

CHAPTER 5

EXPERIENCES IN MEDITATION

To better understand what happens immediately after receiving *śaktipāta* initiation, the personal narratives of recipients of *śaktipāta* will be presented.¹ The various kinds of gross and subtle manifestations which take place in the body and mind of the seekers can be classified into four broad categories as follows:

- (1) Perception of light, various colors and different figures.
- (2) Visual perception (*darśana*) of Gods, Goddesses or scenes of nature.
- (3) Expression of inner sentiments through laughter, crying, chanting of *mantras*, singing, roaring, etc.
- (4) Various physical activities such as trembling, swaying, *āsanas* and *mudrās*.

Under each category the seekers' experiences will be narrated in their own words and a scientific explanation of the subtle processes underlying the seekers' manifestations will be made.

(1) Perception of light, various colors and different figures.

a) "When my mind was all concentration, a bright point of light was seen at a far distance. As I fixed my eyes on that luminous point, it gradually got bigger and bigger and moved in front of me. When it came within two arms' length from me I fixed my gaze on it and in the bright light I had the *darśana* (sight) of Revered Śrī Gurujī in it. After a short while the light disappeared."(H.I.I.)

b) "Through this beneficial experience of meditation I felt peace descending upon my mind. At first I saw a bright sun-like circle flashing on the background of a dark patch. This was followed by yellow, green, purple and finally faint rosy colors. Green, the main color, was perceptible for a comparatively longer period. For a short while, it seemed as if a layer of faint green was before me."(A.R.T.)

c) "A lemon-colored ball was seen before the eyes. Then the lemon color changed to orange. After a short while a belt of green colour appeared. I was not in full control of my mind." (A.R.T.)

d) "Various colors, figures and flowers were seen. There was a preponderance of purple and reddish colors." (C.C.P.)

¹ The experiences narrated in this chapter are the very first meditational experiences of seekers after receiving *śaktipāta* from Swāmī Kṛpālvānad. __Ed.

e) "I had *bhastrikā prāṇāyāma* (bellows blowing breath) three or four times. Then I saw a luminous vacuum that changed colors. First yellow, then white and afterwards sky-blue. This lasted for a very long time. Mentally I was at peace and my emotions were perfectly calm." (G.P.J.)

f) "At first a light like a flame was visible. This was followed by green, yellow and sky-blue colors. A cluster of stars appeared shining. Then flashes of lightning were seen." (S.S.D.)

g) "Waves of brownish luminous rays were seen emanating before my eyes just as waves arise when a stone is dropped into still water. The waves assumed different colors." (R.M.S.)

h) "In the beginning a sort of foggy atmosphere appeared. Then the atmosphere cleared somewhat and a sort of round light was visible. This light looked white, yellow or sky-blue and it formed various shapes. Sometimes lightning flashes appeared." (V.K.D.)

The process underlying these experiences:

Many seekers see bright lights, different colors and various geometrical designs during spontaneous meditation after the release of *prāṇa* energy. Such experiences occur as the result of subtle processes of *prāṇa* in different regions of the body.

The human body is made up five *mahābhūtas* (major elements), viz., earth, water, fire, air and ethereal elements. Each of them is said to govern specific regions of the body.

The region from the big toes to the thighs is considered to be the region of the earth element. The region above the thighs and extending to the navel is considered to be that of water. Between the navel and the heart is the region of the fire element. The air element is between the heart and the eyebrows and above that to the crown of the head is the region of the ether element.

During spontaneous meditation when the released *prāṇa* energy locates itself in any one of the bodily regions governed by the five major elements, the seeker automatically begins to see lights and colors as well as the geometrical design within them. When the *prāṇa* is located in the region of earth, the seeker visualizes yellow colors. When it is located in the region of water, the seeker sees colorless or white and bright light. Location of *prāṇa* in the regions of fire or air elements results in the visions of red or smoky colors, respectively. But when *prāṇa* is located in the region of the ethereal element, the seeker sees colors like green, blue, brown and purple.

Thus by the location of *prāṇa* in different regions of the five major elements in the body, different colors and lights are seen. These colors or lights are sometimes

seen in a single broad spread or may, at other times, be seen in the shape of geometrical designs.

