

**Writers**



**KASHMIR**



**Columnists**





## SELECTED WRITINGS OF SH. G. N. RAINA

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## 1.0 ABOUT THE AUTHOR



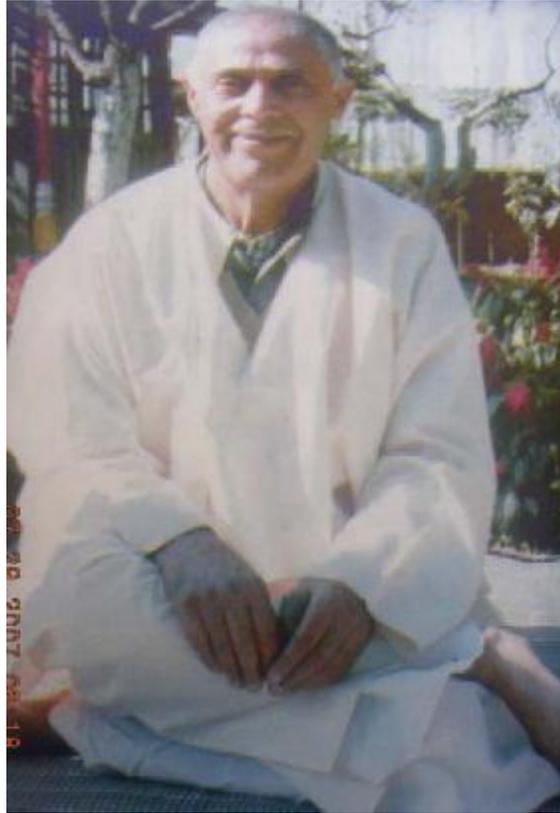
G.N. Raina retired from Indian Information Service (I.I.S.) in 1983 after completing 35 years as a distinguished editor, correspondent, commentator and administrator; Editor, AICC Journal, Varnika, (Jan.'84-Dec.'90); Editor-in-Chief, Koshur Samachar (March'91-Oct.-'95; Presently Editor, Sanatana Sandesh, an official publication of South Florida Hindu Temple, Miami.

## 2.0 SWAMI LAKSHMAN JOO

"The call of the spirit proved irresistible"

by G.N. Raina

*Kashmir Shaivism has penetrated to that depth of living thought where diverse currents of human wisdom unite in a luminous synthesis.- Rabindranath Tagore*



Swami Lakshman Joo

Saivism in Kashmir, as distinct from Southern Shaivism, synthesizes essential things that are to be found in almost all the six systems of Indian philosophy and stamps it with the personal experiences and observations of its exponents.

Right from the founder of Shaiva system, Vasugupta who, as revealed to him in a dream, found SIVASUTRAS, (he later authored), inscribed on a rock called SHANKER PAL (Shankar's rock) in the forest in the lap of the sacred Mahadev mountain, through Kallata Bhatt, Somananada, Utpaladeva and that profound thinker, Abhinavgupta, down to Swami Ramji and Swami Lakshman Joo, in our own times, an attempt, and a successful one at that, has been made at intelligent synthesis of all that is abiding, universal and enduring in VEDANTA, SANKHYA, NYAYA, VAISHESHKA, VAISHNAVA and SHAKTA and even in Buddhist teachings.

Little wonder, therefore, Kashmir Shaivism has attracted the attention of many eminent thinkers and scholars who consider it more synthetic and profound than all the other known works on religious philosophies of the world. And for this no small credit goes to Rajanaka Lakshmana (Swami Ishwara Swarupji), popularly called Lakshman Joo whose exposition of the Saiva texts was backed by his personal

experiences and, therefore, went home to the scholars and students coming from all parts of India and the world. We were fortunate to have had an advanced Yogi like him walking and moving amongst us as a living vibrating Truth.

It is only when you met him, as I did for an interview in 1971, that you would feel his irresistible charm emanating from that sweet child-like innocence which hid from our naked eye his spiritual and philosophic attainments. As a man, he was upright, humble and very generous. Hundreds and thousands flocked to him for succor and he was not found wanting in this respect. Many an afflicted found solace in his presence.

