

SWAMIJI AS I KNEW HIM

by D. S. Rao

When he completed this article in 1984, after Shivabalayogi had attained mahasamadhi, D. S. Rao had already retired from a career in business management, including managing a five-star hotel in Bombay. "Swamiji as I Knew Him" was published in *The Shivabalayogi Journal*, a newsletter distributed by the Oregon Shivabalayogi Trust from 1995 to 2000.

*Om Om Om — Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur
Devo Maheshwara — Guru Sakshat Parabrahma
Tasmai Sri Gurave Namaha*

Om — Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Shiva — Hail the Guru who is the True God

He Lives in Me

My relationship with Swamiji is just the same before and after the mahasamadhi. He comes very occasionally and gives guidance. He speaks very few words. Mostly it is in graphic visions. He comes in dreams, in meditation and sometimes in the waking state also. Every thought of mine and every action of mine he says he is there. In fact it is true of all of us but the actual inner feeling comes with certain levels of mental clarity. This is the level at which intuition also starts to operate. Logic and intellect operate within a small circle. Outside this circle is intuition. He willing, it can come to anyone at any time.

He also operates through auspicious and inauspicious times of the day and a variety of other ways. Sometimes there is a message for you when the dog barks. Sometimes there is a message for you when the wind blows. Such messages only you know and he knows. No one else will know. Sometimes when I reason out on any issue he is clearly shaping the reason. His ways are indeed very intriguing. Every problem gets sorted out either in meditation or otherwise. When he feels his intervention is necessary, he will come in an astral body. The more we are at ease with ourselves, the less he comes. He gives you just enough time to ensure your steady progress. If you need more time, you get it. He does not favor any one; all are equal to him. If Swamiji spends more time with some one we tend to feel he is favoring that person. It is the other way around. That person needs more time from Swamiji. He operates through the unconscious mind. We get to know this when our conscious mind successfully explores the unconscious mind.

He is all knowing, all powerful, and all pervading. From him we come, in him we live, and unto him we go. At his bidding the sun shines, at his bidding the wind blows, and at his bidding we think and act. He is the thinker of the thought. He is the hearer of hearing. He is the taste of taste. He is the touch of touch. He is the smell of smell. He is there before you, behind you, above you, below you, within you and without you. Guru is God and God is Guru. There is no doubt about it.

My Experiences with Swamiji

My association with Swamiji dates back to 1971 when I was first initiated into dhyana by Mr. Adinarayana at Bhubaneswar. My first leg of meditation lasted for just two years, about 400 hours of meditation. During this period I had some wonderful experiences. There was a pleasant sensation and smell in the throat at all times. The skin was smelling like sandal wood. Months after I stopped my meditation they vanished. My second darshan of Swamiji was after nine years, in 1980. I started my meditation again in 1981 after a gap of eight years. During these intervening years I had undergone some structural changes in my attitudes: no liking for crowds, *satvic* (peaceful) habits, less of cinemas and TV. Extrovert nature was gradually becoming introvert.

Again when I started my meditation in 1981 I just informed Swamiji by letter. The very next day his *shakti* powers started operating in me. I used to sit in the morning and evening for two hours. Once I close my eyes I just cannot open them for the two hour duration. By then I was still not perfect in my asana, my sitting posture. So I was struggling for months to find a comfortable way to sit for these two hours. Suddenly one day I saw Swami in a dream sitting in a chair and meditating. Then I understood I could sit in a chair and meditate. That solved the problem. When I checked with Swamiji He said seat is unimportant. Your willingness and duration are more important. My second phase of

meditation lasted for over ten years, a little over 10,000 hours of meditation. One day Swamiji's Guru (*jangama devara*, in the form of an ascetic devoted to Shiva) came in dream and indicated that I stop my meditation, which I did. Then I was into *bhakti yoga*, the practice of devotion. After about a year Swamiji sent a message through my son to restart but keep it on a low key. Now I am on to *karma yoga*, the practice of selfless service. He only knows what is good for me. I do what he says; at least, that is my endeavor.

I received my first spiritual instruction from Swamiji in a dream. After months also I did not understand it correctly. When I went for his darshan in Bangalore I tried to broach the subject. His face at once became red and very angry. I quickly changed the subject. He was his normal self once again. Then I understood that spiritual instruction is something which you cannot discuss even with Swamiji.¹ From that day on I am tight lipped as far as my encounters with Swamiji are concerned. I did not share any of my experiences even with members of my family. As Swamiji now wants us to share our experiences, I am willing to express some of them which are not of the nature of spiritual instruction.

