steadily poised in this state, unobstructed by even the faintest trace of thought. By continuously holding onto this state the mind will die and Atman Sakshatkara or Self-Realisation will arise of its own accord.

The Technique of Dhyana

Having clarified our mind on what we must strive to achieve, we must now concern ourselves with how this is to be achieved; in other words we must now study the method or technique of dhyana. In order to facilitate a clearer understanding, the whole process of dhyana has been explained step by step in the paragraphs that follow. In this context the reader needs to be cautioned that though the technique of dhyana has been broken up into distinct and separate stages, this has been done primarily to enable a better understanding of the entire process. When putting this technique into practice the sadhaka will find that many of these different aspects merge together and occur simultaneously, which is as it should be; he need make no effort to compartmentalize each stage.

Steadying the Vision

When commencing dhyana, the sadhaka must first still the movement of his eyeballs by fixing his gaze on the 'Bhrikuti' (the space between the eyebrows). The novice usually makes the mistake of trying to still the sight by looking forcibly inwards; this causes strain to the muscles of the eyeballs, resulting in fatigue of these muscles. As a consequence, instead of being stilled, the eyeballs start quivering involuntarily and if the sadhaka persists in this practice, he is likely to develop a headache. This is obviously wrong. The process of stilling the sight should be a gradual and natural process wherein the sadhaka continues to gaze steadily at the Bhrikuti, without any strain whatsoever, until he can hold his vision steady at that spot, without allowing the eyeballs or the eyelids to flicker; this is a very important preliminary as, unless the sadhaka has mastered this aspect, further progress in dhyana is not possible. Initially, the sadhaka may take 15-20 minutes to achieve this steadiness of vision. Later, if he continues practicing regularly, he will start receiving help in this stilling process by the development of the Divine Power given by Sri Swamiji during the initiation. Initially, the development and manifestation of this power will be felt as heaviness of the eyelids; gradually, as this power develops with practice, the sadhaka will find that as soon as he sits for dhyana, this power takes hold and almost forcibly as it were, the vision is concentrated at the Bhrikuti and held steady there.

Stilling the Mind

It is the nature of the mind to flow out through the brain and the sense organs, thus becoming aware of the world of names and forms. As a first step, therefore, this outward flow of the mind, in myriad thought forms, is to be checked, and the mind made 'Ekagratha,' i.e., one pointed. This is done by concentrating the entire mind on the Bhrikuti and, thereafter, not allowing even a single thought to arise; even such a basic thought as "I am doing dhyana" must not be allowed to crop up.

Concentration on Chit

When the sight and the mind have been stilled, and the pure state of 'Ekagratha' is achieved, all names, forms and thoughts will fade away and only Chit, i.e., Pure Consciousness will remain. This Chit has no concrete form that can be grasped by the mind; it is the Residual Awareness of Existence, of 'Aham' (I am) that remains when all thought forms have been eliminated. When the sadhaka achieves this state, it will be something like gazing into vacancy; initially, this may appear like gazing at a blank wall of darkness; later, this darkness will give way to light and it will appear like gazing into a lighted crystal or a blazing mass of light.

Commencement of Dhyana.

It is only when the state of 'Ekagratha' or concentration on Pure Chit is achieved, by concentrating the sight and the mind at the Bhrikuti, that actual dhyana commences; all else that precedes the attainment of this state is only a prelude to dhyana; this preliminary process must not be mistaken for dhyana. Having attained the state of 'Ekagratha' on Pure Chit, the Sadhaka must then attempt to retain that state, unbroken by even a single thought wave. To put it into correct perspective then, dhyana is the effort made by the sadhaka to continue to abide in the state of Pure Chit; the excellence of the practice of dhyana lies in not allowing even a single 'vritti' or mental concept to disturb this state of Pure Awareness of Being; even the idea that he is doing dhyana should not be present in his mind.

When the sadhaka thus attempts to keep his mind steady and poised on Pure Chit, various thought waves, impelled by 'Purva Samskar' (inherent tendencies), will try to rise and disturb the even flow of his mind. The sadhaka must remain vigilant and alert and as soon as each thought crops up, it must be gently brushed aside and the calm flow of the mind retained. The mind, during dhyana, should remain still and unflickering "like a lamp in a windless place" and the calm flow of the mind should remain unbroken like a "continuous flow of oil".

The Guru's Grace

The technique of dhyana described above is an attempt to explain, step by step, the process of dhyana.

However, by 'Purna Shamagathi' (self surrender) at the feet of the Guru, and by unswerving 'abhyas' (practice) of dhyana, the power given by Sri Swamiji at the time of Diksha begins to develop in the sadhaka. When that happens, he will find that the entire preliminary process leading to attainment of the state of dhyana is automatically accomplished by this power. All that the sadhaka has to do then is to make the mind quiescent, and to surrender to this power; then this power or shakti takes over, concentrates the sight and mind on the Bhrikuti and holds it there. If a sadhaka feels agitation of the mind, flickering of the eyesight or tightness or pain near the eyes or forehead, he will find that these symptoms are due to his unconsciously resisting the functioning of this Shakti by fleeting thoughts; the moment these thoughts are stilled and the mind becomes quiescent again, these symptoms disappear and the Shakti resumes its automatic process of concentrating the sight and mind on the Bhrikuti; such is the beneficent effect of the Guru's Grace.

Some Problems and Misconceptions Common to Beginners

Turbulence of the Mind

It is the unvaried experience of those who take to dhyana for the first time that as soon as they sit for dhyana, all sorts of thoughts arise and they find it almost impossible to control the mind. They should not be worried or discouraged by this phenomenon, because dhyana can be likened to the churning up of the vast ocean of 'vasanas' (latent tendencies), which have accumulated from beginningless time; unless these vasanas are destroyed, the Atman cannot be realised. In order to accomplish this, the practice of dhyana throws up these 'vasanas' in the form of an endless stream of thoughts; as each thought is quelled or controlled, the related 'vasanas' get destroyed. Since he does not know or understand this, a sadhaka faced with this problem in the preliminary stages of his sadhana, invariably thinks that this is a problem peculiar to him alone and hence feels discouraged and dejected on this account. Therefore, he is usually surprised and relieved to learn that this is the universal experience of every sadhaka when he starts on the path of dhyana. Whereas it may be a source of solace to know that turbulence of the mind is a common problem for all beginners, it still does not help the sadhaka to control his wayward thoughts; in fact it appears to be an impossible task and sadhakas despair of ever being able to gain mastery over their minds. Therefore, the question of how the mind should be controlled is a recurring theme in all our scriptures. In this context, two well known questions and answers on this subject may be quoted. The first, taken from the Yoga Vasishtha, is the question put by Sri Rama to Vasishtha Maha Muni: "O Guru! Is it not possible to control the mind? One may sooner drink

up the oceans or lift up Mount Meru or swallow flaming fire than control the mind." To this Vasishtha replies: "Oh Rama, 'though the mind is hard to control yet it must be subdued by 'Vairagya' (Dispassion) and effort (practice) even at the cost of wringing your hands, clenching your teeth and holding down the senses and limbs; it must be controlled by will power." In the second example taken from the Bhagavad Gita, a similar question is put by Arjuna to Sri Krishna:—

Chanchaalm hi manah Krishna
Pramaathi balavat drishdam
Tasyaham nigraham manye
Vaayoriva sudushkaram (Gita 6:34)

"For, Krishna the mind is very unsteady, turbulent, tenacious and powerful; therefore, I consider it as difficult to control it as the wind."

