



Some of the most eventful periods in Gurudev's life were his official tours to various districts for the collection and analysis of soil. They were significant because at these camps, he could perform mass healings, serve lakhs of people and locate and train his disciples from the past.

Camps

Gurudev joined the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, PUSA, under the Ministry of Agriculture, as a soil-surveyor in 1958. He was 20 years old. His job involved soil survey expeditions to remote areas across the northern parts of India. This meant being away from home for close to six months in a year. Being an escape artist extraordinaire, the official tours became a *vanprasth ashram* by default.

The *Vanprasth Ashram* is the third of the four ashrams or life stages in Vedic culture. It extends from the 50th to 75th year of one's life and involves moving away from the hustle and bustle of city life to quieter places where you can focus on spiritual pursuits and try to look at things in a very minimalistic manner.

Being Gurudev's main area of work, the camps became sites for him to engage in spiritual entrepreneurship. Many significant milestones in his spiritual journey, including forging spiritual alliances and performing mass healings, happened at these camps. The irony was that he performed mass healings in places where there were hardly any masses but more on that later.

Anand Parashar, a junior colleague, gives us some technical background about the organization where Gurudev worked.

Anand ji: Our department was related to Soil Survey. The name of our department was 'All India Soil and Land Use Survey' which has been now changed to 'Soil and Land Use Survey of India'. Basically, there is not much difference. Our job was to survey the soil and to create survey maps of it. On the map we used to mark what type of soil it is. We would note our observations. We used to take samples from the pit and then we would analyse those samples further. On the basis of the results, we would also categorise them. Then, we had to mark the maps. First, we would have to mark villages on the map but later we also took aerial photographs. So basically, our work was the conservation of silt in certain areas.

Our tour was of maximum 200 days where we had to work onsite in states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand etc. These were the areas which used to come under North Zone i.e Delhi centre. So, this was field work. Then we had to get those maps and work on them in the office. The person who had marked the map, then had to check the maps because he has seen the area. He was so perfect in his work, even his vision was perfect and he had a very sharp mind. I can't express his qualities adequately.

One of the first people Gurudev befriended at the workplace was Nagpal ji, who accompanied him to these camps, proxied for him when it came to backend work, and gave him time to train his disciples and engage in spiritual practises.

Over to Nagpal ji.

Nagpal ji: So far as government work is concerned, he used to take it very seriously and do it honestly. Even if places were hard to trek to like the top of the hill, he used to go there. He used to say 'till the time I don't see it for myself, I won't okay it. So far as Guruji was concerned, he used to go there, check each and every spot.

Let's interview some other co-workers to get their views on what happened at these camps. The first is Gurudev's disciple, Dr Shankar Narayan who was also his senior at the work-place.

Dr Shankar Narayan ji: In this field job, he used to meet lot of people in Himachal Pradesh. He was very good at tracking.

Q: What do you mean by track?

Dr Shankar Narayan ji: One has to map the field but before mapping the field, it has to be tracked. Without good tracking you will never be able to map it properly. Even I used to track very well. So that is how he was. But his field work was 100%.

Imagine if Jesus had to run a furniture making factory and perform his spiritual feats at the same time. It was a similar situation that Gurudev was in. He had to travel to remote areas on official tours, map the soil, make reports, and at the same time mentor his disciples and attend to hordes of patients at some of the public events that were held at these camps. He also had his seniors paying visits to check up on the work they were doing. What a time! It was a huge quantum of work that he had to handle. He did and everybody had nothing but praise for it.

F C Sharma ji, helps us further understand what the mahaguru's commercial life was like.

FC Sharma ji: Sometimes, I used to go to prepare maps but only for a week or two. Wherever Guruji would go for his survey, he would require those maps for marking, will make the soil pit and will mark it from where all he has collected the soil samples. I didn't have to go anywhere but Guruji had to go on tours for 6 months. During summers, he would be on tours in Himachal and in winters he would be in Madhya Pradesh. So, on tour, he would have his car and a driver, a class 4 person along with him and a cook and tents. If they didn't get any space to stay then they would stay in tents.

