

Journey to the Centre of the World

~ A circling of Mount Kailash ~

by Ajahn Amaro

HERE IS THE WATCH
MY MOTHER GAVE
MY FATHER on their wedding day, his initials engraved upon the back. Here is a dress that the daughter of Tan Dhammarakkho, Hannah Renshaw, wore before she died at the age of two, in a mysterious fire at Chithurst in 1983. Here is a thimble belonging to Chris Smith's great-grandmother ... all precious relics, family treasures. Now we enshrine them on the slopes of Mount Kailash and walk away, climbing the final slope to the Dolma La pass, leaving family and the rest of our past behind.

Breathe. Keep breathing deeply. Breathe as fully as possible, opening every cleft of lung.

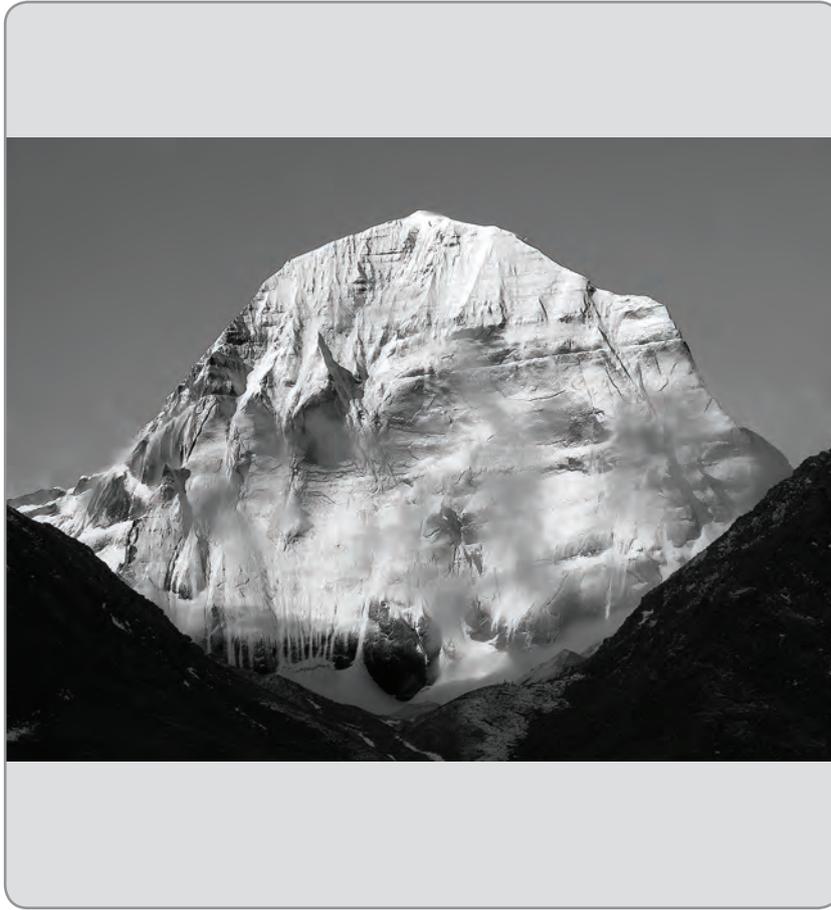
Everything, the whole world, is gathered at this point. Here is the 'still point of the turning world', the *axis mundi*, Mount Meru at the centre of the cosmos. 'At the still point, there the dance is', the dance of motion and pause, one foot in front of the other, and then not. Water, rock, both still and flowing.

Steadily, going nowhere, the mountain falls away beneath the feet until the heights of Dolma La are reached: 'still and still moving into another intensity ...' 'In my end is my beginning.' 'In my beginning is my end.'



The news that I planned to go on a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash in the spring of 2013 was regularly met with a blank look. People would ask: 'Where is that?' or 'Why is that a special place?' 'Good question', was probably the most appropriate reply.

I knew that Mount Kailash was in Tibet and that it was considered to be a holy place by both Hindus and Tibetan Buddhists; these two groups seem to have been aware of the uniqueness of the mountain from ancient times. To Hindus it is the earthly embodiment of the axial mountain of the heavens, Meru, and is the abode of Lord Shiva. To Tibetans



The north face of Mount Kailash, seen from Dirapuk Monastery.

it is Sumeru, also the cosmic centre of the universe. Mount Kailash has thus been a magnet for pilgrims for millennia.

