

Family trip in the Himalayas

November 2017: Diki and I were invited to join Tsetan's family on a trip to India and Nepal. Tsetan was unable to come, someone must work he said.

Thubten, Pema and Zomkey were very excited about seeing their old home and friends in the Tibetan refugee camp at Jawalakhel, Kathmandu, a place they left over 10 years ago. Sangmo spent several months making all the arrangements including a very special blessing / audience with the Dalai Lama.

I met Thubten, Pema and Zomkey in Amsterdam and we continued to Delhi. Diki flew to Delhi via Seoul, and Sangmo flew from her home. We all met another sister Dickey at the Delhi airport early November 2nd. An old family friend in Delhi give us a place to stay. We arrived at their home around 3am for a four-hour nap before loading the 7 of us in a large van for a 10+ hour road trip to Dharmshala. The best of the roads has stops for tolls and road taxes (1), the lesser mountain roads have potholes the size of a small car and switchbacks every few feet. We arrived Dharmshala around 10pm and checked into a hotel getting some sleep before our 6am wakeup.

The audience was scheduled for 7:30am. After a short walk (2) and numerous security checks we were standing in the courtyard of his private residence inside the Namgyal Monastery. When the door opened the Dalai Lama was standing there with a big smile and motioned for us to approach. He said a few words to each person as he put his hand on their head or shoulder as they bowed their heads in respect. When it was my turn, he quickly extended his arm for a handshake and asked where I had come from. I replied I was from Los Angeles and was here with Thubten and his family. He asked if I was affected by the Southern California fires. I assured him I was not in any danger. Then he said we should take a photograph (3), we did and then said goodbye. While at the monastery Diki was given a name for her expectant daughter, Tenzin Lhayum (5).

In the afternoon Diki and I walked around the town (4) and paid a visit to Yangchen, his aunt and cousin. They live in the Tibetan Children's Village retired staff housing. By the way Diki lived/studied at TCV from the age of 5 until she returned to Lhasa 11 years later. Wangyal's mother, father and aunt were among her teachers.

The next day we were up early for the return drive to Delhi via Lake Rewalsar. The lake is a sacred place for Tibetans (6-7-8), you can read more about it here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rewalsar_Lake. This diversion added over four hours to the return trip.

Our last day in Delhi was spent visiting and shopping in the New Aruna Nagar Tibetan refugee camp. We also got sister Dickey a bus ticket to Kathmandu. Dickey is a Tibetan refugee without travel documents and unable to fly so she took a two-day bus trip.

The next day flight from Delhi to Kathmandu was chaotic. Thubten, Pema, Zomkey, Diki and I arrived at the airport ready to travel. Sangmo planned to come the next day. At check in only Diki and I are given boarding passes. Thubten, Pema and Zomkey are told the flight was full and they would fly the next day. They ended up staying at the airport hotel while Diki and I took our flight. Landing in Kathmandu was a pleasant relief. Our friend Ram, a manager for Drukair, the Royal Bhutan Airways, met us as we got off the plane, took us through diplomatic immigration, picked up the bags and escorted us through customs. At the curb was Tshering, a family friend, waiting with her car and driver. We repeated the airport trip two

more times the next day before all the travelers were together again at Tshering home.

Over the next three days we toured the city (9-11), visited the family home and carpet factory (10) where Thubten had worked. The city was certainly different from my earlier visits in 1982 and 1999. Damage from the 2015 earthquake was still visible especially in the old city center of Durbar Square (12-13.)

After 5 days, I said my goodbyes and took off for the trip I had originally planned, Australia and New Zealand. The family stayed behind for a few more weeks of visiting with friends and family before they return to their homes.



