

The History of Mahadevappa

Part 1

He Meets Baba Somanath Ji and Takes Initiation into Nathpanth

In the account of Baba Somanath Ji's life, the story of Mahadevappa, the Siddha Yogi, plays an important part. First of all, those who are acquainted with Baba Ram Singh Ji now know that he previously took birth as Mahadevappa. It is unusual, but not unheard of, for the Saints to share details from their past lives. Guru Gobind Singh described his time meditating in the Himalayas as a *tapasvī* yogi.¹

¹ *If we could only understand fully what a Guru is, much of the illusion would vanish. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, tried to make it clear who he was. He told them of his past births and where he lived in his previous life. That place has been found, and today you will find a gurudwara (Sikh temple) there. At the hill of Hemkunt there is a seven-pointed splendor. There are seven hillocks there, and it is very quiet—but resounding with the peace. He tells us that is where he did his meditation, so much that he became one with the Lord; they were not separate. And the Lord ordered him to go into the world and work. Guru Gobind Singh says, "My heart was not agreeing to come here; but He made me agreeable to come." When he inquired from God what he was to do in the world, he was told: "Whomever I sent had their own praises sung; now go and make them repeat My Name." So Guru Gobind Singh Ji continues: "I am the devotee of the Imperishable Being and have come to see the world's play; know me as His devotee, but see no difference between us." Kirpal Singh, Sant Bani Magazine, May 1991, "The Thousand-Headed Serpent," p 24.*

Tulsi Sahib, the author of *Ghaṭ Rāmāyaṇ*, is traditionally held to have come in a previous incarnation as Tulsi Das.² The *Anurāg Sāgar* of Kabir describes not only the incarnations of Kabir in all the four ages but also the evolution over numerous lives of the relationship of Kabir and his Gurumukh disciple Dhani Dharam Das.³ So I can only hope that I am able to weave this intriguing story of Mahadevappa together so that some of its deeper significance can touch the hearts of those reading this fascinating history.

Baba Somanath Initiates Mahadevappa

Sometime in the early 1920s, Baba Ji had gone into the interior part of India into the state of Andhra Pradesh and was staying in a temple in one town there. A police officer by the name of Mahadevappa, who was from Raichur District, Karnataka, came to know of the young renunciate Sadhu staying in the temple and came to see him as a fellow seeker of God. He expressed his desire to follow the path of renunciation but felt that he needed a Guru to initiate him into the secrets of the inner way.

² “Likewise, in U.P., Tulsi Das was there. Tulsi Das was a devotee of Lord Rama and people believed him to be a devotee of Lord Rama. But He was a very thorough, devout person and He also had inner experiences. His friend was Nabhadass who was the Master of Sunderdas Ji. And later, he went and got Initiation from Nabhadass and he also became a great Saint and he went within. He wrote the Ghat Ramayana, which talks about the entire philosophy of Sant Mat. It is entirely based on the within. But, when he publicized his writing, it was thoroughly opposed by those people who were all idol deity worshipers in that period. And, as a result, he had to keep those writings secret. And, later, he had to reincarnate as Tulsi Sahib, who then wrote it out. So Tulsi Das then, after having all this opposition, he wrote again on Ramayana itself. So when the souls are pure, even if they are on a different path, God Almighty brings them in his fold. He gives them and shows them direction and brings them to a True Master.” Ram Singh, *Discourses of a Living Master*, v 8, p 57.

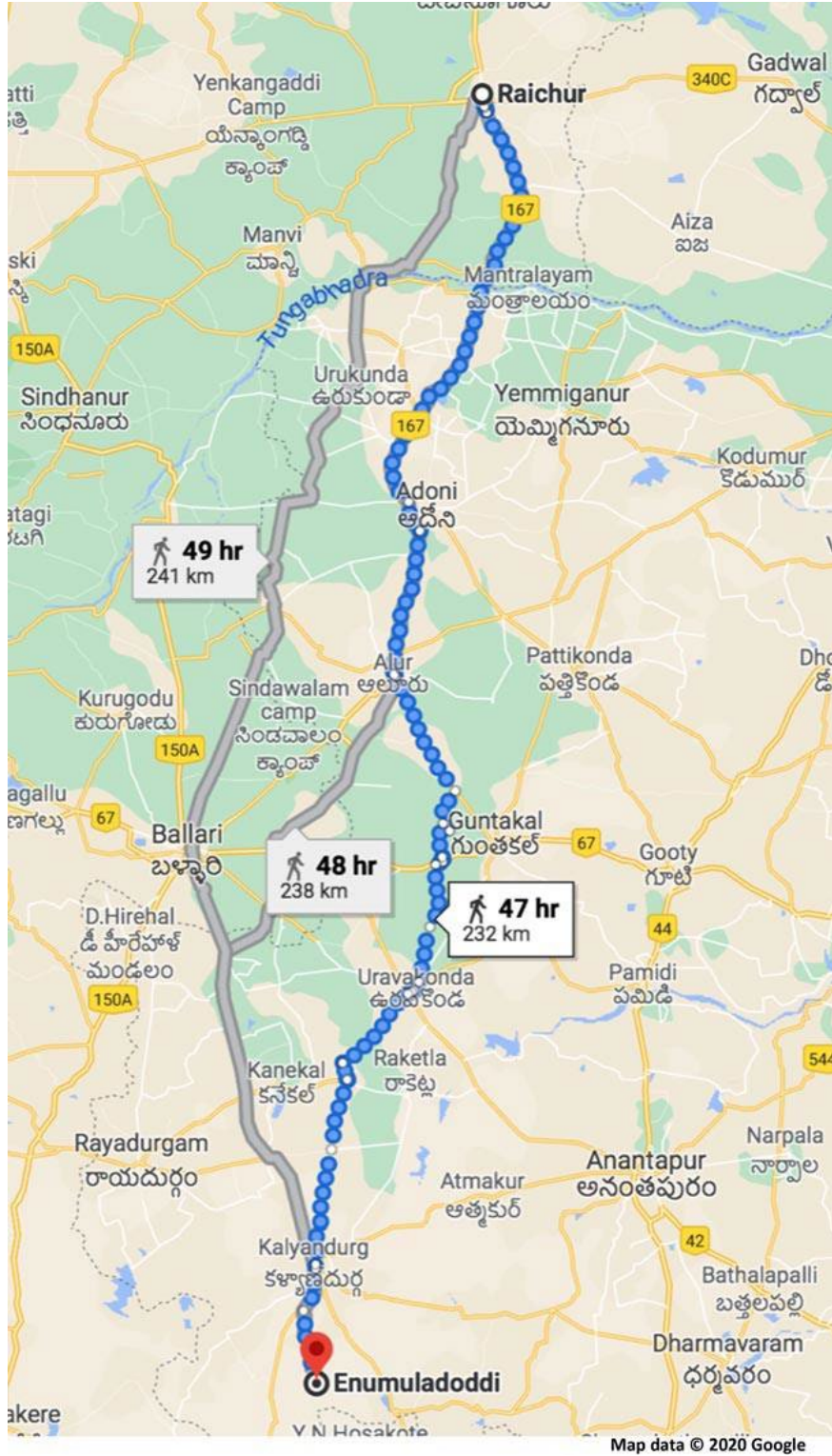
³ See: Kabir Sahib, *The Ocean of Love: the Anurāg Sāgar of Kabir*, translated and edited under the direction of Sant Ajaib Singh Ji (Sanbornton, N.H.: Sant Bani Ashram, 1995) p 141-148.

As Baba Ji listened attentively to Mahadevappa, he noticed that he (Mahadevappa) had a severe skin disease. Baba Ji asked him about it and came to know that this affliction had been with him for some time. He had tried many remedies to remove it, but nothing had worked up to that point.

Baba Ji was moved both by the sincerity of Mahadevappa's longing to meet God and his wish to devote himself wholeheartedly to the practice that would take him to this goal. He also felt compassion for the skin disease afflicting him. Baba Ji took from his pouch ash from the *dhuni* fire and, charging it with the power of his meditation, explained to Mahadevappa that if he would smear his body with that ash, it might afford him some relief from the problem he was experiencing. Following Baba Ji's instructions, Mahadevappa did as he was told, and within a short time, his skin was healed. His gratitude was deep and sincere, and he felt convinced that Baba Ji was the one who could guide him on the inner way.

Baba Ji did not initiate many people into Nathpanth as the practices were intricate and dangerous, but in Mahadevappa's case, he felt a kindred spirit and so imparted to him the secrets of the mystic power he was practicing, giving him the mantra of "*Om Namaḥ Shivāya.*" After practicing the mantra given to him by Baba Ji, Mahadevappa renounced the world and took up the garb of a wandering mendicant. He traveled to a desert region of Andhra Pradesh where rocky hillocks were found in abundance. There he hoped to find a cave where he could, in solitude, devote himself to perfecting the meditation practices which Baba Ji had revealed to him.

His wanderings finally brought him to the small village of Enumuladoddi where he stayed for a few days with a pious Lingayat family. He told them of his wish to find some remote place where he could devote himself to unbroken meditation.



Route from Raichur to Enumuladoddi

They recommended that he go up to the top of Tenagal—a large hillock that was located within a few miles of the village—where he would find a suitable cave near a natural water basin where rainwater collected during the monsoon season.

Wasting no time, he climbed up to the cave and commenced his meditation, following Baba Ji's instructions for practicing pranayama, repetition of mantras, cleansing exercises, etc. He was not worried about his physical welfare; he was only concerned that he should give himself up totally to perfecting the practices Baba Ji had revealed to him.

The local villagers were hesitant to visit that lonely place located so far from the village. It was known to be a habitat of poisonous snakes, bears and other wild animals. But when they came to know that a yogi was dwelling there, they overcame their fear to the extent that one or the other of them would daily bring a glass of milk for his consumption. That was all the food he would take, as the practice of pranayama, in its most advanced form, requires that the practitioner live on a liquid diet.

Pictures of Mahadevappa during this period reveal an emaciated yogi with deep mesmerizing eyes and long coiled hair, dressed in a coarse robe wrapped about the waist with a cloth cord. Sitting on top of the mountain—with a grand view of the ancient Indian landscape, no one to disturb him, pure air to breathe, cool water cupped in the natural basin outside his cave—he had the perfect place for meditation, and he availed himself of this rare opportunity.

Months and months passed in a timeless way and, because of his good background in spiritual matters and his devotion to the Guru who had initiated him, he made rapid progress in awakening the kundalini power.



Mahadevappa

Gradually, the villagers in the surrounding area came to know that there was a great yogi living in their midst, and some began coming to have his Darshan . Because of the difficulty of meeting them in such a remote location, they requested him to come to live in another cave located lower down, on the adjacent Betta hill, and closer to the village. So after one year of intensive meditation practice, he left that cave and moved to the lower area.

Then his fame spread even further because, in his innocence, he began using his supernatural powers for many different reasons, mostly to heal sicknesses and aid those coming to him with solutions to their material, mental and emotional problems.



Tenagal Hill (largest hill, far left) and Betta “Pahar” Hill (center)

I forgot to mention that cheetahs should be included in the list of animals that dwelled in the caves of those regions, and the cave that Mahadevappa moved into, lower down on the Betta hill, was one that they (the cheetahs) like to inhabit. At that time, cheetahs had

become a rarity in the area, but still, a few were to be found in remote places. Those cheetahs took kindly to the renunciate sadhu and used to sit outside his cave while he engaged in his pranayama and accompanying practices. The villagers who brought milk to him learned that they need not be afraid of the cheetahs as they would not harm anyone coming to visit the sadhu.

The History of Mahadevappa

Part 2

Reunion with Baba Somanath and Initiation into Sant Mat by Hazur Sawan Singh

This next phase of the story of Mahadevappa is another powerful manifestation of how the Saints, on behalf of their Masters, work ceaselessly to liberate the dear ones who come in their company. On the outer level, those who are destined to carry on the work of a Saint go through many stages of the spiritual journey so that—through their genuine life experience—they can explain to those who come to them about the various obstacles on the Path to God realization. And at each time and place, they work in this world, they go through those stages of the journey that are most appropriate for the culture in which they have grown up. Baba Somanath Ji grew up in the deeply dharmic Hindu culture of South India, which had its own characteristics of devotion, i.e., worship of gods and goddesses, going to places of pilgrimage, respect and devotion to the heads of Hindu monasteries, love of the great epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, etc.

All of these aspects of the religious culture of South India have resulted in molding the lives of the people in a particular way. Those

who have spent time in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Gujarat, etc., particularly in the rural areas or amongst families who still adhere to traditional ways, experience a wonderful softness and sweetness about them that permeates everything that they do. They have an indescribable air of gentleness and devotion that touches the heart.

Oddly enough, it has taken me decades to become somewhat attuned to these sublime qualities. I lived amidst those possessing them all the years of my life with Baba Somanath Ji and even on some level realized they were worth appreciating, but the dilemma of my own life engrossed my attention, which, in a certain sense, desensitizes one's perception of how the Master Power is constantly manifesting Itself in the world around us. Yes, a person can only be what they are at any given moment and, fortunately, in due course of time, the Saints graciously lead one from the isolation of a world of separateness to one of Unity. Only his grace can shake us loose from absorption in our small selves. As Sant Ji once said about such cases as yours truly, the only important thing is that, in the evening, the cow comes back to the stable where she spends the night.

There is another aspect of the religious and spiritual life of South India that is part of all that is mentioned above, but which, in some ways, seems at odds with the natural loving attitude and gentle mannerisms of the people at large. Those who adopt the way of renunciation and asceticism and live austere lives devoted to obtaining supernatural and occult powers through the practice of awakening the kundalini shakti are in a different world altogether. They often reside in remote places, isolated from the world and all bodily concerns. Their way is little taken up with the everyday lives of the people, as they are totally absorbed in their mystical endeavors, but once they have mastered the kundalini, also called

the serpent power, they quickly gain renown and respect amidst the gentle folk of the South.

