

Neti Neti by Sita Rami

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BABAJI
NETI NETI

BABAJI

“NETI, NETI” - NOT THIS, NOT THIS. SANSKRIT WORDS EXPRESSING THE INEXPLICABLE ULTIMATE, THE ABSOLUTE, THE TRANSCENDENTAL, THE DIVINE, GOD. HOW OFTEN I HAVE SAID I CAN NEVER WRITE ABOUT BABAJI. SO BEYOND EXPRESSIONS BEYOND THE KEN OF THE WILDEST IMAGINATION. THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS FANTASIES PALE BESIDE HIM. IN TRUTH I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE IS. NO ONE CAN FATHOM HIM. NO WORDS SUCCESS FULLY DESCRIBE HIM. WORDS BY THEIR NATURE LIMIT. HE IN EVERY ASPECT IS LIMITLESS. YET I FEEL AN URGENCY TO SHARE HIM WITH THOSE OPEN TO GOD, TO TELL THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SEEKING GOD, SEARCHING FOR REALITY, PEACE, LIBERATION, TRUTH IN ITS HIGHEST FORM, OF HIS PRESENCE IN MORTAL FORM AND OF HIS MESSAGE OF TRUTH, SIMPLICITY AND LOVE AND THE CONSTANT REMEMBRANCE OF GOD'S NAME-THIS TEACHING WHICH OFFERS SAFETY EVEN FROM ATOM BOMBS, YET IS SIMPLE, INTIMATE TO ONE'S BEING, AND THE BASIS OF ALL RELIGIONS.

MY FIRST REMEMBRANCE OF BABAJI CAME THROUGH PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA WHEN I READ HIS “AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI”. BABAJI, THE DEATHLESS GURU, THE YOGI-CHRIST OF INDIA, AS YOGANANDA CALLS HIM, “SHIVA MAHAVATAR (THE HIGHEST FORM OF GOD), DIVINITY IN THE FLESH, MAINTAINING HIS PHYSICAL FORM FROM CENTURY TO CENTURY. SOMETIMES VISIBLE TO PEOPLE, OFTEN WORKING INVISIBLY FOR THE REDEMPTION AND SALVATION OF THE HUMAN RACE”. (AUTOBIOGRAPHY P. 295) WHO COULD READ OF HIM, HIS BEAUTY, HIS POWER, HIS NEVER-DYING LOVE AND PROTECTION OF HIS DEVOTEES, WITHOUT BEING MOVED TO CALL OUT TO HIM? ESPECIALLY SO WHEN YOGANANDA RELATES: “WHENEVER ANYONE UTTERS WITH REVERENCE THE NAME OF BABAJI, THAT DEVOTEE ATTRACTS AN INSTANT SPIRITUAL BLESSING.” (AUTOBIOGRAPHY,P.300).

I REMEMBER THE YEARNING I FELT THEN TO EXPERIENCE THIS IMMORTAL MASTER OF MASTERS, WHOSE YOUTH LIKE BODY, BEAUTIFUL AND STRONG, BEARS NO MARKS OF AGE BUT RADIATES A PERCEPTIBLE GLOW. THE THOUGHT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME IN THOSE DAYS THAT I COULD EVER MEET THIS PEERLESS ONE WHO APPEARS FROM TIME TO TIME AND VANISHES INTO LIGHT AT WILL, WHOSE “UNDECAYABLE BODY REQUIRES NO FOOD” (AUTOBIOGRAPHY, P.300), WHO IS SEEN OR RECOGNISED BY OTHERS ONLY WHEN HE SO DESIRES. THE IMAGE OF BABAJI WAS BY FAR THE MOST ENTICING CONCEPT MY SEARCHING MIND HAD EVER IMAGINED AND, THOUGH I NEVER DOUBTED THE VERACITY OF YOGANANDA'S DESCRIPTION, ONLY THE SEEMING IMPOSSIBILITY OF EVER ENCOUNTERING THIS DIVINE BEING ALLOWED THE FLAMES OF DESIRE IN MY HEART TO SUBSIDE AND THE MEMORY OF HIS EXISTENCE TO RETREAT AGAIN INTO THE SUBCONSCIOUS. I BELIEVE THAT THIS LONGING FOR HIM AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF HIM IN ALL HIS GLORIOUS SPLENDOUR HAS ALWAYS BEEN ALIVE IN MY SUBTLE AWARENESS, PERMITTING ME TO FIND NEITHER PEACE NOR SATISFACTION IN ANYTHING ELSE. I BELIEVE SO, YES. I CANNOT SAY I KNOW. SO MUCH CONCERNING BABAJI ONE CAN FEEL AS TRUTH WITH THE HEART. THE MIND CAN NEVER KNOW THESE THINGS. THESE MATTERS ARE BEYOND THE KEN OF THE MIND.

