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STORY : THE GREAT AMARNATH PILGRIMAGE (AN EXCLUSIVE COVERAGE)

LOCATION: AMARNATH - Altitude 14,000'- KASHMIR

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Penance is one of the essential aspects of any religion and keeping this in view, the Hindus have several ~~stiff~~ difficult and hazardous pilgrimages in India. The final object of a pilgrimage is to achieve salvation and the devout believe that pilgrimages with maximum amount of hardships, do result in salvation. In the earlier days many used to perish during the pilgrimage but thanks to modern medicine, a large number of lives are saved enroute these trechrous paths.

The cave of AMARNATH in Kashmir ~~is~~ is on a higher altitude than the mighty peak of JUNGFRAU(13,650'). The story of Amarnath pilgrimage date backs to several thousand years. It is believed~~k~~ to be the Sanctum of Siva and is one of the most holy and ancient places of pilgrimage in India. Situated in the Eastern Mountain recesses of Kashmir ( Himalaya ranges) Amarnath cave enshrines the icy emblem of Lord Siva. Over 2,500 square feet in area, the sacred cave is atop a narrow gorge at the farthest end of the ~~tribe~~ Liddar valley in a precipitous trough of scraggy mountains. The origin of the pilgrimage is described in the ancient Sanskrit text. According to this , the people of the Vale of Kashmir prayed and pleaded with Rishi Brangish ( name of a holy man) to lead them to salvation Moved by their ~~fr~~ appeal, the Rishi revealed to them the sublime sanctity of the Amarnath Yatra( Yatra- is pilgrimage). The Rakshasas ( demons or devil) however, harrassed the pilgrims and did not allow

them to proceed peacefully. They, therefore, repaired again to Rishi Brangish, and prayed to him to help them out of their predicament. The great sage of Kashmir instructed them to evoke the ~~and~~ aid of TAKSHAKA NAGA( the serpent king). They did as directed and the Serpent King bestowed upon them SIVA'S staff, the 'CHARRI' ( name of the staff which is carried on the ~~pilgrim~~ pilgrimage ) enjoining them to carry the sacred standard along with them on the pilgrimage, as the sure talisman against the ~~harass~~ harassing spirits. Thus was the pilgrimage saved from the wily marauders.

The return trip takes 10 to 12 days and out of this the pilgrims have to spend 7 to 8 nights by pitching tents on various locations on the mountain.

To safeguard the route of the pilgrims, the Charri ~~or~~ the sacred standard of Siva is carried in advance at night and on arrival at the next halt, it is placed under a small tent. The pilgrims offer prayers to Charri at every halt and the priest carrying the Charri, offers blessings to the devout.

Inspite of hazrds<sup>a</sup> of the route, several thousand Hindu men, women and children take the risk of their lives to attain the salvation of their selves. The climb of 'PISSOO GHATI'( 12,000 ft) is one of the most difficult climbs enroute the pilgrimage. In order to get the full benefit of the pilgrimage, people prefer to walk but those who are invalid or those who can bear the expenses of horse ride or 'Dandi' ( a sort of palinquin) travel by the later mode. The climb starts very early in the morning and for the duration of the pilgrimage, it is whole day walking business. On account of very narrow track, people have to walk in single file and any kind of over taking is very dangerous.

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AMARNATH PILGRIMAGE

After climbing the Pissoo Ghati, the next stop is SHESHNAG so named after the impressive glacier which looks like the hood of cobra. The Sheshnag Lake has milky coloured water. From Shshnag to WAVAJAN i.e. the demon of wind is a barren plateau notorious for dry, bitter winds and gales. The next step is PANCHTARNI ( Place of Five streams) which is short but very steep and slippery path of a bout 5 miles . The last leg of the pilgrimage to the cave , the remotest snow bound end of the Lidd<sub>r</sub> Valley, is about 3 miles. It is a gypsum cave about 50 feet in length, 55 feet in breadth and at the centre about 45 feet high. A visit to this Himalayan retreat, apart from gaining salvation is an experience in itself.

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Roll. I.

The mountain climb starts from Pahalgam and the first stop is CHANDANWARI Shot of the camp at Chandanwari surrounded by the mountains. From here onward the real climbing starts.

Shot of the long row of people on the move.

Luggage and tents are carried on the back of the ponies while those who can afford or are unable to walk, take a ride on the horse back or in "Dandy" ( a sort of a palinquin carried by 4 persons )

Long shot of people walking single file going through very narrow hilly path.

Shot of the pilgrims crossing the first ice bridge likewhich there are many more enroute.

From a lower level long shot of the PISSOO GHATI showing ~~xxxxxxx~~ pilgrims climbing the difficult loop.

Several more shots of climbing in Pissoo Ghati.

Shot of exhausted pilgrims who revive their normal breath by taking rest on the track side.

After arrival on the top of the Pissoo Ghati shots of pilgrims relaxing Long Shot of mountain view at Pissoo Ghat.

Few more shots of movement beyond Pissoo Ghati.

Shot of big water fall enroute the track to Amar nath.

Further shots of climbing .(Several different shots of tracking etc)

Long shot of ~~lake~~ SHESHNAG lake which looks like hood of the cobra. Here the altitude is 11,300 feet. Shot of the sign.

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Roll. I Continued.

Shot of lake framed through heads of pilgrims.

Shot of pilgrims moving forward to WAVJAN. Long shot of camp surrounded by snow covered peaks of Himalyan ranges.

Shot of pilgrims luggage and belongings arriving on ponies.  
Pilgrims cooking their meals ( mainly chapatis) on open hearths.  
Shot of pilgrims relaxing while others enjoyed plaing cards.

The mobile medical aid which goes with the pilgrimage . The Doctor examining a pilgrim. In the years gone by many pilgrims perished ~~in~~ due to the lack of medical aid.

Next morning the pilgrims which numbered 9,000 this year ( it is a record number of pilgrims so far) again on the move. Different shots of movement.

ROLL. 2

Long shot of pilgrims climbing the highest altitude ~~xxxxxx~~ enrout 14,500 feet. Close up of the altotude height sign reading 14,300'

Various shots of climbing. Different Close up shots.

Shot of the snow clad mountain ranges with long shot of the pilgrims moving away.

At PANCHTARNI ( place of 5 streams) which is the last stop before Amarnath, shot of the camp ~~xx~~ on the bank of the river.

Shot of 'CHARRI' ( believed to be Siva's Standard) made of silver placed under a white umbrella. The Charri takes away the hazardous of the pilgrimage. Close up of Charri. People making offerings. Shot of the priest blessing the devouts.

Shot of SADHUS( Holy men) sitting in groups near the Charri. Several Close ups of Sadhus.

Shot of Sadhus busy cooking a ~~big~~ huge size pan of rice.

From Panchtarni to Amarnath a distance of 4 miles has to be made up by walking only. No horses and no Dandies( palinquins) are allowed to go beyond this point. This particular track is full of snow. Different shots of people walking on the snow.

A purified body is essential for admittance to the Amarnath cave and the pilgrims who track all these arduous miles of climbing, take delight in bathing in the icy cold glacier waters of Amar Ganga stream at an altitude of 14,000 ft. Shots of bathing.

Long shot of the cave AMARNATH. Shot of pilgrims arrivig at the cave and moving inside. Various shots of people pushing forward for entry to the cave.

Inside the cave where there is not enough light, shot of people throwing their offerings to Shive Linga - a slab of ice - covered with flowers and offerings of the pilgrims.

Shot from inside the cave showing iron railing, crowd outside and the snow covered mounatins in the background.

END.

EXCLUSIVE COVERAGE.