

Bhakti Maha Sangamam - The Tirupathi meet

Kamal Kumar Swamiji's name inspires and draws thousands of Hindus of all castes, specially the oppressed and downtrodden, the Lambadas and the most backward in Andhra Pradesh. This was evident when over 15,000 simple bhaktas joined him on the concluding lap of his Mahapadayatra that took 197 days, through 11 districts of Andhra Pradesh, a walkathon encompassing 5,255 kms of unimaginable terrain!

Swamiji, founder General Secretary of the Hindu Devalaya Parirakshana Samiti, A.P., began his second Mahapadayatra on the 6th of August 2008, from Sri Kurmam Mandir, Srikakulam District, and reached Tirupathi on the 14th of February 2009. The first Mahapadayatra, from Saraswati Mandir, Basara, to Tirupathi, covered 3,200 kms.

This time the canvass was much bigger. Each of the 11 districts now has a proper secretariat of the Hindu Devalaya Parirakshana Samiti, with members drawn from all castes. Each of the over 788 villages that Swamiji traversed is now charged with bhakti fervour. People's groups have been formed in each village to take care of their own Mandir affairs.

The most gratifying result of the Mahapadayatra was to bring awareness to common bhaktas in remote villages and disjointed Hindus in towns about the fate of Hindu Mandirs under Government control. The fiery and informative speeches of Kamal

Kumar Swamiji had the desired effect at each myriad stop, and the Tirupathi Maha Bhakti Sangamam meet had representatives from every village he passed through.

By the evening of the 15th of February, hundreds of bhaktas were pouring into Tirupathi. They were received and rested in six kalyana mandapams, and offered annadana with the respect due to a Hindu Atithi (guest).

The Grand Procession

The procession was grand and colourful. Over 15,000 bhaktas, each with saffron angavastram round the neck, men and women of all ages, some with infants, walked with a spring in their steps, led by Kamal Kumar Swamiji. Bhaktas dressed as Kali, Hanuman, Rama, Krishna... At every stop, they enacted tribal dance sequences of Mahishasuramardini, Asuravadha by the Devas, to the delight of onlookers lined on both sides of the roads.

The three kilometer-long procession enlivened the pilgrimage town. The tribal drummers were at their best, with beats reverberating in the air, long after they left. Slogans pierced the skies, calling for abolishment of the Endowment Department and returning Mandirs to Hindus for proper management, for providing Nitya Dhoop,

Deep, Nivedanam to our Gods and Goddesses.

The procession took more than four hours to reach the Municipal School Grounds, the venue for the Maha Bhakti Sangamam. The colourful pandals and shamianas offered relief from the scorching February sun. Hospitality flowed, and the public meeting which began at 1 p.m. went on till 6.30 p.m. Dr. Subramanian Swamy, former Union Minister, presided over the Maha Bhakti Sangamam. Over 30 district functionaries of the Hindu Devalaya Parirakshana Samiti were invited to share the dais. Sri M. Subramaniam Yadav, Vice President of the Hindu Devalaya Parirakshana Samiti (HDPS) received the dignitaries and Bhaktas and gave a brief summary of Swami Kamal Kumarji's second Mahapadayatra.

Sri Yelamanchi Prasad, Chairman, Global Hindu Heritage Foundation, USA cited examples of discrimination against Hindus in India and the appeasement of minorities. He gave a clarion call for the Government to "Quit Mandirs" and to leave Hindu Mandir affairs to Bhaktas.

Smt Lakshmi Parvati, wife of late Shri N.T. Rama Rao and President of NTR Telugu Desam spoke of the spiritual vastness of Sanatana Dharma and the importance of Mandirs in our Dharma. She recalled how her late husband had always worked for the cause of improving the conditions of the Hindu Mandirs.

Sri Bandaru Dattatreya, President, AP State unit of BJP, lambasted Chief Minister Samuel

Reddy for not keeping his word of rebuilding the 1000 Pillared Mandap at Tirumala. He reminded the public that Mr. Chandrababu Naidu lost the election because he allowed the ancient Mandapam to be brought down during his regime. He warned a similar fate awaited the present government. He accused the regime of allowing 65000 acres of Mandir lands in AP to slip silently into private hands.

Dr. Subramanian Swamy said that we were not consolidating as a Hindu vote bank, unlike the minorities, who get away with everything with just this weapon in hand. He briefed the cheering audience about his efforts through the courts to prevent the destruction of the Ram Setu by the Sonia-led UPA. While this government could not take an alternate alignment to protect the Ram Setu, it had no qualms in changing the entire alignment of a railway line in the Konkan area to protect a Church.

Dr. Swamy gave statistics of how the numbers of Mandirs are allowed to dwindle while in the same period, churches and mosques have increased exponentially, dotting the Andhra landscape under the Christian YSR regime. There are 42 mosques in Ayodhya where no Muslim offers prayers, while they fight for Babri where no prayers were offered for generations.

He said that even in Saudi Arabia they bring down mosques obstructing road projects, and a mosque can be relocated anywhere as the sanctity is of the Namaz, not the building. In contrast, the Mandirs are sacred as Prana Pratistha of the Vighraha and consecration is done as per the Agamas.

