
VINEETA MUNI

The Dream Trail: Across the Himalaya

(Plates 18, 19)

The moon was still visible in the sky, although the sun had begun spreading its rays across the vast expanse of mountains. Strong cold winds gusted round us as we stood on the Karakoram Pass (5638m). It is a place of historic importance. Pilgrims from Yarkand used to travel this high pass on their way to Mecca and if they were not back in time before the winter snows, they would be stranded en route. Many died with their caravan of horse which gave it the name 'Skeleton's Trail'. The Karakoram Pass is also now on the Sino-Indian border. It had been a long journey. In seven months, and despite our expedition splitting in two, we had traversed the entire length of the Himalaya on foot.

Arunachal Pradesh

It was on a wintry day in February that we started on the trail at Bomdila in Arunachal Pradesh. There were, initially, eight of us. Snow was thick on the ground, but our spirits were high as we walked past wonderful orchids in shades of purple and pink. From Bomdila we trekked via Rahung, Panchwati, Derang, Baisakhi and crossed the Tsela Pass (4215m). Though motorable, heavy snow conditions had closed the route which had been the scene of fighting during the 1962 war with China. The pass has a big gate built on it now which gives the history of the war. We had an enchanting view of Tawang, 'Ta' meaning horse and 'Wang' meaning ruler, from the hill-top. The town lay huddled under a blanket of snow with the picturesque roofs forming a symmetrical pattern. We even had a brief glimpse of the Tawang monastery before moving on via Lumla to Blating, the gateway to Bhutan.

Bhutan: The Land of Monasteries

We were excited to be entering a 'foreign' country, the kingdom of monasteries where we would cross from east to west, through nine of its seventeen districts, in 33 days. Each state has a different language though the customs are more or less the same. We entered Tashigang in the far eastern side of Bhutan and walked across Lhuntshi, Bhumthang, Thongsa, Wangdi Phodrang, Timphu, Paro, Ha and Samtse, exiting from the far western side at Sibsü.

The landscape bore winter's signature. It was visible in the icicles hanging from the branches, in the heavily snow-bound passes and the chilly winds, but the warmth of the people was overwhelming. Simple gifts of roasted corn and *suja* or *namkin chai* touched our hearts. As state guests we received valuable help from the district collector of each state as well as from the local people. Climbing through the thick forest of rhododendrons, juniper, bamboo and ferns above Tashiyangtse, the trail steepened towards Dong La before we descended to Yanglapong. A beautifully painted monastery provided us shelter for the night. We trekked via Darchen Pong, visiting another monastery on the way to Tangmachhu, enjoying the changes as we moved through each new state.

We had to abandon the attempt to cross the Robong La. Our local porters were ill-equipped to walk through waist-deep snow, so we turned back to Pelphu and trekked across the Yotang La (3526m) to Sengor and then on via the Thrumsing La (3758m) to Bhumtang where the district collector had organised a big party in our honour. There were over a hundred people dancing and singing and although we had walked around ten hours that day after crossing the Shelthong La (3576m), we danced hand in hand with the local men and women until midnight. Next morning, a rest day, the district collector generously made arrangements for us to drive around Bhumtang and visit some of the monasteries, all of them surrounded by legends, and we were invited, as special guests, to a Bhutanese music programme. We took a rest day roughly every fortnight during the trek, washing our personal and group gear and making arrangements for supplies for the onward journey.

In many ways trekking across Bhutan was a unique experience. We were in relatively unexplored territory with protected thick forests of rhododendrons, magnolias and different species of bamboo. There was a sense of mystique about the place. The colourful Buddhist flags were fluttering their prayers in the breeze. The distinctive architecture and symbols of Buddhism carved or painted on doors, panels and windows and the Chortens that dotted the country added a special charm.

Sikkim

In Sikkim, spring had begun to rouse the landscape. We had glimpses of the famous orchids of Sikkim in a local garden. The hill station of Gangtok, with its modern conveniences, provided a real contrast to Bhutan.

We had special permits to visit Nathula Pass on the Chinese border and seeing no-man's land and some Chinese posts across the Chumbi Valley provided a ripple of excitement. A simple wooden board gave stark details of the strategic importance of the site in modern Indian history. An old fortress-like structure on the Indian side was a touching reminder of those who perished while guarding our frontiers.