SEVERAL YEARS AFTER READING 'AUTOBIOGRAPHY', I LEARNED THAT BABAJI WAS IN PHYSICAL FORM AND LIVING IN THE KUMAON HILLS OF THE HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS IN INDIA. IT TOOK NOT A MOMENT TO DECIDE THAT I WOULD COME TO SEE HIM. I GAVE NOTICE TO THE LAW SCHOOL WHERE I TAUGHT AND FOUR MONTHS LATER FOUND MYSELF IN FLIGHT TO INDIA, MY MIND FLOATING AT THE THOUGHT AND STORIES OF THIS PURE LIGHT WHO HAD TAKEN ON HUMAN FORM FOR THE SALVATION OF MANKIND. EN ROUTE I OPENED THE SMALL "SPIRITUAL DIARY OF YOGANANDA" WHICH I HAD JUST PURCHASED. HOW PERFECT THE WORDS FOR THAT DAY:

"IT IS BECAUSE GOD WANTS YOU THAT I AM HERE WITH YOU, CALLING YOU TO COME HOME, WHERE MY BELOVED IS, WHERE KRISHNA, AND CHRIST AND BABAJI, AND THE OTHER SAINTS ARE. COME, THE LORD IS SAYING. THEY ARE ALL REJOICING IN ME. NO WORLDLY JOYS. CAN COMPARE WITH THE DIVINE JOYS OF MY HOME. THERE IS ONLY ONE REALITY. IT IS HE. FORGET EVERYTHING ELSE."

I REMEMBER THAT FIRST WALK UP THE RIVER VALLEY TO BABAJI'S ASHRAM, CROSSING THE HOLY GAUTAMA GANGA RIVER 10 OR 12 TIMES, THE STONES WHITE, THE WATERS SPARKLING IN THE SUNSHINE. THE FEELING I HAD WAS THAT I HAD FINALLY COME HOME. NOTHING HAD EVER FELT SO FAMILIAR. IT SEEMED THAT EVERY PLACE I HAD EVER LOVED WAS REFLECTED HERE, A PIECE OF THIS WHOLE. AFTER AN IMMEASURABLE PERIOD OF TIME, WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE ABOUT 1 AND A HALF HOURS, I SAW THE ASHRAM - THE TEMPLES ON ONE SIDE, COLOURFULLY RISING OUT OF THE GOLDEN MOUNT KAILASH, THE LEGENDARY ABODE OF LORD SHIVA, OUTLINED BY A BRIGHT BLUE SKY. ON THE OTHER SIDE, TINY PINK AND WHITE BUILDINGS AND A WHITE-DOMED TEMPLE SAT HIGH ATOP A LONG WHITE STAIRCASE. LIKE A FAIRY LAND, IT LOOKED. THEN I HEARD SOMEONE SAY, "BABA IS COMING". I REMEMBER ONLY MY HEAD AT HIS FEET. EVERYTHING IN MY LIFE HAS SINCE TAKEN REFERENCE TO THIS POINT OF TIME. FOR ME, THERE IS ONLY BEFORE MEETING BABAJI AND AFTER. NOTHING ELSE IS OF SIGNIFICANCE.

IT HAS BEEN MORE THAN TWO YEARS SINCE THAT DAY WHEN MY EYES FIRST FEASTED ON HIS BEAUTY, WHEN MY EARS FIRST FILLED WITH THE SWEET MELODY OF HIS VOICE, HIS LAUGHTER, WHEN I FIRST SMELLED THE UNIMAGINABLE FRAGRANCE OF HIS PRESENCE. INCOMPARABLE IS THE JOY OF LOVING HIM, OF IMMERSING THE MIND IN THOUGHTS OF HIM. SATIATION SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, FASCINATION WITH ANYTHING CONCERNING HIM INEVITABLE AND WITH ANYTHING ELSE UNIMAGINABLE.

SHALL I TELL YOU SOMETHING OF HIS BEAUTY ? LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE ABOUT HIM, WORDS FAIL TO CAPTURE. NETI, NETI. HE IS SO ILLUSIVE, LIKE LIGHT LIKE A CLOUD. YOU CANNOT BOTTLE THESE THINGS. BESIDES, HE CHANGES, SOMETIMES FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT. WHAT IS THIS BEAUTY? ONE GAZES AND GAZES AND STILL THE MIND CANNOT FATHOM THE INFINITY WHICH IS HIS NATURE. HE WEARS HIS MORTAL FORM LIKE A SHAWL TO COVER HIS LIGHT. HE IS NOT BOUND BY IT. HE CHANGES IT AT WILL. THIS IS CLEARLY REFLECTED IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN OF HIM SINCE HIS APPEARANCE IN 1970. THE DIFFERENCES ARE ENORMOUS.

