

## Shiva-Avatar and Maha-Avatar

I keenly look forward to Sree Sree Maa asking me to write something for Hiranyagarbha because it helps me get new insights from her, usually not found in books. So when she remarked, “This time, our editors have decided to write on Adi Shankaracharya. What have you thought?” I replied — “I was waiting to get some ‘special information’ from you on the various incarnations of Babaji Maharaj and write on that.” Smiling she said, “You only want ‘scoops’. The notion of ‘viraja-hom’ during sannyas and its significance in the spiritual path needs to be properly understood by you all. Adi Shankaracharya epitomized the spirit of renunciation that is



Adi Shankaracharya with his four principal disciples whom he initiated into monkhood

so essential in the ascent to liberation. At this age, when people have misconceived notions of sannyas, its true spiritual and yogic essence needs to be emphasized.”

“Then you will have to tell me. I have only a sketchy and superficial understanding of all this,” I remarked, feeling delighted at starting another blissful session.

Sree Sree Maa began, “Shankar can be derived from ‘Shan-kar’ meaning ‘Shakti-filled-Omkar’ and its emanating radiance. The benevolent rays of the Omkar-sun shower divine prosperity. That is why Lord

Omkareshwar, the eternally benevolent Shiva, is called Shankar. Adi Shankaracharya, being an avatar of Rudra-Shiva was appropriately christened Shankar (or Shankara). He descended on earth radiating the divine power of pure renunciation (satwik vairagya). The fire of renunciation manifested very early in the young child and the inner urge was so strong that even before diksha (initiation), he took sannyas (monkhood) on his own by performing the ‘viraja-hom’ (the sacrificial ritual for sannyas) following Vedic principles.

The arousal and establishment of vairagya-bhava (spirit of renunciation) within the heart of a sadhaka-yogi on the path of atma-sadhana nurtures his steadfast progress towards nivritti (return to the source). Where lies the roots of vairagya-bhava? Amidst the infinite emotive flows within Sree Radhika’s divine mahabhava in Goloka, pristine vairagya-mahabhava emanated from her state of deep inward contemplation. ‘Devi Viraja’ is her manifested divine form of this mahabhava. Devi Viraja was a companion of Sree Radhika and a great favourite of Sri Krishna. Lord Sri Krishna’s special attraction towards Devi Viraja caused some initial heartburn in Sree Radhika. In order to avoid facing a displeased Sree Radhika, Devi Viraja took the form of a river that traversed across Goloka into Vaikuntha and descended into the created world. The seven oceans were created out of this flow.

Such incidents form the background of various divine forms in Bhagwat Leela and determine the fundamental principles of eternal and ephemeral creation. Within the divine play of Bhagwat Leela lie seeds of

infinite creation. Paramshiva ascends into the divine world to attain this realization and through the power of divine Will, implants it within creation, thereby manifesting eternal truth across all planes of universal nature – physical, astral and causal. Amidst the rhythmic flow of creation ‘Viraja Devi’ emerges as a river in the physical world. In the world of spiritual consciousness she is present as an astral nerve-path within the body of a yogi. Through the infinite grace of Viraja Devi, pure vairagya-bhava awakens within a yogi-sadhaka’s heart, sprouting the spirit of true renunciation. This enables a yogi’s consciousness to ascend beyond the vishuddha-chakra and the flow of prana (conscious life-force) moves upstream from the lalana-chakra. Steadily the flow of pranic consciousness moves upwards, transcending the infinitely-celled saharara-lotus consciousness for supramental union, merging into the supreme divine life-force or mahaprana.

Attaining a state of true sannyas is essential in the realization of supreme truth through the path of nivritti. As long as the outward flow of thoughts and urges are not reversed into deep inner contemplation that seeks the source of perturbation, and is eventually silenced by stillness of the chitta (heart-mind ensemble), the yogi cannot attain the harmonious state of both union and awareness (yoga-yukta). Without such



Shankaracharya meets his Guru  
Sri Govindapada

‘chitta-vritti nirodh’, one cannot embark upon the sadhana of ‘sat-nyasa’<sup>1</sup> in the brahma-nadi within the sushumna (central path) and enter the realms of brahma-marg. This is the yogic significance of sannyas. The astral path of viraja (or the astral viraja nerve) lies within the Brahma-nadi (central astral nerve capable carrying consciousness into Brahman). It is along this path of viraja that the yogi eventually attains Shiva-hood and realizes liberation from the bondage of ignorance. That is why, while resolving to embark on the path of self-realization, a yogi-sadhaka seeks blessings at the lotus feet of Devi Viraja to germinate, nurture and sustain the flow of vairagya so that he or she can swim to the shores of liberation. This is the process of ‘sannyas-diksha’ as enunciated in the scriptures, wherein a firm determination to seek self-realization is made through viraja-hom and the seeds of vairagya-chaitanya are sown.

