

## **Shabrikumbh – towards a massive Hindu awakening**

A huge 'kumbh' (religious gathering) of Hindus is on the cards on February 11, 12 and 13, 2006. Named 'Shabrikumbh' it promises to be an unprecedented assembly of awakened Hindus. The Kumbh will be the culmination of sustained efforts towards awakening the Hindus in general and the vanavasi Hindus in the Dang region of Gujarat in particular.

### ***Vanavasi Hindus – target of Christian missionary offensive***

For long, Bharat has been a special target of the Christian Church worldwide. To the Church, the Hindus represent the greatest stumbling block in their grand design to establish Christ's kingdom on earth. The poor, illiterate, mild Vanvasi Hindu is an obvious target in this nefarious scheme. For years, under the garb of social service, the Church has been spreading its tentacles in far-flung, tribal regions of our country. These converted vanavasis become alienated from their customs and traditions. They get uprooted from their cultural milieu. Conversion to Christianity is invariably associated with separatism and terrorism as is evident in North-East Bharat. There are several areas in our country which have become hotbeds of Christian missionary activity.

The Dang district in Gujarat is one such area. The word 'Dang' is a corruption of 'Dandakaranya', the legendary forest where Sri Rama and Lakhman spent some time while in exile. It is in this region that Shabari Mata, the immortal devotee of Sri Rama met her Lord and lovingly offered him sweet berries which she had tasted herself. The spot where this meeting took place is located on 'Chamak' hill in this region. There is a temple of Shabari Mata at this site. The picturesque Pampa 'sarovar' (lake) is located in this region. Situated on the border of Gujarat and Maharashtra, this district is predominantly inhabited by vanavasi Hindus. The district has 352 villages; the district headquarter is Ahwa. The town of Navapur in Maharashtra is close to the Dang district of Gujarat.

It is pertinent to note that the first church was established in Dang district in 1904. Since then, conversions to Christianity had been progressing at an alarming rate. In the period 1991-2001, the Christian population grew by a massive 400 per cent! The process of self-alienation and separatism which inevitably accompanies conversion had become visible in Dang. Makeshift, illegal churches had mushroomed in cowsheds and residential areas. These churches were unregistered and illegal. Such was the terrorism of Christian activists that it had become unsafe for Hindus to move out of their houses after dusk. It was in the midst of such hostile conditions that a Hindu swami descended upon Dang

### ***Arrival of Swami Aseemananda***

Swami Aseemananda, a Hindu sannyasi heads the 'shraddha vibhag' of the Akhil Bharatiya Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram. For over 50 years, the Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram has been doing yeoman work in the vanavasi regions of Bharat. A Bengali by birth, Swamiji has spent several years in the Andaman and Nicobar islands. His innovative and bold methods in arousing the latent feeling of Hindutva amongst the vanavasis have made him a byword in the field of Hindu awakening. Little wonder then that Christian zealots have made many murderous attempts on his life. Deeply concerned by the Christianization of Dang, Swamiji resolved to stay in Dang and foil the designs of Christian missionaries. It was in August 1997 that this saffron-clad sannyasi set foot in Dang. All that he carried with him in this unfamiliar and hostile terrain were around 500 lockets of 'Hanuman' and an unshakeable resolve! He would knock at the door of each house and would ask the inmates one question, "Are you Hindu or Christian?" At the house of one such Hindu, Swamiji asked him, "May I spend the night in your house?" The Hindu gladly welcomed Swamiji. Swamiji kept his luggage, distributed the 'Hanuman' lockets to the children and asked them to bring their Hindu friends in the evening for a 'Ram katha'. That night, Dang witnessed the first ever 'Dharma sabha'. Sensing danger, Christian missionaries asked Swamiji, "What brings you here?" The Swami posed them the same question. 'We have come here to serve the people" replied the Christian missionaries. "I have come here to drive away those who have come here to serve" retorted the Swami. That was the beginning of the Hindu awakening in the Dangs.

## **Hindu awakening in the Dangs**

In 1998, 25000 Christians embraced the religion of their forefathers in just two months. The submissive Hindu who had been hitherto terrorized by the Christian missionaries began to assert himself. "*Hindu jaage, Christi bhaage*" became a popular slogan of the vanavasis of Dang. From 1998-2004, a total of 55 'Vishal Hindu Sammelans' were organized. These were attended by a total of four lakh Hindus. As Hindus objected to conversion activities of Christian missionaries, clashes broke out. The so-called mainstream media used this pretext to tarnish the Hindus. In December 2004, press reporters from 40 countries descended upon the Dangs and spread a misinformation campaign. As a result, the court restrained the Hindus from conducting any public ceremony around Christmas in future. Meanwhile, the tide of Hindu awakening only swelled. Today, Christian conversion activities have come to a halt not only in Dangs but also in the surrounding twelve districts.