Living at these camps was no walk in the park. Many times, Gurudev's team was unable to find a place to set up camp, so they pitched tents on open grounds. Though I felt I was in heaven just by being in his divine presence, the living was rustic. Occupancies of heaven would have fallen if we were to superimpose the camps there. My introduction to jungle pani or outdoor ablution happened at these camps. It was a unique experience for an urban *dummkopflike* me but Gurudev had no qualms about it!

One person who admired him 'behind his back' was his agnostic yet indulgent boss, Pratap Singh. In the words of a non-believer...

Pratap ji: He was a hard worker. He had to map the area on the topside, through the satellite photographs and others. We would work with 50-60 kms of land and keep shifting base every month. It was tedious work. We had to go to walking into the mountains in the Himachal as the jeep would not be able to climb such heights. So, he was a healthy man, so would go running to get the soil. But he was very good at it. He was healthy. He used to run and do the work.

Gurudev propagated and practiced being conscientious towards work, dutiful towards family and of service to others. His spiritual entrepreneurship involved the practice of seva, both in the physical and astral planes. He spent many hours daily engaged in paath. And it was during paath that he would travel out of his body to help and heal those who had visited various sthans that he had set up across the world. Gurudev utilized whatever free time he had at the camps to engage in astral healing.

Hard to believe? yes! But true, nonetheless.

Gurudev used the camp-sites - be it Kathog, Renuka, Nagpur, Auli, Bharatpur, Srinagar in Uttarakhand, Bathri, Lucknow and thereabouts, and many, many other places to render seva. This led to many spiritual, and potentially spiritual people, coming into his fold, eventually leading to the opening of many more sthans across India.

The sthans were an innovative concept where Gurudev set up centres of help and healing at the homes of his disciples. Since his disciples hailed from various economic backgrounds, this allowed seva to be performed without incurring any additional infrastructural expenditure. Through the multiplication of the sthans, Gurudev expanded the base of his seva to cities, towns and remote hamlets across the length and breadth of India, and eventually some other countries.

The question that begs an answer is – Did the camps lead to the sthans or did the sthans lead, in retrospect, to the camps?

Many of Gurudev's future disciples like Santosh ji from Nadaun, Chandramani Vashisht from Renuka, Shambu ji from Jwalaji, Shrivastav ji from Lucknow, Suresh Kohli ji from Sunet, Giri Punje ji from Nagpur, Amichand ji from Kotla, Surender ji from Kanpur, Sabharwal ji from Pathankot, Jain Saab from Jammu, etc met Gurudev at these camps and went on to run sthans till the end of their lives. This is how the mahaguru made a habit of manipulating coincidence.

What was unique about him was that he was a guru to a few, a deity to many, and a saviour to those who existed as spirits and came to him for release or salvation.

Spiritual practitioners of all types also came to him for help and blessings. There are many such incidents narrated in the podcasts before and after.

Often, Gurudev's camp was situated near a burial ground or a forest where spirits dwelled. And these spirits would reach out to him for help. One of the unique insights that I gained from my time at the camps was that being a disciple of Shankar and a manifestation of Shiv, Gurudev felt duty-bound to help them. In fact, he facilitated the re-birth of some, while freeing many others from their entrapments.

Gaggu ji remembers a unique sighting at one of Gurudev's camps near Bharatpur.

Gaggu ji: We had gone to Bharatpur. In Bharatpur, he had set up camp in a graveyard. There were no inhabitants anywhere nearby, there were no residents living for miles around. When he went there, he also called us to serve people there. In the day, he attended to the public that came to see him. In the evening, he called me over and pointed towards where there were lights flashing. He said, "See, can you see the lights in the jungle?" One light would blink and go dark and then another light would appear and so on. He then told me that these are forms without heads called syeds. They are communicating with each other. These lights are their signals of communication. This must be their way of communicating. But don't go anywhere near them.

Pravesh Kapoor, a devotee, narrates a story of bewilderment.

