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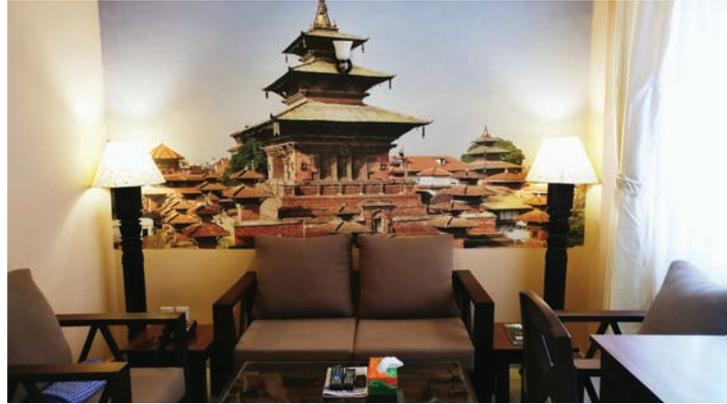
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Editorial

AUGUST 2018 • Issue 201

Happy Rainy-day Reading!

We're full into summer now and the wonderful rainy season. I didn't always used to think that way—in fact, the first year I was in Nepal I really didn't enjoy the incessant rain at all. I think it's because, instead of watching and listening to the weather and adjusting my plans accordingly, I rather insisted on following my plans to the letter, even if that meant driving my bicycle headfirst into a rainstorm. As you can imagine, that did not end well. These days, I'm a little more relaxed. And, I have a good raincoat for when there's a reason to plunge into such a rainstorm.

But really, these are good months, and what's most enjoyable for me at this time of year is the way the city, and in fact, the whole country goes green—literally. Everything is washed clean and growing like mad in the moist warmth of the season. The sound of the rain at night is the perfect lullaby.

However, even with all of the monsoon benefits, sometimes a sudden shower can cramp your style or hold up your schedule. In those moments, it's a good idea to have some reading material on hand—this issue, perhaps?

In these pages, you can learn about an ethnomusicologist dedicated to finding, preserving, and using Nepal's lesser known, and in some cases nearly forgotten, ethnic instruments. It's a fascinating and encouraging story about one man's passion and its very real impact on intangible heritage preservation.

We also have a fascinating history of the first visit by a Nepali prime minister to Europe, photos from the Shrawan festival, more on pilgrimage, and a piece about one of the country's supremely talented stone-sculptors. Travel to Koshi Tappu—not just for the birds, but the full experience. And, of course, our regular columns round out the rest of the pages.

I hope the articles in this issue give you an insight into something you weren't aware of before—or perhaps, a chance to see something already known in a new light. And a few ideas of your own for things to do when the sun comes out to shine again.

Happy reading!

Evangeline Neve
Associate Editor

Unveiling the best ones...

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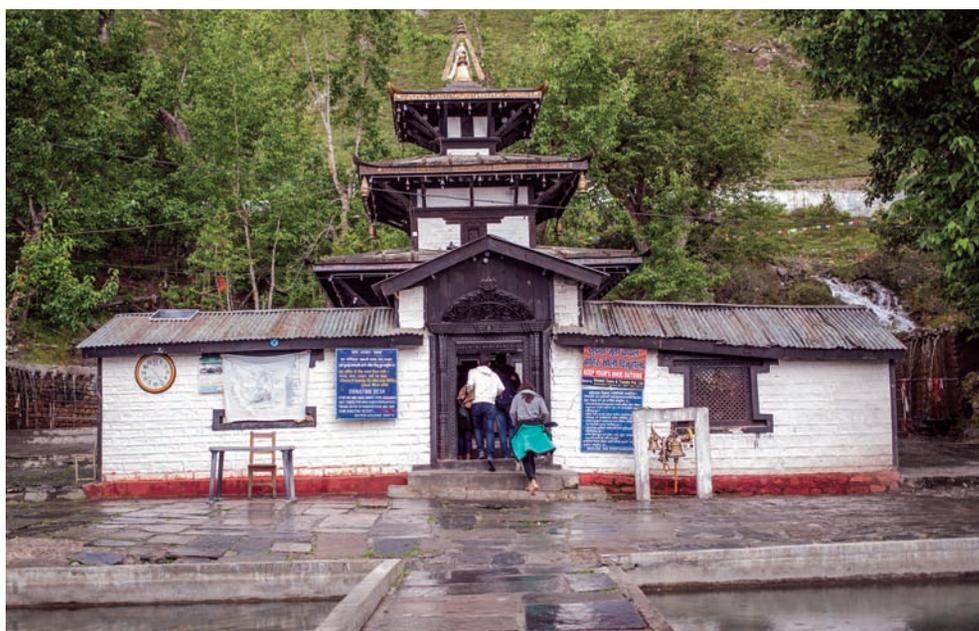
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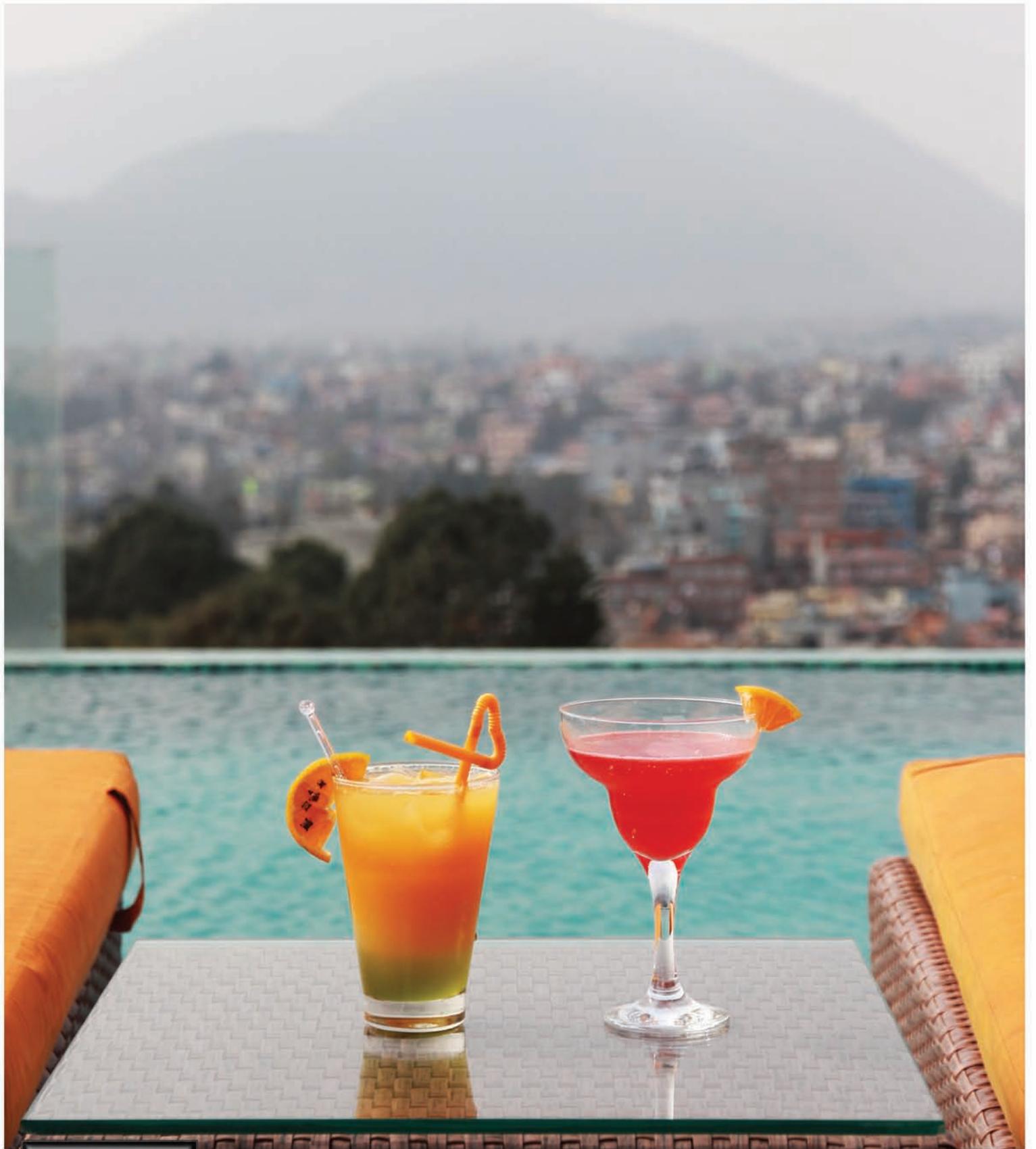
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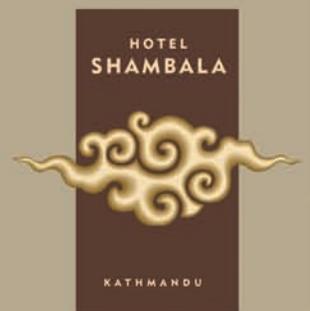
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Living in Nepal

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5 things to do in Nepal

Before the Birds Start to Sing

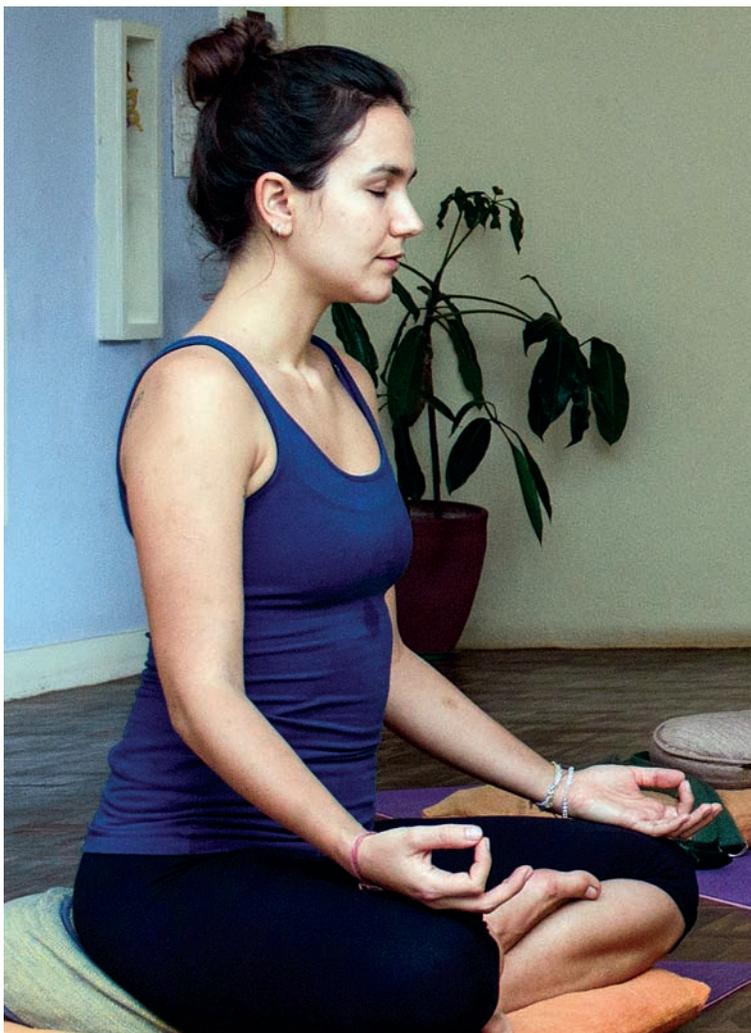
WORDS JOPHEN LAMA

For early birds, morning is the most pleasant time of the day. Maybe because the surrounding is fresh and healthy, or there are a lot of fun things to do in the morning as well. Here, we have a list of activities you can do if you are an early morning person.

1. Morning Walk

If exercises are boring to you, what about taking a walk around town? You can walk anywhere you want, and there are only a few vehicles in the morning. Tundikhel has been one popular walk destination if you're from the capital city, but Nepal being rich in cultural sites, there are Boudhanath Stupa, Pashupatinath, Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square, Swayambhunath Stupa, Budhanilkantha Temple, and many other spots you can go for a morning walk.





