



It was about 3:00 a.m. on August 15, 2010 when my fellow travelers and I waited on the shores of Lake Manasarovar in Tibet expecting a miracle to happen.

There was pitch darkness all round us since the full moon day was still 11 days away.

We heard that Gods and Goddesses would descend on the lake to take a holy dip around that hour.

We waited and waited until the spectacle unfolded.

One day in July, my superiors asked me to get ready for a visit to Manasarovar at short notice.

Learning that world-famous guru Jaggi Vasudev was leading the pilgrimage, I was elated. A month before the pilgrimage, I began to practice brisk walking and breathing exercises to withstand the rigors of the pilgrimage. The day finally arrived.

I, along with a group of devotees, traveled to Delhi and Khatmandu by air from Hyderabad. We had spent three days visiting famous temples in the capital city of Nepal when the tour operator announced that the yatra would begin the next day.

We had satsang and lunch. The tour operator gave us medicines to overcome high altitude breathing problems, special jackets and sweaters to withstand even zero degree temperatures.

In the wee hours of the next day, we set out in buses towards the border with China after the ceremonial guru puja. The road wound its way through valleys and mountains.

The waterfalls, rivers, and greenery all along the route provided a feast to the eye. The mountains looked as if they would fall on us. Landslides blocking traffic and killing people are common along the route.

When I broached the matter with Jaggi Vasudev, he said smilingly, "This is just the beginning." To our right side was Friendship Bridge dividing Nepal and Tibet.

Though it was 1 pm, we shivered as cold winds from the mountains swept past us. Chinese officials permitted us to cross the border after scrutinizing our baggage.

Once we had the Chinese stamp in our passports, we resumed our

Dazzling spectacle at Manasarovar

The very thought sent shivers down our spines. Around noon, we reached a place called Kodari, close to the China Immigration Point.

Houses in brown color, and beautiful Nepali girls embellished the natural beauty in and around Kodari.

Later, we had lunch at a hotel and walked to the Immigration Point. I found the two-kilometer-long walk carrying a bag across the uneven and terrain tough.

journey in Land Cruiser vehicles. Traveling 10 km from Friendship Bridge, we reached Jangmu town, which is 3,500 meters above the sea level.

We took shelter in the town for the night. Around 3 am the next day, our vehicles proceeded towards Saga.

We crossed many hills and hillocks before stopping at a check post where the police scrutinized our passports. Traveling on asphalted

road, We reached Nyalam port four hours later.

A huge welcome arch with letters in Chinese greeted us. As if there was a festival, small flags in their thousands were fluttering in Nyalam.

There is a small Buddhist temple constructed in mud. It has bells arranged in a circular way. We come across the Brahmaputra en route to Manasarovar.

The Tibetans call it Yarlang Sang Po. We reached the small town of Saga by 7 p.m.

Daylight does not fade in Tibet until 10 p.m. In Saga, beautiful Chinese and Tibetan girls run shops located on either side of the road.

Saga town is located 4,600 meters above the sea level. At such heights, people face breathing problems due to shortage of oxygen in the air. My health deteriorated. I suffered from fever and cough, and felt weak. Parameswari, the doctor accompanying us, examined me and referred me to a Chinese doctor.

The Chinese doctor diagnosed me as having lung infection and asked me to return to India. She administered an intravenous injection and put me on oxygen.

The Swamiji's disciples comforted me saying that since Manasarovar is located at a lower altitude, my condition would improve.

Around the same time, the Swami sent word that the team members join him for a walk. I tried to evade but the team members would not relent.

The next day, around 3 am we resumed our journey. En route, we came across Lake Peku. The blue lake located amidst red mountains looked like a perfect piece of work by a skilled artist. Around 8 p.m., we reached Manasarovar.

I noticed a perceptible change in people's behavior on reaching Manasarovar. The tourists got down their cars, looked towards Kailash Hills, and started meditating. Rather mechanically, my both hands united in namaskar mudra and I started chanting Lord Shiva's names. I got into the car thanking the Almighty for having given me the opportunity to visit Manasarovar.

After traveling for some distance, we camped there by pitching tents at the rate of one for every two

pilgrims. Though it was sunny, cool breeze was blowing. We put on seven layers of woolens, gloves and socks, leather shoes and mufflers, and photo sun eyeglasses. Yet, we shivered.

Manasarovar, surrounded by snow-clad hills, was in front of our eyes. The blue waves in Manasarovar began to reflect the early morning sunlight. I was aghast to learn that the water temperature could be around -7 degrees C. At one time, I wondered whether could I see the Kailashgiri mountain.

However, the Swamiji infused courage and confidence in me. He directed the doctors accompanying us to take good care of me.

The next day, everyone followed the Swamiji for a bath in the holy Manasarovar. A majority of my troupe members left for a darshan of Kailashgiri, asking me to wait for a great spectacle.

I slowly walked towards Manasarovar, sprinkled the holy water on my head thrice, and prayed to Lord Shiva. Remaining awake in my tent, I kept peeping outside towards Manasarovar every five minutes.

As I heard dogs barking around 2.30 a.m. I looked towards Manasarovar. There I saw a huge circular ball of sun light descending from the sky into Manasarovar. I could not believe my eyes. By the time I recovered my senses, the light disappeared.

After half an hour, our troupe members and I proceeded towards the bank of Manasarovar. Around 3 am, a bright light, akin to petromax light, spread all over the lake and disappeared.

The light appeared thrice and dazzled us. A little later, we returned to our tents and slipped into deep slumber.

We got up early the next day and set off to Shishang on our way to Kailashgiri. Slowly, I noticed my energy level improving.

Trekking commences from Shishang. One has to trek 52 km in the mountainous region braving chilly weather and decreasing levels of oxygen to complete one round of pradakshina of Kailash Hills. Those who cannot walk, ride on horses.

The previous evening, the tour operator provided us oxygen cylinders and camphor cubes, a good source of oxygen. From Shishang, we get a good view of Mount Kailash.

Hundreds of Tibetans, including women and children, guide horses and work as porters. They charge between Rs.6,000 and Rs.10,000 per

pilgrim for providing a horse and a porter. The charges vary from season to season.

We resumed our journey from Shishang. To me, Mount Kailash appeared like a three-eyed skull. I felt that Lord Shiva appeared to me in this form. Our goal was to reach Derapuk. I felt a sharp pain in my legs as the horse negotiated the rough and uneven terrain.

As my heart missed a beat or two when two horses collided head on in a narrow stretch of road, I chanted the Panchakshari – Om Namah Sivayah!

En route, as I saw a mountain that resembled Lord Vinayaka, I offered namaskar. Later, I saw a red mountain that looked like Nandi, Lord Siva's carrier.

We reached Derapuk traveling on horseback for about five hours from Shishang. We took rest in the rest rooms at Derapuk. At Derapuk,

one gets a better view of Mount Kailash (Uttara Kailasha darsanam). Traveling 2.5 km further, we stayed in a hotel from where the view was much clearer. In front of us, there lay Mount Kailash, the seat of Lord Siva.

Snow was falling on Mount Kailash. It is black whereas the surrounding mountains are red.

Our joy over having darshan of Lord Siva's abode knew no bounds.

This is the most pious place on earth. It is where four younger brothers of Dharmaraja breathed their last. Many people prefer to die at Kailasam.

Annually 50 per cent of pilgrims die due to one reason or the other.

On seeing Mount Kailash, I visualized Lord Shiva in a meditating posture. Tears of joy rolled out of our eyes.

-Dasari Durga Prasad