Parvesh Kapoor ji: We had gone to a place which was a burial ground. We asked him, “Guruji, why have you come here? There is no one here.” He said, “Puttar should I line people up?” I said, “As you see fit.” He went in samadhi for half an hour. People started coming there asking, ‘Where is guruji? Where is guruji?’ And there were lines of people. This was true. I have seen with my own eyes.

To see one’s roommate cure lakhs of people, and that too as part of mass healings, must have been a massive, cultural shock for Nagpal ji. He recounts the first public healing that happened at Kurwai in Madhya Pradesh.

Nagpal ji: I had no idea about all this that such things happen. What started in Kurwai, in Guna, the condition was such that there were scores of bullock carts waiting and every cart had 15-20 people in it who had come to get cured. Someone had family problems; someone had physical problems.

Q: So, when you used to watch him do this, you were surprised as to how he did it. Did you ask him how he did it?

Nagpal ji: So many times.

Q: When?

Nagpal ji: He used to just laugh and ignore the question. I used to ask him, “What is this? how do you manage to do it?”

I’m sure you will empathise with Nagpal ji. Just put yourself in his shoes and see how blurred the picture gets.

You make a friend at work; he becomes your roommate who is nice but strange. Forces you to watch movies more often than not. Sits at night wrapped in a sheet doing something weird. Makes strange sounds through his nose and mouth, and suddenly, one day, starts curing incurable diseases. How was poor Nagpal ji to digest that? Well, and a deep well at that, for Nagpal ji, Gurudev was nothing short of a Googly.

An arrogant entrant, who later became a sincere devotee, is Suresh Kohli ji who hails from Sunet in Himachal Pradesh. Suresh ji, Santosh ji and Shambhu ji were all teachers at the school at Kathog where Gurudev had set up camp. Meeting the Mahaguru was a turning point in Suresh Kohli’s life. Do lend him your ears!

Q: How did you first come in touch with him?

Suresh ji: It was by coincidence. I was in Jaunpur in Hamirpur. During the month of March, I got transferred and I came to Kathog. There was a tantric named Thapa who told me that there's a man in the area who has an Om on his hand and his chest as well as a Trishul. He seemed like a decent person. I told him that "You must be drunk when you have seen this. This Om does not appear to normal people." But he stated that he was completely sober. I went to teach my class. However, I couldn't concentrate on teaching because his words kept resounding in my mind that he had an Om on his hand, Trishul and there is Om on his chest, so he must not be an ordinary person. I was not able to teach my class. I threw the book away and stepped out of class. That's when right outside the gate I saw Guruji, I went, I saw him, his sleeves rolled up- A handsome man, a very handsome. I told him what Thapa ji had said to me. He responded by saying, "Yes, I do have Om on my hand." I just wondered, "Are you very sure that you have Om on your hand?" He said "Yes." To which I asked him to show it to me. He showed me the Om on his right hand.

At that time, I was interested in spiritualism and used to chant the Chamunda mantra. He told me that he will introduce me to God himself. When I asked him again if he said exactly what I had heard, he said yes. The man was so confident in his words. At that time, I was suffering from a tonsil problem.

Q: From what?

Suresh ji: Tonsils. So, I could not drink milk or curd as I had a bad cough. Someone told me that I would have to undergo an operation. The first problem that I had was that I wanted to meet God and my second problem was this (tonsils). Guruji said, "Don't worry we will solve your problem through a glass of water." I was once again left astonished. At that time, Guruji simply called someone to fetch a glass of water. I couldn't believe what this man was saying and was in a fix! I told him "See, I believe that Punjabi people were very clever. Are you also being clever?" He replied "No Master ji, its nothing like that. Believe me. I'll heal you." I said, "Ok no problem." He asked me if I was still doing the Chamunda jaap and I said that I did. That's when he told me that I when I chant the mantra at home that night, I must keep a glass of water nearby and ensure that my eyes remain open throughout. But my eyes would close automatically. I agreed to do so. I usually do my prayers at around 11 in the night. In my almirah, I have a section where I keep all the photos of the deities that I worship and had lit up this space with a light bulb. That night, as I was praying the jaap with my eyes open, I saw a half image like you see a moving picture, so in that sense I saw an image of Guruji in front of me, in my almirah.

