



CHAPTER EIGHT

SPIRITS

If a four-year-old boy were to sit on top of his dead grandmother, pick up his father's japamala and begin to do japa, what sort of boy would you say he is? You would have to say he was born to do Smashan Sadhana. I have seen a boy who did that. Why, even I, when I was a child, used to build toy funeral pyres out of twigs and matchsticks; it's an inborn tendency in someone who is meant to be an aghori.

SPIRITS

THE TRUE NATURE OF AGHORA sadhanas has always been a closely guarded secret, given by a guru only to his most trusted disciples. They have to be secret, because they are not in the realm of the written or spoken word. They deal with planes of existence which are unbelievably alien to our everyday lives. And ethereal beings are jealous; they don't like just anybody to find out about them. If you go around telling everyone what you have achieved, you will definitely suffer.

You should always eat in private, you should always go on pilgrimage alone, when you make love there should only be the two of you present, and when you perform a ritual you must never permit anyone else to be present if you don't want it to go wrong. This is the sensible way of doing things. One of the most basic of Aghora sadhanas is Munda Sadhana. *Munda* means skull, and this sadhana involves the use of both human and animal skulls. You prepare them in a certain pattern, cover them nicely, sit on top of them, and then do your japa. Very simple.

After you have been doing japa for a while, some doubts will probably arise in your mind: “Can there really be any use in such things?” or “Do spirits really exist?” or some such. You’ll forget all about your doubt when one of the spirits whose skull you are making use of loses his temper over your persistence in disturbing his repose and throws a live coal or a heavy rock on you. You will be burned or bruised, and the pain will remind you that, yes, there is indeed some truth in the whole thing.

This is the time when you need to know how to protect yourself. Before you sit for japa you must do *kilana* by drawing an ethereal ring around the spot on which you’ll be sitting. So long as you stay inside that ring nothing can harm you; no spirit can throw anything on you or harm you in any way. But the moment you step outside you are at the mercy of the spirits, and compared to what they will do to you, being flayed alive is pleasurable. Don’t step outside; sit and watch the fun in safety. Slowly your confidence will develop, and you will be able to move up to more difficult sadhanas.

Sadhana of a spirit means enticing it with things it likes and then maintaining it with mantras by performing *kilana* and *stambhana*. Both mean “to fix something in one place.” *Stambhana* is the first, temporary fixation, and *kilana* (literally, “nailing”) is the permanent attachment. If you want to hang something on the wall, first you decide where to put the nail. Then you put the nail in the appropriate spot and hammer it in. Here, the spirit remains with you so long as you follow all the rules appropriate for the particular sadhana. One mistake and all your work is undone.

And remember one thing: No one likes to be chained up. And no one likes to do work for anyone without being paid for it. So, unless you know exactly what you are doing, you will someday make a mistake, and then all the chickens will come home to roost. Some people think they are very clever to do sadhana of *yakshas* and *mokuls* (powerful ethereal beings) to force them to do work, but I think they are the biggest fools, because they become dependent on these spirits, who are really our servants and must be treated appropriately.

If I ask my servant Dhondu for a loan of five rupees, he will give it to me. But even after I pay him back, when I try to dismiss him from my service he will tell me, "I'll go, saheb, but to think there was a time you needed to borrow five rupees from me and I lent it to you. Now you're telling me to get out. What sort of man are you?" Then I am completely lost; my honor is smashed beyond repair. The only way out is to commit suicide. I may ask my friends, I may ask the highest deities for help, but not my Dhondu.

I draw a distinction between spirits and deities because a spirit is bound in one way or another; otherwise, why would they live in the smashan? They would locate a deity, or take rebirth, or otherwise find their own way to a better existence. But for various reasons they are obliged to remain in this intermediate state, wandering about. A deity or a siddha visits the smashan or lives there with a specific purpose in mind but without any necessity to remain there unwillingly. I've told you the smashan is known as *Shahr-e-Khamosh*, the City of Silence. Why city? Because it is not empty, as you might think; it is filled with spirits.

Not everyone can see these spirits, of course. Nowadays most people's minds are so enmeshed in the slush of samsara that they have no subtlety of perception whatsoever. Only when your mind becomes subtle can it soar into the astral regions and begin to perceive all that is waiting there to be perceived.

Matter and energy are never destroyed. Just as astronomers can take measurements and tell us what happened billions of years ago, thanks to dim light being emitted from distant stars, so all the events which happened in our universe millions of years ago are still present as subtle vibrations, which are available to anyone who is subtle enough to become receptive to them.

It is the same way with ethereal beings: Only when one has an extremely subtle mind can one perceive them. But even with a fine mind you can't just stroll into a smashan and expect to be entertained. You have to first awaken the smashan. Spirits have a different sense of time, space, and causation than we mortals do. To "awaken" a smashan means to bring it into a state where you can eavesdrop on what is going on and where you can communicate with the inhabitants if you like.

Finally, even if you have perception and you know how to awaken the smashan you should never, never, under any circumstances, venture to attempt any sadhana you might read or hear about unless you have a guru to save you if something goes wrong. Even then your guru may also make a mistake and then both of you will be sunk, but at least you have tried to provide for a safety net. Many rituals exist which can give you amazing results, and you can succeed at them very quickly, but most of them are so dangerous that 99 out of 100 who attempt them go insane or die. Spirits are not to be trifled with.

