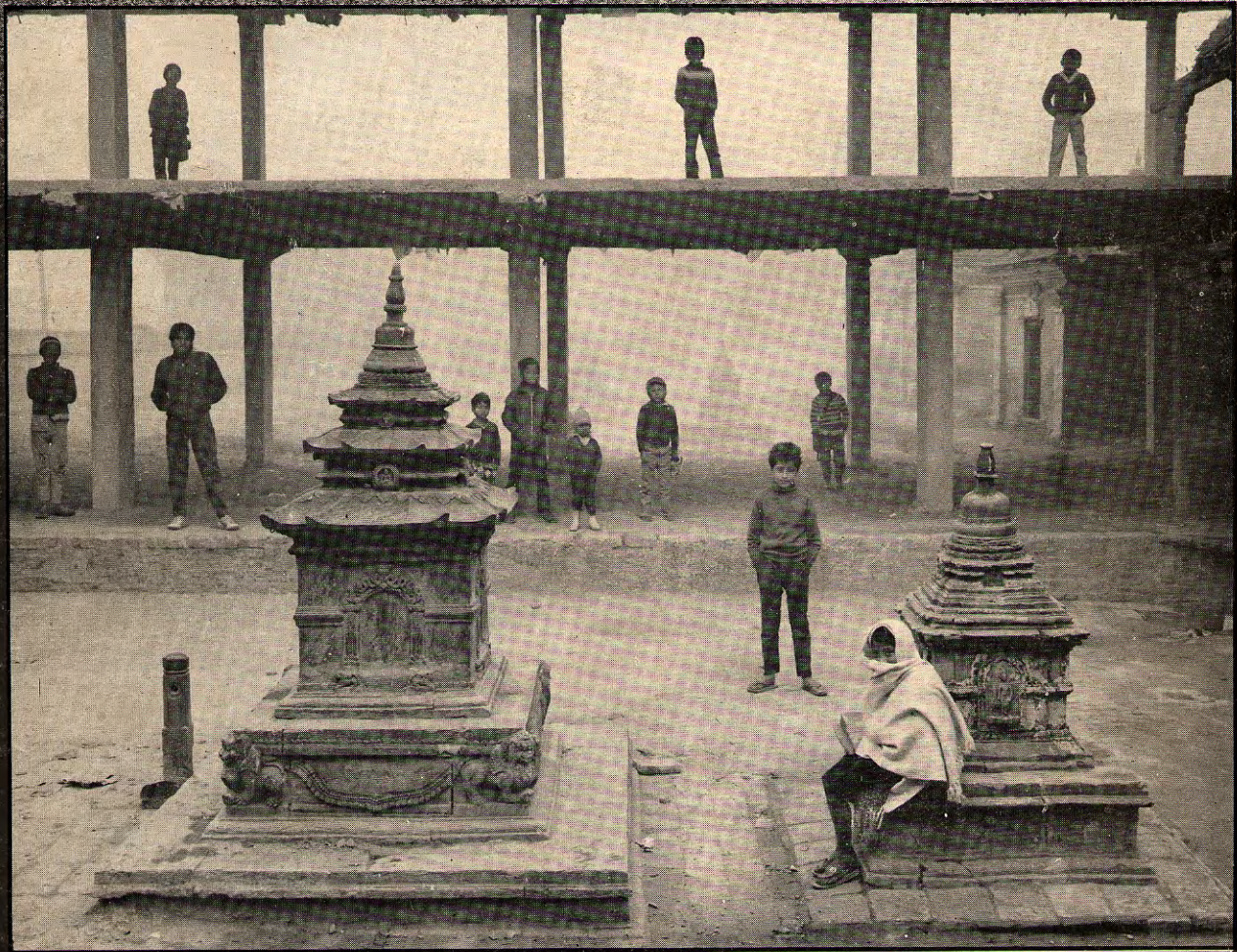


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ISSN 1012-9804
MAY/JUNE 1990

HIMAL

FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT



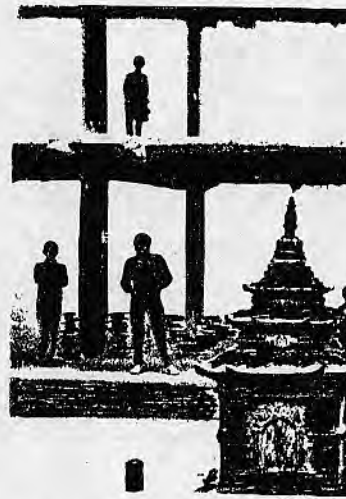
A Nepali Interregnum

DEMOCRACY,
DEVELOPMENT
FIVE TIBETS

GREEN FACADE
SPIRIT OF ANDES
CYNICALLY YOURS

COVER

- 3 Tryst with Democracy
- 7 What is *Bahuda*?
- 8 Businessman's Responsibility
- 9 Durbaria Legacy
- 10 A People-Oriented Proposal
- 11 Learn from Grameen
- 12 Populism, at Last



- 13 Waiting for Robin Hood
- 15 Development Bottleneck
- 17 40 Million Nepalis
- 18 Politics of Nepali Art
- 21 Environmental Agenda
- 22 Call This Education?
- 24 A Right to Develop

FEATURES

- 38 Under the Green Cover
- 39 Reviving the Panchayat
- 40 Spirit of the Andes



DEPARTMENTS

- 25 On The Way Up
- 26 Voices
- 29 Reviews
 - Among Tamangs
 - Shangri-La Myth
- 32 Abstracts
- 35 Briefs
- 44 Abominably Yours

Cover picture by **Kevin Bubriski**: Children pause from play at Ee Bahal, Patan, Nepal.

Himal (ISSN 1012-9804) is published every two months by Himal Associates, PO Box 42, Lalitpur, Nepal. Tel: 523 845. Copyright 1988. Turn to page 43 for subscription information.

HIMAL

Vol. 3 No. 2 May/June 1990

अस्त्युत्तरस्यां दिशी देवतात्मा
हिमालयो नाम नगाधिराजः
पूर्वापरौ तोयनिधी वगाह्य
स्थितः पृथिव्या इव मानदण्ड

*The Abode of Gods, King of
Mountains, Himalaya
You bound the oceans from
east to west
A northern yardstick
To measure the Earth
- Kalidasa (Kumara Sambhava)*

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Kunda

MAIL

WE ARE ALL CARPETBAGGERS

I would like to offer a counterpoint and some additional thoughts on the article, "Carpetbaggers" (*Himal*, Jan/Feb 1990). Some of these thoughts apply to the companion pieces, "The Himalayan Image" and "Whose Shangri-La Is It, Anyway?"



It is easy to blame foreign photographers and novelists for capitalising on the attractiveness of the Himalaya. But articles in *National Geographic*, *Geo* and other wide-circulation popular publications, I think you would agree, have been instrumental in enlightening the world to the depth, the beauty, the fragility and the sacredness of Nepal and the Himalaya. "Himalayan exocitism" may indeed be Nepal's biggest economic commodity, and the growth of tourism has been the result. But can we begrudge Nepal this relatively low-impact source of income? Perhaps factories or extractive industries would be preferable as money-earners?

Most of the coffee-table book writers and photographers I know have maintained close ties to Nepal, returning to participate in what brought them here in the first place: the culture and the natural beauty. There are some exceptions, those who take photos and notes, to

publish and never to return -- but have they too not provided some service to the country?

Ironically, perhaps carried away by a romantic image of the Himalaya, many journalists, overnight experts, and even critical observers often miss the forest for the trees. In the United States, if you mention the socio-environmental situation of Nepal to someone who has never been here, a not uncommon response can be heard: "Yes, I hear they have a very serious problem with litter at Everest Base Camp." This is indeed a testament to a kind of touristic sensationalism: litter and garbage, in disturbing, unromantic contrast to the romantic magnificence of the Himalaya. Is this a priority issue, or any issue at all, to the country of Nepal? What about the impact of over 200 army soldiers posted in Sagarmatha National Park on the area's natural resource base? What about the environmental impact and financial burden of large hydro schemes throughout the Himalaya? What about the insidious socio-cultural impact of cinema and video, Coca-Cola, cement boxes replacing traditional architecture, and the loss of wildlife habitat?

While I don't begrudge these influences as necessarily negative, I likewise do not believe that the "carpetbaggers" have a negative impact, and their influence is certainly not as pervasive. The "carpetbaggers" have joined the handful of pioneers who are waging a campaign to save the traditional cultures and natural environments. The romanticism that is criticised in the Jan/Feb issue of *Himal* may be misdirected or based on superficial characteristics, but I believe it provides a net positive benefit.

Some of these issues concerning development and the environment are political issues, and I hope that under a government in transition your magazine can take a definable stance and perhaps play a role in influencing policy, rather than railing at symptoms.

Broughton Coburn
Kathmandu

TAMARIND AND PLUM

I recently received my first copy of *Himal* (Jan/Feb 1990) and enjoyed it, apart from finding the advertisement on page 33 distasteful in its snide use of the term "environment". Such mistakes should be seriously avoided by an environmentally conscious journal such as yours. Also, I missed details regarding Earth Day 1990.

I send you some seeds of Tamarind and Plum, in token of love and peace from India. Please let us keep in touch.

Bulu Imam
Hazaribagh, Bihar

THIRUKURALIAN ECOLOGY

I read with interest about Chipko poet Ghanshyam Raturi Sailani, (Nov/Dec 1989) who was selected to represent India at Bangkok's International Festival of Songs dedicated to ecological awareness.

Why do you not also publish from our ancient scriptures which show equal ecological awareness? Even Sri Sailani might not be aware of our ancestors' great vision of ecology, abundant in Sanskrit and Tamil scriptures. Take, for example, the ancient Tamil scripture, *Thirukural* (1330 couplets of two lines each), whose verse 742 says, "crystal clear spring, fertile soil, mountains and dense forest constitute defence (for a country)." As you don't have any English translation of *Thirukural*, I shall send you one. I suggest that verse 742 be taken as the motto of *Himal* and be published in each issue in the front page, or above the editorial column.

C.J. Vairavan,
Madras

SQUIRMING OVER MR. RAJA

In the four years that *Mr. Raja's Neighbourhood* has been in print, it has been reviewed numerous times. There have been good reviews and bad reviews, and that's fine. No writer expects to appeal to everyone. But no one has ever misread *Mr. Raja* as glancingly

(or derisively!) as Michael Yaeger (Jan/Feb 1990).

Calling my book "insulting to and condescending about" Nepali culture is so outrageous a statement that it begs a question. One wonders if Yaeger is one of those tiresome Westerners who think they "own" Nepal, and who take almost personal offense when someone tries to decipher his own experience in an unconventional way.

Mr. Raja was not written as a cultural primer. It is an account of the always amazing and sometimes painful seduction that occurs when a searching Western mind finds (and is found by) the East. On a personal level, it is about the inner struggle I waged while trying to meet my obsessive Western goals in a land where other values -- superior ones, I often discovered -- held sway.

Yaeger condemns my book for "pseudo intellectualizations and self indulgent pronouncements." These observations are better applied to his own pretentious review. Toward this end, as Yaeger squirms with discomfort at my occasional sexual references and exhumers (twice!) the tired ghost of Freud, one realizes that he has simply used my efforts as a soapbox from which to vent his own peculiar frustrations.

Mr. Raja is an edgy and intimate communication which would never, could never, reach anyone. Either you get it or you don't. Yaeger didn't get it; and one can't help but feel a sense of embarrassment at how loudly he trumpets that fact.

Jeff Greenwald
Berkeley
California, USA

PRIVILEGE BY ASSOCIATION

In your Nov/Dec 1989 issue, "Abominably Yours" elaborates an intriguing and successful comparison of Sherpas and mountaineering with diplomats and super-power summitry. I believe, however, that the charge of cultural imperialism is misdirected. The members of the press corps, who coined the image to describe the labours of diplomats preparing their leaders for the summits, were following a long-established American journalistic practice of simultaneously exercising the vitality of the English language and their constitutional First Amendment right of free speech. Certainly no slur against Sherpas could have been intended.

There is an alternative interpretation. As a member of the United States Foreign Service, I find the Sherpa-diplomat comparison a source of pride by association. Perhaps when diplomats, like Sherpas, work out of the

limelight, the un-informed tend to think of them as marginally important "porters" or "bag handlers". But, be the summits geo-political or geological, those in the know know that successful expeditions depend equally on their Sherpas and their diplomats.

I for one hope that the Sherpas will take pride in the acknowledgement they have received. After all, it must be very rare for members of an ethnic group from a remote albeit very special portion of the earth to be the subjects of even metaphorical recognition on the world stage. More importantly, the true value of the comparison derives from the exceptional qualities that Sherpas represent: understanding, skill, courage, and endurance under extremely challenging circumstances. These are qualities that all professional diplomats can identify with and aspire to.

Todd R. Greentree
Washington, D.C.
USA

PORTER TAX

Just before leaving Kathmandu after a very beautiful and educational trip to the Annapurna Base Camp, we had the good fortune to come across *Himal*, your highly interesting and thought-provoking publication.

Among others, we enjoyed "Abominably Yours" in which the writer attends a seminar on "The Socio-Economics of Portering" (Jan/Feb 1990). We agree with much of what he says. After having seen trekkers lugging their high-tech rucksacks through work-starving communities of potential local porters, we feel that a law should be implemented whereby each trekker should be accompanied by at least one porter/guide. Special taxes should be levied on trekkers who decide to go it alone. This tax should be collected at each checkpoint and should go directly to the respective community. The fund could be used to create health insurance and pension for old porters. All this should be administered at the local level without much bureaucracy.

Why not let this dream become reality? We love Nepal.

Carmen & Oscar Weder
Connecticut, USA

TOILET TRAINING

I have heard major trekking routes in Nepal referred to as "toilet paper trails". It would be worth considering that some trekkers, finding themselves in an environment very different than they are used to, just don't know how to dispose of their waste in the Himalaya. Many visitors from industrialised countries know



only flush toilets and toilet paper, which is disposed of in the toilet too. They may not know any other system.

It would help a lot if the owners of shops, restaurants and hotels serving trekkers provided refuse containers, such as empty oil tins, at convenient locations. At or near such places, there should also be a toilet hut, clearly marked in the local language and in English, which appears to be the "lingua franca" of trekkers. Finally, a sheet of paper outlining proper behaviour in this respect could be issued with each trekking permit. The problem arises partly through ignorance of the local culture, and educational material would help solve it.

Norman Thyer,
Canada

PIPAL'S CHOICE

In the article on development in Lumbini, (Jan/Feb 1990) mention is made of a "pipal" tree root problem in Mayadevi temple. The scientific name given for pipal, *populus deltoides*, is wrong. It should be *Ficus bengalensis*. *Populus deltoides*, an exotic variety, is called *lahare pipal* in Nepal. It is amusing to watch non-foresters try to give an air of scientific authority by using Latin names more to impress than to enlighten. I am reminded of an American anthropologist who searched for all kinds of etymological roots for "saligram", the fossil pebble found in the Muktinath region. Actually, *saligram* means "pine village". *Saligram* pebbles were originally found near a patch of *salla* trees (*pinus walliachiana*).

Amulya R. Tuladhar
Silviculture and Forest Biology Dept.
Institute of Forestry, Pokhara

We invite readers to comment, criticise or add to information appearing in this magazine. Letters should be short and to the point, and are subject to editing.
Send mail to: PO Box 42, Lalitpur, Nepal

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: PAGE 42

Tryst with Democracy

by Dipak Gyawali

The spring of 1990 was witness to a mammoth democratic upsurge in Nepal. A historical divide was reached, which will separate all events that went before from those that come after. In making this division, history will judge all without mercy - actors and episodes, politicians and the wisdom of their choices - and separate them into heroes and villains.

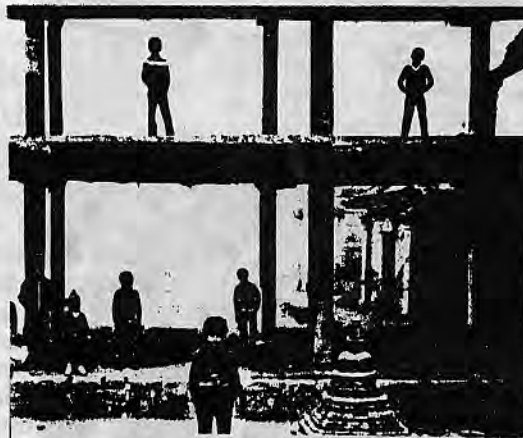
Those now entrusted with writing the new chapter will be judged most severely, for the principles they espouse and their acts of commission or omission will encode the genetic pattern of the country's future development. Whether Nepalis live better in the decades ahead will depend upon those who will fashion the new polity.

By sidelining the Panchayat system, the people have stated what they *don't want*. Like their Eastern European contemporaries, they rejected a political system with a philosophy and culture that failed to meet their aspirations.

However, Nepalis have not yet been able to articulate what it is that they *want*. Long fed a bland diet of Panchayat monism, they are now faced with an over-sumptuous choice of pluralism. Peddlers from the far left to the extreme right have surfaced, hawking new brews of factionalism, pseudo-nationalism, religious fundamentalism and ethnic exclusivism. Old ideas and concepts, which have been stagnant for 30 years in the absence of stimulating exchange and dialogue, are suddenly facing the stress of evolution.

DEAD-END POLITICS

One cannot understand today's developmental dead-end nor the forces of change that buffet the society without studying the early days of the Nepali nation-state. Almost since its founding in 1769, obsessed with the virus of cultural paranoia, the rulers have followed a policy of retreat and isolation. They adopted an orthodox version of Hinduism which promoted cultural passivity and prevented the entry of reformist movements from the sub-continent. The nation-state was unprepared to meet the challenges of an aggressive and intrusive Western civilisation. Jung Bahadur, the *shogun* who usurped power in 1846, took the practice of xenophobia to its logical conclusion by sealing the kingdom to all outside influence.



The 1951 revolution which overthrew the Rana dynasty was the first social manifestation of Nepalis' will to modernise. Its success was due to the coming together of three forces. The king in his royal palace, imprisoned in a gilded cage for a century, wanted the usurpers out. The modernisers, including the Nepali Congress, some democratically inclined factions, as well as a nascent communist movement, saw in the Ranas everything backward that had to go. The third force, Jawaharlal Nehru's Indian government, regarded the Ranas as colonialist collaborators and was more than happy to assist in their fall.

The marriage of incompatibles -- at least between the palace and the modernisers -- fell apart before long. Traditional orthodoxy and well-entrenched feudal forces felt threatened by progressive economic and social measures such as abolition of feudal land rights initiated by the first popularly elected Nepali Congress government in 1957. They rallied behind an ambitious royal palace in 1960 to abolish multi-party parliamentary democracy, ban all political parties and institute an absolute monarchy behind a facade of "indigenous democracy". The new political order wore the armour of religion, tradition and nationalism.

Democratic India, more alarmed by Chinese presence north of the Himalaya than with the strangling of democracy in a backward neighbour, chose to align itself with the royal palace against the country's modernisers in the name of stability. The rest of the world followed the Indian lead.

International perception of Nepal as a stable Shangri-La provided the Panchayat system with two decades of crucial support till 1979.

By then, internal pressure for change had built enough steam to force the king into holding a national plebiscite, which the Panchayat system won by a thin majority. The promise to institute "timely reforms" in the Panchayat was not kept. During the 1980s, the system was given another reprieve by the rise of Reagan-Thatcherite governments in the West to whom any regime which claimed anti-left credentials was eligible for unstinted support.

STABLE BUT STAGNANT

The stability perceived by outsiders was actually stagnation. Every country has to make its own mistakes, and modern-day Nepal's mistake was the Panchayat, which was obsessed with form over substance. For all the talk of democracy and development, Nepalis tasted neither. Over the years, many intellectual and moral compromises were made by tens of thousands of professionals, which drained the society intellectual vigour. The loss of creativity and self-respect is one of the most debilitating legacies of the Panchayat.

Lack of political democracy ultimately results in economic under-development. Autocratic rule can lead to some economic growth but not to broad-based development, especially in a country whose political economy is rooted in feudalism.

What was called "development" was the "bribery" of village and town elite with projects and funds, and promises not to disturb the status quo. Absent from the Panchayati horizon was development which mobilised the inherent genius of a people, their labour and capital for uplifting change.

The main achievement of Panchayat-style development was the establishment of addictive dependence on foreign aid. Nepal specialised in harvesting money from all givers big and small: hard loans and soft loans, grants and gifts; aid from resource-rich Canada and basket-case Bangladesh, from proselytising missionaries, multilateral banks and socialist-minded voluntary groups.

To list some of their unpardonable sins, the Panchayat authorities padded the bureaucracy with under-worked civil servants; maintained public sector monopolies that bled the exchequer; ran a health service which scorned



Juddha would have been displeased: celebrants in downtown Kathmandu.

preventive health; coddled a tourism sector that returned profits abroad or to a privileged handful in Kathmandu; pampered "industrialists" with facilities while industries stagnated; cheated the country's youth of education; devastated the environment with misguided *diktat*; failed to understand the very concept of economic planning; maintained the press on government dole; and replaced honest trade and capital accumulation with state-sponsored smuggling which ruined the national image.

While mis-managing the modern sector, Panchayat politics also managed to ignore the cultural components of development and therefore failed to motivate all the people. Nepal's ethnic diversity was the stuff for tourism brochures, otherwise to be ignored. The Panchayat handlers steered clear of grassroots issues and saved themselves a major headache. Whenever an issue proved "divisive", it was swept under the carpet, there to fester.

Extra-constitutional sources of authority mushroomed. A Social Service National Coordination Council was formed. Rather than coordinate social service, it had its hand in the donor's pocket and its eyes peeled for "unacceptable" social work. The infamous National Sports Council acted as a super-Ministry of Home Affairs with a special unit for producing karate-trained goon squads. The Royal Nepal Army was well-trained but utterly wasted for want of an enemy. The Panchayat *status-quo* never dared question the Army's role in a poverty-stricken "peace zone" between two billion nuclear-powered Chinese and Indians.

Because it was unable to hold its "leaders" accountable and answerable, because it did not in truth support the economic rights of all the people, and because decentralisation and power-sharing were just words to be used at "aid-Nepal" consortia, the Panchayat structure came in-built with a time-bomb of instability. The structure was a make-do contraption built to extend traditional rule a few decades longer, nothing more. Ultimately, the system was unable to come to terms with modernisation and rising aspirations.

CREEPING MODERNISATION

Modernisation is re-examining traditional practices, assimilating efficient and positive features of Western values, and making available alternative ladders of upward mobility to the traditionally under-privileged.

Despite itself, the system was unable to halt the process of modernisation. The forces of modern change, good or bad, are rarely stoppable. Modernisation brings with it the fruits of science and technology which have a seductive charm for the hewers of wood and drawers of water. The desire for modern education, modern lifestyles, and "modern" human rights in the end overpowers political systems that cannot deliver.

If only to produce the technical hands to run a country in the 20th century, to run power plants, hospitals and airlines, schools had to be set up and Nepalis sent abroad on scholarships. If only to utilise foreign aid that came in, highways and television stations had to be built. In-

evitably, the country produced doctors, engineers, lawyers, scholar, civil servants and journalists. Teachers and students infected with new ideas began to populate the Nepali hinterland.

The whole population was being exposed to outside influence - *lahurays* returning from stints in the Indian and British armies and United Nations peace-keeping forces; seasonal migrants with a taste of India's cantankerous democracy; and international volunteers and foreign trekkers who arrived in the village. With these influences, and the ubiquitous short-wave radio receivers, rural Nepal was rich in information like never before.

The last decade saw the proliferation of more "decentralising artifacts" like television dish antennas and computers. One of the best modern digital systems in South Asia made Nepal's telephone and fax machines even more vital communication tools. The country's draconian press laws proved powerless against these alternative sources of information. Highways, while they might be ecological or economic failures, became cross-pollinators of political ideas across Nepal.

CRIMES IN STATECRAFT

To be kind, the Panchayat did not understand the very forces it had helped unleash. Lacking the ability to understand or provide for the rising aspirations, it plodded on as if it were business as usual, hoping to hold out for a little longer and then some. Somewhere along the way, probably towards the early 1970s, what little concern the Panchayat polity had for the country's development was jettisoned. Then it was each one to himself or herself.

The politicians and the Praetorean guards of the royal palace institutionalised corruption to an unprecedented degree. In-fighting frequently broke out among Panchayat proteges, ostensibly for larger shares of the booty doled out by foreign aid projects. The system became a factory producing an unending stream of scandals -- the "carpet scandal" in 1978, the "billion dollar loan scandal" of 1984, the arrest of police chiefs and legislators for drug smuggling in 1988, *ad nauseam*.

Departing temporarily from past practice, *Himal* presents as its cover feature not reportage but a series of viewpoint articles on Nepali society as it looks to the future. The articles represent the writers' views and not necessarily those of the institutions with which they may be affiliated.



Nepali intifada, 7 Falgun 2047.