Shiv-avatar Adi Shankaracharya was divinely blessed by Viraja Devi and a deep inner urge of sannyas-vairagya was innate in him. Taking the garb of renunciation (monkhood), the young child set forth on an arduous journey to Omkareshwar — the famous Shiva-pilgrimage on the banks of the sacred river Narmada — in his quest for ultimate knowledge-realization. Here he met with the shining spiritual light of that era, the great

<sup>1</sup> ‘sat-nyasa’ means firm establishment of existence-consciousness, which is necessary for a yogi-sadhak to enter in to the universal consciousness-lit paths that show up in the sky of Brahman. It can be achieved though advanced Kriya-yogic techniques performed in a state of pranic stillness under the guidance of the Sadguru.

yogi-saint Mahaguru Govindapada and also interacted with Govindapada's teacher, the venerable Sri Gourapada. Sadguru Govindapada, who was none other than Patanjali in another incarnation, initiated this supremely talented young disciple into the sacred yogic methods, transmitting the pristine supreme Vedantic science of self-realization (para-brahma-vidya). Through this divine diksha, the inner samskaras of Shankaracharya were fully awakened and he was connected with his primordial personality and accumulated fruits of spiritual pursuits of his past lives — enabling him to attain ultimate fulfillment in sadhana very quickly. From his birth to his leaving the mortal world, Adi Shankaracharya's illustrious life of avatar-hood was guided and shaped by the great Rishi-Mandala of Vyas-deva and other divine saints like Vashistha, Sanat Kumara, etc, who govern the descent of avatars age after age.

Adi Shankaracharya was a living embodiment of the state of Shiva-hood, manifesting the state of 'Aham Brahmasmi', (I am Brahman) of a realized sannyasi monk propounding the philosophy of Advaita or non-dualism. However, later we see him include the harmonious-union of Shiva and Shakti in the complete self-experience of Advaita. There are many incidents of the divine play of Adyashakti Mahamaya in the life of Sri Shankaracharya. Let me relate one of them, which is fairly well known:- During a stay in Kashi (Varanasi), one day, on his way for a bath in Manikarnika ghat, Acharya Shankar met with a young woman sitting with the corpse of her husband, crying uncontrollably, his head on her lap. The dead body blocked the narrow path to the bathing ghat. The newly widowed was weeping and begging every passerby to help her perform her husband's

cremation rites. After waiting a while, Shankaracharya politely requested the lady, 'Mother, if you kindly move the dead body to one side, we can pass by.' The woman was so disconsolate that nothing appeared to enter through her ears. The helpless saint pleaded with her, placing his fervent request again and again. Finally the lady responded saying, 'Why O great soul! Why don't you ask the dead body directly?' Hearing such a peculiar statement Sri Shankaracharya was taken aback. In an astonished tone he asked the weeping woman, 'Mother! Have you lost your mind? Can a corpse move itself? Does he have the strength (shakti) to move on his own?' The young woman retorted, 'Why O great saint! In your view it is the indistinguishable, shakti-less Brahman which governs this universe?' The Acharya was stunned. As he began to think, 'Is this a divine revelation?' the woman and the corpse disappeared. Later in his meditation he realized that this was the grace of the Divine Mother indicating to him that ordinary people are unable to grasp his philosophy of the Brahman without Shakti. In his Advaita philosophy, he propounded that 'Brahman is reality, the world is illusory, the individual soul (jiva) is none other than Brahman; in pure existential absolute Brahman there is no separation of Shakti – that is the absolute Truth.' The Divine Mother reminded him – 'How can ordinary people grasp this philosophy? Without the yoga of works-knowledge-love and a steadfast pursuit of the soul (atma-sadhana) it is impossible to realize the principles of non-dual Brahman and its philosophy.' That is why the reigning Goddess of Kashi — Mother Annapurna — through a divine revelation, presented an enlightening experience to Adi Shankaracharya."

I heard her in silence, trying to allow every word to go within undisturbed, undistorted — to be reflected upon in solitude. I eagerly wait for these divine consciousness-filled sentences to come back on their own within me, providing exhilarating, enlightening experiences. The delight of these blissful reminiscences is unexplainable.



