

SATSANG



Sri M's Message after Completion of Walk of Hope

Bangalore, 21st May, 2016

*Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah
Sarve Santu Nir-Aamayaah
Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantu
Maa Kashcid-Dubkha-Bhaag-Bhavet
Loka Swarupa Sukhinah Bhavantu*

I thank you all for felicitating and for this Walk of Hope. Many of the dignitaries mentioned that I walked 7500 Kms for 16 months, and so on which is true in a way. But I want to remind you, that when we started this walk from Kanyakumari, you know Kanyakumari is called zero point, there is no landmass after that. So that's called by the highways department – zero point. I said to all our friends who walked with us – consider yourself as absolute zero and start this walk. Believe me we did not know how we are going to walk.

Well I have some good friends here, at least 7-8 of them who formed a core

committee which worked so very hard to make this yatra a success. There are many others also but these people worked day and night for 2 years before we started this yatra. So why I am saying this - I walked but the effort was not only mine...it was done by all people including those sitting in front of me who contributed in many ways for the walk. I am not talking about financial contributions only.

Actually when we started the walk at Kanyakumari we had a small budget of about Rs.20-22 lacs. And some people told me you must be out of your mind. They said, how can you walk till Kashmir with this much? But we walked and as we walked help came and we went on walking. I personally think that this is the fulfilment of the prophecy given by Maheshwar Nath Babaji, my dear Guru.

Many years ago while we were sitting in Uttarkashi looking at the Ganga, he said,

“One day you will have to walk from Kanyakumari to Kashmir.” I got frightened. I said Babaji, “Why should I walk from Kanyakumari to Kashmir? I'm happy to walk with you in the Himalayas – wherever you go I will go. I'll wash the clothes, I will look after you. I'll do what you want but I can't walk like this.” And his next words were a bombshell, as you all know I am of a retiring temperament, I like ekant. He said “Many people will walk with you.” For years it didn't happen and now it has. So when people say you did this, you walked, I know they are saying out of love and affection. But I think it's Babaji who walked. Otherwise I don't think I could have done it. Impossible. Not possible. When I think of it now I don't know how we reached Srinagar. Everywhere there were warnings – people will attack, there are people who don't want communal harmony. In some states the governments

were so scared that they sent the commandos along. I begged them saying why are these gunmen walking when we are walking for peace. But they said, 'No Sir we are responsible.'

And so the Walk went on. I'm not going to talk too much. As I said earlier - my Walk is my Talk.

So this was the Walk. It took us to so many states, 11 states, 16 months, 500 days almost. Till Karnataka and Kerala, I spoke Malayalam. In Tamil Nadu I spoke in Tamil. In Karnataka I could not speak in Kannada, so I started talking in Hindi because in rural areas people said, please talk in Hindi. So it went on and on till Srinagar. Now I have to brush up my English.

Actually what I want to tell you is that, the essence is that, there is no country in the world which has 26 languages, 150 dialects, so many religions and among them so many sampradayas. And yet generally, this is the impression I got, we met more than 15-20 lac people, we still think that we are One.

So many streams flowing into the ocean of Manav Ekta – we are One. But there are fissures here and there, things break and you feel sad. Your heart breaks when people say – I belong to this religion and you belong to that.

So this was the Walk. Not so much as a cure but a prevention. It was a preventive walk. We said, let's find an inoculation by which at least the future generations are safe. And it is the youth who are responsible for unity, integrity and oneness of this country. It's the youth! We might have committed mistakes - our hair is grey. Believe me my hair is grey but I am not old. (laugh)

Believe me friends the walk has not ended. The walk has just begun. Apart from the fact that another one and a half, two years we will probably walk into the North east. Before the walk we went to meet Dr Abdul Kalam, a wonderful man. He said, you have left out the North East. I said Sir yes because already this walk is going to take us 16 months. If we go to the North East and this walk becomes longer probably I might get a divorce notice from my wife. (laugh)

And now this walk is over. The next walk will certainly begin. This was from K to K, Kanyakumari to Kashmir. And I'm convinced that it did have some impact. At least we have sowed the seeds of harmony. Now the seeds that have been sown have

to be nurtured. And that nurturing is not in my hands, it's in your hands. So we wish to meet you all at some point and discuss how to take this further.

I'm not saying the Manav Ekta Mission or Satsang Foundation should do this. The idea is that between people who are doing good work there should be no competition. If there is a competition like that then nothing works, it is just a competition. Akshara foundation is doing work. Why can't we join them and help them out? Why should we say that it has to be done only by us? this is also division. So I'm saying let's put our heads together, all of you, you may be having your own little ways of working this out and see how to bring about a change to follow up this Walk.

And the next Walk will probably be, this was from K to K, from Madanapalle to Mizoram. Dr Kalam said if you go to the North East I will also come with you. Unfortunately, he is no more. And it is very interesting that he passed away in the North East. Thinking about that we should not give up this Walk.

Apart from that we are going to call all the coordinators together, have a brain storming session and decide how in local areas...others can do the walk. If there is a small communal problem coming, go out and walk. This should spread as a movement. I'll come with you wherever you want me to come. And there are a few schemes we want to work out. We will try and work them out soon.

I especially thank every one of you and every one of our coordinators. Special thanks to Dr Venkataramana who got an ambulance, medicines, drivers, staff, everything for us from the BGS Global Hospital right from Kanyakumari to Srinagar. And for all who helped us and who could not walk with us but with your minds encouraged us on to this Walk. I thank you all.

