

PLACID PELLING



tional frescoes depicting tantric Buddhist themes. The main statue of Padmasambhava is seen in a dreadful form with multiple heads and arms.

Magnificent sculptures and gracefully decorated paintings embellish the first floor of the monastery. The main attraction of the monastery lies on the top floor. It is the wooden replica of zongdog Palri, the celestial abode of Padmasambhava. Intricately sculpted by a single monk, it is said that it took five years for him to complete this marvel. The atmosphere is electric. Everything attached with this place automatically creates a magical effect on the eyes be it the paintings or the sprawling green landscapes or the invigorating air you breathe in.

A brisk walk of 30 minutes just below the monastery leads us to a palace - now in ruins. Located on a spur deep inside a thick forest, it involves a 2 km trek to reach the spot (from the main road). Commendably maintained and preserved by ASI, with encouraging signages on the winding track (prodding the fatigued visitor to move on) and manicured laws around the ruins, this site takes the pride of place in the history of Sikkim. Rabdentse, acknowledged as the second capital of Sikkim (after Yuksom) was established in the 17th century by the second Chogyal of Sikkim. It was abandoned at the end of 18th century due to the incursion of Nepalese armies and was shifted to Tumlong. With the passing of time Rabdentse was desolated and ravages of time turned the royal capital into ruins. The chortens around the palace have however stood the test of time. We have to clamber up a fleet of steps to reach the top of the monument. It has two divisions the palace and place of worship. The picturesque view from the top scanning across the subterranean valley to the occult heights of Kanchenjunga is something to be

STAR TALK

By Jagjit Uppal

visit Mr Uppal at www.jagjituppal.com

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ARIES (Mar 21-April 20)



Work is going to keep you busy and engaged for some time. Your progress in the new venture is pleasing and exciting. This will improve your finances and you may feel like working on Sundays and holidays to take advantage of a favorable situation. The discussions taken this week to improve your career prospects will be stimulating. You will get a chance to clarify your ideas and options, some of which may impress the powers that be. You may get an offer for a partnership.

LIBRA (Sept.22-Oct.22)



With your determined and aggressive nature you will be able to get some advance work, which will help you to gain advantage over others in clinching a profitable deal. You can help yourself by joining a course, which will add to your knowledge and strengthen your position and security in the organization. Your professional background along with your gift for accurate interpretation of the current trends may bring in an assignment from a large institution.

TAURUS (Apr 21-May 20)



For completing the assignment you will have to put in all the hard work you are

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov.21)



The situation at your work place may not be as peaceful as you wish. You will have to



■ By **G BRINDHA**



loved and etched in memory. Intoto, a visitor to this place gets a glimpse of Sikkim's history while enjoying the striking prospect as well.

The following day we go sight-seeing.

SINGSHORE BRIDGE (650 FT)

Spanning across a deep gorge this suspension bridge connecting two hills is considered an engineering marvel. Acclaimed second largest of its kind in Asia and the highest in Sikkim. From the centre of the bridge you can get a fabulous view of the streams gushing out from the mountains.

KECHOPALRI LAKE

We head for

Kechopalri a mystical lake supposed to be one of 108 sacred lakes of Himalayas.

Past the ruins of ancient towns below monasteries tended by red robed lamas lie the crystalline wish fulfilling waters of Kechopalri lake. Revered by both Hindus and Buddhists for its magical power to heal, the loch is a mystery in itself. Encompassed by thick oak forests the waters of the lake are jade green and blue. A small temple stands at the banks. It is said that whenever leaves from the trees fall into the water, the birds that dwell here swoop down and scoop them away from the lake. Thus the lake remains crystal clear. The lake is believed to have been blessed by Guru Rimpoche in 9th century. As we walked up to the lake, we had pilgrims carrying incense sticks and other puja paraphernalia, jostling with each other. Right at the end of the jetty, the devout prayed and offered *prasad* to the lake, which was quickly gobbled up by a school of fish, thrashing about in the lake.

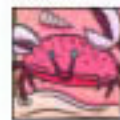
capable of. In case you need some help you can rely on some friends who can rush material and supplies in time. Do not depend upon inexperienced people who claim but do not have extensive experience in this line. Something important may be missing. Do not jump to conclusions and impute motives. A meeting to discuss some legal aspects of your business may clear your doubts.

