

Babaji, the Deathless Guru

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The deathless Guru described as the *Mahavatar* (great avatar) *Babaji*, also known as *Tryambaka Baba* and other names is famous through Paramhansa Yogananda in his “Autobiography of a Yogi” and had appeared to several advanced Yogis as their Guru and initiator for hundreds of years.

It is said among his devotees were those such as *Adi Shankaracharya*¹ who traditionally was born around 509BCE, but who is often confused with his later counterpart who also composed many Stotras and works, *Abhinava Shankaracharya* (8th Century AD). Shankaracharya himself praised the immortal Guru *Dakshinamurthi*, the form of Shiva as the initiator of initiates of whom some have also connected Babaji to. Other correlations have been made between Babaji and *Goraskhanatha*, the great Guru of *Hatha-Yoga* and his Guru, *Minnatha* (*Matysendranatha*) around the 12th Century AD.

Babaji then, is quite an enigmatic figure and appears to be a form of Shiva that has possibly assumed many births. Among the followers of Paramhansa Yogananda in the SRF (Self Realisation Fellowship) there is the common belief that Babaji was Krishna in a former life, but this appears to be simply a tale to connect the *Krishna-Consciousness* or higher state of realisation of both Krishna and Babaji as liberated souls!

However, in a previous life, Sri Krishna was said to have been *Rishi Narayana*, associated with Badrinarayan in the Himalayas, of which Babaji also is. In some other talks, some claim Yogananda had stated he was Arjuna, the disciple of Sri Krishna and Babaji as Krishna. In this context, it also makes the pair the immortal Nara-Narayana Rishis also, again a former birth (perhaps the next was Rishi Yajnavalkya).

In his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Yogananda also states that Babaji materialised a palace for his disciple *Lahiri Mahasya*, due to his past-life desire to see this palace. This could have been due to the association of Babaji in his former life (pre Krishna)

¹ Donald J. Walters (Swami Kriyananda), “*Conversations with Yogananda*”, p.245

as Rishi Yajnavalkya, with Lahiri Mahasya being his disciple, Raja Janaka of Mithila at that time; a way to help him remember his past. The son of Yajnavalkya, *Chandrakanta* is also said to have been reborn as *Kharasura* in the epic *Ramayana*, the brother of *Ravana* due to a curse by Lord Shiva². Interestingly, Yogananda is himself said to have stated that Lahiri Mahasya was Raja Janaka of ancient India³, the disciple of Rishi Yajnavalkya, which further adds to this case.

One clear message we get is the message that came through Swami Pranabananda, a disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya, the *Paramguru* or grandsire Guru of Paramhansa Yogananda. Upon his meeting with Babaji, we learn that he states he will be the Guru of the *Kalki* avatar:

"I have a wish to give initiation to Kalki; then I will leave my body."
(Life Sketch of Swami Pranabananda by Sri Jnanendranath Mukhopadyay, 'Life of a Sanyassi' section, 3.)

According to the *Agni-Purana*(16.7-9), the Priest and Guru of the Kali-avatar will be the great ancient Yogi, *Maharishi Yajnavalkya*, known for his *Shulka Yajur Veda* recession of the Yajur-Veda (also known as the *Vajasenayi Samhita*) and the greatest Yogi before Sri Krishna.

The talks about Yoga between him and his disciple, the Raja Janaka are noted in the Mahabharata epic where Sri Krishna appeared, as taught by Bhishmacharya. It could possibly here mean that he was Krishna and that before Krishna, he was the Rishi Yajnavalkya, who was reborn. Babaji travels with his sister as his spiritual companion also, who could be his wife, *Maitreyi*, who became the disciple of Yajnavalkya and is noted in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* of his.

The Guru of Paramhansa Yogananda, Sri Yuktेशwar is said to have been reborn as an astral being on the sphere of the planet *Hiranyaloka*, the Golden-Planet of the Sun, and the first originator of Yoga is the deity there, *Hiranyagarbha* as per Rishi Yajnavalkya, and of whom Yajnavalkya himself received his entire recession of the Yajurveda from.

The *Mandala-Brahmana Upanishad* itself speaks on how Rishi Yajnavalkya visits *Aditya Loka (Hiranyaloka)* the astral Sun-Planet and learns the Science of Yoga. That his lineage also comes via *Uddalaka Aruni* from the Sun and this, makes it only befitting that Sri Yuktेशwar should become a Guru on that Planet!

Humanity itself also descends from the Sun, as stated in the Rig Veda (IV.26.1) and

² Sheldon I. Pollock, *"The Ramayana of Valmiki: An Epic of Ancient India, Volume II: Aranyakanda"*, p. 278

³ <http://www.ananda.org/meditation/free-meditation-support/articles/the-spiritual-power-of-yogananda/>

also the Bhagavad Gita, where Krishna also traces his first teaching of Yoga to the Sun (*Vivasvan*) who then passed it on to his son, Manu.

Maharishi Yajnavalkya also descends from the Shaivite Yoga lineage of the *Taittiriya Samhita*, the older recession of the Yajur Veda from his uncle and Guru, *Uddalaka Aruni* of whom descends from the *Aruna* Rishis, connected to Mount Arunachala, seen in southern India as a form of Shiva. The *Taittiriya Samhita* itself contains the great Shaivite chant as the *Sri Rudram* and also Solar-Shaivite Yoga, as also seen in the *Swetasvatara Upanishad* that also connects to it. All of this links to Babaji as the same personality as Rishi Yajnavalkya – perhaps in a former life⁴.

