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May/June 1993

HIMAL

HIMALAYAN MAGAZINE



readings...

Who writes for the Himalaya?

It's not quite so odd if you know how deforestation affects the weather.

Up to 75% of the rainfall in the Amazon rainforest is recycled from tree to tree. Water circulates up from the roots, into the

atmosphere through leaves, and back down to another tree's roots as rain.

In this way, one area of forest passes on moisture to the next as though it were part of a huge conveyor belt.

By the time air masses reach the Andes in the west, they still contain as much water as when they first crossed the Atlantic coast over fifteen hundred miles away.

Unless man breaks the chain.

Thousands of trees are removed from this

natural irrigation system every minute.

Yet even small changes in the timing or severity of rainfall can have a disproportionate impact on the environment.

Trees fail to bear fruit, animals starve, and the people who live in the rainforests go hungry.

The deforested areas that cause the problem fare no better.

Without a canopy of leaves to protect the rainforest floor, what rain there is washes away the precious topsoil.

A study in the Cote d'Ivoire showed that the soil loss on a hectare of forested slope was 30kg a year. On a similar deforested slope, the loss was 138 tonnes. And with no sponge-like blanket of fallen leaves to release water in dry spells, or tree roots to help absorb sudden deluges, the effects of the weather become more extreme.

In December 1988, four hundred and fifty people died during floods in Thailand. There would have been no floods had the local rainforest remained intact.

But it's not realistic to simply tell everyone to stop chopping down trees; so what can we do about it?

At Governmental level, WWF - World Wide Fund For Nature, negotiates to change the way we exploit the rainforests.

On the ground, WWF funds the training of rubber tappers in the north-eastern Brazilian Amazon so that their rubber extraction does no harm to the rainforest.

In Panama, we fund the work of the Kuna Yala Indians who manage their rainforest territory as a nature reserve.

In Costa Rica, we are researching ways of felling and removing trees for timber without damaging the other trees growing around them.

These are just some of over 100 WWF tropical forest projects in 45 countries.

It's not enough. A lot more needs to be done. If you can help us with a donation or a legacy, please do.

It could be the answer to someone's prayers.



WWF World Wide Fund For Nature
(formerly World Wildlife Fund)

International Secretariat, 1196 Gland, Switzerland.



**THIS MAN IS PRAYING FOR RAIN.
THE STRANGE THING IS, HE LIVES IN A RAINFOREST.**



MAIL

Wrong on Kalidasa

Knowing some Sanskrit and having recently begun to read *Himal*, I would like to comment on the translation from *Kumara Sambhava* which you have on your masthead. I believe it should go thus:

*To the North is the abode of gods:
The Himalaya, king of mountains;
Bounding the oceans from east to west,
An immutable yardstick to measure
the Earth.*

Good magazine, but terrible translation!

*Sanjay Pratap
Greater Kailash I
New Delhi*

Diminishing Value of Propaganda

The Bhutan conference held in London will probably be looked back at as the first healthy step towards finding a lasting solution to the current crisis. It seems from Robbie Barnett's report (Mar/Apr 1993) that even though 'diplomatic sensitivities' did not allow dissident participation, the conference managed to go beyond mere presentation and acceptance of the Thimphu Government's rhetoric. For Bhutanese refugees, therefore, London has sent a message of inspiration and hope.

For the first time, before a collective panel of eminent scholars, journalists and well-informed individuals, the details of the "Southern problem" was exposed. If the royal Government had believed that it could impress its views upon the international gathering, apparently it did not quite succeed. This was only to be expected in view of the regime's actions to date against a section of its people and the level of international awareness about the blatant violation of human rights in the country.

Now that the issues in question have

been aired by the Government at a forum beyond which there is no other, in terms of influencing decision-makers in governments and international agencies, and the regime has decidedly lost, it is imperative that Thimphu pragmatically decide its future course of action. The time for introspection by the policy-makers has arrived. The policies followed to date have been based on the belief that the regime would weather the storm of international opinion, and that it would, with dogged perseverance, be able to justify its repressive measures on the grounds of protecting the nation from a horde of "power hungry, illegal immigrants". The jury at the London conference, even as it began numerically in favour of the regime, has clearly ruled that this ploy will not wash with the world, and Thimphu must, therefore, make a conscious effort to deal with reality. As a first consequence, the regime's position, that in order to protect the right of indigenous people who happen to wield power and authority any act however abhorrent and cruel, including violation of the fundamental right to nationality of other citizens, is justifiable and morally acceptable, must obviously undergo major transformation.

It is fitting that the conference, which exposed the weaknesses of the Government's arguments, also delivered wise counsel towards resolution of the problem in the form of a paper by Michael Aris who chose to address the "Southern problem" from the point of view of finding a solution. He cited Bhutanese history to point out that the advantages of availing of traditional methods of conciliation to bring about an honourable settlement should not be considered superfluous by Thimphu. Rather, the regime would do well to heed Dr. Aris' advice about use of alternative

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Cover: Poem "Chowrasta" by Lalit Kumar Rai, a scientist working with the G. B. Pant Institute in Gangtok. Picture by Bikas Rauniar.

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अस्त्युत्तरस्यां दिशि देवतात्मा
हिमालयो नाम नगाधिराजः
पूर्वापरौ तोयनिधी बगाह्व
स्थितः पृथिव्या इव मानदण्डः

*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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methods that depended on coercive force since this brought about only interim solutions and provoked a cycle of further conflict.

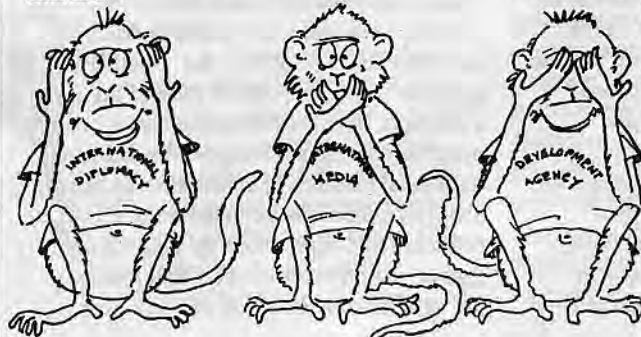
The willingness to consider the soft option will necessarily require a dramatic reversal in the current government position. Given the rhetoric of the past, this may at first appear to be impossible. However, in view of the truth and the surprisingly large degree of real awareness among the Bhutanese people, it would be surprising if the very same northern public that the government fears would ridicule it for 'loss of face' did not actually applaud the regime form being brave enough to face up to realities. The value of propaganda is short-lived and people eventually find out the truth; the average Bhutanese has had enough and will welcome any step that will end the crisis.

*Kesar Man Rai
Jhapa*

Check Your Data

"Staying Afloat", Robbie Barnett's report on the conference on Bhutan in London last March was entertaining but contrary to facts (Mar/Apr 1993). The "single language policy" of Bhutan that Barnett talks about, does not exist.

Barnett writes that "a Dutch ethno-linguist had four references in his paper, all of which were to studies he had written himself." I am the only Dutch ethno-linguist to have attended the conference, and my paper described Bhutan's language policy and the country's 19 linguistic minorities. It contained 21 references, seven of which were to publications written by myself. Contrary to what Barnett maintains, a number of researchers present in the conference, including myself, have conducted field work in southern Bhutan. Most papers presented at the conference did not deal with the conflict in southern Bhutan.



The conflict in southern Bhutan is fundamentally ethnic. It is not religious or linguistic, although an escalation of the conflict could potentially cause it to become so. The situation is complex, and should be dealt with conscientiously. Barnett rightly praises journalists who practice "the art of rational debate", but a sensitive issue where people's lives are at stake deserves to be treated by dispassionate attempts to ascertain the facts, not by rhetoric larded with misrepresentations and value judgements. Before Barnett takes to impugning the integrity of scholars, he would be well advised to "check your data and cite sources."

*George van Driem
Leiden University,
The Netherlands.*

An Impossible Scenario

In Stephen L. Mikesell's article "Paradoxical Support of Nepal's Left for Comrade Gonzalo" (Mar/Apr 1993), I find some things which I agree with and some additional points that I wish the writer had taken account of. His article is a warning to Nepal's comfortable ruling classes, both rural and urban, that sectarian violence of the most extreme sort can overtake the society. But I have my doubts that there is anyone to heed this warning.

However, does not Mr. Mikesell believe that the existence of many ethnic groups in Nepal complicates his theory, or even undercuts it? I do not believe that ideology is strong enough to get even the most disadvantaged groups in Nepal to organise into a potent rural fighting force against the Establishment.

Also, do not forget the regional scenario. Peru does not have a neighbouring country that would be willing to suppress armed revolutionaries in its hills, so the Shining Path movement has remained essentially Peru's problem alone. But how would India react if there was to be, as Mr.

Mikesell suggests, "militarisation of various nationalist movements within the country, spillover of violent repression of farm labour in adjacent Bihar, or a military response by the Nepali Government against indigenous social movements"?

*Sriram Poudel
Dharan Bazaar*

Defensive and Detracting

In her response to my letter (Mar/Apr 1993), Manisha Aryal not only refused to take responsibility for what she wrote but also tried to wash her hands off the issue. She has tried to detract the readers' attention from the important issue about the need for Nepalis to treat experts by the quality of their work, and not by their nationality.

Aryal claims that Dr. Narayan P. Manandhar and I missed the forest for the trees; every tree is important in making the forest. Dr. Manandhar has been observing the trees as well as the forest of ethnobotany and the entire herbal situation of Nepal for almost three decades. Let me ask how long (for how many days or how many weeks) Aryal conducted *her* research? And are the readers not to respond for fear of angry journalists lashing out?

