

Nepal – A Recordist Training Trip

This is a report written by [Kim Knight](#), based in Australia, who trains recordists overseas.

Tuesday 25th August 2009. We were up at five for an early getaway to Dolakha, a small town which is only 80 km from Kathmandu as the local crow flies, but probably more than double that in winding, climbing road distance. And it took 6 hours driving time to get there. After loading up the mighty Tata (Indian maker of trucks and cars), we made our 6 am departure right on 10 to 7. There were 7 of us on board; our 4 students, Surendra who was chief organiser, contact person and driver, myself and Kiran our chef and rouseabout. He would be doing more of the latter as we were to be hosted by the only Christian family in the NEWARI: Dolokhari language / dialect group, a husband and wife and two daughters and son. The daughters and son were also to be the speakers on the recording we would be making in their language. This was to be a training exercise that would also provide much needed Christian resources for that people group. When Surendra first met the family they discovered that they had a strong connection. While linguistically and even culturally they are quite different, they are both Newari and are from the same caste within that society structure. This made the trip a lot easier to arrange too, so we were thankful for that.

Some time after 1 o'clock we pulled into Khadichaur, a market town that straddles a raging river. The shops were packed with cheap goods brought in from China which is only 40km up the road. This is the route for truckloads of stuff that is imported - mostly heading to Kathmandu. Suren did a recce and found us a little cafe as we were all a bit on the peckish side. As cafes go, it wasn't the cleanest but it was 'all you can eat'; it wasn't the most comfortable but it did have a great view over the river; and there wasn't much choice (chicken, fish or beef) but the owners were quick and attentive.



From the river it was uphill all the way. Kathmandu sits at 1300 metres above sea level; Khadichaur at about 900 and distant Dolakha is at 1700, so we had some climbing to do. The roads are very narrow and at every bend it is necessary to blast away on the horn to let others know that you are coming round the mountain. But there were still a few 'heart in your mouth' moments and we saw a number of vehicles that had gone over the edge. There were some magnificent views of plunging valleys, rivers, forests, rice terraces, quaint homes built of stone, some with slate roofs. Being corn-harvest time, there were corn cobs drying in the sun or hung in clusters under the eaves of the houses. Goats and cattle were being herded here and there to make use of the grass. Motorbikes zoomed around us and crowded buses inched past on the wider parts of the road.



4pm saw us at Charikot, a largish town in the Dolakha District. A few minutes later we pulled into Dolakha town itself. It's quite a small place, spread over about 1km sq with lots of small plots of corn and rice in between the houses. It is a beautiful town, perched on its eerie overlooking the amazingly deep valley at its feet. Layers of cloud were scattered below us. With the vertical scale of this area being so immense, who are we to assume that clouds are always going to be up above us. It reminded me very much of PNG in this and in other ways.

We carried our belongings down through a pine forest and on to our hosts' abode. They live in a beautiful spot. The immensity of the valley, the framing mountains and the foreground of buildings and corn crops are set before them in all their glory. How could we ever doubt the creativity and power of God when we see such a spectacle?

The home itself is about 12 years old, typically made of cut stone, with mud as mortar. The walls are half a metre thick and are plastered over with clay on the inside. We were welcomed to this lovely home by our hosts, their four goats, six chooks, a crazy pup and a noisy chorus of crows. Meals were prepared over an open fire in the corner of the kitchen. With no chimney, the smoke just goes out the best way it can! Our room is only just big enough for the 7 of us to stretch out in our sleeping bags.



A stone terrace at the front of the house was the perfect spot to stand and take in the morning while sipping hot, sweet lemon-grass tea from metal mugs. The terrace was also a thoroughfare for those living down below. They

passed through with their water jars, with their basket loads of corn, with their firewood and with their bags of rice, "Namasde, namasde" their cheerful greeting.

Our first morning we wanted to get a feel for the community and the culture of the place. We split into two groups and wandered around the town, asking questions where we could, otherwise observing and then discussing later. Culturally, the central point of the town is the Hindu temple that is visited by people from all over. I'm not sure what special significance it has but it has been there a long time. A lot of animal sacrifices have been made there in the vain hope that peoples' lives will be improved; that their fears and anxieties will be put to rest; and that that big question, the one of 'the next life' will elicit a positive, acceptable answer. Alas, this is not the door to that acceptable answer. But, we have come with information about the right door, the door to eternal life and it is our prayer that the work we do and that other Christians do here will bring light to this community. It's a great privilege to have worked with, lived with and rubbed shoulders with people who have come from Islam, from Hinduism and from Buddhism into Christianity. They know the difference more than anyone else; they know that Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life.

