

Shade of Divine Grace :

A Short Biography of Yogiraj Gulavani Mahārāj

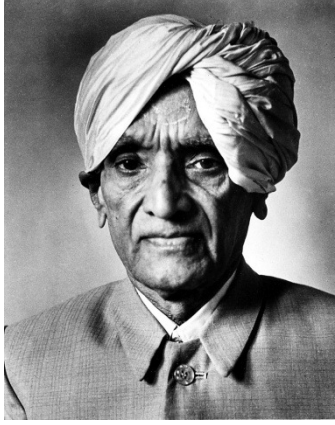


By : **Dr. Vasudeo V. Deshmukh**

Translation by : **Sou. Meera Arvind Datye**

Shade of Divine Grace

|| Shri Gurus Sharaṇam ||



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Shade of Divine Grace

|| Shri Gurus Sharaṇam ||

Dedicated with humble salutations to the memory of



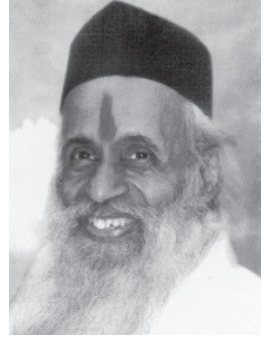
Param Pujya Brahmashri Datta Mahārāj Kavishwar

who provided great spiritual solace and guidance to all disciples and devotees of the Yogiraj after his departure from the physical frame.

Shade of Divine Grace

Blessings of P.P.Yogatapaswi Kaka Mahārāj Dhekane.

P.P.Yogiraj Gulavani Mahārāj, my senior brother disciple and Yogi dedicated his life to the propagation of divine Kundalini Shaktipat Yoga bequeathed by P.P.Sadguru Loknath Teerth Swami Mahārāj. Perusal and contemplation of such saintly lives is the most effective way to cleanse one's mind leading to spiritual advancement.

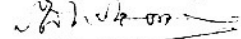


Lives of saints are indeed unfathomable and not amenable to perfect depiction even in voluminous accounts. The limitations of such a concise biography are thus obvious. However, in the modern jet set world, brevity is an advantage.

Dr. Deshmukh has succeeded in presenting the essentials of the holy life of the Yogiraj, duly highlighting the many qualities of P. P. Gulavani Mahārāj. The translation by Sou. Meera Datye effectively conveys the import of the original. I trust that this will benefit its readers and encourage them to read more about the life and works of this modern saint.

In his only public speech P. P. Yogiraj Gulavani Mahārāj has said the following about the heavenly Kundalini Shaktipat Yoga, *"In this path, disciples are constantly having amazing experiences as per their Karmic constitution. Many have even been cured of so-called 'incurable' diseases by just practicing this Sadhana (meditation). Over a period of time, disciples have also experienced purification of their mental makeup. Negative thoughts and impulses were banished from the mind filling it with holy thoughts and peace. This wonderful Yoga watched over by Sages from ancient times, is beneficial to all human beings irrespective of their age, sex, race, creed or caste. Practiced by motivated believers for their enlightened self-interest, this unfailing Yoga Sadhana has the potential to uplift societies not only in India but the entire world."*

I congratulate Dr. Deshmukh and Sou. Datye on their accomplishment and wish that their work will be widely read and appreciated. With sincere prayers to Sadguru Swami Mahārāj for the physical and spiritual well-being of one and all,


(N.Y.Dhekane)

Managing Trustee, Shri Vasudev Nivas, Pune.

Shade of Divine Grace

Foreword

It gives us great pleasure to present this brief account of the holy life of Sadguru Yogiraj Gulavani Mahārāj. This is perhaps the first biography of Shri Guru Mahārāj to be written in English. Primarily, this manuscript was written for the website on Shri Guru Mahārāj – www.yogiraj.org. In view of the Global Mahāyog Meet, many brother disciples urged that a printed version be made available to the delegates from different countries, acquainting them to the life and work of this great propagator of the Kundalini Shaktipat Yoga.

We have appended the reprint of the article “Transmission of Spiritual Power” by Shri Guru Mahārāj.

We are indebted to the earlier biographers of Shri Guru Mahārāj from whose works we have drawn freely. They are, Shri Ram Kavi; Pujya Bapusaheb Kubade, Pujya A. S. Potbhare; Gurubhakt N. B. Bhalerao. We are equally grateful to the authors of some articles published in the quarterly “Vasudev Nivas” and several verbal communications are not mentioned here for want of space.

P. P. Yogatapaswi Shri Kaka Mahārāj has constantly guided and encouraged us in our literary endeavors and has been a source of inspiration. But for his affectionate blessings this work would not have been possible. Our respected brother-disciples Pujya Pandit Sharad Joshi, Pujya Moreshwar Buwa Joshi and Smt Gurubhakt Neelatai Joshi have been greatly supportive and helpful. My heartfelt thanks are due to Shri Pramod Potbhare for helping with the elegant printing.

Pune 3rd May 2012

Vasudeo V. Deshmukh
Meera A. Datye.

The Shade of Divine Grace
Life of Yogiraj Gulavaṇi Mahārāj:
A Brief Account

*Captivating tales, sacred fountains of nectar.
Absorbed through ears and experienced within.
Put into Practice with deep faith,
Make a blissful abode in a devotee's heart.*

These words from the Dnyāneshwari are exemplified by the lives of saints. Their stories are like perennial springs of heavenly nectar that epitomize devotional love. For those who listen to these with deep faith and reverence, imbibe their essence, and constantly practice their precepts, the tree of devotional love blossoms and bears the fruit of eternal bliss. Following this teaching, let us behold, albeit briefly, the extraordinary life of Yogiraj Shri Gulavaṇi Mahārāj of Pune.

Kaulav is a tiny village nestling in the scenic Bhogāvati river valley and hemmed in by mountains on all sides. It is situated in the Rādhānagari Tāluka of Kolhapur district in the state of Maharashtra. In this picturesque village, lived the Gulavaṇi family, who were Deshastha Rigvedi Brahmins (Shakala Shakha) and devotees of Lord Dattātreyā. They were ardent practitioners of the Vedic religion and being the only Brahmin household in Kaulav, were the village priests.

Close to two hundred years ago, Vedamurti Shri Nāgēsh Bhataji, the great grandfather of Shri Gulavaṇi Mahārāj, lived here. Around this time, the great 18th century saint Shri Nārāyan Swami of Kolhapur, who was held in highest regard and widely adored, passed through Kaulav on his way to the Durgamān peak. (Shri Nārāyan Swami's life work bore fruit at Narsoba Wādi which is at the confluence of R. Krishna and R. Panchagangā). This great devotee of Lord

Dattātreyā received the hospitality of Shri Nāgēsh Bhatāji in Kaulav. Nāgēsh Bhatāji also accompanied the Swami to the Durgamān temple of Goddess Vijayā. Here, a mystifying incidence took place. At night fall, during the Sankirtan, an enormous tiger entered the temple. The devotees were frightened and went helter-skelter. However, Shri Nārāyan Swami remained calm and tried to pacify the frenzied crowd. The tiger had injured a foot and limped meekly towards the Swami. Examining the wounded tiger, Swāmiji cleaned and cauterized the infected wound using Anacardium (Bhilawa). Having been alleviated of its pain, the tiger slept peacefully through the night besides Swāmiji. In the morning, the tiger went off on its own way.

Nāgēsh Bhatāji was childless at the time. He became Swāmiji's disciple and appealed for the boon of progeny, which was granted to him. In due course, Nāgēsh Bhatāji was blessed with a son who was named 'Nārāyan' after the saintly Swami. The Gulavanis vowed to Swāmiji that they would dedicated one son from each generation to the service of Goddess Mahālxmi of Kolhapur. Nārāyan, the grandfather of our protagonist, was in turn blessed with four sons and three daughters. The eldest son Shri Dattātreyā (Dattam Bhat) was the father of Shri Gulavaṇi Mahārāj. Dattātreyā Gulavani's first wife bore seven offsprings, none of whom survived. Unable to bear this grief, she died young. Dattam Bhat then married the only daughter of Mārutirao Kulkarni of nearby Hiravade who was named Umābai, after his first wife. Dattam Bhatāji and Umābai left Kaulav and migrated to nearby Kudutri where they set up their household.

Virtuous Parentage

Dattam Bhatāji fulfilled his duties of an ideal Brahmin. He performed Panchamahāyagnyas and pursued lifelong Agniparicharya (service to Fire God). Apart from this,

the family tradition of Datta-worship and Bhajan Pujan continued with great fervor. His simple, virtuous, and beautiful wife Umābai joined him in all religious routines with great devotion. Every Pournima (full moon day), Dattātreyā and Umābai visited Narsoba Wādi which was a 6-hour horse ride. They observed this vow with unwavering faith for twenty two years, in addition to their regular religious practices. In due course, the couple was blessed with four sons-Shankar, Bāpu, Narhari and Govind. The family became established in Kudutri and prospered. However, the husband and wife had a constant yearning to be granted holy Pādukas from Shri Narsinh Saraswati Swami Mahārāj (Incarnation of Lord Dattātreyā and the presiding deity of the Wādi temple). They prayed continuously and intensely for this tangible sign of Grace of their beloved Lord Dattātreyā. Around this time, Umābai conceived again. That year she was unable to accompany Dattam Bhataji to Narsoba Wādi. At Wādi, Dattam Bhataji rose at the break of dawn and proceeded to worship the Nirgun Pādukas. As he was bathing the Pādukas, he suddenly heard a voice from the sanctum: "I am pleased with you." Dattam Bhataji's joy knew no bounds! He returned home and narrated the incidence to Umābai, who was also happy to hear it.

Holy Souvenir: Pādukas

Umābai's longing for the Pādukas became acutely intense. Neglecting her fragile physical condition and admonitions of the family, she took to fasting. Early in the morning, she would wrap up her cooking and other household chores and spend the day praying in the shrine. Towards the 4th-5th day of the fast, her growing weakness forced her to delegate all her household duties to her eldest son Shankar Shastri. Soon she also began to sleep in the shrine. No one could dissuade her from this determination.

On the 7th day around midday, she sat facing the idol, exhausted and faint, chanting her prayers with closed eyes. Suddenly, she felt something drop onto her lap. She opened her eyes and to her joyful surprise found in her lap two small silver Pādukas (2 cm) daubed with fragrant sandalwood paste. She quickly turned and looked towards the door. She saw a tall, radiant Sanyāsi hurriedly leaving through the door. She summoned Shankar Shastri and showed him this propitious gift. She instructed him to go after the Sanyāsi. However, the Sanyāsi had disappeared without a trace. Dattam Bhat (Ābā), on returning from his religious services, learnt of the astonishing benediction. He offered Naivedya to the deities and Umābai happily ended her fast!

Birth and Childhood

Even as these extraordinary good omens rang in, two weeks later on 23rd December 1886 AD at 8:19 PM (Mārgashirsha Vadya 13, 1886 AD), Umābai gave birth to a son. They named him Vāman.

The Gulavani house was spacious with back and front yards. They had domesticated cows and buffaloes. Vegetables grew in their garden. They held their own farmlands. By the rural standards, Gulavanis were prosperous in every way. Thus was the household that Vāman grew up in.

Mother Umā's Tumor Miraculously Cured.

Umābai bore three daughters after Vāman: Tānee, Godāvāri and Sakhu. During her last pregnancy, she developed a tumor which kept growing. She was taken to the mission hospital in Miraj and was diagnosed with cancer. Umābai decided to adhere to the wisdom imparted by all great saints: when circumstances are tough, seek God. Following this philosophy, she went to Wādi accompanied by

Shankar Shastri to offer prayers and service. Shankar Shastri too, started daily recitation of the *Gurucharitra*. One day (*Ashwin Shukla* 3 (28th October) 1893 AD) around noon, while cooking Umābai saw a *Swāmi* and Shankar Shastri approach the house. She wondered who this *Swāmi* was, who had come at this opportune hour of noon to solicit food. No sooner did this thought enter her mind than the *Swāmi* came forward and offered her *Teerth*. Taking the *Teerth*, she asked him “Will I be cured of this ailment, swamiji?” The *Swāmi* replied “It is a tumor of disease. It will burst open.” Then quickly turning to his left, he left through the other door towards the shrine of *Shri. Nārāyan Swāmi*. Umābai fainted as soon as she drank the *Teerth*. Presently, Shankar Shastri reached home having performed his *Brahmayagna*. He found his mother lying in a pool of blood. The tumor had dissolved! Umābai remained comatose for four to five hours. When she regained consciousness, a kindly neighbor took her to the river to bathe her. The same day, Shankar Shastri conveyed this happy news to Ābā, and soon mother and son returned home after taking the *Gurudwādashi Prasād* at Wādi.

Education

Soon after this incidence (1894 AD), Vāman’s thread ceremony took place and he was initiated into religious rites such as *Sandhya*, *Puja*, *Vaishvadeo*, *Purush Sukta*, *Shri Sukta* etc. by Ābā and Shankar Shāstri. He started attending school at nearby Tārāle. He learnt his alphabets on dusty surfaces at home! His first brush with an actual slate was only when he started going to school. Not only did he carry out his school studies studiously but also regularly performed his *Sandhya* and other daily religious rituals.

The school in Tārāle was only up to 4th grade. So Vāman moved to Rājāram High School, Kolhapur where he stayed with a widowed aunt. At the time, Vāman’s brothers

Shankar Shastri and Narsutātya used to offer service turn by turn at the ashram of Narāyan Swāmi near the Māhālakshmi temple in Kolhapur. Vāman had topped 4th grade in all of Rādhānagari Tāluka and was therefore eligible for a scholarship of Rs. 3 per month. Vāman managed to retain this scholarship (which had increased to Rs. 5 after 7th grade) up to 9th grade. As most of his curriculum books were also received as prizes, the cost of his education was minimal.

Apart from regular school, Vāman attended Sanskrit classes at *Pt. Atmārām Shāstri's* school. Vāman's grasping powers were so superior that any lesson heard once was permanently etched into his memory. During this time he also underwent training in physical fitness and swimming.

Vāman had an inborn talent for drawing. When he was in 9th and 10th grades, his teachers were so impressed by his prowess in drawing that they made it obligatory for him to take the first two levels of state-level drawing exams. Having excelled at both levels, he was motivated to enroll for the third level at the Sir J. J. School of Arts in Mumbai (1907). Unfortunately, this move precluded him from taking his Matriculation exam even though he was extremely well prepared for the same. He accepted this as divine dispensation with no regrets not even attempting to take the examination even later.

At the Lotus Feet of Shriguru

In the early days in Mumbai, Vāman lived with an acquaintance and took his meals at a mess. In those days, there were messes for Brahmins where the traditional code of purity (*Sowale*) was observed. After six months, Vāman left for home for Diwali. He stopped at Kolhapur on the way. At the time, P. P. Vāsudevānand Saraswati (Tembe) Swami Mahārāj was visiting Wādi. This was his second trip to Wādi following his *Sanyās* (holy renunciation). Vāman's elder

brother Shri Shankar Shastri, who also happened to be in Wādi, met Mahārāj and told him about Vāman, his education and above all his drawing talent. He sought consent to summon Vāman to Wādi to seek Maharaj's blessings. Swami Mahārāj immediately approved and also gave Vāman an assignment to do: draw a beautiful picture of Lord Dattātreyā wearing a garland. This garland was no ordinary garland, but had a verse weaved into it. The *Shloka* was:

वन्देऽहं देवदेवं धृतिमतिगतिदं साङ्गयोगप्रगम्यं।
पारावाराभरागाद्यरिकरिहरिमाल्हादकं दत्तदक्षम्।
ज्ञेयज्ञं यज्ञयज्वं सुरवरपरदं पारदं रम्यरम्यं।
पातारं तारतारं खलबलदलनं श्रीवरं वक्रवक्रम्॥

Meaning –

Salute to this God of Gods;

Provider of courage, wisdom and motivation;

He who is recognizable by the eightfold path of Yoga;

A savior like a majestic lion banishing the ocean-like

*Elephants of deep-seated negative emotions like rage, hate, lust
etc;*

*He who is the source of joy, assiduous in charity and is the
possessor of true knowledge*

*Object of sacrifices, one who confers the highest status upon
Gods like Indra;*

He who liberates His devotees from the cycle of birth and death;

*Magnificently beautiful, refuge to His disciples, emancipator of
Sanyāsins as the sound of Om;*

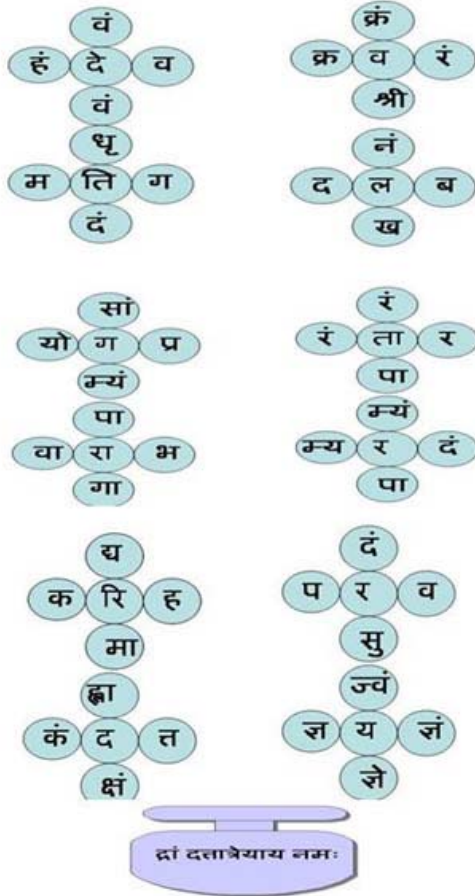
*Banisher of the strength of evil-doers, Master of Goddess
Lakshmi;*

Detrimental to evil;

To this Dattaprabhu I bow down!