On looking up more of its history I found out that unlike the gneiss rock of most of the Himalayas, Mount Kailash was formed of ancient Tertiary gravel lifted up on granite, and had once been the highest island in the primordial Tethys Sea.

Its mystique is enhanced by the facts that it stands high, alone, is snow-peaked year-round and is mysteriously symmetrical, like a natural pyramid; and because four of the great rivers of the Indian subcontinent all have their source in the

region: the Sutlej, the Indus, the Brahmaputra and the Karnali, a tributary of the Ganges. It is for these reasons that it is almost certainly the origin of the Eastern myths of the World Mountain, the towering peak that is the axis of the universe.

I also knew that Luang Por Sumedho had made two attempts to go there, and had only been successful in making the journey and circumambulating the mountain on the second occasion. He had spoken often of the many spiritual blessings that had come from his pilgrimage, but in addition that it had been, 'The hardest thing I have ever done.' Other friends and Sangha members had also made the journey: Ajahn Sucitto, Kittisāro and Ṭhānissarā, and Sister Ṭhitamedhā; they too had all spoken of the sacred nature of the experience and the intensity of the physical challenges. At more than 15,000 feet the air is very thin, and a lowlander's body is easily unready or unable to bear this.



So what was the reason I was now planning to go there?

The short answer is, 'Nick Scott invited me.' The longer version is that Nick, as a *tudong* companion of many Sangha members over more than thirty years, had reached the age of sixty and, due to visibly waning capacities, had come to the conclusion he had just 'one more big adventure' in him.

Based on his friendship and past experiences with Luang Por Sumedho and Ajahn Sucitto, the thought of Mount Kailash as a destination immediately came to his mind, with me as a travelling companion. Other friends and Sangha members were polled, and soon there were plans for a group of three monks and three laymen to make the expedition.

I freely admit that at first I had no great inspiration to go; it would be an interesting jaunt in a unique environment and a good opportunity for a *tudong*-type journey in the wilderness, but until then the place had held little significance for me spiritually. It had no special place in the mythology of the Theravādin world, so it was not like visiting sites such as Bodhgāya or the Deer Park at Vārānasi, holy places where the Buddha himself had walked and talked and dwelt.

As the reality of the journey started to gel, more reflections on the symbolism of the *axis mundi* arose in my mind. This ancient and universal spiritual principle had been a frequent theme of Luang Por Sumedho's Dhamma talks over the years. He often reflected on how the mythological centre of the world, whether embodied as Mount Sumeru, Olympus or Yggdrasil the World Tree, is a symbol of the immanent centrality of consciousness, how, 'The heart of the universe is your heart.'

These reflections reminded me that with many spiritual principles there is a meeting of: a) the physical/historical reality; b) its mythological representation; and c) its psychological parallels. Thus the symbol of the *axis mundi* has its resonances in the physical reality of Mount Kailash, in its mythic reality as the centre of the cosmos and, lastly, in the awakened awareness of the here and now. On account of these reflections rippling through consciousness, the prospect of the journey gained appeal.

In addition, it had been five years since my previous *tudong* trip (also with Nick), so I was quite ready for another such excursion.

These backpacking trips, and the *tudong* principle in general, had always appealed to me. *Tudong* is an ancient monastic practice of journeying on foot through the countryside, often for weeks or months at a time, living simply and close to the elements, and often relying on the kind-

ness of strangers to provide sustenance along the way.

The Thai word *tudong* comes from the Pali *dhutaṅga*. The term refers to a set of practices such as living on one meal a day, not sleeping in a building or not lying down to rest, which are designed to help us cut through complacency by relin-

quishing our usual psychological escapes. By limiting access to and control over food, sleep and physical comfort, the only escape from *dukkha*, the experience of unsatisfactoriness, is via attitude.

