



I guess a journey begins way ahead of its manifestation. It's birth is serendipitous in a book in somebody's conversation. Then again a travelogue is a silent conversation. 'Beyond Sky and Earth' by Jamie Zeppa is a beautifully written personal story of a young Westerner who travels half way around the world to Bhutan as an English teacher. I was reading a second hand copy purchased at Manali bus stand while returning from my first trek in the Himalayas in the Diwali of 2005. Instantly I was in love with the author, her book and Bhutan. A new journey had taken birth. Michael Palin's Himalaya offered me my first glimpses of Bhutan. U tube fuelled the fire Paro airport, Jhomolhari, Tibet, Buddhism, Himalayas. The romance of a distant exotic land predominantly through a Western perspective. Heavily influenced by western thought I was myself straddling between materialism and meaning with an alarming tilt to materialism. It was not difficult to understand this romance.

One day Meghana asked me if I would like to go to Bhutan in May 2012. For a four day trip to Bhutan we had crossed the breadth of India through its cruel summer plains by rail. Bhutan came as a brief pleasant respite. Thanks to Sudhakar sir' s approach the programme inclined heavily onto nature. We got the glimpses of a wonderful country. A small trek to Taktsang Palphug Monastery was a part of it. A dramatic location for an extremely popular yet beautifully maintained monastery near Paro. This is the monastery also known as Tigers Nest, which encapsulates my journey to Bhutan.

Bhutan was definitely a place for grown ups. I couldn' t help wonder and envy Bhutan' s King who was way ahead of his times to dare take a middle path towards protecting his country's identity, culture and not make the easy mistake of blindly following materialism and consumerism. Or was it part of a journey that the Buddha showed centuries ago?

Happy New Year
Rajneesh Gore
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