A distant view of Kangchenjunga dominated the horizon at Gangtok. The trail there had been a trudge along a motorable road but we were soon

able to put our mountaineering skills to use as we went over Rathong La (5180m), our high point in Sikkim with Rathong (6636m) towering on one side of the pass.

Descending through the heavily crevassed slopes of the Yarlung Glacier in Nepal, we were grateful for the services of the local guide. We hired five yaks from Yoksam which carried our loads to base camp and, accompanied by six Sherpas from Darjeeling, we crossed the glacier carefully, avoiding slots hidden under a deceptive cover of snow. We were suitably rewarded for our painstaking effort with stupendous views all around our campsite. Getting a glimpse of snow leopards' footprints added to the thrill.

Nepal

A slippery and steep descent through bamboo forest took us to the local school at Yamphuding village. We had now been on the trail for 58 days and were averaging 25kms a day carrying heavy sacks. The initial aches, pains and blisters had worn off. We always carried our waterproof gear as well as warm clothing in our sacks. Special mountaineering gear like ice axes, snow shoes and crampons were carried only in case of need; otherwise our support team would take this equipment to the next meeting point.

Tensions amongst the team members had begun. Within a few days of the trek beginning, the team leader suddenly announced that no personal photography would be allowed and that all photographs would become property of the expedition and all exposed film should be given to the leader immediately. This was shocking for some of us, especially me, since I had been appointed one of the expedition's official photographers and had also made an arrangement with the leader to carry a personal camera as well. Without anything in writing, I had to accept her decision but it started a major conflict and split the team. Other autocratic decisions followed and we were treated like a bunch of soldiers under the command of a sergeant-major.

In eastern Nepal, on the way to Salpa Dhara (3315 m), we came across a local who had stored big round vegetables, which resembled water melons. Throughout the day, we had been trekking under the hot sun and they seemed a good way of quenching our thirst. Though the man declined to sell the vegetables to us, our leader insisted and having bought two of the so-called water melons for Rs10 each, everyone felt happy. The old man who had sold us these vegetables had a strange meaningful smile on his face. The load was carried another hour or so along the steep slopes and as we reached our destination we were all eager to cut into the fruit. The local women and some of our porters started laughing as we discussed how we should cut it. Finally, when it was cut open, we found it was white and raw with tiny seeds inside. One of our porters said:

'Don't you know this is *kaddu*? This is pigs' food!' He burst out laughing again.

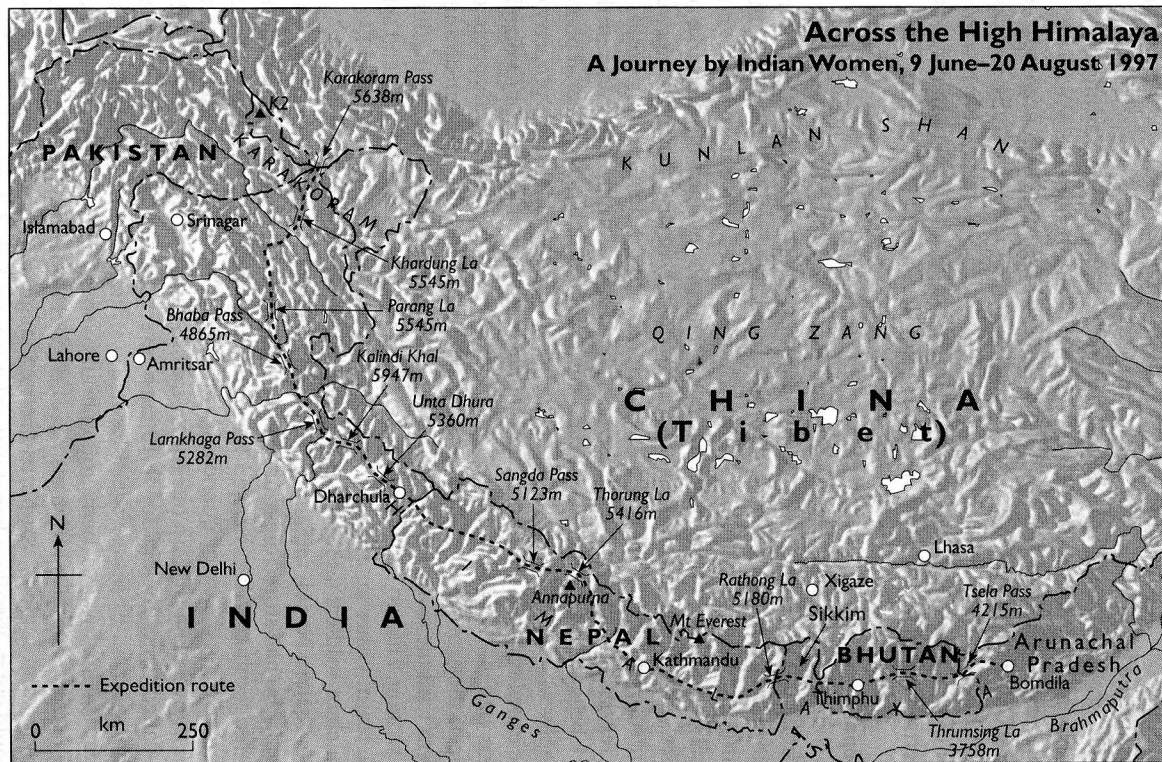
We had breathtaking views of Makalu on the distant horizon and the beauty of Salleri was exceptional. Each pass had its own character. We