And Sri Krishna replies:—

Asamshayam maha baho
Mano duni graham chalam
Abhyasen tu Kounteya
Vairaagyenacha grihaate (Gita 6:35)

"The mind is restless no doubt and difficult to subdue Arjuna but it can be brought under control by constant practice (Abhyasa) and by exercising dispassion (Vairagya)."

From the foregoing examples it can be seen that even such great personages as Sri Rama and Arjuna were afflicted by turbulence and restlessness of mind which should make it amply clear that it is an universal malady. And from the replies given by Vasishtha and Sri Krishna, it should be equally clear that there are no short cuts to controlling the mind. For, as per the advice given by Vasishtha to Sri Rama and by Sri Krishna to Arjuna, the two infallible remedies are cultivating 'Vairagya' and undertaking constant 'Abhyas'; by resolute adherence to these two guiding principles, the earnest sadhaka will gradually gain control over his mind; of this there need be no doubt.

Notwithstanding all his resolution and efforts, there will be days when the mind will be more agitated than normal and the sadhaka will find it difficult to control his surging thoughts by the normal processes of dhyana. On such occasions there is little point in forcibly trying to continue dhyana; the agitation of mind caused by the onrush of thoughts must first be subdued and the mind made calm: only then can dhyana be attempted again. Though a number of methods are prescribed for this purpose, the most efficacious is 'Pranayam' or breath control. It is an infallible rule that when the mind is controlled, the breath is controlled and, conversely, when the breath is controlled the mind becomes controlled. Therefore, by doing 'Pranayam' for a few minutes, as the breath becomes calm and regular, the mind will also calm down. In this context it is

emphasized that only the very simplest form of pranayam should be practised, for a period of 5 to 10 minutes only, and as soon as the mind becomes calm, pranayam should be discontinued and normal dhyana started; otherwise, unless pranayam is done under the guidance of a qualified teacher, it can lead to harm. A simpler and almost equally effective method is to mentally watch the inhaling and exhaling motion of the breath within the nostrils: this will result in breathing becoming calm and regular and will in turn lead to calming the mind.

If, in spite of all efforts to calm it, the mind still continues to be agitated, then the sadhaka should continue his dhyana, leave his seat and read some scriptural or other holy book, or listen to (or himself do) bhajans and kirtan, or do mental japam. When the agitation of the mind subsides, then he should sit for dhyana again.

Steadying the Sight and Concentrating the Mind

The process of steadying the sight and concentrating the mind is often misunderstood and wrongly applied by beginners. As explained in the 'technique' of dhyana, no force should be applied in concentrating the vision at the 'Bhrikuti', and once the vision has been steadied, it must be held there. Most beginners forget this and, after a few minutes, their eyeballs become unsteady and start flitting about again. This must be guarded against as, unless the vision is steady, there can be no progress in dhyana.

Similarly, many beginners make the mistake of trying to achieve concentration of mind by physical effort such as knitting the eyebrows, or looking forcefully at the Bhrikuti etc.; such practices will only result in fatigue and pain in the facial muscles and, if persisted in for any length of time, the sadhaka is likely to develop headache. In this context it needs to be remembered that concentration of the mind is a purely mental process and no physical act is involved. In the same way, the injunction that one should "dive deep" within during dhyana is often misinterpreted to mean trying to make the mind see deep within the physical body or to try and make it sink deep into the internal recesses of the body. In fact, diving deep within means making the 'bahir-mukhi' or outward turned mind 'antar-mukhi' or inward turned. It is the habit of thought that makes the mind 'bahir-mukhi'. Hence the degree to which the mind can be made 'antar-mukhi', depends solely on the extent to which a sadhaka is successful in eliminating other thoughts; as the thoughts are stilled, the mind gradually and of its own accord sinks back to its source, the Hridayam (spiritual heart). Therefore, making the mind "dive deep" in reality implies making it sink back to the Hridayam by freeing it from the tyranny of thought.

Japa and Concentration on Ishta during Dhyana

Even though it is explained at the time of initiation that whereas one may do 'Japa' prior to or after dhyana, no japa should be done during dhyana, the import of this instruction is rarely understood; sadhakas continue to do japa during dhyana, or try to concentrate their mind on their Ishta Deva or on Swamiji as their Guru. This must be avoided because doing of japa or mental picturisation of the Ishta or Guru are also only thoughts and if persisted in, will obstruct progress in dhyana. Therefore, these methods may be used in the initial stages to calm the mind, but once this has been achieved, japa or concentration on the Ishta Deva should be discontinued and the sadhaka should aim at keeping his mind concentrated only on 'Chit'.

The Mental Eye and Mental Ear

It is also not realized by many that apart from the external eye and the external ear, all of us have a mental eye and a mental ear. Because of these mental organs, even if external sights and sounds are cut off, the sadhaka's dhyana will be obstructed by mental pictures conjured up by the mental eye and by sounds and speech conjured up by the mental ear, whereby the sadhaka conducts mental conversations with his mental images. Hence the importance of concentrating the sight at the 'Brikuti'; if the mental sight is kept concentrated on the Bhrikuti, it will not be able to create mental pictures, and in the absence of these pictures, there will be no scope for mental speech either.

Progress During the Initial Stages

It will thus be seen that a sadhaka who sets out on the 'dhyana marga' will be prone to make many mistakes and will have to face some initial hurdles, but if he persists in his practice and resolutely overcomes these hurdles by the methods indicated, he will soon find his path smooth and he will start progressing in his sadhana. In the very early stages, as control of mind is gained, the sadhaka will start attaining periods of thoughtlessness: these periods will normally last for just a few seconds and then, because the sadhaka's alertness slackens, thoughts will shoot up again. The only answer, of course, is to regain control of the mind; no matter where and how frequently the restless and wayward mind may stray, it must be brought back, made still and again concentrated on the Bhrikuti. Thus during the initial stages of the sadhana, the periods of actual dhyana, which implies those periods when the mind and sight are completely stilled and fully concentrated, may be achieved for only a minute or so during the entire one hour or more devoted to the practice of dhyana. However, as dhyana practice continues, the length of the period for which the mind can be held still, as also the frequency of such periods, will both increase. This alone is the measure of progress in one's dhyana.

Obstructions to Dhyana

Sleep

During dhyana the mind, impelled by the vasanas, tends to drift into reverie; when this is prevented and the mind rendered thoughtless, the sadhaka involuntarily drifts into sleep. The only way to prevent this is for the sadhaka to strive to retain awareness during dhyana. If, however, the impulse to sleep is over-powering, it is best to let nature take its course and go to sleep, and to sleep on until the mind and the system attain satiety. Once such satiety is achieved, the urge to sleep will not obstruct dhyana, at least for sometime.

