

128/3/96 Dharamshala (back again).

A new flowery diary! - bit soft! We're back in Dharamshala after three sunny days in Dalhousie (its now overcast here - I think we're destined to see Dharamshala in the cloud!). The Dalai Lama starts his public teachings in four days time apparently and the place is absolutely packed. We asked around a few hotels which were all full and ended up taking a room about 10-15 minutes walk out in amongst the terraces to the east of McLeod Cant, which is really nice (and only 60 Rs a night!). The family are carpenters (I think as they were all busy making window frames for two new rooms they've added on, all properly jointed etc. quite impressive. The other reason I say that is that the beds are (nicely finished off mind you) thin mattresses on solid wood. Should sort out any odd hints in my back over the next couple of nights anyway!

12/3/96 Had a busy day yesterday. Spent the morning organising money, checking out buses etc and registering for a public audience with the Dalai Lama which should be good (a nice compromise as a personal audience would just be a waste of his time). Went for a rather strenuous walk around the terraces (and up and down goat tracks, and rocky bouldered river bed down to Bhagsnath to have a look at the temple and search for an elusive germon bakery and its famed carrot cake I'd heard about (no luck!). The trip there took over an hour and the trip back by road 20 min! Really must stop making things hard for myself but its nice to get off the tracks at times

also I suppose.

We then went down and had some conversation sessions with some Tibetans who were trying to learn English which was interesting. Really drove home the fact that they were refugees. One guy had only been here for two weeks, the most experienced for three years - Rinchen, Lopsang, Gombo and Tendun. They had walked the trip here; sixteen days and across the passes, not a bad effort considering they would have had very little gear. One guy, Lopsang, was a painter but the others had no job and were learning English as a starting point. Inquiries about jobs and if they would be able to get one in Australia if they went. A bit of a nervous time coming from what is essentially a pretty isolated country, into McLeod Ganj with the Dalai Lama and the monks, the throngs of western travellers and the Indians. A huge world and in it somewhere, who knows where, their futures, all confronting them face on. And they face it all with the same serene countenance all the Tibetans seem to have, they must get a fair amount of support from help groups here I imagine and they are all in it together. Maybe I will do something to help when we get back home.

Met Jan, a Swedish sociologist who is here studying the internal politics of the Tibetans over dinner. A lot of people to govern with not so much governing to do it would seem resulting in a lot of toing + froing about the organisational set up. Four factions or states, 10 counties all with three representatives each (I think? - politics + all the lingo not my strong point!) regardless of the number of people in each group and a reform party trying to get a more even spread of power and undermining the power of the system in doing so, attracting power itself and

becoming the start of what might be a multi-party democratic system. At the moment the reform party is held together by the common ideal of reform but there are many different views on policy within so once reform comes (if it does) it won't be long before it breaks apart into smaller bits. The current representatives of the people realise this potential loss of power and don't want to sit down and talk about reform as far as I can gather. The Dalai Lama (who generally stays out of this internal politicking) was apparently invited to a political session yesterday to throw a bit of oil on the troubled waters. He was advocating the sitting down and talking it through. Jan seems to think that the power will eventually pass to the reform party - all very interesting!

Also talked a bit about trekking etc. Jan had spent quite a bit of time around the Himalayas. We will definitely have to come back and do some proper prepared trekking around here and maybe up to Leh and Ladakh (where the little girl we sponsor lives) even. Another time.

After a Rs 5 late session of 'Colder Edge' the latest James Bond film (of dubious quality, screened at the local video hall!) we finally made it to bed about 12, a very late night for us!

(James shadow walked across the screen at one time!)

Life in the little houses and paths around the terraces seems to revolve around looking after the animals. Women bring huge bundles of feed down from the hills (oak cuttings) on their backs. I think this must be a daily thing as there is



and valley on the other side, and a small timber bridge over the river on the way. Clear, fresh, cold greens and greys with touches of turquoise and white bubbles the rivers are something to see in themselves. The terracing was beautiful as always and there were some little kids with big cone cone shaped baskets on their backs waving to us from the fields around the houses at the top. What a place to live, nature ~~and~~ the hills and mountains and air pressing themselves in on you from all sides. It can feel almost deafening at times, I think it must be the constant silence of the hills or the sound of the river faint from below, always there it's as if you are fighting against it with your voice and once you've stopped it just closes in around you again, steady and immense and always there.

Anyway we walked back around by the flatter but longer track which turned out to be the one that goes by Dal lake that we took mistakenly the last time we were here when everything was shrouded in mist. Well the mist had cleared this time and Dal lake is a muddy little pond just as everybody had told us it would be. Being late for english classes with the Tibetans we steamed back (W) in sunset along the way, lit up all of the trees - spruces or pines or firs I don't know? a golden colour and turned the snow on the peaks to pink ~~orange~~ along with the clouds) and arrived a bit puffed, a bit sweaty and more than a bit (30 min) late for school!

(Had we went though) as us and one other girl were the only ones there (apart from the formal teacher) and a few people broke away from the class happy to see us for

a chance to talk - really nice feeling. Spoke to Lopsong and another quiet monk whose name I can't remember and another guy, an ex-teacher called Topten! At the end of the session we talked to them a bit about their crossing - really amazing they all come from eastern

Tibet and travelled

by bus to Chasa

and finally

Shigatse (I think?)

where they walked

across the border

at night, with hands

over torches to reduce

the light and though

three or four or more

feet of snow. If they

are caught by the Chinese

police or even the Nepalese

border police who hand them back to

the Chinese for a bit of monetary reward I think, they face a

beating in jail and three years working in a railway gang where

conditions aren't too good (demonstrated by the hollowing out of

cheeks actions). They arrive at a refuge in Kathmandu and after

one time in hospital they need (a lot of footbites and even the

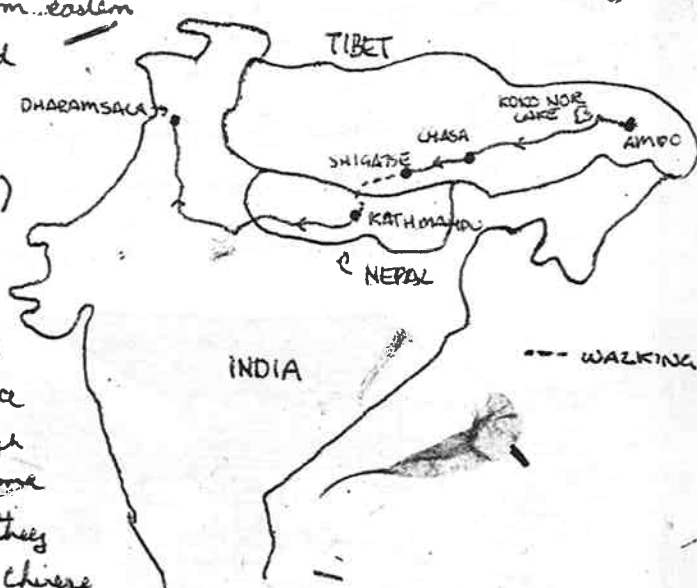
odds death from the cold) they travel to Dharamsala by bus. The

walk takes 15 odd days from Shigatse to Kathmandu, a pretty

hard and desperate feat! It's no wonder they all look so happy and

calm after going through something like that, this must be like heaven

the promised land!



An early night - nice to have some free time to ourselves (recreation!).

nowhere else really for the cows to graze, all the terrace fields are filled up with the yellow flowers (mustard seed for vegetable oil I think) and the lush grass that must get used for feed later on during the drier months. Typical scenes are cows enjoying the sun in the front courtyards munching on their feed in the mornings, little calves tied up on the path being fed handfuls of the lush grass. Later on the cows in their stables (the lower rooms of the house) chewing cud or being milled (or both). Little guppy tibetan terraces standing on high porches



THE TERRACES  
M'LEOD GANT

keeping passers-by at bay, girls sweeping cobblestones & cows mess, inch water pipes bent this way and that along the paths with skidding leads here and there where they've been beat a bit for. Clothes hanging from lines and the balconys of the reduced height upper storeys. The smaller upper storeys with the deep balconies that are typical to the houses

give a bit of a mystical feel, like an imagined world sprung out of a Tolkien ~~novel~~. A garbage slope at the top of the hill just before you get into the main bit of town where the dogs & ~~crows~~ odd cow siff through to hid scraps and generally reduce the impact on the environment! And finally snowy peak just out of sight behind the brow of the top of the hill and a largely unadvised view out to the valley and the plains of the side which nevertheless seems to sit there stretching out in the corner of your minds eye.

Another busy afternoon, lunch - meals always seem to be major events these days, I can't believe the volume of food that I'm eating! I don't know if it's because I just want to eat as much as possible & because I know the food's good and just around the corner may be another Tahrj where it's chopatis, silver nitrate water and three ever so slight variations of overdose veges in sulphuric acid soup; or if it's because of the amount of energy we are expending in walking and keeping warm, or whether it's just rejoicing in the joy of eating and being able to keep it down after the Khajuraho experience! Anyway it's the main cost of living and it gets to the stage of being time consuming and a nuisance even, but on the other hand sitting in a restaurant, sipping warm drinks and watching the world (and a variety of dishes) go by can't be unenjoyable! - anyway back to the afternoon.

We went for a walk up through Dhormahot and over to the terrace hill on the other side of the valley just after the temple, straight down and straight up, what looked like a short little trapeze to the other side of the valley was really hard work! It was worth it however, good views of the mountains



between it all, starting deep down in the earth and ending up high in the sky somewhere. That's not to say concrete is or can't be pleasing to the eye; it just has to be thought about a bit that's all.

// Spent the afternoon walking down to Bloqo temple and up past the big date quarry to sit in the sun on a rock for a while and listen to the water run past (the river). Back to school for a few conversation classes, again not many people there as it was a Sunday and our presence was appreciated. Would be very easy to stay for a while and become a part of the town, and would be very interesting too with all of the politics and culture and religion / meditation to learn about, but not this time... who knows one day we may be back to lend a hand or to do some study.

4/3/96 Reincarnation of the XIV<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama: apparently when the XIV<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama was laid to rest his body was ~~put~~ embalmed and put on display. After some time it was noticed that his head had turned to the North East and so treating this as a sign a band of holy men and reincarnates travelled from the Potala Palace where his body lay, to the north east until they came across a lake renowned for producing visions. Here they fasted and prayed and stared into the lake for days until they were provided with a vision of a gold topped temple and a small house with blue eaves. The vision of the temple led them to a particular town and after a month of searching <sup>the surrounding area</sup> they found a small peasant's house that

fit the description. One of the holy men dressed in beggars clothes knelt on the door to ask for food and a woman answered with a baby boy in her arms. The baby boy said to the man (who had been the XIV<sup>th</sup> Lama's head teacher) 'do you not remember me?' As a test, three of the previous Lama's possessions were laid on a table along with slightly more ornate copies of them by their side. When asked to choose the boy went straight to the table and took the genuine articles (his own possessions) on all three occasions. Amidst much rejoicing and many tears the reincarnate had been found.

That's pretty close to the story anyway - it is told well in the film 'Compassion in Exile'.

// ↑ Actually when the woman answered the door, the little boy started tugging on a string of beads around the monk's neck saying 'mine, mine, give me', the beads had belonged to the 13<sup>th</sup> Lama.

5/3/96 Well, went and saw the Dalai Lama yesterday in a public audience (with what must have been about five hundred other westerners and over a thousand Tibetans). We all lined up at the entrance to his residence by the temple in M-Lood Gang. Was interesting listening to all the different people in the line, travellers like us, dreadlocked alternatives, happy dippy mystics, the regular people Tibetan fans, how that for some pigeon holing? The monks were all in prayer (it that's what it is - chanting) in the temple above us. After some security checks we joined another line which tapered into a single line of people that circled

3/3/96 There is a small calf at the place we are staying. He was born last week during the thunderstorm (that brought the rain for us when we were here last!) and still has his umbilical cord. The old man here looks after it bringing it grass and trying to hand feed it 'chopatis' but I think it is still on milk. Its nice to see his compassion whether its that for a new born baby animal or for his future livelihood, all intertwined together. I suppose which is what is beautiful about farm life.



The Tibetan National Flag (Free Tibet!)

Just saw the film 'Compassion in Exile' a film about Tibet's plight and the Dalai Lama. Quite a shock, a people their rights, their culture, their religion being eradicated by the Chinese. Crimes against a people who resist by non-violence and compassion and a belief in their culture; while the majority of the rest of the world turns a blind eye the economic subconscious stronger than the humanitarian.

Tibetan Buddhism is about helping other people achieve enlightenment also (the greater vehicle - ) Everything you see in these people, the serenity and openness (especially against the background of some of the money grabbing Indians you see across - by a means typical by the way!), an earthly brightness and strength in their eyes and faces. You can't escape the impression that here is a place and a people who are the heart of the world, the cultured, refined and human part of the soul that the rest of us like to think we have within ourselves

But Calm - Most Indians are really nice!

(somewhere!) and like so many other naturally beautiful things it is being trodden on and the destruction being allowed by the rest of the materially strong of us. And like other natural things, I believe it is more a part of us, more intertwined with our future than we realize. What hope is there for a world that can allow the destruction of its own soul?

I'm not sure how all of this will affect me - will have to let it sink in for a while and see what comes of it.

Also impressed by what he was saying about his meditation, he has separated mind from body (like dying) seven times I think (sound on the video wasn't that good!) and this he says is more useful when the actual time comes. Are these the first steps to taking us beyond what we are now, creatures bound from the seas still tied to our earthly bodies by ignorant minds? We have to read some books on death & dying in Tibetan culture (there are a few around), but not now, I'm still tied somehow to the immediate surroundings and... and just know I'm not ready yet!

'Love and Compassion are a world wide religion'

H.H. XIV<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.

Well - easy to be carried away, (and for good reason) back to a few walks etc. to get some perspective.

There is something about concrete which is separating, drawing boundary lines between things, and finally between earth, water, fire & sky (the constituents according to Ptolemy I think), something which is not there in natural elements where there is a continuity



that is strong and growing and anything but downtrodden.

Still reading at the moment 'A brief History of the Universe'. What an amazing thing science and more the universe is! The general theory of relativity predicting changes in the rate of time due to mass (potential energy +  $\therefore$  frequency + speed of light etc) and Quantum mechanics and Planck's uncertainty principle that predicts the random formation + annihilation of particles + anti-particles in free space (as nothing can be said to have an exact value - 0 for instance!). I would love to know all about them and understand them properly - maybe one day. (always one day!)

Today is the last day of Loshang in the Tibetan calendar (the first two weeks of the new year <sup>(Losha?)</sup>) and is a holiday. It coincides with the full moon and there's dancing etc apparently at the temple later on. What is interesting is that no one visits family on the first day of the new year as your actions on that day set the tone for the rest of the year and nobody wants to argue + fight!

It is also Colour Festival or Holy Day for the Hindus (as you can see  $\leftarrow$ ) and everybody throws coloured powder and water bombs at each other in fun, it ranges from drunk over zealous crowds in the streets of the cities which can get a bit out of hand (especially if you a female westerner) we've heard down

to kids visiting around the neighborhood adding a lot of colour here + there to your face. Incredibly fine powder that is really hard to get out! Holidays all round - yay!!!

7/3/96 Manali

Ten hour bus trip yesterday, three hours longer than what we were told and not impressed. Had a rough throat and wasn't feeling all that amicable made worse by what seemed an especially high number of arrogant Indian ~~honey~~ moonies. Wastey pathetic people!