17. Charles Turner on the summit plateau of Qilaut Mountain, Baffin Island.
(David Williams) (p103)



18. The end of 198 days of trekking along the length of the Himalaya. Left to right
Vineeta Muni, Jean Thomas, Sumita Roy and Malika Virdi. (Vineeta Muni) (p39)



crossed Lamajura Pass (3540m) walking through Nepal's thick rhododendron forest with magnolias in full bloom.

After Jiri we had to rely heavily on local guides as the maze of trails was very confusing. Every other day we would cross a 'Dhara' or 'Danda' or 'Devrali' - all meaning 'pass'. These were not difficult or technical but it was like a roller-coaster ride, up and then down every other day. We took 23 days to trek from the Yalung Glacier into Kathmandu, where we indulged ourselves with goodies, veggie burgers, pizzas and pastries, all the pampering that we city-slickers crave after living on staples for weeks.

We moved into Central Nepal and the Annapurna circuit, far more popular with trekkers than anywhere else we had been. None of us would miss the morning breakfast at 6.30am. Lunch was packed in the tiffins we carried with us. Throughout the trek, we kept going on a diet of rice and dahl only. Breakfast was usually tea with puris; vegetables could be eaten only when available and affordable to the team. We basically depended on the availability of provisions from locals. Sometimes we picked up wild edible vegetation like 'zankar leaves' to garnish our dinner.

We were now on our way towards India beyond the Dolpo and Dunai regions. The terrain was comparatively simple. However, the scarcity of food, the humid weather and long distances between camping sites made this stretch an arduous one. Western Nepal, lacking roads, has remained underdeveloped. We trekked in the lower foothills where the trail led from village to village. We crossed Devrali (2700m), Bhoti Lekh (2445m) and Goshada Pass (3200m) before reaching Chainpur. The name suggested a well-developed place and we hoped for a good bath. But in the end we had to camp. At Dharchula on 7 June, 124 days after we had set off, we reached the Indian border.

Kumaon and Garhwal: A new odyssey

Dharchula marked another significant milestone. Three of us, Malika Virdi, Sumita Roy and I, decided to break away from the group and form an independent team to complete the venture, as tension in the group became too great to manage. For instance, we were only being provided with film when we returned the last exposed roll. As medical officer, I had wanted to give basic medicines to local villagers who needed them, but this had been vetoed. Each argument would be settled by threats to send us home if we persisted. We had also been told to hand over our personal diaries. It was time to split.

Reorganising ourselves, we started again on 16 June under a new name and with a new sponsor, The Himalayan Club. In Eastern Garhwal, from Munsariy, we trekked to Martoli along Gori Ganga. From Milam we entered the Goenka Gad. With a support team and porters, we crossed over the Unta Dhura (5360m), climbing the Khingur La (5244m) and descending at Lapthal. Once the bed of the Tethys Sea, long before the Himalaya had been formed, Lapthal is a treasure ground of ammonite fossils, remnants of marine life going back nearly six million years.

