

Dronagiri of course was full of various medicinal plants, but apart from that, if any diseased man would take shelter on the hill visited by Shri Ashwatthama, depending solely on his grace, he would really be cured of his indisposition. It so happened that a hungry disciple of Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj one day took some poisonous fruits by mistake. Babaji Maharaj had already cautioned many of his disciples against that fruit. However, in the absence of Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj, Shri Shyamacharan and his spiritual companions were at first at a loss as to what to do. The deadly poison had its effect on the man in the form of Cholera and made him completely disfigured. After much deliberation they were suddenly reminded of the Grace of Ashwatthama as related by Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj himself. They carried the patient along and laid him down on the road leading to the temple. The next day the man came back completely recovered and narrated his experience. At midnight the great Sadhu with the halo of divine light came and on seeing him on the road, thundered "Who are you"? After that he just kicked the patient twice which made him fall down on a much lower surface of the hill. Strangely enough, however, the diseased man felt renovated and free from disease as soon as he fell down. After this he could only hear the sounds of opening and closing the temple door. Early at dawn he could also notice the halo again taking its leave from the hill.

Many of the disciples of Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj were highly advanced Yogis and could utilise their prowess for the good of others when it became essential. On one occasion Shri Shyamacharan and some of his spiritual brothers went to the opposite banks of

the river nearby. At that time the hill-stream did not have much water and as such they could easily cross it walking. On their return journey, however, they found the stream in flow-tide with a very strong current. What could they do now? Of a sudden, one of the foremost disciples of Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj took off his turban which was  $10\frac{1}{2}$  yards long. There were seven persons in the company. He just tied seven knots in the turban, threw it into the river and asked his brothers to keep tight each to a single knot. He himself infused strength in the turban so that it might easily be kept afloat. Thus, with the help of the turban all were safe on the other side of the river. This was just an example of the immense power reached by the Yogis in India. Such miraculous power is called 'Bibhuti' which is generally sub-divided into eight groups:— 'Anima' or the power of making oneself as small as an atom; 'Laghima' or the power of becoming lighter than air; 'Byapti' or the power of spreading oneself over the entire Universe; 'Prakamya' or the power to acquire anything at the mere wish; 'Mahima' or the power to assume any shape; 'Ishitwa' or the control over all beings of the Universe; 'Bashitwa' or the power to move everywhere; and 'Kamavasayita' or the power to stay at any place. But although these Bibhutis come automatically to a Sadhaka as he advances in his Sadhana, misuse of them may lead him far from the goal which is complete Self-Realization. The proper attitude towards these powers should be, as the sages tell us, neither that of pride nor that of hatred. They should be accepted in all humility as the kind gifts of God to one who takes shelter under His Grace.

Although the Kriyayoga has been made simple

and rather easily available through the grace of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya, Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj would sometimes set very hard tests before initiating one into the path. Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya would often tell his own disciples incidents from the life of his great Master showing thereby the rareness of the gift with which they had been blessed. One should not, therefore, neglect such a rare possession due to idleness and indecision. A very old Sannyasi, as the Yogiraj related, lived for a long time near the cave of Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj and served his disciples with the expectation to receive initiation from him. One day he prayed very earnestly for Diksa. When Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj did not agree, the old man resolved to die unless he would get it. The Great Babaji just said, "Then die, if life has become so cheap for you". The Sannyasi actually jumped from the hills and died. The Gracious Babaji Maharaj then took up his body, revived him by the power of his Yoga and gave him initiation in his new life.

As a matter of fact Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj was the perfect pattern of greatness which is always "वज्रादपि कठोराणि, मृदूनि कुसुमादपि", i. e., hard and resolute like thunder and at the same time as soft at heart as a delicate flower. His cruelty or callousness was just another name for his grace, for whenever he tested a man it was only for the latter's well-being. This explains his rudeness sometimes on his disciples in beating them with the burning brands of his holy fire. In general, however, Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj was always amiable and full of humour.

A rich businessman once invited Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj to grace his house by attending a dinner on

the occasion of a festival. Babaji Maharaj accepted his invitation and told him that he would go with Shri Shyamacharan rather early and would take his meal before all others. On the fixed date he reached there with Shri Shyamacharan and was received very cordially by the householder. But at the dinner came a miracle. The holy man devoured up all the delicacies arranged for the guests and demanded for more. The businessman was at his wit's end. Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya prayed to his Shriguru to spare the man. Babaji replied that the man had great pride for his riches although his resources were limited, as all human resources must necessarily be.

