

**Kathmandu** (9/24/2007-9/31/2007, 11/6/2007-11/16/2007)

I must have liked Kathmandu because during each of my stays there I seemed to stay longer than I expected. Checking out of the Hotel on each occasion, I had to recount the days, thinking, “Wow was I really here that long.” I suppose that is mark of an intriguing city, which Kathmandu certainly is. There is no shortage of side trips to occupy the days, nor good restaurants to occupy the evenings. It’s truly amazing the variety of food on the menus in the restaurants that blanket the tourist area of Thamel. A typical menu consists of Indian, Chinese, Italian, Mexican, and Nepali cuisine. And even more miraculously, it’s decent. I had a couple great wood fired pizzas, a breakfast burrito (while not up to the standards Isla Vista’s Cantina, was decent for being a long way from California), and a couple of really good burgers. Arriving in Kathmandu after living off instant noodle soup Western Tibet was like entering a gastronomical paradise. Of course there is much more to Kathmandu than the food, it is culturally fascinating place as well. It is a place where Buddhism and Hinduism mingle together, intertwined over centuries of history. Mix in some beautiful wooden architecture, a turbulent political situation, 2 million people, possibly as many cows and dogs, and that is the chaotic blend that makes up Kathmandu.

Both of my stints in the city coincided with festivals. When I first arrived, the Kumri (a young girl worshipped as a living goddess) is pulled around the city in a large wooden chariot. The festival goes on for a few days. On one of the nights I attended, traditionally the king is supposed to be in attendance. However, given current political climate in which the royal house is out of favor, he sent the prime minister instead to bare the insults of a segment within the crowd who marched around yelling, “the prime minister is a crook, get out of Nepal.” At least this was according to one of the Nepali guys I was standing next to. My second visit to Kathmandu coincided with the Hindu festival of Diwali. In Nepali its called Deepwali, or Tee-hare, this festival is like Christmas, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and Halloween all rolled into one. During the celebration firecrackers are set off constantly, lights are hung up all around the city, and children go around singing songs for money. On various days devotees put a Tika (consisting of flower garlands around the neck and the red spot on the forehead) on, cows, dogs, and on the last day the sister puts a Tika on the brother. It makes it pretty easy to tell who has a sister and who does not because the guys walking around without the Tika don’t have a sister.



**Prime minister and V.I.P.s watching the festival in Durbar Square, Kathmandu.**



**Kumari's chariot, Durbar Square, Kathmandu.**



**A glimpse of the Kumari, Kathmandu.**



**Kumari's chariot, Durbar Square, Kathmandu.**



**Worshipping during  
the festival,  
Kathmandu.**



**Diwali lights, Kathmandu.**



**Dog with Tika during Diwali, Patan.**



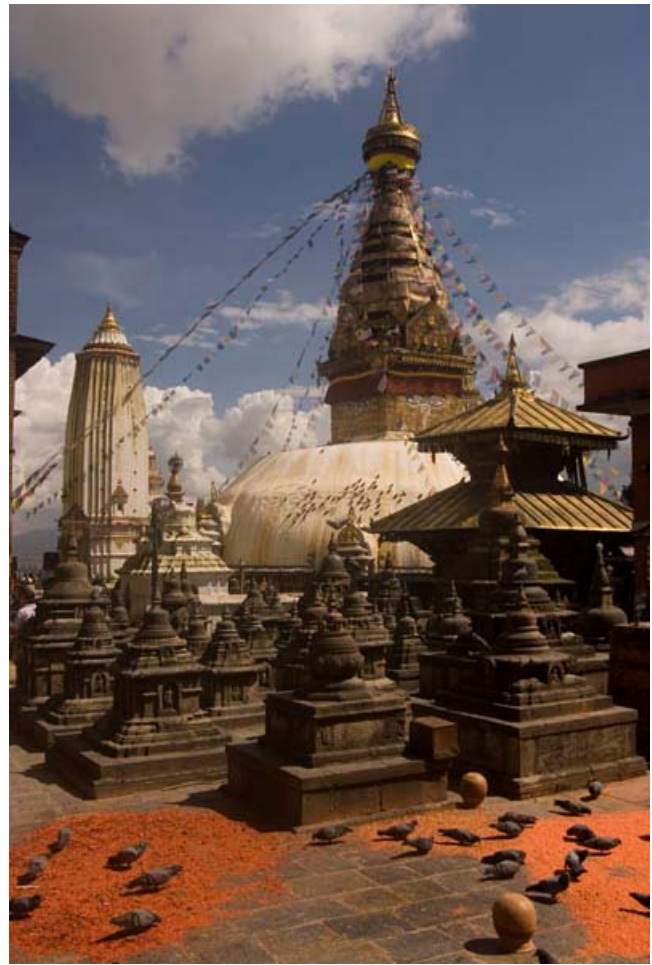
**Brother with Tika and sister on the last day of Diwali, Bungamati, Kathmandu Valley.**