Before I conclude I want to tell you how this Walk became a success and how I at the age of 68 was able to walk. Believe me my mind is as young as the youngest of you here. And this is mainly because I bear no enmity towards anybody. No one. And also because I practiced yoga from the age of 10 and I have continued it till today. So I'm again saying please practice yoga, control your diet. Don't take things which are not good for you. And be kind to people. Kindness and having no enmity towards

others actually increases your strength and energy. Because then God is kind to us. I also want to tell you about this Walk, how it was achieved - not because of me. The moment I come into the picture everything crumbles. And I want to quote a story which I keep on repeating everywhere I go. The source is Swami Shivacharya of Taralabalu Mutt, who told us this story when we were staying at the Mutt for 2 days. The story is about a very expert sculptor who went to a temple to make an idol and the priest in the temple, who was an astrologer, told him, "I think in 3 months you are going to die." The sculptor said, "Please find a remedy for it." So the priest said, "In the next 3 months before the muhurta when you are going to die, make 5 or 6 replicas of yourself – go and stand with them when the yamdootas come. They won't be able to find out which is the original." He did exactly that and the yamdootas could not find him. They went back and told the Yamaraj. Yamaraj said don't worry, I will give you a technique because this fellow is going to die in another 3 months. Now after 3 months the sculptor did the same, he made the replicas and stood in the middle. But Yamaraj had instructed them properly – he said after all he is a human being. There is one quality of a human being – take advantage of that. Stand there and say," Ah what wonderful sculptures, so nice, the hair looks so original, the skin looks like actual". This man heard it for one minute, after that he could not resist it and he said, "I made it". And he was caught!

So we walked, all of us. This Walk of Hope I think happened because we didn't say we did it. All of us did it. Everybody did it. Everyone who joined this walk is responsible - not this person. Well I might have ignited this.

Also to tell you that the Walk has spread not only in India but across continents. It has so happened that in 2017, end of March we have been invited to come and have a walk for peace in Berlin, Berne and Zurich and people, friends are working for it. Those who are willing to come are welcome but there are local people who are walking also.

I don't want to say anything more. Thank you very much. Namaskar. Sat Sri Akal. Salaam.

Walk of Hope, the padyatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir led by Sri M was concluded at Srinagar on 29th April 2016. The Yatra travelled through 11 states and covered 7415 kms in 474 days. It has touched Lakhs of people along the way, spreading the message of peace and harmony.

The Walk went through many places of historical and spiritual significance. The Yatra visited all places of worship along the way be it a temple, mosque, dar-gah, gurudwara or church. They visited schools, colleges and other educational

institutions where Sri M spoke to youth about his mission of uniting the country in spite of its diversity. They also visited institutions taking care of orphans, destitutes and aged. They ate with local people and stayed wherever they got place to stay. Public meetings where Sri M spoke to local people attracted great crowds. Everywhere people supported the cause wholeheartedly and walked along with the Yatra. But the most important aspect of the walk was how people from different communities, faiths, states, countries, back-

grounds and vocations came together in huge numbers and joined the walk wherever possible. Besides the 70 K to K (Kanyakumari to Kashmir) walkers there were hundreds of part time walkers who joined the walk from time to time, for as much time as they could spare. The walk united all of us with one goal and thought - that we are all one!

On 21st May 2016 a small ceremony was held at Bangalore to felicitate Sri M after the Walk. His message post the walk is, "Friends the Walk is not over. Believe me, it has just begun!"

Sri M's Message on the Essence of Walk of Hope

Bal Bharati School, 27th March, 2016

This is a great country. You cannot find a country like this one, anywhere else in the world. We have 23 or more languages. There are so many sub-dialects. Is there any other country that has so many religions? For thousands of years, whosoever came, has been welcomed with open arms and allowed to stay. Not just allowed to stay, but accepted wholeheartedly. Actually, I don't like the word, 'tolerance'. Tolerance means: 'I am good, the other fellow is not so good but it's okay, let him stay.' I would rather say, 'acceptance', which is when you accept someone on equal terms.

Look at this country – so varied and diverse. The man from the south speaks a different language. In Kerala, we speak Malayalam. If I speak, you may not understand. You speak in Hindi and you may not be understood in another part of the country. But all of us very proudly say we are Indians, right? We are very proud and happy to be Hindustanis. And yet, sometimes, little fissures raise their ugly heads. The unity is broken here and there. However, I must add that there hasn't been as much bloodshed since Independence as during Partition. I'm a post-Partition man, so I don't know what happened then. However, generally, we live together in peace and harmony whatever be our names, whatever be our ideologies. This

breaking is happening more often now. And seeing innocent people being killed, murdered, and burnt, sometimes for no reason, is disturbing. This is all done in the name of religion, in the name of ideologies and politics. I'm saying 'in the name of' deliberately, because, these words are used as a façade. No religion asks you to kill your neighbor.

So, I decided that I would walk from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, talk to people, and say to whoever is ready to listen, "Please understand that first and foremost, we are all human beings. You may be Amar, Akbar or Anthony, it doesn't matter, but we are all human beings. And the essence of all religions teaches you this". Secondly, we are citizens of this great country, which looks at everyone equally. This great land for which Mahatma Gandhi fasted till people thought he might die of starvation. When we have been given such a wonderful treasure in our hands, why won't we keep it together? Why would we break it? Why would we throw it to the dogs?"