Dr Swamy averred that he would be impleading himself in the Chidambaram Nataraja Mandir case on behalf of the Dikshitaras and would take the Ayodhya case to the Supreme Court. He assured the public that very soon restrictions on offering pujas to Sri Rama would be removed and bhaktas will have free darshan. He lamented that while it was Sri Krishna who was born in Kamsa's jail, the present regime has put Rama behind bars in Ayodhya.

Sri Datta Vijayananda Teerdha Swamiji of Avadhuta Datta Peetham, Mysore, spoke out against religious conversions by Christian missionaries. He urged the Centre to enact an effective anti-conversion law. Swamiji condemned the Government for having Hindu Mandirs under its control and not taking proper care of them, and demanded the abolition of the Endowment Department. He stressed the need to preserve Hindu Temples and Hindu Dharma, and encouraged Hindus to follow its rich and eternal values. He said Hindu temples must be freed from government control and all Hindus should look at serving the needs of the poor.

Sri Raghunadhacharya of Ashtalakshmi Peetham criticized government interference in Hindu Mandir affairs and offered His blessings and support to the Bhagiratha task undertaken by Kamal Kumar Swamiji.

Sri Ganjam Prabhakaracharyulu of Vaikanasa Peetham highlighted the plight of poor archakas and urged the government to immediately offer succor to them.

Sri Dusserla Satyanarayana, President of the Telengana Jala Sadhana which was

instrumental in making water available through a series of agitations in the arid Telangana region, offered unstinted support to the movement.

Sri Bhanumurthi of Telangana Archaka Samajam spoke of the plight of the poor archakas and how successive governments have neglected this important segment of the Hindu Samaj.

Veda Bharati founder, Sri Neralla Avadhani's book in Telugu, "Hindu Aalayalaku Swatantra Prativarthi" was released by Kamal Kumar Swamiji and the first copy was received by Dr. Subramanian Swamy.

Dr. Prakasarao Velagapudi, President of Global Hindu Heritage Foundation (GHHF) spoke of its formation and mission and NRI support to the cause of freeing Temples from government control. He asked all Hindus to attend the temples and participate in the movement to repeal the Endowment Act.

Sri Kamal Kumar Swamiji demanded that government cease mismanaging Hindu Mandir affairs. He called for the abolishment of the Hindu Endowment Department. Shouts of Jai Shriram, Kamal Kumar Swamiji ki Jai pierced the air. People cheered every word he spoke. He spoke about his experiences during the Mahapadayatra, telling the people that he drew inspiration from their bhakti and commitment to the Mandir cause. His powerful oratory kept the people engrossed.

Sri Venkatnarayanan, Secretary, Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, Sri Bhanu Prakash

Reddy, President BJP (Youth), AP, Anita Sakuru, Vice President, HDPS and Ajay Sakuru, Sri Vinay Bopanna, Dr TRN Rao participated in the Bhakti Maha Sangamam.

End of meeting – Onward march to Tirumala

It was a sight that gladdened the heart. The colourful group of 15,000 headed by Kamal Kumar Swamiji left the Municipal Grounds to trek the Sacred Seven Hills. Unlike last time, they were not stopped when each one carried a Bhagva in hand. People vied with each other to touch the feet of Swamiji and to seek his blessings.

What was most gratifying was that the TTD choultries housed all of them at Tirumala and the darshan of Sri Balaji was arranged without a hitch. The TTD came forward to provide annadanam to all of them until the day they left the Sacred Hills after darshan. For over 90% of them, this was their first darshan of Sri Venkateshwara.

The Good News comes the very next day

The meeting took place on Monday, 16 February 2009. The very next day the AP Government bowed to our requests and passed a G.O. sanctioning a sum of Rs.2500/month towards Dhoop, Deepa, Neivedyam of 4000 inactive Mandirs, in addition to sanctioning a sum of Rs. 1,500/month to the archakas of these Mandirs.

This is just the beginning. Kamal Kumar Swamiji promised to continue his programme of awakening Hindu Bhaktas till the Mandirs are back under the rightful control of the Hindu Samaj.

Follow Up

With District-wise office bearers of HDPS in place, following immediate tasks are being planned:

- 1] Identifying a team of committed Hindu advocates and attaching them to each of these district units.
- 2] Engaging the Government in legal battles to restore Mandir lands illegally occupied in these areas, to the respective Mandirs, through the legal wing of the HDPS.
- 3] Identifying Hindu workers (full time) for each District Units to keep up the momentum.
- 4] Proper selection and utilization of archaka manpower in the 4000 Mandirs sanctioned by the recent GO of Government of AP.

There is still a long way to go. But with a committed Swamiji like Sri Kamal Kumar Swamiji and the thousands of Hindu Bhaktas whom he was able to inspire with his two Mahapadayatras, there is no doubt we will continue to achieve major victories in our struggle.

Appeal

Kamal Kumar Swamiji appeals to all Hindus to support this noble cause and join in the future programmes against the establishment to reach our goal – “Mana Devalayalani Maname Kaapadukuntam” (We will protect our Mandirs).

S V Badri
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