

of the West is situated! Later I would undoubtedly and unequivocally recommend your name as my successor! Now stay with me only, O celibate!”

Avadhūtājī said, “Lord, I am on a circumambulation at present and intend to go ahead in a couple of days, So it’s not possible for me just now to stay over here with you. O Lord, is it possible that this Avadhūta, who will not be allured by even the position of Indra, the king of Gods, would be attracted to your seat! Your seat (piṭha in Sanskrit) has the same value to this Avadhūta as a handful of “piṭha” which in Marāṭhī means ‘flour!’ I am not going to be tempted by this offer of the seat! I don’t have such an ambition! My only desire is to be free from birth and death cycle! Please pardon me!” He wanted to take his leave. H.H. Śrī Śaṅkarācāryājī said, “When will you come again?” Avadhūtājī said, “I’ll surely come for your ‘darśana’, a homage, before the end!” And surely did Avadhūta meet H.H. Śaṅkarācāryājī at Surat. That was shortly before the Head of Dwārakā Śāradāpiṭha breathed his last! A Sanskrit verse states that meaning follows the words of a great saint, which means whatever a great saint says, comes true!

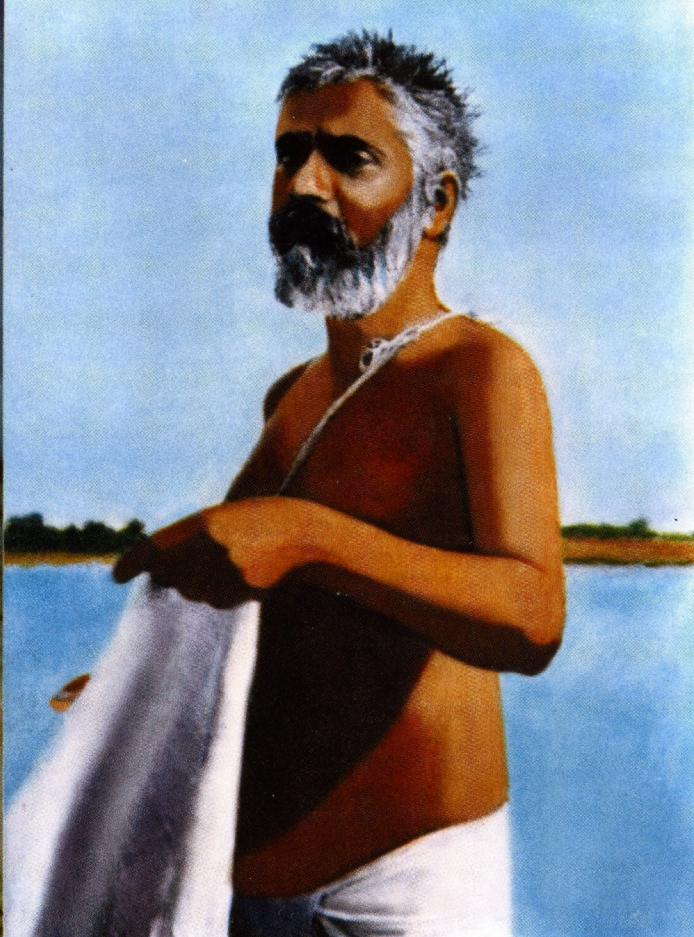
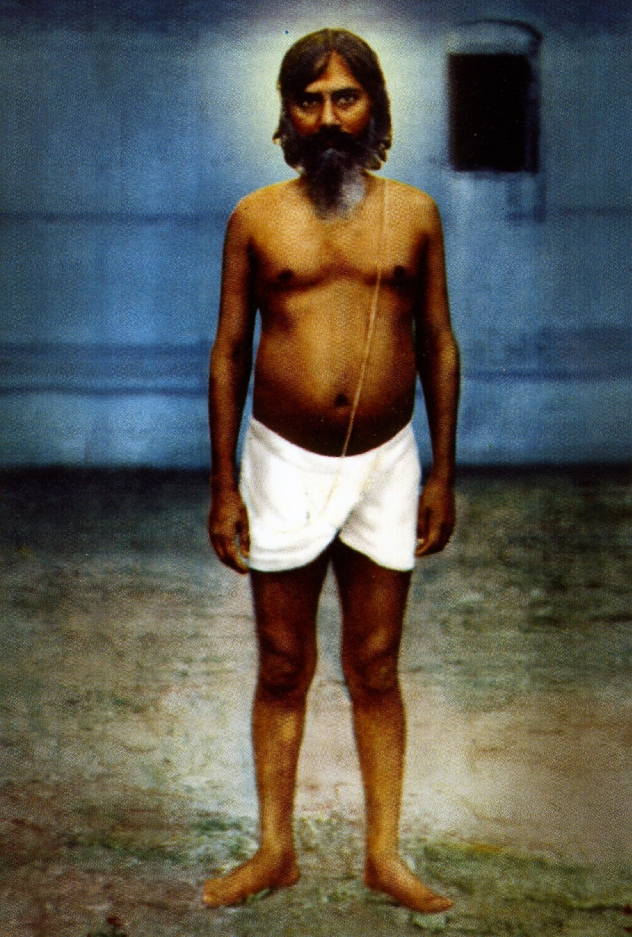
Śrī Avadhūtājī was asked to go to Guñja to see Gaṇḍā Mahārāja before he set out for circumambulation of the Narmadā and he met at the end H.H. Śrī Śaṅkarācāryājī, the highest priest of Śāradāpiṭha of Dwārakā! His undertaking of this pilgrimage was to fulfil his anuṣṭhāna, a religious ceremony of a definite nature

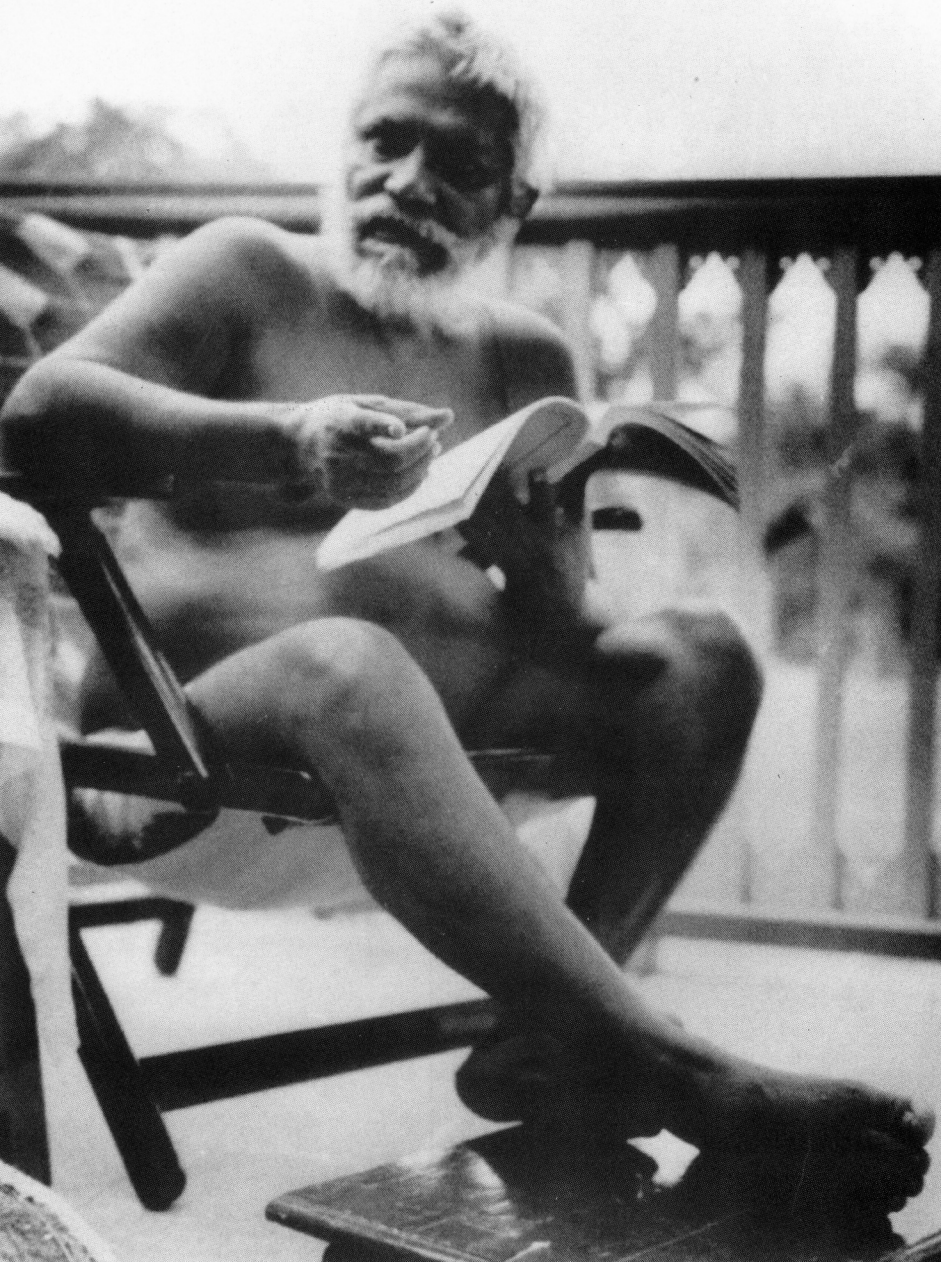
and at the end he came out as purified gold by setting aside the most coveted offer of H.H. Śrī Candrasekharajī Śaṅkarācārya! A befitting end to an ascetic assignment completed in 108 days which is an auspicious figure too! It is very difficult for an individual to rise above worldly attractions and it takes great determination and a highly disciplined soul to decline such an offer! This is a test for real asceticism and Śrī Avadhūta went through the ordeal easily and unaffectedly!

Avadhūta, as we shall see later in detail, is one who throws off attractions as well as shackles, Vaḷāme, by his very name, was Raṅga which means 'Colour' or attachment and so on, but this Raṅga though moving around in the world full of attachments, raised himself to the exalted position of an Avadhūta! a true renouncer. Let us get strength to overcome shackles and allurements of life around by chanting his name.

Avadhūtacintana Śrīgurudevadatta!







CHAPTER V

REVEREND RAṄGA AVADHŪTA'S LITERARY WORKS

Literature shapes itself through words. Words are first spoken and later written. Spoken words show the qualities of head and heart of the speaker. The speaker may be interested in himself, materially and he may give birth to literature of trade and commerce, of technology or of worldly pursuits of the man in the street. Though this is literature, it does not satisfy cravings of the heart! Hence there is another area that covers literature, that affects the heart. Emotions are garbed in words, prose or verse. The latter is a better vehicle to express aspirations, cravings, experiences of joy and sorrow, love and sympathy and their complex admixture. Thus we have poems and plays, novels and narrations and the like. Devotional expressions take the form of prayer songs, rhythmical cantoes, lyrical lines.

Heart is the centre of literary outbursts. The pre-historic beings saw the shining sun, the flowing rivers, the blue skies and the falling rains. So their expressions centered round pointing out what these meant to them. The sun brought day-light and removed fear of the hidden forces, the earth gave them shelter and so on. The early literature was devotional in praise of elements of Nature.

Sage Vālmikī̄ was touched by the incident he saw wherein one of the birds was wounded with the hunter's arrow and the intensity of emotions gave birth to a fine epic, the Rāmāyaṇa. The vedic hymns are full of excellent poetry as a prayer to the Sun or the God of rains and so on. Rev. Avadhūtājī̄ had an assignment given by Śrī Gāṇḍā Mahārāja. It was a task of pleasure for Śrī Pāṇḍuraṅga as the work contained prayers to his own Guru and he was too pleased to take it up. Again it was an easy job for him.

1. DATTANĀMA SMARAṆA

OR

CHANTING NAMES OF LORD DATTĀTREYA

Rev. Raṅga Avadhūtājī̄'s literary activities thus had its roots in devotion to Datta and fidelity to Swāmī Mahārāja. When he came to Nāreśvara, he wrote verse which was rendered into a prosodical form called Bhujāṅga Prayāta so called because lines move in a zig-zag way in the style of a Bhujāṅga or a serpent. Rev. Avadhūtājī̄ was instructed to reside in Gujarat and so he was to spread devotional atmosphere in Gujarat. As language is a very useful tool, he started writing in Gujarātī̄ rather than in Sanskrit, though he was an erudite scholar of Sanskrit.

One important point to be noted about Dattanāma Smaraṇa is that it is not only a prayer of 108 verses but also a work in which fine advice for worldly people is found in every verse. It is on par with the famous

stanzas in Marāṭhī by Rāmadāsa Swāmī, the preacher and guide of Cātrapati Śivājī. These verses are known as 'Manāce Śloka' as 'mana' the reader is asked to keep in mind what should be done on a particular occasion or how should one pass daily life. Let us take an illustration from 'Manāce Śloka'.