(2) Visual perception (*darśana*) of Gods, Goddesses or scenes of nature

a) “The colors seen yesterday were not seen in today’s meditation. Today I got visual glimpses of different saints passing before me, one after another. My mind was experiencing a deep calm.” (B.N.J.)

b) “While in meditation, I saw some divine light, which I was absorbed in observing. While I was about to speak out, I saw the circle of a large lotus approach me. In the lotus itself was Lord *Kṛṣṇa* and *Śrī Rādhājī*. Guru Swāmī Kṛpālu was also seated beside them. Then I saw a chain of *Om mantra* issuing out of the mouth of Revered Śrī Swāmī Kṛpālu and it extended as far as the eye could reach. Then it seemed to come back and all the *Oms* re-entered the mouth of Gurujī Pointing his finger to Śrī Gurujī, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* told me, ‘Son, this is the person. He will remove all your miseries.’ (J.P.J.)

c) “My meditation started with crying. I saw the child form of Lord *Kṛṣṇa*. I took the child in my lap, pressed him to my heart and said, ‘Lord, I am Thine’. Then I had Him drink some milk. After this, the Lord went to graze the cows. Again I started shedding tears from the pangs of separation. Again the child returned. I was musing about the line of a song, ‘His form is decorated with peacock feathers.’ I offered Him some food, butter, broth, bread, etc. But there was not much sugar in the butter, and so the child *Kṛṣṇa* said ‘There is no sugar in the butter’. So I asked the opinion of His friend, *Madhu*. Then the Lord said sharply, ‘Then why not feed him?’ I then put a fistful of sugar in the butter and fed the Lord with my own hand. I wiped His mouth, gave Him water to drink and ended the meal with a mint.”(P.M.)

d) “While remembering the name of Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, my mind became concentrated. Then a green sylvan forest was seen with a big image of Lord *Kṛṣṇa* playing on his flute. A cow and a peacock were standing nearby. I was watching them with no sense of time.” (V.C.P.)

e) “Through the circles of thick green, blue and red colors a scene from the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Indian Scripture) unfolded before my eyes. *Lakśmaṇa* (*Rāma*’s brother) lay mortally wounded with an arrow. Lord *Rama* was wailing by the side of the unconscious *Lakśmaṇa*. I, too, could not check my tears seeing that tragic sight. In a short time, I saw *Hanumānjī* return from a mountain with a life-giving herb. He was giving out loud roars. I also joined in his roaring. As the physician administered the life-giving herb to *Lakśmaṇa* he regained consciousness. A wave of joy spread all over the place. Then I told *Hanumānjī*, ‘Please come to my side.’ Granting my humble request, he came near me. Immediately on his approach I began to tremble and shake all over. I felt as if he had entered my body. While I was looking at him there was so much dazzling light that nothing else was visible. I was a bit frightened. But the next moment I saw the standing figure of dear *Bapu*”

all wreathed in smiles. I bowed to him and he said, 'Have the *darśana* (sight) to your heart's content.' Then, the dazzling light disappeared." (G.I.B.)

The process underlying these experiences:

In order to understand why a seeker gets such visions during meditation, one must first comprehend how different scenes or forms are created before the mind's eye. Ordinarily, impressions gathered in the past remain stored in the memory. When one is reminded of such past mental impressions, the senses or forms pertaining to those persons, objects or places are produced on the mental screen. So one of the centers giving rise to visions is the memory center. Another center is that of imagination. The faculty of memory has a limited sphere, since it helps in depicting only past impressions. But the sphere of the faculty of imagination is very wide because it can cross the barriers of past, present, as well as future. Sometimes both these centers function jointly, while at other times they function independently.

Modern psychology accepts two types of mind: the conscious and the subconscious. But ancient Indian psychology accepts the existence of only one mind. However, it is said to have two broad states: the extroverted mind and the introverted mind. Normally, one is well-acquainted with the activities of the extroverted mind, but knows or understands very little about the functioning of the introverted mind. Perhaps that is why modern psychology called the introverted mind the subconscious mind.

In the wakeful state, the conscious mind is also able to create scenes or visions. It tries to ponder over an object or a person or a scene with the aid of the faculty of memory. For example, a poet, writer, painter, musician, sculptor, dancer, orator and all those who do their work with deep contemplation or concentration produce the desired visions before their mind's eye. But these visions of the conscious mind are not as clear and impressive as those generated by the introverted mind. During spontaneous meditation, such introversion is easily produced by the released *prāṇa* energy.

If a seeker ponders any object, person or scene during meditation, he sees them as visions as soon as his mind accomplishes the required degree of fixation. As water turns into ice due to the required degree of coolness, thought waves also get converted into visions by means of the required degree of mental fixation. Thus thoughts become visions.

