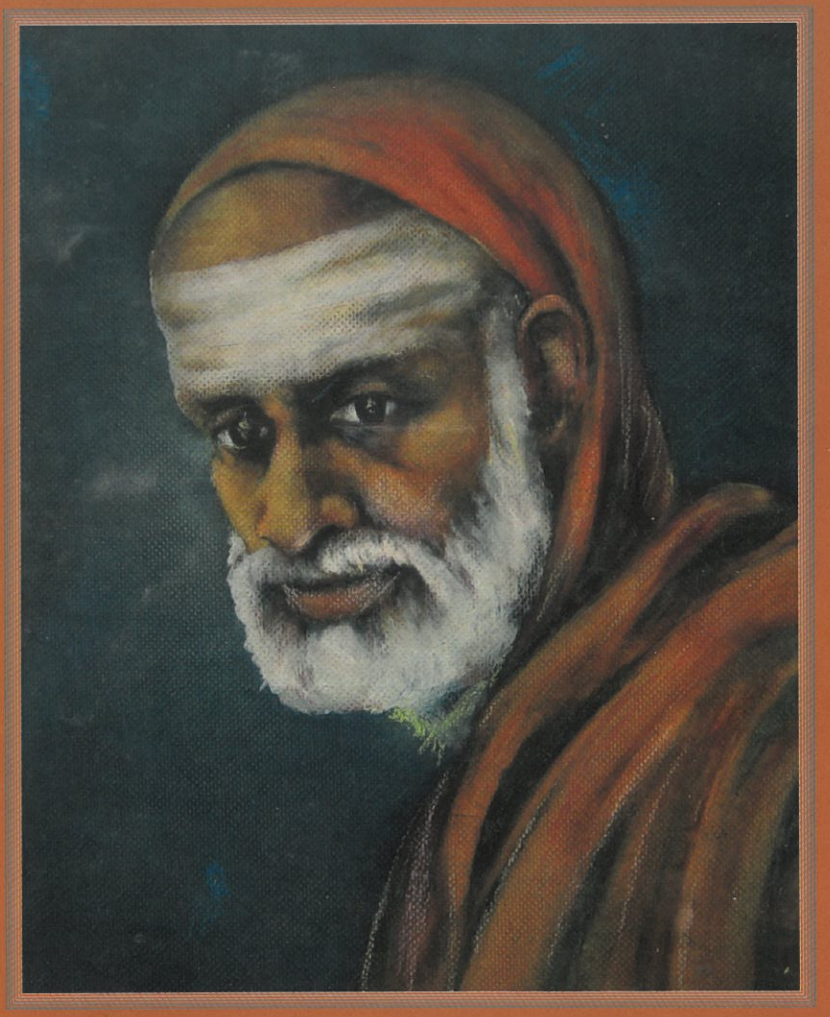
The Saint of Śringeri

Vidyālankāra
Prof. S. K. Rāmachandra Rao



Translated by Sri S. A. Karthik

Suramā Prakashana
Bangalore - 11

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by

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Suramā Prakāśana
Prof. S. K. Ramachandra Rao Memorial Trust
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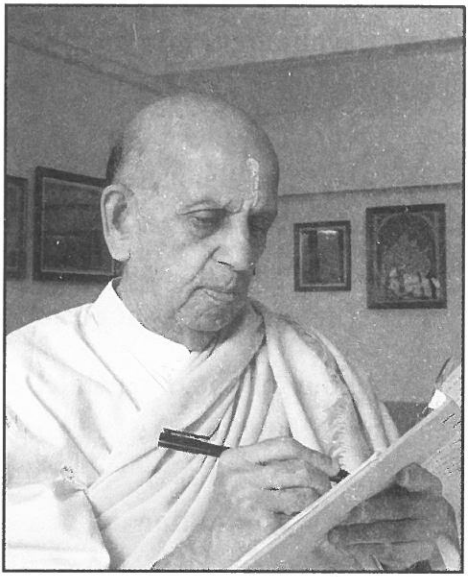
About the Author



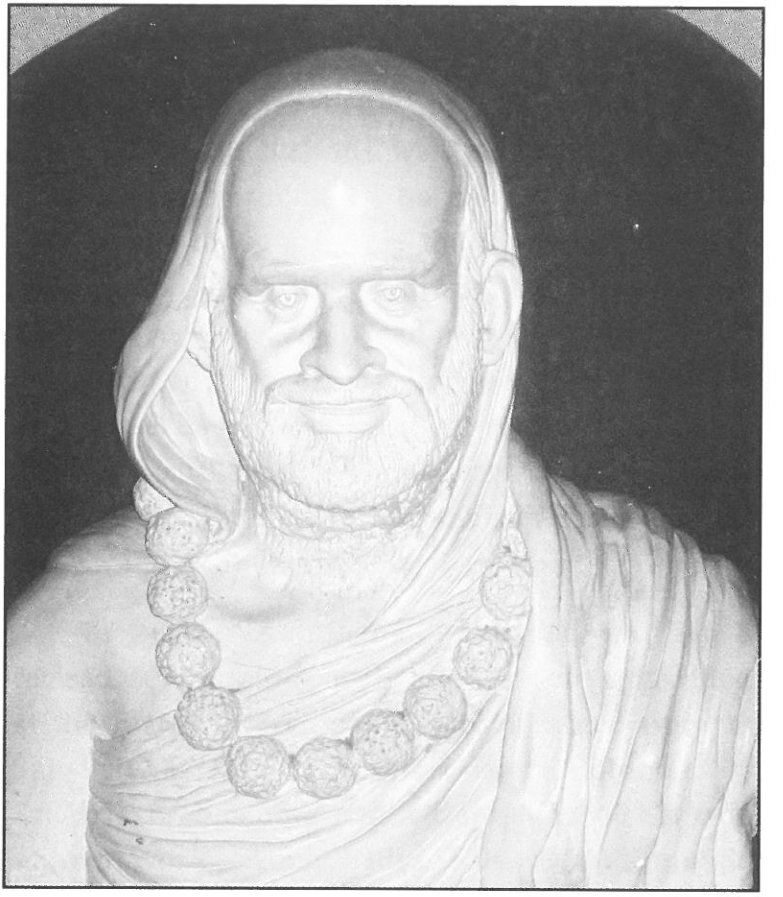
Prof S. K. Rāmachandra Rao (1925-2006) was born in a conservative Mādhva Brāhmin family. He studied sanskrit in a pāṭhaśāla in Nanjangud, and then learnt the prasthāna traya with bhāsya under Pālghāt Nārāyaṇa Śāstri. He also studied Pāli and Tripīṭakas from Nārada Mahāthera of Sri Lanka, and learnt Tibetan in order to learn Tibetan Buddhism. He obtained an M.A. in psychology from the Mysore University, and started his career as a research assistant in the Indian Institute of Science. He later headed the department of clinical psychology in NIMHANS in Bangalore.

A born teacher, he was a visiting professor at the Bangalore University teaching in the departments of psychology, philosophy, Indology, social work and education. He headed the department of Indian culture at the Callison College, University of the Pacific, Bangalore Centre. He was a senior associate of the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, and was on the guest faculty on Indian Institute of Management.

He was a member of the Karnataka State Lalita Kala Academy and Sangita Nritya Academy, had served on the Agama Board, Karnataka and was on the advisory committee of the T.T.D. He had been honored with the 1986 Karnataka Rajyotsava Award.

He was a prolific writer, artist, sculptor, musicologist, scholar and orator. He had written more than 150 books in English and Kannada on various aspects of traditional Indian Culture apart from a play in Sanskrit and books in Pāli. His books on Iconography and on Tirupati were given the state Sahitya Academy awards.

He had been honored with the titles Vidyālankāra, Sangīta Kalāratna, Vāchaspati, etc. He had received the Vedaratna Samman from the Swāmi Gangeshwaranandaji Trust, Mumbai.



Photograph of the Swāmi's Plaster of Paris Model :
executed by the Author

Preface

This is the English translation of Prof S. K. Rāmachandra Rao's popular Kannada book entitled Śrī Śāradā-peeṭhada-māṇikya which saw several editions. The original book 'Śrī Chandraśekhara Bhārati' was published in 1966; it was a small book of 54 pages. An enlarged edition was brought out by the 'Śāradā Prakāśana' in 1983. The third edition was from the Kalpatharu Research Academy in 1994. Apart from these, a group of devotees of Śrī Chandraśekhara Bhārati Swāmi reprinted the book for free distribution amongst themselves. All these editions did not contain the Kannada translation of the Swāmi's literary works.

In 2002, 'Abhijnāna' published the fourth revised edition along with the Kannada translation of the literary works of the Swāmi which were in Sanskrit. It also included a short note on Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra and a translation of his well known work 'Ātma Vidyā Vilāsa' in Kannada written by Prof S. K. Rāmachandra Rao.

The present work comprises the original text and the English translation of the Kannada version of 'Ātma Vidyā Vilāsa' of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra., prepared by the Professor. The

cover page has a reproduction of his oil painting of the Swāmi. We have also included a photograph of the author's sculpture in plaster of paris of Swāmi Chandraśekhara Bhārati and some sketches drawn by Prof S. K. Rāmachandra Rao.

Our friend Sri G. S. Sarnath who has a great admiration for Swāmi Chandraśekhara Bhārati and desired to read the book, was persuading us to bring out its English translation and offered to sponsor the project. We are grateful for his offer and a generous contribution which has enabled the publication of this work.

Śrī S. A. Kārthik has not only donated a substantial sum to the Prof S. K. Rāmachandra Rao Memorial Trust but also enthusiastically came forward to translate the Kannada book into English. His translation is true to the original in both letter and spirit.

His language is simple and elegant. We sincerely appreciate and acknowledge his help. We are thankful to our friends at the 'Vāgartha' for bringing out this book so well.

Pushya Bahula Panchami
14-1-2012

Smt Ramā Rāmachandra Rao.

Prologue

I wish to say a few words about why I wrote this book. The subject of this book, the late *jagadguru* of Śringeri, Śrī Chandraśekhara Bhārati, is a person I revere. I first saw him when I was a boy of thirteen. From that day till this, not a day has gone by without my remembering him; I have not commenced the study of any work without saluting him; neither have I started any solemn endeavour without seeking his guidance. I have believed in him alone; till today, I have not felt the need to choose another guru!

When I speak of him as my guru, I do not mean that I studied under him, as is the usual practice. Neither did I obtain initiation into any *mantra*, nor, for that matter, do I belong to the Śringeri *maṭha*. I saw him only thrice — twice in Nanjanagud and once in Bangalore. In the paragraphs that follow I have reminisced about that first meeting. The second time I saw him, I was in school. A person belonging to the *maṭha* took me to the Swāmi's presence whereupon the Swāmi saw me, inquired about my well-being and smiled benevolently at me. This meeting too was in Nanjanagud. During that time, I got another opportunity to see him from up close and fill my soul with his gaze and smile when he looked towards me. Though not less than sixty four years have passed since this event happened, I can still close my eyes and see that smile very clearly. What an impact it must have had on me! So, it is not inappropriate for me to consider him my guru, is it?

The first time I met him was when I was a student of the high school in Nanjanagud. Nanjanagud is about fifteen miles from Mysore, a famous Śaiva place of pilgrimage. There was a connection of sorts between this town and Śringeri because the Chief Administrator of the Śringeri *maṭha* hailed from here. Since the time of Swāmi Ugra-Narasimha Bhārati Swāmi, it was common for the head of the Śringeri *maṭha* to visit Nanjanagud.

One afternoon, the school suddenly declared a holiday. The reason was that an important Swāmi was gracing the town by his visit. We were thrilled, for a holiday meant time to play. But as we were leaving the school premises, the principal, B. Rajivalochanam called us and said, 'Don't roam the streets because it is a holiday. The Śringeri Swami is coming to the town. Pay him a visit and earn some merit. He has left Mysore for here; he is scheduled to reach around 4 PM. Wait near the town gates and see him; it may be difficult to get a *darśan* later.'

Though he seemed rough on the outside, the principal was soft by nature. He was a favourite of ours because he taught well and regaled us often with his jokes. Later, I learnt that he was a very pious man and owed allegiance to the Ānanda-Āśrama at Agadi. We did not want to disobey him, and were also wary that he may ask us about it the next day. So, we went to see the Swāmi.

By the time we got to the place where the road from Mysore joined the town, a small group of people had gathered. Our school was outside the town, on one side

of the Mysore road; if we crossed the large playground, we could reach the Mysore road. We saw the gathering from afar and walked directly towards it. We did not know where Śringeri was, who this Swāmi was and why he was coming to our town. We were only happy that school was closed, we were excited by the festivities at the town gates and we were to obey the principal. That was all that mattered to us.

We could not spot the principal in the group. A few other teachers were there. We also recognized many elders of the town. But we wondered why only so few people had gathered when an important Swāmi of such a big *maṭha* was visiting. The traditional leaf-festoons and canopies were also not there. In fact, we were a little disappointed by the lack of any celebration.

We learnt later that the Swāmi disliked any show. It appeared that he did not approve of news about his tours getting around. Moreover, people said that his health was not alright. We overheard that he was on his way to Kāladi (a town in Kerala) and that he was stopping over at Nanjanagud en route. Some people felt that the officials of the *maṭha* were compelling him to visit that place. In any case, not too many people knew of his visit; if they did, perhaps there would have been a lot of pomp.

We mingled in the group and overheard whatever they said. Someone said that the Swami was not well; another said that he had gone mad; yet another said that it was not madness but the effect of enduring various tensions at the

maṭha; still one more declared, he is a *jīvanmukta*, a liberated soul, what can we understand of him! Somebody else said that we were all blessed immeasurably because such a *mahātma*, a great soul was visiting our town. To which another agreed: that is true, for even if we went to Śringeri and waited for months on end, seeing him was difficult! Another explained: That was because the Swāmi lived in solitude in Narasimhavana, on the far bank of the river, showing himself to people only when he felt like.

By this time, the murmuring of the group increased. They spotted the Swāmi's entourage at a distance, coming along the Mysore road. Somebody who reached the town first confirmed that the Swāmi had arrived. All eyes were on the road ahead. The entourage, which was moving at a fast pace till then, slowed down as it neared the town gates. It was a small group after all, about eight or ten people. They all looked like Brahmins who practised Vedic rituals. They all came walking. In their midst was a palanquin. That was the first time I saw one. It looked like a tall box with supports on either side and two bearers were carrying it on their shoulders. We had imagined a large procession; what we saw in front of us increased our disappointment.

The Swāmi's entourage turned off the Mysore highway and into the town's main road, where it stood facing the gathering. The bearers lowered the palanquin in the middle of the street. An elderly person opened the door of the palanquin. We saw the Swāmi seated inside in the *padmāsana* posture. Immediately, everybody joined

their palms in devotion and awe and prostrated themselves on the road.

The Swāmi put his head outside the palanquin, smiled lightly, and joined his palms in acknowledgement of the salutations he had received. We did not notice the attitude of superiority which all Swāmis usually assume when they bless the ordinary devotees. The light smile was natural enough; it did not have any trace of artificiality or an indication of superiority. We boys, who were seeing all this happen before us, neither did *namaskāra* nor prostrated ourselves. Not knowing what we should do, we simply stood looking at the Swāmi. However, his glance fell on us too; the same smile was bestowed on us also!

I had not seen such a radiant and bright face ever before. The smile that spread across his countenance and streamed forward made a strong impact on me. Even though more than fifty years have elapsed since this event, the same contented face and that guileless smile appear before me whenever I close my eyes. That memory has remained without fading all these years!

No one in the gathering made bold to speak to the Swāmi; neither did the Swāmi initiate a dialogue with anyone. Only the smile on his face delighted everyone. It appeared as though the people felt it was their good fortune to have seen him with their own eyes, and they were filling their souls with his image. Only one member of the Swami's party was speaking loudly with someone from the town; everybody else was quiet.

After five or ten minutes of this silent welcome, the Swāmi bowed his head slightly and resumed his erect posture in the palanquin. The elderly gentleman who had earlier opened the door closed it this time. Again, the bearers carried the palanquin on their shoulders and began to walk on the main street of the town. The Swami's entourage and the townspeople who had gathered to welcome him walked along with the palanquin.

One of the rooms in the Mysore Mahāraja's palace in Nanjanagud town had been prepared for the Swāmi's stay. Usually, nobody except the elders of his party was admitted into the room. The Swāmi too did not come out. Contrary to the norm, he did not even perform *pūja* in public, either in the morning or in the evening. It was said that the *pūja* articles too had not been brought along. He did not give discourses. Apparently, it had been several years since he stopped giving advice and instruction to the general public. So, it became difficult for people to even see the Swāmi.

However, every evening on each of the three-four days when he had camped there, a few people would collect in the front room of the palace for a *darśan* of the Swāmi. The Swāmi would come there and remain for a few minutes; the devotees would offer their salutations. He did not talk to anyone. And then he would leave the room and retreat into his 'cave'.

The day after the Swami came to Nanjanagud, I went with a classmate to see him. This classmate lived opposite the palace. Since he was a close friend and also the

grandson of the (Śringeri *maṭha's*) Chief Administrator's brother, I got this opportunity when I went to his home as usual. He knew everybody in the Swāmi's quarters. When I went with him, even I was admitted everywhere! It was he who asked me to go with him to see the Swāmi. As long as I live, I shall not forget the favour he did me by making it possible for me to have a *darśan* of the Swāmi.

That evening, about fifteen-twenty people stood in the same room, eagerly awaiting the Swāmi's arrival. My friend and I too joined this group. Since we were boys, we had to stand at the back. Nobody spoke. Devotion was writ large on each face. A few had their eyes closed; a few were with downcast eyes; everybody stood erect with joined palms. Only both of us looked from one person to another, our eyes wandering here and there.

After we stood like this for a while, a cool light seemed suddenly to fill the room. A rare, other-worldly presence seemed to fill the air. Everyone shuddered involuntarily and looked towards the inner doors of the room. The Swāmi had just then crossed the threshold and stood inside the ante-room. An attendant stood behind him with joined palms, in the inner room.

The Swāmi was of normal height, dark complexioned, with a robe of saffron around the waist and a part of it covering his head. The robe was ritually clean, but old, without a border and lustreless. No chain of *rudrāksha* beads adorned his neck; there were no wooden sandals

under his feet. There was no sign of any pomp which could hint that he was a *jagadguru*. He stood like any other ordinary, poor monk. But the lustre on his face was so bright that it pierced the eyes of the beholder. The radiant smile on his face captivated all those who had gathered.

While it was the norm for devotees to prostrate themselves before him, there was no space for that in that room. All those who had gathered offered their *namaskāra*s with bowed heads and joined palms. There was pin-drop silence and it seemed that nobody even breathed. The Swāmi stood in silence and so did the devotees. After five-six minutes, the trance seemed to pass. When we looked at him, as though awaking from a dream, the Swāmi was about to retreat, having taken a step back across the threshold, though without turning his back to us. In a flash, he disappeared from view into the inner room. We could only see a profile of his attendants.

It felt as though we had experienced something other-worldly, something unprecedented and miraculous. We carried that mood with us as we came out of the room and as we went home; the memory of that meeting remained fresh even though many days passed. We felt transformed.

The desire to know the details of his life, death and spiritual practices was present in me since a long time. It arose in this manner: in 1954, when I had applied for a certain government job, I was summoned to Delhi for an interview. At this time, Dr. M. V. Govindaswamy, who was renowned as an expert in psychiatry, was in Delhi as a

member of the interview panel. The very same evening after the interview, he visited his friend and my uncle who lived in Delhi; I was staying there. The conversation between him and my uncle (Sri K. N. Rangarao, a Chief Engineer with the Indian Railways in Delhi) turned to a news item reported in that dayâs local newspapers. It was a report that the Swāmi of Śringeri, who had gone to the Tunga to bathe, drowned and passed away. For a long time they talked about the Swāmi. My uncle, who was interested in spiritual matters, had met the Swāmi; Dr. Govindaswamy used to visit Śringeri for treating the Swāmi. Even though I was present when they were talking thus, I did not butt in, deferring to etiquette. But I felt a strong desire to know more about the Swāmi.

In due course, I got an opportunity to work with Dr. Govindaswamy. I was also introduced to Dr. C. K. Vasudeva Rao, who used to accompany him to Śringeri on visits to treat the Swāmi. Whenever I got a chance, I began to inquire with them about the Swāmi, read the reports about the Swāmi's health they had sent the Diwan and learn more details. Dr. Govindaswamy revered the Swāmi deeply; Dr. Vasudeva Rao was dismissive. This circumstance enabled me to learn more about the two faces presented by the Swāmi's 'mental illness.' Since I was the head of the department of psychology in that institution, both these gentlemen satisfied my curiosity to their best, unwearied by my inquiries.

My good fortune did not end there. After he came into contact with Śringeri, Dr. Govindaswamy became interested in Vedānta and Sanskrit and had commenced the study of some key texts under the tutelage of Panditarāja V. S. Ramachandra Śāstri. As my acquaintance with Dr. Govindaswamy grew, I was introduced to Rāmachandra Śāstri who used to come to the former's house. Śāstri had studied under the Swāmi and was close to him; Śāstri's father Vallur Subrahmanya Śāstri was the Swāmi's teacher in former times, before the Swāmi had taken *sanyāsa*. Rāmachandra Śāstri lived in Shankarapuram, Bangalore. Now, he too helped me to learn more about the Swāmi.

We cannot forsee what favourable conditions destiny has in store for us. Under various circumstances, I became acquainted with many persons who had known the Swāmi from close quarters. Śrī Kapanipati Bhat, a Chief Engineer in Karnataka State, was fond of me as his close friend's nephew; bed-ridden by an accident, he used to tell me about the Swami for many days and for many hours each day as I sat by his bedside. The incidents he spoke of and the way in which he told them — both have left a deep impression on me. The famous Veerakesari Sītārāmaśāstri was the Swāmi's classmate in his childhood; he knew the latter and was familiar with the *maṭha*'s affairs. It transpired that he wanted to write a book on the Swāmi; he could not do it, having lost his sight. He also kindly furnished me with several details. Sri D. V. Gundappa, who used to guide me with affection, also helped me in this matter. Gundappa had studied under Hānagallu Virūpāksha

Śāstri who had been the Swāmi's teacher and knew him well. Thus, Gundappa provided me with a lot of information which he obtained both directly and indirectly

In addition to these people, I deliberately made the acquaintance of persons whom I would not have met in the normal course of events. Justice Nageshwara Iyer, the Swāmi's attendants Mahabala Bhat, Vishweshwara Śāstri, Chandraśekhara Bhat, and such others favoured me by sharing with me their experiences. There were those who told me of things they said were secrets; there were others who revealed to me information under a promise of secrecy. For my part, I have kept my promise.

Many works concerning the Swāmi came to my aid. Important among them are four or five books published in English by R. Krishnaswami Iyer of Tinnavelli. In 1938, on the occasion of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Swamiâs ascent to the *peeṭha*, a book titled '*Bhakti kusumānjali*' was published by the Vani Vilasa Press of Srirangam. This is a work which for the most part has articles in Sanskrit. Many eminent personalities have written about the Swāmi. Among them, Kunigal Rāmaśāstri - who was not only the *dharmādhikāri* of the Mysore palace and a scholar of the *maṭha*, but also knew the Swāmi very closely, and had played a key role in his coronation celebrations, besides accompanying the Swāmi on his tour to Rameshwaram æ has written at length in Sanskrit, giving details of the Swāmi's former life (before he took *sanyāsa*). Besides this book, there are several articles written by

senior scholars in a commemorative volume published to mark the end of his reign. In Kannada, there are reminiscences recorded by Huragalavadi Lakshminarasimha Śāstri, Gamaki Ramakrishna Śāstri, Mimamsa-Kanthirava Vaidyanatha Shastri, Śāstra-ratnākara Karungalam Krishna Śāstri, T. L. Venkatarama Iyer, Chief Justices N. Chandrasekhara Iyer and Patanjali Śāstri, and Mantreshwara Śarma of Mumbai. I read these books and collected much information from them.

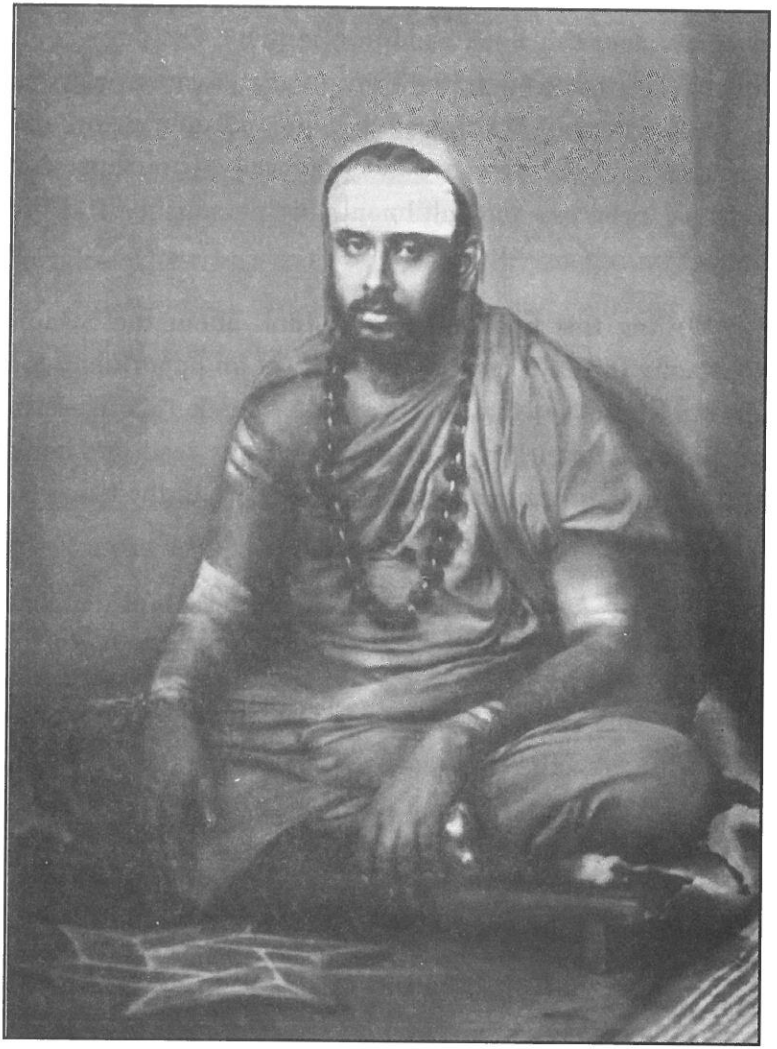
Thus, in the writing of this book, I am indebted to many. However, when I was collecting all this information, I did not have any desire to write a book. I only wished to get an in-depth knowledge about him. Perhaps, I may have been curious too, being a student of psychology. Though I am interested in writing books, I did not wish to make the Swāmi a target of my weakness and so did not pursue my efforts in that direction. Recently, at the behest of a friend, I have compiled some of the details I had gathered over the years in the form of this book.

The book is not intended to spread the Swāmi's glory. Indeed, the Swami himself did not desire such publicity. He was a person who, though a *peeṭhādhipati*, cast aside the instruments of publicity and finally, discarded even the trappings of the *peeṭha* in order to live an unfettered life. He did not display the spiritual powers he had obtained by long practice nor paid them much attention; he chose to turn his attention inward. (It is without doubt that he had such powers. There are people who have experienced them

first-hand. Indeed, I am one of them!) Therefore, what publicity does this book need to give him? The purpose of this book is what my friend said: to give a comprehensive view of a saint of our times - his life and upbringing, his struggles and the pressure of circumstances on him, his spiritual progress and fulfilment, his personality and his impact on others — that is all.

Writing this book made me think about the Swami constantly for days on end and thus get an opportunity for spiritual practise; that was the first benefit this exercise conferred on me. If at least a few persons read this book and are able to summon up his personality in their minds, it will be my second gain from this endeavour.

- Saligrama Krishna Ramachandra Rao



नमः श्रीशारदापीठमाणिक्याय महात्मने।
ब्रह्मविद्या द्वितीयाय चन्द्रशेखरयोगिने॥

CHAPTER - 1

Origins

He became famous as Swāmi Chandraśekhara Bhārati only after taking *sanyāsa* and assuming the position of *jagadguru* at the Śringeri *maṭha*. After all, at the time of becoming a *sanyāsi*, it was and is the norm to discard the old name and take a new one as indicative of the end of a way of life and the beginning of another. His former name was Narasimha. For the purpose of his school records it was Pataguppe Ishwari Narasimhashastri. Pataguppe was the hometown of his family. It is a small settlement on the banks of the Kushavati river in between the towns of Sagara and Nagara. Ishwari was the family name.

It was a family that had lived for generations in Śringeri. They were 'Mulakanāḍu' Brahmins who

had migrated at some time from their original home in the Telugu country. Telugu was the language at home; but it was a Telugu that had adapted to Kannada. They were Brahmins who observed the Vedic rites. They studied the *Āpastamba Sūtra*; their *gotra* was *Gargasa*. Though they were *vaidika* Brahmins they were not priests who wandered from town to town in search of livelihood; neither did they take up a secular job in keeping with the changing times; nor did they depend upon the *maṭha* and cleverly become wealthy. Financially they were not well-off at all; they were poor and remained there. They did not even attempt to get rid of the poverty god had given them.

Even though poor, the family had continued to observe, to the extent possible, certain practices associated with the Brahminical way of life. They learnt some portions of the vedas and also taught a few students who knocked on their door. An ancestor was a scholar and had become well known as a court-scholar or *āsthāna-paṇḍita*. In his time the family got some assistance from the *maṭha* by way of a small house, some rations from the *maṭha's* stores, remuneration on special festivals and so on. So, though they were associated with the *maṭha* to an extent, they lived a quiet existence

by themselves, not interfering with the affairs of the *maṭha*, or participating in the activities of the wider world, or expecting largesse from the authorities.

In the neighbourhood the family was known as naive, unacquainted with the ways of the world and essentially a simple lot. They were neither revered nor reviled. Indeed, why would anybody envy them? Or be their enemy? Or for that matter fear them? Or wish to gain their favour? Any strife in the village or any playing politics at the *maṭha* was beyond them. What little association with the *maṭha* they had was only since the time of Narasimha's grandfather.

His Parents

Subbashastri, Narasimha's grandfather, was a great scholar, especially an adept grammarian. Wishing for higher learning, he left the village, wandered about here and there, and finally made himself reasonably comfortable in the Telugu country. In the course of his tours, the then *jagadguru* of Śringeri chanced upon Subbashastri. Appreciating his proficiency, the *jagadguru* brought him back as an *āsthāna-vidwān* or 'Scholar of the Court'. In Śringeri, the *jagadguru* made arrangements for a small house and some assistance from the *maṭha* for Subbashastri. But Subbashastri, by nature, was unattached to this material world. He did not have the airs and jealousies common to the scholars at the *maṭha*. A person like him found it difficult to cope with the *maṭha*'s atmosphere. In despair, he left both *maṭha* and home and went away as an *avadhūta* - an itinerant mystic. Nobody ever came to know what became of him. It was assumed that he left for the Himalayas. Of course, to the villagers any place outside of their hamlet was the Himalaya!

At Subbashastri's home his wife and only son were left behind. The little assistance from the *maṭha* continued though. But the son did not appear to have it in him to study and become an *āsthāna-vidwān*. He had learnt some portions of the *vedas*

from his father; that was about it. As it was, his father was unattached to worldly affairs. He spent his time in meditation, prayer and such other activities. He left home by the time the son came of age. So where was the question of the son studying the texts? Moreover, though the son did not have the father's erudition, he had inherited his simple ways. Not being too intelligent, he could not hope to get any other job. His wife too was like him; the very same simplicity and naivete. All this meant certain poverty.

The name of Subbashastri's son was Gopalashastri. People called him Gopashastri. His wife was Lakshmamma. Their names have survived only as Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati's parents. They were very docile, not worldly-wise, guileless, and mindful of sin. I have heard of an incident that is indicative of Gopashastri's nature. Gopashastri had the habit of taking snuff. If on his way to the local store to get some snuff he got into conversation with someone, he would return directly home after talking to that person, all but forgetting the reason for which he had set out of home in the first place!

It is no wonder then that poverty clung to people of such a nature. A place to survive, a roof over the head, a little assistance from the *maṭha* –

they were content with these. Not bothering to socialize, or intervene in the affairs of others, they lived by themselves without making an effort to acquire more, content with what came their way. To the extent possible they had continued to observe essential Brahminical practices. Poverty does not mean less of devotion or lack of faith, isn't it? The couple were neither disgusted nor depressed about their poverty.

But they were distressed for one reason – for their children who never survived. The thirteen children they had till then survived but for a while after birth before passing away for one reason or another. Gopashastri and Lakshmamma worried themselves frail. An elder suggested that they go on a pilgrimage to Gokarna and nearby places and make a religious vow at the shrine of Lord Krishna at Udupi; maybe the children would live on. The couple did accordingly. While they were still at the Sri Krishna temple at Udupi, it is said that Lakshmamma felt that the child to come would possibly survive. They offered whatever they could to the Lord at Udupi, worshipped Lord Mahabaleshwara at Gokarna and returned, feeling tranquil in their minds.

After returning from this *yātra*, Lakshmamma gave birth to their fourteenth child. Not only did

this child itself survive, it also proved the salvation of many, spreading joy across the land and becoming a beacon to thousands of spiritual practitioners. Later, the child became famous as Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati. The day of birth was the eleventh lunar day of *bahula* , the month *āśvija*, the year *nandana*; by our present reckoning it was October 16, 1892. The family deity was Lord Narasimha. His grandfather's chosen deity was also the same. The person who brought his grandfather to Śringeri and settled him here was Swāmi Narasimha Bharati. So it was natural that the child was named Narasimha.

Gopashastri was not a man of great means; nobody thought of him as either a scholar or a wealthy man. He or his wife Lakshmamma did not have too many relations. So when the child who became famous later was born it did not hold any significance to the townspeople; only the parents were thrilled. But since the memories of the thirteen children they had lost were still strong, their joy was tempered by the fear of what might happen to this child. However in light of the *yātra* to Gokarna and the *darśana* of Udupi Krishna, they began to feel confident that the child would survive.

Once the child had lived on for a few years the same confidence was clothed with many expectations. The parents conjured up happy dreams that the child would continue to live, grow up, light up their home, and take away their poverty so that they may live like everybody else. Without dashing their hopes the child survived and grew up. The family traits of simplicity, naivete, diffidence and humility were seen in generous amounts in the boy. However, with all these he also had his grandfather's intelligence.

In due course the child joined school and commenced his studies. His education continued uninterrupted. Śringeri was without doubt a village; but since it had a *maṭha* that was respected by even kings, it did not lag behind in the matter of learning. There was not yet a concept of a school to study Sanskrit. The study was in the Sanskrit scholar's house. There was a government school teaching English and Kannada. It was called the 'Anglo-Vernacular School' or 'A. V. School' for short. The lessons there were very much to do with this material world; there was no religious teaching. It was a preparatory ground for those who wished to go to the schools and colleges in the big towns for higher studies.

Our people's fascination for the English system of education had taken root even in those days – a hundred years ago – and had indeed spread widely in the big towns. Though a small village like Śringeri had not felt its spreading heat very much, there were many people even there who had developed an affinity for it. It is difficult for Sanskrit scholars to believe that their lives can be brightened only through Sanskrit; similarly *vaidika* Brahmins too naturally wish to lead the lives of the worldly. In this way, besides being drawn to the charms of the city, the villagers developed a respect for that new path which led to a new life. In Śringeri the intelligent boys all studied at the Anglo Vernacular School. Both to meet the needs of today and ensure the glory of tomorrow, English was *the* highway – so believed the villagers then and so they believe now.

Gopashastri's well-wishers suggested that he enroll Narasimha into this A. V. School. By himself Gopashastri did not know much about all this. 'The boy is smart, intelligent and interested in studies. He may make progress and light up your life. Enroll him into this school', was the advice he received and he felt it was sensible. What if the parents are simple and ignorant of the ways of the world? Should they not wish that their son grow up like

everyone else, get educated, get a good job and bring a name to the family? Will there not be a desire for a light to dispel the gloom?

