

the College in 1848. We have no means of knowing whether he passed the Junior or Senior Scholarship Examination there. Sj. Abhoy Charan Lahiri, however, has informed us in his book of a certificate given by the English Headmaster to Shri Shyamacharan. We reproduce below the certificate as printed in the book of Sj. Abhoy Charan.

### GOVERNMENT COLLEGE BENARES

These are to certify that Shamacharan Lahiree aged about 19 years, the son of Gourmohan Lahiree, inhabitant of Zilla Benares has attended the College for eight years, during which he has afforded very great satisfaction to his teachers by his good disposition, exemplary conduct, regularity in attendance and diligence in the prosecution of his studies.

He possesses a very good knowledge of English, composes letters and translates from English into Urdu and vice versa with considerable facility and correctness and is tolerably acquainted with Literature, History and Geography.

He has gained several prizes during the time he has been in the Institution.

Benares.  
26 July 1848.

Sd/-Geo. Nicholls  
Headmaster, Benares College

Apart from his College studies Shyamacharan would also take English, Persian and other books regularly from the College Library and note such portions from them as would appeal to his mind. This practice shows Shyamacharan's all-absorbing devotion to

studies, so rare in these days amongst students. It reveals also the fact that from his very boyhood whatever Shyamacharan did he did with all his heart. It is this concentration, this taking a thing in all sincerity, that is the greatest pre-requisite for a Yogi. And the boy Shyamacharan had the makings of a Yogiraj from the very start of his life.

His education, however, was never cut off from the basis of spirituality. Apart from the Vedic and the Philosophic studies with Nagabhata, Shri Shyamacharan would, under the instructions from his father, go to Shri Shri Kedarnath after finishing his daily Vedic Chant, and would perform his daily prayer by the side of the Holy Ganga. Incidentally it may be mentioned that a riverside has always been considered a suitable place for Sadhana by sages like Manu. Thus we find that the materialistic education in our schools and colleges would be too feeble to destory the core of spirituality deep down in the heart of Shri Shyamacharan.

As is also evident from the Headmaster's Certificate, Shyamacharan was very regular and punctual in his attendance at the school. He would generally go to school after a very slender meal of rice with a touch of 'Ghee' and salt. Coming back from the school in the afternoon he would sit silent for some time at his reading table. The tiffin at that time was grams and molasses. But if on any occasion the tiffin would be forgotten by the members of the family, he would never ask for it. After an hour he would start for the temple of Shri Shri Kedarnath. It is very surprising that even the boy Shyamacharan did not have the habit of asking for anything, be it his legitimate due. A com-



plete lack of attachment to his meals and dresses and other human wants was a very natural and spontaneous virtue with him. He would only accept what came for him, unasked. Thus, even when salt was lacking in his curry, he would never want it. If, afterwards, the cook would be ashamed on finding out his mistake, Shyamacharan would make light of the affair with some such remark as "A single day's mistake doesn't matter at all." Regarding dress, too, he was supremely careless and would never want a cloth even if he would have to use a torn and worn-out one while going to school. It was only when the family authorities would look to the matter that a new cloth would be purchased. Apart from his lack of avarice and attachment this also shows the great dignity and real aristocracy of Shyamacharan's mind which did not feel the necessity of being a suitor for ordinary wants.

Shri Shyamacharan had great physical strength and he could also stand hard labour. His adventurous spirit is revealed in his boyhood habit of taking a plunge and swimming over the Ganga from Gouranga-ghat ( or Goren Ghat ) to Kedar Ghat and back again from Kedar Ghat against the strong current of the rainy season. He would not indulge in idle talks with his companions, and although generous, had such a dignity and gravity about himself that his companions always obeyed him as their leader. Besides, his keen intelligence and power of judgment was a guide to them all. And naturally, his friends, too, would be inspired to give a good account of themselves in life.