Mahavatar Babaji as revealed to Sir Cameran. E. Kar and later drawn by him.

However, I did not wish to let this golden opportunity pass. Picking up a thread from Acharya Shankar's life, I tried to move on to my originally planned article and asked, "The enigma about Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj never seems to go away from my mind. From you, we know that he is

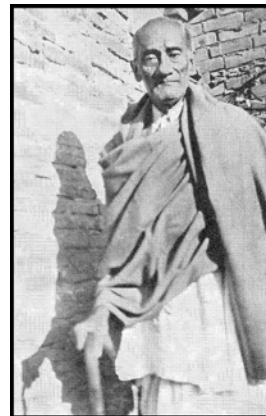
originally the great immortal sage Sanat Kumara of Brahmaloaka, who came into this earth as Kapil Muni, the first avatar of Lord Narayana. Through generations of illustrious embodiments, we see him again as Patanjali, Buddha and Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj, transforming the eternal divine science of self-realization through his extraordinary spiritual research. We are also told that he is the great Mahamuni Mahatapa, the head of the celebrated Gyangunj Ashram in the Himalayas. Now we hear that the guru of Adi Shankaracharya, Sri Govindapada, was Patanjali. I had read in many places that Babaji Maharaj has initiated Adi Shankaracharya. The missing connection is now closed. But one question still lingers in

my mind. You had mentioned sometime ago that when our Sri Sri Baba had asked Babaji Maharaj how old he was, the Mahamuni had remarked, 'I have seen the battle of Kurukshetra'. What was his role there?"

Sree Sree Maa said, "Do you remember what Babaji Maharaj had told Sri Pranabananda Giri Maharaj during their meeting?" "Yes, I do", I replied — "By the grace of his incomparable yogi guru Sri Sri Shyamacharan Lahiri Mahashay, Sri Pranabananda Giri Maharaj had the



blessed fortune of meeting Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj. During the interaction, responding to Pranabananda-ji's question on his life-span, Babaji Maharaj had indicated that it was his wish to advise to Kalki before leaving his current body." Sree Sree Maa said, "Yes, indeed. Now go and read about Kalki. You will get some hint on the missing link that you seek. For re-confirmation, look at what Sri Manick Lal Dutt has written about his guru, Kailash Behari Babaji Maharaj, who we know is Mahavatar himself." This ended the meeting that night.



Sri Manick Lal Dutt

I had my work cut out. Some rapid reading and search followed. Here is what emerged. The Kalki Purana notes that Kalki, the tenth and final great incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is trained in the sixty-four arts including the

Vedas, Vedangas, Dhanurveda, etc., from the great warrior sage, Lord Parashurama. Parashurama, son of sage Jamadagni, was the sixth avatar of Lord Vishnu, just preceding Lord Ramachandra of Ayodhya. In Satya Yuga, there are tales of Parashurama's encounter with Lord Ganesha in the abode of Lord Shiva and Devi Parvati. Parashurama's yuga-avatara life is probably most well remembered for destroying the Haihaya Kshatryia race twenty-one times and killing the invincible Kartavirya Arjuna. Later, in the Treta-Yuga, he handed over the mantle of yuga-avatara-hood to Sri Ramachandra and retired to the Mahendra hills for great ascetic penance. Again, in Dwapara, we find his reference as a teacher of several great warriors including Bheeshma, Dronacharya and Karna. Now, in Kalki Purana, Lord Parashurama is the destined guru of Kalki. This means the he was there not only in the Mahabharata war, we find him present in all the four yugas!

With this discovery, I wondered in silent astonishment, "Is Mahavatar Babaji Lord Parashurama?" I turned to the next reference that Sree Sree Maa had pointed to, namely the life of Sri Manick Lal Dutt, the reclusive disciple of Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj. The sources included the 'Red Book' and the life of Sri Manick Lal (called 'Jibanabhas', written in Bengali), both very rare books of great value to seekers in the spiritual path. The fascinating story of how the young Manick Lal was divinely guided to Kanu (now Khana) junction station (near Kolkata), his yearning for initiation from the yogi saint Sri Vishuddhanda Paramhansa (who declined saying that Manick Lal's predestined guru would himself come and do the needful) to finally his initiation by the twenty-year-old-looking, ancient, immortal Kailash Behari Babaji Maharaj, is a spiritual

thriller. I rapidly read along and stopped at the place where Sri Manick Lal Dutt has said that from his innermost realized thoughts and feelings he was full of conviction that "Babaji Maharaj is the great immortal who has been present in the four yugas - the omnipresent, omniscient, deathless master, Lord Parashurama himself!" With a glow in my face, I triumphantly related the 'discovery' to Sree Sree Maa.

