

Devi Yatra

with Dr. Roxanne Kamayani Gupta



Devi Yatra: Pilgrimage to the Gooddes

A Uneque Study Tour of India

with Dr. Roxanne Kamayani Gupta

Devi Yatra is the first and only tour designed as a seminar/pilgrimage to sites of Goddess Worship in India. India may be the only civilization on earth whose ancient Goddess traditions have survived intact into the twentieth century.

Visiting sites sacred to Sakti (a term for the Goddess which describes Her basic aspect as primordial power) we will have a rare chance to imbibe Her presence through the power of Her geographic space, darshan (sacred vision) of Her many images, the rasa (aesthetic flavor) of her art, dance and music, meetings with Her devotees, as well as lectures and informal talks with Indian scholars and other religious specialists.



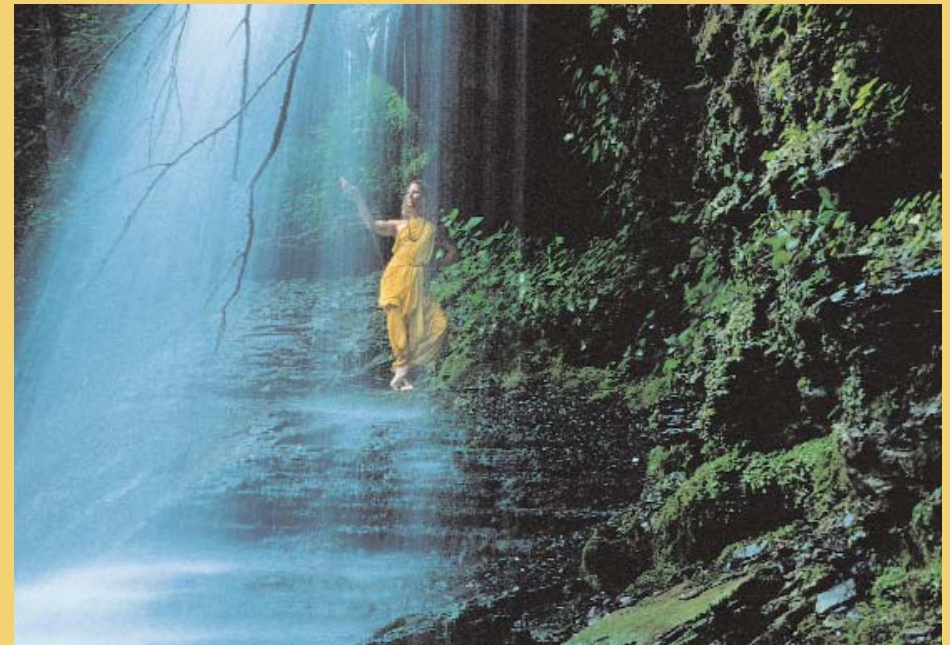
From the busy metropolitan centers of Delhi, Calcutta and Madras, to the magnolia-laden jungles of Devipuram, from early morning sunrise over the Indian Ocean, to evening arati on the River Ganges, we will discover Devi's many aspects as She is worshipped daily in homes, in ashrams and temples, even in caves hidden from public view. We offer an experiential tour with options of yoga and meditation, and other group activities.

If undertaken in a spirit of adventure and openness, I guarantee that Devi Yatra will offer invaluable insights about ourselves, India, and life. The Goddess gives back all that is offered to Her, and more!

My Philosophy of "Tourism"

This tour is a spiritual and educational pilgrimage to selected sites of Goddess worship in India. For this reason, before signing up for such a tour, participants should be aware of the special responsibilities and requirements of a program of this nature. Because we will be coming into contact with Hindu pilgrims, holy men and women, and other types of religious believers, participants must be coemmitted in advance to cultural sensitivity and respect for the native's customs and religions. At many times certain forms of dress and conduct will be required to comply with the tenets of a faith or cultural norm. There may even be some instances where we will not be allowed equal access to religious sites and must accept our status as "outsiders."

As tour leader I will do my best to keep you "clued in" as to what behavior is appropriate for different contexts. Although Indians are a very hospitable people, and a certain amount of accommodation to tourists has recently become more developed in India, the types of experiences we will be seeking will require us to accommodate to India, not the other way around. At the same time, (with the exception of students taking this tour for academic credit) participants are free to choose to participate or not in any of the rituals and activities of the tour provided it does not interfere with the tour activities of the whole group.



