A Moment of Mixed Emotions

Kushal Bailur shares Subhash Madiman mam’s account of a momentous occasion in his family’s life, one he feels truly blessed and fortunate to have had.

पालनाददरितचछदात कामितारथपरपरणात ।

पादकामनतरशबदारथ विमशन मरधनि पजयत ।।

In the Swadhyaya-s on the Shri Gurupaduka Stotram, H.H. Shrimat Sadyojat Shankarashram Swamiji has explained the above shloka thus: The word ‘Paduka’ can be understood as that powerful symbol of our Guru-s, which when meditated upon sincerely, protects and nourishes us (पा=पालनात), removes obstacles on our spiritual path (द=दरितचछदात) and fulfils our legitimate desires so that we progress swiftly on our path of Sadhana (का=कामितारथपरपरणात). For our Samaja, the Paduka-s of our revered Guruvarya-s are a symbol of our Guru Parampara 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 Subhash Madiman mam and his brother, Vijay mam when they were bestowed the opportunity of offering H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji’s Divine Paduka-s to H.H. Shrimat Sadyojat Shankarashram Swamiji in Shirali on Friday, 6th January 2023. The immense joy on Swamiji’s face on receiving Their Parama Guru’s Paduka-s is a sight that is permanently etched in the minds of the Madiman brothers.

Subhash mam and Vijay mam offering the Divine Paduka-s to H.H. Swamiji

It was a moment of mixed emotions for the brothers; while they felt grateful to Swamiji for accepting the Paduka-s, reassured that the Paduka-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 Puja Sthana where the Divine Paduka-s had occupied a cherished place along with pictures of their family deities, Shri Shantadurga and Shri Mangesh. Pujya Swamiji allayed their concern by telling them that the experience of having the Paduka-s, the way they had looked after and worshipped them, was already a part of them. Referring to the Swadhyaya on Shri Gurupaduka Stotram at Tiruvannamalai recently, Pujya Swamiji guided them through a process of visualising the Paduka-s and meditating on them, and explained that this would help them feel the presence of the entire Guru Parampara. Subhash mam says that this was a revelation for him - that the Bhaktipurvaka Guru-smarana is as good as the physical presence of the Guru. H.H. Swamiji’s assurance that the Blessings of the Guru Parampara will always remain with the family, gave both brothers the strength to deal with the physical absence of the Paduka-s at home.

The Madiman Family’s Association with Our Math and Guru Parampara

Subhash mam’s father, Late Shri Narayan Sundarrao Madiman, was an active member of the Chitrapur Saraswat Samaja. He was a member of the Standing Committee of the Chitrapur Math and along with other like-minded laity, established the Bandra Local Sabha in the late 1940s. Since there was no other suitable place available in Bandra at the time, the Madiman-s hosted H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji and His retinue at their home during Their first official visit in 1951-52. The programs would be held in their courtyard. Subhash mam fondly remembers, as a young lad of eight years, carrying the Danda and Chavari while accompanying H.H. Swamiji from their home to the pandal.

Left to Right: H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji arriving at Bandra on the first official visit; Narayan mam, as President of the Bandra Local Sabha, welcoming H.H. Swamiji; Volunteers during H.H. Swamiji’s first visit to Bandra . Subhash mam is seen standing behind H.H. Swamiji

Subhash mam recalls hearing from his elders how around 1957-58, the community members desired that H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji take a Shishya; however, H.H. Swamiji was reluctant as the laity seemed to have slackened in the matters of the Math. However, on the continued requests of community members, Swamiji acceded to their prayers to take a Shishya. Subhash mam recollects his father being part of the Standing Committee that had taken young Ravindra Shukla to the Bangalore Math to meet with H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji for Their final approval.

On their return to Bombay, Subhash mam remembers being the lucky one to pick up his father and the soon-to-be Shishya Swamiji from the railway station and bring them back to their house in Bandra. After having breakfast with the family, Subhash mam was entrusted with the responsibility of taking the Shishya designate - Ravindra Shukla back to his home in Vakola.

Subsequently, Subhash mam volunteered actively and enthusiastically in the Shishya Swikara 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 Shishya taking up the huge responsibility of leading a community as a Mathadhipati in times to come.

In 1961, Narayan mam moved to Malabar Hills with his family as part of his job requirement. Thereafter, around 1962-63, the Standing Committee made Narayan mam’s home the designated place when H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji needed rest and medical consultation. During this visit, Subhash mam has wonderful memories of Shishya Swamiji often calling out to him, “Hey Subhash, yo, gappe marya.”

It was during this visit that Subhash mam’s mother, Shanta pachi, a soft-spoken, sensitive, and an ardent devotee of H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji, requested to be blessed with Swamiji’s Paduka-s. To the family’s great joy, H.H. Swamiji consented. The Paduka-s were immediately covered with silver, and placed in their Puja Sthana along with their Kula Devata-s (family deities). The family offered reverential prayers every morning and evening to the Paduka-s ever since.

H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji’s Divine Paduka-s which the Madiman family were blessed with

Later, when the family moved to Pune, on some occasions, H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji along with Shishya Swamiji stayed at Narayan mam’s home for rest before proceeding to Mumbai for His official visits the following day.

The Madiman family’s special connection with our Guru Parampara continued when they were blessed with a visit by H.H. Shrimat Sadyojat Shankarashram Swamiji at Pune around 1999-2000. Subhash mam recalls Pujya Swamiji spending time alone in the room where the Divine Paduka-s were kept. When the family joined Him later, Swamiji had a serene smile.

H.H. Shrimat Sadyojat Shankarashram Swamiji’s visit to the Madiman’s Pune home

A Life Designed by Divinity

Now an octogenarian, Subhash mam 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. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji’s Divine Paduka-s and their family deities. The strength and confidence his father exuded, the calmness his mother felt after placing her troubles at H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji’s Paduka-s in prayer and the good health his parents enjoyed until they breathed their last, are some ways Subhash mam feels the Divine Paduka-s were always taking care of them.

Even in his own life, he wonders how it was that during all of H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji’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 Pune. 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, Subhash mam was very keen on joining the Armed Forces. Despite being among the best shooters in NCC from Maharashtra (he was among the only two cadets selected for a camp in Kashmir) and leading the NCC Parade in Mumbai, 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 Subhash mam’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. Swamiji’s blessings. To me He was Αnanda 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. Shrimat Sadyojat Shankarashram Swamiji’s guidance for us to be always aware of the Guru Sannidhya, which always cautions and guides us through the vicissitudes, decision-making, achievements, etc. in our lives. This Anusmarana, Pujya Swamiji reassures us, can happen only through a Shishya’s Purushartha and the Guru’s Grace.

While offering the Divine Paduka-s to H.H. Swamiji, They mentioned that They had said in 2007 that H.H. Shrimad Αnandashram Swamiji would come to Shirali in some form in the future. Is it a mere coincidence that these Paduka-s arrived in Shirali when we are on the threshold of completing 15 years of the Shri Gurujyoti Padayatra, when we brought H.H. Shrimat Parijnanashram III Swamiji’s Paduka-s to Shirali? Perhaps this is our Parameshthi Guru’s Prasada, a symbol of His Joy and Satisfaction!