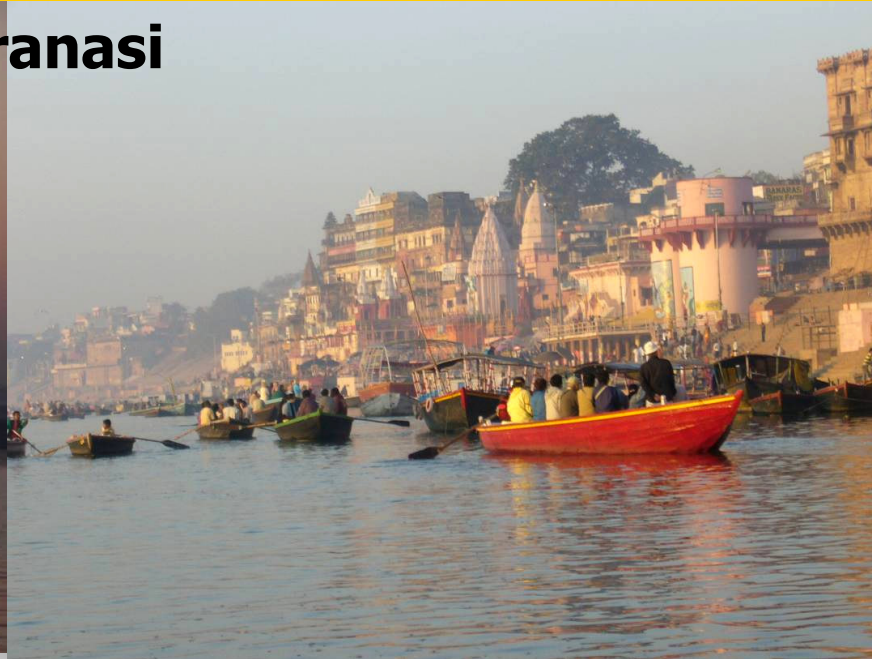


Varanasi



Traffic is a fluid element in Varanasi where the slowest is accommodated and the biggest pushes the tide with inches to spare.



Opulence and sordid sitting side by side with no acknowledgment or anger.

Acceptance is the price of freedom, or is it the cost of the wood to see the bodies off?

Peaceful sermons and peaceful sitting in open drains clearing rubbish, is that what we do with practice? Rejection takes lots of energy. Water can seem so solid and full, the sunrise so staged to provide inspiration and a sign to hold within. A sign to keep me on the path when I pay attention. Water in a swimming pool seems so trivial and chemical, yet probably safer to drink.



Sarnath



Parinibbana Place Thai Temple, Kushinagar



Death is not such big business in Kushinagar, no ashes being spread round the clock, only a strange igloo building on a plinth, forehead touching feet, recollections of my father, not seen but resolved in my heart.

Before enlightenment tears at death of a close friend, after enlightenment equanimity? Understanding? Spontaneous combustion when the time is right.

Haven of tranquility and order, spotless, uplifting, care in all things, foresight and planning,. Is this an example or protection, insulation from the Dukkha or heaven on earth.

The Yin yang of the rhythm of the trip seems designed to shake my assumptions and norms, certainly that seems to be what it is doing. Is this heaven to me, is it sterile, is it holy or luxury in the face of a level of poverty that I can only guess at.



Lumbini



Nepal feels a mystical name, grand mountains and hardy people, I encounter rickshaws and a temple park surrounding a tree festooned with flags bending to the pressure coming from where, again, it feels comforting and superstitious to be swept up into the winds vortex and



Jetvanaram



Nineteen times of returning to the same place with the same people, drinking from the same well, and being free all the while. Knowledge of the truth of everything and still carrying the message, an inspiration and a fitting conclusion

Photographs: Les Callow, Bridget Aisbitt, Jane Allen, Pascale , Zarine Katrak and Jeremy Bruce,
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