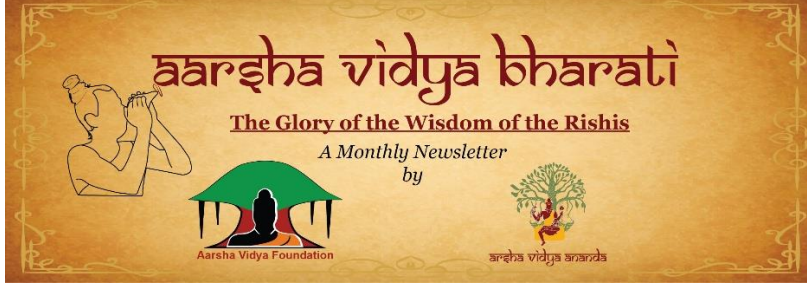

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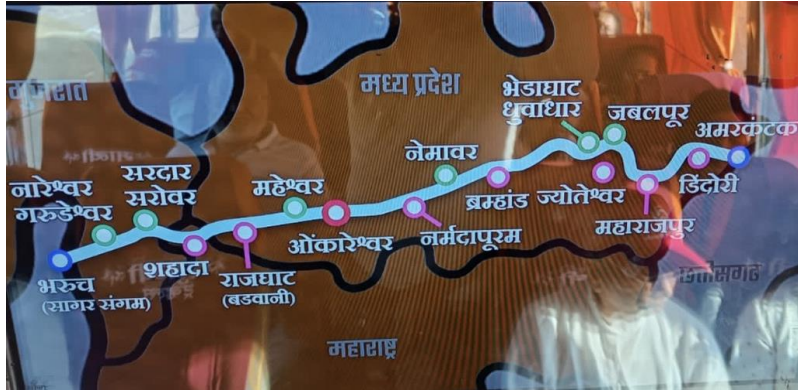
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Narmada Parikramā – An Introduction

By Varsha Patel, Mumbai

Editor: Varsha Patel takes us on a virtual yātrā as she describes her Narmada Parikrama tīrtha-yātrā. In this article, the first of 4 parts, she explains the significance of River Narmada Maiya and gives us a peek into how the journey starts.

Parikramā is circumambulation around the river in a clockwise direction. Narmada originates from Amar Katak, a place on Maikal Mountain, located between Vindhya and Satpura range of mountains. Not only River Narmada but two other rivers, Son and Bhadra also originate from here. They flow in regular route i.e. West to East, while River Narmada flows in opposite direction i.e. east to west, which is also in opposite direction of earth's motion. That is why it has spiritual importance and the only river whose *parikramā* is done.



Lord Shiva after drinking poison, which came out after *Samudra Manthana* (समुद्रमन्थन) did *tapasyā*, penance here to digest the poison. Number of *devatā*-s and *ṛṣi*-s have done penance here and this land became very holy. It is said *Mahārṣi* Kapila, Bhṛgu, Jamadagni, Agastya, Durvasa, Vyasa, Gargi, Charaka and many more stayed and did prayers and *tapasyā* here for the wellbeing of humanity. Very rare medicinal plants grow here which help in Ayurveda. It is said *ṛṣi* Markandeya did penance here for many years and was the first person to do *parikramā* of Narmada and then onwards many *siddha*-s and people have done *parikramā*. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* was written by *ṛṣi* Markandeya and even *Mahāmṛtyuñjaya* Mantra was given by him from here.

Bhagavadpāda Pūjya Śankarācārya did *tapasyā* on the banks of Narmada besides the *parikramā*. When he was doing penance, Maiya Narmada appeared in front of him and he recited Narmada *Aṣṭakam* appreciating her glories here only. The water body or the "Kund" is still there near the cave called "Guru Gufa".

Narmada Maiya is (मोक्षदायिनी), *mokṣa-dāyini* and doing *parikramā* opens the door for (मोक्ष) *mokṣa* or liberation. She clears all obstacles. *Parikramā mārg* is about 3500 kilometres. If you do *parikramā* walking, it takes more than four months. But we did by bus and it took us 15 days to complete.

First day we took bath in sacred waters near Omkareshwar temple, which is located on island 'Mandhata' amidst river Narmada. We took holy water in the *kalaśa* and had *darśana* at Mamleshwar temple. Panditji officiated *Sankalpa pūjā* for *parikramā*. We did *kalaśa pūjā* and prayed for blessings to complete the *parikramā*. Panditji explained the daily *pūjā* rituals and rules to be observed during the *parikramā*.

1. The *parikramā* must be done in clockwise direction and one should not cross the river during it.
2. No hair cut or nails to be cut.
3. Eat *sātvika* vegetarian food and do *Vāk tapas* i.e. no bad words, no nasty comments about anyone.
4. Give *dakṣiṇā* to needy people you come across during *parikramā*.

Recite Narmada *Aṣṭakam* after daily *pūjā* and read any one of the holy books like (भागवद् गीता) *Bhagavad Gītā* or (ज्ञानेश्वरी) *Jñāneśvarī* or of your interest.

Apart from that, the tour organiser had given us *Nāma Japa* Note book for writing along with reciting the mantra. ॐ नर्मदे हर, *Om Narmade Hara* - 5000 times and to be completed along with *parikramā*. The same mantra we used to greet people known or unknown whom we met during the route. This helped anchor our minds on Narmada Maiya throughout the *yātrā*.

To be continued ...