This *Shloka* is set in *Sragdhara* meter; it is the 102nd verse of the third Century of Trishati Gurukāvya. It depicts a

pictorial arrangement called “Hārbandh”. Every quarter in the verse is divided into three parts. Each part is a flower with four syllables set around three recurring letters (in that part) that form the stalk. Twelve such flowers form the garland Hārbandh (shown in the picture below). These types of Hārbandhs are encountered in many of Swami Maharaj’s poetic works.



Vāman gained this rare privilege to serve his *Guru* (Master) even before meeting him in person. Vāman put all his dedication and talent into the drawing of this garlanded portrait of Lord Dattātreyā. He presented this to Swami Mahārāj on the auspicious occasion of *Gurudwādashi* with prostrated salutations. Swami Mahārāj was extremely happy. In appreciation, he sanctified a *Yantra* with his own hands, put it in a small silver casing, and tied it on Vāman's wrist. The first encounter with the *Sadguru* is a monumental event in a devotee's life. It is a culmination of many lifetimes of virtuous deeds. The *Sadguru* gently guides the devotee on to the divine path of self-realization. It is as though a radiant halo from the *Sadguru*'s heart is passed on to the devotee's heart. This is an indescribable event for which external ceremonial rituals are irrelevant and words totally inadequate. Let us try to understand the effect of this meeting on Vāman as recounted to Shri Mānvatkar Mahārāj in his own words:

“Since childhood I have been spiritually inclined. This was coupled with the virtuous teachings of my family. Therefore, formal studies were accompanied by spiritual growth that cast me in a strongly devout mould. There is no doubt that all this could happen only because of prior good Karma. My innate belief in this has been validated time and again by the events in my life.”

“Presently, I developed a yearning to follow the Yogic approach of devotion. Around that time, my prior virtuous deeds brought me in contact with P. P. Vāsudevānand Saraswati (Tembe) Swami Mahārāj. When I set eyes on my *Sadguru*, I felt as though he was my close kin. I surrendered to him with all my heart and I got the gift of initiation which completely sanctified my entire being. I felt as though I had gained everything. He bestowed upon me all I ever longed for!”

“On initiation, I had a supernatural experience. I began to hear a variety of inner sounds. At that time, I thought ‘What are these sounds and where are they coming from? What is happening? How do they sound as though they are approaching me? Can anybody other than me hear them? Am I in a sane frame of mind?’ These and many such questions came to my mind.”

“These sounds were at first quite unsettling. Then I began to experience waves of joy. What happened after this is quite ineffable. After a few days, I realized that these sounds were coming from within me. These are nothing but the *Anahat Naads* (ultra physical sounds). As time passed, these experiences became more varied and intense.”

Stricken by the Plague

When Vāman returned to Mumbai from Wādi to resume his studies, a special event took place. Shri Nārāyan **Mahārāj**, a renowned saint from Kedagaon near Pune, was visiting Girgaum Mumbai, close to Vāman’s residence. Vāman called upon him to offer reverence. No sooner did Vāman bow down before Nārāyan Mahārāj, he saluted Vāman back! Everyone who witnessed this sight was surprised. It takes a saint to acknowledge another!

As the third level examination in drawing drew near, Vāman began to suffer from fever. He had to forgo the examination and return home to Kudutri. The fever turned out to be the plague. It was peak rainy season, and Kudutri was inundated with up to 200 inches of rain per day. Despite the heavy rainfall, the people of Kudutri, fearing the deadly plague, started fleeing the village. However, the Gulavani household could not migrate as Vāman’s sister-in-law was in confinement. Vāman was comatose most of the times. He was moved to the village Māruti temple, where he lied unconscious for ten days almost unattended and without

food, water or any other bodily functions. Hopes of his survival were very bleak. But Vāman had complete faith in the Yantra tied on his wrist by Shri Swāmi Mahārāj. He strongly believed that it would safeguard him against his illness. And wonder of wonders: Vāman completely recovered from his deadly illness in twelve days without any medications or special care! As soon as he recovered, he performed a weekly recital (*Saptāh*) of the Gurucharitra, as a thanksgiving penance. He did this only out of devotion to God. (Shri Guru Mahārāj always used to say that any penance that he undertook was always dedicated to the Almighty with no worldly desires.) The following Gurudwādashi, he went to Wādi and completed seven more *Saptāh* of the Gurucharitra. Vāman spent the next seven to eight months recovering his health in his hometown of Kudutri.

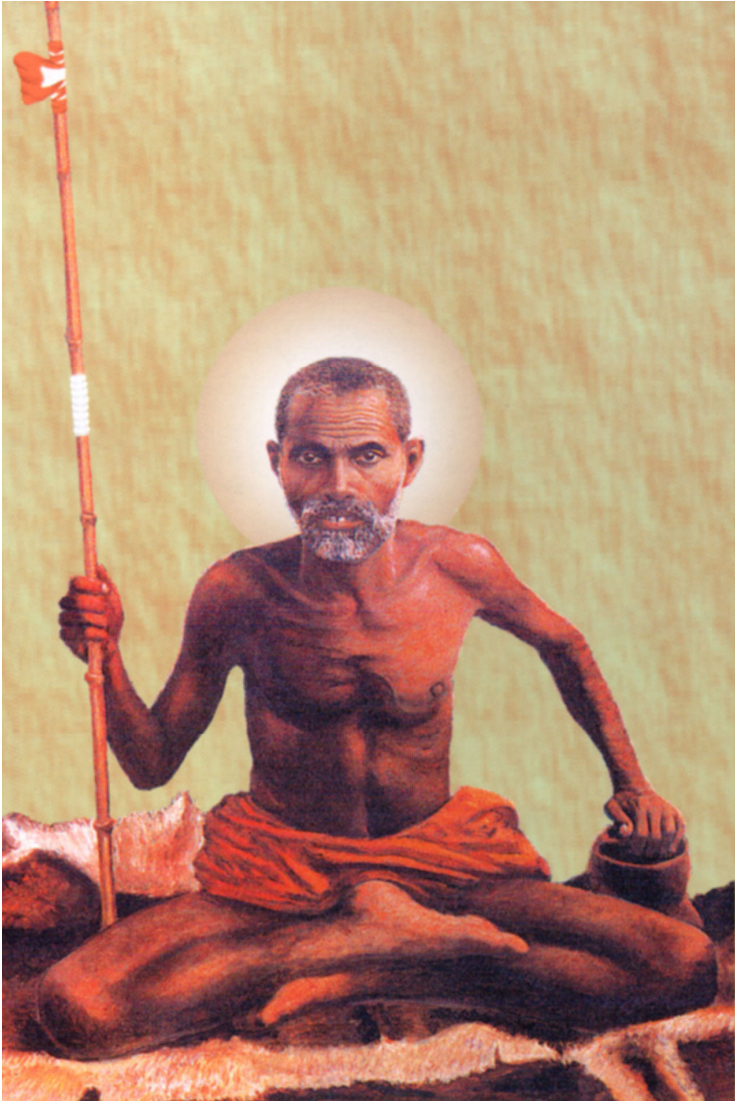
Father's demise

In 1909, Vāman lost his father, aged 80, due to a minor illness. During Ābā's illness Umāmāta had fervently prayed for his recovery. Next day, Shri Narsimhsaraswati Swāmi Mahārāj appeared to her in an early morning dream. He informed her "You have to suffer widowhood for 22 years. You may evade it in this lifetime only to be postponed to a future lifetime. What is your choice?" Umāmāta followed the Bhāgwat doctrine "greet your destiny willingly,"

Initiation

After Ābā's last rites, Shri Shankar Shastri set out to Pawani near Nagpur where Shri Swami Mahārāj was spending the *Chāturmas* (the period of two rainy months during which a Sanyāsi stays in one place). Swāmi Mahārāj later summoned Umāmāta, Vāman and his younger sister Godāvāri to Pawani. On the second last day of the *Chāturmas*, on the auspicious occasion of Anantachaturdashi, all three of

P.P.Shri Vasudevanand Saraswati (Tembe) Swami Maharaj



them were initiated by Shri Swāmi Mahārāj. At this time, Umāmāta and Shankar Shastri broached the topic of Vāman's marriage. Vāman told them he did not wish to marry and according to his horoscope, marriage would bring no happiness to his life. When his mother and brother expressed their concern regarding this to Swāmi Mahārāj, all he said was "If it is to be, it shall be." After this incidence, no one brought up the subject of Vāman's marriage. Vāman had determined his life's calling and marriage, household etc. did not figure in it. He had resolved to live an unattached life and taken a vow of celibacy.

In Search of Sadguru

Leaving Pawani, Vāman set off to Kolhapur (via Kudutri) in search of a job. There, an acquaintance suggested that he should seek for job in Mumbai. This took him to Mumbai once again. Vāman had the qualifications required to get a job at that time. To him a job only meant a means of livelihood. He did not want to compromise on his spiritual pursuits and daily religious practices for the sake of his job. Such a job was hard to find. And so Vāman's job search was futile. He made a resolution to read seven Saptāhs (like the one he had done at Wādi), at Ganagapur. In the hot summer of 1910 AD, on *Chaitra Shukla* 10, he reached Ganagapur via Daund. He completed six Saptāhs as per his resolution. As he was about to start the seventh, he met a *Ramal* (a technique of foretelling with the help of dice) astrologer. He asked the astrologer "How soon shall I set eyes on my Master?" The astrologer predicted that if the meeting does not take place within the next six months, it would never happen. His *Sadguru* being the sole purpose of life to him, Vāman could not imagine spending a lifetime without seeing him. His longing to set eyes on the lotus feet of his Master became

intense. Reunion with his *Sadguru* became his foremost priority.

Next day, he completed the 7th recitation of Gurucharitra in a single day. He gave the priest his sole possession, an umbrella, towards the dedicatory rituals of the *Saptāh*. The following morning, penniless and clueless of Swāmi Mahārāj's whereabouts, Vāman embarked on his journey. He had heard that Swāmi Mahārāj was spending the *Chāturmās* somewhere in south. He made his way to Solapur walking barefoot by the side of the railway tracks, in the scorching heat of summer, through the arid region, carrying only two sets of clothes. In the afternoon, he stopped by a well to perform his daily worship. Quenching both his hunger and thirst with the well water, he resumed his journey at sundown. At nightfall, he found a shelter to rest. Next morning, he found a big well at a village called Ahirwadi to perform his religious chores. Having starved for two days, he solicited lunch at a Brahmin household and proceeded on his travail. This journey lasted for about two months (6th June 1910 to 3rd August 1910). He covered 700 km. on foot and 700 km. by rail. Sometimes, he would starve and at other times he ate at marriages, messes and homes of kind people. Vāman embraced all the sufferings with great determination. "Let me succeed or else let me perish" is the line that can best describe his resolve. At long last, he found himself at the lotus feet of Swāmi Mahārāj, the ultimate sanctuary of his arduous pilgrimage, at Havnur.

Sadguru's sublime Company at Havnur

In Havnur, Swāmi Mahārāj was put up in the Tripurantkeshwar (Shiva) temple. Vāman joined him there. Swāmi Mahārāj instructed Vāman not to communicate his whereabouts to anyone. Vāmanrao got the golden opportunity of staying in Swāmi Mahārāj's company in

peaceful seclusion for the next 11 days. Each day, he would bathe with Swāmi Mahārāj in the sacred waters of river Tungabhadra. He had the rare good fortune of ardently serving his Guru. He would do all of Swāmiji's chores like washing his clothes etc. and would solicit food like Swamiji., Divining Vāmanrao's wish, Swāmiji instructed him to recite *Vishnusahsranaam* and *Bhagavad-Gita*. Every morning, Swāmiji would give a discourse on the Bhagwad-Geeta exclusively for Vāman. Another gentleman, by the name of Venkatrao Gopali, from Havnur also attended this discourse. In the afternoons, Swāmi Mahārāj would have Vāman write Sadashivbrahmendra Swami's *Brahmsutravrutti*. Thus, Vāmanrao got the benefit of hearing narratives from the life of Sadashivbrahmendra Swāmi. At this time, Swāmi Mahārāj trained Vāmanrao in *Yogasanas* and *Pranāyām*, which included some references to *Kundalini*, the dormant spiritual power.

Vāmanrao noticed that at night, after a short nap, Swāmi Mahārāj would wake up and practice *Samadhi*. One day, Swāmi Mahārāj looked at Vāman's astrological chart and said, "Guru (Jupiter) is traversing the 11th house of your natal chart. You ought to have benefitted from this auspicious position?" To this, Vāmanrao quickly replied, "What greater reward is there in the world than having met you and served you?" Vāmanrao was greatly pleased to see his Guru's smile of approval at this answer.

During this time, Swāmi Mahārāj conveyed a verse related to daily worship:

To attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death, one must recite daily:

The Upanishad of one's Shakha (for Rigvedi it is Aitareya), Bhagwad Geeta, Vishnusahstranām, Shree Sukta, Purush Sukta, and Rudrādhyāya.

As we shall see later Vāmanrao practiced this all his life

It was customary of Swāmi Mahārāj to compose hymns in praise of every holy place that he visited and the presiding deities. In Havnur, he composed the hymns to R. *Tungā*, *Chidambar* and *Tripurāntakeshwar*. *Tungāshatak* (hymn with eight stanzas) has a *Hārbandh Shloka*. He told Vāman to draw a picture of river Tungabhadra, garlanded with the *Hārbandh* and to paste it on the temple door, and write the hymn to *Tripurāntakeshwar* on the temple doorframe.

Sadguru's Memory Etched In the Heart Forever

Eleven days of intense bliss and deep contentment in the gracious company of Shri Swami Mahārāj flew by very quickly. Vāmanrao's belongings had arrived at Hāveri station from Mumbai. His father's first death anniversary was also drawing close. He reluctantly and sadly realized that it was time to take leave. As the day dawned, Vāmanrao bathed early and finished his daily rituals. His mind was distraught; the thought of being separated from his *Sadguru* was unbearable. He kept attempting to hold back his tears. Swāmi Mahārāj realized Vāman's anguish and showered him with affectionate gestures all morning. He invited Vāman to join him for lunch and indulgently put a couple of morsels of his own food into Vāman's platter as Prasad. Now Vāman could no longer hold back his tears! After lunch, he quickly packed his belongings. Swāmi Mahārāj was sitting in Siddhāsan (a yoga pose), on a platform in front of the temple. Vāmanrao, carrying his luggage, went and prostrated in front of Swāmiji and stood in front of his Guru with folded hands. Swāmi Mahārāj gave him some holy ash and a coconut and lifted his hand in blessing. He told Vāman to take care of himself. Vāmanrao, eyes misted with tears, trying to commit Swāmiji's image to his mind, asked "Mahārāj, when shall we

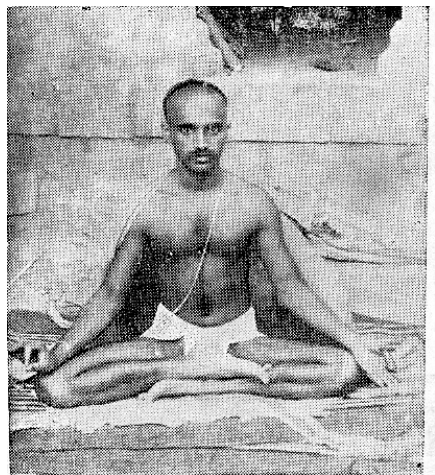
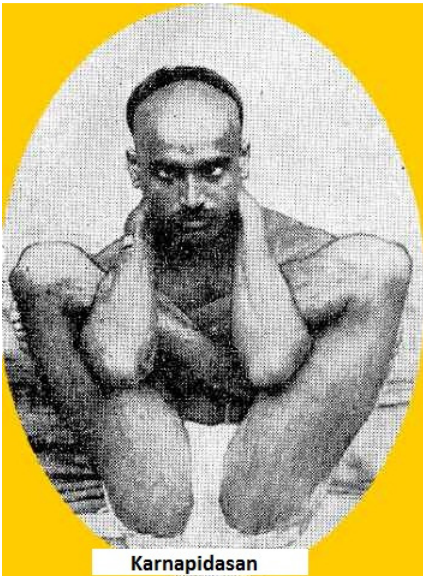
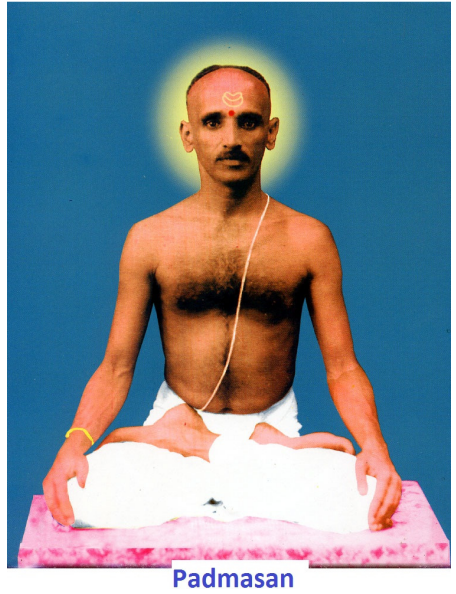
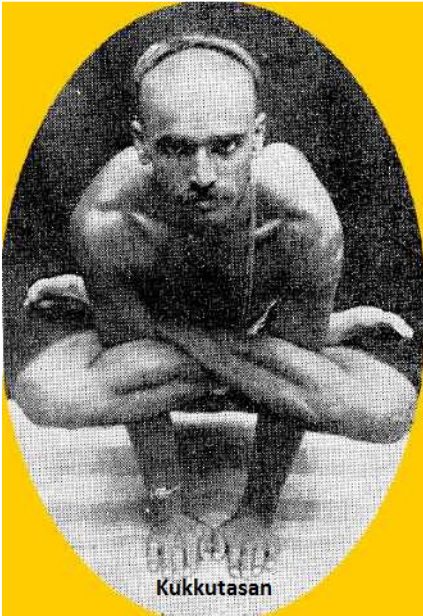
meet again?" Swāmi Mahārāj, pointing at himself said "Just remember this as you behold!"

