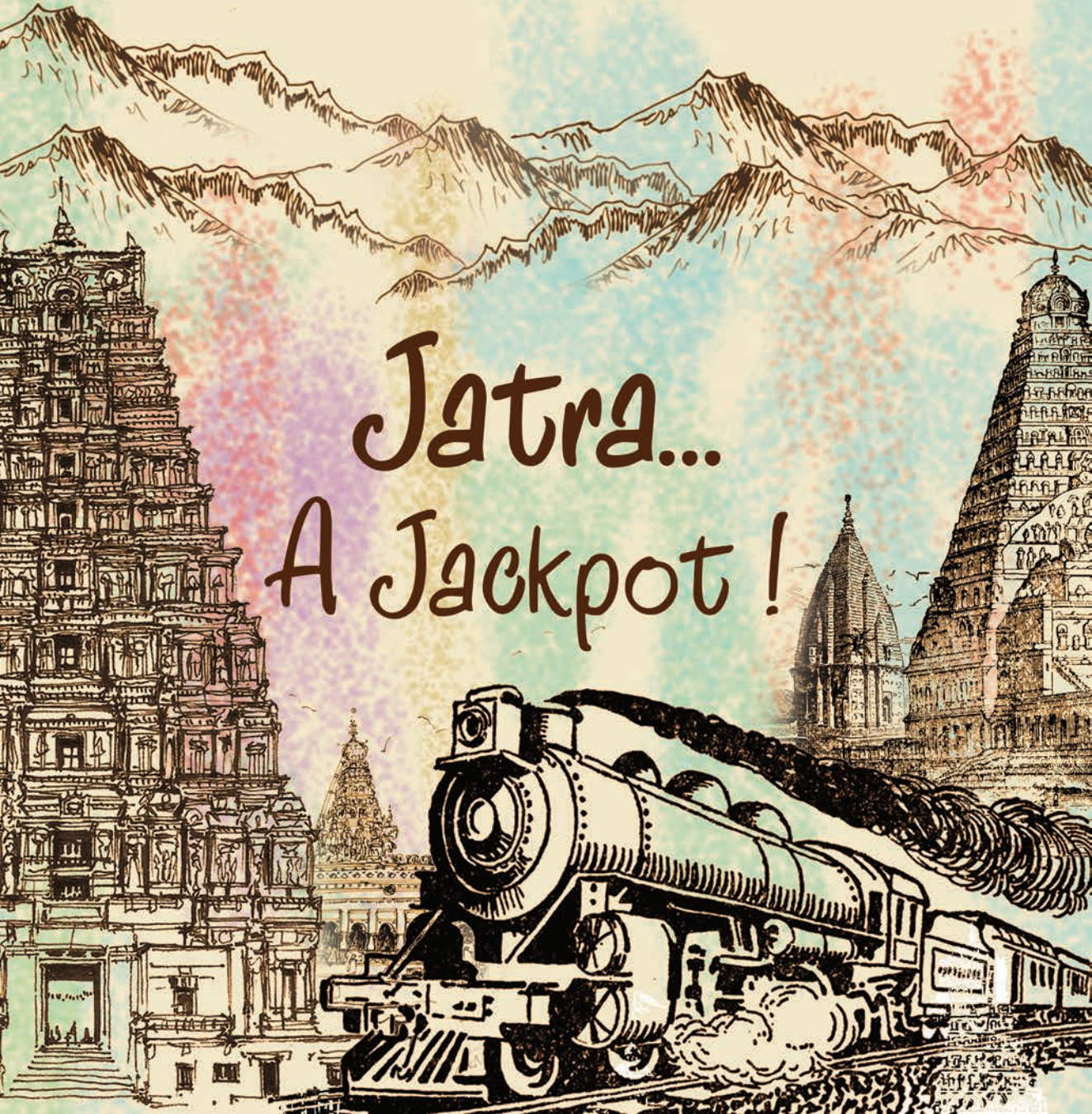


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# AKRAM Express



Jatra...  
A Jackpot!

# Jatra - A Jackpot



## Editorial

Dear Friends,

We get to worship God in the temple, so why the need to go on *Jatra* (pilgrimage)? One has to climb so many stairs and stand in long queues. Why go through so much trouble? Does this question puzzle you as much as it puzzles me?