The last three hours of the trip was up the Kulu valley which was really nice. Started in a steep impressive canyon with a river that would be great for rafting flowing into a big reservoir. The road was cut out of the rock and wound its way along the river the whole way up. Further up around Kulu, the canyon widened to a big valley with a string of small villages (actually I'm not even sure if it wasn't; just a whole lot of houses strung the whole way up) and there was a lot of white Apple blossom about which added to it all. The last stretch to Manali was barely more than riverbed at times with the remains of the old road spread here + there along the way washed out by the last big snow melt or monsoon or whatever!

around the courtyard in the front of his house where we passed by him one by one. Everybody had white scarves (which I thought we were supposed to present to one of his helpers but which just staid around our necks) and some people had bundles of cords (which you then present to your teacher etc. I think) and strings of beads like rosmary beads, the significance of which I am not sure, which they held out to be blessed.

The actual passing by of him was so quick he didn't have time for much more than a glance in your direction and then the next + the next + the next, so I guess it left like a little bit of a let down, there weren't any flows of energy or spiritual presences felt but maybe you have to have more faith in that type of thing for it to affect you. But it was exciting, everybody went quiet as you came into the courtyard, and there he was, the XIV<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, rounded humped shoulders and smiling face amongst the red and yellow robes, short little bowing movements and hands held out to greet the passers by. 'H is Gentleness!'

We were presented with a little red cord with a special knot in it which we found out later (when helping the English students) is supposed to protect the path our life takes from obstructions. And there it was, A meeting with the XIV<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet!

We went up with Lopsang to his room, a little place up some windy and precarious in places steps at the back of McLeod

Graig, to have a look at his paintings (after English Class). He stood us up the day before when he apparently had a chance meeting with the director of the Institute he is trying to get into, and presented him with his one finished painting as a gift and example of his work. He paints 'tantras' which are colorful pictures of Tibetan culture and religion.

He shared his room with two others, one of which was there and we met and he was very impressed with. He was one of those people who has it, whatever it is, a very calm and in control countenance at the same time flowing, buzzing with an underlying energy. He had studied photography and publishing and was helping to produce a small newspaper, he had books on all sorts on his shelves which he obviously had studied in detail and we talked a bit about Australia and the plight of art today in western culture etc. He struck me as a leader of people and ideals and was very inspiring.

Rinchen another student at the classes who had long black hair and glasses that gave him a John Lennonish appearance was also quite impressive in that some way, although with him it was more a political feeling of political ideals rather than learning of culture.

These guys are here, free from most of the trivialities that entrap and soften westerners making them trivial themselves at times it seems, and they have an energy and a cause, its really inspiring and its the other side to a people downtrodden and held under by the Chinese, a positive side, a part of the living Tibetan culture.




lifts!) but the scenery is beautiful, snow covered peaks all around; fir/spruce? covered lower mountains and higher rock and snow peaks craggy and crystal clear against the blue sky (blue today anyway!).

Lots of Indian day trippers up to look at the snow, funny to watch. They hire out gum boots and 3/4 length fur coats (that come in brown, dark green and royal blue!). To ski they get a set of equipment between them and take turns with it hiring out someone to push them around the Hats at the bottom of the hill, these slightly chubby + soft men and their grunting wives being pushed around by the poor old local coolies, all having a good time however, even the coolies enjoying it. They also have sleds that you can hire, two coolie powered wooden benches on runners seating the same daytripping Indians. It's painful + embarrassing to watch, these couples like a pampered upper class (which they probably are) being pushed around by these poor coolies powering away heads down, up to the base of the ski tows to have a look + then over to the food stalls for some chai, hopping off every now and then to pick up ~~some~~ a ball of this snow stuff and toss it up and down to assess + evaluate. The coolies must quiver in their boots at sight of some of these overweight Indians coming their way at the bottom of the hill. The trip down looked a bit

more fun, the coolies racing down with the sled in an effort to keep up and steer, hurtling over the bumps ye-hah!

sitting talking to some people in the restaurant of our hotel, too many things to do - Helisking, trekking here, in Nepal, Doreeling, rafting in Nepal, Tibet, not enough time + not enough money agghh....!

The local people around Himachal Pradesh are really nice, a lot more sedate in their clothes than the colours of Rajasthan and as I've said before I think, there seems to be less young idiots giving you a hard time like you get in some of the cities in the south, probably because the towns up here are smaller, and colder they all go south to study? Less young men out to make a buck or to become English.

The men wear these woolen felt caps with an  upturned panel at the front with different colours and jackets and trousers also woolen. The jackets have the small half inch upturned collars and the pants are cut like Jodhpurs (usually with patches here + there). It's a proud look and gives a sense of society, the fact that they are all well worn and well cut <sup>making</sup> them a ~~valuable~~ <sup>valuable</sup> ~~fact~~ <sup>fact</sup> of the people and the land, <sup>something</sup> that never clothes lack.

The women in this area anyway, not so much elsewhere wear these blankets pinned around them into a type of dress and scarves over their heads.

It's all very distinctive and they are quiet and reserved

Went up to Vashisht village today, what a great little place! Sulphur spring baths on the way up where you could hire out a room with a big bath for 50Rs a half hour. Don't know if it was the sulphur or the steam or what but felt really lightheaded coming out - thought I was going to black out!

The actual village is a maze of houses here and there with the same arrangement as in the terraces around McLeod Canj. Cows and the courtyard at ground level and the living area and full length verandah at first floor height. Big thick slabs of stone as roofing tiles, quite a weight especially considering the verandah cantilevered out in most cases, but I would imagine they get a fair old snow load they have to carry in mind - winter anyway.

A couple of buildings had great wood carvings, some so ornate in form (of the buildings that is) I thought they must be temples (and they may have been) but one was just locked up with an old padlock as a woman left so...? There are also some public baths in the village proper (25 paise to mind your shoes) where there is an ornate temple with carved timber and a mens and ladies bathing area. Hot water running in the drainage channels in the cobbled streets outside, how hard would it be to take a room here for 500 Rs a month and shi + walk and have a hot bath awaiting you when you got home! Wandering around you come across the odd loom (klak-a-dklacka...) being quietly worked

under the shelter of a verandah away from the rain (the Kulu valley is famous for its wooden shawls). Anyway great little village, just felt like a bit of a sightseer wandering through, would be nice to rent a room in one of the houses and live there for a while!

WD 9/6/46

	A\$	SINCE START (46)	LAST WK (7)	
US TCHA's	600 x 1.4 = 840			
US CASH	100 x 1.4 = 140	A\$	21.3	12.4
Rs	2450 / 25 = 98	R\$	532	309
ANGLOPES	2500 / 25 = 100	(55)	386	
	<u>1178</u>	31/4/46		

TOTAL BROUGHT = 2580 + 15000/25 = 3180 A\$

The houses in Vashisht were built from an interesting (to an engineer maybe, probably not to the rest of the world) combination of timber and stone which would really work well and looked really nice, light grey river stone and



lacquered natural pine colour. & bad representation!

8/3/46 Solang

Realized we would be arriving in Delhi on a weekend + as we are only passing through visas etc decided to spend another couple of days up here. Came up to have a look at the snow and have a bit of a shi and ended up at the Friendship hotel at Solang in the snow with wood stove in our room (toasty! as Anqi puts it). The shing, isn't that great (not through lack of snow just a lack of

W/O BAL 276  
POST 343 (20)  
SOCKS 65



Harley + Simon, the volunteer teachers from Manali getting into practice for the heli-skiing trip they're trying to organise. Teja, the director keeping people happy and things together. A tired feeling...

Spoke to the guide - Prithvi Raj Sharma - about trekking and the hills for a while. Really interesting, the place where Shiva meditated wait for from here and religion flows down to the people in the rivers and streams, there is a plethora of smaller 'minor' gods in charge of the crops and the weather etc. Stories of the cultures of the little isolated villages like Malana, exorcisms and rituals. He did some work for an Italian anthropologist the results of which have taken any doubt from his mind that the Himalayas are indeed the mountains and the valleys of the gods. Will have to make it back here for a month or so's trekking, Himachal Pradesh remains unfinished.

11/3/96 Spent the day yesterday around Vashisht, the majority of it that I can remember sitting in an apple orchard, reading in the sun and watching people go by, and everywhere and everything ringing with sunshine!

I want to mention that we met Stephen from the Australian office (foreign office) in Cambodia whilst

we were in Manali. Was good to have another (more cynical given his experiences with the press in Cambodia) view on everything. Had some interesting discussions on third world development and all of that. Foreign investment and quality of life  $\Leftrightarrow$  developed status. Both came to the answer I think that the longer big companies like Macas + KFC leave India alone the better!

Arrived in Delhi today - hot! - more westerners, and more flies also than I remembered last time. We will be here for another couple of days before leaving for Varanasi as we have to wait for our Chinese Visas to be processed. Hmm... keen to get going.

Just read 'Animal Farm' by George Orwell, great book, up there or above '1984' even. Very inspiring comrades, long live the rebellion!

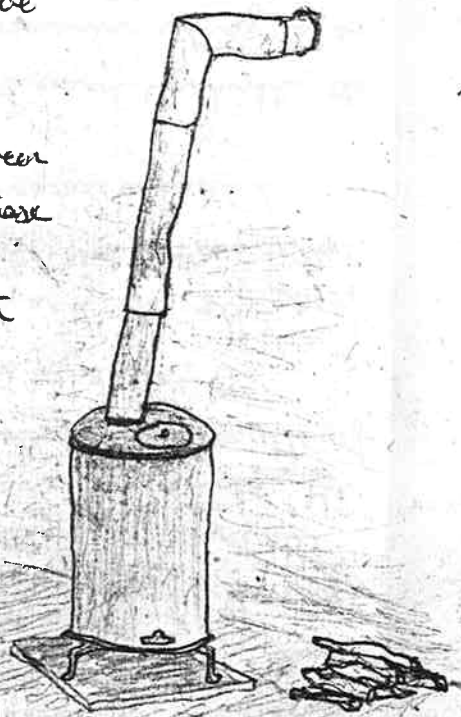
12/3/96 Delhi (last time?)

Yesterday was all a bit busy mostly due to the fact we'd spent fifteen hours on an overnight bus from Manali. Slept surprisingly well considering I had a blocked nose and some throat that were a potential for disaster. Luckily the heat of Delhi seems to have kept them at bay. Spent all of our day organising - money, visas, train tickets, forms to be filled out, queues

and makes you feel at times that you are intruding on a beautiful thing (which we are I suppose), it makes you keep your distance a little in order not to trivialize it into a curiosity. Still though it is changing, because of us, because of the Indian tourists, because all of the inroads better communications + infrastructure makes.

And our little wood stove is great!

11/3/96 Have felt like we've been on a bit of a high these last two weeks, but that it's been tapering off just this last day or so, perhaps because of this sore throat that has been threatening. And then there is Dehli and Varanasi and the warmth of the plains, and then onto Darjeeling and Nepal all just hanging around the corner, an anticipation of energy, waiting there for us to collect. Quite a strange hung feeling, like the tops of the humps in a joy ride, a slow motion poised drifting before the next plunge. Looking forward to Dehli :-!



A cake lit by one incandescent globe and the fading light off the snow outside. A few people loitered about reading and writing and playing cards to covers of The Crustal Dead. A wood stove in the middle of the room warming damp feet + drying wet shoes, a little brass figure about six inches high of a skiing mountain goat adorning the blackened lid, ~~the~~ Skiing trophies on shelves around the top of the room and an old man smoking the biggest pipe you've ever seen behind the front counter, content to sit and watch the spasm going on, a slow gurgling noise emitting from his pipe from time to time. (This is the same guy who wandered through last night, twirling wool into a big ball for the shawl he is making on the wooden loom on the verandah out the back). There is a blackened kitchen out the back where on two baroque stools the cook with the aid of his helper some waiter prepares an amazing variety of dishes. A dark enclosed space with a grimy layer softening every surface. The people who wander in and out during the course of the night include, the young Indian up for a weeks holiday from a cosmetics store in Goa quiet and a bit wide-eyed, the mountain biking, skiing, trekking you name it guide who has been giving a few girls skiing lessons today, the English couple up for the ski-touring, the Aussie snowboarder,





to come and wheelbarrow<sup>us</sup> out every now and then to a nearby restaurant or to replenish our supply of ice cream and donuts - get white tourists, soft as they come! :)

Am still amazed by the streets, such a mish-mosh of people and things it's impossible to know how to begin to even give a faithful picture.

13/3/96 First of all there are all the shops that line the streets. A grubby place selling coal, bits of coal stacked neatly in ~~metal~~ steel shelves, fossilized bits of timber (is that the right word - fossilized?) all meticulously sorted and stacked according to size. The stationary shops with a million and one different ledger and accounts books, pens, rubbers, tapes, envelopes, some looking like they hadn't been disturbed in ten or twenty or more years. The shop owner needing to browse as much as the customer to see if he has what has been asked for. Cosmetic shops selling bangles and cheap adornments but above all else bindis the little spots worn on the foreheads coming in all shapes and sizes and varying degrees of complexity. From cheap punched out packs of ten to individually cased hand made masterpieces full of minute pearl strings and gold wiring. Then there are the spice shops, frontages an arrangement of full to the brim burlap sacks, huge sacks of dried red chillies, nuts and beans and lentils, dried roots and fifty other various unknown commodities, a big set of balance scales and weights in the middle of it all. Saree shops selling a thousand different types and colour of material. From

large emporium type affairs four or five shop lengths across full of fluorescent lighting and rainbow shelves full of neatly folded material, to small one or two man affairs with reams of material + ~~clothing~~<sup>sarees</sup> hung out to give the impression of a small golden selling space adorned by a hundred colourful and luxurious curtains. The salesman cross legged in front of their customer who sit around in a circle on mats while sarees are thrown out like a billowing streamer one at a time for maximum effect, a real display of light and colour concentrated in one place. Welding workshops or cycle repairs etc, dark places with grease and metal grime covering everything, white eyed grime covered shop assistants or mechanics squatting amongst the tools and odd bits and pieces straightening out a bicycle wheel, smashing together the steering of a rickshaw in pieces or even assembling an electrical generator. Restaurants or Chai shops, a well worn arrangement of wooden benches + laminated tables fronted by the den of pots + pans and cooking grease that surrounds the singlet daal cook and his burner. Pumping the herosare reservoir and tossing + sloshing his concoctions of spice + sauces an integral element, the central nervous system of this living breathing blackened animal of a kitchen. Glasses of Chai slopped around here and there to the men who have dropped in to swap a bit of chat and a smile, in eight pack carriers to the kids who run off to the other shops in the vicinity

to be sat in (books to be read and food to be eaten also!)

Still eating a lot of food. Daily menu in Dhoramrala might have consisted of Pot of tea, jam toast, cheese omelette porridge + veg chow mein for brekky, lunch of a sweet lassi, more veg chow mein and chips, and dinner, vegetable soup, plain toast with butter, vegetable manchurian with a dish of plain rice, fried vegetable momos, more porridge and tea and a big slice of cake or two. All with a few little snacks along the way and I still don't seem to be putting on any weight!