Bliss of Manolaya

When thought is extinguished, the sadhaka experiences the state of Manolaya or subsidence of the mind. This state of 'laya' brings peace of mind, as a result of which the sadhaka experiences a feeling of joy or bliss. Many sadhakas mistakenly assume that they have attained the goal when they experience 'Manolaya' and are content to abide in this state. However, the goal of dhyana is not merely to attain 'Manolaya', but to attain 'Manonasha', i.e., total destruction of the mind, and a sadhaka must press on with his dhyana until this is achieved.

Shunya or Void

Another common cause for doubt and anxiety occurs when thoughts have been extinguished and the sadhaka comes up against a seemingly impenetrable wall of blankness, which is referred to in the scriptures as Shunya or Void. In almost all books dealing with 'Nirgunopasana', we find the disciple questioning his Guru on this phenomenon of there being nothing left when thought is extinguished, resulting in the experience of Shunya or void; the disciple is consequently perplexed and does not know how to proceed further in his sadhana. In order to resolve this doubt the Guru explains to the disciple that the void is not self manifest; there has to be some one who perceives that void; He who is the witness of this void is the Atman only and hence the disciple is advised by the Guru to seek Him who is the witness of the void. Explaining this same point Sri Ramana Maharishi said, "First one sees the Atman as objects; then one sees the Atman as void; finally, one sees the Atman as Atman: only in this last case there is no seeing because seeing is being."

Mistaking Somnolence for Dhyana

Some sadhakas allow their mind to drift into a passive state of somnolence and imagine that they are immersed in deep dhyana. This is just another example of the delusive tricks that the mind plays when it is subjected to the discipline of dhyana. In this context it needs to be emphasised that dhyana is anything but somnolence; on the contrary, dhyana involves an intense activity of

the entire mind to keep it steadily poised and concentrated on 'chit'; the mind during dhyana can be likened to a spinning top which, though apparently stationary, is revolving at top speed.

The Influence of the Three Gunas

A Sadhaka who practices dhyana regularly will notice that at times the mind is peaceful and calm and dhyana is easy; at other times he will find dhyana obstructed by excessive thoughts or just plain lassitude. This is because the mind is subject to the continuous influence of the three Gunas, viz, 'Satwa', 'Rajas' and 'Tamas'. At anyone time, one or the other of these three 'Gunas' holds sway over the mind and the moods and mental condition of the sadhaka are determined accordingly. Thus, when 'Satwa' prevails, dispassion, peace, calmness of mind etc. manifest; when 'Rajas' prevails strong desires, lust, anger, greed, fear, driving ambition etc. manifest: when Tamas prevails laziness, confusion, dullness of mind etc. manifest. From the foregoing description of the three Gunas it is obvious that a sadhaka should try and cultivate the 'Satwa Guna' as this Guna is most beneficial for his sadhana. To do this, he must overcome 'Tamas' by cultivating 'Rajas'; he must subdue 'Rajas' by cultivating 'Satwa'; and when 'Satwa' prevails, he must take advantage of the favourable conditions that it brings by increasing the intensity of his sadhana. As the sadhaka makes progress in dhyana, he will find that the prevalence of the Satwa Guna will increase and, correspondingly, the prevalence of the Rajo and Tamo Gunas will decrease. Helpful as this may be, the sadhaka nevertheless needs to remember that he cannot be wholly free from the influence of the three Gunas till such time as he has not attained the final goal of Atman Gyan (self realisation). By acquiring this understanding of the influence and function of the three Gunas, a Sadhaka will also be able to understand the sudden and apparently inexplicable fluctuations in his mental state and he will not, thereafter, be puzzled or depressed by the contrary modes of mind produced by Rajas and Tamas.

The Baneful Influence of the Tamo Guna

In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali it is stated that: "Sickness, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, sloth, craving for sense pleasures, false perception, despair caused by failure to concentrate and unsteadiness in concentration: these distractions are the obstacles to knowledge. These distractions are accompanied by grief, despondency, trembling of the body and irregular breathing." (Chapter 1: Sutras 30, 31) From the indications given here almost all the distractions listed by Patanjali come under the category of 'Tamas'. The sloth or mental lassitude induced by Tamas is indeed the greatest enemy of the sadhaka. When a sadhaka first embarks upon the spiritual life, he does so with great faith and enthusiasm. During the first

few months, under the impetus of this initial inspiration, the sadhaka makes good progress; he finds sadhana easy and pleasurable, and he is filled with peace and joy. However, it is very necessary for him to know right from the start that this inspired mood will not last long. As the other 'Gunas' come into play, he is likely to relapse into his former state; there will be periods of dryness and doubt, necessitating hard struggle. He will probably feel that he is unfit for a spiritual life and will be tempted to give it up. But a sadhaka must never give way to such feelings of despair; these are prompted by 'Tamas'. If he continues resolutely in his sadhana, such dark moods of doubt and despair will pass and he will be able to continue with redoubled vigour. With each such struggle, he will take a major stride forward.

Heated Brain and Headaches

Some Sadhakas complain of a heated brain and or headaches during dhyana. These may either be caused by incorrect application of the technique of dhyana or they may be due to a subconscious resistance of the mind and body to the unaccustomed discipline of dhyana. The answer in such cases is to avoid physical and mental strain; relax, particularly mentally, and dhyana will become easy. Instead of trying to forcibly concentrate the mind, the sadhaka should aim to keep the mind steady by gently warding off intruding thoughts as they arise, but without causing mental strain.

Attainments through Dhyana Sadhana

Progress in Dhyana

Once the sadhaka has gained proficiency in keeping his sight and mind steady, he will reach a stage of calm abidance in pure Chit. When once the mind reaches this state of steadiness, it should be left undisturbed; nothing should be thought of; the mind should be made to rest in its pristine state. When thus the mind is kept continuously poised in dhyana, it will become extinct, for "just as a fire is automatically extinguished if not fed with fuel, so does the mind become extinct if not fed with thoughts." (Devikalottra).

Sadhakas usually feel, and often complain, that they are making no progress. That is because, in spite of long years of practice, they do not find in themselves any external manifestations indicative of progress. However, it needs to be remembered in this context that the changes being brought in the sadhaka are internal and hence not evident to the sadhaka himself; only the Guru knows and can discern the actual progress made. There are, nevertheless, certain indicators which act like sign posts to reassure the sadhaka that he is on the right track and is progressing; these are:—

- (a) Development of the power given by Sri Swamiji
- (b) Visions

- (c) Powers
- (d) Manifestation of Spiritual Currents
- (e) Rise of the "Kundalini Shakti"
- (f) Experience of ananda (bliss)

It needs to be stressed though that it is highly unlikely that every sadhaka will experience all the above manifestations; a sadhaka will usually experience one or more of the above manifestations, and in varying degrees, according to his own personal inclinations and mental attitudes. There is no absolute rule in this regard, nor is it essential for a sadhaka's progress to experience all the above manifestations. Hence a sadhaka must not lose heart just because he is not having any of these experiences; It merely means that he does not need them and can progress without them.

Development of Power given during Diksha.