Narasimha joined the A. V. School. Without skipping a year, he passed all the examinations and reached the 'middle' level. He was then twelve years old. He appeared for the 'Lower Secondary' examinations, and passed first class. What doubt remained in the minds of the parents or the villagers that he was intelligent? It seemed natural that he should continue his studies; he could even get a high position, be a support to his family and bring a name to the village. Gopashastri's well-wishers advised him to educate Narasimha further. He and Lakshmamma agreed.

However, further education could not be had at Śringeri. It was necessary to go to the nearest big town. The parents did not have enough enthusiasm to send the son away from home, what with the boy having brought joy and contentment to the house, and not dying early like their other children. But they also were aware that if they did not send him, his education would not progress further and he would not come up. In this situation they felt that they might consult with the then Swāmi of the *maṭha*. When they inquired about the matter with him, he conferred with the officers of the *maṭha*

and to the shock of the parents told them, ''Let him not have a worldly education; let him learn Vedanta and Sanskrit in the *maṭha's* school.'' The Swāmi then was Satchidananda Shivabhinava-Nrisimha Bharati. The chief administrator of the *maṭha* was Srikanthashastri. He would play a role in the supervision of the boy. More of that later.

The parents were now in a dilemma. They were keen to give the son a secular education. But how could they disobey the dictum of the Swāmi, their revered master? Undoubtedly they would only be too happy to have the boy stay on in the village; but with all the *vedic* studies, when would dawn come upon their lives? Had they not admitted him to the A. V. School because they did not want this *vedic* education? Finally, unable to go against the Swāmi's words, they entrusted Narasimha to *vedic* studies. But they were deeply disappointed, the mother more so. It became certain to them that the castles of their dreams would come tumbling down.

CHAPTER - 2

The *Maṭha* - A Background

Ugra Narasimha Bhārati Swāmi

As a background to this matter, a few words must be said about Swāmi Ugranarasimha Bhārati.

It has been said earlier that it was Swāmi Ugranarashimha Bharati who brought Narasimha's grandfather Subbashastri to Śringeri and had him settle there. Even though his name referred to the ferocious Man-Lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu, his manner was indeed pleasant. People said he was a votary of Lord Narasimha and because of his constant worship of that deity, his face had acquired the lustre and features of that god's face. Though his demeanour was pleasant, his austerity was said to be severe. Having conquered sleep and hunger, he was said to have survived only on a handful of baked bitter-gourd shoots.

Even he was from Śringeri. He was the son of Venkatachala Bhat, an officer of the *maṭha*. 1798 has been recorded as the year of his birth. Even as a boy he left home for distant Varanasi where he studied the scriptures for many years under Vancheshwara Shastri, a renowned scholar. When he returned to Śringeri, he was merely nineteen years of age. Just a few days after his return, the then pontiff at the Śringeri *maṭha*, Sri Abhinava Satchidananda Bharati initiated him to *sanyāsa*, and named him his successor. When his predecessor passed away six months later, Ugranarasimha Bharati had to ascend the Śringeri *peeṭha* as its *jagadguru* at a very young age.

It was in 1817 that he became the *jagadguru*; he passed away in 1879, in his eighty first year. He was the *jagadguru* for sixty two years. In this period he toured the country twice, first the North and then the South, and spread the name and fame of the *maṭha*. The ruler of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodeyar III invited him to Mysore in 1822. A few years later, in 1831, the administration of the kingdom slipped away from the hands of the kings into those of the British Commissioners. There were many accusations that the king was unfit for administering the realm, and it was in doubt whether the royalty of Mysore would survive. The Swāmi was apprehensive that if the royal house itself did not survive, then the *maṭha*, which subsisted on its patronage, may not live on either. It was in these circumstances that he left the Mysore territory.

But Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, who was relentlessly struggling to wrest back the administration of the kingdom, wrote repeatedly to the Swāmi, who was then touring the North, entreating him to return to the kingdom. The Swāmi returned to Mysore in 1854 and visited the king. Records reveal that he visited Commissioner Bowring in Bangalore; however the occasion remains unknown.

It was but natural that the Swāmi was concerned about the *maṭha*. In times past, during the time of Swāmi Abhinava Satchidananda (1742 – 1767), there was a tussle between Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysore and the Peswa Madhava Rao, who revered the *maṭha*. As a result, the Swāmi fled Mysore for Nasik. For decades the affairs of the Śringeri *maṭha* had to be regulated from Nasik. It was only around 1770 that the Śringeri *maṭha* was restored to Śringeri. Hyder too treated the Swāmi with respect. But there was uncertainty about the policy of the foreigner, the imperialist British.

The ties between the Śringeri *maṭha* and the Mysore throne were long-standing. Swāmi Satchidananda Bharati III (1770-1814), the predecessor twice removed from Swāmi Ugranarasimha Bharati, was invited to Mysore by Krishna Raja Wodeyar III as soon as he became king. This king had also seen the Swāmi to be, Abhinava Satchidananda Bharati II (1814-1817). He had sent a report concerning the administration of the *maṭha* to Venkatachala Bhat, an officer of the *maṭha*. That document hints that the Swāmi's administrative capabilities were inadequate. Earlier, Dewan Poornaiah also had expressed some reservations about the Swāmi's predecessor. The *maṭha* had to consider the views and whims of its patrons.

Just as Swāmi Ugranarasimha Bhārati was worldly-wise, he was equally sincere and firm in spiritual matters. Due to these dual qualities, he was revered not only by the Mysore kings but also by the rulers of Hyderabad, Gwalior, Indore, Bhavnagar and other kingdoms; as a consequence, the English officers could not belittle the significance of the *maṭha*. When he returned to Śringeri after completing his first tour, he was sixty years of age. At that time his thoughts went towards cultivating a body of disciples. With the assistance of the then ruler of Mysore, Krishna Raja Wodeyar III, he appointed as his disciple and successor, under the name Satchidananda Shivabhinava Nrsimhabharati, the eight year old Shivaswamy, the third son of Kunigal Ramashastri, the court scholar. He initiated the boy into *sanyāsa* in Mysore itself and together with him, undertook his second tour, this time of South India. He returned to Śringeri only eleven years later!

There are several anecdotes which offer an insight into Ugranarasimha Bharati's character. Here is one of them.

Krishna Raja Wodeyar III had immense devotion for him. This king took delight in composing strings of thousand-and-eight names. He composed such *nāmāvalis* in honour of several gods and gurus. He

got prepared a book compiling all of them. He intended to compose a similar string of names in honour of Ugranarasimha Bharati, listing out his chief attributes.

He did compose such a piece, visited Ugranarasimha Bharati and presented it before him. The Swāmi picked up the book, looked at it, and said, ''It is all well to have composed this, but there is a shortcoming.'' The king said with joined palms, ''Your Reverence must only say what it is and I shall correct it.'' In reply, the Swāmi laughed and said, ''You have forgotten one name. It is, 'He who is happy with god's boon of deafness!'' By this time the Swāmi's hearing had become defective and he could not hear what others spoke. He had believed this to be god's blessing, for the mind could not be agitated by the things people say! Sometimes, referring to his deafness, he would say humorously, ''I shall not listen to anybody. Everyone must listen to me!''

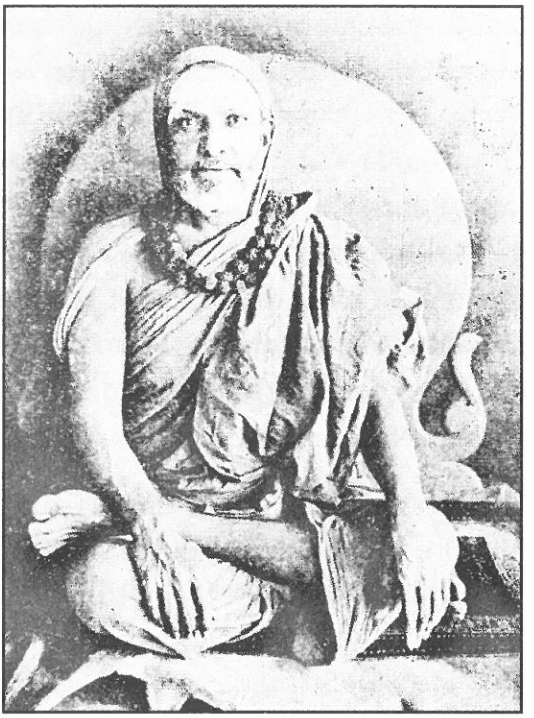
To offer another example – who dare say that all the functionaries of the *maṭha* conduct themselves with integrity? It is well known that there are many who speak in innuendo, or who are avaricious knaves and tricksters, who wriggle their way into a *maṭha*. It appears that such people were around this Swāmi. He had realized such a state

of affairs would not only bring the *maṭha* into disrepute but also render it impoverished. When he visited Tirupati, he put forth his wishes in this regard before the Lord and composed a hymn in praise of Lord Venkatesha, the Venkatesha-Stuti. One of his prayers to the Lord is for the removal of that poverty which is caused by evil minions.[1]

This Swāmi passed away in 1877, two years after his return to Śringeri from his tour of the South where he collected many disciples. His disciple Satchidananda Shivabhinava Nrsimhabharati was twenty one years of age when he assumed the reins of the *maṭha*. Having been with the senior Swāmi for thirteen years, he was well acquainted with matters concerning the administration of the *maṭha*. He also had a marked proficiency in the scriptures. As a person he was inherently capable, pleasant and dignified. For thirty three years until he passed away in 1912, he reigned as the head of the *maṭha* as gloriously as a king of the realm. He was a resplendent personality indeed.

He was the third son of Kunigal Ramashastri – the *āsthāna-vidwān* or the 'Scholar of the Court' at Mysore, confidante of the king, scholar supreme and author of '*Śatakoṭi*' a work on logic. Kunigal

1. "दारिद्र्यं मम दुष्टभृत्यजनितम्"



Nṛsimha Bhārati Swāmi

Ramashastri's ancestors were from Yedatore (now Krishnaraja Nagara) in Mysore district. They had sought the patronage of the king and settled in Mysore. In some unknown way and contrary to the convention of having the father's hometown as part of the name, Kunigal, which was Ramashastri's mother's hometown, became attached to his name. His biography has been written by M. S. Puttanna (1910, published by Kavyalaya press in 1952). Ramashastri's eldest son Lakshmi-Narasimha Shastri

was also a designated scholar at the court of Krishna Raja Wodeyar III. Ramashastri's third son was Shivaswami, eventually the Swāmi at Śringeri. He grew up under the care of his brother Lakshmi-Narasimha Shastri after his father, and then his mother, passed away at a young age. After Ugranarasimha Bharati took him as his disciple and nominated him successor, he learned logic (*tarka*) and Vedanta under his brother from his erstwhile life, Lakshmi-Narasimha Shastri.

Since Lakshmi-Narasimha Shastri did not have male children, he adopted a boy called Ramashastri in his last days. Later, even this boy became famous as Kunigal Ramashastri and even he became a scholar at the Mysore court and the *dharmādhikāri* of the palace; it was also natural that he became the disciple of the Swāmi at Śringeri, though not in the formal monastic way, but more on the spiritual plane. He was of special help in matters like the Swāmi's administration, the establishment of educational institutions, and the writing of treatises. The senior Kunigal Ramashastri lived in Mysore, and as a devotee of Lord Srikantheshwara of Nanjanagud, he lived sometimes in Nanjanagud also. Thus, a branch of the family settled in Nanjanagud. To this branch belonged Srikantha Shastri, who, as chief administrator of the

maṭha was the Swāmi's right-hand for twenty three years. Before him, a scholar from Tanjavur, Satanur Subrahmanyashastri was the chief administrator. Srikanthashastri and the junior Kunigal Ramashastri were contemporaries; they were like brothers; as prominent disciples of the Śringeri *maṭha*, they had a noticeable impact during the time of this Swāmi and Chandrashekhara Bharati, the next Swāmi and subject of this biography.

After Shivaswami became a *sanyāsi* and returned from his tour of South India with the senior Swāmi Ugranarasimha Bharati, the *maṭha* got many wealthy, powerful and learned devotees from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. After the senior Swāmi passed away, the junior Swāmi was anointed as the head of the *peeṭha*. Since his predecessor had wanted to visit Gokarna in his last days but could not, the Swāmi undertook a tour of Gokarna and then Pune six years after becoming the *peeṭhādhipati*, and returned to Śringeri four years later.

When Satchidananda Shivabhinava Nrsimha bharati was reigning over the Śringeri *maṭha,* the ruler of Mysore was Sri Chamaraja Wodeyar (1868 – 1894). Having been initiated into the *Śiva-panchākshari-mantra* by Swāmi Ugra-Narasimha

Bharati, he had a lot of regard for the Śringeri *maṭha*. He visited Śringeri with Sir K. Sheshadri Iyer who had been appointed the Diwan of Mysore during the middle period of his reign (in 1883). Sri Chamaraja Wodeyar was the first ruler of Mysore to visit Śringeri. K. Sheshadri Iyer, who came to Śringeri on December 7, 1885 with Chamaraja Wodeyar, was a Tamilian from Kerala – somebody who belonged to a line of *vaidikas*, a follower of the Śringeri *maṭha* from the time of his forefathers, a stickler to duty and a votary of learning. Appreciating the Swāmi's character, he rendered much help to the *maṭha*'s activities. Sir William Wilson Hunter has written that Iyer had dedicated his intellect to Herbert Spencer and his heart to the Almighty. He was merely thirty eight years of age when he was named Diwan in 1883. Even after Chamaraja Wodeyar passed away in 1894, and Kempu-Nanjammanni took over as Regent, he continued as Diwan. He held this role for eighteen years until he retired in March, 1901; he passed away the same year in the month of September.

In 1891, when the Swāmi embarked on his second tour towards the south he camped at Diwan Sheshadri Iyer's home and moved on. It was then that a special familiarity developed between the

Diwan and Nanjangud Srikantha Shastri, who had been appointed the *maṭha*'s chief administrator a few years ago. In 1895 (to be exact, on Saturday, on *śukla-shashṭhi* in the month of *śrāvaṇa, in the* year *manmaṭha*) after the Swāmi returned from this tour, an institution for *vedic* studies called '*Sadvidyā-Sanjīvini*' was established under the auspices of the Śringeri *maṭha*. Preferring to lead a life of solitude, penance and study, the Swāmi had a portion of the forests on the southern bank of the Tunga river converted into an *āśram*. He named it '*Narasimha-vana*' after his guru and resolved to stay there from then on. *Narasimha-vana* was set up in 1897 (on *bahula-panchami* of *aśvija* month in the year *hevilambi*). It was in *Narasimha-vana* the following year that the king of Mysore, Sri Krishnaraja Wodeyar, who had not yet been enthroned (as the state was being administered by the Regent, Vani-vilasa-sannidhana), saw the Swāmi when he visited Śringeri with his tutor Mr. Frazer. The Swāmi found the Narasimha-vana to be more congenial to him.

Even before he met Sheshadri Iyer, the Swāmi had wished to locate the birthplace of Sankaracharya in Kaladi and build a memorial for him. Since Iyer was from Kerala, occupied a position of power as the Diwan and was also a

devotee, the Swāmi had him visit Kerala and identify the Acharya's birthplace. On the basis of certain data, Sheshadri Iyer determined that a site known as Kaladikara Manjappa's Provarti in Kuttanad, Kottayam Division, in the name of Kaipilli Namboodari, and under the control of the head of an institution called *Tekke-maṭham*, was the birthplace of Sankaracharya. The Swāmi approved. At that time there were no religious records. The name of the Acharya had not even survived in those parts. Though it was well known that Shankaracharya was from Kerala, nobody knew the region from which he hailed. Now a site had at least been identified. The Swāmi arranged for Nadukaveri Srinivasa Shastri of Kumbhakonam to visit that site every year and celebrate the *śankara-jayantī-utsavam* for five days beginning with *vaiśakha-śuddha-panchami*.

Though the Swāmi wished that the *maṭha* take control of the site and erect a memorial for Shankaracharya, he could not think of the means to achieve this, and so did not do anything about it for many years. In 1895, a certain Ramachandra Iyer visited Śringeri to have the Swāmi's *darśan*; he obtained initiation into a *mantra* from the Swāmi. Hailing from Panangudi, Nannilam Taluk, Tanjavur District, he was a lawyer in Chennai. He

then became a judge of the High Court of Travancore. After a year, he became a friend of Diwan Sheshadri Iyer. He became a devotee of the Swāmi and one of the foremost disciples of the *maṭha*. At that time, V. P. Madhav Rao (Vishwanath Madhav Rao Pathanakar), who had secured a high position in the State of Mysore was named as the Diwan of Travancore. In 1905 Ramachandra Iyer and the chief administrator of the *maṭha,* Srikantha Shastri, went to Travancore, met the King and Diwan Madhav Rao, and had Kaladi, the birthplace of Shankaracharya, handed over to the Swāmi.

After completion of this venture, the Swāmi was required, as a symbol of his taking over the site, to install the idol at Shankaracharya's temple and perform *kumbhābhishekam*. In February, 1907 the Swāmi visited Bangalore en route to Kaladi from Śringeri. By then Madhav Rao had been appointed Diwan of Mysore. After the retirement of P. N. Krishnamurthy, who was a descendant of Diwan Poornaiah and the *jahagirdar* of Yelandur, Madhav Rao was Diwan from 1906 until March 13, 1909. He was acquainted with the Swāmi even earlier – when he was the Deputy Commissioner of Shimoga, he had met the Swāmi who had come there en route to Gokarna on his pilgrimage. That

was a long time ago in 1885. From that time Madhav Rao had an attitude of devotion towards the Swāmi. Madhav Rao was from Thanjavur; a *smārta* migrant from Maharashtra. He was a man of intellect and ambition who had come to Mysore to join service as a clerk and rose to become Diwan.

The Swāmi, who was on his way to Kaladi, camped at '*Paṭhana Bhavan*', Madhav Rao's home. Due to Madhav Rao's enthusiasm and assistance, the Shankara Maṭha in Bangalore was built. In the wild stretch between Chamarajapet and Basavanagudi, the extension of Shankara-pura grew. In spacious premises, the Acharya's temple was completed in a mere two weeks. On a Friday, the *krishṇa-dwādaśi* of *vaiśākha*, *plavanga samvatsara*, the marble figure of the Acharya, which had been readied for consecration in Kaladi, was ceremonially set up here. After attending to this event, the Swāmi went to Kaladi, completed the consecration of the idols there and performed the temple's *abhisheka* on February 21, 1910, and came to Bangalore again en route to Śringeri. He opened a school, '*Geervāṇa-proudha-vidyābhi vardhini*', for imparting Vedic education. His objective was to provide free accommodation to fifty students and teach them *pūrva-mīmāmsa*, *vedānta*, *veda*, and the *śāstras*, for a period of

eight years. Madhav Rao had constructed quarters for the students and teachers in the premises of the *maṭha* itself.

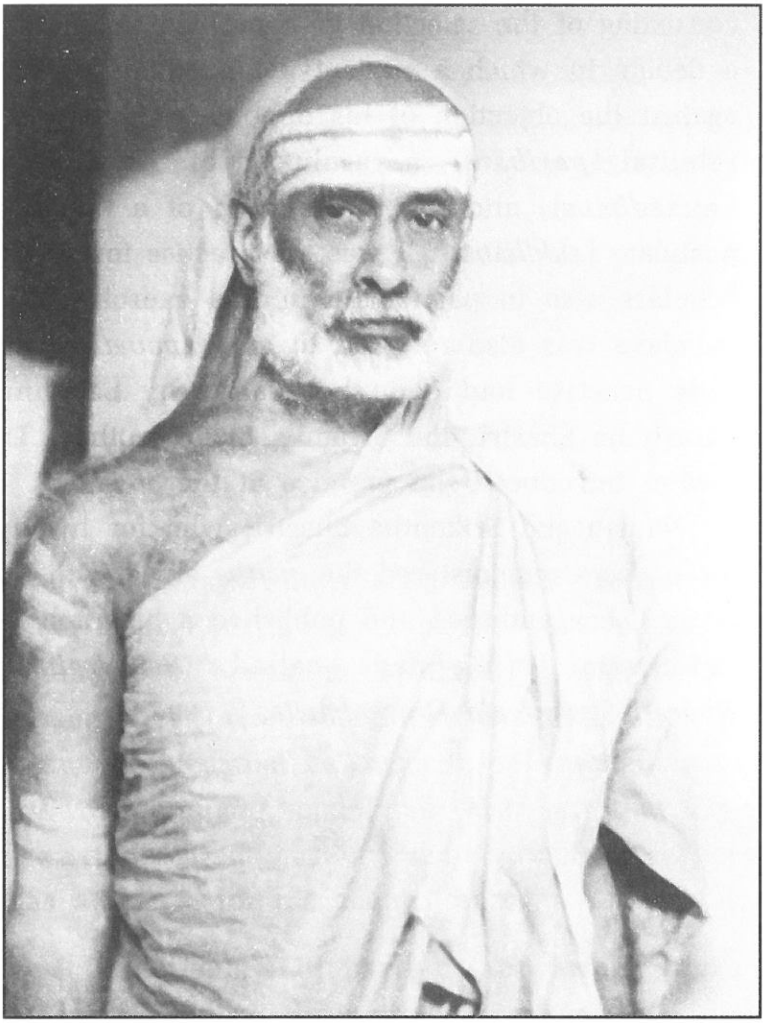
However, having returned to Śringeri, the Swāmi decided upon an initial number of eight students and two teachers, and equipped the school by sending Kunigal Ramashastri to Bangalore. With him came two teachers — to teach *vedānta*, Vellur Subrahmanya Shastri - a man dedicated to his vocation, a scholar and someone who had studied the Vedas and all their branches in the traditional manner; and to teach *pūrva-mīmāmsa,* Vaidyanatha Shastri, who had studied under the Swāmi and had the title '*Mīmāmsa-Kaṇtheerava'*. Of the eight pupils, four were from Śringeri who had already studied logic and grammar at the *Sadvidyā-sanjeevini* school. Three students were from Palakkad and another from Mysore. Among them was the Swāmi's successor, Narasimha. The Swāmi made arrangements for a stipend of Rs.20 to be paid every month to each student. As per his instructions Kunigal Ramashastri came to Bangalore and left after inaugurating the school in the presence of the King of Mysore.

While he was resting on Nandi Hills briefly on his way back from Kaladi, the Swāmi's health was upset. He did not enjoy normal health even after

he reached Śringeri. On March 10, 1912 (*śuddha-bidige* of the *chaitra* month) he was rid of his earthly bonds. He was only fifty-four years of age then. Before he passed on, he had resolved to name Narasimha, who was studying at the *Geervāṇa-proudha-vidyābhivardhini* school in Bangalore, as his successor. More of that later.

The works that this Swāmi took up and achieved were several. Chief among them was the organisation of the *maṭha*. Associated with it were other initiatives like the building of the temples for Sankaracharya and Goddess Sarada Devi at Kaladi, a school in Śringeri to impart traditional education, another school in the Sankara Maṭha at Bangalore for higher learning, *śankara-jayanti utsava* in Kaladi and Śringeri, a conclave of scholars on *vināyaka-chaturthi*, arrangements to have a garden exclusively for meditation at Narasimha-vana and attempts to make the Sarada temple at Śringeri a structure of stone.

A few words must be said about the assembly of scholars on *vināyāka-chaturthi*. This was not a practise that was prevalent in the *maṭha* from times past. The Swāmi's father of his pre-monastic days, Kunigal Ramashastri gave lessons to hundreds of students at home. For only twenty-one days from *vināyaka-chaturthi* (on *śukla-chaturthi* of



bhādrapada) every year, he did not give lessons. However, every evening, before *ārati* was done for the Lord, he made pairs of students who studied the same texts expound the meaning of those texts. The exposition included a methodical process

consisting of the selection of a problem (*samśaya*), a debate in which a student defended his position against the objection of his opponent (*ākshepa*), a rebuttal (*parihāra*), a resolution of the problem (*samādhana*), and the formulation of a thesis or postulate (*siddhānta*). It was the practise for several scholars also to participate in this exercise. This conclave was also referred to as '*gaṇapati-sadas*'. This practise had been kept alive by Lakshminarasimha Shastri, the Swāmi's older brother. The Swāmi introduced the practice at the *maṭha*.

Nanjanagud Srikantha Shastri, who for twenty-three years administered the *maṭha* along with this Swāmi, has authored and published a biography of the Swāmi (in Kannada, called '*'Srī-Nṛsimha-Bhārati-Swāmigala Divyacharitre'*', 1924).

CHAPTER - 3

The Early Days

We shall now return to Narasimha. We saw that when Gopa Shastri consulted the then incumbent Swāmi about Narasimha's education after he had passed the Lower Secondary examinations, the Swāmi decided that he ought to be enrolled in the *Sadvidyā-sanjīvini* school. We also saw that Gopa Shastri deferred to the Swāmi's decision. There was a reason for his acquiescence.

It has been said earlier that Swāmi Ugra-narasimha-bharati brought Gopa Shastri's father Subba Shastri to Śringeri and devised a means of livelihood for him. When Subba Shastri went away as an *avadhūta*, this facility was extended to his family by Swāmi Satchidananda-shivabhinava-nrsimha-bharati. It was with the assistance of the

maṭha, which provided a roof above their heads, some rations every month and some charity that Gopa Shastri's family lived somewhat peacefully. This being the situation, they could not disregard the words of the Swāmi.

There is another piece of detail here. As narrated earlier, Narasimha was Gopa Shastri's fourteenth child, with the previous thirteen dying in their infancy. It was only after the couple finished their pilgrimage to Gokarna and had *darśana* of Lord Krishna that he was born. The naive parents assumed that if their children were to grow up near them, the children would not survive. It is not clear if this was put into their heads by someone or they thought so on their own. Anyway, they felt that if Narasimha were to grow and survive, it would be better if he were separated from them. At that time, the most influential person in the village was Nanjanagud Srikantha Shastri. He was the chief administrator of the *maṭha*, a relation of the Swāmi, and a wealthy man who lived grandly. Many boys from poor families took shelter in his home and pursued their studies. Though he was of a shy nature, Gopa Shastri made bold to request that his son too be given shelter. He wished that at least by Srikantha Shastri's magnanimity the son would survive and grow up. Srikantha Shastri agreed.

In this way Narasimha had to grow up in two households: his own and Srikantha Shastri's. It was therefore natural that his ways were different from the other boys. The shyness he had already acquired from his parents was now enhanced. He now understood the pangs his parents suffered. Thinking that it was enough if he survived somehow, somewhere, did they not agree to be separated from their only son whom they had got after fervent wishes and prayers? How much they should suffer at the hands of those to whom they were obliged! What would be their expectations from him? What could he give in return for their sacrifice? How could he defy their resolve? They were his elders and they were naive; he was still young but he was naive too!

This poor boy who grew up in Srikantha Shastri's house under the latter's supervision, deferring to him, doing all the tasks he was asked to do, and having his meals there, had never imagined that a day would come when he would be the *maṭhādipathi* and the Shastri would stand before him with head bowed. The Shastri too had not expected that. Maybe this set the stage for the mutual discomfiture that came about later. In any case, it was under Srikantha Shastri's upbringing that Narasimha joined school and passed his

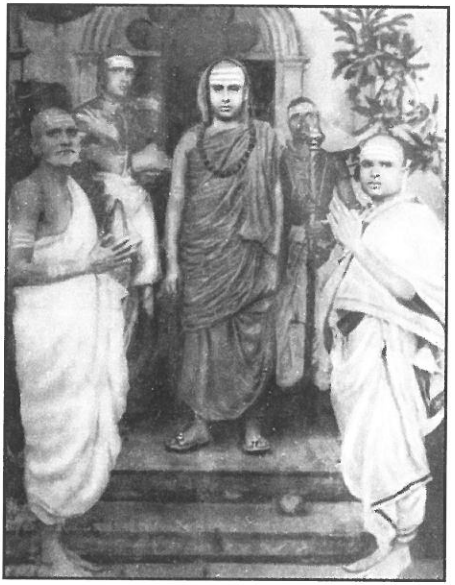
examinations. Since the Swāmi was mostly on tour, Srikantha Shastri too was rarely in residence at Śringeri. Therefore the burden of the son's education was in fact on the parents. The day he cleared the Lower Secondary examinations in the first class, both he and his parents wished that he should obtain a modern education. But Srikantha Shastri and the Swāmi decided that he must continue with the ancient disciplines.

There was a reason for it to be so. The Swāmi was no doubt a votary of education; his family was a family of scholars; his father and elder brother were both scholars at the royal court (of Mysore); his guru was also a famed scholar. However, until then there was no established system within the *maṭha* to impart Sanskrit or the Vedic subjects. It was a time when schools for imparting English education and modern subjects were mushrooming everywhere. In 1895, the Swāmi had inaugurated the '*Sadvidyā-sanjīvinī*' school, with a desire to have a school teaching Sanskrit within the precincts of the *maṭha*. In this school, there was a system to teach not only Sanskrit literature, but also the *śāstras* namely *tarka* (reasoning), *nyāya* (logic), *vyākaraṇa* (grammar), *jyotisha* (astrology), *mīmāmsa* (philosophical inquiry) and *vedānta* (the philosophy of the *upanishads*), all within a period of six years.

The Swāmi wished that the education here be imparted in the ancient way, by following the *gurukula* system. The *maṭha* used to cater to the needs of food and accommodation of the teachers and the students.

But at a time when modern English education was spreading, who would hanker after this kind of learning? Even before the lure of English education was presented before them, people had lost regard for the ancient subjects. And since the time schools encouraged by the government began to be seen here and there, who would come to learn Sanskrit, *vedānta*, or *tarka*? Who would take a liking to this traditional lore when English education had taken wing and held people in thrall? When the wish is for material prosperity, why care to study the *śāstras*? Even the officials and scholars of the *maṭha* did not enrol their children in this stream of study. It was naturally a challenge for the Swāmi to assemble a body of students for this school. Even though ten years had passed since it began, there was no restorative (*sanjīvini*) for this 'good learning' (*sadvidya*). If visitors appeared to show some regard for the ancient subjects, it had become the norm for the Swāmi to recommend that they enrol their children in the '*sadvidyā-sanjīvini*' school. So when Gopa

Shastri came to him with news of his son clearing the Lower Secondary examinations, the Swāmi said, ''The boy is intelligent. Let him not continue with English education; enrol him in the '*Sadvidyā-sanjīvinī*' school. Srikantha Shastri too nodded his approval. What could Gopa Shastri do, given that he was living by the charity of the *maṭha*?



At this juncture, a few words must be said of Srikantha Shastri, for in the life of Chandrashekhara Bharati Swāmi, he played a prominent role. He was from Nanjanagud; his ancestral home was there. In his later years I had seen him there. Among his brothers was one

Krishna Shastri who lived in Mysore. Another brother Yajneshwara Shastri lived in Nanjanagud. I knew him from my childhood. His grandson was my classmate and friend and so I used to visit their home. On those visits he used to call out to me and inquire after my well being. Often I used to see Srikantha Shastri with him. But at that time Srikantha Shastri did not live in Nanjanagud. He used to live at Kallahalli, three miles from Nanjanagud.

It is difficult to describe in words the grandeur of Srikantha Shastri's personality. By the time I saw him he was an old man. It had been several years since he had laid down his office at the *maṭha*. Even so, he stood tall and was well built; he had a glowing complexion and a radiant face; he wore spotless clothes and carried himself majestically; his words were precise and spoken with authority; his gaze was direct. He was an unforgettable person. When I saw him, boy that I was, I used to fear him. But I also wished to see him again and again. He was such a powerful personality. The regal bearing he had is seen rarely even in kings.

Srikantha Shastri, who belonged to the family of Kunigal Ramashastri, the celebrated scholar of Mysore, entered the Śringeri *maṭha* at the age of nineteen, around the time that his relative

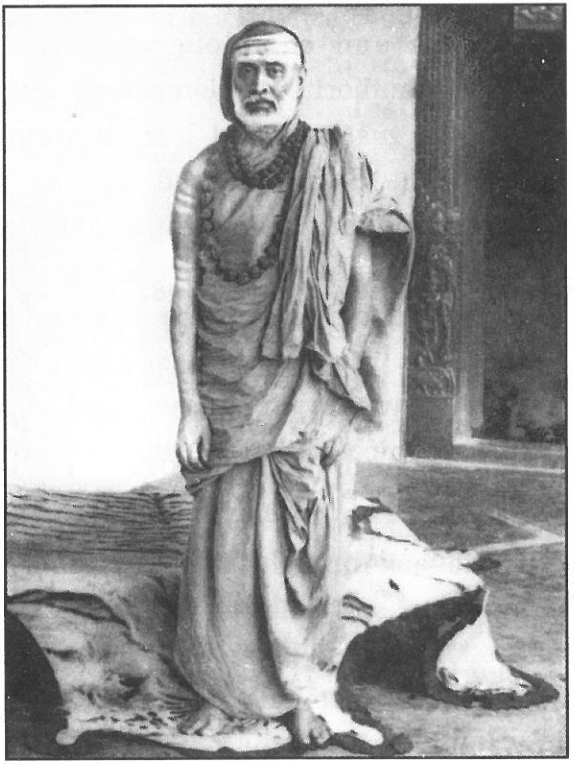
Shivaswami ascended to the position of *maṭhādipati* as Satchidananda Shivabhinava Nrsimhabharati. From then on he administered the *maṭha* for more than forty years – twenty four years for Satchidananda Shivabhinava Nrsimhabharati and eighteen years for Chandrashekhara Bharati. The suzerainty of the *maṭha* was the Swāmi's in name only. But the Swāmi was a *sanyāsi* and the rules and regulations for a *sanyāsi* were many; the gulf between the Swāmi's ways and those of the world were substantial. A householder or a non-*sanyāsi* having the Swāmi's confidence would be needed to look after the *maṭha*'s income, properties, administration of justice, festivities, tours, protection and other affairs of the *maṭha*. It was natural for the Swāmi to trust Srikantha Shastri, not merely because he was a relative but also because he was competent. Though he belonged to a family of scholars, Srikantha Shastri was not known as a scholar himself; in fact he was not inclined to be one. Though he did make some effort to study under the Swāmi after he joined the Śringeri *maṭha*, it did not result in much success. He was a man who had taken upon himself several tasks like the affairs of the *maṭha*, the tours and travels of the Swāmi, liaising with the authorities, the development of a body of disciples and the publicising of the *maṭha*'s status. In short, he was

the master of all the *maṭha*'s affairs – a true *sarvādhikāri*. During the reign of his relative Swāmi Satchidananda Shivabhinava Nrsimhabharati and his successor Swāmi Chandrashekara Bharati, not even the smallest affair concerning the *maṭha* or the town escaped his attention. His writ would surely run and none may oppose it. In the forty years during which he was in power, he lived as an emperor.

This was possible because of his unparalleled competence. He was adept at handling worldly affairs. He was naturally able to exhort people, oversee things and complete whatever task he undertook. His authoritative demeanour was famous. Workers at the *maṭha* feared him; it would not be surprising if the Swāmi feared him as well! He never feared anyone or anything. Diffidence and anxiety did not trouble him even in his dreams. He looked kings and officials in the eye and got them to do what was required. He bowed before none and achieved whatever he wanted to. It was remarked sardonically that he did not bow to the Swāmi even!

Born into and brought up by a family steeped in *vaidika* ritualism, Shastri was a stickler to the observance of rituals. Even there, he preferred to do things grandly. On one hand was the grandeur of the Swāmi's *pūja*, on the other was the Shastri's;

the latter was almost equal to the former! He knew like the palm of his hand the practices of the *maṭha*. Occasionally, if it were inconvenient for the Swāmi to perform the main *pūja*, Shastri completed it. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it was because of him that the Śringeri *maṭha* became famous, powerful and influential. It was with him that an attempt began to fill the coffers of the *maṭha* by attracting rich people from Tamil Nadu.



Is it any wonder then that Narasimha, who grew up in such a man's house and under his care, became most diffident, naturally shy that he was? He experienced Shastri's haughty nature not only as a boy but even after he became the Swāmi. When Shastri expressed his wish with the words ''Enrol the boy in the *maṭha's* school'', Gopa Shastri muttered his assent, and the boy also agreed. What was the alternative? Their dreams melted away like the morning mist.

