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 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

student **EXPEDITIONS**



NEPAL

**The Encyclopedia of
Buddhism**

**The Five Negative
Emotions**

 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
student **EXPEDITIONS**



Nepal Community Service

Rebuilding and Earthquake Recovery

Marina Alcantara	Kaitlyn Luu
Kevin Banasik, Jr.	Bea Pretnar
Eliza Durkee	Dylan Rodgers
Aicha Enouiti	Abbey Savin
Erica Hulsey	Abby Siddiqi
Isabelle Jackson	Jacque Smith
Alexandra Kleber	Jeffrey Walbridge, Jr.
Audrey Kleber	Yico Wu
Kalyssa Leicht-Highcock	Jingxiu Zhao

Co-Leaders

*Alex Basaraba
Kiki Baxter*

Cover photo by Kevin B.

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A Letter from your Leaders

Dear families,

This July, your students participated in an incredible adventure in a country that is very special to our hearts: Nepal. We hope they will look back on their experience as a transformative time in their lives as students, adventurers, and global ambassadors. Over the course of two weeks, in addition to completing more than thirty five hours of physically demanding community service activities, they also learned about the culture, history, and customs of one of the world's most beautiful and remote countries. They built relationships with our incredible local team, hiked through the foothills of the Himalayas, and ate a wide array of delicious Nepali cuisine. They taught English to student monks at one of the most important and sacred Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the world, completed service projects at a rural and remote school that was destroyed in the 2015 earthquakes, and pursued independent projects related to human trafficking, Buddhist philosophy, and meditation.

Over the course of the last two weeks, we explored complex and challenging topics related to colonialism, global development, human trafficking, and community service. We explored not only our own perceptions about community service and the way we want to support projects and organizations we are passionate about in the world, but we explored the history, culture, and issues that influence the impact of travelers in Nepal. While it may seem counter-intuitive, our hope is that this

discussion left your students feeling uncomfortable. It is through discomfort that we experience the greatest possible growth.

We reminded our students that their decision to spend a part of their summer volunteering in a developing nation, rather than skiing in New Zealand or eating pizza in Italy, indicates a promising desire to effect change to make the world a better place. We are impressed and proud of the students who embarked on this adventure with us and we encourage everyone who took part in this trip to view their time in Nepal as one step on the path to becoming more engaged and thoughtful global citizens. There are no easy answers to the complex issues we face globally today: environmental destruction, political instability, development, immigration, the refugee crisis, Climate Change, equality, and injustice. It is our role as leaders to challenge our intelligent and capable students to reflect on their own privilege, perceptions about people and places, and impact on the countries they visit. It is our hope that these conversations instilled in them a desire to continue exploring why and how they can make a difference in the world. As Margaret Meade famously said, "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." It only takes one person, and we are sure that this group of students are capable of just that, changing the world.

Thank you,
Alex Basaraba and Kiki Baxter



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A photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a black top, playing a wooden flute. She is smiling and looking to the left. The background is a light blue wall with a window and a brown door frame.

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Photo by Kevin B.

The Basuri

by Dylan R.

Communication can be difficult in another country, especially when neither of you speak the other's language. Bizarre hand motions do little to break awkward silences and wipe away confused stares. A traveler can feel helpless and eventually forced to just smile and walk away. Even for our group on the first day meeting our guide, Kalyan, there were some barriers to break down: with him, amongst our group members, and within ourselves, as we prepared for the Nepali experience to come. At that time, a passion of mine took on a whole new role and opened my eyes to its potential. Music.

I've played in band and orchestra for years, and sure it's fun to listen to, but on this trip I discovered how great of an effect music can have all around the world. On that first day I was introduced to the 'Basuri', or traditional Nepali bamboo flute, by Kalyan and was instantly intrigued. We all were! It brought us together and made us smile and loosen up. Over the next week I would be working hard to expand my knowledge and skills with this instrument.

The Basuri originated in China and Japan centuries ago, but moved into Nepal around the 1940s where it was at first only for royalty and the army. After many years, however, the Basuri took on a folk role for lonely farmers especially when played with drums and guitar. Even Kalyan had started playing at a young age when he was watching livestock on a rainy day on the top of a rock in somewhere Nepal. He would play for hours until the rain stopped just figuring out notes and tunes.

After learning the basics on Kalyan's flute, I moved on to my next ambition: making my own. For this I enlisted the help of Karma Sherpa. To make one is a relatively easy process and I hope that by the time you finish reading this you will be inspired to make and learn to play your own to spread the love and happiness wherever your travels might take you. To aid you in this, I will pass on my knowledge of flute making in a series of easy steps.



To make one is a relatively easy process and I hope that by the time you finish reading this you will be inspired to make and learn to play your own to spread the love and happiness wherever your travels might take you. To aid you in this, I will pass on my knowledge of flute making in a series of easy steps.

Step 1: Find bamboo. For some, this may be difficult, but with some perseverance anyone can locate the perfect piece. A dry and strong section about 42 cm long and 3 cm in total diameter is ideal. Cut above the joint on both sides to leave one end closed and one end open. Use a knife to scrape off the thin bark along the bamboo to make it smooth.

Step 2: Making the holes. Measure about 4 cm from the closed top and make a mark. This will be where your mouth will go. Then go 15.5 cm down from that mark and make another mark. This will be the first finger hole. From that mark, make marks 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15 centimeters from the first finger hole. Using a 8 or so millimeter diameter piece of hard metal (such as a hex wrench) burn holes on the middle of each mark after heating red hot on a gas stove or similar. Make the top hole a little larger and more ovular to improve tone.

Step 3: Playing! Learning to play takes time and patience. Experiment with different lip positions and flute angles with lots of continuous and controlled air. After sound can be produced, it's really just a lot of practicing and playing around with fingerings and tonguing rhythms to create your own songs or try to match other people's. After a while playing is natural and very fun to do anytime and anywhere.





Shaving off thin bark to make a smooth finish on the bamboo.



Kalyan Gurung, the original flutist and our amazing guide. He contributed much of the information on the Basuri, taught me how to play and the songs that I learned.



Burning holes for my flute in the kitchen.



Karma Sherpa taught me how to design and create my own flute.



Sonom Sherpa and I at a waterfall.

Healing Bowls

by Alexandra K.

Healing bowls, or singing bowls, are common all around Nepal. Often called "standing bells," these bowls look like inverted bells and are used for a variety of things. They are most prominent in the Buddhist religion. Singing bowls can accompany Buddhist monks in meditation and chanting. They can also be used for simple relaxation or music making. Each bowl produces a unique sound when struck with a mallet or played with a rotating mallet along the outer rim. These bowls are also used as a form of alternative healing. They are traditionally made using "the seven

metals." Each metal is usually associated with a heavenly body. The most common metals used are gold, silver, copper, tin, mercury, lead, and iron.