No sooner had Swāmi Mahārāj uttered these words and Vāman had a vision of Lord Dattātreyā: His feet at the place of Swāmiji's heart, draped in tiger skin; an exquisite vision of the beatific frame of the Lord with six arms, serenely smiling on him. Vāmanrao garnered this magnificent image in his heart, with his eyes and prostrated in front of Lord Dattātreyā. As he lifted his head, he saw Swāmi Mahārāj in his usual form saying, "Now, do not waste time and proceed quickly." He walked a few steps with the despondent Vāman to see him off. Vāmanrao reached Hāveri to pick up his belongings from Mumbai and then proceeded to his hometown Kudutri, where he participated in the rituals of his father's death anniversary.

Aundhya Nāgnāth

After this incident, Vāman started seeking more and more of Swāmiji's company. But this was not possible because Swāmi Mahārāj was constantly travelling, making it difficult for anyone to stay for very long with him. Swāmi Mahārāj spent the Chāturmās of 1911 at Kuruguddi, which is a small island in the river Krishna on the border of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. From there, he proceeded north to Hingoli in Maharashtra. Shankar Shastri went to Hingoli to meet Swāmiji there and shortly afterwards summoned Vāmanrao through a letter. By the time Vāmanrao reached Hingoli, Swāmi Mahārāj had advanced to Pimpri. Vāmanrao followed him there and sought his blessings. There, Swāmi Mahārāj gifted clothes to all Brahmins. Vāmanrao received a silk draping too. As Swāmi Mahārāj left Pimpri and proceeded to Aundhya Nāgnāth, Shankar Shastri and Vāmanrao also accompanied him. Aundhya Nāgnāth is one of the *Jyotirlingas*. Vāmanrao got an opportunity to perform

Some Yogasanas



Yogasanas for the perusal of Swāmi Mahārāj and won his appreciative approval.

Swāmi Mahārāj advised him to practice *Siddhāsan* and *Paschimottānasan* more. It was at this place that the Gulavaṇi brothers had the good fortune of listening the discourses on Aiatreya and Māndukya Upanishads from Swāmi Mahārāj.

Dattamālā Mantra Penance

Swāmi Mahārāj's next Chāturmas (1912) was spent at Chikhaldā on the banks of the Narmada. Chikhaldā was rather unapproachable, being struck by an epidemic of plague at the time. Vāmanrao was advised not to go there. Instead, Swāmi Mahārāj instructed him to perform 12000 recitals of the Dattamālā Mantra at Audumbar. (Audumbar has been hallowed by the stay of Shri Nrisinh Saraswati Mahārāj). Accordingly, Vāmanrao went to Audumbar and completed the penance in 40 days. During this time, an extraordinary incidence took place. One day, as Vāmanrao was bathing on the banks of river Krishna, a stranger walked up to him and asked, "Are you Vāmanrao?" to which Vāman replied "Yes". This gentleman, named Gadgil, went on to narrate his dream: "I had a dream wherein a lady came to me and instructed me to convey to Vāmanrao that his penance was 3000 recitations short." Vāmanrao was baffled as he had performed the estimated number of recitations per day for 40 days. No sooner did he begin wondering how this must have happened, he received a letter saying that one of his uncles in Kaulav had passed away. He could not thus include the recitations performed during the ten days of mourning, which left him 3000 repetitions short! The Lord has his way of looking after His devotees and ensuring that their religious undertakings are properly concluded. This incidence is an ideal example of His merciful watch over his devotees.

In the Service of Sadguru at Garudeshwar

Vāmanrao got a temporary job as a drawing teacher in Kolhapur where he lived for a few months. He continued practicing Yoga. Although he took up some new exercises, he had to discontinue them as they did not suit his body. He continued to long for Swāmiji's company. So when he received a letter from Swāmiji inviting him to Garudeshwar, he immediately left for Garudeshwar. He reached there in the summer (*Vaishakha* month) of 1913. He took with him a photograph of Swāmi Mahārāj adorned with a Hārbandh on instructions of Shri Nrisinh Saraswati (Dixit) Swami Mahārāj, and presented at the feet of Swāmiji on reaching Garudeshwar. Swāmi Mahārāj perused the photograph and instructed him to "return it to its owner".

Swāmi Mahārāj would rise early at 4:30 AM. Right from the beginning of his day, Vāmanrao missed no opportunity to serve his Master, starting with providing mango leaves to brush his teeth. As soon as Swāmiji left for his bath, Vāmanrao would begin cleaning his hut. He would sweep the front room and coat the floor with cow dung. Vāmanrao even took the chance of pouring water on Swāmiji hands after eating. Swāmi Mahārāj could retire for a short siesta. After that he would attend to his correspondence. Some letters he would write himself and the remaining he would have Vāmanrao write.

One afternoon, Vāmanrao dozed off. He was startled awake by a dream in which a large white bull was rushing towards him with its horns pointing at him. He could even hear the jingle of the bells on the bull's neck. Apprehensive of being late for his duties, he ran towards the hut, only to find that Swāmiji was calling him just then. He thanked the bull as divine messenger. Swāmi Mahārāj's correspondence began to increase by the day. He would receive hundreds of letter and

P.P.Tembe Swami's Picture adorned with Haar Bandh



it became impossible to reply to all of these. He had to instruct Vāman to return these with the remark, “The addressee refused to receive letters”. However, at the request of Swāmi Brahmānand Mahārāj (who was spending the Chāturmas with Swāmiji), he agreed to resume correspondence. By the time Swāmi Mahārāj had completed Bhajan, Kirtan and answering devotees’ queries, it would be 1 o’clock at night. Thus, Vāmanrao did not get much sleep and he compensated by taking short naps standing against a pole. Indeed, Vāmanrao’s service to his Guru was exemplary!

Learning Vedanta from Shri Swami Mahārāj

Every morning after bathing, Swāmi Mahārāj would give a talk on the *Brahmsutravritti*, the ten main *Upanishads*, and other *Upanishads* like *Kaivalya*, *Mauktik*, *Shwetashwatar* etc. Vāmanrao was, of course, an ardent student. Thus, looking at the time he spent with Swāmi Mahārāj, right from Havnur, it is clear that he learnt all three major components of Vedanta literature *Prasthantrayi*, namely *Gita*, *Brahmsutra* and *Upanishads*, from the learned Master. There is no doubt that Vāman, having always been a fast learner, imbibed the entire knowledge of the *Vedanta* at a young age. It is a tribute to his innate humility that never in his lifetime, did he flaunt this knowledge. On occasions whenever someone brought a query to him on *Vedanta*, his answers were precise, concise and backed with apt scriptural context.

Lord Dattatreya’s Picture

Vāmanrao had painted an exquisite painting of his vision at Havnur, which he kept inside his sacred book. At the time when Vāmanrao arrived at Garudeshwar, Swāmi Mahārāj did not have any picture or idol of Lord Dattātreyā for regular worship. When he learnt about the picture of Lord Dattātreyā clad in tiger skin drawn by Vāmanrao,



Vision at Havnur

Swāmiji asked for it for daily worship. Vāmanrao had this picture framed and kept on a small platform for daily worship and *Naivedya* (food offering). Later, when Vāmanrao was to leave Garudeshwar, Swāmi Mahārāj returned this picture to him. From then onwards, the picture was included in Vāmanrao's daily worship. To this day this sacred image is being worshipped at the holy sanctum in Shri Vasudev Nivās at Pune.

At Garudeshwar, Vāmanrao began suffering from malaria. Swāmi Mahārāj advised him to refrain from bathing, and to practice more of *Dhauti* and *Mayurāsana*. Vāmanrao did not bathe for around a month, and on the day of Dassera expressed his wish to bathe. Swāmi Mahārāj took some water from his Kamandaloo and sprinkled it on Vāman, saying, "There, you have your bath!" Swāmi Mahārāj was known for insisting on strictly observing religious rituals. However this incidence shows that this was tempered with practicality and compassion.

Swāmi Mahārāj Passes Away

Vāmanrao took Swāmi Mahārāj's leave and left Garudeshwar in the month of *Ashwin*. A few months later on 23rd June 1914 (*Ashadh Shudha* 1, 1914 AD), he learnt about Swāmiji's departure from his physical frame. Swāmi Mahārāj had willingly left his earthly body at an appointed hour through Yogic means. Though we do not have any record of the impact of this momentous event on Vāmanrao, it must have come as very deep shock. We can only imagine how orphaned he must have felt.

Years in Barshi

Vāmanrao spent a period of around 3-4 years following Swāmi Mahārāj's demise at Kolhapur. He established himself in the profession of photography and

earned a fair amount of money and recognition. He also received the support of Kolhapur's ruler at the time Chhatrapati Shāhu Mahārāj. A photograph of Lord Washington taken by Vāmanrao received wide recognition. Also during this time, Vāmanrao used to conduct the Puja and other religious rituals at Kolhapur's Nārāyan Swami's temple. His income from photography was not very regular, and so he was on the lookout for a job. Finally, in 1917, responding to an advertisement for the post of a drawing teacher in a Municipal School in Barshi, Vāmanrao went there with elder brother Shankar Shastri. He met the principal of the school at Barshi - Yashwant Nārāyan Vaidya (aka *Vaidya master*). Impressed by Vāmanrao's talent and background, *Vaidya master* recommended his name to higher officials without even checking certificates and other papers. And thus, Vāmanrao was recruited to Barshi's Municipal School No. 1. The kind and elderly *Master*, being a widower living with his sister and 4-year old son, also accommodated Vāmanrao in his own home. He was a devout *Wārkarī* – a regular pilgrim of Pandharpur. This was how he had acquired the company of reputed contemporary scholars, viz. Sant Dāsganu Mahārāj, Shri. Māmā Dāndekar, Shri. Keshavrāo Deshmukh, Shri. Gurudev Rānade etc. Vaidya master was impressed by Vāmanrao's steadfast religiosity, simple lifestyle and celibacy.

Because of similar life values, a bond of deep friendship was forged between the two which lasted for a lifetime. Vāmanrao respected Vaidya master as his elder brother. After a while, Vāmanrao decided to bring his mother Umābai and sister Godutāi to stay with him. Vaidya Master appreciated Vāmanrao's wishes and arranged a convenient accommodation for him.

Vāmanrao worked as a drawing teacher at the Barshi school for ten years. In his spare time, he undertook

photography and drawing assignments. He became friendly with several like-minded folks like Shri. Prahlād Shastri Joshi, advocate Murgutkar and others. Youngsters like Bāpu Kubade, Vyanku Kulkarni, Bhaskar Bhāgwat, were drawn to him because of their interest in Yoga and became his students. Many of these would later receive *Diksha* (initiation) from Vāmanrao. All these like-minded people had formed a kind of informal spiritual fraternity. They read various religious texts together. Kāshi-based Shri Yogānand Swāmi visited Barshi once. He was impressed by Vāmanrao's Yogic progress and declared Vāmanrao as an advanced Yogi from whom seekers in Barshi stood to greatly benefit.

Yearning for the Awakening of Kundalini

Vāmanrao's yogic practices and knowledge continued to progress. Shri. Swāmi Mahārāj had showered absolute benediction on him by initiating him, imparting knowledge of Yoga and Vedanta, and above all, the beatific vision of Lord Dattatreya. Despite this, Vāmanrao had an unsettling feeling of being deficient in some way. It is difficult to fathom the origin of this feeling why it affected him so deeply. Shri. Swāmi Mahārāj's other devotees like Shri. Dixit Swāmi, Shri. Yogānand Saraswati, Shri Seetārām Mahārāj Tembe had acquired perfection in their spiritual practice through Swāmiji's grace. In no way were Vāmanrao's potential or his efforts any less than them. And yet, he had this feeling of wanting in some way! Retrospectively, we can now recognize that this restlessness was in fact a divinely induced urge to guide him to his spiritual mission, namely, the spread of the Kundalini Shaktipāt Yoga, not only in Maharashtra, but also all over India and the world. The Shaktipāt tradition that originated in Bengal was destined to spread southward and Vāmanrao was the divinely chosen conduit.

Vāmanrao used to recite daily Shri. Swāmi Maharaj's *Dwisāhasri*. In *Yogarahasya* of *Dwisāhasri* and in Swāmi Mahārāj's other texts, *Shaktichālan* (activation of the dormant inner spiritual power- the *Kundalini*), has been described. The awakening of this serpent power or *Kundalini Shakti*, as mentioned in these texts, bestow through a series of Yogic processes, many powers on the individual culminating in the realization Self. Vāmanrao had heard of the *Kundalini Shakti* from Swāmi Mahārāj, and he began to yearn for *Kundalini* awakening. He intensified his tireless yogic practices towards achieving this object.

While in Barshi, he read Shri. Brahmānand Swami's book titled "*Yogarasāyan*." He went to Pushkar to Shri. Brahmānand Swāmi. Under the latter's guidance, Vāmanrao practiced 6 hours of *Pranāyām* every day. Unfortunately, he could not get a proper diet for these practices and also the weather in Pushkar did not suit him. So he had to abandon this pursuit and return to Barshi. On his way back, he visited Ajmer and Garudeshwar.

However, his restlessness did not cease. He wrote a letter to Shri. Govind Mahārāj Pundit, who was at the time in Hoshangabad, and expressed his yearning for *Kundalini* awakening. Govind Mahārāj agreed to guide him.

On the banks of the Narmada

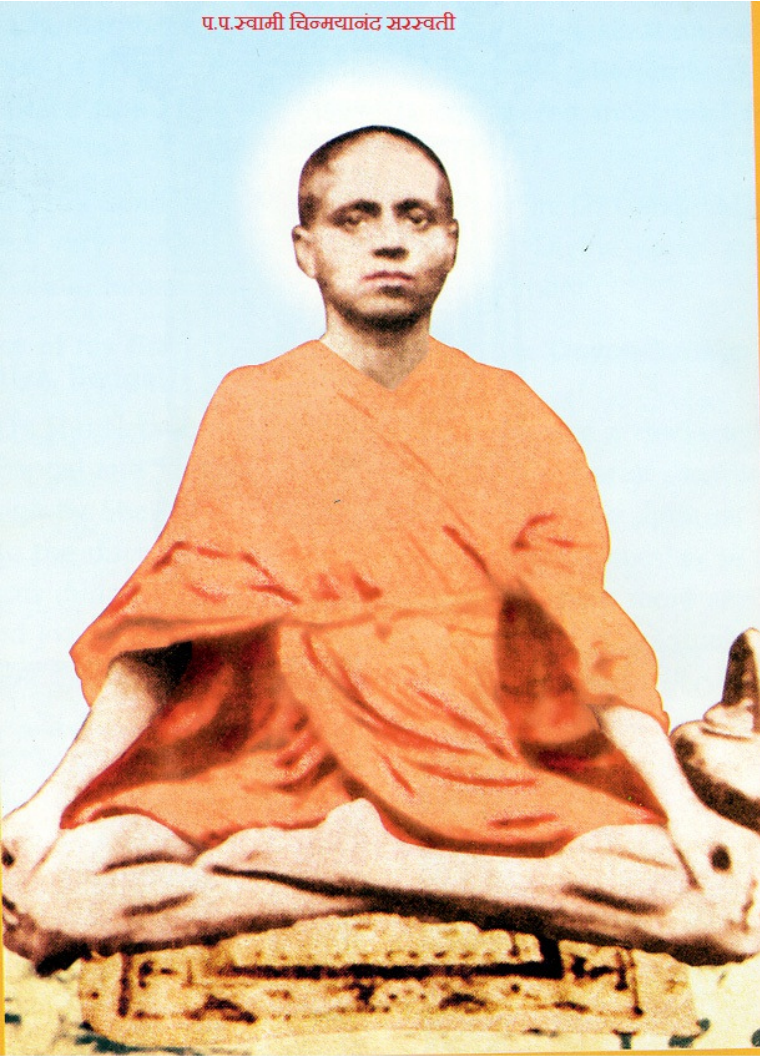
Vāmanrao took time off for 2-3 months for his stay at Hoshangābād. He took his mother along with him so that he would get proper meals, unlike in Pushkar. A separate room was arranged for him in the Dattatreya temple founded by Shri. Sitārām Māhārāj, which was located on the Kharrā ghāt. There, Vāmanrao was joined by Shri. Shankarrāo Ajegaonkar, Shri. Bābā Mahājan of Hingoli and Vaidya master of Bārshi. Vāmanrao started rigorous practice of Prānāyām from the very next day after his meeting with Govind Māhārāj.