Tour Leader

Dr. Roxanne Kamayani Gupta: Travel Experience and Philosophy



Travel Experience

Devi Yatra is a tour designed and led by Roxanne Kamayani Gupta, Ph.D. (Syracuse University) Indian classical dancer, anthropologist of religion and specialist in Tantra, Mother Goddess Worship and Indian Ascetic traditions. She has over twenty-five years experience living, studying, and travelling in India. Her commitment to international education and east-west exchange dates back to her junior year in college which she spent alone on a truly independent study of dance and culture in Hyderabad, South India. Studying under leading gurus of Indian classical dance, taking initiation into kriya, hatha, and tantric yoga traditions, and eventually marrying

into a North Indian family, Roxanne developed an insider's view of Indian culture which laid the foundation for the next twenty five years of her involvement in Indian art and culture.

As on-site director of the New York State Independent College Consortium in 1994 and 98, Roxanne gained invaluable insight into both the promise and challenges of international education in an increasingly global marketplace. She further developed personal and professional contacts in educational, governmental and religious institutions throughout the subcontinent which she puts to good use for the benefit of cross-cultural exchange. In designing and leading Devi Yatra, Roxanne expresses and shares both her love for India, and the Great Goddess: A pilgrimage of discovery and adventure, and insight for individual and planetary healing.

Itinerary

New Delhi, Banaras, Calcutta, Bhubaneshwar, Vishakapatnam, Madras, New Delhi

Sacred Sites, Experiences: With Our Feet on the Earth

As a study tour as well as a spiritual pilgrimage, at each site we will learn as much as possible about each of the forms of the Goddesses we will meet. Upon registering, each participant will be supplied with a bibliography and reading list, and in India will be provided with supplementary articles pertinent to the various places we visit. Dr. Gupta and other specialists in the field will offer regular lectures and discussion group sessions to enhance the total experience. Those taking this tour for academic credit will be provided with a course syllabus outlining the academic requirements of the tour.

Delhi:

January 4-5



We begin our Pilgrimage in Delhi, India's fascinating capital. After a brief orientation, we will at a leisurely pace accustom ourselves to the culture with a tour of the city, including a visit the National Museum with its stunning collection of Goddess images, some dating back to 2500 B.C. We will also go shopping for sarees, shawls, and other appropriate traditional dress for our tour of Goddess Pilgrimage sites.



Banaras: January 6-9

India's holiest city houses some of the most powerful Goddesses in India: While Parvati in the form of Annapurna Devi is the Patroness of the Holy City, this sacred city is also the home of the Durgas, the Matrikas and the Yoginis. We will visit these on foot after traveling by boat up the River Ganges at sunrise. On a hillside in nearby Vindhychal, one of the most important Sakta sites in North India, the powerful



Vindhya Vasini is surrounded by a host of other tantric Goddesses, attended by Brahmins, holy men, and other devotees. We will meet with world famous scholars of Hindu Saktism and experience the hypnotic spell of Hindustani Music. There is no city on earth like Banaras!

Calcutta: January 10-11

Even the taxi drivers in Calcutta are devotees of the Goddess and carry small shrines to her on their dashboards. Welcome to the city crazy for Kali, "the timeless one," affectionately known to the locals as "Ma." We will stay in the Ramakrishna Mission where we will meet the followers of Ramkrishna Paramahansa, one of India's most famous saints, who devoted his life to worship of the Divine Mother. In the old city we will visit Kali Ghat, home of the Original Kali, Her Royal Blackness: an experience not to be missed in this or any other lifetime.



A Note on Luggage:

Due to the nature of this tour, it is strongly recommended that you TRAVEL LIGHT! If possible, I recommend you arrive with a regulation size carry on suitcase with wheels which can convert into a backpack, a smaller day pack and a large folding duffel bag packed into your carryon. You can fill the duffel bag with things you buy and if necessary buy an inexpensive suitcase in India for additional items. Do not overpack! We will be moving from place to place by various modes of transport and nothing will encumber you like material goods. I have seen students upon their departure from India leave behind suitcases full of unused cosmetics and other goods because they had found too many things to fill their suitcases with on their return journey.

Passports and Visas:

Participants are responsible for getting their passports and visas well in advance of departure. Tourist visas are available from the Indian Consulate in New York City or Washington D.C., forms are available on line at <http://www.indianembassy.org/consular/> or by writing (apply 6 weeks prior to journey) to the following address: Visa Section Indian Consulate 3 East 64th St. New York, NY 10021 Please note: You must have 6 months validity left on your passport at time of visa application and the cost of tourist visas are now \$60.

Foreign Exchange:

The U.S. Dollar is equal to approximately 48 Indian rupees. This rate is subject to fluctuation. You can cash major brands of traveller's checks in India and in Delhi you can use an ATM machine. Bring a money belt to use for security purposes.