‘Prabhāte mani Rāma Cintita jāvā,
puḍhen vaikhari Rāma Ādhina Vadāvā;
Sadācara hā thora soḍum naye to,
jagim tocito mānavi dhanya hoto’.

‘One should think of Lord Rāma at dawn; next speech should utter names of Rāma before doing other things. One should not give up being doer of good things as it brings greatness; such a man is blessed in life’. These verses of Rāmadāsa Swāmī are very popular even today and in most of the families, children are made to learn them by heart and repeat them in the morning or in the evening when the lamp is kindled before the deity.

Among these verses of Dattanāma Smaraṇa, one is very prominent and was much liked and repeated by Rev. Raṅga Avadhūta himself. The line forms the burden of stanzas and reads as ‘Śvāse Śvāse Dattanāma Smarātman’, Oh Mind! Repeat the name of Datta with every breath. As breath represents life and life exists for an individual only till he breathes, these verses ask a human being to repeat the name of Datta every moment

and at all times and places. In fact, whatever one does, reciting a prayer to Datta or uttering names of Datta should precede every action whether mental or manual. The Gītā has put this in the following words.

‘Man-manā Bhava Mad-bhakto
Madyājī Mām Namaskuru’

(Gītā. IX-34)

This could be rendered as: Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, be devoted to Me, do all things for Me as all deeds should be sacrificial and finally bow down to Me.

Thus the aphorism or a pithy advice given by Avadhūtājī in ‘Śvāse Śvāse Dattanāma Smarātman’ is useful for worldly ends and also for spiritual heights. The individual soul should be one with the universal one even while having every breath!

2. ŚRĪ GURULĪLAMṚTA

This is the most shining gem in the necklace of Rev. Raṅga Avadhūtājī’s compositions. It has about nineteen thousand rhythmic lines flowing into Dohra channels! It contains a number of Bhajans and prayer songs of eminent devotional value strung as glittering gems of the necklace of three volumes. This composition is not only a piece of religious narrations but also of philosophical expositions and literary expressions par excellence. The three volumes represent Gñāna, Karma

and Upāsanā branches rolled into one as the Trinity of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa appearing one as Śrī Datta. One interesting thing was that the hand had worked so continuously and over a period of time that the end saw the fingers refusing to function due to overuse! And every work was as beautiful as a pearl and so the job was so finished that it could go straight to printing! A Sanskrit verse says:

‘Kriyāsiddhissatve bhavati mahatām nopakarṇe.’

‘Success in the assignments of the great lies in their individual ability and not on equipment.’

A big edifice needs a wide base. The writer has to get properly equipped. For writing a religious book of devotion, one has to get devotionally equipped. Devotion sprouts from heart and soul and so one has to get his soul purified. Gāndhījī, too, observed fast to purify his self. Rev. Raṅga decided to get purification of heart by taking up a short devotional assignment. He took up the job of rendering into Gujarātī his Guru Swāmī Śrī Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī’s work ‘Sapta Satī Guru-Caritra’ (The deeds of Śrī Guru in seven hundred stanzas) which is in Marāṭhī. Rev. Raṅga has said, ‘ek bhakti thī prerita lekhane thayo ā udyukta; kevala hr̥daśuddhi māṭe bhāṭa hum̐ to Śrī Guruno’.

“I am doing this writing, being inspired by devotion only. This is for purification of heart only, I’m a bard of Śrī Guru”. In this Rev. Raṅga followed the same prosody as one employed in Marāṭhī.

Avadhūtājī wanted to compose Śrī Gurulīlāmṛta in Sanskrit but his Guru instructed him to do so in Gujarātī . Thus he could not even employ the original Marāṭhī prosody and so selected ‘Doharā’ for this volume!

The first volume of ‘Śrī Gurulīlāmṛta’ deals with the Dattātreya incarnation, a trinity of the three Gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa respectively. The spouses of this trinity happened to know about *Anasūyā’s devotion and fidelity to her husband. These three Goddesses out of jealousy forced their spouses, the three deities to go and humiliate Anasūyā by an arduous test. They came to humiliate and were turned into children by Anasūyā’s penance!

This part also contains the advice and preachings of Śrī Dattātreya to King Sahasrārjuna or Kārtavīrya, King Yadu and ascetic Paraśurāma. Many valuable gems of philosophy of the Upaniśadas, directive details for learning Yoga, learned discourse, the three attributes of Satva, Rajasa and Tamasa which look like Mandel’s theory of genealogy in a different form, are found in it. There are a few references to principles of astrology, rules for observing vows (vrata) and undertaking religious assignments known as Anuśṭhāna and the like. There is, interalia, prescription of rituals to be performed for mundane ends like getting a son and so on. The Āryan philosophy of life was not too materialistic as the modern Western one nor one advising total early

* Anasūyā was the wife of the sage Atri unto whom Lord Dattātreya was born as a son.

renunciation as found around as in other religions. Life is to be lived in four periods and every period has its duties, functions and enjoyments through the four Āśrama!

The second volume starts with the beneficial deeds of Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha who resides for some time at Kuravapura, now Kuruguddi in Āndhra Pradeśa. The place is surrounded by the waters of the Kṛṣṇā. It's a good place for those who want to meditate in a secluded place. There is even an underground cave where Śrī Vāsudevānanda practised penance! You have to bend down to enter it and once you are in, you are all alone! Even sounds of birds are rarely heard. Of course, you can listen to the sound of ripples in the Kṛṣṇā or the murmur of a cool breeze! Vehicles can go upto a point but you have to wade through waters of rushing Kṛṣṇā with abundance of stones and rocks!

Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha's deeds are sparingly described. They contain, his blessings to a woman who had a dull-headed son and wanted a bright one, saving the life of a devotee going to Kuravapura as he was attacked by thieves and so on. And then is the story of the washerman who served Śrīpāda Guru. The washerman sees, one day a royal family enjoying a boating spree and wants the same happiness for himself. Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha asks the washerman to take another birth in a royal family of Vidura. On requesting that he should not be disconnected from Śrīpāda Guru, the latter promises that they would meet in the next birth. For he would be a Sanyāsī and

known as Śrī Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī. Later, the washerman born in the Vidura royal family suffers from a tumor and is advised to go to Pāpavināśī Kṣhetra and serve the Saint there. The washerman in the next birth is born as a Muslim king and goes to see the saint where he sees a saint who says, 'where were you so long, O washerman, my old devotee?.' Thus Śrī Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī, the next incarnation of Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha blesses the washerman.

The second volume of Śrī Gurulīlāmṛta is really full of holy deeds of Śrī Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī. The role of Śrī Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī was to show real path to worldly people in general and to Brahmins in particular. Śrī Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī took Saṁnyāsa formally at Banārasa (Kāśī) and made Gāṇagāpura in Kaṇṇāṭaka his place of hermitage.

Coming here, Śrī Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī practised penance and gained wonderful powers so that he could help suffering men and women and lead them to the path of duty in this world and devotion to Śrī Gurudeva Datta. His first case of rendering service was that of a Brahmin who was suffering from stomach-ache. He gave medicine and asked Sāyaṁdeva, who later on became his disciple, to feed this ailing Brahmin. He also blessed Sāyaṁdeva so that his cruel master did not only not get angry with him but gave him gifts. Whatever Śrī Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī did was to show real path to people. According to Hindu philosophy, life is a continuity. You

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have a past birth, this present one and the next one. The kind of birth is determined by one's own deeds. A woman did not return money lent by a Brahmin who died and turned into a ghost. This ghost snatched away every child born to the woman who was advised to worship Śrī Guru and water Audumbara tree. Śrī Guru appeared in her dream from his state of existence. Śrī Guru asked the woman to perform the Śrāddha ceremony for the ghost! In another case, Śrī Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī punished haughty Brahmins who were proud of their Vedic learning and humiliated other Brahmins. Śrī Guru made a low-caste face the arrogant Brahmins with his knowledge of the Vedas with the result that the Brahmins lost their tongue and died in no time!

If one goes to Gāṇagāpura today, one finds numerous people coming there to get redress of their worries of life. Some are possessed and some childless. Some suffer from disease and others from struggle of life. All of them come and get relief here.

This second section is very useful for mundane ends too and hence whenever one wants a desire to be fulfilled or an adverse situation to be faced, he takes up the reading of "Śrī Guru Caritra" in Marāṭhī completing the whole volume of 52 chapters (with the index as 53rd) in seven days. This is called "Saptāha". As this section is useful to men of the world, it attracts devotees who are asked to be righteous, follow the path of duty as per the stage and status in life. If Dharma or religion

is to be defined as the path of life that preserves life, this section is full of rich material and Gāṇagāpura is considered the Chief Seat of Śrī Guru Dattātreya who is ever ready to bestow blessings on an active devotee. Surely this section is Karmakāṇḍa, the section of duties!

The third section is named Upāsanā or Bhakti. Prayers play an important part as Humāyun felt when Akabar was ill. Prayers offered with sincerity, fructify for every one! The dominant figure in this section is Śrī Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī who was born in Māṇagāmva (Mahārāṣṭra), initiated to Saṁnyāsa at Narasobāwāḍī and ultimately made his seat at Garuḍeśvara in Gujarat.

The word Upāsanā means sitting near the deity and worshipping it. The word worship conveys the concept of Upāsanā. The devotee fixes a deity to be worshipped and tries to please it by prayers, offerings, ceremonies and so on. In most of the Upāsanā, some goal is kept in view. Some desire is to be fulfilled. As there is a centre of attention and concentration and as there are hymns or special prayers, the mind of the devotee calms down and mental powers grow. In some cases, there is a 'mantra' to be repeated. The sounds of the 'mantra' create an atmosphere both material and psychological. The hidden powers of the individual are synchronized with the result that his mind and thinking is clear and his action to the purpose. There is a goal and the action, so the result is guaranteed. Moreover, spiritual power is involved to strengthen the process and as there is harmony

between the individual and the world around, success is achieved. Thus Upāsanā is a tool to concentrate, to define and keep proper track as well as to get higher powers to work for the purpose. Will-power brings result.

In Upāsanā-kāṇḍa, there are narrations of difficulties experienced by the people and their removal by the directions shown by Śrī Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī. One may note here that Swāmījī was a great scholar of Śāstras, an expert in yogic practices and was very strict in observing rules himself. Even in Upāsanā, certain rules are to be followed and some rituals are to be performed.

Once, the attendants, who performed the daily ritual at Narasobāwādī, a seat of Śrī Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī did not observe the old tradition properly and when they were taking the idol around the temple, on a Thursday as usual, the idol dropped down from the palanquin. There were mishaps around and so the attendants rushed to Swāmī Vāsudevānandajī. He came and saw how the worship was done. He could see the gaps and flaws and so he laid down in clear terms the details for the rituals of a deity. There are sixteen steps wherein sixteen different things are done. For example, the deity is given a bath, offered flowers and so on. For every step, the relevant chants from Puruṣa Sūkta, a Vedic hymn very commonly employed everywhere when a bath is involved, are recited. So Swāmījī laid down steps to be strictly observed. Upāsanā has its rules, details of which differ with the deity concerned. This Upāsanā-kāṇḍa

also refers to areas like yogic principles, astrological considerations. It thus completes the trio of Gñāna, Karma and Upāsanā as represented by the three deities. For ordinary people, Upāsanā is the easiest way to achieve mundane and spiritual goals and hence this process is stressed even in the 'Gītā' which promises,

यो मदभक्तः । स मे प्रियः ॥

'Yo mad bhaktah, sa me priyah'.

(Gītā. XII-14)

'Such a devotee of Mine is very dear to Me'.

In fact, Gñāna and Karma should result in Upāsanā. This 'Śrī Gurulīlāmṛta' with its all the three kāṇḍas is as much popular and effective in Gujarat as 'Śrī Guru Caritra' in Maharashtra. Any one with a definite desire for this mundane life is enjoined to undertake a Pārāyaṇa or completing the reading of all the chapters in a particular number of days or reading a definite portion daily. This volume in Gujarātī has as much efficacy as any stotra or granth in Sanskrit. So those who do not know Sanskrit (and there are very few learners of Sanskrit) need not feel at a disadvantage!! If you know Gujarātī, you are lucky to go through this volume. Peace of mind is rare these days especially in the Western atmosphere. A reading of this volume will surely lessen the need of tranquilizers!

3. 'PATRA GĪTĀ AND SAṄGĪTA GĪTĀ'

'Patra Gītā' is written in 'Ovī' prosodical rhythm and gives valuable guidance to those who follow the spiritual path. 'Saṅgīta Gītā', on the other hand, is addressed to ordinary men and women who follow Gujarātī only and that too very simple in construction. It contains guidance in wordly problems of lay people. It is in a very simple yet musical style. It goes straight into the heart and leads one to devotional steps.

4. 'DATTA-BĀVANĪ' AND OTHER WORKS

This is the most shining gem and is the most useful too for any one. It is full of illustrations of those who got what they wanted by worshipping Lord Dattātreya. It is a prayer to Lord Dattātreya in easy Gujarātī language. In the beginning there are verses describing the form in which Dattātreya Bhagavāna is seen. Next lines tell about the people who worshipped and were blessed. The following lines show how appealing the words are.

