

My Life With Anirvan

Part - XVIII

Anirvanji and Sandhya came down from Shillong to Calcutta by plane on 15th December 1962 and left for Allahabad on 17th December to see his ailing friend Dharendra Chandra Dasgupta. Sri Dasgupta who had accompanied Anirvanji on his South India pilgrimage also accompanied him on this tour of western India as well. Anirvanji, Sandhya and Dasgupta together arrived at Bombay on 14th January 1963 where I and Sharad received them.

Meanwhile, I had gone to Ahmedabad leaving Calcutta on 1st January 1963. I went to Ahmedabad, my native place after a lapse of long fourteen years! I had last gone there in 1948, when our first business concern the Dharmapal Brothers was being wound up. While leaving Ahmedabad then, I had told my young sister who was then six or seven years old and who asked from me a good amount of present – that I will come next time with a lot of money that will satisfy you! And it took me fourteen years to come back to Ahmedabad and I could not keep my promise to my young sister Kokila as meanwhile she had died in 1954 because of anemia! When I went to Ahmedabad in January 1963, my old father did not forget to remind me of my failed promise! I could only answer that I did not go to Calcutta to make money!

Before I reached Ahmedabad on 3rd January, another tragedy had occurred! My close friend Nanubhai P. Shah – elder brother of Kanti P. Shah who was intimately close to Bandhu Dharmapal, who was to become a Dharmapal and was to accompany Bandhu first to Calcutta instead of me - passed away on 1st January! He was suffering from cancer and Kanti told me that he was remembering at the time of his passing away, as he knew that I was coming

to Ahmedabad! It was Nanubhai who was like my protecting angel during the 1942 movement and even later in 1948 when I had come to Ahmedabad to wound up the business. But all that is another story!

After meeting and visiting all the friends and relatives in Ahmedabad after a long time, I went to Bombay to receive Anirvanji and company! Sharad was already there after completing his business tour of South India.

Anirvanji, Sandhya and Dasgupta arrived at Bombay on 14th January. We had arranged for their stay at Villeparle East at the spacious residence of our old friend Dahyabhai Patel.

Anirvanji's pilgrimages were very hectic, covering many places in a short span of time. And this tour was most hectic!

On 14th evening, we visited some places in Bombay city. On 15th morning we visited the famous Elephanta caves, which is situated on an island in the Sea near Bombay, where there is the famous stone of Trimurti – Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva! In the evening, we visited the famous hanging garden and enjoyed walking on the sea beach!

Next day on 16th January, we took a car of our friend Dahyabhai Patel to visit first Nasik and Traymbak, then to Poona for two days and on our return journey visiting Matheran, a beautiful hill station, where one side is stoney mountain like and the other side full of jungle!

Nasik is a place of pilgrimage on the bank of river Godavari where is situated the famous Panchavati where Rama, Sita and Lakshmana settled for a few years during there fourteen years of forest stay and from where the Rakshash King Ravana kidnapped Sita.

Traymbak is nearly where there is the famous Traymbakeswar Shiva Temple,

where the stream of Godavari that is coming out of the mountain just opposite is gathered in a big pond and then flows out.

On the way to Nasik and Tryambak is the famous Pandava caves where Yudhisthir and his brothers with Draupadi are supposed to have stayed for sometime during their twelve years forest-stay!

At Poona, we stayed at Ananda Niketan, an ashram of Swami Amarjyoti, a friend of mine. Sri Dilipkumar Roy, whom we visited next day at his Hare-Krishna Mandir mildly rebuked Anirvanji for not giving him an opportunity to serve him! Any way, we sat at the evening prayers of his Radha-Krishna temple and heard his celestial Bhajan-Kirtan!

We also visited the famous temple of Mother Bhawani - the deity of Shivaji – who is supposed to have given her sword to Shivaji to fight against the Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb and free the motherland. The temple is situated on the small hill near the famous fort of Poona!

We left Poona on 18th morning and on our way to Matheran visited the famous Karla-Bhaji-Buddhist caves reaching Matheran in the evening! It was pleasant to walk in the jungles of Matheran in the moonlit night! Next day morning, we walked up the Panorama and Monkey points and returned to Bombay the same evening! Took the train to Ahmedabad and reached there on 20th January Morning!

20th and 21st were spent in Ahmedabad, visiting Sabarmati Ashram of Mahatma Gandhi and other places. On 21st evening Anirvanji met devotees of Sri Aurobindo and gave a talk at the local Mother's center at the Ellisbridge Pritamnyar area.

We hired a taxi and toured the whole of Saurashtra in four days! Generally, I sat in the front seat with the driver and Anirvanji, Sandhya and Dasgupta occupied the backseats.

We started very early in the morning of 22nd January and reached Palitana, near Bhavnagar at about 11-00 am. Palitana is small hill-town, the hill covered with more than a hundred small and big Jain temples. Palitana is considered especially holy by the Jains, as one of the twenty four Tirthankaras of Jains – Neminath – the 22nd – a cousin brother of Krishna was cremated here. In fact, Paresnath Hills in Bihar is the holiest place for the Jains, as Twenty two Tirthankaras including the 23rd Tirthankar Parasvanath are cremated at different places on this hill. Only the 24th and the last and the most famous Tirthankar Mahavir - who preached at the same time as Goutam Buddha – is cremated at Pavapuri near Nalanda in Bihar. Thus Palitana is the third holiest place for the Jains which should be visited by all Jains at least once in their lives.

The same evening we left Palitana and reached Janagadh at the foot of the famous Girnar Hills via Rajkot late at night!

Next morning on the 23rd January, we ascended rather climbed the Girnar Hill upto the fifth peak where there is the temple to Mother Amba, another form of Durga. Regular steps are built upto this temple. One has to go upto the seventh peak which is dedicated to Gorakhnath the greatest of the Nath yogis. We did not go upto that peak as there was no regular path to it and will take much time! We came down by 11-00 am; saw the famous Ahoka Pillar where the message of peace is carved out in Brahmi script, which only Anirvanji could read! We read the Gujrati, Hindi and English translations! We also visited the famous Damodar Temple where the famous Gujrati poet and bhakta (devotee of Sri Krishna) – Narasimha used to sing Bhajans (devotional songs). Thanks to Mahatma Gandhi his (Narasimha's) name is now famous the world over because of the singing of his Bhajan. "Vaishnava jana to tene kahiye"- He

is called a Vishnava – a devotee of Vishna or Krishna – who etc.

Though extremely tired because of the climbing – we left Junagadh after lunch and a little rest and reached Somanath Patana – the famous Somnath Temple on the

seashore. The present temple is newly built after the independence of India in 1947 on the ruins of the old temple which was first destroyed in 1040A.D. by Mohammad Gazani – the first muslim invader from Afganistan. **-Sri Gautam Dharmapal**