Along with the seven metals, the bowls are associated with the seven chakras of the body. The word chakra means "wheel" in Sanskrit, meaning that the life force inside of us is spinning and creates seven different energy points throughout our bodies. The bowls can be used to keep the chakras in line, leading to the ability to achieve creativity, health, and happiness. The seven chakras are:



Muladhar Chakra (Root Chakra): This chakra is located at the base of the spine. The word Mula means "root" and the word Dhara means "support" because the base of the spine supports the rest of the body. This chakra represents our foundation and the feeling of being grounded. Its color is red because red is the 'densest' color just as this is the 'densest' chakra.

Svadhishran Chakra (Sacral Chakra): This chakra is located approximate two inches below the navel. The word svadhishran means "the place of the self." This chakra represents our ability to accept new people and new experiences. Its color is orange.

Manipur Chakra (Solar Plexus): This chakra is in the middle of the abdomen behind the navel. The literal translation of Chakra Manipur is "city of pearl." This chakra represents our ability to be in control of our lives and feel confident. Its color is yellow.

Anahata Chakra (Heart Chakra): This chakra is located in the center of the chest, right above the heart. The word anahata translates to "unhurt" because this is where we find our love and compassion. Its color is green.

Vishuddi Chakra (Throat Chakra): This chakra is located in the throat. The word vishuddi means "very pure." This chakra is the center for science, knowledge, and intelligence. Its color is blue.

Agya Chakra (Third Eye Chakra): This chakra is located in the middle of the eyes, hence the name "the third eye chakra." The translation of the word agya is "command" since this chakra is the center of our intuition. Its color is indigo.

Sahasar Chakra (Crown Chakra): This chakra is located at the crown of the head. The energy that is passed upwards from the muladhar chakra to the sahasar chakra "connects us with the universal energy." This chakra is the center for understanding, wisdom, and comprehension. Its color is a purplish white, similar to lilac.

In the Buddhist religion, the chakras are the basis of what creates someone's personality. The healing bowls have an important job and only few become master healers. The religious importance of the bowls is incredible as well as what the bowls can do. They are an amazing part of the Nepalese culture.



Where is True Happiness Found?

Story by Erica H., Photo by Kevin B.

On the first day that my National Geographic service group arrived in Talamarang, Nepal, we hiked up the long, somewhat daunting hill to the volunteer house located next to the Little Angels Orphanage. Nearly halfway through our trek, my legs were tired and my breath was heavy but my physical struggles were quickly distracted by the villagers kindness and welcoming nature. I watched in awe as the village locals maneuvered effortlessly through the fallen rocks from the landslides while tirelessly carrying baskets nearly twice their size. Even so, with sweat dripping down their bodies and their breath heavy, a warm smile could still be clearly seen stretched across their faces as I passed by. Amazed by these people's physical strength and

radiant energy, I noticed they were much more than just welcoming, friendly people, but moreover their minds seemed pure.

Despite their bodies being bound by early mornings and tiring work every day, their minds roamed free from burdens, and always held a very conscious level of focus on the task at hand. I soon began to contemplate the concept of freeing the mind from earthly burdens by desiring only the things that really matter in life.

In the wise words of Kalyan Turunt, head guide of The Small World, "poverty makes them happy." Kalyan explained that in his humble opinion the people of Talamarang, despite their lack of financial stability and common western luxuries, have achieved a greater sense of happiness

than those who are rich in material things because their minds are free of both greed and artificial desires. The hearts and minds of the people of Talamarang are not only freed by the absence of materialistic desires, but also humbled.

Furthermore, humility brings peace to the mind allowing one to focus on the intangible treasures of life, such as the relationships ones holds and the love they spread to others. Words cannot describe how thankful I am to have personally experienced and learned about the culture of Talamarang, Nepal. The relationships formed and the lessons I learned made an indescribable impact on my perspective of the world and myself and will forever hold a very special place in my heart.





Cultural Comparison *Story by Eliza D., Photo by Kevin B.*

I come from a town where hug and a kiss as a greeting is considered the norm. Here, that is not the case. When I first arrived in Nepal I was greeted by people who put their hands together like they were praying and said "Namaste". I was slightly confused at first but soon realized that this is their custom and I have to get used to it.

The textbook definition of "Namaste" is, a respectful greeting said when giving a namaskar. The origin of the word "namaste" breaks up into two parts, "namas" meaning bowing and "te" meaning to you, which creates the action that someone does when they use this greeting.

The first few days were filled with awkward encounters with people forgetting what to do and ending up doing half-handshakes and hugs. This was new to all of us.

While being around these people I started to pick up a lot more about their culture.

One thing that really stood out to me was the difference between men and women. In my home country, kissing, hugging, or hand holding is common. Here, it is offensive to the Nepalese. I see men holding hands with other men, but I never see men holding hands with other women. This is not an indication of homosexuality for me because where I'm from, I see people of the opposite sex holding hands.

On the second part of our trip, I was fortunate enough to stay in a village. The kids had held a welcome party for us.



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ex showing public affection.

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ext to the children's home.
ne ceremony for us where

we could introduce ourselves and they could do the
same to us. Some of the little boys at the home shook
all our hands when being introduced, confused by this
I wanted to know more. While on a walk one morning
I had the chance to ask to our leader Colin about this.

I had learned that you may accept handshake offered
by both sex, male or female, but if you are a man
you should never offer your hand first to a woman.
Its considered rude for a man to touch a women
even by shaking a hand, especially if she is married.

After being in Nepal for two weeks and picking
up all of the nepalese customs it will be
interesting to go back home and compare the two.

Self-Sufficient from the Start

Story by Marina A., Photo by Kevin B.



As I sat under the melon tree near of the volunteer house, I watched who worked there move around the They tended to the animals and some of the crops that grew near the ones that would soon become This brought me to consider, how for yourself bring benefits in the How does this lifestyle differ from

At the heart of the Little Angels Children stands the man who makes it all possible. B. Shani has worked with The foundation for the past ten years. raised in Talamarang, his personal to the place inspired him to children's home and operate the Secondary School at the village. 13, he left Talamarang to experience in Kathmandu. Neel's exposure paced urban development that country is currently undergoing reevaluate how his children, at the home, should be brought has dedicated the last 15 years helping the people of his village. 6 hours away in the capital, he had chance to observe two contrasting

Although living in Kathmandu has shaped Neel and his ambitions, agree with many of the changes come to the individual from living city. In his words, "[people in have] clean clothes and nice jobs empty inside." In his eyes, people have the desire for more will never the happiness that comes from

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As is believed in the Buddhist faith, one should not seek happiness from outside, but rather create it themselves. The materialistic greed that pollutes the city in which he lives has opened his eyes to the difference between necessary and excessive, especially in a village where things aren't always easy to come by.

As people, we tend to always try to find the easiest way out of things. Asking favors, taking short cuts and even buying food from a store are things that Neel considers to be, on occasion, lazy. The conditions of the road that leads to Talamarang (driving down to buy resources isn't always an option) and Neel's passion for raising his kids to be independent, always knowing how to fend for themselves are two factors that have ultimately lead him to run both the home and the volunteer house in self-sufficient ways.

