



From the land of
BLACK SOIL
to
the great

WHITE MOUNTAINS

Saga of a sage with whom Sri Raghavendra Teertharu
traveled to Badreenath

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Shri Hari Vayu Gurubhyo Namaha

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The Great Himalayas!

It is factuality that many nations of the world have snow clad mountains. But the spiritual magnetic force that exists in the Himalayas of Bharatavarsha (not just modern Bharata) is non-existent in any other mountain range. People visiting the Himalayas bear testimony to this experience. While nature lovers soak in the experience of being close to nature here, for spiritual seekers every mountain peak of the Himalayas is a portrait of God. Besides, they are eager to experience the thrill of the wobbling cold at hundreds of minor temples created at various faces of the Himalayas.

From the Hinglajadevi Temple at Pakistan to the Durjayalingeshwara Temple at Darjeeling the Himalayan bends are adorned with places of pilgrimage. Amongst these Badarinath known as the region of Mahavishnu is easily accessible (comparatively!) than the other pilgrim places. Badarinath is a small (tiny would be more apt) town in Chamoli district of the state of Uttarakhand. The roaring & ice blocks strewn Alakananda River bifurcates this town into two. The Narayana peak is on the northern banks. This is where the world renowned Badarinarayana Temple is located. The Nara peak is on the southern banks housing ancient buildings & facilities for tourists. Extensive details pertaining to Badarinath are already available through various sources & hence it is not my intention to reiterate the same here. However, throwing some light on an age-old belief and the characteristic weather are complementary to the prime purpose of this write-up.

Narayana Parvata – A home to seekers

The Puranas state that Shri Narayana himself has manifested in the unshakable form of a mountain as Narayana Parvata. Another extraordinary fact is that the benefits of chantings (japa) are magnified by a thousand times. (For instance: Chanting “Om Namō Narayanaya” one time is equivalent to chanting it a thousand times.) As a result, it is commonplace to find hundreds of ascetics engrossed in chanting atop the Narayana Parvata.

Talking of the weather tendency at Badarikashrama insufficiency of oxygen is natural. Let aside climbing & getting down the stairs, even wrapping yourself with a blanket to beat the cold would cause breathing fluctuations. But spending a day at this place might get you a little accustomed. Normally, even if there is body prickling heat at noon, one cannot predict how long it would last. It wouldn't come as a surprise if the 25 degree temperature at 3 p.m. suddenly drops to -3 degrees by 3:10 p.m. Moreover, the swift cold winds blowing from the snow-clad mountains would terrify those travelling from the southern parts of the country. Despite this, I have come across people who have spent months here engaging in the ritualistic chanting of prayers (japa). Likewise, there are also those who set out on a month long spiritual pursuit but flee within four days fearing the cold winds.

Though the priests of Badarinatha are traditionally from South India, South Indian religious institutions don't have adequate representation at Narayana Peak. Probably this is the provincial peculiarity. Besides, since centuries, the local population have built charitable institutions & homes here. Thus it would suffice to say that our entry here is more or less impossible. The facial features of people here resemble those of Nepalis. The language spoken is Garhwali (not Hindi!). Due to these reasons, spotting even a single South Indian face at this peak, be it known or unknown, is bound to bring us happiness voluntarily. When an unknown face can bring about happiness, imagine seeing someone you consider your very own unexpectedly! Wouldn't the face blossom!? Heading a little further, without any anticipation, what if you happen to view a Vrindavana of Rayaru? Isn't it a matter of great happiness! Because the devotees of Rayaru consider him to be a father, mother, brother, guru, friend and worship him. To such devotees if someone as dear as Rayaru appears at the sacred Narayana peak, it would be nothing short of a divine

experience. This is not mere imagination. It is cent percent reality.

After the darshan of Shri Badarinarayana, while returning & getting off the last step, turning towards the left & crossing the Nepali Ashrama, you will come across Chara Vrindavana Sannidhana of Shri Raghavendra Guru Sarvabhoulmaru. It's a mere four to five steps away from the main Temple. Sri Rayaru is offered daily worship here. Upon prior intimation, feast too is made available for tourists.

From the Mountains to the Plains

There is no doubt that Shri Raghavendra Prabhu was extraordinarily capable. It would arouse one's curiosity to know about the backdrop of the presence of Shri Guraja's Vrindavana at the Narayana peak as it is a place dominated by North Indians. Inquire with the resident priests & seekers "This is Veena Maharaja's Ashrama, he is the one who has installed Shri Raghavendra Guruji here" is what you will get to hear in classical Hindi. If we ponder upon who Veena Maharaja was, we will have to slowly travel down the Himalayas through Hrishikesh, Haridwar, Mathura, Varanasi, Hyderabad, Mantralaya & from there on to the plains of Guledagudda.

