

Mukthinath yatra

Written by : Dr. Meenakshisundaram.

Day 1

Had snanam in Triveni Sangamam. Due to recent monsoon you could not distinguish Ganga and Yamuna which will be light greenish and bluish in normal days. Also we could not feel the undercurrent of Saraswati as the depth in the river is more than 20 feet. Due to ingenuity of Boatman we all had a dip . Two boats with space in between where they had a net with six feet height. The net can hold 3 to 4 persons at a time. We all had snanam after sankalpam by a pandit in the next boat. Although the group consisted mostly senior citizens with one person aged 85 all of us had snanam safely. By the time we had completed darshan at Hanuman mandir it was 1PM and the other mandir were closed. After food we waited till 4pm when Sankara Madam opened to have darshan of various deities in different levels. Thanks to Gopalanji contact we got Prasad at Sankara mutt temple. We then proceeded to Veni Madavan temple which opened at 5 PM and had Arthi Darshan.. As the departure from Prayagraj was delayed our ordeal started. It is a long travel from Prayagraj to Naimasaranyam. The AC in the bus failed and driver decided to fix it in Lucknow where technicians were available. We reached Lucknow at Midnight and the repair took 3 hrs and then reached Namisaranyam around 6AM. In the morning we had a dip Chakratheertham which was near Maharashtra Bhavan where we stayed. As it was raining previous day we were advised not to take bath in Gomti river. After BF we visited various temples in Naimasaranyam by Auto. We had darshan at Devaraj Perumal koil and proceeded to Ahobhila mutt Narasimha temple which is under construction. Ramanji had arranged Tirumanjan at Ahobhila mutt for Narasimha. We chanted Upanishads and Purusha suktam during Tirumanjan. We then visited Lalita Devi temple which is considered as one of the Shaktipeeth. We had Lunch at 1pm and boarded the bus for travel to Ayodhya. As the organiser went for banking transactions we got delayed for 2-3 hrs. Reached Ayodhya almost midnight and stayed in Marwadi bhavan. In the morning we had a dip in Sarayu which was also flowing fully due to recent monsoons. After snan and BF we proceeded to visit Ayodhya temple. By the time we reached Ramjanma Bhoomi temple it was closed and we had to wait till 2 pm to have darshan of Ramlala. In the meantime we had food in Bhojanalaya where free food is arranged for Yatris.

- We had Darshan of Ramlala at 2pm and proceeded to Ammaji Mandir where Yogi had unveiled a statue of Ramanujar in the presence of Jeeyar. We had Darshan at the temple and chanted suktams as the Lord Ramaswamy was getting ready for Tirumanjan. We left the temple at 4:45pm and reached our room for proceeding to Sonali Nepal border. We reached border after midnight and had to cross the border by walking 100 mts to reach the hotel.

We started around 11AM to reach Pokhra and our ordeal continued. Bad roads meant we could not go beyond 20-30 kms/ hr. So we covered a distance of 180 kms in 12 hrs.

□ The next day morning we were ready to catch the flight to Jogsom by 4:30AM. Reached the airport which was nearby only with hand baggage. The flight time was 18 mts and was smooth with mountain ranges on the view. Walked from Airport to hotel and had packed BF of uppuma. The weather was chill and most of us had warm clothes although sun was shining. Proceeded to Mukthinath temple by bus Temple is in the hill and you had to climb by road about a KM and climb about 500 steps to reach temple. Most preferred to walk excepting a few like me to take the Pony. Mrs OV was arranged a Dholi at a cost of Rs 4000/-. Unlike in other places there are asked to lie down in a stretcher and carried by four persons. After reaching the temple we had a running snanam

under 108 Ghomukh as the water was freezing cold. Some preferred to have prokshan. After this people have to get in and get out of two square tanks which are named Papa and Punya kundam . I don't know the significance of these kundams but anyway I had a dip in both. After getting into Panchakachham we had Darshan of Mukthinath. The priest is a young female and we had a pandit at the entrance who could explain us various deities inside. He also permitted us to do Parayanam inside the premises. Ramanji arranged for Tirumanjan next day which of course we could not witness. By the time people completed snanam the temple was closed 12pm . Again it reopened by 2pm and we waited till then to do Panchsuktham Parayanam in the temple premises. After that we walked down to reach the bus. The highlight of this yatra to have a good darshan and it was fulfilled although we had to undergo ordeals and hardships due to inability of the organisers of the yatra. For those who want comfortable travel can take a flight to Kathmandu and take a helicopter ride from Kathmandu to the helipad near the temple. All that you have to walk just 100 mts to reach the temple. The helicopter ride will cost Rs 35000/- per person.

☐ In the night the hotel had arranged a good South Indian meal with sambar rasam poriyal. Another group from Bengaluru also arrived on that day.

☐ The next day morning we walked to airport to catch the flight to Pokhara. The flight had a capacity of 18 people. The same flight after dropping the first batch returned to pickup the second batch.