Aryal's insinuation that ethnobotanists, like Dr. Manandhar, have accumulated "vast earnings" is reprehensible. If Aryal tries to find out how much Government researchers make, she might be surprised to discover that she is earning more than a seasoned ethnobotanist.

It seems that in preparing her article Aryal talked to some staff at the National Herbarium, non of them ethnobotanists, yet her comments were about ethnobotany. Her reference to the "real-life conditions of the rural Himalaya" is a total red-herring in this context. Do you suppose field scientists that spend a quarter of each year living with the villagers know more about these conditions or urban journalists that take a two day jaunt up the trail from the nearest bus-stop?

Sanjay Manandhar
Boston, United States.

Manisha Aryal responds:

Sanjay Manandhar continues to leap to conclusions and read insinuations where there are none. Once again, the original article, "Diverted Wealth: The Trade In Himalayan Herbs" was *not* about Dr. Narayan P. Manandhar.

Herbal Khaptad

Thank you for the stimulating article "Diverted Wealth: The Trade in Himalayan Herbs" (Jan/Feb 1993). The "activist agenda" envisaged by the article is especially relevant for the Khaptad Plateau and the Khaptad National Park in Far West Nepal.

The biological riches of Khaptad are well-known — enough for the Government

to once have established a *jadibuti* (herbs) office, where for a number of years various medicinal plants were farmed. With the gazetting of a national park in Khaptad in 1984, the herbal farm was dismantled.

Upon reading the article, I was reminded of a well-known *vaidya* I once met in Khaptad. As I had been surprised by the diversity of plants in the region, I was amazed by the *vaidya's* wealth of knowledge about Khaptad's plants and their uses. Before Khaptad became a park, the *vaidya* said, he used to collect medicinal plants from the plateau, but now, with soldiers stationed in and around the park, he is fearful of even stepping into the area. Ironically, the very soldiers who will not allow him to collect medicinal herbs come to him for treating their various illnesses.

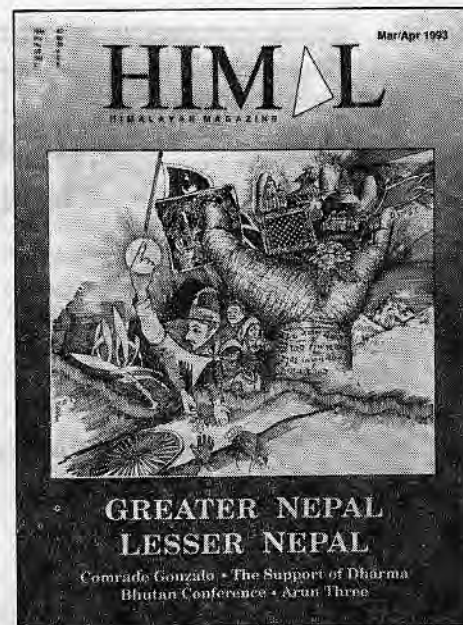
As things stand, the army battalion and the Park administration in Khaptad are nothing but a drain on the country's limited resources. On the other hand, both the inhabitants of the surrounding area and the Government in Kathmandu would benefit from the revenues generated if there were herbal farming and sustainable exploitation of the medicinal herbs of Khaptad.

Having worked with the people of Khaptad for some time, I am convinced that cultivation of *jadibuti* can be revived here. NGOs could help by mobilising resources, providing the knowledge required for primary processing, and helping deal with the middlemen. This would have an extremely positive impact on the livelihood of the people and their income would increase significantly. This would in turn promote the protection of Khaptad National Park by the villagers themselves, and the Park would be converted from a liability to an asset. *Jadibuti* cultivation and harvesting is the key to the future sustainability of both the Park and the people.

Devendra S. Rana
Udaya Himalaya Network
Bajhang, West Nepal

Preaching and Practising

This concerns the article "Is the Grass Greener In America?" (Jan/Feb 1993). Although the writer raises some serious points, there seems to be more than a touch of hypocrisy in his article. Despite the grim situation of Nepalis in the United States portrayed by the writer, I would be very surprised if he himself regrets the decision he made of studying in America. And I am

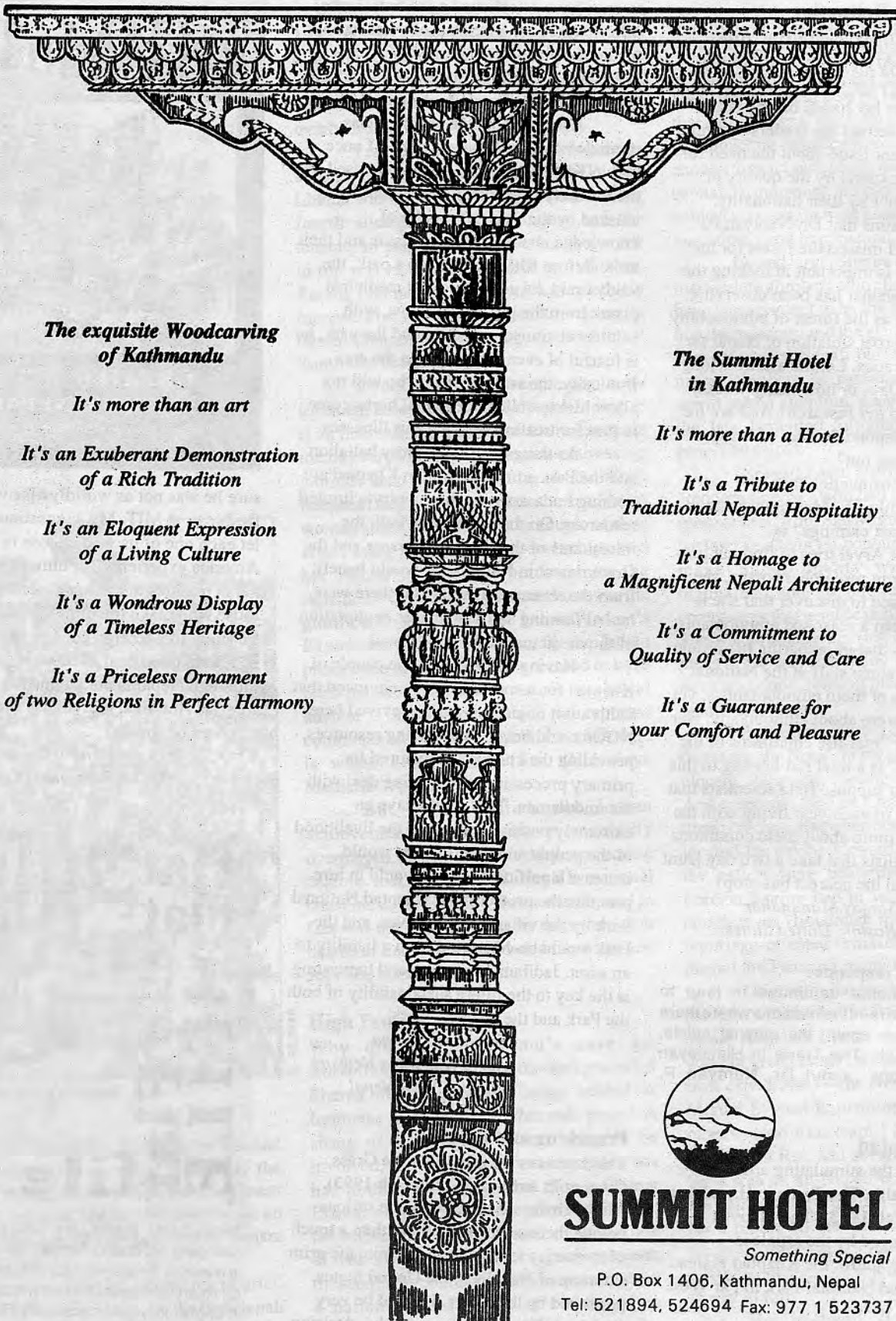


sure he was not as worldlywise while still a freshman at MIT. My suggestion is, why not let each one of us who choose to go to America experience for himself/herself the harsh realities the writer describes. After all, those who make the important decision to go study in a foreign country obviously do so after a good deal of thought, and although Nepal is not so much a "land of the free" as America, individuals here do have a freedom of choice.

Sachendra Gurung
Maharajgunj, Kathmandu.

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Himal thanks Flatfile, the literary journal from Kalimpong, and its editor Anmole Prasad for assistance in preparing the present issue. Readers who wish to continue their acquaintance with Himalayan literature in English may get in touch with Flatfile, c/o A. P. Chettri, Rishi Road, Ninth Mile, Kalimpong 734301.



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Who Speaks for the Himalaya?

How To Develop the Himalaya in
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Laxmi Prasad Devkota (1909 – 1959)

The region is presented to the world by writers and researchers who have not been exposed to the local literature.

