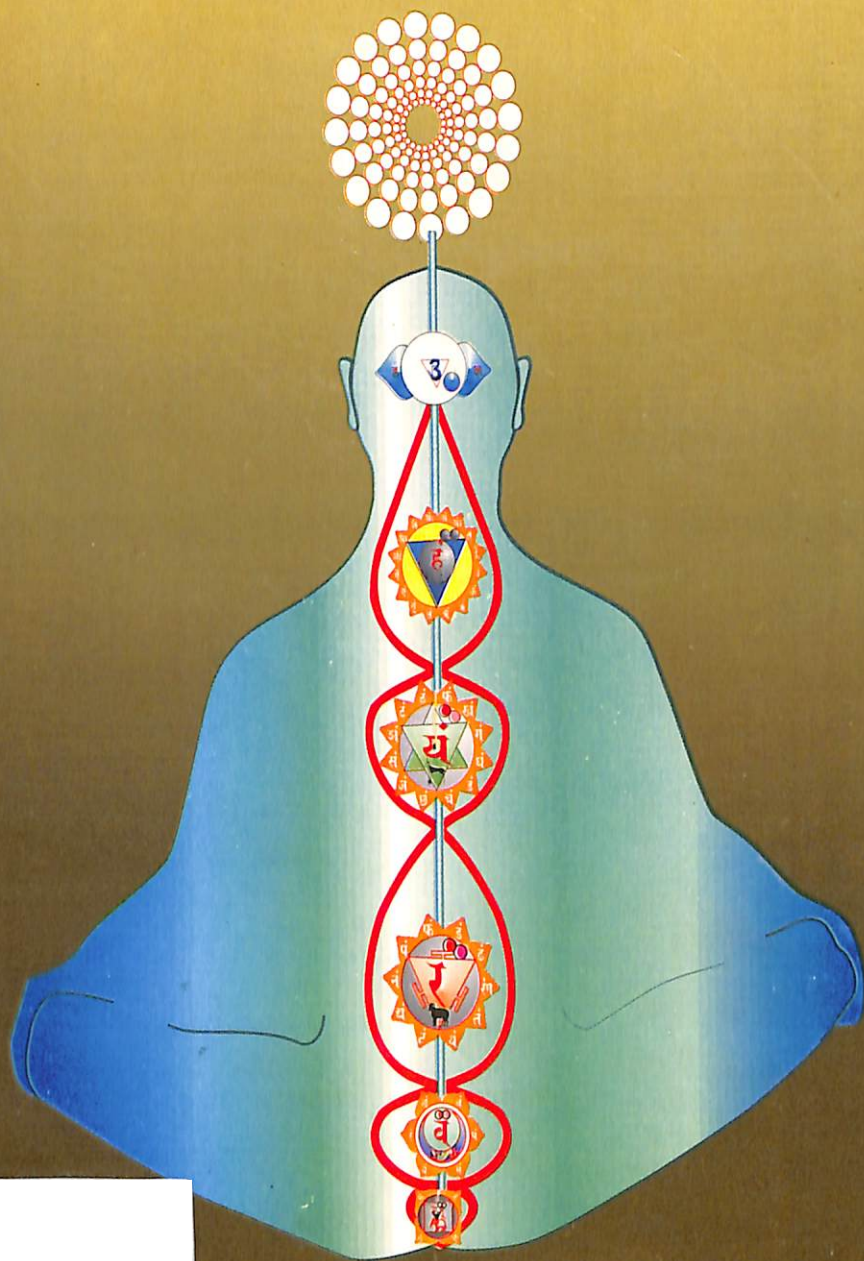


A GUIDE TO SHAKTIPAT



SWAMI SHIVOM TIRTH

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A GUIDE TO SHAKTIPAT

by
SWAMI SHIVOM TIRTH



Devatma Shakti Society
Nawali, Dahisar, P. O. (Via Mumbra)
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FOREWARD TO SECOND EDITION

It is a pleasure to bring out the second edition of 'A Guide To Shaktipat' simultaneously by Swami Shivom Tirth Ashram, New York and Devatma Shakti Society, Mumbai, on the auspicious occasion of the birthday of His Holiness Swami Shivom Tirthji on 26th January 1997. It is a coincidence or the will of God that the first edition was also printed the same way. SHAKTIPAT, a unique technique of meditation is becoming more and more popular and the awareness has grown with the true spiritual aspirants.

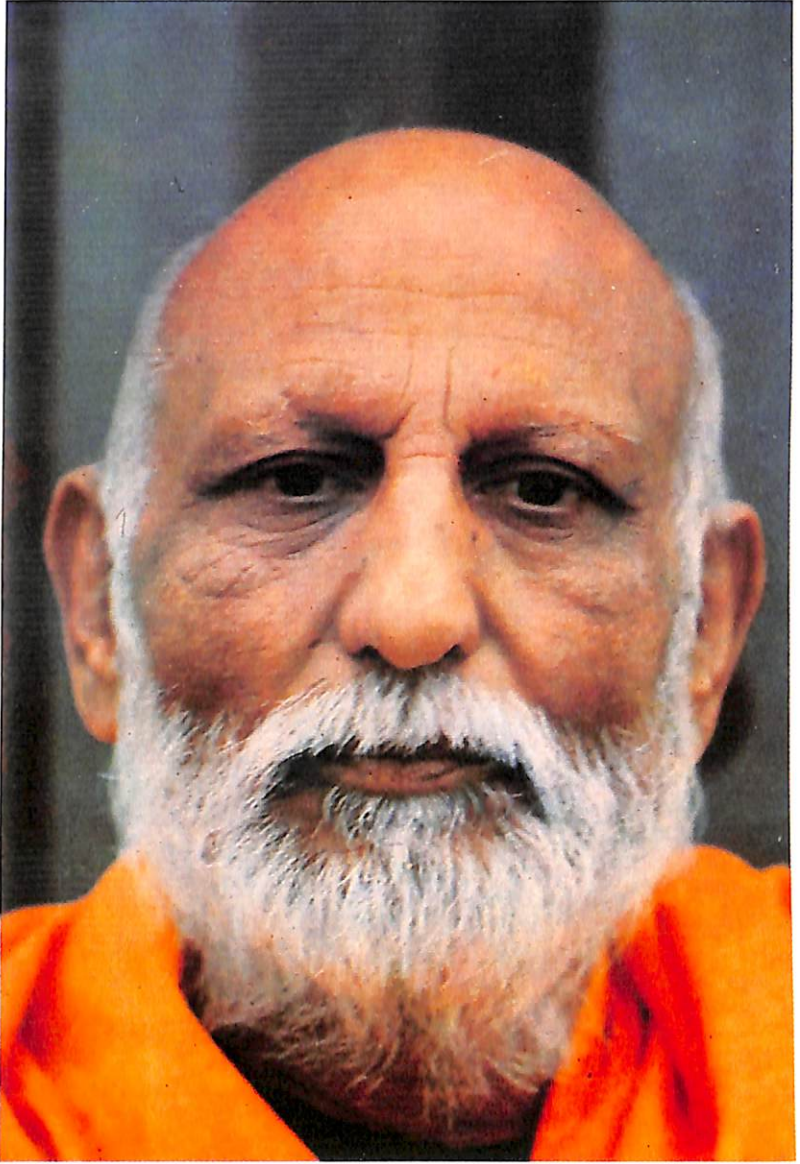
Many people have a large store of worldly knowledge but their intellect cannot be said to be pure because they have many doubts about spiritual matters. This intellect is something that always creates doubts in the chitta (mind stuff). This is an indication that the intellect has become impure. Of course a study of the scripture is a solution to clear these doubts at the intellectual level. Those who have no ability to study scriptures can benefit from Satsang (the company of Yogis and Saints that also includes sermons and lectures by them).

It is difficult these days to find a true Satsang. A yogi or a saint who provides Satsang has to be one who is selfless, is unattached to the world and has experienced the Divine Presence. Only then can he explain to you the secrets of spirituality. If you can find such a Satsang all spiritual doubts of your intellect can be cleared. When the intellect is satisfied, automatically a profound devotion and intense passion for God appears in the heart, and then one can walk on the true path of spirituality.

Probably this is what a spiritual aspirant finds in ' A Guide To Shaktipat'. It is a spiritual book for those who want to read it for spiritual growth and it is very much of an experience of being in Satsang with an adept spiritual master.

We are thankful to Balaji Advertising, Mumbai and specially Mr. Krishnaswami who promptly undertook the job on his computer to design the cover page and set the pages. It is the endeavor of Swami Shivom Tirth Ashram, New York who added the Appendix. II in this edition.

PUBLISHER



HIS HOLINESS SWAMI SHIVOM TIRTHJI

FOREWARD

The following pages are guideline for the seeker of Truth. Presented in question and answer form, it allows the reader a direct response to many of the questions most commonly asked. In the first chapter the author expounds on the meaning of Shaktipat and the path this spiritual power takes once activated. Explanation is also given of differences among Yoga practices with particular reference to YogaDarshan. Chapter II deals with Shaktipat initiation, what preparations a disciple should make and what initial results he might expect. In the third chapter, certain aspects of a disciples' spiritual advancement are described as signs for measuring his progress. Also a specific outline is presented for the process of freeing oneself of life's dualities and ultimately obtaining God Consciousness. Furthermore, answers are given for ways of dealing with different experiences and thoughts which may occur during meditation. In the fourth and final chapter, questions that come to mind after some time when the spiritual aspirant has gained sufficient experience both inside meditation and during worldly activities are answered. The two types of disciples, householder and renunciate, within the Shaktipat system are discussed at length; the purpose and benefits of an *Ashram* and the definition and the responsibilities of the Guru are also elaborated upon. Specific advice is given for women who are seeking Divine knowledge and in general, the Shaktipat path and how it affects one's course in daily life is clarified.

God has blessed us with His love and knowledge through our most gracious Sat Gurudev Swami Shivom Thirth. Swamiji's understanding and ability to express God's truth in such a clear and informative manner is a benefit to us all. This is his first book translated to English language. It is hoped that it will help alleviate any barrier that may hinder one's quest for God and give the inspiration needed to allow His light and glory to fill one's heart and soul.

We are thankful to Devatma Shakti Society, Paige Texas (U.S.A.) for the valuable help rendered to us for printing this book. We are also thankful to Mrs. Daya Murthy for collecting funds exclusively for bringing out this publication. Finally, we express our sincere gratitude to Shri Chandrakant Mhaske, an Artist from Bombay who helped us immensely to design the cover page and make necessary corrections.

Devatma Shakti Society,
2nd July, 1985.

PUBLISHER

INTRODUCTION

This book titled 'A Guide to Shaktipat' is in your hands in which the day-to-day doubts, difficulties and problems faced by all the **Sadhaks** and readers have been solved after giving deep thought. I have incorporated the questions asked by **Sadhaks** whenever I am on tour or whenever they come to the *Ashram*. Apart from these questions, there may be and there are several other questions that crop up. I have plans to write a series of books on the different approaches to **GOD** realisation/Self-realisation. One book will deal with questions and difficulties pertaining to Yoga. One book will deal with matters connected with '**Bhakti**' (Devotional Worship) and another will treat the subject of '**Gyan Marg**! In one or two books, the experiences of **Sadhaks** will be incorporated as reading about others' experiences helps in creating a sense of eagerness or interest to do Sadhana. This book, which is first in the series has the mixture of all the paths.

In fact, **Shaktipat** is not an independent Yoga or System of **Sadhana**. **Shaktipat** is a means of awakening the **Shakti** towards inner consciousness and to make it perform automatic movements (Kriyas). After the awakening, depending upon the state of the Sadhak's inner world and the changes in it, there is progress in the **Kriyas** (automatic movements) and changes in them. Just as when **Sanskar** (accumulated seeds of past actions) pertaining to *Bhakti* are aroused **Kriyas** pertaining to **Shakti** occur so also when **Sanskar** in respect of Hatayoga are aroused, Kriyas pertaining to Hatayoga occur, and so also when Dhyana Yoga Sanskar are aroused Kriyas pertaining to Dhyana Yoga occur. In this way all types of Sadhana, Upasana and Yogic practices are assimilated in this path. That is why this Sadhan is called '**MAHAYOGA**' as it has the mixture of **Mantra, Hath, Laya, Raja, Bhakti** and **Gyan Yoga** and **Karma** and which is manifested in the Sadhak at different times depending on the different state of the inner "**Chitta**" (mind stuff.). Sadhan is dependent on two things; one depending on the past deeds, **Kriyas** occur and secondly on the basis of '**tatwa**'. The past deeds of each one are different. Inter, alia **Kriyas** also differ. As the '**Chitta**' gets purer, **Kriyas** start to rise, above the past deeds and are manifested on the basis of '**tatwas**'. In the middle

there comes a stage when according to his past deeds **Kriyas** occur depending upon the **tatwas**. That is why these **Kriyas** are different from each other. As and when **Kriyas** occur depending upon the **tatwas**, his **Kriyas** will resemble those of the other **Sadhaks** of the same status. This point has not been elaborated in this book. In the series of books to be published attempts will be made to throw light on the above.

Some **Sadhaks** have funny thoughts in their mind and these thoughts are so deeprooted that it is very difficult to up-root them. Just as some **Sadhaks** believe that when **Shakti** is awakened it rises from **Mooladhar** (first **chakra** which corresponds with the pelvic plexus of the sympathetic nervous system) towards **Sushumna** (subtle central current running through the spinal column) in zig zag manner. Such **Sadhaks** are believed to have said that they have seen a snake in the **Sushumna** as if there is a snake within them. So also there are peculiar ideas about the petals of the flowers present in each '**chakra**' as if these flowers are hung in the body. They also do not understand the alphabets written on these petals. If the alphabets कं लं नं वं etc. are written on them how can a Japanese, European or American **Sadhak** read them. Matters relating to Yoga have also to be discussed which will be attempted in the next book in the series.

By thinking on any topic or concentrating on any subject, the seeds of the subject or object get embedded in us. Doing prayers, japa, meditation upasana going on pilgrimage, reading or recital etc. which gives one pride that 'I am the doer' are all covered in this **Sadhan**. In this **Sadhan**, the accumulated seeds of past action (**Sanskar**) from outside are accumulated in the '**Chitta**'. For example if any **Sadhak** meditates and does Japa of either **Shankar**, **Krishna** or **Devi** when his thoughts mature, the **Sadhak** sees the worshipping diety within himself which is nothing but the interplay of his accumulated seeds of past action and is happy.

The other **Sadhan** is to wean out or remove from within these accumulated seeds of the past action which is possible only when the divine **Shakti** turns inwards and becomes active. At this point one should give up the prayers or meditation wherein you forcibly concen-

trate, and surrender to the **Divine Shakti** and sit for **Sadhan**. Doing Japa, meditation and prayers with a purpose will again fill the "*Chitta*" with further seeds of action, when the purpose of **Sadhan** is to wean out the accumulated seeds of past action to make it (*Chitta*) pure. It should be remembered that as long as seeds pertaining to '**Tamoguna**', '**Rajoguna** or '**Satwaguna**' are within the '**Chitta**' it will be impure and engulfed by the above qualities. When the Shakti is directed towards the inner consciousness, it cleanses the soul of the accumulated seeds of past actions (Sanskar). In this book, discussions on the above have been done at random. However it is necessary to elaborate on this issue.

To ponder on the above issue as also several others and to teach a definite goal is of paramount importance to a Sadhak. These shall be dealt by me in the forthcoming series of books. It is hoped that whatever has been written in this book, the **Sadhaks** will read and seriously think it over and try to understand the same which will help in one's progress in Sadhana. With prayers that God will protect love and devote himself to all living beings.

SWAMI SHIVOM TIRTH

CHAPTER I

SHAKTIPAT -THE SELF-PROVEN SYSTEM

Question. What is *Shaktipat*?

Answer: *Shaktipat* is the descent of spiritual energy. Since energy is all pervading and is present in every particle of nature, the question arises-where does this energy come from and where does it go? *Shaktipat*, thus, means the descent of *Chit-Shakti* (the power of mind-stuff) of the *Guru* on the *ChitShakti* of the disciple. The *Guru* is regarded to be spiritually more advanced than the disciple. When the higher spiritual power of the *Guru* is transferred to the lower one of the disciple, it arouses and activates the disciple's *Chit-Shakti* and makes it introspective. This awakening and activation is easily possible through *Shaktipat*.

Question: *Is this awakening possible only through Shaktipat? Or is it also possible to arouse it through other methods and practices?*

Answer: In fact, all spiritual practices aim at awakening *Shakti* and making it introspective. The awakening of *Shakti* has been described by all spiritual practices and theories with little difference but name. For example, it is described as *Kundalini Shakti* by *Hatha Yoga*, *Pratyak Chetana* in *Yoga Darshan*, *Ahladini Shakti* (the delightful power) by the path of devotion, *Pragyan* (knowledge) in *Vedanta*, and *Shri Jagadamba* (Mother of the World) in *Tantra*. The principle idea is that whatever system one follows, the end result is the awakening of inner consciousness. The inward awakening of *Shakti* is possible when the *Chitta* (mind-stuff) has been purified and the grace of God is bestowed. *Japa* (repetition of holy names), penance, practice of *Hatha Yoga*, religious studies and discourses all aim at achieving this objective but they require long and constant effort. It certainly

requires much patience and this persistent and enduring patience is rarely seen. Whenever an aspirant abandons this path, his efforts, become a total waste. For this reason, the reliance on *Shaktipat* is highly beneficial because if an able Guru has been found and he has showered his grace, then *Kundalini* (dormant spiritual energy residing at the base of the spine) is soon awakened.

Theoretically all spiritual systems aim at awakening *Kundalini* however there is a big difference in practice. There are hardly one or two instances known when an aspirant has been able to awaken his *Shakti* by personal efforts. The author of *Shiva Sutras* rightly expounds that there is only one way of awakening. *Kundalini*, i.e. “*Gururupaya*” (the efforts of a Guru).* In *Narada Bhakti Sutra*, *Gauni Bhakti* (secondary systems of devotion) has also been referred to as a means of awakening, but it is pointed out that the end result is “*Mukhyatas Tu Mahat-Kripaiva*”.** The meaning of this *Sutra* (aphorism) is that the power of delightful thrill is imparted by the grace of *Gurus*. In this context Guru is defined literally as great men. We may, therefore, accept theoretically that all spiritual efforts aim at awakening *Kundalini* but in practice the awakening is more easily possible through *Shaktipat*. This does not mean, however, that other efforts such as worship, devotion and study of spiritual books have no bearing. These are necessary and, in fact, are required to be practised so that our *Chit-Shakti* develops necessary receptivity for *Shaktipat* initiation. An aspirant should always have his goal in view while doing these practices. In this manner he develops an intense desire for achieving the higher objective. The feeling of detachment towards the world also develops in time which helps his *Shakti* become active and introspective soon after *Shaktipat* initiation. Thus, the aspirant becomes fully equipped for receiving *Svayam-Siddha-Sadhan* (a self-proven system of autonomous *Yoga* exercises). This, in itself, is an attainment.

Question: *What is the difference between the automatic movements taking place after the awakening of Kundalini and the exercises of other Yoga Practices?*

Answer: There is always a sense of I-ness present while worship-

**Shiva Sutras*, Section II, 6

***Narada Bhakti Sutra*, II. 38

ping, reading and listening to religious books, engaging in spiritual discourse, practising *Japa*, *Tapa* (penance) or the *Asanas* (postures) and *Pranayams* (breathing exercises) of *Hatha Yoga*, but after the awakening of *Kundalini* through *Shaktipat*, *Sadhana* (spiritual practices) become automatic. The sense of I-ness is replaced by a sense of perception and the actions are equally replaced by automatic movements. The difference between actions and automatic movements is that with actions, one experiences the sense of the doer whereas with automatic movements, one experiences the sense of the seer, i.e. the movements take place automatically and without any conscious effort. The aspirant has only to be watchful about the events taking place within himself. These movements take place after the awakening of *Kundalini* in accordance with the accumulated seeds of past actions which are present in his *Chitta* and he experiences the movements of *Kriyaman-Shakti* (automatic movement power) beyond the control of his own body and mind. This sense of perception is never achieved simply by reading, religious discourse or the practice of *Japa* and *Tapa*. An aspirant may momentarily experience the sense of "I am the seer" at the emotional and intellectual level, but its permanence is possible only after *Kundalini* becomes awakened and he has had enough experiences.

Question: *Why has this system been designated as SvayamSiddha-Sadhan (self-proven system) ?*

Answer: *Shakti* cannot be unmanifest. As long as it is extrovert, it is involved in worldly objectives, but after the awakening of *Kundalini*, *Shakti* becomes introverted and is no longer dealing with the world. The process of *Shakti* becoming introverted happens when an aspirant turns off the light, sits in a closed room, closes his eyes and begins *Sadhan*. Now *Shakti* thins out seeds of past actions and converts them into movements. The aspirant experiences a number of automatic movements at the level of his body, senses, mind and intellect. He has no sense of I-ness during all of these. He sees his body swinging, weeping, laughing, singing and trembling. He also directly experiences the fact that he is not performing any of these actions but that some other power is responsible for them. This is why this system has been described as the self-proven system.

Question: *What is meant by the awakening of Kundalini? Is Shakti sometimes dormant and at other times active?*

Answer: *Shakti* is never dormant. It is always awake. However when it is directed towards the outside world, *Shakti* is said to be spiritually dormant but when this flow of energy is turned within and towards the Self, *Kundalini Shakti* (awakening of spiritual energy; inward activation of *Shakti*) occurs. *Shakti*, while flowing out towards the world, is called *PrasavaKrama* (involutionary cycle) and when its flow is turned in towards the Self, it is described as *Prati-Prasava-Krama* (evolutionary cycle). On the basis of these cycles, it is explained in the scriptures how Lord *Ganesh* (the elephant-headed god; son of *Shiva* and *Parvati*) is the giver of *Riddhi* (worldly accomplishments) and *Siddhi* (spiritual attainments). *Riddhis* are the result when the aspirant's mind is turned outward i.e. involutionary cycle. *Shakti* or *Ganesh* is the giver of *Siddhis* when the mind is turned in, i.e. the evolutionary cycle, guiding the aspirant toward ultimate spiritual advancement. When *Shakti* has no temporal or other worldly actions to perform, it will unite with its cause, the soul.

Question.: *Yoga Darshan advocates only conscious efforts for Yoga attainments. Where does this method of Shakti-pat fit into that system of philosophy?*

Answer: *Yoga Darshan* is a classic work on Yoga philosophy. It describes the various states of *Chitta*; it is of no significance whether these states are reached by practices using conscious effort or by automatic movements. The most important method advocated in *Yoga Darshan* is "Ishvar-pranidhan".* "*Pra*" is defined as directly evident, "*Ni*" as certain and "*Dhan*" as to comprehend. This means that when an aspirant directly and without a doubt perceives the divine power within, he can be said to have achieved the state of *Ishvara-Pranidhan*. The basis of this knowledge is not a state of consciousness but is Conscious Being itself, Consciousness is the outwardly directed active force, whereas Conscious Being is that fundamental level of power from which this whole universe, i.e. animals, birds, trees, seas, mountains, sun, moon, stars have sprung.

**Yoga Darshan* by Patanjali, Samadhi, I. 23

When consciousness becomes introverted, as is the case after receiving *Shaktipat*, it is called *Pratyak-Chetana*. During this stage, consciousness proceeds in the direction of attaining the state of Conscious Being. *Kundalini Shakti*, defined as the awakened spiritual energy within an aspirant, is thus described as "*Pratyak-Chetana*" in *Yoga Darshan*.* This means that consciousness when awakened and directed inward becomes *Pratyak-Chetana*. At this stage *Chit-Shakti*, on which are imprinted the seeds of good and evil actions of the past, has its place between *Pratyak-Chetana* and *Chaitanya* (Conscious Being). These imprints along with the five afflictions, namely ignorance, I-ness, attachment, aversion and fear of death all encircle *Chitta* (mindstuff) like rings. When the aspirant sits for practice and consciousness becomes *Pratyak-Chetana*, this cycle is reversed. This means whereas in the beginning the *Jiva* (living being) was accumulating the seeds of past actions because of his ego and attachment to them, now *Shakti* goes on thinning them out. These layers of accumulated seeds are like rings which open up one after another and the coatings of *Chitta* keep wearing out. *Chitta* thus becomes purified and spotless. The modifications of *Chitta* described in *Yoga* philosophy then start taking place automatically and effortlessly.

It has been mentioned that *Yoga* philosophy considers surrender to God as the most important spiritual event. Wherever Patanjali makes references to spiritual practices, he has not forgotten to lay due stress on surrender to God. In the chapter on meditation, *Samadhi Pada*, while mentioning the eight methods of restraining *Chitta*, he uses the aphorism "*Ishvara-Pranidhanadva*" (by surrender to God). The result of this has been described as the awakening of *Pratyak-Chetana* and cessation of distractions. Later, in the beginning of the chapter on spiritual practices, *Sadhana Pada*, Patanjali mentions *Kriya Yoga* for the first time. He has described *Kriya Yoga* as "Tapa (penance), Svadhyaya (self-study) and *Ishvara-Pranidhan* (surrender to God)".* The thinning out of afflictions is mentioned as a result of *Kriya Yoga*. Further, while elucidating the various disciplines for spiritual advancement, Patanjali mentions *Ishvara-Pranidhan*. He emphatically states here that *Samadhi* (superconsciousness; when individual conscious-

* *Yoga Darshan*, by Patanjali, *Samadhi Pada*, I. 29

ness merges with Universal Consciousness) is achieved by surrender to God. *Yoga Darshan*, in this way, propounds that surrender to God awakens *Pratyak-Chetana* and leads to *Samadhi* by a gradual extinction of *Samskaras* (accumulated seeds of past actions) while also eliminating the five fold afflictions. It may be pointed out here that the state of surrender to God is attained automatically after the awakening of *Kundalini* and the easiest way is by *Shaktipat*.

Question: *While Yoga Darshan prescribes Japa, repetition of Om with meditation on its meaning**, you are advocating Shaktipat which is never mentioned in Yoga Darshan. Please explain the meaning of this.*

Answer: Already the due significance of *Japa*, *Tapa* and other spiritual practices has been acknowledged with respect to the awakening of *Kundalini*. If *Japa* (chanting of holy names) is done along with the feeling of surrender to God, then in time *Chitta* will be purified and *Kundalini* awakened by the grace of God. But the patience required for such long and continuous practice is rarely observed among most of today's aspirants. When they fail to keep their practice regular and steady, then they do not find any direct evidence of spiritual advancement and this often discourages them from continuing any further.

Another way to awaken *Kundalini* according to *Yoga Darshan* is to meditate on those personalities who have attained a spiritual height by conquering their desires and worldly attachments[†]. It may be asked how an aspirant can meditate on such persons.

Fixing one's mind on the photographs of spiritually elevated souls, reading their biographies and meditating on them can bring the mind of the aspirant in tune with the minds of these enlightened beings. These methods all can be categorized as means which take effort and are just elementary in nature. In fact, the suggestion here is about the discipleship of an elevated soul. When a seeker approaches a *Guru* with humility and is accepted as a disciple, he receives *Shaktipat* initiation. The disciple sits opposite the teacher during the ceremony; the *Chit-Shakti* of the *Guru* is then extended to the *Chit-Shakti* of the dis-

**Yoga Darshan*, by Patanjali, *Sadhana Pada*, II. 1

***Yoga*..... by Patanjali, *Samdhi Pada*, I. 28

=*Yoga Darshan*, by Patanjali, *Samdhi Pada*, I. 37

ciple, making it introspective. The result of *Shaktipat* is this: the disciple automatically attains the state of surrender to God.

Question: *Yoga Darshan describes penance, studying spiritual books and surrender to God as parts of Kriya Yoga. These do not involve any physical movements. How, then, does Kriya Yoga relate to Shaktipat?*

Answer: *Kriya Yoga* as described in *Yoga Darshan* is to provide only the ground work for advancement in actual *Kriya Yoga* (*Yoga* of automatic movements). If *Japa*, *Tapa* and studies are performed after surrender to God, *Shakti* is awakened and becomes introspective. In its initial stage, *Ishvara-Pranidhan* is characterized by *Japa* and in its later stage by the awakening of introspective *Shakti of Mantras*. At this stage an aspirant starts experiencing *Kriyas* (automatic movements) of which he appears to have no conscious control. It is only for this reason that it has been designated as *Kriya Yoga*.

Question: *You seem to have based the Shaktipat system solely on the philosophy of Yoga Darshan. Is it also related to Bhakti Yoga (the path of devotion) ?*

Answer: It has been pointed out already that all spiritual methods lead to the inner awakening of *Shakti*. *Bhakti Yoga* is centered on the feelings of the heart. *Kundalini Shakti* has been described as *Ahlahini-Shakti* (delightful power) by the path of devotion.

As long as *Ahlahini Shakti* has not become active and introspective, *Gauni Bhakti* (the secondary path of devotion) should be followed. To go to a temple, to worship, to sing divine Songs, to recite *Stotras* (hymns of divine praise), to undertake pilgrimages, etc. all come under the category of *Gauni Bhakti*. *Gauni Bhakti* denotes by its very name "secondary", but it is necessary for the manifestation of unbounded love that the self-proven system of automatic movements is followed. With the awakening of *Ahlahini Shakti*, *Gauni Bhakti* is like a staircase which becomes insignificant after reaching the top of the stairs.

Narada Bhakti Sutra first defines devotion as "*Sa-tva Asmin Param Prem Svaroopā*".* The first two words, "*Sa*" and "*Tva*", mean

**Narada Bhakti Sutra*, I. 2

to transcend the level of secondary devotion. The next Sanskrit word, "Asmin" denotes *Saguna* (God manifested). The Sanskrit word for God Absolute is *Tasmin* which the author carefully does not use; *Asmin* is indicative of that manifest power which is alive and active for the aspirant. This delightful power, having been awakened and made active at the personal level, is seen within the fold of the three *Gunas* (basic elements of the universe i.e. *Sattva* defined as harmony, *Rajas* as activity, *Tamas* as inertia), yet is virtually free from them. When an aspirant directly experiences this power, an unbounded love is awakened within him. This is not any ordinary love but is divine and absolute love and is beyond the field of *Maya* (illusion). The aspirant becomes detached from the world and he no longer experiences any pleasure with objects of the world. He remains completely absorbed in divine love and cherishes a continuous desire for union with his Lord. This state, defined as the state of absolute love and the activation of the delightful power in him, is the real devotion. The acquired secondary devotion is left trailing behind and the automatic activities of *Shakti* start.

