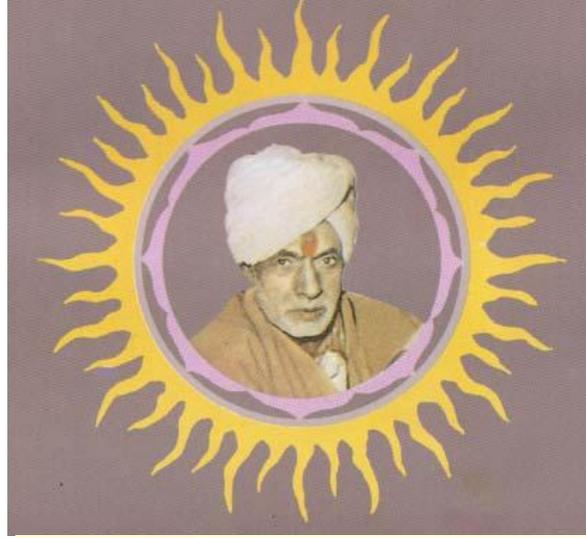




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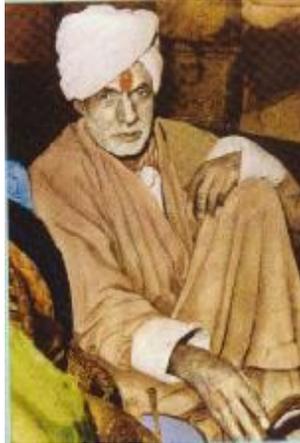
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Bhagwaan Gopinathji

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Contents

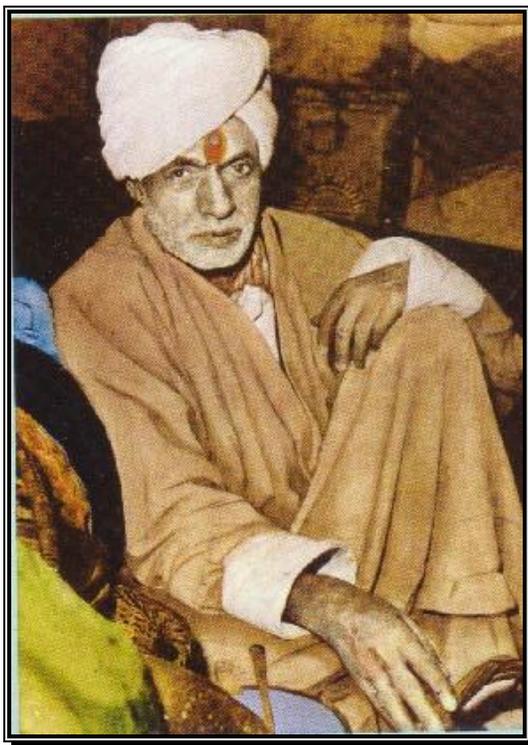
	page
Contents.....	v
Foreword	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1 Introduction.....	1-2
2 Jagadguru Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji - The Inimitable Sage	2-3
3 Bhagwaan Gopinathji - The Saint Extraordinary.....	3-9
4 Indigo Indian of Mystic East	4-13
5 Bhagawaan Ji After 1968	5-16
6 Immortal Bhagawaan Ji.....	6-19
7 Remembering Bhagwaan Ji.....	7-21
8 Jagadguru Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji.....	8-23
9 Jagat Guru Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji.....	9-27
10 Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji As Jagad Guru	10-29
11 Bhagwaan Gopinathji - Some reminiscences and thoughts.....	11-32
12 The Inspired Sage of Accomplishment	12-34
13 Bhagwaan Gopinath - An Apostle of Sahaj Yoga	13-36
14 Bhagwaanji as our children know and see Him.....	14-38
14.1 Extract from the essays of senior participants	14-39
14.2 Extracts from the essays of Junior Participants.....	14-39
15 Multi Dimensional Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji.....	15-42
15.1 Apology	15-42
15.2 Bhagawaan Ji as Siddharth	15-42
15.3 Bhagawaan Ji	15-43
15.4 Lord Buddha	15-43
15.5 Bhagawaan Ji as a Jivan Mukhta.....	15-44
15.6 Bhagawaan Ji as Sthir Man.....	15-44
16 Review on "Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji of Kashmir".....	16-46
17 Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji Trust Activities.....	17-53
18 The Vedas & the Vedic Rishi: Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji.....	18-54
19 How Bhagwanji Called Me Back To His Fold	19-58
20 My Master, Bhagawaanji.....	20-62
21 To Bhagawaanji: A Devotee's Floral Tribute	21-64
22 Was Bhagawaan Gopinathji a Supermind ?	22-66
23 Bhagwan Gopinath and the Contribution of Kashmiri Mystics to the World Order of the 21st Century	23-68
23.1 The Art of Meditation.....	23-69
23.2 Synthesis for a Common Future.....	23-69
23.3 Concluding Remarks	23-70
24 Homage to Bhagawaan Ji on 96th Mahajayanti celebrated at Delhi.....	24-71
25 The Portrayal of the Holiest of The Holy	25-73
26 The Human Mind and Sadhana.....	26-74
27 Select Excerpts from the Personal Diary of Late Shri Shanker Nath Fotedar.....	27-76
28 Surrender to God.....	28-78
29 Quotable Quotes & Wise Sayings.....	29-83

30	How to know that Brahman	30-85
31	Yoga and the Spiritual Path	31-87
32	Spirituality and the Scientific Temper.....	32-89
33	Spirituality and the Scientific Temper.....	33-91
34	Spirituality and the Scientific Temper.....	34-93
35	Spirituality and the Scientific Temper.....	35-95
36	What I see as 'Divine Grace' in Spirituality	36-97
37	The Letter "K"	37-98
38	Brahman.....	38-100
39	Two Centenary Celebrations	39-102
40	Learning from India.....	40-104
41	Religion as I see It.....	41-106
42	From Grief to Renunciation.....	42-108

1 Introduction

Bhagwaanji was veritably God in the human form. This became unmistakably evident to the discerning among his devotees who found him ever-absorbed in the universal consciousness. He would come down to our plane of consciousness only when prompted to answer queries by the seekers and would then instantly return to his exalted state of divine bliss.

A model of utmost simplicity and humility, he could be mistaken for the ordinary. But deep inside him was hidden the saint extra-ordinary, a Yogi of the highest order who had all the elements at his command, who could transform a person with a mere touch or glance. He not only helped the seekers advance on the path of spirituality, but gave liberally out of his "Bounty" to relieve his devotees in distress and even granted many of them fulfillment of their worldly aspirations.



Bhagwan Gopinathji

Bhagwaanji had attained full union with the "Paramatman" long before he gave up his mortal coil and attained "Mahasamadhi". Having got identified with "Siva-Sakti", his energetic activity continues unabated. For the devotees he is as accessible now as he was in physical form.

Bhagwaanji is believed to have counselled his devotees not to bother themselves about awakening the "kundalini", for he considered it a risky undertaking that could harm and mislead them. Instead, he helped the seekers in "experiencing" divine illumination through direct transmission. In his hallowed presence, the true seeker felt an "overseeing power" bringing him to the path of righteousness; the change wrought in him was spontaneous and durable.

We should constantly have Bhagwaanji in our thoughts, and make it our habit to turn inwardly to him in deep prayer to earn his benedictions. Through his grace alone can we contribute our mite to running the programmes and institutions under the aegis of Bhagwaan Gopinathji Trust.

Jai BhagwaanJi

2 Jagadguru Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji - The Inimitable Sage

"whose influence is being felt in even greater measure now"

G. N. Raina

"**Your** Guru has directed me to grace you"- these words were uttered by no less a spiritual luminary than Shri Satya Sai Baba of Puttaparti to a close devotee of Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji when he approached the sage in Bombay at the behest of his son-in-law to seek Grace for overcoming his bodily ailment. The Baba moved his right hand, and poured some holy ash to be taken orally and lo and behold, the devotee instantaneously got rid of his physical pain. The Baba, then, continued saying, "Your Guru was the greatest Kashmiri saint: he was Jiwan Mukta in the real sense. He will appear before you in about two months". This was in December 1973, nearly six years after the Bhagawaan had left his mortal coil.

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji did keep his date and he appeared to the said devotee twice in the subsequent two months (Jan-Feb 1974).

An embodiment of compassion for all those who sought his grace, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji has been and continues to be an unfailing source of solace to their afflicted souls. Men and women, young and old, the educated and the unlettered, the agnostics and the believers, would visit him, in and out of season, to receive words of comfort which would still the throbbing pain of their hearts.

Kashmir has produced a galaxy of saints and sages from times immemorial, and in recent past we have had a number of them. But few among the contemporaries have left as indelible an impression on the minds of the people as Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji. Two highly venerated mystics of contemporary Kashmir -- Kashkak and Nanda Bab, recognised Bhagawaanji's greatness. While Swami Kashkak is on record as saying that Bhagawaanji has been the recipient of special grace of Mother Sharika, Swami Nandlalji described Bhagawaan as "the king of saints in Kashmir".

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji led a simple, austere life. He never moved out of Kashmir: in fact, he shunned publicity, and covered himself with anonymity. Sadhus and saints from outside Kashmir did visit him. A celibate, he lived with his near relations all his life. Though he read upto middle standard only, yet he displayed a fair knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu and English. He spoke very little, never preached, puffed Chillum constantly and always remained engrossed in Brahman, so much so a casual visitor would remain unnoticed by him for hours together.

A Siddha, having attained the olympic heights of spirituality, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was an enigmatic God-man. His life was a curious blend of Jnana (knowledge), Bhakhti (devotion) and Karma (action). For most of us who had had the good fortune of his darshan in flesh and blood, he was the holiest of the holy, with a healing touch and wielding Ashta Sidhis for the good of the people and the nation. To some others, his bizarre behaviour presented a picture of his inscrutability. His marijuana smoking, his non-vegetarianism and unorthodox ways were an enigma to the uninitiated. Ordinary mortals like us could hardly fathom his 'Gunateet' and 'Mayateet' nature.

Born in a respected Bhan family of Kashmiri Pandits in Srinagar on 3rd of July, 1898, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji almost inherited spiritual fervour from his highly religious minded father and mother. His mother was born to her parents following the grant of a boon by Goddess Rajnya herself. Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji had two brothers and two sisters. While the elder brother was a bachelor, the one younger to him did marry but remained issueless. The two sisters unfortunately lost their husbands early, the elder one after bearing two daughters and the younger one after bearing two sons and two daughters. Bhagawaanji was looked after by his elder sister and her two daughters.

From the days of infancy, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji, showed little interest in things material. He would sing the glories of God, of Mother Sharika and seize whatever opportunity he could get to attend bhajan mandalis and raslilas. The spirit of renunciation and the otherworldliness had overtaken his sensitive young mind. That is why his schooling was not complete and he did not take seriously to his uncle's Pashmina business either. He did take up the job of a composer in the city's oldest press-Vishnath Press,

but gave it up only after three years, during which period the press is said to have flourished. Bhagawaan ji rejected the entreaties of the proprietor of the Press saying that his "Dassdaraz" with him had ended. Later, he started a grocer's shop which he gave up soon after to plunge headlong into a rigorous tapasya.

From the age of 20, he had begun daily Parikrama of Hari Parbat and would spend hours in Devi Angan absorbed in the meditation of the Divine Mother. Of course, Chillum was his constant companion, even in those days. This period of his Sadhana was marked by devotion to the Shakti aspect of Godhead. He used to recite from memory hymns like Panchastavi, Bhawani Sahasranama, Saundaryalahri Vishnu Sahasranam, Mahimna Stotra, Utpalastotravali, Guru Gita and Bhagwadgita.

Not much is known about who initiated him. The well-known biographer of Bhagawaan ji, Shri S.N. Fotedar has tried to lay his hand on all evidences in this regard but has not been able to establish who his Guru was. Here, we would like to accept what Bhagawaan ji himself hinted at, obliquely though. On being asked, only a few years before his Nirvana, as to who his Guru was, he replied "any one of the 700 Shlokas of Gitaji can be one's Guru".

The second and the most important phase of his quest for self realization began when he was 32. For the next seven years, i.e. upto the age of 39, he wrestled with God, so to say. In this period of intense tapasya, he would lie on a bed, face towards the wall, with a lamp burning in his room which would often be covered with layers of dust. It is said that a rat made a hole in one of his heels which took a long time to heal. He had almost lost all consciousness of his body. He would often take Datura seed, opium and other intoxicants and would, at times vomit blood.

While it is difficult, nay impossible, to assess the state of Bhagawaan ji's spiritual advancement during this period, we have a clue given again by Bhagawaan ji himself in a cryptic reply he gave to his elder sister when she tried to persuade him to take to worldly life in view of the financial difficulties the family was in. He told her, "Sister, our boat is in the midst of an ocean. Either we will reach the shore safely or get drowned".

To our great good luck, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji did swim to the shore and out of the great ordeal of seven long years emerged a Siddha, with of course, a mauled body but a radiant spirit, with full vision of past, present and future. He had realized his true self and become one with Siva, the Ultimate Truth.

The truths of spirit can be apprehended only by those who like Bhagawaanji prepare themselves for their reception by rigorous discipline. It was not for nothing that in later years, he would often tell his close devotees that "MEHNAT PANANYA BIYI GURU KRIPA", meaning that intense personal effort and the grace of Guru are the essential pre-requisites of God realization.

Devotees like Prof. K.N. Dhar feel that Bhagawaanji inclined towards the Tantric method of Sadhana. According to him, "Bhagawan Gopinath Ji opted for the more strenuous path of Tantras with its curves and bends and wove the threads of his life on this texture". This body, says Rudrayamala Tantra, is an oblation which is to be continuously offered to the fire of self scrutiny. The unextinguishing Dhoomi in front of Bhagawaanji since the end of the seven-year spiritual odyssey symbolized this truth.

After realizing the dynamic aspect of Reality, i.e., the Divine Mother, Bhagawaanji took to the worship of Siva, the pure consciousness aspect of Truth. Siva is Infinite Consciousness, the subject as well as the object. Siva and Sakti are one indivisible whole. While Siva is the changeless reality underlying the entire universe, his energy, Shakti, has an infinity of aspects - Chit (intellect), Ananda (bliss), Ichha (Will), Jnana (knowledge) and Kriya (creative work). The recognition (Pratyabijna) of reality, according to Kashmiri Saivist thought, is all that is needed for Moksha. That is why Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was recognized as Jeewan Mukta (a liberated soul).

Again, Siva and Shakti, in the Ultimate analysis, constitute the contours of a common rather than a specific gender. The male (Nar) and the female (Nari) aspects of Reality are fused together in the case of Tantrik mystics who have often been observed to give feminine names to males and vice versa. One of the foremost Tantrik mystics of Kashmir, Swami Anandji of Jamnagari often addressed his male disciples

as females, perhaps to demonstrate that gender had lost all meaning for him and the likes of him. The great sage-poetess of yore, Lal Ded, looked upon all males as females.

An important aspect of Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji's spiritual Sadhana was emission of well-controlled rhythmic vibrations from various parts of his body. Spanda Shastra of Kashmir Saivism speaks of the vibratory nature of ultimate reality. In the last 30 years of his earthly existence, Bhagawaan ji would keep talking to invisible forces while he would be smoking his Chillum. At times, he would not even respond to people around him. None dared disturb him while puffing his Chillum with his eyes turned skyward, emitting and receiving vibrations. Always immersed in Samadhi, he would come down to our plane of consciousness when his attention was drawn, speak a few words and then go back to the same state. It was quite apparent that Chillum symbolized the vehicle of his communion with the Divine. The inhaling of the smoke acted as an aid for supra- mental dialogue with the Ultimate Truth. In such planes of mystic exhilaration, natural propensities of human organs are said to reverse the roles, where the eyes can speak, the ears can see and the mouth can feel. The senses are said to be under complete control and the mystic utilises them the way he thinks is the best. This stage is known as DIWA SHAKTI.

There is neither East nor West for the naked soul. The whole world is its home and as its home is in each of us, it belongs to all of us". These words of the French Savant, Romain Rolland, are true of all great saints, savants and sages, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji belongs to the entire world. There was no Hindu, Mussalman or Christian for him. All religions and all faiths led to the same goal. He once told a close devotee of his. "Think of Brahman as a Tree and sit on any one of its branches. All branches will lead you to the same goal". As Isa Upanisad puts it, this entire universe is enveloped by God, and nothing but God.

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji laid stress on Vichar, rational thought and the ability to discriminate between the real and the unreal, and he would often say that "a Yogi may attain realisation of God but it is only the Vicharvan, the discerning sage and the profound seer, who can fathom all aspects of the Brahman, the Ultimate Truth." He confirmed the faith of the devotees in whatever they held dear and guided them according to their capacity. Though he suggested Saakar Upasana (worship of God with form) to the beginners, he would say Yi Gav Taaph Parun meaning that it was just like worshipping the effulgence and not the substance of the sun. On yet another occasion, he told a Sakar Upasak "you have light to the level of your throat but your body is blank". He wanted his devotees to realize the absolute truth in all its aspects.

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji advocated special efforts on the part of a spiritual aspirant. He abhorred lackadiasical form of Upasana which he thought was like moving under the shade of willow trees, Yi Gav Veeri Shihilis Tal Pakun. He wanted Truth Seekers to plunge into God realization with complete surrender.

He would often urge the devotees to lift the veil of ego that enveloped Atman. AHANKAARAS NAMASKAAR - SUI GAV OMKAAR - TAMI SAATI BANI SAAKSHATKAAR, which means, "bid good-bye to Ego and be face to face with reality."

Here, one would recall an incident when a saintly person was dissuaded by a scholar-saint from visiting Bhagawaan ji, saying "since when have you started bowing to lumps of muck?" And when the said gentleman went to see Bhagawaan ji, he was asked, "Why do you come to bow before lumps of muck? We are not chiselled scholars." A nice, subtle dig at the scholar-saint! How true! It is the meek, the humble, the unsophisticated who shall be saved rather than those with inflated egos.

He never advised anyone to give up his household, wife or children in the quest of Truth. According to him, a worldly man, a Grihasta, could be a man of dispassion and reach the Ultimate. But he was quite adamant in not guiding those who could not practise celibacy, for he believed that the two centres of Brahma Jnana were located in the Cit (intellect) - one near and the other beyond the back of Chidakasha and that these centres were well preserved only by remaining celibate.

In our spiritual tradition, there are two ways to attain God- head-the one is known as the Buddha way where you tread the path alone, better known in scriptures as tapasya in which individual effort dominates, and the other is to cross the ocean of existence through the medium of a Guru who represents

the Divine, who knows the path and is in a position to help others in finding it. The Guru seeks to awaken much more than to instruct, says the great Yogi, Aurobindo Ghosh in his famous work *Synthesis of Yoga*. And Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji himself said on one occasion, when a verse in Kashmiri extolling the virtues of a Guru was being sung, YI GACHHI YACHHUN. It is an indication of God's grace, if one surrenders at the feet of the Guru.

He did not deliver sermons. He initiated a devotee and induced Parmarth (spirituality) by a touch, a mere glance and by sharing his chillum. Each received his grace according to one's Karma.

Strange are the goings-on of mystics. We recognise their greatness on the basis of something they do which is not explained by the ordinary laws of nature. And we describe these ways as mysterious. Saints and sages have been known to have a clear vision, with ability to read the thoughts of others, forecast events, prescribe remedies and clear impediments.

The saints, however are not to be judged by miracles alone, for some of them are really averse to demonstrations of this sort as they do not wish to interfere with nature. But, again, as Bhagawaan Raman Maharishi of Tiruvanmalai put it, "it is enough for the thoughts of a Jnani to be turned in any direction and the automatic divine activity begins". As if to prove beyond doubt the efficacy of what Shri Raman Maharshi had said about miracles, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji, during his Amarnath Yatra, addressed an overcast sky at Wavjan above the sacred Sheshnag lake, "You settle down in Sheshnag" and in no time was the sky clear of the black clouds and the thousands of pilgrims resumed journey without fear of a bad weather.

Kind and compassionate as Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was, he cured incurable diseases like blood cancer, and he would often ask those stricken with malignant diseases to be brought to him and a mere glance or touch would cure them completely, to the surprise of all. On request, he would give some ash from his Dhooni to cure ailments. Diabetes, Tuberculosis, brain haemorrhages and mental disorders were cured by him. He never asked for any money, though whatever was offered was accepted only to be distributed among those present. Once he referred to these offerings (money, fruits, sweets etc) as blood. This is all blood, he would say. And, it is said, he took upon himself any evil attached to such offerings.

A mystic tradition has it that at a particular point of time, a Divine Government functions and oversees the workings of human mind. It also directs the world affairs. Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was regarded the king of this Divine set up in the State. In this context, one can understand what happened in 1947 and 1948 in the aftermath of a tribal raid conducted surreptitiously by Pakistan into the territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

In 1947, in one of his soliloquies, Bhagawaan Ji was heard saying: "What is our army doing? They get so much ration and yet do not open a direct route to Kashmir for Ladakhi Lamas." And in 1948, we witnessed Indian army conquering Zojilla Pass and Kargil, thus establishing a direct link with Ladakh. A Military Police Officer connected with this operation was informed by the Front Commander that the operations were directed by a mysterious person, giving his identification clues. Long after that, the said Military Police Officer, a Christian, did visit Bhagawaanji in Srinagar through the courtesy of one Mr. T.N. Dhar and the officer confirmed that the saint exactly answered to the description given by the Front Commander.

This is not all, In September 1962, when he was at Bhadrakali, Bhagawaanji told his sister and Swami Amrit-ananda who accompanied him, "Don't you see what is happening across the mountains? A whiff of wind from that side will blow you over". Rest is a matter of history. Again, before the 1965 war, he pointed towards south-west and said, Kaala (death) was dancing there. At the end of the hostilities, however, he pointed out that "the west is clear now".

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji used to sit on his aasan almost all the 24 hours absorbed in Higher Self. Every morning he would wash his face and Yajnopavit at the water tap, tie his turban and put on saffron tilak with a touch of ash in the centre. And then he would start his Dhooni. He would rarely take bath. In fact in the last 30 years of his life, he took bath only twice, once at Kshir Bhawani and another at Chundapora residence in Srinagar when Dal Lake was frozen. It is said that soon after he took bath, there was thaw

and the cold wave abated. But even though he did not take bath, his skin usually gave out an aroma. In fact, he had no body consciousness. He used to describe his legs as splinters of wood. He clean shaved his head once a month. The devotees used to massage his body but he would never take bath after the massage. He, however, stopped devotees from doing any massage a year before he left us. He would undertake fasts for months at a stretch. The fasts were not of the ceremonial type, that of missing a meal a day but these involved total abstention from food, except a cup of Kahwa on rare occasions.

In the last two years of his sojourn on the planet earth, he gave enough hints of his decision to give up his gross body. During this period, he did not leave his aasan even to answer the calls of nature. He would remark: "I have now grown old". To a devotee who showed concern at his failing health, he said about one and a half month before the fateful day: Amar Chha Maraan (Do the deathless die?) Again, a few months before his leaving the mortal frame, his biographer and a close devotee, Shri Fotedar, asked him why swelling in his genitals persisted. He replied, "What else is going to happen to this body? It will get shattered piece by piece". Only a few days before his passing away, he remarked: "I should like to go to Kshir Bhawani now". He also said that Dhooni was no more necessary.

Almost on every Sunday, musicians sang till late in the night and he would never ask them to stop. But on his last Sunday on earth, 26th May, '68 he directed the musicians to stop, remarking "we shall not listen to any more music".

Then came May 28, 1968, Tuesday - the day Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji finally chose to cast off his Bhautik Sareera. He went through the morning routine as usual. At about 3 p.m. he directed one of his devotees to give the three Sadhus rupee one each. He had the last few puffs at his Chillum. A devotee started making tea but Bhagawaanji said "We shall not take tea any more". He asked for water at 5.30 p.m. And at 5.45 p.m. he uttered OM NAMAH SHIVAYA in a low voice, looked around with infinite love towards those present, and closed his eyes. All was over. The revered Nanda Bab mourned the loss by saying that Kashmir had been rocked by an earthquake.

Thus, passed into eternity a great Siddha. He may be no more with us in flesh and blood. But his Spirit continues to guide the ever-increasing number of devotees scattered all over the world. His influence is being felt in even greater measure now.

Nearly a quarter of a century has elapsed since his Nirvana. Yet a mere look at his portrait gives, to the man of faith, the feeling of the presence of a Living Reality. He seems to talk through his lustrous and penetrating eyes. His angelic countenance takes charge of one's afflicted heart, as it were and fills it with inexhaustible bliss. Many a devotee who had never seen him in his life-time, have testified to this mysterious experience.

In his Cosmic form, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji has been seen to take care of all those who surrender to him, heart and soul. Not bound by the limitations of time and space, Bhagawaanji has been munificent in answering sincere prayers anywhere any time. In the words of Swami Yogananda, the celebrated author of "The Autobiography of a Yogi", perfect Masters like Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji "can materialize and dematerialize themselves and move with the velocity of light and utilise the creative light rays in bringing into instant visibility any physical manifestation". According to him, a sage who has merged his consciousness with that of the Supreme Reality perceives the cosmic essence as light and being free from the three dimensions of space and the fourth one of time, is able to transfer his physical or cosmic form with equal ease through the light rays of earth, water, fire and air.

We are passing through very critical times. Materialism has taken a firm hold over our minds, particularly the young. The moral and spiritual values are on the wane. The need to move from the outer to the inner life, to coordinate the scientific temper and the spiritual approach and to restore the efficacy of our ancient ethical, cultural and spiritual perspectives, has never been greater than now. And in this task, only the saints like Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji can show us the right path, dispel fear in our minds and instil the much-needed faith and love. Bhagawaanji has a divine mission to fulfil. He will, we firmly believe, shed light and illumine the dark patches of our aggrieved souls.

Our salutations to this great sage who made Kashmir, nay the entire world, proud.

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3 Bhagwaan Gopinathji - The Saint Extraordinary

T. N. Dhar

In response to the questions of his enthusiastic devotees and inquisitive seekers about the nature of the self, Ramana Maharshi is reported to have observed: "The state of self-realisation, as we call it, is not attaining something new or reaching some goal which is far away, but simply being that which you always are and which you always have been. All that is needed is that you give up your realization of the not- true as true... The state we call realisation is simply being oneself, not knowing anything or becoming anything. If one has realised, one is that which alone is and which alone has always been." If Bhagwaanji had given discourses or entered into conversation with his devotees on the subject of realizing one's self, he would perhaps have said the same thing, because he was a living embodiment of this vital truth about the state of self-realisation. The narrative of his life, though plain and singularly unspectacular, is a striking illustration of how- through single-minded devotion, rigorous discipline, and iron will, he attained this true state: of being himself.

It is almost unbelievable that a saint of the stature of Bhagwaanji could have lived so near our times which, because of our relentless and unabashed pursuit of material gains, has witnessed a radical transformation in our life styles, reflected most conspicuously in the steady decline of faith and our indifference to the rich spiritual heritage of our land. I am not even sure how many amongst us can share my feelings of regret when I recall that though Bhagwaanji lived right through my school and college days I did not have the good fortune of having his darshan, even touching his feet. For me it will always be a costly miss, an opportunity I did not avail myself of, for does not Kabir say it beautifully: "A pilgrimage is good; To meet a saint is better?" And what better luck could it have been to have met not just a saint, but a saint of saints, a veritable Bhagwaan, for that is what Gopinathji was and still is for hundreds and thousands of his devotees, whose tribe has been on the increase?

Bhagwaanji's journey towards sainthood in Kashmir can be understood in its proper perspective as part of a long tradition in the holy valley of rishis, as Kashmir was known in the past, and of the still older tradition of asceticism in India. The way of life in ancient India, which is now generally understood as the Hindu way of life, is perhaps unique in providing a proper and meaningful space for ascetics, sadhus, rishis, and saints within the normal recognizable social framework. For the four- fold varnashrama provided for different stages in an individual's growth and maturity, through the stages of boyhood, youth, marriage and family life to the last stage, in which he stepped into asceticism. This ideal arrangement balanced social needs and material pursuits, for keeping the race alive and providing for its upkeep and growth, with an individual's quest for spiritual enlightenment and self-realisation. It recognized asceticism as a stage following worldly pleasures and joys towards a state in which, through rigorous detachment, every being learnt to withdraw into himself and work towards his personal salvation.

The most remarkable feature of this arrangement is the clear and realistic focus of the ancient Indians on asceticism: it is something normal, desirable, and within the reach of every person; because of this, it has remained an integral part of our society. As a logical extension of a life of fulfillment, it is not something unusual, i.e., a thing diametrically opposed to social and material goals. However, it did affirm that the ultimate purpose of life was much more than perpetuating the race in material comfort. This consciousness was supposed to have a healthy, salutary effect on the earlier stages of an individual's life, imbuing it with a definite moral purpose and character.

In Kashmir, a slightly altered form of this tradition was the strong tradition of householder-sadhus and saints, of enlightened souls who had attained extraordinary spiritual powers, even while living in recognizable family structures. It survived the onslaughts of the rise of Muslim faith, and made inroads into the spiritual fabric of Islam, by straightening the order of the Sufi saints. I have had the good fortune of knowing quite a few of the householder- saints, who preferred to remain almost unknown. They were extraordinarily gentle, humane, and compassionate beings, who kept the tradition of spirituality alive in Kashmir.

Although the four-fold varnashrama was the standard practice among the Hindus, many people chose to plunge straightaway into the last stage, bypassing the preceding ones of marriage and raising a family. In course of time, this tendency grew further, giving rise to the emergence of another class of saints. Some even held that a person who chooses to be a celibate and leads a life of renunciation right from an early stage is ideally suited to face the rigours of ascetic life.

Within the differing strands of this main tradition, sadhus and saints had enormous freedom to do whatever they thought was right and desirable for attaining their ends. There is hardly any evidence, both literary and archival, in pre-Buddhist times to show that asceticism had a rigid institutionalized character, which could be identified through recognizable orders, monks, standardized practices, training schedules, and rules firmly laid-down. This left people free to choose different modes of worship of the deities of their choice; they were, likewise, free to adopt ascetic practices of their choice involving physical and mental discipline. Even the search for a proper mentor or guru was a part of the saintly quest. This partially accounts for the great variety in the saintly order in India. If we find the emergence and growth of more recognizable kinds of saintly orders in the later periods, it is largely because of the growing influence of Buddhism and Jainism on the Hindu thinking and practices. It is not my intention to go into details concerning the various kinds of saintly orders; I have mentioned this social phenomenon only to show what kind of a saint Bhagwaanji was.

The most striking feature of Bhagwaanji's life is that though he lived hardly a few decades ago, when writing about people of eminence and distinction in any field was quite possible, because documenting lives had already developed into a standard literary practice, we actually know very little about him. In spite of our awareness of the extraordinary spiritual powers he had and of the respect he commanded among people, we have less than adequate knowledge about his personality and the nature of his achievement. All that is available to us is a short and in many respects a very inadequate biography by one of his devotees, the late S. N. Fotedar. A devotee of a long standing, he had known Bhagwaanji for over two decades. Also available today are a few short pieces of reminiscences by some people, which provide descriptive accounts of their meetings with him and also of some miracles that he performed. The biography in particular is more of a chronicle of Bhagwaanji's physical movements in the city of Srinagar than a sustained narrative about his life.

The reasons for the paucity of materials about Bhagwaanji do not lie solely with the people who wrote about him; we cannot pin it on the lack of acumen of his biographer or of the people who recorded their impressions about him. They largely inhere in the very nature of his sainthood. He had such a normal and ordinary childhood and youth that nobody could have thought that he would become an eminent saint. In fact, till the time he was in his thirties, he had first a regular job and then ran a small business in a shop, because he needed money to help the members of his joint family. If he resolved not to marry and took interest in visiting holy places, it was not something too unusual. One can cite examples of several household saints of Kashmir who did not marry and did not earn for the families they belonged to. I emphasize these details to establish that Bhagwaanji's early life did not provide any significant clues about the nature of his future life, as one normally finds in the lives of Kabir, Mirabai, or Ramakrishna neither struggle, nor neglect, nor extraordinary visions and fainting spells.

Bhagwaanji's story is too prosaic and ordinary. Compared with the lives of many of the known saints, it has no fire, no striking passion, no flamboyance., which could stimulate people's interest in him. Although he had a well-directed will to seek his Parmeswar and spent virtually his whole life, more noticeably his years after he gave up active work of all kinds, in pursuit of his goal, he did not do anything out of the ordinary which could attract his attention of people. He undertook no complicated measures, did not do anything risky, did not even move out of his home or place of birth. Even after attaining his goal, he remained steadfast in his endeavour to be a true being. He had no ambition to announce anything to the world, or found a school, or raise a following, or reform the society of his day.

In many respects, Bhagwaanji, though he never became a house-holder in the true sense of the word, is a model of the family-saint. Till it was necessary, he shouldered the responsibility of looking after his kin.

After he was free from it, he continued to live with his close relatives. He observed most of the routine social norms, was never choosy about his food or other requirements, and seldom gave any obvious indications of his true state.

Though he maintained links with his family, he stuck to his saadhana. When he concentrated on it with increasing intensity, he became more and more careless about his appearance and living style. Any person seeing him for the first time could hardly take him for the realized soul that he was, for around him one could see only the traditional trapping of commonplace sadhus. He would frequently smoke his chillum and offer ahutis in the dhooni in front of him. Most of the time, he would simply be either lying down or sitting with an abstract look on his face, this was certainly not a very inviting sort of look, which could encourage people to talk to him. This self-absorption became his usual manner in the last years of his life. Though he allowed some of his devotees to press his feet and his legs, which he always thought no better than pieces of wood, he was not much of a talker. Most of the people who sat with him for hours together did not even open their lips, because they always held him in reverential awe. Obviously, Bhagwaanji's mode of saadhana did not make room for discourses, and he spoke no philosophical profundities. He was more of a loner, and too much into himself. His biographer tells us that during the closing years of his life, he spent much of his time in mauna, and hardly ever took food or attended the calls of nature. Although he seldom washed his body, it always looked clean and exuded aroma.

In spite of living through protracted spells of reticence, Bhagwaanji did not cut off his links with people. He was essentially gentle and compassionate and fully alive to the pain and sorrow of those who came to him for succour. To them he offered solace and help and no intellectual or metaphysical fare. He spoke to them in the language that they could understand, the language of a fellow being and not of a learned pundit. Several people have written about Bhagwaanji's acts of kindness and also about the various ways in which he mitigated their pain. All such acts perceived by the devout as miracles have been recorded systematically by Fotedar in a separate chapter in his book.

Though it is generally believed that true saints do not normally perform miracles, especially those who do not want followers or raise sects, yet most of them do it because that is one of the ways for them to reach out to their fellow beings. Dadu Dayal, a famous family-saint from Rajasthan, has said that a saint is always one with God. And when He deems fit, He automatically takes care of the saint and his devotees in very many special ways, which common people understand as miracles. In his celebrated autobiography, Swami Yogananda has recorded a large number of miracles of several yogis. He maintains that "by the perfection of his surrender to the Prime Healing Power, the master enabled it to flow freely through him." Here Swami Yogananda explains that it is actually God Himself Who performs what are seen as 'miracles' of the Masters that act as His instruments.

Bhagwaanji's miracles of various kinds have been meticulously documented not only by his biographer but also by various other people, whose writings have featured in different issues of the Patrika. That is why there is no need to recount them here. I would only like to emphasize that they were actuated by his love and compassion for the people who came to him with hope. Some of them also illustrate how he came to the rescue of his loved ones during moments of their trial or crisis. Another interesting aspect of his miracles is that they were not concerned only with his desire to help or heal people, but also with his wish to enable them to have a taste of the divine. Several times he is believed to have let some of his chosen devotees to have darshan of the Devi, Sharika Devi of Hari Parbat in particular, right in the midst of their routine surroundings. He would let this happen in a very casual manner, which would catch his devotees off their guard. Often when they missed out on the miracle and their chance of seeing the Devi with attention Bhagwaanji would get into his rare unusual moods: he would be playful, humorous, even mischievous. However, such moments minimized with the passage of time, for during the last phase of his intense saadhana, he was hardly conscious even of his surroundings.

Since Bhagwaanji was one with God even while he lived in this world, he was truly a mystic saint, and his mysticism could be called the "mysticism of personal life." Sudhir Kakar, in his illuminating study of Ramakrishna as a mystic, characterises his mysticism as ecstatic, accompanied by physical movements

(such as the postures or mudras associated with the Indian dance). Unlike this, "the mysticism of personal life," according to - Kakar "is not rooted in ecstatic nature, but in a meeting with God in the midst of life's problems and struggles, a meeting experienced at a deep level of faith within normal waking consciousness." This, in my view, aptly describes Bhagwaanji's state as distinguished from Sri Ramakrishna's.

I think that the most remarkable part of Bhagwaanji's achievement is that he makes us see and understand the saintly path in very ordinary and human terms. No adverse circumstances in life pushed him into adopting this path; nor did he show any unusual signs, which could be interpreted as his pre-disposed leanings in this direction. But deep inside him was a strong urge towards it. And he chose to follow this path slowly, steadily, and without any fanfare. He went on intensifying his powers of concentration to such an extent that at one stage he thought of nothing but his Paramatman. Everything he did was within the tried-out, known, and traditional mould, through ways and means which are neither difficult nor unattainable. This makes him into a splendid example of the realized saint, who inspires us more by his example than by his words and actions. The most direct and simple lesson of his life for us is that personal salvation is a purely individual concern and every human being can and should strive towards it: that each one of us, in spite of our ordinalness, is a potential saint.