This aspect has been dealt with earlier also, but it needs to be elaborated a bit more at this stage. After receiving initiation, as the sadhaka continues his practice, he will find that the Divine Power given by Sri Swamiji at the time of dhyana will begin to gradually grow within him. Externally, it will first be felt in the form of heaviness of the eyelids at the time of dhyana; later, as it grows stronger by continued practice, it will manifest itself in the form of a strong and compelling pull, drawing the sight and mind towards the Bhrikuti. In fact, the manifestation of this power at times becomes so strong that, to an onlooker, the sadhaka's face appears to undergo contortions under its influence, though the sadhaka himself is usually unaware of this fact. Once this power develops, all that the sadhaka has to do is to submit to it and not resist it in any way; he will find that this power on its own will draw the sadhaka's sight and mind to the Bhrikuti and hold them there. As mentioned earlier also, if a sadhaka finds his eyeballs flickering, or feels tightness or pain around the eyes and forehead, or experiences an uncomfortable strain on the mind, he will find that these are merely warning signals that he is unconsciously resisting the working of this power by allowing thoughts to play his mind; the moment he controls his thoughts and makes the mind quiet again, the power resumes its work unhindered and these stress signals disappear. As this power increases with practice, the sadhaka will find it progressively easier to concentrate his sight and mind, and he will be able to sit for dhyana for longer hours.

Visions

Visions are about the most misunderstood aspect of dhyana. Sadhakas talk to older devotees, hear them speak of their varied visions, and thereby conclude that visions are the sole indicators of progress; in fact, many sadhakas treat visions as the be-all and end-all of dhyana. These wrong notions need to be dispelled. Regarding visions, Sri Swamiji has repeatedly stressed

that visions are not an essential feature of dhyana and the fact that a sadhaka sees no visions should be no cause for despondency. Undoubtedly, during the earlier stages of dhyana, seeing of visions is a great source of encouragement and gives a tremendous filip to a sadhaka's endeavour, enthusiasm and progress. However, during the more advanced stages, a sadhaka has to transcend these visions in order to make further progress and, at this stage, the habitual desire for seeing visions acts as a brake and an obstacle as the sadhaka is merely satisfied if he sees a vision and has no will or inclination to transcend them and proceed further. Hence Sri Swamiji vouchsafes visions only to those who he feels require such aids for their further progress in dhyana; this again is determined by the personal proclivities of the sadhaka such as whether he is attracted by the personal or impersonal aspect of God, whether he yearns for visions etc. If Sri Swamiji finds that a sadhaka can carry on dhyana without the need for visions, then such a sadhaka may not get any visions at all.

Be that as it may, it is important to remember that visions, if they have to come, will come at their own time and of their own accord. This point is being stressed because many sadhakas fall into the error trying to "will" visions. This is wrong, because such attempts at trying to force visions by "willing" them only disturbs the natural tenor of the dhyana and often obstructs a vision that might have come, had the sadhaka let dhyana take its natural course. And, when in spite of such yearning and intense effort no vision results, (and it will not for the reason stated earlier), the sadhaka feels despondent and frustrated. It cannot be overstressed that a vision, when it has to come, will come spontaneously and of its own accord; it cannot be willed by the sadhaka, however how hard he tries; in fact, such willing may lead to mental hallucinations and may cause him harm.

Again, in the context of visions, a sadhaka needs to be cautioned that he must never allow himself to forget the basic aim of dhyana, which is to concentrate the sight and mind at the Bhrikuti and keep the mind free of thought and poised in Pure Awareness or Chit. When lights or visions arise during dhyana and flit across the mind, he must not allow himself to be carried away by them and try to follow them with his eyes; he should see them if they come within the orbit of his steadied vision, or else he should let them pass. He will find that if he tries to follow a vision as it flits across his mind, he will not only lose his concentration but the vision will also fade away; if he keeps his sight and mind steadily concentrated on the Bhrikuti, the vision will also steady itself and remain within the orbit of his sight. These visions come in a flash, last a few second and then disappear.

Powers

Like visions, powers are another attainment keenly sought after by sadhakas, particularly the uninitiated. In fact, there are many who take to dhyana not because of a desire to attain spiritual benefit and realisation, but primarily because of their desire to attain powers; this craving is excited and further whetted by the stories they hear and the accounts they read of the various extraordinary powers attained by different disciples of Sri Swamiji. It will not be out of place, therefore, to caution the sincere seeker in this regard.

Whereas visions are a help to the sadhaka in his spiritual progress, powers are of no help whatsoever; in fact they constitute a major stumbling block. When a sadhaka attains any extra-ordinary power, there is always a temptation to exhibit it; such exhibition leads to adulation from the ignorant populace who generally confuse miracle mongering with spirituality. Such popular adulation inevitably gives an unwelcome boost to the sadhaka's ego, which in turn prevents any further spiritual progress. Sooner or later, the sadhaka who possesses these powers is tempted to use them for selfish purposes, and this leads to a headlong fall from the spiritual path; such unfortunate sadhakas not only lose the powers that they once possessed, but with them they also lose their spiritual discernment and end up far worse than what they were when they first set out on the spiritual path. Powers, therefore, are to be shunned like poison.

Sri Swamiji constantly warns sadhakas against the dangers inherent in the attainment and misuse of powers. But the fact is that various powers come to a sadhaka unasked and unsolicited, during the course of his sadhana; not necessarily to all, but certainly to many. Should this happen, the sadhaka should on no account exhibit or use these powers; he should, instead, pray ardently to Sri Swamiji to take these powers away from him. If he is sincere in his supplications, Sri Swamiji will withdraw these powers, or at least they will lose their capacity to harm the sadhaka's spiritual progress.

Sri Swamiji also cautions that during dhyana many forms of Devas and Devis will appear before the sadhaka and tempt him by granting him various boons. On such occasions, the sadhaka should never ask for any powers or any material benefit; he should, instead, ask only for bhakti and dhyana siddhi.

Sri Swamiji does, however, make exceptions in the case of spiritually matured and advanced disciples; to them he grants certain powers so that they can do 'Jana Seva' and help other sadhakas in their spiritual progress. However, in the case of these chosen disciples there is no danger of misuse as their ego has been eliminated and they have no personal desires. Whatever powers

Sri Swamiji grants them, they use for the benefit of others, strictly in accordance with his directions.

Spiritual Currents

As dhyana progresses, spiritual currents will start manifesting themselves in the sadhaka's body. These are occasioned by the stirring into wakefulness and subsequent movements of the Kundalini Shakti. These currents will be felt in varying intensities in different parts of the body; their frequency and manifestation are unpredictable. They occur of their own accord and at varying intervals. These currents are helpful to the sadhaka both physically and spiritually, for they cure physical ailments, improve health, give the sadhaka energy for continuing his dhyana, eliminate worries and calm the mind.