Tudong is thus designed to help us meet the customary ways in which we evade, negotiate, deny or weasel our way out of discontent and difficulty, and instead learn to be adaptable, spiritually robust. It is very easy to tweak the world in any way we can contrive or finagle, in order to get away from what we dislike and to get what we want; if we are accomplished at such tweaking we never see how much we have

made ourselves slaves to self-centred desire and aversion. The practice of *tudong* is one means of breaking free of that bondage and enjoying the bliss of contentment. Of course, lack of oxygen is not one of the traditional austerities, but it was a key element in the prospective journey. As it turned out, even though the need to stop regularly and breathe deeply was a novel experience for most of us, it was swiftly clear that just like the other discomforts or inconveniences *tudong* brings, 'If you make it a problem, it's a problem. If you don't, it isn't.'

In the autumn of 2012 Ajahn Sucitto kindly came to Amravati and gave the group of us intended pilgrims a slide-show of pictures from his journey to Mount Kailash with Kittisāro and Thānissarā, along with his reflections on the experience. This was a pivotal moment for me, as it revealed two hitherto unappreciated or unknown aspects of the undertaking.

Firstly, his account of the physical and mental challenges of living in such thin air – how, for example, on one occasion his thinking faculties were so compromised that he held a cup of some hot drink in his hand for an hour, not knowing what to do with it – made it clear that physical fitness and acclimatization to altitude were of paramount importance. This aspect, as well as eliciting the question:



The pilgrims: (standing, from left) Nick Scott, Tan Dhammarakkho, Ajahn Amaro and Tan Appamādo; (in front, from left) Rory Hodd and Chris Smith.



The approach to The Gateway to the Valley of the Gods.

‘Why would anyone want to do that to themselves?’ impelled me to make great efforts to take exercise; weights and press-ups to help my lungs and heart along, and daily walks through the Hertfordshire countryside. This turned out to be a serendipitous source of blessings, in that along with toughening up the body, it also caused me to get to know many previously undiscovered nearby treasures in the way of woods and lanes, farms and open spaces, as well as lacing together an internal map of beautiful spots in the locality.

The second aspect was that I learned of the series of traditional contemplations and practices developed in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition which accompany the circumambulation of Mount Kailash. I had been given a few books to read on the subject and had heard some sketchy accounts in the past, but it was only on learning from Ajahn Sucitto how the circuit around the holy mountain was woven together with specific contemplations on karma and the processes of birth, death and rebirth, that the full meaning and value of the practice became clear.

On hearing the details of how various stations on the

Camp in the village of Dharapuri, Humla, Nepal.



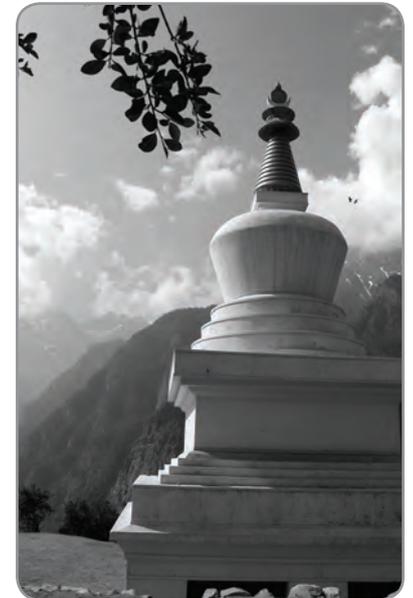
thirty-two mile path around Mount Kailash marked specific stages of a sequence of contemplations, it was as if the proverbial light came on: ‘Oh, *that’s* what it’s all about.’ The light came on, colour came into the world, and the prospect of the journey transmuted from: ‘interesting jaunt in a fascinating place’ to ‘pilgrimage to the holy mountain in order to awaken.’ It came alive.



The process of fitness training and acclimatization was helped along greatly by a ten-day trek through the Atlas Mountains of Morocco with Nick, his partner Micheline and Stephen Batchelor. The location had been chosen on the advice of Andrew Yates, who was not only the architect of the Dhamma Hall at Chithurst, but also the guide who led Luang Por Sumedho’s first attempt to get to Mount Kailash, an attempt that was thwarted by the Chinese authorities at the border.

This journey through the Atlas Mountains and the experiences and conversations we had along the way might be the subject for a travelogue on its own. However, suffice it to say for now that it was a well-chosen environment in which to do some hiking and altitude training, and to be living in circumstances close to what we would experience in Asia.