A 10TH CENTURY INDIAN SAINT, DEVARA DASIMAYYA, ADDRESSING A POEM TO RAMANATHA (A NAME FOR SHIVA), CAPTURES BABAJI'S ILLUSIVE, INDEFINABLE QUALITY :

IF THEY SEE
BREAST AND LONG HAIR COMING
THEY CALL IT WOMAN,
IF BEARD AND WHISKERS
THEY CALL IT MAN :

BUT LOOK, THE SELF THAT HOVERS
IN BETWEEN
IS NEITHER MAN
NOR WOMAN
O RAMANATHA.

(SPEAKING OF SHIVA, PENGUIN, MIDDLESEX,
ENGLAND, 1973, P. 133)

THOUGH BABAJI WEARS A MAN'S BODY, HIS ASPECT AS MOTHER DIVINE IS UNDENIABLE. ONE CANNOT SAY HE IS MAN OR WOMAN. BOTH ASPECTS ARE MERGED IN HIM. THE CREATOR OF ALL CONTAINS ALL WITHIN HIMSELF. THE FATHER, THE MOTHER, THE DIVINE BEING IMMEASURABLY EXALTED BEYOND EVERY HUMAN ATTRIBUTE. OFTEN DURING THE WORSHIP SERVICE THAT IS PERFORMED TO HIM, A SHAWL WILL BE PLACED COVERING HIS HEAD AND SHOULDERS. AS HE SITS MOTIONLESS, HE IS BEDECKED WITH FLOWERS. AT THESE TIMES HIS APPEARANCE BECOMES COMPLETELY THAT OF THE GODDESS. THE MALE ASPECT SUBMERGES ENTIRELY AND HIS BEAUTY, LIKE EXQUISITELY CHISELLED MARBLE, IS EXTRAORDINARY.

MAHANTJI, THE HEAD PRIEST OF THE HANUMAN TEMPLE, ONE OF THE MAJOR TEMPLES IN DELHI, RELATES MANY WONDERFUL STORIES OF BABAJI SHOWING THAT HE IS NOT BOUND BY TIME AND SPACE. ONCE HE TRAVELLED WITH BABAJI FROM VRINDABAN, THE PLAYGROUND OF KRISHNA, TO MADHUBAN. AFTER SOME TIME THERE, THE FOOD WAS OFFERED TO BABAJI AND BLESSED BY HIM. HE TOLD THE PEOPLE THAT THOSE WHO HAD TRAVELLED WITH HIM SHOULD TAKE THEIR FOOD FIRST AND THEN THE VILLAGERS WOULD BE SERVED. INSTEAD OF COMPLYING, THE VILLAGERS RUSHED FOR THE AVAILABLE PLACES. WHEN ALL WERE SEATED, A CLOUD WAS SEEN IN THE OTHERWISE CLOUDLESS SKY. WITHIN MINUTES A DOWNPOUR DRENCHED THE IMMEDIATE AREA. BABAJI RAN HERE AND THERE IN THE RAIN AS MAHANTJI FOLLOWED HIM. MAHANTJI NOTICED THAT THE RAIN WAS NOT FALLING ON BABAJI. WHEN BABAJI SAT DOWN AGAIN ON HIS DAIS, MAHANTJI, COVERED WITH MUD, FEET, LEGS, AND CLOTHES SAT DOWN NEAR BABAJI. BABAJI HAD NOT ONE SPOT ON HIM.

YOGANANDA WROTE OF BABAJI'S SPIRITUAL STATE AS BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION. "THE DWARFED VISION OF MEN CAN NOT PIERCE TO THIS TRANSCENDENTAL STAR." PERHAPS ONE OF THE MOST CONCRETE INDICATIONS OF THE STATE OF HIS DIVINITY IS IN HIS FOOTPRINTS. ON THE SOLES OF HIS FEET FROM TIME TO TIME HAVE APPEARED CERTAIN SYMBOLS WHICH ARE KNOWN AS COSMIC MARKS IN THE INDIAN SPIRITUAL TRADITION. THESE MARKINGS HAVE BEEN SEEN BY NUMEROUS PEOPLE AT VARIOUS TIMES AND HAVE EVEN BEEN SEEN IN PHOTOGRAPHS. THE FOLLOWING MARKS WERE IDENTIFIED :