The Saints of Sant Mat on yogic practices and supernatural powers

Saints do not disparage anyone's efforts to achieve God. Speaking of his own practices—before coming to the feet of Baba Bishan Das and Master Kirpal Singh—Sant Ajaib Singh Ji says:

When I was doing the austerities, I also came across many sadhus or holy men who would stay up day and night struggling with their minds and sense organs so that their thoughts would not become impure. They would work very hard, because they did not want to have any impure or bad thoughts. Why do people do so many difficult practices? People don't understand that just by saying the word "difficult," it is not a big thing. But doing the austerities is a very big thing, for the austerities which I did were very difficult practices. I did many difficult austerities, and many other people were also doing them. Why did we do that? Why did we suffer so much and do so many difficult practices? Only because we were searching for God. We wanted to have peace, and that is why we did all those difficult practices.⁴

But the Saints do instruct us honestly about the limits of the performance of austerities and mantras, advising us frankly that such practices can only take us a short distance along the Path to the Divine and may actually become an obstacle to further progress. When asked in a question-and-answer session about the kundalini power, Master Kirpal Singh gave an enlightening reply:

⁴ Ajaib Singh, (Michael Mayo-Smith, editor) *In Search of the Gracious One: Account in His Own Words of The Spiritual Search and Discipleship of Sant Ajaib Singh* (Sanbornton, N.H.: Sant Bani Ashram, 2007) p 52.

[Question]: Masters speak of wrong yoga practices leading the forces downward on the spine into the area of the kundalini. Could You expand on that a little bit, please?

[Answer]: I tell you, there are ways and ways: there are man-made ways, and there are God-made ways. The times have changed. There are so many systems of yoga. These yoga systems were introduced in the olden ages. There are four ages: the golden age, the silver age, the copper age, and the iron age. They say these systems were introduced in the golden age. Then people lived up to one million years. It is said so in the Hindu scriptures. One sage, Singhi rishi, put in 88 thousand years in yoga practices; and excuse me, I need not point out that, as told in the scriptures, he was led away by desire and had a son. Even after doing 88 thousand years of penances that way, he could not control lust. Do you see?

*Then, in the second age, the life-span was cut down to ten thousand years. Even then we could not put in some one, two, or three thousand years in the practices. In the copper age their length of life was cut down to one thousand years. Even then we could not put in two or three hundred years that way. Nowadays, nobody lives beyond sixty or seventy years, on the average. How can we today do those systems that were introduced in the olden ages? We are hereditarily not fit for them. Those are longer ways, time-consuming and hazardous. So, Masters cut out the **prana** system altogether to befit the times. This is the natural yoga that you have been given: it requires only that you be still physically and intellectually; and a little lift is given; you know your soul.*

You are of the same essence as that of God. This concession is given according to the times; Masters introduced it.

With due deference to all those ways—they are difficult and we are not fit for them. You referred to the Kundalini question. The kundalini arises from the rectum, and thus passes through the spinal cord, and comes out at the head. That is a very much longer way. And from its practice, the whole body appears to be burning like fire from head down to foot. There is no remedy for it. Only a very strong man could suffer and withstand it.

One man met me in India about three years ago. He was doing kundalini and he was all-burning from head down to foot: that kundalini power had awakened. And he came to me and said, "I am in very much trouble; I cannot do anything about it. I've been to hundreds of people, but nobody can help me." I told him, "Please put that aside. Your purpose is to come up here [to the seat of the soul]. Why not come up by the straight way, the natural way?" So, I gave him a sitting. He was initiated, and all the trouble was gone.

Why take up the longer ways? If you have airplanes nowadays, why do you go on plodding on foot? Times have changed. There are various ways, of course, but we are not fit for them, honestly—without any exaggeration. Today, three children sat: they saw light, and they heard the sound of bell and thunder and drum-beat. The other way you cannot prove it; this way you do prove it. And the yogis, I tell you, cannot prove Spirituality all at once as you do in this way. They say, "Go on, do it! It will come in due course." But this way, everybody can prove it—see for his own self—within half an hour or so. So, this is the latest, I mean, concession of God for those who are really seeking after Him, to befit the age; that's all.⁵

Further, when addressing the repetition of a particular oral formula (the formula that Baba Somanath Ji gave to Mahadevappa when he

⁵ Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, December 1976 "No New Faith, Mind That," p 8-9.

initiated him into Nathpanth was “Om Namaḥ Shivāya”), Master Kirpal Singh describes in great detail the advantages and disadvantages of that particular yogic path:

Mantra Yoga is concerned, in the main, with the acquisition of one or the other material or mental power or powers through the constant repetition of a particular mantra or oral formula in order to attract the presiding power or deity to which the mantra relates, and then to press that power into service, good or bad, according to the will and pleasure of the practitioner. One who uses these powers for effecting evil and doing harm to others often runs the risk of self-immolation and usually falls a prey to the wrath of the deity concerned. Those who employ such powers for selfish motives with the object of material gains to themselves at the cost of others very soon lose their power, and in the end, ruin themselves. These powers may, however, be profitably used for the good of others, and there is not much harm in that, though it may mean loss of some vital energy after each such act. All types of miracles of the lowest order, like thought-reading, thought-transference, faith-healing, particularly in cases of nervous and mental diseases, fall under this category. It is therefore much better to avoid such things and to conserve whatsoever psychic powers one may acquire and use them for gaining at least the lower spiritual planes and regions which form the seat of the deities concerned, in a spirit of selfless devotion. Then all the psychic powers will of themselves function without incurring any loss by one's own acquisition of them. It should, however, be borne in mind that repetition of the mantras per se does not bear any fruit unless it is done with full attention fixed on the specific mantras and with intense devotion such as may set up particular vibrations connected therewith. But Mantra Yoga by itself is not of any value in self-realization, and more often than not, those who practice this form of yoga remain ever entangled in useless pursuits of one kind or another

as described above, with no great benefit to themselves in the upliftment of the self or soul.

As regards the exercise of mantra siddhis or supernatural powers acquired through the efficacy of meditation on mantras, Patanjali, in his Yog Sutras, sounds a definite note of warning:

They are obstacles to samadhi—powers but in worldly state.⁶

Sant Ajaib Singh Ji, commenting on a hymn of Guru Arjan Dev, also explains:

Guru Arjan Dev Ji Maharaj says, "I did the reading, and I pondered over the Vedas. I did many other yogic practices, but I did not get any peace of mind. I could not make myself free from these five dacoits, and I wandered everywhere."

So Guru Arjan Dev Ji Maharaj says, "I have read the four Vedas, the eighteen Puranas and the six Shastras, and whatever other scriptures I got, I read those also. I even did the pranayam practices of the yogis, and I also did the practice of the kundalini. I even went to the city of Kashi and took the vow of [poverty]; I gave up using vessels, and I began eating everything using only my hands. I even became a m[a]juni. (A m[a]juni is one who does not speak.) I gave up my clothes; I even gave up wearing my shoes."

So Guru Arjan Dev Ji Maharaj says, "O Dear Ones, this is not the way through which you can meet with God Almighty. Instead, by doing all these practices, you get nothing but egoism. You feel proud of yourself. You say that you have done so much reading,

⁶ Kirpal Singh, *The Crown of Life: A Study in Yoga* (Irvine, CA: Ruhani Satsang Books, 1997), p 86-87.

that you have done so many yogic practices, that you have awakened the kundalini, and that you have gone to so many different places of pilgrimage. But by doing all these things, you cannot meet with God Almighty." ⁷

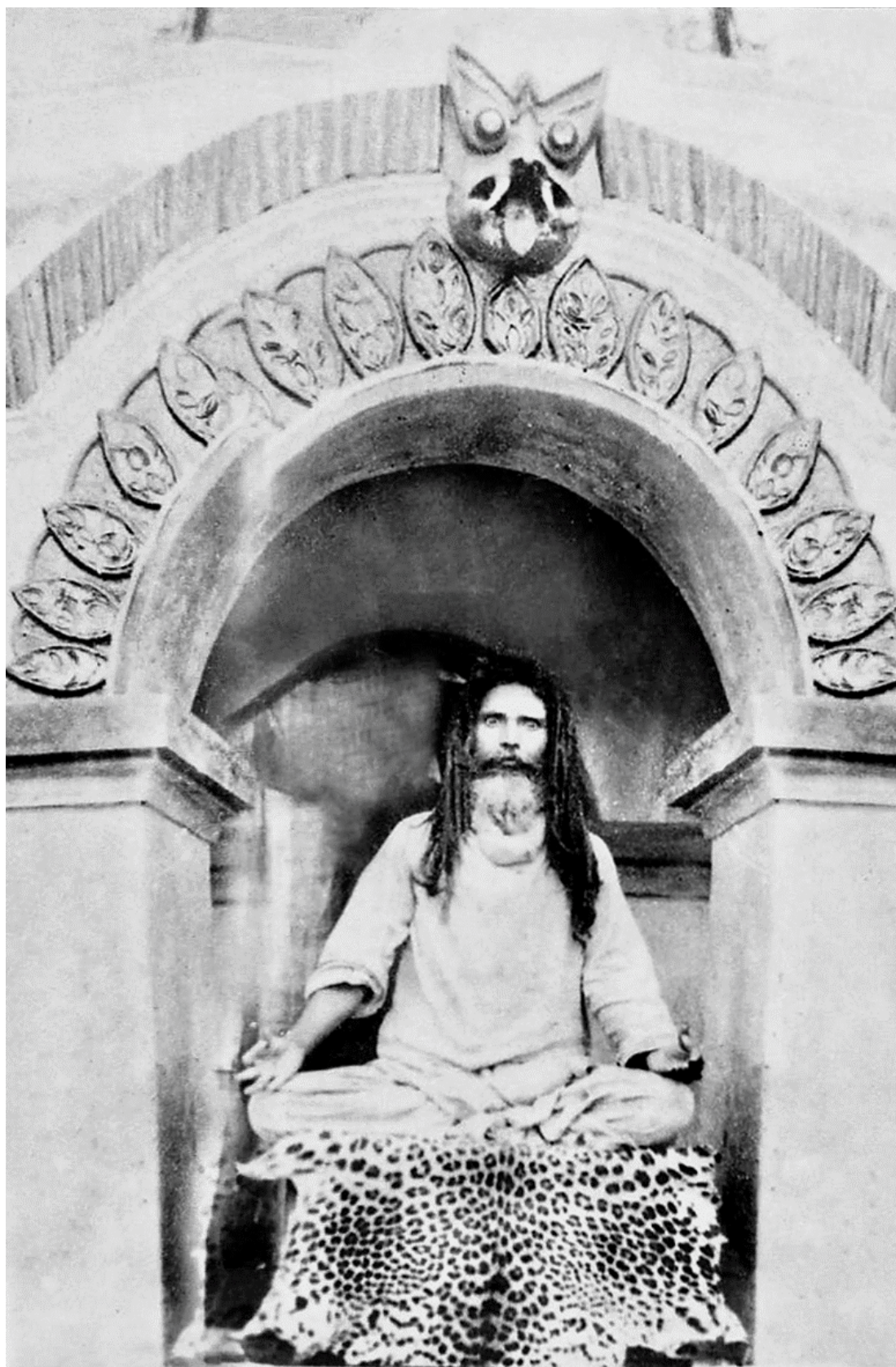
Sant Ajaib Singh

And this is where we now once again pick up the story of Mahadevappa.

In the intervening years, unbeknownst to Mahadevappa, Baba Ji had traveled to North India and, after a long, difficult and arduous search, came to the feet of Baba Sawan Singh Ji, took Initiation from him, lived at the Dera for four or five years and, after becoming a perfect adept in the Path of the Surat Shabd Yoga, returned to Bombay where, in the name of his Master, he began conducting Satsang.

One day, Mahadevappa was sitting with some of his followers in the small cave ashram where he did his practices when, suddenly, he told the people that he was going to travel to Bombay because the desire had arisen in heart for meeting the Guru who had initiated him into the practices of Nathpanth Yoga.

⁷ Sant Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, October 1998, "To Awaken the Power of Spirituality," p 7.



Shri Mahadevappa Swami

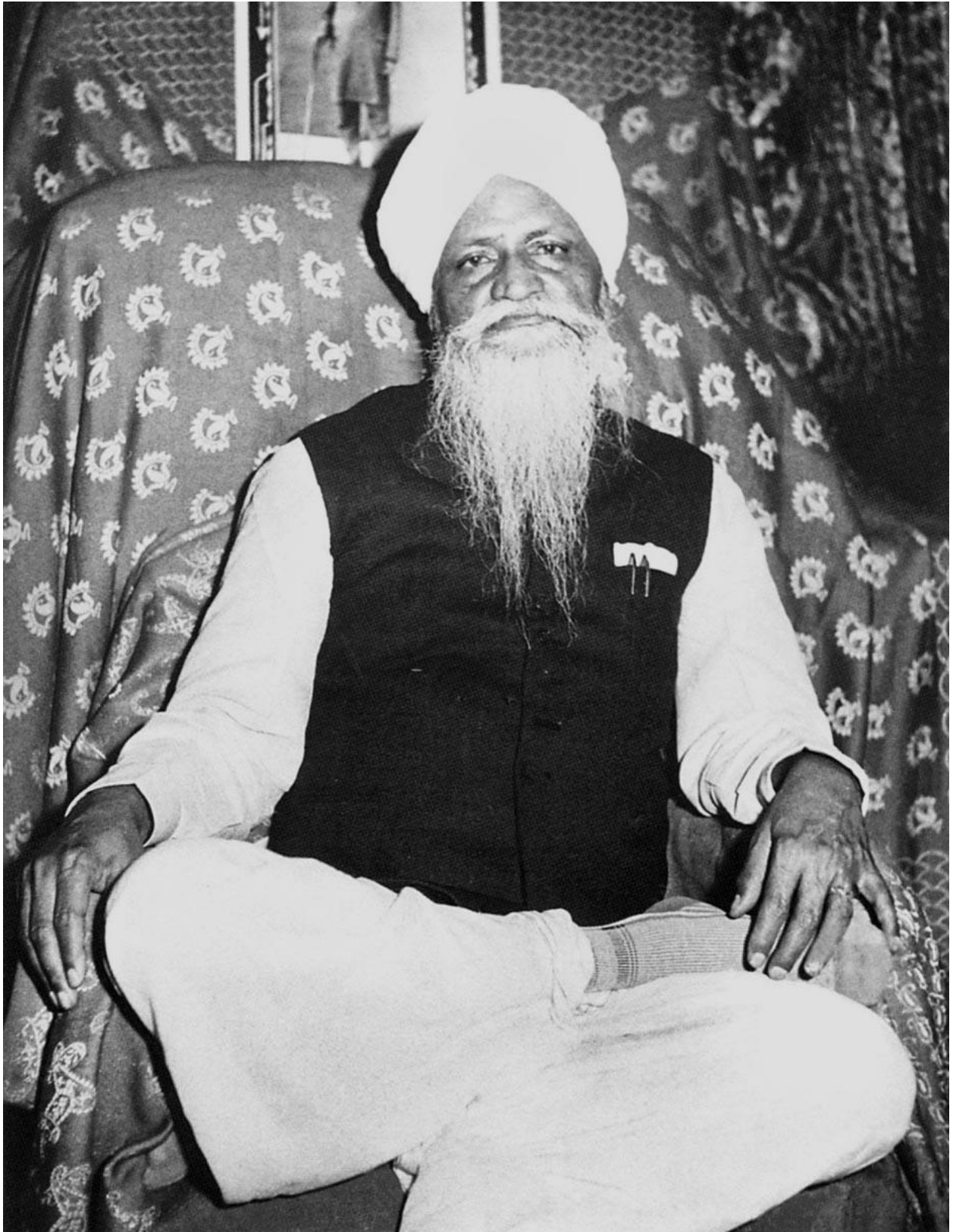
Reunion with Mahadevappa and Initiation of the Andhra Pradesh dear ones by Baba Sawan Singh Ji

Mahadevappa knew, in a general sense, that Baba Ji had made further progress on the Inner Way, as some of the people of the area where he lived were cotton mill workers who occasionally returned to their villages in Andhra to see their families. They had also known Baba Ji since the days when he was a Nathpanth yogi. But the specifics of what had happened to Baba Ji since they had parted ways some 18 years previously were not known to him, nor did he know where Baba Ji lived, nor that he was no longer in the guise of a Nathpanth yogi.