It is palpable from the above that Shri Shyamacharan had every quality, even as a boy, that has been

extolled by our Shastras. Indeed, it is the Shastras which follow the sages and not the sages who have to follow the Shastric injunctions. They come to them naturally and spontaneously, without any strain or effort on their part to acquire them. The 'Yogavatar' ( the Divine as the embodiment of Yoga ) came to instruct the world, to teach men how to remove their sufferings, and therefore, it was in the fitness of things that the Divine descended on him with an easy grace of Perfection.

According to the custom prevalent at that time Shyamacharan was married early at the age of eighteen. His father-in-law, Sj. Debnarayan Sanyal Vachaspati, was a reputed scholar as the very title 'Vachaspati' ( Master of Scriptures ) denotes. Before settling at Khalispura Mahalla at Benares Vachaspati Mahashaya was a resident of Belur in the district of Howrah, Bengal. He was a very religious man and used frequently to go to Gourmohan's house where he read and discussed the Upanisads and other scriptures. Vachaspati was a widower and had to bring up three sons and a daughter. The youngest child, the daughter Kashimoni, was very favourite with her father. She would very often come with him to the house of Gourmohan and the boy Shyamacharan was her playmate there. Sometimes the elderly ladies of the house would humorously ask the young girl, "whom would you marry, dear" ? and Kashimoni at once pointed out the gentle fair-complexioned Shyamacharan. It may be noted, incidentally, that Kashimoni herself was not of a very bright complexion

However, Kashimoni Devi was married to Shyamacharan at the tender age of nine. Since then, she had



always stood by her husband through thick and thin, through all sorts of household troubles and duties and monetary want. It was through her patient efforts that the household of the Yogiraj was always efficiently managed, and a house too could be built from the slender income of Shyamacharan. Kashimoni was always true to the ideals of a Hindu wife in her great devotion to her husband, in her modesty and her sympathy with the distressed. Even in her old age she would herself give alms to the first beggar every morning in her household, and then the other members would take up the job. She was convinced that the suffering and the distressed were so many images of God blessing the house by accepting service from its members.

This worthy consort of Shri Shyamacharan was initiated into Kriyayoga by her illustrious husband and reached a highly advanced stage in the world of spirit. Her grandson Abhoycharan notes in his book that he saw her once in a state of Samadhi or complete spiritual absorption. Kashimoni Devi died at the age of 94 in the month of Chaitra, 1337 B. S. She retained full consciousness even up to the moment of her death.

In his married life the Yogiraj had lost a few children up to the year 1852. At about this time the atmosphere in the joint family came to be disturbed due to difference of opinions amongst cousin brothers. Lahiri Mahashaya shifted with his family to a house near about at Simonchowhatta.

In December, 1863, Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya went to Krisnanagore in order to make arrangements for 288 bighas of land which he inherited from his father and which were so long unlawfully occupied by his relatives. As it was almost impossible to enjoy

his rights over the land from as distant a place as Benares, Lahiri Mahashaya made over the property to the same relatives on condition that they would send him some rent regularly. As soon as he turned towards Benares, however, his relatives conveniently forgot their promise and thus Lahiri Mahashaya lost his landed property altogether. Was this a sign that for the future Yogiraj such material acquisitions were of a very secondary importance? Does it not show again the fact that riches very often are sources of troubles than an advantage in the path of spiritual progress? The spiritualist should also know that he cannot depend even upon the nearest relations who may only seek for the betrayal of his interests, that his only friend and relative is 'Atman', the Soul Supreme. All this, therefore, leads one's mind to non-attachment to material possessions.

But, after all, the Yogiraj had adopted a householder's life and he had duties to his wife and children. There also we find him dutiful in every aspect of family life. He earned money by honest efforts and would always fight shy of being a suitor for anything which was not his legitimate share. Thus he synthesized in himself the seemingly contradictory duties of a householder and a spiritual master.

Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya had two sons, Shri Shri Tinkari Lahiri born in 1863 and Shri Shri Dukari Lahiri born in 1865. Both attained to great spiritual eminence in their lives. The late Acharya Anandamohan Lahiri, the first biographer of the Yogiraj, was the son of Shri Shri Dukari Lahiri Mahashaya. Another biographer of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya is found in S. J. Abhoycharan Lahiri, son of Shri Shri Tinkari Lahiri Mahashaya.



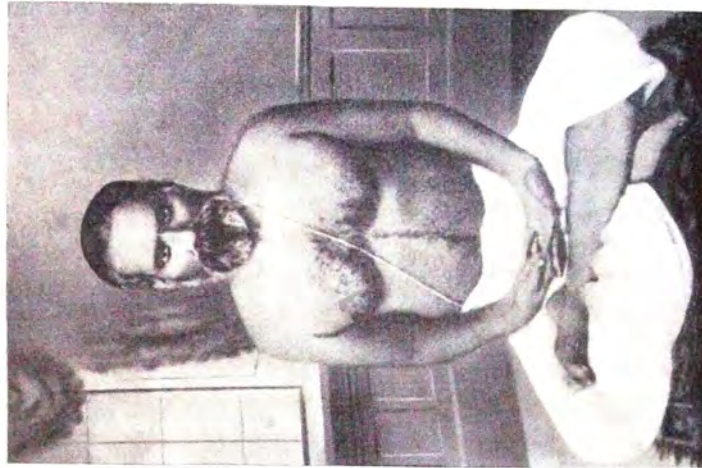
## CHAPTER—III

## Diksa or Initiation.

Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya lost his father on May 31, 1852 A.D, Jyaistha 20, Tuesday, 1259 B.S. A few years before that, on September 1, 1849<sup>1</sup>, he entered the Military Works Branch, P. W.D., Benares Division as a second clerk. The office at that time was a Gajipur. This department had the duty of supplying materials for the army and building roads. At this time Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya had also to teach Hindi, Urdu and Bengali to Engineers and other officers of his department. Throughout his service life he had a very good reputation for his honesty, efficiency, and sense of responsibility as witness the certificates from all the officers under whom he had worked. In his service life the Yogiraj was promoted up to the post of a Barrack-master, which was equivalent to that of the modern S. D. O. of the Public Works Department.

It was in 1861<sup>2</sup> that Lahiri Mahashaya got the order of transfer to Ranikhet, a forest region near Nainital in the Himalayas. He was then working in the office at Benares<sup>3</sup>. The Government wanted to establish a military cantonment at Ranikhet and for this

1. Sj. Anandamohan Lahiri Mahashaya gives us the approximate date of 1851. Here we have depended on the later account given by Sj. Abhoycharan Lahiri Mahashaya.
2. In 1868, according to Sj. Abhoycharan Lahiri Mahashaya who claims to have possessed some of the diaries and other documents of the Yogiraj.
3. According to Sj. Anandamohan, Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya was working as the 2nd clerk in the Asstt. Commanding Royal Engineering office at Danapur, just before his transfer to Ranikhet.



Shri Shri Dukari Lahiri Mahashaya  
( Younger son of the Yogiraj )



Shrimati Kashimoni Devi—Wife of the Yogiraj



Shri Shri Tinkari Lahiri Mahashaya  
( Eldest son of the Yogiraj )



purpose the P. W. D. Military Works Branch was ordered to clear off the jungles and to prepare a level ground. Captain G. Burney was appointed the Executive Engineer at the Ranikhet Division.

Seated on an altitude of about 6000' and surrounded on all sides by forest-girdled mountains, Ranikhet has actually been a favourite haunt for Yogis. When, however, the cantonment was going to be established, the Sadhus retired to lonelier places. A few of them remained, evidently in order to establish a contact divine with the mortal world, a contact which was to bless us anew with the occult mysteries of Yoga.

It was at Ranikhet that the most significant event in the life of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya took place. It was here that he received the Blessed touch of his Master under whose benign influence he became the greatest exponent of the Yoga Cult in modern times.

