

The Life of

Baba Somanath Ji

Sant and Sage of South India



by Christopher McMahon

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The history of a Saint is the history of a soul's pilgrimage. It is a story, which to be spiritually complete, covers innumerable years and countless lives. The final enlightenment may seem sudden, but its preparatory stages are long and arduous.

—Sant Kirpal Singh

Author's Preface

Before I endeavor to share with Western readers something of the profound beauty of the life of Baba Somanath Ji, I would like to lovingly thank Sri Baba Ram Singh Ji for lending his kind verbal and non-verbal support for this work. It has been my long-cherished hope to put into words an account of this wonderful Saint whose life and teachings are little known beyond the areas of South India where his mission unfolded.

Many times, over the last 45 years, I have tried to start a description of the long and difficult search Baba Ji made for a Perfect Master who could guide him along the Path of Love and Light to the soul's long-forgotten Home—but for one reason or another I could not move forward. I always seemed to come to an invisible barrier through which I could not pass, try as I might.

Finally, in January of 2019, I was able to reunite with Baba Ram Singh Ji in his ashram near Bangalore after 25 years of not interacting with Him. Our history stretches back all the way to 1974 when we were both young men living together in Baba Somanath Ji's ashram near the village of Kengeri, about 12 miles south of Bangalore. After Baba Somanath Ji departed from the physical plane in 1976, we occasionally met at the Bombay, Bangalore and Hyderabad Programs of Sant Ajaib Singh Ji, but the time we spent together was very limited as we each had many responsibilities taking care of the needs of the people coming to participate in the meditation programs from the Western world and South India.

Still, from within the heart, there was a warm feeling of spiritual friendship as we had lived in close proximity

to one another in the ashram of the One who had placed us on the inner way back to our True Home. It was extremely fortunate for me that, through all the intervening years, Baba Ram Singh Ji continued to remember me and to ask Bernard Daniel—another initiate of Baba Somanath with whom I also had a long, loving friendship—how I was doing. My dear wife, Suzanne, also had met Baba Ram Singh Ji at a Satsang Program in Rajasthan in 1998 and had experienced the Grace and Love of a true Saint. But she did not in any way try to influence me to go to him myself. She quietly nurtured a deep love, and affection for him but did not visit him during the years from 1999-2018.

The circumstances of life were such that I became insensitive to some of the finer, inner feelings that link hearts together in the silken bonds of love. He, meanwhile, had devoted his entire life to the service of the Saints and to deep meditation for prolonged periods of time. The result of his sincere efforts was that he became a worthy vessel into which Baba Somanath Ji and Sant Ajaib Singh Ji could pour the treasure of their devotional spiritual wealth. They united him from within to the true form of the Saints, which manifests itself in the heart as Pure Light and the Celestial Sound Current.

Finally, by some kind Mercy and Grace, my heart opened once again, and I found myself in the aura of a Soul through which flowed the same pure Love that I had experienced in the time of Baba Somanath Ji and Sant Ajaib Singh Ji. Through contact with Baba Ram Singh Ji, the inner life once again was reawakened. From that time till today, the sweetness and gratitude for this precious gift of Life have increased quietly and gently.

It was during the course of our first retreat with him in January 2019 that we asked if we might take up the

work of translating into English, Baba Somanath Ji's Satsangs and Bhajans. He kindly gave his consent. As soon as he agreed to the project, some wonderful things unfolded to make it possible to move forward with this work in a concentrated way.

While we were at the retreat, an old friend of ours, Mr. Satyapal Dase, from the early days of Sant Ajaib Singh's first Bombay programs, came with his son, Roshan, to participate in the Satsang and meditation program. Satyapal was one of Sant Ji's first Bombay initiates, and he worked tirelessly in the seva of the programs there. We were very happy to see him and meet his son, for we had not been together for many years. Earlier that day, we had been walking around in the ashram garden, wondering how we might locate books or tapes of Baba Somanath Ji's Satsangs in Hindi. We knew of several small books that had been published, each containing about 10 Hindi Satsangs; we already had two of them at home. But then Satyapal's son, Roshan, informed us that he had been active in digitizing the audio files of Baba Somanath Ji's Satsangs and, if we liked, he could send us files for over three hundred Hindi Satsangs that were clear and, for the most part, complete. We did not even know that such a resource existed. We were stunned and happy. When we got home, Roshan had loaded audio copies of all the digitized Satsangs on Google Drive.

With this treasure house of Hindi Satsangs, we commenced the translation work in earnest and, under Baba Ram Singh Ji's guidance, our efforts to give form to this project began moving forward steadily. As the translated Satsangs began to emerge, it became increasingly clear to us that sharing details of Baba Somanath Ji's life and mission would make the Satsangs even more intelligible and accessible to people around the world.

Then one day, we thought to ask Baba Ram Singh Ji if we might try to write Baba Somanath Ji's life story in English. Again, he encouraged us to do so with the same enthusiasm with which he encouraged us to take up the translation work. And so, with his blessings and support, the long-desired inner inspiration began to flow. Since that time, the heart-felt wish to share Baba Ji's life story with others has finally been granted. It has been a source of great happiness to us and perhaps, one day, may prove useful and inspiring to others. Hence, it is with the kind love, support and affection of Baba Ram Singh Ji, Bernard and Suzanne that this work on the life of Baba Somanath Ji has now been taken up.

I would like to thank Revati Shinkar for reading the manuscript of the biography to Baba Ram Singh Ji. I would also like to acknowledge, with special thanks, the biography of Baba Somanath Ji's life, *Somālaya*, written by Srimati Megha Chandrakant Telang and published by the Baba Somanath Ji Radhaswami Satsang Trust. Many of the incidents mentioned here in Baba Somanath Ji's life story are based on the rich accounts included in that book. Many thanks to the dear ones who furnished photographs of Baba Somanath Ji and Hazur Sawan Singh from their personal collections. Also thanks to my wife Suzanne for editing and layout and to Larry Flagg for his careful proofreading and suggestions for improvement.

I hope that, by the miracle of the Guru's Grace, something of the power and beauty of Baba Ji's life and search for Truth will touch the hearts of those who read it. But it is virtually impossible to portray the life of such Exalted Ones, for the vast Reality of their Being remains secret—hidden from outer eyes. Only the Saints themselves can give us hints of their True Nature, and it is through their own Teachings that they unfold before us the ineffable

story of how a pure soul passes through the different stages of the spiritual quest in the search for God and how that search is crowned with success when their journey leads them to the feet of a Murshid-i-Kamil, Perfect Master, or Sant Satguru.

—Christopher McMahon

Terā nām rasamūlā jī, jinhoneñ svāda liyā
(Refrain)

Your Naam is Nectar to those who have tasted it.

Banda kare jo nava dvārā
Randhra dasave meñ chitta jo ṭhaharā
Indrī mana ko roka liyā (1)

Close the nine doors of the body.
Concentrate your attention at the tenth gate.
Control the mind and the senses.

Āvata dhura se anahada bānī
Sūnata jhīnī antara shravaṇ
Do nayanī dhyāna lāyā jī (2)

The Anahad Bani is coming from above.
Listen to that subtle Sound Current with
internal hearing faculty.
Do Dhyān at the center between the two eyes.

Mantra guru vākya antara sumire
Shānta chitta mana ekāgra dhare
Jantra shabda bajāyā jī (3)

Do the Guru's mantra with internal remembrance.
Make the mind and chitta peaceful by
concentrating them within;
Then you will hear the Shabd resounding.



Baba Somanath Ji

Sahasra kamala se trikuṭī āye
Pāra brahma meṅ sunna samāye
Mahā sunna se bhanvara gayā jī (4)

From the One Thousand-Petaled Lotus,
The soul ascends to Trikuti.
In Par Brahm, the soul becomes absorbed
in the Void.
From the Great Void the soul goes to
Bhanwar Gupha.

Sata loka aura alakha agama
Nija gatī rādhā svāmī dhāmā
Dāsa Soma samāyā jī (5)

The soul then travels to Sat Lok, Alakh and
Agam regions.
The final stage of the spiritual journey is
Radhaswami Dham.
The servant Somanath has bacome absorbed
in that state.

*A sore pain troubles me day and night,
and I cannot sleep;
I long for the meeting with my Beloved, and my
father's house gives me pleasure no more.
The gates of the sky are opened,
the temple is revealed:
I meet my husband, and leave at His feet
the offering of my body and my mind.*

—Kabir



Childhood and Youth

The main purpose for which Saints come into this world is to liberate embodied souls (jivas) from the wheel of transmigration so that those souls can travel back to the Infinite Sea of Love on wings of the Celestial Sound Current and Divine Light. Each Saint that comes from the Realm of Pure Truth, while giving out the same changeless, eternal teachings, has their own unique personality through which this Sacred Wisdom flows. According to the time and place where they live and work, they present the teachings in a form appropriate to the people who are destined to come to them.

Baba Somanath Ji grew up in South India and was deeply influenced by the profound Hindu religious and spiritual traditions existing there. From an early age his innocent, devotional spirit, quickened by the company of his grandmother, was drawn to the life of yogic renunciation as portrayed in the lives of great Hindu mystics like Gorakhnath, Machindranath, Akka Mahadevi and Sant Basaveshwar. The remembrance of these great souls propelled him forward into a lifelong quest for God realization, which led him through many challenging trials and difficulties.

During his renunciate years, he practiced many advanced yogic techniques. As he gained proficiency and perfection in each, his longing for deeper and deeper realization was further stimulated. After a long search

throughout the length and breadth of India, during which he met many Sufi and Hindu mystics, he came to the feet of Baba Sawan Singh Ji, who initiated him into the Path of Surat Shabd Yoga and quenched his spiritual thirst. Through his Grace, Baba Ji, in due course of time, became a fully awakened Saint and Mystic Adept in his own right, fully capable of guiding seeking souls on the Inner Path.

*If I may only please Him, 'tis pilgrimage enough;
If not, nothing — no rites or toils — avails;
Whichever way I look, I find that in His creation,
None has won salvation without His Grace
— regardless of Karmas.*

*You can discover untold spiritual riches within yourself;
If you but abide by the teachings of your Master.
My Master has taught me one lesson:
He is the Lord of everything, may I never forget Him.¹*

— Guru Nanak

Early Childhood of Baba Somanath Ji

Baba Somanath Ji was born on September 7, 1885 in a small village of the Gulbarga district, Karnataka Province, South India to a devout Hindu couple of the Lingayat sect.² At birth, he was given the name of Saibanna. In India, at the time of a child's birth, an astrological chart is cast that indicates the qualities inherent in that newly incarnated soul and the future that awaits it.

1. Kirpal Singh, *The Jap Ji: The Message of Guru Nanak* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1964), stanza 6, p 93.

2. Tracing their origins to the 12th century reformer Basava, the Lingayats are worshippers of Shiva who follow a strong bhakti tradition, emphasizing personal devotion over formulaic Brahmanism.

According to the pundits' calculations, Baba Ji was born in the Mul Nakshatra (19th lunar mansion). Individuals born at this time are characterized by a passionate desire to find the Truth and they have tremendous powers of concentration enabling them to endure severe tests and trials in their quest. It is believed that those born in the Mul Nakshatra have the potential to become great yogis or kings but that their parents may die within a year of their birth. And, in fact, his mother, Shrimati Sangama, passed away when he was but three months old and his father, Shri Siddharamappa, passed away within 12 months of his advent into this world.³

Fortunately, the orphaned child was taken under the devoted care of his grandmother, Shrimati Basamma, with additional help given by her son (and Baba Ji's uncle)—Revana Siddhappa. His assistance was irregular, at best, and his first wife was often at odds with Saibanna's grandmother. Hence, Revana elected to live in a nearby village to reduce the family frictions. His wife passed away early in Saibanna's life but when his uncle remarried the same problem reoccurred with the second wife also. From an early age, therefore, Saibanna became acquainted with the stresses and strains of household life when his grandmother and her son's wives would have altercations.

Still, the majority of his childhood and youth was spent in his grandmother's company and she raised the growing child with tender loving care infused with a gentle, sweet spirit of devotion characteristic of people living in the small towns and villages of South India at that time.

3. Sant Ajaib Singh, who gave numerous programs in Bombay, Bangalore and Hyderabad in remembrance of Baba Somanath Ji, was also born in the Mul Nakshatra on September 11, 1926 and lost both his parents as an infant.

Before advancing further into the life story of Baba Ji, it may benefit the reader to reflect on the effect environment played in helping mold Saibanna's character. In a general sense, South India of the late 1800s moved at a much slower pace than we encounter today. There were no modern means of transportation, like cars, planes, trains, and buses, etc., to propel one forward into a modern lifestyle. There were no cell phones, no internet, no laptop computers or other electronic devices, which certainly make life easier in some ways but do not guarantee a stress-free lifestyle.



Village Scene in Gulbarga District, 1880

In that earlier time, people's lives were more intimately interwoven with the crops, the weather, the animals, birds, insects and all forms of life present in the immediate world around where one lived. This type of lifestyle was helpful in keeping the attention from being so spread out as occurs when we people of the modern

world have access to all these electronic and transportation conveniences.

Since Baba Ji was born into a caste concerned with agricultural and horticultural pursuits—planting, irrigating and harvesting crops; care and upkeep of farm animals; charting the seasons and gauging the weather—one can understand how his appreciation of life, work and nature would be deeper than ours and offer some advantage in achieving real inner peace.

Another major influence on the child Saibanna was the ethical and moral atmosphere present in South India at the time. Although the Gulbarga district was administratively under the dominion of the Muslim rulers for extended periods, the force and power of the Hindu devotional culture, which arose thousands of years earlier, was still a major factor in the daily lives of the people and had remained relatively untouched. The influence of the Vedic and Puranic scriptures promoted a reverence for life in all its myriad forms. The spirit of those teachings permeated the lives of the simple village and country folk, infusing all their activities with a unique sweetness, humility, gentleness and devotion. Temples, great and small, were found throughout the states of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. From them flowed the sublime religious spirit of traditional Hinduism that helped mold the thoughts, words and deeds of the people.

These teachings promoted the higher values of life, i.e., the greatness of God and the need for reverence for all life, for that Power was present in every atom of the creation. In order to gain direct realization of that sublime life force, a pure and honest lifestyle was encouraged—with selfless service at its core. Hence, a life based on sound moral and ethical principles was encouraged for people of all castes and creeds and was an integral

part of day-to day existence.

The more esoteric dimensions of the spiritual traditions of the South manifested themselves in the many mystical practices adopted by the yogis and sadhus who wandered the land as itinerant mendicants or who dwelt in caves, ashrams and monasteries. Exposure to these mysterious beings played a significant role in forming Saibanna's awakening desire to solve the Mystery of Life, an ideal and goal for which countless numbers of people have devoted their lives from times immemorial.

Baba Ji's grandmother, Shrimati Basamma, who loved and cared for him during the formative years of his youth, was the embodiment of all the virtues of womanhood as inculcated by Hindu culture. She raised him as if he were her own child. She managed to support herself and the child that she loved, by engaging in a variety of small trade occupations. In this simple and supportive atmosphere Baba Ji's questing spirit began to emerge step-by-step.

Village Education

When Saibanna reached the age of 7 years old, he began formal studies in the village school. Classes were taught in Marathi. For the next few years, he studied arithmetic, geography, Hindi, reading and writing according to the limited resources available at that time. But it was not only the studying of the specific subjects that had an impact on his life, but also the lives of the teachers themselves that imparted the dimension of living an ethical and moral life. Teachers of that time were expected to have a very high character. The lives of the children were deeply influenced by their company, and the effect of that association had life-long implications not only in terms of the outer knowledge imparted, but

also how the children would conduct themselves in the society around them as they grew to adulthood.

In India, traditionally the teachers were always holy and chaste. They were having a very high and good character. So those who were going to them to study and get an education, they were also developing the same type of character. What is the condition nowadays? The teachers are not having a chaste and moral life, and they are spoiled. Those who go to them to get an education, they also spoil their character. So, most of the children ruin themselves either in the schools or colleges.

In the old days education was such that the writings of the great Saints, Mahatmas, and holy men were included in the texts of the course that they were studying. So, in that way the students were also learning a lot from those things. But nowadays, bad novels and other writings are given in the courses, so reading that, the students spoil their mind and they are scattered more in this world.⁴

— Sant Ajaib Singh

Although he was only able to study in this atmosphere until he was 13 or 14 years old, still this experience further increased his desire to understand why he had come into this world and how he could penetrate deep into the Mystery of Life. Reading and writing skills gave him access to a body of knowledge, which, up to this time, had remained inaccessible to him. The beneficial effect of these early school years remained with Baba Ji throughout his life.

4. Ajaib Singh, *The Light of Ajaib*, Volume 4, August: "If One Wants to Progress on the Path," p 57.

Marriage Engagement Ceremony

One event that had both a serious and humorous aspect to it, concerned the marriage engagement agreement of Saibanna to a suitable girl, made on the insistence of his grandmother. In India at that time, the marriage contract of the boy and girl often took place at a relatively early age, as young as 12 or 13. In order to facilitate the engagement, a matchmaker or nayan was consulted to find a suitable companion. The matchmaker was often a family friend or distant relative of the bridegroom-to-be's family. Ideally, the nayan's role was to act as a neutral go-between for the families involved. So, according to the tradition of Saibanna's community, all the proper customs were followed, and an agreement was made as to when the actual marriage should take place. The age for finalizing the marriage was generally in the early to mid-twenties. The interesting conclusion to this important event will be taken up later in Baba Ji's life story.

Death of Baba Ji's Grandmother

When Saibanna reached the age of 14, he was compelled to leave school because at that time his grandmother passed away. The departure of his beloved Shrimati Basamma had a profound effect on his mind, causing him to feel depressed and despondent as this was his first intimate brush with death. It was his grandmother who had always surrounded him with love and affection. With her now gone, he felt as if he was an orphan in this world with nowhere to go.

His uncle endeavored to serve as a support for this fatherless and motherless child, but there was no sympathetic link between them. This being the case, Saibanna decided to go to the city of Sholapur, the great textile center, famous for its cotton blankets. There he hoped to

gain employment of some sort, whereby he could lead an independent and responsible life. He also had been quietly nurturing the desire to make a pilgrimage to the main holy places in India to acquire religious merit and also to meet with wise and holy people who might help him discover something more of why he had been born into this world. The death of his grandmother compelled him to search for the key that would unlock the inner door of perception so he could experience some stability beyond the transient nature of life on the earth plane.

Working for the Sholapur Cloth Merchant

After a short while, he found employment in the home of a wealthy cloth merchant. He was given room and board in exchange for keeping the accounting records of the business. Saibanna had a good aptitude for mathematics. During his school years he had found the subject interesting and so he had acquired a certain degree of proficiency in it. He quickly learned to apply this knowledge to the daily transactions of the shop.

The merchant also discovered that Saibanna was keenly interested in religious and spiritual matters, so he granted him free access to his library once the day's work was completed. Furthermore, he offered to teach this young boy what he himself had learned from the Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads. So that his pupil might have direct access to this sacred knowledge in its original form, the cloth merchant insisted that Baba Ji learn Sanskrit—in which he himself was proficient. He acted as Baba Ji's teacher and guide in mastering this most ancient language of India.

This phase of life opened up new spiritual horizons for Baba Ji to explore. He gradually gained more and more proficiency in Sanskrit with its beautiful lyrical

presentation of the mysteries of life. One thing of note that continually arose in his studies concerned the need for a living spiritual Master who possessed practical inner knowledge of the Path described in the sacred texts of the Hindu faith.

Some persons feel that by the study of scriptures alone they can have spiritual light and need no Master for this purpose. We may pause here and consider the value and worth of the sacred books or Holy Scriptures.

These are, after all, nothing but the records of the personal spiritual experiments and experiences of ancient sages, seers, prophets, and men of piety. It is good to read them with loving devotion. We should have respect for them, for they constitute a great treasure-house of spirituality, which our forefathers have left for our benefit.

The sacred books and biographies of the high-souled personages create a spiritual longing and inspire us with hope and courage. We may, to a certain extent, become acquainted with the broad principles of spirituality, but cannot learn their right import nor get the life impulse, both of which come from a living Master alone.⁵

—Sant Kirpal Singh

It was at this time that the desire to make a pilgrimage to the sacred centers of the Hindu tradition became more firmly rooted in his heart. Earlier, it was the emotion of a child, but now it was the mature yearning of a soul seeking the practical means of traversing the inner way. He hoped that in one of these sacred spots he might meet a spiritual preceptor who could teach him the techniques

5. Kirpal Singh, *Godman* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1967) "The Scriptures and the Learned Cannot Take the Place of a Master Soul," p 61.

of meditation and contemplation that would directly reveal to him the meaning and significance behind the teachings set forth in the scriptures.

It is not known exactly how long he remained with the merchant and his family, but somewhere in his late teens or early twenties the thought arose in his heart that he needed to go to Bombay where he could actually earn a salary and could thus save towards his cherished dream of going on a pilgrimage throughout India. By that time, he had gained a good working knowledge of Sanskrit as he had a natural aptitude for languages. The desire to practically tread on the Godward Path had kindled into a burning fire. The time had now come to take the next step on his journey towards the Divine Love and Light of God living within the heart.

Love for God and man is the keynote of all the prophets and Saints, and search for the One Reality is their sole theme. In this mighty quest, they had to delve deeply into the recesses of their own Self within, the treasure house of untold riches of Spirituality apparently lost to man mightily engaged in the pursuits of all that is of the world; for in his overbearing love for the worldly gifts of God, he forgets and forsakes the divine, immanent in all forms. The scriptures, whatever their origin, are nothing but the record of the experiences of the Godly Souls, carried on in their effort to bring out the basic life principle, enlivening all souls, for the benefit of posterity in general and the aspiring souls in particular.⁶

— Sant Kirpal Singh

6. Kirpal Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, “Why Don’t You Follow the Guru?” May 1982, p 19.

*I have learned the Sanskrit language,
so let all men call me wise:
But where is the use of this,
when I am floating adrift,
and parched with thirst,
and burning with the heat of desire?
To no purpose do you bear on your head
this load of pride and vanity.
Kabir says: "Lay it down in the dust,
and go forth to meet the Beloved.
Address Him as your Lord."*

—Kabir



Baba Ji Moves to Bombay

Working in the Cotton Mills

When Baba Ji reached Bombay, he went into the cotton mill section of the city in search of employment. The mills at that time were a major source of employment and villagers, mainly from South India, flocked there to earn money—by the standard of the times, mill work offered an attractive wage.

The mill owners developed apartment buildings for their workers called chawls, and though many people lived together there in cramped conditions, the apartments were cheap and allowed those sharing space in them to set aside some money each month to send back to their villages where their families stayed. Baba Ji rented a small space in a chawl and began working in earnest to save for a pilgrimage to the holy sites throughout India.

Bombay at that time was not only a magnet for villagers coming from other parts of India seeking employment in rapidly expanding industries, but it was also a melting pot for yogis, fakirs, sadhus, and Sufi mendicants who gathered there to rest and exchange ideas before continuing their journeys to other parts of India.

Baba Ji began coming in contact with this unique class of beings and his interactions with them deeply inspired him to adopt a lifestyle similar to theirs. In the earlier years of his life, he had heard of the great yogic adepts

like Machindranath, Gopichand and Gorakhnath and was impressed with the occult and supernatural powers they had acquired through intense austerities and spiritual practice, but now he was sitting in the presence of those who were actually doing what he had only heard of.

The call to renounce everything and follow their lead was beckoning to him day and night. The only thing that held him back was that he had not yet met the guru who he felt was destined to guide him in the mystic practices of the yogis.



Street Scene, Kalbadevi Road, Bombay, circa 1890

Translating Ancient Scriptures

During this phase of his life, he continued to study the ancient Hindu scriptures in their original Sanskrit language and because of his intense concentration and commitment to finding the Truth, found that he could

naturally translate the abstract concepts embedded in the Vedantic teachings into simple language that the common person could easily understand. He began doing so for his fellow mill workers and he gained a reputation amongst them for his erudite discourses on spiritual subjects in a language they could understand.

The term "Gyan" or "Jnana" is derived from the Sanskrit root "gna," which is equivalent to the English word "know." In common speech, Gyan or knowledge is taken to mean thinking at the intellectual level, embracing within its fold all knowledge recorded in and derived from books, ancient or modern, spiritual or secular. No doubt this is a kind of Gyan or knowledge; and while it is an elementary kind, it is very extensive, varied and significant as far as it goes. We have need of it. A part of it, called scriptures, includes the theory of the science of spirituality. All scriptures—the Vedas and Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Smritis, Shastras, Puranas, and the Six Schools of Philosophy; the great epic poems, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; the Holy Bible, the Holy Koran, the Adi Granth Sahib, and all others form part of this branch of knowledge and come within the range of Aparā Vidya, or the knowledge that comes through the senses. They form a wonderful record of the spiritual experiences of the rishis, prophets and saints of old, and inspire in us a longing to have similar experiences of our own. They also contain ethical truths of great value, which pave the way for an ethical life; and if followed scrupulously, they lay a solid foundation for a spiritual superstructure. So far, so good. But beyond this they are of no avail.¹

—Sant Kirpal Singh

1. Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1970) p 285.

Release from Engagement Vows

One day, Saibanna suddenly remembered that he had been betrothed to a village girl earlier in his life and that the time was approaching when he would need to consummate the marriage vows taken at that time. But such a promise was now impossible for him to fulfill. The commitment to the lifestyle of a renunciate was now completely established in his mind, although he had not yet made the final step of taking those vows. He thought and thought as to how he might be able to free himself from this obligation. In India of that era, a promise made for such a sacred thing as marriage could not be easily overturned. Finally, he hit upon a solution that was within the accepted norms of society. In India, the highest purpose of human life was considered to be the quest for God Realization and if the keen desire to pursue that ideal came in the heart, then one could, in an instant, leave all other obligations and worldly attachments and devote oneself wholly and solely to this quest.

One day, therefore, he removed all his clothes, tied on a loincloth, smeared his body with ashes, and, with a wooden walking staff and begging bowl, went to the village where the house of the bride-to-be was located. He came to the door with his begging bowl extended requesting alms, a practice common amongst the wandering sadhus and yogis. At that time the girl's mother was at home and seeing yet another yogi pestering her for food donations, she became irritated and did her best to rid herself of this nuisance by speaking to him in a brusque manner. Saibanna then said, "O mother, don't you recognize me. I am that Saibanna who is engaged to your daughter. But I have come here to tell you that I have become a homeless wanderer with no financial resources or home to offer her. So kindly release me from

my vow to marry her." The girl's mother, seeing that her future "son-in-law" had turned into a yogi, realized that the marriage was no longer possible and willingly accepted his request to be freed from this obligation. Saibanna returned to Bombay, happy at heart that now there was no longer any further worldly obstacle stopping him from entering the way of life that had become his only reason for living.

All the events described up to this point took place amidst a culture which was still deeply connected with its ancient roots. The pace of life, the environmental influences, the spirit of devotion, all helped to produce in such a sensitive soul an intensely focused state of concentration, untrammelled by superficial concerns. One needs to grasp, as best they may, that both Baba Ji's approach to the Spiritual Quest and the setting in which it took place were instrumental in how he would, at a later stage of his life, present the Teachings of the Saints of the Sant Mat Lineage to seekers of Truth in both informal discussions and formal discourses or Satsangs. The rich textures of the simple words he spoke to help seekers on the Godward Path were the result of a focused and disciplined life that eventually took him on a rigorous, unrelenting search for Truth throughout India. Saints of all times and places present the same eternal Truths but they do so in their own unique style, specific to the times and environments in which they lived.

*The Yogi dyes his garments, instead of dyeing
his mind in the colours of love:
He sits within the temple of the Lord,
leaving Brahma to worship a stone.
He pierces holes in his ears, he has a great beard
and matted locks, he looks like a goat:
He goes forth into the wilderness, killing
all his desires, and turns himself into an eunuch:
He shaves his head and dyes his garments; he reads
the Gita and becomes a mighty talker.
Kabir says: "You are going to the doors of death,
bound hand and foot!"*

—Kabir



Practice of Nathpanth

Meeting with Shivadayal

Finally, around 1913, when Baba Ji was 28 years of age, the long-awaited meeting with his first spiritual preceptor took place. One day when he was out walking in the mill section of the city where he was employed, he came upon an impressive looking sadhu sitting before his dhuni fire¹ beneath a pipal tree.

He felt a strong attraction to the sadhu and shyly approached him wishing to know who he was and what path he followed. He discovered that his name was Shivadayal and that he was a Guru in the lineage of Gorakhnath, one of the most famous yogis of ancient India. The sect he belonged to was the Nathpanth, and practitioners of that path were known for their austere lifestyle, long hair, body smeared with ashes, wearing a loin cloth and little else, pierced ears adorned with a special type of earring, fiery eyes resulting from intensive practice of kundalini yoga, and a classic mystical appearance.

Baba Ji's interactions with Shivadayal were filled with reverential respect. In India, indeed in the East in general, the attitude of deep appreciation for one's elders is ingrained in one's being from birth, and this type of

1. The sacred fire of the Nathpanth yogis from which they draw the power of Shakti.

feeling deepens when the elder one is a sage who has devoted their life to unveiling the Mystery of Life within their own heart. Greatly encouraged by his first interactions with ShivadayaI, he began regularly visiting him to discover the nature of the mystic practices he was doing in order to awaken the kundalini.

Having learned from him as much as could be imparted to an uninitiated seeker, he was totally satisfied and humbly requested ShivadayaI to initiate him into the esoteric practices reserved for renunciate sadhus and to accept him into the Nathpanth brotherhood. ShivadayaI agreed and one fine day Baba Ji consigned all his meager possessions to the fire and adopted the attire and lifestyle of the followers of Gorakhnath. On the day of his initiation into the practices of Nathpanth, ShivadayaI changed Baba Ji's childhood name of Saibanna to Somanath indicating the birth into a new life totally separate from what he had known before. ShivadayaI then initiated Baba Ji and gave him the mantra, "Om Namaḥ Shivāya."

From that time onward, Baba Ji dedicated himself with unbending zeal to asanas, mudras, mantra repetition, pranayamas, and bodily cleansing practices that were adopted to awaken the kundalini Shakti.

Pranayam, or yogic breathing, can be practiced profitably and successfully under the guidance of a Guru or an adept in the method and by those who observe truthfulness, continence, temperance, moderation in diet, humility and patience, are not given to any kind of addictions, and above all, are free from heart and lung diseases and congenital disorders.

The great achievement of pranayam is to awaken and bring into full play the coiled serpentine energy of kundalini, lying in a dormant state at the spinal root-center.

As it rises higher and higher in the Sukhman, the various subtle centers in the subtle nadis get illuminated, till it reaches Sahasrar, the fountain of light. With the destruction of the veil over the Radiance of Eternity, the mind gets quickly absorbed and concentration follows of itself.²

—Sant Kirpal Singh

Mastering the Kundalini

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. This is a very much longer way. And from its practice, the whole body appears to be burning like fire from head to foot. There is no remedy for it. Only a strong man could suffer and withstand it.³

—Sant Kirpal Singh

Because of his rigorous adherence to the practices he had been shown, he began to gain practical experience of the rise of the kundalini shakti in the spinal column. The path he was following was intricate and dangerous—physically, mentally, and emotionally—for one needed to exercise care in every sphere of life. Baba Ji had, though, been preparing himself for this inner journey over the course of many years so he accepted the challenges wholeheartedly.

As one masters each chakra, one attains the supernatural powers associated with each but it often happens that the

2. Kirpal Singh, *The Crown of Life: A Study in Yoga* (Irvine, CA: Ruhani Satsang, 1997) p 47.

3. Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, December 1976, “No New Faith, Mind That,” p 8-9.

unwary practitioner begins to use them indiscriminately, which ultimately leads to his or her downfall. The display of these powers becomes the source of praise and adulation of the people and as the person using them becomes more renowned for his mystical achievements, the ego gains the upper hand. And instead of searching for God, who alone is deserving of praise and commendation, one feels as if they themselves are worthy of respect and honor. Furthermore, the use of these powers entails a certain loss of energy, which being consumed for outer display of miracles is no longer available to the one using them for further inner ascent.⁴

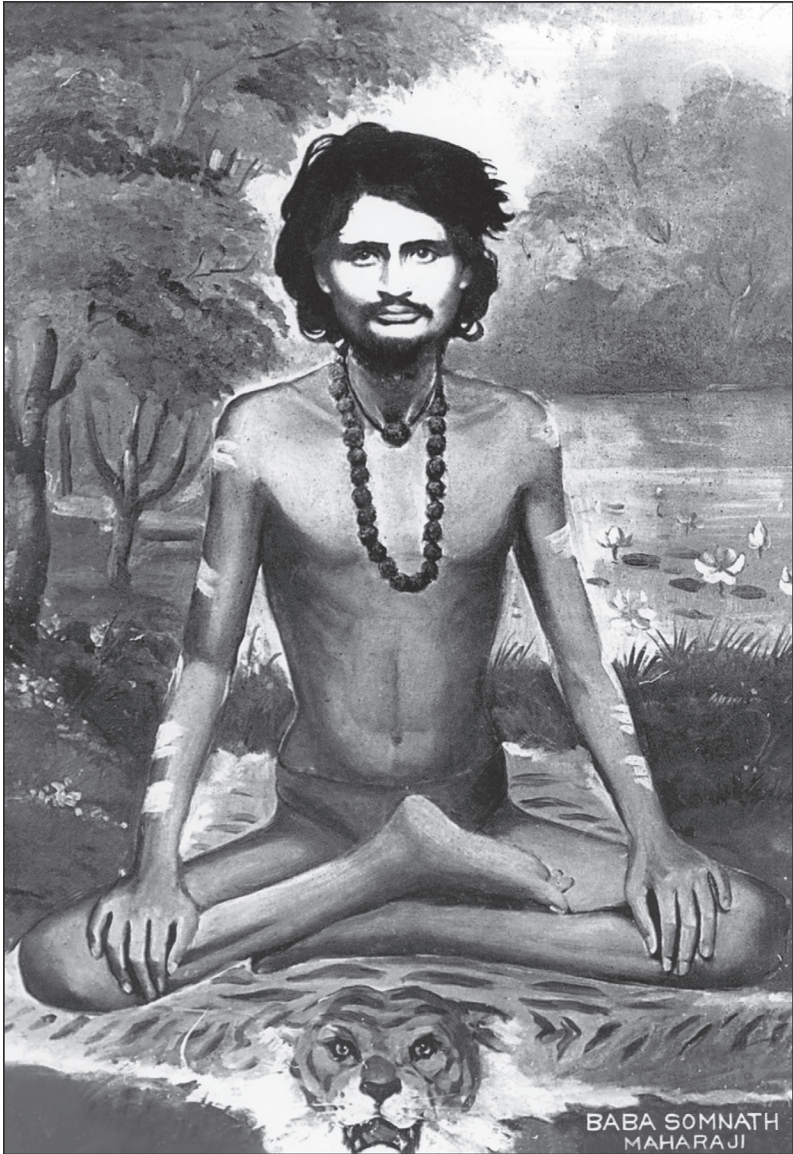
—Sant Kirpal Singh

Baba Ji Fasts and Meditates for 40 Days and Nights

During this phase of his life in which he mastered the kundalini power, he engaged in long fasts and austerities (tapas) including sitting along the seacoast in an isolated place for 40 days and 40 nights, living only on water during the hottest part of the year. Due to the direct exposure to the intense rays of the sun overhead and sitting near the dhuni fire, his body became covered with boils. His physical frame was reduced to mere skin and bone due to lack of food. This is but one of the many types of tapas he performed while following the Nathpanth.

He realized from within that the main benefit one received from such austerities is that one gained tremendous concentration whereby one could have all one's desires fulfilled, but as to achieving true inner peace and union with God, it was not possible via such means. The

4. For further details on the yogic practices, refer to Sant Kirpal Singh's classic work, *The Crown of Life: A Study in Yoga*, where the subject is dealt with in great depth.



Baba Somanath Ji Practicing Nathpanth Yoga

Saints, in their quest for union with God, often do the austerities to demonstrate that even though such the practices bestow supernatural powers on the aspirant, they cannot lead to peace or emancipation from the cycle of 84 lakh births and deaths.

While recognizing the various benefits of yogic practices, they also explain to the aspirants after Truth that such practices cannot secure liberation from the wheel of birth and death. Concerning this subject, Sant Kirpal Singh expresses the reality unequivocally:

Hell and Heaven are the regions where the disincarnate spirits have to remain for a relatively long period according to their actions on earth, bad or good, as the case may be. The stay here, however long, is not everlasting and it does not take them out of the inexorable cycle of births and deaths. Paradise (Heaven or Eden) is the El Dorado of certain faiths. It is also termed salvation by many.

But the fact of the matter is that after enjoying the paradisiacal bounties for as long as is determined by good deeds, one is given a human body once again for it alone provides an opportunity to gain merit leading ultimately to liberation. Even the ministering angels of God aspire to human birth when they feel that they have done their job.

Thus, in following the almost universally acknowledged, widely believed and generally accepted path of good deeds, one ultimately finds himself, once more, caught in the web of insatiable desires and ambitions and with this glittering and ever-elusive firefly in front of him, he still remains an unwitting captive in the iron grip of Karmas. To achieve his objective, he performs tapas (various kinds of ascetic austerities), which may bring him better lives. Even when he attains the sovereignty of a kingdom, his

mind runs riot, he gives himself free reins and commits mighty deeds of valor and prowess, most of which are evil enough to earn him Hell.

Again, after taking a bitter lesson from the hell-fires in which he is plunged, he tries to seek solace in tapas. Thus, he is ever caught and moves entangled in the vicious circle of temptations and lures, from Hell to contrition and from contrition to sovereignty and from sovereignty to Hell again—one after the other—in an endless cyclic order, up and down the Wheel of Life. Thus, everyone for himself makes his own Heaven and Hell and remains through his own volitional deeds entangled in the gossamer web of life prepared by him.⁵

—Sant Kirpal Singh

Baba Ji Meditates Near the Cotton Mills

When not engaged in solitary tapas, he sat out in the open or with a thatched roof over his head near the mills where he had previously worked. He felt comfortable in that area as the workers had been his comrades and friends when he was making his living while staying in the chawls and preparing himself for the life of renunciation that he had now adopted. Many of the workers hailed from villages of South India like the one from which he had come, so they shared a common background in that regard as well.

There was a natural cord of love and understanding existing between them and this young yogi. They were pleased to have him in their midst. He spoke their language, so they could approach him and he could talk to them in their own simple way. Baba Ji, at that time,

5. Kirpal Singh, *Wheel of Life: The Law of Action and Reaction* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1965) p 46.

was conversant in Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Marathi and Sanskrit. Later he was to acquire proficiency in Punjabi, Konkani, and Gujarati as well.

To a Westerner, it may be almost impossible to imagine a scene as is depicted above, i.e., a young yogi sitting amidst the teeming activities of a busy metropolitan city such as Bombay, absorbed in his meditation practice and performing austerities day and night. But such a scene was not uncommon in the India of Baba Ji's time. During that era, there was a deep appreciation and respect for people making such a dedicated sacrifice for the purpose of God realization. They could be found in all sorts of environments, including one such as is described above.

One of the vows Baba Ji had made to himself when he embarked upon the practice of Nathpanth was that he would never actively beg for alms from anyone. If someone from his or her own heart wished to make some small donation in terms of food or money, only then would he accept it. The mill workers, though poor themselves, would sometimes share something of their meager earnings with him so that he could keep body and soul together with a bit of food now and then. His needs though were extremely simple, and his entire life centered on deepening his awareness of how he could find his way into the Love and Light of God.

His connection with Shivadaya! during these early years was sporadic. He (Shivadaya!) was himself an itinerant mendicant and moved about from place to place, seldom staying long in one location. Whenever they did meet, Baba Ji would give him any small amount of money he had collected or if someone had given him a blanket or shawl that too would be offered to his Guru.

But the real fact was that Baba Ji had surpassed his preceptor in terms of inner ascent for Shivadaya! was,

in part, using his position as 'Guru,' as a means of making a living. This practice was common amongst many who adopted the lifestyle of a yogi. Shivadayal, in fact, found that the rigorous practice of austerities and meditation could not be sustained on a day-to-day basis. Still, in Baba Ji's eyes, he held a revered place, as he was the one who had shown him the practices by which he could commence his journey on the inner Path.

Baba Ji Realizes the Limitations of Kundalini Yoga

The practice of kundalini yoga in the Kali Yuga, while leading to some measure of inner ascent, is extremely exacting and requires tremendous physical vigor and endurance to achieve any appreciable progress.

The practice of Prana Yoga helps in developing all the sense faculties, viz., perception, audition, olfaction, touch and taste. A yogin can, by his thought-force, attract to his aid from the atmosphere all the powers that he may like, by relating them to his thought. In bitter cold winter, a sadhak may sit in sidh asana with his chin fixed on his chest, think of the sun, and start the practice with pingala or the solar nadi. Heat would generate of itself and cover him with perspiration. In the same way one can, in the mid-summer heat, have the experience of cold. All this depends on thought-force, provided one knows how to fix his attention at the seat of the soul. This is the height of Prana Yoga. One can develop all these powers by bringing the mind and the pranas to one common level. Thought-force springs from the mind, and Prana Yoga consists in bringing the prana into unison with the mind at the level of the soul, or the divine plane.

The path of the yogins as described above is concerned with meditation at these six centers, beginning from the

lowest and gradually rising from one to the next higher by means of pratyahara and dharna as already explained. In this process, one also calls to his aid the kundalini shakti, or the great serpentine power lying dormant in three and a half folds in the vagus nerve, in a coiled state like a serpent. This latent energy or power is awakened with the help of pranayam. A yogin tries to collect together all the vital airs in the body at the center of the navel plexus and in this process awakens the latent power as well. From the Ajna Chakra he takes hold of the anahat sound and reaches Sahasrar, the highest heaven of the yogins. It is quite a long, tedious, and difficult path. At each of the centers, one has to work hard for years before one can successfully subdue and pierce through it and ascend to the next higher center. One cannot take to this arduous discipline without a strong and robust physique, capable of withstanding a sustained and strenuous effort for a long time.⁶

—Sant Kirpal Singh

Baba Ji, reflecting on this stage of his life, once commented that he gradually came to realize that what he was doing was not going to lead him to his cherished goal of God realization, but he did not know what Path it was that would do so.

He said: “Yes, I had acquired supernatural powers. Yes, I had gained deep concentration of mind. Yes, through such practices I had gained respect and appreciation from the people around me, including not only the mill workers, but other renunciates like myself. But

6. Kirpal Singh, *The Crown of Life: A Study in Yoga* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1997) p 51.

none of these things bestowed on my questing spirit the peace which I sought.”

In Baba Ji’s case, he performed the pranayama practices with intense zeal but without the immediate presence of his spiritual preceptor. It is well-known that the higher stages of pranayama need to be practiced under the direct guidance of one who has mastered the techniques for there are many complications, physical, mental and emotional, that can arise as this dynamic serpent power gets awakened. Baba Ji, in fact, made some small mistake in the technique that damaged his intestines, in consequence of which he suffered from convulsions later in life.

Baba Ji often used to counsel those wishing to pursue the path of kundalini yoga that it was fraught with dangers that might not be perceptible immediately but that later in life could severely affect one’s health. Aside from that, the need to adhere to many attendant practices is a must to achieve success on that Path and few people in modern times have the type of physical, moral and ethical constitution to perform them successfully.

Lastly, even if one was able to master the techniques, the final stage of the practice—the merging into the Sahasrar or Crown Chakra, the Thousand-Petaled Lotus, the capital of the Astral Plane—while no small achievement, was but the portal to ever more subtle regions of materio-spiritual and pure spiritual realms.

Baba Ji never downplayed such an achievement. He had great respect for all true yogis as his own life was deeply interwoven with their mystic practices, but he encouraged those who had achieved something on that path to know that there were yet stages above the Thousand-Petaled Lotus.

Meeting with Aspirants on the Godward Path

As Baba Ji advanced on the spiritual way, he continued to maintain a keen interest in meeting with other seekers of God. He had an open heart and mind and was never stuck in the thought that he had learned all there was to know about the Inner Way.

He was intent on perfecting the practices he had been shown, but he had a growing awareness that there was yet more to come. But where it was to be found and who would show it to him, he did not know. In the beginning, because he had a pure and innocent heart, he thought that the majority of people who had adopted the renunciate lifestyle were fully devoted to finding God.

With the passage of time though, he began to see that the people dressed in the garbs of different religious sects, predominately of the Hindu and Sufi faiths, were not necessarily doing so for entirely spiritual reasons. Indeed, many had started on their journey but had stopped short of the goal because the demands on stamina and dedication required to move even a little bit forward were more than they had realized. Hence, they were, at least in part, adopting various garbs and outer symbols to make a living. They knew that the innocent, devotional people who were leading householders' lives wished to earn religious merit by serving holy men and women. So, with little external effort they could meet the daily requirements for food and clothes.

He was saddened to see this type of behavior on the part of sadhus, fakirs and mendicants posing as holy men, but he was definitely aware of the challenges besetting pilgrims on the way. Instead of being discouraged, he became more determined to devote every moment of his life to attaining his cherished goal of God realization,

the ultimate purpose of human existence.

Through all that was going on both within and without, Baba Ji maintained a very modest demeanor. Life was full of challenges and strange events, and he was deeply aware that at any moment untoward incidents might occur that would test him to see how deeply he was committed to the path of Truth that he was aspiring to follow.

*Tell me, Brother, how can I renounce Maya?
When I gave up the tying of ribbons, still I tied my
garment about me:
When I gave up tying my garment, still I covered
my body in its folds.
So, when I give up passion, I see that anger remains;
And when I renounce anger, greed is with me still;
And when greed is vanquished, pride and vainglory
remain;
When the mind is detached and casts Maya away,
still it clings to the letter.
Kabir says, "Listen to me, dear Sadhu! the true path
is rarely found."*

—Kabir



Baba Ji Initiates Mahadevappa

The Incident of the Drunken Mill Manager

One time he took up residence in an open area near Swadeshi Mill in the Kurla section of the city. The mill-workers, being simple, loving and devoted souls, developed an affection for the young yogi. They built for Baba Ji a thatched-roof hut in which he could sit to fend off the hot rays of the sun and to which he could also retire at night when cooler temperatures prevailed.

Some days passed without incident. Then one Sunday morning Baba Ji was sitting in meditation beside his sacred dhuni fire. A manager from the mill, whose name was Ibrahim, approached Baba Ji in a drunken state and started abusing him: "Oh sadhu, are you sitting here for the purpose of showing some magic or doing some miracles?" Baba Ji replied, "I am sitting here quietly with no such intention in mind."

His reply did not please Ibrahim, who rudely insulted him while forcibly taking the few coins that the mill workers had left in front of him. Baba Ji gently said, "Brother, you may help yourself to the coins. Take them in a gentle manner." Ibrahim then insolently demanded that Baba Ji go buy bidis (Indian cigarettes) and matches for him. Baba Ji complied with his request. The drunken mill manager tried to light several match sticks but failed. He became angrier and angrier and, tugging at Baba Ji's beard, pulled it saying: "I cannot light these

bidis. Shall I set your beard on fire instead? After all, it is your fault that the matches will not ignite." While this drama was unfolding, the people in the neighborhood stood by watching the spectacle of this confrontation. Finally, he raised his arm to strike Baba Ji, but no one had the courage to subdue the intoxicated Ibrahim, nor to come to Baba Ji's aid.

Then suddenly, a police officer appeared on the scene. Perceiving what was happening, he grabbed Ibrahim and thoroughly thrashed him with his club. After bringing the miscreant under control, the policeman asked Baba Ji if he wished to bring charges. But Baba Ji, instead of pressing charges, requested that Ibrahim be released.

The following Sunday the same Ibrahim approached Baba Ji insisting that he give him money for purchasing wine. But this time, there was a brave youth watching what was happening, and he came and stood in front of Baba Ji to protect him. He said, "If you trouble Somanath Ji Maharaj to any degree, then prepare to meet your end." Other neighbors crowded around as well. Seeing the respect in which the people held Baba Ji, Ibrahim ran away. With the passage of time, Baba Ji's aura of sanctity attracted more and more of the mill-working community into his company. There were numerous incidents that occurred at this time when, through the power of the ascent of the kundalini, he was able to help those who came to him, solving various problems they were confronted with or healing the diseases afflicting them.

The Story of Mahadevappa

One particular incident should now be mentioned that was to have a far-reaching effect in the evolution

of Baba Ji's eventual work of spreading the Sant Mat teachings in South India, as instructed by Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj.

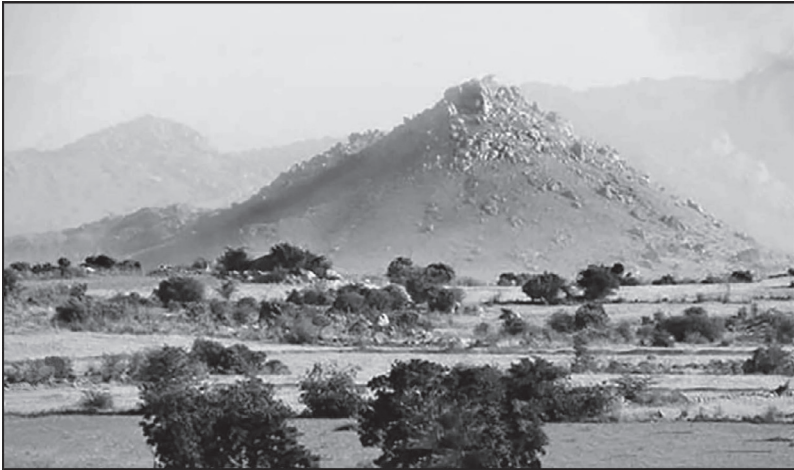
Baba Ji had gone into the interior part of India in the state of Andhra Pradesh and was staying in a temple in one town there. A police officer by the name of Mahadevappa who was from Raichur District, Karnataka, found out that a young renunciate Sadhu was staying in the temple and came to see him as a fellow seeker of God. Approaching Baba Ji, he described his desire to follow the path of renunciation but said that he understood he needed a Guru to initiate him into the secrets of the inner way before any real progress was possible.

