

## A Purana Purusha's Divine Compassion

A little over a hundred and fifty years ago, in 1861, an unknown and unseen event took place in a remote cave in the Himalayas. That momentous incident sourced a spiritual movement which today has captured the hearts and minds of countless seekers all over the world as a path to self-realization suitable for a modern secular world – an experiential approach to Vedanta and Yoga, combining the essential tenants of Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga and Laya Yoga for integral evolution towards spiritual emancipation. Today it goes by the popular name of 'Kriya Yoga'. While today there is an abundance of literature and folklore on Kriya Yoga, available in all kinds of media, the philosophy and methods of Kriya Yoga can be sourced to various in ancient Yogic texts, including but not limited to



the Shiva-Sutras, Patanjali's Yoga-sutras and obviously the Srimad Bhagwad Gita. Most of the specific methods were carefully guarded over centuries during which they were refined and perfected by great masters and handed over through Guru-Shishya tradition and remained mostly out of reach of society at large. Today, we owe it to this remote event of a century and a half ago, and to the enormously large heart of one soul, later revered as Yogiraj Sri Sri Shyamacharan Lahiri Mahashay, to ask his spiritual Guru, the ageless perfected grand master - Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj - to allow the spread of this technique of self-perfection to the world and the magnanimity

and compassion of the great Guru to allow, nurture and lend his continued spiritual support to all those who have sincerely strived in this path through the times. We remain ever grateful to them.

While Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj remains an enigma, whose image of a super-human personality remains undiminished over ages, Sri Sri Lahiri Mahashay appears deceptively mortal-like, giving us an impression that maybe we can emulate him and achieve his levels and make our worldly living divine as easily as he appeared to have done. Only when we attempt the path, follow his methods and receive his grace do we begin to realize the immaculate perfection of his sadhana and unfathomable greatness of his personality. Though much is known about Sri Sri Lahiri Mahashay from available literature, in the company of

Sree Maa and through her inner wisdom we often get rare and sometimes personalized glimpses of this polestar of Kriya Yoga. One such interaction is presented below.

One day, during a discussion, Sree Sree Maa remarked, "Ishwar-koti and Jiva-koti – two categories of human personalities are seen. Among them, Sri Sri Shyamacharan Lahiri Baba was a divine avatar-natured mahatma of the highest order. The Ishwar-kotis take birth through divine will as yuga-avatars to uplift humanity and show them the path of brahma-nirvana through the sadhana of moksha-marga. Such great souls, capable of imparting self-realization to others and enabling them to evolve

spiritually through sadhana are anointed as 'sadgurus' and thereby empowered to transmit the divine consciousness. They are backed up the great rishi mandala and are seen as saints of the highest order, not only for their spiritual achievements but for their great compassion in agreeing to mingle with and uplift the spiritually starved and often helpless jiva-kotis. The supreme yogishwar Sri Sri Shyamacharan Lahiri is one such ishwar-koti rishi who has been revered as a 'Purana-Purusha' since time immemorial.

Ishwar-koti mahatmas are yogis by nature and are guided by divine providence. This was observed from Lahiri Mahashay's childhood and throughout his life. One day his doting mother took him to their household 'Jaleshwar' Shiva temple to pray. Sitting with his mother, who was immersed in her worship, the little boy, copying his mother, closed his eyes. Immediately thereafter, in a flash, a serene yogi appeared. As the bewildered and scared mother grabbed her child and held him close, the yogi, allaying her fears announced, 'O mother, do not be afraid. Your son is not an ordinary boy. I have sent him to take birth to show the path of liberation to agonized people suffering in sorrow. He shall remain within society and attract people towards yogic sadhana of self-realization. You have nothing to fear. I shall guard him like a shadow and will constantly keep watch.' The same great guardian, who kept his protégé under close vigil, again appeared before him when Shyamacharan was in his early thirties in the idyllic magnificence of the Himalayas. Once, while wandering through the woods, he was astonished when he heard a gentle voice beckoning him. Gathering courage, he walked up to the cave where he was met by an extraordinary saint who introduced Himself as 'Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj'. Shyamacharan was led

inside a cave wherein he was shown a piece of tiger skin, a stick and a pitcher ('kamandalu') traditionally used by a hermit. As the divine grace of Mahavatar Babaji Maharaj descended upon him, he could immediately recognize the former as his immortal Guru and the belongings as his own from the previous birth. Over the next few months, during his stay at Ranikhet, he was re-initiated into 'yoga sadhana' by the great Babaji Maharaj. As the invaluable wealth of yoga gradually unfurled before him, Shyamacharan could have renounced his family and society and dedicated himself for his personal achievements. He was, however, instructed by Sri Babaji Maharaj to return to the society to spread the doctrine of 'Kriya Yoga', igniting the minds of great saints who were reborn to build up the spiritual movement that the immaculate Mahavatar guided through his peerless disciple. At this point, the big-hearted Shyamacharan requested his great Guru to also allow imparting of this great gift to emancipate commoners who sought salvation but were too tied up with important responsibilities of family and society to become hermits. This meant taking up a burden of so many struggles for Shyamacharan and his Guru, which they both could have possibly avoided. The rest is history and we, the beneficiaries of this causeless compassion, remained eternally indebted.