Swāmi Chinmayānand Saraswati

Around this time, a young Bengali Sanyāsi (mendicant) Shri. Chinmayānand Saraswati also arrived in Hoshangabad. He hailed from a family of priests (Chakravartis) in Dhaka (now in Bangladesh). Yogesh by name, he was deeply religious. Being the eldest son and having lost his father at a very young age he had to shoulder the financial and priestly responsibilities at a young age, interrupting his education. He also participated in the political agitation against the division of Bengal. However these activities could not tie him down to worldly life for long. He continued to ardently pray and meditate and seek guidance from Mother Goddess (Kalimātā). He left home at the age of 20 after having a vision of the Mātā directing him to his Guru Shri. Atmānand Brahmachāri of Chitalkot. Obeying Her orders, he proceeded in the middle of night to Chitalkot and sought out his Guru who initiated him into celibacy and the *Shaktipat* tradition. The Guru and the disciple then spent two years in worship and service at the Ashram of Shri. Nārāyanteerth Swāmi Mahārāj in Vinotia. Later, they returned to Dhaka where Yogesh sought his mother's permission and was initiated into *Sanyās* (monkhood) from Tripurling Saraswati and was named Chinmayānand Saraswati. After another couple of years at the Vinotia Ashram, following the instructions of Shri. Nārāyanteerth Swāmi, he spent one and a half years in the Himalayas in deep penance. At the end of this period, he was directed by Jagadamba Mātā to "proceed southwards." Accordingly, he went to the Hatharas station where a young devotee bought him a ticket to Hoshangabad. Thus Swāmi Chinmayānand landed on the northern bank of the Narmada at the Mangalwar *ghāt*.

A sub-judge named Shri. Sadāshivrao Parānde who was recently posted at Hoshangabad on promotion from

प.प.स्वामी चिन्मयानंद सरस्वती



Swami Chinmayanand Saraswati

Nagpur was putting up with Shri. Govind Mahārāj. He came in contact with Vāmanrao and his associates, and owing to his religious bend of mind and interest in Yoga, became close to them. Shri. Parānde who was a serious student of Kulārṇav Tantra was impressed by Vāmanrao's efforts for Kundalini awakening. He told Vāmanrao that there was an easy technique of activating Kundalini which was documented in the *Tantric* texts—the *Vedha Dikshā*. In this technique, an able Guru, by his sheer will power, can awaken the dormant spiritual potential (*Kundalini Shakti*) of the disciple. Vāmanrao and his newly acquired circle of friends began to look out for such a sage among the pilgrims that perennially thronged the *ghāts* of Narmada. One day, a lawyer friend of the judge, Nārāyanprasād invited a young Bengali *Sanyāsi* for lunch and asked the *Sanyāsi* if he knew about *Vedha Diksha* and whether he knew any *yogi* who could awaken the Kundalini by this technique. When the *Sanyāsi*, none other than Swāmi Chinmayānand Saraswati, informed the lawyer that he himself was such a person, he was taken aback.

Nārāyanprasād told Judge Parānde about the Swāmi, who induced Nārāyanprasād to get the initiation from the Swāmi, to verify his claim. Swāmiji, considering this as God's will, initiated Nārāyanprasād who immediately started having amazing experiences in line with those described in the *Tantric* texts. Impressed by the lawyer's experiences and progress, Vāmanrao and his friends went to meet Swāmi Chinmayānand. The Swāmi was in his thirties, but had boyish looks and appeared to be in his twenties. It seemed unbelievable that such a young Swāmi would have such miraculous prowess. When they saw for themselves how some of the disciples of Swamiji performed complicated *Yogasanas*, *prānāyam* and other yogic *kriyas* with unbelievable ease, any remaining doubts in their minds vanished. It appeared that these yogic actions, which even an

accomplished Yogi would find difficult, were automatically happening to the initiated disciples. They began to revere Swāmi Chinmayānand. They were further impressed by his simplicity, selfless attitude and meditative demeanor. Vāmanrao and friends began to visit Narmada *ghāt* every day. Swāmiji also developed a fondness for this bunch of ardent seekers of simple and religious mindset. Swāmiji began to enjoy long walks with them, had discussions with them, and answered their queries.

After a few weeks, one of the companions of Vāmanrao, Baba Mahājan, was summoned to his home town for some family work. His yogic practices were quite advanced. He expressed his wish to be initiated by Swāmishri. Swāmishri replied “maybe later,” which disappointed Baba Mahājan. Next day, when he went to the Narmada *ghāt* to take leave of Swāmiji, he was asked to sit on a small carpet and was initiated. At once, he started experiencing powerful *kriyas*. His well-built frame was covered in perspiration. He began to feel a kind of elation and buoyancy. He felt light-bodied. He somehow managed to get up after an hour or so and returned to Kharra *ghāt* in that incredible state. He told Vāmanrao about his initiation. Vāmanrao asked him about his experiences following initiation. Baba Mahājan simply replied, “See for your own self” and right away sat down to meditate. When Vāmanrao saw Baba Mahājan’s *kriyas*, he was convinced that *Kundalini* awakening could be achieved through *Vedha Diksha*. His reverence for Swāmiji increased manifold.

Swāmi Chinmayānand at Vāmanrao’s home

During this time, Swāmiji suffered from ill health. Once, just after initiating a devotee (Poornānand), Swāmiji suddenly threw up. Swāmiji realized that Poornānand must have earlier suffered from poisoning, deeply embedded

sanskār of which affected Swāmiji causing the throwing up. On enquiring, Poornānand confirmed that he was indeed poisoned earlier in his life. Because of Swāmiji's adverse living conditions and poor and irregular diet, it was not possible for him to regain his health quickly. However, being bound by the diktats of Sanyāsi life, Swāmiji suffered stoically. Vāmanrao realized Swāmiji's predicament, and after taking his mother's consent decided to invite Swāmiji to stay with him. He said to Swāmiji, "It is my mother's wish that you should come and stay with us for a while." Swāmiji replied, "That is my Mother's wish too!" Everything Swāmiji did was at Goddess Jagadambā's command. Later, he is said to have remarked, "She does not let me stay at a place for too long." Non-compliance of Her wishes even invited punishment. Swāmi Chinmayānand had a bond with Goddess Kali (Jagadamba) similar to the one Shri Vāsudevānand Saraswati Mahārāj had with Lord Dattātreya.

Vamanrao's Resolve

At Vāmanrao's place, Swāmiji got adequate rest and healthy food and he began to recuperate. His disciples would come there to seek his blessings. He noticed Vāmanrao's exceptional daily routine, especially his practice of *prānāyam* for awakening of the *Kundalini*. Vāmanrao wanted to seek initiation in Shaktipāt Yoga, but had a niggling doubt in his mind. He later recounted this to Shri Mānawatkar Mahārāj. He said, "I have been initiated by one of the greatest holy men, and I am his staunch follower. Would seeking initiation from Loknath Teerth Swāmi Mahārāj be a disloyalty? I even have had esoteric experiences after initiation from my Guru. Why should I be even considering taking *Diksha* (initiation) of Shaktipāt yoga? This question played on my mind and resulted in a lot of mental turmoil. One night, I prayed to my Sadguru before going to bed. In the middle of the night in a

dream, I had a vision of Shri Swami Mahārāja in radiant light. He told me, "There is no harm in seeking *Shaktipāt Diksha*." This was a direct divine directive that settled all doubts and my mind was resolute. Considering it to be Swāmi Mahārāj's command, I decided to seek *Shaktipāt Diksha*. I was convinced that this incidence had a divine purpose to it."

Shaktipāt Diksha

Even as Vāmanrao had no qualms seeking initiation from Swāmi Chinmayānand, Swāmiji thought it inappropriate to interfere with Vāmanrao's ongoing practice of the *Prānāyam* path under the guidance of another Guru. He replied, "Let us see later." He reassured Vāmanrao by adding, "You will be initiated when the time is ripe." In the event, Vāmanrao did not have to wait for long. Just 4-5 days later, he had a premonitory dream of being initiated by Swāmi Chinmayānand and experiencing wonderful *kriyas*. The same evening, Swāmiji made Vāmanrao sit before him and initiated him by a touch on his forehead. Swāmiji passed his hand up Vāmanrao's spine and keeping his thumb on the forehead, placed his hand on the top of Vāmanrao's head, corresponding to the thousand-petalled chakra. Vāmanrao's body already lightened by *prānāyam* began to jump froglike in *Padmāsan* up to 1 -1 ½ feet above the ground (*Dārduri gati*)! He began to experience rapid *bhasrika*. He was dripping in perspiration and feeling extreme elation. After an hour or so, when Vāmanrao opened his eyes, Swāmiji enquired, "So, Vāmanrao, has the *Kundalini* awakened? Wonderful! That was an extraordinary session." Vāmanrao prostrated in front of Swāmiji and placed his head on Swāmiji's feet in silent gratitude. Swāmiji lovingly stroked his head and said, "May you attain good fortune (*Kalyān*)!" reminding Vāmanrao the similar blessing of Shri. Vāsudevānand Swāmi Mahārāj at Havnur.

In this unexpected manner, Vāmanrao's objective in coming to Hoshangabad was fulfilled. He spent the next 7-8 days meditating in the presence of Swāmiji. That year, he also celebrated *Gurudwādashi* and Diwali festival in Swāmiji's company. This was the only time when Shri Guru Mahārāj (Vāmanrao) missed his annual pilgrimage of *Gurudwādashi* to Wādi. Later, Vāmanrao and his entourage went to Aurangabad, Ajanta, Ellora etc. and finally reached Shri. Ajegaonkar's home in Hingoli. After spending 2 weeks at Hingoli, Vāmanrao returned to Barshi with his mother. Swāmi Loknāth Teerth Mahārāj went to Shri. Parande's home in Amravati. From there, he went back to Hoshangabad and spent a year there.

Vāmanrao gets the authority to initiate

Back in Barshi, Vāmanrao went back to his work and assignments. He practiced his newfound yogic practices with great fervor. He regularly corresponded with Swāmiji. He wanted Swāmiji to come to Barshi and stay there for a while. His friends in Barshi were also eager to set eyes on Shri Swāmiji. Finally, in deference to everyone's wishes, Swāmiji came to Barshi in January 1924. He stayed in Barshi for around 2-3 months during which time Vāmanrao provided the best hospitality and served him in every possible way. Swāmiji wanted a book by the name of "*Jeevanmuktivivek*." Vāmanrao obtained this book with commentary, copied it in his own beautiful handwriting, and offered it to Swāmiji. Swāmiji, in return, explained the book to Vāmanrao, Vaidya master, and Prahlād Shastri. During this visit, Vāmanrao's sister Godutāi, Shri. Murgutkar, and Nārāyanrao Purandare took initiation from Swāmiji. When Bāpu Kubade – a student of Vāmanrao requested to be initiated, Swāmiji said to Vāmanrao, "You look after him!" After a trip to Pandharpur in the company of Vāmanrao, Swāmiji left Barshi for Ujjain.

An important member Vāmanrao's friend circle was Prahlād Shastri Joshi. A priest in Vedic tradition, Prahlād Shastri taught in Barshi's higher secondary school and was also the principal of the local Sanskrit school. His wife Gopikabai expressed desire to take *Shaktipāt* initiation. Vāmanrao wrote to Swāmiji on her behalf. In reply, Swāmiji wrote a letter in which he instructed Vāmanrao to initiate Gopikabai on an auspicious day, after due permission from her husband. Thus, on the day of *Anantchaturdashi* in 1924, Vāmanrao initiated Gopikabai by placing his right palm on her head, in the presence of and with the consent of Shri. Joshi. She experienced intense kriyas for an hour culminating in deep meditation. Afterwards, she bowed down to Vāmanrao in deep reverence, offered him Rs 2 as an offering (*dakshina*). "Swāmiji has blessed you. This is good," saying so Vāmanrao forwarded the *dakshina* to Swāmiji. This just shows Vāmanrao's humility and his faith that *Shaktipāt Diksha* was the grace of Shri Swāmiji with him being only a medium.

From this point, let us address Vāmanrao as "Gulavaṇi Mahārāj" or "Guru Mahārāj" or simply "Mahārāj." Here, we have completed the first half of Guru Maharaj's life. From aspirant, Vāmanrao became an adept. He reached a stage in his life where all his future endeavors were for the uplift of fellow human beings.

Guru Mahārāj comes to Pune

As described in the first half, Shri. Guru Mahārāj was ordained by Shri. Swāmi Chinmayānand as 'Sadguru' (Master with the authority to impart *Diksha* or initiation). Gopikabai was the first person to be thus initiated. After this, Guru Mahārāj initiated three of his students (again by the directive of Swāmiji). Swāmiji spent the Chāturmās of 1925 in Barshi. Later, Guru Mahārāj travelled to the home towns of Vyanku

Kulkarni (Aundhi), Bāpu Kubade (Sholapur) and Bhaskar Bhāgwat (Daund) to initiate them.

Soon, the school in Barshi saw a change in management. Owing to differences with the new management, Vaidya master resigned from the school. Guru Mahārāj found it difficult to work in the school after the departure of Vaidya master. He applied for a long leave and took Vaidya master to Kudutri. In Kudutri, the Gulavaṇi family settled all property related matters among the brothers. Mahārāj expressed that he had no interest in any property or land and handed over his share to his brothers. However, he voluntarily accepted the onus of looking after his mother for the rest of her life. From Kudutri, along with Vaidya master, Mahārāj went to Hyderabad to seek the blessings of the revered saint Bhataji Bāpu Mahārāj and from there proceeded to Kuruguddi. He had visited Kuruguddi once before, but this time he completed seven recitations of *Samsholki Gurucharitra*. On returning to Barshi, Mahārāj formally resigned from his job. Meanwhile Vaidya master had gone to Pune. Vaidya master had a *Wāri* (annual pilgrimage) companion in Pune by the name of Shri. Natesh Iyer, Superintendent Engineer, on whose recommendation Mahārāj got a job as a drawing teacher in Nutan Marathi School in Pune. Apparently, God's will was for Guru Mahārāj to accomplish his life's mission based in Pune. With Vaidya master's help, Mahārāj got a tenement at 20, Nārāyan Peth at the Gowaikar *chawl*. Vaidya master was keen to find some caring young person to look after Mahārāj. At the time, Bhujangrao Bhalerao, a simple, virtuous and religious youth related to Vaidya master, moved to Pune from his native Doṇaje village to work in the Pune court. He rented a tenement next door to Maharaj's and proved to be a caring neighbor. Not long after this, Bhujangrao's wife Godavari was initiated by Mahārāj. The Bhalerao couple and later even

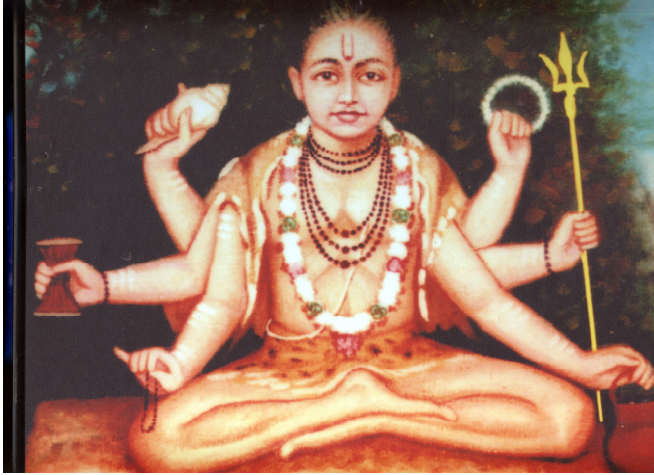
their sons devotedly served Guru Mahārāj throughout his life and became a virtual family to him. The owner of the Gowaikar *chawl* Shri. Dadasaheb and his family also showed a great amount of respect towards Mahārāj. To facilitate Maharaj's rules of purity, Dadasaheb got an independent tap installed for him, a rare privilege in tenements. Mahārāj brought his mother and sister Godutāi to Pune. He then established a daily routine deftly incorporating his job as well as religious and spiritual tasks.

The Gowaikar *chawl* was like any other *chawl*, but it assumed an ashram-like sanctity because of Guru Maharaj's presence. Mahārāj stayed in 20, Nārāyan Peth until the Panshet floods of 1964, after which he shifted to Vasudev Nivās. It was in this 2-room tenement that he fulfilled his life's mission. This place was blessed by the conduct of many a religious functions. Many great sages and saints sanctified this place. People eager to be initiated were initiated here. Many achieved self-realization and spiritual fulfillment. Many atheists turned believers. And all this happened through the powerful, yet peaceful, modest and effortless influence of Shri. Guru Mahārāj.