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 wholeheartedly devote himself 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 applied the ash 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 the path of 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 way he was practicing, giving him the mantra of "Om Namaḥ Shivāi."



Hilly Region Near Enumuladoddi

At this time, Mahadevappa decided to renounce the world and take up the garb of a wandering mendicant. He went to a region in the desert of Andhra Pradesh where rocky hillocks were found in abundance. There he hoped to locate a cave where he could, in solitude, devote himself to perfecting the meditation practices that Baba Ji had revealed to him.

Enumuladoddi

His wanderings finally brought him to the 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.

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

Wasting no time he climbed the hill, entered the cave and commenced his meditation practice, following Baba Ji's instructions for pranayama, repetition of mantras, cleansing exercises, etc.¹ He was not concerned for his physical welfare but only that he should give himself up totally to perfecting what 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 long coiled hair, dressed in a coarse robe wrapped about the waist with a cloth cord and with deep mesmerizing eyes.

Sitting on top of the mountain—with a grand view of the ancient Indian landscape, no one to disturb him, pure air to breath, 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

1. The author visited Mahadevappa's cave on this hill during his first trip to the Betta ashram with Baba Somanath Ji in 1972.



Mahadevappa

good background in spiritual matters and his devotion to the Guru who had initiated him, he made rapid progress in awakening the kundalini power. 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 in reaching such a remote location, they requested him to come to live in another cave located lower down on an adjacent hill and closer to the village. So, after one year of intensive meditation practice, he left that cave and moved to the cave lower down. 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.

We shall now leave Mahadevappa and return to him at a later part of the story after Baba Ji meets Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj and returns to Bombay entrusted with the responsibility of giving Satsang in South India.

*Oh Narad! I know that my Lover cannot be far:
When my Lover wakes, I wake;
 when He sleeps, I sleep.
He is destroyed at the root who gives
 pain to my Beloved.
Where they sing His praise, there I live;
When He moves, I walk before Him:
 my heart yearns for my Beloved.
The infinite pilgrimage lies at His feet,
 a million devotees are seated there.
Kabir says: "The Lover Himself reveals the
 glory of true love."*

—Kabir



Pilgrimage to Surat and Pandharpur

Portents of Baba Ji's Further Spiritual Searches

As Baba Somanath Ji's fame amongst the millworkers began to spread, he became uneasy, because he found that his time for spiritual sadhanas was becoming more and more encroached on by their needs. He began to understand that if he remained where he was, he would soon lose the intensity of his concentrated practice of pranayama and mantra yoga. He knew deep in his heart that he had not come into the world for name and fame, and he could not bear to have his cherished goal taken from him for worldly recognition.

So, after having spent six or seven years doing his practices in the vicinity of Bombay, he decided to set out on a prolonged pilgrimage to Surat and Pandharpur that was to be the first of many long journeys that would span thousands of miles, all of which Baba Ji traveled on foot.

As a youth in Sholapur, he had dreamed of making such a pilgrimage, but at that time he had thought that to do so he would need to work and save money before he could embark on such a sacred journey. But now, in the 35th year of his life, he was determined to go forth to seek some high and holy One who could guide him to the stages beyond Sahas-dal-Kanwal (Thousand-Petaled Lotus), the capital of the astral plane where his yogic practices had taken him so far.

He now knew, from practical experience, that the

acquisition of miraculous powers and the ability to perform long fasts and engage in lengthy austerities could not quench his inner thirst. He knew that all these things could only lead to an intensely concentrated state of mind whereby all one's desires could be fulfilled. What he was seeking, though, was something much deeper, a state in which he no longer had a separate existence but was completely lost in the Love and Light of God. But where to find a Spiritual Preceptor who could guide him further was unknown to him. He felt that perhaps in the holy centers of pilgrimage or along the roads he would travel, he might hear of such a One, and for the yearning soul no sacrifice was too great to secure that end.

The several lengthy pilgrimages he made were ones in which he gained a more profound sense of the life of the Indian people, the ancient history of the country, the spiritual heritage out of which the Hindu and Sufi mystic traditions sprang, and so much more. There was little to separate his physical body from the spaces he passed through for he walked barefoot clothed only in a loin-cloth, with a few necessary items in a pouch and a coarse woolen blanket in case he encountered bitter cold.

Parting from Shivadayal

There can be no doubt that Baba Somanath Ji's first spiritual preceptor was genuinely accomplished in many of the yogic practices. And Baba Ji remained grateful throughout his life to Shivadayal, through whose teachings he was able to advance on the Path as far as could be done by harnessing the kundalini power. At a certain point, however, Shivadayal had failed to move forward on the inner way and instead became caught in the domain of being a "guru." It is a classic pitfall into which many fall after having traveled some distance on

the Inner Path. Having gained some power of concentration and becoming the object of adulation and worship, numerous sincere seekers become trapped in the “guru” identity. Their position becomes a means of earning a living, which many find considerably easier than holding down a regular job in the society in which they live. One also gets a degree of respect and appreciation that the average person does not receive.

In India, there is a basic principle of discipleship that the one who bestows initiation is worthy of all honor and respect. Hence, their commands and demands for service of body, mind and wealth are to be met with at all costs. That is well and good if the spiritual preceptor is a truly advanced soul, whose vision is crystal clear and whose efforts are directed toward helping the disciple overcome all inner and outer obstacles. In such cases, the guru may put the disciples to the test, requiring them to make some sacrifice that helps them transcend the limitations of their mind and intellect in order to move deeper into the inner life.

But if the guru is caught in the web of mind and Maya, and if he makes inordinate demands of the disciple, it can have a detrimental effect on the lives of them both. And if the disciple becomes more evolved than the guru, then a different dynamic comes into play. In such circumstances, the sincere seeker has to, sooner or later, continue the search for a spiritual guide who is truly free from the desires of this world, not someone who is acting and posing as a perfected one but at heart of hearts is trapped in mind and Maya like the greater part of humanity.

At the earlier stage of the relationship, Baba Ji had not yet realized that Shivadayal was caught in the sphere of name and fame and was using him as a source of income.

But as Shivadayal began to continually ask him for money, Baba Ji started to realize that his guru's motives were far from selfless and that his access to the inner spiritual wisdom was incomplete. Thus, expressing his heartfelt gratitude for the teachings he had received, Baba Ji finally had to respectfully take leave of Shivadayal to pursue his further search for the Truth on his own.

Even though there was a rift at that time in their relationship, Baba Ji remained, throughout his life, thankful for the instruction he received from Shivadayal, through which he was able to advance on the Path as far as could be done via the kundalini power.

Lasting Influence of the Pilgrimage Years

Nowadays, we move from place to place in cars, planes, and trains, covering hundreds, if not thousands of miles in a short time, but we gain little heartfelt knowledge of the lands we pass through. There is ancient wisdom, knowledge, and history etched in the earth, but, partly because of modern means of transportation, we tend to be divorced from it. The speed of modern life is so great that our sensitivity to the world in which we live is reduced, but for a being like Baba Ji, possessing a highly evolved state of consciousness, and few material possessions to encumber him, the many environments through which he moved were vibrating with life.

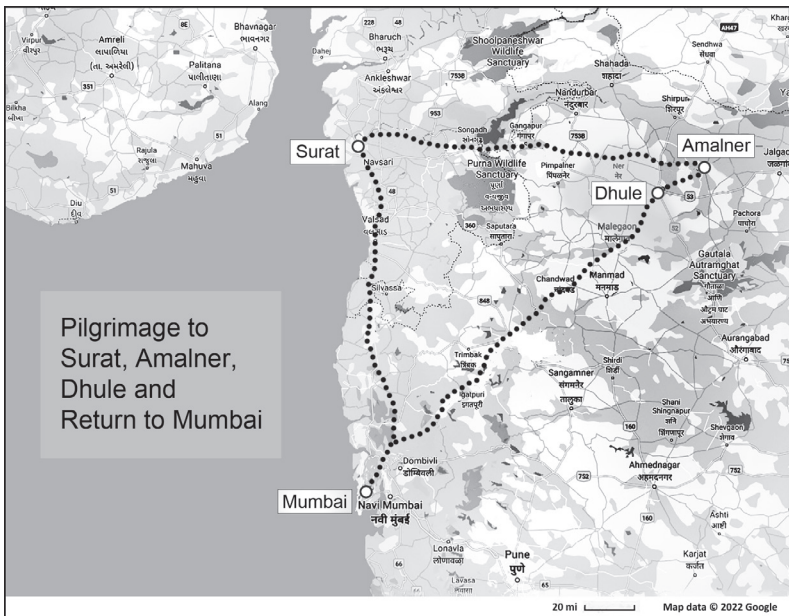
India, at the time when Baba Ji made his pilgrimages, was still a place in which the majority of the people lived their entire lives within the relatively small radius of the village they were born in. Hence, he encountered the distinct regional varieties in the flora and fauna, the lifestyles of the people, the clothes they wore, the crops they grew, the religious practices they adopted to worship the

gods and goddesses, the languages they spoke. All these things he absorbed with appreciation and respect, for he could see that behind all the variations in ways of living there was a central thread of unity connecting all and everything. In his heart, he tangibly perceived that Vibrant Unifying Power, hidden from the human eye. He had adopted a lifestyle where no personal attachments were blocking his vision, and he felt a deep connection with all life.

All of this is mentioned because the intimate interaction he had with the land of India influenced the way he expressed the Eternal Truth revealed by Saints of all times and places. The words that flowed through his simple, powerful Satsangs were a composite of both the rich diversity he experienced on his travels and the inner experience he had of that Principle of Life and Love that transforms diversity into unity. As he walked and interacted with the environments he passed through, his love for his fellow beings grew more and more, for he understood with growing clarity that all were, in their own unique way, seeking for the same thing—connection and absorption in the Mystery of Life whereby one feels deeply part and parcel of all that is. The wise words he used in the Satsangs and interactions with disciples and seekers were not the words of someone who had read things in books but rather of one who had experienced life in a direct, personal way. Those who were fortunate to hear his discourses were touched to the core of their being because everything he said was infused with that special, mystic knowledge that all beings come out of the same Source and are seeking union with it once again according to the understanding granted them by Providence.

Baba Ji felt in the core of his being that the life of the

people was his life. He understood the struggles and challenges of human existence, as well as the pains and sorrows that one experiences on the journey. Having passed down that road while facing hunger, thirst and despair, he yet kept before him the knowledge that beyond the veil of this world there was a glorious Light. Having himself successfully made the journey from darkness into Light after a long intense search and deep meditation, he, in due course of time, became capable of guiding others back to their True Home.



Map 1: Pilgrimage to Surat, Amalner, Dhule and Return to Mumbai (approximately 550 miles/885 km)

It is not possible to describe all the external events of Baba Ji's quest for Truth, as it covers thousands of miles traveled on foot, often under difficult and challenging

circumstances. He met and interacted with hundreds if not thousands of yogis, fakirs, mendicants and anchorites from different castes and creeds, both Hindu and Muslim. He visited numerous places of pilgrimage sacred to the Hindus, where he sincerely paid his respects to the temples and shrines erected in those places to commemorate the life of a Saint or Sage or some special event depicted in the Holy Scriptures. Each such meeting with seekers or visits to places of pilgrimage had an impact on his life. All these events had their own significance in creating within his heart a yearning for union with God and God alone.

Some of the details, to the extent they are known, will be shared to give the reader an idea of the extensive nature of his long quest for Truth and how they inspired him to search deeper and deeper for the meaning behind all outer appearances.

Pilgrimage to Surat

One of Baba Ji's first pilgrimages outside Bombay was to Surat, a city in the state of Gujarat, close to the Arabian Sea. It is approximately 180 miles due north of Bombay.

As mentioned earlier, Baba Ji made all of his pilgrimages on foot. Along the way, he met with a Sufi fakir who then joined Baba Ji and they traveled together for the entire journey. When they reached Surat, they found a Hindu dharamshala, a rest house, where wandering mendicants and other travelers could stay the night. Such lodgings were usually available free of charge and were sponsored by some wealthy patron. But Baba Ji's traveling companion was a Sufi, and since people of the Islamic faith were not welcome to stay in that Hindu rest house, they had to go outside the city where they found shelter in a ramshackle, abandoned temple. They took

up residence there, and establishing the dhuni fire, commenced with their respective practices of meditation.

In that area, the people of the Jain faith exercised a strong influence over local matters. The presence of the two renunciates sitting in daily meditation beside a sacred fire became news almost immediately.

The orthodox Jains were quick to manifest their displeasure over the presence of these two wanderers in the old temple and a rumor was spread abroad that the fire they were burning was causing the wanton destruction of insects living in the wood. This was considered a grave sin by orthodox Jains. Thus, they began to harass Baba Ji and his Sufi companion, even though they were staying quietly and peacefully outside the town. The local people said that they were only doing their so-called meditation for the sake of amassing wealth and possessions.

This attitude seemed inappropriate to Baba Ji, so the two broke camp and moved on. Journeying by foot, they traveled directly east to the towns of Amalner, and Dhule, a trek of about 170 miles. But in those places also, the influence of the Jain community was strong. And again, they found it difficult to set up the sacred fire and meditate. The furthest thing from their minds was to amass wealth. Their only purpose for going on pilgrimage was for worshiping God, but these experiences were so disturbing that they decided to return to Bombay.

We love all scriptures because they are the treasures of the experiences of the Masters with themselves and with God. We also love all holy places of worship because they are the places meant for singing the praises of the One Lord. We love all holy places of pilgrimage too, for the reason that there lived some lover of God, someone who became one with God and became the mouthpiece of God. Thus, for the sake of love of God, we love all others. If we

just love God and hate one Master or the other, or hate one holy book or the other, or if we hate other men, do we truly love God? Surely not; because God resides in every heart, and our ultimate goal is God. The ultimate goal of all religions too is God. Then, how can a follower of one religion or another hate anyone else? If we would live up to what the scriptures say, that looks an impossibility at first sight.¹

—Sant Kirpal Singh

In the course of this long journey, Baba Ji had received donations amounting to about six rupees, which he immediately brought to Shivadayal. Offering him that money, Baba Ji told him bluntly that this type of financial seva was not something he felt comfortable doing and that, henceforth, he would no longer engage in it.

Having freed himself from this obligation, he returned to the Kurla Cotton Mill area and re-commenced the devotional practices of the Nathpanth with renewed zeal. The local people, seeing the nobility of Baba Ji's character, developed a sincere faith and respect for him. But Baba Ji's heart was troubled that his spiritual ideal—meeting with God—was no closer. He had not yet found the Path that would take him to the cherished goal of union with the Truth.

In this frame of mind, he began to question the efficacy of the practices he was doing and of the miraculous and supernatural powers they awakened: were these very powers, in fact, leading him further from the Path of God Realization? To all appearances, such practices offered great benefit to humanity. By performing the powerful

1. Kirpal Singh, *The Night is a Jungle and other discourses of Kirpal Singh* (Tilton, NH: Sant Bani Press, 1975) p 31-32.

mantras and using his supernatural powers, he could bring the dead back to life, he could heal sickness and remove worldly sorrows and afflictions.

Through certain yogic practices one can prolong one's life and master super-human and miraculous powers. But, says Nanak, these do not necessarily win God's goodwill, without which all is vanity. In fact, in a later stanza XXIX, Nanak unequivocally states that such supernatural powers, more often than not, become hindrances in the way of full realisation of God.²

—Sant Kirpal Singh



Pandharpur, circa 1922

As a person adept in such practices, he could perform wondrous deeds, but as for freeing the soul from the Wheel of Transmigration, the source of all sorrows and

2. Kirpal Singh, *The Jap Ji: The Message of Guru Nanak* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1964), [Commentary on Stanza 6] p 93.

pains, neither was he himself liberated from the cycle of births and deaths nor could he liberate others from the same.

Baba Somanath Ji had often contemplated on the meaning of the Sanskrit aphorisms "Aham Brahmāsmi" meaning "I am the Absolute" and "Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma" meaning "Everything is Brahma," but as to practical realization of the same, he did not know the Path.

Pilgrimage to Pandharpur

Although Baba Somanath Ji's first major pilgrimage experience had been fraught with difficulties, the longing and internal thirst to gain genuine experience of those great precepts propelled him forward in his quest for the Truth.

His attention had been so distracted by the vehement opposition of the Jain community to his Sufi companion and himself, that he gained very little from visiting those towns. Hence, he decided to go forth once again to see if he might find someone who could help him in his search. He decided to set out for Pandharpur where he hoped to acquire religious merit by visiting the Temple of Vithoba during the auspicious festival season when devotees from all parts of the country would gather to have darshan of the idol there.

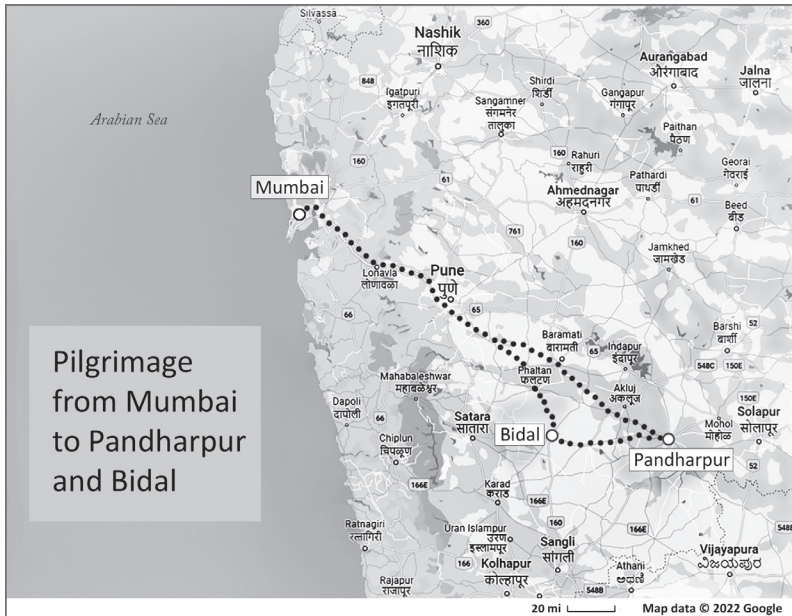
"I am smitten by the arrow of God's love."

It is a beautiful way of describing one's love for the Lord. Once this love enters into the heart, it gets deeper and deeper with time. It is something quite different from the love for worldly things. Guru Ram Das in this Psalm is giving us a pen-picture of his own

mind. He had an intense love for God, and it worked like an obsession in him. He now goes on to explain what it meant to him:

*“I am feeling restless for the sight of God,
As restless as a thirsty man in need of water.”³*

— Sant Kirpal Singh



Map 2: Pilgrimage to Pandharpur and Journey to Bidal
(approximately 467 mi / 753 km)

It was the month of Ashadha, June 22nd to July 22nd, when he set out on foot once again, this time to visit the pilgrimage center of Pandharpur.

The state of Maharashtra, where Bombay was located, had a rich bhakti tradition of mystical poetry in the form

3. Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, March 1969, “Search for Truth,” p 4.

of bhajans, or devotional hymns, that were sung in temples great and small as well in the homes of the people. Baba Ji was very fond of these sacred hymns as, through them, eternal Spiritual Truths were expressed in the language of the people.

The sweet and haunting melodies of the bhajans captured the heart, and they were committed to memory by people both uneducated and learned. The charm of the bhajans and their sacred significance were an accompaniment to Baba Ji's continuing spiritual evolution, and later in life, he himself was to compose many exquisite bhajans in Hindi, Marathi and Kannada.

So, a pilgrimage to Pandharpur was not just for the sake of beholding the image of Vithoba in the temple but also to be in the atmosphere where the great devotional Maharashtrian mystics had been in the past. Baba Ji was sensitive to the invisible imprint that such noble souls left on the ancient land of India, hence his journeys always served to enrich his inner life, preparing him for the time when all his struggles and heartaches would bear a rich spiritual fruit that would not only illumine his heart but the hearts of many who came in his contact.

Along with him went one of his disciples from the Nathpanth by the name of Ganapati Urph Byaji. The journey took them up into the Western Ghats to Pune and beyond. It was still an ancient landscape through which they went, devoid of modern roadways. The land vibrated with the devotional practices of the rishis and munis, mystics and sages. As Baba Ji traveled on his sacred spiritual quests through India, he constantly prayed inwardly to those great souls to guide him to someone who would act as a Living Master and Spiritual Guide, for his soul was longing for true peace and contentment.

The month of Ashadha was one of the most auspicious

times for Baba Ji and Byaji to be going to Pandharpur as it was the season for the Wari Yatra where hundreds of thousands of devotees would gather to celebrate a great religious festival.

Baba Ji and Byaji reached the town of Alandi, which was the starting place for the pilgrimage to Pandharpur to have the darshan of Vithoba, at the auspicious time set by the Vedic Astrologers. That pilgrimage takes 21 days and, at the time Baba Ji participated in it, the devotees went barefoot the entire distance, suffering hunger and thirst, as there were few modern conveniences to be found for the thousands of simple, pure hearted Hindu devotees, called warkaris, making the trek. Nowadays, there is an elaborate system of providing food and drink for those making the journey, but at that time, no such comforts were available. By enduring the difficulties and pains of walking barefoot and having little to eat, a rare spirit of fervent devotion was created in those approaching the temple of Vitobha in Pandharpur.

Upon reaching their sacred destination, Baba Somanath Ji stood in the long queue waiting his chance to have the darshan of Lord Vitobha. He used to narrate the story in this way:

Having made the long and difficult trek with the other devotees, I too was eager to have the darshan of Vitobha. As I approached the entrance to the sanctuary, I beheld two strong men posted at either side of the entrance to the sanctuary. When it came my turn to enter through the door, they barred the way, for I had no donation to offer before the idol. I explained to them that I was a penniless sadhu. Hearing this, they tossed me out of the line and would not allow me to enter. I was totally disheartened by such behavior. As I was turning to go, I saw another devotee approaching the door where the guards stood

and he reached towards his pocket showing that he was preparing to bring out his donation to place before the idol. Seeing this, the guards let him pass. Observing him further, I saw that, in fact, he did not have any money at all; instead, he scooped up some coins collected at the altar and then passed out of the sanctuary. Witnessing this event, I became aware that the pilgrimage sites are places where the deception and illusion of Maya hold sway.⁴

This was the period when Baba Ji realized that places of pilgrimage themselves were not what they were said to be. Innocent souls who went there were preyed upon by priests and other people working in the vicinity who used the temples as a means of making a living. He had mistakenly thought the places of pilgrimage were truly holy sites but it turned out that they had lost the original purity of their spiritual luster and had become centers of religious materialism. He had himself engaged in numerous vain pursuits in his quest and hence could easily relate to the many byways the embodied souls travel upon in trying to discover the Meaning behind all meanings.

After this incident Baba Ji and Byaji began their return trek to Bombay, but, on the way, they stopped at the village of Bidal, the story of which will be recounted in the next chapter.

4. Baba Somanath Ji often related this incident in Satsang.

*On this tree is a bird: it dances in the joy of life.
None knows where it is: and who knows what
the burden of its music may be?
Where the branches throw a deep shade, there does it
have its nest: and it comes in the evening and flies
away in the morning, and says not a word of that
which it means.
None tell me of this bird that sings within me.
It is neither coloured nor colourless: it has neither
form nor outline:
It sits in the shadow of love.
It dwells within the Unattainable, the Infinite, and the
Eternal; and no one marks when it comes and goes.
Kabir says: "O brother Sadhu! deep is the mystery.
Let wise men seek to know where rests that bird."*

—Kabir



The Story of Vaman

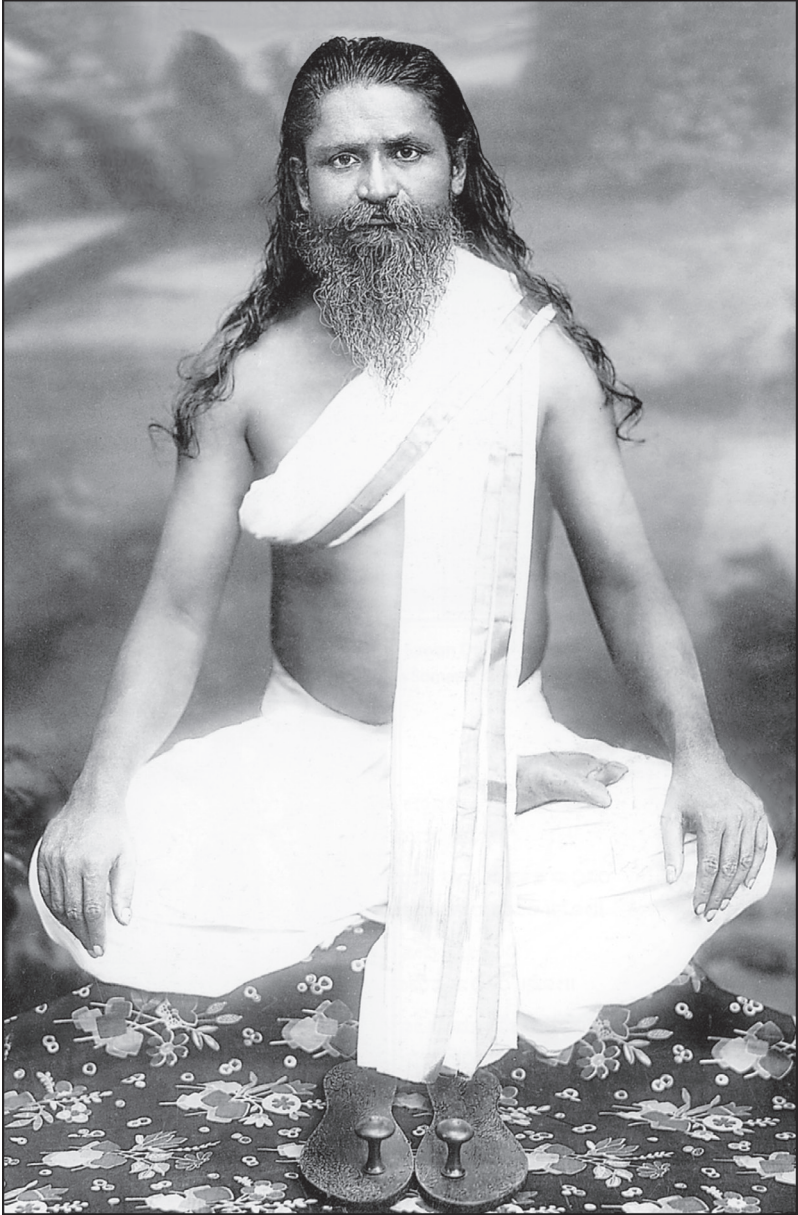
The following incidents are from 1926 and are narrated by Vaman, who was a small boy when Baba Ji appeared in his native village of Bidal, Sitara district, located in the Ghats above Bombay.

Vaman, in his innocent child-like way, served Baba Ji during his days there and developed a deep fondness for him. When Baba Ji left the area suddenly, without informing anyone where he was going, Vaman's whole life was turned upside down, because he wanted to follow Baba Ji as his disciple. As a result, he ran away from home and went to Bombay in search of the yogi whom he loved and admired.

Some years later, Vaman was reunited with Baba Ji after he returned to Bombay and took up the Satsang work entrusted to him by Hazur Sawan Singh Ji. The first part of the story is narrated here, and the reunion of Baba Somanath and Vaman will appear later, at the appropriate place.

Vaman's reminiscences give a deep insight into Baba Ji's life as a renunciate yogi from one who had direct, firsthand knowledge of it.

I had the good fortune to meet Vaman in 1971 when I first traveled to Bombay with Baba Somanath Ji for a Satsang program. The account included here is Vaman's story related in his own words:



Baba Somanath Ji

Baba Somanath Ji comes to Bidal

When Baba Ji left Pandharpur and turned back towards Bombay, he, while traveling through the mountains came to a small village called Bidal. He had only a few possessions with him including a small book of spiritual hymns, a drum and a one-stringed instrument called an ektara. He had on his one lungi and that was the extent of his clothing. Along with him was a low caste untouchable, a fellow disciple of the Nathpanth, Ganapatti Urph Byaji. At that time the caste system was still very strong, and the villagers became disturbed as the Nathpanthis passed through the village. Baba Ji and Byaji therefore went to a place on the outskirts and set up the sacred dhuni fire sitting beside which they commenced their meditation on an exposed platform. Nearby was a temple of Hanuman Ji in which dwelt a priest who observed the arrival of the two yogis.

It was the month of Ashadha (June 22nd-July 21st), a time when the winds were strong in the hilly district, and it was difficult to get the sacred fire going. Baba Ji and his disciple therefore considered where they might find a suitable location out of the wind where they could meditate beside the dhuni fire. The priest, seeing their plight, suggested they go to an old, abandoned temple of Sati nearby that no one was caring for. They could do their meditation there undisturbed by anyone. Byaji was sent ahead to clean a space, and then Baba Ji and the priest followed.

The temple was overgrown with trees and shrubs and due to neglect was quite filthy. So considerable effort was expended in tiding it up. Then the priest mentioned that sometime before he had dropped a coin there and had not been able to find it. Baba Ji said, "Well, now it shall be recovered." Digging the heel of his foot into the soil, and stirring it up a bit, a coin came to the surface. Baba Ji handed the

money over to him. The priest was very impressed and grateful to Baba Ji.

Vaman's First Meeting with Baba Ji

At that time, I was a child of 11 or 12. The road leading to my father's fields passed by the dilapidated temple. So, I was curious to see who the two yogis were who inhabited the temple after it had been abandoned for so many years. So, one day when returning home from the fields, I brought with me two stalks of sugarcane. Approaching the temple, I saw the sadhu, who I later came to know as Baba Somanath Ji, sitting with his disciple in deep meditation. Not wishing to disturb them, I reverently placed the sugar cane stalks before them and departed. From that time onward, I had the habit of bringing sugar cane there and departing.

One day, Baba Ji saw me bring my offering and asked, "Son, have you asked permission of your father to bring us this sugar cane?"

Distressed, I replied, "No."

Baba Ji then said, "From tomorrow you must ask and then only should you bring it to us." I was worried that my father, who I called as "Abba," would refuse permission for me to bring the sugar cane, and I would not be able to meet Baba Ji again. I was very worried and upset in my mind because I desired to meet with him every day and felt happy doing so.

So, the next day while working in the fields, again and again this thought disturbed me, and I felt very unhappy. In the afternoon, as the shadows lengthened, the longing to bring sugarcane to Baba Ji increased, as this was the only food he was taking at that time. I was worried that if I did not bring him the sugarcane, he would go hungry.

Finally, I mustered up my courage and went to my father saying: "Abba, there is a sadhu residing in the Sati Temple. He is a very good Baba Ji, and I wish to bring him two stalks of sugarcane, but he told me I must ask your permission. May I take it to him?"

My father replied, "Is that all you are worried about? You may bring him as much as you like." His words are still echoing in my ears to this day, as it is because of the sugarcane that my liberation is assured.

So, with great happiness I cut a big bunch of sugarcane stalks, brought them to the temple, placed them before Baba Ji and stood there quietly with folded hands. Seeing this large amount, Baba Ji laughed and said, "For whom have you brought so much sugarcane?"

I replied: "According to your orders, I asked my father's permission to bring sugarcane to you, and he told me I could bring as much as I liked. Accordingly, I brought this bundle."

Baba Ji smiled and sweetly said, "Vaman, only bring two stalks of sugarcane each day. That will be sufficient for my needs."

The Monsoon Rains Arrive and End the Drought

Now at that time, the signs of drought were beginning to appear in the area around the village. Everything was drying up. The month of Ashadha was coming to an end and still no signs of the monsoon clouds had appeared. The soil had become cracked and dry from lack of moisture. All the village people began to lament as the crisis deepened.

Then, the attention of the village folk turned towards the sadhus occupying the Sati Temple. Yogis are commonly thought to possess miraculous powers through

which they can control the forces of nature. So, they approached Baba Ji and said, "Maharaj, can we expect rain?" Baba Ji replied, "It will certainly come."

But the days continued to pass by with no sign of monsoon rain clouds appearing on the horizon. All the wells began to dry up one-by-one. The tongues of the animals began to hang out. Cracks in the soil were seen everywhere. Still, no rain came. The villagers once again approached Baba Ji. They were determined to fast until the rains came. Then Baba Ji said, "It will definitely rain in three days' time. But you should prepare a meal to serve the 100-150 children of the village."

But at such a dark time, all the food that had been stored was exhausted. Still, hearing Baba Ji's command, two people (villagers who were staying in Bombay) set to work to see that Baba Ji's orders were carried out. They procured enough grain to prepare the meal for the children and put it at Baba Ji's disposal. Baba Ji said, "You have collected enough grain to feed the entire village."

Now in the village there lived a lady named Lakshmbai who was an accomplished cook, and she was assigned the duty of preparing the meal. And an invitation was issued for all the children of the village to come for the feast. From noon to three, instead of 150 children being fed, over 300 children received the meal. Even then some food remained, and an announcement was made for the grown-up members of the community to come and receive the Prasad or blessed food.

The people who had not contributed towards the community kitchen felt ashamed after seeing how things turned out, and they didn't feel worthy to take food at the place where they refused to donate. But in the festive mood that prevailed, all distinctions were swept away,

and everyone was able to share in the bounty of that day.

After all the food was distributed and consumed, Lakshmibai thoroughly swept and cleaned the kitchen area. Unfortunately, I came there late, as I was not aware that the feast was in progress. All day long, I had been working in my father's fields outside the village and, according to my custom, I had gone to present the two stalks of sugarcane to Baba Ji and now stood before him with folded hands.

Baba Ji enquired, "O Vaman, where have you been and why are you late. Have you eaten or not?"

I said, "No Baba Ji, I have not eaten yet."

So, then Baba Ji called for Lakshmibai and said, "Give some food to my child."

Lakshmibai replied, "Baba Ji, all the food has been distributed. Even the banana leaf plates are gone."

Baba Ji told her, "Well, just look again. Perhaps there is one chapatti or even a half of one remaining."

Lakshmibai grumbled her disapproval but went inside the kitchen area anyway, and to her surprise, she found a chapatti sitting on a banana leaf plate. She gave me that chapatti, and I consumed it thankfully. Then, everyone adjourned to the Bhairavnath Temple for the singing of sacred bhajans in Hindi.

At the time of the village feast, two of the three days had passed that Baba Ji declared were necessary for rain to come. In the temple, there had been constant singing of sacred hymns since that time. As the third day approached, there was a sense of anticipation and expectation present in the air.

A representative for all the villagers approached Baba Ji and said, "Today is the third day since you made your prediction that it would start raining, but still no

monsoon clouds have appeared in the sky. Now, we are afraid the only rain that is going to fall will be the tears falling from our eyes.” The people who gathered there began to complain about the worsening situation, staring at the cloudless sky above them and wondering what had become of the rain Baba Ji had predicted.

It was now midnight. The stars were glittering in the sky. One hour later, all was still quiet and the people were whispering amongst themselves, when on the horizon a huge black cloud was seen to be forming. Brilliant flashes of lightning illuminated the sky as more clouds approached. Then at 2 a.m., a fierce rainstorm broke out, and for three continuous days the land was drenched in a blessed downpour. All places in the village, fields, wells and ponds were saturated with water. The villagers, the animals and all life were filled with joy at the advent of the rain. A new life had commenced for one and all. Then, in the hearts of the villagers, deep faith arose for the Baba staying in the rundown Sati Temple. They said, “The words of the Baba were true. He is one possessing deep knowledge.”

Madhav Requests Initiation Into Nathpanth

One of those present, Madhav, a son of a farmer who sold blankets, approached Baba Ji requesting that he initiate him into the secret practices of Nathpanth yoga. As a sign of respect and as an indication of his keen interest in receiving initiation, he commenced bringing Baba Ji a glass of milk and sugarcane stalks every day.

One day, Baba Ji told Madhav that the practices he was engaged in were extremely difficult and that he (Madhav) would not be able to perform them successfully. But Madhav did not accept what he said. Finally,

Baba Ji acceded to his request. He granted Madhav initiation into Nathpanth yoga and instructed him on how to pierce his ears in order to wear the earrings designating him as a member of that sect.

For the next fifteen days, he remained continuously with Baba Ji to learn how to correctly repeat the mantras and practice meditation.

From the beginning, I did not speak much when I paid my daily visits to Baba Ji for darshan. All I did was come, place the sugarcane before him, look into his eyes and then depart. But following the incident of the rainstorm, I began staying a bit longer and deriving happiness from doing so. The villagers also began coming to see the "Sita Temple Baba Ji".

Ramu, the Boy Who Died and Was Revived

As the days passed, Byaji, the disciple that came with Baba Ji to Bidal, and Madhav, Baba Ji's new disciple, became fast friends. They devoted themselves to the mystic and occult practices, as instructed by Baba Ji. In the evening hours, the village folk would come to see Baba Ji and amongst them was a youth named Ramu. One day, Byaji had gone out somewhere and when he returned to where Baba Ji was sitting, all of a sudden, he said, "Baba Ji, Ramu is severely ill. If you go and see him, then he will be at peace."

In the beginning Baba Ji was reluctant to go, but afterwards on Byaji's insistence, he consented to pay Ramu a visit. But by the time he arrived at Ramu's home, the boy had already died, and, according to the traditions of his community, his body had been placed near the entrance to the home, while all the other members of the household sat weeping inside. Now Baba Ji, having come thus far,

could not turn back.

He became upset with Byaji and reproaching him said, "Why have you brought me? What can I do after such a long delay in informing me of his condition?" Seeing Baba Ji's anger, Byaji was frightened. Then Baba Ji calmed down, and approaching the corpse, he appeared to be feeling the pulse. But the pulse was not registering. Then he requested someone to bring him a glass of water and from his yogic pouch he drew out holy ash; while mixing it in the liquid, he commenced chanting sacred mantras. Then, by exercising the supernatural powers acquired from mastering pranayama, he ordered Byaji to hold the dead man's head in his hands, raise it up, and pour the liquid into his mouth until the last drop.

Then Baba Ji went to one side, commenced meditating and entered Samadhi. Byaji was astonished to find that the liquid was being totally absorbed through the mouth of the corpse. Yet, he was under the command of his spiritual preceptor, so he held the glass in place. Meanwhile, Baba Ji remained absorbed in meditation, — entranced for a full fifteen minutes. When he came out of meditation, Ramu began to breathe slowly, and Baba Ji requested that he be given more water to drink. Ramu stared all around him, looking as if he was awakening from a dream. The pain which he experienced before he had apparently died had also disappeared. Everyone in the house was ecstatic. That man, Ramu, is still alive (that is, he was still alive in 1979 when Vaman was narrating these events), and it is he who related this part of the story to me.

Amidst all the excitement and hubbub created by Ramu's recovery, Baba Ji quietly left that place and returned to the temple. He closed the door and sat in meditation. The villagers came to the temple to have his

darshan, but he did not come out, and no one had the courage to disturb him.

Later that day, when I was returning from my family's fields, I went to Baba Ji's room with sugar cane. Baba Ji was outside at the time and told me, "Everything had to come to pass as it did because of Byaji's foolishness in neglecting to inform me of Ramu's illness earlier. Now, because of this event, there will be a lot of talk and that will put obstacles in the path of meditation."

But the minds of Byaji and Madhav were stimulated by this incident, and they began to think that, if their Guru had such extraordinary powers, they themselves should start testing the efficacy of the mantra he had given them, to see if they could also work such wonders.

Baba Ji Explains the Inner Meaning of a Bhajan

At the Bhairavnath Temple, people sometimes gathered for bhajan singing programs. And Baba Ji, accompanying himself with an ektara (a one-stringed, bowed instrument) and a dapholi (a percussion instrument like a tambourine), would sing poignant soul-stirring bhajans as well. He used to sing one bhajan in particular that still rings in my ears.

Māyī Bāp Doghe Jīvāne Mārāve Charaṇ Bandāve Bāyakānche

The outer meaning of the words is that once you are married, you should kill both your mother and father, and then remain bound to the feet of your spouse.

One day some people—who opposed the singing of this song because they did not understand its inner significance—formed a group, the leader of which stood up and said, "Baba Ji, this bhajan you are singing is not good. It is worthless."

Baba Ji replied, "This bhajan is meant to wake up those who are asleep, having once woken them up, it is meant to inspire them to think carefully about whether they are truly spiritually awake."

Then Baba Ji explained the true meaning: "The words father and mother refer to the powers of mind and illusion (Maya). Therefore, we should give up our association with these two powers, that is we should die to them. It is just like in the world when a man marries, at that time he disconnects himself from following the orders his parents once gave him, and he replaces their orders with commands of his wife. So, we should break off our relationship with mind and Maya in the form of our mother and father and we should constantly meditate on the Lord who is represented by the wife in this bhajan."

Hearing his enlightening words, those who were opposing him nodded their heads in agreement and, rather than objecting to the bhajan, appreciated what he had said and started proclaiming, "Baba Ji has good knowledge of esoteric wisdom." From these two incidents, the local people developed full faith in Baba Ji.

Byaji and Madhav Test the Power of Baba Ji's Mantras

Meanwhile, Byaji and Madhav continued to devote time to perfecting the mantras Baba Ji had given them. There are various mantras used for acquiring specific supernatural and mystical powers. Each chakra has mantras associated with it, by which that particular chakra is activated. In this way, mastery over each chakra is attained and one acquires the supernatural power concealed within it.

In their minds, they were thinking that they should put to the test the efficacy of the power of the mantra used for awakening the dead. Baba Ji had warned them

specifically never to try to master that mantra on their own. But they were lost in arrogance and thought if these mantras were truly priceless gifts from the Guru, then they should learn to use them to their own advantage.

It was a deep, dark night, during the phase of the lunar cycle called Amavasya (new moon), when they decided to put the mantra for raising the dead to the test. A profound peace and quiet was spread on the earth in all directions. At 11 p.m., the two disciples rose from sleep and proceeded to the graveyard where they intended to test the mantra by seeing if they could wake the dead. They got there early for they wanted to start their practice right at midnight as this was considered the auspicious time for rousing departed souls from their graveyard rest. Up until 2:30 a.m. they repeated the Guru's mantra with concentrated attention, and the spirits present there gradually became visible to them.

Now, it was believed that, if by 3 a.m., the practitioner could not make the spirits that had been made visible, invisible again then those spirits would destroy those who had practiced the mantra. But in the midst of that practice, they realized they did not know the mantra for making the spirits invisible again.

At this point, their concentration broke, and they became very disturbed. Byaji, being the cleverer of the two, dashed off to find Baba Ji. Madhav, paralyzed with fear, sat alone in the graveyard trying to protect his life from the spirit forces surrounding him. Finding Baba Ji meditating at the temple, Byaji fell at his feet and entreated him to save them, explaining what they were doing in the graveyard. Baba Ji became very stern and asked, "Why did you do this without consulting me? Why did you not learn the full technique, and why did you not

have me present to guide you?"

But what was to be done? For now, the siddhi power had been activated, and Baba Ji had to think of some means of protecting the two disciples who had gotten themselves into serious trouble. He imparted the mantra to Byaji for appeasing and making the spirits disappear, and then he himself sat in deep meditation in the temple itself. By his own spiritual power, he satisfied the ghosts, and they disappeared because of the power of Baba Ji's meditation.

Byaji, meanwhile, ran back to the graveyard carrying the life-saving mantra with him. He found Madhav and tried to get him to repeat the mantra also, but he was so terrified that he could not move his tongue and was in a cold sweat as well. Both were repenting that they had transgressed the orders of the guru; it was through their own foolishness that they had got themselves ensnared in this fearful situation. Then, as they made their minds firm, courage arose in their hearts, and they started repeating the mantra so as to bring this terrifying event to a close. In fact, Baba Ji had already solved the problem for them through his meditation, but his intervention was unknown to them. As soon as Madhav repeated the mantra to lay the dead back to rest, it began to dawn on him just how competent a guru Baba Ji was. But even after passing through such a hard experience, the two so-called disciples took a change for the worse. Kabir says:

*The lustful, the greedy, the avaricious
cannot do the real devotion.*

*Only some brave one can do it, by removing from his
heart the sense of caste, creed and community.*

Madhav and Byaji Abandon Baba Ji

They had already revealed their true nature to the Guru. Madhav no longer brought Baba Ji a daily glass of milk as he had done before, nor did he come for darshan. In the night, Byaji would stay at the home of Madhav and even went so far as to send a small child to Baba Ji to request that he return the oil lantern that Madhav had given him so that Baba Ji could safely live in the abandoned temple.

Perhaps they thought, "Why should we serve him? What other mantras could he have with him?" They felt that they did not need Baba Ji's guidance but could become independent sadhus with no further need to associate with a guru. Madhav, in particular, adopted this pompous egoistical attitude. So, on that day Baba Ji was compelled to remain hungry, as he would not spread his hands before anyone. When I came to see Baba Ji in the evening, I brought two stalks of sugarcane with me and touched his feet.

Then, Baba Ji explained the situation to me. He said, "O Vaman, what can I do? I do not know what has arisen in his mind. Now the vanity has taken hold of him, but Madhav will soon die. What to speak of not bringing the milk, he has gone so far as to request the oil lamp that is here to illuminate this room in the night.

Byaji sent a school child from the village to ask that I should send all the small conveniences I have here back to him. I do not know what kind of feeling has come in his mind."

As he explained these things, tears began to well up in Baba Ji's eyes. "In return for the benedictions bestowed on him, he has acted with ridicule and scorn. It is not a good thing that he has done."

In my innocence, I said, "Baba Ji, let it be. I am here for you." Saying this, I went to the priest of the Hanuman Temple and procured for him a small oil lamp. And upon my return, I presented the lamp to him.

Seeing this, Baba Ji gently said, "The donkeys have fled and in their place the elephant has come. The simple oil lamp is very good. I do not need the other one."

Then I placed the stalks of sugarcane in the dhuni fire until I could peel off the outer husk. I cut off the soft inner core and served them to Baba Ji.

Tears were streaming down his cheeks. I did not comprehend the meaning of what was happening. I thought perhaps I should bring more sugarcane for Baba Ji. But instead, Baba Ji, taking some of the remaining pieces of sugarcane, placed them in my mouth himself patting me on the back saying, "Vaman, my son, when we meet again, I will definitely impart spiritual instruction to you." I was but a young boy at the time so all I could do was shake my head.

Madhav Seeks Baba Ji's Forgiveness Before Dying

The next evening, I do not know by what circumstance this happened but, for some reason, Byaji returned to the Sita Temple in search of Baba Ji. When I asked where he had been, he gave me a meaningless reply.

Then eight more days passed away. Madhav had meanwhile contracted a serious ulcer on his foot and could not move about. Word was sent to Baba Ji regarding his deteriorating condition. In a message to Baba Ji, Madhav requested forgiveness for his transgressions and begged that Baba Ji might come and give him darshan. Baba Ji sent a message saying that there was no need for him to go to Madhav's residence as he (Madhav) could, using

his supernatural power, stand and have someone bring him along to the temple.

With Baba Ji's grace, this very thing happened. Madhav was able to rise and, on the shoulders of Byaji, he came to meet Baba Ji. At that time, he sincerely requested his forgiveness and promised that he would never commit such follies again. Baba Ji replied, "What can I do now? I can do nothing to avert what is to come. The path of Nathpanth is as it is. Now you will have to endure the fruits of your actions, the consequence of which is that you will die."

And the very same thing came to pass. Cholera appeared in the village and spread all over. To try to avoid infection, Madhav came to stay in our home. But in spite of everyone's efforts, his karmas overtook him, and he passed away while staying with us.

Baba Ji Teaches Vaman the Shanmukhi Mudra

On the day after Madhav's death, according to my custom, I brought Baba Ji sugarcane, and I stayed with him until 10 that evening as he explained to me the meaning behind all the events of recent weeks. Before going home that evening, Baba Ji enquired, "Vaman, would you like to receive spiritual instruction and initiation?" I was an innocent soul, and I nodded yes. Then Baba Ji said, "The path which I teach is extremely difficult and full of dangerous challenges. If you deviate from it even a little bit, then your life is at stake. When you take to the path of meditation, you will need to become detached from mother and father, that is, if you take to the path of renunciation. These are the things that you have to be deeply aware of if you wish to take up this path."

Saying these words, Baba Ji become absorbed within.

A deep peace pervaded the night, and my eyes were growing heavy with sleep, but I thought perhaps I might get initiation, so with this hope I continued to sit with Baba Ji while he remained in samadhi.

After some time, Baba Ji opened his eyes and said, "Vaman, in the future, I will definitely give you initiation." Hearing this, my face became covered with tears. Seeing my disappointment, Baba Ji said, "OK, until we meet again you can go on practicing the technique that I am going to show you." At that time, Baba Ji gave me the knowledge of the Shanmukhi Mudra, a yogic hand gesture where the practitioner closes the "six openings," — two eyes, two ears, nose, and mouth, i.e., the gates of perception for outer impressions.

After receiving this technique from him, I was convinced that I was going to remain with him alone, and all my attachments to family, hearth and home were severed. From that time onwards, my behavior also significantly changed. I could not conceal this change from my eldest brother who was not at all pleased with my coming and goings with Baba Ji. He, therefore, began to place a watch on me and did not allow me to go anywhere unattended.

Baba Ji's fame now began to spread due to the miracles attributed to him with the result that he decided to leave our village and go to some other place where he was not known. He knew if he told me of his plans, then I would want to follow him. So, one night, he quietly departed from Bidal with a heavy heart.

The next day, when I returned from the fields and approached Sati Temple with the stalks of sugarcane as I normally did, I saw that the temple door was closed and locked. Standing there, I thought that perhaps Baba Ji, for one reason or another, had been called to some place, so I

would return later. The sun was going down. The cows, which had been out grazing, were returning home for the evening, and the tinkling of the bells around their necks fell on my ears. The light on the horizon was radiant with a vibrant, glowing red, casting its brilliant colors upon the land. My eyes too had a red cast upon them, like that of the setting sun, as anguish had entered my heart.

I knew not why, but tears began to flow down my cheeks. I tried to convince myself that he would not depart without sending word to me and that he would certainly return when hunger afflicted him. Therefore, I placed the sugarcane by the temple door, so he would have it upon his return.

