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## Boris Lissanevitch and Nepali Tourism: History Revisited

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### Abstract

In the transitional phase of Nepal, attaining peoples' democracy in the 1950, the tourism and hospitality sector witnessed dynamism. The isolated Nepal was on the way of opening for tourism. This paper tries to frame a picture of the era of 1950s in Nepal when commercial tourism was introduced. An overlooked pioneer, Boris Lissanevitch, who established the international-standard Royal Hotel in Kathmandu in 1954, assisted in making key changes in the progression of tourism as visa issuance, hospitality modernization, management of royal events, sightseeing activities, accomplishing inter-continental land cruise, and introduction of European vegetables and dishes. His vision of tourism as an economic sector led Nepal attaining its golden age (of tourism) thus paving the way for other tourism and hospitality enthusiasts to establish similar businesses. This paper aims at interpreting and appreciating the efforts Boris made in the development of tourism in Nepal among tourism scholars and stakeholders.

**Keywords:** the era of 1950s, commercial tourism, Boris Lissanevitch, Royal Hotel, golden age of tourism

### Boris Lissanevitch and Nepali Tourism: History Revisited

Nepal, a land-linked Himalayan territory in south-east Asia, is recognized as the sanctum of nature, culture and adventure (Musa et al., 2004). In historical progression (before the 1950s), Nepal was visited, linked via published sources, and talked about its peculiarity by many visitors and scholars, to name a few, Joao Cabral, a Portuguese Jesuit missionary who visited Nepal in the spring of 1628 (Nunciature, 2017), Kirk Patric, the author of *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, 1792 (Adhikari, 2012), and Sylvain Lévi, a French orientalist and author of the 3-volume book, *Le Népal: Étude historique d'un royaume hindou* (Translated as, Nepal: Historical Study of a Hindu Kingdom), who have had a detailed look-up into the Nepali Kingdom through his travels from 1905-1908 (Britannica, 2021). Nepal, since Junga Bahadur Rana, had organized large scale hunting parties, and especially in 1911 had hosted exquisite tiger shooting for the British Royals; King George V and his party trophied 18 one-horned rhinos, 39 tigers and 4 sloth bears followed by the hunts of Edward VIII, the Prince of Wales and successor of George V (Rookmaaker et al., 2005). Edward VIII also named himself the first person to land a car (on mens' back) in Nepal in 1922 (Hatuwali, 2015).

The world's first ascent of an Eight-Thousander, Annapurna, on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1950 led Nepal into the limelight of the world and Nepal rose into fame as the hub of Himalayan megamountaineering followed by iconic ascents of Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) in 1953, Kanchenjunga in 1955, Lhotse in 1956 and so on (Harper, 1999; NTB, 2011; MoCTCA, 2019). The Himalayan kingdom since the first of mountain ascents witnessed progressive growth of visitors from the western world and big names are accredited in the progression of what latterly was known as tourism. History, however, has not duly accredited one of the major the then pioneers of commercial Nepali tourism (in the 1950s), Boris Lissanevitch, a Russian ballet dancer turned hotelier who through his incredibly adventurous journey made into the isolated Kathmandu and hosted the world-famous<sup>1</sup> Royal Hotel (current Election Commission building, Kantipath) (Peissel, 1966), thus paving a way for commercial tourism in Nepal. This paper tries to highlight the tourism potential Boris saw in Kathmandu (Nepal) and his contributions in projecting Nepal, through both promotion and paperwork, to the world out, simultaneously being a constituting figure of the kindling days of Nepali "Golden Age of Tourism"<sup>2</sup> (Beedie 2003, p. 216, cited in Liechty, 2017).

Kathmandu was indeed an isolated wonderland to all the foreigners till the Rana sovereignty. It was in 1950 when Nepal aptly opened its doors to the world and a land restricted throughout the history, and even strictly during the 105 years Rana regime (Liechty, 1997), suddenly became the enchanted heaven of Himalayan mountaineering, cultural sanctity and ecstasy of the war-worried youths (Liechty, 2017).