In 2002, Hindu activists approached the famed Ramayana 'kathakar' Sri Morari Bapu and told him, " You mesmerise thousands with Ram Katha. We request you to organize Ram Katha in Dang wher Sri Rama himself spent some time". Sri Morari Bapu readily agreed. The tremendous response overwhelmed Sri Morari . In the course of his speech, he spontaneously expressed the desire that a formal 'kumbh' be organized at the spot where Shabari Mata had met Sri Rama. Sri Morari Bapu's desire was taken up as an order to be implemented. Thus was born the idea of 'Shabari kumbh'.

## **Scale of the 'Shabari Kumbh'**

Organizing a 'kumbh' in a remote, heavily forested area is a nightmare as far as logistics is concerned. It requires steely resolve, meticulous planning and precision to make the programme a grand success. The 352 villages in Dang district had no electricity, or roads; the town of Ahwa is a good 35 km from the proposed site of the 'kumbh' There are no medical facilities or eateries in the vicinity. But the famed organizational might of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other like-minded organizations is in full gear. Realizing the importance of such a venture to the state of Gujarat, the state government of Shri Narendra Modi has extended full co-operation. Planning started atleast one and a half years ago. A 250-200 hectare site has been chosen for the 'kumbh'. The state government has undertaken construction of roads on a war footing. All the 352 villages of Dang have got electrification. A total of 22 check dams have been built on the river that feeds the Pampa 'sarovar' where the holy bath will take place.

A total of 20 lakh vanavasis reside in an area of 80 km around Dang. A survey of 5000 villages in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh was completed in the initial phase. Around 30-35 lakh vanavasis were contacted in this massive exercise. An estimated six lakh Hindus will attend the 'kumbh'; of these, around two lakh are likely to stay for all three days. To arrange for their lodging, 40 townships each with a capacity of 5000 people will be erected. Each township will have 100 workers to look after various arrangements such as security, food, medical aid etc. Thus a total of 4000 workers will be required to look after the arrangements in the townships; an additional 2000 workers will be involved in other arrangements.

About 388 vanavasi 'janajatis' and 137 urban 'jatis' which are currently facing missionary onslaught will be represented at the 'kumbh'. Further, dharmacharyas from all over the country including 800 vanavasi sants will be attending the kumbh and taking part in the deliberations.

Each participant will be given a locket of his 'ishtadevata'; Around 20 lakh lockets, 5 lakh Hanuman chalisa and 5 lakh bhagwa dhvaj will be distributed.

## **Programme**

- 11 February 2006: Sri Morari Bapu, Swami Satyamitanandji Gri (Haridwar)  
Mahila sammelan to be attended by 70-80000 women – to be addressed by Sadhvi Shiva Saraswati
- 12 February 2006: Ma. Sri Sudarshanji, Swami Avdhesananda of Juna Akhada  
Yuvak sammelan
- 13 February 2006: Sadhvi Ritambaraji, Shrimad Shankaracharya of Jyotishpeeth  
water from sacred rivers all over Bharat will be poured in the Pampa sarovar

There will be an exhibition of vanavasi freedom-fighters and heroes as also sixteen vanavasi dance performances, each of 1-2 hours duration on eight different platforms during the 'kumbh'.

### **Budget**

As expected, the budget of this 'kumbh' will run into crores. Even at the rate of Rs. 6 per food plate, the cost of feeding the kumbh participants daily runs into lakhs.

### ***What after the kumbh?***

The kumbh will provide a boost to the Hindu movement in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. In particular, the vanavasi Hindu will get tremendous confidence. The momentum generated by the kumbh is expected to trigger the return of thousands of Christian vanavasi converts back to the Hindu fold.

A disinformation campaign has already been started by the so-called mainstream media. Allegations of damage to the environment are being made. These are totally baseless; fact is not a single tree has been cut. This fact has been written by the district magistrate himself in a letter to the Governor. In fact, the tourism in this area will receive a boost as the Gujarat government plans to make this into a full-fledged tourism spot. Infrastructure in this area has been completed thanks to the kumbh. Building of 22 check dams on the local river will ensure uninterrupted water flow all year around

A permanent hospital will come up near the site of the kumbh which will be devoted mainly to diseases of women.

### ***What we can do?***

Workers in their thousands are required in the arrangements of the kumbh. We can volunteer to spend 7 or 14 or 30 days in the run up to the kumbh

Generous donations are required to meet the expenses of this massive event. The success of this event depends on the active co-operation of all Hindus. All donations are exempt under section 80 G of Income Tax Act. Cheques may be drawn in the name of 'Shri Shabri Kumbh Samaroh Aayojan Samiti'. Donations may be sent to RSS Office, Motibag, Shaniwar Peth, Pune 411030 (tel no. 020-24458080).

Spread the word of the kumbh amongst friends and relatives.

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