The acclimatization process was further developed by our plan to enter Tibet on foot, following the Humla Karnali River from Simikot to the border town of Hilsa. This was precisely the route that Luang



Stūpa at Namkha Kyung Dzong Monastery, above the Humla Karnali River, Nepal.

Por Sumedho had followed with Andrew Yates and their party in 1997. Nick had opted for this trail deliberately, not just because it was an ideal method of getting us fit and more used to the terrain (which it was), but more as a way of following in the master’s footsteps.

Throughout these months of preparation, particularly up in the heights of the Atlas Mountains and over the passes in Humla, but also on the frosty paths of Hertfordshire, a few realizations dawned.

Firstly, when walking with a thirty or forty-pound pack, doing twenty-five or thirty miles in a day or crossing a pass at ten thousand feet or more, you realize that spreading

loving-kindness through the body is essential. Naturally, one should spread loving-kindness at all times, and friendliness towards our own body is an intrinsic part of that. However, life in the lowlands and without physical challenges causes this to be easily forgotten, especially in the comfortable, convenient conditions of the West; we can forget the body altogether or think of it as a useless appendage that hangs off the bottom of our neck. The *tudong* life helps us to remember it. In these extreme conditions the body is being asked to do a lot more than in a so-called average day. Its limitations are thus more apparent, and therefore you cultivate a grateful respect and appreciation of it and its capacities. I would spread *mettā* to all my body parts, especially the lungs and heart, feet and ankles, legs, back and shoulders. To all appearances this seemed to have a good effect, and I remained without injury or illness throughout the entire time of training and right up until the end of the pilgrimage.

Secondly, at altitude in general but while climbing in particular, mindfulness of breathing is inescapable. It thus becomes a wonderfully supportive presence for a continuity of awareness

Thirdly, owing to the shortness of breath, the body is unavoidably present; it is impossible to drift off into some mental abstraction. Yet ironically, the body is simultaneously realized as being totally 'other': as 'impermanent, unsatisfactory ... alien, as dis-

integrating, empty, as not self' (M 64.9). Moment by moment it is made clear that the body is neither owned nor under personal control. Certain habits of sense perception are also revealed because of this. The eye says one thing: 'I can do that. It's hardly any slope at all.' But the heart and lungs tell another story: 'Stop. You stop right here and you breathe as deep as you can. You don't move until there is enough oxygen in the blood once more. No debate.'

Lastly, a realization that is crucial for personal ease and communal harmony is that no one comes first or last in a pilgrimage. Old habits of judging and ranking; notions of: 'Being passed ... keeping up ... who's ahead? Don't want to be



The high pass between Mount Kailash and the Kingdom of Gugé.



Indian pilgrims at Simikot, awaiting their helicopter flight to Mount Kailash.

left behind ...'; these all have their power. If they are believed in they lead to great discontent and *dukkha*; if they are abandoned, everyone benefits.

By the time we reached the start of the circumambulation at the village of Tarchen, all six of our group, Vens. Dhammarakkho and Appamādo, Nick Scott, Chris Smith, Rory Hodd and myself, were as well-adapted to the environment as

possible. Some had been experiencing more difficulty than others (Nick had trouble sleeping and Tan Appamādo had almost continuous migraines while above 13,000 feet), but none of us had altitude sickness or anything more serious.

I felt immensely grateful for all the encouragement received to get ready for living at this height. Acclimatization is for the body like keeping the Precepts is for the mind and heart; it is the source of protection and security in all conditions. Without *sīla* we are vulnerable and likely to cause

ourselves all sorts of harm. In a comparable way we found that many groups of Indian pilgrims, coaxed into the region by unscrupulous tour operators to pay homage to Lord Shiva, but unprepared for its physical demands, suffered greatly from their sudden arrival at more than 15,000 feet by plane and helicopter or coach. We heard from a member of 'Group B' of one such party that four people had died, from various causes that very day in their 'Group A'.



Tarchen was a once a hamlet of Tibetan houses but is now a grungy and dispiriting town, expanding rapidly under the influence of the Chinese government's development of the region for tourism. Huge free-standing billboards by the roadsides proclaim the presence of the holy mountain and advertise fun sightseeing opportunities as if it were a Tibetan Disneyland.