THE SANSKRIT LETTER **OM**, CONSIDERED TO BE THE SOUND OF CREATION, CONTAINING THE ESSENCE OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE; THE **SHESH NAG** (OR FIVE-HOODED SNAKE), SYMBOLISING THE FIVE SENSES, THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF CREATION, AND ALSO THE RESTING PLACE ON WHICH GOD IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN SEATED BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD; CONCH SHELLS, SYMBOLISING THE ELEMENT OF SOUND, AND USED IN WORSHIP; A TRIDENT, THE EMBLEM OF SOVEREIGNTY, SYMBOL OF SHIVA; HEAD OF A BULL, LORD SHIVA'S ATTENDANT AND VEHICLE; SWASTIK, SYMBOL OF PEACE AND SUCCESS; A PEACOCK; A LOTUS FLOWER, SYMBOL OF DIVINITY, LIVING ON THE WATER BUT NEVER TOUCHED BY IT; DHANUSH, OR BOW; CHAKRA, OR WHEEL; THE CRESCENT MOON, INDICATIVE OF PERFECT MIND CONTROL; ALL THE SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC; THE SERPENT, REPRESENTING WISDOM AND ETERNITY, AS WELL AS FEARLESSNESS AND IMMORTALITY; THE SUN; AN OCTAGON; A HATCHET; AN EAGLE; THE PLANETARY SYSTEM, WITH SUN AND MOON AT ITS CENTRE; A CLUB.

THE AVATARS RAM AND KRISHNA ARE REPORTED TO HAVE SHOWN COSMIC MARKS ON THE SOLES OF THEIR FEET. THE FIRST TIME SUCH SYMBOLS WERE NOTICED IN BABAJI'S FOOTPRINTS WAS FIVE YEARS BEFORE HIS PRESENT APPEARANCE. HE HAD APPEARED ON THE OCCASION OF THE INSTALLATION OF AN AMBA TEMPLE IN BANAS KADA, GUJARAT, ON 25 MAY, 1965 AND SOME SYMBOLS (A FLAG, OCTAGONAL MARK, ETC.) WERE NOTICED ON THE GROUND WHERE HE HAD BEEN STANDING. THESE MARKS FULFIL THE PREDICTIONS LONG AGO DELIVERED THAT WHEN SHIVA NEXT WAS TO APPEAR IN HUMAN FORM HE WOULD HAVE A SCAR ON HIS LOWER RIGHT LEG AND UPPER LEFT ARM (AS BABAJI DOES) AND SYMBOLS OF SHIVA AND THE ZODIAC ON THE SOLES OF HIS FEET.

THE NAME SHIVA IS FREQUENTLY MENTIONED WITH REFERENCE TO BABAJI. SHIVA IS SYNONYMOUS WITH OM. BY SHIVA IS MEANT ETERNALLY HAPPY AND AUSPICIOUS, THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE. SHIVA IS SEEN AS THE GOD WITHOUT SECOND WHO HAS BEEN MOVING IN THIS WORLD IN HIS ONE AND ORIGINAL FORM SINCE THE CREATION, WATCHFUL FOR ETERNITY OVER THE WELFARE OF MAN- KIND AND THE UNIVERSE. HE IS DESCRIBED AS EVER PURE, CHANGELESS, ATTRIBUTELESS, ALL-PERVADING, ETERNAL, THE IMMORTAL ESSENCE OF THE UNIVERSE, THE UNIVERSAL SELF, THE SELF RESPLENDENT LIGHT OF LIGHTS, THE EMBODIMENT OF WISDOM. PEOPLE SAY BABAJI IS LORD SHIVA HIMSELF, THE GREAT GOD, THE MAHADEV. HIS ONLY DESIRE, IT IS TOLD, IS TO DESTROY THE IGNORANCE OF SOULS AND TO LET THE LIGHT COME. WHAT BABAJI IS, WHAT SHIVA IS - ONE ATTEMPTS IN VAIN EVEN TO PICTURE THESE THINGS - THEY ARE INCONCEIVABLE.

LIKE

TREASURE HIDDEN IN THE GROUND
TASTE IN THE FRUIT
GOLD IN THE ROCK
OIL IN THE SEED

THE ABSOLUTE HIDDEN AWAY

IN THE HEART

NO ONE CAN KNOW

THE WAYS OF OUR LORD
WHITE AS JASMINE.

