

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF RECENT OMKARESHWAR TRIP. Raj Supe (Kinkar Vishwashreyananda)

We were 27 of us to visit Maharaj. I had fixed with Maharaj for diksha for 16, the rest came for darshan.

It was raining heavily right from the time we got off the train at Khandwa and took a cab for Omkareshwar.

We heard announcements continuously being bombarded from the loud speaker until 1 in the night. Once again the same announcements began at four in the morning.

We realised these spelt danger of being near a flooding river. Yatris were being warned not to go close to the river, vendors were asked to vacate the pathways, the new visitors were asked to return.

The river was in spate. Omkareshwar is quite something else this time. Narmada was swelling fiercely and dangerously in her seams. The straight path to our ashram as also ghat of twenty steps had gone under water. We had to trek from the mountain to get there. Umesh, the priest, guided us through the steps which rise from the Omkareshwar temple and girdling the old palace of Raja of Mandhata, lead through the parikrama route to our ashram.

It was raining torrentially like never before and with all the gates of the newly constructed Indira Sagar dam open, there was a veritable deluge.

We could not buy enough umbrellas, so we huddled beneath the simple plastic rainsheet that the villagers use. Poncho? But here was another danger. Big black-faced monkeys...the langurs were all over and snatched a few rainsheets. We watched our steps through the slippery path.

In the ashram though, everything was tranquil.

Vitthal Ramanuj Maharaj was busy writing a sequel to The Eternal Festival. I was told he has been writing for 6 hours daily and hopes to complete the book in two months.

Maharaj has lost some weight, he looked frail but is healthy. He sang Naam for a while and gave diksha mantras. With his usual compassion, he made everyone comfortable. Looking at the fierce river, he said, "Supe Bhai, Ma ka ye roop iss baar dekhane ko mil rahaa hai."

Sometime in the fifties the water levels had gone even higher. Narmada climbed up all the steps of the ashram, entered the Shiva temple, touched Shiva (offered pranaam, according to Maharaj) and retreated.

He read out pages from the spiritual diary of Param Gurudeva Sitaramdas Omkarnath. Therein Thakur had sung the glories of the mantra 'Sadanandamayi Ma Karunamaya Guru'. I promised Vitthal Maharaj, I would bring out a small book of Thakur's notes in Omkareshwar soon.

Talks were also on about relaunching Thakur's periodical "Paramananda".

With Shri Namanandaji of Ujjain as the Chief Editor and Mukesh Chaturvedi as the Publisher, work on Paramananda is in full swing. A great initiative!

There's also another good news. Thakur's ashram in Ujjain is a possibility and the dream will be realised pretty soon. All the work of Omkarnath Mission as well as Paramananda could then be done from the new site.

With the report of all these new initiatives and Vitthal Maharaj's blessings, we returned.

The Narmada water had receded in the evening though the path was still under water.

Drift wood that came along floating with the gushing current was being gathered by the townsfolk.

The following morning the path cleared.

Vitthal Maharaj has gone into mauna from Ganesh Chaturthi.
