



Journey to

# Muktinath Kailash Manasarovar

**Vani Satyananda**



Govt. Regd. No.-13732/057/58  
**Kailash Journeys (p) Ltd.**  
Lainchaur-29, Kathmandu, Nepal.  
Tel: 977-1-4439533, 4427785  
E-mail: info@kailashjourneys.com  
Website: www.kailashjourneys.com



**A JOURNEY TO MUKTHINATH –KAILASH -MANSARAVOR**  
**SOME FEELINGS EXPRESSED**

BY



**KANCHIBOTLA SATYANANDA VANI**

Lecturer in Commerce, Govt. Junior College for Girls,

Maredpally , Secunderabad.

### **Fore note**

First and foremost, I wish to thank God for giving me the power to believe in myself. It is this power which has helped me in pursuing my dreams. I could not have done anything without this power from above. My whole journey started with this faith in that Supreme power, which we usually refer to as GOD. “How numerous you have made your wondrous deeds, O Lord, our God! And in our plans for us, there is none to equal you, Should I wish to equal or tell them, they would be too many to recount”. I fully agree to these lines.

A pilgrimage is a journey or search of something we can't express in any form; it may have moral or spiritual significance. Mostly, it is a journey to be with our own self, a search for within. It may be going to a shrine or other location of importance, to a person's belief and faith. It may be spending a part of your life with the Nature, which is so close yet so unknown. Nature is the best teacher and the best healer for all our wounds, physical and spiritual. We cannot understand nature till the time we stop doubting it. The moment we stop doubting, there is nothing to understand. We become a part of it. We don't doubt ourselves. Although sometimes it can be a metaphorical journey into someone's own beliefs, it gives an opportunity to know our self within. We have to be ready to see ourselves and God in all the things, living and non-living, which we come across during our journey. Only then the journey will become a pilgrimage for us.

## **KAILASH MANASAROVAR YATRA**

Kailash Manasarovar Yatra. The name itself sends vibes in the entire body. Yes, and what when, one attains this goal and is back home. No words are enough to explain the feelings. But gathering all the inner strength, and with the blessings of all, I am trying to pen down my experiences of this, once in a life time achievement i.e., Kailash Manasarovar Yatra. Hope all those, going through this article, will also travel along with me on a virtual trip. While writing this article, if am going more and more in detail anywhere, I request the readers to pardon me, for, sometime I may be lost there and it will take time for me to come back. So please bear with me.

In the year 2014, during one of the discussions with our relatives, the topic of Kailash Manasarovar Yatra came up. It was then, that I made up my mind to do this yatra in the year 2015. I discussed this with my husband, KLN Raju, and he readily agreed for it. I started laying the foundation for this most memorable pilgrimage of our lifetime.

As days passed, the thoughts of Kailash Manasarovar Yatra started taking deeper roots in my mind. Day in day out I was always thinking of this, and only this yatra. I started all my trials, to make this trip, the most successful one I had ever made.

First, I enquired from persons who had already been to this yatra, regarding the total cost for this trip. After satisfying myself that I could make it within the next one year, I was happy with it.

In the meanwhile, the time of Intermediate examinations approached and I had to fulfill my duties there. While we were waiting for the question papers to arrive at the Police Station, to kill time, all the staff deputed there, were discussing all topics under the sky. The topic of KailashManasarovarYatra also came up. Then and it was Mrs. K.Durga Bhavani ,Civics lecturer from Kasturba College, who instantly came up with her interest in joining us for this trip, along with her husband Mr. K.Rambabu garu. M.V.Satyavani, Economics lecturer, from Railway junior college heard about our plans and expressed her interest and joined us. My neighbours Mrs. Kasi.V.Rao and his wife Mrs. Padmavathi Vempati also joined us, thus taking the group's number to seven. The number did not stop here as my husband's maternal uncle, Mr. Kota Sreerama Sarma, joined. This inspired Mr. M.V.Kameshwar Rao, from Income Tax Department, a friend and colleague of Sri. K.Sreerama Sarma joined along with his wife Mrs. M.Rajyalakshmi.

At this stage, I was not alone to dream about this spiritual journey. Nine more souls joined me, strengthening my will power to take this task ahead.

Now the real pressure started for me. All the 10 members of our group had only one common link and that was "ME". So I had to take up the responsibility of coordinating all the persons in the group at all times, for all the works and discussions.

Initially I thought that, it would not be much of a burden, as each one will be paying for themselves and will be taking care of themselves. But as time passed by and I started my job of leading the team, I realized that it was not as easy task as I thought it would be. But the whole hearted cooperation of all the members of the group, especially Bhavani and Rambabu garu, motivated me to fulfill my job and helped me in achieving the goal.

Now my duty to organize this tour started. My first job was to find out a perfect tour operator. I was not ready to compromise at any stage, as this is considered to be a very tough journey and any lapse anywhere, may show its effect on the entire journey. Hence, I started browsing the net to find out the best tour operator who can make our journey the most memorable one. I started the work on computer, which continued on and on, for one thing or the other, till the day we left for Kathmandu on the **23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2015**. One loooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooong ...year.

After careful observation, and going through all the reviews of the earlier yatris, who had gone with different tour operators, I felt that our tour of Kailash Manasarovar Yatra with Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd. would be the best for us and I contacted them over e-mail.

I informed them about our group's wish to go to Kailash Manasarovar Yatra with Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd. I gave them the details of all the members in the group. They were very encouraging and assured me of extending all the best facilities to us which were in their preview.

Thus started our primary steps towards our life's holiest and most enthusiastic journey .....  
The journey to Kailash Manasarovar.

At my request, I got the itinerary and booking forms from Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd. for the year 2015 yatra. We opted for overland tour as it would be economical for all of us. As we were ready to book one year in advance, the tour operators offered the tour at concessional price and also in four equal installments. Initially, we wanted to start on **June 14<sup>th</sup> 2015**. But later we changed the date to **May 24<sup>th</sup> 2015** as it would be a full moon batch and we wanted to make full use of this spiritual journey. With this batch we can be there at Manasarovar Lake on the Full moon day i.e. on the **2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2015**.

In the last week of August, I made the first payment ( non-refundable deposit) of Rs. 10,000/- each (which later increased to Rs.(15,000/-) in Axis bank at Marredpally. I was very excited to have started the payment for our journey. I looked at the counterfoils again and again. Each time I saw them, my interest in the trip increased manifold. After I reached home, I scanned the counterfoils and sent them to the concerned authorities of Kailash journeys Pvt. Ltd. at Kathmandu. I mailed the booking forms along with the list of the documents required to all the members of the group and asked them to send me the filled in forms and copies of the required documents at their earliest. I got

all the forms and documents from all in the next two days. I sent them to Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd. and got the acknowledgement from them for the same.

I booked the flight tickets from Hyderabad-New Delhi-Kathmandu for all ten of us. The return tickets from Kathmandu- New Delhi- Hyderabad were booked only for six persons as, me and my husband along with Bhavani and Rambabu garu decided to go to Guwahati from New Delhi, have the darshan of Kamakhya Shakthipeet and return to Hyderabad from Kolkata. So, I booked our Guwahati and Kolkata tickets also along with the return tickets from Kolkata to Hyderabad for four of us. In this way, the entire journey's tickets were confirmed and everyone paid their share to me, for the bookings done on their behalf.

During September and October 2015, we paid our first and second installments. I started collecting the information over net, regarding the things we need to carry for this yatra. I checked the reviews and blogs of other travelers, from where I got lots of information. Dos and Don'ts also I could know from the blogs of other travelers, who had been there earlier. Shivender was the person in India, who was entrusted the work to guide us all, till we reach Kathmandu. Shivender did a commendable job for all of us and we all are thankful to him.

I prepared the list of items which we need, for this journey. I enquired for the places where I can get them at reasonable prices but, at the same time, did not want to compromise on quality. From here, I started my online shopping, which continued till the day we left for the yatra. I shopped online not only for me, but for other members of the group also.

There will be ups and downs in every plan. Each plan takes a turn in its own way. Even ours was no exception to this rule. The month of December 2015, the time to pay our third installment, saw only eight members paying their due. Mr. Kasi.V. Rao and Mrs. Padmavathi Vempati had to withdraw because of their health reasons. With a painful heart, all of us had to accept the situation, as, for undertaking this yatra, one cannot compromise with health. Thus the first dropout started in the group. I informed the situation to Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd. authorities at Kathmandu and asked them to refund the amount to them. They agreed to it and refunded the amount after due verification.

Come New Year 2015. It brought along with it, loads of enthusiasm for all of us. We started shopping for the long awaited tour, in which, my son Kapil Srivatsa helped me. He guided me to places where I can get quality goods at reasonable prices for this yatra. Following his suggestion, we all went to Decathlon store near Rajiv Gandhi International Airport at Shamshabad. This is the place from where we bought most of the stuff, like sleeping bags, thermals, pants, jackets, water bottles, socks, gloves, hats, masks, pullovers, wind sheeters, etc. etc. and what not. We collected a lot of stuff as we never wanted to take any chance there, where mostly the weather conditions may drop to minus degrees also. In this month we paid our fourth and final installment to the Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd. and felt very relaxed after making the full payment for this yatra.