So, with this in mind, I told a close friend of mine, that I plan to walk from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. I got a very surprising answer. He said, "I'm also walking with you". Soon, within a year or two, many people gathered – cutting across religions, communities, states, languages and polit-

ical affiliations – and said, "Let's do it".

Thus started the Walk of Hope.

Now we have reached Delhi after 5800 kms. We have met lakhs of human beings along the way. We've gone to small villages where the population is no more than a thousand and have had wonderful satsangs under the Peepal tree in the evening. We've gone to villages where there are only five Muslim families or just a few Hindu families living among the Muslims. Believe me, the oneness of the nation still stands. Sometimes, when I speak to them, they say, "Unfortunately, it breaks sometimes". Why does this happen? They say there are reasons that have nothing to do with religion, caste or community. One of the Pradhans in the village told me, "If you look closely, you'll know that these things happen because of some vested interests". When I meet a large group, with a majority of Hindus, I talk to them about the Gita and I remind them that even though the Gita is written in Sanskrit – for that was the language of the times – it is a universal text. It doesn't treat anybody as different. It talks of human beings.

Now, from the Gita, I'd like to mention that the 12th Chapter is called Bhakti Yoga. People think Bhakti is meant for uneducated people who have no understanding of Vedanta. That is not true. Bhakti is the essence of one's spiritual practice.

Without bhakti, however much 'pranayama' you practice, or however much you have understood by reading thousands of books, it is of no use, because feeling is the most important part of the human system. Love, compassion and bhakti are the highest expressions of this.

In that chapter called Bhakti Yoga, Arjuna asks Krishna "Who do you think is the greatest of human beings, a great yogi or a great Bhakta?" Krishna says, "I consider 'Yah Bhakta Samay Priya', 'my dearest Bhakta', to be one who is 'Sarva Bhoota Hite Rataha' – the one who thinks of the welfare of all beings". It is a very good definition, if only we could follow this. There's no point in doing lip service to the Gita. If only you could put this into practice, then you would be a part of the 'Walk of Hope'. Can we, with love and affection, embrace everybody? Can we look after the welfare of all human beings and treat them as our own?

When two Muslims meet each other, they say, 'Salaam Alaikum'. This means, 'May the peace of the Lord be upon you'. The

reply to this is, 'May it be on you too'. See the irony of it. There is a line that divides two nations. One side says 'Salaam', in Arabic, which means peace. The neighbor says 'Shalom' in Hebrew which also means peace and yet, what do they do to each other?

Of course, we cannot go there now, but we can put our own house in order and perhaps set an example.

So, these are some of the reasons why we started this Walk. Like Jesus Christ said in the Bible, 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God'.

So, peace is the essence. After every talk, satsang, or Puja, we say, 'Om shanti, shanti, shanti'. When you go to a temple and get Prasad, what does it signify? Yes, it is nice and tasty. But 'Prasad' in the Sanskrit dictionary means peace- prasadam.

How are we going to live in peace, if we divide ourselves on the basis of language, religion, caste, creed or community? And that too, in this nation, where 3000 years ago, the Rig Veda said, 'Ekam Sat Vipra Bahuda Vadanti' – there is but one truth:

the wise may call it by different names. I do not consider myself as one who belongs to any religion in particular. But if religion is to do with the good of humanity, with finding the truth for yourself individually and not imposing your views on somebody else, I belong to that religion. So, having seen all this and feeling saddened by the state of affairs, we decided to embark on this Walk. I am glad to say that so far, the response we have received shows that most Indian citizens really want to live in unity and peace.

I keep saying, especially to the young, "You are the future of this country". It is possible that we might have committed mistakes, but the destiny of this nation is in your hands. So, we are sowing the seeds of living together in peace and harmony and of 'Manav Ekta', in the hearts of the young. But then, when you sow a seed, it doesn't sprout into a tree the next day. It takes time. The responsibility for nurturing these seeds is with us parents and teachers. We should nurture the seeds.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti!

Satsang Vidyalaya

*by Sunanda Ali,
Principal, The Peepal Grove School*

Dear friends,
Thank you for your donation to the Satsang Vidyalaya. Your donation will help to meet the needs of about 200 children whom we take at our school as per the vision of the Founder, Sri M.

Satsang Vidyalaya was founded in the year 1999 to provide free education to underprivileged children, especially from the 'Sugali' community who stay close to the school. (The Sugali community, notified as a 'Scheduled Tribe' is a backward community, most of its members suffering from lack of steady employment, poverty, poor educational levels, and in general poor health). From nine students in the beginning, we have grown to 164 students and next year we hope to grow to 200. The school has eighteen qualified, ex-

perienced and dedicated teachers who train the students in various subjects and co-curricular activities. The school also has a computer lab with internet facility, a well stocked library, a science lab and a games field.

The school also provides a nutritious mid day meal every day.

Two batches of sixteen students have written the SSC examination and the school is one of the very few schools in Chittoor district to have got 100 per cent results in the school leaving examination.

We believe that the teachers in the school are its main strength and resource and we are committed to their ongoing professional development. A few of them had been sent to the British Council for a course in teaching, and all the teachers go (once a week) to The Peepal Grove School

for extra inputs and training.