‘Evi tārī kṛpā agādha
Kema suṇe nā māro sāda’

‘Thus bountiful is thy favour,
why don't you listen to my voice?’

Bhagavāna Dattātreya in the form of Śrī Nṛsimha Sarasvatī, who was another birth of Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha, blessed the supplicants to give them what they wanted or to remove their ailments. Curing stomach-ache of one,

leprosy of another and driving away evil spirit in still another case are narrated along with the cases of those who were given a jackpot in one case and a child in another and so on.

How to worship Bhagavāna Dattātreya? Look at the following verses:

Karī dhūpa gāye je ema
Dattabāvanī Ā saprema;
Sudhare tenā banne loka
Rahe na tene kyāmye Śoka.

‘He who recites this Dattabāvanī thus with love and sincerity and burning incense, will improve both of his births (this and next) and will have no cause of worry from any source’.

What more promise does one need?

This should however be done regularly every day for which no time is fixed. Take your own time, do it when you can but be regular in doing so, for patience and perseverance bring good fruit!

This prayer is very effective in all situations and its efficacy has been verified. The reader is enjoined to get experience himself. Some devotee doctors even recite this prayer before taking up serious operations! Some have even prescribed that this prayer be recited along with the drugs to be taken by the patient!

The proof of the pudding lies in eating, so do it yourself!

It may be interesting to note that this prayer was composed as a necessity. Śrī Raṅga Avadhūta was camping in the village Saija near Kalol. The wife of the host devotee, Śrī Kamaḷāśaṅkara Tripāthī, was possessed by some evil spirit and was being harassed. Śrī Raṅga Avadhūta could not bear her suffering. This heart rending situation inspired Avadhūtajī to give rise to a prayer and the fifty two verses in Copāī were the outcome. Number 52 was in harmony with 52 chapters of 'Śrī Guru Caritra', 52 Thursdays (day of Guru) of a year and 52 sounds of the Sanskrit alphabets! A prayer from a sincere and compassionate heart is a divine phenomenon and it has worked wonders for the patients as narrated in the foregoing paragraph.

The prayer was written and it was to be published. Śrī Avadhūtajī suggested nominal price so that booklet would not be thrown in the dust-bin or used to pack things! At least to cover the price paid, the buyer would read it!

But for everyone, even two pennies is not a small sum. There was a boy who came along with others from Govaliā. He saw others buying the booklet and wanted to have it. He asked his mother who shoved him away as she could not afford to spend. One day he somehow got the booklet and was so full of joy that he ran straight homewards not showing it to his mother, who may snatch it away! He had to cross the river Narmadā and he began to wade through water. He kept his

booklet high with one hand so that water may not touch it and moved on. The water was getting deeper and he tried to keep his hand raised. He was pushed this way and that but he kept the booklet high over water. Somehow, he reached the bank. The mother searched for him here and there and started repenting that she did not buy the booklet. She prayed to God who heard her prayers. She was told that the boy had reached home! When asked how he crossed the deep river, he did not remember anything except that he had kept the booklet high over water! He did cross the river without a boat! This is an illustration showing how faith in God works wonders and the goal is reached!

A HUMOROUS INCIDENT

Once a man came to Nāreśvara and complained that though he repeatedly read and recited Dattabāvanī, he did not get the fruit as to “Dāsī siddhi tenī thāya, Dukh Dārīdrya tenāmjāya” meaning success attends on the reciter and all his misery and penury vanish! Avadhūtājī immediatly replied humorously: “you are not getting at the right meaning!” Looking at the listener’s amazement, Avadhūtājī said, “look, ‘Tenī’ means his wife would be ‘Siddhi’ cowed down and become an attendant and do manual jobs of people around.” The listener remained silent but there was a peal of laughter around! For ‘Sidhhi’ means ‘Under Control’ in Gujarātī.

REVĀ GĪTAM

In 1961, River Narmadā was in spate. The level was rising rapidly; so people were afraid of the floods. They came to Rev. Raṅga and expressed their fear. Rev. Raṅga cracked a joke saying “If the waters rise high upto Nāreśvara, he would feed sweets to all the Brahmins of Bhālod and Koral!” He knew if waters rose that much high, no village around would be safe! But nature is strange and waters did rise, so Avadhūtajī went and offered oblations to Mother Narmadā. The soaring and rushing waters calmed down! The river turned back just when Avadhūtajī started returning to his residence. Natural elements recognize elemental principles of devotion and supplication to the Almighty!

Thus did we get the prayer Revāgītam.

A line of this prayer says:

“Gāyati Revā Rava Madhuram”

Revā sings melodiously and it is an illustration of what is called “Nādabrahma”.

‘ABHILĀṢAṢAṬKAM’

‘Abilāṣa Ṣaṭkam’ is the 16th stotra (prayer-song) in the ‘Raṅga-hṛdayam’ of Rev. Raṅga Avadhūta. It has only six stanzas and is in the same rhythm as the one of the “Narmadāṣṭakam” of Ādya Śaṅkarācārya. As its very name suggests, it expresses devotional feelings, deep thinking and sound knowledge about beneficial aspirations.

The verses are connected with Mother Narmadā indirectly.

What was the occasion that these lines burst out like the couplet of Sage Vālmikī which led him to compose the Rāmāyaṇa?

Śrī Avadhūtājī was staying at Aranyeśvara with Śrī Ratanalal of Sarakheja (who was nicknamed 'Mahātmā'). The place would sometimes get flooded with waters of the river Narmadā as it happened, during Śrī Avadhūtājī's stay; waters began to rise and so everyone including the temple priests left the place. Only Śrī Avadhūtājī and Mahātmā (Ratanalal) did not move. When the people of the village came to know about this, they came down to the temple and advised Avadhūtājī to move away. Śrī Avadhūtājī asked Ratanalal to go if he liked but Ratanalal did not go, despite the fear in his heart. His spirits had gone low, in fact, when the spirits of Narmadā waters rose up! The people thought it impossible to persuade this whimsical sādhu. People left the place. Waters rose inch by inch. Ratanalal felt uneasy and tried to talk to Śrī Avadhūtājī but got a rebuff. Thinking that there was no go at the moment when death was clutching him by hair, so as the last resort, he found out the highest spot and sat there. Incidentally, Śrī Avadhūtājī told him not to fear. In his humorous way he said, "I went round the river in the Parikramaṇa, now it is the Narmadā that intends to go

a round me in a Parikramaṇa and return with satisfaction! Water rounded up the hillock while Śrī Avadhūtājī kept rhythm with the ripples and recited 'Kadā nu raṅga-raṅga mukta-maṅga mukta-māśraye.' When shall I seek the shelter of one who is free from attachment as well as is a shapeless one! The rhythm of the verse could be felt in the ears if one listens to the triple beats of a "tabalā" (a sort of a drum)! Thus Narmadā waters had a Parikramaṇa of this Saint and slowly receded. People thought that the saint and his companion must have been drowned! They came up to the temple in curiosity and curiously enough found both of them sitting safe and sound! Devotion took the place of doubt!

"MANTRAGARBHA MRITYUNJAYA STOTRA"

The "Raṅga-hṛdayam" contains one more 'stotra'. It is in Sanskrit and is a marvellous composition in terms of poetry as well as language. It is addressed to Mr̥tyuñjaya Mahādeva with Dattātreya in the back ground. The words of the lines are so composed that if the first word of every line is taken, the sentence formed is: Tryambakam Yajāmahe Sugandhim Puṣṭivardhanam Ūrvārukamiva Bandhanāt Mr̥tyormukṣhīya Māmṛtāt. Tryambaka is Lord Śiva with three eyes.

Fifth word of every line downwards gives the sentence:

“Śarīre Jarjarībhūte Vyādhigraste Kalevare,
Auśadham Jānhavi Toyam Vaidyo Nārāyaṇo Hariḥ”

Addressed to Viṣṇu, it is a very popular couplet to be recited to propitiate Lord Viṣṇu.

Every ninth word of every line downwards gives the sentence:

Dattātreya Harekṛṣṇa unmattānandadāyaka;
Digambara mune bāla, piśāca Gñānsāgara:

Obviously Śrī Dattātraya is invoked here. Every twelfth word gives the culmination,

Mṛtyuñjaya Mahādeva Trāhimāṁ Śaraṇāgatam,
Janma-mṛtyu-jarā-duhkha, Sansārabhayanāśana!

“Mahādeva who has conquered Death! Be my saviour that I have come to your shelter. O Destroyer of birth-death-ageing, misery as well as fear of the cycle of birth and death!”

This stotra is very useful in allaying fear of any kind and is frequently employed in all calamities physical, social or of any other type! A word of warning. The stotra is in Sanskrit. It is not very easy language. He who intends to recite it, must know Sanskrit very well, should get acquainted with the meaning of every word and utter every word correctly and loudly. There are not many compounds but Sanskrit Sandhi rules must be known. One gets full result only when the recitation is slow, distinct and accurate both in articulation and pronunciation! If this much care is taken, its recitation will work wonders in any and every situation and will bestow bounties of any kind!

5. PRIOR COMPOSITIONS

While teaching at Gujarat Vidyāpīṭha, Rev. Śrī Raṅga Avadhūta prepared a text book named 'Balabodhini' in a commentary in Sanskrit on selected verses of Bhartṛhari. He wrote Sanskrit Grammar Girvāṇa-Bhāṣā-Praveśa in two parts. He had compiled couple of other booklets like "Upaniśadanī Vāto" (Tales from the Upaniśadas), "Viṣṇupurāṇanī Vāto" (Tales from the Viṣṇupurāṇa) both in Gujarātī while "Upaniśada ke chaudah Ratna" (Fourteen gems from the Upaniśadas) was the translation in Hindī.

"Raṅga Taraṅga" contains Marāṭhī Bhajanas and Abhaṅga verses taken out from the "Avadhūtī Ānanda" while Hindī Bhajanas were compiled in "Avadhūtī Mauja". 'Śrī Vāsudeva-Saptaśatī' consists of 700 verses in OVĪ meter of Marāṭhī and are dedicated to Śrī Raṅga's own Master, Swāmī Śrī Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī. This last one is published in Gujarātī from Garuḍeśvara, the seat of Swāmī Śrī Vāsudevānandajī.

REVIEW OF THESE WORKS IN THE "VASANTA"

Śrī R. B. Āthavale, who was a Professor of Sanskrit in Gujarat College, Ahmedabad puts his views in the following words in "Vasanta" a Gujarātī periodical. "Śrī Amritlal has done well in publishing the three compilations of poems by a modern saint-poet Raṅga viz. "Avadhūtī Ānanda", "Ātma-Cintana" and "Uṣaḥ Prārthanā".

Even a cursory glance at these compilations reveals that these poems are heart-rending notes of sublime poetry rushing out of a devoted heart.” According to this critic, writing in the periodical “Vasanta” in bhajanas can compare with that of Saints like Tukārāma or Ekanātha and so on. But Avadhūtājī himself says “mūrkhoham”, I am a fool, a king of fools and the top most of fools and those who are devoted to me, knowing all this, are doubtless fools! You are nearer to God as much as you melt your ego!

One more publication deserves to be mentioned here. He used to address his devotees on the occasion of his birthday celebrations. On Śrī Raṅga Jayantī (birth-day) he would call upon the gathering to follow the path of social, religious and spiritual progress. He never said anything he did not believe in or practise himself. “Self practice or implementation is better than precept” was his *modus operandi*. All his addresses, lectures, talks and the like are compiled in the book “Amara Ādeśa” published in Gujarātī language. The english translation of this book is also now available. It is named, “Thus Spake Śrī Raṅga Avadhūta = Call of Nāreśvara.” His guidance was practical, realistic, direct, fearless and unique. His advice touched the heart and activated head and hand. He put into practice what he preached as he knew ordinary men follow the leaders in every walk of life! As such leaders should be conscious of their vantage position and be honest and righteous, especially in the field of religion!







CHAPTER VI

RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS

DATTA JAYANTĪ

The birth-day of Śrī Guru Dattatreya was celebrated even before 'Śrī Gurulīlāmṛta' was published. The scale was small. In course of time, gatherings swelled to 25 thousand devotees!! They had food or Prasad on the next day! Śrī Avadhūtājī did not want to invite contributions or press anyone for donations etc. Thus, the dense and unapproachable wild forest at Nāreśvara turned into a place of hermitage, of penance and of divine peace like Naimiṣāranya. Datta Jayantī became an occasion for self inspired, self planned and easily carried out religious fair. There was no tension, no bickering, no obligation no self-aggrandisement of any kind in organising such festivals.

Late Śrī Jhaveracanda Meghani, a poet patriot of Gujarat who joined the freedom fight of Gandhiji and fought social and other evils through journalistic channels, writes about Rev. Avadhūtājī's attempts at Nāreśvara on the following lines.