Narada Bhakti Sutra further defines the state of *Bhakti* after attainment. A *Siddha Bhakta* (a real devotee) does not want to acquire the power of *Anima* (to make one's body or anything else as small as he likes i.e. an atom), *Laghima* (to make one's body or anything else as light in weight as he likes), to fly in the air, to walk in fire, or to disappear physically at will. Indeed, these *Siddhis* (miraculous powers) are disdainful and must be given up. *Siddha* basically means natural. When this natural state is attained by an aspirant in the form of an absolute love for the Divine, he is no longer required to toil for devotion. All the symptoms and automatic movements of devotion appear within him in a very natural manner. He is then required simply to witness what happens and do nothing himself. "*Siddho-Bhavati*" (he becomes realized) carries this meaning.*

Another *Sutra* further elaborates this state of realization. A realized man, it says, becomes nearly mad (intoxicated with joy), actionless and Self-Satisfied (his own self having merged with the Self).** Such a devotee starts experiencing the instinctive movements like weeping,

singing, laughing, jumping, dancing, trembling, clapping, composing poems, adopting a number of *Hatha Yoga* postures, *Pranayam*, *Mudras* (pose, posture or gesture), hearing internal sounds and seeing internal visions. He may shed tears, fall on the ground motionless; his body may become light, heavy, cool or warm without any physical reason. Ordinary human beings may think that he has gone mad but he derives pleasure in all these activities. At times he sits completely motionless giving the impression of a totally different person compared to the one who was previously so active. The devotee becomes inwardly awakened to the happiness which is not found anywhere on the worldly plane.

The outward behavior of the devotee is described in the Sutra which states that he no longer desires anything after this achievement^{*} He is never attached to the objects of senses nor does he take pleasure in the possession of these objects. In other words, his dependence on God is total.

Question: *Does the path of knowledge make any reference to this awakening of Shakti?*

Answer: Out of the four great pronouncements of *Vedanta* (the later part of the *Vedas*), the first one reads knowledge which originates from the *Shakti* of God or *Atman* and animates the inanimate *Chitta*. *Pragyan* is then the virtual controller of senses which are involved in the creation, procurement and enjoyment of the world, but never gets itself involved in them. It is as much above the world as in the world because it is never affected by pleasure or pain, profit or loss, etc., but unfortunately the *Jiva* (living being) misunderstands this divine power to be his own individual power and becomes egotistic. When his actions become affected by the sense of doing, the effects of these actions start accumulating. These *Samskaras* (accumulated effects) give birth to all sorts of desires which are ultimately the cause of birth and rebirth for a number of *Yonis* (lives). As long as the *Jiva* does not make the distinction between the divine power within him and his actions, he cannot stop being egotistic and the accumulation of *Samskaras* continues.

**Narada Bhakti Sutra*, I. 4

***Narada Bhakti Sutra*, I. 6

= *Narada*..... I. 7

The observance of *Shakti* as separate and beyond the senses is the awakening of it. Until an aspirant understands that an omnipotent energy is making his body, mind and senses function, then whatever amount of reading, listening or thinking is done, *Pragyan* still cannot be understood. This knowledge comes when *Pragyan* itself has awakened *Shakti* by direct and definite experiences of the power.

When the aspirant experiences *Pragyan* or *Kundalini* power, he allows it to function without interruption and surrenders completely to it. He begins to reflect with his purified mind seeing that the power which he considered to be separate from him is, in fact, his own. This leads him to a state which is signified by another *Maha-Vakya* (great pronouncement), *Soham*, meaning "I am That". This has been, however, greatly misunderstood by the majority of people. They do not try to awaken *Pragyan*. They do not know what God is and where He exists. They simply go on verbally repeating "I am That", "I am That". When that "I" is not visibly "That" and when "I" is simply the ego besmeared with objects of senses, how can "I" be "That"?

When *Pragyan* is inwardly awakened, it removes the covering of the three elements called *Sat* (real), *Raj* (active) and *Tam* (dark) and quiets *Chitta* (mind-stuff). As a result of this, the thoughts and counter thoughts occurring in the mind perish and the mind loses its existence. This destroys the five afflictions and leads the way towards fundamental truth. Following this sequence, the aspirant first attains the state of *Soham* (I am That).

As the veil of *Maya* (illusion) covering the intellect thins out, the power of discrimination develops, the study of scriptures gives pleasure never experienced before, things become clearer, ideas blossom from within during contemplation, *Chitta* is illuminated more and more by the light of the soul, the sense of detachment towards the world becomes firmer, and ultimately the state of total detachment from the world is attained. This whole sequence in an aspirant is based on the awakening of *Pragyan*, without which he may only inflate his ego through practices requiring conscious effort and egotistic study of the scriptures.

Question: What do you think of Tantra?

Answer: Tantra is one of many spiritual disciplines. Tantra became popular because they represented the new forces of the time. Tantras were formulated for all gods and goddesses. Their main object was to demonstrate the expansion of universal Shakti. Shakti sometimes gives birth to this world and at other times gathers it up by the process of creation and dissolution.

Tantras are mainly of three types: Shaiva (relating to Lord Shiva), Shakta (relating to Goddess Shakti), and Vaishnava (relating to Lord Vishnu) and their centers are located at Kashmir, Bengal and Kathiawar (Gujrat) respectively. Vaishnava Tantra is now nearly extinct and only the Shaiva and Shakta Tantras are available. At the individual level, Shakti originates in the soul and controlling Chitta, performs worldly deeds through the sense organs. During evolution, Shakti, by becoming introspective, reducing the seeds of past actions, and thinning out afflictions, merges ultimately into the soul. Then at the universal level, although this world still exists, it loses itself for the realized soul. The awakening of Shakti during the evolutionary cycle is the awakening of Kundalini power which is called Mahamaya, Jagadamba and Shri, etc. in Tantras.

Tantra-Upasana is basically the worship of a Yantra (a graphic symbol) in which there is essentially a point within a circle along with other graphic symbols. Here the idea is that the whole universe is the result of the expansion of that central point. The Sadhak (spiritual aspirant) withdraws his mind from the outside lines and concentrates on the central point. The worship of the central point symbolizes the worship of that point within the human body, i.e. the seat of the Kundalini at Mooladhar-Chakra (the plexus located at the base of the spine). When Kundalini is awakened and the automatic movements start taking place, Yantra worship becomes secondary. Ironically, these days ritualistic worship has assumed undue significance at the expense of the awakening of Kundalini power. Many persons are seen worshipping Shri Yantra or some other Yantra without any awakening of the power. If the initiation in Tantra Sadhana is obtained from an able Guru, then the awakening of the Shakti may be witnessed. Yantra wor-

ship is comprised of internal and external sacrifices. The external sacrifices aim at awakening the desire for internal sacrifice. As long as *Kundalini* is not awakened, automatic practices which represent the internal sacrifice do not replace external sacrifice.

Question: *What about Hatha Yoga?*

Answer: *Hatha Yoga* is a scientific method and is backed by scriptures. In this method *Kundalini* is awakened through control of *Prana* however in the present age it has become unsuitable because most people do not have the kind of healthy body necessary for its practice. Even if there is control of diet, character, and particularly continence, the atmosphere proper for *Hatha Yoga* practices is absent. Moreover, it is not always easy to find a teacher fully adept with *Hatha Yoga*. It must be pointed out here that prolonged personal guidance from the teacher is essential for some of the *Hatha Yoga* practices.

Hatha Yoga is not simply learning body postures or breathing exercises. The word *Hatha* is composed of two parts: "Ha" meaning the *Ida* current within the spinal column and "Tha" meaning the *Pingala* current. There is a third current called *Sushumna* which runs through the middle of the spinal column while *Ida* and *Pingala* run respectively on the left and right sides. All of these three currents originate at *Mooladhar*. In *Hatha Yoga*, *Prana* is restrained from entering *Ida* and *Pingala* and is concentrated at the *Mooladhar Chakra*. *Mantra* power is used to produce shocks thereby forcing *Prana* to enter the *Sushumna* for ascension. This ascent is described as the awakening of the *Kundalini*.

Question: *What do you think of Karma-Kanda (ritual worship) ?*

Answer: Lord *Ganesh*, being the Lord of *Mooladhar* and the giver of temporal and worldly gifts, is worshipped first in *Karma-Kanda*. *Karma-Kanda* is performed mainly for obtaining worldly pleasure. Here *Shakti*, acting through the medium of sense instruments, gives worldly fulfillment. Worship is performed to strengthen *Shakti*. However, when *Karma-Kanda* is performed for

enhancing spiritual progress, Lord *Ganesh* helps achieve *Siddhi* (spiritual fulfillment).

Question: *What are the various kinds of initiation?*

Answer: These are the types: *Anvi*, *Shakti* and *Shambhavi*. When he is given the initiation called *Anvi*, the aspirant performs *Japa*, worship and spiritual practices egotistically and with effort. It is the effort of a human being who is like *Anu* (an atom) and whose aim, God realization, is much, much bigger compared to his own infinitesimal existence. The second initiation is *Shakti* which involves the awakening of a supernatural force within the body and this awakened power acts for the spiritual upliftment of the aspirant. The third is called *Shambhavi*. *Shambu* is the name of Lord *Shiva*. Lord *Shiva* is described by scriptures as the Supreme Lord having, among innumerable attributes, unimpeded will, absolute Knowledge, absolute power of creativity and absolute Self-consciousness. This initiation which transforms a disciple into the person of Lord *Shiva* is *Shambhavi Diksha*.

The type of initiation given to a particular disciple depends on the competence of the teacher as well as the capacity of the disciple. Many disciples are much too eager to receive the higher types like *Shakti* or *Shambhavi* initiation. They should, however, realize that they can be given these only when they have developed greater spiritual capacity. Constant practice and patience are very important for spiritual advancement. Surrender to the will of the Guru, in whom the disciple has faith, is very essential.

A *Guru* himself is not always dwelling in the highest state of superconsciousness. Just as every *Guru* is not at the same level of development, so also different disciples have different capacities. The three *Gunas* (elements), *Sattva* (harmony), *Rajas* (activity) and *Tamas* (inertia) are dominant in the individual at different times. When at the time of initiation both the teacher and disciple have *Sattva* as the dominant *Guna*, *Shambhavi Diksha* takes place. Similarly, the dominance of *Rajas* and *Tamas* are responsible for *Shakti* and *Anvi* initiations respectively.

Question: *Which is Kundalini Shakti: Jada (matter) or Chetana*

(*consciousness*) ?

Answer: *Shakti* is of three types: *Jada*, *Chetana* and *Chaitanya* (Universal Consciousness). *Jada Shakti* is that energy which manifests in nonliving matter (e.g. the power of lightening, thunder, hydropower, wind power, etc.). Such energy is raw power without any capacity to regulate itself. An electric fan, for example, cannot shut itself off even when the blast of air from it is no longer needed.

The second type of power, *Chetana Shakti*, is that which regulates the senses, mind, intellect and ego. It manifests itself as the power of discrimination of the human intellect and distinguishes between good and bad.

The third power is *Chaitanya Shakti* (Universal Consciousness) which is at the root of manifestation of this external world. Rivers, mountains, oceans, seas, forests, birds, animals, sun, moon, stars and space are all created by it. All that can be seen and perceived is the result of the vibration of this power. This is a much higher level of conscious power. This universal power, when acting in a body through the medium of senses and performing worldly deeds, is called conscious power. Similarly, when *Chetana Shakti* is awakened, activated and made introspective, it purifies the *Chitta* and becomes *Shakti* itself.

The residual power that remains unused after the creation of the world is called *Shesh* (literally meaning residue). Similar residual power in human beings is called *Kundalini Shakti*. This *Kundalini* power controls the outwardly directed senses and is called *Chetana*. This *Chetana* is first converted into *Pratyak Chetana* and is then made introspective and transformed into *Chaitanya*. Therefore, *Kundalini Shakti* is never *Jada* (matter); it is *Chetana* (conscious power).

CHAPTER II

THE INITIATION

Question. *Is everybody fit to receive Shaktipat?*

Answer: There are two views: one, advocating the initiation without any consideration to the fitness of the disciple and the other leaving this decision to the *Guru*. If *Shaktipat Diksha* is given even to an unqualified disciple, it is believed that *Shakti* will apply itself for the purification of *Chitta* of the disciple. Both views are correct, but people who desire to receive *Shaktipat Diksha* should not become indifferent to self-improvement. An aspirant of *Shaktipat Diksha* must prepare himself by practising austerities and various disciplines in order to acquire less sense of ego, and more humility and self-control.

Scriptures tell us of two types of disciples: *Sat* (pure) and *Asat* (impure). Even if a person seems impure and immoral, he may still be accepted by a *Guru*. This is so because only the *Guru* can correctly judge the state of preparedness of the disciple. Similarly, a person apparently of good moral character and possessing spiritual traits may be unacceptable to a *Guru*. An anecdote from the life of Swami Narayan Tirth will best illustrate this point. A Sanskrit scholar well-versed in rituals and scriptures was pestering the Swami for initiation. Swamiji, however, was indifferent to his request and kept postponing the initiation ceremony. One day, while the scholar was present, a Muslim gentleman came to the swami and humbly requested to be accepted as a disciple. To the complete surprise and resentment of the scholar, the swami immediately agreed to the request of the Muslim gentleman and fixed an auspicious time for the initiation ceremony. As soon as the Muslim gentleman left, the scholar angrily questioned the swami and was given this as an answer: "In a building which is wired properly and is ready for power, the electricity can be provided immediately. You, being much too proud of your scholarship and gentlemanliness,

have shut yourself up in the darkness of your knowledge. The cave of your heart is now difficult to light, even by *Shaktipat* initiation.”

In fact, a person himself cannot judge the state of his preparedness. He may seem to be impure, but the present state of his development may be the last phase of darkness.

Question: *Is it proper for people to request initiation at a time and place chosen by them?*

Answer: No, never. Surrendering oneself to the will of the *Guru* implies leaving all important decisions to the *Guru* himself.

Question: *How long should an aspirant stay in the company of his *Guru* both before and after initiation?*

Answer: The disciple may have to stay with his *Guru* for a total period of one week. After initiation he is usually required to stay for three nights, however this period may be prolonged by one or two days depending on the development of *Kriyas* (automatic movements). Even before the date of initiation, the *Guru* may want the disciple to prepare himself by purifying his *Chitta* to an adequate extent.

Question: *What preparation should the disciple make before approaching the *Guru* for initiation?*

Answer: Nothing special. The aspirant should just keep practicing the spiritual discipline according to his personal liking, faith and religious beliefs. During the period of his preparation, he should follow whichever divine form is dear to him and whatever practices his religion, family background, social status, abilities and circumstances allow him to. What must be practised is that which is comfortable and follows one's natural inclination. Usually morning and vespere prayers, worship, chanting of holy names or hymns, observing austerities and *Pranayam* (restraining the breath) can all be helpful for his improvement. It must be mentioned here that the accumulated seeds of his past good deeds are useful both before and after initiation. Purity of food, thoughts, rituals, practices and ways of life

all lead to his improvement.

Question: *What is the disciple required to do during initiation?*

Answer: Usually the initiation takes place before sunrise. On the appointed day the aspirant must get up two hours before sunrise, take a bath, dress in clean clothes and taking a worship offering, present himself to the *Guru* for initiation. After the *Diksha* ceremony, it is no longer necessary to take a bath before sitting in *Sadhan* (spiritual practices) because the energy acts within the body and not externally. The aspirant must have an *Asan* (a woolen rug) to sit on. Wool, being a poor conductor of electricity, prevents the energy activated by the *Guru* during initiation from passing into the earth below. This *Asan* also gets charged during the process and therefore must not be used by anyone other than the disciple himself.

The disciple must sit facing north or east. He must then worship the *Guru* and offer him fruits, flowers, sweets, coconut, etc. If the *Guru* gives a *Mantra*, then it must be repeated mentally. The body must be passive and relaxed and the mind surrendered to *Shakti*. He must leave his mind, intellect, senses and body completely to the control of *Shakti*. No effort should be made to prevent any automatic movements or actions as this will impede further development of the aspirant.

One should not be scared of *Kriyas* (automatic movements). It may appear as if a spirit has entered the body, but it is only the result of the charging of the internal energy which has been activated for the welfare of the disciple. During these *Kriyas* the aspirant is not under the control of any external force or spirit whatsoever. Moreover, these *Kriyas* are fully beneficial for him and are under the control of his own free will and can, therefore, be stopped whenever he so likes. Also, one should not be shy of the *Kriyas* taking place because such a thought may suppress them. Since many other aspirants also sit and experience the same *Kriyas*, no sense of shame need be associated with them.

One should sit in a comfortable posture to make the body relaxed. When automatic movements like weeping, laughing, singing, hopping, dancing, etc. take place, it will not be possible to maintain the

same posture for long. If the aspirant stays in a certain posture for a long time and feels that his feet, legs or any other parts of the body have slept, he can change his position.

He can, if he so likes, sit stretching his legs or fold them backward, standing up, lie down, or stay in any posture which is comfortable. However he should not sit leaning against a wall because this will obstruct the spontaneous movements and may induce sleep. Watches, spectacles, coins, etc. should be removed and put away.

During the three days of *Kriya* development he should study religious books only and should avoid roaming about aimlessly. Gossiping and reading newspapers, magazines or other literature not connected with religion or spirituality should be given up. In addition to the morning and evening hours, he should spend as much time as possible in the room reserved for spiritual practices. If and when the *Guru* is available, *Sadhan* should be performed in his presence, but even the *Kriyas* that take place during the *Guru's* absence are important since they indicate a continuity of experience. Not experiencing the spontaneous movements during the initial sitting should not worry the disciple because they largely depend on the state of his preparedness. The beginning of these movements varies and has been observed to start any time from the first to the fifth day of the initiation. Therefore, he should sit quietly and observe objectively whatever may be going on within himself. The divine power working within the disciple's body causes movements on the basis of his *Samskaras* (accumulated seeds of past actions). It is not proper to interfere with or obstruct the working of this power or to wish for any particular set of movements.

Question: *Some disciples apparently do not experience any automatic movements after initiation. Do they really remain unaffected by Shaktipat?*

Answer: The *Guru* is duty-bound to determine the ability of an aspirant before accepting him for initiation. *Shaktipat* will necessarily bring about desirable effects in a disciple fit for initiation. *Kriyaman-Shakti*, once activated, will first expand itself for the purification and transformation of the disciple, and will then manifest itself

in the form of automatic movements. The awakening and the active manifestation of *Shakti* are two different things. Many a time the awakened *Shakti* does not manifest itself for months. Usually the *Guru* has to impart additional *Shakti* or the disciple has to engage himself in severe spiritual discipline.

Inactive *Shakti* may be due to any one or more of the following reasons:

- 1) Loss of seminal fluid, constipation, hemorrhoids, diabetes, nervous disorders, etc. interfere with the activation of *Shakti*. It is obvious that a sound body is an asset for the quicker activation of energy.
- 2) The activation of energy is faster among younger disciples. The deterioration of the organs and the senses with age retards the process of activation. Women, being more emotional than men, experience faster development of awakened energy.
- 3) The *Guru*, by bestowing greater love to a disciple, can also enhance the development. On the other hand, any indifference or annoyance expressed by the *Guru* will affect it adversely.
- 4) The moral character of the disciple also occupies an important place in his development after *Shaktipat*. The purer the heart, the faster will be the development. Impurities will impede, slow down, or stop his development altogether.
- 5) The effect of good and evil actions and thought processes of past lives are also significant. Any evil deeds or thoughts like murder, theft, etc. committed by the aspirant obstruct the development of *Shakti*.

However, there is no need for a disciple to worry about delays in the active manifestations of *Shakti*. As already mentioned earlier, the *Guru* by imparting additional energy and the disciple by following austere practices can overcome all obstructions.

Question: *If the manifestation of Shakti is very intense, making even self-control and normal social behavior impossi-*

ble, what should the disciple do?

Answer: If the disciple feels that he is unable to conduct himself properly in society, finds it difficult to balance himself during walking, or starts trembling or crying while in a temple or in the company of holy men, he should stop these movements. Many of these obstructions are only mental. The mind must be made strong and this will enable the disciple to stop the movements at will.

If, however, it becomes impossible to control these movements and they become very violent, then he should approach his *Guru* for their amelioration. The *Guru* must have the power to start and stop these movements in the disciple's body. The *Guru* can regulate the intensity of movements either by using his own power or by enabling the disciple to increase his own mental capacity for such control as may be desirable. An important point to bear in mind is that the disciple should try to stay on his *Asan* (seat) during these movements. If and when the body gets displaced, he should repeatedly try to keep himself on the *Asan*. This will eventually enable him to acquire the power to control the movements at will.

Question: *If the movements become active in a public place like a temple, while in the company of holy men, or at collective prayer, what should a disciple then do?*

Answer: The situation is very clear. Movements are strictly prohibited in the presence of noninitiates because of the possibility of transmigration of *Shakti* to them. It is therefore advisable that as long as the disciple has not acquired mental power to control his movements, he should not attend or participate in functions where the *Kriyas* may start automatically.

Movements may be manifested or unmanifested. The possibility of transmigration of *Shakti* exists when the movements manifest. The unmanifested movements take place inside a man; *Shakti* does not transmigrate in this case. If the disciple experiences such unmanifested movements while present in a place of common prayer or worship, he need not fear or worry.

Question: *If in a house where some persons have been initiated while others have not, what important things should the initiated ones bear in mind?*

Answer: There is always a possibility of transmigration of *Shakti* in such situations. It is therefore advised that *Sadhan* (spiritual practice) be avoided in their presence. A separate room is therefore very necessary for a disciple. The practice should be performed while keeping the door shut. Each individual disciple should have his personal sitting cloth. If possible, no other belongings should be kept in that room which could necessitate the entry of other persons. This will, in addition, fill the room with strong spiritual vibrations making the movements all the more intense. This atmosphere will naturally affect even the uninitiated persons by the transmigration of *Shakti* so it is necessary that such persons are strictly prohibited admission. Even then, the possibility of indirect effect cannot be ruled out; therefore the best way is to provide *Shaktipat* initiation for such persons also.

Question: *If the Guru passes away before the disciple attains the highest state of spiritual progress i.e. Samadhi (superconsciousness; when individual consciousness merges with Universal Consciousness), what should the disciple do? Does the Guru continue to guide the disciple in a Sukshma (subtle body) form or is Shakti capable of taking the Sadhak (aspirant) to his goal?*

Answer: There is no difference between the power of God and the power of *Guru*; spiritually they are one and the same. This power having been awakened in the *Guru* is further awakened and activated in the disciple. Therefore, this does not cease even after the disappearance of the physical form of the *Guru*. It is indestructible and eternal. Just as the disciple has been close to the physical form of the *Guru*, so he becomes close to this power and progress on the path of spirituality is ensured. Thus, a disciple need not fear the disappearance of the body of his *Guru*.

Even if the aspirant dies before he attains the state of *Samadhi*, the *Kundalini* still remains awakened. The subtle body has *Prana* as

one of its constituents. *Prana* becomes active and rises because the aspirant, when he reincarnates a new physical body, continues with the same awakened state of *Kundalini* that he had in his previous body. *Shakti* is thus constantly active in an awakened person and will finally take him to his destination, *Samadhi*. With the fulfillment of this objective, the force merges into its cause, the soul. The *Guru*, in essence, is eternal, endless and full of knowledge. As long as the disciple has faith and surrenders himself completely, the power will not die.

There is, however, the *Guru's* successor who can be equally trusted. The *Guru* normally appoints his successor after blessing him to be able to act for the welfare of his fellow disciples. It is worthwhile to mention that all other disciples are duty-bound to have due regard and respect for the succeeding *Guru*. He will, no doubt, on occasions remove their doubts and keep them guided on the right path.

Question: *A question arises regarding movements like laughing, singing, crying, trembling or rotation round; do they keep one involved? What are the results of these and where do they ultimately lead us?*

Answer: The end result of these movements is the purification of *Chitta*. The accumulated effect of past deeds gives origin to attachment in one's *Chitta*. Attachments give birth to certain tendencies and these tendencies seek their expression through the determination and choices of the mind. *Prana* then expresses itself outwardly through the senses. When *Shakti* is awakened, it cuts short the entire process by converting seeds into movements; otherwise these seeds become attachments and cause bondage. Weeping, singing, crying, jumping, dancing, trembling, etc. are the movements which have this purifying effect on *Chitta*. The determination or choices of the mind obviously have no bearing on these movements.

This should always be clear-material gain is never the goal of an aspirant. *Yoga Darshan* describes human sufferings as *Heya* (that which is to be avoided) and are due to *Hetu* (the cause). The way to liberation is *Han* (destruction) and *Hanopaya* (means of, destruction).* This means that the objects of worldly pleasure and pain are all worth renouncing

**Yoga Darshan*, by Patanjali, Sadhana Pada, II16,17, II 24-26.

since they have their origin in the wrongful supposition that this physical body is the self. This is due to ignorance and illusion signified by *Hetu* (the cause). The way of deliverance from pain and sorrow is the destruction of this ignorance. It is mainly due to ignorance that a human being believes that his body is the self, gets attached to the objects of senses, and cherishes a desire for their possession and enjoyment. If this ignorance can be destroyed, then the self realizes that he is no longer the physical body and is therefore freed from all sorrows. Sankhya philosophy describes this stage as that of eternal happiness.

Shakti, when awakened, transforms seeds of past actions into automatic movements, which consequently reduce passions. The thought currents of *Chitta* evolve from disturbing ones to calm ones and ultimately are restrained. Similarly, the mind is also freed of all desires. The feelings of lust, anger, passion, attachment, pride, jealousy, etc., are uprooted. These vices are the veils of ignorance which delude the mind. The awakened *Shakti* destroys the veil of *Maya* (illusion). *Shakti*, which has its origin in the soul, by which *Chitta* appears to be conscious and which is responsible for the creation of the veil of *Maya*, returns and reunites with the soul. Thus, the identification of *Chitta* with the soul is broken, and with the activity of *Chitta* having been so destroyed, the state of self-realization is attained. It is in this way that the individual soul attains the state of superconsciousness.

As the automatic movements become progressively more subtle, the aspirant experiences greater joy out of such movements though there are no outward signs of them. The aspirant is inwardly absorbed in bliss and the movements finally disappear after completing the process of purification of the disciple's mind.

CHAPTER III

MEDITATION

Question: *How shall one know if he is making progress in spiritual advancement? Although I regularly perform the required Sadhana (spiritual practices), I am doubtful about the results.*

Answer: The intensification or otherwise of the practices is not a correct indicator of progress in this field. Kriyas only indicate the fact that *Shakti* has been awakened and is active within the body. The experiences so gained, though being indicative of the continuity of *Sadhan*, do not necessarily denote progress. Depending on the predominance of *Sattva*, *Rajas*, or *Tamas* in the *Chitta*, the aspirant experiences respectively inner peace and bliss, violent internal movements, or the emergence of anger, passion, and a somniferous state of mind. The balance of the three Gunas (*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*) in the *Chitta* is always changing and is therefore responsible for the manifestation of automatic movements which are sometimes violently intense and at other times subtle. A good measure for progress that the aspirant has gained is the extent to which *Sattva-Guna* predominates and the degree to which the veil of ignorance and other vices have been removed.

In Shrimadbhagvat*, Uddhava asks Lord Krishna the same question and is thus answered:

- 1) Is the aspirant getting progressively detached from worldly pleasures and objects of the senses? Such detachment is a sign of progress.
- 2) Is his mind gradually becoming devoid of fear? Fearlessness is a sign of definite progress. Fear has its origin in desires. When a man desires to possess some worldly object he is afraid of

**Shrimat Bhagawat*, Eleventh Skandha, Chapter 20, v. 6-9

loss. If he desires health and wealth he is afraid of losing them. Finally, if he desires just to live, he is afraid of death. Similarly, if he loves someone, he is afraid of parting from that beloved one. Fearlessness, then, is equivalent to desirelessness. The increase of such fearlessness within him is indicative of progress.

- 3) Is there an increasing urge for self-surrender to God? Complete self-surrender is the aim of spiritual practices. Surrender to God implies that the mind of the aspirant remains unaffected by the dualities of pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, honor and dishonor. A man normally desires happiness, fame, honor, and agreeable surroundings. Any impediment to these cause him pain and restlessness. The whole world is engaged in the pursuit of happiness and desires but unfulfilled desires always leave people in sorrow. It is necessary that the aspirant get above all these and experience the grace of God at all times and in all circumstances.

The following are the three ways for getting beyond dualities:

- 1) The aspirant should develop the feeling that whatever pleasure or pain comes to him has its root in the seeds of accumulated actions performed in his past lives. He cannot justifiably accuse anyone except himself for whatever fruit he has been offered to taste. This way of thinking is basically helpful in taking an aspirant above the feeling of pleasure or pain.
- 2) The second method suits the man of knowledge. He thinks that both pain and pleasure are unreal. It is only ignorance which has created such dualities.
- 3) The last one is the spirit of surrender to God which, broadly speaking, is an accomplishment of the follower of devotional love. A total surrender to the will of God is the basic qualification of a devotee. He is fully convinced that whatever circumstances he has been put in are due to the showering of God's grace upon him and are for his good alone. When he is surrounded by favorable circumstances, he should think, "This is

not due to my ability or bravery; in fact, God has mercifully provided them for me. How kind He is!" On the other hand, when he encounters an unfavorable situation, he should think, "I was so much under the spell of those favorable opportunities that I had become too attached to them. God has created contrary situations so that I developed detachment from them. He is so kind!" This kind of thinking takes the aspirant above the sphere of desires. This is mainly possible when he has sufficiently developed the spirit of surrender to God. It also indicates clearly that the person is moving on the correct spiritual path.

The disciples of the *Kriyaman-Shakti* system can experience this surrender to God distinctly. He should let the *Shakti* within work itself out and should not interfere in any way. If he likes any particular Kriya, and if as a result of his desire this Kriya does occur within him, it would only be in opposition to the spirit of complete self-surrender to the Divine *Shakti*. He should, therefore, try to be as indifferent as possible to the working of the *Shakti* within him.

Question: *What is the significance of seeing various forms of light during Sadhan?*

Answer: The seeing of various forms of light, even while their external sources are absent, is a good sign. If during meditation, flames, specks of light, sun, moon, stars, fires, etc., are seen, it indicates a high state of spiritual advancement. Such visions are generally precursors of the state of superconsciousness and may also occur during the interval when the aspirant comes back to consciousness after attaining that state of superconsciousness. While every aspirant attaining the state of superconsciousness will go through these visions, not everyone seeing these visions will necessarily reach superconsciousness. He should not, however, despair and must keep trying with complete faith and self-surrender to God in order to ultimately reach the state of superconsciousness. It will certainly be attained by the persevering ones.