The Small World team, which Neel is a part of, helped build a pipeline to allow for easier access to water near the city, which already simplifies the lives of many who live there. Not only that, but he grows crops such as corn, rice, millet, wheat, buckwheat, and barley and raise livestock such as goats, water buffalos, and chickens for consumption and selling/trading. By doing so, they produce over 55% of their own food. Neel is a firm believer in the idea that less is more. By providing the kids with only the basics, it teaches them to appreciate what they have rather than always wanting more. A bed, a roof, food, and quality education are what are considered to be standard basic needs. Their resourcefulness also allows them to save money to better the kids' lives in other aspects.

Happiness should not be the desire for things. Happiness in its truest form comes when you learn to appreciate what you have as all you need. Working with crops and livestock has allowed the children to explore this idea further.

Long term, being capable of self sufficiency is extremely beneficial to the children. In Kathmandu, like in many other cities, life revolves around money. If you have money, then you must probably be happy. No one thinks ahead, it's about what you want now and how to get it. If you always want more than you have, how is it possible to be happy where you are? It is incredible how much character can be built when kids learn independence.

As someone who has lived in cities my whole life, I have never experienced having to provide for myself. Everything that I needed was always stacked neatly in a store. For this reason, it has always been harder to be happy in the moment. At the children's home, they are taught selflessness and community and they learn to know where things come from and how to appreciate them. As Neel wisely put it, "If they don't go to the river to get fish with their hands, they don't know where the fish comes from. So I like to give them the net, go fish yourself." Self sufficiency is a precious part of the children's lives. Not only does it keep the establishment going, but it also fosters positive qualities such as happiness in simplicity that are otherwise difficult to achieve. It teaches to appreciate what is available and know their roots, ingraining a sense of independence in their lives.

Prayer Flags

Story and photo by Audrey K.

Prayer flags are symbolic banners in which Tibetan mantras are printed. They are commonly used in the Buddhist religion. Prayer flags can be found in only five colors, red, yellow, green, white, and blue. The five colors represent the five elements in which Buddhist people believe they diverge into after death. These five elements are earth, fire, water, wind, and void.

Prayer flags are hung up in the mountains and nearby monasteries. They can be wrapped around trees, stretched across streets, or hung around your house. They are placed on full moons and half moons. These days are special days for Buddhists. Before the flags are able to be hung, they must be taken to a monk. The monks have the ability to give life to the flags. There is an offering ceremony that must take place in order for the monks to be able to bless the flags.

The purpose of prayer flags is to purify the mind, body, and soul. The flapping of the flags is a source of happiness for the Buddhists. They are hung in honor of loved ones who have passed away, as well as being placed to purify the

bodies of ancestors. Prayer flags are also used as a sort of security blanket and protection from bad karma and a bad life. Non religious people sometimes hang prayer flags for their own personal purposes. Some common reasons include good luck, prosperity, good health, and a purified mind, body, and soul.

Kalyan Gurung, 33, is a Buddhist from Solukhumbu, a small village in Nepal. He is a head guide from The Small World organization. Gurung was interviewed about how important prayer flags are in his religion and what they mean to him. "The meaning is the same [for me], you just offer the prayer flags. . . to reduce the dangers and bad things in your life" (Gurung).

Prayer flags are a common sight in Nepal, especially in large cities such as Kathmandu. Hundreds of flags are hung nearby and above temples and other religious places of the Buddhists. Seeing the commonality of these flags arouses interest as well as questions. After interviewing a Buddhist, I was able to learn more about the prayer flags and why they are so important and meaningful.





Society Shapes Strength

Story by Isabelle J., Photo by Kevin B.

As I travel, something I tend to pay attention to about the places that I visit is the way that women live. Specifically the ways in which their lives are different than mine. Living in America, I am privileged enough to have hardly any restrictions on the way that I dress, the relationships I can have, or my accepted role in society.

When I first got to experience first hand the way that women in Nepal live and how different it is from the way that I live, I felt as though they were restricted and were missing out on parts of life that I take for granted.

Modesty is a very important factor in the lives of women in Nepal. An acceptable outfit for a Nepali woman to wear should cover their shoulders, knees, and chest, and be generously loose. When I think about how much I sweat in my tank top and jean shorts that I wore just last week, compared it to the way these women must feel wearing much more clothing than

me it's difficult to try and picture myself having a similar lifestyle. Another aspect of Nepali culture that is drastically different than my own is the concept of arranged marriage. Although it is becoming more and more acceptable to have a love marriage, most adults living in Nepal were married through this practice.

A woman I met in Talarang told me how her marriage was arranged, and that she never got to meet her husband until they were married. Her marriage was successful and she now has a big family but I'm sure this isn't the case for every woman. The process

leaves no space for love to form before the marriage, so it can only develop afterwards, if that. This idea also changes the lives of teenage girls. The idea of boyfriends and dating that is so common for American teenagers is hardly accepted in a Nepali society. Girls who have had relationships



Unexpected Happiness

Story and photo by Abby S.



With my face turned up slightly to the rainy sky, I stretch my bare feet one over the other, and I struggle to conquer the turmoil within my mind. I picture a vast billowing grassland. In the center, an ancient oak seems to sigh with relief as its bulky arms wave in the gentle breeze. If I'm being honest with myself, I don't feel fully present in my dreamland. Everything I'm feeling and thinking is insubstantial when compared to the physical reality of my own existence. I begin to wonder why meditation is so difficult for me when, in essence, all I have to do is breathe and be in this one moment.

From the children of Talarang to the monks of Namu Buddha, many Buddhists in Nepal practice some form of meditation. Some commonalities include breathing exercises and reflecting on one's emotions. Although this may appear quite simple at first glance, meditation is less of a true feat of physical discipline and more of a state of mind. When contrasted with fast-paced Western ideology, which places much more emphasis on a day's work, meditation is viewed by some as mere self-indulgence.

Before experiencing meditation for myself, I shared many of these preconceived notions with my countrymen. I took the practice at face value without delving into the process and results. Thus, sitting on a mat on the hard floor at five o'clock in the morning did not seem conducive to learning anything about myself or why I'm here. As one of the girls at the Little

Angels Children's Home, Jamuna, began the universal mantra "Ooooooooooom," I had no idea what to expect.

I went into Buddhist culture with some vague notion of placebo when it comes to "massaging the mind," as my group members put it. Little did I know that Buddhist belief is not solely a religion but an entire way of life. Buddhists believe that one's life should be spent cultivating good karma that will enable one to achieve Nirvana, or the end of all suffering and the escape from the perpetually turning wheel of life and death.

How does meditation help achieve this? Meditation aims to improve sati (mindfulness), samadhi (concentration), abhijñā (supernatural knowledge), samatha (tranquility), and vipassanā (insight), while also dispelling the negative emotions that taint people's minds: ego, ignorance, anger, desire, and envy.