2. Hit the Gym

Earlier, I thought of going to the gym for getting in shape, I later realized there was more to it. Hitting the gym not just helps you get your dream body, but also keeps you fit and healthy. That is probably the reason why fitness stops are popping up everywhere in Kathmandu. Gymkhana Muay Thai in Chakrapath, Fitstop Fitness in Labim Mall and Fitness Park in CTC Mall are some well-known gym centers which are open by 6:30 a.m.

3. Do Yoga

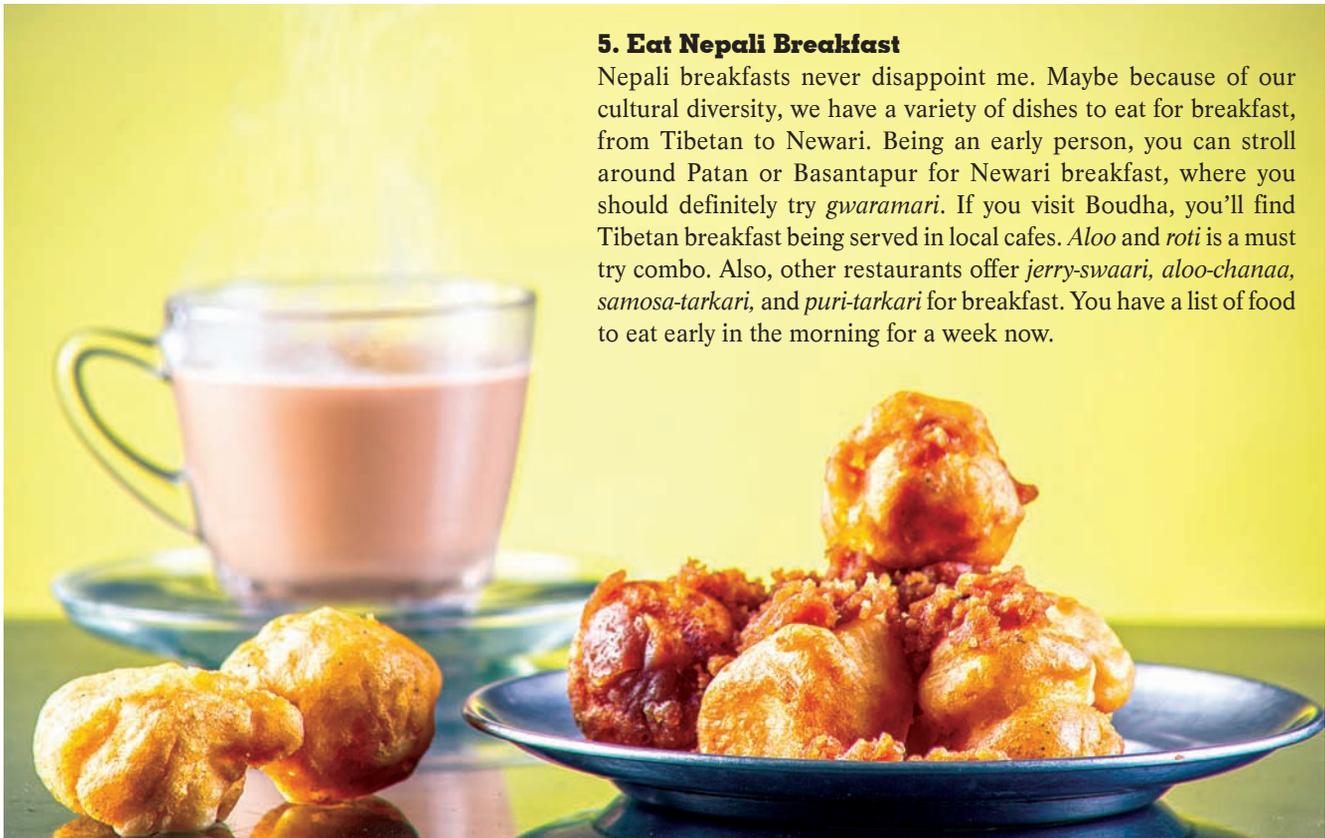
Yoga keeps you mentally and spiritually stable, and not just physically fit. There are a number of yoga studios around Thamel, or you can watch yoga tutorial videos on YouTube, also, www.bookyogaretreat.com has yoga retreat packages you can book at 76 places within Kathmandu. Early morning yoga warms up your digestive system and help nutrients move more easily through the body, causing it to metabolize carbs and fats more quickly.



4. Go Swimming

I recently joined swimming classes, and to my surprise, I found a huge number of people coming to swim in the morning. It is a really good all-round activity. Almost all the hotels in the capital

have a swimming pool, so, you don't have to worry about where to swim. Here are some hotels we recommend: Hyatt Regency, Hotel Shanker, Hotel Mulberry, Hotel Shambhala, Summit Hotel, Park Village Resort, and Annapurna Hotel.



5. Eat Nepali Breakfast

Nepali breakfasts never disappoint me. Maybe because of our cultural diversity, we have a variety of dishes to eat for breakfast, from Tibetan to Newari. Being an early person, you can stroll around Patan or Basantapur for Newari breakfast, where you should definitely try *gwaramari*. If you visit Boudha, you'll find Tibetan breakfast being served in local cafes. *Aloo* and *roti* is a must try combo. Also, other restaurants offer *jerry-swaari*, *aloo-chanaa*, *samosa-tarkari*, and *puri-tarkari* for breakfast. You have a list of food to eat early in the morning for a week now.





Festival

Fulfilling Great Wishes

WORDS AMAR B. SHRESTHA

Among my friends is one who succeeded in becoming a minister some five six times, this in a period of rapidly succeeding governments that hardly lasted for a few months due to various computations and permutations to come up tops in the numbers game of this thing we call democracy. But, even funnier was that it was his wife who always claimed that it was her Shrawan barta (fasting in the month of Shrawan, i.e. July/August) which had ensured Lord Shiva's blessings on her spouse. She took part in a procession of similarly devout women, each carrying a pot of water on her head, walked barefoot to the local Shiva temple, and steadfastly fasted through the day. This routine, she followed with great discipline for the whole of the holy month, which assumed sacred importance after the fact that it was the month when Parvati undertook severe fasting to get Lord Shiva's attention, and eventually managed to get him to marry her.











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Cover Story

FORGOTTEN INSTRUMENTS AND UNKNOWN SOUNDS

Rijal traveled to five villages in search of the “phanderwanam” and “katwanam”, musical instruments many believed no longer existed. He had almost given up, when he met a guy at a tea shop in Haldibaari village in Jhapa district. The man took Rijal to the place he was so desperately looking for. There, he met the old man who was perhaps the last person to possess the knowledge of instruments lost to history.

WORDS SAMBID BILAS PANT



In the 1950s, geologist Toni Hagen traversed thousands of kilometers across Nepal on foot documenting the beautiful Nepali culture and music. In the 1960s, it was Terence R Bech who came to Nepal as a volunteer and traveled from corner to corner carrying his tape recorder, recording traditional Nepali folk music, collecting musical instruments, and translating the native lyrics. Following in their footsteps, scholar-musician Dr. Lochan Rijal traveled to several districts, such as Bhojpur, Panchthar, Salyan, Dang, Kaski, and others for his field research. Rijal, who has a doctorate degree in ethnomusicology, has been on a quest to revive Nepali folk music and the musical instruments that have got lost in the continuum of history after modern influences distorted it.

Discovering the Magic of Music

Rijal was born in a remote village in Panchthar into a large family. His parents passed away when he was very young. He had three brothers and three sisters. His village had limited access to technology like television and the radio, so he grew up listening to folk and ritual music. He lived in Panchthar till he was nine years old, and then his siblings sent him to Biratnagar.

When he was in Panchthar, he heard a beautiful tune, a tune of a guitar. "It was A major chord" he recalls. He was fascinated by it and always wanted to buy it. The dream became a reality when he came to Biratnagar for schooling. He went to his friend Siddhartha to buy his uncle's guitar. It was an old guitar with a bent neck; he sold it to Rijal for 150 rupees and a few books. He was very lonely in Biratnagar; he had no parents or guardians, so his friends and music became his family. He became a self-taught guitarist when he was in the eighth grade. "I bought a book called 'Guitar Guide' written by Ram Thapa. I used to read it by hiding it inside the health science book whenever my brother was around, because he used to tell me to read my course books. I didn't follow any theories, but the book helped me to understand about chords."

One day, a boy from his school discovered him playing the guitar and came up to him. Little did he know that the young boy had a band. He asked Rijal to join his band, and he accepted the offer without a second thought. "I played everything by instinct, by hearing the sound from instruments and organizing it in my head. They invited me to be a lead singer, but I started as a drum-

mer. I began drumming by playing the Tama drums which were quite popular in those days. Sometimes I played the guitar, sometimes the drums, and other days, I used to sing."

His teachers also had a great influence on him. He had some teachers who were from Darjeeling, India. "I remember sneaking into the playgrounds in the evening to watch them sing and play guitars. They provided me with guidance, as well."

Taking the First Steps

Rijal enjoyed the process of converting his thoughts into words and then bringing those words to life by adding music to them. He started writing his own music and compositions, and wrote 8 to 10 songs at the time. But, it wasn't until the 10th standard that he really started making some serious music after he and his friends formed a small band called The Steps. "We were a young band. I was just 15, and I enjoyed the experience to the fullest. Our band traveled around with the little pocket money we had and felt like we had become rock stars."

It was the time when the trend of forming a band was increasing among Nepali youth. He utilized the popular music trends of the time to record his first ever song in a studio in Dharan. "We headed to Dharan full of anticipation. The song was recorded in an old school four-track recorder, and the studio charged us only 800 rupees for the recording. I don't have the song with me right now. I have no idea where the audio is. It was a simple soft rock song about a love story. We thought it would be commercially successful, because romantic songs were trendy at the time."

Rijal was gifted, but kept his talents hidden from his family. He buried the little treasure in the ground, to keep it safe. One day, his elder brother arrived while Rijal was playing the track in a tape recorder, and after hearing it, he asked Rijal about the song. He was surprised when Rijal told him that it was a song recorded by him and the band.

"He gave me the money when I told him about the cost. We still argue about this story, because he reminded me just yesterday that he gave me 900 rupees, not 800!"

Little did Rijal know that this secret talent could lead him on a career path and the road to success. Although he started as a drummer in a small band,



he went on to record numerous songs. His songs even became chart toppers, especially songs from his album, *Coma*, which he recorded with Samjhana Audio Visual. The album won numerous national awards and topped many charts.

Changing Tracks

Rijal majored in science in Nepal Police School during his high school and prepared for the medical science examination, because he always wanted to be a medical doctor. But, fate had something else planned. Music left such a lasting impression on his life that he decided to join Kathmandu University to do his bachelors, and then masters, in ethnomusicology. He was absent from the music scene while pursuing his degree, and by the time he completed his research, he had become a completely new individual. His academic research had shaped his music in a way he had never anticipated. He wanted to learn more about folk music, he wanted to learn to play new instruments and compose songs using them. That was also the time when his love for the *sarangi* grew. Teaching music at the Nepal Music Center and Unique International School had instilled the desire in him to learn more about music, and he decided to pursue a doctorate degree in ethnomusicology. But, there was no provision to do PhD in music in Nepal, so he looked for scholarship opportunities abroad.

"I got a scholarship to the University of Massachusetts. My thesis was titled, 'Transmission of Music in Nepal', and it focused on the music education database in Nepal. It aimed to make a curriculum for music education and to contemporize endangered music traditions. I took the preparatory classes in the university and later enrolled in Kathmandu University. I collaborated with the university to do field research in several districts. I basically worked with Gandharva musicians. I did documentation, processing, analysis, and application model of the folk music in those districts and studied how it transmitted from one generation to another."

The Lure of the Local

He was attracted towards local instruments since his childhood. The sound of his sister Roja's *madal*, a popular hand drum in Nepal, and the sounds

of the *shehnai*, a tubular instrument played during marriages and processions, and *narshima* captured Rijal's imagination. But, it was when he came to Kathmandu University and met the head of department—German drummer, pianist and ethnomusicologist Dr. Gert-Matthias Wegner—that he really got into local instruments, Western classical music, and South Asian 'Shastriya Sangeet.' He also became very attracted to ethnic traditions like those of the Newars.

