

## Spirit of death

One of the most sacred Hindu temples of Nepal – Pashupatinath Temple is located on both banks of Bagmati River on the eastern outskirts of Kathmandu.

Pashupatinath is the most important temple dedicated to god Shiva. Every year this temple attracts hundreds of elderly followers of Hinduism.

They arrive here to find shelter for the last several weeks of their lives, to meet death, be cremated on the banks of the river and travel their last journey with the waters of the sacred river Bagmati, which later meets the holy river Ganges. Hinduists from every corner of Nepal and India are arriving here to die.

It is believed that those who die in Pashupatinath Temple are reborn as a human, regardless of any misconduct that could worsen their karma. The exact day of their death is predicted by astrologers of the temple. Here the spirit of death can be felt. It is a temple with special atmosphere of death; death is present in almost every ritual and every corner of it.



Along the right bank of Bagmati numerous platforms for funeral pyres are built. The cremations on these platforms are a common activity.

Another cultural shock for Westerners in Pashupatinath is the image of local women washing clothes downstream the river. The waters of Bagmati contain animal fat because of the ashes of cremated Shiva followers and easily wash the dirt from linen. It is believed that this is how the soap was invented.

As far as Shiva is considered the patron of animals and all living organisms, monkeys and deers are wandering all around the temple complex on both banks of Bagmati.

It is also very common to meet sadhus in Pashupatinath. Sadhus are wandering ascetic yogis, who are trying to acquire liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth by meditating. They have very unique appearance with specific yellow paintings on their bodies.

We meet these holy men who live their lives away from everyday societies.

They shun all home comforts for a life of asceticism inside caves, forests and temples.

They have faces covered in ash and paint they never cut hairs.