GEMINI (May 21-Jun20)



A long journey takes you to far off places where you meet people who are strangers to you but are unusual and with positive personalities. An association, which begins with strong differences, may prove to be most enduring and delightful. You will feel like having him/her as a partner with whom you will share profits and responsibilities. You will also have a sort of sounding board for your original ideas and discuss the viability. In your professional life you will be an outstanding success.

CANCER (Jun 21-July 21)



There are strong chances of you getting an outstation assignment or an opportunity to work overseas. You should avail this offer for it will have long-term benefits for you. This will also give you an opportunity to explore new areas of operation where you can put your qualifications and talent to profitable use. Professionals in the field of finance and banking will find their services in great demand and they should be careful in selecting their business associates.

put in hard work as your colleagues refuse to co-operate. You cannot afford to take it easy as it may go against your image. If in business devote some time and attention to your accounts, which may reveal the true position of your financial position and may require measures to make optimum use of your loan for which you are paying heavy interest. Complete the present assignments.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov.22-Dec.20)



Even if there is an attempt to belittle your achievement and confidence stick to your views and beliefs, which are based on knowledge and experience. Ultimately they are bound to agree with you and accept your proposals. In the mean time carry out your work as sincerely and with the same speed and efficiency which has characterized your work so far and which has given you this position of power and authority. The youngsters will give you a pleasant surprise when they bring in prizes.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 21-Jan. 19)



You have been thinking in terms of starting your own independent enterprise. You should now make a concrete move in the direction by meeting people and discussing your ideas. It may take some time but your advance detailed work will lead you to your desired goals. Your relationship with your work-mates is cordial. If you are a single and you have already a steady relationship you may think of an engagement or marriage. Control your food habits to maintain good health.

Who says rain plays spoilsport? Atleast not in the hills. I am wiped out after an arduous journey of 16hrs (10 hrs by train from Kolkata and 6 hrs by road in the mountainous terrain). I am in Sikkim the darling child of Mother Nature. The place is Pemayangste a nondescript forested village near Pelling a beautiful spot in the State. Our resort, a retreat of the erst-while royal family of Sikkim is perched on a hill top. After the usual formalities I sit in the lovely landscaped lawns with a welcome drink savouring the beauty of Nature. "The hotel overlooks the Singalila range and Khanchenjunga can be seen at the farthest," says Vivek Oberoi, my host over phone. But the snow-capped peaks are beclouded. Suddenly the clouds gather. Expecting some showers I retire to the lounge which has some excellent Sikkimese furniture. In moments, a fine drizzle begins to veil the hills and the entire surroundings. I enjoy another cuppa and call for an umbrella to venture out and enjoy the April showers. As I move out of the hotel the downpour slowly comes to a naught. Again it is bright and I hear loud cheers. I scurry back to the garden. And lo! The Heaven's sprinkle has acted like a wiper and the whole mountain range with snowy peaks comes to view with all its glory! The rain has pulled off the curtain over the hills which were cloaked in mist ! Hence rain only adds charm to the ambience and is not an impediment.

Back to the story, I return to my chamber where my valet has stowed my luggage. I am in again for a suprise! The room has large windows on all its sides and the lights twinkle from nearby Pelling! Gorgeous view is the USP of Elgin Hotel. From the other window the blue tinted snow and the sky mesmerises us. In the morning, I wake up to the call of fledgelings. Again I walk up to the lawns. The zephyr, the day break, the verdant slopes, the flowers in full bloom (with dew drops), the red cheeked grass cutter - make my lips to spontaneously mutter the song *Khite hai gul yaha* (a hit of Kishore from the film *Sharmilee*). I walk down the road for the morning constitutional. Outside the hotel the road forks into two. One meanders down to Pelling. The other seems to be shorter and hence I follow that path. Just 100 metres ahead, across the resort I notice an arch. Another guest from the hotel joins me and we enter into it curiously. After 15 minutes trudge uphill I reach a Gompa. It is the Pemayangste Monastery (means Perfect Sublime Lotus) one of the celebrated, oldest and most important monasteries of Nyingmapa Order of Buddhism in Sikkim. Built in the 17th century at an altitude of 2085m, this Gompa is encircled by haunting beauty of Khanchenjunga and its retinue of peaks. (Entry ticket Rs.10) A chamber with a big and colourful prayer wheel is tucked away in a corner . We have to go round to get into the Monastery. The complex teems with yellow flags. It is a three storeyed structure wherein the main hall has aesthetically painted doors, windows depicting Tibetan designs and the walls adorned with tradi-

