



A Living Art Show

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(Adapted from "Art Heritage of Nepal", an article written by C.J.G. and published in *Lookeast* magazine)

The valley of Kathmandu is one of the most concentrated repositories of art and design that exist in the world; it is one of the greatest living art shows imaginable.

Nepal has long been famous for quality work. In the past, beautiful bronzes were made, not only for the home market, but for export or sale to pilgrim tourists. Today, exquisite bronze images of the gods and goddesses of the Hindu and Buddhist pantheons are still fashioned and sold.

Early Chinese travellers marvelled at Nepalese architecture with its richly decorated temples, palaces and houses; the Nepalese wood-carver has always excelled in ornately carved windows and roof supports, fashioned in the elegant forms of deities. It is known that the Nepalese architect, Arniko, took the pagoda style of architecture to neighbouring Tibet and from thence to China in the ninth century.

The bronze-casters, scroll painters and silversmiths of the Kathmandu valley were responsible for taking their art to Tibet, and until a couple of decades ago, many Nepali artists were working in Tibet supplying art works for the local market.

The arts of Nepal, with the exception of stone carving, are still very much alive, and in the cities of the valley, master craftsmen, artisans and artists are still fashioning masterpieces, following traditions and using techniques that in many cases stretch back well over a thousand years.

Large areas of the city of Patan are given over to the production of art works, and for the adventurous visitor with an interest in arts and crafts, there is always an excellent opportunity to see artists and craftsmen at work in their houses.

The advent of tourism in the late fifties acted as a stimulus to Nepalese arts and crafts, as it brought with it not only a demand for small souvenirs, but also for high quality items produced by labour intensive methods that could not be copied by machines anywhere in the world. A fine scroll painting, wood-carving or brass image made in Nepal is something unique and exclusive, and buyers can feel that they have purchased one of a kind, or at least, one of a limited edition.

To preserve the national heritage of Nepal, His Majesty's Government has banned the export of antiques of all kinds, but for those with taste and interest, there are many beautiful objects and treasures to buy in the bazaars of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. Many new bronzes and scroll paintings have been "antiqued", and in such cases it is better to get a museum clearance from the Department of Archaeology, near the main gate of the Singha Durbar in Kathmandu.

Over the past twenty years, the handwoven carpet industry has grown and flourished in Nepal. The art of carpet weaving was brought from Tibet, but now Nepalese as well as Tibetan designs are available in the market and are extremely popular with tourists and local people.

The mighty peaks of the Himalayan ranges are what call many visitors to Nepal in the first place, but nevertheless the beauty of the kingdom's art and architecture will linger in the minds of many for long after a visit to the valley of Kathmandu.

A Meaning in context

1. Explain each expression as it is used in the passage.

- (a) concentrated repositories (l. 1)
- (b) quality work (l. 4)
- (c) the home market (l. 5)
- (d) pilgrim tourists (l. 6)
- (e) pantheons (l. 7)
- (f) are ... fashioned (l. 7)
- (g) the pagoda style (l. 12)
- (h) were responsible for (l. 15)
- (i) stretch back (l. 21)
- (j) are given over (l. 22)
- (k) The advent of tourism (l. 26)
- (l) acted as a stimulus (l. 26)
- (m) labour intensive methods (l. 28)
- (n) a limited edition (l. 32)
- (o) national heritage (l. 33)
- (p) a museum clearance (l. 38)

2. Give a synonym for each word as it is used in the passage.

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|-------------------------|------------------------|
| (a) images (l. 6) | (f) copied (l. 29) |
| (b) gods (l. 6) | (g) banned (l. 34) |
| (c) elegant (l. 11) | (h) flourished (l. 41) |
| (d) opportunity (l. 24) | (i) mighty (l. 44) |
| (e) demand (l. 27) | (j) linger (l. 46) |

B In each case, choose the best answer.

1. According to the passage, the valley of Kathmandu
- A is a world-famous tourist resort.
 - B is a haven for budding artists.
 - C contains treasures beyond one's imagination.
 - D contains many examples of Nepalese art and design.

