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Baba Mandir



Baba Harbhajan Singh Mandir, commonly known as Baba Mandir, is a revered shrine situated in the Indian state of Sikkim. Nestled in the Eastern Himalayas, this unique temple is dedicated to Baba Harbhajan Singh, a soldier in the Indian Army who is believed to possess divine powers even after his death. The mandir is located at an altitude of approximately 13,123 feet (4,000 meters) between Nathula and Jelepla Passes in East Sikkim, near the China border.

The story of Baba Harbhajan Singh is both fascinating and mystical. Born on August 30, 1946, in Punjab, Harbhajan Singh joined the Indian Army as a sepoy in the Punjab Regiment. In 1968, while escorting a mule caravan from his battalion headquarters to a remote outpost, Harbhajan Singh went missing. Despite extensive searches, his body was not found immediately. Legend has it that he appeared in a fellow soldier's dream, informing him of his tragic demise and the location of his body. Subsequently, his body was found, and he was given a proper military funeral with full honors.

Posthumously, Harbhajan Singh was believed to have become a spiritual guardian of the soldiers posted in the inhospitable terrain of Nathula Pass. Soldiers began to experience his protective presence, with stories of his divine interventions spreading among the troops. They believed that Baba Harbhajan Singh continued to patrol the border, safeguarding them from mishaps and warning them of impending dangers.

In honor of his spirit, a shrine was constructed at the site where he was believed to have perished. Over time, this shrine has grown in prominence, attracting not just military personnel but also civilians and tourists who come to pay their respects and seek blessings.

The Baba Mandir is modest in its architecture but holds immense spiritual significance. The temple complex consists of three main structures:

1. **Old Baba Mandir:** The original shrine, where personal belongings of Baba Harbhajan Singh such as his uniform, boots, and bed are preserved. It is said that his bed is found to be crumpled every morning as if someone has slept in it, reinforcing the belief that his spirit resides there.
2. **New Baba Mandir:** Due to the increasing number of devotees, a new temple was constructed a few kilometers away from the original site. This structure is more accessible and houses a statue of Baba Harbhajan Singh along with his personal items.
3. **Canteen and Souvenir Shop:** A small canteen serves refreshments to visitors, and a souvenir shop offers memorabilia related to Baba Harbhajan Singh and the Indian Army.

The Baba Mandir is not just a place of worship but also a symbol of faith and patriotism. Devotees come here to offer prayers, light candles, and incense sticks, and seek Baba's blessings. It is a common belief that writing a letter to Baba Harbhajan Singh and leaving it at the temple will have one's wishes fulfilled.

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Soldiers stationed in the region treat Baba Harbhajan Singh as a member of their regiment. His portrait is kept in the barracks, and he is honored with an official rank and pay. A reserved seat is often found for him in military convoys, signifying his eternal presence and protection.

Baba Mandir is a testament to the enduring faith and reverence people hold for Baba Harbhajan Singh. It stands as a unique blend of spirituality, patriotism, and folklore, drawing thousands of visitors who come to seek blessings and pay homage to a soldier who continues to protect his comrades from beyond the mortal realm.

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