Question: *What is the difference between Kriya-Shakti and Nath,*

the spiritual sect founded by the nine Nath Gurus, the chief among them being Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath sects?

Answer: From the point of view of spiritual practices, and the awakening and activation of *Shakti*, there is no significant difference between these two sects. *Kriyaman-Shakti* is present in varying degrees within the bodies of various groups of individuals such as householders, celibates, renunciants, and monks. It is true that the heights reached in the science of *Shaktipat* by the Gurus of the Nath sect have not been equalled by those of our sect. One possible reason for this could be due to prior training in *Hatha Yoga* and complete renunciation of the world before *Shaktipat* initiation. Being thus prepared, the aspirant would reach a very high state of spiritual development immediately after initiation.

In our sect, since it does not have the above mentioned insistence on prior preparation, some of the *Shakti* after initiation is employed in the improvements and transformation of the neoinitiate. Even after initiation the aspirant must pay special attention to the building of better foundations for spiritual advancement. Our sect is of more recent origin and covers many more disciples. Only the future can show how far we shall be able to develop the science of *Shaktipat*.

Question: *The motivation for a man's actions comes sometimes from the awakened Shakti within him and at other times from his impure mind. How can the aspirant distinguish between these two?*

Answer: According to Indian philosophy, a man's actions are affected by his intellect and his mind. Intellect is that faculty which discriminates between right and wrong, good and evil, just and unjust. Mind, according to this philosophy, is the emotional part of man's nature and is easily influenced by pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow, love and hatred and many other dualities. Ordinarily most people are swayed by mind into the performance of undesirable deeds, but the spiritually advanced ones, under the dominance of their developed intellect, are more discriminating. When a man's actions

are motivated by lust, passion, anger, greed or delusion, and are performed in order to get rid of something, to avoid certain circumstances, or to obtain unjust favors, it is the result of the dominance of the emotions. When his actions are dictated by intellect, it is after having taken into consideration his religious beliefs, ashram and social obligations, national laws, traditions and customs, ability, physical and mental capacities, wealth, and opportune time.

In the case of an aspirant whose *Kriyaman-Shakti* is awakened and active, there are autosuggestions received for right actions. *Kriyaman-Shakti* assumes the duties of intellect in such a person and the obedience here is that of the emotions to *Kriyaman-Shakti*. Quite often an aspirant mistakes the dictates of mind to be the voice of *Kriyaman-Shakti* and acts accordingly. One has to be extra careful in this respect so that he avoids making blunders. The main distinction between the two voices is that the real voice is marked with the purity of mind and its desirelessness. Much more can be understood only by personal experience.

Question: *Group meditation has been recommended very highly. What is the actual significance of it?*

Answer: An aspirant is immensely benefited by performing *Sadhan* in a group. The development of Kriya in group meditation takes place in such a way that it contributes to each according to his need. For example, an aspirant may find his Kriyas (automatic movements) to be more intense when meditating in a group than when he practices alone. Also, if a person experiences no movements, then group meditation may help to give him a start in this.

The aspirants who have reached the state of *Dhyana* (meditation) may, however, find some problems being with a group, as the crying, laughing, singing, jumping, dancing, etc. might come in the way of their peaceful meditation. But truly speaking, an aspirant, reaching the state of *Dhyana*, should not be bothered by this. Meditators who find difficulties with this need, in fact, to experience more so that they can make their meditation even finer. On the other hand, those who have reached the subtler state of meditation, while experiencing

no problem, are benefited as per their advanced spiritual requirements.

Question: *The five senses of the body act according to the dictates of the mind. The mind, in its place, is said to be instrumental in taking a man either to heaven or hell. Please tell me where does this mind exist in the body?*

Answer: *Manas* (the mind) is a very subtle element which expands throughout a human body. It is incorrect to confine it to a particular center in the body. For instance, if there is a headache, the mind is present there. Similarly, if a thorn pricks the foot, the mind is equally present there. When there is the dominance of emotion, the mind unites with the brain and when a person becomes thoughtful, it joins with the intellect. The mind has been assigned various functions.

Conspicuously, mind has not been defined anywhere in Yoga Darshan. On the other hand, it details *Chitta-Vritti* (the different whirlpools of mind-stuff). * Mind may aptly be defined as the state of fluctuation resulting from the whirlpools taking place in *Chitta*. There is always a moment's concentration on one object or another of the vibrating whirlpools of the *Chitta*. This idea is the closest to what the mind is like. It reaches and unites a person, star, place or thing situated thousands of miles away from the subject. There is no bar of time, place or person for the mind to think about. It is interesting, in this way, to note that although *Manas* (the mind) is instrumental both during enjoyment and suffering, it cannot be identified with any physical point or substance in the body.

Question: *How is that state of mind achieved where there are no fluctuations caused by desires and determinations?*

Answer: In order to achieve this state of deep contentment the aspirant has to make his *Chitta* totally restrained and inactive. As long as the consciousness originating from the self continues to be replaced by the *Chitta*, the mind remains unrestrained. All that is seen, heard or perceived is the result of the joining of the self through the instrument of the mind with the senses. When ever this identification of the self with the senses is stopped, the *Chitta* becomes fully restrained and inactive. The self has no sense instrument as such and,

*Yoga Darshan, by Patanjali, *Samadhi Pada*, I 5-11.

unless it joins with the sense organs, a person may exist within the world without any knowledge or feeling for it; for this, it is necessary that the self becomes disassociated from the *Chitta*. As long as the conscious self, through the medium of senses, remains directed towards the outer world, the identification of the self with the *Chitta* will not break and the process of involution will go on. It is necessary that *Shakti* evolves and is directed towards the soul. Such evolution is called the awakening of *Shakti* or consciousness and produces Divine Bliss. Therefore, what is important is the awakening and activation of *Shakti* either by *Shaktipat* from a Guru or through other spiritual disciplines. All great souls, both past and present, had this activation and awakening of *Shakti* realized within before any real spiritual achievements were attained.

Even after the awakening of *Shakti*, obstructions in the evolutionary process may be caused by the accumulated seeds of past actions, desires, passions, lust, good and bad thoughts, fluctuations of the mind, materialistic tendencies and the five afflictions (ignorance, I-ness, attachment, aversion, and fear of death). It is necessary to eradicate all these from the mind. The awakened and activated *Shakti* first engages itself in this operation of cleansing the mind and the aspirant does not have to make any special effort except complete self-surrender to the activities of *Shakti* within him. In addition to this, he is, however, required to be very careful about the purity of his conduct in the affairs of the world. This purity of conduct is essential for stopping further accumulation of the fruits and seeds of the present actions of the aspirant. *Shakti* also simultaneously destroys the seeds of the actions performed earlier or even performed during a previous birth in order to avoid the aspirant's rebirth and thus, further involvements. After the completion of this task, *Shakti* merges in its cause, the soul, and the aspirant attains the state of *Samadhi* (superconsciousness). For him the external world dissolves itself away and since the *Chitta* becomes completely restrained, he goes beyond pleasure and pain.

Question: *Nonattachment and renunciation are the pillars of Parmarth (for the highest good). Kindly explain this ?*

Answer: According to Yoga Darshan, nonattachment is that state of the restrained *Chitta* in which no involvement exists with anything seen, heard or perceived. It means that there need not be a physical disassociation with worldly objects. What matters is the sense of detachment at the level of the mind. Renunciation, on the other hand, is the discarding of things completely. Nonattachment precedes renunciation. Both of them are very important for spiritual development.

An ordinary man lives within bondage of the world and he is attached and tied with the objects of the world. He thinks that his body is the self. He is scared of death and consequent rebirth. As long as this and many other fears have a grip on him, he cannot make much spiritual progress. However, nonattachment can be achieved through the restraining of *Chitta* by making it dispassionate.

Real nonattachment is experienced when a man understands that this world is transitory, decaying and everchanging. There is no happiness in the world; only suffering is its net result. This understanding is further nourished by the study of spiritual literature, contemplation, meditation and following spiritual discipline. The more one becomes detached from the world in this way, the higher the leap in spiritual advancement.

Question: *You have said that Shakti converts Samskaras (seeds of past actions) into movements long before they became a passion or emotional drive and that these Kriyas (automatic movements) continue in all states of consciousness i.e. waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep. A question arises as to whether the movements taking place outside meditation are the direct result of Shakti or are normal actions rising from emotions.*

Answer: *Shakti*, once aroused, is active at all times, but its awareness and intensity is felt only when the mind is attentive towards it. Often these movements take place at times other than *Sadhan*, in which case they should be controlled by the determination of the

mind. These movements may also occur during dreams and dreamless sleep although they may not be perceived. When such a person arises after sleep, he becomes aware of the experiences he has had during that state. Others may also have witnessed the movements taking place in him. Kriyas appear, more or less, like dreams while occurring during sleep. The accumulated seeds of the past accompanied by passion and taking the shape of events are dreams, whereas *Samskaras* which appear before getting attached with any passions are Kriyas. These movements are as vivid during sleep as is the common experience of the waking state of consciousness.

The spiritual advancement of an aspirant can be measured by the extent to which his ordinary activities are governed and guided by *Shakti*. It is true that even after the awakening of *Shakti* the accumulated seeds of the past, passions, mind and materialistic tendencies continue to exist. Thus, the sense of ego reappears during these hours of normal activity and further accumulation resumes. Therefore, an aspirant needs to attain that state in which he will perceive *Shakti* directing all the affairs of the world. When this sort of awareness is developed, he also experiences *Shakti* taking charge of all his actions while he is performing his normal worldly obligations.

Question: *Can an aspirant simultaneously follow and practice other systems like Japa, Tapa, worship, or Yoga exercises along with this system of Shaktipat?*

Answer: As the awakened *Shakti* takes over the responsibility of performing all necessary functions, the aspirant is not required to adopt any spiritual disciplines, however he may continue to do his earlier practices of self-purification as long as they do not get dropped and replaced by the automatic movements of *Shakti*. We neither recommend any methods other than that of *Shakti* nor do we stop one from doing something of his past choice. The only advice in this respect is that other systems should be practised by themselves outside of *Sadhan*.

Question: *I was asked to chant the Mantra at the time of initiation. I find now that there are other Mantras which I automatically start chanting. Please tell me which Mantra*

should I repeat..... the former, the latter or both?

Answer: The repetition of a *Mantra* is of secondary importance in this system. The essence, the power, and the divinity of the *Mantra* are already made active. It is through automatic movements that repetition of the *Mantra* happens. The spontaneous suggestions received for new *Mantras* during *Sadhan* is a process of advancement. Whenever you do *Japa*, this *Mantra* should be repeated. It is advisable to repeat it at the initial stage, and also when no movements are experienced, during your *Sadhan*. But whenever you are suggested a *Mantra* automatically during the course of your meditation, then you should repeat it invariably.

Question: *Sometimes during my sleep, while dreaming, I feel like I am being lifted from my seat, am rising from the earth and on some occasions floating in the air. Also, I have visualized dead persons and sometimes have had a dialogue with them. Please suggest the meaning of all these.*

Answer: The dreams are caused by the accumulation of various seeds of past actions in the *Chitta*. There are innumerable imprints of the series of deeds of past and present lives on a man's *Chitta*. Various dreams are the manifestation of these manifold seeds. Dreams are suggestive in the sense that when *Chitta* has become pure, the dreams are sacred and they leave the effect of inner contentment. In this manner they may help the aspirant in assessing the state of purity of his mind.

Question: *What should an aspirant do with thoughts appearing during his *Sadhan*?*

Answer: *Shakti* causes various *Kriyas* to be performed which are suited for each individual's own body while taking due consideration of one's spiritual requirements. The aspirant needs only, therefore, to perceive and even remain an observer of these movements. *Shakti* converts accumulated seeds into thoughts so that they lose their binding effect on a man. Therefore, they should not be stopped in any case.

Question: *Does *Sadhan* need to be discontinued at the time of a birth or death of a person in one's home or when a*

woman is having her menses?

Answer: No, not at all. On the contrary, the practice should be much more regular during such times, however, one should not use his regular room of worship, temple or sitting cloth during these occasions. It is because the awakened *Shakti* operates at the mental level that these considerations of physical purity do not matter.

Question: *I experience Keval-Kumbhak (a type of Pranayam in which the breath is restrained for a long period) repeatedly in my Sadhan. It is further intensified when I pronounce OM loudly. A few postures occur but I find myself trembling and soon become sick with fever. Please tell me if I should stop Pranayam?*

Answer: This system relies on the aspirant's passivity. You need not stop saying OM loudly or doing *Pranayam* as a consequence of it, nor should the fever worry you as it may equally be a process of the purification of your *Chitta*. If you feel like sitting for *Sadhan* during fever, no problem, but you may also lie on your bed and do *Japa* or *Sadhan*. The only thing to be remembered is that you should not join others in *Sadhan* in such a condition.

There are some particular experiences preceding a certain movement in a number of aspirants. One can in fact, find a "key" for unlocking the gate to experiences.

Question: *Is it proper to repeat the Mantra given by the Guru out loud?*

Answer: It can be pronounced out loud as you start *Sadhan* but you should not try to concentrate your mind on it. It can be replaced by automatic movements after some time and may also continue along with them, but this should not bother you at all. You should only keep watching the various movements taking place within you.

Question: *Is it proper to concentrate on the centre between the eyebrows during Sadhan?*

Answer: I have pointed out that this system does not advocate any conscious or active effort on the part of the aspirant. There-

fore, it is not desirable to concentrate on the center between the eyebrows, root of the nose, or any plexus in the body. All the senses, mind, *Chitta*, intellect, and Prana (the vital force) should be allowed to play a free role. The greater this passivity in an aspirant, the more heightened is the experience of Kriyas.

Question: *I have heard that as the practices advance, the passions also increase. I wonder if I should continue my Sadhan in that state?*

Answer: One should never be afraid of anything in this system. *Shakti* arouses all past accumulated seeds, whether good or bad, for a quicker manifestation into passionless Kriyas. They are temporary, transitory and fast changing. One thing to be sure about is that whatever illness results from one kind of Kriya will be removed by another type of succeeding Kriya.

Question: *I feel giddiness while performing my Sadhan. Please tell me if this is quite usual, and if not, the method by which I may be rid of it.*

Answer: This feeling happens at a time when there are counter forces of accumulated seeds of past actions withholding some Kriya from manifestation, however this Kriya will find its own way out for which no effort is necessary.

Question: *My Sadhan is particularly pleasant, but I sometimes feel that I fall into sleep yet when I awake, I find that I was still doing Sadhan. Please explain the meaning of this.*

Answer: It is not the ordinary sleep of unconsciousness that you experience. It is *Yoga Nidra* (Yogic sleep) which immediately restores you to a pleasant state of consciousness. When awakened from an ordinary sleep, a man usually takes ten to fifteen minutes to attain a normal waking state of consciousness.

Question: *I do not like chanting the Mantra loudly but take pleasure while repeating it silently and peacefully in my mind. Please let me know if the loud chanting of a Mantra is a necessity?*

Answer: I have said that the actual chanting of *Mantra* in this system are the automatic movements experienced. The chanting out loud of a *Mantra* may only be necessary initially to put the *Shakti* into automatic motion, but if an aspirant finds himself experiencing *Kriyas* immediately, then it is not essential.

Question: *How do the Kriyas performed in Sadhan differ from the usual routine activities of life?*

Answer: Every kind of movement is the result of *Samskaras* (accumulated seeds of past actions) in a man. The movements caused by the awakening of *Shakti* do not accumulate further in the form of future seeds, however the routine activity of life may create a binding effect since it is performed with some desire.

The awakened energy, being always active, gradually takes over all other obligations of life from the conscious self, and thus reduces the binding effect of such actions. The automatic movements continue to become more and more subtle and ultimately disappear while leaving the aspirant in a state of permanent bliss.

Question: *Do you prescribe any particular postures for this Sadhan?*

Answer: No. You should sit in the posture you find most comfortable. Further, you have the freedom to change it as per your liking and need.

Question: *I sometimes feel like visiting my old school of spiritual teaching. Do you object to my going there now?*

Answer: I do not think it proper for you to go to your old place of spiritual association: firstly, because you may be misunderstood there, and secondly, because there may be transmission of *Shakti* to those who are not initiated.

Question: *What do you mean by Bhava-Shuddhi (external purification)? How is it to be accomplished?*

Answer: An aspirant does not categorize his time into periods of spiritual disciplines and routine activity. In order to reach any height of spirituality, he should remain dedicated to it twenty four

hours a day.

Spiritual discipline is broadly of two types: internal and external. *Japa* (repetition of a *Mantra*), penance, worship, study of religious books and Yoga practices all come under the category of internal discipline. The external type is that discipline of the mind where duties are performed without any passion or desire and the consideration of its fruit never comes in the way of its performance. This discipline is necessary for checking the growth of any future accumulation of the seeds of Karma.

Ordinarily an action produces three kinds of results: firstly, the sense of pleasure or pain; secondly, the invisible imprint of each sensation retained in the form of a seed; and thirdly, the consequence met due to the accumulation of these seeds. Every action performed and the fruit tasted in this manner adds to the accumulation of this store and after some time there is a huge stock of these effects ready to act as a casual reservoir for future actions. This is actually what we call human fate which every man must face. There is no short cut, no way out except to face these consequences irrespective of any spiritual advancement a person has acquired. To sum up briefly, the three Karmas are:

- 1) *Kriyaman Karma* -action in progress
- 2) Accumulated effect of past action in human *Chitta*
- 3) *Prarabdha Karma* - fateful action

There is, in fact, an endless circuit of Karma formed in this manner. A man performs an action under the fateful compulsions appearing before him in forms of pleasure, pain or other worldly enjoyments. This is only enriching the store of the accumulated binding effects of past actions, and these in turn, when strengthened in the aforesaid manner, become human fate. The sequence of cause and effect forms a vicious circle which seems to have neither a beginning nor an end.

The only technique by which this chain can be broken is the discipline of nonattachment and noninvolvement. When an action is

performed without passion, it is done with nonattachment.

Furthermore, there should be no sense of doership. The fact is that it is not the action which causes bondage but the attachment of the mind in its performance that causes it. When an action is performed with the discipline of nonattachment and noninvolvement, there is no sense of pleasure or pain; hence, there is no accumulation of the binding effect.

This sort of action can be performed when *Chitta* has been made tranquil by remaining in the company of holy men, reading religious books and following many other spiritual disciplines like *Japa*, *Tapa* and worship. When we seek blessings from holy men, we are asking for their assistance in bringing about this state of tranquillity of mind so that the binding effect of pleasure and pain do not exist. A man after realizing this state lives in eternal bliss and is not disturbed even by the greatest misery.

It is true that this state cannot easily be achieved. Therefore, it is advised that persons who cannot perform action with nonattachment give up involvement with its fruit. Failing to do this, a person should perform action with a sense of duty and, when even this discipline is not possible, he can adopt the attitude that his actions are only for the worship of God. As long as a person is not convinced by experience of the fact that God is the only controlling force behind all his senses, mind and intellect, he should at least nourish this idea in his mind or heart. He can further think that whatever objects he needs and the actions he performs are all the creation of God. He can, in this way, try to employ his God-given talents for the best possible use of God granted objects. This is all for checking further growth of bondage. It is necessary that the accumulated effects are processed and refined to the stage where they are incapable of growing and, in effect, cause bondage. This process has been described by the analogy of roasted seeds. Once the seeds are roasted, they do not germinate. The seeds of accumulated effect, of past Karma are roasted in the fire of spiritual discipline. Thus, both internal as well as external spiritual disciplines are necessary for the restraining of *Chitta* which help to free a man from everlasting bondage and enable him to live in a state of eternal bliss and divine grace.

CHAPTER IV

SHAKTIPAT - THE SUPREME PATH

Question: *It is mentioned in Maha Yoga Vigyan that the worst aspirant achieves salvation in twelve years, the poor aspirant takes nine years, an average person six years and the best one in just three years. Our experience, however, does not prove this as we find people spending forty to sixty years with regular practice and constant Kriyas but remaining exactly where they started from. Kindly make it clear whether Maha Yoga Vigyan refers only to the spiritual progress in this context.*

Answer: The best, average, poor and worst are the four categories of aspirants. An ordinary aspirant in fact, does not fall under any of these categories. The best aspirant is one who is fully dedicated, is all submissive and performs his duty for the sake of God alone. A few among these either lack dedication or are not keen enough in their aspiration. Some are not fully without lust, a few do not give up anger and quite a few do not perform their duties for the sake of God alone. The above four categories depend on many such qualities. From the point of view of our system, *Shakti* starts acting immediately upon the best aspirant making the disciple fully surrendered to this power. He does not either physically or mentally interfere in the working of *Shakti*. In this way, the best looks at pleasure and pain alike. Friends or foes do not influence him. He is always lost in *Sadhan* fully surrendering himself to it. All actions for him are the play of *Shakti* and this helps him develop a sense of seership for every happening in the world. Such an aspirant is qualified to achieve salvation within three years. When we look around us, we do not, however, find aspirants divided even in the above four categories. I have the following observations to make in this context:

- 1) An aspirant normally tends to be affected by the dualities of

pleasure or pain, respect or disrespect and profit or loss. Naturally the mind of such a person goes on accumulating the effect of these feelings. The more we are affected by the experiences of life, the more the accumulation of such effects takes place. As long as this process of accumulation continues, the mind remains unpurified. The spirit of renunciation does not develop in such a person which is so important in this field.

- 2) Generally an aspirant is attached to his actions and he is very keen to get the fruit of his desire. If the fruit of his action is favourable, he is pleased and if it does not conform to his liking, he is displeased. This is how the process of accumulation of effects continues. Whether pleasure or displeasure, involvement occurs.
- 3) Some of the aspirants treat the *Shaktipat* system as another method of ordinary spiritual practice. This system presupposes a state of total surrender in the disciple. *Shakti* takes over every responsibility for causing the necessary type of Kriyas (automatic movements) in the aspirant. It is necessary, therefore, that the aspirant allows *Shakti* to have its full play.

When an aspirant finds that a particular Kriya caused a happier sort of concentration, he starts desiring that this Kriya should repeat in him. Such desires or determinations convert those Kriyas into ordinary actions. I have repeatedly stressed that *SADHAN* (automatic movements) and *SADHANA* (spiritual practices) are different from each other. Similarly, Kriyas (movements) are, distinct from Karmas (actions). During *Sadhana* the sense of doership is not lost. *Sadhan*, on the other hand, is autonomous and the aspirant is only a passive witness to it. But when these movements are brought under the conscious control of mind, the sense of doership arises and the seer in the aspirant is lost. The movements are free from the clutches of the mind whereas actions are under its direct control. Movements do not add to the burden of past deeds whereas actions are fully responsible for it.

- 4) Continuity without breaks is another important factor. *Sadhan* has to be regular and uninterrupted. Also it has to be kept in mind that mere initiation is not sufficient for perfection. The spirit of surrender in the disciple, the extent of purification, the sense of nonattachment towards objects of the world and deep-rooted interest in *Sadhan* are all very material factors for success in this path. If even after initiation a disciple does not change his behaviour and remains engrossed in the objects of senses and has no gradual increase in Kriyas, he is not the right type. Therefore, when *Maha Yoga Vigyan* speaks about the success of an aspirant in three, six, nine or twelve years, it is in reference to the true type of disciple. If a disciple correctly analyses his state and finds that he possesses the above mentioned traits, he can himself conclude in which category he falls.

Question: *It has been said that there comes a state in spiritual aspiration when an aspirant will continue to live for only three weeks. Thereafter his body has to disappear since the thin screen of Maya (Illusion) gets removed from his Chitta, making him fully realized. His causal as well as his subtle body also gets lost along with his physical one. What is this state? How is it achieved?*

Answer: To say that a realized aspirant relinquishes his body in three weeks and gets merged in God, is an accurate statement, but this state requires a long and steady course. Among millions of people, one aspirant attains this extraordinary state.

It has to be understood well that a person is deeply rooted in this world. When he performs *Sadhan* he experiences joy, but his attachments to life seldom get minimized. He may sometimes seem to be talking about salvation but it is more often than not only an intellectual ideation. The process is slow and gradual. When the mind of an aspirant becomes purified and free from desires and passions, it starts experiencing deeper and deeper states of bliss consequently leading him to the state of *Samadhi*. A singular *Samadhi* experience is not an indication of perfection either. When it becomes a state of continuous recur-

rence, the worldly imprints on the mind of an aspirant get thinned out. Even while attaining the state of *Sabij Sampragyat* (*Samadhi* with intellectual consciousness), the imprints of intellect on the *Chitta* (mind-stuff) are there. The purification of these is very difficult for a disciple. *Yoga Darshan* reads "*Tasyapi Nirodhe sarva nirodhanirbij Samadhi*".* This is the last statement of the *Samadhi* Pada chapter. Maharshi Patanjali says that after erasing the imprints of intellect, an aspirant reaches the state of *Asampragyat Samadhi* which is *Nirbij* (without seeds). An aspirant can thus reach the fourth stage of intellect out of the seven described in *Yoga Darshan*. These four stages are dependent on the efforts of the aspirant. The later three are independent and stand for freedom from life. An ordinary human being is largely affected by day to day happenings but an aspirant who has reached, this stage is not affected by them and does not, therefore, accumulate the effects of experiences any longer. For him things take place not because he desires or acts, but simply because the scheme of things is just like that. Such an aspirant is therefore described as *Jivan-Mukta* (one freed from life)

A *Jivan-Mukta* passes through three phases. In the first stage he sees things as they are seen by others but remains unaffected by their happenings. It is just like a lotus which does not retain water although it is constantly deep in it. The second stage is superior to the first. The aspirant now sees things as if he were seeing a dream or looking in a mirror, but while he is seeing a dream or looking into a mirror, the sense of illusion is there. He is aware of the world of different forms and names but it is as if he were witnessing the waves stirred up from the sea along the sea itself. In this way an aspirant at this stage becomes aware of the casual vibration of *Chaitanya* (Conscious Self) beyond the world of names and forms. Here *Chaitanya* is of primary significance for him and the world of names and forms secondary. In the third stage of self-realization the aspirant visualizes things as if they belong to the world of dream. The world is now altogether lost for him. He is neither conscious nor unconscious about it. There is no bondage or freedom. There is nothing personal or impersonal for him. There is only the Conscious Self; he is only conscious about this. No matter whether he is in the state of *Samadhi* or out of it in the world, he

**Yoga Darshan*, by Patanjali, *Samadhi* Pada, I. 51

is always full of bliss. After reaching this state, the aspirant lives only for three weeks. His three kinds of bodies get dissolved in nature afterwards.

The Self is pure, free and full of knowledge. This is also, therefore, the true nature of a perfect human being. *Chitta*, on the other hand, is always changing and it does not represent the true nature of man. It is sometimes under the deep influence of lust, anger or greed and at other times under the influence of compassion, kindness or forgiveness. These are not the actual Dharmas (tendencies) of a man. Therefore Lord Krishna asks Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita to abandon all *Dharmas* (Dharma literally means religion but here it stands for different types of tendencies) and seek refuge in Me (Universal Consciousness). After reaching the state of *Nirbij Asampragya Samadhi*, the aspirant abandons these unreal tendencies and becomes deeply established in the basic nature of his Self. He surrenders himself to the wishes of God. Other ongoing stages of progress are, in fact, independent of human aspiration or effort. They are attainable either by knowledge or by the Grace of God. They are therefore stated to be spontaneous or natural stages.

This seventh stage of freedom from the bondage of life which is alone real, is attainable and attained by following a number of spiritual paths. This is the ultimate objective of all practices such as *Japa* (repetition of *Mantras*), *Tapa* (penance, meditation and worship). *Shaktipat* initiation is the surest system among all these. This system helps to thin out the effects of past deeds quickly and is important from the point of view of concentration. *Kriya Shakti* quickly proceeds towards Self by identifying the Conscious Being in the aspirant. The automatic movements of this path are initially strong and felt visibly but they gradually become subtle and subtler, ultimately getting fully merged in *Chitta*. There is no movement at the stage of *Samadhi*. It is a state of total mental and physical inactivity .

Question: *It has been mentioned in the literature of the Shaktipat system that the Mantra, its governing god and the Guru are all one and the same. What does this actually mean?*

Nowhere has it been elaborated. Kindly, therefore, explain it in detail. .

Answer: The entire visible world is nothing but the creation of *Chit-Shakti* (Conscious Energy). *Chaitanya* is a state of *Chit-Shakti* only and is responsible for the creation of the world of names and forms because of vibrations in It. These names and forms are like the waves in a sea which exist until they get merged back in the ocean. The objective identity of the world is, therefore, a momentary awareness of its presence and as soon as *Chit-Shakti* withdraws it, there is *Shakti* alone.

Chaitanya appears before us in many forms and names. A river, mountain, sea, forest, cities, men, animals, birds, sun, moon and stars are all only the reflections of It. They are what they seem to be only as long as they are objectively so identified and are sure to disappear with the realization of the true nature of our existence.

Mantra is not a mere combination of letters. Rama for instance is a combination of "r", "a" and "m" but this is in no way an identification of *Chaitanya*. If Conscious Being is dormant, the *Mantra* is naturally a mere combination of letters. Hindu scriptures have, therefore, prescribed methods such as *Anusthan* (periodic particular type of worship) and *Purascharan* (repetition of *Mantra* for completing a fixed number in the millions) so that the hidden power of the *Mantra* is felt and the dormant energy activated. Thereafter the *Mantra* is no longer a word. It is then live and has a distinct conscious Self. This Second Self takes over the reign from the aspirant and exercises its control on him for his onward spiritual progress. Spontaneous movements of body and the mind occur. Down throughout the ages saints and rishis have been following the rigorous course of austerities for achieving this objective only. It is fortunate that the realized souls of the *Shaktipat* system have popularized a technique which is instantaneous in its approach and application.

Shakti is also known by one of its names as *Matrika Shakti*. *Matra* in Sanskrit can be represented by letters. In other words, a *Matra* is a sound. This sound is nothing but the vibrations of *Shakti*. In this

way the Matrikas represent the different aspects of the *Shakti* only. The manifestation of *Shakti* of a *Mantra* is further substantiated by this theory.

The *Mantra* also represent a particular god. While enlivening the *Shakti* of the *Mantra*, this god is also identified and manifested by this power. All the objects of this world, whether mental or material, are worth attaining objectively by the materialization of their representative god. In ancient times when there were no laboratories and modern sophisticated instruments, the seers were having direct communion with gods of war, weapons, medicine or music. On being so invoked, the presiding deity of a particular subject would reveal the hidden knowledge. The concentration of awakened people was so intense that they could visualize well the movements of the farthest star, subtlest activities of human bodies and the deep currents of the cosmic song. Even the herbs would appear in some form and would tell the aspirant how to use them (the herbs). All this may appear to be strange but the power of *Mantra* is no uncertainty.