When I say spirits I mean ethereal beings in general, excepting deities. There are so many categories of spirits, such as those who were once human, those who were never human and can never become human, and those who might get the opportunity to become human. There are less in this last category, however, because animals don't self-identify with their individual personalities to any great extent, which makes rebirth easier for them. Humans self-identify with their past lives so strongly that it takes time for them to forget sufficiently so they can be reborn, unless someone drags them forcibly into a womb.

One of the useful things you can do in the smashan is to arrange for spirits to obtain wombs, with the help of Lord Shiva, of course. You know, in the South there is a temple whose Shiva Linga is actually in the form of a human penis, made of eight different metals. When a girl is about to be married she is taken to the temple and made to sit on the linga so that her maidenhead is broken. In that way Lord Shiva is her first husband.

It seems paradoxical, doesn't it; the God of Death being the ideal husband? There is an esoteric significance: Shiva being the God of Death is lord of all the spirits, and it is only through His grace that a spirit can be reborn on the earth. What this means, practically, to an aghori, is that with the blessings of Shiva you can give a child to a childless couple. It is not all that difficult if you know what you're doing. First you must go to the smashan and find a spirit. He has to have at least a little rnanubandhana with the parents, and you should try to get one that does not have such bad karmas that he will immediately be the ruin of the family.

Then you must ask Shiva for His blessing to allow the spirit to take birth. Once the blessing is there nothing can stand in the way. The spirit waits until intercourse takes place and, after ejaculation, picks a sperm and actually drags it to meet the egg. After fertilization occurs the spirit ensures that the zygote is firmly implanted into the wall of the uterus. Then there is absolutely nothing to worry about. The spirit will sit at the mouth of the cervix and make sure that the baby grows to full term and that the delivery is smooth and without complications.

Now, there is a jiva, an individual soul, in every sperm. But the jivas associated with a childless couple are very weak, unable to grow on their own. So in this case the child will have most of the attributes of the spirit and very few of the jiva, because the spirit's tendencies will be so strong as to overpower those of the jiva. And, of course, the child will have less of the father's traits, because they were represented in the jiva who is eclipsed. In this way the future personality of the child can be predicted, because the spirit is a known quantity. The spirit has little affinity for the mother and father, since most of the rnanubandhanas with them were in the jivas in his sperms. This means that the child will leave the family earlier than usual, because his rnanubandhanas are with other people.

Not only that, but you can know other things about the child because he has had the blessings of Shiva. For instance, *dirghayuh* – long life. How can Shiva allow him to die young? Also, he will be full of intelligence, have no birth defects, and so forth.

Isn't this a fine way to do things? The parents get what they wanted: a child. The spirit gets what he wanted: a womb. Shiva is happy to see one of His spirits get a womb, and a human one at that. And by doing this you finish your rnanubandhanas with the parents and with the spirit, and yet you perform no karma. You are just a bystander. Isn't it wonderful?

It is wonderful. Unfortunately, most of the people who go to the smashan to do sadhana don't look at it in this way. They go to try to capture a spirit and make it do work for them, which as I've told you does not pay in the long run. I know; I have made mistakes, but thanks to the boundless compassion of my mentors I

have escaped the worst consequences. For example, once I became fed up with having to worry about how to make money. I went to the smashan and when I got home in the evening my cupboard was filled with piles of banknotes: 10,000-rupee notes, 5,000-rupee notes, 1,000-rupee notes. "That's right," I said to myself. "Nothing to worry about now."

The next day I forgot the key to my cupboard when I left the house. My son found it and opened the cupboard and was astounded. He ran to his mother and told her. They both felt I was hiding it from them because I had been complaining for months about the pitiable condition of my finances. Unfortunately, they succumbed to temptation and they took out one quarter of the amount and locked it into a chest. Then they relocked the cupboard.

Meanwhile an ethereal being had told me, "Your Lordship, this is the situation. Don't lose your temper." I decided I should go home to see for myself. Once I was home I had tea and while I was sitting with my wife and son I said offhandedly, "Oh, you know, I forgot the key to my cupboard today. Have either of you seen it?"

They both denied it, but they both darted a little glance in the other's direction, which confirmed the information I had been told by the spirit.

Then I asked for the key to the cupboard. My wife became very defensive and said, "What makes you so suspicious? Why should we touch your precious cupboard?" A guilty conscience biting. I replied, "Who said anything about your touching it? I just want to show you something." I located the key, opened the cupboard – and it was empty. I told them, "And if you open the trunk you'll find it empty also." These things are just too dangerous to play around with; without expert guidance, they ruin your mind.

I once knew one Narayan Das who had gained control of a small spirit. When I say small, I mean in power; a spirit is ethereal, so there is no question of dimension. Narayan Das used his achievement to enrich himself. I suppose it's logical; both of us studied with Jina Chandra Suri, and Narayan Das took the old man's advice about making a pile of dough out of his knowledge.

