

1st

DAY

9 June, 2007

SOUL TO SHIVA



Om Namah Shivay!

O God! bless everyone. Protect everyone. This day is going to be a gold-lettered leaf in the book of my life.

O Shiva! O, supreme father! my long-cherished dream is about to come true. It is said that only the blessed individuals, who have done good deeds can see the realization of this dream. My happiness and enthusiasm are knowing no bounds. I have waited for this day like a Chatak (a mythical bird who drinks only rainwater) waiting for rain. What can I say about this special day! My eyes are moist and my heart is beating faster and faster, divulging my excitement and happiness. Waiting for this day kept me on the edge, and when it has dawned, anxiety and pleasure has filled every pore of my body, tingling me to the core. I am going to meet the father of the Universe, my precious Lord Shiva! I am confident that I shall complete the yatra of Kailash – Mansarovar and return as an enriched, blessed, and fulfilled individual.

Something that happens in our life for the first time, is always memorable and pleasurable. What happened here has remained etched in my psyche. I am smiling as well as crying. My smiles are for the yatra and I have tears because I would be away from my loved ones, my children, and my parents for a full month! But the name of Shiva in my mind and courage in my heart have fueled my enthusiasm.

We are the third batch of the Kailash – Mansarovar yatra. The first batch got cancelled due to heavy rainfall in the yatra region. An ominous sign, the cancellation has created huge uncertainty, but I am confident that Lord Shiva will ensure my tryst with him, come what may. My faith in him is unshakeable.

Finally, the news came that our batch was cleared to travel. Lord Shiva had smiled upon us, and we started preparing for the month-long pilgrimage with utmost humility, devotion, and fervor. My entire family and close friends came to see me off at the Ahmedabad airport and wished me a safe and successful Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra (pilgrimage).

ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम्
उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनात्, मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात्।

(This is the Mahamrityunjay mantra, also known as the Sanjivani mantra. Vibrations produced by chanting this mantra build a safety circle around the body. It brings bliss, peace, and prosperity in life.)



THE BEGINNING

Today is the second day of our journey. We got up early, as we had to reach the Delhi Heart and Lung Institute hospital at 08:00 AM for a medical check-up to establish our fitness to undertake this Yatra. We went through many tests including X-ray, TMT, and Pulmonary Function Test (PFT). Being medically fit is a prerequisite to embarking on this arduous journey. We are going to encounter very cold weather and thin air during the month-long Yatra. Our lungs and our hearts should be strong enough to withstand this. Everybody was worried about the outcome of this check-up, particularly the TMT and the PFT as failing them could lead to disqualification. It was a huge relief when we came to know that our test results came out normal.

So, we were now ready to set out for the Yatra. Stories about experiences at Kailash and Mansarovar abound. All yatrīs had their own share of anecdotes. Unusual sightings have been reported at night at Mansarovar. Someone has seen three lamps entering the lake. Someone saw a Ganesha outline in the sky. Someone saw Lord Shiva in the sacrificial pit (Agni Kund). Someone even perceived Shiva on Mount Kailash.

‘Sit on the bank of the lake all night, you shall certainly see some miracles. Even if you don’t see any, the divine combination of lustrous Mansarovar and silvery Kailash with a canopy of zillions of diamond-like stars, itself is a once in a lifetime experience...’ Shivkumar, an experienced Kailash yatri shared with us.

This charged us up. We retired dreaming about such experiences.





CHECK UP AND FORMALITIES

We are at the Military Hospital for a physical check-up which was the concluding part of establishing our fitness.

A short film about the yatra was being screened, as we went for the check-up one by one. Post check-up, we went upstairs where a gentleman briefed us about the journey.

We are a big batch with many elderly yatris. We met many of them and found them personable and good-natured. We were asked to report the next morning at 08:00 AM for visa and currency exchange formality at the Ministry of External Affairs office.

**4th
DAY**

12 June, 2007

DELHI: A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE AT MEA

We reached the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) located in the south wing of the parliament complex, just opposite India Gate. The Foundation stone for this historical building was laid by HRH Duke of Connaught on February 12, 1921. A lady officer briefed us about details of the journey along with a short film and helped us complete the requisite formalities. With this, all the administrative formalities for the Yatra were over.

Tomorrow, the real journey was to begin. We were excited that finally, we would be leaving for the Yatra, at the same time, we were a bit uncertain and worried too about what we will have to face.