CHAPTER – 4

At the crossroads

Narasimha stayed on in his hometown of Śringeri and started the study of Sanskrit and *tarka* at the 'Sadvidyā-sanjīvini' school run by the *maṭha*. A study of *tarka-śāstra* is a necessary preparation for a study of Vedanta. In those days, the Swāmi himself used to teach occasionally at the school; otherwise day-to-day teaching was done by other scholars. When he was in the town, the Swāmi visited the school every day and enquired after the well-being of the students and teachers. It is said that during those visits the Swāmi had observed Narasimha's humility, obedience, calm demeanour, sincerity in studies, a keen interest in learning the *śāstras*, devotion to his teachers and similar qualities. It is also said that the Swāmi had

initiated the boy into the *Narasimha-mantra*. All this is not known for certain.

In 1907, shortly after Narasimha joined the school, the Swāmi had to go on tour. A mention has been made already that the Swāmi constructed a temple each for Shankaracharya and Goddess Sharada on land acquired from the Travancore government, and performed the purificatory ceremonies for the temples (*kumbhābhisheka*) and the installation and consecration of the idols in them.

Kunigal Ramashastri was part of the entourage accompanying the Swāmi. In one of his later writings, he mentions that even while he was on tour, the Swāmi reviewed the answer papers submitted by the students of the school at Śringeri and was all praise for Narasimha's answer sheets. It is said that Narasimha's answers were precise and relevant to the question; he did not attempt to write too much; his treatment of the matter at hand was clear, simple and comprehensive.

In this manner, Narasimha's studies at the Śringeri *maṭha*'s school progressed for three years. At that time the Swāmi returned to Śringeri after completing his tour of Kaladi. It has already been mentioned that en route to Śringeri he stopped at

Bangalore and started an institution in the Sankara Maṭha there called '*Gīrvāṇa-Vidyābhivardhini*'' for the teaching of Vedanta. The Swāmi was hard-pressed to find students to enrol in this school. As soon as he returned to Śringeri and heard that Narasimha had learnt *tarka-śāstra* for three years, he instructed him to go to the *Gīrvāṇa-Vidyābhivardhini* school at Bangalore to study *pūrva-mīmāmsa*, a subject which would aid the study of Vedanta.

Once again the parents were in a dilemma. They had consoled themselves with the thought that the son would stay with them. What would happen to them now if he relocated to far-away Bangalore for studies? The mother was distraught about the venture and protested strongly; the father too confided his predicament with Srikantha Shastri. To solve the problem, it was decided that the parents too move to Bangalore with the son and stay with him in a house within the premises of the Shankara Maṭha. This happened immediately after the Swāmi returned to Śringeri in March, 1911.

Narasimha stayed in Bangalore for about a year. There were a few homes built for students and teachers by Diwan Madhava Rao in the Brahmin locality behind the Shankara Maṭha. Gopa

Shastri, Lakshmamma and Narasimha lived in one of them. They did not relish the move from Śringeri, where they had lived a peaceful life all along, to the wilderness that was Bangalore. But what could they do?

At the time the Swāmi sent Narasimha from Śringeri to Bangalore, he composed three verses in Sanskrit and blessed the boy. Some give an alternate anecdote - that one day when the Swāmi was at the Kalabhairava temple, three boys including Narasimha came there, and the Swāmi instructed them to write down the three *ślokas*. These three verses have been preserved for posterity by Kunigal Ramashastri who had heard Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati recite them. The *ślokas* run like this:

संसारनामकसरिन्नाथोत्तरणे तवास्ति यदि वां छा।
बालक शृणु मद्वचनं श्रुतिमस्तकसम्मतं हितोदर्कम् ॥ १ ॥

प्रविधाय सशिखमवपनं छित्वा यज्ञार्थमाहृतं सूत्रम्।
स्वीकृतपारमहंस्यः स्थिरतरसाधनचतुष्टयोपेतः ॥ २ ॥

श्रद्धाभक्तियुतात्मा प्रविचारय तत्त्वमात्मनः सुचिरम्।
सद्गुरुमुखाम्बुजातस्रवदागमशीर्षवाक्पीयूषैः ॥ ३ ॥

''Son! If you wish to cross the river of *samsāra*, then listen to my words which are for your welfare and which are aligned with the

Upanishads. Follow the *guru's* words, become proficient in the four disciplines, and seek the *ātman*, after shaving your head, cutting off the sacred thread and taking *sanyāsa.*''

The goal pointed by the Swāmi in these verses is an inquiry after the *ātman*. The path is the mastery of the four disciplines - *nityā-nitya-vastu-viveka* (learning to discriminate between the eternal and the ephemeral), *ihāmutra-phala-bhoga-virāga* (detachment from the fruits and pleasures in this world and the next), *śama* (restraint of passions) and other ascetic practices and *mumukshutva* (a desire for liberation). *Sanyāsa* is that path on which these four techniques are of assistance. Ordinarily, this would not be a suitable instruction to any twenty year-old; after all there is no rule that a person who studies *Vedānta* ought to become a *sanyāsi*. Moreover, the detachment necessary to become a *sanyāsi* ought to come on its own and not by another's instructions. So why did the Swāmi instruct Narasimha in that manner? This was not how he instructed everybody anyway. Kunigal Ramashastri, who knew the Swāmi well, has written that having observed Narasimha's character and demeanour and appreciated his powers of concentration and inquiry, the Swāmi had made up his mind that Narasimha would be

his successor. While it is not known whether Narasimha nurtured the quality of detachment, he was certainly not overly attached to matters of the world. He had a certain innocence that was not attached to anything of this world, and he had a bent of mind that was other-worldly. He had the conviction that *Vedānta* had to be learnt not merely for preaching or writing but for practice in everyday life. He already had the qualities necessary for a *sanyāsi* - tolerance, stability, sincerity in inquiring after the ultimate truths, and a love of solitude.

At this stage, it seems as though there was a change in the Swāmi's behaviour. In the beginning, he was taking part in worldly affairs and tours; he had desired the splendours, the processions, and interaction with officers and kings. It may have been the need to protect the *maṭha's* reputation or enrich its coffers that was the cause of this attitude. People recognized him as a *rājayogi*, which meant that there were traces of the quality of *rajas*[1] in him. However, after he returned to Śringeri from his last tour that included a visit to Kaladi, the quality of detachment genuinely took root in him. This is not to say that he did not have

1. The second of the three gunas or qualities, the other two being '*sattva*' and '*tamas*'

such detachment earlier; it is just that *virakti* or the quality of detachment does not come easy to the head of a *maṭha*. Even before 1898, he had arranged for the establishment of 'Narasimha-vana', a grove named after his guru, on the far bank of the Tunga river, where he intended to perform his austerities without hindrance. But then he was visited by the king of Mysore, the British Resident, the officers of the government of Travancore, the envoy of the king of Baroda, and Chettiars from Nattukottai. Then there were the scheduled four-months (*chāturmāsya*) when the devotees thronged. How could he ever hope for solitude? And then came the call from Kaladi and so he had to set out on tour to that place where there was a variety of rituals to be attended to, the king's visit, the *pūjas*, festivities, gatherings of scholars, ceremony and large crowds of devotees. Where was the opportunity for detachment?

Even though the Swāmi was endowed by his inherent nature and cultivation (*samskāra*) with the quality of detachment, would he be left alone by authorities and devotees? Indeed, during the time Srikantha Shastri was the chief administrative officer of the *maṭha*, the Swāmi's quality of detachment was overshadowed by that gentleman's enthusiasm, boldness, worldly-wisdom and

pomposity. When in the years to come Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati did what his predecessor the Swāmi wanted to do, namely hold on to a life of solitude in Narasimhavana, did he not appear to be out of his mind to the officers and devotees? Anyway, more of that later.

Even though at that time he was a boy studying in Bangalore, the Swāmi-to-be had somehow grasped the change that had come over his guru. One of his compositions of a later date indicates this. It reads:

तुङ्गातीरलसत्तपोवनभुविस्वैरं चरन्नन्वहं
गङ्गावारिलसज्जटाविलसितं चित्ते मुदा भावयन्।
तुङ्गानन्दविधायकः प्रणमतां शृङ्गाद्रिवासप्रियः
स स्वामी मम देशिकस्तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते ॥ ४ ॥

"With the image in his mind of Lord Shiva who bears Ganga in his hairlocks, he wanders about at will in Narasimhavana on the far bank of the Tunga. He desires to stay in Śringeri only and gives great joy to those who come near him. He only is my guru. I cannot even utter the name of anyone else."

In any event, when he returned from Kaladi to Śringeri in March 1911, the Swāmi's health had

deteriorated and his spirits were low. He had tired of ceaseless worldly activity. Old age seemed to have caught up with him even though he was only fifty three years old. He lived for just another year. In that year he did not even think of stirring outside of Śringeri. He spent much of his time in Narasimha-vana on the far bank of the river. This change was seen soon after he returned to Śringeri. It was then that he had composed the three verses referred to earlier and given them to Narasimha as a token of his blessing. At that time he relished only the quality of detachment or *virakti*, a way of life appropriate to a *sanyāsi*. Maybe he wished that this quality of detachment was attainable by his successor Narasimha.

In this matter, there is another anecdote that is narrated sometimes. The principal of the *maṭha's* school at Śringeri, Sundarashrouti, wished to have his daughter married to Narasimha, and after taking the consent of Narashimha's parents to the proposal, came to Melmangala in Madurai district to place the matter before the Swāmi. The Swāmi was camping there during his tour. On hearing the girl's father mentioning the matter, the Swāmi replied, ''Not Narasimha. His path is different.

Look for some other boy.'' This incident indicates that the Swāmi had already decided Narasimha's future by that time.

There is another line in a hymn to the goddess composed by the Swāmi which runs thus: ''Make Narasimha omniscient, he who has trust in me''.[1] Though the identity of 'Narasimha' who is mentioned in this line is not specified, there are strong reasons to suppose it was the Narasimha of this book. Kunigal Ramashastri, who knew the Swāmi well and belonged to his inner circle, has written that from the beginning, the Swāmi had

1. ''सर्वज्ञं श्रीनृसिंहं कुरु शिवदयिते सत्वरं मद्विनम्रम्''

Narasimha in mind as his successor. It may be observed that in the three verses quoted earlier the path of *sanyāsa* is clearly identified as the most suitable for Narasimha. It is said that Narasimha grasped the real meaning of the *ślokas* and decided to become a *sanyāsi*; but he had never guessed the possibility of his becoming the successor to the Swāmi and the head of the *maṭha*.

CHAPTER 5

Peeṭhādhipati - The Head of the Maṭha

Narasimha had been at Bangalore barely a year before he had to return to Śringeri. Circumstances

demanded that he who had left Śringeri as a student return as the successor to the *jagadguru*. It transpired thus.

The Swāmi's health took a turn for the worse on his way back from Kaladi. He rested for a while at Nandi Hills near Bangalore and returned to Śringeri without delay. His health did not improve even after he returned. It deteriorated steadily and in the first week of March 1912 he foresaw that his end was near. He resolved that he would nominate a successor immediately and in accordance with his earlier decision, he instructed Kunigal Ramashastri, who was his close associate, a scholar and the *dharmādhikāri* of the palace, to bring back Narasimha from Bangalore to Śringeri. As Ramashastri himself has recorded, it appears that the Swāmi had confided his wishes to him. But this was not known to anybody else.

Where the issue was the successor to the *dharmapeeṭha* of Śringeri, it was necessary to obtain the consent of the king of Mysore. As a background to this a few words are in order. The Śringeri *maṭha* was established with the patronage of the Vijayanagar kingdom. In 1346, Hakka (aka Harihara I), the son of Sangama, came to Śringeri. Inscriptions record that he was responsible for the establishment of a *maṭha*. Similarly, we learn that

in 1356, during the reign of Bukka I, Bharati-teertha had the Vidyashankara temple constructed in memory of his guru, Vidya-teertha. Harihara II founded a settlement called Vidyaranyapura to commemorate the passing away of his guru Vidyaranya in 1386; this is a town in the neighbourhood of Śringeri.

After the end of the Vijayanagar kingdom in 1565, Śringeri's prominence declined. Outsiders took control of the *maṭha*'s possessions. During the time of Venkatappa Nayaka, who was ruling the province of Keladi (Bedanur) at the time of Sadashiva Nayaka, the last king of Vijayanagar, the temple in the *maṭha*'s premises ran to dust. There is a reference that Venkatappa Nayaka consecrated the temple again in 1621. However, as the *maṭha* continued to be besieged by troubles, the then Swāmi Satchidananda Bharati sought help from Shivanappa Nayaka, the chieftain of Bedanur, in 1652. That ruler conducted an enquiry into the matter and restored to the *maṭha* the properties it had lost. After Haider Ali became the overlord of Bedanur, the Śringeri *maṭha* came under the patronage of the Mysore kingdom. In 1791, Parashurama Bhavu, a Marattha mercenary, raided the *maṭha*, looted property worth sixty lakhs of rupees and desecrated the idol in the

Sharada temple. At that time, it was the rulers of Mysore who came to the aid of the *maṭha* and saved it from ruin.

From then on, the affairs of the Śringeri *maṭha* had to have the approval of the kings of Mysore. Therefore, the Swāmi wrote to Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, the then ruler of Mysore, to convey that Narasimha, a boy studying in the Shankara Maṭha at Bangalore, may be made his successor. Kunigal Ramashastri, who was the *dharmādhikāri* of the palace, took the letter with him to Bangalore, submitted it to the king who was camping there, and obtained his approval. As per the wishes of the Swāmi, the king, accompanied by Krishna Shastri, the younger brother of the chief administrator of the Bangalore Shankara Maṭha, Srikantha Shastri, and Tammayya Bhatta, a court-scholar, saw Narasimha whom the Swāmi had chosen as his successor. The king did not think much of the choice, and expressed his displeasure. But what was to be done? He agreed to go by the Swāmi's wishes.

When Kunigal Ramashastri, who, according to the Swāmi's wishes, had gone to Bangalore to bring back Narasimha, informed Narasimha's parents about the matter, they did not agree to the proposal. He was the only son and by god's grace he was the lone survivor among their children. They

had built their dreams on him and relied on him. Had they not gone on a pilgrimage to Gokarna and visited Lord Krishna's shrine at Udupi so that like everybody else he too would marry, get a job, earn money, and preserve the family name and prosper? Then how could he take *sanyāsa* and attach himself to a *matha*? Had they not begotten him after yearning for a child? Should he not be the family's saviour? Should he not continue the family line? They did not heed in spite of being told that this was the Swāmi's wish. How can anybody understand parental pangs? They were not in the least in favour of their son becoming the next Swāmi.

What could Ramashastri do? He said what he could and advised them in various ways – that if the son became the Swāmi, the *matha* would look after the parents, that to occupy the seat of the *āchārya* was an honour and a blessing, and that it was the result of merit earned in several previous births and a means of salvation for the entire family. Though he was a scholar who could silence one and all in assemblies and debates, he did not make much headway with this innocent couple. Determining that his task was unaccomplished, he got ready to return to Śringeri.

At that time, Narasimha understood Ramashastri's disappointment and anxiety and reassured his parents to bring them around. Before he left for Bangalore had not the Swāmi blessed him by advising him to be a *sanyāsi*? He too agreed that he ought to be one. If he were to be an unaffiliated *sanyāsi* wandering from town to town, his parents would not even see him. In the present circumstance, since he occupied a *peeṭha*, he could have a base and take care of his parents. The scriptures anyway said that a *sanyāsi* did not have rebirth. It was then inappropriate to think of continuing the ancestral line. Moreover, they had subsisted through the *maṭha*; to disobey the Swāmi's wishes would not be proper. The eminent Ramashastri had come all the way. It was wrong to send him back disappointed. After Narasimha had discussed all these aspects with them, the parents agreed. Ramashastri obtained their consent, updated the king with these events, and left for Mysore.

In reality, Narasimha did not wish even remotely for power over the *maṭha*. Having seen the *maṭha's* pomp and show, the crowds of devotees, and the arrogance of the *maṭha*'s officials from a young age, and knowing that the Swāmi had to tour without pause, he not only did not get

attracted to the *maṭha* but was positively afraid of it. He was sure that the environment of the *maṭha* did not suit his nature at all. He was essentially a poor boy, humble, studious, fond of solitude and innocent. Administration of the *maṭha* was not in his nature, nor did his competence lie there; it did not give him any joy. Was it not the duty of a son to take care of the elders who gave him birth and fulfil their wishes? Was there any greater *dharma*? But then, once the Swāmi had decided the matter, what was there for him to say? Could he doubt the soundness of the Swāmi's decision? Or reject it? Whether the Swāmi's decision was right or wrong, or whether he, Narasimha, was fit for the position or not, or whether the future would be happy or difficult – all this was not his concern. Ramashastri had come with the Swāmi's instructions and had secured the approval of the king; he, Narasimha, ought to bow to his wishes without resenting or thinking twice. The future was God's will. This was Narasimha's reasoning.

At Śringeri, the Swāmi's health was fluctuating. At times he used to struggle to breathe and there was growing doubt of his survival. The Swāmi had a detailed letter written to his confidante, Kunigal Ramashastri, instructing him to bring Narasimha from Bangalore immediately. The letter was

delivered by hand to the Shastri at Mysore in person. Doubting if the Swāmi would live on till Narasimha came from Bangalore, the chief administrator of the *maṭha*, Srikantha Shastri, thought it was better to ordain someone other than Narasimha as a *sanyāsi*, and go ahead with the naming of the Swāmi's successor. When he suggested the name of a Brahmin youth whom he thought suitable, the Swāmi, who was nearing his end, is said to have retorted, "It is better to keep the *peeṭha* vacant rather than give it to that boy!" After this, he is said to have rejected another candidate. Finally, when a third candidate was suggested, he said firmly, "Let Narasimha come, please be quiet till then".

The chief administrator had estimated that if a successor were named when the Swāmi was alive, there would not be any trouble in future. Like in kingdoms, the problems of succession come up in *maṭhas* too. It is not uncommon for a swami's erstwhile relations to work their influence to retain the headship of the *maṭha* within the family. The Śringeri *maṭha* was wealthy and influential. Under these circumstances, it would have been unusual if there had been no scrambling for position and power. Till the end, the Swāmi had not revealed who his successor was to be and had not revealed

what was in his mind. It was only a few days before his end that he had sent Kunigal Ramashastri in Mysore with a letter to the king that gave an insight into his wishes. He was confident that once the king got to know of his wish, it would fructify and the wolves surrounding him could not do any mischief. Narasimha, whom he had chosen as successor, was not his relation. Neither did he belong to a wealthy or influential family, nor was he impressive in his looks or enthusiastic by nature. He was neither daring nor worldly-wise. A poor boy, he had grown up in the house of the chief administrator. Nobody had expected such a person to ascend to the *peetha*. It was but natural that when they came to hear of the Swāmi's decision, the officials were surprised. It was also true that if this decision had been communicated earlier, it would have been opposed strongly. The Swāmi, who was worldly-wise, had expected this and therefore had not made public his thoughts on the matter. Only after his letter reached the king did his decision become known to everyone. By then, it had gone beyond the reach of opportunists and daredevils.

Ramashastri set out for Śringeri with Narasimha, whose parents said they would join a few days later. However, the Swāmi breathed his

last a day before they could reach Śringeri. Narasimha reached Śringeri on March 21, 1912. The last rites of the liberated Swāmi were already underway. Until those rites were completed, Narasimha could not be initiated into *sanyāsa* or be crowned the head of the *peeṭha*. Narasimha had to wait in Śringeri for about fifteen days. During that time, there was discussion about the successor to the *peeṭha*, attempts were made to disentitle Narasimha, officials indulged in politicking and representations were even made to the king. The chief administrator met the king in Mysore and discussed the matter with him the very next day following the Swāmi's passing away. The king, saying that Narasimha was the successor chosen by the Swāmi and there was to be no other thought on the matter, firmly instructed the chief administrator to make arrangements for Narasimha's coronation and sent his representative to Śringeri. Narasimha remained unconcerned in this whole affair. Though he was inclined to *sanyāsa*, he was not enthused by the headship of the *peeṭha*.

Neither the townspeople nor the officials at the *maṭha* believed that Gopa Shastri's son Narasimha would become the *jagadguru*. Everybody was perplexed why the Swāmi chose him and not

anyone else. Indeed, he was an intelligent boy but he was not from a wealthy family. He was not the Swāmi's relation, nor from an influential family. Gopa Shastri was not a man of stature in the town or at the *maṭha*. Neither the father nor the son understood the affairs of the world. He had neither self-confidence nor boldness. He did not even have the cleverness to win people over. He was not even charming to look at - dark complexioned, skinny and short with a downward gaze. If the Swāmi was as impressive as an elephant, the boy was as ordinary as a goat. The Swāmi's resplendent skin, dignified stance, bright eyes and a face exuding power, could inspire obedience and devotion in everyone.

Moreover the Swāmi was born and brought up in Mysore. The people of Śringeri saw him only after he became the Swāmi. But they knew Narasimha from his infancy. They looked upon both father and son with disdain. Those at the *maṭha* looked upon them as dirt. Before Narasimha moved to Bangalore, he had to bring home buttermilk from the *maṭha* everyday. But without a vessel to bring it in, he had borrowed a vessel from the *maṭha*. The stores superintendent used to taunt him for that reason. The poor are looked down upon not only by the rich, but ironically, also by other

poor folk who depend on the rich. How would things be if this poor lad became the *jagadguru*? Would he forget the past, or remember it and seek to punish? Where was the guarantee that the humility shown when there was no power would survive after power came to him?

In this manner, there were many who did not feel happy on hearing that Narasimha would become the *jagadguru*. Indeed, there was nobody in the *maṭha* who welcomed it. But nobody could do anything about it in the face of the Swāmi's wishes and the king's order. While the last rites of the departed Swāmi were underway, an assembly was called at the *maṭha* to decide upon the *sanyāsa* of the next *peethādhipati* and other formal arrangements for the coronation. Senior officials of the *maṭha*, scholars, important devotees of the *maṭha*, and representatives of the king were in that assembly. Only Narasimha, the next head of the *peeṭha*, was not there. He had not received anybody's attention.

When the gathering had deliberated for a while, a wise man suggested that it would be advisable if Narasimha were present at the assembly. Since the discussion surrounding *sanyāsa* and anointment as the head of the *peeṭha* concerned him, should he not know about what they decided on these

matters? When everybody else agreed, the chief administrator sent for Narasimha. He came and stood with his arms crossed and his back to a wall on the far side. Nobody asked him to have a seat. The deliberations continued. After a while, one K. Ramachandra Iyer (who, in later years, assumed the name Ramananda Bharati and took *sanyāsa* in the presence of Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati - as Narasimha became after accepting *sanyāsa*), turned towards Narasimha and asked him to have a seat. When Narasimha dithered to sit amidst scholars and elders, Iyer once again said, ''Tomorrow you become the *jagadguru.* You should not stand. Please sit down.'' To this, Narasimha said with a slight smile, ''That is only tomorrow, is it not?'' and continued to stand. His reasoning was that at that time he was still a *brahmachāri* while those in the assembly were all his elders. This incident has been recorded by Ramachandra Iyer's son R. Krishna Swāmi Iyer (who, in later years, assumed the name Jnanananda Bharati and took *sanyāsa* in the presence of Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati) in one of his books.

On April 6, 1912, after the last rites of the departed Swāmi were over, the chief administrator of the *matha*, Srikantha Shastri, initiated Narasimha into the ''*śrīvidyā-mantra*''. It is said that during

the time of Swāmi Shivabhinava Nrsimhabharati, a certain Satyanandanatha from the Telugu country who was a practitioner of the *śrīvidya*, came to Śringeri and propagated the worship of the *śrīchakra*. A disciple of Satyanandanatha by name Simhabhattula Ramamurthy Shastri, who assumed the name Jnananandanatha on taking *sanyāsa*, lived in Śringeri and composed a Sanskrit work called ''Sri Sarada Chatuhshati Stava'' following the methodology of *śrīchakra* worship. This was printed in the Shalivahana year 1852 (CE 1930), by Sowbhagya Press, Bejwada. This work has been dedicated to Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati[1]. It appears that the worship of the *śrīchakra* gained prominence due to these two gentlemen in the Śringeri *maṭha*. There are many references to Satyanandanatha initiating several householders in this region into the methodology of *śrīchakra* worship. Among them, Maranarayana Jois is prominent. *Śrīchakra* worship enjoys special status in the *maṭha*. There is a tradition of all the Swāmis of the *maṭha* following this practice. Usually, it is the tradition for the incumbent Swāmi to provide his successor with initiation into the worship of the *śrīchakra* and *abhishekha*. But in this case the Swāmi had passed away before he could formally

1. ''अर्पिता चन्द्रमौलीश्वरभारतीगुरुसन्निधौ'' (विज्ञापनम्, ४)

see his successor. Srikantha Shastri, the chief administrator, had been taught ceremonially the *śrīvidyā-mantra* by the Swāmi. He used to chant it every day and had therefore the authority to instruct the future Swāmi in that *mantra*. However, a householder could not instruct a *sanyāsi* in any *mantra*. Therefore, a day prior to Narasimha taking up *sanyāsa* and while he was still a *brahmachāri*, Shastri instructed him in the *śrīvidyā-mantra*. Similarly, in keeping with the traditions at the *maṭha*, the initiation into the *narasimha-mantra* was also completed.

The next day the formalities for initiation into *sanyāsa*, such as *ashṭa-śrāddha, virajā-homa,* chanting of *presha-mantras* on the banks of the Tunga, were completed. After the rituals like the worship of the guru were completed, *mahā-vākya-sangrahaṇa* was conducted by the Swāmi's disciple, Satyananda Saraswati, an unaffiliated monk, and the *yoga-paṭṭa* was granted. On the following day, Narasimha ascended to the seat of the *jagadguru* under the name 'Chandrashekhara Bharati'. He was the thirty fourth in the line of the heads of the *maṭha*.

The name 'Chandrashekhara Bharati' has been taken by four persons in the Śringeri tradition. The person who came to the *peeṭha* after Vidyaranya

was the first Chandrashekhara Bharati, the thirteenth head of the *maṭha*. The fifteenth and eighteenth heads of the *maṭha* were the second and third Chandrashekhara Bharatis. And so Narasimha was the fourth. The name 'Bharati' was suffixed to the swamis of the *maṭha* from the time of the first Chandrashekhara Bharati. For reasons unknown,

the name had slipped out of use from the time of the fourth Chandrashekhara Bharati. For twenty-one generations, the suffix 'Bharati' had survived.

It was a cruel twist of fate that the parents could not be in Śringeri when the son was ordained a monk and conferred the *jagadguru* status. Even though they started early from Bangalore, the lack of transport facilities en route meant that by the time they made it to Śringeri, they saw their son only as *jagadguru*, and after he was dressed in a monk's saffron robes. They could not talk to their son like in former times, nor could he go home with them; they could not serve him food they cooked or confide their troubles in him. The mother's grief was beyond description. Even if he understood it, what could the son do, now that he was *jagadguru*? How could he comfort her? This was the first incident that churned his mind, the first blow to his emotionally sensitive nature. He could never forget it.

CHAPTER 6

Of the World and the Beyond

It must be said that it was a wonder that a poor boy from Śringeri got an opportunity, even though he did not wish for it or even try to get it, to ascend to the seat of the *jagadguru*, a position that was renowned throughout the land, was regarded officially by many kingdoms as the seat of their guru, and was revered by hundreds of thousands of people. Neither he nor his parents ever coveted this seat of the *jagadguru*; in fact they consciously rejected it. When he ascended to that seat, Narasimha was merely twenty years old. It was but natural that those associated with the *maṭha* doubted if this boy could conduct the extensive affairs of such a large *maṭha*. Even the king harboured such doubts.

The boy did not have the background, mindset or training required to administer the *maṭha*. It was an established custom for the Swāmis of Śringeri to join the *maṭha* at a young age, accept monkhood while they were yet unmarried and ascend to the *peeṭha* of the *jagadguru*. The earlier Swāmi was only eight years old when he came to the *maṭha*. But the senior Swāmi was alive and so Narasimha's predecessor stayed with that Swāmi and also accompanied him on his tours for thirteen years, during which period he became familiar with the administration of the *maṭha*, its income and expense, protocol, the prescribed methods of worship, ministering to the devout, and all other matters of detail. When he succeeded to the *peeṭha* upon the passing away of the Swāmi, he had the required experience, familiarity, expertise and efficiency. He began independently overseeing the affairs of the *maṭha*. Even Srikantha Shastri, who later became the chief administrator of the *maṭha*, was trained by this Swāmi. If somebody like Srikantha Shastri deferred to him, one can only guess how adept the Swāmi was.

But Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati did not have such an opportunity. It was only after the previous Swāmi passed away that he ascended to the *peeṭha*. The fact that he did not have an interest

in administration, nor the required experience, familiarity or training, troubled him as well as the officials of the *maṭha*. No doubt Srikantha Shastri, who possessed enormous capability and experience, was the chief administrator. But the person who was the Swāmi now was not somebody he had recommended; Shastri did not have any role in the nomination of the Swāmi to that post. In fact, the previous Swāmi, in his last days, had brushed aside Shastri's suggestions, saying, ''Let Narasimha come.'' Moreover, as a boy, the Swāmi had grown up in Shastri's house and it was unlikely that he had not faced the heat of Shastri's authoritarian ways. Given these circumstances, it was not unnatural for Shastri and other officials of the *maṭha* to wonder how unquestioned Shastri's authority would be in the days to come. How were they to tell to what extent the new Swāmi would approve of Shastri's administration? Indeed, was it not uncertain if he would even be retained as chief administrator?

However, this anxiety proved to be unfounded. The boy who grew up under Srikantha Shastri's supervision retained a respectful attitude towards him which did not lessen after he became the Swāmi. Moreover, before he was ordained a monk, it was Srikantha Shastri who instructed him in the

śrīvidya-mantra, initiated him into the worship of the *śrīchakra*, and performed the prescribed *tantric* ablutions. So he had continued to look upon Shastri as he would a *guru*. Narasimha did not forget that though he had ascended to the *peeṭha* of the *jagadguru*, Shastri was his elder and as before, continued to conduct himself with humility. Further, the Swāmi did not have any enthusiasm for the administration of the *maṭha* or any interest in worldly matters. His frame of mind was conducive to think that whoever looked after the *maṭha* till then could continue to do so thereafter; he had to do their bidding, that as all. Why bother oneself any more about it? He resolved to sincerely observe the way of the renunciant, obtain a deep understanding of *Vedānta*, and perform penance for the ultimate liberation. Srikantha Shastri's administration continued as before.

It would have been difficult for any person, not only for the Swāmi, to remove Srikantha Shastri from the position of chief administrator. Only he knew unambiguously and completely, all the details pertaining to the *maṭha*. For twenty years, no transaction, however big or small, had occurred in the *maṭha* without his involvement. He was the sole witness to the affairs and traditions of the *maṭha*, with both scriptural and secular sections of

the *maṭha* conducted under his supervision. Nobody doubted his competence or efficiency. There was none who aspired to undermine his authority or take it away from him and there was nobody who had the courage to stand up to him. His grip over the *maṭha* was such that it could not function even for an instant in his absence.

There was compatibility between the previous Swāmi and Srikantha Shastri. Both thought day and night of the spread of the *maṭha*, and its influence and progress. They had the same levels of interest and ability in worldly affairs. And so their combination shone forth in the history of the *maṭha*. But the present Swāmi's nature was very much unlike Srikantha Shastri's. Even if they merely stood next to each other, this difference was apparent. Shastri was tall, with long arms, a robust build, fair in complexion, aristocratic in dress, and regal in gait. The Swāmi was short, slender, dark, simply robed and of delicate gait. The Shastri's hubris, the Swāmi's humility; the former's boldness, the latter's diffidence; Shastri's extrovert nature and the Swāmi's inclination to withdraw; his pomp, and His apathy; Shastri the worldly, Swāmi the spiritual - they were thus altogether different from each other.

For about eighteen years, the Swāmi as *jagadguru* and Srikantha Shastri as chief

administrator, struggled with their incompatibility. During this period - indeed, during his lifetime - the Swāmi did not interfere with the affairs of the *maṭha*. He had left that completely in Shastri's hands. The Swāmi's overriding wish was to be left to himself. But at least for reasons of formality the *maṭha's* affairs had to be conducted with the Swāmi as its mascot. Without the Swāmi, how was the activity of touring the country possible? Without undertaking such tours, how could devotees be mustered? Without a constituency of devotees, how could the *maṭha* earn any income? Could there be any pomp and splendour without an income? Without pomp, how could the *maṭha* establish its reputation? Nobody cared about the officials of the *maṭha*; people would gather only if the Swāmi were present. It was all well if the Swāmi were acquainted with the ways of the world and better still if he possessed an influential personality and were enthusiastic. Even if a Swāmi did not have these attributes, people may still come attracted by the greatness and ancestry of the *peeṭha*. An administrator could manage everything else if the *maṭha* had a Swāmi, even if the Swāmi were senile, stupid or dull. But what could the chief administrator do if this Swāmi were not inclined towards worldly activity, or to welcome visitors, talk to them and charm them with his personality?

In this light, authority over the Swāmi was a part of the authority wielded by the chief administrator. The Swāmi was after all young, had depended on him in his early years, was forever obedient to him, and was incapable of ever troubling him. Though a *jagadguru*, he would always look upon the chief administrator as his guru. Therefore, Shastri did not find it an effort to exert his authority over the Swāmi. Let alone attempt to remove the chief administrator from office, the Swāmi did not even think about it. For someone like him who did not want anything to do with worldly matters, how did it make any difference if the administrator was this person or any other? Shastri was not troubled by the Swāmi over anything. However, Shastri, who had seen the glory of the *maṭha* in the years past, and who had been chiefly responsible for it, did not like the Swāmi's apathetic attitude. He tried in vain to mend him and finally gave up his post.

CHAPTER 7

The Struggle

The first few years after the Swāmi ascended the *peeṭha* passed without any cause for anxiety. The previous Swāmi too had spent the first six years after he ascended the *peeṭha* in the worship of his predecessor. By that time, the previous Swāmi had at least completed his education. But in the case of the incumbent Swāmi (Chandrashekhara Bharati), his education was limited to the lessons in *vyākaraṇa* and *tarka-śāstra* for three years in Śringeri, followed by an introduction to *pūrva-mīmāmsa* for one year at Bangalore. Should not the Swāmi of the *maṭha* be well versed in the *śāstras*? It was important to please the scholars; mere familiarity with worldly matters was inadequate. The Swāmi's benedictory messages, sermons and conversations protect and enhance the standing and

influence of the *maṭha*. With this in view, the chief administrator of the *maṭha* made arrangements to have the Swāmi's education continue in Śringeri.

The Swāmi also wanted this, but not for the reasons the chief administrator had in mind. He had genuine interest in the study of the *śāstras*. While he was at Bangalore, and during the last two months of the year, he was studying under the guidance of a scholar called Hanagallu Virupakshashastri, books on *tarka* that he had left unfinished at Śringeri. At that time, Virupakshashastri was not a teacher at the *maṭha*'s school. Narasimha (as the Swāmi was known then) used to visit him at his home in the *agrahāra* of the Shankara Maṭha and learn from him. After he became the Swāmi, he had Virupaksha Shastri come over and settle in Śringeri, and for a period of two years, he studied

Hanagallu Virupaksha Shastri

under him the treatises on Vedanta (that is, the *prasthāna-traya*- books) and related works on *nyāya*.