Swami Lakshman Joo was born on 9th May, 1907 (Vaisakha Krishna Dwadasi), Thursday, at 4 p.m., in Srinagar, Kashmir. His father, Shri Narayandas Raina, the first man to have introduced house-boats in Kashmir, and his mother, Shrimati Aranyamali, were greatly devoted to Swami Ramji, who was their family GURU and who had by then become their Spiritual teacher also. Swami Ramji was the greatest exponent of SHAIVA-AGAMA and he was also a Siddha Purusha. Many stories are current about his Siddhis. It is said that he had only to look at or touch a person and he was bound to be a changed man. Shri Narayandas had built a separate house for him where he could carry out his Sadhana and teach the Saiva texts to his pupils. This is now known as Rama-Trika-Saivashrama, located in Fatehkadal, not far from the ancestral home of Swami Lakshman Joo.

As soon as the news of the birth of Swamiji was conveyed to Swami Ram, he literally danced in joy and exclaimed: "I am called Rama, let the child be called Lakshman". How prophetic Swami Ram was! Subsequent events proved that Swami Lakshman Joo was to Swami Ram what Vivekananda was to Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa.

Lakshman Joo did show his leanings towards the higher life in early childhood. At the age of three, his play consisted in making a Shiva-linga out of clay for worship. At five, he would sit down for meditation and in this condition, he would exhibit signs of abnormal behavior which worried his parents. They approached Swami Ram who said, 'This boy was a great Yogi in his past life. His Yoga would be consummated in this life'. Lakshman Ji's childhood was spent under the spiritual care of this great sage, Swami Ram who taught him the Japa of Gayatri Mantra and also certain Yogic exercises according to the Saiva discipline. Before Swami Ram took Mahasamadhi, he entrusted his disciples and the seven-year-old Lakshman to the charge of his principal disciple, Mahtab Kak who later taught Saiva Sastras to Swamiji.

In school also, Swamiji used to go into Samadhi now and then. One of his inquisitive teachers once asked him what he noticed in the state of absorption, to which he replied in Kashmiri that he experienced "BADA BODA", the highest, the supreme. Yet another teacher asked him to do physical exercises. Instead, Lakshman collected a group of students and sang Bhajans. Enraged, the teacher inflicted 25 cane strokes on him for defiance. Next day, it is said, the teacher fell ill and had fever exactly for twenty-five days.

At 13, his parents thought of arranging his matrimony (as was the custom those days of marrying quite early). But Lakshman's reply in the negative was firm and emphatic. When he was in pre-matriculation, his father fell ill and he was asked to look after his business. He had to give up his studies. As he was now free from the routine work of the school, he devoted most of his time to the study of the Saiva Sastras from Mahtab Kak. He devoted even greater time to the practice of Yoga, for he did not want to confine himself only to the theoretical part of the Saiva system. He used to practice Yoga from two in the night to dawn.

It was at the age of 20, as he told me, that he had the experience of self-realization for the first time. And the time was 4 a.m. (Brahma Muhurat). After this, he used to go into Samadhi even while he was in his workshop. He now lost all interest in business, for which he was reprimanded by his father. Inner

struggle ensued and finally the call of the Spirit proved to be irresistible. He bowed to the Inner Monitor, as it were, and left home with only a lion's skin for sitting. A search for him followed but without success. His brothers, however, found on a piece of paper the following note left behind by the boy Lakshman:

"My dear brothers, I am leaving in search of the Supreme. Kindly take care of my parents". After frantic telegrams and telephonic messages and even report to the police about the missing boy, his father received the following message from a relative in Sopore: "This morning I saw Lakshman going on foot to Sadhuganga Ashram". The parents rushed to Sopore where they found the boy seated on the lion's skin in deep meditation near a spring in a jungle. When he returned to normal consciousness, he told his parents that he could no more live in the home. His father promised to build for him an Ashram in an unfrequented place in Srinagar itself.

Lakshman Joo, meanwhile, lived in a village, Danyahama in Harvan, near Srinagar. Four months later, his Ashram was completed and he moved into it. It was here that Lakshman Joo made deeper study of Saiva Sastras from the reputed scholar, Maheshwar Nath Razdan, for seven long years. It was at this time, Sharika Devi, daughter of Shri Jialal, approached Lakshman Joo to accept her as- his pupil. She practiced Yoga under his guidance and she was lucky to have self-realization in a few year's time. Overwhelmed by her experience, she lost mental balance for a few years when she had to be moved to her parent's house. Again, it was Lakshman Joo who went to see her, gave her a grape to eat, and then she started improving and in due course, she regained her normal condition. Lakshman Joo also initiated Prabha Ji, the younger sister of Sharika Devi.