Narayan Das would make you hold a currency note between your index finger and thumb. He would tell you, "Grip it tightly, even tighter ...," and suddenly it would disappear into thin air. Or, he would take a banknote, make you sign it, and then say, "Go out and buy us some snacks with this." You would, and on returning you would be asked for the change. Then he would say, "You thief! Here is the original banknote in your pocket!" And there it would be, signed in your own handwriting, with the same serial number.

Narayan Das could also remove roses from cabinets, sweets from tables, and more of such tricks. But when he made a very minor mistake, the spirit, who was furious at being overworked, took hold of his only son and was about to squeeze the life out of him until Narayan Das came to me and begged me to save him. I did, since we had been fellow students, but Narayan Das died shortly afterward; a miserable death.

I could go on and on. There is a lady near Bombay who can make red powder appear out of thin air, but her daughter is crippled, and mad as well. And no one on earth can cure her, except someone who knows about this sort of thing, someone who can understand the spirits. A spirit is of the same form as the mind, so it can enter your brain and do plenty of damage: create temptations, pervert your intellect, and so on. Only if your acuity is as subtle as theirs will you be able to control them absolutely.

And remember, most spirits are miserable. They don't want to harm you, but if you come along and tease them they have every right to hit out. This is how most spirit possessions occur. Someone just sleeps under a tree or urinates in the wrong place, and he or she gets possessed. It seems unfair, doesn't it? But if there is a spirit in the tree you sleep under, it may suspect you of ill will. We all know attack is the best form of defense, so the spirit may strike. And as for urinating, spirits have some rights; you can't just do anything to them. They don't like urine any more than anyone else does. They like it even less because they have no mouths and so cannot eat physically; they eat through their sense of smell. This is why they love incense and scent so much, and why these are so important in sadhanas. Deities are even more refined: in addition

to the sense of smell they eat with their gaze, their sweet glance. But none of them likes the smell of excrements, except the lowest possible spirits, who possess the forms of skeletons. But you definitely don't want to attract them, because they are 100 percent sure to ruin your mind; they are far worse than mad dogs. The spirits you want to attract hate filthy odors, and if you offer such to them, you had better be prepared for punishment. You may chain up a dog, but if you venture too near you are going to get bitten without fail if he is vicious. Always remember: most spirits are not evil, they are just miserable, but they will attack if provoked, like a dog or a snake, and, of course, they can only take possession of you if some *rnanubandhana* is present. And what sort of possession occurs will depend on the type of spirit.

I can't begin to explain all the types of spirits; I'll just tell you about a few so you'll get the idea. There is the *preta*, a person who died without any relative to perform the appropriate funeral rites and who is doomed eventually to take the form of a cobra; and the *bhuta*, the spirit of a newly-dead person who is still quite attached to embodied life. There are *dakinis*, the spirits of women who died in childbirth and who frequently have such morbid possessive love for the child that they will try to harm or kill it so they can be with it again. There are also tiny children, those who were born dead or who died of disease or accident or some more terrible fate.

There are the spirits of those who were murdered: hacked to pieces, buried alive, poisoned, you name it; and headless spirits, who were decapitated during life. Almost everyone who dies a sudden death becomes a spirit, because there is no time to select a new life; this is why a peaceful death is so important.

And then there is the *karna pishachini*. *Karna* means ear, and when you have succeeded at the *sadhana* for this type of spirit it will come and sit on your shoulder and whisper things into your ear. It knows a lot about the past, a little about the present, and very little about the future. This knowledge can come in handy when you are testing someone to learn the source of his knowledge: if he can't predict the future, he may have a *karna pishachini*.

Besides telling you events, a karna pishachini can protect you, and see that you get enough to eat and drink, and help out with your sadhana. But they are possessive and jealous; if you try to get into a romance with someone of the opposite sex you and your partner will both have a hard time of it. But they are very useful. Arjuna started out with a karna pishachini; so did Veda Vyasa. Once you have learned all you can from yours, your guru can remove it from you, and you can go on to something higher.

Higher than a karna pishachini is a *yakshini*, the female form of the *yaksha*, a male spirit almost at the level of a minor deity. Yakshas and yakshinis were once human and were good sadhakas at that time; otherwise they could not possess such powers. Yakshas and yakshinis were Hindus during their lifetimes, *mokuls* were Muslims, angels were Christians, but their condition and level are roughly the same. Since they were once humans, they still retain some human traits: a mokul is most likely to speak to you in Urdu, a yaksha will like the sort of things Hindus like, and so on. For instance, hibiscus flowers play an important part in the sadhana of a yaksha. During the sadhana of a mokul, a lamp filled with the pure essence of hina, a Muslim's favorite perfume, must be kept continuously burning. There is a type of spirit who comes to a woman and makes her fall into a stupor, what we call the state of *tandra* in Sanskrit, and then enjoys sex with her. If you were to watch it, and I have watched it, you would see her lying on the bed, twisting and turning, oozing, enjoying orgasms, and what-have-you. In fact, she will find it much more satisfying than physical sex, because he has no body to tire out, and he makes her enjoy much more than any man could. If the spirit is of a really high caliber a child may even be conceived out of this kind of intercourse. It may sound unbelievable; don't believe it if you don't want to, I don't care. But it's true.