In the last week of January 2015, M V Satyavani called me and asked me whether a friend of hers Mrs. Padma Velamuri could join our team. I told her that anyone can join as it is not me or anyone who would be deciding who has to come for this yatra. If it is God's wish, then they will surely join. Thus Padma Velamuri joined the group by paying the full amount at a time. I booked the flight tickets for her in the same flight by which we were going and coming. I sent her the booking form and got the filled in form from her immediately, which I sent to the Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd persons at Kathmandu.

We all started our countdown for the yatra to start on the **24<sup>th</sup> of May**. Meanwhile, in the month of March 2015, Mr. E Radhakrishna, a friend of my relative, contacted me and requested me to take him into the group for this yatra. I agreed to his request and asked him to fulfill all the requirements by sending the filled in forms and document copies. As I was busy with my Intermediate examinations, I asked him to deposit the amount on his own and send the receipt copy to my mail, as Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd. will not accept it individually if you are in a group. I scanned the receipt and sent it to the Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd. Mr. Radhakrishna came down to my house along with his daughter and grand-daughter, to know his future course of action in this regard. I could see the happiness in his eyes in each and every word he spoke. He was full of enthusiasm and even brought along with him, a bag and other things which he wished to bring along with him. He wanted to show all the things to me. At that point, he seemed like a happy child who got what he wanted. With his joining the group, we again became a group of ten persons. The two dropout places were filled by Padma and Radhakrishna.

On Ugadi day, we had a small get together at my brother's place. Since past few years this tradition is continuing. My sister, Annapurna, will read out the year's "Panchangam" for all of us before dinner and we all enjoy a lot. This year they brought a Panchangam authored by some new person. I was not happy with it and I asked them for the regular one. They said they had only that and they continued with it. When my sister started reading my rasiphalam (predictions), it stated that any foreign travel, which I plan that year will not materialize. My brother, ASR Murthy, warned me and asked me to rethink me about my Kailash yatra. I was totally upset and became very sad, as by now, I was totally immersed in the preparation for Kailash Manasarovar Yatra. This prediction washed away all my dreams and I could not take it anymore. I shouted at all of them and asked them not to continue reading of my rasiphalam, as I was not happy with the book, from which my sister was reading out since the beginning of this session. They stopped reading mine, but continued with others. The prediction, created a fear in some corner of my mind. I always comforted myself saying that, it was less than a month and nothing can stop me from going. I prayed many Gods to make my dream a reality.

April second week of 2015 saw another member Mrs. Shubhada Devi from Kakinada, sister of E Radhakrishna joining the group by paying the full amount and fulfilling all the required formalities. Thus we became eleven in our group now. I thought that the team is full now and there is hardly any time left for us to start our journey. Hence I started packing the bags for a very tough, sacred and adventurous journey of my lifetime.

The saying "Man proposes and God disposes", proved right for us at this stage. On the **25<sup>th</sup> of April 2015** the television sets in our homes gave us all a big shock. The news of the earthquake in Nepal not only had effect on the people of Nepal but it also affected us. The tremors were felt in the minds and hearts of each and every one in our group. It crashed the dreams of many like us who were all set to start on this holy pilgrimage. We all could not come to terms for a very long time and all of us were in great shock. Not only were we worried about the money which would be held up with the tour operators, but more than that we were worried about our longtime dream, which was not going to be fulfilled, as all the tours were cancelled by the Nepal and Tibet Governments.

Phone calls, messages, enquiries, suggestions, and what not. These were pouring from all corners of the world. The first phone call was from my brother, A S R Murthy saying, "Look now, what happened. You were angry over the prediction on Ugadi day. Didn't it turn out to be true? Now relax and don't worry. Be happy that this did not happen while you were on your tour." These were the

words from my brother, after he heard the news about the earthquake in Nepal. There was sarcasm, concern and solace, all mixed up in his message. I could not take it anymore and I very firmly replied that no earthquake or anything can stop us from going on this yatra. I myself don't know, from where I got this confidence, to still believe that we will go and nothing can stop us.

All the group members started discussing about our future course of action. We started contacting the Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd. authorities at Kathmandu. First we enquired about their safety and the situation in which they all were there in Kathmandu. Then we enquired about the status of our tour. Shivender was the person who was not left even a single day without being contacted in this regard. At a point of time the Kailash Journeys Pvt. Ltd. people suggested us to cancel the yatra as it may not take place that year, and were ready to refund the full amount. Only the non-refundable deposit will be held by them and assured us that they will adjust that amount if we wish to go next year with them. We had to cancel all our flight tickets and it was a big loss for all of us. We all consulted each other and finally decided that we will wait for some more time, as the government was taking up relief operations on a large scale, and the road might be ready, but a bit late. Our wait started. It became my duty and daily routine, to check the mail for any message from our operators, regarding the progress of our journey. I used to go to the bookmark on the computer, to find out the latest situation in Kathmandu and the status of our tour. I had to answer all the group members who was calling me for the update. But always it was the same reply I got from the operators, "No madam, no progress yet. The road is still blocked. This year the yatra may not be there, but we are still waiting for the permission from Tibet authorities. We don't know whether we will get it or not." On the net, I could see the same lines posted, "Road not yet cleared. Did not receive Tibet permission yet." Though such responses were showing cracks in my enthusiasm, they could not move my faith in God.

I have faith in God, and it will see to it, that I will go on this yatra this year itself. This belief or faith of mine, made me go to number of temples, and pray for this yatra to be successful one. Bhavani and Rambabu garu were the ones, who stood along with me and my husband in these testing times. They used to visit me every other day and helped me, while I browsed the net or spoke to the tour operators. Their moral support was a pillar of strength during this tough time. All four of us used to go to temples, even in the early hours, to pray for removing the obstacles for this yatra. Deep in my heart, I knew that, we will make it to the yatra this year itself, as we had the blessings of all the elders, Gurus and God. Bhavani went all the way to Warangal, before the start of this journey, to seek her Guru's blessings. All these weighed heavier, when compared to earthquakes and after tremors in Kathmandu. Time was passing by and was taking along with it, all the little hope we had for the yatra.

On the **5<sup>th</sup> of August 2015**, while I was busy with the preparation of our college freshers' day, I suddenly received a call on my mobile. It was a call from Kalyan from Katmandu. It was a very brief and quick call wherein, I was told that the Tibet government had started giving permission for Kailash Mansarovar Yatra. He also informed me that the permission is only for helicopter yatra and not for overland tour. This will cost us Rs.50,000/- extra per person. I had to give the details of the persons who agree to this, for which I was given only 2 hours' time. My joy knew no bounds. I made the first call to inform this matter to Bhavani. She was very happy to hear this and told me that, come what may, there was no going back now. I felt all our prayers were answered. I quickly finished my college work and called my uncle, K Sreerama Sarma to inform him about the latest situation. Though he felt happy about it, he could not confirm his trip as he was away from home then. He

asked me for some more time. I told him the situation and time constraint, for which his response was negative. He was not comfortable with the date, i.e. **23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2015**, on which date, we decided to start our yatra. Here I saw the count going down. I doubted the coming of MVK Rao and Rajyalakshmi too, after this. The reason for my doubt was that they had joined us through K Sreerama Sarma, who dropped himself out. I asked Sarma babai garu to contact them and get back to me at the earliest. In the meanwhile, I contacted Satyavani, Padma Velamuri and Radhakrishna, who contacted his sister in turn. All were willing to join. When I did not get any message from MVK Rao, I contacted Rajyalakshmi. She told me that the time did not suit them as, MVK Rao had work pressure in the office during that time and it will not be possible for them to join us.

I informed the whole matter to Kailash Journeys Private Limited officials, who asked me to send the list of the dropouts separately, as they had to make the refund. I called up Rajyalakshmi and asked her for their bank account number. I told her that the tour operators wanted it for making the refund. Within no time, I got the account number from Rajyalakshmi through SMS. I sent all the details of the dropouts along with their account number to the tour operators. My next move was to deposit the difference amount of Rs.50000/- each, in the bank by Saturday, the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2015. While I was about to go to the bank, I received a call from MVK Rao that they too were ready to join us. I informed them that the names of the persons dropping out had already been sent along with the details and there is hardly anything that could be done at that time. But he asked me to persuade the matter, and see to it that they join this yatra with us. Now the trouble started for me. I called up Shivender who was in a fix. He told me that the Tibet permission list had already been sent. I requested him to manage these two names, as we did not want them to be left out from the group. Shivender said that he can give me the assurance, only after contacting the officials at Kathmandu. After half an hour I got a call that they can join us. He asked me to send the passport copies of MVK Rao and Rajalakshmi immediately. As I had them with me, I sent them immediately and went to the bank to deposit the difference amounts. MVK transferred their amount into my account. I had to visit my bank, collect the amount and then go to Axis Bank and pay the amount there. Till here everything went off well. In the meanwhile, Bhavani madam's son, Anirudh, also wanted to accompany us. But as fate could have it, he could not join us, as he did not have a copy of the passport with him. He could not provide me with a copy of it, as he was on his way to Thirupathi. So I could not help him in any way and he had to opt out of this yatra. Looking back at the events, which turned in the last one year, after so many ups and downs, additions and deletions, the groups' size finally remained same, that is 10. We started with this number, and we could hold with it.. We had only 15 days of time left, to start our journey. I and Bhavani madam went to Monda Market bought a whole lot of dry fruits to take with us. Later we had to leave a large portion of them at home itself, due to excess weight. Bhavani madam arranged for currency exchange also for all of us, through her brother, and again I booked the flight tickets for all. This time, we cancelled our Kolkata Guwahati trip and decided to come back to Hyderabad along with all others. By now all the preparations were over and I never noticed, how days were rolling by. I bought some essential medicines, sunscreen lotions, etc. and started packing our luggage.