Nonetheless, it was through Baba Ji's guidance that Mahadevappa had become what he was, and, as is prevalent throughout the East, the respect and veneration for his spiritual preceptor were deep and true. A number of the dear ones who were his disciples were also eager to meet the one who had shown Mahadevappa the way of Nathpanth, so they set out for Bombay, first traveling by bullock cart to Kalyandurg and then taking the train from there to Bombay.

When they reached the Bombay train station and came outside to the place where the horse-drawn carriages were ready to take people to local destinations, they enquired from the drivers if they knew of any Sage living in Bombay that was giving Satsang.

One Muslim driver told them that he could not say if the person he had heard about was a God-realized fakir, but there was, at any rate, a Hindu gentleman, who dressed like a Marwari businessman and had a cloth shop, where he gave Satsang every evening. Perhaps he might be the one they were looking for and, if not, maybe he could guide Mahadevappa and his group to the one they were seeking.

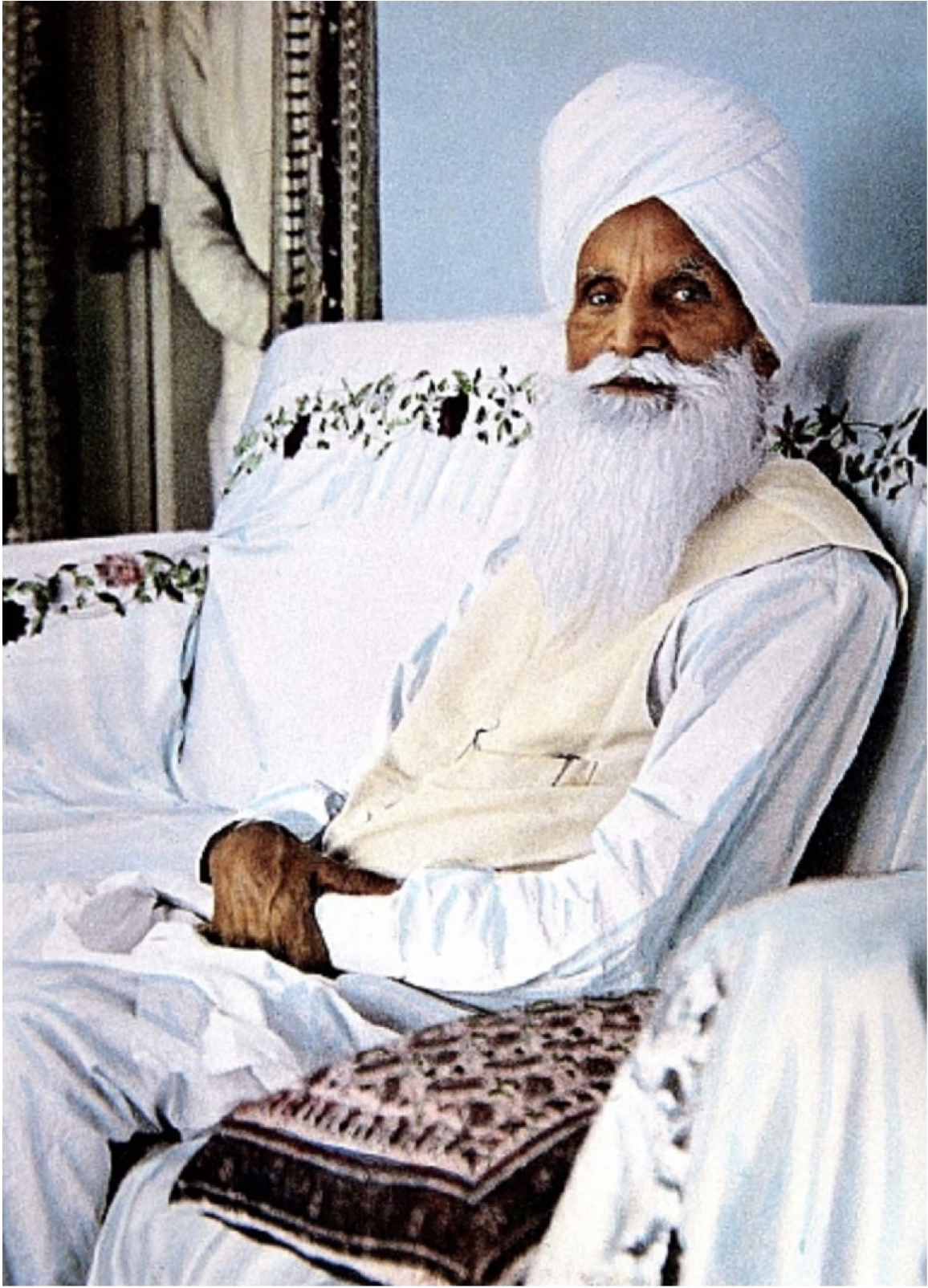


Baba Somanath Ji

When they reached Worli and got down in front of the shop, Baba Ji, recognizing his disciple from their earlier interactions in past times, welcomed him and those with him into his shop. Baba Ji was delighted to meet Mahadevappa once again but asked him who all the other people were. Mahadevappa said, "Baba Ji, these are your spiritual grandchildren." Baba Ji laughed and said, "I have never married and have led the life of a brahmacharya since birth, so where did these grandchildren come from?" It was in this way that Baba Ji was introduced to the dear ones who would later play an important role in his Satsang work in Andhra Pradesh.

Over the next week, Mahadevappa and those accompanying him stayed with Baba Ji, during the course of which Baba Ji explained the basic principles of the Path of the Masters. He counseled Mahadevappa and his disciples to come with him to Beas to have the Darshan of Hazur and take Initiation from him. He lovingly explained to Mahadevappa that the instructions that he had given him as a Nathpanth yogi could not take him beyond Sahas-dal-Kanwal, the Thousand-Petaled Lotus, the capital of the Astral Plane. Beyond that, he would need the help and guidance of a competent Spiritual Adept to take the soul through the causal and super-causal Planes.

The dear ones from Andhra Pradesh were fully convinced of the truth of Baba Ji's words, but Mahadevappa, having perfected the practices that Baba Ji showed him, whereby he could transcend body consciousness, and through which he gained access to supernatural and miraculous powers, showed little interest in taking Initiation from Hazur. He was content with the stage he had reached. As a result of his achievements, he was greatly honored and respected in the region of India where he lived.



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

Seeing his reluctance to move further along the Spiritual Path, which would mean surrendering the worldly name and fame that had come to him, Baba Ji commanded him to take Initiation. He told him that if he truly considered him as his Guru and valued his guidance, then he must take Initiation from a Perfect Mystic Adept, as it was the only way out of bondage to the Wheel of Life and Death. Mahadevappa reluctantly agreed, and so the whole group went to Beas with Baba Ji for Initiation.

Hazur readily accepted the dear ones from Andhra for Initiation, but he hesitated to initiate Mahadevappa, as he could see that within him there was a strong sense of vanity that occupied his entire attention. Those who have practiced such difficult austerities often become proud of what they have done and, because their powers of concentration are superior to that of the average man, they are respected and honored, not for the spiritual virtues of humility, compassion and forgiveness, but rather for their ability to manifest extraordinary phenomena, heal the sick, grant boons or dispense curses, cast out evil spirits and so on. Baba Ji understood Hazur's reluctance but respectfully requested him to be gracious and overlook Mahadevappa's shortcomings and initiate him. Finally, Hazur agreed, but he instructed Mahadevappa to leave off using his powers and remain in silent contemplation for the rest of his time on earth. And Baba Ji told Mahadevappa that the instructions for repetition of the Holy Names should not be conveyed to anyone else because the consequences of doing so would severely impact his life. Despite the admonitions and directions given both by Baba Ji and Hazur, Mahadevappa never fully accepted the Path of the Masters, and when he returned to his cave ashram, he resumed the practice of pranayam. And later, unbeknownst to Baba Ji, he began giving out the Simran of the Five Holy Names to a few of the people who came to him seeking spiritual instruction. The consequences of this will be revealed a bit later.

The History of Mahadevappa

Part 3 “Rediscovering Lost Strands”

The stream of life rolls on ceaselessly in the endless course of time; the power of the Timeless appears and disappears in the realm of relativity. ⁸

— Sant Kirpal Singh

These memorable words of Sant Kirpal Singh are, in fact, the basis of this account concerning Baba Somanath Ji, Sant Ajaib Singh Ji, Mahadevappa and Baba Ram Singh Ji.

The whole story that follows is on that theme, even though it is being told by one who is least capable of doing so. It is only done to give context to the deeper story, which I feel lies at the core of this sharing.

⁸ Kirpal Singh, *Baba Jaimal Singh Ji: His Life and Teachings* (Anaheim, Calif.: Ruhani Satsang, 1987) p 7.

First of all, I would like to inwardly thank Sant Ajaib Singh Ji over and over again for the kindness and love he has showered and continues to shower on us all. How can we mortals describe such a One? We try to find words for him, but it is simply not possible. His ways are unique, and his mission, both manifest and hidden, is profoundly deep—indeed unfathomable.

So how to describe what role he played in my life. Well, each and every person who reads this could easily go on recounting incident after incident of the personal and spiritual role he played and is playing in their lives. So I know I am in the good company of all whose experience of the love of the Saints is precious, deep and real.

I have borrowed the title for this section, “Rediscovering Lost Strands,” from Master Kirpal Singh’s classic biography, *Baba Jaimal Singh: His Life and Teachings*,⁹ because I think we can say with grateful hearts that Sant Ajaib Ji graciously expanded our understanding that the Master Power is indeed an Unlimited Power and that the body of the Guru is the vessel in which that Power resides.

But that Power can reside in various vessels, both known and unknown, to us. In other words, it is not restricted, in a narrow sense, to just the Saints with whom we have been fortunate to have come into contact. Sant Ji began talking of Mastana Ji, Mahatma Chattar Das, Baba Somanath Ji and perhaps others as well. He personally spoke to me of another Saint in Jullundur whose disciples came to him for comfort after their Master left the body.

He brought to life the beautiful words contained in the Bible:

⁹ Kirpal Singh, *Baba Jaimal Singh Ji: His Life and Teachings* (Anaheim, Calif.: Ruhani Satsang, 1987)

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.

—John 3:8

This part of the story is concerned with the work that Sant Ajaib Singh did in reuniting the “lost strands” of Sant Mat, weaving in the Saints in South India. I feel that this story extends back at least to the time of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who traveled extensively in the South and spread the teachings of Sant Mat as he went. On one of his journeys, he encountered Banda Bahadur, and that meeting was described by Sant Ajaib Singh:

The same is the story of Banda Bahadur, who used to live in South [India]. In those days, when there were not such good means of transportation, there were no trains and like that—Guru Gobind Singh had taken that journey; he went down south to find Banda Bahadur. Banda Bahadur was also very devoted right from the beginning, and he had also acquired the supernatural powers. He had made a bed, and if any fakir or any holy man would come to his place, he would welcome him and then ask him to sit on that bed. And then, using his supernatural powers, he would throw the bed down, and in that way, he would make a fool of that holy man, and he would laugh at him.

When Guru Gobind Singh came, Banda Bahadur also treated him very well. Then he tried to do with Guru Gobind Singh the same as he used to do with the other holy men. But Guru Gobind Singh was Almighty. And as only a wrestler can realize the strength of the other wrestler so, when Banda Bahadur tried to do the same trick with Guru Gobind Singh, it did not work, and then Banda Bahadur fell at Guru Gobind Singh's feet, and he said, "I am your slave, at no charge!"

In the writings of Banda Bahadur, we read, "The intoxication which I got at that time from my Master, I could not forget that for the rest of my life."¹⁰

Speaking further of Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Bahadur, Sant Ajaib Singh goes on to say:

Only time will tell us who is the selection of the Master. We people are of such nature that if the Master tells a person in front of us—"I am giving you this Power, you will be working after me"—how much jealousy and enmity will we have for that person, even if Master tells us that he is going to be his successor.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj travelled a lot, from the Punjab he travelled to the south to Avichal Nagar because there he had to choose Baba Banda Bahadur and he was going to give him some Powers there. So when Guru Gobind Singh came there in front of all the Sangat he gave him that little sword which is called kirpan.¹¹ But the other people who were there with Guru Gobind Singh did not like that, and they at once removed that kirpan from Banda Bahadur and said, "Well Master, you have met him just today, we have been living with you such a long time." They were very jealous of Banda Bahadur.

Gobind Singh did not say anything over there. He kept quiet, but, internally, he gave Banda Bahadur the Inner Powers and inspired him to go to the Punjab and carry out the work there.¹²

¹⁰ Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, February 1995, "The Tongue of the Soul," p 31-32.