There are different and conflicting accounts regarding the meeting of the Yogiraj with his Master Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj, and his initiation. The conflict seems to be between the spirit which claims to start from a rational and scientific basis and rejects all improbable incidents as entirely unbelievable, and that which blindly accepts everything—facts and legends, however improbable and fantastic—as gospel truth the validity of which cannot simply be questioned. The truth seems to stand midway between these two extremes. While accepting on the whole the point of view of the so-called rationalist in weighing the available data so as to see how much of them can stand the test of reason, it is impossible while dealing with the life of a spiritualist par excellence to reject all that seems to be fantastic to the ordinary human understanding. For, in matters

of the Divine, reason fails and recoils at the vision of the Transcendent Glory. How can rationality be able to grasp that which is Supra-Rational by its very nature? It is for this reason that Brahman has been called "अवाङ्मनसगोचरम्" in the Upanisads. Reason on the mental plane of human consciousness reels and staggers until it is completely silenced in the presence of the Supra-mental Reality. It is not that everything about the Supreme Reality is unscientific, only because it is Intuition rather than Intellect that leads towards the Divine. The Supreme Reality is, on the other hand, the only perfect scientific phenomenon in the Universe. Only it does not always tally with our day-to-day science which is a very imperfect imitation of Super-Reason. The Divine is the greatest scientist as well as the greatest artist. It is the Supreme Reconciliation and Synthesis of all seeming opposites and therefore combines rationality with intuition. It is only here that there is no distinction between the 'Jnanin' and the 'Bhakta'. If, therefore, we come across some highly improbable events in the life divine of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya, we should not at once feel tempted to reject them outright. As the greatest portion of spirituality is Revealed Knowledge, we would perhaps do well to accept such accounts as might have come from some of the greatest disciples of the Yogiraj even where the facts are not available.

Although, however, there are differences in details of how exactly the Yogiraj received his first initiation, what is important for us and for the world too is to note that the initiation brought about a silent revolution (or evolution, if one likes) in the life of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya and paved the way for a regeneration of



human consciousness which must ultimately bring about a new world-order for a more spiritually enlightened age.

As the office-work at Ranikhet was not at all heavy, Shyamacharan had ample time to move about in the vast grandeur of the Himalayas. It was really a very beautiful place. On all sides there were vast mountain ranges through which the river Gaugus was flowing. At some distance there was the Dwarahat hill and just above it was the Dronagiri or Dhunagiri. The distance between Ranikhet and Dronagiri was only 15 miles.

One afternoon Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya went deep into the nearabout forest. The darkness of evening was fast descending. Shri Shyamacharan was absorbed in the beauty of Nature. Of a sudden came a call, "Shyamacharan, you've come!" Shyamacharan was highly surprised by hearing his name uttered by a Sadhu with whom he had no acquaintance. Doubts arose in his mind whether he had fallen in the hands of a cheat. But the Sadhu knew the thoughts of his mind and gradually gave him details of his ancestry. Doubts, however, still continued in the mind of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya. The holy man told him that he was not a deceiver and asked Shyamacharan whether he could remember if he came there before. Shri Shri Sahiri Mahashaya repeatedly answered in the negative. The Sannyasi drew Shyamacharan's attention to a few equipments of a mendicant which were lying aside in a cave, a Stick ('Danda') and Waterpot ('Kamandalu') a Tigerskin and Fireplace etc. But still Shri Shri Lahiri Baba could not recall his association with them. At last the mysterious Sadhu touched the head of Shyama-

charan, and lo! an electric current passed as it were through his entire body. The cave as well as the things there suddenly seemed to be very familiar to Shri Shyamacharan. The Holy Man narrated that Shri Shyamacharan was his disciple in his former birth when he used to meditate in this very cave, and the equipments were really his own. It was his Gurudeva who brought him here by his spiritual force. The telegram transferring Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya to Ranikhet was only a mistake on the part of the authorities. Within a week again he would be ordered back to his former place. "The Office was brought here for you, and not you for the Office", said the Great Saint.