One day He was sitting in my room with looking glasses. Then I suddenly realized I have to go to an ophthalmologist. The very next day I got my glasses. Such experiences are innumerable. When I received the invitation for the birthday function on January 24, 1994, I made a suggestion to Swamiji that I would go to Bangalore only if Swamiji wanted me to do so. The next day he came in dream standing in the Tirumala Hills next to Varaha Swami.² Swamiji told me He is going in three weeks time. That would be February 2, 1994. [Shivabalayogi dropped his physical form on March 28, 1994.] Then another person, a Divine Being standing a little way from Swamiji, sprinkled holy water on me indicating *suddhi*, purification. This meant that I have to go to Tirumala, have a dip in the *pushkarini* pond, have *darshan* of Varaha

Swami, Lord Venkateshwara, and then go to Swamiji for darshan. I did just that.

At the darshan time I told Swamiji about my arrival and took His permission to leave the next day. I got His approval in His looks only. He had no words and I also had no words. That was my last darshan of Swamiji. He knew it and I also knew it. The date did not tally but that is not important. Swamiji actually left the date floating to be decided by the two opposing forces, the Divine Will on the one side and the devotees' prayers on the other. In the process He became a silent witness. When the body no longer supported Him, then He went into *yoga nidra*, yogic sleep. Such matters of controversy have to be resolved internally through meditation rather than do it externally. For that matter, any controversy has to be resolved only internally. This is true of every one who meditates regularly. Swamiji is emphatic that one should meditate and experience the truths rather than go by others' experiences.

As I see now, Swamiji's movement will first spread in the West and then come to India. Some time back a mahatma great soul said that Hindus will practice Hinduism only if the Westerners practice it first. Through Swamiji's movement this seems to become a reality. Only when the *yoga asanas* [postures, i.e., hatha yoga physical exercise] became popular in the West did they come back to India in the 1970's with full vigor. It will not be a surprise if it happens with meditation also. The West is better equipped to conduct the needed research into meditation and then launch it like any other commercial product launches. Media publicity is necessary for market penetration to reach the target audience.

God and Guru

God the absolute, out of His infinite compassion for His devotees, comes as their Guru. Whenever he descends he comes with a message and goes away after delivering the message, much like the postman. He will live in our midst but has no attachments whatsoever. He loves us—that is his inborn nature — but he has no attachments. It is for God to recall his Messenger the moment the mission is fulfilled. God knows and the Guru also knows when he is to go. Guru is everything for us. He is father, mother, brother, relative, friend, God — everything. He is the one to whom we cling because he is everything to us all.

Like God recalls the Guru, the Guru can also recall any of us anytime. If he thinks a new body is better

¹ That Shivabalayogi discouraged Rao from asking his question on that occasion had to do with Rao. Shivabalayogi's meditation instructions encourage devotees to write to him with doubts about meditation experiences.

² Rao refers to two incarnations (avatars) of God Vishnu. Tirumala is the site of the famous temple to Lord Venkateshwara. Varaha, like Rama and Krishna, is one of the ten major avatars. Vishnu incarnated as a wild boar, Varaha, to protect the Earth.

for our progress, he will do so. In fact, many of the devotees and disciples who have died over the last thirty years have all come back to Swamiji as little children around him today. According to the *Bhagavad Gita* (VI:42), only exceptional yogis will be born in his family.³ Children born into the members of his family are all highly evolved yogis who are in the last leg of their sadhana spiritual practice. For the next seven generations the only yogis will be born in these families. Swamiji is perhaps the only Living Yogi who can bestow liberation in just one lifetime. We must have that mental resolve and work for it.

Swamiji has left just enough hints that His mission was coming to a close. Kuwait was the first hint that more difficult assignments are falling into His lap.⁴ Then comes the illness. He never falls ill a hundred times like us. If he is ill it means he is packing up. When Sri Ramakrishna was ill he complained to the Divine Mother that he was not able to swallow food. The Divine Mother asked him, was it not a fact that he was eating through millions of mouths? After that he never recovered from that illness. During the last two or three functions there were two more indications, the *kumbabhishekam* and garlanding of all devotees at the time of the *kalyanam* wedding of Shiva and Parvati.⁵ These are all unmistakable indications of the mahatma's departure. The only thing we can do is to meditate and carry on His mission further.

³ *Bhagavad Gita* VI:42: "Otherwise one surely takes birth in a family endowed with wisdom in the science of uniting the individual consciousness with the Ultimate Consciousness; certainly such a birth as this is vary rare in this world."

Shivabalayogi explained that for a great soul to incarnate, the parents must also be great souls. It does not follow that all of a yogi's family members must also be great souls. History shows they aren't.

⁴ When the Iraqis invaded Kuwait in August of 1990, Shivabalayogi was there. He was one of the passengers on the British Airways flight from London to India that landed in Kuwait City for refueling as Iraqi soldiers were capturing the airfield. The Iraqis held him captive with the other passengers in a Kuwait hotel.