Mentioned previously, Nepal had permitted and entertained majorly notables (royals, diplomats and writers) before the 1950s. In a sense, Nepal's formal tourism, considering the previous visits to be much of royal endeavours, was induced after the then King Tribhuvan and Nepali Congress's (Nepal's one of the leading political parties) combined efforts led to a revolution overthrowing the 105-year Rana regime (Liechty, 2017, p. 29). Boris Lissanevitch visited Nepal as a guest (much more of a confidant) of King Tribhuvan in 1951. He had met Tribhuvan via the exiled General Mahabir Samsher JBR in the Club 300 (Kolkata), one of Boris's luxurious and premium establishments. Nepal's fate of tourism with Boris's visit was about to take a radical transformation.

Boris Lissanevitch was born as the youngest of 3 children in 1905 in Odessa. In times of tumultuous Russian politics, his career as an army recruit for the Bolsheviks was inevitable, to add, born to a Czarist army officer. At the age of nine, he was sent off to the cadet school in Odessa and so began Boris's unenthusiastic military life. In 1917 when the revolution raged, the 13-year old Boris was enlisted in the Imperial Navy and started his military career. The war quickly came out tragic to the Lissanevitch family, losing 2<sup>nd</sup> son Mikhail and lives of the remaining were still at stake as Odessa had fallen and barred. With countless struggles, Boris finally made it to Paris to pursue a new life but as something he'd not anticipated. He took help from his aunt who was a ballet mistress and teacher at Odessa Opera House. The idea was cut and dried, Boris, if needs to get out of the struggling Russia, must train as a ballet dancer and get certified as a member of *corps de ballet* opera. Attending the ballet school not only saved Boris's life but started a career for him- one of his many careers- that was to take him around the world in remarkable adventures (Peissel, 1966, p. 73).

With ballet performances from Moscow to Berlin to Paris, Boris had achieved the fame of a

<sup>1</sup> *On the claim "Boris is the number two attraction in Nepal after Everest" made by an American paper, cited in the novel Tiger for Breakfast by Michel Peissel.*

<sup>2</sup> *The era 1950-65 is considered as the "Golden Age of Tourism" in Nepal.*

young talent in ballet. It eventually led him to Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929), an impresario and a respected figure of ballet in Europe. From 1925 until Diaghilev's death, Boris flourished and amazed the European ballet under the shade of such finest artistic genius. *Le Carnaval, La Boutique fantasque, Prince Igor, The Three-Concerned Hat, Petrouchka, Mercure, Parade, The Firebird* were some of the hits Boris starred in Diaghilev's creation (Peissel, 1966, p. 88). His fame grew amongst all crew and audience as a tall, muscular, and witty man. This evidences the larger-than-life character in his latter life as the central figure of both Club 300 and Royal Hotel, seed of what must have been Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Eskelund, (1960), cited in Liechty (2017), states, "A visitor (of Royal Hotel) in 1957 noted that tourists arriving in Kathmandu wished to be photographed with three things: in order of preference,

1. Mt. Everest (which they were told was too far away to see),
2. the Abominable Snowman (which they were told was too shy), and
3. Boris, "the famous ballet dancer and night-club king who goes hunting with film stars and maharajas".

Diaghilev's death trembled the Russo-European ballet and Boris had now been in sheer absence of Diaghilev's guardianship. After a few months, he tied up the situation and re-pursued the ballet career, now on more of international stages. Boris in the ballet career pursuit met Kira Stcherbatheva in the early 1930s and married her soon after. The "Kira and Boris" group performed in upscale colonial hotels, nightclubs, and concert halls from Shanghai and Hong Kong, to French Indo-China and Singapore, to Calcutta and Bombay. This ballet adventure brought Boris to the lights of Asia, especially India (Liechty, 2017). After his dancing career almost came to an end with quivering marriage in 1936, he crystallized the idea of creating an all-day-open mixed club<sup>3</sup> in Calcutta; the brainchild of Boris, Club 300, was established in December 1936 hosting India's elites, the princes, Maharajas, corporate magnates, and foreigners (Liechty, 2017).

