

FIRST ARTICLE

THE DARK LIGHT IN DARKNESS YOU DISCOVER LIGHT

By Rajan Sakya

When you first glance at this painting, it projects depression of body and soul, a feeling of having given up on life. Yes, it is dark, it is lonely, it is sad. But, please wait. Do not dismiss, or pass by. Stay and gaze. For, in a fleeting moment you may be transported to a repressed period in your own life – a dark, lonely, sad place. Most of us have experienced dark moments in life, where we struggled and persevered only to emerge triumphantly back into the light.

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DIPESH NEPALI: HIS OWN PROTEGE

By Sworup Adhikari

FIRST PERSON

Born in 2005 CE in remote Jumla to a family that struggled to make a decent living, Dipesh Nepali was interested in everything even as a child. Very different from his two elder brothers, he found mathematics and science fascinating, and soon found himself immersed in self-study. He recalls spending hours learning about how the universe works. Everyone, says Nepali, has an innate ability to understand and create art. The written and unwritten rules of society, materialism and the thirst after superficial satisfaction causes the artist within us all to go into hiding. But given the willingness to search, the artist within oneself can be found and treasured. Similarly, art, he says, was buried deep within his identity, only needing to be remembered and recalled. Nepali says he rediscovered his love for art, and in some ways, himself, when he was in grade seven.

Obsessively self-studying art history, art criticism and various styles of western art since his personal renaissance, Nepali started to find this deep passion taking over his other interests. Nothing besides art was of importance to him. It gave him a sense of meaning and purpose.

Journeying to Kathmandu to develop himself and his craft, Nepali found himself struggling internally as well as externally. Taking refuge in an elder brother he was close to, Nepali's external burden was somehow lessened. Internally, however, there was no relief. Submerged under his own thoughts, feelings and emotions, Nepali buried himself in his work, using it almost as an internal Band-aid. Having learnt and practiced different techniques and methods used in the various genres of art, Nepali developed an internal mechanism to take his identity and emotions, and to make them materialize on canvas. Painting became the outlet where he could let loose his repressed emotions and feelings.

Cont. on page 2...

WHITE TARA

BY SAMUNDRA MAN SINGH SHRESTHA

INDUCER OF A CALM, OVERWHELMING TIDAL WAVE

By Rajan Sakya

Life is an assemblage of deep embedded memories

*-
an experience to reminisce,
an escapade to cherish,
a secret to smile over...
of all of the senses, visual spying of
something beautiful
enriches those vital memories...
you recall, you talk, you laugh, you cry, you
ponder -
a whole array of emotions over
that particular sight in that particular moment.*

Saptalochani or The White Tara is a spectacular work of art. On first encounter with this masterpiece, a variety of emotions may emerge - from surprise to awe, bringing about an understanding that beauty has been totally redefined here.

Samundra Man Singh Shrestha is synonymous with Nepali art. A well-deserved position, resulting in his being one of the most sought after artists of the country.

Saptalochani - a feeling engulfs you, as the beauty of simplicity captures the surrealist movement, it gently yet firmly overwhelms you. Your body, mind and soul enter a calm inner tidal wave. The flow of the energy resonates through the painting in a spiritual manner, touching your inner self.

Saptalochani is not just a painting of the White Tara, but the artists' lifetime learning essence captured in one single piece of canvas. Shrestha has mastered up his experiences and knowledge to bring out the mastery of simplicity. Through this style of simplicity, we view the incorporation of his linework, the rhythmic flow and blend of colors, and we witness the confident strokes of effortlessness and minimalism as they unite both the artist and the viewer.

The White Tara proclaims a new era of Shrestha's work. To create art, share, and then let it go; that's one of the keys to living a successful and peaceful life. This artwork reminds one to be humble, thankful and compassionate. Tara is a symbol of love, compassion and beauty. Compassion is defined as being thoughtful towards the pain and sorrow of others.