Now that we were a small group we had to travel as light as possible, eating basic foods like dahl, rice, sattu, cheese and dry fruits. For this stretch we had a cook by the name of Duryodhan Singh. His unusual name provided an interesting glimpse into the customs of the region. Duryodhan, head of the Kauravas, was a nasty, scheming character in the Mahabharata but he is not regarded as a villain in these parts. Rather he is venerated as a god and there are even temples dedicated to him.

We exited at Malari and followed the Amrit Ganga that rises from the snout of the Bank Kund Glacier. From Malari we trekked to Gamshali and the base of the Bhuyendar Khal (5057m) in two days. As the track climbs, the terrain changes from green pastures to moraine and we picked our way through the glacier, fully aware that while the Khal is not technically difficult, it has major crevasses just below the pass.

Our experience over the Bhuyendar Khal brought home the fact that any excursion in the Himalaya is a serious affair. The weather deteriorated as we began our ascent over loose scree on the true right bank of the icefall. Visibility dropped to ten feet and the wind-chill factor increased every minute. Our 73-year-old guide Madhoda kept issuing directions all the time. Carefully we made our way up the crevassed slopes and then down the long steep slopes to Dhada Kharak at the beginning of the Valley of Flowers. We were greeted with slope after slope of beautiful flowers: *Anemone tetrasepala*, *Anemone obtusiloba*, *Illium oxypetalum*, *Allium humile* and on and on, with more than fifty varieties of flowers on the trail. This was the valley that Frank Smythe discovered and named in 1931. Almost seventy years later, despite the degradation caused by trekkers and climbers, it is still a most enchanting spot, particularly at the beginning of the flowering season.

Picking some raw wild onion leaves and ganjari, a sort of mini-carrot, to garnish our khichdi for the night, the lingering fragrance of this magic carpet of flowers kept us company all through the changing landscape. It was good that we had no inkling of what the next day would bring. Our guide, who was once a shepherd, suggested we go through the Khunt Khal (4365m) instead of the Govind Ghat route. This, he said, would bring us out at Hanuman Chatti on a road, 11kms before Badrinath.

The initial climb, with the views of Hathi Parbat and Ghori Parbat shining in the morning light, seemed like a good omen. However, we soon realised that we were in wild country. Since the shepherds had been forbidden to enter the Valley of Flowers, the trail had become completely overgrown with trees and shrubs. This was one of the most difficult ascents of our trek.

The steep, loose, rocky slopes passed through thick jungle, and so sheer was the descent that we were forced to spend a night in the open, wedged between bamboo trees for safety. There was no question of pitching a tent. The water source was a trickle on the mountainside two kilometres away. As so often happens in the mountains, there was one bright dazzling moment during that unforgettable day – our first and only sighting of the rare Himalayan Blue Poppy.

From the holy town of Badrinath we moved through Mana towards the Kalindi Pass (5947m) in the Saraswati Valley. We were now into the monsoon but so far the weather seemed to be holding. This was literally the high point of our venture, being the highest of passes that we crossed during our trek. Picking a delicate path around a huge icefall on the vast snowfield, we set out, accompanied by Kusang Dorje Sherpa and Pasang Dorje Sherpa.

At 9.30am we stood atop the pass and waited for an hour for our porters to join us. Then began our descent, roped up for safety. Our 73-year-old guide, who had begun the morning on a quite literally spirited note, scorned all this. In a masterly performance, he glided and flew over the crevasses, smiling benignly at us. It was another lesson from the mountain people and their obvious empathy with their surroundings. Kamet rose above the clouds to the east. The majestic rock walls of the Arwa towers were also an impressive sight and we were fortunate that the weather remained clear till we crossed the pass.

We roped up to descend the crevasse-prone slopes below the pass, just as the weather closed in. It was a long walk on the Chaturangi Glacier via the Vasukhi Tal. Vasukhi Parbat's north face towered impressively above the camp and the Bhagiraths were bathed in the golden rays of the setting sun. One more day brought us to Gangotri via Gaumukh. By now we were well into the rainy season and the Bhagirathi roared in full fury.