I have discussed at length the theory of *Mantra* to bring home the idea of *Guru-Tattva* (the power of Guru). The material form of the Guru is no Guru in fact. The physical form of the Guru, no doubt, remains illumined by the awakened spiritual power. His worldly attachments, passions, likings and dislikings are all lost. The activated *Shakti* is directed for the betterment of the world. The *Guru-Shakti*, which is no less than the Divine Power of God himself, desires to bestow good among the disciples whether by sight, touch or the power of *Mantra* and brings this awakened *Shakti* in contact with the dormant power of the disciple. This is how the initiation of an aspirant takes place, the result of which is the activation after awakening of the sleeping Kundalini. It quickly changes the inner state of the aspirant. The accumulated effect of past deeds are gradually thinned out. The aspirant then experiences that *Shakti* which is active inwardly in him as omnipresent and all pervading. The entire cosmos becomes the body of such a person. In this stage the cosmos and the aspirant begin to contribute for each other. Since the physical limits of such a person are extended to the cosmic level, all distances come into his reach.

According to *Shaiva Darshan* it is philosophically known as *Shambhupaya*. The realized soul at this level, except for creation, preservation and destruction, can do anything on earth.

When Newton discovered that "this world is an accidental collection of atoms", he concluded somewhat correctly that the subtler particles were there and that the energy forms the basis of things. *Shakti*, as we have dealt at length with, is at the base of the visible world. It virtually governs the rising and the setting of the sun and the moon, the flow of water and winds, the shine in the lightning, the thunders of the clouds, etc. The human senses work because of It. The sense organs very much exist in a dead person but since *Shakti* has withdrawn, the functioning of the organs stops.

Upanishads declare that the "One Fire" or Prana is all pervading. The one *Shakti* assumes the form of an elephant, a dog, a bird or a human being as the case may be. White as well as black are both the function of the one *Shakti*. *This Shakti* is deep inside and all outside. All events originate from It.

An aspirant must experience this *Shakti* working independently in him. Instead he is fully dependent on It. He is absolutely wrong if he considers himself to be distinct from his Guru, *Mantra* or God. This is because of ignorance and illusion. Sufferings, sorrows, vices, effects of past actions all gather around a person and separate individuality is experienced. Once the individual consciousness is deeply rooted, it is very difficult to extinguish this unreal person and realize the real one. Psychologically, selfconsciousness in a man does not perish quickly simply because the traditional mind cannot think of existence without continuing what he mentally is. Only the grace of the Guru and long, long *Sadhan* can save him from this illusion.

Question: *Sometimes I feel that my Prana (vital force) is stuck somewhere either inside or outside of me. This is probably defined as Antar Kumbhak or Bahir Kumbhak by the technical terminology of Yoga. It is as if my breath is lost somewhere. This loss of inhalation and exhalation of the breath causes uneasiness in me.*

Answer: The stopping of the breath inwardly and outwardly which

has been well defined as Kumbhak Antar (inner) or Bahya (outer) is a good sign of spiritual progress. As long as this breathlessness continues, the tendencies of *Chitta* are restrained. The fluctuations of the mind are also not there. This breathlessness is caused by two factors. The first is the acquired state and the other is automatic owing to selfless surrender. When this state is brought about by practice, the aspirant repeats the process of retaining breath outwardly and inwardly but selfless surrender enables the aspirant to get his inward power awakened which takes over the control of his system. In fact, in this state the physical sensation of breath is lost but Prana inside Sushumna (the middle nerve within the spinal column known to be the passage of Kundalini) is quite active. If Prana meets *Apana*, the merging of the inhalation and the exhalation of the breath takes place and if it occurs outside Sushumna in the body, death is the imminent course. If the same union is possible inside Sushumna, *Samadhi* (superconscious state) is the result.

It may seem surprising how a person can continue to live with his breathing stopped. The fact is that the subtle breath is very much there which helps the physical system work as usual. The more subtle the Prana inside the Sushumna, the quicker the process of the awakening of Kundalini. *Yoga Darshan* in Chapter *Samadhi* Pada expounds on how *Pranayam* helps control deeply rooted tendencies and brings about the state of *Samadhi*. * This control is only temporary when it appears by effortful *Pranayam*. When *Pranayam* takes place spontaneously, owing to instantaneous awakening caused by surrender of self, the whole process gets expedited.

As long as the breath is active in *Ida* (subtle nerve to the left of the spine) or *Pingala* (subtle nerve to the right of the spine), without control and its outward flow has not turned within into Sushumna, actual aspiration cannot be said to have begun. Retaining of the breath inside or outside the human body is one of many *Kriyas* taking place in an aspirant. There is no doubt that the *Kriyas* have much to contribute in the way of dissolving tendencies.

Question: *How can one meditate on God during the entire twenty-four hours of each day? I wish that whether during the*

**Yoga Darshan*, by Patanjali, *Samadhi* Pada, I. 34

course of aspiration or fulfilling worldly obligations, I could remain attuned to the Lord.

Answer: To keep oneself in constant communion with God is possible only when the glories of God are directly experienced by an aspirant. When inner awakening has taken place and *Kriyaman-Shakti* becomes active, the feeling of doership is totally lost and the seer in an aspirant takes over. He apparently experiences that the Divine Power is working independently in him. However, one problem which he faces is that as soon as he comes out of the course of aspiration, the ego soon replaces the seer. Naturally the directly perceptible Divine *Shakti* vanishes. The human being gets disassociated from God. There is no doubt that this is at the level of the human mind because in actuality the separation is never there. The accumulation of the effects of all actions then begins.

The uninterrupted remembrance of God implies a state where the aspirant is not only aware of the divine presence during the activation of divine power within him but also during his involvement in worldly activities. The repetition of a *Mantra* is an effort for achieving this end only. When the repetition becomes automatic or the divine power is felt directly, the uninterrupted remembrance of God becomes possible. A *Mantra* is not a mere combination of words or letters; it contains subtle seeds of divinity and its particular aspect of divine power can be thus realized through it.

Generally people say that only God is the doer and they are the mere tools in His hands. However the sense of doership in them seldom ceases. Neither a simple statement nor an intellectual assertion can make the divine presence visible. As long as It is not a direct experience, the absence of ego is not possible. To begin with, an aspirant should first get his *Kriyaman-Shakti* awakened in his body and his *Chitta* which then becomes a thing of direct experience for him in a course of time. Gradually this power inside an aspirant is extended outwardly. When he sees things in the spirit of their true nature, he becomes a seer in place of a doer. He perceives a divine presence in all matters and objects which enables him to remember God at all moments. The flow of water, the movement of the wind, the shining sun

and moon, thunder and lightning are all the workings of one divine power for him. It is the basic cause of all virtues and vices, worldly or otherwise, in all human beings. This state of constant awareness of God comes when spiritual progress is that systematic. A simple statement of fact has no meaning here. One has to live and not merely experience this supreme state of being.

Question: *An aspirant sometimes receives inward instructions which are both true and false. Please tell us which one of these should be relied upon.*

Answer: The instructions received during spiritual aspiration are of two types. These are either at the instance of *Kriyaman-Shakti* or the working of one's *Chitta* under the influence of accumulated effects of past deeds. When the instructions come from *Kriyaman-Shakti*, they are true and aim at doing good for the aspirant, but if they are the functioning of the *Chitta*, they are false and consequently cause suffering. *Kriya Shakti* Herself, being full of knowledge, knows well enough what stock of accumulation of past deeds exists in one's *Chitta*, how they accumulated, what fruit they would bear, when the fruit would become ripe and what an aspirant should do in these circumstances. The instructions coming from *Kriyaman-Shakti* originate at a time when *Samskaras* (effects of past deeds) have not taken the shape of actions. Therefore, if these instructions are sincerely followed, they are beneficial to an aspirant. The effects which get converted into longings and desires tend to motivate the mind accordingly. A mind such as this becomes full of fluctuations. A person is unable to make right decision in a state. Even while sitting for the course of spiritual aspiration, an aspirant is quite liable to receive wrong orders of the mind. Naturally the reliance on such orders makes the person unhappy. In fact, proper discrimination in this regard is somewhat difficult. Here lies the competence of the aspirant to make a correct decision. Broadly speaking, when the message is distinct by way of automatic writing, vision or hearing, it is because of the activation of *Kriyaman-Shakti*. It may be asked whether or not such experiences can take place during the course of spiritual practice, dreaming or even while quite awake and conscious. More often than not, they are there simply because of

the accumulated effects of the past. The experiences become quite distinct when emotions like love, hatred, anger or fear are very intense. Therefore, it is advisable to ensure that the mind is free from all feelings and attachments. The purer the *Chitta*, the clearer the reflections of *Atman* and the truer the instructions.

Question: *The entire human body is said to be the abode of God. However it is stressed that there is some specific part He actually resides in. Would you kindly clear my notions about this?*

Answer: God exists not only in each hair of a human being, but in fact permeates every particle of this universe. It has been repeatedly declared in scriptures and the seers of all ages of all countries hold it so. However, you will have to pinpoint Him somewhere to experience His presence everywhere. A cow, for example, contains the raw materials for milk in its entire body but milk does not come out from its mouth, tail or hoofs. It finds its way out only through her udders. In the same way, the presence of God is first felt in the human heart. The experiencer of God is man's ego which is one of the four parts of his *Chitta*. When divine consciousness awakens, its activation is felt and experienced by this ego in different parts of the body and at different stages. Whether there is laughing, weeping, singing or other super sensory experiences like seeing visions, hearing voices, all are experienced by the human ego only. The seat of this ego is the human heart. In this manner the first reflection of God is in the heart.

When the process of purification of the human heart is continuous, the aspirant enters into the state of *Ghata* (a jar). Just like a jar which is full of water, the aspirant is overwhelmed with divine effulgence. The next advanced state of aspiration is *Parichayavastha* (state of introduction). The aspirant is now introduced to *Shakti*. He experiences that his body is only a particular type of creation by this power. He witnesses the same power present everywhere in the world. In this state *Shakti* teaches the aspirant well that the entire material world is nothing but consciousness. Whatever name or form, whether visible or the object of human imagination, all seem to be the play of *Shakti*.

Shakti path - The Supreme Path

The aspirant, now feels the presence of this Divine *Shakti* in every part of his body, nonetheless in every particle of this world, whether mountains, sea, jungles, cities, men, animals, birds, sun, moon or stars.

It may be thus concluded that it is not only in the human heart or the body that the divine power needs to be found and experienced. It can be felt and witnessed outside as well. It is, however, essential that *Shakti* awakens and the aspirant is keen enough to pursue the path of spiritual aspiration punctually.

Question: *If an aspirant visualizes the six Chakras during the course of automatic movements of Kriya-Shakti, does it amount to some spiritual progress or is it a mere hallucination?*

Answer: You should first understand what the six *Chakras* are. Our backbone has been divided into seven parts from *Mooladhar* (the basal plexus) to *Sahasrar* (the top plexus bearing one thousand petals). The different plexes of the sympathetic system viz. pelvic, hypogastric, solar, cardiac, pharyngeal and naso-ciliary are correspondingly *Mooladhar*, *Svadhistan*, *Manipur*, *Anahat*, *Vishuddha* and *Ajna Chakras* of the *Yogic* system. It is a fact that the movements of *Shakti* are quite marked during its passage through these *Chakras*. *Shakti* manifests itself into particular *Kriyas* in the manner energy takes different forms such as electricity, air or heat. For instance, when *Manipur* is activated, the movements of the stomach are there. *Anahat Chakra* makes one hear sounds, *Vishuddha* is responsible for crying, laughing or weeping. At the stage of *Ajna*, the *Chitta* gets one-pointedness and meditation is possible. During the course of spiritual aspiration the experiences corresponding to the accumulated effects of different *Chakras* are distinct because *Kriya-Shakti* gets these effects expressed into movements. Basically, the nature of physical movements indicates the activation of a particular *Chakra*. Therefore, it is not wise to regard such movements as illusions.

Broadly speaking, the whole world is *Maya* or illusion. All incidents, movements or visions are consequently illusory. *Vedanta* philosophy of Hinduism supposes all tendencies, *Samskaras*, aspiration

and/or attitudes of the mind (including movements caused by *Shakti* at the levels of different *Chakras*) to be only illusions. According to *Yoga Darshan*, however, these are not unreal. They are important for minimizing the effects of the accumulated imprints of past deeds. According to *Yoga*, this world is also not illusion. On the other hand, one should develop a sense of detachment towards the objects of this world and while purifying one's *Chitta*, he should gradually lose ego. According to *Yoga Darshan*, the ultimate end is to remove the veil of *Avidya* (ignorance) and to realize the Self, however his journey towards Self naturally involves the elimination of the world outside.

One important factor which needs to be kept in mind is that the *Yogic Chakras* are never physical parts of the human body. They are important centers of subtle nerves in the spinal column. Moreover, they are the vital stages of the manifestation of Divine *Shakti*.

Question: *When one visualizes the form of his Ishta (aspired aspect of God in worship or aspiration), the mind does not remain centered on it for long. Why?*

Answer: What I understand by this question, is that you believe that sometimes Rama for instance, is your *Ishta*. Whenever you see such forms in your *Sadhan*, you tend to believe that you have a perception of your *Ishta*. Let us examine what this experience stands for. Our *Chitta* keeps a number of good and bad effects of past deeds stored in it. The appearance of the form of your desired aspect of God during your *Sadhan* after the awakening of your *Kundalini* power is as much the result of these *Samskaras* as is the manifestation of other *Kriyas* in you. Whether Rama, Krishna or Christ, all are stored deep within our subtle consciousness. This is not realization of God. No one knows what God is like. Therefore, whatever form of God we decide on depends largely on our attitude towards Him originating from our social upbringing and family surroundings. It is only during the efforts of spiritual awakening (which is virtually no awakening) that one needs to concentrate on a particular form of God. This is sometimes prescribed by some teachers as a technique of meditation. It is quite ordinary, in fact, and elementary. Once the inward power is awakened, such concentration is not needed at all. It is also not necessary

for an aspirant to visualize only the forms of his aspired God. Therefore, it is likely that an aspirant fully devoted to Rama would then perceive Lord Krishna or Christ. I recollect here a case of an aspirant who was never in his life devoted to Lord Shiva but during the course of his aspiration he witnessed the form of Lord Shiva. As a matter of fact, we ourselves are never good judges in determining an *Ishta* for us. *Kriyaman-Shakti* probes into our inner being and fathoms out what truly lies inside.

This distinction between the ordinary type of aspirant and one in whom *Shakti* is awakened is always to be kept in mind. As regards the flickering glimpses of the desired form by an aspirant of the latter system, I have this explanation to give. The *Kriyas* of an aspirant are autonomous. The aspirant experiences different kinds of movements on his own and never decides himself to move or not to move. *Shakti* itself decides the movements affecting an aspirant beneficially and It is the best judge for continuity or frequency of *Kriya*. Whenever you visualize a form in your aspiration, *Kriyaman-Shakti* manifests it and thins out the accumulated effects of it. It is natural that such visions increase your concentration and you consequently feel happy about it, but once you enjoy a vision, the seer in you is likely to get lost. Spontaneous *Kriya* will no longer have the necessary outlet in such cases. *Samskaras* will not be thinning out as they ought to.

Concentration should never be your goal though concentration is, no doubt, the effect of your aspiration. With the purification of your *Chitta*, concentration will soon come, but you should not stop just here. Let *Kriya* be free enough to take you on towards your best direction. Let your *Samskaras* be thinned out gradually.

Question: *During the course of aspiration, sometimes it is very difficult to remain steady. What is to be done at such times?*

Answer: I have repeatedly stressed that the intensity of aspiration depends on the level of purification of your *Chitta*. Whenever there are purer effects on *Chitta*, the aspiration is constant and the *Kriyas* are enchanting. But if the purity of *Chitta* is under adverse effect, *Sadhan* will be irregular and sometimes stop altogether. The aspirants are, in such cases, suggested to chant either a *Mantra* or do

praying in the traditional method. In this manner the continuity should never break. *Kriyaman-Shakti* is fully equipped to restore you back to the finer state of experiences.

Question: *It has been declared by the scriptures and is also believed far and wide that the human being suffers because of his long, long past separation from God. How can one get over this suffering in life?*

Answer: God is, in fact, never separated from a being. It is due to ignorance alone that a human being supposes himself to be away from God. A living being, as a matter of fact, exists only because of the conscious power of Being. When the conscious power of Being unites with inanimate *Chitta*, *Chitta* starts to feel "I am conscious". This is ignorance. It is called *Maya Mal* (dirt of illusion) in Hindu scriptures. This bewilders human understanding. A person begins to treat nonbeing as being, unreal as real and virtual pains as pleasures. The unreal world appears real to him, the transitory permanent. The world for him becomes very wide but the truly wide *Atman* (Supreme Self) seems small. He forgets that the source of all is *Atman* and believes that the world of names and forms is fully real. The understanding of a person, thus, becomes so contrary to the fact that he forgets his true nature is *Atman* which is pure, permanent and full of all knowledge. *Atman* is blissful and, as a matter of fact, *Jivatma* (living being), basically a part and parcel of God, is also full of joy. But ignorance keeps a person withdrawn from happiness and sufferings appear to be real.

There are two types of people on earth. The first are of the kind who believe that their body, mind and intellect are their being entirely and consequently what is actually nonbeing becomes being for them. Such people are naturally both happy and sad but they believe the reason for their suffering is not separation. The other kind of people are those whose attention is only outwardly directed. They are, in fact, in the involutory process of creation and consequently the veil of *Maya* or ignorance keeps them separated from their true nature. Whatever their suffering, declares *Yoga Darshan*, it is because of *Tasya Hetu Avidya* (ignorance)*.

**Yoga Darshan*, by Patanjali, *Sadhana*" Pada, II. 24

It is obvious that as long as this *Avidya* (ignorance) is not destroyed, relief from pain is not possible for human beings. The veil of ignorance will keep reality hidden. Happiness is only an object of imagination for such persons and sufferings are bound to be faced. The veil of *Maya* is thickened further by the accumulations of *Samskaras* taking origin in attachments. *Samskaras* first need to be thinned out. It is not very easy to complete the process of purification by one's personal efforts. As long as the ordinary consciousness of a man does not become superconscious, the inward power that is *Kundalini* is not awakened. And unless and until the efforts are not directed and controlled by *Shakti* Itself, the spontaneous movements do not take over and the sense of ego is not absent which is so important for the purification of *Chitta*. A poet has beautifully stated this purification in the following words: "As soon as I lifted myself, the curtain was automatically removed. There was no one hidden behind it now. The two were one and the same." The meaning of this is that with the extinction of egoism or I-ness in man, the sense of the indivisible nature of human being and God develops. Consciousness is disassociated from *Chitta* and attached to Being, the original identity. The human being begins to feel the direct presence of One Universal God inside him and everywhere outside.

Question: *You have mentioned in Shri Narayan Updeshamrit that Prana and Apana meet in the Sushumna nerve. You have further stated that if they ever meet outside, it is only at the time of death. What does this actually mean?*

Answer: The passage of *Prana* consists of the distance from *Anahat Chakra* to *Ajna Chakra*. It is the region covering the inhalation and exhalation of air. *Apana* controls the lower part below the navel. The two *Pranas* need to be well regulated by a *Yogi*. When a *Yogi* gets the passage of *Sushumna* opened, *Prana* and *Apana* happen to unite. In all there are five kinds of *Prana* known as *Prana*, *Apana*, *Vyana*, *Samana* and *Udana*. They are virtually the activities of one *Prana*. The union definitely results in the state of *Samadhi* or superconsciousness.

If the *Pranas* meet outside the *Sushumna*, it implies that there is

some basic disorder in the system. In the language of *Ayurveda* (the ancient Indian science of medicine), the *Pranas* are then described to be angry. The consequence of this displeased union is death of the person. It may be noted here that the union outside the *Sushumna* does not mean outside the human body. It is simply outside the *Sushumna*.

Question: *Kindly elucidate the following verse of Hatha Yoga Pradipika:*

**“*Divā no puḡyet liṅgo ratrau chaivāna puḡyet
Sarvada puḡyet liṅga diva ratrau nirodhat.*”***

Answer: The verse literally means that Lord Shiva is not to be worshipped during the day or during the night. He is, however, to be worshipped all the time once day and night are in control. Human breath ordinarily flows either through *Ida* (left nostril) or *Pingala* (right nostril). These nerves respectively represent the moon and the sun. Ordinary human beings keep on storing the effects of their actions since they perform them always with the sense of doership. The verse, therefore, means that Lord Shiva is not to be worshipped either during the activity of *Ida* or *Pingala* which are in the verse respectively night and day. The regulation of day and night is the exercise of *Pranayam* which unites the two *Pranas* and the right time of the aspiration of Lord Shiva arrives. The union of the *Pranas* activates the power of *Kundalini* which makes the aspirant a seer in place of a doer. The united *Pranas* gradually rise upward in the *Sushumna* and make the state of *Samadhi* a possibility well within the reach of the aspirant.

Question: *While initiating a disciple, a Guru must be losing some of his energy. If he continues to lose his power in this manner, there is a likelihood of his being deprived of it completely. Would this mean that the teacher should give limited initiations to save some power for his personal advantage?*

Answer: It is true that the teachers who are not empowered in the tradition of Gurus and are not sufficiently awakened in the cult of spiritualism might lose some power while showering grace

**Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, Section 4, v. 42

on others. Those teachers who become egoistic are also likely to be deprived of their power. The genuine saints who fulfill these qualifications do not lose their power while initiating any number of disciples. As a matter of fact, the power neither increases nor reduces as such. The growth of the movements of *Kriya* is taken to be the growth of *Shakti* and vice versa. In the course of experience, a teacher develops a technique which is also important.

When I speak of a Guru in context of a tradition, I want to stress that the power of the Guru does not simply amount to his individual achievements alone. He, in fact, represents the collective force of the entire clan in which he happens to be last in the line of Gurus. One basic resolution on the part of the first in the line of teachers is that the disciple may aspire to attain spiritual upliftment which goes on multiplying and bearing fruit after fruit. This is more of an obligation on the part of the Guru since he is only discharging his duty entrusted to him by his Guru. A real Guru is never, therefore, proud about the grace he is simply instrumental in showering. In our tradition, for instance, we are simply carrying forward the resolution which the first Guru, Gangadhar Tirth, adopted and which has come to us down through Shri Swami Narayan Tirth, Swami Shankar Purushottam Tirth, Shri Yoganandaji Maharaj and Shri Swami Vishnu Tirth. Furthermore, there are Gurus who directly visualize the power activating them instrumentally to initiate a disciple. Naturally they never have any sense of doership in performance of this duty. The power need never diminish in such cases.

Swami Narayan Tirth Maharaj was indirectly authorized by Shri Swami Gangadhar Tirth Maharaj to initiate others. Swami Gangadhar Tirth Maharaj had stated mysteriously, "I have put a secret fire in your clothing which will spread through the whole of Bharat (India) one day." Swami Narayan Tirth, however, did not start initiating others until he had the direct experience of the Goddess Kali in which he visualised the idol vibrating distinctly.

Some people advocate that non-initiates should be permitted to join the initiates while sitting in the course of spiritual aspiration. They have a mistaken notion that *Shakti* Itself will get hold of the aspiran

and the formal initiation is not a necessity. As a matter of fact, *Shakti* is always present and the only question is that of kindling the dormant power by an awakened one. While initiating a disciple, a Guru regulates the power by the basic resolution he adopts for the well being of the disciple. The initiation is not, therefore, an ordinary transmission of energy. In such a case, there is every likelihood that it would adversely affect the initiated.

Another important element regarding the Guru is the fact that the Guru as a person does not have much relevance. Indeed, he symbolizes and represents the Divine Grace universally, present in a Guru. The physical form of the *Guru* is a mere vehicle of the divinity. It is inexhaustible and infinite. There is no chance of its getting reduced.

Question: *What is the utility of Ashrams (centers of spiritual training) ? What do you think about the different controversies which go around these centers? Do you think that if there are no centers, the proper publicity will be brought about?*

Answer: When a Guru-family increases, there are broader arrangements to be made for the proper training and stay of the larger group of people. Some aspirants prefer staying with the Guru permanently and some desire staying for a long time since they feel that the proper atmosphere for spiritual development is nowhere else that fine. Further, there are persons who want to keep coming and going for whom some lodging and boarding arrangements are necessary.

The rules in a center are so framed that they bring about the required discipline for the spiritual upliftment of the residents. People tend to take all Advantage of their home while living in the center of spiritual development. This is not the correct attitude of an ashramite. One has to observe total cleanliness, safeguard property and should not get involved and indulge in disputes and quarrels with other people. They should be very cautious and keen to attend the course most punctually.

I want to emphasize here some more salient features of *Ashram* life for the proper understanding of its aims. An *Ashram* intends on

providing the residents with the basic requirements alone. It is, therefore, up to the resident to see that if his necessities are more than average, he himself arranges for them. The basic difference between the atmosphere of an *Ashram* and a house is that in an *Ashram*, spiritual aspiration is the central objective of the inhabitant whereas it is only one of many pursuits for a householder.

The Guru may reside in the center sometimes and it may be represented by someone duly authorized by him as well. There are also trusts and committees constituted by the Guru which control the working of the *Ashram* under rules and regulations approved by the Guru.

A Guru in his role should not have a possessive sense concerning the management of the *Ashram*. He is simply the chief among the trustees to safeguard the property of God. A Guru is the representative of God much in the sense that, like God, he does not discriminate among his disciples and his primary concern is the betterment of his followers. He is like the Divine Father who brings up his children most lovingly but does not get attached and lost in involvements.

The aspirants joining an *Ashram* must understand that the lives they have been leading outside were totally different and they need to pay much greater attention to the purification of *Chitta* by giving up vices like lust, anger, greed, pride and ego. They should keep fair relations with all inhabitants of the *Ashram* and with greater understanding and tolerance.

An aspirant should make proper use of the articles of the *Ashram*. He should cultivate the habit of minimum use of things in the *Ashram* and remain prepared to sacrifice them for others. Habits such as to leave your room clean after your departure, to refund the *Ashram* articles in time and to keep the *Ashram* books carefully so that they may be used and reused by others who are interested are some specific examples. There are persons who do not keep the books well and continue to pass them on unofficially to others. This is not proper. You should take care of your things very carefully. Not only this sense of belonging but a greater sense of responsibility is needed here. When there is a frequent violation of the system in an *Ashram*, the rules are

tightened with the consequence that even the needy ones may have to suffer.

It is natural that when a few persons live together may be some points of dispute among them. But when it is the case of an *Ashram*, the disputes are immaterial and they should never be given undue significance. It is also quite immaterial whether or not the Guru goes to the *Ashram*. The significance of his system or message to be communicated is in no way affected by it. It has been, therefore, observed that when there are disputes and controversies raised in an *Ashram*, the Guru loses interest in it. The real aspirant is in no way at a loss by the absence of an *Ashram*. But those who are beginners and not quite advanced lose much when they do not have the proper atmosphere

Question: *A woman is generally dependent on a man. She has to face a number of obstacles to join the spiritual course. Her house, husband and society are her primary bondages from which she rarely gets freedom. What do you advise to a woman in such circumstances? Do you propose that she should forget her house and husband and devote herself fully to the devotion of God or struggle against the circumstances that may occur in her life?*

Answer: The life of a woman is full of sacrifice. What she basically needs is the training of her mind to perform her duties without involvements. She can virtually make her every breath full of glory once she understands that the two seemingly different courses of life can well be united. If she keeps on clinging to desires, she only accumulates the seeds of future burden. It is like wasting invaluable riches for thankless pursuits.

The husband and wife relationship is the general scheme of life. The seeds of feminine nature are so strong in a woman that sometime she is born and reborn only in the form of a woman for a number of lives. The same theory also applies to a man. There may sometimes be the change in form of such a person but the basic character remains unchanged at the subtler level. When there are cases of change from human life to that of an animal, the masculine or feminine basic char-

acter, as the case may be, is maintained.

A woman is *Shakti* in form. No one, not even the Almighty Lord, can really function once deprived of *Shakti*. She is the Goddess in heaven and mistress in the home. But a woman without the spirit of surrender for her husband who is the representative of God for her, finds it difficult to rise to the status of goddess. If she cultivates the spirit of surrender in herself, all her actions will become burdenless because she performs them without the sense of doership. She brings up her children because they are the offsprings of her husband. Everything that pleases her husband is the choice of a real wife. The life of such a woman is full of sacrifice.

It has been held in India that the wives share by half whatever good a man performs. It implies that a wife is always participating, not directly though, in the actions of her husband. It is surprising to note here that the participation of the wife has been restricted to the fruits of good only. Whatever evil is performed, the man has to suffer singly. In addition, the wife is always getting one hundred percent of whatever good her own performances are.

One question that is often asked is that if a woman has to worship and obey her husband just as if God is in her house, why does she need to select a Guru? It is also worth consideration whether or not both the husband and wife should keep a common Guru. In my opinion a woman does need a Guru in spite of her total devotion to her husband. A husband is in no case the substitute for a Guru. The Guru, on the other hand, increases the awareness of a wife to find godliness in her husband. He guides, controls and takes the woman on the righteous path of self-surrender. As regards the question of a common Guru, there are a few persons claiming that the Guru for husband and wife should be different. They argue that the initiation by one Guru makes the wife and husband Guru-brother and sister. I am not of this view. In my opinion the relationship which the initiation brings about is spiritual and not physical or worldly. If we delve into the essence of things, no one is anybody's wife, husband, brother or sister. These relations are only relative and not absolute. Furthermore, there are changes taking place with birth and rebirth. Then there is the situation

of a father and son or mother and daughter being initiated by one Guru. There is no fear expressed in these cases that their relationships could be disturbed. I, therefore, hold that the wife and husband can well be initiated by one Guru. This approach is more practical. If the two have different Gurus to guide them, there may be differences of opinion which may lead to quarrels and the loss of peace in a family.

A woman need not leave her house to devote herself to divine objectives. Although this applies to both men and women alike, it can be stated in more definite terms when it relates to women. Whenever a woman decides to leave her home, it is always at the cost of her duties. The path of spiritualism begins exactly where you stand. It is absolutely not necessary for either a husband or wife to give up the other to get closer to God. The test of their ability is in their merging successfully among all these odds in life. If an aspirant only keeps waiting for some favorable time to come, he most likely will have to wait indefinitely.

