

A stroll to ADINATH

Shaurya Kshatri unearths the legends and myths behind the enigmatic Adinath Lokeshwar Temple of Chobhar

The Kathmandu Valley has no dearth of astonishing religious structures, but it is somewhat of a rarefied territory when a location covered in sacred shrines is of just as much appeal due to its natural setting. And the 15th-Century Adinath Lokeshwar Temple at Chobhar is one of those spots.

I first came across the mesmerising shrine by pure chance during a hike through Panga, Kirtipur and Chobhar back in 2014. Climbing up the stone steps and through the cool forest path start off from the Chobhar Gate — the doorway to the Chobhar, little had I known that a place like Adinath was situated at the apex of the hill. The most astonishing and an immediately noticeable aspect of the temple premises were myriads of bronze pots and plates hanging by the walls, and even the wooden struts and roofs of the temple, which today only seem to have multiplied.

After the devastating Gorkha Earthquake of 2015, the temple premises are currently undergoing reconstruction. And while it may not be restored back to its full glory, it still makes for an enjoyable cultural tour and a short yet an incredibly pleasant hike.

The hike to Adinath in and of itself isn't a gruelling task. As a matter of fact, with the walk taking no more than some 30 minutes of slow and relaxed uphill climbing, it might not even qualify for a hike. Nonetheless, given that it's far secluded from the noisy and dusty mayhem of the City, the 'stroll' works wonders.

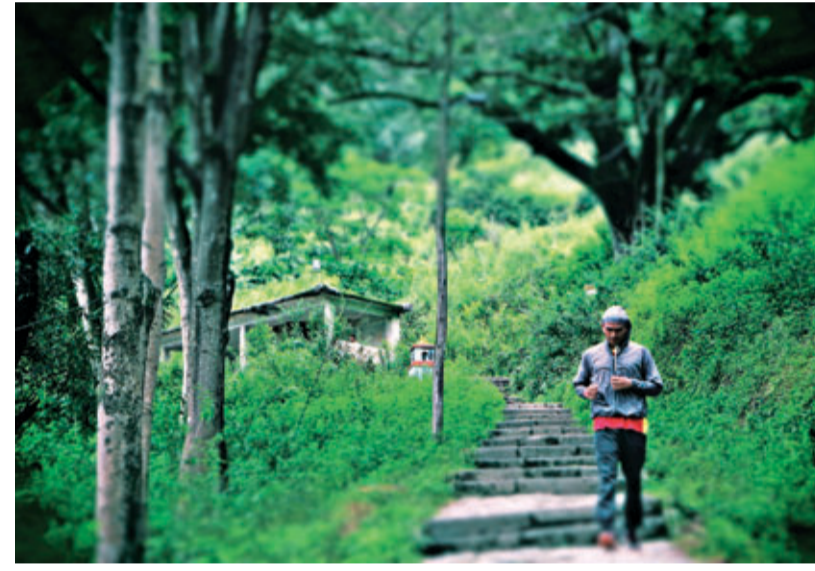
Right from the get-go, nature comes to the party as the chirping of birds slowly muffles the sound of traffic. Along the route, you come across herders making their way up or down the steps while tending to their goats, and farmers effortlessly moving with their hay-stacks full of local produce. A little further ahead of the forest path,



there is a nice settlement along the stairs, where corncocks are hung to dry from a few of the house's balcony. Up this hill, which the locals refer to as the Kacchapala Giri (meaning turtle hill), lies the mahavihara (or bahal) — the Adinath Lokeshwar Temple.

On a cloudy Wednesday afternoon, the bahal was secluded and still except for an elderly man sitting in the corner and the sound of the woodworkers. A large number of metals utensils are wedged around the courtyard of the bahal — the elderly man, Nuchhe Bahadur Maharjan, 73, said the family of the deceased offered them so that their dear departed could have something substantial to follow them in the afterlife.

"They have to be taken down every 10 years to make way for fresh ones," informed Maharjan, who often sits there pondering that



Nuchhebahadur Maharjan

one day a utensil would bear his name on it.

According to the priest, Hira Ratna Gubhaju, 40, who also runs the Hira Coffee Shop nearby, the statue in the temple isn't the real one. It is believed that the real statue resides in Kerung, Tibet after a group of Tibetan monks stole it during a chariot festival, "back when gods and demons freely roamed the earth," as Gubhaju puts it.