On this, Paramhansa Yogananda has himself stated:

"Babaji's mission in India, has been to assist prophets in carrying out their special dispensations. He thus qualifies for the scriptural classification of Mahavatar (Great Avatar)." (Yogananda, Autobiography of a Yogi, p.346).

"Babaji is not limited to a physical body, nor to this planet, but, at God's wish, is fulfilling a special mission for the earth." (Yogananda, Autobiography of a Yogi, p.354)

In "*Pranab Gita*" by *Jnanendranath Mukhopadyyay*, Swami Pranabananda, upon talking with Babaji, as mentioned before also asks him his age. Babaji is said to have replied that three *kalpas*⁵ had passed for him already and he was about to complete the fourth *Kalpa* at its end.

This was in the late 1800s and hence here, would mean that *Babaji* then, in that current body, although looking around only twenty-five years of age, was actually around 480 years of age, or say 400+ years old. Babaji didn't say when he was completing his fourth *Kalpa* however, although we can assume he was far into its period.

One famous Yogi in Northern India who Babaji appears to be acquainted with is *Sri Chand*, seen as an incarnation of Lord Shiva (his father, Guru Nanak being seen as an avatar of Vishnu) and also great reformer who lived to 149 years of age, being born in 1494AD. Like Babaji, *Sri Chand* is believed by some to be immortal, simply "disappearing" around 1643 into a forest.

⁴ Great Yogis such as Babaji can assume several forms, including those of their past incarnations or lives also, being able to exist on causal, astral and physical planes, not only of this earth but also of others, as also simultaneously. Sri Krishna did this in the *rasa-leela* in the Bhagavata Purana, where he expanded himself into several forms. Attaining the form of their previous lives, then, is not feat at all. They may hence appear in any of their past avatars to a devotee for a particular purpose, just as the deities appear in various forms themselves.

⁵ Accordingly, Babaji is said to have stated that each *Kalpa* is a period of (up to) 120 years. This makes him about 480 years old or just less at this time.

If however, we assume the *Kalpas* as per 120 years, and we take the latter part of the 1800s as when *Pranabananda* met him, we can thus look at the cycles as:

1494-1643AD
1643-1737AD
1737-1854AD
1854-1974AD

By this logic, it would mean that he was in his fourth *Kalpa* during this time, but we can debate how far into it he actually was. He had stated he had completed three already, which shows he could possibly be Sri Chand. His first meeting with Lahiri Mahasaya is said to have been in 1861. Sri Yuktेशwar met him in 1894. Another disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Keshabananda met Babaji in 1935.

Yet as noted, a *Kalpa* is up to 120 years. Taking the average of 100 years, we get a date of 1894 for when Babaji would have completed his fourth *Kalpa*, if he was indeed, Sri Chand in his last famous incarnation.

However, Yogananda also notes that he gave initiation to the great *Kabirdas* (1440-1518), which could possibly have been in a former "form" as *Dakshinamurthi* before his birth as *Sri Chand* or as *Sri Chand* when he was very young. If he was in his former forms, however, this is possible.

Kabirdas also belonged to the *Sant Math* as Sri Chand's father, *Guru Nanak*, which is also noteworthy. Moreover, it is known that *Babaji* is a fair-skinned youth not unlike that of the Panjabis of the far north-west of India like Sri Chand also and hence either way, initiating him before his birth as *Sri Chand* in his more astral forms as *Dakshinamurthi* or *Yajnavalkya Rishi*, it all points to the same personality and also same associations.

Yogi Bhajan, the famous leader of the Western Sikh movement is said to have stated about Sri Chand, that:

*"Very few people met him in physical terminology, but everywhere he appeared in his radiant body, in perfect form and shape."*⁶

This also connects him to the immortal Babaji and also connects him to the deeper aspect as the avatar who descends into human flesh, but also retains his superhuman state as an advanced Yogi as well. It is also said that Sri Chand when he was a youth wandered into a forest with wild animals and when found, was seen to be in deep meditation surrounded by these animals at his feet and untouched⁷.

If one sees depictions of Sri Chand in his golden youthful body and also Babaji, one also sees a striking resemblance as well. In addition, one also notes the social exchange and many Muslims and non-Hindus that his father Guru Nanak and the San Math also allowed into their traditions to preserve the Vedic teachings and

⁶ Source: <http://www.spiritvoyage.com/blog/index.php/who-is-baba-siri-chand/>

⁷ His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh, *"The Miraculous Life of Baba Siri Chand: Loving Son, and True follower of Guru Nanak Devji"*, p.2

hence also shows his similarity to Babaji with regards to spiritual affairs of the modern day Western world also. We know Sri Chand was acquainted with several western languages as Persian as well as Hindi, Sanskrit and Urdu and appears to have reappeared again to Lahiri Mahasaya to create another invitation to the Western world in his more astral form.

However, the reader is invited to form their own opinions here alone – I have had many visions of *Sri Dakshinamurthi*, Lord *Shiva Yogeshwara* and others and have derived much of my early inspiration from Rishi Yajnavalkya, and do not however wish to disclose the truth about Babaji in any way, but simply let one conjecture on their own by these correlations and similarities between such figures in India; the sole purpose of this article itself.