Q: Almirah?

Suresh ji: Yes. It was moving before me in that small light of my bulb. I kept thinking, “Who is this person? I had just met this person for the first time, and I have no devotion or belief towards him. Why is his picture here?” This picture remained visible on for an hour and I kept on doing my jaap.

Q: So, what I am understanding is, while you were doing your Chamunda jaap with your eyes open, you would see his photograph?

Suresh ji: Half portion only

Q: But in front of your eyes open or....

Suresh ji: Eyes open. Quite awake. That was there for one hour, continuously that was there and I enjoyed my jaap also. This thing continued for 7 days. The eighth night his photograph did not appear. My eyes were open. Despite my best efforts, his image didn't appear before me. In the morning when I went to him, I asked him what happened, “What happened today?” His reply was, “If you see me again, you would have met God, Masterji.” I was shivering from head to toe from excitement. This was the God that I was looking for. I had got him.

Gurudev was probably an eco-conscious saint who liked to save paper by printing his image on people's walls! And in this case, admirahs too!

Kathog was a significant milestone in Gurudev's spiritual life and that of several of his newly acquired disciples who hailed from the neighbouring areas. Raji Sharma calls it a lift off point in the mahaguru's spiritual journey.

Suresh ji continues the story of Kathog.

Suresh ji: Lakhs of people came to Kathog. It was a barren place. He would put steel kadas on people's hands and these kadas began to get over. The cloves or elaichi and kali mirchi too started to get over. So many people saw the miracles he performed there. That was his first gathering. Someone complained about us saying that schools are empty as all the teachers are busy doing seva as some magician had come there. He was giving laung and elaichi to people and healing them. When the deputy director of education arrived at the school for a check based on the complaint, he saw that there were no classes happening. People were in the classroom and seva was going on. He called me outside and asked, “Mr Kohli, what is going on?” So, then I said, “This is the place”. I introduced him to Guruji and his problems were solved. He went back to the authorities and told them that everything was fine, and the school was running normally. Even he became his follower.

Q: How was the camp in Kathog? How many people used to come?

Suresh ji: Lakhs of people. Lakhs of people. It was the biggest camp. The biggest camp was the one at Renuka, but this wasn't any lesser.

A few words with Santosh ji of Nadaun who also met Gurudev at Kathog.

Santosh ji: This happened in May or June 1976, I had health issues. Someone told me that an engineer has arrived at Kathog who healed people by giving them laung, elaichi and jal. When I went to meet him, Guruji showed me the symbols of *Om*, *Trishul*, on his hand. I was surprised to see them and thought that I would be blessed to become his follower. After 3 days, on a Thursday, Guruji had called me with *kada* (a bracelet), laung, elaichi and a bottle for the jal. When I went to him, he said "Son, we will do your welfare." At that time, Guruji used to give copper kadas to his disciples. He also gave me the same copper kada and he gave me a mantra or jaap.

Many people came to get cured in Kathog. I will share one incident which had happened in my presence. There was a person named Pradhan ji who lived 5 to 6 kms away. His brother was unwell. He had come to meet Guruji. At that time there were no taxis etc. He came to ask for Guruji's jeep so that he could take his brother to the PGI Hospital in Chandigarh. Guruji asked him "What if I cure your brother here itself?" He replied "Why are you making fun of me?" Guruji took a glass of jal and gave it to Pradhan ji to drink. He put his hands on his stomach and lifted it, the brother had a stomach related disease, and said "You can go home now, your brother will be alright." He went home and checked on his brother. Some of us visited him a little later. Pradhan ji said his brother was fast asleep from the time that Guruji had made him drink a glass of jal and was feeling better. This was the miracle performed by Guruji, and seeing this many people started coming to meet Guruji. At that time, I was there, Shambhu ji from Jwala ji and Suresh Kohli, who was a retired principal. At that time, Shambhu ji and Suresh were working together at the same school. Guruji gave the three of us the opportunity to do seva. We were not aware of how to do seva. Guruji gave us a glass of jal and said, "You just have to keep your hand on the body part which people want cured and I will take care of the rest." We were astounded as we didn't know what to do and how to do it. But shockingly, and strangely, we followed Guruji's orders and cured people in the same way. Whoever we touched would be cured of all his problems and would leave the place with a smile.