Language:

We will be traveling in North India where Hindi is spoken. We will be traveling as well in Orissa and Bengal where Oriya and Bengali are spoken, and in Andhra Pradesh where the language is Telugu. Finally, in Tamil Nadu the main language is Tamil. However, English is spoken throughout India and all our tours, seminars, and meetings will be conducted in English.

Cost of tour:

\$3375. Includes all meals, international and domestic transportation and accommodations. I recommend you bring an extra few hundred dollars, if possible, for shopping, etc.

Registration Deadline:

November 6, 2001. At this time you must pay in full for the entire tour. Preregistration: To secure a place on Devi Yatra register any time before November 6, with a deposit of \$500. Deposit is refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$100. if you do not decide to go on the Yatra. Once payment has been made in full, you will forfeit \$1000 if you cancel less than one month ahead. For this and other reasons I again advise participants to buy travel insurance (see above).

Contact: roxannegupta@earthlink.net

Health:

Participants are responsible for contacting their physicians regarding any immunizations which might be required or recommended by the National Center for Disease Control (it changes from year to year and season to season). Immunizations are available in most areas at county health departments. In addition, a tetanus shot is highly recommended. Participants should be in good health from the outset and will be well advised to lead a somewhat prudent lifestyle for the duration of the tour. This means resting when necessary, following precautionary measures regarding food, and refraining from use of intoxicants or drugs.

Special Health Conditions:

Anyone with special health needs or conditions must identify these in writing at the time of registering for this tour and must discuss them in advance with Dr. Gupta.

Weather:

We will be traveling during India's "cool" season. Days will be mostly warm and sunny (although it could rain sometimes) but nights, especially in the North, could get rather chilly and temperatures could go into the 40's even during the day. However, South India, where we will be spending most of our time, will be very pleasant, somewhere in the 80's. You will even be able to swim in the ocean at Mahabalipuram.

Clothing:

I recommend you bring mostly comfortable, hand-washable clothing, a couple of tee-shirts, a jacket and sweater, a few pairs of stretch or sweat pants. This type of clothing will be warm and will double as exercise clothing for those who do yoga, but also will be comfortable for sitting on the floor. If you so desire, choose clothing in shades of red, the traditional color worn by Goddess Pilgrims. This is an Indian custom that will readily identify us as a group of pilgrims and will lend cohesion to our group. Men should bring one cotton dress pant and shirt in addition to more informal dress. Women will easily find dress outfits to buy in India where the markets are overflowing with beautiful and inexpensive clothes, scarves, and shawls. We will schedule a shopping trip at the beginning of the tour to orient you to the traditional dress. In any case, women's clothing, whether Indian or not, should be long, loose and non-revealing to avoid sexual harassment. Men are advised not to wear shorts in public. For footwear, bring a few pairs of warm cotton or lightweight wool socks, a pair of sneakers or lightweight boots and a pair of sturdy sandals (like Birkenstocks) that can be worn with or without socks. Many good sandals and shoes are available in India as well at reasonable prices.

Suggested Items:

a towel, a compact sleeping bag, a small flashlight, mosquito repellent, sunscreen, bandaids, antibiotic cream, aspirin, deodorant (all other toiletries are available in India). A notebook (journal), small tape recorder, camera, videocamera, jackknife, small items and mementos to give away to Indian friends or children you might meet on the trip - for example your favorite cassette music tapes, small toys, pens and pencils, cosmetics, etc. Voltage in India is 220 DC and a converter is necessary for all electronic goods.



Bhubaneswar: January 12-13

Some of India's most gorgeous temples are to be found here in a style of architecture unique to Orissa. Many are resplendent with images of the Goddess in her dancing, martial, or erotic moods. After visiting these local temples, we will travel by bus to a village shrine, to another rare site-the temple of the 64 Yoginis, and finally the famous Sun Temple at Konarak. Our special guide for this part of the tour will be the world-renowned art historian and pioneer of Women's Spirituality Studies, Dr. Elinor Gadon, best known as the author of the classic *The Once and Future Goddess*.

Vishakapatnam: January 14-18



We travel to this site, off the beaten path of most tours, to undertake a seminar in Sri Vidya tantra at the lovely desert ashram of Devipuram ("Abode of the Goddess"). Devipuram is the only temple in the world to be built in the shape of the Sri Chakra, the three dimensional geometric form of the Universal Feminine Energy. We will be hosted

by Devipuram founded Guru Amritanandanatha Saraswati and his wife Annapurna Devi. Guruji is a rare example of an Indian Renaissance man: retired nuclear physicist, Sanskrit Scholar, Social worker, and visionary mystic madly in love with the Divine Mother. We will attend a series of mind-expanding lectures by Guruji, learn the basic principles and meditational techniques of Hindu Saktism and participate in rites of the Goddess Rajarajeshwari, "The Goddess Who Rules the Rulers." We will also visit the nearby Simhachalam Temple, the Vishakha Devi Temple and other sites in the city on the Ocean, and witness a Kuchipudi classical dance program dedicated to the Goddess of Devipuram.