On the whole, the school is doing well, but we see many areas where we would like further development. A better library, more games equipment, more laboratory equipment, more workshops and study tours for teachers and more regular educational excursions for children are some of the areas where we need to pump in additional resources.

As you know, providing education to children from poor families (many of whom are first generation learners) is a very difficult, demanding exercise and we are trying our best.

Your generous support will make it possible for our organisation to grow and develop further so that our students become strong, independent individuals able to contribute to society.

Asha Yatra

*Published in The Speaking Tree,
New Delhi, March 27th, 2016*

Sri M's Walk of Hope has inspired scores of people to join his cause and trek with him for at least a few days. One such participant, Anjali Hazarika, shares her experience.

Spiritual master, social reformer and educationist Sri M's Walk of Hope, the padayatra he initiated to promote peace and harmony, was flagged off on January 12, 2015 — the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, who advocated interfaith harmony — from Kanyakumari. The yatra has covered 6,000 kms in 400 days and passed through the Capital before continuing towards Kashmir.

Accompanied by a core group of 70 people who are committed to walking with Sri M from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, the project seeks to provide answers to questions of all those anxious about the growing discord, disharmony, conflict and violence in the world. They ask, "What is my responsibility as a human being? Can these random acts of violence be replaced by random or sustained acts of kindness and active peace initiatives?"

An invitation to join the walk is also an invitation to help find answers to these troubling questions. Sri M is only too aware that the cultural marrow of our country has always been inclusive, liberal and humane. What unifies us as a people is more fundamental than what separates us. Diversity is our collective strength. These principles must be nurtured. Sri Ramakrishna, Guru Nanak, Kabir and others like them worked tirelessly to promote the concept of unity in diversity.

Unsurprisingly, the Asha Yatra — Walk of Hope — instantly touches people wherever it goes. From fruit and vegetable

vendors, auto rickshaw drivers and university professors to industrialists, religious and political leaders across party lines, all are drawn to it. So too for age groups that range from children and youth to the middle-aged and the elderly. Clearly, the cause and purpose of the padayatra is close to peoples' hearts, as it establishes an instant connection, rekindling their hopes and dreams of a united and peaceful India.

Joining in as a part-time participant, I could only walk in five of the eight states so far, that too for five days. Despite changing weather conditions — be it heat, cold, rains, dust and smoke — the grace of Sri M protects the padayatris from exigencies. Despite the 18-20 km trek undertaken on a typical day, any fatigue we feel is minimal, with no after-effects. While the physical walk is visible, the baby steps people are taking on their inner journey is not so easily visible. As the Walk of Hope passes through many locations in different states of India, Sri M and the padayatris, along with locals who join in, visit shrines of all faiths. The group also visits schools and colleges along the way, interacting with students and inspiring them just as the young ones, too, inspire the trekkers. The walk is more about changing the individual and spreading the torch of hope from one individual to another in a chain response. The Asha Yatra is to culminate in Srinagar, Kashmir in May 2016. But that's not the end, for yatris will walk on, treading the inner path, sharing their experienc-

es, and passing on the torch of awareness and hope. Some people who watch the Walk of Hope from a distance or from the sidelines often ask, even before the group led by Sri M has reached their final destination, "Has the walk produced any results? Has the change become apparent?" The answer lies in the question itself. Without undying faith in human potential and the personal experience of the goodness of human spirit, the Walk of Hope could not have been undertaken by Sri M. However we need to recognise the fact that lifelong conditioning, old mindsets, prejudices and habits do not change overnight. Change takes time, years, perhaps even several generations. Assumptions about people only change one person at a time. Change also requires changing ideas, images and perspectives about oneself first and then about others. It is all about changing one's consciousness. In fact, that would be the first step.

It is like planting trees for future generations. We may not be able to see them grow or flower in our own lifetime. Just as our forefathers who have planted trees for us, but have not been able to eat the fruit of their labour in their lifetime. But it is like following the footsteps of our elders with the same trust in the future and the limitless possibilities it holds.

That, alone, is good enough reason.



The Story of da

20th February, 2016. Shani

Lajpat R

I joined the Walk of Hope only for a few days, with just a day in Delhi. In retrospect, I missed out on a lot of fun. However, I wish to share the story of the day I did manage to walk in Delhi. That day, the walk started at IIT Delhi and moved through Green Park towards AIIMS and beyond. At Green Park, within a distance of a couple of kilometers, there is a Church, a Mosque and a Gurudwara. All three lie within walking distance of each other.

What I remember of the Church visit is that when we arrived, the majority of the padyatris went inside, leaving their chappals outside. This is not the custom in Churches, but a place of worship is always a sacred place in the Indian psyche. After a brief while, we moved to the Mosque.

I had been deputed to maintain the liaison with the Maulvi Saheb at the Mosque, which also houses a residential Madrasa. I made a couple of trips, prior to the Walk, to get to know the Maulvi Saheb. I think these were my only visits to a Mosque/Madrasa in all my life until then.

I think there was a bit of skepticism and some fear of the unknown from both sides in the first few meetings and we were not very sure of the kind of welcome Sri M and the Walk would receive. However,

that day, the Maulvi Saheb made adequate preparations, welcomed all the padyatris and even invited Sri M and the padyatris for tea after Sri M's brief speech.