In 1934, Lakshman Joo built an Ashram for himself on a site between Nishat and Shalimar Gardens. It was named Isvara Ashram. Sharika Ji's father also built a house for her on a plot of land nearby. While Nature has bestowed picturesqueness on the Ashram, the peace and harmony radiated from the one who hallowed it by his presence, Swami Lakshman Joo.

Swami Lakshman Joo left his mortal frame and merged into the Supreme, Shiva, on 27th of September, Thursday, at Brahma Muhurat. The great master of Kashmir Shaivism that he was, he has taught us that Param Shiva or Supreme Reality is both static and dynamic. The dynamic aspect of Param Shiva is known as Shakti and the entire manifestation is a play of his Shakti. The world is not an illusion as held by Vedanta but an epiphany, an expression of the Divine Shakti. For the average man, the best means for ascent in the spiritual path is to find out a competent Guru whose Grace will lead the aspirant to the Supreme Bliss. And Swamiji has summed it up thus in his own poetic form:

*There is a point twixt sleep and waking,  
Where thou shalt be alert without shaking:  
Enter into the new world where forms so hideous pass,  
They are passing, - endure, do not be taken by the dross.  
Then the pulls and the pushes about the throttle,  
All those shalt thou tolerate,  
Close all ingress and egress; - yawnings there may be;  
Shed tears-crave-implore, but thou wilt not prostrate,  
A 'thrill' passes, - and that goes down to the bottom;  
It riseth, may it bloom forth, - that is BLISS;  
Blessed being, Blessed being, - O'Greetings be to Thee.*

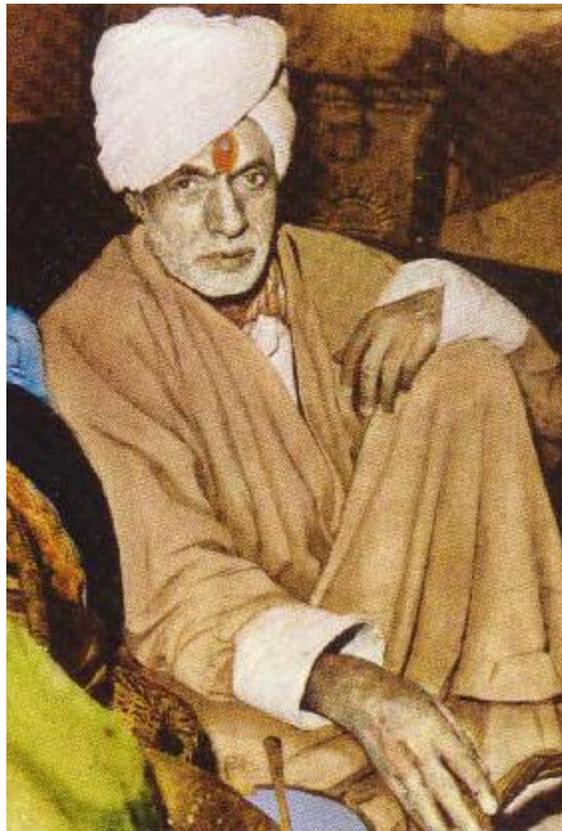
Source: Koshur Samachar

### 3.0 THE INIMITABLE SAGE: JAGADGURU BHAGWAAN GOPINATH JI

"whose influence is being felt in even greater measure now"

by G.N. Raina

"Your Guru has directed me to grace you"- these words were uttered by no less a spiritual luminary than Shri Satya Sai Baba of Puttaparti to a close devotee of Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji when he approached the sage in Bombay at the behest of his son-in-law to seek Grace for overcoming his bodily ailment. The Baba moved his right hand, and poured some holy ash to be taken orally and lo and behold, the devotee instantaneously got rid of his physical pain. The Baba, then, continued saying, "Your Guru was the greatest Kashmiri saint: he was Jiwan Mukta in the real sense. He will appear before you in about two months". This was in December 1973, nearly six years after the Bhagawaan had left his mortal coil.



Bhagwaan Gopinath Ji

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji did keep his date and he appeared to the said devotee twice in the subsequent two months (Jan-Feb 1974).

An embodiment of com- passion for all those who sought his grace, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji has been and continues to be an unfailing source of solace to their afflicted souls. Men and women, young and old, the educated and the unlettered, the agnostics and the believers, would visit him, in and out of season, to receive words of comfort which would still the throbbing pain of their hearts.