Rev. Raṅga Avadhūta has made Nāreśvara, popular as a new place of pilgrimage. Though originally from Mahārāṣṭra, Śrī Valāme, a snātaka (graduate) of Gujarat Vidyāpīṭha has made his seat on the bank of the river

Narmadā. He has neither built a new temple nor started a sanitarium by collecting contributions! He has done two new things, viz. his devoted heart is composing sweet rhymes in Gujarātī in the shape of prayers to Guru Dattātreyā and secondly he has encouraged folk-fairs. About ten thousand people attend this new fair, and lead a poetic life for 4-5 days. They organise a collective kitchen and there pilgrims go on reciting the devotional rhythmic prayers composed by Rev. Raṅga while at work. A pilgrim bringing water from the river goes on reciting-

“Jaya Yogīśvara Datta dayāḷa,
Tur̃ ja eka jagamām̃ pratipāḷa”

while another one moving the ladle in the kitchen says:

“jhoḷī Annapurnā kara mām̃hya”

what a consistent line! A person cooking food should pray to Annapurnā, the Goddess of Food.

Even Gurudeva Ravindranatha Tagora has remarked that there is no sense in raising memorials. Folk-fairs be organised instead. This gives sufficient information and indication about the Datta Jayantī programmes at Nāreśvara in the early days!

When Datta Jayantī was celebrated for the first time in 1929 A.D.; there were a handful of participants and the expenses turned out to be Rs.36/-. As the celebrations grew in momentum, the figure of participants bulged to thousands and the expenses outnumbered Rs.3600/- even

when dearness was at a low ebb! People came to enjoy without any goal and this was exactly what Śrī Avadhūtājī did not want. Shops would be set up on the sands of the Narmadā bank but the shopkeepers had to give guarantee of honesty, cleanliness, righteousness and these were strictly yet voluntarily observed and as the poet, Śrī Meghani said, "There was an atmosphere of discipline and control saturated with devotion".

While celebrating Datta Jayantī festival a clear condition was followed that no contributions be asked, no funds raised, no appeals made, no lists circulated for any expenses and no announcements were made as to receipts and no names mentioned.

If there was no flow of voluntary contributions, it was to be taken as an injunction from the Deity and the celebrations be stopped forthwith! Till this day, there has been no hitch. If, after the Datta Jayantī expenses were covered there was a surplus, it was to be spent on any good day after the end of Kārtika. Moreover, no money was accepted while the celebrations were on as there was to be no balance to be carried over for the next year. Thus the accruals were earmarked for the particular celebration of the particular year only! This reminds one of the Vedic days when the Ṛṣis or Sages procured only what was needed for the day. No surplus was to be kept for the next day. If there was any surplus, it was to be used for the cattle or birds and beasts around!

In the early years, the accounts were maintained by Śrī Dāsakākā (Haragovindadas Soni) as he was considered to be the most trustworthy person.

On Datta Jayanti Day, Rev. Śrī Raṅga Avadhūta would perform the pūjā between 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. He himself would start the auspicious programme by reciting the morning prayer song “Ūṭha aghabhañjanā Dattamunirañjanā” exactly at 6 a.m. Then would be performed the ceremony of waiving a lamp before the Deity (Āratī) “Ānanda Vājāṃ Vāge Gaganamām” (In the sky, do sound the joyful musical instruments). He would recite Dattabhajanam from “Raṅga-hṛdayam” and only those who had their bath could join the chorus singing. Then everybody would recite the rhymes from Dattapañcapadī. At the time of Datta-birth when the sun sets, there would be recital of Vedic chants on the one hand and lullaby on the other. This would be followed by bhajanas. These would be accompanied by “Rāsa” ‘dance’ till 3 a.m. followed by singing on tambourine (tambūrā) till the dawn would appear and the morning prayers would be recited. People would complete their morning choirs, attend to nature’s call, take a dip in the river and return for Āratī. Thus the programme would cover full 24 hours! Instructions were given on the earlier day with emphasis laid on maintaining cleanliness, holiness and purity of thought and action.

From 1935 onwards, one addition in the form of continuous reading of the three sections of

‘Śrī Gurulīlāmṛta’ was made, to be completed in two days. There would be three groups of seven readers each sitting in three different places. The reading started simultaneously with the first chapter aloud followed by silent or low-voiced reading. A separate arrangement for sitting was made for women.

There would be a break when the readers would have fruits to eat, take a short break, have a fresh bath for which all the twenty one would go together to the river.

The area would be decorated with festoons. Separate arrangements were made for camping of men and women. Everybody got the “Prasāda” or part of offerings to the Deity and every one was served food between 11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. Some of the pilgrims and devotees accepted only dry food. People were ferried from the river banks by boats and canoes waving the flags and chanting loudly the names of Lord Śrī Datta.

Śrī Avadhūta made it a point, even in the biting cold of December/January to perform Datta pūjā, only with the loin-cloth on. If feeling feverish, a shawl would cover Him. In a special ‘maṇḍapa’ (pandal) would be placed oak-made idol of Śrī Datt, a big cow and four dogs and decorated with Aśoka-pallava leaves. Branches of Audumbara tree would be kept bending on the Deity. Green grass would lie near the cow. Sprouts would grow around and the front part of the maṇḍapa would have coloured powder drawings called raṅgolī. All this would be ready before six o’clock in the morning.

The idol of the Deity would be a wonderful thing to be seen after the Pūjā and if a big crowd gathered, Śrī Raṅga Avadhūtaji himself would lead the recitals aloud. The area would resound with the words:

“Digambarā Digambarā, Śrīpāda Vallabha Digambarā”.

At the time of food serving, there were particular conventions. Everyone got his own water for drinking while eating and for cleansing afterwards! There were neither taps nor wells! Everyone had to bring water from the river Narmadā to the storage tank. Rev. Raṅga himself carried a pair of pails hanging on a bamboo supported on the shoulders! The next day food served would be consisting of sweet-balls, four five vegetable dishes, salads of different kinds, pies, pañcāmṛta (a mixture of milk, yoghurt, purified butter(ghee), honey and sugar) and pickles of different kinds! A multi-item dish would it be!! Instructions were given not to start eating while the recitals “Digambarā” were on. The signal for eating was given by the call “Avadhūtacintana Śrīgurudevadatta” and a thousand odd hands would start eating. A classic example of mass education and discipline in practice!

For preparing items like sweet-balls, the wheat flour would be ground by women devotees voluntarily while chanting the names of Lord Dattātreya! Even educated people took pride in moving the grinding stones! Everything one did was considered as the actual worship of Śrī Datta! The rural and the urban, the illiterate and the scholarly hands joined in this task where Avadhūtaji himself was the pace-setter!

Here is one more example of Rev. Raṅga Avadhūta's belief in the dictum, "Practice is better than precept".

The incident pertains to the period of Mahātmā Gandhiji's non-co-operation movement when Śrī Pāṇḍuraṅga Vaḷāme was a volunteer at picketing of a pub. The daily sale was reduced from 40 gallons to 4 gallons due to picketing but one rural woman would carry away 3-4 gallons daily. The volunteers were unable to persuade her as the woman said, "You all are in the habit of drinking tea or coffee and I drink liquor. Please mind your own business."

The volunteers saw that Śrī Pāṇḍuraṅga Vaḷāme did not press her. They came to him and said, "Now you try to persuade her". 'I will do so after three days', said Śrī Vaḷāme.

He himself had the habit of drinking tea. So he decided to give up tea for ever. Once he was free from the addiction of tea, he went to the woman and said in an urging tone, "Sister, I don't ask you to stop drinking liquor, but please do not carry home!" This earnest appeal had a wonderful effect due to a confident voice free from conceit, consequently the woman promised Vaḷāme that she would not visit the pub again. Śrī Raṅga Avadhūtajī would always set an example himself before advising or preaching to others.

This Datta-Jayantī celebration started in 1929 and continued growing till 1948. Datta Jayantī celebrations were held at several other places also on big scales.

So Rev. Raṅga Avadhūtājī decided to go to some such place surprisingly and take part in the celebration over there. This made the organisers of that place very happy. It was a good thing that the function instead of being confined to one central place, spread all over Gujarat and a time came when Avadhūtājī was known as the Saint of Nāreśvara- a sort of a personification of a saint into the Deity adored!

He really impressed every one because of his simplicity as well as lack of any desire- not touching money at all. Contrast to this is with some other religious leaders who expect a good gift and amount when asked to visit a house of a devotee! Again wherever he went, he avoided show, his needs were few and austere and his belongings were fewer! A small square sitting plank, an earthen pot, a small tiffinbox to keep “daśami” (bread prepared in milk). Again this “daśami” was prepared on Thursday lasting till Sunday. Those of the Sunday would suffice till Thursday.

He observed complete silence as a rule. His silence was not restricted to only not speaking by mouth but restraining all the senses and focusing them into concentration. Energy of mind and body was preserved and concentrated into meditation. Naturally, if one does not employ his organs and senses, his mind also does not waver or get distracted! There is no success on the spiritual path without penance, control, abandoning things and so on. And how can you even expect an easy

achievement? Do we not strive in the worldly life for getting success?

He would never go to a place unless the programme was fixed before hand and that too for a definite time. Every place was given its turn. Thus every place he visited turned into a village of devotional festival and a religious fair! At times, his procession and stay exceeded in grandeur due to the camping of big officers or religious heads. Everything was done voluntarily so much so that at times, even dignitaries of the place would consider it a privilege to pull the vehicle he was sitting in! When he showed his dislike, these respectable persons would say, “We are worse than even oxen with two legs, We would like to rise to be human by carrying angels like you as it would wash away our sins!” And on every such occasion, he would deal with doubts in the mind of the audience falsehood, about the scriptures like the Gītā or other erroneous or incorrect presentations prevailing of that time without attacking any one. His approach was only constructive though very learned and authentic, so much so that the adversaries who tried to misguide the ignorant rural masses fled away. Truth always prevails if properly presented!





CHAPTER VII

REV. RAṄGA AVADHŪTA AND DIVINE LIFE FOR ALL

Who is Avadhūta? The word is derived from the Sanskrit root 'dhū' preceded by the 'upasarga' or preposition 'ava'. The root means (i) to shake, to wave (ii) to reject (iii) to discard or despise (iv) to insult, to humiliate. This word is applied to ascetics of a particular kind. An ascetic tries to shake off worldly shackles. He discards worldly pleasures, rejects comforts and despises sensuous enjoyments. He tries to lie low even if humiliated as such by those who are drunk with power or prosperity.

Avadhūta is one who has renounced all worldly attachments and connections and leads a severe and rigorous life. He is not one of those ascetics who run some institutions and enjoy advantages of the seat. The Heads of religious institutions may lead an ascetic life but are surrounded by an atmosphere of abundance and opulence. Their residence is big and so are their attendants and followers. Mentally they may be detached from mundane world but enjoy all physical comforts of food, shelter and security. Avadhūta may live among people but is not restrained by them. His appearance is unattractive and so are his belongings.

His dress is simple, too! His habits do not need many things and he avoids dainty dishes and fine clothes!

Avadhūta is traditionally described as one who is beyond stages of socialization like youth and grown-up, a householder and so on or similarly he is not concerned with any caste or social status. He remains engrossed in meditation. He contemplates over the inner soul and the final truth. He is beyond caste and stage and is a yogi.

In a different way, the Avadhūta has following attributes 'A-VA-DHŪ-TA'

The letter 'a' denotes that he is concerned with 'amar' the immortal, the imperishable. He is very meritorious as indicated by the letter 'va' which stands for 'vareṇya' or the sublime. It is his aim to be one with the sublime. The low inclinations of the mundane world are not for him. His next attribute is renunciation or throwing away the shackles of this world (Saṁsāra) as indicated by 'dhū'. One becomes a true Avadhūta if he attains the position of unity of the self and the sublime, of the individual and the universal soul. He concentrates his activities both physical and mental on the achievement of "tatvamasi" "Thou art That" meaning the soul of a human being is not different from the universal soul. Only one has to free the soul from the grip of allurements and pleasures of senses and consciously try to know the real nature of his own soul which has all the attributes of the sublime one. The micro form has

all the qualities of the macro one, only in a minute form. Once this is realized and constantly kept in mind, one attains the stage of Avadhūta. Mere dress or surroundings do not tell about Avadhūta.

The most important quality of Avadhūta is his disinterestedness. He does ordinary things, follows a practical routine but has no selfish or particular interest as such. In fact, he starts begging for alms so that he prepares himself mentally for self-lessness and humbleness. This is also helpful in avoiding publicity.

Rev. Raṅga Avadhūta was disinterested in worldly achievements even when he had not renounced the world. A gentleman who had a very good opinion about Śrī Valāme as a scholar recommended him to work as a companion to sons of a rich family. The idea was to make those young ones really civilized, polite and knowledgeable. Śrī Pāṇḍuraṅga did not say anything on the face of this elderly well-wisher out of respect and left the place. On the way home, he began to ponder and came to conclusion to reject the offer. He sent his brother Nārāyaṇa with a chit and asked forgiveness for his inability! While an ordinary man would have been glad and proud for getting such an offer, this Avadhūta humbly threw away the chance!