These and other crimes in statecraft were bound to lead to a punishing finale. Increasingly remote from its own people, the ruling coterie also began to lose its grasp on international diplomacy. The downfall began in July 1988, when the royal palace imported a large consignment of arms from China, possibly to test the limits of a secret protocol it had entered into with India in 1965 (which restricted Nepal's options to purchase arms from third countries). India was not pleased. A few months later, Nepal increased tariff on Indian goods in a well-meaning but misguided attempt to free Nepal from the grasp of the Indian market.

India, under its own regional imperial illusions, decided to "teach Nepal a lesson and show where its interests lie." It let lapse bilateral trade and transit arrangements which led to tremendous hardships for Nepal, making it ripe for political upheaval. Neither country was clean in the stand-off, but it was the Panchayat system that lost.

Meanwhile, because the Panchayat system had been resisting demands for reform and pursuing a "hard-line" policy against internal dissent. It failed to muster domestic support for itself by whipping up an anti-Indian frenzy. Rather than rope in the national opposition to meet the Indian challenge, the palace, in a fit of hubris, dug in its heels. This left the Nepali Congress and the communists free to agitate. They joined forces, and the Movement to Restore Democracy took to the streets on 18 February.

The 50-day agitation finally brought Nepal out of the woodwork. The system had lost what legitimacy it had, and even writers and poets, doctors, engineers, teachers and civil servants added to the chorus of dissent. The people of

Patan dug trenches and set up barricades, practically declaring their town a People's Commune.

Heavy-handed repression against unarmed demonstrators, the indiscriminate use of dum-dum bullets, torture, and large-scale human rights violations evoked revulsion. Nothing could now prop up the tottering Panchayat super-structure. April 9 saw the largest demonstration of people power in Nepal. And blood flowed on Durbar Marg. The king was forced to lift the ban on political parties and allow a caretaker party government to take over. A commission was formed to recommend a new constitutional dispensation.

A TENSE INTERREGNUM

Theoretically, the people have got what they wanted, but they remain tense and suspicious. The interim government struggles from crisis to crisis, unable to lead with vision and statesmanship. Transparency in statecraft has not emerged, either at party headquarters or in the royal palace. News reports hint at conspiracies to restore the Panchayat *status quo*. The motives of all and sundry are suspect. It is within this climate of distrust, amazingly, that a new order is being defined which will determine the future of Nepal.

The essence of the interregnum in Nepal today is the painful process of adjustment that everyone is having to make - the people, the political parties, aid agencies and the feudal forces.

For the people of Nepal, the euphoria of the early days of democracy has subsided into a more sober and mature attitude towards politics. While democracy may not bring utopia and might require nerves of steel to withstand, it brings with it that indisputable gift of hope. In March they had long since lost hope. In April, they began once again to hope.

After being catapulted from house arrest to ministerial mansions, the Nepali Congress and communist stalwarts have to learn to advocate the positive politics of performance instead of the negative one of criticism that they have been used to.

Having advocated a constitutional monarchy, the Nepali Congress has to perform the trickiest task of strengthening the kingship as an institution for national cohesiveness and



Lost Innocence: victims of public lynching.

Gopal Chitrakar



G Chitrakar

Against one's own: debut of armoured personnel carriers.

development, while at the same time weakening the capricious powers of the incumbent.

The leftists are also in a quandary, finally caught between an ideology that knows no compromise and a reality that refuses to fit theories. How can they be as effective above ground in an open democratic polity as they were during their underground struggle? The upheavals in the international communist movement with the clashing theologies of Gobachev vs. Ligachev or Deng vs. Mao forces them to go back to Marx and reassess their basic theoretical premises. It is the end of a comfortable era for them when they could go to bed with conviction that whatever tomorrow's sunrise may bring, their ideology would have a ready-made cut-and-dried answer.

The international community in Nepal also presents a sorry figure in the process of painful adjustment. Having misread Hindu philosophy which unequivocally says "Aham Bramhasmi Tat Twam Asi" ("I am God and you are That too!") and the Hindu psychological concept of *ojhas* (psychic energy, which all outstanding captains among men are said to possess), it imposed a Judaeo-Christian misinterpretation and assigned a divine status on the king. Having barely recovered from the shock of seeing how devotees can revolt against a god, the diplomatic and aid community finds itself before a set of popular politicians with a mind of their own regarding what development is or should be. Gone are the days when a palace secretary's giving the nod could sanction a development project. Now comes the time of

pork-barrel politics, voter pressure and interest groups. Many pet projects pushed by donor agencies now find themselves objects of drastic revamping. Conducted with honesty and goodwill, this process may be a good thing to set Nepal's development on the right track.

Having fought a reactionary battle for the last 30 years, the feudal forces of Nepal must be made to realise that the cost of preserving an old order is all-round doom and despair. By preventing a people from having access to alternative ladders for upward mobility and by using the institution of monarchy as the weapon to hold on to their personal privilege and status, they will only guarantee a full-scale upheaval in the future. At that time, all will be lost.

The feudal forces must understand that there is no going back. To put it metaphorically, the people's movement succeeded in making a political omelette. It is not now possible to recreate the Panchayati egg. The adjustment the feudal forces have to make is to transform themselves from consumptive drones to productive citizens. They *must* become the national capitalists and industrialists of tomorrow.

The Nepali public now awaits the political parties to show their hand. Are they prepared

at the nigh end of the 20th. century to prove that a multi-party democracy can function in Nepal. Or will they allow this moment of hope regress tragically back to cynicism? The public hopes that a more representative government under a multi-party democracy will ultimately deliver a better standard of life. Representative government must tackle the so-called development issues of a deteriorating resource base, population pressure, increasing poverty, and an economy that refuses to get up and trot.

But there are days of uncertainty ahead before the country will set course on a new developmental strategy. The present interim government does not have the mandate nor the *de jure* power to carry out earth-shaking reforms. As for the work of the constitutional "recommendation" commission, a series of constitutional crises loom ahead, including the mechanism to transfer sovereignty from the king to the people, and what procedure to follow in ratifying the new document. Party leaders and cadres are pussy-footing around issues of ethnicity and religion with an eye on the upcoming elections. The Army, the police and even the civil service do not know clearly which are the masters that they serve.

The long-suffering people of Nepal, cheated of development by their own past, now hope for a better deal from the future. The king and the national political parties are the trustees to whom this hope has been entrusted. The burden on the king is to try to be less divine and to restore trust in the monarchy as an institution capable of self-sacrifice for the larger good of the nation. The parties, for their part, need to rise above petty factional interests to a level of statesmanship that ecumenically embraces all Nepalis. Then only will the country's future and its development beckon with hope rather than frighten with uncertainty. △

Dipak Gyawali is a resource economist who works in Kathmandu.

A seven-year-old gets what she wanted.

There was a big fight in Nepal, a helicopter ~~was flying~~ thru ter gas, now we got what we wanted!

please write back ♡

"Bahudal Byabastha" Interpreted

The villagers of a rural district in of East Nepal have their own interpretations of what the multi-party system of government (bahudal byabastha) is and is not.

by Jamison Ervin

After the April proclamation which announced the multi-party system, hundreds of thousands celebrated on urban streets. In rural Nepal, far from the political centre of Kathmandu, the celebration was more subdued, and the impact of freedom, and all its implications, more slowly digested.

Says one elderly woman, "I don't know, they say that there is a change. I don't see it, I don't know that there is any new *bahudal byabastha*."

However, even though many in the rural hinterland do not see political changes as affecting their lives, they are clearly aware that something has happened. Almost every villager has heard of *bahudal*.

BAHUDAL EQUALS FREEDOM

One common association with *bahudal byabastha* is that of freedom: of speech, action and political belief. Says one man, tentatively, two months after the proclamation, "I am just a farmer, I am a small man. I have no concern with politics. They say we have a new system. All I know is that for those who are able to speak, there is no longer fear of being arrested."

For others, freedom of speech is a more direct and tangible right. A shop-owner speculates, "...we used to have to say good about bad things, bad about good things, especially regarding money. Those who stole we called good, those who were honest we called bad. Now we can speak freely."

The freedom to act according to one's conscience is also associated with *bahudal*. A district officer complained that before *bahudal*, he was obliged to do what the powerful politicians asked him to do. "Now," he says, "I can do whatever I want. I don't have to take orders from anyone...the people are my boss."

Many, however, have their own interpretation of this freedom. A primary school teacher tells of how his students came to class recently and demanded a half-day. When he and other teachers tried to explain that the new system had nothing to do with school hours, the students retorted, "*Bahudal* is here, don't you know anything?!"

This sense of freedom, both of speech and action, has also led to a feeling of uncontrolled ability. In other words, chaos. The Chief Dis-

trict Officer of the area compares the advent of *bahudal* to the release of a dog which has been tied up for 30 years. "People don't know their limits; of course they're going to go wild if you let them go all at once. There is no control any more."

BAHUDAL EQUALS DISORDER

Many villagers see only this negative aspect of freedom. They see *bahudal* manifested in violence and vandalism, of freedom out of control, chaos, confusion and danger. Says one 70-year-old woman, "*Bahudal* means hitting people, killing people, I guess." Her husband adds, "It's like a return of *Saat Saal*, when people ransacked our farms, killed our goats, and took away what they liked."

Bahudal might be applied to any situation which is not clearly defined, as when villagers call a fight between two men "*bahudal*", or a young man with unusual clothing, or a shop owner who charges high rates.

Another aspect of this undefined freedom is the lack of rules and precedents available to police and legal officers. One officer comments, "Everything is uncertain. Now the people must decide everything by themselves. I must sit back and encourage them to take decisions...that is my job." Twenty minutes later, however, he seemed less certain. "Now there is no direction or communication with the government. I have to decide everything by myself. I just have to use my common sense." There is a clear break from the past, without a solid base for the future. He is left with only his "common sense".

REVERSAL

More than just freedom, however, *bahudal* implies a reversal: of power, of status, and of wealth. Says one carpenter, "The government has eaten hundreds of thousands of rupees...where has all the foreign aid gone? Now it's our turn." *Bahudal*, then, is change from bad to good, from corruption to honesty, from oppression to freedom.

A government officer expressed this sense of reversal, in term of his legal action. He admits, "Whatever I used to do, now I have to do the exact opposite." When a group of fifth and sixth grade students demonstrate in front of his office, he considers their demands carefully.

Before he used to simply shoo them away. "What am I supposed to do?" he asks, "All of the political prisoners, whose names we couldn't even mention until a month ago, are now ministers. Everything is backward."

One ramification of this reversal of power has been the meting of justice. Those who are perceived to have done wrong are forced to either leave the community, suffer jokes, threats, or worse. One young man says about the Chief District Officer, "Certainly he is in the wrong. Like all who have done wrong, he will meet up with *bahudal* eventually."

For some, *bahudal* means not only the punishment of wrong-doers, but an end to the insidious corruption which permeates all levels of bureaucracy. One woman remarks, "It starts at the top and goes all the way down. Someone gives me some money, I take half and give you half and give someone else half...that's what the Panchayat *byabastha* meant."

Favouritism, too, is out. *Bahudal byabastha* is seen as ending the need for "soros phoras" in finding jobs, or receiving privileges. One forestry officer comments on his new status, "The list of favourites is gone. I am at the bottom now, or I'm not even on it, or there is not even a list anymore."

HOUSEHOLD MULTI-PARTY

An example of the duality of *bahudal's* interpretation is illustrated by an incident in a village between husband, wife, mother-in-law, and two sons, aged 10 and 15. The wife sold some of her personal property and put the earnings in her own savings account, without consulting her husband. The husband, enraged, and beat his wife severely. Several days later, the woman, her mother and the two sons cornered the husband and beat him with sticks. The incident is interesting for the interpretations which it provoked.

Some villagers, outraged, gathered at a local tea shop to discuss what action to take against the woman. "It isn't right for a woman to hit her husband. And her mother-in-law, it is unthinkable. This *bahudal* has gone too far." For them, *bahudal* was the natural order turned upside down, a dangerous reversal, unrestrained freedom.

Another group, however, gathered at the woman's house. They believed the woman had acted within her legal rights, though unconventionally. For them, *bahudal* was freedom to act within one's own rights, as well as punishment of those who oppress. "It is her money. Why should she have to consult that fool?" Another added, "He has always tried to dominate her. At last, *bahudal* has caught up with him." ▽

J. Ervin works in health care in East Nepal.

Time for Business to Return the Favour

So-called Nepali industrialists accumulated ill-gotten capital during the Panchayat years. The least these businessmen can do now is to invest creatively and become real entrepreneurs and risk-takers.

by BIPPB

At the end of seven five-year plans, Nepal still lacks a development cornerstone. The people have been thoroughly exploited by government mal-administration, and the Nepali economy is today characterised by despair, disappointment and disillusionment.

There are many reasons why. A major factor has been the parasitical nature of Nepali business, which has taken benefits from the people and government without giving anything back in the form of entrepreneurial skill or daring.

During the years of Rana rule, the privileged were the capitalists owning tracts of arable land and family fortunes in gold, jewelry and mansions. This class had neither the urge nor the need to engage in entrepreneurial activity. When, together with education and travel, access to industrial activity was made available to common folk in the 1950s, infrastructure base as well as capital for true industrial development was lacking.

THE "INDUSTRIALISTS"

The main financial beneficiary of 29 years of the Panchayat was the group known earlier as businessmen and now as "industrialists". Advantage was also taken by Indian business folk lured to Nepal by breaks on excise, taxes, import duty and a non-competitive monopolistic environment, in addition to tremendous scope for general trading activities. The Panchayat period saw the accumulation of capital not through honest sweat but through illegal, corrupt or questionable means. The following procedures played vital roles in the formation of such capital.

Commission Agent Business: Small-time traders and a few Indian businessmen were quick to grab the opportunity to act as commission agents to suppliers of goods and services contracted under government procurement, or under bilateral or multilateral financing arrangements. These middlemen thrived in all sectors of development, from road-building to public utility and industrial projects. "Commission agenting", whose income is almost always hidden from the government, has been the

major provider of windfall gains to businessmen.

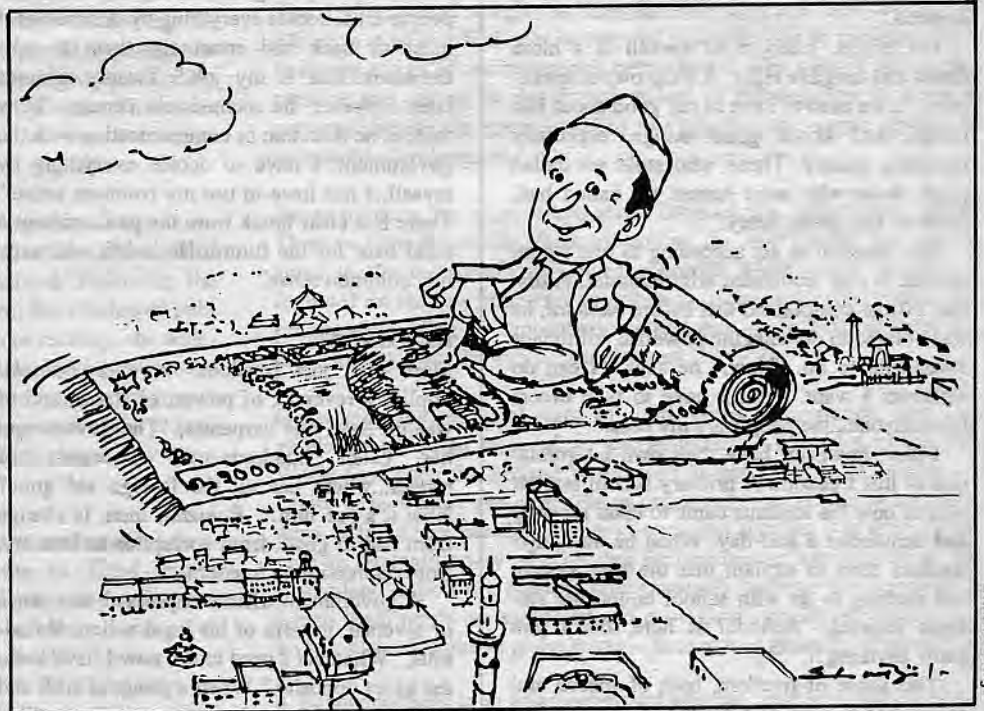
Over/under invoicing: Another money-making sleight of hand is over-invoicing the cost of imported goods such as equipment, machinery, spare parts and raw material. The difference between the true cost and inflated cost is profit, minus hush money. Such dealings are usually done with the consent of the suppliers (who may share in the profits) and the benefits are mostly held in foreign currency outside the country. When goods are exported, again with the agreement of the foreign importer, the value of goods are lowered or inflated from the real value depending on the individual situation in order to reap a tidy differential.

Trade in imported raw materials: Rather than go through the bothersome task of establishing genuine productive enterprises, "industrialists" have often been more interested in importing large quantities of raw materials and

selling them illegally to India at high profit. The concession provided by the government with regard to import duty and taxes on industrial raw materials is what attracts those with an eye for quick and illegal gains.

Inflated project cost: The cost of development projects are highly inflated not only by over-invoicing the cost of equipment and machinery, but also, with the aid of corrupt engineers, by over-reporting the cost of civil construction. The benefits are reaped by the "industrialists", while the cost and liabilities are borne by the government and financing institutions.

Assembly industries: The government had lately approved the establishment of many assembly industries in order to upgrade indigenous technology and know-how. But the only goal of the "industrialists" was to take advantage of the facilities provided by the government. The difference in cost of the imported electronic good (which is liable for full import duty, taxes) and parts of the same electronic good (reduced import duty and taxes) again went in the pocket to the assembler. The intention was to provide value-added benefit to the country. In practice, however, most of these electronic goods did not come as "knocked down" components. They arrived intact with little or no assembly work required. At the same time, the government never felt it necessary to insist that parts be produced within the country in due course.



Sharad Ranjit

Price fixing: Even those industries that did produce actual products engaged in unfair practices. For example, even though they had the capacity to provide for the country's demand for steel rods and CGI sheets, the producers colluded to produce lower quantities. As the demand rose, they had no qualms about doubling or even quadrupling profits.

Hidden profits: A mechanism was devised to divert profit from the main manufacturing company by creating sister concerns or marketing arms. Thus, the books would show the mother company always at a loss despite reasonable production, whereas the sister concerns would be making unbelievable profits. Through this ploy, the businessmen could play around with the capital that was due to the financial institutions.

With the ushering of a new era in Nepali political history the expectation of the people have skyrocketed even while the economy is at the verge of collapse. Prices have never been so high, the unemployment situation is serious, and public enterprises are practically lifeless. The task before the government in the business sphere is enormous, but it would seem that the business sector too is not without obligation, for having taken so much while giving so little.

MOMENT OF TRUTH

While amassing huge fortunes, businessmen and tradespeople always had ready answers for their failing industries and ventures: they blamed someone else for everything. First they cried, "No raw material!" When it was discovered that raw materials were available aplenty, they whined, "Where's the market?" When statistics reflected that the market too did exist, the bogey was that of high government excise, high taxes, high interest rates, high cost of utilities, and so on. With most "industrialists", these were just diversionary tactics while they did what they did best: accumulate capital through one or more of the methods listed above.

So, if one significant thing emerged out of the past decades of rank corruption and mis-directed policies, it is that capital has been accumulated in the hands of the "industrialists". In a country where legitimate sources for large profits are severely limited, the "industrialists" have done it nefariously. Can we now expect them to use this ill-gotten booty to do some good? Can the "industrialists" now be trusted to become truly entrepreneurial and to invest in honest enterprises that can contribute to steady and long-term growth of the economy? Certainly, the "industrialists" should not be allowed to operate in the traditional way any more.

These "industrialists" have now to get used to a different world in the making, where they will have to do real business. They will have to collaborate, produce, market, compete, earn, invest and re-invest. They will have to embrace the concepts of management, research and development, trained manpower, efficient utilisation of factors of production, quality control, proper pricing, and labour welfare and development.

The "industrialist" will have to begin investing in his country and its people. Nepalis are as hard-working as any other people, including those of the newly industrialised economies. Compared to the 1950s, the country now has

basic infrastructure. Access to internal and external markets is not that limited.

The main impediment is in the mind of the "industrialist", who is diffident, inexperienced in real industry, and spoilt by easy profits. As long as the government blocks the loopholes that allow him to cheat the public, he will be forced to seek legitimate avenues for profits.

There might still be hope. Nepal's underground capital might yet come to use. The lotus, after all, grows out of the muck of the swamp.

"BIPPIB" are the pen initials of a former manager of a Nepali public sector company.

The "Durbaria" Legacy

There are certain traits, characteristics, values and norms -- most appropriately encapsulated in the term "durbaria attitude" -- which have been consciously and conspicuously adopted, endorsed and emulated at all levels of Nepal's administrative machinery. It is almost as if these distorted traits and attitudes have become an intrinsic element of the Nepali national character.

The time has come to do away with the vestiges of *durbaria* culture, a remnant of our feudal past that was nurtured by the Rana feudocracy and survived unscathed during the Panchayat years. Before we banish these attitudes and expectations, it is important, firstly, to identify them clearly. They are:

- the culture of *hazoor*, implying obeisance to bosses big and small. Those who considered such groveling as alien to their indigenous culture were forced at the cost of their conscience to follow it. Others made it a principle to "hazoor" all and sundry -- bosses, colleagues, underlings -- in a bid to save face.

- the *darshan* syndrome, a holdover from the Rana predilection for borrowing from the Moghul court. This syndrome was more or less institutionalised in the Panchayat culture. Early morning visits to extra-constitutionally important personages constituted the nadir of humiliation for self-respecting civil servants, but the means to an end to many others.



- going out on *chakari*, which, as in the Rana days, implied regular *darshan* and ostentatious display of gratitude to "grace givers". The patron-servant relationship left little room for initiative or a sense of self-worth. Rejecting the system meant a brake on career progression and exclusion from powerful fraternities.

- the "hands off criticism" syndrome, which was perhaps the most debilitating of all. Open criticism was taboo. There were penalties for daring to criticise anything, from the no-party state to foreign-aided projects, one's boss, one's teacher, or one's colleagues. Only good news was endorsed and rewarded. In the absence of criticism, reality was camouflaged while creating a fairy tale of success.

- the *maathi bata* culture impelled people to perform through fear of the one "upstairs", be it the royal palace or the *hakim's* suite. There was no one to check if a *maathi bata* claim was genuine, for who would dare bell the cat? - Prabha Thacker

A People-Oriented Proposal

They may be illiterate and poor in capital, but rural Nepalis possess common sense and a heritage of traditional technology. Their abilities must be used innovatively to turn the agrarian economy around.

by Ram Chand Malhotra

If it is true that development efforts of the past four decades have bypassed Nepal's poor and disadvantaged -- the marginal farmer, poor households headed by women, and artisans -- then the issue is how to redress the imbalance. What strategy can we adopt for people-oriented, participatory development?

The single most important lesson that emerges from past experience in Nepal and elsewhere is that the people themselves will have to get involved in their own development. This is hardly a dramatic discovery, but the lesson has yet to penetrate or form the bedrock of development programmes of the government and donors. They have yet to find ways to involve the people in projects aimed at self-sustaining indigenous development.

For development to be genuinely self-sustaining, impulses and initiatives must come from within the community. Those impulses and initiatives are there, normally dormant, in every community, howsoever "underdeveloped". What is required is to identify them and nurture them with appropriate institutional and material support. This is where public sector bodies, voluntary institutions and international agencies can play their most significant role, provided they can find the right mechanisms.

A WASTING RESOURCE

Nepal's rural folks may be illiterate and poor in capital, but they do possess common sense and have a heritage of traditional technology which is normally environmentally sound. These two elements can provide the foundation for modern innovations.

Obviously, any strategy for Nepal's agrarian economy must take into account its resource endowments and constraints. The constraints are natural, technological, financial and managerial, but the one resource in which Nepal is rich is underemployed and unemployed rural woman and manpower. This surplus labour might be "unskilled", but it does possess traditional skills for digging canals, constructing bunds, reforesting, or building rural roads and schools.

Unemployed labour, like time, is a wasting resource. If unused, it is not only unproductive but acts as a drain on limited consumption goods and services, and hence a burden on households and the community at large. It is necessary to capitalise on this vast reservoir of seasonally unemployed and underemployed rural labour for productive investment.

This is, again, by no means a new concept. After all, the Pyramids and the Taj Mahal were built with *shramdaan*, so-called "voluntary labour". Voluntarism in rural areas usually turns out to have been coerced in one form or another and exploitative of the poor and underprivileged. There is generally no contribution in labour or in kind by the wealthier and more powerful members of the community, although it is they who largely benefit from the community projects.

Justice and equity would demand that those who are called upon to contribute their labour, which usually is the only capital or resource they possess, should be compensated for their contribution towards the community project. Such compensation should be, at the very least, in part in cash wages to the extent that will pay for the daily needs of their families, and the balance in some form of entitlement to essential goods or services, or a share in earnings to be generated by the community project.

This would imply that the community project constructed with voluntary labour should have access to some form of credit or working capital in order to be able to pay for part of the daily wages in cash (besides the purchase of required materials). They should also be able, upon completion, to generate revenues in order to pay for the initial credit of capital and labour (with interest and premium, in the latter case, for deferment of consumption) as well as for regular operation and maintenance over the life of the assets created.

