

November 27<sup>th</sup>

We got up at 7 to find clouds obscuring the mountains but sunshine for the valley and warm again. A quick shower of slightly warm water, it has been better this year than in the past with having this luxury.

We were off to the German bakery for a pastry and coffee, non-instant. The apple strudel was very good, warm, sweet and filling. There were small wrens that kept hopping on the tables to snatch crumbs. We fed several until one pooped on the table and then it was obvious why it's discouraged! A French man, a ski instructor sat with us a bit, his 9<sup>th</sup> time to Nepal.

Throughout the day I spent time on-line to find a hostel or cheap hotel close to the Indra Gandhi International Airport in Delhi. I will have 15 hours between flights and do not want to try and occupy myself there for that long. The reason for that time span is that flights are frequently canceled out of Kathmandu and I do not want to miss my flight home so booked an early flight in case I might have to wait on a later one. I also have no real desire to go into Delhi, having been there many times. The hostels are 45 minutes from the airport and the airport hotel is expensive. I have found some hotels 5-10 minutes from the airport but have not booked anything as yet, would like to stay around \$50 in spending on this.

We met Kunga a little before noon to go to the Rastriya Secondary school for lunch with the children. When we arrived the children were in class with the smallest group having class outside. We popped into classrooms to say Namaste and get a few photos and then had tea while the cook (Tibetan) and one of the older student girls got the students meal ready. It was the traditional Daal Bhat and they were piling mounds of rice onto the plates, adding the daal and then the curried potatoes and cauliflower. The children came in groups and got their plates and then ate outside in the sun. After this they have an hour free time and generally play. I had to pick up two of the smallest and hold them; they are beautiful children, all smiles and shyness.

We then gathered in the kitchen for our Dall Bhat and had saag (spinach) added also. It was delicious and filling and topped off with a cup of warm boiled water (made just for us). We brought cookies and candies for the children to be dispensed later, Andrea left a first aid kit and a few other small items. The agreement that I had sent wasn't printed out as they have no printer so I explained that if Kunga agreed he could sign and I would get them printed and to him which I did later. The school was pleased to have the assistance, I agreed to keep in contact with them and as we left were presented with Katas, the traditional Tibetan prayer scarf draped around our necks. This is always an honor and every one of them over the years that has been presented I have kept to pass on at some point.

When we got back to the hotel, I had previously texted Ajaya to stop by which he did to pick up the remaining school funds for Bandipur. He will get them to Sahadev's sister who lives in Pokhara and she will take this to him when she returns there to visit her parents. We also gave Ajaya some money for all that he did in getting a good rate at the hotel and with airfare. He said that it wasn't necessary; we know that but again without all our Nepalese friends we would be limited in our ability to provide the service to the schools. Nothing happens without community support and when you get it it has a value and should be recognized and compensated (NCC/CCPH/CBPR principle).

The rest of the afternoon was spent in beginning the process of sorting and packing for our next move tomorrow to Kathmandu. We have a reservation back at the Kathmandu Guest Peace House and it will be good to see our friends there once more. The book "Escape from Kathmandu" is a fun read and is really enjoyable as it details some of the more funny and ridiculous, aspects of being a traveler in Kathmandu and Nepal in general. Mixing in the Yeti myth (maybe) makes it all the more magical.

We went to dinner at 7 and went to the Tik-Tak where the movies are held, there were two short documentaries scheduled. I ordered the Grandmothers Experiment, a combination of beans, onion, garlic, green peppers, tomatoes and other spices, cooked in a covered clay pot in a wood fired oven and served with fresh chapattis and topped off with a San Miguel beer.....absolutely the best meal in Pokhara so far.

The first documentary was called "Fly Over Mt. Everest" and told the story of two Nepalese, one a Ghorka (from the ethnic group famed for its fierce fighting skills), the other a Sherpa (the ethnic group of famed climbers/guides). One had learned to Paraglide expertly, the other of course a mountain guide. The met and eventually formed a deep friendship and dream, to summit Mt. Everest, paraglide from there and then make their way to the sea (which neither had ever seen) through India, a Summit to Sea journey. The film was introduced by its director (live and in person) and is a National Geographic Special, the epic journey done this year. The filming included interviews of adventurers, the Frenchman who has spent ten years in Nepal teaching paragliding to the Nepalese and others that knew the two. The film footage was excellent and the most dramatic was from the handheld cameras both had after they flew off the summit. Not only did they summit Mt. Everest they then soared above it, higher than any paraglider had ever flown. Surprisingly I never saw this in the news in the US, what I consider to be an extraordinary feat but it is easy for these stories to be buried with the craziness of other world events.

The second film, Woman of Tibet was simply incredible. It centered on the life of the Dali Lama's mother but was about the nature of mothers, of the mothering inherent in each of us that provides compassion, love, care, sets values and teaches. The author Alice Walker was one of many interviewed along with

extensive footage of the Dali Lama, his brother, sister and grandchildren speaking about the deeply compassionate woman who became known as the Mother of Tibet, whom the Dali Lama described as a simple peasant woman of deep compassion.

The Dali Lama and others spoke of how this Mother Nature inherent in us all, all having been born/reborn as mothers at some time, if realized by everyone would transform the world to a more peaceful one. Having respect for one's mother, for the earth, for others is the basis of a sane world and we have obviously been distracted from realizing the potential each of us possesses.

It was the best night in Pokhara, having spiritual substance, being mindful and reflective. I haven't spoken much about the spiritual aspect of the journey but it is inherent in most everything done here because the two religions of Hinduism and Buddhism are so intertwined and prevalent. I did not visit the Tibetan monasteries or settlements this year but have found other ways of connecting such as my new found friendship with Kunga and his wife Yanchen. Trekking the mountains of Nepal is in itself a spiritual walk, as is being invited into rural homes, served meals and drink, being honored with flowers by the children, having katas draped around us, and on and on. How fortunate my life has been and how much must be returned in the circular flow of it all.

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is  
no path and leave a trail.                      **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Peace

chuck