

18 March - Day Two in Kathmandu

Namaste! (Nepalese for hello, greetings etc.) After finishing my notes last night, I promptly went to bed. Two things noted during the night: it gets cold at night in Kathmandu - a rather pleasant cold - I might add. Also, I had a trio of roosters serenading me from 0230 till 0300 (2:30 to 3:30 AM) at which time I awoke, and arranged my clothes from the duffel bag. I set out what I would wear the next morning also. One hour and 10 minutes later, my guide came up the stairs and knocked on my door. I was half-awake anyway, and was half worried that he might not show - wrong! Kathmandu at 0430 (4:30 AM) is quiet, a la roosters. The jammed streets of yesterday afternoon were strangely quiet, a weird sort of exciting quiet. We drove east and naturally, I figured we were driving west. I mistakenly took a town name that I thought was in the western part of the country for my direction. Beyond the city limits we began gaining altitude, and darkness. I was not without a suppressed feeling of "what if..." I think perhaps it is a natural, healthy fear of a minor sort which tended to keep me alert, and ready for something to happen - it didn't happen. We drove past the town of Bhaktapur, heading almost directly east. My guide showed me the road to Dolalghat and that cleared the location picture immediately. We drove through a small brick village and came to a dead end. There were other "sight-seers" there so no problem. It was chilly, and my guide asked me if I wanted some tea. "Yes" I said, "that would be fine." So we departed to the small village. I must make some comments about the village as it appeared at night. Would you believe Bethlehem? Yes, that was what the old imagination came up with. A rather high Bethlehem, but somehow, Bethlehem. The red brick buildings were barely lit by what few fires or lights were lit. A young boy ran out from one building to the car and announced, "Good morning!" After that a woman covered with a shawl came out and washed several pots and kettles. This was followed by my guide bringing me tea in a thick glass. It was hot, and it was good! It had a unique flavor which was obviously partially from the buffalo/cow (?) milk in it (I would find out later that the type of cows in Nepal seem to produce a very sweet milk). It gave a sweet, milky taste. I could begin to discern the first rays of morning light as my guide and the cabby and their fellow cabby buddy returned to the car. I was feeling much better and ready to "see the sun rise." We drove again to the dead end, and this time a young boy met us. He was to be my guide. He spoke fairly good, but limited English. We then began the ascent of a small

mountain where you could tell the whole drama would soon unfold. There was still a chill in the air, but as I climbed the paths, I got warmer. On the way up I met several people who were being shown the sunrise also. One lady was French and the young boy with her was singing Aluete' (sp?) - that French song - anyway, it was quite a show. Slowly, the curtain began to rise and somewhere an orchestra should have begun a building, magnificent theme for it was breath taking. From all sides the terraces dropped to the valleys below. Each terrace was either dug up, plowed and ready for planting, or they were fertile with green rice shoots.



I stopped and took some pictures, one of which was a group of young children with runny noses - cute and somehow, pitiful. The young man announced the beginning of the premier performance that can only happen once a day. ***And, I beheld the glory of the Lord!***





The ride was beautiful, and I really began to understand something of this small country that is traveled through by use of a Chinese road. A very well built road considering all factors. It was back to the room for a quick pack of the nap sack, a general review of items brought versus items needed, and then, I made my way down to the small quaint tea room for breakfast, from whence these notes began.

It is now 1915 (7:15PM), and it's been a pretty busy day. Everything is fine except for tomorrow morning I must get the airplane ticket (STOL). It will give me 15 days to get to Shangboche (Previously, I wrote this name as Songboche - it is the location of the airstrip overlooking Namche Bazaar, not far from the Japanese hotel being built over-looking the Dudh Kosi River and directly down that same valley from Mt Everest), Money is a tight factor which rather upsets me because I didn't count on quite enough Traveler's Checks. Actually, the real catch is that I'm going to the mountains much more prepared than I had anticipated. It is fortunate that I have a ready source of cash with my American Express Card (It really came in handy, as you will hear later on.)

I have traveled the city extensively and now feel rather confident of the majority of my surroundings. I must explain some of my adventures further, after finishing this delicious repast that awaits me.

(Of note, I am at dinner and doing some calculations on costs - they are listed here as they were in my dairy)

First Payment	1500 NR
Second Payment	900 NR
3 rd Payment	277 NR
Total	2677 NR or about \$255 US dollars

(NR = Nepalese Rupees)

Roughly, \$15.00 a day when plane fair is extracted. This includes the ride by bus to Dologhat (the starting point for the trek to the Everest Region).

Dinner cost 16.75 NR for:

Sweet and Sour Pork

Two fried eggs

Toast and Jelly

Tea

Cost \$1.60 US Dollars.....that's not too bad.

Back to my notes...

The main intent of my walk from 1100 to 1400 (11:00 AM to 2:00 PM) was to orient myself better and try to locate several important areas which I wanted to know for sure.

First, I traveled through a section of the old market. It was here that I eventually bought my wool cap for the mountains. I then located the Post Office and then decided to try and locate "Yeti Travels." I had met a couple in the bank down the street while trying to cash Traveler's Checks.



Entrance to the King's Palace

They said their book on the American Express Card gave one address for Kathmandu - "Yeti Travels." Well, I found it and a beautiful hotel as well. I still needed my passport, and there was no way to get the extra checks at that point. From there, I walked up to the King's palace. Next, I bought two post cards from a shop nearby.

I walked from the shop immediately into the Annapurna Hotel next door. Plush! I bought stamps and used a manager's pen to swing out a few lines - one card to the family, one card to MACTHAI/TLD. (MACTHAI/TLD was the name of the unit I was assigned to at Udorn, Thailand - it stood for Military Assistance Command/Thailand - Training and Logistics Detachment).



The Annapurna Hotel in Kathmandu

I just had a visit from the headman of the Sherpa Society. He has arranged everything. I have every reason to expect a good trek from tomorrow right on up to 1 April. He has thought of everything and will include a skier's type jacket which I obviously didn't have from Thailand. I really was bolstered by his appearance. He gives me confidence just in his well explained, well thought out plans and actions.

Back to this afternoon's walk. I traveled past the large "town green" which is sort of a parade field.



Several Nepalese Army men were practicing motorbike-riding skills for a celebration later this month. I walked through the Nepalese Exhibition that was just terminated after the King's coronation. Apparently, it was all built with Chinese brick, and now it will be used for nothing (?) My guide sort of informed me on that. Also, just beyond the exhibition was the transportation bureau. The Japanese cars were just lined up dusty and dirty, not being used. They had been brought in for the coronation also. A note on the various ministries in the city. They're everywhere! They've got one for everything you can think of, and they seem to be about as effective as (some of the ones we have in the States).

Well, I see it's 2030 (8:30 PM), and time for good trekkers to get their behinds under the covers, for things are going to start popping again tomorrow.