4 Indigo Indian of Mystic East

H. N. Kaul

I am no great believer in men who claim direct liaison with the GOD (emphasis mine). To me all Godmen are fraudmen, whom I dare not touch with a ten-foot-long barge pole.

Naturally, I hit the ceiling when my god-fearing and god-abiding wife asked me, one fine morning, to accompany her to a Godman, wrapping me up with a lot of crape about the supposed miraculous powers of the holy man and the likely material benefits I could get. I may have had a bite at the bait but before she could hook me up for the visit she slipped and that settled it for me. Being mortally afraid of droppers and junkies I put my foot down-and I knew I hurt her-when she told me the Godman was a hash-addict. It was in the winter of 1967- 68, hardly three months after my marriage.

In the summer of 1968, while cooling my heels in Kashmir on a sandwiched holiday, my wife continued her efforts to bring me round to a visit to the holyman and this time I had to thwart a two-pronged attack as my sister-in-law Jai, a committed devotee, had joined forces with my wife. But I was so scared by the mere thought of confronting a junkie that I refused to budge even an inch despite the provocations, temptations and nagging they tried to corner me with. And when it was time for us to say thank you to the vale and dale and tie our shoelaces for the return journey to our joint in Delhi, it happened. My wife trooped in, with puffed cheeks and blood-shot eyes, a picture of misery and grief and broke down: "He's left us."

And to my sympathetic enquiries she cleared the riddle amid sobs. The Godman was dead.

"Good riddance", I thought, and felt a surge of relief through me. But to show my concern for her grief I presented her my sympathies rolled in butter. I even volunteered to pay my homage to the saint by joining his funeral procession. This was great comfort to her and I had nothing to be scared of. "Who is afraid of the dead - even dead junkies.

I kept my word and was at the spot on the dot. But I was stunned to see the size of the crowd - a funeral crowd any national leader would have envied. And what struck me most was the devotion of the people more than their grief. They said their grief with rose petals and tears.

For some time curiosity welled up in me to know why so many sane people were drawn to a dope but the bustle of hectic life in Delhi, put the lid down on my inquisitiveness and I parked the thought of Godman in the closed shelf of my brain and forgot about him the way I forget all the trifles that cross my way.

But it was not to be so. One day when I returned back from my work very late, tired to the bones and ready to hit the sack, I failed to recognize my bedroom. A Godrej-size cane-rack had pushed the yacht-size bed to the corner and string of coloured bulbs had given the room a festive look. My wife, in lotus posture, eyes closed and string of beads in her hand was seated like a statue in front of the rack. I nudged forward and looked into the rack. An old man in typical Kashmiri Brahminical attire was staring at me from within the rack. He was supporting a six tier Muslim turban and wearing a 'pheran'. He was deeply drawing at his 'chellum' with the tongue of a flame licking his broad and furrowed brow and his luminous eyes were penetrating through me like X-ray. For a few minutes I could not take my eyes off him. It was an impressive photograph in a chrome frame.

I jerked my wife out of her reveries. She promptly introduced me to the Godman, pointing an enthusiastic finger at the photograph and she kissed the locket, with another mini-portrait of the saint studded in it, with reverence. And so the Godman, despite my apparent disliking, started staying with me right in my bedroom and in the heart of my wife. And I had to stay with him to compromise peace at home. I had my misgivings as I thought the ghost of the saint in my bedroom will be standing like a ten-foot-tall concrete wall between me and my wife. But it was not so. I managed peaceful co-existence with the godman.

Satya Sai Baba, a south Indian Godman with a liberal crop of Negroid hair that shaded his head like an umbrella was the most sought-after Godman those days and I decided to cash on his popularity to make a fast buck and steady my fast declining bank blue. Somehow, I managed to gatecrash and got an audience

with the saint and wrote a 50 page sketch of my impressions. The booklet was sold before it hit the stalls. Though it fattened my bank-roll a bit, it did not make me any wiser about Godmen and I continued to love Godmen like plague. Then two small happenings softened me a bit and I began to waver but, yet, I was not fully sold to the idea.

I prize two things in life: my son Ashish and my liquor. One day Ashish suddenly doubled up in pain and his yelps and shrieks were piercing through my heart like lances. It was midnight and I was trying to ring my doctor out of his slumber when my wife brought Ashish to me, parked him in my lap, opened a rusty tin box, scooped up a pinch of ash and put it in the crying child's mouth. Suddenly like a taut wire let loose at both ends, the child's stiffness vanished and he calmed down. Within five minutes he was his giggling self again with no pain or sickness. I smiled through misty eyes in utter disbelief: How could a pinch of ash calm a child, who seemed dangerously ill? This was the poser that was raising its hood like a cobra in my mind and biting into my convictions. I had a mind to get the ash chemically examined but gave up the idea lest it may lose its healing touch for Ashish. Since then a pinch of holy ash is the first medicine we try on Ashish whenever he gets ill. Dr. Arya's regular visits for check-up are of course there but we have not taken the child specialist into our confidence about our potent drug. I might have been shaken in my convictions a bit but I was still unconvinced.

Doctors had advised me to cut down my liquor as my liver had lost its potency to keep track with my intake. Like all good things in life, I stubbornly disagreed with the advice and fell like a pole axe. I was not bothered much about the liver but the pain was unbearable and I had started living on pethidine shots and mandril tablets. But it was a temporary relief and I was not getting well. My guts were in mess. Touched by my plight, my wife tried her wildest best to persuade me to swallow a pinch of the holy ash- she has a swell stock of the ash- but firstly because of the pride of my convictions and secondly because I never wanted her to score over me, I brushed her aside. I was writhing with pain but would not give up.

I was itching for a smoke and pleaded with my wife for a fag, despite doctor's strict warning. It was one in a hundred chance, if I know my wife as I should, expecting the usual harangue of: "liquor and cigarettes are poison to you", I was pleasantly surprised when she readily gave me a butt of a Charminar, she dug out from the folds of her purse. Though my brand is different and I don't relish butts but being off the fag for over a week I readily accepted her generosity and hungrily puffed the-life out of the butt. I felt a surge of relief passing through my body. It was all balm, blue and Sunny. I felt like a king lighter, happier and better. A fag after three days is just like posting maiden kiss on the lips of love and with these pleasant thoughts I slipped into deep slumber after five days of agony and tossing about in the bed. And when I came out of it my wife attributed my miraculous escape from the clutches of death not to the liver-extract and terramycin and the hundreds of tablets and capsules I had consumed but to the healing touch of "Bhagwaanji"-her Godman.

"How does your Bhagwaanji come in?" I asked partly in anger and partly in surprise.

"The half-smoked Charminar was Bhagwaanji's" she told me and showed me scores of half smoked cigarettes in her purse.

I decided to find out more about her "Bhagwaanji", whom she had now made the honorary physician in absentia of us both, me and my son Ashish. And my quest began in right earnest.

Indians seeped in deep superstition have elevated thousands of mortals to the status of Godhood all through the ages and this tradition of creating halo of Godhood around men and women has continued to this day. And it is the unflinching faith of the devotees more than the miracles of these Godmen that have made them great. Grapevine in India is the most effective medium of circulation. While the few among thousands of such Godmen have circulated all over the country, many more despite better achievements have remained obscure. At least fame is not all that Godly. And Gopinathji Bhan, whom his devotees identify with the God, or atleast with the God's closest circle has not reached all over the country like Satya Sai baba or all over the globe like jet-age Swami Maharishi Mahesh yogi, the once spiritual head of Mia Farrow and Beatles. Except within his own community in Kashmir and a few individuals outside the

state, he has not been in the spotlight despite being spiritually more robust and miracle-wise more stunning.

Naryana Bhan was a man sold out to the idea of God and the devoted most of his time in pursuit of a chance meeting with the Almighty. But worldly-wise, he knew spiritualism was no substitute for a square meal and hence did business in pashmina wool. And like every good Kashmiri Brahmin, his spiritual pursuits did not prevent him from marrying and raising good many children. He married Hara Mali, who her father believed was the incarnation of Goddess Ragyina-the deity who relishes milk. And Gopinathji Bhan was born off the conjugal explosion of the two spiritual sparks. He was the second of three brothers and two sisters. Naryana Bhan bequeathed property to his stepmother and spiritual legacy to his son. Some father!

Gopinathji cried his arrival on July 3, 1908 in his ancestral house at Banamohalla, in the heart of Srinagar. But the family had to shuttle around thanks to the liberal attitude of Narayan Bhan.

Gopinathji was not averse to studies and passed middle. He lost his mother at the tender age of 12 and started earning his bread and butter at the age of 16 as a compositor. But born free, he shook off the shackles of subordination and opened a grocery shop. He carried on for ten years but then gave up.

He churned the gist out of scriptures and showed special preference for Gita and Vedas. Most of the time he remained within than without. No one, not even his biographer, Mr. S.N. Fotedar are sure about his Guru. Some say it was his father who initiated him into the realm of mystic while some others feel it was the holyman Balak Kaw but the majority opinion is that Zana Kak Tufchi, a local Godman should be credited with this honour.

Reason: Gopinathji attended the anniversary function of Tufchi religiously and even cleansed dirty pots at the function. Few of the staunchest followers believe that he was his own 'Guru' and got the word direct from the 'God'.

Guru or no Guru, Gopinathji knew the ropes and rose high in the coterie of local Godmen. He was so high in the estimation of his devotees that they started calling him "Bhagwaanji"-The God. Never before in the history of Kashmir has a mortal been elevated so high.

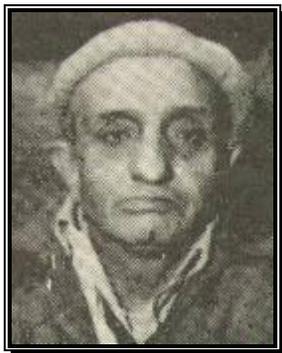
First it was deep study of scriptures, then brooding concentration to unfold the self, then visits to shrines, then burning ambers and pulls at the hashish-chellum. Step by step he climbed up and a few who saw in him the saviour, clung to his apron strings. He neither offered help nor shrugged them off but sustained their faith with a miracle now and then. The cult spread, his devotees had found a Messiah and they entombed him at Kharyar, a comparatively unknown temple in Srinagar. The faith spread, so did the devotees multiply and those who had not seen him in his mortal form did draw inspiration from his life-like statue. Faith, they say, is a horse, you can ride when in distress.

What miracles? Many devotees come forward with tales of the powers of this holyman. They are men and women whom it is very difficult to disbelieve. He showed many devotees, including Pt. Nila Kaul, Goddess Sharika in human form. Sixty people were served tummy-ful of lunch prepared for six souls. He predicted wars with the accuracy of the minute. He healed those given up by the best brains in medicine. He read thoughts, both wicked and noble, like an openbook. He was here, there and everywhere at the same time and many sane people vouch for it. His commitment was total. He gave everything without asking anything in return. He shunned publicity and abhorred fame. He carried his laurels with indifference. He was a Godman but never said so.

A piece of mind. Anniversaries, holy fires, books and pamphlets, 'Bhajans' and Kirtans are good. They keep the clan bonds strong. But look beyond the statue of the great man, untie the knots of talisman and don't freeze him in stone. It is polluting not honouring. Let the Indigo Indian spread the fragrance of mystic east for all to smell and refresh. Open the portals of Kharyar for the world to see that God is a man at his best.

5 Bhagawaan Ji After 1968

Shri S. N. Fotedar



Shri Shanker Nath Fotedar

Association with a Saint or even a mere touch or a single glance from him can transform a man and make him Divine. His heart is full of universal compassion and he works ceaselessly for redeeming suffering souls from ignorance. He guides them to a life of joy, freedom and immortality. The Saint is verily God in flesh and blood.

During the present century one such saint of exalted dimensions was Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji of Kashmir, who graced not only the sacred soil of Kashmir where he was born and lived (1898-1968) but also played his part in the spiritual upliftment of India, though he had never moved out of Kashmir in his physical body.

The people of Kashmir had the good sense to realize this in his life time, they gave him the name Bhagawaan while he was still in his earthly existence, a unique phenomenon indeed. Such is a rare saint for whom a monument is raised and relics enshrined. In his Ashram at Kharyar, Srinagar, where his marble statue has been installed, regular Aarti is held everyday. His Mahanirvana and Jayanti festivals are observed every year, where a Yagnya performed on the former occasion and a Sadhu Bhandar and prayers are offered on the latter. A Trust (Regd) has been organised for maintenance of the institution and other activities for spreading of Bhagawaan Ji's message of universal love and brotherhood. The aim is to awaken a higher level of consciousness amongst the masses. This is styled as "Bhagawaan Consciousness" by his Australian devotees. Attempt is made to develop this consciousness for the betterment of the whole world.

Since it is not possible to give an exhaustive picture of Bhagawaan Ji's life, sadhna and his other manifold activities in a small article, I shall confine myself to give a brief sketch of his life.

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was born in 1898 A.D. at Bana Mohalla, Srinagar. His revered father Pandit Narayan Joo Bhan was a Pushmina Merchant and a man of liberal mind, Bhagawaan Ji's pious mother Smt. Har-Mali was the daughter of Pandit Prasad Joo Parimu, a mystice saint popularly known as "Zad-Bharata". In a vision at Khir Bhawani the Divine Mother had told him that she would be taking birth in his house and thus the blessed girl (Haramal) was born, who later got Bhagawaan Ji in her lap. On account of strained family circumstances, Bhagawaan Ji had a very troubled time in his early days. He had to give up his studies after passing the middle school examination.

He had studied Sanskrit, Persian and other languages but all along he was detached, attending to 'Raslilas' and other Bajan Mandalis and also visiting saints usually. He would sip at all cups but drain none.

From his early boyhood he had started going to Sharika Bhagawati Shrine at Hari Parvat, Srinagar. It became routine for him to circum-ambulate the hill every day. When his age was about 25 years he was blessed with Darshan of Sharika Bhagwati. He did not rest at that but aspired for attaining perfection. He girded up his loins and plunged himself headlong into intense sadhana for exploring all the aspects of the Divine Reality and gaining mastery over Tattwas, with no hold barred and with scant attention to his body

welfare. This process was the same as Swami Ram Krishna Parmahansa had adopted after having Sakshatkar of Maha-Kali. For some time he continued to live with mundane affairs which gradually waned off and later he took no interest in such matters whatsoever.

The most crucial period of his Sadhana, a do-or-die effort, was while he was residing at Rangteng in Srinagar (1929-36). He lay stretched on a bed all the 24 hours of a day, absorbed in the Supreme with a small wick lamp kept lighted. He would sometimes fast for months together and sometimes take large quantities of food at a time. His body got swollen. He at times spit large quantities of blood. A rat had bored a hole in one of his heels and he did not seem to be conscious of it. On occasions he would eat handfuls of Datura and other lethal intoxicants. The Sadhana continued for about 7 years after which he emerged a radiant soul but with a battered body. His 'Chelum smoking' continued to be his constant companion from an early age to the day he gave up his mortal coil.

Questioned why he was fasting so often he said, "that he was taking tons of energy through his puffs (smoking) and food was not necessary. "

After this Sadhana of 7 years, came to be recognized as a great saint and he began his saintly mission of improving the lot of humanity and alleviating the distress of people who called on him for succour and hope. He even started helping sadhus and other people monetarily and the practice continued till the end of his days in this physical world.

After attainment of perfection he had, in pursuit of his mission, to contend with opposing inimical forces which, left to themselves would have harmed our country. He had to exert a lot, to keep these forces in check. On some occasions, you would find him like Aghura with flaming eyes rivetted upwards, parched and foaming lips, fasting, refusing to take water even but addressing some invisible forces. To what extent he was successful in taming those forces is known to all. One wonders at his unrelenting efforts, his determination of not yielding to dark forces, for a number of years with scant attention to his Physical comforts. Such a great saint, with such endurance is really a God and Bhagawaan Ji displayed this.

He seemed always in tune with the infinite and used to come down from a higher plane of consciousness in response to requests and appeals made by devotees and that too for a few moments only. He started the practice of giving Ahutes, after the year 1936 in the first instance into his fire pot (Kangdi) and later into an Iron Sekdi and then offerings in Dhuni continued till the end.

Saints do not live in their outer actions. It is not possible to speak of the inner Sadhana of Bhagawaan Ji which is a closed book. It is possible however, to give an account of his Sadhana as seen by common people in diverse fields and disciplines.

It is apparent that few saints like Bhagawaan Ji emerged from the sacred soil of Kashmir during the last three or four centuries or so, became so active in their spiritual realms. They either seem to be spent up or have gone to higher unfathomable realms and we have to depend solely on the divine protection of the Spiritual colossus Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji, not only for succor but also for effectively combating the satanic forces, bound on destruction of our culture and personality.

I smell and visualise that the decade of nineties will be a period of great test for the lovers of Bhagawaan Ji. They have to strengthen the spiritual exercise, be engrossed in Bhagawaan Ji's worship through bajans, meditation, offerings. Dark clouds are roaming but have to vanish. Bhagwaan Ji is active in the subtle plane we have to develop the attitude to present ourself before Him. All the Ashramities have to undergo strenuous Sadhana to get in tune with Bhagawaan Consciousness. I have faith in Pran Nath Ji to hold the internal front and Chrungoo Sahib for the external, because the swallon ranks of devotees need guidance.

Bhagawaan Ji's very presence is not doubtful. Saints are healers, masters and Spiritual guides. They seek disciples and hunt for them so that the chord is framed between masters and aspirants Gurus and Shishyas. He knew his sphere.

One day Bhagawaan Ji had to face for a photograph and some close associates wanted to be included, but he disallowed that. There was some annoyance. Next day Bhagawaan Ji very patiently explained, "This photograph has to go to far far corners, that is why I wanted it to be so". Today when thirteen years have

passed we have been seeing that Bhagawaan Ji's photograph has reached every home. It is placed in Pooja rooms and Ashrams, that are coming up. The aura of spiritual and mental shelter has spread so wide and far that Bhagawaan Ji's "Parivar" has passed all the geographical boundaries. Devotees have taken him to Australia, New Zealand, Japan and other parts of India. Bhagawaan Ji has been in gracious for those who need Him and for those whom he needs.

In 1975, Justice S.N. Katju a Sadhaka practising shakti worship was in a difficult and there was some conflict in his mind about his sadhana. Bhagawaan Ji appeared in a vision to him and said, "Your Gurdeva and I are one, and you have now been put under my care for carrying out the mission of the masters, What you are doing under the guidance of Papaji was all chalked out by me and your Gurdeva together". Katju said, he spoke in Kashmiri, what I needed. Then he slowly faded out of my vision and I opened my eyes; How keen Bhagawaan; Ji is for spiritual seekers.

In Feb, 1975 Philip Simpfendorfer an Australian Bhakta had come on Kashmir yatra with some friends. He alongwith his friends had came to see the writer and his problem was about the mission and message for him from Bhagawaan Ji. The writer said, "Mr Philip, do you remember how Bhagawaan Ji accepted your request when your daughter was to be married". "Yes every detail of that day", said Philip, "It was Saturday when my daughter Helen was to marry Peter. From Friday it started raining, I went into my room and prayed before Bhagawaan Ji, asking to take care of happiness of the children, give sunshine for the outdoor wedding function. The miracle happened clouds got rolled, bright sunshine appeared till function was over and by evening again clouds came, but it did not rain. I was happy how Bhagawaan Ji helps when, we are in complete obedience."

"Again, it was 15th of Feb. 1978 while in full concentration and meditation I met him in a very awakened state." He said, "For the guidance of humanity we seek people in every land, strengthen their faith. They fight against the dark ocean of destruction. We guided when there was no religion, we do not interfere with religion. Well being of the world and spirituality of man is the goal". "My Mission and goal was made clear", said Philip.

6 Immortal Bhagawaan Ji

Philip Simpfendorfer, Australia

The vision of Paradise became strong for me when I made my home in a cave near the Bargo River NSW for four months during my midlife crisis. I felt impelled to find my nature in the context of nature, because I realised that I did not know the essence of either. What I discovered was a reality different from what I had experienced in society or in my inner world of spiritual power. Not knowing what I lacked, I felt I had to abandon my spirituality and somehow live in the ISNESS of myself and everything else.

After four months I went to the Weston Plains where I lived with the sun and the stars for two years. I still went about my daily work, experiencing it as a respite from the strange, overwhelming dynamic attitude within me. It was not until I stayed two months in a Balinese village that I felt I had met a culture that embodied the dimensions I experienced within environment and cosmos.

At Amarnath Cave in Kashmir in 1976, a voice spoke to me as I stood before the ice stalagmite within the cave. I was thinking that the only request I could make was that God continued to look after me. The voice said, "Don't you trust me.?" A similar voice spoke to me from Kashmir 18 months later and said words to the effect that the wellbeing of the world depend on the interconnection of anchorages and sites of power across the globe. It was not as simple stated as that because it was Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji communicating unfamiliar concepts to me from the astral level. The Saint had left his mortal coil in 1968 and it was no surprise to his devotees that he was in my room speaking to me in English - it was within the pattern of his behaviour before and after his death.

Bhagawaan Ji was beyond religious categories, but he did spend a lot of time at certain sacred springs and rocks associated with various Devine Energies, i.e., the immanent, feminine aspect of transcendence. Contact with him did not violate my freedom. He did not say I had to do anything. But in 1979 I invited around 20 friends to camp in the bush for the weekend. The purpose was to be aware of our inward being and the energies of environment as one, if possible. Since then on the first Sunday of each month people link in meditation with sacred sites in different countries of the world to strengthen Earth's network of light. The first Sunday is now called 'Sacred Earth Sunday'.

Probably the idea of harmonious human society came first to the Himalayan area in the age of Gemini and blossomed in the Age of Taurus. Its centre could easily have been Mt. Kailas in Tibet. Certainly the human collective memory of paradise on earth alludes to this area. The belief in the four rivers flowing from paradise could be the memory of the four rivers that rise in the Kailas region. As late as the Middle Ages in Europe, paradise was somewhere located between India & China. During the earlier ages, though the work of great Himalayan ascetics (or people who came from the stars, if A Hopi Prophecy is correct). 1995 The new race of humans will begin to design their new reality of life on this planet as they intended it to be when they came from the stars. (A Hopi Prophecy).

The harmony of heaven began to permeate human social groups causing animal and instinctive traits to yield to human spiritual consciousness. The Indian word 'Bhagawaan' is sometimes simply translated as 'Lord' or 'God'. In K.N. Dhar's book, 'Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji of Kashmir Vol.II.' There is a quote from Kalika Purana defining "Bhaga" as 'unmitigated sovereignty over temporal and subliminal powers, religious and moral merit, undiminished glory, graceful lustre, perceptive Knowledge and discernment'.

Like the Fisher Kings father in the Grail Story, a Bhagawaan does not live as a person bound by spiritual and physical realities. By his sovereignty over temporal and eternal energies he brings in all qualities necessary for a strong and happy society cemented by love and abundance.

He is lord of the sites in his region. The last great person in this Bhagawaan tradition was Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji who during the mid decades of the 20th century took spiritual responsibility for Kashmir during the time of acute threat. The Bhagawaan energy broods over Glastonbell (Glastonbell, NSW Australia is 410 acres of bushland, a garden of delight, a great landscape and temple managed by a non-profit association - a big Ashram in true sense.) waiting for a building that resonates with the harmony of

the sun, the moon, the earth and universal brotherhood, when built, its spiritual energy will probably relate to Mt. Kailas.

The 'Renewal' movement in part grow out of Australian involvement with the enigmatic Kashmir saint Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji. As the saint Gopinath Ji said little and spent his time weaving strong positive spiritual energies into both the Elemental forces, and the doings of people. In a sense Glastonbell, and occasionally the people in it, are Gopinath Ji's Australian focal point.

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was a celibate, he belonged to no religious order. Staying mostly in a room of a relative or in a hut at a sacred site, he lived in extreme introversion. His teaching sessions were limited to a few sentences. Often he would awaken necessary insight in people with a touch or a glance or sometimes like a Zen Master, with a blow. Miracles constantly happened around him. For the enlightenment of others he sometimes caused goddess or sages to appear physically. His goddess was a rock site on the hill of Hari Parbat in the centre of Kashmir valley, called Sharika, the Universal Mother.

Born Gopinath Bhan, he was the only Kashmiri given the title 'Bhagawaan' (Glorious Lord). Once he commented that a yogi may get realisation of God, but an introvert can get realisation of all aspects of God. God in the Kashmir Shiva - Shakti spiritually is like an infinite ocean of consciousness consisting of every possible vibration even material objects.

Bhagawaan Ji's mastery over the varied manifestation of God was recognised by his awed devotees. Visiting sadhus, wandering from sacred site to sacred site, visiting the holy men of India would comment that they knew of no other so fully absorbed in the infinite. His method consisted in emitting vibrations from various organs of his body in tune with the universal cosmic vibrations. In this way he was able to entre the realm of subtle thought that pervades the world and influences the world consciousness.

Six weeks before he died he said, "Amar chha maran" (Does an immortal die?) to a disciple who was merely thinking about Bhagawaan Ji's impending death.

On 15-2-78 I met him in a vely awakened state and the following is a part of the conversation as recorded a few hours later. .

"--- Have you not heard of the guides of Humanity ? On every land we seek people who will stand like an immovable rock against the dark ocean of destruction. We would like ashrams linked with places of power and linked throughout the world."

These may not have been the precise words as I was confused by the visilation. I asked, "Are you Bhagawaan Ji,"?

"Will you make limitations? if not, that is true. "

"Do you have a religion? What are your religious beliefs?"

"We guided when there was no system of religions. We do not interfere with religions. We want the well being of the world. If men make patterns of belief, it is their concern. Our guidance is to make circles of light and love for the well being of Earth.

"Will the present patterns of human life go on?"

"But the circles remain."

7 Remembering Bhagwaan Ji

Prof. A. N. Dhar

Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji attained Mahasamadhi in 1968. since then his renown as an eminent saint has spread far and wide. The number of his devotees and followers has swelled considerably during the past 2-3 decades. In consequence, Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji centres have sprung up at several places in India in addition to the main centre at Srinagar one centre has been established in N. S. W. Australia. The present Ashram at Udaiwala, Jammu, that came up in the wake of the outbreak of militancy in Kashmir, has turned into a busy spiritual centre where regular prayer meetings devoted to Bhagwaan Ji are held on all week days. Besides, Yajnyas are performed periodically at this centre and the birthday of Bhagwaan Ji is celebrated with great fervour and devotion annually here. In fact, it is noteworthy that all the centres are managed and run efficiently, thanks to the orderly manner in which a disciplined and dedicated band of Bhagwaan Ji's followers is seen to handle congregations and conduct proceedings at each centre.

I remember having seen the Bhagwaan on some festive occasions at Khir Bhavani and also several times at his Chandapora residence in Srinagar in the fifties (when I was a young man in my twenties).

Whenever I observed this great saint, what impressed me deeply about him was his total absorption in divine contemplation - that a true seeker could immediately perceive. One had to lend one's ears keenly to the words he sometimes mumbled to get at what they actually conveyed. Once, in my very presence, Bhagwaan Ji almost whispered some meaningful words into the ears of my friend, Sh. Triloki Nath Dhar, and then made an offering into the dhooni that was there in front of him. As I gathered from my friend later, Bhagwaan Ji had spoken of his own exalted state of consciousness, what: in mystical parlance could be described as Unitive Experience, I, myself, had an 'encounter of a different sort with Bhagwaan Ji, which I still shudder to recall (though the experience, in effect, turned out to be auspicious for me). I saw the saint last at his Chandapora residence in 1961 purposefully to seek his blessings. Something about me was perhaps not liked by Bhagwaan Ji. This became evident when he spoke some harsh words to me, making me leave the room in an agitated state of mind. Within a couple of days of this seemingly 'unpleasant' encounter, I got the job I had applied for a Lecturership in English, which I held at the start of my teaching career. Obviously, the Bhagwaan's 'anger' proved to be a blessing for me.

In attempting the present article on Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji, I am acutely conscious of two handicaps - my first handicap is that I have not had the advantage of knowing this saint closely as a disciple nor as a devotee who paid regular visits to his residence. The other handicap is that my own knowledge of authentic facts relating to Bhagwaan Ji's life and teachings is scanty, far less than what one can glean from the two sequential studies published by Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji Trust - the biographical study by the late Sh. S. N. Fotedar and the volume bearing the sub-title 'The Saint of All Times' by the late Professor K. N. Dhar. Shri Fotedar's work is a well-documented study, offering a lucid account of the life and teachings of Bhagwaan Ji. It is replete with authentic facts, in terms of dates and events, concerning the life of the saint. Analytical and critical in his approach (aiming at objectivity in spite of his devotional fervour), the author has arrived at sound conclusions regarding the spiritual attainments and eminence of Bhagwaan Ji. Professor K. N. Dhar's volume is a useful sequel to Shri Fotedar's biographical study. It sheds further light on the important observations and statements made in the earlier work. The author has attempted to provide illustrative support from relevant scriptures (bearing on Vedanta and Shaivism) to the findings and conclusions of Shri Fotedar. The concluding section of the book, titled 'Exchange of Notes', is revealing. On going through the letters exchanged, among others, mostly between Mr. Philip Sempfendorfer and Shri Pran Nath Koul, Secretary Bhagawan Ji Trust, the reader realizes how 'Bhagwaan consciousness' has grown and spread beyond India, 'touching' and influencing devotees in far offplaces like Australia, where Bhagwaan Ji's Australian devotees have established the centre mentioned earlier.

Having touched briefly on the two studies brought out by Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji Trust, I should like to elaborate a few points that I gathered from Shri Fotedar's work. I shall deal with them one by one:

i) The question of who actually was Bhagawaan Ji's Guru has been discussed at some length by Shri Fotedar. After thorough investigations - all controversies settled - he has come to the conclusion that Swami Zanakak Tupchi was his Guru. However, the author mentions Bhagawaan Ji himself as having conveyed, in response to a disciple's query, that he considered the Gita as his Guru. At the same time, we know on authority that Bhagawaan Ji was fond of the Guru Gita. Understandably, he prized it because his Guru, Swami Zanakak Tupchi, had prescribed its study for his disciples. And this work indisputably attaches utmost importance to the Guru (as a person). The only conclusion we can draw from this apparent divergence is that while the Guru's grace is indispensable, the seeker has to assimilate his Guru's teaching through self-effort. The Guru's anugraha and the seeker's purushartha are complementary in character.

ii) Bhagawaan Ji led a celibate life, yet he continued to live in grahasta and performed agnihotra as a ritual in earnest throughout his life. He never donned the yellow robe and did not preach or practise vegetarianism. Nor did he preach any orthodox doctrine but spent all his time in Sadhana. All this could lead one to the conclusion that Bhagawaan Ji was in line with the tradition of Kashmiri saints who were at once Shaktas and Saivites, who wouldn't make a distinction between 'Siva' and 'Kesava', who never thought high of external sanyasa but emphasized inward purity and discipline.

iii) Bhagawaan Ji was a great Siddha and used his spiritual powers for the welfare of mankind. He performed miracles to alleviate the suffering of bhaktas and to help those who were in distress. As a tattava jnani, the Bhagawaan emphasized self analysis and introspection. Ample evidence is available to suggest that he continues to guide spiritual seekers and events as Jagat Guru.

iv) He was an institution in himself, an accomplished Master who could initiate the seeker through a glance, a gesture or a puff from his chellum. As a spiritual genius, he evolved his techniques to awaken 'Bhagawaan Consciousness'.

v) Bhagawaan Ji was accessible to all and gave liberally of his spiritual bounty, taking, of course, into account the receptive capacity of each seeker. His impact on a large number of spiritual seekers has been phenomenal, explaining his pervasive influence in this country and abroad.

May Bhagawaan Ji's grace descend on all of us in this hour of crisis and deliver us safe across the perilous ocean of samsara.

8 Jagadguru Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji

Professor J. N. Sharma

Jagadguru Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji was one of the most eminent saints who have ever graced the sacred land of India. Unlike the other saints, he was called Bhagwaan in his lifetime as all the six attributes which that word stands for were seen in him. He was a jeevanmukta, having attained mukti or liberation while still in the gross body, to which he was not attached in the least. His spiritual state was what the Shaivites call Shaambhavi avasthaa (the state of Shiva Himself) and the Vendandns, Brahmisthiti (the state of ever dwelling in Brahman, or God without a form).

With his spiritual power, he did a lot of good to spiritual aspirants, house-holders and the country. He had a peculiar way of bringing sinners around to the path of virtue. Though utterly detached, he, in his later life, showed much concern for the country and its people. Now, according to S.N. Fotedar, his biographer and one of his senior disciples, he also exercises a beneficent influence on the modern age and its concepts.

Gopinath, one of the several brothers and sisters, was born in a middle-class Kashmiri Pandit family at Banamohalla, Srinagar, Kashmir on 3rd July, 1898. His mother, Shrimad Haara-Maali, passed away when he was only twelve, and his father, Pandit Narayan Joo Bhan, when he (Bhagwaan Ji) was in his late twenties.

Gopinath was educated only upto the Middle Standard, but had absorbed well whatever he had been taught at school. He would very rarely, though utter beautiful English sentences even in later life, when he used to be absorbed in the Self most of the time. He was also conversant with Sanskrit, Persian, Hindi and Urdu.

When Gopinath was only 10, Pandit Narayan Joo Bhan relinquished the possession of his residential house, along with most other belongings, to his step-mother. The family continued to live in Srinagar, but had to shift residence from place to place. Thus, Bhagwaanji lived in 11 different houses, besides his ancestral house. These included the house of a niece of his at Chondapora where he gave up the mortal frame on 28h May.

The family being in dire financial strains Gopinath was asked to take up some work so at the young age of about 15 or 16, he started working at a local printing press as a compositor. He, however, gave up that job after three years. In his 20, he ran a grocer's shop, here he seemed to be generally absent-minded, being absorbed in meditation. The family pressed him to marry, hoping that marriage would bind him to the world, and so he would be a permanent financial support, but he was adamant in his refusal.

As a young man, Gopinath stood out for his bravery, fearlessness and hatred of dishonesty. Another notable feature of his youth was his longing to visit the great saints of that time. The ones he visited included Swami Baalak Kaw, popularly known as Baalji, Swami Jeewan Saheb and Swami Zana Kak Tufchi, Gopinath remained a celibate all his life.

He regarded lust as the greatest obstacle to self-realisation. Here is an incident worth mentioning in this connection. Some friends once forced the young Gopinath to visit a courtesan, along with themselves. At the very sight of her, he felt such a revulsion that he called her a witch and reprimanded her in very harsh language. Then, he advised, her to live a virtuous life. However, thinking that poverty must have forced her to take to a sinful life, he in his characteristically compassionate manner, threw a rupee-coin towards her before leaving her room.

His hatred of lust was noticed throughout his later life was well. Once, among the many visitors, there was a woman sitting before him. At the very sight of her, he started beating her with his long iron tongs, and chased her away. Returning to his seat, he told the others that the unchaste woman had visited two friends that morning, and then had come to him steeped in sin.

He felt happy whenever a celebrate came to see him though he never asked a house-holder disciple or devotee to give up his wife and children in pursuit of Self-realisation.

Bhagwaan was above all considerations of caste, creed and nationality. From 1947 onwards, the people of all creeds would go to see him and he would shower his love and compassion equally on all. Once he said, in answer to a devotee's question. Is Hindu one and Muslim another?

Unmistakable spiritual leanings were discernible in the child Gopinath from the early year of seven or eight. That he visited some great saints in his youth. Most probably, he did so to find out a guru who would initiate him formally. It was not generally known who his guru was. However, much investigative work was done in this regard by Sh. S.N. Fotedar. One piece of irrefutable evidence on which he based his conclusion that the great saint Swami Zana Kak Tufchi was Bhagwaanji's guru is that it was confirmed by Pt Baal Ji Wangnoo, the younger brother of Swami Aftaab Joo Wangnoo, Bhagwaan Ji's senior co-disciple.

Bhagwaanji started with the spiritual discipline known as Panchaanga-upaasanaa, that is, meditating on the five deities, Ganesha, Surya, Narayana, Shiva and Shakti. Later, his ideal was the Divine Mother Shaarikaa, whose vision he had, for the first time, at the age of 27. Gradually, he shifted to nirguna-upaasanaa, that is, meditating on the Supreme Reality without a form. His interest in worldly affairs, including domestic matters, dwindled till in the early thirties, he took to intense saadhanaa: (spiritual discipline), shutting himself up in a room, which no one, except mostly his, was to enter. An earthenware lamp was kept burning there all the 24 hours. He did not allow even the room to be swept. His concentration was so intense and he grew so unaware of his body that a rat nibbled a hole in a heel of his. It is not possible to say what type of spiritual discipline it was, but it caused his body to swell and made him vomit blood, sometimes. During this seven-year period of saadhanaa, he would take no food for long periods extending even to six months. Sometimes, however, he would take food in very large quantities.

He came out of this terrible ordeal with the full realisation of the Supreme Reality.

In his later years, Bhagwaanji took to another type of spiritual practice. He would emit vibrations from some parts of his body, e.g. the knees and the intestines, and through his chillum smoking. The vibrations seem to have been in tune with (to-us, mysterious) cosmic vibrations.

Bhagwaanji kept a dhooni(sacredfire) burning before him and offered oblations into it off and on. He continued with this practice even while he stayed at some holy shrines in, or outside, Srinagar.

Ekam Sat vipraah bahudhaa vadanti (The Reality is one but the wise call it variously), so says the Rig Veda. The paths leading to It are also various. Having realised the Reality, Bhagwaanji respected all these paths. He defied categorisation as a Shaiva, a Shaakta a Vaishnava, a Vedaantin, and so on. Discerning people could find the characteristics of all these in him. He uttered 'Aum namah Shivaaya ' at the time of giving up the gross body, and yet a copy of the Bhagavadgita (a vadantic text, which also he regarded as a guru) used to be always by his side. Calling Aum the throat of the Godhead, he once said that nothing was possible without it in the spiritual field. It is known that he put two of his prominent disciples on the path of the upaasanaa of Narayana with a form. However, he seems to have preferred to guide his disciples from the upaasanaa of God with a form to that of God without a form.

