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Yatra

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सम्फनामा
मध्यमास



Kumbhaikarna (Janu) 7710 m

Kangchenjunga - west 8505 m

Kangchenjunga
main 8586 m

Kangchenjunga
center 8494 m

Kangchenjunga
south 8476 m

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INTERVIEW
MS. VALERIE JULLIAND
UN Resident
Coordinator in
Nepal



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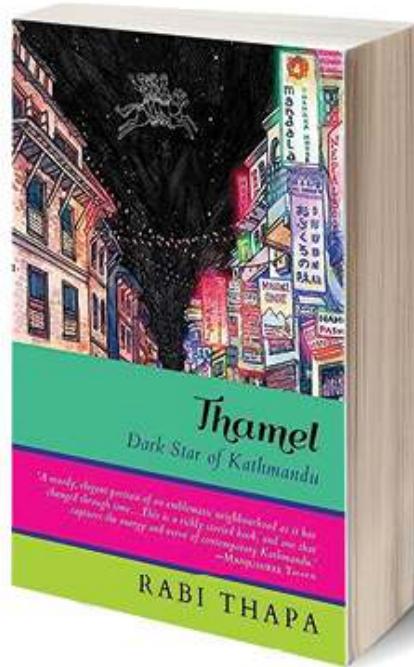
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Thamel, Dark Star of Kathmandu

In conversation with RABI THAPA

In this unusual biography of Thamel, Rabi Thapa revisits the haunts of his youth. Tramping around its temples and monasteries, he unravels its layered history as well as the tales of the kings, monks and travelling merchants who laid its foundations. From residents—both

Written in the best traditions of flânerie, Thamel combines history, memoir and sharp reportage to tell the electric story of a place forever in flux, forever reinventing itself to suit the appetites and desires of those who seek it out.”



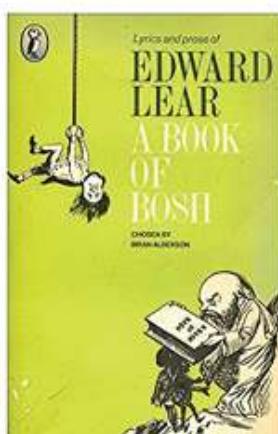
Reviews on Thamel

Tyler Mason: A mix of personal narrative and neighborhood history. This is better enjoyed if you have a little bit of knowledge about Kathmandu and Nepali history. For someone fresh to the subject some events are glanced over and would make less sense in context. That said, there are a few short stories here that are really great, Rabi Thapa is predominantly a fiction writer after all.

Mr. Thapa does bounce around a little bit on the history and location, even talking about places outside of Thamel, though admittedly somehow tangentially related, for close to entire chapters, so really it feels a little bit like a history of how westerners and their values have impacted life in Kathmandu/Nepal.



Nepali and those who visited and never left—he pieces together the story of Kathmandu of the ‘flower-power’ sixties, the legendary Freak Street, and the rise of modern Thamel. What emerges is a finely detailed portrait of a vibrant place that is an ever-evolving reflection of the social mores of Kathmandu and an enduring staging post for Western fantasies of the East.



“
My favourite is the Book of Bosh, by Edward Lear. It's a bunch of nonsense verse by a Victorian poet, writer and illustrator. Endlessly amusing, profound, ridiculous, all at the same time. ”

In this issue, we sit down with **Rabi Thapa**, a writer and editor based in Kathmandu and London. He is the author of *Thamel: Dark Star of Kathmandu* (Speaking Tiger, 2016) and the short story collection *Nothing to Declare* (Penguin India, 2011), and the Editor of the literary magazine *La.Lit*.

Tell us something about yourself.

I'm trying to find a way to do as little of the things that I don't like to do in order to do as much of the things I like to do. For instance, trading work for writing time.

When did you start writing? And what motivated you to follow this path?

High school, but it took a while for my boring and angst-filled journals to amount to anything creative.

What was your motivation behind writing *Thamel: Dark Star of Kathmandu*?

It seemed like a place that deserved a bit of considered writing, considering the amount of time I've spent there. The rest is (a) history (of the place).

How long did it take for you to wrap up the first draft and did you get help from friends while working on it?

Not all that long, given that the research suffered a small interruption – a big earthquake. The writing itself only took a couple of months, once all the pieces were in place. I interviewed a range of people, some of whom were my friends; my wife came up with some good ideas, but I won't tell you what they were!

Did you expect it to be such a hit?

Is it? These things are so relative. But I am gratified by the positive response.

What did you edit out of this book?

Personal, self-indulgent, confessional stuff. But also names, since I was advised by my publisher that I could get into legal trouble.

How do you select the names of your characters?

Pluck them out of the ether.

Do you plan on writing another book in the future?

That's the general idea, and expectation. Once you allow people to call you a writer, you are obliged to field the question above, without fail, for the rest of your life.

What is the most unethical practice in the publishing industry?

There are clearly criminal practices such as piracy by publisher-distributors in Kathmandu, which cheat authors who are strapped for cash in the first place (I talk about this in *Thamel*). Indian

book pirates cost the global industry US\$36 million a year, for example.

Does writing energize or exhaust you?

Both. It's a vicious circle that, in retrospect, can be cast as a virtuous one.

If you could tell your younger writing self anything, what would it be?

Get on it. There's plenty of time to procrastinate when you're dead.

How did publishing your first book change your process of writing?

It made me aware that writing, and particularly putting it out there, isn't simply about the writing process.

Do you Google yourself?

Constantly. In fact you just inspired me to Yahoo myself for the first time. The results were not encouraging.

What books do you recommend our readers?

Nothing that has #1 Bestseller blazed across the cover.

Has the list you mentioned helped you in your life/writing?

Yes, it's taught me how not to make money in my life/writing.