Got all my wristle shaved off last night and had a hair cut. Was in this little shop for over an hour and gave him Rs50 (as you like) with which he was more than happy (30 or 40 would have been more than enough! oh well). Great little places. This one had a picture up from the fortys it must have been, with all the different styles of mens cuts, the actors, the german, french, wavy, inspectors etc etc. I always go for the oldest shop with the oldest barber. They (some of them) are real throwbacks from the Raj, the attitudes more than anything I suppose. The old barbers always stern and serious, this is a world of men of distinction and character being groomed. They respect your position as the sir getting his hair cut and expect respect back. White coats and beautiful old tools of the trade, the brass clippers and cutlass? razors all operated with the utmost precision

and pride, no element of doubt ever allowed to creep into their expressions as they do their job. Even when I've paid them it was only through a quick little smile to his partner that Ange picked up on when I turned my back that I knew for sure. Everything respect and service.

I quite like Delhi, it's big but it doesn't seem as cut throat as Bombay where the prices are double + more <sup>than</sup> anywhere else in the country and people will rip you off as soon as look at you. (In Delhi it's only every second person that will rip you off). (Like Main Bazaar and I like all of the big railway stations and boards with business men and travellers examining them, giving details of all of the train stretching out to all the bits of the country (as Ange was informed of one day when she asked if there was a Bank of India that would let us change money there - to the capital Madam!))

Just moved rooms, our old one had windows onto the main foyer area with all the noise from the cabs, the street reception etc, etc, and (twenty four hour fluorescent light through the thin curtains and and its kind of nice having all the noise and busyness at times). There are definite times when its nice to have people around you so that you feel a part of things even if you spend most of your time in life trying to get away from all of that!

12/3/96 pm. Slept and read and ate, that was about it for today and it was great! Lollled around our room for the most part, ringing only for the hotel staff.



if it all, or whether he is happy to see his children, ~~for~~ instead and this is just his lot + he lives with it. How does he feel at the rebuffs of passers by, of the tourists who walk on frowning at this offer to their expensive comfortable hotel rooms whilst he is left there looking for a hopeful sale.

He is one and what you see is a hundred individuals each with his own plight in it all. Each having to get on and the scene becomes large, its ins and outs loom up like a huge wave poised, curling before the sand on which it is about to break. And it sits there poised above you while you try to comprehend it, and you can't.

Spoke to Peter Head yesterday briefly about work and indicated that I would probably not be back until September or October. There was something in his voice I could not quite pick on that suggested he had more to say... Hmm... Makes me think about what I am doing over here, and I feel a need to be doing something a little more productive. Will this just end up being a holiday or will something come out of it. And what will come out of it, a career or a holiday travel journalism? just a bit of travel experience? or my ways to turn.

I worry that stuff I've designed has gone wrong and I'm not there to defend myself. I worry about the effort that would have gone to Av about my work in

London. I worry about ~~not~~ being there and not knowing which way the tide is turning.

Is this keeping my options open, or is this not being able to let go? Or is it just a bit of paranoia?

I think it's a matter of patience, a lot of possibilities on the horizon, just let it all unfold and don't spoil the present in order to quench the onset of the future.

Getting a bit rowdy ~~perhaps~~ in your writing (Breder) will put it down with the feeling of the moment + if I ever use it, I'll write it in the light of day later.

15/3/96

14/3/96 PM

		STOCK START (101)	CASH W/R (7)	
US TCHAS	1250 × 1.4 = 1750	AB 22.3	35.9	22.1
US CASH	100 × 1.4 = 140			
Rs	1050 / 25 = 42	Rs 558	898	554
	AB 1932			

MALINDA 850  
 UK VISA 690  
 NEW VISA 800  
 1300RS 80  
 CASH 25  
 2405

$$\text{TOTAL BROUGHT} = 3180 + \underbrace{650 \times 1.4 + 2384 / 25}_{25000 \text{ VISA}} = 4185 \text{ AB}$$

Expensive week with all of the visas and running around Delhi and Shing and long bus trips!

### Varanasi

A fourteen hour train ride, I usually like travelling on the trains but last night there were extra people all over the floor etc and we couldn't get any space until 11 o'clock and I wasn't in the mood for it! \* Must say the average Indian is really starting to piss me off - more grabbing

Chairs in, out, in, out, being recorded in books in neat little stacks or paid for to a grimy wooden drawer full of coin and one + two rupee notes. Being slurped down from the green glass cups held steaming with two fingers, lips outstretched to avoid <sup>the</sup> burning.

The shopfronts spill out with canopies and merchandise, people and mess, onto the streets, arteries boiling over with people and their produce. Cycle rickshaws, Motor rickshaws carrying huge sacks of grain, or piled high with school kids, Ambassador cars with darkened windows looking like a throwback to the fifties in America. And people - people of all sorts, beggars on shales limbs twisted and sored, women with shopping, kids, tourists, carrying bunches and parcels, pushing big trestle wheelbarrows with food or shoes or luggage tied up in towering stacks. Bicycles, mopeds and incessant honking, cows and bullocks, hay and food scraps, heat, noise and pollution that seems to rise from nowhere to the thin air above.

The activity winds up about ten o'clock and then quiets down a bit for two or three hours when it gets really hot over lunchtime. It's not so much a rest break or anything it's more just the sun imposing its will and beating down the efforts of the people to keep going. The activity doesn't willingly subside, its struggles just get slower and more pained. The sun unable to keep the barrage up for more than a couple of hours subsides and the

streets thronged with movement keep on going. The ~~constant~~ warmth and humidity give you the feeling you are effortlessly swimming in this scene, wandering at will through the eddies and currents in an unreal atmosphere. Like an ant house set up purely for the cultivation of all of the life you see around you.

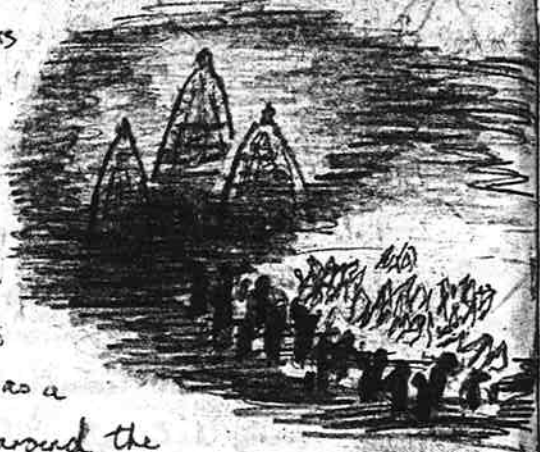
And when you have looked at it for long enough the bikes and the rickshaws all become the same, each fruit stand becomes one of a hundred, the colours become just that, colours, and what you see are the people. The people moving in and out, everywhere to a density that seems too much for this stretch of road to support. The grape seller whom you ignore when you walk past him and he tries to sell you grapes in the morning, is there for the day, he looks after his little trolley of grapes dusting them and keeping them presentable, he combs his hair and surveys the passing people expectantly, hoping to sell his grapes. Every now and then he might push the trolley down the pavement a hundred yards or so to try his luck somewhere else. And he is one of four or five you can see just in this small stretch. Somewhere he probably has a family to support, the dust and the heat and the pollution get into his eyes and his lungs and stain his tatty clothes. This is his life every day, out amongst it, and you feel for him, you wonder how he gets by, you wonder if he sighs at night when he gets home at the hopelessness



arisen ~~some~~ from some religious or spiritual beliefs, rather than in the past a collection of runoff rivulets in the hills somewhere in the distance.

How's that for being a bit overcoloured! I'm sure it will be with a pained expression that I read back over this some-day.

THE BURNING GHATS  
VARANASI



Walled back through Merikamhe Ghat tonight, one of the burning ghats. Again, powerful is the word that springs to mind. The tiered domes of the temples looming, faintly lit as a backdrop. Shilleoutted people around the big fires on the ghats. Not a lot of noise or movement, just large pyres, consuming away. You imagine you can see the blackened outline of a head and shoulders and maybe you can, there is a large heap of ashes at the bottom <sup>in one of them</sup> by the river, ready to be pushed in and given to the currents I imagine.

We stood back in the shadows not wanting to intrude on something that wasn't ours and that we didn't understand. A man came up to talk to us. 'Do you do this type of thing in your country?' 'No, ... well we cremate people but, ... well its all enclosed and their ashes are, ... put in an urn + maybe spread on a river or something ... but its not such a religious thing. ... yes I suppose we do do this sort of thing but with differences.' He was telling us that the big old building behind us is where people come to die.

The old and the sick, and once their time comes they are buried. There are only five types of body that they will not burn and these are tied to large rocks and taken out into the river and dropped overboard. They are children under ten years old, Holy men, Lepers, people who have died from small pox and people who have died from snake bites.

Further back along the bathing ghats they sell little copper sealed containers containing water from the river. A man selling necklaces from a stall was wearing a string only and had just been bathing, you could sense his feeling of religious devotion, a man rich in soul being able to treat his body to so much holy water right at hand.

Sitting down to watch some kids play cricket, one of the ~~men~~ come up to talk to us. He was born in Varanasi but doesn't know if he wants to die here.

- both people who live by a holy site that pilgrims travel thousands of miles to come and see. some only once or maybe twice as highpoints in their lives.

Age just reminded me of all the cripples you come across in India. Not so much the beggars with hands and feet or limbs missing, they become a fact of life, its the other people, the little man about four feet high last night on the train with chiseled legs and feet returned, bound by custom made leather shoes to enable him to walk. The invalids that pedal the stoves in large three wheeled bicycle contraptions with a hand driven set of pedals turned by one hand and low gearing, their only means of propulsion. How does Indian society treat them, they are

of my book while I was reading, questions such as 'So do you love Indians?' with all sorts of grins - overtones or not I don't know but I can't be bothered with <sup>the</sup> stupidity and naivety either way. Get a fucking life will you. Yes, I know... culture differences etc. well it doesn't change the fact that from my cultural background they are sad fucks with no idea of respecting other peoples space !!! So there!

Last day in Delhi was a busy one - Chinese visas ✓ Nepali visas ✓, visa cash advance → Traveller's cheques, visited the Jami Masjid, Malaria tablets, train tickets all makes a tired Bren + Ange at the end of it all - paying for our two days of rest (actually considering the amount of ice cream & donuts the word indulgence would suit better I think).

Varanassi started out as a cramped trip in a Tempo, in heavy traffic, including a flat tyre, to get from the Train Station at Mughal Serai into Varanassi itself.

And from there, a cycle rickshaw ride (yes two fat white tourists with full luggage and one small Indian rickshaw rider!) into the Ghats area and the old city. The poor old rickshaw driver had very little or no brakes and kept getting cut off by cross traffic at which he just had to veer off into side streets or on to the carriage way coming in the other direction; off the bike, head down with grumbled mutterings as he then had to wheel you in a U-turn back into the traffic stream, which he ignored more often or not on the basis he had just been done a terrible wrong and deserved some right of way I suppose. Luckily we had reached our don't care anymore tired stage and spent

the most part of the trip in fits of laughter.

It was then up and down and around a bit (felt like more up than down!) in a beating heat looking for a place to stay. A helpful little tourist stayed with us (despite piss off's being put to him in the nicest possible way) until we finally had a look at his hotel and decided NO! (What went wrong he kept saying - we don't like it we kept saying!). We pushed on to the one over the hill, the one that was half an hour's hard walk away as our little mate had told us, the one where the smoke from the burning ghats fills every room and which will be full onyeway.

The rubbishy tacky tourist chop clutter that was threatening to be our lasting impression of Varanassi cleared to small lanes and locals on their way to and from the Ghats. The noise died and we found our hotel with a huge room, a balcony and great views down the Ganges doing a lot to change our first impressions.

Quite a powerful scene looking down the river, a huge expanse of sandy river bank on the other side baked in the midday sun, the Ghats in and out lining this side and the river a no-mans land in between. The boat, not straying too far from the town side for fear of being caught in the hot emptiness of the other.

Temples here and there, a few people bathing and washing quietly, the corpse of a camel forty or fifty feet out drifting down with the current. The Ganges with ~~and~~ all its background in folklore seeming as though ~~it's~~ its



window into this hazy grey converse world where space and time are sacred holy things ... or something!

I'm sure this is just a westerner tourists viewpoint and it's all wound in quite tightly to the rest of the up and down in + out multi coloured India, which sits somewhere in-between reality and legend!

Watching the rowers go with the currents reminded me of day trips to Richmond, and watching the people flailing hopelessly with the oars, not understanding the currents and being carried off downstream to be rescued later on by a small launch. Very amusing sitting on the grassed banks watching all the antics.

At the other burning ghat, Harishchandra ghat, there were a couple of men scooping all of the remains of the fires into cone baskets and taking them into the river where they whisked them around a bit letting all of the ash and charcoal float away. The old man who was rowing our boat gestured towards them pointing at his teeth. Gold fillings of those deceased!  
Hmmm...

19/3/96 Darjeeling

17-6-96

7:00 PM Finish watching Australia bat in the final of the world cup. 7 for 241, a not unreasonable score but a disappointment after the good start and expected 280, 290. Left Yogi Lodge restaurant on foot.

7:15 PM Arrive in the main street of Varanasi, momentarily pang of horror as we are struck by the absence

of cycle rickshaws on which we are dependent <sup>in order</sup> to reach our bags locked in Varanasi railway station cloakrooms which close at 7:45 for dinner. It turns out however that they must be allowed in here at night on turning the corner we are confronted by the more usual throng yapping at our heels for business.

7:35 PM Our covered in sweat richy driver drops us at Varanasi station where we tip him a couple of rupees and pick up our bags (surprisingly big station seeing few trains ever seen to go there!) Not wanting to trust ourselves to the train to cover the 15 km to Mughalserai, the station from which our train leaves, we march past auto rickshaws and taxis offers of 120, 100 rupees to a waiting tempo which we snugly know will cost us only 10 each. Our bags are strapped onto the roof and we head off the boy sitting opposite seems quite ill and wants to get off: his father a middle aged man most likely his father sitting next to him restrains him.

8:05 PM We are dropped off by our tempo man on the side of a dark road with gestures of no tempo after an unidentified clerk from below Indians scatter in all directions and we are left alone. We start toward the bus stand which we are led to believe is just down the road. The sick boy (who collapsed in a heap and getting out of the tempo) and his father headed off in that direction a couple of minutes beforehand so we are reasonably confident.

Fortunately another tempo stops just as we are heading off and we manage to get on and resume our journey.

8:20 PM Sitting in traffic queues engaged in fumes we are not making much progress. Some of the Indians who were hanging off the side of our tempo are standing by the side of the road having a smoke or kicking

and all in fact were in (think of) exceptions very poor but there are a lot of very poor people in India + maybe you never see the richer ones, for the simple reason that they are rich and don't need to frequent the streets.

I think that generally they are left to fend for themselves which by all accounts is a better way of life than the exclusion through sympathy that happens in the west. India a country of more variables than most, familiar with the hard truths that get glossed over elsewhere is probably good at dealing with the different, with those deformed or diseased of skin etc.

It's hard to know not having been in or even close to the situation at all. I have trouble with things like that. I find myself full of sympathy + concern coupled with disgust feelings that are not right I think. I don't know if they have been instilled in me by society or whether they arise from logic instincts.

Through shyness in fact I have spent a lot of my life not wanting and trying not to be different to other people, to blend in and not stick out in any way.

When you see the scale of the world and its hardships and its ignorance and the millions of people living on top of each other you truly do realise how lucky you are...

16/3/96 Went for a walk along the ghats this morning and towards the end of it came across a severed arm. I could only see the hand at first sitting out ~~on~~ a step. It looked so white and so perfect that I thought it was plastic to begin with. It was pale upwards and had perfectly formed fingernails, the

water had swollen the tissue a bit I guess, so that it didn't look wretched or long or anything, just a well formed pale delicate hand and forearm. As I came closer the rest of the arm came to view, just the clean bone of the upper arm and a few bits of gristle and blue flesh at the joints.