THE RIGHT MECHANISM

One way to provide working capital or credit to locally-initiated rural development projects would be to set up a "Local Development Corporation" for the purpose, or entrust the responsibility to an existing institution such as

an agricultural development bank. The financial institution would provide credit to communities for approved projects, properly prepared and appraised, on the basis of collective liability of the community as a whole to pay the long-term loans (5 to 10 years) in the form of toll-fees or user charges to be levied on committed projects.

These fees and charges would be collected by the lending institution through its own staff or representative until payment of the loan plus interest and administrative costs have been fully realised. During project execution, the LDC representative would also handle all finances, such as part-payment of wages in cash to the local voluntary workers, with the balance to be deposited in a local bank account to earn interest from the first day of payment at the highest rate applicable to long-term deposits.

The labour certificates will be negotiable only for community services or public goods and services, for example irrigation, public transport, schools and health services, all of which also would be subject to user fees. Those public services which collect their fees in labour certificates will be able to cash them at the central bank or the authorised local bank. The cash in lieu of labour certificates will be derived out of savings of the public exchequer made possible by withdrawal of all forms of subsidies to public services, such as schools and health clinics.

The LDC will provide long-term soft loans to local communities for projects initiated and designed by them, if required with the assistance of its core group of well-qualified and experienced technical experts. However, the project will be operated by the LDC to meet its own standards and conditions for loans. It will stipulate priority areas, in conformity with the national development plan, and also make due allowances for regional variations for purposes of overall balance.

The LDC's local agent, initially appointed to handle project execution and disbursement of loan funds and to administer the project after completion on behalf of the local Board of Directors or Executive Committee set up for the project, will be expected as a development agent to identify areas for new local initiatives or help generate innovative ideas for local development. The most important ingredient for such development, namely local initiative, community leadership and cohesion for development would have already been identified and tested with the completion of the first project.

GOING IT ALONE

The concept of labour certificates may be implemented even by small communities on an *ad hoc* basis without the intervention of an LDC or another financial intermediary institution. For example, local residents who volunteer to work in community projects may be compensated in terms of school fees for their children in the local community schools. An account will have to be kept for the number of woman-man-hours contributed by a family at the prevailing or mutually agreed rate of daily/hourly wages, and the amount credited towards the school fees (or health service fees, or any other community service that may be preferred and available).

Since the school will not be able to cash the labour certificates received in payment of school fees, it may be necessary to raise the school fees for all children in proportion to the value of the labour certificates. This would in effect mean that the labour certificates will be paid for by the community at large. This would meet the norms of equity and social justice, for the reason that those who contribute voluntarily their labour for community projects for payment in kind are likely to be poor families. It is only fair that they should be compensated by the rest of the community for their contribution to the community's welfare. ▽

R.C. Malhotra was till recently Director of Evaluation for the Rome-based International Fund for Agricultural Development. His proposal is treated in detail in *Local Level Planning and Rural Development: Alternative Strategies*, Concept Publishing, New Delhi.

Learn from Grameen

One of the more successful poor-oriented, participatory programmes in the Third World is in Bangladesh. Its beginnings date back to 1978 when Mohammad Yunus, a professor of economics in Chittagong University became concerned about the exploitation of landless male labourers and underpaid

up an enterprise to sell water for irrigation. The women repaid the loan before long, with interest. Thus was born the Grameen Bank, with its credit scheme for the poorest of the poor to start small businesses of their own.

Today, Grameen is acclaimed worldwide as an exemplary project for empowerment. It has over five million landless and disadvantaged as its members, more than two-thirds of whom are women. The loan repayment rate is nearly 98 per cent.

Grameen gives credit without collateral for periods not exceeding one year for quick revenue-earning assets and enterprises like rickshaws, milch cows and goats and retail shops. The only condition is that the borrowers form groups that will be collectively liable for repayment of individual loans to each member. The repayment of the principal amount is made weekly in 50 installments after two weeks of grace period. Similarly, accrued interest on the loan is paid in the final two weeks of the year.

Yunus' large cadre of "bank workers" function at the field level rather at branch offices. They hold weekly meetings for disbursement of loans and collection of payments. Attendance at these meetings is compulsory for all members of loan groups.

The "bank workers" form the lynch pin of the Grameen programme. They act as "development agents" facilitating local initiatives and making available credit on affordable terms. This does not mean that the credit is subsidised, for the interest rate works out higher than the prevailing bank rate (though lower than the exploitative moneylender's rate).

Grameen's profits go to build its capital. The compulsory savings of the members, also a condition of membership designed to meet members' non-productive needs such as for weddings and funerals, have been used to increase the members' share in the bank's paid-up capital. This has enabled them to gain over 75 per cent of representation in, and control over, the bank's Board of Directors.

Although support from the Bangladesh Government and IFAD, the Rome-based UN aid agency, have been crucial for Grameen's rapid development, the initiative is indigenously sponsored and sustained. Today, Grameen has a lesson to offer to international funding agencies, the regional banks, bilateral donors, and governments and people of the South Asian region. - R.C.M



Receiving a Grameen loan, outside Dhaka.

women workers in the university neighbourhood. Even though they were perfectly capable of carrying out income generating activities, no bank would advance credit to those without tangible assets as collateral.

Acting unconventionally, Yunus advanced his personal funds to a group of landless women to repair some unused pumps and set

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Giving the People Their Due

The unprecedented growth of people-power in Nepal cannot be appeased with piecemeal solutions. It demands equality based on the principle of "no affluence, no poverty".

by Prabha Thacker

Any indication of where Nepal is going requires an assessment of where we are coming from. And we have not yet come a long way. The past years have yielded little scope for reflection, analysis or honest criticism. In fact, we have almost lost the habit of intellectual discourse. And the most pressing area for discourse in Nepal today is that of populism. Understanding populism can help usher genuine development at the very grassroots.

The movement for democracy that overtook Nepal indicated that populism is not to be ignored. It was the people's sheer will power that saw the toppling of the Panchayat superstructure. During the most crucial days of the movement for democracy, the political parties were not leading, but rather were led by, the people. Pent-up emotions exploded in the public arena in a way that took everyone, even the most astute political analyst, by surprise.

Populism as a paradigm for development recognises that culture and motivation of the masses as meaningful, their lives purposeful, their knowledge valuable, and their constraints real.

The motivation to develop must have its roots in culture, for economic development by itself will not satisfy the human soul. The convergence of populism in Nepal, as elsewhere in the Third World, is a symbol of protest against the unfulfilled promises of urban industrial mobilisation and its associated "capture" of power by a minority.

The past three decades have seen the culture of the masses being gradually replaced by the elitist culture of the "privileged" on the one hand, and that of the "nouveau riche" on the other. The sheer strength of populism rooted in the mass movement has subsequently given vent to an initiative for change. Much of the malaise inherited over the last thirty odd years needs to be replaced by democratic principles which accept heterogeneity as the heritage of human kind.

The populist movement in Nepal is an antithesis to the one-party state, where the avenue for opposition was a blind alley. It also indicates that the innate need for self-worth which overrides economic worth. This, the two

dominant paradigms of development theory -- capitalism and socialism -- do not provide.

Deeply entrenched as they are on the western concept of "economic development", where individuals are looked upon as production units working under pure objectives of efficiency, productivity and competitive market mechanisms, these paradigms overlook the humane quality of life that looks towards equity and distributive justice.

Because of its very spontaneity, populism which is the outcome of mass participation may be looked upon by the sophisticated and "rational-thinking" as unfounded on empiricism. Preoccupation with objectivity and empirical evidence steeped deep in a "positivist" approach to science has constantly held at bay any attempt to search for realistic, "simplistic" indicators of the quality of life.

The need for alternative strategies to alleviate poverty, hunger and disease has led the way to the people-centered approach which some call "sustainable development" -- a kind of development that sustains culture, religion, language, ethnicity, as well as economic well-being, not forgetting the concern for environmental sustainability.

PEOPLE POWER

In the changed context of Nepal, we must accept the heterogeneity of Nepali life and the right of an individual or community to sustain its identity. The total stifling of this identity, in an attempt to project the Nepali image as a single homogeneous one, has done the nation enormous harm and today we find de-mystified the utopian image of Nepalis as being naturally and perfectly homogenous.

The aftermath of the fall of the no-party Panchayat system has already brought in its wake debate over a wide range of issues that two months ago

were taboo. Among others, these relate to the question of religious secularism versus maintaining Nepal's identity as a Hindu kingdom. There are also issues of ethnicity and language. Clearly, while some might try to take uncouth advantage of the situation in order to grab the leadership mantle, the issues are genuine and indicate a desire of communities to retain their indigenous character and maintain their socio-cultural roots.

As a result of this newfound awareness, other issues which were taboo are also finding their rightful place in Nepali discourse: "participatory development", "people power", "empowerment" and "activism". All these terms, in their genuine usage and not as puff-words used by an un-participatory regime, have their roots in populism.

It is too early to assess the gains from the assertion of populism in Nepal. While the origins are justified, the outcome is unknown. Unlike capitalism and socialism, populism has no distinct archetype. It springs from injustice and calls for equality based on a philosophy of no affluence, no poverty.

The people have spoken in Nepal. But populism is a grassroots upwelling that is non-prescriptive and puts forth no models. There are no directive principles. Having shown the way, the people expect their leadership to display statesmanship and lead to the only conclusion that populism demands -- broadbased, non-exclusionary development that touches every member of every community. Those who would lead this society need to understand that there is strength in diversity, and that the need for equity and distributive justice cannot be ignored any longer.

P. Thacker is affiliated with ICIMOD and the Center for Women and Development, both in Kathmandu.



G Chitrakar

Waiting for Robin Hood

Kathmandu's public lands policy has actually hastened the decline of Nepali forests. Only a Robin Hood-like strategy that reverts control of woodlands back to the people can bring the trees back on the hillsides.

by Kk. Panday

The areas most devastated by Nepali politics of the past three decades were human rights, social and economic opportunities for the poor majority, and the natural environment. The damage to the natural environment was due to degradation in the other two areas. Despite tiring talk of development, the human right to development was ignored by Panchayat polity. Being economically poor meant also being environmentally distressed.

Without a doubt, the change in the political system should lead to a change in the role of the people in politics and in the management of their natural heritage. In a country where 90 per cent of the population depends heavily upon the natural system for its livelihood, the problems of the environment has deep ramifications. The agrarian economy is hypersensitive to the changes in natural resources and climatic conditions.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

A series of mistakes were made by governments over the past decades, which contributed to the devastation of the Nepali countryside.

Nationalisation: Disaster hit the environment the day forestry resources were forfeited from the people. The nationalisation of the forests in the second half of the 1950s was undertaken before there was a stable government, a functioning forestry service, or control mechanisms against misuse.

Land Reform: The land reform policy which was imposed during the first half of the 1960s was a response to the popular demand for the redistribution. However, a political system which needed support of the local rich could not stand up to those who resisted government pressure. Also, ecological diversity, soil fertility and altitudinal limitations were not considered. If the concern was equity, income guarantees should have been the paramount element and not a ceiling on surface area. With land reform, the rich kept the best land for themselves and only released marginal lands for redistribution.

Because both nationalisation and land reform were carried out without an adequate understanding of their full impact, the end result was that forests suffered. There was no control over the plunder of community forests while at the same time private woodlands were converted into unproductive fields and terraces.

The latter half of the 1970s brought with it the concept of community forestry, an attempt to try and unravel the problems created by nationalisation. But even this strategy was wrongly conceptualised, based as it was on the false definition of a "community" as being inherent in the village panchayat. Natural resource management systems should never have been based on the political underpinnings of the local panchayats. As a result, there was unexpressed but grassroots opposition to the false sense of community imposed by Kathmandu planners and politicians.

The Master Plan:

The late 1980s brought another yet another masterly intervention, the Forestry Master Plan. One would have expected that the years of experience and wrong turns on forest-management issues would have lead to a plan that was conscious of the villagers' needs. Instead, the Master Plan, conceived by a Finn consultancy firm, was a "top-down" and Kathmandu-centric affair without many redeeming features.

The Master Plan proposed, in effect, to bring about widespread dislocations in the Nepali farmer's relationship with

his/her forest. However, it did not guarantee an improvement in the quality of the implementing agencies. The document was formulated with the help of a forestry bureaucracy that was at its weakest due to rampant corruption and opportunism at its upper echelons.

Since forests, fields and livestock form one integral system within the farming system, one cannot separate the three artificially. But that is what the Master Plan tried to do. In any case, a plan for the forest sector alone was out of touch with reality because farming in Nepal means an artful use of forest resources, livestock and agriculture.

ARROGANCE

The Master Plan's major focus is on the provision for leasehold forestry and the re-nationalisation of all plots of forests that did not come under categories of "religious", "private" or "public" forests. This would have given the administration control over even the locally managed small forest plots that were left out by the first nationalisation of the 1950s.



Kunda



These plots are normally accessible for community use and are well-stocked. There was a vested interest to get hold of these good forest plots for the use of the ruling and richer classes.

In order to implement the Master Plan's provisions, a most undemocratic Forestry Bill was proposed. The Bill, an anti-human rights and anti-democratic document, was drafted towards the end of 1989 and would have come into force through adoption by the National Panchayat by the second half of 1990. A Master Plan which was unpopular and unworthy to be placed before the people envisaged spending over NRs2 billion annually over the next two decades. This showed excessive arrogance on the part of those who would have the people follow their ivory-towered policies.

The implementation of the Master Plan, as with the community forest plan, was based on the structures of the Panchayat system. Luckily, the political system was toppled before the plan was introduced. Today, it lies in limbo. The best thing the present government can do is to shelve the Master Plan and guard against future attempts by vested interests to make a grab at the forests.

MISERABLE RECORD

The one feature that marked Nepali forestry over the past decades, thus, was the steady weakening of traditional management institutions and customs, and the centralisation of the forestry administration. As one of the few sources of wealth held in common trust, forests fell easy prey to periods of political instability and to corruption.

Things came to such a pass that, recently, politicians and bureaucrats under active investigation for misappropriation of forest resources were still being allowed to carry on with their official work. At the end of the Panchayat era, the credibility of forestry administration which oversaw the overuse and plunder of Nepali forests was at its lowest ebb.

Nepal's forestry administration, while failing miserably to protect the resources under its control, refused to give the people the oppor-

tunity to manage their woodlands. These "protectors of forests" themselves became party to deforestation. Rather than trying to gain the people's trust, they confronted and harassed local communities.

The biggest loss of the forestry resources is said to have taken during 1979-1980, the time of the referendum. The politicians of the day were, again and again, willing to sacrifice the country's vital forests in order to maintain an unrepresentative, exploitative political system.

TRUST THE VILLAGER

There is a qualitative change in the political atmosphere today. People can now sound the alarm when a forest is being decimated without fearing for life and security. There is less danger of vindictive actions by the local overlords, at least for the moment.

Considering the numerous socio-political problems that are arising in the country today, forestry is one of the easier fronts to handle. An interim arrangement to arrest depletion is needed until a long-term solution can be worked out. The law which allows distribution of forests plots to individuals under a leasehold system must be frozen.

The new government must be liberal and courageous enough to have confidence in the people, who are, after all, sovereign. In order to protect nature and at the same time develop economically useful forests, those who would lead Nepal *have* to go to the people. The public must have a say in determining plans about the

choice of plant species, their density and the quality of forests. After all, the people have longer traditions with planting trees and protecting forests than fly-by-might consultants, whether from Kathmandu or Canada. For example, planners often forget that the majority of the people living off farming naturally prefer broad-leaf multipurpose trees such as *Schima wallichii*, a farmer's multipurpose timber species, *Quercus sp.*, which is a desired firewood and fodder species, and *Ficus sp.*, the most common hill fodder tree.

The people have more stake in managing local forests than foresters or urban business people. Village communities have evolved their own mechanisms of management. Obviously, changes will have to be made in traditional mechanisms to take account of objective changes in technology, population pressure, accessibility and transport, fuel-wood demand, and other socio-cultural factors. But whatever changes are made have to supplement and not replace village management. The *only* way towards the slow recovery of Nepali woodlands is to give back the forests to the people. A Robin Hood is what we need, preferably in legislative guise, with full constitutional powers and total understanding of village Nepal. Which means, of course, good government.

Kk. Panday is an environmentalist who initiated the JaraJuri grassroots awards for villagers striving to protect their environment.



David Sassoon

The World beyond Models

How the development process got stuck in simple models and how to get it unstuck. The key is understanding culture.

by Ben Dolf

It is not really possible for a person to understand what shapes another's culture unless he or she spends years in an active dialogue with that other culture. If this statement is true, then one would expect development projects -- which by definition aim to change the environment or the behaviour of people -- to be based on a deep understanding not only of obvious cultural differences, but of the underlying values and perceptions which shape a culture.

Unfortunately, this seems to be less and less the case. More and more development projects are conceived, planned, and even executed, by people whose schedule is so tight that they have to rely on a technique which allows them to turn out projects at a rapid rate: the bottleneck approach.

THE BOTTLENECK

With only a quick glance, a development worker will identify the obvious shortcomings of a situation. For example, a particular area in Nepal produces less rice per hectare than a comparable area in India. Comparative analysis is used to explain the lower productivity in Nepal: search for the factor in your model which is in short supply in comparison to the situation considered more ideal. In our example, it is obvious that in Nepal less fertiliser is used and improved seed varieties are not available. If you believe in bottleneck analysis, you have now found the reason why the productivity is lower here than there.

This is how cultures, regions, communities are analysed with one simple question in mind: where is the bottleneck, what is missing? The reason for "under-development" then becomes relatively simple: fewer children go to school, workers are not highly trained, irrigation covers a smaller percentage of arable land than in richer countries, and so on.

And the solution to "under-development" becomes equally clear: if farmers use little fertiliser, make fertiliser available. If there is little irrigation, promote canals and tube-wells. If families are excluded from formal credit, promote credit schemes, and on and on.

What is wrong with the bottleneck approach? Firstly, it leaves no room for the in-

sight that every situation is a unique answer to a unique set of forces: that every culture, every environment, is distinct.

Secondly, the analysis gets stuck at the level of superficial diversity and leaves out all the other dimensions which can be just as powerful as pure economics: politics, legal and social norms, religion and aesthetics, but also differences in perception and processing of experience. Those who use this approach analyse the obvious and formulate solutions at the same simplistic level. Facts are made to fit the theory. Those who must execute the project are left to confront the powerful forces for which there was no room in the planning model.

Thirdly, and as a consequence, the bottleneck approach easily leads planners and decision-makers to believe that problems are similar across a variety of situations and that solutions must be similar too. Nets are cast very wide: if a problem appears to be nationwide, then naturally the solution must be applied on the same scale.

But what if the answer is wrong? The solution would be mistaken, and it would be mistaken on a grand scale.

POWER OF THE ELUSIVE

Those who are enamoured with their models lose sight of the basic truth that the development process centers around human beings who are all the same at heart but who, through their particular histories, have found many different ways to deal with their experiences.

To rely on the bottleneck approach means to commit the same error that has come to be deplored in modern economics: to commit the sin, in the name of efficiency and elegance, of constructing a model which is too simple. Indeed, people, culture and their environments differ from one another in ways which are far from obvious. Often, these differences hide behind a mask of similarity which may lead the unwary astray. Examples abound.

•Many road-builders had to learn their trade all over after experiencing the power of the Himalayan monsoon and dealing with the fragility of these mountains. Nor were they

prepared for the enormous silt and bed load carrying capacity of Himalayan rivers. It is surprising that something so obvious should have been so elusive.

•Similarly, many agronomists found that primitive cultivation techniques do not necessarily reflect a lack of knowledge. Also, rural people organise their time and labour differently. An experienced extensionist arrived in a village where the people did not seem at all interested in growing vegetables. Great was his surprise, therefore, when he returned some years later to find large fields under intensive vegetable cultivation. The answer to the puzzle was that the price of vegetables had increased and now the people found it worth their while to invest extra effort in cultivating the vegetables. The skills had been there all along, but people simply had not made use of them so long as it was not worth their while.

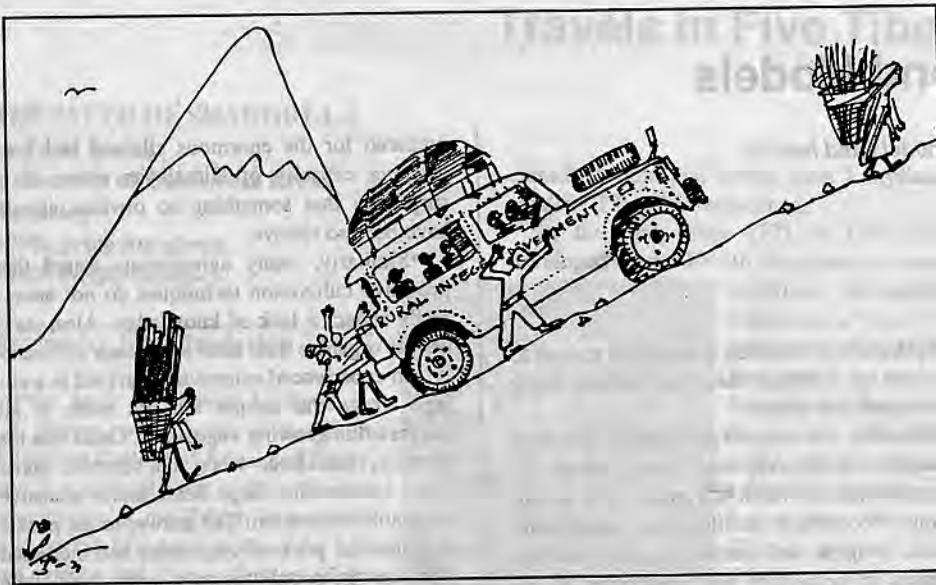
•Many projects have tried over the past years (in the words of one such project's report) "to increase the agricultural productivity, to provide additional employment and to raise the income and standard of living of small farmers." Unfortunately, the term "farmer", in the eyes of the Western expert, invariably conjures up an image of a man tending his fields. But in Nepal, the "farmer" is very often a woman, who has to be approached in a very different fashion than the "farmer" the project designer had in mind.

•English is the same every where, we tend to believe, but the truth is different. In the West, "private" means "belonging to one or more individuals". In Nepal, it often means "not falling under the rules and regulations of His Majesty's Government". The same is true for many other terms such as "contractor", "brother", and even "government". We use the same terms but we refer to very different realities.

CULTURE SPECIFICITY

Beyond the pitfalls mentioned above, which can be avoided with a bit of care, there are also different ways of apprehending and dealing with our experiences. In fact, many of the most powerful forces which shape people and their environment remain hidden; they work below the level of consciousness.

C.J. Jung has taught us that individuals differ fundamentally in the way they relate to their experience. Some prefer to collect information about their environment, while others prefer to dwell on their inner experience. In much the



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same fashion, cultures tend to favour one style over another: the Russian and French tend to use much more symbolic and abstract reasoning, whereas Americans tend to refer to concrete situations. Nepalis tend to value the relationship with another person much more than upholding an abstract principle.

Even the way people learn differs from culture to culture. Children in the West are taught at a young age to formulate abstract rules about their environment which they later use for connecting one thought to another, whereas Nepali children learn to connect ideas by association, by analogy.

These are some of the ways individuals and cultures may differ, but if we dig deeper, we'll find that every situation and every individual is distinct. And unique situations must be studied one at a time. As Casper J. Miller writes in his most recent book, "What is required is better and close attention to (these) individual characteristics and individual trends."

If what we have said is true, then we need to gain a new perspective, and we may have to learn to ask different questions. Instead of "What is missing?" we could ask "What forces have shaped this environment, or this society, exactly the way it is?" Or, to use a more concrete formulation, "How has poverty been created in this village?"

Thus, rather than start from an abstract model, we will have to learn to start from the concrete, and we will have to get an intimate acquaintance with the facts, as Keynes said.

DEVELOPMENT VISION

What would development work look like if activities were designed for concrete situations and for normal humans: people who sometimes want change and sometimes resent it; who get

bored when there is not enough to do and stressed when there is too much; who want to be involved in all decisions, but who do not know their children's age?

In an ideal world, the following factors would come into play in development work:

- The development vision would be worked out in a dialogue between those who wish to transform their society and those who have seen other solutions.

- Priorities would be set by those who are familiar with the particulars, not by those who only have an abstract notion. Naturally, they would have to convince those who control the resources that their priorities make sense, but the process would start with those who live the problem, and not with outsiders who may unwittingly project their own needs.

- Planning would also be different. It would have to be done by people who have taken the time to learn about the uniqueness of the problem with which they are confronted. They would have to check their ideas again and again with the concrete reality of the particular environment and community.

- The pace of implementation of a project would no longer be dictated by the needs of a bureaucracy, but by the ability of people to absorb the changes and to remain masters of their own community.

- Naturally, then, projects would be smaller and slower, but that should be inevitable whenever projects involve living beings. In fact, the rule could be: the more the project concerns living systems, the smaller they must be and slower they must move.

- The structure of the project would fit the problem which it addresses. For example, if a project were to work with the poor, it would be small and flexible, because the poor do not

know how to deal with large and inflexible organisations. Work would be done according to the standards of the weak, not of the strong. Conventionally, such projects would be horribly inefficient, but efficiency is almost by definition a concept which does not apply to the poor.