This mixture of wildly contrasting realities, as with the magnificent wonder-inducing presence of Mount Kailash and the sleaze-pit nature of Tarchen, is a theme throughout Tibet: the open barrenness of immense reaches of desert, a thousand shades of brown (umber, cream, rust and slate), with not a



Making offerings to Ven. Khenpo Lobsang Jinpa, at Shri Darghey Ling Monastery.

tree in sight, yet in the temples, dense brocades of poppy-red, emerald, turquoise and sapphire, gold and shining yellows. Similarly, the character of the Tibetan people, nomadic, rough-hewn, centred on the spiritual, while the Chinese government under whose thumb they are held is orderly, humourless and fixated on the worldly. It is a realm of intense disparities.

Both the tour operator, Roger Pfister, whom we had met in Kathmandu, and Ajahn Sucitto in England had described in some detail the series of contemplations traditionally used by Tibetan pilgrims when circling Mount Kailash. These two descriptions did not entirely match each other, but as can be said about all such processes of contemplation, the principal ingredient is more what the contemplators themselves bring to the practice, rather than the details of the method. What I will describe here is the series of reflections that I used as we made our way around the mountain.



Tarchen – This is the southernmost point of the *kora* or pathway around Mount Kailash. The walk from here to the first ‘station’ symbolizes the time before our birth, from the beginningless past through to our coming into the world in this life. The pathway rises gently from the edge of Tarchen. I have to stop and breathe deeply from time to time. After an hour or so I reach the first place to pause. A few of the others of our group, including our Tibetan guide Tashi and our one porter Jigme, are already here. Nick is far behind.

Greeting the Mountain – This spot is the first place on the *kora* from which Mount Kailash itself can be seen. The cairn there is decked with prayer-flags streaming in the steady wind under cool grey skies. As I focus the mind to receive the full sanctity of the moment, on cue a Tibetan lad hauls up on his beribboned and chrome-studded motorbike, girlfriend on the pillion and loud Tibetan music blasting from its on-board PA. My first thought is: ‘How can he come and ruin the moment like this?’ But what makes this more my mountain than his? He takes out a cigarette and lights up, chatting with his girl, who smiles broadly. His

blithe manner suggests he doesn’t even register our presence, let alone ask us: ‘You got a problem?’

What is that animal inside that says ‘My reality is more important than yours?’ The Tibetan family settled nearby doesn’t blink either, but continues bowing to the mountain undisturbed. Theirs is the example to follow.

Gateway to the Valley of the Gods – The path from the place of greeting the mountain leads down a gentle slope and into a broad, level valley. Ahead there are tour buses parked, just beside a small scarp and in front of a red and white *stūpa*. As we draw closer a clutch of young Tibetan men race by on ponies caparisoned in jaunty colours. A hundred or so people mill about the buses, a

mixture of Chinese sightseers come to look at the sky-burial up on top of the nearby plateau, Indian pilgrims negotiating for the ponies, Tibetan folk working to provide all the needful, and then those Tibetan families and us, going through on foot. We are the only Westerners in sight.

This place is called The Gateway to the Valley of the Gods, and it symbolizes the beginning of this current life. The *stūpa* is exceptional as it has an archway through its centre. As one ducks beneath the bell and rings it, this signifies the birth moment. For me in this lifetime, that happened in Kent in 1956, so I rewind my thoughts and picture my mother at Kench Hill Hospital, Tenterden, and a small squalling presence, newly hatched.

We walk on. The long, straight, even surface is walled with endless stories of deities and spiritual warriors, demons battled and defeated, all marked in whorls of rock.

Snow flurries begin, but though I whip out my waterproof to ‘be prepared’, it is plain that for the locals this does not even register as weather. Cowboy-hatted rough-necks slurp pot-noodles with abandon in the rest-stop tent. Turquoise and corals bead their hatbands and *mālās*, as they do the earrings and plaits of the womenfolk.

Dirapuk Monastery – We come to the ancient monastery of Dirapuk, famed for its tiny cave where Guru Rimpoche (Padma Sambhava) once stayed. It’s been a twelve-mile walk from Tarchen; we are weary and glad indeed to be given the finest guest-room to share. The walls are friezed with intricate and colourful strings of lotuses, Dharma wheels and other auspicious symbols; vermilion pillars are tricked out in orange, green and cobalt blue designs with golden flourishes. The grand window looks out onto the north face of Mount Kailash, now obscured by cloud.