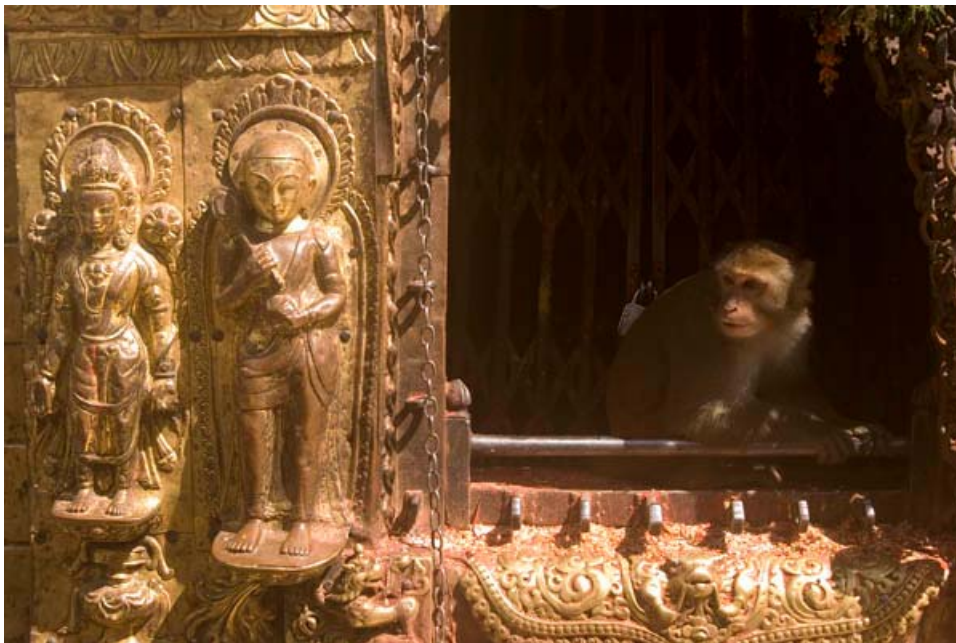
**Swavambhunath Stupa,  
Kathmandu.**



**Swavambhunath Stupa, also known as “the Monkey Temple,” Kathmandu.**



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**Baby monkey near Swavambhunath Stupa, also known as “the Monkey Temple,” Kathmandu.**



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**Baby monkey near Swavambhunath Stupa, also known as “the Monkey Temple,” Kathmandu.**