Kashmir has produced a galaxy of saints and sages from times immemorial, and in recent past we have had a number of them. But few among the contemporaries have left as indelible an impression on the minds of the people as Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji. Two highly venerated mystics of contemporary Kashmir -- Kashkak and Nanda Bab, recognised Bhagawaanji's greatness. While Swami Kashkak is on record as saying that Bhagawaanji has been the recipient of special grace of Mother Sharika, Swami Nandlalji described Bhagawaan as "the king of saints in Kashmir".

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji led a simple, austere life. He never moved out of Kashmir: in fact, he shunned publicity, and covered himself with anonymity. Sadhus and saints from outside Kashmir did visit him. A celibate, he lived with his near relations all his life. Though he read upto middle standard only, yet he displayed a fair knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu and English. He spoke very little, never preached, puffed Chillum constantly and always remained engrossed in Brahman, so much so a casual visitor would remain unnoticed by him for hours together.

A Siddha, having attained the olympic heights of spirituality, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was an enigmatic God-man. His life was a curious blend of Jnana (knowledge), Bhakhti (devotion) and Karma (action). For most of us who had had the good fortune of his darshan in flesh and blood, he was the holiest of the holy, with a healing touch and wielding Ashta Sidhis for the good of the people and the nation. To some others, his bizarre behaviour presented a picture of his inscrutability. His marijuana smoking, his non-vegetarianism and unorthodox ways were an enigma to the uninitiated. Ordinary mortals like us could hardly fathom his 'Gunateet' and 'Mayateet' nature.

Born in a respected Bhan family of Kashmiri Pandits in Srinagar on 3rd of July, 1898, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji almost inherited spiritual fervour from his highly religious minded father and mother. His mother was born to her parents following the grant of a boon by Goddess Rajnya herself. Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji had two brothers and two sisters. While the elder brother was a bachelor, the one younger to him did marry but remained issueless. The two sisters unfortunately lost their husbands early, the elder one after bearing two daughters and the younger one after bearing two sons and two daughters. Bhagawaanji was looked after by his elder sister and her two daughters.

From the days of infancy, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji, showed little interest in things material. He would sing the glories of God, of Mother Sharika and seize whatever opportunity he could get to attend bhajan mandalis and raslilas. The spirit of renunciation and the other-worldliness had overtaken his sensitive young mind. That is why his schooling was not complete and he did not take seriously to his uncle's Pashmina business either. He did take up the job of a composer in the city's oldest press-Vishnath Press, but gave it up only after three years, during which period the press is said to have flourished. Bhagawaan ji rejected the entreaties of the proprietor of the Press saying that his "Dassdaraz" with him had ended. Later, he started a grocer's shop which he gave up soon after to plunge headlong into a rigorous tapasya.

From the age of 20, he had begun daily Parikrama of Hari Parbat and would spend hours in Devi Angan absorbed in the meditation of the Divine Mother. Of course, Chillum was his constant companion, even in those days. This period of his Sadhana was marked by devotion to the Shakti aspect of Godhead. He used to recite from memory hymns like Panchastavi, Bhawani Sahasranama, Saundaryalahri Vishnu Sahasranam, Mahimna Stotra, Utpalastotravali, Guru Gita and Bhagwadgita.

Not much is known about who initiated him. The well-known biographer of Bhagawaan ji, Shri S.N. Fotedar has tried to lay his hand on all evidences in this regard but has not been able to establish who his Guru was. Here, we would like to accept what Bhagawaan ji himself hinted at, obliquely though. On being asked, only a few years before his Nirvana, as to who his Guru was, he replied "any one of the 700 Shlokas of Gitaji can be one's Guru".

The second and the most important phase of his quest for self realization began when he was 32. For the next seven years, i.e. upto the age of 39, he wrestled with God, so to say. In this period of intense tapasya, he would lie on a bed, face towards the wall, with a lamp burning in his room which would often be covered with layers of dust. It is said that a rat made a hole in one of his heels which took a long time to heal. He had almost lost all consciousness of his body. He would often take Datura seed, opium and other intoxicants and would, at times vomit blood.

While it is difficult, nay impossible, to assess the state of Bhagawaan ji's spiritual advancement during this period, we have a clue given again by Bhagawaan ji himself in a cryptic reply he gave to his elder sister when she tried to persuade him to take to worldly life in view of the financial difficulties the family was in. He told her, "Sister, our boat is in the midst of an ocean. Either we will reach the shore safely or get drowned".