There are instances of persons who gave up their families when they were not ripe enough to do so. Naturally there are repentences in such people and they consequently suffer a lot. A woman in particular has to be most careful while making a decision to lead the life of solitude. She would be better off sticking to her home and continuing to purify her *Chitta* by performing selfless duties.

Question: *Aspirants often talk of solitude. They require a separate room for their practices wherever they go. In your opinion how does their contact with other people affect them?*

Answer: In my opinion solitude as well as contacts are both required for an aspirant. Spiritual attainments can only be tested when the aspirant comes in contact with others. Naturally the aspirant thereafter solidifies his achievements. However it is important that the aspirant is not affected by the outward atmosphere at all. He will simply keep an awareness of these effects so that he is able to provide solutions for others when required. The practices in solitude are necessary primarily at the initial stages but at later stages it is never that important. What is really important is to live in the world and to be beyond it at the same time.

Solitude is possible in the forest, the mind or in one corner of the house. Real solitude lies in the mind alone. When a person is not affected by the outward hustle and bustle and he is able to maintain the calmness of his mind even while facing disturbances, he surely lives in solitude. It makes no difference whether he is in the forest or home once he has attained this merit. If a person has forcibly kept himself aloof and his mind is full with the thought of the world, he is a first class hypocrite. My Guru, Swami Vishnu Tirthji Maharaj, used to tell an interesting tale about this. There were two friends. They were both following the spiritual course. After some time one of the friends got married and started to lead the life of a householder. He was following the spiritual course to the extent his worldly duties would permit him. He performed his responsibilities with the sense of duty to fulfill his obligations. The other friend who had given up the world lived for some time in some cave of the Himalayas meditating rigorously. Twenty years so passed. The householder became the father of some five or six children. The secluded one then came down to his old friend and stayed with him. Both were very happy. The recluse was talking very high of his achievements. The householder, on the other hand, simply exclaimed at this and modestly submitted, "My friend, you are really great. It is wonderful that you have done so much difficult penance. I am an ordinary householder. I hardly have time to take the name of God. I am simply leading a common worldly life." The evening set in. There were prostitutes living in the back side of that house. The attractive sound of songs and dances began to be heard. The mendicant soon expressed that he would not stay there for long. His heart was being carried away by the attractive sounds. The worldly man then stated that in that case, the twenty years of rigorous training had really taught his friend nothing.

The test of your success lies in the fact that you remain unaffected by all situations. Passions do not move you by distracting your mind from the natural course. This state is attainable by those who constantly keep a watch on themselves. They are always examining their behavior. In our tradition of *Shaktipat*, excepting Shri Gangadhar Tirth Maharaj, all had some *Ashram* built but they were in constant touch with people outside.

As long as there are desires, passions and belongings in the world, duties are there to be discharged. The world will keep appearing and reappearing. *Chitta* will have to be taken beyond even though the aspirant has already dived deep in the world. Once *Chitta* is purified, realization of the real motives is there and illumination of the Self has been an experience, world or no world, it makes no difference.

This joint course of aspiration in the *Shaktipat* system is very important. Even when a person finds his course fully satisfactory all alone, he should at least once a month sit in the group. When a person says that he does not have a calm mind while sitting in a group, it invariably implies that he is attempting to get the state of mental calm effortfully. This is not as per technique of the system.

In brief, neither solitude nor company is self-sufficient in aspiration. They should supplement each other. Forlorn travel inward equips a person to lead an energized life. It is like training yourself to lead an effective practical life which consequently strengthens the spiritual course you have undertaken.

Question: *What do you think about Shava Sadhana (corpse worship) ? Would you please throw some light on this system as compared with other methods of aspiration?*

Answer: *Shava Sadhana* is a Tantric way which is generally followed by nonworldly people. Such people seek solitude in places like mass burial or cremation grounds and use dead bodies for attaining some miraculous powers. These experiments are horrible but once the aspirant gets the courage to go through these and many more terrible experiences, some miracles are seen to be performed by them.

The most common path of aspiration to all human beings is the practice of *Karma Yoga*. *Karma Yoga* means the skilled actions of such a trained mind who is neither attached to his actions nor involved in the enjoyment of the fruit thereof. Such a person maintains equilibrium between his worldly obligations and spiritual aspirations. The system of *Shaktipat* which activates inherent *Kriya* is indeed the most superior among all the methods prescribed for people in the world. Every sys-

tem basically aims at awakening the inward power which is generally dormant. *Shaktipat* begins exactly where other methods end. As regards the comparison of the "worldly" system and the "dead" worship, the former is definitely superior and worth recommendation.

Question: *There are various kinds of thoughts which sometimes lead to a decision and at other times to indecision. The mind gets bewildered and becomes full of sorrow. What do you advise one to do in this state?*

Answer: Mental determinations take their origin in the underlying tendencies of *Chitta*. These tendencies give birth to passions, passions make one inclined and the inclinations give origin to different types of determination. As long as there are seeds of passion, mental fluctuations will result. Whatever the mind decides, it is due to, firstly, the resolution resulting out of the incapacities relating to unfavorable time and circumstances, secondly, the resolution to do something which is not necessary for the time being, and thirdly, the resolution to do things which will ultimately involve the mind. By uncalled for resolutions, what is defined here is something which you find contrary to your desire for concentration.

It may be pointed out here that whenever concentration is achieved effortfully, it will only be transitory. Whenever the *Samskaras* find an outlet, the acquired concentration will vanish. Therefore, it has been advised to first thin out these imprints of the past so that real concentration which results is lasting. With the extinction of effects of the past, purification of the mind is faster with the result being all that the mind resolves or dissolves has no bearing on the progress of the aspirant.

Question: *If the system of surrender is self-sufficient, do you mean to say that we do not need to continue, Japa (repetition of a sacred name), Tapa (austerities) and Puja (worship) ?*

Answer: When the self-equipped system of *Shaktipat* is attained, other forms of aspiration indeed become secondary. They do not contribute to your progress any longer, however it cannot be

forgotten that the *Samskaras* may be there even after the awakening of *Shakti* in an aspirant. These imprints of the past prompt one to not only desire the outward objects of life but also to do *Japa*, *Tapa* or worship. It is, therefore, necessary that everything including these traditional forms of worship is surrendered to God. It may also be advised that one should schedule different times for the practice of traditional worship and this course of spiritual aspiration. For instance, you should follow the *Shaktipat* system early in the morning from 4:00 AM to 6:00 AM and after you take your bath in the morning you may perform your routine of other forms of worship. I do not particularly advise you to discontinue the system you have been following nor would I advise you to continue one. I may, however, speak for certain that once your *Samskaras* have been reduced, other types of practice will automatically drop. They continue in an aspirant as long as he has not attained a height where they have become irrelevant.

Question: *It appears that the place of aspiration has a great bearing in this system. Sadhan is definitely deep and intense in solitude and in places of natural beauty or spiritual depth. It is never the case in a house. According to you, what is the significance of the place in our system?*

Answer: The place of aspiration has a great significance in the course of aspiration. There are only a few persons who have risen above time and place and have remained unaffected. The common experience is that the proper atmosphere is a great help for the advancement in this course. Once the system is strengthened by regularity of practice, the necessity will naturally be minimized. It need not be reiterated that places like a lonely forest, cremation or burial grounds, religious places and spots of natural beauty make the mind calm. It also goes without saying that in places of the world where there is a concentration of passions and desires, the mind is affected adversely. Admittedly housing is a great problem these days. With the increase in population, accommodations have reduced much in size, A separate room for spiritual exercises which is, no doubt, enriched in spiritual vibrations can be confined to a corner for those who cannot afford to have a separate room but the place should be kept fully free and not used for any worldly purpose. And those who cannot

even arrange for a corner at least may be advised to assign some place in a temple, garden or any other religious center where they are able to remain unaffected by outward atmosphere.

Question: *Some of the initiates of the Shaktipat system are householders and some become Brahmachari (those following the course of celibacy). What is actually the difference between the two? What are their distinct characters and what specific duties are assigned to them? What should be the relationship between the two? Kindly throw light on these points.*

Answer: Surely there are both types, worldly and nonworldly, found in the followers of this system. A householder continues to lead a disciplined life of limited needs and performs deeds without involvement. It is, as a matter of fact, a preparing ground for the second stage of *Brahmacharya*. He is living in the world of pleasure and pain but at the same time he is above them. Whatever actions he performs, he has a sense of duty and he offers them and the fruits thereof to the Almighty Lord. A *Brahmachari* is the kind of disciple who is totally indifferent towards the world and has no desire for any enjoyments whatsoever. It is, therefore, advised that only those disciples who have courage to get over all sense pleasures should choose to go for this system of discipleship. The life of a *Brahmachari* is full of sacrifice and service. He devotes his entire time either in studies or service. He has to perfect himself and learn scriptural rites of importance in this period. He must have endurance to suffer and great patience. He cannot have any excuse for the break or irregularity in practice like a householder. He has to get beyond pleasure and pain, profit and loss and respect and disregard much before he is acclaimed in society as a saint.

The two types of disciples are interdependent. A closer coordination between the two is needed all the more. If the householder looks for inspiration from the recluse, the *Brahmachari* depends on many worldly needs from the householder. A greater sense of responsibility that occurs on the part of a *Brahmachari* is that whether meeting his necessities or not, whether being helped by his householding

counterpart or not, he has to remain satisfied.

Question: *Quite often you have mentioned in your speeches that aspiration is of two types: one being internal and the other external. Unless and until the two are co-ordinated, perfection is not seen. How can one bring union between the two?*

Answer: Aspiration is basically one though it may have different aspects. What I mean by external aspiration is the outward behavior of the aspirant. Whether he speaks evil or good, whether he is selfish or cares for the good of others, whether he becomes angry immediately or has some tolerance, how much objects attract him, whether or not he performs his duty with the sense of duty alone and surrenders the fruit thereof to the Almighty Lord, all these qualities and their ongoing cultivation in a man amounts to external aspiration. Yoga Darshan details many more accomplishments under the category of Yama and Niyam. All of these are practical and are better behavioral attitudes which have a great bearing on internal progress. Further accumulation of *Samskaras* is checked by this exercise and the advancement of the aspirant is expedited.

Internal aspiration is generally thought to be the actual aspiration. This is the process of Purification of the mind. Whatever actions are performed with the sense of doership by a man, they only add to the burden of the past. Therefore, aspiration needs to be without this sense. Other traditional systems have failed to contribute much simply because they are also performed with the sense of doership. It is important, therefore, whether internal or external, that both types of aspiration are performed without involvement. The seer, and not the doer, is what is needed here.

These practices are interdependent and without the progress in one, the other cannot go far. The one cannot be sacrificed for the other. They have to move simultaneously. The aspirant is, in fact, fighting against two different types of enemies. Externally, he has to put a stop to any further accumulation of *Samskaras*. Internally, he must thin out the accumulated effects gradually and purify *Chitta*. They supplement, strengthen and intensify each other in such a manner that spiritual advancement of the aspirant is fixed.

APPENDIX

DISCOURSES

The following discourses shed further light on Guruji's relationship with his disciples and his particular manner of speaking with them. (The author is called Guruji by his disciples.)

IN THE COMPANY OF ASPIRANTS

(From the Hindi publication, *Devatma Shakti*, January-March 1982)

I have been thinking for a long time to undertake trips to be with my disciples in such a way that it proves to be of optimum benefit to them. I was not satisfied with my past tours as maximum time was being spent in scattered visits to the places of my disciples and practically no time was left for *Satsang* (spiritual contacts). People were coming to me every now and then and the matters discussed were largely of no spiritual significance.

The span of human life is unpredictable. No one knows how long the breath will continue. If we, therefore, go on wasting our time in useless gossip, jokes and doing our work with attachments, the chain of karma (action) will never break. I perceive that the speed of time is faster than the spiritual progress of my disciples. Death is constantly watching and waiting for us to become unguarded so it can grab. It is, in fact, very ironical that the nearer death approaches, the more attached with the world a man is. It is easier to flow along with the current of attachments in the world. An aspirant, however, directs his movements against these currents. His path is, no doubt, a very difficult one. The senses, the mind, the intellect and Prana (vital force) are all conscious only of the material world but unaware of the existence of the soul. This is how an unreal world begins to appear as real. The human soul or Almighty God is absolutely subtle so awareness about Him is, therefore, only a matter of realization. But a constant, untiring

and long, patient process which presupposes continuous observation and guidance is necessary. It has been my idea to help, assist and aid my disciples on the practical aspects of these matters while visiting them during my tours to their places.

Recently I have gone to Shri Shail Mallikarjuna with twentyfive to thirty persons accompanying me. It was a time in which only spiritual practices or *Satsang* and prayers took place around the clock. This inspired me to organize such spiritual camps with regular intervals in other places also. I am sure if an aspirant spends a few days in such camps, he will find himself more cheerful and energetic for the next six months to come. By then, of course, a new camp can also be attended by him. This will help a seeker tremendously in making faster spiritual progress.

I discussed these ideas with some people and to materialize them, I fixed some places and times for the camps to happen. Out of a number of suggestions received, some are still in my consideration but four have been fixed and finalized. The last Yoga camp in this series took place in Dewas where people were doing *Sadhan* (meditation) three times in a day.

The following are some of the conditions which an aspirant is expected to strictly observe:

- 1) The participation in the camps will be restricted to the initiated followers of the School of Shri Narayan Tirth Dev only. They may have been initiated by Shri Vishnu Tirth, myself, Gulvani Maharaj, Datta Maharaj, Keshav Rao Joshi or Mama Deshpande
- 2) Gossiping is prohibited here and unnecessary wanderings are not allowed. Entertainments and delicious meals are not encouraged. In fact, only earnest seekers of knowledge need come to the camps.
- 3) The participants should not bring children with them. They cause trouble to their parents as well as interrupt in the *Sadhan* of others.
- 4) Necessary clothing suited to the particular climate should be car

ried by participants.

- 5) It is expected from every participant that he attend activities like *Sadhan*, *Satsang* and Arthi punctually.
- 6) The participants should come prepared to stay for the entire period fixed for the camps.

IN THE COMPANY OF ASPIRANTS -- II

(Summary of the speech of Shri Swami Shivom Tirthji Maharaj delivered in Bombay on January 1, 1982)

I am very happy to be present here for addressing the *Shaktipat* initiates of Bombay. You have all been given *Shaktipat* Diksha (initiation) but have you ever thought about why you have been initiated? In fact, when a Guru initiates a disciple, he has an intense desire created for the welfare of the disciple. He wishes that the disciple should get beyond the dualities of pleasure and pain, gain and loss and get established in eternal happiness. *Shaktipat* initiation does not aim at anything else other than this. If a disciple gets involved in his deeds, he cannot go beyond the dualities of life. If he performs his duties with a dutiful mind, *Samskaras* (the accumulation of the effects of his deeds) is no longer there.

To come back to the original point, I want to stress that disciples are normally not aware about the significance of spiritual progress for which they have been initiated by their Guru. After all, what is the awakened power? Where does it come from? What does it do? How does it function? And finally, what does it aim at doing? Aspirants do not find time to seek answers to these questions. It is mainly because issues of secondary importance have been given undue significance. Disciples are consequently indifferent to something which is so important. At the same time, there are a hundred and one excuses for something to be done or not to be done. But once, priorities are fixed, deeds can be accomplished easily.

This is not your first birth of which you have lived a life on earth. No one knows in what Yonis (lives) you were wandering in your past and after what virtuous deeds you have come to attain human

form. It may be that you sometimes were a horse, a dog or a cow. You could equally have been a thief, a dacoit, a beggar, a *Yogi* or a saint. You are fortunate that you have now been bestowed with human form which you should utilize for making spiritual advancement. It is possible only in a human life that good and bad are discriminated. All other forms of life are meant for enjoyments or suffering. A human being can thin out the effects of the deeds of his past lives and can also at the same time stop accumulations of new *Samskaras*. A man, therefore, performs worship, *Japa*, *Tapa* and other sorts of spiritual practices, and also performs prescribed worldly duties with the sense of duty which is devoid of all attachments, but this is very rarely remembered. Generally people are involved in the functions of earning money, accumulation of property, fame and the enjoyments thereof. Precious life is thus wasted without any fruitful solution.

How unfair it is that the primary object of life is so forgotten. Everyone is certain that he will die one day. The only uncertainty that exists is about the exact time of death. A man can become the prey of death at any given moment. The only certainty about it is that it will definitely come. Escape from it is never possible, no matter whether you are in your own country or abroad, in your house or out of it, whether working, sleeping or taking rest. What I mean to point out is the fact that you are never sure of how much time you are left with to work. You must, therefore, utilize your time in spiritual practices to the maximum. It is natural that ordinary human beings give preference to worldly pleasures which are directly attainable but those of you who have been initiated should consider that bliss consciousness, though beyond the reach of senses, is more real and worth attainment. It is only unfortunate that you have so far undertaken a futile voyage on earth. You have only carried the burden of ego and accumulated the effects of your deeds. The properties of spirit which are real have remained unattended.

When Guru Nanak Dev had acquired fame as a saint, he once went to Lahore. There lived a rich man named Seth Dunichand. He came to see Nanakji on being attracted by his fame. Upon leaving, the Seth asked if he could be of some service to the saint. Nanakji told him that everything was going on well with him and he was in no need

of any service. When Dunichand very much insisted for it, the Guru gave him a needle and told him that it should be returned back in his next life. Ultimately he went back to the Guru and requested to be discharged from that responsibility. The Guru smiled and told the rich man, "True, Sethji, if you cannot carry even a needle with you, how do you then expect your riches, properties and belongings to remain with you forever? Neither fame nor obscurity can surely accompany you. Even this body will lie behind. You should therefore give up your ego and try to attain salvation through devotion, worship and meditation."

You would be surprised to note how short of time you always are. Normally the life span of an ordinary man is seventy to eighty years. Around thirty years out of it are spent in sleep, thirty years in profession and at least fifteen years in eating, discussions and recreation. You are hardly, therefore, left with four to five years for your spiritual accomplishments.

I hear from a number of disciples that they are not finding time for spiritual practices. I am sure these are all excuses which are prompted by the mind. It is the nature of the mind to keep wavering until disciplined in spiritual practice. My last camp, organized in Nasik, was primarily meant for the attendance of my disciples in Bombay. I was surprised to find that there were people attending it from Hyderabad, Bhilai, Dewas, Rajkot and Sangli. There were thus around one hundred twenty participants but no one happened to come from this part of Bombay. Someone had said that his wife had become ill, another failed to get leave from work and some initiates were required to go somewhere and practically everyone had an excuse in this manner.

I admit that everyone has responsibilities of work and no one, in fact, can abstain from working. If you doubt my statement, you can try and see if you can remain without work. Action will continue as long as a man has desires and attachments. I therefore do not want you to give up work; I only insist that you give up attachments from all your actions. It may be pointed out that an action is not a root cause of bondage. It is the involvement in an action which binds a man. If without giving up attachments one stops working he will commit a mistake only. If you go on working after abandoning attachments the

same will amount to worship. This is also called a sacrifice. Yagna (sacrifice) is essential for the purification of mind. The purification of mind is possible when the accumulated effect of past deeds is thinned out and any further such accumulations is stopped. The work in this manner becomes the worship of God which a worker performs by the power of God only. You are fortunate that the "power" in you is already awakened and the process of purification has started. What you therefore need is only patience and joy to go on doing your *Sadhan* (spiritual practices). Be confident that God will surely help you.

FROM THE DISCOURSES OF GURUJI

(From a talk given at Vasudev Niwas, Poona on January 14, 1982 at the occasion of the eighth anniversary of the salvation of Shri Gulvaniji Maharaj.)

You know it well that the self is conscious or animate. The body, on the other hand, is inanimate and gross. The self is manifested by *Shakti* (power). As long as *Shakti* is manifest in the self, it is called *Chaitanya* (conscience). This *Shakti* also performs a miracle by making the inanimate *Chitta* (mindstuff) appear to be conscious by virtue of the reflections of the illumined self. At this stage *Shakti* has been defined as *ChitShakti*. The *Shakti* still continues its travel further. It then comes into contact with the senses and, while making them appear conscious, comes to be known as *Chetana* (consciousness). The one common *Shakti* thus is known as *Chaitanya* (Conscious Self), *Chitta* (mind-stuff) and *Chetana* (consciousness). This has been described as *Prasava Krama* (involuntary process) by the science of spirituality. Involution means involvements by birth. It is, in fact, the downward travel of *Shakti* but when it withdraws its manifested form from objects, to senses and finally then to consciousness, *Prati-Prasava-Krama* (process of evolution begins).

Consciousness is deep inside and all outside us. When it is projected through the senses outside, it is called consciousness, but when it is active inside, it is described as *Pratyak-Chetana* (Pure Consciousness). Even this pure consciousness does not reach conscious self as

long as *Chitta* has not been made pure by reducing the burden of the effect of past deeds. When awakened, the *Chit-Shakti* fights and removes these effects.

There are two methods of awakening *Shakti*. The first one is the path of knowledge. Such a man performs his duty for the sake of duty alone. He has a total dependence on God. He is detached from the sense of doership. This helps him develop the spirit of *Vairagya* (indifference/renunciation) towards the world. For instance, if I take off my spectacles, yet my mind is involved with thinking of them all the time, then this would not be renunciation. But even if I keep the spectacles on and the mind is fully detached, then this would be the true spirit of renunciation. A real deed in life is free from all mental involvements in it. Only an action is done with a feeling of doership in it. I have therefore advocated the performance of deeds which helps a man gradually attain pure Consciousness.

The other method of awakening *Shakti* is the grace of Guru. I do not want to detail in this respect innumerable evidences from scriptures. I will summarily state here that this path has been advocated simply because an aspirant cannot depend fully on self help in spiritual advancement. He is short of patience and generally expects immediate results and when this fails to happen he gives up spiritual practices altogether. A Guru gears up and accelerates the system of an aspirant and continues to be by his side until the goal is reached.

A Guru traditionally speaking gives *Diksha* (initiation) to the disciple, but he neither gives nor takes a thing from him. He does not even impart *Shakti* to his disciple. He simply prays to the Almighty Lord saying, "This one of my disciples has offered himself to your protection; he is obedient and keen. May Thou bless him by awakening his *Shakti* inwardly for his evolution."

The awakened *Shakti* of the Guru thus contacting the dormant power of the disciple stimulates it forcefully. The more powerful the Guru, the quicker is the awakening of *Shakti* in the disciple. This system of initiation is called *Shaktipat*. Literally it means the descent of *Shakti*. The Guru is spiritually superior to the disciple. The transmis-

sion of power is therefore described as *Shaktipat*.

Shakti after awakening stirs up the accumulated effects of the past deeds in the *Chitta* and by transforming them into various movements and actions, gradually thins them out. It has to be noted that these actions have no further effect since the doer is no longer involved in them. The initiated aspirant is only a seer and remains neutral. The awakened *Shakti* gets the aspirant's accumulated burden reduced by automatic movements. Once the spirit of doership is lost and the seer in the aspirant becomes vigilant, the accumulation of unwanted effects is stopped. You must, in fact, become a seer. For instance, when you see a film you are totally inactive and the film still goes on. You have similarly to watch in this *Sadhan* (spiritual practice) *Kriyas* (movements) taking place automatically. It has been questioned that some *Sadhaks* (aspirants) experience automatic movements for a very long time and they feel happy about it, but their spiritual advancement is not up to the mark. Their *Chitta* is not purified and the accumulation of the effects of deeds continues further. This simply means that the seer in the *Sadhak* has not taken over which is so important.

Now I will analyze the process of the accumulation of the effects of past deeds. An ordinary human being has a number of longings developed as he comes in contact with the objects of the world. Longing for a thing gives rise to a tendency which consequently exposes him to the alternatives of *Sankalpa* (determinations) or *Vikalpa* (indiferences). In such cases *Shakti* is extrovert as there is a conscious participation of the senses. The mind also has an involvement in it, but the act of spiritual practice is never the result of any tendency and therefore, the involvement of mind is not there. I have to caution you here again that if you try for a particular posture or activity in your *Sadhan* the seer in you could be lost and naturally such actions will become deeds.

You may be interested in knowing and perhaps prescribing the order of *Kriyas* (activities) in an aspirant for his spiritual progress. It is, therefore, important to mention here that *Shakti* follows its own course. Various postures, gestures and movements automatically take

place in an aspirant according to the need of his spiritual advancement. No prescription and no training is relevant in this system for a spiritualist to advance.

It has to be taken for granted that the Kriyas in an aspirant takes place according to the tendencies developed on the basis of past effects in him. For instance, there are different types of electrical appliances which can provide heating, cooling or lighting. The one and the same electrical energy sometimes heats, cools or shines. Likewise, the one awakened *Shakti* in a man can make a *Sadhak* weep, sing, laugh or dance depending on his various tendencies. Whether good or bad, all these effects go on refining by their manifestation into Kriyas.

It is to be noted that even worship and many other spiritual practices, unless performed without attachment, only increase the burden of the past. Once *Shakti* is awakened, this accumulation stops. The art of action taught by Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* is automatically perfected by such a person. This is open for anybody's experiment and experience since *Shakti* is direct and active. The will cannot be imposed on it. Even surrender to God, which has been described as *Ishvar-Pranidhan* in *Yoga Darshan*, is the action of awakened and active *Shakti*. Therefore, we do not advocate any sort of spiritual practices but propose a passivity and surrender to the spontaneity of all active energy.

I consider initiation with *Mantras* to be proper but I make it always clear at the time of initiation that the *Mantra* is only secondary. Such *Mantra* is *Chaitanya* (live) and if there is no manifestation of activities in an aspirant, the repetition of that *Mantra* will help him manifest his tendencies and his actions in due course, however it is not advisable that the *Mantras* replace the actions. You may wonder that I am speaking against some systems of spiritual practices which, in fact, is not true. I simply want to state here that if you continue to be interested in such a system, even after the awakening of your *Shakti*, it is because of your attachment with it (the system). Such attachments have their origin in the accumulated effects of past deeds. The awakened *Shakti* is capable of thinning them out by their manifestation into

action. You may even continue to follow two types of your practices for some time, but it is certain that the practices performed with the feeling of doership will gradually be substituted by those without it.

When *Shakti* is awakened the aspirant experiences it to be distinct and different from his senses, mind and intellect. The idol worship has now come to be recognized as the worship of God with a form, however our scriptures consider it to be the worship of a symbol. Unmanifested Almighty God is the actual goal of our achievement. It is true that psychologically a human cannot concentrate on formlessness. Therefore symbols whether sun, moon, river, a god or an idol have been regarded as the objects of worship. The actual worship of a form is superior to the worship of an idol. Such an aspirant directly perceives the power and the supremacy of God.

In *Bhakti Sutra* of Narada, *Bhakti* (devotion) has been described as an extravagant and abundant love for God. The pronoun for God used by Narada is *Asmin* which means "this." "This God" of devotion is directly perceived and felt. The pure and supreme love for Him can only be the result of awakened *Shakti* which is in direct touch with Him. The devotion has also two stages. In the beginning, a devotee has the feeling of doership but when the blissful *Shakti* is awakened, the ego in him is lost. The oneness of the devotee with the object of devotion is a matter of experience in such cases. These days a number of saints prescribe *Mantras* like *Soham*, meaning "I am That." I am of the view that this *Mantra* should be an experience and not an idea of our efforts.

The stage preceding this *Mantra* is *Pragyanam Brahma*. *Pragyan* is nothing but *Kundalini Shakti* which has been identified with God. This stage has to be a state of automatic, spontaneous and instantaneous realization of your system and not an effortful idealization of it.

After the objective existence of *Shakti* is experienced the state of *Shaktopaya* comes. This means that *Shakti* has started working for the aspirant. Higher than this is *Shambhopaya* in which the purified *Chitta* of the aspirant is unified with *Shakti*. *Shambho* (i.e. Shiva) thereafter takes over the reign from *Shakti*.

The finest stage is the one in which the inside and outside become identical. All forms and objects disappear and the one consciousness is felt and perceived all around. Such a *Sadhak* starts sharing the same experience as the seer of the *Upanishads* who says, "Like a spark of fire one Prana (vital force) is deep inside and all outside us. It is omnipotent and omnipresent."

You have a long way to go. This way is also thorny. Therefore you have to be completely alert and very patient. There are cases when years of practice have not contributed substantially for the purification of *Chitta*. The measurement of your success is not, therefore, the frequency and magnitude of your movements, but sublimation of your mind and the purification of your *Chitta*.

Appendix II: Further Discussion

Intellectual people need intellectual clarity prior to beginning *Sadhana*. Since curiosity and doubts can arise, clarification of all questions is essential to build faith on the path.

The questions raised by the disciples are ones that any searching mind would encounter. Some of the questions addressed in Appendix II are:

- . How long does it take to reach the spiritual goal after *Shaktipat*?
- . What are the demoniac powers?
- . What is the difference between common memory and *Samskaras*?
- . How does the awakened *Kundalini* purify impressions?
- . Is it necessary to do *samyam* to dissolve the five elements into their causal elements?
- . What is the meaning of restless *Prana*?
- . Does one have to do efforts to achieve *pratyahar* (rising above sense perceptions and possible distraction) after *kundalini* is awakened?
- . What does it mean in terms of spiritual progress to have the same *Kriya* for many years?
- . Where is the Self in the body -- in the heart or in the *Sahasrar* (crown)?
- . What is the difference between the mind and the intellect?

Is the grace of God or the *Guru* earned as a result of past *Karma* or does one receive such grace without any cause or reason?

Generally the paths of yoga and knowledge are understood to be different from each other. But if one thinks about it carefully, it is clear that there is no difference between the two. Actually, they complement each other. Without yoga, knowledge is not attained; and without keeping the goal of knowledge in the forefront, the objective of yoga is not fulfilled.

Those who try to attain knowledge only through thinking, must understand that the process of thinking is a natural happening in the path of yoga. Thoughts manifest as *Kriyas*, or autonomous processes in the experiential intellect. The illusory veil of intellect is not removed by mere reading and reciting, deliberating and contemplating. Lifting the veil requires the experience of yoga.

For yoga a *Guru* is required. An appropriate state of mind (*chitta* or psyche) is fundamental to meeting a *Guru*. That state of mind is attained by an aspirant as a result of good *Karma* for several lifetimes. If *Sadhana* and *Satsang* are done with ego, impressions of the ego are accumulated instead of *Sattvic* and purifying *Karma*. But by doing every activity while being absorbed in love for God, with a sense of service to God, one develops a state of mind that enables him or her to receive a *Guru*'s grace. That is when by the grace of God one meets a real *Guru*.