This time the *Jatra* destination is going to be Samet Shikharji. In this issue, let us learn lots of novel facts pertaining to *Jatra*. Moreover, it is a great fortune if you get a chance to go on a pilgrimage with a *Gnani* (the Self-realized one). That's why this pilgrimage is like hitting a jackpot!!

So come, let us understand the importance of *Jatra* and enjoy the experience with the *Gnani*.

-Dimple Mehta

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# Gnanis Say...

Dadashri: Why do I take all these *mahatmas* (Self-realized ones in Akram Vignan) to different places of worship? I take them so that they get forgiven for their previous mistakes.

Every religious place has a god and goddess. The god and goddess can become aware of our negative thoughts or *viradhana* (disrespect) and they can punish us. Once, while on a pilgrimage, one man had some negative inner intent, and he fell off a ladder. Without any apparent reason he just fell and got badly bruised. Dada said that the person must have spoken against and thought negative of that place, and that is the reason the god and goddess made him fall.

When you visit any religious place, you should follow the rules of that place. You should not have any adverse thoughts. You should not ridicule or make fun of that place or say anything negative.

People of this time cycle are all those who have opposed and criticized in their past life. We must have criticized some religions and religious leaders. We should now worship the gods and goddesses, so that they are no longer offended, and then they will let us pass freely and help us. By not speaking or seeing anything negative about anyone, you will be on good terms with not only the gods and goddesses but also with all living beings.



# Absolutely New



—•••—

**Dadashri:** Once, when I was in Palitana, I recited a Trimantra in one of the temples and there occurred a miraculous shower of rice! People's minds are turning away from religion, so the gods do this to turn them around. They reinforce their faith in religion.

—•••—

—•••—

Before going on a pilgrimage, Niruma herself used to arrange for food to be made and packed: *Sev mamra*, *chevdo* (Indian snacks), popcorn, biscuit, peanuts, dry fruit, etc. was packed into small bags and handed over to each *mahatma*, so that if the train got delayed nobody would go hungry.

—•••—



# and Different!

Questioner: Dada, you had said that there are a lot of places of pilgrimage in India, and even if you have gone on pilgrimage to all those places, you still gain more by being in Dada's company and by His *darshan* (live connection with an enlightened One through eye contact)

Dadashri: So, you cannot put a value on this. You will benefit as per your understanding.



Once during a pilgrimage, everyone was travelling by train. Niruma instructed everyone to do *samayik* (introspective analysis as the Self) - to see the Pure Soul in everyone and all living things you see through the window. There was pin drop silence in the cabins. Since then everyone started getting into the practice of seeing Pure Soul in everyone.

In 1971 about 30 *mahatmas*, traveling in four cars, went on a pilgrimage to South India with Dada. They reached Tirupati Balaji at night time. At that time, no one knew that the queue for the *darshan* (devotional viewing) of Tirupati Balaji started as early as 4 am. All the *mahatmas* leisurely arrived for *darshan* at 9 am. Upon seeing the long queues, they realized that it will be night time by the time they got their turn! Someone informed them that by paying 100 rupees per person they could fast track the queue. When they informed Dada about this, He replied, "You cannot do *darshan* by giving a bribe. Moreover, it is ridiculous to spend 3,000 rupees for thirty people for *darshan*!" Let's do this, we will sit here and ask Tirupati Balaji to come out here!"

As per Dada's instructions, they cleared some space under a tree and set up *puja* (ritual and prayer) items for worship. Dada did *vidhi* (Silent auspicious blessings by the Gnani) and then said out loud, "Tirupati

Balaji ki Jai Ho ! Now – everyone, go ahead and do the *darshan* !" And everyone experienced an exact vision of Tirupati Balaji! All the *mahatmas* together with Dada sang devotional songs and rejoiced.

At night all the *mahatmas* went to a hotel for dinner. Over there, the chief engineer of the Tirupati Balaji Trust saw Dada. Seeing a garland around Dada's neck, he asked one of the *mahatmas* for an introduction of Dada. They introduced Dada and also talked about the extraordinary *darshan* they had of Tirupati Balaji outside the temple. The engineer was amazed. He felt that all these *mahatmas* should have a proper viewing of Balaji. He made all the arrangements and took Dada and all the *mahatmas* to the innermost part of the temple so that they could do *darshan* of Tirupati Balaji peacefully.