To our great good luck, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji did swim to the shore and out of the great ordeal of seven long years emerged a Siddha, with of course, a mauled body but a radiant spirit, with full vision of past, present and future. He had realized his true self and become one with Siva, the Ultimate Truth. The truths of spirit can be apprehended only by those who like Bhagawaanji prepare themselves for their reception by rigorous discipline. It was not for nothing that in later years, he would often tell his close devotees that "MEHNAT PANANYA BIYI GURU KRIPA", meaning that intense personal effort and the grace of Guru are the essential pre-requisites of God realization.

Devotees like Prof. K.N. Dhar feel that Bhagawaanji inclined towards the Tantric method of Sadhana. According to him, "Bhagawan Gopinath Ji opted for the more strenuous path of Tantras with its curves and bends and wove the threads of his life on this texture". This body, says Rudrayamala Tantra, is an oblation which is to be continuously offered to the fire of self scrutiny. The unextinguishing Dhoomi in front of Bhagawaanji since the end of the seven-year spiritual odyssey symbolized this truth.

After realizing the dynamic aspect of Reality, i.e., the Divine Mother, Bhagawaanji took to the worship of Siva, the pure consciousness aspect of Truth. Siva is Infinite Consciousness, the subject as well as the object. Siva and Sakti are one indivisible whole. While Siva is the changeless reality underlying the entire universe, his energy, Shakti, has an infinity of aspects - Chit (intellect), Ananda (bliss), Ichha (Will), Jnana (knowledge) and Kriya (creative work). The recognition (Pratyabijna) of reality, according to Kashmiri Saivist thought, is all that is needed for Moksha. That is why Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was recognized as Jeewan Mukta (a liberated soul).

Again, Siva and Shakti, in the Ultimate analysis, constitute the contours of a common rather than a specific gender. The male (Nar) and the female (Nari) aspects of Reality are fused together in the case of Tantrik mystics who have often been observed to give feminine names to males and vice versa. One of the foremost Tantrik mystics of Kashmir, Swami Anandji of Jamnagari often addressed his male disciples as females, perhaps to demonstrate that gender had lost all meaning for him and the likes of him. The great sage-poetess of yore, Lal Ded, looked upon all males as females.

An important aspect of Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji's spiritual Sadhana was emission of well-controlled rhythmic vibrations from various parts of his body. Spanda Shastra of Kashmir Saivism speaks of the vibratory nature of ultimate reality. In the last 30 years of his earthly existence, Bhagawaan ji would keep talking to invisible forces while he would be smoking his Chillum. At times, he would not even respond to people around him. None dared disturb him while puffing his Chillum with his eyes turned skyward, emitting and receiving vibrations. Always immersed in Samadhi, he would come down to our plane of consciousness when his attention was drawn, speak a few words and then go back to the same state. It was quite apparent that Chillum symbolized the vehicle of his communion with the Divine. The inhaling of the smoke acted as an aid for supra-mental dialogue with the Ultimate Truth. In such planes of mystic exhilaration, natural propensities of human organs are said to reverse the roles, where the eyes can

speak, the ears can see and the mouth can feel. The senses are said to be under complete control and the mystic utilises them the way he thinks is the best. This stage is known as DIWA SHAKTI.

There is neither East nor West for the naked soul. The whole world is its home and as its home is in each of us, it belongs to all of us". These words of the French Savant, Romain Rolland, are true of all great saints, savants and sages, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji belongs to the entire world. There was no Hindu, Mussalman or Christian for him. All religions and all faiths led to the same goal. He once told a close devotee of his. "Think of Brahman as a Tree and sit on any one of its branches. All branches will lead you to the same goal". As Isa Upanisad puts it, this entire universe is enveloped by God, and nothing but God.

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji laid stress on Vichar, rational thought and the ability to discriminate between the real and the unreal, and he would often say that "a Yogi may attain realisation of God but it is only the Vicharvan, the discerning sage and the profound seer, who can fathom all aspects of the Brahman, the Ultimate Truth." He confirmed the faith of the devotees in whatever they held dear and guided them according to their capacity. Though he suggested Saakar Upasana (worship of God with form) to the beginners, he would say Yi Gav Taaph Parun meaning that it was just like worshipping the effulgence and not the substance of the sun. On yet another occasion, he told a Sakar Upasak "you have light to the level of your throat but your body is blank". He wanted his devotees to realize the absolute truth in all its aspects.

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji advocated special efforts on the part of a spiritual aspirant. He abhorred lackadialical form of Upasana which he thought was like moving under the shade of willow trees, Yi Gav Veeri Shihilis Tal Pakun. He wanted Truth Seekers to plunge into God realization with complete surrender. He would often urge the devotees to lift the veil of ego that enveloped Atman. AHANKAARAS NAMASKAAR - SUI GAV OMKAAR - TAMI SAATI BANI SAAKSHATKAAR, which means, "bid good-bye to Ego and be face to face with reality."