However, the blessed days for Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya in company with his Gurudeva were coming to a close. The orders for his transfer came. Before his departure he prayed to his Master for relaxing the rigour in granting initiation in the Kriya. He was for giving it to anybody with earnestness, however imperfect he might be. The Master appreciated his disciple's sympathy with the suffering humanity and granted his prayer. He also received the permission to permit others to give initiation.

Before parting from his preceptor Shri Shyamacharan was overwhelmed with grief, but Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj consoled him by saying that he would give 'Darshan' to Shri Shyamacharan whenever he would pray to him. This divine promise, however, gave rise to a very awkward situation later on. While on his way back to Ranikhet Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya halted at the house of a gentleman. Some Bengalee gentlemen there expressed their doubt as to

whether really holy men are available in modern times. Naturally, Shri Shri Lahiri Baba protested and told them that he could show them one of the greatest Sadhus. The curiosity of everybody present was aroused at this and they pressed Shri Shyamacharan for the miraculous show. What could Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya do? He had to yield to their pressure and he started meditation in a closed room of the house with nobody present by his side. Very soon Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj appeared in a splendid halo of light. He was true to his promise. But at the same time he sternly rebuked Shri Shyamacharan for calling him on such a flimsy ground for sheer fun and said that henceforward he would not always appear at his disciple's request. Only when he himself would feel it necessary for Shri Shyamacharan, he would grace him with a visit. However, at the earnest request of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya he gave Darshan to those waiting outside the room and took 'Halua' for their satisfaction distributing 'prasad' amongst them.

After this incident Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj sometimes visited his disciple of his own accord. The great disciples of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya, too, were sometimes graced with his Darshan and given valuable instructions at significant moments in their lives.

The holy communion between Shri Shyamacharan and his great Gurudeva is, however, a lofty spiritual drama which passes the comprehension of us, ordinary mortals. For a greater realisation of that Divine Comedy one should progress along their path with an untiring devotion and an unflinching faith in their Grace. Then and then alone the Kindly Light will dawn upon one, the light that upholds and illumines, raises and supports.

## CHAPTER IV

### As an 'Acharya'<sup>1</sup>

While still at Ranikhet, Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya initiated a few Sadhus in Kriyayoga under the instructions from his Gurudeva. On coming back to the plains, his first disciple was a garland-maker named Yogi who used to sell flowers outside the temple of Lord Kedareshwara near about the Narada Ghat.<sup>2</sup> The next disciple was a cobbler named Bhagavandas (Servant of the Lord!). This shows that Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya made no distinction of caste, creed, and community in giving initiation. He was really the "भावप्राही जनार्दनः" (the Lord who looks into the heart alone) who could enter into the inmost corner of the human heart and therefore anybody with sincerity and devotion would receive the Grace of Initiation from him, while others would have to be disappointed in spite of their learning and culture and riches. Very often it happened that a so-called educated gentleman would have to wait for years for receiving initiation from him. Some had to go entirely disappointed. This, of course, does not mean that anybody would be

1. Preceptor.

2. Is it significant that the name of the flower-dealer was Yogi and the name of the Ghat was after Narada the great devotee of the Lord? Notice the place, too, where he used to take his seat. It was in the vicinity of a temple of Lord Shiva, the greatest exponent of Yoga.

deprived of his Grace. His heart was large enough to fell for the well-being of every mortal. Only, the rarest possession of Kriyayoga could not be entrusted in utterly anti-divine hands. This was for the good of the men themselves. Shri Shyamacharan's rejection in regard to initiation would often transform a sinner into a great devotee and then the Master was all Grace to him.

Even Muslims and men of other communities were not deprived of initiation. Thus Abdul Gafur was a highly advanced disciple of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya and was given the right to initiate others.