1. Road Tax Workers



2. Namgyal Monastery Entrance



3. Photo Prep



The Dalai Lama and family. November 3, 2017, Namgyal Monastery, Dharamshala, India



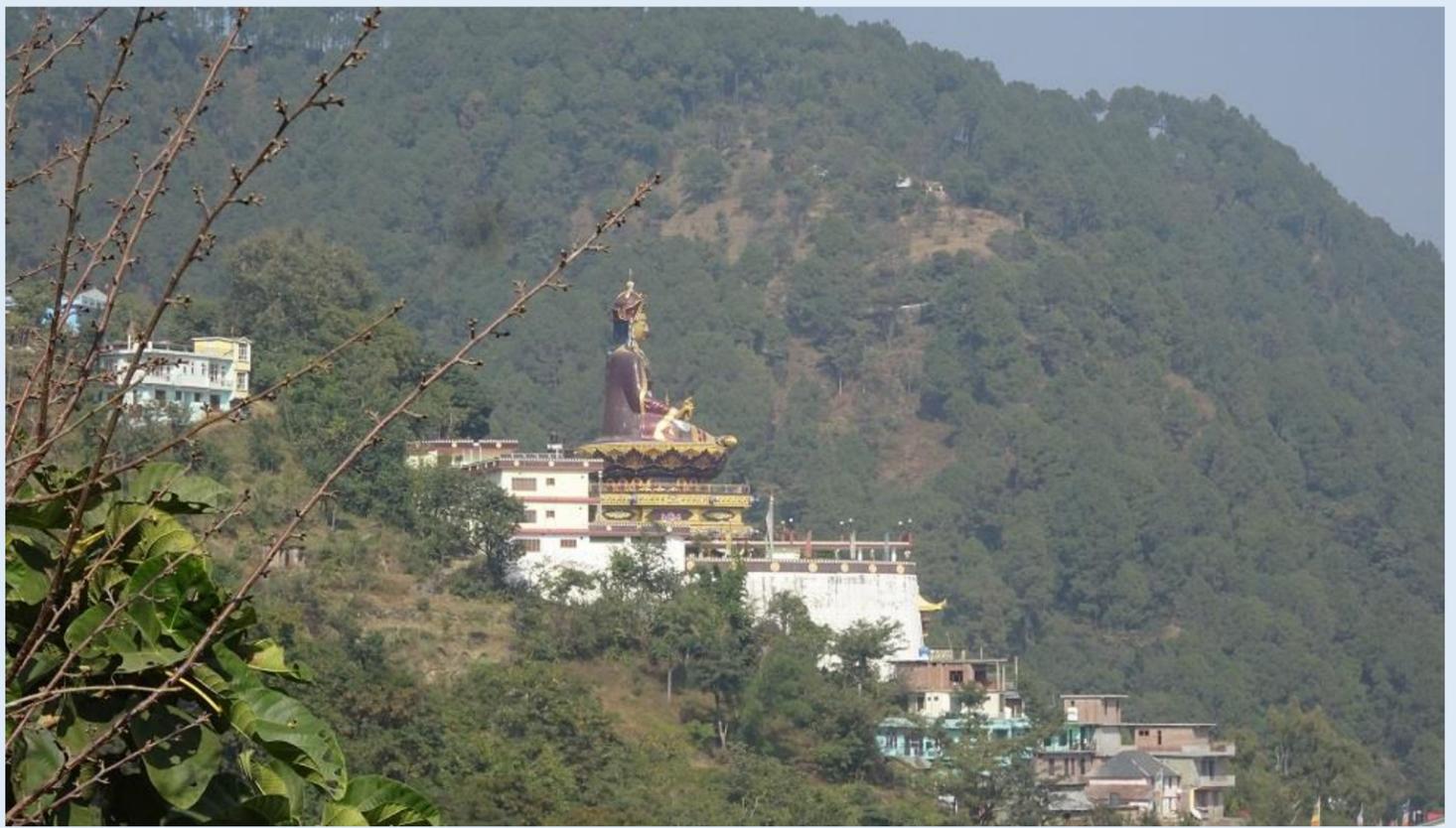
Baby Name Tenzin Lahyum



5. Kalachakra Temple