¹¹ One of the five symbols of the *Khalsa*, the brotherhood of pure souls started by Guru Gobind Singh, later formalized in the Sikh religion. The others are *kara*, the bracelet; *kangha*, the comb; *kesh*, the uncut hair; and *kaccha*, the drawers.

¹² Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, July 1992, "He Comes Only to Give," p 27-28.

More pertinent to our consideration of Sant Mat in South India as it relates to the history of Mahadevappa, was Guru Gobind Singh's connection with the ruling Peshwa family of the Deccan. Master Kirpal Singh has related:

Guru Gobind Singh traveled widely, penetrating the Himalayas in the North and going to Deccan in the South. During his extensive travels, he met and lived with the ruling family of the Peshwas and initiated some of its members into the inner science. It is said that one Ratnagar Rao of the Peshwa family was initiated and authorized to carry on the work by Guru Gobind Singh.

Sham Rao Peshwa, the elder brother of Baji Rao Peshwa, the then ruling chief, who must have contacted Ratnagar Rao, showed a remarkable aptitude for the spiritual path and made rapid headway. In course of time, this young scion of the royal family settled in Hathras, a town thirty-three miles away from Agra in Uttar Pradesh, and came to be known as Tulsi Sahib (1763-1843), the famous author of Ghat Ramayana, the science of the inner life-principle pervading alike in man and nature. The vita lampada of Spirituality was passed on by Tulsi Sahib to Swami Shiv Dayal Singh Ji (1818-1878)...Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, one of the earliest and most spiritually advanced disciples of Soami Ji, as directed by the great Master himself, settled down at Beas in Punjab to revitalize the work of Spirituality, and to repay in some measure the debt that the world owed to Guru Nanak.¹³

As is already well-known, Baba Jaimal Singh entrusted the work of taking the souls across the ocean of existence to his Gurumukh son

¹³ Kirpal Singh, *Baba Jaimal Singh Ji: His Life and Teachings* (Anaheim, CA: Ruhani Satsang, 1987) p 8, 13.

Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh. What is less well-known, is that Hazur, in the fullness of time, sent his Gurumukh son, Baba Somanath Ji, with a commission to spread the teachings of Sant Mat in the South, a work begun centuries before by Guru Gobind Singh on his southern odysseys.

As we have already seen, Baba Somanath Ji drew a handful of Western dear ones to his feet, fifteen in number, and I was fortunate to be amongst them. From 1971-1976, when he left the mortal coil, we had the chance to be near him for months at a time. It was an incredible period in our lives because we were able to live in close proximity to a Saint in a traditional way.

But, at least in my case, I felt myself quite alone whenever I returned to the USA. All the dear ones I knew, and they were not many, were initiated by Sant Kirpal Singh Ji or Maharaj Charan Singh Ji. Naturally, they were in all absorbed in their love for their own Masters, and I was initiated by a Saint who no one knew about. I was fortunate to have a few friends in Davis, California, where I lived at the time, that had open hearts—like Jim Fiel, an initiate of Maharaj Charan Singh Ji, and Marc Rubald, an initiate of Sant Kirpal Singh Ji. Such dear ones were a wonderful support to me. But it was not until I came in contact with Sant Ji in Nanaimo that a totally new life began to emerge.

Sant Ji was, from the beginning, a wondrous being to be around, as his name indicates; Ajaib Singh meaning the Wonderful Lion. He was a unifier. While being an ardent Gurumukh disciple of Sant Kirpal Singh Ji, he never had the least trace of exclusiveness in his heart. His love was for all who came in his contact, initiate and non-initiate—which is true of all Saints. But the expression of the Master Power that lived in his heart took on added, perceivable, personal depth for me as he began to openly talk of my own Master, Baba Somanath Ji, as well as the other aforementioned Saints. At first, he

spoke to me in private regarding the greatness of Baba Somanath, and then gradually, he began commenting in public talks as well. And not long after I met him, he agreed to hold a Satsang Program in Bombay, which was followed by invitations to other South Indian cities where initiates of Baba Somanath Ji lived. It became clearer and clearer, as time went on, that there was some deep inner relationship between Sant Ji and Baba Ji that only those who go within to a very high level can fathom. Later in a private interview, Sant Ji shared with the author and his wife that Baba Somanath Ji had met him within and requested that Sant Ji take care of his sangat, so that the seedlings he had planted would not dry out and wither, but instead could flourish and thrive, nourished by the water of Satsang. And so another chapter of rediscovering “lost strands” began. It has been a very incredible story to have been a part of, even at my rather dim level of perception, and for those who are more deeply aware of the inner significance, no doubt even more profoundly felt.

And now we will once again pick up the story of Mahadevappa. Each part of his saga is so fascinating, as will be seen as we move forward. Rarely does one become aware of the movement of that Power through the different human vessels, as is seen in this story.

Baba Somanath Ji goes to Betta in Andhra Pradesh, which became the center of his mission in South India

The visit of Mahadevappa and the dear ones from the Betta area was a major turning point in Baba Ji’s work on behalf of Hazur in South India. When they returned to their village and recounted all that had happened when they went to Bombay and Beas, the interest in having Baba Ji come to their area to give Satsang instantly took hold. Within a short time, an invitation was sent to him to kindly visit Betta so that seekers of Truth could gain first-hand knowledge of

Sant Mat. It was sometime towards the end of 1942 or early 1943 that Baba Ji first traveled there from Bombay. The total distance from Bombay to Betta (“Betta” means “small hillock”) was about 500 miles, most of which was covered by train, but after reaching Kalyandurg, the remaining distance of about 16 miles needed to be covered by bullock cart.

The entire desert region through which the country road passed displayed a beautiful landscape of massive stone hillocks jutting out of the desert floor. The hillocks themselves were composed of enormous boulders fit together to create gigantic natural sculptures in which no human agency had any part; rather, they had been fashioned by the Creator Himself in some distant time beyond memory.

It was a true desert landscape composed of sandy soil and tough native plants that could withstand the rigors of a hot, dry climate. By good fortune, there was abundant water beneath the earth that came naturally to the surface in small and large artesian springs or via hand-dug wells. In the case of more prosperous families, gas or diesel pumps were used to draw the pure water out of the earth. In the areas where the water was abundant, crops such as rice, bananas and mangoes could be grown. But, more commonly, the farmers cultivated ragi (a dark brown grain), wheat, chilies, peanuts and vegetables.

Still, even though it was a desert area, the climate was not as extreme as found in the Thar desert of Rajasthan and other arid regions of North India. The people of the Anantapur district, where Betta was located, were, for the most part, agriculturists living very simple lives in a pristine environment. Their lives were governed by the flow of the seasons and the Hindu religious traditions that had been maintained for centuries. The feeling of the entire area was that of an ancient land in which dwelled people who tilled the earth,

knew how to work in harmony with the forces of nature and whose overall impact was that of gentle souls who walked with appreciation for the world in which they lived. Baba Ji was delighted to get out of the crowded city environment and to once again experience the treasures of pure water, fresh air and a life lived in accordance with nature.

Because he was a man of the people, well understanding the ways of their hearts, he was welcomed with open arms, and it did not take any time at all before his presence amongst them became known throughout the area. As a result, when he did visit the district, thousands of people would flock to see him. The setting for the Satsangs was as simple as the people themselves. Often his dais was a large boulder, upon which he sat and gave out the timeless teachings of the Saints. In order to meet with people in the many villages of the area, he traveled by bullock cart, sometimes giving as many as six Satsangs a day in different places. The elegant but heart-to-heart way in which he gave Satsang found a receptive audience.

This was a special gift for the dear ones of deep South India, as it was the first time that the Sant Mat teachings through the line of Swami Ji of Agra (Swami Shiv Dayal Singh Ji) had reached into that region. It was also the first time that the Path of the Masters was being presented in the South Indian languages with which Baba Ji was familiar. His words touched their hearts, for he understood their lives in an intimate way. And his words were charged with the ring of Truth, as he had traversed every stage of the Path.

During these Satsang programs, Mahadevappa would often be with Baba Ji. Even though he did not take to the Path of Sant Mat, still his love for Baba Ji was deep, and he inspired the local people to follow

the Path that Baba Ji was teaching. Baba Ji used to stay with Mahadevappa in his small cave ashram on the side of the Betta mountain near the village, and they would meditate together.

Mahadevappa's end time and the disputes that arose afterwards

At the same time this growth was going on, Mahadevappa was nearing the end of his life, and his departure was hastened in this manner.

It so happened that three ladies, to whom he had given the repetition of the Five Sacred Names, came to Bombay to visit with their families dwelling there. One of the ladies had a son working with Baba Ji in his shop and, since she knew of Baba Ji through Mahadevappa, she came to have Baba Ji's Darshan along with her friends.

In the course of their conversation, Baba Ji enquired from them, "Have you received Initiation from any Guru?" They replied, "Yes, Baba Ji. We are initiates of Mahadevappa." Baba Ji asked them what mantra or simran he had given them, and they repeated the Five Holy Names. Baba Ji was not pleased with their answer, for Mahadevappa had promised not to instruct anyone on the Simran of the Saints. At that time, these words spontaneously came from his lips. "He has disobeyed the Master, so now neither his beard nor he will survive."

Soon after Baba Ji had uttered these words, Mahadevappa became very sick and was accosted by fits of coughing and vomiting, to the extent that his long hair and beard became saturated with it. For those in his service, it became very difficult to keep him clean, and,

finally, they decided to cut his beard and hair. For six months, he was severely ill, and then he left the body. The year was 1946.

As mentioned before, Mahadevappa, right up to the end of his life, maintained a strong love and devotion for Baba Ji as the Guru who had initiated him into the mystic practices of the Nathpanth and, although he suffered tremendously during his last days, Baba Ji was ever in his thoughts. This plays an important part in the later developments of Baba Somanath Ji's continuing mission in South India and directly concerns Baba Ram Singh Ji, who we visited in January of 2019, 2020 and 2022.

After Mahadevappa left the body in 1946, there was a gap of several years before Baba Ji visited the area again, due to some internal strife amongst the dear ones living in that area. It often happens that land and property become the source of confusion when someone leaves the body, and even though Mahadevappa had only a small ashram which consisted of the cave in which he stayed and the small bit of land immediately outside it, still some disagreements arose between those who were devoted exclusively to him as a Nathpanth yogi and those who, through him, came to know of Baba Somanath Ji and Sant Mat. This type of misunderstanding happens repeatedly, be the property great or small, because we people have not meditated, gone within and realized the Truth that the Saints teach, which is something completely separate from concerns about worldly possessions.

Consequently, when Baba Ji heard of this controversy, he refused to visit the area, as this type of behavior had nothing to do with following the Path of Love, which was the essence of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji's teachings. But finally, the dear ones at Betta realized that they were sacrificing the most precious thing of all, the company of a Living Master, for a mere nothing—a piece of earth that could not impart to them the knowledge of the Inner Path nor could it guide

them within. Understanding their mistake, everyone involved put aside their differences and implored Baba Ji to return to their area to bring life and hope into the hearts of the people dwelling there.

The History of Mahadevappa

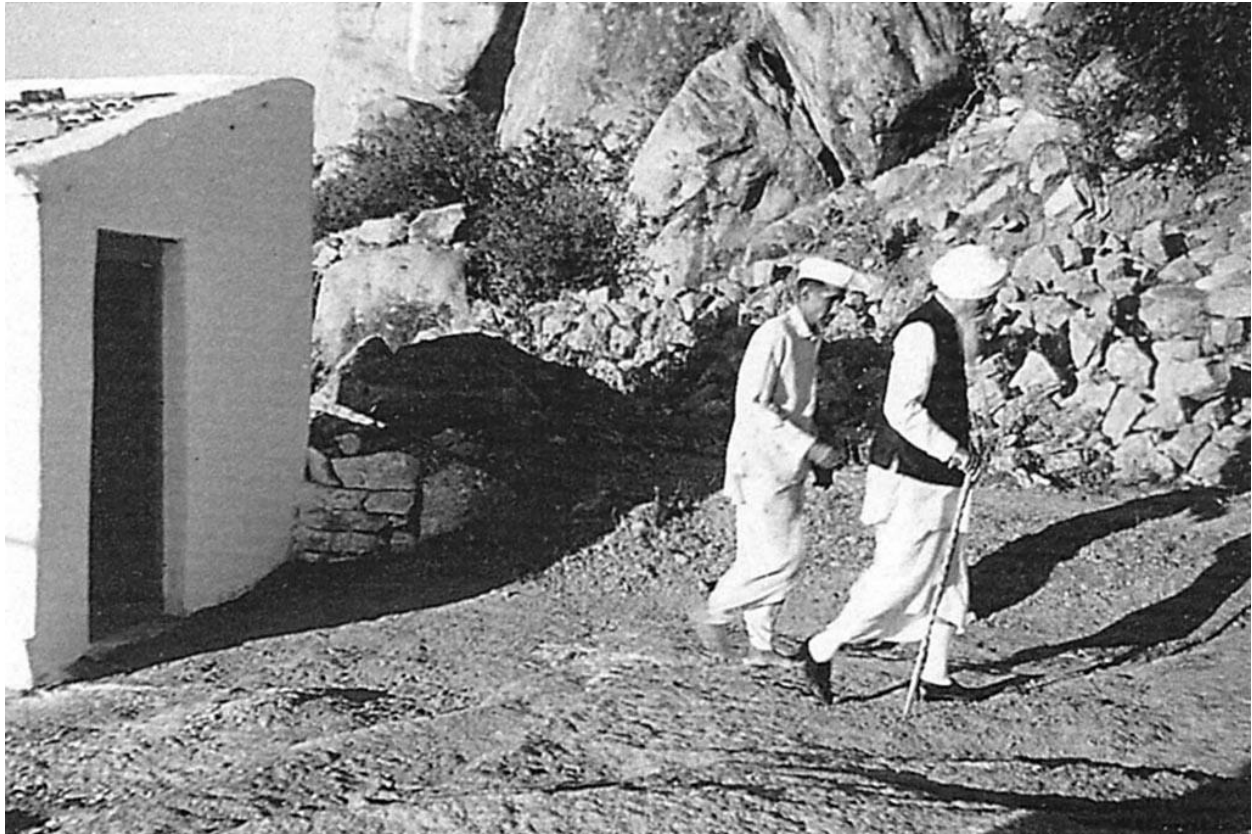
Part 4

I Learn of Mahadevappa During My First Visit to Betta with Baba Somanath Ji

Visit to Betta ashram

Before I left Kengeri ashram for the first time in 1971, Baba Somanath Ji had once called me to his room and told me that he wished to take me to the Betta (Pahar) ashram near the village of Enumuladoddi in Andhra Pradesh, for he said that there I would begin to gain an insight into what true devotion is. At that time, I was nearing the end of the visa that I had obtained before leaving the USA. The Indian government sometimes permitted a three-month extension, which I had already obtained, but seldom, if ever, granted more time than that. But Baba Ji requested that I at least make an attempt to get another few weeks so I could go with him to celebrate the bhandara of Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, which took place at the end of December and early January. He even kindly wrote a letter for me to submit with my application requesting further time in India. But all efforts to procure another extension were not