**Sleeping Vishnu,  
Budhanikantha, Kathmandu  
Valley.**



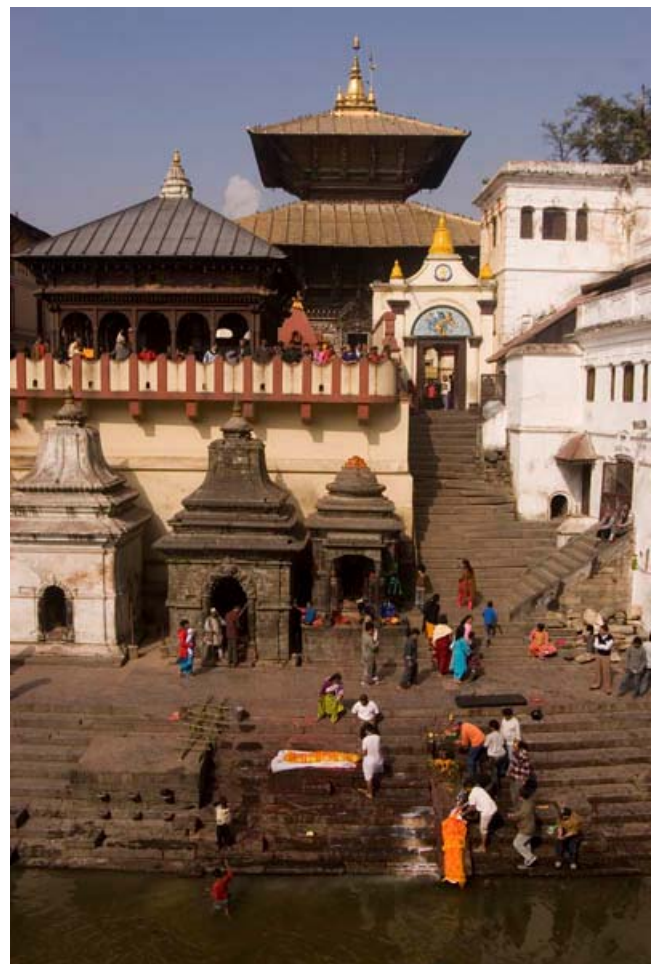
**Woman worshipping at the  
feet of sleeping Vishnu,  
Budhanikantha, Kathmandu  
Valley.**



**Budhanikantha, Kathmandu Valley.**



**Sleeping Vishnu, Budhanikantha, Kathmandu Valley.**



**Pashupatinath Temple with bodies being prepared for cremation, the most important Hindu temple in Nepal set along the holy Bagmati River, Kathmandu.**



**Puja along the Bagmati River near Pashupatinath Temple, Kathmandu.**



**Siva temple overgrown by a tree, Gokana Mathadev Temple, Kathmandu Valley.**



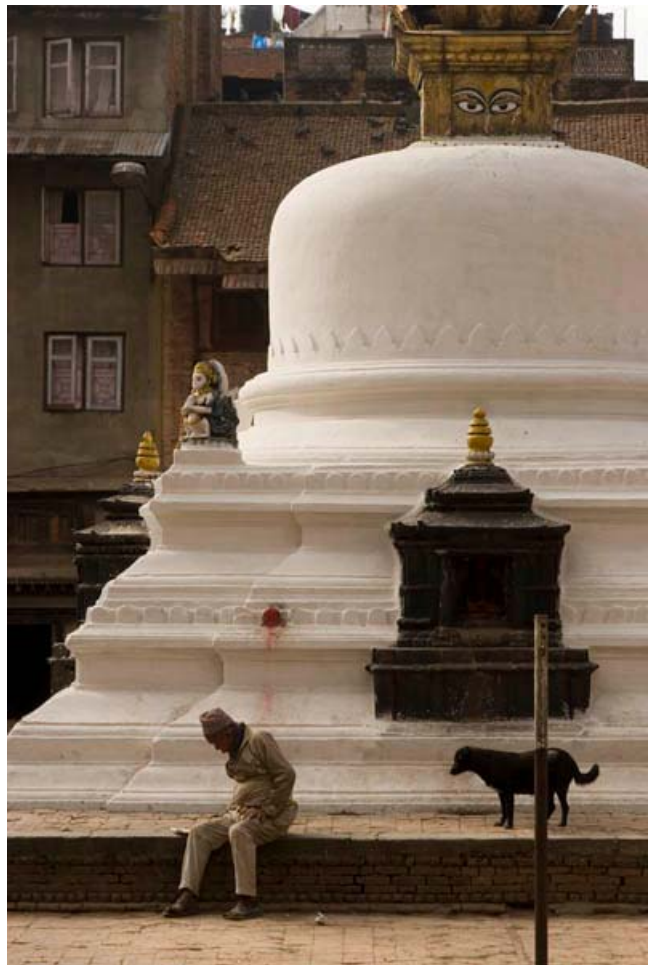
**Parvati (Siva's consort), Gokana Mathadev Temple, Kathmandu Valley.**



**Bodhnath Stupa, most important and largest stupa in Nepal, Kathmandu Valley.**



**Bodhnath Stupa, most important and largest stupa in Nepal, Kathmandu Valley.**



**Man and dog at a Stupa in Kathmandu.**



**Burning incense Kathmandu.**