"I started playing various instruments like the *dhime*, the traditional drum of the Jyapus; the *tabla*, a membranophone percussion, classical guitars, and sarangi, a popular musical instrument in the western part of Nepal," said Rijal. In 2010, he started making *arbajo*, the male counterpart

"Folk music is used to narrate folklore, stories of a local community, the sadness and ecstasy. It is the music that preserves history by promoting culture and reflecting society. It is the national identity of our country."

of sarangi, by collaborating with Hari Gandharba, a musician from Kaski. *Arbajo* has been very popular among Gandharva musicians since ancient times. They considered the sarangi a feminine instrument, since its sound was as compassionate as a woman, whereas an *Arbajo* was considered to be the male counterpart of the sarangi, since its tone and texture sound is lower in frequency. The *arbajo* is bigger in size and difficult to carry. "Arbajo was more rhythmic, while sarangi was more melodious. They used to be played together in the past," he explained.

Folk music is the music of all the people of all the times, according to Rijal. For him, it's more like a language. "Folk music is used to narrate folklore, stories of a local community, the sadness and ecstasy. It is the music that

preserves history by promoting culture and reflecting society. It is the national identity of our country."

Winner of the best South Asian musician award in the South Asian Music Festival, he says that although he is a musician and not an activist, he believes the sound of musical instruments can raise awareness on various issues. "Music can be a very powerful tool to tell stories. 'The Death of Emmett Till,' a song by Bob Dylan, tells the story of events in 1955 when 14-year-old Emmett Till, an African American from Chicago, was murdered. "It's amazing how Dylan used a song to tell a story on racial inequality present at the time."

During the process of teaching and preparing the curriculum, Rijal realized the significance of Nepali musical heritage and its application. "I was very vocal about making music part of formal education. I even prepared the first draft curriculum and defended it when working with the government." He realized that it could play a significant role in bringing different castes and ethnic groups together to contribute to the nation's development. Before television and radio arrived in the country, Nepali folk musicians were the newscasters for the country. To preserve and promote folk music, it should be part of the education. Kathmandu University has been bringing in local folk musicians into the faculty recently. The idea is to bring intangible knowledge to university academia. It also gives job opportunities to the singers, as well. "Musical instruments like *nau mati baja*, played by the Damai musicians, needs to be integral in our education system."

Enduring Sounds

Rijal gets introduced to musical instruments whenever he travels to new places. "I went to Korea to give a talk as a guest lecturer and also to perform in a concert. That is where I was introduced to traditional Korean musical instruments. I really liked the sound of the *jangu*, a slim waist drum that is the most popular drum in traditional Korean music, and started learning it. I am engrossed by all types of musical instruments. Understanding them gives me a lot of pleasure." He feels life is meaningless if you don't discover and learn new things every day. On one oc-



casation, when he went to Bangkok for a lecture, he carried some musical instruments with him just in case they wanted him to play. “There were instruments everywhere, from the gardens to the kitchen. The auditorium was so good that I didn’t want to leave. I played the sarangi and everyone was in awe. They asked me if they could come to Nepal to play.”

Sound for Rijal is anything that alerts or triggers the human senses. He considers it an integral part of the universe. “Without sound, we wouldn’t have ears.” Composing music comes naturally to him on some days. He fondly recalls a recent recording, where he had to play a flute although he doesn’t consider himself a flute player. “I chose to play the *murali*, which is played like a trumpet, instead of the *bansuri*, which is a side-blown flute, and I was surprised how spontaneously I kept on playing it. But, when I base my composition in a concept or theme, it takes a lot of time for me.”

He sometimes prefers to work in isolation, in his room or veranda. But, he likes being with friends more, because he tends to overthink when he is in isolation, and he draws inspiration from people. “When I make music, I

want to make music that can last one or more lifetimes,” he told me.

He has had several influences throughout his career: ‘*Sawari Mero Railai Ma*’ by Melava Devi has been a huge inspiration for him, since she is considered to be the first recording woman artist of Nepal. “I have listened to the music collected by Terence R. Bech at Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya (MPP) in Patan that mostly consists of the music of Karnali, which is something

special. I have also watched the recordings of Toni Hagen, whose documentary had a lot of music. Ingemar Grandin and Dharma Raj Thapa are other individuals whose works have influenced me.”

Various Nepali musicians have inspired him, as well, and among them, Hari Maharjan stands out. “He has to be one of the best guitarists I know. He thinks guitar, doesn’t just play it. I like Nabin Bhattarai a lot when it comes to pop music. He is like a brother to



me.” Rijal has also been enthused by Nepathya and Kutumba, who have been promoting local instruments. “I have collaborated with them in many ways. I have had the opportunity to perform with Kutumba and write harmony score for Nepathya, too. I get goose bumps when listening to musicians like Deepak Kharel, Deep Shrestha, Phatemaan Raj Bhandari, Tara Devi, Aruna Lama, Om Bikram Bista, Natikaji, and of course, Narayan Gopal.”

He also believes that singers don't need to have recordings, or have their songs played on the radio, to be great musicians. “The local musicians, who are self-taught, are world class musicians. The ones who inherit music, like Badi Gandharva from Salyan and the late Mohan Gandharva from Kaski, who used to sing songs on historic events such as Janga Bahadur Rana's visit to Britain or about the time when the Singha Durbar caught fire. The Santhals and the Limbu musicians have broken various barriers like caste, ethnicity, and politics to produce music worthy of awards like the Grammys.”

Although he likes performing live, he believes his music is bit more applied, or scientific, and prefers performing in front of a limited number of people, though he has enjoyed performing in front of large crowds in the past. “I remember a concert in Basantapur on climate change. It was the first time I played in front of a large crowd. There were other artists like Hari Maharjan, Mukti and Revival, and Jindabaad. My hands were shaking when playing the sarangi, because it was the first act of the concert. There was an old man staring at me, who I thought was a sarangi player, later I found out he was an instrument maker. The crowd later started cheering, which was a huge relief. After that concert, he and the other performers went to a restaurant for a jam session. His fellow musicians wanted him to sing, as well. He was on the guitar. “I don't know what happened to me, but it was like I was blessed with creativity. I went on a musical marathon, narrating freestyle stories like the Gandharva musicians, singing till the early hours of the morning.”

He feels that knowing one's sound is the most difficult thing in music, and thinks teaching is a difficult job, since

one has to be very subtle when doing so. But, it complements his work, because he says he learns from his students, too. Apart from teaching, he has also been involved with other work. The music department was affected by the recent earthquake, so he has been working closely with the university to get things back on track. The rebuilding of heritage sites in Tripureshwor is also taking his time. Implementing the project, coordinating with the architects, have been completely different experiences for Rijal. “I have to visit ministers, administrative officers, and senior civil servants of the Government of Nepal, which require a lot of patience.”

Inspiring Future

According to him, the way Kutumba has contemporized folk music has given

Rijal also believes that singers don't need to have recordings, or have their songs played on the radio, to be great musicians. “The local musicians, who are self-taught, are world class musicians.”

hope that the future of folk music is bright. He has high hopes for his students; some of them have performed at the Soaltee Hotel, along with representatives of universities from around the world. Their performance was like a dream, according to Rijal. “One of my students, Sudhir, is such a wonderful tabala player that I requested him to play in a concert with me. He was very young at that time. He reminded me of my youth. We practiced for just 30 minutes before performing together. I enjoyed collaborating with him. Now, he is a drummer in the Night Band and plays in festivals all around the world.”

Recently, he has been busy with his new project titled, 'Nepali'. “I have written and composed the song and played seven instruments.” The aim is to showcase Santhal, Limbu, and Da-

mai musicians. Musicians from Jhapa, Panchthar, Kathmandu, Terathum, Taplejung, and Dhading have come together for the song. Rijal had set out for a research on inclusion in Nepal. He took a mini studio with him to the field to record the music, and recorded visuals as well. “You can say I became a cinematographer for the first time. Neptunes Records helped me a lot, along with Leon Jervis.”

The intriguing thing is the use of the *sitara/ektare*, a rare Limbu instrument used in the song. Limbu musicians have used the instruments to sing *Mundhum*, their ancient folk literature. Damai singers have played narsimha in the song. The Damai musicians, without whom the royal ceremonies and traditional Nepali weddings weren't possible, have also played their music in the song.

“I have used a bow from a sarangi to play a Fender Jimi Hendrix guitar to give that dramatic touch,” said Rijal with a smile.

Discovery and Excitement

But, the most exciting part of the trip for Rijal wasn't the coming together of different musicians, as important as that was. It was the discovery of two musical instruments that people thought no longer existed. Many scholars who had studied and done research on folk music believed that the musical instruments phanderwanam and katwanam were now extinct, which made Rijal's discovery entrancing, and a fascinating story.

While recording with the Santhal musicians for his song in Haldibaari village in Jhapa district, one of the musicians talked about an old man who was in the construction business, but was also an instrument maker, and said that he could build a phanderwanam and katwanam.

Rijal traveled to five villages in search of this maker of musical instruments many believed no longer existed. He had almost given up, when he met a guy at a tea shop. He said that he knew the instrument maker. Rijal got on the man's motorcycle, and they drove to the place. There, he met the old man, who was perhaps the last person to possess the knowledge of instruments lost to history. When asked about the instruments, the old man went inside his house and brought out two musi-

cal instruments that were in a sorry state. After Rijal asked him, the old man somewhat restored them.

“He said he used to receive orders to make them in the past. I asked him if they were for sale. He was ready to sell it for 400 to 500 rupees, which was a sad reflection of the life of the instrument makers in our country.”

Phanderwanam and katwanam belong to the Chordophones family, which is a family of instruments that use vibrating strings to create sound. Chordophones are divided into different types, such as harps, zithers, lutes, lyres, and musical bows. They are defined by the bond between the strings and the resonator. Their history stretches back to medieval times, when minstrels performed songs using these instruments. Their songs narrated stories about far-flung places, or about real or imaginary people. Phanderwanam and katwanam were played mostly in the Middle East, Far East Asia, and Central Asia. In Nepal, they mostly came from the Hindu Kush region. A small section of the Santhal community migrated from Jharkhand and settled in Jhapa. They lived like nomads, traveling to different places, playing their traditional music and singing songs. They probably couldn't fit into the traditional definition of Nepali music, and so gradually disappeared.

A phantarwanam looks a lot like arbajo, smaller in size, with four strings made out of single piece of wood. It has an elephant carved at the top. The elephant probably signifies the Santhals' closeness to nature. Katwanam has just one string, but looks like a sarangi, with a figure of a couple at the top belonging to the Santhal community. Rijal has used these instruments in his song 'Nepali,' too, but believes there is a long way to go in order to revive such rare instruments.

“I feel happy that I went to the community, did field recordings, and created some beautiful music. The instruments shouldn't be simply showcased in museums. They should be used for scholarly study. Their application should be recorded.”

Dr. Lochan Rijal, now a married man with a daughter, says a long difficult road lies ahead. “My dream is to collaborate with musicians from the 125 castes and ethnic communities all across Nepal. I want to do it in my lifetime. I also want to collaborate with world class musicians from across the world like I recently collaborated with Leon Jervis for my album *Kaacho Awaz*.” Rijal believes the songs he has written and composed, about things he has envisioned or witnessed, define his life.

He believes the highlight of his career was the day he discovered that he did not know much about music, because it was the day he learned that he needed to explore music. Back in Kathmandu, he gently plays the instruments once broken and forgotten, a high tone rising and falling, as Rijal's fingers move along the strings, creating sound not many have heard, a sound impossible to explain, but really worth listening to, and once heard, impossible to forget.

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Paddle Steamer 'Ripon' at the Port of Southampton, England.
(Illustration courtesy of www.pandosnco.co.uk/navalservice.htm.)