Who knows how many lifetimes, how much difficult *Sadhana* without a sense of doership, is necessary to awaken the *Shakti* and start self-perfecting *Sadhana*? But by the grace of the *Guru* this task is accomplished serendipitously. The *Guru*'s own *Shakti* is awakened, and his inner sources of bondage have become feeble. The *Guru* clearly experiences the movements of *Shakti* and has the capability to awaken *Shakti* in others. Only such a *Guru* deserves the title "*Guru*".

In the *Gurudeeksha* the Guru's mental resolve is at work. The *Guru* showers his grace on the disciple with his mental resolve, which is expressed with the support of a *Mantra*, a touch or a look. Thus the *Guru* awakens the disciple's *Shakti* without any external support. There are many examples in which a *Guru* and a disciple are thousands of miles away from each other, yet the *Guru*'s grace touches the disciple. The disciple experiences the *Shakti* awakening.

On receiving the *Guru*'s grace, the disciple attains a natural and perfected *Sadhan* (a course or spiritual practice that unfolds naturally). The disciple does not have to do anything, really. He or she just has to sit, surrender and witness the workings of the awakened *Shakti*.

A person's nature is based on his *Samskaras* or past impressions. He rigidly toils in unnatural practices and is consequently unsuccessful. But by the grace of the *Guru* he receives *siddha* practice and *Shakti* awakening. Depending on his nature, *Samskaras* and the state of his *chitta*, spontaneous *Kriyas* occur. *Shakti* works within the purview of one's physical and mental capabilities. No *Kriya* happens outside the character of one's *chitta*.

After awakening, the spiritual journey of the *Shakti* commences. The concept of *Shakti* awakening is generally misunderstood. Everyone can experience that *Shakti* is present in all living beings. Commonly it is believed to be *Shakti* of the senses. If one can directly experience *Shakti* working through the medium of senses, then *Shakti* has indeed been awakened.

Similarly, there are popular misconceptions about *Kundalini Shakti*. It is not an actual serpent residing within the body. *Kundalini* is the name of a specific condition of *Shakti*. The three circles of *Kundalini* are also an imaginary concept. In reality they refer to the three *gunas* or qualities of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *tamas*. When it is said that *Kundalini* is asleep and hiding her face in the three coils, it means that the Truth or Brahman is hidden behind the three *gunas*. The *Kundalini* pierces through the six *chakras* of *Shakti* or plexuses, which are not physical.

The activity of *Shakti* is experienced on the body, even though the plexuses actually exist in the *chitta* in the form of impressions.

When a person performs any action with attachment, impressions are accumulated on the *chitta* and the circles get more and more intense. When *Shakti* starts to move upwards after awakening, her circular motion is reversed, the impressions are weakened and the coils start to unwind. Then the hidden face of the *Kundalini* serpent is open and the Truth is revealed. The Brahman is apparent. Everything that happens during *Sadhan* loosens the knot of *Maya* (or illusion). Ultimately the knot of *Maya* is untied.

God's *Shakti* is mysterious, just as God is. *Shakti* is one. It cannot be divided, even though it appears as if it is. *Shakti* takes the form of individual consciousness and is present in everyone. The ultimate goal of spiritual life is to recognize that *Shakti* is undivided in the whole creation and to merge or dissolve the Self into the all-pervading, undivided cosmic *Shakti*. All one needs in order to reach that goal is the awakened *Kundalini Shakti*.

While traveling to this goal, *Kundalini Shakti* introduces herself and enables the aspirant to experience the real Self. She also discloses her natural qualities of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. She reveals the secret to the aspirant that *Shakti* is not separate from the individual soul and that the person is nothing else but *Shakti*. In order to have this experience, the layers of one's impressions and tendencies must be removed. This happens in the form of *Kriyas*.

No matter what state the Self is in, it remains non-separate from the *Shakti*. Her omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence are always present, if only in seed form. Even when these qualities are natural and innate, they are not experienced by the individual. The Self is limited by illusion. The *Kriyas* remove these limits and illusions, enabling the aspirant to have the experience of the real Self.

It is the duty of every aspirant to support this spiritual journey. The

activities of the *Shakti* are self-propelled, but support from the aspirant adds to the pace of progress and reduces the obstacles in the way of *Shakti*.

. The first kind of support is faith. **Full faith in the *Guru*, in the path, and in the main deity of worship are fundamental.** Just as a car cannot run without gasoline, faith is critical for *Shakti* to work.

. The second kind of support is surrender. The ego present within the aspirant cannot be suddenly removed. But with surrender, the ego starts to melt. Even though the ego is aroused when impressions are cleared with workings of *Shakti*, one's surrender gives *Shakti* the freedom to work. With surrender, *Shakti's* inner journey can take place without any hindrance.

The third kind of support is *Karmayoga*, or actions without attachment to the results. This stops the accumulation of new impressions.

How can the total purification of the *chitta* occur if the aspirant continues to collect more impressions by doing work with attachment while *Shakti* is purifying impressions by way of *Kriyas*? One does not have to take the vow of renunciation or *sanyas*. Instead, one can attain the fruits of yoga by doing all work in the best possible way without attachment to the results. Real renunciation involves giving up the fruits of one's actions.

There is no objection to *sanyas*, but its prerequisite is real detachment. To be afraid of hardships in discharging worldly responsibilities is not detachment. Detachment means total lack of thirst for worldly attainments or pleasures.

The aspirant is detached when he is in the world fulfilling his duties, experiencing joy and suffering, without letting the mind or *chitta* get affected. When the mind is in total control, desires for pleasures do not subjugate the person. For detachment one must remain in the world and fulfill his duties. By following this path, the individual Self be-

comes purified, the destiny within the chitta diminishes, and the spiritual journey continues at a good pace.

When the *Shakti* is awakened with the Guru's grace, the path of *Sadhan* is very clear. Yet some people experience difficulties in their practices. The sense of service while performing actions gets lost, and the sense of surrender during *Sadhan* is forgotten. This happens for two reasons. First, there may not be a clear understanding of what service or surrender means. And second, there may be inadequate commitment towards the spiritual goal. Generally, people wish to retain all the worldly things and attain liberation as well. Worldly attachments must be shaken off to attain liberation.

Kriyas can be categorized in terms of three kinds of bodies and five sheaths covering the Truth or the Self. The first is the physical body, which includes both the physical body and the body of *Prana*. The *Prana* is subtle and divine, but because of its workings at the physical level it is considered to be part of the body. The sheath of mind and experiential knowledge are part of the subtle body, and the sheath of *ananda* is believed to be in the causal body. The causal factor behind formation of the physical body is *Maya*.

If that is the case, how can *Maya* be the sheath of *ananda*? *Maya* is the closest to the soul. Qualities of the soul reflect upon the *Maya*, and qualities of *Maya* reflect upon the soul. Thus, *ananda* of soul reflects on *Maya* and the illusion of *Maya* reflects on the soul. After reaching the causal body the aspirant rises above the physical and subtle bodies, and starts to work on the subtler levels of *chitta*. He experiences immense joy! The joy is experienced at the *chitta* level, but it is really the joy of the Self.

Another question may arise: If at the beginning of creation there was neither any impression nor any illusion, where did they come from? In the beginning creation occurred because it was God's wish. Eventually the wish of God or *Maya* caused the cycle of birth and death. Because of *Maya* or illusion, the individual soul accumulates impres-

sions, pollutes the *chitta* and keeps reincarnating.

The process of creation consists of the rise of *Maya*, the collection of impressions and the attachment to sense objects. For spirituality one must redirect the *Shakti* in the reversal of the creative process, going from unfolding to infolding. One can attain this through efforts alone, but it is extremely difficult and requires *Sadhana* for a very long time. The path of *Shaktipat* or the grace of the *Guru* is much more simple, easy and direct.

Even after *Shakti's* awakening with the *Guru's* grace, impressions prevail in the *chitta* and destiny also remains. The awakening of *Kundalini* is not the ultimate goal. Rather, it is only the beginning of *Sadhana*. The goal can be accomplished with surrender in one's *Sadhana* and actions to serve God.

Questions and Answers

Question: *What is laya yoga and raj yoga?*

Answer: During *laya yoga* the mind merges with any object of meditation. In the traditional terminology of spiritual practices in India, *laya yoga* means to concentrate on the sound that arises within and to merge into that sound. People on the path of *Shaktipat* do not need to do any specific efforts to hear the inner sound. As they do *Sadhana*, the sound, which is a kind of *Kriya* of *Shakti*, begins to emanate by itself. When the mind spontaneously concentrates on the sound in the form of a *Kriya*, *laya yoga* occurs.

Let us now consider *raj yoga*. Most people following a different yoga path believe that their path is *raj yoga*, which means the king of yoga paths. But further consideration reveals that *raj yoga* is a natural state of mind or psyche. As long as the psyche is loaded with impressions, the *chitta* is in an unnatural state. The essential components of the natural state are the elimination of all impressions, the experience of self-knowledge, and a sense of the falsehood of the world. After *Shaktipat* the impressions are cleared by doing *Sadhana*. If one acts with detachment, new impressions will not be accumulated. The falsehood of the world becomes evident, knowledge of the Self is attained, and the natural state of *raj yoga* occurs.

Question: *What are the demoniac powers that are said to be the obstacles to Sadhana?*

Answer: In reality the demoniac powers are the impressions on the *chitta*. They precipitate obstacles, difficulties and hardships. Depending on one's impressions, *vasanas* or tendencies develop. Mental modifications occur based on those tendencies. Modifications of mind con-

stitute quality of mind, and mental resolves determine *Karma*. The mental impressions take the form of destiny and present an individual soul with happiness or unhappiness, suitable or unsuitable circumstances. Thus the soul is shackled by impressions, which are a kind of demoniac power.

Shakti never changes. No matter what one's impressions are, it continues to work. Sometimes it is called divine, and sometimes it is called demoniac.

Question: *Some books say that an aspirant attains self-realization within 12 years after Shaktipat. But some disciples who took deeksha 20, 30 or 50 years ago have made virtually no progress. Can you explain this?*

Answer: The scriptures do say that an aspirant of the lowest grade can attain realization in twelve years, the low grade in nine years, the medium grade in six years, and the best disciples can attain the Self in three years. Generally, however, aspirants do not fall into any of these four categories.

An ordinary aspirant remains in the primary state only because he or she does not maintain the necessary level of surrender, detachment, and continuous *Sadhana*. People may talk a lot about spirituality without moving beyond the preliminary stage. They remain contented with their commonplace life and are not willing to make the needed changes. Thus their spiritual journey tends to be very lengthy. They do not perform actions with an attitude of service, and their sense of detachment remains unsteady. Their ego prohibits true surrender, making continuous *Sadhana* impossible. These aspirants do not belong to any of the four categories mentioned above.

Question: *What is the difference between memory and Samskaras or vasanas?*

Answer: *Samskaras* are impressions of good and bad experiences on the psyche or *chitta*. These impressions generally take the form of mental tendencies, thoughts and mental resolves. They also take form as destiny when they are strengthened. When they arise from the storehouse of impressions, they create waves of past memories related to experiences, circumstances and people. The accumulated impressions or *Samskaras* take the form of memory waves through the medium of *vasanas* or mental tendencies.

After *Shaktipat initiation*, the accumulated impressions do not take the form of destiny, nor do they arise and manifest as *vasanas*, memory or modifications of mind. Instead, they become *Kriyas* during meditation and are thus reduced.

Question: *How does the awakening of Kundalini purify impressions?*

Answer: This clarifies the preceding answer. After *Shaktipat*, *Shakti* starts to move in an infolding direction. During *Sadhana* *Shakti* has no work to do, so it excavates the impressions and prevents the formation of destiny and *vasanas*. It turns them directly into *Kriyas* and eliminates their power.

If the aspirant is not attached to the *Kriyas*, new impressions will not be accumulated. Impressions accumulate because of attachment. When that cause is absent, no new impressions are accumulated and the *chitta* is purified.

Question: *Does one need to do samyama or practise mental control over the senses to dissolve the five elements into their causal factors?*

Answer: The five elements dissolve into their causal factors not because of *samyam* on the senses, but because of the infolding reverse journey of *Shakti* towards its source. *Samyam* is helpful only in creating detachment from worldly pleasures and objects. *Samyam* is essen-

tial for spiritual progress, since the absence of detachment can put many obstacles in the path of the inward journey of *Shakti*. The fullest detachment from the world and the greatest spiritual benefit are contained only within the inward journey of *Shakti*.

As the *Shakti* progresses inward, first the senses dissolve into the causal mind, the mind dissolves into intellect, intellect into ego and ego into *chitta*. The five elements also dissolve. The dissolution of elements at an individual level occurs only after impressions are purified. Initially *Kriyas* occur because of impressions. After the impressions are cleared, *Kriyas* take place on the basis of the elements.

Question: *What is the distinction between mind and intellect?*

Answer: Mind and intellect are two *Kriyas* of *chitta* that occur with the support of *Shakti*. The mind consists of *Kriyas* of resolve and dissolving the resolves. Intellect is the process of thinking. In common worldly people the intellect controls the mind, whereas in *jnani* and evolved people the mind is in control of the intellect.

Question: *What is the meaning of restless or vikshipt Prana?*

Answer: *Prana* is neither restless nor at peace. It neither progresses nor falls. The *Prana* will be more active when the *chitta* has many impressions and the *Shakti* has more work to do. That extremely active state of *Prana* is said to be restless or *vikshipt*. To eliminate this restlessness of the *Prana*, impressions must be removed. An aspirant's duty involves nothing more than clearing impressions by letting *Shakti* work without interference.

Question: *Should an aspirant make efforts for pratyahar (to go beyond sense awareness), like a tortoise withdraws into the shell, so that he or she does not hear outside sounds during meditation?*

Answer: Knowledge is a quality of the soul. When the soul's *chaitanya*

Shakti or Consciousness reflects *chitta*, then this quality of consciousness affects the *chitta*. This brings external knowledge to the intellect, which is purely a function of *chitta*. As long as the soul's consciousness remains in contact with the *chitta*, it will have knowledge of the outside world. During *pratyahar*, knowledge of the worldly subjects remains even though those subjects have no more influence.

All spiritual aspirants should do as many efforts for *pratyahar* as possible. But whether one attains mastery over that depends upon the workings of *Shakti*. One's efforts for *pratyahar* should always be done with surrender to *Shakti*.

Do not expect that after *pratyahar* is attained, outside noises will not be heard. Noises will be heard, but the *chitta* will not be affected by them and become restless.

Outside awareness can be lost in two ways. First, during *Kriyas* impressions of an object of one-pointedness arise spontaneously. When the mind is fully focused on that, external awareness can be lost. Second, when modifications of the *chitta* stop completely and contact between the soul and the *chitta* is lost, *asamprjant* (thoughtless) *Samadhi* occurs and external knowledge vanishes. The instrument of external knowledge is *chitta*, which is gross. When it loses contact with *Shakti*, the *chitta* does not receive any power for its activities. The workings of *chitta* stop and external awareness is dissolved.

Question: *What does it mean in terms of spiritual progress to have the same Kriya in meditation for many years?*

Answer: As it has been explained, *Kriyas* occur based on one's impressions. If one has only a few impressions of a certain type, *Kriyas* pertaining to them will happen for one day and be gone the next day. If one has an enormous amount of similar impressions, *Kriyas* pertaining to them will continue for many years. One thing is certain: *Kriyas* cause the purification of the *chitta*. So the *Sadhaka* should not be

concerned with whether the same *Kriyas* repeat or change. He should only assure that progress and purification are occurring.

Question: *A jnani enjoys the bliss of Samadhi while walking and working, whereas a yogi must stop all the modifications of mind and be in the state of Samadhi to enjoy that bliss. Considering this, isn't a jnani the best?*

Answer: The awakened *Samadhi* of a *jnani* is definitely superior, but the state of awakened *Samadhi* is attained after meditative *Samadhi*. First by following the path of yoga, when all the modifications of mind stop, the state of *Samadhi* is attained. Then the *chitta* is purified, intellect based on the Truth instead of impressions arises, and steadiness in the Self is attained. When the events of the world no longer affect the mind and everywhere the presence of pure consciousness is experienced, *Samadhi* in the awakened state is attained. The bliss that is experienced during *Samadhi* is present and experienced in the awakened state as well.

Yogadarshan describes seven states of intellect. The *Samadhi* state is only the fourth stage. Three remaining states are subsequent to *Samadhi*. *Sadhana* is required only up to *Samadhi*. After the fourth state of *Samadhi*, no *Sadhana* is necessary. **Surrender is the only path from then on.**

Question: *What is the relationship between the rising of Kundalini from muladhar to Sahasrar and self-realization?*

Answer: The awakening of *Kundalini* and its journey from *muladhar* to *Sahasrar* occurs only for the purpose of self-realization. This journey destroys impressions, ends *vasanas* or tendencies, and removes the veil of *Maya*. According to the scriptures there is no difference between the individual soul and God. The sense that they are separate exists because of *Maya*, ego, impressions and impurities.

Shakti moves upwards and removes all the obstacles along the way. These obstacles take the form of *Maya* and impressions. As soon as the obstacles are gone, the path of self-realization becomes clear.

Question: *The Upanishadas talk about the abode of soul in the heart, and we are talking about Sahasrar as the destination of Kundalini. Why is that?*

Answer: The feeling that the soul resides in the heart is only within the body. And as long as we do not experience the soul or God in our heart, it is useless to talk about the omnipresence of God. The experience of God in our heart is yoga, and the experience of God everywhere is *vedanta*.

Sahasrar is also within us. We look for the heart and *Sahasrar* on the physical level. But union with God is possible only when one rises above the body. The heart and the *Sahasrar* discussed in the book are beyond the body.

Question: *What should one do if he or she does something wrong such as insulting a Guru?*

Answer: First of all, one must make a firm resolve not to repeat the same mistake ever again. Repent over whatever has happened. Decide punishment for that mistake, and go through that punishment. For example, do *Japa* for a certain length of time, observe fasts, pray, etc.

Question: *Is all grace earned from past good Karma, or is there any special kind of grace given for something other than action?*

Answer: Grace is primarily determined by past *Karma*, but during human life there is also freedom for new *Karma*. Humans are free to take *Kriyamana* action. If a person gives control of his mind to his intellect and performs good actions, then grace can come on the basis

of new good *Karma*.

Question: *Some books say that siddhis are obstacles. Please explain.*

Answer: In the *Samadhi* state there are no *siddhis*. The *siddhis* that show miracles are a part of the gross world. The world of *siddhis* is subtle compared to the gross world. A spiritual aspirant can become attached to the *siddhis*. If the gross world has enough power to make one fall into the trap of attachment, how much power would the subtle *siddhis* have?

Once attachment develops, the fall of the aspirant is absolutely certain. Therefore, *siddhis* are considered obstacles in the path of spiritual progress.

Question: *What are yamas and niyamas?*

Answer: *Yamas* and *niyamas* are mentioned in many places in the scriptures. *Yamas* are the guiding rules for spiritual behavior in the world. To live in concert with the *yamas* one must control oneself according to some additional rules, which are *niyamas*.

Question: *If the Guru leaves the body before the disciple progresses fully, what would happen to the incomplete Sadhana? Does the Guru keep helping the disciple and the awakened Shakti remain until the disciple reaches the ultimate goal?*

Answer: Even if the Guru's body may have dissolved, the *GuruShakti* does not cease to exist. It is eternal, without birth or death, and beyond depletion. Therefore, once the *Gurudev* awakens the *GuruShakti* within the disciple, irrespective of whether the *Gurudev* is in the body or not, the *GuruShakti* continues to work toward the disciple's progress. It is also essential that this faith matures within the disciple as well. If it

does not, the disciple will feel the separation of the *Guru* in body and will be deprived of the infinite, eternal, omniscient grace of the *Gurutattva*. This may slow down his spiritual progress. Therefore, a disciple should never let his mind become troubled with the thought of separation from the physical *Guru*.

If the disciple continually maintains faith in the *Guru*, *Sadhana*, and *Shakti*, then *Kundalini Shakti* will remain actively busy and the disciple will make progress.

If the aspirant leaves the body before attaining the ultimate goal, then the *Kundalini* will awaken in the next births and will lead the soul to the higher spiritual stages. Therefore, a spiritual aspirant needs to maintain full faith in the *Shakti*, a steady sense of surrender to the *Shakti*, and keep doing his *Sadhana* without apprehension.

Question: *For the last month, after my father's death, my health has not been good. A feeling of fear persists. Sometimes I fear that some good or evil spirits are following me. Sometimes in the middle of the night I have nightmares, and I start shaking with fear. I also, wonder at times whether I will have to go through lots of mental and physical sufferings because of doing too much meditation.*

Answer: It seems that your state is caused by sadness from your father's death. Mourning intensely for a long time causes the mind to become weak and think about irrelevant things. At that time the mind feels that unforeseen calamities are likely to occur, and imaginative misfortune causes fear. One must rid of unnecessary worries and try to overcome the depression caused by his father's death.

Spirits cannot do any damage to a person whose *Shakti* is active. Sometimes aspirants feel that a spirit has entered into them. At times activities of mother *Kundalini* may feel like a spirit. Furthermore, when *Shakti* becomes extremely gracious it is directly visible. By becoming directly experiential, the *Shakti* talks like another spirit, gives advice

and protects the aspirant. If such an experience is taking place, do not be afraid. Instead, believe the goddess *Shakti* is coming alive, and you will have a direct realization.

When an external spirit enters someone, the person becomes unconscious, but when *Shakti* is working the person has full awareness. It feels as if someone else has entered, and the body is filled with a new charge. If you have such an experience, do not be afraid. Know that no other spirit can damage you in any way.

Because of the fear your health also suffers. Do not weep so much after your father. Everyone has to go one day or another. Could your father have lived forever? Will you live forever?

To think that *Sadhana* can do something bad to you also is a baseless fear. All the activities and *Kriyas* due to *Sadhana* occur for your betterment. There is no chance of any harm. If during *Kriyas* you see some terrible things or bad omens, be confident that it will do some good for you eventually. The inability to understand the process of purification of the *chitta* can give rise to such doubts. It is best to get rid of these doubts immediately. Because of this you must not think that some harm may occur due to *Sadhana*, and continue to do the *Sadhana* with faith.

Other yoga practices such as *hathyoga* require knowledge, caution, and are prone to problems if the teacher is not physically available to guide the disciple. But this *Sadhana* of *Kriya Shakti* is self-perfecting. The *Shakti* is all-knowing. It is fully aware of the past impressions requirements of the aspirant. Consequently, whatever experience is required for, the aspirant's progress takes place in the form of *Kriya*. When the aspirant leaves the responsibility of *Sadhana* to the awakened *Shakti* with a total surrender, he becomes happy and composed. There is no place for even a doubt of potential harm.

Such aspirants have to remember a few things. They must get over the mourning after a dear one's death, and remove the doubt of being pos-

sessed by some spirit. They must remove all doubts that *Sadhana* can cause any harm and maintain a worry-free, happy temperament. They must maintain strong faith in the *Guru* and the awakened *Shakti*, and fill their life with continuous *Sadhana* and devotion towards the goddess within.

Question: *It is said that Shakti protects the aspirant, gives forewarning of catastrophe, but I have seen that this does not happen with all initiated aspirants. Why is it so?*

Answer: In eyes of God everyone is equal. Not only for human beings, but also for animals, God has the same grace. But experiences differ because of differences in one's capability to receive the grace. If an aspirant remains in close touch with the subtle activities of the *Shakti*, he is able to experience the *Kriyas* to a greater depth. Just as some people have very sharp eyesight, some are totally blind, and some are able to see only to a degree, everyone has their own level of capabilities. Similarly, in the subtle inner world each aspirant has his or her own level of capabilities.

There is another reason for this. *Shakti* is all-knowing and mother of every being. All of her activities are for the betterment of all, whether or not the aspirant can discriminate between good and bad. *Shakti* may give forewarning and protect some aspirants, while she may punish others for past actions and uplift them by purifying their *Samskaras*. The ignorant and imperfect aspirant does not know what is good for him and what is not good for him. This is known only to the Goddess *MahaMaya Shakti*. An aspirant may talk about high philosophy and nurture his ego, but his knowledge is so limited that he does not even know what has been accumulated in his *chitta*.

Therefore, there is only one way for the aspirant — the way of surrender. A real aspirant sees the divine grace of mother *Shakti*. If he gets into some difficulties, he is protected by *Shakti*. Then he says, "Mother you are very compassionate. You take so much care of a person like me who has no virtue, no strength, and no good *Karma*." If he faces

difficulties, he also sees grace in those. He thinks, "I was lost in worldly pleasures, believing them to be eternal. I had become attached to circumstances, but by the grace of the compassionate Mother, who destroyed this attachment, I am seeing the reality about worldly involvement."

Thus the aspirant sees nothing but the grace of God in every situation, in every *Kriya*. He experiences gains and losses, pleasures and pains, and rises above imaginative ordeals. For that aspirant the pathway to attaining God or Self becomes easy and even.

Question : *When I sit in meditation various kinds of Kriyas take place. I do not feel like getting up because they are very pleasant. Even then I have doubts. What is the advantage of this shaking, and trembling, singing and shouting? How long will these Kriyas go on? Is doing these Kriyas real Sadhana?*

Answer: The *Kriyas* can be categorized into three types: physical, mental and related to speech. The benefits of each are also different. The objective of every spiritual aspirant is not to attain worldly pleasures, but to become detached from them. Sensuous pleasures do not give real happiness. People of knowledge say they are filled with sorrows.

*Parinam tap samskara duhkhairegunavrittivirodhaccha
dukhamev sarva vivekinah.*

Happiness ends in sorrow, and sufferings are themselves sorrowful. The memory that happy and unhappy experiences leave on the *chitta* in the form of impressions causes pain. Those impressions bind you and pull you to go in the same direction. This helplessness becomes the cause of further unhappiness. The mental modifications of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *tamas* caused by unhappiness are the cause of suffering because they are mutually contradictory. A person with discrimination clearly learns that happiness is in reality nothing else but unhappiness.

Therefore, if *Sadhana* is done for the fulfillment of desires, then it is no longer spiritual. It becomes gross and worldly.

Who does not suffer because of physical diseases, mental worries and grief? *Sankhya* says that the real pursuit is total eradication of three types of burnings (physical and mental, spiritual, and God-sent calamities) so that they never return. Medication may reduce a fever, but we must still heal the body in such a manner that the fever does not return. Similarly, we want to heal ourselves in such a manner that once the sorrows are gone, they are gone for ever.

Yoga takes responsibility for such a cure. There are four parts to any therapy: diagnosis, reason, treatment and elimination of the disease. Life has birth, old age, diseases, and death — the big disease. Its reason is *avidya*. Self-realization is the treatment, and is the elimination of the disease.

One must test how well the *Kriyas* of the awakened *Kundalini* fulfil these four criteria for treating the aspirant. To believe that this physical body is the Self is the *avidya* or grand illusion. This illusion is destroyed only when knowledge of the Self, which is eternal, pure consciousness and free, comes with self-realization.

The first folly is to believe that worldly, sensuous pleasures can give happiness. The second mistake is to desire that this body, which is the instrument for experiencing these pleasures, remain healthy and strong forever, never becoming weak and decaying. The third mistake is to expect that the instrumental cause of enjoyment should be available forever. The biggest factor sustaining the grand illusion is attachment to the pleasures. Helpless slavery to these attachments causes the cycle of birth and death to continue. Yoga Darshan, by Patanjali, claims that its path can bring you to Self-realization, which is possible with cessation of all mental modifications.

After awakening the *Kundalini Shakti* begins *Kriya yoga*. How do *Kriyas* help the cessation of mental modifications? In the first mo-

ments after awakening, it gives the experience of such divine bliss never experienced before. It does not need any external object. No efforts are necessary for attaining that bliss. This joy is beyond the senses, because the senses need external objects with the qualities of touch, sound, looks, fragrance and taste. Contrary to the senses, this joy surges from within. To experience that joy, the mind does not have to do any external activities. That is why the aspirant may not feel like getting up from meditation. In the words of Lord Krishna;

*Antah sukhoantarama yastvatmaratirevasyat
atmatriptascha manavah.*

Bhagavat Geeta

Such a yogi is freed up from all worldly activities and attains the position of *nirvana* in Brahman. Mundakopnishad calls such a yogi who is *Atmakrida atmaratihi Kriyavan*, the one who is dwelling within the Self, attached to the Self and active within the Self, as the best of those who know the Brahman.

The aspirant experiences the hollowness of the worldly pleasures along with the waves of inner joy of the Self with every *Kriya*. The words of saint Kabir come alive, *mana mast hua phir kyun dole*: Why wander when the mind is elated with inner bliss?

Shaking and rotating around or back and forth, are the two initial signs of *Shakti* awakening. In the same way, when the ignition starts a car, it shakes a little. The *Kriyas* of shouting and singing are sign that *Shakti* is *jnanamayi*. *Shakti* herself does the *Kriyas*, sings, laughs, weeps, protects the aspirants from adversities, gives advice like a *Guru*, and turns the aspirant towards Knowledge. All these are signs of its all-powerfulness and omniscience.

The upsurge of *Shakti* within the heart is nothing but the realization of the one who possesses *Shakti* or God, because God realization is possible only through its expressed *Shakti*. These processes of *Shakti* exist until one reaches the stage called *parichaya*, which means introduc-

tion. The form of the *Kriyas*, which start off being gross and loud, become subtler and subtler. Upon reaching a steady state within the real Self, the mind becomes empty and has no subject in it. With steadiness of mind all outside *Kriyas* also become stagnant. Once the work is completed, they become redundant.

Kriyas are not done by the aspirant. They keep on happening spontaneously, as long as they are necessary, in the manner in which they are needed. Without any efforts on the part of the aspirant, *Shakti* itself keeps on creating *Kriyas*. The aspirant watches the *Kriyas* like a witness.

Now, we will consider the question of whether having these *Kriyas* is real *Sadhana*. The genuine *Kriya* is control over the mind. That is a part of *Sadhana*. Proper diet, activities, sleeping, remaining awake, are also called *Sadhana*. Every activity that helps in attaining ultimate good is *Sadhana*, and everything that gets in the way of the spiritual goal is called an obstacle.

The completion of the journey of *Sadhana* is the state of being liberated while living in the body. In that state the aspirant experiences that whatever had to be done is accomplished, and nothing remains. Whatever had to be attained is attained; all desires have been stated. Now an unbroken inner contentment has come to be. With the final elimination of the three types of burning heat (sufferings), the *chitta* rises so far high above the ego identification with the body, there is total indifference to the worldly happiness or sufferings.

Lord Krishna says,

Yasmin sthito na dukhen gurunapi vichalyate
Bhagavat Geeta

Once reaching there the person is not shaken, even by the greatest sorrow.