Shri Shyamacharan's sympathy with the poor and the down-trodden was immense. Instead of taking anything from them in the shape of money and other presentations, he would rather help them from his own pocket. To receive any material presents, whether from the rich or from the poor, was generally against the principle of the Yogiraj. 'Pratigraha' or receiving gifts was almost a forbidden thing in his family itself and Shri Shyamacharan generally followed this tradition with scrupulous care. He would only take Rupees five at the time of initiating anybody, as he was instructed to do so by Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj. This custom too originated from the fact that a man generally values something only when he has to pay for it. That the divine Kriyayoga should not be misused in the hands of ordinary mortals was the motive force behind the introduction of this custom. Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya sent these sums to his Gurudeva. Even now-a-days the amount of money thus received is spent in some noble spiritual cause. For the poor and the unable disciple the Yogiraj often paid this 'Gurudaksina'

too himself. Besides, this spiritual aristocrat was the real exponent of democracy in its truest form which depends not on quantity but on the quality of the heart. The poor and uneducated disciples of the Yogiraj were equally treated by him with the rich and many of them were regarded and honoured as advanced Yogis. Thus the first disciple of Shri Shyamacharan at Danapur was an ordinary peon named Brinda Bhakat. Although without academic education, Brinda had attained such a direct realisation of the Infinite that all knowledge was revealed to him through Divine Grace. Once he surprised an assembly of learned scholars at the place of a Zamindar at Bankipore by settling some intricate spiritual disputes among them in very simple words and was rewarded by the landlord. Brinda explained that Yoga embraces all Sadhana within itself. Whenever there is a secret mystery in any Sadhana, the theory of Yoga has been involved. Thus even in the six systems of philosophy, different paths have not been advocated, but only the six different stages of the same Yoga.

Once it so happened that a gentleman who had received initiation from the Yogiraj some time back, was pressing him for the grace of second initiation. Just at that moment reached Brinda in the presence of his Gurudeva. The Master asked him, "Well, Brinda, would you like to have the second initiation?" "Oh, no, Sir," Brinda appealed to his Master, "the very first initiation received from you has so much overwhelmed me that I find it difficult to deliver letters." "Brinda is floating in the Ocean of Sachchidananda", \* said the Yogiraj.

\* Eternal Existence, Supreme Consciousness and Bliss.

Another incident has come down to us which reveals the depth of tenderness hidden within the heart of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya. The Maharaja of some place, who was a disciple of the Yogiraj, once took him to his house and made all arrangements for his comfort. But Shri Shri Lahiri Baba showed himself rather fastidious in his taste. There was an extremely poor man nearby who earnestly requested the Yogiraj to grace his cottage with his Lotus Feet. Lahiri Mahashaya agreed. On arriving there, however, he found that the man prepared a fish curry for him with great devotion. Now the Yogiraj was a complete vegetarian. But he found that if he would not take the curry, it would not be possible for his devotee at that moment to gather and prepare something else for him. He, therefore, took rice with the same fish curry and slept at the house for some time. On his return, the Maharaja who was already informed of this through his attendants asked Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya about the reason for this differential treatment. He used to arrange high-quality dishes for his Gurudeva and yet the Master would not seem to be satisfied. The Yogiraj, however, replied that behind all his costly arrangements there was always a sense of pride which really caused discomfort to the Master. The poor devotee, on the other hand, was all humility and simplicity before his Master. Everything, therefore, tasted sweet in his house.

It is not that, however, Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya looked only to the poor and his door was closed for the rich; for the rich too might have honesty, simplicity and devotion. As a matter of fact the Grace of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya was showered upon

all—high and low, mean and elevated, the rich and the poor. Devotion was to him the only passport to the Divine and whosoever had even a modest share of it was graced by him in a concrete form. Thus, Maharaja Ishwarinarayan Sinha of Benares was one of the devoted disciples of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya. The Maharaja of Khetri was another.

The unbounded sympathy of the Yogiraj did not keep itself circumscribed within the human world alone. It was also extended to the birds and beasts and all things of the Universe. It was Lahiri Mahashaya who moved the Government against shooting down pigeons living happily in the palaces on the bank of the Ganga at Benares, and stopped the cruel practice for ever.

The Yogiraj was not in favour of indiscriminate propaganda for Kriyayoga. He would rather ask his disciples to go on silently with their Sadhana and a time would come, according to him, when the Yoga would be accepted all over the world. In an age when we always tend to talk big and do nothing, it is easily conceivable how wholesome his instruction really is. Indeed, propaganda devoid of the surest basis of sincere action leaves no lasting effect on the human mind. Such propaganda, instead of doing good to people, often makes them misunderstand the very spirit of Sadhana. Silent work, on the other hand, produces such strength and conviction in the Sadhaka that he becomes sure of winning his way even through the heaviest odds. Spiritual consummation must first be achieved in one's own life, and then and then alone it can be spread throughout the world. The prophecy of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya, however, on the spreading and propagation of the Kriyayoga has proved true in modern times. Already the message of the

Yogiraj has reached America and Europe through Paramhansa Yogananda, the great disciple of Shrimat Swami Shri Yuktेश्वर Giriji Maharaj who was one of the foremost disciples of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya.