A dog sat nearby and so I guess that's how it came to arrive up on the steps although he looked pretty non-pleased about the whole thing so I couldn't be sure.

I kept thinking it must have belonged to a small woman or perhaps a child, who at some unspecified time beforehand must have been quite attached to it. I wouldn't say I was disturbed by it but the experience was rather gruesome and bare if you know what I mean; raw.

17/3/96 Went for a boat ride along the ghats this morning which was really nice. Quite peaceful and sedate, although to keep out of the currents we were quite close to the people bathing and washing on the way up. They didn't seem to mind at all but it felt a bit awkward, the bemused tourist waiting past the scantily clad locals and pilgrims cleansing themselves in the sacred water. A bit like suddenly finding something foreign in your bathtub and pausing to watch it float by, out to wherever it came from in the first place.

Nice old buildings on one side and all the ghats and people bathing, and the wide silent Ganges and sandy barren flood plain on the other, drawn out in on a large meander of the river banks it really is a unique place. Seems a bit lost in time or legend or something, like you've passed through a



vomiting. Stomach pains and nausea. It's like a nightmare, I can't believe I'm going through this again. Things have been so good over the past two months and already all that seems forgotten in the light of an empty stomach.

9:00am Took some perinorm to stop the nausea. Struggle to hold it down but manage and drift off asleep.

10:00am Wake up & roll over which is too much, go to the toilet and are violently ill. Made worse I think by the fact that I put my head over the toilet and its poo ridden pipe down to the tracks below. Easier to control over the basin.

Decide to take some lemetid to dog it all up. The words 'only if you absolutely have to' from LP ring around my head.

10:30am Take a couple of disprin and feel better quite soon afterwards. Spend the rest of the day with a very weak stomach trying to eat & drink. Manage two mandarin oranges and a banana.

The train is late and seems to stop for ages at stations. Anqi is very bored and so am I, preoccupied only by my stomach and I sleep a bit and otherwise just lie about listening to the train and watching bits of countryside blur past the door. Not sure if some of this could be contributed to motion sickness. The train is rocking about quite a bit.

11:00am Arrive in New Jalpaiguri six hours late. Too late to make it to Doojeling today. We share a rickshaw (who needlessly powers through the dark streets narrowly missing bicycles and cycles) and take a room in an 'ok' (nothing

Struggle out a little later to get some food and spend most of the ten minutes over the rice, curd and banana with my head on the table, overcome by nausea and unable to go on.

Getting back to the hotel I feel a lot better for haven eaten I think it must have been the idea of food more than anything else making me feel sick.

There are mosquitos everywhere and Anqi had seen some on it so we slept together on my bed. Luckily there are mosquito nets.

19-3-76

6:00am

Wake up feeling really good. Didn't get up during the night at all which is unusual for me. Don't get bitten on the arm a bit by the mosquitoes but that's a minor annoyance in the scheme of things and with the help of some TCP goes away quite quickly.

We make it onto a 6:40 bus up to Doojeling. Things starting to go our way this morning it seems.

7:30am

The woman sitting next to us's perfume is overpowering and I'm feeling sick again. Don't know if it's travel sickness or what coming back again. Thankfully we stop halfway up for ten or fifteen minutes & I can recuperate sitting in the sun on the top railway tracks which follow the road up.

10:05am

Doojeling finally. The second half of the trip was a bit better I think by the absence of the perfume clad woman and a packet of Indian smokies which helped lubricate my stomach a bit - serious!

Found a reasonable hotel, feeling ok, just a bit tired, will have to make sure I drink a lot of water over the next week or two & take some potassium pills. Don't want it to desert me!

the dust watching for signs of the traffic in front of us moving (There have been up to 15 people on the tempo at any one time, four on each of the two seats in the back designed for three, two crammed in next to the driver on his seat and another four including the conductor, one crouched on the floor and three hanging off the side) The tempo ever when free from traffic, weighed down by all the people and bags, and having a cord pull start engine that looks like it belongs to a large lawn mower and has been extracted ~~without~~ against its will to be bolted above the front wheel of this ugly contraption barely makes 15-20 kmph and I spent most of my time with my head out the window looking for the mile markers and any sign of the traffic clearing. <sup>ahead</sup> Our train is scheduled to leave at 9:00 and we don't think we will make it. We console ourselves with the fact that we would be very unlucky if the train were on time having to come all the way from Delhi.

I witness a couple of very near misses with goods carriers coming in the other direction. We are forced to the side of the road and <sup>are</sup> overtaken by other goods carriers travelling in the same direction as us. Tempos are the lowest form of life on the roads second only to cycle rickshaws (who even seem to have an element of self respect that tempos lack) and who are never seen out of their league on these bigger roads one way).

9:05 am Arrive at Mughal Serai station, on a closer examination of our ticket we find the scheduled departure time is actually 9:20 am but riddled with anxiety we hurry into the station and start asking every 2nd or 3rd official looking person if they know what platform our train is leaving from. We make our way along

the ramps with a mass of people singing and holding cloth green banners fresh off of some sort of rally or demonstration. Having no time for demonstrators and their causes we jostle for position not even bothering to read the placards and make our way to the station superintendent's office where we find that our train will leave ~~from~~ platform 1 or 2 within the next half hour. We are joined by ~~two~~ a Danish traveller who has been studying in Varanasi for a couple of months and spend the next couple of hours changing platforms once or twice and keeping our ears peeled for announcements on where our train might arrive.

11:00 am Our train it seems is actually arriving on platform 3. Again with the throng of demonstrators or whoever they are we move en masse to platform 3. We note with worry that people, spirits still high after the rally, <sup>they are</sup> apparently, are pressing their way onto any carriage there being it appears less space than people available. Our carriage is right at the other end of the platform + thankfully far enough away from all of the protestors for us to get our reserved sleepers. We bed down + settle in for the long journey. ~~Time~~ at 3:00 am tomorrow and already an hour and forty minutes late.

19-8-96

3:00 am Wake up with a sore stomach and go to the toilet, with a case of the runs.

3:30 am Up again, this time watery diarrhoea and vomiting. Hopefully it's just an upset tummy after all the worry over making the train or ... or something else! (Please no!)

5:00 am Unfortunately it's not ~~and~~ more diarrhoea and



thousand bookshops around the world. And soon we will venture among them to see them for ourselves, to walk along some of their dusty dog tracks, to see all the valleys, to drink the chai of the villages, to gaze up and around at them rather than thumb through the glorious photo spreads extenuating their majestiness in the books in the bookshops.

My cold and the bug in my tummy linger on in the form of a runny nose and a feeling of fragility, at bay at the moment but in anxiety over the coming trip into Nepal (lots of bus time) and the food it has to digest over the next shaky week, the spectre of a repeat performance in a weeks time hanging uncertainly over its head. My mind troubles at the thought of it.

21/3/96 Out of bed at 4:00am this morning! to get in a jeep and trundle up to Tiger Hill in order to watch the sun come up with a hundred or more other people. Let me just say one more time that your typical soft middle and

upper class Indian male really rubs me up the wrong way! I still don't know for sure what it is, maybe their complete lack of appreciation for anything that is real; definitely a part of it is their intrusive, heavy handed banging in on peoples (mine in particular!) space, immature and withering are two words that spring to mind <sup>it</sup> that they may be a bit strong.



Some of it ~~comes~~ from their fascination with us I think getting videoed with us in the background, trying to force their way into conversations with us on buses, when they appear (maybe unattractively - probably not!) at their worst.

Anyway. Sunrise was really nice. A long line of jagged peaks with the morning sky behind them. But what was really a spectacle was Kanchenjunga. Before the sun came up even the little spray of cloud peeling off of the summit was lit up in the pink light. Then lit by lit it crept down the sides changing colour to yellow and then dusty white. Didn't need the stops at the monastery and Gurkha memorial / toy train turning that padded out the trip on the way down mind you!

Busy day yesterday - visited the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute which had exhibitions on Everest and the Himalayas in general, the zoo and saw some red pandas (more like racoons) and siberian tigers and snow leopards - absolutely beautiful animals but it was ~~very~~ sad seeing them in what were quite small enclosures and in the case of one poor pacing leopard a cage. Hummm...

Then went for a visit and walk around Happy Valley tea plantations which was really nice. Might even go back and just sit amongst the tea for a bit to day is.

Still don't know what it was that made me ill - biting my nails in the back of the tempo is the only thing I can think of as I didn't eat anything remotely dodgy - but then you never know I guess.

Most of today was spent finding our feet around Darjeeling, having our first cup of darjeeling tea (I'm going to have to learn to drink tea w/o sugar as it all tastes the same - I've ever unknowingly drunk weak coffee in India thinking it was tea - what hope is there?) and finding the local places to eat, and also recovering from the journey, still feel a bit dazed by it all!

30/3/96



KANCHENJUNGA  
8548 m

Sitting down by a small shelter on Bhan Bhakta Sarani one of the roads that creeps around the Darjeeling hills. Birds are chirping, the sun is out (and is quite strong for this time of the morning), a Tibetan man is calling his dogs for breakfast - I know a few dogs that would respond

quicker than there seem to!; and there are gunshots or something going off intermittently somewhere in the hills below. And we are admiring a mighty view of Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world, sitting out in peeling cloud, the Himalayas! There before us. Until now they have existed as big glossy pictures in large spread books with big headings in bookshops. They've existed under the guise of 'the roof of the world' or 'the lands of eternal snow' as a nameplate on a wall which lie the borders of Nepal. When



actually they have been here all along. Silently sitting with clouds moving in and out of them and coming off of the tops of them, in amongst the quiet valleys just being themselves separate and unaware of all the glossy literature that has been lauded on their behalf in a



for floor space) whilst the other could even in fact lie down. And so we made it through alive, with some beautiful scenery at dawn along a river, into Kathmandu. Kathmandu is a city of trekking gear (leaps of it) and German bakeries, of white water rafting expedition companies and free rum and coke slide shows, of rickshaws and Tiger Balm sellers and of all manner of organisational things to do with permits and visas, and trekking and taxes, and mail and money, and ... and not much else as yet! Should be good!



KATHMANDU!

26/3/96 Well it's our fourth day in Kathmandu and still haven't done much more than Thamel. Rum and Coke at night over slides of Tibet and rafting, roaming the streets scouring trekking shops and bookshops for bits and pieces during the day organizing this and that and generally giving ourselves a chance to cross off India and 'the big trip' from Darjeeling. Hearing ads, solds about Tibet, expensive bus rides, landslide ridden roads and trouble at the border getting in etc. all amounting

to what it's been the whole way along - an uncertainty. Best to just leave it in the subconscious and live Nepal for the moment. I have a feeling it will still be swirling mist right up until we are standing, passports in hand at the border, and we do get through to washed out roads and intermittent buses + jeeps or we get turned back to try again or to fly into China proper.

Booked ourselves on a five day whitewater rafting trip down the Kali Gandaki which should be fantastic.

Then onto four weeks trekking around the Annapurnas and hopefully up into the sanctuary as well. Hopefully that will give us a good idea of what we don't need to take to Tibet and still be prepared.



KALIGANDAKI!

Do you ever feel vulnerable? Vulnerable in that your valuables will be taken from you while you sleep, in that your insurance doesn't extend to the rafting trip you have just undertaken to do, vulnerable in the hands of a Nepalese bus driver and his twisting turning bus sticking to the sides of the curves of the mountains, to the might of a Chinese government that sets its own rules and has something to hide in Tibet where you want to go, where you will be alone and at their mercy? Or even further down the track to perspiring turks with bristling mustaches who will drag your drinks and leave you

21/2/96 PM

US TCHOS	1210 x 1.4 = 1694	AA	START	WEEK	1051	330
US CASH	100 x 1.4 = 140		(108)	(7)	FLM	220
OSE ANGE	25 x 1.4 = (30)	AA		17.4	BUSPARK	50
Rs	1850 / 25 = 74	Rs	22.0	<del>17.4</del>		<u>100</u>
	<u>1850</u> / 25 = <u>74</u>		5850	4306		14.0
	<u>1850</u> / 10			<del>3309</del>		350

Better!

At 22.0 a day for three and a half months in India not including flights in but including shopping etc. 2375 At all up.

24/3/96 Kathmandu, Nepal.

Well, said goodbye to India rather appropriately looking out of the back of a jeep between the Siliguri and the Border. (I was feeling really tired, and had been sick out the side of the bus on the way down from Darjeeling, so once in Siliguri I really let fly on some of the more vicious touts trying to get us onto buses + jeeps to anywhere, a parting - well a few, parting shots in anger, also appropriate. One poor guy in Darjeeling kept us waiting in his jeep for 20 min + then announced that it would be longer when he couldn't fill it so I went spare at him getting back 110Rs when we'd paid 102 for the tickets! We then jumped straight onto a bus and I realised looking back he was quite a nice guy and was genuinely sorry - felt like - and was - a real arsehole - if you're out there anywhere - I'm really sorry!!!) Anyway, the dust and the touts and the Indian tourists faded and we were sitting in the back of a jeep speeding for the border with Nepal. Tea plantations, dry river beds and fields all passing away from us. The people by the side of

the road, carrying loads, riding bicycles, selling peanuts from little stands or just sitting all draining away with passing countryside. Flashes of detail and movement + colour up close, pittering away into an overall scene, receding, like a series of postcards flashed up before you and then stored on a table for an overall view and retrospection. Our best images of India, the quiet country images, the real people, the nicer bits. And so we said goodbye.

...and Nepal, our first experience of Nepal was a crowded bus ride lasting 17 hours over the Terai from Kahanbhitta at the border to Kathmandu in the middle. Ching! - the road passed over a lot of low plains and hills had been washed away, or were under very poor repair. Walking pace at times for half an hour or more being thrown up and down in the back of the bus. As seems to be the cases with buses, there is only a 50-50 chance that your seat will actually recline (ours didn't on this particular journey), however a 95-5 chance that the ones immediately in front of you will (which these did!) We were left with less than 4" of room to get our legs down to post the front of the seats to the floor. The idea of the looming night on this bus was so aweing we sat down at six o'clock thinking 'what is this going to be like' and were unable to get our minds around this spectre, towering there more immense than any Himalayan peak in front of us, just ready to topple with a long drawn out certainty upon us. Thank God almighty we managed to get the back seat so one of us could have two seats to themselves facilitating the need



front. A cow with its head bashed off making a silent + inconspicuous exit from the side gates of the main temple (Taleju temple I think). I got the feeling that a lot of the people, people in the streets even rickshaw drivers etc. don't fully believe in it all as there were a few glances around to other peoples faces when things like the cow appeared. Maybe its just an awareness when their private ceremonies and beliefs are out in public (well the after effects anyway) under the gaze and scrutiny of other people of other religions. a self doubt thing?

2/4/96 Pokhara (700m approx)

Just back from a five day white water rafting trip (all that rum + coke had the desired effect!). A great time, hard to know where to start!

Night before meeting at the 'tea time in' and a bumpy three hour bus trip the next morning to drop off in the Kahi Gandaki. Then it was 'right back', 'left forward', 'all forward', 'forward easy', 'forward hard', 'left back', 'right sides right' and 'high sides left' and 'forward hard, and!' + harder!! Twenty odd people on three rafts, zig forwards and backwards and and spinning around +

around down the river, four Kayakers and a gear raft somewhere in there as well. And it was good fun, rapids up to class III+ (I would have liked a few more IVs and Vs I think) and nice large bits inbetween for swimming or water fights or just sitting back and watching the hills and the conyons draw past you on either side.