Having attained the highest spiritual state, Bhagwaanji, as already stated, used to be absorbed in the self most of the time. But he could easily come down to our level of consciousness to answer questions, or, to give permission to someone to leave. Immediately thereafter, he would rise to his own state. He talked little and that, too, in such low whispers as to be almost inaudible.

Generally, he did initiate a disciple directly by word of mouth. He did so by a mere glance, by giving him a little bhasma or prashad, or by allowing him to have a puff at the chillum. Once, a European's kundalini was awakened by just having a puff at his chillum. With a mere touch of his iron tongs, he shifted a senior disciple from meditating on Narayana with a form to meditating on Him without a form.

What was exactly Bhagwaanji's spiritual state? A pointer in this direction is that a devotee of the Divine Mother Raajnaa had a vision of Bhagwaanji seated before Her at the Khirbhawaani shrine at village Tulamulla, Kashmir. The devotee was a great saint and would have visions of the Divine Mother off and on. Our question is, however, clinched for ever if we consider that Bhagwaanji himself said when an

aachaarya from outside the State wanted to know from a devotee in his (Bhagwaanji's) room at what stage of spiritual evolution Bhagwaanji was. While the devotee wondered what to say, Bhagwaanji recited the sixth verse of the Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, which, translated into English, reads: "The Sun does not illumine it, nor the moon, nor fire. That is my supreme abode, reaching which one does not return (to this world of birth and rebirth).

Bhagwaanji did not perform miracles deliberately. Miracles often happened where, out of compassion, he helped someone or the country. A very brief account of a few of them is given below.

Bhagwaanji helped a devotee to realise the concept of time relative to man and Lord Brahmaa (The devotee had some reservations about this). Bhagwaanji enabled him to live three life-cycle in only some earthly hours! And in each cycle he reached a mature old age!

Bhagwaanji helped two devotees separately to have a darshana (vision) of the Divine Mother of the Universe in the form of two girl children. A third was helped to have Her darshana in the form of dazzling effulgence equal to that of several suns.

From 1947 onwards, Bhagwaanji took much interest in what was happening around him. He used his spiritual power to help the country. In 1948, our soldiers saw him, at the front and just in front of them, directing them to fire in this or that direction though at that time he was seated in his room in Srinagar. His body was no hurdle in his going anywhere. Once he said that he was himself present at the battle-front, and so there was no danger to Kashmir though, again, he was physically in Srinagar. During the border war with China (1962), he once left his residence and returned the next day. His body was quite cold. He had caught a chill and had bronchitis. In answer to a question by a devotee, he said that he had gone to Tibet to settle the matters. In a few days, there was a lasting cease-fire. He kept a close eye on the 1965 war also.

Bhagwaanji was a tattvajnani (one who has all the knowledge about the elements). By a peculiar type of saadhanaa he had gained control over the elements. During a pilgrimage to the holy cave of Amarnath, he brought rain to a drought-hit area. On some occasions, he stopped rain when it was likely to cause suffering or death. He was able, due to his control over the elements, to know which organ of a person's body was diseased, and to cure it. With a mere look or the bhasma from his dhooni, he cured dreaded diseases like cancer, epilepsy, and the diseases of the heat, the kidneys and the stomach, besides many other physical ailments.

He brought the dead back to life temporarily or permanently, as the situation demanded. Once, he asked someone (probably, Mahaakala, the god of death) to wait till the next day to revive the dead father of a girl whose marriage (lagana) was being performed just then. The man came back to life, blessed the newly-wed couple, and died for good at about noon the next day. Once, two cooked fish, chewed and swallowed by Bhagwaanji himself, were vomitted by him in their original form, that is, as two live fish, because the situation demanded that the fish sprang into the nearby spring and swam away !

Once, Bhagwaanji visited Mata Jawalamukhi Shrine at Khrew in Kashmir. There were five or six people with him, so his sister cooked rice sufficient for seven or eight people. But many more started coming to have Bhagwaanji's darshana and, finally, food was needed for 50 people. Finding herself in awkward predicament, Bhagwaanji's sister talked about it to him. He asked her to keep the pot of cooked rice covered while taking helpings out of it. And, lo and behold! All the 50 people were fed, and there was still some food left in the pot!

Now something about how Bhagwaanji used his spiritual power to help householders in solving their domestic problems. Once he fasted for a month with the specific purpose of extending by a year the life-span of man, whose children still needed his attention. Could it be that the food Bhagwaanji would have taken for a month sufficed the man in question for a year and so he continued to live, even though the stock of food he was destined to take in that birth had been exhausted? Several times, he made a peculiar offering to Mahaakala to save the lives of certain people. Sometimes, he prevented road accidents even at far-away places. His blessings helped people in arranging and performing the mairiages of their daughters. As a result of his blessings, some people suspended from their services, got reinstated.

It has been already mentioned that, after attaining the highest spiritual state, Bhagwaanji in his life-time, was never hampered by his gross body. He could be present at some other places, too, while he was in Srinagar. No wonder, then, that, after giving up the gross body, he has been helping spiritual aspirants in, and outside, the country. He may appear in his astral body before them or in their meditation.

9 Jagat Guru Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji

B. N. Fotedar

On the 30th December 1993, hundreds of men, women and children surged to the newly built prayer hall for Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji, at Bohri, Talab-Tilloo, Jammu, chanting the mantra 'Om Namoh Bhagawate Gopinathaya'. Their faces reflected joy and radiance and extreme pride. The event was the inauguration of a newly built prayer hall and the installation of Bhagawaan Ji's marble statue there in, for hours, devotees thronged the place and paid their homage and sought blessings from the immortal saint. One was left wondering about the personality of this saint who could so inspire people even after throwing away his mortal coil, 25 years ago.

Before dwelling on the life sketch of Bhagawaan Ji, it will be relevant to recall the role of saints in this world. Saints hallow this world. When man forgets the ultimate purpose of life, saints appear and with the surging tide of their devotion redirect the course of humanity. These saints have no creed, cast, colour or country. Their approach is universal. It is out of the prayer of a whole society that a saint is born to show human beings the path of righteousness for self-realisation. Our country has produced a galaxy of saints and sufis who have not only enriched the life here but also left their deep imprint on the culture and way of life of the people.

Such a saint was Gopinath Ji, who in his life time achieved great spiritual enlightenment that people in affection addressed him as Bhagawaan (Gopinath Ji). He was born on the 3rd July, 1898, in a humble Bhan family in Srinagar, Kashmir. He is stated to have read up to the middle standard (a rare achievement during those times). He was well conversant with Sanskrit, Persian, English and old Sharda languages. He started his life with a grocer's store but after 2 years he closed it and took up employment in a printing firm. He gave up this job also after about 2 years much against the wishes of the employer who wanted him to continue. After this, he took to the path of spiritualism. He began his spiritual quest with frequent visits to the great shrines of Kashmir like "Goddess Sharika" at Hari Parabat, Srinagar, as well as shrines of 'Khir Bhawani, Jawalamukhi, Jayastheva Bhagwati, Gupt Ganga, Badar Kali and Mahadev hill. He often stayed at these shrines for long periods. He made 2 pilgrimages to the holy Amarnath cave. He remained celibate throughout his life and lived with different relatives from time to time. He resorted to intense Sadhna at 39 years of age at 'Rangteng" in Srinagar for about 7 years. He renounced all other activities and immersed himself in the contemplation of Parambrahma. It is stated that during this period he did not allow anyone to enter his room and even disliked any sweeping. His only companion was a 'Diya' (oil lamp). After 7 years, he shifted from this place and moved to other relative's homes by turn. From 1949 till his death on the 28th May, 1968, he stayed at one place at Chandpora, Srinagar. The later part of his Sadhana was devoted to the worship of Lord Shiva and Lord Narayana, though it is not clear to which he gave priority in his heart. May be he had made a synthesis of both.

From 1949 onwards, people flocked to offer their homage to Bhagawaan Ji. They were sometimes seen occupying in even the stairs outside his spacious room. He sat on his Asan for 24 hours and took no food except a cup of Kashmiri tea (Kahwa). He smoked his chillum continuously gazing heavenward as if in communion with higher beings or absorbed in intense Sadhana. It must have been his intense Sadhna which sustained his body without regular food, though the physical effects of emaciation etc were apparent. He, however, made light of these problems and once exclaimed that the body was all muck and perishable, meaning thereby that it was the spirit or the soul that needed to be nurtured and cared for. He never preached and seldom spoke directly. He would some times mutter to himself which the devotees present could not follow or understand. His body had to be nudged when he was requested to reply to a query. During the later part of his Sadhna (for about last 20 years of his life), the practice of lighting of a 'Dhooni' (sagri type in which wood or charcoal is burnt) was adopted in which he made the usual offerings. He would sometimes poke the fire with a pair of tongs himself. However, a few days before leaving his mortal coil he had desired the lighting of the 'Dhooni' to be stopped.

It is believed that saints do not normally interfere with the laws of nature but they are known to help people in their difficulties. Bhagawaan Ji followed this practice of helping human beings in distress and when this was pointed out to him he averted that ants cannot on their own cross a river unless they were carried on strong shoulders. The reference was to the guiding role of saints in crossing the ocean of Maya. He was filled with compassion and was fond of listening to classical and sofiانا music. This encouraged the classical singers to sing in his presence usually on Sundays. These singers included Hindus and Muslims alike and all were welcome in his presence. He was fully conscious of his surroundings and to the threat of the security of Kashmir and indeed of other parts of India and made herculean efforts on the spiritual level to ward off such threats in 1947 and then again in 1965.

A few incidents of help to his devotees are briefly stated here though there are scores of such incidents in which Bhagawaan Ji played the role of a messiah.

In 1947, he asked a devotee who was posted at Baramalla to move to Srinagar with all his belongings. This was 2 months before the raiders looted the town and razed the buildings to the ground.

A lady who had been confirmed for leukemia was given 'Bhasm' by Bhagawaan Ji and was cured of the disease much to the surprise of her doctor a leading physician at that time.

In 1946, after paying his obsequies at the holy shrine of Amar Nath, he detained his party for a few hours much to their chagrin while all other Yatris were seen going on. When he finally allowed them to move, they found that a freak cloudburst had rendered the Yatris who had proceeded there, miserable with cold and drenched at Mahaguns pass, a few miles away from the holy cave.

A devotee had a serious problem while attending to the marriage of the daughter of a relative. The marriage ceremony was performed in one room but in the other the father of the bride was in his death throes. The devotee was perplexed and approached Bhagawaan Ji for help. Bhagawaan Ji uttered the words loudly "Tell him to wait till tomorrow." Thereafter, Bhagawaan Ji accompanied the devotee to the site of marriage and saw the bride and bridegroom off. The father died the next day.

Such was the spiritual eminence of Bhagawaan Ji that one day a learned Acharya from Banaras visited him and enquired of the only devotee present there in the morning about the spiritual status of Bhagawaan Ji. The devotee was perplexed as he could not make such an assessment but Bhagawaan Ji came to his rescue after coming off his reverie and recited saloka No.6 of chapter XV of Shrimad Bhagwat Gita. Translated this verse means "that the sun does not illumine me nor the moon nor the fire that is my supreme stage reaching which one does not return to life."

Even though Bhagawaan Ji never moved out of Kashmir, a lot of people from outside knew him and came to pay their homage to him. Even after he attained 'Nirvana' people not only from India but also from far away countries like Australia came to seek his blessings. His Ashram in Srinagar is still intact even though all the surrounding buildings have been targets of arson.

There is therefore no doubt that his spiritual eminence and prowess are the guiding principles to which people are attracted, some for redressal of their worldly ills while others for their spiritual advancement.

Let this beacon light guide people to spiritual progress so that this country regains her position of leading the world to high thinking and great moral values.

10 Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji As Jagad Guru

Professor O. N. Chrungoo

Kashmir is indeed a pearl in the Himalayas. Its natural charm matches the spiritual eminence of the saints and sages that have been born in enchanting valley from time to time.

There are several energy centres in Kashmir. These are of two kinds Primary and Secondary. The primary energy centres are the permanent Shiva or Shakti power points, which symbolize the powers of consciousness existing in the Universal Mother, the Universal Mind, or the Universal power. A few instances of these are the Ice-Lingam of the holy cave of Amarnatha, which waxes and wanes with the phases of the moon; the Shri Chakra engraved on a Shila (rock) on the hillock of Hari-Parbat symbolizing the Divine Mother as Mata Sarika; the holy spring of Khir Bhawani whose water changes colours with the changing moods of the Divine Mother, Rajna, whom the phenomenon symbolizes; (on the surface of the spring appears automatically the Rajna Chakra, a form of the Divine Mother Rajna, when she is in a happy mood); and the shrine of the Divine Mother Jawalaa at Khrew.

The secondary energy centres are the places of birth, places of penance or the Ashrams of the saints of highest spiritual attainment, whom God sends to this world in order to put the erring humanity back on the rails of spiritual attainments. They also acts as the mentors of those who are on the spiritual quest, even sharing their spiritual experiences with them.

A few instances of such saints from the part of Kashmir are Laleshwari, Peer Pandit Padshah (Rasi Peer Saheb), Mata Roopa Bhawani, Swami Jeewan Saheb and Swami Shaivaachrya Ramjee and such others.

Every Sadhaka has to be clear in perception and understanding about these two types of energy points (Primary and Secondary). Kashmir is full of these Tirthas, seats of power. From the early dawn of history we find a galaxy of sages, savants, seers and spiritual preceptors profitably engaged in going near and near the essence of divinity. Primary energy centres were, their attraction and guiding forces, where they meditated, widened spheres of knowledge, unlocked certain knots for the aspirants, to understand the ultimate reality. They established different schools of thought, established Aashrams, Patshalas and seats of learning. These places became the secondary energy seats for the seekers and their followers.

Neelmata Purana, the ancient record of socio-religious account of Kashmir has paid glowing tribute to the piety prevailing in this land, " O, King (Janmejaya), whatever holy places are found in the world, do exist here also."

Kalhana the great historian too writes in Rajtarangnee, "there is not a space even as large as a grain of sesamum without a Tirtha in this country." Further he writes the great saints have taken birth in this sacred land from time to time.

In our age, too, we were fortunate enough to have amongst us in Kashmir one such spiritual giant, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji, a multidimensional spiritual personality. He lived in his ownself and yet lived with the masses around him. To write about him, for a lay man in spirituality is nothing short of impudence. But what encouraged me is the feeling that, talking, writing in praise of a saint of the eminence of Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji comes near to worshipping him.

This great saint was born on the 3rd of July, 1898 A. D. at Bana Mohalla, Srinagar, Kashmir. His childhood as well as adolescence was full of strife; he lost both his parents and all the domestic responsibilities evolved on his shoulders; these included the upbringing and marrying off of an unmarried sister. Schooling ended at the Middle standard. However, he learnt the art of composing and worked as a compositor at a printing press. Next he started a small grocers shop at Sekidafar, Safakadal under the guidance of his maternal grand father, Pt. Prasad Joo Parimoo.

Prof. B. N. Parimoo, son of Pt. Prasad Joo Parimoo, writes: "Bhagawan Ji lived a normal life. He had formed a group and as the leader of this group would organise trips to the holy shrines of Kher Bhawani, Sharika, Pokhribal, Jawala Ji, Mahadev and Vicharnagh. He was fond of going to saints. Having married

off his younger sister, he felt relieved of great domestic responsibility and started showing less and less attachment to worldly attractions."

Bhagawaan Ji could no longer remain a house holder. He shut himself up in a room for months together and carried on 'Tapasya' (Penance) unmindful of food even. The business of the world did not attract him any more. He severed all worldly bonds and got absorbed in the Absolute. He attained the stature of a 'Siddha'. He attained the position known in the Tantric Lore as that of the celestial realiser.

The late Prof. K. N. Dhar a renowned Sanskrit scholar writes, "such persons of towering stature are 'Divya Sadhkas' (Celestial Realisers) in the Tantric Lore. For them man is essentially part and parcel of Divinity, but owing to his tortoise like self centered attitude, grafting the host of limbs into his own body, has lost much of his flavour and fragrance. Bhagawaan Ji throughout the Years assigned to him for this enabling mission, strove hard in his own unassuming, yet persuasive way to restore that divine spark to man. He tried to rehabilitate him on his actual moorings."

Bhagawaan Ji guided and helped people in general and 'Sadhkas' in particular to strive for service to mankind and the purification of the body, the mind, and the spirit. He himself lived this truth in letter and spirit. Hence he has been accepted, as the great Master the 'Jagadguru'.

Justice S. N. Katju writes, "Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji lived a very claistered life. He never moved out of the valley. He was a great Siddha. Gradually, his fame spread and saints and 'Saadhus' from different parts of India used to visit him. By his intense Sadhana, he has become a 'Koula' and 'Aghareshwara' of the highest order. He talked little and never preached but he was full of compassion and love for all who sought his protection and blessings. He exercised his spiritual powers in the interests of the nation. Kashmir is the fountain source of Shiva-Shakti worship. It has produced great Koulas and Aghareshwaras of the tallest stature, the last of whom was Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji, who left his mortal frame in July, 1968. His spiritual stature can easily be compared to that of Maharishi Ramana, Shri Rama-Krishna Paramahansa and Shri Auribindo".

Bhagawaan Ram of Varanasi, one of the greatest Aghareshwaras of present day India has described the state of an Aghareshwara thus: "An Aghareshwara reaches a stage where he is totally freed from all Karma bonds. For him, there is no Moksha (liberation) nor re-birth.

"He becomes a burnt seed which cannot sprout. When he leaves his mortal frame, he lives and directs from the astral plane and he may enter the body of a living person and make him an instrument of his line of action. He is not subject to the currents of cause and effect, which bind the ordinary mankind. He is a law unto himself.

In short, he becomes the Sun of his own solar system and performs acts either directly or indirectly which appear to be befitting. Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji belonged to this spiritual line (Parampara) of the Koulas and the Aghareshwaras. Bhagawaan Ram of Varanasi has taken his photograph to 'Kreem-Kund', one of the oldest and most sacred shrines in Varanasi where He is adored in the midst of the galaxy of Aghareshwaras. Daily 'Satsang' bhajans, and aarti, is performed there."

The main seat of this great saint is at 'Kharayar, Habbakadal, Srinagar, Kashmir, where an Ashram with a registered trust is functioning. Bhagawaan Ji's relics are also there for the darshans of the people. A 'Maha-Yajna' on Jeshtha Shukla Dwitiya and a 'Maha-Jayanti' on Ashaadh Shukla Dwadashi, and Guru-Poornima on Ashaadh Poornima, are the main festivals celebrated at the Ashram.

Besides these main festivals at Ashram, there is a Japa of 'Guru Geeta' and Homa (Namaa-Smaranaa) of mantras on the first Sunday of every month before sunset. The Ashram at Srinagar is one of the most effective and powerful energy centre.

Justice S. N. Katju says, "Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji seems to be more alive now even after leaving his mortal body". It is as true as the fact that the sun is in the sky and the Ganges springs in the Himalayas, that His influence, guidance and directions are being increasingly felt all over India and even in some foreign lands, wherever his devotees are. He commands as 'Jagad-guru' and guides all. We have only to establish a link with his divine energy through meditation, Puja and Archanaa.

Mr. Philip Simpfendorfer, an Australian devotee of Bhagawaan Ji, has written in the world-famous journal Cosmas, a living paper of Australia, "Kashmir has produced many people of highly developed consciousness. The greatest in recorded history died in 1968."

During his life time of 70 years, Bhagawaan Ji's consciousness settled in the 'Turiyaa'. He never acted like a spiritual leader, not did he seem keen to propagate his outlook on life. In fact he was satisfied to live with relatives as a bachelor uncle. But in his own being he lived out the pre-occupations of the awakened of this age altered states of consciousness, harmonious living with Nature and its powers, helpfulness to others in every day life and concern for humanity's well-being.

Although humble and an introvert, he was able to direct aspirants according to their needs; in the inward sphere, the realm of causes, he was a supreme master. He was willing to heal, work miracles on material and weather conditions, cause divinities to appear and solve the personal problems of individuals, but, when he was involved in massive struggles against the powers of chaos in times of calamity or warfare, no one dared go near him, for he was then like a whirlwind of fire. His devotees still find his presence with them, long after, he gave up the physical body. He still lives.

Bhagawaan Ji is even more active as an inspirer for immature spiritual seekers than he was in his gross body. He is their permanent guide and, indeed, that of humanity at large. His way of working is quite unassuming. He works to help and guide a person from behind the scene. In order to meditate on Bhagawaan Ji one has to think of him as having a turban on his head, a 'White Pheran' (a loose gown worn by Kashmiris) on his body, a Dhooni (Sacred Fire) in front of him. When the meditation (Dhyaana) is perfect, He does not fail to appear before the 'saadhaka'.

Vandey Bhagawaantam Gopinatham !

11 Bhagwaan Gopinathji - Some reminiscences and thoughts

A. K. Jalali

I had my first 'darshan' of Bhagwaan Gopinathji in the year 1966. Those days, he lived at the house of the Mallas at Gudood Bagh, Srinagar-Kashmir. I found him seated on an 'aasana' in a corner of the room on the first floor. He was wholly absorbed in the self, seemingly oblivious of the surroundings and even of his own body. There, I saw for the first time also a young bachelor, Bodha Kak, Later, I found that he was deeply devoted to Bhagwaanji. Everyday, he would light, in a 'Sigrhi', the small 'dhooni' (sacrificial-fire) into which Bhagwaanji would make offerings, off and on. Whenever Bodha Kak was away, I would have the privilege of lighting the 'dhooni'.

I went to have a 'darshan' of Bhagwaanji almost everyday. Seated before him, I got wholly absorbed in divine thoughts and almost lost the awareness of my physical existence. This continued upto May, 1968 when he gave up the gross body in the very house in which I had seen him first.

Bereft of the bliss of his physical presence, I found myself utterly lost a ship-without an anchor. A student of the B.A. then, I found it very difficult to concentrate on my studies. I even cursed myself, feeling that I was floating rudderless in the ocean of life. Then, lo and behold! Bhagwaanji's grace came in the year 1969 when I had a vision of him in a dream. He said to me, "My child, why are you sad? I am alive and at the place which you used to visit to see me." This filled me with inexpressible joy. I started once again visiting the place and experienced as much bliss there as before.

Then, owing to Bhagwaanji's grace, some of his disciples and devotees set up an 'ashram', named after him at Kharyar, Habbakadal, Srinagar. A beautiful marble statue of his was also installed there. I felt as if Bhagwaanji had returned to this world in his physical form. Unfathomable was the joy I experienced. My visits to the 'ashram' were regular, and I participated every day in the prayers and the evening 'aarti' (song service) offered to Bhagwaanji there.

Now, I should like to pen down further what I observed about Bhagwaanji in the course of my regular visits to him at Gudood Bagh during a period of two years or so. It has been already mentioned that he would be absorbed in the self and make offerings into a small 'dhooni' (The latter practice, I have long since been told, was related to his efforts to save Kashmir). He lived a hard and disciplined spiritual life, never indulging any of his senses. Sometimes, for weeks and even months on end, he would deny himself even food, taking off and on, only a cup of the Kashmiri milkless sugar tea seasoned with cardamom. Ever absorbed in the Divine, Bhagwaanji would never say anything to any one, unless it was in answer to a question. Even then, he spoke the fewest words needed, and in a low whisper which was hard to catch. Men, Women and children came in large numbers everyday to have his 'darshan'. He spoke to everyone politely and sweetly. Towards some visitors in particular, whom Bhagwaanji perceived as faulty or erring, his behaviour was visibly harsh, he got up and chased them away even from the stairs leading up to his room and, on occasions, struck them with the long iron tongs-the kind some ochre-robed wandering monks carry-which he always kept by his side. However, to the true devotee, Bhagwaanji's anger too proved a blessing.

Even a casual visitor could feel that Bhagwaanji had all his senses under perfect control. His affectionate nature reminds me of a personal experience. Once, after I had prepared Kashmiri tea-Kahava-and poured it into his khos (an alloy tea-cup used only by Kashmiri Hindus), he asked me lovingly, 'tehi cheyaunaa? tohi phirvanna Pannas? (Won't you take tea? Didn't you pour yourself a cupful?). A person's faith did not come in the way of his affection. Once he remarked in answer to a question from a devotee, "What is the difference between a Hindu and a Mussalman?" He was, indeed, an ocean of love and compassion. Whoever approached him with a mundane or spiritual problem, never went away disappointed, very often, his helping others resulted in miracles though he did not seem to believe in performing miracles in order to impress anyone. His spiritual state was far above to that of egoism. I never found him using the first person singular pronoun.

All were equal before him. In this connection, I can recall an incident to which I was an eye-witness. Once, some Ochre-robed monks called on him as they would often do. As was his habit he gave away to them a rupee each. One of them expressed the wish to be given two rupees. Bhagwaanji simply sent him packing; he would not discriminate between one monk and another.

Devotees and musicians would sing devotional songs before Bhagwaanji though, being absorbed in the self, he would not seem to be listening to them. Once, while a party of musicians was singing 'Soofiana' songs to the accompaniment of the relevant instruments, I heard Bhagwaanji remark in Kashmiri, 'Poga Kashiree' (O Kashmir, which has seldom been calm and peaceful). I was unable to grasp the significance of this remark then, but its full import became clear to me many years later when militancy robbed Kashmir of all calm and peace, and lacs of people had to migrate to several other parts of the country to save their lives and dignity.

Bhagwaanji's eminence as a guru is hard to imagine. He became one with God during his earthly life. If anyone thinks of him as Shiva, he will see him in the form of Shiva, and if, in any other form of Divinity, he will see him in that form. This has been borne out by several of his disciples and devotees. Meditating on him helps one to get rid of lust, anger, greed and delusion.

How can one attain Bhagwaanji's grace? My own observation and experience have shown that, for this purpose, one must perform right actions and have right thoughts, one should not harbour any evil designs against anyone, to whatever creed or caste that person may belong. Egoism and pride catapult one far away from Bhagwaanji. And last but not the least one must surrender completely at his holy feet.

12 The Inspired Sage of Accomplishment

Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal'

*deham ca nasvaramavasthitamuthitam va
siddho na pasyati yotadyagamata svarupam
daivadapetamuta daivavasadupetam
vaso yatha parikrtam madiramadandhah
(Bhagvata Bk. XI, Ch. 13, Ve. 36)*

*Drunk deep, one becomes unmindful,
Knows not about the cloth he wears -
Whether it's fallen off the body or held on to the shoulder;
Likewise, the sage of spiritual attainment
In disembodied joy of Divine Ecstasy,
Knows not about this transient body -
Whether he retains it by the power of destiny
Or has gone beyond it by Grace Divine [1].*

*deho pi daivavasagah khalu karma yavat
svarambhakam pratisamiksata eva sasuh
tam saprapancamahirudhasamadhiyogah
svapnam punarna bhajate pratibuddhavastuh
(Bhagvata Bk. XI, Ch. 13, Ver. 37)*

*This body moves on the power of destiny
Unto the fruit of actions done in previous births;
The natural plan of whose commencement
Involves investigation, as if, of arrows
Shot formerly - whence and why;
But one in a meditation mood
Got firm in the knowledge of the Supreme Self,
Shares not the experience of manifest projection,
Just as a person, on waking from sleep,
Minds not his dream [2].*

*vag gadgada dravate yasya cittam
rudatyabhiksanam hasati kvacicca
vilajja udgayati nrtyate ca
madbhaktiyukto bhuvanam punati
(Bhagavat Bk. XI, Ch. 14, Ver. 24)*

*Whose earnest devotion melts the mind
And renders his speech convulsive,
Who frequently weeps, laughs on occasions
Unabashed sings aloud and dances;
Endowed with My Bhakti,
He makes mankind sinless [3].*

[1]. Just as in the case of Lal Ded (of Kashmir) in her own expression:

*'suy gav Lali me vakh ta vacun
tavay hyotum me nangay nacun.'*

*"To Lala, that precept inspired me:
Therefore, I took to roaming naked."*

[2]. As is said about the accomplished sage:

*prakasamane paramarthabhanau nasyatyavidyatimire samaste
tada' budhah nirmalavrttayo 'pi kincinna pasyanti bhavaprapancam (Yogavasistha)*

***"When the sun of spirituality shines bright
And the darkness of ignorance vanishes completely,
The wise, even with a purified mind-process,
Then, has no feeling of worldliness as himself."***

[3]. This is the sign of a truly inspired sage:

***etavadeva khalu lingamalingamurteh
samsanta samsrticirabhramanirvrtasya
tajnasya yatmadanakopavisadamoha -
lobhapadamanudinam nipunatanutvam. (Yogavasistha)***

***This alone is the sign of that non-distinct self,
Whose long-drawn rolling in births has ended,
And, who is tranquil on realisation - Thou Art That;***

***That his relative emotions -
Desire, anger, grief, delusion and greed,
Lose their weight day after day.***

13 Bhagwaan Gopinath - An Apostle of Sahaj Yoga

S.N. Zadoo " Suman "

Since 1968, when BhagawaanJi attained Maha Samadhi many articles have appeared on his personality, achievements and state of consciousness in "Patrika" but I would venture to focus on his Sahaj Yog or what is referred to as communion in philosophy or realization of Truth by means of reasoning and discrimination. In the realm of duality, one sees another, hears, smells, addresses, knows and comprehends another, but the undivided self, by casting off the desires created by ignorance, can recover the knowledge of its oneness with the supreme Self and realize freedom as Kashmir Shaivism has also propounded.

When the Sense organs act in obedience to spiritual laws, the worldly tendencies are overcome.

Evil is rooted in attachment of self with body and mind. The intrinsic nature of self is detachment, the meditation being the last step known as Sahaj Yog.

The spontaneous and unceasing love of Atman is real Sahaj Yog. BhagawaanJi used it as a medium of Higher knowledge or Moksha. He was always mixed with devotees but detached in mind and its determinative faculties. A world outside the realm of self was of no interest to him and he never wanted to waste an iota of a second without meditating on his Master. After all man belongs to the animal kingdom. It happens at occasions that we do a pious act mentally, morally or physically. This state of mind leads us to believe that there is some super power to bid us do a good act. On the reverse we undertake to follow a bad path and bear its fruit to our disadvantage. The difference between these two states of mind is due to ignorance which creates hurdles. BhagawaanJi perceived his self three fold in this body viz. through wisdom eye, mind and heart.

His self was unimpeded like a fish in water and unobstructed as a bird in sky (Upnishad). Sahaj Yog i.e. communion or balanced mind used to be at his command in wakefulness, dream, sound sleep and when he went beyond these three states i.e. attained TuIya, it rested and later on entered his own self. When an aspirant is overcome by light, he sees no dreams and is balanced/happy. BhagawaanJi felt at that time as if endowed with faith, chastity and austerity i.e. three glories of the spiritual field. In all the three states, external, internal and intermediate, he was never nervous and experienced one-in-many and many-in-one being thus free from any bondage (Upnishad).

He used to offer oblations to fire in a fire pot nearby unceasingly which created heavenly atmosphere around him as fire is the first element to have conceived the light.

This signified a discipline as propounded by the Vedas. After all, the source of knowledge, attainment of freedom and enjoyment of Moksh are all embodied in the Vedas. This is distinctly known as spiritual discipline and BhagawaanJi used to act accordingly. His physical actions were "ritual gestures and his pleasures "offering to the self", to quote Soundarilahli. He dedicated all actions to Him may be Japa, Mudra or Parikrama. These are the symptoms of a Sahaj Yogi or of what is conceived as communion. One would find BhagawaanJi always in silence and seclusion ever since he had attained Sahaj Yog. With eyes open and mind fixed he used to bless devotees. On Nad or (Transcendent Sound) he felt as if he was himself blessed, when it rose from within. He tried to fix his mind on central point of eye brows (light divine). He was a perfect saint devoted to super consciousness.

It is said that BhagawaanJi had circumambulated Hari - Parvat in Srinagar for twelve years in his childhood, where he had attained spiritual power. From natural impulse he had intuited that he was in all and all was in him. Out of the bounty of Lord's grace, he enlightened others, and was always on his way undismayed, never losing, composure and delight.

Every phase of BhagawaanJi's life was a miracle. It was observed that he was in indeterminate ecstasy" when in total silence. Of course he would return to his normal state on entrusting the body to him. Surely one has to long for a meeting before it can come about and this longing cannot be aroused and is to be

ostensibly awaited. In Sahaj Yog he became transformed unto Him. I bow to thee my Master and pray for your peace sublime.

14 Bhagwaanji as our children know and see Him

A.N. Dhar

For the bulk of Kashmiri Pandits now living in Jammu, away from the valley of Kashmir, the land of their birth, the Bhagawaan Gopi NathJi Ashram at Udaiwala, Jammu has assumed the sanctity of a Tirathasthan. Within the brief span of only a few years, it has grown into a vital centre, throbbing with spiritual and cultural activity. For the young and the old alike, it is a prized fount of inspiration and strength. This is evident from the sizeable gatherings of devotees that can be seen here on all days of the week, especially on Sundays in the evening. Thousands of devotees are served prasad here, consisting invariably of a full meal, on festive occasions. Yagyas are performed here periodically, and the birthday of Bhagawaan Ji is celebrated with extraordinary zeal and devotion every year. One is delighted to watch young volunteers working in perfect discipline and with exemplary devotion, rendering valuable social service to the large crowds on such occasions.

The various programmes and activities organized by the Bhagawaan GopinathJi Trust have produced tangible results. They particularly serve to promote religious and social awareness among the youth of our community. This awareness is an indispensable means to preserving our spiritual and cultural heritage. It is important to mention here that disciplined and collective participation of the devotees in Kirtan, consisting of devotional hymns touching upon the spiritual qualities and attainments of BhagawaanJi, has a significance of its own. The impact on the young particularly is immediate and enduring. The religious activities of the Ashram have thus a healthy, formative influence on our adolescent boys and girls.

It is widely known now that the Bhagawaan Gopi NathJi Trust has been paying special attention to the education and spiritual growth of the young. Incentives in the shape of scholarships and prizes are accordingly given by the Trust to the meritorious and deserving students of our community in order to ensure that they shape well and succeed in life. It is in this context that a symposium on the topic "The Spiritual Eminence of Bhagawaan Gopi NathJi" was held at the Ashram at Udaiwala, Jammu as part of the annual "Navreh" celebration on 1st April, 1995. Thirty six young students (boys and girls) presented essays at the function bearing on BhagawaanJi, which they had thoughtfully planned and written in advance. A panel of judges evaluated the performance of the participants, who were formed into two batches - seniors and juniors. From among the senior participants, Sandeepa Kaul bagged a prize each for i) the best presentation and ii) for the overall best material. Manu Bhat, from among the junior participants, got a prize for the best presentation. Some consolation prizes were also awarded to the other deserving students.

A careful reading of the written scripts of the young competitors reveals that most of them, as was desirable, must have consulted the available published materials on the life, teachings and spiritual achievements of BhagawaanJi. Some of them must have gathered further relevant information from other sources (such as their parents who knew the Bhagawaan through personal contact). In almost every script BhagawaanJi is described in glowing terms as veritably an Incarnation of the Divine and as a Jagat Guru. None of the writers has failed to mention the miracles attributed to the great saint, which he is known to have performed, without making an exhibition of his powers, to help his devotees in diverse ways, to cure diseases like cancer and to save the country when attacked by Pakistan in 1947 and 1965 and by China in 1962. Several essays have dwelt on the intense Sadhana that the Bhagawaan performed with sustained rigour throughout his life. Some essays highlight the fact that BhagawaanJi's fame as a spiritual genius and as an eminent saint has spread to countries abroad and that the number of his devotees has been swelling steadily. In a number of essays there is evidence, at places, of the young students' introspection - their own perception of BhagawaanJi's spiritual greatness, though its articulation is not adequate. Obviously, they owe this gain in self- introspection and spiritual perception to their consistent participation in the programmes of the Ashram. Paying tributes to the spiritual qualities and attainments of the Bhagawaan, the students in general have expressed their adoration for him and acknowledged their faith in him as the Sadguru who alone can heal our woes.