As far as creative literature is concerned, the Himalayans still speak largely for, and to, themselves.

by Michael Hutt

Before 1950, because Nepal was virtually inaccessible to foreigners, almost every visitor who passed through published an account of his or her experiences. The earliest book-length treatment (Col. William Kirkpatrick's *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*) appeared in 1811, and was followed by several others by visitors such as Hector Oldfield, Perceval Landon and Sylvain Levi. None of these were works of creative literature as such, though they are still referred to by

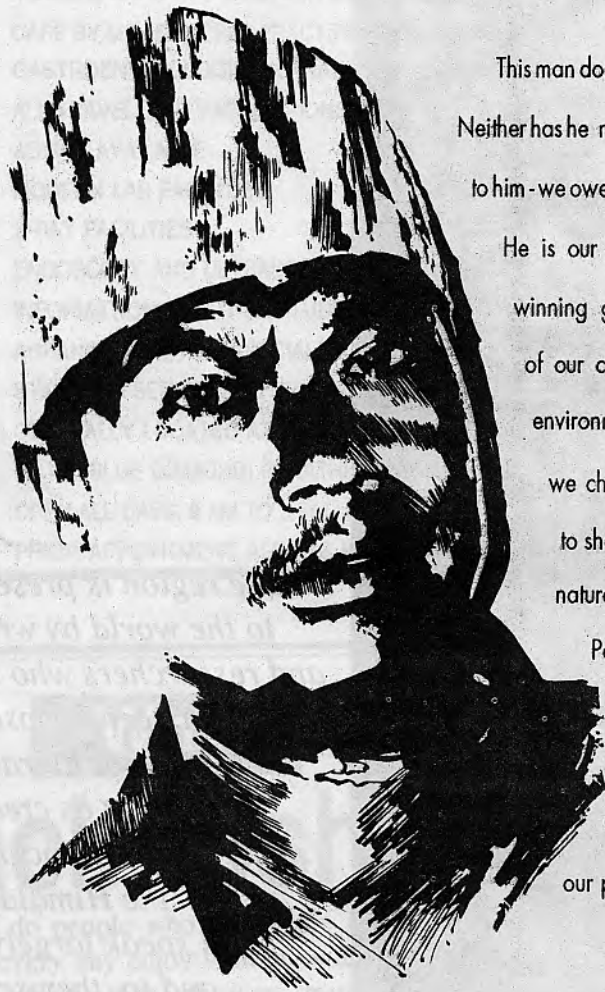
students and researchers.


Because Nepal remained independent during the period of British rule in India, it merited very few mentions in the works of popular Anglo-Indian authors like John Masters, Paul Scott or Rudyard Kipling. Though Kipling wrote about "the little yellow idol to the north of Khatmandu" and described the "facts of Khatmandu" as the "wildest dreams of Kew", he never set foot in Nepal. For Kipling, "Khatmandu" was useful in



tortuous rhyme-schemes. It also represented something remote, unknown and exotic: "to the north of Khatmandu" probably sounded to readers of Kipling's day like somewhere near the edge of the known universe. In most British colonial fiction, the Himalaya meant hill stations like Shimla or Darjeeling, or occasionally Kashmir.


The early British travelers to Nepal usually presented its people and culture in a positive light. This may have been because

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most of them visited the kingdom as representatives of the British Government in some shape or form, and because their relations with the Nepali rulers were generally cordial. This was particularly obvious during the latter half of the Rana period. British travelers had few good things to say about the culture of less pliant kingdoms. Ashley Eden's book (*Political Missions to Bootan*) is still notorious in Thimphu for its withering attacks on Bhutanese officials, whom Eden found "boorish" and "insolent" when he visited in 1863.

Nepal in the West

The recent exponential growth of international tourism has inspired an avalanche flood of guidebooks and picturebooks, accounts of adventure and mountaineering, and a body of anthropological literature that has now assumed epic proportions. There are, for instance, at least a dozen book-length studies of Sherpa society and culture. But the scene is still one of poverty if you are looking for Western-authored fiction set in the Himalaya, or for travelogues or mountaineering books that possess literary merit.

In the first category, we seem to have only Han Suyin's *The Mountain is Young* (1958), J.R.Marks' *Ayo Gurkha* (1971), and a handful of novels by Greta Rana and a more recent clutch of fictionalised travelogues such as Pico Iyer's *Video Nights in Kathmandu*. Suyin's novel is set against the backdrop of King Mahendra's coronation, which she herself attended. The heroine, Anne, is a shy English woman with a priggish English husband. Anne discovers her sexuality in sensuous "Khatmandu" through a liaison with an Indo-Nepali engineer. Suyin painted a lurid, exotic picture of Nepal, but her novel probably introduced the kingdom to a huge number of readers who had never heard of it before:

Frederic Maltby knew the bend of the road where he would suddenly see, and always with the same shock of happiness, the snow peaks, rosy in the early light, emerging above the near hills. Although from his bedroom window he could see them just as well, yet it was pleasure redoubled to meet them just at that corner, to see the lords of the snows towering incandescent pink in the early sky. I shall see them here again tomorrow, he thought, and felt himself fulfilled.

He had been five years in the Valley. He would never leave it. Never would he go back to the plains. He would remain here until he died, lifting his eyes to the mountains in the morning and many times during the day. 'For the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills...

J.R. Marks' novel stands out from a mass of hackneyed Gurkha-inspired literature. It describes the life of Aitahang, a Limbu who joins the Brigade of Gurkhas and fights in Malaya. This is how Marks describes Aitahang's preparations for departure from his home (Bhalu is his dog):

Aitahang did not sleep a wink before he left. Every half-hour after midnight he peered out at the moon, full and clear in the cloudless night sky, the monsoon just past. At last, when he reckoned it was two hours before dawn, he slipped down from the hayloft, still wrapped in his fur, whispered to Bhalu and entered the farmhouse. He opened the family chest,

took out his new kukri and closed the lid carefully. Then he folded the fur, laid it on top of the box and laid his working kukri on top of that. This was the only way he could leave word that he had gone of his own free will. He could not have told his parents earlier; they would have forbidden him to go, and would have extracted his promise that he would not.

For a moment he stood in the darkness of the lower room, the familiar scent of pine-wood in his nostrils, hearing from outside the sounds of cattle shifting in the byre, and the clink of Bhalu's chain. Through a crack in the window boards he saw moonlight flitter on the snows of Topke, and impulsively he stretched out his hand to the lid of the chest again, tempted to replace his new kukri and steal back to the hayloft beside his brother. No one would ever know...

The second category — mountaineering books and travelogues — is much more extensive. H.W.Tilman was the finest of mountaineering writers: *Nepal Himalaya* recounts his exploration of Jugal, Ganesh and Khumbu Himal during the late 1940s. The book is a masterpiece, full of laconic wit and offbeat allusions. Compare the following to the bald diary-like style of many other mountaineering books:

Our recent access of confidence was further undermined by the appalling prospect of the next stage, from our camp on the rice stubbles of Gudel across an appallingly deep valley to Bung, and thence to another pass on the ridge beyond. Bung looked to be within spitting distance, yet the map confirmed and the eye agreed that we should have to descend some 3,000 ft. and climb a like amount to reach it. Profound emotion may find some vent in verse as well as in oaths; despair as well as joy may rouse latent, unsuspected poetical powers. Thus at Gudel, uninspired by liquor, for there was none, some memorable lines were spoken:

For dreadfulness nought can excel

*The prospect of Bung from Gudel;
And words die away on the tongue
When we look back at Gudel
from Bung.*

Writers of the Literature Issue

Bill Aitken writes prolifically on the Himalaya and is a columnist for *The Statesman* and *The Pioneer*. He lives in Delhi and Mussoorie.

Anadi Pawan Chettri is an accountant with the Kalimpong Municipality.

John Michael Chiramal wrote the poem in page 17 while in Shemgang, Bhutan, in August 1991.

Michael Hutt is Lecturer in Nepali Studies at the School for Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and translated and edited *Himalayan Voices* (University of California Press, 1991).

S. Ram Kumar is working in the Centre for Environmental Education, Thaltej, Ahmedabad.

Dorjee Tshering Lepcha, Harkabahadur Chettri and Moti Prasad Sharma are all teachers living in Kalimpong.

Krishna Bam Malla (1920 - 1985) was a senior civil servant who hailed from Western Nepal and studied in Benaras.

Anmole Prasad practises law in Kalimpong.

Lalit Kumar Rai is a scientist working with the G.B. Pant Institute in Gangtok.

Bhupi Sherchan (1936 - 1989) is considered one of the most popular modern poets of Nepal.

Mana Man Singh lives in Chobar, Kathmandu.

"The Ploughman" (page 14) and the two poems by Bhupi Sherchan (page 18) were translated by Michael Hutt. Bharat Mani Pradhan translated "Budget" (page 12).

The village of Bung, a name which appeals to a music-hall mind, provoked another outburst on the return journal because its abundant well of good raksi, on which we were relying, had dried up:

*Hope thirstily rested on Bung
So richly redolent of rum;
But when we got there
The cupboard was bare
Sapristi. No raksi. No chang.*

To disarm the hypercritical I might say that the 'a' in chang, a Tibetan word for beer, is pronounced like a short 'u'.

The neat houses and terraced fields of Bung, apparently rich in promise, covered several thousand feet of hillside. In Nether Bung they grew bananas and rice, in Upper Bung oranges and wheat. A sepoy had gone on to collect rice but on arrival the whole party scattered in search of provender like hounds drawing a cover. For ourselves we acquired nothing but a goat, worth about Rs.5, for Rs.12, having been asked Rs.20. In order to secure the rice we had to curtail the march and make a late start. Next morning the jemadar, with bloodshot eyes and husky voice, as became one who had attended an overnight harvest thanksgiving, led the rice procession up to our camp in swaying triumph.

The Facts of "Khatmandu"

So, as far as creative literature (fiction, poetry, drama) is concerned, the Himalayans still speak largely for themselves. The problem here, though, is that they also speak mainly to themselves, and the percentage of outsiders who take an active interest in the local literature remains small. In my more cynical moments, I sometimes wonder whether a Nepali poet in Kathmandu actually reaches an audience that extends beyond the other Nepali poets of Kathmandu. Then I remind myself that nearly every educated Nepali I know appears to have written poetry at one time or another.