The agenda for most who came to the camp was to obtain cures for their suffering. But for Santosh ji, Suresh ji and Shambhu ji, the 3 S' of Kathog, it was seva.

Santosh ji, who was a body builder and a PT teacher, fell hook, line and sinker for the mahaguru. He recounts one of the many miracles that he was witness to.

Santosh ji: Many people used to visit Kathog to get healed by Gurudev. So, there was an incident where an old man had come to meet Guruji. He walked with the help of two canes and had a bent body. Guruji called him and asked, “Baba, what if I heal your back?”. So, Baba ji said “Now this will be healed only when I die. I am far too old to get healed.” Guruji called him inside and took a glass of jal and threw some drops on him and then gave him the jal to drink. After drinking jal, Guruji helped him stand erect by putting one hand on his back and one hand on his chest and gradually that old man could stand erect. Guruji told the old man “Lose the canes and start walking.” The old man was too afraid to do so for the fear of falling. Guruji took put the canes aside and helped the man to walk. And then Guruji told him “Baba, now you take these canes on your shoulder and go home.” Baba ji did exactly as Guruji told him to do and went home. And the world was amazed to see this old man and they looked at him as if he was a ghost. This was one incident which I saw.

Shambhu ji’s eldest son, Pappu Pahadia, witnessed the miracles at Kathog through baby eyes. He grew into an impressive young man and an ardent devotee. His memories present themselves.

Pappu ji: When Guruji first came to this *Shaktipeeth* area (pilgrimage destinations in Shaktism, the goddess-focused Hindu tradition) in Himachal, he set up camp at Kathog which is three kilometres from Jwalamukhi. My father was a teacher in the school located opposite Guruji’s camp. It was there that it all started. We began interacting with Guruji. At that time, no one knew that he was a Guru and it was a small place. When we met Guruji we noticed that people in his staff would call him “Guruji’. We were all perplexed as to why people at the camp were referring to this handsome, modern looking man as Guruji. My father and a group of 3-4 teachers began to investigate who Guruji really was. Slowly, Guruji began to perform miracles at the place. If someone came to him with a stomach problem, he would tell them to keep their hand on their stomach and pray and they would soon become alright.

In fact, while Gurudev was performing unbelievable miracles at Kathog, his family in Haryana was completely unaware of this spiritual shift. Let’s head to Haryana for a chat with Gurudev’s sister.

Gurudev’s sisters: He set up camp in Kathog. I asked a guy named Dilbaag, who was studying in my class, “How far is Kathog from Jwalaji?” He said, “It’s nearby. At the moment, there is one Om Baba who has come there.” I asked him, “Who is this Om Baba?”

We knew that my brother is a research officer. We didn’t know that he was a Guru. I said that “My brother is there. He is a Research Officer and they have their soil conservation

camp situated in that place.” Then he said, “No, but there is an Om Baba who is staying there. There’s a huge crowd of people who have come to meet him in Kathog.” Later, my elder brother (Guruji) returned and I asked him, “Pappaji, who is the Om Baba who had come in Kathog?” He asked me “Who told you about him?” I said “There’s a guy in my class who told me that there is one Om Baba there. No one has seen his face but there is a huge crowd of people who have come to meet him.” Then Guruji told me everything. He said, “There was a sarpanch (a village head) who had come to meet me as he had stomach issues. I heard a voice saying “You have that power to heal this man.” Hearing this, I made jal. He felt better.” I don’t know whether he had pain due to cancer or some other ailment but he was healed. So, like this there were crowds of people who had come to meet him.

For her, this was nothing short of a googly, and naturally she was clean bowled.