Auntiela, Yangchen and cousin



6. Guru Rinpoche



7. Rewalsar Lake



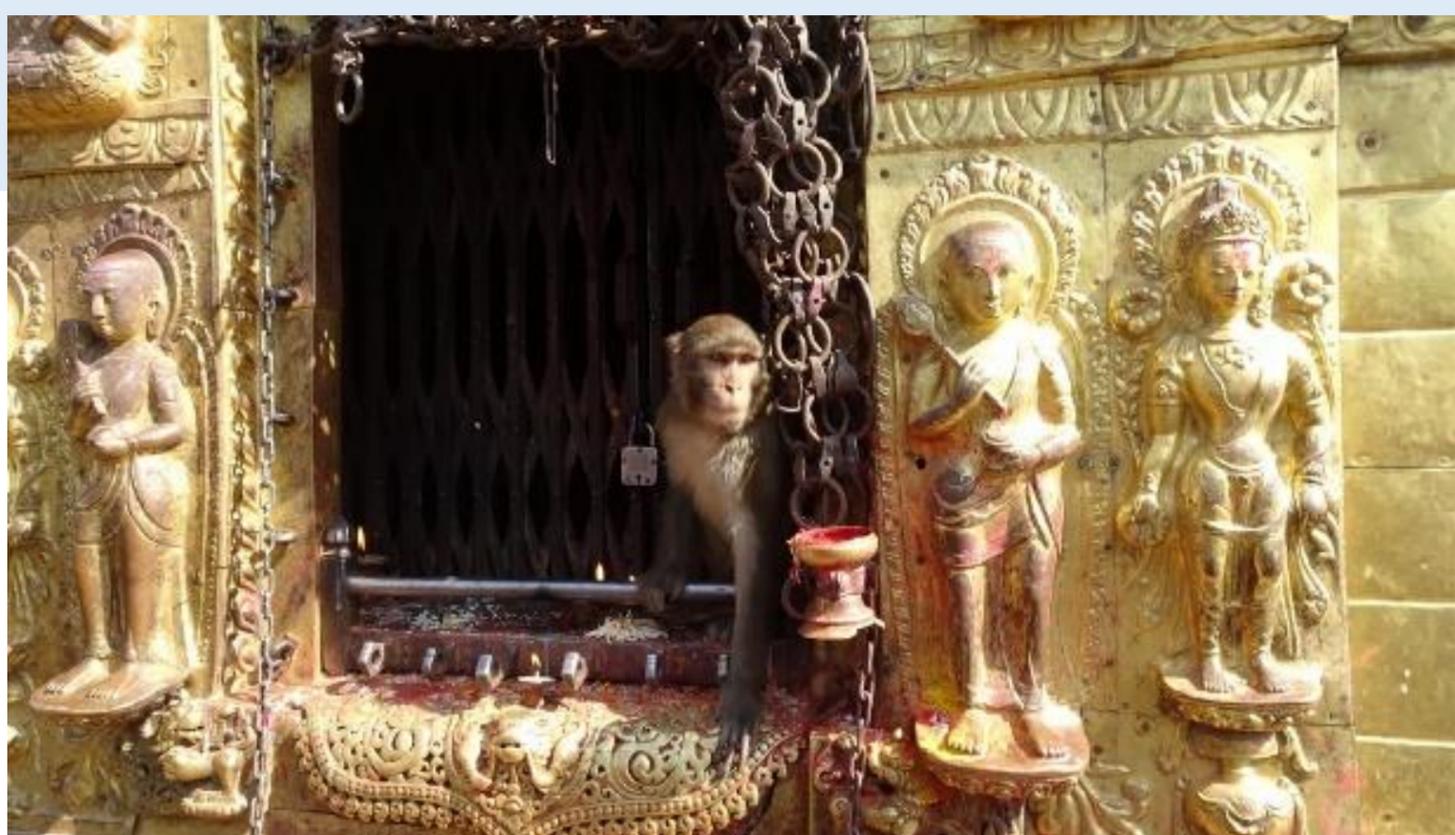
8. Rewalsar Nunnery



9. Great Buddha Stupa



10. Spinning Thread



11. Monkey Temple



12. Kumari Ghar



13. Durbar Square