I went to the Hanuman Temple and enquired of the priest if he knew where Baba Ji had gone, but he had not seen him. Feeling helpless and distraught, I returned to my home.

Vaman Runs Away From Home and Goes to Bombay

From that day forward, sleep and hunger both departed from me. The question continually troubled my mind as to why he had left without telling me. In his absence, the days passed by with great difficulty. The goal of my life became to gain news as to where he had gone.

I remained restless at all times. In the end, one idea occurred to me. Since I knew that Baba Ji had come from Bombay, I would seek to increase my relationships with villagers coming and going to Bombay.

I also thought to become friends with the priest of the Hanuman temple, as he and Baba Ji were friends. I was determined at that point to go to Bombay myself in search of him.

As it turned out, the brother of the temple priest was returning to Bombay, so I decided to go with him. I did not tell anyone in my home of these plans. The priest's brother's home was located in the jungle near where he grew up, about 2 1/2 miles from our own farmlands.

I went to the priest's home in the village in the dead of night, for I needed him to guide me to his brother's home. But try as I might to get him to come to the door, he would not rise, because he did not realize it was I. He was afraid to get up and let me in. Thus, in the dark night, I had to return home. But my resolve remained unbroken.

I continued to establish contact with anyone going to and coming from Bombay. Finally, the auspicious day came. On that day, some acquaintances I had made were sitting on the train awaiting its departure for the metropolis. I sat amongst them, taking my life into my own hands. But as fate would have it, my elder brother, the one who opposed my relationship with Baba Ji, also came to the station to see friends off. I fainted but fortunately, by Baba Ji's grace, he did not spot me.

The year was approximately 1929. I was a young person, just 13 or 14 years of age, but still I left home all alone in search of Baba Ji. Arriving in Bombay, I was able to stay in the chawl housing people from my area of Maharashtra but as I was so young it was difficult to find a job. But with the grace of Baba Ji and the assistance of my village comrades, I was eventually able to find employment in the cotton mills. When not working, I searched for Baba Ji with great longing and intensity.¹

1 Based on: Shrimati Megha Chandrakant Telang, *Somālaya* (Mumbai: Baba Somanath Ji Radhaswami Satsang Trust, 1980) "Bidāl kā Vritānt" p 37-50. Vaman narrated this tale around 1979.

Vaman's wonderful story will resume later. But first we must follow Baba Somanath Ji on his lengthy and arduous pilgrimages throughout India, leading to the final culmination of his search far to the north on the plains of the Punjab where and the mystery of life and death was at last revealed and his heated heart was cooled by the healing balm of the Perfect Guru's mercy.

*There is nothing but water at the holy bathing places; and
I know that they are useless, for I have bathed in them.
The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak; I know,
for I have cried aloud to them.
The Purana and the Koran are mere words; lifting up the
curtain, I have seen.
Kabir gives utterance to the words of experience; and he
knows very well that all other things are untrue.*

—Kabir



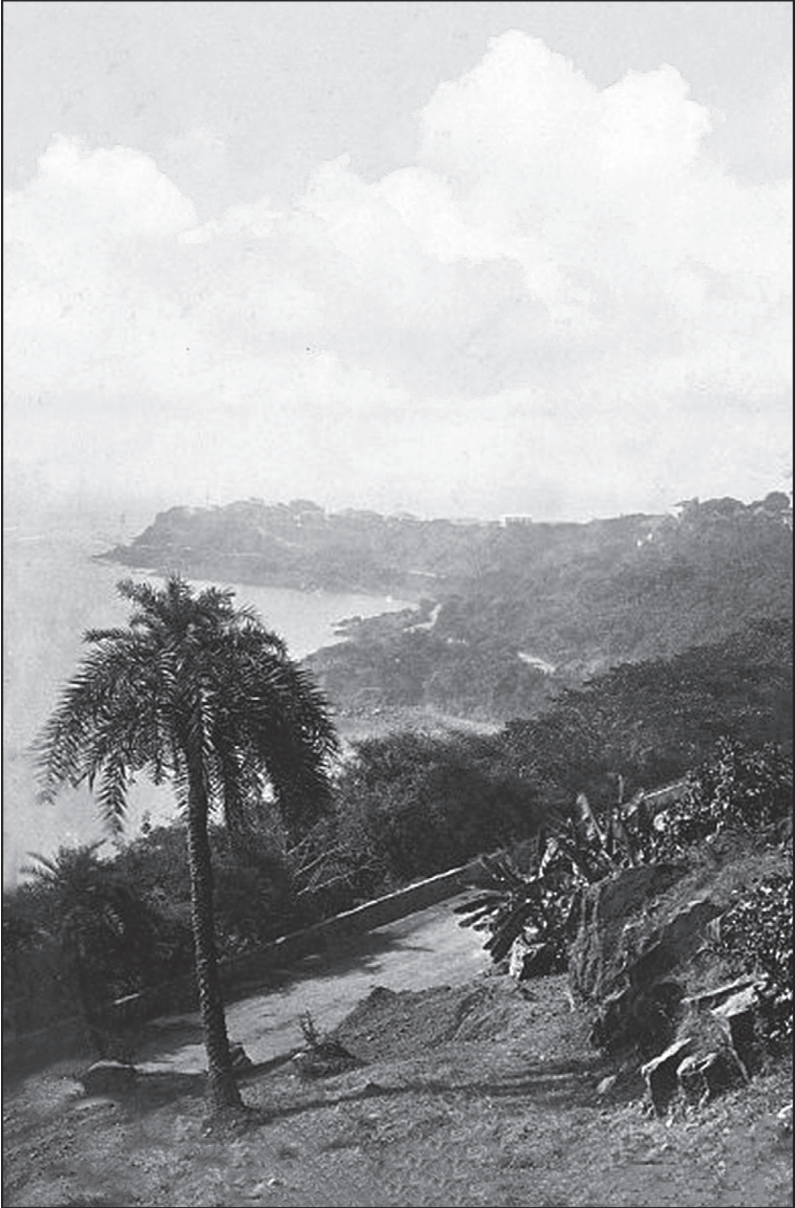
Pilgrimage to Girnar and Dwarka

The Child Who Died From a Cobra Bite

When Baba Ji left Bidal village, he returned to Bombay and once again took up residence in Worli near the cotton mills. It was a very difficult time for him as he wrestled with the sorrow of not being able to find someone who could guide him beyond what he himself had perfected. In order to purify his heart further, he went to the banks of the Arabian Sea near Worli. He commenced his meditations there in earnest, living on jaggery (raw sugar) and water as he had done once before. This vigil went on for 40 continuous days.

Now it so happened that, at the end of this vigil, a child of 2 1/2 years of age, who lived in a nearby chawl, was bitten by a cobra and died. At that time, the section of Worli where Baba Ji meditated was a total wilderness. Bewildered and consumed with grief and sorrow, the family of the child came to the place where Baba Ji was sitting, carrying the child's dead body. They explained to him how the child had died. Baba Ji said, "Leave the body here, and return tomorrow." Then Baba Ji took sacred ash from the dhuni fire, spread it upon the body and became absorbed within.

In the morning, the father of the child, along with some of his neighbors, came to the place where Baba Ji was staying and what did they behold? The child was



View of the Arabian Sea from Malabar Hill, Bombay, 1870

sitting there alive and well.

Following this incident, Baba Ji felt it would not be good to remain in the area because he knew that the story of the child's restoration would spread, and he was concerned that the resulting attention from the people living there would disturb his meditation. He also was weighed down by the sadness of separation from that Hidden Lord for whom he was making the sacrifice of body, heart and mind. His heart was troubled because he had not yet had the good fortune of finding the Path leading to the Light of God. Realizing this, he was determined to move on and continue his quest for enlightenment.

Again, the thought came in his mind that if he went on pilgrimage he would come in contact with other aspiring seekers of Truth and perhaps he would finally meet that Immaculate Soul who could guide him further.

If it is not my portion to meet thee in this life then let me ever feel that I have missed thy sight—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

As my days pass in the crowded market of this world and my hands grow full with the daily profits, let me ever feel that I have gained nothing—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

When I sit by the roadside, tired and panting, when I spread my bed low in the dust, let me ever feel that the long journey is still before me—let me not forget a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

When my rooms have been decked out and the flutes sound and the laughter there is loud, let me ever feel that

I have not invited thee to my house—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.¹

—Rabindranath Tagore



Map 3: Pilgrimage from Mumbai (Bombay) to Dakor, Bhavnagar, Junagadh, Girnar, Porbander, Dwarka, and return to Mumbai (approximately 1241 mi/1998 km)

Therefore, Baba Ji set out on the long journey to the Girnar Mountain Range where he wished to pay respect to the samadhi shrine of Gorakhnath, the renowned

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1915), [Song] 79, p 73.

disciple of Machindranath and founder of the Nathpanth sect. Situated in that sacred area were pilgrimage sites where several other famous Nathpanth yogis had also done their meditation and austerities, and Baba Somanath Ji felt the longing to meditate there and benefit from the spiritual aura of those places.

The foot journey from Bombay to Girnar would amount to over 540 miles. His further journey to Dwarka and the pilgrimage sites in that area would add another 130 miles to his outbound journey for a formidable total of about 670 miles. Traveling on foot northward along the coastal route, he would have crossed the Mahi River and then the sacred Sabarmati River. One of the myths surrounding the origin of the Sabarmati is that Shiva brought the goddess Ganga to Gujarat causing the Sabarmati to manifest, and it is on the banks of this river that Mahatma Gandhi later founded his Sabarmati Ashram.

Dakor and Bhavnagar

Baba Ji then traveled to the small town of Dakor, near the city of Ahmedabad, which was considered a place of great importance for devout Hindus wishing to acquire merit through religious pilgrimages. The famous Ranchhodraiji Temple—a shrine to Lord Krishna—was located in Dakor, and he respectfully paid homage to that holy spot.

At each stage along the way, he was eagerly looking for some Spiritual Preceptor who could help him, for many holy men and women gathered at these pilgrimage centers. He would humbly approach anyone who appeared to have spiritual insight beyond what he had attained, but no one was capable of guiding him further

than he had already gone. He was forever restless in this regard because, although his meditations were successful up to a certain point, yet the feeling of separateness from the Source of the Power that had created him was always present in his heart.

A part is always in search of the whole. We are so constituted that we cannot rest until we rest in Him. The flame of a lighted candle even if turned upside down would still rise upwards. A clod of earth if thrown upward is sure to come down. This is the law of gravitation. Everything tends to move towards its source. A conscious entity cannot but seek the Ocean of All-Consciousness. So, the search for God is something natural in man.²

—Sant Kirpal Singh

After a short sojourn in Dakor, he proceeded on to Bhavnagar, where he visited the Takhteshwar Temple and other temples of more ancient origin. In Bhavnagar, he rested for 15 days so he could gain strength and courage for the next trek to Junagadh, which lay at the entry to the sacred Girnar Hills, the ultimate goal of his pilgrimage.

Junagadh

Junagadh was thought to be the place where Queen Indra Mati had lived. Not only had she become a liberated soul through her deep devotion and love for Kabir, but she also was the means of her husband's salvation.

When Baba Somanath Ji reached there, he visited the holy sites thought to have special spiritual significance, hoping to absorb some of the hidden radiation present there beyond what could be seen with the eyes, so that

2. Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, March 1969, "Search for Truth," p 4.

within his heart he could more clearly perceive and understand how to achieve his spiritual goal. He had the advantage that there was nothing pressing to distract him from the real purpose of his quest. His needs were as basic as possible for a human being to have, so his whole attention was directed to deepening his knowledge of the purpose of life. And always he was hoping and praying that in those places there might be someone who had gained more practical knowledge of the inner way than he had.



Temple Shrines in the Girnar Range in the 1890s

While in Junagadh, Baba Ji had the extra blessing of spending time at Gorakhnath Ashram, where many of his brother disciples were lodged. Here he could, in their company, recall the glory of their lineage and refresh the awareness of the sacred significance of visiting the

Girnar hills where Gorakhnath and other great exponents of the Nathpanth had meditated. It is also worth noting that Buddhism had flourished in that region in ancient times, and, while in Junagadh, Baba Ji also visited the Uparkot Fort, that held within its precincts ancient Buddhist cave dwellings that had housed monks pursuing their spiritual practices in their search for the Ultimate Reality.

Further, when Baba Ji departed from Junagadh and traveled westward towards Girnar, his path led him past one of the major rock edicts of the great Emperor Ashoka (3rd century BCE), who was an exponent of Buddhist precepts. The stone inscriptions he set up around his kingdom bear witness to his commitment to the philosophy of the Middle Way—respect for all religions; developing a positive approach to life; abstinence from extremes, kindness to everyone, resistance to greed, and proscription of animal sacrifice.

As Baba Somanath Ji proceeded along the narrow road, drawing ever closer to the land where Nathpanth had its origins, his spirit was fully focused on the example of his great Nath predecessors and the forthcoming trek through the Girnar Hills that they had sanctified by their devotions.

Girnar

The Girnar Range in the Junagadh District of Gujarat is the site of many temples, ashrams and other holy places, and these hills and mountains are considered sacred by many religious traditions. The tallest peak in the range is Girnar Mount, which rises to a height of 3507 feet or 1069 meters above sea level. It is an important pilgrimage site for Hindus and Jains, who gather there

during the Girnar Parikrama festival. Girnar Mount was also considered holy to Buddhists.

And, of special significance to Baba Somanath Ji, the Nathpanth yogis had done great austerities on the peaks of the Girnar range—Guru Dattatreya, Shri Adabanganath, Shri Augharnath, Shri Dayanath, and finally, Shri Gorakhnath, the practitioner to whom Baba Ji felt the greatest alignment. And now, his cherished longing to visit these locations and sit in meditation where those great yogis had done their spiritual practices was about to be fulfilled.

On the high peak of Gorakhnath Mountain stood a small shrine traditionally held to be the place where Gorakhnath sat for many years performing austerities. Baba Ji traversed thousands of stone steps to sit in that benign atmosphere, absorbing the radiation of the great Mahayogi whose life had inspired him to take up *sanyās* and adopt the life of a renunciate.

In honor of the other great yogis of the Nathpanth, he also climbed atop the Girnar peaks of Ambika, Devangiri, and Kamandal Kundala where they had performed austerities. As he had done these practices himself, he felt a close connection with this spiritual lineage. Remaining there for many days, he continued the sadhanas they taught.

At the same time, Baba Ji also visited many Hindu and Jain temples, basking in the fresh mountain atmosphere and absorbing the spirit of devotion that pervaded this ancient part of India. And in that charged atmosphere, he felt more keenly than ever before the importance of a living Master, and his anguished heart cried out for the company of One who would take him into his shelter and guide him safely across the treacherous waters of

the Sea of Transmigration.

Having absorbed all he could of the sacred atmosphere of the mountains, Baba Ji returned to Junagadh and from there he walked further west to the city of Porbandar.

Porbandar and Sudamapuri

Located on the southeast coast of Gujarat, about midway between Veraval and Dwarka, the modern-day Porbandar is chiefly noted as the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi.

The ancient city of Sudamapuri was located on the same site and took its name from Sudama, the childhood friend and life-long bhakta of Lord Krishna. According to legend, Sudamapuri is the place where Lord Krishna miraculously produced a beautiful palace for his devotee Sudama and his wife. That palace itself was also named Sudamapuri. Sudama was a very poor Brahmin but his love for Lord Krishna was pure and the history of their relationship forms an important part of the sacred lore of India.

Contemplating on this miracle of Sudama's devotion, Baba Ji's heart became intoxicated thinking of the simple and pure love Sudama had for Krishna and how Krishna honored their friendship. The couplet written by another great Krishna devotee, Surdas, might naturally have entered into his mind:

*Sudāmā mandira dekha dare
Kahāñ to hotī meri tūṭī maṛhaiyā
Kanchan mandira dekha dare*

Sudama is fearful on seeing such a palace.
Where is my broken-down hut?
In its place, I see a palace of gold.

The stories of the love that exists between a devoted disciple and the Guru had been etched on Baba Ji's heart since childhood, as they formed a part of the rich oral tradition that existed at the time. These stories were told in the homes and the temples throughout the land, and every child grew up hearing them. The devotional imagination of the Indian mind brought them to life as these classic stories emerged in the form of bhajans or spiritual songs with and without accompaniment by musical instruments.

It was not just the stories themselves that were brought to life by the sacred songs, but also the deep love and devotion that lay behind them. The melodies that accompanied their singing had a wonderful way of transporting the attention into an inner sanctuary of one's being, helping the aspiring soul to draw nigh to the Hidden Power abiding there.

In that town, there was a sacred place of pilgrimage called Chakra Mandi. It was said if one went and had the darshan of that place, they would be freed from the cycle of births and deaths. Many people flocked to that place with the idea that they would get liberated without making any other effort. But now, having had the darshan of that place with a sincere heart, Baba Ji was not satisfied that this belief was true. No doubt this place of pilgrimage had been constructed as a reminder that the seeker must go within and find that place where true liberation is to be realized. To think that the outer can substitute for the inner is an error.

As he moved through the city of Porbandar, he visited many temples commemorating the lives of saintly souls or the gods and goddesses held in esteem by the devout Indian people. And as the inner beauty and power of the stories of their lives penetrated into the innermost depths

of his heart, his soul cried out for the company of that One who would take him into the Sanctuary of Love.

Dwarka

From Porbandar, Baba Ji proceeded to Dwarka along the coastal route, a distance of about 65 miles. The entire area around Dwarka was charged with the love and devotion of millions of Hindus, past and present, devoted to Lord Krishna, and while Baba Ji was there, he visited both Dwarka Gomati Ghat on the Gomati River and the island of Bet Dwarka, which lies about 20 miles to the northeast of the city. While he was still in the area, he also visited one of the most famous of the Shiva shrines, the Nageshwar Jyotirlinga temple, which plays a significant role in Puranic literature and is very ancient.

As Baba Ji quietly moved from place to place, the epic spiritual stories rippled through his heart and mind. Alive to their penetrating spiritual significance, he moved in another world—what was not visible with eyes of flesh yet was real for him. The stories, legends and myths of these sacred places were vibrantly alive because inwardly he had attained high spiritual ascent and thus could perceive the inner meaning behind the outer manifestations of the material world. So, as Baba Ji wandered through India in search of God and the True Guru, his heart was filled with these stories which were brought to life by physically standing in the places where they took place. Hence, his pilgrimages were by no means simply moving from one physical location to another, but also an inner pilgrimage brought to life by the stories and bhajans that were written on his heart.

One must, to the best of their ability, try to imagine his condition at this time. His attention was almost totally

absorbed within because his bodily needs were reduced to bare necessities, while his spirit burned within for realizing why he had come into this world. The intensity of his concentration was far beyond that of a normal human being. His deep and continued practice of the sadhanas of Nathpanth had clarified and purified his mind so that his experiences had a vivid intensity. For most of us, the connection between our inner and outer life is clouded by our tumultuous thoughts, but for Baba Ji every aspect of outer life was a reflection of the Divine. He was keenly aware that each and every event was a reflection of the life of the spirit.

The food provided to all men for their unfolding is the same; but their capacity of feeding and digesting it is not the same; they have not hatched out of the ovum in the same time and place. Hence the difference in their space-time expansion and hence no two can be found who are exactly alike.

From the same board, so richly and lavishly spread before all men, one feasts on the purity and beauty of gold and is satisfied; while another feasts on the gold itself and is ever hungry. A hunter, looking at a roe is prompted to kill it and consume it. A poet, looking at the same roe, is carried on wings into spaces and dreams of which the hunter never dreams.³

—Book of Mirdad

Baba Ji was indeed a mystic poet, but the songs were all written in his heart. He saw and experienced many things seen and unseen, and because he passed through all the stages of the quest and suffered the challenges,

3. Mikhail Naimy, *Book of Mirdad: A Lighthouse and a Haven* (London: Stuart & Watkins, 1962) p 167-168.

trials, and difficulties that such a search entails, he understood deeply and surely the mystic yearning of the heart for union with God, which lies at the core of the life of us all.

We chase the shadows of life and not the substance, and, though the same longing may propel us forward for a while, very few of us have the stamina and purity of heart to penetrate through the veils and seals that bar the way to directly experiencing the pristine Light of God in which the oneness of all Life is revealed.

Because Baba Ji did possess the strength and the longing to discover the source of Divine Light, the trials and experiences he went through created in him a heart that melted at the suffering of others. He knew from first-hand experience the obstacles that one has to overcome in the search for God, and this is why, at a later time, many souls from a wide range of backgrounds, would flock to him for spiritual solace and guidance.

Baba Somanath Ji's Plight

Baba Ji had now made a devout and sincere pilgrimage to Gujarat, where he witnessed some of the depth and breadth encompassed by the great spiritual traditions of Mother India. He had paid homage to the Mahayogi Gorakhnath, to whom he owed a debt of eternal gratitude, and had met with followers of Nathpanth like himself, who were carrying on the traditions and practices of their illustrious preceptor in an unbroken lineage. By practicing the long and difficult austerities and pranayama of Nathpanth, Baba Ji had reached the Thousand-Petaled Lotus and then, through his sustained practice of dhyana, had gained access up to Trikuti. It was no small achievement and few have the stamina, courage and zeal to go so far, but, in the end, he knew that there was a

further Path, something beyond the stages he had perfected, for there was still the sense of separateness from the Eternal Source.

As he sojourned in Dwarka, he had also experienced the height of Krishna bhakti. He was deeply moved by the intense spirit of devotion manifested in bhakti yoga, yet he knew that, for himself, the need for a Living Master was of the highest importance and what he was searching for could not be found in any yogic practice that he knew of.

All of his pilgrimages to holy places, all of his readings from the treasure trove of wisdom found in Hindu scriptures, all of his long and difficult practices of pranayama and austerities had only fired in him an indescribable thirst for something more. In spite of doing all these things, the pain in his heart did not go away nor was the veil of separateness torn asunder. As a central part of his pilgrimages, he had sought the guidance of many other yogis, sadhus, and fakirs but none of them could help him find the higher Path he was seeking.

Turning Back Toward Bombay

It was at this point that Baba Ji decided to return to Bombay. Disappointed but determined to press on with his search, he turned his steps eastward to Rajkot and began the long trek back to South India, a journey of over 550 miles.

In his pilgrimage to Gujarat, his body had undergone severe hardships, but he had not yet attained his goal, and he needed to recoup his strength before continuing his search. He knew in his heart that he could not remain idle. He would take up the quest again and, if necessary, perish in the search for some Master Soul who could show him how to progress further on the inner Way.

As he journeyed homeward, he had to remind himself over and over again not to lose heart, for perhaps someday he would find himself sitting at the feet of a Saint who would take him by the hand and not only explain the inner way to him but also accompany him within as well. In the Holy Scriptures, he had found reference to the Nuri Swaroop (Radiant Form) of advanced souls who were capable of guiding and traveling with their disciples on the inner Path and it was for such a One that he was searching.

His pilgrimage into Gujarat, rather than quenching his thirst, had instead increased it. But the answer as to how, when and where he would find what he was earnestly looking for had not yet been given to him.

Just as there is restlessness in the unchaste man, the greedy man or the angry man until he satisfies his desire, in the same way, the person who has a real desire to realize God cannot be satisfied until he fulfills that desire: always, day and night, he remains restless. Just as we are restless within when we desire the worldly things, if we feel that some great Power has been separated from us for ages and ages and that He is the Supreme Thing, and that by getting Him one can get the real happiness—if we come to know about that unseen Power, that hidden Power, and we have the real desire to realize that, then we will not get satisfaction until we do. In this world we see what we think are happinesses and we feel we will get rest in that. But neither in pain nor in happiness can we get rest in this world, because this world is full of suffering.⁴

Sant Ajaib Singh

4. Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, February 1980, "The Remembrance of Kirpal," p 5.

Finally, arriving back in Bombay, he took up residence in an old Hanuman Temple. There he continued on with his intense meditation practice and continually prayed for further guidance while he awaited the next inspiration.

*I laugh when I hear that the fish in the water is thirsty:
You do not see that the Real is in your home, and
 you wander from forest to forest listlessly!
Here is the truth! Go where you will, to Benares or
 to Mathura;
If you do not find your soul, the world is unreal to you.*

—Kabir



Pilgrimage to Nashik and Trimbak

During his stay in the Bombay temple precincts, he became friends with a wandering sadhu, Urdhvabahu, who had done the austerity of keeping his arm extended above his head for 12 years without ceasing. Through this practice, he had not made any inner spiritual progress, but he was a sincere seeker.



Pilgrims Bathing in the Godavari River, circa 1880

Together, they decided to make a pilgrimage to Nashik and the nearby temple of Trimbakeshwar in hopes that they could receive further inspiration and guidance in their search for God. Located in the northern part of the state of Maharashtra on the banks of the Godavari River, Nashik is one of the four cities in India that host the massive Simhastha Kumbh Mela once every twelve years.

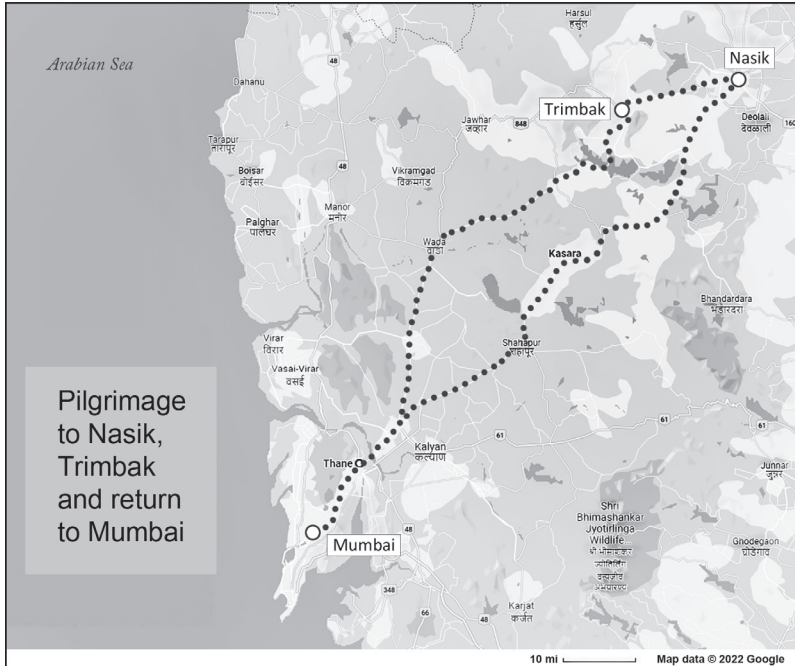
Sadhu Urdhvabahu and Baba Ji decided that it was best to spend a month in the environs of Nashik absorbing the rich essence of this sacred area as it had many temples created to celebrate India's ancient spiritual past.

As always, the most important factor keeping Baba Ji in Nashik for a longer period was the hope that amongst the many yogis, sadhus and anchorites gathered there he would somehow behold the one he was looking for. At such holy places, thousands of devotees from different sects and different paths collected together, and as Baba Ji was interacting with people, he was searching and inquiring for anyone who could give him deeper instructions about the inner way.

The area of central Nashik, called Panchavati in the Ramayana, has several very old sacred sites which Baba Ji and Urdhvabahu visited. It is said that Lord Rama and Sita along with Lakshman stayed at Panchavati during their 14 years of exile, making it holy by the touch of their feet. Nearby is the Sita Gumpha (cave) where Sita is said to have stayed for some time. The name "Panchavati" means the place of five (panch) banyan (vad) trees.

Also, in the Panchavati area is the site of the Tapovan (Forest of Meditation and Austerities), which had a

special attraction for Baba Ji, as in the Ramayana Lord Rama and Laxman visited this forest, where many great rishis and sages were meditating and pursuing the path Godward.



Map 4: Pilgrimage to Nashik, Trimbak, and return to Mumbai (approximately 216 mi/348 km)

While visiting these holy places, Baba Ji did not wander about for the sake of sight-seeing. He would go to each place with reverence and respect and quietly find someplace where he could sit undisturbed. There he would meditate for hours on end, enjoying the radiation of devotion in that place. Because his attention was continually focused within, he was able, in some measure, to fulfill the ultimate purpose for which these places

were made—remembrance, devotion and meditation.

In the same district as Nashik, about 20 miles west, was the renowned and ancient Trimbakeshwar Shiva Temple, located in the town of Trimbak.

The temple contained one of the twelve Jyotirlingams of Shiva, one other of which Baba Ji had beheld when he was at Dwarka. The Jyotirlinga temples hold a high place of reverence and esteem amongst Nathpanth yogis for in their sect they consider themselves, first and foremost, as devotees of Shiva. Hence, Baba Ji bowed down in reverence before it and prayed that his request to meet the Perfect Master would be heard.

The headwaters of the Godavari River were close at hand, and the entire area possessed its own unique natural beauty. Indeed, India, at the time that Baba Ji was walking the land, was still a place where the sacred and natural world intermingled almost seamlessly.

Modern travel conveniences were just coming into being and did not yet have a significant presence in the rural areas where he traveled. People wishing to make pilgrimages had to do so with few creature comforts to support their trips, so the spirit that moved them was deep and sincere. This lent a special aura to the locations where the temples, sacred rivers and other holy places were located. Baba Ji was himself a lover of nature, so being amidst rivers, mountains and trees was nourishment for his soul, even though he had not yet found his Spiritual Preceptor.

But no matter what place he went to, or who he met with, that One for whom he was seeking eluded him. The time for the meeting had not yet come. From within, the time of the meeting of the Master with the Gurumukh disciple is fixed and nothing can be done to hasten it. But the disciple cannot sit idle. The inner and outer intensity of the search

totally consumes his or her life. The search leaves the pure and pristine soul awaiting the advent of the One who can then, in an instant, set him or her on the Path back to their True Home.

So it was that Baba Ji and Urdhvabahu returned to Bombay consoled only by the fact that they had done their best to pursue their search for that which would make their life worth living.

O servant, where dost thou seek Me?

Lo! I am beside thee.

*I am neither in temple nor in mosque: I am neither in
Kaaba nor in Kailash:*

*Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in Yoga and
renunciation.*

*If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me:
thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time.*

Kabir says, "O Sadhu! God is the breath of all breath."

—Kabir



Pilgrimage to North India: Bombay to Rishikesh

When studying the lives of the great Masters, what purpose do we find in them? They show us an example; and seeing such an example, we should pattern our lives upon theirs.

Ages go by, man hears the same words again and again; but in a practical way how much have we learned? When a schoolteacher writes the words on the blackboard, the child copies them, carefully trying to make his letters as beautiful as the teacher's. Eventually he succeeds. The words of the Masters are the recorded examples of Those Who realized the great Love, and you are all here to realize that same Love. How did the Masters get this realization? One by one, the accounts and descriptions of their experiences are given out to you, hearing which a deep enthusiasm swells up and a yearning is born within one to become like those Masters. Is it not so?¹

—Sant Kirpal Singh

Baba Ji's Final Pilgrimage

Now we come to the last, most difficult and profound of Baba Ji's journeys in his search for Truth and a Perfect

1. Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, April 1974, "What Have You Become?" p 2.

Master. It is in the course of this great pilgrimage that he finally came to the feet of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj, the high and holy One that was to put him on the path he had so earnestly sought for during the previous 20 plus years. It is virtually impossible to truly capture the meaning, significance and beauty of this meeting.

Every part of the journey that has already been described was profoundly significant. Much of the setting in which it took place is unfamiliar to the Western reader in terms of places, practices and people, and for many years I myself did not pay much attention to those actual details. But when I began to draft Baba Ji's life story, I came to realize that the setting and the details connected with his life could not be ignored if one was to fathom what his search was all about.

Reading through the accounts of his many experiences in his inner and outer quest—during which he endured intense difficulties and hardships—we ourselves might be inspired to begin making some small sacrifices needed for awakening to our true spiritual heritage.

Baba Ji did not learn about life from reading books but through intimate involvement with it. The difference between him and most of us, is that he had one-pointed concentration. His whole life was devoted to realizing the purpose for which he had come into this world—to awaken to Divine Light and Love that is the substratum of all existence.

Baba Ji did intense yogic practices, deeply studied the sacred scriptures, respectfully worshiped at the temples etc., all within the context of Indian culture. He grew up in the strongly traditional dharmic culture of South India where ethics and morality of a high nature were inculcated from birth. The myths, legends and worship of sages, rishis, gods and goddesses and holy places were

all woven into a way of living and a unique inner landscape that has developed over thousands of years. This devotional attitude was fully alive in him as he sought for the One who could guide him beyond the realm of mind and senses into the Infinite Sea of Divine Love, the Source from which we all came.

This strong religious foundation, then, was the edifice upon which his search was conducted but, as with all great souls, he also had the burning desire to transcend all outer forms. There was a deep yearning to be free, to see the Divine Light living in every cell of the Creation beyond any religious affiliation.

On the strength of his inner innocence and purity and the burning zeal to realize the Truth, he passed through one realization after another, during which he understood that every approach to the inner way has its own value, but the actual thing for which he was searching was yet higher up—beyond all practices created by man for God Realization. Those outer practices may give some temporary mental and emotional relief but do not bring lasting inner peace. Even the acquisition of supernatural and miraculous powers bestowed by awakening the kundalini did not help solve the Mystery of Life.

What he did gain from all his experiences though, was a deep appreciation for every person's quest, whatever it might be, for he had himself explored, in depth, the many approaches to the inner way. Later in life, after he had, through the grace of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji, become successful in awakening to the Radiant Light and Divine Sound within and transcended the physical, astral and causal worlds, he became an inspiring guide to many who were also longing to realize God.

His way of teaching had a wonderful human touch for he knew that where all human efforts ultimately fail,

there was the power of Grace that, sooner or later, comes to the rescue of all who yearn for God with a sincere heart. It was in Hazur that he found One in whom this compassionate grace was fully alive and freely accessible to all, regardless of caste, creed, color or social status.

What then, was the end result of his quest? How did this meeting with Hazur Sawan Singh Ji transform his life? Hazur graciously opened his inner vision so he could see that only God was the doer and none other. With this vision came the realization that he was but a servant of that gracious and merciful Power of Love, which is the source of all life.

The physical form of a Saint is just a means of awakening us to those qualities that already exist there, but which we have forgotten. Humility is the crowning jewel of all Mystic Adepts and with their kind guidance that same quality can once again live within us too. It is this very quality that those of us who lived with him witnessed day in and day out and with the passage of the years becomes yet more deeply etched in our hearts.

Sant Kirpal Singh has beautifully described this most precious quality that adorns a Saint and which brings an unshakeable peace and a quiet joy to every phase of life:

The humble man makes no fuss. He is at harmony with himself and others. He is gifted with a wondrous feeling of peace. He feels safe and secure, like a ship in harbor, unaffected by howling storms and lashing waves. He has found refuge at the Lotus Feet of the Lord and the storms of changing circumstances have no power over him. He feels light as air. The burdens which we carry all our life — the burden of the self and its desires — he has laid aside, and he is ever calm and serene. Having given up everything, he has nothing to lose, and yet everything belongs

to him, for he is of God, and God is in him. Having broken the bondage of desire, he is as happy with a piece of dry bread as with a sumptuous meal. In every situation and circumstance of life, he blesses the Name of God.

He who would be humble regards himself as a student. He learns many new things, but what is more difficult, he unlearns many things he has learned. A scholar came to a Saint and said, "O Seer of the Secret, tell me what I may do to live the life divine." And the Saint said to him, "Go, unlearn what thou hast learnt and then return and sit before me."

He who would walk the way of humility must renounce his earlier ways of living. He must give up the opinions he has formed, the standards to which he is accustomed. He must have a new outlook on life. The things the world would worship are to him of no value. His values are so different from those of other men. Rich food, fine houses, costly dresses, positions of power and authority, the applause of men, honors and titles, no longer attract him. He feels drawn to a life of simplicity. He is happy in living a hidden life in the Hidden Lord.

He is dead to the world; he is alive in God. At times he actually behaves like one dead.

Yes, the truly humble man is, in that sense, the "dead" man. He has "died." God alone lives in him. His self has been annihilated. His self has vanished into God, and only God remains. God works in him and through him, and God emits in his eyes. God speaks in his words. On his feet, God walks the earth; and through his hands gives His benedictions to all.

Such men are the real strength of the world—its illumination and inspiration. To see them is to commune with God, for God dwells in them. They are the living, moving Temples of the Lord. They are the ones who keep

the world intact, though they do not know it themselves. The whole earth depends on them without anyone being aware of it. Their hearts and minds are in tune with the Great Heart and Mind of humanity. They are in complete accord with all that lives. They give their love to all living beings, as though they were the sons of the one sweet Mother. They have broken all fetters and entered into the freedom of the children of God. God does their will, because they have merged their wills in His. God fulfills their least desire, for it is He Who desires all their desires. They are the little saviors of humanity.

I wish each one of you to follow the lesson of humility, born of love and simplicity.²

—Sant Kirpal Singh

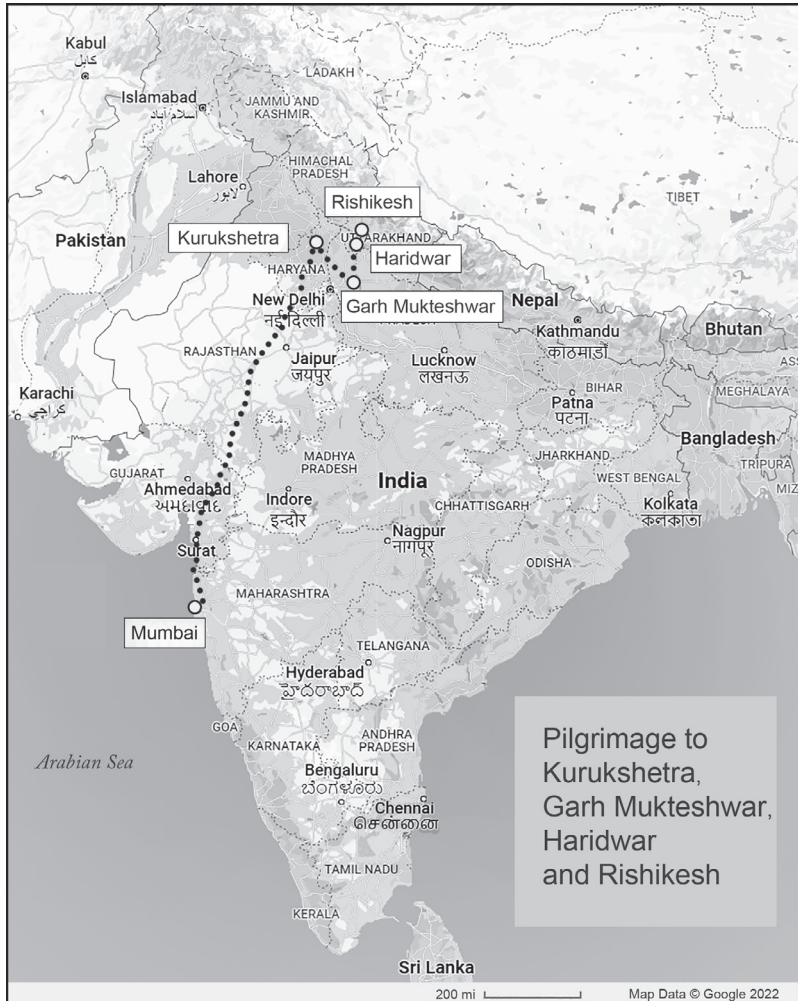
Journey to Kurukshetra for the Kumbha Mela

After returning from Nashik and Trimbak, and spending some weeks in Bombay, Baba Ji once again became restless. The time for the Kumbha Mela celebration in Kurukshetra was approaching, and he and his friend Urdhavabahu decided they would embark on a trek to Kurukshetra—over 900 miles by foot—to attend that illustrious gathering of sages and sadhus, in hopes of learning of the further way to God.

The Kumbha Mela is held periodically, at various holy sites throughout India. Kumbha means “pot,” and according to the mythological explanation of its origin, during the churning of the sea of milk to bring out its treasures, the devtas (gods and goddesses) and the demons fell to quarreling over a pot of amrit—the nectar of immortality—with the result that drops of amrit fell

2. Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, July 1971, “Humility,” p 23.

from the pot on the places that later became the holy sites of the Kumbha Mela celebrations. In modern times, this festival remains one the most important and best-known religious celebrations in India.



**Map 5: Pilgrimage to Kurukshetra,
Haridwar and Rishikesh**
(approximately 1116 mi/1796 km)

During Baba Ji's time sadhus, mahatmas, sages and seers from every conceivable branch of Hinduism and from every part of India came to participate, and it had long been Baba Ji's aspiration to attend the Kumbha Mela and take a holy bath in the river Ganges at an auspicious time as determined by the Vedic scholars.

So, Baba Somanath Ji and Urdhavabahu once again set forth with high hopes. Planning their trip so as to arrive for this ancient spiritual gathering, they became part of the huge surge of humanity traveling to that part of India. Baba Ji was also determined to continue on to Haridwar from where he would go deeper into the Himalayas and travel on the road, which, according to the Mahaprasthanika Parva³, the Pandavas took into the depths of the Himalaya mountains as they tried to ascend to Heaven.

Hence it was that the two of them left Bombay, the city that, in her talons of attachment, kept control over the vast majority of people. Maya, the goddess of illusion and forgetfulness, hovered about on all sides, endeavoring to stop them from slipping out of her grasp, but Baba Ji paid no heed to her treacherous devices. Only the desire to realize God accompanied him on his pilgrimage. He was pulled into North India feeling that there he would meet the One that would help him solve the Mystery of Life.

We can consider for a moment just how Guru Amar Das Ji worked and searched before he realized the Truth. For more than seventy years, he did all that was

3. "The Book of the Great Journey," the seventeenth book of the Mahabharata.

*recommended to find God: Jap (repetition of a name), tap (strict austerities), vrat (fasting), puja-path (devotional ritual and reading holy scriptures), tirath-yatra (pilgrimage), havan (fire ritual), dan (giving alms), kirtan (singing and playing holy music) and many other things. All were good actions, but he did not get a contact with God. Eventually he said, "I am extremely tired performing these karmas." With deep sincerity he had done all this.*⁴

—Sant Kirpal Singh

Kurukshetra

After a very long trek that took them through Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and into Haryana, they arrived at the city of Kurukshetra, also known as Dharmakshetra. According to Puranic legend the area around Kurukshetra was the site of the conflict in the great epic poem, Mahabharata.

They arrived on the auspicious day of the Kumbha Mela. Hundreds of thousands of sadhus and seekers had come to take a sacred bath that was said to wash away all impurities. Baba Ji sought out those who, like himself, were sincerely seeking for God, but as he moved amongst the huge congregation of sadhus assembled there, he could not see any sign of One capable of guiding him beyond where he had reached.

Baba Ji used to describe this visit to Kurukshetra in Satsang: "Hundreds of thousands of sadhus had gathered for the sacred bath. Each sect occupied their own camp, but out of all those assembled only some rare

4. Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, January 1971, "It is a Noble Search," p 6.

sadhu was actually engaged in meditation. In reality, most were dressed in sadhu's garb but were not engaged in devoted, spiritual practice."

Sadly, most of those in attendance were, at best, concerned only with outer practices or with acquiring supernatural powers, and, at worst, with plying their trade of deceiving the innocent devotees seeking spiritual merit. In this regard, Sant Ajaib Singh used to relate this amusing incident from Guru Nanak's sojourn in Kurukshetra:

Once Guru Nanak went to a place called Kurukshetra where there was a fake sadhu who was famous because he told people that he could see whatever was happening in all the three worlds. He would always close his eyes and sit with a cup in front of him. People were coming to worship him, and they would put some money in that cup, and he would just keep his eyes closed. After some time, he would open his eyes a little bit and see how much money had been collected in the cup so that he could transfer it to another bag that was behind his back.

So, Guru Nanak took that cup which was in front of him and he put that cup behind him. Then Guru Nanak sat in front of him, folding both his hands. When that so-called sadhu opened his eye to see how much money was collected, he didn't see that cup there. So, he opened both his eyes, and he asked Guru Nanak, "Where is my cup? Where is it? Who took it?" Guru Nanak said, "I am sitting here. I didn't take it."

The sadhu got upset and angry and he said, "Then who else has taken it?" Then Guru Nanak said, "You say you have the knowledge of the three worlds. You can

*see what is happening there, but you can't even see the cup which is behind you.*⁵

—Sant Ajaib Singh

As fate would have it, while at the Kumbha Mela, Baba Ji came in contact with his first spiritual mentor, Shivadaya Ji who was, in reality, a worldly person; of this Baba Ji was already aware. Baba Ji had, at one point, discovered that he was a married man and was using his outer position as a Guru as a means of making a living from which he could support his family. After Baba Ji had received initiation instructions from him and assiduously applied himself to the practices revealed to him, he far surpassed Shivadaya, who in practice could not follow Baba Ji's example.

Baba Ji had mastered the siddhi powers by virtue of difficult sadhanas. Outer signs of sanctity could not imitate this. Nonetheless, out of respect for what he had received from him, when Shivadaya demanded that Baba Ji give him whatever money he had, Baba Ji gave him the 10 rupees that were in his possession, which left him penniless.

But even after experiencing this type of behavior on the part of his spiritual preceptor, he did not lose heart. His experience had taught him that each person is evolving, at best, at their own rate and that one simply must focus on his/her own way forward with a forgiving heart for everyone.

It is difficult to fathom the grace that Shivadaya received from Baba Ji because of their relationship. Those

5. Michael Mayo-Smith, editor, *In Search of the Gracious One: An Account in His Own Words of The Spiritual Search and Discipleship of Sant Ajaib Singh* (Sanbornton, NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 2007) p 45.

who interact with a Saint at any point of their life in any way have a special place in their hearts and this association eventually becomes the source of their liberation also.

Garh Mukteshwar

After being amidst the mass of humanity present at the Kumbha Mela, and particularly after the incident with Shivadaya, Baba Ji was ready to move on to a solitary place where he could focus on his meditation.

So, at the conclusion of the Kumbha Mela, Baba Ji and his dear companion traveled to Garh Mukteshwar (a town currently in Uttar Pradesh) on the banks of the Ganges River, where Baba Ji sat to practice his *abhyās*. Others who had attended the Kumbha Mela had also come that way, and they congregated on the banks of the Ganges, only a short distance away, to take a sacred bath there. Baba Ji and his companion also participated in this symbolic event.

Their stay in Garh Mukteshwar was brief, and soon Baba Ji expressed his longing to visit the famous towns of Haridwar and Rishikesh farther up the Ganges River in the Himalayan foothills. Since his early childhood, the name of these most ancient of holy places rang in his ears and now, deep into his search, he wished to visit the locale that had been the home of many great rishis and munis.

Baba Ji and Urdhavabahu were now joined in their foot journey to Haridwar by a sadhu by the name of Paramananda Lal Ji, and another man, a wealthy merchant. Together, they turned their backs to Garh Mukteshwar and set out on the 90-mile trek northward

to Haridwar, where the sacred Ganges spills out of the Himalayan foothills and onto the vast Gangetic Plain.



Haridwar circa 1866

The sadhus were accustomed to walking long distances, but the strenuous nature of the journey caused sores to erupt on the feet of the merchant. Further, the primary food they took while traveling was sugarcane juice, and for the businessman, it was more of a deprivation than his body could endure. He contracted dysentery due to lack of proper nourishment and the stresses of the long journey on foot for which he was not suited. He had to break his journey at Haridwar and Urdhavabahu chose to stay behind to care for him.

Therefore, Baba Ji went ahead of his companions and traveled alone northward. On that segment of the journey, he had to endure yet more hunger and thirst than previously because, as one of the vows he had taken while following the Nathpanth, he would not of

himself beg for food. He considered it a dishonorable thing to spread his hands before anyone to ask for donations. Whatever food was given to him without his asking, he subsisted on that.

So, after four days of having no food at all, two rotis were given him by some loving soul. Before consuming them, he placed them alongside his meager belongings and then went first to take a bath in the Ganges. While he was bathing, a monkey came along and snatched them away. The happy monkey enjoyed an unexpected feast, but Baba Ji remained totally without food. In that state, he reached Rishikesh where he found refuge at the free resting place of Baba Kali Kamli Wale.

A Description of Rishikesh

Baba Ji was traveling through Rishikesh sometime in the late 1920s, so the following description is relevant. Swami Krishnananda (1922-2001) writes about the days of his spiritual preceptor Shri Swami Sivananda:

What was Rishikesh like in those days? It is really worthwhile to contemplate those conditions. Only those who can stretch their imaginations, like an artist, can behold the beauty of such an atmosphere.

When I was a little boy, I heard that monks used to carry fire on their heads when they travelled from Haridwar northwards to Badrinath. It must have been intensely cold that they carried fire on their heads. There were no roads from Haridwar onwards. It was a forest, a thick jungle inhabited by wild animals. Even some thirty or forty years ago people saw tigers in these forests. Nowadays the tigers must have left, or they died.

There was nothing here which could be called a human environment. It was considered as an abode of anchorites, ascetics, renunciates who could somehow manage to survive—by what means, God alone knows.

Incidentally, I may mention the hardships of the lives of these great saints and sadhus in those days. There was no question of food, because sadhus had no means of purchasing food and there was no other way of obtaining it.

There was a great saint called Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj, usually referred to as Baba Kali Kamli Wale because of the black blanket that he used to wear. Evidently, he was a master spirit in himself, which we can appreciate from the effect produced by his austerities, as can be seen today.

Pilgrims used to walk on hard ground that was covered with pebbles and stones. There was no footpath even worth the name, and there was no accommodation whatsoever on the way. We should not compare those days with the present when we can travel quickly by car and reach Badrinath and perhaps even return the same evening. Such comparisons cannot be made.

There were hardships galore, and unadulterated problems. Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj—Baba Kali Kamli Wale—observed the sorrows of these pilgrims, that they had no water and no food. It appears that he stood in the middle of the shambles of the little town of Rishikesh and insisted that some arrangements be made for the poor pilgrims.

He appealed to the well-to-do Seths, Marwadis, etc., that a chaultri (halting place) should be built in Rishi-

kesh and food should be offered to the sadhus, and facilities should also be provided along the way at various places for them to rest.

