

Kali Bharat Yatra 28th Anniversary Tour of India: A Life-Long Dream Came Through for Many

By Dr Tara Singh

The 28th consecutive annual Kali Bharat Yatra Tour to India returned on Monday October 31st with Yatrans (tourists) feeling jet lagged but still at the top of this world.

They have had an extra-ordinary experience visiting India and re-established their links with the country that had given birth to their religion, music, and culture. It was not only a journey of discovery but also one that took them to a higher level of existence, says one of the tourists, Gewan Seeram, who was on his first visit to India. For Seeram as well as the others, it was a life-long dream coming through. An interview with 20% of the tourists indicates their satisfaction with the high quality of service provided by Kali Travel and Tours,



A Traditional Welcome

which is the only Indo-Caribbean tour operator that is recognized by the Government of India Tourist Board. Kali Bharat Yatra Travel and Tours, is an authorized travel agent of Air India.

The tour party consisted of 44 individuals, the majority of whom were making their first trip to India. At the departure lounge at the JFK Airport, Kali Travel and Tours hosted a “social



Tara Seeram could not resist the warmth of a child in the village in UP.

ritual” for the tourists who were immediately given the opportunity to meet one another and received a few tips on their travel by knowledgeable guest speakers. That event set in mo-



Mohan Singh & his wife reflecting a simple of love at the Taj



KALI BHARAT YATRA (KBY) GROUP AT TAJ MAHAL IN AGRA , OCT. 2011

tion the physical and emotional start of the Kali Bharat Yatra tour.

The Yatrans visited a number of spectacular monuments and sites, such as the Akshardham of Delhi, which is considered one of the wonders of the modern world and built by the amazing humanitarian and cultural group called BAPS. The tourists were fascinated by the architectural splendor of this building which integrates rich cultural and historical elements of the past with the contemporary, and offers an optimistic perspective into the future. A few Yatrans regard this as the highlight of their tour. Others say that their visit to Mathura, the birthplace of one of Hindus’ most venerated deities, Lord Krishna, was most memorable, while a few indicate that performing “artee” at the Ganges was significant. Of course everyone was awe-struck with the breathtaking grandeur of the Taj Mahal which immortalizes one of the greatest love stories of history. Emperor Shah Jahan was so deeply in love with his wife Muntaz, that he built that shrine in her memory.

Another Kali Bharat Yatra tour party of 19 left JFK 5 days later destined for both North and South India. The group leader was Harry Nepal who was making his fourth trip to India. Kali Travel and Tours arranged for the two groups to meet in the Pink City (Jaipur), the capital of Rajasthan, to celebrate the Hindu festival of Diwali, there. “That was a spectacular event,” says Tara Seeram. At Jaipur the tourists also visited the famous Amber Palace and made their way to it by riding on the backs of elephants.

Yatrans note that the logistical arrangements for the trip were superb. Asked to grade

the quality of service provided by Kali Bharat Yatra Tours, they scored an average of 9.5 on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest and 1 the lowest. One Yatran even accorded it a score of 12 out of 10. This is not to suggest that everything was perfect. Hotel accommodation is not the same standard in every state, and a few Yatrans felt a bit uneasy when the standard of a particular hotel did not match their expectations. However, this was more than compensated for by the live entertainment provided by Lake Persaud and others while the tour party travelled in coach, as well as, at the Mumbai farewell function. That Mumbai program featured Samir Daate of “Dhun Dhamaka” and “Chalte Jaana Hai” fame. Accompanying him was Deepali Somiya. Heer Patel, a Model and Dancer, Ghansham Vaswani, Singer, and Varsha Usgaonkar, Actress, also made appearances.

Every member of the tour party with whom we spoke, declared their love for India and would want to return there in the future. Two couples were emphatic that they would return in 2013. Their tour operator would be no other but Kai Bharat Yatra Travel and Tours. They also advised anyone who is planning to visit India that they should go with Kali Travel and Tours. How the tourists feel about India is captured by one

New York member: “we should all pay Kaliji \$1,000 more for this trip.” At the end of the trip, Nirupa Persaud was crowned, “Miss Kali Bharat Yatra 2011” and Melissa Heeralall was sashed as Kali Bharat Yatra best dancer.

Here is what Yatrans had to say about their recent 2011 trip to India. Purshotam Shivraj of Lamaha Gardens, Georgetown, Guyana, observes: “It was a fantastic experience. You have to see it to believe it. You also need to be in good health.” Shivraj was on his first trip to India. He didn’t expect India to be so developed and that so many people go to the Ganges for a bath or perform Ganga aartee. He was touched by the extreme poverty and begging in such places as Mumbai and Delhi. What he regarded as a phenomenon was the traffic flow with no traffic lights and which is a mixture of cars, trucks, rickshaws, pedestrians, and bicycles, and which was free of accidents.