Hanagallu Virapaksha Shastri had moved to Bangalore from the Dharwad region at an early age and studied under the guidance of a scholar called Nuggehalli Tirumalacharya. He also studied under Chikkerur Swāmirayacharya, (1823-1903) a *chatush-śāstra-paṇḍita* or a scholar of four disciplines. Swāmirayacharya was not merely a scholar but a *tapaswi*, a practitioner of austerities. Recognized by the kings of Benares and Gwalior, he lived in Harapanahalli during his last days. It was there that Virupaksha Shastri studied *nyāya* and *mīmāmsa* under him. Virupaksha Shasti composed the following verse in praise of his guru:

विद्वत्तारकशीतभानुरमलो वादीभकण्ठीरवः
स्वान्तेवासिशतत्रयप्रवचनप्रौढप्रतापोज्ज्वलः।
श्रीमद्राजपदाग्रवर्तिगुरुराट् श्रीस्वामिनामा गुरुः
चिक्केरूरुशुभान्वयाब्धिशशभृद्वैराग्यभाग्योऽवतात्॥

It was said that Tirumalacharya taught three hundred students and that though he was feted by kings and his scholarship was immense, he was a renunciate.

In this manner, one of Virupaksha Shastri's teachers belonged to the Madhva tradition while

another (Tirumalacharya) was from the Srivaishnava tradition. While he was yet a student, Shastri used to give discourses in the house of Diwan Sheshadri Iyer. He won the praise of the Diwan and through him the favour of the previous Swāmi of the Śringeri *maṭha*. Not only that, for a while Shastri was the student of that Swāmi. Shastri was a great scholar, who had secured the award of 'Mahamahopadhyaya' from the government of India, and the titles of 'Tarka-Panchanana' from the Vidyapeetha at Benares, and 'Vidyanidhi' from the king of Mysore. His inclination, which was initially towards *tarka* (logic), turned to *vedānta* under the influence of the Swāmi. He had grown up in poverty, undergone difficulties, acquired learning, been feted at royal courts and the homes of the learned and had won the respect of the king of Mysore. Though a householder, he led his life with detachment and without coveting another's possessions. Towards his last days, he took *sanyāsa* under the assumed name of 'Abhinava Valukeshwara-Bharati' and became the head of the *maṭha* at Kudali, a sister institution of Śringeri. Though a great scholar, he was a simple man. In spite of being a *jnāni*, he was always faithful to *karma*. He was a man of the utmost integrity, and given to right action; he was friendly

and shunned publicity. He did not have anyone who wished ill to him. He was someone who did not use *vedānta* to earn his livelihood but made it the very essence of his life. Sri D. V. Gundappa has written about him in the fifth chapter (titled '*Vaidikadharma-Sampradāyastharu*') of his '*Jñāpaka-chitra-śāle*'. I have also heard of the virtues of Shastri from Virakesari Seetarama Shastri, who studied under him for a while.

The fact that Narasimha initiated his studies in some of the basic texts of *tarka-śāstra* under such a personage served to shape his character. Having noticed the Shastri's method of discourse, liberal mind, selfless nature and an essential detachment from worldly matters, it was but natural for Narasimha to be eager to study under him even after he, Narasimha, became the Swāmi. At first, Shastri did not agree, thinking it was inappropriate for him, a householder to teach a *sanyāsi*, and that too the *peeṭhādhipati*. But the Swāmi remained adamant; he satisfactorily countered each of Shastri's objections and convinced him to agree. Even though he was occupying the seat of a *jagadguru*, the Swāmi behaved with reverence and devotion to this householder-teacher and acquired mastery over *vedānta*. Not merely that, he also regarded the Shastri's character as a benchmark

and cultivated the same qualities the Shastri had. So, Virupaksha Shastri was a major influence on the Swāmi.

There has never been a dearth of scholars in this world. There are always many who have learnt their subject well and who are capable of elucidating it equally well. But scholars who are pure in both principle and practice are rare. Rarer still are those who are ranked high on ability, output, practice, teaching, and expertise. Virupaksha Shastri belonged to this latter group. It may be said that it was due to the *puṇya* the Swāmi had accumulated that he was exposed to such a person's influence, ideals and association. The Swāmi was aware of Shastri's greatness and his own good fortune. To show respect to Shastri, he would get up, on some pretext or the other, whenever he heard that Shastri was coming to give lessons. It was said that whenever Shastri, according to the prevalent norms as between a householder and a *sanyāsi*, prostrated before the Swāmi, the latter used to stand at an angle, with palms folded and eyes closed, himself offering salutations in his mind to his teacher. He sat down only after Shastri did. He would then submit the previous lessons and inform Shastri that he had gone over the lessons for the day. He would listen

with rapt attention when Shastri gave his lessons. For those two or three hours when Shastri's lessons were on, nothing else could distract the Swāmi's attention. After the lessons were over the Swāmi would stand up once again. Shastri used to repeat his prostration before the *guru*. In his mind, the Swāmi thought that the salutations were due not to him but to his predecessor, who was both his teacher as well as Shastri's. This was narrated to me by Veerakesari Seetarama Shastri, the Swāmi's childhood friend and somebody who belonged to the Swāmi's circle of confidantes.

It was said that later on, when the Swāmi was giving lessons to others, he followed the teaching methodology of Virupaksha Shastri. The method of expounding the subject was the same, the emphasis was the same. The Swāmi, having heard Shastri's elegantly precise usage of words as a young boy, picked up the same. He never used harsher substitutes even for common words. The Swāmi was reputed to express his opinion directly, simply, and clearly, taking care never to hurt anyone by speaking loudly or raising his voice; it was said that this was Shastri's way as well. Like Shastri, even though he had studied *tarka śāstra* (the discipline of logic), the Swāmi leaned towards *vedānta*. However, it is possible to learn from the writings

of Sri Krishnaswami Iyer that the Swāmi used the techniques and aphorisms of logic in the course of his dialogues and discourses.[1]

Of the many benefits the Swāmi derived from his association with Virupaksha Shastri, the most significant was the development of an attitude of detachment. He was only a youth of twenty years when he became a *sanyāsi.* Twenty is not an age when detachment comes naturally to a person. In this case the person did not even aspire to become a *sanyāsi.* It is doubtful if he would have become a *sanyāsi* but for the pressure of various circumstances. Further, it cannot be said that detachment will automatically follow *sanyāsa.* If a person becomes a *sanyāsi* without detachment, it leads to his discomfort and also be troublesome to others around him. As for this Swāmi, he was never interested in material things from a young age. He was immersed in studies and had self

1. Krishnaswami Iyer has published in Tamil and in English the conversations and discourses of the Swāmi using the notes he took down at various times. His father Ramaswami Iyer was a devotee of the previous Swāmi. Ramaswami Iyer's name has appeared earlier in this book in a different context. Krishnaswami Iyer spent many years with the Swāmi; he even took sanyāsa in the Swāmi's presence, assuming the name, Jnanananda Bharati.

restraint. But these qualities by themselves cannot be said to prevent changes that are natural to the process of growing up. Detachment is a quality that requires maturity in an adult. It is an attitude that should be cultivated after much deliberation and consideration of one's responsibilities and innate nature.

Reference is made to all this in some of the Sanskrit *ślokas* the Swāmi composed during that period. It could be explained away that what he wrote was mere poetic fancy or something that was appropriate and conventionally apt. But why should they be not considered as expressions of genuinely expressed feelings? Observing that he hankered after material things and that he was devoid of detachment, the Swāmi confides this in his *guru* and begs for his grace. For example, when the sentiment that the guru should appear before him and guide him on the right path took root, it led to the composition of '*Navaratna-māla*'. The words, 'May my guru appear quickly before me' occur at the end of every stanza.[1]

The third stanza of this work reads thus:

1. "दृग्गोचरो भवतु देशिकराण्ममाशु"

शब्दादिमान् हि विषयान् विषतुल्यकक्ष्यान्
ज्ञातापि तत्र बहुरागवतो ममाशु।
पादानताखिलजनस्य विरक्तिदाता
दृग्गोचरो भवतु देशिकराण्ममाशु॥

In this stanza, the Swāmi describes himself as full of desires, even though he is fully aware that such desires are as dangerous as poison. He then describes his guru as someone who bestowed detachment on everyone who approached him and begs the guru to give the same attitude of detachment to him, who is full of various desires.

Another work, '*Toṭaka-stotra*', which is also addressed to the guru, contains some interesting autobiographical references.

जलबुद्बुदवत् क्षणभङ्गयुते
मलमूत्रवसासहिते वपुषि।
कुरुतेऽभिमतं हृदयं हि मुदा
लघु वारय देशिक तां दयया॥

''He (referring to himself) confesses as having attachment to the body which appears and vanishes like a bubble on water, and prays to his guru to remove this attitude in him.''

करणानि समानि भवन्ति कदा
तरणं नु कथं भववारिनिधेः।
शरणं मम नास्ति गुरो त्वदृते
निरुपाधिकृपाजलधेऽव जवात्॥

''When will my senses become quietened? How to cross this ocean called 'samsaara'? There is no refuge for me other than you, oh guru, whose compassion is boundless.''

चरितं न मयेषदपीह शुभं
भरितं जठरं बहुधाऽघचयात् ।
छुरितं हृदयं नितरां तमसा
त्वरितं विमलं तनु तद्गुरुराट् ॥

''I have not done the slightest good deed. I am full of negative thoughts. Darkness envelopes the soul. It is only the *guru* who can cleanse my life.''

विषयेषु सदा रमते हृदयं
विषतुल्यधियं दिशि तत्र गुरो ।
लषितत्वदपाङ्गझरी प्रसर-
त्वचिरान्मयि बन्धविनाशकरी ॥

''My heart has always delighted in worldly pleasures. The awareness that these are like poison has to come through the guru's grace only. Let that grace come soon so that this fetter is unshackled.''

सदसन्मतिरेव न मेऽस्ति गुरो
विरतिं प्रति सा करणं गदिता ।
विरतिः क्व नु मे विषयाशहृदः
कथमाप्नुव एव विमुक्तिपथम् ॥

''I am completely devoid of discrimination between the good and the bad. And discrimination is said to be a tool to achieve detachment. (Given this condition) where can detachment come to me? How will I get on to the highway of salvation?''

ब्रुवते निगमा बहुवारमिदं
जगदभ्रतलादिसदृक्षमिति।
मम तादृशधीः समुदेति कदा
वद देशिक मेऽङ्घ्रिजुषे कृपया॥

''The scriptures say repeatedly that the world is without substance. But guru, please tell me when will my intellect realise that that is true?''

In another poem called, '*Guru-prārthanā-stotra*', the Swāmi has again revealed his anguish.

श्रीमच्छङ्करदेशिकेन्द्ररचिते पीठे जगद्देशिक त्वादृक्षाः
शिवरूपिणोऽखिलविदो ब्रह्मस्थिता वर्तितुम्।
युक्तं कोऽहमतीव मन्दधिषणो बाह्येषु सक्तोऽधुना
स्थातुं तद्भगवान् भवान् करुणया मामुद्धरत्वञ्जसा॥

''Oh guru, it is fit that someone like you, who is Lord Siva incarnate, who is all-knowing and who is firmly rooted in *brahman*, adorns this *peeṭha* established by the great teacher Sri Sankara. But who am I, a dullard interested in the external world, to occupy this seat? Only you should bestow your compassion and save me.''

From these verses, one can surmise the kind of 'poet's heart' that the Swāmi had. His temperament was very sensitive and delicate; one that would simply melt from the heat of worldly life and shrink away from pomp. He was like a clear stream, flowing quietly without dazzling the eyes or assaulting the ears, like a lamp giving off a steady and soothing glow, untouched by gusts of wind. It was only natural that he trembled when he faced the tempests unleashed at the *maṭha*. If he had not come to the *maṭha*, maybe he would have become famous as a poet. He had a keen interest in music; it was said that he was capable of singing hymns melodiously. Be that as it may, what is to be observed here is that detachment does not come naturally to a poet's mind. Detachment did not come to the Swāmi naturally; nor did it come because he saw suffering (he had not seen any great suffering at home). It came to him because of his study of scriptures. His education under Virupaksha Shastri helped him in this matter. It is doubtful if any other teacher could have explained the meaning of the texts as effectively as Shastri.

During a four-year period in which he was absorbed in the study of the texts of Vedanta under Virupaksha Shastri's tutelage, the Swāmi grasped that it was important to direct his attention not to

the superficial sound of the text but to its inner meaning and made certain for himself that the world is without substance and that *brahman* is the ultimate truth. Only then did detachment truly arise in him. A mind that was already given to contemplation turned increasingly toward its inner depths. He dedicated his life to the recall and practice of what Virupaksa Shastri had preached to him. While doing so, he forgot that he was not an unaffiliated monk but the head of a *maṭha*. But merely because he forgot, would the Chief Administrator forget likewise? The Swāmi's attitude

came from the standpoint of, 'I am a *sanyāsi*, a monk'. The Chief Administrator's response was, 'No, you are the head of a *maṭha*.' The Swāmi's dilemma was whether a true *sanyāsi* could be the head of a *maṭha*. The Chief Administrator argued that the head of a *maṭha* could not be a renunciate, a *sanyāsi*. Such a person would have to be in and of this world; he would need to relax the principles of a monk.

CHAPTER 8

Celebrations at the *maṭha*

In this battle of mindsets, it was the Swāmi who lost first. At the time of his departure from Śringeri to Bangalore, his guru (the previous Swāmi) had composed three benedictory verses (which have been quoted earlier) in which the Swāmi had been commanded to 'become a *sanyāsi*, do *sādhana*, and practise the philosophy of the *ātman*'. If he were to observe the life of the *sanyāsi* (which is the last among the four stages of a person's life) without compromise, it would mean that he would have complied with his guru's injunctions and fulfilled his purpose. But it was the same guru who, during his final hours, had sent word through Kunigal Rama Shastri that he, Narasimha, had to assume the responsibility of successor. Therefore, he had

to do and carry on whatever tasks his guru did as a *maṭhādhipati*, increase the sphere of the guru's influence and complete those tasks that the guru had started but left incomplete upon becoming liberated. In this matter, the chief administrator (Srikantha Shastri) was the last word. Only he was privy to the guru's inner thoughts. It was only he who used to conduct the guru's worldly affairs. He knew the *maṭha*'s strengths and weaknesses. On the contrary, the Swāmi did not know anything about these matters. Therefore it was his present duty to act according to the chief administrator's directions. In this manner, the Swāmi avoided a possible rift with Srikantha Shastri.

There were a few tasks that the previous Swāmi had undertaken but which remained incomplete. One of them was the renovation of the Sharada temple at Śringeri. This temple, which was built partly of stone but mostly of wood, had become old and even dilapidated in places and therefore, was neither nice to see nor spacious. Though it was the main attraction of the *maṭha*, this temple was not in keeping with the *maṭha's* present stature. When the previous Swāmi was on his third tour of the south (in 1891), some highly influential Nattukottai Chettiars of Madurai and Ramanathapura received him with pomp. They collected thirty

thousand rupees for the purpose of remaking the Sharada temple completely in stone and handed over the contribution through their religious leader, the head of the Koviloor-maṭha. A certain Kanadukuttan Chidambara Chetty of Gobichettypalyam, who was well acquainted with the renovation of several Shiva temples in Tamil Nadu, accepted the task of renovation at Śringeri and was engaged in it. Due to many hindrances, the work did not progress quickly. In fact, the work stopped after the Śringeri temple caught fire at the time of the previous Swāmi's return from his fourth tour. When all this was happening, Narasimha was still studying at Śringeri. The previous Swāmi passed away a couple of years after returning to Śringeri. He did not see the completion of the (new) Sharada temple.

In 1916, four years after the Swāmi had ascended the *peeṭha*, work on the Sharada temple had progressed to a firm stage thanks to the untiring efforts of the chief administrator, and the *kumbhābhisheka* had to be performed. Also, the chief administrator and other devotees had got a sculptor from Mumbai, Ganapati Krishnarao Mhatre, to carve in milk-white marble a figure of the previous Swāmi which they wished to place in the Narasimha-vana (which was the site of the

previous Swāmi's austerities). Kanadukuttan Chidambara Chetty, mentioned earlier, had even completed the outer structure at the site. The *kumbhābhisheka* of this structure too was due to be performed. The Maharaja of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, visited Śringeri for the occasion. In his presence, the Swāmi performed the *kumbhābhisheka* of both structures on Thursday, the *pāḍya* of the *kṛshṇapaksha, vaiśākha* month, *naḷa samvatsara* (1916).

Festivities associated with this occasion went on in style for many days. Devotees had congregated from all parts of the land in large numbers. The presence of the Maharaja of Mysore and his family added some more sheen to the event.

The teeming crowds, the continuous festivities, the unending lines of dignitaries who came to meet him, the constant programmes at the *maṭha*, the temple and in Narasimha-vana - the Swāmi had to be everywhere in this hullaballoo, had to mingle with everyone and show keen interest in everything. The chief administrator, other officials and confidantes had made impeccable arrangements, taking care to ensure that there was no slip-up. But then, all activities had to be carried on with the Swāmi as the frontispiece! The Swāmi

had not been caught in such a vortex of celebratory activity ever before. Till then, he had never ventured into a crowd. Earlier, there was nobody in the house except his parents. There were only eight students in his school. It was always him and his studies. For two years after he became the Swāmi, the only person in his world was Virupaksha Shastri. And moreover, the Swāmi was constantly meditating on the principle of *virakti* (detachment). Now, all of a sudden, he had to engage himself in the midst of a lot of people and a lot of responsibility. The Swāmi did everything according to the chief administrator's wishes so as not to annoy him. He saw to it that nobody was troubled on his account. He was alert lest there be any let-down during the festivities. But all this he did mechanically. Neither his mind nor his heart was really in it.

Immediately after the excitement died down and Śringeri returned to its peaceful state, he adopted a solitary lifestyle, as if to convey that he had nothing more to do with the affairs of the *maṭha*. Except during a few activities - bathing in the Tunga, paying homage to his Guru in Narasimha-vana, lecturing on the *sūtra-bhāshya* to a few students and conducting the daily worship of the deity in the *maṭha* — he was not seen by anyone.

Virupaksha Shastri had left Śringeri by then. At that time, there was no other scholar in Śringeri of such boundless eloquence and detached temperament. The scholars who were there were not appreciated by the Swāmi. As for the officials, their interaction with the Swāmi was only for a few minutes.

In Śringeri, *Navarātri* (*śaran-navaratri*) is the biggest festival of the year. For about ten days during that time, there is a festive atmosphere in the *maṭha*. At the temple, the Goddess is specially adorned and worshipped, and special *pūjas* are performed. During this time, the incumbent Swāmi of the *maṭha* wears a crown studded with the nine precious gems, a resplendent outer garment and necklaces with priceless golden pendants encrusted with precious stones. He sits regally on a silver throne surrounded by officials of the *maṭha* like courtiers. This show is also called 'darbar'. It is not known when this curious practice of decking up a *sanyāsin* and making the *maṭha* seem like a palace started.

The kings of Vijaynagar, during their period as powerful suzerains, sat on the *mānavami-dibba* and indulged in such a show. That was appropriate. *Navarātri* is mainly a *kshatriya* festival. The festival is known for various rituals relevant to the warrior

community (like *vāhana-pūja, āyudha-pūja, vijayotsava, seemollanghana* and so on). It was but natural that this *navarātri* pageant was commenced by some families of kings who imitated the Vijayanagar rulers. But then, why this juvenile game in a *maṭha*! Merely because he is the titular head of the *maṭha*, and because the *maṭha* is called a *dharma-rājya*, should a *sanyāsi* lay aside the code of his *āśrama-dharma* (of a renunciate), his dignity and his purpose and succumb to this hollow show? Is it to entertain the multitude? Or is it to attract wealthy devotees and seek contribution from them? What royal pageant can there be for an unattached *sanyāsi* who has given up all ?

To Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati, all this appeared strange, even inappropriate. Given that he was engaged in observing strictly the code of the renunciate and was engaged in a struggle to cultivate an attitude of detachment, he felt repelled by this pomp and splendour. But the officials of the *maṭha* maintained that this was the tradition of the *maṭha* and could not be given up. Lacking as he did an inclination to pick up a quarrel with them, he agreed. The very next day after he became a *sanyāsi* and ascended to the *peeṭha*, he had to don a crown and other 'royal attire' (as Srikantha Shastri called it) and occupy the silver throne

which had been placed on an elevated plinth. At that time itself, he had felt that this was not an acceptable practice. But what could be done? If it was said to be the *maṭha*'s tradition, how could he object to these things? The chief administrator knew everything and so he let everything run according to the former's writ. That was all. He expressed his opinion in verse, referring to the show as futile. This is one of the stanzas in the '*Sāmbāshṭaka*' which he composed –

धत्तां मूर्ध्नि प्रवरमणिभिर्जुष्टदीव्यत्किरीटं
वस्तां देहे विविधवसनैर्हेमसूत्रावबद्धैः।
आरुह्यासौ विचरतु भुवं तिर्यगान्दोलिकां वा
सर्वं व्यर्थं मरणसमये साम्ब एकः सहायः॥

This is a description of himself, wearing the 'royal garb' and getting ready for the procession. The first half of the next stanza refers to the gaiety of the royal (the *maṭhādhipati's)* durbar.

सर्वाशान्तप्रकटितरवैर्बन्दिभिः स्तूयतां वा।
भेरीढक्काप्रमुखबिरुदं दिक्षु दन्ध्वन्यतां वा॥

It was in the month of *chaitra* that he ascended to the *peeṭha*. In the next couple of months, the *śāstra* lessons under Virupaksha Shastri started. Within no time, the festivities surrounding *vyāsapūja* and *chāturmāsya* commenced. By the time these

celebrations were over came the *gaṇapati sadas*. Then *navarātri*. Come *navarātri* and studies would be derailed, solitude would be disturbed and there would be no opportunity whatsoever for meditation. To top it all was the irony of all this pageantry! The Swāmi would always feel uncomfortable when *navarātri* approached.

After the bustle of the *kumbābhisheka* was over and the devotees dispersed, the Swāmi engaged himself peacefully in his study, teaching, meditation, puja, and tapas. He now turned his attention to the *mantra śāstra* and grasped its esoteric meanings. After he turned a *sanyāsi*, he had not yet started the four *sādhanas*[1] which his guru had earlier enjoined him to do (at the time he was sent from Śringeri to Bangalore for lessons in the *vedas*). In the *śloka* the guru had composed at that time, he had referred to achieving the state of a *paramahamsa* before he mentioned the *sādhana-chatushṭaya*. Becoming a *sanyāsi* is to reach

1. Sādhana chatushṭaya or the four practices which are (1) nityānitya-vastu-viveka (or the practice of discriminating between the eternal and the transient) ; (2) Ihāmutra-phala-bhoga-virāga (renunciation of the fruits and enjoyments of this world and of the next) (3) śamādi-shatka (restraint of passions and such other practices) and (4) mumukshutva (a deep yearning for liberation).

a certain level; becoming a *parahamsa* is another thing. It cannot be said that the one will lead to the other. It requires effort to become a *paramahamsa*. Tutelage under Virupaksha Shastri had made the path to *paramahamsa*--hood a lot easier; it had shed a light on that path. But was it not his responsibility alone to walk on it? Now, the Swāmi determined to get a firm grip over this matter.

In course of time (from 1901), the previous Swāmi too became detached and as distant as possible from the *maṭha*'s activities and used to stay on Narasimha-parvata or in Narasimha-vana to do his austerities. He did not even do the ritual *pūjas*. In his place Srikantha Shastri had to perform them. He stopped lessons for his students. He had given up even speaking with anyone. He was busy practising Sadashiva Brahmendra's '*Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa*'. Srikantha Shastri himself has written about these matters in '*Divya-charitre*', a biography of the previous Swāmi. Therefore it is no wonder that this Swāmi (Chandrashekhara Bharati) also took the same route. After all, is it not a mark of devotion to the guru to travel on the path he has shown?

In this context, a few words must be mentioned about Sri Sadashiva Brahmendra. He was a great

yogi and *jīvanmukta* (one who has attained liberation during his lifetime) who lived in Tamil Nadu some two hundred years ago. He was a pupil of Swāmi Parama-Shivendra-Saraswati of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha. He took initiation from that Swāmi and lived as an *avadhūta* on the banks of the Kaveri, observing a vow of silence. He lived for almost a hundred years and passed away at Nerur (near Karur) on the banks of the Kaveri. His *samādhi* is located there. Though he was a great scholar, he kept aside debate and discussion and spent his life contemplating the *ātman*. Though peerless in his knowledge of *vedānta*, he practised *ashṭānga-yoga* sincerely. He has written '*Yoga-sudhākara*' as a commentary on Patanjali's *yoga-sūtra*s. In addition, he has also written some scriptural works and several hymns and songs in Sanskrit. In all of them, *bhakti* is the dominant flavour. His works, '*Guru-ratna-maalika*', '*Dakshiṇāmurti-dhyāna*' and '*Navamaṇi-māla*' bring out clearly his devotion to his guru. About twenty-five of his compositions are available today. It is clear from a few of his compositions that Sri Rama was his chosen deity. Everybody knows how beautiful his *kīrtana* '*Mānasa-sanchara-re*' is. Of late, '*Sarvam-brahmamayam*' and '*Chintā-naasti-kila*' have also become popular.

Chief among Sri Sadashiva Brahmendra's works is '*Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa*'. Having 62 verses set to the *ārya* metre, this work describes beautifully the behaviour of the *jīvanmukta*. Through his personal experience, Sri Sadashiva Brahmendra has highlighted how the enlightened *jnāni* is engaged in contemplation of the Self (*ātman*) and is immersed in its blissful experience. The previous Swāmi, Satchidananda Shivabhinava Nrsimhabharati, appreciating very much this work of Sadashiva Brahmendra, used to often read it himself or have it recited. As he was giving up his life breath, he instructed that this very same work be recited. Since this *avadhūta* was his role model, the previous Swāmi had started behaving like him in the last days of his reign as *peeṭhādhipati*. He had also conveyed to Virupaksha Shastri, who had been his pupil for a while, the greatness of '*Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa*'. For his part, Virupaksha Shastri had developed a keen interest about the life and times of Sadashiva Brahmendra and had studied with reverence not only this work, but all his other works as well. It is no wonder then that this interest and reverence towards Sadashiva Brahmendra and his works showed themselves in Sri Chandrashekhara Bharati, who studied *vedānta* under Virupaksha Shastri.

Appreciating the greatness of Sadashiva Brahmendra, Swāmi Ugranarasimha Bharati, the past *jagadguru* of Śringeri visited his *samādhi* at Nerur. His successor, Satchidananda Shivabhinava Nrsimhabharati, went to Nerur during his tours, performed *pūja* at Sadashiva Brahmendra's *samādhi* and composed two verses in his praise. In due course, Swāmi Nrsimhabharati's successor, Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati also went to Nerur during his tour of Tamil Nadu and performed *pūja* at the *samādhi* of Sadashiva Brahmendra. In this manner, there was a bond spanning three generations between Sadashiva Brahmendra and the Śringeri *maṭha*.

The Swāmi was anxious to experience what was described in the '*Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa*' after the noise surrounding the *kumbhābhishekha* in Śringeri died down. Day and night he used to study, contemplate and practise this work. Remaining in this mood, he would mechanically perform those activities which he *had* to do as the head of the *maṭha*. Except for his ritual bath, morning prayers, *pūja* and exposition of the *sūtra-bhāshya*, he did not show interest in any matter concerning the world outside.

This did not seem appropriate to the *maṭha*'s chief administrator, Srikantha Shastri. However,

this behaviour was not new to him. Wasn't there a time when the previous Swāmi behaved in the same fashion? As said earlier, he (the previous Swāmi) had got this mindset when he was about fifty years of age. He used to stay in Narasimha-vana for a long time. Srikantha Shastri had to discharge the worldly and ritual-related responsibilities of the *maṭha*. Even in that state, he (the previous Swāmi) did not withdraw from the *maṭha* or neglect his duties as its head. After all, it was when he was in this mental frame that he had responded to the call from Kaladi and completed a successful tour of the southern country. In any case, it was only after many years since he became *peeṭhādhipati* that he developed this attitude of extreme detachment. As for this Swāmi (Chandrashekhara Bharati), he had internalised an attitude of detachment right from the moment he ascended the *peeṭha*! What would happen to the *maṭha*? Even though he (Srikantha Shastri) repeatedly impressed upon the Swāmi that in the interest of the *maṭha* he had to tour, the Swāmi did not pay much attention to that; neither did he say no. Srikantha Shastri waited to see if the Swāmi's behaviour would change. He, Srikantha Shastri, even tried to change it forcefully. However, the Swāmi remained firm.

CHAPTER 9

The Avadhūta's Temperament

In 1919, Gopa Shastri, the Swāmi's father, passed away. His wife Lakshmamma's anguish was indescribable. It touched the Swāmi also, who was engaged in cultivating an attitude of detachment. Even though his son was now the *jagadguru*, Gopa Shastri did not meddle in the affairs of the *maṭha*. Compared with earlier times, he did not even increase his visits to the *maṭha*. He just kept to himself. Living as he did in Bangalore during that time, he had been brought back to Śringeri. The *maṭha*'s administration had provided some conveniences. So the earlier days of poverty had passed. But could the worry over the son's absence from home ever go away? It was indeed difficult for the parents to visit the son. There were the regulations of the *maṭha* on one side, and on the

other there was the son's *avadhūta*-like temperament. It was a custom for the *maṭha* to observe the *suvāsini-pooja* on the ninth day of *navarātri* every year; on that occasion the Swāmi would give away *saris* to un-widowed women. Before her widowhood, the Swāmi's mother used to be invited for the occasion. At such times, the mother and son would meet in public; they would see each other and exchange formal words of goodwill. After Gopa Shastri's death, the mother lost even this opportunity.

Even though a person may become a *sanyāsi*, a father remains a father; even if he becomes the head of a *maṭha*, a mother remains a mother. The Swāmi used to be troubled because he took *sanyāsa* instead of fulfilling his parents' aspirations, especially as he was a son begotten after much bereavement. He has composed the '*Śārada-bhujanga-stotra*' a hymn in twenty three stanzas. It is said that this work was composed during this depressing period. In this hymn, he has confided his innermost grief in the Great Mother, Sri Sarada. It is not surprising if his mother was uppermost in his mind when he composed this hymn. At one place in the hymn, he has said, 'No mother will express the slightest apathy towards her son'[1]. At

1. "न पुत्रे मनागप्युपेक्षा जनन्याः"

another place in the hymn he has said, 'I do not know how to express my grief'[1] and then, 'This flaming anguish is scorching my soul'[2]. He has repeatedly called himself a *mahāpāpi* – a great sinner.

It seems as though brooding about his mother was the one hurdle in the Swāmi's practise of detachment. He seems to have been sympathetic to her plight, worrying about how anguished she must be, and how he was the cause of her boundless grief. Before he became the Swāmi, two younger sisters had passed away. It was said that he dearly loved these siblings. His personal attendant revealed to this author that even after becoming the Swāmi, he used to remember them and shed tears. Occasionally, a kind of disgust about the *sanyāsa* and the *maṭha* used to rear its head. He did not seek *sanyāsa* voluntarily; certainly he did not wish for lordship over the *maṭha*. He agonized over it as the fruit of his past *karma*. He has grieved to Mother Sarada thus:

यदि त्वं वदस्यम्ब ते पूर्वकर्म
त्वयैव प्रयत्नेन जेतव्यमेवम्।
तदा मय्यजस्रं कृपा संविधेया
प्रयत्नं करोम्येव तत्रापि सम्यक्।

1. "न विजानेऽम्ब वक्तुं च मद्दुःखरीतिम्"
2. "दुःखवह्नि प्रतप्तेऽन्तरङ्गे मदीये"

''Oh Mother! You say I should conquer my past *karma*? In that case, at least give the gift of your grace. Empowered thus, I shall try to seek victory.''

It is only conjecture that he used to be tormented by worry over his mother. There is no reference that indeed he confessed it was so. It is true that during this period, his mind was in turmoil. It is true that he had lost his peace of mind to an extent that it was suspected he had lost his mental balance. He used to be in Narasimha-vana always; visits to the *maṭha* across the river stopped. For many days there was no eating, no bathing and no sleep. Unable to settle down, he paced about from one place to another. There was no awareness of what he wore, no attention to what he spoke.

Within three years of his father Gopa Shastri's death, his mother Lakshmamma also passed away in December 1922. For two years prior to her death, the mother visited her son everyday at the *maṭha*. This practise gave both of them some sense of calm. It is not known how her last days were. Neither is it known how this impacted the Swāmi, whose mind was already in turmoil.

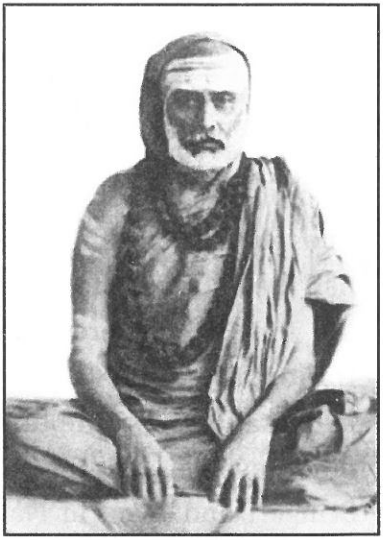
Within a month and a half of his mother's death, the first instance of the Swāmi supposedly

losing his mental balance became widely known. On the fifth day of the bright lunar half in the month of *maagha*, the Swāmi had to personally worship Mother Sarada to the accompaniment of the '*Lalitā Sahasranāma*'. It was the period when the ritual practise of 'Lalitaapanchami' was observed. The Swāmi, who came to Mother Sarada's temple, returned to the river immediately after having *darśana* of Lord Ganesha. Though he returned after bathing in the river, he could not perform the *pūja*; he had the priest perform the rituals and he sat quietly. That night, he could not get sleep and paced about here and there. The next morning, he informed his attendants that things around him appeared to revolve. The attendants informed this to the Chief Administrator, Srikantha Shastri. Immediately, he made arrangements for the Swāmi to stay in Narasimha-vana.

Less than a month after this illness showed up, a Konkani *vaidya* from Mulki was summoned. He prepared a therapeutic paste to be consumed and an oil to be applied. The Swāmi refused to have the paste. The oil was forcibly applied. Five or six attendants held him as they massaged the oil and gave him a cold bath.

Things appeared to improve a little. He used to behave normally for a few days. He resumed

bathing, the morning's ritual observances, *pūja*, and teaching. The hyperactivity and anxiety of the preceding days were not to be seen. But occasionally, having entered the Tunga for his bath, he would stand there for a long time. Or he would sit for at least an hour where the water was not deep. The Chief Administrator, who was ashore, had to send attendants to forcibly bring back the Swāmi from the water. Sometimes he would forget himself while performing *pūja*; the *pūja* would stop midway. Or having started giving lessons to the students, he would become abruptly quiet; or he would get up suddenly and leave. And then it would relapse to the previous state for several days – without bath, food or sleep. He would not stay still but wander about ceaselessly. There was an inexpressible anxiety, an unnameable agitation.



CHAPTER 10

Travels

Suddenly, the introverted temperament of the Swāmi changed. He began to resume his daily routine as before. At that time, a few became his disciples. One of them was Ramachandra Iyer, a householder and father of Krishnaswami Iyer; he had been associated with the Śringeri *maṭha* from the time of the previous Swāmi. He had played an important role in this Swāmi's initiation into *sanyāsa*, his assumption as the *maṭhādhipati*, and other events. Wanting to be a *sanyāsi*, he came to Śringeri and lived in Narasimha Vana. At that time, Srikantha Shastri's daughter's marriage was scheduled at Nanjanagud. Being very close to him, Shastri coaxed Ramachandra Iyer to attend the wedding. But Iyer refused, saying it was not proper for a person desiring *sanyāsa* to attend a wedding.

That evening, the Swāmi told Iyer, ''I believe there is a wedding in the Chief Administrator's family? I assume you are attending?'' Iyer replied, ''No sire, I have come here to withdraw from all kinds of contact and embrace *sanyāsa*. That being so, how can I go to a wedding?'' The Swāmi replied, ''Your purpose is that, true. But what is wrong in attending the wedding? If you go, Shastri will be happy.'' Iyer did not relent and said, ''Everyday here there is the bath in the Tunga, the morning rituals and the opportunity to hear discourses on Vedanta. I am also trying to maintain a one-pointed mind. I do not wish to forsake all this and travel to Nanjanagud, participate in the wedding and mix with people.'' The Swāmi chuckled and asked, ''Why? Are you afraid that you will be trapped in the net of worldly life?'' When Iyer replied it was not so, the Swāmi said, ''If your mind is so firm, please go and come back. At least you would have tested your mind's resoluteness. If your enthusiasm for worldly life does not make a comeback and you return to Śringeri, we shall think about ordaining you as a *sanyāsi*.'' A few days after Iyer returned to Śringeri from Nanjanagud after attending the wedding, Swāmi got him initiated into *sanyāsa* through his disciple, Kamalananda Narasimhabharati, of the

Nelamaavu *maṭha*. From then on, Iyer became well-known as Ramanandabharati.