Club 300 rose as a venerable social club in Calcutta, fame spreading as far as Europe and Boris, if his exquisiteness looked upon today, is one of the few individuals who is even larger attraction than his establishment. His connections from the club led him to big game, Tiger Hunting. Big game hunting was sport of the elites in India, while Nepal's approach was slightly slant; the Ranas had used Tiger Shooting as a diplomatic tool, mostly for the East India Company's bigwigs and British royals (Rookmaaker et al., 2005). Now the rallying point of young, wealthy, and brilliant men in the city, Club 300 had led Boris to intimate relations with major rajas and maharajas, the notable for us, General Mahabir Shamsher Rana who was residing in Calcutta as an exile from Nepal and had joined 300 soon after its opening. General Mahabir Shamsher was also the sole reason why Tribhuvan met Boris, and a financier for the liberation movement (via Nepali Congress party) against the tyrannical Ranas (Peissel, 1966, p. 180).

While the tiers of revolution were unfolding in Nepal, Boris was busy in his unusual endeavours, and in airlines this time. The service refurbishment of Cathy Pacific Airlines<sup>4</sup>, inception at 300, had Boris and de Kantzow plan the flights of surplus airplanes left by the US Army Air Force. Peissel (1966) estimates that these flights brought profits of almost a million

<sup>3</sup> India then had extravagant clubs but only open to European lords with fewer or no recognition to Indians. Boris had felt a mix club was Calcutta's necessity, and a precise target market he had waiting for the club.

<sup>4</sup> Started with residual planes by Roy Farrell and Sydney de Kantzow (Boris's friend) during the post-war China, 1946, Cathy Pacific is now a popular airlines operator in the Pacific area.

dollars in matter of weeks. With this immensely successful flight renovation, Boris inspired General Mahabir to buy a surplus plane that Boudzikowski (Boris's Russian friend) would pilot. General Mahabir bought the small chartered DC3 plane and converted it into a luxury plane and having earned quite handsomely, he kept on adding aircrafts, leading to the establishment of Himalayan Aviation (estd. 1955), Nepal's first airlines operator. A small airstrip built in Gaucharan (now Tribhuvan International Airport) in 1950 saw Nepal's first commercial airplane (the DC3 aircraft), visibly breaking the extensive isolation for the first time in history. In a sense, Boris had contributed to the commencement of the tourism of Nepal before he even realized, and before anyone had attempted. It is plausible that many travel and tourism professionals believe, Boris was and is to be considered as Nepal's 'Father of Commercial Tourism'.

Inger Lissanevitch, Boris's second wife, according to Rai (2005), immediately fell in love with Nepal in the very first visit and wanted to live here. Boris was more than captivated by Nepal, the moment he landed. Explaining to a friend, according to Liechty (2017) Boris expressed his charm for Nepal as "Where can I breathe fresh air like this? Where can I find open space like this? If I live in Nepal, I'll live fifteen years longer!" As we explain the major pulling factors of Nepali tourism now, fresh air, resembling pristine natural environment, the breeze of the Himalayas is at the prime. Open space resembling unspoiled and immune to unmanaged concrete infestation as another competitive advantage while fifteen years longer life portrays the spiritual haven Nepal is. Boris's first statement on Nepal illustrates one of the prime reasons he fell for Nepal and a man of such splendid personality, he saw the unprecedented tourism potentiality.

It is tough digging out the exact reason Boris wanted to build a hotel in Nepal. Based on his establishment of Club 300, he could possibly have been figuring a way to drink after 2:00 am in Kathmandu, considering the times, Kathmandu was flooded only with home-grown fermented liquor (*Raksi*) at local levels; royals and elites had privilege of imported drinks apparently. Or until Boris opened the Royal in 1954, there were not many standard lodging hotels in Kathmandu, which could have possibly had him struck with the opportunities of instituting one. Liechty (2017) explores the hotels existent in Kathmandu before the Royal, which were, Himalayan Hotel, Paras Hotel, in the 1940s, neither of which served meals or had proper bathrooms. Kathmandu also saw the first of its standard eateries, notably, Rangana Café and Rendezvous Restaurant, New road, in 1950s, basically Indian hangouts they were (Dammann, 1995, p. 81; Chand, 2000, p. 51). Nepal Hotel, Jawalakhel, Patan, changed the existing scene of hospitality in Nepal. Established in 1951, the first "quality hotel", provided meals and had improved bathrooms with faucet and Asian-style toilets (Dammann, 1995, p. 51). Unfortunately, in just one year of establishment, the hotel became obsolete and bolted forever. Hotel Snow View, Lazimpat, emerged as the first successful foreign-class hotel in 1952 (Adhikari, 2005). Thomas Mendes, an Anglo-Indian and a Christian Missionary, ran the hotel well compared to existing ones with dining halls, clean rooms, kitchen staffs, but retaining from selling alcohol and cigarettes (Morris 1963, p. 52). These were the major players in Nepal hospitality before the Royal opened.