The Yogiraj would generally instruct his devotees not to forsake their normal social and religious customs. Persons who had already been initiated by their family preceptors could also practise their particular Sadhana along with Kriyayoga. A farsighted genius as he was, Lahiri Baba did not want to disturb the normal tenour of life so long as it does not stand in the way of progress.

Shri Shri Lahiri Baba would normally ask his disciples to marry at the proper age and adopt the household life, as, for most people, a virtuous married life leads gradually to non-attachment. He was, however, ready to make exception for those who had an overwhelming desire for adopting the life of a renunciate. Swami Pranavananda Giriji Maharaj was an instance in point.

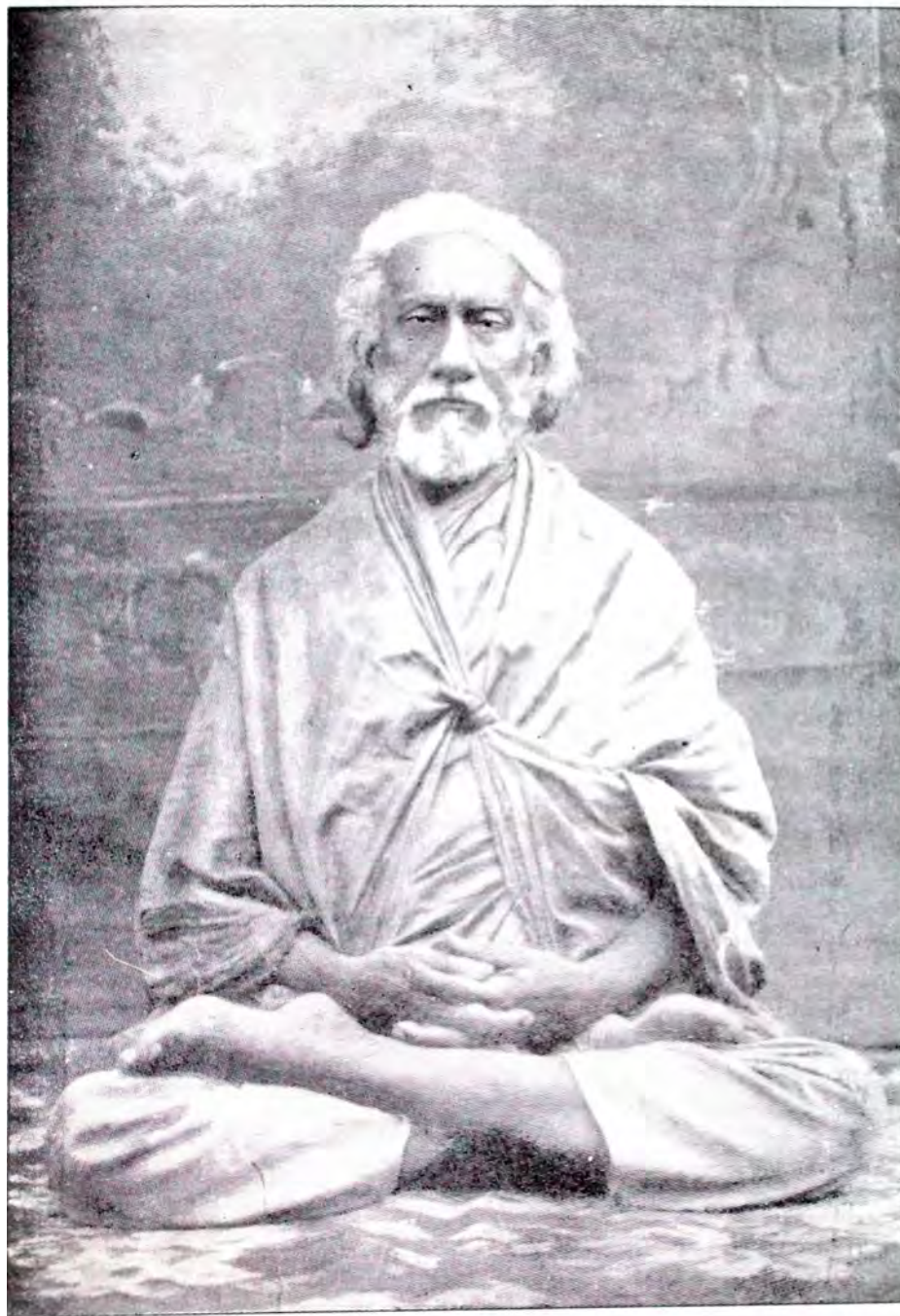
The disciples of the Yogiraj who imbibed the real spirit of his teachings included his two sons, the Venerable Tinkari Lahiri and Dukari Lahiri Mahashayas, Shrimat Swami Shri Yuktेश्वर Giriji Maharaj of Serampore, Shrimat Swami Pranavananda Giriji Maharaj, Shrimat Keshavananda Avadhut, Hansa Swami Kevalanandaji Maharaj (Shri Shri Shastri Mahashaya), Acharya Shrimat Panchanan Bhattacharya Mahashaya, Acharya Shrimat Bhupendranath Sanyal Mahashaya, Shrimat Ramdayal Majumdar Mahashaya (Dayal Maharaj), Shrimat Mahadev Prasadji and other highly advanced Yogis. Shrimat Bhupendranath Sanyal

