



Travel Report

Nepal Youth Delegation 2016-17



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DAY1

10/03/2017

FLIGHT LANDING IN NEPAL

We reached the Tribhuvan International airport at 10:45 AM after an early morning flight from Delhi. The change in temperature and demography was surprisingly pleasant. Amidst the hills and the capital city of Nepal the airport looked marvelous from the skies. Many government officials came to receive us which was followed by our check in to Shangri-La hotel.

VISIT TO SWAYAMBHUNATH STUPA

During the afternoon, we visited the first point of historical and religious interest "The Swayambhunath Stupa" or as the west calls it "The Monkey Temple". According to a legend the entire valley was once a large lake, a Buddhist monk planted a lotus in between the lake, the 2500 stupa is said to surround the area where the lotus once grew. It is a prominent heritage site and attracts many Buddhist tourists throughout the year. We took the less tiring 60 step climb to



the stupa rather than the 365 step climb which has its own cultural significance. The Stupa has an undeniably soothing ambience which is complementarily complemented by the non-human inhabitants of the temple who justify its name in the west. Another myth

says that the monkeys around the stupa have mystical origins themselves. The entire boundary wall of the stupa is covered with mantra rolls which the passersby keep rotating. The stupa has Buddha eyes on four sides, which themselves are a renowned symbol in Nepali culture and have in fact become a pop culture symbol in Nepal and Tibet. The stairway till the Stupa had lots of local shopkeepers on both sides who regularly brought into use the bargaining skills of fellow contingent members. Overall it was a culturally and spiritually enriching visit and a great start for the trip.



VISIT TO INDIAN EMBASSY

This followed our visit to the beautiful Indian Embassy in Nepal, where Mr Vinay Kumar ambassador in charge of Indian embassy along with other officials greeted us. The entire contingent felt very nice to meet the officials and we were awed at hearing the life experiences of them.



DINNER AND CULTURAL PERFORMANCES

This was followed by our dinner at wellness club hosted by Sri Mahesh Chandra Dahal, Secretary of the Minister of Youth and Sports, Government of Nepal. The host started off by talking about the present working of the ministry which was followed by a brief discussion on issues in south east Asia. Our taste buds were then greeted with organic Nepali food, along with cultural performances by local artists. This ended the eventful day for us.



DAY2

11/03/2017

BLESSINGS FROM LORD PASHUPATINATH

We started our morning with blessings from Lord Pashupatinath at the Pashupatinath temple in the backside of river Bagmati. It remains to be one of the most visited Hindu religious destinations in the world. The temple again had a lot of monkey residents and one could hear the familiar



Hindu chants inside the temple. Hindus perform their last rites on the shore of the river which looked distinctly polluted from the height of the temple. Like most Hindu temples, it had multiple small temples dedicated to Hindu 'Devas' along with the central structure for the 'Hindu Destroyer' aka 'Bholenath' aka 'Shiva'.



INTERACTION WITH YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS AT THE NATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The breakfast was followed by the much-awaited session with youth entrepreneurs. The panel comprised of Mr. Rajesh Kazi Shreshta, the chairman of Nepal Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Ram Prasad Thapaliya, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Youth & Sports, Government of Nepal; Sri Daya Nand, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Department of Youth Affairs, Govt. of India and the Leader of Indian Youth Delegation to Nepal, Mr. MN Nataraju, deputy leader of the delegation members of the youth chamber, education ministry officials and other dignitaries. There were keynote speeches by above speakers which was followed by a question answer session between the Indian and Nepali youth. One noticeable point is that in Nepal the youth are considered until the age of 40 unlike 30 in India which clearly demarcates the related policy structures in both the countries. The discussion mainly revolved around Indian Tourism in Nepal, business opportunities and the legal logistics involved for Indians in Nepal, Nepali cottage industries, higher education, women empowerment, effect of multinational corporations, sustainable development, water management, transportation and export issues between the countries, Indian and Chinese competition to small Nepali industries and the Indian support to Nepal during crisis. It was in all a very fruitful discussion that ended with conclusive remarks on how the two countries set global standards for an open border and free trade. Mementos were presented by both the sides to each other. In a witty and light tone the chairman mentioned how prominent is Indian tourism to the economy of Nepal. This session helped in reflecting back on our own problems and realizing that both the developing nations have a lot to learn from each other.

THE BUS JOURNEY TO NAGARKOT AND A SUN LOST IN CLOUDS

After lunch, we left in our buses to Nagarkot, a renowned hill station in Nepal. The Scenery on the way was breathtaking and the villages In between reminded very much of rural India. Unfortunately, the sky in Nagarkot was too cloudy to watch the sunset. However, the scenery of the Langtang mountain range was mesmerizing. In the cold weather and drizzling rain, we had some of the best memories of our lives. It was clear that we were in god's own valley. It was followed by the dinner and cultural performances by our fellow delegates.



