

## Pilgrim's progress from London to Gujarat's eunuch temple

The pilgrim town of Becharaji in north Gujarat, famous for its temple of Bahucharaji, the Hindu patron goddess of eunuchs, has an unlikely guest: Pamela, a tech-savvy youngster who quit London to find solace here.

While Pamela, also referred to as Prema by many at the temple premises, refuses to talk to the media, other inmates and temple regulars who have befriended the visitor say that the youngster's original name is Stephen.

'Some Gujaratis in London, noticing Stephen's eunuch-like body language and behaviour, helpfully told him about the Bahucharaji temple,' says Gunavant Joshi, a resident of Becharaji, about 110 km from Gujarat's main city Ahmedabad.

'Stephen then made a search on Internet on Goddess Bahucharaji, considered the goddess of eunuchs. He found all necessary information on the net.

'He even got a printout of the picture of the goddess and showed to a tattoo artiste and got a similar image tattooed on his left arm,' Joshi told IANS.

Clad in a saffron sari, Pamela moves around the temple complex without any inhibition as if she has been staying there for years.

A group of pilgrims notice her and flock to her, seeking blessings just as they do from other eunuch devotees of Goddess Bahucharaji. Without hesitation, Pamela blesses them - in the ritualistic manner of putting the third finger on the forehead of the devotee, leaving even temple old-timers amazed.

In return, some pilgrims give her money as offerings - from Rs.10 to even Rs.500. Pamela does not refuse, but usually donates the amount to the temple.

Her rising popularity has left old-time eunuchs at the temple jealous and angry. Some of them misbehaved with her and attempted to check her claim of being a eunuch.

'We were alarmed by the incident and soon provided her an accommodation in the temple guesthouse,' said a temple official.

Describing the visitor's daily schedule, the official said: 'Pamela gets up early in the morning. She attends all artis in the temple.

'Also, she has become a pure vegetarian. She eats Gujarati food in the temple dinning hall.'

Those acquainted with the visitor, here for the past three-four months, say that she is here on a six-month visa and intends to apply for an extension soon.

*Harsh Trivedi ( © IANS / India eNews)*