The following day is our designated rest-day – fortunately, because the local gods decide to use it to deposit copious rain and snow upon the region. Undaunted, Chris and Rory explore the mountain’s foot and get as close as possible to its walls. Tan Dhammarakkho wanders up a side valley, meeting marmots galore.

The rain and snow pass, and next morning the mountain is revealed in all its glory, wearing the night's white fall and shining brightly. Encouraged by Tashi, Nick sets off before the rest of us at dawn. He knows this will be the longest day for him.

The sky is a perfect blue as I pick my way along the trail. Indian pilgrims in puffy red jackets, some on foot but most on horseback, form a long thread below us and ahead. Yaks bearing barrels pass me by.

The contemplation of this life has reached the present day and now addresses the run-up to the day of death. The slope gets steeper.

Shiva Tsal, the Graveyard of the Siddhas –

This is the northernmost point of the *kora*. The contemplation assigned to this station is belied by the patches of bright colour sprinkled over the rock-field, for this is the place of dying. It represents the death moment of this present life, the time of letting go, whether we wish to or not. This is the place and time for relinquishing.

I can walk only fifteen or twenty paces before having to stop, inhaling in the full-chested way I have developed to increase the intake of air. The splashes of red and blue, the stripes of yellow and pink that decorate the stones are from pieces of clothing, often of loved ones, left here as a gesture of releasing, letting go. Sometimes folk leave something that is more personal to them, perhaps their own pullover, a woollen hat or, more traditionally, some of their own hair or fingernails.

I knew of this place from Ajahn Sucitto's account and had pondered long on what to leave here. Had he still been alive, it would have been my father's hundredth birthday on 30 May, only a few days before.

As a memorial to him, and recognizing his love of the outdoors, my sisters and I decided to offer up his watch and to enshrine it here.

The group has built a small cairn by the time I arrive at the Shiva Tsal. Tan Dhammarakkho has brought with him tiny dresses that belonged to both his daughter Hannah, who died at the age of two, and to Rachel, her elder sister, from that same time. It was almost thirty years ago that Hannah

died in the strange explosion of a car. Chris places his great-grandmother's thimble with these other offerings, and we add a picture of Hannah and one of Luang Por Chah. We chant and share our blessings, letting go of family; leaving it and all the world behind.

Beside me a young couple, gloved and aproned in sturdy leather, take three steps and bow, measuring their length on the rocks (see photo left). They make a beeline up the slope, bowing every third step, ignoring the twists and turns that offer a more gentle rise to the path. Their intent, their faith, shimmer the air around them.

The climb up beyond the place of death represents the journey through the *bardo*. These are the intermediary states that follow the death of the body, wherein we meet

the unpaid debts and residues of former lives, incalculable in number.

I endeavour to meet the present at every step, breathing it in deeply – ever present, ever onward, up to the highest pass. Circling the mountain with devotion expresses the devotion to reality, the *axis mundi* of the here and now.

The bowing couple are much quicker up the slope than I am; they go face down into rock-shards or crusty snow regardless.



Vens. Dhammarakkho and Appamādo at Shipship Pass, also known as Nara Bhanjyang La.

The Dolma La pass – Here is the highest point of the *kora*. The rough stone *stūpas* on the pass are buried in layers of devotion, the five colours of the prayer-flag offerings obliterating the dusty greys of the rock. I sit in the bright sun next to Tashi. Tan Appamādo is cold and ready to move on; Tan Dhammarakkho has already gone. Rory gleefully takes pictures;

Chris ponders, bright eyes open wide; Nick is far below and far behind.

Here is the place of karma's ending. Here, at the highest point and the end of climbing, is the contemplation of life once you have let go of the family, the Horners and the Goldsmiths, the Hayters and the Barratts; let go of past karma and debts to any others. Here is the letting go of being a Theravādin or a Buddhist, a man or a woman, of being a hu-



The Himalayan range, seen from the north, beside the road to eastern Tibet.

man; here is the letting go of past, future and present, and of location. Here is the end of here-ness, the end of all beginnings and endings. This is the centre of the world.