Singleness of purpose is another trait of a real Avadhūta. Kāryam Sādhayāmi Vā Deham Pātayāmi- 'Do or die' becomes his motto. Physical and other handicaps do not deter him. When Pāṇḍuraṅga Valāme

came to Nāreśvara for penance, the place was horrible. Trees and bushes in Nāreśvara forest were so thick that sun-light was not visible even during the day. There were scorpions and red ants everywhere. Serpents moved freely and so were pythons. Once some highway men came up too, but Śrī Pāṇḍuraṅga was the least affected or disturbed!

On another occasion, he showed how determined and firm he was in carrying out decisions! Once during a journey it was decided to move on after meals. They were at Koral and had to go to Nāreśvara. Śrī Chunilal was a heavily built person. So he told Śrī Chamanlal about moving on in the evening for even Avadhūtājī could not bear the heat of the mid-day sun. Their talk was loud enough and Avadhūtājī heard it but did not say a word. As soon as the alms were over, he set out for the journey. Śrī Chunilal tried to persuade him saying the heat was terrible and the road was through sand! Avadhūtājī said, “Before taking a decision, such things should have been considered. Once a decision is taken, it must be followed by hook or crook”. Avadhūta walked through the red hot sand and reached the destination!

Fearlessness is a rare quality and one has to develop it if one treads on an extraordinary track. Renunciation is one such track and only Avadhūta is really qualified for it. He has to brace situations both physically and socially! One such incident occurred while he was on Parikramaṇa. He was passing through a bushy track

near Śūlpāṇeśvara which is even today a lonely but beautiful place for a short tour. There is lush vegetation around and splendour, not seen in an urban atmosphere! It was getting dark and there was a group of three sādhus from Girnāra camping on one side. Most of the Girnāri sādhus are rigorous ascetics. They carry trident and a pair of pincers (Cipiā) and apply ashes of the camp-fire to the whole body. They don only a loin-cloth often and may have a small headcloth to cover their long matted hair! Their slogan is 'bam girnāri' or 'Harhar Mahādev' or a similar one. Some of these Girnāri sādhus are Kāpāliks who carry a skull bone as a bowl to drink anything liquid. Girnāra in Saurāṣṭra is their popular resort. Girnāra is a series of hills, some of them quite high and a few unapproachable due to their steepness. These Kāpāliks usually camp in jungles and rarely come to any habitation. Often they are entirely naked. These Kāpāliks are devotees of Mother Kālī and propitiate her by making offerings into an altar. These offerings consist of thing like til seeds, barley, red flowers, meat, sweets and the like and may include human or animal flesh. A cock is their popular offering! Girnār is also famous for Dattātreya pāḍukā (Foot-pads).

Avadhūtajī found a small streamlet flowing and thought of passing the night nearby. This was a bit near those sādhus. In the meanwhile one of those Girnāris came and asked Avadhūtajī to have his seat just near the conjunction. Avadhūtajī saw the place and decided to

shift there for two reasons: one, the sādhus would kindle fire and go on talking which would disturb him and secondly he could not bear heat of the fire.

So he accepted the suggestion. Soon the sky began to shine with twinkling stars, wild animals moved in search of food and water. At places, birds like owl started hooting and making sounds! And the second moment, there was pin-drop silence. Silence not of a hall of a city but of a forest which could be very dangerous and horrible every minute. The bigger animals live on the smaller ones and at any moment, the terrific howl of a tiger could be heard and it would go on echoing for a while!

Animals like tigers or lions have their own locality. Look at their physical strength, their suppleness and you will realize the grandeur. Of course, you have to pay the price! You can't go nearby: Though you may be a forester or a brave and big-hearted hunter! These animals, especially lions, follow the policy: 'Don't trouble troubles till troubles trouble you!' Find a lion resting and you may pass by comfortably. Do not show fear and consequent attack and this magnificent beast will not even raise its big head!

Avadhūtājī did not want to sleep and was meditating in those sombre surroundings! The water of Mother Narmadā was rippling and the sound of 'Om' and the charm of 'Tvam aham, tvam aham, aham tvam, aham tvam' 'I am you', 'you are me' and so on was heard!

The atmosphere was harmonic. The night was growing. It may be after midnight, Avadhūtājī awoke at the sound! He awakened the sādhus and said “O mahātinās! there is a tiger nearby, be alert!” They were all up, kindled the fire and had a big flame! There was bright light all around! They were gossiping for a while. As no sound was heard, Avadhūtājī asked them to go to bed and himself sat in meditation. At about four o’clock, he smelt the beast and so he awakened all the three sādhus and again the fire was kindled into flames! They passed half an hour thus! Again Avadhūtājī asked them to lie down. Soon it was dawn and the birds began to chirp and to let the world know about the arrival of dawn! It is laid down for pilgrims to the spiritual path that one should get up and sit down for prayers after attending to the morning duties and your routine. Even the Sandhyā Vandana where offerings of water are made to the sun, are to be finished before the sun is actually up! An hour and a half before sun-rise is the period usually recommended for this. Again for those who want to practise concentration and meditation, this hour before sunrise is very helpful as the limbs are fresh and the mind is clear.

The three sādhus got up and tried to drive away cold by kindling fire while Śrī Avadhūtājī was already absorbed in meditation! It was just dawn and birds, vegetation and beasts were getting ready to welcome the sun! Suddenly the three sādhus saw a tiger rushing from

behind Avadhūtājī. Before they could utter a word, the tiger jumped. There was a blast of wind around Avadhūtājī and the tiger touched the ground a bit away from where Avadhūtājī was sitting and disappeared in the bushes. The blast of wind awakened Avadhūtājī from his meditation and saw the tiger running away in front of himself. The sādhus stood aghast!

Avadhūtājī looked around and came to know that the place was a conjunction of waters where beasts usually quench their thirst! The sādhus knew about this beastly routine and so they had asked Avadhūtājī to have his seat there! It is very difficult for ordinary human beings to give up selfish intentions even after renouncing the world! Physical renouncing has no sense unless one is psychologically and spiritually prepared! The tiger had paid respects to Avadhūtājī, as it were and made the sādhus tremble while running away! They came to Avadhūtājī, bowed down and showed gratitude for saving their lives! The aim of renunciation should be to create better surroundings for experiencing unity with the universal soul! Otherwise, mere material saṁnyāsa has no meaning! Avadhūtājī set out for further journey repeating the chant 'Digambarā Digambarā Śrīpāda Vallabh Digambarā'! In this 'mantra', Śrīpāda Śrīvallabha, the Dattātreya form of this Kali-Yuga is propitiated as Digambara-one whose clothes are all the directions themselves! We shall return to this 'mantra' in the chapter on "spells and charms". Humbleness is a prominent attribute of a true saint!

Humbleness in ordinary world shows a sort of selflessness, politeness and courtesy dominating an individual's character whether he is an officer or a subordinate, a major or a sepoy, the chairman of a big organisation or an ordinary volunteer! Humbleness becomes prominent at higher levels. A great man's humbleness becomes clear as he has to cultivate this quality and manifest it. A lowly-posted man may have this as a matter of his position! He has got to be humble as his status is humble! A real saint is humble even when he has attained heights!

Avadhūtājī went to Mālsara which is now a good tourist centre on the Narmadā. It is the terminus station of a short narrow-gauge, Western Railway Section between Bombay and Baroda. The line terminates at Mālsara. There are only a couple of big stations like Śinor, Sādhli and Coranda. Mālsara is a beautiful place because of the sands of the Narmadā. You can walk into the river for some distance and enjoy its cool sweet waters. The other bank is deep. On Mālsara side, one can enjoy river-bath at sweet will. The river is big, the stream is wide and shallow, the water is very clean. Again it is near the town and habitation! Even children can dabble-dabble, wade through water, build sandcastles and so on! No crocodiles nearby!

Avadhūtājī went to Śrī Satyanārāyaṇa temple and bowed before the deity! He was a parikramaka and you can imagine his apparel and his looks! His real identity

was difficult to discern! The deity-attendant who performs the routine prayer-ritual noticed him. He was angry and burst out, 'what sort of a sādhu are you? You do not know how to bow down to the deity!' Hearing this Avadhūtājī said, "I'm not a sādhu (meaning a regularly and formally initiated one). Please explain to me the whole thing! I shall bow the right way to deity'. Hearing this, Avadhūtājī accepted the advice, bowed in that fashion and walked out!

A truly humble man never claims that he knows or is a knowledgeable person. Remember what Newton had said, 'I am like a child picking up pebbles at the sea-shore!' A truly learned man appreciates learning and so his presumption is that the other one speaking to him is a knowledgeable person and accepts his knowledge at whatever level it is! [He does not care if the other one is a hypocrite, ignorant one and only parades his information!] In Sanskrit we have two words, Vidyāvāna and Vidvāna. A Vidyāvāna only 'knows'. He carries the burden of knowledge on his head and shoulders. A Vidvāna or a truly learned man has mastered his learning, has tested it through experience and has become wise in its application. He knows when and what to say and in what manner! He is not a mechanical tap which pours out the moment the key is moved. A truly learned man says, 'O saints, I am a fool, a simpleton!' Śrī Avadhūtājī once said:

निर्भयं विचराम्यत्र, विद्वत्कवचरक्षितः ।

विद्वत्-चरणकञ्जेषु, सदा मेऽस्तु मतिस्ततः ॥

Nirbhayaṁ Vicāramyatra Vidvatkavacarakṣitah |
Vidvat-caraṇakañjeṣu Sadā Me'stu Matistatah ||

“I am surrounded by learned people (he was addressing a conference of scholars at Baroda!) and with this armour, I'm moving without fear! So let my intellect be at the lotus feet of the learned ones!” As a verse goes in Gujarātī, (લેવી નાના પાસેથી પણ ચાતુરીની વાર્તા) ‘Levī nānā pāsathī paṇa cāturīnī Vārtā’ Meaning one should welcome a wise thing even from the younger or lowly ones! For, a small piece of diamond is brighter and valued as against a heap of shining stones! A Śāṅkarācārya can defeat Maṇḍana Miśra even though the latter was very experienced veteran both in learning and worldly ways! A truly great man is more humble than any one on the opposite side! Let us imbibe in us this humility and humbleness!

However humbleness should not mean accepting improper or incorrect situations or things. Humbleness behoves only if heights are reached and prominence or depth is attained! Otherwise, it is said in Sanskrit, one can be good or saintly when one is unable to achieve a thing! You can give up only if you are strong enough to grab a thing! Ignorance is no sign of humility, erudition is. An illustration from the early life of Śrī Valāme will be apt at this point.

Śrī Shankarlal Banker and Śrīmatī Anasuya Sarabhai were interested in the study of the old Sanskrit works.

They found a very good reader in Śrī Valāme. Though they were socially at the higher rung, they would be glad when this young scholar came and would sit with humility and politeness.

Once Śrī Banker said, ‘Scholar! Have you seen Annie Besant’s Gītā’

Valāme : No, is there any speciality?

Banker : It is in good English.

Valāme : How can one call the Gītā good only if the English language used there in is good? Is there no other better material to read than the Gītā in English in order to study this philosophical work? Still, let me see what sort of rendering it is!

The book was lying on the table and Śrī Banker gave it to Śrī Valāme. Avadhūtaji, a mere young scholar preparing himself for the final goal of spiritual ascendance, remembering his Guru Śrī Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī of Garūḍeśvara, opened the Gītā in English as translated by Annie Besant. Annie Besant was a theosophist and had joined India’s fight for freedom too and as such she was in limelight in those days.

On opening this Gītā in English, the verse that came to sight was 32nd one of Chapter XI. It read as under.

ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे
येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ।

R̥te’pi tvāṁ na bhaviṣyanti sarve
Ye’vasthitaḥ pratyānīkeṣu yodhāḥ |

(Gītā 11.32)

The word 'ṛtepi' in this second line was translated as 'without thee' by Annie Besant.

Instantly, Śrī Valāme spoke out: See Mr. Banker, a foreigner does take time in getting the grasp of a language of a different country. What to talk of comprehending the force expressed in the phrase. Śrīmatī Besant has failed to get the inner meaning! In the above mentioned verse the composer of the Gītā intends to say this: All are killed whether you are there or not. Some other indiscernible power is active in killing all! The rendering of Mrs. Besant talks of quite a different thing. It points out that all except you are killed and annihilated while you alone are alive! The Gītā does not say that. It stresses the point that the annihilator is some different power. Even without you, the task is accomplished. 'Ṛtepi' does not mean 'without thee or except thee' as rendered by Mrs. Besant. It means 'even without thee or even in your absence, you are not vital to this end. The Gītā says, 'O Arjun, why do you move about carrying the pride of a doer? They are all annihilated even if you are not there (ṛtepi), don't think that they will not be destroyed if you are not there. The killer is a different power altogether. You are merely a tool. The rendering of 'ṛtepi' could have been 'in spite of yourself, or something like that. A rendering in any other language should be faithful to the hidden meaning of the original expression. The total purport should not be lost in rendering. Here, the original sense has not been brought out. It has, in fact, been laid away!