Salient points from the essays (with the name of the participant given at the end of each point in parentheses) are reproduced here for the benefit of BhagawaanJi's devotees and admirers:

14.1 Extract from the essays of senior participants

1. BhagawaanJi was a spiritual genius, a Master who had the power to carry innumerable souls across the ocean of samsara (Nidhi Khazanchi)
2. BhagawaanJi's spiritual life demonstrates the inner divinity of man and the sacredness of Nature (including the earth we inhabit). He worked for the good of the humanity at large. (Purnima Kaul).
3. BhagawaanJi's spiritual presence as a Jagat Guru has been felt by some of his devotees living in Australia. (Monika Bradoo)
4. BhagawaanJi is the saint par excellence, the saint of all times. He assumed the human form for the spiritual upliftment of mankind. (Jharna Jalali)
5. BhagawaanJi dispensed help to his devotees taking into account their different levels of consciousness and needs. He was inclined more towards the Tantric method of worship. (Vimal Raina).
6. BhagawaanJi is 'Kalpavraksha' in the sunburnt desert that this world is. He gives his bounty to every one according to the latter's capacity to receive. (Rakesh Pandita).
7. In BhagawaanJi's view God-realization is within the reach of any one whose devotion is intense and sincere. (Sachin Bhat)
8. BhagawaanJi had attained the highest state of consciousness through devotion and self-discipline. Spiritual seekers experienced bliss in his company. (Asseem Zutshi)
9. A mere glance at the picture of BhagawaanJi (when I visited the Ashram at Udaiwala, Jammu, for the first time) made me feel that purifying Amrita was being showered upon me. I always perceive a radiant glow on the Bhagawaan's photograph/statue. What his spiritual eminence consists in can only be felt as 'something' incommunicable. (Sharmishtha Kaul).
10. BhagawaanJi devoted all his time to Sadhana and to the spiritual advancement of his devotees. (Usha Parihar)
11. BhagawaanJi was, in a sense, a category apart as a spiritual Master; he outclassed many a seer and saint. (Archana Raina)
12. With his eyes turned upward, BhagawaanJi remained absorbed in God-consciousness throughout. With the dhooni aname in front of him, he would now and then smoke his chillum, but inwardly he was always attuned to the Divine. (Suman Kachroo)
13. A siddha of a high order, BhagawaanJi was a trikal - drashta. (Davinder)
14. Bhagawaan Gopi NathJi had descended into the human form to deliver Bhaktas across the ocean of Samsara. He illuminated the path of spirituality for the seekers he blessed. He was charitable to all and led men Godward. (Anil Kaul)
15. BhagawaanJi attained spiritual heights, far beyond the limits of Varnashrama and formal religion. In marked contrast to his inward greatness, he behaved outwardly like an ordinary man. (Snehlata)
16. Expressions like 'the depth of oceans', 'vastness of the blue sky', and 'tolerance of the earth' could give us a hint of the Bhagawaan's eminence. Yet, no words can express all about his spiritual greatness. (Sandeepa Kaul)
17. Godlike BhagawaanJi knew the past, present and future of the devotees who came to seek his blessings. (Sonu Bradoo)

14.2 Extracts from the essays of Junior Participants

1. BhagawaanJi continues to protect his devotees. When we left the valley in 1990, we had to relinquish all our belongings there. Our faith in the Bhagawaan has shielded us all through. We have overcome our difficulties through his grace (Chandrika Jalali).

2. Bhagawaan Gopi NathJi was an accomplished Aghoreshwar, having attained the highest stage of self-realization. He lived a simple life, devoid of pomp and show. All that he said or did during his life time has already become an inspiring legend (Anu Bhat).
3. Devotees sought BhagawaanJi as bees go about in search of flowers (to suck honey from). He was a source of solace and strength to them. Just as sandalwood tree provides its soothing cool to the poisonous snakes that coil themselves around its stem, so did the Bhagawaan soothe and heal the worldlings who approached him. (Manu Bhat)
4. Bhagawaan Gopi NathJi practised meditation both on Sakar Narayan and on the formless Maheshwara. Even after attaining Mahasamadhi, he continues to guide aspirants on the spiritual path. (Ridhma Saproo)
5. When BhagawaanJi provided his healing touch to a devotee in distress, he did so directly himself, without invoking a spirit or a god, or chanting a mantra. More and more people are joining the big family of his devotees and getting blessed. (Isha Kaul).
6. It is very difficult to make an adequate assessment of BhagawaanJi's eminence. As a saint, he was unique and incomparable. (Nidhi Nehru)
7. Bhagawaan Gopi NathJi had remarkable qualities as a saint. He commanded rare spiritual powers which the great siddhas of yore and Avtars only possessed. (Sakchi Nehru)
8. Whoever came within BhagawaanJi's spiritual hale experienced inward peace and illumination. All the devotees felt the impact of his presence. (Shivani Raina)
9. The true mark of a spiritual person is that he is free from prejudices, and is above casteism and communalism. BhagawaanJi had all these qualities. He was a very liberal and kind- hearted saint, and Siddha of high order. (Roma Dhar)
10. Though BhagawaanJi has left his mortal frame, his spirit continues to protect and guide us in all walks of life. When we bow to his statue, we feel blessed inwardly. (Anmol Kaul)
11. BhagawaanJi never acted like a preacher. He spoke very little but radiated spirituality that touched the souls of his devotees. He was virtual Shiva; cosmic rays of perennial bliss emanating from Him illuminated the minds of his devotees. (Remu Kaul)
12. I am a naughty girl in the class and sometimes the teacher taunts me. However, whenever I remember Bab Maharaj (BhagawaanJi), every one loves me. (Rema Kaul)
13. BhagawaanJi would rarely talk but he often uttered the words sezar (simplicity/ straightforwardness) and pazar (truthfulness). He was himself an embodiment of these spiritual qualities. An aspirant who cultivates these qualities in himself is sure to attain his goal. (Sunnhalee Razdan)
14. Although as displaced Kashmiri Pandits we are passing through difficult times, we are lucky enough to remain in BhagawaanJi's blessed fold. I personally feel that His divine Hand is always on my head, guiding me every moment. (Amit Kaul)
15. BhagawaanJi was truly an incarnation of God. His divine descent served one important purpose - the spiritual upliftment'of his devotees. Although he attained Mahanirvana in 1968, He is always accessible to us through prayer and meditation. He influences our spiritual growth in many imperceptible ways. (Sushma)
16. BhagawaanJi did not deliver any spiritual discourses but induced spirituality through a touch, a look or by offering bhasma, prasad or a puff from his chillum. (Nitin Ganjoo)
17. Personally I am indebted to BhagawaanJi, who saved my life here in exile (a fugitive from the valley) when I was stung by a snake. I invoked his name for help and could see only Him around me. The Bhagawaan's kripa saved my life, which was otherwise threatened with death. (Ashutosh Ganju)
18. BhagawaanJi's achievement in sadhana was supreme - he had attained complete union with God. He was Ishwara in the human form and he made free use of his divine shakti for the welfare of his devotees. (Avinash Ganju)

19. Although BhagawaanJi lived throughout in the valley of Kashmir his spiritual influence and fame have spread far beyond the valley, even to countries abroad. Centres dedicated to him have sprung up in many parts of the country; one important centre has been established in Australia. He will continue to inspire generations and multitudes of devotees throughout the world. (Sunita Sharma)

It is hoped that our young men and women will continue to explore more facts about the great personality of BhagawaanJi and his spiritual attainments. They should not rest content with barely reading the articles and books on the Bhagawaan that have been published so far. They should read the materials with care, analyse their content and arrive at their own conclusions. They are expected to extend their knowledge of what sainthood involves and read more about our spiritual heritage. The more advanced students among them should build up a good reading background in the areas of religion and philosophy. Thus equipped, they will develop aptitude for independent study and research. They can surely explore more illuminating facts about Bhagawaan Gopi NathJi's spiritual life and teachings if they persevere in this endeavour.

15 Multi Dimensional Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji

A Point of view

A. K. Parimoo

15.1 Apology

To begin with I beg an excuse from esteemed readers for any wrong or erroneous interpretations, for I feel I am too small to describe the State Bhagawaan Ji was enjoying as he lived in extreme introversion all along his life and never preached or deliberated. His talking sessions ended in a few words only during his life time. The only evidence from the practical life of Bhagawaan Ji is his Karamyoga. Like lord Krishna he fought wars in a passive manner himself not using weapons or arms but simply directing soldiers to catch the right hideouts of Barbarians and thus defeating them saving the innocent and hence keeping the morale of the country and soldiers high. Like a compassionate father he cured instantly his disciples of fatal diseases, helped to raise the economy of the down-trodden and brought the wrong on the right path.

In all, helping the Humanity to heal both physical and mental wounds. During this whole process he renounced all the fruits unlike other saints who take delight in being applauded and cheered in large gatherings. Let me make an attempt to peep into various dimensions of the Holy master as under:

15.2 Bhagawaan Ji as Siddharth

Six hundred years before Christ one night when the world was in a deep slumber, a young restless prince worried to see Pain, Disease and Death, left his home breaking all shackles - Ego, Desire, Lust and Greed in silent jungles, with a firm determination to seek the sole creator to ask Him the cause of human sufferings. Even after giving up human vices he observed three barriers in the cosmic journey of his mind blocking his way e.g. Hunger, Pain and Fear; he waged a war with the three body concerns. Starving for months he smiled before roaring tigers and hissing cobras. A mere skeleton with a coverage of dry skin he meditated under the scorching sun avoiding shade just to invite pain. Finally he won the war. A relaxed and liberated Siddharth got the required enlightenment and awakening and thenceforth a Buddha.

Likewise Bhagawaan Ji who right from childhood shunned company and was indifferent towards material pleasures, obviously because of his previous sanskars, divested his mind gradually of every desire, ego, greed and lust. Again like Siddharth he wanted to give up his body concerns i.e. pain, hunger and fear. He walled himself up in a damp dark room without ventilation or an air inlet, all stinking, a habitat of little blood suckers. He never objected to a rat boring a hole in his heel. He had no desire to inhale fresh air in burning heat nor asked for warm equipment to face chilling cold because he had to conquer pain. He starved for months together and the pangs of hunger did not deflect his aim. Peeping through the door he was seen looking at the opposite wall with vacant eyes, his sole companion being an earthen lamp always burning. Nobody heard him reciting any hymn or prayer. He would not allow even the room to be dusted. During this period, to become fully sickness proof and pain-proof he swallowed poisonous drugs. He vomitted potfuls of blood but did not surrender before hunger and pain. Nobody except his elder sister was allowed to get into the room; she alone was the communication medium. For seven years (1930-37) Bhagawaan Ji dived constantly deep into the eternal ocean of Spirituality and in each dive collected the gems of eternal bliss to be utilized for the welfare of his children being Himself a global compassionate father. Thirty nine years old Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji came out of the solitary cell with a lean and a pale body but a radiant soul in communion with the Supreme creator, Param Brahma. From Thirty ninth year onwards he selected an asan to accomplish great jobs in the field of Karam- Yoga.

Obviously the initial modes of Sadhana adopted by Lord Buddha and Bhagawaan Ji seem alike in terms of arduous physical torture but a distinction is there as indicated here under:

15.3 Bhagawaan Ji

1. Half of his life he spent in achieving the Supreme and the rest half he spent entirely in the service of his people as compassionate father and as a silent commander, to lead the Army against the tyrants using his miraculous powers.
2. An extreme introvert who preferred to live in solitude right from childhood.
3. A born celibate who said that lust is the biggest barrier in seeking eternal bliss.
4. Passed whole of his life in the valley of Kashmir occasionally in energy sites of the valley viz Hariparbat, Khir-Bhawani, Jyestha Bhagwati and JwalaJi.
5. Believed in his religion and all its allied traditions, respected all religions, himself being above religion.
6. Had a strong belief in God. The real Siddhi lies in total communion with the supreme creator, Param Brahma The monosyllable OM (AUM) is the union of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. On his being an introvert he said; "A Yogi may realize God but an introvert can realize all the aspects of God."
7. BhagawaanJi had a mission to help those in distress by his miraculous powers. A miracle literally means breaking a subtle natural law, for example raising a dead man to life. Such powers for a saint like BhagawaanJi are not consumed as he had attained Shiva-hood. It matters nothing for an ocean if a million buckets of water are taken away from it.
8. Like a Zen master BhagawaanJi would beat a devotee and lose temper but like a compassionate father he never did so with an intention to harm him, simply to bring him on the right path or to counter the ill effects of his stars. Once he injured a devotee by his forks, shedding blood the devotee left his room scared. Later on his horoscope indicated that a fatal accident would befall him wherein a heavy blood loss was expected on the same day.
9. BhagawaanJi never left his aasana. Whatever his devotees offered him, he would distribute it among those present leaving nothing behind. Never in his life did he ask for any thing from his devotees.

15.4 Lord Buddha

1. He also strove for the first half of his life in attaining enlightenment and the rest half he spent in preaching his eight fold path which attracted the masses giving birth to a new religion. He never performed miracles.
2. An extrovert who was bound to talk and deliberate in order to bring people into his fold.
3. Married and in the prime of youth renounced his wife and child to seek enlightenment.
4. Roamed all over the country to preach his eight fold path.
5. Founded a new religion i.e. Buddhism which gave a set back to Hinduism. More than half of Asia embraced Buddhism as violence was at peak and people preferred Buddhism which lays great stress on non-violence.
6. Does not believe directly in the existence of God. The philosophy of Buddhism is associated with it dhyanas and meditation. It claims only Shunya (Vacuum) as the aim of its Mystic practice. Buddhism aims at man's liberation from pain and suffering. Beyond this, Buddhism originally had no specific aims or claims. That is why after Buddha it divided into branches and many Buddhists got reconverted to their original fold i.e. Hinduism.
7. Lord Buddha never performed miracles. May be, it was not in his mission to adopt short term measures to help the people in distress. Most probably he aimed at people being relieved of anxieties and sufferings through long practice of the eight fold path, which is of course time consuming, and not instantaneous.
8. Lord Buddha never lost his temper.
9. Lord Buddha while preaching with other bhikshus would knock at a number of doors to collect food. Of course he or they would not hoard just enough to satisfy their hunger.

15.5 Bhagawaan Ji as a Jivan Mukhta

A sage is said to be in a Jivan-Mukhta state or Sahaj state if he is cramped in a body yet unidentified with all its needs, its pain and disease. Such a sage is liberated in life itself because the strongest attachment of an individual is with his body from which the sage has freed himself.

From all that I have said so far, it is clear BhagawaanJi took up an arduous physical Sadhna to attain Jivan-Mukhta State. While in the body he called his swollen and shrinking limbs as splinters of wood which would turn to ashes one day. In his life time he never showed any symptoms of pain or illness though at times he looked ill. A Jivan-Mukhta saint says, "This body is a nest of troubles, an assembly of flesh and bones, it is a barrier in the cosmic journey. Make use of it but forget about its welfare. The more you care for it the more it will demand keeping you away to attain the real ecstasy. The pain, disease or hunger can never supersede the time of your departure from this world. You are a tool in the hands of time and space".

In the Jivan-Mukhta State BhagawaanJi was freed of all persistent tensions and the ego. He was free from all the anxieties and frustrations ever enjoying the nectar of Divine bliss and in constant communion with Param-Brahma. Sh. Rama Krishna Paramhansa, a victim of chronic throat cancer never healed him self, though with his miracles he cured people on the death bed and instantly removed all the signs of fatal diseases.

A Jivan-Mukhta sage like BhagawaanJi would invite Devas while the sacred fire was on to make them share a portion of his prasad. In fact all deities were at his beck and call.

At times he would bless his disciples with the material darshan's of Holy Jagat Ambha. The characteristics of Jivan-Mukhta were clearly visible in the life of BhagawaanJi. Being in full communion with Param-Brahma he referred to himself in the plural. The Upanishad says. " When all the desires of heart are fulfilled, then even a mortal becomes immortal", not to speak of a sage like BhagawaanJi who never nurtured a worldly desire in his heart.

A Jivan-Mukhta is liberated in life itself though the momentum of his past Karmas may sustain his physical life for some time. Vidara Mukhti that is liberation after death is a natural consequence of this.

15.6 Bhagawaan Ji as Sthir Man

(Stability of Mind)

Lord Krishna says in the Holy Bhagwad Gita:

When a person completely abandons all cravings of mind and feels quite contented and satisfied in own self through his own self then he is called a stable mind.

The Saint who has perfectly integrated joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, where thirst for desire is altogether vanished and who is free from passion, fear and anger is a stable mind. While in the body unattached to every thing, neither rejoices after meeting with good nor grieves when an evil comes is a stable mind.

Self controlled mind though it enjoys various sense objects through the senses remains free from likes and dislikes, attains stability of mind. As waters of different rivers enter an ocean the ocean remains absolutely undisturbed, like-wise in a stable mind all the enjoyments merge themselves without an expression of any change or utterance of a word. Even if fully acquainted with cosmic conscience, the sage like the ocean, remains absolutely undisturbed; such a sage is stable mind.

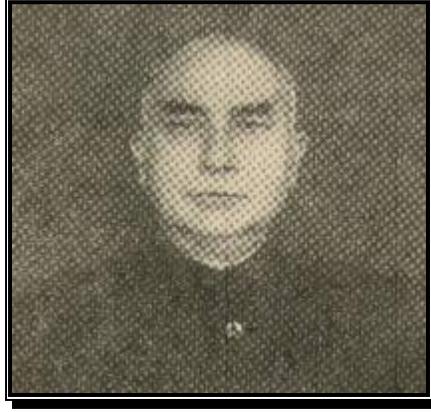
Having gone through all the above experiences BhagawaanJi is in total harmony and contact with the Supreme self. The Lord endowed him with great powers of futurology clairvoyance and instant means to heal any and solve problems of his devotees. He is in contact with the supreme lord and also his devotees by speech and thought transference. At will he can materialize simultaneously at various places to bestow his benign grace and bliss on his disciples.

A Great Sage says:

It is easy to ride a mad elephant, to tame a ferocious tiger, to play with a Cobra, to be ever youthful, to walk on fire and water, but it is difficult and more beneficial to control the elusive mind and to divert its activities to the most supreme, omnipotent and omniscient God. The mind once controlled is controlled for ever. Shri Ramana Maharishi teaches that one should constantly ask oneself "Who Am I?". The greatest enquiry indeed, by strongly rejecting other thoughts the devotees will find himself going deep into an abyss and the other thoughts will cease to exist. The practical example is that of Dr. Paul Brunton, an English journalist and an author when he entered the Maharishi's chamber at Arunachala. The master simply said, "Go, come tomorrow and just think with full concentration - who am I? and let me know your answer." Thus arousing spiritual curiosity in the author, he elevated him until he was blessed with eternal knowledge.

16 Review on "Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji of Kashmir"

Mr. Justice Shiva Nath Katju



Mr. Justice Shiva Nath Katju

I have known Pandit Shridhar Joo Dhar retired Conservator of Forests, J & K Government, since the Summer of 1936 when I met him for the first time at the Shrine of Shri Sharda Ji on the banks of Krishna Ganga, now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. It was at his suggestion that a copy of the biography of the Late Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji of Kashmir was sent to me. I have read and reread the book which has been very ably written by Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar with absorbing interest. It deals with the life story of the greatest Kashmiri Saint of the century.

Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji was born on 3rd July 1898 in Bana Mohalla, Srinagar (Kashmir) and died in Chondpura, Srinagar on 28th of May 1968. He remained in Kashmir throughout his life and never left it. Born in a respectable and esteemed family of Kashmir Pandits he took to spiritual pursuits from an early age and from 1925 onwards plunged headlong in the quest of self-realisation. Though he lived with his near relations he remained a celibate. He had read upto the middle standard and had a fair knowledge of English. He knew Sanskrit well and had mastery over Persian and Urdu. He spoke little and kept himself covered in a cloak of anonymity. Only those fortunate few who came in contact with him had glimpses of his greatness. It was only in the later phase of his life that his fame began to spread and Sadhus and Saints from outside Kashmir visited him. But even then it was only a small gathering of devotees and aspirants who came to him. He shunned publicity and lived in close communion with unseen forces. He was compassionate to the needy and in distress and helped them and blessed them. He led a simple and austere life. His chelum was his constant companion.

It is very difficult to make a true assessment of spiritual giants. They have dimensions wholly different from men of the world, big or small, and it is not possible to measure their greatness by an ordinary yard stick. The great merit of Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar's book on Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji lies in its faithful and detailed recording of all that the author knew about Bhagwan Gopinath Ji and the information that he gathered about the great saint. The reader gets a narrative of Bhagwan Ji's life events, his habits and his spiritual efforts. It is not fully certain as to who was the Guru of Bhagwan Ji. Shri Fotedar while mentioning about the spiritual efforts of Bhagwan Ji is not in a position to say as to what precisely was the path followed by Bhagwanji which enabled him to reach the heights which he had attained. But there is enough factual material in the book to enable a practitioner in the path of the traditional Shiva Shakti worship which is prevalent among Kashmiri Pandits, to draw inferences and conclusions about the mode of sadhana practiced by Bhagwanji.

It is necessary to mention briefly the religious beliefs and practices of the Kashmiri Pandits. They follow the tenets of Sanatan Dharma in common among the Hindus and worship the Supreme Being in His five aspects of Vishnu, Ganesh, Surya, Shiva and Devi. But their kul-devatas are the different forms of the

Devi and they are worshippers of Shakti which includes Shiva as well. Every family has his Kul Devi which are generally Ragyan, Sharika, and Jwala, with their corresponding Bhairava (Shiva). While the Devi is worshipped in the ordinary way some persons aspiring for higher reaches get initiated and then the path goes steep high. Side by side with the aforesaid traditional worship of the Devi is Shaiva Darshan, popularly known as Kashmir Shaivism, propounded and elaborated by a long line of great philosopher sages and sadhaks such as Shri Kanth. Vasu Gupta, Kallata, Somanand, Utpala, and to crown them all, the great Abhinava Gupta who was followed by Kshemraj and others. There is no other Savant and Scholar after the Adi Shankaracharya who is more honoured in the Hindu world than Abhinava Gupta. He is referred to as Mahamaheshwar and he moved across the Indian stage as an unrivalled colossus. The Trika system of Kashmir Shaivism in a way seeks to harmonise the Shaiva and Shakta philosophies. It adds to the concepts of the beginning and creation of the universe propounded by the Sankhya System. The Trika system has its practical side as well. It is a moot question as to how far the principles of the Trika system have been borrowed from Shakta practices or, conversely, to what extent the Shakta sadhana as prevalent in Kashmir and in parts of Indqa, has been influenced by the Trika doctrines. The subject becomes relevant in order to assess the spiritual heights attained by Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji.

The factual information contained in Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar's book clearly shows that Bhagwan Gopinath Ji began with the traditional worship of the Devi in Her different aspects such as Ragyan, Sharika and Jwala. The distinction between the Devis is only for the beginner. As the practitioner goes higher on the path the distinction disappears and he bows before the Divine mother, Jagadamba, in all Her aspects. The traditional Shakta upasana leads the practitioner to the point where every thing goes back and merges in the Devi and that includes Shiva as well. The sadhak becomes a Kaul, a paramhansa and according to the Tantras there is nothing beyond a Kaul. In the upper most reaches the sadhak pursuing the path of visualising and comprehending the reverse process in cosmic evolution seeks to go to the Ultimate Source of all, the Divine Lady, who is the Supreme Creatrix.

Is there anything beyond the Devi which can be subjected to ritual worship and which can come within the comprehension of a Kaul. It could be said that the traditional worship of the Devi by Kashmiri Pandits as also the Shakta practitioners in India and abroad can itself lead to the identification of the Sadhaka with the Supreme Being and no further climb is necessary. The Shaiva Darshan and Trika Shastra seem to suggest that there is a higher summit beyond the Devi Herself. The approach though highly abstruse is indicated with clarity. That may be regarded as the last hurdle before reaching the final goal and even Shakta Sadhaks have sometimes traversed the path indicated by Trika Shastra to achieve their objective. Did Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji too adopt such a course. In 1930 Bhagwanji shifted to the house of Pandit Tika Bayu at Rangteng (Srinagar) and stayed there for seven years. The factual record of what Bhagwanji did in this period is briefly given by the Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar in his book. It runs thus:

"At this place he appears to have plunged headlong into intense Sadhana. He would be found lying on a bed, face towards the wall, with a small lamp burning in his room for 24 hours. His elder sister told me, that during this period, nobody was allowed to get into his room except her younger daughter Chanda Ji and a few other selected people. The room and Bhagwan Ji's bed were covered with layers of dust which he would not allow to be swept. Cob webs and spiders were also present in this room. During this period a rat had bored a hole in one of the heels of his foot which had been there for a long time. He would sometimes take handfuls of Datura (Stramonium) opium, panak and other intoxicants in this period of intense Sadhana.

At times, Bhagwanji would vomit basinfuls of blood and his body was wholly swollen and he looked like a ghoul. On one occasion during this period, his sister reminded him of the intense suffering which they were undergoing and suggested to him to take up a worldly life. His reply, firm and direct was "Our boat is in the midst of an ocean, either both of us will land safely or get drowned".

During this period he would fast for months together or sometimes take huge quantities of food. This tapasya lasted 7 years and he came out of this great ordeal, clairvoyant and clairaudient, with full vision of the past, present and future, a Siddha with a badly mauled body but a radiant soul. . . "

What was the nature of this sadhana. To pursue this line of enquiry it is necessary to mention some salient doctrines of the Trika system with respect to cosmic evolution. According to the Trika Shastra the universe is only an "expansion" of the Power of Param Shiva in His aspect as Shakti. The things and beings of the universe are built up by a few fundamental factors called the Tattwas. They are:

1- 5 The five Bhutas viz. Prithvi (Earth), Apan (Water), Agni (Fire), Vayu (Air) and Akash (Ether).

6-10 The five Karmendriyas viz. Upastha (Power or or capacity of recreation), Payu (Power of voiding or discarding). Pada (Power of locomotion), Hasta (Power of handling) and Vak (Power of expression or voicing).

11-15 The five Tanamatras (general elements of sense perception) viz. Gandha (Odour), Rasa (flavour), Rupa (colour), Sparsha (touch) and Shabda (sound).

16-20 The five Jananendriyas (Five powers of sense perception) viz. Ghrahendriya, Rasendriya, Darshanendriya, Sparshendriya, and Shraavanendriya.

21-23 Antahkaran (The three capacities of mental operation) viz. Mana, Ahankara and Buddhi.

and

24-25 Prakriti - the Root of all Feeling and Purush, the experiencer of these feelings as a limited individual.

The aforesaid 25 Tattwas are common in both the Sankhya and Trika systems with the difference that Sankhya emphasises that Purusha and Prakriti are final principles while in Trika they are only derivative and the Trika pursuing the analysis further treats the following as additional Tattwas: viz.

26-31 The six sheaths of the Purusha which are principles of Subjective Limitation and are collectively called the Kanchukas viz.

(i) Kala or Time

(ii) Niyati (Limitation in regard to presence);

(iii) Raga (Attachment);

(iv) Vidya (Knowledge);

(v) Kala Art of Creation;

(vi) Maya.

32-36 And lastly the five important Tattwas, viz.:

(i) Sad-vidya (True knowledge).

(ii) Aishvarya or Ishwar Tattwa (Lordliness).

(iii) Sadakhya or Sada Shiva Tattwa (that in which the experience of Being begins).

(iv) Shakti Tattwa (Principle of negation of universal experience).

and

(v) Shiva Tattwa (Suppression in the Experiencer of all experience of objects and means of experiencing them.

It is the play of the abovementioned last five Tattvas which sets the wheel of creation in motion. The splendour and grandeur of the Cosmic drama of the beginning, evolution and dissolution of the Universe (Srishti) as visualised by the Kashmir Shaiva sages is entralling.

Param Shiva, the Highest Reality, is the prime source of all universal manifestations. In the beginning there is nothing but Param Shiva. The manifested universe as an idea is within Him, because He is complete in Himself. The creative process begins with the desire to manifest and shining out, (Abhas). This is the first stirring in the Cosmic drama. At this stage the two Tattwas, the Shiva Tattwa and the

Shakti Tattwa come simultaneously into operation. Param Shiva by the operation of Shiva Tattwa, the Anand aspect of His Shakti which acting as a force of negation, makes Him climb down from His supremely ideal self in which the universe being all within Him there was, initially no desire of manifesting Himself and He is now gripped by the idea of Abhas. But as yet there is only a feeling of manifestation and no feeling of a universe in the experience. The Shakti Tattwa keeps the experience of universe in a state of suppression. Thus the Shiva Tattwa is the first ripple in the Cosmic process of Universal manifestation while the Shakti Tattwa acting as a principle of restraint checks and regulates it. In this stage Param Shiva has only the feeling of pure "I" because the feeling of universe in the experience is suppressed by the operation of Shakti Tattwa and the thought of "I am this or that" becomes dormant. The concept of manifested universe in all its minutest-details was in the mind of Param Shiva but the operation of Shakti Tattwa, which is an aspect of His own self, puts him as if in a haze and He is only: left with the desire to manifest but oblivious as to its form and shape.

The next scene opens with the operation of the Sadakhya Tattwa. The grip of Shakti Tattwa is slightly lessened by the Iccha aspect of the Divine Shakti and Param Shiva getting out of the haze in which he had been wrapped begins to regain the vision of the ideal universe in experience but the vision starts as a vague recollection and the full picture of Cosmic manifestation is still hazy. The thought "I" gets enlarged into "I am" but "what I am" is still a dim vision.

In the following scene of the drama, with the coming into force of the "Aishvarya Tattwa" the Jnan aspect of the Divine Shakti clears the most and Param Shiva as the Divine Experiencer recaptures the vision of the Ideal universe in all its full glory. The thought "I am" becomes "I am this" after a full survey of manifested universe in the manner in which an architect gets the mental picture of a building to be constructed according to his own plan. At this stage the experience "I am this" is reshaped into "This am I".

The next scene commences with the impacts of the Kriya aspect of the Divine Shakti by the "Sad-Vidya" or "Shuddha Vidya" Tattwa. Now the Supreme Architect of the universe examines the concepts of "I" and "this" giving equal prominence to both and looks into them as both identified as also separate in thought. There is unity as every thing emanates - from Param Shiva but what the creation leads to, is diversity in the objects of creation. With His gaze fixed to the manifestation to come with all its diversities there is experience of diversity-in-unity-and-identity. The divine Experiencer surveying the manifested universe to come with all its multifariousness sees it as part of Him and proceeding from Him as the Creator of all forms of creation. The Act in the Cosmic drama which follows the impact of Sad Vidya Tattwa depicts the start and flow of the creative process of manifestation which upto now was only a plan in Divine contemplation. The process of implementation of the plan now starts.

In the "Sad Vidya"- or "Shuddha Vidya" state the Supreme Architect of the universe had visualised the manifestation of universe as an ideal one. But, as a result of all the mental efforts and phases of dimness, slumber, and awakening to which He had subjected Himself by the operation of His own Divine Shakti in Her different aspects He, as if feeling tired, finds Himself in the grip of Maya who almost put Him to sleep and the concept of universal. "All this" again gets dim and He only remains conscious of the picture of manifested universe as something vague and indistinct almost amounting to nothing. The five Kanchukas now come into operation by the obscuring force of Maya and He is wrapped by the limitations of Kal, Niyati, Rag, Vidya and Kala. The Experiencer in this state is called Purusha or the limited individual spirit which affected by the other Tattwas produces innumerable individual spirits, also called Purushas. Simultaneously with the Purusha comes into existence Prakriti who acts and reacts on the Purush reminding him of His full glory which the obscuring force of Maya has dimmed. With the process of multiplicity of the All Highest innumerable Purushas and Prakritis come into being. The Trika Shastra however makes it emphatically clear that even by producing unlimited Purushas and Prakritis of individual spirits He only changes the character of His Experience by Himself becoming the experience of all the Purushas with their mutually exclusive and distinct realisations at different levels but He remains the same as He is in Eternity. The sleeping, drowsy and waking stages are just part of play by the Actor in the Cosmic drama. The Actor remains what He is irrespective of the part He plays in the divine drama. The

universe with all its innumerable varieties, objects, and experiences is only a manifestation of the Shakti of Puram-Shiva Himself which is only a part of Him and in no way different from Him. The five main aspects of this Shakti are Chit, Anand, Iccha, Jnana, and Kriya. When Shakti opens Herself the universe is born and when she loses Herself there is dissolution of the universe and the divine manifestation comes to an end. But this drama of opening and closing continues and will go on with countless universes coming into existence and then disappearing. The Trika again emphasises that Shakti is only an aspect of Param Shiva by which He pervades the universe while He himself remains unaffected by His own ever continuing manifestations.

The concepts of Shakti, Purush and Prakriti as elaborated in the Trika Shastra are somewhat different from those who worship Shakti and this includes the Shiva Shakti worship in Kashmir. The border line between the two approaches, howsoever, shadowy and thin, does exist. The Shakta approach follows in general the Sankhya line. Brahma in His unmanifested state is silent. There is nothing beyond Him and every thing is within Him. Then comes the desire to manifest and The Supreme One assumes the character of two even though the two is outwardly one just like a gram within whose outward covering there are two pieces. The two thus produced are Purush and Prakriti. Purush is in a state of rest and provides the matter base for Prakriti's operations as Supreme Energy. Purusha is Shiva and Prakriti the Divine Mother and even though they are united to each other as sound and word and word and its meaning. Shiva remains in a state of repose. The Devi, the Divine Mother creates, preserves and dissolves the universes. The infinite number of Purushas and Prakritis is not so emphasised in Shakta philosophy as the Trika does even though every individual being is a part of The Mula Purusha and the Devi. The Kaul Shastra puts Her on the loftiest pedestal.

Brahma in his hymn to the Devi in Ratri Sukta addresses Her as Vishveshwari, Jagatdhatri and the cause of all creation preservation and dissolution.

She is Parmeshwari to whom the gods have prayed and before Her all have bowed.

Ragyan, in Her Sahsrnama, has been described as samast tattwa nilyaa (In whom all Tattwas merge) and jagdraagye (Queen of the Universe), tattwaraagye (Queen of Tattwas), vaagraagye (Queen of Sounds); and tattwarupinee (Possessing the form of Tattwas).

In Ragyan Stotra it is said : . .

Daughter of Himalayas ! You alone knew Shambhu whose origin is unknown, who remains unclad and is a Bhikshu holding a skull, before you married Him;

Girija! It is because of your taking Him as your spouse that Shiva, who remains smeared with the ashes of the dead, who roams as a mendicant, and who dances in places of cremation has become lustrous.

As the Trika Shastra deals with Shiva, Shakti and Nara (Individual) similarly the Shakta philosophy deals with Purush, Prakriti and Jiva. The final goal in, Sadhana is the merger of the Jiva or Nara with Brahma or Param Shiva. The aforesaid three stand as three points of a triangle and the individual Nara or Jiva strives to Shorten the length of the sides of the triangle so that ultimately the triangle is reduced to a point the "Bindu" in which Shiva, Shakti or Nara, or Purush, Prakriti and Jiva, are all absorbed. This is the reverse process after the flowering of the universe, the Srishti, and the Tattwas moving backwards merge in the source from which they emanate. It is given to few to reach the final goal during their life time. For those who do reach the top of the Everest there is no further climb. For the Sadhak in different categories the process of ascent consists in reducing the area of the triangle and decreasing the length of its sides and their progress can be assessed, where such assessment is possible, by measuring their distance from Shiva and Shakti or Purush and Prakriti.

There are four systems indicated in the Trika Shastra viz. Pratyabijanya, Kula, Spanda and Krama. Trika points to three paths by which an individual merges into Param Shiva. They are:

Anuvopaya, Shaktopaya and Shambhavopaya.

(i) The four methods of Sadhana indicated in Anuvopa viz. Ucchara Karan, Dhyan and Sthana Kalpana are drawn from the Krama system and are connected with Kundalini Yoga.

(ii) Shaktopaya prescribes thought concentration. In this method recitation of mantras or breath control is not necessary. All thoughts other than the feeling of identity with Param Shiva have to be excluded.

(iii) Shambhavopaya is a form of Yogic practice in which the mind has to be kept free from all thoughts. It is indicated by the Kula system.

Spanda is a system of meditation and Pratyabhigyan shows the path for self realisation and reunion with universal consciousness.

I cannot claim familiarity with the practical side of the different modes of Sadhana prescribed by the Trika Shastra because I have only followed to some extent, the path indicated by the Kaulmat or Shambhavi Vidya (worship of Shiva-Shakti) which is prevalent among the Kashmiri Pandits as also in a section of Hindus in general throughout India and in foreign countries. The worship of Ragyan, Sharika, or Jwala, or of the Devi in any of Her different aspects consists, after graded initiations culminating in Purna-Abhiseka, in recitation (Japa) of the mantras and invoking Her in Yantra and performing the necessary rituals. Worship in the Yantra is either performed singly or in a group. Individual worship is of two kinds viz. Antaryag and Bahiryag. In Antaryag the entire worship is contemplative and no articles which are generally used in worship are required. The practitioner performs Bhut Shuddhi. The five elements e.g. Prithvi (Earth), Apan (Water), Agni (Fire), Vayu (Air) and Akash (Ether) are collectively called Bhutas. The subtle centre in the base of the spine is called Muladhar Chakra. The Kundalini lies there coiled in a dormant state. The Kundalini is roused by the force of mantra Shakti and thus awakened she moves up passing through the upper chakras which are the centres of other Tattwas. Passing through Swadhishtan, Manipur, Anahat, Vishuddha and Agyan chakras she reaches the Sahasrar chakra and is united there with Shiva. Kaul practitioners, generally speaking, rouse the Kundalini by mantra yoga. It is also done by the process of Hatha Yoga. In chakra-archan or chakra puja which is performed collectively by a group of practitioners, the worship of the Devi is performed in Her Yantra which, in formation of triangles, circles, and rectangles, with the Bindu, the point, in the centre, symbolises the cosmos. It is a very powerful and potent form of Sadhana and its power and effectiveness depends on the spiritual stature of the chakreshwar who conducts the rites and the level of thought concentration and vibrations of mantra shakti released by the persons present. The Devi is invoked and the vibrations go round in a circle in which formation the participants in the rite sit. There are no speed breakers in a circle as there are in a rectangle and the imagery of thoughts produces the mental picture of the Srishti in its reverse and enveloping movement. One by one the Sheaths in which the Tattwas have woven the universe are dissolved till the Central point is reached, which symbolises the beginning of creation and the practitioners get an awareness of the Devi. The same process is gone into when worship in yantra is performed alone. If properly performed by highly adept practitioners this form of worship in which mantra shakti, thought force and magnetic power of the practitioners come into play the result can be Jagrit Samadhi or Samadhi in a state of wakefulness. After continued practice the need of any outside aid with Yantra is not required and a practitioner can reach a similar stage by mental process.