The three-storied pagoda at courtyard houses one of the four Karunamayas in the Valley, Anandayi Lokeshwar, popularly known as Adinath and thus the name of the temple, Adinath Lokeshwar Temple. The place is enchanting in every sense of the word but the story behind it, even more so.

Historian and cultural expert, Lok Ratna Shakya, agrees that the temple does, in fact, bear a different statue. "The deity is called Anandayi, or Ananda, meaning pleasure, for a reason and it all goes back to the time of Karkotak Nagraj, who is still believed to be residing in Taudaha, and an unassuming cowherder," he shared.

According to the legend, upon revealing the truth of Karkotak's wife's promiscuous indulgence, Karkotak, impressed by the bravery and loyalty of the herder, gave him the power to be able to understand the language of the cows. Consequently, he understood as to why his

cow kept feeding milk to a stone on the bank where Balkhu and Nakhurivers met, a peculiarity, which had even puzzled the locals of Chobhar then.

It turned out that the stone housed the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, who embodies the compassion of all Buddhas. In reverence to the deity, instead of leaving it down below on the bank of the river, he placed the stone one the spot, which we now identify as the Adinath Lokeshwar.

Cursed by Karkotak's wife for revealing her truth, the cowherder suffered a skin disease. However, the Karunamaya relieved him of his ailment, and since then he has been known to cure illnesses, and provide pleasure, joy and happiness, thus the name, Anandayi.

The Adinath Lokeshwar Temple is one of the among the oldest and culturally most significant monuments in the area and walking through each step to it is what makes it special.

HOW TO REACH

From Balkhu Chowk, take a bus to Panga and get off at the last stop or simply ask the driver to drop you off at the Chobhar gate. Walk uphill to reach the temple.



Photos: Shaurya Kshatri / THT



Lok Ratna Shakya

File photo: THT

WHAT'S HOT

Relish

Nawabi-style Biryani at Hotel Shangri-La



Hotel Shangri-La in Lazimpat is offering Luc-knowi Zaika, a biryani that transpires Nawabi delicacy for their 'Biryani and Beer' food promotion for customers to try out delicious exotic flavours. One can enjoy the cuisine's soulful taste as the meat is cooked and served in an earthen pot in front of your eyes over slow fire by the hotel's Executive Chef, Vikram Kumar. The scrumptious dish is available in chicken, mutton and also has veg options for customers at the Shambala Garden and Lost Horizon Cafe located inside the Hotel until August 16. You can enjoy the dish with a bottle of Nepal Ice Beer, which comes free with the Biryani from 12:00 noon to 9:45 pm. For more details, contact: 01-4412999

Bringing Mughlai flavours to Bhairahawa

Bodhi Red Sun Hotel, Bhairahawa inaugurated its fine dining Mughlai cuisine specialty restaurant, Golden Spoon, on August 4. The restaurant, which opens out to the hotel's swimming pool, serves mouth-watering Mughlai dishes such as Tandoori Alu Zaika, Birbali Seekh Kabab, Zamin-kand Kabab et cetera with a variety of cocktails and mocktails. A perfect place for a business meet or family outing, the outlet offers professional service and a perfect ambience along with live ghazals. For details, contact: 071-525957



Photo: THT

RENDEZVOUS

WITH NEPAL

Rolf Van De Lual is a boat designer from the Netherlands who has come here to soak in the cultures and scenic beauty of Nepal. He finds the country frenzied and chaotic with high energy which he really enjoys.

Your experience in Nepal

Everything about Nepal is very vibrant, the markets, the people and everything else. The Nepali folks are among some of the friendliest in the world.

Must-visit places

The architectural masterpieces — Durbar Squares and stupas around the Valley.

Must-try food

Noodles and rice.

Travel tips

Drink fresh water. Take your time while travelling and don't rush.

David Laballero is a businessman from Spain. Seeking adventure, Laballero is here to experience some adventurous treks. After returning from his ABC trek, he is now enjoying the food, ambience and people of Kathmandu.

Your experience in Nepal

It's fairly convenient and fun commuting across Nepal because most of the people can understand and communicate well in English. Moreover, if you are confused about anything, the friendly Nepali folks are always ready to help.

Must-visit places

ABC trek if you fancy an adventure. Begnas Lake and Nagarkot for a peaceful soothing atmosphere.

Must-try food

Every meal of ours always consists one of either momo, chowmein or daal bhaat.

Travel tips

Nepal is a safe country, so feel free to talk to locals and open yourself up to new experiences.

