

INDIA / NEPAL / Benares > Kathmandu, 3

Words: 7182

14-15-16-XII, Monday - Wednesday, BENARES (VASANARI) [291], 6-16-06

Catching the real atmosphere of this place is difficult, but it centers on the river, bathing in it, praying to it, trading by it, and in our exceptional case, living on it. It couldn't have been a finer chance to see the river at all hours, and find that rarely was the waterfront devoid of activity. The first night, when allow as quiet, suddenly the second floor of the Hindu temple above and to our left became ablaze with lights and a furious percussive din, punctuated by shouts. About four pieces, rattling for 25 minutes -- then a shimmering silence. Tilted umbrellas looked like haunted beach figures. A howl of dogs -- or near-human wails? -- wafted across the river.

The boat. Reached by descending steps, stepping across a 10" x 5' plank, walking the length of a rowboat, stepping across the prow of another houseboat, and into ours. Owners were two slender dark boys of 18-20, whose relationship and friends we did not distinguish. The boat had cracked floorboards in many places and scallop-shuttered windows you could see right through in several angles. Bench along each side, back room. Creaking minimal, but did not look safe. Top tarred, dewy. Railing just about to yank loose. Rope in prow (for anchor?)

PAGE TOP [regarding fading ballpoint pen]: Now I know why all shopkeepers have fountain pens. And I thought it was just a status symbol!

Never saw the stern. 25' long, I guess. Paintings of Munch-like [figures], stark and vivid, within. Mike's stove lit only for tea first morning. A homey boat, but I spent scant time there. I was fascinated to watch the bathers for an hour each morning. Tiny wizened old ladies, young strapping bald men, pretty young girls, babbling old babos bearded, startlingly well-built women past prime -- all individually etched on my mind, clear faced, devout, and dedicated to MA GANGATI. It was easily the most moving sight I've seen yet in India. These lovely people, imbued with faith, come here morning after morning, to clean their bodies, purify their hearts, merge with god, wash their clothes. They duck themselves not less than three times, they touch water to mouth and forehead, as Christians do with holy water, but aware of the full significance of the ritual.

"Panditji" (Dudh Nath Pandaye) is a young, handsome, short-haired bearded man of 23 or so, dressed all in white with */ on his brow, signifying Vishnu, I think. He has the most sweet and delighted smile, broken English but powerful expression of desire to find God, spent 9-4 and 7-12 at prayer away from the boat. Lived apart from his wife and family to avoid worldly attachments, has been on the boat next to ours for a few years, worships his Mother Gangaji devoutly, speaks with child-like directness and sincerity on all matters. He mistranslated my riddle to Anne and Jeannette [Shulenberger], turning it into a prayer (typically). I was tempted to leave it. He sang a song to Krishna, consisting of epithets of his name:

Govinda jay-jay, Gopala jay-jay, Radha-ananda, hare; Gofarna jay-jay.

This was in a gentle and husky voice, as Negroid as his strong features

appeared to be, with a serene conviction, and subtle grace notes, and once the simple theme was established, endless melodic variation with the same words, which I found most creative. Mike was singing it, too, but in an amused, companionable way, I think, rather than caught up in spirit, and sang it rigidly. Michael was in fact an exception to the hardnosed loutish bearded Ozzie type I'd met in London – sensitive, amiable, childlike, quizzical. Direct humor. His propensity for *bhang-lhasi* unfortunately gave us worry over him when, sick all morning, he tooled off to the hospital and spent the night in a hotel. He seems relaxed and easily absorbed into the atmosphere and Indian family.

The tiny bit of Benares that I became familiar with was right in the heart of the pilgrim/tourist belt. It included the main road to our Deshashwaramh (Gryaga) Ghat, and a major artery into the bazaar. It did not include any of the major temples (I didn't see a one) though our ghat was one of the very busiest.. There were many beggars – sadhus, Jains with tridents, paintfaced; old ladies in rags, kids, hobbling old men, a miserable looking muscular dystrophy soul – either chasing after you at your sleeve or groveling on the *pan*-gouted pavement. (Benares' streets seemed to aver its age – all bent and crooked, even the largest, even the cantonment, whereas the weirdly Venetian scramble of alleys led only to confusion.) I happily give 5 and 10 *paisa* pieces to single ones but not to a crowd; I'll bet I'm in the tourist minority in doing so. Seated with Pat the last morning in a *masal dosa* shop (*itli* for 15 *paisa* with 2 spicy sauces!) a large parade of wealthy German tourists, each be-cameraed, stormed toward the ghat to capture the quaint religious folk on home movies. One elderly couple were walking as quickly as possible straight ahead, frowning and shaking their heads in funny nervous jerks at the beggars clamoring around them. People have forgotten how to give in our society where the State Welfare and Charitable Institutions take care. But the beggars are indefatigable, persistent, smiling or pitiable in their approach. Ten *paisa* will whet their appetite and make them grimace sadly and point to their mouths, asking for more. Some turn away without a word or a nod; some –particularly the very old – bow in reverent thanks. SIGN: CONJUSTED TOWN AHEAD

[hindi script] site of renowned industrial complex which umesh suggested visiting, 'worth-seeing'

Who are the pros? Who are the needy? What does it matter! Give freely! I mark with amusement that neither Richard nor Pat EVER give a *paisa*! It's the only responsibility that's ever been shunted on me. Ha ha. Fred the almsgiver.