The stretch of the path descending from the Dolma La embodies the contemplation of the ‘clear light nature of mind’ or *pabhassara citta*, wherein all debts have been paid and all identity, all attachments finished – life with no ‘I’ and ‘mine’. Here is the challenge of fusing practical engagement with utter emptiness.

My feet fly down the hill. Ultimately all things might be equal, but descent is a different universe from ascent. I never pause for breath. Before I know it I am ahead of all the others, my booted feet mercurial, sure-footed.

I follow a local Vajrayogini as a guide down through open rock-fields. Down, ever down to a ‘gust’-house with a restaurant. It is just before noon but none of the laymen of our group are here yet, so I assume this will be a day without a meal offering, but to my surprise a young Chinese couple offer me some food, the miraculous unsearched for.

The ground levels out and there is a long easy run on to our resting-place for the night. This is the end of the arena of clear light. Nick makes it in after everyone, after dark. He hit the wall, he tells us, climbing to the pass, but he has come through alive and that’s what matters.

Zutulpuk Monastery – Settled on the south-eastern edge of the *kora*, this is another ancient holy site, famous as a place where the yogi Milarepa lived in a small cave.

This station of the circumambulation signifies the conscious re-entry into the world of people and things, a new

birth among beings but with the heart free of delusion. From the classical Theravādin point of view this might be seen as an impossibility, but the contemplative exercise in itself is very useful. In the Pali Canon the Buddha encourages the emulation of the enlightened by simply keeping the Eight Precepts (A 8.41), for ‘in this way you will live as the arahants do ... and that will be of great and glorious benefit to you.’ So at this point of the *kora* I reflect: ‘How would the Buddha live in the world here, responding to this moment as it is?’

It is an easy, levellish run to the south, alongside a shining river. The road is wide and even, and there is an aura of conquest, completion in the air. Unshaven Indian pilgrims ask to have their pictures taken with us, arms thrown with carefree bonhomie round our shoulders; hats are swapped in an abandoned festive sweep. Given the many recent deaths on the *kora*, it is no surprise that a few are drunk on survival.

Back now to the world as if with no residues, with all debts paid. We debouch from the valley to a clutch of stone buildings and find the broad plain opening out before us, as well as some fifty-seater coaches waiting to convey the Indian groups on to their next place.

It’s a long dusty road back into Tarchen, under the shadow of the foothills of Mount Kailash, so I tuck in behind our trusty porter Jigme and slip-stream him for the final miles home. For a while the grungy town seems to recede from me like a mirage, ever-retreating like a horizon. Again, ironically, its presence is now appealing, beckoning from afar.

At last even that eerie never-reachingness comes to its end and the circle is completed. We have come back to the world.





Chiu Gumpa on the north-western shore of Lake Manasarovar.

Where to go after such a journey and where to direct the attention?

Close to Mount Kailash is the sacred Lake Manasarovar, the Lake Anotatta of the Pali scriptures. It has been mythically paired with Mount Kailash from time immemorial, and miraculously, even the Chinese government respects its traditions, so all boats and fishing are forbidden there.

It possesses a vast, placid and thunderous presence, and is the perfect place to rest after the physical rigours of the *kora*. Our group stayed there for three or four days, at the guest house of Chiu Gumpa (The Monastery of the Birds) right at the water's edge – we could easily have stayed for a month.

Still, limitless, bright, Lake Manasarovar embodied the rich roaring silence of *nirodha*. The infinite spaciousness of the lakeshore was the ideal environment in which to digest what had just been experienced; not to put the event into words or

pictures, but rather to let its effects soak through the system.

And at this ending of the pilgrimage, how can those effects be described?

'In my end is my beginning'. Whatever the effects are, they are manifested in the mode of being at each moment, each fresh beginning. It is realized that it is possible to receive the present reality in the heart which is spacious, light and gracious. There is the possibility to be the awakened awareness that is the centre of the world. ❧

'The heart of the universe is your heart.'

Luang Por Sumedho

[Quotations from *Four Quartets* by TS Eliot; *Burnt Norton II*, *East Coker I & V*]



A lone dog along the shores of Lake Manasarovar.

