

## TRAVELOGUE

# NEMBUTSU NEPAL

**M**ANY come to Nepal from all over the world for hiking, trekking, rafting, yoga and much more. For three of us: Azra Mahmood, Muna Hasan and I, it was during the holidays when we decided to undertake an all girl's trip in an attempt to gaze at the artsy marvels that are antecedent of hundreds and thousands of years of craftsmanship. The ancient nation has a rich history which is reflected in each of her three main cities and the temples that dot them.

The origin of Nepal is still a mystery, giving rise to different conflicting theories. It was known as Satyavati in the Satya Era, Tapovan in the Treta Era, Muktisopan in the Dwapar Era and Nepal in Kali Era, according to Hindu Scriptures.

Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, is one of the world's oldest cities. The old part of the city, with narrow medieval streets and lovely little shrines, centers on the Durbar Square. Our first task was to find distinctive pagoda-roofed temples, stone sculptures, old monasteries and historic monuments in Durbar Square. The eastern wing with ten courtyards is the oldest part of the square dated

to the mid 16th century. The stone inscription outside the palace, now a museum, is in fifteen languages and legend states that if all the 15 are read, milk or gold would spring from the middle of the stone tablet. As known, this was the king's attempt to inspire everyone to be literate. Azra and I found almost all Bangla letters and some Hindi (as we want to believe)! The last Malla king to rule Kathmandu built a temple for Kumari and Durga in her virginal state. The temple was named Kumari Bahal and was structured like a typical Newarivihara. Currently Kumari resides in this house, a girl who is revered as the living goddess. Till today Nepal has living Goddesses who peep through the windows all decked up at a certain time for tourists. We were there at the right time to see the only living Goddess of the world, who came to the window and stayed for few seconds with no photos allowed.