I enjoy charity; what bugs me is people taking advantage. They'll ask anything they think they can get – even for tea – 35 *paisa*, at times. We haven't got the proper procedure down yet, but once or twice I've simply dropped 20, smiled, and walked away. I know the locals can get [tea] for 10 or 15.

Plus the bazaar! Half my angst and agony in Benares is wondering whether and how much I was diddled by the man I traded my gray trousers and green cardigan to, getting a few bone ('ivory') trinkets and a brass bowl (35R quoted later as worth 15). He was criticized indirectly by our money-changers that evening, and later he vindicated himself, saing they were known scoundrels and slanderers. "What is truth?" as Pilate aloofly asked. He burned his ivory and

said he'd take it all back; I liked the bowl and so demurred, liking to keep a straight barter straight. He was glib but convincing; I'm a better subject than writer of ad slogans and sales messages. But I was embarrassed to think I probably was made a fool of for my impetuosity, gullibility, and lack of perspicacity. I think I shall never change in that respect.

My other preoccupation was translating a brief poem to accompany little necklaces to Anne and Jeannette [Shulenberg]. I bought them literally ON the Gages for an enterprising fellow in a boat laden with junk jewellery, badly registered color photo albums, gaudy Sanskrit maps, etc. It was our morning row on the Ganges with Mike and our 'landlord' as rower (Mike took a turn at the elusive, unbalanced, tied-on bamboo oars [pic]), full sun, crowding and plashing in the water and by its edge, the glint of brazen pots, and shiny wet, dark figures half-clad. The women's contours were ill-concealed, but none of the men stared as I did at the slender shapely arms and legs, high proud asses, firm smallish breasts. I was embarrassed to feel so steeped in the *maya* of sex-consciousness while they were occupied in cleansing their souls. We rowed down and then upstream, our dark boatman with red splotch on brow reading off the names of the ghats and me writing them down (from yellow and black painted signs). The far side was a wide white dune with trees beyond. At the burning ghat we paused, electrified by day at its prospect by night. Bodies placed on thick pyres. Family concession for a renowned Sudra: what responsibility and power! Complex feelings of awe, horro, grisly amusement, morbid curiosity, all worked on me at once. The contrast of holy rite and workaday bustle of the workers (several going at once, assembly-line) was engrossing, rich of polarities of life, like *Hamlet* V.i.

[won at scrabble with shit letters, Pat leading all way, with astonishing ELFLING (92) on last round, catching R & P with full boards!]

I bought the necklaces at bargain prices as we moved downstream in jostling boats. The man was amazingly persevering, despite our adamant refusal to pay more than we stipulated (high enough). But the gefuffle of translation when I decided on a poem! Panditji painstakingly made poetic rendition of 3 lines; lovely but nowhere near what I'd wanted for my riddle (Olde Englyshe). Boy at sub-post office made some additions and I helped with his telegram: MOTHER LEFT WEDNESDAY PLEASE RECEIVE. AT main GPO two blokes had a go, an old bespectacled gentleman did a fine job but his penmanship was illegible, so Mr. Murjee of our local PO helped out (while he loaned me Leadbeater's book on the Chandras to digest. On the boat next to ours (Panditji's) one of the boat boys was playing very soft repetitive bluesy flute quite late. High on a joint I went over with my axe [clarinet]. He let me cut him out of reticent politeness, playing only one note. I octaved it, budged it, appoggiatura-ed it, unmovable. So I played themes over pedal point D. It sounded ruddy marvelous, but I couldn't get him to duplicate his bluesy improvisation. Is flute, transverse in Bb, was made of carefully bored pipe.

We didn't leave B on the 16th until late, me plowing all over town behind a little man to get a box made (eating cocoanut) and chat with Mr. Narais Das

(whom I told Peet about) who spoke Dutch and 10 other tongues and had a Mahatma ring (20 paisa piece) and said his motto also was “Be kind to all and speak the truth.” And palaver at the post Office. As we drove toward Patna, Pat sewed up my box with small bit of cheap cloth bought on the Main St. At tourist office I turned in the *soi-disant* government shop that sold silk scarves at 15 rupees. We paralleled railroad on sluggish local line with people hanging off the running boards for kicks. The station signs were in English and Arabic [Urdu?]. At [script] we prowled around, D.B. [dak bungalow] closed full up (we suspected otherwise, fear of wigs showing up late) and drove back & off the road to Inspection House. Umesh greeted us shortly, had tea with us, took us out for chucken curries, huge rices and veg (prepared as we sat aloof in the car, eaten with fingers under the gaze of several poor local kids) discussed pros and cons of East and West, put down misconceptions and overcondemnations of western decadence, had pans from the car (drive-in pan shop) and retired after receiving specific instructions regarding How To Go To Katmandu. “You arrive at Patna at 11:15 and have time for tea at ...”

