

[A Yogi Worth Watching](#)

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INTERVIEW

A Yogi Worth Watching

Shivarudra Balayogi may be a new face in the public eye, but he's been around a long time, preparing in austerity for a world-roaming mission

When the famous Sri Sri Sri Shivabalayogi passed away in 1994, meditators around the world wondered who would take his place. The suspense slowly subsided as Shiva Rudra Balayogi, Shivabalayogi's close disciple since 1974, humbly emerged as his qualified successor. In December, 2000, after years in secluded meditation, Shiva Rudra Balayogi formally began teaching yoga in India and abroad. Thousands have been inspired by his influence. Recently, amidst the intensity of one tour after another, the gracefully graying savant found a peaceful moment to chat with Hinduism Today correspondent Rajiv Malik in New Delhi. Here are highlights from that interview:

On a yogi's youthful aspiration

Since childhood I had been inspired by the teachings of great saints. Although my family was economically well-off, and I had loving parents, brothers and sisters, I always felt that I was missing something. Then I met a devotee of Sri Shivabalayogi. I was sixteen years old. He told me about his guru who lived in Bangalore. I was impressed. Six days later, Shivabalayogi came to Mysore. When I saw him I was instantly drawn to him. It was such an inexplicable experience. Three years after that, in 1974, Shivabalayogi accepted me as his disciple and sent me to Dehradun. For the next twenty years, I learned from him and did sadhana, religious discipline, for long hours.

On the practice of great austerity

Although I did sadhana for many years with my guru when he was alive, what transformed me most happened after his mahasamadhi (the great death of a saint) in 1994. At that time, I was so disturbed that he was gone that I fell into depression. I went to Mysore to visit Chamundi Hills there. This was a place of solitude, a lovely spiritual place. I sat down for meditation and became deeply absorbed for three days. During this time, my guru appeared to me in a vision. He said that

for twenty years I had served him well, and that if I did five more years of tapas, religious austerity, I would achieve nirvikalpa samadhi (ultimate meditation). Initially, I was not interested and took it casually. But several months later I had a very strong experience. I was performing havan, sacred fire ceremony, when out of the fire my guru ethereally appeared with all this glowing and dazzling light around him. He told me that five days after that he would make me begin sitting for five years of tapas to attain union with the Divine.

My mind became very quiet and silent. I did not speak to anybody in the ashram about this, because I myself did not know if it would really happen. But five days later, after the evening worship service, he appeared again. He applied the sacred Hindu mark on my forehead, pressed it gently and led me by the hand to a secluded room. I lost consciousness. For two days I was completely absorbed in meditation. The people in the ashram with me worried that I was not opening my eyes and was not taking food. When I came out of meditation, General Anoop Singh, a leading disciple of my guru, came forward and told me that he and the others would look after the ashram, and that I should carry on with the continued sadhana. After that, my Guruji would appear before me in vision about once a month, usually on the full moon day. He guided me. For five years I continued this tapas, until on November 10, 1999, it ended.

On wisdom gained and ego lost

Once one has completed tapas, the mind settles down completely into the Self. There is a great calm. Effortlessly, this calm remains, even when we talk, walk and move. Hence, an automatic sadhana is going on.

Parabrahma means: "the great God beyond all imagination." When the mind gets absorbed in this Parabrahma as a result of continuous meditation and tapas, the mind stops. Even after meditation, the mind will not move or run. It does not imagine, and it does not absorb. Thus always, effortlessly, the samadhi continues.

God does not come from the imagination of the human mind. The humanmind comes from God. The mind is our clue in the search for God. If we concentrate our mind and allow it to penetrate, we will experience God. We will see that God is all-pervading.

Everyone who practices sadhana and tapas will discover many wonderful things, but there is a danger to spiritual progression. When a person thinks to himself that he has become learned or accomplished, he becomes egotistical. The process of learning should

never stop. Whatever we have achieved on this Earth is only a fraction of what we could have achieved. So we must always keep the attitude that we are learning. Ego stops the learning.

In my personal spiritual life, my guru is everything. When he appears in a vision, he is solid and real. He is as real as someone physically standing in front of me now. It was because of him that I was able to do tapas. In the beginning I was not so sure that I would be able to sit for so many hours. But when it started, it went on successfully— all because of my guru.

On teaching

Since June of 2000 I have been touring different places, carrying the message of my guru. I am the spiritual heir of Shivabalayogi, although other disciples are carrying on the mission work by singing bhajanas (devotional songs). We are all working together to spread his philosophy.

I would like to take some disciples, but they will have to

do tapas. They will have to continue meditation for longer periods of time and have determination for enlightenment.

The meditation technique I have been taught is to concentrate between the eyebrows with the eyes closed. Without repeating any mantras, I concentrate the mind and the psyche in this way. This leads to samadhi.

I am frequently asked: "Why do we require a guru when we can do sadhana on our own?" The guru has first-hand knowledge. He can also make you to do the necessary disciplines when you don't want to do them. He can inspire you. He can be your guiding light. He can stand by you when you really need help.