Gurudev was bestowed with very localised titles like Kathog wale Baba, Om wale Baba because people had seen the Om on his hands and understood its significance.

Himachal is not called *Devobhoomi* or land of the Gods for nothing. Many a saint has Himachal presented to the world. Spiritual prowess and miracles are an accepted principle.

But every solution brings with it an inherent problem. Many of the visitors who frequented the powerful Jwalaji temple, situated near Kathog, drifted towards Gurudev’s camp.

Raji Sharma tells us what happened thereafter.

Raji Sharma ji: I do recollect a fleeting mention of the incident about the khadaus (wooden footwear). This incident happened after I had left Kathog. Apparently, the pandits of Jwalaji were not very happy because suddenly they saw a lot of surge towards Guruji, rather than towards the temple. And to see his spiritual power they invited him to the temple. They took him down to the basement or a dungeon where there were a pair of khadaus kept. I don’t know who’s Khadaus they were but they may of a powerful khadaus of a Tantric or of a Siddh Purush which Guruji was asked to wear and was asked to walk a few steps. He wore it and walked 3 steps and that is how they felt yes, that this person who is able to walk with these particular Khadaus is superior or has got higher spiritual powers that what they had earlier deemed to be. He had the power to step in those shoes.

The khadaus were meant to separate the accomplished spiritualist from the pretender to the throne. The priests would punish anyone who could not pass the test. This is hearsay but I was told this story as far back as the 1980s.

The other camp that created waves was the one at Renuka, a town in Simaur district of Himachal Pradesh. Renuka is the dominion of the immortal Parshuram ji, son of devi Renuka and Saptrishi Jamdagini.

Let's shift base from Kathog to Renuka. Both in Himachal Pradesh, but 320 kilometres apart.

In a *tete-a-tete*, Bittu ji relives his memories of the time he spent with Gurudev at this camp.

Bittu ji: In 1979, Guruji went on an official tour to Renuka. He asked the locals whether there was any other place he could rent. The locals told him about Mr. Vashisht's place which was empty. They added that he could stay there provided he got permission. Guruji spoke to Vashisht, who said it was a barren land and he wouldn't be responsible for anything that happened to them there. Guruji saw the place and approved of it. We shifted the camp. There wasn't any water supply there. After staying for a few days. Guruji was walking ahead of two of us, a labourer called Ranjeet whom we had hired on daily wages, and me. There was a rain-fed water channel near the place where we had camped. When Guruji went downhill-it's nothing short of a miracle-the water followed us. We used that water. The entire place was arid, but Guruji kept walking, and soon the garden became green. After a few days, at the place where we had camped, there was a small temple with a shivling inside, the shivling that you are talking about, which hadn't been cleaned and maintained. It had spider webs etc. So, a few days later, I asked Guruji if I could clean that temple as there are spider webs and it was dirty. Guruji gave me money and asked me to go to the market and get white paint. He also said I have to pour water on the shivling and light an incense stick every morning.

After that, when I used to light a lamp etc, I didn't pay much attention to it then, when I used to light the incense, Guruji used to ...we used to do this at 6 in the morning—as instructed by Guruji. He used to stand behind me when I used to perform the rituals at the shivling. After Guruji left his body, many people have got a darshan of him at that shivling.

Q. This Mr. Vashisht whom you spoke of—you said he apparently saw a figure resembling Guruji for 10 years. Can you tell us about this?

Bittu ji: Mr. Vashisht used to see Guruji a soil surveyor. So, one day, Guruji had come to Delhi on some official business, and I was at the camp. One morning, Mr. Vashisht came to pray at the temple, the same Shivling temple which I spoke to you about. While drinking tea, he questioned me—he used to call Guruji Sharmaji— “Does Sharmaji wear spectacles?” I answered, “No, Sharmaji doesn't wear spectacles, but wears goggles

