#### Get a glimpse of Kumari, the Living Goddess, at Kumari Ghar in Basantapur, Kathmandu Durbar Square.

**LIVING GODDESS KUMARI**

Regarded as a Living Goddess, a young Newar girl with no blemishes is chosen to represent the Goddess Kumari as an incarnation of Goddess Taleju, the tutelary deity of the Malla dynasty and the Shah dynasty which inherited the tradition. Newars are the original inhabitants of Kathmandu valley and have the most elaborate religious festivals. The Living Goddess is worshipped with great reverence and even the Shah Kings followed the tradition of receiving tika and blessings from her. Dating back to the 17th century, the practice was institutionalized by a Malla king.

Legend has it that King Jaya Prakash Malla under the influence of alcohol, while playing a game with the visiting Goddess Taleju in the form of a human, started lusting after her. This offended the goddess and she ordered the king to make an oath that he would select a virgin girl within whom she would always reside. The tradition has been continued to this day.

The Malla dynasty was ousted by King Prithvi Narayan Shah but the tradition of revering the Goddess Kumari was continued by the conquerors. Until 2008, the Shah King would go to the Kumari to receive tika on his forehead which symbolized the empowering of the monarch.

The young candidates from the Shakya caste among the Newars, many as young as four years old, must go through an extremely strict and harrowing selection process before one of them is chosen to represent the Goddess. She must remain calm and show no signs of fear even when put through scary tests. Once chosen, she has to live within the Kumari Ghar (Kumari’s House), her feet must never touch the ground and will leave her residence only during certain festivals. She will remain a Living Goddess until any form of bleeding occurs, which is usually when she reaches puberty.

Visit the Kumari Ghar across Durbar Square, at Basantapur, where she resides and you may be in luck to catch a glimpse of this Goddess. If you are visiting in late August or early September, you may get the opportunity to observe the fascinating festival known as Indra Jatra when the Living Goddess Kumari is carried out of her residence and pulled through the narrow roads of old Kathmandu in a large chariot. It is quite a sight to behold, as masked dancers come out on the streets and the chariots of Lord Ganesh and Bhairav are also pulled along with that of the Kumari by exuberant devotees in a lively procession.