Guru Maharaj's Artistic pursuits

Guru Maharaj's work in the early days was done quietly and without much show. His social identity was that of an able and sincere drawing teacher. During the Ganesh festival, he made Ganesh idols. He used to draw beautiful *rangolis* also. He was ambidextrous and could draw simultaneously with both hands. One day, the headmaster Shri. Potdar gave him an English book on making crepe flowers. Referring to this book, Mahārāj made really attractive flowers which were highly appreciated in the annual day exhibition. So life-like were these flowers that they are believed to have attracted bees. The European

Baal Dattatreya (Dattatreya as child)



Shind Style Ganesha



Shinde Style Ganesha



Atrivarad

manufacturers of crepe paper were greatly impressed by Maharaj's creative art. Many people bought bouquets of these flowers. This artwork not only found place in many art exhibitions but also won several prizes. The flowers were also exhibited and appreciated in Boston through a representative of Denison Company. An English education officer and his wife were so impressed by the flowers that they showed keen interest in learning this art from Guru Mahārāj. Mahārāj, though very reluctantly, agreed to this request, and used to go to Camp area to teach the lady flower-making. This publicity was not to his liking, and in future Mahārāj took great care to keep his talents a secret. Guru Mahārāj made seven oil paintings of Shri. Swāmi Mahārāj. Later, at the behest of friends, he made some personal portraits too. It is believed that he made paintings of six or seven of the sixteen incarnations of Lord Dattātreya. He had earlier painted the *Atrivarad* incarnation at the request of Shri. Dixit Swāmi Mahārāj. This painting can be seen today at Shri. Vasudev Nivās (see the inside of back cover). An idol based on this painting can be found at the Shri Vāsudevpeeth at Amrapur.

Guru Maharaj's Ganesh idols used to be simple, creative and very attractive. A Ganesh idol wearing a Shindeshāhi pagadi received much acclaim (reproduced on the inside of front cover). Copies of many of Maharaj's drawing and paintings can be seen at the Shri. Gulavani Mahārāj Dharmashala at Ganagapur. Mahārāj had deep knowledge of both eastern and western styles of painting which occasionally became apparent in the company of art experts.

Daily Schedule

Guru Maharaj's household in Pune was a typical "bachelor" household consisting of him, his mother and his sister. The household had to be run on a meager teacher's salary. This automatically made their lifestyle very simple. But within that simplicity was a lot of order and harmony. The routine was preplanned and followed religiously. All three family members being religious by nature, conversations naturally revolved around spirituality. They owned limited clothing, but this was of good quality, clean and tidy. Maharaj's dressing style reflected an artist's creativity right from his alluring headgear to his becoming woolen coat.

Mahārāj would wake up at the break of dawn at 4:30, freshen up and recite the Ajapā Jap as instructed by Shri Swāmi Mahārāj. Then he would pay respects to his mother and sit for meditation (*Sadhana*) for three hours. One constant feature of his Sadhana was a type of Pranāyām named Bhrāmari Kumbhak after the loud sound like that of a horde of bees. To prevent this from reaching outside, he had papered the walls of the room making it almost soundproof. He did not want his meditational practices to become a common knowledge. Around this time, he also started practicing the arduous Khechari mudra.

After his meditation, he would read the newspaper and then go to the barber for a shave - if the day was astrologically suitable for shaving. After his bath, he would perform 1200 recitations of the Gayatri Mantra. He would read Bhagwad Gita and Vishnusahstranām following Shri. Swāmi Maharaj's bequest. He also read the Dwisāhasri Gurucharitra (*Saptāh* or ritual weekly recitation) and Aitareya Upanishad from a copy which he had himself written. He also offered daily worship to the holy Pādukas bestowed on his mother, with Vedic Mantras viz. *Rudra*, *Purushasukta* and *Pavmān*.

School started at 10:30 in the morning. Before that, Mahārāj would have his food. His diet was simple and nutritious. Meals were always cooked and eaten strictly as per the traditional code of purity (*Sowale*). To humor his mother, he would take a short nap before leaving for school. In the evenings, after school, he would go walking for an hour and return home by 7:30. After freshening up, he would proceed with his evening *Sandhya*, *aarti* and other daily recitations. This also included an hour of meditation. The family did not eat dinner but only light snacks in the evening. Mahārāj had a routine of laying his mother's bed, pressing her feet and touching her feet with his forehead before going to bed. He unfailingly adhered to this routine except when they were out of town or on some other special occasions.

Mahārāj was recognized as a simple, sincere, regular, soft-spoken and kind teacher who was popular among the students. Beyond this, nobody knew much about him, his intense religiosity, his yogic practices or achievements, or even his vow of celibacy. He used to be on friendly terms with all and sometimes would help others. Yet, he remained unattached. He reflected his Guru's teachings of being detached, steadfast in spiritual pursuit, introvert and modest.

Although not socially very active, he did make it a point to attend all school functions and some select functions in the city. He never missed the Vasant Vyakhyanmāla (the spring series of public discourses) held in Pune and discourses by eminent scholars like Bālāshāstri Hardās. Apart from this, he would celebrate the death anniversary of Shri. Tembeswāmi Mahārāj at his home in which all his neighbors in the chawl joined enthusiastically.

Shri Loknath Teerth Swāmi Maharaj's Pune Sojourns

In 1927, Swāmi Chinmayānand was ordained into sceptored (*dandi*) *Sanyās* by his Guru Swāmi Shankar



P.P.Shri Loknath Tirth

Purshottam Teerth and bestowed on him the name (Yogapatta) of Loknāth Teerth. In the summer of 1928, Swāmiji came to Pune and stayed at Maharaj's place for two months. He became acquainted with the Bhalerao family and Bhujangrao Bhalerao was initiated by Swāmiji. He even visited the Bhalerao's village Doṇaje. From Pune, Swāmiji went to Barshi and then proceeded up north. He spent the Chāturmās at Hardwar where he was afflicted by influenza. He fasted to regain his health, but the weakness persisted. After the Chāturmās, he went to Hrishikesh. A sudden Yearning to meet Guru Mahārāj, brought him to Pune. There, he recuperated under the care of Mahārāj and the other devotees. Swāmiji, in turn, helped them to progress in their Sadhana. From Pune, he proceeded to Vyasa Kshetra on the banks of river Narmada for the Chāturmās, from where he again returned to Pune. After two weeks in Pune, he accompanied Bhujangrao Bhalerao to his village. While travelling, Swāmiji met with an accident and injured his left arm. He returned to Pune for treatment. When his arm healed, he left for Kudutri reaching there on the day of Ram Navami, receiving the hospitality of Maharaj's family. From Kudutri, he went to nearby Tārāle to meet Tanubāi Badkatte, and to Murgud to meet Ramabāi Joshi (Maharaj's sisters). Then he went to Kolhapur to seek blessings of *the Goddess Mahālakṣmi*. He then spent some time in Hoshangabad and went to Kāshi. After this, Swāmiji went to Pune only after 5-6 years. During this period, he and Mahārāj regularly corresponded with each other. Mahārāj also regularly sent a significant amount of money from his meager salary to Swāmiji as Gurudakshina. He also sent money on several special occasions. Mahārāj would keep a close watch on Swāmiji's health through correspondence. Swāmi Mahārāj, who never asked anyone for money, however, never hesitated to ask "Vāman" for it. In fact, when he was in need

of money, Kali Mātā would direct him to write to Vāman. From 1938, Swāmi Mahārāj visited Pune at least once in a year. Sometimes he stayed in the Gowaikar Chawl, and sometimes at some other devotee's house. In 1940, he suffered from Beriberi and this affected his heart adversely. At this time, a disciple of Guru Mahārāj, Jambuwant Singh, tended Swāmi Mahārāj with complete devotion. Later, Swāmiji stayed in Pune for a while, under the care of Mahārāj, Nana Bhalerao and other devotees, and the treatment of Dr. Bendre. On recuperating, he went back to Kāshi, where he had a relapse. Jambuwant Singh sent a telegram to Guru Mahārāj about the seriousness of Swāmiji's condition. Immediately, on hearing this, Mahārāj reached Kāshi. He stayed there for 2-3 months and with the help of Jambuwant Singh, Bhagwantrao Upadhye and other devotees, took proper care of Swāmi Mahārāj. Loknath Teerth Swāmi Maharaj's trip to Pune in 1951 proved to be his last.

Family Tragedies

In 1933, Guru Maharaj's sister from Tārāle, Tanubāi, lost her husband. Seven to eight months later, Mahārāj lost his mother Umābai. Mahārāj went to Kudutri and looked after her before she passed away. Mahārāj was overwhelmed by grief at the loss of his mother. Many other tragedies occurred in the Gulavaṇi family around this time: Govindrao became debt-ridden; two of the sisters lost their spouses. In Pune, Godutāi Bhalerao also fell ill. Mahārāj himself was unwell and had only the support of the Bhalerao family. Shripād, a nephew of Mahārāj, suffered from typhoid and was put up in the Gowaikar Chawl on the first floor. He was looked after by his mother Sakhubāi who was unable to handle the situation on her own thereby requiring Mahārāj to share this responsibility also.

Propagation of Kundalini Shaktipat Yoga

During this entire period, Guru Mahārāj continued his work of initiating sincere aspirants in a steady, quiet and unceremonious manner, as he indeed did all through his life. Though he rarely spoke of it, propagation of Kundalini Shaktipat yoga was the prime mission of his life. From time to time, aspirants wanting to be initiated (to receive Diksha) came to him and had their wish fulfilled. As the years advanced, the initial trickle of seekers became a steadily growing flow, and in the final years of his life, a virtual flood! Sincerity, dedication and a determination to adopt a new lifestyle for lifelong pursuit of the Yoga were the main criteria for accepting an aspirant. In his early years at Pune, however, few people realized that anything of special import was taking place. In his lone speech, made at the Amrut Mahotsav (75th birth anniversary), Mahārāj outlined the significance of this Yogic sect thus: **“In this path, disciples are constantly having amazing experiences as per their Karmic constitution. Many have even been cured of so-called ‘incurable’ diseases by just practicing this *Sadhana* (meditation). Over a period of time, disciples have also experienced purification of their mental makeup. Negative thoughts and impulses were banished from the mind filling it with holy thoughts and peace. This wonderful Yoga watched over by Sages from ancient times, is beneficial to all human beings irrespective of their age, sex, race, creed or caste. Practiced by motivated believers for their enlightened self-interest, this unfailing *Yoga Sadhana* has the potential to uplift societies not only in India but the entire world.”** For a better understanding of this divine path, we are reproducing an article by Shri Guru Mahārāj, “Transmission of Spiritual Power” published in “Kalyan Kalpataru:25-7-1940)

Guru Mahārāj considered himself as an humble agent of divine grace. This faith was further strengthened by certain significant events. In the winter of 1934, a certain gentleman who was blessed by the Dakshināmurti deity of Kolhapur came to Mahārāj. He used to receive divine guidance from the deity in the conduct of his life and holy practices. He was directed by Dakshināmurti to seek *Shaktipāt* Diksha from Shri Mahārāj. He experienced remarkable spiritual advancement after being initiated by Shri Guru Mahārāj.

Despite Maharaj's unassuming ways, it was divine will that the Gangā (river) of Kundalini path should flow mightily. The Kalyān magazine published from Gorakhpur, dedicated its 1935 Annual edition to Yoga. An article on the 'Yoga of Kundalini awakening through Guru's Grace' by Tryambakeshwar Khare, a friend of Guru Mahārāj, was published in this issue. Despite Maharaj's instructions to the contrary, he was portrayed in this article as a renowned Shaktipāt Yogi and even his address was publicised. As a result, seekers from all over the country were attracted to Mahārāj. In this way, the flow of the *Diksha* Ganga increased manifold.

There was an Arya Samaji disciple who had been blessed with *Diksha* named Mangaldeo Vedālankār. He happened to go to Aundh (near Sātārā) to the renowned Veda and yoga scholar Pt. Shripad Damodar Sātavalekar. Motivated by Mangaldeo's account, Sātavalekar went to Mahārāj in May 1937 to learn more about this path. All his doubts were cleared and he agreed to all conditions set by Mahārāj, including adopting the Vedic code of conduct. Three months later, he got *Diksha* from Mahārāj.

Aforementioned Shri. Khare's third son had completed his MBBS and was about to appear for his MD examination. He brought this son to Pune for initiation from

Mahārāj. During the Diksha, Shri Khare had a vision of Goddess Jagadamba standing next to Mahārāj and a radiant light emanating from the two and merging to form a circle.

Preparations before Diksha- Mahārāj used to carefully scrutinize every disciple who came to him for *Diksha*. He would explain to each candidate this Yoga and the rules that needed to be followed. Not every seeker received the *Diksha*; many were instead asked to follow some form of worship or penance for a few months and sometimes even a few years. (Towards the end of his lifetime, however, Mahārāj appeared to have become more generous in granting *Diksha*) His aim was not to gain more and more disciples. He was confident that the path of *Sadhanā* was a wonderful way to self-realization. So he wanted more and more people to get advantage of this path. However, a certain amount of inner strength, will power and the right motivation were essential prerequisites. A person lacking in these was asked to follow some other form of worship until he/she was deemed fit to receive *Diksha*.

Miraculous Healing: - Tantra literature mentions that the *Kundalini Shaktipāt Yoga* can cure even certain incurable diseases. But Mahārāj was against granting *Diksha* for the sake of treating diseases or for other worldly benefits. He explained this to seekers coming to him, and made it clear to them about not expecting any kind of materialistic gains from their *Sadhana*. Yet, some people did come to him with these types of expectations. One such person - Shri. Bhagwantrao Upadhye from Thurawas in Gujarat came to Mahārāj with an intractable ulcer on his back. Mahārāj told him that he would consider initiation after his recovery from the ailment. Bhagwantrao misinterpreted this to mean that Mahārāj expected some monetary gift. So he took his wife's

expensive nose ring and placed it in front of Mahārāj. Mahārāj told him to at once take back the nose ring. He explained that the reason that Bhagwantrao had been denied Diksha was that as per the code of *Sadhanā*, Diksha should not be given to a person afflicted by an illness. He made it clear that it had nothing whatsoever to do with money. But to remove any doubts from Bhagwantrao's mind, he was initiated the very next day. Bhagwantrao was later blessed with the holy company of Shri Loknath Teerth Swami Mahārāj. Meditating in Swāmiji's saintly presence cured his ulcer completely within a year very much to the surprise of the physicians treating him.

Code of Restraints: - Mahārāj avoided initiating followers of other yogic sects who were practicing under the guidance of their own Guru. Shri. Moholkar of Sholapur worshipped under the guidance of a capable Shrividyā guru. He pleaded to Mahārāj for Diksha, but Mahārāj granted him *Diksha* only on receiving a written permission from Moholkar's Guru. Mahārāj was very particular about observing proper precincts between different sects. He revered the priests at Narsobawadi like his Guru and refused to initiate them. Because of this reason, the great scholar and devotee of Lord Dattātreyā, Pt. Atmāram Shastri Jere could not get Diksha. When he expressed his regret at not getting Diksha, Mahārāj told him that the Wadi priests are by birth initiates of Lord Dattātreyā himself.

Many people were mysteriously told, "Your Guru is another." Once, the famous Wārkarī saint Sonopant Dandekar requested for Diksha. Mahārāj told him, "You do not need it." The great scholar from Kāshi, Shri Rajeshwar Shastri Dravid asked Mahārāj for Diksha. Mahārāj instantly got up and prostrated before him and said, "To me, you are Vishweshwar Himself." Later some disciples asked, "Mahārāj,

if you had granted Diksha to him, it would have added great prestige to our tradition.” To this Mahārāj had replied, “That is what we have to guard against!” For Mahārāj, Diksha was not a means to augment his prestige, but an instrument to help people advance on the path to the Divine.

Selfless Mission: - In its January 1940 issue, the English magazine Kalyān Kalpataru carried an article “Transmission of Spiritual Power” by Guru Mahārāj (reproduced as an appendix to this book). The then Finance Minister of Bombay Presidency, Sir Chunnilal Mehta, read this article and came to meet Mahārāj. He solicited Diksha and soon he and his wife were initiated. They invited Mahārāj to their home and venerated him. They expected Mahārāj to seek some valuable gift in view of their apparent opulence. But this did not happen. Shri. Mehta couldn’t resist asking Mahārāj if he wished to have some gift. Mahārāj declined but Shri Mehta persisted and offered to build a house for Mahārāj and make financial arrangements for his livelihood. Mahārāj flatly refused saying, “If I accept your favors now, I would have to take several births just to repay the debt.” This emphasizes how selfless was the Diksha mission of Shri Guru Mahārāj.

Shri Jambuwant Singh: Around this time, Shri Jambuwant Singh a cloth merchant from Kāshi came to Mahārāj in his quest for Sadguru. He had a dream informing him that his Sadguru was in Pune. Once in Pune, he chanced to read the ‘Yoga’ issue of ‘Kalyan’ and Shri Khare’s article in it. Having thus obtained Maharaj’s name and address, he sought Mahārāj at a function at the N.M. School. Mahārāj came out of the function, heard his request and gave him a time and place for the initiation. Thus Jambuwant Singh was initiated. When Mahārāj came to know that Jambuwant Singh

was from Kāshi, he enjoined him to serve Shri Loknath Teerth Swami Mahārāj to the best of his capability. Then on, Jambuwant Singh served Swāmiji with unstinting and selfless devotion right until the Swāmiji's demise.

Pundit Yogindrakrishna Daurgadattashastri was the hereditary priest to the royal family of the State of Idar, Madhya Pradesh. More than seven generations of Shastriji's family had been practicing the *Shrividyā* form of worship. Shashtriji had complete knowledge of the Shaktipāt sect, but he completely lacked any experience. Shastriji's fame reached Maharaj's disciple Gulabsingh Ranade's ears, who went to him seeking *Mantra Diksha* of this sect. After receiving the *Mantra* from Shashtriji, as Gulabsingh sat chanting the Mantra, he started experiencing intense *Kriyas* and lost consciousness of his body. Shashtriji saw his state and the *Kriyas* and instantly recognized the manifestations of Kundalini awakening and knew them not to be the result of his *Mantra*. He asked Gulabsingh from where he had received this faculty. Having thus got the reference of Guru Mahārāj, he started corresponding with him, and was soon initiated through a letter. When the Prince of Idar learnt this, he too went to Pune and received *Diksha* from Mahārāj.