After Swamiji escaped, he told an interviewer for *Hinduism Today*:

"Earlier I declared that I shall be personally present at the place where the war would break out. It happened. Even now after I have left that place, I shall be careful to see that it does not."

⁵ During Swamiji's birthday celebrations in Bangalore, the last before his mahasamadhi, devotees ritually bathed him with 108 pots of water (*kumbabhishekam*).

That evening, during the ritual wedding (*kalyanam*) of Shiva and Parvati, Swamiji has all the flower garlands that had been given to him that day distributed and worn by the devotees, something he had not done previously.

Death Wish

When Swamiji became ill in August and September of 1991, I was in deep anguish. How can Swamiji, who is the embodiment of the Highest for all of us, be ill? I was very deeply pained and upset. Then the message came that Swamiji is preparing for his departure. He only needs a cause to go, much like Ramakrishna Paramahansa or Lahiri Mahasaya. Once I had a strong *sankalpa* (intent) to take a new body. Swamiji came in a dream a bit puzzled but approved it. Immediately thereafter I got a strong message that *sadhakas*, those on the spiritual path, should never make a *sankalpa* and they should ever be alert to avoid such situations. So I retreated from my earlier *sankalpa*. Swamiji used this opportunity to teach me the process of body separation. That is a unique lesson which I will never forget. It has developed in me spiritual boldness. Thanks to Swamiji, today I can smile at Yama, the God of Death, without fear. We all have to go one day. If I have to go now, I am ready; no regrets, no fear, no anxieties.

All this was happening when he was sick. After that incident also quite a number of times I had suggested to myself that if this body could save Swamiji's body then I am prepared to go. Generally Swamiji responds to such suggestions, but on this point he was ever silent. Then a new set of lessons came. These are in the form of stories but behind every story there is a spiritual principle

God the Giver

On a rainy day it was all dark. We search for a candle and light it. Then we tell the Sun God, "Here is a candle, keep it with you and be cheerful. Henceforth there will be no darkness for you." How silly! The Sun God is ever shining. Does he need a candle? All the candles put together, will they equal his light?

Guru is God and God is Guru. Swamiji only knows how to give health, wealth, prosperity, or whatever. You ask and He gives. He is a *kalpataru* wish-fulfilling tree, a *kamadhenu* cow of plenty, a *chintamani* wish-fulfilling jewel. Does he need anything from us? When he lives as one among us we treat Him as one among us. But is he not different? We only ask him for all and sundry but do we ever say, "O God, here is my health. Take it, be healthy and cheerful!" After all, what is health to God? Does he need us to give him his health?

After Swamiji's mahasamadhi I went to Bangalore for his darshan. I was still feeling guilty. The

thought that perhaps my body could have perhaps saved his life still persisted in me. So I prayed to Swamiji to forgive me for any of my faults. Doubt haunts you like a shadow. When we get drowned in it and when we come out of it only he knows. When Sri Ramakrishna transferred all his powers to Swami Vivekananda, he still had doubts in his Guru. Faith and doubt are the two sides of the same coin. He willing, doubt haunts us. He willing, faith may be firmly entrenched in us. He gives us just enough faith to enable us to pursue our sadhana.

Swamiji's Message

Swamiji is repeatedly saying please meditate, please meditate, please meditate. We are doing anything but that. All of us ought to meditate more and those who have not yet started meditation should make a beginning. The best way to serve Swamiji is to meditate. Earlier we take to it the better. Those who are initiated but unable to meditate, pray to him to give you strength to meditate. He will grant it. Those who want to meditate more but are unable to do so, pray to him to give you strength to do more of meditation. He will grant it. So far we have identified Swamiji with his body. Now we must identify Swamiji with Parabrahma, the Supreme Soul, and work diligently for him. Remember, the only way we can serve him is through meditation and spreading his message of meditation.

It is something like this. There is a great cook highly skilled and highly reputed. He has a number of assistants who help him. They are all busy serving his needs. They are content more as the errand boys bringing provisions. But the master always told them to learn cooking. They were busy with their own chores and never had the time even to go to the kitchen. Occasionally when they would walk in they are happy to cut the vegetables or to carry the vessels. Their attention was never on the cooking. Suddenly the master goes. Now should his attendants learn cooking or not? The onus to spread his message is on them but they have not learned cooking. Should they now learn cooking and then spread the message?

Those who have served him in the inner quarters are indeed very blessed. What if they have not done any sadhana in this life? They have all done intense sadhana spanning many lives. That is what has brought them so close to Swamiji. They were not keen to do sadhana lest their attention to him might suffer. Look at Sri Krishna's parents. They have done intense sadhana in many lives spanning

over 10,000 years. The Lord was so much pleased with their devotion he has decided to be born to them. That is Love, pure Love. Swamiji's parents also belong to this category of devotees. Because of their intense devotion to the Lord in many lives, Swamiji was born to them. Those in the personal service of Swamiji also belong to this category.