Feature

Crossing the 'Dark Waters' Reflections on Jang Bahadur's Trip to Europe in 1850

"They came, they were seen, and forthwith they conquered. To look at the lustre of their retinue, to count the diamonds which sparkled on their brown skins, to mark the gemmed turbans, the jeweled aigrets, the white bird of Paradise plumes—who would not have been forgiven for believing that the whole party might be an incarnation from the 'Arabian Nights'... Coming in this guise, lavishing diamonds and gold, enshrined in a halo of oriental mystery, the Nepal Embassy became at once the talk of the town."~ From a London newspaper, July 24 1850.

WORDS DON MESSERSCHMIDT

In 1850, almost four years into his reign as the most powerful man in Nepal, Jang Bahadur Rana set out on the first Nepalese mission to Europe, where he visited England and France. The Prime Minister, along with his two youngest brothers Jagat Shamsheer and Dhir Shamsheer Rana, plus an entourage of officials and a covey of servants and personal attendants, arrived in Southampton on May 14, 1850, after a month-long sea voyage from Calcutta. It was Jang Bahadur's first time traveling away from the subcontinent.

Accounts of the momentous trip are told in several memoirs and history books, and in the English and French press of the time. What dazzled many Europeans was the splendor of the premier's attire. But there was more to the trip than how he looked. In Europe they, he and his entourage were hosted by important officials, visited numerous places of historic, economic and military significance, participated in many state-sponsored events, and enjoyed some of the pleasures of Victorian London and Napoleonic Paris on their own.

What tends to have been forgotten over time are the complications members of the Nepalese party confronted while attempting to sustain their caste status as conscientious Hindus.

Maintaining Caste

These days we give little thought to Hindus traveling abroad, but in the mid-19th century leaving home on the Indian subcontinent and crossing the ocean—the 'dark waters'—to foreign lands was a frightening prospect. Attention to the long-established rules for maintaining caste purity was taken seriously and often achieved with great difficulty.

The fear of losing caste and the rules for observing caste values are grounded in the 'Dharma Shastras', ancient laws that have guided Hindu religious life for more than two thousand years. The *Shastras* clearly banned crossing the ocean (*samudrayana*) to visit foreign lands. Why? Because, as religious scholars have pointed out, it was nearly impossible to observe the obligatory personal worship three times a day, and other requirements while traveling on a ship at sea. Restrictions regarding food, drink, and commensality were especially challenging. The risk of traveling afar in the company of non-Hindus was to live in a state of perpetual pollution

from the sin of '*mleccha samparka*', politely defined as 'mixing with foreigners' though 'barbarians' is a more accurate definition of '*mleccha*'.

For Hindu travelers to avoid or counteract the consequences of impurity and to rid themselves of guilt, an especially odious and lengthy routine of penance was prescribed. In its strictest form, lasting up to three years, the penitent was allowed to eat only a little food as infrequently as every fourth mealtime, to pass each day standing and each night sitting, and to bathe morning, noon, and night. Upon return to India, a bath in the holy Ganges was considered essential to regaining caste purity. (On their return from Europe in early 1851, Jang Bahadur and his companions did just that during a stop in Benares.)

The concerns that Jang Bahadur, his two brothers and the other travelers in his party expressed about observing caste restrictions, especially while eating, are described, for example, in the memoir of their official minder, Orfeur Cavenagh. The British had assigned Captain Cavenagh as "Political Charge of a Mission from the Court of Kathmandoo to Her Most Gracious Majesty" in London. In that capacity, he accompanied and guided Jang Bahadur and his brothers on a daily basis, sometimes interpreting for them (though they also had an official interpreter) and had every opportunity to observe how they behaved. Their efforts to maintain caste purity are also mentioned by other authors, historians, and curious European journalists.

Unknown Rules

As an 'old India hand' and Hindi speaker, Capt. Cavenagh was well aware of Hindu customs. He did all he could to assure that the party had adequate accommodations, with bathing, cooking, and eating facilities that met their needs. He also mentions several occasions when their European hosts breached local convention and 'broke the rules' to accommodate some of the strange customs of their honored guests. Perceval Landon writes that their British hosts, who were largely ignorant of their guests' needs and tastes, were especially "anxious not to transgress the unknown rules of caste."

For their part, the Nepalese did their best to avoid breaking the most fundamental customs regarding ritual



Jang Bahadur in Europe 1850

pollution. Padma Jang Rana, a son of Jang Bahadur writing from his father's personal journal, describes life aboard ship on the first leg of their sea journey out of Calcutta as having been "arranged in a thoroughly orthodox Hindu style" –

"The Europeans [he writes] wondered at the Minister's seclusion during mealtime, and the scrupulous care he always showed in keeping himself and his things aloof from the touch of any non-Hindu. So rigid was he in the observance of the customs of his country, and the principles of his caste, that he... never tasted anything but fruits while on board the steamer, and even then, not before placing a thick screen in front of him, to save himself from being stared at.

This is a unique feature of the Hindu character, for while Europeans feel no delicacy in taking meals in public, Hindus, especially of the higher grades, ...always take their meals in privacy."

Padma Jang Rana points out that to Jang Bahadur the ship's "common deck implied abominable contact with objectionable people." Thus, during the first few days of the long voyage, until arrangements were worked out for the Nepalese servants to prepare meals on board, all food for Jang Bahadur and the others was both cooked and eaten ashore. This Hindu character trait appeared "unintelligible to Europeans to whom our universal 'chowka system' is a constant puzzle." The rule was that cooked food carried away from the '*chowka*' (the cooking place) was



Jang Bahadur in Europe 1850 (Courtesy Wikimedia Commons)

considered unclean, hence unfit for caste-conscious Hindus.

Hide the Cows

Two examples of the care the Nepalese travelers took regarding food and drink show how Hindu custom sometimes bumped uncomfortably up against European convention. For their own convenience aboard ship, the Nepalese brought cows that they alone milked (but, being considered sacred, never slaughtered for food). Shortly after boarding the P. & O. line's steam-

ship 'Ripon' in Alexandria, Egypt, for crossing the Mediterranean Sea, Jang Bahadur came to Capt. Cavenagh "sadly distressed" to learn that other cows on board were killed to provide meat on the European menu. So affronted were the Nepalese at this, Jang Bahadur is said to have told Cavenagh if there was no way of stopping "this most objectionable practice..., he would immediately quit that ship and engage another." Cavenagh averted that by arranging with the purser to carefully conceal the time and place of cow

slaughter, a plan to which Jang Bahadur uncomfortably agreed.

Once that was settled, the Nepalese set up housekeeping on the 'Ripon' for the remainder of the journey. An article in the London press describing shipboard accommodations, mentions that given "their strict notions" regarding religion, diet, bathing, and dread of contaminating the food, cooking vessels, and utensils -

"they were compelled to engage the whole of the forecabins and saloons of the Ripon, in which they fitted up cooking apparatus, which was constructed out of a large square box made of planks and paddle-floats, filled with mud and sand. The fuel they used was charcoal. Their principal food on board was poultry, kids [goat], eggs, rice and vegetables. They took in themselves at each port they touched at, what water they used."

Dock their Tails

Another problem arose when it was found that the sheep brought on board the 'Ripon' for the Nepalese to butcher and eat were of the European long-tailed variety, which they told Cavenagh they were forbidden to eat. To the ship's authorities this seemed easy to make right. So, as Cavenagh tells it, out of sight and probably with a bit of jollity on the part of the crew, -

"an animal with an apparently orthodox tail was duly made over to the Nepalese party for execution. The appointed executioner was not disposed to become too inquisitive as to the origin of the shortness of the tail of the fine fat sheep destined to become the dinner of himself and his fellows. Unfortunately, however, amongst the members of the Minister's suite was an old Kazi under a vow not to indulge in animal food for a certain period; under no circumstances, therefore, could he partake of the repast. This old gentleman, who was of rather a crabbed disposition, insisted upon being allowed to examine the sheep to satisfy himself that his brethren acted in accordance with their religious tenets. The result of his minute scrutiny established... that the animal they were about to sacrifice had originally been born with a long tail."

Capt. Cavenagh was of the opinion that the companions of the "old Kazi," Karbir Khatri, were prepared to ignore the docked tail and get on with cooking up a nice mutton curry. But out of respect, apparently, for the concerns



Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of Nepal, Sir Jang Bahadur Kunwar Rana. Watercolor over pencil portrait by C. Grant, Calcutta, 1850. (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

of the elder gentleman they outwardly expressed great astonishment at the revelation. Or, as Cavenagh put it, with a touch of irony –

“Inwardly, I fancy, many were the curses against their friend’s officiousness. However, the requirements of religion must be obeyed. Monsieur le Mouton [with the docked tail] was at once released and bundled up stairs to join his companions and to become food for heterodox Christians instead of orthodox Hindus; whilst the suite for the rest of the voyage were obliged to content themselves with rice and flour and such like comestibles.”

After arriving in London, Cavenagh assumed Karbir Khatri must have been barred from examining what went on in the kitchen, for nothing more was heard about short-tailed sheep.

Cut the Carpet

The Nepalese party’s concern for keeping rigid standards of separation from the Europeans went well beyond what they ate, to the point of rearranging the furnishings. One London journalist described the lengths to which they went to avoid contaminating situations –

“In the matter of eating and drinking, the Nepalese gentlemen continue to keep rigidly to their rules of faith and custom. As regards animal food, they eat mutton and goat’s-flesh cooked after their own fashion by their own retainers. Fruit is the only refreshment, as my readers may be aware, of which the Nepalese will partake in the dwelling

When Her Majesty Queen Victoria met Jang Bahadur during an event at the Palace, she expressed the hope that he would make a tour through the United Kingdom beyond London before leaving the realm.

of Giaour [meaning ‘*gaur*’, ‘an infidel’ in Persian]; and in consuming even it, the most curiously rigid system of isolation appears to be requisite.

At a recent fête, at which all artistic and aristocratic London were present, the Nepalese, before they sat down to their collation of peaches, nectarines, and so forth, were not only ensconced in a closed room with trusty sentinels at the door, but the carpet of the apartment in which they sat, and which was of the same piece as that which covered the floor of the adjoining chamber, was, at their request, severed at the threshold, and rolled back on either side, so as to destroy the idea of any immediate connexion or communication between themselves and the neighboring infidels.”

Don’t Drink the Water

What to drink, and to drink from, were also problematic. The Nepalese team were guests at numerous receptions and parties in England, at which they took no drink and ate nothing more than some raw fruit. In those days, as historian John Whelpton explains, Hindus of “pure caste” would not accept water from “impure” sources, which included ‘*iyuropiyen*’ (Europeans) or ‘*kristan*’ (Christians). Impurity could be transmitted through water from ‘*mlechhas*’ but not by touch. Thus, while Jang Bahadur and members of his party could shake hands with their European hosts, they would not accept a glass of water from them.

Their behavior confounded no less than Queen Victoria herself. When Her Majesty met Jang Bahadur during an event at the Palace, she expressed the hope that he would make a tour through the United Kingdom beyond London before leaving the realm. Then, as Cavenagh tells it –

“His Excellency, in reply, stated that he was extremely anxious to do so,

but, unfortunately, his religion offered an insuperable bar to his travelling as much as he could wish, as difficulties were experienced with respect to his securing suitable cooking utensils. Her Majesty, appearing somewhat surprised at this answer, I at once explained the peculiarities of the Hindoo faith, more especially as regards their being prohibited from making use of cooking-pots that had been rendered unclean by the touch of one of another creed or of inferior caste.”

Jang Bahadur and his brothers eventually toured a bit more of England and some of Scotland where, along the way, they encountered a drinking water problem at a railway station. According to a rather high-sounding newspaper account, what happened at Castle Station went something like this –

“His highness being thirsty the interpreter inquired for some water, and, in the emergency, one of the [railway station] porters hastily procured it in one of the men’s coffee cans. This not being accepted, and the porter supposing the vessel was too plebeian for his highness to use, a clean tumbler, containing the pure element, was tendered, but also solemnly rejected. In this dilemma his Highness, or Magnificence, as the splendor of his costume would warrant his being styled, caught sight of the stand-pipe and hose by which the engines are supplied with water, and supposing it to be a spring, endeavoured to find where he could dip in his own drinking-cup, and procure water unpolluted by contact with any vessel in Christian use. The whole party curiously examined the water-pipe, but of course could make nothing of it, and returned to the train with his Highness’s want unsatisfied.”