Here, I'd also like to share an excerpt from the Walk of Hope Journal's entry for the day, "In probably one of the warmest welcomes accorded to the Yatris at a religious institution, the Maulvi said prayers for the success of the Yatra. He had tears in his eyes as he said that all humans are one, and are friends without any animosity towards each other. Sri M recited a prayer in sonorous Arabic and thanked everyone at the mosque for the grand welcome. The Maulvi gently persuaded everyone to have tea before leaving, telling them that it will be proof that they are leaving the Masjid with their hearts filled with sweetness."

Some students and teachers from the Madrasa, along with the Maulvi Sahab joined the Walk and when we reached the next stop, a Gurudwara, which was within walking distance, Sri M paused outside for a while, until Maulvi Sahab joined him and then both of them together led the group into the Gurudwara.

I think this was perhaps one of Maulvi Sahab's first visits to the Gurudwara and when the 'shabad kirtan' started he was quite surprised to hear one of Kabir's beautiful hymns, 'Aval Allah Noor

Upaaya, Kudrat Ke Sab bande' which had some Urdu words in it. Sri M explained the hymn to him. I think Maulvi Sahab's exact words were, "I thought this was from the Islamic scriptures!"

And this is where I'd like to end the story. I guess a taboo within our own religious communities or some strange sense of fear of the 'other', often stops us from knowing institutions of different faiths even if they are right next-door. But once we take that leap, similarities between all faiths surprise us and leave us with a deep sense of warmth.

I remember the young Madrasa kids with kurta-pyjamas and caps jumping around the Walk from their Madrasa to the Gurudwara, I don't think anyone saw anything but the innocence of their laughter. Then why does the distance of a few hundred metres between institutions of two different faiths appear so big in our day-to-day lives?

It is perhaps this distance, which the Walk and Sri M have successfully decreased wherever they have walked. And may this distance continue to decrease until our hearts unite with the same divinity, which binds us all.

Amen. Amin. Aum.

Baba Murad Shah ki Dargah

30th March, 2016

On 30th March 2016, the walk went through the narrow streets of Nakodar town and finally ended at one of the most interesting religious places visited during the walk. Baba Murad Shah ki Dargah is a unique place

– it is built like a Gurudwara and much of the insides resemble that of a mosque. This place is closely associated with three Sufi Saints, Baba Sher-e-Shahji, Baba Murad Shahji and Sai Laadi Shahji. The ambience inside was cool and sooth-

ing and all encompassing. The Dargah of Murad Shahji surprisingly had an idol of Ganesha among other things.

It is said that Baba Murad Shah was born in a wealthy Hindu family of Nakodar. He was named Vidya Sagar. He was educated

Day 405 in Delhi

*Mandir Gate (IIT Delhi) to
Sai Chowk*



and had a job in the electricity department in Delhi till the age of 24. He met his Murshid Baba Sher-e-Shahji at Nakodar and started serving him ardently. He was blessed by his Master with deep love and devotion and was eventually given the name 'Murad' which means 'the one who would fulfil people's desires'. That is why people come here to seek blessings and relief from their suffering. After Baba Murad Shahji, his disciple Sai

Laadi Shahji continued and prepared a beautiful darbar for his Master. Padyatris were told that Sai Laadi Shahji was an exemplary holy man who did not care a hoot about the rich and famous who tried to become friendly with him. He was very eclectic and permitted all forms of worship here. It was an amazing experience to visit this peaceful sanctuary of love and inter faith harmony. Interestingly, it seemed like a

Gurudwara as the langar tradition exists there and also like a temple with worship of Lord Ganesha being done within. The all inclusive and multi faceted spirit of India is alive in many such places which the Walk has visited during the last 15 months and which encourages us to say – there is hope!

Snippets

from the

Walk

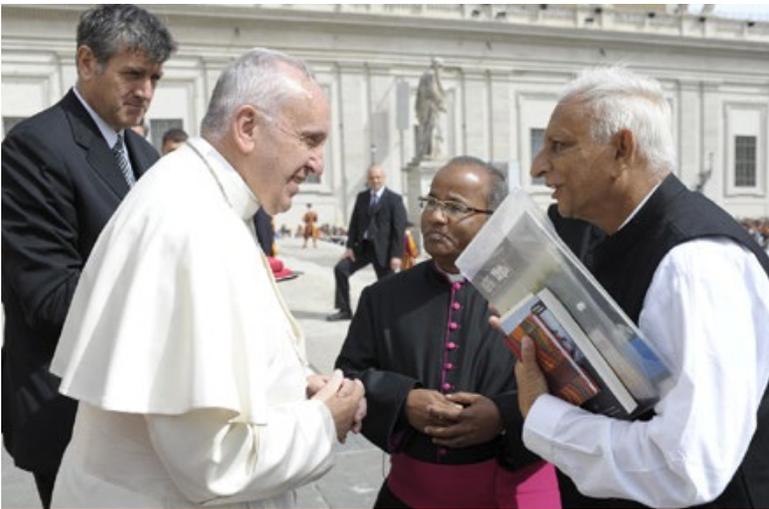


The Walk of Hope team at the Rashtrapati Bhawan with President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

● Visit to Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi.

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee met Sri M and the padyatris on 19th February 2016. He not only interacted with Sri M and the volunteers of 'Walk of Hope' but also lauded the team's effort to spread the message of peaceful coexistence that is central to India's age-old plurality.