Spreading the Message

Mahatmas like Swamiji, when they leave the body very few people know them. When they take mahasamadhi their message spreads like wild fire. When Lord Krishna was in the body, how many knew he was the Yuga Avatar (incarnation of the Age)? After he took mahasamadhi his name is a legend even today after five thousand years. Jesus Christ took mahasamadhi two thousand years back. Today Christianity is the largest religion in the world. Ramakrishna Paramahansa took mahasamadhi some hundred years back when he had only a handful of devotees.

Today his movement has spread to the four corners of the globe. Compared to them, Swamiji has a very large following all over the world, so think of the gigantic proportions his message will take in the years to come! We all have the unique privilege as his devotees to interface with the world to spread his message. He willing, his message will spread into schools, into the clinics, and into every household, and if not for final emancipation, at least for health and peace of mind. A fifteen minute meditation daily should make one healthy, wealthy and wise.

Today technology which is moving at a gigantic pace is creating spiraling tensions in the society with no relief in sight. Anxiety, fear, worry and all sorts of tensions are ever in the increase. We see the psychosomatic disorders like asthma, insomnia, peptic ulcers, cancer, blood pressure, cardiac impairment and what not! People seek remedy through smoking, drinking, drugs and other stimulants. The remedy is quite often worse than the disease. Life is cut short and they go. Swamiji's meditation is an excellent concentration and relaxation technique that could restore health and order in society in a short span of time. But first we have to prove it through research, maybe in clinics and schools. All are interested in health first. Then comes spirituality. Let us evolve a scientific basis to put it on a sound footing. His technique of meditation is very sound and very powerful.

Swami Vivekananda said a hundred years back that a new order of society will emerge through a marriage between the culture of the Orient and the scientific temper of the Occident. Foundations have already been laid in this direction. The modern religious schools give formal education with a back drop of a strong cultural foundation. It looks like Swamiji's mission is all set in this direction. Swamiji himself has said that in the next forty years He will unite the East and the West. Let us hope for it and diligently work in this direction. It is the responsibility of his devotees to turn his every word into a living reality. That would be a fitting tribute to a Living Yogi.

Spirituality, the Science of All Sciences

One may wonder what is this spiritual science? Renouncing everything and taking solace at the feet of the Guru? Can we begin somewhere else with a more scientific bias? Spirituality is more exacting than all the sciences of which we are aware. It is a science of all the sciences. It is a master science. If science can teach you that blood circulates in the body, spirituality will make you feel and experience the actual movement of the blood in the body. If a normal person can recall memory, a spiritual person can relive an experience, much like the action replay. Experience these yourself. The taste of the pudding is in the eating. Like swimming and driving, spirituality is an experience based learning. Every truth of spirituality must be first experienced internally. Swamiji is repeatedly stressing this point. But before that happens the body and mind must shun the impurities accumulated over the ages in countless births. The soul evolves through the 8.4 million species in nature before taking human birth. How true is Darwin's theory!

Spirituality is a mental phenomenon. It deals with brain and mind. Psychologists and brain specialists are the best interface with spiritual sciences. The whole exercise of spirituality is something like this. We are all aware of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind that is associated with waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Spirituality is a technique by which we use the conscious mind to explore the subconscious and the unconscious minds. When that is explored you transcend these three states and become super conscious. It is that simple but it is not that easy. There are several techniques to explore the unconscious: *raja yoga* (meditation), *bhakti yoga* (devotion), *karma yoga* (service), *japa yoga* (mantras), *jnana yoga* (self inquiry), and the like. The rules of the experiment

are very exacting, like any other laboratory experiment. You follow the rules and you get the results. Swamiji is the best example of one who has excelled in this great experiment. Let us also put our first steps forward.

Meditation is one of the such techniques for the exploration of the mind. All these techniques require a formal initiation by a Sadguru, a True Guru who is qualified to initiate. His power comes with the initiation. Whoever follows the instructions, that power works in him and transforms him. There is always a difficulty. For one genuine Guru there are a thousand frauds. One has to be very alert. If we get cheated that is our bad luck. After all, one gets what one deserves. We think we can act intelligently but how often we get trapped!

Activating the Dormant Brain Cells

We all know that only five percent of the brain operates in the conscious self and the rest is dormant. Brain is the physical mediator of consciousness linking the mind, body and emotions into a harmonious unit. To explore the unconscious mind is to activate the dormant brain cells. We all know in deep sleep the mind is unconscious. If we can by some means achieve a state whereby we are conscious during sleep we are at once in the super conscious state. The goal is achieved. But the journey through the technique is very long. It is well worth the effort.