On **21<sup>st</sup> of August 2015** I got a call from Kalyan from Katmandu that we did not get the permission from the Tibet Government for our trip to start on the **25<sup>th</sup> of August 2015**. He told me that they accorded the permission for the **30<sup>th</sup> of August 2015**. He asked me to postpone our trip for another 3 days. At this stage, my husband Mr. KLN Raju suggested very firmly that, instead of postponing the trip, we can as well go and stay, for those three days in Kathmandu itself. If not, we will have to lose

a lot of money in the cancellation of our flight tickets and the last moment airways would cost us more. Hence we decided as planned earlier and informed Kalyan about our decision. He gave us an option that if we were all ready to pay rupees Rs.20000/- extra amount per person, then we can have Muktinath Yatra before Kailash Mansarovar Yatra. This proved to be a better option. As the saying goes in Hindi “Bin Mange Moti Mile” which means, getting something very precious without asking for it. We all happily agreed for it and packed our bags and finally were off to the airport on the early hours of the **23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2015**. I booked a cab from my house, and picked up the Rambabu garu and Bhavani on the way, and reached the airport.

At the airport I met the other six members of our group. I was seeing Shubhada Devi for the first time. All were looking very excited, for finally making it to the yatra. Of all, I was the most happiest as, my responsibility was nearing completion. Once everyone checks in at the airport, everyone will have to take the charge all by themselves.



We all started off from Hyderabad by Air India flight and landed in New Delhi. We changed our flight and reached Tribhuvan airport, Kathmandu. After collecting our respective baggage, when we were coming out of the airport, I saw a person standing with a placard with my name on it.

It was a thrilling experience to me then. That person led us all to a vehicle which was parked there, for us. He put a ribbon with Kailash Journeys Private Limited printed on it, around the necks

of each one of us and welcomed us. We all took our seats in the vehicle. The welcome gesture was a moving one, and now we felt that all the hard times have ended. From here, the task of conducting the tour and their responsibility was transferred on to Kailash Journeys team. I felt very much relieved. We were transferred to Shangri La hotel in Kathmandu for our stay.



Suman, a person from Kailash Journeys Private Limited, also came and visited us and enquired about our journey. He gave us all a brief description and itinerary for the coming Mukthinath tour. After fresh up, we all had our dinner and went to take rest.



Early morning of **24<sup>th</sup> of August** my husband went for swimming in the hotel premises itself. Later we all were ready, had our breakfast and tea and were off to visit Boudhanath. From there we visited Budaneelkanth or Jalnarayan temple. This temple has a big statue of Narayana lying in water. At this place we also saw a shooting of a dance clipping for a Nepali film. We were back to hotel from here to have our lunch. After resting for a while, we all went to Kailash Journeys office, and settled all the accounts there with them. We also paid for our Mukthinath Yatra and came back to our hotel.

In the evening we went to the Pasupatinath Temple. This Temple has the Statue of Shiva with 5 faces. It is believed that, the rest of the body part, is at Kedarnath Dham in India .I could see some dead bodies floating in the river Bhagamati, on the banks of which is this Pasupatinath temple. We came back after performing the pooja and watching the arathi on the banks of the river Bhagamathi near Pasupatinath temple. It was a beautiful sight. Our first day of this journey ended, after making some purchases of Rudrakshas and Nepali bells near the temple. We were given rudrakshamalas by the purohit in the temple.



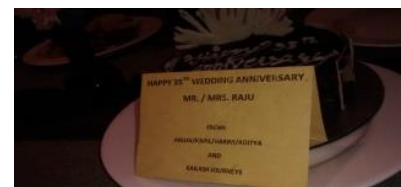
On the **25<sup>th</sup> of August 2015**, we woke up at 4 a.m, got ready by 5.15a.m. and left for Dakshina Kali temple, which is 20 kilometers away from Kathmandu. It was our 35th wedding anniversary. MVK Rao and Rajyalakshmi came to our room and gifted us clothes. We travelled through ghat road and were thrilled on seeing greenery all around, with thick dense forest on either side of the road. We had darshan of Dakshinkali and enroute we saw two Buddhist monasteries. We came back to the hotel for breakfast.

Later, we went to visit Bhaktapur temple. This Bhaktapur temple is famous for art and architecture. Earlier its name was “Bhaatgaon” which means rice village. Here we could see the effects of earthquake everywhere. We saw Indirani temple, Durbar square, two statues of Bhairav (Shiva) and Druga in monolithic stone belonging to 17th century. The golden gate, built in 1754 and the Tulja Bhavani temple inside this gate are beautiful. Tulja Bhavani was the family goddess of the Bhaktapur kings. This is where 108 animals’ sacrifices are made every year on Dussehra day. The statue of Tulja Bhavani here is carved in teakwood. The damaged Vatsala temple stands as an evidence of the deva sting earthquake but to the surprise of all there is yet another temple here, which resembles Pasupatinath Temple. It was built in the year 1475. It survived two earthquakes of this intensity, but there is no damage which occurred to this temple. The Bhaktapur temple is one of the World Heritage sites.

From here we came back to our hotel for dinner. At dinner, there was a pleasant surprise for us. While we all filled our plates and sat on the table, the team from Kailash Journeys, Suman and others



came up with a cake on to our table. There was a card put on it and with the names of my grandson Arjun, son Kapil, daughter Harini, son in law Aditya and Kailash Journeys, wishing us on our 35<sup>th</sup>



anniversary. We felt very happy for the concern. Everyone then started wishing us and we felt very happy for spending the day in that way. Then all of us went to rest as next day we had to start early to Pokhara.

On the **26<sup>th</sup> of August 2015**, at 8 a.m. after breakfast, we started our journey to Manokamna temple. To reach there, we have to take a cable car and cross Trisuli River. The temple of Manokamna Devi



was under renovation and hence the statues or the murthis of Kanyakumari, Druga Mata and Manokamna Devi were placed on an elevated platform outside the temple. We had very good darshan of the Goddess. I saw trees full of fruits which were brown in color and were like apples. This temple is located on a hill at a height of 1302 meters from sea level. The drive of 8 hours to Pokhara ended by evening. We reached Shangri La village, i.e. our hotel. The location of the hotel is beautiful in between hills all around. It had a

fish pond and also a small Pasupatinath Temple. The stay here was very comfortable. The room provided to us, had an old wooden box which, in olden days, was used to keep costly articles inside it. I remember, we had the same type of box, of a much bigger size at my grandfather place. I opened it and placed my hand bag, containing our passports, money, Swiss knife and other related stuff in it. I thought that I did a wonderful job by putting it there in it and it would be very safe. What happened with this could be seen the next day.

On the **27<sup>th</sup> of August 2015** we were ready to take the 7 o'clock flight to Johnson from Pokhara. Though it was cold, we could manage with all the stuff we carried along with us. It was a great feeling for all of us. We were very eager to leave to the airport. We packed only two pairs of clothes for the next day and left the rest of the luggage in the hotel itself. Only after reaching the airport at Pokhara, to take the flight to Johnson, did I realize that, I had left my handbag in the wooden box itself. As it was not seen anywhere outside, I left the room thinking that I had picked up all my belongings. I was panicked and did not know what to do. But our guide to Muktinath, Saroj, assured me, that I will get back the bag, and I need not worry about it. He called up the hotel people from the airport and informed them about the whereabouts of my bag. They, in turn, handed it over to another person from the next group, who was joining us at Jhomsom by next flight. Then I heaved a sigh of relief as I knew the person who was to get my bag for me.

On our way to Johnson from Pokhara, I could see the Annapurna basecamp, Annapurna ranges, the rivers flowing through the mountains and the snowcapped mountains. What else a beauty can be defined. I was lost in the beauty of the nature around. Then we reached Jhomsom in Mustang district which is 1300 meters above sea level. Our stay was arranged at Hotel Majestic.