Rise of the Kundalini Shakti

According to the 'Yoga Shastras', a vast reservoir of spiritual energy is located at the base of the spine; this is known as the 'Kundalini Shakti' which, literally translated, means: 'coiled up energy'. During the course of a sadhaka's spiritual practices, this spiritual energy which is lying coiled up and dormant, is stirred up into wakefulness and moves up along a spiritual channel known as the 'Sushumna Nadi', which corresponds to the location of the spinal column, to the Sahasrara or thousand petalled lotus said to be located at the crown of the head. On this upward journey, the 'Kundalini Shakti' passes through six 'Chakras' or centres of spiritual consciousness which are:—

1. The 'Muladhara Chakra', which is located at the base of the spine.
2. The 'Swadhisthana Chakra', which is located along the spine, approximately opposite the genital organs.
3. The 'Manipura Chakra', which is located along the spine, approximately opposite the navel.
4. The 'Anhata"Chakru', which is located along the spine approximately in line with the heart.
5. The 'Visuddhi Chakra', which is located along the spine, at the base of the neck, in the rear.
6. The 'Ajna Chakra', which is located in the central cavity where the vertical line connecting the crown of the head to the soft palate joins the horizontal line connecting the two ears.

As the Kundalini Shakti travels upwards through these 'Chakras' the sadhaka will have experiences and encounter obstacles peculiar to each Chakra; these are given in some detail below.

Muladhara Chakra

The mind of a worldly person is said to dwell in the three lower centres or chakras; the mind does not manifest any spiritual aspirations and is normally obsessed by desires of a material and worldly nature. However, once the Kundalini Shakti is awakened as a result of Diksha and Dhyana, the following indications become manifest:-

- a) Indications: There will be a keen desire to do more and more dhyana.
- b) Experiences: A sadhaka may obtain a vision of his Ishta Deva during Dhyana.
- c) Obstacles: The sadhaka may be afflicted with various bodily ailments but such ailments will not hamper his dhyana. Such ailments can be cured by Sri Swamiji's 'ashirvad' and by use of vibhuti given by Sri Swamiji.

Swadhisthana Chakra

- a) Indications: When the Kundalini is in this Chakra the mind becomes very agitated (Chanchal). A sadhaka feels restless and usually roams from place to place. He also feels excessively hungry.
- b) Experiences: The experiences he may have been having earlier disappear and though he yearns to have experiences, his yearning is not fulfilled. This causes depression of mind.
- c) Obstacles: The mind is agitated and disturbed; the sadhaka feels depressed and is tormented by excessive craving for food. These obstacles are to be overcome by persistence and regularity in dhyana, and by increasing the time spent on dhyana to the maximum possible.

Manipura Chakra

- a) Indications: Sadhaka starts experiencing samadhi and soon reaches a stage when, as soon as he sits for dhyana, he goes into samadhi.
- b) Experiences: Powers begin to manifest themselves such as ability to materialise at a distant place.
- c) Obstacles: As soon as a sadhaka gets up from dhyana, he is tempted to tryout his powers and if he yields to this temptation, he is soon misled into trying to show off the powers he has acquired. As a consequence of this his ego gains strength and, correspondingly, his 'Bhakti' or devotion to God and his Guru diminishes. In order to overcome this obstacle the sadhaka should refrain from exhibiting his powers.

Anhata Chakra

- a) Indications: The sadhaka acquires 'Yoga Siddhi' or 'Vachan Siddhi', i.e. whatever he says comes true or is fulfilled.
- b) Experiences: The sadhaka acquires the power to roam about in his 'Sukshuma Sharir' or astral body wheresoever he wills.
- c) Obstacles: As additional powers manifest, the sadhaka's 'Ahankara' (pride, self importance) greatly increases so much so that he forgets that it is by the Guru's grace alone that he has attained this present state. The sadhaka goes around boasting and showing off and, at times, may even go to the extent of deriding his Guru. As the saying goes, 'Pride goes before a fall', and sure enough this pride and egoism that he develops lead to his downfall. The only answer of course, is to shun these powers like poison and to pray sincerely to the Guru for his 'Ashirwad' so that he (the sadhaka) does not fall prey to egoism and pride.

Visudhi Chakra

- a) Indication: The sadhaka experiences deep and blissful samadhi.
- b) Experiences: The sadhaka sees divine light and has darshan of his Ishta Deva in dhyana. He attains the power to go anywhere he likes in his 'Sukshuma Sharir' including other 'Lokas' or planes of existence such as 'Deva Loka', 'Mrityu Loka', etc.
- c) Obstacles: There are no obstacles experienced at this stage.

Ajna Chakra

- a) Indications and Experiences: The sadhaka experiences deep samadhi and strong currents. The sadhaka obtains vision of the Atman, but there is still a trace of individually left. As Sri Ramakrishna puts it, "It is like a light in a lantern; one feels one could touch the light but cannot, because of the obstructing pane of glass".
- b) Obstacles: It is at this stage that the sadhaka is tested and, consequently, undergoes his ordeal by fire. Patanjali also cautions the Sadhaka thus: "When tempted by the invisible beings in high places let the Yogi feel neither allured nor flattered; for he is in danger of being caught once more by ignorance." (Chapter 3: Sutra 52). The "Invisible beings in high places" mentioned here are the 'Devis' and 'Devatas' who tempt the sadhaka with various heavenly allurements and enjoyments and try to deflect him from his path. The sadhaka succumbs to these temptation then

he falls from the path and becomes a 'Yoga Bhrasta'; in case of a fall, there is also danger of mental disease. Hence, this is the stage when the greatest help is required from the Guru; it is only by the Guru's 'Ashirwad' (blessings) and his raksha (protection) that the sadhaka can hope to steer a safe course through the powerful temptations to which he is subjected. Even in the lives of divine incarnations we read about this period of testing; e.g. Jesus being tempted by Satan in the wilderness; or Buddha being tempted by the Devil Mara just before he gained the final illumination.

The Sahasrara

If the sadhaka successfully resists the various temptations and sticks resolutely to the Yogic path, the Kundalini finally rises to the seventh plane, The thousand petalled lotus in the crown of the head known as the Sahasrara. When this happens, the sadhaka passes into Nirvikalpa Samadhi and experiences Atman Sakshatkara.

Samadhi

The only difference between fully matured dhyana and samadhi is that the state of dhyana is attained by effort and is kept up by effort; samadhi is a state of effortless abidance in the Atman. Samadhi, like everything else in dhyana, cannot be induced by the sadhaka by an act of will. It comes automatically, of its own accord, when the sadhaka has acquired the requisite state of maturity in his dhyana. While doing dhyana, he will effortlessly pass into samadhi,; this initial samadhi may last for half an hour or more; then the vasanas, which are still active, will pull his mind down from samadhi again. As the sadhaka continues his dhyana in the proper manner, such samadhi will become more frequent.

Samadhi is of Three kinds:—

- a) Savikalpa Samadhi.
- b) Nirvikalpa Samadhi.
- c) Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Savikalpa Samadhi

In the advanced state of dhyana, the mind turns away from objectivity to subjectivity and, when that happens, Savikalpa Samadhi ensues. During this samadhi, the mind is resolved in its origin, the 'Hridayam' or heart and the sadhaka is sunk in deep peace and bliss, without the least ripple of thought. However, the sadhaka still retains consciousness of his identity and hence the feeling continues to persist that he, the subject, is doing dhyana and the Atman is the object of his dhyana. As he is aware of this differentiation, he has to make an effort to hold on to this state of Savikalpa Samadhi.