The river must be absolutely awesome during the monsoons, you could see huge rocks that looked like they'd been scoured with oxy torches sitting two or three metres out of the water.

There was jumping off rocky cliff walls, paddling under cold smattering waterfalls and coupling under raft shelters on the grey sand beaches.

And it was the river the whole time. There drifting by when you were stopped preparing lunch, there when you fell asleep <sup>at night</sup> and got up in the mornings, when you went for a crop and when you went for a walk, always the river, peeling off in little eddies here and there and twisting its way round the and through the hills to God knows where.

The local people were quite interesting also. There were always a few there to watch what was going on at camp and kids swimming out to have a paddle of the rafts in the quieter stretches while we were on the river. Stopped in a beautiful little village to have a look around and get a soft drink or whatever.

to wake passengers and asked in a room somewhere, or to the fingers searching at will through your belongings after you have been gassed along with the rest of the people in your carriage on an overnight train in Italy. Or even just the hot, unlistening, unstoppable tempers of the waiters and other middle east people whose minds seem to have been cooked into madness somewhere along the way in the desert homeland they grew up in.

... I do, sometimes...

27/3/96 Paid a visit to the Australian embassy this morning and had a flick through some papers etc. Do you feel that pile of people all in a big heap towering up in front of you, all clambering and climbing over the top of each other in a big crawling pyramid that goes so high that the tippy top bit actually blocks out the sun? Do you feel drawn in by those moody artyarty shots of playwrights and politicians in the papers, drawn to scrounge for some recognition so that you might stand there coolly, pondering and retrospective in one of those photographs one day? Drawn to that pile of people that seems so big that it spills out of the papers and across the loud intubing rooms and studios and hithers, into trendy flats and studios in trendy suburbs, into small pubs in country towns, into the private corners of peoples minds where they keep their little bundle of dreams and hopes wrapped up

away from the public eye where they might get trampled on. Drawn against your will in fact, against the profferings of that little burning black hole that occupies another corner of your mind (that's the thing about the twisty windy passage ways that make up your mind, lots of places to hide, lots of little corners), the one that just wants to sit down with a cup of tea in a quiet corner and watch some television.

... I do...

27/3/96 PM

OWEANCE  $25 \times 1.4 = (35)$   
 US TELCHG  $1110 \times 1.4 = 1554$   
 US CASH  $100 \times 1.4 = 140$   
 NRs =  $2785 / 42 = 66$   
 RAFTING FEES  $190 \times 1.4 = 266$   
 A\$ 1922

(+FILM 1600)  
 SINCE START (R 114) 24.5  
 SINCE NEPAL (6) 69.5  
 LAST WK 23.5  
 BOOK CLASS 25  
 2550  
 2920  
 990

TOTAL BROUGHT =  $4185 + 22180 / 42 = A\$ 4713$  <sup>visa</sup> <sub>not</sub>

! GET IT RIGHT! →

This figure includes part of travelling permits of to be added in in trekking @  $\frac{2550}{4} = 640$  us

Had a nice walk around Durbar square this afternoon. Just by myself, wandering and taking a few photographs here and there, just drifting around the different minor squares watching the life go by. Today is a religious holiday, not a good day for cows as quite a few had been sacrificed around the place to different idols. Thick red oil paint blood smeared over the statues and the ground in



maybe surfing something to keep me fit and in condition. Body felt as though it had changed, dehydrated out by all the water and forced into the road to getting into shape by all the paddling and swimming.

A good five days emergency!

3/4/96

PM  
3/4/96

BASE RANGE  $25 \times 1.4 = (35)$   
 US TCHQ  $1110 \times 1.4 = 1554$   
 US CASH  $100 \times 1.4 = 140$   
 NRs  $18500/42 = 440$

A\$ 2099

TOTAL BROUGHT -  $4713 + 20000/42 = 5189$  A\$

SINCE STAGE	LAST W/F	SINCE NEPAL	W/O
(121)	(7)	(13)	(7)
			<u>285</u>
			1275
			<del>38</del>
			<del>161</del>

BATT 60  
 CAMERA 60  
 PHOTOS 150  
 W/O CAM 280  
 SOUVENIRS 350  
 W/BOTTLE 150  
 MAPS 85  
 DREAM 140  
~~285~~

4/4/96

Bezisarhar (823m)

Well! Day 1 of our trekking. Two and half hours on a bus from Pokhara to Dune - Called Tim and Jen and finally managed to get a hold of them, seems the little bugger doesn't want to come out just yet and they are going to induce her today! Poor old Tim must be a bit ragged, especially with work and phone calls from us at 5:00 in the morning!

Anyway, then a six hour bus trip to cover the 42 km from Dune to Bezisarhar! (I thought they were lying). The road is under construction and we

didn't get much above a fast walking pace for most of the trip. At one stage the bus in front of us sunk into the newly graded dirt and our bus was held up for almost an hour (until the caterpillar moved some dirt and created a new road around the bogged bus apparently!) We started walking which was a nice break for a bit although a bit dusty at times, dust three or four inches thick like snow in drifts all over the road. The bus caught us up about forty minutes further down the road - back to the swaying and jolting Hmmm...

The last hour we spent on the roof, things being more than a bit crowded down below, and it was quite nice although you could see a bit more of the road (or more importantly the hills dropping off to the sides of the road) which provoked thoughts of which way to jump if the bus overturned, no safe answer!

Brought back a few memories of other notable bus rides - Ajanta to Ellora, head out the windows ready to throw watching for buses coming in the opposite direction, that one turned out for the best when with one almighty bump my banana breakfast went down and my road to conquering Indian bus motion sickness began - Of course the original Goa to Bombay air con horror, sick on +

little streets and traditional style houses leading off at various angles tapering off to tracks leading up into the hills. A school to which we'd see children walking from the countryside all around a little earlier up the river. And unfortunately a tour group of white western tourists wandering poking their noses in here there and everywhere! Unavoidable part of being in a group I suppose, it wasn't so bad at camp and in the river as we were more separate from the countryside around us and were ourselves the attraction (them coming to see us rather than vice versa) ourselves. Saw people reaping in the terraced fields, carrying loads along the paths (paths are surprisingly well frequented by people walking to and fro), guiding donkeys along the big suspension bridges (a lot of marvellous suspension bridges draped across the river looking like scenes from an Indiana Jones movie or something) and even burning people on the sides of the river like in Varanasi. Even saw a few floating bodies, not sure if they were the smallpox and snake-like etc victims or whether they were just people who had drowned in accidents on the river at some stage. The day we saw them (three of them along the river, stuck in eddies at different places) the water had turned a mucky brown from heavy rains upstream somewhere so it could

be that the slightly higher flows had dislodged the bodies to take them further downstream.

Had a go at kayaking but couldn't get the ball going. Could manage all of the hip flicking but couldn't do it in tandem with the sweep of the paddle. Only lasted 15 min at a time ending up with a chivering goosebumped cold body and very bruised knees and bum. Maybe next time (if a bigger kayak (hope!)).

What else did we do? - Went for a moonlit walk to an abandoned palace one night which was beautiful. The whole scene along the way, the river and the hills all looming there in the unnatural light of the moon, like the alternative ghostly half of the daytime landscape through which we rafted. Also made a little more interesting by the swaying of suspension bridges by the crew (most those things were really moving!) and a fire show at the palace once we got there.

The crew were really good. John a blonde haired full of muscle (and the strength to go along with it) kayaker from the states who was team leader and the rest were raft guides and kayakers. Dick, Daniel, Ail, Ash and Manee, all really nice, and fit little well proportioned bastards! Happy and healthy against the backdrop of assorted white long joints and flab of us the chinks! Not a bad life - must do something like that when I get home, pick up surfing properly or



be a bit flexible with the rooms!

Spent most of yesterday shopping + joggling + eating our way around Pokhara. Seven o'clock found us on mountain bikes in a dash array of bus after bus and no ticket or information office! Still dodgy on our means of transport we did a quick pack (left my gloves out damn it!) with Phil + Lorna watching + then off for a few drinks with the rafting people, and a removed sort of blessed night ending up with sore eyes and an alarm set for 5:30 (to see a lunar eclipse the next morning - someone had miscalculated + the moon had set at 5:30!!). A strained mind sinking into a surprisingly good sleep at 12:00 o'clock.

Phil + Lorna + Matt have all disappeared in a sudden flash and here we are, dust settling around us from the bus and the Annapurna circuit out lying in wait at our feet.

5/4/96 Bahurandaha (1230m approx)  
→ 1310m?

Day 2 - our first real day of trekking. Two hours walk to Khudi and a great suspension bridge springing out of the town centre on one side, and sagging and straining its way across the river to the path on the other side. Old steel hangers wired to a timber and bamboo deck, beautiful. Another 1/2 an hour to Bhulhule and then an hour and a half to Ngadi for lunch. It has been really nice countryside. I was afraid that because so

many people do the trek the towns might be commercial, dirty and spoilt but they've been really clean and really nice. Such a difference to India and Kathmandu + Pokhara, the fact that the only way to get there is by walking keeps them small I suppose, and the absence of cars has too many advantages to list!

We've been following the Marsyangdi (white water in Nepali) for most of the way and the trek to Ngadi is I think the one days trekking you do in the Marsyangdi rafting trips. There is a helipad there where refits (rich americans no doubt!) get dropped in every now and then apparently.

It was then another couple of hours, the boat bit up some very steep hills into Bahurandaha a little town at the top of a hill (well near the top!) got in about 2:30, hottest part of the day - sweat baby sweat! and found the Mountain View Guesthouse, a homely nice house further up the hill (that vague good feeling about a place coming into play again). Beautiful place all in local construction, the obligatory cows in the stable etc and even starlings flying in and out and through the lower storey which was all one big open plan restaurant and lounge sort of room. I won't go into lengthy descriptions because it's just a local place and is what it is, some things are better left ~~less~~ lengthy descriptions somehow intruding on them.

Really enjoyed today, the next few weeks I'm really looking forward to. Heard Thongha could be open, or could not be, apparently still get snowfalls etc, all a bit of an unknown still, doesn't sound easy. Seven or eight days walk still before we get there even! all very exciting.  
(6 hours walking time total)

off for a month after that one, felt like someone had slowly drained the life out of me overnight with an unseen intravenous drip - Chitorgarh to Bardi, our intro to the walking pace and dust of unmade roads. - The creek beds of the final stretch of road up to marali (thank God the rain held off) - The mini-bus trip down from Darjeeling with the bus driver who spent the whole time on + off the accelerator, and the brake pedal that played a little ditto every time it was pressed. Even tired and sick in a murderous mood at the end of it. - and the third leg of that trip, more monsoon swept roads, overnight this time thrown around the back of the bus like a sack of potatoes. I can't say I've ever looked forward to bus trips but I did like the travelling, I'm now developing a corner of my mind that kits there in awe for two or three days beforehand slowly chipping over the prospect of the coming trip, shielding the rest of my mind from the full brunt of it all and when the time comes I transfer control over, the full tightening of my stomach muscles is realized and finally and all the other systems in my body are shutdown, disconnected and packed away in boxes, in suspended animation for their own protection while the little corner acts on minimum resources, just enough to go with the jolting and to switch on only functions (like the white knuckle grip to the luggage rack on top of the bus today) required for self preservation.

Then there is a slow heading back process at the end of it all where cobwebs are removed and damage reports are handed over and tested. Like a slow lifting from a coma, a body rehabilitating itself.

Besirahar itself isn't too bad. I thought it might be a bit of a dirty bus ridden hole, especially when put against the earthy mud rendered houses and terraced fields we'd been passing on the way. Really nice countryside, the backblocks of Nepal. I hope we get to walk through some of that countryside, I'm sure we will. Hotel Everest is on the main stretch, 20 Rs a night for a small room with walls made from timber slats and wallpapered with an old copy or two of the Independent believe it or not. Basic as hell but had a good feeling about it somehow, although I can't think why - Ange says it's probably because it's not pretending to be anything which is a good description! I think it might be something to do with the fact that it's not full of people bouncing along at eight km an hour, and slight overtones of the restaurant downstairs which is nice, open verandah onto the street + lots of diaries being written in! You are expected to eat in the restaurant of the hotel you stay in as that is where they make all of their money, someone obviously figured hotel rooms can be bargained but food is a fixed price. (2) look and choose a restaurant +



etc. although I'm not sure if they're exclusive to the Tibetans or not. Will have to read up on it a bit as we go through four or five distinct types (or tribes?) of people along the way apparently.

Started at about 6:20 this morning (Tibetan bread for breakfast which is more like a flat jam donut here - ü) and got in about 11:50. It's nice to get in early and relax, sit back eat some lunch, have a quick look at town (usually takes about 30 secs!) and write in the diary letting the countryside and people and the cows & goats and chickens all soak in.

7/4/96 Dhangsoni (1943 m)

Day 4 - Short day today. Four hours walking, the next town along which is where we would have gone to was Bagarokhap which was all but wiped out by a landslide last November. Killing 18 people apparently, one of them was a young Canadian trekker whose photo was seen on the way up at different places on 'Have you seen this man' posters. The weather has been clouding over in the afternoons also with thunder up in the hills and ~~even rain~~ rain today & yesterday so it was just as well anyway. The rain last night cleared up the air a bit and the views were excellent today, up through the canyon with snow-capped peaks peering their heads out now & then. Just hope it isn't snowing up on the pass! it's a long way back.

Trekking today was mainly up through the canyon along the Marsyandi again, which is getting steeper and smaller as we go. It opened out into a wide flat valley at Tal about half way which was really nice. You put your head over the rise at the end of a section of climb to find this

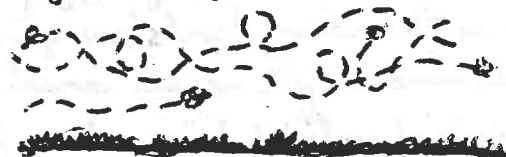
sprawled out vista of meandering river and river bed amongst that green stretches and surrounding hills. Nice village too, mainly Tibetan again I think. The villages here (this & the last anyway) have stone chortens with prayer wheels mounted in little recesses to mark the beginning and end of the town. I like things like that, sort of contains things and gives a sense of identity rather than the sprawling gradually to nothing. (Actually we are sitting here now under a verandah with the path leading out through one of chortens passing by the hotel in front of us, watching the rain come down and one little donkey from a group going out to feed after a hard days work has stopped underneath it for some shelter.)

All of this rain is a bit worrying - might start looking around for a jumper & gloves (extra beanie!?) for the pass. It feels cold now, mind you were at almost 2000m which is the same height as the hill stations in India - which were cold!

Ooh - something else I meant to mention was the fireflies at night along the river when we were rafting. I've never seen them before - pretty impressive, little flashing dots of green light tracing paths ~~down~~ in the night.

David, one of the guys we've been walking with (the other is Grayson both from England) stopped in Tal today sick with a stomach bug, he drank some streamwater (treated with iodine) which was probably it - Hmmm... Lots of little pitfalls, the water, the cold, bucking donkeys, yowling cows and pecking chickens, well maybe not so much the chickens but pays to take it easy I suppose and be a bit wary although iodined water should be ok!

Just had a shower (little wooden shed with a bucket of like warm water out the back!) and fuck it is cold. The rain is easing a bit and it's been snowing on the hills above as well.