Other problems persist: very little 20th century Himalayan literature has been translated into English or any other language, and most of what has been translated is not available outside the region. It took me about eight years to complete an anthology of Nepali literature in translation (*Himalayan Voices*) and more than two years to find a publisher who would take it on. Most publishers seemed to assume that there would be no market for such a book because Nepali literature was unknown in the West. Authors of colourfully-illustrated travelogues probably do not face

such problems.

There is also the problem of Western expectations. People can feel profoundly uncomfortable when you question their preconceptions. Some years back, I read some of my translations from Nepali at a poetry evening attended by respectable ladies and gentlemen from the English Home Counties. The poems I read included Bhupi Sherchan's "Monkeys of the Cold War":

*A monkey with shit on his hands
Is eternally bothered by their smell;
In an orange grove it makes him breathless;
If he sees a rose, he blocks his nose;
Raising polluted hands, he tries to keep his
body*

*From their hateful touch,
Then runs from wood to wood
With a scream of failure,
Wiping his hands on rocks and trees,
Dipping them into streams and springs,
Trying to be free of their stench.*

*At each attempt, he sniffs at his hand,
But finds that it smells even worse;
As if mad, he shakes down fruits and flowers,
Destroying sweet scents and sweet tastes.
Despairing at last, he sits on a rough rock,
Scrapes his hand hard there, then sniffs.
He scrapes and sniffs, and sniffs and scrapes,
And continues to scrape
Till his hand is useless.*

*When a nervous monkey's paws start to
stink,
He lays waste to the garden
And maims his own hands.*

It was mischievous to read such a poem to such an audience, perhaps.* [*All translations are the writer's own.] But I felt that Lekmath Poudyal's "Last Poem" would probably make up for it:

*God Himself endures this pain,
This body where He dwells.
By its fall He is surely saddened,
He quietly picks up His things, and goes.*

And if not, I imagined that Devkota's lyricism in *Pagal* would win them over:

*Surely, my friend, I am mad,
that's exactly what I am!*

*I see sounds,
hear sights,
taste smells,
I touch things thinner than air,*

*things whose existence the world does not
know.*

*Stones I see as flowers,
pebbles have soft shapes,
watersmoothed at the water's edge
in the moonlight;
as heaven's sorceress smiles at me,
they put out leaves, they soften, they glimmer
and pulse, rising up like mute maniacs,
like flowers — a kind of moonbird flower.
I speak to them just as they speak to me,
in a language, my friend,
unwritten, unprinted, unspoken,
uncomprehended, unheard.
Their speech comes in ripples, my friend,
to the moonlit Ganga's shore.
Surely, my friend, I am mad,
that's exactly what I am!*

*You are clever, and wordy,
your calculations exact and correct forever,
but take one from one in my arithmetic,
and you are still left with one.
You use five senses, but I have six,
you have a brain, my friend,
but I have a heart.
To you a rose is a rose, and nothing more,
but I see Helen and Padmini,
you are forceful prose,
I am liquid poetry;
you freeze as I am melting,
you clear as I cloud over,
and then it's the other way around;
your world is solid, mine vapour,
your world is gross, mine subtle,
you consider a stone an object,
material hardness your reality,
but I try to grasp hold of dreams,
just as you try to catch the rounded truths
of cold sweet graven coins.
My passion is that of a thorn, my friend,
yours is for gold and diamonds,
you say that the hills are deaf and dumb,
I say that they are eloquent.*

But the response was one of polite incomprehension. This was not what they had expected to hear at all. These expressions of moral doubt, of political sophistication, of self-styled lunacy, surely could not come from the land of the Gurkhas and Sherpas!

Diverse Himalayan Realities

The lack of quality translations from Nepali is less serious now that it was ten years ago. However, what is available is still only the tip of what is there. And what of the modern literatures of other Himalayan languages? Scores of Tibetan Buddhist texts have been translated and published, but where are the

Tibetan novelists and short-story writers? Literature has been written in Kashmiri since in the middle ages, but hardly any has been translated. Is Bhutan still a land of medieval minstrels and Buddhist bards, or does it contain writers of Dzongkha and Nepali who deserve to be heard?

The days when anthropologists conducted fieldwork with the help of an interpreter are long gone, and works in languages other than English are beginning to creep into their bibliographies. The Himalaya welcomes more than its fair share of researchers and advisors, but its diverse realities are still often presented to the outside world by people who have not been exposed to the local literature. So, although it may no longer be a case of the "wildest dreams of Kew", it may not be a case of *all* the "facts of Khatmandu" either. In 1945, Devkota published an essay, *Pahadi Jivan* ("Mountain Life"), which began like this:

On my journey to Gosainthan I saw mountains, but I did not see mountain life. What I saw on the way did not reflect it: apart from a few huts and a couple of bazaars I saw nothing but the forests, the hills and the path I was walking on.

Men spend their lives high up here like birds, sometimes in the terraced fields. In the winter there will only be the smooth realm of snow where sheepfolds and cattlepens now stand... Here, Mankind is

blinded and numbed by the great frosty regime. Life springs up from the dust: smeared with a little of the dust of Spring time, it blooms, and then in the end it mingles once more with the dust. There are no greater problems here than eating and scratching a living. Here, 'home' means four posts and a roof of straw that lasts only a couple of months, and social life rarely exceeds the coming together of four people. Man lives a shifting, wandering life in such a place, travelling in search of warm air and sunshine. The world is stingy, and Nature is tightfisted: if he is lucky the earth might yield a little maize and a few nettles.

Why did Man come up here? What pleasure, what happiness was he seeking? Did he come here just to eat thorns and to stand, rattling in the teeth of the wind, like a few frost-ravaged leaves? Was it to display his alienation? The children are illiterate, and their legs are bare. They dance and play like jungle creatures, and life is just subsistence, and the water that moulds the red clay.

Compare the tone of this with Tilman's jovial account of life in the high mountains. Again, compare Peter Matthiessen's account of arrival in Pokhara (from *The Snow Leopard*) with Bhupi Sherchan's satirical account of actually living there:

After midday, the rain eased, and the

Land-Rover rode into Pokhara on a shaft of storm light. Next day there was humid sun and shifting southern skies, but to the north a deep tumult of swirling greys was all that could be seen of the Himalaya. At dusk, white egrets flapped across the sunken clouds, now black with rain; on earth, the dark had come. Then, four miles above these mud streets of the lowlands, at a point so high as to seem overhead, a luminous whiteness shone—the light of snows. Glaciers loomed and vanished in the greys, and the sky parted, and the snow cone of Machhapuchare glistened like a spire of a higher kingdom. (Matthiessen)

*Planes are coming, planes are going,
Coming with honeymoon couples,
Going carrying soldiers
Summoned to Kutch next morning.*

*Planes come, carrying tourists
To see the Fishtail mountain,
Planes go carrying baskets and trunks,
Ploughs and the Fishtail's children,
Off to seek land in the plains.*

*Planes are coming, planes are going:
From a bench by the airfield a blind man
drones,
"No milk comes from a bird,
For a sad man there's no home."
(Sherchan)*





Main Road Revisit

by Anmole Prasad

There is a sodium moon at Thana Dara crossing that lights up every evening at six.

Under its corrosive glow, two men passed each other in the night.

One stops and in that terrible pause, asks himself: where have I seen that face before.

Wheeling abruptly he hurries after the receding figure, plucks at a sleeve. Excuse me, do you have a light.

There is some urgency in the question.

The other man turns, smiles a slow chemical smile. His bones jut under a black coat of seedy elegance. His is the angular grace of the stalker.

You already know who I am. Here, a light. For your cigarette and for you to see me more clearly by.

Recognition scuttles across your face like a crab.

It does not matter anymore, for we are travellers and I have followed you down the centuries to this, the beginning of the end.

In the flare of the Ronson, your yellow smile twists uneasily in remembrance.

Do you remember the Iron King.

Do you remember the frown of the Damsang Fort over Pedong.

Do you remember Chel.

I was much bigger then: I could eat a whole bullock in a morning. It was foretold that because of this my body would slowly turn into iron. Afterwards, I would rule the world.

The ferrous dusk crept up from my feet.

Your masters trembled. Even as they sat in secret council, my scrotum, belly, my sternum, my ribs, arms, all hardened into steel, armouring me like a black rhinoceros.

They sent in vassalage, as a peace offering, the Three Assassins bearing white scarfs and fermented wine. To serve me; to stop me.

You carried a byanphok then, doctor, you were seldom without it. You were renowned for your deadly surgery then as you are known for your compassion now.

With your two friends you served me faithfully for a year. A year almost too late. Only my neck and head still remained of flesh and bone.

Like the gods, I was almost invincible.

As you stand here on Main Road linked to me by flame, the fateful night comes back to you like a surge.

One of you held the basin.

One of you poured the water.

You lifted the black blade behind the curtain, your mouth bloody with paan. My hair, long, wet, straight.

The byanphok is a swift souging arc.

My headless body leaps of its own volition about the

room. Great crimson patches on the ceiling.

You had a good memory then, doctor. You do not forget the monks' warning — let not the head join the trunk. Gibbering the ancient mantras, you snatch it up in a bag.

Do you remember:

- i the flight through the avenue of pines;*
- ii the clank of my decapitated body in hot pursuit;*
- iii hurling my head in the grinning whirlpools;*
- iv the white-fanged waters of Chel;*
- v a metal carcass scrambling down the banks in silent despair.*

The other Assassins intercept me, I am drawn and quartered and drawn and quartered again into a thousand trembling pieces until the very stones above the ford are bubbling with blood.

My eyes watched you through the waters. They watch you now through flame.

For years after, travellers coming from your country learned to dread the crossing at Chel. Some of them survived.

Then the monks came, red robed, smelling of rancid butter, carved magic runes into the rocks around the ford. The wayfarers chanted the spells before crossing — I was thwarted.