Mixing socially with European ‘*mlechhas*’ abroad was, at times, clearly onerous.

(See also the related article on page 72 of this issue.)



Feature

Pilgrimage... with a book

In February 2009, I took the plunge and published a book.

WORDS SUSAN M. GRIFFITH-JONES

Unknowingly at the time, its journey had already started long ago, high up in the trans-Himalayan region of Mustang in April 2005, when I went there on a trip that would lead me to an in-depth contemplation on my inner psyche.

Indeed, as most life-turning events seem to begin, it was not a planned expedition, but one prompted by my spiritual guru, His Eminence Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, a great master of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition,

who was then residing in Bouddhanath, Kathmandu, as I too was at that time.

I was actually destined to go on pilgrimage to a very special place in Tibet that month. And so it happened that the day before departing, I went to visit my guru for his blessing, as is customary before long journeys.

With tickets bought and visas and permits already obtained, I was mentally ready and all packed up to

leave on this expedition...when he suddenly stopped me in my tracks.

“Go to Muktinath!” he told me, and even though I was fully coherent in the final decision making process, I could not fail to listen to this simple statement that his clairvoyant mind had detected as perhaps a more suitable option for me.

“Was it protective advice against an ill to befall me in Tibet?” I wondered at the time. Looking back on it now,

I understand it as a fulfilment of personal destiny, a springboarding of events and life circumstances that would follow in its wake.

Within a few more days and a plethora of mind shattering realizations in between, I found myself in the heart of the Kali Gandaki gorge heading towards Mustang.

But it was only upon entering the valley of Muktinath that I was unknowingly swept into the vortex of the place, as I explored its highs and lows, interiors and exteriors, as well as the sacred and mundane without any intention of going anywhere in particular.

Consciously realizing that I had entered a kind of sub-strata reality where the division between gross, hard-core existence blends easily into a more subtle space of being, this uncharted journey of spiritual awakening culminated in a kind of transcending of the so-called 'ordinary' world.

Just following my guru's advice, I was truly there to visit the place, to understand it, to find out its essential meaning and the vision of the guru who had sent me on this journey; by just simply being present there and facing whatever occurred.

"Is this really 'pilgrimage'?" I questioned, as I watched other fellow travelers pour offerings of milk and flowers over the various sacred objects at each of the shrines in the valley. But, in response, I intuited that everything has its outer, inner, and innermost meaning and way of processing and just focused on being there, rather than on trying to judge it as this or that.

After returning to Kathmandu and shaken in a new way by what had happened, I set about to write it down in a travelogue of sorts. A mystical and yet flowing explanation of the deeper process that had occurred ensued upon the page in the root text, *The Rainbow Bridge*, that appeared in a series of verses pouring from my mind in an insistent and procreative way.

These verses then remained in a file on my computer for the next three years, as I set about digesting

their meaning into my everyday life. It was only in the middle of 2008, when I had already shifted to the old British hill station of Mussoorie in the Indian Himalayas after the passing away of my guru, that I set about to explain the meaning of the verses in a commentary to the essential text.

On March 1, 2009, in Delhi, I finally gazed at the cover of a hardback book depicting a rainbow outstretched above a monastery in the heart of the Muktinath valley. Looking across at the twenty or so boxes within which the 1000 copies we had published were neatly stacked, I felt a sense of wonderment of the power of words and their capacity to achieve creative fulfillment.

I had already decided to self-distribute the books, as I was keen to learn the process, as well as to slightly keep tab on where they would be placed in the market. I also knew that this was not a book for everyone and that it required an audience of like-minded seekers of spiritual knowledge and wisdom.

The bottom-line truth was that I did not really know how, or where, to start. The only way to begin seemed to be just by beginning. I therefore considered making a fact-finding, experimental trip to one of the cities on my list of India's spiritual centers, Rishikesh, which is nestled at the foot of Ganga's mountainous path in India, to see what response it would receive there.

Thus transporting eighty books to the place, on the first night, after attaching a marketing poster advertising 'New Book Release' nearby, I stacked a pile of books on the table where I was eating dinner that evening. By the end of the evening, one copy had been sold, and I felt euphoric.

And so it continued, until I had combed the entire length and breadth of Rishikesh, leaving books in cafes and bookshops alike, some paid for upon receipt, others that would be paid for after selling.

Sometimes, the purchasing of a book would happen in an

extraordinary way. I would have just piled a stack of books on a table in a public place, as I was counting, sorting, or rearranging my bag, and someone would appear out of the blue, ask about the book, glance over a copy (and not even open it in some cases), and buy it there and then.

I began to feel no attachment to the books, as it became obvious to me that those who were taking them were somewhat like vessels who would transport them to further pastures.

I could not cover the entire world with my 1000 books, but if I were to concentrate on certain key areas where people, who were wishing to reach beyond the mundane and understand their inner truths, would come from all over the world, then they would do the job for me.

So it continued in Dharamsala—northern India—where the process of distribution had become even easier, as I was becoming familiar with the way that the shops worked, and also more flowing in my description of the book. Then, on to India's great capital of Delhi and Nepal's two largest cities of Kathmandu and Pokhara.

The finer details of what occurred in each of these places and the meetings and conversations that ensued around the distribution of *The Rainbow Bridge* to both individuals and shops would merit a book on the wider scope of pilgrimage itself, as I was meeting different religious backgrounds, beliefs, and moods, in which I came to detect a unified spiritual understanding that definitely exists between people of different origins.

So, I came to see the act of 'pilgrimage' as ever there, ever present, and everywhere in our everyday lives; an ever-changing, ever-increasing swell of being at one with existence, wherever and whenever.

The Rainbow Bridge is available at www.pyramidkey.com as well as Amazon and Barnes and Noble.



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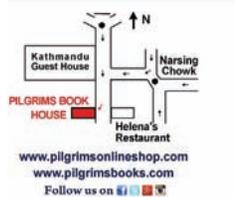


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Craft

REVIEW • CRAFT TALE • CRAFT MAKER • CRAFT PRODUCTS





Reaching Greater Heights in Stone

WORDS SUPRASANNA ARYAL

On reaching sculptor Chandra Shyam Dangol's studio in Khokana on a Friday morning, I feel that it is located in the perfect neighborhood. Not so crowded, peaceful, plenty of fresh air; exactly the kind of ambience where art and artists likely thrive.

As you enter the tin-roofed studio, the first section is a spacious office-like room, where there is a showcase

displaying small stone sculptures of deities like Ganesh, Bishnu, Laxmi, and Buddha, among others, for sale. Certificates honoring the sculptor's excellence are hung at one corner, and on the floor below are some more sculptures of bigger sizes—more deities, guardian lions (*singhas*) seen at temples' entrances, and *panas* (traditional oil lamps). There is also a desk,

on which is a stack of brochures about the sculptor's recent solo exhibition, 'Inheritance'. Alongside are a couple of couches where visitors can sit. A door at the next corner leads you to another area that is more open-spaced, which gives you a clearer picture of what the sculptor is up to—statues of Shivalinga, stupas, and still more deities. There are also unfinished



sculptures, uneven stones, and machines needed for cutting stones and smoothing their surface. And, a handful of sculptors doing what they love most; making statues.

Dangol has just returned after teaching a class on sculpture at Sirjana College of Fine Arts, located in Uttardhoka, Kathmandu, of which he is also a founder member. He has been teaching there for over eight years now. High school-level students are encouraged to become comfortable with sketching and drawing first, and then they get to work on clay, so that when they make statues, they can rework as many times as they want, since clay is moldable. Once they get better and get used to doing it, they work on stones, wood, and metal, which is taught during their bachelor's. In his college, five students on average decide to take sculpture classes in their bachelor level, he observes. "Many students don't prefer taking sculpture classes, and I assume it's because the work looks very messy. You have to work with stones and get your clothes dirty, and lifting heavy weights is not everyone's cup of tea," he says, adding that maybe another reason is that



people aren't much aware about the importance and charm of this art form.

Also, since contemporary artists have the liberty to explore different genres, he hopes that Nepali contemporary sculptors will make it a point to love making traditional sculptures reflecting Nepal's history. He stresses, "Traditional sculpture is our identity,

and it gives us a uniqueness that the rest of the world adores. So, even if young sculptors want to try international imageries, they should not hesitate to work on Nepali styles, too." He has seven sculptors working in his studio, who have been trained by him.

It was his father, Krishna Dangol, who influenced him to get into sculpt-



ing. His father was passionate about metal sculptures, so he had joined the profession in Patan. But, being a resident of Khokana, where almost everyone was involved in agriculture, he was also required in the fields, so he had to quit the sculpture business after five years. However, he wanted his son to pursue fine art in high school, and Dangol agreed, but without any interest in the beginning. But, studying about sculpture made him so interested that he now feels he wouldn't be able to love any other profession like he loves stone carving. He completed his bachelor's and master's in fine arts, specializing in stone sculptures, from Tribhuvan University.

The stones Dangol uses are brought in from Hattiban, which is a very complicated task. Firstly, geography makes it difficult. He observes, "Taking excavation equipment to the sites and transporting stones become a challenge because of the narrow and unpaved roads. Additionally, there is no proper policy for the excavation." They have to take permission from the community forest authority as well as the local people, along with other bodies of the government. And, since the government keeps changing, they are required to convince new officials every time they want stones for sculpture. This makes the process lengthy, and so it takes over five months to get 300 tons of stones. "And, since we don't have advanced tools, we excavate rocks in the traditional way, because of which they do not come out in blocks, but uneven shapes, which need further trimming," he adds.

Once these stones are brought to the studio, they are cut into blocks as per the required sizes. They then smooth the surfaces, and images are roughly sketched onto them. According to these images, the blocks are trimmed into perfect shapes. The stones he uses are called "black ballast". While some people like their statues naturally colored, some order them oil-polished, and some even prefer them painted. For making a one-foot-tall sculpture, Dangol charges ten thousand rupees, and it requires a week's time. If he is to spend a month on the same sized statue with more details, the price goes up to sixty thousand rupees. People buy statues from his studio for worship or decoration purposes.



Having made around one thousand gem statues (quartz, lapis lazuli, and other stones) and two thousand stone carvings in his more than two decades of sculpting, Dangol has received many awards and participated in numerous national and international exhibitions. He has been honored with awards such as National Best Entrepreneur (2006) and National Best Entrepreneur Runner-up (2007 and 2014) by Small Scale Cottage Industry (Government of Nepal), Achievement Award (2008) by Oita Asian Sculpture Exhibition, Japan, Fine Arts Special Award (2011 and 2012) by Nepal Academy of Fine Arts, Best Artist of The Year (2017) by Federation of Handicraft Associations of Nepal, and Jyapu Kala Prativa (2017) by Jyapu Culture Development Trust.

His ten-and-half-feet-tall Bodhisattva Buddha, a six-foot Bodhisattva Buddha, a five-foot Shakyamuni Buddha, and a pair of three-feet-tall singhas were exhibited at the Shanghai World Expo 2010 in China. He was also honored as a distinguished

professor at Suzhou Art & Design Technology Institute in Suzhou, China, in 2014, for two years. Also, he gets invitations to facilitate and judge art competitions organized by schools and other institutions.

Speaking on why sculpture-making means so much to him, Dangol says that, through this profession, he gets to help preserve Nepal's rich tradition. "We see chaityas, statues of deities, and other traditional carvings the moment we step outside our homes. There are monuments and temples all around that reflect our ancestors' creativity and are very inspirational. I feel proud that I have been taking the legacy forward," he shares. His works that recently made a buzz in the country is a pair of singhas, five-and-half-feet each, installed in Nepal Vajrayana Mahavihar in Lumbini. Also, since there aren't many traditional sculptures of big sizes in Nepal, except for a few, that too dating back to seventh or eighth century, he wants to make as many as possible. His eighteen-feet-tall Maitreya Buddha, one of the tallest

sculptures in Nepal, was installed in Bara district in 2012. Another one, a thirty-three-feet-tall Manjushree statue, which was started over five years ago, has reached the final stage and is located in Chobhar. The artist has compiled over twelve pieces to complete this one, each weighing two tons at the lowest, while the biggest piece weighs ten tons.