I had an opportunity to discuss with one of the monks at Namu Buddha, David Karma Sherpa, and he explained that real happiness comes from oneself and not others. In other words, one can not depend on other people to supply a consistent source of devotion and joy. People change. Unpredictable events occur. However, one will always have to live with oneself, and unity with oneself through meditation is just the first step toward inner peace, acknowledging the bad but bringing forth the good.

In Tibetan Buddhism alone, as I experienced at Namu



Buddha, there are thousands of visualization techniques. As our leader told us to focus on the image of an elephant and only that image, my thoughts struggled away from me. Some moments were genuinely insightful, while others were difficult to grasp at first. Meditation, I realized, has to begin with the individual and develop over time. While I've traveled around Nepal with my group, we've participated in group discussions that we would have never even thought of had it not been for the group meditation that came before them. Feeling each other's energy and focus reminded us that we are all here for the same purpose: to learn together, to be enlightened, to form lasting bonds, and to take these values home to our communities.

As I've pondered the implications of meditation techniques, I've compared them to mental health's representation in American culture, how it is either demonized or avoided entirely in discourse. The stigma regarding this issue is even more senseless in the light of the humbling experiences I have had here. I love the idea that health of the mind precedes health of the body, and time should be taken everyday for self care and getting in touch with the deepest parts of ourselves that we all too often lock away so that we can cope with our days' work. Everyday in Nepal, I have been told to concentrate on what I am FEELING and THINKING for at least a minute. Rather than leaving pessimism and irritation to fester interminably, we can understand why we are feeling these emotions and move on from them.

The idea of spirituality and the sacred spaces for meditation have been fascinating to absorb. In the temple at Namo Buddha, bursting with color and life, it is easy to see why so many pilgrims are drawn to such a place. The precious grounds and inspirational art draw one's focus to the center, where Buddha's statues sit serenely. In the vicinity one can see symbols of purity, like the lotus flower and conch shell.

Amidst such stunning architecture, sitting in a warm patch of sunlight, I reflect one more time on the Buddhist philosophy. Everyone from all walks of life can be enlightened. One only needs one's mind to meditate, and to appreciate the feeling of being one of billions of people on this earth. It is easy to disregard that which with we are unfamiliar, and to let our ambitions stand in the way of our happiness now. From the children I have lived and learned with, to our wonderful leaders who have guided us every step of the way, I will never forget how these people have challenged me to grow and make my own happiness. As I sit atop a remote Nepalese mountain, far from all that I have ever known, I feel closer to the universe, to myself, than I ever have been. I would like to leave readers with a quote from Gautama Buddha, "We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think. When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves."



It Takes a Village by Abbey S.

Girls in pleated navy skirts prance along the hard packed dirt of the schoolyard, dark braids weaving down their backs like the river that weaves through the beautiful valley that houses the village of Talarang. As the heavy footsteps of the boys playing fútbol and their excited calls reverberate against the surrounding walls the girls hook arms in a showing of unity. This scene could not more accurately demonstrate the energy that Talarang and its people possess, with vibrancy that can be mirrored only in the landscape around it. All of this interconnection seems to stem from a sense of love and commonality between the people of this community. The most intimate exposure to this that we were able to experience was in the Little Angels Children's Home, an orphanage tucked into the clouds of the mountains and run by Neel Shaahi.

Neel's sole dedication is to the orphanage and the well-being of the children who reside there. Growing up near Talarang, his father was killed while cutting down a tree in the nearby town of Galto. Although he was young, Neel was able to push past his own grief and insisted that the tree be used for its original purpose; the construction of a school. Since then he has been an avid and aggressive advocate for the rights of children and students to education. Through his partnership with The Small World he has enabled volunteers like us to visit and aid in Talarang. His belief in the value of volunteering stems from his hope for a more

unified and progressive world. As I drank tea with him in the warm rain one early morning he explained to me, "It doesn't matter where you are from. It's about how you choose to look at this planet. If you decide to go out and work to make it better." This philosophy is one of many that portray the emphasis that he places on the positive energy that has become the basis for success in both the orphanage that he runs and the Shree Terse Secondary School whose board he sits on.

This infectious desire to see the best in every situation has wormed its way into the minds of the children living in the home. I spent most of my time with the girls. Their undying hope and patience with each other was rarely interrupted by tiny scuffles that were quickly resolved and forgotten. The close proximity to each other that would drive most siblings mad is irrelevant to them because they make the conscious decision to allow their feelings to be dominated by love and gratitude rather than annoyance and frustration. As an outsider looking in I expected to be more of an observer or tolerated visitor but I was quickly inducted into their tight knit sisterhood and treated with incredible compassion. This philosophy of indisputable kindness from the start is a shock to the system for those of us whose normal and engrained response to strangers is hostility or caution. No matter how irregular this behavior was to me, I came to discover that its true value was held in the warmth and fulfillment that it brought to my heart and the others around me.



Neel insists that like any other family, their lives are not perfect. He explained to me that the integration process can be difficult as the children can be sent long distances to live with him. This poses challenges of cultural and social acceptance along with the other abundant issues that come with raising children, especially those with such unconventional backgrounds. The children themselves occasionally struggle with the strict expectations that Neel places upon them. I spoke with some of the older girls and they admitted to me that sometimes his discipline towards education and respect can feel restrictive. Upon multiple occasions during our time both in the school and the orphanage the kids made efforts to fake studying as to allow us to have more time with them. Although this may see like common teenage behavior, the discrepancies between their situation and that of an American student were magnified when during a quick stroll and inspection of the compound it became apparent that cameras were tucked into nearly every corner. Neel uses these to supervise the works habits and behavior of the children. This in no way appears to be a source of conflict in the home, though. Jamuna, a 17 year old girl who is one of the oldest in the home, expressed to me that as her father figure, she knows that Neel is always doing what is best for them and helping to guide them into their futures. Frankly though, Neel seems to place little personal value on his likability. Nonchalantly one day while sitting next to the compound's fish pond he explained,

"The negative energy directed [toward] me is not my business. I am too busy to care about that." Rather, his main objective is to ensure that the children are given the tools necessary for them to exceed the limitations imposed on them by their situation. Through education, skill development, and a balanced and disciplined environment designed to push them he hopes to shape them into good people with bright and diverse futures.

Beyond his more direct efforts at the orphanage, his investment in the next generation is evident in the hopes of the other students who attend Shree Terse. One night during home visits, a young girl named Kamala told us that her desire for the future is to become an engineer and help others. Dreams like these are shaped and encouraged through the supportive environment cultivated by Neel's efforts and those of others, as well the emphasis on education that has grown with the younger generations of parents. As a community, the common goal of a better future for the children of Talarang and therefore Nepal itself has developed a culture focused upon mutual respect and sharing that was evident even in our treatment as outsiders. Through both communal and familial commitment to positivity and belief in the power of energy and effort, Talarang is making important and necessary strides forward for the lives of current and future generations and their quality of life.

The Five Negative Emotions

Story and photos by Jeffrey W.



