

# Pangs of Partition: Why is Kataraj inaccessible to pilgrims?

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The Post-modern and post-liberated Indian order is a system of 'dot.com' and deadly weapons, loud showbiz and subtle manoeuvres, material revolution and moral degradation, glossy smiles and under-current machinations. So, in this paradoxical and cacophonous ambience, what does a visit to a shrine, and that too of a high order and mythological significance, like one of Kataraj (Pakistan), signify?

Before one delves deep into the philosophical and historical significance of this pious journey, a little description about mythological allusions of the place is very much called for. Along the salt ranges, almost at a distance of three hundred kilometres from the capital city Lahore, a religious place of Hindus named Katar is situated in the Chakwal district. It also finds its description in Mahabharata, an epic, written by sage Vedvyas, before 300 BC. The place 'Katar' has some mythological connotations. According to a tradition of Brahmanas, at the time of the death of Devi Parvati, Lord Shiva burst into tears which took the form of lakes - one Pushkar of Ajmer, and the second, Katarasheel. In the Sanskrit language, Katarasheel means a stream of tears which gradually came to be pronounced as 'Katar' over a period of time. Alberuni, a noted historian and scholar, came to stay here to get an education of the language as the place had the distinction of having a university of Linguistics at that time. Not only this, he wrote his world popular book 'Kitab-el-Hind', a scholarly and critical treatise on various religions, scientific books and social customs of India during his sojourn at this place. He not only had many rich, varied and rewarding experiences in the field of education, but also succeeded in discovering the diameter of the earth.

In this background of Katar being a centre of knowledge and learning, and Mecca for Indian pilgrims, a visit to this place assumes great significance.

If not much, it is at least a purposive break from the monotonous worldly routine and a person's move towards his quest for his real roots. It reflects an introspection to have a relook on the course of the life traversed so far. If one goes a bit deeper, there is no denying the fact that the very concerted decision to set out for this sort of transboundary pilgrimage embodies not only denial of dominance of materialistic mentality, abhorance for epicurean tendencies, rancour against the prevalent hedonistic humdrum, **but also a strong inner urge for spiritual strengthening of one's soul leaving behind this transitory and ephemeral world.**

But mere visits to such a place of religious, historical and mythological significance, or turning them into an annual ritual, is not going to serve the purpose, as the things are at their low ebb there. What could be more pitiable and shameful than to find the shrines without the deities! It reflects nothing but the callous insensitivity of people towards their religion. The dilapidated remains of the glorious past tells the tales of apathetic attitude of local administration towards the preservation and protection of religion and cultural heritage. It also casts strictures on the character and religious sentiments of the people of the region who are laying off their responsibilities of restoring their faith in India's culture, which rather should be a driving force in their lives. Despite all the limitations of belonging to a minority class, the Hindus should run the gauntlet to the fact of losing their identity by merging and

eclipsing into the dominant class and so emerge out as one tolerant, co-existent and powerful social entity. The Hindu minority in Pakistan should seek the co-operation and assistance from their brethren around the globe to reconstruct the lost glory of the place called Katakshel. More visits like this can not only set off the process of re-establishment of the lost grace of this holy sanctum-sanctorum but can also cement the across-border relationship too. Nankana Sahib is a good example.

It is high time that we rejuvenate our religious sentiments and usher in an era of religious renaissance as it is only through religion that one can hope to get deliverance from the modern social ills and political problems. Only religion can act as a saviour for human beings, irrespective of caste, creed and colour, by keeping them away from all ills that may infest their mind, body and soul and so prevent them from falling into the danger of turning into an unhappy, grumbling, discontented and confused lot. It enables them to be in touch with their real self and rids them of all the potential perils of falling prey to consumerism and materialism.

This type of visit will not only resurrect political relationship through individual interaction, but also provide one an inducement to realize his godly *persona* visualising that Supreme Power within him, whose benign influence has come under the spate of modern scepticism, pseudo-logicality and self-centricism.