The question is what is the ultimate stage of consciousness reached by the practitioner either when the Kundalini moving through the different centres in the Sushumna reaches the Sahasrar or when he visualises the nature of the central point, the Bindu, in a Yantra. It may be the stage when both, Shiva and Shakti and also the practitioner merge into one or the stage when Param Shiva is gripped by the power of His own Shakti and the latter assumes the role of the Divine Creatrix. More likely it is the latter stage which is attained even by highly adept sadhaks. In such a stage there is still some quantum of distance left between the three points of the triangle in which Purush, Prakriti and Jiva stand. The last plunge is taken by the adepts, as if to break the atom itself, to realise the state of Param Shiva freed from the wrappings of the Devi. As mentioned above the achievement of such a state of consciousness may be possible by practicing Kundalini Yoga or the abovementioned Shakta rites but some adept sadhaks have taken resort to some other highly specialised form of practice, in addition to the aforesaid practices, for attaining their objective. What can that be? Did Bhagwan Gopinath Ji practice any such form of specialised sadhana? what was the nature of the sadhana performed by him during his stay at Rangteng (Srinagar). From the

account given by Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar it might have been Kundalini Yoga or even some form of Aghora sadhana or perhaps both.

Some highly adept Shakta sadhaks have taken resort to Aghora sadhana to attain the stage when the sakal Brahma is freed from the overpowering pull of shakti or Devi and She is absorbed in Him. According to Shaiva Darshan the Tantras have come from; the five mouths of Param Shiva viz. Ishan, Tatpurush, Sadyojat, Vamdeva and Aghora. From Aghora mouth have come the following Tantras viz.

- (i) Vijaya
- (ii) Vishvas
- (iii) Swayambhuva
- (iv) Anala
- (v) Veer

Is there any special method prescribed by this set of Tantras which can enable an adept practitioner to break the shackles of Devi Herself and attain the highest stage of Param Shiva. I am not competent to answer this question. There are frequent references in Pt. Shanker Nath Fotedar's book about Bhagwan Gopinath Ji's emphasis on Nirakar Upasana. He described the stage of his own spiritual development in the words of verse 6 of chapter XV of the Gita where Lord Krishna Says:

"The Sun does not illumine it nor the moon nor Fire. That is my supreme stage reaching which one does not return".

It appears that Bhagwan Gopinath Ji had reached the highest stage that is possible for a man to attain in his life. How did Bhagwanji climb up to the summit. There are only three persons in Kashmir at present who can throw some light on this query. The first of this Triumvirate is the well known great sadhak and expounder of Kashmir Shaivism-Swami Lakshmanjoo. The other two are followers of the traditional Shiva-Shakti upasana (or Shakta upasana in Kashmir. One of them is Pandit Shridhar Joo Dhar. He is the greatest living Shakta sadhak in Kashmir but he keeps himself away from the footlights. I have often requested him to break the rule of gopiniyam (Secrecy) and initiate competent men and women of younger generation in the path of their ancestors as the light of Kaulmarg is getting dim in Kashmir which in former days led the country on this path. The third of the trio is Pandit Tika Lal Khazanchi. I heard about his eminence during my recent stay at Srinagar in last October but was unable to meet him.

Shri Swami Lakshman Joo, Pandit Shridhar Joo Dhar and Pandit Tika Lal Khazanchi form the galaxy of the great in present day Kashmir. They alone can clear the mist regarding Bhagwan Gopinath Ji's spiritual efforts.

17 Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji Trust Activities

M. K. Tikoo

After our forced exodus from the valley, a large number of devotees expressed their keen desire to have an "Ashrama" in Jammu as well, where they could meet to have "Samohik Arti" every evening at the feet of the Master.

So a piece of land was purchased at Borhi Jammu, which had already a dilapidated shed on it. The same was got renovated and then regular "Arti" was started. Due to the paucity of space and with the ever increasing inflow of the devotees the need to have a much bigger accommodation was felt. So came up the present double-story "L-shaped" building with a lawn in the front. All this was possible only because of BhagwaanJi's charismatic and magnetic divine personality and His ever flowing grace as also close and active cooperation and encouragement from the devotees'. The "Ashram" is acquiring stature every day in and out. Its effulgence is spreading throughout the country and even abroad. Devotees from outside and overseas especially from Australia, Canada and Switzerland, regularly visit the Shrine.

With this, besides the daily evening "Arti", our usual activities that we used to have at Srinagar, like providing financial assistance to widows, orphans and the physically handicapped, medical aid to patients suffering from different ailments, help to poor students to pursue their studies etc. were also started here.

Under similar circumstances as described above another "Ashram" at Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi, also was constructed. Devotees at Bangalore also started another one, but that is still housed in a rented accommodation.

We are having the below mentioned activities round the year in the Ashrams at Jammu, Delhi & Bangalore concurrently:

- i. Annual mahayagnya on "Jyesta Shukla Dvitiya". The Yagnya starts a day earlier in the evening and "Purna Ahuti" is offered at 2 P.M. After this thousands of devotees have the "Prashad".
- ii. Bhagwanjis' "Mahajayanti" is celebrated on "Ashad Shukla Dwadshi". The day starts with "Paduka Pujan" at 8-30 A.M. At noon a very large number of sadhus are fed and paid "Dakhshana", which was the practice in Bhagawanjis' life time also. After this "Prashad" is distributed to the general public which is followed by discourses and devotional music till late in the evening.
- iii. Only two days after the Mahajayanti we have "Guru Purnima". On this day devotees sit at BhagawaanJis feet and offer flowers "Pushpa Archana". In fact "Seekers of truth" throughout the length and breadth of the country worship their masters with great humility and devotion on this day.
- iv 25th of December is celebrated as "Bal Divas", Childrens Day. A large number of children are given presents and sweets are distributed after the evening "Arti".
- v. On "Hora Ashtami" Phalguna Krishna Ashtami we have night Jagran.
- vi. On "Navreh", 1st of Navratra, an essay competition is held which is open to all students and other people. We suggest the topic and a team of eminent Judges prepare the merit list. Prizes are given for the best material and best presentation separately.
- vii. On 1st Sunday of every month, we have "Japahoma" of Bhagawan Jis Shatnam, followed by recitation of the "Guru Gita".
- viii. BhagwanJis "Sacred Bibhuti" is distributed among the needy regularly.

Beside this other festivals also are celebrated. Revival of B.G.T. Patrika, which besides other publications, was our regular feature at Srinagar we hope, will go a long way in spreading Bhagwan conciousness", an awareness of universal brotherhood.

Om Shanti.

18 The Vedas & the Vedic Rishi: Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji

Triloki Nath Dhar

Book is the symbol of knowledge and enlightenment. The Vedas are the First Books on Earth and the date of their compilation cannot be determined even approximately. It is the recorded knowledge contained in the Vedas that disseminated throughout the world raising the intellectual level of the mankind as a whole. Since Vedas are the First Books on Earth it is logical to infer that Vedic civilization is the primal civilization which sprouted and flourished in India. Vedic people did not come from a place outside India as some Westerners and many Indians have been preaching during the last century and the present one. There is no solid proof to indicate that the Vedic Aryans infiltrated into India from the north and gradually established their settlements in Afghanistan, the Punjab and the Gangetic Plain.

The Vedas contain references to almost all the branches of modern scientific knowledge. They are hymns recorded in the most scientific language in perfect metres. The Vedas are not "vague incursions into infinity" as Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru has termed them. Being hymns only they couldn't be treatises on different subjects. There is no aspect of knowledge which you will miss in the Vedas. Various references are there to persons of scientific achievements but their works are lost to us. For instance, it is mentioned that Matrishwa obtained fire from water by means of a systematic process. What that process was, we don't know anything about.

As per the Vedas, fire and thermal energy (having Agni Deva as the presiding deity) are indispensable for sustaining life and global civilization. About electricity it is stated:

It is electricity which activates rainfall. Through it oceans are under currents. Through it directions are awake. Through it the world is animated with life. (Rig Veda 2/43)

It is indicated that heat can manifest as electricity and vice versa.

The Vedas declare that there is One and only One Reality and the wise describe that one in innumerable ways (Rig Ved 2/43)

This fact is stressed at another place by an interrogative riddle:

Is that unborn who sustains the six worlds only One? (Rig Ved 2/43)

About jeeva we have:

Who saw the one who took the first birth. That skeletonless adopted the skeletal one. Life-force and blood (protoplasm etc.) arose from the Earth but where from did Atma come. (Rig Ved 2/43)

Jeeva is immortal but the body is perishable. People know the body but concerning Jeeva they are floundering in confusion. (Rig Ved 2/43)

In this connection one is reminded of Thoreau's words: "The Light that puts our eyes out is darkness to us:". And about the mind the Vedic sage asks:

Where from did mind, capable of divine conduct, arise? (RigVed 2/43)

According to the Veda, all immanent, self-existent Lord is Vishnu. And the Vedic utterance says:

Vishnu encompasses the entire creation; Protector of all; Him no one can deceive; His will it is that makes natural laws inviolable; He protects Indra, Mitra. (Rig Ved. 1/22)

According to the Veda this world did not come into existence by a single act of creation but through evolutionary Yagya guided by the power and intelligence of gods amongst whom Indra is supreme. It is Indra's power and intelligent guidance which has brought forth orderly world out of chaos. His power made the first clouds to shower rain and free Water (which is at root of life) out of the clutches of Demon Vrita. His power made rivers flow along a proper course.

What is Yagya?

Actions, reactions, and interactions of matter with matter, of mind with matter (horological, spatial and numerical), of astral with material, constitute Yagya.

And the Veda says:

Yagya is the navel of the Universe!

Yagya altar is the Earth's bound.

The propelling force of Yagya is due to the will of the Supreme Indefinable Being.

About Indra and Agni we may quote a richa from Rig Veda:

O! Great Indra and Agni: protectors of societies. Render eaters of humankind issueless. Awaken to give us refuge for Truth; for performance of Yagya. (Rig Ved 1/21)

Agni, transporter of oblations (offered to gods); Inspirer of effort for attaining true knowledge. Accept our Yagya alongwith immortal and famed gods! (Rig Ved I/I)

About Sun god the Vedic utterance is:

All beings (mortal and astral) and all the worlds are in the lap of the Sun. (Rig Ved I/22)

Beautiful, deeply vibrant, animated, filling space with light...

Where does this Sun reside and in which ether (aakash) do his rays sustain. Who can say all this? (Rig Ved I/35)

Sun, Agni, and Soma are considered as inanimate by the modern. However, yogis are blessed with the vision of Sun god and other gods with their eyes open. This Sun god is the Master of the effulgent orb which everyday rises in the east. This orb of the Sun is 12,00,000 times bigger than earth and sustains all biological and physical and chemical processes on Earth. Sun god is all knowing and Soul of Beings.

It is indicated in the Veda that Indra is the lord of the mind and coordinates the senses. His power is explained by a very simple but wonderful example.

We know, human hand is one of the greatest wonders of Nature. Enquire its importance from a painter, a graphist, an artist, cartoonist, a musician, a surgeon, a barber, a typist, a computerist, or a technician. In this connection, to explain the power of Indra, the Vedic verse states:

Always in comradeship Fingers perform innumerable tasks. All these sisters moving like housewives (in a household) perform the service of Indra. (Rig Ved 1/62)

And for understanding general meaning of Yagya we may quote following verses of Bhagvad Geeta which have been misinterpreted by most of the commentators:

<verses>

(Bhagvad Geeta 3/14)

Food grains sustain living beings; rain makes food-grains to grow; Yagya causes rain; Karma brings forth Yagya.

<verses>

(Bhagvad Geeta 3/15)

Karma (inherent capability for doing work) emanates from Brahma (immanent God); Brahma is the manifestation of the Supreme Indefinable Being. In this way all pervading Supreme Reality is ever involved in Yagya.

In the verses above Karma needs to be understood in the context of rain formation. In this connection it may not be amiss to add that rain formation occurs every time around this globe whether men perform Yagya according to the Vedic prescription or not.

The thermal energy from the Sun stirs up molecules of water over seas, oceans, lakes and rivers causing vaporisation and formation of clouds. The clouds, in the higher reaches of the atmosphere, undergo condensation resulting in showers or a downpour. A cycle of changes is effected and the end product is the same and constitutes physical change. In a cycle involving chemical change the end product or intermediate products are different. Such type of cycles ever occurring in the biosphere of the Earth for supporting life are nitrogen-cycle and photosynthesis. All these cycles constitute Yagya and the propelling force of Yagya is karma. In all these cycles thermal energy plays a crucial role. That is why the presiding deity of thermal energy, Agni Dev, is worshipped throughout in the hymns of the Rig Veda. In the ultimate analysis propelling force of Yagyas is the will of the Supreme Indefinable Being. Therefore, a human being, though endowed with a little of free choice, should ever remain engaged in detached Karma for the good of the entire world. For this reason the Yagyas ordained in the Vedas are to be performed for attuning ourselves with the Devas (Indra, Agni, Varuna, Mitra and so on) of various energies for mutually assisting to evolve a beautiful and harmonious world order free from sin, misery, turmoil, death and destruction. The Devas have laboured for aeons through Yagyas for evolving this wonderful Earth with atmosphere and ionosphere, and animal and vegetable kingdoms. Vedic Rishis exhort us to protect this beautiful globe and build up a truly human civilization.

By following Vedic injunctions India became one nation as early as 4th century B.C. In this connection it is worthwhile to mention that Germany or Italy attained the status of a nation only in 1870 A.D. and the U.S.A. began to breathe as a free nation only in the 18th century. So these nations are just babies in comparison with India. However severe campaigning against the Vedas by Lord Buddha and subsequently by Buddhists resulted in stifling the Ved Vani. The result was disintegration and chaos. But India, through the blessings of Vedic Rishis who, according to Mahatma Gandhi, were greater geniuses than Newton and greater warriors than Wellington, is again emerging as its former self.

Vedic Rishis were spurred by insatiable love for God. They also had insatiable thirst for knowing the truth and understanding reality in totality. For awakening latent powers within they evolved a scientific system of yogic discipline.

However, it may take a whole lifetime for awakening ones yogic powers of comprehension and direct viewing. It takes around 20 years to have a peep into Aakash through Aagya Chakra by fixing gaze between two eyebrows in the manner prescribed in verse 27 of Chapter 5 of the Bhagvad Geeta. It is for this reason that when Ishwar Swaroop Swami Laxmanji was asked in a radio interview why His Holiness didn't marry and was it because His Holiness was against marriage, pat came the reply, " I am not against marriage but couldn't get leisure for marriage."

I have given a concise background of Vedic culture and knowledge to assist understanding why I consider Bhagawaan Gopi Nathji a Vedic Rishi incarnate for guiding mankind from higher planes.

From his early age Bhagawaanji remained deeply immersed in the love of God. For overcoming distractions induced by mind and matter he adopted a rigorous discipline of sadhna to which he remained attached perpetually even, at times, doing without food and water for days on end like his Guru Shri Shri Swami Zana Kakji Tufchi.

Our Bhagawaanji remained celibate but remained in a household sympathetically attending to the problems of his sisters and other kin. He was always eager to alleviate the sufferings of the people. To the needy and sanyasins he helped with money.

Our Master's dhaarna was mainly in Aagya Chakra (space between two eyebrows) and thus he remained gazing up into Aakash in which things, past, present and future exist simultaneously. For this reason the Master read thoughts of anybody who approached him and was aware of all mundane happenings in advance. Our sage had compassion for all and malice for none.

Our master was continually engaged in Vedic Yagya. A vedi on which Fire stood enthroned day and night was always before the Master and from time to time he threw oblations (rice and barley or some other Yagya material) into it to the accompaniment of mantras (holy incantations) recited in whispers.

Professor A.N. Dhar has made my mention in his article entitled "Remembering BhagawaanJi" published in July'95 issue of Patrika regarding some utterance whispered into my ears by BhagawaanJi. I want to narrate the incident myself.

Professor A.N. Dhar and myself were sitting before the Master at his Chandapora abode. I was nearer to the Master. He whispered into my ears. The first part of the utterance I keep to myself.

The second part of the utterance was this:

<verses>

(What have I achieved? My gaze is fixed high up in Aakasha. I have welded everything into oneness) The Master took up some oblation (barley and rice) and threw it into the vedi (receptacle for hawan) adding "" (Obeisance to Aakasha).

Offering oblations to Aakasha through Fire is a significant part of Vedic Yagya.

Our Master was an epitome of humility. In this connection I am reminded of an utterance of Vedic Rishi Deergatama (who, besides being a Rishi, was a language scientist and master of chhandas):

"I don't know what I am. I am foolish and half- mad. Only when a glimpse of knowledge dawns on me am I able to understand the meaning of a sentence. "

Late Pandit Nila Kanth Wali of Ali Kadal, Srinagar, was amongst the great devotees of the Master. He related an incident which throws sufficient light on the social wisdom and humility of Bhagawaan Ji. He said that one day he was sitting before the Master and he felt the call of nature. He went down into the lavatory. He was sitting on the receptacle but there was no water for cleaning privy parts. In half a minute Pt. Nila Kanth found the Master placing a pot of water before him. He felt disconcerted beyond measure. After cleaning himself he went up and lay prostrate before the Master and gradually composed himself.

Great savant late Shankar Pandit held BhagawaanJi in the highest esteem though being elder to the Master by a number of years. Savant Shanker Pandit had suffered an accident which had made some defect in his legs. He could not therefore easily prostrate himself. But whenever he went to have a darshan of BhagawaanJi he invariably prostrated himself before the Master though it entailed a very painful effort.

To conclude this article I might relate a vision I had about two years ago. I was meditating at the dhooni of the Peerku Guffa temple, the shrine I hold in high esteem. Late Yogni Radha Devi of Zaindar Mohalla, Srinagar, and BhagawaanJi appeared before me. They appeared on my left-hand side in the same dress they were accustomed to wear. Nothing was communicated. I couldn't decipher the meaning of the vision.

19 How Bhagwanji Called Me Back To His Fold

S. N. Bakshi

It was in January, 1997 that, having had darshan of Satya Sain Baba at Putaparti when I was accompanied by a party of 22 karsevaks from Jammu, 8 ladies and the rest male devotees, I came to Bangalore, where I stayed with my son (employed with HMT Factory) until the 20th of January, 1997.

There in Bangalore my grand-daughter, doing her B. Pharmacy course in a local college, and her two female cousins attended the prayer meetings devoted to Bhagawanji held regularly in the evenings on Sundays at the residence of a lady, who too is an employee of the H.M.T. Factory. She has kept a room for being exclusively used for devotional prayers offered to the Bhagawan. My son too attends these prayers whenever he is free from other preoccupations. Turmeric-red cooked rice (tahas) and cheese (mixed with pieces of potatoes) are distributed as prasad among the devotees after the arti is over.

Not long after my return from Bangalore it was actually in mid-March-my grand daughter wrote to her father here (my elder son) that Bhagawanji had appeared in her dream and asked her, "Why don't your parents visit the Ashram at Bohri, Jammu and offer turmeric-red cooked rice and charwan (cooked pieces of liver) there, to be distributed as prasad among the devotees ?" My son and daughter-in-law, joined by my grandson, lost no time in doing Bhagawanji's bidding : they visited the Ashram at Bohri, Jammu, on Sunday, 3 March, 1997 carrying with them two varieties of cooked rice, one variety mixed with pieces of liver and the other with pieces of cheese (meant for vegetarian devotees like me). When they returned home after having attended the Arti, all the members of my family, including me and my children/grandchildren, partook of the prasad and the vibhuti brought from the Ashram. During the next week I too had a dream, someone asking me therein, "Why don't you come to Bohri Ashram for a darshan of Bhagawanji I felt shaken, realizing that having had a long and deep association with Bhagawanji going as far back as 1947, it was a pity that I had paid my obeisance at the Bohri Ashram only three or four times since 1990. So I decided to go to the Ashram with some halwa as prasad on the coming Sunday, 4th Sunday of March, 1997. Since the ingredients of halwa were not available from the market on account of the day being a Sunday, I had to postpone my visit to the next Sunday, when I did carry halwa to the Ashram (in place of cooked rice). Since then I have been attending the evening Arti at the Bohri Ashram on all Sundays.

At the Ashram, Shri Shibanji Turki Sahib, who has known me as a fellow-devotee for many years past, asked me to contribute an article for the forthcoming issue of the 'Patrika', on the theme of how I came to Bhagawanji and about all that I owed to Him spiritually. Initially, I felt hesitant to write on the subject, for two reasons (i) I cannot recapitulate all that is worth recording in view of the long lapse of time since I met Bhagawanji many years ago, (ii) I felt that a humble person like me could not conceive of the greatness of, and write about, Bhagawan Himself. And so I did not make an attempt at writing a piece. Since Turki Sahib would not let me go and persuaded me insistently on the next two Sundays at the Ashram not to disappoint him I realized that I could not shirk the responsibility. I took the prompting of my friend (Turki Sahib) as a direct command from Bhagawanji that had to be complied with. What follows is a truthful account of my experiences bearing on my contact with Bhagawanji. Wherever I inadvertently go wrong or deviate a little from the truth, I hope He will make allowance for human error and forgive me.

It was way back in 1938-39, when I was a student of the 9th Class, studying in the C.M.S. High School, Srinagar that I had to migrate to the National High School, Baramulla in view of my father's transfer from Doda Forest Division to the J. V. Forest Division, Baramulla. As employees of the Forest Department, my father and his colleague (in fact his assistant) late Shri Shankar Nath Zadoo, lived as close neighbours, occupying the residential quarters allotted to them by the Department. Shri Zadoo's first daughter, who was born in Baramulla, was less than a year old when my father took over in that Division. Both Shri Zadoo and his wife came to love me very much as a young boy. After finishing my studies in 1944, as my

good luck would have it, I secured the job of a senior clerk in the Chief Conservator's office (through my father's influence).

From my early childhood, I had intense devotion for the divine Mother and was, therefore, drawn to the feet of the Goddess Ashta Dashbuji whose peeth is at Hari Parbat. I maintained the habit of going every morning to Hari Parbat during my college days and even later, after joining Govt. service, I paid my obeisance to the Mother Sharika every morning without fail. Since Shri Shankar Nath Zadoo too (then working as a Head Clerk in one of the divisions, of the Forest Department in Srinagar) also visited Hari Parbat daily in the mornings, I was able to revive my contact with him at the feet of the Great Mother. It was one day during the year 1946/47 that Shri Zadoo just asked me, "Why don't you come to Babji, a saint of a very high calibre?" I readily expressed my willingness to see the saint in view of my reverence for saints in general such as Sam Baba, Grata Bab and others.

So, one lucky Sunday, I was accompanied by Zadoo Sahib to the house at Rishi Mohalla in which Bhagawanji lived then (that actually belonged to his sister). As I came near the lotus feet of Bhagawanji, he asked Shri Zadoo who I was. After introducing me, Zadoo Sahib informed Bhagawanji that I could recite verses from the Panchastavi tunefully. Bhagawanji responded by asking me "pur" (which means recite in Kashmiri). I reverentially enquired of Bhagawanji which tav I should read (Panchastvi has five tavs or sections). His holiness asked me to recite the 4th tav (Ambas tav-that glorifies the Mother), which I did. In fact, I must express my gratitude to the late Shri Lala Kaul Ji (Shoda) of Karfali Mohalla, Srinagar from whom I had picked up the bhang (the right tune) in which the verses of the Panchastavi should be sung. Whenever later I paid my obeisance to the lotus feet of Bhagawanji, I recited the 4th tav for the Bhagawan in the tune I had become proficient in through practice. With the passage of time, I got familiar with Bhagawanji and naturally gathered courage to press his feet and even his legs. When for the first time I introduced my hands inside his feran (outer garment) to press his legs, I could feel that there was virtually no flesh on them-the large legs, when touched, were felt to be simple splinters. So instead of pressing them. I would massage them. Whenever I went to pay homage to Bhagawanji, I invariably found Shri Shankar Nath Zadoo in the house. During those days Shri Shankar Nath Fotedar and others were not to be seen there. This continued to be the position till October, 1947 when Qabailis and plain-clothed Pakistani soldiers invaded Kashmir. When the news that the raiders had reached Shalteng spread to Srinagar, panic gripped the city. In the evening, in great distress, I went to Bhagawanji's and saw Shri Shankar Nath Zadoo as usual there. There were only we two of us besides Bhagawanji (and the other inmates of the house). I found Shri Zadoo entreating the Bhagawan to save the Kashmiri Pandits. Bhagawanji remained silent for a long time and made no response to Shri Zadoo's request. I left the house and the next day, on my return from Hari Parbat, I enquired of Shri Shankar Nath Zadoo as to what had been bhagawanji's response to his request, He replied that Bhagawani had asked him if there was really a bata there (implying that no Kashmiri Pandit was really a Pandit as he should be). Being very close to Bhagawanji, Shri Zadoo would not relent and persisted in his request. Thereupon Bhagawanji had asked him "Will you sacrifice yourself for the Pandits (tcha lagakha balayi batan)? " Shri Zadoo, in his simplicity, replied, "Yes Maharaj (Ahanmara)". Then Bhagawanji asked him to thrust the fore-fingers of his two hands into the holes of the pinjara (Kashmiri word for a window with numerous holes) that served as the window of the room in which Bhagawanji was seated. After an hour or so Shri Zadoo was allowed to go home by Bhagawanji. Thereafter, I noticed that Zadoo Sahib did not behave like a normal person and sometimes talked irrelevant. He did not look 100% sane and became abnormal. I did ask him what the matter was and why he did not behave as he used to. To this he replied that he had sacrificed himself for the Pandits (bu chusna batan logmut balayi). Later he was posted as a Head Clerk in the Direction Office of the Forest Department in the C.C.'s office in which I too worked. He did regain his normalcy in two or three years, but continued to have a touch of abnormality, behaving like a mastana (inebriate) at times.

I continued to visit Bhagawanji's abode on Sundays for paying him my obeisance. One Sunday it so happened that a Kashmiri Pandit lady came to see Bhagawanji from Karan Nagar, Srinagar, accompanied by a servant, a Muslim, who was carrying a bag-ful of yellow pears (goshibob variety). The bag of pears was placed as an offering at the feet of Bhagawanji. He asked the 'everpresent'. Shankar Nath Zadoo to

distribute the pears as prasad among all the devotees present. Shri Zadoo started distributing the pears from the devotee who was sitting next to Bhagawanji. But Bhagawanji made a nod and desired that the fruit be distributed starting from the servant (who had carried the bag). After Shri Zadoo gave him a pear, Bhagawanji asked him to give another and then another (nodding several times) till the servant got five pears. At this the servant got up trembling in obeisance, telling Bhagawanji that he had got enough. The rest of the devotees were given one pear each. That shows how kind and considerate the Bhagawan was to the poor and underprivileged. The inquisitive Zadoo Sahib, however, enquired of the servant what must have made Bhagawanji specially bountiful to him in having him given five pears instead of one. The servant revealed that at the time of purchasing the pears, he had felt tempted to eat them. He had further thought to himself, "I do not know for whom Mataji is purchasing the fruit ; at any rate, she is not going to offer me any pear to eat". Obviously, Bhagawanji being ananterymi had read what thoughts had occupied the servant's mind and so he asked Shri Zadoo to feed him to his fill.

That very summer, I witnessed another miracle. My sister had appeared in her B. A. Examination and she was very keen to pursue higher studies. A class-mate of hers, who was the daughter of a cousin of Shri Shankar Nath Zadoo, had also appeared in B. A. Examination. Being close to her as a friend, my sister had asked her to inform her when applications would be invited by the State Govt. from the aspiring students for admission to the B. T. Course. The girls's father functioned as an auditor in the A.G.'s office, Srinagar. One day that year, on the 3rd of July (I don't remember the year precisely) I could lay my hands on the Govt. gazette which carried the advertisement in question (regarding admission to the B. T. Course). It said that the candidates whose B. A. result had not been declared yet could also apply. Unfortunately, the closing date for entertaining the applications was mentioned as 30th June, which had already expired. I took the relevant leaf of the Gazette and enquired of my sister if she had been informed by her friend, Miss Zadoo, about the advertisement. She was taken aback and at once ran to the friend's house at Khardouri, Srinagar. She came back in tears and told me that her friend had hidden herself and not come forward to see her. Depressed and dejected, my sister did not take her meal that evening and she wept bitterly. On the following morning (when it was Sunday) I, as usual, went to Hari Parbat. It was there, at the feet of the Mother Sharika, that it occurred to my mind that I should approach Bhagawanji and urge him to help my sister. As I reached home, I advised my sister not to feel depressed and frustrated. I asked her to accompany me to Bhagawanji's house at Reshi Mohalla, Srinagar. I bowed to Bhagawanji (who sat facing the door), and took my seat close to his feet. My, sister sat on the other side, against the wall. Bhagawanji observed her sobbing, with her head bent on her knees. He wanted to know who the girl was and why she was weeping. I made bold to tell him that she was my sister and had been cheated by the daughter of Shri S. N. Zadoo, who was very much present there. Feeling abashed at the mention of his name, he asked "My daughter ?" I replied back saying "yes please, actually your cousin's daughter". I first narrated the whole story to Shri Zadoo and then to Bhagawanji particularly, who was outwardly inattentive but heard every bit of what I said with rapt attention. He pondered for a while and then said to my sister, "Ma vad (don't weep). Chanyi jayi tamis ta tamsanz jayi ceh (your place will go to her and hers to you)". None could understand the actual import of this cryptic remark. We left after receiving Bhagawanji's blessings. While proceeding towards our home, I consoled my sister, reassuring her that Bhagawanji's words would bear some fruit. On the next day (Monday, 5 July) my father, by chance, met one of his former class-fellows, Dr. B..... who was working then as a Professor in the S. P. College, Seeing my father gloomy, he said to him "Manakaka, why are you looking sad today ?" My father explained to him at length what had made him feel depressed and helpless. The Professor, in a heartening tone, asked him to furnish him an undated application from my sister, which he promised to get entertained in the Education Department by the officer concerned who happened to have been his pupil (whom he had taught). It so happened that when the B. A. result was declared, my sister's friend, Miss Zadoo, was placed in the compartment category (she had not cleared all the subjects) whereas my sister passed in the second division. Through Bhagawanji grace, she was selected for the B.T. Course. Was it not a divine miracle wrought by our Bhagawan ? My sister not only passed her B. T. Examination but also got the M. A. degree in two subjects and was appointed a teacher in a Government

School; she rose to the position of Head Mistress in a High School. The reader can now appreciate the meaning of Bhagawanji's cryptic statement as I too did when my sister was admitted to the B. T. Course and her friend had to lag behind her.

Finally, I recount the miracle connected with Thakur Harnam Singh Pathania, who was the Chief Conservator of Forests in whose office I worked. There was a colleague of mine in that office, Shri Neelkanth Kalla, who functioned as the Steno-cum-P.A. of Shri Pathania. Shri Kalla too had turned into a devotee of Bhagwaanji through my association with him. One Saturday he had gone to Bhagawanji's to pay his homage to him. Bhagawanji asked him, "Is your officer (Afsar) well?" "The officer with whom you, are working", Bhagawaiiji continued. Shri Kalla replied back saying "Yes, Shri Pathania is fine" "Has he to go to Jammu ?" Bhagawanji asked next. Actually Shri Pathania was scheduled to leave on tour for Jammu on the approaching Monday. So Shri Kalla replied to Bhagawanji in the affirmative. Thereupon Bhagawanji took out a piece of candy sugar and asked Shri Kalla to give it to Shri Pathania before he would leave for Jammu. Shri Kalla met Shri Pathania well in time and delivered the piece to him, narrating to him all that Bhagawanji had enquired of him. Shri Pathania went to Jammu in his official Land Rover jeep, which he drove himself, and he was accompanied by two peons in the jeep besides his driver, Madhov Ram, on whom he did not depend much since he found him unfit. Shri Pathania was a dauntless driver and as such he was on the steering, Madho Ram being seated to his left. They left Srinagar at 7.30 a.m. and halted at Qazigund where Mr. M. I. Beg, D.F.O. Anantnag, was waiting to receive them. On resuming the journey, Shri Pathania was again on the steering. About 200 yards away, the jeep had to cross a bridge built across a small canal. It so happened that an army truck coming from the other side was followed by a Jonga jeep driven by an army officer who wanted to overtake the truck. This jeep somehow struck the Land Rover of Pathania Sahib. As narrated by the peon, Sadhu Singh, it seemed to him as if the Land Rover driven by Pathania Sahib was lifted by some one and placed harmlessly in the Nallah below without getting overturned. Shri Pathania got a small scratch on one of his ears and sustained one or two light bruises and the others too suffered no serious injuries. When the Army officer (whose fast driving led to the accident) came to know of Shri Pathania's official status and of his being a brother of Major General A. S. Pathania he got an Army Rescuer and thus Shri Pathania's jeep was rescued. He was offered another jeep which he declined. Instead, a jeep was arranged for him by the D.F.O. So Pathania Sahib managed to reach Jammu safe in the evening. On his return, he was accompanied by Shri Neelkanth Kalla to Bhagawanji's residence at Reshi Mohalla, Srinagar. Shri Pathania conveyed his gratitude to Bhagawanji who responded by blessing him with a smile!

[The author is a senior devotee of Bhagawanji, living at Karan Nagar, Jammu]

20 My Master, Bhagawaanji

M. K. Tiku

In the present day materialistic world of ours there has been a mushroom growth of the so-called gurus (masters). We rarely come across the real guru who can put the sadhaka (aspirant) on the path of God-realization. The spiritual seeker who comes to the feet of the genuine Master is to be considered very fortunate in today's world.

A man of real spiritual attainment is invariably on the look out for a true disciple with whom he would like to share his experiences and whose mentor he willingly becomes. In fact it is universally believed that Godmen are sent to this world with a definite purpose to guide the seekers on the path of spirituality so that they progress towards their goal and do not go astray, getting derailed into the mire of animality. With the grace of the true guru, the sadhaka overcomes all odds, finds his feet and attains spiritual knowledge, leading him to the Divine.

I feel I have been very lucky as many others too have been like me, in coming to the feet of the Master, Jagad Guru Bhagawaan Gopinathji.

Kashmir has given birth to many saints and savants from time to time but my Master has been the most eminent saint of this century. He was undoubtedly a Jeevan Mukta and it was in view of his intense sadhana that he won the rare distinction of being called Bhagawaanji by his devotees and looked upon by them veritably as God-incarnate.

Born on 3rd July, 1898 A.D. Bhagawaanji's life on this earth was marked by a sustained and intense spiritual effort, aimed at the upliftment of the ailing mankind running after illusory shadows. Throughout his life he strove hard, in an unassuming but persuasive manner, to make man conscious of his innate divinity and to enable him to find his spiritual moorings.

All his life, Bhagawaanji remained a celibate, took delight in coming across a celibate but never asked an aspirant to renounce his wife and children if he was married.

He kept a dhooni (sacred fire) burning before him, into which he made offerings and with the ashes (bhasma) from it he cured dreaded diseases. For most of the time he remained absorbed in meditation that consisted in deep contemplation on the self. His devotees feel convinced that even after giving up his gross body, he has been helping aspirants spiritually not only in India but elsewhere in the world, too.

Bhagawaanji's fame as a Jagad Guru has spread far and wide; his spiritual influence is felt by the devotee who had never seen him in his physical form and who encounter him as a living presence in their meditation. Several devotees including foreigners, have had remarkable visions in which they have heard him speak and impart spiritual instruction. That explains why there has been a steady increase in the number of his devotees ; in consequence, Ashrams consecrated to his memory have sprung up at several places in the country. At these centres, devotees in bulk are today well set on the spiritual path, who are involved in social service as well. Though Bhagawaanji never moved out of the Kashmir valley, Satsang mandals in his memory have also come up in countries abroad, like Australia and the U. S.A.

People in large numbers attend the daily arti at the ashrams. Discourses to spread Bhagawaanji's message of universal brotherhood and love are held periodically at these places of worship especially on important festivals including his Mahajayanti and the anniversary of the day on which he attained Mahasamadhi (when a mahajajnya is also performed). Monthly financial assistance to the destitutes, orphans, the poor but talented students, and the ailing people who cannot afford to purchase medicines, is being provided on a regular basis at the Ashrams dedicated to Bhagawaanji.

Having accomplished his mission on earth, when he had around him a dedicated band of spiritual adherents, both male and female, who could be trusted to spread his message of love and brotherhood, Bhagawaanji chose to give up his gross body on the 28th of May, 1968 A. D. at Chondapura, Habbakadal, Srinagar. Accordingly, we are celebrating his birth centenary year in India and abroad that is due to commence in June, 1997. May he shower his grace on mankind throughout the world!

In the end, I would like to quote a verse of the great saint Kabir, that I consider appropriate to the greatness of the Guru I adore, the remarkable Bhagawaanji enthroned in my heart:-

<verses>

The verse is translated here under:

My Guru and the Lord are both standing before me. Whose feet should I touch ? I would sacrifice my body, mind and all for my guru as it was he who put me on the path leading to the Lord.

[The author is a senior devotee of Bhagawaanji and an important functionary of the Trust (Organizer). He lives in Jammu]

21 To Bhagawaanji: A Devotee's Floral Tribute

C. L. Moza

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was one of the greatest saints of the 20th century. It is very difficult for a person like me to throw light on such a great Mahatma. However, like the proverbial six blind persons who went to see the elephant, the little that I have gathered about him from those who had been in touch with him I state briefly as follows:

To start with, what may seem a digression from the main theme, I would like to mention how I had the good fortune of having a "darshana" of Bhagawaan Ji in the year 1951. My home is situated at Sheli-Teingh, 2nd Bridge, Srinagar. In my neighbourhood, there lived a saintly person senior to me in age. His name was Sh. Kanth Koul Peshin. He used to spend most of his time in the company of saints. He visited Hari-parbat daily from his childhood to the last days of his life. It was he who motivated me to have Bhagawaan Ji's darshana. Those days, Bhagawaanji lived at Reshi-Mohalla, Habba-Kadal. Motivating me, Sh. Kanth Koul revealed that one of the members of his sister's family once went to Manigam, Ganderbal, Kashmir to see Swami Kasha Kak Ji. As soon as the person in question entered the house of Swami Ji, the latter addressed him thus : "Why have you come to me? You have 'Muhatimim Darbar' at your home. He is the final sanctioning authority ; there is nothing in my hands."