This single illustration not only points out true meaning of humbleness and the necessity of a scholar or a preacher to go deep into the job undertaken. 'I know this! This is very simple. What's there at all'- stating like this should not be the attitude which is not humble. On the other hand, a humble one does not accept an unnatural situation in whatever walk of life it be. Thus a quality has both its positive and negative aspects and both should be made justice to!

Does Avadhūta look like Socrates or a vagabond? Is he a forest-dweller or has a seat in a cave? Such questions and doubts rise in the mind while thinking about Avadhūta. And to tell the truth, he does not appear in the same dress or mood for ever. So are his belongings or doings. At one time, he would be seen in rags while at other he amuses himself if others want him decorated and honoured. As Avadhūtajī has himself said:

“निजानन्दमां मस्त फरे जे,
चेल कुचेल धरेल ”

“Nijānandmām mast, phare je’
Cel Kucel Dharel”

He walks about in self Ecstasy, He bothers not for the clothes whether rich or rags.

‘अहं खाख तन राख लगावी
हाथे लिधो पंचपात्र’

Ahām-khākha Tana Rākha Lagāvi
Hāthe Līdho Pañcapātra

He applies ashes of his ego to his body and carries a wooden pot. Even Bhagwāna Dattātreya appears as follows:

Mālā kamaṇḍalu radhah karapadmayugme
 Madhyastha pāṇiyugale ḍamaru-triśūle
 Yasyast urdhvakarayoh Śubha Śaṅkha Cakre
 Vande Tamatrivaradam bhuj-ṣaṭk-yuktam

Whose lotus-like lower pair of hands have a rosary and a wooden-pot, who has a ḍamaru (a drum) and the trident in the middle pair of hands whose upper pair of hands holds the auspicious conch and the wheel; To such a benefactor of Atri with six hands do I bow down!

Avadhūta is not a pauper as he gets what he needs and is better than a prince since he is free from the worries of possession and consequent miseries. He is a man standing on the bank and is the least affected by what is going on around!

We have a few characteristics of Avadhūta defined in the 'Avadhūta Gītā'. He is free from the shackles of hope, pure in every spot, whose joy has no end.

(Avadhūta Gītā V.1).

He has given up desires, his speech is guileless and is true to the current time.

(Avadhūta Gītā V.2).

His limbs are smeared with dust, his mind is pure and healthy. He has achieved freedom through yogic processes like dhāraṇā and dhyāna.(Avadhūta Gītā V.3).

He deliberates over philosophic principles and is devoid of care and activity. He is immune from ignorance and pride too. (Avadhūta Gītā Ch.VIII VV.6-9).

Avadhūtopaniśad puts it like this:

He is called Avadhūta because of immortality, and excellence having thrown away the bonds of mundane world and because he has accomplished the substance of the principles तत्त्वमसि 'Thou art That' (Tatvamasi).

As desires are the root cause of complexities of life, he either avoids them or conquers them. He is not interested in mastering a 'mantra' and get siddhi and as such keeps himself away from 'Tantra'- special procedures for achieving an aim as laid down in the Tantra Śāstra. He may study Śāstras or may write prayers and yet he does not perform 'Pūjā' as per rules. He may practise yoga or just while away time! As such he is not bound by any restrictions! If this is so, what is his philosophy?

Avadhūta is a free lancer so to say, and is not bound by Advait or Dwaita, conformation or agnosticism, One Allāh or many and so on. Rev. Śrī Pāṇḍuraṅga has put it in the following words:

Say either Rāma or Rahim, say Īṣṭa or Christ, either Kṛṣṇa or Karim, Datta or Dātāra, Vibudha or Buddha, Ātam (Soul) or Pritam (lover), Isvara or Allāh, Jin or Jehovah, God or Guṇeśa, Ahurmazd or Ātma-mast (absorbed in self), parabrahma or Parmeśvara, Viśvātmā Puruṣottama or Pārasanātha. Say Bhagawati or Mary or

Marium or Mother or any other thing, the same nameless pervades the Universe (Amar Ādeśa P.3). If one takes such a liberal view, one should not utter a single word or do a single thing that strikes an unpleasant or harsh note in His universal symphony. Be a child, guileless, desireless and unworried about appearance or apparel, a digambara in fact! Similarly, don't worry about things, let the Almighty worry! Be an Atri-the sage who was free from greed, desire and avarice, for the word Atri means 'A-tri' 'not-three'. This trio may differ for different individuals. For some it may be power (सत्ता), for some it may be wealth (संपत्ति), for some it may be honour, fame or publicity (सन्मान/प्रतिष्ठा). But for God-blessed fortunate and real disciples of Datta, it may be Sat-Chit-Anand. Through God's grace such few lucky souls disregard mundane and physical allurements and reach celestial or spiritual heights.

Avadhūta is a sublime soul and considers others as such. His thoughts and deeds are divine and so he sees divineness everywhere and in every person and behaves as such ('Paraspara-Devo Bhava') "Invoke the Divine unto one another" is his principle. As he sees Divinity in others, he treats others as such. He is a source of strength for others though he himself remains unaffected. He inspires others to do beneficial things for the society but he himself is aloof. He guides others through ups and downs, whirlpools and rapids in the sea of the life and sets their sails in order without taking any credit for it nor keeping any personal attachment in it.

Rev. Raṅga Avadhūta was a real Avadhūta. He wanted people to be fearless and so led a rifle-shooting training programme. His inspiration could raise a temple for the Harijans while he would not allow gallons of edible oil to be wastefully poured on a Hanumāna idol but see that the oil is given to the needy tribals and poor villagers.

He was truly a revolutionary Saint and a thinker too. And that too in an unattached manner as prescribed in the Gītā by sliding away from the scene.

How far an ordinary man can be Avadhūta? Should he be one? An ordinary man has to live in the society and has to carry out its responsibilities. He cannot afford to go to a secluded place and stay there for long. What should he do then and why? The very premises of life are that a man has to go on in accordance with his circumstances. He cannot and should not try to escape responsibilities and duties towards his family and even the society. There is a way out and that's what the Gītā has pointed out.

Let's see how far we in ordinary life are away from being Avadhūta. We try to shake off our worries and shackles by facing them and finding a solution. In some cases, no solution is available and the harassing situation persists. Our world is circumscribed and so is that of Avadhūta. As the Gītā says, one cannot escape activity. Even Avadhūta has to eat and live and so there is 'Action' (Karma) of course, because he is away from the society or lives all alone, his needs and duties are

less in number but they are still there, and if action is there, its fruit will be there too. The Gītā enjoins us to do what is required. For activity is better than non-activity. Of course, one has to decide what one should do and what one should not. Social and other conditions create the needs, the scope and the restraints of activity.

Saint Rāmdāsa Samarth of Maharashtra has said, “Avoid what is despised in the world around and do what is expected”. The Gītā states ‘Karmanye vādhikāraṣṭe’. (कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते) (Gītā II.47) You are responsible for doing the job and should not bother about the result. Again you should not be the cause of the result. For if one takes a thing personally and does it, one is affected by the result. Emotion or self-interest makes the end either happy or unhappy. If you have no attachment, you are not affected by the fruit or the result just as while solving an example on profit and loss a/c, the resulting answer of profit and loss does not affect the person who solves the example. But in ordinary life, attitude of non-attachment (the position of a steadfast intellect (Sthitapragñā) of the Gītā (Ch.II-45 onwards) is not easy to develop. One has to apply oneself seriously and persistently to look at every job with detachment. Good result or bad, favourable or adverse have to be seen equally. For this, the Gītā lays down steps and details of ‘Yoga’. It is one’s own mind that is the main functionary. If one is interested personally, his mind

seeks a definite end and gets joy or sorrow as to the result. So the main thing is to control the 'mind' (thoughts or attitudes). Mind is very powerful and unrestrained and takes a long time to get controlled. For the control of mind, 'Yoga' has prescribed certain steps by which the activities of mind are slowly and gradually controlled. Mind is the cause of bondage or freedom. मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः (ब्रह्मसिंहप्रणित - २.३).

Thus, for ordinary people, the way to be Avadhūta is to develop non-attachment by controlling the mind. This is not difficult, for all of us know and do control our temper and even our thoughts. We channellise our interests and employ concentration. Meditation does help in controlling mind when it is achieved and could be transferred to life around. There is the famous illustration of king Janak who reigned his kingdom and yet was unattached and unaffected. How is this possible? An example is given here. A man was asked to take a round in the city with a pot full of purified butter (ghee) on his head, with specific instructions that not a drop of butter should spill out from the pot, he went from place to place taking care not to spill even a drop. At the end of the round, he was asked to state what he saw in the city. His answer was: I did not see anything because I was concentrating on the pot! This sort of concentration is inevitable for detachment. Attaining the position of a Sthitapragña is the goal to be reached for becoming Avadhūta!

We live in tension and so we would gain if we follow and practise this line of 'being and thinking' as given in the Gītā-the line of Yoga of a Sthitapragña.

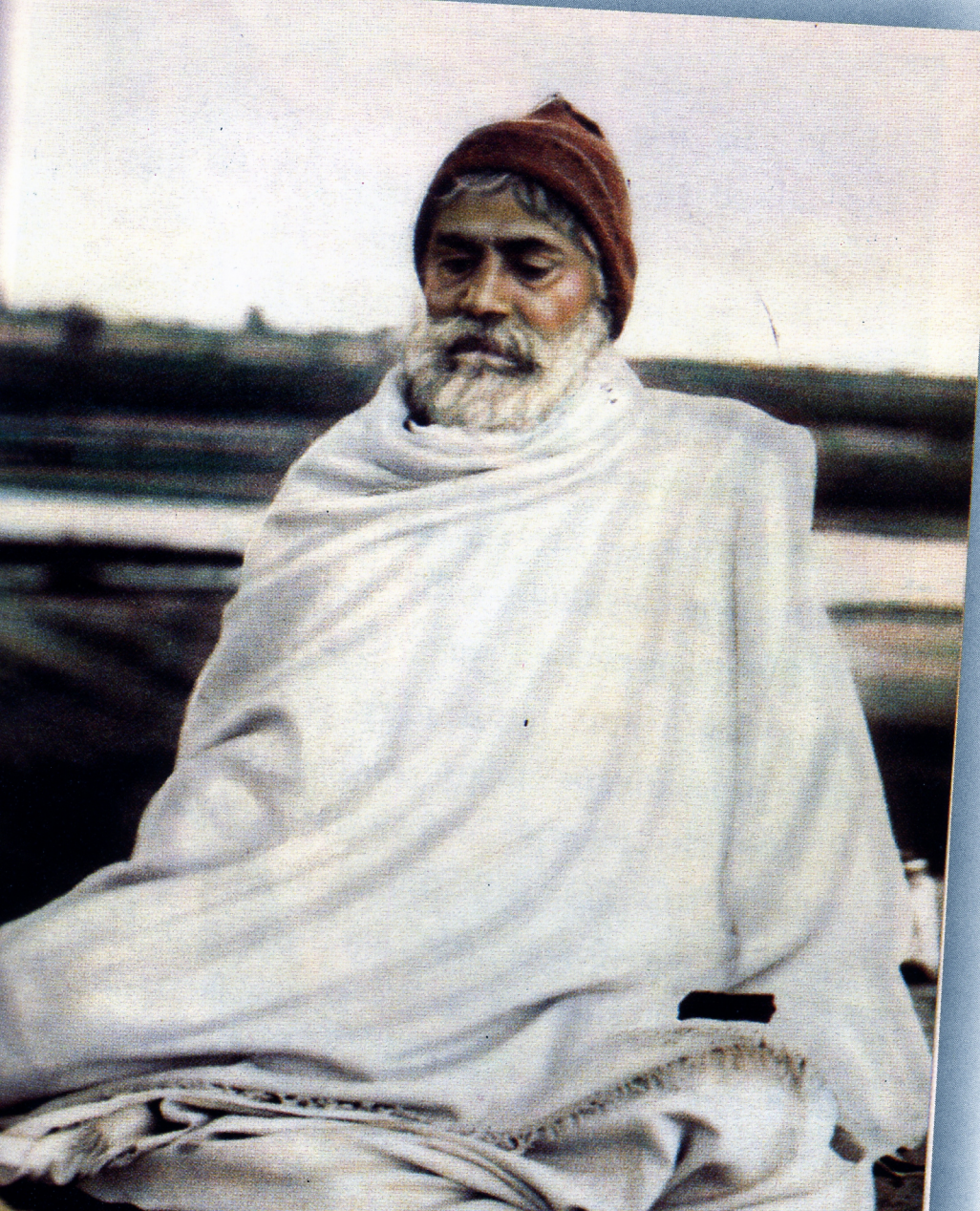
The Gītā, it may be noted is very critical about renouncing the world (Sañnyāsa). All necessary things are definitely to be done and there is no escape from it. They are to be done well but one should not take it personally as to the end as to the result whether joyful or sorrowful, happy or sad. Do not have unbridled desires, for desires are the source of all troubles. If desires are fulfilled, mind and body both suffer from the state of 'having and being'. If they are not, still there is suffering. Reduce personal desires so that greed, anger, envy and the like do not thrive. If they are not there, there is peace of mind. Do not leave your job or occupation but do it attentively and efficiently. Only keep in mind, 'you are not the real 'doer' (Kartā) in the sense that you are only called upon by circumstances to do this or that and any body else could have been in our place, Śrī Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna who did not want to kill his relatives, that he was only an instrument and not the real doer. Why should he take it personally and be proud of 'having done this or that?'