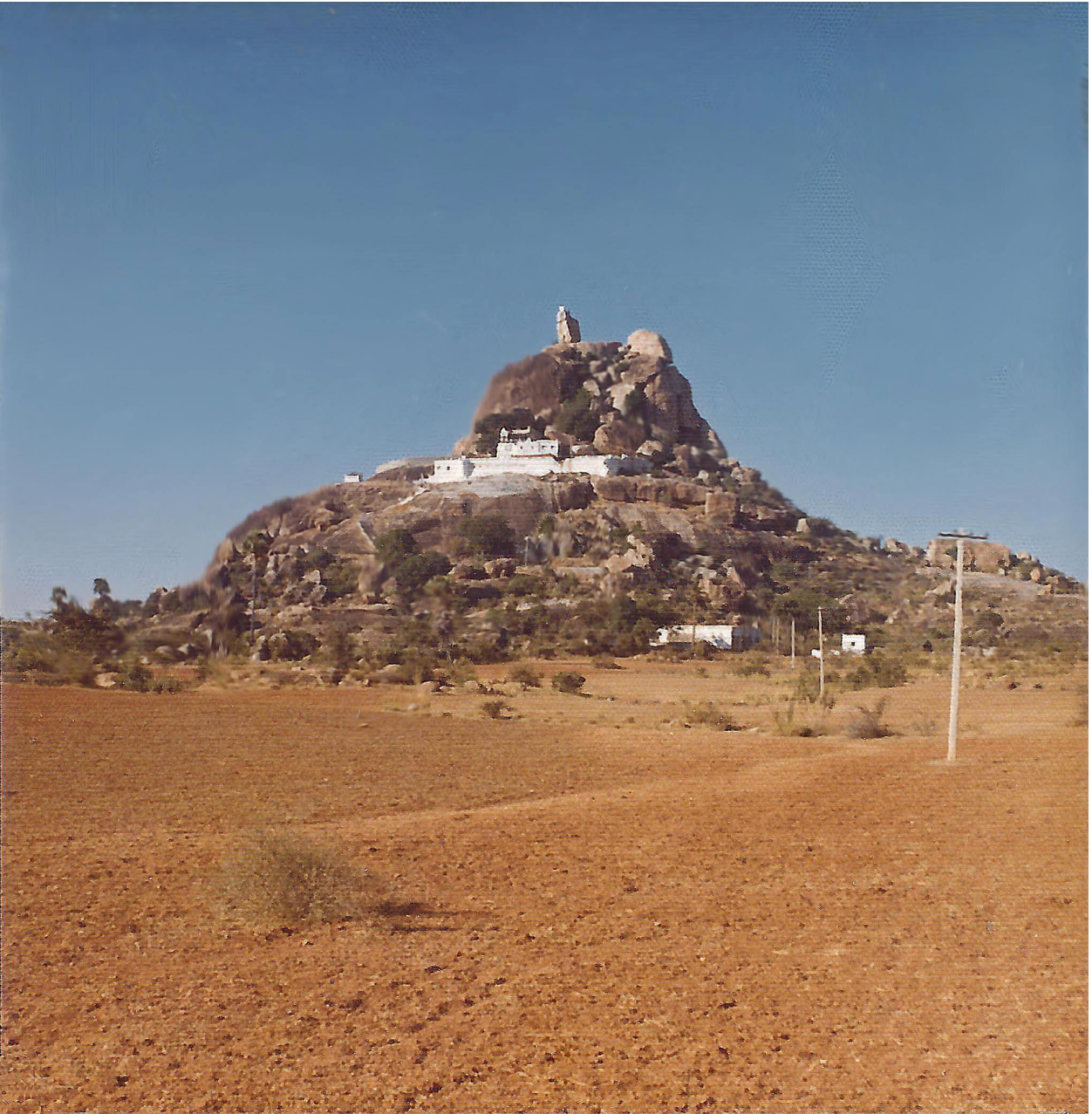
destined to succeed, so I had to depart from India before the aforementioned program.



Baba Somanath with Naiyar Ji at Betta ashram

But the next year (1972), I made sure that I planned my stay in the ashram to be such that I would not miss the opportunity to go to this place that was dear to Baba Somanath Ji's heart and became precious to mine as a consequence.

Fortunately, Graham Gibson was also in the ashram at the time, and as he had his video camera with him, a record of that experience was captured on film (which is posted on the Baba Somanath Ji website under "Videos").



The Betta ashram of Baba Somanath Ji

The first section of Part 2 of the videos is about the Betta (Pahar) visit, and in that film I can be seen in several sections. There is one scene where the bricks for building the ashram are being passed via a human chain of dear ones, and about mid-mountain, a tall, gangly Westerner (myself) may be seen as part of that seva. Later, there is

also a section where I can be seen helping Baba Ji traverse up and down the steps at the ashram. I made so bold as to say to Baba Ji at that time: “Baba Ji, we need to be careful as the steps are very steep (or something to that effect).” Baba Ji laughingly said, “I know perfectly where I am going, but you should be attentive to where you are going.” It was excellent advice, as all my life, I have been stumbling over obstacles in my path. My poor shins bear testimony to the many knocks and bruises received.



Baba Somanath Ji

But I would like to share one scene from the *Memoirs* that can never be forgotten, and I feel it captures the essence of that trip to this ancient area of India:

Toward evening we came to a juncture in the road. To our left lay a hard-packed dirt track that was used by motorized vehicles, bicycles, bullock carts and humans. From the flat desert floor arose a number of the giant rock hillocks, their impressive features silhouetted by the sun commencing its descent into West. Midway up one of these immense masses of rock, one could discern a line of colorful lights. This turned out to be where the ashram was located, and the lights illuminated the walls enclosing it. Electricity had just come to this area during the previous year and had been run up to the ashram, thus enabling the villagers to string lights in honor of Baba Ji's arrival. It was all so magical—like out of a fairy tale. But the most amazing and moving sight was yet to come.

After traveling down the road a short way, a long line of glittering light reflected from gas lanterns could be seen. As we approached, one could see that many of the inhabitants of the village of Enumuladoddi had come out to greet Baba Ji. The line stretched for a long way, with hundreds of people standing along the left side of the road so they could have Baba Ji's Darshan. It was a sight that can never be forgotten. Mr. Megananon slowed the car to a snail's pace so that Baba Ji could look into the eyes of each. As he passed, many reached through the window and gently caressed his face. Most of these people were materially poor, but I can say one thing for certain—the richest, most prosperous millionaires had nothing compared to what they had in their hearts. It was such an honor to see the beauty of their faces, the luminous quality of their souls.

One old woman was standing there, dressed in a simple coarse cotton sari. She was waiting for the car to pass so she could have Baba Ji bless some sugar she had wrapped in newspaper. The car slowed even more, and Baba Ji reached out and blessed the paper envelope she had in her hand. Then she saw me sitting in the

back seat, and her face became filled with joy—God only knows why. In her excitement, she poured half of the sugar into my hands. It was one of the greatest gifts I have ever received on this earth.

Slowly the car wound its way through the village, and after the last person had been passed, the car picked up speed and headed towards the light-illuminated walls of the ashram. Many people were gathered there awaiting Baba Ji's coming, just as they had been doing regularly over the past 35 years or more.

After alighting from the car, the dear ones who had been waiting carried him up the hill in a sedan chair constructed of a large covered basket balanced at the center of a 20-foot-long pole. The chair was hoisted into the air by ten or so people who then carried Baba Ji up the 300 stone steps to his bungalow. We quietly followed him through the cool, still desert night air with thousands of glistening stars shining in the sky above. We were shown to a cave that had been converted into a room, and after having some dinner, we lay down to rest for the night. Thus ended the first wonderful day of travel and homecoming into the heart of ancient India.

In the days to come, many such scenes unfolded before the eyes of this stunned Westerner. Never before had I experienced anything like it. I had traveled with Baba Ji to Bombay and other places, but this was unique.

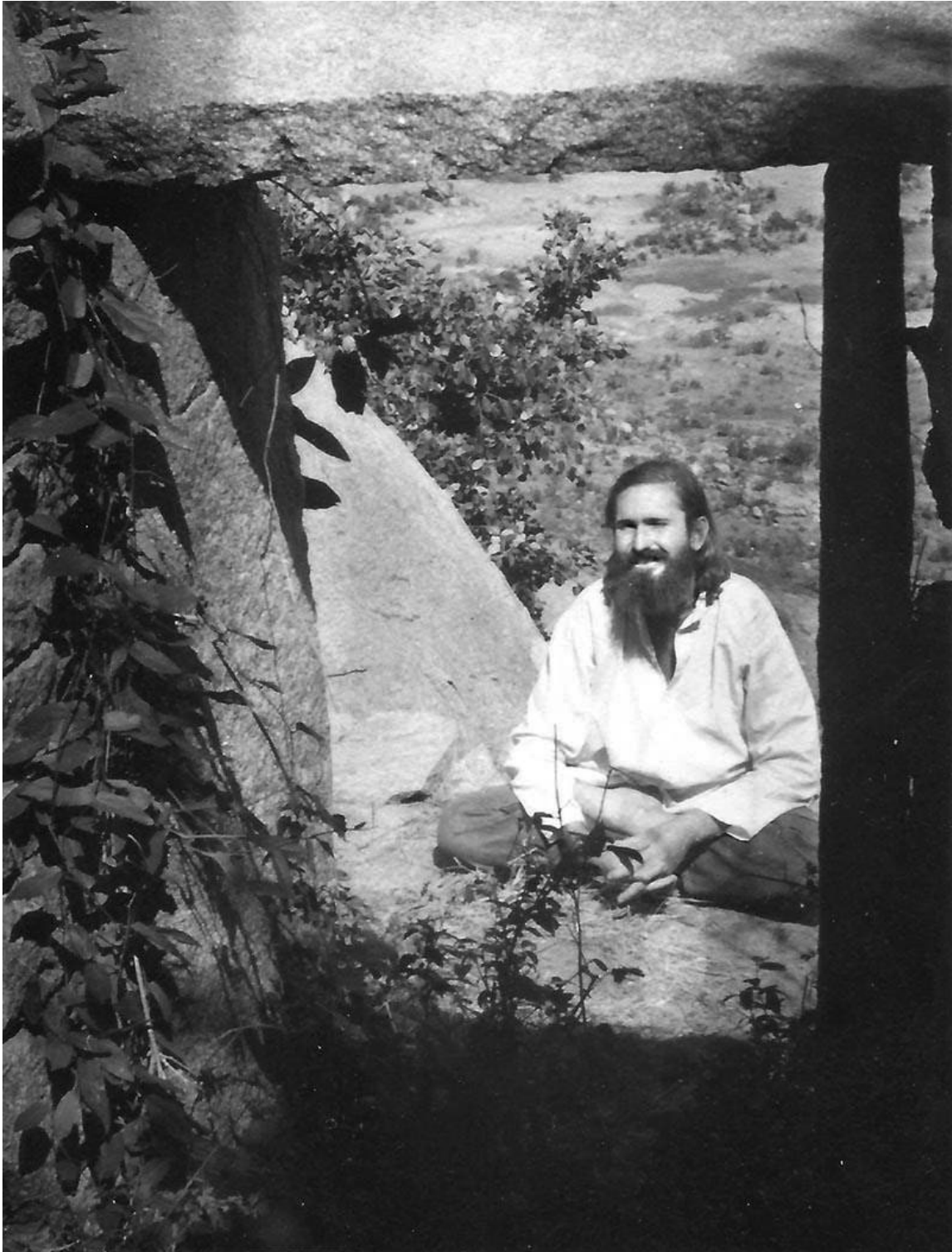
It all stemmed, as I was to experience, from the simple, pure hearts of the dear ones coming to him there. For the most part, these people were simple farmers or field workers who had just enough to keep body and soul together, but through them shone an innocent love and devotion so powerful that even my heart was touched. It is to be remembered that I did not speak the language of the region,

although, by that time, I had some working knowledge of Hindi. Nevertheless, it was a blessing in disguise, for those things which move the heart often lie far beyond the sphere of the spoken word.

When I went to Betta this first time, I did not have any knowledge of who Mahadevappa was. I had never seen a picture of him. In fact, I knew nothing about this part of Baba Somanath Ji's mission other than that Baba Ji had told me it was a place where one could begin to perceive the nature of true devotion. But later, when I knew more, I also discovered that some of those fortunate souls who had been initiated by Mahadevappa—and who had accompanied him when he went to Bombay in search of Baba Ji—were in attendance at the program. They were all initiates of Baba Sawan Singh Ji and had received Naam when Baba Somanath Ji had taken them to Beas.

I Hear the Story of Mahadevappa

So one day, Graham and I were invited to have lunch (or should say lunches) in the homes of some of the elderly Satsangis in the nearby village of Enumuladoddi. I distinctly remember entering one of their earthen-floor homes constructed of mud and bricks—sparse in furniture but filled with bhakti, the spirit of devotion. On the wall of one of the homes were a few pictures—one of Baba Somanath Ji, one of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji and one of a yogi with long hair, mesmerizing eyes and a simple cotton robe. To this day I do not know why, but that picture had a powerful effect on me, and I never forgot it in the years to come. All I could find out at the time was that Mahadevappa was a yogi who had come to their area and had meditated in the caves. He had later become instrumental in bringing Baba Somanath Ji to their region, and, from that time forward, Sant Mat had taken root there.