At Gaumukh we heaved a sigh of relief at having crossed our high point without any mishap and during a rest day at Gangotri, we washed our clothes, mended our torn jackets, repaired our shoes, wrote letters and planned the food and portage for the next section. Sumita's parents and brother had come specially from Delhi with cash, rations and other supplies: replacements for our medical kit, extra clothes and shoes but most important of all, news and precious letters from friends and family, all vital morale boosters.

Himachal

We strolled on the road from Gangotri to Harsil and then headed up the Jalendri Gad. The route to the Lamkhaga Pass (5282 m) was particularly scenic with the bhojpatra forest, a small lake and a mosaic of flowers: violet poppies, yellow and red potentillas and anemones.

The loose scree before the pass provided some tricky moments but at last we were atop Lamkhaga that divides Garhwal from Himachal. We descended the icy slope and trekked across the Baspa, crossing and re-crossing the numerous streams that fed it almost fifteen times in a day. I would love to go back one day to Rakcham near Sangla in Himachal Pradesh, if only to meet again the gentle lady who offered us fresh green vegetables from her farm for dinner. When I asked her the price she smiled and said, 'You are like my younger sister. This is all I have in abundance to offer you here.'

Our next objective was the Bhaba Pass (4865m) and Parang La (5545 m) leading into Ladakh. For the trek across Kinnaur and Spiti, we were joined by Hem Tiwari from Joshimath who brought us goodies like condensed milk and tins of cheese. From Sangla, the stretch up to Kafnu in the Bhaba valley, was along metalled road, and just two kilometres after Karcham there was a hot water sulphur spring. We longed for a dip but had to wait till after dark for our free luxury bath since our bathroom was right by the road. A new footbridge took us across the Wangar river.

We were then joined by three other 'members': Sadsukh and his two horses, Sundari and Kalu. We did a double-stage the next day and camped below the Bhabha Pass. Next morning we were ready to leave but the weather was ominous with thick clouds. We repitched the tents hoping the storm would pass but the horseman would have none of it. Some time later he came by, yelling: '*Mausam khul gaya, aaj par karo, kal ka kya bharosa*. The weather has cleared, let's cross today, what is the guarantee for tomorrow?' He was one of those rare porters with self-motivation and eagerness to move although the team had declared a rest day. We too did not want to waste precious time. We set off although we knew it was not going to be easy.

Slowly and steadily we gained height. The top of the pass seemed within reach when suddenly Sundari gave out a frightened cry. We saw her hind legs sliding helplessly on the ice and a few kitbags bounced off. We all threw off our own rucksacks and rushed to help Sundari back on her feet. She made a valiant effort only to slide back again. All seven of us strained to help Sundari up but she seemed terrified and rolled her eyes in fear. Somehow we grabbed her, Sadsukh removed her loads and the others began cutting steps into the ice, pressing mud and stones to arrest her fall. Slowly, with Sundari on her feet, we began moving again. We were so relieved that Sundari was not hurt. She was a special horse, with her dappled grey colouring and lustrous black eyes, matched with a mind and spirit of her own.

Spiti: The middle country

The rugged terrain of Spiti was an exciting change. We began our walk towards Kaza, the administrative headquarters of Spiti, on tarmac roads while our support team left for Gulling by car with our gear. Sometime later Hem came back by bus to tell us that our erstwhile teammates were already in Kaza. We had to make up our minds. Should we continue according to schedule and risk meeting them? It would create not only an embarrassing situation, but one in which we would be forced to compete. We decided to avoid them and dropped our pace so we reached Kaza late at night. Hem Tiwari, our support member, then informed us that the other team would also be following the same trail. We remade our plans and moved on to Leh, leaving Kaza early. On the way to Kibber we had a distant view of Ki Gompa perched on its cliff and found fossils scattered on the way to Thalda. The route then descends and climbs on steep scree slopes before reaching the Parang La (5578m) and the descent into Ladakh.