I bided my time, doctor, I did. Watched and waited down the years that became decades that became centuries.

Three years ago I caught up with the two Assassins — hosted their heads in the park one gray morning.

They called it political killings. I prefer that.

But for you old friend, I have something more... special.

Come let us walk you and I down Main Road.

Where I break upon you like the flood filling this moment with everyone of your memories. Until it comes to you with unbearable clarity that one does not love, one only remembers.

And next I am gone, receding bit by bit from your head bleeding you of all recollection while you stand helplessly like a lake emptying in the sea.

For you can do nothing about it. Except savour the slow and exquisite agony that you are losing all of your mind.

As for the pain, it will stay long after I've gone, for no one forgets pain.

And I cannot bring myself to bid you farewell.

The next day I lunched with a friend, a learned professor, who assures me that there is no legend of the Iron King of the Lepchas. He adds that the Bhutanese built the Damsang Fort only in the last century.

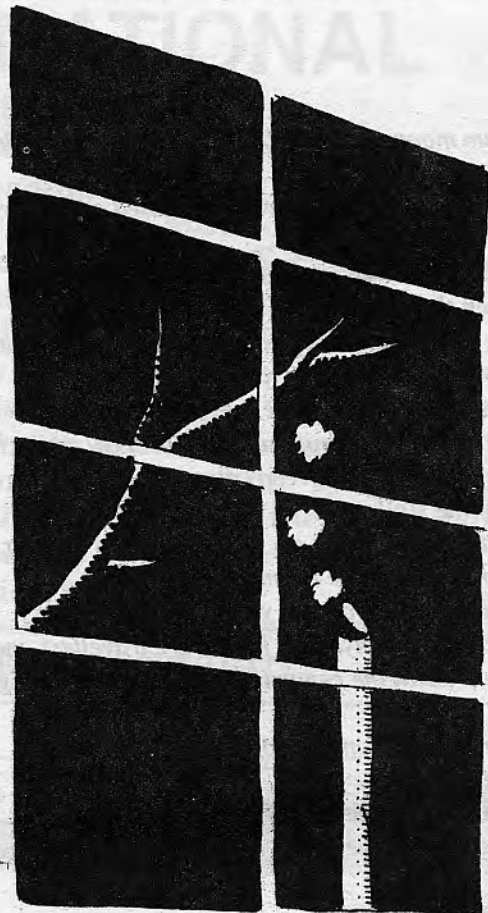
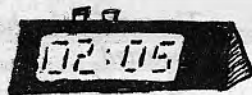
Perhaps he is right.

▷

Shut up Cuckoo!

Kathmandu night, rain has just stopped. Unreasonably early pre-monsoon, making things wet when they should be dry. Which makes the local koel feel like bursting forth into song. Bird, do you realise it is two in the morning? And the hard-working people of Patan would like a bit of a respite from your koho koho questioning? You have all morning, midday and evening to practise, so why do you disturb the whole tole at this hour of deep slumber? Your call has sent poets of all cultures into rhapsodies, but tonight all you succeed at is preventing sleep. As you keep at it from the eucalyptus bough just outside my window, I am unable to recollect gurgling brooks, daffodils, secluded grottos, or wide open skies. The only association I can draw to your koho koho is the poop poop poop of rice mills in the hills. They attach whistles in the exhaust to alert surrounding villages that husking is in progress. I have no rice to husk today, cuckoo. Don't sing into my window. At least, turn the other way.

Mana Man Singh



Budget

Clenching the week's wages — all ninety rupees of it — in a fist, Maitey recites the wife's shopping list in one breath to his grocer:

"Twelvekilosrice, twokilosflour, quarterofoil, halfquarteroftea, abottleofkerosene, salthalf, tworuledexercisebooksno2, tabletsforcoughandcoldtwo, tha'sall."

"One hundred and twenty three and seventy five paise."

"Same amount of rice, even that won't suffice. Leave out the flour. I'll do without lunch. Add up the oil, tea and salt. Skip the kerosene, we'll manage; give me the rest. And yes, better throw in four toffees, four balloons."

Like a criminal poised for the verdict, Maitey waits expectantly.

Moti Prasad Sharma

Silverfish

Covers a great distance
a hundred thousand miles
stone dead under its feet
the unveiled knowledge lies

Strange this relation
unlike root to the soil
this silver creature
amid wisdom toils

Upon a coarse surface
a heart spreads open
absorbed and lost
before coming into motion

Like a surprised branch
at the onset of spring
strange is the feeling
the unknown brings.

Harkabahadur Chettri

YETI Song

*Beyond the Ganges river
In the mountains of Nepal
There lives my hairy YETI,
She's the fairest of them all.
She's lithe and curvaceous
And as Yetis go, she's tall
She's my hirsute mountain beauty
She's the fairest of them all*

*Chorus:
Full my heart and gone my reason
We have love for every season;
She's my own, my hairy YETI,
Fairest of them all.*

*Her hair is like angora
From the first cold nip of fall
But in summer, when she's moulting
She has nothing on at all.
Her smile is lost in hairiness,
Her nose is cute and small,
And her eyebrows are so shaggy
I can't see her eyes at all.
(Chorus)*

*High up on Sagarmatha
When the cold is hard and blue
And the wind is icy needles
And I'm frozen thru and thru
My ever-loving Yeti
Takes me up in her embrace:
The warmth of her four bosoms
Draws the frostbite from my face.
(Chorus)*

*She wraps me with her cosiness
Against the chill monsoon,
Or we sit in summer twilight
Singing lovesongs to the moon.
She's an international heroine —
holds Asia in her thrall;
She's an undisputed citizen
Of China and Nepal.
(Chorus)*

*Alternate chorus:
Salute the flag and throw confetti
China made the first spaghetti
She's my own, my hairy YETI
Fairest of them all.*

Marlin Spike Werner

The Ploughman

Krishna Bam Malla



BIKAS RAUNI/©R

Before the beginning of August last year, Manidhar bista had come running ten times if he'd come once, to employ Pudke damai as a ploughman. So Pudke had ploughed his fields and done various odd jobs in his house, and this had earned him a full nine measures of corn. The grain had been allotted to him the day the bista's barn was filled that November. It was Pudke's profession to plough for others; this was how he made his living.

Pudke damai was exactly thirty. Sometime ago, his wife had died. She had not left any children, and so he lived alone. But now he was able to marry again. Six miles from his village there lived a twenty two year old damai girl named Ujeli. She was just as stout and hardworking as he was. We will love one another, for sure, thought Pudke. And after the last crop was sown that year and he had some free time, he put on his best coat and went to visit her. She gave him chiura and green pickle, kept back from the midday snack in fields, and asked him,

"When will we eat the chiura of your wedding day?"

"In November, perhaps?" said Pudke and smiled.

"Is that just a hope?" asked Ujeli

"No it will certainly happen!"

Back home, he told Manidhar that the wedding was fixed for November.

A few days later, Pudke tethered the old ox in its stall after a long day of ploughing the mustard field. It seemed perfectly healthy that evening, but the very next day it died. This caused a tremendous fuss, and Pudke was blamed for ploughing badly. Manidhar claimed that he could no longer afford to give Pudke his share of the crop for the year. After all, how could Manidhar bear such a loss as the death of his great old ox? On the day that the crop came in in November, Pudke wept and begged for forgiveness, but Manidhar would not soften.

How could he go to see Ujeli now with any kind of cheer? Would she still agree to marry him? No, he didn't think she would dishonour him — she would marry him, alright. But how would he feed and support her? And all he had was a tiny field producing only half a measure of corn. And there was barely a sackful left now.

Manidhar bista has refused him his share — what reward did he hope for in heaven after causing misery to the poor? There were not

many days left in the month — the month within which he had promised to marry. What could he tell Ujeli? How were they to meet? He could think of no solution. But even as he sat there thinking, Ujeli appeared before him.

"Men are all sinners!" she said. "They string up other men's daughters in nooses of hope!"

Pudke understood full well what she meant, but what answer could he give her? His eyes filled with tears. Could Ujeli bear to watch her man cry?

"He didn't give you your share, and now you sit here crying! You won't have to keep me, you know. I have my own skills too: I can sew and earn money. If you have to, just move back the date a little."

Pudke got busy, and the wedding was set for December. But weddings don't happen just like that. He needed an outfit for himself. And the bride should be given a skirt and a blouse, a shawl and a waistband at the very least. There would have to be beer, and spirit too. Nor could they omit to slaughter a pig. He reckoned he'd need at least one hundred rupees. How could he borrow that now?

He went to Manidhar's house: who else would trust him? A loan of 120 was agreed. 10 was deducted as commission, his house and his fields were pledged as security, he was bound to plough for a year for no payment... In the end, he came home with 90 rupees, at ten percent interest for a term of one year. At the end of the month, he brought Ujeli home with trumpets sounding. The very next day, Pudke began ploughing Manidhar's fields, and Ujeli began sewing vests and blouses.

Every evening when Pudke came back from a long day's ploughing, Ujeli would greet him cheerily with a great wide smile, and fill pipe with tobacco. As soon as he saw her, he would forget his exhaustion.

January, February... the months went by. But as soon as March began, Pudke became very ill. The fever stayed with him for a whole fortnight. Even when it had abated, he could not leave his bed. As soon as he heard that Pudke's fever was better, Manidhar sent his man around to the house to ask when he was coming back to work. But Pudke could hardly get up. What he really needed was good food and rest, but there wasn't a grain of food in the house. Ujeli's three rupees had already been paid up to the shaman for sacrificing a black chicken at the crossroads. Ujeli had had no time to sew while tending her husband, so her income ceased too.