Usually those thoughts which are strong get converted easily into visions. Strength of thought will again depend upon the strength of the past impression that an object, person or scene has left upon the seeker's mind. Generally, a person in whom one has great faith and love easily becomes the subject of deep contemplation on the part of the seeker. Perhaps this is why most spiritual seekers easily visualize the image of their gurus, beloved saints or various forms of God.

(3) Expression of inner sentiments through laughter, crying, chanting of *mantrās*, singing, roaring, etc.

a) “I could not keep my body erect. It slumped to the ground. It was a very intense and pleasant experience. I could not help crying. There was a trembling sensation all over my body.” (G R.M.)

(b) “In the state of meditation, the body seemed to be rising up automatically and the sound of ‘*Hari Om*’ came forth. The atmosphere was full of light.” (R.D.)

c) “There was intense pain in my heart and I burst out crying. Then the crying stopped and the movement of my head increased. Legs that were crossed got themselves loosened and were stretched. I fell down and sat up. Then I started crying again.” (S.K.P.)

d) “While in the meditative state I felt as if I were hearing the faint tunes of a flute. This made me laugh.” (K.H.P.)

e) “There was a trembling sensation in my body which subsided when I chanted the name of Lord *Śiva*. So I continued chanting the name of Lord *Śiva*. My body was lying flat before this chanting began. Later I sat up and began chanting the name of the Lord.” (G.Z.P.)

f) “While in the state of meditation my body started rocking I longed to dance like *Mīrābāī* (a female saint known for her devotional songs and dances to Lord *Kṛṣṇa*). But being conscious of the other people around me I desisted from dancing. Had I been alone, I would have indulged myself in a meditational dance and would have sung devotional songs also.” (S.K.G.)

g) “I started tumbling and gnashing my teeth. Then I felt as if Lord *Kṛṣṇa* was passing through the sky in a chariot. So I shouted, “Let me come, let me come.” But the Lord did not allow me. So I started shouting again, but the Lord disappeared. Then there were lightning flashes in the sky and it began to rain. Seeing the dazzling flashes I was terrified and started shrieking with fear. My brain became absolutely confused.” (V.K.B.)

The process underlying these experiences:

Human beings are emotional and sentimental by nature. They express their natural feelings by way of crying, laughing, singing etc. Even during spontaneous meditation, the seeker expresses his inner emotions and feelings through external manifestations like laughing, singing, crying, loud chanting, boisterous shouting, etc. Of course, sometimes such emotions are expressed silently without producing any sound. Tears often roll from the eyes of a seeker or his facial expressions change depicting either delight or sadness.

It is a known fact that there are various nerve centers in the human body which generate and govern different emotional expressions. When a particular nerve center is stimulated a specific kind of emotion is generated. During spontaneous meditation, when the released *prāṇa* energy becomes localized and pressurizes these nerve centers, different kinds of emotions burst out. Thus they are the manifestations of the subtle processes of *prāṇa* energy in the state of meditation.

The manifestations of crying, singing, chanting, babbling, shouting, laughing loudly, etc. are considered to be the expressions of *anāhata nāda* (spontaneous sound) and are very important processes in meditation. When the released *prāṇa* eventually becomes localized in the throat region, it starts pressing the larynx and forces the mouth open. As a result, sound is generated and various emotions are expressed automatically, according to the prevailing states of mind of the seeker.

(4) Various physical activities such as trembling, swaying, āsana, and mudrā.

a) “The mind was exceedingly cheerful and meditation was quickly accomplished. Then all of a sudden the body started swaying. The swaying was slow at first but it gathered a great momentum later on. Then various hand *mudrās* occurred automatically. It seemed as if the hands had started dancing. The mind and the heart were both with Guru Swāmī Kṛpālu. Later on, the body leaned back a little, but the hand actions were going on all the same. The mind stood as a neutral observer and the ecstatic delight of meditation was indescribable. There was no desire to stop meditation.” (A.P.)

b) “Today I separated myself from my body (physical being). I stood at a distance watching the actions of the body. I felt extremely delighted while observing the body.” (R.M.)

c) As soon as the meditation became operative some activity started in the body. The *baddha padmāsana* (bound lotus pose) was performed followed by *śīrśāsana* (head stand). During the meditation there was *kapālabhāti* (quick successive breaths) and the droning of a bee was also heard.” (K.P.S.)