(SPEAKING OF SHIVA, MAHADEVIIYAKKA, P. 115)

WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT BABAJI'S EXISTENCE WAS FIRST DISCLOSED TO THE MODERN PUBLIC BY A FAMOUS INDIAN HOUSEHOLDER SAINT (THE GURU OF SRI YUKTESWAR, YOGANANDA'S GURU,) NAMED LAHIRI MAHASAYA, WHOM BABAJI INITIATED INTO KRIYA YOGA AND ENLIGHTENED IN 1861. DETAILS OF THIS AUSPICIOUS MEETING AND OF BABAJI'S EXISTENCE WERE GIVEN WIDER PUBLICATION BY YOGANANDA IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY. HE DESCRIBES BABAJI AS CAPABLE OF DOING ANYTHING AT ANY MOMENT OF WHATEVER MAGNITUDE. IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY HE WRITES OF THESE LILAS (SANSKRIT FOR "GOD'S PLAY"), SUCH AS BABAJI'S MATERIALISING A PALACE IN THE HIMALAYAS OUT OF HIS THOUGHT WAVES, APPEARING FROM AND DISAPPEARING INTO LIGHT AT WILL, INSTANT HEALING AND BRINGING THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE. ALTHOUGH BABAJI APPEARED TO HIM SEVERAL TIMES, YOGANANDA WAS UNAWARE THAT DURING THE VERY PERIOD OF WHICH HE WROTE, BABAJI WAS IN FACT APPEARING IN A HUMAN FORM. BETWEEN THE YEARS 1800 AND 1922, ONE OF HIS NAMES WAS HAIDAKHAN BABA, BECAUSE HE SPENT MUCH TIME IN THE LITTLE VILLAGE OF HAIDAKHAN IN THE HIMALAYAN FOOTHILLS. HE WAS ALSO KNOWN AS SHIVA BABA.

IN HIS 19TH CENTURY HAIDAKHAN BABA FORM, BABAJI WAS RENOWNED IN THE HIMALAYAN AREA FOR HIS SUPERNATURAL POWERS AND DIVINE PRESENCE. MANY STORIES ARE TOLD OF HIS RAISING THE DEAD, HEALING, SITTING IN FIRES, AND, AFTER HOURS OR DAYS, EMERGING UNTOUCHED; APPEARING IN SEVERAL PLACES AT THE SAME TIME, OFFERING GIFTS OF OUT-OF-SEASON FOOD, WRITING IN UNKNOWN ANCIENT LANGUAGES. IN 1922 HE VISITED THE RAJA OF ASHKOT, WHO, WHEN BABAJI LEFT, HELPED CARRY HIS PALANQUIN OUT OF THE CITY. AT THE MERGER OF THE TWO RIVERS NEARBY, BABAJI, PROMISING TO RETURN ONE DAY FOR THE SALVATION OF MANKIND, ENTERED THE WATER. EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS STATE HE SAT IN YOGIC POSTURE, TURNED INTO LIGHT, AND DISAPPEARED.

DURING THE FOLLOWING 48 YEARS BABAJI OCCASIONALLY APPEARED TO DEVOTEES BUT DID NOT SEEM TO MAINTAIN A PHYSICAL BODY. THOSE HOWEVER WHO CALLED UPON HIM WITH FAITH AND DEVOTION WERE BLESSED WITH APPEARANCES AND VISIONS, AS NUMEROUS STORIES FROM THIS PERIOD TELL. PERHAPS THE MOST ARDENT OF BABAJI'S DEVOTEES AT THAT TIME WAS A GREAT SAINT CALLED MAHENDRA BABA. HE SPENT VIRTUALLY HIS WHOLE LIFE IN SEARCH, WORSHIP, AND SERVICE OF BABAJI. BABAJI HAD APPEARED TO HIM ON HIS FIFTH BIRTHDAY AND HANDED HIM CANDY. NEVER COULD HE FORGET THIS DIVINE FIGURE. AFTER COMPLETING HIS SCHOOLING, HE SPENT THE NEXT 25 YEARS SEARCHING FOR BABAJI IN TIBET, NEPAL AND INDIA, AND PERFORMING PRAYERS AND EXTREME AUSTERITIES. FINALLY, IN 1949, IN THE HIMALAYAN HILL TOWN OF ALMORA, HE SAW A PICTURE OF HAIDAKHAN BABA IN HIS PREVIOUS FORM. MAHENDRA BABA RECOGNISED THAT SUPERNATURAL BEING WHO HAD DISAPPEARED 27 YEARS EARLIER AS THE FIGURE FROM HIS CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE. BABAJI AFTERWARDS REAPPEARED TO MAHENDRA BABA, ENLIGHTENED HIM, AND INSTRUCTED HIM TO PREPARE FOR HIS RETURN TO THE WORLD IN MORTAL FORM.