We all left our baggage in our respective rooms and had only one pair of clothes in our backpack. We left the hotel and started our journey to Muktinath temple which is around 3800 meters above sea level. On the way, we saw trees loaded with apples. We initially walked for 2 or 3 kilometers, as the road was not good. Then, we took a bus and traveled



for about half an hour. All through we were moving along the river Kali Gandaki. All the villages here are situated on the banks of the river Kali Gandaki, which is a tributary of river Ganges. We travelled through the Shivalik ranges and then we had to get down from the bus due the bad condition of the



road. We took it as a blessing as we got a chance to cross river Kali Gandaki by foot. Piling up stones, we made our way and crossed Kali Gandaki by foot. I sprinkled the holy water on my head and had a sip from the river directly. Here Shubhada Devi had a tough time crossing the river. She was dressed in a saree and while crossing she could not manage the flow of the river with her saree. Other members helped her out with great difficulty and she came out all wet. After crossing the river, we had to walk for a kilometer, and then we got into another bus to reach the jeep station. All of us will have to get down here and then trek upward around 5 or 6 kilometers which includes 400 steps, to reach the main Muktinath shrine. On the way we passed through a village called Shraddha Bani. We saw many solar dishes installed here. At this place people use them for their daily cooking needs.



We reached the Muktinath temple and looked back for our friends, who were not to be seen. I thought that they were slow in climbing. So I decided to go ahead with my bathing process, under the 108 water sources. There are 108 gowmukhas, which are placed in the outer courtyard of the



temple, in a semicircular form, from which, freezing water pours out continuously. This water is considered sacred and symbolizes the sacred pushkarini waters from all the 108 Shree Vaishnava Divya Dhamas. I was very afraid to take bath even under one gowmukha as; the water was really freezing cold. But finally, I made up my mind and then started running from underneath all the gowmukhas and covered all the 108 sources of water. But I can say, it is not an easy task. Anything can happen at any point of time. After completing this, I was supposed to take a dip, in each of the two tanks, in front of the temple. The water in these tanks was also equally cold. One tank is known as Paap Kund and the other is known as Punya Kund. I quickly had the dips in both the kunds and changed my clothes. I was feeling very fresh.

I could not see Rambabu garu and Bhavani around there. Later, I came to know, that they arrived late and were taking bath under the 108 water sources behind the temple. Rambabu garu had developed altitude sickness during the trek and was vomiting all way. He was feeling breathless too, during this trek. So they had to take breaks in between, which caused the delay in their reaching the temple. We were a bit taken aback with his condition, as we were worried, imagining his situation for the Kailash Manasarovar trip. But we later realized that, this was the acclimatization for him, before the tough Kailash tour. After every one completed taking bath, we waited for the temple doors to open.

This temple of Muktinath is in the beautiful settings of Annapurna ranges and is 18 kilometers North East of Johmsom in the district of Mustang, at an altitude of about 3800 meters. The main shrine is a Pagoda type temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu. This is the 105<sup>th</sup> Dhama from among the 108 Divya Mukthi Kshetras. This temple is the highest temple in altitude in the world. In this temple, we find the idols of Lord Vishnu with Sridevi and Bhudevi. Here we sat for some time in the temple premises. We recited the Vishnusahasranamam here and felt very happy to have had an opportunity of coming here in our lifetime. I felt really blessed. We offered prayers here in this very small but beautiful temple. We had the prasad and started our journey back to Johmsom.





We reached Johnsom, watching the beautiful sky touching the mountain peaks, variety of flowers all along the path and the cool breeze touching our faces, as though blessing and pampering us. We purchased some saligramas and rudraksha chains from here and reached Johnson by 5:30 p.m. We had our dinner which was waiting for us and all of us went to sleep with beautiful and memorable events in our minds. We were asked

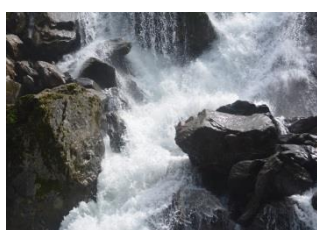
to be ready by 6 a.m. the next day to take a flight to Pokhara.

28<sup>th</sup> of August 2015. We were all set to leave Johnsom. We waited in the common hall in the guest house along with many others like us. In the meantime, we could see the beautiful sight of sunrise on the Annapurna ranges of the Himalayas from outside of our guest house. My daughter Harini, called me on skype from Australia. It was Friday of Shravan month. She along with her mother-in-law performed Varalakshmi vratham in Sydney. She and her mother-in-law, both handed over the vayanam, (a plate filled with soaked



raw chickpeas, beetle leaves and supari and fruits along with other pooja related prasad) to me, over skype. How best one can make use of the technology, I could see here. It has connected two continents in a single moment with a single call for all our requirements. I felt very happy over this.

Coming back to our journey, we were informed by the operators that, we will be leaving by the third flight to Pokhara. Hence, we waited there for our turn, which never came. We shopped for woolen socks and caps, gloves, saligramas, etc. to kill our time. But to our disappointment, we were informed that due to unfavorable weather conditions, there will be no more flights for the day. We cannot stay back at Johnson, as our permission for Kailash Manasarovar tour by the Tibet government was for the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2015. So at any cost, we had to reach Kathmandu by 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2015. Only then, we could start our tour on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2015. All those who were left behind, started discussing the ways and means to move out of Johnsom and reach Pokhara the same day. We were all together 24 persons left out. From among these 24 people, there were three brothers from Hyderabad Narasimha Murthy Oruganti, Suryaprakash Oruganti and Ramakrishna Oruganti, who were directly discussing the matter with the officials at Katmandu. The eldest of these three brothers, Narasimha Murthy, took the lead from here. He saw to it, that the transportation was arranged for all, and we would reach Pokhara by night.



All of us started our journey back to Pokhara by road, in four jeeps by paying some extra amount. Little did we knew, that we did not lose anything by missing the flight. Instead it was a big gain for all the 24 of us. It was a very adventurous journey and one can never



get a chance to travel the way we did.



Most of the parts, we could not see road. We could see only rocks and boulders on which our jeeps were moving. We rolled from one end to the other in the jeep. On one side it was thick forest and on the other side there was the deep valley with river flowing down. On the way, we came across many beautiful and mind blowing waterfalls. The landscaping was breath taking all through. Sometimes we had to get down from our vehicles, as we could not cross the road in the vehicle where the waterfall was falling down on the road from atop the hill. We had to take a small narrow bridge, made of small pieces of wood, to reach the vehicle on the other side of the river. Driving on such roads is not that anyone can do. It needs expertise to drive and strong heart to travel. Landslides were other common sights on our way. As if all these were not enough, one of our vehicles tire had a puncture and all of us had to wait for it to get back to the condition. We got down from our vehicles stretched ourselves a bit and relaxed for some time on the road side.



We had to cross the river Gandaki. We asked our jeep driver to stop for a while. We wanted to pick some saligramas from the flowing river all on our own. So I and Bhavani, got down from the vehicles searched a place where we could easily go and collect the saligramas. I picked some



saligramas from the flowing river Gandaki and collected them in my woolen cap which was handy for me then. At around 3 p.m. we stopped at Ghasa, small village on the river side. We went to a nearby roadside hotel for lunch. We covered the journey of 180 kilometers in 11 long hours and finally reached Pokhara by night.

We were given a warm welcome by the hotel staff, in a very traditional way, with a lighted lamp kept in the plate and tilak being put on our forehead. By this time we were fully exhausted and after having a very simple dinner we all went to bed. We were a bit relaxed as there was a deal, that we will be flying to Kathmandu from Pokhara instead of going by road the next day. So we had a peaceful sleep that night.



29th of August 2015. Many people wait for this day very eagerly. This is that special day of Shraavana Purnima or the Raksha bandhan. This is considered to be a very auspicious day. At Shangri-La hotel we had a small temple and a purohit. So all the male members of our group went there and changed their sacred thread or what we call them as “jandhyam”, with the help of the pujari there. After breakfast, we went for sightseeing.

Pokhara is called the city of seven lakes. Due to time constraint, we could not see all, but we went to Tal Barahi temple which is located in the middle of a lake. It is one of the 58 Shaktipeethas. Here, I could see an instrument for breaking coconut easily. I never saw it before. We had very good darshan of the Goddess Varahi. Here Satyavani lost her mobile. She became very upset over this as even after all trials, she could not get back her phone. We came back from the temple to the shore in small boats.



From here we headed to Davis falls. The falls had been named after Mrs. Davis, who was washed away while taking bath here with her husband and her body was found after a very long attempt. Depth of this fall is considered to be 180 feet. From here,



we returned to our hotel for lunch and then reached Pokhara airport at around 1:30 p.m. We took the 2:30 p.m. flight and reached Tribhuvan airport at Katmandu at about 3 p.m. We were transferred to Shangri La hotel.

