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Yogis of Sound

Radha Soami Mat is one of the major sects functioning in India. It is a fraternity which has adherents and disciples all over the world. Founded by Sri Shiv Dayal Singh Sahab, otherwise known as Soamiji Maharaj, this sect has its headquarters in Dayalbagh. Soamiji Maharaj is regarded as the Incarnation of the Supreme Being, Merciful Radha Soami by the followers of the Mat. The sect came into being on Basant Panchami—a day sacred to the Hindus—15th February, 1861.

Sri Shiv Dayal was born on 24th August, 1818 in Agra City. He was a great linguist and achieved high proficiency in classical and modern languages of India. He was spiritually inclined from his very childhood and learnt to meditate for hours on end at the incredibly young age of six. On growing up he started spreading the light that had come to him and delivered his message to the world. The foundations of this Satsang were well and truly laid by Soamiji and the movement has since acquired a vast body of followers. Radha Soami faith does not recognise the barriers of religion, race and community and has in its fold Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Mohammadans, Christians, Jews, and people from England, U.S.A., Canada, Switzerland, Sweden, Germany and many other lands.

According to the Radhasoamis, the message delivered by Merciful Radha Soami when He incarnated Himself on this earth in the Form of Soamiji Maharaj was a Message of Cheer, in as much as He was pleased to declare that the Supreme Being had incarnated Himself for the redemption of Jivas. The significance of the work of Sarkar Sahab—a successor—lies in the fact that he explained the true implication of this Message. Hazoor Sarkar Sahab declared that the Supreme Current of the Supreme Being would not withdraw from this earth and there could be no break in the succession of Gurus and that this arrangement would continue till the redemption of the entire creation was accomplished. There was thus no occasion for depression or despair which some people felt on the departure of Maharaj Sahab. And so, there has been continuous succession.

We are told that the Sant Mat or the philosophy of the soul, which was propounded with great force and clarity by Soamiji, is as old as man. The philoso-

phy as enunciated by Soamiji Maharaj was the fruit of deep meditation in a dark and secluded room, lasting 17 years. Soamiji says that Radha Soami is the Divine Supreme, the Lord of all, Nameless, and yet called by different names. Radha means the original Soul and Soami is the Lord, Creator, i.e, the Shabd or Nam (word) in the purest form from whom the Soul has descended.

The second Guru was Rai Bahadur Salig Ram who was known as Param Guru Hazur Maharaj. Of him, a scholar as great as Max Mueller said :

"Often those who came to listen to him were so inspired by his teaching that they renounced the world and began to lead the life of Sannyasis, so that it became a general belief that whoever went to Rai Salig Ram would forsake his family and become an ascetic. Nay, it was said that no one could even look at the lamp burning on the upper storey of his house without being influenced to renounce the world, to forsake his relations, and thus to become useless to the community at large.....He holds five meetings day and night for the purpose of imparting religious instruction, so that he has hardly more than two hours left for sleep. Everybody is welcome, and no distinction is made between Brahman and Sudra, rich and poor, good and bad. The people are convinced that he can work miracles, but he himself regards such things as unbecoming, and below his dignity. It is said that the late Doctor Makund Lal, Assistant Surgeon to the Viceroy, was in the habit of sending to him patients who had made themselves senseless by excessive practice of Pranayama, restraint of the breath, and that by a mere look he brought them back to their senses, and taught them that this practice was of little good, and in many cases injurious."

The Radha Soami philosophy insists that Liberation from the world can be achieved only in the human form with the guidance of Sat Guru. Sound Current, Shabd, Nam or the audible life stream is the ladder by which a seeker gradually ascends upwards to the world of the spirit. The Universe owes its being to the sound current and man can go back to the Lord only through it. What is this sound current ? It is the 'word' of the Bible, the Nad or Udgit of Nadas, 'Ism-i-Azam' of the Koran and 'Shabd' or 'Nam' of the saints and mystics.

Sant Mat or Radha Soami faith stresses spiritual progress through 'Nam Bhakti' or 'Nam Yoga'. The Mat requires the observance of the following :

The tenets of the Radhasoami faith are based upon a living belief in

- (a) the existence of God,
- (b) oneness of the essence of God and spirit-entity in man, and
- (c) continuity of life after death.

It is held that there is only one God, the True Supreme Being, who is the Fountain-head of all spirituality and is the Creator of the whole Universe and that the spirit or soul of man is an emanation from the same Supreme Being.