Author sitting outside a cave temple above Betta Ashram

I was so strongly impressed with Mahadevappa's mysterious history that I decided to hike up the large adjacent mountain called Tenagal Hill one day. I wanted to see if I could discover the cave where Mahadevappa had performed austerities and gained perfection in kundalini yoga. I knew which hill it was as others had reverently pointed it out to me. It was just across from the one we were staying on, so without any knowledge of how to get to the top, I took off one morning to see if I could discover its location. Luckily, I was ignorant of the fact that it was a haunt of wild bears and poisonous snakes, large and small, for that might have dissuaded me in the attempt.

Although there was no marked path, I managed to negotiate myself around the larger boulders and gradually made my way to the top. When I reached the crown of the hillock, I found the cave, before which was a small pond formed by a natural cavity in a single boulder, which had served as Mahadevappa's source of water. The atmosphere was very lovely, as one had a clear sweeping view of the surrounding natural countryside. It was a profoundly quiet and serene place where only faint sounds from the nearby area could be heard. It was easy to understand why he chose that spot, even if he shared it with the wild creatures. I was awed by what he had done while living in such a remote place.

Little did I realize at the time that I would later have close contact with Baba Ram Singh Ji—who, in a past life, had been Mahadevappa—and who, through the grace of Baba Somanath Ji and Sant Ajaib Singh Ji, would help thousands of souls tread upon the Path of the Masters.

I might mention here, before going further, that in 2020 when Suzanne and I, along with a small group of Westerners, stayed with Baba Ram Singh Ji at the Som Ajaib Kirpa Ashram for a couple of

weeks in January, we had the opportunity to visit Baba Somanath Ji's Betta ashram where I had gone with him in 1972.



View of Countryside from Mahadevappa's Cave on Tenagal Hill

On this 2020 visit, we saw the two caves Mahadevappa occupied when he lived there. One cave was below the ashram that the dear ones constructed during the time of Baba Somanath Ji. It is there that Mahadevappa would meet with the people from the surrounding area. But there was another cave up at the level of the ashram, where he would remain in seclusion and engage in the pranayama sadhanas related to the inner ascent on the power of the kundalini. That cave was accessible only by a wooden ladder. It was not large, as it was but a crevice between the huge boulders that create the hillocks of that region.

Even in January, the “cool” month in Andhra Pradesh—meaning daytime temperatures in the 80s and nighttime temperatures in the lower 70s—the cave was very hot and stifling. How a human being could survive there is hard to comprehend, but those engaged in such practices live an entirely different type of life than we do. Our visit to the Betta ashram only made more vivid the story that

surrounds Mahadevappa, Baba Somanath Ji, Baba Ram Singh Ji and the entire area in which this intriguing part of the Sant Mat history unfolded and continues to unfold in this region of India.

Baba Ram Singh arrives at the Kengeri ashram

So now, we take up the story of Baba Ram Singh Ji. I think most of it is already well-known, so I will only highlight a few points before sharing some significant incidents related to his previous life as Mahadevappa.

Baba Ram Singh Ji came to Baba Somanath Ji in January of 1974 while some of the Westerners were living in the ashram, including myself. He had grown up on his small family farm near Varanasi in UP and, after attending high school, came to Bombay seeking employment. His father was already working there, so Ram Singh had a place to stay while he sought for work. Because he had a high school education, he was able to get a job in the cotton mills mixing the dyes for the textiles being prepared for the wholesale market.

Since childhood, he was inspired to do the devotion to God and, in those early years, he became a devotee of Hanuman. After reaching Bombay and settling in with his father, he also continued his search for God and was initiated by a Mahatma who gave him the “Onkār” mantra while instructing him to worship the goddess Durga. He took to the practice with sincerity, and because he had maintained a pure life since childhood, he developed the Vāk Siddhi meaning that whatever he spoke (vāk) became true.

One day, after taking a walk along the Worli Sea Face, he was returning to the tenement housing where he stayed with his father when he came upon the place where Baba Somanath Ji had his Satsang Hall. There was a small signboard there with the times at

which the daily tape-recorded Satsang was played. Since he was interested in spirituality, he felt drawn to go there at 7:00 p.m. to hear what was being presented. During the first Satsang, everything he heard penetrated into his heart, and after that, his whole attention remained focused on thinking of Baba Ji's words over and over again. That remembrance became so intense that, even though he had never met Baba Ji face-to-face, still he began having Baba Ji's Darshan at all times and places.

This remembrance created in his heart the longing to go and be with Baba Ji, and two months after hearing his first Satsang, he left Bombay, without informing anyone where he was going, and took the bus for Bangalore. So, it was on an auspicious January day that he arrived at the ashram. None of us living there knew what the significance of that event was, nor, on the outer level, did Ram Singh.

He had come there like any other sincere seeker, longing to find a practical Path back to God. And, in Baba Ji, he found the One who was destined to open the gates to the Inner Kingdom of Light and Love. But at the time of his arrival, his only wish was to engage in the service of the Saints, and that same feeling is what motivates everything he does to this day:

Baba Ram Singh finally reached the Kengeri ashram. There was Jamal Bhai at the gate. Ram Singh told him where he came from. Jamal Bhai went to Baba Somanath and said, "One person from Kashi wants to have your Darshan." Babaji said to him, "Bring him in." It was not the regular time for the Darshan, but Babaji allowed him to come in. As soon as Baba Ram Singh looked at Babaji's radiant countenance, he also saw that the golden rays were beaming out from him, and it was like that of [a] hundred Suns shining. When he looked at the feet of Baba Somanath, there he also saw that the golden rays were coming out. He

[Baba Ram Singh] put his head at his holy feet and lost himself in this Divine Radiance.

Babajii picked him up from the ground and caressed him sweetly. Babaji then put both hands on Ram Singh's head, and then Baba Ram Singh came into his senses. Babaji asked him with affection, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Ramugrah Singh." Then Baba Somanath said with a smile, "O, you are not 'Ugrah' (hot-tempered). You look very cool and calm. Your name should only be Ram Singh." From this time onwards, he was called Ram Singh.

Babaji asked him further, "Do you want to live in the ashram and do Seva or go back home after the Darshan?" Suddenly these words came out from Ram Singh's mouth, "I have come here to live in your Seva." Then Babaji called one of the sevadars named Nayar.¹⁴ Nayar began to ask Ram Singh in front of Baba Ji. "When you do the job at Bombay, then why do you want to live here? It is very difficult to get a job in these days." However, Baba Somnath looked at him and said, "Oh, is the job of two or four hundred rupees per month of any use? Take him and give him a room."

The worldly people cannot understand what 'Seva' Baba Somnath really wanted to take from Baba Ram Singh. Sant Ajaib Singh Ji used to say, "When the iron comes in the range of a magnet, it pulls the iron towards itself at once. In the same way, the enlightened soul is pulled by the Sant Satguru himself. The time of their meeting is already fixed. At the appropriate time, such circumstances occur, and they meet with each other.

¹⁴ Shri Ram Naiyar Ji came to Baba Somanath Ji in 1947.

Naiyar gave Ram Singh the room that was used for ironing the clothes. Ram Singh had neither clothes to wear nor bedding to sleep, but he did not care for these things. All he had was the form of Babaji within him. A strange intoxication was now inside his body. He was very happy that Babaji took him under his protection. He was first allotted the Seva of milking the cows, working on the farm and cleaning the gutters. He began to perform these Sevass wholeheartedly. ¹⁵

Staying in Baba Ji's Sawan Durbar Ashram, Kengeri, south of Bangalore, was a challenging and demanding lifestyle centered around agricultural pursuits, with the core being meditation and Satsang.

It was hard work, day in and day out, throughout all the seasons of the year. The subtropical climate was ideal for growing crops year-round, so there was a never-ending cycle of plowing, planting and harvesting, along with building projects of various kinds. Ram Singh Ji entered into the life of Seva with single-minded devotion, joining us in all the activities of farm life. I did not know him very well personally; I only knew he was a quiet young man who, though serious, had the most winning smile.

¹⁵ Pratap Singh Shakya, trans., *In the Lap of the Supreme Father: the Biography of Sant Ram Singh Ji Maharaj* (Guddella, A.P: Som Ajaib Kirpa Ashram, 2014) p 10-11.

In the picture below, Baba Ram Singh Ji is seen with his good friend, the gatekeeper, Jamal Bhai (a most loving gentle soul who was a very good meditator) and one of the guard dogs, who I think might be either Moti or Mohan, who spent the nights with Baba Ram Singh walking about the parameter of the ashram keeping thieves at bay.



Baba Ram Singh and Jamal Bhai circa 1978

Soon after Ram Singh arrived, Baba Ji gave him the responsibility of night guard duty that none of us could do on a sustained basis. Ram Singh alone remained devoted to it, and it was while doing this seva that he, with Baba Ji's Grace, was able to perfect the Simran, the first step on the spiritual ladder of inner ascent.

It was during the remaining years of Baba Ji's life, and for a year or two afterward, that he had a series of inner experiences which eventually brought him to the place within where he saw that in a past life, he had been with Baba Somanath Ji as Mahadevappa.

The History of Mahadevappa

Part 5

Baba Ram Singh Follows Sant Ji’s “Small Request” and Begins the Work in Andhra Pradesh

In the following section, I have drawn extensively from *In the Lap of the Supreme Father*,¹⁶ written and translated into English by Pratap Singh Shakya, affectionately known as “Master Ji,” and from Baba Ram Singh’s Satsangs and Meditation Talks and unrecorded conversations where he relates incidents from the time that these events took place.

First of all, I will endeavor to put together a few of the important experiences Baba Ram Singh Ji has shared with us at different times and places regarding his inner relationship with Baba Somanath, Sant Ajaib Singh and Baba Sawan Singh. Some of them are taken from the written materials that are available to us, and some are drawn from things he has related in talks for which I was fortunate enough to be present. For example, in his Satsangs and Meditation talks, there are repeated references to Baba Sawan Singh Ji even though, in this life, he never came in his contact with Hazur.

¹⁶ Pratap Singh Shakya, *In the Lap of the Supreme Father: The Biography of Sant Baba Ram Singh Ji Maharaj* (Guddella, India: Som Ajaib Kirpa Ashram, 2014)



Baba Somanath Ji

Baba Ram Singh was born on April 12, 1954, in a small village near Varanasi, long after Hazur had departed from the earth plane in 1948. But as will become more apparent as we progress into the story, his relationship with Hazur was deep and profound, extending back far beyond the present incarnation.

Baba Ram Singh Ji's vision of Baba Sawan Singh Ji

This experience took place on the morning of the day (April 2nd, 1974) when he received Initiation from Baba Somanath Ji. It was early morning, and he was sitting in meditation outside the Naam Nirnay Mandir (the name given to the Satsang Hall at Sawan Durbar Ashram). In his meditation, Baba Sawan Singh Ji appeared to him. Here is the vision described in his own words.

While sitting in meditation, I, along with another dear one, was transported to Dera Baba Jaimal Singh Ji. In that vision, I beheld a large crowd gathered for Satsang, and Hazur Sawan Singh Ji was sitting on the dais giving Darshan . While beholding this scene, I also saw that sitting in the caves along the river Beas were a number of sadhus absorbed in meditation. Even though we were standing far back behind those gathered for Satsang, seeing us, Hazur beckoned for us to come forward. When we reached him, he stood up and embraced me. At that time, there was a lot of fear in my heart because I remembered my previous life as Mahadevappa. I had failed to accept Hazur as my Guru and had instead continued on doing my pranayama practices and working miracles using the powers garnered therefrom. I had failed to heed the words of Baba Somanath Ji to spend the rest of my life in silence and attend to Bhajan and Simran. I had even given out the Five Holy Names to several dear ones, though

I had been directed not to do so. Seeing the fear in my heart, Hazur said, "Worry not. All has been forgiven. In fact, now everything is being prepared for the work you are to do in carrying forward the teachings of Sant Mat that was begun by Baba Somanath Ji in South India. Then Hazur gave me some food to eat. While I sat there partaking of the prashad, I kept my gaze fixed on Hazur, after which he turned around, ascended a staircase that led to Sach Khand and disappeared." ¹⁷

Baba Somanath Ji instructs Baba Ram Singh, Bernard and Jamal Bhai to take supplies to Betta ashram a few days before he left the body

Ram Singh's whole life was centered on seva. He had left hearth and home and given his entire life over to the service of the Master. He had nothing of his own. His only possessions were his clothes and the food he received from the ashram langar. He was a young man at that time, just 22 years of age, and the passage of Baba Ji from the mortal coil had immense ramifications on every level of his life. Here is the account of this time and the vision that came four days after Baba Somanath left the body.

It was a few days before Baba Somanath Ji left the body. His health was swiftly declining, but none of us living there could entertain the thought he was about to leave this world. On this day, Ram Singh was resting after lunch. As he did night duty, he reserved three or four hours for sleep in the afternoon. It was his only rest time because, after completing his night duty, he would then work in the fields in the morning hours with the rest of the sevadars doing the regular ashram agricultural work. At around 3:00 in the afternoon, a sevadar came to his room informing him that Baba Ji wished to see him. He rose immediately and went to his room. No one who was

¹⁷ This vision was confirmed in an email to the author from by Baba Ram Singh, Oct. 21, 2020.

called into Baba Ji's presence unexpectedly ever went there without a bit of trepidation, for usually something of consequence was to be discussed. Only yours truly managed to enter his room (at least in the beginning) without realizing that perhaps some major karmic blockage was about to be removed, of which one had no awareness. Certainly, it was not always like that. Still, on the other hand, one might find themselves in a situation where everything one thought they understood about themselves was tossed out the window without ceremony. But a new vision of life was granted if one had the grace to understand the love behind all that Baba Ji did. More than any of us, Ram Singh Ji was quick to pick up on this aspect of Baba Ji's way of working and thus entered his presence with due awe and respect.

On this day, though, after he bowed before Baba Ji and then looked into his eyes, a tender stream of love flowed into his heart from Baba Ji, who told him, "Be ready to go the Betta ashram early tomorrow morning using the tractor because some needed supplies are required there. Bernard will drive the tractor, and you need to be with him. You need to go there to see if the new Satsang Hall is completed. It is important that you go there first, then I have to go. You will have to do seva there after me." When Baba Ji gave these orders to Ram Singh Ji, I was present there, along with a few prominent Satsangis from various South Indian locations.