At around 7 p.m. the operators from Kailash Journeys conducted a meeting for all the members going on Kailash Manasarovar Yatra. Persons from other places, who landed in Kathmandu in the past two days, also joined. Here they gave the guidelines and all do and don'ts for a safe journey. They also gave each one of us, a backpack and a duffle bag with numbers printed on them. We were also given the pouches for passport and ID card. It was now that we met Gopal Nair, who had come from Kerala to go on Kailash Manasarovar Yatra. He



He did not get any warm clothes along with him. He thought of purchasing them in Katmandu, we had no time as we were to fly to Simikot by 6.30 a.m. flight the very next day. So we shared some of ours with him and he felt extremely happy. Since then started calling me Vaniamma. We were asked to limit the weight of our baggage to 10 -12 Kgs only. Here Gopal Nair helped us. Any extra baggage of ours was taken care of by him, as he did not have any luggage with him. Then we all went to bed at 12:30 a.m. to start our once in a lifetime journey, the journey to Kailash Manasarovar.

**30th of August 2015.** Finally the D-Day had come. All of us woke up early in the morning. We got ready and by 5.30 am we reached Tribhuvan airport. We were a group of 10 members and there were other 20 persons who were to travel along with us from Kathmandu. The flight which we were



to take was a charter plane which could carry only 16 persons at a time. As per the permit issued by the Tibet authorities, we were divided into two different groups. Here our group members got divided. As MVK Rao & Rajyalakshmi joined in the last moment, theirs were the last two names in the permit visa papers issued by the Tibet authorities. So out of 10 only 8 of us could make it to the first flight. 8 members from the other group were picked up to make the no.16

for the first trip to full capacity. Though, we were supposed to halt at Nepalgunj, on the way to Simikot, our flight landed directly at Simikot, as the aircraft was full. We landed at Simikot leaving behind MVK Rao and Rajyalakshmi with other group members.





On our way to Simikot, I had the beautiful view of the Annapurna ranges & Himalayan ranges. I could also see the multi-coloured Taral Lake. This lake is considered to be the next highest lake after Lake Manasarovar. I could see the clouds resembling balls of cotton, floating in the clear sky and trying to kiss the snow clad

mountain peaks. A little down the view was the rich green vegetation. The dense forest was giving a very soothing look to the eyes. I looked still down. I could see the rivers gushing out and making their way through the mountains. I felt, as though the whole nature was teaching me something or the other in its own way. From the clouds I can learn to move higher & higher in life.



From the mountains I can learn to be strong at all times, still giving way to the flowing rivers. They stand still in their place but don't block the way of the flowing rivers. From the flowing rivers I can learn that if I wish to move ahead in life then, I should not be afraid of the difficulties and obstacles which come in my way. I should keep moving ahead and reach my goal. I experienced it a bit before the start of this journey. I could overcome many obstacles, and here I am today gazing the beauty of the Himalayas.

We landed at Simikot and immediately we were asked to take our seats in the helicopter which was ready, waiting for us to take us to Hilsa. In one helicopter only six persons at a time could sit. So here at Simikot, Satyavani and Padma opted to stay back and the rest six of us occupied the seats in the first helicopter. This was the first time I was travelling by helicopter. There was thrill, fear, happiness, wonder, curiosity and a mixture of many such feelings in me, when I sat in the helicopter. Our luggage was also loaded and the helicopter took off to Hilsa carrying six of us. In the second trip

of the helicopter the other two members of our group along with the Oruganti brothers landed at Hilsa. We were given semi-pukka houses with community living here at Hilsa. Six members were given on big room with an attached wash room. Satyavani & Padma occupied a double occupancy room, where as the rest two members KLN Raju & MVK Rao shared their room with the Oruganti brothers. Though



eight of us reached Hilsa in the morning itself by the first two trips of the helicopter, the last two members still did not reach. I was a bit worried for them. Lunch was arranged for all at Hilsa. Everyone started having their lunch, but I could not have it. I was worried for the last two members. Even they might be hungry. So whenever I heard the sound of a helicopter coming, I used to go to

the roof top, from where I can see the people landing. But there was always disappointment on my side. As the time passed, my worry for them increased. I was told that after 2 pm helicopters will not fly. But God listens to genuine prayers at the right time, and they landed by the last trip for the day. They had come via Nepalgunj along with others joining the tour from Nepalgunj. All of us were happy to see them joining us. We had our lunch together and then we went out for a short walk.

Hilsa is a small village, on the banks of river Karnali. I never even dreamt that, I could be at such a beautiful place, and I will get a chance, to spend a few days of my life, in the lap of Himalayas and the beautiful nature. I spent some time sitting beside the river and watching it, as it was flowing gracefully all through. I felt that there is a river somewhere that flows through the lives of everyone.



After some time we all returned to our camps, had our dinner and went to sleep as it was a very tiring day. Though we



were supposed to enter Tibet today we couldn't do so as some of the yatris, who were to join us from Nepalgunj, could not come to Hilsa by evening. Hence we had to stay back at Hilsa.

On **31<sup>st</sup> August 2015** all of us got up early. It had become a routine for all, to fill our flasks with hot water. This is what we were drinking; ever since we started our tour to Kailash Manasarovar from Kathmandu. We were taking Diamox pills, half each, once in the morning after breakfast and once at night after dinner. We started taking this from **29<sup>th</sup> of August 2015**. We had tea and breakfast



and again our wait started for the people to come from Nepalgunj.

We went out on to the mountain for a small trek. There we rested for a while,



gazing the clear blue sky above and enjoying the beauty of nature around. I felt that John Ruskin had rightly said that "Mountains are the beginning and the end of all natural scenery." Here the beauty of the Himalayas is unique rustic, calm, tranquillity. It's no wonder then, that tests show this mountain range is geographically alive, growing a quarter of an inch every year.

After some time we came down when we saw a helicopter coming to land. We were literally waiting for all the yatris to arrive by the end of the day, such that we can enter Tibet and carry our journey ahead. We went to the banks of river Karnali again, to spend some time besides the river. A river is the closest of friends. You must love it and live with it before you can know it. Many a times we forget that water cycle and life cycle are one. The river has taught me to listen; the river knows everything and one can learn everything from it.



We all were taking pictures here and enjoying the riverside. What we should learn from the river is that, it is sure to get where it is going, and it does not want to go anywhere else. If there are obstacles coming in the way, it makes it way by jumping over them, but does not turn back. This can be the biggest lesson from the river which any one can take. Even today the last batch from Nepalgunj could not reach Hilsa. We had to stay here for one more night.

After dinner Mr. Narsimha Murty, along with some other friends arranged for a camp fire. All of us gathered in the small ground around the bonfire and had a lovely time. We got ourselves divided into two groups & started antyakshari competition. It was great fun and everybody, young and old, participated and enjoyed it. Then, we all went to bed, hoping that next day at least, we could reach Taklakot. Taklakot is the city on



the other side

of river Karnali, which is in the Tibet region. To reach there we have to cross a steel rope bridge after our passports get stamped.

**1<sup>st</sup> September 2015.** This day saw to it that we enter Tibet. All the yatris from Nepalgunj landed at Hilsa by afternoon. After our lunch, all of us packed our bags and waited in the ground. We were divided into two groups as per the Tibet permit papers. Later our passports were stamped and before crossing the bridge, all ten of us had a group photograph taken near the bridge.

While we were waiting for our turn to cross the bridge, we saw a lady coming from the other side fainted in the centre the bridge. They were coming back from Kailash Manasarovar after completing their pilgrimage. Her husband was there nearby, but was unable to lift her up. So some of our friends ran there and lifted her to this end of the bridge. Later, we came to know that she had developed problem of breathlessness and



was not responding to any first aid which was being given to her. Immediately she was shifted to the guest house nearby from where she would be lifted to hospital at Katmandu. With this there was a slight fear in all of us, but we were assured by our guide Raj Kumar and our team leader Narsimha Murthy that, none of us will have such problems, as all of us maintained good health.

Raj Kumar used to check our blood pressure and pulse rate every day and was monitoring everyone's health. He used to see that each one of us had their Diamox tablet dose regularly.



Now came the turn for us to cross the bridge, the bridge which would take us to fulfill our dream of Kailash Manasarovar Yatra. After clearance from both ends, and from the Chinese government, we boarded a bus which took 2 hours to reach Taklakot at 9:30 p.m. as per Chinese time

We had to rush to the market for shopping some of the essentials for the yatra like, the oxygen cylinder, cans to carry holy Manasarovar water home, walking sticks etc. We were particularly asked by our guide Raj Kumar to buy the walking sticks. He explained the significance of the sticks. These walking sticks will be with us all through the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra and especially during the three days of the Parikrama. After reaching home, we can keep these sticks as mementos, and pass



them on to our future generations, who can know that someone from their family had visited Mount Kailash and did the Parikrama and these sticks have served them during their tough times. We even purchased Chinese sim cards from here, giving all our ID proofs and details. On our way back to our hotel we saw a specially designed motorbike, used by people, to carry loads of luggage. At the hotel we had our dinner and went to bed by 12 pm (Chinese time).