DAY3

12/03/2017

HERE COMES THE SUN

The day started with a beautiful sunrise which highlighted the Himalayan tips from within the clouds. The sun came out at about 6:15 and at around 7:30 the peaks of the Langtang mountain range got a golden lining. This was followed by a filling breakfast and some group photography sessions.



"Witnessed a lovely

sunrise and sunset today.

Nice rosy bookends."

BHAKTAPUR SQUARE

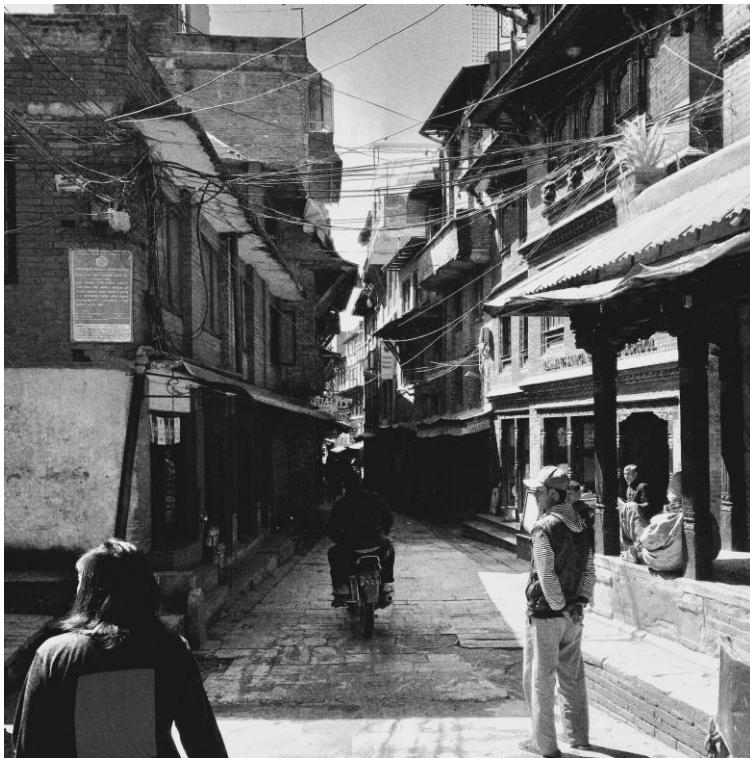
Soon after we reached Bhaktapur which is known for its durbar square. Bhaktapur is known for its Durbar Square. A UNESCO world heritage site, the square was the durbar for the Bhaktapur empire after the 15th century split in the Mallu dynasty. It is renowned for its multistory architecture, temples dedicated to Vishnu, Shiva and Laxmi, wooden and metal carvings and architecture. Unfortunately, it was one of the worst hit places by the 2015 earthquake. We visited the Nyatapola temple and observed the Pagoda style architecture of the buildings. It is renowned for its "Ju Ju Dahi" which is a local curd delicacy. The entire square was covered in the colors of Holi and you could see young children and the artefacts covered in colors.



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The square is a great historical site which is now a residence for many of the local habitants. The entire place is covered with markets and small shops mainly targeted at tourists which sell handicrafts.



After lunch at Bhaktapur we left for Kathmandu for our short flight to Lumbini where we rested for the day followed by cultural performances by the delegation during the night. This ended a hectic yet remarkable day.

DAY4

13/03/2017

LUMBINI: BUDDHA'S BIRTH PLACE



The day started with Mr. Basantabidadi, ex-staffs man of Lumbini Development Trust giving us a presentation on the history of the Buddhism and the rediscovery of Lumbini. He was also the chief archeologist for Lumbini for many years, where the biggest excavation of 20th century i.e. the marker stone of buddha's birth was found. It consists of three distinct parts- The Sacred Garden, the

Monastic Enclave and the New Lumbini Village. The sacred grade is where Buddha was born. It also has the lake where his mother took bath before his birth. She is also said to have held the branch of an Ashoka tree which is replanted every time it dies. Many countries have constructed monasteries of their own in Lumbini in the monastic enclave region because every year 1000s of tourists visit Lumbini from throughout the world.



The sacred garden region with Ashok tree on the left and colorful mantra bindings all over.



The interior of a Chinese monastery in the monastery enclave region.



The end of the monastery region and an architecture representing the general theme of emptiness and its importance in Buddhism.

OFF TO CHITWAN AND THARU DANCE



After lunch and checkout, we departed for Chitwan National Park. After a journey of 8 hours in the Terai region of Nepal where we saw plain beauty at its best, we reached the hotel and checked in. Before Dinner we saw the local Tharu dances that were performed by the people of Terai region. The various dances displayed were- Lathinach (stick dance), Dampunach(dancing on the beats of drum covered with goat skin and peacock feathers), Thekranach(Harvesting dance), Jhumranach(Condolence Dance), Firedance(dance to chase wild animals away) and the Jhilinach(invitation dance). During the end the entire group joined for dancing and after dinner we retired to our beds.