It is further held that there are three elements in the human body: first, the coarse matter of which the physical body is made; second, the subtle matter of which the human mind is made; and third, the spirit (Atman) which creates and gives life to the human body and which brings about the evolution and development of man's mind and body. The human body and mind are both perishable, i.e. mortal, while the spirit is immortal, i.e. it continues to exist even after the death of the body and mind, and finally it can reach the Supreme Abode and, in some cases, merge into the Supreme Being, Merciful Radha Soami.

Just as man's body has been created and endowed with life by his spirit (Atman), in like manner the entire creation has been brought into existence and endowed with life by a Parama Atman or Supreme Being. Since the essence of the Atman and the Param Atman (Paramatma) or of the spirit and the Supreme Being is one and the same, the human body created by the spirit resembles the Universe and has, therefore, been accepted as the miniature of the whole creation. The creation is called the Macrocosm and the human body, the Microcosm.

According to the Radhasoami faith, the Supreme Being has blessed the human body with certain latent faculties in order that the spirit may be able to establish contact with different regions of the universe and also with the abode of the Supreme Being and thus get an opportunity of deriving maximum benefit from the human body. Just as a man can establish contact with the sun with the help of his eyes, there are apertures in man's brain by means of which the spirit in man can establish contact with higher regions of a creation. This is the reason why the Radha Soami faith specially emphasizes that man should make it the aim of his life to develop faculties of all the three kinds—physical, mental and spiritual—and make use of the faculties available in the human body, and throwing off all lethargy and ignorance, make a bold effort to achieve the object in view by adopting suitable

methods. The Radha Soami faith lays down that, with the object of acquainting mankind with the existence of these latent faculties and their great utility, the Supreme Being has been pleased to arrange for the advent on this earth, from time to time, of holy and awakened Souls. These Souls are fully conversant with the secrets pertaining to these faculties, the practical methods of awakening them and also with the way they should be used. Besides, they are competent to explain these secrets to other people and to awaken their faculties and thus enable mankind to profit by them. These Souls are known as sages, faqirs, prophets, incarnations and saints, etc.

Radhasoamis of Dayal Bagh

Dayal Bagh (Garden of the Merciful) is one of the two centres of the Radha Soami community. Situated at a distance of two miles from the city of Agra, the "Ashram" is a self-contained colony. It is well-known all over India for its various institutions—educational, medical, industrial and agricultural—which cover quite a wide range of man's needs and aspirations.

The colony provides excellent facilities for studies in all disciplines—Arts, Humanities, Education, Science, Commerce, Engineering and Technology. These facilities are available to everybody who qualifies, whether he is an inmate or not and whether he believes in the teachings of Soamiji or not.

The general approach and work of the Satsang are best summed up in the words of the present Guru, Hazur Mehtaji Sahab : "Dayal Bagh, which is not far from the City of Agra, is quiet and peaceful like a village and yet there is perfect arrangement for sanitation and cleanliness as in cities. Students, scientists and devotees keep themselves peacefully engaged in their respective activities away from the turmoil of the world, and unemployed educated youths, agriculturists and labourers get opportunities to earn their livelihood. Neither does wealth flow here, nor does anybody starve here ; neither are there any big palaces and mansions here, nor are there any dilapidated huts either ; neither is anyone great or big here, nor anyone small or insignificant, and if anybody here is honoured more than others, it is he, who works better or more than others. Dayal Bagh belongs to every resident, while no resident has any kind of property in anything here. In this small place, Dayal Bagh, where there is almost no illiterate person and where nobody leads a life of laziness and indolence, which is neither a village nor a town, and which is both a village and a town, enthusiasm, joy and happiness are overflowing today."

At Dayal Bagh, I could not meet the Guru, the Maharaj Mehtaji, but had a very useful and highly informative conversation with Shri Babu Ramji, the Private Secretary of the Maharaj. Babu Ramji told me a great deal about the Guruji and his life, the faith and its tenets, and the colony and its activities. I learnt that about 5,000 persons, *Satsangis* or members of the sect, lived at Dayal Bagh, where they engaged in three main activities : Industry, Agriculture and Education.