Picking up on the motive behind establishment, Boris might as well have been looking for a good place to rest his head in the nostalgia of his flamboyant Calcutta endeavour. Peissel (1966) contends that Boris, who had gone weary explaining tourism from Prime Minister to governmental desk-jockeys, had the idea of reviving Club 300's flavour in a place his heart dreamt of dwelling. How? A hotel.

It, however, is evident that Boris was not really a money-driven businessperson. According to Choegy (2020), Boris times-a-while went into financial distress and sought loan from Jim Edwards<sup>5</sup>. 'He was a terrible businessman, he didn't think about money at all,' bemoaned Inger. Boris himself said: 'I always spent just about a little bit more than I made' (Choegy, 2020). It thus is evident that Boris was never unto money solely. For him, money was just an operational asset to get things running. Managing and monetary activities for Boris was a necessary chore and socializing the real reward (Shelby, 2008). It also could be deduced that, had Boris operated the Royal only as a profit-making hotel, he possibly would not have been remembered as the larger-than-life character by those who met him and Nepal's tourism would not have had taken the pace he raced at based on the Royal.

The Royal Hotel came into existence in 1954. Boris with financing from and in partnership with prince Basundhara (younger brother of King Mahendra), leased a large section of the Bahadur Bhawan (current Election Commission Building, Kantipath, as of 2021) and went on operating the hotel, a sector he was relatively new to. Examining all of Boris's doings, it is obvious that he was eccentric and able to look into things the way others could not, extravagantly most of the times. The Royal in that sense was destined to open as a hotel but stand as something larger aligned with Boris sophistication. As mentioned earlier, Nepali officials were totally unknown to 'tourism' and mocked those who suggested Nepal should open for it. A hotel he dreamt of establishing and the hotel he established, but apart from the large empty halls and ghostly rooms, the building would never be a hotel. Had he thought of a restaurant, setting up would have been much easier but for an international, tourist-grade hotel, everything from forks and knives to bed and beddings to sink and flush-toilet needed to be set; the latter was something Kathmandu till the date had never seen. Boris had to import his own belongings, from Club 300, Calcutta to Kathmandu, Nepal. With no proper roads and vehicles in Kathmandu and India in Monsoon, his journey with 140 crates of hotel items turned out to be as harrowing as it could get (Peissel, 1966, p. 48). After a week, he managed to get the logistics in Kathmandu. Another take on tourism progression, now the logistics, for clarity let's imagine, a flush (commode) toilet that modern day tourism (even basic) hotels use, and something so common that no one thinks about, were alien to Nepal till 1954 and Boris was the first one to get them. Tourism modernization in Nepal owes a lot to the Russian émigré.

Bahadur Bhawan in its refurbishment took a huge capital and time, and with the crew of Indian and Nepali craftsmen, was ready to lodge and serve by February 1955. Boris was still struggling to persuade Nepal to issue tourist visas and at a moment, he gambled that Nepal could relax the visa restrictions if tourists enjoyed their stay in Nepal (Liechty, 2017, p. 39). To enlighten the context, Boris was very keen to receive guests for the Royal (hotel). According to Satyal (1999), cited in Liechty, 2017, the mass travel pioneer Thomas Cook in October 1954 asked Boris to manage and accommodate 20 of his clients, who were in a cruise tour to India, to Kathmandu, Nepal. The 20 tourists, mostly elderly and extremely rich, fell in crazy love with Kathmandu, buying all the local arts and crafts from the hotel display<sup>6</sup>.