17-XII-70, Thursday, MOTIHARI MOKAMEH [300], 6-28-06

Long pot of tea for breakfast and Umesh saw us off so we wouldn't pay the *chokkidar* more than 5 (instead of 7.50, and he took us teas). Recommended Nepal import items, and had a look at my radio when I mentioned it. Immediately thought it was 2-band, asked price, I said 200, he said 175, I said best offer had been 140 but I wanted 200, he was told it was one-band and revised his price down to 150, elaborately explaining the limitations of the machine. I played dumb and feigned indifference, but he slowly pursued and had the thing for 150. Good riddance to it. I hope he enjoys it, and that he didn't buy it after all because he'd made an initial price. He said he'd have it 'in memory of me', which I thought a kindly remark. He was short, swarthy, heavy, has a wife and two kids in Arrah, up the road.

We reached Patna about 11 and I spent 50 minutes sending the package (9.50) plastering it with all the recent Indian 20p commemoratives, gluing stickers, filling forms, jumping queue, buying stamps. No queues, really: people jump and shove and wave banknotes about. A fine time, and I'm glad to be riding again.

Then we found the GOLGHAR [hindi, photo elsewhere] a huge beehive edifice supposedly built in 1786 to house grain, but sporting a recent limewash and with two sets of steps outside to top. Inside had two dimlit desks and booking clerks at entrance, and several hundred stacked grain bags looking very small on the far side. The sounds [echoes?] were superb! I dropped change, paper, clunked and scraped my Afghan shoes – all with their own sounds amplified and reverberated wildly under the dome. I was fascinated: somebody dropped a rush mat and what a din ensued – echoing for 15 seconds!

We doubled back along the Ganges to check the ferry but it cost R45, and the river was even down – what a gyp! Especially after big lunch on pavement across from Wheeler Senate House (?) with half the neighborhood watching: big rice, 2 innards, 2 veg, chapattis, 3 teas, all for 2.10. Extraordinary, and the guy

was proud to serve us and gather a crowd. Chased teas himself. Kids washed plates with mud – what's Ajax but white mud? Very clean. At Mokameh we stayed the night in bungalow and had veg dinner sent in – not too great for 2.50 each – too much spuds. Mosquitoes a drag: spray ineffective. Beat R at scrabble coming from behind, used blanks effectively – RETAXES (52) and LIQUID (30) on last go versus his big letters. Uncomfortable, annoying night, must get the nets out or die.

18-XII-70, Thursday, MOTIHARI [302], 6-28-06

I drove a long stretch, immediately over the flat gray Ganges on long river bridge. Herwe was a white yacht, lonely as the one in Weill's song, and as weird. Saw many wonderful birds – blue and indigo wings, brown breast, russet head [bee-eaters?] and wading birds and others. Had a flat and gave old man alms. Many palm trees, increasing tropicality since Benares. Tea stop brought straightfaced high prices. Lots of tiny increasingly poor villages. Made arrangements at circuit house annex after initial rejection and suggestion of camping. Pat and I went shopping and found prices high, but were helpless to bargain. 50p per egg was refused, again at the place. Pat got it into her head to make hash, and wanted potatoes, onions, tomatoes, and I got eggplant chili and ginger (mixed with dhanian and chili from men at Allahabad Tourist Bungalow). Place that Sikh fed us at gave small milk for 50p -- a gyp: he was an imposing fellow. Before long Pat was wailing away at the stove and I was just reading a bit and fooling about. The hash was excellent and my curry was nice and gingerly. We befriended a small puppy who was sore-covered and fed him some scraps. The little girl came and kept looking at us. Another guy came and tried the tomato soup, bummed weeds, chased away the dogs, brought flowers, refused my pipe and shoes, chattered aimlessly, grinned, stared. Boss brought us a fire, misinterpreting Richard's trash burning as being cold. Carried a log fire into the room: we chased him out and told him not to kick the dogs. Our puppy was fierce by our feet, and the older males hypocritically 'kissed ass' when he growled at them; when he went off, they nipped him. Richard nailed me at scrabble: my letters were so bad I lost interest and played with nasty nonchalance. Bit again all night by the skeeters. The man in next room snored volcanically, like a huge echo – it was peculiar.

Still feeling a rush though we had a few hours to kill in this place – sorted out bookbox. The Swami's getting dull with over—repetition of eulogy and too many names & piddling events. They could have done it in 1/3 the space and lost nothing of the man's stature. Flogging a dead horse as it is.

