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‘Satyalok’, Varanasi, Initiation Day July 4, 2012

A dialogue with a Buddhist monk from Bangladesh

A Bangladeshi Buddhist monk recently wrote to the Portuguese website impressed by its presentation of the forthcoming Kriya Yoga event in Lisbon. The coordinator, Maria do Céu forwarded the email for adequate response and this task was given to our old friend Gopi Menon who is known to many as he does international coordination.

The response was indeed a most profound joy to read. The mails are presented below as a subject matter of this Message:

I: Mail from the Buddhist Monk to Portuguese website:

“Honourable Dharma Friends,

With great respect. We are Two Bangladeshi Buddhist Monks writing from Sri Lanka and we study the Theravada Buddhism. Every year our High Priest sends us to various Dharma Centres around the Globe to practice, study and to visit various Religious Cultures and other religious programs. This year we have decided to spend a few days in your centre with you in your country. Recently we have visited your website and we have been delighted to see it is very beautiful. For this reason our High Priest is deeply interested to send us as well as we are keenly enthused to participate in your centre to practice your own teaching. If we would spend few days then we would need your cooperation of accommodation only and our High Priest and our viharaya committee is fully able to pay our flight fares. If you assist us then we could visit your centre and stay for few days with our Dharma brother.

As Buddhist Monks or according to our Nikaya (rule), it is possible to sleep on any floor and we don't take any food after 12 O'clock and are fully vegetarian.

We expect that you would never refuse our request. We are looking forward to your kind response in the matter. We have written to you with great desire. Please don't hesitate to write to us.

May all be happy and free from suffering.

May Lord Buddha Bless You.

*Yours in Dharma
Ven. Jnanlangkar Sramon.*

Colombo, Sri Lanka”

II: Mail from Maria do Céu to Shibendu and Gopi

Dear father and Gopiji,

I received a message from these Bangladeshi Buddhist Monks. They want to stay in our centre that we have not here in Portugal. Can you please help me answering them and decide what to do.

It seems to me that it would be better for them to go to India.

*Thank you for your help.
Jai Guru!*

Maria do Céu

III: Response from Gopi Menon to Buddhist Monk:

“Ven. Jnanlangkar Sramon,

Your mail was forwarded to me for response. My name is Gopi Menon and some coordination work is done through this body.

The website you wrote to is run by some disciples of Shri Shibendu Lahiri (whom we call Guruji or Baba (father) out of our love and reverence). Guruji has no organisation and no centres anywhere in the world because Truth cannot be organised – only ideas of truth can be organised. The picture of fire is not fire. Truth has to be perceived directly for and by oneself. It cannot be taught through any organisation or teacher. The teacher can only share; it is up to each one to see for himself. Perhaps that is why even Buddha said: “Light your lamp from mine – and go.”

For practical purposes disciples manage web sites to share his teachings amongst others in their country. Guruji speaks in English, Hindi or Bengali but has disciples all over the world and they speak many languages as you may imagine. Therefore those among the disciples who understand English translate his teachings into the local language and share it with others who know only the local language. This is one of the purposes of these websites. The other is to inform people about his programs to visit their country where, during such visits, he initiates people in Kriya Yoga and also holds retreats. Retreats are intense sessions where the group goes into the understanding of the teachings with the teacher – the Guru. Thus there are no centres where a kriyaban (as one initiated in kriya is called) can invite someone to stay.

Guruji was born into a Brahmin family. His great grand father from his father’s side was Shri Shyamacharan Lahiri who is now popularly known as Lahiri Mahashaya. Lahiri Mahashaya was a householder and an employed person. During his working life he had been transferred to Ranikhet, which is a military cantonment in the Himalayan regions. Here during his stay he met a sage whose background is shrouded in mystery and whom he called Babaji (because, as I said earlier, we call our teacher Baba out of love and respect). Babaji initiated Lahiri Mahashaya in Kriya Yoga, which at that time was an almost lost science.