Nirvikalpa Samadhi

By continuously holding on to Savikalpa Samadhi, the sadhaka eventually experiences Nirvikalpa Samadhi. In this state the mind sinks into and is resolved into the Atman; there is not the least trace of 'I' or separate identity; in fact there is no knowledge apart from the awareness of blissful existence. In connection with Nirvikalpa Samadhi, it is stated in the 'Viveka Chudamani' that: "When the mind is purified by sadhana, one passes from Savikalpa to Nirvikalpa Samadhi; this in turn leads to the direct realisation of the Atman. This Nirvikalpa Samadhi destroys all vasanas, and severs the Chit-Jada Granthi; thereafter, everything is seen as a manifestation of the Atman only; The difference of you, I, this, that etc. disappears."

Once Nirvikalpa Samadhi is attained, further effort by the sadhaka is neither necessary nor possible. Effort is only possible up to and including the stage of Savikalpa Samadhi; once Nirvikalpa Samadhi is attained, the sadhaka is no longer aware of his 'I', i.e. of his existence as a separate individual, and hence there is no one left to make any further effort. At this stage, some higher power takes over and leads the sadhaka on until the final realisation.

Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi

Sahaja Samadhi is remaining in the primal, pure, natural state without effort. This is the highest state and the goal of all Yogis.

The sadhaka no longer sees himself as an individual but is in conscious identity with the Param-Atman. There is now no more need for him to do dhyana or any other sadhana. Though he may engage in normal day to day activities, he no longer identifies himself with these activities but treats them as a dreamer treats a dream experience. In fact, in the Sahaja state, the Yogi is aware only of the Atman; it is a continuous experience of oneness: "Ekoha, Dwityo Nasti."

Tapas

There are many ardent sadhakas who repeatedly request Sri Swamiji to initiate them into 'Tapas.' Such Sadhakas obviously do not comprehend the true meaning and nature of Tapas. The difference between normal dhyana and Tapas is that during dhyana the sadhaka is conscious of the body; Tapas implies being immersed in samadhi during which the sadhaka is not at all conscious of his body and his surroundings; whereas dhyana is intermittent and is interrupted by thoughts, Tapas is continuous like the flow of oil. From this it will be apparent that only that sadhaka is fit for undertaking Tapas who has reached the samadhi stage, and who is capable of holding onto his samadhi for long periods. Obviously, therefore, a sadhaka cannot undertake Tapas merely by his having a wish to do so; it is only by

practice of dhyana over a period of time that the mind is purified and prepared for samadhi and Tapas; the duration of this preparatory period depends on the spiritual maturity of the individual and the amount of time and effort he devotes to the practice of dhyana.

Initially, Tapas follows a six hour cycle. Beginning from midnight, the sadhaka will be immersed in samadhi for about 5 or 5 1/2 hours; at 0500-0530 hours his eyes will automatically open and he will emerge from the state of Samadhi; this will be repeated at 1100-1130 hours, at 1700-1730 hours and at 2300-2330 hours. When the sadhaka emerges from samadhi, he should drink some water. He should then take light nourishment which should be restricted to only milk and fruits; in case preferred, 'Lassi' (diluted curds) may be taken instead of milk. After this light repast, the sadhaka should sleep for about 10 minutes to digest the milk and fruits he has consumed. Thereafter, he may walk around within the house or ashram compound if he likes. This rest period between samadhi should be restricted to 30 minutes to 1 hour. During the midnight rest period, the sadhaka should have his daily bath; after his bath, he should rest for one hour. As the intensity of Tapas increases, the sadhaka will remain immersed in samadhi for longer and longer periods until during the advanced stages, he will be in continuous samadhi for all the 24 hours, except for an one hour break at midnight when he can take his bath and partake of some light refreshment of milk and fruit. The sadhaka must continue his Tapas until, by 'Guru Kripa' he obtains Sakshatkara and is instructed by his Guru to rise and discontinue his Tapas. If the sadhaka leaves off Tapas without 'Guru Agya' (Guru's permission), he will face difficulties and he will have to come back to his Guru in order to complete his sadhana.

Sakshatkara

The state of Sakshatkara, of course, can never be described because it is beyond mind and speech. However, there are various indications given in the scriptures and in the descriptions left to us by the great sages who have attained this final state.

The great Sages say that "to remain always as the Pure Atman is sakshatkara or realisation." Elaborating this, Sage Vasishtha has said in 'Yoga Vasishtha': "Just as the mind in a stone remains quiet and modeless, so also like the interior of the stone to remain unmoded and thought free, but not in slumber nor aware of duality, is to be fixed as the Real Atman."

Sri Shankaracharya has said: "Just as in the ignorant state unmindful of the identity of the Atman with Brahman, one truly believes one self to be the body, so also after knowledge, to be free from the illusion of the body, being the Atman, and becoming unaware of the body, undoubtingly and unmistakably and always to experience the Atman as the Sat-Chit-Ananda identical with Brahman is called Sakshatkara."

Talking about the experience at the time of obtaining Sakshatkara, Sri Ramana Maharshi has said: "Realisation is called 'Vritti Jnana'. You can feel yourself one with the one that exists; the whole body becomes a mere power, a force current, your life becomes a needle drawn to a huge mass of magnet and as you go deeper you become a mere centre and not even that, you become mere consciousness. There are no thoughts and cares any longer; they are shattered at the threshold; it is an inundation; you are a mere straw; you are swallowed alive; but it is very delightful, for you become the very thing that swallows you. This is the union of 'Jiva' with 'Brahman', the loss of the ego in the real Atman, the destruction of ignorance, the attainment of Truth."

Sri Swamiji, when questioned about Sakshatkara, has been somewhat reticent about this final and culminating aspect of dhyana. As he explains it, this is something that has to be experienced and cannot be put into words. That apart, even if an attempt is made to convey the nature of this experience, by suitable hints and examples, only very advanced sadhakas would be able to understand it. Therefore Sri Swamiji feels that details about Sakshatkara should only be given once sadhakas have acquired a deeper understanding of dhyana; these

details may, perhaps, be included in a later edition of this book, or in a new book when it is written; for the present, Sri Swamiji has confined his remarks to clarifying the nature of experience at the time of Sakshatkara. According to Sri Swamiji, this experience will depend on the spiritual propensity of individual sadhakas; thus, those sadhakas who are inclined towards the 'Nirguna Bhava' (devotion to the Attributeless Absolute), will obtain 'Atman Sakshatkara' on the successful completion of their dhyana practices; those who are inclined towards the 'Saguna Bhava' (devotion to God with Attributes) will obtain Sakshatkara of their 'Ishta Deva' instead. In the same context he has further clarified that there is no essential difference in these two forms of Sakshatkara; for it is the same Atman that manifests either as pure Atman, or appears in the form of the Ishta Deva.

In conclusion, it needs to be emphasized and stressed that Sakshatkara can never be obtained by a sadhaka merely by personal endeavour. Sakshatkara is essentially the result of the Grace of God, who comes in the form of the Guru, to bless and bestow realisation and 'mukti' on the Yogi who has striven hard and ceaselessly on the path of Union with God. This must never be forgotten.