A man can also be entertained by a female spirit, and he will have more or less the same kind of experience. He will also find it more satisfying than ordinary sex. But – and here's the rub – by indulging in this sort of sex you can never again be satisfied by a physical partner. You will long for your ethereal lover, and, when you die, you will also become a spirit.

Here is one of the things a yakshini can do for you: when she is satisfied with your sadhana she will come to you in whatever form you desire: Marilyn Monroe, Jayne Mansfield, anyone you want. Have you ever heard of performing sex with a corpse? It can be done. I don't mean in the perverted sense of necrophilia, of course; I am talking about a ritual. You can call a yakshini into a corpse and then enjoy sex with her. And believe me, a yakshini can make you enjoy sex. If you do this five or six times the yakshini will come to you on her own and force you to copulate with her and extract all your energy. And you can't get free of her; it's next to impossible. When you die, you become one of the fraternity of spirits, of an order lower than even the yakshini, and you will have to work your way up from there, roaming about. You don't even have to copulate with her; just kiss her – once only – and you are finished, done for.

Our scriptures mention all the various hells, like *Raurava* and *Maharaurava*, each of which can be identified. *Raurava*, which means “terrible” or “terrifying,” is an ethereal hell. This is terrifying because anyone who is sent to such a hell is born into an ethereal womb as a spirit. Spirits have no physical bodies, and therefore they cannot die. They have no choice but to exist, no matter how painful and miserable their plight. There is no time limit. They might have to wait millions or even billions of years, until a higher being takes compassion on them and makes them enter wombs. They have no hope whatsoever of escaping otherwise. Isn't this terrifying? It terrifies me. It is a great blessing, perhaps the greatest, to be born human, so that you can die and move on to new things. But I would never want to perform such karmas that I would have to go to an ethereal hell after my death.

Can you guess who would go to this type of hell? Someone who had fooled about with spirits during his lifetime. Take that fellow who had spent some time with me some years back. All my friends saw how he could help gamblers by correctly predicting what would turn up, and he has helped many people become rich. He does it with spirits. He failed with me, though, and ever since his career has been in a tailspin.

As for his sadhana, his specialty was to take women who had died in pregnancy or in childbirth – dakinis – and force their spirits to do work for him. He and his guru also unearthed the corpses of over 200 babies – most Hindus don't cremate their babies – and made them work also. Those babies; so innocent! When I think of it I go into a blind rage. They don't deserve to be used like that, to have their rest disturbed. Shouldn't they get their revenge on this man? They must, and it has already started. His guru made a mistake one day. The guru went blind, his family business was ruined, all his brothers and sisters died, his wife and children died, and he, too, died after watching them all go. His disciple made a mistake one day, and now his younger son is raving mad, worse than an animal. All his family members are cursing this fellow for getting involved in this; he is penniless. The babies are harassing him, and as soon as he dies, I can promise you, he will become a spirit, and they will have him in their power for good or until someone pardons him and helps him find a womb. Sadhanas can be dangerous.

I say it over and over again, just so you'll remember it: playing with spirits is fun, and boosts your ego, and so on, but it is very, very dangerous. It is so dangerous that you cannot even imagine all the possible dangers, all the nuances of danger involved. For example, suppose a *pishacha*, a low sort of spirit, becomes pleased with you and blesses you. You may not have asked for the blessing and yet you get it. And the only blessing a pishacha can give you is that you will receive everything you ask for, and that can be so dangerous. Naturally if you are a saint or a sadhu you may be able to take it. But even good sadhus have had to suffer, even when they had not done any sort of sadhana for the spirit, never asked it to come. Once I was in Bombay, and I started to get a mental request from someone to come to visit him in Bhopal, because he wanted to take *agni samadhi*, to end his life by consuming his body in flames he would create from within. He had some things which he had collected during his life, and he wanted me to be their custodian. I resisted for a few days, because I was very busy in Bombay, but finally I agreed to go.

When I got to Bhopal, he greeted me as his spiritual “heir” – and then I found out the problem. Sometime before, a man who was possessed by a spirit had been brought to him, and just to help the man out, he had exorcised the spirit. The spirit, who had been removed by satisfying him, not by force or violence, was pleased with this sadhu and asked what he desired. I suppose the sadhu’s mind must have been elsewhere because he said, “Be with me always.”

Thereafter, the poor sadhu had not been able to get a single night’s sleep. Every time he would drop off to sleep, the spirit would prod him awake and say, “Here I am; what do you want?” The sadhu was so exasperated he decided to end his life, which is why he had called me. I removed the spirit, the sadhu took agni samadhi anyway, and I took a truckload of herbs, yantras, and what-have-you back to Bombay.

And when the spirit asked me what I wanted, what did I say? “Come when I call you.” For a higher class of spirit, “Be happy with me always as you are now” is a good formula, but never “Be with me always.” To escape from a spirit is next to impossible once you have taken work from him.

By now you are probably thinking, “Then what is the possible use of all these sadhanas if you are in danger of ruining yourself for untold eons?” There are plenty of uses, and once again I tell you it all depends on your presence of mind and strength of will as to what you do with your success. I did these sadhanas because I wanted to know if they really worked, and I have always believed that whatever anyone else can do in the smashan, I can do better. You may call it egotism or whatever, but that’s the way it is.