Shakti makes you do *Sadhana* herself. Aspirants get such tremendous

Kriyas which they could never accomplish with their own efforts. People do *yogasana*, *Pranayam* and *mudras* that are not known to them, are difficult to perform, and are not even seen in yoga books. An aspirant totally unaware of the seven notes of classical music sings in perfect harmony. Different *ragas* surge during *Shakti*. That is the reason this *Sadhana* is called *shaktipay*, meaning remedy through *Shakti*. The ego of doership breaks down when *Kriyas* of *Shakti* are experienced. A disinterest in worldly affairs develops. The force of anger and desires weakens and disappears. No fear can ensnare the mind. It is said that the one who knows cosmic bliss is never afraid of anything.

Most of the followers of this path experience that after forceful *Kriyas* quieten down, a meditative state emerges for some time during which the chitta seems as if it is dissolved. Following this sequence, the mind remains free from resolves and thinking for as long as time from worldly duties permits.

Indifference to worldly pleasures, the ability to endure suffering, control over the mind, victory over anger and desires, fearlessness, equanimity of mind and then Self-realization, are the natural outcomes of *Shakti* awakening.

Upon the awakening of the *Kundalini*, the *Sadhana* that takes place spontaneously is called *Siddha yoga* or *Maha yoga*. It is called *Siddha yoga* because *Sadhana* occurs by itself, without any efforts by the aspirant. It is called *Maha yoga* because it embodies all four yogas: *Mantra yoga*, *Hatha yoga*, *Laya yoga*, and *Raja yoga*. All these must be taken in the form of the internal edifice of the *Maha yoga*.

*Mantra layo hatho Rajayogo antarbhumiika kramat
Eka eva chaturdha ayam, Mahayogo abhidhiyate.*

Yoga Shikhopanihad, 1/129/130

Depending on the belief and faith of the aspirant, the *Shakti* makes him do *Japa* (*Mantra* repetition) of different God forms such as Rama, Krishna, Shiva or goddesses. When the aspirant is excited with devotion, he may start to dance, weep, laugh, sing and sometimes behave

like an insane person. When he experiences that the goddess *Kundalini* has manifested in his heart and he feels the *Kriyas* she is doing, love, faith, devotion and sentiment of surrender develop and strengthen. His ego of doership starts to melt. He becomes free from anxiety. Sometimes his mind becomes absorbed in the devotional *Samadhi* and melts into the *Samadhi* of nothingness. Consequently, *sthitaprajna* or a state of equanimity of mind attained in *Raj yoga*, is experienced. The state of *Unamni* or joyfulness beyond mind starts to ensue.

The followers of this path should stay free from doubts such as, what are the benefits of these kinds of *Kriyas*? One should not get confused and give up *Sadhana*. One must keep on looking within to examine his state of mind. He should also try to understand the form and effects of various *Kriyas*. He should maintain a diary of the special kinds of *Kriyas*. If for some reason the *Sadhana* slows down, reading about past experiences can be inspirational.

Question : *I have noticed that followers of Siddha Mahayoga get Kriyas of shaking, but Yoga Darshan lists shaking among the obstacles. How can I reconcile this apparent contradiction?*

Answer: During *Kriyas* aspirants experience many things such as goose bumps and shaking. These bring divine joy. The body becomes light, and *Sattvic* feelings arise in the heart. The shaking that is described as an obstacle in Yoga Darshan is not the same as the shaking during *Kriyas*. The *sutra* is:

*Duhkha daurmanasyangmejaytva
shvash prashvas vikshepa sahabhuvah*

Yoga Darshana 1-31

The *sutra* preceding this one lists disease, inertness, doubts, laziness, lethargy, loss of interest in yoga, inability to see the truth, futile efforts and unsteady progress as obstacles in the *chitta* of an aspirant, which

cause sorrow and mental weakness. This in consequence causes physical shaking and unhealthy breathing patterns. When one gets angry, for example, both of them occur. When one gets scared, he may tremble and get goose bumps.

One's state of mind changes based on *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* and *tamasic* emotions. When one of the *bhava* becomes intense, the mind can become imbalanced and debased. At such a time the breathing intensifies, the body starts to tremble, and the hair on the body can stand up. When one feels sad or weak, the shaking that occurs is not the same as what one experiences with exuberant joy. Can the intensity of breathing be said to be the same when one does *hasrika Pranayama* compared with when one runs? The symptoms that appear when *Kriya Shakti* awakens and becomes active cannot be compared with symptoms of mental imbalance.

Question: According to the Vedanta, four states of soul are described: awake, dream, sleep and one beyond these three called Turiya. On the other hand, in Yoga Darshan five modifications of chitta are described: *pramana*, *viprayaya*, *vikalpa*, *nidra*, and *smriti*. Is the sleep state one of the states of the soul, or is it one of the modifications of the chitta?

Answer: It is an error to say that there are four states of the soul including sleep state. The soul is free from the *prakriti*, and its degradations are changeless. A person may say within the influence of the qualities of the *prakriti* whether he is asleep, awake, happy or unhappy. Just as the four states of *pramana* keep coming and going during the awake state, these four modifications disappear with the sleep state. This sleep state is also considered to be a type of one-pointedness. One says, "I slept well" or "I did not sleep well." There is a memory of the sleep state. That goes to show that sleep state is also one of the states of *chitta*. *Samadhi* or the *turiya* state is that state of *chitta* where all modifications — all activities of *chitta* — stop.

Question: Does the piercing of the six chakras occur in sequence, or can they be pierced in any order? Is there any specific type of expe-

riences associated with the piercing of a specific chakra? It seems that the aspirants of the Mahayoga have Kriyas pertaining to all chakras without any specific order.

Answer: All *chakras* are pierced simultaneously to various degrees. Work on some *chakras* could be so slow that one may not experience anything. Some other *chakra* may be pierced through more intensely, and the *Kriyas* related to that *chakra* would be equally intense. Therefore, the aspirant could misunderstand that even when a particular *chakra* is not pierced, another *chakra* which would seem to be next on the ascending order is already pierced.

Kundalini consists of *Prana Shakti*. It resides in the *Muladhara* before awakening and moves to *Swadhishthan chakra* after awakening. Sleeping *Shakti* can be compared to the fire smothering under ashes. The *Muladhar* is the fire pot, and the flames of the fire would be above the fire pot. The flames would blaze and reach new heights from time to time. In the same way *Shakti* can be experienced flowing up and down. If it goes up and one experiences a heavy head, one-pointed mind and bliss, it does not mean that the lower *chakras* were not pierced and that *Shakti* reached the top without going through the lower *chakras*. The truth is that the lower *chakras* were definitely pierced to some extent.

Question: *When Shakti moves up from Muladhar, does it remain anymore in the Muladhar? Similarly, when the Shakti goes to the crown chakra, does it not exist in the other chakras?*

Answer: This question is already answered in the previous question. *Kriya* of *Kundalini Shakti* is always experienced in all the *chakras*. When all the life that exists in the body is that of *Shakti*, even during the sleep state, why then would it not also exist when one is awake? The difference is one of awareness. Extroverted awareness is called sleep and introverted awareness is considered being awake. That is why it is said that *Ya nisha sarva bhutanam tesham jagarti yogino* meaning the time that is night for everyone else is the time the yogis are awake.

In other words, the state of cosmic consciousness is the awakened state,

and the state of worldly involvement is the sleep state, and the state of active mental modification is the dream state.

The saint and poet Narsinh Mehta sings,

jagine joun to jagat dise nahi

Meaning: when I “wake up” and look around, the world has disappeared.

Saint Dadu Dayal sings,

*Dadu sota sakal jag, jaga mila an koya,
Jage men fir jagana, jaga kahiye soi.*

Meaning: O Dadu, the whole world is asleep. I could not find anyone awake. When someone is “awake” — when he knows the ultimate truth while being physically awake — that is the real awakened state.

Question: *I rarely experience true surrender. Can you explain why?*

Answer: Faith and surrender are two important parts of this path. If one does not have full surrender to one’s *ishta deva* or the *Guru*, there is a possibility that the fruits of the faith may be delayed or may not be as powerful. Consequently, one’s faith may diminish and disappear. These feelings cannot be verbalized, even though they are felt in the heart.

The disciple becomes fearless if he can take full refuge in his *Guru*’s grace, but such aspirants are very rare. The aspirant who surrenders to the *Guru* should not be apprehensive and fearful. Any form of doubt in the *Guru* or God can deplete one’s faith and lose one’s sense of surrender.

If you are expecting that your refuge, the *Guru* or God, must fulfil your desires, then that is not surrender. The person who surrenders gives up thinking about personal gains and losses and leaves it all to the *Guru*.

He remains happy under any circumstance. He undergoes the periods of worldly scarcity and sufferings with a firm belief that his ultimate good is hidden in whatever happens.

Question: *Sometimes the KriyaShakti brings out physical illnesses and heals those weaknesses. Is it true that sensual Samskaras from many lifetimes also appear? Will they be cleared by Kriyas? Sometimes very strange, perverted feelings come up and we start to hate ourselves. Other people start to criticize us and wonder what kind of aspirants we are. What is the duty of the aspirant at such times?*

Answer: Sometimes aspirants complain that after *Shaktipat* and *Kundalini* awakening both their anger and sex drive increase. This may be true for other weaknesses as well. It means that these impressions were potentially present within. If they have come to prominence due to *Kundalini* awakening, they will also subside spontaneously.

In such circumstances one must examine whether there is any external stimulus or influences causing such an upsurge of weaknesses. If there is, then *Kundalini* awakening is not the cause. On the other hand, if desire manifests and there is no beautiful woman around or if anger manifests without cause, this is likely to be the purifying work of *Kundalini*.

After *Shakti* awakens, the mind and body of the aspirant can become so delicate, sensitive and transparent that external factors affect him quickly. Feeling of compassion for someone who is sick can make him sick as well. Other foibles affect him in the same way. To allow *Shakti* to clear diseases and other weaknesses, an aspirant must avoid an improper lifestyle and foods. If one does not pursue a proper lifestyle, there is the possibility of spiritual downfall.

Question: *Is it true that at the time of Shaktipat the disciple is affected by the Guru's mental powers? Some people say that Siddha Mahayoga is a tool based on the science of psychology. How do you*

answer those allegations?

Answer: The science of *Shaktipat* is not mesmerism or mind control. It is a science related to *Prana Shakti*. *Prana* and mind are two different things. With *Shaktipat* the *Prana* starts to move upwards. That has nothing to do with psychology. *Prana* has very subtle work to do. It does not do the work of thinking. Those who say that *Shaktipat* is an aspect of psychology need to study the difference between mind and *Prana*.

Question: *What is the difference between sleep and Samadhi?*

Answer: Sleep is that state in which the *chitta* or the subtle body is absorbed or dissolves into the causal body. In the *Samadhi* state, however, the modification and activities of the *chitta* cease to exist. Therefore, *Samadhi* is different from sleep.

Question: *It is said that the knot between one's gross body and one's consciousness should be released. This should be the real goal of any spiritual practices. But some great spiritual masters have no practices for Shakti awakening. Why then should one waste time and energy awakening the Shakti?*

Answer: The knot between the gross and the subtle body is the "I-ness" and the belief that the body is the self. That is called *chetana* (lower consciousness). *Kundalini Shakti* is also a consciousness *Shakti*, but it is divine consciousness. Its awakening is called *pratyak chetanadhigam* in the Yoga Darshan, which means direct experience of God's independent consciousness. Constant surrender to this divine consciousness unties the knot between the gross body and consciousness. There is no other way to open that knot.

Saint Tulasidas says in *Ramayana*,

*Jad chetanahi granthi parigai,
jadapi mrisha chhootat kathinai.*

Meaning: A knot has been formed between the gross and the subtlest. Even though it is an illusion, it is very difficult to undo.

There are many avenues to *Shakti* awakening. It is possible that the great being you are referring to may not have done any explicit practices for awakening the *Shakti*, but it would be not correct to assume that he did nothing to awaken *Shakti*. Sometimes *Shakti* is awakened spontaneously as a result of *Sadhana* done during a past life.

Question: *How can an aspirant know when a Shakti sankraman — the onslaught of another person's Shakti — is taking place? How can one protect himself from that?*

Answer: After *Shakti* awakens, it remains active throughout one's life. Its *Kriyas* can be experienced every moment, all day and all night. The *Kriyas* change as the aspirant's state of mind changes. For example, when *Shakti* is awakened the upsurge of love, devotion, compassion, anger etc. become more powerful. With the force of those outbursts *Shakti sankraman* also takes place. During ordinary times *Shakti sankraman* does not occur. Also, during lectures, discourses, discussions *Shakti* can affect both the listener and the other person.

During *Shakti sankraman*, one can experience the coming and going of *Shakti*. If one does not have that experience, it can also be seen as having good and bad effect on the others. If someone curses, it comes true. If out of compassion blessings are given, that can manifest as well. But in both of these situations it is hard to keep clear of potential disadvantage. Feeling compassion for a sick person may help heal him, but the disease may enter one's own body. Thus there are two ways to recognize a *Shakti sankraman* incident. One is through subtle insight and direct experience, and the other is by observing the external effects.

To protect oneself from this an aspirant should avoid crowds as much

as possible. One can also stop a *Shakti sankraman* with mental will-power. Whenever there is an emotional outburst, one must walk away from the situation. Maintain a balanced mind whenever possible.

Question: *When I sit for Sadhana, I have very forceful Kriyas and simultaneously my anger keeps on growing. Sometimes when I am alone, I get angry over my anger. I recognize that my anger is out of place and inappropriate, but I cannot control it. What should I do?*

Answer: Anger is always inappropriate. It is not beneficial to the person who gets angry. In addition, the person who receives the anger also loses his balance. The aftermath of anger is mental anguish. Anger is caused by weakness. It damages the *Sadhana* and is a great enemy in worldly affairs as well. It is considered to be the doorway to the hell.

The reason anger occurs is that something contrary to what one wishes happens. It is normal for one to feel that one thing is in line with one's wishes and something else is contrary to them. A wise person practices remaining equitable towards other people's vices and virtues, and towards favorable and unfavorable events. Attaining and retaining equanimity is the goal of one's spiritual pursuit. One must also develop the habit of remaining indifferent towards personal pleasures.

Anger should be made an occasion for laughing, which would benefit both parties. Silence and forgiveness are the two opponents of anger. A spiritual aspirant must understand the other person's perspective and consider what he would have done in similar circumstances.

A person who has received *Shaktipat* must pray to *Shakti*, who is all knowing. She will remove all weaknesses.

Question: *Some aspirants understand what Sadhana is and what the ultimate goal is. They do efforts towards their spiritual goal, but I have rarely seen the advancement that one would expect to result. Why is that the case?*

Answer: *Sadhana* is the path to reach the final spiritual goal. On the way various obstacles, one's accumulated *Samskaras*, friends and family, other influences, and one's job can be either a hindrance or a help. Generally aspirants are greatly affected by these factors. Their mind is so preoccupied with external activities, their progress becomes stagnant. Past impressions are the main cause of this.

The best way to weaken those impressions is surrender to God and the awakened *Shakti*. Aspirants are so involved with their family, social and political issues, and other attachments, their *chitta* is always busy dealing with them. Being addicted to newspapers is very harmful for aspirants. The news and the futuristic plans of the political leaders disturb the balance of the mind. I am not saying that one should become totally unaware of worldly affairs. Rather, one must not be affected by them. In words of the Bhagavat Geeta, one has to attain *jeeta sanga dosha* — victory over external influences.

Question: *If you have a vision of some great being in a dream and you receive a Mantra from that saint, or if you have a divine initiation during meditation, isn't that a Gurudeeksha? Is it necessary to take deeksha from a physical Guru directly?*

Answer: If you receive a *Mantra* or other teachings in a dream from a *mahatma*, it is called *swapna deeksha* or dream initiation. And one can do repetition of the *Mantra* and *anushthan*. Even if you do not recognize the *mahatma*, the teachings you receive are important.

The virtue of the dream initiation is that the teachings are in accordance of the person's nature, *Samskaras* and temperament. The question of the worthiness of the disciple does not arise in the *swapna* initiation as it would in an initiation given in awakened state, because it is based purely upon the *Samskaras* of the person.

If you receive an initiation during meditation, that is even more important. *Deeksha* given by a *devata* or a *siddha* is called divine *deeksha*.

Those who receive *deeksha* in a dream or meditation are very lucky indeed. It is evident that the person has been doing *Sadhana* for many lifetimes.

There are two different opinions as to whether one needs *deeksha* from a physical *Guru*. Some people believe that *deeksha* received during a dream or meditation is the most effective. Therefore, there is no need for *deeksha* from a live *mahatma*.

Others believe, and I agree, that even after receiving such *deeksha* one must get *deeksha* from a live *Guru*. One may still have many questions and doubts after receiving an impersonal *deeksha*. For clarification of all doubts a live *Guru* is absolutely critical.

A story of *Satyakam* in the *Chhandogya Upanishada* illustrates this point. *Satyakam* had received divine initiation, but his questions were not satisfied until he heard directly from his *Guru Goutama*. This concludes that one needs a live *Guru*.

The aspirant must practice religiously the *Mantra* and *Sadhana* given by the live *Guru*. He may do the *Mantra Japa* and *anushtan* of teaching received in a dream or meditation, but his main practice should consist of what he receives from the live *Guru*. This is especially true for aspirants following the path of *Siddha Mahayoga* because their spiritual progress depends on the *Guru*'s grace, the compassion of awakened *Shakti*, and their own *Samskaras*. As with other paths, the decision on the appropriate *Sadhana* for each individual is decided by awakened *Shakti* herself rather than being made on an intellectual basis.

Question: *Some people say that renunciation and detachment are the foundation of jnana nishtha or steadiness in the knowledge of Truth, and consequently the influence of Knowledge is lost. This may be because people do not like to become detached and renounce worldly pursuits. What do you say in reference to this?*

Answer: The meaning of the word *jnana nishtha* is that the person

who is *jnana nishtha* would do everything — daily activities, study, contemplation, all mental and physical activities — for gaining Knowledge. Now, let us see what Knowledge is.

Everyone relates to the body as the Self. The body is the cause of worldly pursuits, and oneness with the body is the cause of all the activities and inspiration for all the *vasanas* or tendencies. Ignorance is the belief that I am the body, and the soul is not an independent element. Most of the spiritual beliefs say that the body is mortal and the soul is immortal. The soul has fallen into the illusion that the body is the Self. Therefore, when we talk about Truth we must understand Knowledge of the soul. Thus for attaining knowledge of the soul, it is essential to remove the identity with the body and attachment to the body. The main element of all spiritual paths is to embrace the feeling of detachment from the sense pleasures, and progress in the direction of steadiness in the real Self. This is real detachment.

Vairagya does not mean giving up things externally but rather remaining inactive (as far as your attachment is concerned) while remaining fully active and responsible towards your duties. According to the Geeta, renunciation means giving up efforts to fulfill desires. To renounce the rewards of all work is real renunciation. Control over the senses and mind is called *tapas*. And to remain absorbed in service to society and to perform all action for pleasing God is called *yangya* (sacrificial fire ceremony). It is absolutely certain that one must never give up *yangya*, *tapas* and donations. By following this path the inner state of detachment and renunciation becomes firm and unshakeable.

Running away from duties because of difficulties, problems, failures and defeat in life is not called renunciation. That is the path to inactivity. An aspirant has to strive hard and not fall prey to a false sense of satisfaction.

Knowledge of the Truth does not come because of *Karma*, but by performing duties without expectations. One must strengthen the stage for receiving Knowledge. Once Knowledge arises, both detachment

and renunciation also fall off, just as after reaching the shore the effort of swimming and the desire to reach the shore both disappear.

Question: *It was believed that one must master yamas and niyamas for yoga, and only after mastering those can one try to master the other six parts of the eightfold yoga. Consequently, yoga aspirants started to practice the rules inflexibly. Now the opposite belief is arising that once Samadhi is mastered, the yamas and niyamas will be automatically mastered, so one need not do any efforts and waste time. As a result people have become indifferent towards the observance of yamas and niyamas. Please help us understand what is appropriate.*

Answer: There are two levels of yoga: external and internal. The external yoga consists of *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayam*, and *pratyahar*. The last three parts are internal: *dhyana*, *dharana* and *Samadhi*. These eight parts require that the preparatory groundwork be done.

There are also five each of the *yamas* and *niyamas*. *Yamas* are considered universal rules because of their social significance. Without these five *yamas* a civilization cannot function smoothly. Five actions are the opposite of the *yamas*: to kill or harass someone with words or actions, to tell lies or act deceitfully, to practice infidelity, kidnap or rape, to steal, and to accumulate and hoard money and other things, way beyond one's needs. They are always punishable behaviors. Therefore, every citizen must practice the *yamas*. For yogis these five rules are the foundation and provide a solid base.

The yogi's goal is much higher than that of a common citizen. He is interested in attaining spiritual knowledge. He may love solitude, but he must still live in society. So he must follow the rules of the society. Besides, the observance of these fundamental disciplines is the first step on the spiritual ladder. Without being firmly established in these, one cannot reach the spiritual peak. He can lapse every step of the way if he does not adhere to the *yamas*.

There are also five *niyamas*. The first two *niyamas* are *shouch* and *santosh*, meaning purity and contentment. Showing their usefulness is like holding a lamp up to the sun. The next three are part of *Kriya yoga* and are useful in thinning out the afflictions and preparing the ground for *Samadhi*. Yoga Darshana says:

Samadhi siddhir Ishvar pranidhanat.

Meaning: The attainment of *Samadhi* is made possible by keeping the God presence within the Self.

Thus, the observance of *yamas* and *niyamas* should not be with rigid force. Instead, the yogi's nature should be such that he automatically follows them. To do it with rigid stubbornness would be hypocrisy. Once a yogi reaches the *Samadhi* state, the *yamas* and *niyamas* are spontaneously practiced. To say that special efforts are no longer relevant for *Sadhana* is like putting the cart before the horse. It is impossible to attain *Samadhi* without *yama* and *niyama*. Internal and external *Sadhana* should be continued simultaneously. The level at which *Sadhana* takes place depends upon the aspirant's stage of development.

Samadhi is seen as a result of *Shaktipat*. It does not mean that the person following *siddha mahayoga* is beyond *yamas* and *niyamas*. When the good and bad *Karmas* balance out, only *Shaktipat* is possible.

*Adharmadharmayoho samye Sati Shakti patatyasou.
chidatmika para Shakti shmbhoryasmin nipatita.*

It is Shiva's *chidatmika* (consciousness) ultimate *Shakti* that falls on the disciple during *Shaktipat deeksha* when the good and bad *Karma* of the disciple are equal.

Once *Shakti* awakens, the external *Sadhana* of *yamas*, *niyamas*, *asana*, *pranayam* and *pratyahar*; they start to take place somewhat spontaneously.

Question: *Service to the Guru is being practiced a lot. Is it true that by doing more service and Sadhana, the Guru showers more? If so, does that not make Guru Shakti more selfish and biased?*

Answer: The person interested in Knowledge surrenders to the *Guru*, bows to the *Guru*, serves him, asks question according to his interest, and prays. What the *Guru* is giving is not even known to the disciple. He does not know that the *Guru* who sees the Truth, while accepting him as a disciple, makes him a partner in his assets so that the valuable knowledge of the Brahman is never lost.

Tadviddhi pranipatena pariprashneana sevaya.

Upadeshyanti te jnanam jnaninstattvadgarshinah.

Bhagavat Geeta.

It is impossible to count one's service to the *Guru*. It is not a question of more or less *seva*. Because no one has ever been able to place a value to the most priceless Knowledge. It is invaluable! The disciple receives depending on his worthiness and capability to receive. The *Guru* who knows the Truth is like that holy *tirth* where the Ganges of Knowledge keeps on flowing. One can fetch an amount of water from the Ganges depending upon the size of the pot he has. The Knowledge of the Brahman is infinite, because Brahman is infinite. Therefore it is improper to think that depending upon how much *seva* one does, the *Guru* will give more to one and less to the other.

The *Guru* plants the seed of Knowledge in the soil of the disciple's spirituality. The disciple's faith, *Sadhana*, eagerness, ardent love, will do the work of taking the plant of the Knowledge to full fruition. *Seva* is only an indicator of his faith. A rich person without faith cannot do *seva*. It is nothing but a show of his pride. Such *seva* does not help in attaining knowledge. Therefore, it is irrelevant to raise the question of partiality and prejudice on the part of the *Guru*.

Question: What is Yoganidra?

Answer: Yoga is said to be the cessation of all mental modifications. According to Yoga Darshan *nidra* or sleep also is a kind of modification of mind. Therefore yoga and *nidra* are opposites. There are two states of mind where the modifications have ceased to occur. In one the impressions of the object of meditation remain on the *chitta*. This is called the *Samprajnat* state. The second is called *Asamprajnat*. *Samprajnat* depends upon stoppage, where there are no resolves taking shape in the *chitta*. In sleep the *chitta* dissolves into the *tamas* quality, whereas in the yoga state all the activities of the three qualities cease. Sleep is also called the unexpressed state when all three qualities are equal. Therefore, sleep is an obstacle in the perception of the real Self. But the word *yoganidra* indicates that there may be a state between sleep and yoga, where the sleep state is not completely gone but may be partially stopped.

Question: What are the three levels of attention?

Answer: The ability to see is called vision and the subject on which the mind gets focused is called an aim. If the mind goes to some external object that the eye sees, then both the eyes and the mental attention are in an external state. If the eyes are looking at something outside but the mind is focused on some internal spiritual aspect, then the attention is on a combination of internal and external factors. When the eyes are closed but one is thinking about some external subject, that is also a combination. When the eyes are closed and the mind is also introverted, when one has visions of the sun and the moon and other kinds of light inside the closed eyes, that is internal eyes with inward attention of the mind. These are the three aims: external, medium with combination of external and internal. The best state is when the eyes are open but attention is focused on the Self within.

Question: What is Vedha?

Answer: In *Sushumna* there are six *chakras* and three *granthis* or knots. The six *chakras* are *Muladhara*, *Swadhisthana*, *Manipur*, *Anahat*, *Vishuddha*, and *Ajna*. Three *granthis*, which bind the individual soul in the manifestation, are *Brahma granthi* of *Rajas guna*, *Vishnu granthi* of *Sattva guna*, and *Rudra granthi* of *tamas guna*. In the *swadhisthana* and *Manipura chakras*, the *Rudra granthi* is believed to be present. In the *anahat* and *vishuddha chakras*, the *Vishnu granthi* is believed to be present. And in the *Ajna chakra*, the *Brahma granthi* is believed to be present. In the first two *chakras* is the circle of fire, in the middle two is the sun circle, and in the top two is the moon circle. Thus at the union of fire and the sun circle the *Rudra granthi* is supposed to be present; at joining of the sun and the moon circle the *Vishnu granthi* is supposed to be present; and on the moon circle the *Brahma granthi* is supposed to be present.

Kundalini Shakti is said to be asleep under the *Muladhara chakra*. The body is supposed to be 96 finger lengths tall. Exactly at the center, meaning 48 finger lengths from the sole and 48 finger lengths below the top of the crown, the *Kundalini* is supposed to reside.

The students of *Hatha Yoga* awaken the *Kundalini Shakti* by way of *asana*, *pranayama* and *mudras*. After awakening it rises up to the *sahasrar*. The *sushumna* is its path for the journey up and down. While it is ascending it pierces through the *chakras* because they block its path. The process of piercing is called *Vedha*.

The *chakras* and *granthis* can be also pierced in many other ways, including an upsurge of devotion, *Japa* and other spiritual practices, the long-term practice of some other yogic techniques, or the Guru's grace.

Question: It has been observed that some aspirants do not have any Kriyas at the time of Shaktipat or even later on. Is it really that they

do not have any Kriyas, or is it that they do not understand Kriyas? If Kriyas are really not occurring, what could be the reasons?

Answer: It is necessary to think about the worthiness of the aspirant to receive the *Shakti* that is being transferred by the *Guru*. Only when the aspirant is deserving will the *GuruShakti* enter the person. The coming and going of the *GuruShakti* is known to the *Guru*. For some initiates receiving *Shakti* is like being struck by a lightning bolt.

If *Kriyas* do not start with *Shakti* transference by the *Guru*, it is possible that they may begin later on. Sometimes because of a hidden disease the *Kriyas* may not be felt, but the awakened *Shakti* is busy removing the disease. Once the disease is cleared the *Kriyas* will start. Sometimes the hidden diseases become manifest and *Shakti* does the healing of the disease herself. At that time medicines can be a hindrance to the *Shakti's* workings. Mental worries, fear, sorrow, and lack of faith can also be obstacles. The intensity of expression of *Shakti's* workings depends upon the physical and mental condition of the aspirant, spiritual practices done in the past, and the past impressions or *Samskaras* of the person.

Kriyas develop slowly during old age. They are more intense during youth, and they are greater in women than in men. The *Guru's* love also brings vigor to the *Kriyas*. The *Guru's* indifference or anger create the opposite results. The aspirant's character also influences the *Kriyas*. It is essential that the aspirant do self-observation in this regard. If *Shakti* does not want to enter and start working in someone, perhaps some big sin or bad *Karma* of this life or a past life may be the obstacle. Two people were complaining about their lack of *Kriyas*. One of them had given poison to his widowed daughter-in-law and the other had an inappropriate relationship with his young stepmother. When they confessed, accepted their sins and repented their bad *Karma*, *Shakti* started working in them. There are many such examples.

Generally weakness of semen, constipation, muscular decay and diabetes also become obstacles in the workings of *Kriya Shakti*. Some-

times the subtleness of the *Kriya* can be difficult to understand. Closed-minded people who do not have any faith and take the initiation because someone else took it may also experience disappointment.

Question: *I am interested in pursuing a very rigorous spiritual life. But my parents think that I must marry and have a family. I wonder at times if I can follow the life of a celibate renunciate or I might desire a wife and family at a later date. Please guide me as to what path I should choose.*

Answer: Often aspirants do not understand what *Sadhana* is and what its final goal is. With *Sadhana* the attention is focussed on the practices of the yoga, *bhakti* or *jnana* paths. External circumstances may either support or disturb one's spiritual practices. In the Bhagavat Geeta Lord Krishna says:

Nirdvandvo mahabaho sukham bandhat pramuchyate

Meaning: All spiritual practices aim at one thing: freedom from the bondage of the world. There is only one way to be free! That is to rise above duality. The person above dilemmas is spontaneously free. That is the *sthitprajna* state of *chitta* or the state of mind in which the intellect has become steady (in the ultimate truth). One has to rise above the dilemma of attachment to comforts and dislike toward discomforts. This shakes up both householders and *sanyasins* equally.