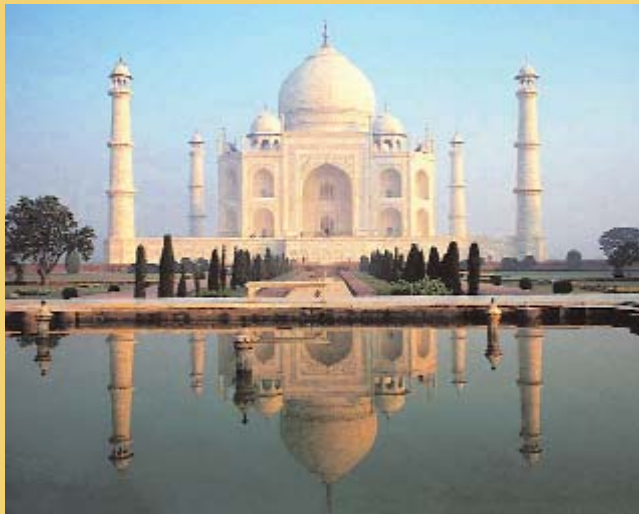




Madras and Mahabalipuram: January 19-22

During our stay in and near this Queen City of the South, we will visit the city's most famous Goddess temples, sample its world-famous cuisine and then head for the beach where we will stay in a lovely sea-side resort.

From Madras we will travel to Melamaruvathur, site of Adhiparasakthi Siddha Peetha, one of South India's fastest growing Goddess communities where worship of the mother is integrated into service to society, and Auroville, site of the Mother's Temple. In Mahabalipuram, we will attend Bharata Natyam (classical dance) performances and visit Dakshina Chitram, South India's premier folk culture museum featuring stunning examples of South Indian handicrafts, textiles and architecture.



Departure from Delhi: January 23-24

We return to Delhi to wind up our pilgrimage with shopping and a day of rest before departure. As no trip to India is quite complete without a visit to India's Seventh Wonder of the World, we offer you an optional day trip to the Taj Mahal in Agra. On our last evening we will hold our farewell banquet at one of the many world-class restaurants of New Delhi.

Participate Enrollment and Preparation for Devi Yatra

A Personal note on Tourism and Terrorism:

How does the current world climate affect travel abroad? Many people, especially those with little travel experience abroad, fear that it might not be safe to travel in these times and this becomes a point for consideration. In India, political conflict is confined to two areas, the Northwestern region of Kashmir near the Pakistani border, and in Gujarat, near the Western coast. Our tour is not going anywhere near either of these regions and we will see that just as most Americans are living their lives normally despite the government warnings of further terrorist attacks, so too do millions of Indian people continue to go about their daily business with faith and purpose. Of course there is never any guarantee--when we leave the country, the state, or even our homes in the morning--that nothing will happen to us. Each of us must decide for ourselves the risks we are willing to take in our interactions in the world. I offer this tour in the belief that individuals who are willing to take a reasonable risk by stepping outside their normal boundaries, and reaching out to another culture, will gain as I have, rich rewards of insight and experience.

-Roxanne Kamayani Gupta, Tour Leader

Departure for Devi Yatra:

From Newark International Airport on January 3rd at an evening flight time indicated on your ticket. You will receive your ticket within ten days of registering for Devi Yatra (you may need a copy of it to apply for the tourist visa). In addition, you are responsible for your own transportation to and from Newark or New York International Airport. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND travel insurance, in case you have to cancel your trip after registering or encounter other difficulties including serious illness on the tour which necessitates your leaving India early. This is available from Access America International.

Transportation:

While in India we will travel by train (2nd class AC) and plane (see itinerary), and on site in vans, taxis or buses.

Accommodations:

In cities, we will stay in guest houses and/or quality hotels (rather than luxury hotels) where the food is hygienically prepared. In Devipuram we will stay in an ashram where the accommodations are natural and charming but somewhat rustic. For this reason, and for convenience on trains as well, we ask you to bring a compact sleeping bag. Participants should be fairly physically fit and prepared for an adventurous time as opposed to a cushy "armchair" tour that never engages the realities of life in the country one is visiting.