Shri Mukherjee, during the 30-minute meeting, received the first draft of the Bengali translation of Sri M's autobiography 'Apprenticed to a Himalayan master - A Yogi's Autobiography'.



Sri M meets His Holiness, Pope Francis at the Vatican in Rome.

● The Vatican Visit

Sri M met with His Holiness, Pope Francis at Vatican in Rome on 13 April 2016. He informed the Pope about Walk of Hope 2015-16 and its mission of peace and harmony in India.

His Holiness wished the WOH all success and congratulated Sri M for undertaking the endeavour to ensure a strong and vibrant future for India. Pope Francis has consistently spoken for the global cause of interfaith harmony and respect for everyone's religion in the public sphere and, therefore, he extended his full encouragement and support for the padyatra.

Speaking about his meeting with His Holiness, Pope Francis, Sri M said:

"His Holiness, Pope Francis blessed the the Walk of Hope initiative which stands for the promotion of peace. Pope Francis mentioned in His day's address that this was the year of mercy, and added that every saint has a past and every sinner a future, and that Jesus came for the sinners and welcomed them as his own."



Nirahar Satyagraha at Varanasi

● Nirahar Satyagraha

Along its route, the Walk of Hope 2015-16, organized Nirahar Satyagrahas – a proclamation against terrorism and communal violence along with a call for interfaith dialogue, conflict resolution and prevention of religious clashes. The first Satyagraha was held at Pune on 5th July 2015, the second in Ahmedabad on 6th September 2015 while the third Satyagraha was held in Bhopal on 20th October 2015, the fourth at Varanasi on 18th December 2015, and the fifth at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi on 24th & 25th February 2016. During these Satyagraha, Sri M and other participants observed a day long fast and spent the day in meditation and prayer for peace and harmony. Various prominent people participated in these showing their support for the cause.

The Varanasi Camp (15-20 Dec 2015)

The Walk of Hope had a 6 day camp at Varanasi from 15th to 20th December 2015. On these days, walks and programmes were held in various parts of the city such as Lahartara, the birth place of Sant Kabirdas, Kabir Choura Math where the Sant lived for a long time, Kashi Vishwanath temple, the Assi Ghat where river Assi merges into the Ganga, Tulsidas Ghat, Banaras Hindu University etc.

One of such walks bridged two of the most spiritually exalted places in India – Varanasi and Sarnath. Varanasi, famous for the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir, the bathing Ghats on the Ganga, scores of Shivalings, quaint little shrines of Deities, Manikarnika Ghat where the funeral pyres have been ablaze for the last 3000 years, the ultimate holy place for a Hindu; and Sarnath, probably the second most important Buddhist pilgrimage centres, where Buddha delivered his first sermon.

On their way to Sarnath, the yaatris walked along the meandering streets of Varanasi, lined by many heritage buildings and shrines. They visited the Gurudwara Badi Sangat, made famous by Guru Tej Bahadur and presence of the Ganga Kund within.

Sarnath is a treasure trove for the followers of Buddhism. The imposing brick structure i.e. Chaukhandi is where Buddha, after getting enlightenment, had a discussion with five of his former disciples. Then he held a sermon at the Deer Park.

The pontiff of Mahabodhi society who described each of the monuments to the group, lamented the damage caused by extremists to memorials of outstanding events in world history. He highlighted the relevance of Asha Yaatra's (Walk of Hope) message of peace and oneness in this context.

The show piece structure in the deer park is the Dhamek Stupa. It is a memorial of Buddha's sermon on dropping of desires, hearing which five of his disciples became 'arhants' or realised souls.

The Varanasi sojourn also included a Ganga Cleaning drive by the padyaatris along with the students of Banaras Hindu University at Rajendra Prasad Ghat. Sri M has emphasized the importance of cleaning our precious rivers and environment and he has himself participated in many of the cleanliness drives undertaken during the Walk.

Mr Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Advisor for Prevention of Genocide joined the Walk in Varanasi. Mr. Dieng participated in various programmes held in the city culminating in the International Summit on Peace and Harmony jointly organized by Banaras Hindu University, Manav Ekta Mission, UNESCO Chair for Peace and Malaviya Centre for Peace Research. Mr Adama Kieng lauded India's contribution over the years to World Peace and quoted the ancient Indian dictum 'Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu'. He also congratulated Sri M and his efforts towards world peace and universal brotherhood.

Sri M spoke regarding the significance of Varanasi during a satsang :

"If you are in Varanasi, definitely go to the temples. Come and see the sunrise at least once. Sit on the ghats and look at the river. Watch the boats going and see how life moves. If you are lucky, one day while watching the river flowing and the boat going and the sun rising, suddenly you'll realize that you are not different from that Kashi Vishwanath who is sitting there. You're the same..."



The International Summit on Peace and Harmony at Banaras Hindu University



River Ganga at Varanasi



Nirahar Satyagraha at Delhi

The Gurudwara Ber Sahib and Meeting Sant Seechewal

28th March, 2016

On 28th March 2016, the Walk took the padayatris through very sacred territory. The yatris visited a historic place called Sultanpur Lodhi in Punjab where Guru Nanak ji had stayed for over 14 years. The day started with a tree plantation drive under the stewardship of religious leader and environmentalist, Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal. It was a matter of great joy to the padayatris that the trees planted by them would form part of a garden in the park, adjacent to the Sultanpur Lodhi Railway Station. Sant Seechewal has amazing achievements to his credit, like the de-weeding and cleaning of the holy river Kali Bein, the effluent treatment and similar activities.

