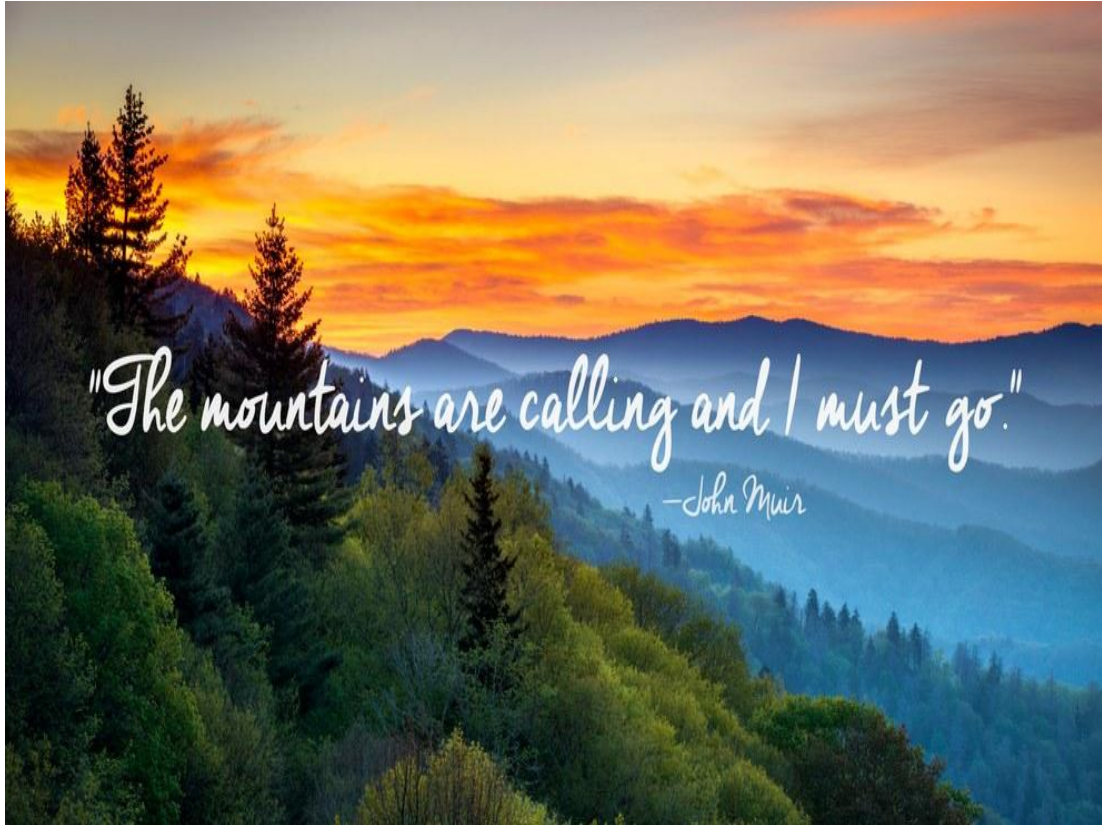


## Tryst with the Almighty- Part-1

### (Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra) by Aparna Sharma



I had a latent desire to undertake this challenging yet fulfilling journey to Mount Kailash since the last few years, however did not know when & how. This time more than ever, I have come to believe that there is a time for everything in one's life. And when its time, everything around you will propel you towards it- You just have to stay tuned, walk the path, make efforts to fructify & go along.

The experience is still so fresh that I am in a trance , though living in the real world. I have just crossed the 90 day mark post my return. I would want to continue to bask in the intense memories of the trip, but my friend & well wisher- Mr.Ram M. requested me to write about it & share it at the earliest while its still alive in me 😊 , so others could also experience the joy .Fair ask- hence, putting pen to paper. Above all, he exclaimed, "I am meeting Aparna version 2.0".

I have not done any regular pilgrimages in India so far like the Char Dham, Kumbh Melas etc. However, when the CALL came directly from the Head Office (😊😊😊)-Abode of Lord Shiva...was overjoyed!

Zeroed in on the same tour company that my husband & father had gone with. The administrative part of the trip was handled by them since it is in China & you need Visas etc. It was a 63 member group---- seekers of different age groups--- as young as 20 yrs old & the most spirited being 91 yr old.

The mental preparation was the easy bit....since I was determined & am quite comfortable in dealing with the unknown & ambiguous. I listened to everyone's advice & experience, however did not let it scare me with respect to the level of difficulty.

The most important preparation was building physical endurance through exercise, yoga, walking on the incline, practising deep breathing & challenging my own physical limitations over 6 months. Exercise, rest combined with healthy eating got me charged up to undertake what is known as the most challenging spiritual voyage. Focus & Unwavering determination helped me immensely in the preparation phase.