In this way the *mahatmas* experienced utmost happiness for being blessed with both types of *darshan*.

See friends, the amazing effects of being in Dadashri's presence!

## Tirupati Balaji was called outside!



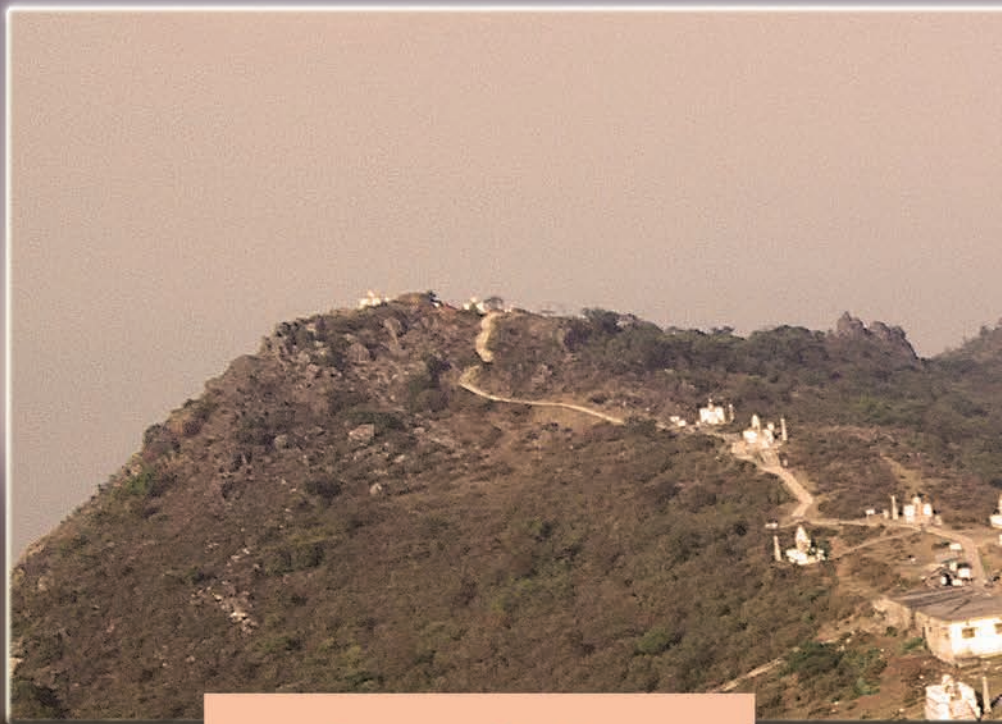
# The purpose of a Pilgrimage

Whichever place you go to, the *parmanus* (subatomic particles) of that place will affect you. For example, when you go to Kurukshetra (where the great Mahabharata war took place), and even if you have no desire to fight, you start fighting. Similarly, wherever the Lord has moved about, His subatomic particles are in the atmosphere. So when we go to that place, we experience peace. Intentions of worship and devotion awaken within us. This is why you should go on pilgrimage.



A person who follows Jain religion does not go to a Vaishnav temple, and Vaishnavas do not go to a Jain temple. That is, people of one religion will not go to the religious places of another religion due to differences in opinions. This is not the way of the Vitrag Lords (fully enlightened lords). So Dada used to take the mahatmas everywhere – to Hindu temples, Muslim mosques, Sikh Gurudwaras and also to Christian Churches. This is because, in our infinite lifetimes if we have knowingly or unknowingly disrespected or criticized and Gods - all that can be washed away by going on pilgrimage. Because now we want to be liberated. So, we want to ask for forgiveness from everyone and become pure.





## Samet Shikhar

In 1977 -78 Dada had taken all *mahatmas* to Samet Shikhar. During the pilgrimage, Dada sat with each and every *mahatmas* individually. Each and every *mahatmas* confessed to Dada all the mistakes they had made throughout their life and repented for them. Dada showed everyone ways to turn back from their mistakes. He was strict to some people and to others He gently made them understand. For some He showed them the mistakes that they could not see for themselves. This happens when you are in touch with the Gnani. If you stay away from the Gnani, then this will not happen. This is the benefit of a pilgrimage.