In the morning, Ujeli went round the whole village, trying to borrow a little rice and corn, but no one would lend her anything. Manidhar even scolded her because Pudke wasn't at work. She was in despair. She would willingly live on water alone, but her sick husband had to have something to eat. What could she do now? Even if she did manage to provide a meal the next morning, she would have to go home to her parents' in the evening for a few pounds of grain. But she hadn't yet solved the problem. She was on her way home tired and disconsolate, when she met Chaur's mother fetching water from the spring. She had promised Ujeli a small measure of rice for the blouse Ujeli had sewn for her. So now at least, she could give poor Pudke some rice, although she herself would have to eat a thin cornflour soup.

Next day, Ujeli fed the sick man in the morning and then set off to her mother's home without eating anything herself. That evening she came home, bearing rice for him and corn for herself.

Thanks to Ujeli's attentions, Pudke was fit for work much sooner than expected. She begged him to rest for a few more days, but he just went off to plough the rest of Manidhar's fields. So she took up

her sewing again. In September, Ujeli gave birth to a son, and Pudke was overjoyed.

Then November came around again, and Manidhar's man demanded payment at once. Pudke and Ujeli went to his house and begged for mercy. But Manidhar would not listen. He ordered that Pudke be locked in his cellar. Ujeli could not bear it.

"First pay us what you owe us for a whole years ploughing, then we'll pay you back. How can you lend 90 rupees, then demand 132 back? You should be ashamed!"

When she shouted at him, Manidhar read the agreement again. It was quite firm in its terms. So he said, "If you want to get your husband out, go and fetch the money. There is no point gabbling at me!"

"Where can I go? How can I bring you money? If we had money to pay off our debts, we'd never have begged you for charity. And it's not charity, either, it's payment for ploughing your fields!"

"This damai woman just says what she likes! She should better at her age. If you love your husband, go and work. Earn some money and set him free!"

"Hey, bista, watch your tongue!" roared Ujeli. For a moment she was blinded by rage. She was even deaf to the cries of the child in her lap.

Unable to bear any more of this, Pudke interrupted them. "You have the right to my house. But you have no right to destroy our honour. I hereby give up my house and my land. You just take it over. We're leaving."

Pudke relinquished ownership of the house and land of his forefathers, picked up his son and led Ujeli away. Ujeli clung to her husband.

"What are we going?" she asked.

Pudke walked on a little further, then he took his son by the hand.

"To Assam. We'll keep cows."

(Original title *Hali*. From the *Sajha Katha* anthology, 1968.)

FILM HIMALAYA

1994 FESTIVAL

HIMAL IS ORGANISING A HIMALAYAN FILM FESTIVAL IN KATHMANDU, 18-19 FEBRUARY 1994. WE SEEK TO PROVIDE A FORUM FOR SCREENING HITHERTO SCATTERED AND/OR UNKNOWN FILMS ON THE HIMALAYAN REGION. THERE IS GREAT DEPTH AND DIVERSITY IN HIMALAYAN FILM-MAKING, BUT THE "SUBJECT PEOPLE" OF THE HIMALAYA DO NOT KNOW THIS. THE *FILM HIMALAYA* FESTIVAL SEEKS TO FILL THAT GAP. FROM THE ENTRIES RECEIVED, THE FESTIVAL PANEL WILL SELECT FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES TO BE SCREENED BACK-TO-BACK FOR TWO DAYS. HIMAL HOPES THAT THE FESTIVAL WILL BRING FILM-MAKERS AND CONNOISSEURS TOGETHER IN COMMON INTEREST.

Details are being finalised and will be announced in the Jul/Aug 1993 issue of *Himal*. Queries may be directed to Suman Basnet, Festival Director, at P.O. Box 42, Lalitpur, Nepal. Fax 977 1 521013.

OBITUARY OF THE BLACK TULIP QUEST

S. Ram Kumar

This paper uses modified Ahalpara Matrices to generate Hartree-Fock (yes, HARTREE-FOCK) approximations to account for Eigen values of upper f-p-g shell nuclei. Ground state occupancies in such cases can be calculated..."

The rod jerked in my hands. The line went out screaming. I struck hard hoping that I had made him hooked firmly. Adjusted the drag, and by the pull he was exerting, I figured he must be a couple of Kilos. In about ten minutes, he was flopping about on the beach. Later, around the camp fire as I bit into my roti and pickle, I could almost predict the conversation; dull, stale conversation mocked by the sparkle and glow of the fire. I wandered off down the shore — I missed her. The contest was unequal — the sand kept diving under the water to seek refuge and the sea kept lifting it up and battering it on the shore. Another lot of sand dived in — do those bastards never learn?

Phosphorescent algae washed ashore, if you do not locate it fast enough to put it back into water, it stopped glowing. Flopped down on the sand, face down. If you dug yourself in a little deeper it was a lot warmer. Made a pillow of sand under my chin. Still missed her. Played out a demonstration of Green's theorem. I'd punch the sand as if hitting a button and sure enough somewhere on the shore at the very exact moment my finger hit the sand, a phosphorescent glow would light up. A couple of times it didn't happen and the grave danger in store for the universe if Green's theorem refused experimental verification weighed on my mind. Going mad, stark raving mad. How long do I miss her? Wire her name on the shore, the waves flog her.

The trouble was that I had never met her. That's why I call her Swapnika. Of my dreams, by my dreams and God forbid — for my dreams. Born of longing, desire and a desire for companionship — a composite creature, part Aphrodite, part Minerva, friend, lover, guise, mentor, personal philosopher, soothsayer — my Swapnika. Maybe I'd meet her in the next second, maybe never. Green's theorem failed again. I'll bait my largest sea hook with my harmonica and cast as far as I can. Maybe I can hook a mermaid — yes definitely going mad. I jumped up; the keen wind at Okha can really chill you. Tripping over a dozen mermaids, decrepit Green's theorems and faded signboards that said "Swapnika —>" I stumbled back to camp. Radhan was just finishing an eyewitness account of Suleiman killing a dory owner for fouling his nets. "Navlakhi is a bad place," he warns. Clavell springs to my mind. "Dew ne loh moh" on nets, Suleiman and Navlakhi. In that order — in any fornicating order. *Hamari galli bhi phoren hai dekho!*

Sleep is impossible. Swapnika, Swapnika, where are you? Long for you. What hook, what bait what rod, what line — just what do I do now? Back on the beach it is too cold. Inside the tent it is too claustrophobic. Smoke a couple of cigarettes. count stars, sheep, sleep.

"Remember, in funds flow calculations, the rate of the flow is as important, sometimes more, than the volume of the flows. Japanese managers are adept at increasing flow rates to levels where the operating cycle becomes fifteen or twenty days giving them twenty rotations per year. Compare this with the two or three rotations possible in India..." — thirty minutes to go for lunch. Exams are from the day after. Long for the great, wide, open spaces.

The climb is lung wrenching. One step forward, heave, another step forward. Wish I had given up smoking. 12,000 feet and still climbing. But the great-big ice-cream cones are reward enough. Bhagirathi 1 & 2, Shivling — the sky seems to lick their tops with gossamer cloud tongues. Simla baba makes us coffee with Swiss milk powder and offers to deliver instant bliss — smoke it, sniff it or inject it — we claim that the coffee is strong enough. Halfway to Bhojwasa, the snow starts falling. Too cold to even eat. Gulp down some soup and snuggle in under some dozen sheets. No one told me about cold seeping in through the floor, so I am now faced with a frustrating decision problem: from a total of 14 blankets, how many should I have on the ground and how many over me? No one at management school can help. Would love to have Swapnika inside, but she is not here at Gangotri either. Where is she then? Write her name, mine and Naganath's on a discarded cigarette packet; he wanted to bathe in the Ganga at Gaumukh to seek blessing for his investment banking company and slip it into the rushing torrent.

See the pines and miss her, see the rhododendron and miss her, see the lazy river in the far away valley and ache for her. Hate to see the beauty of nature so alone.

"*Sahib, stockists ke paas se abhi bhi pandrah lakh baki hai to main kaise advance payment bharon?*" Market shares, price fluctuations, infiltration across state tax lines, territory poaching, sales meetings — the same litany every time. This month it is not too bad. Next month, oh god. The new budget will come in, more excise duties, more taxes and till the stock in the channel gets sold right down to the consumer — no sales. Sick and tired of convincing, pleading, cajoling, and threatening people to buy. To keep that stupid sales graph pointing its obscene finger at the sky. Wish I was off somewhere far away.

We find that salt is good but snuff's better. Leeches, bloody leeches. Sophisticated scientific bloodsuckers. They first make an incision and inject anaesthetic, then an anticoagulant and for good measure a vasodilator to expand your blood vessels so they can gorge themselves. Doesn't impress me. Salt the little buggers away. But the jungle is worth it. They tell me that it is one of the last remnants of the primeval rain forests in the Western Ghats. There is an incipient fear of meeting an elephant on the trail. Jump off the trail, the game warden said. Into the leeches? No way. Rather take a chance with the elephants. Santosh says that elephant's trunks look like huge leeches. If leeches were that big, what would they suck? Whales? And how would whales move in the jungles? Very slowly, I suppose. Sick jokes, horrid leeches, lovely jungle. Someone is catching butterflies for research. We flip through his day's collection. All "*lepidoptera*" and "*ensis*" and "*ata*". We nod dumbly. This criminal has just killed a fragment of a rainbow and has reduced it to a "*lepidoptera somethingensis*". Drop dead stranger, you don't slot nature into "*ensis*" boxes. Burying his body would be a tedious chore so we spare him.