Another reason I did these things was to help out the spirits. If you were to develop a sense of perception and you could hear them talk, your heart could not help but be smitten by the pathetic lamentations they make. Once I was in Hyderabad, and as I was walking down a certain street I heard such a noisy wailing I felt I must find out from where it was coming. It turned out there was a female spirit in a tamarind tree nearby. She had been a Muslim – spoke beautiful Urdu. It seems her husband had murdered her, and all she could do was wander about and try to find some way to get even with him.

I asked her if she would come with me, and she agreed. I put her into a small cemetery and had her repeat a certain mantra for some time, and after a few months she was able to leave, go into a womb, and be born again. She forgot all about her revenge, too. Of course, she will get her revenge eventually. Nature's wheels grind very slowly, but there is no escaping from them. They do a thorough job. By the time she takes her revenge she will have forgotten why she was entitled to it, and her self-identification with her actions then will act as a new karma to bind her further to limited existence. That's the way things are in this world.

And, of course, if you know about spirits you can help people who are being troubled by them. Once someone brought home a video of a movie called *The Shining* and we watched it. The people who made that film made some good guesses about spirits, but that's all they were: guesses. The reality is entirely different, though the picture did come close in some respects. But when I think of all the fake exorcists and all the damage they do when they have no idea of what they are doing, I really lose my temper.

When I had my dairy in Borivali, north Bombay, the man who was chairman of the Bombay Milk Producers Association was named Magan Seth. His wife was possessed by a very low sort of spirit. Ordinarily she was a very meek and mild woman, but whenever the spirit entered her she would develop immense strength and would attack her husband. He found this very embarrassing, and also painful, and was on the lookout for someone who could exorcise the spirit. I could have done it, but the spirit was not harming her, and her husband deserved a beating for some of the things he did. So, I did not let Magan Seth know what I could do. I have never advertised myself. Not only is it beneath my dignity, but I would never have any peace if I did things openly.

Anyway, one day Magan Seth came to me excitedly and said, "I've located someone who can cure my wife!" I doubted it, but I decided to play along. A few days later we all met at my flat in South Bombay: Magan Seth, his wife, myself, my foster daughter, and the exorcist. The exorcist was a sweetmeat merchant; can you imagine it? He had offered *attar* (fragrant essential oil) by the pound to Bhairava

and thought he was quite something. I decided it would be wise to teach him a lesson. Not only would it prick the bloated balloon of his ego, it would also make him turn away from such things before he started to fool around with something he couldn't handle and really got himself into trouble.

He was explaining, "When I pronounce the sacred syllable 'Om' in the correct way the spirit will be forced to obey me and leave this woman." The sacred syllable 'Om'! Who did he think he was, some rishi? Suddenly the spirit came into the woman's body, and I contacted it. Not through vocal speech of course, that is useless with spirits; there is a different method. I explained my plan to him, and he was only too willing to cooperate. So as soon as this sugar butcher opened his mouth and began to warble the "sacred syllable," the woman rose from her chair, walked over to him, and gave him such a tremendous slap that he was floored. Yes, actually laid out flat on the ground.

I made a show of concern for him, helped pick him up, dust him off, and so on. Then I picked up a few sticks of incense to show the spirit I was friendly. Spirits eat through their sense of smell, so I was feeding him. If you throw a steak to a vicious watchdog chances are he'll let you pass, right? Then I asked the spirit, "Now look, what is it you want that you are harassing this poor woman for?" He told me what he wanted done. I said, "If I promise to ensure that it gets done, will you leave her?" He said yes. I shook the incense sticks a couple of times, and he left – and she was suddenly normal again. And she has not been troubled again.

It is not always so simple, of course. Sometimes the spirit refuses to leave, and then you have to resort to other measures. At least you can always control such spirits, even if you can't make them exit immediately. Then, gradually, you can usually make them see reason, unless the spirit involved is of the lowest possible category; then it is a real job to make them see reason.

One of my friends is possessed by a spirit. It was not his fault at all. He had gone to Chowpatty, Bombay's downtown beach, and decided to relieve himself under a tree. Unfortunately for him – it is all a matter of *rnanubandhana* anyway – there was a spirit in that

tree who resented it and immediately my friend was possessed. He fell down in an epileptic-type fit. But it wasn't epilepsy; there was no tongue-biting and so on.

Eventually someone brought him to me. I was in Poona, and this fellow was chatting with us all very nicely when suddenly the spirit entered him. I told a boy standing nearby to hold our friend so that he wouldn't fall and hurt himself, but the spirit tossed that boy aside like a stuffed animal. The eight or ten men in the room then grabbed hold of him, but they also could not hold him down; he threw them off one by one.

I decided that things were going too far, so I sent a girl with some ash to throw on this fellow. It was special ash; I knew it would probably calm him down. But as soon as she threw it he slapped her, and she came running back to me, crying.

This was too much to be borne. Attacking an innocent girl! I decided it was time to teach this spirit a thing or two. I was a wrestler in my heyday, you know. I walked up to him and hit him so hard that he fell to the floor in a heap and slept like a dead man for several hours. When he got up we found that his shoulder had been dislocated. In fact, he had to have it operated on later.

