



## AS THE GROUND SHOOK IN NEPAL

What scares you the most? What is the worst case scenario you could possibly think of? Dying? That term 'being scared to death' is legitimate, sure! But the answer is No! There is something scarier than death itself, the reality of having everyone you know dead.

They say if a man claims not to be afraid of dying he's either lying or he's a Gorkhali ('Gorkhali' are the group of elite Nepalese soldiers who fought for Britain in World War 2 and earned the highest of honors in warfare) What my valiant ancestors proved on the battlefield over centuries of combat, this legacy was going to be a valuable inheritance for what became the most haunting memory for every Nepalese around the world.

April 25, 2015 I was lying in bed talking to my friend on whatsapp, casually discussing about her exams when suddenly I got a panicked message (oi bhuichaalo aayo!) (Hey there's been an earthquake!) For the first few minutes I even thought she must have been kidding because unlike any other disaster, earthquakes are undoubtedly the most unpredictable and although Nepal sits right on the middle of two giant tectonic plates, the last time we had a devastating earthquake was perhaps back in 1990. Scientists constantly predicted a ravaging earthquake was underway though no one could ever really predict when and the when turned out to be that unfortunate Saturday morning.

I didn't get any other reply from her for another five ten minutes but that felt like forever wondering what was going on, I called her but there was no answer. I panicked, so I googled and also went on to Facebook to see updates if any and horrible upon horrible posts all across my homepage, I couldn't believe my eyes, she wasn't lying! There really had been an earthquake and an extremely devastating one as I went on scrolling downwards reading people moan and grief over that sudden unseen disaster. I quickly dialed my father's number to check if everybody's okay back home but the communication lines had all failed and nobody was responding, I went back to whatsapp to see if my friend had replied back but there was no reply from any of my friends. I stood in my garden helpless, devastated, I cried.

There! That is the worst of all horrors! Back home the ground was shaking, the mega quake of magnitude ( 7.8-8.1) and soon after aftershocks within minutes of interval was bringing everyone to their knees, tumbling buildings everywhere, cracking roads, panicked people running around not knowing what to do and here I was trembling myself in fear, what if something had happened and I wouldn't even get to know for God knows how long.

Dharara (the iconic watch tower over nine storey tall in the middle of Kathmandu city) had fallen too and with that almost hundreds of other iconic temples, ancient monuments and

buildings had all turned to rubble in a matter of seconds, the scene must have been horrific as people wailed trying to find their loved ones who'd gotten trapped while trying to dodge huge chunks of building from falling on to them as the earth beneath continued to vibrate in a devilish manner. Fallen buildings and fallen innocent victims, the hospitals were overwhelmed by the massive turnover of injured people within the blink of an eye, roads were filled with terrified civilians who'd fled their houses and there was no shortage of these nightmare images flooding social media as the death toll continued to rise exponentially and still I had no contact with any loved ones.

Somebody posted that Dillibazar( the area in Kathmandu where I live) was even more ghastly than the rest of the city and I quickly thought of the few old buildings we had in our area, my heart was pounding vigorously as I continued to dial redial and dial again to my father then my mother my brother then back to my father again, I wouldn't let the 'unavailable tones' dishearten me anymore so I kept dialing one after the other and after probably the most unbearably tensed hour of my life my brother's phone connected. He'd been on a trip to the Chinese border just a day ago, in fact I had called him in the morning some half an hour before the quake, to think my instincts about getting worried for my brother was so accurate is so bizarre. His voice was unclear for the first few seconds so I yelled asking him if he was alright but inside I couldn't have been happier to know he was safe. After he assured his well being he asked me if I had gotten in contact with our parents and realizing the communication was that severed that calls within the country wasn't connecting only added more and more devastation to my mind.