At Guledagudda of Bagalkot district, Parvatikar happens to be a noted & wealthy lineage. The seeker born into this family was Dattatreya Ramarao Parvatikar. Since childhood, he remained undeterred by wealth & showed signs of an ascetic. He had unflinching devotion towards Shri Rayaru. Owing to his interminable fascination with music, he forsake his riches & engaged himself in the disciple of playing the Veena. He had great reverence towards Shri Raghavendra Prabhu who was the most eminent Veena player the world had witnessed & through the latter's grace he earned vast proficiency in playing the Rudraveena. But his accomplishment did not stop here & he set out from Mantralaya towards the Himalayas in pursuit of his goal. Enroute he spent some time at Hyderabad, a few years at Kashi, quite a while at Mathura, a few years at Haridwar on the banks of the Ganga & awhile at Hrishikesh, he built his Ashrama and continued with his pursuit. From Hrishikesh he moved to Badarikashrama. As he proceed further, the Ashramas that he constructed & left behind at each of the places he stayed at, he donated to Shri Raghavendra

Swami Matha, Mantralaya by transferring the requisite titles to the then Chief of the Matha Shri Sujayeendra Theertharu. The current valuation of these places maybe around 20 – 25 crore rupees. The willing donation of such places to Shri Rayaru exemplar the detachment of this ascetic.

At Badarikashrama besides engaging in music he also engaged in Hatha yoga. Thereby, the people here began addressing him as Veena Maharaja reverentially. At Badari if you enquire the current aged population about the accomplishments of Veena Maharaja, “You probably wouldn’t have spoken as much as he has chanted the Gayatri Mantra. You probably haven’t even bathed as much as he has punished his body & practiced austerities” is what you will be told. This is not fantasy. These elders are eyewitness to the austerities performed by Veena Maharaja. Great respect comes across in the eyes of these people as they share how he used to remain in shirshasan (a yoga asana wherein the head is rested on the ground and feet are put up towards the sky) for a period of three hours in the body wrenching cold at the banks of the Alakananda with just a small piece of cloth around his body & continually chanting the Gayatri Mantra.

Shri Gururaja comes to the Himalayas

At all the Ashramas mentioned earlier on, Maharaja retained a small icon of Shri Rayaru, along with a disciple of his & had made arrangements to remain in constant contact with each of these Ashramas. Further, he resolved to install a Vrindavana of Shri Rayaru at Badarikashrama. Thus, again he travelled towards Mantralaya, acquired the mrithike with the auspice of Sri Sripadangalavaru & installed a Chara Vrindavana at Badari Kshetra. Not just that, he also made arrangements for uninterrupted pooja to be conducted here. His Ashrama was converted into Shri Rayara Matha. This is the backdrop of Shri Rayaru following one of his devotee & inhabiting the Himalayas. As stated, this Vrindavana was installed in the 1960’s.

This is innate for the sky-born

Engaging in the austerity of meditation incessantly at this peak is beyond the capability of any ordinary mortal. Everybody sets a predetermined limited time period for their stay at Badari & return soon after the austerity period

they set out on is over. Even for most ascetics who hail from this place, it is not possible to stay here all year long. Bear in mind that business at Badari is operational only for 6 months in a year. (Although merchandise business is open for 6 months, brisk business lasts for a meagre 3 months). As the annual pooja period of Badarinatha draws to a close, all the ascetics set out to tour different places of Bharata. It would not be possible to say that those ascetics who stay back during the snowfall period would continue to spend their entire lifetime here. It is common to find them move out of Badari at least once in two years. Another interesting belief is that during the 6 months period post Deepawali the celestials themselves worship Badarinarayana here. When the fact that Shri Raghavendra Theertha was an incarnation of Prahalada, with an element of Lord Vayu & the hard geographical backdrop of this place as stated above are noticed closely, it becomes clear to us that Shri Raghavendra Theertha had all the eligibility and merit to inhabit Badarikashrama. When it is not possible for anybody to get a place for uninterrupted stay at this peak, the fact that Shri Raghavendra alone has a permanent residence here is a pleasant surprise for commoners like us. But this is innate for sky-born like Gururayaru.

