



Mahadham

Mahimohan Tripathy

It is generally accepted as tradition that Adi Sankaracharya founded four *mathas* (monasteries) as seats of Hindu religion at four ends of India- the Sringeri *matha* on the Sringeri hills in the south, the Sharada *matha* on the Dwaraka coast in the west, the Badrinath *matha* at Badrinath in the north, the Govardhan *matha* at Puri in the east. These are the four major spiritual centres of Hinduism in India.

Swami Nigamananda (1880-1935AD), a great saint of modern India, after his initiation into *sanyasa*, was instructed by his *guru* Swami Sachidananda to visit all these spiritual centres (*dhamas*) to realize the deeper significance of the four great sayings of *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Each *dhama* is known for a *mahavakya* (great saying), which has to be understood and realized by each *sanyasin*.

He visited first to Badrinath accompanying his *guru* Swami Sachidananda. They stayed in the Jyoti *matha* (i.e. the Badrinath *matha*) for some days. The great ancient sage, Vyasadeva had meditated in Badrinath (also known as *Badrikashram*). Here Nigamananda was taught by his *guru* the method of realizing the great saying, *Ayatma Brahman* which means 'This Self is *Brahman*'.

Swami Nigamananda continued his journey without his *guru*. He visited the Sarada *matha* near the Dwarakadhish temple. This is

the *dham*, where the *mahavakya* of *Samveda*, *Tatwam Asi* (Thou Art That) has to be realized. After staying some days there, the Swami visited Rameswar and Sringeri. In this place(Sringeri), a vedic sage has to realize the significance of the saying of *Yajurveda*, *Aham Brahmanmi* (I am One 'With Brahman).

His last journey was, of course, to Puri. Puri is also known as *Nilachaladham*, *Purusottama dham* and *Jagannath dham*. Rigvedic *mahavakya* '*Pragyanam Brahman* (or *Pragyanam Ananda Brahman*) is to be realized in this place. In other three monasteries, the soul is equated with *Brahman*, but here the real identity and nature of *Brahman* is to be realized.

Swami Nigamananda visited these four *dhamas* and realized the great sayings of the scriptures through intense *sadhana*. He attached more importance to *Jagannath dham*. He established a spiritual organization named as *Nilachala Saraswat Sangha* at Puri in August, 1934 and became its President. *Brahman*, the ever blissful, has manifested as *Daru-Brahman-Jagannath*. Another great saint, Yogiswara Kalipad (1902-1966 A.D.) has stated that Puri, the abode of *Daru Brahman*, is a *Mahadham*.

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