Why is a *Jatra* (pilgrimage) considered as hitting the jackpot? You can get closer to the Gnani. By being closer to the Gnani, He becomes dear to you and you feel comfortable to confess your mistakes to Him. Otherwise the mistakes happen and they agitate you but you are still not able to open up. But by being closer you get the strength to confess and become free.



# Jatra - A Jackpot





Shree Samet Shikharji, is an important Jain pilgrimage site in the State of Jharkhand in India. The importance of the place is that out of the twenty-four Tirthankars of our current time cycle, twenty of them attained *nirvana* (ultimate liberation) here. A small temple (shrine) has been built in remembrance of each one of them.

As the *nirvana* shrines became eroded and destroyed with passage of time, it became difficult to identify the places of *nirvana* of different Tirthankars.

Sheth Khushalchand, who used to go and worship there, was concerned about the state of the temples. One day, upon receiving instruction from Jain monk, Shree Devvijayji Ganiji, he undertook a penance of three day fast. This penance done with the intention to rebuild the pilgrimage site proved fruitful as the goddess Padmavati came to him in his dream and said, "Wherever you see a saffron *swastik* (sacred symbol), understand that surely is the place where the Tirthankar attained *nirvana*. It is a naturally occurring phenomenon in that location. The number of *swastiks* that you see will correspond to the particular Tirthankar who attained *nirvana* from that location."

In accordance with the instructions of the goddess of that place, the exact place of the *nirvana* of each of the twenty Tirthankars was determined. Accordingly, small shrines were built with footprint of each Tirthankar in the *nirvana* place. One starts the pilgrimage by worshipping Bhomiyaji Maharaj (protector deity of that territory) on the foot of the hill. On the mountain there are thirty-one small temples of which twenty are dedicated to the Tirthankars who attained final liberation from there. In their remembrance their sacred footprints have been placed there.

Of the current cycle of the twenty-four Tirthankars, apart from Shree Rushabhdev Bhagwan, Shree Vasupujya Bhagwan, Shree Neminath Bhagwan and Shree Mahavir Bhagwan, all the rest attained liberation from Shree Samet Shikharji.

# The purpose of a Pilgrimage



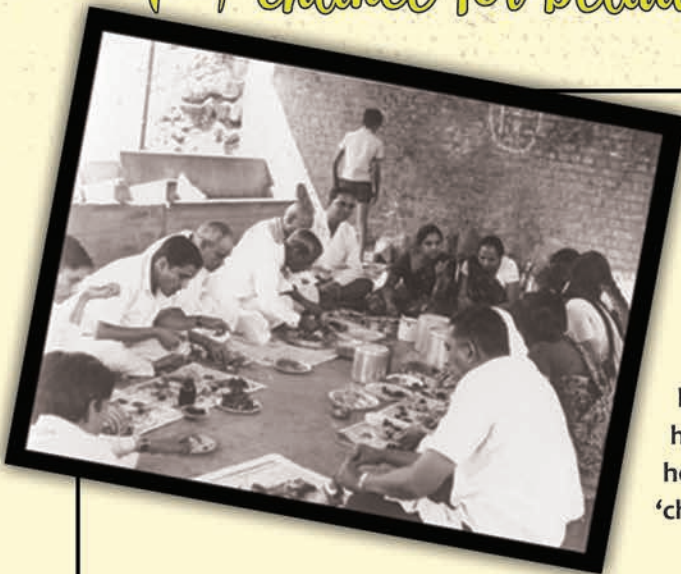
If you go on *Jatra* with a *Gnani*, you will get to see His daily routine very closely; how a *Gnani* goes to sleep, how He eats, how He gets up and sits, how He interacts with people. His naturalness, His simplicity, His *Vitragta* (absolute detachment) and His constructive intervention. You get a chance to observe all this.

Dada always used to say that when you see Him, then His strength manifests in you. Even if someone served Us food that's not properly cooked, We would eat comfortably without a fuss. The *Gnani*, even though He is at such an elevated state, He is able to have a humble disposition and be like everyone. When you see all that, that strength arises within you.