Shrestha's Saptalochani helps us to be mindful through the simplicity, beauty, and attractiveness of his creation. The in-depth knowledge of White Tara becomes prominent not through the iconography but through the flow of the painter's style and depiction.

There is always a perfect iconographic presentation of White Tara in paubhas, thangkhas, statues and temples and monasteries. Yet, how do we transfer the knowledge of the past to the next generation with the same kind of intensity, emotions and faith? To be able to understand, respect and pass down the values while retaining the same core is what Shrestha has mastered.



WHITE TARA
SAMUNDRA MAN SINGH SHRESTHA

From page 1

DIPESH NEPALI: HIS OWN PROTEGE

Art was his escape from himself. A way to be truly free amid the numerous chains of societal existence. It is where the chaos of his psyche finds rest and where he can finally let loose. For Nepali, nothing can rival the emotional release that he experiences when he paints. Inspiration, he says, can appear out of nowhere. For him, even something as simple as a chair can be a source of inspiration. Nature and the self are the two components of reality and the highest forms of inspiration, he says.

Working at a studio in Chhauni in Kathmandu, Dipesh paints exclusively in oil because of the technical blend of colors that he can achieve. Acrylic, says Nepali, is great as a learning tool and for certain types of art, having used it himself in the beginning. The essence and depth that he tries to bring to his paintings and the unique blend of the colors he looks for in trying to express his complex emotions requires the use of oil.

At only 16 years old, Dipesh's mind has traveled for longer than his body has. With an incredibly mature and unique vision of the world, one finds within his work expressions of suffering and a desire to be free. Art, says Nepali, is the only thing he has in mind for the future. Each day, he aims to learn, implement and experiment in his craft in an attempt to express who he is.

Sworup Adhikari is an engineering student. He is also a passionate researcher of art, culture and religious philosophies.

THE DARK LIGHT IN DARKNESS YOU DISCOVER LIGHT

From page 1...

This work was created by Dipesh Nepali, a 16-year-old boy from a remote village of Jumla. As a child he attended school, played with his friends, and above all he had time to draw and to paint.

Art was my escape from the world, and from myself. A way to be truly free amid the numerous chains of family and society. It was where the chaos of my mind and soul found rest, a place or medium where I could find and express myself. Then and now. - Dipesh Nepali

Talking to him over multiple, deep conversations, I finally understood what led him to seek solitude. It was mostly the written and unwritten rules of society in which he lived, but not least the materialism and the desperate search for superficial satisfaction. That promoted him to go into a form of hiding - a personal retreat. Yet he retained the curiosity of his childhood, questioning, seeking and discovering that deep within himself, art itself resided. It only needed to be groomed gently to become a personal tool, his individual power. On realizing this he awoke with the strength of a newborn flame.

Seemingly unenthusiastic and non-pleasing on initial viewing, if you give it space and time, this piece radiates a form of energy. Almost like an inner applause of a battle won over earlier negative emotions or phases in your life. If one reflects honestly, an association with such feelings often emerges. Bringing back the dark moment, yet remembering your process of recovery where you emerged stronger, determined and self-reliant. No matter what you have struggled, there will be further struggles ahead. Evoking and honoring these memories empowers you to meet all adversity.

I was confused about myself and about my art. So, I traveled to Kathmandu to seek experience and knowledge. Luckily my older brother was there, and he helped me address the practical burdens. Yet internally I found no relief, being weighed down with my own thoughts, feelings and emotions. I submerged myself into my work, as an escape. Hard work became a form of Band-aid, that helps the wound but never heals. - Dipesh Nepali