Here, one would recall an incident when a saintly person was dissuaded by a scholar-saint from visiting Bhagawaan ji, saying "since when have you started bowing to lumps of muck?" And when the said gentleman went to see Bhagawaan ji, he was asked, "Why do you come to bow before lumps of muck? We are not chiselled scholars." A nice, subtle dig at the scholar-saint! How true! It is the meek, the humble, the unsophisticated who shall be saved rather than those with inflated egos.

He never advised anyone to give up his household, wife or children in the quest of Truth. According to him, a worldly man, a Grihasta, could be a man of dispassion and reach the Ultimate. But he was quite adamant in not guiding those who could not practise celibacy, for he believed that the two centres of Brahma Jnana were located in the Cit (intellect) - one near and the other beyond the back of Chidakasha and that these centres were well preserved only by remaining celibate.

In our spiritual tradition, there are two ways to attain God- head-the one is known as the Buddha way where you tread the path alone, better known in scriptures as tapasya in which individual effort dominates, and the other is to cross the ocean of existence through the medium of a Guru who represents the Divine, who knows the path and is in a position to help others in finding it. The Guru seeks to awaken much more than to instruct, says the great Yogi, Aurobindo Ghosh in his famous work Synthesis of Yoga. And Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji him- self said on one occasion, when a verse in Kashmiri extolling the virtues of a Guru was being sung, YI GACHHI YACHHUN. It is an indication of God's grace, if one surrenders at the feet of the Guru.

He did not deliver sermons. He initiated a devotee and induced Parmarth (spirituality) by a touch, a mere glance and by sharing his chillum. Each received his grace according to one's Karma.

Strange are the goings-on of mystics. We recognise their greatness on the basis of something they do which is not explained by the ordinary laws of nature. And we describe these ways as mysterious. Saints and sages have been known to have a clear vision, with ability to read the thoughts of others, forecast events, prescribe remedies and clear impediments.

The saints, however are not to be judged by miracles alone, for some of them are really averse to demonstrations of this sort as they do not wish to interfere with nature. But, again, as Bhagawaan Raman Maharishi of Tiruvanmalai put it, "it is enough for the thoughts of a Jnani to be turned in any direction and the automatic divine activity begins". As if to prove beyond doubt the efficacy of what Shri Raman Maharshi had said about miracles, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji, during his Amarnath Yatra, addressed an overcast sky at Wavjan above the sacred Sheshnag lake, "You settle down in Sheshnag" and in no time was the sky clear of the black clouds and the thousands of pilgrims resumed journey without fear of a bad weather.

Kind and compassionate as Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was, he cured incurable diseases like blood cancer, and he would often ask those stricken with malignant diseases to be brought to him and a mere glance or touch would cure them completely, to the surprise of all. On request, he would give some ash from his Dhooni to cure ailments. Diabetes, Tuberculosis, brain haemorrhages and mental disorders were cured by him. He never asked for any money, though whatever was offered was accepted only to be distributed among those present. Once he referred to these offerings (money, fruits, sweets etc) as blood. This is all blood, he would say. And, it is said, he took upon himself any evil attached to such offerings.

A mystic tradition has it that at a particular point of time, a Divine Government functions and oversees the workings of human mind. It also directs the world affairs. Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji was regarded the king of this Divine set up in the State. In this context, one can understand what happened in 1947 and 1948 in the aftermath of a tribal raid conducted surreptitiously by Pakistan into the territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

In 1947, in one of his soliloquies, Bhagawaan ji was heard saying: "What is our army doing? They get so much ration and yet do not open a direct route to Kashmir for Ladakhi Lamas." And in 1948, we witnessed Indian army conquering Zoiilla Pass and Kargil, thus establishing a direct link with Ladakh. A Military Police Officer connected with this operation was informed by the Front Commander that the operations were directed by a mysterious person, giving his identification clues. Long after that, the said Military Police Officer, a Christian, did visit Bhagawaanji in Srinagar through the courtesy of one Mr. T.N. Dhar and the officer confirmed that the saint exactly answered to the description given by the Front Commander.