*Jatra* is the biggest opportunity to learn how to adjust. You do not get your meals on time, you do not get to sleep on time, and when you do not reach your destination on time, the rest of the timetable changes. You have to put up with variable quality of accommodation and food – and during all this time you learn how to adjust. In our house we have our own bed, our own pillow, our own bed sheet, it is our own space so there is no problem. But on *Jatra* with whatever you get, *Mahatmas* observe each other and adapt in different ways. By observing them, we also start to learn and develop common sense.



# A chance for beautiful understanding



The year was 1969. Once Dada, together with about four to five *mahatmas*, visited Simandhar Swami's temple in Mehsana. After doing *darshan*, everyone went for lunch at the temple's dining hall. On that day, double layered chapatti was being served. One *mahatma* had never had this type of chapatti before, so when he saw it, he said to Dada that the 'chapatti is not properly cooked'.

Upon hearing this Dada immediately put his finger on his lips and said, "Be quiet. At a place of pilgrimage you should not criticize the food or say anything negative. The gods will be offended."

From that day that particular *mahatma* learnt his lesson. Whenever he goes on a pilgrimage or to any temple opening ceremonies, or any religious place, and if he gets watery soup or rice that is not properly cooked, he never moans and takes whatever he gets at that time.



# Know Something New!

## Religion – Christianity

**Main pilgrimage sites: Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Vatican City**

**Jerusalem- Ancient city of Middle East**

Jerusalem is a site of significance for three religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Jesus Christ was crucified near Jerusalem and he died nailed to the cross.

**Bethlehem – City situated in the south of Jerusalem**

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem.



**Bethlehem**

## Religion – Islam

**Main pilgrimage sites: Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem**

Mecca is the holy city in Saudi Arabia where Prophet Muhammad was born.

Kaaba is the holiest shrine in Mecca. The Hajj is an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca.



**Mecca**

## Religion – Sikhism

**Main pilgrimage sites: Golden Temple, Amritsar**

This sacred place promoting selfless service spreads the message of equality and peace. Every day more than fifty thousand people are served free meals in the kitchen of this temple.



**Golden Temple**

## Religion – Jain

Main pilgrimage sites: Shree Samet Shikharji, Palitana



Palitana

### Palitana

Twenty three of the twenty-four current cycle Tirthankars came to Palitana. There are more than 3000 small and big temples in Palitana.

### Shree Samet Shikharji

The holy land where 20 Tirthankars attained Nirvana and where countless *sadhaks* (seekers of salvation) did *sadhna* (spiritual practices).

## Religion – Buddhist

Main pilgrimage sites: Bodhgaya, Sarnath

### Bodhgaya - Bihar

Associated with the Mahabodhi Temple Complex where the first temple was built by the great Emperor Asoka. Thousands of devotees from different cultures and different upbringing come to worship here.



Sarnath

## Religion – Hindu

Main pilgrimage sites: Varanasi, Somnath, Rameshwaram



Somnath

### Varanasi – Uttar Pradesh

There are many famous temples on the banks of the river Ganga in Varanasi. Kashi Vishwanath Temple is the main temple of the twelve Jyotirlingas temples of Lord Shiva.

## Religion – Hindu

Main pilgrimage sites: Mathura, Puri, Dwarka, Tirupati

### Mathura

Mathura town known as the birth place of Lord Krishna and nearby Vrindavan is the land of many temples.

### Tirupati

The Tirumala Venkateswara Devasthan, adjacent to Tirupati, is one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites in India. The temple of Lord Venkateswara is located here.



Tirupati

# Blessed were those days!

This happened in 1995-96. A pilgrimage to Rajasthan was arranged with Pujyashree and Niruma. I received my life's most invaluable opportunity during this pilgrimage. Niruma had tasked me with carrying Pujyashree's luggage. While doing this service, I saw Pujyashree make such tremendous adjustments, that those occasions are etched in my heart, and to this day my memory of them is still so fresh.

