

44. Three Months in Austria

V. S. Rai

Vishnu Singh Rai (1951) is a retired professor of English. He taught at TU for three decades. He was educated in India, Nepal and the UK.

In this travelogue Rai narrates his experience of travelling to Austria and back home. He leaves Kathmandu on a January morning. There is no use to haggle with a Nepali taxi driver on the fare. He flies to Vienna via the Turkish Airlines. There is a description of the railway station near the Vienna airport. The railway station is different from Indian railway station. It is not crowded, not dirty and not noisy. The train and the passengers are punctual. Austria is much more developed in terms of infra-structure than Nepal. But material development without spiritual is like a body without soul.

The author is visiting Vienna University to do his post PhD research. This university was born in the 14th century, 600 years older than Tribhuvan University. The university is one of the tourist attractions of the city. The university building and the parliament building are close to each other. They are separated by a tiny garden which indicates the distance between knowledge and politics..

Inside the university premises, there are wide corridors heading to every direction. There are statues of professors. The professors are studious and dedicated to research and search of knowledge. They are humble. Back in Nepal professors are busy I politics and have no time for study and research. Students are also hard working and studious there.

There are museums of architecture, sculpture, art music and there are theatres for exhibiting of cultural shows. The author describes the traffic systems in Austria and Nepal. There is good law and order and security.

The culture there is very different from that of Nepal. The life style of modern women is disagreeable to the author. The most beautiful gifts from nature-love and tenderness are being neglected today.

Despite every comfort available there, the author feels homesick. The mechanical life has suppressed the human relations and emotions (see page 282, para 3). They

talk about many kinds of rights- even animal rights. But there are many groups of people, the poor and the elderly for example, whose rights are never taken care of. The culture in Nepal is very rich in terms of humanity.

European scholars are work hard and remain busy even after their retirement. In Nepal retired people patiently wait for death.

Finally the author narrates his return journey. He gets excited and happy as he sees the Himalayan range through the plane window. He has a sense of relief in spite of the Everest of garbage on the bank of the Bagmati River.