Sree Sree Maa smiled and said, "Only by deeply reflecting on the glorious, life-continuum of Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj through the inner depths of self-realized universal truth, can one appreciate how priceless is the contribution of this great avatar towards advancing the spiritual science that enables one to progress from Jiva-hood to Shiva-hood. This great soul, Brahmarshi Sanat Kumara, descended on earth as Kapil Muni, the avatar son of Maha-Prajapati Kardam. In this incarnation, through immaculate meditation, he perceived the inherent mysteries of the principles of creation and out of this realization pronounced the philosophy of 'Sankhya'. His treatise, 'Sankhya-Darshan', which elaborates on the dual principles of Purusha (Self, Consciousness) - the Experiencer, and Prakriti (Phenomenal Nature, Matter) - the Experienced, is a presentation of this universal truth realized by him.

Later, in his incarnation as Maharshi Patanjali, he researched on the methodology of realizing the principles espoused in the Sankhya philosophy. Founded on the firm steps of tapasya, self-introspective meditation (swadhyay) and surrender to the supreme divine (Ishwar pranidhan), he propounded the precisely scientific, experientially realizable, research-based yogic path of self-realization in his

masterpiece – ‘Patanjali’s Yoga-Darshan’, which is a theory of how it is possible to progressively uplift one’s consciousness into the self-illuminating realms of the liberated soul, breaking the bondage of ignorance (Jiva-hood) and attaining freedom (Shiva-hood). In spite of its supremely scientific basis built upon the fundamental principles of Sankhya-Darshan, ‘Patanjali’s Yoga-Sutras’ remained a set of philosophical aphorisms in the yogic science of self-realization, usually beyond the reasonable reach of a jiva seeker.

Kapil’s Sankhya-Darshan or philosophy transformed into a realizable yogic path of supreme union, namely Sankhya-Yoga, in the celebrated divine diction of the Srimad Bhagwat-Gita. Also, Patanjali’s Yoga-Sutras translated into an actionable yogic technique in the form of ‘Brahma-Vidya’, again in the Gita. Through the witnessing-presence of Lord Parashurama, Kriya-Yoga sprouted from Brahma-Vidya, with the warriors of the Kurukshetra war exemplifying the various yogic elements and the battle being an exposition of the process of spiritual reconstruction. The Kurukshetra war is called dharma-yuddha because the yogic principles of self-realization and establishment of eternal truth was fully manifested through this divine leela in the form of a transformational battle.

Along the four ages, the life-force of this great soul, through his unprecedented sadhana, has presented the world priceless gifts of divine self-fulfillment in the forms of philosophical principles, scientifically based research processes and actionable methodologies, thereby providing the goal,

identifying the path and developing the vehicle for firm establishment of eternal truth within creation. Mankind remains eternally grateful to this divine Maha-Guru. He enlightened this world again in the form of the peerless Gautama Buddha as the ninth avatar of Lord Vishnu, the harbinger of peace and enlightenment. With the passage of time, when the need arose, he, as Sri Govindapada and his equally illustrious friend and partner, Sri Gourapada, planned the re-establishment of truth and arranged for the descent of Maharshi Shaktri, the illustrious son of Brahmarshi Vashistha, as Shiva-avatara ‘Adi Shankaracharya’. The illuminated ever-present life-force of this super-soul remains undiminished and today he is reverentially known as Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj. He is also the fabled Maharshi Mahatapa, head of the enchanting Gyangunj Ashram. Babaji Maharaj’s uninterrupted benevolent mission continues as we await his imparting the seeds of knowledge to Kalki.”

Unable to hold my curiosity I asked, “Maa, you have talked about Sri Gourapada as being a partner of Babaji Maharaj in the process of manifestation and establishment of eternal truth. Who is Lord Gaurapada?” Sree Sree Maa smiled, “He is none other than your eternal father, our Sri Sri Baba, about whom His Divine Majesty, Sri Sri Nanga Baba has remarked, ‘Mera Saroj, Rishi-shresth Vashisth hai’. Now let us keep the story of Brahmarshi Vashistha’s lives for another day.” I offered pranam and left her in peace. My day was made.

*Transcribed by*  
**Sri Partha Pratim Chakrabarti,**  
*her blessed child*

Happiness is your nature. It is not wrong to desire it. What is wrong is seeking it outside when it is inside.

**-Ramana Maharshi**