*5 Jim Edwards is a gargantuan figure in tourism of Nepal. He is famously known for renovating the Tiger Tops, a famous jungle lodge, now, Tiger Mountain, chain of eco-resorts. Edwards is also credited to establishing Elephant Polo, a sport introduced by Nepal to the world.*

*6 Royal Hotel alongside being the first standard hotel in Nepal was the first boutique hotel as well. Peissel (1996) in Tiger for Breakfast explains he witnessed local merchants rushing every morning to the large glass displays in the hallway of Royal Hotel to exhibit their arts and crafts (gold, brass ornaments, bamboo crafts, wood carvings etc.). Tourists in the hotel could experience and purchase Nepali souvenirs. The hallway alone contributed in a section of Kathmandu's local merchants' economy.*

Who were the 20 ladies? Tourism history acknowledges them as the first tourists who visited Nepal, considering the 'tourist' identity they belonged to.

Nepal's tourist visa issuance also had noteworthy efforts of Boris as he had put himself in enlightening the prospects of tourism Nepal could offer. In one of the cardinal visits of the hotel, he arranged that the King himself should attend a reception for the newcomers. Mr. and Mrs. Alexander of the Ford Foundation, who had arrived a few months earlier and were the first clients of the Royal Hotel, scanned Patan's artisans' shops for intricate and beautiful Nepali jewellery and handicrafts. They felt these might interest visitors and could be a new source of foreign exchange for the country. On the day of the reception, before the surprised King Mahendra and his royal ministers, the tourists rushed on the handicraft exhibits, fighting with each other to buy up everything. So popular were the bejewelled copper boxes, the masks and other artefacts that there were not enough to go around and more had to be ordered. King Mahendra was so impressed by the evident enthusiasm of the tourists for his country and its crafts that he gave orders to his ministers then and there, on the terrace of the Royal Hotel that in the future visas should be issued to all tourists on sight. Thus Nepal, with the King's aspiration and Boris's assistance, was procedurally opened to the world (Klenov, 2000, p. 14).

Now that Royal Hotel was successfully installed and even enjoyed its first clients, visa issuance in the operational pipeline and Nepal as the haven for adventure and mountaineering (especially after the Annapurna Expedition, 1950 and majorly, Sagarmatha Expedition, 1953), Kathmandu rose as the ultimate oriental world, a farout the world looked as if it were another planet, a must go for the west, a must be for the west. The hype of Kathmandu could also be expressed in lights of the visitors Royal welcomed; because for foreigners, there simply was not a place except the Royal to reside in stay, and Boris, with his ebullient personality, was even larger charm than the hotel itself. Ed Hillary, Father Marshal Moran, Elizabeth Hawley, Desmond Doig, Han Suyin, Werner Schultess, Toni Hagen, Peter Aufschneider were frequent visitors of the Royal Hotel. Some iconic personages had visited Nepal back then, to name a few, Valentina Tereshkova (first and youngest woman to have flown in space) and her husband Andriyan Nikolayev (Russian Cosmonaut), who stayed in the Royal on her honeymoon, American billionaire John D. Rockefeller III, Spanish Prince and later King Juan Carlos, on his honeymoon in Royal and many politicians, diplomats, Hollywood celebrities, and celebrated authors. Not to mention the Nepali royals, to whom the Royal served as a hangout. The kind-hearted Boris had let youngsters without money to dwell in their camps on the vast open lush-green gardens of the hotel. Mountaineers dwelt all around. As the inside overwhelmed with extravagance of the aristocrats, the outside was equally colourful with music and youthful ecstasy.

On the unwavering foundation of the Royal Hotel accompanied by Boris's corresponding charisma, and larger than that, the magnificence of nature-cultural wonders, Nepal's tourism debuted as a sensation to the world media. The media coverage and western perception of Kathmandu in the golden years is richly compiled by Liechty (2017), a few are attempted to reword here. New York Times and Chicago Daily Tribune in 1955 infatuatedly covered the tourists' trip to Nepal, stressing over how such few visits happened before. The Los Angeles Times claimed Kathmandu "the new million-dollar world in travel," destined to join Bali and Tahiti "in every around-the-world-folder" (Hemphill, 1956). Kathmandu enchanted the US's public imagination, virally as of now, with Life (1955) magazine's 4-page photo-article on the lavish visitors of the Royal Hotel and sites to visit. People believing Kathmandu was

somewhere on another world now realized they could with enough money and peripheral hobbies (sightseeing, trekking or mountaineering) make it to Nepal. Public image of Kathmandu before was justified as with the above-mentioned names in the place, one would simply believe it was the place for the chosen ones. Now that the tourists' numbers kept on increasing, and Royal Hotel, being the first encounter and choice of stay of the tourists, was synonymous with Kathmandu. A London newspaper ranked it second among "the most interesting hotels in the world" (Stephens, 1979).