- An analysis of the social and political conditions would precede any project involving a community. Some local communities are more open to democratic development processes than another, which may be in the grip of a group that will not participate in planning and implementation.

- There would be much more quality control and people would be held accountable for their actions. There would be independent auditors, or even better, controllers, who would not be content with checking the formal correctness of the accounts but who would make field checks and see if the people got value for their money.

THE POWER TO DECIDE

Does all this sound like a pipe dream? Is it naive and unrealistic? Not if those who are entrusted with the public good take their job seriously and initiate only as much as they can handle. Not if they realise that the worst things to trade for money is the vision of their own future, the mastery of their own destiny. And not if advisors and donor agencies realise that the worst thing to take for their money is the power to decide.

This article is not a plea for an end to foreign aid, nor does it advocate the dismissal of the foreign adviser. Nepali society, as much but not more than any other society, achieves maturity only through a dialogue with the rest of the world. In an encounter with the rest of the world, a society becomes aware of itself, of its strengths and weaknesses. It is only through mature dialogue that societies evolve.

Nor do we want to give support to those who in the name of the special nature of their culture want to deny control of their deeds to outsiders.

We simply call for a development setting where the real expert is the person who sees not only the obvious but who takes the time to find out what the powerful but hidden forces are which shape the particular Nepali environment exactly the way it is and who is prepared to take the time to understand it. ▲

B. Dolf was Programme Director of the private Swiss development agency, Helvetas, for six years. His term in Kathmandu ended in June.

Dealing with 40 Million Nepalis

There are no quick-fixes to Nepal's population problem. It is past time to begin a resolute, long-term programme of fertility control.

by Som Pudasaini

Even though Nepal has been attempting to regulate population growth over the past couple of decades, the results have been less than satisfactory. The country's population reached 19 million in 1990 from 5.6 million in 1911, 6.3 million in 1941 and 15 million in 1981. While it took 60 years for the population to double between 1911 and 1971, at the prevailing annual population growth rate of 2.6 per cent it will take only another 25 years for it to double again.

There are 50 new mouths to feed in Nepal every hour, 1200 every day and 450,000 every year. There will be 24 million Nepalis crowded into these hills and plains by the turn of the century. A majority of these will be of economically and socially dependent age of below 15 years and above 60 years.

These data indicate that the situation is critical. With Nepal's decreasing resource base, there is no way to sustain even a minimal quality of life if the population continues to expand at the present rate. This low quality of life is indicated by the fact that today per capita income is below US\$170, life expectancy is below 54 years, 100 out of 1,000 infants die during the first year, and nine out of 1,000 mothers die during childbirth.

Population control can only be tackled on a long-term perspective, as opposed to short-sighted, *ad-hoc* programmes that has been the hallmark of the past in Nepal. The basis for a long-term population plan does exist in the National Population Strategy adopted in 1983. But the document will, like most other master plans, remain a dead letter unless there is strong commitment.

It is true that over the past 20 years, attitude towards population programmes in Nepal has changed from indifference to lip service to a grudging acceptance. But we have still not reached a stage where society is galvanised to tackle the problem. In Indonesia, there is understanding of and action on population issues from President Suharto down to the village headman. Only when similar involvement is apparent in Nepali society will we even begin to address the question of population seriously.

AGENDA

It is now urgent to adopt and implement a comprehensive and multi-sectoral strategic plan with realistic population targets, a time-bound plan of action and clear-cut division of responsibility between government and non-government sectors.

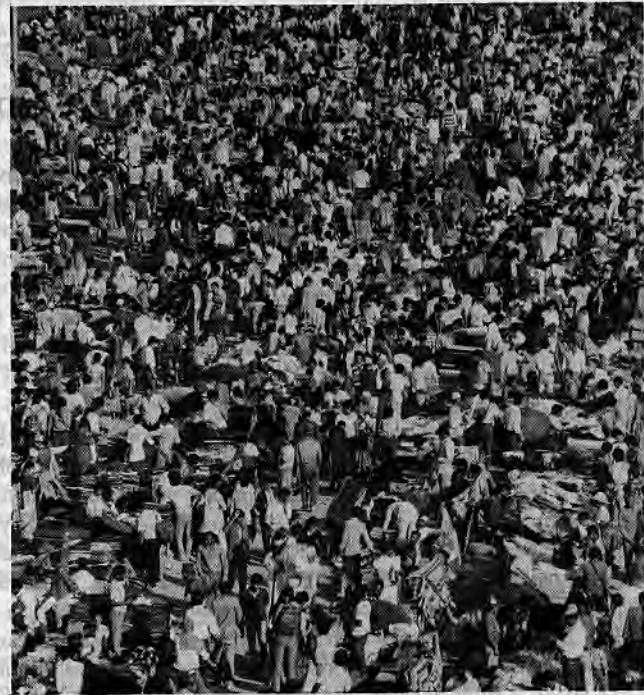
Enough human, financial and technical resources must be provided to population programmes. At the same time, villagers themselves must be allowed to participate in formulating and implementing programmes that affect them. It is they, after all, who will either accept or reject the small-family norm.

Quality family planning services will have to be expanded through hospitals, health-posts and non-government outlets to cover the entire area of the country. Presently, only 15 per cent of couples of reproductive age use population control methods. Such use will have to rise above 50 per cent to make a dent in fertility and population growth. Wives will have to receive increased decision-making powers with regard to use of contraceptives, without interference from mothers-in-law or husbands. Many more men have to be convinced to use contraceptives.

Improved service quality and acceptability is important to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice of family planning. In the past, emphasis was placed on sterilisation and new contraceptive methods were introduced on an almost *ad-hoc* basis. There have been lapses in providing medical and consultative support to women who have tried the pill, IUDs or the Depo-provera injectible.

The push should now be on making a broad range of contraceptive choices available to couples so that they can select the best possible method depending on their health, age, location and other socio-cultural factors.

Counseling programmes are vital but virtually non-existent. They have to be expanded in order to assist and reassure couples. Lack of counseling programmes and follow-up, in fact,



constitutes a major handicap. Family planning drives must be attuned to specific rural milieu and they must respect the rural person's need for information. It is in large measure a failure of past efforts that a majority of couples remain ignorant about contraceptive choices. Large-scale misinformation about contraceptive-use and sterilisation continues to permeate society and rumours of the ill-effects circulate freely. Motivation and method-specific information clearly is the key for a large part of the population.

Successful family planning depends upon other developmental factors and therefore has to be integrated with programmes such as mother and child health services. After all, acceptance of family planning to a large extent depends upon the survival of the desired number of children. Beyond that, in a country where a majority of women are said to be "poor, powerless and pregnant", improving women's social and economic status is in itself a family planning exercise. Since population is a multi-sectoral problem, population activities also need to be integrated with other developmental, educational and environmental programmes.

Because so many societal factors are involved, there are no quick fixes towards a successful population control programme. Also, the impact of a good programme is not immediately apparent. That is every reason to act on population issues now, before millions more become part of our census figures.

S. Pudasaini is Director-General of the Family Planning Association of Nepal.

"They Are Poor But Happy..."

The Politics of Kathmandu Art

The portraiture and landscapes in Kathmandu galleries reflect an idealised Nepal that does not exist. Art must evolve to speak for all Nepalis and not just for its elite urban patrons.

by Manjushree Thapa

What does it mean when a community's artwork fails to represent the concerns of the community? The offerings in Kathmandu's museums and galleries, and the traditionally made art in the stores, depict only serenity, beauty and harmony. But a day in Kathmandu will contradict the guide-book description of Nepal and Nepalis as peaceful and peace-loving. In whose interest is it to have institutions display nostalgic, even dishonest, art?

To arrive at some answers, the political and economic ideology of the city's public and private cultural institutions must be examined, keeping in mind that artwork is necessarily shaped by the nature of its patronage. Only then can we understand the place of traditional art, the need for "honesty" in contemporary art, and why Kathmandu's art increasingly tends to misrepresent Nepal.

THE PATRON'S AGENDA

Political systems patronise artists in different ways, and for different reasons. Throughout the history of Kathmandu, feudal systems have used art, particularly religious art, as a political tool to reflect and maintain their power.

The Malla kings spent money on art forms and architecture that fortified their divine rights. The beauty and richness of these creations glossed over the squalor in which the average citizen lived. The originality of Newari art came to an end when Prithivinarayan Shah conquered the Valley. A warring culture, the Gorkhalis did not have a strong artistic tradition of their own. Newari forms were patronised for various reasons but were not built upon.

The Ranas chose to emulate British Victorian and colonial Indian ways. Oil paintings, portraiture, mansions with high ceilings and columns, and Western features in clothing, were some of the results. From abroad, the arts of Kathmandu received a secular influence, but, unlike in the West, this new secular art remained at the service of feudal interests.

Since the restoration of power to the Shah dynasty, the conservative, sometimes feudal,

but relatively more representative government professed interest in encouraging the cultural expression of all Nepalis, and some efforts were made to do so. But government efforts continued to yield art that was unrepresentative of Nepal's cultures.

A major economic factor that helps shape current art in Kathmandu is the city's extreme dependence on foreign money, in the form of aid and income from tourism. The practitioners cannot but submit themselves to the tastes of foreign sensibilities.

Another factor is the concentration of economic wealth in the urban center of Kathmandu, with its sophisticated cash economy, which is in stark contrast to the rural hinterland. The beer and cigarette commercials on Nepal TV are perhaps manifestations of how far Kathmandu's art-patronising elite are removed from the rest of Nepal. The two cultures no longer share a common ground, and this is evident in the galleries.

MUDDLED MUSEUM MANIA

Though Western influence has done much to make Kathmandu's high society appreciate the value of museums, indiscriminate acceptance of an imported understanding of what is new culture must be questioned.

In museums, the interaction between the viewer and the viewed is secular and educational. In temples, the interaction is sacred and irrational. Religious art thus has a "use value" that secular and archaeological pieces lack. The presence of religious Hindu objects at museums in the West, for example, disallows the very reason for which they were made. It would be equally inappropriate to place a Dutch still-life in a Kathmandu temple.

For this reason, the idea of barring the entrance of non-Hindus from Hindu temples is interesting. Though it more or less manifests as discrimination against non-South Asians, the rule is intended to keep unbelieving eyes from a sacred site, and to avoid having temples turned into archaeological sites and ethnological Disneyland.

Public museums preserving secular objects must bear the responsibility of representing the vastly differing arts of Nepal. As there is no objective rendering of the past, the information disseminated can be coloured by current biases.

In recent years, museums in the West have faced much criticism from feminist and Marxist critics, who contend that the history of women and minority groups has been sup-



Connosseurs of Kathmandu art.

Kevin Bubrick



K. Bahaduri

And is this not art? Woman in front of fresco, Suga Village, Mahotari District.

pressed in favour of the history of elite men. The National Museum in Kathmandu's Chhauni is ideally suited for such criticism. Supposedly established to represent the history of Nepal, the museum displays on Malla king, all the Shah kings and their prime ministers. Those who go to the museum learn nothing of the history of "low-caste" peoples, ethnic groups outside the Valley, and women of Nepal.

The Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) is an example of an art museum that fails to recognise the vast economic and cultural gulf between Kathmandu's art and that of the rest of the rural majority. Aimed at encouraging contemporary art, NAFA seems to be guided by

several misconceptions, the first of which is the notion of "Nepal" itself.

In a country where the majority understands art to be of ritual or decorative use, it is alien to have a national institution display just easel paintings and sculpture. Nepal's history of easel painting dates back to the Rana rulers who encouraged Victorian portraiture. After the Ranas went their way, "modern" (abstract) paintings became fashionable among elites impressed by modern art of the West. As such, painting is the heritage of few Nepalis.

NAFA's definition of "fine arts" also demands inspection. In choosing only painting and sculpture for its walls, a distinction has implicitly been made between "fine arts" and

"crafts". The contemporary arts of rural areas, such as the cloth woven by Gurung women, or decorations on Tharu houses, are excluded because they are "crafts". It is perhaps not arbitrary that this distinction has the effect of marginalising the arts of rural women and men, and aggrandising the arts of urban artists.

Further, the paintings that hang at NAFA leaves one with a picture postcard understanding: happy natives and spiritual and natural wealth seem to mark Nepali life. This misrepresentation is due in part to the fact that the Kathmandu-based patronised artists naturally lack the ability to speak for the reality of all Nepalis. But it is also caused by the complacency that marks government patronage, for which art that supports the theory that "the natives may be poor, but they are happy," provides justification for inadequacy.

It is natural that a government not held responsible to all the people should create aloof institutions that prefer unchallenging works of art. But the Nepali public can ill-afford to support urban-based "high art" institutions that fail to reach, represent or educate it. A representative government must begin to use museums to recognise and encourage all kinds of Nepali art, and to educate Nepalis about the many histories and cultures of Nepal.

GALLERY ART

The appearance of businesses which sell contemporary and traditional paintings marks another shift in the Nepali relationship to art. Instead of simply looking at objects, as in museums, viewers are offered the opportunity to own them. Enriched by development efforts, a small upper-middle class in Kathmandu can now afford to buy artwork as testimony to their cash wealth.

The gallery system originated in the late 19th century Europe, as a reaction to high-handed and conservative museums. Capitalistic in conception, galleries offered artwork as commodities for sale. Thus they were not bound by ethics as to what they could display, and they tended to show progressive, sometimes shocking works.

The emergence of galleries in Kathmandu could be an indication of a revival of contemporary art, and they do have the potential to encourage original expressions. But the galleries, like the museums, display paintings that are overwhelmingly nostalgic, illustrating religious scenes or depictions of idyllic agrarian life. In their romanticism, they seem inspired by travel guides and posters promoting tourism.

Because idealised images of Nepal relieve them of the psychological burden of their privilege, Kathmandu's elite patronises art that

speaks kindly, if distantly, of Nepal. Artists cannot expect to make a living exposing the dark side of Nepal. Happy natives, untouched nature and marked spiritualism may not pertain to reality, but they sell well.

Because galleries will always supply what is in demand, it is up to the consumers to demand honest expression. Only when the gallery-going public is ready for challenging art will the galleries speak for all Nepal.

SHOPPING FOR THANGKAS

Creativity cannot flourish in a philosophical vacuum, and it is an indication of religious stagnation that few temples or religious arts have been created recently. The broad, inclusive Hinduism of the scriptures has manifested in Kathmandu as an archaic social doctrine with rigid caste, race and sex-based hierarchies, and in keeping, government and private funds have been directed more towards restoration of original religious work.

Increasingly, traditional artisans are learning to tap secular sources of income. At Patan Industrial Estates, for example, traditional art is being made for foreign markets and the urban

elite. This work is important because it employs artists and encourages traditional skills, but it cannot be taken as art created with originality.

A relationship has been established between native and tourist based on the native's need for money and the tourist's need for entertainment. The native culture is made to put its ethnic identity and religious heritage on sale.

Thangka stores on Durbar Marg exemplify this relationship. Tourists and urban elite are offered their choice of motifs on their choice of colours, producing "designer" *thangkas* to decorate empty walls with. These *thangkas* are made by Hindu and Buddhist lay persons with imported, industrially produced materials such as acrylic paints, canvas, and rabbit-skin glue.

Thangkas are properly used as yantras, or spiritual diagrams, during motivation, and are covered when not in use. A foreign market, for which "ethnic" art is chic, hardly cares to respect the ritual use of the objects. Unable to resist the demand by indiscriminating tourists, Nepali arts are unable to grow and change at their own pace. Instead, they are transformed to exotic wallpaper in foreign homes, devoid of

the depth of experiences they are meant to convey to the initiated.

Clearly, the ethnic art marketed in stores is no longer found in the lives of the natives, who would rather be like foreigners. While traditional Nepali artists are transformed into tourist memorabilia, the natives of Kathmandu are busy constructing concrete block houses and furnishing them with posters of foreign landscapes. To see the art patronised by the natives, one might have to look to printing presses in Hong Kong and Bangkok instead of in Nepali galleries and art shops.

POSITION OF STRENGTH

In Kathmandu, feudal political ideology is being replaced by democratic ideology. In keeping with the spirit of democracy, the government must use its funds to encourage the arts of *all* Nepalis. Government restoration projects and museums must reach all segments of the population, and avoid reflecting a Kathmandu-centered, exclusionary attitude. The fact that Nepal has no less than 31 distinct ethnic groups and 26 different languages alone disallows a representative government from giving preference to any one cultural mind-set. Also in keeping with the spirit of democracy, the government must not only tolerate, but encourage, difference, diversity and dissent in artwork. Full artistic license will encourage representative art.

The economically disadvantaged position in which Nepal entered "the world" in the 1950s made it vulnerable to foreign influence. Unguided by native wisdom, it has taken little time for genuine art to wither. Ideally, the arts of Nepal should be able to approach foreign influence from a position of strength. But this necessitates such measures as government subsidies for the production of marginalised arts of rural Nepal, and incentives for people to support them. Though the government will perhaps never be able to protect traditional cultures to the extent that, say, Bhutan does, it must relieve Nepali art of the pressure to conform to the foreign taste for cute, ethnic art.

Finally, artists must realise that it is not enough to be skilled. It is important to understand that traditional and recently-developed skills can be put to various uses; they can become propaganda for the cause of a powerful minority, or they can raise awareness among Nepalis of how they live. It is the message conveyed, not the medium, that is of primary importance. △

M. Thapa paints and writes in Kathmandu.



Dirgha Man Chitrakar

Victorian/Rana portraiture.

The Environmental Agenda

Environmental activism has to extend beyond planting and protecting trees. Nepalis must be ready to address more complicated present and future problems with their environment.

by Kk. Panday

Many people believe that the environmental problem in Nepal begins and ends with talk of deforestation and degraded hillsides. But the issue is a complex one and involves more than merely the protection of woodlands and prevention of topsoil loss. As the country enters a new era, hopefully of economic development, other environmental issues will have to be faced. They already range from the questions of high dams in the Himalaya to factory effluent on the Narayani river, air pollution, water and soil quality, and the negative impact of highways and other activity on ecosystems. The seriousness of these diverse environmental problems should not be doubted.

Environmental concern in Nepal is newer than other "modern" issues such as development, infrastructure-building or land reform. No agenda for environmental action has been set by the government. In the absence of appropriate legal backing, state agency action, or coordination among committed environmentalists, the concern has only been expressed and talked about. Environmental talk must now get serious. Nepali experts, social scientists, lawyers and activists have to begin identifying environmental crises and develop indigenous legislative, scientific and grassroots mechanisms to tackle them.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In the past, there used to be muted opposition to environmentally unsound policies, but timid suggestions had little or no impact in the central corridors of power in Kathmandu, where the governing criteria was banker-friendly rather than environment-friendly. Prevailing "etiquette" discouraged criticism and questions about mega-projects. Honest investigation was not tolerated, and was even regarded in extreme cases as "anti-national". Environmentally unsound and economically disastrous projects were placed before the public as *fait accompli*. All this was due to the rush of well-connected commission agents and contractors, before whose greed the "petty concerns" of the environment proved no match.

The unrepresentative government of the Panchayat era did not allow lobbies to func-

tion, including those for the environment. Most certainly, that will change now. The Nepali people have fought for the right to know and the right to get involved. This includes the right to fight for and get involved in order to save our environment.

Take the examples of the proposed Karnali project or the Arun III hydro scheme, which the Panchayat regime has bequeathed to us in an advanced stage of agreement. It is proposed that a significant portion of Nepal's natural heritage be tampered with, perhaps even for good reason. While in the past, a governmental *fiat* would have been enough to carry these projects through, now there will have to be public hearings and an openness on the part of those accountable. There will have to be open discussion of everything from economic cost-benefit, to possible alternatives with less environmental impact, the displacement of local inhabitants, the impact on flora and fauna, and protection of indigenous cultures.

MINISTRIES & WATCHDOGS

As socioeconomic development surges ahead, the threats to the environment are bound to increase. There is a need for active watchdog institutions that can balance the needs of development and the right of future Nepali generations to inherit an untrammelled environment. Strategies will have to be worked out within the new democratic setup so that there are checks and balances in the realm of environmental management.

Semi-governmental organisations like the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation can be retained and given the responsibility and resources to monitor government activity or inactivity in relation to nature conservation. At the same time, the atmosphere is now favourable for the growth of genuine non-government organisations. These NGOs can take different shapes, from village groups acting spontaneously to petition local government to expert groups with investigative




Raw paper factory sewage is fed into the Narayani River.

Kk. Panday

expertise to study a wide variety of environmental questions.

At the governmental level, Nepal needs a Ministry of Environment to draft legislation and directives and ensure the implementation of environment-friendly projects. In coordination with other arms of government, including those that deal with water quality, forestry and occupational health, it would ensure that a sustainable environment is preserved for future generations. A word of caution: the new ministry should not be manned by the discredited bureaucrats who presently run the Ministry of Forests even if they think the mantle should fall to them. Those who have been unable to protect Nepal's forest resource should hardly be let loose to manage the larger Nepali environment.

Besides a Ministry of Environment, the country also needs a high-level specialised entity which might be called the Environmental Monitoring and Protecting Agency. The body would be answerable to Parliament, like the Auditor General. It would be provided with adequate legislative backing and financial resources, technical and legal skills, as well as the moral authority to act as the guardian of the nation's environment. The agency could prepare annual "state of the environment" reports that would identify environmental problems and prescribe corrective action.

While institutions are important, it is the people who run them that will make a difference if our environment is to be rescued from its current decline. The persons who are charged with the challenging task of revamping present policies and societal mind-sets should be intellectually honest and politically courageous, and beyond the reach of party or palace politics. Only then will our air, water and woodlands share a fair future. 

Cheating Our Children

Those parts of education, it is to be observed, for the teaching of which there are no public institutions, are generally the best taught.

-Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations.

by Kedar Mathema

The popular movement of Spring 1990 which ended the Panchayat polity also opened up the possibilities for change and improvement in Nepali society. The education sector is one which is long overdue for structural reform and revitalisation, and we owe it to our young not to miss this opportunity.

Historically, Nepali education has concentrated on growth rather than on quality. The period after the fall of the Rana regime in 1951 witnessed a rapid expansion at all levels of education. Mindless expansion was also the hallmark of the National Education System Plan, inaugurated in 1971. The Plan failed, but the system of increased government intervention in education continued.

Government policy coupled with strong social demand and considerable mobilization of private finance for education led to rapid increase in enrollment. From 0.5 million in 1971, total enrollment in all levels of Nepali education had expanded to 2.4 million students by 1987-88. Presently, there are 1.9 million students at the primary level, 559,500 at the lower and secondary levels and 94,700 at the university level.

This success in enrollment, unfortunately, is accompanied by a pathetically low quality of teaching, coupled with inequity, inefficiency and squandering of scarce resources.

REGRESSIVE EDUCATION

The gross inequities that exist in the schools throughout the country speaks of Nepali education's regressive character. The opportunity cost of child labour (cost of labour foregone by attending schools), particularly of the girl-child, malnutrition, and the direct cost of schooling conspire to keep many children of the lower-income group out of school.

There is also the pre-school factor. Children of poorer families, even when they manage to attend schools, are seriously disadvantaged due to their poor health, under-nutrition and impoverished socio-economic background. Seventy per cent of the children who drop out early or fail to complete primary education are from this segment of Nepali society.

Taking the case of female education, in 1988, only 28.6 per cent of children enrolled at the school level were girls. Today, the literacy rate among women, at 18 per cent, is nearly three times less than that of men. A disproportionate portion of pupils who fail to leave primary schools are girls or children from disadvantaged communities

Those whose mother-tongue is not Nepali are additionally handicapped because the compulsory medium of instruction is Nepali. In these and many other ways, hundreds of thousands of children are being penalised for no fault of their own by the very educational system that is meant to be supporting them.

Disparity also exists between the towns and villages. Because urban children have the benefit of better secondary schooling, those who pass the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examinations are mostly from the towns. This becomes a severe penalty on village children, as entry into higher education is based on SLC scores.

POOR TEACHERS

The quality of school education is abysmal due to a lack of trained teachers, absence of instructional materials, obsolete curriculum and poorly designed textbooks targeted at urban children of higher income groups.

Low morale and motivation among teachers is a problem that has never been tackled. Teachers receive inadequate professional support, such as regular sessions with subject specialists, on-the-job training, and supply of teachers' bulletins and professional magazines. In fact, teachers are more absent from school than students. The daily teaching schedule rarely exceed three hours and hardly ever reaches five. On the average, schools are in session no more than 120 days out of a school year of 180 days.

Even when teaching does take place, it is unimaginative and fails to stimulate young minds. Intellectual curiosity, which is every child's innate gift is constantly suppressed. Discovery, experimentation and practical learning are unheard of in our schools. Examinations are incentives only for rote-learning.

Nepali children are never taught to imagine, interpret, opine or think creatively.

All this taken together, it is not surprising that the success rate in the SLC examinations has remained at an average of 30 per cent over the last two decades. Only once during this period has it exceeded 40 per cent. Although the previous government claimed 93 per cent national gross enrollment at the primary level, a recent World Bank study indicates that 40 per cent of school-age boys and 70 per cent of school age girls remain out of school.