ASHRAMS

Adivarapupeta :

1. Sri Shivabalayogi Ashram (Adi Ashram)
Adivarapupeta
P.O Drakshrama
Taluq Ramachandrapuram
Dist. East Godavari (Andhra Pradesh)

Bangalore:

2. Sri Shivabalayogi Ashram
Bannerghatta Road
Bangalore-560029
3. Sri Shivabalayogi Ashram
No. 1A, III Phase
J.P. Nagar, Bangalore-560078

Ananthpur:

4. Sri Shivabalayogi Ashram
Bangalore Road
Ananthpur (Andhra Pradesh)

Dehra Dun:

5. Sri Shivabalayogi Ashram
180 C. Rajpur Road
Dehra Dun (Uttar Pradesh)

Sambhar Lake:

6. Sri Shivabalayogi Satsang Mandir
Sambhar Lake (Rajasthan)

CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
24 Jan 1935	Birth of Sathyaraju
Jul 1937	Bheemanna, father of Sathyaraju passes away.
07 Aug 1949	Initiation into Tapo Marg.
Oct 1949	Bala-Yogi goes to Pasalpudi Ashram and returns after a sojourn of one day.
Nov 1949	Tempest lashes Adivarapupeta, but leaves Bala-Yogi untouched.
18 Nov 1949	Bala-Yogi shifts venue of Tapas to the Burial Ground.
Dec 1949	Bala-Yogi bitten by a cobra, with resultant affliction.
Jul/Aug 1950	Bala-Yogi loses control over his limbs.
Oct 1950	Dhyana Mandir completed and Bala-Yogi shifted to Dhyana Mandir
Jan 1951 (First week)	First visit of Tapaswiji Maharaj.
1951 later half	Bala-Yogi afflicted by burning sensation due to black magic, cured by Tapaswiji Maharaj
Oct 1952	Tapaswiji Maharaj initiates Bala Yogi into Surya Upasana Mantra.
Jan 1953	Bala-Yogi regains use of his limbs through the grace of his Divine Guru.
28 Oct 1953	Sakshatkara of Shankara Bhagavan and Siddhi, including Dik-Siddhi of Eastern Direction.
29 Oct 1953	Commencement of Tapas of Northern Direction.
Oct 1954	Sakshatkara of Surya and Siddhi of Surya Mantra.
Oct 1954	Divine Guru takes Bala-Yogi to Surya Mandal.
01 Aug 1955	Sakshatkara of Shankara Bhagavan and Dik-Siddhi of Northern Direction.
07 Aug 1955	Commencement of Tapas of Western Direction.
12 Oct 1955	(a) Tapaswiji attains Mahasamadhi. (b) Bala-Yogi bitten by amber coloured Naag.
25 Jun 1956	Sakshatkara of Girija and Natesa and Dik-Siddhi of Western Direction.
26 Jun 1956	Commencement of Tapas of Southern Direction.
May 1957	Sakshatkara Bhagavan and Dik-Siddhi of Southern Direction.
01 Aug 1961	Sakshatkara of Shiva and Parvati and Siddhi of Yuga Tapas.
07 Aug 1961	Completion of twelve years of Yuga Tapas.
19 Jan 1962	Propitiating of Raktha Kali by Sri Swamiji.
Mar 1962 (Shiva Ratri)	Installation of Shiva Lingam and Murthi of Mother Parvati by Sri Swamiji.
21 Mar 1963	Sri Swamiji leaves Adivarapupeta for first tour.
07 Aug 1963	Sri Swamiji inaugurates Ashram at Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore.
Mar 1965	Swamiji starts on second tour.
Mar 1965	Sri Swamiji's first visit to Dehra Dun.
07 Aug 1965	Sri Swamiji inaugurates Ashram at Sambhar Lake, Rajasthan.
Sept 1965	Sri Swamiji undertakes 40 days Tapas for Desha Raksha and re-establishment of peace during Indo-Pak War-1965.
07 Aug 1968	Sri Swamiji undertakes one year's Tapas at the behest of Divine Guru at Bangalore.
Dec 1971	Sri Swamiji undertakes 40 day's Tapas for Desha Raksha and re-establishment of peace during Indo-Pak War 1971.
13 Feb 1972 (Shiva Ratri)	Sri Swamiji inaugurates the Ashram at Dehra Dun.
15 Jan 1976	Mahasamadhi of mother Parvathamma.
07 Aug 1977	Opening of International Centre for Indian Culture at J.P. Nagar, Bangalore.

GLOSSARY

- Abhyas — Practice.
- Adi Ashram — The First Ashram.
- Advaita — Non-dual
- Advaita Vedanta — The Philosophical portion of the Vedas which expounds the philosophy of Non-dualism.
- Aham — 'I' or ego.
- Ahamkar — The ego sense or the sense of 'I'.
- Ajna Chakra — Yoga centre of concentration, see Chapter 9.
- Anahat Chakra — Yoga centre of concentration, see Chapter 9.
- Ananda — Bliss.
- Antarmukhi — Turned inward.
- Arjuna — One of the five Pandavas to whom Shri Krishna expounded the Bhagvad Gita.
- Asana — Yogic Posture.
- Asanga — Unattached, in this context implies being unattached in any way to the fruits of one's action.
- Ashanti — Lack of peace.
- Ashirwad — Blessings
- Ashram — A holy retreat.
- Atman — Self.
- Atman Vidya — Knowledge of self.
- Anna Daan — The gift of food; the feeding of the poor and the needy, undertaken as a charitable act.
- Bahir Mukhi — Turned outward.
- Bala Yogi — Boy Yogi.
- Beedi — A type of cheap cigarette popular in India.
- Bhagvad Gita — The discourse given by Shri Krishna to Arjuna.
- Bhakti — Devotion and love.
- Bhrikuti — The point between the two eye brows.
- Bramhan — The Absolute.
- Bramhacharya — Celibacy.
- Buddha — Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.
- Chakras — yoga centres of concentration.
- Chanchal — Agitated or unsteady.
- Chidabhas — The reflected consciousness of the Atman which gives rise to the 'Jiva'.
- Chit — Pure or absolute consciousness.
- Chit Jada Granthi — The knot that binds the conscious with the unconscious, in this case refers to the knot that binds the conscious self to the unconscious body.
- Deva — A god or a celestial being.
- Devata — A female deity.
- Deva Loka — The region where the Devatas reside.
- Devi — A deity denotes both male and female.
- Devi Kalottar — It is one of the minor 'Agamas' or Shaivite Scriptures.
- Dhyana — Though usually translated as meditation, this is an incomplete translation. This term has been fully expounded in chapter 9.
- Dhyana Siddhi — Perfection or the fullest attainment in Dhyana.
- Dhyana Yoga — The path of spiritual realisation through the practice of Dhyana.
- Diksh — Initiation.
- Ekagratha — One pointedness.
- Gunas — The three fundamental qualities, tendencies or stresses which underlay all manifestations. These are Satya, Rajas and Tamas.
- Guru Agya (Ajna) — Commandment of the Guru.
- Guru Kripa — The Guru's grace.
- Hridayam — The heart: in this context refers to the spiritual heart which is the seat of consciousness located at the right side of the chest.
- Ishta Deva — The chosen ideal of the Godhead.
- Jagat — The Universe.
- Jai Jaikara — Jai means victory, Jai Jaikaras are shouts of victory, analogous to the 'Hurrahs' used in Western countries.
- Jangam Devar — A sect of Sadhus in Andhra Pradesh devoted to the worship of Lord Shiva.
- Japa/Japam — Continuous repetition of a Mantra with concentrated mind.
- Jiva — The individual soul.
- Jyothi — Light.
- Kula Guru — Family Guru.
- Kundalini — The mystic circle of 3½ coils situated in the umbilical region, the yogic principle of coiled serpent power, the primal Maya.
- Kalpa — Age: used to denote the Hindu concept of the cycle of time.
- Lakshya — Aim.
- Lassi — A drink made of out of diluted curd.
- Lathi — A bamboo staff.
- Laya — Absorption leading to subsidence.
- Loka — Region, also denotes the seven spheres above the earth.
- Mahatma — A great or lofty soul, a highly spiritual person who is in tune with the Infinite.
- Manipura Chakra — A Yoga centre, see Chapter 9.
- Mathadhipathi — Math denotes a monastery; Adhipathi is the term used for the Senior or Head Monk, hence the term denotes Head Monk or Abbot of a Monastery.
- Manolaya — Subsidence of the mind caused by absorption of the mind and the breath in Hridayam (Spiritual Heart).
- Manonash — Destruction of the mind.
- Manovritti — Tendencies of the mind.
- Mantra — Seed letters used for meditation and mental repetition (Japa).
- Mantra Diksha — Initiation into a Mantra.
- Mara — The devil as conceived in Buddhism.
- Marga — Path.
- Moksha — Liberation; final emancipation or release from birth and death.
- Mowna Upadesa — Instruction imparted through Silence.
- Mudra — Pose of the hand as used in worship and in dance.
- Mumukshu — An aspirant who yearns for liberation.
- Mukti — Liberation, see moksha.

