

2 — Routes to Kathmandu

There are journeys that are not made with the feet, but with an open soul.



A small boat crosses a mist-covered lake.

The mountains breathe gold.

The world stops.

*The soul remembers
that it, too, knows how to awaken.*

·◊·

*Boat in the mist,
the Himalaya in gold —
the soul awakens.*

When a book becomes a destination

At twenty-five, a book had marked me:
The Roads to Kathmandu, by René Barjavel.
Young seekers in search of meaning,
heading toward the city of a thousand temples,
at the foot of the Himalayas.
And suddenly, life offered me
the chance to live
my own version of that adventure.
I was working for an international airline
and could travel at low cost.
“By chance” —
though I already sensed it was not chance,
but causality —
I received the news:

Thai Airways was inaugurating a route
with a three-week tour
from Seattle, via Bangkok,
to Kathmandu.

I didn't think twice.

Booked.

Confirmed.

The journey had begun.

The journey begins with steps and temptations

In Seattle I met the group
and Jeff, our African-American guide:
friendly, charismatic,
a lighthouse in unknown lands.

I discovered I was the only South American in the team.

Quite a surprise.

Bangkok welcomed us with luxury
and temptations.

That night, with a Cuban companion,
we explored the red-light district.

I was young, single, curious.

The next day, another flight — via
Calcutta — finally took us to Kathmandu.

Where every street is a temple

We stayed in an elegant hotel and went out to explore.
At every step, a temple.

Pagodas seemed to rise from the ground,

as if spirituality

were a natural part of the landscape.

The local guide shared stories and traditions.

I walked in awe,

as if I had stepped

into an ancient dream.

The Himalayas as the horizon of the soul

The next day,

an endless bus ride

took us to the start of the trek.

Sherpas carried our backpacks

and went ahead to set up camp.

The path was a parade of wonders:

rice fields,

enchanted villages,

children playing violins,

elders weathered by time

and always smiling,

cannabis plants growing freely

as if they belonged to the scenery.

And in the distance, always,

the white wall of the Himalayas.

The “Eight-thousanders” —
Machapuchare, Dhaulagiri —
rose like guardians of the sky.

The silence that speaks louder than a thousand voices

At dusk
we reached the camp.
One tent for eating,
another for sleeping.
I remember a flat rock
engraved with the symbol Om.
There we meditated.
Silence was not emptiness:
it was presence.
As if the soul aligned itself
with something greater,
something wiser.

When light turns the world into gold

We arrived in Pokhara,
beside a vast lake.
There, one sunrise
gave me one of the most beautiful images
of my life.
The water was a mirror

covered in mist.

Suddenly,

the sun gilded the highest peaks

on the planet.

And in that instant,

a boat crossed the lake,

guided by a fisherman.

Time stopped.

The universe gifted us

an eternal moment.

With my reflex camera

I shot nonstop.

I knew those photos

would be unrepeatable.

And they were.

Humility as a secret wealth

Back in Kathmandu

I discovered something that still accompanies me:

the difference between poverty

and humility.

People did not have much,

but they carried God in their eyes,

in their smiles,

in the way they offered

without asking for anything.

Meanwhile,
I amused myself like a child with candy:
yerba in one pocket,
hashish in another,
hash oil as well.
As if I could smoke it all
in two days.
A joke of youth.

Fortune also knows how to laugh

On the last night,
the hotel invited us to the casino.
With a Canadian friend
I played blackjack, dice, slot machines...
and roulette.
With a single chip,
I won again and again.
The towers of chips
grew in front of me.
It was my lucky night.
Until I exchanged the chips:
a wad of bills...
in rupees.
Non-convertible.
And we were leaving the next day.
God, with His humor,

reminded me that luck
is also a game.

The return with suspicions and smiles

Before returning,
I raided the hotel lobby for souvenirs:
carpets, cushions,
everything packed into a huge bundle.
Thai Airways saved me
from excess baggage fees.
In Los Angeles,
inspectors looked at me
with suspicion.
Three weeks in “the exotic”
and a bundle of carpets:
they were convinced
I was hiding drugs.
They checked even my toothpaste.

Chapter’s moral

The divine reveals itself
in the unexpected:
in a golden mountain,
in a stranger’s smile,
or in the mist of a lake.
One only needs

an open soul

to hear it.

And so I confirmed

what I already sensed:

whoever walks

with an open soul

never returns

as the same person.