This trip to Nepal, I had the privilege of working with an Australian teacher, Tashi, at Namu Buddha, a Buddhist Monastery about 40 kilometers Southeast of Kathmandu, and learning more about Buddhism by taking classes alongside the monks. I was able to explore the Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism more in detail while taking these classes. Tashi was there on retreat for about a year to help the monks, and he really took the time to help me understand more about Buddhism. In the little time I had, I learned that all of Buddhism revolves around the Five Buddha Families, more commonly known as the five negative emotions. I studied in the temple where each emotion had its own totem at the top of the temple, right next to the temple of the mind. I decided to take the time to really understand these five emotions

and how Buddhism is built around them.

Tashi explains that each emotion is like a coin. The evil, or negative emotion, is on top, because it is easily seen and approached, as people can use these negatives to reach a seemingly desirable outcome in the short-term, but they will ultimately sacrifice a good afterlife or a positive reincarnation. However, if someone was to put in some effort into combating these emotions and flipping that coin over, they can achieve peace in mind and spirit, be happy in the current life, and also build their karma to have the best afterlife possible. These five emotions or families play into how we think today, and Buddhism teaches that you should fight these evils today and build a happy life and afterlife for your future.



कलेश

1: Buddha Akshobhya

Commonly known as anger, the Buddha Akshobhya family revolves around a person's reaction and outlook upon the actions of others. While Buddhism is known to be a very peaceful religion, anger plays a role in anyone's life. The temple uses the "vajara" totem to represent Buddha Akshobhya because it is a symbol of immortality, permanence, and no change over time. The word "Akshobhya" refers to the "immovable and changeless state of Buddha" because when one is angry, they make rash decisions in order to avenge their anger. They also begin to shake and turn red, and the Buddha rules it unwise to follow your anger before you hurt those around you and yourself. However, the Buddha also does not want people to be extremely happy. He says that if people are too happy they go into a blissful trance in which they will once again make decisions they may not be able to support later. Much like a wavy pattern, one does not want to go too high or too low. Instead, Buddha advises that people should take the middle path so that they have a clear mind and sensibility when it comes to building their lives and decisions.

2: Buddha Ratnasambhava

The Buddha family of Ratnasambhava refers to the self-admiration of a person, or his or her pride and ego. Represented by the jewel totem at the top of the temple, the jewel is told to be a wish-fulfilling jewel that gives a person whatever he or she may desire, symbolizing enrichment. Buddha tells people not to become too self-centered because it will disrespect others who will in turn disrespect you. Buddhism is more like a brotherhood where each monk respects one another and works with those next to him or her to build a good relationship and standing for the afterlife. If someone is too prideful, they begin to ignore the teachings or warnings of others. "Ratnasambhava" means "Buddha's precious source" because Buddha teaches that the source of all good qualities show in the absence of pride. Once relieved of his or her ego, a person can begin to feel compassionate and really show their good traits and qualities.

3: Buddha Amitabha

A large part of Buddha's life was giving up on attachment. The Buddha Amitabha family shows that one must give up being attached to material or any items in order to feel truly at peace and wholesome. "Amitabha" translated means "boundless light" or clarity because when someone is influenced by the desire for something, he or she does not think clearly and will begin to show a bias towards certain ideas or items, possibly the wrong ones. The lotus flower is the totem for Buddha Amitabha because the lotus grows in muddy water, yet it is able to grow pretty, stainless flowers free from the dark and dirty water, symbolizing the freedom from attachment. Buddha also teaches against having relationships with other people or material objects, because one will begin to devote more time to these than his or her actual work and studying. If a material object is lost, the person will then spend time trying to find it and even recreate it again. While the rules are more lenient today and some monks are allowed to get married, Buddha teaches against relationships with other people because a person will start spending so much time to please the other and the other person becomes a major part of his or her life. Therefore, being free from attachment will help a person have a free mind and bring them closer to a happy afterlife.