When we sleep we are unconscious but when Swamiji sleeps he is conscious. He is conscious at all times and at all places. He has transcended time and space. Conscious sleep is what we aspire to achieve through sadhana. That is the super consciousness that is samadhi, that is God realization, that is revelation.

Like the experiments with spirituality are conducted in the science laboratories, the experiments with spirituality are conducted in the laboratory of the human mind. Everything is validated by one's own inner experiences. We do not need any external proofs. Swamiji is the best proof if proof is ever required.

Psychology and Brain Sciences

Spiritual science deals with the transformation of the mind and the brain. The frontiers of research in these two fields should get deeply involved in the meditation process so that meditation could become more research based. Spirituality is an attempt to

integrate the three levels of consciousness — waking, dreaming and deep sleep — to evolve a more integrated personality through activation of the dormant brain cells. The techniques used to achieve this are very exacting.

Research in educational systems is another area for association. If we can integrate the conscious and subconscious minds in the learning process then the whole learning process could be speeded up many fold. It works something like this. If we want to learn a new language we should first play it during sleep and then again when we are awake. During the sleep state the conscious mind is dormant but the subconscious mind is very active and absorbs the lesson. The same lesson is replayed when we are awake. Both the conscious and the subconscious minds participate in the learning process. This will speed up the learning process. Experimentation must begin in this direction.

What Is Meditation?

Sitting quietly in any convenient posture we attempt to still the thought process of the mind by withdrawing the consciousness from the sense organs and concentrating it at the *bhrikuti*, the third eye, the spot between the eyebrows. Before anything else happens, the pituitary gland gets activated. The pituitary is the commander of the endocrine system that keeps the body biochemistry in balance. This takes care of the stresses and strains on the mind and also the health problems.

In meditation each one will have different kinds of experiences, like seeing colors, graphic visions, divine figures and the like. It all depends on the disposition (*prarabdha*) of the individual. In the process we use the voluntary system to gain control of the involuntary systems. This takes a long time. One must have faith and perseverance.

The mind is like a monkey. It jumps from one thought to another thought in quick succession. We cannot suppress these thoughts but we can withdraw from them and watch them as a witness. If this attitude of witness consciousness is developed we have put our first steps forward. Swamiji had perfected this during his sadhana. Another difficulty we experience is that the mind always dwells on the past or the future; rarely on the present. This will be so with most of us in our meditations. The objective of the exercise is to live in the present, to live for this moment. We do not know what happens at the next moment. *Triakarna sudhi* is synchronizing the mind, speech and action.

This is important in sadhana (spiritual practice). If we make effort His Grace will flow into us.

Initially we concentrate on the first four steps of raja yoga: *yama*, *niyama*, *asana* and *pranayama* (do's, don'ts, posture and breath control). These are in the control of the voluntary system. *Pratyahara* is the withdrawal of the consciousness from the senses. The Creator has designed the consciousness as outward going. It requires tremendous effort on our part to make them inward looking. With our consistent effort comes the Guru's Grace. Once we get into the realms of the involuntary then the progress becomes very fast. A normal healthy mind takes a million years to fully evolve. This could be compressed into one lifetime through meditation. Here time moves very fast. Unless we meditate we cannot progress and unless we progress we will not meditate. We must go through these experiences and overcome these limitations with His Grace.

There are certain do's and don'ts in meditation. Same time, same place and same duration as far as possible. It is preferable to take a bath before meditation. Avoid it immediately after meditation. After meditation one has to take ten to fifteen minutes rest to relax the body and mind. It is most beneficial to observe *mouna* (silence) after meditation, the duration depending upon the duration of the meditation. This will allow internalization of the benefits of meditation. If we talk immediately after meditation the divine energies that flow into the system cannot be assimilated. They get frittered away. When the meditation process gets internalized into our way of life, with integration of personality a teacher becomes a better teacher, a soldier becomes a better soldier, a doctor a better doctor, and a dancer a better dancer. Any one can meditate and improve his lifestyle. You lead a better life, more integrated, more harmonious and free from all tensions. You get internally focused. The whole world you see outside is also inside you. The microcosm works exactly on the same principal as the macrocosm. You meditate and discover the truths.

Swamiji was emphatic on one point. If you meditate regularly whatever you need will come to you automatically. Food will come to you. Books will come to you. Health will come to you. You do not have to run after them. They will reach you. All this is within the realm of my experience. The essence of Brahma is *mouna*. Whoever understands this and practices it is indeed blessed. His Grace flows into such individuals in ample measure.