We reached Nakoda. All mahatmas were given their accommodation. Niruma's accommodation was arranged at a royal hotel and Pujyashree was accommodated with the rest of the Aptaputras in a small place. That day, due to various circumstances, Pujyashree had to change room three times. However, Pujyashree's expression did not change even slightly despite having to go to three different rooms with his luggage in tow. I was touched by Pujyashree's easygoingness and

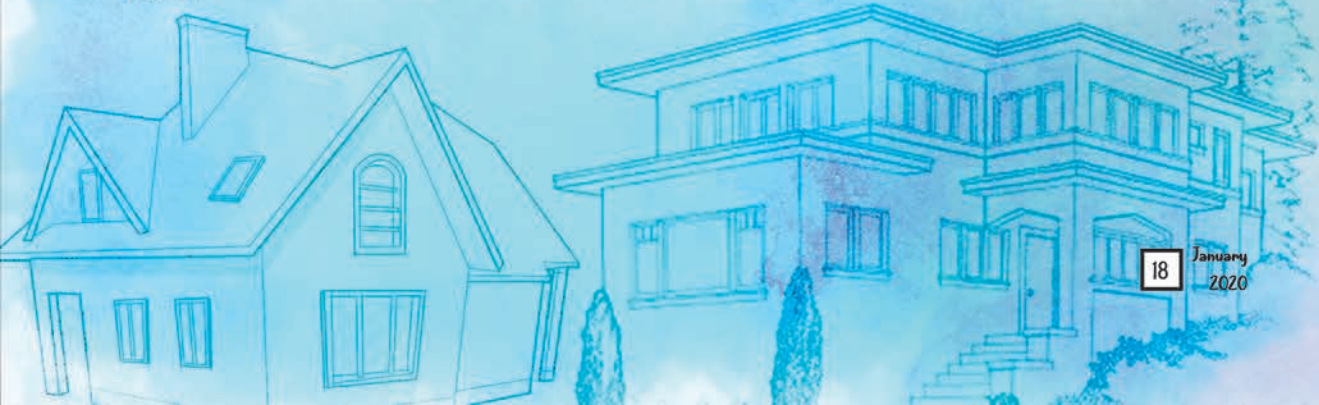


his capacity to adjust.

I went into his room to put the luggage and I was shocked to see the size of the room. Pujyashree was given a small room of approximately 10 by 8 feet. As I was leaving to go and sleep in another room, Pujyashree warmly insisted that I sleep in the same room. By observing Pujyashree that day I learnt a beautiful way of how to find comfort in discomfort.

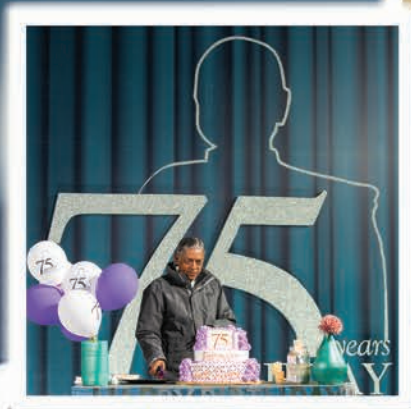
Further on in Jodhpur, Pujyashree was accommodated at one mahatma's palace-like residence. Whether it was a small cubicle or whether it was a spacious room Pujyashree maintained the same demeanor. I saw that he was just as happy in the small room as he was in the palace!

During this pilgrimage, by staying close to Pujyashree, I was blessed to learn an important life lesson.



# 75

years  
BIRTHDAY  
CELEBRATION  
*forever sweet sixteen*







# And Finally...

Niruma and about two hundred mahatmas went on a fifteen day cruise to Alaska. As soon as the cruise liner set sail, within fifteen minutes Niruma said to the celibate brother, "Shall we turn back? What will do here for fifteen days?"

The aptaputra Bhai was stunned. He said, "Niruma, we cannot do anything now. We have paid the money and the cruise has started!"

Niruma was silent.

The brother asked, "What happened Niruma? Why are you talking about going back?"

Niruma replied with a lot of compassion, "Fifteen days on this cruise means there will be no *satsang* (spiritual discourse), and so many people in this world will be deprived of this *Gnan* (spiritual knowledge)." But nothing could be done. The trip ended. Throughout the entire trip Niruma remained completely detached. She made sure that *mahatmas* were enjoying themselves, but she was also saddened by the fact that many many people in the world would be deprived of *satsang* and *Gnan*.

We got to witness the compassion and *Vitragta* (absolute detachment) of the *Gnani* during this Jatra.



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