

INTERVIEW/PERSONALITY

“When I first saw Daijhi I knew that it was my destiny to go with him. My father had told me about a man who would rescue me one day and I knew it was Daijhi when he arrived.”

“I did not enjoy being famous because so many people want to know you for the wrong reasons” *Jay Khadka*



"About 25 years ago a middle-aged woman was in despair at her tiny home on the edge of the Kathmandu valley. After many years of marriage Ganga Thapa was beyond normal childbearing age. She had given her husband only daughters and he had taken another wife to bear him sons. Alone and desperate for his return, she visited a holy man who was well known for curing illnesses and blessing women with sons. He was a devotee of Vishnu and had spent his life at Budhanilkantha learning the essence of his faith.

"Ganga performed his rituals and wore a special '*butti*' that he had blessed. He would not tell her what was inside the tiny cloth wrapped package that he tied around her waist. She only knew that every week she had to perform a private ritual and believe in the powers that he had given the mysterious fragment. After the ceremony the guru told her what would happen. He said that she would indeed have a son and that he would be healthy and strong. But he would have no ordinary life. "He will not be the son that you are expecting", the guru said. "He will become famous but he will not experience the traditional life of a Nepali son and you will never eat his fruits". Ganga was given no explanation of this prophecy but she was told that her son would be born on the last day of Dasain and that she must name him Jayaram. Of course she went away worried and confused but her faith in the holy man was undiminished.

"A short time later Ganga became pregnant when her husband, Bashu Khadka, unexpectedly visited for a single night. And the child she bore was indeed a healthy son. But his birth was sudden and premature. Instead of the last day of 'victory', Jayaram was born on the first day of the festival during a moonless night. The guru said that her son had to perform a '*rhudri*' every year on that day in order to fulfil his destiny. And Ganga, even though she feared that destiny must mean a premature death for either the boy or herself, fulfilled the rituals with careful attention.

"Twenty years later the prophecy was finally understood. Ganga's husband could not afford to keep both his families and her young son soon needed to leave home and find work. But like his namesake, Jayaram met a foreigner who took him abroad and educated him. He was adopted into a Western family and never lived the traditional life of a Nepali son. He became famous when defeating British attempts to deport him and the fruits that he

eventually gave his mother came not from him but from the whole family that had adopted him. Her faith had triumphed in the end." (Excerpted from *Nepalilal Patra-21: A Question of Faith* by Richard Morley, available at Daijhi.Com)

So, that is the modern fairy-tale like story of Jayram Khadka, a Nepali youth of fame. Jay, adopted by the British Millionaire Richard Morley as a tribute to Bashu who saved his life during a trek in Nepal over a decade ago, was pleasantly surprised when he received a request from *Newslook* for an interview with him. His first email message, dated May 23, 2001, read: "It is a little strange to hear from you, I guess this is the power of the web." Jay agreed to share his experiences and opinions for a proposed profile on him and answered questions filed by the magazine. Things took a nasty turn in early June in Nepal, starting with the Palace Massacre, and followed by unprecedented Maoist incidents that stole away much of the spare energy here at *Newslook*. Further correspondence with Jay and Mr Morley could not be smooth, too. The Idea of publishing Jay's profile was abandoned even after the initial draft was in the process of completion. Lacking supporting information for many facets of Jay's life, the idea of profile was abandoned. What follows is an email-interview (June 21, 2001) with Jay:

How would you recall your experiences regarding your life and family after the passing away of your father in Nepal, and the subsequent travel to Britain. What was the first reaction in the family to Mr. Morley's proposal? Why did he chose to adopt you and not other members in the family?

My mother was not very surprised because the Mahatma (refer to Article in Daijhi.com 'A question of Faith') had told her before I was born that such a thing would happen. She accepted my new life without concern for herself but I was very sad to leave her. It was very difficult for me to follow my destiny when it meant leaving my country, my family and my culture. But I knew I had no real choice. When I first saw Daijhi I knew that it was my destiny to go with him. My father had told me about a man who would rescue me one day and I knew it was Daijhi when he arrived. He did not adopt me at the beginning. He only offered me language training in England. But after a few weeks in England we began to love each other very much and it became impossible to separate. So he adopted me because we were so happy together. Of course he did not know the other members of my family but he has helped them very much.

Your early days in Britain: How did you adjust to the new environment, especially with the turmoil when the deportation scandal broke out?

At the beginning I thought England was very strange. I didn't like the food or the weather. I think I became very shy to strangers and learnt the culture by playing as child with other children. I was a little sad about not speaking very good English and this frustrated me very much. But every day I was given English language lessons and this helped very much. And I was never lonely. My new father and his family were always very kind to me and showed me many places. I had a very happy childhood in England but I was always frightened of being sent back. We knew there was a big problem in 1992 but it was not until 1995 that the story hit the media. Then I felt very happy that we had a chance to get help from other people but I quickly learnt that some newspapers and TV programmes supported the Government and they told terrible lies about Daijhi and me. That made me angry and sad but it also made me learn how to fight against such people. So in the end I am quite pleased that

it happened.

Jay Khadka: Bansbari to Britian

Jay was born at Bansbari (near Pharping) circa 1975/6.

He says he attended a local school when "we had the money." From about 1983 he worked in a local quarry smashing stones. In 1988 his father died and he had to leave home and find better work. He found a job in Bhaktapur as a hotel boy. In late summer 1990 Daijhi (Richard Morley) found him at the Golden Gate Hotel. Mr Morley took him to Annapurna base camp because, as Jay says, he had never seen the mountains. On 1 December 1990 he arrived England. During 1991-1994, he spent time at home, mostly studying. He is educated at home in England. In 1994 he began to work in his family business as a trainee chef and in 1996 he became the head chef. In 1997 they finally won his right to residence but they moved to France to develop a ski business. There he learned to ski. The following year, he started to work as a trainee manager of their business. He became Manager in 1999 and the following year he was appointed director responsible for the hotel. Jay is now preparing to represent Nepal as the first Nepali skier in the Winter 2002 Olympic games to be held in Salt Lake City, USA.

