

MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY TO INDIA



SPECIFICALLY TO HONOUR MY ANCESTORS

by Sam Kodua, South London

In January 2024, I embarked on a profound spiritual journey to India alongside Nabhinandan Das. Our purpose was twofold: to deepen our spiritual consciousness and to perform sacred rites for our departed ancestors and friends, guided by the ancient Vedic tradition of "Pinda-Dan," which assists the eternal soul in its journey beyond.

Our journey began in Delhi, where we set forth towards Haridwar, a city revered as one of the holiest places on Earth. Upon arriving, we were enveloped by the spiritual energy that permeates this ancient city nestled by the sacred Ganga. Our first act was to bathe in the purifying waters of the Ganga, an experience that washed away more than physical impurities-it cleansed the soul.



At Haridwar, we also witnessed the famous Ganga Arti which was an amazing spectacle of intense devotion to the holiest of rivers, Ganga.



In Haridwar, we conducted the solemn "Pinda-Dan" ceremony, on the bank of the Ganga, a ritual of profound significance in Hindu traditions. This ceremony is believed to aid the departed souls in their spiritual transition. As we honoured our ancestors in this way, I felt a deep connection not only to my own lineage but also to the timeless spiritual heritage of India.

Additionally, during our time in Haridwar, we seized the opportunity to engage in acts of seva (selfless service). We served meals to 500 pilgrims, offering them a nourishing plate of puri, halwa, and vegetable curry. This act of feeding pilgrims, known as "annadan," is considered highly auspicious in Hinduism, symbolising the spirit of selflessness and community.



The experience was transformative. Each moment spent in Haridwar felt like a step deeper into the heart of India's spiritual legacy. The sights, sounds, and rituals enriched my understanding of the interconnectedness of life and death, the temporal and eternal.

As we continued our journey to other sacred sites across India, including Rishikesh, and beyond, each step resonated with the echoes of centuries-old wisdom and devotion. Through these experiences, I felt a profound sense of fulfilment and a renewed commitment to honour not only

my ancestors but also the timeless wisdom that permeates the land of India, a land where spiritual seekers and pilgrims alike find solace and enlightenment.

After our transformative experiences in Haridwar, we continued our spiritual odyssey to Prayagraj, a city steeped in ancient lore and spiritual significance. Here, we stood at the confluence of three sacred rivers - the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati, at a revered spot known as Triveni-Sangam. As we bathed in these holy waters, I was struck by the tangible contrast between the dark waters of the Yamuna and the shimmering golden currents of the Ganga. The Saraswati, though invisible to the eye, flowed beneath the surface, its presence felt in the depths of our spirits.

From Prayagraj, our journey took us further eastward to Varanasi, the eternal city of Lord Shiva, where spirituality resonates in every corner. Our pilgrimage reached a pinnacle as we beheld the majestic Shivlinga at the renowned Kashi Vishwanath Mandir, freshly renovated and exuding an aura of divine grace.

In Varanasi, amidst the labyrinthine lanes and ancient ghats, we discovered myriad temples. Among them, one temple stood out vividly in my memories, the temple within Benaras University, a splendid edifice where students are blessed with daily visions of the divine. Here, we witnessed the profound dedication of young followers of Sanatan Dharma as they conducted a poignant evening ceremony in honour of Mother Ganga, epitomizing the timeless bond between humanity and the sacred river.



Each step of our journey through Prayagraj and Varanasi was a testament to the rich spiritual tapestry of India, a tapestry woven with threads of devotion, tradition, and the eternal quest for enlightenment. In these sacred cities, time seemed to blend, and the ancient rituals unfolded before us like chapters from a timeless scripture, imprinting upon our souls the essence of a spiritual legacy that transcends lifetimes.

Leaving behind the spiritual enchantment of Varanasi, our next destination was Gaya, a place steeped in significance for honouring ancestors and performing sacred rites. This pilgrimage was deeply personal for me, as I sought to carry out the "Pinda-Dan" ceremony, a tradition revered in the Vedic scriptures and sanctified by Lord Chaitanya Himself, who performed this ritual for His father at this very site.

In Gaya, we were blessed to encounter sincere and knowledgeable priests who guided us meticulously through the intricate processes of the ceremony. Following the Vedic rituals with devotion and precision, I felt a profound sense of



fulfilment in fulfilling my duties as a son, relative, and friend to my departed loved ones. It was a moment of deep connection and closure, knowing that I had played my part in assisting their onward journey.

From Gaya, our spiritual expedition continued to Vrindavan, the sacred land of Lord Krishna. Here, surrounded by the timeless devotion and legends of Krishna's pastimes, we immersed ourselves in the vibrant atmosphere of devotion. Days were spent wandering through magnificent temples and absorbing the sanctity of this revered region.

One of the memorable highlights in Vrindavan was witnessing the artistic and devotional ceremony dedicated to the holy river Yamuna. This sacred river, believed to be dear to Lord Krishna, holds a special place in the hearts of devotees. The ceremony was a symphony of devotion, a visual and spiritual spectacle that left an indelible impression on our hearts.

Throughout this transformative journey, which was nourished by delicious prasad (vegetarian food) everywhere, I felt immense gratitude towards the devotees and priests who extended their support and guidance. Their wisdom and assistance not only enriched my spiritual experience but also reinforced my sense of purpose and fulfilment. Undertaking this sacred mission, guided by ancient traditions and surrounded by the spiritual energies of India's holy places, was a profound blessing, an odyssey that deepened my spiritual understanding and left an enduring imprint on my soul.