- Muladhara Chakra — Yogic centre; see Chapter 9.
- Namaskar — An Indian form of salutation made by joining both the hands.
- Nirguna Upasana — Worship of the attributeless supreme Brahman.
- Nirvikalpa Samadhi — The state of consciousness in which the Jiva of individual soul loses its sense of individuality and merges into the Supreme Atman; see Chapter 9.
- Niyam — Rules of good conduct required to be observed by Sadhakas, particularly those following the Eight Fold path of Yoga.
- Omkar Dhvani/ Shabd — The sound of 'OM'; 'OM' is the "Pranava" or the first manifested sound, all other 'Mantras' and sounds are derived from it.
- Padma Asana — Lotus posture, one of the yogic postures prescribed for those practicing Dhyana.
- Pandal — An improvised shelter.
- Patanjali — A great saint, reputed as the author of the "Yoga Sutra".
- Prakarana — Section of a book.
- Pranayama — Breath control.
- Prasad — Sacred offering.
- Pravachan — Discourse
- Ramakrishna Paramahansa — The great sage of Dakshineswar, Calcutta, in whose name the well known Ramakrishna Math and Mission have been organized.
- Sadhaka — Spiritual aspirant.
- Sadhana — Spiritual practice.
- Sadhu — A Holy man.
- Sahaj Nirvikalpa — The natural stage of Nirvikalpa.
- Sahasrar Chakra — Yogic centre. See Chapter 9.
- Sakshatkar — Realisation through direct perception.
- Samadhi — Super conscious state.
- Samadarshan — Equal vision.
- Santosh — Contentment.
- Sangam — Confluence.
- Sat-Chit-Ananda — Absolute existence - Absolute consciousness and absolute bliss.
- Satsang — Holy company.
- Sanyas — The vow of asceticism, renunciation.
- Sanyasins — Those who have renounced the world.
- Satva (Guna) — One of the three 'Gunas' representative of peace and purity.
- Savikalpa Samadhi — A state of super consciousness in which the distinction between the knower, knowledge and known is not yet lost.
- Siddhi — Realisation, attainment. Also denotes supernatural powers.
- Siddha Asana — One of the Yogic postures recommended for those practicing dhyana.
- Siddha Purusha — A person who has gained siddhi or realization.
- Shishya — Disciple.
- Shiva Linga — Symbolic emblem of Shiva.
- Shakti — The manifesting energy of a divine aspect, represented mythologically as the wife of the God.
- Shankaracharya — A great saint who lived in the 9th Century who re-established Advaita Vedant after it had become lost due to the upsurge of Buddhism.
- Shanti — Peace.
- Shastra — Scripture.
- Shunya — Void.
- Shukhama Sharir — Subtle body.
- Stithi — Firm abidance.
- Sushumna Nadi — The central nerve spoken of in the Yogic scriptures.
- Swayambhu Lingam — Self-evolved Lingam of Shiva.
- Swadhisthana Chakra — Yogi centre. See Chapter 9.
- Swami — Lord, a title used as a mark of respect for holy man.
- Swarupa — Form. In this context, as Atman is the Swarup of the Jiva or the individual soul, the word implies constant abidance in the Atman.
- Tamas (Tamo Guna) — One of the three Gunas indicative of inertia and ignorance.
- Tapas — Religious austerity.
- Tapasvin — A person who practices Tapas.
- Trimurti Darshan — Vision of God in His manifestation as the Trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara.
- Upwas — Abstention from food, fast undertaken as a religious discipline.
- Utpatti — Origin.
- Upadesa — The spiritual guidance or teaching given by a Guru.
- Vairagya — Dispassion or freedom from worldly desire.
- Vasanas — Predispositions, tendencies or propensities of the mind in the present life acquired as a result of experiences of former lives.
- Vasishta — The kula guru of Shri Rama and great saint well known for expounding the Yoga Vasishta Ramayana.
- Vibhuthi — Holy ashes.
- Vichar — Enquiry into the Truth of Atman.
- Vishudhi — Yogic centre. See Chapter 9.
- Vivek Chudamani — An Advaitic treatise by Shankaracharya meaning "the crest jewel of discrimination".
- Vritti Jnana — Vritti means an idea or a thought, hence the term means knowledge in the form of an idea or thought. In this context by describing Realisation as Vritti Jnana, it is intended to convey that Realisation is not an object of knowledge, but knowledge itself; it is not knowing but becoming.
- Yagna — Religious sacrifice according to vedic rites.
- Yama — Principles of good conduct enjoined on sadhakas, particularly those following the Eightfold Yogi path.
- Yoga — The spiritual path which enables the Jiva or the Individual Soul to attain union with the Atman.
- Yoga Brashta — A person who has fallen from the practice of Yoga.
- Yoga Shastra — Scriptures dealing with the practice of Yoga.
- Yoga Sutras — Yoga Aphorisms.
- Yoga Vasishta — The treatise imparted by Vasishta to Shri Rama.
- Zamindar — Landlord.