[hindi signs: SUGAULI, RAMGARWHA, RAXAUL 11, BORDER 13]

19-XII-70, Saturday, KATHMANDU [304], 8-26-06

Richard demanded an early start: off before 8. Obsequious chokkidar was demanding (hopefully) 7R, but I asked our neighbour, who said 1 each. A baksheesh was in order, but we didn't give it. Off we went, passing through the small towns on the [reverse sheet]. They got progressively poorer – nothing but thatch and rags, but a certain pride and independence lost in big cities. The

border was easy, no currency questions, no check-up, saw huge Guernsey bus with 8 beds in it, spoke to kids. Indian side ragged and sloppy; Nepal side police checkpoint set in lovely thatched cottage with palms and grass and flowers and 2 [hand pointing] – count ‘em! – outhouses. Spoke with friendly Chinese-y guard and two Nepali lads – many dialects, Nepali similar to Hindi, same alfabet.

185 km to Kathmandu. The first 30 after Birganj (which looked ‘Indian’) were like the Chepachet road to Connecticut: trees behind telephone poles – nothing more. Then we started to climb – chalk cliffs, pine-topped to the brink, long white, rocky, winding, dryish river bed – boys cutting rock, men spearing fish in river, little kids toting huge bundles of leaves wearing brow-bands, looking like little bushes with legs, some flat faces, mostly smiling. Eeven in the tiny villages a certain architectural unity becomes appoarent – several wooden doors [fve coffered squares] in succession, [peaked roof] round-the-edge eaves, [façade] red-white stripe paint jobs, elevated corn-cribs, flat wooden slats – all that with the rolling farmland reminded me strongly of Austria (Patl of central Wales). We went over a low range, Siwalik Hills, and arrange of mid-sized (Mahabharat) mountains and were suddenly struck with the prospect of the Hjimalyas looming bright on the North horizon – a long scarcely broken chain as far as the eye could see – like a long strong brass chord. With salient peaks like Annapurna (far left), Gorkahimal, Langtang, Jugal, Rolwaling (high on right): what a sight from the plinth at Daman! Everest was too far to the East to see. The highest range in the world stretch before us like a hallucination – disembodied, floating, unreal – with dried grass and stones at our feet like anywhere else in the world. Wow.

We went through long terraced valleys looking like sealed relief models of mountain ranges, all brown at this time of year, used for corn mainly. Shadows lengthened, in the crevasses away from the sun, there were small waterfalls and small, spooky clefts like Flume Gorge in White Mountains. Anticlimactic approach

Footnote: Lunch with Mike whom we passed in a lorry. He felt lousy – the craps. Pat took a snap of me with a lamb (tee hee). Lusty lady fed us rice and dhall, what a sensuous laugh!

To K through length of valley up and down small hills. Last miles in dim smog of evening following trucks through congested suburbs. The white peaks visible just out of town but not in center where 3-4 story pagodas and 4-5 story buildings were common. The archiutecture was like 19th centiury continetal urban, barred windows, ornate frames, clear-cut, neat, straightforward, unpretentious. The temples were unlike anything I’d ever seen – elaborately carved black hardwood door and window casings with accentuated horizontal lines very wide. Tiered pagodas and guardian lions, piles of oranges on stone platforms, rice in great white piles on the temple steps, about 10 various shapes and sizes jumbled into a small, irregularly shaped square – a knockout locale with innumerable lovely angles of vantage. Cold suddenly after dark.

We chkeced into New Matchbox, triangular cement building with reinforced brick staircases and carefully fitted window casings and doors (even in

triangular bathroom). Met Chris, a heavy-set patriarchal San Fran Man (who held the dubious distinction of being the first to chuck a brick through the Administration Building's windows.) He had stacks of grass, so we turned on strong at the tea House over friend rice, chow chow, and other goodies, without curry spicing. Far more Chinese (and Tibetan) cuisine with some classic misspellings on the menus. Later with fat heads to Inn Eden, Himali Cold Drinks, and another joint – head hangouts all – scant chatter and tripping on the food. I was feeling no pain at all; it hit me hardest about ½ hour after I stopped.

Other first impressions: only one paved street, sidewalks all semi-dissolved bricks of ages ago, low constant shopfronts with very low step-ups, all in dark wood, with dark interiors and few lights except little log or stove fires. Stars clear, hardly any cars, very few rickshaws in these parts (with ooga horns, not bells.) Cows everywhere, goats, dogs, chicks, etc., thriving fertility from all forms of life. Little contact with locals. Room cold, gray concrete, dismal but view fascinating out back: very steep staircase, overhanging eave of huge white house behind with solid wall of windows 4x4) with pumpkins on it, cloverleaf [drawn] pool steeply below, yards full of rubbish, huge expanse of cauliflower garden with narrow tall brick houses all around. (Layout like Viterbo, houses like Amsterdam.) Monkey temple visible beyond.