Mahashaya attained his Mahasamadhi a few years ago. His annotations on the *Gita*, following the Yogic interpretation of his Master, is an elevating scripture to the spiritualists.

Judged from the point of view of the dissemination of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya's Sadhana and ideals amongst the masses, Shrimat Swami Shri Yuktेश्वर Giriji Maharaj of Serampore, Bengal, was the main-spring and pillar of the Lahiri Empire. It was he who, with the help of his disciple Yogishwar Shrimat Shri Shri Matilal Thakur who was a constructive genius of the highest order, established the Satsanga Sabha' for the first time. He was called the 'Jnanavatar' due to his great researches in the spiritual field.

It was at the Kumbhamela\* at Prayag (Allahabad) that Shri Yuktेश्वर met Babaji for the first time. Shri Yuktेश्वर did not as yet adopt the life of a Sannyasi, although his wife and only daughter were both dead. He heard somebody calling him as Swamiji instead of by his real name Priyanath. He was surprised and went to the Young Sadhu who was calling him. The Sadhu was no other than the great Babaji Maharaj himself. This fact was however known by Shri Yuktेश्वर much later when he met his Master Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya. Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj conferred the title of Swamiji on Priyanath and asked him to write a book showing the underlying unity in the religions of the East and West. He promised to see him again when the book would be finished. He also sent a symbolic message through Shri Yuktेश्वर to his great

\* A vast religious congregation of pilgrims and holy men every third year in India symbolising the flow of nectar or divine consciousness. Every twelfth year is a year for 'Purnakumbha' or 'full pitcher' of nectar.