**2nd September 2015.** We all woke up at 4:30 a.m. and started our journey towards Manasarovar



Lake. As this part of Tibet is under Chinese control, we had to undergo security checks many times. After travelling by bus roughly for about 2 hours, we reached a place



called Rakshas Tal, from where we had our first darshan of Mount Kailash.

It is believed that, this is where Ravana had his bath, before visiting Mount Kailash. We all got down from the bus. The first sight off Mount Kailash filled my eyes with tears. Tears of joy started rolling down my cheeks. How much I longed to get this moment, I cannot express in words. Imagine trying to describe your life's fondest memory to anyone. Yes, I know you cannot do it. They can know it only when they experience it all by themselves. Likewise, I may be able to give you some sense of, what it is like, but it will always fall short of the real feeling inside me. That is the beauty of experience. To know it, you must live it. Each one of us present there had their own experience, and no two experiences will be alike.



With the sight of Mount Kailash, all my hard work, pressure and pain, since the past one year, vanished like vapor. All the efforts, which I had put, proved worth it. We were warned not to touch the waters of Raksha Tal, as they were considered to be inauspicious. Scientifically it is said that, there are more harmful chemicals present in those waters. Here we clicked

many shots from our cameras. Gopal Nair also joined us and hence forth became one among our team.

From here we reached Lake Mansarovar by bus. It took 2 hours



to reach Lake Mansarovar. We did the Parikrama of the lake by bus before getting down near the lake.

When I got down near the lake, I felt that the lines which Firdaus had written for Kashmir will hold



good here too. His lines for Kashmir were "Gar Firdaus bar-rue zamin ast, hami asto, hami asto." (If there is paradise on earth, it is here, it is here). Standing beside Lake Mansarovar and watching Mount Kailash in front of me, is nothing less than a paradise to me. The thrill and beauty in this

statement can also be felt here. We can see Bramha Parvat, Lake Manasarovar and Mount Kailash all in one line. What else can one wish for, after being here physically, enjoying and living every moment? Lake Manasarovar lies at 4590 meters i.e. 15060 feet above sea level, a relatively high elevation for a freshwater lake, on the mostly saline Lake studded Tibetan plateau. It is relatively round in shape with a circumference of 88 kilometer that is 55 miles. .Lake Manasarovar is near the source of the Sutlej, which is the easternmost large tributary of the Sindhu. Nearby, all the sources of the Brahmaputra River, the Indus River and the Ghagra River, an important tributary of the Ganges, are here. As per Hindu mythology, Lord Bramha who is the creator God, formed this lake first in his mind, after which it manifested on earth, and so it got its name “Bramha Manasarovar”.

A dip in these sacred waters of Lake Manasarovar is said to wipe off your sins from last seven births. We all were very eager to take a dip in the Lake Manasarovar for which we had come a long way. We recited the holy prayers before entering the lake. We thanked God, our Gurus, our parents and all our elders, for their blessings and helping us, in making our dream, a reality.



The time to take bath in this holy lake of Manasarovar has come. The feeling cannot be expressed in any form.

I entered this lake, and I was totally lost. The water was not as cold I was told it would be. Standing in the lake and looking at Brahma Parvat on side and Mount Kailash on another side, my mind stopped thinking. I was only looking all around and was unable to believe that I was there. But yes. I was there in Lake Manasarovar. I started taking the holy dip in the lake. There are no words to express my happiness then. I bathed again and again. We were told not to be there in waters for long, as it may show effect on our nervous system. So we came out of the lake. There was a clothes changing tent provided for ladies to change their clothes. We changed our clothes and were totally fresh.



We sat down to perform puja beside Lake Manasarovar. While we went on with the puja, with the articles we got from

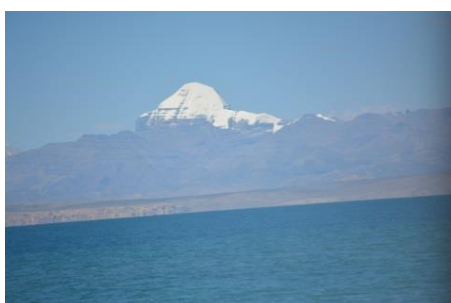


our homes, Narsimha Murthy along with his two brothers started performing Rudrabhishekam. It was a sight for the Gods to see. Narsimha Murthy arranged the Rudraksha Mala on the stones so

well, that we could not take our eyes off from it. We finished our pooja. We lighted the wicks, dipped in ghee, which we got from our homes. I also lighted the wicks, which Sarma babai garu had sent, to be light them on his behalf, and prayed for his visit also. We filled the cans with the holy water from Manasarovar Lake, for my friends and family back home.



I looked at Mount Kailash and prayed in gratitude. Murthy garu asked me to recite the Sri Suktham. I could not believe my fortune. My mind went blank and I was struggling for the verses initially. Then within no time I came back to senses and recited the Sri Suktham along with Bhavani and Rajyalakshmi. I did that with full of happiness in my heart. Rarely does one get such an opportunity, to take part in the Rudrabhishekam, beside Lake Manasarovar. Standing there for quite some time, I felt that I was breathing some of the purest and freshest air I would ever breathe in my life. I was lost in the beauty of the lake and the mountain, but suddenly I turned back after hearing a sob .I saw Gopal Nair crying like a child, holding my husband feet tightly. Then he fell at the feet of both of us and was crying uncontrollably. My husband took him near and consoled him. He too started crying. It took some time for both of them to come to normal situation, as both became highly emotional.



From Lake Manasarovar we had a very clear view of Mount Kailash. This view is named as Aghora Roopa of Lord Shiva, which is often referred to as, Moksha karaka Roopa. The other three faces are said to be Vayu Roopa, Tatpurusha Roopa and Ishaan Roopa. I again went into Lake Manasarovar, to pick up some pebbles from inside the lake. Here I could get a small stone, which resembled Mount Kailash. I was very happy to have got it. I brought it and kept it in my puja, in my house.

We all returned to our rooms, which were allotted very near to the lake. We had dinner which the cooks prepared with all their heart. It was very tasty and hot. In the meantime our guide Raj Kumar, along with our team leader Murthy Oruganti started their service. They went to each and every pilgrim and informed them about the next three days schedule. They also informed as that the time had come to pay for the pony, if we wished to hire one. One can travel by foot also. Except one person, Radhakrishna, in our group, rest all were ready to hire a pony and a porter for three days. Now we started mentally preparing ourselves for the Kailash Parikrama.

We were not someone to settle for anything less. We did not want to miss even a single chance during this yatra. We enquired about the belief that, Gods come and take bath in this Lake

Manasarovar every day. We were told that we will have to wait and watch quietly from 2:30 a.m. onwards as per Chinese time for that. This time matches with 11:30 p.m. in India. For this, I set my alarm clock, and went to sleep. But sleep was far away from my eyes. I felt that if there is magic on earth then it is contained in water. I am a workaholic. I never ever imagined that, I will be away from work for such a long period, and still be happy, doing nothing. Now I am on a journey, journey which in its own way is teaching me the art of cultivating infinite patience and acceptance. Every moment I was learning from this travel. I was learning from the food habits, from their culture, the events and things that are making a mark on my soul and making this journey, “the life’s most memorable one.”

Lost in deep thoughts, I heard the alarm of my clock and without wasting even a single minute, I got up and I picked up my blanket. I, along with five other members, quietly moved out of our rooms. We covered ourselves fully as it was freezing cold outside. We were all set to watch the stars come down into Lake Manasarovar. They say that, Gods come down in the form of light and take bath in Lake Mansarovar. All were watching silently and seriously. The curiosity filled eyes were all set on the waters of Lake Mansarovar. And Yessss. There it is. We saw a bright light coming down from above. It was travelling at a medium pace and it’s touched the waters of Lake Manasarovar. We could see it very clearly with our naked eyes. Later, we saw four more such lights



or stars, whatever we may name them. All the lights were floating and dancing on the upper layer of the lake. There are no words which could explain our situation then. We waited for some more time and blessed be felt.

With twinkle in our eyes, and heart filled with gratitude and happiness, we retired to our rooms, as the next day we had to start our Kailash Parikrama, yet another adventurous journey. Unwillingly, I closed my eyes, to give them some rest, as they had much more work to do the next day.

**3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015.** All of us got up early. We packed our luggage to suit our three day Parikrama separately in a backpack. We performed the poornahuti with the articles which Rajalakshmi got for all of us. We had our breakfast and before leaving we stood in front of the poornahuti with folded hands and prayed for our successful Parikrama. We carried the whole luggage along with us till Tarboche. This is the place, where we picked up only our backpacks and water bottles and left the rest of the luggage in the bus itself and hired a pony and porter for our three day Kailash Parikrama. We were given a slip, in which, the name of our porter and pony was written. We had to keep it safe till the time we return from Parikrama. So I put it behind my ID card which

was around my neck. Per person, we had to pay 2900 Chinese Yuan together, for both the porter and the pony for three days of Kailash Parikrama.