OM MA NI PAD ME HUM

TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GODDESS

20-XII-70, Sunday KATMANDU [308], 9-7-06

Characteristically, a long slow day. By the time Pat and I had a roll waiting for the mists to lift, it was lunchtime. So we repaired to the Himali Place and tucked into rice and chow mein and spaghetti. When the excellent dry veg came, we were full so we invited in a local orphan in army coat, snotty and ragged but independent and cheerful, who ate well and sopped up with bread and joined us in tea. Lovely little chap with broad Oriental face and expressive eyes. The place is very bare and rickety with very loud, scratchy “Martha My Dear” Beatles blaring and a stuffed owl in a lit-up case full of 5.50 apple juice tins. Down Main Street past tourist shops for booze and food to the G.P.O., where we bought weird-stamped airletters and stamps but no postcards (75P) and, bargaining furiously, I had some First day Covers for (my uncle) Pat. Very mixed crowd queuing for stamps and things. We sat and wrote in a café for a while, I to Jack White and Pat to her brother. It was bloody 4pm before we left. Film we find no cheaper than India, but we bought two good Chinese pens for 50p. What's more, they write. We ambled back toward the center, checking booze and radio prices for export. Radios surprisingly dear, booze looks best: 85N for 1.25 Liter [?]

Cuddled at the hotel a bit then off toward the river where we stumbled [sic] down some dark muddy steps to a riverside temple with incredibly intricate decoration – prayer flags in bronze, Cerebus hounds a-grinning, Siva lingas, carved animals and flowers all dimly realizable in 50-wat street lamp. Caretaker and family slept in open side, all white and peaceful. Bells hang here and there to be pulled, as one late worshipper did – loudly. Pigs grunting in the dark, a family in upstairs window singing to drum and table accordion (pump organs), another

sitting in deep open verandah around fire, father reprimanding crying youngster. Streets very dark, medieval. Fell upon Harvey and Gail, hip Manhattanites who took us to their whotel room and showed us stacks of Tibetan woodcuts printed onto rice paper. I flipped over several and bought a big one and two small ones. They were as intricate and starkly beautiful as brass rubbings, with extraordinary devils on the big one and zodiacal symbology on the circular calendar. Clutching our rice-paper goodies, Pat and I ascended through the dim Durbar Square to the alleyway Chinese restaurant, the Capitol, where we enjoyed egg foo yung, disappointingly watery Tibetan [buffalo] thukpa – a soupy compote of noodles, cauliflower (and other veggies) and meat, and a fried rice for 5.30. Bed earlyish. Saw little Krishna who mauled us with friends; gave him a rupee and told him to meet us for breakfast. Two others tagged after us and we gave them a rupee; they were very happy.

Pata Durbar Square, name of the deserted temple yard [in Nepali].

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Coconut chunks came wrapped in Russian newspaper. I was fascinated by a scraggly bitch with an enormous tumorous appendage. Tibetan men and women (near Monkey Temple and Bodhinath) all wear turquoise earrings and coral bangles. Pigs sleep in heap – big ones on outside, pink snouts emanate from center. Dirty straw litters alleys, which pigs eat. One early bird pig was already eating the morning paper. The folks know nothing of curing/ageing meat: buffalo flabby and flaccid and blood red. Coconuts are sold, bananas are not.

Himalayas left to right at Nagarkot: Himal Chuli (saddle), Manaslu (middle of 3 peaks visible), Ganesh Himal (3 equal points), Gorshai Himal, Durja Lakhpa, Parbee Choyuyu (sharp point), Unnamed (horn shape), Gouri Shankar [sharp], Mount Everest (small trapezoid wreathed in clouds), Lhotse (very sharp), Unnamed (two flat mesas), Malaku, third mesa, Kichinjunga (right angle sharp point, drawn), long low ones, Numbur (high flat red peak).

21-XII-70, Monday, KATHMANDU) [311], 9-7-06

Up abominably late and missed Krishna for breakfast. The view out the back window gorgeous – long valley of cauliflower surrounded with thin brick wellings 4 stories high. [cloverleaf] fountain below with women and kids washing, large side of the white palace angular to our Matchbox Hotel. Sumerged, mud and grot filled fountain in front of hotel, busy all da not with washing but with kids playing the eternal marble game. And men and women sitting by rice (unshucked) drying on straw mats and bobbing their portable sweing machines. All gay, cheerful, snotty-nosed kids and clear-skinned *acceuillantes* in sarongs with wet hair drying. Absoultely without shame of their lovely low-slung sensuous bodies with arched backs, dimpled bottoms, round weighty breasts. The kids are nearly all chubby and happy and never hide at their mothers' skirts in shame or fear. Kids have their own society here and don't stick to apron strings. Even at 2 or 3 they are quite capable of toddling about independently. This could be because parents are busy working: they are around but not fussing or fondling the kids all day long, or making a mutual fawning dependence.