I too, like Dipesh, had my issues as a teenager. As a way to escape them I flew to Pennsylvania, America, at 17. My Band-aid was enrolling as an exchange student, senior year in high school. My family covered my costs, and I lived with an American family for a year. Unfortunately, I had developed Vitiligo, a dyspigmentation of skin color. This was a catastrophe for a teenager trying to adapt into a new society. With no relatives and no friends, I felt totally isolated. Not because of any bullying, but because of what was going on inside me. My horror about my own appearance and my perception of how people would view me was crippling. I lacked confidence. I kept away from people, afraid of how they would react. It was so bad that I ate my lunch in the school bathroom for four months, and then went straight to class. I would feel a sense of achievement by just avoiding people. Today, I no longer feel shy of anything or anybody. I

UNVEILING



Avalokitesvara and White Tara

Avalokitesvara is the earthly embodiment of the eternal self-born Amitabha Buddha. He guards you against shipwrecks, fires, assassins, robbers and wild beasts. White Tara is Avalokitesvara's female consort, born from the tears of his left eye. White Tara is a great representation of Avalokitesvara's immense compassion and love.

Mukesh Shrestha, the artist, created this work to alleviate the pain of all beings, including those of viewers and the artist himself, and to support them in walking the road of self-liberation.

The message that the artist tries to send out through this painting is that we can achieve happiness and balance out the predisposition to despair by practicing compassion, generosity, and gratitude.

Artist: Mukesh Shrestha, Size: 2 x 3 ft

believe those hard years gave me a solid foundation to face anything that life throws at me.

This artwork transports me back to that time of my life. The sadness, the loneliness, the depressiveness - the feeling of being trapped by powers outside one's control. Yet it reminds me of a personal battle I won over myself. I wouldn't be who I am today, if it wasn't for that year.

Dipesh's mind has traveled further than his young body has. With an incredibly mature and unique vision of the world, one finds within his work expressions of suffering and a desire to be free. For him, painting became the outlet where repressed emotions and feelings could be let loose. The very essence and depth that he brings to his paintings are obvious. Less obvious are the numerous and varied technical aspects he utilizes, partly highlighted here by his choosing oils to achieve his unique blend and shades of colors.

Only you, the individual, can judge what art is - for it be so many different things to different people. Dipesh's art touched the deepest and darkest parts of my past and reminded me of life's struggles. I find happiness and peace in the darkest part of this great work.

Rajan Sakya is the founder and director of the Museum of Nepali Art.

LIVING CULTURE

STHAPIT: TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS OF KATHMANDU

by Rikesh Sthapit

Sthapit is one of the nine clans of the Udaaya community of Kathmandu. Before the introduction of modern technology to Nepal in building construction, they were the only people who occupied a prominent place in the construction of houses in Kathmandu.

When building a house, the first step of laying the foundation and placing a lintel beam Nināh at the highest point of the house in the final stage are the most important tasks. To mark those important events, it is customary to perform a ritual worship by the chief carpenter, usually a member of the Sthapit clan. Also known as Sikami, the Sthapits were one of the most important craftspersons for setting the foundation of any construction work.

However, the origin of the Sthapit caste is still a subject of research.

Sthapit means “established or to establish” in Sanskrit. The Sthapits’ traditional occupation, as per the division of labor laid down from ancient times, has been carpentry, architecture, and engineering. They were skilled artisans, and were engaged in designing and building palaces, houses, temples and machinery.



Among the notable Sthapits, Jogbir Sthapit (also known as Joglal Sthapit, Bhajuman) was the architect who built Narayanhiti Palace in Kathmandu, the palace of the Shah dynasty, in 1886 CE. He was also the chief architect of the restoration project of the important Buddhist shrine of Swayambhu, which was completed in 1921 CE.

Traditional Sthapit neighborhoods in Kathmandu are Thaymaru, Bhindyah, Makhan, Mikhadwan and Lagan. Makhan is home to the largest population of Sthapits. Based on their ancestral residency, the Sthapit caste is categorized into four main subgroups.

Though some Sthapit families are still engaged in carpentry and furniture manufacturing, most of them have now abandoned their ancestral profession.

Rikesh Sthapit is a software engineer and heritage enthusiast.



