

# 7 WEEK BHARAT YATRA

August 2023 – September 2023

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This Yatra for me was the King of all Yatras (*so far*) for the sole reason of the number of holy places I had visited and took darshan of. Below is a brief overview of the places we visited.

## Mayapur, West Bengal

Here we visited the ISKCON complex, TOVP, Yogapitha, Srivasa Angan, Advaita Bhavan, Gadhara Angan, Jaganath Temple, Navadwip, Jaganath Das Babji Samadhi, Gaur Kishor Das Babaji Bhajan Kutir, and Hari Har and had a snan (*swim*) in the Ganga and a boat ride.



Gatekeeper at entrance of TOVP



Yogapitha, tree under which Lord Chaitanya appeared in 1486AD



Temple of Hari Har (combined form of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva) near Mayapur



*Radha Kund in Mayapur*



*Ferry to take us from mainland Kolkata to Ganga Sagar where the Ganga meets the bay of Bengal*



*Bathing in Ganga Mai in Mayapur during a sunset and remembering the Golden Avtar.*



*The beach at Ganga Sagar where Ganga meets the ocean. Kapil Muni's ashram is near the beach. On Makar Sankranti a huge mela takes place here every year.*

## **Ganga Sagar (where Ganga Mata enters the Bay of Bengal sea)**

Gangasagar is a place of beauty as well as religious importance. Home to some of the most stunning beaches, it is famous for hosting the Gangasagar Mela, one of the most hallowed pilgrimages in the world. During the mela days, the island becomes a melting pot of culture and belief.

## **Puri, Jaganath Mandir**

The main place to visit in Puri is the Jaganath Mandir which was established the 10th century. Puri is famous for the Rath Yatra which attracts millions of devotees. It was the Lords blessings that we could visit Purshottam Kshetra (Puri) during the month of Purshottam.



Evening view of the Jagannath Temple taken from Grand Hotel opposite the temple



Ancient temple of Lord Narasimha located near the Gundica temple



Outside of the Gundica temple (this is his parents house) where Lord Jagannath stays for 1 week after Rathayatra.

We stayed in Puri for 5 days and other places we visited were Bhaktisidhanta birth place, Gaudiya Math, Narasimha temple, Gundica temple, Indradyumna tank, ISKCON, Haridas Samadhi, Tota Gopinath temple, Kashi Misra's house, Haridas Thakur samadhi, Gambhira, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house, Konark, Alarnath, Bhubaneswar



The group in Siddha Bakul, the place where Haridas Thakur's bhajan kutir is located



The beach outside our hotel in Puri. Lord Chaitanya bathed in the sea here.

## Konark Sun Temple



View of the sun temple at Konark. This is no longer operating as a temple .



View of a wheel on the structure of the temple representing the chariot of Surya dev



Alaranath, temple where Lord Chaintanya's body melted the stone when he paid obeisances

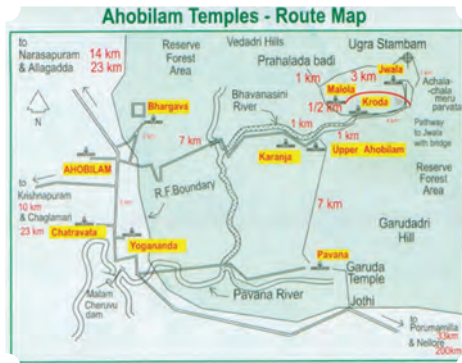
Next stop was Visakapatnam, for Simhachalan (famous and magnificent temple of Varaha Nrshimha)



The magnificent temple of Varaha Nrshimha

## Next was Ahobilam, the appearance place of Nrsihma Dev

Ahobilam is the place where Lord Vishnu in the form of Narasimha killed the Rakshasa Hiranyakashipu in order to save his devotee Prahlada. It is truly glorious holy place where there nine main temples of Narasimha and it is a place where devotees do not often get a chance to visit as it is so far of the beaten track.



Map of all the 9 temples of Narasimha Dev in Ahobilam



Jwala Nrsimha temple, which is the highest temple near the Ugra Stamba



View of Ugra Stambha which is the pillar that Lord Narasimha came out of to kill Hiranyakasipu

We stayed for 2 days in Ahobilam trekking upper Ahobilam 1 day and lower Ahobilam the 2nd day. This was a very exciting part of the Yatra as we had to walk up and down mountains full of natural beauty like forests, water falls and streams. As mysterious is Narasimha Dev Bhagavan is so too is this Ahobilam Dham



Devotees trekking in Upper Ahobilam.

## Next stop was Tirupati the home of the famous Balaji Temple, a 6 hour car journey from Ahobilam.

The city is home to the important shrine of Tirumala Venkateshwara Temple and other historic temples. It is one of the eight Swayam vyakta kshetras (Self-Manifested Temples) dedicated to Vishnu.

### Balaji Temple, Tirupati



View of the Balaji temple in Tirupati and murti of Balaji

## Kanchipuram

From Tirupati we travelled to Kanchipuram, famous for Kamakshi Amman Temple, Kailasanatha Temple and Ekambareswarar Temple

Known as the City of Thousand Temples, Kanchipuram is known for its temple architectures, 1000-pillared halls, huge temple towers and silk saris.



Outside view of the temple dedicated. The Kanchi Kailasanathar temple is the oldest structure in Kanchipuram dedicated to Lord Shiva. The Shiva lingam in this temple is 10 feet high.