19. The team en route from Murgo to Burtse Gongma in the eastern Karakoram.
(*Vineeta Muni*) (p39)

Ladakh: The moonscape of India

In Ladakh yaks and horses are still used for trading, yak meat is the staple food and yak skin makes a perfect home for the nomads. Following a trail along the Pare Chu we switched banks at Norbu Sumdo. Here we stood on the borders between Himachal and Ladakh. Finally on 29 July, some 175 days after leaving Bomdila, we were in the last state of Jammu and Kashmir. Although under a rain shadow, the region was experiencing heavy rains and wind, a combination which drove the cold right into our bones.

In dank rain we walked for some four hours towards Tso Mori lake. The sight of a half-circle rainbow made us forget our aching misery. It rose from the jade-green water and merged back into it while soft sunlight fell from behind the hills. The light slowly faded, as did the colours of the rainbow, but the vision stayed with me as we trudged on for eight more hours to Karzog.

In Ladakh we were struck by the spectacular terrain and its unique architecture. Beyond Parang La, although the walk was flat, the long distances and lack of drinking water made the going tough. Our next stage was across the Polokonka La (4800m) via Tsokar Lake to Rumtse and then on to Upshi where our feet were numbed fording a river. Golma and Sange, our new four-legged companions now joined us on the trail to Leh. Golma loved not only grass but whatever we ate and would often snatch rotis and other food from our hands, eyeing us mischievously. Eventually we reached Leh on 5 August, halting at Thikse and its famous monastery. Our visit to Leh coincided with that of the Dalai Lama, and the whole city was out on the streets to welcome him. It meant we got a chance to observe and meet Ladakhis from different villages who had also come into Leh.

We trekked on to Khardung La (5545m) via Ganglas but knew we had to make it to the Karakoram Pass to be true to the essential spirit of our venture. An army truck drove us back to Leh and we spent three leisurely days eating, shopping and even seeing a movie. On 9 August, Jean Thomas, a 59-year-old trekker from Meerut, joined us as a support team member to the Karakoram Pass which she had attempted 13 years ago. She helped us plan the route we would take with Major Chhatre the same afternoon. The army promised us accommodation and food so that our tents and other equipment could go back.

Karakoram: The skeleton trail

Karakoram. The word itself was exciting. As we walked past the skeletons of unfortunate travellers, our guide Norbu was full of stories of Yarkhandis who in the past had attempted the perilous journey to Mecca – men, women and children with their laden horses, striking out into the unknown, driven only by the will to continue against all odds.

Our route proceeded via Khardung, Khalsar and Panamic to Sasoma, meaning New Land, along the Nubra River, 158kms from Leh. Norbu, a guide from the Ladakh Scouts, met us here. A tough Ladakhi, he had

expressed doubts over whether an old lady and three fragile-looking women would make it. However the driver of the army truck, who came as support team from Leh up to Sasoma, assured him that we were quite capable. We had taken three days to walk 119kms from Khardung La to Sasoma.

Now we had another tough lady, Kara, a dog who had accompanied us since North Pulu beyond Khardung La. All attempts to dissuade her had failed; she was determined to be part of our team.

Our first destination was Turtaylak which we reached after climbing the 36 bends in the trail which lead to the Tulung Puti La (3595m). The track was built by Ali Hussain in 1646 and one can only admire his architectural skill as one gains height towards the pass. On the way to Saser La, Kara would often roll in the snow as if to show how happy she was to be there.

On 15 August, the fiftieth anniversary of independence, we stood on Saser La, the pass of golden sands, at 5170m. After a long ascent on lateral moraine and toiling up hard snow and ice slopes, we stood on one of India's windiest spots. At Saser Brangza the soldiers and occupants of the army camps were flabbergasted to see a group of women suddenly descending out of the mountains.

Our next stage was to cross the Shyok river. Known as the river of death, its murky black waters brought a chill to the heart. The horses plunged in, swimming expertly, but we took the cableway. Delicate flowers were blooming despite the hot dry stony surroundings. Karakoram is a geologists' paradise. We had distant views of Chom Kumdan. A blue glacial pool en route made one believe that Mother Earth had bedecked herself with a huge turquoise pendant. Following the nullah route, we had to cross the river some 28 times; finally we climbed up to Chong Tash. We found that vehicles were plying between here and Murgo providing supplies to the troops. The vehicles had actually been assembled here. Even in this remote region the army functioned with clockwork orderliness. We, however, walked on.