Sri Sri Lahiri Mahashay was a yogi of the highest order. Yet he carried on his life as an ordinary person, only rarely displaying his yogic powers and that too typically to encourage and instil spirituality and highlight the grace of God. Like all great ishwar-koti souls, his life had a vast inner side. His inner soul remained illuminated in supreme self-realization as a divine blissful being, who tried hard but was often

incapable of hiding his innate glorious nature. His disciples, would, in the course of their sadhana, experience their Guru's illuminated light within and directly experience his living presence guiding them in self-realization. Diaries of his disciples, from the exalted mahatmas to simple ordinary people are replete with illustrations of his constant existence in their kutastha. Therefore limiting Sri Sri Shyamacharan Baba only to his mortal envelope and seeing only his external activities is being blind to his universal existence and the gigantic effort he has played and continues to play in the spiritual evolution of humanity. Let me give you two personal experiences from my life occurring at times when the mortal coil of Sri Sri Lahiri Mahashay is known to have left this world by over nine decades.

That was the night of Shiva-ratri. After completing Shiva-puja at maha-nisha, I was sitting in asana uplifted in paravastha. From early on, above my head, in the vyom-mandala, small sparks lightning and rumblings of thunder were at play. Within a while, suddenly, the sky was lit with a huge zig-zag ray of lightning and with a great crackling sound the thunderbolt fell – on the 'bama' centre of the head. My body leapt up and fell aside. All senses switched off and consciousness went into a deep Samadhi – asampragyata-nirbeej-nirvikalpa Samadhi. Subsequently, my being was awakened by the call of a brilliant yet gentle and blissfully comforting Jyoti-satta. On reclaiming partial self-consciousness, I found in front of me, the dazzling sun-like halo of a maha-satta, one who had retrieved me from the state of deep Samadhi. Viewing through this luminous plate-like shining sun, everything within the room, engulfed by the emanating radiance of the mahatma's divine light, appeared illuminated and golden. As I continued to gaze at this wondrous

appearance, a thought arose within – who is he? As if immediately, the transparent golden halo, in a series of steps, reduced its size, and moved towards the marble statue of Sri Sri Shyamacharan Lahiri Mahashay, enthroned in my room. I was then residing in Parnasree. On reaching the same, it reduced to a point and merged into the heart region of the saint's statue and vanished. At this point I became fully awakened. I looked carefully at Sri Sri Lahiri Mahashay's statue and saw that it had become alive, with the divine soul looking at me — a slight smile on his face, full of bliss. I began to ponder – 'what had happened to me?' and immediately from deep within the response arose – 'Maa Ganga has descended within you'. This was the first time I was directly blessed by the presence of this Brahmarshi maha-purusha.

Several blissful years passed under the shade of this great soul's divine blessings. During this period many occasions arose where his sacred touch was experienced as I followed the path enunciated through him in the rishi lineage. One of them was a wonderful dream. I saw that I had gone to my own Guru, Sri Sri Saroj Baba's house. I saw him lying on his bed. The room was closed but the door was transparent – made of glass. He appeared ill and incapable of even getting up to open the door. Seeing me standing in front of the door, he said, 'I am doing so so. I am always with you and shall remain so forever. At present you may return.' Paying him my pranams I began to make my way out of the house. As I was about to step out of the main door, I observed a large photo-frame above the door. Within the frame was a mirror, inside which I saw Sri Sri Shyamacharan Lahiri Mahashay sitting in yogic posture. As soon as I opened the door and stepped out by walking under this peculiar photo-frame, Sri

Sri Lahiri Mahashay's two lotus feet dropped down and rested hanging in front of my chest. Immediately I clung onto them with my hands and placed my head on the top of his feet. A burst of universal consciousness engulfed me and my whole being began to tremble. Just then my dream ended and I awoke. Once again I received his divine touch.

There are so many more instances through which I have received his sacred wisdom enabling me to not only see the light of Truth but also discover the original satta of this great personality. Other than taking many luminous lives, he is renowned in the divine world as 'Brahmarshi Narada' who was also given the name of 'Satya-sukrit' by

the great sages and devas during the early ages. He is ever with us, constantly guiding us with great compassion, imparting eternal gyana-bhakti to seekers since time immemorial. His spark will soon come again before us in a new physical embodiment and you all will hopefully get a chance to meet him. But don't ask me any further on this." Sree Sree Maa stopped. Through the grace of Sree Sree Maa, we have been lucky to have been blessed by many great souls, old sages in their newer forms. This is another for which I am still waiting with bated breath, steadfastly controlling my impatience.

**-Sri Partha Pratim Chakrabarti,**  
*Her Blessed Child*