When I asked him how many yogis lived at Dayal Bagh, he answered : One, the Maharaj. I, who had come to discover and study the India of yogis had the impression that a whole religious colony, a big ashram, would have many a yogi. Furthermore, the idea one had of a yogi was that such a person would be a celibate, and his beliefs and practice would conform to the general notion we have in the west : sex is sin, marriage is taboo, and family life an obstacle on the spiritual path. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when I was told that the Maharaj had seven children, two sons and five daughters. Obviously, I was in for learning about a new kind of philosophy and religious approach.

Although only a few thousand live in the colony at Dayal Bagh, the Society claims a membership of 200,000, spread all over India and even in foreign countries. They practise techniques of meditation beginning, as a first step, with concentration in the region of the body where the spirit resides. When I questioned where this place was, Babu Ramji pointed to the spot on the forehead between the two eyes. I tried to photograph him when he was pointing to the particular spot, but he would not allow me to let my camera make a record of that.

The second step, according to him, in meditation is that there is a light within one; "like your flash", he said, pointing to my camera. The third and the final stage is when one begins to move on, through concentration, from the light to the sound. I questioned him if all people made the concentration on sound and he answered, 'yes'. I asked if we could say that the Radhasoamis were yogis of sound, Shabd yogis. He was surprised that I knew 'shabd' and answered that, of course, all people in the Ashram or colony practised it. He told me that there were three different kinds of practices :

1. Sahaj Yoga—Easy Yoga.
2. Surat (Shabd—the spirit of Sound) Yoga.
3. Shabd Yoga (real Yoga of Sound).

Then he began to speak about the six centres of the body where, according to him, the sound can be heard, and explained that at more length.

I had been struck by the similarity between the ashram of Aurobindo at Pondicherry and this colony at Dayal Bagh. I, therefore, questioned him as to the difference. He answered that in Pondicherry Ashram they did not teach spiritual practices. They taught philosophy and their way lay through philosophy. It was generally

difficult, he seemed to imply, for poor people to be initiated into the membership of the Ashram at Pondicherry. The Radhasoamis, he said, were more 'democratic'. They accept anyone. The teachings are easy and adaptable to the intellectual level of the common man.

I repeated my enquiry about the technique of concentration. He replied that "during the 24 hours of our normal living, the mind is disturbed. Our mind is going to the names and forms of things so it is occupied with only the names and forms. To get out of this state of pre-occupation, obsession with names and forms of things, we try to concentrate only on one form and only on one name". I requested him to give me an example.

Before he could answer my question, tea was brought in and poured out. Very courteously he asked me not to bother about being formal and to take my tea.

He took up my question and replied as follows: "In this Ashram we concentrate on the name of the Radha Soami and the form of His face. Then, after some training in this kind of concentration, a sadhak can go to Light and then to Sound—first the light and then the sound." It is necessary to add here that the Radhasoamis do not have to take to any special posture—padmasana, etc.—during their meditation; all that is necessary is to close the eyes and to sit erect.

Babu Ramji continued, "All force is sound, produces sound. We cannot hear it. All energy is sound and the Spirit is Energy, so the Spirit is Sound. And God is the source of Energy."

I looked at the man, a short-statured normal-looking person sitting at his table in an ordinary room. I was surprised that he could be full of such knowledge and wisdom.

He continued with his explanation : "The spirit is kinetic in the body and God is kinetic in the Universe."

This was high Philosophy and I wanted to proceed slowly, so I interrupted him with a question : "What kind is the sound? Like the sound of what, I mean." He replied, "It begins like the sound of a bell. This was the first sound in the Universe, and, by the way, that is the reason for using the bells in temples and in churches though nobody understands this sacred origin of the bell." I enquired

how long it took a sadhak to begin to hear this sound, and he answered, "This depends upon the individual ; some take a long time, others less."

I questioned him whether it was necessary that the name and the form should be only one for everybody, or could these be different.

"Good question", he commented and continued, "Usually these are the same. Suppose the name is the Radha Soami and the people think of the form of His face ; but sometime, the name can go and the form, the face, stays. You can see the form in the light without name."

I again questioned him as to the technique of concentration between the eyes. I asked him if this kind of spiritual practice had some connection with the concept of the microcosm. He said that there was no special technique nor was any explanation possible. "This is all a matter of practice", he affirmed.

