



Kathmandu

Thomas Bell

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One of the greatest cities of the Himalaya, Kathmandu, Nepal, is a unique blend of thousand-year-old cultural practices and accelerated urban development. In this book, Thomas Bell recounts his experiences from his many years in the city—exploring in the process the rich history of Kathmandu and its many instances of self-reinvention.

Closed to the outside world until 1951 and trapped in a medieval time warp, Kathmandu is, as Bell argues, a jewel of the art world, a carnival of sexual license, a hotbed of communist revolution, a paradigm of failed democracy, a case study in bungled western intervention, and an environmental catastrophe. The layered development of the city can be seen in the successive generations of its gods and goddesses; its comfort in the caste system and ethos of aristocracy and kingship; and the recent destabilizing effects of consumerist approaches and the push for egalitarianism and democracy. In important ways, Kathmandu's rapid modernization can be seen as an extreme version of what is happening in other traditional societies. Bell also discusses the ramifications of the recent Nepal earthquake.

A comprehensive look at a top global destination, *Kathmandu* is an entertaining and accessible chronicle for anyone eager to learn more about this fascinating city.

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