

Dispel Darkness, Invite Insight

Description

It sure does seem to take more time to settle into a new place than I think it should. We have been here 2 1/2 weeks now and are still adjusting. This week we received some training from our leaders in Hong Kong as well as the Wolfgramms. We continue to try to figure out how it will all work here in Nepal. Once we realized that our fiscal year starts in January and the main NGO that we work with (Choice) has a July to July year some confusing pieces fell into place. We were able to meet with Choice Humanitarian this week and had a nice orientation and lunch. We are excited to follow up on and visit some of the collaborative projects that are in the implementation stage over the next few weeks.

Another interesting event was meeting Bishnu Adhikari who some of you may remember from the *Meet the Mormons* movie in the Nepal segment. He is very knowledgeable about life, humanitarian work, politics, history and the church here in Nepal and it was enlightening to talk with him over a pizza lunch. It will help as we go forward.



Lui (Elder Wolfgramm) showed us a nice park, Bhandarkhal Jungle, that has good walking paths, vegetation, space to play badminton and monkeys! It's great to have our exercise routine settling in. Exercise keeps me sane. I think monkey pictures in Nepal may take over for cow pictures in India.



There are a lot of things about Nepal that are similar to India and so feel familiar. The roads are narrow with homes and businesses close to the edge. There are all kinds of little shops one right next to the other and often stuck between dwellings. They drive a little crazy here but not like India and they don't honk constantly. A more constant noise here are roosters! They eat a lot of Indian food in Nepal although it is often a little different. Momo's are a favorite food. They are much like potstickers and very tasty. We still need to thoroughly wash our produce but I am able to find some things that were unavailable in Vizag, like green chiles. Maybe they are just in season right now. I am roasting and freezing some because buying them in a can is impossible. It is mango season and they are delicious. We had a mango lassi (basically a yogurt smoothie) last evening. Yum!

Women here wear kurtas and saris like in India but there are a lot more women that wear more western style clothes. Men, usually older, wear Dhaka topi hats and there are quite a few dressed in traditional Indian and Buddhist clothing. As with the women there are plenty dressed in western styles.

Nepal is cleaner than India. Part of it is that Kathmandu has a new mayor that has done a lot to clean things up. There is still trash at the side of the roads though. Since there aren't many cows wandering around, the streets are automatically cleaner! As in India the waterways smell bad.

One crazy sight found all over are rat's nests of wires. We thought it was out of control in India but it is unbelievable here. These are not generally power lines, just cable. Apparently no one ever removes a cable line when it is no longer in use.



We are enjoying the cooler weather although it is still plenty warm, daytime temperatures are mid to upper 80's. It does cool off at night which is helpful. The air quality is questionable at times but not like in New Delhi. There is a temple complex nearby where they do cremations and ceremonially dump the ashes into the river which doesn't help, especially if they use the traditional method with an outdoor pyre and lots of wood.



Smoke from cremation at Pashupati

We were able to go to Swayambhunath Temple, nicknamed the "Monkey Temple" for the abundance of monkeys found there. It is a Buddhist temple and Unesco Heritage site. It is a chaotic blend of Buddhist and Hindu iconography. It has one main temple and other smaller ones, hundreds of prayer wheels throughout the area and many statues.



Manoj, our driver, and Rick at Swayambhunath or Monkey Temple



Floral decoration on the base around the statues



Monkey with his snacks

The main temple, or stupa, is surrounded by prayer wheels that devotees spin as they walk clockwise around the structure. There are also prayer flags fastened to the spire.



Swayambhunath Stupa



This is all located on a hill in Kathmandu which is believed to have risen spontaneously out of the lake that is now the Kathmandu Valley. The name, swayambhu, means self-arisen.

Offering butter candles to God is considered to be the most powerful offering. It means one has chosen to drive away the darkness within and attain clear wisdom.



Butter Candles at
Swayambhunath Temple
Grounds



More Butter Candles



Taunya and Rick in front of a Buddha figure



Monkeys drinking at the "Monkey Temple"

Our townhouse apartment building is very nice. I am especially thankful for filtered water that is clean enough to cook with and I don't have to use bottles of filtered water to wash my hair. Because the water in India and Nepal is impure and has a lot of metals in it, it can cause hair loss or make your hair very brittle. We have joined the ranks of rooftop clothes drying. I feel like a native now. (We had a dryer in India.)



Entrance to our home



Our apartment is on the level with the juniper bushes on it.



Rooftop Garden

A few photos from walking around town...



Tractor Pull Cart—interesting!



Taunya with her new friends



He smiled just after I clicked the photo



We see many huge loads on trikes. This was boxes of chips so probably wasn't too heavy.

It is hilly in Kathmandu though.



Infinity design. This one was on a gate.

There are many beliefs in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions that are fascinating. Our landlord (he's Hindu) was talking with us and sharing his thoughts that we all want to get to the same place in the end and that all pure religions have the common ground of loving others, loving God and living moral lives. I thought that was rather profound and if I can drive darkness away (as with butter candles) by loving God, loving my fellow man, keeping the commandments and striving to do good, hopefully I can settle in and have the inspiration needed to successfully serve the people of Nepal.

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Author

taunyaneff