SEWARO ROCK GARDEN

A small hydel power plant is situated on the left bank of the Rimbi river and provides power to Pelling and other nearby villages and towns. The department of tourism in Sikkim has developed the Sewaro Rock Garden on the banks of the river Rimbi. The park is beautiful with wildflowers growing everywhere in abandon, the Rimbi river flowing by majestically and the hills completely covered with lovely forests on either side of the park.

KANCHENJUNGA FALLS

After witnessing our excitement at the Rimbi Falls, our chauffeur had been hinting about the Kanchanjunga Falls being far more exciting. The name itself conjures up images of the water coming down from the snowcapped peaks of the great mountain and I must say on seeing the waterfalls, we were left speechless. The main falls are hidden from view from the road and we have to walk about 500 m which includes a short climb to view the spectacular waterfalls, a huge wall of roaring water crashing almost vertically from 150 m or more, surrounded by dense foliage and moss covered stones. To go near the falls some persons give us a helping hand to get over the rocks on the way. As we go near it is an amazing sight of marvel at the symbiosis of light and sound.

Changey waterfall is located about 10km from Pelling on the way to Dentam. The road that runs past it overlooks the Dentam Valley from high above. The Changey falls from a great height and disappears below among the thick vegetation. It is a very serene place with almost nobody to disturb the sound of gushing water.

The water falls from the high cliff in different runs that makes visitors watch unmoved for hours. Interested visitors may climb up through gentle footpath and sit closer to the falls in a beautiful viewpoint shade when nearby they can attempt for a light bite and drink in a cafeteria.

Pelling is fast growing as a major tourist hot spot. The refreshing greenery, small stream, amazingly brilliant falls, peaceful, magnificent view of snow peaks, terraced hillside fields of paddy and corn are what one expect to find. Even staying at Pelling is refreshing. Pelling is in the western part of Sikkim close to Yuxsom and is bordered by Nepal. It is situated on the top of a ridge and remains surrounded by mist. Winters are chilling cold, monsoon is strong and summers are pleasant. It is situated at an altitude of nearly 2073 meters / 6,800 feet. It offers the most spectacular views of Mount Kanchendzonga, Mount Makalu, Mount Pandim and the Himalayan ranges. A visitor is sure to leave away his memories etched here.

LEO (July 22-Aug 21)



There may be a bit of conflict as you are keen on accepting a job offer, which will involve

a lot of travelling to nearby and far off places, which you love and prefer. This is bound to affect your family, as you will be away from them for quite a while. You may have to decide on some arrangements to look after them and also install security equipment to ensure their safety. It will be easier to approach a reliable friend for financing your new venture. A visit by an overseas visitor is likely.

VIRGO (Aug 22-Sept. 21)



A sudden and unexpected financial benefit will help you to settle your dues as promised. It

will now be possible to concentrate on your venture with an easy mind. Try and complete your old commitments that were left half way for some valid reasons but should not bother you when you wish to pay undivided attention to the new one. A smart move can help overcome some minor objections from the authorities. There may be slight delays while accomplishing some household tasks.

AQUARIUS (Jan.20-Feb.18)



You are likely to get some unexpected benefits due to sudden demand of your products as a result of change in public taste. This may inspire you to use your creative mind to work on products, which can catch the imagination of the people. At an upcountry seminar you will be able to put through your original ideas in a convincing manner and impressing the participants. This will add to your reputation bringing in offers of consultation and advice from various organizations.

PISCES (Feb.19-March 20)



The negotiations may require little tact and diplomacy. Be discreet. Let the other party

declare their strategy and demands. This will give you time to ponder and reflect. Ultimately your advance work in data collection will help. At home the problems you thought were rather insurmountable are settled with a smile and you will be in an upbeat mood. Your dream to be independent by starting your own venture will be realized. You will get all the co-operation and support from family.