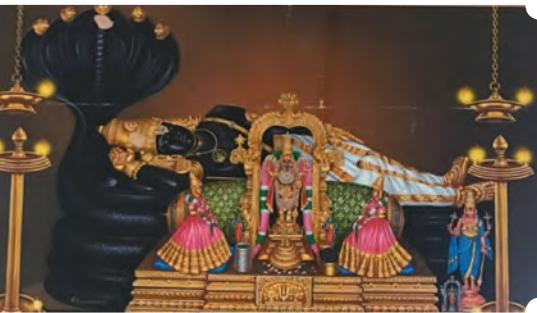
## Trichy

Trichy is near famous Srirangam temple, known for being home to the vast Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple, one of the largest in India with 81 shrines spanning 63 hectares



*Outside view of the Ranganath Swamy temple in Srirangam*

Huge murti of Maha Vishnu lying on Anant Sesa. This murti has to be viewed through 3 different windows to see the head, the navel and the feet of Maha Vishnu.



*Ranganath Swamy*

## Rameswaram

We travelled to Rameswaram, famous for Sri Ramanathaswamy Temple (with 18 wells with waters from different rivers). Rameswaram is associated with Lord Rama, who left the Bharatiya mainland to rescue his wife, Goddess Sita, from the clutches of Ravana, who had taken her to Sri Lanka. A stone's throw from Rameswaram lies Dhanushkodi that has been endowed with magical natural beauty.



*Hall leading to the temple and the 18 wells. Each well has water from a holy river in Bharat.*

## Kothandaramaswamy Temple (Vibhisana met Rama here)



*The Five-Faced Hanuman Temple (Panchamukhi Hanuman)*



*Vilonia Tirtham, Agni Theertham, Dhanuskudi Beach (where the Ram Setu [bridge] was started and some of the floating stones are still there with one on my head!).*

## **Southern tip of Bharat, Kanyakumari**

We travelled to the tip of Bharat, Kanyakumari next, famous for Vivekananda Rock..its unique sunrise and sunset points, the 41-metre (133 ft) Thiruvalluvar Statue, and Vivekananda Rock Memorial off the coast.



*View of Vivekananda Rock*



*Sunset at Kanyakumari*

## **Next was Kovalam (Trivandarum) to visit the Padmanabhsamy Temple**

The Padmanabhaswamy Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Vishnu in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of the state of Kerala, India. It is one of the 108 Divya Desams, which are considered the sacred abodes of Vishnu in the Sri Vaishnava tradition.



*Outside view of Padmanabh Swamy Temple*



## Udupi, the home of Madhvacharyas Math

The next place we visited was Udupi, the home of Madhvacharyas Math and the Udupi Krishna temple.



*View of lake on the complex of the Madvachrya's math*



*Entrance to the Udupi Krishna Temple*

Final stop in South Bharat was Bengaluru. We spent 2 days here celebrating Janmastmi . We flew from Bengakuru to Delhi to catch a train to Haridwar.

## Haridwar

Located at the foothills of the Himalayas, Haridwar is a city of temples and ashrams. Haridwar is one of the four holy cities in Bharat that host the Kumbh Mela, a pious gathering of millions of Hindu devotees every 12 years.



*Hari ki Pauri*

We took an overnight train to Haridwar where we stayed in a hotel by the Ganga for 2 nights. Haridwar is famous for Hari-ki-pauri, where drop of nectar fell and where poojas for ancestors takes place. Haridwar is also known for the doorway to God (Hari) and funerals also take place on the bank of the Ganga here.



*Statue of Lord Shiva near Hari-ki-pauri in the Ganga*



*Rishikesh. Half an hour from Haridwar where the famous Laxman Jula (bridge) and Ram Jula are located. Rishikesh is famous for its many ashrams of saints (rishis). The bridges are used to cross the Ganga from one side to another.*



*On the way to Gangotri*

### **Top tip of Bharat, Gangotri**

Our next stop was Gangotri, part of the Char Dham Yatra travelling in a traveller for 10 hours.

The holy River Ganges originates from the Gangotri glacier, located here, and is called Bhagirathi. The main attraction in Gangotri is the Gangotri Temple, where

Goddess Ganga is worshipped. This is the highest temple dedicated to Goddess Ganga.

Our stay in Gangotri was for 2 days in a hotel by the Ganga right opposite the Ganga mata temple.



*The river Ganga at Gangotri with the temple dedicated to Mother Ganga in the background*



*Sunrise at Gangotri*



*Waterfall in Gangotri, Uttarkashi*

Our journey back to Haridwar was via Uttarkashi where we stayed 1 night and visited the Vishwanath Temple and Shakti Temple. Uttarkashi, Kashi of the North, is famous for an ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, which is visited by thousands throughout the year.



*Murti of Ganesh outside Uttarkashi*

We took an overnight train from Haridwar to Mathura for Vrindavan

## Vrindavan

The holy town of Vrindavan, near Mathura is an important pilgrimage hub in Braj region where Lord Krishna spent his childhood. The name of Vrindavan comes from words 'vrinda', which means basil [Tulsi], and 'van' meaning forest.

Our stay in Vrindavan was for 5 days where we visited the main temples, Goverdhan Parikram, Radha kund & Shyam Kund, Nangaon, Barsana, Gokul, Mathura, Raman Reti, Vrinda Kund, Yamuna and we met the Gopis/ children being sponsored by LIVE.



*View of Madanmohan temple, one of the main 6 temples of Vrindavan, on the parikram marg*



*View of Radhakund, the most favourite kund of Krishna, located in Goverdhan.*



*Murti of Radha Raman, the only original murti in Vrindavan*



*Vrinda Kund , where a temple of Vrinda (tulsi) devi is located*



*Barsana. Main temple of Radharani, where Radharani spent her childhood.*



*Surrounded by children some of whose education is being sponsored by LIVE*