The householder state is supposed to be the time of worldly pleasures, but with the pleasures come difficulties. Therefore one must have a home not for enjoyment but to free the Self from attachment to pleasures. The householder state begins with accepting a wife. Some devotees pray to the mother goddess:

*Patnim manoramam dehi manovrityanu sarinim
Tarinim durga samsara sagarasya kulodbhavam.*

Argala stotra, 24

Meaning: O Mother! Give me a wife who is pleasant to my mind and good at following my mind, give me a wife who is from a spiritual family, who can cross the ocean (of birth and death).

It is also said in the Durga Saptaashati (11,6):

*Vidya samasta stavadevi bhedaha,
Striyaha samstaha sakala jagatsu.*

Meaning: In the universe the mother goddess resides in all the women. But even then, the aspirant takes one of them as his wife who is pleasing to the mind, who follows his wishes, who was born in a good family. Why is this done? Is it done because the wife is an instrument for physical pleasures? No. It is done because the wife is the one who takes on the difficult task of swimming across the ocean of the *Maya*. Family life must rise above the duality and the dilemmas. The person who believes that married life is only for physical pleasures and physical beauty, who believes that the clothes, make-up and dowry are most important and ignores family morality and education, is nothing but a prostitute. Such marriages often end up in quarrels, murders and divorces.

Marriage is not just the relationship between a man and a woman, but it also involves a valuable ceremony prescribed in the *Vedas*. It follows the celibate period and precedes the forest-dweller phase of life. Its purpose is to prepare solid ground for the spiritual forest dweller. It is an important and necessary phase of life. By remaining in the middle of the physical pleasures, one prepares the path of liberation. This is a school that teaches the way to freedom while one is in the midst of activities. To remain unperturbed in the middle of losses and gains, victory and defeat, fame and defamation, union and separation, is the real spiritual practice. The soul is unaffected by everything, and the creation is the house of pleasures. The person who forgets the Self and becomes associated with the creation and attached to the pleasures, detours off the path. One must never forget the great sentence from *Vedas*, *Asango ayam atma*, which means that the soul is always alone

and unaffected.

When the soul is connected with the senses and mind it starts to experience things. The Katho-upanishad says that the senses are like horses and mind is the reins to the chariot of the body. If the reins are kept loose, the horses will take the chariot of the body toward objects of pleasure. And like horses out of control, they will lead the chariot off the path and may cause it to fall in a ditch. If the charioteer keeps the reins pulled towards himself, the horses will be in control and take the chariot to its destination.

*Vijnanasarathiryastu manah pragvannarah
Soadhvanah paramapnoti tadvisnoho paramam padam.*
Katho-upanishad 1, 3, 6.

Lord Krishna also says that if the mind follows the senses, the intellect (discriminating judgement) is lost just as wind can sink a small boat in the ocean. If you keep pulling your mind towards your soul, the senses also will remain under control and the intellect will be steady. The yogi whose intellect is steady does not fear calamities and does not get entangled in sensual pleasures. The path of spirituality is very narrow, traversing both obstacles and conveniences. The person whose mind reins are pulled towards the Self, who guides the chariot with spiritual understanding, reaches the destination. Ultimately he arrives at the abode of Lord Vishnu.

*Yeshamtvantgatam papam jananam punya Karmana
Te dvandvamoha nirmukta bhajante mamdridhavrataha.*

Meaning: The people whose sins have been cleared by good *Karmas* become free from duality and are able to be engrossed in me with the strength of an unshakable oath.

Question: *I am an initiate who made some mistakes in my youth. My mind is troubled as a result of that, and my Kriyas have stopped.*

Consequently my restlessness has increased. What should I do?

Answer: When you talk about mistakes committed during your youth it seems that you may be involved in some undesirable relationship. A relationship with your wife is not considered a mistake. A wife is considered to be a true companion in spiritual pursuits. The relationship with one's wife enables them to continue the thread of progeny. An illicit relationship with a woman can be expression of the height of physical hunger. Therefore, prostitution and going to a prostitute are criticized. Sexual desires increase the attachment to the body and can be the cause of the fall from the Self for both the partners. At the soul level there is an absence of sexual differences. The differences exist only in the physical body. Attachment to that body, called *abhinivesha*, it is like killing the soul. It is like blind darkness. The Vedas say:

*Asurya nam te loka andhena tamasavrita
Tanspretya tesbhigachhanti ye ke cha atmahano-janaha*

Meaning: An aspirant does efforts to free himself from attachment to the body. It is natural that you feel the way you do about your mistakes. The aspirant must repent and remain very cautious in the future. Other women should be like one's mother. An initiated aspirant desiring purification must do one hundred and twenty-five thousand *Japa* of *Gayatri* or other *Mantra* given by the *Guru* while observing full celibacy.

Question: What are the panchavyoma or five skies? What is their relevance to Sadhana?

Answer: *Akasha*, *parakasha*, *mahakasha*, *tattvakasha*, and *suryakasha* are the five skies which fall within the middle goal (as compared to the ultimate goal). The *Mandala Brahmanopnishad* describes them this way:

. Varieties of colors, the sun and moon,

- sky with or without flames fall within the Akasha.
- . Shimmering deep darkness is *Parakasha*.
- . Brightness similar to fire is in *Mahakasha*.
- . The best incomparable light shines in the *Tattvakasha*.
- . And the light of millions of suns shines in the *Suryakasha*.

An aspirant may get visions of these Akashas during meditation or after *Samadhi* in a half-active state. This is the vision of *Saguna* Brahman or Brahman within the three qualities. Generally people believe that God is visible in the bodily form, but visions of light are also vision of God. Shvetashvatar Upanishada (2, 11) says:

*Nihara dhumaksnilsnilanam khadyotvidyutsphatikashashinam
Etani rupani purahasarani brahman
abhivyaktikarani yoge.*

Meaning: Fog, smoke, sun, air, fire, fireflies, lightning, crystal, moon, etc. are visions that express *Saguna* Brahman during the course of *Sadhana*. They occur before or after *Samadhi*, when one experiences the Brahman beyond qualities. The Brahman does not have any appearance, and the visions are filled with light. They do not have any body, but sometimes they are heard as if they are saying something to the aspirant. The meditator may forget his physical form, but he hears without ears and sees without eyes. At this stage the aspirant is in the state of the subtle *hiranyagarbha* level. This is also known as *tejas*.

God is also known to be *sarvendriya gunabhasam sarvendriya vivarjitam*, which means being devoid of all senses but seeming to have the qualities of all the senses. Therefore, seeing these lights is considered to be the visions of *Saguna* Brahman without body. During *Samadhi* the separation of the scene, seer and seeing dissolve into oneness. Therefore it is said in Yoga Darshan, *atma arai can vijaniyat*. The fruits of these visions leads to the cessation of all modifications of *chitta* or *Samadhi*. Mundakopnishad says:

*Yada pashyaha pashyate rukmavarna
kartarmisham purusham brahmayonim.*

*Tada vidvan punyapape vidhooya
niranjanaha paramam samyamupaiti.*

Meaning: When the seer sees the creator or God or Brahman, the causal being in the golden form, then the seer becomes liberated from his good and bad *Karmas*. He attains absolute similarity to that formless being. He becomes similar to God — the pure light without bodily form.

If one has a doubt about the Brahman which is said to be without form, without cause and effect, and not an object of vision, then the next verse explains:

*Prano hyesha yaha sarvabhutairvibhati,
vijananvidvan bhavate nativadi. - 3, 1, 4.*

Meaning: This golden, luminous beauty is *Prana*, which has risen from Brahman. It radiates in all beings. The person who has known this does not discuss it (*ativada nahi karata*). He is in the form that is worth knowing (*Saguna*) and is made up of *Prana*.

Sarvataha panipadam tat sarvatoakshi shiromukham.

Meaning: His hands and feet, eyes, head and mouth exist everywhere.

Question: What is the significance of purification in Sadhana?

Answer: An aspirant must always remain alert for self-purification. Otherwise there will be inevitable struggles with obstacles along the path of *Sadhana*. Disease, laziness, and lethargy are physical vices. Desires, anger, not rising above sensuous pleasures, an unsteady mind and faith, doubts and misconceptions are all mental obstacles that can get in the way of *Sadhana*. Therefore, *Kriyas* for physical strength, purification of the nervous system, and purification of feelings and attitudes are recommended.

All the above types of purifications depend upon purification of food intake. Therefore all spiritual aspirants must take appropriate quantity of *Sattvic* and pious food. The person who overeats or eats the wrong foods cannot maintain celibacy and can become a victim of the impurities mentioned above.

Tamasic and *Rajasic* foods are always to be avoided. The body is made of five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. Desires, anger, passion, happiness, unhappiness etc. are a function of the mind, but seers have concluded that they are also fundamentally related to the five elements. That is why it is said that your mental qualities depend upon what you eat. The scriptures also point towards how essential pure foods are:

*Annamayam hi manaha,
apomaya hi pranaha, tejomayi vak*

Meaning: The mind is made of the quality of food you eat, *Prana* is made of liquid (the water you drink), and words are made of the light you possess.

These days cleanliness is understood to be pious. But that is not correct. Cleanliness of food is important according to *Ayurveda*, but whatever is clean is not necessarily holy. The diet of an aspirant should be clean and *Sattvic* and holy. Food bought with a sinful income is not holy. Therefore, aspirants are advised to be cautious while eating food provided by others. The elimination of fecal matter is closely tied to physical cleanliness. With constipation the body, mind and *Prana* all become uneasy. Fecal matter should be well constituted, and elimination should be effortless. That indicates that your body cleanses well.

The purification of thoughts and feeling is mental. Giving up all bad thoughts creates cleanliness of mind. The Vedas have a prayer, *Tanme manaha shiva sankalpam astu*, which means, "May my mind have pious resolves."

The *nadis* of a person consist of *vata*, *pitta* or *kapha* and blood vessels. The *vata nadis* are the nervous system. Their cleanliness is very important in the pursuit of yoga, since they are the channels for the flow of *Prana*. They are purified with *asana*, *Pranayama* and *mudras*. *Pranayama* also purifies the five elements that make up the body. This subject is elaborately presented in the scriptures, and we should not become more involved in it here.

Question: *If the experience of Brahman is a matter of personal exposure, what is the purpose in acquiring knowledge from the scriptures?*

Answer: Some aspirants emphasize *Sadhana* only and ignore study of the scriptures. But studying the scriptures is important in the goal of experiencing the ultimate truth and thus contributes to one's *Sadhana*. One should not study scriptures for the empty verbiage. Rather, study, recitation and contemplation of the scriptures should be considered essential to *Sadhana*. They enable the aspirant to experience the Truth directly and personally.

Unfortunately, the pandits of scriptures get stuck in grammatical details, depth of words, sentence structures and the critical evaluation of the subject matter. Consequently, even great scholars of the scriptures are stuck in superficial knowledge of the books and neglect their *Sadhana*. They are empty of spirituality and good actions. Like common people, their minds are filled with desires for sense pleasures, and they remain inundated with fear, worries, anger and melancholy. They are untouched by benefit from their knowledge of the scriptures because they are attached to sense pleasures.

In order to know God, one's *chitta* must be filled with the *Sattva* quality. If it is filled with the darkness of *tamas guna*, and every moment flinches with waves of *Rajas guna* and is enveloped in attachment, hatred, anger and desires, how can the reflection of the soul shine in the *chitta*? Studying the scriptures helps cleanse one's intelligence,

remove doubts, develop greater love for spirituality and develop spiritual interest. This happens through direct experience. Otherwise the empty study of scriptures can cause arrogance about the knowledge and make the dark layer of *tamas* quality even more dense.

Question: *If along with bhakti, yoga and Sadhana there is no faith, what difference does it make?*

Answer: Removing faith shakes the foundation of all spiritual practice. There are no practices for God realization in the absence of faith. Why would one do anything to find God if there is no faith?

Maharishi Vyas, in his commentary on Patnaja Yoga Darshan, says that faith protects the aspirant as a mother would protect a child. *Bhakti* is possible only on the basis of faith. Faith takes the form of confidence. In the *Brahmanandvalli* within *Tettiriya Upanishada*, faith is compared to the head of the *jnanamaya kosha* (sheath of knowledge), the south side of *Rit* (manifestation in its potent stage), the north side of *Sat* (all that exists) and the torso of the yoga upon which ultimate knowledge stands.

Now, what is *Rit*, *Sat*, and yoga? *Rit* is knowledge gained without hearing or by assumption. It is the intellect arising from *Samadhi*. *Sat* is experienced as truth unsupported by anything else. Yoga is any one-pointedness of *chitta*. *Rit* and *Sat* are related to the one-pointedness of *chitta*. At its head is faith, which can inspire a person in any direction toward an object of faith. Work done without faith is only a pretense.

Intense faith in God takes the form of *bhakti*. And when *bhakti* becomes intense, it takes the form of the spontaneous meditative state of *chitta*.

Brahmaji, while preaching to the Ashvalayana Rishi, said that through combined faith, *bhakti* and meditation one can know the Brahman. Faith and *bhakti* precede meditation.

Is faith blind? Faith based upon *Rit* and *Sat* is fruitful. But faith that does not discriminate between truth and untruth is blind faith. *Rit* and *Sat* are the two eyes of faith.

Question: *The controversy among people following different paths makes one confused. What should be done?*

Answer: People following the *bhakti* path criticize those following *vedanta*, *vedantins* criticize yogis, yogis criticize *jnani*, and some criticize everything else by saying the only way is *Karma Yoga*. *Bhakti* and *jnana* are separate paths. Even within the yoga path there are separations of *hatha*, *Mantra*, *laya*, *Raja yoga*. Some groups take a one-sided perspective and criticize everything else.

But all the paths recommend meditation in one form or another. Some recommend meditation on God as a form and others on a formless God. Some concentrate on a sound, on the tip of the nose or on an object. During *Mantra Japa* or chanting one is supposed to remove the mind from all other thoughts and focus on God and his lotus feet. In the path of knowledge *shama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titiksha*, *Sadhana*, *nididhyasana*, faith, listening and contemplating help attain a state of oneness with Brahman. In both *bhakti* and *jnana* the devotee first wants to surrender to God and dissolve the ego in God. A *jnani* offers to merge the ego in the cosmic consciousness to dwell in the Brahman. *Dharana*, *dhyana* and *Samadhi* are an integral part of *Sadhana*. No matter which path one chooses, he must depend upon these three. Even when different paths appear to vary, their final goal is to attain peace and tranquility of *chitta*.

Reverend Shri Shankar Bhagavatpad has written in his volume *Yoga Taravali*, that Lord Shiva has shown one hundred and twenty five thousand ways for cessation of *chitta*. Considering this, narrow-minded religious fanatics will have a hard time belittling every possible path.

A *Karmayogi*, with steady dexterity, without getting upset, keeps on performing his duty. This is the *Sadhana* of maintaining unshakable

equanimity while doing all worldly work. The Bhagavat Geeta calls this *Buddhiyoga* because in this path, by performing duties without likes or dislikes, one attains steady intellect and becomes *sthitaprajna*. *Karmayoga* is necessary only until one attains steadiness in the Self.

The discussion regarding which path is good and which is not is relevant only for external *Sadhana*. As long as *Shakti* is not wakened by the grace of God or as a fruit of the grace of a *Guru* and spontaneous internal *Sadhana* does not start, all external *Sadhana* paths have relevance. At that stage efforts by the aspirant stop. All the necessary *Kriyas* of *bhakti*, *yoga*, *asanas*, *Mantra*, *laya*, internal sounds and visions, *Japa* occur unprompted. The awakened *Shakti* is *jnanavati* omniscient. It fully knows the hidden *Samskaras* and our spiritual needs. The responsibility of selecting one's spiritual practices is taken over by the *Shakti*. The aspirant does not have to decide anything.

Question: *After receiving Shaktipat deeksha there should be a transformation of the aspirant. But even after initiation mental limitations remain as they were prior to Shaktipat. What is the benefit of receiving initiation?*

Answer: One must not believe that only by taking *Shaktipat deeksha* one becomes freed from the need for *Sadhana* and becomes a *siddha*. If the disciple is truly the best disciple according to the scriptures, then immediately upon receiving the initiation he can attain liberation. Otherwise initiation awakens the *Kundalini* and internal *Sadhana* begins. *Sadhana* must be done to attain the ultimate goal.

Immediately after *Shaktipat* the *Shakti* must work to remove past impressions, then it has to pacify the three *gunas*. Then separation of the three *gunas* and the *chitta* occurs, and the mind, *chitta*, body and flows of *Prana* have to become worthy of further progress in *Sadhana*. Therefore, even after *Shaktipat*, because the *chitta* is still the same as before, aspirants still have their previous flaws.

In this regard one must remember the following points:

1. A woman cannot give birth immediately after she becomes pregnant, when only signs of pregnancy are visible. Similarly, with *Shaktipat* the aspirant has a clear understanding of the goal and an awareness that the seed for knowledge to attain the goal has been planted.
2. A pregnant woman can experience the development of the fetus. Similarly, as *Kriyas* change from gross to subtle, new experiences occur every day. The aspirant can feel that the seed of knowledge is growing within him.
3. A woman remains alert to protect the fetus and observes rules for the healthy growth of the fetus. Similarly an aspirant must follow a discipline according to the instruction of the guru and the scriptures to develop and progress in knowledge and *Sadhana*.
4. A pregnant woman who disregards the rules can destroy the embryo. Similarly, through actions that are contradictory to the instruction of the guru and the scriptures, the aspirant can waste the *Shaktipat* he received.

Some aspirants believe they are above the rules. They behave in an arrogant self-righteous way. Until one rises above the intellect of duality and attains first hand knowledge of the Self, it is absolutely essential to follow the guidelines of the scriptures and the Guru's instruction.

Question: According to the scriptures and my belief, the soul has separated from God for many births and suffers the pain of separation. How can one endure the pain? How can one unite with God and alleviate the suffering?

Answer: The *jeeva* never actually separates from God and the Self. He only forgets his real Self and believes that he has separated from God. The very existence of the *jeeva* is within the *chaitanya Shakti* (consciousness) of the soul. When the soul's *chaitanya Shakti* arises from the soul and comes in contact with gross *chitta*, a sense emerges saying "I am consciousness!" That is called *jeevatma* or *jeevabhava*.

Then a layer of illusion called *Maya* or *avidya* covers the *jeevatma*. This inverts the understanding and intellect of the *jeeva*, and he thinks, "I am the body, I am mortal. There is happiness and unhappiness." Things that are false appear to be true, and those that are transient appear to be everlasting. The soul, which is great and limitless, appears to be small and limited. The world, which is small and limited, appears to be infinite. What is visible and has a name seems real, so one ignores the essence behind everything. Thus the *jeeva* begins to think in reverse.

The Self is pure consciousness — eternal and free. *Ananda* or bliss is the innate nature of the Self. The *jeeva* does not see the reflection of the bliss within himself, and believing he is miserable and unhappy. This is the grand illusion. This is what a *jeeva* is not able to bear.

There are two kinds of *jeeva*. The first is not able to think of the Self or God and feels separated from God. He believes that the body, mind and intelligence constitute his real Self. In other words, he believes the non-Self to be the Self. He becomes happy and unhappy in the world, never thinking that separation from God or the real Self is the cause of

suffering.

The second kind are attracted to the world because of their past impressions, attitudes and impurities. The veil of *Maya* inverts their understanding and makes their intellect extroverted. Their *Shakti* is in the expansive manifestation mode. They become happy or unhappy because of this. The cause of their suffering is the grand illusion upon the Self.

Without destroying this illusion the *jeeva* cannot be freed from the suffering. As long as the illusion prevails, the intellect works in an inverted way, and the world appears to be the total reality. The *jeeva* imagines happiness and accumulates more impressions. This makes the impurities and impressions on the *chitta* more powerful. Therefore, to remove the veil of illusion one must purify the *chitta* from the impressions and dispositions. This is never possible for an ordinary individual. As long as the *Kundalini Shakti* is not awakened and has not become active inside, spontaneous *Sadhana* has not begun. Since all spiritual efforts are done with ego and a sense of doership, the *chitta* will not be purified.

As soon as the ego identity, "I-ness" or separateness is gone — when the *chaitanya Shakti* that is identifying itself with the *chitta* separates from *chitta* and merges into the Self — the cause of the separation is gone. Nothing remains except pure bliss, knowledge, and eternal Truth. The world dissolves. With the removal of the veil the sovereign power of Truth comes out and the vision of the soul that is present in every particle becomes constant.

Question: *Quite a few of your disciples go to other Gurus. They discuss the subject of spirituality with them, sit and meditate with them. Is that according to your instructions? Do you give deeksha to the disciples of other Gurus? If*

you do give deeksha to them, why do you give it? And if you do not, why not?

Answer: We cannot tie someone down and prevent them from going to other Gurus and doing *Satsang* with them. But doing *Sadhana* with other groups is not at all preferable. The development of *Kriyas* relates to two things: the *Samskaras* of the aspirant and the lineage or tradition. By doing *Sadhana* in the same tradition, the purity of development of the *Kriyas* can be maintained. If one meditates with others a mixture takes place. The *Kriyas* are no longer spontaneous. There is nothing wrong with doing *Satsang* with other groups, but doing *Sadhana* is not advisable. If some of our initiates ask for permission to take *deeksha* from another *Guru*, we happily give permission for that.

When the question arises about giving *deeksha* to the disciple of another *Guru*, we try to avoid that. There are many people in U.S. who have been initiated by another *Guru* and have asked for initiation from us, but so far we have not given them initiation. If someone deeply wants to receive *Shaktipat* from us, we do that under the following circumstances:

1. If the aspirant has no *Satisfaction* from the *deeksha* he received from the other *Guru* and has gotten permission from the other *Guru* for another *deeksha*, then we can give it to him.
2. If an aspirant has fallen prey to a false *Guru* who is fooling him for money or somehow misusing the person's good intentions, then we can also give him initiation.
3. If the aspirant's progress has stopped because for

some reason he has lost faith in the *Guru* and is unable to get help for further spiritual progress and that aspirant believes that he would receive help from us, we may consider giving him initiation.

4. Someone else may be totally happy with his *Guru* but is unable to be in touch with his *Guru* and sees the same *Guru Shakti* in the *Guru* from our lineage. Such an aspirant may request *deeksha* in order to establish a formal relationship with us and be accepted by us as a disciple.

GLOSSARY

- Ahladini Shakti** - the delightful power
- Ajna** - sixth Chakra corresponding with the naso-ciliary plexus of the sympathetic nervous system
- Anahat-** fourth Chakra corresponding with the cardiac plexus of the sympathetic nervous system
- Anima** - to make one's body or anything else as small as he likes i.e. an atom
- Anusthan** - periodic particular type of worship
- Anvi** - type of initiation into meditation involving effort
- Apana** - the Prana which controls air in the passage within the spine below the navel
- Asan** - a woolen blanket used to sit on during meditation
- Asana** - physical postures performed by a *Hatha Yoga* aspirant
- Asat** - impure
- Ashram** - center of spiritual training
- Asmin** - God manifest
- Atman** - Supreme Self
- Avidya** - ignorance
- Ayurveda** - ancient Indian system of medicine based on the Vedas
- Bhakti** - devotion
- Bhakti Yoga** - path of devotion
- Bhava-Shudi** - external purification
- Brahma** - God as the creator
- Brahmachari** - an aspirant who is celibate and devoted to the practice of spiritual discipline
- Brahmacharya** - the practice of celibacy
- Chaitanya** - Conscious Self
- Chakra** - any one of six energy centers located in the Sushumna through which the Kundalini rises; metaphorically called lotuses
- Chetana** - consciousness
- Chitta** - mind-stuff

- Chit-Shakti -** power of mind-stuff; Conscious Energy
Chitta-Vritti - thought waves of the mind
Dhyana - meditation
Dharmas - religion (literal definition); different types of tendencies (specific definition with reference to the Shaktipat system)

Ganesh - the elephant-headed god; son of Shiva and Parvati
Gauni Bhakti - secondary systems of devotion
Ghata - a jar
Guna - essential qualities of the universe of which everything is composed ; Sattva, Rajas, Tamas

Guru - a spiritual master
Gururupaya - efforts of a Guru
Guru-Shakti - power of the Guru; the power of God
Guru-Tattva - power of the Guru
Han - destruction
Hanopaya - means of destruction
Hatha Yoga - physical branch of yoga consisting of postures, breathing exercises, Mudras used to awaken the Kundalini

Hetu - the cause
Heya - that which is to be avoided
Ida - subtle nerve on the left side of the spine
Ishvara - God
Ishta - aspired aspect of God
Ishvara -
Pranidhan- surrender to God
Jada - matter
Japa - repetition of Mantra
Jagadamba - Shri-mother aspect of God
Jiva - Jivatma - living being
Jivan-Mukta - one freed from life
Karma - action
Karma-Kanda - ritual worship
Karma Yoga - skilled actions of a Yogi; unattached actions with

- Kriya** – nonnvolvement in the fruit defined by the Shaktipat system as automatic movements; defined by other systems of Yoga as preliminary practices involving concentration used to arouse the sleeping Kundalini
- Kriyaman**
- Karma** – action in progress
- Kriya-Shakti** – automatic movement power
- Kumbhak**
- Antar** – stopping of the inhalation
- Kumbhak**
- Bhaya** – stopping of the exhalation
- Kumbhak**
- Keval** – a *Pranayam* in which the breath is restrained for a long time
- Kundalini** – dormant spiritual energy residing at the base of the spine
- Kundalini**
- Shakti** – awakened spiritual energy; inward activation of Shakti
- Laghima** – to make one's body or anything else as light in weight as he likes
- Maha-Vakya** – the great pronouncement
- Manas** – the mind
- Manipur** – fourth Chakra corresponding with the solar plexus of the sympathetic nervous system
- Mantra** – sacred words or sounds invested with power
- Maya** – illusion
- Maya Mal** – dirt of illusion
- Mooladar** – first Chakra which corresponds with the pelvic plexus of the sympathetic nervous system
- Mudra** – a pose, posture or gesture for intensifying concentration
- Nirbij**
- Asampragyat** – Samadhi without intellectual consciousness; Samadhi without seed

- Parichayavastha** - advanced stage of aspiration when the aspirant is introduced to Shakti
- Parmarth** - for the highest good
- Pingala** - subtle nerve located on the right side of the spine
- Pragyan** - supreme knowledge
- Prana** - vital life force; breath of life
- Pranayam** - exercises involving breath control
- Prarabdha**
- Krama** - fateful action
- Prasava-Krama** - involutory cycle
- Prati-Prasava**
- Krama** - evolutionary cycle
- Pratyak-**
- Chetana** - inwardly directed consciousness
- Puja** - worship
- Purascharan** - a fixed number in the millions for Mantra repetition
- Raja, Rajas** - one of the three Gunas; quality of activity
- Riddhi** - worldly accomplishments
- Sabij**
- Sampragyat-** Samadhi with intellectual consciousness;
Samadhi with seed
- Sadhak** - spiritual aspirant
- Sadhan** - automatic spiritual practices (automatic movements) as in the Shaktipat system
- Sadhana** - effortful spiritual practices
- Saguna** - God manifested
- Sahasrar** - seventh Chakra; the thousand-petaled lotus located just above the top of the head.
- Samadhi** - superconsciousness; when individual consciousness merges with Universal Consciousness
- Samskaras** - accumulated seeds of past actions
- Sat** - pure
- Sattva** - one of the three Gunas; quality of harmony
- Shaiva** - relating to Lord Shiva
- Shakta** - relating to the Goddess Shakti

- Shakti** – spiritual energy; spiritual power
- Shaktipat** – descent of spiritual energy; literally defined as the fall of spiritual energy
- Shaktipat**
- Diksha** – Shaktipat initiation
- Shambavi** – type of initiation which transforms a disciple into the person of Lord Shiva
- Shava Sadhana** – corpse worship
- Shesh** – literally defined as residue; the residual power that remains unused after the creation of the world
- Shiva** – God as the destroyer and transformer
- Siddha** – a perfected soul
- Siddha Bhakta** – a real devotee
- Siddhis** – spiritual attainments; miraculous powers
- Soham** – a Mantra meaning “I am That”
- Stotras** – hymns of divine praise
- Sukshma** – subtle body
- Sushumna** – subtle central current running through the spinal column
- Sutra** – aphorism
- Svadhishthan** – second Chakra corresponding with the hypogastric plexus of the sympathetic nervous system
- Svadyaya** – self-study
- Svayam-Siddha**
- Sadhan** – a self-proven system of autonomous Yoga exercises
- Tama, Tamas** – one of the three Gunas; the quality of inertia
- Tapa** – penance, austerity
- Tasmin** – God Absolute
- Upasana** – worship
- Vaishnava** – relating to Lord Vishnu
- Vishnu** – God as the preserver
- Vishudda** – fifth Chakra corresponding with the pharyngeal plexus of the sympathetic nervous system

Yantra - graphic symbol
Yoga - spiritual practices leading to union with the Self
Yoga-Nidra - Yogic sleep
Yoni - the life of a being

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THOUSAND
PETALLED LOTUS



AJNA CHAKRA



VISUDDHA CHAKRA



ANAHATA CHAKRA



MANIPURA CHAKRA



SVADHISTHANA CHAKRA



MULADHARA CHAKRA

SHAKTIPAT - A SELF-PROVEN SYSTEM (KUNDALINI MAHA-YOGA)

Kundalini Maha-yoga (Shaktipat) is a self-proven and self-perfecting spiritual practice. This means that the Kundalini power causes an initiate to perform kriyas (automatic movements) through the power of Kundalini itself. Therefore, its other name is Siddha-yoga, or "the self-proven path of meditation." It may be relevant to mention that in every aspect, in body, in mind and in intellect, Shakti itself performs the meditation. An initiate must not make any effort at all; one's duty is only to surrender. The time and characteristics of the manifestation of Shakti are solely the work of the divine power (Shakti) itself. To practice this type of meditation means that one must simply allow the divine power the opportunity to perform the meditation by itself.

Of course, Kundalini Maha-yoga (Shaktipat) is different from other paths of meditation, because on other paths you are responsible for performing certain tasks or mastering certain techniques. In other methods of meditation, you may be responsible for performing meditation yourself or you may have to acquire a great deal of knowledge concerning spiritual matters. You may have to perform worship ceremonies, you may have to practice different asanas (yogic postures) or you may have to constantly endeavor to eject undesirable thoughts out of your mind. However, in Maha-yoga (Shaktipat) you don't have to do all these things. you just have to sit with a total sense of surrender. Then, according to the nature and state of the spiritual consciousness of an initiate, the different meditative experiences of an emotional, intellectual or creative nature occur by themselves.

SWAMI SHIVOM TIRTH