Though we were in a large group & I had gone along with a known family from Mumbai, I came back with a strong realisation that while you have people & relationships like family, friends etc in your life..., you have to walk the path on your own- "You are alone" in the end & till the end. Each one's life is unique & you have to live & experience your own & take the lessons along the way. "Be apart from it" while being a "Part of it"- Detachment leads to fewer disappointments in our life.

The journey from Mumbai to Lucknow to Nepal was all covered in a single day. At the end of the day in Nepal , we were briefed about the journey from Nepal to Simikot by a small aircraft through a cloud covered valley & then a helicopter ride from Simikot to Hilsa. After clearing immigration in China, it was a bus ride to Taklakot where we would camp for 2 nights to acclimatize. All of this in a day- whoa- what a spin! From 500 mts to 8,500 mts....was tough & exhausting to say the least.

After arriving in Taklakot, I realised the terrain, weather, air had all changed- It was cold already! We were asked to walk around in the small town, rest, eat, not to bathe, keep our windows open in the night...so we would breathe the air which was already thin compared to the earlier places given the height.

Alas-The first lot from the group was already sick with headache, nausea...fever, breathlessness on the first day... a few more fell sick...they started binging on food since they did not know what else to do.

I ate bare minimum, drank lots of fluids- warm water, tea, coffee, juice, soup etc., walked around quite a bit, rested & above all meditated...had promised to myself to keep "Maun" during the entire journey starting from Taklakot. I, however, spoke when group members needed help or medical attention. The journey within had started along with the journey towards the eternal abode 😊

The 3<sup>rd</sup> day was earmarked for our journey to Manasarovar from Taklakot...we started early post breakfast by bus. Beautiful mountainous terrain on the way with very little or no vegetation on the sides. The first marvel was being able to catch a glimpse of the mighty Mount Kailash from Rakshastal which was a huge blue lake, the place where Ravana did Tapas to be blessed with "Atma-Linga". The water of this lake is absolutely blue with no flora, fauna & four islands within it where the locals breed Yaks.

We went close to the lake on a hillock & could see Mt.Kailash through fleeting clouds. Tears rolled down my cheeks with the sight....I have no words to express why & what I experienced. In hindsight, they were unstoppable tears of joy.... I was finally there to see & experience the ultimate.

We proceeded to do a parikrama of the Manasarovar Lake in the bus & stopped midway at a place where we could see Mt. Kailash clearly at a distance, take a dip in the holy water & offer prayers. The water was colourless & cold.... could see the "Legendary Hans" in the lake & different types of vegetation in the base since it was so clear. I was spellbound....the Lord beckoned!

It was late evening by the time we completed the parikrama in the bus & reached the other side of the Manasarovar lake, however, it became very cloudy, started to rain & was really cold.

We camped in temporary rooms on the bank of the Manasarovar Lake.....it was pitch dark...no lights- only sound of wild dogs barking. I was lying on some kind of a bed, longing for the sky to clear up. Post midnight, the sky cleared up & there were countless stars all over the sky...some light...some brighter....it was a spectacular sight. Had never seen so many stars so clearly with naked eyes.

Fully clad with woollens & a huge blanket, I walked towards the lake along with a few other members of the group around 02:30 a.m & settled on the ground pretty close to watch the celestial activity. Kailash was at the back & I was sitting there facing the Manasarovar lake. Suddenly, one star split (Taara tutana) & fell into the lake & then started to dance like the sine wave....what was that—I was stunned...pulled out my camera....clicked a few pics....Then, the star light moved in a circular manner after a few minutes as if it was revering Lord Shiva @ Mt.Kailash. This continued....& suddenly after sometime, another star split (Taara tutana) & the same actions were repeated....after a while, both stars together moved in circular motion...again offering prayers. I clicked all this several times. I rubbed my eyes just to check if it was real & not a figment of my imagination. It was truly divine. It was about 04:00a.m. Then again, the 3<sup>rd</sup> star split(Taara tutana) & the same action was repeated by all 3 in tandem....it is truly unbelievable.

My understanding is that the Gods in the form of stars come down to cleanse in the Manasarovar lake during Brahma Muhurat & then worship the Almighty-Lord Shiva who resides in Mt.Kailash according to our scriptures. I am speechless & dumbfound having seen this myself first hand. It is truly miraculous- I experienced divine power----it is so pure & intense....no words can express! I clicked as many pictures as I could & chose to come back to the room since it was freezing in the open.

What is unbelievable is that all the pictures I or anyone else clicked are blank....there is no image captured at all...its absolutely black & clear....The images couldn't have vanished from the camera, however...given the pristine nature of this phenomenon...all I have within me is the intense experience which my eyes saw & my soul soaked in!

I have never believed in heresy-- for me----this treat is the purest form of prayer by witnessing the divinity in the universe. Something in me, changed with this experience- Ram, was it the birth of Aparna version 2.0?

**Find your Calling!**

**Thank you**