sometimes.” After hearing that, he left. In the evening, when Guruji came back, I told him that Vashisht ji had come in the evening and was asking so and so question. Guruji started laughing. The next day, Vashisht came again. He asked me whether Sharmaji had returned and asked to meet him. I told Guruji that Vashisht saab had come and Guruji asked me to serve him a cup of tea and said that he would meet him after he had shaved. After Guruji finished shaving, Vashisht asked him the same question—whether he wore glasses or not. Guruji said, “No, I don’t wear glasses, but these kids had bought me a pair of sunglasses which I wear sometimes when I travel by jeep.” Vashisht asked the same question again. Guruji said he was a young man and didn’t need spectacles right now. Then Vashisht kept talking about spiritualism; after 10-15 minutes, Guruji told him, “Come Vashisht sahib, we will also show you something.” Guruji asked me to get water and washed his hands. I have seen Guruji show his Om to many people, but when he showed it to Vashisht saab, the Om was shining very brightly. I have never seen it shine so brightly before this. As soon as Vashisht saw the Om, he fell at Guruji’s feet. Later, Vashisht said that for 10 years, whenever he used to sit for bhakti—it’s called dhuna in Punjabi, where saints and ascetics sit and do their paath—so whenever Vashisht sat, he used to see a vision of a person resembling Guruji but wearing spectacles sitting on the wall in front of him, who used to disturb his meditation. He used to think about who this was. Guruji said, “Son, I have come here in 1979. I should have come here in 1969. You’ve been waiting for me for 10 years.”

Gurudev opened a sthan at Renuka in 1980 with Chandramani Vashisht in charge and Parshuram ji as its chief patron. Chandramani Vashisht eventually picked a successor, Dinesh ji, to manage the sthan, and handed the reins to him before he passed on. Dinesh ji gives us some background of the spiritual history of the place.

Q: What is the connection of this sthan with Parshuramji?

Dinesh ji: Yes, this land here belongs to Parshuram ji as this is his birthplace and his meditation place too. He lives in each and every corner of this land. You must have heard that Guruji had said earlier that pick up any stone and you will see ‘Om’ in it. Now also if you pick up any stone you will be able to see the Om on it. The earth has existed for thousands of years, he is here and he has taken many births in this time, and this is also the birthplace of Parshuram ji. Mata Renuka was his mother whose sthal is the lake where she is believed to live seh sharir. Parshuram ji is still immortal and in the physical form. Do you understand what I am saying?

Q: In the physical form?

Dinesh ji: Yes, in the physical form he can come anywhere and anytime. He doesn’t age. He can be seen by anyone in the same form.

Q: How does he look?

Dinesh ji: He looks very young. Has a small beard and a moustache and a hair bun.

It was at the camps that Gurudev forged many spiritual alliances, be it with the great Parshuram ji and his mother, Devi Renuka, with several Devi Devtas in Himachal Pradesh; with Buddhé Baba and Augarh, and many others whom we are yet to discover.

When Gurudev first arrived at Renuka, he instructed all his disciples to refrain from addressing him as their Guru. He wanted his identity to remain a secret till he had established a working relationship with Parshuram ji.

Strange as it may sound, many spiritual greats test other spiritual greats before they can or do acknowledge.

Bittu ji recounts an interesting anecdote from Renuka that involves Gurudev's eldest daughter, Renu, do listen on!

Bittu ji: There was a camp at Renuka. At that time, Renu had measles and her condition got worse. She was on deathbed and kept on saying that she wanted to meet Daddy (Guruji) and Guruji was in Renuka. Mataji took Renu to Renuka along with Subhash and Pal ji. When they reached, Guruji was working on away on a field trip. When he returned, he saw that them waiting for him at the camp. Seeing them there, he got very furious. Mataji said to him, "I didn't come of my own accord, your daughter wanted to see you." He said, "Let her die if she has to die." He asked them to return to Gurgaon that second. It was around 5pm. In those days, it used to get dark by 6 pm and the roads were quite narrow. I mustered the courage and asked Guruji, "Can they stay here?" He replied, "They will not stay here." So, I asked if they could stay at the sthan at Baayri which was further away from the camp. He said, "They can stay wherever they want. They will not eat anything here." Mataji replied, "I won't have a sip of water from here as I have carried food and water along with me. If you want then even you can eat it." He agreed to allow them stay there for a night. He said, "Before I wake up to do my paath, you must all leave." Later, Guruji said that Parshuram ji was testing him.