That sounds cruel, doesn't it? But after that the frequency of possession by the spirit is much less, and our friend can lead an almost normal life. His shoulder is healed also. And even when the possession is there it is much reduced. One day it happened at my place in Bombay, and I just told Robby to sit on him and the problem was controlled in just a few minutes – although the sight of the spirit contorting our friend's features scared everyone else in the room into speechlessness. That spirit is now learning how to behave. It is not an ideal situation, but it is the best that can be arranged under the circumstances.

You can learn a lot from spirits. A *brahma rakshasa* is the spirit of a teacher or guru who while he was on Earth was negligent about passing all his knowledge on to his pupils. After he dies, he must station himself somewhere and wait for a suitable individual to come by to whom he can give his knowledge. If you take the knowledge from him, you should be aware of the strings which are

attached to it. One is if you ever sell the knowledge, if you commercialize it, you will yourself become a brahma rakshasa when you die. But you don't have to commercialize it. You can use it to help out other suffering beings.

Yakshinis can teach you as well. But if you really want to learn, you should go to *gandharvas*, *kinnaras*, and *vidyadhara*s: the celestial musicians, dancers, and pundits. These are much higher than ordinary spirits, and they can teach you their arts if they become pleased with you. Once I took my son into the jungle to a particular spot and made him listen to ethereal music; it scared him a little, hearing the music but being unable to see what was going on. Many of my friends have heard disembodied recitations of the Vedas. But to see one of these beings is more difficult.

You can see them after they take birth, though; all of them eventually make some error, however minor, which forces them to take birth in the physical world. Once a *gandharva* or *kinnara* comes to Earth, he or she becomes entangled in the *samsara* and then for thousands or millions of births it is impossible to regain that former state. Once back there, the *gandharva* realizes the limitations of being a *gandharva*, and then he or she goes higher. But to be a *gandharva* – marvelous! What joy!

Unfortunately, whenever a *gandharva* comes down to Earth he lives a life of misery, even though he makes beautiful music. Look at Beethoven, a typical *gandharva*. He achieved unheard of heights as a musician, but he was thoroughly syphilitic, his body was full of pus, and when he died he was in misery. Very rarely, though, a *gandharva* will come down to Earth and not ruin himself completely. I am thinking of the last Nawab of Oudh, Wajid Ali Shah. From his childhood he had been quite a different type, and though he was a Muslim he used to dance with such intensity that Lord Krishna himself used to come and take possession of his body.

He had two musicians who were brothers: Kalika Prasad who was a singer, and Bindadin, a percussionist. One day the Nawab told Bindadin, "If you are such an excellent musician, you should be able to make Krishna come and dance before me. If you fail, you will have to suffer." What was Bindadin to do? And the Nawab made

the conditions even harder by saying, "You must sit in your own house and play, and Krishna should come before me." His house was about a hundred yards from the palace.

Bindadin composed a new song, and told Kalika Prasad, "You go before Nawab Saheb and sing this song as loudly as you can. When I hear you singing I will start to play my drums, and then we shall see the result."

What was the result? Wajid Ali Shah forgot his identity entirely and imagined he was one of the gopis, the milkmaids who loved Krishna. He began to crave for Krishna so intensely that he started to dance. He danced for three hours, unaware of his earthly existence; he went into *bhava samadhi* (a state of emotional ecstasy) and did not return to earthly consciousness for three days. When he finally came to his senses again, he asked what had happened. Bindadin told him, "I did as Your Highness commanded. I played, and Krishna came." Then the Nawab realized what sort of musicians he had.

What happened to the poor Nawab? All during his reign he encouraged music, dancing, perfumery, all the high arts. And the British, who disliked him for his extravagance with money and wanted his kingdom, overthrew him. And what did they do with him? They incarcerated him in a small house surrounded by a sewer. The Nawab said bitterly, "What do these pork-eaters understand of me? I have lived my life surrounded by the finest of fragrances, and they give me this." He died after a very short time.

I am sure Wajid Ali Shah and Beethoven were originally gandharvas because they were born musicians; they began singing or playing instruments as soon as possible after birth. Whenever a higher spirit is born on Earth, some of the impressions of that celestial existence will be retained. A kinnara, when he is on Earth, will have an innate ability to dance; right from his birth he will be light on his feet. A vidyadhara will have an innate love for jnana. That doesn't mean every spirit who is fond of music is a gandharva, however. You must know how to distinguish. Once I was in Berhampur, Orissa, and I was told about an old palace which had been converted into a school. During the day there was no difficulty, but no one dared

stay there at night. I immediately said I would; I had to find out what it was. And besides, I needed a place to stay.

I became wonderfully intoxicated and sat in the main hall waiting for the circus to begin. Eleven o'clock – midnight – one o'clock. I was beginning to feel it was just a case of the fertile imaginations of the local inhabitants and was thinking of going off to sleep when suddenly a young dancing girl came in to me, bowing low, and saying, "I am indeed sorry, my lord, for having been late tonight. Now we are ready to begin." Let me tell you, I have never seen such dancing nor heard such singing as I did that night: superb! About dawn, the little girl came to me again and said, "My lord, we must take leave of you; please do come back tomorrow night." I did, and for several nights thereafter; I enjoyed myself thoroughly before I left town. And no one ever found out what I had seen there.

