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On a Chinese television stage, a Nepali man stood before an audience and sang a song that many viewers knew by heart. The language was Mandarin, the song was *Yi Jian Mei*, and the performer had once worked as a tour guide in Bhaktapur. For Sandesh Singh Deuja, the moment represented an improbable turn in a life redirected by disaster.

His story began far from China’s entertainment industry. In Nepal, he had guided visitors through a country whose mountains, temples and heritage sites support countless livelihoods. In 2015, a devastating earthquake struck, damaging homes, historic

landmarks and the tourism economy. Deuja was among the workers whose prospects were shaken. What followed was not a straightforward pursuit of fame. It was a decision to learn a new language, which eventually brought him to Shanghai and onto Chinese national television.

A guide facing an uncertain future

Before leaving Nepal, Deuja worked as an English-speaking tourist guide. His connection to visitors from abroad gave him a practical understanding of how much language matters: it can decide whether a traveller experiences a place as an outsider or feels welcomed into it.

The 2015 earthquake changed the calculation. Tourism was among the sectors badly affected, and Deuja lost work. Later accounts from Shanghai International Studies University, where he would study, describe a young man looking for another path at a moment when the career he knew had become unreliable.

China was not an entirely unfamiliar idea. In a 2019 account published by *Xinmin Weekly*, Deuja recalled an early interest in Chinese films and songs. He had also encountered Chinese visitors during his time in tourism. Learning their language therefore offered both a practical possibility and a route into a culture that already interested him.

Three months that changed his direction

Deuja began studying Mandarin in Kathmandu in 2015. According to the Shanghai municipal government's account of his career, he passed a Chinese-language proficiency examination after roughly three months and gained the chance to pursue study at Shanghai International Studies University, or SISU. A 2019 Chinese magazine report describes his subsequent study opportunity as part of a South Asian scholarship programme.

Moving to Shanghai demanded more than mastering vocabulary. China offered a new social environment, unfamiliar routines and an international university campus where students from many countries met. Deuja had to learn not only what people said but the cultural references that gave their words meaning.

He took a guitar with him. University accounts describe how he played and sang in his dormitory, initially performing Nepali music. Friends encouraged him to try Chinese songs, including those associated with singer Fei Yuqing. He began practising and expanding his repertoire.

The song that opened a larger stage

In 2017, Deuja entered an international student singing competition at SISU. His choice was *Yi Jian Mei*, a well-known Chinese song closely associated with Fei Yuqing. He won first place.

The victory made him recognisable beyond the campus. According to university and Shanghai government reports, audiences began calling him the “Nepali Brother”, a nickname that reflected both his nationality and the familiarity he had built with Chinese listeners. The label travelled with his growing public appearances.

A university singing contest is not the same as a television career. But it provided a bridge between them. His performance drew attention from broadcasters, and Deuja subsequently appeared on programmes including Dragon TV’s *Chang Xiang Zhong Hua* and CCTV-4’s *Zhong Hua Qing*. The Shanghai government also reported a later appearance on CCTV-3’s *Avenue of Stars*.

For audiences, there was an appealing contrast: a singer visibly rooted in Nepal performing a Chinese standard with confidence. A 2017 Nepali interview described his television performance attracting attention from viewers and judges. But the more substantial achievement was not novelty alone. He had invested in understanding the language and repertoire well enough to be welcomed into public cultural spaces.

It would be an exaggeration to say a television appearance made him a mainstream music star throughout China. The available reporting does not establish that. It does establish something unusual: a former Nepali guide had found an audience on some of China’s best-known broadcast platforms.

Not only singing, but explaining

During his television appearances, Deuja described his ambition to encourage cultural exchange between Nepal and China. The goal fitted his earlier work in tourism. A guide interprets one place for visitors; a bilingual performer can interpret aspects of two cultures for people who may never travel between them.

In a 2019 interview cited by *Xinmin Weekly*, he discussed the possibility of building a tourism business connecting Nepal and China. He spoke of the beauty of both countries and the value of helping their people experience one another’s landscapes and cultures. The report documented an ambition, not the completion of such a venture.

Life beyond the television appearance

Deuja graduated from SISU’s Chinese International Education programme in 2020. His story did not end with a diploma or his earlier success onstage. The university and Shanghai government describe a later turn towards social media, where short videos allowed him to explore ordinary experiences rather than depend on television producers and competition organisers.

The subjects ranged widely. Accounts of his work mention Nepali rice planting, lessons in Chinese New Year greetings, and everyday rural life in Wuhu, Anhui province. They were not the grand symbols usually associated with bilateral friendship. They

were smaller scenes: how people farm, speak, celebrate and organise their days.

This shift is significant. Singing a familiar song gives an audience a reason to notice the performer. Showing ordinary life gives that audience a reason to stay. It also requires a different skill: the ability to identify which details one community takes for granted but another may find interesting.

By June 2024, SISU and the Shanghai government reported that Deuja had attracted millions of followers across online platforms. That was an aggregate claim from the institutions’ reporting at the time, not an independently verified count for October 2026. It nevertheless suggests that the audience for his cross-cultural material grew well beyond the university.

The opportunity—and the limits—of an online identity

Yet such labels come with a cost. A personality seen as representative of a country may be expected to speak for it, even when no individual can reflect the experiences of millions. A creator’s positive experiences of another society may be genuine without providing a complete picture of its social or political realities.

His story also complicates a familiar Nepali conversation about leaving home. Migration is often described in terms of lost talent, wages or remittances. Those concerns are real, but they cannot account for every life lived abroad. Some Nepalis build careers by becoming interpreters between societies: not necessarily professional translators, but people who understand the habits, humour and aspirations of more than one community.

A different meaning of success abroad

For young Nepalis considering study or work overseas, Deuja’s experience offers neither a formula nor a promise. Mandarin lessons do not automatically lead to a scholarship. A talent contest does not guarantee media attention. And follower counts, even when large, reveal little about the stability of a career.

What his record does demonstrate is the cumulative value of transferable skills. Tourism gave him experience speaking across cultural boundaries. Studying Chinese expanded the people he could communicate with. Music created an introduction. Television amplified it. Social platforms allowed him to reach audiences directly.

Each stage depended partly on circumstances beyond his control, from the shock of the earthquake to the interest of fellow students and broadcasters. But each also drew on a decision to keep learning after his original livelihood was disrupted.

The latest substantial institutional profiles reviewed for this article date to June 2024. They do not establish exactly where Deuja lives, what he is doing professionally, or how many followers he has in October 2026. His documented achievements are enough without turning those uncertainties into new claims.

In the end, the striking image is still that of a Nepali man singing a Chinese song before a Chinese audience. Yet the performance matters because of everything behind it: Bhaktapur’s tourism economy, a devastating earthquake, the discipline of language study, a guitar in a Shanghai dormitory and the gradual discovery that familiarity can travel in both directions.

Deuja’s journey is not simply the tale of someone who found success abroad. It is a reminder that the distance between two countries can sometimes be narrowed, for a few minutes, by someone who has learned how to speak—and sing—to both.

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