When six months passed and the Swāmi had not lapsed into his solitary, introvert state, the Chief Administrator felt it was perhaps the appropriate time for the Swāmi to undertake a tour. The Swāmi had been receiving invitations from several places. It had been over a decade since the head of Śringeri had toured the southern territories. After all, was it not as a result of such tours that the financial position of the *maṭha* improved? Was it not that the support of a large number of followers would ensure the smooth functioning of the *maṭha*? The Maharaja had also requested the Swāmi to visit Mysore and conduct the *maṭha*'s rituals at the palace. Bowing to such pressure, the Swāmi agreed and set out on a tour up to Rameshwaram.

Sankaranarayana Jois of the *maṭha* fixed January 18, 1924 - *pushya śuddha dvādaśi* - as the date on which the Swāmi's tour should start. Precisely at noon on that day the Swāmi and his entourage set out in procession through the four main streets of the town. Circumambulating the *Bettada Mallikārjuna* temple and going round the town, the procession brought Swāmi, who had been made to wear a crown, necklaces and a brocaded shawl, to

the town's main gate. In between, *pāda-pūja* was performed for the Swāmi by many households. At the main gate, the Swāmi removed the crown, the necklaces and the shawl, sat in the palanquin and left in his usual saffron robes. Those who held the Swāmi's *daṇḍa* and *kamaṇḍalu*, walked alongside the palanquin. The rest of the entourage followed behind in carts. It was five o'clock in the evening when they left Śringeri.

The entourage reached Hulugaru and camped the night at the home of a certain Chennakeshavaraya. They left the following afternoon and came to Kigga that evening. They stayed the night there and came to Kavadi the next morning, where the Swāmi had his fortnightly ritual shave. The next day was spent at the *maṭha* in Hariharapura, a branch *maṭha* of Śringeri. The following day, they arrived at Betagere where they were hosted by Krishna Bhatta, the local man of wealth. Early next morning, they left Betagere and reached an *agrahāra* called Naaruve. They stayed for a day in this town on the banks of the Tunga.

From thereon, they reached Chikkamagalur via Koppa, Tadasa, Tarikere, Birur and Sakkaraya Pattana. They stayed in Chikkamagalur for eight days. After passing through Belur, Belavadi (a

village given over to the Śringeri *maṭha*), Javagal, Banavara (where they had their ritual bath on account of the eclipse), Arasikere and Dudda, the party reached Hassan. They stayed eight days at the bungalow of Mylariraya, the most senior official in Hassan district.

On *māgha-śuddha-pourṇami*, the entourage arrived in Mysore, after leaving Hassan and passing through Holenarasipura, Arakalagud, Ramanatha pura (where they observed *Śivarātri*), Konanoor, Kikkeri, Channarayapattana, Honnu Hunasegrama and Hirode. The Maharaja, Krishna Raja Wodeyar IV, received the Swāmi with ceremonial pomp, and in the golden enclosure of the palace, offered *pūja* and tribute to him. On the same day, the Swāmi worshipped the deities of the *maṭha* and gave *phala-mantrākshata* to the gathered devotees.

The previous Swāmi was born and grew up in Mysore. The place where the previous Swāmi was born had been purchased by the *maṭha* and arrangements had been made to build a memorial in the form of a Shiva temple made of stone at a cost of a lakh of rupees at the site with the help of Dharmadhikari Kunigal Ramashastri (the owner of that property) and the Chief Administrator, Srikantha Shastri; the land surrounding this property had also been acquired from the

government. During the Swāmi's visit to Mysore, the *kumbhābhisheka* of the temple was performed. A marble figure of the guru (the previous Swāmi) was also consecrated at the site.

Leaving Mysore, the party stayed at Kalhalli, a village next to Nanjanagud, for fifteen days. It was the Chief Administrator, Srikantha Shastri's native place and he had a bungalow there. The Swāmi's health was upset and so he had to camp there. After his health improved, they left that place and reached Hasnur Ghat after passing through Chamarajanagar, Koulande and Attagallipura. Resting awhile in the forest department's bungalow, the group passed through Bannerichatra and came to Satyamangala. This town on the banks of the river Bhavani has a *maṭha* affiliated to Śringeri. The party stayed there for three days.

From thereon, the entourage came to Gobichettypalyam where they stayed on for two months during the monsoon till *bhādrapada-bahula-amāvāsya*. Thereafter, they journeyed to Srirangam, Tiruchirapalli, Pudukottai, Chettinad and other places, making devotees happy with their visit. After performing *vyāsa-pūja* in Kunnakkudi and spending the *chāturmāsya* there, they passed Ramanathapura and reached Rameshwaram. Tamil Nadu begins from Satyamangalam. Is it not the

norm for the gathered throng of devotees to receive words of blessing and beatitude? It was natural that the people (of Tamil Nadu) expected this to happen in Tamil. The Swāmi also agreed.

But the Chief Administrator believed that the Swāmi did not know Tamil. His mother tongue was Telugu, the language of his land was Kannada and the language he learnt was Sanskrit. He spoke well in Kannada and gave lectures in simple Sanskrit. But then how could he have acquired knowledge of Tamil? This was the first time he was visiting the region. If he tried to speak to the assembly in a language he did not know, and became their laughing stock, what would remain of the prestige of the *maṭha*? So the Chief Administrator insisted that the Swāmi speak in Sanskrit. The Swāmi chuckled and said, ''People will understand if Tamil is spoken. What is the use of speaking in Sanskrit if it is not understood?'' An upset Chief Administrator said, ''I am not coming to the assembly; it is up to you.'' But on that day, the Chief Administrator was amazed to hear that the Swāmi spoke in fluent Tamil and gained the appreciation of the gathering. From then on, the Swāmi's talks in Tamil Nadu were given in Tamil; only in gatherings of scholars was it in Sanskrit.

From Rameshwaram, they reached Madurai. The Swāmi was thrilled to be in the presence of Goddess Meenakshi. He composed two hymns, '*Meenākshi-stuti*' and '*Meenākshi-stotra*'. In the former, he has admired the beauty of the Meenakshi Temple. To him, Meenakshi is the goddess of supreme learning – *brahma-vidyā-devata*.

दिव्यं रूपं दधाना ललितरवैर्वेणुवीणादिजातैः
प्रापय्यान्तर्मुखत्वं निखिलजनमनांस्यात्मरूपं विवेक्तुम्।
वृत्तिर्मोदादिरूपा अपि परिगलिताः कुर्वती ब्रह्मविद्या
मीनाक्षी जीवनीडं सुखममृतमहोबोधयन्ती विभाति॥

'The Devi's form is divine and unique. She makes people go inward using pleasant instruments like the flute and the *veena*. The charm of music is that it creates a condition conducive to introspection. This is the means for everyone to see the divine in themselves. So, she dims the mind's feeling of even (positive sensations like) pleasure and prepares the way for *brahma vidyā*. She glows brightly, residing in this grotto called the mind, teaching a bliss that never fades and is never hidden.'

It seems like it was here that the Swāmi thought of music as a means for attaining Self knowledge. In the days to come, he developed an increased liking for classical music. Later, when he became

introverted as an *avadhūta*, he used to sing to himself, having a pleasant voice. It is a feature of his compositions that they are suitable for singing.

Coming back to his tour, in Madurai, standing before the Goddess, he lost himself in ecstasy. When he awoke from his ecstatic trance, a hymn issued forth spontaneously from him —

अद्राक्षं बहुभाग्यतो गुरुवरैः सम्पूज्यमानां मुदा
फुल्लन्मल्लिनवप्रसूननिवहैर्हालास्यनाथप्रियाम्।
वीणावेणुमृदङ्गनादमुदितामेणाङ्कबिम्बाननां
काणादादि समशास्त्रमतिदां शोणाधरां श्यामलाम्॥

'How fortunate I am, that I saw the Devi today! My guru too worshipped her with delight. This Devi, who is adorned with blooming jasmine flowers is the beloved of Lord Halasya-natha. Her face, made happy by the music of the *veena*, the flute and the *mridanga*, is like the full moon. Her lips are red and her hue is blue. She graces us with knowledge of *vaiśeshika* and other shastras.'

He saw the Devi as someone who would remove the darkness shrouding the intellect (*mohāndhakāra-haraṇam bhaja mīna-netram*) and prayed, ''Let my soul be the lotus on which your divine form shines forth'' (*tvadrūpameva mama hṛtkamale vibhātu*). He plaintively sang-

श्रुत्युक्तकर्मनिवहाकरणाद्धिशुद्धिः
चित्तस्य नास्ति मम चञ्चलतानिवृत्त्यै ।
कुर्यां किमम्ब मनसा सकलाघशान्त्यै
मातस्तवाङ्घ्रिभजनं सततं दयस्व ॥

'It is not possible for the mind to be cleansed by merely performing all the activities prescribed by the Vedas. But then what should I do to dispel the unsteadiness of the mind? How can the mind's lack of steadfastness go without subduing past sins? What should I do to quell the sins of the past? Bless me so that devotion in your lotus feet takes root.'

The Swāmi's entourage left Madurai, reached Papanasam, and visiting Banatirtha, arrived at Tiruchendur. Here again, the Swāmi became overcome with divine ecstasy. He saw in the deity only the Supreme Being, the Supreme Light.[1]

He composed two hymns on the deity of the *kshetra*. Of them, one is in the *bhujanga-prayata* metre.

In this hymn, the Swāmi has explained the meaning of 'Guha' which is another name for Lord Subrahmanya. 'Gu' is darkness, inner and outer; darkness is ignorance. 'ha' is to destroy (as in

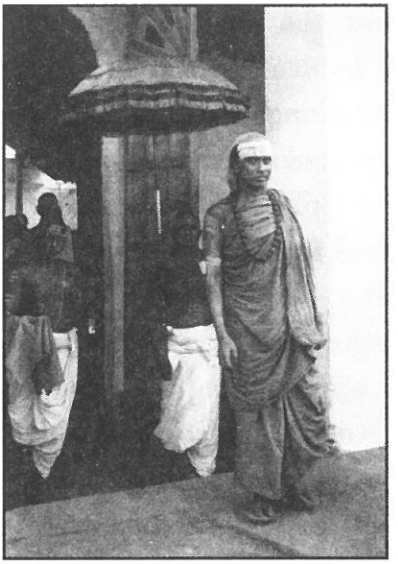
1. ब्रह्मपरात्परममलं सुब्रह्मण्याभिदं परञ्ज्योतिः ।

'hanti'). That is knowledge. So Guha's nature is knowledge itself, the self-knowledge - *ātmajñāna* - which the Upanishads teach.

गुकारेण वाच्यं तमो बाह्यमन्तः
स्वदेहाभयाज्ञानदानेन हन्ति।
य ऐनं गुहं वेदशीर्षैकमेयं
सदा षण्मुखं भावये हृत्सरोजे ॥

From Tiruchendur, they visited Kanyakumari and other places and reached Tiruvahindrapura (Tiruvancur or Travancore). They received the Maharaja's hospitality and arrived at Kaladi. The work undertaken at Kaladi by the previous Swāmi has been mentioned earlier. He had taken the birthplace of Shankaracharya to the *maṭha*'s possession, built temples for Goddess Sharada and Shankaracharya and consecrated their images. He had also set up a school to teach the Vedas. The current Swāmi established a school to teach Vedanta and a settlement for Brahmins. He conducted the *Śankara-jayanti* festivities of that year (1927) in Kaladi itself.

From Kaladi, the Swāmi visited Cochin, Thrissur, Palakkad and Coimbatore, and came to Nanjanagud where he observed the *chāturmāsya*. He set up a Shankara Maṭha there in which he consecrated the images of Rama, Lakshmana and



Sita as well as an image of Shankaracharya. He also set up a school to teach Vedas. He then returned to Śringeri. He had left Śringeri in January of 1924. He returned in December 1927. In these four years, Kunigal Ramashastri was with him; and of course the Chief Administrator. In this period, not once did he become inward-oriented; there was no hint of the 'insanity' of the past.

But the Swāmi had withered from the relentless travel, the continuous conversations, the series of lectures, the countless *pāda--pūja* performed at his feet, the food, the distribution of *tīrtha-prasāda*, the need to cater to the welfare of the vast number of disciples, the crowds everywhere and more than

anything else, the need to give prominence to the royal attire he was forced to wear. A mention of such regal clothing (like the gem encrusted crown, the gold brocaded shawl and so on) has been made earlier. As per the dictate of the Chief Administrator, the saffron robe and *rudrākshi* bead necklace natural to the *sanyāsi* was permitted only when travelling in the palanquin from village to village. On approaching a town or city, the royal robes had to be put on. In order to make an impression on the people and show off the superiority of the *maṭha*, the Swāmi had to be seen only in such finery. As though it were a necessary condition to participate in the procession.

An incident that occurred in the course of these travels is interesting. There was a big town en route; a large gathering had assembled to receive the Swāmi. When the town was still at some distance, one of the attendants set down the Swāmi's palanquin and placed the gem encrusted crown on the Swāmi's head, wrapped his body in the brocaded shawl and hung the diamond necklaces around his neck. But in his urgency, he inverted the shawl such that the glittering threads of gold were hidden inside and the knotted patchwork of threads was seen outside. The people received the Swāmi and the grand procession

reached the place readied for his stay. When the Swāmi started for his daily rituals, the attendant removed the crown and the necklaces. When he was about to take off the shawl, he realised his mistake; what ought to have been hidden was visible! His body in a sweat, he feared what the Swāmi might say to him. He fell at the Swāmi's feet pleading, ''My apologies, the Swāmi must show compassion and pardon me.'' When the Swāmi inquired what happened, he revealed the mistake about the shawl. Laughing lightly, the Swāmi said that the moment the shawl was draped around him, he had realised what had happened. The attendant was surprised. He said, ''The Swāmi could have told me then itself? I could have corrected the mistake immediately.'' The Swāmi replied, ''So what happened? I thought, this is today's garb; let it be.''

CHAPTER 11

Illness

After he returned from the pilgrimage to Kaladi, a change was observed again in the Swāmi's behaviour. For a few days after coming back to Śringeri, he was outward oriented and oversaw the *maṭha*'s activities. The biggest attraction for devotees at the *maṭha* is the detailed worship performed by the Swāmi of the *maṭha*'s deities (the Chandramoulishwara Linga, the Ratnagarbha-ganapati idol, the *utsava-mūrti* of Goddess Sharada and the figure of Shankaracharya) in public view. People gather in large numbers to witness this. It is customary for the Swāmi himself to perform this *pūja*; the *maṭha*'s helpers will be at hand to assist him, and the *pundits* chant the Vedas and *stotras*. The pomp with which the *pūja* is performed is unforgettable.

After returning from Kaladi, the Swāmi used to perform this *pūja* daily. But it was clear to everybody that his heart was not really in it. During

the *pūja* he would pick up flowers but sit limp without using them; if the lamp's wick were burning thin, he would try and relight it with a flower but then would lose himself observing that process and do nothing else; while doing *abhisheka*, he would continue pouring ablutions even after the accompanying chants were over; after the *abhisheka* was over, he would wipe the idols and *sāligrāmas* with a cloth but while doing so, would stare at them fixedly and forget about all the subsequent

rituals. Midway through the *pūja,* he would simply get up and walk away. On several occasions, Srikantha Shastri or someone else had to complete the *pūja.*

In these circumstances, the Chief Administrator had ordered that the Swāmi should not go to the river to bathe and had made arrangements for his bath at the *maṭha* itself. The Swāmi would sit by a cauldron of water and pour the water onto his head using a copper pot. Even after the water in the cauldron was over, he would not stop trying to fill the pot and pouring it on to his head. If a nearby attendant asked if he should get some more water, the Swāmi would agree and wait with the pot kept aside. The attendant would bring and pour some more water on the Swāmi's head and when it was over, would ask if he could stop. The Swāmi would agree and leave.

This is to say that all his actions were mechanical. It appeared that his mind was elsewhere. Even if his eyes were open, his focus appeared to lie somewhere else; even if he heard with ears open, his attention seemed to be directed somewhere else. He lived as though he had no relationship at all with the world outside. If it was absolutely necessary, he would eat a few morsels

and speak a few words. As the days passed, he gave up performing the *pūjas* at the *maṭha*; he stopped his lectures on the *sūtra-bhāshyas*; he gave up meeting people and talking to people who met him. He was unaware of what he wore. He began to stay in the Narasimha-vana on the far bank of the Tunga, and evinced no interest in coming to the *maṭha*. However, unlike his earlier period of withdrawal, this time he was not anxious and agitated. A gentle smile played on his lips always. He appeared as though he had obtained an otherworldly peace and happiness.

During his wanderings inside the Narasimha-vana, he used to recite loudly the 'Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa' of Sadashiva Brahmendra. To those who observed him, he seemed to have become the exemplar of some of the ideas and sentiments expressed in some of the verses of that work.

अवधूतकर्मजालो जडबधिरान्धोपमः कोऽपि।
आत्मारामो यतिराडटवीकोणेष्वटन्नास्ते॥

'This ascetic, who has cast aside the fetters of all *karma*, wanders about self-content in the forest, as though he is dull, deaf and blind.'

तिष्ठन् परत्र धाम्नि स्वीयसुखास्वादपरवशः कश्चित्।
क्वाऽपि ध्यायति कुहचिद् गायति कुत्रापि नृत्यति स्वैरम्॥

'Rooted in *Para-brahman* and experiencing inner bliss, at times he will become immersed in meditation; at other times, he will sing or skip around as he fancies.'

पश्यति किमपि न रूपं न वदति न श्रुणोति किञ्चिदपि वचनम् ।
तिष्ठति निरुपमभूमनि निष्काममवलम्ब्य काष्ठवद्योगी ॥

'He will not see anything, or talk to anyone or hear anything. Settling down in the boundless *para-brahman*, he will remain in that frame of mind, (impervious to anything external) like a piece of wood.'

The Swāmi's behaviour was comparable to these and other similar descriptions (of an *avadhūta*). In the language of *yoga*, this is '*antar-mukhāvastha*'. We learn that this is how *ātma-jñānis*, *avadhūtas* and *mounis* will be. It is said that in ancient times, Jada-bharata or Rshi Vamadeva behaved similarly. In our times, we have heard that Sadashiva-brahmendra of Nerur lived in this manner.

To become *antar-mukha* or inward-oriented is to not bother about activities in the world outside and keep to oneself. The Swāmi's desire to teach and give discourses disappeared after he became aware of the nature of people during his tours. In

this context, the following conversation is noteworthy —

An elderly householder, wanting to improve the world, came to the Swāmi and explained several projects he wished to undertake towards that end. Listening to him patiently, the Swāmi asked, ''What you say is true, but is it not a hindrance to you? If you must implement whatever you said, leave aside the expense involved, will you get competent people? They should be sincere to the cause of *dharma*, they should be wise, they must be people of character and they must agree to your plans. More than anything else, they must be people who can exert an influence on others. Will such people be found?''

The gentleman replied, ''Among such people, I shall be the first!''

The Swāmi said, ''Very well, but do you have the time and opportunity to undertake such a task?''

The gentleman replied, ''By god's grace, I do not have to worry about necessities. I have retired from work. My son is there to take care of the house, lands and other assets. I am ready to work hard at this task for the rest of my life.''

The Swāmi asked, ''Do you understand Sanskrit?''

The gentleman replied, ''Yes, I understand.''

The Swāmi asked again, ''How much have you studied?''

The gentleman said, ''I have completed the study of the epic-poems (*kāvyas*).

The Swāmi asked, ''Have you studied *tarka* (logic) or *vyākaraṇa* (grammar)?''

The gentlemen replied, ''No, I haven't.''

Again the Swāmi asked, ''Have you studied the texts of Vedanta''?

The gentleman replied, ''To an extent, I have read the 'Viveka-chudamani' and the 'Vasudeva-manana'.''

The Swāmi replied, ''Look here good sir, you say that you do not have any troubles with your worldly affairs and that you have a lot of time. It appears that you have a genuine interest in our *dharma*. When you have all these facilities, why not study some more? Why not practise what you have studied? Is it not better to save oneself before saving others? When you begin to preach the path of salvation to others, would they not ask you, 'Sir, how much have you been uplifted?' Isn't it true

that you have the authority to prescribe *dharma* to others only after you have practised it yourself? How could a person who doesn't know how to swim help a drowning man to the shore? So, good sir, you please first find a way to uplift yourself. It is everybody's duty to do so. Sankaracharya has said that the man who forgets his salvation and worries about the salvation of others is a fool. Our life is short; it is said that we must take several births to liberate ourselves. In this circumstance, why waste time in the salvation of others?

''Moreover, where is the assurance that people will listen to what you say? Each is subject to the pulls exerted by tendencies brought forward from past births. It may be possible in politics or economics to assemble a body of people and get them to do something; it may be possible to take them with you and goad them to undertake a task by your oratory powers or the logical force of your arguments. But this is not possible in the spiritual realm. It is possible to assemble a multitude to draw a temple car. But when you are hungry yourself, what will you do with hundreds of people? You will remain hungry and so will they! One man's hunger can't satiate the hunger of others, is it not? When you are spiritually hungry, you must find a way to satisfy that hunger.

''Also, what is the use of preaching a way to satisfy the spiritual hunger to thousands who do not feel that hunger in the first place? Which is why our *sastras* say, 'Knowledge must not be imparted to a person who does not truly desire it'. It is easily discovered whether the desire is true or faked.''

Hundreds of people got such advice. The Swāmi used to talk patiently and with a smile playing on his lips. As a result, the number of people who visited Śringeri merely to see him increased. But now, in his introverted state, he used to be an *avadhūta* most of the time.

In this state, he had to be kept effectively under confinement in Narasimhavana. At noon, attendants would keep food in his room, close the door and come out. On many days, when somebody went to check in the evenings, they would find the food uneaten or scattered around the room. At night, the attendants would keep a cup of milk; that too would remain where it was, untouched. During this time when he was confined, nobody could see him. Suddenly, at some time, he would revert to his normal state and resume conversation, and dress, behave, worship, and teach as usual. But it would be impossible to predict when he would go into his introverted state and when he would 'come out'.

This led to some anxiety for the *maṭha*'s administrators and his personal attendants.

The administration of the *maṭha* was carried on as usual by Srikantha Shastri. He even did all *pūjas* which were supposed to be done by the *maṭha*. The Swāmi's oscillations between introvert and normal states did not hamper the routine activities of the *maṭha*. But devotees, disciples and pilgrims came to the *maṭha* mainly to see the Swāmi. They felt fulfilled only when the Swāmi spoke to them with a smile and blessed them. The temple is not charismatic by itself; it derives its importance because of its association with the *maṭha*, which in turn owes its existence from its association with the Swāmi of the *maṭha*. If the Swāmi becomes an introvert, the economic well-being of the *maṭha* is affected adversely.

The chief administrator, thinking that this was all due to influences of planets and spirits, tried making arrangements for suitable remedial measures; he thought of ways to keep the Swāmi in check. But eventually, not seeing a way out, he informed the Maharaja of Mysore of the Swāmi's state. The Maharaja was Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV. He was the king who, in accordance with the wishes of the previous Swāmi, had endorsed the

choice of Chandrashekhara Bharati and ordered his coronation as the *maṭha*'s head. In turn, the Maharaja informed his Diwan about this and indicated that in this connection everything necessary must be done. The Diwan was Sir Mirza Ismail. He was favourably disposed to Hindu religious leaders and temples. He went to Śringeri, met the Swāmi and made inquiries with those around. He then wrote to the head of the government mental hospital in Bangalore, instructing that somebody must visit Śringeri immediately, check on the Swāmi's health and submit a report.

At that time, the incumbent Chief Administrative Officer of the hospital was Dr. M. V. Govindaswamy. Twenty years later, when this hospital became the National Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences (NIMHANS), he became my superior. Accompanied by Dr. C. K. Vasudeva Rao, the Head of the Department of Psychology, Dr. Govindaswamy made several trips to Śringeri and submitted reports to the Diwan on the Swāmiji's health. Fifteen years later, when I was with The Indian Institute of Science and established an acquaintance with Dr. Govindaswamy and Dr. Vasudeva Rao, and later, when I became the Head of the Department of Psychology, NIMHANS, I got

the opportunity to go through these reports. Dr. Govindaswamy and Dr. Vasudeva Rao enlightened me about certain details which were not to be found in the reports.

It was not possible for the doctors to examine the Swāmi directly; they could not see him at close quarters, talk to him and get the necessary details. They had to observe from afar, make enquiries with the officers of the *maṭha* and the Swāmi's attendants and acquaint themselves with the nature and cause of the 'disease'. It was equally difficult to administer curative medicines. If the medicine were mixed with food, the Swāmi would not touch food for several days. So, the doctors could not assess the nature of the ailment; nor could they initiate any procedure of treatment. But, to the good fortune of the doctors, the Swāmi came to his normal state all of a sudden. In this context, Dr. Govindaswamy's account comes to mind.

Even though Dr. Govindaswamy had camped in Śringeri for a week, he had not had the opportunity to meet the introverted Swāmi. Suddenly, on the eve of his return to Bangalore, the Swāmi returned to normalcy. Without showing himself as a doctor, Dr. Govindaswamy dressed like a Brahmin and went to see the Swāmi with many others. He sat facing the Swāmi in the midst of others. Nobody

had informed the Swāmi that this person was a doctor or that he had come to Śringeri to examine him. Dr. Govindaswamy prostrated before the Swāmi saying, 'I shall be leaving for Bangalore tomorrow with your permission.'' Chuckling lightly, the Swāmi asked, ''Why? Have you finished the work for which you came?'' Dr. Govindaswamy was dumbfounded. He realised that the Swāmi had come to know the purpose of his visit. By answering yes, he would be implying that he had understood the nature of the disease. By answering no, he would be opening himself to the question: why leave when your work is not done? Unable to say anything, Dr. Govindaswamy remained silent. The Swāmi broke the silence by asking, ''So are you done with examining me? Is this an illness which falls within your medical specialty?'' As if to answer, the Swāmi himself said, ''This is my fate. I have to experience this. After all, what can you do? You may please leave, may god bless you'', and gave *phala-mantrākshata.*

(Dr. Govindaswamy said that) Swāmi observed his forehead just as he was giving him *phala-mantrākshata.* It being (the Shaivite) Śringeri *maṭha,* Dr. Govindaswamy had put on *vibhūti* thinking it would please the Swāmi. Chuckling lightly, the Swāmi asked, ''Why have you put on *vibhūti*? Are

you not a *mādhva*?'' When Dr. Govindaswamy remained silent, not knowing what to say, the Swāmi said, ''You should not give up your practices to please others. We are pleased only when you remain true to your practices.''

Dr. Govindaswamy used to say, ''It is true that I went to cure the Swāmi's ailment; but what happened was that my ills were cured.'' Ever since he went to Śringeri and met the Swāmi, he became a believer. He began to show an interest in Vedanta and started learning Sanskrit. He invited home Panditaraja V. S. Ramachandra Shastri who had studied under the Swāmi and lived in Bangalore, and undertook the study of the definitive texts of Vedanta under his guidance. Ramachandra Shastri was the son of Vellore Subrahmanya Shastri, who had studied Vedanta under the previous Swāmi and had taught Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati. I was introduced to Ramachandra Shastri in Dr. Govindaswamy's house.

There was no treatment as such which was administered to the Swāmi. He was kept in confinement when he became an introvert; he used to be normal when he came out of his introverted state. Even in his extroverted state, he did not pay any attention to the affairs of the *maṭha*. He could neither give lessons nor perform worship. The

Chief Administrator did not believe that the Swāmi's condition would improve or that the prestige of the *maṭha* would survive under this Swāmi. He thought it would be good if they could have someone else as the head of the *maṭha* under whom he could continue the *maṭha*'s administration. Once, when the Swāmi was in his extroverted state, he proposed this to him. The Swāmi did not say no. He said, ''Do as you think fit.''

R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, in one of his books, has referred to an incident which illustrates the Swāmi's response in such situations. At that time, Krishnaswamy Iyer had camped in a small room on the far bank of the Tunga (on the side of Narasimhavana). The Swāmi too used to be on that side of the river. One day, Iyer saw the Swāmi's attendants moving various articles from the Swāmi's room to the other side of the river (the bank on which there is the temple and the *maṭha*). On enquiring, he found out that the Swāmi was about to cross the river and go to the *maṭha* on the other side. Thinking he would do *namaskāra* to the Swāmi before he left, he went to the Swāmi and said, ''I believe your worship is going to the far bank?'' The Swāmi chuckled and replied, ''Yes. The Chief Administrator has said that it will rain

and the river will swell making it difficult to shift the articles of worship from that bank over here. So it will be good if I can go there. What difference does it make where I am?'' The Swāmi continued, ''You stay here. You need not come there. At this time, there will be neither rain nor flood.'' Could he not have expressed his opinion about the rain to the Chief Administrator? Was it the opinion of the Swāmi or the words of the Chief Administrator which should be carried out in the *maṭha*? But the Swāmi's nature was one which shied away from unnecessary discussion on any topic with anyone. Which is why he used to say, ''Let it be as they wish.''

Moreover, in matters concerning the *maṭha*, he was unattached and unenthusiastic. He was incapable of showing interest in the affairs of the *maṭha* and direct its administration. All these days, the elderly Chief Administrator, who was adept at administration, competent, experienced and who was like a teacher to him, was running the show in a manner that earned praise from everyone. What would be the plight of the *maṭha* without him? The Chief Administrator was now sixty years old and was repeatedly requesting that he be relieved of his responsibilities. His decision on the activities of the *maṭha* and the future arrangements

was the appropriate one. It was also understandable that he was anxious to ensure that the *maṭha*'s affairs would continue as usual even after he retired. Reasoning thus, the Swāmi did not counter the Chief Administrator's proposition (to find an alternate head for the *maṭha*).

On May 22, 1931, the Swāmi formally accepted a disciple (and successor). Srinivasa, the son of Kaipu Rama Shastri of Bangalore, was ordained as a monk with the name Abhinava Vidyatirtha, and anointed the junior head of the *peeṭha*. In due course, he became the *jagadguru*. An incident that occurred at the time of his induction is interesting. It had been arranged that the Swāmi, along with the junior *jagadguru*, would go in a procession through the streets of Śringeri. There were two palanquins with the *maṭha*. One of them was bigger and gold plated; the other was smaller and silver-plated. It was designated that the gold palanquin was for the senior swami and the silver palanquin was for the junior. Both the Swāmis had to circumambulate the Sarada Temple and climb onto the palanquins as they came out. As they came out, the Swāmi quickly climbed onto the silver palanquin and directed that the junior Swāmi must sit in the gold palanquin. This caused a major stir in the gathered throng. Not knowing what to

do, the junior Swāmi stood quietly. One after another, officials came to the Swāmi and requested him to grace the golden palanquin. He did not budge. Finally, Srikantha Shastri, the Chief Administrator, came with the same request. The Swāmi told him in unambiguous words, ''Have you forgotten the background and context to this situation? From now on, he is the *jagadguru*, not me; please remember that.'' Shastri remained silent. The procession went on in accordance with the Swāmi's wishes.

Thenceforth, the Swāmi used to clarify in every circumstance that the person who had been anointed (junior) Swāmi was the *jagadguru*, not himself. If anybody asked what his position was in the *maṭha*, he would reply, ''The world is ours, why do we need a separate place in it?'' To a senior official the Swāmi said, ''The very day on which the junior Swāmi was ordained a monk and ascended the Seat of Yoga, he became the *jagadguru*. He is the person in overall control of this *maṭha*. I am just awaiting the end of this body which has accrued to me through *karma*. That is about it.''

At this time, the Swāmi was thirty nine years old. The junior Swāmi was fourteen. After making all arrangements for the junior Swāmi's studies, the

Chief Administrator retired from his post. He was sixty two years then. He had served the *maṭha* for twenty four years under the previous Swāmi and for eighteen years under this Swāmi and had indeed aged while serving. At the time of his retirement and according to his suggestion, the Swāmi wrote to the Mysore administration requesting the appointment of an experienced officer to oversee the *maṭha*'s accounts.

After his retirement, Srikantha Shastri settled down at Kallahalli, three miles from Nanjangud. Even though he had retired, he continued guiding the *maṭha* intermittently. In 1935, when the Swāmi had camped at Kaladi for a long while, Srikantha Shastri made all the arrangements and even stayed there with him. He passed away in Mysore in 1950 at the age of eighty. The year before his death, he had even taken *āpat-sanyāsa*, or monkhood embraced out of a sense of impending distress. Apparently, he had wished to be ordained a monk formally at the hands of the Swāmi once his health improved, but that was never to be.

After he accepted the junior Swāmi as his successor, the Swāmi gave up whatever little connection he had with the *maṭha*. Whenever somebody posed a problem concerning the *maṭha*, the Swāmi, who in former days used to say,

''Please ask Srikantha Sastri'', now said, ''Please ask the *jagadguru*''. The Swāmi lived on for twenty three years after he had taken in the junior Swāmi. All this time he spent as a *jīvan-mukta*, unattached, without anxiety and without heightened emotional involvement. He did not show any interest in the affairs of the world. He spent ever more time in solitude. Even when he did not exactly go into the *antar-mukha* or introverted state, he was never interested in the outside world. Even though devotees gathered to have a glimpse of him, he was not keen to meet them. Neither did he wish to participate in the *maṭha*'s *puja* and pageantry. Staying in Narasimhavana, he practised what is called '*Ādhyāna*', which is also known as '*Ādhyātma Yoga*'.

Sankaracharya named *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* as the tools which facilitate the realisation of *Brahman*. The Swāmi completed the first of the three under Virupaksha Shastri. Subsequently, during the time of his self-study and lecturing, he conjoined principles of logic that were consistent with the Vedas with his personal experience and completed the second phase of constant rumination. Earlier, there was no time for the practical task of *nididhyāsana*. There was always some worry or other about the *maṭha*'s

affairs. It was also necessary that the *karma* of past births had to be worn out, and the residual impressions of past lives and actions had to be erased. Once the successor was chosen and assistance was provided by the government for the administration of the *maṭha*, he was free to practise *nididhyāsana*. Now, he undertook the austerities necessary for that purpose. The officials, who continued to harbour the impression that the Swāmi was out of his mind and who did not know about the workings of *nididhyāsana*, assumed that this too was a form of mental instability, and kept the Swāmi more and more in confinement. Ironically, this was convenient for the Swāmi's spiritual practice.

CHAPTER 12

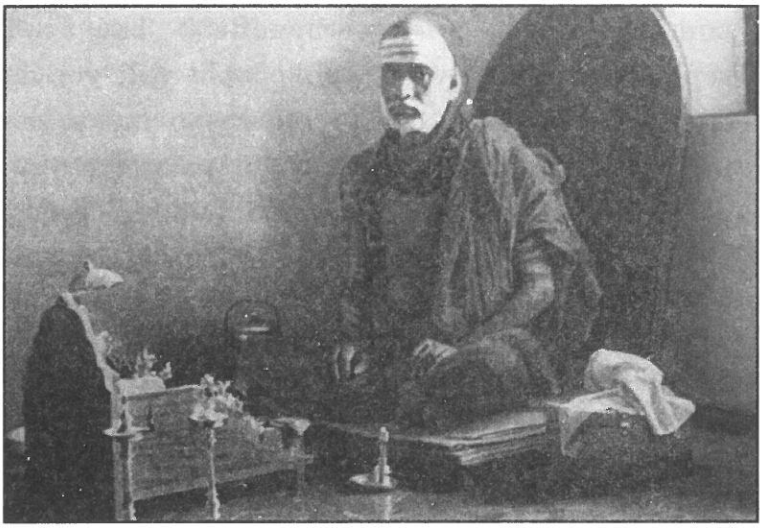
Another Tour

After being in his otherworldly state for seven years, the Swāmi came out of it. As though the austerities he had undertaken had reached a definite stage, he began to remain in a normal, extroverted state. He used to speak a few words with visitors. During this period, an effulgent glow could be observed on his face. A light smile played on his lips constantly. From his gait, speech and gaze, one could discern that he was experiencing an immeasurable peace. Immediately on seeing him, anybody could recognize him as a *siddha-purusha*. Those who stood before him experienced a unique and sublime feeling. It was as though an unearthly glow had taken human form, as though an abundant peace had become starkly manifest. In former

times, he had sat near the *samādhi* of his guru and prayed for him to be led on the path of liberation. It now appeared as though that prayer had borne fruit.