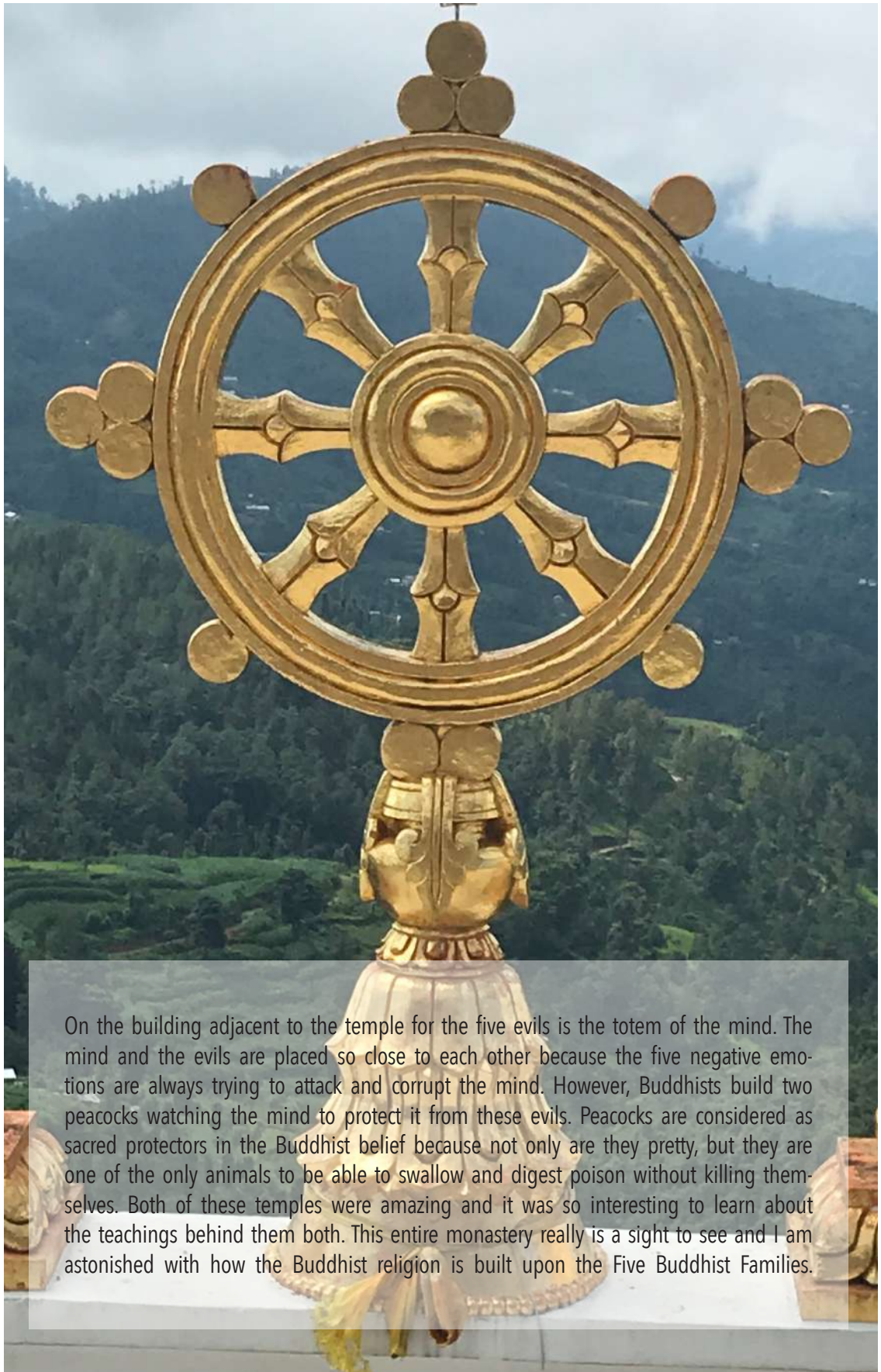
4: Buddha Amogasiddha

Every person in this world is faced with jealousy. Buddha Amogasiddha is the Buddha family describing jealousy and accomplishment. "Amogasiddha" means "meaningful accomplishment" but Buddha teaches that jealousy prevents us from reaching our goals. The totem symbolizes the double badgers fighting over material goods, when they could be working together to achieve a common goal easier and quicker. Jealousy distracts us, steers us off course from our original goal, and prevents us from a happy life. Buddha teaches that once one rids him or herself of jealousy, he or she will find accomplishment and will be able to build a better karma for a better future and afterlife.



5: Buddha Vairocana

The largest totem, situated in the middle of all the other totems, is the Wheel of Dharma. It symbolizes ignorance of the Buddha Vairocana family. "Vairocana" translated means "perfect knowledge of all things as they manifest" and Buddha teaches that if one tries to see a situation or something in a different way than it really is, he or she will not understand the full truth. People will try to build stories or see what they want to see rather than determining the situation. Buddha teaches about a rope in a dark room. People will become afraid of the rope and will think it is a snake instead of just seeing the rope for what it is, a rope. Instead they choose to instill fear in themselves. Fighting ignorance and trying to understand what is happening and being wary of the world around one will help build a happier and stronger life as well as improve one's karma.



On the building adjacent to the temple for the five evils is the totem of the mind. The mind and the evils are placed so close to each other because the five negative emotions are always trying to attack and corrupt the mind. However, Buddhists build two peacocks watching the mind to protect it from these evils. Peacocks are considered as sacred protectors in the Buddhist belief because not only are they pretty, but they are one of the only animals to be able to swallow and digest poison without killing themselves. Both of these temples were amazing and it was so interesting to learn about the teachings behind them both. This entire monastery really is a sight to see and I am astonished with how the Buddhist religion is built upon the Five Buddhist Families.

Living Goddesses: The Kumari

Story and photo by Kalyssa L.

During my time traveling in Nepal I learned of the existence of a goddess on earth. They are not what one might expect, they are little girls who can never smile, they are little girls that have the power to make illness befall an entire city; they are Kumari.

In the South Asian country of Nepal this strange notion is reality for some. These young goddesses are called Kumari's. As per sacred tradition dictates a group of young girls from the age of 3-5 will be chosen to go through a series of "32 perfections", (a body examination) in order to determine who shall become the next vessel for the goddess Taleju.

The candidate must pass physical as well as psychological tests, such as when she must stay in a dark room over night while 108 buffaloes and goats are sacrificed around her. During this night the goddess Taleju is said to enter her body. When she emerges from the room at dawn she must be perfectly calm, if the candidate is undisturbed she will be purified then officially named a Kumari.

The girl who is ultimately picked will live in a temple built for the sole purpose of housing Kumari's like herself. Though she is free of material troubles, she must follow strict rules and complete ceremonial duties. She will only leave her temple a handful of times a year for important religious celebrations, when she is out of the temple she cannot smile or walk. Many ex-Kumari's have said how difficult it was to follow these requirements.

Luckily for these girls being a Kumari is not a life sentence. Once a Kumari first menstruates she is relieved of her duties and can once again live a normal life. It was not always this way though, during the mid 1900s Kumari's could not marry or go to school. Now they have private tutors in their temples, can marry, and have the rest of their life financially supported by the government.

Though this tradition may seem absurd or cruel, it is a central part of Nepalese culture both for Buddhist and Hindu people.

Modern Slavery in Nepal

Story and photo by Jacquie S.



A pretty sight can often distract the eye from the darker crevices of life and it is hard for any person to focus on the beauty of a rose bush when the petals are so bright. A country filled with color, extraordinary culture, and some of the world's happiest people is unlikely to be correlated with one of the largest issues: human trafficking. Unlike the magnificent country, Nepal, has not succumbed to this threat but, with a stabilizing government and dedicated organizations, the country is slowly taking steps in the right direction becoming a safer place for the Nepali people.

In 2008, Nepal's twenty-four year old monarchy was overthrown by a group of people from the jungle, and various political groups who rejected the king's tyrannical rule. The instability during the former monarchy, along with the natural chaos that followed an overthrown government, a dark environment was able to brew: human trafficking. People from all around the world, seeking to take advantage of all opportunities, and there is the slightest bit of vulnerability, a weak government, and the lack of law enforcement created an environment nearly perfect conditions for trafficking. The conditions, as well as a slight neglect of resources, such as the education system, led to the chaotic state of Nepal at the time. Nepali people a popular target in the sex business. But, the unreliable Nepal is not the only reason for why Nepal is the largest international hotspot for human trafficking. The culture of the region, a social norm of viewing women as property and even a burden in certain cases.

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females are often abandoned by their families because they are not seen as a potential leader in the family, only a hindrance. Girls who are not abandoned after birth are given little to no education and experience in life. Nepali women are shaped by their society to be emotionally and intellectually weaker, causing them to slip into the traps of trafficking itself. Lastly, the border control from India to Nepal is almost nonexistent, making the crimes of human trafficking easier than any other part of the world. These cultural and political circumstances are what make Nepal so popular in the trafficking business because the country basically self grooms the women and its atmosphere before traffickers have to do the work themselves.

Nepali society's neglect for women and their education has taught girls to be completely dependent on those around them and made them incompetent when it comes to thinking and making logical decisions. Although many organizations and schools are currently trying to end the unjust cycle, the reality still remains. This reality has contributed to the shocking amount of Nepali people that are still completely unaware of this modern form of slavery. About 50% of Nepal's citizens are illiterate and most citizens live in remote locations where daily news doesn't reach the people living in them, making almost 30% of the Nepali population completely unaware of the global issue. So, Nepali women with poor and uneducated backgrounds tend to fit the trafficking victim profile, partly because of the fair chance of them being unaware of the altogether threat.