d) “*Sukhāsana* (easy pose), *padmāsana* (lotus pose), and *vajrāsana* (adamant pose) became operative. All the three *bandhas* (locks) were accomplished. During *vajrāsana* when the ears and eyes became introvert, I had the experience of ‘*OM Mantra*.’” (A.J.K.)

e) “At the commencement of meditation the respiratory action started vigorously in my chest, lungs and throat. I experienced everything moving in a whirl. I felt as if swooning and I fell down. Then my legs and arms started moving. Tears streamed down my face.” (R.C.P.)

f) “I felt some inner power taking grip of my hands and body and felt some power like an electric shock passing through my hands. Then I felt my hands moving.” (M.S.A.)

g) “First I shed tears. Then my body started trembling, swaying and rocking. The portion from the navel to the shoulder was moving left and right. I was perspiring profusely. *Kapālabhāti* (quick successive breaths) and *bhastrikā* (bellows breath) became operative with great pressure in the chest. The whole body was very hot. The throat became parched and it was suffering from a burning sensation. Strange sounds started coming forth. Then the neck began to sway from left to right and vice-versa. The head also started moving to and fro. At last the body fell down. Then followed *sarvāṅgāsana* (shoulder stand), *paścimottānāsana* (posterior stretch) and its variation, *jānuśirāsana*. There was an irritating sensation in the brain during meditation. The head felt heavy and there was some sort of strain between the eyebrows.” (S.V.)

The process underlying the experiences:

As mentioned in these experiences, the seekers, after receiving *śaktipāta* initiation undergo many spontaneous physical activities such as performing *āsanas*, *mudrās*, and *prāṇāyāmas*, dancing, rocking, rolling, etc. All these spontaneous physical movements are part and parcel of post-*śaktipāta* meditation. So even when a seeker undergoes such bodily movements, mentally he is not concerned about them and remains in introversion.

During ordinary willful meditation, one’s mind orders the *prāṇa* to see that it keeps the body, the neck and the head stiff and straight, not allowing the slightest movement. Here, *prāṇa* being under the control of the mind obeys the order. But during spontaneous meditation after *śaktipāta* initiation, one lifts the control of the mind over *prāṇa*. So the mind does not give orders to *prāṇa*, allowing it the freedom to do whatever it wants with the body. Such released and free *prāṇa* generates automatic physical manifestations by acting on the external and internal organs of the body.

The mental faculty of a new-born child is not developed. Thus it does not even understand feelings like hunger and thirst, nor does it know language or emotional expressions. In such a state how can there be control of mind over *prāṇa*? So there is direct control of *prāṇa* over the body. This is the reason why a new-born child’s body is constantly making movements during the wakeful state. The driving force behind these movements is the *prāṇa* energy because of the absence of any orders from the mind.

This is the natural state. Therefore, when a seeker surrenders the control of mind and hands over his body to the *prāṇa* energy during meditation, spontaneous physical manifestations occur. Such a state of meditation is called *sahajāvsthā* (natural state) by the *yogīs*.

Some useful hints:

It seems necessary to mention one or two useful hints for seekers practicing spontaneous meditation. Some seekers have a wrong notion that if the bodily

organs are permitted to make free movements during meditation, the introversion of the mind may be disturbed. On the basis of such false understanding, they do not allow such movements by putting a mental check on the natural functioning of the *prāṇa* energy. This is an incorrect approach to spontaneous meditation.

In fact, the seeker practicing spontaneous meditation does not have to bother about the position or the condition of the body. It is immaterial whether it remains stable or active. One has only to keep the mind detached from bodily activities and watch the automatic manifestations of *prāṇa* energy as a mere witness. A witnessing mind is not disturbed and remains introvert even when the body is making different types of physical movements.

Another hint pertains to the art of relaxation. Some seekers do not know how to make the body and mind relaxed. As a result, they do not succeed in creating introversion. Relaxation is an important factor contributing towards generating introversion. It is through relaxation that both gross as well as subtle senses are made introvert. So if a seeker learns the art of relaxing the body and the mind at will, he has an important key for attaining introversion.

Sometimes after undergoing laborious activities, the physical organs and the nerves are fatigued. As a result they become tired and loose and automatically slip towards the state of relaxation. Such relaxation in a fatigued state also generates introversion, which may further lead to sleep. During spontaneous meditation also, the introversion of mind often leads the seeker into the states of *tandrā* (yogic drowsiness,) *nidrā* (yogic sleep) or *mūrchā* (yogic swoon). These three are the lower states of mind which a seeker must pass through in order to reach *turīyā* (the fourth state) or *samādhi*.