That single Blessed touch was sufficient for Shyamacharan to revive all the wealth of his former spiritual glory. He did not have the mind now to come back to his household life and prayed earnestly for staying with his Master. But the Master did not agree, as Shyamacharan was the Man of Destiny to fulfil the mission of propagating the lost secrets of Yoga (as described in the Gita) to the world at large, particularly to the householders. Lord Shrikrisna revived the Yoga which was almost forgotten with the passage of time and gave it to Arjuna, his fit disciple. The age came for another revival and Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj let the mantle of the missionary fall on the shoulders of Shri Shyamacharan who was easily non-attached to mundane affairs. Besides, one of the most ancient exponents of Yoga was the great sage Shandilya in whose family Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya was born. The *Shandilya Upanisad* was even older than the *Yogasutra* of Patanjali. That was why Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj told the Yogiraj that the Kriyayoga in which



he was being initiated was actually a possession of their own.

Everyday after this fateful meeting Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya used to go to his great Gurudeva and spend some hours in his elevating company. He also used to take his meals prepared under the instructions of his Master. One day it so happened that Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj asked Shyamacharan to take a potful of castor oil as his only food and drink. There were of course hesitations in the mind of Shri Shyamacharan, but nevertheless he carried out the instruction and, according to the will of his Master lay down on the bank of the river Gaugus. This hill-stream had a very strong current which bore him far away. He was almost senseless due to an attack of Cholera as an aftermath of taking the Castor Oil.

The next day, Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj told Shyamacharan, that the purgation had a very wholesome effect on him, as it purged away all the physical ills that might stand in the way of his grand spiritual illumination. Now he was given a sumptuous repast of 'Luchi' and 'Halua'. The same evening was chosen for Shri Shyamacharan's initiation.

In the evening Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya had to be prepared for a miracle. Following his great Master, he entered a palace which seemed to be a material embodiment of a fairy-tale grandeur. There was an almost unbelievable magnificence of decoration, furniture, and servants male and female. There were also arrangements for a grand feast. The same night Shri Shyamacharan and another devotee were given initiation by Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj. One of the greatest spiritual dramas in modern times was thus enacted in complete



Mahavatar Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj



silence amidst the vast Himalayas, the land of the Yogis. Does it show the eternal truth that the greatest conquest, viz., the conquest of one's own self, always fights shy of the clamour of public gaze and is performed in golden silence ?

The next morning, however, to his utter surprise, Shri Shyamacharan found no trace of the gorgeous palace. In its place stood the good old cave of his Guruji before him. As Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj later explained, a great Yogi can at will take some atoms from the air and make them condensed into any shape he likes. Again, after its function was over, the shape would be dissolved "into air, into thin air" at his will. This may at first seem to be completely fictitious, but the Yogi knows that it is perfectly scientific. Everything in this world is made of atoms assuming a particular shape. The Yogi knows the secret of atoms as he is in unison with the "One Spirit" which "impels all" atoms and is one with each of them. Hence this Prospero-like trick is entirely at the disposal of a Yogi. The difference of Yoga from magic, however, is this that the former is all-powerful and devoid of any merely mundane purpose. Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya in his former birth had the desire to live in such a palace just for a day and it was now fulfilled by the grace of his Shriguru. Not that Shri Shyamacharan had any attachment to riches and gorgeousness. Such a desire would just enable him to come again here in this world, because complete lack of desires stops one's cycle of birth and death. But how could that be ? After all, Shri Shyamacharyan was the chosen pathmaker of Yoga in modern times. His desire was just like that of Shri Ramakrishna who sometimes used to take a great

quantity of sweets just in order to avoid a constant Samadhi.

That Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya had already achieved his spiritual consummation in his former birth and regained his mortal existence just in order to fulfil the Divine mission of propagating Yoga amongst the masses ("लोकसंग्रहार्थम्" as described in the *Gita*) is also proved by the fact that he learnt all the complicated processes of Rajayoga only within a week. Ordinarily consummation in Yoga is reached after a life-long Sadhana for many births. That consummation can only come to a man within seven days when his Sadhana has already been complete in some former existence.

As the *Gita* tells us :

"पूर्वाभ्यासेन तेनैव द्वियते ह्यवशोऽपि सः ।  
जिज्ञासुरपि योगस्य शब्दब्रह्मातिवर्तते ॥"

The practice of Yoga in former lives leads the Yogi automatically to a detachment from earthly pleasures. He can attain a greater success than is declared in the Vedas for virtuous deeds, even if he merely enquires into the secrets of Yoga. The Sadhana of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya was ready to bear fruit. And his latent faculties woke up at the Blessed Touch of his great Shriguru. Just after his Diksa he remained locked in Nirvikalpa Samadhi (the highest state of absorption in the Divine)<sup>1</sup> for seven days at a stretch.

We do not know the exact name of Shri Shyamacharan's spiritual Master, but he is generally referred to Babaji or the Father. Who else can be properly described

1. In this state the bodily functions are totally suspended and the consciousness of the Sadhaka has no separate existence whatsoever.



as a Father than one who leads the erring children of this earth into the life divine, the only life which is real and knows no death or sorrow? But Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj was also known as the 'Tryambaka Baba' (one who has three eyes, including the 'Jnana-Netra' or the eye of Divine Knowledge the seat of which, according to Yogis, is in between the eyebrows) or 'Shiva Baba' after the name of Lord Shiva who is regarded as 'Yogishwara' or the Master Yogi.

Next to nothing is known regarding the life of Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj, as Mahayogis like him are generally far off from the contact of ordinary mortals. Besides, it was not the custom of Shri Shri Babaji to stay for a long time in any particular place. After a few days he would generally order his devotees to move with their equipments to a new place with the watchwords "Dera danda uthao"—"raise the shelter and stick (to move with them elsewhere)". It is said that he was many hundred years old and initiated the great Shankaracharya in the Yoga cult. He was also the spiritual preceptor of Sadhu Haridas. But although Babaji Maharaj was very old, he possessed eternal youth, because after every hundred years or so he would renew his body with the 'Kayabyuha-Yoga', a process which can be practised only by the greatest Yogis. The disciples of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya who had seen him were all of the opinion that the physical features of Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj were almost like those of his favourite disciple Shri Shyamacharan. Only Shyamacharan looked much older than his Gurudeva who could almost be taken as the former's son. But, again, Babaji never appeared twice in the same form although his similarity with his

disciple was a common feature in every case. This perhaps leads towards the conclusion that for Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj who is all spirit, and can assume any form at will, bodily considerations are entirely beside the point and therefore he would just assume a form similar to his beloved Shyamacharan when he would have to appear before the disciples of Shri Shri Lahiri Baba. Besides, the devotees of Shri Shyamacharan had a great devotion to their Gurudeva, and as such they would very much like and revere the appearance of their Paramagurudeva (the guru of Shri Gurudeva) in a form similar to that of their beloved Master. There might have been another reason for the different forms which Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj assumed at different times. It also helped to keep his physical identity hidden from the view of others.

Shri Shyamacharan had been the witness of a few interesting events at the Dronagiri. It is said that the Pandavas of the *Mahabharata* lived here for some time with their preceptor Dronacharya after whose name the place is so called. There was a temple on the Dronagiri, some four or five miles away from the cave of Shri Shyamacharan. The temple was visited every midnight by a sadhu with a halo of resplendent light round his figure which could be seen from a great distance. The mysterious man would stay a little within the temple and then go away. Nobody would disturb him at that time by going to the temple. Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj described him as Shri Ashwatthama, son of Shri Dronacharya of the *Mahabharata*.<sup>1</sup>

1. Here it should be noted in passing that Ashwatthama is one of those who have been gifted with a never-ending life.