Nepal Art Post monogram in Ranjana, Nepal's original script.



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VISITORS' TESTIMONIALS

Jaya Ram Shrestha
Director, National Museum

The MoNA is really amazing and wonderful. I have never seen such an ambitious effort in Nepal by the private sector. I have learned many things that can be applied in the National Museum as well.

Anuradha Koirala
Social Activist and CNN Hero

Congratulations to Rajan Bhai. This museum reflects his respect for all the artists and their preservation of our Nepali culture, customs and religion. Hope we will all be able to join in with his efforts. Congratulations.





Acalanatha

The Five wisdom Kings of Shingon Tradition
Size : 95 x 85 cm



Bodhisattva Padmapani

Lo Manthang Art
Size : 90 x 52 cm



Chaturbujha Avalokitesvara

Bodhisattva of Boundless Compassion
Size : 66 x 46 cm



Green Tara in Lalitasana

Embodiment of Ceaseless Activity
Size : 97 x 72 cm



Vajra Yogini

Embodiment of Transcendent wisdom
Size : 48 x 35cm



Vajrasattva with Consort

Vajragarvi
Size : 56 x 43 cm

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MYTH BUSTER

THE POINTY YOMARI

**It is more than just a delectable delicacy.
It is an ancient symbol of prosperity.**

Text & Photo by Alok Siddhi Tuladhar

It is sweet and syrupy, but it is not a dessert. It is delightful to the taste buds and to look at, but you eat it only on specific occasions. It is the increasingly famous, nutritious and succulent Yomari.

This year onwards, a government holiday was declared to celebrate Dhanya Purnima, the full moon day in December when the harvesting of rice is completed. Yomari is mandatorily cooked by the indigenous Newa community of the Kathmandu valley as part of the Yomari Punih festival on this day.

A popular legend links the origin of Yomari to the ancient, prosperous Newa settlement of Panchal (now called Panauti) in the eastern edge of Kathmandu valley many centuries ago. It is believed that offering Yomari to your fresh harvest of rice to kick off the Yomari Punih festivities will ensure good farming results and a full harvest in the forthcoming year.

Yomari is always made in a shape that resembles the citron fruit (*Citrus medica*), which is called Jambhara in Sanskrit. Hindu women who wish to bear a child worship Jambhara. Another word for this autumnal fruit is Bijapura (meaning full of seeds). Jambhara is also the root word for Jambala, the deity of wealth in the Mahayana sect of Buddhism.

In a more secular context, the citron fruit (tashi in Nepal Bhasa and bimiro in Khas) is revered by the Newa people during the Mha Puja ceremony, which began as a worship of the fetus during pre-Buddhist, pre-Hindu times. Mha Puja is celebrated nowadays as a worship of the self, where the citron fruit is worshiped as a symbol of fertility and prosperity.

Going by both Hindu or Buddhist traditions that are prevalent in present-day Kathmandu valley, or tracing our roots to pre-Buddhist and pre-Hindu times, we see how the popular Yomari links us to the humble citron fruit, which in turns connects us to our prosperous past.

The age-old Yomari song starts off with the phrase Yomari Chwamu (meaning pointy Yomari). The rest of this classic song, and its deep meaning, can be explored in a short video entitled The Story of Yomari made by this scribe. It can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/33905178>.

Alok Siddhi Tuladhar is a documentary filmmaker and an activist for preservation of cultural heritage.



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INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

CIBĀ DYO REVERENCE AN AGE-OLD TRADITION OF RESPECTING BUDDHA

By Ursula Manandhar

“Vandāmi caitiyem sabbam sabba thanesū patisthitam”
“Sarba buddhālayam caityam dharmadhātu namastute”

Both in Pāli and Sanskrit verses, the worshipping of Caityas has been prescribed as an immensely meritorious act of devotion. Initially, it was called Thūba (in Pāli) or Stūpa (in Sanskrit), and it is also called “Cibā/Cibhā” in Kathmandu valley in modern times. The ones deserving to be revered through the Stūpa are Tathāgata, Prateka Buddha, disciples of the Buddha and monarchs who turn the Dharma wheel.