Raja Yoga & Meditation

In *raja yoga* there are eight steps: *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi* (do's, don'ts, posture, breath control, withdrawal of senses, concentration, meditation, and enlightenment). One should read the *Bhagavad Gita* to understand these steps clearly. Meditation is the seventh step. Instead of starting with *yama niyama* (do's, don'ts) we start at the highest level. This is the gift of Swamiji for the benefit of the vast humanity. After initiation one has to follow the instructions mechanically for some time. Before long, the inner mechanism will be set in action by Swamiji. From that time on you get instructions internally. There will be no need for any external inputs. The trance which he has left behind is a great boon for devotees to work for his cause. One thing is certain, if we put one step forward he will put ten steps towards us. It is for us to know what the right steps are and move forward. If we are sincere he is always there guiding us. He is meant for us. We may fail him in our ignorance, but he will never fail us.

Sleep & Samadhi

There are many similarities between deep sleep and samadhi. In both states the body and mind undergo deep relaxation. In deep sleep we are unconscious while in samadhi we are conscious. Another difference is that in deep sleep the ego is temporarily subdued while in samadhi the ego is completely eradicated. In deep sleep consciousness withdraws from chakra to chakra unto its source while in samadhi consciousness gets concentrated and focused on each chakra and the *kundalini* (latent spiritual force located at the base of the spine) moves from chakra to chakra in the same order. *Kundalini* unfolds the seven planes of consciousness while it moves from chakra to chakra. The net effect is that in sleep you are unconscious and in samadhi you are fully conscious.

Sleep operates through the involuntary system. The whole meditation exercise is aimed at bringing this involuntary system within control of the voluntary system. Movement of consciousness from the sense organs follows the following order:

muladhara chakra — earth principle — smell —
I plane

swadhisthana chakra — water principle — taste —
II plane

manipura chakra — fire principle — sight —
III plane

anahata chakra — air principle — touch —
IV plane

visuddhi chakra — ether principle — sound —
V plane

Once the consciousness withdraws from the five sense organs it remains in the *ajna chakra* (the chakra spiritual center that is the third eye), the seat of the mind, in the dream state and then moves into *sahasrara* (crown chakra), its source. This is the direction of consciousness when we sleep. This happens without our knowledge. In samadhi the *kundalini* moves in the same pathway with full awareness. When you come out from samadhi you are egoless and super conscious. You become a yogi. From sleep you come out just the same as you were before. In most of the scientific discoveries, whether it is Newton, Maxwell or Einstein, they all had their conscious mind stumble upon the subconscious and that gave them a deep insight into their experiments and thus helped them make the inventions. It is true of every invention. He willing a scientist comes out with an invention. How much should be revealed to science is His will only.

Yoga Nidra & Meditation

Yoga nidra, yogic sleep, is a relaxation technique and meditation is a concentration technique. Immediately after meditation we relax for some time in *savasana* (lying down posture). That is the time when we get into *yoga nidra* involuntarily. *Yoga nidra* occurs in the border line of waking and dreaming states. Generally this lasts for about ten to fifteen minutes when we retire for sleep. This period could be prolonged for longer periods of relaxation using certain techniques. As the mind is fully withdrawn, one pointed *yoga nidra* is the best time for deep relaxation.

When we relax after meditation we are generally conscious and will be experiencing dream state also. Most of the visions and instructions come at this stage because the ego is totally absent here. The ego operates only in the conscious. It does not operate in the subconscious or the unconscious. Dream state is when the conscious is fully withdrawn from the sense organs. The ego is temporarily withdrawn. In this state the mind and body enter into deep relaxation. I generally relax with face up for about three minutes until I experience some dream. Then I turn right and wait

for the dream state. Then I turn to the left and wait for the dreams. Once this process is complete I consider the relaxation is over. The whole exercise takes about ten to fifteen minutes. Sometimes I may go into deep sleep lasting about an hour. Meditation is the best remedy for insomnia.

In *yoga nidra* one relaxes completely. For this to happen the necessary condition is total withdrawal of the senses. This relaxation occurs in deep sleep also. Like meditation, *yoga nidra* is another technique used to reach the higher levels of consciousness. *Yoga nidra* uses techniques akin to hypnosis. In *yoga nidra* the mind is completely withdrawn from the senses and becomes one pointed. This helps concentration. In advanced stages this leads to meditation and samadhi.

Swamiji has full control of his involuntary system so he can withdraw consciousness from his senses at will. We cannot do it so easily. For us this state comes only while relaxing after meditation or in deep sleep. When we sleep it is *nidra*. When Swamiji sleeps it is *yoga nidra* because he is conscious. Through *yoga nidra* one can enter into samadhi. In that state the body can remain for fourteen days. Then it fails. When Swami Vivekananda experienced the state of samadhi Ramakrishna Paramahansa woke him up and told him that he had to fulfill his mission in the world and until then the key will remain with him. Unless we come to those levels it is indeed very difficult to understand these phenomena. They have to be experienced internally.