Although the issue of human trafficking in Nepal is vast, a light at the end of the tunnel for Nepali people is slowly becoming brighter. Six months ago, an election for Nepal's future was held and it was decided that all the political parties would align and create one big party: the Nepal Communist Party. This new change will result in a more stable and just government which will ease the inflammation of trafficking in the country and also increase education for women. The government's new budget for natural resources has increased the spending for Nepal's education system, which will create more aware women in Nepali society. Another form of progress against the issue is in dedicated organizations that focus on Nepal's current status with the situation as well as the future. The large organization, "Maiti Nepal," is also slowly quelling human trafficking by rescuing and schooling victims in order to work towards ending the devastating cycle. The organization also largely focuses on, and finds the most struggle, with reintegration for victims of trafficking. Although it is a challenge (because of the cultural misconceptions about trafficked women being impure), this step in "Maiti Nepal's" own rescue process is crucial in saving Nepal because of the awareness reintegrated women spread just by rejoining society. Many other smaller organizations, along with these two benefactors, are moving toward solving this issue in Nepal and bringing hope to victims, their families, and citizens that their beautiful country will one day no longer be plagued by the threat of human trafficking in their future.

Our Small World's Inspirations *Story and photos by Kevin B.*



Everyone has a role model, a hero. We all have somebody to look up to for their personality, and qualities. Meet Neel, the man who has become my hero. Otherwise known as the 52-year-young human-machine. Neel puts in extreme amounts of time, effort, gratitude, and efficiency into everything he does in his life, especially towards following his dream. Neel's father once had a dream... A dream to build the best school in Nepal. However, unfortunately, his father passed away, while working on the school, when Neel was only 15 months old. When Neel was 13 years old, he decided to help his mother and four siblings by working a full-time job in the Kathmandu, making only Rs.100 (\$1) per month. Neel's dream began at the age of 34, when he decided to move to Talamaryang, for the purpose of working

for his own necessities, them in Kathmandu. Neel of life than the majority lifestyle, I am busy, I want work as much as possible feeling of having to do so 10 years, Neel has worked Ireland, TEAM Nepal, and such as National Geographic. To be green, organized a the community. What I think about Neel is what he hopes. His dream and aspiration follows in the footsteps wants to build a school. Neel the best school in Nepal education, environment, pro



Neel Shahi, Director of TEAM Nepal

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eel's dream is to "make
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acticality, and life for the

students. Next year, he wants to have a house
for 25 boys and another for 25 girls, to build a
house for his volunteers and National Geographic.
"Let's see what god will say." Personally,
having been a part of Neel's recent journey,
seeing his constant effort and determination to
succeed, I too, have a very strong feeling that his
dream will become a reality. He has a dream to
change the Talamaryang community, to make
his home the most welcoming and comforting
place as possible, and for his children to love his
lifestyle as much as he does. Myself, the local
community and National Geographic all believe
in him. More importantly, Neel believes in
himself, he has the energy, grit, persistence
and work ethic to get his work done.

Mt. Everest stands at a staggering 8,848 meters above sea-level, making it the highest mountain on our planet. For many, including me, climbing this extreme mountain is an unattainable dream that we can only wish to live, but for the 49-year-old Dawa Sherpa, it can be considered a reality. In 2006, at the age of 38, Dawa, and his fellow Sherpas were proposed job opportunities with a Russian climbing crew, The Seven Summit Club. He saw this as a prime occasion to make the necessary money he needed in his life, and accepted their offer to work as a cook. Upon arrival, he was assigned to work for the Nepali and Sherpas at Base Camp until he was promoted as a cook for the climbing group members and transferred to Camp 2 after their cook caught altitude



Dawa Sherpa, The Small World Chef

sickness. Consequently, Dawa hiked up to 7,000 meters to spend 15 days cooking for the Russian crew before they descended to Base Camp to unwind from the high altitude at Camp 2. During this time, Dawa remained at Camp 2 and was asked to carry four oxygen tanks to Camp 4 by another climbing group for \$150. The group left at 1:00 a.m. the next morning, Dawa carrying 20kg of oxygen tanks on his back, each weighing 5kg up to Camp 4. Having climbed to Camp 4, at 7,950 meters, one can consider his highest point to have nearly completed the impossible, summiting Mt. Everest. Dawa joined The Small World, TEAM Nepal, as their full-time head chef, constantly putting in his all for us, and never without a smile.



Foggy Mornings

Story and photos by Jingxiu Z.



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him to go to high school and college and therefore it seemed like his life was destined to be a farmer-like his parents. He went down hills everyday for school with the sunrise and fog from the other side of the mountain. He always paused on the way to think about his mesmerizing dream, his shadow laid behind him quietly; the shadow is the only one who knows the secret in his heart—he wanted to go to the college, to find opportunities, to learn the reign of law in nature.

One day, he told his parents but the reply is "you can go if you want, but you need to pay all the fee by yourself". He chose to go with his persistence. That is definitely the uncertainty of people's life. He got the offer from a school in Kathamandu so that he could finish high school and college. In the phase of preparation, he felt panic about city life because a stark difference exists between people born in the village and the city. But "life is all about evolution," this thing that looks like a mistake to other people in the village has been a milestone in his own life.

He set off with on a foggy morning; it was so early that dewdrops were still hanging themselves on the grass. His dad took him by the arm to encourage him though he did not appreciate his son to do so. Dirt diffused in Kathamandu as a symbol of "city," mixing with the accumulated history and culture. He felt that all sounds

existing in the world combined together like some sophisticated music were hovering around him when he stood in the center of Kathamandu for the first time. He silently vowed to chase after the thrill. To earn his tuition and alimony, he found a job in a travel agency carrying 60 kilograms of luggage with no oxygen for those hikers in Everest, which has an altitude around five thousand meters. Because of his financial problems, he only had flip-flops for hiking up the snowcapped mountain. When the weather was getting frostier, some of the water in the rivers there froze into ice. The soles of his feet stuck to the ice, and his feet were heavily bleeding through the whole process. When the harsh wind blew through his body, he felt that thousands of knives were cutting his skin, but he had a clear realization that the blood mixing with the ice was the payment for a better future. The remuneration for one day was 5 dollars, and it was enough for his life. With all his experience, he built a close attachment with the environment and made an incredible achievement. He became a tour guide for Chinese and American, and in return to society, he found a private school and a travel agency with non-profitable purpose now. He is a tiny corner of the society but truly expresses the overall development in Nepal including the increment of opportunities and the improvement of culture.



The first day when we arrived in Nepal, July seventh, the weather was clear and crisp. We started our journey by traveling to a Hindu temple which is filled with sunshine to crawl with monkeys. Its serenity was a wonderful way to welcome us—NGSE to Nepal! Little did we know, there was a big surprise waiting for us to discover—Tangka paintings.

There's a Thangka shop laying in a house with four floors. Every available surface, walls, corners, etc, was covered with different size of Tangka paintings. Tangka is a form of art which is especially prevalent in Nepal, Tibet, India. The themes of these paintings span a wide range of subjects including history, politics, culture and the social life of famous individuals. Tangka paintings help us identify the development of society.