In fact, everyone is Avadhūta if one can throw away many things willfully. One has to do this 'throwing away' or 'shaking off' consciously, systematically with a view to achieve a higher spiritual status. All worldly activities are thus to lead to a higher behaviour more

concerned with an individual's spiritual growth. Man is a microcosm and the universe is 'macro'. Everything in the 'Macro' exists in a minute form in the 'micro'. So one has to foster the divine concept in himself and be in tune with the universal soul. This is possible through 'yoga' as laid down in the aphorism 'Nānyah panthāh vidyate'- There is no alternative.







CHAPTER VIII

REV. RAṄGA AVADHŪTA'S PRĀṆAYOGA AND ELIMINATION OF TENSION

Rev. Śrī Raṅga Avadhūta's advice is: "With every breath, repeat the name of Lord Dattātreya."

श्वासे श्वासे दत्तनाम स्मरात्मन्

Śvāse Śvāse Dattanāma Smarātman.

This, in a way is Prāṇayoga. (प्राणयोग.)

Life depends upon breathing. It is said that every living creature is born with a certain definite number of breathings during its life time. Whether true or not, breathing is the most important function of the physique, may be involuntary for that matter. As human beings are endowed with mind, intellect and faculty of thinking and reasoning, it is upto them to study one's own self and draw conclusions. If breathing is the be-all and end-all in life, how should it be properly regulated and employed? That's why Aryan way of life stresses on Prāṇāyāma. But though breathing is a must, Prāṇāyāma has some preliminary conditions to be adhered to. Prāṇāyāma follows 'Yama and Niyam'. Prāṇāyāma is physically a higher stage where human effort is involved and as such

it has its own goal. Physical well-being is the primary thing but a human being is not satisfied with the fulfilment of physical needs, his other cravings being spiritual ones. One has to raise one's spiritual status, try to know about divine life and experience it if possible.

In order to elevate one's life activities, one has to read, know and concentrate on the 'divine'. This is possible if there is some guide with His deeds in life that could attract human beings. The 'deeds' may be the pranks (līlā लीला) of Lord BālaKṛṣṇa, or exploits of Lord Rāma or benefactions of Lord Śaṅkara but they help in fixing the appearance as human beings could conceive. The Purāṇas speak human language and so Śrīmad Bhāgawata appeals to our imagination. So Rev. Raṅga Avadhūtājī suggests repeatedly chanting the name of Lord Datta, but why 'Datta'?

Śrī Datta is wellknown as Bhagavāna Dattātreya because it was Sage Atri who could get a son like Viṣṇu when the trio Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa turned into small babies before Mā Anasūyā. They stood before Atri and Anasūyā in their child forms and said that Viṣṇu would represent them as the child. So Atri's child is Datta which means given. Dattātreya means 'given to Atri'.

This narration is given to us with a purpose. One has to fulfil his or her obligations to others around. It is also given to see and strive for higher goals viz. from a human being to become God i.e. a divine spirit. That

is why Rev. Raṅga Avadhūta says, ‘परस्परदेवो भव’ Behave in a refined way towards one another, not only in thoughts and speech but in action too. This means one should not only be polite and humble subjectively but try to be helpful to others to raise their level of life towards higher stage in the cycle of birth and death. When you say ‘Datta’, you have got to be helpful to others. So ‘Datta’ really has two aspects: the subjective towards one’s own self and the objective towards others. Just as after completing any religious rite, the doer says, “Śrī Kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu” and adds, ‘idam na mama’ (इदं न मम). The first part means whatever I have done is dedicated to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It could be ‘Brahmārpaṇa’ ‘offered to Brahman’ as in the case of Vedic rituals. The second part means ‘This is not mine’. Compare this with the advice of the Gītā where Śrī Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna:

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥

Yatkarōṣi Yadaśnāsi Yajjuhoṣi Dadasi Yat |
Yattapasyasi kaunteya Tatkuruṣva Madarpaṇam ||

“Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, given away and whatever austerities you perform, surrender it, Oh son of Kuntī! as an offering to Me.” (Gītā IX.27). Thus one has to work for situations and obligations in life but surrender its fruits to one’s deity. For just as your life is ‘Datta’ (given), everything you do has got to be given or ‘Datta’ to others.

There is another side to this. One has to give back in fact go back to the desired deity. For this, one has to make special efforts. One of the approaches is that of 'Nāmayoga'- chanting repeatedly the name of the deity concerned either through a special Mantra or Spell of mere name as discussed earlier. Here we want to see how repeating the Name is done with every breath which is Prāṇayoga. Of course, in the beginning one has to speak the Name aloud and clearly so that others could hear. This will have to be done for a longer period every day and for a considerable period of time so that later the Name is uttered involuntarily and unconsciously. The next stage would be to chant repeatedly the Name with closed lips and moving tongue. This should go on for weeks before the third stage is practised, where there is no movement of lips or tongue. The repeatedly chanting is mental. This mental repeating should synchronise with breathing to form Prāṇayoga. Let's see how we breathe. When we inhale usually, we inhale with the nostrils, the breath goes into the nose and comes out. The span of activity and time is small and Name like 'Rāma' 'Kṛṣṇa' or 'Datta' could be repeated mentally with every breathing in and so too with every breathing out. Thus one can repeat the Name twice in one breathing cycle or Prāṇa. Even this much is fruitful as said below:

नका धरुं काहीं आस, राम जपा श्वासोश्वास ॥
 नाम श्वासोश्वसीं वसें, तेथें ब्रह्म उभे असे ॥
 ब्रह्माविष्णुमहेश नामीं लक्ष्य श्वासोश्वास ॥

श्री ब्रह्मचैतन्य महाराज गोंदवलेकर

Do not entertain any desire, breathe the Name of Rāma every time. Brahma stands before, where with every breathing, the name is repeated. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa are the goals kept in view with every breath.

Even with the small and easy efforts, one sees divine light and listens to the unbeaten sound, symphony follows and there is a link, between the sound and the shape of the deity. One may visualize 'Kṛṣṇa' in the form of light while merely repeating 'Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa' with every breath. Thus in Prāṇayoga, breathing is made divine. Some instructions could be availed of:

मन हीं मनमे जाप करि दर्पण उज्ज्वल होय
दर्शन होवे राम का तिमिर जाल सब खोच ।

Firstly, the Japa or continuous chanting has to be done mentally which requires concentration and involvement. The will to be very particular about the actual procedure helps in the effort. Secondly, the Japa should be full of harmony. The beats and breaths should go hand in hand. The rhythm and the speed should be constant and maintained at a convenient level. It must not vary. As a help to this, the beads of Rudrākṣa are usually employed. This rosary contains 108 beads. If so, one should count the number of beads required while inhaling and the same number of beads be taken as a span of time to exhale also. Thus, inhaling and exhaling become rhythmical and regularised. This seems to be simple but is very beneficial in the process

of synchronising breathing with the repeating of the name which is the heart of Prāṇayoga. For example, one may utter 'Rāma' once and count three beads while inhaling, three beads only be required to exhale as well as to repeat 'Rāma'. This will vary with every individual and the stage attained. Later, even one bead would be sufficient to utter 'Rāma'. It must be remembered that nothing should be done in a hurry, everything should be done meticulously. This will apply more precisely if the Mantra to be repeated is a big one like "Śrī Kṛṣṇa Śaraṇam mama" or "Digambarā Digambarā, Śrīpādavallabh Digambarā." Important thing is the rhythm in the activity as it is a yoga as such. This procedure will create a sort of mental and physical equilibrium and the practitioner feels a sort of tranquility without any use of tranquilisers. Prāṇayoga restores Prāṇa.

The Japa can be done at four or five different levels. The higher the level, the more the efficacy. Harita puts it as follows:

उच्चैस्त्वेकगुणः प्रोक्तो ध्वानो दशगुणः स्मृतः ।

उपांशुः स्याच्छतगुणः सहस्रो मानसः स्मृतः ॥

Uccaistvekagunaḥ prokto dhwāno dashgunaḥ smṛtaḥ;

Upāṁśuḥ syachatagunaḥ sahasro mānasah smṛtaḥ.

Japa practised aloud has an efficacy of a unit, Dhwāna has ten-fold efficacy. Upāṁśu or whispering one has hundred times while the mental one has a thousand-fold efficacy. The levels only mean that more

effort and co-ordination between uttering of the words and breathing process are to be achieved first consciously which after much practice would be regularly synchronised in an unconscious or even involuntary way. The Prāṇa becomes real yoga where Prāṇa (breathing) merges into yoga (Nāmayoga) of offering and breathing.

Next to the Japa done aloud, there is Dhvāna japa where murmuring sound of the Mantra is heard clearly. The listener after some time gets an idea about the words murmured. In Dhvāna, lips are kept closed and the tongue moves very slowly. Of course, attention be kept on the breathing speed and its time. No haste be done at any stage. The Prāṇa side is vital for living.

The next level is 'mental'. The 'Mantra' is uttered slowly, clearly only mentally while the speed and intensity of inhaling and exhaling are meticulously controlled.

Hitherto, there was duality of the 'Mantra' and the breathing. Could this two-fold activity be fused into one?

There is one more way in which Japa could be done where there is fusion of the two-fold activity. This can be named Prāṇayoga. When we inhale, slight sound could be heard. The same is true when we exhale. Thus breathing gives rise to a certain sound. This very sound of breathing could be considered as the Mantra concerned. This is called 'simulated' activity. Children play often this way. They make a sound from their mouth as if it were the sound of a starting car. In some cases, a child may produce a sound, which would exactly be

that of a starting engine or of its ignition. For the child, the simulated activity is the driving a car. When we were young, we used to imitate driving a railway engine. We would say, 'Kaśā sāthi poṭā sāthi, kaśā sāthi, poṭā sāthi' for that sort of sound is produced when the levers and the wheels of the locomotive move. The words in Marathi mean, 'With what purpose, for stomach' meaning 'why do the wheels of the railway engine move' and the reply, too, follows 'for stomach' meaning for satisfying hunger or physical needs. When one listens to a wire being sent on Morse's telegraph, one hears the sound 'kattakad-Kadkatt' and so on. Of course, the sender of the message means ABCD and the same are taken down by the listener at the other end. So much should our concentration and concurrence be there between the breathing and the sounds of the mantra. Then it is real Prāṇayoga. This will take time and effort but this, too, is possible. One may still go further and identify the air breathed with the Mantra itself. In short, the devotee has to train himself mentally, saturate emotionally and involve completely in the process of propitiation of the deity by recital of the Mantra. Practice alone is the criteria to success.

If there are levels to be reached, is there any period suggested for mastering each level? The following verse in Hindi makes a few suggestions.

आठ मास मुखसुं जपै सोलह मास कंठजाप ।
बत्तीस मास हिरदै जपै मनमें रहैं न पाप ॥

The oral one should be practised for eight months, the one from the throat for sixteen months, while the mantra should rise from the heart for thirty two months so that no sin remains there in the mind.

In other words, if there are only three levels as oral and aloud, from throat and whispering and soundless mental one, the unit is eight months, to be doubled at every higher level.

Still higher stage is to breathe from the navel. This has to be done for five years to attain success. The same is put in different words in the following:

पांच बरस जप नाभिसों रग रग बोलै राम ।
देह जीव निजभक्त दो पहुँचे हरि के धाम ॥

Some go a bit further. The inhaling is taken upto the navel and raised to the basin technically known as 'Brahmarandhra' or the plexus with a thousand petals (sahasradhar cakra). For it is this highest point in the human body that has to be activated to be one with the Almighty.

नाम उठा कर नाभिसूं गगनमांहि लै जाय ।
जहां होय परकाश सही, शुकदेव दिया बताय ॥

Śukadev, the Bālayogī, has pointed out that the Mantra should be produced from the navel and taken to the sky (brain) whereupon true light is seen.

It may be noted that it is better to practise Japa while meditating over the form, appearance, attributes and deeds of the deity concerned. This is called Dhyānayukta

Jāpa. Of course, the task is not easy and one is likely to get tired or bored or even irritated with slowness of progress. Whenever this happens, the following advice be followed.