They were all spirits, of course. The palace had belonged to a Nawab, and one night his enemies had come under cover of night and slaughtered every living being within. Now they were all spirits, trying to maintain the standards of the court as they had while alive. They were deathly afraid that I would try to remove them, which explains why they were being so nice to me. But they weren't harming anyone, and school was going on uneventfully during the day, so I left them alone.

One of the females there was a princess, and she and I took to each other from the start. She told me, "Why don't you keep me with you?" I said, "How can I? I'll be going away before too long." Then she indicated to me the place where her skull was buried, and I unearthed it, cleaned it, and kept it with me. She was with me for quite some time; her dancing was something superb. Spirits are infinitely more faithful than humans. Once a spirit loves you he or she will never desert you no matter what. Can you say that about any human you've ever met?

I don't know why, but I have always had good relations with spirits. Even the most vicious spirits try to harm me only very rarely. Once I was in Bihar, and at night I saw an unusual procession: several naked women carrying torches and charcoal braziers. They were *chudails*, a very low type of spirit, and it is said that after seeing them you

cannot survive. But nothing happened to me. Last year in Bombay I was driving along when I saw a group of people carrying a corpse and running. The corpse's head had slumped to one side, and there was a sickening fixed grin on it. Again, chudails. No one else in the car could see it besides me, but again, nothing happened. Maybe it has something to do with my years of sadhana in the smashan. My suggestion is, if you ever happen to propitiate a spirit, accidentally or intentionally, don't use it to make ash fall from your hands or any other such tricks. Take a lesson from the story of Tulsidas. He found his deity, Ramachandra, with the help of an ordinary spirit.

Tulsidas was in the habit, after relieving himself in the early morning and washing up, of pouring any leftover water on a nearby pipal tree. After forty days of this the spirit in the tree said to him, "Now I am pleased with you; what can I do for you?"

Tulsidas said, "I wasn't pouring water here to please you; in fact, I never knew you were here. I was only doing it out of love for the tree."

The spirit replied, "That's all right, still I'm happy. What do you want?"

Tulsidas told him, "All I want is to see Lord Rama."

The spirit said, "If I knew the location of Lord Rama, I would go there myself. But I can do one thing for you. I can send you to Anjaneya, and he can take you to Rama. In a certain place a recitation of the *Ramayana* is going on, and a group of lepers comes daily to hear it. Anjaneya is always the first of the group of lepers to arrive and always the last to leave. Catch him, and he will show you Rama. That's the best I can do for you."

Tulsidas did as he was told and watched a few days to make sure the same leper came first and went last. When he was satisfied, finally, one day he waited until the recitation was over and grabbed the leper.

The leper, struggling to get free, asked him, "What are you doing, you fool? Do you want to catch my disease?"

Tulsidas said, "Yes, I want to catch the disease of devotion. Take me to Lord Rama or kill me if you can't; I don't want to live."

At the mention of the word Rama, Anjaneya immediately under-

stood. And it was not long before Tulsidas located Rama, all thanks to an ordinary spirit in a pipal tree.

You should treat a yakshini in the same way. Don't look at her with eyes of lust; treat her as your own mother, and she will treat you as her son and love you maternally. When the yakshini accepts you as her child, then you can ask her, "Ma, won't you show me where I can find Anjaneya, or a Yogini, or a Siddha, or whatever. She probably won't know – if she did she would be there herself - but she may know where to tell you to look, like Tulsidas's little spirit did.

One of my old pals pestered me for years to teach him some rituals. Eventually I initiated him into a mantra which allowed him to handle the most venomous snakes with ease and even to cure snake-bite, but that was not enough for this fellow; he demanded more.

I knew there was a rnanubandhana between him and me regarding transfer of knowledge so I did try to oblige him. I made him go out one day and sit on a rock at the seashore with a vessel full of water next to him. I told him, "All you have to do is offer water to whomsoever comes to you."

He said, "Ha! Don't worry! It is all over now, but I will go through with this just as a formality." He was so sure of his success. All I could do was shake my head in disbelief. I went off to sit nearby to watch over him.

After some time, an old woman walked up to him and asked for water. He could do nothing but look at her with his mouth agape and his arms and legs shivering. He couldn't move a muscle. Again she asked him, "Please, my son, do give me just a sip of water." No response. A third time she asked, and a third time she remained unanswered, and then sadly she walked away, while this fellow remained as insensate as before.

I went over to him and said, "Well, what about the formalities?" Unfortunately, he couldn't answer me; he was still speechless with terror. I tried a second time to make him do it, but the same drama was repeated, and then I just told him, "You can't do it, it's just not in your destiny; why don't you realize that?" And since then I have never tried this with any one else, because I know what the result

would be. For your information the old woman was not an old woman at all but a yakshini. I told her to come as an old woman, because if she had come as a young girl this fellow would have run amok and tried to climb on top of her, and then he would have really ruined himself. And who would have gotten all the karma? Me! So, I washed my hands of the whole affair and said, “Nevermore!”

