

Creating a Sacred Space

By Rama Berch, C.S.Y.T., E-RYT

Published in Vision Magazine, San Diego CA, June 1996

You cannot create a sacred space because God already did. You are in it right now. No matter where you are as you read this, it is a sacred space. Probably you were not paying attention to this aspect of your surroundings. There are things you can do to heighten your attentive abilities. There are also things you can do to make the sacredness of a place more tangible. Yoga is a science of consciousness that offers ways to do both. But the place where you are now is already sacred, and so are you.

A sacred place is wherever people notice that quality or feeling that we call "sacred." The key is people. All you really need is to notice that quality or feeling which is everywhere, including inside yourself. You are yourself a sacred space.

A young man decided to go on pilgrimage, though he came from a poor family. He set out on foot, knowing it would take two years or more to walk all the way to Mecca. Having very little money, he relied on the generosity of the people who lived in the villages along the way. The villagers knew that feeding a pilgrim would give them all the benefits of making the trip themselves. He had traveled only three days when he met an old man who was dressed strangely, with many layers of shabby clothing even in summer heat. The eyes of this old man glowed with an inner fire that could only mean that he was either mad or that he had given himself over completely to God.

They shared a tree, waiting out the midday heat in the leafy shade. The young man tried to start a conversation several times, but the old man was not talkative. As the heat abated, the young man explained he would be on his way because his journey was a long one and he could not waste time. "Ha!" cried the old man, "Your trip is the real waste of time!" Horrified at this sacrilege, the young man began to hurry away from this madman. "Go! Go!" shouted the old man, "Hurry through all the days of your life until you die like a dog sucking on a dry bone. Hurry, hurry. And see what you get for all your hurry."

The young man slowed his step and turned to look again, recognizing the truth in the old man's words. He asked, "What should I do instead?" The old man said, "How many coins do you have in your pocket for your trip?" "Three silver and one gold coin." "Give them to me," demanded the old man, "and do your holy walk around me three times, instead of around the stone. You will save yourself all the years of travel and many blisters on your feet."

The young man, without really knowing why, complied with the strange command. He handed over all of his money and walked around the holy man three times. Then his face changed. A hint of a smile played on his lips as his eyes filled with a brightening glow. He said, "Now I know. I know that which cannot be found on any road, but only within the human heart. I have no need to travel on. But, please, may I stay with you?" The holy man smiled quietly, and gave the boy back his coins, "Go home. Take what you now know, and live your life in full. You will give to others by being what you are. You do not need me any more."

People travel great distances on pilgrimage to many famous places including Mecca, the River Ganga, Jerusalem, Lourdes, the Pyramids, Ayers Rock in Australia, and more. Whatever you find there is just a finding of the sacred inside yourself.

This inner place is what you actually find when you go to a place of pilgrimage, to a quiet place in nature, or to a place of worship. You use the surroundings to trigger your innate capacity to notice something that is always present. You do not have to travel across an ocean to find an environment that will trigger your experience of the sacred. Find it inside. Do more yoga.