Tahol Panham and his wife Thakurbasi



A soothing boat ride in the Lake Pichole in Udaipur.

Panham of California say that Kaliji made them realize their life-long dream of visiting



Diwali celebrations commence with Nirupa Persaud lighting Diya in the Jhulelall Mandir in Jaipur.



Broadcaster and Kishore Kumar singer Lake Persaud entertains the other 62 yatrans at the gala night in Jaipur.

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KBY group on the way to the Taj

India. "The price charged was way below the value of the trip." Kaliji delivered "more than we expected." For them, two things were memorable, namely, the traffic was unbelievable and the people are humble. The tour guide Sunil was terrific.

Indranic and Dave R Daberam's (formerly of Trinidad) major highlight was their visit to the Ganges in Rishikesh. That had such a profound impact upon them that they are planning to return to India in 2013 just to re-visit the Ganges. They were impressed with the temples and castles, including the Taj Mahal, and the Sabarmati Ashram, too. They continue to marvel at the Palace in Udaipur that is surrounded by water. "This (visit India) was the greatest thing we did in our lives."

Sumintra Mangru (formerly of Canal No 2, Guyana) states: "Since I was a little girl I wanted to go to India. I was inspired by a senior, 102 years that cared for the neighboring

temple. "I have now accomplished my most important dream." She asked, "I want to know why in this 21st century, there are so many beggars and people sleeping on the streets?" "Shouldn't they be building homes rather than temples to care for the needy?" Sumintra advises that every human being should touch the soil of India.

Mohan Singh and his wife Chandrowtie (formerly of Guyana) was impressed by the Akshardham and the Laxshmi Narayan (Birla) Temple in Delhi. "The trip was above our expectations." They add: "words cannot capture the magnificence of the Taj Mahal in Agra or the sanctity of the Raj Ghat in Delhi."

Nirupa Persaud, the youngest member of the tour party had a wonderful experience and would not hesitate to return to India. She was accompanied by her dad Lake Persaud, who rendered steady entertainment, and her grandmother. "Everybody is so kind, but I was disturbed by the number of people sleeping on the streets." Nirupa insists that every youth should visit India at least once.

George Mangar (formerly of Canal No I, Guyana) was accompanied by Savitri Persaud. "The only thing I knew about India before, was what I had seen in Indian movies. It was a great experience." He notes: "The entertainment was great and Kaliji is the



Melissa Harrilal Miss KBY best dancer flanked by Miss Kali Bharat Yatra Nirupa Persaud and her father Lake Persaud.

greatest." Parbotie Nanjad (formerly of Port Mourant, Guyana) loves Rishikesh and the Ganges. "Too many people are poor." "I had always wanted to go to see Lord Shiva and the Ganges. India is beautiful."

Gewan and Tara Seeram (formerly of West Bank Demerara, Guyana) were overjoyed with their experience. "The trip made us appreciate more of what we have. Sleeping on the streets was not a pleasant sight. Kaliji provided services above our expectations and we give him maximum marks." According to the couple who now resides in Florida, their best memories are: "fun in the bus, stopping to give charity, doing pooja at the Ganges. These made us feel that India belongs to us, too." What's even more remarkable is, "how people can make out with so little and be content."

Chaitnarine Panday who was accompanied by his Mom enjoyed the splendid structures and architectural beauty, especially taking into consideration that when these were built they didn't have the



Rajasthani singers and dancer performing.



advanced tools and equipment of the modern world. When he visited the Elephanta Caves in Mumbai, Panday felt at home. "If you want to know more of your background, then you have to go to India."

The other Kali Bharat Yatra Group returned to New York on November 6, 2011. "Though going to India for 28 years, each time it is different, as I have to respond to each person's individual's needs. When I could see how the Yatrans' face glow with satisfaction, that gives me the greatest joy." Kali Bharat Yatra next trip to India is scheduled for December 29, 2011.



Following a successful performance at the Princess Hotel in Georgetown Guyana, Samir Daate and Deepali Somaiya grace their presence and perform at the farewell dinner for Kali Bharat Yatra group in Mumbai. In the center is popular actress and singer Varsha Usgaonkar.



Veena Sirwani shashed and congratulates Nirupa Persaud as Miss Kali Bharat Yatra, extreme right is Dilip Sirwani



KBY group in Haridwar, after a dip in the Ganges where Pandit R. Sharma conducted Ganga puja, Oct. 2011.



Left to right: Director and Producer Ajay Sharma, Veteran Journalist Devindra Mohan, First Disciple of Jagjit Singh - Ghansham Vaswani, Tour Director Kali, Tour Operator of RTS fame Dilip Sirwani, Versatile Singer Shree Seepersaud, holding momentum and Veteran Photographer & Coordinator of KBY group Mohan Singh.