No thanks to government, but due to the ingenuity of some private entrepreneurs, there do exist a few relatively good primary and secondary schools in the urban centers, but they are expensive and out of reach of the majority population. In comparison to other countries, however, even these "elite" schools provide sub-standard education. Most of their teachers are untrained and their curriculum is heavily drawn from Indian boarding schools. English language teaching is equated with good education and the stress is on passing examinations rather than on the "process" of learning and intellectual growth.

AT COLLEGE

Higher education is no better. Academic standards in the campuses are mediocre, with teachers, again, lacking dedication and scholarship. University classes consist of straight lectures that adhere to the text, or teaching notes prepared some years ago. Instruction is bookish, prescriptive and suffers from what Paulo Freire calls "narration sickness".

Seminars, discussions and case-studies are unheard of in Nepali higher education. Reading assignments, term-papers, projects, and paper presentations are regarded as conventions from another planet. Tribhuvan provides neither the rigor nor the challenge of university life. Academic calendars do not exist: students leave early for vacation and return late. Un-scheduled holidays, student meetings and teacher absenteeism frequently interrupt classes. College students probably spend less time in the classroom here than in any other country.

The scarcity of funding for capital investment and non-salary operating expenses has seriously undermined the institutional framework of higher education. The situation is tragic. Campus buildings are disheartening structures with graffiti-filled corridors, dingy classrooms, broken furniture, blackened walls and whitened blackboards. In the libraries, books are in perpetual short supply and professional journals a luxury. In the science



K. Bubnski

Schools off in a Tarai village.

laboratory, chemicals, and even water, might not be available. Basic equipment for field work are unavailable.

The University produces chemists who have never done a salt test; biologists who have yet to perform a dissection; physicists who do not know the measure for an electrical current; technicians who have never been required to disassemble machinery; agriculturists that have only read about soil analysis; and social scientists who have never collected data or conducted an analysis. Such are the qualitatively deprived graduates that Tribhuvan has been dumping into job market.

Tribhuvan's unthinking open admissions policy is the major bane of higher education. The University is swamped by ever-increasing numbers of students. In many campuses, particularly in the urban centers, the carrying capacity of the buildings themselves has been exceeded. Tribhuvan's total enrollment is approaching 100,000 students and according to one projection that number will double within a decade.

Reforming the open admissions policy is one of the major challenges before the new government. Without admission reform, the enrollment in higher education will grow much faster than the available government resources.

POST-PANCHAYAT SCENARIO

Nepali education reached this low, low ebb because the Panchayat government had neither the inclination nor the political support to

successfully face the challenge. Its success lay in skillfully avoiding the hard decisions required to tackle the poor quality, inefficiency and inequity inherent in the education system. The backlog of problems that await a new government is therefore enormous, with the situation further aggravated by people's expectations, the demand for educational expansion to accommodate the growing number of children and youth through the 1990s, and the acute shortages of public fund.

Rather than shirk its responsibilities, the new government that comes to power after the election in 1991 will be expected to be courageous, clear-headed and purposeful. One thing is clear: the neglect of Nepali education over the years has made the task of reform much too complex for routine methods to work.

The first major attack must be on the quality issue. Programmes to improve educational standards might include the training of school teachers; staff development and upgrading; faculty exchange; twinning arrangement with other universities; increasing the relevance of curricula and textbooks; improving the process of teaching and learning; providing vital teaching aids such as lab equipment, books and instructional material; limiting enrollment in higher education; and imposing rigorous academic discipline on schools and campuses.

"Cost consciousness" is also important. The utilisation rate of physical plants such as laboratories, workshops and other specialised

facilities must be improved. Teachers' "time on task" must be monitored and minimum teaching loads per week set, particularly in higher education. "Casual leaves" and sabbaticals must be restricted, as must the ratio of non-academic support staff to academic staff.

Campuses and training centers should introduce accelerated courses and intensive training. Low-enrollment programmes such as those of the Mahendra Sanskrit University which grossly suffers from the "diseconomies" of under-utilised facilities, must not be encouraged. In the particular instance, a Centre for Sanskrit Studies would have been much more useful than a separate university. At the other end of the spectrum, high-cost institutions such as Budanilkantha High School, which are heavily subsidised by government and foreign grants, need to be completely privatised. Savings from such measures can be channeled towards the improvement of rural schools.

There is also a need to shift more of costs from public to private sources. This can be achieved by various means: gradually increasing fees for tuition in higher education, particularly in campuses where unit costs are high and earning prospects after graduation are good (such as engineering and medicine); reducing or even eliminating subsidies for meals and accommodation in student hostels; and, where possible, collecting contributions from prospective employers to help finance at least part of vocational education and training.

University campuses can mobilize their own resources by raising funds and collecting endowments from alumni and other donors in the private and public sectors. Some centrally located campuses can also raise funds by providing research, consultancy and training services to government, aid agencies and private firms. This is already being done by the Institute of Engineering.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Unequal access to education runs counter to the spirit of democracy and social justice. For this reason, special focus must be on increasing the participation of girls and children of rural and disadvantaged communities. Programmes which address the equity issue can include recruitment of female teachers which, as research has proved, can help attract more girls to school; providing disadvantaged communities with not only free textbooks, but also stationary and writing material; developing special introductory Nepali courses for children whose mother tongue is different; and posting teachers belonging to the same

Contradictions that constrict

Nepali Legislation is behind the times. It lacks the progressive provisions regarded as fundamental on other legal systems. As a result, the "right to development" is still a remote concept for the Nepali bar, courts and the public.

by Bharat Raj Upreti

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development on 4 December 1986. Together with the rest of the Third World, Nepal actively welcomed the Declaration for having added another dimension to the concept of human rights. In supporting the Declaration, Nepal recognised its own people's inalienable right to expect, at the very least, good faith from government in trying to achieve socio-economic advancement.

Unfortunately, the laws of the land have remained inadequate and riddled with contradictions. Progressive ideas rarely found their way into legislation and, when they did, many ways were found to negate their purpose.

Under the 1986 Declaration, States have the primary responsibility for the creation of national and international conditions favourable to the realisation of the right to development. This right shall ensure, among other things, equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and fair distribution of income. Effective measures must ensure women's active role in the development process. Social injustices are to be eradicated through appropriate economic and social reforms.

BAD LAW

In Nepal's case, the benefits of "development" of the last three decades benefited a disproportionate few at the cost of the powerless and the impoverished. And law, by and large, has aided the privileged and maintained the status quo.

The entire spectrum of laws in Nepal is riddled with provisions that discriminate against one section of society or another. It would be appropriate to begin correcting those pieces of legislation which penalise the disadvantaged, particularly women, children, workers and peasants.

Discriminatory laws have to be now challenged by legislators, "development lawyers", law enforcement agencies and activists. Some

pertinent question which can help identify bad laws in specific areas are the following: Do they ensure equality between men and women in matters of acquisition, inheritance, partition or disposition of property? Do they protect the interests of those displaced by land acquisition? Is existing legislation for the protection of workers implemented? Are laws which protect children actually enforced in favour of the beneficiaries?

These questions pose a challenge to future governments: can they really work towards implementable laws that guarantee the minimum opportunities today's society demands?

While it is not useful to flog dead horses, it is true that many discriminatory legislation was adopted during the Panchayat era. There is some so-called welfare legislation meant to empower to disadvantaged, but these laws are either not strong enough to make a difference, or enforcement has been non-existent.

FACTORY WORKERS

The Nepal Factory Workers Act came into force in 1959, at a time when Nepal had a handful of manufacturing units, all of which offered similar jobs and working conditions. During the past decade, the variety of "industrial" activity governed by the Act has enlarged, from workers in hotels, trekking agencies and the transport industries to manufacturing units with different needs and demands. There are jobs requiring the service of workers round the clock, others that require extra specialised knowledge, and others that require great physical strength.

Unfortunately, the one Factory Workers Act applies to all these activities, irrespective of differences in the nature of the jobs and working conditions. Moreover, even the implementation of this poor law is negligible at the plant level. Rules such as those limiting hours of work and assigning minimum wage are routinely flouted.

The 1959 Act prohibits hiring of children under the age of 14, but a recent survey of 30 carpet manufacturing units showed that the industry grossly violates this stipulation. Almost

ethnic and language group as the primary school students.


Other possible programmes can be: establishing locally run day-care centers for pre-school children in poorer communities; starting remedial programs for students coming from poor school backgrounds; providing loans for university students from under-served communities who fail to qualify for scholarships or grants; and allocating certain percentage of seats in higher education for applicants from disadvantaged groups, particularly girls.

PAINFUL CHOICES

These suggestions on possible ways to alleviate educational disparities by no means exhaust the possibilities. And it would be a pipe dream to expect all of them to be implemented immediately by the new government. Political considerations will inevitably limit the feasibility of some of the recommended measures as they will be perceived as threats to the deeply ingrained interests of some powerful groups. Some other recommended options will obviously require deeper analysis and meticulous research.

Moreover, implementing the recommendations will require financial resources that are not easily available. Some savings can be realised by enhancing educational efficiency and reducing wastage, but such savings will not be sufficient to upgrade education. Considering the prospect for growth in the economy, the government's budget is not likely to grow much in the mid-term future, and the competition for budget any resources among the government programs will continue to be severe.

The forthcoming elected government will have to confront the need to decide where the budgetary axe should fall: on education and other human development programs, or on military spending, state ceremonies, mis-managed public corporations, or subsidies directed toward the urban higher income families.

All persons with school-age offspring now await action by the elected government. Nothing can be more harmful to the country than for such government, when it takes office, to procrastinate. The options are closing and the inevitable chain of consequences is already underway. Only an elected, responsible government can turn Nepali education around. 

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On the Way Up

by Kanak Mani Dixit

If democracy consolidates its gains and survives in Nepal, grassroots action may at last begin to stir and spread across these hills and plains. Village-level activism was discouraged during the Panchayat era, with local administrators preventing every "disruptive" act of empowerment.

Adjacent hills of Kumaon and Garhwal or Darjeeling, might have been in ferment, but on the Nepali surface all was calm. Now, in Nepal, there is bound to be acrimony, disgruntlement, factionalism and even violence, but this only means that we have entered the real world. Rather than fear anarchy and wish a return to the comforting but unequal warmth of the Panchayat flame, those who still define the agenda must adjust to new realities.

Himal, too, is busy adjusting to the new realities, as this our first issue after the Nepali *jana andolan* will show. We will now confront political issues directly rather than take refuge in figures of speech, subtle jabs, sarcasm and irony. We can now call a spade a spade and not a manual agricultural excavator.

But we do not propose to convert *Himal* into a political news-magazine. It will remain a development-sensitive, environment-conscious periodical that tackles the deeper conundrums of Himalayan society. We will concentrate on issue-based coverage, of which politics is but one aspect. In this present issue, we have focused overwhelmingly on Nepal, picking up long-neglected subjects and looking at the full agenda ahead.

Being free of censorship and self-censorship in our home ground also allows *Himal* to look more honestly at fundamental questions affecting life elsewhere in the region. This magazine will renew its efforts to grow as a useful information channel for thinkers, activists, administrators, and academics of the region.

Himal does not crave a mass market, but it does look forward to developing a small but sensitive readership which can carry on a discussion across frontiers and divisions of the mind -- discussion on earthy issues such as local-level initiatives, alternative development, representative government, ecological activism, and the politics of development.

The Kathmandu Spring has outlasted its 1968 Prague predecessor and has entered a soggy monsoon period. May it survive many more seasons and bring lasting change in this part of the Himalaya.

20 per cent of the industry work force are village children brought to Kathmandu by middle-men, to work in the carpet sweatshops for nominal wages under unhygienic conditions.

A WOMAN'S PLACE

The existing laws which discriminate against women on property matters also show how far we have to go before we can be proud defenders of the Declaration on the Right to Development. Even the Panchayat Constitution, which came into force in 1962, guaranteed equality before law. But this basic guarantee was violated only a year later in the *Naya Muluki Ain*, the country's general code. The *Ain* incorporates chapters on partition, succession, adoption and marriage that are clearly discriminatory against women.

Under current law, sons get right of equal partition in the property of the family but a

more for the cruelty of laws than this reversal of property rights against a woman.

A man can adopt a girl child while his wife cannot do so as long as her husband lives. Under certain stipulated conditions, a man can marry a second wife with nary a thought even if his first wife is still alive and staying with him under the same roof. The Land Reform Act does not provide room for the acquisition of tenancy right by the daughter or daughter-in-law after the death of the male tenant. The Panchayat Constitution and the Citizenship Act of 1963 prohibit the citizenship to the foreign husband or children of a female Nepali citizen.

MEANS TO AN END

The discrimination existing under labour law and family law are cited here to give a glimpse of inadequacies and contradictions that riddle Nepali legislation. The outright discrimination under law victimises not only workers, children and women, but other weaker sections as well. In a country where feudalism still reigns supreme and where anachronistic laws do not raise eyebrows of even of their victims, the advent of multi-party democracy must provide at least the impetus to begin to right the wrongs.

If and when Nepalis receive the wise and generous Constitution they deserve, the time will have come to start cleaning up the country's laws. The guide to such a clean-up campaign should be the articles of the Declaration on the Right to Development.

Multi-party democracy is but a means towards socio-economic development. The future government under a hopefully progressive Constitution will have the task of ensuring first that bad law is scrapped and good law is enacted. Next, it will have

the much harder and longer-term task to ensure that the laws are implemented to benefit the oppressed and destitute. That is what representative government is supposed to be all about.

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Lady Justice: Does she know of the right to development?

daughter, to avail of that right, will have to remain unmarried till she is 35. The unmarried daughter cannot dispose of the property she receives by way of partition without her father's consent. If she inherits property as per such stipulation but then gets married, she loses her rights and her property devolves back to her brothers or nephews. Nothing speaks

S Ranjit

[Archives]

"OUR CAPITAL IS THE PEOPLE"

Former Nepali Prime Minister B.P. Koirala, speaking on the nexus between democracy and development, as interviewed in the Jan/Feb 1978 issue of Worldview magazine. Koirala had traveled to the United States in late 1977 for medical treatment.

Democracy alone, without economic development, becomes meaningless. On the question of economic development, democracy is also necessary. In conditions of acute poverty, when there is not enough capital for development purposes, democracy alone is that institution that can get people involved in the process of development. Our slogan is: "We need democracy for development purposes also."

There is a misconception among some socialists that since people live in conditions of poverty, the real need is food and shelter and the eradication of diseases and that liberal democracy is of secondary importance -- that priority should be given to economic development. This is a misconception; according to our analysis, we cannot eradicate poverty unless we motivate the people. Our capital is the people. We don't have the machinery, and we don't have financial capital; we have labour. So we have got to motivate our people for developmental purposes. And that motivation can be provided only by institutions that are democratic and responsible to the people and reflective of the aspirations of the people. This is the best way to provide the leadership that can involve the people in the developmental process...

What are the resources for our development purposes? We could accept outside aid, but that can only have a marginal impact on our development. Our development starts when we mobilize the people. We have manpower, and land. We have to mobilize this manpower. You know, every year Nepalis migrate to India to the tune of a few hundred thousand, seeking jobs. We export human beings rather than goods. So this human material is not being used in our development. In our country we want to have small industries that will be labor intensive, where we do not need too much capital, where we can employ many people, rather than employ a small number of people and big machines. We have to improve the productivity of land, without introducing machines, but improving the plow, improving the breed of the cattle that pulls the plow, and so on.

So -- democracy for development. We say that we want democracy not only for political rights and democratic rights but also for the purposes of mobilizing people, getting people involved in the process of development, getting people involved in the process of the formulation and implementation of policy.

What is being done today is that experts trained at Harvard and at London universities' economics departments prepare a very good plan at the top. Then the plan is sent to the districts. The district authorities issue some kind of *fiat* for implementation. And the people are asked to work on that plan. No local leadership is created. It is through a

bureaucratic machinery, with a psychological antagonism between the bureaucracy and the people. And the people start thinking that the job of development is the responsibility of the government, with participation by the people unwelcome. That is

why, despite all the aid that has been received, there has been no development.

There are, unfortunately, unthinking intellectuals in prestigious campuses who subscribe to this kind of stupid argument about development, that democracy is a useless luxury for the Third World. I can't understand how a dictator, who is not responsible to anybody, not even to his people, can develop faster than leaders from the people themselves and responsible to them by periodic free elections. As long as Indira Gandhi was a dictator, or developing into an authoritarian ruler, there were publicists, professors, and writers who thought that she was doing the right thing, that what she was doing was needed.

According to our conception, democracy and economic development are not contradictory concepts, they are complementary concepts. As a matter of fact, economic development starts from politics. If you have appropriate political instruments that are responsible to the aspirations of the people, only then can you start thinking about development and serving the people. Otherwise it is all humbug.

And then, secondly, who is to decide who will be that authority who will have dictatorial power to develop? Not professors from Harvard University. They are not going to select them. It will be some man riding on a white charger, who will say that "I am destined to develop the country, and the powers must belong to me." It is a very simple question: Even if we agree, for the sake of argument -- and I want to emphasize that I don't agree -- that a poor country needs authoritarian rule, who will be that authority? Who is going to protect the people from the authoritarian power? Whoever has the longest sword? We will have to measure the length of the sword to decide who will have the maximum power in the state. I react very strongly to this kind of propaganda. And unfortunately there are intellectuals who make these kind of arguments for the Third World...



Koirala

[Reflections]

EASTERN EUROPE

From the May 1990 issue of Panoscope, an article by Hungarian green activist Janos Vargha, in which he argues that multi-party democracy and free-market economies will not magically solve the environmental problems of Eastern Europe.

The crisis of the political-economic system in Eastern Europe is risky, but it is also necessary: without melting away the old structures, there is little hope that a more sensible social system will emerge. The break with the totalitarian system and the return to the tradition of European political democracy is now within reach. It is also an essential step for bringing about the end of the ecological crisis.

For these reasons, a strong tie has developed between the civilian environmentalists and the democratic movements. The question is: How long will this alliance last?

Eastern Europe still has to learn by experience that parliamentary democracy will not in itself solve today's global ecological problems. Even those societies which are more successful in guarding their democratic traditions are mainly concerned with the non-human and non-biological effects of technology -- like profit, for example.

The serious environmental problems in Eastern Europe can probably only be partially resolved by a return to democracy. Can there be a solution which does not reproduce the crisis, or spread it to more and more areas of life? Can there be a solution which ensures in the long term that the biosphere and society will survive and that fundamental resources will be preserved? Eastern Europe must find the answer soon.

[Commentary]

WHY SHY AWAY FROM REGIONALISM?

T.N. Khoshoo, former Secretary, Department of Environment, Government of India, in an article in The Sunday Observer, making a plea for a regional ecology plan.

Whenever environmental deterioration takes place in any country, there is ultimately a good measure of regionality and globality about it. Thus, while geographical borders of countries are national, the environmental borders are regional, if not global. In this region, there is nature's big gift, the Himalayas, which is a guardian, extending from east to west. The region between the Himalaya and the Indian Ocean is one continuous land mass.

We need to change diplomatic methodology and adopt new diplomacy which takes note of growing economic and environmental interdependence of countries. While national sovereignty ends at the national border, environmental borders go far beyond and are better defined on the basis of major mountain systems, watersheds, biogeographical provinces, ecosystems, atmospheric transport of pollutants and the like. From the environmental point of view, it is the region and not a country in isolation which is important. In countries of this region, these questions need to be deliberated upon collectively. Therefore, while formulating foreign policy, not only foreign service personnel and economists, but also space and environmental scientists need to be included.

Legally, deforestation in a country's catchment on watershed may be its sole sovereign prerogative, but the downstream catastrophic effects of such action by way of floods, soil erosion and siltation become trans-boundary questions. Similarly, while a few rich countries have benefitted from the use of fossil fuels, they have passed the environmental costs to all the countries of the world.

The most pressing need is for a multilateral agreement in our region to rehabilitate the sick Himalaya, involving Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The Himalayas are responsible for giving the region its distinctive climate, monsoon etc. and with this mountain system being sick, the plains extending from west to east though having great potential to feed the region, are progressively being desertified. The first signs of such desertification are already visible. To contain the Thar desert, there is a need for a bilateral agreement between Pakistan and India. If SAARC thinks of a contingency plan against the possible sea-level rise to save people in Bangladesh, Andamans and Nicobar, Lakshadweep and Maldives together with habitations in entire coastal belt, then there is need for all the countries of the region to come to terms with one another. Otherwise, the region will face ecological refugees on an unprecedented scale.

[Commentary]

IN THE FOG LIES SOMETHING MUCH MORE HARMFUL

From "Out of Nepal" a column in the 5 March 1990 issue of The Independent, London, by Tony Allen-Mills.

For much of the latter half of this century, it has been almost impossible to think of Nepal without conjuring up pink-tinged images of the Sherpa tigers of the snows, the plucky Gurkha lions of the valleys, and the divine abodes of the gods. My favourite guidebook on Nepal reflects perfectly the requisite style: "In the distant dawn of recorded time, so legend tells us, the Valley of Kathmandu was a turquoise lake. Upon this lake rested a wondrous lotus flower, from which emanated a blue light of awesome magnificence."

I have found before in Nepal that it ill behooves an outsider to disturb these pleasant clichés. There seems to exist, among Nepal's many friends abroad, a disturbing refusal to acknowledge that somewhere deep in the fog lies something much more harmful than romance.

The popular perception of a proud, courageous mountain kingdom has sprung such formidable roots that it sometimes seems people do not want to read reports of cruelty, misery and oppression. A good story about Nepal discusses rubbish removal from the trekking camps around Everest, or conservation of the one-horned rhinoceros. A bad story mentions corruption, police brutality and the lack of democratic rights in a country that proclaims itself a democracy.

...It is impossible not to love Nepal. But the charm and humour of its people and its incomparable natural allure should not be allowed to blind anyone to its serious shortcomings. Nepal remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Many Nepalese still live in near-feudal conditions. There is rank corruption in government. And whatever is said about the merits of executive monarchy, Nepal's greatest problem is that no serious outlet exists for orthodox political opposition. King Birendra will soon learn, as so

many autocratic rulers have lately learned, that you cannot control your enemies by suppressing them. The movement for greater democracy has to be addressed sensibly and realistically. Otherwise Nepal may be plunged into torment that no romantic fog will conceal.

[Poetry]

"TO THE PEOPLE OF THE DARJEELING HILLS"

Message sent to the first conference of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), organised in Darjeeling, by the Chotanagpur Chapter of INTACH.

May your hills prosper with your planting,
May trees sun-crowned fill your beautiful valleys,
May your children laugh and play under the healthy trees,
May your waterfalls never dry up due to deforestation,
May the love of trees be foremost in your hearts
Nor for the money they may earn, but as
Messengers of plenty from the Almighty.

[Speech]

WHO WILL PAY FOR SUS- TAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

From a lecture given in Colombo by Gamani Corea, former Secretary-General of UNCTAD, as reported in IFDA Dossier 78, July/September 1990.

The Brundtland Commission, I feel, stopped short of spelling out the implications of sustainable development. An environmentally sound pattern of development, environmentally sound technologies, environmentally sound sectors, environmentally sound solutions to the problems of energy are all likely, in the present context, to cost more than less. If you want to reduce the pollution generated by motor vehicles, you put catalyzers on your cars. But it is a costly process and if you were to extend that analogy to reduce the pollution arising out of industrial production, the chances are that the process is going to be more rather than less costly. If the Third World countries do not cut their forests in order to settle their excess population, they have to look to industry and to other avenues of employment which may prove, in fact, to be more costly alternatives. So I feel that one has to be frank and admit that sustainable development will require more rather than less resources. In my view sustainable development will only be possible if there is reform and reorganisation of the whole international monetary system to transfer substantial, even massive, resources to Third World countries so as to make it possible for them to grow and to preserve and avoid damage to the environment at the same time.

And then, more fundamentally, there is this basic dilemma: it is a fact that the Third World countries are seeking to reach the *per capita* income levels of the rich countries. But it would be ecologically impossible for them to attain this goal. There would not be sufficient non-renewable resources in the world to make it possible; there would be too much poisonous emissions to make life on the planet bearable. So what then is the moral of this in the long run? I ask from environmentalists, I ask this from people in the North. Is the moral one that points to "one world, two lifestyles"? One lifestyle in which the industrialised countries can keep to the

habits that they have developed using up non-renewable resources, discharging toxic wastes and polluting both air and water? And another lifestyle for the Third World countries following a path of environmental soundness at the cost of lower levels of living? I do not think that is a sound answer. I think that the logic of the environmental debate points to the need for a revolution of lifestyles in the industrialised countries themselves so as to provide a model that can be pervasive, that and be valid, throughout the world as a whole."

[Commentary]

MR. HIMALAYAN ENVIRONMENT

From an article by Aamir Ali in the travel supplement of the Times of India, 30 March 1990 on protecting the mountain areas from the "stampede" of tourists to destroy them.

The Swiss Alpine Club has recently appointed a permanent official solely for the protection of the environment. Shouldn't there be at least one Mr. Environment for the Himalayas? He could easily be financed by a small head tax on all visitors.