The news whirlwind you were in a couple or more years ago has subsided. How do you feel being in the limelight that was not a making of your own? What are you doing at the present?

I did not enjoy being famous because so many people want to know you for the wrong reasons. It was very difficult having so many letters from girls who wanted to marry me simply because they thought I was handsome. But I also got thousands of cards from people all over the world who genuinely supported me. That made me very happy. At the moment I am the Director of a hotel business in England and I spend May to October working with the Manager. In the Autumn I visit Nepal with Daijhi and in the winter I train to become the first Nepali Olympic skier. I am now a registered ski racer and I enjoy the races very much. Although I have a long way to go before I am very good.

Adoption is a big issue in Nepal. Many kids are adopted every year, with many poor families willing to give away their kids? What do you think about this trend?

Adoption is a wonderful thing. If a poor family cannot care for all the children they should not hesitate to allow another family to care for some of them. A foreign family is particularly good because it will spread a bit of Nepali culture to other countries. The government should make adoption easier. If a new family can prove they have enough money, if they have no criminal record and if the child is happy NO government should interfere.

You were really lucky. Do you consider yourself a self-made man or a man bestowed with sudden opportunities? The general impression is that you inherit fortunes from Mr. Morley without having to do anything.

The general impression is completely wrong. Daijhi has made me work very hard to learn in life. And he has taught me that money is only a tool for living. It is not life itself. I am not a self made man but a family made man. Without Daijhi and my family in France, I would be lost today. I would have achieved

NOTHING. But I had to put in a lot of effort to learn about English, French, History, Art, Religion, Geography, politics, economics and General Science. Then I had to learn about business and skiing. I have never stopped learning new things and I think that is true for the whole of life.

What are the various works you are involved with right now? How many hours do you work daily? How about your Winter Olympics preparations? How could you represent Nepal in ski in the Olympic games when you may by now be a British citizen?

Living in a family business means that you must always work at something. I have accounts paperwork wherever I am. During the winter I must train to ski-race and work in our Chalets at the same time. It is very hard work. I am not a British citizen.



Jay Khadka with Mr. Morley in 1996. Photo courtesy of Telegraph.

I am sure you are following the developments in Nepal. Sad, that things are taking an awful turn even after the restoration of democracy? How

do you feel about this? As a person born into poverty, but now living in extremely well off family, how do you see the future of Nepal? What, in your opinion, could lead Nepal into prosperity and happiness? Are you or your father in contact with the top politicians/the King in Nepal?

Yes the situation in Nepal is very sad. But I do not think that 'democracy' exists in Nepal yet. There is no party that really represents the people and their wishes are never considered. Government in Nepal is fine for the wealthy but terrible for the poor. I see the future as very bad unless somebody with the interests of the country at heart comes into power. At the moment most politicians are in power for their own interests. This is the reason for Maoist strength. Corruption is so common in Nepal that everyone has lost faith in the system. And without a greater distribution of wealth in Nepal, business and economics will only favour the wealthy. Nepal needs proper management by decent people. That is the route to happiness and prosperity. Yes, we have met many senior politicians and the King.

Your message to the young folks in the Kingdom? The new generation, frustrated as it is with the economy at home, is aiming to migrate abroad. What do you think the young generation needs to do for their better future and of the country?

The young generation has the greatest opportunity for effecting change because they have so little to loose. Once they have families and responsibilities their chance to change things lessens. The most important thing for young people is experience. They should travel to India and other Asian countries to learn from their experiences. But afterwards they should return and do what they can for Nepal. We are a small nation and we need all Nepali people to realize we are all brothers and sisters.

What are your future plans? You are undoubtedly one of the richest young man (based on calculations of wealth you

will be inheriting) of Nepali origin. As a non-resident Nepali, what are your plans for the Nepal? Are you willing to invest in Nepal? What does your mother and family members in Nepal expect from you? Have your being the person you are now changed their lives in any way?

My personal wealth is greatly exaggerated by the media. On paper I am a dollar multimillionaire but I have many responsibilities with this wealth. It is not really mine but the shared wealth of my whole European family. We do not use it to live grand lives. In fact I live a very simple life by Western standards. We use our wealth to give other poor people the same chance I was given. So our family gets bigger every few years. That costs a lot of money because houses in the West are very expensive. Most of 'my' wealth is tied up in houses to accommodate our family. Daijhi and I have supported my mother for several years and we are buying them some land to build a new house in the Valley. But my mother expects very little from me. She only wishes to see me once a year and know that I am healthy and happy.

Tell us about Mr. Morley. How do you describe him? What are the three most important things one can learn from him, that you learnt, too?

I see Daijhi as a truly great thinker and teacher. He is like a modern day Karl Marx who has developed a simple principle into an entirely new socio-economic-political theory. He has called it 'Molecularism' because he feels that the whole universe, including ourselves, is made from atoms working in molecules. If we look upon our families as our personal molecule then we will prosper and be happy. But if we think as individuals we will always be lonely and frustrated. He also says that absolute honesty in all matters is the only basis for true love. We must be completely open to others if we love them. That breeds companionship and without that no relationship can survive. He says that Love is 'giving everything and expecting nothing in return'. And he believes in a single world in which nations gradually federalize into a global unit that cares for the whole planet. Without that he says the world can never live in peace. Although he adopted me, Daijhi is more like a brother than anything else. I intend to spend the rest of my life living with him and the other people in our family. We all think the same about him and you can never leave such a person. It would be like chopping off your own head.

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