Guru Nanak's elder sister, Nanki was married to a family in Sultanpur. Being very close to his sister, he stayed with her for several years. At the behest of Nanki's husband, the Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi appointed Nanak as an accountant at the Nawab's store. The place where Guru Nanak forgot himself while distributing grains – as he reached the number 13 (terah) and went on distributing saying 'terah ,terah, terah' (a story oft repeated by Sri M) is also nearby. In a short while, the padayatris reached Gurudwara Ber Sahib. Ber Sahib is the place where Guru Nanak Dev ji used to meditate under a Ber tree after his morning ablution in the Kali Bein river. This Beri tree is still present in the Gurudwara, which is green and bears fruits. It is said that at this place Guru Nanak had direct communion with the Divine. One morning while doing his morning ablutions, Guru ji disappeared in the Bein and reappeared at a place 2 km away upstream aftr 3 days. The first

words he uttered were 'No one is Hindu. No one is Musalman'. The place, where he appeared, is the site of Gurudwara Santghat Sahib. The padayatris drank in the ambience of these highly sanctified spots in Sikhism, nay spirituality itself. There was a tangible peace and stillness in these quiet places sanctified by the great Guru himself.

Next, Sri M and the yatris visited the Seechewal Trust on the banks of Kali Bein. The yatris had a rare opportunity to see a video depicting the colossal work done by Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal in cleaning up the holy river of Kali Bein, and related environmental protection initiatives. The Sant seems to be a powerhouse – propelled by Guru Nanak's ideals and his own vision. He has been instrumental in reviving the 110 Kms long Kali Bein river which had been reduced to a garbage dump with its historical and religious significance long forgotten by the local people, It is people like Sant Seechewal who are the hope of this country and Walk of Hope yatris had a blessed time interacting with this great soul!

In Sant Seechewal's words : "People had illegally taken over the riverbed and it was difficult to free it from their clutches. But, with god's grace it was done. It was an incredible experience to resolve the issue of Kali Bein. Following that we can bring about a revolution by treating polluted water and use it for irrigation purposes. Polluted water has become a major problem not only for India but also for the entire world. However polluted water can bring prosperity if we treat it and use it for irrigation. We have proved this in village Seechewal and other nearby villages.

We have purified the polluted water and directed it to fields through water motors. We have learned a lot from this experience. We are facing water scarcity these days, as the ground water level has gone down. But, this can be changed. The flow of polluted water in free-flowing natural rivers has blocked the recharging process. If the flow of polluted water can be stopped to the streams, the water level will automatically improve. In India, when rains come we have floods, but when rains stop we face severe droughts. This is happening because the water is not recharging the earth. If the water is used to recharge properly, we will never face scarcity of water. And, water can be preserved for the coming generations.

Whatever work we have done in cleaning up the Kali Bein rivulet it is for the welfare of mankind. No other work can be more sacred than this. It is said in Gurbani (Guru's gospel) that it is better to save a creature, than to take bath in 68 holy places of pilgrimage. Nowadays, animals, birds and even water creatures are dying - and to protect them is the need of the hour. We are happy that we are devoting our time for their betterment. Water is water. Be it of Punjab's white Bein or Kali Bein, or be it of rivers like Satluj, Ganga, Yamuna and Godavari. Be it water in India or any other country - it is needed by everyone. We need water just like we need air to breathe. A wave has started from Punjab's Kali Bein rivulet and we want it to spread not only across India but also across the whole world. Environment is of prime concern these days. Efforts made at the Kali Bein have sent a message globally."

Upcoming Programmes

- Guru Purnima celebrations will be held on 19th July 2016 at The Satsang Foundation Campus, Madanapalle. For registration and enquiries please write to gurupurnimasatsang@gmail.com.
- Sri M will be in the US from 22nd September to 21st October 2016 where a few public meetings and events are scheduled. For more information please refer to the website, www.satsang-foundation.org.



Anna Hazare's address to Walk of Hope *padyatris*

July 13, 2015. Ralegan Siddhi

The Walk of Hope passed through Ralegan Siddhi on July 13th 2015 and met Anna Hazare who participated with the *padyatris* in the Walk. Anna Hazare addressed a gathering of about 300 people, including 150 *padyatris* of Walk of Hope in Ralegan Siddhi. Here are excerpts from his inspiring message to the *padyatris*:

My greetings to respected Sri M, brothers and sisters who are on the *padayatra*, and all others who are here. Sri M has set out with a very important message. He has set out on this *padayatra* from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. I have faith that this *padayatra* will have an effect on society. I feel that this message of peace, harmony and unity, with which Manav Ekta Mission has set out, is very relevant. Today, due to many reasons, mostly due to a few people, the unity of our country faces some difficul-

ties. I feel that, with this *padayatra*, these difficulties will be overcome. You have come here, to this small village, where the population is 2500. You have probably experienced the difficulties of living in a village. Facilities are not good here and we face many challenges.