This is not a plea to stop tourism. That would be impossible anyway. It is a plea to regulate its future development far more strictly and that is not an easy task. If there is a lesson to be learnt from the experience of the Alps, it is this: protection of the mountain environment needs determined action and hard work at all levels, from the highest government authorities to the lowliest individual. Interests of local people have to be catered for so that they have a vested interest in protecting the environment. The Swiss, for example, have an active programme of aid to mountain communities.

Protection needs some down-to-earth action. Perhaps one way to start is to talk less about the romantic attractions of mountain wilderness areas and more about toilets, garbage disposal and fuel.

Once there is a heavier investment in tourism in the Himalayas, it will be difficult to fight destruction because money talks, and loudly too. Before this happens, I suggest that the Himalayas should be divided -- with the co-operation of all the Himalayan countries -- into three zones.

The first would be open for intense tourism development: climbers and trekkers would be welcome and infrastructure provided for them. Come one come all.

The second one would be open only by special permission to a limited number of climbers and scientists. There are already a number of national parks: these could be upgraded and perhaps even linked.

The third one would be inviolate and kept free of human intrusion. It would be a grade or two above the national park status. This raises some basic questions. Do we want to preserve some corners of the earth free from man's interference or do we want to open up every bit of it to human exploitation. Do we have the right to use up all the earth? Or are we willing to leave some space for the snow leopards, gurrals and the abominable snowman?

As Reinhold Messner wrote recently, "Man, through the centuries, has always chosen places which seemed special and declared them holy and untouchable. There, the Gods lived... Today more than ever we have a need for unexplored wilderness."

And our Gods have always lived in the Himalayas.

Tamangs: The Ethos of Balanced Exchange

**ORDER IN PARADOX
MYTH, RITUAL AND EXCHANGE
AMONG NEPAL'S TAMANG**

by David Holmberg

Cornell University Press

1989, price not given

ISBN 0-8014-2247-7

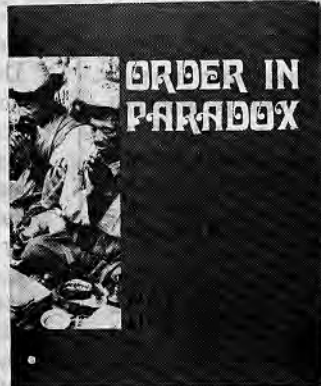
Review by Dor Bahadur Bista

There is order in apparent paradox between contradictory myths, conflicting rituals and equalising exchange between unequals among the Tamang people of Nepal. David Holmberg's excellent presentation of the "normalising ethos" and value system of the Tamang community in a village in Dhading district north-east of Kathmandu is in fact a representation of Nepali society at large.

Holmberg, who teaches anthropology at Cornell University in the United States, has been a careful observer of the Tamang community for many years. In his latest work, he shows how the Tamang manage to maintain an egalitarian social order within their society while living in close proximity to high caste Hindus.

Tamangs are marked off as a distinct group "as the consumers of beef and particularly carrion beef." As such, they have become "commensally, sexually, and legally separate from other groups in the official hierarchy of the codes and occupied a relatively low position." But Holmberg emphasizes, "that Tamang in the areas of this research respect the sanctity of the cow and even perform standard Hindu rituals of nurturance and devotion towards cows...The as-

sociation of the Tamang with violence to cows, then, does not reflect contemporary Tamang practices." Such attitudes rather "reveal a political agenda...To this day, accusations of violence to cows are voiced when factions vie for political dominion on the local level."



However, it is true though that the "contemporary Tamang clearly view themselves as a distinct

religious society, one based on the authority of lamas as opposed to Brahmins." The Tamang in the village where Holmberg did his research do not recognize "Bahun as ritually superior." Whenever a less influential Tamang acts with deference to a local Upadhyaya Bahun, this reflects power, not ritual purity.

Tamang social imagination is structured by the idea that the world should be governed by reciprocity. Within the bounds of Tamang society, goods are potentially infinite in amount and can theoretically be continually divided so that all receive their due portion.

Lest it might be construed that all of this sounds rather naive and simplistic, Holmberg states that the Tamang are very much aware of the real-life limitations. They are aware of "fear-some figures of disruptive, destructive, and degenerative excess untempered by the self-denial or restraint essential to continuing reciprocal relations."

Holmberg shows that the structures and events of Tamang society are not transparently unproblematic. The Tamang reassert an ethos

of balanced exchange because it is tenuous and constantly threatened in the sway of human and divine affairs.

Tamang women are coequal with men in the management of the household and are directly involved in the consumption and distribution of household products. Women are powerful in significant ways and serve as mediators in most aspects of life. Moving more easily than men across the formal oppositions of society, women occupy a privileged position in negotiations and communications upon which all intercourse depends. Divorce does not alter the prospects of remarriage for Tamang women because of the higher status of wife-givers (unlike the higher status of wife-receivers in many other mid-hill communities). This automatically raises women's status their society.

The Tamang worship various deities, conduct various rituals and commission as many as eight different categories of ritual specialists. But they make clear distinction between two classes of divinities, the positive divinities and the harmful agents. Divinities are like headmen or kings and harmful agents are like the untouchables of village society: the former are wanted but reluctant guests, the latter uninvited but persistent presences. In general, the Tamang imagine divinities as though there is potentially an absence of relationship and evil as though there is an "excess of relationship".

Order in Paradox is extremely interesting and readable; it makes a valuable addition to the list of textbooks for students in anthropology and sociology and also for those interested in the study of folk religion.

D.B. Bista, author of *The People of Nepal*, is Professor of Anthropology at Tribhuvan University.

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Travels in Five Tibets

THE MYTH OF SHANGRI-LA

by Peter Bishop

University of California Press

Berkeley

1990, price not given

ISBN 0-520-06686-3

Review by John Frederick

The *Myth of Shangri-La* by Peter Bishop, who teaches at the South Australian College of Advanced Education, is a study of Tibet in the collective imagination of the British over a 200-year period. It is not a study of the land and people, but of a collection of imaginal "Tibets", products of the travel literature from 1773 to 1969.

Imaginal places are common to every society. They are created, reformed and dissolved according to changing social, religious and geo-political consciousness. Kailas for South Asian Hindus, El Dorado for sixteenth-century Spanish, and the Island of Origin for Hawaiians are lands invested with a people's dreams and aspirations: peace, wealth, pleasure, sanctity, equality. They are spun into being by storytellers, poets, film-makers and travel writers. Some places are contemporary, some ancient -- in all, reality is subordinated to fantasy. The modern Asian myth of America, fat and rich, diplomas and videos dropping from the trees, has little relation to the hard work, iron streets and tacky shopping malls experienced by Americans themselves. Westerners, in their turn, willingly ignore the cultural degradation behind the painted masks and palm trees of Bali.

For Westerners, Tibet has been one imaginal place among many: the Andes, the sources of the Nile, the Arctic, the European Alps. Bishop has chosen his topic well. The centuries from the entrance of the first modern British traveller in 1774 to the flight of the Dalai Lama in 1959 "coincided almost exactly with the rise and fall of European, particularly, British, aspirations." Bishop's examination of primarily British travel writing is intended to be a window "into the changing aspirations, the soul, of modern Europe."

There has been and still is no single "Tibet" in the Western imagination. There has been a succession -- evolving, declining, contradicting each other. Bishop chooses to delineate five, with reasonable historical justification, and is

careful to note that within each a myriad of smaller "Tibets" are subsumed.

In the first, from 1773 to 1792, Tibet developed in the British imagination from an

undefined geographical location to a "place", the rudiments of a literary landscape aesthetic formed, and from disillusionment with Christianity and Western spirituality there began a fascination with the Tibetan style of Buddhism, at once highly literate and rational, patently idolatrous and

mystical. Following the Gurkha invasions of Tibet the country was closed to travelers. Bishop shows how the recurrent inaccessibility of Tibet contributed to its creation as a sacred place, and "sealed Western fantasies into an almost closed vessel."

During the next two "Tibets", from 1792 to 1875, few travellers managed to cross the borders. Almost none reached Lhasa. The British Empire expanded and with it expanded its geo-political imagination. Britain looked outward. "Nineteenth-century rationalism provided idealised images of coherence, unification and identity (of foreign civilisations) which belied intense internal social fragmentation and conflict."

With India and the rest of the Empire, the Himalaya was systematically surveyed. Brian Hodgson made his immense study of the geology, customs, languages, botany and zoology of the Himalaya. Joseph Hooker and other naturalists lingered on the closed borders of Tibet, recording the mountain landscape with scientific precision.

The genre of travel writing was forming, in some confusion. Mid-century Rationalism lay in a rumpled bed with the transcendent visions of emergent European Romanticism. The genre found cohesion in the publication of the fourth volume of John Ruskin's *Modern Painters* in 1854, at the peak of British mountain enthusiasm, when the Alps were the focus of physical challenge and the Himalaya the focus of mountain fantasy. Ruskin's landscape aesthetic combined careful observation and precise description with a subdued, unromantic evocation of the inner experience of the

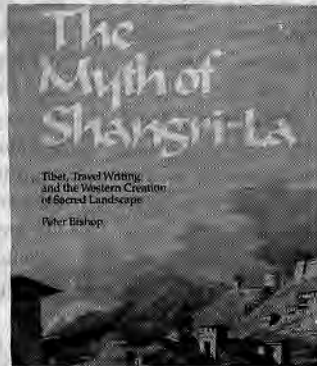
landscape. With Ruskin, says Bishop, the modern literary relationship of man and the wilderness began.

During the closing years of the nineteenth century, the fourth "Tibet", travelers once again entered, from every direction. "In 1895 one British journalist exclaimed, 'Tibet may be said to be at present in a state of siege.'" Russian, French and British explorers vied with each other to cross the cold plateau and enter Lhasa. Few succeeded, but most wrote about the attempt and the sub-genre of Tibet travel writing was born. British bookshops displayed an array of mythical landscapes: noble, heroic journeys, mystical pilgrimages, high adventure, and ethnological fantasies. Forbidden Lhasa and its God-King, the Dalai Lama, were the *axis mundi* of the sacred place.

For Victorian travelers, the world was closing in. Tibet, almost alone, seemed untouched. "The increasing sense of global unity was accompanied by a realisation of global fragility, destruction, loss...The deforestation of the Himalaya was already causing concern and sadness even at this early date..." But perhaps the deepest sense of loss, as well a source of irritation, was caused by mass tourism and its effect on the wild places of the world. "Those who had suffered the wind and cold of the Tibetan plateau thought themselves, not incorrectly, an elite. They were explorers, not tourists, struggling with contradictory desires to explore the land and to keep it untouched, to preserve in the world one last sacred place."

Until the twentieth century, the fifth "Tibet", there was an essential unity in the travel writers' visions and thus in the British collective fantasy. From 1904 to 1959, Bishop sees a fragmentation of the fantasy into four quite distinct and contradictory imaginal places. Different visions were inevitable as information about Tibet accumulated, as western travel writing evolved and as the writers responded personally to the pain of the two World Wars and the Great Depression of the 1930s.

One Tibet was descendant from the long fascination with Buddhism: the land of the lamas and mystical accomplishment, the land of spiritual perfection in a debased world. This vision was exemplified by Alexandra David-Neel and, to Bishop's credit, the scholar Giuseppe Tucci. In contrast, there was the "realistic" Tibet of Spencer Chapman and others -- pictures of mundane everyday life, un-inquisitive and anti-religious.



The other two Tibets of the twentieth century were, in Bishop's consideration, the final, dissolving forms of the cultural fantasy, the conclusion of the growing, changing vision which he had traced over 200 years. In these, Tibet the geographical reality was disassociated with Tibet the imaginal place. In 1949, the American tourism writer Lowell Thomas and his son visited Lhasa. Lowell Junior deposited upon the world a model of the Tibetan tourism fantasy -- cultural resonance, historical depth and sensitivity to landscape had disappeared beneath cliches and expressions of naive amazement. The other Tibet, the utopia, was fixed in the public imagination by James Hilton's immensely popular *Lost Horizon*, published in 1933, during the Depression. *Lost Horizon* dramatised the disillusionment



Utara Creas

of the West, its spiritual emptiness and fears of social disorder. The perfect land of Shangri-La reflected acute Western longings: peace, righteousness, psychic fulfillment. The collective fantasy of Tibet had become abstract, the land had disappeared.

Even before the exit of the Dalai Lama and the dismantling of traditional society, Tibet itself had ceased to be the locus of the Tibet myth. Realism had turned on the house lights and bared the mysteries, the tourism writers had reduced the noble and remarkable to the banal, and the utopian vision had removed Shangri-La from earth altogether. Tibet had become, in Bishop's words, "an empty vessel".

The Myth of Shangri-La is a book for academics. It is extraordinarily rich in analyses, but is somewhat confused by a hazy methodology based in archetypal psychology. Bishop examines travel texts with tools from a variety of disciplines. Each examination is valid and revealing, but all are jumbled together; analytical perspectives change from paragraph to paragraph with no apparent order. This is unfortunate, for the book is likely destined for graduate library stacks, rather than the audience upon which it could have made a profound impact: travel writers themselves.

The tools of French de-constructionism are skillfully used to place the texts within appropriate geo-political, social and psychological contexts. Humanistic geography, such as Bachelard's and Lowenthal's work on the per-

ception of place and landscape, illuminates the evolution of the landscape aesthetic in travel writing. Bishop charts the development of the Western fascination, and later obsession, with Tibetan Buddhism and Eastern spirituality with great skill. His several-page definition of the art of travel writing should be required reading for every travel writer. One wishes each of these studies were a separate monograph.

The book stops abruptly with a cursory conclusive chapter, as if Bishop himself were defeated by "the emptying of the vessel". Today, utopian fantasy is "rarer than sightings

of the yeti". Every day accounts have become the domain of anthropologists working with Tibetan and related peoples in the surrounding Himalaya. With the establishment of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, the spiritual quest has dried up and though spiritual journeys still occur, "with few exceptions the accounts are cliched, unreflective survivals of a bygone genre" (his exceptions are David Snellgrove, Peter Matthiessen and Andrew Harvey, among others).

Tourism literature, particularly adventure tourism literature, is booming of course, beckoning tourists to the last hidden place. This literature, says Bishop, "has had profound influence on the shaping of the contemporary images of Tibetan landscape and culture." What this influence is and why "contemporary images" no longer constitute a Western collective imagining, Bishop does not explain. One feels he has been confined by his own academic model of the creation, evolution and dissolution of a sacred place.

The current interest in Tibet, although primarily touristic, would seem to indicate that Tibet is not yet an "empty vessel". It is regretted that Bishop has not looked a little closer at the travel writing of the 1970s and 80s, at two schools in particular: the contemporary descendants of the spiritual quest literature, and the new travel-realism writers of Britain, Ireland and Eastern Europe.

Bishop is correct in stating that the focus of the spiritual quest was displaced with the movement of high lamas to the West. However, he seems unaware of the literary result of that movement. The lamas' Western students have been translating and practicing Tibetan Buddhism for the last 15 or 20 years. They are knowledgeable about Tibetan history, iconography, and the lineages of teachings, and their vision of Tibet is informed by the great Tibetan literary tradition itself. Their writing, like Keith Dowman's *The Power-Places of Central Tibet*, based on a nineteenth-century Tibetan pilgrims' guide, has incorporated the Tibetans' vision of their own culture.

The new "hard-boiled" school of travel writing, well represented in the periodic travel editions of the British magazine *Granta*, is in part a child of war journalism, in part a product of Europe's powerful ecological and democratic consciousness. It is hyper-realistic, humorous, acute, lightly self-deprecatory and sensitive to the nuance of recent history. These writers have not yet touched Tibet as they have touched other countries in pain: Cambodia, Uganda, Haiti. But they will. The travel-realism writers will see Tibet with its bones laid bare, while the Buddhist writers will explore Tibet with full knowledge of its literary and religious traditions. Both will create new imaginal places, and the vessel will be filled again. △

J. Frederick is a travel writer and the editor of *Shangri-La*, the in-flight magazine of Royal Nepal Airlines.

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Decision Making in Village Nepal

by Casper J. Miller

Sahayogi Press, Kathmandu

1990, NRs225

Miller studies the "context, process, nature and techniques of decision making" among farming families in order to help development workers facilitate "people's decisions to participate in local development". Research was conducted among farming families in the villages of Jhadewa Valley east of the Tansen town in central Nepal. Miller concludes that "in public and in private, the partineal and patrifocal family structure is respected and mirrored in the functioning of the decision-making process." Ideological factors that affect decisions are prestige (*ijjat*), caste-centred morality (*dharma*) and family-centred morality. However, "amoral power" not *dharma*, prevails when haves and have-nots come into conflict due to the "non-ideological pressure of economic necessity". Because of their lack of land, poor farmers "face the recurring temptation to utter cries of bitter frustration". Even decentralisation at the district or village level will not be sufficient to bring about people's participation in development if the village people are immobilised at the individual level and locked into individual family units. Miller concludes that there is a need for the poor to bond together to create organisations linking them to the larger government institutions and development agencies. "In this way farming families can free themselves from amoral familism and grow into broader understandings of *dharma*. No one but the poor need act for the poor when they act together."

Regional Migrations, Ethnicity and Security: The South Asian Case

by Lok Raj Baral

Sterling Publishers, New Delhi

1990, IRs150

This book focuses on various aspects of inter-state migration in South Asia and their impact on existing ethnic tension and internal "politico-social equation" of South Asian countries. According to the author, who visited all the countries of South Asia except the Maldives for the purposes of this study, no country is experiencing bitter ethnic conflict stemming from clashes between immigrants and local people. All major conflicts originate from within the countries and their causes are basically economic, political and psychological. Inter-state migration in South Asia is rooted in history and can only be controlled through raising the standard of living within each country and a "minimum understanding on regulating... international borders." The internal aspect of population growth is more dangerous than "the overplayed problem of immigrants". The recent trend of arming tribals and minority groups has added a significant dimension to inter-state relations. The prospect of Nepali-Bhutia conflict in Bhutan cannot be ruled out and both Indian Nepalis and Nepali migrants from Nepal may aggravate matters. Unless Bhutan sticks to strict regulation of its borders with India, its survival as a nation-state will be in jeopardy. India has absorbed a sizeable number of Nepalis who work in the unorganised sector, but there is every likelihood that they may be treated as

"stateless persons" if they fail to return to Nepal and take citizenship. Indians in Nepal also face similar problems. On the whole, inter-state migration in South Asia is in decline as a sequel to mass movements and regulatory measures, many of them psychological, adopted by the regional states.

Incentives for Development:

The Key to Equity

by Denis Goulet

New Horizons Press, New York

1989, US\$14.50

ISBN 0-945257-03-1

Another path-breaking book by a leading scholar and advocate of social justice in Third World development. The basic premise of this work is that incentives, both material and moral, hold the key to equitable development and can be fashioned as deliberate policy instruments to achieve that goal. Participation by people and a proper incentive system are the only sound basis for long-term development. The author examines the role of incentive systems in both socialist and capitalist societies, and includes a penetrating analysis of rural and urban development projects in Brazil. He concludes with the presentation of a new theory based on participation as a moral incentive.

Politics and the People:

In Search of a Humane India

by Rajni Kothari

New Horizons Press

1989, US\$28.50

ISBN 0-945257-18-X

Recognised as one of the early initiators of the "alternative movement", Kothari has dealt with the subject in its various facets over a long period. His writings reflect a growing concern with moving towards a more humane, equitable, and democratic future, particularly for the colonised, and exploited and oppressed peoples in all societies -- whom he calls the "victims of history". In his earlier works, Kothari's concern was with creating viable states and polities in developing countries. Since then, his concern has shifted more to "the condition of the people," and to the struggles of the oppressed. This shift from "global structures" to the "rights of peoples" has also taken him into the whole realm of civil society, the structures of oppression that inform it, and the struggles for freedom and democracy that emanate from it. The present work takes him beyond alternative development into the new upsurge of ethnicity in both its positive and its negative connotations.

Modern Nepal:

A Political History (1769-1955)

by Rishikesh Shah

Manohar Publications, New Delhi

1990, IRs550 (two volumes)

ISBN 81-85425-02-7

These two volumes provide a running account of political trends and developments in Nepal during the two centuries following the rise of Prithvinarayan Shah, founder of Nepal's Shah dynasty, till the end

of the "post Tribhuvan revolutionary era until 1955", when King Tribhuvan died. The volumes takes the reader through the ascendance of the Gorkha *raja* Prithvinarayan, the rise and fall of Bhimsen Thapa, the Kot Massacre of 1846, the emergence of the Rana prime ministers, their inter-family feuds, and the aftermath of the 1950-51 revolution. The volumes contain portraits or photographs of the major political Nepali personalities over the last two hundred years.

Hydronet*

Reihold Metzler, editor

Micro Hydropower Network

Available free

ISSN 0935-0578

This is a thrice-yearly international newsletter published by an European appropriate technology group for dissemination of information, on micro-hydro-power techniques and experiences. It brings together hydro-power enthusiasts from as far afield as Papua New Guinea, Ladakh, Vietnam and Ecuador. The most recent issue received contains a detailed study of the development and installation of some 600 small scale hydro-power units throughout Nepal. It includes an interview with Kiran Man Singh of the Agricultural Development Bank of Nepal, which financed the majority of turbine-mill installations in the country. A letter from the island of Chiloe, located off the southern coast of Chile informs readers that Chiloe has water mills similar to the Nepali *ghattas* described in an earlier issue. HYDRONET: FAKT, Gansheidestrass 43, D-7000 Stuttgart 1, Germany.

Nepal: Perspective on Continuity and Change

Kamal P. Malla, editor

Centre for Nepal and

Asian Studies, Kathmandu

1989, NRs450

This compilation provides a detailed update on present Nepali (but pre *jana andolan*) society from a Nepali perspective. Various facets of Nepali life are presented by the following contributors: Bal Kumar K.C on physiography, Harka Gurung on ecological change, Vidya Bir Singh Kansakar on population, Ram Bilas Pandey on ancient Nepal, Dhanavajra Vajracaryaa on medieval Nepal, Ludwig F. Stiller, on modern Nepal, Jagadish Chandra Regmi on religion, Prayag Raj Sharma on culture and society, Dor Bahadur Bista on structure of society, B.P. Shrestha on planning and development, Ram P. Yadav on agriculture, P.P. Timilsina on industrialisation, Mahesh Banskota on the economy, Devendra Raj Pandey on the political economy, Ram P. Rajbahak on trade, Devendra Raj Upadhaya on monarchy and political institutions, Lok Raj Baral on political culture, Ganesh Raj Sharma on monarchy and democratic development, Y.N. Khanal on relations with neighbouring countries, Dhruva Kumar on national security and foreign policy, Suresh R. Sharma on education, Lain S. Bangdel on sculptural art, Abhi Subedi on literature, and Kamal P. Malla on language and society.

People's Participation in Himalayan Eco-System Development:

A Plan for Action

by Madan Lal Dewan

Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi

1989, IRs300

The writer, a soil scientist and a former official of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, in nine chapters discusses the degradation of the Himalayan environment and proposes strategies for conservation of the Himalaya. His plan of action emphasises the need for political will, professional skill and people's action. Dewan says the impact of the Chipko movement and the Sukhomajari watershed management strategy has shown clearly the power of people's action. "Since the Himalayas are studied with universities and research institutions, the faculty and students can take the lead in implementing a charter of nature in their respective areas." The writer informs *Himal* that the publishers offers a discount of 30 per cent on the cover price for readers in the Himalayan region.

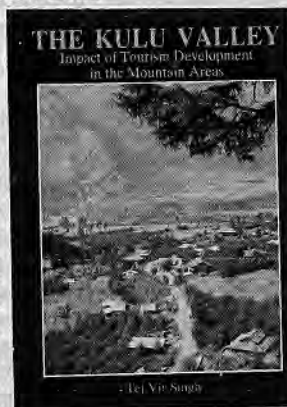
The Kulu Valley: Impact of Tourism Development in the Mountain Areas

by Tej Vir Singh

Himalayan Books, New Delhi

1989, IRs550

Author Singh, who founded the Centre for Tourism Research in Lucknow in 1976, reports on tourism development and its impact on Kulu Valley in Himachal Pradesh. Writes Singh: "This piece of biosphere remained almost a closed ecosystem until recently when mechanised transport brought tourism in its wake, overwhelming the bucolic Manali with tourists and straining capacities, besides posing psychological problems in the host community." The monograph was written while Singh was Senior Fellow at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu.



Mountain Research and Development*

Vol 10, No 1, Feb 1990

Jack & Pauline Ives, editors

International Mountain Society

Davis, California

The latest issue of this quarterly journal, now in its tenth year of publication, contains four case studies by geographers on "physical adaptations and local conservation and development strategies found in villages across the Himalayan hills". The studies deal with conservation practices at an upper-elevation village in West Nepal, local resources management

in Nepal, traditional knowledge and conservation as a basis for development in West Nepal, and range conservation and Sherpa livestock management in the Khumbu. Other articles deal with the tropical mountain agro-systems of Rwanda, two South-East Asian national parks, an analysis of land-use options in Chitwan, Nepal, and conditions for local level community forestry action. According to the editors, ICIMOD in Kathmandu has undertaken to purchase 200 subscriptions for distribution in the Himalaya-Karakoram region.