6/4/76

Chemye (1433 m)

Day 3 - only 5 hours of walking today but it felt longer, a lot of short sharp ups and downs, and probably a little tired after yesterday, also lacking that first day enthusiasm!

More great suspension bridges, going to have a few photos of bridges by the time this trek is through, and little towns along the way. Chooks and chickens heaping all over the place, in and out of the houses and surging away from under your feet. Cows chewing cud amidst a mess of hay in their stables watching you pass with a kind of dazed vacant look of concern on their faces. And donkey trains, mostly empty coming this way. The lead donkey often has a big red and white duster type thing sprouting out of his forehead as decoration, or I suppose so that the guy whooping & whistling them along from the back can see where he is. They wear these huge bells that must be 10" in diameter and a foot long hung around their necks so you can hear them coming far before you see them, and wear little diamond shaped mosaic carpets on their foreheads with colourful strips of material hanging down behind the ears, all mostly faded but is a nice sight ambling and clanging past you in trains of ten or fifteen amongst the hills.

Still following the Marseyandi and got into (are still in fact) some really deep canyons. Rocky hills (I'll call them hills as they don't have any snow on them) rising up to 4000 or 4500m over a distance of about 3 km from the river. Lots of waterfalls dropping hundreds of feet (best sounds more

impressive than metres) over the rocks into the river along the way.

Seen a lot of porters on the trail today carrying huge loads. Two huge packs at a time. The best porters apparently can manage up to 200 kg and they get paid by the kg! These huge bundles all carried with rope over the shoulders and a strap that sits over the forehead, must be a question of balance as these guys are really small. They've been carrying anything from supplies to deck chairs and we even saw one lot with an armed guard carrying up dynamite. I'm glad we're carrying our own stuff (although I'm not putting down porters!) get a bit more satisfaction, although I would like to have had a tent + stove + some food just so it's a bit more like the real thing + we could be self sufficient. Actually I would have liked to have gone over the Ticho lake pass (the ice lake that they come across in Maurice Herzog's Annapurna I think. It involves a couple of hours of walking at around 5500m rather than just the up-down of Thongha, but you need to camp out - maybe another time. Thongha is nothing to sneeze at in any case!

You get these strange little spots of rain when there are clear blue skies above everywhere, I noticed them coming on the rafting trip as well, must be snow being blown off the mountains at high altitude and just drifting or something?

Chemye is a Tibetan village, were staying at the Tibetan Hotel - I must say really impressed with the accommodation. Lovely old traditional houses and always (well tonight + last night anyway!) clean + homely. Seems to be a lot of Tibetan influence up the valley, a lot of prayer flags



9/4/96

Pisang

(3333 m)

- Old Pisang - high village

(3185 m)

- New Pisang - low village

Day 6 - Wow, perfect weather and scenery, beautiful day. Started about 6:30 again, despite all the best intentions, we seem to get breakfast before about 6:20. A lot colder this morning, even had my jumper on for the first bit, up the valley past a few mini-glaciers sitting over the river!

Before all that I should mention this morning, woke up to awesome views of Langjung Himal and Annapurna II peering around the corner, crystal clear with the sun making its way down them and the smaller hills in front silhouetted against them. Lots of photos! Made up for the more than average porridge!

Anyway up the valley and along a small path cut out of a cliff to more views of Langjung Himal + Annapurna and also an amazing rock face in the shape of a huge bowl. Smooth (relatively) with sheets of snow draping down and melting to ice and water really impressive. All pretty dramatic scenery!

Then dined into the pine forest for a bit, the first time we've left the river since we started. Seemed really quiet, just the sound of the breeze passing through the pine needles and the musty warm smell of pine everywhere.

After all the climbing, the last section was along another high valley type plain. The big rock + snow bowl at one end, and the Annapurnas to one side (and other smaller hills elsewhere). Very quiet valley, not many people around. Walked across a few small avalanche spills from the hills around, mounds of snow covered in dirt and pine needles, fallen trees at their bases. Passed only one small village about a half hour before Pisang.

Pisang itself is quite strange. Very sleepy town and

apart from the painted window frames and a hotel or two totally devoid of colour. Even all the prayer flags are underwashed out white. The place gives the impression of being lost for something to do, a couple of sleepy looking dogs appear from time to time in different spots around the place and we saw someone chase a family of goats out of the post office but apart from that nothing much else appears to happen. The women dress in long black dresses with neutral coloured vests + jackets over the top which makes them seem to chink away into the rocky landscape as well.

Just up the hill is what we presumed to be the old village of Pisang, an even more colourless collection of mostly empty and deteriorating stone buildings around little lanes and paths. Looking from the valley up it appeared as though it had been totally deserted but there were a few people about, sitting spinning wool, and sitting watching the others sit + spin wool! Sia in all to be precise we saw. Most of the buildings had been deserted, perhaps in favour of the new Pisang on the main trail which could help explaining the strange atmosphere of these places, a community already in relative isolation, split, the two halves never feeling whole.

We had a look around some of the buildings including what looked like an old monastery. Had a ground floor with a central stool sitting in the middle of the void of the second floor mezzanine. An old community gathering place maybe with two areas, the ground and mezzanine where people could come and listen to others speak or perform. A couple of old drums left to waste away in the ground floor added to the atmosphere also.

ably two or three hundred metres up. Idleness - poor!

3/4/96 Chame (2629m)

Day 5 - Back into it today, 5 1/2 hours walking time. It didn't feel quite so bad as it was more of a constant gradient, no steep ups and downs which take their toll.

- Started about 6:20 - cold! Passed through Bagarchop after about 40 minutes walk, you could see all of the rubble from the landslide, only a few houses left standing in odd spots but it was an awful lot better than what I had expected, there didn't seem to be any real slip plane up the hill or anything. They are going to resettlement the town, would think it would be quite strange, a little unsettling living with that history in the background the whole time. There would be the odd drop in wind and silent moment that follows from time to time when your thoughts might pass back to the destruction and loss of life. Any spot where life has been taken prematurely is a bit like that conjuring up reflective thoughts of the last moments. One story has it (from the hotel owner at Bahundanda) that the storm brewed up one night and the hotel owners left to a friends place or something getting soaked, leaving the tourists asleep in the hotel. The hotel ended up in the river with everyone going to a watery grave. Twenty people in total dead. There was a plaque up in memory of three Canadians as you come to the area of the slide. Hmmm...

We walked further up the Marsiyandi again today, the river now only probably a third of the size it started out as, and slowly getting clearer. It has been rather milky up until now which I thought was just silt but Anje reckons she heard somewhere it was from limestone, which would make more sense as all of the tributaries are crystal clear (hard to

believe they're full of limestone etc!), maybe the bed of the river cuts through some limestone in different places?

Anyway more and more views of rock snowcapped peaks as we turned west after Dharapani, and even glimpses of Annapurna II although we were on the ~~west~~ leeward side so obscured by cloud for most of the afternoon, maybe tomorrow morning when things are a bit clearer.

The path passed through some forest, pines mostly (yes one or two monkey looking rhododendrons but nothing to get excited about) which was nice, a bit more topsoil and softer on the feet, I'm a bit worried that the slowly thinning Docs might not be up to the job and have a blow out half way up the pass or something. You could see the damage being done to the forests for timber and firewood, especially up closer to Kota and Chame. Kota is also a beautiful town. Perhaps nicer than Chame as it's a bit smaller, sitting on the canyon floor with rocky cliffs hills either side and snow covered mountains visible at either end. Chame is also nice but a bit bigger with electricity etc, doesn't have the same sense of pride the smaller places have. There is a long row of prayer wheels just inside the eastern gate<sup>to</sup> which we gave a spin as we come in.

You can also buy some stuff, but it's warmer today even with the increased altitude so I'm going to leave it until Manang where things will be a bit more expensive but nicer I hope - dangerous...!

Also passed over a few landslides today, the path just having been rebuilt (or retrodden) along the face of them. Very dodgy!

Feel a bit more confident it being warmer this afternoon. It got down to 5-10°C according to Gavis watch yesterday! I couldn't help thinking we've come up 1100m, we started out boiling and now we're freezing and we've got another 3500m to go! Will be interesting to see what Manang is like.



visible at the other end. The best views so far, filling the whole horizon. Will let the photos speak for themselves. Quite a few little chortens and temples up and around the place, very beautiful. We had a little dog that followed us up for the whole way wanting some company, he finally left us for something infinitely more interesting no doubt in the village of Nagawal. \*

We then walked along the contours for an hour or so to Nagawal, the bits of the hills not getting any sun still covered in the light dusting of snow from last night. Felt great to have gotten up there so early and have the place to ourselves, the first ones through it was one of those things that feels like your own little discovery, the whole of the eastern Annapurna Himal there spectacular before us.


Nagawal was a nice village, very Tibetan again, prayer wheels in the middle of town with trees growing up and around them. All stone, faded timber roofs and washed out white prayer flags again but seemed to be a little more together. There were fields with a few people working in them around the place and the little pathways seemed to have a warmth about them, coming no doubt from the fact that they were used! echoing of people carrying baskets and bleating goats etc.

\* I forgot to mention we saw some large (king?) quails wandering around the place which took off in a flap and glided down the valley after our tag along friend chased them for a bit. All these small things really create an impression in amongst the quiet of it all.

Not wanting to miss the police checkpoint in Hongde (the last and most important in the marang district according to the sign!) we come down a very steep track, which gave me my first blister in! to Paugba and crossed over to Hongde.

Paugba was another beautiful place. You walk down following a small brook and some grassed fields past a couple of big old trees, really smacked of coming into a small English village from the hills behind. They had big compost heaps of pine needles which gave off that warm misty pine smell, the fresh air, the exercise, feels like your trapped in a advertisement for pine or something! More prayer wheels (will have spun more than a few prayer wheels by the time this trip is finished!) and across the bridge to Hongde and lunch at about 11:00 o'clock. About 2-3 hours longer than the flat road.

It was then another hours walk along the valley floor to Braga (just the ruins of Mungji, quite a few places suffering for want of people it seems up here, a real shame). Braga is an impressive village stretching up to a monastery at the top, most villages are set out that way, woodless stone buildings and prayer flags draped down from a yellow roofed (usually) monastery at the top. Braga however has the added impact of the 'feathered' hills behind it and quite an impressive majestic looking monastery that makes it look like a village out of 'The man who would hark'. All helped by the dry barren valley and the first yaks we had seen just beforehand.

Every day tomorrow declimbing.  YAK!  
walk into Marang and do some shopping and then onto a small village on the other side maybe.

It's getting cooler and cooler with the altitude, ice on the bridges and frozen dew drops on the trees this morning. Stopped

Should hopefully see some stars tonight (if it clears, it clouded over about 12:30-1:00) again making the very mountainside, even more menacing as they disappeared into the mists). Didn't see much last night because I think of the electric lights about the place. A small town without electricity is much nicer, much more down to earth and tied to the elements around it.

Just read back over bits - its very hard to describe the mountains and the views because its not just one thing its everything, its the stone houses and wooden rooves, the doskey trains (of which we saw none today!), the river and hills and mountains all moving around you slowly. Its dramatic and its beautiful, there are soaring whites and blues and cold hard browns and reds, there is the greyness of the barren slated paths and river rocks, and there is the greens and browns of the pines. And there is also the ever increasing height and all the subtle changes that come along with it, the river slowly diminishing to tributaries and waterfalls along the way, the dropping of temperature.

There is the people and the food, and I suppose finally there is the red line on the map leading us further and further into and up the valley.

A whole group of people have just arrived, independent it seems but all travelling together and staying at the same places along the way. Talking loudly and forcing laughter, crowding the place and overpowering it. I think I preferred the quiet emptiness of before that somehow had some affinity anyway with the barren landscape around. This seems like a merry ball of colorful fairy down, gonster and hand hair dyes, out of place and swirling around with the odd ski stick walking stick poking

out here and there, leaving a few scraps of tattered waste in its trail. Hmmm...

Its just started lightly snowing outside. This is the highest I have ever been - above 3000m. We come across one guy whose friend had to come down with all the symptoms of AMS, headache etc even from this height! (Before he even reached the toll they give on AMS at the HRA on manang!) So far so good - just take it slowly, no deadlines to work to.

About five hours walking today (stretched out to eat with photos and cups of tea etc!).

10/4/96 Braga (3450m approx)

Day 7 - Along days walking today, started early about 6:15 substituting a cup of tea for breakfast. There are two routes you can take along the road to Manang, the flat short route along the south side of the river or the high route along the North which gives better views of the Annapurnas but involves a lot more climbing and is longer. Needless to say we took the latter after all that's what we are here for! Started out along the river for a bit with views back to Annapurna II and Lomping Hinal, the sun creeping down then. It was then almost 600m straight up, what a bit of a climb, never ending it seemed but we made it, and it was well worth it. Panoramic views from one end of the valley to the other. Starting Pisang peak, around the big rock bowl at the eastern end, then up to Annapurna II and Annapurna IV, along to Annapurna II and Gangapurna just

to 3000m  
to 3000m



(quite good donations - 100Rs+) in exchange for blessings for people  $\gamma$  over the pass. Kind of nice but we've seen a bit much in all of that in India, quite a well paid job being a holy man over here!

Also went to another AMS talk. sounds like a lot of severe nonverging but is worse, it as when it does happen it sounds like it can all go wrong pretty quickly if you don't know what to do. Headache, nausea, dizziness, confusion, vomiting, swollen hands feet + eyelids, dreams and breathlessness, fluid retention in the brain, fluid retention in the lungs, diuretic, pressure bags, loss of appetite and helicopter evacuations! 500m a day, climb high sleep low, lots of water and no overexertion, eyes on your partners and descent, descent, descent.

There is a lot to take in up here, the walking, the mountains, the people and their culture. It seems hard to do at the moment. Like a lot of our travels I would like to read more about it all when I have the time. At the moment the show is on and I just want to be here + take it all in.

12/4/96 Thorang Phedi (4500m approx)

Day 9 - from Braga all the way up to Thorang Phedi! Started late, about 7:15 and decided to keep going until we didn't feel too well. HRA recommended 500m a day for prevention but I think that is to ensure you have a 99.9% chance of being ok. Most people are fine for a lot more, it's just very important to know what to do if you do get any symptoms. Have been drinking heaps of water, over four litres (scored him going to be up all night in + out to the



toilet which will be bloody cold!). I had just a touch of a headache, Craver had a bit more, + Anji and the three other people we travelled with were fine. Crav + I went for a short walk up the hill, another 100 or 150m (climb high sleep low - not much but hopefully will help). Craver ended up taking a Diuretic tablet which helps speed up the acclimatization by getting rid of the weight types of fluids from the body (alcohol I think). Not in any way, if things aren't good tomorrow morning or if we have trouble on the way up we'll just come

ANNAPURNA III FROM BRAGA



for five minutes to take some early light photos and my fingers were frozen by the time I left! Had to warm them against my thighs and already shrunken balls! - still wearing shorts, as long as you're moving it's fine, just some cold knee caps that all, and they don't have much feeling as a result! So many shined knees on the basketball court in my young gangly uncoordinated days (now I'm in my old gangly uncoordinated days I'm a bit smarter & don't play so much basketball!).

11/4/96 Am. Drank alot of water before I went to bed last night as I had a bit of a headache and thought it might be AMS. more probably the cheap beer we had a drink off! Anyway up & down all night to the toilet - I hate that! But it did give me a chance to have a look at the mountains under the light of the full moon which was pretty nice, a full moon must be beautiful. Tried a couple of photos, one at 30" the other until I started to freeze at about 3 or more minutes.