This is not all, In September 1962, when he was at Bhadrakali, Bhagawaanji told his sister and Swami Amrit-ananda who accompanied him, "Don't you see what is happening across the mountains? A whiff of wind from that side will blow you over". Rest is a matter of history. Again, before the 1965 war, he pointed towards south-west and said, Kaala (death) was dancing there. At the end of the hostilities, however, he pointed out that "the west is clear now".

Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji used to sit on his aasan almost all the 24 hours absorbed in Higher Self. Every morning he would wash his face and Yajnopavit at the water tap, tie his turban and put on saffron tilak with a touch of ash in the centre. And then he would start his Dhooni. He would rarely take bath. In fact in the last 30 years of his life, he took bath only twice, once at Kshir Bhawani and another at Chundapora residence in Srinagar when Dal Lake was frozen. It is said that soon after he took bath, there was thaw and the cold wave abated. But even though he did not take bath, his skin usually gave out an aroma. In fact, he had no body consciousness. He used to describe his legs as splinters of wood. He clean shaved his head once a month. The devotees used to massage his body but he would never take bath after the massage. He, however, stopped devotees from doing any massage a year before he left us. He would

undertake fasts for months at a stretch. The fasts were not of the ceremonial type, that of missing a meal a day but these involved total abstention from food, except a cup of Kahwa on rare occasions. In the last two years of his sojourn on the planet earth, he gave enough hints of his decision to give up his gross body. During this period, he did not leave his aasan even to answer the calls of nature. He would remark: "I have now grown old". To a devotee who showed concern at his failing health, he said about one and a half month before the fateful day: Amar Chha Maraan (Do the deathless die?) Again, a few months before his leaving the mortal frame, his biographer and a close devotee, Shri Fotedar, asked him why swelling in his genitals persisted. He replied, "What else is going to happen to this body? It will get shattered piece by piece". Only a few days before his passing away, he remarked: "I should like to go to Kshir Bhawani now". He also said that Dhooni was no more necessary.

Almost on every Sunday, musicians sang till late in the night and he would never ask them to stop. But on his last Sunday on earth, 26th May, '68 he directed the musicians to stop, remarking "we shall not listen to any more music".

Then came May 28, 1968, Tuesday - the day Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji finally chose to cast off his Bhautik Sareera. He went through the morning routine as usual. At about 3 p.m. he directed one of his devotees to give the three Sadhus rupee one each. He had the last few puffs at his Chillum. A devotee started making tea but Bhagawaanji said "We shall not take tea any more". He asked for water at 5.30 p.m. And at 5.45 p.m. he uttered OM NAMA SHIVAYA in a low voice, looked around with infinite love towards those present, and closed his eyes. All was over. The revered Nanda Bab mourned the loss by saying that Kashmir had been rocked by an earthquake.

Thus, passed into eternity a great Siddha. He may be no more with us in flesh and blood. But his Spirit continues to guide the ever-increasing number of devotees scattered all over the world. His influence is being felt in even greater measure now.

Nearly a quarter of a century has elapsed since his Nirvana. Yet a mere look at his portrait gives, to the man of faith, the feeling of the presence of a Living Reality. He seems to talk through his lustrous and penetrating eyes. His angelic countenance takes charge of one's afflicted heart, as it were and fills it with inexhaustible bliss. Many a devotee who had never seen him in his life-time, have testified to this mysterious experience.

In his Cosmic form, Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji has been seen to take care of all those who surrender to him, heart and soul. Not bound by the limitations of time and space, Bhagawaanji has been munificent in answering sincere prayers anywhere any time. In the words of Swami Yogananda, the celebrated author of "The Autobiography of a Yogi", perfect Masters like Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji "can materialize and dematerialize themselves and move with the velocity of light and utilise the creative light rays in bringing into instant visibility any physical manifestation". According to him, a sage who has merged his consciousness with that of the Supreme Reality perceives the cosmic essence as light and being free from the three dimensions of space and the fourth one of time, is able to transfer his physical or cosmic form with equal ease through the light rays of earth, water, fire and air.

We are passing through very critical times. Materialism has taken a firm hold over our minds, particularly the young. The moral and spiritual values are on the wane. The need to move from the outer to the inner life, to coordinate the scientific temper and the spiritual approach and to restore the efficacy of our ancient ethical, cultural and spiritual perspectives, has never been greater than now. And in this task, only the saints like Bhagawaan Gopinath Ji can show us the right path, dispel fear in our minds and instill the much-needed faith and love. Bhagawaanji has a divine mission to fulfill. He will, we firmly believe, shed light and illumine the dark patches of our aggrieved souls.

Our salutations to this great sage who made Kashmir, nay the entire world, proud.