Diksha to Sanyāsins - In 1943, Shri. Pradnyanandsaraswati (Karve Swami) from Khed (Rajgurunagar) came to Mahārāj. He was a well known devotee of Saint Tulsidas and had translated the Tulsi Ramayan into Marathi. He requested to be granted *Diksha*. Mahārāj expressed his inability since *Sanyāsins* were like Guru to him. However, Shri Karve Swami wouldn't relent and Mahārāj had to yield. He duly worshiped to the *Sanyāsi* offering *Diksha* as *Dakshina* (a humble offering from a disciple).

Spontaneous awakening of Kundalini- Kundalini can be awakened by Pranāyām, Gayatri mantra recitation or even by prior good Karma. But in the absence of competent guidance, such aspirants may face problems. In January 1943, a gentleman by the name of Anandrao Lele came to Mahārāj. His Kundalini had awakened after 25 years of Gayatri chanting. But he was experiencing some difficulties. Mahārāj formally initiated him, removing the obstacles and facilitating *Prānāyam* (breath control). Shri Nana Patwardhan from Thane had also experienced spontaneous awakening of Kundalini. The resulting experiences and *Kriyas* were too unsettling for him. Thinking that he had some kind of ailment, he consulted several doctors but to no avail. After a couple of years of much suffering, he met Mahārāj by whose graceful initiation, he was reassured and set upon the blissful path of Kundalini yoga.

Informal Initiations: - Shaktipat Diksha, springing from the Guru's resolve, is free from any constraints of time, place or other formalities. Even so, Mahārāj always chose an auspicious day on which the planetary positions were conducive. Mostly, Diksha was given at his own house or in the Puja room of the disciple's home. In 1944, on his way to Kāshi, at the Pipariya railway station Mahārāj had to catch a train at midnight. Many disciples from nearby (6 miles) Khaperkheda village had come to the station to see him off. Two ladies from the group insisted on getting Diksha there and then and were supported by the other disciples. These devotees wouldn't take "no" for an answer. Always compassionate to disciples, Shri Mahārāj had to yield to their demand. The railway station was not all that crowded. Mahārāj told the people to hold hands and form a circle within which the two aspiring ladies were seated. Even as Shri Guru Mahārāj made a resolve (*Sankalp*), women started

experiencing such intense *kriyas* that the others had to control them to avoid commotion on the station. Similarly, a man named Solapurkar experienced a surge of the serpent power, merely at the sight of Mahārāj at a railway station. Many have experienced Kundalini awakening on first sight of Guru Mahārāj, including an author of this book.

Unsolicited Diksha - There is a solitary incidence of Diksha bestowed upon an aspirant without his asking for it. In 1962, Mahārāj very hospitably invited Shri. Gnyaneshwar Kondiba Kale (a follower of Warkari sect) of Pune and consecrated him with *Diksha*.

Diksha by Guru's resolve - To awaken a disciple's Kundalini, Guru Mahārāj did not have to be in physical proximity to the disciple. Many, staying in far off places and even across the seas, were initiated just by Guru Maharaj's mental resolve (*Sankalp*). Especially in the last few years of this life, Mahārāj gave most of the Dikshas by making such a resolve through letters.

"Potential of Tradition": Gurucharandas was a devotee who had been initiated by Shri Shankarpurushottam Teerth Mahārāj, the Guru of Shri Loknāth Teerth Mahārāj. However, he failed to have any experiences despite regular meditation. Later, he met Shri. Loknath Teerth Swāmi Mahārāj. Even after mediating in Swāmiji's holy presence, he did not have any experiences. He then sought out Guru Mahārāj. In Hoshangabad, he had the good fortune of meditating in the presence of Mahārāj. This is when he began to have wonderful experiences and progressed in his *Sadhana*. To this Mahārāj had these words to say, "In the light of my knowledge and experience so far, I can say that this is the potential of the tradition (*Paramparā*), and not any individual."

No age barrier: The 8-year old daughter of the author of this book had witnessed the *Sadhana* of her parents

and wished to be initiated. She requested Guru Mahārāj for *Diksha* through a letter. Amazingly, she was very soon initiated on the auspicious day of Vijaya Dashami. There are several examples of even younger children who have received *Diksha*. Similarly, people who had crossed 80 years of age were also given *Diksha*. P.P. Shri Tembe Swami Mahārāj writes in the Dattapurān:

सुषुम्णाज्ञो नरो स्त्री वा युवा बालो जरन्नपि।

योगाभ्यासेऽभ्यधिकारीस्यादभ्यासात्सिद्धिभागपि॥ २:२:१॥

One who has acquired the knowledge of *Suṣumnā* (through the awakening of *Kundalini*), whether he is a man, woman, youth, child or even aged, is eligible to practice Yoga, and can attain fulfilment by practicing it.

Traditional Criteria for initiation: Shri Shankarapurushottam Teerth Mahārāj granted *Diksha* to only devout and deserving Bengalis and had disciples only in Bengal. As for Loknath Teerth Swāmi Mahārāj, he only looked for worthiness of the disciple and did not hesitate to initiate people from other regions as long as they were deserving candidates. However, he kept the numbers of the initiates rather limited. He was rather particular that prospective initiates follow the tenets of Vedic religion, although he sometimes did grant *Diksha* to Arya Samajis. There are examples of people who were made to follow the strict code of conduct and then practice some form of penance before they were initiated. Swāmiji's chief criterion was the will of Mother Kali.

In the initial years, Guru Mahārāj also followed this approach. After gaining thorough knowledge and experience of the *Shaktipāt* path, he is seen to have become more generous in granting *Diksha*. He has initiated many people even from other religions. But he first sought solemn

commitment from the disciples to ardently follow the code of conduct and to practice *Sadhana* regularly. His liberality finds support in a *Shloka* following the above quoted one: सर्वेऽप्याश्रमिणो वर्णा योगाभ्यासेऽधिकारिणः। People belonging to all castes and Ashrams are eligible to practice Yoga. The great grand (Parātpar) Guru of Shri Mahārāj, Shri. Narayanteerthdeo had given *Diksha* to even Muslim disciples. This indicates that Mahārāj did not deviate from the traditional guiding criteria for the eligibility for *Diksha*.

Professor Dr. Walcott from Vivekananda Memorial in New York came to Mahārāj in 1960 at the Gowaikar Chawl and requested for *Diksha*. Mahārāj took the help of an interpreter - Shri Mishra, to ensure that Dr. Walcott knew the code of conduct (like diet among others) and followed it sincerely. Only when he was assured of this, did he initiate Dr. Walcott.

Mahārāj had a photographer disciple, Shri. Gaikwad, who used to worship a photograph of Mahārāj every day. During his visit to Haridwar French couple saw Shri. Gaikwad's worship. The gentleman recognized the person in the photograph as the one who had initiated him in a dream. The Frenchman took Mahārāj's address from Shri Gaikwad and reached Pune to meet him. The French couple removed their footwear at the door, washed their hands and feet as per Indian custom and only then entered the house to offer obeisance to Mahārāj. Shri. Nārāyanrao Bhalerao, who was present at that time, has written that Mahārāj conversed with the couple in French for quite some time.

Guru Maharaj's family of disciples consists on non-Vedic religious persons like Arya Samajis, Veershaivs, Jains, Sikhs, etc. He also had disciples belonging to other religions like Islam, Christianity and Parsis.

Capacity to Bestow & Revoke (Nigrahanugraha) –

The Sadguru has the power not only to arouse the spiritual power within but also to make it dormant again. A Jain disciple was initiated by Mahārāj through a letter. But his body, weakened by frequent fasts, could not endure the surge of power. Mahārāj had to call off his initiation through a letter. A year or two later, the same person became repentant and apologetic and so Mahārāj took pity on him and reinitiated his *Sadhana*. There are several such similar incidents.

Pilgrimages

In December 1940, after Shri Loknath Teerth Swāmi Mahārāj recuperated from his illness, Guru Mahārāj went on a pilgrimage to Gaya, Kolkata, Brahmāvart, Ayodhya, Hardwar, Mathura etc. He returned to Pune via Hoshangabad. As a suitable conclusion of his pilgrimage, he went to Wadi and worshiped the Padukas there. At that time, Swāmi Mahārāj was in Pune. Guru Mahārāj accompanied Swāmi Mahārāj to Dombivali, Bhandara, Ajegaon etc., and later to some places of pilgrim such as Shrishailya and Gokarna. Back in Pune, he spent two to three months there until the school exams finished and then went to Hoshangabad and stayed there for three to four months in solitude and prayer. Shankar kaka Ajegaonkar and two other disciples had also joined him at Hoshangabad. In Hoshangabad, the entire day was spent in practicing Yoga, recitation of Gayatri Jap and Shrigurucharitra, etc. He also translated “Yogawāni” by Shri Shankar Purushottam Teerth Swāmi Mahārāj into Marathi.

Retirement

Since very early in his life, Guru Mahārāj had the firm belief that everything that happened in life was God’s will.

Hence every incident, whether happy or untoward, was faced with equanimity. One can only infer that this was the fruit of his virtuous deeds from previous lives. We have seen how he had to forgo his Matriculation examination, in spite of being thoroughly prepared, to secure admission to J. J. School of Arts in Mumbai. He neither regretted this nor did he attempt to appear for the exam later because he firmly believed that it was not destined. Even at the time of his third level drawing exam he suffered from plague and missed an opportunity once again. He never gave this exam either. He exemplified Sant Dynaneshwar's philosophy to let the events follow their predestined course, in the manner of water flowing through channels laid down by the gardener. Showing neither resistance nor grudge, and accepting events in life with respect and contentment, with neither resistance or grudge. For this reason, he neither sought nor cherished any certificates or accolades in the field of art or education. He was never remorseful about this and never went in pursuit of any credentials or recognition. This was not due to any indifference but rather it was the natural attitude of a Self-realized saint. This attitude was evident even at the time of his retirement. In his entire career, he had never been asked for any certificates or documents (neither in the school at Barshi nor at N.M. School in Pune). He had a fruitful career for sixteen years (from 1926 to 1942), even though his job was always of a temporary nature. In 1942, in order to confirm his services, he was asked to produce certificates and other documents. With only three years of service left, when he was asked for certificates, Guru Mahārāj interpreted this as a divine signal to bid adieu to his teaching career. He immediately resigned and sought voluntary retirement. The Principal, Shri. Nāralikar, mistook this as umbrage on Maharaj's part, and supportively offered to use his good offices to extend Maharaj's service by two more years. Shri

Mahārāj calmly explained to him the rationale behind his actions and took his leave.

Thus far, in his life, Mahārāj had garnered hundreds of disciples. After his retirement, thousands more joined his fold. He loved each disciple as he would his own son. In this sense, he had a massive family. Although the school job was based in Pune, he did manage to travel a lot. After his voluntary retirement, he spent a lot of time outside Pune. In 1942, soon after his retirement, Mahārāj went to Sholapur. He stayed with Vaidya master at his home for almost two years. There he concluded seven recitations of the Gurucharitra observing vows of fasting and silence. Whenever he went to Wadi (either for Gurudwādashi or death anniversary of Shri. Nārāyan Swāmi Mahārāj) he always went via Pune. After Diwali, Shri. Loknath Teerth Swami Mahārāj was in Pune where Mahārāj spent 4-5 days in Swāmiji's company before returning to Sholapur. In Sholapur, Mahārāj translated some important chapters of "Mahāyogavignyān" by Yogendra Vidnyani into Marathi.

Fourteen-hour Samadhi

In 1944, an ardent disciple of Shri. Loknath Teerth Swami Mahārāj, Shankarrao Markand decided to build an Ashram for Swamiji at Kāshi. To help him in this task, Guru Mahārāj spent 2 months in Kāshi. During this time, he had the good fortune of being in the company of Paramaguru Shri. Shankar Purshottam Teerth Swami Mahārāj. On the Paramaguru's invitation, Mahārāj accompanied Shri. Loknath Teerth Swami Mahārāj to his Chhoti Gaibi Ashram. Mahārāj venerated the Paramaguru with garland, fruits and sweets. Later, Mahārāj would sometimes go to the Chhoti Gaibi Ashram for meditation. On one occasion, he started meditating at five in the morning and finished only at seven in the evening. Paramaguru witnessed this and also brought

it to the notice of his disciple Swami Pranavanand. Guru Maharaj's body had become stiff like wood with practically no sign of life; his breathing had completely stopped (Kewal Kumbhak). His entire body was cold except for a small spot near the top of his head (*Sahasrār Chakra*). When this condition remained the same until four in the afternoon, Paramaguru started to worry and prayed to Goddess Jagadamba. Mahārāj finally came out of his Samadhi at seven in the evening, much to the relief and admiration of Paramaguru. This incident illustrated Maharaj's Yogic potential to everyone at the Ashram.

The period of fifteen years after retirement, was spent by Shri Guru Mahārāj outside Pune. Nana Bhalerao in Pune, Vaidya master and Bapusaheb Kubade in Sholapur, and Shankar kaka Ajegaonkar in Hingoli-Ajegaon and many other disciples were his extended and devoted family. In 1943, Mahārāj turned sixty. Shankar kaka wanted to celebrate this occasion. Mahārāj refused to celebrate the occasion in the traditional manner. Instead, he offered various services at the Wadi temple, including Mahapuja, Palkhi, Ugrarathi Shanti etc. However, Shankar kaka did not give in, and out of great love and enthusiasm organized a function at Hingoli. The function did not turn out to be a very grand affair as it would have been in Pune. But still, it was celebrated with lot of gusto. A lot of charity was done on this occasion. All rituals and customs were also duly observed.

During this period, the work of building the Ashram for Shri. Loknath Teerth Swami Mahārāj at Kāshi by Shri. Markand reached completion. Mahārāj could not attend the opening ceremony of the Ashram because of the celebrations in Hingoli. So he sent a money order of Rs 10. Also during this time, Maharaj's elder brother Shankar Shastri took renunciation (*Sanyās*). Shri Shankaranand Bharti, as he was thereafter called, spent the remainder of his life in Wadi.

Publication of the Complete Works of P.P.Shri Vāsudevānand Saraswati (Tembe) Swami Mahārāj.

Shri. Vāsudevānand Saraswati Swami Mahārāj had accomplished the great task of reviving the Datta Sampradāya (followers of Lord Dattātreyā). An important aspect of his work is his vast literature depicting the lives of Lord Dattātreyā and his two Incarnations in the Kali Age: Shripād Shrivallabh and Shri Nrisinh Saraswati. Born of a poor Brahmin family in a small village in Konkan in the nineteenth century, he had neither the benefit of any formal education nor any means of study. A Sanyāsi with such a background, he travelled all over the country, suffering starvation, disease, unfavorable weather conditions and strictly observing the code of Sanyās (monkhood). Despite these adverse circumstances, he created the most remarkable and prolific literature. Today, more than a century later, this literature is not only still alive but has the power to lead thousands of aspiring devotees on the path of Datta worship. Shri. Dhundiraj Mahārāj, the extremely capable and learned devotee of Swami Mahārāj, has this to say about his works: “Shri. Swami Maharaj’s literature is exceptional, created through Divine will, spontaneous, pleasing, blessed, source of benediction to its readers, popular, and potent. It has spread effortlessly to the masses. Being an incarnation of God himself, his poetry is Divine and blissful.” Many scholars have compared the vastness, depth, wisdom, variety and piety of his literature to that of the literature of revered Shankarāchārya. Swami Mahārāj has penned the plethora of this beatific literature in Marathi and Sanskrit. It covers the biographies, doctrines, and modes of worship preached by Lord Dattatreyā and his incarnations, for all types of devotees. The literature has proved to be a guiding light to all devotees suitable to their stages of

spiritual development. Rather, Lord Dattātreya has Himself created this miraculous literature through the medium of Swāmi Mahārāj. Just as he has composed simple lilting Marathi devotional verses, he has also composed complex Sanskrit verses that are adorned with beautiful poetry. They have not only authentically outlined the tenets of Datta tradition but have also revealed the mystical practices therein.

This literature was mostly unpublished. Some disciples had published texts such as *Dwisāhasri* and *Dattamāhātmya*. Guru Mahārāj, Shri Ajegaonkar and other devotees were keen to make all literature available in print. Swami Mahārāj used to send most of his manuscripts to his favorite disciple Shri Dixit Swāmi Mahārāj at Wadi. Later Dixit Swami Mahārāj relocated to Aurawād (across the river Krishna from Wadi) and established the “Shri Vāsudevānand Saraswati Vidyāpeeth” where these books were kept. Apart from these books, Swami Maharaj’s works extended to several of his devotees across India. To collect, compile and publish these works would be a challenging and rather expensive endeavor. Since most of the literature was in Sanskrit, the task required active participation of Sanskrit scholars. After much thought on his matter, Guru Mahārāj and Shankarkākā decided on the person to whom they would assign this task. This person was none other than the professor of *Vedanta* and *Nyāya* at the Tilak University in Pune, *Vidyā Vāchaspati* Shri Dattātreya Shastri Kavishwar who was a disciple of Shri. Dixit Swami Mahārāj. Accordingly, in 1953 (Vijaya Dashami day), with Guru Mahārāj presiding, a committee of eleven members headed by Dattātreya Shastri was established.