Food & Meditation

For one who meditates the food needs generally go down. There are no rigid rules and one has to generally develop his own choices depending on what suits his meditation exercises. The general principle is to eat easily digestible, freshly cooked vegetarian foods free from spices and fats. Fruits and salads will go well with these foods. Processed foods and stored foods are best avoided. It may not be good to change the habits overnight. It is better to effect the changes slowly. One has to make an effort in this direction depending on the stomach signals. The focus must shift from the taste buds to the needs of the digestive system. What the taste buds demand may not necessarily be what the 250,000 billion cells in the body might need.

Another thing to be borne in mind is that the food we eat is divided into three parts. The gross part is eliminated through the eliminatory organs, the middle part goes to sustain the body, and the fine

part sustains the mind. So we have to always be careful of what we eat because it has a direct bearing on the mind. Mind has three components: *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas* (the qualities of balance, action and passivity). By eating *satvic* (balanced) food the mind becomes *satvic*. This develops mental clarity which means the mind gets more focused. The *Bhagavad Gita* gives detailed guidelines in the matter of food. Until the goal is reached rigid control on food is necessary. Once the sadhana is completed food habits could be relaxed. Swamiji is the best example for this. Food becomes prashad when offered to Guru or God.

(*Bhagavad Gita* IV:24) “Sacrificial paraphernalia, sacrificial fire, offerings of oblations and ghee by the brahmin are all Ultimate Truth. Ultimate Truth is certainly attainable by being fully absorbed in spiritual activities.”

We eat just to sustain the body — no indulgence in food. We eat to live and not live to eat. That is sadhana as food is concerned. Lunch is the main meal when the digestive system is very active. Breakfast and dinner have to be light as per individual needs. Fasting per se is not important but fasting between meals is very good. The digestive system gets some rest.

Hinduism: Not a Religion

Hinduism is in existence from time immemorial. It is not a religion. It is Sanatana Dharma (Ancient Truth), a universal religion. It has a Guru *parampara* tradition. The knowledge flows from Guru to disciple down the line through the ages. Any one can practice it. It is the heart of all religions. It has a message to the world at all times. Other religions like Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Taoism and the like are of recent origin. They have all emerged to suit the changing psyche of the human mind. He only creates these religions and He only withdraws them when their relevance is lost to the society. Many civilizations which have perished in the past like the Indus Valley civilization have gone because they lost their relevance to the changing times. He alone knows it. He alone makes these changes. The essential principles of all the religions are the same. They differ only in matters of detail.

New Year Resolutions

Now this is the month of October. The year end is not too far. Let us make some New Year resolutions along the following lines:

Daily meditation at the same time and place.

Duration of meditation to increase by at least 50%.

Those with less than one hour should make it to one hour.

No break or stoppage even for a single day.

Weekly get together (satsang) for meditation and kirtan.

All should pray to him for success in their resolutions.

Book Reading

Western mind is very inquisitive and they want to understand everything through the intellect. Everything cannot be grasped through the intellect. In fact, at a stage you experience that intellect is an obstruction to *sadhana*. Intellect only strengthens the ego. It is a great robber. It will rob you of your life's aspirations. Book reading to get an understanding of the Reality could still the mind. To that extent certain amount of literature survey is necessary particularly for those who regularly meditate. Such reading is only a means and not an end in itself. There should not be over emphasis on book reading. I am listing a few selected books for every one to read. Further interests could be pursued according to one's own requirements. A good central library or even an individual library could be thought of. Most of the spiritual literature is available in English. One should generally read spiritual books written by fully evolved souls.

Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga by Swami Vivekananda.

Commentaries on Gita by Swami Sivananda

Quintessence of Vedanta by Shankaracharya

What Happens to a Soul after Death by Swami Sivananda

Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda

Food Is Your Best Medicine by Dr. Henry Bieler

It should not be reading for reading sake. Everything learnt should be internalized into daily practice. Read only that much which you can internalize. Undigested knowledge is not good for meditation. It gives rise to the assertion of the ego.

Time, Space, Causality

Yogis transcend time, space and causality. Every one who is meditating will also go beyond them. Let us explore this a bit further. All that which has a name and form will be swallowed by time.

Everything is contained in time. Nothing can go beyond it. What is beyond is only God. God is not a name. It is an expression given to that which has no name and no form. Through meditation one has to transcend this name and *rupa* (form). Up to Brahma the Creator everything merges in time.

Let us understand Brahma's life span. There are four Yugas (Epochs): Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga (analogous to the Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron Ages of the ancient Greeks). These four Yugas make up one *mahayuga*. A thousand *mahayugas* make a day of Brahma (4.3 billion years). Another thousand make for one night. On this basis Brahma's life is 100 years, some 300 billion years. During the day of Brahma there will be life and during night of Brahma there will be no life. This is *pralaya*, dissolution. When Brahma's life comes to an end everything comes to an end. Then there will be *mahapralaya*, universal dissolution. Thus life on this planet is cyclical in nature. For a certain period life is projected and then for the same period it is withdrawn. When we look at the electron spin that is the smallest unit of time. Thus measurable time extends ten to power minus fifteen to ten to power fifteen. It is indeed a very deep ocean even for science.

