Shivabalayogi: 'I am Here, Always.'
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His Holiness, Shri Shivabalayogi Maharaj, attained the final samadhi on Monday, March 28, 1994, at a private hospital in Kakinada, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh. Shri Swamiji's body had been suffering since his detention in Kuwait (August, 1990) [see Hinduism Today, Oct., 1990], especially the infected right foot and failed kidneys, which required dialysis for the last three years.

His body succumbed to heart failure at 1:47pm. Moments before his death there was a great glow in Swamiji's body, so bright that the devotee who saw it, Mr. Ramlingeshwara of Adivarapupeta, felt that he could not tolerate so much light. But he was holding Swamiji's left hand and thought that this contact allowed him to bear the intensity. Swamiji smiled very pleasantly, then his body suddenly relaxed. Others in the room reported they continued to see the radiance. As Swamiji had repeatedly stated and as is the way of the great saints, Shri Shivabalayogi left his body intentionally and consciously.

Swamiji's body was taken to nearby Adivarapupeta where he was seated in yogic posture for public darshan. However, the mahasamadhi pujas and interment ceremonies were delayed for five days due to trance messages received throughout India [see sidebar, page 26] saying that Swamiji was trying to reenter his body. Several exact times were given for Swamiji to return. When he did not return, a new message would come through giving the next possible time. Devotees at the ashram held a continuous vigil of bhajan and meditation waiting for each moment Swamiji said he would return. Finally, late Friday night a decision was reached-and confirmed through trance-to perform the mahasamadhi ceremonies the next day. Despite the tropical heat and no effort to preserve the body other than shade, it showed none of the usual effects of death throughout this period, according to ashram devotees.

The mahasamadhi pujas were performed on the afternoon of Saturday, April 2. Swamiji's body was laid to rest at the Adivarapupeta ashram in a yogic posture facing North. His jata, matted locks of hair, and personal items were installed in a Sivalingam shrine at the Bangalore ashram on Sunday, April 10.

Swamiji's Life and Mission

On August 7, 1949, when Shiva Bala Yogi was just 14 years old, Lord Siva Himself initiated him into what was to become twelve years of deep yoga tapas (austerity). Swamiji recalls, "I had peeled a palmyra fruit. All of a sudden, I saw a light emerging from the fruit. Simultaneously there was the sound of Aum. The fruit disappeared, and there was a Linga in my hand. The Aum continued all the while and the Siva Linga continued to emit the same dazzling light. It broke into two half pieces and a Jangam Devar (spiritual seeker dedicated to Lord Siva) appeared before me. He sat me down and placed my feet in the correct position for meditation. He told me to close my eyes and tapped me at the bhrikuti (the spot between the eyebrows). I immediately lost outer consciousness and went into deep samadhi. I became totally unaware of my body and my surroundings. All I could see was the Linga. All I could hear was the Aum."

His tapas-23 hours of daily meditation for eight years and 12 hours of daily meditation for four years-was completed in 1961, when he began his life of spiritual service. He has initiated more than three-million spiritual aspirants into meditation, established more than 50 ashrams in India and Sri Lanka and travelled at a relentless pace to fulfill his guru's mission. "Siva is my guru," explained Swamiji.

Swamiji stressed personal meditation and realization and called religion "spiritual politics." His ministry had four elements: 1) giving darshan in samadhi; 2) dispensing blessed vibhuti to heal all forms of disease; 3) using spiritual songs to induce bhava samadhi [see sidebar]; and 4) initiating people into dhyana (meditation). This was the mission his Divine Guru instructed him to carry out.

Swamiji leaves four trusts, one in India, one in the UK and two in the US, which shall continue his work. On successorship, Swamiji proclaimed in a trance message, "I have no need for a successor, because I am not dead. My mission will now continue at a much faster pace. If someone wants to do 12 years of tapas like I did,

then we can think about a successor." Reported By Tom Palotas, India.

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Bhava Samadhi: Inner Encounters With Shivabalayogi

Bhava (literally: "becoming, turning into") can be translated as trance. Samadhi is a spiritually advanced state of consciousness in which one is so absorbed in inner states as to lose all awareness of time and form. Bhava samadhi, as taught by Swamiji, describes when a higher spirit or astral body enters one's physical body and places a person in trance. The depth of the trance varies, but it is quite common to lose all body consciousness. People in trance may dance ecstatically or move around seemingly erratically-it depends upon the spirit in them. What is common to all in bhava samadhi is the feeling of spiritual bliss.

Shivabalayogi has used bhava samadhi as a primary method of transforming people's consciousness since the beginning of his mission. Now that he has left his physical body behind, the trances seem to be occurring more than ever. His devotee Tom Palotas explains, "Those who are blessed with bhava by Swamiji receive several invaluable benefits: diseases are cured; God-consciousness is instilled; the ego sense is subdued and is replaced by a spirit of surrender to the will of God; an absolute and implicit faith in God is instilled; and pain and misery, mental or physical, are removed."

Devotees Recount Post-Samadhi Experiences of Swamiji

I was meditating in front of his body before the mahasamadhi puja. In my meditation, Swamiji came and hugged me with both his arms and blessed me, saying, "Don't be afraid. I am here, always."-Mr. Munivenkatapa, Bangalore

During the puja, I went into trance and saw him going for the purnahuti, conclusion, of the homa and giving darshan in the hall. It was as though he was conducting the program as he always does.-Ms. Annasurya, Bangalore

Swamiji came in trance and for over an hour gave instructions about the Shivalingam to be installed at the mahasamadhi shrine in Bangalore. "You should not think that Swamiji is not here," he said.-Mrs. Jhun Jhun Wala, Bangalore

Swamiji said, "Nothing has happened. I have only left my physical body."-Mr. Rama Mohan Rao, Bangalore

The day before the mahasamadhi puja, I woke up and heard Swamiji beating his stick on the gate as he always did. I went out and saw Swamiji. After some time, I did namaskar to him and he vanished.-Koty, Bangalore.