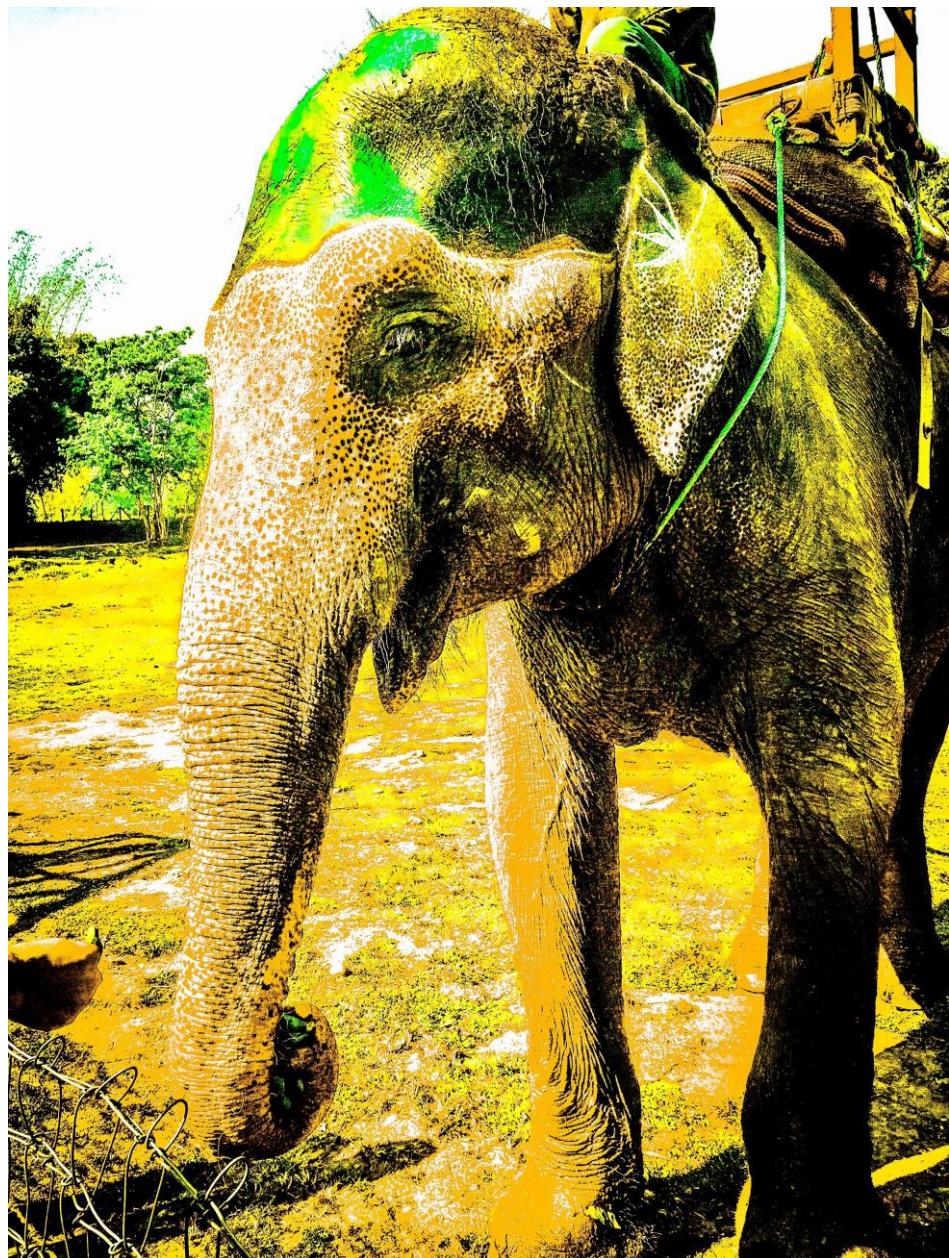


DAY5

14/03/2017

ELEPHANT SAFARI AT CHITWAN

The day started with an elephant safari into the deep forests of Chitwan National park. Each elephant had 4 people and one rider. The national park is renowned for its endemic species One-horned rhino. Unfortunately, we could not find one. However, the ride was a wonderful experience and we saw antelope, deer, buck, crocodiles etc. There was a river flowing in between the forest and the scene was very picturesque. The bumpy ride continued for 2.5 hours. After that we had our lunch and departed for Pokhra by bus.