This is the story behind the founding of what is today called the Baba Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra, where hundreds and hundreds of sadhus are given free food. Incidentally, as a branch, as it were, the Swargashram Annakshetra was opened a little later. This ashram known as the Swargashram existed in a seed form, functioning in miniature during those days. This may not have been exactly in 1922 — maybe two or three years afterwards. It is not very clear to us.

One of the disciples of Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj, known as Atmaprakashanandaji Maharaj, settled down on the other side of the Ganga and named that location as Swargashram, and opened an Annakshetra for the resident sadhus there.

That was where Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj did his tapasya. There was no Sivananda Ashram. There was no Divine Life Society. There was nothing. There was just stone and thorn and jungle — no house, no human beings.⁶

—Swami Krishnananda

Having endured hardship on his journey to Rishikesh, Baba Ji stayed at the dharamshala of Baba Kali Kamli Wale Kshetra for several days during which he began to recuperate his strength. But, after a short while, he began to feel once again the intense and overwhelming feeling that somewhere in North India was to be

⁶ From the Swami Krishnananda website, subheading “Gurudev” https://www.swami-krishnananda.org/gurudev/gurudev_4.html

found the One whom he was looking for. He decided to proceed deeper into the Himalayas to the pilgrimage center of Triloknath to see if he might come in contact with some great soul who might be living amidst the vastness of the Himalayan range.

*Hang up the swing of love to-day! Hang the body
and the mind between the arms of the Beloved,
in the ecstasy of love's joy:
Bring the tearful streams of the rainy clouds to
your eyes, and cover your heart with the shadow
of darkness:
Bring your face nearer to His ear, and speak of the
deepest longings of your heart.
Kabir says: "Listen to me, brother! bring the vision
of the Beloved in your heart."*

—Kabir



Trek into the Himalayas: Rishikesh to Chintpurni

Baba Ji Meditates Outside in the Icy Cold

Paramananda Lal, the sadhu who had proceeded to Rishikesh at his own pace, joined Baba Ji there and accompanied him on the first part of his trek. He had a disciple living in a Princely state through which they had to pass—one of many places, both sacred and worldly, on the long journey to Baba Ji’s destination of Triloknath.



*Towering Himalayan Peaks
Viewed from the Foothills, circa 1869*

When they reached that disciple's village, set amidst the mountain snows, Paramananda Lal was afforded a cordial welcome by his disciple, but Baba Ji was left sitting outside on an exposed veranda. Sitting in the bitter cold with barely enough clothes to cover his spare frame and suffering from hunger, Baba Ji sat down and spent the entire night in meditation.

Some of the villagers, observing him sitting in this exposed position, approached him and suggested that he take some wood that was sitting beside the home of a wealthy merchant. This would enable him to build a sacred dhuni fire beside which he could sit and do his meditation while benefiting from the fire's heat. But Baba Ji refused to beg for anything from anyone and would not take the wood by stealth.

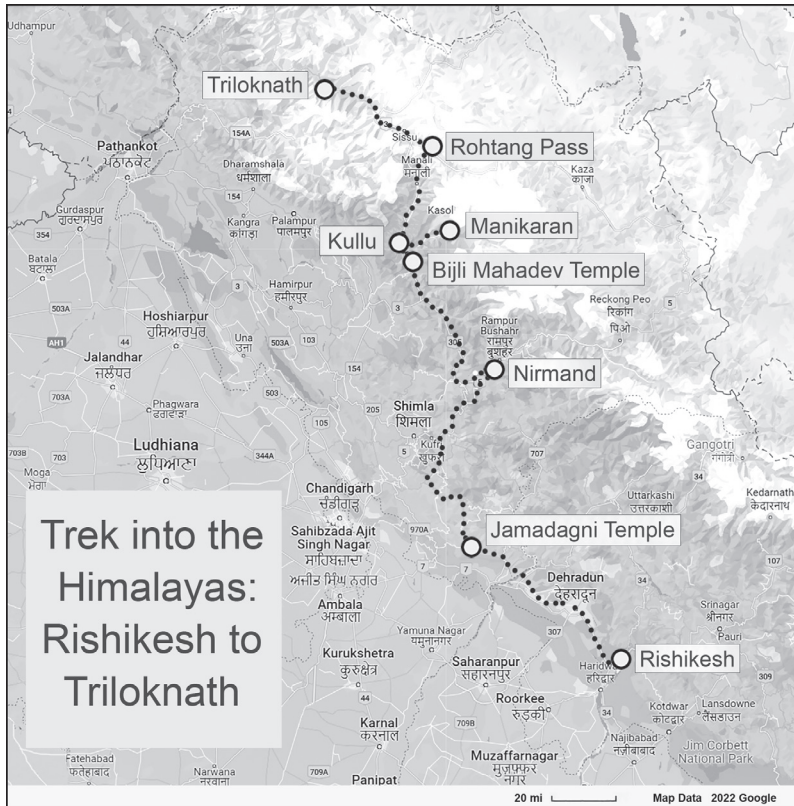
Finally, one man, having compassion on Baba Ji's situation, collected some money from amongst the village folk and used a portion of it for buying some wood for Baba Ji to build a fire to protect himself from the cold. He presented the wood to Baba Ji and gave the remaining money to him to purchase food and to assist with expenses he might incur on his journey deeper into the mountains.

Baba Ji, realizing that the money would be helpful as he proceeded on the long trek towards Triloknath, gratefully accepted the financial donation and the wood so lovingly offered him.

When Paramananda Lal came to know of what had transpired, he approached Baba Ji and offered to take the responsibility of being his guide into the deeper reaches of the mountain vastness.

Baba Ji, being by nature sincere, trusting and free of greed, failed to denote the guile inherent in Paramananda

Lal Ji's behavior and entrusted into his care the money that had been given to him by the villagers.



Map 6: Trek into the Himalayas: Rishikesh to Triloknath
(approximately 437 mi / 704 km)

Unconcerned and unaware of what his needs might be, he placed his welfare in the hands of a greedy, av-
aricious man. What can a person who has these qual-
ities infusing his mind know of the devotion of God?
Understanding Paramananda Lal as an alert person who
could guide him through the mountains, he accepted his
assistance.

Despair on Seeing Animal Sacrifice in the Temple

The entire region through which they passed was still covered with snow, for spring was yet far away. Baba Ji had little more than a loincloth and coarse blanket to cover his limbs and battered sandals to protect his feet. Under these perilous traveling conditions, they reached the Rishi Jamadagni Ashram located near the village of Jamu, 2,000 feet above the Giri River. After resting there for a short while, they proceeded on their journey. Mile by mile they progressed north-by-northwest over the many ridges and valleys of the Himalayan foothills.

At one place, they came to a temple of Mahadevi. Approaching the sanctuary with great faith, Baba Ji beheld the temple full of the blood of slaughtered goats. The temple priests were using the blood for religious ablutions while he stood watching with great consternation. Seeing this done in the name of divine worship, he became depressed and despondent. He had traveled so far to an area of India celebrated for its sanctity and purity, yet such cruel and heartless sacrifices were being made of harmless animals, and this troubled his heart greatly.

Leaving that dreadful scene, he and Paramananda Lal Ji continued on their journey towards the Kullu Valley and Triloknath, the site of the Shri Trilokinath Temple, but after a short distance of trekking in the Himalayan wilderness with no assurance of food or places to rest at night, Paramananda Lal Ji became fed up with the company of this selfless Sadhu because wherever he went with him, only difficulties were encountered and nothing else. So, he decided to part company with Baba Ji, and to this Baba Ji had no objection, bidding farewell to his erstwhile guide without rancor. After Paramananda

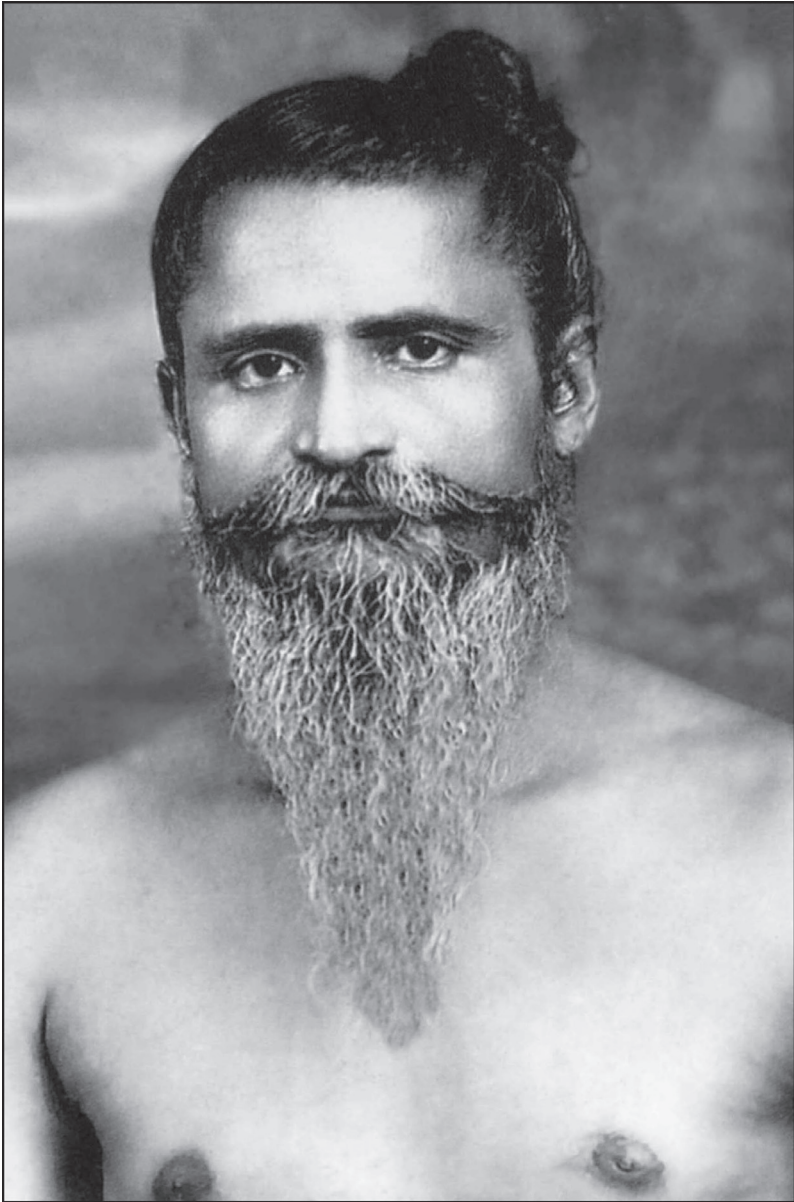
Lal Ji had left him, Baba Ji was still determined to remain in the sacred precincts of the Himalayas. He had the yearning to meet with other renunciates who were sequestered in the mountains. Thus, Baba Ji continued deep in the Himalayas with nothing to guide him but his intense yearning to meet sages and seers who could help him on the path to God-realization.

The Near-Death Incident at Gurudev Mandir

In order to cross over the snowy region that lay before him, he had to concentrate all his attention within and keep his eye on the goal ahead. He had heard tell of a famous local temple called Gurudev Mandir located in a remote area. There he hoped to meet some renunciate recluses who could guide him on the inner way.

But when he arrived at the Gurudev Mandir, instead of meeting with high and holy ones, he saw walls of the temple lined with goat's horns. While standing in the inner sanctum silently contemplating this grim scene, he heard shouts and cries outside the temple. Bursting in to where he stood came a crowd of mountain folk who surrounded him, dragged him outside and bound him to a tree.

Unbeknownst to him, there was a law of that area that it was forbidden that anyone should enter the temple without first sacrificing a goat. If anyone did so, even in ignorance, their own life was forfeit. Helpless in this situation, distressing and perplexing thoughts arose in his heart. He had traveled far and wide in search of an enlightened Master to guide him on the Path of Liberation, and now it appeared his human birth was going to be wasted in this wretched manner, without unraveling the mystery of life and achieving the emancipation he



Baba Somanath Ji

sought from the Wheel of Transmigration.

That he had sacrificed body, mind and wealth to realize God did not concern him, for he had done so with a sincere heart. It was better to die in that quest than to live in any other way, but he felt a great sadness that after such a search, he was going to die at the hands of those who, while having human bodies, were but demons from within.

Again and again, the prayer issued forth from his heart that he might be rescued from this unbearably difficult situation so that he could continue his quest.

His prayer was answered when the village headman appeared on the scene. Having a merciful feeling toward this wandering sadhu, the headman explained to the villagers that he himself would sacrifice a goat to fulfill the necessary condition, which they accepted. Baba Ji was thus liberated from the life-and-death situation and, leaving that place, he continued his journey in search of the Divine.

The Kullu and Parvati Valleys

Emerging from this difficult encounter, his desire to continue his journey, far from being extinguished, instead burned ever brighter. His path into the wintry Himalayas was through the Kullu Valley, and he likely stopped at the little town of Kullu on his way to Bijli Mahadev Mandir—the temple on an 8,000-foot ridge with a magnificent view. To the south was the Kullu Valley carved by the River Beas, and to the northeast lay the Parvati Valley with its hot springs and the Parvati River, a tributary to the River Beas. From Bijli Mahadev Mandir, he walked east to the pilgrimage center of Manikaran, a side trip of about 30 miles.

The Sacred City of Nirmand

After thoroughly exploring Manikaran and the surrounding area, he traversed another segment of his Great Pilgrimage. The walk from Manikaran southwards to the town of Nirmand—an ancient city with many places of religious importance—was a solitary winter trek of 115 miles over some of the higher snowy elevations of the Himalayas. This was a trip he deemed worthwhile even though it took him farther from Triloknath.

Meditation and Prayer at a Nathpanth Ashram

Having visited the sacred temples and rivers of Manikaran and Nirmand, Baba Ji made the long trek back to the Kullu Valley where there was a Nathpanth ashram. Members of the Nath sect could meditate and rest there for a while before continuing on their journeys. Baba Ji decided to rest and recuperate for a few days before commencing his journey to Triloknath located high up in the Himalayas.

The Kullu Valley itself was a place of profound beauty, unspoiled by the hand of man and pristine at the time Baba Ji visited there. Amidst the majestic surrounding of the towering mountains, the vibrant, rushing Beas River and the dense forests of pine and deodar cedar, Baba Ji wandered, all the while earnestly praying to that Almighty Power that was the fountainhead of Light and Love, to kindly make Itself manifest in the form of an illumined Living Master whom he could love and serve and receive guidance from.

Outwardly, he did not know what else he could do. He felt the whole thing was entirely beyond him. It seemed that he was lost in the dark night of the soul—nothing he had hoped and prayed for in terms of finding freedom from the thralldom of the mind had come to pass. All

he could do was press onward earnestly and hope that someday the gates of freedom would be opened to him.



Rohtang Pass

After spending several days in meditation amidst his brother disciples, the thought came into his mind that he should now proceed towards Triloknath. While at the ashram he had the opportunity to interact with many yogis of his sect.

Through contact with them and conversations regarding their quest for Truth, he came to know that the majority had adopted the outer dress and lifestyle of a renunciate yogi simply as a means of making a living and very few were applying themselves to focused meditation, pranayama and the other sadhanas that were the core of the life of a Nathpanth sadhu. Be that as it may, he enjoyed spending time in the congenial atmosphere of the ashram as he gained strength for his onward journey.

Pilgrimage to Shri Trilokinath Temple

Finally, he was prepared to set out for the last leg of his journey to visit the Shri Trilokinath Temple, deep in the higher reaches of the Himalayas, situated about six miles from the modern-day village of Udaipur in the Lahul and Spiti District of Himachal Pradesh, at an elevation of 9055 feet above sea level.

The path to reach there was the most challenging he had faced to date, as it was buried in snow and treacherous in places. The distance to be covered on foot was 120 miles from the Kullu Valley ashram where he had been resting. When he announced his intention to go there several other sadhus decided to accompany him, as they were impressed by his courage and enthusiasm in tackling one of the most difficult pilgrimage routes existing in India. It is said that to make this trek was like ascending the cross of crucifixion and indeed it proved to be so. It is thought that this trek took place in the month of March or April when the route to the temple was still covered in snow and difficult to discern.

They would have to surmount the ridge that divides the River Beas from the Chenab River valley, over a pass more than 13,000 feet high. Tightly binding blankets about their bodies and wrapping their feet and hands in makeshift cloth gloves and shoes, they set forth holding in their minds the goal before them.

As they progressed higher and higher, the temperatures dipped lower and lower. One of the yogis passed out from exposure to the elements. To save him from certain death, they quickly collected scarce twigs and branches to start a fire and placed the unconscious yogi beside it. Initially, he was unresponsive but slowly, through the warmth of the fire, life returned to his frozen limbs. Revitalized, he was able to proceed forward with

the help of several of his companions and the party finally reached Triloknath. But having finally attained their most cherished goal, they found the Shri Trilokinath Temple locked and empty. No priest remained there during the season of bitter cold. And instead of the spiritual upliftment they sought, they found the now all-too-familiar remains of Aghori animal sacrifice.

Thus, the final blow was administered to Baba Ji's heart and mind. He had come deep into the Himalayas hoping to gain ultimate emancipation by sitting at the feet of a fully awakened Saint. But instead, he had before his very eyes the real experience of his own near demise at the hands of demonic beings in human form, where the temple floors were covered with the blood of innocent animals, the smell of which was nauseating.

Furthermore, he had sat at the feet of many Sufi and Hindu mystics requesting them, with an open heart, to reveal to him a Path beyond that which he had achieved, i.e., the one that led through the conquering of the seven chakras of the body and acquiring supernatural powers as the kundalini ascended along the spinal column up to the eye center. But none had reached beyond the Thousand-Petaled Lotus, the Sahas-dal-Kanwal.

Pondering over all he had experienced on his long treks, he was at last convinced, beyond all doubt, that the way out of this tumultuous sea of life and into the infinite sea of Love was not via pilgrimage, performance of rites and rituals, fasts, austerities, pranayama, mudras, or other observances pertaining to the physical and mental dimensions of life. He had done all these things with the deepest sincerity, hoping that he would find inner peace and God realization through them, but to no avail.

He realized there was a Path beyond all these man-made methods adopted for uniting with that Hidden

Power, but as to Who held the secret of that Path he had not been graced to know. He felt a deep and abiding compassion for all creatures: human, animal, birds, etc., for in them he saw his own soul yearning for the Light and Love of God. The struggles and trials endured during his quest to uncover the mystery of life had opened his heart to all life forms as each was bound while revolving in the intricate Wheel of Life due to the veil of gross and subtle dimensions of illusion covering the soul since times immemorial.

The sum total of all his experiences was that there was no real and lasting way out of this dilemma save by the grace of a Benign Power hidden deep within the folds of the heart and no human endeavor could force that inner door to open. His heart was profoundly perplexed and disturbed by the question as to how he was to find someone who possessed the key that would open the secret passage into that realm of Grace and Mercy where the soul could finally rest and then lose herself in the Infinite Sea of all Consciousness.

Kabir's Bhajan Gives Solace to His Heart

At this critical juncture, a beautiful bani of Kabir Sahib, arose in his heart, giving him comfort and courage to go on:

*Moko kahāñ ḍhūñḍheñ bande,
Main to tere pās meñ.*

My friend, where do you search for me?
I am residing within you.

*Nā tīrath meñ, nā mūrat meñ,
Nā ekānt nivās meñ.
Nā mandir meñ, nā masjid meñ,
Nā kābe kailāsh meñ.*

Not in pilgrimages, not in idols,
 nor in the lonely places,
 You won't find me in the temple,
 nor in the mosque,
 Not in *Kābha* or in *Kailāsh*.¹

*Nā maiñ jap meñ, nā maiñ tap meñ,
 Nā maiñ vrat upvās meñ.
 Nā maiñ kriyā kram meñ rahtā,
 Nā hī yog sañyās meñ.*

I am not in repetitions, nor in austerities,
 Not in fasts, not in rites and rituals,
 Nor in the renunciation of the yogis.

*Khojī hoe turant mil jāūñ,
 Ek pal kī hī talāsh meñ.
 Kahe Kabīr suno bhāī sādho,
 Maiñ to hūñ vishvās meñ.*

Seek earnestly and you will find me in
 the blink of an eye.
 Kabir says: Listen, O brother sadhu,
 Where your faith is, there I am also.

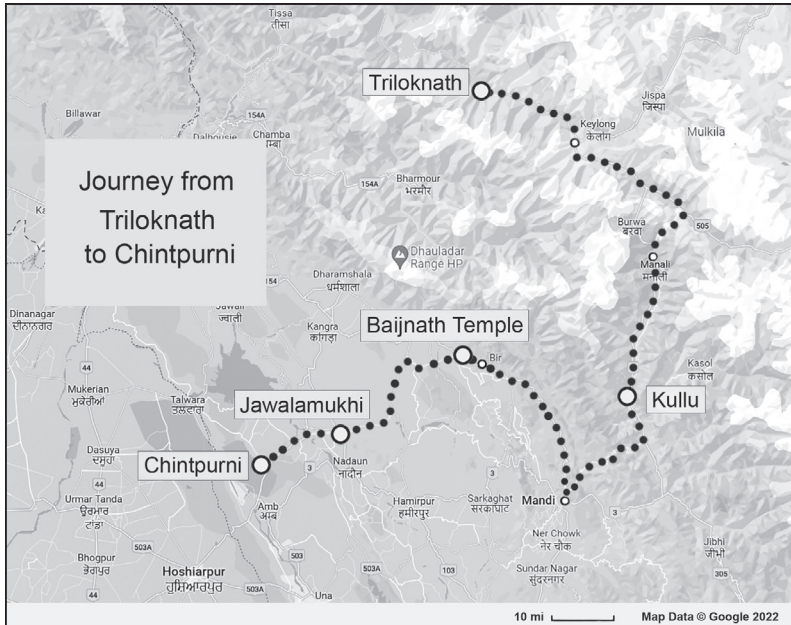
*Moko kahāñ dhūñdheñ bande,
 Maiñ to tere pās meñ.*

My friend, where do you search for me?
 I am residing within you.

The beauty of this astonishing and amazing bhajan
 flowed through his heart and mind, yet still his soul

1. The *Kābha* is a holy Muslim shrine in the sacred city of Mecca. Mount *Kailāsh* is a mountain peak in the Himalayan range, sacred in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. *Kailāsh* takes its name, meaning “crystal” from Lord Shiva’s celestial paradise.

ached for he could not perceive what inner shortcoming was preventing the meeting with a perfect Mystic Adept who could reveal to him the Path back to the True Home of the soul. Over and over this troubling thought churned about in his mind.



*Map 7: Journey from Triloknath to Chintpurni
approximately 251 mi / 404 km*

Even while he was supported within by the wisdom revealed in Kabir's bhajan, on the human level he could not see his way forward. Yet it was through that cloud of unknowing that his path lay, as it was only in that state could his soul be made ready to meet that great and pure Being who would bathe his questing spirit in the union he sought.

The Kangra Valley and Visit to Baijnath Temple

Baba Ji now began his trek back over the high pass and then down towards the plains by slow degrees. His return journey took him again through the Kullu Valley from where he had commenced his journey to Triloknath.

The weather was becoming milder as the spring season had begun in the lower reaches of the Himalayas. From there he headed west towards the Kangra Valley. He briefly rested at many temples and dharmashalas along the way.

As he journeyed through the Kangra Valley he visited the Baijnath Temple and several other temples where the Pandavas were said to have worshiped in their thirteenth year of exile. Finally, he halted briefly at the famous Jawala Ji Shrine in Jawalamukhi, before arriving at Chintpurni, from where he would commence his auspicious descent into the plains of Punjab.

Dear friend, I am eager to meet my Beloved!

*My youth has flowered, and the pain of separation
from Him troubles my breast.*

*I am wandering yet in the alleys of knowledge without
purpose, but I have received His news in these
alleys of knowledge.*

*I have a letter from my Beloved: in this letter is an
unutterable message, and now my fear of death
is done away.*

*Kabir says: "O my loving friend! I have got for my
gift the Deathless One."*

—Kabir

On the Plains of the Punjab



Bullock Cart Drivers on a Country Road in Punjab

Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar and on to Amritsar and Beas

From Chintpurni, Baba Ji began his descent toward the plains. Passing through Hoshiarpur, he walked on to Jalandhar, a town located between the Sutlej and Beas rivers. (According to folk etymology, the name is literally derived from the words for water, *jal*, and within, *andar*.) Little did Baba Ji realize, as his quest led him now into the ancient land of the Sikh Gurus, that the time for his spiritual search to finally bear fruit was very near.

In Jalandhar, he rested in an ashram for several days. While doing so, he met one sadhu who suggested that they travel together to the great city of Amritsar where they could visit the resplendent Golden Temple, the most venerated place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs. It was also nearing the Diwali season, so they could enjoy the festival, which was celebrated all over India with great enthusiasm and delight.

Ironically, on the journey to Amritsar, they passed through the town of Beas, near to which was located Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, the ashram of Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj, but the time for their meeting had not yet come.

Diwali at Amritsar and Return to Beas

Amritsar was historically known as *Rāmdāspur*, named after the fourth Sikh Guru, Ram Das. It is home to Harmandir Sahib, popularly known as “the Golden Temple,” one of Sikhism’s most spiritually significant and most-visited gurdwaras.

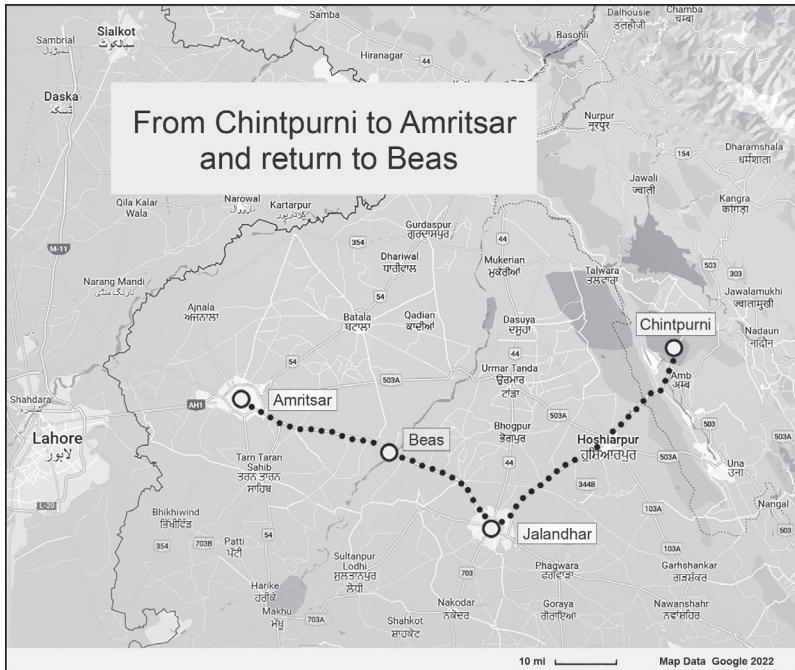
After spending several days in the celebratory atmosphere of the sacred city of the Sikhs, they decided to venture back the way they had come.

Despite the gaiety of the world around him, Baba Ji’s heart was restless and despondent. The feeling of being separated from the source of Life was consuming him. Deprived of the union that was the only thing that held meaning for him, he could not find any happiness in the worldly festivities. And so, once again, he and his companion turned their footsteps towards Beas.

A Devoted Sikh Lady Tells Them of the Great Saint

As they traveled along the path, they came near to the Beas railway station where a Sikh lady lovingly

called out to them to stop so she could prepare them a nourishing meal.



Map 8: From Chintpurni through Beas to Amritsar and back to Beas (approximately 130 mi / 210 km)

Looking at Baba Ji's worn and weary physical and mental condition, resulting from his long yet unsuccessful search for God, she spoke these sympathetic words: "You have made a long and difficult journey in search of God. Just nearby to this railway station there is an ashram wherein dwells an immaculate Saint. Go to him and, through his company, you will gain the benefit of Satsang, and through his luminous form you will behold the Almighty Lord."

But the sadhu Baba Ji was traveling with refused to

accept her suggestion saying that the ashram was a stronghold of the Sikh religion and, that being the case, the entrance into the precincts where the Guru was staying would be forbidden. He concluded by saying, "The lifestyle of the sadhu is not appreciated, so going there is of no benefit to us."



Har Mandir, The Golden Temple, 1870

This, in fact, was a gross misunderstanding of the Saints, for the hallmark of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji's court was love for all, and he had equal respect for those who followed a solitary, renunciate life and for those who were drawn to the path of the householder. His universal outlook was such that the followers of all religions and faiths were dear to his heart. But the sadhu was not attuned to this all-embracing message, and he

pressed Baba Ji to accompany him to the nearby village of Daulangarh.

Setting up Camp in Daulangarh

Outside the village a wide-spreading tree was found, beneath which they made their camp and started the sacred dhuni fire. In order to attract the attention of the villagers, the sadhu adopted a prayerful attitude while standing on one leg and rotating a rosary in his hand. Seeing this Baba Ji said, "If this is a technique for God realization, then kindly give me instruction as to how to do it properly."

But the sadhu replied that this apparent display of religious fervor was simply being done to attract the innocent people so they would make donations of food to fill their bellies and money for their onward journey.

A short while later, a Sikh gentleman approached them begging permission to bring some home-cooked food as he wished to serve devotees of the Almighty Lord. But the sadhu curtly replied that, "We do not eat prepared food. But you can send us the uncooked food items, and we will prepare the food ourselves." This deeply hurt the gentleman, and he departed never to return.

Baba Ji himself became upset and asked why the sadhu had talked with the gentleman in such a rude fashion. The sadhu said that prepared food was very common, and it would be better that they prepare their own food directly from ghee, cream and other raw ingredients. Baba Ji reproached the sadhu for his disrespectful behavior toward the devotee who had lovingly offered to feed them.

Because of the sadhu's rash words, the two of them were compelled to go without food for two days because

no villager came forth to serve them. On the third day, the sadhu commanded Baba Ji to go to the village to beg from door to door. Hearing this Baba Ji thought to himself, "What type of meditation can a person do while eating cream and clarified butter? And what possible benefit can be gained in his company?"

Meanwhile, the sadhu had taken up the position of a headstand to attract the people. Seeing him perform this apparent act of piety, Baba Ji felt it was no more than a deceptive circus performance meant to coax people into parting with their hard-earned money just to support the desires of a greedy man. By such deceptions, would not one's burden of sins increase? Baba Ji then realized how difficult it was to gain the company of a true sadhu.

The word "sadhu," when used in its true context meant one who was free of all worldly desires and had bathed in the inner pool of nectar beyond the regions of mind and matter. The beautiful words contained in a hymn of Tukaram, the famous devotional poet of Maharashtra, arose in his heart:

He chi dān degā devā, tujhā visar na vḥāvā

O Lord, Grant me this one boon
That I may never forget You

Gun gāin āvadi, he chi mājhī sarv jodī

May I praise You with Love
And remain always absorbed in You

Na lage mukti āni sampadā, Sant sang deī sadā

Money and liberation I need not
But grant me the company of the Saints.

Tukā mhane garbh vāsī, sukhe ghālāve āmhāsī

Tukaram says, I will remain forever joyous
 if I have the Saint's company,
 Even if I should be sent once again into the womb
 of the mother.

And the sacred words of Sant Tulsī Das also reverberated in his mind:

*Sant samāgam Hari kathā Tulsī durlabh doyī,
 Sūt dārā arū lakshmī pāpī ke bhī hoyī.*

Even the sinner has son, wife and wealth;
 O Tulsī, to have the company of the Saint and
 to listen to the stories of God is very rare.

Baba Ji Offers a Plaintive Prayer

Baba Ji found himself in conflict as to what direction he should proceed as he felt uncomfortable in the company of the sadhu he had been traveling with. Three days more passed, and the villagers paid no heed to the sadhus staying beneath the tree outside of the village. The sadhu was very upset with Baba Ji for his steadfast refusal to beg alms, and finally, he became so perturbed that he cursed the villagers and departed.

Relieved of the burden of the sadhu's presence, Baba Ji remained sitting where he was. The atmosphere of the place was very congenial, and he felt it would be an appropriate place to meditate. The desire to meet God, the Lord of the Universe, was far more intense than concern for physical nourishment. In this state of anguish and separation from the Hidden Power, immanent yet not perceptible to him, he took up his daphali (small tambourine) and ektara (one-stringed instrument) and began to sing:

Māulīchiyā bhetīsāthī ātur ho tānhā

O Divine Mother, your child is longing to meet
You.¹

Over and over the plaintive words tumbled forth from his heart, filling the atmosphere with their poignant vibrations, hearing which a Brahmin who was passing nearby was drawn into his presence. Filled with the spirit of devotion, the Brahmin, folding his hands, asked Baba Ji how he came to be sitting there all alone, and why he was feeling so destitute. He was a resident of that very village. Baba Ji haltingly told him a few words about himself.

After learning that Baba Ji had not eaten for a number of days and that he had been forced to fast because of the disrespectful attitude of his former traveling companion, the Brahmin, with great humility, asked Baba Ji if he might accept food that he would bring from his home. Baba Ji gladly accepted this loving appeal and with great enthusiasm the Brahmin went to his home and brought back a nourishing meal prepared by his wife.

Baba Ji gratefully ate the meal that had been offered with such an innocent, pure love. Having been the recipient of such kindness, he resolved to remain under the shelter of the tree for the foreseeable future, as he could not conceive of where his journey would take him next.

Baba Ji Meets a Disciple of Baba Sawan Singh Ji

Now the auspicious time was approaching when his cries and pleas for the guidance of a Perfect Master, a

1. Shrimati Megha Chandrakant Telang, *Somālaya* (Mumbai: Baba Somanath Ji Radhaswami Satsang Trust, 1980), p 60.

Murshid-i-Kamil or Sant Satguru were to be answered. His prayers had not been in vain, but the time for the meeting of the true disciple and the Perfect Master is pre-ordained. The hardships, difficulties and experiences of his entire life were the ground upon which the edifice of deep devotion had been built. With such a preparation, all that was left was for the Living Master to give him the spark of Naam, the Transcendent Celestial Sound Current, for his soul to break through the veil of mind and matter to enter the realm of pure spirit.

*Maharaj Kirpal Singh, the True Lord, used to say that in Sant Mat there is no difference of years. A pure and loving soul, if it comes in contact with a Saint, is just like putting fire near dry gunpowder. Many people say of somebody, "He is a new initiate;" but what is there, new or old? This is not government service!*²

—Sant Ajaib Singh

Because of the gentle ministrations of the Brahmin, Baba Ji was able to rest and recuperate a bit after his long and arduous trek through the Himalayas.

One morning, while Baba Ji was sitting quietly beneath the tree outside the village, the local schoolmaster, who was himself a sincere practitioner of meditation and a Vedantic scholar, came and sat before Baba Ji while remaining silent. Baba Ji himself did not offer to speak. After enjoying the peaceful atmosphere for some time, the schoolmaster got up and went to the school to attend to his responsibilities. This routine was followed for several days.

2. Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, February 1977, "One Who is Thirsty Will Ask for Water," p 23.

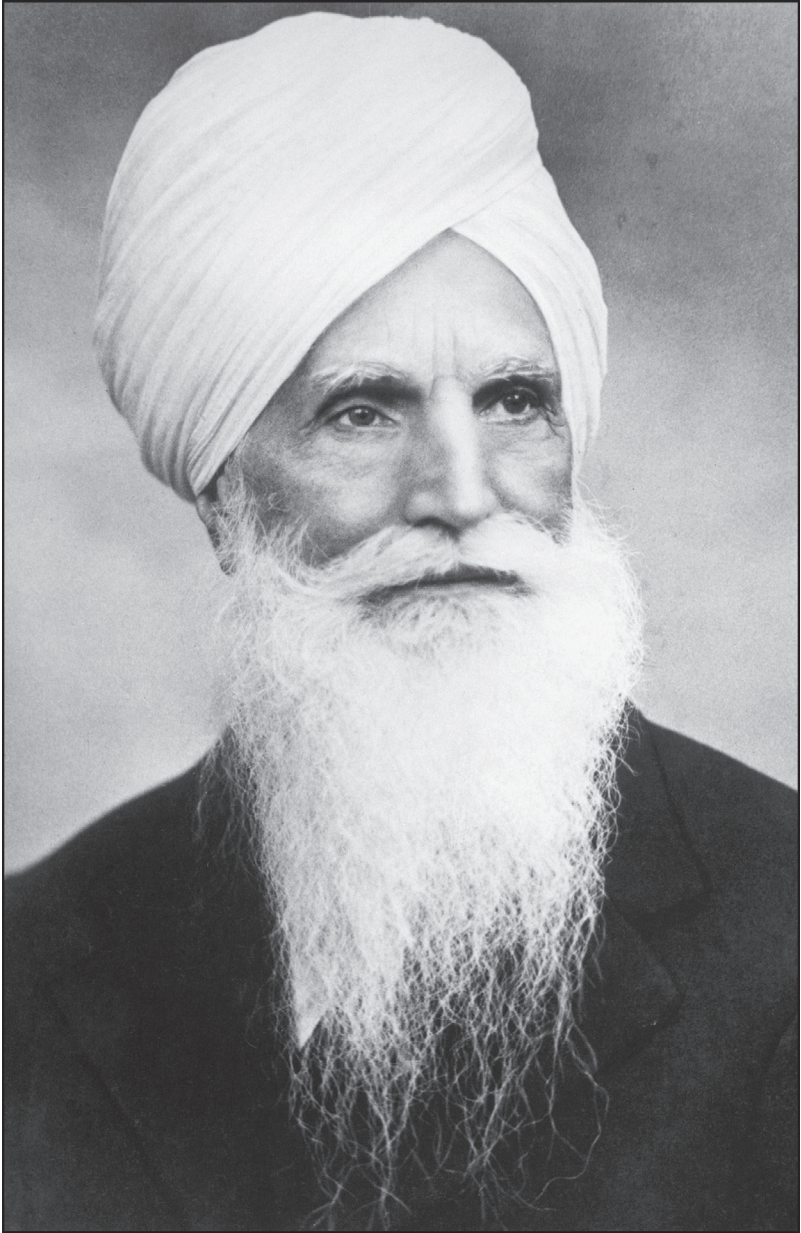
There is an old dictum, "When two sadhus meet together then they exchange divine knowledge with each other." So, one day, Baba Ji asked the schoolmaster, "Brother, are you engaged in some type of meditation, some spiritual practice? If so, by what name is it called?"

The schoolmaster respectfully replied, "I follow the Path of Surat Shabd Yoga, the Path of the soul's union with the Divine Light and Celestial Sound Current, the practice of which I have obtained from my Sant Satguru, Baba Sawan Singh Ji. Under his guidance I am proceeding along the inner way."

When these words emerged from his mouth, Baba Ji perceived in them a nectar-like sweetness. Baba Ji then requested the schoolmaster, Mahadaya, to kindly allot some time to share with him knowledge of the Path he was following. He agreed to do so but first Mahadaya requested Baba Ji to tell him of his search and what type of meditation he was doing and what were the practical results he had achieved. He asked Baba Ji if he had found peace through the path he was following. Mahadaya was a very perceptive soul and recognized in Baba Ji the signs of a true seeker of God.

In reply, Baba Ji informed Mahadaya that he was initiated into the practices of the Nathpanth and that by practicing Hatha Yoga and following the Eight-fold Path as prescribed by Patanjali, he had gained some inner ascent via which he had acquired the supernatural and miraculous powers. Mahadaya then enquired if, through his meditation, he had been able to rise above the limiting confines of the physical, astral, and causal bodies and, having transcended them, entered the state of Natural Equipose referred to by Perfect Saints as Sahaj³ Samadhi.

3. Sahaj: the state of equipose beyond the turmoil of the physical, astral and causal worlds with all their enchanting panorama, and where the great principle of Life is seen within.



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

By communion with the Naam, one attains the state of Sahaj;

O Nanak! His devotees live in perpetual ecstasy, for the Naam washes away all sin and sorrow.⁴

—Guru Nanak

He specifically put this question to Baba Ji because he was aware that Hatha Yoga placed a lot of emphasis on the disciplined culture of the physical body, whereas Patanjali Yoga concerned itself with a balance of physical and mental disciplines.

Patanjali, the reputed father of the yoga system, after the fashion of his progenitor Gaudapada, defines yoga as elimination of the vritis or modulations that always keep surging in the mind-stuff or chit in the form of ripples. He calls it chit vriti nirodha or the suppression of the vritis, i.e., clearing the mind of the mental oscillations.⁵

—Sant Kirpal Singh

For achieving the different levels of Samadhi, Mahadaya was aware that the yogis adopted the padmasana or full lotus posture⁶ to prepare themselves for entering Samadhi.

4. Kirpal Singh, *The Jap Ji: The Message of Guru Nanak* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1964) stanza 10, p 96.

5. Kirpal Singh, *The Crown of Life: A Study in Yoga* (Irvine, CA: Ruhani Satsang, 1997) p 4.

6. Lotus position, or padmasana, is a cross-legged sitting asana originating in meditative practices of ancient India, in which each foot is placed on the opposite thigh. It is an ancient asana, pre-dating hatha yoga and is commonly used for meditation in many traditions.

The term samadhi is derived from two Sanskrit roots: sam, with its English equivalent "syn," means "together with," and adhi (the Primal Being) with its Hebrew equivalent of Adon or Adonai, which denotes "Lord;" the two together, sam plus adhi, denoting a state in which the mind is completely absorbed in the Lord or God. It is a state in which all limiting forms drop away and the individual, with his individuality all dissolved, experiences the great truth—Ayam Athma Brahma—"I am Thou." It is the last and culminating stage in the long, drawn-out process of experimental yoga and may therefore be said to be the efflorescence of the yogic system. The dhyān itself gradually develops into samadhi when the contemplator or the meditator loses all thought of himself, and the mind becomes dhya-rupa, the very form of his thought. In this state the aspirant is not conscious of any external object save of Consciousness itself, a state of all Bliss or perfect happiness.⁷

—Sant Kirpal Singh

The schoolmaster, being well-versed in Vedānta and esoteric Hindu spiritual literature, proceeded to question Baba Ji about every facet of what he had practically done and experienced through the complicated sadhanas of the Nathpanth yogic tradition. He was amazed and delighted to be in the company of one who had, in reality, achieved perfection of every phase of what most people had only read about, much less practiced.

As he probed Baba Ji further, Mahadaya came to know that he had successfully traveled on the kundalini power

7. Kirpal Singh, *The Crown of Life: A Study in Yoga* (Irvine, CA: Ruhani Satsang, 1997) p 74.

through the practice of pranayama and all the accompanying sadhanas; and that he could enter Samadhi up to the stage of the Thousand-Petaled Lotus, the Sahas-dal-Kanwal, the capital of the Astral Heavens, but he could ascend no further on the pranas because their source originated in the Astral Plane.

In that process he had heard the intoxicating strains of the Divine Melody associated with that region—the Bell and Conch sounds—as well as other lower manifestations of the Sound Current. With yet deeper concentration, he had been able to enter the Causal Realm and had reached the peak of Brahmand, but he could not go further as he had not found a Master who had the key to the Supra Causal Planes (Par Brahm and Beyond). His heart told him that there must be something beyond what he had experienced for even with such a high ascent he had not discovered the fountainhead of Love and Devotion to God which he ardently sought. He had found no lasting peace in all that he had experienced within.

It was for Baba Ji also a pleasure to share his experiences with such a kind and knowledgeable fellow-traveler on the Path. His questions were deep and penetrating, revealing a profound theoretical knowledge of all he had done, yet there was an elevated wisdom prompting the questions which moved Baba Ji deeply. He sensed that he was on the verge of hearing about the Path that up to this time had evaded his grasp.

Mahadaya, the schoolmaster, tells Baba Ji more of the Path of Surat Shabd Yoga and of his Sant Satguru, Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj

When Mahadaya began to speak of the higher manifestations of the Sound Current, tears of joy began to stream down Baba Ji's cheeks as—for the first time in his

long quest for knowledge covering thousands of miles throughout India and meetings with many mystics—he was hearing of the Path that he had earnestly longed to follow but did not know how to gain knowledge of. His tears of joy were accompanied by an inner conviction that finally he was nearing the goal of his life.

Shabd is All-consciousness. It is just a wave in the sea of consciousness. Man is a drop of the Ocean of God, and both are of the same spirit. While one is the Ocean, the other is the wave and the third is a drop of All-conscious God. The wave of conscious Shabd cannot but, like a powerful magnet, attract and draw to itself the conscious drop of the spirit. The spirit finds no rest until, riding upon the Sound Current, it reaches the heavenly home of the Father and attains salvation. The sound is surging in Its fullness and the spirit needs but to contact It to rise above all limitations into the limitless eternity.

*Surat and Shabd are naturally related to each other. Shabd is characterized by Light and Sound principles, wherewith the mind gets stilled and the spirit, freed from the clutches of the mind, is irresistibly drawn by the Shabd and is taken to her native home from where the Sound Current is emanating. On the other hand, those who take up practices involving Pranas cannot go beyond the frontiers of Prana, which extend to the mental or astral heaven (Chidakash). But a Shabd-yogin can go freely, openly and honorably to wherever he likes, because Shabd pervades everywhere without any limitations, and reach the true home of his Father.*⁸

—Sant Kirpal Singh

8. Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word* (Tilton, NH: The Sant Bani Press, 1974) p 168.

The schoolmaster, seeing Baba Ji's reaction, continued to unveil more details of that hidden path beyond the reach of traditional yogic practices. He explained that, just as in all other spheres of spiritual practice, one also needs a spiritual guide who was himself accomplished in the practice of the Word or Surat Shabd Yoga and, having followed that Path, had, step by step, passed through all the stages of the spiritual quest until complete absorption in the Nameless region (Anami Desh) and in the Nameless Lord (Anami Purush), had been achieved. It was only through the kindness and grace of such an Exalted Soul that one could receive initiation into the practices that would lead one to the goal.

*The Master, at the time of initiation, explains the wondrous and formless Word, and then, with the lever of His own life-impulse, raises the spirit up and contacts the initiate with the Naam.*⁹

—Sant Kirpal Singh

With each passing revelation concerning the Path of the Masters from Mahadaya, Baba Ji's heart was inexpressibly moved. The intensity and depths of his feelings of gratitude were born out of the sincerity and prolonged nature of his search, during which he had explored every spiritual avenue known to him, but in which he could not discover the way out of suffering caused by being within the dominion of the mind. Now finally, his internal cries and pleas that he might be taken out of this darkness and into the Light had been heard.

It was an almost unbelievable turn of events for him for he had come out of the Himalayas with little but his physical body intact, and that also was barely alive

9. Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word* (Tilton, NH: The Sant Bani Press, 1974) p 165.

after being subjected to the harsh elements of the high, snow-covered reaches through which he had passed. And the memory of his own close call with death at the hands of the villagers at the temple of slaughtered goats was fresh in his heart. Now had arisen in his within a hope beyond all hopes that God would be merciful on him and show him the way out. His spirit soared, just like that of another seeker who comes to mind, Baba Jaimal Singh, whose long and difficult search was finally rewarded when he came at last to the ancient sadhu in the forest near Tappo Ban, who told him of Swami Shiv Dayal Singh dwelling in Agra:

What a burden fell off Jaimal Singh's back! How many nights had he spent tossing and praying, wondering if God would ever grant his wishes? The stranger at Peshawar had given him hope, but his words were vague, and nothing was certain. Now, at last, a definite clue had been given to him and success appeared within sight. The Lord was indeed kind and did not ignore his humble servant's supplication. Refreshed in spirit and confident in mind, the youth, with a heart overflowing with inexpressible gratitude bowed before the yogi now entwapped in silence and humbly took his leave.¹⁰

As he listened carefully to what Mahadaya was sharing with him, he felt that every word was true and that the method of inner ascent was also pure and correct. An intense inner emotion possessed him as now he saw the path of Liberation opening before him.

Mahadaya was closely observing the effect of his words on Baba Ji and, seeing the tears of gratitude flowing from his eyes, he was deeply moved. Mahadaya

10. Kirpal Singh, *A Great Saint, Baba Jaimal Singh: His Life and Teachings* (Sanbornton, NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 1995) p 36.

therefore said, "You should not worry." Quoting lines from the famous abhanga of Namdev he said, "Now the auspicious time is approaching when you will receive the cup of nectar, the Holy Naam."

*Amritāhūni god nām tujhe devā
Man mājhe keshvā kā bā neghe*

O God, Your name is sweeter than "Amrit" – the
nectar of immortality!
Then, O Keshava, my father
Why doesn't my mind dwell upon it?

*Sang pandharirāyā kāyī karu yāsī
Kā rūp dhyānāsi naye tujhe*

Tell me O King of Pandhari,
What can I do about this (mind)?
Why can't I meditate upon your image?

*Kirtanī baisatā nidre nāgavile
Man majhe guntale vishayasukhā*

When I sit to sing Your praise,
Sleep snatches away my attention.
My mind becomes entangled in the
pleasures of desires instead.

*Haridās garjatī harināmāchyā kīrti
Naye mājhyā chittī nāmā mhane*

The devotees of Hari resound with
the Praises of Hari's name
Alas, those praises don't enter my heart!
So says Nama.¹¹

11. Original Marathi transliterated from: *Namdev, Shrī Namdev Gāthā*, (Mumbai, Mahārāshtra Rājya Sāhitya Āni Sanskritī Mandal, 2008), poem 1457, p 593.

Mahadaya told Baba Ji, "The spiritual emperor, Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji, the Master of the Conscious Life Force of Naam is dwelling on the banks of the River Beas at Dera Baba Jaimal Singh. Go take refuge at his holy feet for he can impart to your soul the spiritual knowledge you seek. There your soul can bathe in the streams of divine nectar flowing through his wisdom-filled words as he delivers Satsang. If you listen attentively, all your doubts, worries and concerns will be forever washed away and in its place the Elixir of Life will pour into your heart. There you will be able to ascertain whether the key to God realization lies in fasts, pilgrimages, study of scriptures, performance of rites and rituals and yogic practices or with the Saints who are themselves the Masters of the secret of the Sound Current."