*Published by:*

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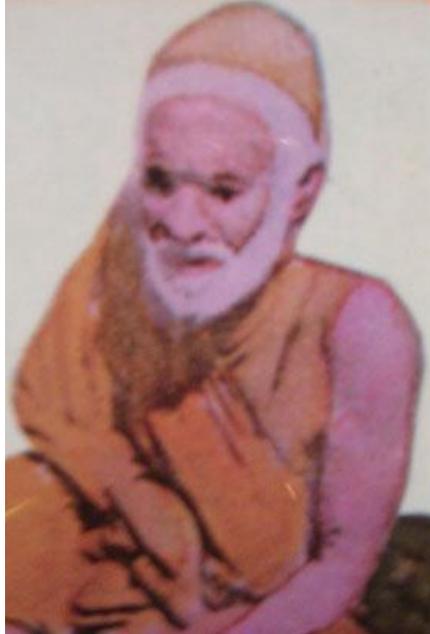
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## 4.0 KASHKAK

"All found solace and comfort in his presence"

by G.N. Raina



Kashkak

*Color Picture Courtesy: Anjali Kaul, Austin*

Manigam, the silent sleepy village in the north of Kashmir, about 25 kilometres from Srinagar, which had been hallowed in the late 17th century by Mata Rupa Bhawani during the days of her early penance, produced in the early part of this century a gem of a Faqir, a Mastana, who led a normal life of a Grahasta, and, earned his bread by tilling whatever little land he possessed till the end of his life.

As one crossed VAYIL bridge on the outskirts of the tiny village, one came across a well-built, thinly dressed peasant engaged in ploughing the field. This was the divine figure of the mystic-saint popularly known as Kashkak. A mere darshan brought comfort and solace to one and all who have had the good fortune of visiting him. Small wonder, then, that those who thronged Manigaam day in and day out for Kashkak's darshan included not only the common men, women and children, the rich businessmen, and top government officials, seeking divine favours, but also contemporary saints and sages of Kashmir and the rest of the country. Meher Baba, that silent sage from Poona who was declared an Avatar by his followers, visited Kashkak and accepted Prasad from him. Recording the reminiscences of his meeting with the Manigaam seer, Meher Baba says in his famous work on Saints, "The Wayfarers", that he found Kashkak ever engrossed in Higher self in the 7th plane of Consciousness.

I know of two other contemporary saints - Swami Nandlal Ji and Swami Lakshman Joo, who had darshan of the sage of Manigaam.

Initiated into the Yogic Sadhana by his Guru, Narain Bhan, Kashkak attained Siddhi sooner than expected. Once in a trance, he is said to have climbed a tree wearing Khadaoon, (wooden slippers). Known for his uncanny prophesies, he did appear to have used spiritual powers in the service of God's creatures. It was said of him that he never disappointed anyone and fulfilled everyone's wishes. Once, I

vividly remember, a Gujar with his right arm fractured came to Kashkak and implored, "Bab (father), this is the harvesting season, and down and out as I am, my family will die of starvation if I am not alright. Be kind and heal my arm". The sage touched the fractured arm and it was restored to normal health. The Gujar sped away in joy, but an elderly Muslim, sitting alongwith others, including myself, was not happy. Turning to Kashkak, he asked, "why on earth Bab, should you have been so kind to a person who is known for his cunning?" "We are here to serve and do good, simplify matters rather than complicate them. If his arm was not cured, his family would have suffered for no fault of theirs. If, indeed, the Gujar is a bad man, he will have to go through the hell again after the harvesting season", the sage replied. As I learnt later, the Gujar had to go through normal medical process long after the harvesting season. Kashkak's predictions were often shrouded in ambiguity, made more so by his reciting persian couplets. To a query as to when a particular gentleman who had accompanied me, my father and mother to the saint in the summer of 1942, would get married, Kashkak replied, " Yora Gachhith ta Tora Yith", meaning "let him die first and then be reborn". The said gendeman from Ali Kadal, now in his 81st year, remains unmarried to this day.

A poor farmer that he was, Kashkak displayed utmost hospitality and those coming from far-off places for his darshan were allowed to stay at night and were served simple meal of rice, curd, dal and vegetables. He treated the rich and poor alike, never discriminated between a Hindu and a Muslim. He always refused offerings in kind or cash. Whatever was offered used to be thrown by him in the Sindh river that flowed nearby.

Kashkak attained Mahasamadhi on 17th of August, 1961.

*Source: Koshur Samachar*