DAY6

15/03/2017

FEWA LAKE AND DEVI'S WATERFALL AT POKHRA

We went for Devi's waterfall where we saw some magnificent gorge beauty. There were lots of local shopping shops around where we bought mementos for home and friends. Thereafter, we went for boating in the Fewa lake heading to the Brahmi temple at its center. The entire lake is surrounded by mountains and one can see their reflection in it. The very scenery is breathtaking. The fish tail mountain can also be a reflection during clear days when it actually looks like a fish is swimming in the water.



MEETING WITH NYEF

After lunch, we had an interaction with Youth Entrepreneurs, organized jointly by the Pokhra Chamber of Commerce and Nepalese Young Entrepreneur's forum(NYEF). It started with the address from the panel and the contingent officers. The topics discussed were focused on the development of youth in the country like brain drain, unemployment, lack of entrepreneurship and funding through NYEF. The NYEF is taking a lot of steps to address these issues like school mentorship and startup incubation program. In interaction with Pokhra tourism board we got to know about the famous adventure sports in Pokhra and how tourism is the primary source of income in Pokhra a city that never sleeps. In the end, there were conclusive remarks by both the sides with discussion on how youth can join hands with businesses in Nepal.

FREE TIME IN POKHRA

After the meeting, we were given free time to explore Pokhra. Most of us rented cycles to explore the city which primarily is around the lake. There are many attractions around like local handicraft shops, precious stone shops, live restaurants, sunset points, boating sites, cycling lanes etc. finally we had dinner and retired for an early morning rise next day. Pokhra is very different similar Indian cities like Shillong in terms of being more commercialized and well organized attracting an international crowd.

DAY7

16/03/2017

SUNRISE AT SARANGKOT

We woke up at around 4:30 in the morning and reached Sarangkot by 5:45. The sun came out at around 6:15. There were some clouds which prevented the layered enshrining of the mountain peaks, but the first ray of light making the peaks of Annapurna and Macha Puchari magically visible was simply magical.



HIMALYAN INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAINEERING MUSEUM

After breakfast, we went to Himalayan international mountaineering museum. It had a vast collection of pictures, equipment, personal tools, specimens from different mountaineers throughout the history. It also had a natural history section for biota of the mountains. We saw an Audio-Visual show highlighting the base camp trek to Mount Everest. Outside it had a huge model of mount Everest where everyone got clicked. It gave us a good summary of the culture and demography of the mountain region of Nepal which we could not visit explicitly due to shortage of time.



FLIGHT TO KATHMANDU AND MEETING WITH MR. DALJIT SHREEPALI

After the museum, we had our lunch at a Thakali Restaurant in Pokhra which was a local cuisine. This followed our flight to Kathmandu. In the evening, we had a farewell program in Hotel Shangri La organized by Hon'ble Minister of Youth and Sports Nepal Mr. Daljit Shreepali. There were keynote speeches by the minister and our contingent leader. It ended with cultural performances from Nepali artists and our fellow delegates. The night ended with a Bourne-fire accompanied with singing and dancing, where everyone was recollecting the precious memories of the past week.



DAY8

17/03/2017

MOUNTAIN VIEW FLIGHT

The last highlight of the trip was the mountain view flight where we flew over the mount Everest and other mountain ranges very closely. Due to excessive clouds the Everest was not visible fully but the other ranges were. The clouds seem to form a creamy playground for the large mountains. "We didn't touch the Everest but we felt it with our hearts" as the flight attendant said. In the afternoon, we went to explore the local market in the Kathmandu. After lunch, we departed to airport for our flight to Delhi and thus this wonderful trip which was a "soft diplomatic exchange" between the two countries became a part of our lives.



TAKEAWAYS

The 8-day trip gave us memories to behold for years. If I talk in terms of the things learnt, the very first thing was from the very delegation. One often forgets the heterogeneity and cultural diversity of this huge nation, the fellow delegates each from different backgrounds made me reconcile on this fact. The small landlocked nation and its relations with India; the freedom two nations share and the feeling of national fraternity is not something seen every day. The aesthetic value the trip added to my life has been mentioned throughout the report. Besides, it changed my perspective of Nepal in many ways primarily because of the interaction sessions we had with the youth, which showed that there are many different Nepals than I thought of before. They inspired me to do justice to my life. The mountains, lakes and the forests gave me serious travel Goals. Nagarkot and Pokhra parted with the promise of meeting again. The trip is over but the ideas, memories and experiences would continue to inspire me throughout my life. Ultimately, the will of Nepali people; from a destroyed Bhaktapur to a joyous again Bhaktapur would keep motivating me, the will of fire will go on. Besides the cultural similarities which were distinctly visible I could see the differences too, these help us reflect back on our own history. The problems faced by the people in both the countries are not very different and we need to a positive retrospection on both the sides and learn from each other. Finally, Nepal a landlocked small nation taught me the importance of nature. I have registered for the mount Everest expedition 10 years down the line to visit it once again, to rediscover myself and something beyond!!