As Baba Ji heard the profoundly beautiful words flow through the schoolmaster, he could not help but wonder that if such a disciple has so much pure devotion, then what must the Guru himself be like. In the brief time of their friendship, the intensity of his own quest had increased many-fold.

Then the schoolmaster offered a penetrating analysis of Baba Ji's quest for truth. "You have seen with your own eyes how the self-centered sadhus who, for the sake of achieving their own ends, are deceiving the innocent souls and casting them heartlessly into the ditch of ignorance. Such is not the case of those possessing the secret of Naam.

They are the Givers rather than receivers, and their only concern is to liberate the souls from the Wheel of Transmigration. The treasure of Naam which they have is given freely to all who come to them, weary and crying out for the Love and Mercy of the Lord. Lovingly, they bring them into their shelter and not only explain how

the soul can travel back to her True Home and give them the technique of doing so, but also accompany all whom they initiate at every step of the journey both within and without. Now go forth and approach him with all due respect and appreciation so that he may grant you the long-held desire for liberation from the Wheel of Birth and Death.”

Baba Ji Sets Out for Dera

On hearing his words, Baba Ji’s restlessness increased many-fold as these truths flowed forth from the mouth of the schoolmaster. All that he had dreamed of was now about to come to pass, and he could wait no longer. Then and there, he prepared himself to depart for the nearby Beas ashram. The day was Monday.

Baba Ji pleaded with the schoolmaster to accompany him to the feet of Satguru Sawan Shah. But because the schoolmaster had his students to attend to at the school, he told Baba Ji that he could not go with him until the next Saturday. But Baba Ji could not wait any longer. Years and years of searching with sincerity and longing had made him feel there was not a moment to lose. He had seen from his experience that all life was uncertain and recalled the famous sloka of Kabir:

*Kāl kare so āj kar, āj kare so ab
Pal me Pralaya hoyegī, bahuri karegā kab*

What you have to do tomorrow, do today,
And what you have to do today, do right now.
Because at any moment dissolution could occur.
How then, will your work get done?

Therefore, Baba Ji said to the schoolmaster, “You have been extremely kind to me. Now please tell me the way to the Guru’s ashram and I will proceed there alone.”

Mahadaya agreed saying there were a few things he should bear in mind when going there: "First, only a few renunciate sadhus are accepted for initiation, those who are willing to mold their lives according to the teachings of Sant Mat.¹² The second thing is that you should live in the ashram in a pure and wholesome manner, participating in all activities in a respectful, devoted way."

Gratefully, Baba Ji paid his respects to Mahadaya and departed for the Dera of Hazur. With each step he felt as if he were crossing over the ocean of mind and Maya and entering the Path leading to the court of the Lord—the One who was, is and will be forevermore, the source of the Celestial Sound Current.

12. It is a principle of Sant Mat that those who are initiated should earn their living by some honest occupation.

*O my heart! the Supreme Spirit, the great Master, is
near you: wake, oh wake!*

*Run to the feet of your Beloved: for your Lord stands
near to your head.*

*You have slept for unnumbered ages; this morning will
you not wake?*

—Kabir



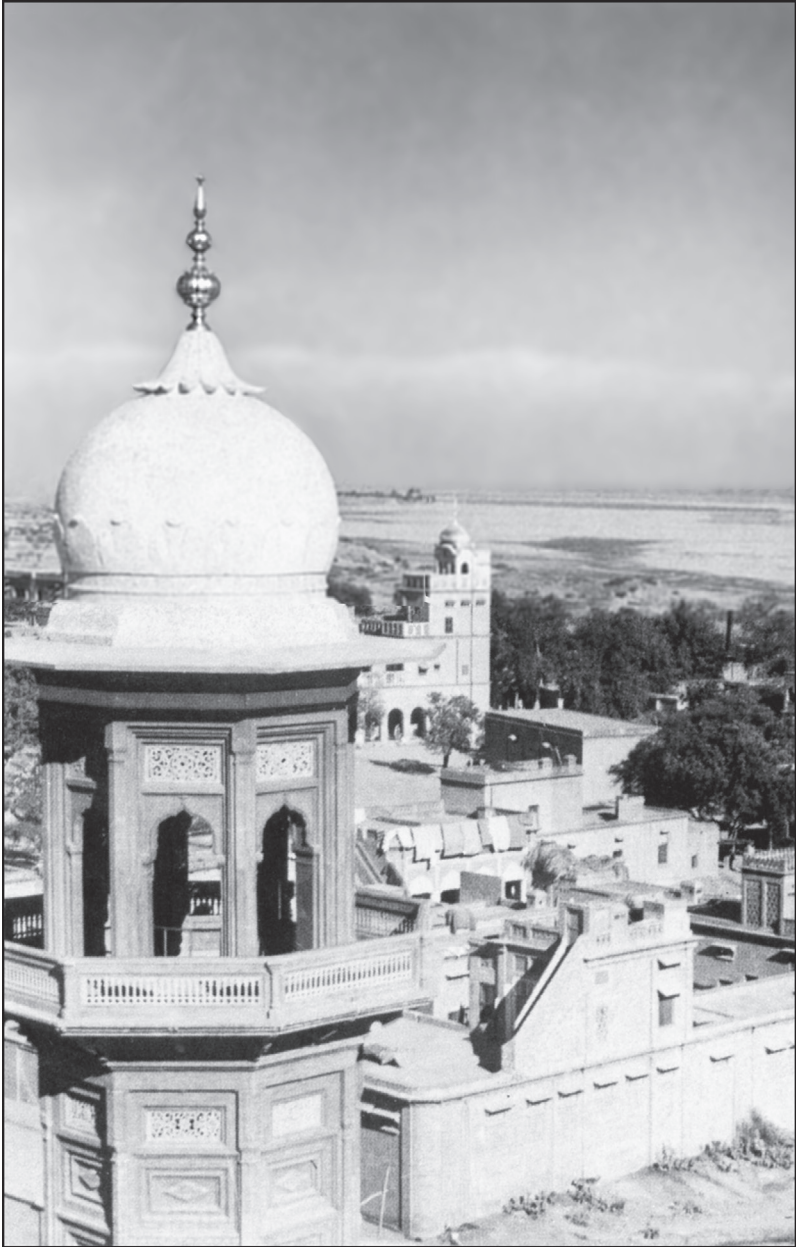
Meeting With Hazur

First Darshan of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

As he traversed the path leading to the ashram, the spirit of devotion continued to deepen with the result that he quickly covered the distance to the place where he would meet the One whom he had searched for on his pilgrimage journeys throughout the ancient land of India. As he approached the ashram, the Beas River spread out before him. Placing his one-stringed ektar and his dapholi in the current of the flowing water of Beas, the words of the sacred Sanskrit Guru mantra reverberated in his heart.

*Gurūbrahmā,
Gurūviṣṇu,
Gururdevo Maheshvarā,
Gurursākshāt Parbrahma,
Tasmai shri guruve namaḥ.*

Guru is Brahma — the Creator;
Guru is Vishnu — the Sustainer;
Gurudeva is Maheshwara — the Destroyer;
Guru is Para Brahman — the Manifest Lord.
Salutations to that Guru.



Dera Baba Jaimal Singh

Prostrating three times at the entrance to the ashram he entered its holy precincts, understanding that he had passed through the Door of Liberation. Withdrawing his attention from the body and focusing it at the seat between the two eyes, he prepared himself for the Darshan of the Guru. At that time, Hazur was sitting outside watching the seva of cleaning the wood to be used for cooking food in the langar. When Baba Ji's focused gaze fell upon the radiant form of Hazur—sitting relaxed in his chair observing the seva—his mind became totally absorbed in the vision of the Lord in human form.

A divine Light was radiating from his lustrous forehead, his eyes were resplendent with God's Love, down his chest flowed a glistening silken white beard and his head was adorned with an immaculate white turban.

A bhajan written by Sant Kirpal Singh in honor of Baba Sawan Singh Ji beautifully describes Hazur's transcendent form, which Baba Ji was seeing with his open eyes.

*Ājā pyāre, Satguru ājā, apanī surat, menū
vakhājā (refrain)*

Come beloved Satguru, come and show me Your
face.

*Sīdī, sādī, surat terī, pyārī, pyārī mūrat terī
Cheharā rab dā, jalavā dise, dil nuñ lubhāvan,
vāle ājā (1)*

Your simple, simple face—your beloved form,—
In your face is seen the Glory and Radiance of
God.

You are the one Who attracts my heart. Come...

*Sohanā matthā, chitt̥hī pagṛī, nūr chamake, har
liv lagaṛī
Ankhiyāñ prema, pyāle bhariyāñ, bharoṭe nūr,
palate ājā (2)*

Your beautiful forehead, the white turban, light
shines from all parts;
Your eyes are full with cups of love and your eye
brows are emitting light. Come...

*Zulfāñ teriyāñ, resham tārāñ, nūr ilāhī diyāñ den
chamkārāñ
Ik ik vāl, sire de uttoñ, doveñ ālam, vārāñ ājā (3)*

Your hair is like silken threads from which the
radiance of God flashes;
On each hair of your head, I sacrifice both the
worlds. Come...

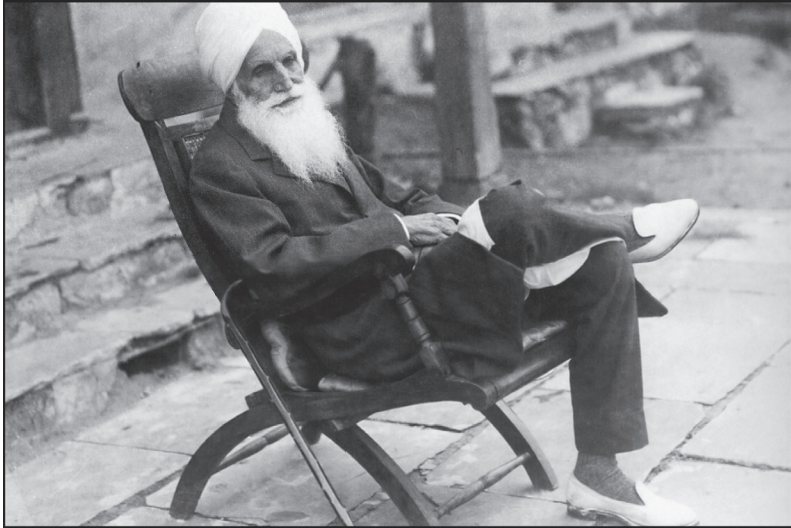
*Mukhṛā suhāvā, sahaj dhun bānī, sun sun pāvāñ,
kant nishānī
Rasīle ben, atī miṭhurī bolī, miṭāvan tapat, hirde
dī ājā (4)*

Seeing the beautiful face and listening to the Dhun,
I get the mark of the Master.
Your delicious words and sweet voice finish the
heat of my heart. Come...

*Suchī dārī, chātī te āve, baggī ho ho, nūr barsāve
Lālī nām dī, bhā pai māre, garībī sikhāvan, vāle
ājā (5)*

Your pure beard flows down your chest, becoming
whiter and whiter, showering light.
The color (redness) of Naam destroys ego. You are
the one who teaches humility. Come...

As he stood wonderstruck, Baba Ji found he had not the courage to move closer towards him. Instead, he joined the sevadars in cleaning the wood for langar use. Hazur, seeing that a person dressed in the apparel of a sadhu was working with sincerity along with the other sevadars, called to him to come near.



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

Very gently and kindly, Hazur enquired from him, "From where have you come and what has brought you here?" Continuing, he said that such seva was not suitable for a renunciate sadhu. "Here we honor the sadhus so you should not do this work."

Baba Ji was further overwhelmed with emotion on hearing these kind words flow from Hazur's lips. He then began haltingly and humbly to explain about his long search for Truth and the practices he had done towards that goal and the inner ascent he had gained. Finally, Baba Ji said, "Now that I have reached you it is my life and faith. I have no other support than at your holy feet.

I will never leave your protective shelter. Now kindly liberate my soul from the Wheel of Transmigration.”

As he spoke these words, all the pent-up anguish arising from his years of seemingly fruitless searching rose to the surface and were replaced with tears of joy at having found the One he was looking for.

Tears are very necessary, for without them the deeply buried sanskaras [karmic impressions] of aeons of births cannot be washed away. The water from the eyes has a marvelous cleansing power. Maulana Rumi has a very beautiful way of putting it when he says that if one wishes to do the Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca), then he should go by “waters of the sea,” for the road by dry land will never take one there. The “waters of the sea” are the tears flowing down in torrents from the eyes.¹

—Sant Kirpal Singh

Hazur was deeply touched by Baba Ji’s appeal and told him that the ashram was his home and that he should rest and recuperate from his search and spend the next three months actively involved in seva and listening to Satsang so that he could become thoroughly acquainted with the Sant Mat teachings. Thus, it was that Baba Ji was guided to the feet of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji.

The Incident of the Tulsi Plants

Baba Ji began to settle into the daily routine of ashram life, but after a few days an incident occurred that put his faith to the test. One day, all the sevadars had gathered together and were involved in the work of clearing the fields of weeds and stones in preparation for planting

1. Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, April 1973, “The Heart’s True Yearning,” p 6.

crops. All the existing weeds, shrubs and herbage that existed in the area were being eradicated with shovels, axes, and pry bars in the process of converting a barren wasteland into productive farm property. Among the plants being removed were wild growing tulsi or holy basil herbs.

Because Baba Ji was coming from South India where tulsi was a venerated plant, which was kept growing in the courtyards of most Hindu homes for its therapeutic and symbolic virtues, Baba Ji became very disturbed. The event of removing the holy basil rankled in his mind for several days.² The inner turbulence resulting from this incident rose to the surface when, a few days later, some pundit scholars came to the ashram with the intent of questioning the sevadars on how the teachings of Vedanta relate to Sant Mat, the Path of the Masters. At the time this event took place, Hazur was away on tour and Baba Somanath Ji was present when the pundits began putting questions to some of the lead sevadars. One pundit quoted a line from Swami Ji of Agra's bhajan

2. At first glance, this may seem a small matter to be troubled by, but it is not uncommon for the mind to throw up trivial objections when the aspirant comes close to achieving freedom from the realm of Kal.

When Baba Jaimal Singh came to the feet of Swami Ji in Agra, he was concerned that the Guru was not a Sikh (in fact, Swami Ji's family were followers of Guru Nanak—sahajdhari or "lightly-burdened" khatriis who cut their hair and followed other outer customs of their own community). But after Swami Ji lifted Jaimal Singh's soul into the higher realms, he playfully asked Jaimal on his return to the body, "Do you, my boy, still doubt if your Master be a True Sikh or not?"

Similarly, when Baba Sawan Singh first heard the Satsangs of Baba Jaimal Singh in the Muree Hills, he objected to Baba Jaimal Singh's use of the term "Radhaswami" because it does not appear in the orthodox canon of Sikh literature. But after Baba Jaimal Singh gently explained the Reality to him, Sawan Singh slowly came around and finally relates: "After several conferences with Baba Ji, I was thoroughly convinced and received Initiation from him on the 15th day of October in 1894."

Karūñ benati doū kar joṛī (I offer this prayer to you, folding both my hands):

*Satyug, tretā, dwāpar bitā, kāhū na jānī Shabd
kī rītā.*

The Golden, Silver, and Copper Ages passed away,
but no one learned the secret of the Shabd.

So, regarding that Shabd he asked, “Does it mean that no True Master of the Sound Current Yoga was alive at that time, initiating souls?”

The answer to the question was not a difficult one for those who had studied the Sant Mat literature and, more importantly, had attended Hazur’s Satsang, for it is there that one comes to know that Kabir Sahib manifested in those ages and was indeed giving out the knowledge of the Shabd but in a very limited way. It was only in the Kali Yuga that the Path of the Shabd was openly proclaimed, whereas the secret of Shabd was concealed in the other yugas.

Be that as it may, the sevadars considered it a waste of their time to engage in such intellectual wranglings with the pundits, and they did not reply to the question asked of them. Baba Ji was already unsettled because of the, from his vantage point, wanton removal of the holy basil plants. Deep down, though concealed from his own self and from others, he was very proud of his incisive knowledge of Vedanta and the holy scriptures and the present events had set the stage for his vanity to rise to the surface.

The thought arose in his mind, “What is the point of keeping company with such people who cannot even properly answer the ordinary question of a pundit? I have more wisdom than any of them.” And he went so

far as to proclaim his superior status to them.

The nonplussed sevadars said, “Baba Ji, who do you think you are?”

The atmosphere was starting to get prickly. “I am a Nathpanth yogi!!!”

The sevadars replied, “Are you not even aware of the low status of your Gurus, Machindranath and Gorakhnath, who were but homeless wanderers of no consequence? You have become a ghost lying prostrate at their feet!”

Hearing these renowned yogis insulted—knowing how they had suffered through countless years of indescribably difficult austerities in the search for God—was something that Baba Ji could not tolerate, and he immediately left the ashram.³

He was walking towards a nearby village when, all of a sudden, he came upon Mahadaya, the schoolmaster that had kindly told him of Baba Sawan Singh Ji. Baba Ji related to him all that had happened concluding, “The Master has captured my heart, but I cannot tolerate the attitude of the sevadars. I am not sure what I should do. I am ensnared in a web of confusion and doubts.” Hearing all this the schoolmaster said, “My God, critics are surely the guardians of the Guru’s court. Your concealed vanity has gotten the upper hand and, in order to remove this disease from your heart, he has created this drama in which you have become a player. Turn around and return to his refuge and in the future never allow the mind to bring such egotistic feeling in your within.”

3. See “Dance Mind Dance” October/November 1977 issue of *Sant Bani Magazine* for a full description of how many great rishis and munis did tens of thousands of years of meditation and austerities but could not protect themselves when Maya attacked them with her full force.

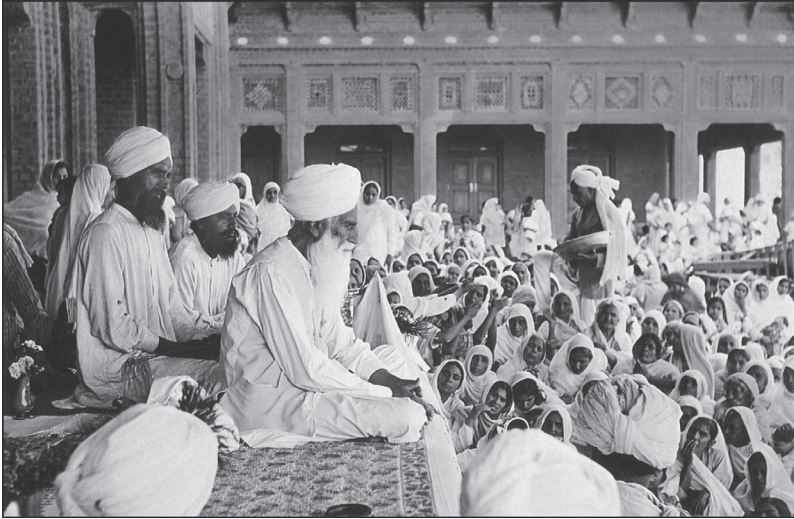
He continued saying, "So far, you have been doing some seva but it is of a superficial type. It has all been done within the sphere of vanity and ignorance, is it not so? Why have you not considered this carefully? I am also a devotee of the same Master as you are. You know I wish you well, so now follow my advice. As I did before, so I am doing now. I facilitated the first meeting with Maharaj Ji and again I am doing the same thing. So, reverse your steps and return to his holy feet."

Baba Ji Adjusts to Life at Dera

Following the advice of the one who was the instrument through which Hazur had worked to bring him on the Path, he returned to the ashram with a better awareness of the tricks of the mind and how, out of nothing, it creates this type of ill will amongst those who proclaim to follow the Master. Keeping a vigilant watch over his mind he returned to the seva with renewed vigor but with a heart filled with the knowledge that the power of the Naam, the true form of the Satguru, was present everywhere, within and without. Keeping this simple truth before him, his heart became gentler and softer and a feeling of harmony and unity with his fellow sevadars began to suffuse his being.

It is to be remembered at this juncture that Baba Ji was a Hindu by birth and that his entire life had been consumed in searching for the Truth through the ways followed by people growing up in that traditional devotional atmosphere of South India. The scriptures he studied, the austerities and yogic practices he followed, and the pilgrimages he made, etc., were all part of that rich spiritual culture of the Hindu people. Now, on the outer level, he was totally immersed in the ways and traditions

of Sikhism, as the people he was interacting with on a day-to-day basis came primarily from that community.



Hazur Giving Satsang at Dera Baba Jaimal Singh

There is no doubt that the teachings of the Saints are one and the same for all no matter what community and religion they are born into, but the actual physical place where they live is generally composed of people of a specific heritage. They have grown up in an atmosphere that has its own unique characteristics.

Life at the Dera was a sudden and profound change for Baba Somanath Ji. Therefore, in order to become an integral part of the community at the Dera, he needed to adjust his entire outer life accordingly. That is to say, he needed to adopt the type of clothes worn by the common man in that region, adapt to the food habits, learn the Punjabi language, study the lives and teachings of the Sikh Saints from Guru Nanak onwards, etc. In short, he

needed to grow beyond his identity as a yogi and adopt a more patient, tolerant and universal outlook so that he could blend in peacefully with life at the Dera.

Baba Ji took to this new existence with enthusiasm and dedication. It mattered little to him as to what work was assigned to him for what he really needed to do was to mold his life in such a way that he could become open to the flow of the Divine Transcendent Power coming from Hazur.

It was in these new surroundings that his inner life began to blossom in a way that he had never imagined. He loved working in the ashram with the devoted souls living there. He reveled in the profound beauty of the Master and his Satsangs. During the next three months he found a great peace in the regular activities of a thriving agricultural community. His physical health also benefited as it was nourished by the simple diet of chappattis, vegetables, grains and legumes that were served daily in the community kitchen. Never in his adult life as a renunciate yogi had he had a regular diet of nourishing food, so this too helped him regain his health.

The Power of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji's Satsangs

In such a charged environment, the longing to receive Initiation increased to an almost unbearable degree. With each passing day, his heart was filled with the Wisdom, Light and Love flowing from the Master during Satsang. Hazur's style of Satsang was very intimate and engaging and often in the middle of his enchanting discourses, there were lively interactions with the people sitting in the Satsang compound.

This helped bring his teachings to life in a wonderful, heart-warming way. Devotees would stand up and confess mistakes or ask questions right in the middle of

Satsang and lively, instructive conversations would ensue. Hazur had a very down-to-earth way of explaining the teachings but it was also elegant and refined. The regal, majestic, enchanting physical form through which the teachings flowed also vividly impressed on the listener's heart and mind the deep beauty of the eternal teachings of the Saints of all times and places.

Through it all, his search for God and his eventual arrival at Hazur's feet took on a new significance. He now clearly saw that each and every event in that quest, both the ups and downs, the sorrows and joys, the trials and successes, were all part of an intricately detailed predestined plan of which he was but a part. He now understood that at every step the gracious Master Power was guiding everything and was, in fact, doing everything as well.

This awareness deepened as, through Hazur's boundless grace, Baba Somanath Ji's heart became ever more filled with love and compassion for all creatures. Step-by-step, Hazur revealed to Baba Ji that every experience in life is precious and meaningful when one's angle of vision shifts from the individual standpoint to a universal one.

Master Sawan Singh Ji used to say, "Those who say that they have searched for the Master, they go to the Master, or they go to the Satsang—their inner eye is not yet opened, that is why they say that they are doing everything.

But those whose inner eyes are opened do not say things like this, because they have seen the reality, that it is not because of their efforts that they are going to the Satsang and they have got the Master. It is the grace of the Master Power, the Sound Current that is the active

force behind all that happens. It is the Master, Himself, who makes them come to the Satsang, who makes them do the meditation."

Master Kirpal Singh Ji also used to say that it is not within the reach of a blind man to find a person who has eyes. Unless the person who has eyes calls for the blind man and makes the blind man catch his hand, the blind man cannot find his way.⁴

—Sant Ajaib Singh

Hazur's knowledge of the wisdom contained in the Sikh, Sufi, Christian and Hindu scriptures was deep and sublime. He freely quoted from the teachings of the Sages of different traditions showing that in the Court of the Lord only one thing mattered and that was Love, born out of a reverential respect for all life, because the enlivening Life Principle, the Shabd or Naam was present in all.

His Satsangs were rich with many stories that he used to illustrate the spiritual truths that formed an essential part of the disciple's remaking of his or her life so that the soul could receive the continual flow of grace from the Court of the Lord. He had a unique way of bringing the stories to life so that the listener felt that they were actually part of the events being described. Often the stories were humorous in nature, helping those present to laugh at their own follies.

Hazur himself heartily laughed as he related some of the incidents in the lives of past Masters and their disciples. Those who were fortunate enough to be present at such times could never forget what that experience was like.

4. Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, May 1989, "The Storm of Love" p 5.



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

It seemed that his laugh and his smile illumined the entire universe. Currents of Joy and Grace bathed the hearts of those present on those wonderful occasions.

In this new environment, far different from any Baba Ji had hitherto known, his heart became free of the spiritual

anxieties that had plagued him during the years he had practiced the intricate yogic exercises of the Nathpanth. His life had a normal routine of daily activities and this, coupled with the company of Hazur, allowed his body, mind and soul to find a gentle equipoise in which the purpose of existence was clearly perceived. And as he relaxed, knowing that he had been guided to One who truly cared for him, the deep inner longing for gaining the gift of Initiation continued to grow. Day-by-day that yearning increased until it became an all-consuming passion.

Hazur told Baba Ji at their first meeting that he should attend Satsang and do seva regularly for three months so he could fully grasp the Sant Mat Teachings. This advice proved illuminating on every level, for now all that had happened in the past appeared as a dream and was replaced with the Timeless Wisdom that taught him to dwell in the living moment. It was during this time that his heart and soul were purged of the vanity arising from the practice of kundalini yoga. On the Path of the Masters, only faith, humility and surrender are effective in gaining entrance into the realm of pure spirit and it cannot be done overnight.

Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj knew all about the practices that Baba Ji had done, and he had great appreciation for those who had undergone such intense disciplines in their search for God. He also knew that, in the end, these practices were not capable of lifting the soul beyond the confines of the mind and senses. For that, one needed the guidance of a Guru who himself had gone through the innermost discipline, purified his within and completely surrendered his mind and senses to his own perfect living Master, thereby making God's Will his own.

Since Baba Ji had already developed so much inner discipline due to his long search, this process of purification was significantly hastened. But still, some time was required to prepare the vessel for the gift of Initiation.

In his high, simple and elegant Satsangs, Hazur continually referred to the three core practices of Sant Mat.

The instruction in the esoteric teachings consists of the exposition of Simran, Dhyan and Bhajan, that is to say, repetition (mental with tongue of thought only) of the words which are charged with the power of the Master; concentration or meditation (fixing consciousness or gaze) at the center of the two eyebrows; and linking the spirit with the saving lifeline within, ever reverberating in the form of the perennial Sound Current, the very life-breath of the Universe, of which the Master himself is the living embodiment. As soon as a devotee is able to transcend the physical body, the Radiant Form of the Master (Guru Dev) appears in the subtle plane and becomes a guiding force to the spirit on the journey into higher spiritual realms, bringing him back to the True Home of his Father. Henceforth the Master-spirit never leaves the soul, but continuously helps and directs, visibly and invisibly, directly and indirectly, in this life and the life hereafter, as the occasion may demand.⁵

— Sant Kirpal Singh

Baba Ji could not help but long for the day when the Initiation would be granted, but it was not in his hands to make this event come into being. All he could do was continue listening to Satsang and work in harmony with those who had become his dear brothers and sisters.

5. Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1970), "Deeksha," p 275.

Hazur Continues to Prepare Baba Ji for Initiation

One interesting thing to note regarding this time was that just a short distance from the Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, there were caves sitting above the Beas River in which were dwelling renunciate sadhus who had done similar difficult spiritual practices like those which Baba Ji had done. By good fortune, these ascetic types had come in contact with Hazur and had been granted the gift of Initiation, but Hazur had not required them to give up their traditional way of living. The only thing that changed was the technique of meditation.



Hazur Supervising Work at His Farm in Sirsa

Logically, Baba Ji could have joined them because of his similar background. But Hazur saw clearly that, in the future, Baba Ji would be instrumental in spreading the teaching of Sant Mat in South India, hence he wanted him to adopt a lifestyle similar to that of the common

men and women amidst whom he would carry out his mission. Hence, this integration into the activities of daily ashram life was something that was vital to his spiritual education.

One day, seva was going on in the ashram fields, and Hazur came to oversee the progress of the work there. Baba Ji was working in a quiet, unobtrusive way but with enthusiasm and zeal. Hazur, observing him from afar, was very pleased. At that time, one of Baba Ji's fellow workers who had a lot of love for him (Baba Ji) approached Hazur and requested that he might grant Baba Ji initiation. But Hazur, fully aware of the vanity existing in the hearts of those who had led the renunciate life, simply said that the day would come when it would be granted but some time was still required before the inwardly appointed date.⁶

Baba Ji himself used to say that Hazur made him wait several months before he could be initiated. During that time, he requested initiation twice but was told to wait on both occasions. In January of 1929, the auspicious moment finally arrived, and he was granted the gift of Naam. It took place in this manner.

Baba Ji Receives the Gift of Naam

Each year a special program was held at the Dera in honor of Baba Jaimal Singh Ji that spanned several days covering the period from the end of December into the 1st week of January. Thousands of people from throughout

6. The Saints see our inner condition clearly as looking at the contents of a clear glass jar. When Ibrahim Adam, the king of Bulkh Bukhara came to Kabir Sahib and had served him for six years, Mata Loi implored that Kabir grant him initiation. But Kabir Sahib saw that the egotism of kingship had not yet fully left him, and, instead waited another full six years, before granting the king that priceless gift of Naam.

India would come to the Dera to attend the program and to have the blessing of Satsang, Darshan and Seva.

During that program a time was set for Initiation so that those drawn to the teachings of Hazur could receive the meditation instructions and could enter into the spiritual life under his guidance and protection.

On this occasion, so many people gathered for the bhandara that there was not enough space to accommodate them all under the cover of the various tents and buildings set up for that purpose. Many slept in the open area where Satsang was delivered during those special days.

On the weekend starting on Friday and lasting through Sunday, January 4th–6th, Hazur gave deep and illuminating Satsangs concerning the Mystic Way and the life to be adopted to successfully traverse the Inner Path. Monday, January 7th, was set aside for determining who would be initiated on the following day, Tuesday the 8th.

Baba Ji was intensely restless. Would Hazur accept him or not? It seemed as if each day that passed was an eternity. He worried lest he might die without coming under the protection of the Almighty Lord in the form of this most beautiful, simple and elegant Saint. Again and again, he questioned his own heart, “Is this vessel ready to receive his Grace or not?”

Over the three months that he had lived in the ashram and listened attentively to the Satsang while working tirelessly beside his brothers and sisters, his identity as a Nathpanth yogi had been transformed into that of a simple, innocent soul who knew that, without the grace of God, the soul could not enter the Kingdom of God, the domain of Light and Love. He realized deep within

his heart that he was just like every other created being and a beggar at the door of the Saints. Bhai Nand Lal Ji once said to Guru Gobind Singh, "O Master, here it is the question of Your one glance, and it is the question of my whole life."⁷

At this program, there were so many aspirants seeking Initiation that Hazur could not humanly question each one individually. Hence, everyone was seated on the ground in a long line extending for several hundred yards. All that were seated there had already been screened by sevadars assigned the responsibility of asking them if they were (1) following a strict lacto-vegetarian diet, (2) if married, were they living a life remaining faithful to their companion and if single, were they leading a life of continence, (3) abstaining from all intoxicants like alcoholic beverages, bhang, opium and (4) were standing on their own two feet and earning a living by honest means. Those who were not yet fully committed to those simple vows were asked to wait for Initiation till they had attended more Satsangs and gained a better understanding of the basic tenants of the Path and the responsibilities inherent in taking Initiation. All those who passed this initial screening were seated in the line aforementioned.

Baba Ji was thus seated amongst those who met the basic requirements and awaited the final approval of Hazur—when he would cast his gracious gaze on each and see if on their forehead Initiation was written in their fate.

As Hazur slowly walked down the line looking at

7. Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, January/February 1993, "Stories of the Love which Never Ends," p 46.

each with his penetrating gaze, only a rare few were asked to wait until a future time for Initiation. Walking with Hazur was a devoted Satsangi and lead sevadar in the Langar (community kitchen) whose name was Gopaldas. He had a lot of love and affection for Baba Ji and quietly said to Hazur, "Now he will not leave us." Hazur smiled and nodded his approval that Baba Ji was accepted for Initiation.

This was the most auspicious moment in his life. Now the weight on his mind was lifted as to whether he would be initiated or not, and the happiness he felt was inexpressible. Early the next morning, he rose well in advance of the appointed time for Initiation in order to prepare for this sacred event. He bathed in the River Beas, donned the simple white clothes (kurta-pajama) worn by the common man of North India, and with a pure mind filled only with love, devotion and faith for the Saint—who had cleared all his doubts about what Path would lead his soul back to the Source from which it came—he hastened to the place where Initiation was to be given. He reached there well in advance of the time appointed for Hazur to come as he wanted to be sure that he did not leave anything to chance and possibly miss this moment for which he had been waiting all his life.

Entering the hall where the instructions were to be given, Baba Ji sat down in the first row near the place where Hazur would ascend the steps to the platform upon which He would sit. While he waited there, he composed himself by inwardly enshrining the Guru's form in the temple of his heart and commenced remembering him with every breath.

A short time later, Hazur entered the Satsang Hall. As he walked slowly toward the platform where he was to take his seat, he cast his grace-filled sight upon everyone gathered there. Pin-drop silence prevailed as all the dear embodied souls absorbed the Radiant, Celestial Light flowing from every pore of his body. As he approached the place where Baba Ji was sitting, Baba Ji spontaneously bowed his head to the ground out of profound respect for this Great Soul who had incarnated on the earth for the liberation of the souls.

On his side, Hazur perceived the intense longing for God realization present in the heart of one who had renounced everything in his quest for the Truth. As he neared Baba Ji, the powerful emotion welling up in Baba Ji's heart found expression in one word, "Maharaj Ji" (Great Emperor).

Hazur stopped and, looking at him with deep love and compassion, said, "Well Baba Ji, will you now leave us?"

Baba Ji replied, "Where may I go now that I have been brought to You. I offer my life as a sacrifice at your holy feet. Now there is no other destination for me. Kindly keep this lowly servant at your feet."

Hearing this Hazur laughed joyously and said, "Worry not. I shall also never leave you."

Hearing these loving words from Hazur's lips, his heart was overwhelmed with happiness and tears of gratitude flowed from his eyes.

The atmosphere in the room was charged with profound peace and solemnity. Taking his seat, Hazur for the next two hours, imparted the verbal instructions concerning the way of life of an initiate and the method of meditation to be practiced to attain union with God.

From within, he took the karmic account of those being initiated out of the hands of the Negative Power and placed them under his own care while connecting their souls to the Audible Life Stream and Celestial Light within. The shower of the Divine Nectar arising from its source in Sach Khand rained down in abundance as the souls were taken into his refuge. Baba Ji consciously imbibed this Spiritual Elixir as Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj taught those present how to connect their attention with the life-giving Stream of the Shabd flowing from the higher regions to the center above and behind the two eyes.

*I see the uniqueness
of the path revealed by the Master
as my mind and soul make contact with Shabd.
I see the great spectacle within
and like a maiden at the village spring
my soul collects nectar from the sky.
I have drunk this nectar to my heart's content,
thoroughly soothing my body and mind.⁸*

Completely transcending body consciousness, Baba Ji's soul traversed the inner regions of the sun, moon and stars and became absorbed in the Radiant Form of the Master. By absorption in the Guru's Form his soul's rarefied consciousness traversed further upwards and passed through the door of Liberation. For close to two hours his soul remained absorbed within.

When his soul returned to the body, his gratitude for

8. Shiv Dayal Singh, *Sar Bachan Poetry (Selections)*, (Beas, Radha Soami Satsang, 2002), Bachan 5, Shabd 4, 1-3, p. 27.

the gift of Naam granted to him by Hazur was immense. True love for both the physical form of the Master and his inner Radiant Light essence, the Celestial Sound Current, was awakened for he now knew for a certainty that the inner Power of the Guru was forever with him capable of guiding his every thought, word and deed.

*What is that flute whose music thrills me with joy?
The flame burns without a lamp;
The lotus blossoms without a root;
Flowers bloom in clusters;
The moon-bird is devoted to the moon;
With all its heart the rain-bird longs for the
 shower of rain;
But upon whose love does the Lover concentrate
 His entire life?*

—Kabir

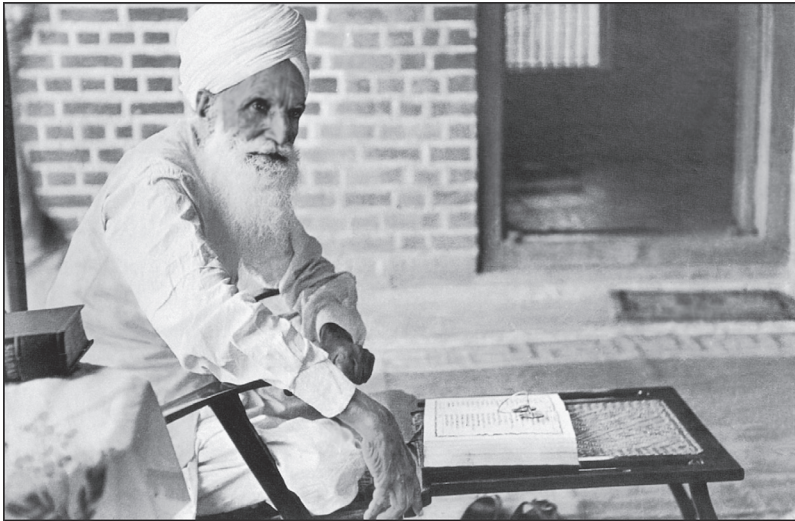


Life at Dera Baba Jaimal Singh

Hazur Prepares Baba Ji for the Work in South India

Baba Ji's life in the Dera continued as before with the added joy that he now had a conscious inner link with the Master Power of which Hazur was the living embodiment. In the coming months, as his soul progressed deeper and deeper within, under the Master's guidance, he came to appreciate how his life, however challenging it might have been, had been orchestrated down to the minutest detail to give him first-hand experience of the many practices seekers adopted to realize God. He came to understand that all the various practices he had engaged in—like the performance of karmkand (rites and rituals), japa (repetition of sacred mantras), tapa (austerities), tirath yatra (pilgrimages), vrat (fasts) asanas (yogic postures), gyan (spiritual wisdom), dhyan (contemplation) and prarthana (prayer)—all sprang from a noble place within on the higher planes and had pure and powerful significance when practiced under the guidance of a preceptor whose attention had risen to the source from which each practice had originated.

They, in fact, were all stepping stones on the Path Godwards but, despite yielding some power of concentration and spirit of devotion, tended to keep the attention bound at a lower level and left one far from the goal of union with God that was the Fountainhead of all Paths.



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

As he had practiced many of the above-mentioned sadhanas, he also knew that to gain mastery in any of them required years of dedicated practice, during which time, one needed to make commendable sacrifices. And after so much effort, even though one might acquire some concentration and magnetic powers far beyond the range of normal human experience, still one would remain devoid of peace and trapped within the confines of the subtle mind and Maya.

It was because this experience formed a significant part of his own quest that he always held in high regard any sincere seeker who might be engaged in any aspect of the quest for Truth. If they found themselves desiring to go beyond the reach of what they were currently doing, Baba Ji was glad to explain, from his practical experience, what the upper limits were of the practices they were engaged in. If they wished to go higher and of themselves sought his guidance, he was happy to assist

them in their search.

As this awareness of the limitations of what he had practiced grew in his heart, the gratitude for the guidance of the Great Master also increased day-by-day. Tears of joy often flowed down his cheeks as he sat in meditation during the night when he was free of other responsibilities.

The man-body is the golden opportunity that we have got in which we can change our love from the world to God. Kabir says if we have neglected this subject all through life, now we should wake up and divert our attention from the world to God. So, for that, what do we have to do?

First of all, we read the scriptures, in which past Masters are speaking about God. We hear about God, learn about God, through past Masters speaking through books. This causes a desire to arise, it grows strong and we feel separation. In his sweet remembrance, naturally the heart becomes full and that bursts forth in tears through the eyes.

So, all these outward practices, reading of scriptures, are meant only for what? That the desire to see God, love for God should develop. What are the criteria of love of God? Whom you love, He is always in your heart. You never forget him. If you want to love God, then what should you do? You should remember Him every second of your life, never forget Him. When you love somebody, naturally constant remembrance of that person remains in your heart. You wish to have love for that person and naturally, if you have constant remembrance of him and keep him in your heart, that will result in love.¹

—Sant Kirpal Singh Ji

1. Kirpal Singh, *Morning Talks* (Delhi, India: Ruhani Satsang, 1970), "How to Develop Love for God," p 29-30.

Baba Ji Discovers the Sant Mat Lineage

Through the Satsangs of Hazur, Baba Ji was now exposed to an expanded range of bhakti poets of the Sant Mat tradition. The lyrical poetry of several of them was already known to him—Kabir, Mira Bai and Namdev—but many were new, such as Guru Nanak and his Successors², Dadu Dayal, Swami Ji Maharaj of Agra, Paltu Sahib, Sehjo Bai, Ravidas and others. Having the poetic temperament himself, he was enchanted with the manner in which they presented the Teachings of the Saints in the form of their banis.

Whenever Hazur was at the Dera (for he often traveled to other parts of North India), he conducted daily Satsang. Just to see him enter the Satsang Hall with the regal bearing of the most noble of Emperors, while drawing each person into his gentle loving aura as if they were his very own children, was a most sublime and elevating experience in itself. But when he took his seat and looked out upon those assembled, be they a few or numbering in the thousands, it was yet more elevating.

From his eyes flowed a Divine Light that flooded the entire Sangat with his radiance, suspending the actions of time and space. Indeed, for those whose inner eye was receptive, his body became luminous with a Celestial Power that filled the hearts of those who beheld it with joy and peace. Then the Pathi (the person chanting the bani or poetic couplets of the Saint whose teachings Hazur was

2. Sikhism recognizes nine successors to Guru Nanak: Angad Dev, Amar Das, Ram Das, Arjan, Har Gobind, Hari Rai, Krishan Rai, Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. Contemporary Sant Mat emphasizes an unbroken lineage of Perfect Masters which continued with Sant Rat Nagar Rao, Tulsi Sahib, Swami Ji Maharaj of Agra, and continues to this day. See: Ajaib Singh, *Streams in the Desert* (Sanbornton NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 1981) p 11.

commenting on that day) commenced singing the bani. A silence fell as the words of the Saints penetrated the mind and began transforming it into a pure receptive vessel for holding the Truth. Then Hazur would explain its inner significance in chaste Punjabi language—each word charged with the Power of God’s Light and Love as his soul was merged in that Infinite Sea of All Consciousness.

*Chasm-i-oo-maste Khuda
Daste-oo-daste Khuda.
Guftai-oo-guftai Allah bavad
Garche az halqum-i-Abdullah bavad.*

His eyes were intoxicated with love of God and his hand was one with that of God.

He was the mouthpiece of God and God Himself spoke through that human throat.³

—Sant Kirpal Singh

With each passing day Baba Ji’s inner and outer life were enriched. The two supported each other in a seamless manner. Hazur’s simple, graceful and sublime words concerning the path of discipleship touched Baba Ji’s heart in a profound way and, as he went about his daily duties of working in the fields, serving in the langar or any other activity, the form of Hazur was before him and the words he uttered reverberated in Baba Ji’s heart.

In this way, his entire being became absorbed in the Path of the Masters with the result that the two seemingly different bodies—that of the Master and that of the disciple—while maintaining their distinct outer appearances, became one in the within, for in that Inner Realm only the Power of the Celestial Sound Current and Divine

3. Kirpal Singh, *The Way of the Saints: Sant Mat, Collected Short Writings of Kirpal Singh* (Sanbornton, NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 1999) p 3.

Light held sway and it was in that domain that all individual differences were eradicated. This transformation occurred quietly and unobtrusively, virtually unknown to anyone but the two of them.



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji Distributing Parshad

Baba Ji's lifelong habit of studying sacred scriptures continued while living at the Dera. As Hazur opened up to him the spiritual tradition of North India, he spent time each day savoring one sloka taken from the writings of Dadu Sahib, Bulleh Shah, Baba Farid, Swami Ji and many others. And he made sure that whatever their words conveyed, he was applying to his own life. He understood that unless he aligned his life to their sacred words, there was no value in merely memorizing them parrot-like.

After having spent his days working, remembering the words of the Master and attending Satsang, then whatever time he spent in meditation, whether it was little or much, produced wonderful results, as his soul traveled ever more deeply into the Light in the company of Hazur's Radiant Form.

Hazur Entrusts Baba Ji with More Seva

Hazur, on the outer level, began entrusting important sevas to him, the end result being that he was assigned the responsibility of managing the food supplies required for the langar. He also supervised the work of those assigned the job of cooking for the many people coming to eat in the community kitchen both on a daily basis and for those coming from outside for the large monthly programs.

This seva was considered one of the most important in the Dera because it was a basic principle of Baba Sawan Singh Ji that people coming to the ashram for any reason, even those arriving unexpectedly at any hour of day or night, should first be fed a simple but hearty meal of dal, chapatis and vegetables.

The Dera at that time was growing dramatically as word spread throughout India that a great Sage was living there. In India, the Darshan of such a High and Holy One is considered one of the most auspicious events of the life whether a person was initiated or not. It meant for Baba Ji and all those working with him, that there were times when little or no sleep was to be had. It was not uncommon for individuals or even large groups to arrive in the middle of the night and, according to Hazur's instructions, they had to be fed. And when the monthly Satsang came, as well as the several major celebrations of birth or death anniversaries of Masters of the Sant Mat lineage, particularly of Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, then food needed to be prepared for tens of thousands of people at a time.

Baba Ji was deeply grateful that he had been given the opportunity to serve all the dear ones coming to meet the Master and participate in the Satsang programs. He had come to know from direct inner experience that the Power of the Master was living in each and every heart and to serve his family of devotees, disciples and admirers was to serve him.

But, on the other hand, he was troubled because there were times when he could not sit in meditation for the minimum of three hours between 3:00 to 6:00 a.m. as enjoined by Hazur at the time of Initiation. Those hours, which were termed as the Amrit Vela or the Time of Nectar, were deemed as the most auspicious period of the day for meditation because all the world was asleep and quiet prevailed. The aspirant was fresh and undisturbed by the activities of the day, and one was linked to an entire community of people, near and far, who were also awake at that time in the Remembrance of the Lord.

And of greatest importance of all, it was during these precious moments that the Grace of the Shabd Guru rained down in abundance.



Hazur Visiting the Langar

The Naam has so many good qualities in it, and by meditating on such a Naam we gain so much—so why not do the meditation of such a Naam which gives us eternal peace and happiness? Catching hold of that Naam, we can go back to our Real Home. Why not do the meditation of that Naam? We should especially take advantage of this precious Ambrosial Hour and we should devote ourselves to the meditation of Naam.

It is a very pleasing thing that anyone can do the devotion of Naam. It doesn't matter whether one is old or young or whether one is man or woman. It doesn't matter to which country or to which state we belong; people belonging to all different countries and states, and all

*different religions can do the devotion of the Lord and they can meet Him within. So, taking advantage of this precious time we should all sit in meditation, closing our eyes.*⁴

—Sant Ajaib Singh

One day toward evening, Baba Ji went to put his problem to Hazur—the difficulty of not finding regular time for meditation especially when large numbers of people came to the Dera to participate in the programs. After explaining his remorse for not being able to attend to what he considered the most important and sacred duty of a disciple, Hazur became quiet for some time and withdrew into meditation. After a short while, he opened those eyes filled with Divine Love and gently told Baba Ji, “The seva which you are doing in the remembrance of the Master is no less than meditation.”

Hearing these precious words flow from the lips of the One who had become for him the support and foundation of his life, he gained the courage and confidence to give his whole heart to the duties that had been entrusted to him without any lingering worry or concern.

One day an incident occurred that would remain forever etched in his heart and mind as one of the many signs of his Master’s greatness. It was about midnight when some 300 dear ones from a distant village arrived at the Dera. Hazur came out to greet them and after looking at each with Infinite Love, said, “Now everyone should go and partake of the langar Prashad—the blessed food of the Saints.”

4. Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, July/August 1990, “Something Worth Experiencing,” p 46.

*There is a lot of charging of the Master in parshad which they give us, a lot of grace is contained in that parshad of the Master. If we take that parshad with full love and faith in the Master, we can gain a lot, and a lot of our karma can be paid off by eating that parshad.*⁵

—Sant Ajaib Singh

He then called Baba Ji and instructed him saying, “Distribute food to all those who have come.”

