

Beads on One String Pilgrimage August, 2010

The 'Beads on One String' pilgrimage is becoming an established journey through India, following the trail that Don Stevens and other pilgrims have taken since it started in 2004. The pilgrimage includes visits to spiritual sites in India that are sacred to the traditions of Hinduism, the Jains, Buddhism and Islam. What follows is a description of the 2010 pilgrimage, with the understanding that there may be slight adjustments in the final itinerary.

The intention of the pilgrimage is to experience the common thread of the Oneness of God which permeates the diverse paths to the Divine. This pilgrimage is also intended to involve people of all faiths who have a sincere wish to join, in companionship, and who long for the resolution of the terrible religious conflict that is so prevalent today.

The next pilgrimage is planned for AUGUST 4 - 20, 2010.

Delhi is the starting point of this journey, where the group will stay for 2 nights. Pilgrims will visit the Qutub Minar, a magnificent tower of red sandstone and marble, inscribed with verses from the Koran, originally built in the 13th C. as a minaret to exclaim the faith of Islam in northern India. The tomb of Mahatma Gandhi, one of the most important political and spiritual figures of the 20th century, will also be visited.

From Delhi the group will travel by train to the medieval town of Ajmer in Rajasthan, to the dargah of the great Sufi Master Mu'innudin Chisti. This is the tomb/shrine of The Qutub-e-Irshad (axis or hub of the spiritual hierarchy) of his time who was responsible for bringing Sufism to India in the 12thC. This shrine welcomes all faiths.

The group will then travel onwards to Mount Abu, once a hill station of the British Raj, beautiful and cool, with an ancient Hindu and Jain history. A road from the town winds upwards, past an ancient Hindu temple set into the natural rock of the Dilwara Jain Temple complex. The Vimal Vashi Temple is the focus here; exquisitely carved from luminescent white marble, it is dedicated to the first Jain Tirthanker or Guide, Ardinath, and a sacred place of worship.

After spending two nights in Mt. Abu the journey will continue to Mahabaleshwar, high in the Western Ghats. We will stay for two nights and visit several important places, including the impressive 16th C. Pratapghar Fort of Shivaji which overlooks the town of Satara. This fort, magnificent in its ruins, was where this great spiritual warrior king finally stopped the flow of Islam to the Hindu south. Meher Baba often visited this area with his eastern and western devotees, and Kitty Davy in her book 'Love Alone Prevails' remembered 'It is a beautiful spot. A mass of woods, valleys and hills.' The pilgrims will also visit the cave, known as the Panchgani Cave, which Meher Baba had constructed for His meditation and seclusion work.

Following Mahabaleshwar, the group will travel to Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, an important centre of Hindu and Islamic culture. This is where Meher Baba completed

His New Life phase in the Manonash Cave, located in the rock of the surrounding hills. The group will visit this important site and stay in the Meher Baba Centre situated in the Jubilee Hills region. This beautiful and tranquil place is built on the curious rock formations that surround the whole area.

From here the group will visit Aurangabad and the Ellora Caves, famous for the numerous Hindu, Buddhist and Jain Temples carved from the living rock. The Lonely Planet Guide states that; '*India's three great religions and their coexistence at one site indicates a lengthy period of Religious tolerance.....The Masterpiece is the astonishing Kailasa Temple and is the world's largest monolithic sculpture.*' The group will share a meditation in the Kailash Temple which Meher Baba instructed Don to visit and to film. We will also discover the simple beauty of the Buddhist and Jain caves, particularly Cave 10, Viswakarma, where an enormous statue of the Buddha sits in silent meditation.

As Don Stevens writes of the visit in 2009- '*The entire Ellora Caves complex has an intense atmosphere of charged presence and one feels that one can pause anywhere at any time and begin any type of observance of one's personal devotion and search for the Truth.*'

Following the day at Ellora, the group will visit the neighboring Valley of the Saints which contains the tomb of the perfect master Zar Zari Barkash and the cave of Sai Baba, one of the five perfect masters who brought Meher Baba to earth as the Avatar.

After a second night in Aurangabad, the group will proceed to the tomb/shrine of Meher Baba at Meherabad near Ahmednagar and stay at the new Pilgrim Retreat there or return home via Mumbai.

This pilgrimage is open to seekers of all faiths and is a journey to be taken together as a group in the spirit of companionship. It is being limited to between 30 and 40 people. It is also hoped that a number of young people will join the group. The cost of the pilgrimage is approximately \$1,100 US and some scholarships are available.

To register, go to the website <http://www.beadsononestring.com>