

Chapter 21

Granting New Life to the Holy Pilgrimage Place of Prayag

Early on the morning of 12 December 1953, the train reached Prayag. Preparations for the Kumbh Mela were in full swing. Swamishri, the sadhus, and devotees boarded small boats to reach the site of the Triveni Sangam—the sacred confluence of the three holy rivers, the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the Sarasvati. Swamishri bathed Harikrishna Maharaj in the Triveni Sangam and sprinkled the holy water on everyone's heads. Then, everyone bathed in the river. Then they offered donations to the *pandas*, or Brahmin priests who performed rituals in the sacred pilgrimage place. Yet, the *pandas* aggressively touted other rituals and pestered devotees for more donations. Seeing this, Swamishri laughed and said, “This is not a place that one can come alone. It's good that all of you came together with us. Otherwise, these

touts would likely steamroll anyone who came here alone!"

Harmanbhai used to emphatically tell other sadhus and mahatmas, "We bring God with us wherever we go."

Swamishri quipped, "You shouldn't say that. If you say that, they will likely tip this boat over!" Everyone laughed.

There were several swimmers who would perform stunts, such as diving deep into the river to collect spare change from tourists and onlookers. Seeing this, Swamishri said, "Just look at their disregard for their body! They are tolerating the cold to earn money. Similarly, we should cultivate such disregard for the body to please God."

After bathing in the Triveni Sangam, everyone went for the darshan of the Akshayavat, a sacred banyan tree believed to be the oldest tree on Earth. From there, everyone went to the train station.

At night, an assembly was organized on the railway platform. Swamishri said: “Today is a very auspicious day. The Triveni Sangam is extremely holy. Shriji Maharaj incarnated on Earth with 500 *paramhansas* to grant everyone bliss. If one has experienced that bliss, one will never forget it. Many Kumbh Melas have occurred, but today this place of pilgrimage has been granted new life. Today, a new place of pilgrimage has emerged. All of us bathed in the river. From today, whoever bathes in this place of pilgrimage will be liberated, and they will receive a birth in Satsang. We are unable to travel extensively, but through this, many will attain liberation.

“One should contemplate upon this special pilgrimage. You should communicate its glory, but you should not sing the glory of *manushyabhab*. Out of compassion, Shastriji Maharaj has granted us bliss. He has granted us the bliss of Akshardham, if one understands it. Haridwar, Rishikesh, all of these are definitely places of pilgrimage, but peace can be

found in this place of pilgrimage manifest before you. Whoever offered their puja in Ayodhya, or after bathing in the Ganga or Falgu Rivers will attain infinite-fold spiritual merit. One should not be concerned about money, but one should realize that this holy place, this sacred company is all divine. This Sadhu is unattainable even after spending `10 million. Now, since everyone has so enjoyed this pilgrimage, people are thinking about arranging another. But now, we should go on a pilgrimage to the places sanctified by the manifest God—Sarangpur, Gadhada, Gondal, Bhadra, etc.”