As I'm almost done with the interview and preparing to leave, I ask him my last question: what is his favorite sculpture that he has worked on till date. He walks across the office, opens an old tin cupboard, and takes out a rectangular sculpture. Explaining that it is *Buddhacharita*, an image that depicts Buddha's life from birth to death, he informs that the sculpture is 12 years old, and it took him over three years to finish it. "Many people wanted to buy it, but I couldn't give it away at any cost. I don't really know why, but it's very dear to me," he says. Certain things in life are unexplainable, indeed!



Craft Product

Attractive, Indestructible, and Made in Nepal

WORDS EVANGELINE NEVE

There are many things in my home that are made in Nepal, from clothing in my closet to art that hangs on the wall, and of course, many of the most traditional local crafts: singing bowls, khukuri knives, and myriad more knickknacks that have been collected over the years.

However, you might be surprised to know that amongst the made-in-Nepal items that have brought me the most

joy are, in fact, my dish towels (or tea towels, if you're a Brit). I can't even tell you how many years ago it was when I first bought a few from Dhukuti, in Kuponhole. I'd also bought some from a department store around the same time, and while I didn't intentionally set out to compare them, that's sort of how it worked out. I'd had some experience—again, this is years ago—with Nepali

made T-shirts and bags whose color ran copiously, or that sprung holes, after a few uses, and so I only bought a couple. The first ones I purchased were of a woven striped material, light green. I know this because I still have them, years and years later. They have dried dishes and hands, covered cakes and wrapped bread, added a splash of color to my kitchen.

The cotton they are made from is durable, absorbent, and has gotten softer over the years. And they still look good! Anyone who has had something in regular kitchen rotation for years knows just how much of an anomaly this is.

Even now, whenever I pop into Dhukuti, which is one of my go-to places for gifts before a trip home, I invariably end up standing in front of the dish towel shelves. I don't need any more—the first ones I purchased still haven't worn out—but I am constantly tempted by the new designs. There are aprons, oven mitts, and pot holders that match the dish towels' patterns, too, and I generally combine a selection of these into a set when I'm buying them for a gift. But, for myself, I just buy a couple more of the towels. At least two, usually, because I like them to match. I have brown ones and red ones now, and another shade



Dhukuti provides the raw materials and the women then do the weaving locally in workshops that are located near their homes

of green. There are now printed ones, too, with things like donuts, chilies, and herbs on them, and while those are nice (and I have a few of them, of course), I still prefer the striped weave. They don't show stains (imperative in the kitchen) and have a traditional feel. My sister told me that the ones I'd given her for a gift a couple of years ago still look great in her kitchen—so much better than her other ones.

When I was last in the shop, I decided to ask about the provenance of this simple item that I've grown so fond of. I was told that they are made by local producers in Kirtipur and Lagankhel—Dhukuti provides the raw materials and the women then do the weaving locally in workshops that are located near their homes—a setup that enables them to feed and care for their young children easily in between work times, and means that even those who are still breastfeeding are able work on their own schedule. It was good to hear that this small purchase of mine is one that goes straight back into a very local economy. And it reminded me that when made-in-Nepal products are of such high quality, there's no need to look elsewhere for our purchases. This isn't a big-ticket item, of course, and some might think I'm reading too much into it, but I believe quality in the small things promotes trust and customer loyalty, too.

It appears that my collection will continue to grow; the old ones show no sign of losing their usefulness, and at least a few times a year a new design catches my eye. Oh well. There are more expensive addictions than a love for colorful kitchen towels.

Is there a made-in-Nepal product that you particularly love and would like to tell us about? Drop us a line at: editorial@ecs.com.np



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Travel

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Photo Story

Far, Far Away

WORDS AMAR B. SHRESTHA PHOTOS SULOVE MAHARJAN

Once a kingdom in its own right, Jumla is where Nepali (*Khas Bhasa*), the national language of Nepal, originated. The sprawling district of around a thousand square miles is also reputed for its red rice, which is said to be more healthy and nourishing than other kinds of rice. Located in Karnali Zone in mid-western Nepal, Jumla unfortunately is also one of the most impoverished regions in the country. As befits the rugged landscape of this remote district, its inhabitants, too, are a tough breed. The district is renowned for its many *jadibutis* (medicinal herbs), among which Himalayan Viagra, that is, *yarsagumba*, is the best known. You'll find eager hordes scrambling all over the hillsides during the period of April-June, spending hours and hours crawling through the shrubs and digging for this precious combination of fungus and caterpillar. .











© Sulove Maharja



Photo Story









Experience

Beyond Bird-watching in Koshi Tappu

WORDS AND PHOTOS SANJIB CHAUDHARY



Are you a bird-watching enthusiast? Then, Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve in eastern Nepal is the must-go destination for you. However, when I was there with my friends recently, we ended up discovering more than the birds.

Home to migratory birds and wild water buffaloes

Famous for bird watching, the reserve boasts of being home to more than 485 bird species, especially migratory birds flying from as far away as Siberia. Since we were there in the second week of April, the

migratory birds had already left, but we were welcomed by the resident birds. Early in the morning, an Asian koel woke us up with its sweet cuckooing, chorused by coots. Then, as we roamed around the reserve, we spotted black-hooded orioles, swamp hen, moorhen, white-rumped vultures, jungle babblers, drongos, flycatchers, doves, rufous treepies, open billed storks, lesser adjutant stork, and a greater adjutant stork, not to mention the different types of wild ducks and so many birds that we couldn't identify. I was simply

amazed! Had we had more time, we'd have easily seen the precious Bengal florican in the grassland.

The reserve is also known for its herd of wild water buffaloes, called 'arna' locally. They are famous for their long and sharp horns. When we were there, the arna count had begun and the reserve was closed for domestic tourists. However, after requesting the park authority and the army, we managed to get inside and observe the arna counting process. But, we were saddened by the presence of domestic cattle in the reserve. They were everywhere. The sad thing is, the wild buffaloes might turn into a breed of hybrid buffaloes due to breeding with domestic buffaloes that get inside the reserve for grazing.

Noisy construction in the heart of the reserve

As we moved further, we were disheartened by the loud noise coming from a construction site within the core area of the reserve. A part of the reserve had been encroached by scores of construction workers, mixer machines, and tractors, and polluted by construction materials, the high volume of music played by them, and the sound of machines, motors, and vehicles. The reserve authorities could have allocated a piece of land away from the wetland to make the concrete pillars for the bobykes being installed at the banks of the Koshi River, and could have spared the precious habitat of so many birds!

Seeing the sad scene, we asked our guide to take us to the site where the dykes were installed. Driving to the north of the reserve, we came across embankments and dykes on the banks of Koshi River near Prakashpur. This section was breached by the swelling floods in August 2008 that displaced more than 50,000 in Nepal and more than 3 million people in India. According to tourism entrepreneur Chakra Timsina,



Arna horns at the reserve visitor centre

learning from the experiences of the People's Republic of China, the Koshi Barrage Management Authority (Government of India) started installing these dykes along with gabion wire embankment and spurs in between. And it has worked! But Timsina mentioned that a few greedy locals had been stealing the poles and selling them at Rs 700 (around 7 USD) apiece in the local market. They're used to manufacturing low-cost houses. They've still learnt nothing from the bank-breaching which happened as the embankment could not hold the waters. The fierce floods swept away the embankment, since a few locals had cut and stolen the gabion wires holding the boulders. The greed of a handful caused such great disaster in 2008, and we can't rest assured that it might not happen in the future, if people keep stealing these poles. God forbid!

Sad fate of dolphins

Once we were done with the bird-watching and moving around the reserve, we set out to meet the reserve officers to inform them of the noisy construction going on inside



Fishes of Koshi

the reserve. But, when I saw a dead baby dolphin displayed at the reserve's visitor centre-cum-museum, it made me cry. The dolphin was caught in a gillnet in the Koshi River few months ago. It finally died after struggling to survive. And, it's only the tip of the iceberg. Several other dolphins and rare fishes had had similar fates. Sadly, a recent dolphin count in Koshi in 2016 came up with just nine dolphins. Due to over-fishing and destruction of their habitat, their numbers are declining, not to mention the dangerous gillnets that wound them and finally kill them.

We complained about the construction with the officer who had arrived from Kath-

mandu to monitor the arna count. He assured us they would take the issue seriously. I was saddened by the dolphin's fate, but once we came out of the reserve, I was happy again to see the fields of sunflowers on the way out. Once planted by gardeners, sunflowers are being preferred by farmers over other cash crops in Prakashpur and Koshi Barrage area. They've started planting them commercially. If you're a photographer, you won't be able to contain yourself from clicking loads of pictures of these sunflower farms!

Delicious fishes of Koshi River

On our way back home, we decided to taste the local fishes



Barmajhiyako peda

from the Koshi River. When asked, everybody suggested us to visit Sambhu Hotel by the river. The eatery, established during the East-West Highway construction era, is in a narrow street to the south of the river's eastern banks. You'll never get lost getting here, as everybody in the vicinity knows about it and will happily tell you the directions to the hotel. Once you reach here, you can choose the fish of your choice, which are then cooked by an old man and garnished by the lady who runs the shop with her sons. The fish are sourced from the local fishermen who earn their living by fishing in the river. I bet you'll love the taste and decide to return again and again!

After filling our empty stomachs, we decided to watch dolphins in the Koshi River. We waited for half an hour focussing on the river waters, but I could not see even a single dolphin, though my friends claimed to see a dolphin's back. Rather than looking for dolphins, I was interested in a fisherman scouring the fierce waters with a hand net. Standing on the edge of the barrage foundation, on a sweltering

day, looking for fish - life is so difficult for the locals!

Crossing the barrage, we came across small shanties put up by fishmongers. There were fishes everywhere. The barrage and the surrounding have some special kind of smell wafting around and if you're a fish lover, you'll love it. The fishmongers sell all kinds of fish, including *buari*, *chitalpeti*, *kanti*, *tengra*, *bam*, shrimps, and many other local varieties. Among them you can find small fishes growing one-three inches long, called *koshia*. They taste amazing!

And, finally we waited for the sunset, to capture the silhouettes of cattle on the dam, returning home after grazing in the reserve. It was an out of this world feeling!

Barmajhiyako peda, one of the most delicious sweets produced in eastern Nepal

It was already dark when we left the Koshi Barrage. However, we decided to indulge in a local sweet peda, made from pure milk. You'll find scores of shops selling peda in Barmajhiya, a small town on the way back from Koshi River. They

sell the same product and have similar names. And all claim that they're the original shop established by an old man, Baidhyanath Sah. As suggested by the locals, we easily located the '*Budho Baba Peda Pasal*', meaning old man's peda shop, adjacent to the Armed Police Force beat. And it happened to be the original one! The shop owner said, "Just look for this banyan tree next to our shop and you'll never fail to recognise our shop." The old man, who left this world a few years ago, started making peda and it became an instant hit among the locals and people visiting eastern Nepal, thanks to the quality of the product. Since then, scores of other shopkeepers have started selling peda, making this place a hub of peda business. But the peda from this original shop has something special about it. It tastes amazing!

We sped towards Lahan, a small town on the East-West Highway, to find rooms for the night's rest, with the smell and taste of fish and peda still lingering in our memories.



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Sketches by Jagdish Chitrakar

The exhibit "Sketches," by Jagdish Chitrakar, is on at Yala Mandala on Kwalkhu Road, Patan. It opened on July 13 and will run till September 13, 2018; opening hours 11 am to 7 pm. Mostly self-taught, the artist has experience in both painting and, most recently, ink drawings. These insightful and oft inspirational images should not be missed. For more details, contact: 9818239744

Guide me from Darkness to Light by Sandhya Regmi

On Saturday, July 7, 2018, the 9th solo painting exhibition by artist Sandhya Regmi was held at Nepal Arts Council, Babarmahal. Entitled "Guide me from Darkness to Light," the exhibit was organized with the Buddha Harmony Foundation and was inaugurated by HE Roland Schaefer, the German Ambassador to Nepal, and showcased some amazing art.