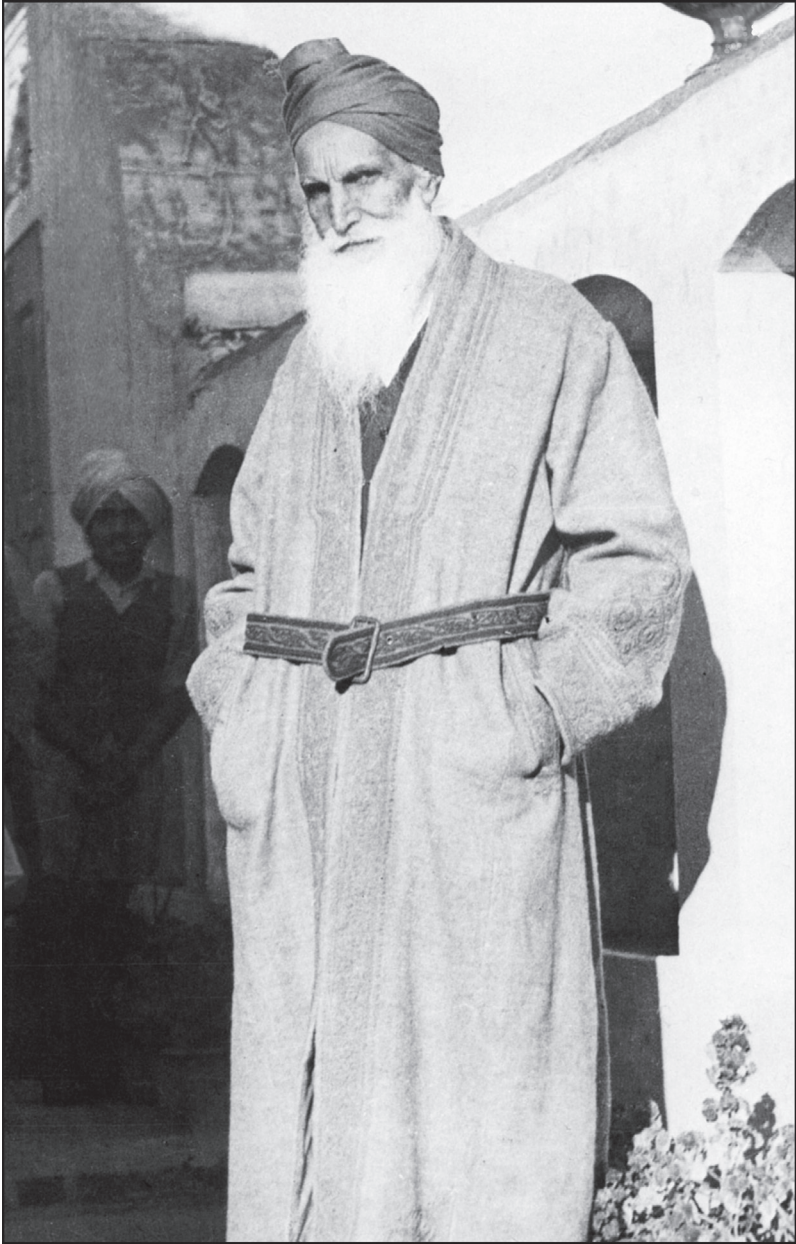
Baba Ji replied, “Maharaj Ji, there are just a few chapatis remaining from the evening meal and the ladies who are responsible for preparing the food have all gone to sleep.”

Unperturbed Hazur replied, “It does not matter. Everything will be fine. Just go to the langar and spread a cloth over the basket in which the remaining chapatis have been kept. I myself am coming there.”

When he entered the langar he went over to the basket, and lifting the cloth and looking inside said, “Well, you are saying that there are only a few chapattis but, in reality the basket is full. There is sufficient food here to feed the entire Sangat.” Following Hazur’s order, while keeping the cloth upon the basket, Baba Ji went on distributing the chapatis till everyone had eaten to the full and, even then, some chapattis remained.

Since Baba Ji was conversant in the languages of dear ones coming to the Dera from Maharashtra and other southern regions, Hazur began requesting him to translate his Satsangs so they could derive more benefit from his discourses. It was the first visible sign of what

5. Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, October 1985, “The Reality of the Saints,” p 27.



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

Hazur was preparing Baba Ji for in the coming years.

Those who were physically near to Hazur were astonished to see how much love and affection he had for Baba Ji even though Baba Ji was by birth a Hindu and had followed the ways and practices of the Nathpanth yogi's that bore little relationship to the traditions of those brought up in the Sikh faith.

But the heart-to-heart path is something totally apart from such concerns as its source is the fountainhead of all spiritual practices, the infinite Sea of Divine Love. As Hazur was that Fountainhead of Grace and Baba Ji was its devotee, the inner union of the two grew deeper and deeper with each passing day.

One day, Baba Ji, along with another devoted and loving sevadar, whose name was Bhai Shadi, were sitting together with Hazur. At that time, Bhai Shadi asked Baba Ji, "When you were following the path of the Nathpanth yogis, were you capable of protecting the souls from within?"

Before Baba Ji could reply, Hazur answered saying, "Well, if he was not capable of doing it then, what does it matter, because now he will protect the souls."

Baba Ji Asks Hazur Several Important Questions

On another occasion, Baba Ji had the opportunity to go and sit with Hazur late in the evening around 9:00 p.m. During the years Baba Ji was at the Dera (1928-1933), even though the numbers of people coming to him were steadily growing, there were times when those living in the ashram could approach him informally and in private.

Baba Ji enquired from Hazur, "Maharaj Ji, the Path which the Saints prescribe for attaining spiritual

realization is that of Simran, Dhyan and Bhajan. Aside from these three things is there any other Path by which one can achieve God realization?"

Hazur peacefully closed his eyes for a short while, and then coming out this contemplative mood, he said, "Baba Ji, are you asking about taking refuge with the Guru?"

Baba Ji answered, "Yes, Maharaj Ji."

Hazur then said, "To truly take complete refuge with the Guru, to become totally dependent on him, is something extremely difficult to do."

He elucidated further saying, "For the normal person, even if there are some defects in their meditation practice, or even if they leave it off for some time then start again, still in due course of time, by falling down and getting up again and by gradual improvement in Simran and Bhajan, they can, with the Grace of the Guru, reach their true home in Sach Khand.

But if one has adopted the Path of taking refuge with the Guru, i.e., relying totally and completely on him to take care of all one's inner and outer affairs, if even for one instant one's love for him breaks or some doubt in his competency arises, then all that one has done in respect to devotion to the Guru is tossed to the wind and in that instant one loses all that one has gained.

Hence, only some very rare soul can succeed on that Path. Therefore, it is better that one receives his Grace through the meditation practices. In this way they can easily and naturally awaken to their true spiritual heritage. That is the best way to follow. Still, I would like to say that, though extremely difficult, the Path of taking refuge with the Guru is a very high one."

On yet another occasion, Baba Ji placed this question before Hazur regarding the final phase of the spiritual

journey within: "Maharaj Ji, in Satsang You have made reference to the regions of Alakh (Indescribable), Agam (Inaccessible) and Anami (the Nameless) that are components of the realm of the True and Absolute Lord. Now kindly reveal more about these regions."

Maharaj Ji replied, "You have seen the Guru, so whatever he is instructing you to do you should, with faith, do that. Then the Guru will, from within, reveal to you every detail of this sublime subject." So, Baba Ji did exactly as Hazur had requested and gave his entire attention to meditation and with his Grace went inside and directly experienced those pure inner regions.

Regarding this Baba Ji used to say, "I was a very ordinary person, yet he bestowed on my soul the great Benediction of Love." This thought remained uppermost in his heart throughout his life, and it is why he was constantly singing the praises of his Guru. In later years, Baba Ji wrote a hauntingly beautiful bhajan that captured the depth and beauty of the inner relationship with Hazur that drew his soul deeper and deeper into the Sanctuary of Love Divine:

Guru rāyā tava charaṇī
Tana mana vāhile (refrain)

O Majestic Guru, I sacrifice body and mind at Your
holy lotus feet.

Janana marana bhava dukha haraṇa
Karuṇa nidhāna, kritārtha kele (1)

You destroyed the pain of birth and death.
O Treasure House of Grace, You have solved the
mystery of existence.

*Koṭa koṭa dandāvata, tujha guru māūle
Thaṭa he virāṭa, ati uncha ghāṭa
Chukuni vāta, bahu bhramiyaleñ (2)*

Millions of times, I prostrate myself before You;
O Guru, You are the Loving Mother of all.
Your magnificence is awe-inspiring;
You dwell in the sublime regions.
Seeking to scale those heights,
many are misled on devious paths.

*Japa tapa sādhana, upavāsa sādhiḷe
Vrata nema āchāra, karūnī vichāra
Tāpa dhuna agnī, bahu tāpiyale (3)*

They practice the repetitions and austerities;
they observe the fasts.
Fulfilling their vows and carrying out religious
observances, they do deeds of righteousness
and cultivate compassion.
Sitting in the heat and smoke, they burn the ritual f
fire.

*Mriga nābhiñ kasturī, mriga nāhī dekhile
Ḍagamaga chitta, agha pāpa dwaita
Bhramata phiralo, māyā mrigajale (4)*

The musk is hidden in the deer's navel, but the
deer cannot find it.
The mind is unsteady and wavering, stuck fast in
sin, misdeeds and duality.
It wanders about in illusion, like the deer chasing
after a mirage.



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

*Atī dīna dārūṇa, matīhīna pāhile
Gatī nām deūnī, sthītī sudhārūnī
Patita jāṇūnī, pāra bhava tārile (5)*

I am thoroughly wretched, please take care of this
one of low intellect.
Give me the knowledge of Naam and improve
my plight.
Be merciful on the fallen one; ferry me across the
ocean of this world.

*Guru Sāvana shishya Soma, rāsa eka kele
Pāra sparsha lochanḍa, kanchana jhāle akhanḍa
Aṇḍa brahmāṇḍa tyāgunī, tava charaṇ bhedile (6)*

O Guru Sawan, work Your alchemy on
Your disciple Somanath.
Touching this iron with the philosopher's stone,
transform it through and through into purest gold.
Going beyond the astral and causal realms,
I have become absorbed in Your holy lotus feet.

The Fire in the Lantern Storeroom

One of the duties to which Baba Ji was assigned that lay outside the scope of his normal langar responsibilities concerned the lighting of the kerosene lanterns, which were placed at strategic locations about the Dera so that those about at night could see where they were going in the desert darkness. Early each evening, Baba Somanath Ji would work along with another sevadar by the name of Eknath Ji. Everyone affectionately called them the "Two Naths." It was their job to fill and light the lanterns and then distribute them about the Dera. The storeroom that held the canister of kerosene for the

lanterns was just below Maharaj Ji's room.

One evening, Baba Ji and Eknath were preparing the lamps for use—cleaning the glass, trimming the wicks, filling them with oil, etc. In the process of doing their work, somehow the vessel containing the kerosene got knocked over, and the oil quickly spread across the floor. Eknath was sitting with his back turned toward the spreading oil and so did not observe what was going on. At that time, he was lighting another lamp. In the process of doing so, he managed to ignite the oil that was slowly spreading around him and, in a flash, the flames exploded in all directions.

Both sevadars quickly dashed outside and fortunately escaped catching fire themselves. In their consternation, they sounded the alarm that a fire was raging in the compound beneath Hazur's room. There were other vessels of oil sitting in the storeroom, and they feared that the whole storeroom would ignite, posing a danger to all in the vicinity of that building including Hazur, whose room was located directly above. Hearing their outcry, other sevadars rushed to the scene and began forming a line, passing vessels of water hand-to-hand to the area where the fire was burning. They hoped that they could douse it quickly and avert further damage.

Suddenly, from behind, a voice filled with profound peace resounded in the atmosphere: "Cease all this activity." Everyone turned around and beheld Hazur quietly standing there, radiant, calm and beautiful. How he came there none could say, yet he was amongst them. All the sevadars drew back, and, in that moment, the flames suddenly were quelled. In this mysterious way, Hazur mercifully prevented utter destruction of the housing compound and likewise protected everyone from harm.

Baba Ji Returns to Bombay

Baba Ji lived at the Dera for about four to five years. His days and nights were filled with serving the langar's needs, attending Satsang and practicing meditation, the spiritual pillars of Sant Mat. It was a rare and precious time, and Baba Ji was grateful to have the opportunity to live in close proximity to the One who had bestowed on his heart and soul, the gift of Initiation into the Path of the Celestial Sound Current. Hazur was the living embodiment of the Teachings of the Saints, and from him one could behold before their eyes, the fruits of living in harmony with the Power that sustained the entire creation—the Music of the Spheres. Yet amidst it all, he knew that he could not remain there for all times to come as Hazur had indicated to him inside, and outwardly also, that his destiny lay in South India where he would be given the responsibility for spreading the Teaching of Sant Mat amongst those who had never encountered the Path of the Masters before.

Having drunk deeply from the cup of Love manifested through the physical form of Hazur, resulting in his being able to complete the inner ascent, his thoughts were filled with compassion for the many souls he had met in his long and arduous quest for Truth. And beyond those he had personally encountered, he was aware of the longing in the hearts of millions of souls for the union with God but who did not have the technique for focusing their attention at the seat of the soul above and behind the two eyes where the grace could be directly experienced. He himself felt that the time had come to return to Bombay and take up some work that would allow him to remain financially independent and then serve those who came in his contact by telling them of

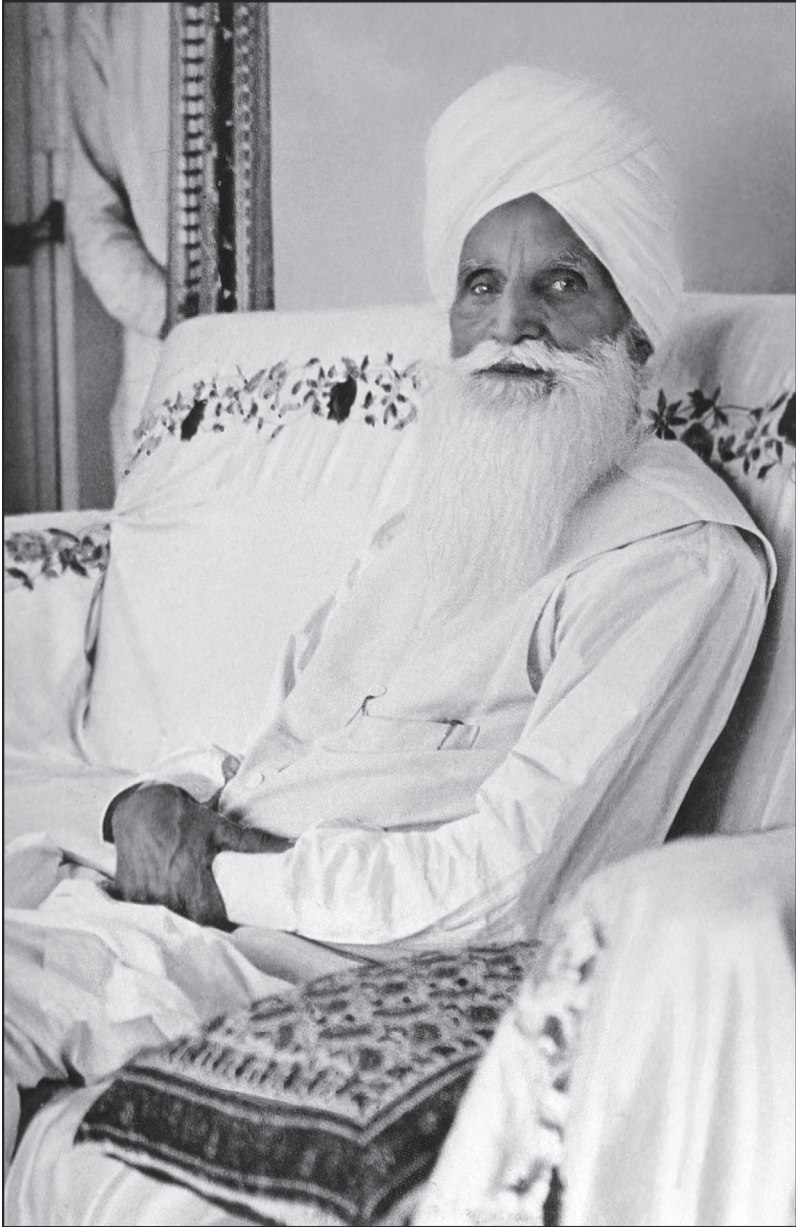
the Great Saint of Beas so that they too could derive benefit from him.

As the time for departure approached, the thought came into his mind to request Hazur to personally come to Bombay. (Hazur had traveled extensively in North India but had never ventured as far south as Bombay.) So, he placed the request before him saying, "Maharaj Ji, if you will shower your grace and consent to visit Bombay for a Satsang Program, then many thousands of people can benefit from your Darshan and spiritual instruction."

On hearing this heartfelt request from a Gurumukh disciple, Hazur gently smiled and said "What is the Kannada language like, in which you are fluent, for I am aware that people of South India speak a language of which I have no knowledge. I know that you are fluent in Hindi, Punjabi and Marathi but what are the Dravidian languages like?"

Baba Ji laughed and replied, "Kannada is like the jack-fruit. Inside it is very sweet, though outside it may appear a little bumpy. The sound of spoken Kannada can be best understood if you put some rocks in a can and then shake them. The sound coming out of the rocks tumbling over each other is like the sound one hears when listening to and speaking Kannada."

Hazur was pleased with his reply and said, "Somanath, the body in which your soul dwells is highly suitable for spreading the teaching of Sant Mat in South India for you have both the understanding of the ways of the people of the South and with the Grace of the Masters have perfected the meditation after passing through every lower stage of the journey. Go and commence the work of Satsang."



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

Baba Ji, perceiving the enormity of Hazur's command, asked, "How can this work flourish without Your support?"

Hazur then said, "Everything has already been prepared for you in advance to the extent that every leaf of the trees will repeat 'Radhaswami' to inspire and instill faith in your heart."

His deep and profound words gave Baba Ji the confidence he needed to commence this work in Hazur's Name.

Just prior to departure Hazur called Baba Ji to him and gave his final instructions. First of all he told him that he was to earn his own living by honest, hard work, and he was not to depend on the financial aid of anyone to earn the money for his own upkeep. Furthermore, he was always to keep before him the basic teaching of the Saints concerning subsisting on a pure vegetarian diet, maintaining a pure character in all worldly and spiritual affairs and, while attending to all one's responsibilities, devote a minimum of two and a half hours a day to meditation and the more the better. He further instructed him not to, in any way, be attracted to the external grandeur associated with ashrams but rather to be totally absorbed in the real inner essence of the Guru, which has nothing to do with physical properties or position in the Sangat.

As Baba Ji had lived a life of strict continence and renunciation prior to meeting Hazur, these simple words penetrated deep into his heart and for the rest of his life in this world he remained true to the injunctions imparted to him on that memorable day.

Outwardly the time of separation had arrived, but for those who have penetrated into the inner sanctuary of

the Third Eye where the soul comes in contact with the Radiant Form of the Satguru, merges with Him, and then stage by stage ascends through the astral, causal and supra causal planes until all sense of individual existence is vanquished in the Infinite Sea of Love, there is never any real separation.

While this is true in the highest sense of the word, yet on the outer level there is something that happens between the physical form of the disciple and that of the Guru that cannot be understood by those of us who have not yet reached that highest goal, for only such a disciple knows the full value of the company of the physical form of the Master. The gratitude and reverence such a disciple has for the manifested form of the Guru is beyond us.⁶

As a parting gift, Baba Sawan Singh Ji gave Baba Somanath Ji 20 rupees (remember that Baba Ji had no worldly belongings or money at all), two pillows, a small

6. The pain of the outer separation of the Guru and the Gurumukh disciple is a great mystery. While the two are united within, the pleasure of the Guru's company on the physical plane is incomparable and indescribable.

When Baba Jaimal Singh's army regiment was to be transferred from Agra, he told his great Guru, Swami Shiv Dayal Singh: "My heart breaks at the thought of parting. If you so will, I can have my name struck from the army rolls." But Swami Ji would not hear of such a thing: "Build your love on the Shabd within. That is your real Guru and is ever at your side. All else is transient and must be left behind. You must earn your living for if you depend on the labor of others, you must pay for it with your mental peace, and your understanding will be clouded. If you have to work, then why leave the army?" Jaimal Singh had no choice but to bow before the superior wisdom of his Master. At parting, Swami Ji spoke of the nature of Sainthood and the conduct of Saints. He related anecdotes of their great humility and, when bidding farewell, said: "Your regiment is now leaving. If you ever meet a true seeker, put him on the inner path, but remember always that you are only a humble instrument of the Saints." Tears filled the young soldier's eyes as he fell at the feet of his Guru and bade him adieu." Kirpal Singh, *A Great Saint Baba Jaimal Singh: His Life and Teachings* (Anaheim, CA: Ruhani Satsang, 1987) p. 43-44.

wool rug and a silk sheet. With these few possessions and the treasure of the Guru's blessings and instructions, Baba Ji returned to Bombay to take up the work allotted to him by Hazur.

*The flute of the Infinite is played without ceasing,
and its sound is love:
When love renounces all limits, it reaches truth.
How widely the fragrance spreads! It has no end,
nothing stands in its way.
The form of this melody is bright like a million suns:
incomparably sounds the vina,
the vina of the notes of truth.*

—Kabir



Return to Bombay

Baba Somanath Ji's Style of Giving Satsang

Before starting this section, I would like to refer back to some earlier comments regarding Baba Ji's unique style of giving Satsang. Baba Ji's Satsangs were generally oriented toward the people of South India, because his mission mostly centered in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The content of his Satsangs was based upon his personal life experience, which, for the most part, was directly connected to the devotional atmosphere in which the past Saints and Sages of India had lived. That atmosphere was beginning to pass away during his lifetime. His life had been steeped in the ancient yogic traditions of India and his pilgrimages throughout the country were made at a time when few Westerners had gone there in search of Truth as happened later in the 1960s.

Unlike Baba Ji's spiritual preceptor, Hazur Sawan Singh Ji, and his brother disciple, Sant Kirpal Singh Ji, who carried on Hazur's work on a domestic and international platform, Baba Ji had almost no connection with the British who ruled in India from 1858-1947. Both Hazur and Sant Kirpal had been directly involved in an official capacity with the British and not only spoke impeccable English but also understood the Western mind very well. Baba Ji, on the other hand, did not speak English and had almost no contact with the Western world. As a result, those of us who came to live at Kengeri Ashram

towards the end of Baba Ji's life had to totally readjust ourselves to an environment still grounded in a traditional Indian lifestyle with few concessions to Western needs as we perceived them in our own countries.

Those who are in the West and who will be reading the Satsangs and Bhajans translated from Hindi to English might benefit from knowing that the ways of the people of ancient India were based on a very strong code of ethics and high spiritual thinking. By good fortune, both Suzanne and I had the opportunity to spend a considerable amount of time living in India. We, in fact, were married in Bombay by Sant Ajaib Singh Ji. Our experiences gave us some insight into a traditional world that was rapidly vanishing. To say we fully grasped the beauty and depths of that culture would be a mistake, but because we also became well grounded in Hindi, it helped connect us to a world that was fading away and gradually being replaced by the more modern ways of living and thinking that we are accustomed to in the West.

Sant Ajaib Singh Ji, a successor of Sant Kirpal Singh Ji, was also steeped in the ancient ways of India since he had spent the most of his early life in Punjab, later moving to the edge of the Thar Desert in Rajasthan where he farmed and meditated. At one point, when he was a young man in the army, he went to Europe and fought with the British against Hitler, so he had more contact than Baba Ji did with the West. Even though he had a very traditional outlook on life, he also had a practical grasp of the way people in the Western world thought. It was not that Baba Ji could not have entered that domain, because all Saintly souls have the capacity to see clearly into the hearts of others and discern what their real needs are, but the assignment allotted to him had little to do with the West; therefore he kept his attention focused

on the needs of the Indian people that dwelled in the regions where his mission lay.

So, I feel that understanding Baba Ji's life story is an essential key to appreciating his Satsangs. Once the two are brought together, I think it is entirely possible that the reader can, through a receptive attitude, enter the world in which Baba Ji lived and worked on behalf of his Great Master Sawan Singh Ji.

The Changed Environment in Bombay

The city of Bombay itself, the setting in which Baba Ji began the second phase of his life there, was a dynamic ever-changing, ever-growing landscape in which traditional and modern elements co-existed side-by-side. Bombay was also a true melting pot of Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Parsi, Sikh and Jewish cultures. Hardly any other city in India had such a diverse blending of communities as existed in Bombay at that time. The British controlled the economic and political aspects of Bombay life to a large degree, but they, for the most part, left the socio-religious life of the people untouched. And because of their presence, the tensions that arose between castes, communities and religions was kept in check, for their military and administrative power was still something to be reckoned with.

.When Baba Ji left Bombay on his last great pilgrimage to North India in 1927, the city was continuing its economic expansion on every level. It was a great mill city employing tens of thousands of workers, primarily from South India, who flocked there from their villages. As mentioned earlier, the wealthy mill owners had erected public housing facilities called chawls where their workers could be economically housed. The Indian people, being highly social in nature, lived in these

accommodations packed tightly together, often amongst people from the very same communities that they had lived in while in the country. Yet by the time Baba Ji returned, that world had also changed to some degree. Bombay was still a growing, bustling city, but the Great Depression of 1929 had also taken a toll, with the result that the prosperity of the mills and the economy when Baba Ji returned in 1933, was somewhat checked.



Victoria Terminus in the 1930s

Working for a Grain Merchant

When Baba Ji first arrived back in Bombay, the immediate need that presented itself to him was to find some work to do whereby he could support himself as enjoined by Hazur. He began by procuring chickpeas from the grain merchants and, after roasting and spicing

them, would sell this popular snack to people coming out for their evening walk beside the ocean.

After a short while he found employment in a grain merchant's shop where he assisted with the procurement of grains and managed the account books pertaining to the business. The merchant was himself a religiously-minded man and appreciated the honest, conscientious way that Baba Ji attended to his responsibilities. Baba Ji requested the merchant to allow him to give spiritual discourses on the shop's steps in the evening when their work was complete to which the merchant readily assented.

Hence, it was in this modest way, that Baba Ji commenced the assignment entrusted to him by Hazur. Dressed in a simple white lungi,¹ shirt, vest and turban he would sit before the shop and himself sing the banis of Kabir Sahib, Paltu Sahib, Guru Nanak and other great Mystic Adepts of Sant Mat lineage. Between each sloka, he would explain, in simple but eloquent Marathi or Hindi, the spiritual meaning concealed in the archaic poetical language of the sacred writings.

The merchant was profoundly moved by the depth and beauty of Baba Ji's discourses, and he felt embarrassed to be employing him as a common worker in his establishment, for he was clearly a person of great spiritual attainment. One day, he called Baba Ji and said to him, "Kindly do not shame me by working as a servant in my shop. I feel that you should start your own independent business. I will loan you the money to commence any enterprise you prefer. You can repay me when your work is flourishing."

1. A popular men's garment made of cool, light cotton. It is wrapped around the waist like a kilt or sarong and is worn in lieu of trousers or pajamas.

At first, Baba Ji thought of entering the grain business where his recent experience lay, but after careful consideration, he decided instead to search for some place where he could open a cloth shop. Hence, while continuing to work for the grain merchant, he started looking for a suitable place to open a new enterprise. While he developed a plan for his eventual cloth business, he attended to his daily work in the shop, delivering Satsangs and meditating according to Hazur's instructions.

As soon as he could save a bit of money from the service he was doing, he began to look for a place to rent, as up to that time he had been living with his employer. The grain merchant's home was located in the cotton mill area, where Baba Ji had spent a good deal of time during his days as a Nathpanth yogi, and he decided to locate an apartment in the chawls where the millworkers lived, since he felt a close link with the people dwelling there. In one of the chawls, followers of the famous Saint of Karnataka, Siddharudha Swami² stayed together. These followers were themselves from Karnataka (at that time called Mysore State) and had come to Bombay to work in the cotton mills.

They recognized Baba Ji from that earlier time when he was engaged in intense yogic disciplines, and some of them had, in fact, received Initiation from him when he was a follower of the Nathpanth. Hence, he was invited to dwell amongst them. He also started holding Satsang in the Bombay Development Department chawl where he was living. This chawl had been developed in 1920 to

2. Siddharudha Swami (1836-1929) was an ascetic yogi active in South India. He was an exponent of non-dualism, and his commitment to social reform, particularly related to the drawbacks of the caste system, resonated with the nascent independence movement blossoming throughout India at that time. He lived to 92 years of age, departing from the earth plane in 1929 in Hubli.

house 50,000 tenement dwellers.

A large number of initiates of Swami Siddharudha lived in that area. The Swami had been a broad-minded renunciate Sage and, in the beginning, those who were following his noble ways of tolerance and inclusiveness felt a strong attraction to the teachings of Sant Mat, free as they are from discrimination between religions and communities and the tyranny of the caste system.

The principles of universal brotherhood were part and parcel of Baba Ji's being, as his soul had merged into the Ocean of God's Love, and hence was totally divested of the veils of egotism that blind us to the oneness of all life—seen and unseen. But the roots of sectarian belief had not been totally eradicated from the hearts of some of those with whom he was living, as it is very difficult to put into practice the philosophical tenets of any great teacher.

And so, in due course of time, the very people in the chawl that once showed admiration for the teachings of the Saints concerning the oneness of all life began to turn against him. On another front, a dear one who had played a prominent role in helping set up the Satsang accommodations and externally showed a lot of devotion to Baba Ji, became possessed of the idea that it was because of him, and none other, that more and more people were attending the Satsang.

One day, he proudly approached Baba Ji and told him bluntly that the only reason why people were attracted to Baba Ji's Satsang was due to his own efforts. At that point, Baba Ji decided that he would need to find other accommodations to carry on the Satsang work entrusted to him by Hazur. Reposing in the Guru's infinite Grace, he started searching for some suitable arrangement and was able to locate two small rooms where he could dwell independently.

As has been seen repeatedly in the history of the lives of the Saints, such incidents are quite common.³ Throughout the years of serving their Masters, they encounter all sorts of people at different stages of their evolution. A few rare seekers come only for the sake of finding a way for the soul to get out of this world to return to her True Home, while many others come, at least initially, to have some worldly desire fulfilled. The Saints have equal love for all, but on a practical level they sometimes temporarily create some type of play whereby those who are interested in the world and its enchantments may be gently pushed aside so that they can pursue those ambitions on their own—without hindering the Saints' work of awakening the souls to their true spiritual heritage.

The reason you come to him is to meet God. There is a room. It has four corners. There is a man in one corner who has millions of dollars; and he gives money to whoever goes there. The second corner is only for diseases; and those who come sick to him, he heals. The third is where supernatural powers are given. And in the fourth corner God is sitting Himself. How many will go to God? Very few. People come only for worldly things, here and hereafter, or for healing, or for supernatural powers. How many are there who come to God for God's sake? Very few. People come to the Master only for these three things—most

3. The story of the mind deluding the disciples in this way is a familiar one. Satta and Balwand, who were pathis for Guru Arjan Dev, once told the Guru flatly that the Sangat attended his Satsangs only to hear their beautiful recitation of the banis. Guru Arjan tried to humbly explain the reality to them, but they remained lost in their own arrogance, finally declaring that the great Nanak himself would have been nothing without their illustrious ancestor, Baba Mardana. Unable to bear this insult to Guru Nanak, who was God incarnate—a beacon light to suffering humanity in this dark Kali Yuga—Guru Arjan Dev cast them out, and their journey back into his favor was long and painful.

*of them! The man who comes to him for His (God's) sake, rises with his right foot on the ladder. So, you're blessed, you see. God has directed you from within to meet you somewhere where you can have your true chance of life, which is never, like the world's relations, frittered away, never ruined, never lost.*⁴

—Sant Kirpal Singh

Vaman Reunites with Baba Somanath Ji

Earlier in the narration of Baba Ji's life, the story was told of Vaman, the young boy who served him when he was staying in Bidal, a village in the mountains above Bombay. We left Vaman running away from home and coming to Bombay in search of Baba Ji. Now that story is taken up once again. At the time their reunion took place, Vaman was working in the Mir Muhammad Mill while residing with members of his community at the Trikamdas Chawl. He had heard through the grapevine that the Nathpanth yogi called Somanath had once resided in that area but had since disappeared.

After leaving Bidal, Baba Ji had returned to Bombay and made the aforementioned pilgrimages culminating with his meeting Hazur and receiving Initiation from Him. But word had not yet generally circulated that he had returned to Bombay and had given up the ways of the yogic tradition he had been following. Few of his old associates realized he was working in the shop of a prosperous grain merchant. Externally also, his appearance was quite different since he now dressed as a common working person.

4. Kirpal Singh Ji, *Sant Bani Magazine*, December 1994, "The Message of Christmas Day," p 22.

So it happened that one day, Baba Ji went to meet one of his old disciples from his Nathpanth yogi days who was selling the popular Indian confection chikki⁵ outside the Mir Mohammad Mill.

It just so happened that when Baba Ji met with his friend, Vaman was standing at the door of the mill. Even though Baba Ji's physical appearance was somewhat altered in terms of his mode of dress, etc. yet his face and demeanor were unmistakably that of the beloved yogi whom he had served as a child. He was at first astonished to see Baba Ji dressed in a typical South Indian lungi, white shirt and khaki vest with a turban tied on his head, but after his astonishment subsided, he joyfully bowed down and touched Baba Ji's feet.

Baba Ji was taken aback at this gesture of reverence from an unknown young man. Then, recognizing Vaman, he exclaimed, "O Vaman, how is it that you have come here?"

Wonderstruck, Vaman replied, "You yourself have brought me here. You left the village without telling me, so I set out in search of you."

Baba Ji smiled and said, "Well, Vaman, now was the appointed time for our meeting once again. It is a good thing that you did not come in contact with me in between, because I passed through many trials and difficult pilgrimages. Now your auspicious fate has awakened, and you will receive initiation from Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji."

Vaman then took up residence with Baba Ji and helped him with the seva of serving the dear ones coming to take advantage of the Satsang.

5. A brittle Indian sweet made of nuts and brown sugar.

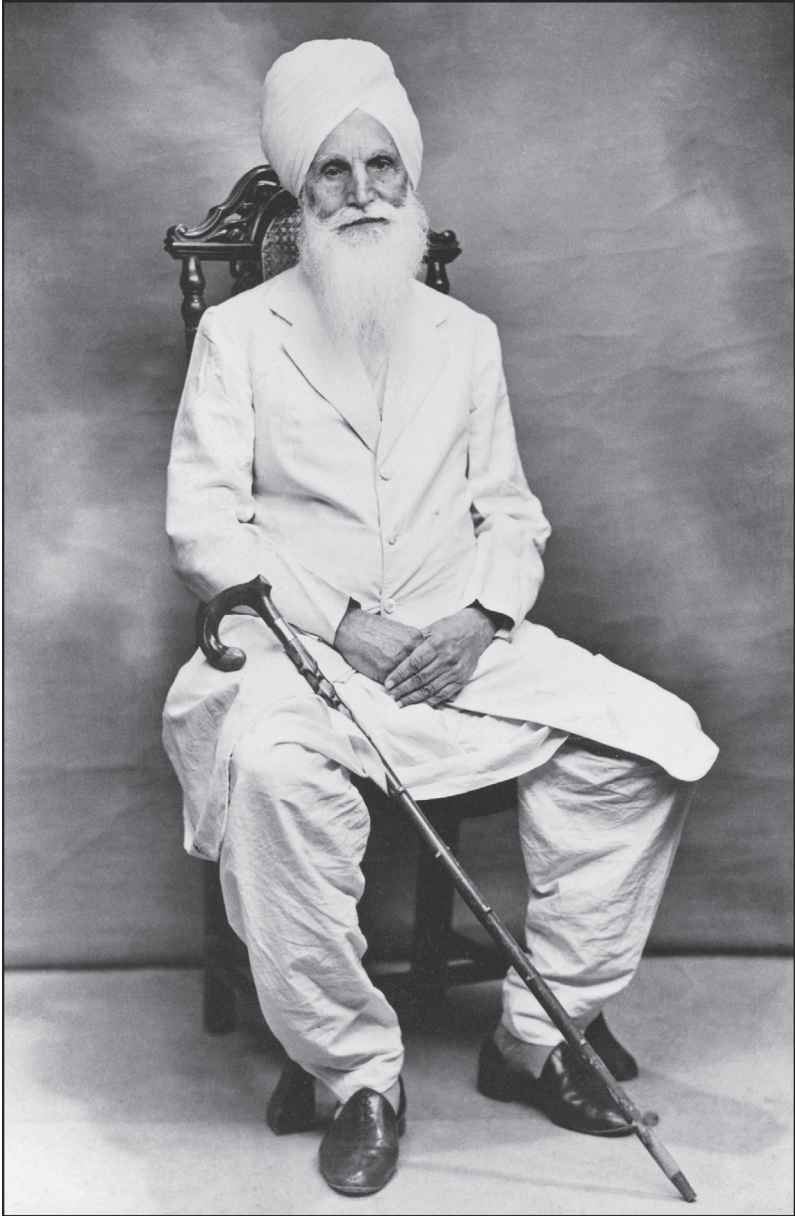
The Sangat Begins to Grow

Word began to spread among the residents in the area that a Sage of high spiritual status was amongst them with the result that growing numbers of people from all castes and communities came to be with him. But both the people he originally stayed with and those who were orthodox Hindus did not like his universal outlook, and they endeavored to obstruct the evolution of his Satsang work by one means or another.

Seeing their continued opposition, Baba Ji decided to leave the BDD Chawl altogether. He was able to locate and rent a bungalow at the crossroads near Dhan Cotton Mill and from his new residence he continued delivering Satsang. These were days of great happiness for both Baba Ji and those who knew him, for Baba Ji could totally serve Hazur through conducting Satsang and group meditations, but he did not have the additional responsibility of giving Initiation.

Once, when I was visiting Baba Ji at the Kengeri Ashram, he spontaneously told those of us present: "Before Hazur inwardly conferred the responsibility of granting Initiation to seeking souls, I was able easily to sit in meditation for 24 hours at a stretch, but he placed a garland of razor blades around my neck when he gave me the responsibility of giving Naam Dan."

During this phase of Baba Ji's service to Hazur, he began writing bhajans. One of the first was Satguru Sawan Shah. Baba Ji had a beautiful voice and so, before Satsang, he would lead the Sangat in the singing of this poignant remembrance of his Beloved Spiritual Preceptor. Following is the translation with a phonetic transliteration of this lovely bhajan:



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

Satguru Sāvana Shāh

Merā chitta hara liyā jī (refrain)

O Spiritual Emperor Satguru Sawan,
You have captured my attention.

Jita dekhu tita tū āpa dikhāī

Gati mati tana kī sthiti bhūla gayī

Chanda chakora dhyāna lāyā jī (1)

Wherever I look, there I see You.
All consciousness of the body has been lost.
This servant does Your dhyān like the
moonbird contemplating on the moon.

Dina ko chaina na rāta ko shayanā

Mana meñ mere tū ghara kinhā

Kauna sune kahāñ jāvā jī (2)

In the day, I have no peace, and at night, I get
no rest.

You have made your abode within me.

O who will hear this prayer of mine,
and where do I go?

Naina bahe jasa jharanā nīra

Kāna kalije bīcha lāgī tīra

Jāna chāhata aba jīyā jī (3)

Tears are flowing from my eyes
like water running in a stream.

You have pierced my heart

with the arrow of Your Love;

Now, I wish to give up my life.

Tujha bina jāūñ kaunī ora

Eka tūhī hai andara bāhara

Mana mandara andara basiyāñ jī (4)

Without you in which direction should I go?
 You are the only one both within and without.
 You have dwelt in the temple of the mind.

Dāsa Somanātha dhyāsa meñ rahe nitta
Āsa eka terī bālaka pita-māta
Phānsa kāṭa diyo māyā jī (5)

Your Servant Somanath remains in dhyān constantly.
 He has only your hope; you are the father
 and mother of this child. Cut the net of maya.

The dear ones who attended those memorable Satsangs reported that often, when Baba Ji sang Satguru Sawan Shah, tears of love flowed ceaselessly from his eyes. In the years to come, Baba Ji would write numerous bhajans in Hindi, Marathi and Kannada in which almost every aspect of the path of devotion was touched upon.

During this phase of his life, Baba Ji would, at least two times a year, travel to Beas, taking with him those souls who had come in his company and were longing for Initiation. Shortly after the reunion with Vaman, Baba Ji took him and other dear ones to the Dera. So, on the day allotted for Naam Dan, Vaman, who was still quite young, sat along with others seeking approval for this most sacred and precious gift. The numbers seeking Initiation at that time were so many that the aspirants sat on the ground in a long line and, as often was the case, Hazur would walk amongst them to see if the inner mark was on the forehead that would determine if they would be accepted or not. Occasionally, he would halt and ask some question of the person awaiting Initiation.

When he came before Vaman, who was overcome with joy on seeing Hazur approach, he stopped and, while casting a grace-filled glance upon the very young man, said to Baba Ji, who was walking with Him, "Somanath,

he (indicating Vaman) is yet a child. How can I give him Initiation?"

Baba Ji instantly replied, "Yes, but he is a very loving soul," upon which Hazur consented to initiate him.

On hearing these words of Hazur, Vaman's heart was filled to the brim with gratitude and delight. It was as if the ship of Love had come to the shore and he could now board it and cross over the Ocean of Existence in the company of a Competent Ferryman.

After the Beas program was completed, Baba Ji returned to Bombay and, once again, shifted to a new dwelling place, vacating the rented bungalow and taking two small rooms in the Trikamdass Chawl.

Vaman stayed with him and helped Baba Ji with the practical affairs of everyday life. Prior to his arrival, Baba Ji used to himself sing the banis of the Saints and then comment on each, line by line, but, in Vaman, Baba Ji found a willing student, and he taught him how to sing the banis. So, at Satsang Vaman would chant the verses and Baba Ji would comment on them.

At this time, a core group of initiates of Hazur, along with new seekers of Truth, began to meet regularly with Baba Ji, and in the evening, everyone would gather in his apartment for a one-hour Satsang followed by one hour of meditation. Afterwards, Baba Ji would meet with individuals before having a light dinner and retiring for a brief rest till midnight. Then he would begin his meditation practice that would last until 6:00 a.m. at which time he would resume his daily routine once more.

Hazur's First Visit to Bombay

As mentioned earlier, the grain merchant offered Baba Ji an advance of funds to open his own shop. With his support and a practical payment plan to repay the loan, Baba Ji began to focus on buying a shop in the Worli

section of Bombay, parts of which were becoming a lively center of business activity serving the nearby inhabitants, many of whom were in the upper middle-class segment of the population. Before he could locate a shop, Baba Ji gained an introduction into the cloth merchant business by purchasing material from the wholesale market and then taking his procurements on his bicycle and going to homes, bungalows and housing projects in his neighborhood and selling them directly to the inhabitants dwelling therein. In this way, he began to acquire knowledge both of the market and its chief merchants and the buying public as well.

Baba Ji, meanwhile, requested Hazur to kindly visit Bombay for a Satsang program. Hazur assured him that he would come, but it was not until 1936 that he was able to fulfill his promise. On that first occasion, very little information was provided to the public that the Great Saint of Beas was to grace the city for a Satsang program. But Baba Ji used to tell that such was the invisible magnetism of Hazur's being that without any publicity, people from the city and the surrounding villages and towns somehow came to know he was there and eagerly attended the Satsangs in large numbers.

Baba Ji quietly made all the arrangements for Hazur's visit but there was another prominent and devoted Satsangi, Tansukh Ram Ji, in Bombay, who was also eager to have Hazur stay at a location selected by him. Baba Ji graciously put aside his own wish to have Hazur reside in the place he had prepared and helped Tansukh Ram Ji with his arrangements instead. But since he already had rooms in readiness at the other location, he kept those reserved in case Hazur wished to stay there at some point during the program.

When Hazur arrived, he was taken to Tansukh Ram Ji's place and remained there for a couple of days. But

Hazur also understood and appreciated the feelings of Baba Ji's heart and, after a few days, while expressing his deep satisfaction with Tansukh's preparations, indicated that he wished to stay at the place selected by Baba Ji.

The property Baba Ji had arranged belonged to one of the most distinguished kings of Rajasthan, Maharaja Jiwajirao Scindia, who along with his family, would reside at his seaside palace in Bombay for several months each year. The rest of the time this distinguished property was occupied by a few of his staff that kept everything in perfect order for the king's yearly visits.

The king's wife, Vijaya Raje Scindia, who was a seeker of Truth, had come into contact with Baba Ji, and when she found out that Hazur was coming to Bombay, she offered the palace for his residence. It was because of her kindness that Baba Ji had reserved it for Hazur and those traveling with him.

The palace suited Hazur and his entourage very well, as it was situated right on the Arabian Sea where fresh breezes blew off the water and kept the area cooler and less humid than interior parts of the city. While staying at the palace, Baba Ji was in constant attendance on Hazur and those who accompanied him, so there would be no lacking for anything required by Him.

It was a dream come true for Baba Ji. Hazur openly expressed his appreciation of the selection Baba Ji had made. The sincere love and devotion which quietly flowed from his heart naturally drew forth a continuous outpouring of grace from Hazur, resulting in Baba Ji being immersed deeply in his Remembrance during all the precious moments of Hazur's physical presence in Bombay.

The comfortable staying arrangements allowed Hazur to give Satsangs in selected venues around the city where many souls heard Hazur's discourses, received

Initiation and were reconnected to the Celestial Sound and Divine Light within. Baba Ji was keenly aware that the life of a renowned Sage such as Hazur was far from easy. The responsibility entrusted to him was not merely that of giving instructive and spiritually illuminating talks but, of far greater importance, to initiate seekers of Truth and put them on the Inner Way. Once having done this, the duty of the Saint does not end for, from that point onward, such a One has to inwardly help the disciple to wind up their karmic account—a debt that has accumulated from times beyond reckoning. Such a duty naturally casts a heavy burden on the body of the Saint, and Baba Ji wanted to do everything possible to make Hazur's physical staying arrangements as comfortable as possible so he could fully attend to the needs of those coming to him for help and guidance.

After the Satsang program was completed, Baba Ji took Hazur to the place where he planned to construct a new shop on the site of the old Diamond Mansion Hall, and Hazur gave his approval for the idea. He suggested that Baba Ji construct a separate hall for Satsang to which Baba Ji readily agreed. On that day, Baba Ji had arranged to have a tent erected on the shop's proposed new site. There Hazur delivered a Satsang.

The days passed all too quickly and finally Baba Ji, along with other dear ones from Bombay, found themselves bidding farewell to Hazur and his traveling companions at the railway station. When they gathered around him to bid farewell, Hazur asked Baba Ji, "Somanath, how much did you spend for the arrangements?"

Baba Ji folded his hands and could only say, "We only crave Your grace."

Hazur lovingly replied, "Grace you shall have in abundance."

Baba Ji Opens a Cloth Shop

After Hazur departed from Bombay, Baba Ji had the cloth shop and hall constructed and proceeded to develop his business in a systematic way. It did not take long for the people living in the Worli section of Bombay to discover his enterprise and patronize it. But they were rather surprised to discover that they had to change their buying habits to encompass the hours that Baba Ji chose to have his doors open for business. Normally, in India, the prime shopping hours are towards evening between 6 and 10 p.m. but Baba Ji promptly closed the doors at 5:30 and from 6:00 to 7:00 every evening held Satsang, followed by meditation for one hour, after which he would meet with dear ones individually to answer questions they might have.

The opening of the shop also marked a new era in the type of people that came for Satsang. Now that he had established himself in a respectable profession, people from the middle class, upper middle class and even upper class, in terms of wealth and social status, began to come to him along with the millworkers and others laboring in what many considered to be menial jobs.

But for Baba Ji all these class and religious distinctions did not have any significance.

Ek nūr te sabh jag upjiā, kaun bhale ko mande

The entire created world has emerged from one
Divine Light,
So, who is to be called as good or bad, as all are of
the same essence? ⁶

—Kabir Sahib

6. Kabir Sahib, *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, p 1349.



Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Beas

Those who transcend the realm of mind and senses and enter the regions of pure spirit come to know, as a living reality, that dwelling within all forms of life, human and otherwise, is one pure Light and Love though encased in so many types of veils due to karmic impressions.

As the word of the merchant Saint of Worli quietly spread from neighborhood to neighborhood and the numbers of people coming for Satsang increased, the need for having larger venues for special-occasion Satsangs arose. The hall adjacent to the cloth shop had sufficient space for those wishing to attend the daily Satsangs, but as the years passed by, there were times

when hundreds and later thousands of people would come to the special Satsangs. Different halls were therefore rented to accommodate the large numbers of people attending. And as Baba Ji went on glorifying the name of his Master and others of the Sant Mat lineage, i.e., Kabir Sahib, Guru Nanak, Paltu Sahib, Mira Bai, Ravidas, etc., so the numbers of people wishing to be initiated increased as well.

Baba Ji Takes Many Dear Ones to Beas for Initiation

In order to fulfill their desire for receiving the gift of Naam, Baba Ji would, twice a year, take seekers and devotees to Beas. Sometimes entire train compartments needed to be reserved for the dear ones, because hundreds would accompany him to Dera Baba Jaimal Singh in Punjab.

Likewise, with each passing year, Hazur's ashram, Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, had grown larger and larger to the extent that tens of thousands would attend the monthly Satsang that spread over a period of three days. The ashram was a busy hive of activity during those grace-filled years while Hazur was in the body. To come into that powerful spiritual atmosphere was an unforgettable experience for those who had the opportunity to do so.

Upon arrival at the ashram, Baba Ji would meet with the organizers responsible for the dear ones' accommodations, and he would personally see that everyone was settled comfortably in some communal hall or in one of the tents erected to house the hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of people who flocked to Hazur's holy feet. The dear ones coming to those programs seemed to have a wonderful capacity for being able to squeeze into what people coming from the West might consider tight places, but they not only adjusted themselves comfortably,

they did so with delight.

As soon as these preliminary arrangements were taken care of, Baba Ji would quietly go for Hazur's Darshan and the meeting of the two great souls—the Perfect Master and the Gurumukh disciple—was charged with divinity. All that needed to be conveyed between them was done so through the eyes of the soul and not perceived with the eyes of flesh. Baba Ji would then inform Hazur about the people traveling with him with special attention given to those who were seeking Initiation.

Baba Ji Translates Hazur's Satsangs into Marathi

During the scheduled Satsangs, when all the dear ones would gather together—not only those from Bombay but also those from Punjab and other North Indian states—Hazur would sometimes have Baba Ji translate the Satsangs into Marathi. Once Hazur took his seat on the dais and the singing of soul-stirring bhajans was concluded, the Pathi's lyrical chanting of one of the Saint's banis would commence. The Pathi would sing a stanza and Hazur would comment on the spiritual import contained therein. His luminous countenance accompanied by the enchanting melody of the bani and his simple but elegant commentary on the teachings of the Saints amidst the pin-drop silence of those sitting in attendance, produced a charged atmosphere that lifted the hearts of all.