Long after Bhagawaanji attained Maha Samadhi, I enquired about this from Shri Madhavjoo, one of the senior devotees at the Srinagar Ashram. He confirmed what I had heard, and revealed that it was he himself who had visited Swami Kasha Kak. He also accepted in to having heard the saint pay glorious tributes to Bhagawaanji as a great siddha.

I visited Bhagawaanji's Ashram regularly at Srinagar as it was at a stone's throw from my house. I sometimes got an opportunity to talk to Shri S. N. Fotedar occasionally. Once Fotedarji revealed to me one of his own experiences about Bhagawaanji which I consider worth mentioning. He said that it had occurred to his mind once, while he was sitting in the company of the master, that almost all the great saints have a spiritual halo encircling them, so he had thought what should be the colour of the halo encircling Bhagawaanji. The same moment he saw a bluish halo encircling Bhagawaanji. The halo stayed a few moments and then faded completely. This experience of Sh. Fotedarji shows clearly that though Bhagawaanji looked humble, he was a saint of high order, veritably a divine incarnation.

Lastly, I may relate my own experience. One morning, I had gone to the Srinagar Ashram situated at Kharyar, Habba-Kadal. As I concentrated on Bhagawaanji's photograph lying close to the marble statue of Bhagawaanji, I had a strange experience which may strike the readers as incredible. I noticed a movement in Bhagawaanji's right eye. It closed for a while and then opened again. The act of closing and opening of the eye was felt to be slow by me. I could not believe my eyes and thought it to be an optical illusion. I did not speak about the experience to anyone. There was a great conflict in my mind for about two months as to the authenticity of the experience. I could not understand whether what I had seen was a figment of my own imagination or a spiritual miracle. I felt confounded and bewildered. Then one evening, Bhagawaanji pulled me out of this muddle as I sincerely believe. That evening when Arti was going on, some youngsters, not aware of Bhagawaanji's spiritual eminence, indulged in gossip and laughter. When the Aarti was over, a devotee, Shri. T. N. Raina, who lived close to the Ashram, conveyed to me his displeasure over the behaviour of the youngsters. He was sitting very close to me when the Aarti was on. He spoke to me thus, "These youngsters do not realize the spiritual importance of this peeth. Sit here with a composed mind sometime in the early morning ; you will witness strange spiritual chamatkars." He said further that he had not revealed such things to anyone before. He confided in me because he found me regular in my visits to the Ashram. This dispelled the doubt that had lurked in my mind about the miracle I had witnessed. I felt assured about the truth and authenticity of my experience, and got convinced that Bhagawaanji continues to be a living and vibrant force despite the fact he has shed his mortal frame. Never afterwards did I have the fortune to have such an experience again!

It is my fervent belief that the mental agony that our community has been going through, since we left our homes and hearths, shall come to an end before long through Bhagawaanji's grace.

May Bhagawaanji shower his blessings on us all - our country, our community and the devotees of the Ashram !

[The author is one of Bhagwaanji senior most devotees. A former Principal of higher Secondary School, he is now living in Jammu]

22 Was Bhagawaan Gopinathji a Supermind ?

Triloki Nath Dhar

Some 3 billion years ago tiny living cells slithered in mud and sand particles of the primitive oceans. A living cell is composed of living matter called protoplasm. How a living cell took birth, nobody has been able to , say any thing about it thus far. There are 92 elements of Matter out of which not more than 8 elements participate in making protoplasm. Out of these 8 elements Carbon, Nitrogen, Hydrogen and Oxygen are indispensable for making a living cell. Thus, life is not "inconscious" in a metal or in every elementary substance.

As soon as the living cell made appearance in the primitive seas the marvel of the Evolution of Species was set off. Millions of species evolved and at a certain stage bifurcated into Animal and Vegetable kingdoms. Today we know that the atmosphere and the sky are biologically made. We also know that each and every life starts from a pre-existing life. The Evolution of Life kept pace with the geological evolution of Earth's crust.

Evolution is an inscrutably astonishing cosmic plan for creating ascending series of more and more complex and varied forms of life for a purpose which Man is unable to grasp fully. Nevertheless, one gets a feel that some superior intelligence has been guiding the Evolution of life, though its locale is indefinable. In this connection one cannot fully agree with Sri Aurobindo that "all evolution must proceed at first by a slow unfolding ; for each new principle that evolves its power has to make its way out of involution in inconscience and ignorance".

It took the human body billions of years to evolve with its Brain and sense organs. The human eye can detect 7 colours of which white light is composed. The human ear can distinguish 7 notes of the musical scale. If I art! observing a star there are 3 "spaces" involved-the space where the star is situated ; the space where I am situated ; the space where the visual sensation of the star is flashed into 'perception. Is there a way to interlink the three spaces ?

Occult science is not essentially "the science of the subliminal". It is the science of that part of mental activity which cannot be clearly expressed in language or in symbols.

Spirituality in essence is to know the real nature of the being. It is to know whether the being, I-ness imbued with consciousness, is beyond matter or has emanated from matter. As per Rupa Bhawani's doctrine, the power to imbue with consciousness rests absolutely with Supreme Siva.

Thus she says:

Athi kanse-na tsetan thavun

(Entrusting to-none the power of imbuing with consciousness).

Supreme Purusha is creating beings imbued with consciousness, but deluded by Maya shakti keeping them whirling in duality, ignorance, greed, hunger, tamas, selfishness and meum and teum.

The creative powers of the Supreme Being are infinite. He has created beings in material bodies. He has also created beings in bodies which are not of matter. A sadhaka knows all this.

An animate material body is subject to growth, decay and death. Our human body grows with all its organs and reaches to full stature, weighing more than 55 kilograms, in about 35 years. After 50 years various organs show symptoms of wear and tear and a time comes when the body suffers death. Every fraction of a second, millions of atoms (of matter) which formed part of our body are shed and millions of outside atoms are taken in. Human body consists of about 10 trillion living cells. At the time of death most of the atoms which formed part of the body at birth are no longer there. All that remains almost unaltered in our body is individuality with consciousness.

The problem is whether a Supermind incarnate in human body can ascend to higher spheres in earthly body. It is recorded that Lord Rama ascended to his dham in the very body which He had on Earth. Similarly, Yudhishtara is believed to have ascended to Heaven in the same physical body which he had on

Earth. Rationalists warn us not to believe in such myths. They argue that Yudhishtara could have descended again on Earth to show himself to some of his close associates. They don't believe that Sant Tulsi Das saw Lord Rama at Chiterkot with open eyes.

I explained to one of the Rationalists that Man (Homosapien) evolved from anthropoid ape, 10 million years ago, in Africa, Europe (Spain) etc. and today we have so many anthropoid apes but don't find any member of such species mutating into man through its offspring. I added that a rare event may not be repeated for millions of years. So, Lord Rama's ascending to His dham in the very physical body which he had on Earth, having been a rarest event, may not be repeated for millions of years.

The birth of a Supermind is a possibility. Lord Krishna was a Supermind. He says to Arjuna (Chapter 4 of Bhagvad Geeta) that in the beginning of this kalpa he imparted knowledge of Yoga to Vivasvan (Sun) and Vivasvan transmitted this knowledge to Manu and Manu revealed it to King Ikshvaku. Arjuna points out to Lord Krishna that He (Lord Krishna) existed in that present but the birth of Vivasvan was the most ancient, so how was it that the Lord living in the present imparted knowledge of Yoga to Vivasvan in the most ancient past? Lord Krishna replied to Arjuna that both of them had passed through many births with the deference that Arjuna had forgotten those births while he (Lord Krishna) remembered all the previous births. A Supermind has the power to recollect the past lives.

IN OUR OWN TIMES Bahagwaan Gopi Nathji was a supreme yogi. Divine Mother (18 armed Sharika) had initiated him into shakhti chakra. Again, Divine Mother (Maha Ragnya) had initiated him into the Serpent power of the Spanda (wave). Right up from early age He rivetted himself on to Supreme Deity. During early days of sadhana a tiny flame of an earthenware lamp was His constant companion. He constantly remained in the vision of God, glued to the Deity, forgetful of surroundings. But He was also awake and nothing was hidden from Him. He didn't renounce the world but remained with his kin. He hardly uttered a word ; never showed any desire to preach or establish a cult. He scarcely took a meal. After the age of 40 His constant companions were Chillum and Dhoni symbolizing blazing fires in the heart of the Stars. His morning chores were simple-washing face and feet ; rolling turban on His head in a characteristic style and fixing tilak on His forehead resembling the Sharika Shilla at Hari Parbat. While immovable on his asana He was all powerful, active, helping devotees, directing mundane affairs, moving in His astral body from plane to plane and from individual to individual ; knew the past, present and future but remained hugged to the Deity with all His might. He did create a powerful system of Yoga Shakti and a vast band of dedicated followers. He was Yoga Shakti incarnate.

Was Bhagawaan Gopinathji a Supermind?

[The author is a versatile writer, he has written a number of books including his pioneering work on Roopa Bhavani. At present he is living in Goa]

23 Bhagwan Gopinath and the Contribution of Kashmiri Mystics to the World Order of the 21st Century

S. Bhatt

Bhagwan Gopi Nath is among the all time great seers of Kashmir. He passed away in 1968 in Srinagar, Kashmir, where he lived in Habba Kadal area. Some scholars such as the late Justice Shiv Nath Katju compare him to Maharishi Raman, Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Shri Aurobindo. Katju has written that Bhagwan Gopi Nath had by his intense sadhana become a Kaul and an Aghoreshwar (meaning those who see the vision of God) of the highest order. He lived the life of a recluse and an ascetic, says Katju. Bhagwan Ram of Varanasi has made a sacred shrine of Bhagwan Gopi Nath in Varanasi along with other great saints. There is a Sat Sang Mandal for Bhagwan Gopi Nath in Kreem Kund in Varanasi. More such Sat Sang Mandals exist in Allahabad, Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi, and Jammu etc. His spiritual influence is on the increase. He has become a part of the great mystic vision from Kashmir which aims at bringing harmony and peace to the modern world.

Mysticism And Global Environment Movement

Writing about Bhagwan Gopi Nath, another devotee, an Australian, Philips Simpfendorfer, says : "The salvation of earth is the great contemporary issue." He writes that "the threat is from physical and psychic pollution and the intense exploitation of earth's resources."

Thus mankind is faced with two tests : One, to promote harmony of man with man; and two, to establish harmony of man with nature.

The importance of Kashmiri mysticism and Kashmiri seers can be highlighted in the context of the global environment movement of our times. The United Nations as a representative body of mankind has made an important contribution to protect the global environments and the resources of nature. In 1972, it passed a historic Declaration in Stockholm. Some of its salient features are briefly recalled here not only for their intrinsic importance, but also to bring home the messages of seers and saints of the world in general and of Kashmir in particular. These sages have sought world peace and harmony through times immemorial. The UN Declaration calls for "a common outlook and for common principles to inspire and guide the people of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment." It says that environment is needed for intellectual, moral, social and spiritual growth of man. In a major policy statement the Declaration says : "A point has been reached in history when we must shape our actions throughout the world with a more prudent care for their environmental consequences". It calls upon man to live in the freedom of the world of nature ! and use knowledge in collaboration with nature for a better life on earth. To defend and improve environment has become a predominant goal of mankind. Harmony with nature is the unmost need of mankind, says the Declaration.

Thus, we see why mystics and seers have been inspired to practice harmony with nature. Mysticism is a science as well. Albert Einstein said of mysticism: "The fairest thing is the mysterious, it is the cradle of true art and true science." In a world of global science today mysticism gives us new hope, new joy to comprehend nature and the global environments, it is increasingly being realised now that the entire management of the biosphere is based on realising the laws of nature operating in it and maintaining its ecological balance.

Man is also a part of nature. Mysticism helps us understand nature better, Bbagwan Gopi Nath attempted to discover the mysterious. Elevation of self to superconscious level enables seers look into the mysteries of nature. In a dialogue between Einstein and Tagore, both agreed that "the infinite personality of man comprehends the universe." "Truth", said Tagore, "which is one with the universal being, must essentially be human, otherwise whatever we individuals realise as truth can never be called truth, at least the truth which is described as scientific and can only be reached through the process of logic..."

Thus, as Einstein says, the art of mysticism is simply to discover the truth and beauty of nature. Mysticism and meditation, it has been increasingly stressed the world over now, lead to world peace and harmony. So the role of Bhagwan Gopi Nath in the process of global peace-making is profound.

23.1 The Art of Meditation

Let us see what the philosopher-historian Arnold Toynbee says on the art of meditation. In his important discourse in 1960 on "Azad Memorial Lecture" in New Delhi he spoke on the theme of "One World And India". He referred to the habit of contemplation which promotes a harmonious world order. He said : "Western Christian does did recognise and practise the virtue of contemplation to some extent in the western Middle Ages. Since then, we have almost entirely lost this spiritual art, and our loss is serious, because the art of contemplation is normally another name for the art of living. So now we turn to India. This spiritual gift, that makes Man human, is still alive in Indian soul."

So, does Rabindranath Tagore speak of the contemplative habit of India as is exhibited by noble souls like Bhagwan Gopi Nath. He says : "The East did once meet the West profoundly in the growth of her life. Such union became possible, because the East came to the West with the ideal that is creative, and not with the passion that destroys moral bonds. The mystic consciousness of the Infinite, which she brought with her, was greatly needed by the man of the West to give him his balance.

Therefore, we see recently United States, showing keen interest to integrate foreign policy with the concern for nature and global environments. In a new context of our world order, Mrs Madeleine Albert, the US Secretary of State, has said that "the global environment affected American people. " She said our families will be healthier if the rate of emission of green house gases was slowed. Our families would be safer if we cut back toxic chemicals used in food production. Our coastal economies will be stronger if our bays and beaches are free of pollution and our oceans full of fish. She asks "that our future will be brighter if we are part of a world that is increasingly able to support life, rather than one that is losing that capacity day by day." She summed up her observations maintaining that modern man needed to adapt to a crowded global environment.

23.2 Synthesis for a Common Future

Thus Secretary Madeleine Albert sets the agenda for a world wide integrated vision of modern world society to take care of the global environments. There is need for a synthesis of our beliefs and cultures for a better tomorrow. The world is one large interdependent ecological unit. A recent editorial in Times of India New Delhi, says that "Modern science has begun to understand the interdependent nature of our universe, even if social and political institutions still function as if they are autonomous of each other, it is the increasing social and physical interdependence of our world that is forcing our diverse pasts, our different presents to merge into a common future. Tomorrow's world will be a world of greater interdependence." The editorial analysis conveys that the successful future societies will be those that can adapt to changing lifestyles, changing technologies, changing environments and changing methods of governance. It says "the key is the ability to think in the future tense."

Therefore the message from the historical and recent seers of Kashmir is : Understand nature and mankind with an open and broad synthetic view. Nature cannot be seen and understood with a myopic view; but only with a broad magnificent canvas as Bhagwan Gopi Nath did. These seers from Kashmir have synthesised spiritual and cultural beliefs. Arnold Toynbee once again says with much historical insight on this subject of synthesis that he has a praise for the Indian experiment. "India has also succeeded in establishing some kind of synthesis out of her immense variety of religions, cultures, languages and people. Her success in this field is an earnest of the success which mankind may achieve in achieving a synthesis of the still wider variety of religions, cultures, languages and peoples of the world."

The seers of Kashmir like Lalleswari, Nundrishi, Bhagwan Gopi Nath and others have a very urgent message for our civilisation. They are the path-finders for a common outlook for a common global cultural synthesis and even for a spiritual synthesis. New integrated global culture and religion is in the

making for the 21st century. There is no confrontation between various cultures and religions of the East and West, North and South. A prominent Arab scholar wrote recently: "Let us have dialogue, not clash between civilisations". He calls for discussion of modernity in the full historical and cultural context, and asks to play down our cultural differences. In other words, a synthesis of global life is already there. The synthesis, manifests in the unity and diversity of global life. Diversity helps, man grow with the diversity of nature. Yet, it is important to grasp the overall unity of mankind on this planet which is based on the interdependence of global life and ecology of earth.

23.3 Concluding Remarks

I have briefly referred to Bhagwan Gopi Nath and his message as of other seers of Kashmir for our civilisations. These sages and saints have created, like the great scientists Newton and Einstein, visions for mankind's journey for the future in harmony. Indeed, the next century will see an intense effort to combine the creativity of modern science and spiritual philosophy. Therefore, Bhagwan Gopi Nath belongs to all times.

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24 Homage to Bhagawaan Ji on 96th Mahajayanti celebrated at Delhi

R. C. Kaul "Pamposh"

On this auspicious occasion, I feel the greatest pleasure in recalling to my mind the particular birthday of Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji that was celebrated at the shrine of Mata Khir Bhawani. Tulamula, Srinagar some time during the period 1953-56 (I can't recall the exact year). I was very fortunate in accompanying Bhagawaan Ji in a "doonga" (a wooden boat with several cabins inside) from Sehyar, Nawakadal to Tulamula. The 'Yatra' started from the house of the late Shri Gobind Kaul. He and his three brothers Shri Dinanath Kaul, Shri Shyam Lal Kaul and Shri Lassa Kaul were great devotees of the Bhagawaan. They had made elaborate preparations to perform a 'Yagnya' at Khir Bhawani on Bhagawaan Ji's birthday in His very hallowed presence there. Of the four brothers mentioned, Shri Lassa Kaul is still alive, residing now at Jammu as a displaced migrant. His nephew, Shri Pran Nath Kaul (S/o Shli Dina Nath Kaul) too is living at Jammu, well known as the Secretary of Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji Trust. I quite remember how affectionately all the members of the Kaul family would call Bhagawaan Ji "Tathi Bab".

It was actually in two "doongas" that the Kaul family, their close relatives and friends, accompanied by Bhagawaan Ji and many devotees (including me) started our "Yatra" from Sehyar. I was then a young man in my early thirties, working as a teacher at Rangteng High School, Bulbul Lanker, Srinagar. I distinctly remember the words that Bhagawaan Ji spoke to me in the 'doonga'. " You are blessed as much as you are linked with the children of God; you don't need any thing more. You do not smoke, but pass on the 'Chillum' and the 'Tobacco-daba' to me." I prepared the 'Chillum' with his eyes turned skyward the Bhagawaan puffed it. He was deeply absorbed in meditation, transmitting and receiving vibrations (as I could make out).

The "doongas" sailed smoothly down the river Jehlum for a good length. All of a sudden, Bhagawaan Ji stopped puffing his 'Chillum' and said to Shri Govind Kaul, "Don't you see what has happened to the Malla (Boatman) ? The boatmen rowing the other "doonga" hired a labourer at Mujagund to assist him in handling a long, thick and strong wooden pole (called 'Hamtul' in Kashmiri) to ensure speedy movement of the 'doonga'. Thereupon, Tathi Bab (Bhagawaan Ji) again puffed his "Chillum", and then, pointing towards the north east of the valley, said in an angry tone - " A whiff of strong wind from that side will blow them over." At the moment it was very sunny and calm. All of sudden, the sky was over-cast with clouds and a strong wind started blowing. It grew into a fierce storm, and there was thunder and lightning. Consequently, all the pilgrims in different "Shikaras" and "doongas" got panicky, shivering with cold. The miracle of miracles was that our two "doongas" stood steady and unharmed; Only the Malla (boatman) fell into the river but he too was saved. The storm continued for 45 minutes. Tathi Bab stopped puffing altogether and he came to the prow of the "doonga". He lifted the "Hamtul" and asked Shri Dina Nath Kaul (who was a renowned medical practitioner) to bring a piece of red cloth. Tying the cloth around the top of the long wooden pole, the Bhagawaan addressed the raging storm: " you settle down at once in this vitasta (Jehlum)" In no time was the sky clear of the black clouds and the yatris resumed the journey happily. Our two 'doongas' reached Khir Bhawani safe and sound. I still cherish the memory of having spent a full week, along with other devotees, in the company of Bhagawaan Ji at Tulamula in the cool shade of chinar trees, in Kashmiri parlance a "Bonishehjar" of Mata Khir Bhawani. It was a great joy indeed to watch the Bhagawaan's divine participation in the holy 'Yagya' performed by the father and uncles of Shri Pran Nath Kaul. Simultaneously, the birthday of Tathi Bab (Bhagawaan Ji) was also celebrated with great religious fervour.

I was fortunate too, in having Bhagawaan Ji's darshan many a time at his several places of residence. On such occasions, I also came into contact with the Bhagawaan's dedicated Bhaktas, who were steadfast, in selfless devotion to Him. I specially remember the names of Shri Thakurdas Ji of Thakur's Agency (father of Shri M.L. Pandit, President of Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji Trust), Shri Shambunath Tufchi and Shrimati Padmavati Naqaib. One day after having Parikrama of Hali Parbat, they and I (four of us) called at Bhagawaan Ji's residence at Dalhasanyar. The Bhagawaan received us like a simple and earnest grahasti,

got tea (Kahawa) prepared for us and then during the course of conversation, talked to us about the upliftment of our community in his characteristic way, making an economical use of words and conveying 'wisdom' through suggestive hints. He did not discourse on things at length nor spoke like a preacher. What I could gather from his words was his utmost concern for the allround development of our youth and his emphasis on our cultivating the spirit of selfless service as members of trusts and social organizations engaged in religious activities. I believe that BhagawaanJi's devotees at the various centres today are mostly dedicated and disciplined, following his teachings in letter and spirit. May the Bhagawaan bless us all.

25 The Portrayal of the Holiest of The Holy

S. N. Dhar

1. **To** perceive the shapeless, blissful, essence of wisdom, beyond the impact of duality, His impact and greatness, is knowledge. To understand the Godhead, His deeds, qualities, impact, mystery and essence is service. Mysterious, beyond description conceivable only by the faithful.

2. Animate and inanimate; shapeless and with shape; perceivable and imperceptible; physical and minute; kind and merciful; tranquil and stable; knowledge and love, broad-minded and friendly, beautiful and fragrant; endless beginningless and transcendental; omnipresent; omniscient and omnipotent; All pervading and within the reach of the devoted.

3. In the beginning; there was nothing but God. After the creation, everything perceivable is God. Truth and untruth, Purushuttam, Ishwara is only God. Beyond the creation is Brahaman, blissful God. The cause of whole creation and beyond illusion is God. The soul of all souls, Deathless and beyond the limit of time. Unchangeable and unfathomable but all-pervading and within the reach of the faithful and devoted.

It was a pleasure to go through 'Patrika' published by Bhagawaan Gopi NathJi Trust, Talab, Tiloo, Jammu. The topics dealing with the holy saint's life and teachings inspired me to pen down the following which, if it pleases the holy Guru, may see the light of day.

In fact it is the good fortune of those who come in contact with a great Guru and thus liberate themselves from the cycle of birth and death by uniting with the divine Lord. A seeker of God is doubly born. He gets his birth from his parents and second birth from his Guru who puts him on the righteous path with the unfoldment of Brahma Jnana (knowledge Divine). In the words of a renowned poet, we can afford to displease the Lord, the father but not the Guru as without Guru we cannot perceive the unfathomable, beginningless, unending all pervading universal soul.

It is as a result of good deeds that one becomes a true seeker and finds a master who leads him towards self realisation. Such masters come down to earth when it is enveloped by gloom and darkness of greed and selfishness. To save mankind from this gloom, the masters incarnate and drive away the evil. Those who are pure, chaste and deserving follow their faith and save themselves from the quagmire of sin. The same was the condition when Bhagawaan Gopinath came in the human form. He has purified the faithful and with his all pervading spirit continues to guide the needy and the deserving.

To free oneself from the bondage of life and death, one has to seek union with the Lord through the technique of Yoga taught by saints like Bhagawaanji. For this it is necessary that we observe the discipline as preached by the masters for the ultimate good. Lord Krishna advises Arjuna and the mankind to practise the divine technique of uniting with God, known as Yoga. What this technique is can only be given by masters like Bhagawaanji. Therefore, it is high time that in order to overcome the impending gloom we follow the techniques of Bhagawaanji. May all human beings be purified and led to the path of liberation by the sacred teachings of Bhagawaan Gopinath, the great master of modern times -
Amen !

26 The Human Mind and Sadhana

A. K. Kotha

The human mind is like that monkey, incessantly active by its own nature; then it becomes drunk with the wine of desire, that increases its turbulence. Desire begets jealousy at the success of others and last of all the demon of pride enters the mind, making it consider itself all-important. How hard to control such a mind.

The mind influences every cell in the body; human ageing is fluid and changeable; it can speed up, slow down, stop for a time, and even reverse itself! Hundreds of research findings of the last three decades have verified that ageing is much more dependent on the individual than was ever dreamed of in the past. To challenge ageing in its core, this entire world-view must be challenged first, for nothing holds more power over the body than ingrained beliefs of the mind.

Spirituality is not meant to be something that is unrelated to the body. Sickness and ageing result from the body's inability to reach its natural goal, which is to join the mind in perfection and fulfilment. Using meditation as way to defeat ageing is a legitimate spiritual goal.

There is nothing more powerful than holy company to uplift the depressed mind of a spiritual aspirant and infuse it with the favour of the spiritual mood.

Swami Vivekananda teaches:

"The mind has to be gradually and systematically brought under control. The will has to be strengthened by slow, continuous and persevering drill. The purer the mind, the easier it is to control. Purity of the mind must be insisted upon. The man who is perfectly moral has nothing more to do; he is free". A reverent study of lives and teachings of the great souls who have realised God will keep the mind pure, then there are powerful aids to steady the mind the study of good and holy books and contemplation on good topics. Malice, deceit and crookedness should be utterly given up. If the mind does not become steady when we sit for meditation, recite exalting prayers and cry to Him with a yearning heart. Keep a large picture of your chosen Deity (Ista-Devata) in front of you, and fixing your eyes thereon, pour forth your heart in prayer. A weak minded person will not pray; instead, he will simply sit brooding over his past or blaming other people for his misfortunes. Just as a cow yields much milk when it is well fed, likewise when the mind is provided spiritual food, it attains tranquility, spiritual food consists of meditation, prayer, contemplation and japam. Gossip, speaking ill of others, interference in matters not pertaining to oneself, the seeking of acquaintances, and idling away time in the company of others, are very harmful. It will not be difficult to control the mind if one resorts to solitude and divine contemplation from one's early years. Shri Krishna says in sloka 60 & 67 of chapter 2 in the Gita:

"The turbulent senses, O Arjuna, do violently snatch away the mind of even a wise man striving after perfection. For the mind which follows in the wake of the wandering senses, carries away his discrimination as a wind carries off its course a boat on the waters". As it is very difficult to gather the mustard seeds that escape out of a torn package and get scattered in all directions, so it is not a very easy affair to ingather and concentrate the mind which runs after worldly things in diverse directions. If therefore we are to nip the trouble in the bud, we must restrain the mind from thinking constantly about sense objects. The mind is like a spoiled child always restless. Practise of japa and meditation regularly is very helpful in controlling the mind.

The Gita also says in sloka 70 of chapter 2 "He unto whom all desires enter as waters into the sea. Which, though ever being filled is ever mentionless, attains to Peace and not he who hugs his desires". Undistrubed calmness of mind is attained by cultivating:

- a. Friendliness towards the happy.
- b. Compassion for the unhappy.
- c. Delight in the good.

d. Indifference to the evil.

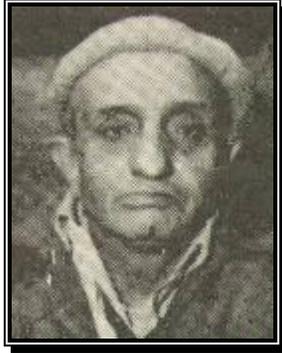
It will be impossible to control the mind

1. If we have strong likes and dislikes, attachments and aversions.
2. If we live an immoral life
3. If we have the habit of deliberately harming others.
4. If we indulge in intoxicants and live unbalanced chaotic lives.
5. If we habitually indulge in vain controversies.
6. If we torture our bodies unnecessarily, spend our energies in futile pursuits, force rigid silence upon ourselves or become too egocentric.
7. If we are over ambitious.
8. If we have a feeling of guilt.

The impurities of the mind can be gradually removed by providing the mind wholesome food on the one hand and by transforming the guna structure of the mind in order to bring about the preponderance of sattva in the personal nature, and finally by transcending even Sattva.

Swami Vivekananda says "the food that we eat is transformed in three different ways; that the heaviest part of it becomes the excrement, that of medium density is transformed into flesh and the subtlest part goes to form the mind". When the food is pure, the mind becomes pure, memory becomes firm; and when a man is in possession of a firm memory, all the bonds which tie him down to the world are loosened. A good memory is indispensable to sound judgement.

27 Select Excerpts from the Personal Diary of Late Shri Shanker Nath Fotedar



Shri Shanker Nath Fotedar

- OM is the symbol of God Ishwara and Braham.
- OM is your real name.
- OM covers the whole three-fold experiences of man.
- OM stands for all phenomenal world.
- OM represents the physical, mental and astral planes.
- OM represents the whole deep sleep-state and all that is unknown in your wakeful state, all that is beyond the reach of intellect.
- OM represents all.
- OM is the basis of your life, thought and intelligence.
- OM is everything.
- All words denoting objects are centered in OM.
- Hence the whole world has come from OM, rests on OM and dissolves in OM. Guru, Ishwara, Brahm, truth and OM are one.

• **BHAKTI**

Bhakti is based on the strong theism of the Bhagwata Cult. The Narayana or Vasudeva cult and Pashupati and Shiva Cult are the twin covenants of that permeate, the devotional side of Hinduism. The supreme person or god is thought by Vashnavites (worshippers of Vaishnav) as Narayan who transcends the trinity of Brahmah, Vaishnav and Rudra. The shavites (worshippers of Lord Shiva) consider Lord Shiva as the Supreme Lord. The conception of personal God is the same though the name and form may vary. We can appreciate the strong prediction of the votaries of Narayana as Shiva to their respective chosen forms of Brahman better if we understand that Bhakti is centered on emotional appeal. Phelgmatic people and men of cold logic can never be moved to the ecstatic state of Bhakti.

SAINT

A saint can help one to attain a stage wherein the experience of knowledge is possible. But for this the aspirant must get something like a shock (to awaken him from his dreams)...

The teaching of saints, the intensity of their messages and the influence created by them directly or indirectly on the atmosphere roundabout help the humanity, in general, to attain the truth.

RELIGION

True religion is not what we get from outside, from books and teachers. It is not the religion of routine which we adopt as a matter of habit. The saints pray without break. Their whole life is "one single great continuing prayer." By it we not only ascend to God but attain the revelation of God in the heart of man. When insight into the truth is attained passions are subdued, ill-will subsides and inward conflict ceases.

When the spark in us is released it becomes fire which cleanses the earth. It can be released only if we end our narrow egoism, greed, anger, hatred, all the restricting appetites and passions which keep the individual locked up inside his moral stuff. Every religion provides a ladder to perfection which we have to climb by effort.

GURU AS HEALER

A Guru's work in this world is to alleviate sufferings of people through spiritual or intellectual counsel or will-power, escaping to super-consciousness whenever he so desires. A master can become oblivious of his physical illness, sometimes to set up example to disciples he bears the pain stoically. By putting on the ailment of others the Yogi can, for them, satisfy the karmic law of cause and effect. The law is mechanically or mathematically operative. Its working may scientifically be manipulated by men of divine wisdom.

28 Surrender to God

R. K. Sapru

All religious teachers, savants, saints and seers have preached self-surrender as the highest step in the spiritual evolution of man. Our scriptures including Shrimad Bhagvad-Gita also advocate the doctrine of unconditional surrender to God as the final stage in spiritual growth. Shri Krishna says to the bewildered Arjuna, 'Abandon all paths and surrender to me I shall redeem you of all the sins. Grieve not ' Indeed, self-surrender, which implies the surrender of one's ego to the command of the divine will, with its stress on the 'Thou-Consciousness' rather than the 'I-Consciousness', is a stage higher than that of any kind of meditation or any kind of virtuous or noble deed. This progress from the Ego-Centre to the God-Centre is true liberation, and anything short of that is sheer bondage, or, in other words, Ego-Worship rather than God-Worship.

Mahayogi Aurobindo mentions self-surrender as the very first step in self-unfoldment.

The word 'self-surrender' is very familiar to us and surrender seems to be quite easy, but the fact is that a lot of difficulties confront us when we try to practise this discipline in day-to-day life. True self-surrender has several implications.

What are the compelling reasons for which man has to surrender to God in order to achieve perfection, the goal of human life? No matter whether he is conscious of this goal or not, man seeks, and strives for, perfection from moment to moment in life in order to master and conquer it.

The natural man is, obviously, a self-propelled being, a self-willed individual with all the faculties to deal with any situation and there is apparently no need for him even to think whether there is any God, much less to surrender to him. But when man, in his evolution, rises above ordinary nature and aspires for a more broadened and expanded awareness, or, in other words, when he outgrows his animal-nature and propensities, he naturally wants to know the why and how of everything around him, and is not prepared to take anything for granted, or, believe in anything blindly. This stage in man's life is marked by intellectual awakening. When man matures in this stage of intellectual growth, and his intellect is greatly sharpened, he is in course of time, fed up with mere intellectual gymnastics which leave him high and dry. He feels temporarily transported to the rarified domain of the subtle activity of the intellect, away from the hard and concrete sense-reality of the world around him. However, the limitations of this faculty of man make him revolve in a vicious circle from which there appears to be no release. There are ample chances that man may misuse this faculty by using as a tool to extol his ego. He may indulge in fruitless argumentation merely to emerge as the winner, and thus gratify his ego. Such persons cannot use their intellects impartially as they are able to invent reasons and arguments to justify their biased views. All the saints warn us against pride, vanity and egoism which the intellectual awakening may generate, as man is apt to think wrongly that he knows everything, and needs no teacher. Such intellectual pride is dangerous as it blocks all the ways for further progress and upliftment, especially in the spiritual field.

Realising the incompetence of the intellect to penetrate the mystery of life, and to find the answers to some basic questions about life and death, a sincere seeker, naturally and un-knowingly, enters into a spiritual quest, the quest for something that transcends intellectual limitations and the realisation of which will satisfy the deeper urges of man, and ensure his all-round development-emotional, moral, intellectual and, above all spiritual.

He seeks to ascend to a divine stage where his seeking and searching may end. How to realise this divinity in man and attain perfection is the question before us. How to attain a blissful, harmonious and elevating state of mind (Characterised by truth, knowledge and power) is another such question.

A man takes birth in a predetermined set-up in which he has no say. He falls a prey to the situations and circumstances around him which are beyond his control. The environment around him is mainly responsible for what he becomes in future. The situations and circumstances around him during his childhood are beyond his control, yet these have a far-reaching effect on his future. Man's ego is really at

the mercy of nature. Another blow to his egoistic nature and vanity is the uncertainty about his life span, and the kind of death he has to meet. Thus he is blind to the past as well as the future of his life which is so dear to him and to sustain which he struggles so hard in life. He even does not know what awaits him the next moment, yet he feels confident about his future and plans for hundreds of years. He thinks that he inhales and exhales breath out of his own free will, yet even this simple act is really beyond his control, for does not he die when he does not want to die, and is he not saved when he wants to die?

Thus the actual count of breaths that one has to take in one's life is not known to one but the Lord dwelling within one knows it. Even when man falls asleep, he draws his waking self into himself which consists of the ego, the intellect and the mind. The ego, intellect and the mind cease to function in the dreamless sleep but the inhaling and exhaling of breath continue. What is that intelligent power which sustains breathing without which life is impossible? Psychologists say it is either the unconscious or super-conscious part of the mind which is infinitely more intelligent and powerful than the conscious or the sub-conscious mind. Again what is that power, which creates milk in the mother's breasts when the child is about to be born?

Man is active on three planes, namely, the emotional plane (Characterized by the emotions like love, hate, anger, greed and lust), the intellectual plane (Characterized by discrimination, judgment and assessment), and the physical plane (Characterized by physical activity). A spiritual aspirant who practises a spiritual discipline uses the emotional self for devotion to God, the intellectual self for understanding science, philosophy and religion, and the physical self for translating devotion and knowledge into action. Thus he practises Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga respectively. But these yogas fail to reach their culmination so long as the ego remains in the aspirant. The director of all the activities, mundane or spiritual, is the ego and it is extremely difficult to get over it. All devotion, knowledge and meritorious actions fail to redeem a man or give him true enlightenment so long as the ego remains and interferes with his activities. The presence of the ego, together with its preferences and prejudices, makes any spiritual endeavour or, for that matter, any exalted activity like fasting and the practice of a discipline or penance impure from the spiritual stand point, and so unacceptable to the Lord. Man being naturally ego-found, the presence of the ego has some constructive role to play in the scheme of evolution, but that is so only upto a stage, after which it becomes an obstacle for further development. Man's ego bound nature is limited in vision and so his judgement is prone to error. All this parts a limitation on the individual effort for realisation and liberation. Even if you are knowledgeable and have true devotion to the Lord, your effort for attaining perfection may be misdirected. What you think is wrong for you may prove to be the right thing, the direction you consider promising for you may turn out to be a ditch tomorrow. This is so because a devotee in his religious zeal is apt to fall a prey to misapprehension, wrong judgement, distortion, isolation and abstraction. The simple reason for this is that he fails to analyse and understand the deeper layers of his mind, the innate tendencies, prejudices and complexes that lay deeply embedded in his mind, and yet influence his thinking, judgement, behaviour and actions. Realising this fact, the saint-poet of Martand Kashmir, Parmananda, sings:

***moklaawakh nath kyaah chhu myone paay
krim sind Dand tal hasi sund vopaay.***

***'Lord, without thy will and assistance, nothing can be achieved by man who is helpless like
an elephant whose leg is in the grip of the jaws of a crocodile.***

***yore keyv zorav banino kehn
paan pushran ros nani no kehn***

***By mere individual effort, nothing can be achieved in the spiritual field. Instead, surrender
to God can bring forth the final revelation.***

So long as a man follows the dictates of his ego and is a puppet in the hands of his desires and individual plans which keep him preoccupied, he cannot hope to enter the divine sanctum, or gain enlightenment.

