A Moment of Mixed Emotions

Kushal Bailūr shares Subhās͟h Maḍimaṇ mām’s account of a momentous occasion in his family’s life, one he feels truly blessed and fortunate to have had.

पालनाद्दुरितच्छेदात् कामितार्थप्रपूरणात् ।

पादुकामन्त्रशब्दार्थं विमृशन् मूर्ध्नि पूजयेत् ।।

In the Swādhyāya-s on the Shrī Gurupādukā Stotram, H.H. Shrīmat Sadyojāt Shaṅkarāshram Swāmījī has explained the above shloka thus: The word ‘Pādukā’ can be understood as that powerful symbol of our Guru-s, which when meditated upon sincerely, protects and nourishes us (पा=पालनात्), removes obstacles on our spiritual path (दु=दुरितच्छेदात्) and fulfils our legitimate desires so that we progress swiftly on our path of Sādhanā (का=कामितार्थप्रपूरणात्). For our Samāja, the Pādukā-s of our revered Guruvarya-s are a symbol of our Guru Paramparā in its Vyakti as well as Shakti aspect, and we worship them with utmost love, respect and devotion. So, it was indeed a blessing for Subhās͟h Maḍimaṇ mām and his brother, Vijay mām when they were bestowed the opportunity of offering H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī’s Divine Pādukā-s to H.H. Shrīmat Sadyojāt Shaṅkarāshram Swāmījī in Shirālī on Friday, 6th January 2023. The immense joy on Swāmījī’s face on receiving Their Parama Guru’s Pādukā-s is a sight that is permanently etched in the minds of the Maḍimaṇ brothers.

Subhās͟h mām and Vijay mām offering the Divine Pādukā-s to H.H. Swāmījī

It was a moment of mixed emotions for the brothers; while they felt grateful to Swāmījī for accepting the Pādukā-s, reassured that the Pādukā-s which their family had so lovingly and reverentially worshipped for nearly 60 years, had reached their rightful place where they will continue to be venerated with devotion, they also felt the absence in their Pūjā Sthāna where the Divine Pādukā-s had occupied a cherished place along with pictures of their family deities, Shrī Shantādurgā and Shrī Maṅgesh. Pūjya Swāmījī allayed their concern by telling them that the experience of having the Pādukā-s, the way they had looked after and worshipped them, was already a part of them. Referring to the Swādhyāya on Shrī Gurupādukā Stotram at Tiruvannāmalaī recently, Pūjya Swāmījī guided them through a process of visualising the Pādukā-s and meditating on them, and explained that this would help them feel the presence of the entire Guru Paramparā. Subhās͟͟h mām says that this was a revelation for him - that the Bhaktipūrvaka Guru-smaraṇa is as good as the physical presence of the Guru. H.H. Swāmījī’s assurance that the Blessings of the Guru Paramparā will always remain with the family, gave both brothers the strength to deal with the physical absence of the Pādukā-s at home.

The Maḍimaṇ Family’s Association with Our Mat͟h and Guru Paramparā

Subhās͟h mām’s father, Late Shrī Nārāyaṇ Sundarrāo Maḍimaṇ, was an active member of the Chitrāpur Sāraswat Samāja. He was a member of the Standing Committee of the Chitrāpur Mat͟h and along with other like-minded laity, established the Bāndrā Local Sabhā in the late 1940s. Since there was no other suitable place available in Bāndrā at the time, the Maḍimaṇ-s hosted H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī and His retinue at their home during Their first official visit in 1951-52. The programs would be held in their courtyard. Subhās͟h mām fondly remembers, as a young lad of eight years, carrying the Daṇḍa and Chavari while accompanying H.H. Swāmījī from their home to the paṇḍal.

Left to Right: H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī arriving at Bāndrā on the first official visit; Nārāyaṇ mām, as President of the Bāndrā Local Sabhā, welcoming H.H. Swāmījī; Volunteers during H.H. Swāmījī’s first visit to Bāndrā . Subhās͟h mām is seen standing behind H.H. Swāmījī

Subhās͟h mām recalls hearing from his elders how around 1957-58, the community members desired that H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī take a Shis͟hya; however, H.H. Swāmījī was reluctant as the laity seemed to have slackened in the matters of the Mat͟h. However, on the continued requests of community members, Swāmījī acceded to their prayers to take a Shis͟hya. Subhās͟h mām recollects his father being part of the Standing Committee that had taken young Ravīndra Shukla to the Bangalore Mat͟h to meet with H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī for Their final approval.

On their return to Bombāy, Subhās͟h mām remembers being the lucky one to pick up his father and the soon-to-be Shis͟hya Swāmījī from the railway station and bring them back to their house in Bāndrā. After having breakfast with the family, Subhās͟h mām was entrusted with the responsibility of taking the Shis͟hya designate - Ravīndra Shukla back to his home in Vākolā.

Subsequently, Subhās͟h mām volunteered actively and enthusiastically in the Shis͟hya Swīkāra function in 1959, despite it being close to his S.S.C. Board exams. He recalls being overwhelmed during the occasion, watching such a young Shis͟hya taking up the huge responsibility of leading a community as a Mat͟hādhipati in times to come.