In the afternoon we started checking the translation that has been done by the family. This is a very laborious but important part of the work. It has to be verified that the meaning of their translation is the same as the meaning of the original script (which is in Nepali language). We found some errors and also found that some parts had been missed out, proving the value of this checking process.



Joseph who is 17 and still at school is an absolute delight. He is a very committed young man and was a real joy to work with. Joseph's two sisters (20ish and 25) both work at a local school but took a day off each so they could help us with the recording. They are great girls and are determined to make a go of life. The work went quite well over the Thursday and Friday, the four guys recording a quarter of the work each. Suren was delighted how trouble-free it had been. I know he has had some extremely difficult recording jobs in the past so to see the work completed so quickly was quite something for him.

Our reconnaissance trip around Dolakha was a real delight after the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu. The buildings are mostly of stone, some with thatched roofs, some with the slate and some with very old, very small tiles. The streets are only designed for foot traffic but some will take a small car or the ubiquitous motorbike - though in many places, steps are a barrier for them. It has a very rural atmosphere, with cattle having the run of the place, goats leaping around - except, that is, for the ones tethered at the temple waiting for the big knife. Old men and women are plucking the seeds off corn cobs and spreading them out to dry in the sun. Some of the buildings look very old and a lot have very intricate carving on door-posts, window frames etc.

Apparently the mother of the host family was quite sick three years ago, when they happened to bump into a pastor near a church. He got talking to them and told them he would pray for her to get better. She was healed of that problem and as a result, the family became the first (and still the only) believers from the Dolakha Newari people. Sadly, she died tragically last year and the father remarried soon after to a Hindu woman which is very sad. He regrets what he has done now and is going through quite a few problems, so they need our prayers. Because of this and some other things we could not use his voice in the recordings.

After we finished recording on Friday we made a decision to go for a walk to Charikot - by a short cut! It was supposedly a 1 hour round trip, but turned into a 3 hour marathon. We followed a sort of goat track on the way, skirting the steep slopes overlooking the valley, the farm land and bush. We crossed streams, rivulets, brooks, creeks and torrents - wherever you go there is water gushing down the mountains. It's the height of the monsoon season and you can easily see why Nepal is second in the world (after Brazil) for the volume of fresh water running down its rivers

Saturday morning started off quite drizzly but after breakfast (more rice and dahl and a slice of cucumber from the garden) it cleared up for us to lug our belongings up the hill again and load up for departure. We were going to stop at the church a few km up the road, where the family goes. Sam had been asked to preach, with Suren translating. It was a tiny church, like a small shipping container so it was quite a squeeze in there



with 30 plus people. But what a thrill to see these dear folk, faces beaming with joy as we worshipped together. Some of them had brought a few ears of corn or small bags of rice - all they had to offer to support the Pastor and his wife - and placed them at the front. The church began some years ago as a result of GRN work in the area. Barny Shrestha (Suren's brother) had come with recordings in the local Tamang language and a small group had become believers. It took some time before they formed themselves into a church and once they did, they faced a lot of persecution. Some were threatened with arrest but they bravely persevered, declaring that if any were arrested, they would all go together. Believers are treated as the lowest of the low in the caste system, but in fact most of the ones I work with are actually from high caste families. The Hindus find this very hard to come to terms with. Church was a great experience. It was a privilege to be with these dear folk who go through so much. Some of them are still suffering because of past allegiances and practices, so we had a special time of prayer for them at the end. We trust that they can be completely liberated from old fears and uncertainties. Young Joseph took a leading role in the running of the church service and it was great to see him taking such responsibility at his young age. I feel certain that he will go on to be a great servant of the Lord.

Our trip back to Kathmandu went really well - no breakdowns or delays - just a lot of gear changing, horn blowing and swinging left and right around the hairpin bends. We got back at about 6:00pm - back to tables and chairs, a real bathroom and toilet and a soft bed. And Kiran was straight into gear, cooking up a treat in his inimitable style.



Kim Knight

This morning we enjoyed something of a sleep in, then some breakfast of corn flakes and boiled buffalo milk, toast and jam and coffee. When I opened my curtains afterwards I couldn't believe my eyes. There to the north were these huge snow covered mountains that we hadn't seen in the past 4 weeks. Every day they had been hidden by clouds, but now Father had taken the clouds away and what a sight it was. It seems that they are up near the Tibetan (Chinese) border, about 80 km away and are around 6 and 7 thousand metres high. During winter they are visible a lot more often. It was another Nepalese 'Wow' moment. This afternoon Ranjan, Emmanuel and I walked to one of the market areas to check it out. It was another maze of narrow alleys, crowded streets, amazing old buildings, lots of crafts, fabrics and everything else for sale.

God bless, Kim