Parikrama at Tarboche started at 10 a.m. After a short while we stopped at Yamadwar. Prayer flags were seen here. Tibetans tie prayer flags at high passes because; they believe that the wind will carry their prayers to God. The colors of the flags, blue, white, red, green and yellow, represent the five elements i.e. .the sky, wind, fire, water and earth. This Yamadwar is considered to the starting point of the Kora. Then our trek of 12 kilometers started. Sometimes I was asked to get down from the pony and was asked to trek by the porter.

Everything seemed so stunningly beautiful around. I could spot many yaks here, on my way. The mountain was calling and hence my feet were moving without taking any rest. I felt as if I was travelling in to paradise. The breathtaking view of the Himalayan foothills, snow

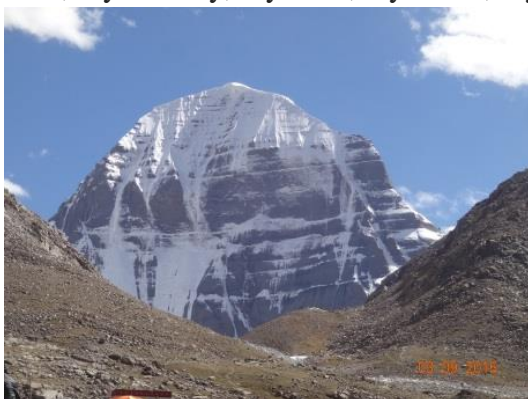


clad mountains, trek

covered with carpet of flowers around, there is so much to see, there is so much to experience, that I felt I cannot understand the Himalayas or cannot experience its beauty to the fullest at one go. I will have to come again and again and even then the situation will remain the same. All through the way, I felt that this particular



journey is that, which I was doing for my own self. The nature around me was teaching all through. The river was teaching me to move ahead, even though there may be obstacles in my path. The mountains were teaching me to be bold and stand still however strong the difficulties may be in life. I was enjoying every moment and was moving ahead. The freshness of air and the fragrance of the flowers around did not let me feel tired. They were soothing my tired body and soul. Away from my land, my country, my state, my home, my friends and my family, I was lost in the Himalayan beauty.



On the way, we had our lunch which was packed and given with all their love, by the cooking team of Kailash Journeys Private Limited. My trek was along the foothills of Mount Kailash. I could see clearly many formations on and around Mount Kailash. The big serpentine form in snow can be easily distinguished by anyone, above the tip of Mount Kailash. I could see the mountains in the form of Ganesa, Nandi, Peacock, Elephant, etc. By evening we reached the Dirapuk.

We were accommodated in a hotel very near to Mount Kailash. From here, the North face of Mount Kailash can be seen clearly. If we open the windows of our room, we can see Mount Kailash was in front of us. What luck! This is the Charan Sparsh of Mount Kailash. It means, we have come to this point touching the feet of Mount Kailash.

After having popcorn and tea, my husband along with Rambabugaru, MVK Rao, Narsimha Murthy, Gopal Nair and others went very near to Mount Kailash. They did meditation there for some time sitting on a rock. They collected the holy water, which was flowing down directly from Mount Kailash. We all had a sip of that holy water and felt blessed. In the meanwhile, I and Bhavani went out and collected some small stones, which are considered as the forms of Shiva and Parvathi. All these stones were in two colors, black and white Half white and half black or white stones with black spots or black stones with white spots.



We returned to our rooms, where we were served hot and tasty soup and then hot khichdi was served. By now we were totally exhausted and all of us went to bed and slipped in too deep sleep.

**4th September 2015.** This day will test us all. The second day of the Parikrama is considered to be the toughest part in this whole yatra of Kailash Manasarovar. Hence, people who cannot do this will return from here to Darchen and wait for others to come back from Parikrama. We woke up at 4:30 a.m. It was still dark, but we had to start. After having tea, we started at 5:30 a.m. We saw the sun rising, giving us an opportunity, to have a wonderful Golden Darshan of Mount Kailash, before the start of the journey.



Today's journey will see us trek 22 kilometers which may take roughly about 7 to 8 hours. We will have to trek up to 18600 feet above sea level, and then we will have to descend from Gaurikund. It was a very tough path. Many times I had to get down from the pony and walk with the help of my walking stick, trekking slowly. High mountains on all sides, I was making my way, in between the rocks and was moving ahead. There was no proper road. Trekking for some time and then sitting on a rock for

a while and again trekking, I continued my journey up to Dolma La pass which is at a height of 5648 meters above sea level. This is the highest point of Kailash Parikrama.

I kept climbing through rocky and narrow path. There were large strands of prayer flags here. There is a place called Shivasthal here. Leaving clothes here signifies new life. Buddhist believe crossing the Dolma La pass, you are coming into new life with all the sins of previous life forgiven at this place. I left a piece of cloth, on which I had written all the names of my family members, who could not come here till date. I also included the names of the principal and staff of Government Junior College, Marredpally, as their wishes were also there, in my doing this yatra so very successfully. I can never forget the way; they all wished me, when I started on this long and adventurous journey. This was a small and humble way of showing my gratitude towards them.



Here, I relaxed for some time, offered prayers, mainly to the nature, meditated for a while. This gave me much more strength to move ahead. From here we can see Gaurikund, at an altitude of 5608 meters above sea level. There goes a belief that Goddess Parvathi acquired her son Ganesh's elephant head here. The water here, is green in color unlike elsewhere which is blue in color. There was a boy sitting on a rock who got some water some from Gaurikund for me. I paid him some amount and he went away happily.



Now the most difficult part of our journey started from here. I will have to descend steep down from here. I cannot use my pony. I have to go down all on my own, very very slowly. I have to be very careful. I must move slowly with the help of my walking stick. Any small misstep may lead to a great disaster. The slope was slippery and dusty and it was very uneven with loose stones. I had to pass through snowy path also during this journey. My husband slipped twice, but was saved by God's grace. So I asked my porter not to worry about me, and to take care of my husband and help him get down. From here two porters took care of him and they saw to it that he reached down safely. I used my walking stick and with full control, I came down without any problem.



During this journey, I was distributing small packets of bindis which I brought from home. I was told that the people here like them a lot. They were very happy when I gave them a packet to each one of them. I could see that sparkle in their eyes, when they took the packet from me.



I trekked 10 kilometers down. Then we all had our lunch, which was pre packed and given to us at the start of the day. I got on to my pony and traveled a distance of about 5 kilometers. We had our second day night's stay at Zuthulphuk. We were totally tired. Satyavani reached before us and reserved some good and comfortable rooms for us. We had our dinner and later went to bed.

5th September 2015. Early in the morning at around 4:30 a.m., we were greeted by our cooks, Limbu, Laxman, Shepa and others got some prasad in their hands. This day had to significances for us. In the first place, it was Janmashtami, so we were offered sweets as prasad by Laxman and other members of the cooking team and secondly, as most of the members from our group were from the teaching community, and it was Teachers' day, they wished us for that reason. So the day started on a very good note for us.

Our horses and porters were ready waiting for us to continue the third day's journey. After travelling for some time on the pony I was asked to get down and walk. I walked through a very narrow passage with steep valley and river flowing on one side and a mountain on another side. This was river Ravi flowing down. I walked a distance of 3 to 4 kilometers and reached a spot where the vehicles were waiting to pick us up.

We all boarded the bus and reached Darchen. On the way, once again I had a beautiful view of Mount Kailash to my heart's content. What else can one ask for? This would be the question in anyone's mind after this view of Mount Kailash. We joined other yatris, who could not do the Parikrama, due to their own reasons.



Here again there was a formality of security check. Later we drove back to Taklakot. We had to take the final clearance of our luggage and passports from the Chinese government here. As others were waiting for their turn, meanwhile we had our lunch at 1:30 pm.

After getting our luggage clearance, we crossed the bridge over river Karnali, got our passports stamped and we all stepped into Hilsa again. We immediately took boarded the helicopter and landed at Simikot for

that night's stay in a small guest house. Here I had bath with hot water after many days. I came out clean and fresh. The owner of the guest house prepared very good tea for all and cooked some vegetarian food for us. From here, I asked my brother to book the return flight tickets for us, from Kathmandu to Hyderabad. Before starting on this journey, I handed over the tickets amount to my brother and asked him to book the return flight tickets only after he gets a call from us to do so. The reason for doing so was that I did not want to lose any more money in the process of cancellation of the tickets. Our journey is considered to be very uncertain, so only after we were back in Simikot, I called him.

My mind could not come to terms that this journey was coming to an end. I could learn so much during my travel since past few days. The earth and sky, lakes and rivers, the mountains and the rocks, the sun and the moon are excellent school masters. They taught me more than I could learn from books. A river though has so many things to say, that it is hard to know, what it says to each one of us. Rivers renew our spirit and connect us with our past and link directly with the flow and rhythm of the natural world.

“He who climbs up on the highest mountains, laughs at all tragedies, real and imaginary,” says Friedrich Nietzsche. Truly said. We went to bed after having our dinner here at Simikot.



