

9. DHARMAKSHETRA AS A TIRTH

Bhagawan has equated Dharmakshetra with the sacred shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath. He visited Badrinath over 40 years back and brought back its ancient glory. If you visit these two pilgrimage centres in the lap of the Himalayas, you will find a tremendous contrast between the two.

Kedarnath shrine (11750 ft. above m.s.l.) with the backdrop of Kedardome, has a unique ambience which envelopes you with the feeling of Vairagya, detachment. From here the Pandavas took the route to body renunciation. From here, after his life's mission was fulfilled, Adi Shankara marched towards his heavenly abode. The feeling of detachment and renunciation that overcomes you cannot be described; it has to be experienced.

Pilgrims are therefore advised to visit Badrinath (10,500 ft. above msl) after the pilgrimage to Kedarnath. In Badrinath worldly affairs submerge you. Material attractions (Maya) are strong here. In the backdrop of Nara-Narayan peaks, Badrinath brings us back into Samsara, with emphasis on rites and rituals. Although the two shrines are only a few kilometers away as the crow flies, Kedarnath has to be reached after a walk of several kilometers; on the other hand, Badrinath is easily accessible by road.

Swami has often described Mumbai as the stomach of India. Prime needs of the body have to be met before the aspirations of the soul become overpowering. Swami wants us to experience both - Vairagya and materialism. What better place can there be than Dharmakshetra in the midst of the financial capital of India. Swami has said that both wings are needed by the bird when it soars high in the sky. The freedom of the sky is not for the timid; those who seek balance between worldly and spiritual life, Educare and Education, Artha & Kama with Dharma & Moksha, will find Dharmakshetra an ideal practice ground for Sadhana. As the Kathopanishad declairs, 'The path of Sadhana is like walking on a razor's edge.' Dharmakshetra is meant to provide an in depth experience and insight into practical spirituality. Swami expects from us 'Head in Forest, Hands in Society.'

Dharmakshetra as a Tirth Kshetra is an idea Bhagwan gave several years back. It is for all of us to understand and decide how we fulfill this Divine injunction and be worthy of His Grace. A Tirth is a holy place from where Divine vibrations constantly emanate. Those sacred vibrations touch the conscience of the individual who visits it with reverence. Thereby, the individual gets a sense of fulfilment, peace dawns, and it raises his or her level of 'Awareness'.

Life is a newspaper; read it in a casual manner headlines, a few columns which catch your fancy and throw it aside. Do not make it more important than that. Tomorrow, it is "waste paper".

Dharmakshetra is a holy place because it is Bhagawan's Abode. Here, over the past 36 years, He came and lived in Sathya Deep and charged it by powerful vibrations. Hence, the central place, the sanctum sanctorum from where these holy vibrations can be carried out is Sathya Deep. It is upto the individual Sadhaks (aspirants) to tune in with the Divine vibrations to bring about a quantum raise in personal Sadhana and consciousness. Dharmakshetra is a Divine Gift of the Lord to all those who come here.

Naturally, we have to lay down specific rules and regulations for the above purpose, and these should be strictly followed. Any sincere Sadhak can participate in this sacred endeavour; there is no high or low in class or caste, age or reputation.

Bhagawan Baba started the sathya Sai Vidya Mandir (school) here 35 years back. With the model of Prasanthi Nilayam in mind, the students have to be fully involved and equipped with the Divine life style, and encouraged to take over Dharmakshetra activities, especially in the Sathya Deep surroundings. This effort has began. Effort will be made to promote self-confidence in more and more students. An exposure in programmes of Meditation, Devotional Group Singing and Prayers, seva and cultural activities will give them self-satisfaction leading to self-sacrifice. In this process, parents are active participants. Thus the first priority would be to promote Sadhana of the Vidya Mandir students so that they are equipped to play an important role in future.

Another significant decision is to enrich the physical ambience of Dharmakshetra from the entrance gate to provide an environment of tranquility, peace, cheerfulness and quietness. As a pilgrimage centre, Dharmakshetra is already attracting regularly an increasing number of visitors. It is necessary that they experience the pull of divine vibrations visibly displayed through cleanliness, beauty and courtesy.

Always in the past, with the Blessing of Bhagwan, Dharmakshetra had symbolised the journey from I to We to Him; as one enters the gate, one becomes aware that good health is the first step to spirituality. The Sri Sathya Sai Medical Centre on the left near the gate is a symbol of this awareness. Further up the road, one comes face to face with the huge mural of the Sun God astride on the chariot pulled by seven horses. Sun is our immediate divine symbol, the creator of Prana in all of us.

You are all caskets of Divine Love; share it, spread it, express that love in acts of service, words of sympathy and acts of compassion.