A Himalayan Ornithologist: The Life and Work of Brian Houghton Hodgson

by Mark Cocker and Carol Inskipp

Oxford University Press

1989, price not listed

This book is about the remarkable 19th century naturalist, scholar and administrator who was for many years (starting in 1825) the British Resident in Kathmandu. Despite severe restrictions placed on his movements during his years in Nepal, Hodgson single-handedly laid the foundations of Himalayan ornithology, observed 120 species then unknown to science, built one of the largest bird collections on Asia, and pioneered Buddhist studies, anthropology and natural history. Everything seemed to interest Hodgson, from the cultivation of camellia bushes to pre-historical migrations of the human race. While an acknowledged authority during his lifetime, Hodgson's name slipped into obscurity in the 1900s. This new book is a laudable attempt to revive his memory and study his contributions.

Towards Green Villages: A Strategy for Environmentally-Sound and Participatory Rural Development*

by Anil Agarwal, Sunita Narain

Centre for Science and Environment,

New Delhi

1989, price not listed

The logic of this paper runs thus: the fundamental cause of poverty in India is the scarcity of biomass resources to meet daily basic needs; growing ecological imbalance is further exacerbating this scarcity; rural development programmes must restore ecological balance and increase biomass production on a sustainable and equitable basis; rural development programmes must therefore be ecosystem-specific; action is best planned and undertaken at the rural settlement level; all rural settlements must have an active institution which has legal control over its immediate environment as well as access to funds. The role of government must be that of an enabler of village-level planning and action, rather than that of a doer. The authors are convinced that "there is no solution through democracy and equity...Gandhiji's concept of village republics has become an imperative." Here is another relevant observation: "Common property resources can be government property resources or community property resources, but people will react to them differently. They will care for the latter but not for the former."

Panchayati Raj: The Role of Panchayats in Integrated Rural Development*

by B.L. Shah

Cosmo Publications, New Delhi

1990, IRs200

In 1947, Uttar Pradesh took steps to organise villages panchayats all over the state through a Panchayati Raj Act, with the aim of strengthening local-self government. In 1957, a three-tier structure of rural local-self governing bodies was set up, with village panchayats at the bottom, development blocks in the middle and the Zila Parishad at the apex. The success of the efforts have been limited due to a "conspicuous lack" of people's participation says the author, a lecturer of Political Science at Kumaon University in Nainital. The book's analysis of the Panchayati Raj system is based on the experience of the Kumaon Division, comprising the hill districts of Almora, Nainital and Pithoragarh. It contains a critique of various rural development schemes and the absence of co-ordination among various development bodies in the Kumaon hills. In particular, it underlines the role of leadership and financing in success of the concept of integrated rural development, of which the lower-most panchayats are supposed to be the lynch-pins.

Regional Patterns of Migration in Nepal*

by Harka Gurung

East-West Population Institute, Honolulu

1989, price not listed

ISBN 0-86638-118-X

This paper presents an overview of migration in Nepal over the last three decades based on census data and selected survey reports. During the last two decades, there was a seven-fold increase in out-migrants from the highlands and about a six-fold increase in in-migrants to the Tarai lowlands. Increasing population pressure on limited land resources induced out-migration from the hills. Immigration from high-density areas across the open border with India is growing as well. Thus, the Tarai has emerged as the area of migrant convergence from within and outside the country and as a result is undergoing significant changes in demographic character, social composition, land use, and economic development. Recent economic and demographic processes have all the potential of transforming the lowlands into a dynamic region. This development has various policy implications for Nepal's population redistribution, spatial development and sociopolitical future.

The Thakalls of North-Western Nepal*

by Susanne von der Heide

Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu

1988, NRs200

Based on field research carried out in 1981 and 1982, this study deals with the Thakali community in the upper Kali Gandaki Valley. It discusses the geography of the Thak Khola region as it relates to the lives of the inhabitants, Thakali economy and society, and Thakali history. There is detailed description of clan organisation, including those of the Tamang Thakali (with the sub-clans of Gauchan, Tulachan, Serchan and Bhattachan), the Mawatans

(Lalchan, Hirachan, Juharchan and Pannachan), and the Yhulkasummis, whose sub-clans are no longer identifiable. Despite their contact with social and religious ideas of Hindu caste-oriented society, the Thakalis of Thak Khola have largely been able to preserve their close-knit, self-contained endogamous groups. However, many young Tamang Thakalis, and in some cases Mawatans and Yhulkasummis as well, are beginning to go their own ways, separating themselves from the strictly organised family, clan and group associations. Says the author, "One may therefore assume that chinks in the ethnic group structure, especially among the Tamang Thakalis, will appear in the future."

Botes: The Ferrymen of Tanahun*

by Suraj Subba

A.K. Limbu, K.B. Rai, publishers,
Gorkha and Tanahun Districts
1989, NRs200

Botes, "ferryman", are a little-known ethnic group that according to the author is found in at least 12 districts of Nepal. Subba, who is head-master at a school in Damauli, Tanahun District, says there is little literature extant on Botes and the present book is the result of his part-time labours over the past nine years. The socio-economic status of Tanahun's Botes is sinking fast, the author writes. He hopes an understanding of their way of life will lead towards programmes to improve their condition. The book describes the tribal division and social ways of the two main divisions of Botes in Tanahun: the Pakhe Botes and Pani Botes. It deals, among other things, with the Botes' general beliefs, land ownership, agricultural activities, gold panning, ferry service, food gathering and handicraft. Botes were traditionally engaged in ferry service as an occupation. However, around 1965, the right to manage ferries began to go to the highest bidder, with the village panchayat collecting the money. With Botes unable to come up with the annual charge of about NRs9000, today most *ghats* are serviced by ferrymen of other socio-cultural groups, says the author.

Exploratory Travels in Highland Nepal*

by Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf

Sterling Publishers, New Delhi
1989, IRs200

This book describes a series of treks undertaken by von Furer-Haimendorf in the mid-hills and high Himalaya of Nepal in the 1950s and 1960s. Having studied the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh in the 1940s, the anthropologist had wanted to travel in Eastern Nepal, home of the Kiranti tribes, to see if they had any links to the people of the eastern-most Himalaya such as Monba, Nishi, Apa Tani and Adi. As it turned out, the Haimendorfs' trip (the anthropologist and his wife Betty) described in this book took them through not only the lands of the Rais and Limbus, but of the Sherpa, Tamang, Newar, Thakalis, the Kali Gandaki Bhotiyas, and Thakuris of west Nepal.

Nature and Culture: Random Reflections*

by Harka Gurung

Mrs. Saroj Gurung, publisher
Kathmandu
1989, NRs200

This book is an assemblage of 25 articles written on diverse topics over the years by the author for publications as wide-ranging as *Himalayan Journal*, *The Himalayan Review*, *Vasudha* and the *Rising Nepal*. Less thematically focused than two earlier compilations (*Vignettes of Nepal* and *Nepal: Dimensions of Development*), this book deals with subjects that range from "Aspects of the Snowman" to the origin of the Himalaya, "Among the Magars", "Romance of the Gurkhas", and a "Review of *Himalayan Review*". The section on Political Culture deals with the "geography" of the 1980 referendum. It analyses the voting pattern and finds, among other things, that the "multi-party side" carried the districts with high literacy rates, those with towns and those connected with highways. An article entitled "Sociology of Election" analyses the May 1981 elections to the national legislature. A chapter on "Making of a Nation", in dealing with the integration of Nepal as a nation-state, also discusses the "Hinduisation" of Nepal.

Ethnicity: Identity, Conflict and Crisis

Kumar David, Santasilan Kadirgamar, editors

Arena Press, Hong Kong
Price not given
ISBN 962-7516-169-4

This is an effort to grapple with the issues of nationality and ethnic violence by integrating theoretical reflections with case studies from India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand. The book works towards a unified framework for conceptualising ethnicity, understanding the role of the State and different social classes, and assessing the scope and limitations of ethnic struggles. The authors of this transnational publication attempt to bridge the divide between the activist and the academic and seeks a just and peaceful way out of the crises facing many countries of the region.

Ten Questions about Nepal's Forests*

by Aditya Man Shrestha

Forestry Sector Institutional Programme
HMG (FINNIDA), Kathmandu
1990, NRs100

This booklet by the author, who is President of the Asian Forum of Environmental Journalists, is based on information from Nepal's Master Plan for Forestry Sector. The Master Plan, costing more than a million US dollars, took two years to produce and was to have run from 1989 to 2010, until it was suspended earlier this year. In the publication, the author provides responses to queries relating to the importance of forests in Nepal, such as whether forests are able to meet the demands of the population, who forests belong to and who manages them, the link between forests and public health, and how to start with forestry-related activities.

Natural Resources Management in the Mountain Environment: Experience from the Doon Valley, India*

by Jayanta Bandyopadhyay

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu
Occasional Paper No.14
1989, price not listed
ISBN 981-00-1552-6

Taking the Doon Valley of Uttar Pradesh as a case study, this paper reviews the challenge posed by urbanisation in mountain areas and the response of government and public. The fallout of population growth and urbanisation of Doon Valley has been degradation of land resources, shortages of water supply, air and water pollution, and urban slum development. Speaking approvingly of the Doon's organised response to the emerging problems, the author notes: "Doon Valley has moved ahead, compared to the rest of India, in facing the main issues of natural resource management, particularly with respect to forests, water resources, mineral resources, and land-use. The record...in matters related to institutional innovations is no less impressive." The author's analysis is bound to prove useful in tackling population concentration problems that are already coming to a head in other Himalayan valleys such as Kathmandu.

Institutions And Mountain Development*

International Center for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu
1990, Price not listed

This paper is the outcome of an international workshop on the role of institutions in mountain resource management organised by ICIMOD in Quetta, Pakistan in May 1990. Case studies from Pakistan, Nepal and China (Tibet and Sichuan) present various approaches to local development in mountain areas. The main conclusions emerging from the Quetta meet are that governments of the region should promote growth of local level participatory (grassroots) organisations in mountain regions by providing the "supporting structure" for such growth; that parastatal and non-governmental organisations must be encouraged (without giving rise to a dependency syndrome) to play the role of the catalyst in inducing institutional innovation. In forming effective village organisations for total community development, the "process of group formation has to be based on total participation, the stability of the group has to be ensured through a consensus approach, a participatory financing mechanism has to be established, and "a gradual and rational evolution of a federation of village organisations and users' groups has to be allowed for supra-village activities." While linkages between government agencies and user groups has to be fostered, the primacy of the user groups in decision-making has to be ensured.

(An asterisk indicates that the publication is available for reference at *Himal's* office.)

Human Development Index

If one believes the standard *per capita* Gross National Product (GNP) ranking, Bhutan has the third worst quality of life in the world, after Ethiopia and Kampuchea (1987 figures), and Nepal is eighth from the bottom. But under a new quality of life index developed by UNDP, Bhutan is only twelfth worst in the world and Nepal seventeenth. Ethiopia comes off even better, nineteenth.

UNDP's new formula is known as the Human Development Index. Developed by Mahbub ul Haq, former Finance Minister of Pakistan, HDI quantifies "the human condition" and ranks countries by their success in meeting human needs. Countries might have low *per capita* GNP, but may still rank high on the HDI scale. This is because HDI relies not on national income but on three "humane" criteria: life spans, literacy and purchasing power.

As Haq explains it, life expectancy was selected as a variable because it speaks to health care delivery and the ability of people to live long enough to achieve goals. Literacy not only helps people get and keep jobs, but it helps them to understand their surroundings and culture. Purchasing power demonstrates the relative ability of a citizen to buy commodities and meet basic needs.

HDI puts a higher value on human development achieve-

ments in countries with a reasonable degree of democracy. "Human freedom is vital for human development. People must be free to exercise their choices in properly functioning markets, and they have a decisive voice in shaping their political future," says Haq's report.

Human Development & National Income: Comparative Ranking

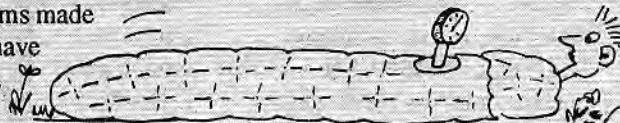
| | HDI | GNP |
|-------------|-----|-----|
| Afghanistan | 9 | 17 |
| Bhutan | 12 | 3 |
| Nepal | 17 | 8 |
| Bangladesh | 23 | 6 |
| Pakistan | 36 | 33 |
| India | 37 | 25 |
| Myanmar | 50 | 11 |
| China | 66 | 22 |

Gamow

The Gamow Bag looks like a sleeping bag, feels like a sleeping bag, but is actually a portable pressure chamber which can save lives in the High Himalaya. It is now reportedly available for rental in Kathmandu.

Invented by a Colorado professor by that name, the Gamow Bag is a first aid device to provide temporary treatment to those suffering from Acute Mountain Sickness. Dr. Buddha Basnet, a Nepali specialist on AMS, says the claims made for the bag have basis in fact.

Trekking



Lollipops and Cheese

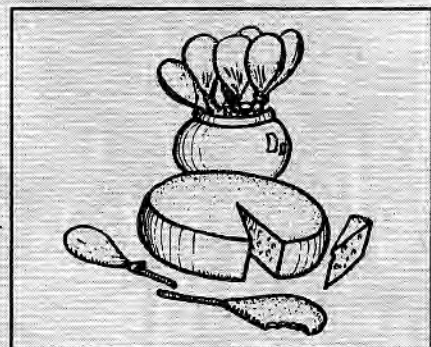
Back in the 1950s, a Swiss Missionary named Father Andreas Butty established a small co-operative "welfare dairy" in Kalimpong. While Christian missionaries were well-known for setting up schools and hospital, this was the first recorded instance of a Swiss-style dairy.

In time, Father Butty's Dairy gained well-deserved acclaim for its products, which were cheese, butter and, oddly enough, lollipops. A visit to Kalimpong was considered incomplete without the purchase of its celebrated cheese and lollipops.

Today, the tradition continues, even though original Swiss dairy is no more. The workers at Father Butty's fanned out and started their

own dairies and today there are four private cheese and lollipop dairies in and around Kalimpong.

The most prominent of the new establishments is the Selina Dairy. Its proprietor is an alumnus of Father Butty's and employs two workers in addition to his own family of four. They produce six to seven rounds of cheese a day,



Naren Pradhan

besides curd and lollipops. These delights are exported as far away as Bombay to delight the palates of cosmopolitans. Nearer home, Selina's products are sold in Darjeeling, and in gift packs in Kalimpong.

Don's Sweet is a little dairy which specialises in lollipops. Five family members work indomitably to make 200 to 300 lollipops a day. While it is common knowledge that the delicious lollipops of Kalimpong are concocted from milk and sugar, just how, is a jealously guarded secret by the four dairy establishments.

There are who reminisce and claim that none of today's cheese or lollipop can match Father Butty's products. But the fact remains that while the original Swiss dairy is no more, its offshoots are flourishing, and Kalimpongians are proud of them.

Lhamu



The Feather in the Crown

Even as the Nepali crown was facing unprecedented political crisis in the Himalaya, the actual feathers in the crown were on the road to terminal ecological decline in a faraway Pacific isle. The bird of paradise, whose long and vibrant feathers make the majestic plume of the Nepali *sripech*, is an endangered species in the Indonesian island of Irian Jaya, states *Environesia*, a Jakarta based magazine on ecology.

The magazine reports that all 26 bird of paradise species (*Paradisaeidae*), found only in Irian Jaya, are in trouble. More than 50,000 dead and live male birds sporting the plumes are exported to milliners and bird fanciers in the United States, Europe, Japan and Indonesia itself. Female birds of paradise do not fetch a price because

they are drab, as is the case with the Himalayan Impeyan Pheasant (*Danfe*).

Traditionally, the bird of paradise has been protected by taboos of the rain forest dwellers. Only tribal leaders were allowed to hunt and to wear the plumes of certain extra-sacred species. As the demand of the birds has skyrocketed, traditional systems have collapsed. Traders today encourage indiscriminate plunder by offering local hunters relatively large sums. Indonesian soldiers based in Irian Jaya are also responsible for significant depletion of the birds.

In the face of lax enforcement of wildlife regulations and low fines, the attractions of the high-profit trade are great. Recently, a businessman was caught trying to export 41 live males to London, where one bird fetches US\$1500. The businessman was found guilty and fined -- only US\$7.

Seminar! Symposia! Dementia!



Kathmandu is in the midst of Seminar Mania. Already a growth industry, the holding of seminars, meetings, symposia, conferences and consultations has quadrupled since the Constitution Recommendations Commission began work.

Every possible lobby group, from religious fundamentalists and not-so-fundamentalists to child welfare groups and "disadvantaged" groups, have held obligatory *gostis* to resolve that their special interest be protected by the Constitution. The only lobby yet to make an appearance, it seems, is one for animal rights.

Since Kathmandu's air links to the world expanded in the mid-1980s, international organisations began moving overflow seminars from Delhi, Dhaka and Bangkok up to Kathmandu. Why swelter in the plains when one could bask in the monsoon green or autumn gold? Right now, it is not the

United Nations but so-called non-governmental organisations that are busy as bees in the run-up to constitutional reform. "Disbursement" is the magic word among development agencies, and since most development activity is at a halt, it is easiest to channel excess money into "NGO activity". And the only NGO work that is happening with any amount of alacrity is meetings and more meetings, interspersed with coffee breaks, lunch breaks, snack times and the wrap-up dinners.

Nepal Television is ever-obliging with coverage of publicity-conscious NGOs. One camera team can cover half a dozen seminars a day for the evening news, pointing glaring arc lights at self-conscious participants and audience. Welcome to Kathmandu, Asia's busy seminar capital.



Bagmati Blues

What is the most maligned river or rivulet in Nepal?

The Bagmati, of course, known to many as the flush toilet of Kathmandu Valley. This watercourse, with its source barely 28 kilometres upstream from downtown, carries away everything the valley citizens see fit to dump in it: cremation ash, animal carcasses, untreated city sewage and sludge, solid wastes, silt, and quarry debris. Also, the holy Bagmati carries some amount of water.

Kathmandu residents not only give to the river: they take away. All the sand for the Valley's booming construction industry has come, unregulated and unchecked, from the Bagmati's bed, causing the river to shift course

of the river, says Rajendra P. Shrestha, the Campaign's Member-Secretary. "Our aim is to attract attention of the public and of the authorities to the unacceptable conditions of the Bagmati."

The Campaign comprises of mostly professionals who have had close association with the watercourse -- either by having lived by it and watched its downturn, or doing work related to water, environment and sanitation issues. All are exercised over the environmental disaster that the Bagmati represents. They hope to make the Campaign an environmental watchdog, but the task is daunting. It is yet to be seen if the group can arouse awareness of the need for action among the urban and rural



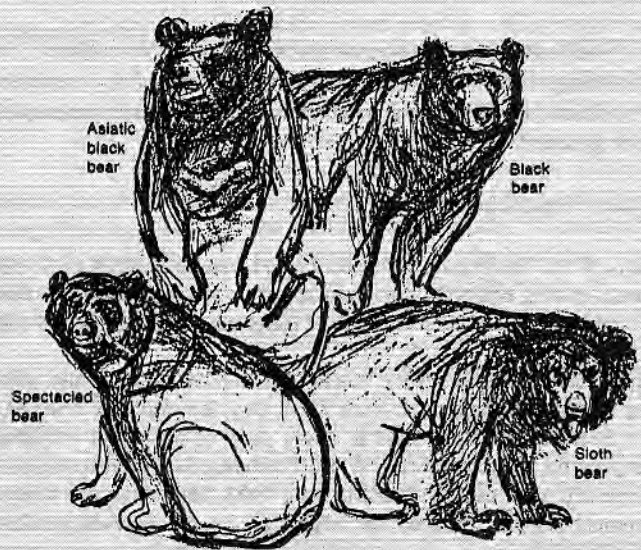
permanently in many areas. Illegal encroachment on the river's right of way has increased dramatically over the last couple of years, by squatters as well as by official agencies and hospitals.

Nobody seemed to care for the Bagmati, until 1990. A group of Bagmati lovers finally surfaced in Kathmandu in late June to organise a modest walkathon and attract attention to their chosen's plight. The Save Bagmati Campaign's first goal is to try and stop further deterioration

people who give and take from the Bagmati.

The task ahead is difficult. The ills of the Bagmati are the result of misuse of the river throughout its course, in all its tributaries. A clean and clear Bagmati would indicate that there has been a complete turnaround in Kathmandu's environmental affairs, which is pipe dream for the moment. But the first step is always to raise the alarm, which the Campaign has done, if timidly.

P. Khanal



Bears at the Brink

Bears are in serious decline worldwide, states a newly published study, and the next decade could determine their fate in many areas, including in the Himalaya.

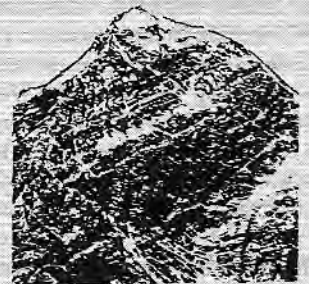
According to a report of the International Association for Bear Research and Management, thousands of bears are falling prey each year to poachers who sell parts in China, Japan and Korea. Countless others are being killed or

rendered homeless as people take over their jungle and forest habitats for living space, agricultural land and raw materials.

Although information on the status of bears is fragmentary, six of the eight species worldwide seem to be in worse condition than they were in 1970: the brown bear, found in Europe, Asia and North America; the Asian black bear; the sun bear in south-east Asia; the sloth bear in South Asia; the spectacled bear in South America; and the giant panda in China.

Remembering Sir George

The grand nephew of Sir George Everest, Surveyor-General of India whose name got stuck on Chomolongma, has sent a note to *Himal*. He would appreciate any heretofore unpublished information about his grand uncle. Sir George would have been 200 years old in June 1990.



Write to:
G. Everest Munro
161 Dianne Avenue
Oakville, Ontario
L6J 4G8 Canada

Beneath the Green Cover

Third World environmental movements seem preoccupied with tree-plantings and ceremonial observances. Meanwhile, the underlying political issues relating to global and local environmental issues are ignored.

by Jayanta Bandyopadhyay

June 5, World Environment Day, came and went in South Asia as elsewhere, leaving behind hundreds of speeches given at numerous functions -- expressions of the ascendancy of the green fashion the world over.

This year, not only did we mark World Environment Day, we also added another day of celebration: 22 April Earth Day. Beyond this, a series of regular meetings are being held in many parts of the world to discuss preparations for the forthcoming World Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil in June 1992. This mega-event on the environment is being planned and organized from a sprawling villa in Geneva, Switzerland.

Officials of international agencies, as well as institutions that the guru of alternative development Marc Nerfin calls the "Hilton-brand NGOs" are busy making trans-Atlantic or trans-Pacific flights to talk about ozone layer depletion, global warming, tropical deforestation, and so on. The term "sustainable development", whose actual meaning remains elusive, is sure to die through sheer repetition between now and 1992. Of the term, a noted British environmentalist has said that "its very strength is its vagueness: Sustainable development means different things to different people."

To comprehend the undercurrents of this situation, where every erstwhile protagonist of the growth model of development has suddenly taken a "greener than thou" attitude, it is necessary to examine the process through which the environment arrived at center-stage. Following the universal application of the growth model of development, especially in foreign-aid development activities, a broad critique emerged, questioning the efficacy of the growth model in the fight against poverty. There was talk of accentuation of inequity, enlargement of the debt trap, centralisation of knowledge and information and environmental degradation, etc.

From the 1970s, however, criticism based on environmental issues have been propagated on such a large scale that other significant elements of the critique of the growth model became marginalised. Following the 1972 Stockholm Conference on Human Environment, there followed publication of the World Conservation Strategy and, more recently, the widely publicised report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Report). There has been impressive growth in voluntary environmental activism while major supporters of the growth model, financial institutions such as the World Bank, have now committed huge funds for the environment.

The situation indicates an impressive victory for the environmentalists. Environmental movements established deep roots in Third World countries during the 1970s and 1980s. Today, if there is any well-coordinated international pressure group in a position to influence decisions or public opinion, it is the network built up by the world's environment movements. The strength of these movements lies in the direct links established by the activists with the millions of marginalised and threatened people, and in their commitment and courage to fight the governments

and the international financial institutions on the issue of ecologically destructive development. In the socialist world, the movement has not yet been too articulate, although green groups have become conspicuous in the recent efforts and successes of democratic forces in Eastern Europe.

Over all, the enhanced awareness of environmental threats, has emerged at the cost of tracking away from some equally important elements of development critique. The Brundtland Report did take some political stands. It recognized sustainable development as "a process in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are all in harmony, and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations." On the surface everything seems fine, and this is how the Brundtland Report probably succeeded in satisfying everyone -- governments, NGOs, and the development financing institutions -- each putting its own interpretation on the paper.