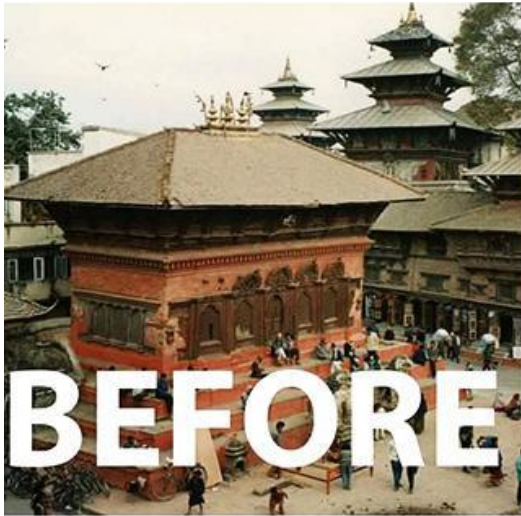
It took several hours before my brother somehow managed to get in touch with mom and dad, he'd asked his friends to go visit our place and confirm that our parents were unharmed and soon after he called me and told me everybody was safe and that they'd gone to the open ground just a few paces from my house. Mother left in such a hurry that she'd forgotten her phone on her bed and father was too busy making sure not just the two but all our neighbors had gotten out safely and were calm to avoid unnecessary panicking. When my father called to reassure me that there was nothing to worry about and that

everybody we knew were safe and sound at the moment I thanked heavens a million times. By late in the afternoon, the death toll had already surpassed five thousand a figure that was to double over the next few days. More and more devastating images and shocking news posts on facebook and google kept disheartening me, all of us Nepalese here in TKM contacted each other and made sure our families were safe. I turned to my friends and made sure to ask everybody as many as I could to check if they were okay.

Soon, my mother called me back too, she giggled on the phone," ...that's a lot of missed calls, we're fine choori( daughter), you don't worry...) and I just couldn't bear myself as I wept on the phone like I hadn't heard my mother's voice in forever, she asked me to calm down but I just couldn't handle it and wept for some time before I managed to gather myself as she went on to give me a brief overview of the situation which I pretty much had seen over the internet myself but hearing all that made it even worse.

My brother was supposed to return home that Saturday but unfortunately he was at the exact district where the epicenter had been. Bless the man who advised him and his friends to leave the hotel they stayed at and head back to Kathmandu because soon after he left entire hills and mountains had started to collapse right before his eyes, He must have witnessed countless of deaths and destruction along the way and he fought his way back, fighting not only the quakes and the aftershocks but also having to walk almost 100 kilometers to Kathmandu with no food and no proper shelter his horrors as he told me over skype a couple of days later sends chills down my spine so much that I can't thank my brother enough for being so brave and persistent and not giving up. He's a true Gorkhali indeed! He thanked mother's encouragement instead," Babu! Ghar farkera aau hai mah kurirako chu timilai! (Son, please come back home I'm waiting for you!) It was only on the next Monday morning that he'd somehow managed to walk back to Kathmandu and my family was reunited and more importantly safe.

Countless of other families were however not so fortunate as almost 9 thousand of confirmed deaths of which almost five hundred were foreign nationals sent the whole of Nepal and the world in a deep remorse. The severely affected areas had been the remote



villages outside the Kathmandu valley in the nearby districts where help couldn't reach in time for most and others lost their lives unable to survive after the earthquake destroyed all they had. Millions worth of ancient artifacts and monuments, several enlisted in the world heritage site by UNESCO was no more. Countries from all around the world were sending help in the forms of money, medicines, food, clothing, rescue officers and helicopters, what I pride upon the most is how every single person fit enough to walk participated in volunteering in every way possible, all my friends had joined cleaning and rescuing missions and safe guarding damaged and potentially threatening buildings. My family along with thousands of others all came forward to donate whatever they could to help in any way that they could. Some of my friends in Bangladesh and India came as medical helpers and worked continuously in the remote areas. Where experts had predicted the loss of lives of millions the figure was astonishingly low and credit to the integrity of the people who all came forward to rescue the nation.

Nepal, a nation unified over four centuries ago from tiny nations into one still remains united with the bonds we share with each other and although the devastating quake shook our lands, our hearts it couldn't wreck the bravery

We inherit from our brave ancestors and we've proved to the world that whatever disaster may befall us, we will stand together and face our foes, whether on the battle field or against mother nature herself and no amount of earthquake could ever weaken that. JAI NEPAL!

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പ്രണയം പരിച്ചെടുത്തിട്ടും നമുക്കിടയിൽ അകലം കുറയ്ക്കാൻ അവർ പണിത ഈ BOT പാലങ്ങൾ.

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