Off to the valley for lunch sitting on the rocks in the middle of the stream. Then for a light snooze. Warm sun on my eyelids battling to darken my vision hand in the water, leeches creeping up on my forearm — paradise in the here and now, leeches and all. A familiar ache begins to develop in the pit of my stomach. I know what's coming.

But hark the river is saying something! "Gurgleburblemessage, Gurgleburblemessage." And an extraordinary understanding bursts inside me, deep inside where I have never been, I know who I'm missing. I KNOW WHO SWAPNIKA IS. I KNOW HER! What a chump I have been not to know all along. I jump up and slosh along the river to tell someone, anyone who'll listen. Santosh, I'll tell Santosh. I interrupt the idiot who is explaining the dangers of drinking unfiltered river water to Premanand. Doesn't he know that there are better things than schistosomiasis, cholera, typhoid, or even a nuclear war? I shake him rudely and tell him all. He tries to calm me down as if he had the wisdom of a million years and tell me to check with this, what's her name, Swapnika, first. "Does she feel the same way for you? Would she splash around the river and scare all the animals for miles around in Silent Valley if she thought of you? Is unfiltered water really safe?"

I wearily go back to my Bodhi tree-rock equivalent. Polar ice smothering molten lava. Snatch at the nearest leaf and write a message to Swapnika. Santosh is right, but so what if he is? There are hundreds of treks, thousands of miles of coastline to angle on and many, many unspoiled jungles to drown oneself in. Wish an elephant-trunk leech on Santosh.

Post Script:

I have recently angled at Okha, have been to Goa, trekked in Silent Valley again. In fact the last week I was in the little Rann of Kutch admiring the wild asses. Next week, I shall perhaps go to Gir. Lots more places to go. And by the way Santosh was wrong. Hopelessly wrong.

△

Monsoon Sunset, Shemgang

Sol's gone down, run aground,
Wan glow wanes in westwake;
The duskin' air is moisty.
Soundlessly,
Dip, slide east,
'tis twilight, throat's thirsty.

Jetstream steam, ill at ease,
Ponders precipitations.
The rain drops by without so much
As an 'if you please,'
Or a 'by your leave,';
No notice of intentions, as such.

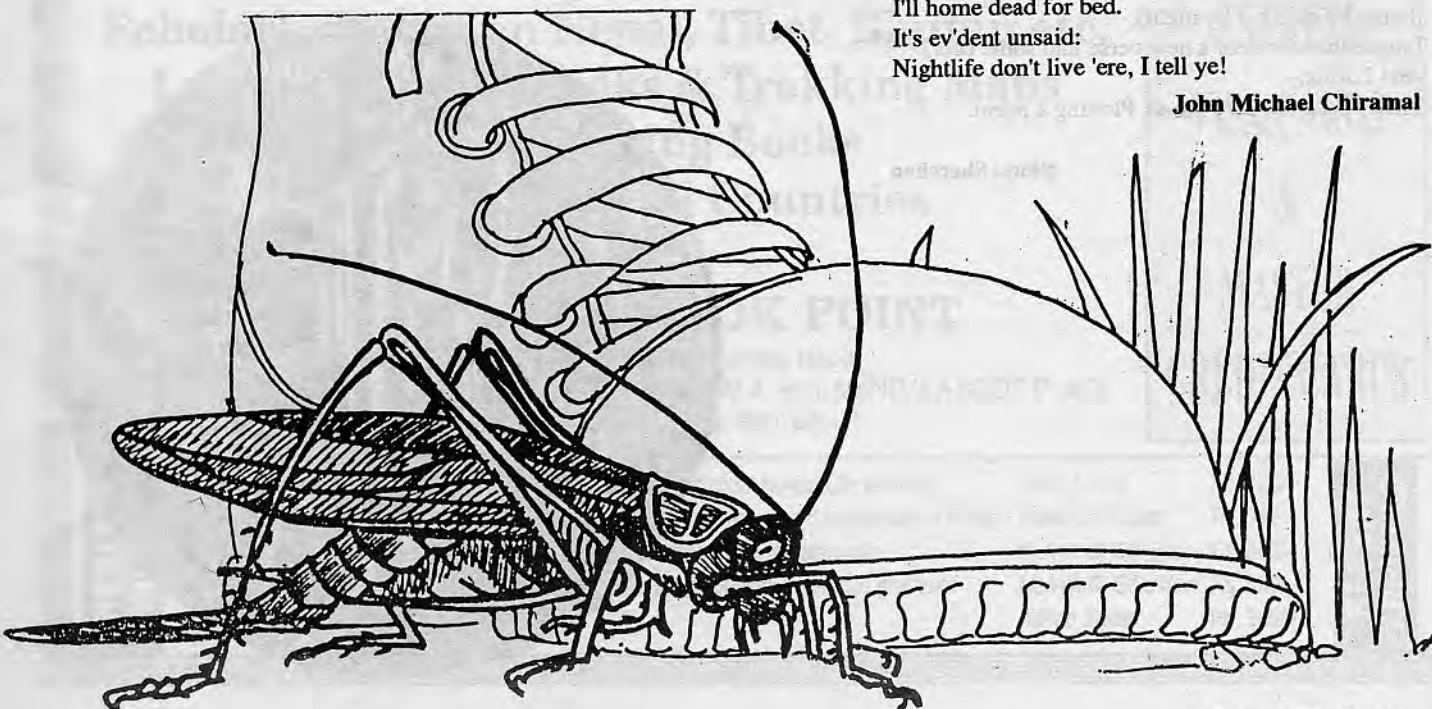
Shadows deepen, darkness creeps in,
Domesticity hums.
The Wild Ones range the Great Outdoors.
Mother Earth rolls over,
Disdains companion Moon lover,
Spurns Venus and Mars, etc. & stars.

Insect natter, clawfoot chatter,
Vie for supremacy.
Kingdoms catcall vocally
In mutually impersonal malice
And yet, their silence's twin solace
And their bedlam, harmony.

Yawn! Unwind. Pubcrawl a mile:
Buildup for self prescribed beer.
Shedwards the cattle are bound,
Mudcaked, sunbaked,
Flyscaled, dungtrailed,
Black and white and dappled brown.

Now curtains are drawn and children kept warm
With motherlove and familial affection.
The beer's in my belly,
I'll home dead for bed.
It's ev'dent unsaid:
Nightlife don't live 'ere, I tell ye!

John Michael Chiramal



Evening on New Road: A festival of Light

New Road has been swept and is outwardly clean;
Girls come and go in the dusk,
Khichapokhari gasps for breath
Amid the smoky sidestreet houses,
Dark and malodorous,
Like armpit hairs in a sleeveless blouse.

In the shops' display windows,
Suzy Wong smiles, a Hong Kong beauty,
Madam Nylon, Miss Terylene,
Innocent virgins, virgins with loops,
Arms bearing prints of penicillin's advance,
Stride toward the dark alleyways.

A flower-baby hippy walks down New Road
In the arms of her prince, engrossed in a trip
Half-naked in a saffron-blouse,
Her brassiere's baskets lift the stale fruits of youth.
Every eye in New Road is fixed on her navel;
Adopted sons around the pipal tree
Stand secretly thinking lewd thoughts:
They sprout up from behind benches.

The filth thrown up by P.S.K. Drainage
Regards the day with jaundiced eyes,
Opening a newspaper's pages.
A beggar woman stands by the News Centre;
She X-rays a hard-up Nepali's pocket,
And begs for five paisa.
Then the poor man puts up a ballon of abuse.
Up into the Kathmandu sky.
He turns to the lottery stall,
Whence his fortune might come,
And finally spits on himself.

I see no point in loitering round here
So, to give meaning to the word "home"
(home by day, bar by night),
I make the labour of a new verse into some beer,
And I drink.
Then I pace out New Road, Plotting a poem.

Bhupi Sherchan

To the Children of Quail, Partridges and Sacrificed Oxen

Whether it was in a German Assault,
Or in the seige of Burma,
Whether it was amid Malay rubber trees
Or in a strangers' wars in NEFA, Ladakh
Selflessly they died,
Deaths without meaning or aim
Partridges, quail, oxen to slaughter
Adding their "yes" to strangers' agreements,
Awakening to strangers' handclaps and slogans,
Drunk on the dregs of other mens' beer,
Crying "ayo Gorkhali", but merely oxen,
Tumbling headfirst into war.

Unfortunate women, weaning your sons
On pensions from husbands who are no more!
Old ones who worship the eighty four sages,
With income from the fall of your sons!
Young men who woo in the gathering-house,
Donning the jerseys of friends passed away!
Young brides in your palanquins,
Wearing bangles given by lovers now dead!
Beautifully it adorns your breast,
This medal of honour, Victoria Cross
But does it not give off sometimes
A rising stench from the corpse of your kind?

Bhupi Sherchan



Malli

He stretched my patience across
the long wet pull
on a biri and said it'll take time, sir
my hands are full
Why don't you have a glass of tea
while I seal
the puncture inside your flaccid wheel

Motor and compressor
sweating kerosene
a disembowelled Ceat tube
converted by a keen
blue knife, aplomb and a grin
into a giant rubber foreskin
vanishes inside
the thick truck tyre

Tista flexes muscle
through the iron dusk
truckers talk in low tones
manly, brusque
Along the black valley
a myopic jeep
carefully skirts a Tata
grunting in its sleep.