I had felt like there was a good chance my friend would have been able to relate to the yakshini as a mother, and she would have taught him so many useful things. This fellow was not an ordinary individual, by the way; he had already done several million japas of a mantra for Ma, so I was just trying to accelerate his spiritual progress, but it was not meant to be. Even though she was in an old woman’s form my friend could still sense her tremendous power, and he simply was not strong enough to endure it. Not that there was any real danger: That’s why I was present, to watch over him. And besides, I had put the yakshini up to it so she would not have ruined him.

I can’t repeat it often enough: Don’t fool around with spirits. When this fellow could not endure a yakshini in spite of his years of penance, what will you be able to do if even a small spirit comes up to you? And spirits are really the least significant of ethereal beings.

Of course, if you have a competent guru, the matter is different. And to work safely with ethereal beings, you simply must have a competent guru. One day in Girnar, while walking about in the jungles, I saw a young lady near a tree. She was really beautiful and it looked as if she was from a good family from her looks and the way she was dressed, but I couldn’t understand what she would be doing out in the middle of a deep jungle. As I passed her she said, *Mai aaun?* (“Shall I come?”)

Now I didn’t know what to think. What is she doing acting like a prostitute out here in dense forest soliciting me? I decided that the best thing to do would be to walk on. She started to follow, and she kept repeating, *Mai aaun? Mai aaun?*

I told her, “Cats say ‘Meow, meow’; are you a cat?” But she said nothing at all except “*Mai aaun? Mai aaun?*”

I continued to walk, and she continued to follow until I began to

feel tired. I sat down and she came near me, repeating “Mai aaun? Mai aaun?”

I was tired and fed up with her, and that made me lose my temper and say, “If you are coming, come!” And immediately I was entrapped. She was a yakshini.

You don’t know what trouble I had with her. I wouldn’t dare meet anyone, even other sadhus, because she would have finished them off, she was so possessive. When I was at the tether end of my rope my Mahapurusha freed me from her. That is only a minor one of the many reasons I have for saying that I owe everything to my Big Daddy, my Mahapurusha. If I am flayed alive for millions of births it would still be insufficient to repay him.

SADHANA WITH SPIRITS

All three of my mentors were wonderful, really amazing. They taught me everything very systematically. For example, sadhana for deities is hundreds of times more difficult than is sadhana for spirits. Deities are higher, no doubt, but what is the use of knowing about them if they are too difficult to reach?

You have to use your brain. If you can first succeed at the sadhana of a spirit, that spirit can help you with your sadhana of a deity. Both you and the spirit will be benefited; isn’t that better?

Or, if you like, you can do sadhana of a yogini. There are Sixty-Four Yoginis, who act as companions or handmaidens to the Great Goddesses; Smashan Tara is one of the Great Goddesses. The Yogini can teach you a lot herself; she can make you immortal, take you to the Himalayas and bring you back in the twinkling of an eye, and make you succeed at other sadhanas. And with her introduction a productive audience with one of the Great Goddesses is certain.

I have always preferred female spirits and deities to males, for the simple reason that I always look at every female, ethereal or human, as if she were my mother. All females are facets of the Divine Mother, after all, and you can’t go wrong this way. When your mother is pleased with you there is no end to what she would do to promote

your prosperity, physical or spiritual. That is the sublime nature of maternal love. I think this is the best way to do sadhana, especially in Aghora.

Can you understand now why Smashan Sadhana is the best of all sadhanas? The longer you sit in the smashan the more you learn about death, which will teach you about life. Some of the things you see there are heartbreaking, but you must go beyond them. There is a sadhana done in the smashan, only on one certain night in a year. You repeat a particular mantra, and hundreds of dead children will flock to you. Hundreds; some murdered, some crushed in accidents, some who fell to disease. They will crowd around you and cry, "Give us! Give us!"

Then you must cut your finger and throw blood to them, just a bit, to satisfy them. You should have made preparations for forty to forty-five kilograms of sweets, and when you throw them to the children, they will catch them; it's a sight to see! After they've all eaten, you ask them, "Have you had enough?" They will say yes and ask you what you want.

Here comes the dangerous part. If you ask for anything, eventually they'll come back and extract work from you, and you'll never be able to take it. Don't even ask for knowledge or for help in finding deities. If they volunteer information, OK, but not otherwise. If you ask even one question, you are bound to repeat this procedure each year on the same night; if you don't you'll never know what hit you. And if you take work from them, be it stock market fluctuations, races, or whatever, you'll get it in the neck.

So never ask anything. On the contrary, try to help them out. They are only children! Can any parent take anything from his or her children? Of course, nowadays parents expect their children to slave away for their whims and fancies, but these are not real parents. Treat these children as your own children. Suppose you saw your own child in such a predicament; could your heart bear it? Wouldn't you forget any danger to your life and try to rescue the child? You would if you were a real parent. You can help these children out by doing sadhana for them. Everyone will be benefited by it. Your own sadhana will be made firm by the effort, your rnanubandhana with

the kids will be snapped, and when they are able to locate wombs and be reborn to continue their evolution the blessing they'll give you is something unique. You cannot purchase, even with billions, such a blessing, or the satisfaction you will derive from seeing such a child smiling. And you will come closer and closer to the deity who hates to take children, the Lord of the Smashan: Mahakala.