Q: Means, he was testing him?

Bittu ji: Yes

Q: So, testing him to see how trapped he was in emotions.

Bittu ji: Yes. His daughter is about to die. They had carried Renu all the way from Gurgaon.

Having passed the test, Gurudev was accepted as a collaborator by the immortal one, and an alliance that continues to this day was born.

Soon after, Gurudev started seva at Renuka and asked a few disciples to join him. Gurudev told them that his voice had gone far beyond the mountains, and he expected a lot of people to show up in this little hamlet. Sure enough, in the days that followed, people came from far and wide. Buses from the states of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan, offloaded people near the campsite every few hours. In fact, Haryana and Punjab Roadways diverted a few buses to Renuka to meet the unexpected demand.

As word of the miracles at Renuka spread, the Himachal Government sent a few of its officers to investigate the goings on. They took a sample of the *jal* that was being distributed there to a laboratory nearby, only to find it to be of immaculate purity.

The camp at Renuka remains the site of the largest gathering of mass healing performed by Gurudev. And possibly any other saint.

My own experiences at Renuka are enough to fill a book.

I cannot forget Devi Renuka's regal persona and divine beauty. Due to certain strange circumstances, I had asked her for protection which came instantly. She appeared in all her glory, dressed in white, in the centre of my forehead and touched me with something like a wand or a feather and I could feel a sense of bliss almost instantly.

Let's turn back the clock to the events surrounding my visit to Renuka.

Whenever Chandramani Vashisht poured water over the shivling at the sthan established by Gurudev, the graphic of Om would show up. On a visit to Renuka with a few others, I too saw it. But what my co-travellers saw and I could not, was an image of Gurudev appearing on it. Disappointed, but unwilling to believe just because the others did, made me exit the scene in disagreement.

A little later, we stopped at the home of Karamchand, another disciple from Renuka, for lunch. We sat in the open on the mud floor and were served lunch on plates made of leaves. I cleaned the ground before I put the plate down. and after lunch, when I picked up the plate, I was shocked to see a perfect graphic of the Om inlayed on the ground below it. Though I thought it wise not to share the experience with my host, I felt it was a sign and ran back to the sthan to take another look at the Shivling.

Vashisht ji had left the premises by then, so I jumped over the compound wall and asked the shivling to show me what I had not been able to see earlier. What I saw next was

nothing short of a lo and behold moment! An outline of a face appeared instead of the om and stayed there in spite of my complete disbelief. The shivling did not need my faith to showcase itself and its power, but this incident was indicative of how spiritually charged the place was.

I have recently, after over two or three decades, taken groups of disciples and devotees to Renuka so that they can pay their respects to the power there. Most of them have seen the Om appear on the Shivling when a dhoop is lit in its perimeter.

For most of Gurudev's devotees, Renuka is a must visit. It is believed that Gurudev and some of his disciples had in a past life meditated in and around the hills of Renuka and it is said that their samadhis may still be there.

Think about it – if a heavyweight like Parshuram ji found it worth his while to collaborate in the establishment of a sthan for seva, and indulge in its sustenance, then maybe it would be wise to pay more heed to the philosophy and practice of selfless service.

Just because your lifestyle may not include going to camps for long durations, you can do what I do--Make a camp in your mind. Escape from the operations management of your life to the hillside locations in your head. Tune off the mediocracy of day-to-day life, common attachments, family and social ties, and give yourself the time and space to learn and practice spiritualism.

Make the mind your paramaatmic retreat.

For an hour a day, you can make your bed your camp. Your morning or evening walk your camp.

Let's camp alone.

Let's camp together.

Let's camp with Gurudev!

Sochne se kaha milte hai tamanna-o ke sheher
Sochne se kaha milte hai tamanna-o ke sheher
Chalna bhi jaruri hai, Chalna bhi jaruri hai,
manzil ko paane ke liye, manzil ko paane ke liye