

Utopian Dreams

Description

As previously mentioned, we have been working in a “hurry up and wait” fashion. We decided we could squeeze some activities in during the down time and Tuesday we went on a hike in the Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park. It is in the hills that border the Kathmandu Valley on the North. It was a pleasant hike until the stairs leading up to our destination of Bishnudwar, the place of worship at the spring. Coming down was even more challenging. We were glad for the trekking poles we recently purchased.

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I have often heard people say that they feel closest to God while in nature and both the Hindu and Buddhist people of Nepal have created so many temples and sacred spots for worship in the mountains of Nepal and they are all designed to take people to a temple.





We stopped at KFC for lunch, adding that to our list of Nepal experiences!

Thursday we made a spur-of-the-moment decision to go to Chandragiri. We had hoped that the wind would clear the skies enough for good views of the Himalayas from the top of the cable car and it did. It wasn't a perfect day but it turned out to be good enough. This is an activity that would have been better to do in the Fall, but we were way too busy then. At this time of year in Kathmandu there is not much rain and the pollution gathers in the bowl-like Kathmandu Valley.



Hahaha!

Anyway, we had pretty clear views and could even see Mt. Everest—barely and very far away. It is sad that when taking a picture the mountains look so much farther away than with the naked eye. That said, it was really cool how the mountains looked like they were floating in the air. The haze and clouds below the peaks made it seem that way.



This made me think of Shangri-La which is a utopian community hidden in the Himalayan mountains of Tibet. The book *Lost Horizon* is a story about people whose plane crashes and they are taken to Shangri-La so they can survive. A famous quote from the book is, "In the end, it's not the years in your

life that count, but the life in your years". This statement offers a profound perspective on the value we place on our time on earth. I hope that our time here in Nepal (and India, and Salt Lake City) will have and in the lives of the people we have met and served. I know it has



A thought from the song, *Reflection*, in the musical remake of the movie Lost Horizon is:

"Doing something for someone else

Isn't really for someone else

It does twice as much for you as something you do

Just for yourself"

My experience has been that not much of what I give is actually a sacrifice. God is so good to me. He blesses me constantly. I am forever in His debt. Serving a mission is often seen as a sacrifice, but I don't feel like it is. It is true that I am giving my time and using my financial resources differently than I would be if I were at home, but it doesn't feel like a sacrifice. Yes I miss my family and friends, but I can stay in touch and I have made new friends and met people that I consider "family". There are things here that are hard and frustrating and so very foreign, but I am enjoying my time here and know that when I get home and am able to enjoy the conveniences and comfortable aspects of life in Rexburg I will miss the uniqueness of Nepal, Manoj's smile, the people that we meet on the street, the spirit of the Kathmandu branch, and giving very meaningful service.

Shangri-La has become synonymous with any earthly paradise, particularly a mythical Himalayan Utopia – an enduringly happy land, isolated from the world. We can't live our lives isolated from the world. We need to be willing to give of ourselves, our time and our talents to build Zion which is the only Utopia there will ever be.



In honor of Valentine's Day!

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