MAHENDRA BABA THEN SPENT THE FOLLOWING TWENTY YEARS REPAIRING AND REBUILDING HAIDAKHAN BABA'S OLD TEMPLES AND ASHRAMS IN NORTHERN INDIA AND GATHERING, INFORMING AND SPIRITUALLY INSTRUCTING DEVOTEES IN PREPARATION FOR BABAJI'S RETURN.

MAHENDRA BABA WAS NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO FORETOLD THE COMING OF MAHAVATAR BABAJI IN THE YEAR 1970. SOME OTHERS RECEIVED REVELATORY INFORMATION ABOUT BABAJI'S REAPPEARANCE, AND PUBLISHED DETAILED HINDI-LANGUAGE ACCOUNTS OF WHAT WAS TO COME. IN 1970, A NORTH INDIAN MAN HAD A DREAM IN WHICH HIS LONG DECEASED FATHER TOLD HIM TO GO TO A CAVE IN HAIDAKHAN, SAYING BABAJI HAD APPEARED. HE WENT, AND FOUND A YOUTH-LIKE HOLY MAN THERE. IT WAS BABAJI.

THE PICTURES TAKEN IN THE FIRST YEARS AFTER HIS APPEARANCE STRONGLY RESEMBLE THE FACIAL OUTLINE OF BABAJI GIVEN BY LAHIRI MAHASAYA, SUBSEQUENTLY SKETCHED AND APPEARING IN YOGANANDA'S BOOK.

IN 1970 AND THE FIRST YEARS THEREAFTER, BABAJI APPEARED TO BE MORE SPIRIT THAN MATTER. HE HARDLY SPOKE IN THOSE DAYS, SITTING FOR HOURS ON END IN MEDITATIVE TRANCE, MOTIONLESS LIKE A MARBLE STATUE. YET WHEN A DEVOTEE WOULD BOW AT HIS FEET, HE WOULD OFTEN RAISE HIS HAND IN THE BLESSING POSE. PEOPLE COULD NOT LOOK INTO HIS EYES THEN, THEIR POWER WAS SO GREAT. MANY PEOPLE FEARED HIM, SO UNAPPROACHABLE HE SEEMED. AS THE YEARS HAVE PASSED, HE HAS BECOME MORE APPROACHABLE AS HE SITS, CHATS, LAUGHS AND FILLS THE AIR WITH HIS PRESENCE. PEOPLE WHO HAVE KNOWN HIM SINCE THE EARLY YEARS SAY HE HAS HIDDEN HIMSELF. THE BODY OF LIGHT WHICH HE EXPOSED SO OPENLY AFTER FIRST APPEARING IN "MORTAL FORM" HE NOW DISCLOSES ONLY TO SOME IN SPECIAL VISIONS AND DREAMS.

WHAT ONE OBSERVES IN BABAJI'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE DEPENDS UPON WHAT BABAJI CHOOSES TO DISCLOSE. SHEILA, AN INDIAN DEVOTEE, FIRST MET BABAJI IN 1972. RAISED IN A FAMILY VISITED FREQUENTLY BY VARIOUS SAINTS AND GURUS, SHE HAD REACHED A SATURATION POINT; NO LONGER INTERESTED IN MEETING ANY SUCH PERSONS. SOMEHOW SHE WAS PREVAILED UPON TO SEE BABAJI. WHEN SHE FIRST SAW BABAJI, SHE SPOKE TO HIM INTERNALLY. SHE ASKED THAT IF HE WERE WHAT HE WAS REPORTED AS BEING, HE SHOULD DISCLOSE HIMSELF TO HER. FOR THE NEXT HALF HOUR, AS SHE CONTINUALLY PINCHED HERSELF TO MAKE SURE SHE WASN'T DREAMING, SHE STARED AT HIS FACE, WHICH CHANGED LIKE A KALEIDOSCOPE, FROM ONE FORM OF GOD TO ANOTHER, RUNNING THE GAMUT OF HINDU AND OTHER DEITIES.