The publishing of the entire literature took four years. The compilation and publishing was in the able hands of Shri Dattātreya Shastri. His responsibilities included

getting the foreword to each book written by scholars from within and outside the sect, translation and editing. Devotees, sect followers and initiated disciples provided monetary help. This literature, in 12 volumes was made available for a nominal price of Rs 51. Shri. Swami Maharaj's devotee Her Highness Indirabai Holkar of Indore came to Guru Maharaj's home in Pune and made a donation of Rs 3000 towards this endeavor.

In 1954, the hundredth birth anniversary of Shri. Vāsudevānand Saraswati Swami Mahārāj was celebrated in Hyderabad. The twelve volumes were launched on this auspicious occasion. Another book that was launched on the same day was the biography of Swami Mahārāj "Shrigurudevcharitra" which was written by Shri. Dattātreyā Shastri Kavishwar.

Bereavements

In November 1952, Shri. Shankaranand Swami, Guru Maharaj's elder brother entered Mahasamadhi (left the physical body). On this account, Mahārāj, who was supposed to go to Hyderabad for Datta Jayanti, cancelled his trip and went to Wadi instead. He paid due respects to Shankaranand Swami, who was the only elder (after his parents) that Mahārāj looked up to. Shankaranand Swami's entire life was devoted in to religious pursuits, Datta worship and Sadhana prescribed by Shri Thorale Swami Mahārāj. He was survived by a son.

Within the 3-4 months, Maharaj's elder sister Godutāi, who was staying in Wadi in the service of God, passed away. Mahārāj made it a point to be with her during the last 4-5 days of her life. When he realized that her time was approaching, he gave her a sip of Ganga water and started chanting the Bhagwad Geeta. Mahārāj was deeply moved by her demise. He had once written in a letter about

Godutāi: “I don’t feel alone after my mother’s demise (because of Godutāi).” She was his only familial attachment. That was also destined to end. Needless to say, Mahārāj duly performed all of Godutai’s last rites.

Swāmiji eludes death

In May 1953, Sadguru Loknāth Teerth Swami Mahārāj had a premonition of his own death. He communicated this to some of his close disciples, including Shri Guru Mahārāj, who went to Kāshi to be by his side. On the following new moon night, Swāmiji’s health declined and everyone became solemn. However, Swāmiji had a calm smile on his face and the name of Kālimātā on his lips. Suddenly, his eyes widened for a moment and then shut down tightly. He clasped the hand of Guru Mahārāj. His body began to tremble. Everyone around looked on expectantly. Then Swāmiji’s body stiffened and everyone lost hopes. But soon he suddenly opened his eyes and began to mumble some words. On seeing this Mahārāj brought his ears to Swāmiji’s lips to hear his words: “Vāman, they have gone.” The messengers of Death were turned back!

Shri. Loknāth Teerth Swami Maharaj’s Mahasamadhi

After around nine months after this incidence, on Wednesday 9th February 1954 at midnight, Swāmiji in a weak state got up with the aid of a disciple and sat on the siddha position. He sipped some Gangājal (water from river Ganga) and had Bhasm (holy ashes) smeared on himself. He wore a string of Rudraksh beads and sent everyone out of the room. The disciples heard the “Aum” sound uttered twice. The third utterance probably did not find outward expression. When the disciples entered the room half an hour later, Swāmiji’s body was inert. This time Guru Mahārāj was not close to him. Swāmiji mentioned him several times that day. Guru Mahārāj



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received this distressing news through a telegram when he had just concluded a seven-day recitation of the Gurucharitra and was reading the concluding chapter. At that time, it was not possible to go to Kāshi in time for the funeral. However, on February 22nd, Mahārāj performed a ritual service to Swāmiji.

Bhaimarathi Shanti and Amrutmahotsav

Guru Mahārāj completed 70 years of age in 1953. Under the initiative of Shri. Dattamaharaj, Maharaj's disciples organized four-day festivities including Mahāpuja to the deities, Pavmān Abhishek, Bhaimarathi Shanti, Pavmān Swāhākār and Rudrābhishek. The Wadi priests under the flagship of Shri. Nārāyan Shastri Jere, honoured Mahārāj by presenting him with a certificate of reverence and clothes. Later in May 1957, countering Maharaj's displeasure, all his disciples very enthusiastically celebrated seven-day Amrutmahotsav in Pune. This function was officiated by Shri. Datto Vāman Potdar and was attended by many great persons like Shri Sātavalekar, Shri. Balwant Shastri Hardas, and Shri. Sonopant Dandekar. This function brought to light the greatness of Shri. Guru Mahārāj not only in Pune but the whole of Maharashtra. Bhaimarathi Shanti and other worships were also conducted on this occasion.

Shri. Datta Mahārāj Kavishwar lost his daughter Shobha to influenza in June 1957. The whole family was suffering from fever. Kavishwar Shāstri being away to Wadi for some religious duty, Guru Mahārāj arranged of take Shobha to the hospital, tend to her and finally her last rites. After this, Mahārāj went to Sholapur. A year before, Vaidya master had expressed his wish to breathe his last in the presence of Guru Mahārāj. Accordingly, during Maharaj's Shrāvan sojourn in Sholapur, Vaidya master breathed his last

while sitting facing Mahārāj and uttering the Aumkar, in the presence 5-6 close disciples of Shri Guru Mahārāj.

Major Illness: A few days later Guru Maharaj's health suddenly took a turn for the worse. Suffering from prostatic problems, he had a sudden spell of unconsciousness. After spending a restless night, he felt slightly better in the morning. Mahārāj reassured the anxious attendants by recounting his vision of Shri. Vāsudevānand Saraswati Swami Mahārāj in which Swami Mahārāj had reassured that Mahārāj's time had not yet come. Doctors advised surgery to treat the condition. Choosing to adhere to the Yogic injunction against surgery, Mahārāj suffered this painful affliction for the rest of his life. Thus, he had to regularly use a catheter for 17-18 years. Never did he display so much as a hint of the pain and inconvenience of this procedure. Following this affliction, he spent most of his time in Pune.

Comrade Vishnu pant Chitale: Mahārāj decided to counter this affliction by naturopathy. He took the advice of Shri. Vishnupant Chitale. Shri. Chitale, though a successful politician of renown, was a great Yogi in his personal life. He respected Guru Mahārāj tremendously. His remedies slowly but surely afforded relief to Mahārāj. Maharaj's almost non-existent diet improved and within a year he was up and about. Towards the end of 1958, he even began to travel and managed to undertake his customary Gurudwādashi pilgrimage to Wadi. Later, he went to Kāshi and Prayāg also. In March, he travelled to Girnār (4000 feet above sea level) to worship Datta Pādukas (holy Sandals). However the journey left him exhausted and weak. A year of strict regimen under the care of Shri. Chitale restored his health.

The Deluge

In 1961, the 45th Punyatithi of Shri Vāsudevānand Swāmi Mahārāj was being celebrated at 20, Nārāyan Peth in Pune. The 6th day of the festivities fell on 12th July (new moon day). The Mahāprasād (holy food offering) was to be offered the next day. A temporary shed was made in front of Maharaj's room to store the vegetables and other food items required for the next day. Many devotees from other towns and cities had arrived. Seven-day recitation of Gurucharitra had been completed. Mahārāj completed his mid-afternoon worship and was about to sing the Aarti prayers when the waters from the Panshet dam, which had erupted, flooded the house. Everyone took hold of whatever came in their hands and began to run for their lives. Even in this panic-stricken situation, Mahārāj showed the presence of mind to venerate the river waters with the help of Sow. Māi Kshirsāgar (daughter of Shri. Ajegaonkar). He quietly kept the Pādukas in an upper shelf, wore his chained watch, sent everyone out and only then walked out of the house with nothing in his hands. He locked the house and went out through the cow shed on the right side of the house. His life-saving catheter, was however washed away in the flood waters. The entire day went off in securing themselves from the flood waters and at night they took shelter at Shri. Govindrao Phātak's home in Purandare colony.

The stock of books of the 12-volume literature of Shri Vāsudevānand Swami Mahārāj which Guru Mahārāj had painstakingly collected and published was left behind in his tenement. All the books, the holy Pādukas which Maharaj's mother had been blessed with and all the food for the next day's festivities was left behind. Mahārāj remained calm even in the face of this adversity and waited for the Almighty to lead the way out of this calamity.

The head priest of the Siddhamāta temple in Budhwar Peth, Jaggannath Pujari, approached Mahārāj with a plan to hold the next day's birth anniversary festivities at the temple. With the support of the trustees, all arrangements of place and food would be organized. Mahārāj's disciples had already reached the place. In spite of everything working out well, Mahārāj could not help being saddened by the loss of the holy Pādukas. The water started receding at around 9 PM. Heaps of household items, pieces of furniture and other miscellaneous objects were strewn all over the place. To find one's way through this chaos was in itself a big challenge. There was strict police patrolling of the area. Battling all these odds, Nānā Bhalerao reached Maharaj's house and managed to bring back the Pādukas which Mahārāj had kept in an earmarked upper shelf. For a long time, Mahārāj held the Pādukas against his head and heart. He became teary-eyed and said, "This is as good as recovering all." He thanked everyone for this. Because of the efforts of Shri Jaggannath Pujari the following day's festivities went off smoothly. Surprisingly, a big container of laddus that Yogesh Bhalerao had kept on the upper floor had managed to float its way to safety!

The next few weeks were spent in restoration and recovery. These were distressing times for the flood-hit Pune people. Mahārāj, however, remained serene and in control. He counseled everybody and in a planned and determined manner salvaged as many books, pictures and other literature from the devastation. Everyone was felt the need for a proper and spacious shelter for the ever-growing family of followers and for the peaceful and smooth pursuit of religious and spiritual activities. Shri. Datta Mahārāj Kavishwar spoke for everyone while presenting a proposal to build an Ashram. Shri Guru Mahārāj finally conceded and gave his consent.

Shri Vasudev Niwas.

Guru Mahārāj stayed at the Siddhamāta temple for a year, after which he went back to the Gowaikar tenements. His ailment troubled him sporadically. The doctors were pressing for surgery. But Mahārāj ruled out that option. At this time, Shri. Sridhar Swami of the Samarth sect was visiting Pune. He had been introduced to Mahārāj by Shri. Pradnyānānand (Karve) Swami. In 1947, when both Mahārāj and Sridhar Swami were in Wadi for a couple of months, Mahārāj used to go to meet him every day. Subsequently, they had met several times and Mahārāj accorded him the reverence due to a Guru. When they met in Pune, Sridhar Swami advised him to commence a yearly pilgrimage to family deity, Tulja Bhavani. Accordingly Shri Guru Mahārāj visiting Tuljapur in the month of *Shrāvan* offering worship.

The construction of the Ashram quickly progressed with contributions from Maharaj's disciples and other devotees. This work was being managed by Shri. Balasaheb Wakade, Bagārām Doe, Keshavrāo Joshi etc. Shri. Bhāgwat in Mumbai collected funds by organizing shows of popular Marathi dramas. The actual construction was overseen by engineer V.M. Vaidya. The finances were handled by Madhukar Atre. Mahārāj was also attentive making valuable timely suggestions. Mahārāj continued his regular routine and activities. In 1963, Mahārāj was in Kāshi for a month. There, he performed the death anniversary rituals of Shri. Nārāyan Swami. He performed religious rites, holy recitations, discourses and charitable work. Goddess Annapurna was worshipped everyday by anointing with Haldi-Kunku. Around the same time, the Goddess had appeared in a dream to Nānā Bhalerao and said, "There is too much Haldi Kunku on me." Shri. Bhalerao observed the next day that indeed there was a lot of Haldi-Kunku on the idol. He dusted it gently and did a proper Puja. The dream and the

excess of Haldi-Kunku kept recurring for a few more days. Nānā Bhalerao wrote a letter to Mahārāj recounting the ausoicious incident.

In 1964, the construction of the Ashram reached completion. In 1965 (Paunsh Vadya Dashami), the opening ceremony was celebrated with great gusto with many religious rites being performed, and the Ashram was formally handed over to Shri Guru Mahārāj. Mahārāj immediately nominated trustees for the Ashram and drew out the necessary deed. The management of the Ashram was delegated to the new trustees. The trust was named as “P.P.Shrivāsudevanand Saraswati and P.P.Shri Loknāth Teerth Memorial Trust.” From that day to the present, there have been countless religious functions and rites at the Ashram. Loknāyak Bapuji Ane and Principal Sonopant Dandekar visited the Ashram. P.P.Shridhar Swami also paid a visit within the first three months of its opening.

After Mahārāj came to reside at the Ashram, he was a bit restless for not having the vision of Sadguru Shrivāsudevanand Saraswati Swami Mahārāj in his dream. He began to wonder if it Shri Swami Mahārāj disapproved move to the Ashram. But his doubts were soon dispelled as he was blessed with a vision of Swami Mahārāj sitting on a tank in the Ashram and smiling pleasantly at him. A year later another highly significant incident confirmed the blessings of Swami Mahārāj.

The Datta-Amāreshwar temple in Aurawād was founded by Shri Narsimhsaraswati Dixit Swami Mahārāj. He had received holy *Pādukas* from Swami Mahārāj himself and installed them at the temple which is named “Shrivāsudevanand Saraswati Peeth.” A few months after Guru Mahārāj shifted to the Ashram, a devotee at the Aurawād temple stole the *Pādukas* and absconded without trace. Later, Shri Datta Mahārāj saw this person in his dream,

carrying the Pādukas in a bundle and sitting in the Ashram hall. Couple of days later, Datta Mahārāj saw the same person actually sitting in the Ashram. Instantly recognizing him, Datta Mahārāj took the Pādukas from him and presented these to Shri Guru Mahārāj. With great joy, Mahārāj and the other residents of the Ashram worshiped the Pādukas. Mahārāj said that his long-time wish to venerate the Pādukas in the Ashram was graciously fulfilled by God. Everyone felt the presence of Shrivāsudevanand Saraswati Mahārāj himself at the Ashram that was built for one of his principal disciples.

The Pādukas were worshipped in the Ashram for four months after which they were returned to Aurawād with due reverence. Shri. Datta Mahārāj Kavishwar who had been conducting *Praushthapadi Bhāgwat Saptāh* at Aurawād for 60 years, as directed by his Sadguru P.P.Shri Dikshit Swami Mahārāj, shifted the venue for this annual Bhāgwat reading to Shri Vasudev Nivas, Pune, starting from that year. In our opinion, this is a very clear indication of the perpetual presence of Shri. Vāsudevānand Saraswati Swami Mahārāj at the Ashram.

In this manner, a great Mahayoga establishment was founded. It is a centre of the Kundalini Shaktipat Yoga pioneered by Guru Mahārāj; a place where the traditions of Sanātan Vedic religion are kept alive. Generations of devotees, enthusiasts, disciples and Yogis acquired a sanctuary to pursue religion and Yoga. To quote Shri Atmaram Shastri Jere's words, "The Ashram is Heaven itself. A heavenly environment pervades this place. No physical or spiritual requirements are lacking here. Human frailties cease to prevail on entering the Ashram and every devotee's heart becomes filled with Divine love. This is the court of Lord Dattātreyā." These words of Pundit Jere need to be borne in mind by all devotees coming to the Ashram and they

should conduct themselves as if they are in actual Godly presence.

Sahasrachandra Darshan Shanti

26th to 30th April 1967 were celebrated as Guru Maharaj's Sahasrachandra Darshan Shanti, a ritual marking completion of 80 years of age, a span of life during which one witnesses a thousand full moons. Guru Mahārāj completed a four month penance of reciting Dattamālā Mantra preceding this event, observing vows of silence and other religious conduct, including dietary restrictions, ban on shaving etc. The celebrations were graced and chaired by the brother disciple of Shri Loknāth Teerth Swāmiji, Shri Vishnu Teerth Swami Mahārāj. The *Shanti* was marked by religious rites such as Shri Ganeshyaag, Chandi, Shridattayaag, Saur-yaag, Pavmaan, Rudraswāhākār etc. Before the main event, Guru Mahārāj and Shri Vishnu Teerth Swami Mahārāj were taken in a procession riding an elephant. A touching incident during this time was the visit of Pandit S. D. Sātavalekar, one of the major disciples of Shri Guru Mahārāj. Punditji's Birth Centenary ceremony was being celebrated on the same day in Pune. Punditji, who was otherwise very punctual, delayed his own ceremony to be able to offer his veneration to Shri Guru Mahārāj. Guru Mahārāj welcomed him warmly, not allowing Punditji to bow before him, instead bowing himself to the revered Punditji. In his short speech, Punditji expressed his regret for not being able to offer his respects to his Sadguru on account of older age. He made it up instead by offering verbal veneration. The major highlights of the event were wise and inspiring words Shri Vishnu Teerth Swami Maharaj; cordial expression of Guru Maharaj's thoughts and the plans for the future of the Ashram projected by the trustees.