Melody for Remedy

Melody for Remedy, a musical event organized by Aama Buwa Trust will feature the famous fusion band of Nepal Kutumba, along with Indian Sufi singer Pushpan Pradhan. With musical ambience,

splendid food, and exciting door prizes, the program will be hosted by Vivek Khatiwada. The funds raised from the event will be handed over to Lamachaur Apangata Swabalamban Samaj, Pokhara, for sustainability and smooth running of the day care center for individuals with disabilities.





Beyond Visible by Conci Mazzullo

The photo exhibition titled “Beyond Visible: Parallel Routes Nepal and Italy,” was displayed at Nepal Art Council in Babermahal from 17-27 July 2018. The selection of photos, by Italian photographer Conci Mazzullo, trace the experience of her journey here in Nepal. The four sections—Restoration, People, Abstract and Invisible Cities—contain a lot of close ups that cause you to look deeply and wonder about what is being portrayed. Drawing your own conclusions seems to be part of the process. The Restoration section has images from what appear to be both an Italian church and a monastery in Nepal. The juxtaposition is beautiful and surprisingly harmonious.



CSR at Hotel Yak & Yeti

As part of Hotel Yak & Yeti’s Corporate Social Responsibility, General Manager, Ms. Monika Scheiblauer and team have taken the initiative to donate basic home and living supplies such as mattresses, pillows, bed sheets, towels, etc. to Helping Hands for the Deaf, a shelter for children with hearing impairment and special needs in Gairidhara on 11 July, 2018. They also spent time with the children and teachers listening to their stories. Along with the donation supplies, Executive Chef Sagar Singh Rawat of Hotel Yak & Yeti, and his team prepared special healthy lunch boxes for all the children and staff working at the shelter.



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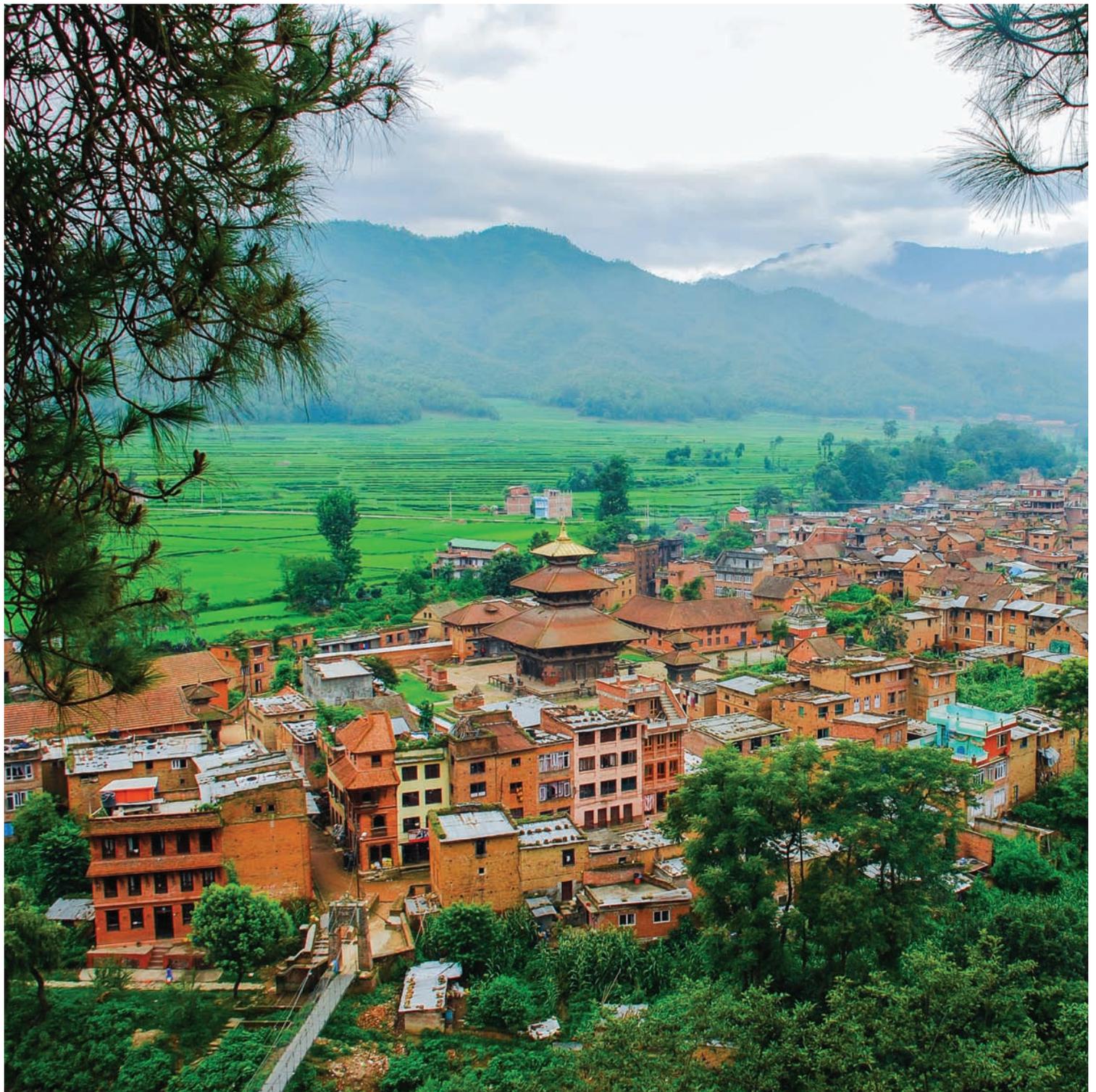
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Where History and Culture Intertwine

WORDS AMAR B. SHRESTHA



Once out of Bhaktapur city, the Arniko Highway offers a great drive, with really great scenery all along the road. There's serenity in the surroundings, you'll agree. An abundance of lush greenery everywhere you look, especially in this season of rain. The road climbs up gradually in places, and goes lazily downhill in some, the traffic isn't much, and you get to enjoy long moments of silent tranquility on the way. It's peaceful, is what I'm trying to say. Then, a half hour or so, and you reach

one of the most touristic spots in the valley, Dhulikhel.

Now, this Dhulikhel, it has some of the best resorts you'll find anywhere on Earth, located on hilltops and plateaus, offering panoramic views of the mighty Himalaya. It's said that no visit to Nepal can be complete without a night's stay in Dhulikhel. Most visitors come here looking forward to being bewitched by magnificent sunrises every morning. The city is deeply steeped in ancient Newari tradition and culture, and the city folk take special care to uphold such a rich civilization. Here is where you'll find the locals vigorous in celebrating the many festivals throughout the year, and here is where you'll discover the pleasures of bird watching in the thick jungle all around. If you love nature, you'll love Dhulikhel. Period!

Now, if you drive on a few kilometers, you'll arrive at a place called Banepa that's a rapidly growing city. It's an important place of commercial activities. Here is where you'll find a road meandering northwards from one of the squares on the main road. This road takes you to one of the most ancient Newari towns of the country. They say that it is the fourth most culturally important town, next only to Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur. It has a rich history, and is said to be located on a massive rock bed, which makes it impervious even to the mightiest earthquakes!

This particular town is also as ideally located in another sense, at the confluence of two sacred rivers, the Roshi and Punyamati. The town has many pagoda-style temples and other religious shrines, in addition to other common paraphernalia common to Newari settlements, such as *patis* and *sattals* (public resting places) and *hitis* with *dhunge dharas* (watering spots with carved stone spouts). Most such places are made of wood and terracotta. You'll find that the wood columns are also intricately carved pieces of art, and as far as the temples are concerned, they have beautiful gilded roofs and wide

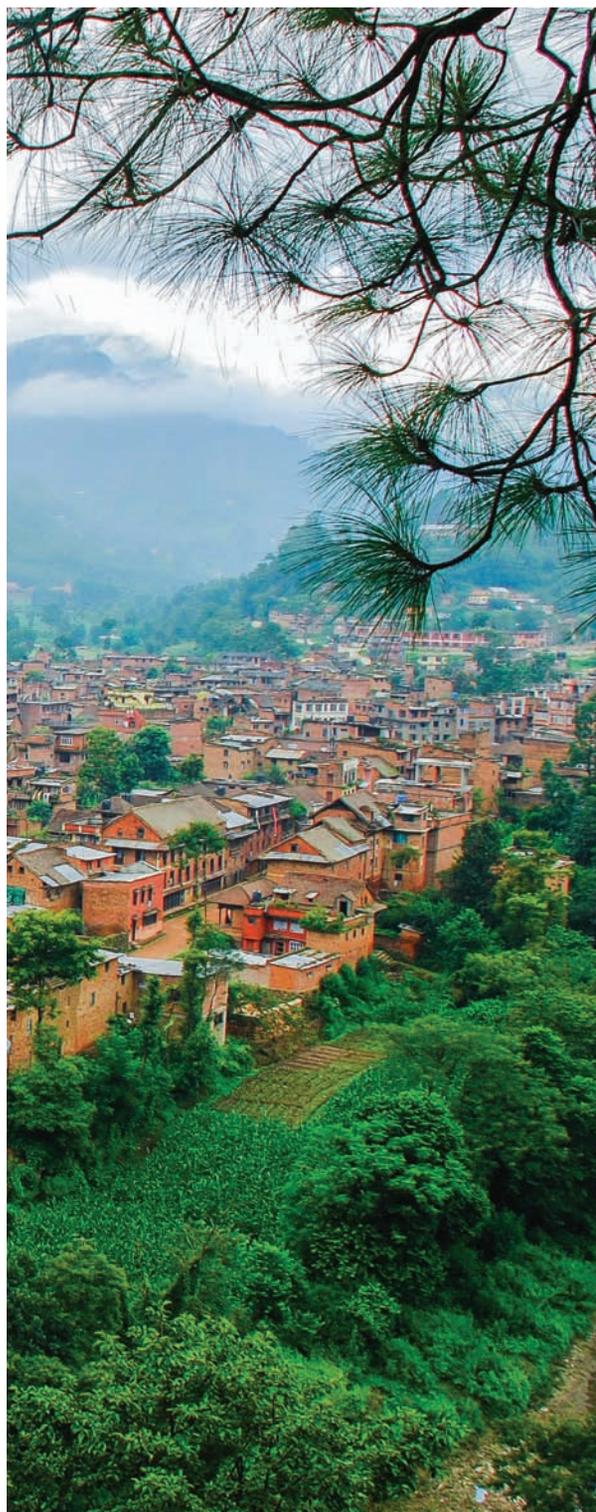
courtyards in front. At the center of the town, you'll discover the remnants of an ancient durbar, as well.

This town was formed after the merger of six ancient villages, and now has an area of about thirty-four square kilometers. From here, too, you'll be able to have splendid views of the Himalaya, especially if you take the trouble to take a 15-minute walk uphill to Gorakhnath Hill. From here, you will also realize that the town is, in fact, slightly fish-shaped from east to west, and that it is pretty small, only about a kilometer in length. The junction of the two rivers is known as Triveni Ghat, a sacred site for the last rites of loved ones.

Although many of the festivals and traditions are similar to that of the capital, this town also has some festivals that are unique to the place. One such, a post-harvest festival, is in honor of a delicacy that has become famous throughout the land, and which originated here. In fact, today, it has attained a high status as one of Nepal's most popular dishes, and many restaurants in the valley tout it proudly on their menus. Another festival unique to this town is held once every twelve years for a full month at the confluence of the two rivers, Roshi and Punyamati. It is believed that another river, the Lilawati, also confluences at this point, but you'll need your third eye to see it.

Another interesting fact about this town is that this is where Prince Mahasatwo was born. Who's that, you may query. Well, he's the famous prince who sacrificed his body to feed a tiger and her cubs in the nearby Namobuddha jungle, and thus became the very epitome of compassion and sacrifice. Now, it is a very holy pilgrimage site that is visited by thousands of devotees who hope to imbibe the same noble values. Indeed, this ancient town, and its surroundings, is where one will find history and culture intertwined in equal measure.