I HAVE SEEN HIM ALSO, WITH MY PHYSICAL EYES, AS THE GREAT LORD SHIVA, BLUE-SKINNED WITH MATTED LOCKS PILED HIGH ATOP HIS EXQUISITE HEAD AND THOSE ALMOND-SHAPED EYES THAT ARE POOLS OF BLISS. ONE TIME I EVEN SAW HIS FACE AS HANUMAN, THE BELOVED MONKEY-FACED GOD WHO IS SAID TO BE A SHIVA MANIFESTATION, HANUMAN WHO GRANTS ALL WISHES OF HIS DEVOTEES; WHO IS THE GREAT SERVANT OF LORD RAM AND HIS CONSORT SITAJI. AND WHOSE PERFECTION IN WORSHIP AND SERVICE HAVE LONG BEEN MY IDEAL. AND ON ANOTHER OCCASION, I SAW HIS FACE CHANGE TO THAT OF MY MOTHER. THE EXQUISITENESS OF THIS EXPERIENCE EQUALS ALMOST ANY OTHER.

YOU SEE WHY IT IS DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE HIM. WITH THESE LIMITATIONS IN MIND, ONE CAN SAY HIS FOREHEAD IS EXTREMELY BROAD AND HIGH. HIS BLACK HAIR, SHINY AND WAVY, REMIND ONE OF THE WAVES OF THE SACRED RIVER GANGA WHICH, IN ORDER NOT TO DESTROY EARTH BY HER FORCE, IS SAID TO PLUNGE TO EARTH THROUGH THE HAIRS OF SHIVA. HIS EYES ARE DARK AND SPARKLING, LAUGHING, FULL OF BLISS, ENDLESS IN THEIR DEPTH; SEEMING TO CONTAIN OR REFLECT THE COSMOS. THE FEELING I GET AT TIMES COMPARES SOMEHOW WITH EXPERIENCES OF VIEWING THE SKY FROM HIGH ATOP A MOUNTAIN ON A CLEAR, MOONLESS NIGHT. I HAVE SEEN BABAJI ANGRY IN EXPRESSION AND VOICE, BUT NEVER HAVE I SEEN ANYTHING BUT SOFTNESS, COMPASSION, AND LOVE IN HIS BEAUTIFUL EYES, REFLECTING AN OCEAN OF PEACE. HIS NOSE, DELICATE YET STRONG, SOMETIMES FLARES SLIGHTLY, REMINDING ME OFTEN OF THE PRIMAL ENERGY AND JOY OF A YOUNG WILD COLT. HIS MOUTH, LIKE EVERY OTHER FEATURE, IS EXQUISITE. HIS FACE IS FULL, LIKE THE SUN. HIS BEAUTY IS BEYOND THIS WORLD.

I LOVE THE HANDSOME ONE
HE HAS NO DEATH,
DECAY NOR FORM
NO PLACE OR SIDE
NO END OR BIRTHMARKS.
I LOVE HIM, O MOTHER. LISTEN.

I LOVE THE BEAUTIFUL ONE
WITH NO BOND NOR FEAR
NO CLAN, NO LAND
NO LANDMARKS
FOR HIS BEAUTY

(ALLAMA PRABHU, SPEAKING OF SHIVA, P.166)

HIS BODY IS BROAD, SOMETIMES QUITE LARGE IN STATURE. AT TIMES, HE SEEMS TO CARRY THE EARTH IN HIS BELLY. HE ONCE TOLD A DEVOTEE THAT IT CONTAINS FIVE BABIES. SOMEONE EXPLAINED THIS AS MEANING ALL OF CREATION, CONSISTING OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS: EARTH, WATER, FIRE, AIR, EITHER. ONE DEVOTEE HAD AN EXPERIENCE OF ENTERING BABAJI'S BODY AND IN FACT VIEWING, SEEMINGLY, THE WHOLE UNIVERSE CONTAINED THEREIN.

DESPITE THIS LOAD, GRACE CHARACTERISES ALL OF HIS MOVEMENTS. HE WAKES CARRYING A STAFF¹, AND HIS FEET, LIKE THE LOTUS FLOWER, DO NOT SEEM TO REST ON THE GROUND. AT TIMES HE LEAVES NO FOOTPRINTS WHEN HE RECENTLY STEPPED ON A WEIGHING SCALE IT REGISTERED 75 KILOS, ABOUT 165 POUNDS.

YET HE CARRIES HIS WEIGHT LIKE A CLOUD. HE WILL RUN UP A HILL AS THOUGH WINGS WERE ATTACHED TO HIS FEET. SOME PEOPLE WHO HAVE CARRIED HIM REPORT THAT HE SEEMS TO WEIGH ALMOST NOTHING. A BOOK IN HINDI DESCRIBES THE COSMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF EVERY PART OF HIS PHYSICAL BODY. ONE GETS THE FEELING, AND IT IS SO REPORTED, THAT EVEN HIS SLIGHTEST MOVEMENT IMPACTS THE ENTIRE COSMOS. AND WHEN HE TOSSES HIS HEAD BACK IN A BURST OF LAUGHTER OR NODS IT EVER SO SLIGHTLY IN ASSENT TO A QUESTION POSED BY A DEVOTEE, ONE'S HEART FILLS IN EVER EXPANDING LOVE FOR HIM.