(This is a example of a Tangka painting, the main

colors of it are red, yellow, green, and black. We can see the four symbols on each side is a symbol of a deity in the middle to show the

As painters to draw Thangka, the ratio of Buddha at four eyes is fixed, then the whole When they are 9 years old, they use cotton paper and adjust the size to become highly short-sighted. Tangka paintings need to be a career for Tangka painters, short, and their painting skills

There are three levels of Tangka painting: basic level, intermediate level and advanced level. The first time I saw these Tangka

Thangka of Buddhism

Photos by Yico W.



w, blue, green, white and
r sides in this Thangka, and
a stupa. They join together
(belief of union and peace.)

, they need to start learning
ears old. If the location of the
size of the Thangka is settled.
ey will start to learn to grid the
color. It is common that they
ed extremely early because
be detailed. For this reason,
ers is extremely limited and
kills plummet after age 45.

ngka painting, the students
and master level. The first
paintings from different

levels, they looked the same, the same colors, same
comment, even the same size. When I, however, stood
closer to them, I saw the stark differences. The most
obvious one is Buddha's face. For students's level,
instead of elaborated lines, there's only coarse shape
for facial features. But in the master's work, each detail
are well expressed by the sophisticated depiction.
Nevertheless, the most amazing thing is not their
skill but the change that happened under the light.
They transformed from paper to china, getting half-
transparent surface illuminating like the rays of sun.

Different from other arts, there is no innovation
or creativity in Thangka. Because instead of
aiming to be creative, Thangka's purpose is
to finish a work by strictly obeying the rules.

Growing Through Experiences

Story and photo by Kaitlyn Y.

At the start of this journey, I never knew Talamarang would impact me this much. To be completely honest, I was so nervous to go on this trip to the point that I almost dropped out. I started to fall in love with the views, but what really captured my heart was the community work, the connections I made with the local children, and finding my own family through my experiences.

Talamarang is breath taking. I remember the horrendous hike up the mountain, but seeing the encouraging faces filled with curiosity from the neighbors boosted me up as well as the views ranging from corn fields to rice patties. The constant smiles and yells of "Namaste" from the children made it even easier for me to fall in love with them.

Community service for me was filled with lots of paint and kerosene. Although it wasn't exactly the type of volunteering I thought i would do, i did see the transformation of the school as well as how the children saw the school . I wish we could have worked longer hours and did more work than just beautifying the school. However this experience allowed

me to connect to many of the students.

Connecting with the students, was not easy because of the language barrier. It was awkward at first, but once they started seeing us as family it was beautiful to see the children let down their walls as well as mine. Their eyes were filled with so much joy and passion and they inspired me the most because they appreciated the little things. They don't complain about not having the newest iPhone, but find simple pleasures from a smile or a wave.

The kids have taught me so much about their culture and I have learned many things about myself. I have grown over the past week and i couldn't have been more proud. I definitely have stepped out of my comfort zones and saw my life in a different light. I have never felt so at peace in my life before and i can't thank the whole team enough. I am so glad i was able to attend this trip because it has opened new paths for me in the future and i hope i can pursue those dreams to help my second family here in Nepal.







Swayambunath Stupa is a Buddhist temple (respected and worshipped by both Buddhist and Hindu people alike) in the Kathmandu valley of Nepal. It is one of the oldest sites in Nepal, religious or otherwise. The myth behind the "Monkey Temple" says that a giant lake used to fill the entire valley, out of the center of this lake grew a lotus flower.

Manjusri, the bodhisattva of learning and wisdom, had a dream about the lotus and was compelled to walk many days to the great lake. He drained the lake of its water by cutting a gorge; he wanted people to be able to reach the holy site easily. He built up a hill where the lotus flower bloomed and turned the flower into a stupa to sit atop the hill. The monkeys there are considered holy because they were born from Manjusri's hair lice and since the lice were so close to his brain, they absorbed his intellect and knowledge.

nath Stupa

o by Beatrice P.



My opinion of the monkey temple was nothing short of awe. It was the perfect balance of beautiful hectic for a place dubbed "The Monkey Temple." There is a halfway point between the obscenely long walk of stairs and the stupa itself where the majority of the monkeys congregate. People throw coins into a bucket centered in a pond here, for good health and fortune. But the main attraction was obviously the monkeys (for the foreigners at least). They seemed to understand they were safe, they did not care in the slightest about any of the people staring or surrounding them, only when we had food did they pay us any mind. In short the monkeys were nothing like I expected, such personality - they were funny, angry balls of fur. The view itself was unexplainable, the perfect view of Kathmandu city, making all the buildings look like toys but somehow the light still helped the colors to pop and contrast fantastically against one another. Knowing the history and myths behind this ancient site just seemed to improve the experience even more.

Luni-Solarity

Story by Aicha E.

Time is the foundation of our existence, a concept upon which we buttress the cycling and continuation of our lives. How it is demarcated determines the way we form our reality in every whichway. In Nepal, time is luni-solar: a testament to its complexity and fascinating history.

The Vikram Samvat, otherwise known as the Bikrami calendar, is the official calendar of Nepal. The Vikrami Era, which begins in 58 BC, is used by Hindus, which dominate the country. Unlike the Gregorian calendar, the Vikram Samvat maintains the integrity of the lunar cycles and solar sidereal years, leaving room for the occasional addition and removal of months (*adhika māsa* and *kshaya masa*, respectively). This flexibility and responsiveness to the ebb and flow of celestial bodies is one of the most significant signs of difference between the Vikram Samvat and widely popularized Gregorian calendar.

The Gregorian calendar first took root on the Indian subcontinent during British imperial rule. The dissemination of the calendar is most often via the avenue of commerce and official, diplomatic transactions. In this sense, there is an inextricable sense of hierarchy associated with the dynamic of time in Nepal. With the growing interconnectedness of our globalized era, the usage of the two calendars has become symbolic of the fusing of the ancient and modern world.

Life operates very differently for individuals pursuing different domains of society. For

instance, those who interact with the Gregorian calendar far more often – like tour guides – form a greater attachment to it and end up distancing from the Vikram Samvat, often even forgetting what day it is. Though the Nepali education system still teaches solely using the Vikram Samvat, its more feasible applications have begun to vary. Nowadays, the calendars are almost always used in tandem, being hung side by side. Right now marks an interesting time where Nepal is experiencing a shift in time representation.

The Vikram Samvat also differs from the Gregorian calendar in its demarcation of season. As opposed to the four Gregorian seasons – Summer, Spring, Winter, and Autumn – based off of weather patterns of the northern hemisphere, the Vikram Samvat has six seasons – *Vasanta Ritu* (Spring), *Greeshma* (Summer), *Varsha* (Monsoon), *Sharad* (Autumn), *Hemanta* (Winter), and *Sheshera* (the Dewey season). This is particularly interesting with respect to how Nepali society places such significance on the crossroads of spirituality and nature. Many Nepali individuals believe in their sharp attachment to deities of nature and living sustainably in alignment with natural discourse.

A calendar is far more than merely bound paper or cloth. It can carry the gravity of time and its impressions, and the Vikram Samvat does so beautifully for Nepal, a country with respect for nature at its core.



Photo by Jacquie S.