But you're intrigued by this place. Well, then better make a trip here soon!



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Heritage Tale

Romancing the Gods

WORDS SWOSTI RAJBHANDARI KAYASTHA

The art of Nepal is something that collectors, museums, and art-historians all over the world appreciate. Nepalese art is believed to be an irreplaceable source of life and inspiration. Therefore, there is a call for preservation and conservation, mostly of those that we see on roadways and side alleys in the open air, because they contribute to world history and should be preserved for

future generations. These art forms can be seen in various mediums, shapes, and sizes. Stone, wood, terracotta, and metal are some of the common materials used since ancient times, and the practice continues till today.

In the medium of stone, one such theme has been continuously produced since the pre-Lichhavi period (2-3rd CE), continuing through

the Malla and Shah periods of our political history. This is the beautiful stone image popularly known as Uma-Mahesvara stone reliefs. Although Shiva and his consort Parvati are depicted in various iconographic forms, this relief panel depicts Shiva as Mahesvara, the 'Great God', and Parvati as Uma, the goddess who performed many meritorious deeds

in order to marry Siva. This relief panel represents Lord Siva in one of his calm, or *saumya*, moods, embracing his consort, representing the ideal married couple.

The interesting point about this theme in Nepalese art is its continuous production, right from the ancient till the modern period of the Shah dynasty, at various places in Pashupati, Patan, Kathmandu, and Bhaktapur.

The oldest one can still be seen at Sikubahi in Patan, although in a dilapidated condition, having lost much of its artistic detail over time. Looking at the various stone relief panels of this theme of various periods, we see the development of its art form. The earlier relief at Pashupati and Patan depict the central figure of seated Mahes on the left of Uma, who is seated most often on his lap and sometimes resting her right hand on his lap, while the lord lovingly embraces his consort gently with left hand on her breast.

The artist of the earlier period shows graphical representations of mountains, as if the couple is relaxing in their Himalayan abode, Kailash. The images made in the medieval and modern period show a lot more additions to the narrative. Although the central portion with the couple remains the same in style and posture, numerous other characters also find a place in the narrative. A characteristic feature of this relief panel of Nepal is the placement of the anthropomorphic forms of the river goddess Ganga and Jamuna as flying demi-gods in *anjali* or veneration *mudra* on the central top of the stele.

The latter reliefs can be comparable to modern-day family photographs, with the couple in the center, and their sons Kumar and Ganesh with their mounts, the peacock and mouse, respectively, not forgetting Siva's mount Nandi, the bull who always finds a place wherever Siva is. One of the most beautiful depictions of this narrative is seen at the water spot, or *dhunge dhara*, at Kumbeswara Temple, Patan. Although we can find a large number of these images around the Kathmandu valley, no two images are the same. Each has its own characteristic, demonstrating the artistic creativity and skill of the artist.

Broadly looking at this stele, we can divide it into three bands horizontally. The top represents the sky, with flying Ganga and Yamuna pouring water in *anjali mudra*. Above them is a *chhatra* or umbrella, a symbol of power in the ancient days. Sometimes, a *sivalinga* is also depicted, and to the right and left end are the images of the sun and the moon. The central portion is much larger, with the romantic posture of the couple taking center stage. Siva is seated with Uma in *sukhasana* or relaxed posture, with the right leg hanging and left leg folded on the seat. He is depicted with four arms holding a rosary or *akshayamala* and *trisula* or trident with the above hands and the lower left arm embraces his consort, while the other hand is in *varada mudra*, or the gesture of benediction. Siva is clad in his usual tiger skin lower garment and a snake around his neck and other natural ornaments, while Uma is bejeweled as a queen with an elaborate hairdo. Shiva's alluring gaze towards his consort brings a picture of the gods in a romantic setting. Kumar, with the peacock, is mostly placed on the left of Siva, while Ganes, their younger son, is mostly depicted on the lower part of the stele, with his attendants, or *gana*, playing musical instruments.

The stories of Siva and Parvati and their love and sacrifice for each other are often cited as an example of the perfect and ideal couple; however, it is only in his form that we see their intimacy and closeness. In today's world, there is much to learn from these artistic productions about patience, love, trust, and devotion.

The author is a scholar in Nepalese culture, with special interest in art & iconography. She can be reached at swostirjb@gmail.com

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'The Crossing Sweeper.' Oil painting by William Powell Firth (1858)

Spilled Ink

A Friend of the Broom The First Nepali to Visit England

WORDS DON MESSERSCHMIDT

It's been said that Prime Minister Jang Bahadur, in 1850, was the first Nepali to visit England. One early account goes so far as to say that he was "The first Asian to visit England." Another describes him as "the first Hindoo of so high a caste who has ever been presented to the Queen."

The latter claim is probably correct, but Jang Bahadur was by no means the first Nepali, first Hindu, or "first Asian" to visit England. He was, however, the first head of state from Nepal to do so, in 1850. (The second was his nephew,

Prime Minister Chandra Shamsheer, in 1908.)

The first Nepali known to have lived in England was from Bhaktapur. As a young man, Motilal Singh fought and was captured in the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16. He spoke English and impressed his British captors, one of whom encouraged him to migrate to England. Once there, however, and down on his luck, he joined the poor London street people including cripples, children, and other foreigners to eke out a meager living as a crossing sweeper.

A crossing sweeper's job was to brush away muck, mud, and manure at city street crossings to keep pathways open for ladies in long dresses and gentlemen in fine apparel, for which he was given a gratuity.

Before automobiles, the streets of Victorian London and other cities were often crowded with horse-drawn carriages. It was said that in London alone, close to 100,000 horses passed along the unpaved city streets each day. You can imagine all the odiferous horse buns that had to be swept away to clear a path



for those well-dressed ladies and gents to pass unsullied.

One day Motilal's crossing sweeper career came to a sudden but happy end. According to a June 1850 London newspaper account —

“Everyone one who has passed through St. Paul's Church-yard to Cheapside on a rainy day, when birch brooms are very much in requisition, must have noticed the well-known Hindoo crossing-sweeper, who has for years past regularly stationed himself at the northeast angle of the Cathedral. A day or two ago he was at his post as usual, when the attention of the Nepalese Ambassador [Jang Bahadur Rana], who was passing at the time, was attracted towards him. His Excellency ordered the carriage to stop, and entered into conversation with him [in Nepali], the result of which was that he threw his broom with desperate eagerness over the railing....

He now appears every morning arrayed in a new and superb Hindoo costume and is not too proud to recognise his old acquaintances and friends of the broom.”

After that, 'Muttu Lall Sing' (as he was known to the English) was often seen with the Nepalese mission visiting many places as an informal interpreter and companion. He is said to have accompanied the Nepalese entourage to

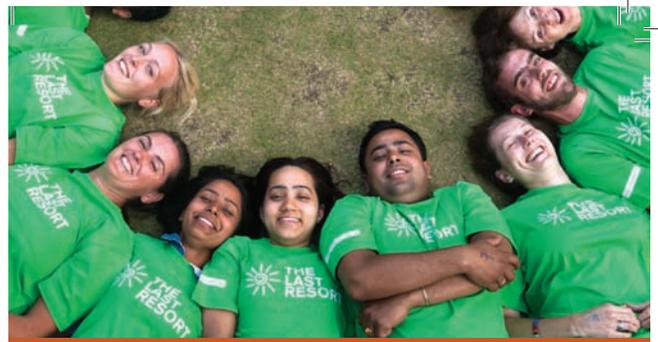
France and is thought to have returned to Nepal with them.

There is no mention, however, of Motilal in the published accounts of Jang Bahadur's historic European tour. His story appears only in a few short, obscure accounts in English newspapers of the time. The snippet above is from 'Vicissitude of Fortune', in London's 'Indian News' of June 17, 1850. It was reprinted among excerpts from the European Press appended to John Whelpton's 'Jang Bahadur in Europe' (1983).

More recently, the Nepalese researcher Krishna Adhikari, while investigating Nepalese migration to England, found yet another story about Motilal in 'The Economist' of June 1, 1850. It forms the basis of Adhikari's own short study entitled 'A Nepali in Victorian England: Motilal—Soldier, Crossing Sweeper, Chronicler,' published by London's Migration Museum at www.migrationmuseum.org.

Better to be a lowly Friend of the Broom than a down-and-out Nepali beggar on the filthy streets of Victorian London. Better yet to be discovered and compassionately befriended by Jang Bahadur and his brothers, dressed up in Nepalese finery, and cheerfully toss your broom aside for a new life.

(See also the related article on page 38 of this issue.)



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In line with its vision of providing the safest, most reliable and comfortable means of air transport, and with the end goal of delivering more smiles per flight, Buddha Air strives to grow, improve, and reinvent itself every year. The company recently celebrated its 20 glorious years of trusted flying. But even at a time when it enjoys an almost unrivaled position in the domestic aviation sector, the company already has an eye set towards the future.

In an exclusive interview, the Managing Director of Buddha Air, Birendra Bahadur Basnet, revealed how the company has its sights set on the ambitious project of adding more international flights in Buddha Air's future.

The plans for realizing this dream project are currently underway, and the company is hopeful that it will be able to wrap up all the preliminary preparations soon. This would then set in motion the next stage of rigorous negotiations and collaborations with various authorities and parties whose support is crucial for the achievement of this breakthrough objective.

From aircraft manufacturing companies like Airbus and Boeing, Nepal's Foreign Ministry to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, Buddha Air will



engage with utmost dedication with all parties to bring everyone on board.

Depending on how soon the construction of Pokhara Regional International Airport will be completed, Buddha Air will be initiating flights from Pokhara to international destinations like India, China, Hong Kong, etc. Buddha Air aims to begin with two jetliners, but the number will increase gradually as per the need and demand of their valued passengers.

Besides expanding its reach in the international skies, Buddha Air's attention is also on the requirements of the country's domestic flyers. Further considering Nepal's growing market, and

exploding potentialities with the formation of new federal states, Buddha Air has plans for domestic expansion as well.

Buddha Air has been adding to its ATR fleet. In 2018, it added two ATR 72-500 aircrafts to its fleet family. The most recent addition was the 9N-AMU, which will be in operation by August 2018. With this addition, Buddha Air is currently soaring the skies with 11 aircrafts, which includes two Beechcraft 1900D aircrafts, three ATR 42-320 aircrafts and six ATR 72-500 aircrafts.

In the east, the company has started flights with its 72-seater aircrafts for Janakpur. Furthermore, Buddha Air has already recommenced its flights between



Kathmandu and Surkhet. As Surkhet is the capital of Province no.6, this flight route is an important move on Buddha Air's part. From October 2018, Buddha Air will be connecting Pokhara and Nepalgunj as well. It has also been providing direct flights between Pokhara and Bhairahawa and Pokhara and Bharatpur since 2017.

“When we are speaking about local flights, we cannot ignore the importance of Pokhara as a tourism-hub, which in turn is a hub for frequent flyers,” explained Basnet.

Nepal received around 10 lakh tourists in 2017, of which over 70% traveled with the aim of holiday and pleasure. The tourists frequently traveled to destinations like Pokhara, Bhairahawa (Lumbini) and Bharatpur (Chitwan).

Buddha Air's research has predicted that over 25 lakhs tourists will be flying in and out of Pokhara in the next 10 years. And when that happens Buddha Air will be ready, with already the capacity to serve over 30% of these tourists in the coming years.

It's been over two decades of leading the aviation in the country by ensuring an exceptional flying experience for its passengers, but it looks like Buddha Air is only getting started in its endeavor of conquering the skies.

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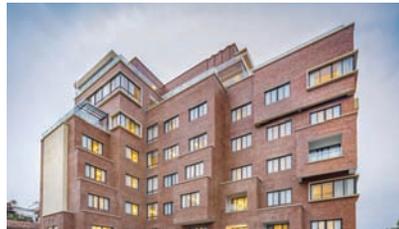
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