Regarding that time, Ram Singh says, and it was true for us all, that we did not grasp what Baba Ji was saying. It is virtually impossible for us to comprehend the meaning in the words of the Saints. But in the years to come, the full impact of this time was to become manifest. Ram Singh then said to Baba Ji, "I would like to request that Jamal Bhai can also accompany me," and Baba Ji agreed. At 4:00 a.m., the tractor was ready, and Bernard, Ram Singh and Jamal Bhai went up to Baba Ji's room for Darshan . Baba Ji gave them eight rupees and a banana each as prashad. Ram Singh Ji wondered why

Baba Ji was giving them the money, but Baba Ji only replied that they should take the money and prashad and be on their way. When they came down from the room, Jamal Bhai, who was a good meditator, said to Ram Singh. “My friend, I feel this is the last prashad we will receive from Baba Ji’s own hands. So, let us eat it peel and all,” which they did. Thus, the three of them began the 18-hour journey to Betta through an ancient landscape permeated by the love and devotion of innumerable generations of simple South Indian rural folk. To travel in that area even now is quite an experience if one’s heart is open to the spirit that permeates the land. It was the first trip of all three into this area where Baba Somanath Ji had commenced to spread the teachings of Sant Mat in deep South India in the 1940s due to the invitation of Mahadevappa and the dear ones of that area. Hazur Sawan Singh Ji had requested Baba Ji to go there as most of the dear ones were too poor to come to Beas, and also Baba Ji spoke the language of the people there, whereas Hazur did not.

Baba Somanath Ji’s departure from this world

The original plan was for them to reach there late Thursday evening, deliver the supplies and return the next day (Friday), but their plans were altered by one day as the tractor had to be used to bring bricks from the large outdoor kiln to the base of the hill for projects then in progress. Hence, instead of returning on Friday, they returned on Saturday, reaching there at 11:00 p.m. It was a most difficult time for all of us. By then, it was apparent that something of tremendous import was taking place. Everyone was up. A prominent doctor had been called from Bangalore to administer a heavy-duty sedative, as Baba Ji had been suffering from intense convulsions throughout the day. Just about the time Ram Singh Ji, Bernard and Jamal Bhai returned, the doctor came along with several Satsangi’s from Bangalore. A guard was posted to prevent anyone from going up to

Baba Ji's room, but somehow Ram Singh Ji managed to do so. Looking through the window, he saw that Baba Ji lying on his bed, and the doctor was conducting an examination. It was a heart-wrenching scene. The doctor then administered what he said was the most powerful sedative in his medical arsenal (which is saying a lot). But it had little or no effect, and Baba Ji continued to have convulsions until about 3:00 a.m., when they finally subsided.

This part is not known to many people, but, for some reason, I happened to be outside of his room early the next morning, around 8:00 or 9:00. There was a lovely Indian nun from the nearby convent with Baba Ji at that time. She was a very pure soul, and she and Baba Ji had a tremendous love for each other. She was talking with Baba Ji in a very loving way, enquiring as to his health. She also informed him that she was being transferred to another convent hospital and wished to bid him farewell. Baba Ji at that time said, "Yes, I will also be leaving today." Hearing this, I thought maybe Baba Ji was going back to the nursing home. I had no clue that he was telling her he was about to leave the body. A few hours later, he cast off the mortal coil.

The days that followed were unbearable. I will not recount them now except to tell of what happened with Ram Singh Ji, for it bears a lot on events to come. He continued to do night seva as before, but all the time, he wept. The cry came from his heart, "I am now an orphan, dear Baba Ji. What am I to do? Who can I now turn to for support?" It is to be remembered that he was only 24 at the time, and his only possession was the deep love in his heart for the Master. And understanding his distress, Baba Ji was to offer him a deep solace in meditation four days after his departure.

It happened like this. At 4:00 a.m., Baba Ram Singh sat in meditation on the verandah below Baba Ji's room. Then the inner veil parted, and, in that vision, he saw that he was bowing at Baba Ji's feet in his

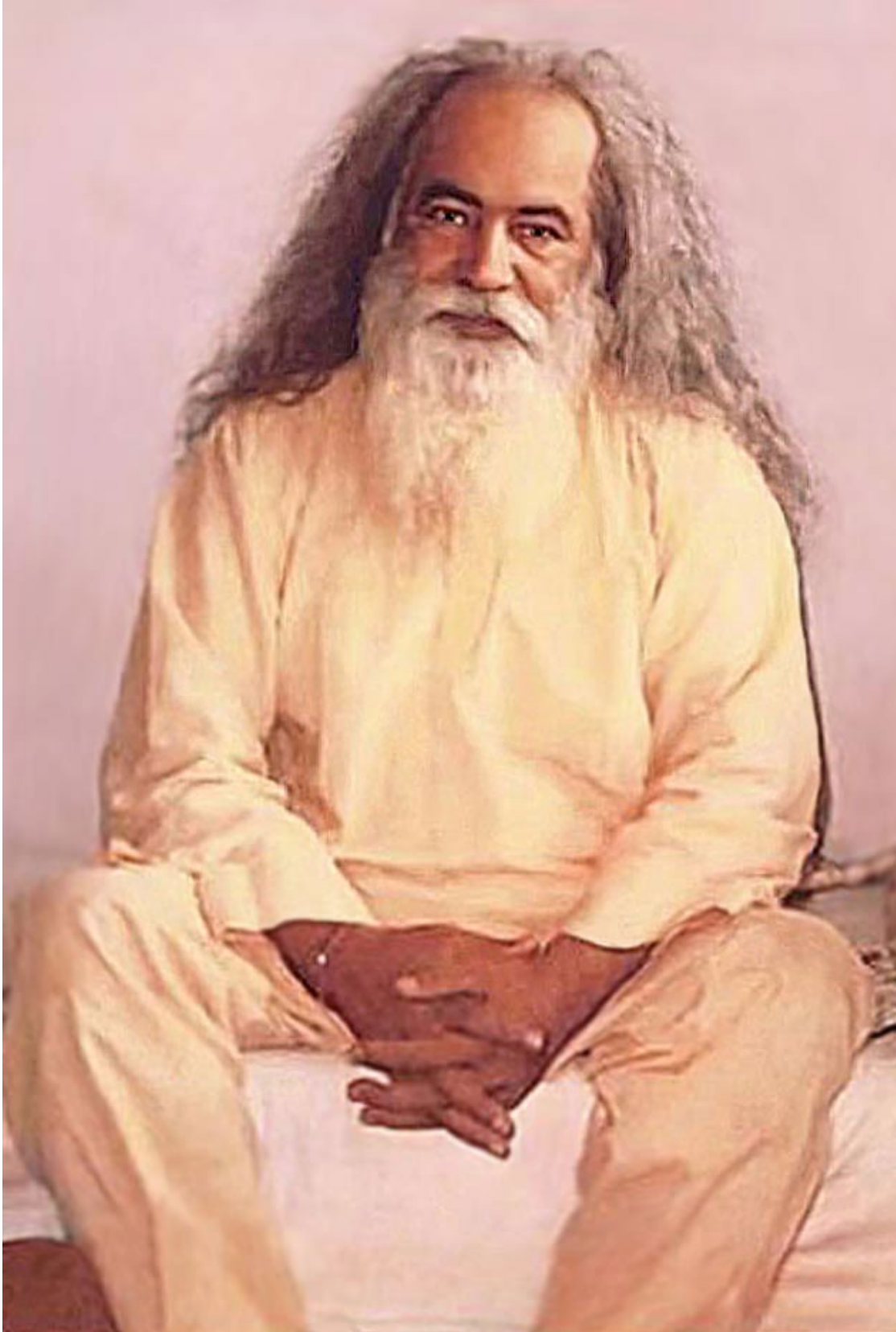
room. Another dear one named Ganapati was with him. Baba Ji then smiled at him and said, "Why are you weeping, Ram Singh. I am ever with you. Everything will be alright in due course of time. Be patient. A great seva will be taken from you in the time to come."

Baba Ram Singh Ji's vision of a Master who he did not recognize at the time

Then a few days later, he had another experience in meditation. In that vision, he was with Jamal Bhai. There he saw there was a large Sangat gathered to have the Darshan of a Saint sitting on the dais. Initially, they were under the impression that Maharaj Charan Singh Ji was sitting there, but as they came closer, they saw that it was a Master they had never seen before. When approached Him, he welcomed Ram Singh Ji and Jamal Bhai. He said, "You may ask any question you like." Ram Singh Ji said, "I am not able to do Bhajan. Please help me." The Saint replied, "Hold the Simran continuously in your heart, and your work will be done." Then Ram Singh Ji asked, "Will I ever meet Baba Somanath Ji again?" The Saint closed his eyes for some time and, then opening them again, he indicated that a period of time would lapse before the meeting would occur with Baba Somanath Ji in his new form. Two years later, Ram Singh Ji attended the first Bombay Program of Sant Ajaib Singh Ji, and it was there that he recognized in Sant Ji the face and form of the Saint he had beheld in the vision.

Baba Ram Singh's life after Baba Somanath Ji cast off the mortal coil

Before that meeting with Sant Ajaib Singh occurred, though, several important events transpired. After Baba Ji left the body, Ram Singh Ji remained in the ashram for about 18 months, continuing with his night guard duty. But there came a time when he felt he needed to seek greater solitude, giving all his time to meditation. It then occurred to him to go to the Betta ashram and meditate there.



Sant Ajaib Singh

His short visit there, just before Baba Ji left the body, had stirred in his heart something essential and profound; so, he respectfully took leave of the ashram dear ones and proceeded to the desert ashram in Andhra Pradesh. When he went there, he immediately gave himself over to remembering Baba Ji day and night. Many of the dear ones in that area liked to sit with him because they felt the benefit of the love in his heart. But some of the organizers responsible for the management of the property were not comfortable with his full-time pursuit of meditation. So he left that place and went lower down on the hill where he could utilize a cave that belonged to Sharanappa Swami, an initiate of Baba Sawan Singh Ji. The cave was a sometime residence of poisonous snakes and scorpions, but those who have made it as their goal in life to realize God are seldom troubled by such venomous creatures, for the hearts of such devotees are filled with a unique type of love for the entire creation.

Having read about Baba Jaimal Singh's method of keeping a basket of premade dried chapatis on hand to satiate his hunger when required, Baba Ram Singh Ji decided to do the same thing. He would have five kilos of whole wheat flour made into flatbreads, which were dried, and then, whenever he felt hungry, he would dip pieces of them in water to consume to keep body and soul together. To protect the dried flatbreads from wild creatures, they were placed in a basket to which a rope was attached and then hung from the ceiling of the cave. Two other dear ones, one by the name of Ganapati and the other Bhuvneshwar, joined him on this retreat, and they inspired each other to meditate deeply and sincerely. One day Ganapati thought he would further advance their devotion by killing their sense of taste altogether. To serve that purpose, he gathered together a quantity of bitter neem leaves, crushed them into a paste, and each one of them consumed a portion of the same with the result that they no longer had the slightest desire to eat.



Baba Ram Singh at Sharanappa's Cave Where He Meditated Years Earlier

But even this solitary retreat was not to remain a quiet one for very long, for Sharanappa Swami made it known to the local populous that several sadhus were meditating in his cave. The result was that the villagers began coming there to have their Darshan . Thus, after four months of solitude, they realized they must go to yet more remote areas to regain the benefit of the quiet atmosphere conducive to meditation.



Puttuswami

At that time, the thought came in Ram Singh Ji's mind that it would be best to retire completely into the Himalayas, the idea of which has arisen in his mind as a young boy. Before making this final journey into the North, Ram Singh, Ganapati and Bhuvaneshwar decided to visit several Satsang centers of Baba Somanath Ji in the South. First, they walked on foot to Davangere, where they remained for two days and, though the local Satsangis requested them to stay longer, they felt they should press forward.

From there, they proceeded to Dhareshwar along the coast, which was another major Satsang center of Baba Somanath Ji. Again, they enjoyed the company of Baba Ji's dear ones for two days and afterwards proceeded north to the seacoast town of Aghanashini, where an elderly initiate of Baba Sawan Singh Ji, Puttuswami by name, lived in a cave on a hill overlooking the sea. Puttuswami was 90 at the time but in very good health. They sat with him in meditation for ten days before deciding to move on.

Leaving all their belongings with Puttuswami, except for two lungis and a blanket each, they began their trek north toward the Himalayas. Their route took them toward the city of Manmad in the state of Maharashtra. For three days and three nights, they walked on, but in the course of their journey, they began to develop sores and blisters as they were barefoot. Finally, a bus driver passing by took pity on them and took them to the train station in Manmad. There they boarded an express train for Kashi even though they had no money. A kind-hearted ticket collector, seeing the three young, penniless sadhus, kept quiet and allowed them to travel on the train without demanding any fare.

Upon reaching Kashi, these three renunciates went to the village of Karkhiyaon where Ram Singh had grown up and where his family home was located. There Ganapati grew sick because of the change of food and climate and decided to return to the familiar environments of Andhra Pradesh, where the Betta ashram was located. Bhuvneshwar also declared that the life of a mendicant was not for him and went to stay in a nearby village.



Baba Ram Singh with Shri Ganapati Ji

With the disappearance of his two companions, Ram Singh Ji realized that the trek into the Himalayas was not in the will of God, but, at the same time, he did not feel comfortable staying in his family's home. Ever since Baba Ji left the mortal coil, his heart had known no peace, so in this distressed state of mind, he felt drawn to go and stay with R. R. Singh who was a very good meditator as was well-known to the initiates of Baba Ji in Bombay. His grandmother loved him very much and gave him 40 rupees, which he used to purchase a train ticket for Bombay.

R. R. Singh had a small shop in Bombay dealing in paan leaves for the "mouth freshener" industry. The shop served as a center of his business activities, and several Satsangis shared the attached kitchen, dining room and bedroom. While staying with R.R. Singh, Baba Ram Singh participated in the cleaning and preparation of the leaves for sale to the shop owners who bought them in small bundles. R. R. Singh was very strict about how the leaves were

inspected, counted and cleaned, and anyone helping him was required to do constant Simran while engaged in each step of the process. He was very aware of what each was doing, and if he sensed that anyone was inattentive to their Simran, he would bluntly inform them to keep their attention focused on it.