I do not know whether this is true in all cases, but I have often found that even people in high places who think and talk of philosophy and knowledge, mind and the intellect, concepts and ideologies as naturally as we breathe, have the tendency of imperceptibly sliding down from the spiritual to the superfluous, from gospel to gossip, from metaphysical discussion to personal histories. I must confess that I myself quite often want that this should happen and I was glad, therefore, that, somehow, the conversation drifted down to a level where I did not have to struggle in the deep waters of elaborate and metaphysical theories.

I learnt from Shri Babu Ramji that he had been the member of the community since 1924—he is about sixty now. He had been working in the Ashram in Dayal Bagh since 1928 and became the Private Secretary of Soamiji in 1931. He has known two gurus. He was professor of Sanskrit and History in a college and is, therefore, quite a learned person.

One aspect of Indian life about which we occidentals are constantly puzzled is the matter of diet. We are used to freely eating non-vegetarian food, the tamasic food. In India there is an overwhelming emphasis on vegetarian food. On enquiry I learnt that in this ashram, the diet was vegetarian.

Babu Ramji now started asking me a few questions. He showed a keen interest in my work of research in the states of consciousness of the yogis. He told

me that pseudo-perceptions and hallucinations were usual in their practices. The techniques of Radhasoamis were not original but could be traced to the Yoga of Patanjali, because the repetition of one name and concentration on form of object is contained in the Yoga-sutras of that sage. He rounded off his talk by saying that there had been in all six gurus in Dayal Bagh and gave me the names and histories and the main dates connected with them. The first guru who founded the Radhasoami Mat in 1861 had passed away in 1878. The second guru had died in 1898 ; the next who succeeded, died in 1907 and the fourth in 1913. The fifth in succession was Sahabji Maharaj with whom he had worked as Private Secretary. He left the world in 1937, when the present Maharaj had succeeded to the *Gaddi*.

I thanked Babu Ramji with all my heart for having given me this interview and for explaining to me so clearly the essentials of the Radha Soami beliefs and techniques and left him to make a round of the colony and to have a look at its many fields of activities.

medical practice.*

that we have already begun using the ancient and sacred methods of Yoga in our Sophrology has begun its official, scientific existence in India. We are happy and oriental doctors. I am happy that this project has been duly completed, and Medicine. It has realised its great desire of establishing a bridge between oriental India, and has founded the Indian Society of Sophrology and Psycho-somatic Medicine. Tolerance and patience are required to deal with people who at first do not understand these ideas. Sophrology has got over these initial difficulties in cultures. In their initial stage, all new ideas need to overcome obstacles and diff-

psychology.*

In the state of consciousness we shall increase our knowledge of the reality of human and techniques of Indian Yoga. I believe that by studying the yogic state of man. For that reason, I have been greatly interested in studying the methods on the state of consciousness, we shall carve a new way to therapy, and knowledge the state of consciousness of the sick. We believe that through this emphasis, consciousness. In our approach to human pathology, we give great importance to methods which can produce favourable change in the ordinary state of human In their research work Sophrologists are learning and revising all the techniques and consciousness. Some people have called it the science of psycho-physical harmony. Sophrology is a new scientific school which studies the phenomena of human

interesting the medical men of India in its study. the new school which I founded, namely Sophrology, and about my mission of have made in achieving these. I am going to talk about my work in connection with India in this section is to relate some facts about my own aims, and the progress I might deserve notice in the context of Yoga and Medicine, my main object in including Delhi in this base for all operations connected with my plans and projects; and, though there may be a little work being done here and there in the Capital which was the base for all operations connected with my plans and projects; and, though there may be a little work being done here and there in the Capital which

Delhi

All this would not have been possible without the help and cooperation of the Indian doctors. I sincerely thank, in the name of the International Society of Sophrology and Psychosomatic Medicine, all the Indian doctors and Yoga specialists who have accepted our ideas and assisted us in our work. The evidence of their faith and cooperation is the practice of the ideas of Sophrology, in important private clinics of Delhi.