The number of tourists steadily grew in Nepal. The reason Boris saw the tourism potentiality in Nepal were indeed the major pulling factors. Peissel (1966) compares Patan with Venice, that not a single structure that built them were out of the places. A city so alive, so architectural, every minor component of the city exhibits its aesthetic beauty and the glorious hands that carved them; 'a dream city' in Peissel's language. Bhaktapur and Kathmandu were similar in terms of authenticity. He was amongst the non-native pioneers who added vibrance to the city<sup>7</sup>, a desire the world wished to experience. Unsaturated as Calcutta, Kathmandu was free from all sort of noise, pollution, dust and the ever-deepening crater of rich-poor visible encounter. The valley roads despite being narrow, passed through the melting smile and humility of the Nepali people. The roads of Kathmandu, as found in literary sources are described as an experience on themselves. Aligned with beautiful flowering trees: Persian lilacs, silky oak, bottlebrush, and jacaranda (Fleming & Fleming, 1990), and the grand view of majestic Himalayan chain, Kathmandu had a magnetic effect on tourists in only a few minutes of arrival. Boris was very accurate in recognizing that Kathmandu could be the definition of tourism when he landed in Nepal. It now was. Royal Hotel was well set in operation. Boris had hired and instructed required staffs to meet the demands of the tourists and was involved himself as he was the sole bridge between the guests' expectation and the Nepal experience. Inger, Boris's wife, had employed herself to receiving the guests at the airport.

In the swift operations, an issue arose, however. The tourists wanted to explore, understand Kathmandu, see the temples, monasteries, hills, valley and all that it has to offer, but how? Boris could hardly get free managing the logistics as he had to supervise the airlifts of majorly liquors and other requisites from Calcutta to Kathmandu. And a few even if he could manage, not quite compatible with the growing numbers every day. Nepali townfolks, rich in warm smile though, only communicated with the tourists in sign language, that wouldn't work for the over-enthusiastic westerners. Boris had realized the situation and came up with an idea of hiring English-speaking hotel managers from India which would work for the in-hotel encounters. But what on the outside, where the real deal was? In the early 1950s, the only place where he could find English-speaking Nepali was at the St. Xavier's School run by American Jesuits. Boris met with Ashok Sharma, a local English-speaking boy of St. Xaviers whom he proposed to guide the groups of westerners. Liechty (2017) has illustrated a section of the interview with Sharma where he recalls his first guiding as, just being able to speak English Boris hired him and instructed to take them from airport to Pashupatinath and Boudhanath, then to hotel, a bit of shopping and dinner. More sightseeing on the next day or next days to and from the hotel. Sharma who didn't know much of temples, anyhow managed to guide the tourists to Kathmandu's marvels. Boris, in 2 minutes chat with Sharma on being

<sup>7</sup> *Kathmandu, excluding westerners, had several colorful and enigmatic adored internationally. Almost every western visitor of Kathmandu was intrigued by the royal family, especially King Tribhuvan, Prince Mahendra, Prince Basundhara, Field Marshal Kaiser Shamsher Rana, their sex-life as the major drunk gossip, illustrates Murphy (1967, p. 80)*

able to speak English as all that required, had trained Nepal's first tourist guide; a vocation now that takes 4 months to complete, requiring minimum bachelor's degree to enrol, has its history emerged this way.