The strongest criticism of the Brundtland Report is based on its support of traditional economic growth and its sustainability. In her foreword to the Report, Brundtland stresses the need for "a new era of economic growth -- growth that is forceful and at the same time socially and environmentally sustainable." Its inability to qualify the specific needs of growth, in specific regions, among specific groups, for specific resource bases, lends obvious support to the same *laissez faire* model of economic transformation, largely negating the very purpose of the Commission's establishment. "Sustainable development", thus, may in practice become "sustainable economic growth", together with a package of technological fixes for solving environmental problems. Environmental mobilisation the world over may end up as merely a search for new technologies rather than a search for a new way of living and relating to nature. This is where the original significance of the World Environment Day needs to be re-established, otherwise the environment will be the "business of the 21st century", supervised by environmental managerialism.

The environmental struggle is, thus, far from over and there is little justification to be satisfied over ceremonial tree-plantings by ministers or officials as a sign of environmental commitment. The core of philosophy, practice and culture in the growth model of development is shrewdly protected behind the green cover of tree planting and vague slogans for sustainable development.

An example is the most talked-about issue of the "greenhouse effect". There is little discussion about controlling the heavy fossil fuel emissions in the industrially advanced countries while world attention is focussed on the less important contribution of tropical deforestation. The projected doubling of atmospheric carbon dioxide in next 50 years will come mainly from the industrialised countries.

Globalising the marginal issue of third world deforestation, and marginalising the main issue of an energy-intensive lifestyles in the First World (and soon the Second World too), is not a matter of chance -- it begins to look more and more like an organised process. A new and much more difficult task lies ahead for environmental activists -- to actually provide an alternative way of achieving socioeconomic transformation. The Brundtland Report is a halfway house towards "another development" in which basic needs are satisfied and ecological stability ensured. Let us go below the decorative green cover -- in search of green development. ▽

J. Bandyopadhyay is an environmentalist who has been involved in Doon Valley activism.

Reviving the Panchayat (in Almora)

How a programme to revitalise moribund village panchayats has achieved success in a corner of the Uttar Pradesh hills. The key was to let the villagers themselves take active charge of setting priorities and implementing projects.

by Pandurang Hegde

Bhetuli is a small hill village in Almora District, Uttar Pradesh. I recently attended a village meeting in which most of the village people and youth took active part. The meeting was called to decide on the control and management of the community's forests.

As the group gathered, Jamar Singh, the *sarpanch* (headman) of the forest panchayat, explained that the village had 55 acres of community forest land given to it by the state government. However, some portions of it had been encroached upon by villagers. Immediately, there was a heated exchange in which some emphasised the need to end the encroachment while others spoke of the urgent need to grow trees on land that had become barren. But the most important question was that of leadership. Before you knew it, the people had decided that Jamar Singh was incapable of managing the common resource of the village. Shankar Singh, a much younger man, was chosen as the new *sarpanch*, with authority to frame new policies and to implement them in order to protect the forests.

The vitality of the Bhetuli meeting showed that a campaign launched by an Uttar Pradesh non-governmental group to reactivate defunct village panchayats was bearing fruit. In some of its hill districts, the Uttar Pradesh government had allotted community forests known as "van panchayats". A constituent body of villagers, the panchayat, was empowered to manage this common resource. When it was drafted, the Van Panchayat law was a novel attempt to help the villages, but in actual practice, many panchayats became lifeless bodies dominated by powerful villagers who actively took part in or colluded in the encroachment of common forest lands.

In order to revive the village panchayats, the Paryavaran Jan Jagran Samiti (PJJS), a non-governmental group, launched a campaign in Almora. It has helped raise awareness among local youths on the need to take charge of their common resources. In fact, in many villages such as Bhetuli, the young people have taken over the van panchayats from the leadership. In doing so, they have had to face strong challenges

from elite groups who would rather use the village lands for private gain.

In order to build community assets, PJJS typically initiates a series of discussions among the 22 villages of Almora it has focused on. Its approach has been to help the people decide. The actual decision on the priorities relating to development projects are left to the villagers. Most active in these discussions have been the Yuva Mangal Dals (youth clubs) and Mahila Mangal Dals (womens' clubs).

The work undertaken by the villagers have not been over-ambitious. Typically, they take up schemes concerning drinking water, afforestation of barren land, the building of school-houses, maintenance of stream banks, and so on. The villagers calculate the costs of these schemes and put forth part of the total monetary needs for the projects.

The PJJS helps the villagers in preparing the schemes. The Indian Government's Department of Environment came forward with the funds. Initially, a grant was released to cover the work of the 22 villages. The management of the funds and execution of the work was the responsibility of the villagers. Local leadership emerged to implement its own plan for development. It took keen interest in the work and managed the monetary aspects themselves. Many villages decided to change priorities ac-

ording to local needs. Because decision-making and management of finance were decentralised, local leadership was able to emerge.

The unprecedented success of its programme at the local level has led to the next step. PJJS is thinking of establishing cottage industries and fruit processing industries. It considers generating employment and supplemental cash revenue as a priority in these hill villages of Almora.

The following are the characteristics of the successful experiments in Almora, which might be replicable elsewhere in the Himalaya, especially in Nepal, where new possibilities are emerging for grassroots involvement: the local people themselves decide on the priorities and it is they who implement and manage development schemes. There is no "target group" to provide benefits or services to. Neither are there specific one-point programmes like health, or agriculture or forestry. PJJS's programme is holistic in its approach and the villagers themselves identify the beneficiaries. Due to these characteristics, the programme has enhanced rather than eroded community feeling.

In conclusion, the PJJS's programme has all the qualities of decentralised planning, local participation and sustainable strategy that make it more successful than the top-down model of hill development used by the National Planning Commission or the various eco-development plans being implemented in the Uttar Pradesh hills.

P. Hegde is with the Environment Conservation Centre in Sirsi, Karnataka.



Youngsters gather at Bhetuli forest meeting.

"The Relatedness of Things" Andean Soul and Spirit

The Aymara and Quechua people of the Andean highlands are only superficially Roman Catholic by religion: they retain beliefs and rituals which date back to pre-Inca times. Their worldview contains "liberation theology" in its original, indigenous form.

from Andean Focus

For the Aymara and Quechua highlanders, who live by tilling the soil and shepherding animals, faith is closely tied to agriculture. Everything is related: land, birth, death, the mountains, and the seasons. Nothing is absolute or complete in itself; there is a broad mutual need that links all things: supernatural beings, humanity, and nature. Harmony and balance are fundamental conditions of life.

The Andean belief structure flows from this sense of the relatedness of all things. *Campesinos*, the hill peasants, have a vague sense of a father god who is or dwells behind the sun and germinates life. But this god is remote. More central to the awareness of the Andean people is their veneration for Pachamama, the earth mother.

"The earth is the source of life; she is where we are born and buried. We do not want to abandon the earth, although at times it appears to abandon us. The earth is like a mother who nurses us and from whom we nourish ourselves. Were it not for the home, we would not exist," explains one Aymara leader.

The Pachamama is both the ancient mother who watches over her children as well as the young virgin who continually renews herself. She is the source of all that is alive, ever-fertile, ever creating; she will produce, reward and punish according to the way she is treated.

Besides the Pachamama, there are the *achachilas* ("grandparents"), protectors who live in the surrounding mountains. These spirits are given a community's forebears who remain close to their people, protecting them, sharing in their pain and sorrow, blessing them. They must be revered, prayed to and given offering.

There are two types of *achachilas*: the great ones, who protect the entire Andean people (these are the huge Andean peaks such as Illimpu, Illimani and Pachiri); and the innumerable local ones that bless particular communities.

When Spanish missionaries taught the Andean people about the Virgin Mary, it was relatively easy to incorporate Mary into their

concept of the Pachamama and to see the saints as protectors -- they simply changed the names of the local *achachila* to that of the patron saints.

The idea of the soul was also familiar, because Andean highlanders believe that each human being has an *ajayu*, a principal spirit (there are several others), located in the head. This vital force can leave the body, especially during sleep. The *ajayu* of the dead can return home and announce the death of a family member. When a baptised infant dies, it is buried near the parent's home because the Aymara believe the child's *ajayu* will protect the house from evil spirits.

Another Andean belief is the complementarity of the masculine and the feminine, called *jaqui*. Aymaras believe in the fundamental principle of cosmic order; the male-female duality: everything has its complementary pair, its *yana*. The sun (masculine), has its moon (feminine); the corn, its potato; the lightning, its thunder.

It is up to the *yatiris* ("wise ones") to preserve the religious beliefs of the Andean people. These wise men and women are priests, diviners, healers and teachers.

LIBERATING AGENTS

Theologians and pastoralists working in the Andes are beginning to recognise "liberating" elements in many of the pre-Christian practices, elements which are politically equalising in nature. They point to customs such as *Kausay Hunuy* or "leveling feast" whereby a family that has an abundance of animals or crop land gives to those

who do not have as much, so that relative economic equality is maintained.

According to Diego Irrazabal, Director of the Aymara Institute in Juli, Peru, Quechua and Aymara people understand god as the giver of life. The earth is the fruit of life and they discover a liberating god in receiving life from earth, working it and struggling for it. They relate to a creator god who bestows the miracle of life

Irrazabal points to the ritual of the *cha'lla* as a paradigm for the sacramental quality of Andean celebrations. The *cha'lla* is a libation in which men and women spill out part of the region's traditional *chicha* or other alcoholic drink on to the ground to venerate the Pachamama.

The ritual is performed at all important occasions: at the birth of a child, during a first haircut; at weddings, funerals and anniversaries; at planting and harvest times; during the branding of animals; on feast days; at the beginning of a solemn meeting or business deal; at the roofing of a home. The toast signals peace, joy, and acceptance, and gives context to the meal that follows.

Andean Focus is a bimonthly publication that reports on human rights and social justice issues affecting the Andean peoples of Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador.



The *achachila* of Mt. Illimani, above La Paz, Bolivia.

INTRODUCTIONS



SOCIETY FOR PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH IN ASIA (PRIA)

This six-year old organisation supports grassroots action in rural and urban India as well as some other Asian countries. It has focused on developing long-term relationships with activists and groups and responds to needs and issues as they emerge. PRIA's work is primarily educational and involves workshops, training programmes, grassroots research and documentation, production of public information materials, and "networking". Presently, the group is engaged in the study of the following topics: women and work;

deforestation, land ownership and alienation; and occupational health and safety. The organisation has available 31 titles on its publications list.

Contact: 45, Sainik Farm, Khanpur, New Delhi 110 062

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION OF ENVIRONMENT (NICE)

This new organisation based in Lahore, Pakistan, lists as its aim the tackling the country's environmental degradation problem "on a war footing". However, it will also devote itself to disseminating information on South Asian environmental issues.

Contact: H-19 Umer St-31, New Ghuri Shahu, Lahore, 54000 Pakistan.

UP AHEAD

(Details on up-and-coming events which might prove useful to readers. To insert announcement, send information to Himal/Up Ahead, P.O.Box 42, Lalitpur, Nepal.)

NATIONAL CONVENTION ON ROLE OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION

Dates: 28-30 August 1990

Venue: Disaster Management Institute, Bhopal

Contact: Kamal Kumar

Disaster Management Institute

Paryavaran Parisar

E-5, Arera Colony

Bhopal 462 016, India

Tel: 68653, 68715

Comment: Write also for details about Disaster Resource Directory 1990 to JAC Trust, H-65 South Extension I, New Delhi 110 049.

SEMINAR ON THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF TIBET AND THE HIMALAYA

Date: September 1990

Venue: Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich

Contact: Martin Brauen
Volkerkundemuse-
um der Universitat
8001 Zurich, Switzerland

Comment: Young social scientists are encouraged to apply

THE HIMALAYAN FORUM

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to summer 1991

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of Oriental and African Studies

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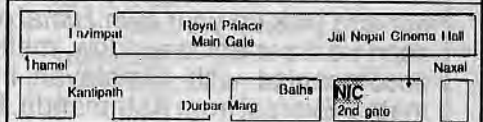
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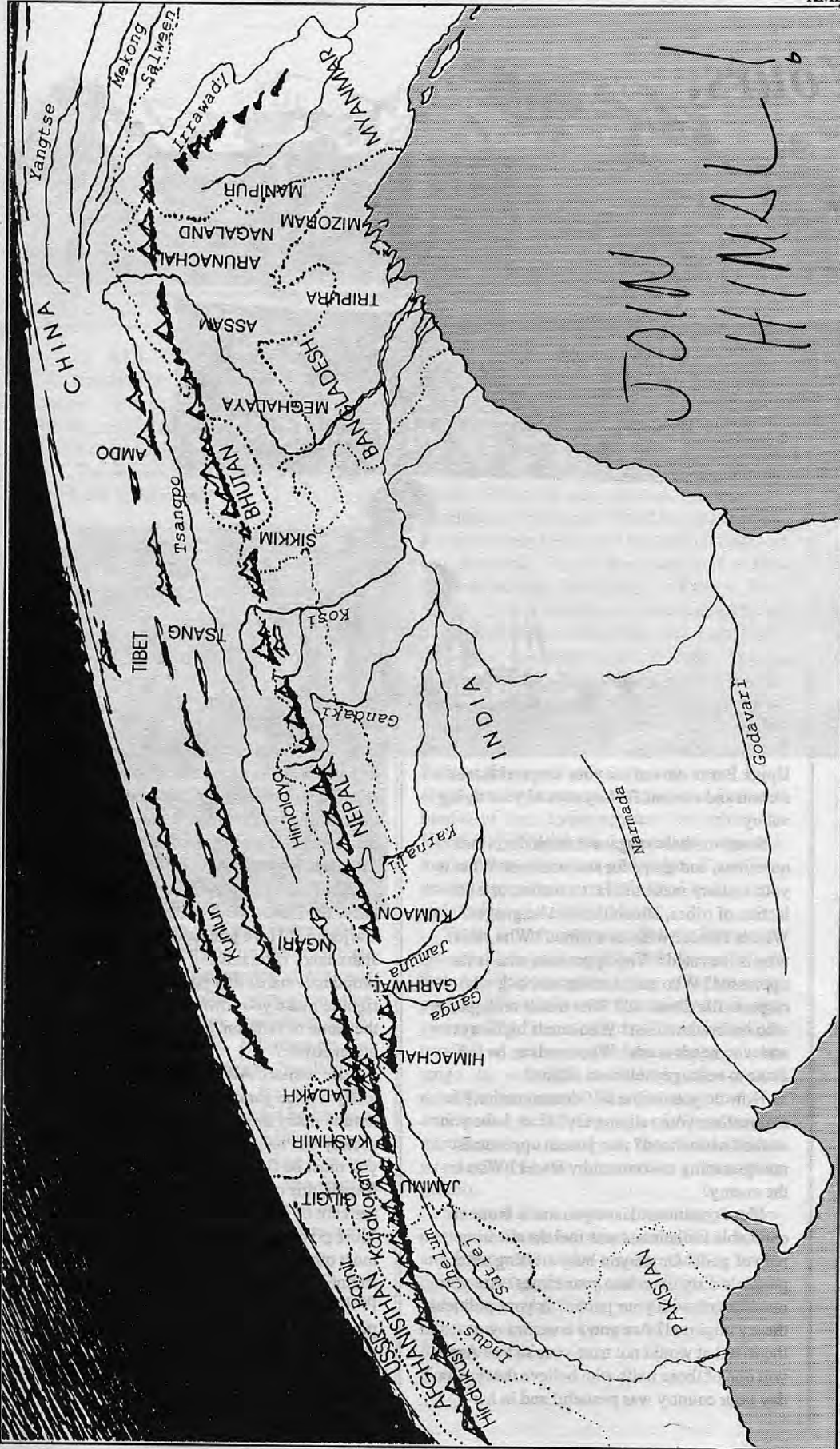
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Abominably Yours,

I hear democracy has arrived south of these Himalayan slopes, if not yet to the north. Doubtless, it is a relief for the Nepali population. But the noise that reaches up here from the low valleys lead me to fear that a giant coaching class on democracy is necessary. To train at least a hundred thousand.

Those who must attend this coaching class are not the hill porter nor the village housewife. It is the urban sophisticate, the national politician, the superficially educated. In other words, those who mouth the words but lack the vision to take advantage of what is now available.

Pardon my cynicism. Sometimes I wonder and I despair for Himalayan hominoids. But do you not understand the forces you have unleashed? Or did you fight the old order just because you were on the outside? Oh, you proud ones who claim to have restored democracy, have you taken a good look around? Exhilarated by the move from the outhouse to the altar seat, beware that you are not sacrificed on that altar because you did not comprehend the times and the forces that buffet your society.

Or are you the *gharelu udyog adhikrit*, the local cottage industry officer, still at your desk? The trappings of your unfortunate, artificial, vocation on the table-top for all to see. A glass paper-weight with air bubbles and a flower pattern inside, a wind-up bell to call in the disconsolate peon who squats outside, a four-pen plastic stand with ink-well, and a calendar holder, empty. In the corner, an aluminum beach chair. Garlanded portraits and yesterday's slogans. The definitions belong to your life and work from a previous incarnation. For the future, the people look to you, but have you anything to give?

Wake up, you Nepali anthropomorphs. Come up here to my cave and take a good look at your nation. Take a deep breath of the



Upper Barun air and rid your lungs of diesel carbon and cement-factory soot of your dying valley.

Stand on these crags and think deep. Ask questions, and grope for real answers. What is your country made of? Is it a nation, or a collection of tribes, ethnicities and languages? Who is Hindu? *What* is a Hindu? Who rules, who is the ruled? Who oppresses, who is the oppressed? Who might maim and kill, who respects life above all? Who treads on logic, who on irrationalism? Who needs highways and who needs seeds? Who needs to be left alone to manage their own affairs?

How do you define self-determination? Is nationalism your rallying cry? If so, have you studied nationhood? Are you an opportunist masquerading as community leader? Who is the enemy?

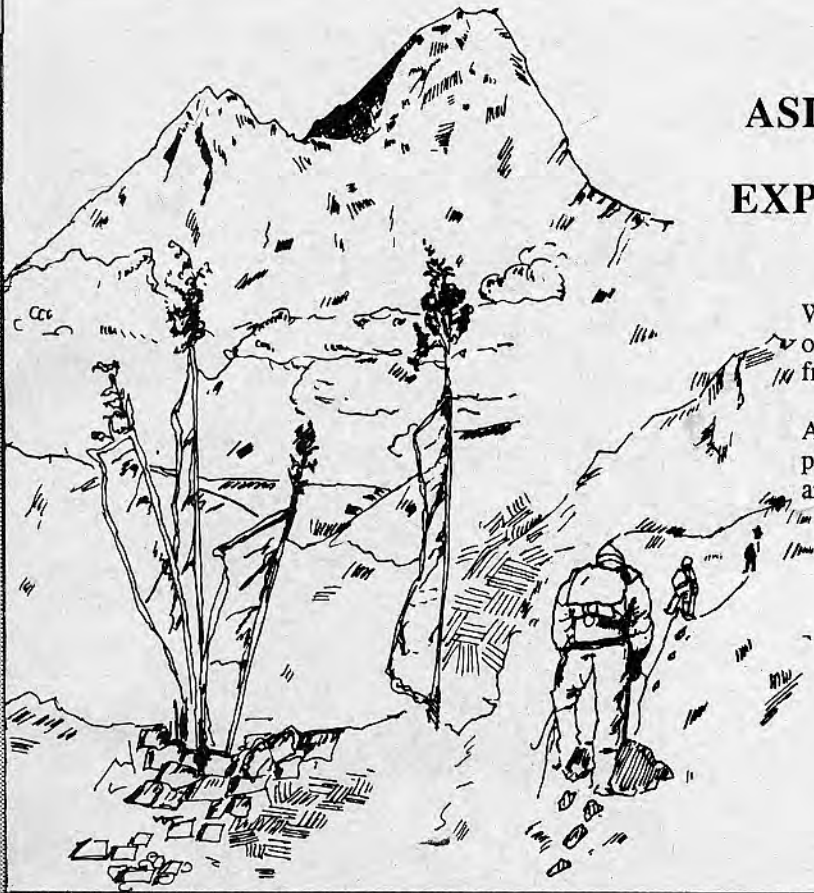
More questions: Have you made those accountable for heinous acts feel the shearing pain of guilt? Or are you busy stuffing other people's dirty linen into *your* closet? Are you out of touch with your public? Is your political theory imported? Are you a conspiracy theorist that would not trust your sister? Are you one of those naifs who believe that yesterday your country was peaceful and in har-

mony? Or are you also one who would use religion and ethnicity for self-gain, and sow distrust and mayhem? You may say you have the mandate from the people, and you speak for them. Do you really, *all* the people?

Above all, do you know tolerance? Do you know Sri Lanka, Biafra, Cambodia, Kashmir, Darjeeling? Have you heard of Bodoland, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand? Or would you rather, proud nationalist that you are, demand the right to make your own disastrous mistakes in the name of religion, caste, region, or god-given power?

Life is short. All you who are so exercised today will be gone before the sun has come around many more times. Understand your society and help it out. If you are reading this, you must be fluent in English. If you are Nepali, this means you are from among 0.08 per cent of your society. More privileged than most others. Do *you* have a contribution to make? Probably. Look into your past and present, mull over the experience of others, and plan for yours and your country's future.





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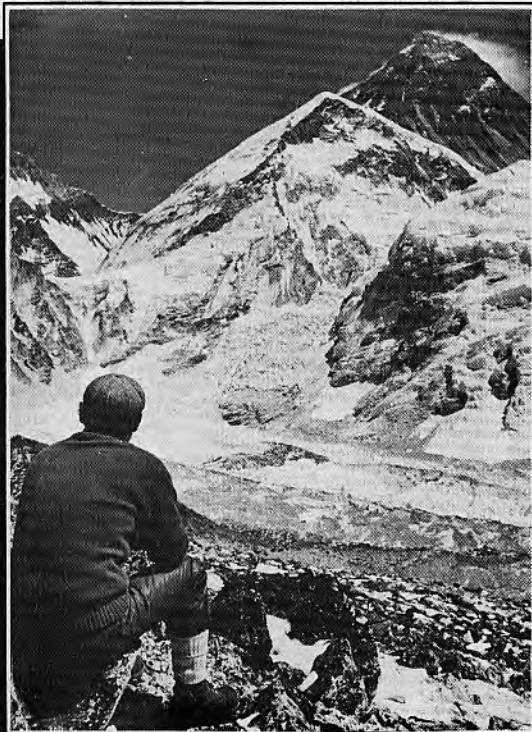
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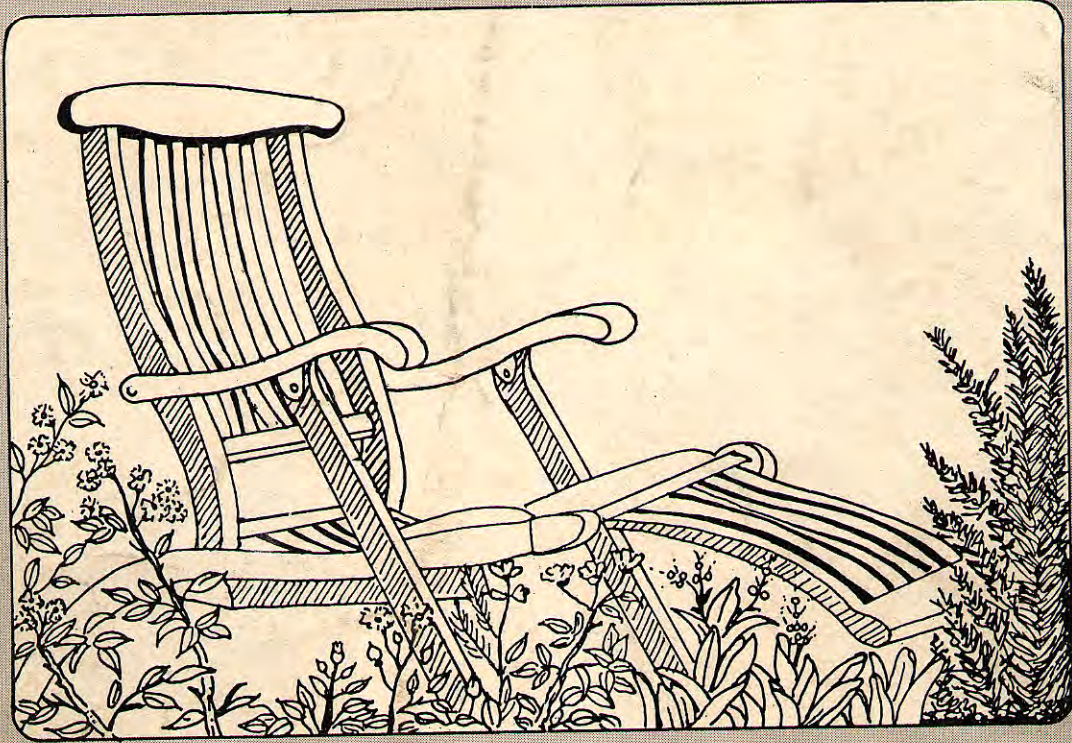


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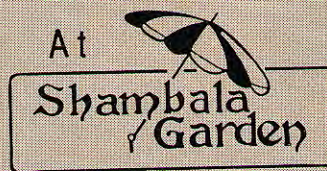
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