Chief among Śringeri's attractions are the *maṭha*, the temple, and the ceremonial processions (*utsavas*). There is the *jagadguru* in the *maṭha*, Goddess Sharada in the temple and pomp of the procession. All this is on the near bank of the river, attached to the town. In the minds of many devotees and pilgrims, not much importance is assigned to the Narasimhavana on the far bank of the river. Except that the beautiful *adhishṭhāna* of the previous Swāmi did attract a few. How could people be drawn to the Swāmi, who had hid himself in the Narasimhavana and who was described as mentally deranged? Even so, the devout, the enthusiastic and the curious began coming from afar to see this *jīvan-mukta*, to speak to this *siddha-purusha* and to seek the blessings of this *avadhūta*. Śringeri's sanctity increased manifold because of this Swāmi's presence.

But the Swāmi did not relish this throng of people much. Indeed, he became perturbed that people were coming to see him. Even if people were waiting to meet him, on several occasions, he



never showed himself. During that time, Krishnaswamy Iyer, seeking an opportune moment, appealed to him, ''Devotees will be eager to see the Swāmi and seek his grace. If the Swāmi gives *darśan* for at least a few minutes and speaks a few words to them, they will be happy. Otherwise, they will return disappointed.'' The Swāmi replied, ''Your view is not correct. I cannot reciprocate the enthusiasm of those who come to see and speak to me. They do not share my interests. Where do I have the ability to give what they wish for? Isn't it a fact that many people come to have their illnesses, worries or something else redressed? Am I a doctor? Or a magician? Is this why the Acharya (Sankaracharya) established this *peeṭha*?'' Not leaving it at that, Iyer persisted, ''But at least a few

come to obtain spiritual benefit?'' The Swāmi replied reassuringly, ''Such people will get help from me somehow or the other; no matter how many hurdles they may have to cross, they will certainly see me'', and added with a chuckle, ''Now, haven't you come? Likewise!''

The same Iyer has quoted another incident suggestive of the mental state of the Swāmi at that time. Once, Iyer went to the Swāmi's room. The Swāmi was sitting quietly and alone. When he saw that Iyer had come, he motioned to him to sit down. The Swāmi continued to sit quietly, without uttering a word. About twenty minutes passed. An uncommon peace enveloped the room. Then, Iyer saw a light smile formed on the Swāmi's face. Immediately, the Swāmi asked Iyer, ''Shall I tell you?'' Iyer replied, ''If your holiness feels like it, please do.'' The Swāmi explained, ''The mind was at peace. And then a thought arose, as if to ruffle the peace. On realizing that you were sitting close by, it seemed that you were expecting me to speak. Another thought arose that I ought to speak if I were to satisfy your expectation. As soon as that thought came, it came to mind that 'speaking' is a verb and required a subject. I felt like searching for something to speak about. Instantaneously, it came to mind that all subjects are of two kinds –

those that are true and those that are false. I recollected the teaching of Vedanta that only Brahman is real but cannot be expressed through words. It meant then that there was only one thing to talk about – this illusory world. And then I recalled that Vedanta says the world is comprised of name and form but it too is beyond articulation. So I felt, there could be no talk about that either. There is no third category, is there? So, I thought it is really not possible to speak about anything. Which means I came to my initial state! Why did I harbour so many thoughts at all? It is like the story of a man with a headload of goods, who wandered the whole night trying to avoid paying tax at the tollgate but found himself just in front of it at daybreak. I was amused at my stupidity for having wasted so many thoughts thus.''

Feeling that he would get no solitude in Śringeri, he thought he would go to Bangalore or Kaladi and spend some time. Just at that time there were several requests from the southern territories for the Swāmi, now out of his introverted state, to undertake another tour. In 1938 the Swāmi set out of Śringeri for the second time. But he declined to take with him any of the *maṭha*'s pomp and pageantry. He made it clear that he was not the *jagadguru* now and he was not going on any tour

of victory, that this tour was unofficial and personal. With a small entourage, he came to Bangalore. In the Shankara Maṭha at Bangalore, the previous Swāmi had got constructed a temple to Shankaracharya and had consecrated his idol therein. This Swāmi (Chandrashekara Bharati) had got built a temple to Goddess Sharada opposite Shankaracharya's shrine. When he visited Bangalore, he arranged for the installation and consecration of the idol and *kumbhābhisheka*. He stayed in Bangalore for eight months.

An interesting conversation which occurred at the time Swāmi left Bangalore is fresh in the minds of those who were present then. On the day he was to leave Bangalore, one among the hundreds of devotees who had gathered to receive *phala-mantrākshata* began to sob on coming near the Swāmi. When the Swāmi inquired the reason that man said, ''I was happy to get the guru's *darśana* these last seven-eight months. From now on, how can I get that *darśana*?'' With a chuckle, the Swāmi asked, ''Who is that guru who gave you so much joy?'' That man replied, ''It is you, my lord!'' The Swāmi said, ''Then I am not fit to be a guru. If this is all I taught for six-seven months, then there is no use for a person like me. It is better that you do not see me''. When the startled devotee asked

why, the Swāmi consoled him thus, ''Did you think of my body as your guru? The true guru is *ātman*. Isn't it true that the *ātman* is unattached to the vagaries of time and place and actions of leaving and returning? If I have taught you that this body is the guru, I am not a proper guru, is it not? Of what use am I?'' The Swāmi explained further, ''The guru's task is to make himself redundant to the pupil. If he thinks that the pupil must depend on him forever, then he is not a true guru.''

Since people thronged to see him at Bangalore also, the Swāmi did not get the solitude he desired. He stayed at Nanjanagud for a few days and went direct to Kaladi via Coimbatore, without stopping anywhere else. At Kaladi, the Maharaja of Travancore and the prime minister of that state, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, made all arrangements for the comfortable stay of the Swāmi at Kaladi. Indeed, Ramaswamy Iyer's attitude towards the Swāmi was that of great devotion. For a few months, the Swāmi practised his austerities in solitude. But his fame spread by word of mouth and people from the surrounding areas began to come to have *darśan*. The Swāmi felt once more that he had to leave the place.

This time round, the Swāmi was in Kaladi for ten months. In order to supervise the arrangements

in the Swāmi's camp, Srikantha Shastri, who had retired from the *maṭha* and was living in his native village, had come down. During the whole time that he was at Kaladi, the Swāmi was in his extroverted state. At this time, he began to write in Sanskrit a commentary on the 'Vivekachudamani'. 'Vivekachudamani', reputedly of Shankaracharya, is a key work on Vedanta. It is a popular work of the Advaita school. It is learnt that the previous Swāmi had resolved to write a commentary on this work; for a variety of reasons, that was not to be. It was Srikantha Shastri's wish that the previous Swāmi's successor should undertake the task. But Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati did not have much enthusiasm for writing texts. Even so, he began writing a simple commentary on this work. Even after his return from Kaladi to Śringeri, the writing continued; but it could not be finished. More about this work later.

The Swāmi returned to Śringeri around 1940. For some time, he instructed students in Vedanta. His writings used to appear in 'Astika-matojjivini', a publication of the *maṭha.* But gradually, he laid aside all these activities, and like a bird returning to its nest, he went back to his solitary ways. It appeared that interaction with the outside world

had completely stopped. It was difficult to see him outside his room. In spite of this, his fame spread everywhere. As soon as people heard that he was in his outward oriented state they would descend on Śringeri from all directions. There were many who left other work and camped at Śringeri for days and weeks on end, just to have a sight of the Swāmi. The numbers increased – of those who were satisfied to see him even from afar, or even see him just once. There were many who thought their lives were fulfilled by a glimpse of his light smile, who felt their birth was sanctified by hearing a few words from him.

Even when he was in his outward oriented state, he was not performing the customary *pūjas* or giving discourses. It was also seldom that he spoke to people. The one thing that those who came to have his *darśana* got was his light smile; sometimes he used to nod his head; with those known to him, he enquired briefly after their welfare. His attitude to everyone was the same. He did not discriminate between the poor, the rich, the *maṭha*'s students, outsiders, scholars, or the laity.

CHAPTER 13

The Final Emancipation

In October 1952 (*nandana samvatsara, aśwayuja bahula ekādaśi*), the Swāmi completed sixty years. On that occasion, his devotees, students of the *maṭha*, and those who had received his grace wished to commemorate the 'shashṭi-pūrti-śanti' with pomp. They made the necessary arrangements without asking the Swāmi; they collected the required funds also. As the event drew near, the subject was broached before the Swāmi but he rejected the idea. He said, ''No 'shanti' is needed for a sanyasi's body. It is also not correct to celebrate his birthday'', thereby throwing their desire to the winds.

A sanyasi is someone who has given up ritual observances concerning the bodily frame. A

sanyasi's age is not calculated from the date of his birth, but from the time he accepted monkhood. Therefore, it is meaningless to speak of a sanyasi's birthday. Merely because the person was the head of the *maṭha*, should his dharma as a sanyasi be given up? Often, devotees in their enthusiasm indiscriminately wish to play with the Swāmi as though he were a puppet. But should the Swāmi also indiscriminately say yes to their whims? Can he ever forget that he is first a sanyasi and then only the *maṭhādhipatī*? Have the *śastras* said that by virtue of being the head of the *maṭha*, there must be pomp and splendour, that he should receive a king's honour, or that he should undertake various activities just like a householder?

As for the Swāmi, he firmly said no to the people who proposed the idea and walked away. But will the devotees let go? They had made arrangements, gathered funds and obtained the approval of the authorities at the *maṭha*; would it not be a loss of face to accept that their venture would not succeed? They had made arrangements to have an '*ati-rudra-swāhākāra mahā-yāga*' and '*sahasra-chaṇḍi-homa*' on the occasion. After their idea of the 'shashṭi-pūrti-śānti' had been rejected, they came before the Swāmi again, with a request for permission to go ahead with these sacrifices.

After giving them a patient hearing, the Swāmi said, "These *yāgas* and *homas* must be undertaken for the welfare of humanity. Let them be performed, I have no objection. But there must be no connection between the sixtieth birthday and these events. You should not even expect me to come when the *yāga* is going on."

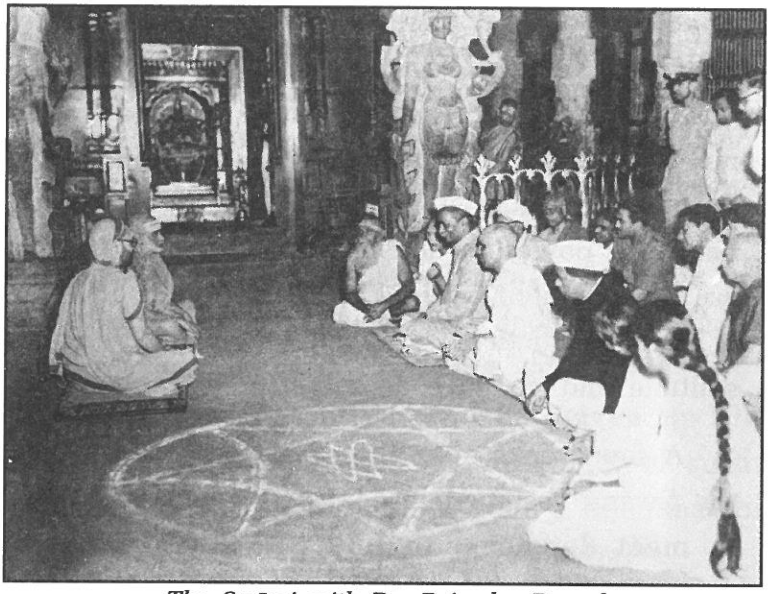
The '*ati-rudra' mantras* belong to *yajur-veda*'s *taittiriya* branch. They have been described as '*pāpa-kshayārtham*' (conducive to the removal of sin), '*vyādhi-vimochanārtham*' (conducive to relief from disease) and '*śrī-kāmah śanti-kāmah āyush-kāmah ārogya-kāmah kuryad-etan sarvam-āpnoti*' (the person desiring wealth, peace, longevity, and health will obtain all of them). Though the *sahasra-chaṇḍi--homa*, which embodies a part of the '*saptaśati*' of the '*mārkaṇḍeya purāṇa*', is meant for relief from famine and drought, it also contains a desire for wealth, grain, longevity and health. Is it right to involve a sanyasi who has given up all attachment to worldly gains in the welter of such activities? And that too, to present a dilemma to someone who is living like a *jīvan-mukta*?

These *yāga* and *homa* events were observed with a lot of fanfare in Śringeri from the 2nd to the 9th of April 1953, long after the Swāmi's birthday.

After all, people love festivities, don't they! People from outside Śringeri had gathered in hundreds of thousands. But during this time the Swāmi never came out of his room and remained in his introverted state. An unimaginable number of people had collected just to get a glimpse of him. But he did not show himself. When someone asked the reason for his conduct, the Swāmi replied, ''*Yāgas* are god-oriented activities and must be done with sincerity. A desire to see me is a hindrance to the people's sincerity. They may be troubled by the officers of the *maṭha.* Moreover, I will have to speak with everyone who comes. If not, they will be disappointed. They come to see me for relief from some disease, or from poverty or for the fulfilment of some desire. Where do I have the power to satisfy all their wants? If they are disappointed, even I will be saddened. This is a mutual affliction. Is it not better if I remain in solitude and not give an opportunity for all this?''

A few weeks after these celebrations were over the Swāmi resumed his extrovert state and started to meet devotees. In July 1954, he performed *vyāsa-pūja* as was the custom. He observed the *chāturmāsya-vrata* also. From then on, he did not become solitary and did not return to his other-worldly state.

On the morning of August 24, 1954, the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad visited Śringeri with his entourage. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was god-fearing, devout to gurus, simple and very pious. He had come with a wish to meet the Swāmi. The Swāmi also agreed to meet him. He met him seated on the platform in front of the Sarada temple, spoke to him in Sanskrit and blessed him. In the afternoon, Dr. Rajendra Prasad met the Swāmi again, talked to him for a while, took his leave and left Śringeri.



The Swāmi with Dr. Rajendra Prasad

On the day previous to Dr. Rajendra Prasad's visit, an officer of the *maṭha*, S. G. Narasimhaiah, was getting ready a silver palanquin in which to

bring the President. At that time, the Swāmi, who was in his extrovert state and was returning from his meal, stopped on seeing Narasimhaiah and spoke to him. When Narasimhaiah told him about the silver palanquin for Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Swāmi asked many questions about the President. When Narasimhaiah told him that the President was pious, devout, simple and free from hankering, the Swāmi said, ''If he is such a man, why the silver palanquin? Prepare the gold palanquin!'' Accordingly, the gold palanquin was despatched to carry Dr. Rajendra Prasad. When Dr. Prasad learnt that the Swāmi used to sit in that vehicle, he reverentially touched the palanquin and refused to sit in it and came walking.

At this time, there arose a situation in which the government, according to the law, was to acquire the land belonging to the *maṭha* as a *jahagir*. The officials of the *maṭha* had requested the Swāmi to put in a word to the President, thinking that that would give the *maṭha* exemption from this law. But would the Swāmi, who had never shown interest in worldly affairs, suddenly become interested now? To those who brought up this matter, he said, ''When the Acharya (Sankaracharya) established this *peeṭha*, which *jahagir* was there? What extent of land was there?

The Acharya did not set up the *maṭha* looking at all these things, did he? The only assets of the *maṭha* are dharma, god, and disciples who have faith - that is all.'' In his conversation with the President, the Swāmi did not broach the topic even indirectly; the talk centred around only religious matters. It was but natural that the officials and other interested parties were upset.

Ganesha Chaturthi (*bhādrapada-śukla-chauti*) came a few weeks after this event. The previous Swāmi had established the practice of arranging a conference of scholars every year on the occasion. During the *chāturmāsya-dīksha*, it was the custom for an idol of 'sabha-ganapati' to be installed in the *maṭha* on the *chauti*; and every evening after that, students and scholars expounded on various *śāstras* in the Swāmi's presence. The Swāmi also used to lend colour to the proceedings by participating in them. In the days past when Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati was in his normal, extroverted state, the chief attraction at these scholarly gatherings was his speech. His method of presenting the problem, his way of unravelling the solution and his ingenuity in giving satisfactory explanations to counter-arguments – all these showcased his ability, his sense of timing and scriptural knowledge. Even the greatest scholars

would sit back dazed by his brilliance. But for many years, he had not participated in such *sabhas*. Only that year, in 1954, did he grace the *vināyaka-sabha* every day. Though he did not say anything, he used to listen to the deliberations with respect and rapt attention. He even stood for half an hour opposite the venue of the *gaṇapathi-visarjana*, and returned to his quarters happily.

In this manner, the change in the Swāmi's behaviour captured the attention of one and all. In former days, even when he was extroverted, he had not been easy going and jovial, speaking freely with everyone. Now, he called every one of his attendants and enquired after his well being and the welfare of his family. He spoke unhurriedly to those who had come to see him and sent them back happy and satisfied. In fact, from August, the Swāmi became very accessible. He called for and spoke to various people voluntarily; he had letters written to devotees in other places, asking them to come and see him.

On September 25th, *chaturdaśi*, he asked for the librarian of the *maṭha*'s library, returned all the books in his room which he had retained for study and said, 'Please keep them safely; these texts are rare and valuable.'' In fact, he saw one of the

tomes and said jovially, 'This is not yours, this is mine!' and bid goodbye to the librarian. On the same day, he asked for one Mahabalabhatta and, recollecting the names of the latter's family members, asked after each of them. He met everyone who had come for his *darśan*, reassured them and sent them with his blessings. It is said that after this, he stood in silence from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. in front of his guru's (the previous Swāmi) *samādhi*.

On that day, he ate very little food. He completed his ablutions that night. He did not have the customary light meal or milk. That night, because some unavoidable circumstances detained Sri Bhimabatta, the person whose turn it was to attend upon the Swāmi, Sri Mahabalabhatta was with the Swāmi. Bhatta was a simple man; he did not know much about the world and had a childlike devotion to the guru. The Swāmi displayed an affectionate concern towards him. It was indeed significant that he had come to attend upon the Swāmi that night.

That night, the Swāmi did not sleep. He came out of the 'Satchidananda-vilasa' where he was staying and went again and again to the neighbouring *samādhi* of his guru and offered his

salutations. In between, he even visited the Kala-Bhairava Hill. He roamed about reciting *ślokas* loudly. (His most favourite shlokas were those of Sadashiva Brahmendra's work 'Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa'. It was his practice to recite them repeatedly. Apart from this, he used to recite the 'Vishnu-Sahasranāma' and the 'Lalitā-Sahasranāma' in full every day. Markandeya's 'Shiva-Stotra' and Shankara's 'Hanumat-Stotra' were also dear to him.)

The next day, September 26th, was *bhādrapada-bahula-amāvāsya*, the *mahālaya-amāvāsya* before the commencement of *navarātri.* From the following day, there was to be the festival of *navarātri*, a special occasion at the *maṭha*. What with the splendid festivities scheduled for the next ten days and the (senior) Swāmi's possible participation in the proceedings, given that he was in his extrovert state that year, arrangements were in full swing on the far bank of the river and in the town.

Around 4 AM the next morning and before dawn broke, the Swāmi clapped his hands and woke up Mahabala Bhatta who was sleeping nearby and said, ''Let us go for bath.'' By the time Mahabala Bhatta picked himself up, the Swāmi had climbed down the steps of 'Satchidananda-vilasa',

his living quarters. Since it was winter and the rain was pouring, it was thought fit that the Swāmi should not have his bath in the river and arrangements had been made to have hot water supplied in the dwelling itself. Mahabala Bhatta politely brought this to the notice of the Swāmi. In reply, the Swāmi said, "Is this not a holy day? So come, there is no need for hot water. I shall take bath in the Tunga", and began walking towards the river. Mahabala Bhatta got ready quickly, and waking up attendant Ramaswamy with instructions to get the Swāmi's clothes, he ran behind the Swāmi with an umbrella made of palm fronds and a lantern, since it was raining and still dark. Ramaswamy also got ready and started after them, clothes in hand.

There is a *sandhyā-vandana-maṇṭapa* on the banks of the river. When Ramaswamy got there, the Swāmi and Mahabala Bhatta were both there. The Swāmi asked Ramaswamy to wait there and climbed down the steps of the bathing *ghat*. Bhatta held onto the clothes to be washed and climbed down the steps with the Swāmi, holding the umbrella above his head. The Swāmi took a dip, got up and sat on the adjacent platform in *padmāsana* to do *prāṇāyāma*. The rain had stopped by then. Bhatta kept the umbrella and the lantern

on one of the steps and got into the water to wash the clothes, his back turned towards the Swāmi.

Just then, having heard the sound of something falling into the water, Bhatta turned around to see that the Swāmi was floating away, his *padmāsana* posture intact! Bhatta dived into the water, swam towards the Swāmi's figure which was floating away with the current, and having got hold of him, swam back against the current shouting for help. It occurred to Mahabala Bhatta that it was difficult to support the Swāmi's mortal frame on his back and swim against the current; in fact, he lost balance and was about to drown. By chance, Keshavachari, a householder who happened to come along that way, heard Bhatta's cries for help, and diving into the water, brought him and his load to the safety of the bank.

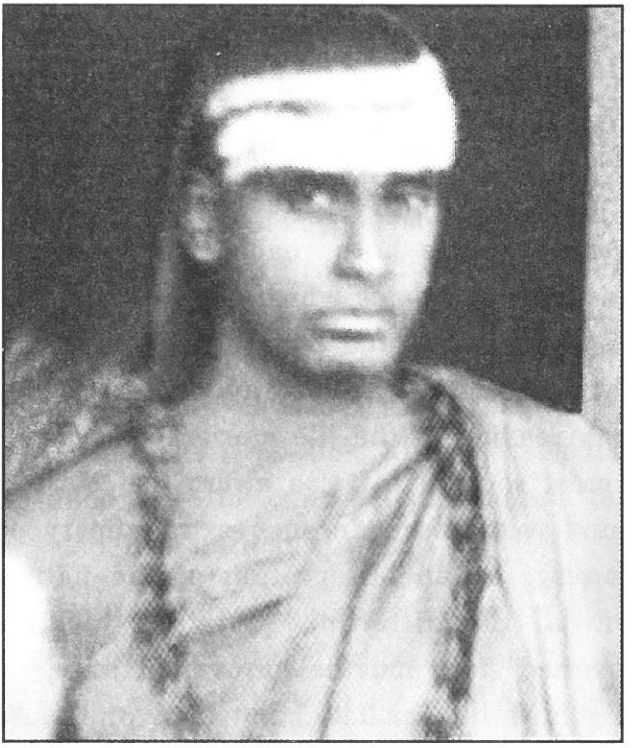
Seeing the immobile body of the Swāmi, Bhatta began sobbing. The *padmāsana* posture assumed on the platform was intact, the tranquillity on the face was undisturbed and not even a little water had entered the body. It was clear that the Swāmi had died by choosing to stop breathing. It was then 4:20 a.m. and dawn was breaking just then. The news spread like the wind. Immediately, the junior Swāmi and officials and attendants at the *maṭha*,

and hundreds of elders from the town gathered there. The body was brought from the riverbank to a structure called 'Chandramoulishwara-totti'. After completion of the customary funeral rituals, it was taken in procession around the four main streets of the town in the golden palanquin which the Swāmi had refused to use when alive, and finally laid to rest in Narasimha-vana next to the *samādhi* of his guru, the previous Swāmi. Later, a mausoleum was erected over the *samādhi* and a marble figure of the Swāmi was installed there.

The *linga* that was consecrated on the *samādhi* was brought from Varanasi by Sri Yadavalli Ramayya, a devotee. Ramayya came to Varanasi in *kārthika-māsa* of *jaya-samvatsara* with a large *linga* he had obtained from the banks of the Narmada. He brought the *linga* to the hut of Kashi Satchidananda-Saraswati, a disciple of the Swāmi, on the early dusk of a certain Monday. Satchidananda-Saraswati thought of the *linga* as Chandrashekhara-Bharateeshwara — i.e., no different from his guru — and adorning it with a *rudrāksha* necklace and saffron robes, he worshipped it for four or five days with *bilva* leaves and then sent it to Śringeri. The *linga* was consecrated on the Swāmi's *samādhi* on Sunday, March 3, 1963 (*śubhakṛt-samvatsara, phālguṇa-*

śukla ashṭami). The Swāmi's birth, thread ceremony, renunciation (i.e., accepting *sanyāsa*), and *videha-kaivalya* (i.e., giving up his body) – each of them happened on a Sunday.

On the same day that the *linga* was consecrated as mentioned above, *mahā-kalaśābhisheka* was performed for the Sarada Devi temple's new *gopura* and in the town, a *sahasra-chaṇḍi-mahāyāga* was performed.



CHAPTER 14

The Swāmi's Personality

It is difficult to either understand or elucidate the Swāmi's personality. It does not conform to any particular framework of understanding. To us who live on a mundane plane, his extraordinary character eludes both reach and grasp. I have heard many anecdotes which suggested that he was of unsound mind, and have also read the reports to that effect given by many doctors. However, from a reading of the life stories of several saints and great souls, I am also aware that such a state of mind was present in such extraordinary people. Moreover, by an observation of the nature and extent of the difference between his normal, extroverted state and the introverted state, and by noting how he oscillated between one state and

another, the special features of this so called 'madness' can be appreciated. Even medical professionals could not pigeon-hole his behaviour in any specific 'type'; neither did they administer any treatment. Indeed, it is true that such treatment was impossible to carry out; it is equally true that the Swāmi used to revert to the 'normal' state without any medical treatment.

Further, everybody who had seen him was aware that irrespective of whether he was in the normal state or in an introverted state, there used to be a unique and wonderful atmosphere around him. Anybody could observe a dignity in his bearing, an otherworldly lustre on his face, a sweetness in his speech and even when he simply gazed without speaking, a mysterious attraction in that gaze. Just as there seemed to be an abundance of peace wherever he was, people who stood before him seemed to be in the depths of tranquillity. Many have described this, I too have experienced it. Is it possible to have been this way if the mind were unsound? Is this normal for even those who live normally?

From whichever perspective it is seen, the Swāmi's personality is extraordinary. As said earlier, when it is difficult to even describe, what

to say of its analysis? With what parameters can such a character be measured? How to evaluate the purity of that gold? Against what standards can his demeanour be judged? By what technique do we understand his mind? If it is called madness, so be it. But I have seen several stalwarts stand with bowed heads and joined palms at the mere mention of his name. I know from close quarters several people who obtained the grace of his gaze, who made their lives happy using his words of advice and who drew inspiration from his memory. I cannot discard all these people as fools. Let alone talk of the anecdotes about him that suggested the miraculous; even his normal personality was inspiring. Even his abnormal condition was special.

It is beyond me to describe or analyze the Swāmi's supra-normal state. It may be unwise to even attempt that; it may be like the dwarf in the proverb who aspired to pluck high-hanging fruit. It is enough to observe his normal state in its many facets; his greatness can be gleaned from that. For any person, will not his environment influence him? Is it possible not to inherit some traits from one's parents? How can childhood experiences not have their influences? It is inevitable that the sudden responsibility thrust upon him in his youth, the consequence of having to face the idiosyncrasies

of elders, and the attendant pushes and pulls, would certainly have had their impact on his psyche.

Perhaps because of his poverty, the influence of his innocent parents, the association with a person like Virupaksha Shastri, his natural reticence – whatever be the cause – he never displayed haughtiness, an obstinacy that his will be done, a bossiness to keep others under his thumb, a desire to hog the limelight when the opportunity arose – he had none of these qualities. A scholar, yet humble; a *jagadguru* without ego; a person who did not discriminate between the rich and the poor, though the rich courted him. When he had visitors in his extroverted state, he was always courteous, always dignified and relaxed, with the same light smile playing on his lips. I have personally seen him, seated on the platform of the Sankaracharya shrine at the Bangalore Shankara Maṭha, giving *teertha-prasāda* in an unhurried manner to the hundreds of devotees passing in a queue before him, ignoring the officials who urged him to hurry. Even when a small boy held out his hand, it was the same measured manner, the same attention to the activity at hand. There was no hurry in anything; he was patience incarnate.

On one such day when he was giving *teertha-prasāda*, a lady stood crying, with her back to one of the pillars in the courtyard. When he raised his head, the Swāmi saw her. Immediately, he asked his attendant to enquire why the woman was crying. The attendant went up to the lady, asked her why she was crying and reported back, ''I believe that lady has not shaved her hair even though widowed; she is distressed that the Swāmi cannot give *teertha* to such a person.'' The Swāmi asked for the lady to come and gave her *teertha.*

Another anecdote. It was the practise, while the Swāmi distributed *teertha,* for a container to be placed before him on behalf of the *maṭha* into which the devotees dropped their contributions. It was but natural that when there was so much devotion towards the Swāmi, the vessel should brim with silver coins. An old man held out his hand for *teertha*, and after receiving it, began to weep. The Swāmi stopped giving *teertha* and asked, ''Why? What happened?'' The old man was poor; his daughter's wedding had been fixed but however much he tried he could not secure enough money to perform the wedding. Not knowing what to do, he had come to the Swāmi for his blessings. After narrating his plight, he said, ''It is enough if the Swāmi simply assures me that the wedding will

take place. Those words will strengthen me and comfort me.'' Without further thought, the Swāmi signalled to the attendant to pour out all the coins in the contributions-receptacle into the man's outstretched upper garment. The old man was taken aback; the officials of the *maṭha* were aghast. Only the Swāmi had a smile playing on his lips. I was among those who watched this dumbstruck.

The Swāmi's gait was regal and measured. He kept his eyes on the ground and walked unhurriedly with silent steps. The intention was to take care to avoid harming any insect which may have been on the ground. He did not step on any human shadow in his path but went round it. It was the same when the shadow of a temple fell on the ground; he would not step on it. It was his habit to keep his hands together in front, as if they held each other. When he sat, he assumed a firm posture without any bodily movement, still as a statue. When he was in an assembly of scholars, he listened keenly and respectfully to the exposition of a text or a discourse. To sit apathetically and let his eyes wander was not his way.

When he spoke, the words were limited but were uttered softly yet firmly. He was taciturn, speaking only to the extent necessary and

appropriate. Enquiring after the visitor's wellbeing with a smile, and one or two sentences relevant to the context – that was just about all. There was no trace of agitation in his speech. In the beginning, he used to give discourses in the assembly. It is said that during that time, his speech was fluent and resonant like the chiming of a temple bell. He was reputed to have the keenness of intellect which could unravel the toughest of subjects with ease and clarity. I have heard that in assemblies of scholars, he used to speak in Sanskrit and that his language was simple. It is said that he used to give discourses in Kannada, Telugu and Tamil; even then, the language used was simple, the style dignified. I have heard from scholars that during sessions in which the scriptural texts would be expounded, even great scholars used to acknowledge his erudition. Leave alone Vedanta, the Swāmi's depth of knowledge was immense in *Mīmāmsa*, *Vyākaraṇa*, *Nirukta* and *Nyāya*. But it was said that not once did he show off his scholarship. As days went by, he stopped speaking at such assemblies. He did not even take part in discussion. At the most, he used to indicate his agreement with what was being said with a nod. If he did not agree, only a slight smile showed itself.

His conversation was limited, though instructive. In between was a lightning smile. While he spoke, he did not gesticulate with his hands, or shake his head or raise his voice. He spoke softly, so much so that one had to pay attention to hear his words. It appears from books written by Sri R. Krishnaswamy Iyer (like *'Dialogues with the Guru'*) that in the beginning, his conversations were logical and his arguments were incisive. It looks as though he adopted a kind of Socratic practice of making his opposition tongue-tied. But it is difficult to even imagine that he ever argued in this way. One wonders whether Sri Iyer, gave this impression to readers to make his anecdotes more interesting. Be that as it may, it was not in the Swāmi's nature to argue and prolong the discussion.

In no situation did he speak in a way that hurt someone. He did not believe that criticising another faith was required to uphold one's own faith. He showed deference to other *achāryas*, *gurus*, and *paṇḍits*. Once, a pundit wrote a work criticising the *dvaita* philosophy and presented it before the Swāmi. The pundit hoped that the Swāmi would laud this effort and reward him. When the pundit briefed the Swāmi about the work, he said, ''Why did you bring this work which serves no purpose in this life or the next? God has bestowed on you

the ability to write texts. Should not that ability be used properly? In any activity, shouldn't there be some benefit for the individual here or in the hereafter? What do you achieve by writing a work like this? Moreover, have you not heard that *ahimsa* is the foremost among all *dharmas*? The wise refrain from uttering a single word which would hurt the sentiments of another. When this is the case, please think about how many people will be hurt by a work like this which condemns an entire faith. Should you be spending your life in such meaningless activity? As if that were not enough, should our time also be wasted in the bargain?'' The Swāmi did not even look at the pundit's work. Naturally, the pundit was disappointed. Observing that, the Swāmi pacified him saying, ''I am not saying these words to pain you. I am merely giving expression to the pain in my own heart. That is all.''

On another occasion, referring to the incident in which Sri Ramanujacharya climbed up the temple tower and proclaimed loudly the '*ashṭākshari mantra*', somebody said, ''Some Srivaishnavaites do not believe this.'' Curious, the Swāmi asked the reason. The gentleman replied, ''Because, it can be deemed that by doing so, Sri Ramanujacharya spurned the *varnāśrama dharma*. The Swāmi again

asked how that might be. The gentleman replied, ''If the norms of *varṇā-aśrama-adhikāra* are ignored while giving initiation of a *mantra*, does it not amount to ignoring *dharma*?'' The Swāmi replied with a smile, ''What if we think of what Sri Ramanujacharya said not as a *mantra*, and his act of saying it not as *upadeśa* (initiation)?'' Surprised, the other person asked, ''Isn't the *ashṭākshari* a *mantra*? When he uttered it, did it not become *upadeśa*?'' The Swāmi explained, ''Neither. Can it be said that Ramanujacharya did not know even this much? A *mantra* is no mere grouping of letters. *Upadeśa* is no mere utterance. If it were only that much, then it would be a mere word. A *mantra* is an initiation, filled with the guru's power, given by the guru to a humble and sincere pupil in accordance with the prescribed procedure, with a view to uplifting the pupil's nature. Ramanujacharya was aware of this. Perhaps some persons opposed the *mantropadeśa* he did in ritual secrecy, or pressed him to initiate them into the *ashṭākshari mantra* even though they were not qualified to receive it, or did not heed his advice that initiation into a *mantra* is not an easy task – something like this must have happened and he must have thought of loudly proclaiming the *mantra* from the temple tower. Simply because he said it did not make it a *mantra*, merely because it was

heard did not make it an *upadeśa*, is it not? We should not say that the Acharya disregarded *dharma*; it is better to interpret the incident in this manner.''

1948. Sri A. V. Ramanathan, who was a minister in the Mysore State, has preserved this incident in his memory. A devotee came to the Swāmi and said, ''Providence introduced me to five *jīvanmuktas* (those who have attained liberation during their lifetime); but one of them was from the shepherd caste, another was a Muslim, a third was a Christian and yet another, a Srivaishnavite. Like this, though they were different, their experience was of *advaita*.'' The Swāmi replied, ''So what are you saying sir? Are there differences of caste and profession when it comes to the awareness of the Self? Is the experience of non-duality the property of Shankaracharya's disciples? Or the *jahagir* of the Śringeri *maṭha*? It is an eternal philosophy. It was there even before Shankaracharya. Anybody, at any time and at any place can attain it.''