While operating the Royal, Boris had introduced Kathmandu to many things it was unknown to, that the Nepali in the valley did not know they existed. On the large lush grounds of the Royal, he raised European vegetables unheard, unseen and unavailable in the local market such as mushrooms, strawberries, artichokes, carrots, and beets (Liechty, 2017, p. 70). Such common vegetables now were completely alien till the 1950s. Another supposedly noteworthy Boris's contribution to Nepali society was the introduction of Yorkshire Whites to Nepal whose transformation to Nepali society was incredible. Nepali pigs (*Sungurs*) were considered impure, only to be eaten by lower caste but wild boar (*Bandels*) were considered dainty dishes, often hunted for and by the elites. While the hotel needed fresh ham, Boris cooked stupendous idea of breeding pigs in Nepal and imported 43 large Yorkshire Whites from India (Peissel, 1966, p. 61) which were deemed edible by the elites (Liechty, 2017, p. 70). To distinguish the Yorkshires, a new identity was required for the hogs. It is believed either Boris or Jimmy Roberts was the architect behind the term *Bangur*, combining *Bandel* and *Sungur*. It is very likely that the ancestral roots of Nepali *Bangurs* if researched, would lead to Boris's hogs. He had also been a pioneer of introducing several European (Russian majorly) dishes to Nepal. One of the noted dishes, as mentioned by Peissel (1966), was the Genoa fruit cake which used to be the summit treat of nearly every Himalayan mountaineering expedition. Boris was very warm with the mountaineering fraternity which privileged him to be accounted on their after-expedition publications while many mountaineers brought him pieces of rocks from the summit of the highest peaks (Peissel, 1966, p. 225). In the reign of the Royal, 1954 to 1969, Boris had played a major part in assisting, feeding, lodging and entertaining number of largest and famous expeditions. It is with these multiple accounts and mentions of him in several publications, the western media crowned him with 'the number two attraction in Nepal after Everest.'

The Royal, along with providing food and accommodating the visitors, via the Yak and Yeti bar, served as the primal spot of socialization. Founded on the 2nd floor of the hotel, the bar was the clubhouse where all Kathmandu gossip trickled (Murphy, 1967, p. 22). From Hillary to royals, Yak and Yeti entertained all colourful personas. The problem was however liquor, which ran short every once-a-while as there was no distillery in Nepal that could produce liquor of the par, thus was to be airlifted, causing delays. Seeing the guests and royals helpless, Boris planned another of his astounding endeavour, setting up a distillery in the eastern Nepal (Biratnagar). He arranged the legalities with the authorities and indeed set up the thing, for his calculations were simple. There were none in whole Nepal, guarantees a success. Boris thus set the very first factory in Nepal (Peissel, 1966, p. 199) and in Biratnagar, the city that would later develop as the country's largest industrial center. The factory produced 3 categories of fine fruit flavoured alcohol, which unfortunately would not sell at high prices. Loss for him it was, although, Nepal witnessed the very first factory and the enthusiasm of industrial commencement. A win, calculating all accounts.

In 1956, Boris had played a significant role in the hospitality management of the coronation of King Mahendra. With the epitomal royal event, he attempted changing the nature of managing events, performing at an unprecedented standards and methods. Boris, having assigned with the accommodation of the royal guests from several countries and the management of the event, did it so splendidly that major royal and elite events afterwards



required him to execute. The detailed account of King Mahendra's coronation is described in the 1958 Han Suyin novel, *The Mountain is Young*. Peissel (1966) describes a thorough version from Boris's standpoint. For logistics, he had chartered three DC3 aircrafts for three days, airlifting six thousand live chicken, one thousand guinea fowl, two thousand ducks, five hundred turkeys, one hundred geese, one and a half ton of fish, two tons of vegetables and even a couple of tons of ice (Peissel, 1966, p. 210). This airlift was a gamechanger in Nepal due the fact that all coronations before were hosted on and with entirely local logistics, for which the citizens were subjected to high taxation and even property cuts. It changed with Boris's idea of airlifting the logistics from India. King Mahendra's coronation brought Nepal to even grander fame in eyes of the west and the elites from around the world. The guests of the event, who enjoyed their stay at Royal and explored virgin Kathmandu, came repeatedly what later advanced as diplomatic tourism.

