



Photos: Courtesy Shalendra Shrestha

Pimbahal (1852 AD)



Pimbahal (1986 AD)

Since the last 350 years of carefully recorded family lineage, Shalendra Shrestha and several generations of his family have been permanent residents of Pimbahal, Patan. Apart from being well versed in the history of the place, Shrestha has a private collection of old illustrations and photographs, all documenting the Pimbahal in the span of more than 160 years. In one of the paintings from his collection, dated 1852, women can be seen washing clothes and bathing in the pond, offering a reflection of what life must have been like at Pimbahal back then.

Today, the pond and the 'Phalcha' (resting place) right in the centre have become a place for locals to bask in the sun, peel oranges and savour peanuts. A notice framed and hanged in one of the pillars of

Phalcha warns visitors to not indulge in any inappropriate activities like drinking, shouting or teasing women and even requests young couples to not cuddle in public. While the pond is undoubtedly renowned for its aesthetic value, it was originally created as a way to end the water woes of the community.

**The myth behind it all**

It seems impossible for any youngster growing up in the Pimbahal area to remain unfamiliar with the mythical tales of the elusive tantric priest Gaya Juju of the nearby Swanimha Tole and the demons who used to plague the large meadows of medieval Patan during the night. According to Lokratna Shakya, founder president of Lipi Thapoo Guthi, an organisation working for the conservation and propaga-

tion of the Nepali script, Gaya Juju commanded the demons (*lakhes*) to build a pond to end the water crisis in the area. "The chief of the demons, already pri-



fied by the powers of Juju, employed all his mates and constructed a water tank that same night," explains Shakya. According to the popular myth, with the first ray of morning light, most of the demons had fled in fear of being seen by the humans, but the chief, adamant to complete the tank, had stayed behind. To avoid the humans, the chief vanished in a nearby stone, which today is known as the Lakhe Lhwan (the demon stone) and is still there underwater just in front of the Chandeshwori Temple.

It is believed that cleaning the stone brings rain. While it all sounds very fantastical, Shrestha shares how during the renovation after the devastating 2015 earthquake, it rained heavily every time the stone was cleaned. As the demons completed the construction of the water tank within a single night, they were unable to build the foundation for the surrounding wall, which is how it got its name as Jagmadu Pukhu, a pond without foundation. However, an inscription placed outside the pond, recounts a different story of a demon who built the pond in a single night to help his beloved woman fetch water.

For many, the mysticism of the pond extends beyond their connection to demons and tantric priests. Known for his healing capabilities, small

children going through *aisa chayegu* — a state in which they cry endlessly after coming in touch with pregnant women — are relieved after washing their face with the water from this tank.

**The water source**

Gaya Juju is believed to have been the royal priest during the rule of Siddhi Narasinha Malla, an era when the water supply system of the Valley is believed to have been quite ingenious. Lalitpur slopes from the south towards the northeast and this geographical structure was used by the royal engineers of the time to develop the water supply system. Through an inter-canal system called Raj Kulo (Royal Canal), the locals of the time were able to divert water from Lele River at Tika Bhairav all the way to the stone spouts and ponds of Patan.

Like all the ponds and stone water spouts in the area, the waters of Pimbahal come from Tika Bhairav through an intricate design that was developed more than 300 years ago. "The Raj Kulo was working till 1970s before urbanisation destroyed it all," says Shrestha. The reason why most of the water spouts and ponds in the valley run dry is because the very source that brought it is lost and forgotten.

The Pro-poor Urban Regeneration Pilot Project, funded by the Japan Social Development Fund and managed by the World Bank along with the support of the local community, has revived the historical pond not letting it go down the same path as Rani Pokhari.



Tales of the mystical pond

Shaurya Kshatri recounts the legends of the historical Pimbahal

Photos: Ranjan Shakya / THT

**WHAT'S HOT**

**Gyakok for the soul**



There isn't any dish as befitting on a cold day than a warm hotpot, and Hotel Annapurna is promoting just that at their Chinese outlet Amiko Room with its Tibetan delicacy, Gyakok Himalayan Hotpot. You can enjoy a myriad of delicacies tastefully arranged in a charcoal steaming pot as the restaurant will be serving four hot pot options, which includes vegetarian gyakok, chicken gyakok, seafood gyakok and mixed gyakok. Amiko Room will serve the dish until the end of January. The dish is served from 12-12:00 pm onwards. Contact: 01-4221711

Relish

**Sound for stress**

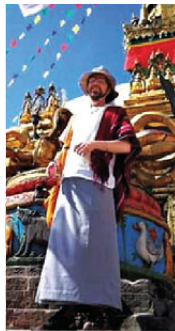
Give yourself the gift of sound therapy this Thursday, January 31, where you can relax comfortably in a restorative pose while singing bowls, chimes and gongs are played in the background. The experience will facilitate deep relaxation, mental clarity and a meditative state among participants. Ramesh Rudra, the yoga instructor, will be looking to rejuvenate your mind, body and soul with the soothing sound of singing bowl and other mystical instruments that induce profound relaxation and inner quiet. The event is hosted by Sooriya Wellness and Yoga Centre during 6:30-7:30 pm at its premises in Lazimpat. Contact: 9818481972



Event

**RENDEZVOUS**

WITH NEPAL



**Martin Namesy**, a Slovakian national, visited Nepal to explore the country's abundant sacred sites. As a practicing Buddhist, he always wanted to pay homage to the power spots in the Kathmandu Valley

**Your experience in Nepal...**

With the exception of the 'extraordinary' roads in the country, I had a fantastic time here. I remember the first time I stood in front of the Boudhanath Stupa, I couldn't hold back my tears.

**Must-visit places...**

Boudhanath, Swayambunath, Patan, Pashupatinath, Pharping, and, of course, Thamel for shopping and some fun during the evenings.

**Must-try food...**

- Nepali Thali and Tibetan Thukpa.

**Travel tips...**

- Don't take many things with you as it possible to buy everything right at the spot in Nepal. Be prepared for bumpy rides while on the road.

**Alexandria Dhami**, a British Indian, is in Kathmandu to pursue Tibetan language and Buddhist studies at the Rangjung Yeshe Institute in Boudha

**Your experience in Nepal...**

I really enjoy living in Boudha among the local people and my fellow classmates at the institute. It feels like a little village.

**Must-visit places...**

My favourites are Boudhanath Stupa, Pullahari Monastery in Jagtol, Patan, Muktinath, and Langtang for trekking.

**Must-try food...**

- Dal Bhat and Potato Cheese momo

**Travel tips...**

- Bargain for everything, especially taxis, unless it is absolutely a fixed price