The same is with space. Birth of stars, black holes, big bang theory, explosion and implosion — all these theories of the universe are in conformity with the cyclical nature of time. The observable universe is 25 billion light years. (A light year is 10,000 billion kilometers.) Beyond this matter travels at the speed of light. Time and space have such gigantic proportions science may take millions of years to explore its secrets. The configuration of matter that is present in the atom is the same that is present in the solar system or the galaxies. If the meteor which hit Jupiter had hit the earth all life on earth would have vanished. He willing such a thing can happen at any time in this vast cosmos. Can science prevent it? See the gigantic nature of the figures: 250,000 billion cells in the body; 300,000 billion years in the life of Brahma; 250,00 billion kilometers of measurable space! Is it all accidental or is He being very meticulous in the order of His creation? Let us contemplate.

Science is an institution 400 years old. The knowledge it has gathered so far is only a small scratch on the surface of Mother Nature. Science has a long way to go. We are relentlessly degrading the environment depriving our posterity of pure water to drink and fresh air to breathe. Yet we

believe ours is a science driven society and there is no room for superstition. Like the small child who puts his finger in fire not knowing it will burn, we are all small children in the lap of Mother Nature. It is full of cause-effect relationships finely balanced. We rarely understand them and always act in ignorance. Increasing levels of pollution, spiraling tensions, increasing numbers of incurable diseases, and the ever increasing threat of nuclear war: there are any number of such situations where we are helpless. A science driven society indeed! Science fails to understand even simple cause-effect relationships. There are so many diseases in society which are incurable. They know neither the cause nor the cure. Is science in its present form directed to human needs?

When sunbeams are focused on a piece of paper through a magnifying lens, the paper burns. Much the same way meditation focuses the mind and improves our awareness. A sharply focused mind is all that is needed to transcend the barriers of time, space and causality. Only when consciousness goes beyond these barriers we become super conscious. Yogi's consciousness extends beyond these limitations. So let us all make an attempt to become yogis of tomorrow. Shri Krishna tells Arjuna, "*Tasmat yogi bhava Arjuna.*" (*Bhagavad Gita* VI:46, "Arjuna, be like a true yogi."). If we are willing Swamiji's blessings are always there with us. Let us put our first steps forward with firm resolve to transcend this barrier of time, space and causality. What science may take millions of years you can find it here and now, in this very life time. This is Swamiji's challenge to the world. We must respond to it positively.

He Knows What Is Good for Us

We look at the present and decide what is good for us. When Swamiji advises us he looks at all our past, present and all future and tell us what is good for us. Swamiji knows what is good for me more than I think is good for me. In fact we do not know what is good for us. Only he knows. The cause and effect relationships in nature are so complex we hardly understand them fully. Only an evolved soul understands them. Once we accept that he alone knows what is good for us, we need not ask for

anything from him. He gives us what we need and when we need in sufficient quantities. So why ask for anything? This attitude of mind will come with long practice and experience. We know Swamiji has asked for nothing from his Guru.

Mounopadesh, Silent Teaching

Some people used to complain that unlike many other swamis our Swamiji does not give speeches. Let us explore this a bit further. Take the case of a swami who is a good orator with a good knowledge of spirituality. He comes and gives an excellent speech to a spellbound audience of 500 people. At the end of the speech there will be clapping and mobbing of the speaker. He is hailed for his oratory. Then all would disburse. The memories no doubt will last for a few days, then it is all forgotten. There would be no change in us. We are just the same as before. As against this you have a Swami with you who by his mere presence changes and restructures your mental attitudes for the rest of your life and looks after your every need very silently without even speaking a word about it. The impact of his darshan is everlasting. You undergo a tremendous amount of transformation over a period of time. You may even take a long time to realize this. He does all that for your own good even without your knowing about it, not to speak a word about it.

When you set fire to a wild forest all the wild animals take to their heels. Much the same way all the negative tendencies in you like lust, greed, anger and the like will all be hurt up by his mere darshan. They take to their heels for all times to come. So which is better, a good speech that is quickly forgotten and lost or an everlasting transformation? This is *mounapadesh* or silent benediction which Swamiji so freely gives to one and all who come for his darshan.

*Sarva dharman parityajya namekam saranam vraja
aham tva sarva papebhyo moksha ishyami
masuchaha.*

(*Bhagavad Gita* XVIII:66)

Renounce all truths and take refuge in Me alone.
I shall liberate you from all your sins.