Baba Ji would stand below the dais while Hazur delivered the entire Satsang and only when he completed the discourse would he do the translation from memory. Mr. Oberoi, a dear disciple of Baba Sawan Singh Ji and a close associate of Sant Kirpal Singh and Sant Ajaib Singh, said that when Baba Ji did the translations, his voice was so powerful, magnetic and charming that even without a microphone he could be heard by the large crowds assembled there. Mr. Oberoi was given the responsibility

by Hazur of personally attending to all of Baba Ji's needs while he was at the Dera including serving him food.



Baba Somanath Translating Hazur's Satsang at Dera

One time an elderly lady from Bombay accompanied Baba Ji and the other dear ones to the Dera for the Satsang and Initiation program. One day, along with hundreds of devotees, she was waiting by the road along which Hazur was walking. She was standing beside Baba Ji at the time. When she beheld Hazur's luminous form approaching her, she became overwhelmed and her natural response to the feelings of adoration arising in her heart was to bow down to the ground and try to touch his feet.

Hazur moved back and gently struck her with his cane, as he fervently wished that people would not do such things. The numbers of enthusiastic people around him were quite enough to negotiate as they loved to move in

close to him but if people were allowed to touch his feet amidst a pressing crowd, then it was dangerous for all concerned. Furthermore, he was constantly reminding all those who wished to derive benefit from the company of the Saints that the Grace and Mercy that lived in their hearts was most abundantly manifested through their Eyes.



Hazur Giving Darshan to the Assembled Devotees

Nonetheless, he later called Baba Ji and apologized for striking the lady who was with him, saying that it must have hurt him to witness such an event. Baba Ji replied, "Hazur, it was by a very noble and high good fortune that she received the mild blow from you through which a vast storehouse of karma was eradicated in an instant with little or no effort on her part."

The Saints have come into this world as benefactors—their every action, word, and glance is directed to the upliftment of the disciple. Their ways are mysterious and, through the law of sympathy they often take upon

themselves the karmas that we would find very difficult to bear. The Gurumukh disciple has surrendered totally and has made the Guru's will their own. Having become one with the Master, the Gurumukh can fathom the secret behind Saints' behavior that remains a closed book to those of us who have confined our dealing with the Master to the physical plane alone.

*This day is dear to me above all other days, for to-day
the Beloved Lord is a guest in my house;
My chamber and my courtyard are beautiful with
His presence.
My longings sing His Name, and they are become lost
in His great beauty:
I wash His feet, and I look upon His Face; and I lay
before Him as an offering my body, my mind, and all
that I have.
What a day of gladness is that day in which my Beloved,
who is my treasure, comes to my house!
All evils fly from my heart when I see my Lord.
"My love has touched Him; my heart is longing for
the Name which is Truth."
Thus sings Kabir, the servant of all servants.*

—Kabir



Hazur's Visit to Sangli

Amolak Ram Brings News of Hazur's Upcoming Visit

The year was 1942, the month November.¹ At that time, there were still numerous kingdoms within India ruled over by Rajas, which were backed by the British Empire. One of these was the Kingdom of Sangli. Raja Chintamani Rao Appa Saheb governed it. He and his entire family were devoted disciples of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji. The king and his family came from the tradition that those who held such positions did so on behalf of the people in their kingdom. Their whole existence was bound up in seeking for ways of improving the lives of those they were outwardly responsible for governing. The king, with the support of his family, devoted a huge part of their resources to higher education for all, modern medical facilities, improved agricultural techniques, etc. In short, they looked to the welfare of all strata of society instead of only the upper classes, which was the case in many kingdoms in India. As they were deeply devoted to Hazur and the Sant Mat teachings, they infused all their works with a spiritual fragrance that touched the hearts of many in their kingdom.

It was the ardent wish of the king and his family that Hazur Sawan Singh Ji should visit them, so he graciously

1. Rai Sahib Munshi Ram, *With The Three Masters: Translated from Ruhani Diary* (Beas, Radha Soami Satsang, 2018), v 1, p 46.

accepted their invitation. In order to reach their palace, which was located in the mountains about 235 miles southeast of Bombay, Hazur and his party had to pass through the teeming metropolitan city itself. The party planned a short stop there to recover from the long journey from Punjab and wanted Hazur to have maximum rest, so no formal program had been planned. No announcement of Hazur's imminent arrival had been made to the Bombay sangat, and Baba Somanath Ji himself did not know of Hazur's upcoming visit.

Such events have their own mysterious meaning and significance that require an inner understanding to comprehend. There is indeed a hidden heart-to-heart language that exists between the Master and his lovers so that no outer circumstances can prevent their meeting both inwardly and outwardly.

It so happened that shortly before Hazur was due to arrive in Bombay, Baba Ji had just come out of meditation and was looking out of the window of the cloth shop. To his surprise, in the distance, he saw a devoted mastana disciple of Hazur's from Punjab coming down the street.

In the court of almost all Saints there is often at least one disciple, if not several, who have high spiritual ascent within, but who are not able to integrate that experience into their daily lives and attend to outer responsibilities in the normal way. They remain absorbed within enjoying the bliss of the higher regions but have very little awareness of their physical body and the environments they are moving through. Baba Ji had a great love for such ones, as he had himself passed through similar experiences in his life, and it was only by the grace of Hazur that he had been able to ground himself such that he could attend to both spiritual and worldly responsibilities in a quiet, unassuming way. So, he well

understood such dear ones and enjoyed their company tremendously.

Seeing that dear one, whose name was Amolak Ram Ji, Baba Ji went out and called to him to come to the shop.

Once he had him safely inside, he enquired, "Amolak Ram Ji, how is it that you have suddenly appeared in this place. Who told you how to find me here?"

He laughed and said, "Well, I got down from some horse-drawn carriage and came directly here. The Satguru himself sent me here."



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji at Beas Railway Station

As it turned out, Amolak Ram Ji had heard of Hazur's trip to Bombay and managed to get a train ticket from Punjab, but he didn't know where in Bombay the program was being held. In his usual God-intoxicated state, he had disembarked at the Bombay rail terminus and somehow had ended up coming to Baba Ji's shop.

Outwardly, it was a rather inexplicable thing to

happen because Amolak Ram Ji did not know anything about Baba Ji's whereabouts there in Bombay. His only interactions with Baba Ji had been when Baba Ji came to the Dera in Punjab, during which all their conversations were about Hazur and his wonderful ways. So, it was through this auspicious meeting alone that Baba Ji came to know of Hazur's impending visit.



Royal Opera House (Right), Bombay, early 1900s

But, as mentioned before, Amolak Ram Ji was hardly aware of his physical body and in appearance he was disheveled, wearing filthy clothes and having long, unwashed hair. Baba Ji understood everything about the condition of those that are lovingly termed, mast fakirs (intoxicated renunciates) so he lovingly cut his hair, had him bathe and gave him new, clean clothes to wear. He then had him sit and eat a nourishing meal so that in every way his physical needs were taken care of.

Then, Baba Ji informed the Satsangis living nearby to

come to the shop, as they would be going from Worli to the Fort area by horse-drawn carts, about six miles away. He did not know exactly where Hazur would be staying, but he felt sure that the Satsangis in that area would be able to furnish them with more information. In those days, there were few cars and trolleys, buses, and trains. Horse-drawn carts were the most common mode of transportation.

In fact, arrangements had been made for Hazur's party to stay at Lakshmi Bhag, a comfortable guest house, very near to the old Opera House. Baba Ji and all the dear ones were overjoyed and reveled in the opportunity to help prepare for Hazur's arrival. The cat was now out of the bag and Bibi Lajwanti, who accompanied the Master on the journey, describes the scene when Hazur stepped onto the platform at Victoria Terminus:

When the station came, Hazur stood at the door of the compartment. In order to greet Hazur, the highest ranked officers came at the station. So many rich people of the nearby cities had also come to receive Hazur. The Queens and Kings of close by states laid down on the platform in order to greet Hazur. They used to do Dandavat. That was the tradition among the royal people to give respect. All including Raja Sahib had the royal scarves around their necks and gave their loving respect to Hazur by folding their hands and bowing their heads. There was a big crowd of sangat around Hazur...Hazur met everyone with love and he placed his soft hands on everybody's head and blessed them.

The fireworks were going and the music band was being played for the greetings of Hazur.

Data Ji reached Lakshmibai's house. Somanath and Dundhi Ram had arranged the whole house for Hazur...

*When Hazur entered the house, it looked as if the moon appeared from the dark clouds. As soon as he arrived, he sat on the stage and did the satsang. He said the golden words in the satsang and gave his Darshan to the sangat. Then after finishing the satsang, Hazur came in the room and said, "Kako, get the food ready and also feed the rest of the people. Then Raja Sahib will come soon. You also make yourself free so that you can also meet Raja Sahib." Shahanshah's pictures were taken in the satsang. Then Hazur said to Dundhi Ram, "After giving satsang today and tomorrow, I have to go the day after tomorrow to Pune (another city close to Bombay). Then I will give you time on my way back."*²

—Bibi Lajwanti

After the short stay in Bombay, Hazur and his party had to depart for Pune and Sangli, but planned to stop again on the return trip to give more time to the sangat in Bombay. For the onward journey, the party traveled on the Deccan Queen, which, according to Hazur Sawan Singh's secretary, Rai Sahib Munshi Ram, was the fastest and most comfortable train in India at the time. "It runs on electricity and covers the 126 miles to Pune in only three hours. The journey was beautiful. Houses, green fields and the sea slowly fades into the small hills and valleys of the Ghats."³ But for those blessed souls fortunate enough to make that journey with Hazur, all the phenomena of this world were eclipsed by the priceless opportunity to be near the Beloved Master.

2. R.K. Rajput, *Sawan: Sage of Beas* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Publishing, 2018) p 154.

3. Rai Sahib Munshi Ram, *With the Three Masters: Translated from Ruhani Diary* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang, 2018) v 1, p 50.

In the evening we reached Sangli. The other Kings and Queens and their servants were waiting at the railway station. Raja Sahib was a loving devotee of Hazur and was a very peaceful King. As soon as he got down from the train he picked up Hazur's luggage. His servants and other ministers tried to take the luggage from him, but the King did not give it to them. He said, "With great difficulties I have got this chance to serve my Satguru. Hazur said such jivas (human beings) take the benefit."⁴

— Bibi Lajwanti

Satsang in the Kingdom of Sangli

The palace was vacated for the use of Hazur and his party, and the whole city was decorated with lights in honor of Hazur's visit. There are so many lovely stories that could be recounted about how Baba Sawan Singh Ji was preparing Baba Ji during this time for the work he would do after his (Hazur's) departure from this world; they would literally fill several volumes. But one highlight of particular note from the Sangli program should be presented in this account, as it once again reveals the intimate spiritual link between Hazur and Baba Ji and how the Gurumukh disciple maintains a respectful attitude towards everyone and does not push himself to the forefront of the Sangat.

During Hazur's stay in Bombay, several of the local dear ones had been invited to accompany Hazur and his party traveling onward to Sangli. Baba Somanath Ji was included in that number. Here are Baba Ji's own words regarding that experience:

According to the will and wish of Hazur, I departed from Bombay with the rest of the local dear ones on the train trip

4. R.K. Rajput, *Sawan Sage of Beas* (Morrisville, NC: LuLu Publishing, 2018) p 157-158.



*Shrimant Chintamanrao Appasaheb Patwardhan
Maharaja of Sangli, circa 1911*

to Sangli. Hazur could have given Satsang Himself (without translation) but because the vast majority of the people attending would be native Marathi speakers and they did not have much knowledge of the Sant Mat teachings, Hazur felt it would be better if I was with him to do the translation into the local language so they could grasp the subject more thoroughly.



Hazur with the Maharaja of Sangli and the Royal Family

A close associate of the Raja's family, Shrimant Rajavade Sahib, suggested that the Sant Mat teachings should initially be presented in such a way that it would not downplay the rites and rituals which are at the heart of orthodox Hinduism, as in their region the people were deeply involved with the traditional ways. In fact, Saints never disrespect any of the orthodox practices of any religion, be it Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian etc., but they clearly explain the need to rise above rites and rituals to experience the Ringing Radiance within, which is the common heritage of all humanity. Out of respect for this request, Hazur

had decided, in advance, which banis to comment on that would be in accordance with their wishes.

Since it was via the invitation of the royal family that Hazur was coming for a Satsang program, the word reached to all the towns and villages in the area that such a sacred event was taking place. People from all strata of society, therefore, gathered in Sangli to attend the Satsangs and have the benefit of Hazur's company.

The royal family's love and devotion were something to experience, as they had made excellent arrangements for all attending. They had a huge tent constructed on the palace grounds that could comfortably accommodate thousands of people. A large community kitchen was also constructed to provide simple meals for all attending.

Making such commodious arrangements allowed everyone to relax and derive full benefit from Hazur's presence amongst them. The Raja and his family also had shifted their entire household to a tent on the grounds so that Hazur and his accompanying party would have the palace for their exclusive use. Every facility for the party's comfort was looked after down to the minutest detail.

When Hazur arrived for the first Satsang, before ascending the dais to give the discourse, he graciously bowed before the Sangat and then took his seat. I was standing beneath the dais, and Hazur indicated to me to prepare to do the translation into Marathi from Punjabi. But unbeknownst to Hazur, some of the well-regarded scholars and people of high social status had approached the king and requested him to have one of the most revered statesmen and scholars of the time, Sir Moropant Vishvanath Joshi, do the translation, although he was not a disciple

of Hazur and did not know anything about the Sant Mat Teachings.

Hazur perceived everything that was going on and looked towards me to see my reaction. I folded my hands and said, "Maharaj Ji, the seva of the Sangat should be done according to the wishes of those making the arrangements, so it would be best to act in accordance with their requests." After saying these few words, I quietly took my seat amongst those assembled.

On that day, Hazur took a very simple bani regarding the precautions in lifestyle that should be adopted by a true spiritual aspirant. He avoided any reference to the specific spiritual practices that are at the core of the inner ascent and would be difficult for a person to translate if they were not knowledgeable about the Teachings of the Masters.

But on the next day, Hazur chose to do a commentary on one the most esoteric banis of Sant Mat entitled "Kar Nainoñ Dīdār Mahal Meñ Pyārā Hai" (See Your Beloved Lord in the Temple of the Body) by Kabir Sahib. In this bani, Kabir describes the ascent of the soul through the chakras of the body into the astral, causal and supra-causal planes. It carefully elucidates the reach of Sant Mat as it relates to the other paths, clarifying that Sant Mat's focus is oriented towards the inner Path. The vocabulary used is very profound and precise and can only be properly described and translated by those who have practically gone within.

Hearing the first stanza of the bani, Shriman Joshi humbly folded his hands and bowed before Hazur, saying, "If you can entrust the translation of this bani to one of your disciples it would be more appropriate. In that

way I can sit and take advantage of the Satsang.” Hazur accepted his request.



***Hazur Sawan Singh Visiting Bombay
Baba Somanath is standing by Hazur (wearing a black coat)***

Maharaj Ji then asked that I should give a detailed and accurate description of each of the chakras and the Path that lay beyond them. He said the language being used is very sublime and exalted, so I should translate what he was describing with great discrimination. It was my first opportunity to stand before so many renowned scholars and pundits to explain such a subtle and intricate subject that needed to be fully translated from Punjabi to Marathi. I prayed within my heart that Hazur should protect me so I might correctly explain the profound meaning of each and every line of the bani so that those listening might receive the full benefit of this lofty subject. I respectfully replied to Him, “Satguru, You alone

are the one who accomplishes everything." With this the Satsang commenced.

Hazur explained this spiritually comprehensive subject in detail and how he was making the translation happen astonished me, for I was not prepared for such an event. The Sangat was very uplifted by the discourse. Their understanding of Sant Mat was greatly expanded by what they heard. The Raja himself gained a much deeper awareness of the Teachings of the Saints through the discourse translated into Marathi and was thoroughly satisfied with all that he heard.

Later, I came to know from the dear ones near Hazur that, when he returned to Beas, he commented, "There is no one else like Somanath that could translate this Satsang of Kabir based on their own inner experience." But the truth is that it was only that Power that was Itself accomplishing all the works, for I was a person of no special consequence.⁵

After the seven-day program in Sangli (November 13th-20th), Hazur, along with those accompanying him, returned to Bombay on the 21st for a two-day Satsang program. During that visit, Hazur again stayed at Lakshmi Bagh in the Fort Area of Bombay and held Satsangs both in the Hall at Lakshmi Bagh (morning of the 22nd) and at Baba Somanath Ji's Satsang Hall in Worli Naka (evenings of the 21st and 22nd).

It is recorded in *With the Three Masters* that on the morning of the November 22nd Maharaj Sawan Singh visited many homes of the local Satsangis and then: "On his return to Lakshmi Bagh at 10 a.m. Hazur gave a discourse

5. Based on the account given in: Shrimati Megha Chandrakant Telang, *Somālaya* (Mumbai: Baba Somanath Ji Radhaswami Satsang Trust, 1980), "Sānglī kā Satsang," p 92-94.

on Soami Ji's shabd *Heavy intense darkness prevails in this world*. Satsang took place in the hall downstairs and was translated into Marathi by Baba Somanath."⁶

Jag meñ ghor andherā bhārī, tan meñ tam kā bhandārā

Heavy intense darkness prevails in this world
and the body is a storehouse of shadows.
Whether they are awake or asleep, I see people
helplessly caught in the maze of this creation.
Through ignorance of its own real home
the soul is living here like a homeless wanderer,
Stumbling through different life forms, tossed
about in the cycle of birth and death.
Moment by moment she lives her days in utter
misery, defeated, demoralized and crying in pain,
But who is there who listens to her cries? ⁷

By good fortune, Baba Ji was able to go to the Victoria Railway Terminus to bid Hazur farewell when he was departing. As his time had been fully occupied with attending to the needs of others, there had been little time for them to be together. But in that moment of departure, Baba Ji humbly requested him, "Hazur, kindly keep showering Your grace and mercy upon us."

Hazur, three times in succession, said, "You shall have more and more grace."

Regarding these precious words of Hazur's, Baba Ji used to say that, in fact, each and every thing that was happening was happening by his grace alone. All the Satsang activity, and indeed every aspect of life, was

6. Rai Sahib Munshi Ram, *With the Three Masters: Translated from Ruhani Diary* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang, 2018) v 1, p 58.

7. Translation from: *Sar Bachan Poetry: Selections* (Beas: Radha Soami Satsang, 2002) bachan 14, shabad 12, p 125-126.

flowing along on the hidden stream of Hazur's grace. And all the way up to the last moments of Baba Ji's life, he always reminded everyone that one should never think that they were the doer but rather should go within and see how every detail of life of devoted souls is being taken care of by the true form of the Guru, the Celestial Sound Current, which was in no way confined by time and space.

Not long after Hazur returned to Punjab, another event of major importance occurred, the impact of which is being felt to this day as will be revealed as this part of the story unfolds. It is one of those intriguing parts of the history of the Saints, which totally transcends the mind and intellect, but since the writer of this account and his wife are in some way connected with this ongoing story, it has a special place in their hearts, and it is hoped that it can be presented in such a way that others might feel the wonder and mystery of all that occurred at that time and continues on even now.

*O man, if thou dost not know thine own Lord,
whereof art thou so proud?
Put thy cleverness away: mere words shall never
unite thee to Him.
Do not deceive thyself with the witness of the
Scriptures:
Love is something other than this, and he who has
sought it truly has found it.*

—Kabir

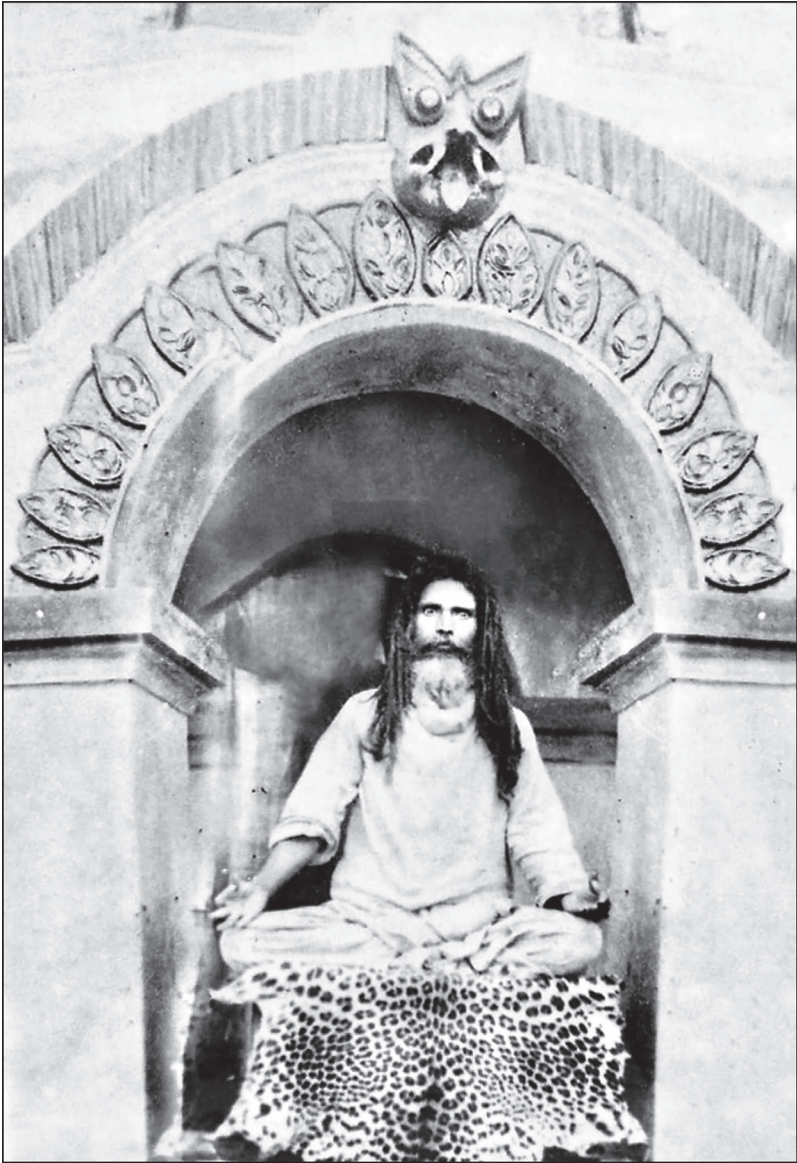


Reunion with Mahadevappa

Mahadevappa Searches for Baba Ji

Earlier in Baba Ji's life history, the story was presented on how the police officer, Mahadevappa, came into contact with Baba Ji when he was a Nathpanth yogi. Mahadevappa was a sincere seeker of Truth but had not found anyone he could trust to initiate him into the mysteries of the Inner Life. When he met Baba Ji, he had a long-standing skin disease that Baba Ji healed. Mahadevappa felt a deep spiritual connection with him and was initiated into the mystical practices of the Nathpanth. Having taken instruction from Baba Ji, he went into the deep hinterlands of Andhra Pradesh where he found a solitary cave to meditate in and devote himself fully to the awakening of the kundalini through pranayama. He became successful in mastering the kundalini and through it achieved numerous mystical powers with the result that many of the people of the area where he lived were attracted to him and became his devotees.

Now 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, began conducting Satsang.



Shri Mahadevappa

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.

He 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 that 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. He did not 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 was 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 secrets of Nathpanth, so they all set out for Bombay, first traveling by bullock cart to Kalyandurg and then taking the train from there onward.

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 great sage living in Bombay who was currently giving Satsang.

One Muslim driver said that he had heard of one holy personage. He could not say if the person he heard about was a God-realized fakir, because he did not dress in the saffron robes of the yogis. Instead, he was a Hindu gentleman who dressed like a Marwari businessman, and

he owned a cloth shop where he gave Satsang every evening. He might be the one they were looking for and, if not, perhaps he could guide Mahadevappa and his group to the one they were seeking.

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 accompanying 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 all 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 his companions stayed with Baba Ji, and, during the course of their visit, Baba Ji explained to them the basic principles of the Path of the Masters. He counseled Mahadevappa and his disciples to come with him at once to Beas to have the Darshan of Hazur and take Initiation from him.

He lovingly explained to Mahadevappa that the instructions, which he gave 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 supra-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 which Baba Ji showed him whereby he could transcend body consciousness and through which he gained access



Baba Somanath Ji

to supernatural and miraculous powers showed little interest in taking Initiation from Hazur.

He was content with the stage he had already attained. As a result of his achievements, he was greatly honored and respected in the region of India where he lived. But Baba Somanath understood the importance of progressing beyond Brahm and was determined that his disciple should not remain trapped in the three worlds. After explaining the rudiments of the Path to the dear ones, Baba Somanath Ji escorted everyone to Beas to have the darshan of Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji, participate in the seva, and attend his Satsang.

Baba Sawan Singh Ji Initiates the Dear Ones from Andhra Pradesh

By this time, Beas was already a center of bustling activity. The enchanting form and personality of Hazur Sawan Singh and his powerful, lucid commentaries on the banis of past Saints during Satsang made Dera Baba Jaimal Singh a shining polestar for all sincere seekers after Truth, and they flocked there by the thousands.

An English disciple of Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh—Mrs. Flora E. Wood—who spent time at the Dera with Hazur, paints a vivid picture of the langar seva:

Several hundred squatting figures had already taken their places back-to-back on row after row of matting that was spread on the hard, bald earth. We saw wiry, sinewy men hoisting cauldrons of dal on long polls as they labored down the lines. We were told it will take at least four hours to feed everyone.

Near sheds that were separated like horse stalls and lined with the grass carried from the riverbed to fuel the

*cooking fires, women were gathered around firepits covered with iron griddles, making chapatis. Around each oven, one woman pushed fuel into the fire pit, another rolled wheat paste into balls, a third flattened them, a fourth passed the patties onto the heat, a fifth turned them and a sixth stacked the pancake-like bread. They were surrounded by other women who gripped crescent-shaped cutting tools in their toes to chop vegetables for the dal. All were singing as they worked.*¹



Preparing Chapatis in the Langar

While all the dear ones who had come from Enumuladoddi with Mahadevappa were deeply attracted to Hazur and the life at Dera, Mahadevappa had come along only to be in the company of Baba Somanath

1. Quoted from: *Glimpses of the Great Master* (Hong Kong: Mrs. Cami Moss, 1986) published with the permission of Radha Soami Satsang Beas "Blessing the Food at the Langar," p 134.



Hazur Leaving His Residence at Dera

Ji; his devotion to Baba Ji was unshakable, but he felt no attraction to the Great Master of Beas.

Seeing Mahadevappa's 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. Baba Ji told Mahadevappa 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.

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 those 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. 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.

Baba Ji Visits Enumuladoddi in Andhra Pradesh, an Important Center of His Mission in South India

The visit of Mahadevappa and the dear ones from Enumuladoddi 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 desire to have 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 the Betta area 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 mountain or hillock") was a little over 500 miles, most of which was covered by train but after reaching Kalyandurg, the nearest city to Enumuladoddi, the remaining distance of about 13 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 natural gigantic sculptures, fashioned not by any human agency but by the Creator Himself in some distant time beyond the memory of mortal man.

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 such crops as rice, bananas and mangoes could be grown but, more commonly, the farmers cultivated ragi (a dark brown grain), wheat, chilies and vegetables. While being a desert, 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, while living on 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 and fresh air and a life lived in accordance with nature.

Because he was a man of the people, 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 because it was the first time that the Sant Mat teachings through the line of Swami Ji of Agra (Swami Shiv Dayal Singh Ji) had been broadly disseminated in that region. His words, spoken in the language of the region, 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 already traversed every stage of the Inner 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 sincere, 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.

The Master Power is the Free-Flowing Form of Grace, Mercy and Love

I would like to mention here that it is entirely possible that there have been souls of the highest spiritual order in the Sant Mat tradition living in South India in the past,² but they were simply not well-known and could

2. Guru Nanak traveled south all the way to Lanka, teaching as he went. See: Jon Engle, *Servants of God: Lives of the Ten Sikh Gurus* (Franklin, NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 1980) p 32.

even have come from a different lineage.

During the time of Swami Ji, the British were in control of the outer life of the Indian subcontinent. They avoided religious persecution and kept communal tensions at bay, and so the Sant Mat teachings could be presented in an open way, unlike in earlier times when Saints often cloaked their teachings in an esoteric language for the sake of avoiding confrontation with religious zealots of all persuasions.

It is said, "Those who see God face to face shall all tell the same thing." The differences come in only because of the means of approach in each case, the language of the time employed, the mode of expression then prevailing, and the intellectual level of the age. Again, these differences are not in essentials but only in non-essential details.³

—Sant Kirpal Singh

Time and again, it has been seen that we people tend to want to claim any type of spiritual teaching presented by a living Master as our exclusive possession, with the result that the Universal Love, which is the center of their teachings, becomes codified and presented in the form of a religious dogma rather than appreciated as a free-flowing form of Grace proceeding from the Infinite Sea of Light—openly accessible to all peoples of the earth no matter what their caste, color, creed, sex, age etc., might be. We want to make a particular Saint our own exclusive possession, forgetting that the body of the Master is not the real Master. It is a physical form, albeit

3. Kirpal Singh, *The Night is a Jungle* (Tilton, New Hampshire: Sant Bani Press, 1975) Chapter 5: "Guru, Gurudev, and Satguru," p 138-139.

a precious one, through which the Hidden Power of the Word or Shabd or Naam or Kalma expresses Itself.

*It does not matter for the Saints if someone comes to them lovingly or with hatred. They will shower grace on them equally. It does not matter if their own initiate comes near them or if someone else's initiate comes to them. They extend their grace and protection to all those who come to them.*⁴

—Sant Ajaib Singh

How and where that Power will work and manifest Itself cannot be controlled by anyone. It is what It is and It works how It wishes to work and may come any place It wishes, not just in India or any other particular country. And that Power sheds the same grace on all.

Baba Ji Takes More Dear Ones for Initiation

In those early years of seva in South India, Baba Ji would not initiate anyone but, along with visiting the Dera twice a year, he began taking large groups of seekers to Hazur for Initiation. Many of those dear ones were from Betta. They would first come to Bombay where Baba Ji would meet them with their onward railway reservations for Beas, and they would all travel up together to spend time at Hazur's Dera. During these occasions Hazur Sawan Singh would sometimes hold special small Satsangs just for those dear ones coming from Andhra Pradesh. And Baba Ji, standing by his side, would translate the wisdom of the Saints from Punjabi into their own language. Then after hearing the Satsangs for several days and receiving assurance from Baba Ji that those listening grasped the basic tenets of Sant Mat, Hazur

⁴ Ajaib Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, June 2001 "The Seven Signs of the Saints," p 13.

would initiate them.⁵

Generally speaking, when the dear ones from Andhra Pradesh and other South Indian localities attended the program at Beas, they would, along with the dear ones from North India, eat in the general langar that would provide three square meals each day to hundreds, sometimes thousands and on occasion, tens of thousands of people.

But one day, the South Indian dear ones were given a place in the kitchen to prepare their food South Indian style. Every region has a distinct type of cuisine and within that region itself there can be specialties particular to a specific locale. On that occasion, Hazur came Himself to bless the food. Baba Ji was an expert cook and loved to prepare food when time permitted. One of his favorite preparations was mint chutney. So, after preparing the mint chutney, Baba Ji presented some to Hazur in a spirit of reverence and devotion. Tasting it Hazur was deeply pleased. It was a simple exchange between these two Great Souls and the beauty of it can be best appreciated when the inner eye is opened and one sees how the grace flows between the Master and his Gurumukh disciple.

Transmission of the Power During Satsang

Now, what is the way? How can we drink that wine, that intoxication? He says, "O Master, it is through your eyes — you give a draught of it" The eyes are the windows of the soul. The radiation comes through in whatever color that soul is dyed. Intoxicated! "Master, it is through your eyes that you give pegs of wine like that." It is not a matter of reading and writing — it is a prayer of the soul

5. As mentioned previously, Kannada and Telugu are both Dravidian languages and are closely related, very much like Hindi and Punjabi or Spanish and Italian.

*through the eyes. In whatever color you are dyed, that is the very color of the radiation. How do people become lusty? Through the eyes. How do you feel that others are angry? Through the eyes. When you are attached, your eyes have a strange coloring. So, the eyes are the windows of the soul. "O Master, give me that wine; but that will come through your eyes." And when Masters transfer their Mastership, they give it through the eyes and not by document.*⁶

— Sant Kirpal Singh

The event now to be described, which took place at Dera, was narrated by Baba Ji himself on several occasions including the days prior to his physical departure from this world. It is a key moment because at that time, Hazur placed within Baba Ji the Power that was to enable him to carry on with his mission after Hazur left the earth plane. As mentioned earlier, there is sometimes a tendency to think that the Saint we are following is the "only" one who is the successor and indeed the only one in the whole world that is ordained to teach the Sant Mat. But the subject is far deeper than we may realize, and not only may there be a number of successors of a particular Saint but there may be other lineages we are not even aware of. As Master Kirpal Singh used to say, "There may be one, two, or more in the world; the more the better, naturally."⁷

The Power of Love flowing from beyond the regions of time and space, Mind and Maya may appear wherever

6. Kirpal Singh, *Sant Bani Magazine*, December 2003 / January 2004, "Love & Intoxication," p 27.

7. Kirpal Singh, *Sat Sandesh*, October 1971, "The Mind replies to the Soul," p 10.



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

and in whatever form It wishes. And the whole point of the teachings of any Saintly soul is to help us to awaken to that Celestial Love within, where all boundaries and bars created by our self-centered ego are dissolved, and we see that living within every heart is the Light which is the support of the entire universe.

Baba Ji describes the event in this way:

The year is 1946. On that day thousands congregated at the place where Hazur was to give Satsang at the Dera. The platform on which Hazur sat was, as always, adorned with a simple pure white cloth on which he was seated. I was standing down below the dais along with several other sevadars. Before he commenced delivering the Satsang he called to a dear one named Sadhu Ramesh to bring a chair. As was the normal procedure, I was standing ready to translate the Satsang into Marathi for the dear ones from South India.

But on this day Hazur commanded me to come up on the dais, sit in the chair and do the translation sitting beside Him. Within my heart, I was not prepared to follow his order for as a devotee and lover of Hazur my only prayer was to take refuge in the shadow of his Protecting Grace. As a consequence, I remained standing there in stunned silence not able to ascend the dais. Again, Hazur beckoned me to sit with him upon the dais.

Then a voice came from those assembled, "Baba Ji, obey the commands of the Guru." I was, therefore, compelled to take my seat next to Him. When I came before Him, it finally registered in my mind that he wanted me to sit with him. Therefore, I humbly bowed my head before him in recognition of his grace, generosity and mercy in allowing me to share the dais with him. Then three times, I bowed down at his holy feet and then sat in the chair as indicated by him. As soon as I was seated, my whole

body began to tremble. Then looking into my eyes with his merciful, grace-filled glance, a current of pure Divine Consciousness flowed into my heart and permeated my entire being from head to toe. Then Hazur motioned to the Pathi to commence chanting the bani. During the entire Satsang that Power itself, the Power that he had transferred into my heart, conducted the Satsang. This was my first opportunity of sitting on the dais with him and delivering Satsang. Afterwards, the Satsangi brothers and sisters assembled there said it was an exquisite Satsang but it was truly my experience that it is the Guru Power alone that gives Satsang and, forever after, the awareness was firmly established in my heart that only that Power itself is getting everything done.⁸

8. Based on the account in: Shrimati Megha Chandrakant Telang, *Somālaya* (Bombay: Baba Somanath Ji Radhaswami Satsang Trust, 1980), “Bambai ko Vāpsī/Guru-Shiṣhya kī Bheñt,” p 86.

*He is the real Sadhu, who can reveal the form of the
Formless to the vision of these eyes:
Who teaches the simple way of attaining Him, that is
other than rites or ceremonies:
Who does not make you close the doors, and hold the
breath, and renounce the world:
Who makes you perceive the Supreme Spirit wherever
the mind attaches itself:
Who teaches you to be still in the midst of all
your activities.
Ever immersed in bliss, having no fear in his mind,
he keeps the spirit of union in the midst of all
enjoyments.
The infinite dwelling of the Infinite Being is everywhere:
in earth, water, sky, and air:
Firm as the thunderbolt, the seat of the seeker is
established above the void.
He who is within is without: I see Him and none else.*

—Kabir



The Mission Grows

The Sangat Continues to Grow and the Satsang Seva Expands in Bombay and Beyond

This period of time, from 1943 to 1946, saw a swift growth of interest in Sant Mat, not only in Bombay and the Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, but also in many towns and villages that lay along the route that the train took from Bombay to the city of Anantapur.



Baba Ji with Early Bombay Sevadars

There is a unique type of communication that takes place in India between members of different communities. Many of the men would come to Bombay to work in the mills and send money home to support their families in rural villages. Since many of the mill workers were from areas through which the train passed, they informed their families to come to the stations to see the great Sage of Bombay when he traveled to Enumuladoddi for Satsang Programs. Those people would indeed come and bring along with them other friends who had the desire to see a Saintly soul.

These brief encounters of 10 or 15 minutes were so powerful and moving that those who took advantage of it began to petition Baba Ji to give Satsang programs in their towns. Baba Ji began accepting these invitations, and soon there were Satsang groups in Hubli, Guntakal and other places along the way.

Mahadevappa's End Time and the Disputes that Arose After His Departure

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

It so happened that three ladies, to whom he had given the repetition of the Five Sacred Names, traveled to Bombay to visit with their families who were living 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, along with her friends, came to have Baba Ji's Darshan. 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 because Mahadevappa had promised not to instruct anyone on the Simran of Sant Mat, and, at that time, these words spontaneously arose on his lips: "He has disobeyed the Master, and so now, neither he nor his beard will survive."

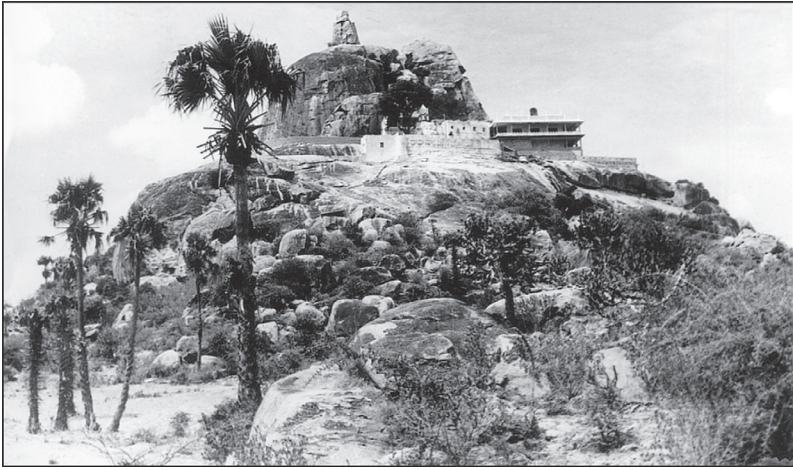
Soon after Baba Ji had uttered these words, Mahadevappa became very sick and was accosted by fits of vomiting and coughing. His long hair and beard became saturated with it. For those in his service, it became very difficult to keep him clean, and finally, they decided to cut his hair and beard. For six months he was severely ill, and then he left the body. The year was 1946.

As mentioned earlier, 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.

After Mahadevappa left the body in 1946, there was a gap of several years before Baba Ji visited Enumuladoddi again due to some internal strife of the dear ones living in that area. It often happens that land and property become the source of contention between families and groups when someone departs from this world. 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, there were still disputes between those who were devoted exclusively to him as a yogi and those who, through him, came to Baba Somanath Ji.

This type of contention happens repeatedly, be the property great or small, because those people surrounding any great personage may not yet have gone within

and realized the spiritual wealth is their only true treasure and that the outer worldly possessions are just destructible matter of no consequence. As a result, when Baba Ji heard of the bickering over property and possessions, he refused to get involved in any controversy, as this type of behavior had nothing to do with following the Path of Love, which was at the core of Hazur's teachings.



Early Photo Showing Completed Ashram at Betta

This dispute between the two groups went on for several years before those involved realized that the most precious thing of all, the company of a Living Master, had been sacrificed for a mere nothing. They were squabbling over a piece of earth that could not impart to them the knowledge of the Inner Path nor could it guide them within. When, through a lot of pain and suffering, this awareness arose in their hearts, both groups put aside their differences and sent the group leaders to Bombay to humbly request Baba Ji to return to their area to bring life and hope into the hearts of the people dwelling there once again.

The Construction of the New Ashram

Baba Ji, at first, was reluctant to return. But after seeing their sincerity and heart-felt contrition for their errors, he said he would again visit Betta if everyone agreed to work wholeheartedly together, so that the glory of his Master's teachings would take root in their within and transform their lives both inwardly and outwardly. Hazur Sawan Singh Ji used to say: "*Sant Mat is not a platform for debates; it is the glory of Love.*"

When he resumed his visits to Betta, thousands assembled there to greet him with deep gratitude for having him amongst them once more. In the years that followed, the Betta area became one of the most important spiritual centers of Baba Ji's work in deep South India.

Very soon after Baba Ji's return, the dear ones gathered together and procured the entire hillock on which Mahadevappa's cave was located with the idea that an ashram would be constructed there to serve the needs of the Sangat and to serve the new seekers who were attracted to the Sant Mat teachings. Baba Ji agreed that more extensive accommodations in terms of a community kitchen, a large Satsang place, and staying arrangements for people coming from outside the area should be constructed.

The hillock, therefore, was carefully inspected from the viewpoint of constructing the buildings to meet the needs of the growing Sangat. A place higher up on the hillock was selected. It was above the cave in which Mahadevappa had lived. The site chosen was magnificent on every level, as by careful planning all the requirements could be accommodated there without having to remove any of the major boulders that abounded on the site. Local masons came to construct the 300 plus broad stone steps that wound up the hill to the building site so

that supplies required for the construction of the ashram could be easily transported there.

Not only was the space sufficient for the Satsang area and the langar, which could accommodate and feed 3,000 people, but the elevated position facing to the East was also breathtakingly beautiful. From that position, one could look over the entire area including the small oasis-like farms gracefully adorning the landscape and the giant boulder-strewn hillocks jutting out of the desert floor. Standing there at sunrise, one's gaze drank in the beauty of an ancient land totally undisturbed by the effects of modern civilization. Without any effort on the part of the beholder, a unique peace and serenity enveloped one's being as the sun stole up over the horizon and as the gentle desert breezes of dawn washed over the body. One was reminded that the only purpose of life was to awaken to the Light within.

But on the physical plane, a tremendous amount of hard work was required to shape the new ashram, and Baba Ji on several occasions traveled from Bombay with a number of close disciples to participate in its construction. Baba Ji would spend as much as three months at a time at Betta supervising the design and placement of the buildings in the various locations.

During his stay, thousands of dear ones from the surrounding area would come to do seva. It was a work that required many willing hands to transport bricks, cement, stone slabs, and all the materials required by the masons for their work. There were no modern means for bringing the materials up the hill. It had to be done in bite-size chunks that could be placed in baskets and sent up the stone steps via a human chain of men, women and children who would pass the supplies from hand-to-hand and then store them in appropriate places for the masons and their crews to utilize as the projects progressed.

It was a time of great joy and happiness for all concerned because they had amongst them one of the Great Souls of that era in India's spiritual history. On the material level, the people were almost entirely poor farmers, but they knew how to work hard and their simple hearts were alive with a deep love and devotion for the Maha Yogi who, under the guidance of Hazur, had become a realized Mahatma.

It was inspiring to see Baba Ji continually circulating through the construction site or standing on the hillock overlooking the arrival of supplies by bullock cart from the surrounding countryside. He would regularly visit the community kitchen at the base of the hill to be sure ample food was being prepared for the workers. This work often went on from early morning till late at night, whenever he visited Betta.

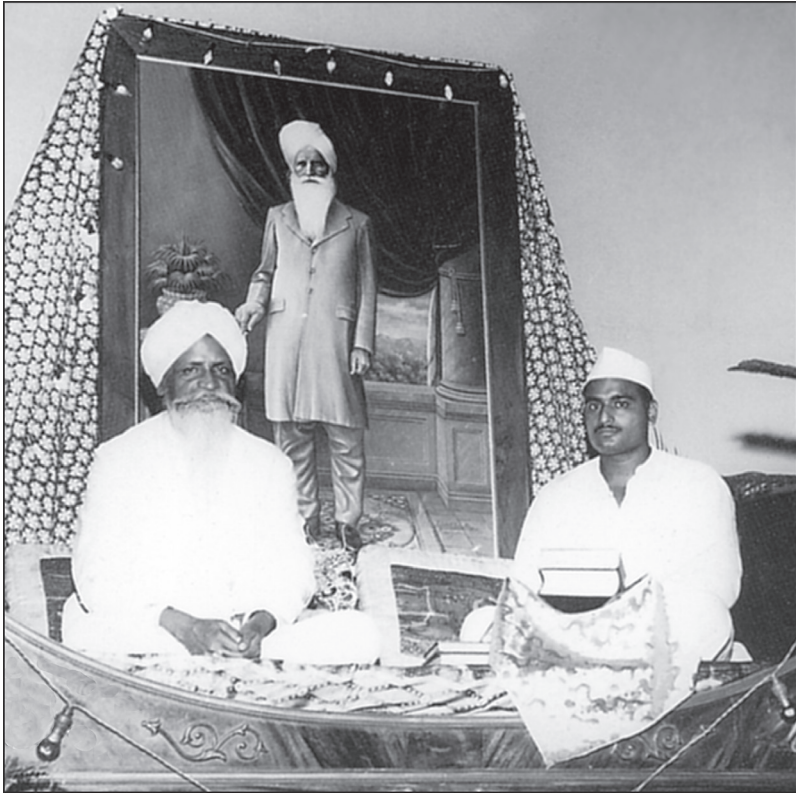
Great brick kilns were constructed to fire the bricks directly from earth taken from the surrounding area. As many as 100,000 bricks could be fired at one time. Once they were baked to perfection, those bricks too had to be placed in baskets and sent up the hill via the chain of dear ones working tirelessly on the project. Such times in the life are very rare, special and unforgettable; and those who participated in them felt that the highest good fortune had been written in their fate.

Through the concentrated efforts of all the dear ones working in a co-operative spirit of love and devotion, the ashram's basic structure was quickly established, and a special dwelling place for Baba Ji was constructed so, when he came to Betta, he would be able to stay in the ashram proper.

Thus, it was that Baba Ji and his work in South India continued to develop and grow amongst the rural populace of that region.

The Coming of Pathi Ji and Naiyar Ji

During this phase of Baba Ji's seva in Bombay and South India, several loving souls came in his company that were to play a significant role in the evolving work there.



*Baba Ji with Shri Vyanktesh Shanbhag,
"Pathi Ji," at Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall*

The first was a dear one by the name of Shri Vyanktesh Shanbhag. He initially came in contact with Baba Ji in 1944. There is a well-known section of Bombay called Saat Raste and in that area Vyanktesh was staying near

the Sadanand Dayanand shop. At that time, he was employed in the Manin Mill.

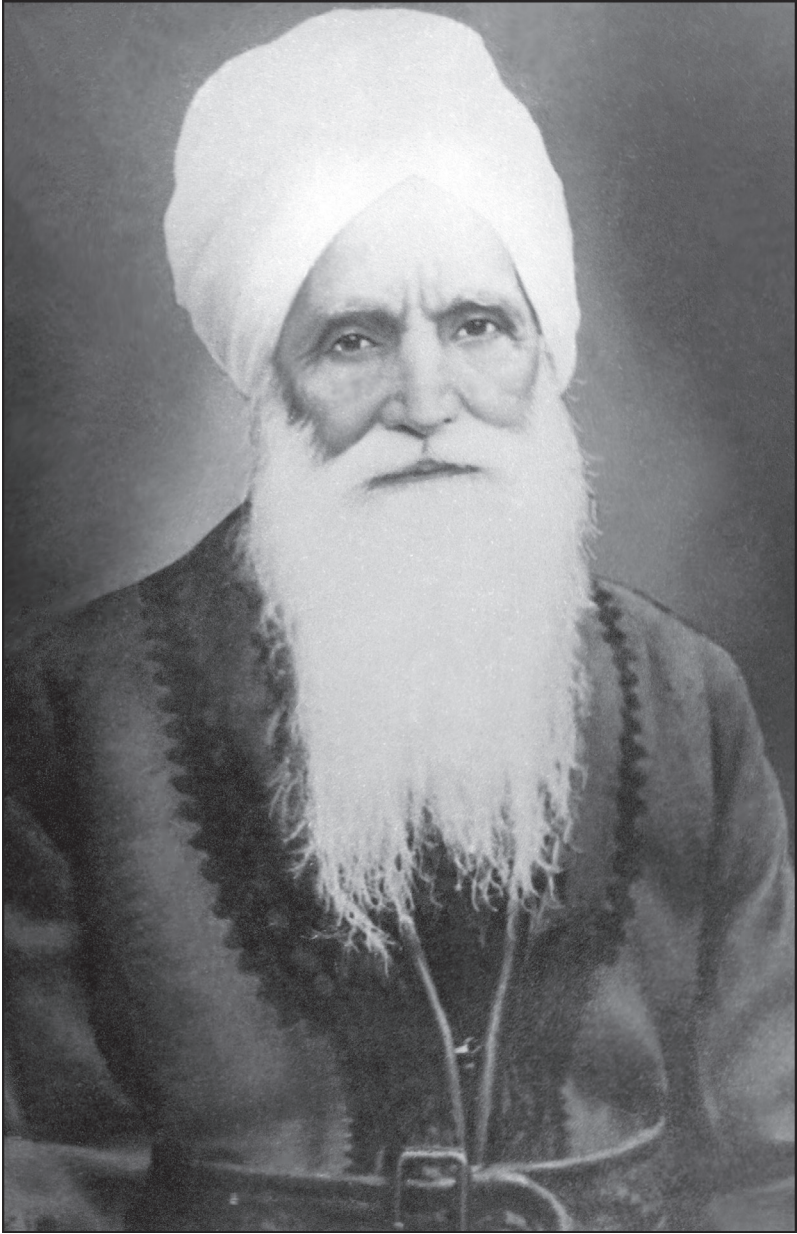
It was the time of Diwali, the Indian Festival of Lights, and as a result the millworkers had a three-day holiday. Vyanktesh, along with several friends, had decided to go to the picture show at a local cinema theater.

