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Earth Vessel Pilgrimage, The journey continued

My fellow pilgrims,

After a days rest from our footprints tour, the remaining group consisting of Marge, Carolyn, Shantum, and myself left the hotel at 3 AM to catch the train to Haridwar (the remaining journey didn't get less challenging). On the train Cynthia had her money, passport, ID and plane ticket home stolen. After we all recovered from the shock, Cynthia's determination and Shantum's capacity to handle difficult situations got us back on track to complete our mission to bury the Earth vessel. Jugdish joined us in Haridwar in NW India to began our second pilgrimage to the source of the Ganges. His warm vibrations restored my mood after our shaky start.

I think our first night was spent at an ashram run by a Mr. Surry (the days seemed to run together but I'll attempt to stay in chronological order). He was a kindly gentleman preparing to sell his house to reside in a cave for spiritual practices. We visited a lady from England named Nani Ma revered as a saint. The advice she gave which meant the most to me was that before anyone can accomplish the big stuff in healing the earth one must work to remove their own impurities to be an effective agent for change.

The following day we traveled on winding mountains roads around hair rising turns through pine forests and glowing red rhododendron bushes. We arrived at A small village and checked in at the local "hotel" before setting out again to scout for sites to bury the vessel. We were turned back about 13 miles from the traditional source of the Ganges at Gangotri because of hazardous road conditions (black ice) and snow. Immediately beside the van at the end point of our journey I found a rock shaped in a perfect heart, which I brought home for my wife Carole along with other treasures.

The next day we after total emersion in the Ganges by Shantum and Jugdish. (I had taken mine at a hot springs the day before), the rest of us waded in a ceremonial cleansing ritual. Following that we let intuition guide us to the Perfect spot to burry the vessel containing all our prayers. Mission accomplished!

On the journey home we stopped again at Mr. Surry's ashram and enjoyed his hospitality along with a fine meal. Setting out again the next morning

we arrived at the confluence of the Alaknanda River, which we had been previously following to the Ganges source and the Bhagirathi River where they combine to make the official Ganges. A few miles downstream we visited Shantums property which he plans to build a retreat. Cynthia, Shantum, and myself climbed down a rugged slope to take a final swim in the Ganges. The water was clean, refreshing, and rejuvenating. The warm sun quickly dried us and we were soon underway to Jugdish's home.

Jugdish owns a hotel called Shangri-La. Besides having the opportunity to meet his wife and child, I got to stay in his place named after the mythical place portrayed in Lost Horizons. Although located in Tibet in the book, I've always yearned to go there. Wouldn't you know that India would manifest it for me? In front was the most perfectly formed Bodhi tree I saw in my travels in India.

The next morning we left for our last stop, the luxurious Glass House hotel. On a secluded spot on the Ganges we enjoyed fine food and wandered through their beautiful gardens. The next day we departed at noon to catch the afternoon train back to Delhi. We had what I coined our last supper together as shown in my picture. In crossing over The Ganges on a foot bridge to our restaurant we encountered many monkeys close up. I couldn't get my camera to work DAMN! We boarded the train and arrived at the Claridges in Delhi late that night. We gave one another sleepy hugs and said our last goodbyes.

The next day Carolyn and I went to the national museum filled with tens of thousands of statues and ancient artifacts, but my only desire was to see the Buddha's relics unearthed in the burial stupa at Kapilavastu. I felt a deep sense of awe and reverence being in the presence of the relics once a part of such a high being as the Buddha. In my picture on the last page you can clearly see his white bone fragments inside the glass enclosing them.

Shantum invited me to join his family and friends to celebrate Holi the next day where everyone sprays one another good-naturedly with colorful dyes to celebrate the arrival of spring. Shantum's wife presented another fine meal and I reluctantly said my final goodbyes.

The next day I was alone again as I was when I first arrived on March 3rd. I looked forward to seeing Carole and enjoying the physical comforts of home. I flew home the next morning and when I arrived at the airport she greeted me with a hug and a chocolate milkshake. And yes, she loves and treasures the heart rock.

May you all have wonderful lives
full of peace and contentment,

Bowing with palms together,

Paul