When they had done their work for the day, they would walk to Worli Naka, where Baba J's Satsang Hall was located. On the walk to and from the Hall, as well as during the Satsang, everyone was enjoined to do constant Simran. As a result of this good influence, after 45 days with R.R. Singh, Ram Singh regained his inner composure, and his soul once again started its inner ascent as the attention became totally concentrated at the Eye Center.

Then one day, an announcement was made at Kakad Chambers, the Satsang Hall of Baba Somanath Ji. A Saintly soul from Rajasthan was coming to Bombay, and he would be staying in the flat of Mohan Karnani, an initiate of Baba Somanath Ji. With him would be coming several Western initiates of Baba Somanath Ji — Paul Young, Graham Gibson, Bernard Daniel and Christopher McMahon. So Ram Singh and R.R. Singh thought they too should go and see this "Baba," although they had no idea of who Sant Ji was. Their thought was that he was just some sadhu giving lectures on the Sant Mat, but they were soon to be surprised with a far different Reality.



Shri R. R. Singh Ji

Baba Ram Singh comes in the company of Sant Ajaib Singh Ji

Between the numerous programs Sant Ji held on that first three-day program in Bombay, he stayed on the 11th story of an apartment building on the Worli Sea Face by the Arabian Sea. It was a lovely location as the air there was fresh, unpolluted and cool. It is one of the most desirable places to live in Bombay—a 15-minute walk from Baba Somanath Ji's Satsang Hall and the place where he used to have his cloth shop.

There were, I think, about nine Westerners in the flat that morning. Sant Ji was in a light-hearted mood. Very intoxicated. We were also floating on a cloud of his Love. Sant Ji had retired for a short while to his room, and we were all happily resting in the other parts of the apartment. Then, there came a knock on the door. A dear one answered it, and it was Ram Singh, R.R. Singh and Bhuvaneshwar. I immediately came forward to greet them, as they were dear souls who I knew from the past. I was delighted to see them. I knew something about R.R. Singh because, when he sometimes came to the ashram from Bombay, I would sit near him in Satsang. Usually, at the ashram, the only people who attended Satsang were those of us living there, about 40-100 depending on the season, and a few dear ones coming from outlying areas for short visits. R. R. Singh would get so intoxicated in Satsang that he would leave the body and fall back, face luminous with Light. So one of my assignments was to keep people from disturbing him.

In my happiness on seeing them, I innocently went and knocked on the door to Sant Ji's room. Sant Ji called out to come in. When I opened the door, Sant Ji was sitting cross-legged on his bed. He was so resplendent. I told him that some dear ones of Baba Somanath Ji had come to meet him. He smiled and said to let them come in. Then the most amazing thing happened. As soon as they entered the room, Sant Ji sprang to his feet and embraced them. I had never seen such a thing happen. He was simply radiant and must have been waiting for them. R. R. Singh's attention immediately withdrew from the body and he fell to the floor. Ram Singh stood there stunned, for before him was standing the Saint who he had seen in his vision. Then Sant Ji asked me to leave and close the door behind me.

Thus began a whole new chapter in the history of Sant Mat with regards to Sant Ji, his mission in South India, and finally, the

passing of the Responsibility that had been entrusted to him by Baba Somanath Ji on to Baba Ram Singh Ji. The lovely story continues to unfold to this day as Baba Ram Singh Ji attends to the needs of thousands of initiates of Sant Ji, Baba Somanath Ji, Sant Kirpal Singh Ji and new seekers of Truth in both South and North India as well. In addition, several hundred Westerners also attend his twice-yearly meditation programs at his small ashram near Bangalore, as well as at his Som Ajaib Kirpa Ashram in Andhra Pradesh.”¹⁸

These were grace-filled days for us all, each receiving an abundance of Sant Ji’s grace and love. After that memorable program, Baba Ram Singh Ji again returned briefly to the Kengeri ashram, and, shortly after that, he returned to Betta to deepen his remembrance of the Master through full-time meditation. Arriving there, he decided to go up upon the Tenagal Hill where the cave of Mahadevappa was located, thinking that in such a secluded spot, he could spend all his time in meditation where no one would disturb him.

Baba Ram Singh Ji’s own account of that time when he meditated on Tenagal Hill near the Betta ashram

From the ashram in 1980, I decided that I wanted to go and sit for meditation. I decided to go to the Betta ashram and do my meditation there. So when I went there, the management of that ashram at that time told me, “You cannot sit here for meditation. You will have to do seva here. And, only then, you can stay.”

¹⁸ From: Christopher McMahan, *Memoirs of a Western Disciple: Life with Baba Somanath in South India, 1971-1976.*



Tenagal Hill in the Background Behind Baba Ram Singh Ji

So I told them that I had done nearly eight years seva, and Baba Ji Himself told me, "If one has to do meditation, then the Betta ashram is a very good place to do meditation. So I want to spend some time doing meditation. That is why I have decided to come here."

But they insisted that I could not do only meditation. I had to stay there and do seva. Only then could I stay there.

So after three or four days like that, we went on the adjacent hill, which is twice the size of the Betta ashram hill. Mahadevappa had done his meditation there for one year. We went there for visiting and seeing that place. So we all went up on the top of that hill.

People don't generally go on that hill. There are a lot of bears, which stay at different places on that hill. And it's a little difficult hill to climb.

So we left early morning—about ten or twelve people. We left from the ashram, and we carried some puffed rice, and we carried some jaggery. We left early morning because, once the sun is up, then it is all hard rock there, which becomes very hot. And then it becomes very difficult to stay on that hill.

So we reached there early morning. And when we reached at the top, I saw that there was a well, which was an old well— about twenty feet in depth — and it must've been built by Mahadevappa when he was doing his meditation.

So all these animals also come to that well only to drink water. And there is also a very small temple, which was also constructed there. So I looked around, and I felt that there was water available here, and this was a nice, secluded place for meditation. And also, nobody came there. Also, nobody's management was there—so, nobody to tell me what to do or not to do. And I could sit and peacefully do my meditation undisturbed.

Now, we had that rice and jaggery, and then everyone decided to leave the place. So everyone decided that they should leave, otherwise, it would get hot after some time. So I told them, "You all can leave. I will sit here and do my meditation."

So they advised me that I should not stay there because all those animals—different wild animals would come there to drink water. And the well was hardly fifteen, twenty feet away from where the temple was. So if you sat for meditation near the temple, all these animals would be coming near you.

So I stayed there, and then all of the others left. The temple was very small. One could not sit inside the temple. But the temple had a veranda, and I cleaned that veranda because all these bears would come, drink water, and then they would sit in

the veranda and only spoil that veranda. So I cleaned that veranda.

Amongst the people who had come with me, there was a boy of around fourteen years called Tippay Swami. When he came to know that I was going to stay there, he went to the ashram, and he informed them, "Ram Singh is not coming back. He has decided to stay on that hill only.

So that boy went down to the foothill and told Sharanappa, who was staying below at the foothill of the ashram. And Sharanappa then packed some groceries for me. He gave some dal, and he gave some rice. He gave a little bit of coffee. He gave two earthen vessels and two matchboxes. So all that, he put in a basket, and he sent it back with this boy.

So that boy reached at about 1:30 with that basket. He had gone down and come up again. And then, I told him, "Don't stay. You shouldn't have come because there are bears and, in the afternoon, they will all be coming up to drink water." And, exactly on the path on which we climbed, the bears had their caves, and they were staying in those caves there on the way.

So when I opened that basket to see what he had brought, I saw that whatever I required, everything was in small quantities — but everything was there — everything that I required. And there were tears in my eyes because I felt, "God Almighty is so great that I have just decided to sit for meditation, and he has already provided all of this to me. So if I sit for meditation and I actually do meditation, he will definitely take care of me."

So there were enough rations. I used to take one fistful of rice and put a little dal in that, and then put it in the vessel with some turmeric and salt, mix it all up, and then, I would make khichree. And that one meal was enough for me for the whole day. So that

way, that ration was good enough for almost four to five months. So I stayed there for about twenty days.

I stayed there for twenty days and was called back, because the management had taken a meeting. But, when I sat there, I was only using one kurta pajama. And then, it was so hot there, later, two boys had given me two towels.

I used to use one towel wrapping myself and one on my shoulder because it was quite hot there. And I used to sit there for meditation. There was nothing to keep below me. There was one gunnysack, which was given to me. So I would sit on that and sleep on that. And I used it to sit for meditation.

Once I observed what types of animals that would come there. So there were lots of bears that would come after four o'clock, and they would come and drink water, and they would go. Once, I saw a very big snake, which was nearly one-and-a-half feet in diameter alone. So it was a huge snake, which came and it drank water, and it saw me for some time and then went away quietly.

So that way, lots of these snakes and animals would come there. And, in the daytime, I would sit. And, at nighttime, I would only light a fire because it was pitch dark. It was completely pitch dark there. So that animals would at least know that there was somebody, I used to light a fire. And, the thing was, not even one single animal and snake or insect attacked or disturbed me because God Almighty, to Whom we are meditating and to Whom we are doing our devotion, is also there in all of these animals. And He didn't allow them to bring any emotion to attack, or such, within the animals.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ram Singh, *Discourses on Sant Mat*, Vol 9, Jan. 10, 2019, Afternoon Satsang, p 158-159.

Baba Ram Singh Meditates and Cares for the Betta Ashram



Ram Singh Visiting the Betta ashram 2001

As mentioned above, the management of the Betta ashram had a change of heart and agreed to let him stay at the ashram and continue with his concentrated meditation. He was, in fact, entrusted with the care of the ashram during the following five years. For the most part, it was a solitary life except for those special times of year when bhandaras were held in the remembrance of Baba Somanath Ji, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, and Baba Sawan Singh Ji.

In 1983, the dear ones who were doing the seva at Baba Somanath Ji's Kengeri ashram invited Baba Ram Singh to go back there. But he declined the invitation and instead resolved to return to his family's property near Kashi and spend the rest of his life farming and doing meditation. So the first leg of the journey home brought him to

the home of a devoted Satsangi named Vomanna, who had a farm in Mudgal, near Kalyandurg not far from the Betta ashram.



Baba Ram Singh Visiting the Betta ashram 2001

Vomanna had a lot of love and affection for Baba Ram Singh Ji as he and his family had come in his contact while he was living at the Betta ashram. His farm was in the countryside, far away from the village. There he had made a special place for Baba Ji to meditate, consisting of two rooms near a small water tank. He and his family requested Baba Ji to kindly consider staying with them for a year before leaving South India for Kashi. They told him they would not disturb him, and he could meditate without any worry or concern. Seeing their love, he acceded to their request. Baba Ram Singh Ji said that Baba Somanath Ji showered an immense amount of grace on him during this time. When the year was up (it stretched from January of 1984 till January of 1985), he resolved to continue his

homeward journey, but as good fortune would have it (for all of us who know and love him), he was drawn back into the company of Sant Ajaib Singh Ji. It had been six years since he had last been in his physical company. Whenever Baba Ji is asked why the delay was so long, he quietly smiles and says that such meetings happen at the right time and place.

What happened in the meeting with Sant Ji as told in Baba Ram Singh Ji's own words.

So I meditated at the Betta ashram for five years, and then, one year in Mudgal. And, after this period, I had convinced myself that I would go back to Varanasi and stay there. But I was aware of Sant Ji. And I was aware that he was giving programs in Mumbai. So I thought I would meet him and then go to Varanasi.

So when I went there, he was sitting there with his feet on the floor, and I bowed down and touched his feet and bowed down to him. He told Damu to close the door, and then he started speaking to me. And he started explaining to me that I had to leave this thought of going back to Varanasi. I had to go back to Andhra Pradesh.

He said, "I have been specifically asked to water the plants of Somanath Baba Ji." He said, "I am doing this Bombay program because of the seeds that have been sown by Somanath Baba Ji. I have to water them. And this is on his instructions that I am doing this program. And, on the same instructions, I am telling you to go back to Andhra Pradesh. And because you have to do your duty there, you have to water the plants that have been planted by Somanath Baba Ji there."

For forty-five minutes, he was explaining to me, and I was crying because I had given up on Andhra Pradesh, and I really did not want to go back there. But he kept explaining to me, and I kept crying. And I felt that, finally, "If the Saints are telling us something, and if we don't obey the instructions of the Saints, then I will not get happiness." So I, therefore, accepted the duty that he told me to do.

So he instructed me to come to Andhra Pradesh to do seva, and I came to this hilly region of Andhra Pradesh, duty-bound by what he had instructed me to do. And I cannot express how much grace he has extended to me. In the form of monetary help, physical help, spiritual help, and in all respects, he fulfilled everything I required. And even in the Bombay program, after the Bombay program, on two or three occasions, he called me after the program was over, and he had a room on the first floor where he would give Darshan. So he called me into that room, and afterward, at the end of the program, he would get whatever seva people—the devotees—had given, those would be in the buckets—and two or three buckets of rupees would be there.

So he would invert those buckets on the floor. And he would tell me to sit down and start counting. Then, he would tell me to stack the notes. So I would do the notes of ten rupees and fifty rupees, and he would do the hundred rupees. And, finally, when we had stacked up the notes, he would put it in a black envelope and a black bag. And he would tell me, "Okay, you take this and use it for your seva for your ashram."



Som Ajaib Kirpa Ashram in 1998

And then, with that money, I gradually started building the ashram in Andhra Pradesh at Guddella. And the people there are very poor because only rain-fed agriculture is done there. And there is not much irrigation. And with that kind of seva that Sant Ji gave, that kind of support that Sant Ji gave, it is only with his support that I could start the ashram.

And even today, it is Sant Ji only who is supporting me; through the eleven years that I have been with him, and even to this date, he has been supporting me in all respects.



So it is his small request that I followed, and he has given me so much as a result of that little instruction that I followed.

So it is important that we should all follow his instructions, and we should sit for meditation for two and a half hours every day.²⁰

Dear Friends, this is all a very deep subject, and there are many, many more pages that could be written on it. But I think that this is enough. The whole tale is quite an amazing one, and now to be part of this history is something beyond belief. It may seem hard to

²⁰ Ram Singh, *Discourses on Sant Mat*, Vol 11, Morning Meditation Talk, Jan. 15, 2020, p 218-219.

conceive of for those who have not been in Baba Ram Singh Ji's company in Andhra Pradesh, but in that quiet atmosphere, filled with the glory and grace of Sant Ji and Baba Somanath Ji, it is very easy to sense the profound beauty of it all.