In 1961, Nārāyaṇ mām moved to Malabār Hills with his family as part of his job requirement. Thereafter, around 1962-63, the Standing Committee made Nārāyaṇ mām’s home the designated place when H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī needed rest and medical consultation. During this visit, Subhās͟h mām has wonderful memories of Shis͟hya Swamījī often calling out to him, “Hey Subhās͟h, yo, gappe māryā̐.”

It was during this visit that Subhās͟h mām’s mother, Shāntā pāchī, a soft-spoken, sensitive, and an ardent devotee of H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī, requested to be blessed with Swāmījī’s Pādukā-s. To the family’s great joy, H.H. Swāmījī consented. The Pādukā-s were immediately covered with silver, and placed in their Pūjā Sthāna along with their Kula Devatā-s (family deities). The family offered reverential prayers every morning and evening to the Pādukā-s ever since.

H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī’s Divine Pādukā-s which the Maḍimaṇ family were blessed with

Later, when the family moved to Puṇe, on some occasions, H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī along with Shis͟hya Swamījī stayed at Nārāyaṇ mām’s home for rest before proceeding to Mumbaī for His official visits the following day.

The Maḍimaṇ family’s special connection with our Guru Paramparā continued when they were blessed with a visit by H.H. Shrīmat Sadyojāt Shaṅkarāshram Swāmījī at Puṇe around 1999-2000. Subhās͟h mām recalls Pūjya Swāmījī spending time alone in the room where the Divine Pādukā-s were kept. When the family joined Him later, Swāmījī had a serene smile.

H.H. Shrīmat Sadyojāt Shaṅkarāshram Swāmījī’s visit to the Maḍimaṇ’s Pūṇe home

A Life Designed by Divinity

Now an octogenarian, Subhās͟h mām looks back at his life and that of his family’s as one that was guided by a Divine Shakti. He is convinced that this was possible only due to the blessings of H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī’s Divine Pādukā-s and their family deities. The strength and confidence his father exuded, the calmness his mother felt after placing her troubles at H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī’s Pādukā-s in prayer and the good health his parents enjoyed until they breathed their last, are some ways Subhās͟h mām feels the Divine Pādukā-s were always taking care of them.

Even in his own life, he wonders how it was that during all of H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī’s visits, of the four siblings, it was always he who was fortunate to be with his parents at home while the rest were in Puṇe. Further, he sees the Divine play in the serendipitous manner in which his choices of academic pursuits, career choices and growth in the industry, and in fact, everything significant in his life panned out. To cite an interesting instance-inspired by his uncle, Subhās͟h mām was very keen on joining the Armed Forces. Despite being among the best shooters in NCC from Mahārās͟hṭra (he was among the only two cadets selected for a camp in Kashmīr) and leading the NCC Parade in Mumbaī, he had to face three heart-breaking rejections after reaching the final round of selection. He, then, decided to pursue a Masters in Physics with Electronics, as electronics was a hobby. As he was nearing the end of the course and feeling unsure of how to proceed further on his career path, a suggestion from his father led to a series of happenstance events which landed him a seat in the prestigious Indian Institute of Management at Calcutta. Subsequently, with Divine grace, he got excellent growth opportunities in his career.

In Subhās͟h mām’s words, “What happened to my dreams of joining the armed forces? I cried when I failed each of the three times-I was that disappointed-it felt like the world had ended, the skies had fallen. And then, joining IIM-Calcutta in such an unplanned and accidental manner, at a time when I was in tension of my post-graduation finals and with the process being so competitive; and thereafter, my career…I don’t think I achieved anything of my own. Things always happened in a manner which were beyond me. I didn’t know why they were happening. Now I can understand that I am a blessed person and I cannot trace it to anything else but H.H. Swāmījī’s blessings. To me He was Ᾱnanda personified in the form of calmness and serenity; and when I saw Him, I felt nothing else was required. I just wanted to keep looking at Him.”

These words resonate with H.H. Shrīmat Sadyojāt Shaṅkarāshram Swāmījī’s guidance for us to be always aware of the Guru Sānnidhya, which always cautions and guides us through the vicissitudes, decision-making, achievements, etc. in our lives. This Anusmaraṇa, Pūjya Swāmījī reassures us, can happen only through a Shis͟hya’s Purus͟hārtha and the Guru’s Grace.

While offering the Divine Pādukā-s to H.H. Swāmījī, They mentioned that They had said in 2007 that H.H. Shrīmad Ᾱnandāshram Swāmījī would come to Shirālī in some form in the future. Is it a mere coincidence that these Pādukā-s arrived in Shirālī when we are on the threshold of completing 15 years of the Shrī Gurujyoti Padayātrā, when we brought H.H. Shrīmat Parijñānāshram III Swāmījī’s Pādukā-s to Shirālī? Perhaps this is our Parames͟ht͟hi Guru’s Prasāda, a symbol of His Joy and Satisfaction!