

HIMALAYAN PILGRIMAGE

The Cave is fourteen thousand feet up at Amarnath in the Kashmiri mountains where the god Shiva is said to dwell. Every year, thousands of Hindus gather at Pahalgam for the arduous four-day pilgrimage to Shivas' ice cave, where they will wash away their sins.

Most of these pilgrims come from the hot plains of India, and for them, the climb towards the eternal Himalayan snows is more bitterly cold than they have ever known. But they believe that strenuous journeys such as this can purge them of their sins of mortal life, so they go on their way cheerfully.

Men, women and children make the pilgrimage because of the rarefied air frequent stops for rest and prayer are made.

Holy men leading the pilgrimage carry the "Chari", walking stick of the god Shiva.

Now at last the summit draws near; the end of the wroay climb is in sight. Here, at last, the pilgrims can look on Shiva's Ice Cave. To the people of many faiths, mountain tops have always seemed symbols of spiritual achievement. The Hindu has something in common with the religions of all the world, when he feels that here he can shed his faults and begin life anew.