Now in his neighborhood, there dwelt an initiate of Baba Sawan Singh Ji, Gangadhar Shanbhag, who was a close associate of Baba Somanath Ji. He was from the coastal town of Dhareshwar, which was located about 200 miles south of Bombay and later became a major center for Baba Ji's work in South India. Gangadhar was invited to go along with the group to the cinema but he replied, "Why uselessly waste your time seeing the films? Why not come along with me to Worli and I will introduce you to a great Sadhu, and we can have the benefit of his Satsang."

They agreed and, having reached Worli, they went to Baba Ji's shop, had his Darshan and then listened to Satsang. The experience that Vyanktesh had was so powerful that, whenever he had free time after that, he would attend Satsang.

When Baba Ji first started Satsang in Bombay, he chanted the banis of the Saints himself and then commented on each stanza, but later two dear ones became his Pathis. The first, whose name was Devabua, served Baba Ji for a number of years in the 1930s, and the second Pathi was Narsingh Ji who was doing this seva at the time this event took place.

The general pattern of the Satsang was like this. Thirty minutes before the Satsang proper commenced, the dear ones who were assembled there would begin singing devotional bhajans drawing on the vast wealth of beautiful songs by Mira Bai, Kabir Sahib, Guru Nanak etc. Then about 10 minutes before the discourse began, the



Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji

lovely bhajan written by Baba Somanath Ji, Santa Sata Guru Satya Swaroopa, was sung by the entire sangat led by the Pathi.

*Santa Satagurū Satya Svarupā
Nitya Nirāmaya Nirmalā (refrain)*

O Sant Satguru, Form of Truth,
You are Forever pure and undefiled.

*Mrityuñjaya bhava dustara tārakā
Chitta chinmaya tatva prakāshakā
Gati mati ko gaṇe sthiti na varaṇe
Mati agamyā anta na mūlā (1)*

You are the Victor over death who ferries the jivas
across the impassable realm of matter,
Omniscient Consciousness, Quintessence of Light,
Ineffable and beyond reckoning is Your state.
The mind cannot conceive of You;
You are without beginning and without end.

*Dhyāvata yogī kara sanyogī
Jag vāsanā tyāgi
Nigamādika kare terī mahimā
Nāga sheṣha shiva harī bramhā
Jāgata jyoti mahā teja mūrti
Kāraṇa sukṣhma na sthūlā (2)*

Through contemplation upon You, the yogis have
abandoned worldly desires and have achieved
union with the Beloved.
The Vedas and all the scriptures extol Your
Greatness.
Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, and the serpent Shesh
proclaim Your glory.
O Kindler of Light, in Your form resides all
power and splendor.
You dwell beyond the physical, astral, and
causal realms.

*Veda atīta bodha mūrti
Sādhū jana hridaya vāsī
Nāda nāyaka bheda anantā
Bādha jīvana bhava harantā
Cheḥ dishi māyā kara niramohyā
Alaukika amolā (3)*

Surpassing the Vedas,
You are the Embodiment of Wisdom,
Yet within the hearts of the Sadhus,
You make Your abode.
Lord of the Inner Sound, the mystery never ending,
Vanquishing all obstructions in this
earthly existence,
Free us from attachment to the six-directional Maya,
And bestow on us the Transcendental Reality
that is beyond price.

*Param jyoti param prakāshā
Karatalāmrita dāyakā
Nirankāra niraguṇātītā
Nirbhaya deva bhava rahitā
Varanata shāstra purāṇa atūlā (4)*

Peerless Radiance, Supreme Effulgence,
Cupped in Your hands is the Nectar of
Immortality,
which you graciously distribute.
Fearless Lord, unfettered by this world,
Even the Shastras and Puranas recount
Your matchless glory.

*Dīna nātha dayāla svāmī
Sva anubhava prakāshakā
Somanātha tava charaṇa dhyāve
Nema nitya nirantara gāve
Kāmādik bhava hara jīva shūlā (5)*

O Protector of the lowly ones, most merciful Lord,
Self-Existent, Bestower of Light,
Somanath has contemplated upon Your lotus feet.
Unceasingly, he will sing Your praises.
You free all the jivas from the desires and
afflictions of this world.

When Mahadevappa left the body, Baba Ji had sent his Pathi, Narsingh Ji, to console the Sangat. The year was 1946. Narsingh Ji normally led the Sangat in singing "Santa Satguru," but since he was in Betta, Baba Ji asked if anyone sitting there could take on this responsibility of leading the Sangat in the bhajan.

Vyanktesh was sitting in the front row and his elder brother who was beside him indicated to Baba Ji that his younger brother had a good voice and could lead the Sangat in the singing. After he sang the bhajan Baba Ji commented, "Your voice is fine. Now you should study Hindi." (He was at the time only speaking Marathi and other South Indian languages.) After Narsingh Ji returned from Betta, Baba Ji requested him to start teaching Vyanktesh the proper way to chant the bani for Satsang. After a short while, he had mastered the manner of chanting and from thence forward, he was Baba Ji's Pathi in Bombay right up to the end of Baba Ji's life.

In the year 1947, there were riots in Bombay due to the conflict arising from events surrounding partition of India and Pakistan with the result that very few people came to the shop either for buying cloth or for Satsang. In the same neighborhood where Vyanktesh stayed, lived another acquaintance from his native place by the name of Shri Ram Naiyar Ji. He was by nature a very devoted soul. Each day when he finished his work each day at 5:00 p.m., he would, without delay, go for darshan of the goddess at the famous Mahalakshmi Temple.

There was another devoted Satsangi living in the same Saat Rasta area by the name of Somappa Ji. Due to curfew regulations, traveling any distance from one's neighborhood was restricted, and the Mahalakshmi Temple to which Naiyar went each day was three miles from Saat Raste. Somappa Ji, therefore, suggested to Naiyar Ji that he accompany him to the nearby shop of Baba Somanath Ji so he could take advantage of the Satsang of an awakened Mahatma.

When Naiyar Ji entered the shop and sat down his gaze immediately became immovably fixed on Baba Ji with the result that Baba Ji's radiant form sat within his heart the entire time. When the Satsang was over Baba Ji commented: "Our relationship is an ancient one, established deep in past lives."

From that day forward, Naiyar devoted his entire life to the service of Baba Ji. He never returned to his previous practice of going to the temple but instead came directly for Satsang. Shortly after meeting Baba Ji he left his normal occupation and went to live in the shop where he helped Baba Ji with all the practical dimensions of running the business. Along with that he prepared Baba Ji's food, seeing to it that it was fresh, nourishing and tasty. (Naiyar was a superb cook as the writer of this account can testify to through practical experience.)

With the passage of time, Baba Ji entrusted more and more of the practical dimensions of the business to Naiyar, as the demands on his time for seeing to the spiritual needs of the Sangat increased. Right up to the end of Baba Ji's life, Naiyar Ji remained in attendance on him, helping in any way he could to allow seekers to benefit from Baba Ji's teachings, Darshan and divine radiation.

Those who are familiar with the story of the Ramayana, one of the epic spiritual classics of Hinduism, saw in Naiyar Ji the embodiment of devotion as exemplified by



Early Picture of Baba Ji with Shri Ram Naiyar Ji

Hanuman's love for Lord Rama. I was extremely fortunate to spend a good deal of time in Naiyar's company, which will be detailed a bit further in the *Memoirs of a Western Disciple*, and I can attest to the fact that Naiyar was a truly dear soul, imbued with the love of Baba Somanath Ji. Whenever Baba Ji went to Bombay, I stayed in the Satsang Hall with Naiyar Ji and benefited from

his loving care and most of all from seeing what it was like to devote one's life to the service of a Saint. It was a remarkable experience that can never be forgotten.

The Departure of Hazur Sawan Singh

The year was 1947, and the health of Baba Ji's beloved Spiritual Preceptor, Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj, was swiftly declining. Baba Ji, along with other dear ones from the South, went to Beas in the month of February. When Baba Ji went to Hazur for Darshan, Hazur tried to speak, but no words would come forth as he was very weak. Still, the heart speaks to heart through the eyes and Hazur filled Baba Ji's within with his grace in an exchange of glances.

That is to say, the Radiant Shabd Form of the Master dwelling in the perishable body of the Saint gave his blessing through the eyes. This was to be the last meeting on the physical plane between these two Great Souls. On April 2nd of 1948 Hazur cast off his mortal coil.

In the period immediately following this event, Baba Ji, along with all those who were devoted to Hazur, passed through a difficult time. Those who had inner access and who had transcended body consciousness to meet the inner Radiant Form of the Master had the daily consolation of his Presence within, but even for those fortunate souls the knowledge that they could no longer meet with Hazur outwardly was hard to bear. The appreciation for the blessing of being in the physical presence of the Living Master increases with the depth that the soul penetrates within. Those who have done so realize that, unless they had come in contact with the corporeal form of that Power, they would not have known the ways and means of transcending into the Beyond. In later years, whenever Baba Ji would endeavor to speak of that time,

his throat would become constricted and tears would flow from his eyes.

Along with this, Baba Ji also realized that the time was now approaching when he would need to take on the responsibility of initiating seekers of Truth into the practices of Simran, Dhyan and Bhajan, which all great Masters have taught to those who wish to practically begin the arduous task of controlling the body and taming the mind so that the spirit within can shake loose the shackles of the physical, astral and causal coverings and enter the realm of Pure Spirit.

No one who has truly understood the responsibilities accompanying giving Initiation ever wishes this fate would befall them. It is not merely a task of imparting the theory of inner ascent and the practices by which it can be done, but, far more importantly, it entails taking on the karmic debt of the disciple and patiently guiding and protecting him or her from within until the requisite purity is attained for the inner ascent. Even then, the Master's responsibility does not end there as he guides the dear one who has been initiated through each stage of the journey until the soul reaches the eternal home. What this responsibility signifies cannot be understood unless one has totally transcended the mind. In this regard , Baba Ji once said:

When Hazur commanded me from within to start giving Naam, he placed the garland of razor blades around my neck. Just see the condition of my body now. (Baba Ji suffered considerably in his later years with convulsions, poor eyesight, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.) Before the duty of giving Naam was entrusted to me, I used to be able to sit in Samadhi 24 hours a day without any problem, but now that is not possible.



Hazur Sawan Singh Ji

Hazur had, in fact, indicated to Baba Ji on several occasions what his fate would be, in terms of giving Initiation, but Baba Ji could only hope and pray that Hazur would remain in the body a longer time so that this fate would never befall him.

When Baba Jaimal Singh left the body, Hazur Sawan Singh was reluctant to take up the work of initiation entrusted to him by his Beloved Master. It was only on the insistence of Seth Pratap Singh Ji, Swami Ji Maharaj's younger brother, that Hazur finally started initiating seekers of Truth into the Path of Surat Shabd Yoga. In the same way, after Hazur's departure, Baba Ji continued to bring seekers of Truth to Beas, but Maharaj Jagat Singh advised Baba Somanath Ji that there was no longer any need to make the difficult and expensive trip northward to the Dera, since Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji had authorized Baba Somanath Ji and, relying on Hazur's infinite Grace, he should now take up the work in South India that had been entrusted to him.

For the first anniversary of Hazur's passage from this world, Baba Ji received a special invitation from Maharaj Jagat Singh Ji to kindly come and participate. (The year was 1949 or 1950.) Several days before Baba Somanath Ji left the body (in 1976), he narrated the following story:

Maharaj Bahadur Jagat Singh Ji had in his heart a deep brotherly feeling of love and affection for me as we were both disciples of Hazur. But I had for him the feeling of honor and respect as one having the status of a Guru. On this occasion, many Satsangis from Bombay accompanied me to the Dera. Amongst those traveling with me, were the respected Satsangis Padmanath and Shankar Shanbag. Dundiram, who lived in the Saat Raste area of the city (where I used to ride my bicycle on occasion to

give Satsang) was also with me. I was very close to the aforementioned dear ones. Prior to our leaving Bombay, Maharaj Ji had sent word to Dundi Ram that he would be sending a car to the Beas railway station to pick us up, but I myself was not aware of this message, so after getting off the train, Dundi Ram and others entered the waiting car and proceeded directly to the ashram for Darshan.

Maharaj Ji was aware that I was often with them and, noting my absence, asked them where I was, as the time for Satsang was quickly approaching. Since I was not aware of all that had transpired, I proceeded by tonga (small, horse-drawn carriage) to my friend Bakshi Mulukchandra. Maharaj Ji somehow came to know of what had happened and immediately sent a message to me through one of the sevadars that I should come to him.

The loving thought in his mind behind this kind invitation moved my heart very deeply. I immediately hastened to have his Darshan. Hazur (Jagat Singh) then requested me to kindly do the seva of giving Satsang on that auspicious occasion. As this was the express wish of Maharaj Ji, I proceeded to the area where Satsang was to be given. Many thousands of dear ones were gathered there.

During the time of Hazur, I used to stand just below the dais to give the translation of Satsang from Punjabi to Marathi, and, on this day, I stood on the second step of the dais in a slightly elevated position, as the crowd was very large. Maharaj Ji had requested that I do so. Those responsible for the orderly running of the Satsang, according to established regulations, told me to step down from the dais stairs as I was standing in the way of Darshan for some of the women sitting there. They requested that I sit down with everyone else. At that very moment, Maharaj Ji arrived for the Satsang, and he motioned to me asking what was going on.

I remained quiet, and he then asked the organizers why I was being requested to step down as it was by his order that I should be there. The organizers then explained as to why they had requested me to sit down. Maharaj Ji then smiled and said, "Well and good. I understand. But I do not think you can have any objection if Baba Ji sits right next to me on the dais." Perceiving the kindness and nobility of his heart, tears sprang to my eyes, and my attention became absorbed in the depth of our spiritual kinship with Hazur. I myself hesitated to sit next to him on the dais out of the deep reverence I had for him. But on his side, he was absorbed in the feeling of being brothers of the same great Master.

I therefore sat beside him, and then he requested me to give the Satsang. It spontaneously came to me that "Satguru saran gaho mere pyāre Karm jagāt chukāya" would be a suitable hymn to comment on for this day as it was entirely concerned with the munificence of the Living Master and how, through him alone, the forgetful jiva can be liberated from the burden of karmic debt. So offering loving homage to our Beloved Master, I asked that a hymn of Swami Ji be chanted by the Pathi Ji.¹

Satguru saran gaho mere pyāre Karm jagāt chukāya

Seek the refuge of the Satguru, O Dear One,
For He will free you from your karmic debt.

The entire world is consumed by forgetfulness
and confusion,
No one appreciates the unique message of the
Saints.

1. Based on: Shrimati Megha Chandrakant Telang, *Somālaya* (Bombay: Baba Somanath Ji Radhaswami Satsang Trust, 1980) p 95-97.

The unfortunate ones of this world are dominated
by Maya,
And they do not attain the Immaculate State.

Those upon whom the Grace of the Primal Creator
is showered,
Alone have the desire to drink the Nectar
of Immortality.

Who is capable of singing the majesty of this state?
Only the rare Gurumukh can realize it.

He is not contented with anything but residing at
the feet of the Guru.
He remains forever absorbed in the rapture of
that experience.

Having the Lord's Darshan, he transcends body
consciousness,
And remains oblivious to his home and the world
around him.

Such a soul is drenched in the color of Love.
How can one properly depict his condition?

The paths of yoga, renunciation and knowledge are
insipid to him,
Compared to the bliss he enjoys, they are of
no account.

Supremely blessed are such rare lovers,
Who have obtained an abundance of this
spiritual treasure.

Radhaswami proclaims for all to hear,
Only the Gurumukh sings this song of devotion.



Baba Somanath Ji

The Satguru alone knows how that Satsang was done. My body was sitting there and the words were flowing out, but it was all happening by the Grace of that Inner Transcendent Guru Power. There was one well-known advanced Sadhu in attendance by the name of Brahmanand Ji, and he was so intoxicated and overwhelmed by the beauty of the Satsang that he dashed to the stage and lifted me up and exultantly carried me on his shoulders throughout the entire assembled Sangat. Maharaj Ji himself was deeply moved and kept me with him for the next four or five days.

When the time for parting came, he sent his son to the railway station and had him purchase two tickets for my return trip to Bombay, so I could travel in comfort. The experience of the benediction of the continuous love he showered on me is stored within my heart. Now I am 92 years of age and I realize it was through his loving solicitude that the work of serving the South Indian Sangat, that Hazur had entrusted to me, has flourished.²

On the last day at the Dera, which was to be the final time Baba Ji went there, Maharaj Jagat Singh Ji called him and said:

“Baba Ji, why are you bringing all the poor dear ones from South India here. It is a long and difficult journey both for them and for you, and they have little money. With Hazur’s Grace you are equal in spiritual status to me. Hence forward, according to Hazur’s Will and Wish, you should commence giving Initiation in the South.”³

With these words of encouragement and support from

2. Based on: Shrimati Megha Chandrakant Telang, *Somālaya* (Mumbai: Baba Somanath Ji Radhaswami Satsang Trust, 1980) p 95-97.

3. H. Ramalingamma, *A Brief Biography of Sadguru Baba Somanathji Maharaj* (Kengeri: Radhaswamy Satsang, Sawan Darbar Ashram, 2001) p 39.

his Gurubhai, Baba Ji departed from Dera for the last time and began his own independent mission in South India as had been authorized by Hazur Sawan Singh.

After Baba Ji returned to Bombay, he continued doing Satsang as before with the knowledge that the time had come when he must take on the responsibility of bestowing Initiation on those seekers who were desirous of following a practical Path of going within.⁴

4. Similarly, Hazur Sawan Singh himself was reluctant to take up the work of Initiation entrusted to him by his Master, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji. Hazur Maharaj would say openly: "When Baba Ji commissioned me with the task of initiation, I sometimes contacted Chacha Pratap Singh Ji and at other times Baba Garib Das Ji (both of whom were living Masters) and it was only when they assured me of their help and guidance and remarked that my initiates would surely get salvation that I undertook this arduous duty upon myself." from: Bhadra Sena, *The Beloved Master* (Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1963) p 50.

*I hear the melody of His flute, and I cannot contain
myself:
The flower blooms, though it is not spring; and already
the bee has received its invitation.
The sky roars and the lightning flashes, the waves arise
in my heart,
The rain falls; and my heart longs for my Lord.
Where the rhythm of the world rises and falls,
thither my heart has reached:
There the hidden banners are fluttering in the air.
Kabir says: "My heart is dying, though it lives."*

—Kabir



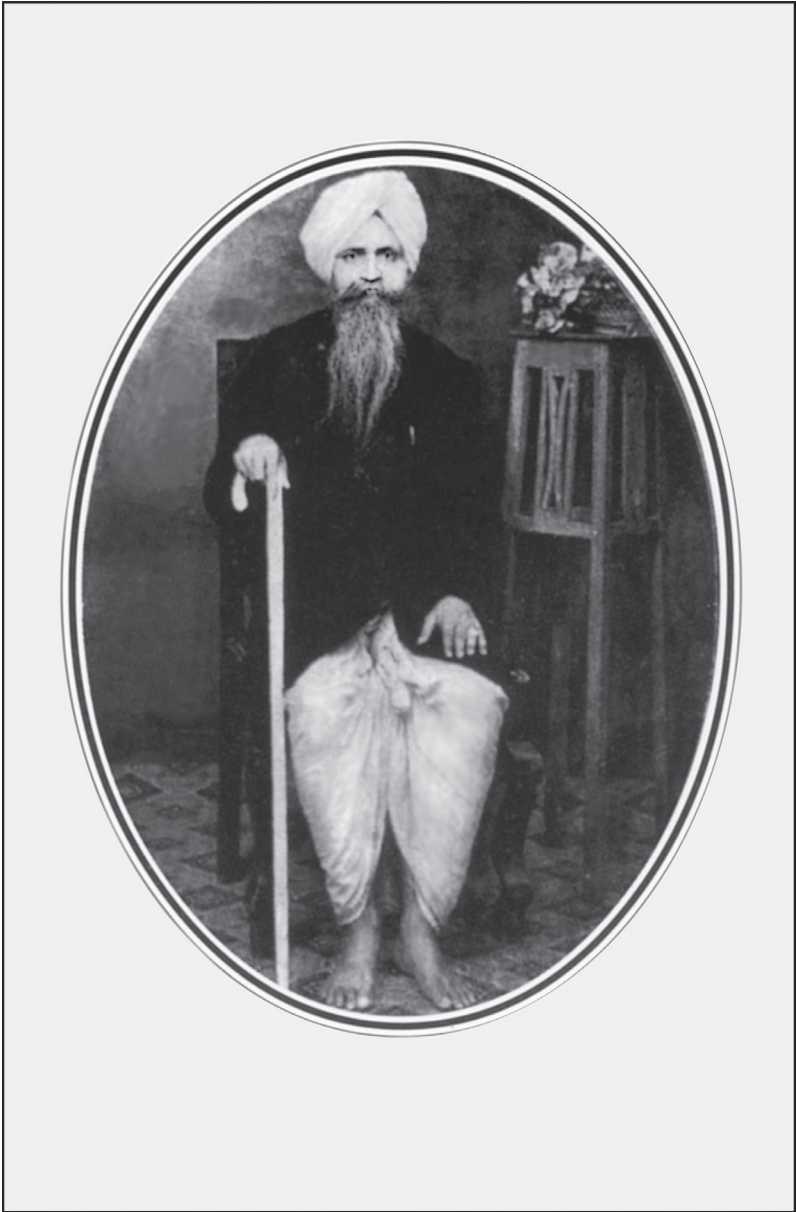
Sawan Durbar Ashram

Baba Ji Commences Giving Initiation

Sometime in 1951, Baba Ji began his own work in earnest as per the inner guidance of Baba Sawan Singh Ji. There were many souls in South India yearning for Initiation and so he took up this part of the service with all its attendant responsibilities in Hazur's remembrance. More and more people from all walks of life in Bombay began seeking his company and guidance.

In the midst of this new phase of his life's work, his health began to suffer. He was living in cramped quarters in Bombay, the city was growing rapidly, and he had little time to relax, for he continued his daily routines as before, resting for only 2 hours at night between 10 p.m. and 12 a.m., before beginning meditation from 12 a.m. to 6 a.m.. When Saints begin to give Initiation that also has a tremendous impact on their life, as they become responsible for helping their disciples liquidate their karmic accounts so their souls can go free.

At this juncture, doctors were consulted as to what might be the problem. It was determined that Baba Ji had leukemia, which was quite a common disease in Bombay at the time. Under the doctor's advice, he entered the Tardev Sthit Bhatiya Hospital for treatment. The dear ones who were close to Baba Ji were naturally concerned for his well-being. They felt that a change of environment would assist in the healing process.



Baba Somanath Ji

The fresh mountain air in the villages near Pune, at an elevation of 2,000 feet, was considered an important part of the remedy. A search was therefore launched to locate a suitable place where Baba Ji could rest and recuperate.

Before Baba Ji could make the move though, his health dramatically declined. He was coughing up considerable amounts of blood. Seeing this, the dear ones who knew and loved him best felt that his end time was drawing near. The worry and sadness they felt was intense. They all gathered at the hospital at this critical juncture, thinking that he would soon leave them.

Seeing their sadness, Baba Ji sat up in bed and with great clarity and patience informed them, "Dear ones, cast all worries out of your heart. This is just a temporary illness. The work that Hazur has entrusted to me is just beginning."

His words acted as a healing balm on their hearts. Shortly thereafter, there was enough improvement in his health that he could move to a small cottage in a rural district in the mountains away from the pollution and noise of city life. Baba Ji was at that time 68 years old.

During the next couple of years Baba Ji lived a quiet life in the mountains and would return to Bombay once a month to give Satsang and Initiation. Naiyar and other dear ones continued to run the shop while Baba Ji regained his strength. The salubrious mountain air and rest proved an ideal remedy for regaining his health.

Sawan Durbar Ashram

It was at this time that the possibility of making a permanent move to a rural environment was being considered, because it was thought that at Baba Ji's age, it would not be wise to continue living in a city environment.

The first plan to evolve was for Baba Ji to move to Betta, where an ashram had already been constructed. The air,

water and climate were highly suitable for maintaining good health. The drawback was that Betta would be more difficult to access for the majority of city-dwelling people. By this time there were several thousand people in Bombay who were benefiting from Baba Ji's company. Still, it was the most viable way whereby Baba Ji could continue to serve the many dear ones both in Bombay and in South India for, from that center in Andhra Pradesh, he could make periodic visits to the different places where there were growing numbers of devotees.



Baba Ji with the Bangalore Sangat

In 1954, Baba Ji went to Betta for one of his yearly visits. By that time, a number of people in the prosperous city of Bangalore had come in contact with Baba Ji and, amongst themselves, they had decided to ask him if he would consider moving to some rural location near to the city. The climate of Bangalore at that time was considered one of the most salubrious in South India. The British, in fact, had established a considerable presence there during their reign, for the year-round climate was lovely and the city itself was graced with many parks and lakes.



Baba Somanath Ji

So those dear ones came and put their proposal to Baba Ji while he was staying at Betta. Baba Ji liked the idea for not only was the climate good there but it was a major transportation hub so it could be easily reached from many locations by train or bus.

Therefore in 1955, along with Pathi Ji, he spent a month staying in the Gandhi Nagar sector of Bangalore. There he gave regular Satsangs in a nearby hall. Many residents of the area benefited from his deep and powerful discourses, delivered in the Kannada language. While there, Baba Ji and his companions visited sites that might be appropriate for establishing a retreat where a farm could be developed and accommodations built so that people from South India could benefit from his company in a rural setting.

Finally, a 111-acre tract of land was located near the village of Kengeri about 10 miles south of Bangalore along the Mysore Road.

The property had originally been in the hands of a British officer who had developed it in a limited way, planting several hundred mango and other fruit trees. He had built a modest bungalow but otherwise had not done much with the land. In the end, he sold it to an Indian gentleman named Ranjit Singh who had found the property too big to develop and so was offering it for sale.

When Baba Ji visited the site, he was instantly attracted to it as it was on a hill overlooking the surrounding area and was constantly washed by the fresh cool air of the countryside that was all in agricultural land.

It is difficult to conceive of what it looked like then as the city of Bangalore now totally surrounds the ashram. But when I lived there it was still a lovely subtropical rural retreat with wonderful views in every direction. Even today, in spite of the encroachment of the city, it is stunningly beautiful. It has been developed a lot since the days when I lived there. Many of the buildings are

new, gardens have been planted, etc.

Having located the desired tract of land, Baba Ji returned to Bombay to begin the transition to this new phase of his life's work. The preliminary agreement to buy the land was signed in 1955 with a significant sum of money advanced toward the purchase, but it was not until 1958 that the deal was concluded.

During that time, it was decided to sell all the cloth in the Bombay shop but to temporarily keep the building itself along with the small room in the back where Baba Ji rested, meditated and ate. In that way, Baba Ji could continue with the seva Hazur had entrusted to him while Naiyar and other dear ones busied themselves in selling off all of the existing stock. The shop itself was sold at a later date after Baba Ji had established himself in Kengeri and the Bombay dear ones had found alternative arrangements for his twice a year visits which he promised them he would make.

With the practical details of winding up his life in Bombay well in hand, Baba Ji went to the Betta Ashram and explained to the dear ones there what had taken place and his plans for developing the Kengeri Ashram. The dear ones there were very supportive of Baba Ji's decision and collected what material wealth they could to contribute towards establishing the ashram. More importantly, they promised to help Baba Ji develop the ashram itself, pledging the labor of eager sevadars who would come in shifts to clear the land, plant crops, construct buildings, etc. In the years to come, it was the farming community of the Betta area that did the bulk of the physical work at the ashram.¹

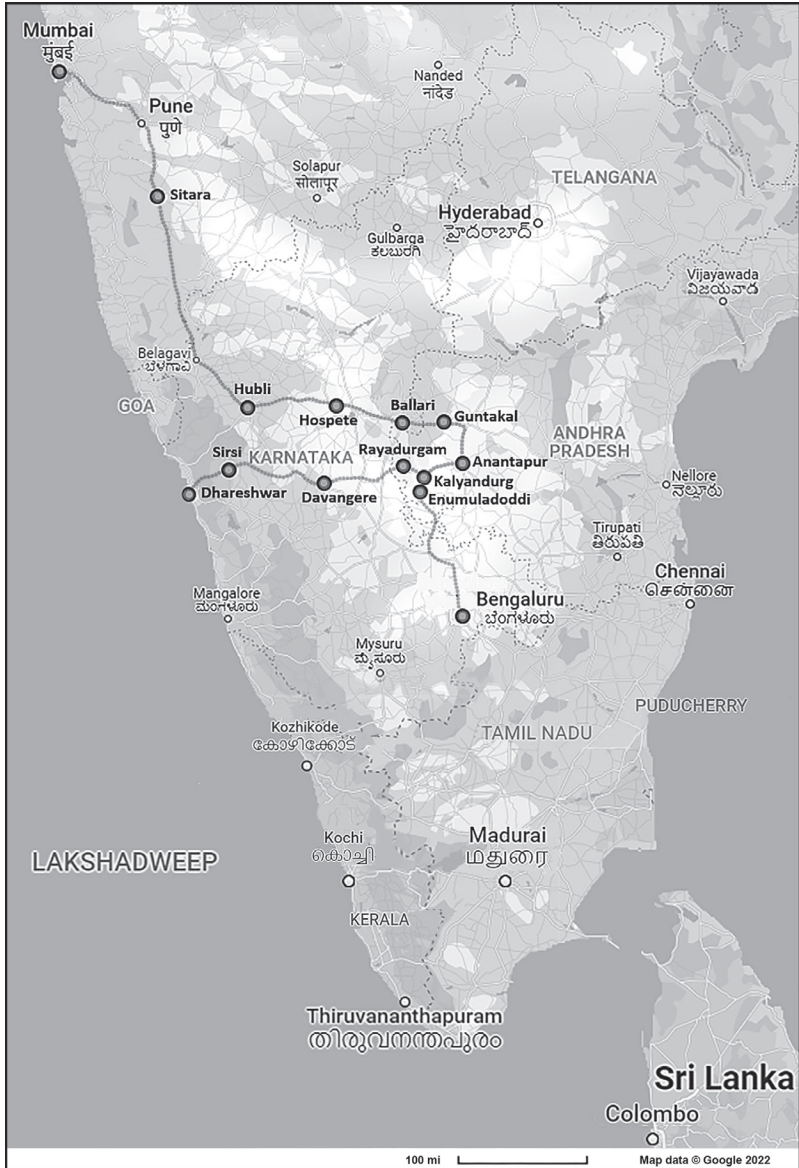
During this period of 1955 to 1958, Baba Ji's mission in South India flourished. He had recovered totally from

1. In later years, when I was living with Baba Ji, he told me that if I wished to see what the spirit of devotion was like, I should travel with him to Betta. And by good fortune, I was able to do so, the account of which will be told in the *Memoirs of a Western Disciple*.

his bout of leukemia and enjoyed relatively good health. His travels to South Indian towns and cities for giving Satsang and Initiation increased significantly. Satsang centers were established in Davangere, Ballari, Hosapet, Sirsi, Dhareshewar, Hubli, Guntakal, Rayadurgam, Kalyandurg, Enumuladoddi, Anantapur, and Satara. These were main centers with many smaller branches in more remote places. Baba Ji regularly delivered the Satsang discourses in Kannada, Hindi, and Marathi. He was also a scholar of Sanskrit and had familiarity with Punjabi, Konkani, Gujarati and Telugu, so he had a wonderful capacity to relate to people coming to him from those diverse backgrounds.

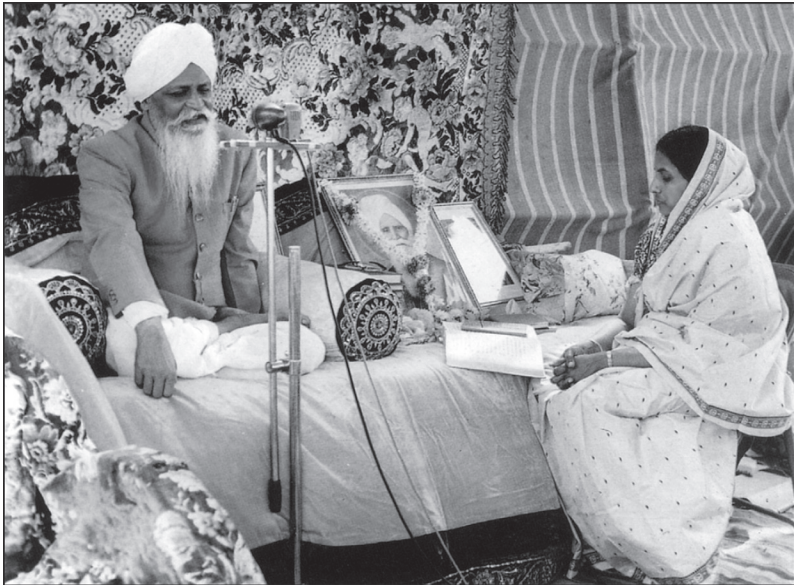
For the Bombay Sangat, this period was a very difficult one for they had enjoyed the close proximity to one of Hazur Sawan Singh Ji's devoted Gurumukh disciples for many years and now the time had come when he would be among them on a daily basis no more. Still, they realized it was far better that Baba Ji be in a place where he could maintain his health while serving the larger needs of disciples and seekers in South India. When Baba Ji left Bombay in 1958, he did so without taking any of the Bombay sevadars with him like Naiyar Ji, Pathi Ji etc. He instructed them all that their responsibility was to take care of the needs of the local dear ones and ensure that Satsang was held every day in various locations throughout the city.

Upon reaching Bangalore, he was taken to the new ashram by the local dear ones who had converted the existing bungalow to a residence for him. Immediately after arriving there, the disciples from Betta came to start shaping the ashram into an agricultural community. Years of hard work lay ahead to convert the land into a beautiful farm with almost all acreage under cultivation with grains, legumes, fruit orchards and vegetables.



Map 9: Satsang Centers in South India Where Baba Somanath Ji Toured Regularly

Simple new buildings were constructed for water buffaloes, cows and bullocks, as well as staying arrangements for sevadars and visitors from other parts of India. Everything was tastefully done but kept very simple so that those who came would not be distracted by any display of wealth or position. Everyone who came there was expected to share in the life of the community so that they could practically understand that all the divisions of caste, creed and religion had no significance there.



Baba Somanath with Pushpamma

After Baba Ji took up residence in the ashram, Shrimati Pushpamma, the wife of Shriman S.B. Pathrappa, came to live in the ashram to serve as Baba Ji's cook and Pathi Ji. She had met Baba Ji years earlier when she was living with her husband in Hospet. Hearing his discourse, her heart was deeply drawn to a life of service to a living

Master. She had a remarkably beautiful voice and enjoyed success singing traditional devotional bhajans of the Saints of South India like Akka Mahadevi, Basavanna and Mankuthimma on the radio.

When Baba Ji moved to the Kengeri ashram Pushpamma Ji consulted with her husband who had been transferred to Bangalore to serve as the Assistant Commissioner in the Commercial Tax Department and told him of her desire to serve Baba Ji. He graciously consented to her wish. They had no children so it was possible for her to pursue a life of service to Baba Ji and his growing family of devotees.

Pushpamma Ji was fluent in Kannada and Telugu, as well as Hindi and English. Thus, with a little training she took up the seva of chanting the Banis of the Saints from which Baba Ji gave Satsangs. She had a remarkable memory and learned by heart many of the poetical compositions of the South Indian saints like Akka Mahadevi and Mankuthimma. Often, when Baba Ji was giving a discourse, he would ask her to sing excerpts from these compositions, and she could comply on the spot, without referring to any book. She had the very kindest of hearts and for those of us who came from the West, she was like the most loving and considerate mother. I consider it one of the great honors of my life to have known her.

With Baba Ji now established in the Kengeri Ashram deep in the heart of South India, the teachings of Saints who followed the Path of the Ringing Radiance—the Divine Melody or Surat Shabd Yoga—began to be known to a wider group of spiritual aspirants dwelling in Karnataka. Baba Ji had a deep fondness for the farming life and those who came to him now had a place where they could live and work in an atmosphere permeated by the radiation of One who had practically scaled the

heights of the Spiritual Path from beginning to end. The wisdom he lived and taught in this rural environment was free of considerations of caste and creed, and those who wished to could practically immerse themselves in the essential Truth lying at the heart of all religions. Since Baba Ji did not speak English, the work that he was doing on behalf of his Master, Baba Sawan Singh Ji, did not spread beyond a relatively small triangle of cities, towns and villages stretching from Bombay to Bangalore and from Bangalore to Dhareshwar along the coast of the Arabian Sea.



Mahadwara, Sawan Durbar Ashram

Then in 1971, a young Westerner, who had found out about the Sant Mat teachings through disciples of Sant Kirpal Singh Ji and Maharaj Charan Singh Ji living in the USA, came to Bangalore where the school he was attending, Friends World College, had a branch. He enquired from the director of the college, Dr. Krishnaswamy, if

he could help him find some center in the surrounding area where he might come in contact with disciples of the aforementioned Saints of North India, who had large followings in the West. A few days later, a friend of Dr. Krishnaswamy, who worked for a newspaper, told him that there was such a place about 11 miles south of the city, called Sawan Durbar Ashram and that perhaps a visit there would be of interest to his FWC student.

Thus it came to pass that on a beautiful summer morning that the Western student and his professor took an auto rickshaw into the luxuriant sub-tropical South India countryside, finally coming to the sign for the ashram posted along the Mysore Road indicating the direction in which the ashram was to be found. Heading up a gentle incline on a dirt road, they passed along a levee until they came to the gates of the compound containing the ashram lands.

The rickshaw driver honked his horn while the curious Westerner and the professor waited for the gatekeeper to appear and admit them within. From out of a small hut located to the left of the gate, a thin little man with a sweet and gentle demeanor emerged. He peered through the gate at the new arrivals and enquired as to why they had come. Dr. Krishnaswamy, conversing with him in Kannada, informed him that a Westerner was with him who wished to know if he might enter and visit with devotees living in the ashram so that he could enjoy the company of those following the Sant Mat teachings.

Jamal Bhai, the gatekeeper, asked them to wait a minute while he sought the permission of Baba Somanath Ji, who was the Master dwelling there. That Westerner, who was in fact myself, did not, of course, understand what Dr. Krishnaswamy and Jamal Bhai were talking about. I had no idea that there was a living Master dwelling in this beautiful location on the hillside set amidst orchards



Baba Somanath Ji Giving Satsang at Sawan Durbar Ashram

of mango trees and coconut groves.

No doubt, I felt in my heart that I was in an enchanted land and was happy that I might soon have the company of friends that I could visit with while pursuing my degree in Indian philosophy and religion.

A short while later Jamal Bhai returned, after having spoken with Baba Ji about the appearance of the rickshaw at the ashram gates, informing him that there was a Westerner wishing to come in. Baba Ji, sitting quietly in his room, closed his eyes, and as was his custom in all that he did, inwardly communed with Baba Sawan Singh Ji about the newly arrived seeker from the West. Opening his eyes, he told Jamal Bhai to open the gates so that the autorickshaw could enter the ashram.

Hence it so happened that I came to be standing, along with the director of Friends World College, in the courtyard in front of Baba Ji's first-floor bungalow. I still did not know that there was any Saint living there, but, in the moments that followed, I was to come into the presence of the One who was to become the best friend, father and spiritual guide that one could ever dream of.

* * *

This, then, ends the section of the story of Baba Ji's life that happened up till the time that I met Him. In the next section, *Memoirs of a Western Disciple*, which will be published separately, I have recorded events from my life with Baba Somanath Ji from 1971-1976. I came into his company very late in his life. I was then, and still am, a person who understands very little about such great and noble souls. I can only say that he was more than a father to me in every possible way, both in this world and as a spiritual guide and preceptor. Indeed, I know little about the spiritual side of things but with the passage of the years I can say that the impact he had on my life has been

deep and profound.

Through being near him I came to realize that the human vessel of that Power which resides in the heart of the Saints radiates Timeless Knowledge to those who come into their company. The actual outer events that happen in their company are just a means of awakening the soul. The process of awakening may be slow or fast depending on one's background from past lives. In my case, I have definitely been on the slow track, yet the inner essence of what they communicate in an unspoken language of the heart lives forever within one's being.

It has been over 50 years since I first met Baba Ji and only now am I getting glimmers of what was actually happening at the time when I was living near Him. To say that this glimmer is priceless would be to underestimate its value but it is the only word I have. In essence, it is this: Within our hearts is an Imperishable Infinite Sea of Love. This Love permeates the entire creation. It lives within everything but, because we are captivated by outer appearances under the influence of mind and senses, we do not see that Immaculate Beauty that is in and around us at all times. We continue separating things into good and bad and involving ourselves in criticism, backbiting, hatred and all sorts of things that are, in truth, alien to our real essential nature. It leads to a lot of misery for us and those around us.

But a Saint is awake to that Love. He or she sees it within and without and the whole purpose of their life is to awaken that Love within us also. They have many means at their disposal to do so because they clearly see the veils and seals that create this separate identity. In order to break through this barrier of egoism they adopt the appropriate means for each. That is the personal touch of a living Master.

Baba Ji was, at least in my estimation, one such Being. He was very simple in every way. He was just a lovely

and loving human being. That is how I really knew Him. He was one of the kindest, wisest people I have ever known although I cannot say he was the only one as I had the opportunity to spend considerable time in the company of Sant Ajaib Singh Ji, Sant Sadhu Ram Ji and now with Baba Ram Singh Ji. Each has made a deep mark on my life. No words of thanks can express in my heart what I feel for Them. But since Baba Ji was there for me in the very beginning of my inner Quest, and he took a lot of special care to shake me loose from the dilemma of my life, I feel a special gratitude that goes on increasing with each passing day. I am not saying all this to promote any great soul over another. I strongly feel that there are many great Saintly souls living on this earth, most of whom I know nothing of. I am only sharing my personal, heart-felt experience with one True Servant of God.

It is this very thing that was at the core of what I learned from Baba Ji. He pointed out again and again in a multitude of ways that all one needs to do is change one's angle of vision from the separated part to the Whole at which point everything becomes clear. Seeing that the Divine Light is everywhere, our heart becomes soft and sweet, full of mercy and kindness for all and every living thing.



O Protector of the lowly ones, most merciful Lord,
 Self-Existent, Bestower of Light
 Somanath has contemplated upon Your lotus feet.
 Unceasingly, He will sing Your praises.
 You free all the jivas from the desires and afflictions
 of this world.

—Baba Somanath Ji



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For images not credited below, I have drawn from the Ruhani Satsang online photo archives, Sat Sandesh and Sant Bani Ashram online and print publications and the author's personal collection of photographs.

Map data for all maps included is ©Google 2022, as detailed on each individual map. Please note that the maps employ modern data and can only provide an approximation of the routes taken by Baba Somanath Ji in the early 1990s on his travels in search of a True Guru. For the maps, I have chosen to use the modern place names, for instance, "Mumbai," while, in the text of the life story, I prefer the names that were in use during Baba Somanath Ji's lifetime, for instance, "Bombay."

All uncredited quotes from Kabir are taken from *Songs of Kabir*, translated by Rabindranath Tagore (New York: MacMillan, 1915). The uncredited quote from Sant Kirpal Singh Ji at the beginning of the Author's Preface is taken from *A Great Saint, Baba Jaimal Singh: His Life and Teachings* (Sanborton: NH: Sant Bani Ashram, 1995) p 20.

IMAGE CREDITS

CHAPTER 1, Childhood and Youth

**Village Scene in Gulbarga District, 1880*

Photograph; by Deen Dayal; 1880; "Asuf Gunj, Gulbarga; 1880"; Distributed 2022 under CC-PD-Mark license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Asuf_Gunj,_Gulbarga.jpg. (The Deccan first came under Mughal rule in the 14th century and was part of the Delhi Sultanate. In 1347 Gulbarga became the capital of the

Bahmani kingdom. Aurangzeb later annexed Gulbarga as part of the Mughal empire. As the might of the Mughals waned, the Nizam of Hyderabad, originally a viceroy of the empire, asserted independent control over the area, which endured till 1948.)

CHAPTER 2, Baba Ji Moves to Bombay

**Street Scene, Kalbadevi Road, Bombay, circa 1890*

Photograph; Photographer unknown; 1890; “Kalbadevie Road, c. 1890,” from: A Photographic Trip Around the World, (Chicago: John W. Iliff & Co, 1892); Distributed 2022 under a CC-PD Mark 1.0 license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: BombayKalbadevieRoad1890.jpg

CHAPTER 5, Pilgrimage to Surat and Pandharpur

**Pandharpur, circa 1922*

Photograph; Photographer unknown; 1922; “Temples on the River Bank at Paṇḍharpūr,” from: J. Nelson Fraser and J. F. Edwards The Life and Teaching of Tukārām, (Madras: Christian Literature Society for India, 1922); Distributed 2022 under PD-US license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Temples on Chandrabhaga.jpg

CHAPTER 7, Pilgrimage to Girnar and Dwarka

** View of the Arabian Sea from Malabar Hill, Bombay, 1870*

Photograph; Photographer unknown; 1860s; “Malabar Point [Bombay], Govt. House.” from an album of 40 prints taken in the 1860s; Distributed 2022 under PD-US license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Malabarpoint governmenthouse bombay.jpg

**Temple Shrines in the Girnar Range in the 1890s*

Photograph; by F. Nelson; 1890; part of the Lee-Warner

Collection, "Photographs of Junagadh," British Library; Distributed 2022 under a CC-PD Mark 1.0 license; Source: Wikimedia Commons Wikimedia Commons, File: General view of Girnar Temples, Junagadh.jpg (The Girnar Hills rise to a height of 3000 feet above Junagarh and are the site of Jain, Hindu, and Muslim shrines, as well as one of the rock edicts of Ashoka.)

CHAPTER 8, Pilgrimage to Nashik and Trimbak

****Pilgrims Bathing in the Godavari River circa 1880***

Photograph; Photographer unknown; 1880; "Scene in the River Gadavery, Nasik"; Distributed 2022 under a CC-PD Mark 1.0 license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: River_Godavari,_Nashik_(c._1880).jpg (Nashik is one of the sites of the Kumbha Mela, held every 12 years. The Panchavati temple complex is located on the banks of the nearby Godavari River.)

CHAPTER 9, Pilgrimage to North India Bombay to Rishikesh

****Haridwar circa 1866***

Photograph; by Samuel Bourne; 1866; "Hardwar from opposite bank of the Ganges"; from the "Strachey Collection of Indian Views," British Library; Distributed 2022 under a CC-PD-Mark 1.0 license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Haridwar from opposite bank of the Ganges, 1866.jpg

CHAPTER 10 Trek into the Heart of the Himalayas Rishikesh to Chintpurni

****Towering Himalayan Peaks Viewed from Foothills circa 1869***

Photograph; by Samuel Bourne; between 1863-1869; from "View of India" (an album of 27 photographs

featuring architectural sites), plate 14, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, D.C.; Distributed 2022 under CC-PD-Mark license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Views_of_India_Plate_14_dli_A136_cor.jpg

****Rohtang Pass***

Photograph; by Timothy Gonsalves; July 2, 2019; “Chandra Tributary Rohtang Lahaul”; Distributed 2022 under CC-BY-SA-4.0 license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Chandra Tributary Rohtang Lahaul Jul19 D72 10383.jpg (Color photo converted to grayscale)

CHAPTER 11, On the Plains of Punjab

****Bullock Cart Drivers on a Country Road in Punjab***

Photograph; by Sandeep Gill; May 7, 2016; “A bullock cart in Patiala, Punjab, India”; Distributed 2022 under CC-BY-SA-4.0 license: Source, Wikimedia Commons, File: Bullock cart in Punjab, India.jpg (color photo converted to grayscale)

****Har Mandir, The Golden Temple, 1870***

Photograph; by William Henry Baker; 1870; British Library; Distributed 2022 under CC-PD-Mark license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: January 1, 1870 photograph of the causeway to the Golden Temple sanctum. jpg

CHAPTER 14, Return to Bombay

****Victoria Terminus in the 1930s***

Photograph; Photographer unknown; c. 1930; “Victoria Terminus in Bombay in late 1930’s”; Distributed 2022 under PD India license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Victoria_Terminus,_Bombay_in_1950.jpg

CHAPTER 15, Visit to Sangli and Bombay

**Shrimant Chintamanrao Appasaheb Patwardhan, Raja of Sangli, 1910-1948*

Photograph; Photographer unknown; 1911; “Chintamanrao alias Appasaheb Patwardhan of Sangli”; from The Imperial Durbar Album of Indian Princes, Chiefs and Zamindars, Vol. I, by Purshotam Vishram Mawjee (Bombay: Lakshmi Art Printing Works, 1911); Distributed 2022 under India PD license; Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Chintamanrao alias Appasaheb Patwardhan of Sangli.jpg

**Royal Opera House, Bombay, 1912*

Photograph, Photographer unknown; 1912; “Old vintage 1900s Royal Opera House, Lamington Road Bombay (Mumbai) Maharashtra India”; Dinodia Photos / Alamy Stock Photo, Alamy license reference# OY67032694, Image ID: DH1EJJ

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About the Author

Christopher McMahon attended Friends World College in Bangalore, where he received a B.A. in Indian Philosophy. While studying in Bangalore, he had the good fortune to come to the feet of Baba Somanath Ji and was initiated by him in 1971. From 1971-1976 he spent six months each year living with Baba Somanath at Sawan Durbar Ashram and traveling with him to Satsang centers throughout South India.

After Baba Somanath departure from this world in 1976, he found the same Power working in Sant Ajaib Singh of Rajasthan and was a tireless sevadar at Sant Ji's yearly Bombay programs in remembrance of Baba Somanath from 1978 till Sant Ji left the body in 1997. He is now continuing his spiritual journey, attending the programs of Satsang, Seva, Simran and Bhajan held by Baba Ram Singh, a Gurumukh disciple of Baba Somanath and True Lover of Sant Ajaib Singh.

Christopher is retired, after a 22-year career as a wholesaler of essential oils, and lives with his wife Suzanne in the beautiful Pacific Northwest of the United States.