In the backdrop of the Prahalada Dhara

There is another fact that would add to our happiness. In the mountain exactly behind the place where the Rayara Matha stands at Narayana peak, a beautiful waterfall gushes down from the edge of the mountain. Do you know the name of this waterfall? "Prahalada Dhara"! This is not a name attributed by someone recently. This waterfall is being called Prahalada Dhara since centuries. Other than Prahalada himself, for whom else would it be possible to engage in uninterrupted chanting beside the Prahalada Dhara? One may say that with this perspective too & divine will, Sri Rayaru inhabited this place.

An association of saints

Another trait in Veena Maharaja was that he sowed the seeds of devotion towards Shri Guru Raghavendra in every person that he met. At all the places mentioned above, even to this day, one comes across hundreds of scholars who recite the shloka of Raghavendra Theertha before commencing the discourse/musical recital/spiritual gathering. At

one of the Bhagavata discourse conventions held consecutively at Badarikashrama, the auspicious stanza “Pujyaya Raghavendraya ...” is recited every day. I have personally witnessed with a sense of pride, people passing by the Matha including Nepali laborers, Naga ascetics, local Pandas (priest community at Badarinath) recite the Rayara Shloka, bow their heads to Rayaru & then proceed. Veena Maharaja was a forerunner in popularizing this tradition.

Invention of a Vichitra Veena

Forever engaged in experimentation, this music ascetic brought about several changes in the design of the Rudra Veena & invented his very own Dattatreya Veena. He has also called it the Vichitra (Vichitra means peculiar, novel in Sanskrit) Veena. If you search for Swami Parvatikar on the internet you will be able to listen to a few of his compositions that always fully adhered to the treatise.

Vaishvanara Yajna

When the previous Peetadhipathi (head pontiff) of Shri Matha Shri Sushameendra Theertha embarked upon his second tour of Badari, given the significance of this Peak, he undertook a project to renovate the small Matha & laid the foundation for the same. Also, having noticed the hardship that all the travelers were facing with regard to food, he set in motion the project “Vaishvanara Yajna” that aimed at providing hot meals at noon & night. Since the southern variety of rice & dhal are not available in north India, sumptuous quantities of rice & dhal are sourced from Gangavati & Gulbarga of Karnataka and sent to Badarinath to ensure free food is provided on a daily basis. His disciple & the present head pontiff Shri Suyateendra Theertha has been continuing the project undertaken by his Guru with equal fervor. Since the expansion of the existing Matha is practically not possible, Shri Matha is considering beginning the construction of a religious rest house (Dharmashala) at another place at the Nara Peak.

Where is this Matha?

This Vrindavana Sannidhana is along the old pathway that leads from the Badarinatha Temple to Mana village. The illustrious Brahma Kapala at Badarinath is at a rung below Shri Matha.

Is there facility for the provision of food?

Though the Shri Matha is a little small, it is possible to cater food for about 200 people on a daily basis. Upon prior intimation, hot food is made available in half an hour. The cooked food tends to get cold and below minus degree temperature within minutes. The prerequisite is with an intention to provide hot food only.

Contact address

The administration of the Matha at Badarinath is assigned to the management of the Delhi branch of Shri Matha. Besides, before reaching Badari, midway at the Delhi Matha, accommodation facility is made available. The contact address of the Delhi Matha is as below.

Mantralaya Shri Raghavendra Swami Matha

Rao Tularam Marg, Near Motibagh Flyover

Sector 12, RK Puram, New Delhi – 110022

Ph: 011 – 26172892

Badari contact number: 9968385037

The latitude & longitude coordinates for Badari Matha on Google map: 30° 44'44"N 79° 29'31"E

In conclusion

The primary purpose of this article was to elaborate upon the background of Shri Rayaru inhabiting Badari. A brief about Shri Parvatikar Maharaja who performed austerities and was instrumental in the above episode was essential for readers to gain a full insight into the significance of the Matha here. Also, without him this write up is nothing & Rayaru too wouldn't be pleased. Let the mercy of Rayaru & the blessings of Veena Maharaja be bestowed upon us all. One can gather more details about Parvatikar from the below mentioned sources:

1. Shri.B.K.Gururaja - (080) 25253204 / 9844172028
2. Rajendra Parvatikar, Kuvempu Vishwavidyalaya, Shimoga

INSIGHT



VRINDAVANA OF SRI RAYARU AT BADARINATHA DHAM

INSIGHT



SRI PARVATIKAR MAHARAJA WITH HIS VEENA