जपाच्छ्रान्तः पुनर्ध्यायेत्, ध्यानाच्छ्रान्तः पुनर्जपेत् ।
जपध्यानाभिर्युक्तस्य क्षिप्रं योगः प्रसिद्ध्यति ॥

One tired of Japa, should start meditation and vice versa. One who is determined and engrossed in Japadhyāna, attains yoga successfully.

The yoga being 'Nāmayoga' in general and Prāṇayoga in particular where breathing synchronises with naming where primary function of the body (breathing) becomes attuned to the final goal (of uttering the name) and where Jīva, the vibrant part of the human existence becomes merged into the 'Brahma' or the cosmic whole known in popular terms as God or Almighty. With birth, Prāṇa (breathing) comes in but it is to be turned into Yoga (merging) with the Almighty by employing Prāṇayoga process. And herein lies Śrī Raṅga Avadhūta's approach where he suggests in broad terms the main activity of the Prāṇayoga in his preaching. 'Śvāse Śvāse Dattanāma Smarātman'. From Him you come, to Him you go and the key is the easiest and readily available. One is going to breathe whether one likes it or not. Then just little more efforts and make it fruitful. Only employ your mind which is always active to this benefactory purpose. Śrī Raṅga's greatness lies in this. He does not use

polemical discussions nor long lectures or voluminous pieces of advice. His words too are very simple meant for the simple men of this world who hardly enter into debate over any idea presented to them. The easier the idea put in easy and straight forward language, it catches attention and becomes effective. If you are a writer or if you have tried a hand at it, you will agree that big, clumsy, resounding words are easy to be employed but it requires real command over language to select the easiest and yet very effective and to the point words of expression. This is R̥tam̐bharā Pragñā ऋतंभरा प्रज्ञा intellect of the highest order which Raṅga Avadhūta had in abundance. So Prāṇayoga or breathing while uttering the name of the desired god head, is Śrī Raṅga's key to divine life.

Tension is a common complaint of busy and active men. This tension leads to sleeplessness and consequent use of sleeping pills. Whether you are in Bombay or Los Angeles, London or Leningrade, you have to face tension. Tension goes with complex worldly activities, situations which are beyond control, events that baffle individual planning and schedules that get shattered. Perhaps modern civilization with its crowds and traffic jams, demonstrations and strikes, accidents and calamities has given birth to this factor in urban human life. People in village working in fields and farms, do not have such complaints. This means the more man is away from natural atmosphere and pursuits, the more

he is exposed to tension. Again life of run and rush, of cravings and commitments, of rivalry and competition, of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' gives birth to tensions.

What's the way out? The first thing to be done is to avoid cravings. There is no objection in setting goals and planning projects but all this should be viewed objectively. The subjective factor of taking it too much to heart, getting excited and the like has to be minimized. One should try to be introvert and not think of personal gain or loss, joy or sorrow.

Some habits are required to be modified both in daily and long-term schedule. If one has to be in this materialistic world, its attractions and allurements, its envies and worries, let there be some time earmarked to be with Nature, to be away from the urban hubbub and the humdrum and to be all alone either sitting or moving amongst nature-birds and beasts, flowers and trees! Even this may not be possible but even if one is alone with the open sky above, if not an open landscape, it will do.

A few modifications in habits may help. If one is addicted to alcohol as it is often so in the West, one should avoid drinking at night. At least one may have some water and keep it in the mouth, move it this side and that and think of the alcohol and you'll have the taste of alcohol even with water. Of course, this is only a starting process and many efforts are necessary to get freedom from alcohol. If one can do away with

alcohol by having some soft drink at the scheduled time, this will modify the intensiveness.

Another effort should be cultivated to have deep breathing slowly. This helps in getting freed from rush of thoughts. Sipping water, sitting erect and the like help in making one quiet mentally. Of course, effort will have to be made to drive away thoughts. For this, thinking of a single topic or event or so may help. If one has faith in the Almighty, one should repeat the name and concentrate on some form. It matters little, whether one utters 'Christ', 'Lord', 'Allāh' or 'Kṛṣṇa' or 'Hare Kṛṣṇa.' This will help in keeping a reign on rushing thoughts. Thinking over details of the form of the saint or angel or godhead will increase the span of concentration. A secluded place, sitting in easy posture but erect with closed eyes especially in the early dawn and in the falling shadows will encourage the individual.

Śrī Rāṅga Avadhūta put all these various aspects of mental attention and effort in a philosophic way when he said:

‘Śvāse Śvāse Dattanāma Smarātman’

‘O soul, remember (Repeat) the name of Datta with every breath. Stepwise this will look as under:

(i) Sip water three times (only a little spoonful) and repeat the name of some godhead or saint or angel or your own Guru (preacher). This should be followed by deep breathing twice or thrice.

(ii) Be alone at a definite place and time (best between 4 to 6 a.m.) in the erect posture with eyes closed.

(iii) Repeatedly chant the name of the Deity silently and concentrate on the form the Deity, its dress and so on. For this, one may read the Bhāgawata, the Bible or the Holy Kūrāna or anyother work of the kind.

(iv) Concentrate on breathing, increase its span both of inhaling and exhaling as the days go by.

(v) With more time to breathing, repeat the name of the deity as often as would synchronise with the time of breathing.

For example, if you say 'Rāma' once while inhaling, repeat it while the breath is inside and you should finish exhaling with utterance of 'Rāma' once.

This is Prāṇayoga and must not be overdone. Master breathing, its span and the utterance.

(vi) Let the breathing be involuntary, unmarked, natural while utterance of the name of the deity continues.

(vii) Life is breathing and so Prāṇayoga ultimately is concerned with harmonising individual life with the cosmic one.

(viii) Once you reach a stage when your vibrations are in tune with those of the cosmic one, you have attained the goal. Your frequency will be the same as that of the Lord or the saint or the angel or the godhead concerned. Beyond that is the Almighty the cosmic soul-the Summum Bonum or Mokṣa.

The real thing is a devoted approach. There are instances where the devotee is so much absorbed in the deity that the devotee expects the deity to do jobs for him. In the case of Narsimha Mehta, a devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa from Gujarat, Lord Kṛṣṇa puts on the apparel of a rich bania and provides the expected gifts to the in-laws of Narsimha Mehta's daughter who was pregnant.

In the case of Dāmāji of Maharashtra who had to deposit a certain amount in the treasury, Viṭṭhala, a form of Lord Kṛṣṇa, becomes a Harijana messenger and deposits the amount in the treasury.

But a strange story is wellknown about Dādu Bhagat. He used to repeatedly take the name of Śrī Hari, counting with the help of a rosary beads. This was his routine throughout the day. Once he did not carry the rosary with him whereupon some one asked as to why was he not carrying the rosary and why was he not taking the Name of God?

Dādu's reply was as under:

I used the rosary to count the number of times I took the Name of Śrī Hari. Then I used my fingers to count the numbers. Later on I stopped counting and only my tongue moved. Now a stage has come when my name is repeated by Śrī Hari Himself and I am resting. The lines were as under:

माला जपो, कर जपो, जिन्हा जपो श्री राम;
सुमिरन मेरो हरि करे, मैं पावा विश्राम.

Mālā japo, kara japo,
Jivhā japo Śrī Rāma;
Sumiran mero Hari kare,
Maim pāvā viśrāma.

Repeat the Name on the rosary or the fingers of hand; repeat the Name of Śrī Rāma by tongue. But now Hari is reciting my name and I am resting.

In fact here the devotee and the Deity merge into one another. The micro has merged into the macro or the cosmic.

In short, one should go on chanting repeatedly the Name of the God or Deity of one's choice and concentrate on it so that the powers of the Deity are attracted into the body of the devotee.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has said:

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

Svalpamapyasya Dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt ॥

Even a little practice of this discipline protects one, from great fear (of birth and death) (Gītā: II.40).

Let this material about Rev. Raṅga create in us Raṅga or attachment for divine life (devabhāva) as suggested in 'PARASPARADEVO BHAVA.' INVOKE THE DIVINE UNTO ONE ANOTHER.

Let us repeatedly chant the mantra heard in all the places of Datta worship viz.

“Digambarā Digambarā Śrīpādavallabha Digambarā”

Śrī Raṅga Svarūpa, Śrī Dattah Prasanno'stu

Let Datta in Śrī Raṅga form bless us.

AVADHŪTACINTAN ŚRĪGURUDEVADATTA

Om Śāntih ! Śāntih !! Śāntih !!!

Peace Physical ! Peace Mental !! Peace Spiritual !!!

ॐ

श्री दत्तः प्रसन्नोऽस्तु

श्वासे श्वासे दत्तनाम स्मरात्मन्

परस्परदेवो भव



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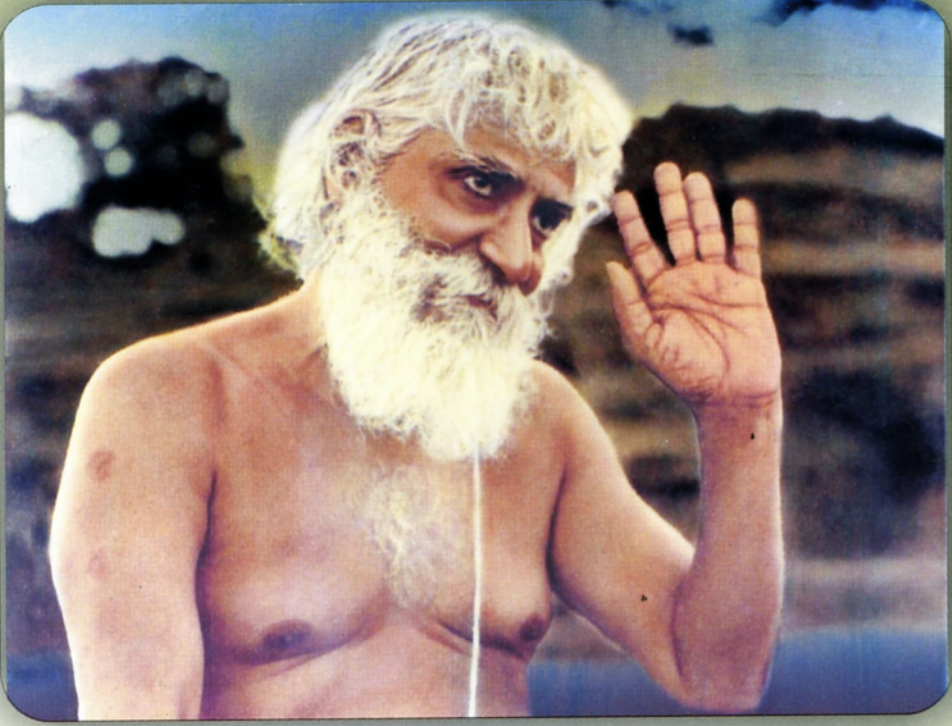
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वैराणिं प्रशमं यान्तु सौहार्दं वर्धतां मिथः ।
कलहा विलयं यान्तु भावयन्तु जना मिथः ॥
ॐ शांतिः शांतिः शांतिः

Vairāṇim Praśamaṁ Yāntu Sauhārdam Vardhatām Mithah |
Kalahā Vilayaṁ Yāntu Bhāvayantu Janā Mithah ||

May enmities be tranquilised, Friendliness be thriven,
Quarrels be desolved, And Love supreme be prevailed.

Om ! Let Divine Peace Prevail.

Peace Physical ! Peace Mental !! Peace Spiritual !!!

World Friend,
RĀṄGA AVADHŪTA

OM
MESSAGE ETERNAL

|| PARASPARADEVO BHAVA ||

INVOKE THE DIVINE UNTO ONE ANOTHER

Look at one another with Divine-Eye, Not with devil's look.
Feel the Divine Attribute in Each-one
and

Wishing welfare mutually, bestow welfare all around !
Practise integrity in Thought, Speech and Action.
Bless each-other, Corse not. Wish well, Wicked not.
Do good, Crooked not ! Supporter be, Exploiter not.
Saviour be, Detrimental not.

Helpful be, Harmful not. Speak less, Do more.
Keep head cool, Let there be warmth in hands and feet.
Cultivate tolerance towards everyone, Not hatred !
Speak always Truth, Falsehood never.

Virtuous deeds always do, Wicked never.
Wish welfare everyone's, Not only to ownself !
Look always at own faults, Praise always others' merits.
Earn your bread by self labour always !
One the tongue Eternal Almighty's Name,
With hands noble deeds and

In the heart a resolute courage Hanumanji- like,
Rush forward and forward sure.

Success is yours ! Success yours is !
Vairāṇīm Praśamaṁ Yantu Sauhārdam Vardhatām Mithah |
Kalahā Vilayaṁ Yantu Bhāvayantu Janā Mithah ||
May enmities be tranquilised, Friendliness be thriven,
Quarrels be dissolved, And Love supreme be prevailed.
Om ! Let Divine Peace Prevail.

Peace Physical ! Peace Mental !! Peace Spiritual !!!

World-Friend,

RAṄGA AVADHŪTA