On corporal punishment

I feel that the physical beating of children should be avoided at all times. We should try to train the children by emphasizing discipline within their minds. Constantly, we must teach them through example.

Simply punishing a child will not change him. Children in such cases are more likely to become more stubborn and lose their path of righteousness. I am totally against beating the children like this.

Beware of the children. They will observe you and your behavior more than they will listen to what you say or tell them to do. My guru taught me that my behavior should be such that others would assume I was a monk. We should teach the younger generation through our behavior. With love and affection we can win over anyone, particularly children. Also, we should try to convey the idea that discipline is not bondage. Discipline is an exercise which can make us perfect in our personality and shape our character. We want our children to become great. But we don't want to lose them in the process.

On respect for women

Abuse of women is also a very bad thing. Women should not be abused. A husband and wife should be fond of each other and respect each other's sentiments. They should try to adjust to each other. Whenever

required, both should try to sacrifice their egos. The woman is physically weaker than the man. When a person is physically weaker, that person should be helped and protected not abused. A man should never abuse his physical power over a woman.

I am against dowry also. A marriage should take place between two human beings that come together to live happily and peacefully in their love and affection. There should be no business attached. Dowry is business.

On temple worship

In our Hindu scriptures we are taught to worship. Along with this we are taught that God is all pervading. God is like space—only defined by limits. If you have ever tried to give an explanation of all pervading space to a small child, you know how very difficult it is to make children understand these kinds of things. To this child you may define space as something that exists between the four walls of a room. But how do you explain that the space also goes through the walls and pervades all. Let the child sing bhajana in the temple. The aim is to bring one-pointedness.

We must acquire good impressions within the mind and in this way temple samskaras (religious ceremonies producing positive subconscious impressions) definitely help. Also allegorical stories are used to make impressions. But the best impressions come from meditation. For instance, if you read the Ramayana to a person who does not meditate, he may only see the villain of the drama. But if he gains control of his mind through meditation, he will be able to absorb the story correctly and discriminate in a proper way to bring out the real knowledge.

As we grow up, we are supposed to understand and gain the knowledge and wisdom of the deeper meaning behind things. Ultimately, we should see God everywhere. The scriptures say this, and they tell us how to do it. Our scriptures offer so many ways to worship, perform puja, religious ceremony, offer flowers, chant God's names and sing bhajanas. The basic aim is to give the mind one-pointedness every step along the way. The mind is constantly craving. But when it is brought to a single point, it gets concentrated and introverts. Ultimately, this brings Realization. There are different terms for this: Moksha,

Nirvana, Realization, God Realization, Self Realization.

Corruption of society and materialism

Ultimately, it is our own character that will help us stand and face the challenge of trouble. This is one of the important reasons for the performance of sadhana. Sadhana builds character. To achieve mastery of the mind, we must restraint ourselves, keep ourselves composed under pressure and during suffering. Those who cannot or will not do this usually take the wrong path toward corruption. By sadhana I mean not only meditation, but other religious practices as well, like japa, puja and bhajana. But the best sadhana is meditation.

Scientists have said that the Earth has always had enough resources and will continue to have

enough resources to meet the true needs of mankind—the need, not the greed. The real needs of society are not really that great—just some food and some respectable clothing. These needs should be easily satisfied. The problem comes when we succumb to greed. If we practice meditation, the restraint of greed is not so difficult. We gain the power to apply our brains in a proper way. We make ourselves fit to judge and discriminate between right and wrong. Wonderful results can occur.

On today's youth: a plan of action

It is really very difficult for the present day generation of youth. They have hardly any faith in the system of religion and spirituality. Our great rishis from ancient times have given various exercises to control the body. When we can control the body, we can control the mind. When the mind is in control, we are able to observe a code of conduct. "Conduct" here means

consideration for others. If our youth are practicing these three things perfectly, they will become fine people of great character. But one other thing is very important: Determination. My guru once told me: "Go into that room and meditate. Don't come out until you have reached the goal." This is not to say that we should die trying to achieve some goal, but that we should resolve ourselves with determination so that we are willing to put in every possible effort to achieve some worthy end. The younger generation should be determined in this way in all that they do.

On his mission

My chief mission in life is to teach meditation for mind control and Self Realization. I emphasize dedication and discipline. I can say honestly that all efforts made can bring miracles, if there is faith in oneself and God. This human life is a rare gem and must not be wasted. All of the scriptures say

this.

I have been reading this beautiful magazine, Hinduism Today. I am very impressed. This magazine is providing a great service to society. It is a torch bearer. And it is a leading guide for today's Hindu youth who demand to understand what religion is and why they should follow it.

I am very happy and content in this life. I have been so blessed. God has always graced me. But I have benefited most from hardship and difficulty. These things have given me more determination to rise up.

It is difficult to predict exactly what the future will bring. This will depend on disciples. I pray for divine grace. I will do this work until the last breath of my life.

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