Our India is a country of villages...until villages change, there will be no lasting change in the nation. Mahatma Gandhi used to say that to change the nation, one has to change villages and to change the villages, one has to change its people. Yes, there has been development – there has been a lot of change after Independence. Today we have roads, many tall buildings and buses to the villages. Constructing tall buildings is not real development. There is nothing wrong with tall buildings but if the buildings get tall, thinking should also be high. What

is happening? The buildings are getting taller and the thinking of people is getting lower. This is not real development. And, what sort of change? There should be people who think of their neighbours, of the village, of society, of India. So many years have passed since Independence but still there is a lack of such people. I feel that through the medium of Manav Ekta Mission, such people can be created. Why am I saying this to you? All of you are going with the message of peace and harmony from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. I have seen it in the pamphlet. You have other objectives too. You are talking about the environment. Today, people throughout the world are worried about the environment; what will happen to this nation and to the world? After Independence, we have been exploiting nature and humanity. We are using

more petrol, diesel and coal. And, then, we are dreaming of development. Mahatma Gandhi used to say that in the name of development if one exploits humanity and nature, one day there would be an unimaginable disaster. Today, we are experiencing this.

If the temperature goes up to 50 or 52 degrees, there will be no birds. I am telling you all this, because the work that we have done in Ralegaon Siddhi presents an idea to the country and to the world. Here, 40 years ago, there was no water to drink, people used to sleep on empty stomachs and walk 6 kms everyday to break rocks. No foreign funds have come, no money has come from industrialists and funding agencies. Without money and support, these people have come together and worked with nature.

They harvest the rainwater and use it to recharge ground water. The underground water table has increased. In this village, where there was no water for even one crop in 400 acres, we now have two crops every year in 1200 acres. We did not burn any fuel.

This little work we have done, shows that a different way of development is possible. If other villages get inspiration from this then, without exploiting nature or humanity, there will be development. There was a time when 80% of the people were hungry in this village. There were 40 alcohol breweries just so the people could feed themselves with the money earned. From such a village now, without any external support, 200 to 250 trucks of onion are exported every year and more than a crore

of rupees is coming in. This is our way. I read about the objective of environment in the pamphlet of Manav Ekta Mission. This is very relevant. In this village, there was less than 400 liters of milk produced every month. Now, 5000 liters of milk goes out every day. It has been 4 years since there was any rain. This is a drought-prone area. Despite that there is greenery here. The reason for this is soil conservation, water management and water conservation.

If you have to change society then talking and doing have to come together. Now, why do people listen to and believe in Sri M? This is because there is talk as well as action. There will be influence only from this. If we only talk and we don't do, then people listen to us and wonder, how this person who speaks so nicely, lives and eats. If there is even a little difference in word and action, there will be no influence. Words will only have weight, if the character of the one who is speaking these words is pure. Clear character, clear thinking and a life without stain!

Also a little bit of sacrifice. A little sacrifice is needed. Without sacrifice, nothing will happen. For thousands of years, it has been said in India that, for the welfare of the nation and society, someone has to sacrifice. You can see this in front of you. On a farm, you can see corn plants. Why are there so many? Because one grain has been put into the ground. If that happens, then we will see good things. Many grains wonder, "why go into the ground? I want to live a nice life of luxury". The grains that think like this are destroyed; the grains

that do not go into the ground go to the flourmill, are ground and become flour. This is not the fate of the grain that goes into the ground; it gives rise to a thousand other grains. Look at your family, 200 years ago. Does anyone remember anyone's name? Why? Because they went to the flour mill and got destroyed. And, what has happened to people such as Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave? They have not been destroyed. They still stand out in the millions they have given rise to.

This work that Sri M is doing – those that are with him – try to become such a grain. Look at Sri M; he has a family and also a family that is very big.

Sri M was telling me that people laugh at him, say many things about him. I told him that to do anything like this, you have to be mad. Not half mad, you have to be completely mad. Otherwise, it will not happen. We are not able to stand even a little bit of insult. We get frustrated easily. This is a big disease. I want to say that you are doing good work, please remember these things – clear character, clear thinking and a life without stain and the ability to 'drink' insults.

When the river is flooded and the trees do not bend, they go along with the flood and are destroyed. There is grass next to the river, it bows down and lives. What does not bow down is destroyed. Only that one that bows down has a heart that has life. Becoming angry is very easy; it is the mark of the ego. The quality of humility should be there. I will conclude now as I have spoken for quite some time now.

The Yoga of Walking

by a Satsangi

Since of Yoga,
Today we are talking and celebrating,
Let's put a thought together for the
Yoga of walking.
This Yoga of walking,
Has no roots in yoga sutras of Rishi Patanjali,
But in the mind of a contemporary mystic,
Who offers every step in this yoga of walking,
To his Guru,
As his shradhanjali.
Don't mistake,
This Yoga of walking as a mere footnote to
The Yoga of postures and breath ,

When a masters grace is received simply
Walking will fulfil the same goal of life and death
Traditional Yoga as we know it is a journey
to the self inside,
This Yoga of walking ,
Is a padyatra taken by walking outside ,
But ultimately it is to show us the sameness
Of that which permanently resides
Yoga of hata and kriya,
Will bring you in union of your own self,
This Yoga of walk ,
Is to bring your union with everyone else
(every religion) ,
Thereby showing your god can also be

found somewhere else (in other religion too)
Asanas, Hata and Kriya,
Will heal you from within,
This Yoga of walk,
Begins by healing our society of its extremist ills,
And that's how it intends to bring us to our peace within
By both means may all realise,
That only in oneness do we all live and cope,
For me,
Truly eye opening is this Yoga of Walk of Hope