Ate well and rented bicycles after a few papads and greasy fritters and 'chaija' and took a leisurely cycle to...

<<The Gospel according to P.C.>>

[ie. Patty Cat, who wrote the above]

[I add: "delivered at Nellore 13-I-71 to Evangelist Federicus]

Patpan (Lalitpur)

We pedaled out of town and were met by a crowd of children who met us at the gate of the town demanding "paisa!" and chasing us when we wouldn't fork over. In an oblong square we stopped at the Macchendra Nath Temple with a huge single dhoma across the lintel, at least 20 feet long, somewhat rundown for its 500-odd years, with a pagoda over the backside of the inner courtyard which was taken down for an annual processional. Kids were playing marbles outside, older boys playing in shade of courtyard, maybe 15' square with a cloister on three sides. Marbles requires certain well-worn dirt tracks in which the marbles groove; then you have to hit the one played before [yours]. Simple but evidently engrossing and requiring a sharp eye. Two tiny shrines (one leaning) out in the street by the pig sludge heaps.

Pat bitched about bikes being whipped – we put coats on the back rack, looked at postcards, bought Peep but not prayer wheel, chubby cross-eyed shopkeeper in square looked after our bikes. Very shady narrow streets with super woodworking on window frames. Walked back up from lunch Tibetan in tiny dark shop with women bathing and oiling in the raw with kids out back. Boiled eggs, crisp dall, millet and meat; curds, sweet and lumpy in earthenware bowls. Then we bounced down the lumpy hill on bikes with sun behind, skimming pigs, women washing hair at every fountain. Big temple courtyard full of Siva junk, wild carvings, puppies, people greeting, kids grabby my pussycoat as we escaped in a flurry of chickens. Down to the river, bikes in the mud, walked them uphill. More women bathing. Into large open square like Holland in architecture but not cleanliness. Drove over to the Durbar Square; I couldn't get film. We took a few shots with Pat's camera, walked up and down, had tea with kid waiters, smelled billy goats, chased by man with coral & knives, snake medicine bloke selling in the street, by mounds of pulses and grains. Many temples in a line: Japs filming documentary, elephants and grotesque lions. A quiet moment in deserted temple courtyard (waited 'til horde of Toyota bus tourists left.) Continued late toward Godavari: one Ashokan stupa, grass-covered, old man mending grass slippers. Watched kids' calisthenics to booming drum with backdrop of white mountain. Sweat and toil on bikes – back quickly in purpling dusk. Peanuts, piglets, traffic, easy ride in the shade.

[Ashokan wheel] AN ENORMOUS VILLAGE –MACROCOSMIC LIFE CYCLE
22-XII-70, Tuesday, (KATHMANDU) [315], 9-22-06

Becoming increasingly aware of the completeness of the life cycle as we stroll about the old city. Dirt streets filled with garbage and pigs rooting (variegated black and white). Kids howling or gleeful in mud. Dogs roaming (no

cats whatsoever), calves tied, cows munching any stray greenery, or hied away from produce on the ground with big sticks wielded with mock ferocity, plops made into patties and dried for fuel (as in India), washing cows in the river, hanging clothes on bushes by the temple, burning a human body with little ceremony and no mourners on the only ghat behind the temple, pigs eating chicken feet, newborn piglets at the dugs, babies on the ground for diaper change – everything flowing along nicely with no interruptions or mucking about, ecologically as perfect a cycle as the photosynthetic process but more comprehensive. The symbol of OM takes on a physical reality in such a society – simple and pure – and the spiritual circularity and oneness of existence seems to be very near.

Pat and I had satisfying breakfast in quiet dark of the Capital – no lights, no windows, Chairman Mao and friends beaming from over the cashbox, where a placid sweet-faced little Chinese girl sat doing her sums. Ducks walking about kitchen. I had *momos* – boiled huge raviolis full of mutton with a spoon of chili, & Pat had two superb fried eggs and hand-sliced chips. A few locals were having very frugal meals. Handsome little Balinat (with his jet shock, frank brown eyes, and mischievous alert expression that would look right on many American kids) had seen us in the street and showed up shortly after we did, ostensibly to be invited for breakfast (?). He bolted a tea and bread and left.

We came to see Mike at the camp, sat around for a bit, and went to the Chiya and Pie Shop, run by Bishnu and Son, cook to the English colonel who plies pies of every conceivable flavor (except cherry and mince) and tea – nothing else. [Once?] specialized as a fish and chip shop, and bloody good, too. At the end of the alley where they slaughter buffaloes, where pigs are grunting in the entrails, but not quashing the appetites of the innumerable Westerners trekking down there to partake. It was jammed with Rich Americans from the Oberoi 5-Star, wallowing in bread, and eating about four slices each, before lunch. They left behind an astonishing brochure for Elephant Ring Camping, entertainment for the Exclusive Few – substitute safari excitement for \$150 a day. Shit.