After the cremation of the revered Tathāgata, their remains were buried under thūba. In the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra scripture, Buddha is known to have said that venerating the stūpa with his relics will make people’s hearts peaceful and after death, and they will be reborn in the heavenly world.

During the Maurya period in the third century BC, the hill with the Buddha’s remains was given a dome shape, with only slight detailing. Later in the Gupta period, the stūpas were created with more refinement and details, with the installation of many statues as well as the Panca Buddha images.

The practitioners of Nepalese Buddhism came from the sect of Caityavāda, which is one of the 18 Nikāya (sects) of Buddhism, developed after 200 years of Buddha’s mahāparinirvāṇa. The founder of this was a guru named Mahādeva, who gave sermons on top of a mountain in front of a Caitya. In the inscriptions of Amarāvati as well as Nagarjunakonda, traces of the Caityavādi sect can be




Illustration by Roshan Dangol. Image is from the cover page of *The Traditional Newar Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley: The Stupas and the Chaityas* by Wolfgang Korn.

found. According to their belief, worshipping the caitya, doing parikramā (circumambulating) around the caitya, and making offerings to the caitya can bestow great religious merit. This is mentioned in both Sanskrit and Pāli Buddhist literature. The oldest Caitya in Nepal is the Dhando caitya located in Chābahil, Kathmandu.

In the Sadharmapuṇḍarikā Sutra scripture, even children who are playing in the riverbanks by creating a sand chibā will never have to face the wrath of hell and will accumulate merit. In the past, every household and town center must venerate and establish a chibā dyo. Due to urban development and the expansion of roads, we see the chibā dyo placed in the middle of the road and other religious places. This has degraded the highly spiritual and symbolic status of Chibā.

Ursula Manandhar is the chief researcher at the Museum of Nepali Art, and a student of museology and Buddhism.



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CURATORIAL PERSPECTIVE - PART 2

“MUSEUMS: A GATEWAY TO TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE” - SATYA MOHAN JOSHI

Museums are social institutes of education, open for all without any restrictions. Studying history from textbooks is difficult as it is vague, and words have less meaning than physical objects that we can observe. Museums fill that gap to provide knowledge by observing.

Museums should be looked on as a time machine to the past and not mere storage space for artefacts. Traditional objects and art displayed in museums often become a source of inspiration for new artists and new ideas. This is a matter of national development and pride.

Even from the tourist point of view, the museum is vital. International tourists can view something new, other than the mountains. If we compare ourselves with European countries, we might seem underdeveloped. However, we are rich in art and architecture that we have preserved so far. We also have the talent, knowledge, and skill to create masterpieces. The tourists fancy our lifestyle as well. They wonder why we are so religious, and are awed by the way we worship various gods and goddesses. These are all ritualistic practices that we have inherited, which bring philosophical and psychological value within us. Who am I? Why was I born? What is my life's destiny? We have a spiritual understanding from these rituals and religious beliefs and practices that give us a sense of our ultimate destination. In Buddhism, it is to obtain nirvana. In Hinduism, it is to reside in Brahman after death.

The main focus is on the transcendental knowledge through which we can gain the state of nirvana. All of this is initiated into the discerning person's mind when he or she visits a top quality museum such as the Museum of Nepali Art (MoNA).

MoNA is an exemplary example of a place where one can do a thorough case study in Nepalese art. If anyone desires to see authentic sources of Nepalese art then, it is difficult to find a single place that has a collection of such a wide variety of Nepali art. MoNA has now filled that void. The best part of MoNA is that it is always accessible to the public.



Portrait of Satya Mohan Joshi by Roshan Dangol
Size: 4 x 3 feet

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