THE FRAGRANCE OF HIS PRESENCE IS UNMISTAKABLE, UNIQUE. SOME SAY MUSKLIKE THOUGH IT'S UNLIKE ANYTHING I'VE EVER SMELLED BEFORE. IT LINGERS ENDLESSLY ON THINGS HE HAS USED, HIS SHAWL, HIS PILLOWS, ONE DEVOTEE WITH WHOM BABAJI STAYED FOR SEVERAL DAYS IN DELHI TOLD ME THAT HIS DIVINE FRAGRANCE REMAINED FOR SIX MONTHS IN THE ROOM, AND WAS NOTICEABLE EVEN TO PEOPLE WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT HIM OR THE FACT OF HIS VISIT. ONE DAY WHEN I WAS CLEANING THE AREA OUTSIDE HIS ROOM AT HAIDAKHAN, HIS FRAGRANCE WAS STRONGLY PRESENT. HE HAD BEEN AWAY MORE THAN TWO MONTHS THEN, THIS FAIREST FLOWER OF CREATION, OCEAN OF MERCY WITHOUT ANY MOTIVE; WHY HAS HE COME TO THE WORLD? TO THE WORLDLY MINDED IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PERCEIVE BABAJI'S NATURE. BUT GOD HAS FEW TO WHOM HE WHISPERS IN THE EAR. IT IS FOR THESE THAT HE HAS COME INTO THE WORLD. THIS IS WHAT HE SAID :-

I AM EVERYWHERE - IN YOUR EVERY BREATH I AM COME TO HELP YOU REALISE UNITY BEYOND DIVISION. I WILL SHOW YOU A FREEDOM YOU HAVE NOT IMAGINED. YOU MUST SEEK THAT UNITY WHERE THERE IS AN AWARENESS THAT WE ARE ALL ONE AND THE SAME. YOU SHOULD SEEK HARMONY IN ALL THAT YOU DO. I AM HARMONY. IF YOU ARE IN PEACE, I AM IN PEACE. IF YOU ARE TROUBLED, I AM TROUBLED. IF YOU HAVE PROBLEMS, I HAVE PROBLEMS. IF YOU ARE HAPPY, I AM HAPPY. BE HAPPY. HAVE FAITH. EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON FAITH.

BABAJI HAS COME TO THE WORLD TO REMOVE THE BONDS OF SORROW OF MAN, TO CHANGE THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS, TO BRING IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF TRUTH. FROM HIS INFINITE MERCY AND LOVE, HIS TEACHING COMES. THIS TEACHING - SO SIMPLE, SO POWERFUL, CAPABLE OF DISSOLVING ALL THE SINS OF THE WORLD, YET NATURAL, INTIMATE TO ONE'S INNER ESSENCE, THE BASIS OF ALL RELIGIONS.

BABAJI'S TEACHING IS THREEFOLD - (1) LIVE LIFE IN TRUTH, SIMPLICITY AND LOVE; (2) REMEMBER GOD ALWAYS BY REPEATING HIS NAME. THOUGH HE SAYS ANY NAME OF GOD WHICH APPEALS IS APPROPRIATE, HE TEACHES THAT THE MAHA MANTRA OR ULTIMATE NAME OF GOD IS, **OM NAMAH SHIVAYA**. THIS, HE SAYS, IS THE HIGHEST MANTRA. IT MEANS "I BOW TO SHIVA" OR "I TAKE REFUGE IN GOD". REPEAT THIS ALWAYS. IT PURIFIES THE HEART AND MIND SO THAT GOD CAN DWELL THERE; (3) PERFORM WORK - KARMA YOGA. WORK FOR HUMANITY, GIVE EVERYTHING OF YOURSELF FOR OTHERS, ALL YOUR ENERGY AND RESOURCES. IDLENESS, HE SAYS, IS DEATH, THE BREEDING GROUND FOR EVIL. BY WORKING AND DEDICATING ALL TO GOD, ONE REACHES GOD.

OM NAMAH SHIVAYA



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Published by:

Haidakhandi Samaj.

Haidakhan Vishwa Mahadham.

Via Kathgodam, Dist Nainital, U.P. 263126

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