As recounted earlier, when he went on his first tour of the South, the Swāmi stayed for a few days at Kanyakumari. At that time, many Christians and others waited at a distance from his camp to have

his *darśana*. The officials, who knew that these people were not from the faith, did not permit them inside the camp, treating them as non-believers. The Swāmi got wind of this. He came out of the camp, went to the spot where the people were waiting, spoke to them for a while and returned after blessing them. When somebody inside the camp spoke of them derisively as non-believers, the Swāmi chuckled and said, ''Non-belief is not a caste. It is an opinion. Opinions can be assumed, discarded and changed by anyone. Merely because their opinions are not acceptable to us is no reason to complain about them or deride them.''

No matter who came for advice, the Swāmi would speak a few words about the relevant scripture and encourage the person towards spiritual practise. If the person who came to him was a scholar, he used to say, ''Please read ten stanzas everyday from Mookakavi's *'Pādāravinda-Śataka'*,'' or ''Please read the *kavacha-bhāga* of Durvasa's *'Devi-Stuti'*,'' or ''Please meditate upon the *mantras* beginning with 'Yash-chandasam-rshabhah''' and so on. If the person was more inclined towards the worldly, he would quote a verse from the *'Gīta'* or the *'Śivānanda-lahari'*, or the *'Soundarya-lahari'*, or *'Ātma-bodha'*, or Nilakantha Dikshita's *'Śāntivilāsa-ānanda*

sāgarastava' or the *'Panchadaśi'*, and explain it based on his own experience. He would often recommend reciting the *'Vishṇu-sahasra-nāma'*, or repeating the Gayatri *mantra,* or recite Markandeya's *'Śiva-stotra'* or recite the *'Hanumat-Pancharatna'*.

He sent word to his disciple in Varanasi, Satchidanandasaraswati Swāmi, through Mantreshwara Sharma of Mumbai, a devotee, that he should meditate upon the last eight verses (13-20) of the twelfth chapter of the Bhagavad-gita and realize its meaning through experience. These eight verses are famous as *'Dharmyāmrta'*.

Devudu Narasimhashastri, the famous Kannada author, was a devotee. He requested the Swāmi to suggest a remedy for some difficulty. Then, the Swāmi initiated him into the *datta-mantra* ('Om Datta Om Datta Dattatreya Sri Devadatta'). Similarly, when Mantreshwara Sharma of Mumbai was faced with some trouble, the Swāmi suggested the *mrtyunjaya mantra* by letter. To many who came to him seeking initiation into a *mantra*, he would say that the *gāyatri mantra* was sufficient. Indeed, his light smile itself was initiation to many; for many others, it was his gaze. Initiation into a *mantra* was seldom; initiation by touch, never.

The Swāmi said again and again that mere study of scripture and philosophy, without putting them into practice, was useless. 'Pandita-raja' V.S. Ramachandra Shastri was someone who had studied the texts of *nyāya* and *Vedānta* from the Swāmi himself. Shastri felt that he should write the *vidwat* examination in *Vedānta* to gain some material benefits, since it was a qualifying criterion for a job. When he brought up this matter before the Swāmi, the latter said, ''Vedānta is there to practise, to experience. By passing an examination, nobody becomes a *vedāntin.* You have learnt from me, is that not qualification enough? You simply study the subject by yourself.'' Shastri gave up the idea of writing the exam. However, in due course, he obtained the post of the head of the Sanskrit College in Benares University and received many awards and recognition from the government. It was due to his tutelage under the Swāmi.

It was his advice that practising scripturally prescribed actions was better than engaging in dry philosophical argument. At least, the former may perhaps lead to the purification of the mind while debate could lead to passion and anger. Once, a scholar who knew the Swāmi came to him and bowed reverentially. After enquiring about his well-being, the Swāmi asked him, ''Sir, are you putting

into practise what you have read (*upāsana*) everyday?'' The pundit replied with some pride, ''My lord, there is no time for practice. Time is getting spent in teaching and studying the texts''. The Swāmi said, ''Oh! The chapter on knowledge has begun before the chapter on action!''[1]

On another occasion, a scholar of *mīmāmsa* from Andhra Pradesh who visited the Swāmi was asked the same question – whether he was doing his spiritual practice. When the gentleman said no, the Swāmi asked, ''Is the *mīmāmsa-śāstra* meant only for teaching? Or does it lend itself to practise also?''

Once, a well known scholar from Bangalore came to the Swāmi. He was orthodox and traditional and had been teaching the *śankara-bhāshya* to many students. After inquiring after his welfare, the Swāmi asked, ''Is the teaching of the *bhāshya* going on?'' When the visitor replied in the affirmative, the Swāmi asked, ''I hope the spiritual practice is also continuing?'' The pundit replied, ''It is not easy to do spiritual practice, Master. It

1. The Swāmi was alluding to the order of subjects in the Vedas, where portions related to the performance of ritual actions or the karma-kāṇḍa precede the portions related to self-knowledge or the jnāna-kāṇḍa

is a big city; it is difficult to get cow-dung cakes[1].'' The Swāmi said, ''Oh! The cows in your city give milk for coffee but no dung for fuel, is that so?''

When he was in his extroverted state, his discipline in observing the prescribed rituals was unparalleled. When he was at Rameshwaram during his tour of the south, he came down with a high fever. The chief administrator Srikantha Shastri instructed the Swāmi's attendants that the Swāmi must have a perfunctory, ritual sprinkle (*mantra-snāna*) that morning and that there was no need to supply water for his regular bath. When the Swāmi came to have his bath and learnt of this, he said sternly, ''Should a monk preserve his body even at the cost of giving up his practices? For the benefit of whose children and grandchildren should he preserve his body?'', and left after having had his bath as usual. But he did not insist that others also should follow this rigorous discipline.

Once, when he was getting ready for the class on *vedānta*, a student came up and prostrated himself before him. While enquiring after his welfare, the Swāmi asked him, ''Are you repeating the *gāyatri mantra* a thousand times every day?'' The student replied no with head bowed out of fear

1. Specifically, the dry cakes of cow dung used as fuel to light ritual fires.

and shame. The Swāmi reassured him and said, ''Let that be. Anyway, we are discussing *vedānta*. That too is a way of thinking about the Supreme, is it not?'' He used to tell students, ''While you are moving about and engaged in daily activities, you should always think about the meaning of the scriptures.''

While he was in his extroverted state in the Narasimha-vana, his daily schedule was usually like this: he arose at dawn, finished his bath and sat for meditation at 6:45 – 7 AM. He sat in *padmāsana* till 1 PM and then went to the Tunga river for his bath. After bath, he performed his midday *pūja (madhyāhnika)* and came to the *samādhi* of his guru. After circumambulating and prostrating himself before the *samādhi* he had his meal. It would be 2 – 3 PM by the time he ate this light *bhiksha* (the alms offered to a monk). After that, he would not show himself to the outside world. Once in a while, he would converse a little with guests about scriptures and spiritual practise. While those in his proximity alleged that he was mentally unstable, his physical health was robust. He was not troubled even by minor ailments. He did *āsanas* and other exercises of yoga for some time but then gave them up; for a while, he even did *prāṇāyāma*. Even though he used to

forsake food for many days on end, he never knew fatigue. Stability of position, tolerance of discomfort and patience – all these qualities came to him from childhood.

Once, he began to analyze the respect people gave him, because he was the *jagadguru*. There had been some discussion that in the matter of spiritual practise, the nature of the spiritual object chosen for practise moulds itself according to the practitioner's own nature, eligibility (to receive spiritual benefit) and expectations (out of spiritual practice). The Swāmi said, ''Take my example. All of you respect me, is it not? Though at a gross level, it is possible to say that the object of veneration is the same, in reality, I am looked upon differently by different people; the reasons for respect are varied. Usually, instead of respecting my personality, people are attracted by the glamour of the position I occupy, the wealth of this establishment and all the pomp that goes with it. These people will respect anyone who has these embellishments and splendours, is it not? Which means to say, that truly, they respect the adornments and not the person behind them. Some others respect me because I am a *sanyāsi*. This too is like before – whoever is in the same position as a *sanyāsi* will earn the respect of these people.

Their regard is for the institution of *sanyāsa* rather than for the person. A few others will respect me wherever I am and in whatever state I may be, without regard to the trappings or my status as a *sanyāsi*, for the purity of mind and purity of nature which I may have. Their respect for me will be in due proportion to my knowledge of the scriptures and my spiritual discipline. Only very few will respect me for the Divine Light that is in me. They are the one with true discrimination. Just as they see that omnipresent Divine Light in me, they can see it in everybody else too, is it not?''

On another occasion, somebody came to the Swāmi and said, ''The world will be uplifted by your grace!'' In reply, the Swāmi said, ''This is only formal talk. If you really believe that it is so, then it is a delusion. My only desire is that all should be happy. The thought processes of different people are not within my scope of enquiry. In this strange world, everybody's desire cannot be fulfilled. Since it is a place where there is a guru, people come with devotion; they salute me treating me as their guru. My only task is to bless them. It is possible that good things happen to a few. But that has no connection with me!''

During his tour of Tamil Nadu, the Swāmi completed his *pūja* at the house of a pious

householder named Nilakantha Iyer at a place called Ravanasamudra. While giving a discourse after the *pūja*, he said, ''Like me, the master of this house, Nilakantha Iyer, is fit to assume the role of a *sanyāsi*; he has the required eligibility for it. But like King Janaka, he remains a householder and practises *dharma* for the benefit of the world.'' He did not reckon that the status of a *sanyāsi* was higher than that of the *gṛhastha* (householder). He used to say that merely because somebody was a *sanyāsi* was no reason to be worshipped by householders. Whether a *sanyāsi* or a householder, if each practised his *dharma* with sincerity, he would be an example to the others; in his view neither was superior nor inferior to the other.

He was not proud that he was the suzerain and *jagadguru* of the most famous and wealthy religious establishment in India. Nor was he conscious that he was an exponent of *yoga* or that he was unparalleled as a scholar. Even though people referred to him as a *jīvan-mukta*, he did not pay attention to it. From the beginning, humility was a quality that had been woven into his personality. The following is an incident when he visited Kaladi for the first time and was conducting the *śankara-jayanti* celebrations there:

As mentioned earlier, there was a school for vedic studies. The teacher there was Karukkulam Krishnashastri. The Swāmi, the teacher and the students were sitting in the shrine of Shankaracharya. During the Swāmi's discourse, the teacher called out to the students to come forward. The Swāmi replied immediately, ''Are they the only students here? Before the Acharya, we all are pupils only! Let there be no difference between the scholar and the student here.''

During the times when the Swāmi was extroverted, it was the custom for him to sit in the verandah in front of the shrine of his guru to give *darśana* to the waiting devotees. On those occasions, he used to observe the needs and capacity of the waiting gathering and speak for a few minutes on a suitable topic. He used to speak of spiritual matters that had relevance to worldly people. He never referred to the administration of the *maṭha*, its conduct and politics or to the traits of different people. Several elders remember the beauty and usefulness of his talks. His speech was such that it would touch the heart and make an impact. Could there have been a better spiritual experience for the soul than to listen to the Swāmi, who was like peace incarnate in those peaceful surroundings! The Swāmi was not bothered whether those before him were poor, rich,

scholars, laymen, followers of vedic rituals, locals or outsiders. It did not matter whether the audience was two or comprised scores of people – the nature of the talk was the same; the same depth and the same quality.

Sometimes, though rarely, the Swāmi indulged in humour. Once, an assembly of scholars was arranged. A session on the exposition of texts was to begin. A scholar stood up and requested permission to expound some texts of *alankāra-śāstra*. The Swāmi said, ''Passages from *alankāra śāstra* may be filled with the theme of beauty and may not be suitable for this gathering.'' The *pundit* did not give up. He requested permission again and again. Not to disappoint him, the Swāmi agreed. The scholar took up the nature of *rasa* (aesthetic essence) and quoted a certain passage from the vedas meaning, 'The Supreme Being is *rasa;* obtaining it man becomes happy' - to demonstrate that this had their sanction. The Swāmi intervened to rearrange the words in the quote, such that it meant, 'Man becomes a beast on obtaining *rasa*', prompting ripples of laughter in the assembly.[1]

1. The statement quoted by the scholar was:
''रसो वै सः, रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वाऽनन्दी भवति''
The Swęmi made a pun on the way in which the word "Anandi' is used in the statement and said
''अयं पुमान् एतं रसं लब्ध्वा अनुभूय नन्दी भवति पशुर्भवति इत्यर्थः''

On another occasion, while a commemoration of his guru was going on, the Swāmi gave *tīrtha* to the line of scholars who were about to eat and said in Sanskrit, ''Please eat unhurriedly.'' Addressing Mallikere Subrahmanya Shastri, he quipped, ''When I said have a relaxed meal, I was referring to time, not to space.''[1] The scholars also laughed at the delicate humour.

A few days before the Swāmi passed away, the renowned scholar Subrahmanya Shastri came to him, prostrated and said, ''The Swāmi must bless that I realize the Absolute in this birth itself''. The Swāmi replied light hearted, ''What is so difficult about realizing the Absolute? Has not Shankaracharya said in his commentary on the Gita that removal of differentiation among external forms leads to an awareness of the Self? Therefore, nobody needs to struggle to obtain the Supreme Knowledge. We think of what is not the Self as the Self – only this thought process we must discard, that is all!''

1. The word the Swȼmi used was "saavakaasha'. From he perspective of time, it means, "slowly', "unhurriedly'. But from the perspective of space, it can also mean, "Eat such that your stomachs have some space left'.

CHAPTER 15

Literary Wealth

The Swāmi never had the enthusiasm to write books. A mention has been made earlier to his incomplete commentary on the *'Viveka-chūḍāmaṇi'*. It is said that this is Adi Sankaracharya's work. The previous Swāmi had wished to prepare a commentary on this text, but it was not to be. Bowing to the desire of the Chief Administrator that he (the Swāmi) must complete the task solemnly wished for by the previous Swāmi, the Swāmi Chandrashekhara Bharati began to write the commentary. There are parts that he wrote himself; there are other sections which were written down (chiefly by Panditaraja V. S. Ramachandra Shastri) as he spoke. The commentary, which is detailed for the first few

verses, gradually tapers off in length until it abruptly stops at verse 515. There is no commentary on the remaining 66 verses.

The process of writing the commentary began in 1939-40, during the ten months that the Swāmi was in Kaladi. Since he was in an other-worldly state after his return to Śringeri, the writing was not regular. It progressed fitfully whenever the Swāmi was in his extrovert phase. Finally, when he stopped seeing the students altogether, the writing stopped too. His successor mentions in his foreword to the printed edition of the work that when requested to complete the work, the Swāmi replied, ''Whatever had to be said has been said. Now, except for meditation, the mind does not desire anything else.''

The commentary is in Sanskrit. It is simple yet dignified. A reading of the commentary reveals that he was a versatile scholar. But in the commentary, he does not rely only on his erudition to advance a proposition or expound a concept. He tries to reveal the insights he experienced directly. In some cases, he follows the line of the original text and gives its synopsis by using the technique of 'anvaya' (a methodical rearrangement of words originally in verse form into prose form). In some

other instances, he instructs by stating the essence of the whole verse. Sometimes, he highlights the interrelatedness between verses in the original text. At other times, he gives an independent explanation for them. In the final analysis, this work is to be designated as a *'vyākhyāna'* (commentary) only for convenience; in reality, it is an independent work. It is a work that shows the way to practitioners and followers of *yoga*. In some places, it covers territories much beyond the original text. I intend to discuss this work in detail sometime later.

This work was published by the *maṭha* in 1957, three-four years after the Swāmi's final liberation. His disciple, Panditaraja Vallur Ramachandra Shastri - who passed away a few years ago - edited, revised and made arrangements to print this work. This has been printed in Bangalore. I had the good fortune of knowing Ramachandra Shastri. I have heard from him that this work was composed mostly in Kaladi and that T. K. Balasubrahmanya Iyer, the proprietor of Vani Vilas Press in Srirangam and a disciple of the *maṭha*, intended to print and publish the book under the auspices of that press. It is this press in Srirangam that published neatly the volumes of the series, *'Śankara-granthāvali'*. The previous Swāmi's work, *'Bhakti-sudhā-taraṇgini'* was also brought

out very nicely by this press. When Balasubrahmanya Iyer broached the prospect of publishing the commentary on the *'Viveka-chūḍamaṇi'* to the Swāmi, he replied, ''When I think of the greatness of Śankarāchārya, I feel ashamed to publish my writing'', and checked Iyer's enthusiasm.

The same Vani Vilas Press of Srirangam published an anthology of the Swāmi's verse in Sanskrit. These verses are mostly adulatory (of a deity). In the early days of his ascension to the seat at Śringeri, he used to compose some *stotras* now and then. The inspiration for this verse was his regret that he did not obtain the guidance of his guru in person. There are many verses here in which he remembers repeatedly the greatness of his guru, bows before the unrestrained compassion showered on him by the guru and pleads that the guru's grace should be with him always. Some of these are *'Pādāvalambana-stuti'*, *'Deśika-navaratna-māla'*, *'Toṭaka-stotra'*, *'Guru-prārthana'*, *'Guru-suvarṇa-māle'* and *'Deśikotkarsha-manjari'*. The Swāmi has shown his unwavering devotion to his guru and his humility in these stanzas. Confiding in the guru his ignorance, powerlessness and helplessness, he has practised *naicyānusandhāna* by treating himself as a dimwit interested in material

things who is unworthy of such a holy seat established by Sankaracharya.

The chief characteristics of his verses are the mellifluousness of the words and the intense emotion. As in his life, so in his works he shows a preference for softness and humility. He does not use difficult or harsh words. The things said are simple and the emotions they inspire are beautiful. In the *'Pancadaśi-stotra'*, while praying to the Goddess he says, 'Let the poetry flow forth sweetly, simply and beautifully, like streams from the Himalaya.'[1] Indeed, his poetry is like a Himalayan cataract. He speaks of the anxieties of the mind and the agonies of the heart through his verses. He especially reveals his fears about activities that obstruct the desire for liberation that all men, and more so *sanyāsis*, must necessarily have.

'*Sāmbāṣṭaka*' is an incandescent hymn. In each of the verses, there is a common refrain – that even though one may have all the wealth and comforts of material life, none of these is helpful when the time comes to depart and God alone is

1. ''सरसमृदुमधुरकवितासरिदिव हिमभूभृतो मुखात् प्रसरेत्''

the saviour.[1] In this hymn, there is an allusion, though allegorical, to the *maṭādipati* pomp and splendour. There are hymns in praise of the deities Dattatreya, Dakshinamurthy, Shanmukha, Meenakshi, Lalitamba and Sharada. The Swāmi's view was that the purpose of praising God was to rid the mind of ignorance, discard affinity with the body and obtain purity of the soul.[2] He was convinced that thinking of God helped one to control the natural fickleness of the mind and discard sin by following the Vedic way.

शृत्युक्तकर्मनिवहाकरणाद्विशुद्धिः
चित्तस्य नास्ति मम चञ्चलतानिवृत्त्यै।
कुर्यां किमम्ब मनसा सकलाघशान्त्यै
मातस्त्वदङ्घ्रिभजनं सततं दयस्व॥

His poetry expressed itself in various metres. His command over prosody ('*chandas*') is apparent in each of his compositions. He achieves the ideal blend of linguistic form and meaning

1. In every charana, there is this line:
"सर्वं व्यर्थं मरणसमये साम्ब एकः सहायः"
here, meaning, "At the time of death, the Lord alone is the saviour, everything else is useless

2. "चित्तशुद्धिमभिलिप्सुरहं द्राक्, दत्तदेवमनिशं कलयामि; शिथिलयतु तमो हार्दमाशु प्रगाढम्" सफलय जनिं सक्तिं देहे निराकुरु सद्धने" here.

('*vāgarthasampruktata*') while paying attention to the requirements of poetic metre and the forcefulness of the message. He conveys an expansive message within the limited confines of the chosen metre. When the pace of the metre carried him away like a whirlwind, he had the skill to scatter the essence of the verse into the spray of words. Maybe, if he had focussed his energies on composing epic poems (*kavya*), he would have been acknowledged as a great poet (*mahākavi*). Here are a few samples that show how the pace of the metre, the beauty of the words and the dignity of the message all come together.

स्थितेऽनुकम्पा मकरन्दपूर्णे
जगद्गुरोः पादसहस्रपत्रे।
किमन्यतो धावसि चित्तभृङ्ग
प्रयाहि तत्रैव रमस्व नित्यम्॥

This is the first stanza of the *'Pādāvalambana-Stuti'*. Treating the feet of his guru as a lotus filled with the nectar of compassion, thinking of his own mind as a bumble bee, he conveys the sentiment of why the bee must go elsewhere when nectar is to be found in that lotus, and why it cannot remain there forever.

जलबुद्बुदवत् क्षणभङ्गयुते
मलमूत्रवसासहिते वपुषि।
कुरुतेऽभिमतं हृदयं हि मुदा
लघु वारय देशिक तां दयया॥

This is the second stanza of the *'Toṭaka-stotra'*. 'Totaka' is a form of composition with four lines and twelve letters to a line. Those who are familiar with the structure of *kāvya* say that handling this format is a difficult task. It is said that the words must trot like a bedecked horse at a procession. Short words that match the flow of the metric must be selected with care and strung together. Even if the match between the metre and the words is achieved, the meaning conveyed must not be barren. The Swāmi has composed twenty one poems in this metre; indeed, each of them is a golden nugget. The meaning of the verse chosen above is simple: The soul thinks of the body as belonging to itself, not realising that it is as transient as a water bubble. The grace of the guru must remove this misconception. In a few other stanzas of this hymn, he has expressed his anguish, his hopes and shortcomings.

करणानि समानि भवन्ति कदा
तरणं नु कथं भववारिनिधेः।
शरणं मम नास्ति गुरो त्वदृते
निरुपाधिकृपाजलधेऽव जवात्॥

'When will my sense organs stop their superficial work and become quiet? When will this ocean of life be crossed? I do not have a way other than the guru. Only that guru, who shows grace without expecting anything from me, must come to my aid.'

सदसन्मतिरेव न मेऽस्ति गुरो
विरतिं प्रति सा करणं गदिता।
विरतिः क्व नु मे विशयाशहृदः
कथमाप्नुव ऐव विमुक्तिपथम्॥

''I do not have the ability to discriminate between the real and the unreal. It is said that this discrimination is the way to detachment. How can I get detachment with this mind of mine that is filled with things material! How can I reach the path of liberation?''

He has composed the *'Śārada-bhujanga'* in the *'bhujanga prayāta'* metre, a delightful metre that is suited for the stage. Here too, the sentiment is overwhelming.

शरीरं स्वतन्त्रं तथाक्षाणि सर्वाण्यहो
किं करोमि क्व याम्यम्बिके वा।
मया पोष्यमाणानि मद्भश्यतां न
प्रयान्त्यञ्जसा मद्भशे तानि तन्याः॥

''This body is independent; so are the sense organs! Oh! What shall I do? Where shall I go? It is I who fed and nurtured them. But they do not ever come under my control!''

शरीरे स्वकेऽहं त्वमस्तं प्रयायादिति
त्वां प्रपन्ना जनाः शारदाम्ब ।
समस्तेषु वस्तुष्वहन्तां भजन्ते
किमेतद्विचित्रं चिदानन्दरूपे ॥

''How surprising it is that even those who have sought refuge in you so as to give up the distinction between 'mine' and 'thine' leap forward saying 'me' and 'mine'!''

Composing the *'Śārada-daṇḍaka'* in the same style as the famous *'Syamala-dandaka'*, he refers to Goddess Śārada as, 'One who delights in Śringeri situated on the banks of the Tunga, a river that is indeed as sacred as the Ganga'.[1] He describes Her variously as 'She who is an honoured guest in the minds of yogis' and prays that she save him, who is deluded by *māya* (cosmic illusion) and that she glow in his mind forever. The prose-like verses may be noted for their beauty.

1. ''गङ्गानदीतुल्य तुङ्गोत्तराङ्गावली शोभितुङ्गाधुनीतीर संराजि-शृङ्गाद्रिवासैकलीलेः'' निर्व्याजकारुण्यघण्टापथे, योगिचित्तातिथे, शारदे पारदे दुःखवारां निधेः'' ''पाहि मां मोहितं मायया, देहि शीर्षे पदं मामके तावकं, भाहि मन्मानसे सन्ततं भारती, देहि मे संविधं शाश्वतीम्''.

Poetic metre imposes its own restrictions; on top of that, if there are further restrictions in the form of verses having to start with only specific letters, composing becomes difficult. On many occasions, such endeavours seem contrived. But the Swāmi has attempted these kinds of compositions and carried them through without a trace of artificiality. There are fifteen verses in the '*Pancadaśi-stotra*', each verse starting with one of the letters of the '*Śrī-vidya-mantra*'. The letters in his guru's name begin every verse of the '*Guru-suvarṇa-māla-stotra*'. Eight verses that begin with the letters comprised in the sentence '*Om Namah Śankarāya*' are in the *'Ācarya-pādāvalambana-stuti'*.[1] Similarly, in the *'Dakshiṇā-mūrti-mantra-matṛkā-stava'*, every verse begins with a letter of the '*dakshiṇā-mūrti-mantra*'.

When the second edition of this anthology of verses was published in 1959, a prose piece titled, '*Nara-janma praśastih, tat krtyam ca*', meaning 'The Human Birth: Its Significance and Responsibility' was included. This was a discourse given by the Swāmi. In this lecture, he stresses on the uniqueness of the opportunity of being born human, the necessity of deferring to what the scriptures prescribe and the need to recognize that

1. "स्तोत्रं तदीयं अनुवर्णयुतम्"

only *dharma* leads to well-being; for without *dharma*, even happiness cannot be obtained here in this deluded world, let alone permanent bliss. The final passages of this lecture may be examined to appreciate the beauty of his words –

''तिष्ठतु दूरे नित्यानन्दावाप्तिः, भ्रान्तिसिद्धसुखावाप्तिरपि न धर्मं विना सम्भवति.... अतो लोकसिद्धं शास्त्रसिद्धं वा सुखं धर्ममन्तरा नैव लब्धुं शक्यमिति सर्वेण पुरुषेण शास्त्रं शरणीकृत्य तदुक्तकर्मानुष्ठानं यथाविधि कृत्वा स्वेप्सितं सुखं लब्धुं शक्यं, शास्त्रनिषिद्धं त्यक्त्वा दुःखं परिहर्तुं चेति सर्वं शिवम्'' ॥

Another hymn of fifteen verses, called '*Deśikotkarsa-manjari*' has been included in the same second edition. At the end of every verse is the line, 'He alone is my guru; I shall not take the name of anyone else except him.[1] In the fourteenth verse, he has given expression to his conception of the ideal guru –

सत्यं वाचि दया नतेषु पटुता धर्माध्वसंरक्षणे
सौजन्यं सुजने भृशं विमुखता यस्याभवत्।
रक्तिर्ब्रह्मणि निन्दितेषु विषयष्वासीद्विरक्तिर्दृढा
स स्वामी मम देशिकस्तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते ॥

''Truth in speech, compassion towards those who seek refuge, artful in protecting Dharma, courtesy towards the good, indifference towards the

1. ''स स्वामी मम देशिकस्तदितरो नाम्नापि नाम्नायते'' ।

bad, a keen interest in the nature of Brahman, and detachment from the comforts of material life – if these qualities are in the guru, where is the need for the disciple to rely on anyone else?''

By and large, the Swāmi did not give lectures. Initially, he used to teach the '*Brahma-sūtra-bhāsya*' to students in Śringeri. Kamalananda-Narasimha Bharati Swāmi of Nelamavu Maṭha, Ramachandrananda Bharati Swāmi of Shakatapura, Satchidananda-saraswati Swāmi of Kashi, Pandita-raja Vallur Ramachandra Shastri, Pandita-pravara Subrahmanya Shastri and such other eminent persons learnt Vedanta from the Swāmi. In due course, he gave up giving lessons. When he toured the southern areas for the first time, he addressed the gathered assembly in Kannada, Tamil, Telugu or Sanskrit. He presided over seminars of scholars and expounded on the scriptures. But even these speeches stopped and conversations with those who came to see him became the only opportunity for discourse. Even that was only when he was not in his introvert state. These conversations have been compiled and published by Tinnavelli R. Krishnaswami Iyer, a noble-minded householder. Huragalavadi Lakshmi-narasimha Shastri, Gamaki Ramakrishna Shastri, Pandita-pravara Subrahmanya Shastri, T. L. Venkatarama Iyer, Mantreshwara

Sharma and others have recounted their recollections about the Swāmi. A gist of the Swāmi's words, selected from the writings and notes of all these personages, has been given below.

1. Śāstras (scripture) give the dos and don'ts only for mankind, not for other animals. The task of the scriptures is to prescribe what is good for man and proscribe that which is not. It is but natural for man to desire that which yields happiness and discard that which does not. But intelligence and experience are required to discriminate between the two. Since everybody does not have these abilities, the *śāstras* have been created. What is conducive to obtaining happiness, what is conducive to the removal of suffering – these must be learned only from *śāstras*. Let alone eternal bliss, even worldly happiness in this deluded world is difficult to obtain without the aid of *śāstras*. It must be understood that *dharma* is the root of happiness. We are incapable of independently giving an opinion on matters which the *śāstras* have pronounced upon keeping in mind the welfare of the world. Moreover, whatever anybody may say independently on these matters does not carry any weight.

2. Practise is all-important in the observance of *dharma*. *Śāstras* are there not to preach but to practise. It is better to practise one philosophy with sincerity rather than obtain proficiency in hundreds of texts. An increase of knowledge will only lead to argument. There is no benefit to anyone from such argument. A scintillating vocabulary and criticism of another faith are useful tools of trade to enjoy this world, but not to obtain salvation. The debate between *dvaita* and *advaita* is meaningless. Has Sankaracharya said anywhere that by writing works condemning *dvaita* one can obtain salvation? Sankaracharya did not expound *advaita* alone; he also said one must give up attachment and hatred. It is not proper to give a place in religion to such passions by writing works that are born of hatred and which promote hatred.

Moreover, if in order to establish *advaita*, works condemning *dvaita* are written, it only leads to increased condemnation of *advaita*. It has not been observed anywhere that feeding a fire with more fuel reduces the flames! The passions of others increase as a result of such works. Let others accept or reject *advaita*; you accept *dvaita*. Do not lend an ear to words of condemnation; remain indifferent. If you are deaf, what can the music or abuse of others do to you? *Dvaita* is the first step

towards self-realization. It is an excellent aid for thinking about God.

3. When those who have studied the Vedas do not have the conviction that their learning is of value, it is natural for worldly people to see them with indifferent eyes. Seeing wealthy people of the world, the ordinarily placed vaidikas feel envious; they regret that unlike the former, they did not obtain a worldly education. This is not right. Knowledge should not be only for earning money. A thing acquires value only when there are those who aspire for it. If you do not aspire for wealth, you would not think highly of a person just because he is wealthy, is it not?

Wealth to someone is what that person desires and values. If rupees are wealth to the worldly, to the scholar, poverty is wealth. Not that money is to be rejected; but it should not be given a value in excess of what it truly has. Money is an ordinary means to happiness; money itself is not happiness. If you get money, spend it happily. If you do not get it, do not struggle for it or grieve over it day and night. I do not believe that only by struggling can one get money.

4. People will be happy so long as they are sincere about *dharma*. Happiness will decrease

from the day that earnestness in *dharma* and *karma* declines. Where there is happiness, it must be assumed that there is sincerity about *dharma* and *karma*. These two are the sources of happiness. Happiness is not to be measured in terms of money. Happiness is a state of the mind. If we get what we desire, we are happy. When there is only desire, when the object sought is not obtained, the mind gets agitated; as soon as the object is obtained and the desire is satisfied, one gets contentment. Similarly, when something that we dislike goes away from us, we become happy. When the object of dislike is at hand, the mind is disturbed; when it recedes, the mind is at peace. In both situations, the nature of happiness is the same. If the peace of the mind is maintained without disturbance, one can be happy as long as one wants!

We see that the mind becomes agitated and then attains rest following the process by which happiness is achieved: obtaining what is desired and pushing away what is disliked. But that is not innate happiness. Compared to a person who recovers after a bout of illness, the health of a person who has not experienced disease is more natural, more stable. Is it not better to keep away from slush than to step on it and then clean up? Similarly, the happiness that results from

equanimity of mind is preferable to that which results from the like or dislike of an object.

5. It is only of late that our tradition has been named 'Hindu Dharma'. From the earliest times, this was called *'sanātana-dharma'* or *'śāśvata-sampradāya'*. In this faith, there is no date on which it can be said to have been born, no person from whom it originated or was established, and no prophet. Since it is eternal, it is all-pervasive. It does not abide by measures of space and time. It is my opinion that everybody in the world is a Hindu.

But everybody does not get the same spiritual guidance. Is there only one road to Śringeri? One can come here from Shimoga, Agumbe or Tirthahalli, is it not? Different propounders of *dharma* have shown different paths; but the goal is the same. There is no need for conversion. I am not going to convert anyone. Do you know when conversion is necessary or possible? When the person desiring conversion is not a member of the faith to which he wants to belong. To each person, his faith is like his mother. Is it right to show disrespect to the mother who gave birth to him and honour another?

I am occupying this *peeṭha* to advice everyone to follow their traditions; not to convert anybody to any other faith. Where do I have the competence to examine the faults and deficiencies of other faiths? A person who seeks to evaluate the qualities of two persons must be more competent than both of them. Has God given me the intellect to understand the teachings of Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammed and pass judgement on them? My lifespan is not enough to study even one *śāstra* and digest even one part of it!

It is natural for doubts to arise in the minds of those who study different faiths. But it is futile to approach mere scholars to get rid of such doubts. Only those who treat their faith as the be-all of their existence and have internalised it in their daily lives may be capable of clearing such doubts.

6. There is a state called '*moksha*' which transcends birth and death. Whether it is easy or difficult to reach one cannot say, but it is true that only through human endeavour can one attain it. It is possible for us to obtain it. It is capable of keeping us happy for all time. If that is so, should we not put forth our maximum efforts to obtain it? At the least, should we not try?

What is the assurance that a person who has all the conveniences conducive to obtaining *moksha* will have those facilities in another birth a hundred years later? You say that the atmosphere in which we live is deteriorating and you complain that there are many hurdles to perform the Vedic rituals. But do you know the nature of *vaidika dharma?* One aspect of it is to collect various items, invite many priests, give their ritual fees and perform those rituals which the Vedas prescribe. The second aspect is to focus on the *ātman* or the Self and meditate without reference to all these things. In this way, the Vedic way has two faces. The second approach does not invite hindrance from others, is that not so!

7. It is not necessary to study and remember the philosophical aspects of any faith. It is enough if there is sincere belief in God who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. All faiths say this only. If there is a yearning to know, there will be enough time in old age, after retirement. But even so, it is better, in old age, to practise what is already known than to learn something new.

8. It is very necessary to keep the mind controlled in order to reach the goal of Vedanta, which is to attain self-realisation. There are three

aspects to it: material, ethical and mental. Whenever the mind is upbeat, one should meditate; it is not good to do meditation when tired. Care should be taken to avoid sleep while meditating. In the beginning, one should meditate for a few minutes and gradually increase the duration. One should ruminate and contemplate every day. Material for contemplation can be obtained from *Bhagavad-gīta, dṛgdṛsya-viveka, ātma-bodha, pancadaśi* and such other texts.

Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra

Śrī Sadaśiva Brahmendra was a great saint who lived during the eighteenth century. Though he was wandering about on river banks and in forests and fields as an *avadhūta* and liberated soul, he is renowned for his hymns and works on the *śāstras*. His *samādhi* is in the village of Nerur, about 12 kilometres from the city of Karur in Tiruchirapalli District. Every year since 1912, an *ārādhana* to commemorate him has been conducted at the *samādhi* which is right on the banks of the Kaveri river; the event attracts many visitors. While touring Tamil Nadu, Śrī Chandraśekhara Bhārati visited his *samādhi* at Nerur. The Swāmi's guru, Śrī Satchidananda-śivābhinava Nrsimhabhārati also visited the *samādhi* during his tours and composed a hymn in Sanskrit on Sadāśiva Brahmendra. In this hymn of forty five verses, there are details about

the sage's life and references to many incidents and miracles.