2. One can expect a piece of art work from Nepal to be of
- A a low quality.
 - B a high quality.
 - C inferior quality.
 - D indifferent quality.

3. From looking at their art works, we can conclude that the Nepalese people
- A worship many gods and goddesses.
 - B believe in only one god.
 - C are worshippers of idols.
 - D are not religious at all.

4. Nepalese architecture can be described as
- A plain.
 - B pictorial.
 - C modernistic.
 - D ornate.

5. Which of these statements is false?
- A The Nepalese architect Arniko originated the pagoda style of architecture.
 - B A Nepalese architect introduced the pagoda style of architecture to the Tibetans.
 - C The pagoda style of architecture was introduced into China in the ninth century.
 - D The pagoda style of architecture spread to China by way of Tibet.

6. Which of the following art forms is no longer flourishing in Nepal?
- A Stone carving
 - B Wood-carving
 - C Scroll painting
 - D Carpet weaving

7. In the city of Patan,
- A there are few artists and craftsmen.
 - B one cannot satisfy one's interest in Nepalese arts and crafts.
 - C one can visit artists and craftsmen and see them at work.
 - D one is lucky if one comes across any artistic activity.

8. According to the passage, tourism
- A made it necessary to mechanize the production of much-demanded items.

- B led to the increased production of Nepalese art works.
- C had a harmful effect on the quality of Nepalese art works.
- D caused a tremendous increase in the prices of high quality items.

9. A piece of art work from Nepal is
- A exactly like others of the same kind.
 - B easily obtainable anywhere in the world.
 - C very expensive.
 - D unusual.

10. Which of these statements is false?
- A In Nepal, antiques of all kinds are banned from export.
 - B Some new works of art have been classified as antiques.
 - C To take "antiqued" art objects out of the country, one must get clearance from a museum.
 - D The purpose of banning the export of antiques is to preserve the national heritage.

C Answer these questions in your own words.

1. What does the "living art show" in the valley of Kathmandu consist of? Illustrate your answer with examples from the passage.
2. What characterizes Nepalese architecture? How did it affect early Chinese visitors to the country?
3. How did neighbouring China and Tibet benefit from the Nepali artists? What was Tibet's contribution to Nepalese art?
4. What has been done to preserve the national heritage of Nepal? How can "antiqued" objects be taken out of the country legally?

D For further work and discussion

1. What factors do you think influence a people to produce beautiful works of art?
2. In the context of your country, what examples of art and architecture do you regard as part of the national heritage?
3. The Gurkhas are Nepalese. Find out what they are famous for.
4. Many Nepali artists worked in Tibet until about twenty years ago. Why do you think they left then?

"what's up, doc!"

Modern science has finally endorsed the centuries-old belief of traditional healers that the crux of the human body is its mind or consciousness, which has to work properly in order for the body to function normally. When something goes wrong in the mind, the physiology reflects that disorder. Since alternative remedies have had a head start on this front, one can understand the sudden switch to it.

Alternative medicine focuses on using the forces of nature in the purest of forms possible, so according to Dr Rudolph Ballentine, director of the Centre for Holistic Medicine in New York: "There's something about the use of natural medicinal like herbs that have a tendency to bring us back into synchrony with the rest of nature, so that in a way we are healing the piece but we are also healing the piece back into integration with the whole."

As traditional medicines are mainly based on plant or other natural products, they supposedly don't have side-effects. Although most traditional healers are unregulated by law and don't have to meet any official health standard, the practitioners of tangible alternative therapies like homoeopathy are of the view that this is the only answer for the future because this mode of treatment can cater to the needs of millions without having to dig every medicinal plant and deplete earth's resources.

"Back To The Future" - Munazza Siddiqui
The Review weekly of Dawn, December 20-26, 2001

SPEAK OUT

When, according to the author, traditional medicine is a suitable and popular treatment for illness, why do medical practitioners nowadays prefer medicine that have known possible side-effects? Exchange views with the teacher and your classfellows.