When I came to India, my plan was to interest people here in the scientific school of Sophrology and to enlist the support of Indian medical men, Yoga therapeutists, Yoga practitioners and yogis, for exploiting the rich possibilities of incorporating Yogic techniques in our medical practice. As I wrote to my dear friend, Dr. Vinekar of Bombay :

"I am thoroughly convinced of the importance of yoga in the therapeutic field..... That is why I have come to India, that I might learn the fundamentals of Yoga with the help of specialists here..... Perhaps, it is not wrong to say that a new generation of scientific yogis has come into existence..... I believe that the process of achieving a synthesis of science and Yoga has begun..... Collaboration between the new school of Sophrology and these 'new' yogis can be significant and can open a new path..... Sophrology attempts to develop an officially recognised relation between the doctors on the one hand, and the Yoga specialists, on the other. The Yoga specialists can be admitted in the Society of Sophrology as advisers on Yoga therapy. The great yogis can help us to develop the right techniques regarding the states of consciousness." *

When I explained the concepts and objectives of Sophrology to Prof. Indra Sen in Pondicherry, he immediately grasped them and readily appreciated the vital role they could play in modern life. I was gratified to hear from him the following :

'Sophrology is a splendid conception. It is original, has great justification and surely has a future. Harmony of integration or unity are the pivot and the forms, which have to be defined, classified, and investigated in relation to the conditions of the body, the mind and the environment, in states of health as well as disease. But primarily states

*Letters of Silence pp. 146-148.

of health. It is an empirical study, but involving a normative approach. As such it gets very near to Yoga. It is, in fact, Yoga born of Western scientific knowledge. That is how I have understood Sophrology and I wish it all progress and success."*

I feel that the way has been finally cleared for serious research in the field. With people like Dr. Vinekar, Dr. Indra Sen, Dr. Bhatnagar and Dr. Austin—both of Delhi—and Dr. Varandani of Jaipur, keenly interested in our new scientific school, I see no reason why progress should not be made in our work.

Dr. C. L. Bhatnagar, M.B.B.S., Zen (Vienna), well-known Indian specialist in the field of Psychosomatic Medicine, has now taken over as President of the Indian Society of Sophrology and Psychosomatic Medicine. I am happy to say that Dr. Bhatnagar has been developing our techniques in his clinic at No. 18, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi, where we have now the new head-office of the Indian Society.

The Indian Office of the International Society is located at Dr. S. A. Austin's Nursing House at D-8 Green Park, New Delhi. Dr. S. A. Austin, M.B.B.S; D.P.M.I. F.P.S., has been nominated Representative of the International Society for India. He thinks highly of Sophrology. In a speech made in Delhi he said :

"Sophrotherapy has come handy for gynaecologists, dental surgeons, psychiatrists and other specialists in branches of medicine. It has also become an integral technique in psychotherapy. Sophrology has come to India with a view to incorporate Yoga in its methods. We do hope, that in times to come, we would have ensured full success."**

We intend to organise in no distant future courses of Yoga and Yoga therapy in Delhi for the occidental Sophrologists. These courses can be the living nucleus for a true contact between the Sophrologists of the two sides of the world. I am sure that many Sophrologists including myself will willingly come to India to help in the course of Yoga and Yoga-therapy organised by the Indian Society.

Thus Delhi can be the centre for work of both the Indian Society and the International Society. The International Society has great confidence that Indian doctors of the new branch will help develop contact with the Tibetan doctors living

*Letters of Silence p. 126.

**Extract from a speech delivered in New Delhi.

in the Himalayas and begin the extremely interesting work of making a scientific study of Tibetan Yoga. All in all, through collaboration between Indian medical doctors and specialists in Yoga-therapy for research on Indian Yoga, and Tibetan doctors in connection with Tibetan Yoga, the Indian Society can play a very vital role and be a prominent branch of the International Society.

The International Society, on the other hand, will make all efforts to profit from the advice of Indian doctors. Already, it has appointed for that purpose, Dr. Vinekar of Bombay and Dr. Varandani of Jaipur, about whose work I have already spoken elsewhere, as Counsellors on matters connected with Yoga.

Since all these contacts for our work need necessarily be between medically qualified persons, we have laid down specific criteria for membership of the Society :

1. All qualified medical men and dental surgeons with registerable qualifications as per Indian Medical Act can become Ordinary members.
2. All clinical psychologists and Yoga-specialists with more than six years' experience, will be entitled to become Associate members.

Of course, it is necessary for these members to have training in Sophrology. This will be organised by the Indian Society.

The Indian doctors, I hope, will also try to make contact with others working in Delhi or other places in India in Yoga research, to gain knowledge about yogis and their phenomena. This is work of great value but also of great magnitude. I have taken only the first step. The way is long, but I am sure that with their great ability and crusading spirit, the Indian Sophrologists will one day cover it all and reach the goal.