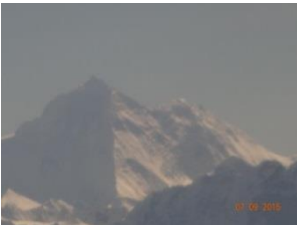
6th September 2015, in the morning we took a flight from Simikot to Nepalgunj. We reached Nepalgunj at 9 a.m. We all were accommodated at Hotel Siddhartha. Here we had our bath and after lunch we boarded the flight at 3:45 p.m. to reach Kathmandu. We were shifted to Shangri La hotel again in Kathmandu. The team of Kailash Journeys were there waiting to

receive us and congratulate us. We had our bath and had our dinner. We were given the certificates of Kailash Yatra completion by our tour organizers. We returned to our rooms and started packing our bags. We had to leave to Hyderabad the next day afternoon. In the morning we were to go for Mount Everest view. We struggled a lot with the weight of the luggage, which was exceeding the permitted



weight. Finally we decided to pay for the excess baggage and packed our bags and went to bed, Bhavani did not have any problem of excess baggage, as she shifted it to her brother, who was to come there, the next day, on an official trip.

**7<sup>th</sup> of September 2015.** Finally the day had come to bid good bye to the whole yatra. But before that we were to go on Mount Everest View flight. We booked the ticket for 6 a.m. flight, but because of heavy air traffic we could only make it



at 8:30 a.m. Because of the clear sky we had a very good view of Gauri Shankar peak, Dhaulagiri peak and ranges and the peak of Mount Everest. I was still unable to believe that it was happening. Yes, I was looking at Mount Everest from a very close quarter with my eyes wide open. I never imagined that this day would come in my life. I could feel the Everest peak saying that, “you cannot conquer me, but I will allow you to pass”. Nature cannot be conquered. We have to obey her. We were given certificates of the Everest Mountain View by the authorities.



We came back to the hotel, had our lunch and headed to Tribhuvan airport by 1:30 p.m. to take the Jet Airways flight to Hyderabad via New Delhi. After paying Rs.10000/- each, I and MVK Rao respectively, checked in our excess luggage. Satyavani and Padma also had to pay for excess baggage. Our flight took off at 4:45 p.m. from Katmandu to reach Delhi at 6:15 p.m.

I'd looked out of the window of the aircraft. Looking at the mountains underneath me, I was again totally lost in my thoughts of the Himalayas. These mountains seem alive-breathing. Behind these mountains exists a great life force. My heart filled with appreciation.

We were feeling totally free and were under the impression that we could collect the baggage directly at Hyderabad. But to our shock, we were informed by Gopal Nair, that all our luggage was put aside near the conveyor belt. He could identify the bags, with the logos of Kailash Journeys and our numbers printed on them.

We all rushed there, picked up our bags and again went through security check and checked in the luggage for Hyderabad bound flight at 8:15 p.m. I had a long discussion with the Jet Airways staff at the airport, which left the cans containing the holy water very carelessly on the floor. I explained them the trouble we had undergone, to get the water and our sentiment attached to it. They could understand my feelings and assured me that the cans would reach safely to Hyderabad. With this assurance, I boarded the flight. I sat near the window and looked out and was counting on all the blessings of so many people, which made my journey so very successful.

We reached Hyderabad at 11 p.m. After completing all the formalities, we waited for our baggage to arrive. Everyone got their



baggage excepting me. I was shocked, but to my utter surprise, a person came to me carrying my baggage separately with fragile tags on all the pieces. The staff of Jet Airways at Delhi airport shifted my baggage separately with fragile tags. Heart in heart, I thanked them, as the water cans were in perfect condition.

We came out of the airport. I bid goodbye to everyone. I thanked everyone personally, for their cooperation. At this moment I noticed that Rajalakshmi's eyes were filled with tears. Her voice was choked. She could not speak anything. But her face expressed everything. Her eyes were full of gratitude. We all had developed a strong bond during these 16 days of journey. We hired a cab and dropped Rambabu garu and Bhavani at their house at 12:30 a.m. Their parents were eagerly waiting for them at the doorstep. From there we reached home at 1 a.m.

I felt that the trip was the best journey, a journey into my self-search. When I look back at this life's most memorable journey of mine, the journey to Kailash Mansarovar is a journey through places, devoid of any cacophony of modern day life, through places where only love and peace prevail. This pilgrimage is of love, nature and devotion. I fully agree with the writing of Swami Tapovan Maharaj where he says, "Feeling that the purpose of my birth had been accomplished, I congratulated myself, on my good fortune." The yatra was indeed memorable, with all of us experiencing an inner satisfaction and joy that comes only from truly blessed events.



**8<sup>th</sup> September 2015** I woke up early, finished my regular household chores and went to college, to join back after 17 days break. I had a class in the first hour. I went on with my duties as usual. Later in the day, I was informed that there would be a staff meeting. Little did I knew, that this meeting was nothing, but a small get together, which was organized by my



Principal and colleagues, to felicitate me, on completing this holy pilgrimage of Kailash Manasarovar. Looking at the affection they were showing, my throat was choked and with great difficulty I could speak. I thanked them for the love they were showing towards me. I don't think that anybody will get such an honor anywhere else. All were very eager to know about my Kailash Manasarovar Yatra and how I could do it. I explained them briefly of how I went ahead with all the preparations. Above all, one must have God's wish, blessings of the parents, and blessings of the Gurus, for a pilgrimage of this kind to be a successful one. The principal and staff honored me with a shawl, garland and sweets making me feel that my yatra was still continuing and has not come to an end. All nice things have to end somewhere. So let me also make a full stop to my article, after just another event, the Kailash Manasarovar Samaradhana, related to this journey.



**20<sup>th</sup> September 2016** Rambabu garu and Bhavani had arranged for Samaaradhana at their place.



They performed the Mahalingarchana and did the Samaradhana and arranged lunch for all the invitees. They distributed the holy water of Lake Mansarovar to all



those who attended the function.

**On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2015,** we arranged the Kailash Manasarovar Samaradhana in our



house. I called up my cousin Mani, to invite them for the function. She asked me whether they too can join us for the Pooja, as that day was her husband's birthday. We happily agreed to it as, we will have another couple sitting and performing the Rudrabhishekam in our house. I invited my near



relatives, my college principal and staff and the principal and staff of Nrupatunga College, where my husband worked prior to his retirement as principal of



that college. I made all the arrangements for the pooja and the cooking also which, I wanted them to do at my place itself. I approached Ramakrishna Oruganti,



who works in a bank near my house, to invite him and his family to the function. I also requested him to bring along his parents for Paada Pooja (Pooja where the couple is treated as Lord Shiva and Parvathi). I told him the reason why I chose them especially for this pooja. I felt that, they were the most fortunate parents, who had sent all their three sons to Kailash Manasarovar pilgrimage at a time. It was our luck, that accepting our invitation, they agreed to come, I was very happy that the Rudrabhishekam went on very well which was attended by more than hundred and fifty persons. The Paada Pooja itself was an event which nobody could ever miss. All those present there, were feeling lucky to be there, when the pooja was being performed. The satisfaction we got, after performing the Paada Pooja cannot be expressed. I felt that coming back from Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, Lord Shiva and Parvathi had come down all the way here, to bless us. We were blessed, we were blessed. All the people present there were blessed; all the people who saw this pooja were blessed. After the pooja, everyone had lunch. We offered new clothes to all the people, who had come to Kailash Manasarovar Yatra along with us.

This journey not only holds an important place in my life, for the peace and happiness it had given me, but it also has taught me to go ahead and struggle for what I aspire, if it is right. Any predictions or obstacles should not come in our way if our intention and the purpose is true. We may lose hope temporarily, but must have strong faith in the God, the Guru and the elder's blessings which will help us in achieving our desired goals.

In this way the final stage was completed, bringing down the curtain of our

## **Mukthinath - Kailash- Mansarovar Yatra 2015.**

My sincere thanks and heart felt gratitude to the whole team of  
**Kailash Mansarovar Journeys Private Limited.**

- Mr Rajan Shrestha : Managing Director
- Mr Shivendra Mishra : Sales Associate
- Mr Pramod Gautam : Regional Head - India
- Mr Suman Dahal: Accountant
- Mr Sagar Acharya : Helicopter tour expert
- Mr Kalyan Parajuli : Sales Associate

### **Tour Staff : (Accompanied us during tour)**

- Mr Raj Kumar Adhikari : Guide
- Mr Lam Babu : Guide
- Mr Limbu Rana Magar : cook
- Mr Nir Bahadur Thapa Magar
- Mr. Dhan Bahadur Thapa Magar
- Mr. Lhakpa Temba Sherpa
- Mr. Pardi Man Ghale
- Mr. Nurbu Sherpa
- Mr. Mingma Sherpa
- Mr. Laxman Kaji Rai
- Mr. Dhan Bahadur Ghale





Darling of our family