Śrī Chandraśekhara Bhārati's reverence towards Sadāśiva Brahmendra came to him from his guru. 'Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa', the famous composition of Sadāśiva Brahmendra, was dear to both the Swāmis. The description of the *avadhūta*'s way of life in this hymn was realized in actuality by Swāmi Chandraśekhara Bhārati. For the most part, he used to recite verses from this hymn in his introverted state. Though he did not get an opportunity to be unaffiliated like Sadāśiva Brahmendra, in a sense, his life echoed the latter's. For, even though he was the head of an institution, he lived like an *avadhūta*. Therefore, it is not out of context to include in this book a note on Sadāśiva Brahmendra and the text of the 'Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa'.

Though it is not possible to fix Sadāśiva Brahmendra's time with certainty, it is learnt that he lived in the period after the commencement of the Maratha rule in Tanjore in 1676, during the reign of the second ruler, Shahaji II (1684-1712). There is also a reference of him giving a copy of the 'Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa' to Sharabhoji (1712-1728) who was Shahaji's brother and ruled after him. Shahaji, who was famous as 'Abhinava-bhoja',

established a settlement of Brahmins in Tiruvishainallur and granted it to the scholars of his court. Among them was Sridhara Venkatesha Aiyyaval, who was at the forefront of the *bhajana* (devotional singing of hymns) school in Tamil Nadu, who knew Shahaji very well; he had composed a work called 'Śāhendravilāsa' in honour of the ruler. It is learnt that this person was Sadāśiva Brahmendra's guide. Another person who lived there, Marudanallur Venkatarama Sadguruswami, who developed the practice of *nāma-sankīrtana* or singing the god's name, has composed a hymn on Sadāśiva Brahmendra. Yet another contemporary of Sadāśiva Brahmendra was Bodhendra Sadguru, who was also a promoter of the *bhajana* cult. Known as Bhagavan-nāmabodhendra Saraswati, he was the 59th in the line of gurus of the Kanchi Kamakoṭi Peeṭha; it is learnt that he passed away in 1609. His predecessor was Vishwādhikendra Saraswati (also called Atmabodhar), who was the head of the Peeṭha from 1584 to 1636. Records reveal that the ruler of Pudukottai, Raghunatha Tondaiman (1730-1769), met Sadāśiva Brahmendra in 1738.

Sadāśiva Brahmendra was from the Telugu Niyogi community. His father was Mokshayinti Somasundara Avadhāni, who lived in Madurai and

who was a scholar in the *vedas* and *śāstras*. Sadāśiva Brahmendra's earlier name was Śivarāmakrishna. His initial schooling was at home. For further studies, he went to Tiruvishainallur, also called Shahajipura. There, he came into contact with the famed trinity of the *bhajana-nāmasankīrtana* tradition - Sridhara Venkatesha Aiyyaval, Bodhendrasaraswati and Marudanallur Sadguruswami.

When he returned to Madurai after completing his study of the *śāstras* under the tutelage of one Ramabhadradikshitar in Tiruvishainallur, Sadāśiva Brahmendra's parents performed his marriage. Not having the slightest interest in a householder's life, he ran away from home to Tiruvishainallur. He obtained initiation to *sanyāsa* from a scholar-sage called Paramaśivendra and assumed the name of 'Sadāśiva Brahmendra'. It is not known for certain who Paramaśivendra was. One opinion holds that he belonged to the line of *gurus* adorning the Kanchi Kamakoṭi Peeṭha. In fact, the 56th *guru* in this line was called Sadāśiva Bodhendra. His time was 1523-1529; he composed a hymn called '*Puṇya-śloka-manjari*'. Maybe the same name came to him also. However, Bodhendrasadguru, who was elder to Sadāśiva Brahmendra and an inspiration to the latter, was indeed a *guru* of the Kanchi

Kamakothi Peeṭha (as Atmabodhendra - 1584-1636). He was the 58th in that line. His immediate predecessor is unknown. But the *guru* before him was Sadāśiva Bodhendra. In any case, Paramaśivendra is not to be seen in this line. There was a head of the Kanchi Peeṭha by the same name, but very long ago as the 45th in line who ascended to the *peeṭha* in 1061 and continued for twenty seven years.

Be that as it may. Sadāśiva Brahmendra himself has mentioned Paramaśivendra as his guru in many works. This is prominently stated in the 'Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa'. There is also 'Navamaṇimāla', a short hymn in praise of his guru. It is learnt that Paramaśivendra was a *yogi* and had composed a Sanskrit work called 'Daharavidya-prakāśika'. In the beginning, the subject of *tarka* (logic) was Sadāśiva Brahmendra's favourite; he used to enjoy debates and had a flair for talking. Once, the frustrated *guru* is said to have asked him: 'Sadāśiva, when will you learn to remain quiet?' He replied, 'From this moment!' and assumed a vow of silence immediately. He did not give up that vow till the end. However, he composed several works in Sanskrit. 'Brahma-sūtravṛtti', 'Yoga-sudhākara', 'Kaivalyāmṛta-bindu' (a work on the Upanishads), 'Siddhānta-kalpavalli' (the verse form of Appayya

Dikshitar's 'Siddhānta-leśa-sangraha'), 'Manoniyamana' (in thirteen verses) — are all well-known works among scholars. His 'Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa' is dear to scholars, *yogis* and to spiritual practitioners.

In due course, Sadāśiva Brahmendra gave up his preoccupation with scriptural texts and turned towards spiritual practise. Gradually, he developed extreme detachment and became an *avadhūta* — a wandering, unaffiliated *yogi*. Naked, unmindful of his own person, unaware of the world outside, unheeding of the rules of *sanyāsa*, he began to live like a man possessed. He wandered about as he pleased in forests and fields; he rested beneath the canopy of trees; he slept on the sandbanks along the river. Regardless of sun, cold, rain, or wind he remained uncovered. He never took shelter under any roof; never came inside any home; never accepted any invitation; never spoke to anyone. Always contented about everything! 'By the grace of my guru, I am Brahman himself' [1] was his motto, the cause for his state of mind. People noticed him as a realized soul. His *guru* also praised him.

1. "ब्रह्मैवाहं सद्गुरुकृपया"

निरवधिसंसृतिनीरधिनिपतितजनतारणस्फुरन्नौकाम् ।
परमतभेदनघुटिकां परमशिवेन्द्रार्यपादुकां नौमि ॥ २ ॥

Once, somebody came to Paramaśivendra and said, 'Your disciple has become mad'. To this, the former replied with deep regret, 'Alas! How I wish that madness afflicted me!' Satchidānanda Śivābhinava Nṛsimha Bhārati has written about this episode thus:

उन्मत्तवत्सञ्चरतीह शिष्यस्तवेति लोकस्य वचांसि शृण्वन् ।
खिद्यन्नुवाचस्य गुरुः पुराहो ह्युन्मत्तता मे न हि तादृशीति ॥

If somebody had told him that his pupil Chandraśekhara Bhārati, who succeeded to the *peeṭha* after him, had become similarly insane, perhaps Satchidānanda Śivabhinava Nṛsimha Bhārati too would have said the same thing. This divine madness of *avadhūtas* is not intelligible to laymen.

Even though he was an *avadhūta*, Sadāśiva Brahmendra occasionally visited Bodhendrasadguru in Govindapura and Sridhara Venkatesha Aiyyaval in Tiruvishainallur. The vow of silence was kept even during those visits; but the noble spirits communed nonetheless. Both those gurus advised Sadāśiva Brahmendra, 'Keep your vow of silence in your interaction with the world; but why should that come in the way of chanting the name of the

Lord?' Heeding them, he went on to compose and sing several hymns in the *bhajana* tradition. Except for that, he did not speak to anyone. These compositions in Sanskrit are in vogue in *bhajana-mandalis* even today. In these hymns, Rāma and Krishna have been depicted as forms of the formless Brahman. 'Piba Re Rāmarasam', 'Khelati Mama Hṛdaye', 'Bhajare Raghuvīram', 'Chetatah Śrīrāmam', 'Prativāram Vāram Mānasa' — are all hymns in praise of Lord Rāma. 'Smara Nandakumāram', 'Gāyati Vanamāli Madhuram', 'Bhaja Re Gopālam Mānasa', 'Bhaja Re Yadunātham', 'Krīḍati Vanamāli Goshṭhe', 'Brūhi Mukundeti' — are hymns to Lord Krishṇa. A few compositions on Brahman are — 'Sarvam Brahmamayam Re', 'Khelati Brahmāṇḍe Bhagavān', 'Mānasa Sanchara Re Brahmaṇi', and 'Tadvajjīvitvam Brahmaṇi'. Altogether, he has composed twenty one or twenty two hymns. 'Paramahamsa' is the signature he uses in his compositions.

When Sharabhoji (1712-1728), the ruler of Tanjāvur, visited him, he blessed him with a copy of the 'Ātma-vidyā-vilasa'. The king of Pudukottai, Raghunatha Tondaiman (1730-1769) revered him. But he lived independently throughout, always wandering about at will, without putting himself to

any obligation to anyone, or coming under anyone's authority, or staying at any location. Finally, he returned to Nerur and gave up his mortal body on the banks of the Kāveri. His *samādhi* is a place of pilgrimage even today. He attained *samādhi* on *jyeshṭha-śuddha-daśami*. One Laksharchanai Swāmi started the practice of having a commemorative *ārādhana* at the site of the *samādhi* in 1912. It is said that after the ninth day since Sadāśiva Brahmendra's attaining *samādhi*, a *bilva* tree was seen at the spot. The tree exists till this day. The tree is worshipped as a symbol of Sadāśiva Brahmendra. On the twelfth day after his *samādhi*, a *bāṇa-linga* from Kāshi was consecrated by the Pudukottai king, Raghunātha Tondaimān, about ten-twelve feet away from the *samādhi*.

The 'Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa', printed in the next section, has sixty two verses in the *ārya* metre. It is in simple Sanskrit and deals with detachment (*vairāgya*). It is special because it elucidates the way of the *avadhūta*. The *avadhūta* is liberated in this life itself and is a realized soul; the way of such a detached person is to cast aside all dealings with the world, give up adherence to scripture and the restraints of tradition, and turn a blind eye even to the conventional upkeep of the body, and to live like a madman, a ghoul or a child.

It is said that the very letters comprising the word '*avadhūta*' are indicative of this state:

अक्षरत्वात् वरेण्यत्वात् धूतपापादिबन्धनात् ।
तत्त्वमस्यादिलक्ष्यत्वात् अवधूतः प्रकीर्तितः ॥

'a' — one who is imperishable, 'va' — one who makes the Supreme Truth his abode, 'dhu' — one who has cast away a sense of sin and such other restraints, and 'ta' — one who is an exemplar of 'You Are That' and similar key tenets of the Upanishads.

आत्मविद्याविलासः

चिन्मुद्रितकरकमलं चिन्तितभक्तेष्टदं विमलम् ।
गुरुवरमाद्यं कञ्चन निरवधिकानन्दनिर्भरं वन्दे ॥

Jnānadaksiṇāmūrti is the 'Ādi Guru' or the First Teacher. He is one of Lord Śiva's incarnations, assumed by Him as part of his 'leela' or Divine Play. With his right hand, he makes the gesture of Vedantic exposition; with his left, he makes the sign of benevolence. His face is adorned by a light smile indicative of his unending bliss.

वटतरुनिकटनिवासं पटुतरविज्ञानमुद्रितकराब्जम् ।
कञ्चन देशिकमाद्यं कैवल्यानन्दकन्दलं वन्दे ॥ १ ॥

This Ādi Guru is at the foot of a banyan tree. As said above, the right hand displays the symbol of knowledge. He appears as though the bliss that accompanies liberation has blossomed forth.

निरवधिसंसृतिनीरधिनिपतितजनतारणस्फुरन्नौकाम् ।
परमतभेदनघुटिकां परमशिवेन्द्रार्यपादुकां नौमि ॥ २ ॥

I bow to the pādukas (wooden sandals) of Parama-Śivendra, which have the power to save those who helplessly struggle in the sea of samsāra and the courage to confront those who have deviated from the righteous path.

देशिकपरमशिवेन्द्रादेशवशोद्बुद्धदिव्यमहिमाहम् ।
स्वात्मनि विश्रान्तिकृते सरसं प्रस्तौमि किञ्चिदिदम् ॥ ३ ॥

I (the Ātman) am imbued with a spiritual power born out of the teachings of Parama-Śivendra. Desiring to dwell within myself, I am presenting this short composition in a simple style.

निरुपमनित्यनिरीहो निष्कलनिर्मायनिर्गुणाकारः ।
विगलितसर्वविकल्पः शुद्धो बुद्धश्चकास्ति परमात्मा ॥ ४ ॥

The Ātman is incomparable, limitless, without desire or blemish, unfettered by māya (the cosmic illusion) and beyond the three attributes (of sattva, rajas and tamas). He is changeless, pure and liberated (that is, endowed with self-awareness). He is paramātma, the omnipresent effulgence.

स्वाविद्यैकनिबद्धः कुर्वन्कर्माणि मुह्यमानः सन् ।
दैवाद्विधूतबन्धः स्वात्मज्ञानान्मुनिर्जयति ॥ ५ ॥

Not knowing oneself is bondage; from this arises delusion; because of this one engages in activities. The fetters imposed by action fall away when one realizes oneself. This awareness does not come about naturally; it may happen because of good fortune. A person who has gained awareness in this way is the seer (muni).

मायावशेन सुप्तो मध्ये पश्यन्सहस्रशः स्वप्नान् ।
देशिकवचःप्रबुद्धो दीव्यत्यानन्दवारिधौ कोऽपि ॥ ६ ॥

By the power of māya (the cosmic illusion) men live in this world as if they are asleep; their life experiences are like thousands of dreams. Very rarely, one among them awakes due to the Guru's teachings; such a person is as though immersed in an ocean of bliss.

प्राकृतभावमपास्य स्वीकृतनिजरूपसच्चिदानन्दः ।
गुरुवरकरुणापाङ्गाद्धौरवमापाद्य माद्यति प्राज्ञः ॥ ७ ॥

The man who cultivates discrimination gives up his interest in this world (which arises from birth itself), and with the help of the Guru's teachings, realizes that the true nature of his self is existence, knowledge and bliss. Such a man receives respect from all and lives happily.

श्रीगुरुकृपया सच्चित्सुखनिजरूपे निमग्नधीर्मौनी ।
विहरति कश्चन विबुधः शान्ताहन्तो नितान्तमुदितान्तः ॥ ८ ॥

By the grace of the Guru, such a man keeps his intellect focussed on the para-brahman (The Supreme) whose nature is existence-knowledge-bliss. He discards egotistic thoughts of 'me' and 'mine'. Remaining silent, he moves about carefree, enjoying an inward bliss.

गुरुवरकरुणालहरीव्यतिकरभरशीतलस्वान्तः ।
रमते यतिवर एको निरुपमसुखसीमनि स्वैरम् ॥ ९ ॥

Like unceasing waves, the Guru's grace washes over the mind of the seeker. Becalmed, the mind is led towards boundless bliss. In this state, the seeker is content in his solitude.

श्रीदेशिकवरकरुणारविकरसमपोहितान्तरध्वान्तः ।
विहरन्मस्करिवर्यो निरवधिकानन्दनीरधावास्ते ॥ १० ॥

The Guru's grace is like the sun; it is the light that dispels the darkness inside. The seeker experiences unbounded joy because of it.

जनिविपरीतक्रमतो बुद्ध्या प्रविलाप्य पञ्च भूतानि ।
परिशिष्टमात्मतत्त्वं पश्यन्नास्ते मुनिः शान्तः ॥ ११ ॥

When the five elements — earth, water, fire, wind and ether — are subsumed differently from how these elements occur in their natural state, that is - ether in air, air in fire, fire in water, and water in earth - what remains is Ātman, or that which is not the five elements. The seer who

realizes this becomes free from worldly attachment and attains peace.

जगदखिलमिदमसारं मायिकमेवेति मनसि मन्वानः ।
पर्यटति पाटिताशः प्रगलितमदमानमत्सरः कोऽपि ॥ १२ ॥

Only one among several obtains the conviction that that this world is without essence and a mirage created by māya. He discards his desires, removes ego, jealousy and the like and walks about carefree as a muni.

नात्मनि किञ्चिन्माया तत्कार्यं वास्ति वस्तुतो विमले ।
इति निश्चयवानन्तर्हृष्यत्यानन्दनिर्भरो योगी ॥ १३ ॥

Truly, there is not an iota of māya in the Ātman; nor is there any trace of this world which is the work of that cosmic illusion. The yogi who realises this enjoys the bliss that fills his soul.

त्वमहमभिमानहीनो मोदितनानाजनाचारः ।
विहरति बालवदेको विमलसुखाम्भोनिधौ मग्नः ॥ १४ ॥

The yogi, having given up notions born of ego, like 'you' and 'I', and being amused by the ways of the world, immerses himself in the ocean of bliss that is within him and becomes carefree like a young boy.

अवधूतकर्मजालो जडवधिरान्धोपमः कोऽपि ।
आत्मारामो यतिराडटवीकोषेष्वटन्नास्ते ॥ १५ ॥

This yogi, who appears as though he is a dullard, or a deaf-mute, discards the fetters of karma (worldly action), remains self-content and roams about the forest happily.

शान्त्या दृढोपगूढः शान्तसमस्तान्यवेदनोदारः ।
रमते रसज्ञ एको रम्ये स्वानन्दपर्यङ्के ॥ १६ ॥

He looks after himself without agitation, he suppresses the desires of the body and having realized the essence of liberation, enjoys alone.

उन्मूलितविषयारिः स्वीकृतवैराग्यसर्वस्वः ।
स्वात्मानन्दमहिम्नि स्वाराज्येऽस्मिन्विराजते यतिराट् ॥ १७ ॥

This king among sages vanquishes the temptations of the senses and thinks of detachment as his only property. He stands radiantly in the glory of his atman, like a king of his realm, unrestricted by another.

सवितर्यपि शीतरुचौ चन्द्रे तीक्ष्णेऽप्यधो वहत्यग्नौ ।
मायिकमिदमिति जानन् जीवन्मुक्तो न विस्मयी भवति ॥ १८ ॥

The sage is not surprised even if the sun's rays are cool, or if the moonbeams are hot, or if fire burns upside down. He treats all these as maya and remains calm.

अज्ञानवैरिविजयी प्रज्ञामातङ्गमस्तकारूढः ।
विहरति संयमिराजः समरससुखधाम्नि सर्वतो रम्ये ॥ १९ ॥

Conquering ignorance that is the foe, and seated on the high elephant-like seat of knowledge, the sage moves freely in the realm of harmony. He is not excited by happiness, nor disappointed by adversity; gain and loss mean the same to him. He has neither friends nor enemies. Everybody is equal. This is harmony.

शान्ताहंकृतिदोषः सुसमाहितमानसः कोऽपि ।
पूर्णेन्दुशिशिरभावो राजत्यानन्दसत्यचिद्रसिकः ॥ २० ॥

Conquering negative traits like a sense of 'I' and 'mine', and establishing the mind in a state of unshakeable poise, the yogi is resplendent with a cool light, as he enjoys supreme bliss.

तिष्ठन्परत्र धाम्नि स्वीयसुखास्वादपरवशः कश्चित् ।
क्वापि ध्यायति कुहचिद्गायति कुत्रापि नृत्यति स्वैरम् ॥ २१ ॥

The yogi lives as he pleases, remaining firmly on the plane of parabrahman as he enjoys the bliss within himself. He stops to meditate, or sing or dance, wherever he feels like.

अगृहीताघकलङ्कः प्रशमितसङ्कल्पविभ्रमः प्राज्ञः ।
न्यक्कृतकार्यकलापस्तिष्ठत्यापूर्णसीमनि क्वापि ॥ २२ ॥

Remaining untainted by sin, and, subduing his desires and difficulties, the jnāni, who has cast aside the burden of worldly action, stands firm in

the sense of accomplishment he has obtained within him.

चपलं मनःकुरङ्गं चारु गृहीत्वा विमर्शवागुरया ।
निगमारण्यविहारश्रान्तः शेते स्वधाम्नि कोऽप्येकः ॥ २३ ॥

The mind is as restless as a deer. The yogi tames the mind by using the faculty of discrimination and, enjoying the expanse of the Vedas as though he were roaming carefree in a forest, he reposes in the calmness that is there within him.

दारुणचित्तव्याघ्रं धीरमनःखड्गधारया हत्वा ।
अभयारण्ये कोऽपि स्वैरविहारी जयत्येकः ॥ २४ ॥

The mind is like a big tiger; the yogi is like a brave hero who slays it with the sword of knowledge and then roams about alone in the forest.

सज्जनहृदयसरोजोन्मीलनकरधीकरप्रसरः ।
एको यतिवरपूषा निर्दोषश्चरति चिद्गगने ॥ २५ ॥

This sage is like the sun, spreading rays of light that delight the minds of the pious. His inner knowledge is like the vast sky. Being without any blemish, he travels ever onward in that realm.

कुबलयविकासकारणमज्ञानध्वान्तकौमुदीप्रज्ञः ।
शुद्धो मुनीन्द्रचन्द्रः सुरसेव्ये लसाति विष्णुपदे ॥ २६ ॥

This sage shines brightly like the moon in the sky — the moon that dispels the darkness of ignorance with the light of knowledge and makes the lily bloom.

स्वानन्दामृतसेकैरान्तरसन्तापसन्ततिं शमयन् ।
चित्रमचञ्चलवृत्तिश्चिद्व्योमनि भाति योगिवर्यघनः ॥ २७ ॥

Quelling his inner troubles by means of his inner bliss, this yogi of firm mind shines like the lone cloud in the sky.

सुमनःसौरभमञ्जुलसञ्चारनिवारिताखिलश्रान्तिः ।
संयमिचारुपसमीरो विहरत्यानन्दसंविदारामे ॥ २८ ॥

This sage is the light breeze that blows in the garden of knowledge. He is like the wind which carries the fragrance of flowers, and, blowing gently, takes away all weariness.

निःश्रेयससरसफले निर्मलविज्ञानपल्लवमनोज्ञे ।
वीतभये विपिनतले यतिशिखिकण्ठो विभाति कोऽप्येकः ॥ २९ ॥

This sage is like a peacock, dancing in that beautiful forest where there is no fear. The forest has trees full of the fruit of liberation and shoots of pure knowledge.

निःसारभुवनमरुतलमुत्सार्यानन्दसारसम्पूर्णे ।
वरसरसि चिन्मयेऽस्मिन्परहंसः कोऽपि दीव्यति स्वैरम् ॥ ३० ॥

This lone sage is the paramahamsa who, having given up this world which is without any substance, sports in that lake which is full of the bliss of knowledge.

निखिलागमपल्लविते निगमशिरस्तन्त्रशीतलोद्याने ।
मधुरतरमश्नुवानः कूजन्नास्ते यतीन्द्रकलकण्ठः ॥ ३१ ॥

This sage is like the koel that coos melodiously in the grove where the Vedas are the green shoots and the flowers are the Upanishads and Vedānta-Sūtras.

दारितमोहमदेभो दूरीकृतसकलदुरितशार्दूलः ।
विबुधोत्तमसिंहवरो विहरत्यानन्दविततकान्तारे ॥ ३२ ॥

The sage, who is foremost among jnānis, defeats the vices of delusion and sin like a hero who fights off elephants and tigers, and roams about like a lion in the forest where bliss abounds.

अज्ञानमृगवरोज्झितविज्ञानोत्तुङ्गशृङ्गशिखरितले ।
मतिसलिलशीतलाङ्गो यतिमदकलभो विराजते विहरन् ॥ ३३ ॥

This sage, who has removed himself from ignorance, and ascended to the peaks of knowledge where he delights in his own intelligence, is like that elephant which, having warded off the lion, enjoys in the cool waters of the lake on the mountaintop.

नासाञ्चलनिहिताक्षो नामादिभ्यो निवर्तितस्वान्तः ।
तटिनीतटेषु तत्त्वं ध्यायन्नास्ते यतिः कोऽपि ॥ ३४ ॥

The sage, whose gaze is fixed at the tip of his nose, and whose mind is moved away from the world of names and forms, sits on the banks of rivers, immersed in philosophical inquiry.

आशावसनो मौनी नैराश्यालङ्कृतिः शान्तः ।
करतलभिक्षापात्रस्तरुतलनिलयो मुनिर्जयति ॥ ३५ ॥

The very directions are his clothes, his ornament is discarded desire, in his hand he carries a begging bowl and lives at the foot of a tree; even so, he is at peace and remains quiet without speaking to anyone. This sage is happy.

भूतलमृदुतरशय्यः शीतलवातैकचामरः शान्तः ।
राकाहिमकरदीपो राजति यतिराजशेखरः कोऽपि ॥ ३६ ॥

As he happily contemplates the ātman on the lonely banks of rivers, in the hollows of trees and on the sandbanks by the riverside, the sage is as though he were in repose even when he is awake.

विजननदीकुञ्जगृहे मञ्जुलपुलिनैकमञ्जुतरतल्पे ।
शेते कोऽपि यतीन्द्रः समरसमुखबोधवस्तुनिस्तन्द्रः ॥ ३७ ॥

To him, the bare earth is the soft mattress, the cool breeze the fan, and the full moon the light. What more does he need? He glows with inner radiance.

विपुलशिलातलफलके विमलसरिद्वारिपरिवृतोदारे ।
मन्दं मलयजपवने वाति प्रस्वपिति कोऽपि यतिराजः ॥ ३८ ॥

This sage is lying on a stone slab along the gurgling waters of a river; a southerly breeze is relaxing him.

आन्तरमेकं किञ्चित्सन्ततमनुसन्दधन्महामौनी ।
करपुटभिक्षामश्नन्नटति हि वीथ्यां जडाकृतिः कोऽपि ॥ ३९ ॥

The sage wanders about on the streets as he contemplates unceasingly some truth within himself; he talks to no one and eats whatever food comes by his way.

प्रविलाप्य जगदशेषं परिशिष्टाखण्डवस्तुपरतन्त्रः ।
प्राश्नाति कबलमास्ये प्राप्तं प्रारब्धकर्मणा कोऽपि ॥ ४० ॥

Merging the whole world in an all encompassing truth that is outside of and beyond it, and bowing to that principle, the sage is swallowing whatever food has come into his mouth by his past karma.

निन्दति किमपि न योगी नन्दति नैवापरं किमप्यन्तः ।
चन्दनशीतलहृदयः कन्दलितानन्दमन्थरस्त्वास्ते ॥ ४१ ॥

This yogi does not speak ill of anything; nor does he become elated by anything. His heart is cool as sandal paste. Happiness bubbles inside him.

संत्यज्य शास्त्रजालं संख्यवहारं च सर्वतस्त्यक्त्वा ।
आश्रित्य पूर्णपदवीमास्ते निष्कम्पदीपवद्योगी ॥ ४२ ॥

This yogi has cast aside the burden of scripture; he has given up all the affairs of this world. He has sought refuge in ātman, the unitary principle with no desires and no defects. He is like a lamp that remains firm in the wind.

तृणपङ्कचर्चिताङ्गस्तृणमिव विश्वं विलोकयन्योगी ।
विहरति रहसि वनान्ते विजरामरभूम्नि विश्रान्तः ॥ ४३ ॥

His body is covered with dust and blades of grass. Indeed, he treats the world as though it were a blade of grass, and roams about in the forest unknown to anyone. He has remained steadfast in Brahman, the principle that neither age nor death touches.

पश्यति किमपि न रूपं न वदति न शृणोति निश्चिदपि वचनम् ।
तिष्ठति निरुपमभूमनि निष्ठामवलम्ब्य काष्ठवद्योगि ॥ ४४ ॥

This yogi does not look at anything, nor say anything or hear anything; remaining rooted in the incomparable ātman, he lives unaffected as a piece of wood.

जात्यभिमानविहीनो जन्तुषु सर्वत्र पूर्णतां पश्यन् ।
गूढं चरति यतीन्द्रो मूढवदखिलागमार्थं तत्त्वज्ञः ॥ ४५ ॥

He does not have any affinity to his caste, clan or family; he sees the unitary principle of atman in every living being. Though he has realized the essence of all that the Vedas teach, he lives like a simpleton, unknown to anybody.

उपधाय बाहुमूलं परिधायाकाशमवनिमास्तीर्य ।
प्रस्वपिति विरतिवनितां परिरभ्यानन्दपरवशः कोऽपि ॥ ४६ ॥

This yogi makes a pillow of his arms, covers himself with nothing but the wide open spaces and holds not any woman but detachment; thus he sleeps blissfully.

गतभेदवासनाभिः स्वप्रज्ञोदारवारनारीभिः ।
रमते सह यतिराजस्त्रय्यन्तान्तःपुरे कोऽपि ॥ ४७ ॥

This man is the king among sages; he is partial to nothing. To him the discrimination that emanates from the knowledge of ātman is itself the company of women; the secrets of the Vedas are the inner apartments where he enjoys their company.

वैराग्यविपुलमार्गं विज्ञानोद्दामदीपिकोद्दीपम् ।
आरुह्य तत्त्वहर्म्यं भुक्त्या सह मोदते मुनिराट् ॥ ४८ ॥

This lord of sages walks on the highway of detachment with the aid of the bright light of self-knowledge, and he ascends to the mansion which is spiritual knowledge; there, he enjoys liberation as though she were his queen.

विजनतलोत्पलमालां वनितावैतृष्ण्यकल्पवल्लीं च ।
अवसान्यामृतघुटिकामात्मज्ञः कोऽपि गृह्णाति ॥ ४९ ॥

The garland that this realized soul wears is made of lilies that grow in the wild. To him, the wish-fulfilling tree is detachment, or the attitude of not desiring women or anything else. He swallows insults that people throw at him as though they were drops of nectar.

न निषेधति दोषधिया गुणबुद्ध्या वा न किञ्चिदादत्ते ।
आविद्यकमखिलमिति ज्ञात्वोदास्ते मुनिः कोऽपि ॥ ५० ॥

This sage does not reject anything saying, 'This is defective, I do not want it', or desire anything saying, 'This has merit, I want it'. Knowing that everything is born of ignorance, he remains indifferent to all.

भूतं किमपि न मनुते भावि च किञ्चिन्न चिन्तयत्यन्तः ।
पश्यति न पुरोवर्त्यपि वस्तु समस्तार्थसमरसः कोऽपि ॥ ५१ ॥

He does not call to mind the past; he does not think of the future; he does not even notice things that are before him. To him, there is only one substance, which is the ātman that resides in all beings. Hence, his mind is at equilibrium with respect to everything.

निगृहीताखिलकरणो निर्मृष्टाशेषविषयेहः ।
तृप्तिमनुत्तमसीमां प्राप्तः पर्यटति कोऽपि यतिवर्यः ॥ ५२ ॥

Subduing his senses and casting aside desire of sense objects, he has obtained a limitless contentment. Thus, this sage wanders about without staying anywhere.

संत्यजति नोपपन्नं नासम्पन्नं च वाञ्छति क्वापि ।
स्वस्थः शेते यतिराडान्तरमानन्दमनुभवन्नेकः ॥ ५३ ॥

This king among yogis does not discard what has come to him, nor does he covet that which hasn't; he lies down, enjoying the bliss within him, and relishing his own company.

कामपि विमलां पदवीमासाद्यानन्दसंविदुन्निद्राम् ।
आस्ते भिक्षुक एको विहरान्निर्मुक्तबन्धः स्वेरम् ॥ ५४ ॥

This mendicant roams about without a care in this world, after having obtained a pure state of mind and becoming aware of the Blissful Intelligence (ānanda-caitanya).

वस्तुन्यस्तमिताखिलविश्वविहारे विलीनमनाः ।
राजति परानपेक्षो राजाखिलवीतरागाणाम् ॥ ५५ ॥

He is the king among those who have given up desire. His mind is established in that ātman in which the whole universe is immersed. He does not have any defects.

आचार्यापाङ्गदृशा समवाप्तापारसंविदाकारः ।
प्रशमितसकलविभेदः परहंसः कश्चिदाभाति ॥ ५६ ॥

By the grace of his guru, he is the incomparable knowledge incarnate. He has subdued all differentiation that results from the names and forms of this world. He is a paramahamsa and he is radiant.

वर्णाश्रमव्यवस्थामुत्तीर्य विधूय विध्यादीन् ।
परिशिष्यते यतीन्द्रः परिपूर्णानन्दबोधमात्रेण ॥ ५७ ॥

He has crossed the social orders of caste and creed and discarded all the restrictions imposed by scripture. He only recognizes that Supreme Blissful Awareness of which he too is a part.

क्षयमुपनीय समस्तं कर्म प्रारब्धमुपभुज्य ।
प्रविगलितदेहबन्धः प्राज्ञो ब्रह्मैव केवलं भवति ॥ ५८ ॥

Indeed, this jnāni becomes Brahman itself, as he has exhausted and destroyed all prior and future karma, experienced the fruits of past action and cast aside the limitations imposed by this human body.

स्तिमितमनन्तमनाख्यं सन्ततमतुलानन्दबोधघनम् ।
अविकल्पमाद्यमेकं सन्मात्रं विद्यते किमपि ॥ ५९ ॥

Only Brahman exists; it is pure existence. It is [nelegoṇḍa tattva, the fundamental reality], without end or beginning, and eternal; [aanandavemba aravina gaṭṭi, concentrated awareness called bliss]

and changeless. It is that which exists first and prior to everything else.

अक्षरमजरमजातं सूक्ष्मतरापूर्वशुद्धविज्ञानम् ।
प्रगलितसर्वक्लेशं परतत्त्वं वर्तते किमपि ॥ ६० ॥

There is a certain transcendent truth. It is indestructible, ageless, unborn; it is a subtle, pure and hitherto inexperienced awareness; it is that which has discarded all impurities and defects.

सुखतरममरमदूरं सारं संसारवारिधेस्तीरम् ।
समरसमभयमपारं सत्किञ्चन दीप्यते तत्त्वम् ॥ ६१ ॥

It is Brahman, and must be designated only as 'That'. It is that joy that ever-increases, it is deathless, near at hand and resides in the soul. It is the essence of all things, the far bank of this worldly life. It is equally present in all things in this universe. It removes fear of this world. What indeed is that truth!

अरसमगन्धमरूपं विरजस्कमसत्त्वमतमस्कम् ।
निरुपमनिर्भयतत्त्वं तत्किमपि द्योतते नित्यम् ॥ ६२ ॥

Does it have any taste, smell or form? None of these. It is far removed from the three qualities (gunas) - sattva, rajas and tamas -— which pervade this world. -Nothing compares to it. It is fearless and shines forth ceaselessly everywhere.

इति गुरुकरुणापाङ्गादार्याभिर्द्व्यधिकषष्टिसंख्याभिः ।
निरवद्याभिरवोचं निगमशिरस्तन्त्रसारभूतार्थम् ॥ ६३ ॥

By the grace of my guru, I have given the essence of the Upanishads — which form the most important part of the Vedas — in these faultless sixty-two verses.

गदितमिमात्मविद्याविलासमनुवासरं स्मरन्विबुधः ।
परिणतपरात्मविद्यः प्रपद्यते सपदि परमार्थम् ॥ ६४ ॥

The wise man who contemplates everyday this Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa- becomes well acquainted with the knowledge of the Self and quickly obtains the Supreme Truth.

परमशिवेन्द्रश्रीगुरुशिष्येणेत्थं सदाशिवेन्द्रेण ।
रचितेयमात्मविद्याविलासनामा कृतिः पूर्णा ॥ ६५ ॥

This work, titled 'Ātma-vidyā-vilāsa', composed by Sadaśivendra, disciple of Paramaśivendra, is hereby concluded.

इति श्रीमत्परमहंसपरिव्राजकाचार्यश्रीपरमशिवेन्द्रसरस्वतीपादाब्जसेवापरायण
श्रीसदाशिवेन्द्रसरस्वत्या विरचितः आत्मविद्याविलासः समाप्तः ॥