Have also been out the last few nights at various times looking for this comet, usually stamping and clapping & freezing my nuts off before bed but I still haven't managed to see it. It is apparently near the north star & so sits quite low in the horizon, I should have been able to see it when I got up last night but the moon was probably a bit bright. Don't need not to be visible, that or I'd end up freezing to death in the trying.

on Good day today, next day to acclimatize. Slept in a hut (6:30!) and went for a walk up the hill to the main part of town to have a look at the monastery. Lots of earthy colours and even a brass dome → lots of photos with the mountain and barren valley below in the background. Really

beautiful place. The people and the buildings (~~the~~ Ange has told me never to use etc., it's a cop out!) and everything here seem to exist proudly on the hillsides, prayer flags soaring and flapping joyfully, surveying the valley plains below, however above all of this there is always the immense towering stone and ice of the Himalayas. Lands of eternal snow standing there like a higher authority, another world away. Picking up the early and late light for their own, wisps of snow and ice spraying off the sharp edged peaks under the winds of the upper atmosphere, or billowing clouds blowing out in a stream like the smoke from a volcano spreading over the valley.

Anyway! went into Manang today, not the big bustling city I thought it might have been, apart from the power lines actually not a bad place at all. Not the trekking gear mecca I'd hoped for but bought a pair of woolen gloves and decided to risk the rest, have a lot of layers and the old Gore-Tex jacket is pretty good. The coldest bits will be sitting in the lodges at night I would of thought, when you are moving it will be a bit easier to keep warm.

Went for a walk up to some little hills around the small lake to the south of Manang (at the foot of the Gangapurna glacier) which was pretty nice! Brilliant blue lake (more photos!) and good views of the glacier & up and down the valley. Ever got a glimpse of the pass which was nice.

A lot of other people walked up the hill on the other side to be blessed by a Lama of some sort (responsible for the Manang district supposedly). He lives up in a little place a couple of hundred metres above Manang in a crevice or something in the rock face with his wife and collects donations



Stop to admire the flowers along the way !!! Should be great!

13/4/95 Muktiwath (3798m)

It's snowing outside! Day 10 - over Thonung <sup>hag</sup>! Didn't get a whole lot of sleep last night, about two hours the rest spent tumbling + turning + going to the toilet (cold out! - still couldn't see the bloody comet!), a result of the altitude, worrying about AMS and also the pass. Up at 4:00 am, breaking and up. Thoroughly enjoyed the walk up especially the first few hours, awesome views, traversing big steep slopes and trying not to slip off the snow on the slopes. Everything a high pass through the Himalayas should be! Was a bit of a downer when after 2 1/2 hours and what we had thought was most of the climbing we found out we still had another 450m to go, we'd already got our AMS headaches in anticipation and everything, a few more hours (saved since ~~there~~ <sup>Tal</sup> at 55Rs) soon saw to that and we were ready to go on upwards evermore again. Little did we know it would be another two hours of slow sloping hills, new rise after new rise to false summit (well saddle!) after false summit. By the end of it we all had headaches developing and were getting 50m stretches at a time struggling and out of breath. Fucking hard work, really took a lot of mental effort and physical strain. Thoughts of are we going to be able to do this, thoughts of having to do it all again in a second try spurring us on (well Ange's thoughts were of a plane flight from Mangde to Tomson she admitted later!) and amongst it all the worry over-AMS! Ange even shed a little tear at one stage (I feel like I'm about to cry). Anyway we made it to the top and cold! - we only stayed for ten or fifteen minutes as it was a bit breezy (not too bad) but mainly

icy cold (the lid on my water bottle froze shut on the way up!) when the sun got hidden by a cloud. But it was pretty cool, 5416m, the highest we're likely to get without an aeroplane, Yalawa Kang, red stupa against the blue sky and patches of snow + cloud on one side and Khatury Kang all snow and bluish green hanging glaciers cold against the grey cloud on the other. sentries to the saddle, prayer flags flapping and the odd few trekkers + porters beaming smiles, about the place.



Down the other side to another valley, a Muktiwath, a Tomson + Alonponi, to electricity wires and busy touristy towns full of Tomson trekkers. Slightly nostalgic about the Morsyandi valley and all its little towns, had such a good time, I think the Kuli Gondaki has a lot to live up to. The view over the pass was of hazy mountains in the distance; just a bit second best, but... not to judge too soon!

The descent was long and tiring is what you would say. And we all had thumping headaches, trying to be drug free we held off on the dimozin until an hour and a half later when still descending (descent, descent, descent!) they were still thumping and I had begun to get a nauseous as well. And... and they didn't do much else except send me reeling for a pee at inopportune moments! Started off a reasonably handleable gradient + then ended up with shale and scree slopes and mess of snow down mixedbeds which were really steep, quite a few people, walking sticks sliding and haultering were having a lot of trouble getting down. Ange got very tired and was falling quite a bit, even though on the outside she seemed in relatively good spirits etc. I also fell a bit, mainly on the snow which was icy and compacted making it very slippery, ended up sliding down a fair bit using my shoes as skis. Anyway I finally haultered out for the last hour and we roched into Muktiwath getting on momentum only. Muktiwath from the walk down looks like a dirty spread

back down - special another way here, it is actually quite a nice spot contrary to what we had been led to believe.

Anyway, started off after the big sleep in this morning and a lazy butter pancake with sugar (more like a thin doughy spongecake!) for breakfast (when I did the sketch over - quite happy as I did it quickly + no rubbing out), made our way to Manang, the scenery is so beautiful you want to take photos the whole time, had to restrain myself as we've already taken some of that stuff! Noticed this morning caves dug in the soft sandstone/siltstone of the lower cliffs - mystics sitting there living on juniper berries? Maybe come back some time for a bit of ancient wisdom.

Managed to lose a group of about fifteen Germans all clacking + clattering like a gaggle of geese with two walking sticks each by taking some short cuts across a couple of terraced fields coming into Tengri. Once we got past them they turned off the track to follow us + we ended up lost picking the track back up from the side of town. Nice views down to where the Marsyandi splits into the Khongor Khole which goes up to Lake Tilicho and the Kone Khole which goes up to Thorung Phedi. Have now followed the river until it's just a trickle following all the changing country side it passes through - nice thought.

After Tengri you turn right and head up another valley leaving the Annapurna and Annapurnas behind. The landscape is a lot more barren, large scree slopes with patches of snow streaked across them leading up to rocky peaks and snowy Himalayas behind them. Climbing now with the base camp and the pass high in your thoughts in front of you. We made it to Churi Lattan (7000m ap) and sat down for some

lunch. After lunch we all felt fine and decided to go the extra 300m up to Thorung Phedi, another two hours away. Thinking back it would have been fine to stay there, do the small walk the next morning and then maybe a day walk in the afternoon, but it was so cold and the villages are nothing more than one or two hotels so to save mulling around in the cold we decided to press on.

More barren, cold scenery on the way up the valley, well trodden path of broken stones from a thousand pairs of boots winding up rocky slopes to the mountains above. The odd cascade of icicles in small streams coming down from the hills. Impressive, it feels as though this is it, the valley and the local people have been left behind at Tengri, Jomsom awaits.

Thorung Phedi itself is nice, the end of the valley, high rocky walls creating a canyon effect with (as always) the brightly lit snowy peaks behind them. The weather, a bit of cloud dust early on had remained mostly fine for the whole day and you can see right down the valley to Gongapurna - Annapurna III, a slight bluish haze setting them back as a part of the valley we have now left behind. Quite a few people here, wandering about filling in the afternoon, playing in the snow (as if it isn't cold enough!) and walking up to the top of the cliffs around the place. And disappearing upwards in scree slopes and patches of snow, rocky crags either side, the path up to the pass, up to the saddle that now so close is just as far away it seems as the Manang Valley behind us. Straight up into the blue of the sky, the grey of the rock + the patches of snow, up to the tiers of 7400m! Should be quite an experience. Will take it very easy and enjoy




referred to as, without it seems any elaboration ever, looks amazing anyway, remote and full of adventure, for those on camping trips with guides, an ecologist and US 700 are for 10 days minimum it appears. Kagleri anyway was well worthwhile, a bit of an explore around the streets, goatherds lounging into town in the afternoon and nice views of Nilgiri and Tilicho Peaks.

Tarkhot on the way down was nice also, not far below Muktiwasi caves + buildings in + out of each other similar to Kagleri, but built out on the ridge of a hill, on the end of which was a monastery. - and paintings - really graphic of what seemed to be heaven + hell type analogies (in a buddhist monastery?), people being thrown into pots of boiling water with spears, being burned alive and skewered. Humm...

The walk to Kagleri was a bit fragile. Some toes + feet and lowhill all the way. The scenery was good though, cold dry hilly desert, trails down big hills of barren ground with little evenly spaced dry bushes, - too hard to describe, really barren, really big spaces, and a really (really) strong wind. Also lots of little caves dug out of the side of the valley, thought they might be for the monks spells of isolation but some of them were tiny or parts metres in and looked impossible to get to - natural? They all had flat bottoms so they must have been manmade.

So anyway - day 11 done with, both tired (me especially - and pretty crabby - Humm...) oh - and got up about three in the morning to go to the toilet and had another look for the comet! (after looking for it before going to bed as well) well I never learn, and surprise surprise - nothing - but I did see a shooting star, really bright one but quite short. Small reward for all my efforts.

Day 12  Up this morning to have a look at Kagleri in

the morning light without the wind. Took a few photos of the monastery at first light - taking a lot of photos but what the hell, indulge - I hope they turn out or I'll be a bit pissed! :-)

Today was mainly the walk to Marpha, along the river bed, though Jomsom which was a pretty plain town, a lot of hotels around the airport, and Dizepi slowly moving to our left, the wind sprung up about 11:00 and after that, that is about all I can remember, strong dry headwind roaring up the valley, will have to start earlier tomorrow!

Marpha is a really nice town, dried apples, apple pie, apple fritters, apple cider, apples, apples, apples everywhere. A monastery to have a look at and lots of chortens up the cliff face behind (+ one dodgy house even!) Looking down on the town its all rooftops surrounded by cut firewood. Rock, walls, timber, mud, firewood, prayer flags and shig in that order. And a dead crow hanging by its neck from a clothesline on the rooftop of the house next door to the hotel. Humm...

The other thing is the black water, full of the slate from the hills it must be, down in the tributaries and down into the irrigation channels and through the streams in the village, probably ok to drink but just very heavy on the minerals!

16/4/96 Cheza (2055m)

Day 13 - Long walk today. got up early to avoid the wind and it never really eventuated so we kept going after lunch at Kalopani to Cheza, about 7 hours walking time all up. A gain the walking was mainly along the river bed of the Kali Gandaki (or up and down right next to it anyway!). Unfortunately <sup>too</sup> most of the day it was overcast and we missed out on the views of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna I except for what we could see against a grey background. We are back here low again so you get a good idea of the heights of the mountains, looking up to see snow + ice + rock peeping through the gaps where you would expect to see shig! Passed through some nice villages but

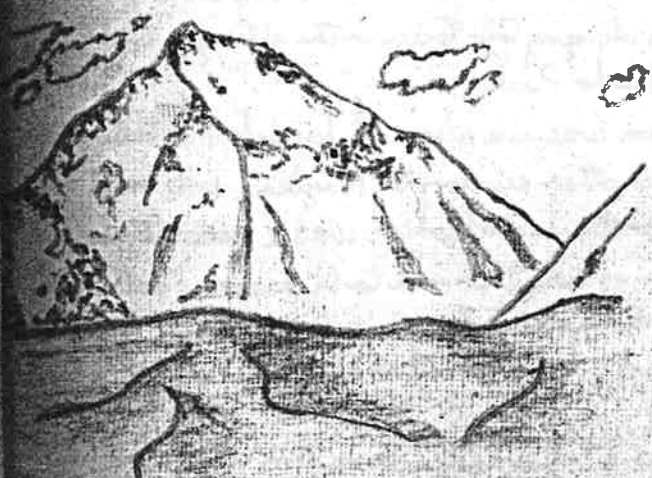
old buildings like some industrial estate and I had a bit of trouble believing that this was Mustang, for some reason I thought it would be a nice little compact town. In sure I'd heard good things about it somewhere.

Anyway ended up in the Bob Marley Lodge with fires under the tables (cool), with blankets to keep in the heat - and with Timi Hendrix playing on the stereo, man! Hopping place - lovely ladies running it (all the ladies in the hotels are really nice actually) laughing and giggling the whole time running in and out with food. Really helps a place when there is so much human warmth about. (4 1/2 hours up, 4 hours down + stops)

14/4/96 Day 11 - slept like the dead last night and up this morning with sore feet and a mouth like a pot of dog. Mustang in the morning sun isn't too bad at all, a jumble of buildings spread about a dusty main street with a water course running through part of it (women washing pots etc), amid a barren landscape of brown hills and patches of snow and higher snowy peaks surrounding them. The most impressive of which is Thapa Peak (Dhoryan Peak depending on which map you look at), perhaps this side of the pass won't be so bad after all.

Things in the street of Mustang, scores for sale - really nice, yak wool, horse wool, whatever, a kid crying having to have a bath under a cold tap, a bunch of horses tails (or yak tails or whatever) bones still in them also for sale, a couple of roosters coloured against the chocolate brown of the dirt (dirt is more appropriate than dust I think) around, women coming from time to time to fill up buckets with water at the public tap, the odd treble, a bit sloper, coloured by stiff muscles from the pass a day or two before, or maybe just the spin + relaxed pace of the town (the complete missing of our residual nervous energy from the pass & the chink down, and the towns relaxed pace could be part of

the reason for our (my) initial bad impressions. Mustang doesn't pretend to be anything!), and finally the same kid still crying, now having to have his hair combed - oh, and a small sign pointed on the head of a doorway into a hotel saying MAY ALL BEINGS BE HAPPY.



THAPA PEAK

15/4/96 Manjha  
(2667m)

Stayed last night at Kagheri (2622m) a great little town at the bottom of the valley leading down from the pass (on the Kali Gandaki in fact!)

The town is a maze of little paths leading in, around and even under all the buttresses, a series of water channels running around the place (quite a bit of crop lands just above the town from irrigation) and the ruins of (what we think is) an old fort, mud walls poking up amongst the prayer flags. But by far the most distinguishing feature is the big ochre red temple rising out of the general mud brown. It sits there (looking a bit like the generator building of a hydro-electric scheme it has to be said!) like a sentinel, base slightly under than the top giving it a look of laid back dominance, of solidity, anyway like a sentinel, marking the start of the lands of Mustang, whose vista of barren earthy mountains and wide river valley spreads out behind it. The legendary kingdom of Mustang as it keeps getting





ending it down to his helper who kept a respectable distance, only coming closer with a blanket over his head to collect the honeycomb in a bucket. The guy with his hand in the hive didn't seem to be getting tingly but he didn't seem to be enjoying it that much either! He had a grimace on his face and his right leg was shaking nervously, sometimes to the point like when you put weight on it the wrong way. One time he stepped on a couple of bees (he was halfway up one of those wooden log-step ladders) to kill them, not an act of friendship! He did however have a bit of burning grass creating a little bit of smoke - only had on a short-sleeved shirt so maybe it wasn't too bad. Interesting to see one way.