We climbed up to Depsang La, 5376m, from Burtse Gongma, slowly gaining altitude. Burtse is the name of a plant which grows here and can be used instead of firewood. A huge plateau opened out; ahead of us was a brown carpet spreading out all the way into China. Far in the distance were Rimo I and II, the Saser Kangri peaks and Momotsang Kangri. It was Rakhi Purnima, the first full moon after the monsoon when sisters tie a sacred thread around their brothers' wrists, and the moon, like a huge football, rose above the campground. Track Junction at 17,600ft is one of the highest camps run by the army. Our goal was now very close. If only the weather would hold out for a day or two. Leaving camp at 5.30am, we climbed steadily.

A dream come true

At 6.45am, holding hands, we walked the last few metres to the Karakoram Pass (5638m). We had done it. Three of us, accompanied by Jean, Kara and Norbu stood atop the roof of the world. We took photographs, walked

into the Chinese side and collected a few stones as mementos. Seeing the colour of the stones on the pass, I understood why the Karakoram Pass was so named: the 'pass of black stones'. It was a grand finale to a journey across the roof of the world. At 9.30am it was time to start the journey back home. We still had to battle inclement weather, as dark clouds hovered menacingly on both sides of the Karakoram Pass.

What we had seen in those six months was only a fraction of the mighty Himalaya. The real treasures could never be tangibly counted. My life had been enriched by the natural beauties and treasures of the mountains, my own personal experiences of human relationships, the people I had met and the satisfaction of having lived through tough times.

It was like the colours of the rainbow I had seen above Tso Mori Lake on a rainy day, merging imperceptibly, lighting up the horizon and then fading away to live on in my memory. I had discovered simple but profound truths, knowing the thin line between the possible and the impossible, enjoying each moment and leaving the rest to God, Nature, Reiki – call it what you will.

SUMMARY

Part One: The Indian Women's First Trans-Himalayan Journey

4 February - 8 June 1997

Team: Bachendri Pal (leader), Chawala, Jahagirdar, Chetna Rana, Kokila Sudha, Nanda Patel, Sumita Roy, Malika Virdi and Vineeta Muni.

Sponsored by Tata and Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs.

Part Two: To Walk Across The High Himalaya

9 June - 20 August. Total period of trek: 198 days.

Team: Vineeta Muni, Sumita Roy and Malika Virdi.

Arunachal Pradesh, 4 -13 Feb 1997

Tsela Pass, 4215m.

Bhutan, 14 Feb -18 March.

Yotang La, 3526m; Thrumsing La, 3758m; Shelthong La, 3576m; Pele La, 3300m; Dochu La, 3080m; Pum La, 3050m; Jilay La, 3480m; Chele La, 3780m; Sele La, 3490m.

Sikkim, 19 March - 2 April.

Pangolakha, 3062m; Dzongri La, 4320m; Rathong La, 5180m.

Nepal, 3 April - 7 June.

Salpa Dhara, 3315m; Lamjura Pass, 3540m; Thorung La, 5416m; Sangda Pass, 5123m; Goshada Pass, 3200m; Dal Lekh, 3440m; Shivripakha, 3110m.

Uttar Pradesh, 8 June - 16 July.

Unta Dhura, 5360m; Khingur La, 5244m; Matoli Pass, 5350m; Bhuyneder Khal, 5057m; Khunt Khal, 4365m; Kalindi Khal, 5947m; Lamkhaga Pass, 5282m.

Himachal Pradesh, 17 - 29 July.

Bhaba Pass, 4865m; Parang La, 5545m.

Ladakh and Karakoram, 30 July - 20 August.

Polokonka La, 4800m; Gymer La, 5170m; Manda La, 5050m; Khamder La, 5100m; Khardung La, 5545m; Saser La, 5170m; Tulung Puti La, 3595m; Depsang La, 5376m; Karakoram Pass, 5638m.

Passes on the return journey:

Depsang La, Saser La, Tulung Puti La, 3595m.

Sponsored by The Himalayan Club, Bombay.