What genuinely separates Boris from anyone of that era and even as of now it seems was his courage and enthusiasm to explore things, some of which never previously undertaken. Analyzing his past as a soldier at the age of 13 to world tours to an opium addict at some point, a big game hunter and the center of social clubs and gatherings, it is logical that only the person whose character and doings resonate as of an adventurer can think in levels of the unprecedented. In 1957, Boris attempted and succeeded in an endeavour possibly not many of that time would try. He became the first person to drive the full distance from Solihull, London to Kathmandu on 3 long-wheel based Land Rovers (Peissel, 1966, p. 237), a pioneering journey that he completed in 42 days, odometer reading 12,380 kilometers, as the monster vehicles parked in the Royal, Kathmandu (Liechty, 2017, p. 130). He pulled off this grand cruise as a pilot to develop an overland-cruise-package with 20 luxury house trailers. The cruise was to last for 3 months at a cost of \$100 per day. The spacious house trailers were loaded on costume-designed powerful Land Rovers, each trailer having a Nepali valet, Nepali chauffeurs and in-built bathroom facilities. Two giant kitchen trucks were part of the crew with 5 cooks and local chefs to be picked up on the arrival of specific countries for the nation's specialities (Peissel, 1966, p. 239). Such was his vision and operated the package for a few years. Owing to poor quality roads and high maintenance costs, he had to take the idea down but recollecting the concept now, how a man pulled off such a gargantuan cruise alone, inspires the tourism associates to pull off similar endeavours on tourism innovation and product diversification. On the bright side, Boris's travel attracted a wide media coverage (Peissel, 1966, p. 272) which in turn inspired the latter travellers (majorly hippies) to undertake long overland travels from Europe to Kathmandu.

By 1961, Boris's fame was glowing around the world. The Royal, hosting a wide range of visitors from royals and elites to diplomats and researchers to hippies, had Boris featured in almost every literature the visitors published. During Queen Elizabeth's state visit to Nepal, Prince Philip is said to have scanned the room at a reception, approached with hand outstretched, and asked, "Are you Boris?" (Simpson, 1976, p. 65). Boris was assigned by King Mahendra to manage the royal state visit, and that he did, utilizing the moment to display his extravagance of organization. Welcoming the royal couple at Meghauli, Chitawan (the hunting camp), Boris lined up no fewer than 376 elephants, lavishly decorated and painted with gold and silver, into one immense, breathing wall, stretching miles long (MacDonald, 2005, p. 80). A heated criticism the tiger shooting of the British royals brought from over the west as an issue of animal cruelty and heavy taxation on the poor citizens for the royal appeasement. It however for Nepal and Boris was possibly the biggest and grandiose

event that ever happened. Being among the last of the tiger shoots around the world, King Mahendra's spectacle was truly magnificent. Nepal army was mobilized to set the camps on the banks of Rapti river, Megghauli, Chitawan. A road was bulldozed through the deep Terai jungle and an airstrip of 1200 yards long was built (Peissel, 1966, p. 254). Boris at the event managed and executed flawlessly all that he was capable of doing, banquets, picnics, tent camps, in both Kathmandu and Megghauli, and a model of Mount Everest at the center of the hunting camp (McDonald, 2005, p. 80). Kathmandu, unfamiliar with any of the westernized receptions, galas, balls, banquets, and other sophisticated event managements, was introduced and pioneered with Boris, a take, Nepali tourism history should acknowledge.

## Conclusion

Boris, who through his adventurous journey, made it to Nepal in 1951 and falling in love with Kathmandu, he established the Royal Hotel in 1954 and the Yak and Yeti Bar. His establishments were modern and of international standards at the time and enjoyed global recognition. But apart from just operating a hospitality business in a candid economic mode, Boris succeeded in changing the nature of tourism in Nepal via events like visa issuance, King Mahendra's coronation, Queen Elizabeth's state visit to Nepal, and maintained a warm relation with guests that privileged him and the Royal hotel to be synonymous with Kathmandu. As Morris (1963) has pointed out, "nobody in their senses" visited Nepal for great food or lodging. Nepal was not seen as any whereabouts, but an oriental world and Boris was the catalyst who channelized Nepal into the lights of commercial tourism, an unseen experience then, that would later develop as the nation's one of the pillars of national economy. Owing to his carefree business attitude and reluctance to keep pace with the expanding tourism industry, the Royal Hotel was shut down in 1969 but on the bright side, Boris was the inspiration behind those later generation of Nepali tourism and hospitality. The rise of Mountain Travel Nepal (estd. 1964), Hotel Annapurna (estd. 1965), The Soaltee Hotel (founded 1965; inaugurated in 1966) (Soaltee Hotel Limited, 2021), Hotel Association of Nepal (estd. 1966), Kathmandu Guest House (estd. 1968) contributed to further evolution of tourism, succeeding the Boris-pioneered 1950s, thus the end of an era.

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