Jnanavatar Shrimat Swami Shri Yukteshwar Giri Maharaj

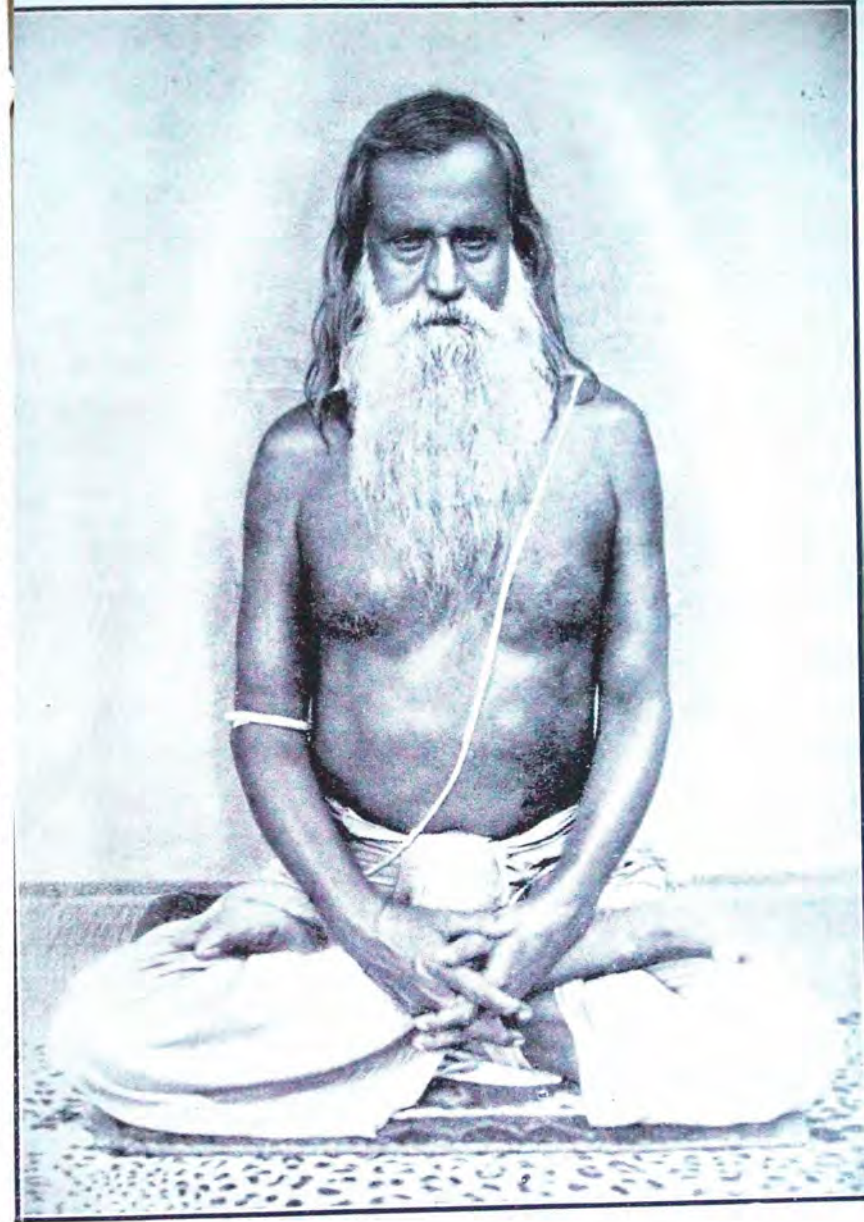
disciple the Yogiraj, of which we shall speak later on. It was thus with the blessings of Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj that Shri Yukteshwar wrote the book *The Holy Science* or *Kaibalyadarshanam*. The day on which the book was finished, a strange incident happened. Shri Yukteshwar was going to take his bath in the Ganga, and lo ! he found Babaji Maharaj himself standing beneath a tree. He at once laid himself prostrate before the Great Master and wanted to take him home. Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj would not agree. The shade of the tree, he said, was better for a Sannyasi like him. Shri Shri Yukteshwar Giri Maharaj then appealed to him to kindly wait there for a few minutes. With great hurry he brought some sweets and fruits for Babaji Maharaj. But, alas, nobody could be seen there. Shri Yukteshwar asked many people nearby, but they did not see anybody with the likeness of Shri Shri Babaji. At this Shri Yukteshwar felt mortified. Later on, at the residence of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya at Benares, Shri Yukteshwar was sitting at the feet of his Master. Of a sudden, Babaji Maharaj appeared. At once Lahiri Baba rose and offered Pranams at his Lotus Feet. Shri Yukteshwar, however, did neither rise nor show any honour to the Great Babaji. The Yogiraj expressed his surprise at this seemingly strange behaviour of Shri Yukteshwar. But Shri Shri Babaji Maharaj explained that Shri Yukteshwar was enraged against him as he could not find him at the treeshade at Serampore on coming back with sweets. This, however, as the great Babaji explained, was all the fault of Shri Yukteshwar himself. Babaji was there all the time. But Shri Yukteshwar had lost the concentration of his mind due to extreme hurry and that was the reason why he was unable to see the divine figure of Shri Shri

Babaji Maharaj. Shri Yuktेशwar felt ashamed at this and asked pardon from the Master of his Master.

Shrimat Swami Shri Yuktेशwar Giriji Maharaj also brought about an edition of the *Shrimadbhagavadgita*, following the spiritual interpretation of his Master. Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya himself revised the book and gave his blessings.