Closed up for the morning's walk and we saw our first patches of red rhododendrons up high on some hills, walked through some forest with what sounded like huge cicadas chinking away in the trees. Lots of donkeys on the trail today. saw a couple more chickens riding shotgun, unaware of their fate - so comical! The Kali Gandaki went down some pretty steep + twisted drops and we crossed a few dodgy wooden bridges along the way. A lot of people on the trail including a couple of bread-loved mules carrying their guitars (keen!). Passed through Dana, a town with some nice houses with intricately carved windows etc. similar to some of the buildings you see in Kathmandu, must have been still in (?) quite a well-off town in its day. Managed to catch some nice views of Annapurna south before it decided over again + we arrived at Tatopani (Bhaji for Hot Water) - nice volcanic hot springs at the bottom by the river.

Staying at the Dhulegiri Lodge (we've been staying at Dhulegiri the whole way down. + they've been pretty good!) in Tatopani which is great - good food (not that cheap but not too bad) especially apple straddles for Rs 25 - ummm! Our room has windows that open out to look over the street (one floor up) and a heavy curtain come through so we just lay down with the windows open

watching it come down, dropping off the eyes + drenching the street below until we fall asleep. Then went down for a dip in the springs which were also nice. The sky cleared up a bit later and you get a great view of what I think is Nilgiri South up the river, the smaller hills forming it from each side. Looked remarkably like the prominent symbol! Anyway, a few cheap happy hour beers over dinner, experiences over the pass recounted and off to bed early - big day tomorrow - 1600 odd miles up to Ladangoni! Me refusing to take dimoxin saying (I'll be a guinea pig + drug free - an hour later - give me it, where is it!! give me that dimoxin! (how embarrassing!)).

18/4/96 Ghorepani (2874m)

Day 15 - A lot of climbing, full of sweat at the end of it but it was quite good. felt good to do some work, a feeling of accomplishment that's been lacking the last few days. Most people are heading back to Pokhara from here, I think we will continue on and do the Sandring trek as it's what we started off intending to do and the Rhododendrons out to Lhanduk are supposed to be great. Will feel like it is sealing the whole thing off as well which will be good.

Most bizarre thing this morning: woke up and had breakfast early and a villager had killed a snow leopard (strangled) with his bare hands, and not a small one either, about a metre or more long not including the tail. The story goes that it had come down from the hills + had attacked his dog; he jumped in to save the dog + fought with it for half an hour (slightly exaggerated by this time me think!) after which time with the help of a few others he finally got the better of it. Beautiful animal - quite sad really. The guy who did it had deep cuts + gashes all over his hands (which were huge - maybe he does this sort of thing quite often?) and he was still shaking from nervous excitement

were as nice as the better places on the other side of the pass. Not too disappointed in the views as we saw so much on the other side, but I might get an early and hike back up the trail a bit just to have a look, (our map has a little star which tells you there is good views from here!)

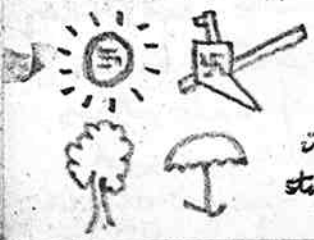
Over the pass we met up with a nepali guy who had a set of Yak horns sticking out of the top of his bag, and we've been seeing him on + off for a bit. Last night he walked in + it turns out he's got the whole head! hanging these eyeless sockets + dried up mouth off the back of his pack - pretty off + pretty funny. Why he'd carry that the whole way over the pass I don't know?!

Made a bit of a night last night on apple cider (screamy) TOR; for a litre bottle and it was great. Apparently you can get similar - screamy straight from the farmers in England (around Somerset I think) - might have to try that when we get back!

I almost forgot we did get some good views of a huge glacier down Dhaulagiri (I think - our map puts a bit short) which was pretty impressive, but judging by the photos, the best views of Dhaulagiri are to be had from Kalopani.

Everyone is off having an afternoon snooze so I'm left here on my own, rain is just starting to fall, kids have been let out of school + I'm sitting under a awandah waiting for my tea + peanut butter chowatis! kind of nice actually :-)

Around the circuit there have been election signs, mainly just the symbols of the different parties, painted on walls; on rocks; on telegraph poles and basically anything that isn't moving. The different parties are the sun, the tree, the plough and the umbrella (and probably one or two others also). Apparently quite a bit of the trail is communist. They don't know what real communism is "some chok-dawachien



guys we met up with reckoned. The great thing about the towns (as in India) is that the whole of town life is centred about the streets and things you notice here, more than India

+ more than the other side of the pass is all of the roosters + hens + chickens. strutting in + out, scratching up the dung as the horses + cows turn to watch them pass, sleeping with their necks turned inwards + juffed up with ten or twenty chicks poking out from under them. Nice having so much the about, makes it all seem warm - natural + real. We saw a donkey train today with two hens perched sitting between saddle bags of rice or grain or whatever on two of the donkeys, along for the ride, a part of the procession and I'm sure quite an adventure for your average chicken! Looked funny these two chickens riding off past us on the trail amongst all the clanging bells and "moocha, cha, cha's" of the donkey driver, Little did they know I imagine. (chicken ~~any~~ on the menu somewhere along the way).

		SINCE START	LAST WK	SINCE NEPAL	INCL OTHER
WEAWE	25 x 1.4 = (35)	(134)	(13)	(26)	(13)
US CASH	1110 x 1.4 = 1554	A\$ 24.2	11.7	33.4	13.4
US CASH	100 x 1.4 = 140	N\$ 1016	471	1403	561
NRs	12000 / 42 = 286				
	A\$ <del>1800</del> 1945				
				↑	w/o 4000 100
					1910 + 523
					476 - 1945
					= (2914 - 1945)
					Permit 1290

17/4/96 Tatopani (1199m)

Day 14 - Started off late (was raining for most of the night and cloudy this morning so I didn't bother getting up to see if we could hike back a bit to see Dhaulagiri) thinking it would be an easy day, wrong! Steep descents the whole time and seemed to stretch out, especially as it got hotter in the afternoon, become harder + harder to make it past the cold drink stops.

Leaving Citara we saw a bee keeper taking the honeycomb out of one of his hives, a piece of hollow log on a wall with a small hole in it. He was wiping it clean of bees with a rag and then



when we saw him (up an hour after it happened). Well!

The walk today was quite nice, through the middle hills (I think they call them, lots of village life (and us sweating our way up stone stairs through it all)). As we gained height all of the different mountains that have been lurking about in and out of the clouds for the past couple of days poked their heads above the hills at different stages which was interesting, Dhaulagiri, the Nilgiris, the Annapurnas (except I!); will head up to Poon Hill tomorrow-morning and see the whole ensemble for sure hopefully.

19/4/96

Day 16 - up early (5:00 am) for a 45 min walk up Poon Hill and sunrise - pretty spacy! All the mountains there to say hello, Dhaulagiri, Turshiche, Nilgiri, Annapurna I and Annapurna South, and Machhapuchhare (the fish tail). The sun creeping up from behind Machhapuchhare (a lot of it) and the Annapurnas to light up the Dhaulagiris. Lots of rhododendrons were also, well worth the effort (about this other people all chiding and kidding away thought so also!)

Tarepani (Derham water! - 2721 m)

Short day today about 3 1/2 - 4 hours walking, thought we deserved it after our hard day yesterday and this morning early morning jaunt (which wasn't as easy as any of us thought!) from 2974 → 3210 m, it seems easier with paths somewhere but they slow you down a bit and you do it steadily - must mean you're not aerobically fit and it feels easier when you are limited by strength.

The walk was quite nice today, started with a steep climb up the ridgeline (after saying goodbye to everyone in Chorepani, they are all heading down + so we organized to meet up in Kinawa - poor Mark had what must have been his first Dal Bhat of the trip last night, didn't get a refill + was sick this morning + gotta laugh :-)). one way climbed up almost to the level of Poon Hill

which we could see across the saddle containing Chorepani, good views (why did we bother with Poon Hill? - well not quite as good as Poon Hill maybe), saw a plane and a couple of helicopters fly through above Chorepani (below us) on their way up to Tomson, Chorepani must be the high point they have to get over on the way up, was pretty impressive.

We continued along the ridgeline for a while, through the long-soaked rhododendron forests which were nice, lots of tangled roots underfoot and gnarly moss covered trees, bit of an enchanted forest feel about it. Lots more flowers about but expectations were a bit high I think (like Ange said, expected to be beating them off with a stick!). Mainly pink as well, the red ones are more striking, it was nice though (I have to admit!) getting glimpses of the mountains through the gaps in the trees, all very picture postcard and just a little cheesy, could almost make out the bible quotations in the bottom corner!

Then it was down, down following a small stream (how could anything that clear be bad for you!) through a couple of villages not marked on our maps and down a dippy canyon, a nice waterfall covered in Rhododendrons (more bible quotations), down away from the river, down a really steep slope to the bottom of the valley and the Bburungli Khole, and then straight up for a couple of hundred metres to Tarepani. Jungle most of the way which was nice, lots of shade and a troop of monkeys even coming up the hill into Tarepani, big grey bodies with long tails and white fluffy trimming around their faces. And finally Tarepani, not the most beautiful town, more a collection of hotels actually! but looks like it promises some nice views if it's a clear morning tomorrow.

Will miss travelling with the people we met along the way (Mark, Gaby, Phillip and Cravin) it's nice having people you know at a place to compare the days happenings with. We all had a drink of water last night which was nice - onto new friends and new ground I suppose.

The other thing I forgot to mention about yesterday were the porters we saw carrying cages of chickens. Seven days or something with a dozen chickens strapped to your back, drive you absolutely crazy I'd imagine!

It seems with every week we are away Brendon's place in this world drifts further away, getting out of focus and splitting into little ripples, becoming more and more liquid. First it was just endless opportunities, endless possibilities, now I seem to be getting more and more lost in all of this travelling, in the moments, and what was is getting hazy, getting forgotten? Part of it may be the fact that we have been away lost in the villages of Nepal for so long. The mountains and the Dal Bhat have been moving in to fill up the corners of my mind gently smothering things, and I wouldn't say it is all that comforting, because I suppose that's not why I am here, I'm not out to lose myself, quite the opposite in fact, and I think that that is what is happening to some extent. I suppose once we hit... hit what?, civilization. London, Melbourne?... I suppose it will all come crashing back, and I'm confident it will all still be there.

This afternoon has been quite boring, it has been raining (snowing at base camp!?) so we couldn't have really kept on walking anyway, and we've just been hanging around the hotel. I'm a bit disappointed in Taraponi I suppose but it's more than that as well, it's my mind wanting something creative to do. (hence the writing in the diary routine even if it is drabble!)

Little bit of Nepali trekking culture, sitting writing in the evening, sounds of the porters & guides in the camp below setting up camp and drifting into an easy song every now & then (like the rafting guides used to - the river song - my life is like the river flowing ever onwards - pretty mellow man!), the guy sitting next

## Money

PLACE	TIMESPAN	ALL AVG AS/DAY	PERIOD DAILY AVG	W/O SHOPPING ETC	
INDIA GOA → DHARAMSALA	12 1/2 WKS	21.8	21.8	14.4	
DHARAMSALA → MANALI	= 1 WK	21.3	15.4	12.4	
SOLANG → DELHI	= 1 WK	22.3	35.9	22.1	
VARANASI → DARJEELING	= 1 WK	22.10	17.8	14.0	
BORDER →					
	→ KATHMANDU = 6 DAYS	24.5	69.5	69.6	
POKHARA → POKHARA	= 1 WK	25.5	55.0	42.7	
(RAFTING) POKHARA → GHASA	= 13 DAYS	24.2	33.4	11.7	
GHASA →					
	OVERALL		NEPAL	PERIOD	W/O SHOP EX.
		24.5	69.5	69.6	23.6
		25.5	55.0	42.7	38.4
		24.2	33.4	11.7	13.4

## Books read.

- Poirot's Christmas - Agatha Christie.
- Animal Farm - George Orwell.
- Journey to the Centre of the Earth - Jules Verne
- Dark Witness - Agatha Christie.
- Midnight's Children - Salman Rushdie.

to us reading his book, empty plates from pancakes and jam (easy to eat to pass the time - too easy!), the mountains peeping through the rain clouds every now and then looking amazing

20/4/96 Suuwa (2350m)

Day 17 - second day spent trekking around the hills, looking forward to getting back by a river where everything is a little more gradual! From Taraponi at 2721m straight down



Exchange rates

22/3/96	Nepal Rastri Bank	USD	TCHA	55.75 R
24/3/96	" " "	"	VISA	55.45 R
3/4/96	Nepal Credit Bank	"	TCHA	54.20 R
		AD	TCHQ	42.34 R
		₹	TCHQ	82.80 R

through forest and then terraced fields of wheat to the Kyamru Khola at about 1930m (800m!) and then up again through more terraced fields to around 2400m and Chhomong where we had lunch beautiful views of Machhapuchhare and Annapurna south, lots of hotels with big glass windows and cheap food (tempted to stay), and then straight down about 500m to Chomrong Khola and then straight up the other side where drained of a litre or two of sweat (dropped in a trail up the hill and pooling around our shirts and back aches) we decided to stop at Suresha (2350m). A lot of hard work, we did quite well, 6 hours of walking all up impressed with how Ange handled it all. I was feeling a bit light headed up the last hill and she kept on going. Still in what I would call the middle hills, lots of green, lots of farms and villages, very warm and almost (almost) humid. The countryside really has changed a lot along the way, I think of it all the highlands at the back of the other side. Piss above up to the pass were the most amazing.

today, more of the middle hills and we're up to base camp, another goal, the views good (even better than the circuit we've done) a town, two hotels on a ridge above which is nice, looking forward to a quiet night, aching, feels like we've just walked a human group of Aussies, Americans and Brits + raving - I can't be bothered - they're flowing ever onwards - please! To be cont'd...

looking into the hills  
the hills is a down  
something is down  
to rain

diary  
Lup  
diary, sour  
dinner and  
the rafting guides were  
flowing ever onwards - please!

DELIVERED  
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MAXIMUM WEIGHT 100g  
G.T. O.K. 11  
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**RICH CHRISTMAS PUDDING.**

- 1 lb. M'Dougall's Self-Raising Flour.
- 1 lb. Beef Suet.
- 2 lb. Currants.
- 1 lb. Mince Sugar.
- 2 oz. Blanched Almonds.
- 1 Apple (peeled & cored).
- Juice and Rind of 1 Lemon.
- 1 Nutmeg (grated).
- 1 teaspoonful Ground Ginger.
- 1 teaspoonful Mixed Spice.
- 1 teaspoonful Salt.
- 4 Eggs.
- 1 lb. Brandy.
- 1 Gill Milk.

Chop the Suet, Raisins, Sultanas, Peas, Almonds and Apple, or pass separately through a mincing machine, and mix all the dry ingredients. Beat up the Eggs, add the Milk, and stir them with the Brandy and Lemon Juice to the Fruit, etc. Put the mixture into a greased mould, cover with a parchment cloth, place at once in boiling water, and boil for eight hours.

NOTE—This pudding improves with keeping, when required for use it should be reheated for two or three hours.

**FAMILY CHRISTMAS PUDDING.**

- 1 lb. M'Dougall's Self-Raising Flour.
- 1 lb. Suet.
- 1 lb. Sultanas.
- 1 lb. Mixed Peas.
- Juice and Rind of 1 Lemon.
- 2 Eggs.
- 1 lb. Raisins (stoned).
- 6 oz. Molasses Sugar.
- 1 teaspoonful Salt.
- 11 gills Milk.

Prepared as for "RICH CHRISTMAS PUDDING"

M'Dougall's Self-Raising Flour