Shri. Guru Maharaj's routine

Guru Maharaj's routine was exemplar. His day began before 5 am in the morning. After morning ablutions, he would sit on a *Paat* (small wooden platform) and invoke the vow (*Sankalp*) for the *Ajapā* (natural) Jap (recitation) in the form of breath, as instructed by his Sadguru. Every inspiration corresponds to *Sah (that)* and expiration to *Aham* (I). Thus each combined act of breathing in and breathing out becomes a recitation of *so' ham* mantra meaning 'that I am'. By making a ritual resolve for this innate recitation (*Ajapā Jap*), you avail of the merit. This would be followed by meditation, in which he would usually be joined by several disciples from Pune and outside. Mahārāj would customarily sit in his bedroom while his disciples sat in front of him or in the neighboring room. The session would last for about an hour to an hour and a half. At this time, Mahārāj would touch particular *Chakras* of the disciples to facilitate the progress of their *Sadhana*.

Then it was time to read the newspaper. Mostly, Guru Mahārāj had one of the disciples read out the newspaper while he listened attentively but usually without much reaction or comment. This would be followed by a massage given by Ghaisas Guruji. After this, he would take a bath. At this time he would take a round of Ashram and the garden. After his bath, he would proceed with his daily religious rituals. This was an elaborate routine – Sandhya, 1200 recitations of Gayatri Mantra, worship of Sadguru, Dattātreya, Tulja Bhavani and the holy Pādukas acquired by his mother etc.; his daily recitation included Dwisāhasri, Vishnusahsranaam, Aitareya Upanishad, and of course, the Mantra received from Sadguru. If time permitted, he would recite a Rudra Avartan during the Abhishek. The rituals were concluded by offering *Gandha* and flowers to the deities and

prostrating before them. After this, he would water the Audumbar tree with the holy *Puja* water and offered worship to the Audumbar. Then *Brahmayagnya* and *Vaishvadev* would be performed.

Lunch time was around 11-11:30 am. At least ten to twelve disciple from Pune and outside Pune joined him for lunch every day. The code of purity (*Sowale*) was observed while eating lunch. In true Vedic tradition, meals to him, were *yagnya karma* (*sacrifice*) and not just filling of stomach. Starting from 3 pm in the afternoon till later in the evening, there used to be a steady stream of devotees, seekers and disciples etc. to meet him. To those suffering from illnesses, he would offer kind words and spiritual advice. His solutions were based on the *Prashnavali* of Shri Vāsudevānand Saraswati Swāmi Mahārāj. These were almost invariably effective. Guru Mahārāj gave credit to the *Prashnāvali* and Swāmi Maharāj's powerful blessings. Often the mere sight of Guru Mahārāj would banish the ills of his disciples. Sometimes when someone asked a query of scriptural or spiritual nature, a healthy debate would ensue concluding in a satisfactory resolution.

Everyday Guru Mahārāj went for a walk at 6 o'clock in the evening accompanied by his usual companions. On rare occasions, other person/s was lucky enough to join. After the walk Mahārāj, used to perform his evening Sandhya on the first floor itself. He would then have his evening meal which consisted of milk, fruits and peanuts (he called these the "poor man's cashew nuts"). Then he would sit on the cot and chat with other devotees. Around 10 o'clock these religious discussions would get over and everyone used to disperse. Mahārāj would wash his hands and feet and sit on a Paat (Small wooden plank-like seat) and surrender all the day's actions to the Almighty. Then he would retire to his bedroom.

Roudri Shanti Ceremony

When Guru Mahārāj completed 85 years of age, Shri Datta Mahārāj took the initiative to organize a Roudri Shanti ceremony. This ceremony was celebrated with great gusto during the week from 26th May 1971 to 1st June 1971. The celebrations included different Vedic rituals like Shri Ganesh Yaag, Ruksamhita Swāhākār, Laghurudra Swāhākār, Shatachandi Yaag etc. There was group recitation of Shri dattamala Mantra and Mrutunjay Mantra. Devotees from all over India made monetary contributions. Enthusiastic contributions in kind were also many. Ghee from Ahmadabad, Sesame from Saindhava, 11 gunny bags of sugar from Ganagapur sugar factory, 10 gunny bags of rice from Sabale Guruji, etc. Twelve hundred disciples from outside Pune were staying at the Ashram. Apart from these, many out-of-towners were put up with their relatives. Afternoons were marked by lunch, devotional songs and discourses. Pundit Atmaram Shastri Jere presided over this function. Shri Dhundiraj Mahārāj Deglurkar was a special invitee to this event. Several scholars from across the country had been invited. Shri Guru Mahārāj was weighed in silver (Roupya Tula) provided through contributions of devotees. The function was extremely joyful and everyone who attended it felt blessed. Most of the silver that had been collected for the Roupya Tula was donated to appropriate charities. The remaining silver was used to adorn the doors of the temple at Wadi. All invitees, Vedic Brahmins and the volunteers were given a gift of clothes and Rs 101 each. Those invitees who were not able to attend the function were also sent this gift. Food was served to 15000 persons during the function.

The Canopy at Wadi

Guru Maharaj's entire life has been closely linked to Narsoba Wadi which is traditionally considered the spiritual capital of Lord Dattatreya. His parents undertook monthly pilgrimage to Wadi throughout their lives. Major events in the life of Mahārāj, Umā Mata's miraculous healing and first meeting of Mahārāj with his Sadguru etc. took place at Wādi. Mahārāj was thus immensely devoted to the holy place . The Pādukas in the Wadi temple were established in the gorge of the river Krishna by Shri Nrusimhasaraswati Swāmi Mahārāj who ordained a priest named Bahirambhatt to look after these Pādukas and perform regular worship. Bahirambhatt then handed down this legacy to his son, and for generations his descendants have been piously worshipping the Pādukas. The present priests of Wadi are all descendants of Bahirambhatt. Initially, the Pādukas were kept in an open space only. Later, Bahirambhatt eldest son Shripadbhatji and, in turn, his sons built a stone temple for the Pādukas. In 1192, the Moslem king of Vijāpur built the quadrangular courtyard as a gesture of gratitude for restoration of vision of his blind daughter throug the grace of Lord Dattātreyā. Later, in the sixteenth century, the great Saint from Paithan Shri. Eknath Mahārāj built the pier facing the deity. After that, no new constructions or improvements were undertaken at the temple during the next 400 years, despite several attempts by devotees. The daily palanquin (holy procession) took place in the open exposing participants to rain and sun. Guru Mahārāj was troubled by this fact. He expressed to his disciples his sincere urge to build a canopy around the temple and contributed Rs 35000 towards this cause. His disciples immediately took up the cause and made their own donations. The Government of the day also gave some grants. Within a very short span of time the required funds were collected and further collection had to be stopped within a

year. Legal authority was obtained from the temple trustees. The actual work of construction was assigned to *Mahārāj's* devoted disciple Shri. V. M. Vaidya (who was also instrumental in the construction of the Pune Ashram). Shri. Vaidya spent more than 1 and ½ years in Wadi. On 8th February 1973, the work was completed to everybody's great satisfaction and the dedication ceremony was performed. Now there was a grand, beautiful and roofed courtyard for devotees to perform their holy circumambulations around the deity. Many other improvements were also done such as renovation of shelters, restoration of the Nārāyan Swāmi temple, restoration of the Shri Ram temple near the main temple, construction of a Vrindavan at the place where Umā Mata met Lord Dattātreya, and building of a hospice. During his last Gurudwādashi visit to Wadi, Guru Mahārāj dedicated all the structures to the temple and in addition donated a sum of over Rs 60000 to provide for repairs and maintenance.

Mahanirvāṇa

The number of visitors to the Ashram was multiplying. A steady stream of devotees seeking relief from distress, some improvement in their temporal life, or divine knowledge thronged the place. Quite frequently, saints, scholars and leaders also visited the Ashram. Many religious ceremonies were performed. More than 500 letters needed to be replied daily. During this period, at least 50-60 initiations took place every month. Most of the letters were from suffering disciples. In spite of his senescence and ill-health, Guru Mahārāj did not disappoint his disciples. It is next to impossible to describe the extent of his tireless work. The number of disciples increased, especially after the Roudri Shanti. Mahārāj never fussed over his own health because he wanted always to be there for his people. This

work was his ultimate resolve. Every aspiring seeker of initiation was rewarded with Diksha during this period. Many a times, his body did not cooperate and he was urged by doctors and others to not to speak too much. But Mahārāj believed that if his talking could benefit even a single person, then his ailing body could be ignored. He had remarked, “Not talking to people who love me so much and who come from far off places to meet me, is a punishment. How will I feel better if I don’t talk to them?”

Guru Maharaj’s ailments of 21 years, which he had neglected, became severe. In 1973, the pilgrimage to Tuljapur had to be cancelled. Sensing his imminent demise, Mahārāj called his close friends, disciples and relatives, had them stay at the Ashram and blessed them with his company. He began to send out messages to his disciples about his impending end through actual meetings, appearances in their dreams and visions during meditation etc. Disciples continued to experience these until the actual day of Maharaj’s demise. Many of them received instructions (directly or indirectly) to come to Pune. Even under these circumstances, Mahārāj undertook his annual Gurudwādashi trip to Wadi and managed to conduct all religious rituals (he even climbed up and down the stairs on the river bank). This appeared to be nothing short of a miracle.

On 10th January, he called all the disciples in the Ashram and gave them the four directives for fulfillment of life’s purpose:

- “1. Healthy and pure diet
2. Regular meditation
3. Firm belief in the principles and power of the sect
4. ‘Who am I?’- this humble thought to prevent vanity.”

“Practice as many religious rituals and rites as possible. But if that is not possible one should not be disheartened. Always

be simple and humble. Pure mind and simple living make the Almighty happy. Just having faith that there is a God is also enough.”

On Sunday, 13th January, Maharaj’s health took a turn for the worse and the doctors advised that he be admitted to a hospital. But Mahārāj had given strict instructions forbidding this and so treatment was being given at the Ashram only. Many reputed doctors used to visit the Ashram and give him the best possible treatment. Once in a while, Mahārāj would ask, “When does the Uttarāyan (summer solstice) start?” But nobody really understood the sinister implication of this question. On Monday, it was the festival of Makar Sankrānti. Devotees thronged the Ashram to offer Tilgul to Mahārāj (a type of sweet customarily exchanged during this festival). However they had to offer it to idols on the ground floor. Despite his critical state, Mahārāj invited a few people upstairs and spent time with them. At 10 pm, he applied *Bhasm* on his forehead, sipped Ganga water and performed his Sandhya. His health appeared to improve a little through the night, and on Tuesday 15th January he even completed the recitation of Ajapā Jap in the morning. The overall tension in the Ashram was somewhat relieved. Mahārāj asked everybody to quickly complete their daily worship and eat lunch. At noon, when Dr Sane removed the infusion needle from his hand, he undressed for his bath and went to the bathroom. There he suffered a heart attack. He was lifted and kept on the bed, where he consumed some Ganga water and calmly relinquished his sacred body.

Shade of Divine Grace

At the age of 40, when Guru Mahārāj came to Pune, he was single-mindedly driven by the cause of people’s spiritual welfare. Although people rallied around him right from his Barshi days, his main mission was accomplished at

Pune. He never flaunted his greatness nor did he actively conceal it. He exemplified the verses of Saint Dynaneshwar's: *"Firmly established within/ in the transcendental Divine/ outwardly assuming/ the social mores."* *"Adhering to the path scriptural / guiding the people/ not alienating at all /the ordinary folk."*¹.

It would be impossible to even imagine the immensity of his life work. Thousands of distressed, needy and aspiring people sought his guidance and he never disappointed them. He preached to each person according to his/her spiritual makeup and won a thousand hearts. He empathetically listened to all queries and lovingly gave advice. He received a lot of correspondence also. He read every letter carefully and made it a point to reply to every letter. He preached not only Shaktipāt Diksha but also Datta worship, Hath yoga, Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga etc depending on the devotee's needs and constitution. All this work was done quietly and constantly with natural ease. No one other than him can know the vastness of his work. A few random illustrations may make this clear.

Once, a devotee with esophageal cancer visited Guru Mahārāj with his family. This devotee had not been able to consume even a single morsel of food in 2-3 weeks. Mahārāj made him sit down beside him for lunch. And wonder of wonders! The person could swallow food, which brought tears to his eyes.

Such instances were continuously taking place. Saroj Gandhi was bed-ridden with a debilitating illness for 12 years. Shri. Guru Mahārāj went to meet her at her home and spent an hour in her company. After this she began to recover and soon returned to normal.

¹ *"अंतरीं दृढा परमात्मरूपीं गूढा बाह्यं तरी रूढा लौकिकु जैसा।।" "मार्गाधारं वर्तावं। जन हे मोहरे लावावे। अलौकिक नोहावं। लोकांप्रति।।"*

Shri Dyaneshwar Kale's newly married daughter was sick with fever at her in-law's house far from Pune. Guru Mahārāj appeared by the side of her bed and comforted her. After recovering, she conveyed the incident in a letter to her father who visited Mahārāj and asked him, "Mahārāj, were you really there?" Mahārāj smiled slightly and asked him in turn, "Would your daughter lie to you?" Shri Guru Mahārāj had an unarming way of deflecting attention from him.

Mahārāj had a devout disciple in Sholapur by the name of Sharanappa Mangule. Once, his 7-8 year daughter fell down from an upper floor. Everyone rushed to her and found that she was absolutely unharmed. When asked, she replied, "Mahārāj was here! He securely held me in his arms." Right until the day of his demise, and indeed even later, disciples have recounted incidents of seeing Mahārāj in flesh.

We have earlier spoken of Shri. Jambuwant Singh, the devotee who had devoutly served Shri. Loknāth Teerth Swami Mahārāj. Once, he had gone to Bāgalkot in Karnataka for business. There he suffered a heart attack. In that unfamiliar place he had to be hospitalized with no one to attend to him. In his hospital room he saw Mahārāj enter through the window. Mahārāj tended to him for 2-3 days. Overwhelmed, he asked Mahārāj, "Who are you indeed? Are you an angel or devil or someone else?" Mahārāj assured him that he was indeed who he appeared to be, his Guru! Mahārāj, of course, was in Pune at that time. Jambuwant Singh rushed to Pune and apprised Mahārāj of this incident. Mahārāj just smiled.

People came to Mahārāj with spiritual queries as well as household problems. Many times disciples would feel shy or hesitate to ask their query. Sometimes they got a satisfactory reply even without asking it. Shri Padture's experience is worth mentioning. He had got a job in an Arab country. But he could not decide whether to leave his current

well paid job and take this offer. He decided to ask Mahārāj and reached the Ashram. He bowed before Mahārāj and sat in front of him. But he could not bring up his personal query in the presence of other disciples. During the course of discussion Mahārāj quoted a saying, "Fortune favors the brave." At that point he suddenly turned to Shri. Padture and said, "This is for you!" This was enough for Padture to make up his mind and take the Gulf job, which, needless to say, brought him prosperity.

Another disciple from Mumbai was having trouble convincing his daughter to marry the person of his choice. Being a devotee of Shri Swāmi Swarupanand of Pāwas, he went to Pāwas. But Swāmiji was unwell and could not be approached. On the suggestion of his companion, he stopped over at Pune and went to see Mahārāj at the Ashram. He had penned down his query on a piece of paper, but couldn't get himself to ask Mahārāj. He sat there for a while fidgeting. Suddenly Mahārāj said, "Take out that chit from your pocket!" This helped him gather enough courage to speak up. Mahārāj asked him to return with his daughter. When he came with his daughter, Mahārāj just explained to her, "Our parents always want the best for us. Your happiness lies in obeying them." Surprisingly, the girl immediately gave up her insistence and consented to marry any person her parents decided upon.

The above mentioned incidents are just random examples. Such events took place all the time in near or even distant places from Mahārāj. Every initiated disciple most definitely had wonderful experiences during their Sadhana. These are described in detail in the relevant literature. Many of the disciples have also written about these. Often, however, even uninitiated persons have had these experiences. People have seen Mahārāj converse with them or advise them through dreams, Sadhana, or even in person.

Regarding this, Guru Mahārāj once said, “These experiences arise from individual faith. I do not visit anyone’s dreams. God himself assumes an appearance as per the devotee’s faith to bless him thus!” Some faithful disciples have sighted Mahārāj in the sanctums of Wadi, Kuravpur and Gānagāpur. Mahārāj attributed this to the infinite grace of Shripadshrivallabh, deftly omitting to mention that it was his saintly personage that provided the medium for this grace. Even today, 40 years after his demise, Shri Guru Mahārāj continues to be an effective and perennial channel for this divine grace to flow, as evidenced by the disciples who continue to have similar experiences. The Sanskrit word for saint, “Sant” literally means one who exists eternally, transcending all physical and temporal limitations. As asserted by P.P.Shri Vāsudevānand Saraswati Swami Mahārāj in Dattamāhātmya, *“Saints are the shades of divine grace /God’s motherly face/tongues of the Supreme/That neither grow nor diminish.”*

May Shri Guru Maharaj’s austere, selfless and dedicated life ever be a shelter for his disciples, an imperishable and perfect Divine grace that bestows on all devotees everywhere a happy and harmonious life culminating in Self-realization.

तीर्थानां परमं तीर्थं तारकाणां च तारकम्।

सद्गुर्वाख्यं महातीर्थं भजामि परमार्थदम्।।

“Holiest of the holy places / Savior of all Saviors / Known as Sadguru / bestowing the ultimate benediction / I verily venerate. “

Dedicated to the lotus feet of Sadguru.

Shri Gurudev Datta!