The day was spent in Pokhara visiting temples Mahadev gufa and a devi temple. Mahadev gufa which has an entrance fee has a Shivling when you walk down in steep steps in the midway and when you go further down you see a waterfall at a distance of 10 mts. After that we went to Guptheswari temple which according to legend is more than 5000 years old and is considered as Shakthi peetam. But some don't agree.

In the evening we planned to visit Pokhara lake and Barahi temple. Again miscalculation by the organisers we reached the lake at 6 pm when the lake was closed for boating and the temple across the lake was closed. Anyway we saw Aarti of the lake which probably is a new trend. Of course it was good and the Aarti song was good. Ramanji was lucky to get a Rudraksha used for Aarti.

All yatis insisted on seeing the Barahi temple and arranged a transport from hotel to Lake early morning to reach the boating yard which opened at 6am.

The boat ride was good with scenic views and temple visit was also refreshing. Lucky that we did not miss it.

Started from Pokhara to Kathmandu at 8 AM again an ordeal with bad roads. Around 7:30PM we decided not to stop for dinner and proceed to Kathmandu to have dinner there. Within half an hour another disaster happened. An oncoming vehicle hit our vehicle in a bend of the road smashing four glass windows and raining pieces on the passengers sitting in the first four rows.

All ladies were allowed by a house owner nearby to enter and change dress to remove the glass pieces which rained on them. Good Samaritans are there everywhere. Our schedule was again disrupted again and reached Kathmandu at Midnight without dinner. Tiring journey put us to sleep immediately but we were ready for Pasupati nath Darshan at 6:30AM. However our vehicle had gone for repair of glass windows they had arranged a smaller bus for the group. Finally we started at 9 AM for the temple visit. We first visited Guhyeswari temple which is again Sakthi Peet with the anus part. The temple does not have a prathima but a Chakra and puja was conducted for the chakra. Our group chanted Durga Sri Medha and Bagya suktams and we left for Pashupathynath temple. The tour guide arranged for Rudrabhishek puja and it costed Rs11000/- (NR). We collected

the same with most of the yatris contributing. The guide asked to buy Rudraksha before going to temple as it can be submitted to the Lord before taking home. The rudra puja lasted about 45 mts in a raised thinnai outside the sannadhi but inside the temple. Six Brahmins chanted Shukla Yajur vedam R&C and it went well with all the yatris. Before that Gopalanji arranged Vastram for Adi Sankara and a small puja was done on behalf of KanchiMutt. Thodakashtam was chanted in the sannadhi.

The priest who arranged Rudrabhishek puja took the group to see Pashupathynath where puja is done by priests of Sringeri Mutt. All yatris were taken to see four faces of the Lord out of turn inspite of heavy crowd outside.

After Darshan our group chanted Rudram outside the sannidhi. The Pashupathynath Darshan and Mukthinath Darshan were really exhilarating and probably overcoming all the ordeals and hardships of the travel for the yatris. After Lunch we started for Janakpur with usual delay but was compounded by one passenger leaving the bag in the hotel and noticing it later. Of course the organiser was considerate to arrange picking up the bag. We proceeded to have darshan of JalNarayanan and move to Janakpur at a snail speed. As there was not much of Veg hotel for dinner we agreed to delay the dinner by 2-3 hrs. However we had to abandon it as one of the tyres burst and needed to be fixed. Our yatris found a small veg Dhaba and requested them to make chappatti and side dishes for 30 yatris. As it was done by a single female and getting delayed women from our group entered the kitchen and started making chappatti and men folk serving it. After two hours halt we started again to turn back to Dhaba as one of our friend left his phone and noticed later. By this time delays and problems had become habitual. Only thing that we didn't anticipate was at around 5 AM when we thought we were near Janakpur another tyre burst happened. We realised that we are only in the midway to Janakpur. The organiser arranged a small bus to continue the journey as the repairs could be done only after 10AM. We reached Janakpur around 11AM with frayed tempers. Those who wanted to do Thula masa Tharpanam did it in their room or in Janakpur tank. As the temple closed by 11AM we had to wait till 4PM for darshan. Any way we had to wait till our bus reached Janakpur as all our baggages were loaded in it and the small bus hired could not accommodate the big suitcases. After Lunch we visited Shiv Dhanush which is about 20 Kms in a small auto in bad roads. Returned and visited Ram Mandir Janak Mahal and Seetha Vivah palace. By this time our bus reached Janakpur and 5 of us hired a SUV to reach Patna from where we had to board our flight. Our ordeal ended and we reached Patna around 11PM and had a comfortable stay and good sleep. For others ordeal continues.

I missed the visit to Mankamna temple in a winch. That was really good and we had a good darshan in the hills. Being Sunday crowd was there but still we could have darshan and return in time for travel further.

Visit to Pashupathynath on Somavara is a real blessing.

- The yatra reminded us that there is no easy way to reach abodes of God but to face hardships with determination. Only saving grace the yatris made friends and had fun and faced the hurdles together. Since all yatris are senior citizens with one person at the age of 85 it is really a miracle we had such a nice darshan inspite of the ordeals faced.