Shrimat Matilal Mukhopadhyaya was one of the first disciples of Shri Yuktेशwar and had received the order of Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya to be an Acharya when the great Yogiraj was no more in his human frame. Shri Yuktेशwar was testing his disciple. There were many waiting to be initiated by Shrimat Matilal Thakur. But he did not as yet have any instructions from his Master to that effect. For many days the Master seemed to be so indifferent towards him. This seeming unkindness pained the disciple and he constantly prayed to Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya so that his Gurudeva might again be kind to him. One night Shrimat Matilal was meditating in a closed room at Kidderpore where he was an employee of the Kidderpore shipyard. Suddenly the divine figure of Shri Shri Lahiri Baba appeared amidst resplendent light, gave him his blessings, and initiated him as an Acharya. After this incident when Shrimat Matilal met his Gurudeva at his call, Shri Yuktेशwar was highly pleased at this great change in his disciple and explained the Grace showered upon him by the Yogiraj. The Master knew it all. He was merely testing his disciple. Now he became very glad at his success and blessed him from the heart of his heart.

The life of Yogishwar Shrimat Matilal Thakur



Yogishwar Shri Shri Matilal Thakur  
Advent : Pous 15, 1273 B.S.  
Mahasamadhi : Ashwin 23, 1352 B.S.



(Shri Shri Sachchidananda Deva) reveals before us an astounding spiritual personality fit to be a deep subject of study for any spiritual seeker. He was a householder with an ingrained spiritual tendency from his very birth. While serving at Burma he came in contact with the 'Fungi' Sadhus there. Later on he also became intimately connected with the religion of the Shikhs and the theosophists. A great turning point came into his life when he lost his first child, a lovely son, within a year of his birth. Life lost its savour for him. The impermanence of life was so deeply impressed on his heart that he became the most earnest seeker of the life eternal, the life divine. At such a time he was initiated into Kriyayoga by Shrimat Swami Shri Yuktishwar Giri Maharaaj. He was then serving at Kidderpore. Very soon he so deeply applied himself to the organisation of the 'Satsanga Sabha' under the instructions from his Master and made his colleagues and friends so inspired that he drew the appreciation of his Gurudeva as "Kidderpore is my right hand". Once while going to office, he received in his heart a call from the Divine to work for the helpless and suffering humanity. The urge for responding to the call became so insistent that he was compelled to come back from the Serampore Railway Station carrying along a man attacked with blood-dysentery in his arms. The number of maimed and diseased people under his care gradually increased and at last he established the 'Bhaktashram', a chaity home which he supported by begging alms from door to door. A time came when he had to leave his office and dedicate himself entirely to the service of the Divine. A few years passed, and then came another great change in the life of Shrimat Matilal Thakur. Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya again

appeared before him in his divine self and commanded him to establish 'Shrigurudham'. Accordingly, in Chaitra, 1325 B.S.\*, 'Shrigurudham (Yogada Satsanga)' was established at Serampore. The Bhaktashram was now handed over to Shrimat Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj, a great disciple of Shri Ramakrishna and the founder of the Shri Ramakrishna Vedanta Society. So long Shrimat Matilal has been ministering mainly to the physical debilities of suffering humanity. Now he devoted himself entirely to the spiritual needs, which, when fulfilled, make for an all-round development of the human personality. Besides, the practice of Kriyayoga, even in its easier form as propagated by Shri Shri Lahiri Mahashaya, is too much for the majority of ordinary mortals. They must be given a force in the human shape before which they can surrender and thus come gradually to the path of Sadhana. It is Shriguru who is that Force in its highest form. The establishment of Shrigurudham and its many branches all over West Bengal by Shri Shri Matilal Thakur has thus ushered in a new era in the evolution and propagation of Kriyayoga, and the tradition is being gloriously carried on by Yogiguru Shrimat Brahmachari Anilanandaji Maharaj, the greatest disciple of Yogishwar Shri Shri Matilal Thakur and an embodiment of Infinite Power and Infinite Grace. Shrimat Anilanda has established hundreds of centres for propagating the ideal of Shrigurudham and his magnetic spiritual personality has attracted millions to take shelter in his grace. He has also established 'Shrigurumandir' (Shriguru Temple) at Shrigurudham premises at Serampore where images of the Yogiraj, Shri Yuktishwar and Shrimat Matilal Thakur have been installed in 1961. Brahmachari

\* Shrigurudham was established in A. D. 1919