HANUMAN DHOKA

It became evident that Richard was to be substantially delayed, so we ambled up to the striking square and moved about a little, avoiding knife vendors (what can I do with a Gurkha knife? Slice open letters?) and the incessant requests to ‘change money?’ We turned left at the bank, and lo! – another Hindu & Buddhist vista opened before us – a huge bell hung high – a shaded courtyard with large temple and orange statue of Death God. We paid our rupee, it not being a free holiday, and a small guide immediately clung to us. We tried to shake him but he hung on, useless for information, a patient shadow. We tried to ditch him by sheer ignoring or taking long delays over the superb view of pagodas: rounded top [tiny cameo, round disc top [cameo] and regular [cameo] with gorgeous mountains all behind – Ganesh Himal 3 points on far left, the tiny very white point of Langtang peeking over the Mahabharats, the imposing heights of the Jugal peaks on the right. The wooden decoration was really

superb, though the king's quarters were surprisingly severe with beamed roof of board sides (4" wide) painted over white and black. Old palace white stucco (150 years) with scalloped Moghul arches – abuts abruptly with the 15th century red and black old pagoda type building with a beautiful concave corner [several small drawings by me or Pat]. Mike took photos from top, of Vishnu as lion killing bad king in bronze at the door. We joked and fooled about, examined his fine Japanese camera. I think he'll stay around now that Richard's ministering of Streptotriad cured him of the craps.

We left Mike at the Camp and walked down toward the river. The little temple we saw the other night had people busily washing, hanging clothes, with the garbage dump beyond. Man and woman kicking water over buffaloes in the shallow, stony meandering split river. Across the rickety bridge (several gorkhas passed and greeted us) we walked through the Tibetan Refugee stronghold covering half a mile before the Buddhist Stupa (aka Monkey Temple). We looked at the lovely people with their broad, frank, sweet faces, and had a look in the handicraft shop at the bright [pat?: *reh* (?)] jackets, and upstairs at the bold chunky carpets. One of a dragon on green was thick, funny, beautifully made, but was \$50. Regret not making such a purchase. We reached the foot of the steep, wooded hill, with those piercing eyes of the temple looming at us like a benign Sauron. The steps were very steep, and golden baboons began to appear halfway up. There was a steady moderate flow of westerners. The monkeys would slide a little way down the double rail with a kink in it to accommodate small carvings or to deter long slides, then hop off when approaching man. [drawing of eyed steeple with eave bangles and dome with prayer wheels hanging off it].

At the top we found an entire community with the temple, monastery, shops, and chai house and little flats for the inhabitants. Mostly tourists were around, but four young Buddhist girls were busy lighting tiny cup candles with incense and spinning the prayer wheels (a lazy but fun way of getting through a rosary.) The sunlight blazed from one face; Pat strolled off a tangent alley. It was all a bit surreal – monkeys chasing, fighting, looking about in their furious, fidgety, preoccupied way (increasingly like urban humans). Had peaceful cup of tea with Chris, Marian (chick looking for tall dark Emil) and Bob, a red-bearded Australian with a yen for trekking and interest in Buddhism. Passed out arrowroot crackers to them and a little girl. Spoke with Italian tourists negotiating rapidly and expensively with junk monger, overjoyed to get \$20 for a long silver knife and \$8 for a brooch.

Pleased with their latest acquisitions: I was stoically amused. We spoke to Belgians as we descended, 3 of us helped a man carry a huge sack of grain up the last 25 steps. It must have weighed 200 lbs. or about twice his weight! What endurance and energy. One Italian lad who worked for Shell in Geneva wants to come back with friends when he can spend a few weeks. We pushed on back and got lost in town, wandering here and there, bailed out by two biology students keen on going to US. We crossed the dim folding square at 6; Richard had left an accurate map to the Kathmandu Medical Center, a grim set of post-

war flats. Ravi Shankar blared on the fine stereo and Richard was chatting with two pushy high-powered Squibb salesmen, who bent our ears on the wonders of Modern India (with specific directions) while our somewhat preoccupied handsome host – Mr. Sthresthra in beige cloth cap – poured beers gingerly, tendered *rakshee* (spiced *poitin*) and watched over our peas, radishes, mixed nuts, cheese (!). He seemed gentle and yielding whereas the Indians thoughtlessly monopolized the conversation, even competing with each other. We all left simultaneously and our host seemed relieved at our going – personal family trouble? The son Narayan was gracious, relaxed, smiling. We said we'd come again. Late brief dinner at Tibetan Dragon where I was engrossed in *Time*.

WE LIVE IN THE ISTAMBUL SECTION OF KATHMANDU – THE OLD CITY -- TWISTED DARK NARROW ALLEYS, NOT FOR TRANSIENTS.