Jesus Christ hints at this in the words "Blessed are those who are simple and true in heart for they shall see God." The saint poetess of Kashmir Lal Ded also says:

**sooham padas aham golum
be no aasun chhuy kun updesh**

In the "Thou-I" relation or the "God and I" - sense in man, the dissolution of the "I-sense" is the last word of wisdom and the final sermon.

In other words, so long as man cherishes a separate individuality, feels his ego or for that matter inflates his ego-sense and refuses to dissolve or irradiate it, he cannot hope to make any headway on the spiritual path. The following words of Kabir are note worthy in this context:

**jab mein thaa tab too naa hee
jab too thaa tab mein naa hee**

So long as the I-consciousness persisted in me, god-consciousness was no longer there but as soon as God-consciousness dawned and took hold of me, the "I or me" - sense dissolved for ever.

Hints for tiding over the ego problem

How can an aspirant attain mastery over his ego and, at the same time, participate in day-to-day life where he is regarded as an individual, and has to act always in an individual capacity. The solution lies first, in understanding what this ego after all is. It is the sense of "me and mine" in man. He does not have the courage to question it. To keep this sense intact, he struggles a great deal. With this sense of ego man associates everything pertaining to himself: his dress, house, occupation, or, any good or bad quality in him. This is the error man commits from the spiritual point of view because there is the immortal and divine true self in him to which everything truly belongs and to which everything in the world should be attributed. Round this spaceless, timeless, causeless and all-witnessing consciousness, called the True-self, everything in the world revolves. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita 'To my prakriti or Nature (which is at my command) every action must be attributed, as it is the real doer of all actions; but the jiva, in his ignorance, ascribes actions to himself and hence has to reap their fruits'. Thus, in case a man does some action with the sense of ego and with the expectation of its fruits, the law of Karma, i. e. of action and reaction, operates and binds him, making him the recipient of the fruits of his actions, whether good or bad. But in case he does an action considering himself to be only an instrument in the hands of God, the law of Karma no longer binds him, but, instead, becomes the cause of his liberation. Such a man says, "Lord, I am really incapable of doing any action without Thy grace, even the simple act of breathing; my body, mind, intellect, ego, family, profession, home and hearth and other possessions belong to you. My good and bad qualities also belong to you. What is desirable and what is undesirable in my nature is for you to see; for you to rectify all that is wrong in me. All my faculties are at your disposal. Your planning is my planning; my gain is Your gain; my success is Your success; and my failure, Your failure. Lord, grant me the equanimity, knowledge, power and bliss which is Thy essential nature. Lord, your guidance is fool-proof and your directions are harmonious with the world-setting. Your vision is clear and mine is hazy and distorted; Thy wisdom and knowledge are perfect and mine limited, because my highest knowledge and wisdom are just darkness before you. Lord, my judgement is partial and prejudiced but yours is not. Hence it will be judicious on my part to hand over the reigns of my life to you. How long shall I tread the path of ignorance, darkness and sin under the dictates of my cruel ego? Lord, since You are the original Designer, and true Director of this world drama, how is the petty man responsible for his deeds? He may be immediately responsible for his actions but you are ultimately responsible for his actions but You are ultimately responsible for what he thinks and does; for does not ignorance (which breeds lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego) have its ultimate origin in you? But alas: man regards not You but himself as the doer of actions, and that, naturally, makes him the recipient of their fruits. Lord, yet the truth remains, that without Your wish even a blade of grass cannot move, not to speak of any major happening in this world. If man would realise this, he would be relieved of his ego-bound nature, and

cease to be caught in the chain of cause and effect. A man who cannot give life even to an ant or a blade or grass, thinks that he can, of his own volition, give birth and life to a human being. How funny! Truly, it is not man's power but the Lord's Shakti (power) in Him which performs this miracle. Lord, it is due to your creative will that the life-less dust of this planet is transformed into plant, animal and man. Why should I not bow my head in adoration to the powerful Magician of this Universe whom we call God?

This is the attitude of one who has surrendered to God. But a word of caution is necessary here. This surrender should not be prompted by one's incompetence to deal with life and its problems or by lethargy and any other kind of weakness. It should be motivated by experience, wisdom maturity and strength. It is an outcome of the mastery of life rather than defeat in it. Nobody should make surrender to God an excuse for running away from the problems of life. It is to be noted that this surrender is the result of individual growth and maturity of wisdom. Nobody can attain this state by simply uttering some formula about it. Indeed there is no short-cut to spiritual elevation because it is a matter of spiritual growth and maturity.

To understand better the true significance of self-surrender in the spiritual field, let us try to understand how the surrender of soldiers takes place in the battle-field. When the soldiers are fighting against the enemy troops, they follow the dictates of their Commanding officer, who directs them and controls their operations. The Commanding Officer is like an individual ego commanding and controlling the individual's actions. Now let us see what happens when the troops get suddenly surrounded by the enemy troops and are forced to surrender. The soldiers who surrender, raise their arms high in the air and abandon their individual command, wishes and desires, or their Commanding Officer's command, and follow the dictates of the authority to whom they have surrendered. This authority they follow from moment to moment. For every requirement of theirs, they are dependent on that authority. In the spiritual field, the authority to

whom one has to surrender is God - the Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient Reality. First, the individual ego has to be consciously dependent on that Reality from moment to moment for guidance and instructions. Secondly, the individual ego has to abandon its individual planning and play a subordinate role so that it becomes a fit tool in the hands of the Divine. Thus the ego-drive or the individual drive, prompted by one's accumulated tendencies and desires, will no longer motivate one but the divine stir or the divine impulse alone will prompt one to action.

Shri Raman Maharishi explains the phenomenon of the ego and the condition of a man who carries its unnecessary burden in life when he can really feel light and relaxed without it, by surrendering it to God, and thus lead a life of bliss, beauty and equanimity. Is it not a fact that man even tells lies and tries to bluff others in order to keep up the false prestige of his ego? Regarding ego-problem and false attachment to what one associates with the ego, Shri Raman Maharishi says, "A villager, with a burden of his belongings on his head, once happened to board a train which, as is usual in India; was crowded. The villager entered a compartment and somehow managed a seat for himself. Taking his seat, he continued to keep his luggage on his head. A Co-passenger sitting by his side marking this, said "Brother, why don't you unload your head by putting the load down?" The poor villager replied, "This is my luggage and, keeping its safety in view, why should not I carry it on my head?" the fellow-passenger said, "I know this load belongs to you, but this is a very big train and has sufficient capacity to carry the bag and baggage of all of us. Why can't it carry your little load? "Relieve your head of this load and place it directly on the train which is big enough to carry everything in it". But the villager, who had an acute sense of possession, refused to keep the burden down.

The condition of the villager is the condition of the man in the world who insists on 'me' and 'mine' and who wilfully carries the burden of his ego along with its problems, and refuses to surrender the ego, together with its cares and worries, to the all-controlling power that rules the Universe.

This phenomenon can be reduced to a mathematical equation:

Man = God + Desire

or Man - Desire = God

i. e. Man - Ego = God

In this formula, Desire and Ego have been equated because Ego is the root cause of Desire.

In what has been said above, we have stressed the surrender of the ego and the fruits of actions to the Lord, and that this can be achieved by desirelessness. But does this mean that a man will do wrong things and surrender their fruits to God, Also, when a man has no desires, will he not be inactive, and so unable to progress in life or change the world for the better? Here, it needs to be emphasized that a desireless person is active but his actions are not dictated by desire, prejudice, bias, or any special attraction or repulsion; they are dictated by his destiny and the sense of duty and service to mankind. His mind is unprejudiced, simple and natural. He does what comes to him naturally. He accepts what comes to him un-sought for, and does what a situation demands of him or, what his intuition tells him to do. Thus, he does his duty for the sake of duty and puts extra care and concentration into his actions as they are to be offered to the Lord as worship. Such actions bring about his release from the law of Karma, i. e. action and reaction, and so bring about his liberation. In this way, such a blessed aspirant converts his actions into an act of worship because neither money nor fame or fear is the driving motive behind them but only the sense of service to mankind. He need not go to the temple for worship because his home, his office, nay the whole world is the temple for, him, and in his eyes every activity in this world ultimately converges on its Maker. He sees God's will behind every action and feels the world revolving, like an orbiting satellite round the central Reality, which is God.

There are two kinds of I:

- 1 "I" The false sense of ego or lower-ego.
2. I - The immortal divine self of man or Atman.

When the state of self-surrender matures, man escapes from his ego by his merger or identification with, and participation in, a Greater Being, and acquires immortality as his identity dissolves into the greater identity, the Universal Self.

Shri Rama Krishna Parmahansa's life demonstrates how a self-surrendered life can be lived. He sought guidance from the Divine, which he named Kali, from moment to moment. In fact, he worshipped his own transcendent Self in the image of Kali as the word Kali itself connotes that which transcends time.

This spaceless, causeless and timeless Reality, which he called Kali, really treated Rama Krishna as her obedient and trustworthy son because of the utter self-surrendered attitude of the latter. During his ecstatic state, Shri Rama Krishna sometimes put the flowers of worship on his own head rather than on the image of Kali because Kali lived in him, and was his own immortal self which he initially took to be outside himself. He referred every problem, whether minor or major, to Kali for clear-cut guidance. All this he did deliberately in order to dislodge the egoistic trend of thought which works on the principle of division and darkness. Thus he clearly laid the landmarks along which human evolution has to proceed. He lit the path which the future civilisation has to tread so that it embraces the divine and lives a life of harmony, truth, knowledge and divine obedience.

29 Quotable Quotes & Wise Sayings

Devotional Mysticism is an important part of all world religions. Without this, God would be only a philosophical concept for intellectual discussions. God is love and the devotee wants to feel the love of God and His mystic embrace. God is beautiful and the devotees want to adore Him, worship Him, praise Him and offer all that is best in him to God. God is Merciful and appears to His devotees in the form of Avatars and Saints to show His compassion. God comes in these forms to sustain the world, to destroy evil and to uphold righteousness.

Saints are salt of the Earth. It is by the prayer of a whole society that a saint is sent to this world to show mankind the path of Mukti (Liberation). Usually he will take birth in a poor family and leads very simple life. Through the examples of His life, He shows how Divine precepts can be adopted in daily life. The conversations, discourses and songs and literature which He leaves for posterity become invaluable treasure.

Blessed is the land and the parents that give birth to Saints. Time and again God sends His messengers to flood the world with devotion, dispassion and compassion. They are the source of Divine life and it is they who sustain the world.

Saints hallow this world. Whenever man forgets the ultimate purpose of life, saints appear and with the singing tide of their devotion redirect the course of humanity.

"I speak (in praise of) the Guru, who is Brahman Himself; I sing (the glories of) the Guru, who is Brahman Himself; I meditate on the Guru, who is Brahman Himself; I salute the Guru, who is Brahman Himself."

"Nothing is beyond the Guru; No one is above the Guru! Nothing surpasses the Guru; None is greater than the Guru! That is my commandment; I say authoritatively! I say so authoritatively; that is indeed my commandment."

Saints are beyond cast, creed, color and country. They belong to God and their approach is Universal. Their lives are examples for all of us in leading a Divine life of Universal love and service to God through humanity.

Guru Geeta:

In the Guru Geeta Lord Shiva beautifully elaborates the sublime role of the Guru in answer to the queries of the Divine paarvati.

The Guru Geeta deals with the sublime aspect of the Guru, who imparts the high special knowledge to the Shishya (disciple). Without the Guru's grace no progress in the Spiritual field is possible.

The Guru Geeta lays down how the Shishya (disciple) should look upon his Guru and act towards Him.

The Guru Geeta is an ancient Shashtra, which, among other things, mentions the qualities and greatness of a true Guru. In this Shashtra it is also mentioned that a regular recitation of it earns the disciple great merit and his Guru's abundant grace that lead him to the final beatitude.

Two Voices But One Truth

LALLESHWARI

Spiritual Intuition revealed to me the one and the only one course of Self-education, To adjure the ephemeral mundane and to ruminate over the perennial Sublime within. This very self-striven truth turned out to be a happy coincidence with 'Lalla' Goadng her on to dance in ecstasy of self-discipline, unmindful of The stark obsessions of Social norms.

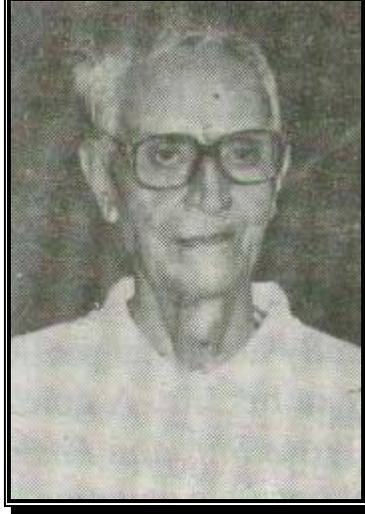
SHRI BHAGAWAN GOPI NATH JI

Spiritual mental discipline opened before me the one single secret of self-consciousness, To reject the meshes of worlday life from without. And to come face to face with the Sublime light within. This very Self-sought revelation made 'Gopi' comprehend the exact import Of Three Syllabic 'OM' and ruminate over it in Divine ecstasy.

30 How to know that Brahman

The Supreme Peace

Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal'



Late Shri Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal'

The Upanisad (Kathopanisad) speaks of the secret Brahman:

***ya esa suptesu jagarti kamam kamam puruso nirmimanah
Tadeva sukram tadbrahma tadevamrtamucatyē
Tasminlokaḥ sritāḥ sarve tadu natyēti kascana Etadvaietad
(Kath II.ii8)***

'Purusa, who keeps awake and goes on creating desirable things even when the senses fall asleep, is pure; and He is Brahman, and he is called the Immortal. All the worlds are fixed in Him; none can transcend Him. This is That.'

The knowledge of the unity of the self, though validated by proof and reiterated more than once, does not find a lodging in the hearts of those Brahmins of insincere intellect whose minds are swayed by the intellect of numerous logicians; therefore, the Upanisad, being eager to inculcate it, says again and again:

***agniryathaiko bhuvanam pravisto
rupam rupam pratirupo babhuva;
ekastatha sarvabhutantaratma
rupam rupam pratirupo bahisca
(Kath. II.ii.9)***

'Just as fire, though one, having entered the world, assumes separate forms in respect of different shapes, similarly, the self inside all beings, though one, assumes a form in respect of each shape; and (yet) it is outside.'

Another mantra follows with another illustration of Air:

***vayuryathaiko bhuvanam pravisto rupam rupam pratirupo babhuva
ekastatha sarvabhutantaratma rupam rupam pratirupo bahisca
(Kath. II.ii. 10)***

Here the contingency arises - If the one entity is the self of all, the sorrowfulness of the world will belong to the Supreme Brahman itself. The Upanisad answers:

**suryoyatha sarvalokasya caksurna lipyate caksusairbahyadosaih
ekastatha sarvabhutantaratma na lipyate lokadukhena bahyah
(Kath. II ii. 11)**

'Just as the sun, which is the eye of the whole world, is not tainted by the ocular and external defects; similarly, the self, that is but one in all beings, is not tainted by the sorrows of the world, it being transcendental' .

**eko vasi sarvabhutantaratma ekam rupam bahudha yah karoti
tamamastham ye nupasyanti dhiraste'sam sukham sasvatam netaresam
(Kath. II.ii. 12)**

'Eternal peace is for those (and not for others) who are discriminating and who realize in their hearts Him who (being the One, the Inner Controller, and the Inner Self of all) makes a single form multifarious'.

**nityo nityanam cetanascetananameko bahunamyo viddhati kaman
tamamastham ye anupdsyanti dhirastesam santih sas'vafi netaresam
(Kath. II.ii 13)**

'Eternal peace is for those (and not for others) who are discriminating and who realize in their hearts Him who (being the eternal among the ephemeral, the consciousness among the conscious) alone dispenses the desired objects to many'.

This was spoken by Yama to Nachiketa, an intelligent and earnest boy, who had approached the former in order to know the Truth, the Supreme Peace. Then Nachiketa, the inquisitive and self-reliant boy, put a question to the teacher Yama:

**tadetaditi manyante nirdeyam paramam sukham
katham nu tadvijaniyam kimu bhati vibhati va
(Kath. II. ii. 14)**

**'How shall I know that supreme, unspeakable Bliss which they realize directly as "This" ?
Is it self-effulgent ? Does it shine distinctly ? Or, does it not ?'**

Yama answers how it is both self-effulgent and shines distinctly (or multifariously):

**nk tatra stirylo bhati na candra tarakam
nema vidyuto bhanti kuto yamagnih
tameva bhantamanubhati sarvam
tasya bhasasarvamidam vibhati
(Kath. II.ii. 15)**

There - is Brahman which is one's self- the Sun does not shine (i.e it does not illuminate that Brahman, though it illumines all). Similarly, neither the moon, the stars nor these flashes of lighting shine; how can this fire, that is seen by us, shine ? In short, all, inclusive of these that shine, shine according as He, the supreme Lord shines. Just as hot water, fire-brand etc, owing to their contact with fire, burn according as the fire does, but not independently; similarly, it is verily by His effulgence (tasya bhasa) that all this (sarvamidam) - the sun etc, shines variously (vibhati). This being so, it is that Brahman itself that is effulgent and shines variously. Through the various kinds of effulgence in the effects, it is known that the characteristic of luminosity is intrinsic in that Brahman. For that luminosity which does not exist naturally cannot impart itself to others; for a pot etc. are not seen to illuminate others, whereas luminous things like the sun etc are seen to do so.

31 Yoga and the Spiritual Path

Aparna Dhar

The meaning of the word "yoga", conveyed literally, is "union". It signifies the union of the Jivatman (individual soul) with the Supreme Parmatman (the one Supreme Reality i.e. the eternal Ishwara, pervading the entire universe). This union marks the culmination of the spiritual journey, undertaken in the past by many sages, sairts, rishis and God-seekers throughout the length and breadth of our country (as also elsewhere in the rest of the world). In Kashmir, we revere and cherish the memory of saints such as Bhagawaan Gopinathji, Alakeshwari Roop Bhavani, Madhav Dhar (Roop Bhawani's guru and father), Lal Ded and others.

Today, in this age of material and technological advancement, it has become all the more necessary for us to try to understand the teachings of our revered sages, seers and rishis, for today's world has become more materialistic than ever before in its long history. With materialistic ends in view, the advancement of science has led to the virtual neglect of what were cherished as spiritual values in the past. The goal of science has all through been to understand and master external nature. Yoga, on the other hand, enables man to understand his own inner nature and realize the indwelling Atman. The purpose of science is to make life comfortable and enhance pleasures, while the purpose of yoga is the realization of one's self.

Our rishis taught us that no matter how much of material well-being we enjoy, in the end, when death comes, all of it is reduced to naught. Therefore, in their wisdom, they taught us to seek the Supreme Being, the only abiding Reality. It is the science of yoga that enables us to achieve this goal. Patanjali's "Raja Yoga Sutras" is one of the oldest texts on this discipline.

Since our spiritual goal is to find the Ishwara within us, the method for us to adopt is to purify ourselves through the fivefold moral disciplines of truthfulness (Satya), non-injury (Ahimsa), chastity (Brahmacharya), non-stealing (Asteya) and non-receiving of gifts (Aparigriha). These five disciplines are to be supplemented by the regulated conduct of our daily lives that consists in austerity, cleanliness, contentment and self-surrender to God.

The next stage is to find one's Guru and then to receive spiritual initiation from him, the Ishta Mantra, the sacred Name of God, best suited to the liking of the spiritual aspirant. The right choice of the Guru is of the utmost importance (as far as spirituality is concerned) so the Shaktas would receive a shakti Mantra, the Shaivites a Shiva Mantra and the Vishnavites a Vishnu Mantra. The repetition of the Mantra is a way of attaining closeness to the Supreme Being (Ishwara) seen in whatever form. This marks the beginning of our spiritual journey, and as we advance, we attain real peace of mind and experience true joy within ourselves. As we get stabilized in the path, our lives become spiritualized : a Divine Presence fills our hearts, our homes and every thing that exists around us. We perceive the Indwelling self and find the outward "things of sense" charged with a spiritual glow. It is as though Divinity becomes manifest to us on earth. We feel blessed and transported with delight ; our outlook on life gets transformed and we feel deified.

Our revered rishis and saints showed this to us as having happened in their very lives, which were filled with Divinity. In their lives again one would feel the Divine power manifesting in so many miraculous ways. They taught us the truth as they lived it and experienced it, and handed down spiritual wisdom to us through their teachings.

Our material pleasures, though they look like nectar in the beginning, actually turn out to be poison-like in the end (aptly conveyed through one of the slokas of the Gita the readers must be familiar with). Spiritual disciplines on the contrary look like poison in the beginning (being difficult and as such unpalatable for the beginners) because they demand austerity and self-restraint. Eventually they turn out to be nectar-like, for they lead us to the Blissful Divine Presence.

Let us, therefore, pause a while in this fastmoving material life and sit at the feet of our rishis, the spiritual Masters. Let us revere them, follow their teachings, emulate their lives and ponder over the message they

have handed down to us, their children. By earning their benedictions we can confidently advance in the spiritual path, that has aptly been compared to the 'razor's edge' (the phrase that appears in the Katha Upanishad signifying the difficulties and dangers the aspirant has to face on the path). Thus will our lives be sanctified and we can look forward to attaining union with the Divine. This is the only way for us to make our lives blessed and also our society blessed.

May Bhagawaan Gopinathji on this auspicious occasion of the celebration of His birth centenary shower blessings on us all and guide us to the goal of Divine Union!

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32 Spirituality and the Scientific Temper

Prof. A. N. Dhar

AS I see it, there is not any basic or sharp opposition between what spirituality essentially is and what science stands for. It is quite tenable to conceive of a fair degree of compatibility between the two - the scientific temper is not alien to spirituality nor is a scientist necessarily an atheist or a person with an unspiritual outlook. To an appreciable extent, science and spirituality can be seen to have a common aim - promotion of human values and welfare of mankind in general. Just as disinterested curiosity for the unknown marks the scientific temper, a fervent quest for Truth is often a strong motivation for the spiritual seeker. However, it is evident to all that science is not enough. Its practical applications may serve human needs, make life comfortable and enable man to achieve longevity through control on diseases. But too much dependence, as we have seen, on machines and other scientific gadgets, have made life mechanical, not to speak of the havoc wrought on the earth through the abuse of science.

Coming to the precise domain of science as a systematic body of knowledge, its investigations are mostly confined to the physical universe, the world of sensory experience. How does the scientist go about his work? He observes facts and phenomena, analyses them and then arrives at theories and laws. Old theories may be discarded in favour of new ones as research advances and the boundaries of knowledge expand. Scientific research, on the whole, is a well-coordinated activity, a collective endeavour, not just an individual achievement. That is what Newton meant to convey when he observed, "We stand on the shoulders of other giants". Again, the efforts of scientists are result-oriented, scientific experimentation produces concrete results. Miracles of science are about us today in every walk of life, staring us in the eye.

What about spirituality? The spiritual seeker, by choice, grapples with eternal questions. He has an intense urge to understand the mystery of life and death; for him life is not absurd or just the result of an accident. He is concerned with Truth as the ultimate cause, the secret of secrets. It is in this vein that the poet Coventry Patmore of the mid-Victorian period characterizes mysticism (a substitute term for spirituality based on direct experience of the Divine) as "The science of ultimates". Life for the Yogi or mystic has meaning and purpose; he neither discards reason nor trusts it wholly. However, he trusts his own intuition and finer perceptions because of their spontaneity and authenticity. Drawn to Truth by an inner compulsive urge, he does not rest content until he apprehends the Reality behind appearances or his indwelling Self. Thus he too is an explorer, an earnest seeker engaged in a life-long pursuit of the Divine. Invariably, the spiritual aspirant has to approach a Master for help and guidance. In spite of some initial difficulties and hurdles, he finds the Guru who takes him under his spiritual care.

Faith in God and the Guru are the essential prerequisites for a seeker's success in the spiritual path. It is on the solid foundation of faith that he raises the superstructure of sadhana involving a vigorous exercise of all his mental powers of "memory, understanding and will" (as the Christian mystic Ignatius Loyola characterizes a "spiritual exercise"). Until at least a sadhak gets established in meditation, he does not discard reason at any point; the onward experience "transcends but does not contradict reason". To the last, the sadhak remains thoroughly discriminative and mentally alert. The Raja Yogi, as the Gita and the Upanishads testify, proceeds on the spiritual path steadily, with extreme care and determination. He watches the behaviour of his mind with the alertness and patience of a scientist handling very sophisticated equipment in the laboratory.

What is strictly called Kundalini Yoga (on which several treatises in English are now available) is as systematic as a technical science and has as such attracted considerable attention in India and abroad. There is a technique of meditation also stressed in Patanjali's Yoga Sastra. In this and other forms of Yoga, it is very likely that the experience varies slightly from one individual practitioner to another. To that extent, meditation on the Divine is fine art too. At the same time, it is a systematic discipline with a scientific bias. Success in Yoga calls for a vigorous and sustained effort as it does in a scientific pursuit.

An aspirant's spiritual growth certainly derives nourishment from a congenial social ethos and from a culture conducive to his upbringing. However, what he achieves ultimately depends on his individual talent. This also demands that the society permit him to explore Truth in the way he chooses and give him freedom to profess what he considers true in relation to the Divine or the physical world. His opinions may be unorthodox and may not conform to the establishment, freedom is as important in the realm of spirituality as in that of sciences.

Spirituality essentially aims at man's inward transformation, culminating in realization of the Self. The process involves cleansing of "the doors of perception", enabling the aspirant to see the Divine as the indwelling spirit, inhabiting "a blade of grass", the stars above and "all that we behold". The truly spiritual persons provides the best example of a noble human being, moral to the "nth degree" and "divine" to the core. Such a person is the friend of all, a well-wisher of the whole world. The true scientist, likewise, pursues knowledge both for its own sake and for the welfare of mankind. We cannot blame him outright for how his research findings and theories are exploited by those who wield political power.

A pertinent question that needs to be answered regarding spirituality is: what is the relevance and significance of the sidhis or powers that some spiritual Masters are credited with? The sastras do mention such things and we cannot dismiss them as mere "superstition". However, what is "esoteric" about them may ultimately be within the reach of science itself (as its boundaries expand), but attaching undue significance to them is perhaps not desirable for the aspirant. They would only distract his attention from what he should prize most-his inward illumination. Of course, the real spiritual miracles that great Masters perform are actually "unseen" a mere 'look' or a 'touch' works wonders in terms of the spiritual awakening of the seeker who is thus blessed. The accomplished Masters, if and when at all they utilize sidhis, do so selectively and discreetly out of compassion for true devotees. They do not do it for winning "applause".

Great sidhas, such as Bhagawan Gopi NathJi (as we have seen and known him) or the rishis of yore, have been spiritual scientists and seers in their own right. An outstanding and classic example of a great spiritual Master and an equally great disciple that comes to my mind is that of Sri Rama Krishna Parmhansa and Swami Vivekananda. When the inquisitive, agnostic - like Vivekananda asked the Thakur "Have you seen God?", quick came the latter's reply "Yes, I have seen Him as I see You". The assertive and confident tone of the Master here, the 'spiritual scientist' of note, at once set at rest the honest doubts of the young aspirant Narendra. He immediately recognized the Guru he had been in search of. The encounter between them was a union of two great spiritual personalities. Sn Ram Krishna, the great Bhakta of Mother Kali, in fact, behaved like a true scientist in experimenting with faiths like Christianity and Islam, and in adopting several Gurus including Bhairawi and Totapuri. As for Vivekananda, we can say that he proved himself to be an epitome of the best that we find in the eastern religions and western thought.

To conclude, the boundaries of science and spirituality do overlap: the scientist's intuition, at times, goads him on and steers his empirical investigations in the right direction. So do the thrilling accounts of the universe, given in science fiction and in works like the scientist James Jeans' 'Mysterious Universe' sometimes awaken in the inquisitive reader "a sense of wonder". Such accounts may inspire the potential seeker in the 'qualified' reader, whose perception is fine, and awaken the 'sleeping' Kundalini in him. That is what exactly happened when Sri Rama Krishna was struck by the beauty of a host of swans flying high up in the sky. He was instantly thrown into a trance-like state. There is an much of compatibility between the fine arts (including poetry and music) and spirituality as there is between pure science and the Religion of man (transcending creeds and dogmas). Swami Vivekanand rightly visualized the future possibility of science coming close to religion and vice versa; extremes, he said, will eventually meet. The spiritual scientist should no longer be a myth but a reality in the future, however distant.

33 Spirituality and the Scientific Temper

Soni Kachroo

Spirituality is a term that means many things to many people, to some it means devotion to spiritual things and to some others it signifies the mystical and the religious ways. However, in its broadest scope, it embodies certain postulated virtues, philosophical speculation, ethical and moral attitudes, and the belief that spiritual existence is more important than material existence. It stresses belief in transcendental entities, in religious and moral ideas in terms of which our fathers could rationalize their feelings. We talk of our present age as a spiritually impoverished one in which we act not in terms of postulated divinities, virtues and goodness but in terms of mundane realities like the 'right to happiness' and the 'right to a better material life'. We justify our feelings and actions by an appeal to human welfare; we are doubtful regarding some supposed absolute good. Instead we believe that what is good is so in itself. Many of the ideas which our forefathers accepted without questions are now rejected outright by us.

Our pre-occupation in contemporary times is with the humanitarian idea of universal welfare, the upliftment of material life and social well-being. We aim to fight for progress, for social prosperity. We look at a thing pragmatically and have less time to occupy our minds with philosophical postulations about the mystical; we have little time to ponder on the belief that the knowledge of God and of the real truth may be reached through meditation or spiritual insight, independently of reasons and the senses. If there are truths beyond human understanding, they are better left to themselves for the moment; instead, we should concentrate on the immediate problem of human weal and woe.

If we strip spirituality of its mantle of the mystical and look at its ethical and moral relevance, we are on better terms with it then. Judged in this light there is no conflict between spirituality and the 'scientific temper'. It is, in fact, the interaction between man's soul in quest of the good and man's actions in that direction that has resulted in an ever-widening horizon of human endeavour.

We cannot drive away an attack of indigestion or migraine by 'talking' to it; we have to do something more than merely talking about it. We have to take some medicines. We cannot fight Aids or Cancer (to name a few killers only) by merely sitting up, closing our eyes and meditating. We did so in the past and died in good numbers and in quick time. Let us remember that God gave us grain but we have to make the furrow; God has sent us flax but we must make the spindle. Well, the man who made this instrument for the furrow or who made the spindle was the man with the scientific temper. It is a long-long way from the earliest and the simplest tool to the modern computer controlling giant machines, but it is a story of man's restless soul in pursuit of happiness; it is a story of how his scientific temper guides his pursuit of knowledge.

Imagine a world where everybody sits up, gazes at the stars, meditates with legs locked, occasionally waiting or reciting a few lines of sublimity. Could it be possible for such a monk-infested world to have even a simple tincture iodine for a cut, let alone special medicines for serious diseases? What I want to emphasize is that progress is unthinkable without the scientific temper. We have progressed far in many fields of human activity and the horizon is ever-widening. The scientific temper is pervasive in all fields and everywhere there is a climate of research and enquiry. The modern age is aptly called the age of science. The only fly in the ointment is the misconception that the scientific temper is at logger-heads with ethics and morals. It is wrong to judge things in such a fashion because then we fail to see the real connection at is there between spirituality and science. It is actually ethical and moral considerations that prompt a scientist to spend weary hours in finding a new drug, a new cure, a new machine. Wasn't Louis Pasteur, who spent a whole life finding cures for agonizing and deadly diseases a truly Spiritual person? How many million lives have been saved by the pioneers in the field of medicine.

There are, of course, abuses of our scientific achievements and it is against these abuses that we have to wage a moral and a spiritual struggle. No scientific invention is bad at its original source; it is only later that the politician turns it into an instrument of wickedness. If the scientists discoveries are utilized by those who wield power to terrorize man we wrongly infer that the scientific approach has led us to such a

sorry pass. It is the politician's lust for power, his evil designs to dominate others, that distorts human discovery into a nightmare. And paradoxically enough it is the scientists themselves who warn the world about these abuses. It is the scientists who try to inject into us all ethical a moral and a spiritual discipline. Thus the scientific spirit cannot be in opposition to the moral and the ethical spirit.

But at the same time it is true that the world today has become a funny place; we boast of the universal spread of education and enlightenment, yet there is an astonishing spread of ignorance and helplessness. To quote G. B. Shaw, "there are millions of workers, none of them are able to make anything, none of them knowing what to do until somebody tells them, none of them having the least notion of how it is that they find people paying them money with which to buy things in the shops" there is a universal ignorance of how things are made and done while at the same time things are made and done on a gigantic scale. It only shows that we have to pay a price for our material progress. We have only to narrow down the gap between our scientific temper and our spiritual perceptions. It is really not necessary nor really possible for every man to know everything. What really matters is the ability to utilize the native power that gives us the power to act, the power to go on acting ceaselessly. Our world is a world of actions in which ideas are so very important. And ideas become our guiding stars. It is true that feelings are equally important but they go on changing all the time. An idea, however, persists and it leads to actions which it is our duty to perform. The man with the scientific temper is motivated by ideas and these ideas concern human happiness and welfare. Spirituality too is concerned with human happiness and welfare.

34 Spirituality and the Scientific Temper

R. K. Sapru

The word 'science' is defined as the systematic study of all those things that we observe in our daily life. By the term 'Scientific temper' we mean the attitude of the scientist emphasizing that nothing in the world should be taken for granted or accepted on the basis of blind faith without its being subjected to the test of reason. The scientific temper thus stresses investigation, seeks proof without any bias or prejudice. The man with such a temper studies a subject with openness of mind and impartiality, because he wants to know and observe a thing as it is and not as he wishes it to be. With this impersonal approach toward a problem, the observation that an explorer makes and the conclusions he arrives at are verifiable by any one at any time and at any place. This is so because a law, principle or phenomenon in nature is universal and not confined to any individual or place. Science has touched every department of human life. It has transformed our life significantly in many ways. Science is there with its endless gifts, having affected every field of life. Nobody can, therefore, stop the scientific temper from influencing our study of the inner invisible world of mind and spirit.

In view of its emphasis on enquiry and proof, science has questioned the irrational beliefs and practices of every religion in the world. If we do not apply the spirit of rationality to all the religions of the world, then religious zealots and fanatics will dominate our society everywhere. Such people, lacking the scientific temper and not having a vision of the oneness of humanity, will only hamper human development and progress; the followers of one dogmatic religion will not tolerate those of the other dogmatic religion. Narrow dogmatism will lead to forced conversions and to the persecution of innocent people in the name of religion. What an irony that religious enthusiasts though preaching brotherhood and oneness of mankind, promote discord and disunity among men, thus leaving world to ruin!

Thus thundered Swami Vivekananda: "It is better to be an atheist than a superstitious fool. Let us not, therefore, divide humanity into different sects, groups, faiths or nations, thus creating blocks among men that lead to dissention, discord and strife. Instead, let us discard all religious labels and orthodox terminology marked by rigidity and an inflexible attitude. Let us restore the status of science to spirituality (that it enjoyed in India in the true sense during the Vedic times) that relates to the study of the invisible realm, including the mind, intellect and spirit."

By tempering spirituality with science, we will succeed in crossing the boundaries of religion, caste, creed and colour. This will encourage men and women to study the science of self-realisation, what true spirituality actually consists in. Let the schools, colleges and Universities recognize spirituality (as distinguished from blind faith) as a science. For achieving positive and practical results in the field of spirituality, due emphasis has got to be laid on moral uprightness and discipline. Our educational institutions should pay proper attention to moral and spiritual education, treating it as an integral part of the curriculum. Let our Universities award fellowships in the science of self-realisation to the deserving aspirants. Let the Nobel prize be awarded to outstanding researchers and explorers in the field of spirituality.

The question arises how far spirituality, which deals with the invisible, can be regarded a science. If the answer is "Yes" it needs to be specified where the laboratory is in which this science can be studied and what instruments/ implements to be used for its study exactly are. The answer is that the inner self of man is the laboratory in which the research is to be carried out. The required experiments are to be conducted well within the human body itself, using the mind, vital force (Prana), and emotions as the instruments. Total devotion and concentration of mind are, in fact, as prerequisite for exploring the world of spirit as is equally true of exploring the objective sensory world. Just as we study the anatomy of an atom or a computer in physics or the anatomy of a frog in zoology, we can likewise study the spiritual anatomy of man. The spiritual science involving the practices as systematically devised by Maharishi Patanjali is no less result - oriented than modern science. The yogic techniques prescribed by Patanjali, when followed

by the aspirant under directions of an accomplished Guru, yield definite results in terms of the attainment of Self-realization.

Thus, says Swami Vivekananda, "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity by controlling nature, internal and external. Do it either by work, or by worship or by physilic control or knowledge or all of these and be tree". This is the whole gist of religion. The dogmas, rituals and customs are but secondary details. Now it should be clear that genuine spirituality does not consist in material poverty nor mortification of body or beggary but total mastery of spirit over mind and matter. A genuine spiritual person develops complete mastery over nature. One such spiritual master was Bhagwaan Gopinathji of Kashmir. He 'fought' the war lords in the years 1947, 1962 and 1965 (when India got involved in conflicts with Pakistan in 1947 & 1965 and with China in 1962), using his spiritual powers to defeat the enemies of peace, brotherhood and co-existence. The miracles that he performed are beyond the ken of the present day science, nevertheless not inexplicable in terms of the science of spirituality.