Among the writings in Indian scriptures one of the most shining gems is the Patanjali Yoga Sutra. This text begins with the lines – “Swadhyay, tapas, Ishwara Pranidhan – Iti Kriya Yoga” This is the only yoga mentioned in the entire scripture. Swadhyay is the essence of Sankhya and Tapas of Yoga. Ishwara Pranidhan – or the blasting into the dimension of holistic awareness is the essence of Vedanta. Literally Vedanta means Ved anta or the ending of knowledge - for knowing to begin. Knowledge is the sum total of experiences. However experiences are themselves an unreal reflection of events in the mirror formed by one’s mind-ego structure. Every experience further modifies the ego and thus there is a continuous corruption of “what is” into “what is known”. The ending of this corruption requires the shattering of this fictitious mirror of “I” and this happens through Swadhyay (meditation without a meditator on the structure of “I”, which is the essence of Sankhya) and tapas (certain practices which assist in diminishing the interference of the activities of “I” that hinder the meditative state – the essence of yoga) thereafter blasting into Ishwara Pranidhan or the benediction of being in the state of awareness. The Swadhyay, tapas, Ishwara Pranidhan of Kriya Yoga is nothing but Sankhya, Yoga, Vedanta.

This Kriya Yoga was handed down by Shri Shyamacharan Lahiri to his sons as well as other disciples. They further handed this down and thus today there are people teaching Kriya Yoga through the disciplic lineage as well as Shri Shibendu Lahiri who inherited it through the dynastic lineage. What Guruji teaches is the original as taught to his ancestor by Babaji. There is a popular book written by Paramahansa Yogananda – Autobiography of a Yogi. Yogananda was a disciple of Swami Yuktेशwar Giri who was initiated by Lahiri Mahashaya. In his book Yogananda makes some mention of Lahiri Mahashaya and you may find it of interest. However the book was written with heavy emphasis on miracles and mysticism, which are not of the essence. It has been written for popular reading and it has indeed become very popular all over the world.

I thought it appropriate to give you some background information before coming to your specific request.

As mentioned earlier there are no centres or organisations that is run by Guruji or his disciples anywhere.

Guruji goes all around the world at the invitation of his disciples and sows the seed of Kriya Yoga. You could invite him to your centre so that not one or two, but many can listen to him. Guruji would love to visit you because apart from everything he also has a personal affinity for Bangladesh because his mother hailed from what was then known as East Bengal (later East Pakistan and now Bangladesh).

Meeting Buddhists also has significance for him because Buddha was a Vedantist par excellence.

Moreover you could receive the teachings of Kriya Yoga uncorrupted – from the mouth of the river, as it were – and further in Bengali, which is Guruji's mother tongue.

This suggestion is made for you to consider. If you do wish to invite him you may kindly write to the above email address as this body assists in coordinating Guruji's visits. A suitable program can then be made with you, your High Priest and Guruji.

If, however, you wish to meet him in India that is also possible as you could visit him at Varanasi three times in a year when he is present in India. His next visit is this July (next month), which is too close for you to organise a visit. After that he will come to Varanasi on 20th October 2012 and will be there until 27th October 2012. The visit after that will be from 1st February 2013 to 6th February 2013. During his three visits to India he visits his home and temple in Varanasi and holds vedic rituals for the three occasions – his father's anniversary, Guru Poornima and Lahiri Mahashaya's anniversary. Thus one who is beyond rituals also participates in them because he is not for or against anything. He says that rituals (Vedas) are the container and Vedanta the contents. But, if one has partaken of the contents, there is no need to throw away the container.

Please do let me know what you would like to do and we can plan accordingly.

With best wishes,

Gopi''

This is indeed revealing and it may bring about a profound harmony and integration between the teachings of the great Buddha and those from the great householder yogi Lahiri Mahashaya.

Jai Buddha