23-XII-70, Wednesday, (KATHMANDU) [320], 23-December-1970

At the Capitol again: Pat's fried eggs were soft, my fish was thin, but chips were superb. We sit at the same table, and a little Asian lotus reaches for the light switch. Joyce, a tiny wide-eyed actress from Chicago with a wide smile, sold us a few paperbacks: she's been here since July, expecting a check for weeks. We talked about Nepal; she's had lots of time to assimilate, revive pristine associations of body and mind. She invited us to visit Bodnath's Tibetan community. The dairy has no cheese, so we split a milk on the spot. No release of bottles, not even for exorbitant fees. Large Nepali clientele. We weaved our way to the post office: nothing happening. Met Lahore businessman who put himself at our service when we express delight in his home town.

Took keys from Richard (spending much time at Camp) and drive through considerably duller east end, through huge empty brown-grassed park and sports pavilion. We turned north and shortly saw a few pagoda tops at Deopatan. Pat really wanted country, so we wouldn't stay long. It was a long, broad ghat on the Basmati, with a long row of elevated Sivalingas, each covered in a die-straight line. A bearded sadhu scraping the high rock-face chased us off with an English fusillade. Matan, a tiny (4'0") funny kid with several choice expressions to his credit, followed us around "not as guide, as friend." When he mentioned "phallic symbol" I should've called his bluff. An American and his wife, both toting heavy cameras, ran by us with a cursory remark of "great shot here." Over the balcony they were beginning to light a dead body, scantily draped. This bastard snapped furiously "to make up for Benares." Pat and I turned away in disgust at his prurience as much as the commencing stench, and I took a group shot of woman, infant, old woman, 2 kids, Matan, and a fiddler in front of a small temple. The fiddler was annoyed because I wouldn't lay out photo money (I'd given the baby 50 paisa). Pat was roaring to leave at that, so we left, not bringing matan, as I had suggested. When I gave him 50 paisa, I foolishly asked him to share with flocking friends.

Top of page: [drawing of rooftop and prow-like board at base]:

“Dhuma” [‘mosquito’ in Telugu] sitting outside Machhendra Nath Temple (Patan) and smaller ones at other temples (eg, Living Goddess) for drawing processional carriages, placed centrally, actually top pagoda off temple removed and transported. Single board of wood, prow- end painted with Vishnu-like blue god.

We drove right thru Bodnath, dropping two teenage boys by the stupa and pushed on. Soon the ragged hills were brown greass and across the stream was walled-in forest. Strange. We climbed a hill and watched the sun decline. An eagle sat on a higher peak. Cirrus clouds like I’ve never seen flew by in two layers. [cameo] Straight wisps like cotton wool. Descending, we drove a girl and two kiddies, leaving mother and boy, to Bodnath center, then doubled back to Skylark Restaurant which, it turned out, was in a game preserve with tiggers and elefumps. It was too late to see anything and we avoided restaurant. A few peacocks pranced near gate. Men warmed hands by log fire. We tootled back to Bodnath, picking [out/up] mom and son and taking them the last mile to their house, where lovely eldest daughter greeted us again, with joyful gratitude. The mother, though worn a bit, was scarcely 30. We circled the stupa, white stucco, as the sun set and the flat-faced smiling Tibetans were whirling prayer wheels at a furious rate, clockwise circling the temple. We made a round of the shops, many curios, not breaking down til nearly around. I told Pat not to be tempted, but promptly laid out 9 for a recent Tibetan ½-rupee with Dalai Lama.

E sought out a dim chai shop where we haad tea and large filling fried cakes [dark oval] and wandies [crazy eights]. Father tendered counter, mother worked smoky kitchen. Several boys, one older man with braided hair and poriky-pie hat looked for all the world like a Plains Indian. No wonder they claim Redskins migrated from Mongolia! A blond boyish dane (jon) came in, had tea, invited us across the street, where Joyce and two bearded lads were sitting corss-legged on carpets upstairs. I gave Michael all my tobacco, Jon smoked my meerschaum. Pat and I ate fried veg, boiled momo and tea (2.80), Joyce told us about the things she’d done in 6 months. Subdued flamboyance very like Faith Fisher. Invited them both to Xmas dinner after downing several glasses of chung in a local dark ground-floor establishment with fermenting ricepots in one corner, and yeast cakes looking like Turkish whalebone scrubbers, white buttons. Hair-raising night ride, Pat highstrung as I drove; picked up one boy and took him to Durbar Square. A round of carousing at the Camp, determining menu for the 25th, gave them \$10, no change. Chandra Shankar, an alert, sly fellow, goodnatured but practical, not inspiring maximum trust. Mike, feeling very much better after treatment, was kiddish and jovial. Talked to John and Margaret Lord, handsome Australian pair who were going to Pokhra by plane but expected to be back 25th evening. They’d leave messages yes or no by 5pm. o,

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