

Sunday November 23<sup>rd</sup>

We were up this morning at 6:30, packing and getting things ready to load up for the trip to Pokhara. Kashi came around 8 pm and had arranged a jeep to take us to Damauli, the only way we could get there with the luggage. Sahadev and Suroj showed just before we were settling the hotel bill. We said our goodbyes until next year, always assuming that our work together will continue.

Kashi was accompanying us to Pokhara but we first were going to stop in Damauli to meet with Hari Gurung, the president of the Rotary Club. We had to complete the Volunteer Service Grant form, still not knowing the extent of the reimbursement if any. I did get an email from Rotary International stating they had sent me emails regarding the grant but I responded that they were not received. We have also agreed to fund one-half (\$450) of a 12 month health provider training program for a volunteer from Chhabdi Bazar, one of the rural villages we visited. This would allow the village to have health care services at some level and provide a career for the volunteer.

We were next off to the bus area to hop a local bus to Pokhara. We loaded our backpacks on top and climbed up also. Kara was excited to ride the two hours on top and is something I had wanted to do also. We sat on metal bars that were hard and thin so it was very uncomfortable but quite the experience. When the bus would swerve it felt as if we would tip over. At the start it was cold as the fog had not lifted from the night's chilly air. About half way the sun began to warm us. Being a local bus we made probably 25 stops along the way as people would wave us down. It was great fun to see the countryside from this vantage point.

We got into Pokhara about noon, got a small taxi and crammed our stuff into it. Kashi had arranged a hotel room for us at the Stupa hotel. When we arrived I was worried because it seemed pretty fancy by Nepal standards and at this point everything is out of pocket. He had negotiated a rate of US \$20 and it had at least warm water. The extent to which my friends here continue to help me is simply amazing.

We were to meet Kashi in several hours before he returned to Bandipur. Kara and I had a shower and clean clothes before heading out to eat. I also booked a flight to Kathmandu to arrive several hours prior to the flight to Kolkata and thus allow us an additional day here. These few days are time that Kara and I will have together just for fun since the service work is done.

Pokhara, specifically the Lakeside area is like the Haight in San Francisco of the sixties, the Georgetown of the early 70's in DC, a small hippie haven at the base of the Annapurna range. The folks that come here, especially the younger ones are the adventurers of their generation. They come dreadlocked, wild-eyed, and dressed in the hippie style of the 60's or a mix of that and Nepali. They have a spirit and energy for life that my closest friends still possess, not having allowed the politicians, culture of consumerism and false religious propaganda take their hearts away. This spirit and energy is essential to my life and well-being and I seek it out in those around me and the experiences that life presents us. . Sadly, so many of my generation have "grown up". It appears that possibly Barack has motivated the country once again to see the possibilities and see beyond one's self.

We had dinner at the Laughing Buddha restaurant before heading off to bed. Hope everyone is well.