Temples of Dharmarth Trust
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The Dharmarth Trust of Jammu is more than a hundred years old. It was founded in 1846 by Gulab Singh, founder-ruler of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, with a personal grant of half a million rupees (about US$ 20,000) - a big amount in those days. It is the largest Hindu trust in northern India and one of the oldest in the whole of this country entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that the temples and shrines do not suffer the vagaries of nature or fall to the rapacity of art vandals.

By good fortune, even the trust's dozen temples in war-torn Kashmir remain unharmed. The temple priests have unfortunately been forced to flee the area, however Hindu members of the Indian Army are continuing the rituals.

The trust is managing about 175 temples and shrines all over the country, most located in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

What makes the trust important and distinguishable is the fact that it is presided over by Dr. Karan Singh, an eminent Vedic scholar and politician. He told HINDUISM TODAY, "I feel happy that I am able to work for the protection and preservation of India's glorious heritage symbolized in its magnificent temples."

The trust not only renovates old temples and new ones, but also propagates Sanatana Dharma, establishes Sadavrats, Gaushalas (cow shelters) and schools where education imparted to children is based on spirituality.

Inspired by his father, Gulab Singh, Ranhir Singh built several new temples in his state. Among them are the magnificent Shri Raghunath temple complex, the unique Ranbireshwar temple, Shri Gadadharji temple and Maha Laxmi Narain temple. Jammu, where most of these places of worship are located, has come to be known as the "City of Temples."

Grandson of Gulab Singh and the father of Dr. Karan Singh was Hari Singh. He was a progressive ruler. He wanted everybody to pray at the temples. He therefore threw open their doors for all in 1932, even for the untouchables called harijans. In 1935 he separated the Dharmarth Trust from the state government and vested its management in a body called Dharmarth Council. He appointed Dr. Karan Singh in January, 1959, as the Sole Trustee of the Dharmarth Trust.

A politician, erudite scholar, author of a number of books, an orator of international repute and a great exponent of Indian philosophy and culture, Dr. Karan Singh has taken upon himself the role of roving ambassador of the Hindu religion carrying the message of the Vedas from one end of the globe to the other. Under his guidance the trust has achieved a multi-dimensional complexion and has made a debut in Delhi, the capital of the country, with the foundation of the Ramayan Vidyapeeth. It has emerged as an important center of religious, social and cultural activities.

A temple of Lord Siva at Sudhmahadev, where, according to legend, He married Parvati, attracts a large number of pilgrims from different parts of the country. The Mahakali temple at Sarthal in Doda district, at a height of about 7,000 feet above sea level, is a central place of pilgrimage for the people of the entire hilly area.

In the Valley of Kashmir, the shrine of Kheer Bhavani is a sacred place for Kashmiri Hindus. The temple is situated in a spring of milky water. From its top one can have a panoramic view of the entire valley. On the hill is also a Siva temple which was visited by Adi Sankaracharya.

The Siva temples at Pahelgam and Gulmarg are so beautiful that they are seldom missed by the tourists visiting the valley. The cave of Swami Amarnath where the snow Lingam of Lord Shiva waxes and wanes with the moon is also under the management of the Dharmarth Trust.

Outside the Jammu and Kashmir state, the temples under the management of the Dharmarth Trust are Shri Raghunathji temple, Pehwa (Kurukshetra), Shiva temple at Kankhal (Haridwar), Shri Raghunathji temple at New Delhi and Shivaji temple at Varanasi.

The Dharmarth Trust is running a Sanskrit College at Birpur in Jammu where students are given free food and lodging. To produce persons qualified to perform Vedic rituals, the trust is running classes at Birpur, Haridwar, New Delhi and Varanasi. In the past few years the trust has produced more than 200 qualified pandits.

For the benefit of pilgrims the trust is managing travel lodges at Bhadarwah, Kishtwar, Sarthal, Ramban, Ramnagar, Gulmarg, Pahelgam, Jammu and Varanasi. The trust also grants merit scholarships to Sanskrit students of schools, colleges and universities. Liberal financial aid is given for the maintenance of cow shelters. The weaker sections of the society receive particular attention.

The trust takes pride in managing the Ranbir Sanskrit Research Institute at Jammu with a collection of over 7,000 rare manuscripts and an equal number of printed publications. The institute attracts scholars from within and outside the country. For the propagation of Indian philosophy, the trust is bringing out a quarterly magazine entitled Dharma Marg, in Hindi and English.

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