Spirituality can be regarded a science in its own right provided we explain it in precise terms without resorting to over symbolism, personification and mystification. The spiritual scientist - the true saint or seer or sage - has a plausible explanation for any happening in the world but the physical scientist's analyses and study cannot be stretched beyond a certain point, being sense-bound. Modern scientists have succeeded in analyzing matter to find its ultimate constituent, the electron which behaves sometimes as a particle and sometimes as a wave.

Science is trying to reduce all known energies like electricity, magnetism, light and heat to its formal single source as is attempted in the unilied field theory but it has yet to discover the fact that mind is the prime source of matter. It has to learn the fact that matter cannot exist without mind. Science defines matter as something which occupies 'space' and has 'weight' terms signifying mental concepts or attributes. The sage knows the truth that earth was formed as a result of solidification of liquids, while liquids are derived from fiery gases and from aakash or space. Space is derived from mind and subtler than mind is the intellect. The mind and the intellect finally merge into the void called sunya which is "nothingness full of everything". The spiritual seeker, after reaching the "Sunya" sate explores further by asking "What is the element in man which recognizes the void as such and witnesses it. The space-less, timeless and mind transcending self (as we call it) both pervades and witnesses our waking, dreaming and dream- less states, this "pure consciousness" is the divine deputy in a 'coalition'. To know this as our immortal self is not to see it but to be it, this divine deputy - sometimes called Supra- Atman since it unites and binds different individual minds is linked to another bigger sun of "pure consciousness" which the western philosophers have called a "hing-in-itself" or the Absolute corresponding to the para-Brahman of the vedantists, Mahavishnu of the Vaishnavites or Parma Shiva of the Shaivites.

To sum up, let us look forward to the day when physical scientists will succeed in crossing the boundary of matter and mind and have a perfect wedlock with the self-realized seers and sages. Let intellectual prowess be matched by moral uprightness and strength. This wedlock will completely change the material scientist's conception of the universe and its source. The day may not be far off when the scientist can explain as to how a sage or saint can materialize an object by the sheer power of his will. That will be a reaffirmation of the truth that this universe is a mental ideation and imagination of the Universal mind.

"Let peace come for permanent stay on earth".

35 Spirituality and the Scientific Temper

A. K. Parimoo

From time immemorial man has been striving to unravel the mystery of life; he has been very eager to know, for sure, if there is God and, if the answer is in the affirmative, he would like to know what God is like. The inquisitive among men want to be clear in their minds as to what the terms 'absolute' and 'infinite' precisely signify. In fact, many questions such as these have been exercising man's mind for ages. Since his intellect is limited, he cannot comprehend what is the ever-lasting source of the energy that holds this universe-including the stars, planets and galaxies in a state of equilibrium. He cannot fully explain how and why the heavenly bodies, such as the planets rotate around their axis and revolve in their orbits, precisely how these motions are possible at all. It is not still known how much matter is consumed in the sun, that provides heat and light to the globe, to produce the inexhaustible energy which sustains our life. No doubt, the great scientist Newton discovered the law of gravitation as a physical phenomenon, but beyond this he could say nothing about the ultimate cause of the universe. He could not explicate its 'grand design' of which gravitation is only a small manifestation. There are innumerable other phenomena that are still either unknown or unintelligible to man.

Man has made innumerable compounds out of the 120 elements available in Nature, but he has not been able so far to create a single element. Realizing this limitation of man; scientists have plainly acknowledged that "matter can neither be created nor destroyed by any known chemical or mechanical means." Despite the great achievements that science has to its credit, its limitations are manifold that cannot be brushed aside. No scientific theory formulated to this day is flawless and unchallengeable. The great Newton, who made a significant contribution to calculus, a branch of Mathematics, could not say anything definitive about what he understood by the term 'absolute zero'.

All that he could postulate was the term 'limiting zero or O, which he made use of in finding differential coefficients (dy/dx) of various trigonometric functions and algebraic quantities. On the other hand, the great yogeshwar of the 14th century, Lal Ded, has said something revealing and significant about the concept of 'nothingness' in the Vaakh given here which is followed by mine English translation:

**goras prutchom saasilatey,
Yath na kenh vannaan tath kyah naav,
Pritchaan pritchanna thachist lususas,
Kehn nata kenh-manza kyah thaam draav
A thousand times did I ask my guru:
"How do we perceive that which hath no name?"
Making persistent enquires, I got exhausted,
The pursuit brought forth a positive result**

What had seemed nothing yielded something significant. From this verse, we infer that although Lal Ded had no formal or technical knowledge of what 'Zero' stands for mathematically, she makes a profound statement about the origin of life and this universe. It is from 'Zero' or 'nothing' that a significant form emerged, which we perceive as the vast universe comprehending great variety and multiplicity. The verse has several over-tones conveying alternative meanings. It can thus also be interpreted to mean that Lalla's contemplation of 'Zero' was rewarded with spiritual knowledge consisting in something ineffable, that can only be experienced but not precisely communicated. Isn't it remarkable too, that the mighty 'mountain' of Mathematics, whose peak is yet beyond reach, stands on the very foundation of the inconceivable 'Zero'?

It is to be conceded that medical science has made great strides in the present century in as much as vital organs such as the kidney and heart are successfully being transplanted today.

Yet in no laboratory to this date have medical scientists been able to 'manufacture' a vital or any other organ of man or of any other creature. The truth is where all our empirical knowledge ends, there surely the domain of spirituality begins. No one can dispute the fact that scientists are still prowling on the outskirts of Truth, that continues to elude them.

There is, however, an interesting dimension to scientific and the spiritual. We may characterize this as science-based spirituality. What is today known popularly as Kriya Yoga provides a fine illustration of the synthesis in question. It is a simple psycho- physiological method by which human blood is re-oxidized. By reoxidizing his venous blood, the yogi is able to prevent the decay of his tissues (made up of cells). It is being claimed that an advanced yogi, like Maha-avtar Babji, transforms cells into energy. He can, at will, materialize and dematerialize at any place. This has been an ancient yogic practice that Lord Krishna is believed to have revived and taught Arjuna. Later, the knowledge of Kriya Yoga passed on to Patanjali, the founder of the prevailing system of yoga in India. It has evoked considerable scientific curiosity in America. Some American scientists are engaged today in discovering the practical effects of non- breathing. Investigations are on to see if non- breathing exercises can be prescribed for achieving longevity and for preserving youth.

So we see that though science and spirituality are distinct from each other, there is no inherent conflict between them. It seems possible and is perhaps desirable too, to integrate them to the extent possible, at least to make them function alongside each other as complementary disciplines. Just as it is possible to humanize science it is equally possible to give science a spiritual basis. There are definite signs of the initial moves being made in this direction in some of the western countries like America.

36 What I see as 'Divine Grace' in Spirituality

A. N. Dhar

God is within us and as such within our reach. The important thing is how earnest we are to see the Divine in and around us. Sheer intellectual curiosity cannot carry the seeker too far. Even a rigorous rational enquiry into the unknown is bound to prove fruitless and frustrating if it is not accompanied by an intense longing actuated by pure devotion and love. Passion to seize the unknown, reinforced by thoughtful reflection, serves as the helpful means here.

The aspirant has to undergo an inward process of cleansing through the mortification of the little self. Those who are true of heart, humble and one-pointed in concentration find the path to God free from obstacles. Ordinary worldlings, bereft of such qualities, on the other hand, find the path beset with hurdles and difficulties, which they cannot cope with. Their efforts to experience the transcendent, however strenuous, yield no results.

It is profitable, indeed, to study the accounts given by great saints and sages of their pursuit of the Divine and of their spiritual attainments. But such accounts often present a variety that, too, can baffle the unimaginative reader; he cannot easily apprehend the underlying principle, the ground of variety and multiplicity. For the discerning, however, the singlemindedness of the aspirant provides the key—the concentration of all his mental powers on one point, a thing that is often elusive to the novice.

For the contemplative, the road lies through constant "thought, study and application". And for the true lover, the 'rinda' free from narrow dogmas and wedded to the Beloved, the Divine is always accessible, though He may play the game of hide and seek with him.

It is appropriate to mention here that what the sastras refer to as saktipata does not necessarily convey that the descent of divine energy or sakti into the seeker's psyche or soul is an accidental phenomenon, something unpredictable, not governed by law. If God "favoured" one devotee and remained indifferent to the other, that would amount to His wantonness and fickleness. But God's ways are always right and He cannot be anything but just.

The very aspiration for a glimpse of God, in my view, is in itself divine grace or anugraha. The true devotee of God is already blessed, certainly he has felt the divine "touch" or else how would he or she pine for a vision of God? Shaktipata is, however, not of the same order or intensity in all devotees. What begins as a 'spark' generally works its effect slowly and steadily; it develops into a 'flame' and then into a 'wild fire' until it consumes the aspirant's ego. The devotee, freed of all traces of the ego, when his inward purification is complete, becomes an illuminated soul and finally gets fully united with the Lord.

There is no contradiction between anugraha and purushartha, the latter manifesting itself as tapas or penance that the aspirant undergoes for inward purification. The practice of yoga, involving meditation and other forms of sadhana including Kirtan, self-less social work and the like, yields positive results sooner or later. Such a discipline makes the aspirant into a recipient for divine grace.

Finally, the true Bhaktas, who are knowers of the Divine in their own right, generally look upon the world (Jagat) as a divine sport (Ishwara's Lila). According to this view, the individual soul weaned away from the Divine gets eventually united with him. In fact, its temporary alienation from God is a Sheer play of his Maya. However, the 'veil' of separation will not shut out the divine light for good. Siva's grace is always there, and for all. That is what our sastras lay emphasis on and declare so unambiguously. He who strives hard, trusting in God, ever waiting for "the spark from heaven to fall" inevitably experiences 'divine grace' and attains the final beatitude.

37 The Letter "K"

T. N. Dhar 'Kundan'

The letter 'K' fascinates me. May be it is because I am proud of belonging Kashmir, the land founded by the great Kashyapa. Perhaps this is why I have adopted the pen name Kundan beginning with K. Is it not a fact that the Indians have never been historyminded and the first great historian who wrote Rajatarangini, was none other than Kalhana of Kashmir ?

Kashmir is known for its Kong (Saffron) which is unique in the world. Our lakes are full of Kamal (Lotus) which traditionally has been a symbol of life. The ladies' headgear in Kashmir is called Kalavalyun, the essential component of which is Kalpush. Then we have our famous Kangri-that sustains us during the Kathyush (freezing cold) of the winter and the Kantopa, the cap that protects us from the biting cold. All these items begin with the letter 'K'.

Now if we turn to our religion, we find that we basically believe in the Bhakti. Be it unto Krishna (Vaishnava), upto Kailashapati (Shaiva) or unto Kaali (Shakhta). All these Deities whom we adore, worship and pray to have the names begining with the letter 'K'. On the Yogic side also there is an important school of thought in Kashmir which advocates practising of Kundalini Yoga. Interestingly enough, here again we come across the same letter 'K'.

Then as the believers of the Bhagawad Geeta and devotees of Lord Krishna we cannot but refer to Kanna Yoga. We know that a major portion of the Geeta is devoted to the discussion on Kanna-the Nishkama Karma at that. We are reminded that to act only is within our competence and that the fruit lies in the hands of the Lord. So unmindful of the fruits we must act and perform our duties. Kirma with capital K has, therefore, to be the cornerstone of our life. We must turn our lives into a Kalpavrikhsha and go on giving without expecting anything in return.

There are innumerable birds in our land, some of them singing birds. We have Kaw (Crow). Kotur (Pigeon) and many others, but I personally love Kukil (Koil) and Katij (Dove, incidentally the name of my mother). May be because of this fascination for the letter K, I am very fond of Kahwa and Kulcha-served of course in the traditional Khose.

I have nostalgic memory of Kadal, (the bridge) Kocha (the lane) and Kwal (the River) where I lived my childhood. I love my mother tongue, Koshur and its literature, enriched by saints, sufis and savants. It is colourful and fragrent with the scent of the multihued flowers of the gardens of Kashmir. It has the flow of the running brooks and the piety and the serenity of the lakes and springs of the valley.

This rich tradition, this pious heritage and this glorious past has not only made us a Godfearing and religious community but has also filled our hearts with Karuna, the compassion. We can't see any one suffer. We cannot tolerate tears on any cheek. We can't bear anyone in pain and agony. That we must have care, concern and compassion for the mankind, the flora and the fauna is the lesson taught to us by the great Sufis, Saints and Rishis like Bhagwan Shree Gopinath Ji. They are the Kamadhars and Kevats (the boatmen) Who Will ferry our Jeevan Kishti (life boat) safe to the other side and they are the ones who have taken Avatar for the Kalyan (Well being) of the human kind. Karuna no doubt is the K-word (The keyword) for the Kalyana of us all. Of course, Kripa of Krishna (Divine grace) is paramount and vital. Kedar to Kanya Kumari, Kamaroop to Kashmir this letter K is seen everywhere. In our spiritual quest we have to ask questions which again start with K, e. g.

Kus Who am I ?

Kati Whither have I come from ?

Kar When has this creation started ?

Kem Who has created this universe ?

Kot Where am I heading to ?

So the letter K and my fascination for it.

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38 Brahman

An Introduction

Susan Walters

My friend Mira at the time of the Durga Puja in October 1992 went with two close friends from college days on a six-day holiday to a village not far to the north of Calcutta. This holiday proved to be a very happy one. The three friends talked together for hours, sang, recited poems, and took long walks along the quiet village roads. A river that flowed through the village lent an air of serenity to the occasion.

When they returned to Calcutta, Mira told me everything about the holiday, and then described a very special experience she had one evening when the three were seated on the roof of the house they were staying in. She also told me she had written a poem in Bengali about this evidently a beautiful poem with rhyme, rhythm-*ever* thing. As unfortunately I don't know my Bengali, she gave me the gist of the poem in English.

I was so moved, I felt inspired to try to capture her experience in English. The poem Brahman is the result.

BRAHMAN

'The space in the universe is negated in Brahman, who is Omnipresent.

How can I forget that night?

The night I saw the sky dissolve into Nothingness The Nothing-ness that is All-ness.

There were three of us-old college friends on a six days holiday in a village three hours by train from Calcutta, sitting on the roof of our temporary home in the midst of a thick grove.

*The trees' branches
rustled around us,
making a little gap now and then
for the sight of the river below.*

*We sang song after song
and ended with Rabindranath, who else ?
Then sat silent. gazing at the sky.
Gradually the sky itself disappeared
And all that is-- was Nothing-- the Void. Then I understood:*

*All those I had ever known, and loved, and lost, were there.
They, and the stars, the trees, the river, and we three friends, were all
part of the same Reality,
with only a little gap between.*

*Nothing is ever lost.
Peace descended on me, and Bliss--*

that little gap was closing up.

I felt I was dissolving in the Void.

*Afraid to lose my little self,
I grasped the nearest arm
And came back to earth.*

Foolish me ! To cling to maya at such a time as this

***But maya won't last forever.
Once again I'll see that Truth,
the Immensity that is Brahman-(No gaps then!) And know for sure that I
am That, That Bliss, that Joy-- That Nothingness that is All.***

39 Two Centenary Celebrations

Susan Walters

Once remarked to an Indian holy man that India was the only country in the world that produces holy men. He smilingly replied, 'it's the only thing it produces!' Of course that statement, as he well knew, was an exaggeration, but what is actually true is that holy men are the only thing India produces that other countries cannot produce.

And it is these holy men who have kept alive, and are keeping alive, the great spiritual traditions of India though not for the sake of India alone, but for the sake of the whole world. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'India's gift to the world is the light spiritual.' He also said, 'Our sacred motherland is a land of religion and philosophy-- the birthplace of spiritual giants-- the land of renunciation, where and where alone, from the most ancient to the most modern times there had been the highest ideal of life open to man.'

At the very base of India's spirituality are the four mahavakyas, the condensed truths of the Vedas, one of which is *tat tvam asi*, 'That thou art.' This tells us that we are in reality the innermost Self-the eternal, divine Atman, and not the body-mind complex, which is always changing and is perishable. This truth, when through the teaching of an enlightened Indian holy man we learn to make our own, gives us great strength and peace. It weans us away from our desire for worldly pleasures and possessions and makes our life a blessing to ourselves and others. Today we need this teaching more than ever before.

This brings us to the subject of this paper, two holy men of India who have something in common besides the spiritual message of India that both have taught. They are Swami Vivekananda and Bhagawan Gopinathji. And what they have in common is that the 'Centenary' of both is being celebrated in 1997 and 1998.

One hundred years ago, in 1897, Swami Vivekananda returned to India as a conquering hero from the West where he had captured many people with his message of Vedanta. He was given a reception all over India befitting such a great hero. And in Kashmir, around the same year, a baby was born who was to become the great saint and spiritual leader, Bhagawan Gopinathji. Both of these events are being celebrated this year in 1997 and next year, 1998, with great eclat.

The arrival of Swami Vivekananda in Columbo on 15 January 1897 and his triumphal procession from there to Calcutta, and then on to northwestern India has been re-enacted this year, with thousands of people greeting him (in his life-size image) with cheers and flower-offerings on his train journey from Rameswaram to Madras (Chennai) where he boarded a ship for Calcutta. Tens of thousands of people welcomed him in Calcutta, the city of his birth, where many celebrations were held before he continued his journey to Almora. Almora greeted him with the same wild enthusiasm as it had a hundred years ago.

(In 1897, Swami Vivekananda had received an invitation to tour the Punjab and Kashmir, and had gone to Kashmir with a group of his disciples where he stayed for over a month, leaving Jammu in early November. It is not known whether the Punjab and Kashmir will be re-enacting his stay in those places this year.)

The birth centenary of Bhagawan Gopinathji is also being celebrated this year with many activities being planned by his disciples and followers. Among them are: holding seminars on spirituality, the printing of rare manuscripts to preserve precious ancient writings, the publication of a commemorative magazine, issuing a postal stamp in his memory, and other projects. These activities will continue in 1998.

The followers of Bhagawan Gopinathji have all along been 'celebrating' his birth (and holy life) by keeping alive the spirituality he represented, in the face of great hardship in Kashmir. Driven from the city of Srinagar, they have built ashrams in Janunu, Delhi, and Bangalore. Here, besides performing the daily arati, work for the poor and suffering is being carried out as before, and other activities such as essay competitions for students are being initiated.

At a time when India is going through difficult times, and it seems that corruption and violence are holding sway in this holy land, all these activities and the dedication of these devoted disciples of Bhagawaan Gopinathji inspire us not to lose heart, and to remember Swami Vivekananda's words:

'In the midst of our misery, our poverty and degeneration, the heart beats as warm as of yore, when the "wealth of Ind" was the proverb of nations and India was the land of the "Aryas", and 'Thou blessed land of the Aryas, thou wast never degraded.'

References

1. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1990, III p. 109
2. Ibid III p. 137.
3. Ibid V, p. 122.
4. Ibid IV, p. 314.

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40 Learning from India

Susan Walters

What can we in the West learn from India? Most students of the subject believe that Advaita Vedanta philosophy-the conception of the Divine Oneness at the centre of everyone and everything-is the most important teaching of India to the world. That is no doubt true. But in my opinion, equally important for us in the West to learn is the worshipful attitude which is so deeply ingrained in the Indian heart and mind. Most Indians are not aware that they possess this endearing and valuable trait. Like the air they breathe, it is taken for granted. But a Western visitor can't help noticing it. This worshipful attitude pervades every aspect of life in India, beginning with ceremonial worship.

An American Poet, Joel Shaw has written a poem titled 'To a Hindu Worshipper' in which he tells how he sees Hindu ceremonial worship.

***Not understanding one word you say,
or what you do,
I stand transfixed, watching you worship God.***

***With what devotion you chant the ancient
Sanskrit and move your hands just so!***

***The way you offer flowers, the pungent incense,
The flickering lamp, I observe bewildered.***

***Hindu worshipper, beyond my comprehension,
Accept my loving worship of your worship.***

But Swami Vivekananda didn't have a very high regard for such worship. He said, 'Ceremonials are the lowest form of worship. Next to God external, and after that, God internal'.

Let us next look at the second kind of worship, external worship, one notch above ceremonial worship.

To see Indian external worship, one has only to walk down a busy Calcutta street. The many shrines to various gods and goddesses, the deities on the shelf in every shop, the priests on their way to worship these deities, the namaste the shopkeeper greets you with, even the way he touches the money you give him to his forehead as a token of worship before placing it in a box-these are all examples of external worship. (I mention Calcutta since I know it, but the same thing is probably found in many other Indian cities.)

One touching example of external worship was observed by a man walking along a country road. An old woman was walking down the same road when she happened to notice a road- side marker with the number 3 engraved on it. She mistook the 3 for an Om sign and carefully dusted off the marker, placed some wild flowers on it, and worshipped it before continuing on her way.

The Thakur ghar in every Indian household is also evidence of external worship.

These ceremonials and external forms of worship may seem superficial, but I believe we in the West can gain much by practising them. Through these practices, we forget our little selves, at least for a short time, and think of something beyond our own little egos. Gradually and mostly unconsciously, we build up within ourselves an attitude of worship. With this attitude, other traits follow. We become genuinely modest-like the 'patient Hindu, the mild Hindu', in Swami Vivekananda's words.

However, there comes a time when these rites and rituals fail to satisfy us. We feel the need for going deeper into the spiritual life. We want the last of the three types of worship; we want the God internal. If we are serious about this, we will find a teacher, an Indian Holy Man. From him we get instructions in japa and meditation. He teaches us that the way to God is an inner approach; God is within our own heart; He is our real Self. We learn how to meditate on that Self.

Actually, through rites and rituals we have already been worshipping that Divine Self, though we didn't know it. In worshipping God we have always been worshipping our hidden Self.

Gradually, throughout spiritual practice and the grace of God, we become aware of the truths of the Upanishads, such as *tat tvam asi*, 'Thou art that'. We understand that this inner Self is in reality the Divine Self of the universe, the unchanging, undying, pure and perfect Ultimate Reality-Brahman. This Self is the one external Existence in all things and beings, their innermost essence. We not only know this, we try to experience this divine Oneness.

As our personal spiritual life deepens through worship, we learn to see God not only in our own heart, but in all. Our relationship with others is then imbued with a spirit of worship and service. We worship God in our parents, our husbands or wives, our children, our neighbours - even our so-called enemies, seeing the divine in them all. This is the key to peace in the family, in society and in the world.

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41 Religion as I see It

Neerja Mattoo

I do not believe in the fashionable rejection of religion. As I see it, religion - I mean every religion - has a beautiful face that satisfies the deepest of human urges, but which becomes tarnished, distorted, even defaced in the imperfect hands of the human beings who pride themselves on practising it! Let me explain.

In its purest form, religion was born as a quest for the knowledge of the unknown. I shall not go into the evolution of the religious urge - I think the desire to find answers to the questions that constantly plague the sensitive mind, is a fact of human consciousness itself. The very fact of existence, the act of being, demands an explanation. And religion is the codification of human attempts through intellectual development to give meaning to the chaotic mess of life. The ultimate triumph of good over evil promised by every religion, enables us to go through life in this world. Otherwise its Unreason, Injustice, even Absurdity which confront us at every step, would surely overwhelm us. At the highest level, religion is a reaching out to lift the veils of mystery that hide the ultimate reality from us. At a lower level, the thought of an All-pervading, All-knowing, All-loving, Perfect - Being who presides over our destinies, is a nice, comforting thought. It creates a warm but tough core within that makes it possible for us to cope with disorders, individual and collective. At a still lower level, religious belief in an ambivalent presence, to be summoned whenever a crisis looms ahead, keeps us joint and sees us through. Aren't we all familiar with the sight of streams of young people crowding the steps of shrines, mosques and temples when examinations are near? And their equally 'motivated' parents, importuning the Higher Power through vows and donations!! But, seriously, religion is the motive force that makes human beings strive for perfection through adoration of the All Perfect Being. As it inspires Mother Teresa to tirelessly tend the forsaken dregs of humanity, religion acquires a luminous face. When John Donne, the deeply religious poet, utters the impassioned plea, "No man is an island unto himself....therefore ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee," religion strikes the right balance between the individual urge and the collective good. In making the individual rise above self - interest and worry about the neighbour's welfare, its role can never be over-emphasized. The virtues of fellow-feeling and generosity, in fact all the attributes of the human beings whom we respect owe their cultivation to religious teachings. If interpreted correctly and practised seriously, every religion can become a cohesive force to channelize the best energy and potential of humanity, utilizing the sense of shared strength among its followers. There are so many other beautiful faces of religion. Just look at the sublime architecture of the many houses of god - cathedrals, mosques, temples, gurudwaras and gompas, painstakingly designed, built and decorated out of religious love. Our greatest creative and aesthetic skills, no matter whether in music, painting, literature of whatever, have been poured into the service of religion. Religious poetry in any language plays upon the finest chords of our being. The ecstasy of devotion transforms a mere singer into amusical genius. The collectively sung prayers, resonant with feeling, stir the inmost depths of our hearts. The vibrations of the muezzin's call, in the stillness of the early hours of the morning, have a deeply moving, universal quality, which cannot be the monopoly of only a selected group. The spiritual urge that moves the celebrated Mehdi Hassan to make music in Allah's name is the same that motivates the great Subbulakhshmi or Kumar Gandharva, when they pour their souls into the veneration of Shri Venkatesh or Rama or that which inspires Amahlia Jackson when she breaks into a Negre Spiritual. The complete dedication with which a Bharata Natyam dancer gives herself up to pure dance is also born out of religious feeling - it is her way of reaching out to the divine. And the whole - hearted response of her cosmopolitan audience is also due to a shared religious experience in its broadest sense which has nothing to do with the religion that her dance might have originally been associated with.

But, alas, religion has an ugly face too which thrusts itself before our vision too often. Imperfectly understood and narrowly interpreted, it has allowed itself to be used as a divisive force, driving wedges between people instead of uniting them. This comes from grasping the externals of religion rather than

understanding its essence. Thus it becomes a mockery of itself. Alexander Pope's famous lines come to mind:

***A little learning is a dangerous thing
Drink deep or taste not the Pierian Spring.***

This sums up the situation beautifully. With a smattering of knowledge, a newly serious 'upholder' of religion becomes vain and self-satisfied, as though he alone were the worthy candidate for heaven. Of all arrogances, moral arrogance is the worst. It is a sin against humanity, preaching intolerance and self-righteousness, and goes totally against the humility religion is supposed to inculcate. And I do not mean the all-obvious institutions of intolerance like the Inquisition. There are other, perhaps more cruel and subtle ways of piling guilt upon an individual for not professing to believe loudly enough. The battle cries that are raised give religion an unrecognizable aggressive face, far removed from the gentle, benign, divine face it was supposed to have. Inimically enough, that which should have been the most humanizing force in the world is being used as an agent of dehumanization.

I must not forget to mention a comic face of religion that has made its appearance in the fast-paced western world with its material pre-occupations. This is the quickie brand or rather instant salvation, which is being bought and sold in the international thoroughfare. There are all manner of peddlers of this commodity, who take advantage of the innocents' quality. There is money to be made while the euphoria of their followers lasts, and the Guru disappears before his followers do!

True religion does not breed fear, it celebrates a joyous freedom from doubt. It does not impose blinkers, nor lifts them. It ushers in the light to dispel the darkness of uncertainty. To me, religion is a liberating force, setting one free from fear and ignorance. To think of it as an instrument of enslavement is a grotesque insult to it. But, sadly enough, vested interests are distorting it by deliberately mystifying it, suggesting that it is the chosen few who can understand it and that it is their responsibility - (noblesse oblige!) to interpret it for the lesser mortals! Thereby it is used to serve ends totally at variance with the spirit.

What we need, in the circumstances, is a demystification of religions so that its truths become accessible to the masses, particularly the youth who so desperately need a strong, positive anchor in these drifting negatively volatile times. Such a process will only strengthen the foundation of religions and not weaken them, as human intellectual energies shall then be harnessed to it and not work at cross-purposes. In my mind there is a clear difference between individual religion, a private matter, and organized religion. The latter has its clearly defined and regionally upheld system of hierarchies. It has its own compulsions to enforce its diktat. When an individual will come into conflict with it, organized religion must defend itself with all the force at its command and, needless to say, crush it. Therein lies its apparent strength. But Mira Bai, Surdas and others of the Bhakti Movement, forging their own direct line to their God, successfully challenged it. There lies their strength. Joan of Arc was burnt on the stake as a heretic, accused of daring to directly communicate and receive instructions from her God without aid from the clergy, but how can we forget that the same Joan was canonized as St Joan later?

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42 From Grief to Renunciation

T.N. Dhar 'Kundan'

Sometimes I wonder why Sri Krishna had to give to Arjuna after a long discourse running into 18 Chapters of the Bhagwad Geeta, what was available to the Gopies from the very outset. For an answer to this question I again turn to the Geeta. I find Arjuna does not accept any thing blindly. He reasons out, argues, puts counter questions and, being an intellectual, has his own philosophy. Therefore, sometimes he grieves, sometimes is perplexed and is always full of doubts. The first chapter is appropriately named as the chapter of Arjuna's grief. Because of this grief he drops down his Gandiva, the famous bow. It takes Nine chapters of Sri Geeta from 2nd to 10th to remove his illusion and in the first sloka of chapter 11 he admits for the first time that his illusion is wiped off and he has begun seeing the Truth. The only thing that remained for him to do was to see the grandeur of the Lord and fathom its vastness. After getting a taste of all this in the subsequent chapters and on knowing some more important and salient secrets from Sri Krishna, he finally realizes fully that he is on the rails, as his memory is back and his attachment is gone. All his doubts are cleared. That is how in Chapter 18 sloka 73, he tells Krishna that he would act according to His directions. In other words he resigns unto the Lord, which was the position of the Gopis from day one. It is noteworthy that when Udhav comes to teach them and give them spiritual knowledge, they flatly say, "no one has a number of hearts, but one. We too had one each which Shyam has taken away with him. Bereft of any heart how are we to follow what you preach?"

Well Arjuna cannot be faulted for the way he behaved or for the position he took. He was a man of intellect and wisdom and such a person is bound to weigh pros and cons of his actions. It takes a full study of the Shastras, guidance of a self-realised preceptor and a life-time of experience to be convinced that argument and reason lead one upto a point only. Even Dharma is essential upto a point and upto a stage just as a boat is to cross the waters. But once the shores are reached even the boat has to be abandoned. Thereafter it is the Divine Grace alone that helps one to experience the unexplainable, the indescribable and the unknown. In order to bring home this fact, the discourse of the Geeta, the quint-essence of the Upanishads, was necessary for Arjuna. And it culminates in slokas 65 & 66 of Chapter 18 which Sri Krishna calls the Secret of Secrets, stressing 'complete resignation unto Him' In short Arjuna is advised to become a Gopi.

During the entire discourse, at every step, Sri Krishna has hinted at the supreme fact that He is the whole and sole as also the soul of the universe. In chapter 4 sloka 84 he explains this through a metaphor that Brahma is the holy sacrificial Fire, the oblation, the giver and taker of these and indeed the act itself. In sloka 19 of chapter 7 He says that a knowledgeable person who perceives God in every thing is really rare to find. In chapter 9 slokas 17-18 He makes it clear that He is the Father, the Mother, the Vedas, the Pranav, the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of the entire universe. Again in chapter 10 sloka 8 He describes himself as the Fountain-head of every thing created. Earlier He likens himself, in relation to the creation, to a string within the beads of a rosary. In chapter 18 sloka 61 He says that He is in everybody's heart. But all this Arjuna realizes only when he sees the Majestic Universal Form of Vasudeva, seeing which he trembles and shivers. That is why the resolve "I shall do as you say." escape involuntarily and spontaneously from his mouth. In other words, he gives up actions which are undertaken only for the described objects and this precisely is the definition of 'Renunciation' given in sloka 2 of the last chapter, named aptly as Sanyas Yoga. Thus the study of the Geeta in effect covers a journey from Grief to Renunciation.

This journey each one of us has to undertake and must undertake. Many a milestone is reached during this journey where we get answers to our questions, clarification to our doubts and thereby our blurred vision gets cleared and we reach a stage where we also say 'vasudev sarvmiti'. Everything here verily is Krishna only. And then we surrender upto Him.

Now let us examine some of these milestones met during this journey. The most popular and oft-repeated is the detailed analysis of the Body and the Soul- one is perishable and the other is immortal but then

death itself is only a stage in one's life just as child hood, youth and old age are. So the Soul can neither kill nor get killed.

Another important topic is that relating to poise and balance that one should maintain in one's life. In fact one of the two definitions of Yoga given in the Bhagwad Geeta is 'poise', the other being efficiency in one's deeds. We are advised to be unruffled in grief and unattached in pleasure. We should maintain equilibrium in opposite situations of gain and loss, victory and defeat, happiness and sorrow.

In chapter 5 it has clearly been stated that of all the types of Yoga, Karma Yoga is, supreme (sloka 2). Karma Yoga is nothing but doing ones, deeds without an eye on the reward or the result. In fact it has been made explicitly clear in chapter 2 that doing a deed alone is our concern and the reward and result are outside our jurisdiction. Here one has to make a distinction between a reward and a purpose. When a mother breast-feeds her baby she has a purpose, the health and well-being of the baby; She does not have any reward in view which she would get from the babe. So, as a true Karma Yogi according to Sri Geeta, we should do our deeds with purpose, efficiently and leave the reward in the hands of the Lord. For Bhagwan Krishna says that those who have unflinching faith in Him need not worry either for their 'yog' or for their 'kshame' ('yog' means getting what one does not have and 'kshame' means protecting what already one has.)

In reply to a query from Arjuna about the attributes of a person with firm intellect Sri Krishna says that in order to be a 'sthit prajh' one should have the following qualities: He should shun all desires and be self-satisfied. He should have poise and equilibrium. Unattached he should be devoid of anger and fear. He should neither get elated nor depressed in favourable and unfavourable circumstances, respectively. This person of perfection is likened to a tortoise. Just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs, the person with firm intellect withdraws his senses from the sense-objects.

The Geeta says if the senses are not so withdrawn from their objects, a person is bound to think of these objects all the time. This leads to attachment with the objects, that in turn creates desires. Desires give rise to anger and anger generates delusion. Delusion results in the loss of memory of the Truth and this loss of memory brings about destruction of discriminative intelligence. Once this intelligence is gone, it spells a man's doom. Thus the root cause of spiritual disaster is the constant thought of sense-objects and it is because of this that we are told to withdraw our senses from these objects. For this one has to be a yogi-who is above the three attributes of Sat, Raj and Tam; who has a balanced approach to life, who sees God in everyone and everyone in God; who sees himself in every thing and every thing in himself. Such a person is the indestructible Yogi who is able to see the indestructible Truth (Chapter 6, slokas 29 et seq).

The question as to what these attributes are and how one rises above them has been beautifully answered in Chapter 14. The Geeta says that the three attributes have three different results. Satwagun gives light (clarification), Rajogun habit (Inclination) and Tamogun illusion (fascination). One who does not bother getting or losing these results, whose Mana does not dwindle, who has the same attitude towards comfort and discomfort, who loves nor hates and takes both praise and comment in their stride, treats friend and foe, respect and disrespect alike, is said to have risen above these attributes and this state is essential for liberation and emancipation.

Even if one is not fully successful in rising above these, still one must guard against falling into their trap. Even Rajogun, the moderate attribute, leads to sin. Sloka 37 of chapter 3 explains that both Desire and Anger are the progeny of Rajoguna. These are never satiated and therefore, induce us to committing sins. Thus they should be viewed as enemies. They thrive in the senses, Mana and the intellect. They put a veil around knowledge, bewitch a person and thus hinder his spiritual advancement.

The first step towards attaining the exalted position according to Sri Geeta (chapter 6, sloka 35 et seq.) is to control the Mana (loosely translated as Mind.) it is difficult indeed but constant practice and detached attitude make it possible to control it. But then there is an easier method, that of Resignation. In sloka 27 of chapter 9 Sri Krishna says, "Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give away and all your penance should be offered to me." This is further elaborated in sloka 34 which

reads. "Concentrate on me, be my Devout, worship me, salute me. Thus getting attached to me and fully dependent on me you shall certainly attain me."

In chapter after chapter, relevant and important questions are raised, sometimes by Arjuna and some times by Sri Krishna himself. Lucid answers are provided to these questions in simple words but with depth of meaning and connotation. A thorough study helps us to cover this journey from Grief to Renunciation as Arjuna did and enables us transform ourselves from Arjuna - a groping seeker into a Gopi all purified through the nectar of the eternal Love of Krishna.

Before we conclude, however, let us also know the qualities that the Bhagwad Geeta says will endear us to Sri Krishna. these are enumerated in Chapter 12 (Sloka 13-20). These are: "No hatred: Friendship unto all; compassion; no attachment; no ego; poise in pleasure and pain; always satisfied; firmness in resolves; concentrating Mind and Intellect on Him; moulding one's self in such a way that one is not a cause of grief for others and others are not a cause of grief for him; devoid of happiness and sorrow, fear or favour; satisfied in whatever one gets; pure; efficient neutral; one who does not grieve; one who acts without worrying about results or reward; one who covets not; one whose attitude to friend and foe, respect and disrespect, heat and cold and pleasure and pain is the same; one who drinks deep the nectar of Sri Krishna's Upadesha, acts as He dictates and has unflinching faith in Him". Let us imbibe these Qualities to justify our own existence and our faith in the Lord as also our trust in the scriptures.

If we want to cross the ocean of Grief let us know ourselves. As stated in the Vedas, it is the knower of Self only who crosses this ocean.