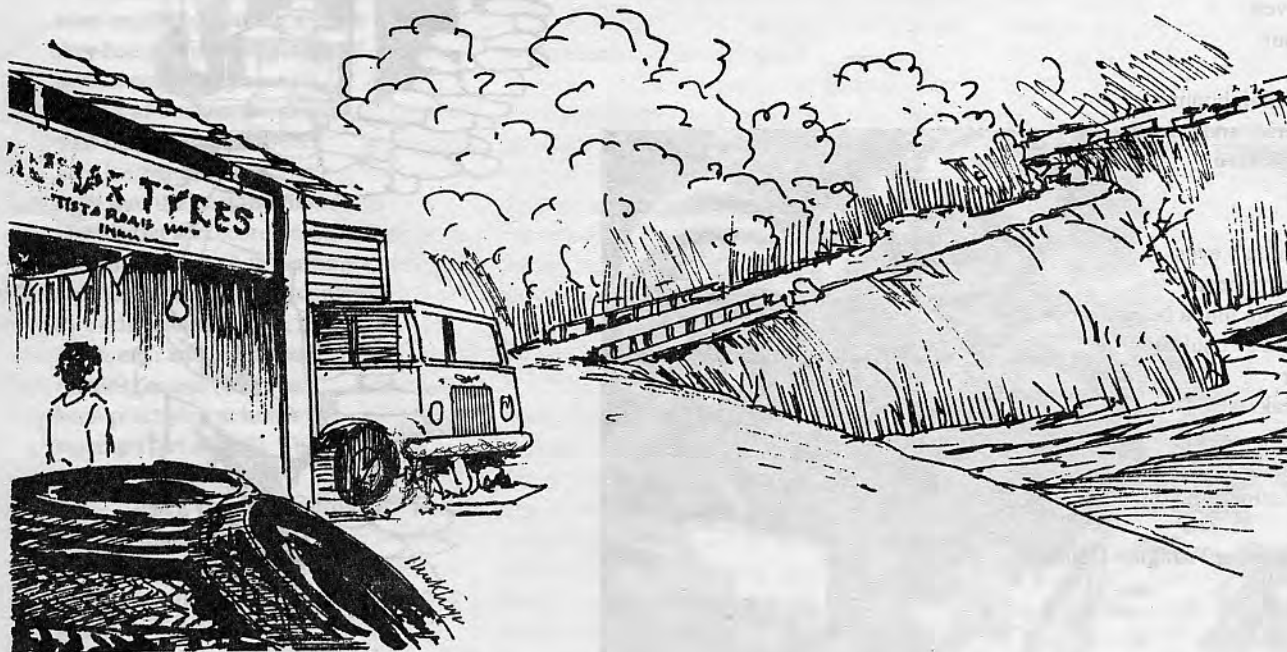
By the tottering tyre-shop
loafers hang around
jaundiced by the petromax
spellbound
in secret admiration
at the prestidigitation
by Kumar
of Kumar Tyres

On the scourged hill,
above the far bank
the mud closes fingers
liquid, lank
over skull-coloured boulders
fallen from the shoulders
of the road to Danny's brewery

Insects creep creep
creep as three lights vie:
neon, the petromax
and the crepuscular sky
by the river a mournful fox
concedes
the moon has risen behind
what's left of the trees.

Tista at Malli —
not a pleasant sight
even when muted
by the seeping night
I can sit and watch the ballet, though
of rubber and the steel
and the man who resuscitates
my motorcycle wheel.

Anmole Prasad



T. MUKHYA

Counting Beads

Sunlight flickers
Escaping around tall prayer flag
surfeited with prayers.
The morning wind blows,
not too gently,
with promises of an uncomfortable afternoon
Old Dawa walks with his prayer wheel
and Rayban glasses.
Sending prayers upto heaven,
to descry his death.
Whose weight sits heavily on him,
along with remembrances of sins,
now recollected with the wisdom of age.
His faltering feet,
adhere to the rules of rheumatism
while he mumbles a prayer for compassion.
Propelled by some need to live forever.

At the feet of a prayer chant,
sleeps another day.

Agnes in her borrowed dress,
fingers her rosary with the shyness
and trepidation of a new lover.
The beads slip between fingers.
So that she falters between her chants
and loses sight
of the smiling Buddha in her mind.
She saw her life gape greedily at her
full of emptiness
and fled.
Only to be taught that the aim of life
was "emptiness".

The eyes of heaven,
quietly wink again

Sonam smiles at neighbours,
sliding over queries and prayers
She would like to have
a turquoise ring.
Large and blue.
The golden Buddha's eyes,
burn her wandering heart,
and dropping a coin into a beggar's bowl.
She worries about a "chubba"
for the new year
and milk for breakfast.

The dust spawns majestically,
uninterpreted illusions and dreams.

Tsering Wangmo Dhompa

Recurrences

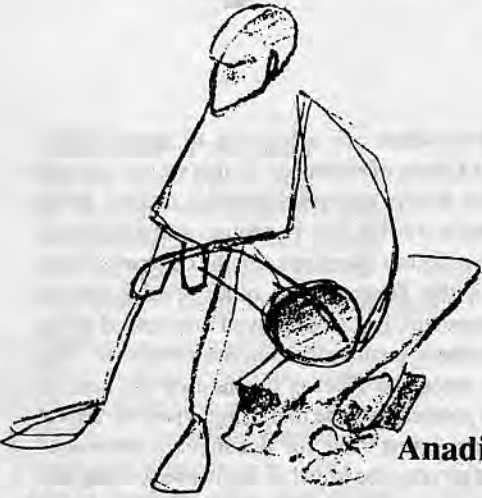
All day long she moves in silence.
Betrayed only by musical glass bangles,
I could almost believe in her non-existence
But at night,
she presents herself in giggles,
and the rustling of silk.
Sometimes,
she wears the night out in sobs,
and screams in between loud meeting of angry fist on flesh.
Her husband,
likes to think she is a goddess incarnate
and either adorns her in silk embraces
and worships her sensuality
or inflicts her malaise and anger.
In stages of brutality.
Her remonstrations.
His expletives.
And the night tries itself out.
Then silence, as intangible as death.
Her sobs.
His pleas
Carrying the death of the fumbling dregs of his misery
The morning comes.
Carrying in its mouth,
promises of a recurrence.

Tsering Wangmo Dhompa



T. MUKHIYA

Monograph of a Murder



Anadi Pawan Chhetri

ANMOLE PRASAD

I no longer fear death. I no longer value life. Its remnants lie curled up cold and clammy inside me, waiting to be snuffed out.

It began with envy: the envy of a friend. What ended it was a poem. The sequence of events, as they unfolded are recorded here.

I attribute my present condition to Ajaya's death. For a week or two after that, memories of my life are at best hazy. I probably went through the motions of living.

My wife doubtless suspects that my behaviour is related to my friend's death. Her anxiety became obvious when she referred to my odd behaviour later. If only she knew.

Ajaya was the only person who meant something to me, who listened to what I had to say and understood me. I admired him very much. Everybody admired him. His first book of poems had attracted much attention. Some critics even regarded him as the most promising poet of the nineties. This was not his only talent. He could gather friends and acquaintances — even those who scarcely knew him — and hold them in thrall for hours in a web of words, telling stories, reciting, or arguing with precision and wit.

Adulation and artistic recognition did not however, turn his head. He welcomed the company of his friends with the same easy warmth. He did not suspect the envy that lurked in me, eating away my soul. My bitterness stemmed from the knowledge that I could neither captivate audiences nor write fine poems. My envy was a recurring interference in my passion for his company. I almost showed it the day the reviews of his book came in. So, secretly, I nursed my — yes — jealousy.

Matters finally came to a head one summer evening. Searching through haunts, I finally located him at a corner table with his girl. I hesitated because she did not like me. But I approached them anyway. She looked up at me, turned to him and complained audibly, "Here comes that bore!" My blood surged. Angrily I retorted. Words flew, it looked like the beginnings of a war. Ajaya tried to calm us down. He did not reproach her. Instead he asked me to calm down. The implications sank in. I walked out, brushing aside his protests.

Bore!

The word rang in my brain. I strode down the street unmindful of my course. Only when I reached there did I realise that my feet had carried me to my usual refuge near the Teesta river.

Wearily I sat on a flat rock that served as a bench. From here the town's lights shimmered across the curve of the water. Tonight the moon seemed remote and the night failed to move me. My mind was

a mass of colliding thoughts. When at last I could think more coolly, I went home.

For the next few days I did not go to work, although that would have helped to forget. Instead I stayed home and brooded. Reading was difficult. I skimmed through several books, but nothing caught my interest until I picked up a collection of poems by a South American poet. One of them drew my attention. It was titled MAY 20, 1928 (ON THE DEATH OF FRANCISCO LOPEZ MERINO). On a second reading, I grew excited. And the more I read it, the better I liked it. The poet had imbued the poem with uncanny insight. Or perhaps he had generously attributed to the protagonist his own sensibility and delicate nuances of feeling.

My immediate impulse was to go to Ajaya's house and show him the poem. In the excitement, my hurt was forgotten. With his perception and passion, the poem could scarcely fail to move him. But there ran in him a morbid streak which unnerved me at times. Sometimes he grew melancholy for no reason and talked gloomily of a meaningless life. I thought this to be an affectation but later realised it was genuine. And dangerous. The sane and the insane are separated by a thin line after all. But even as I hesitated about showing him the poem, an idea, fantastic in scope, logical in its implausibility, took shape.

Shoving aside my compunctions, I visited him early the next morning. Awake, he sat in bed, sipping tea. He smiled as he saw me. I felt guilty and ashamed over having avoided him over the past few days. Soon we were arguing as furiously as before. I realised how much I had missed him.

I took out the book and showed him the poem.

He ran his eyes down the page. A second time. More slowly. Then.

"A good poem."

I returned home, my enthusiasm cooled by his lukewarm response.

He surprised me, however, by joining me for a stroll early next morning. Seeing the question in my eyes, he launched into an explanation. He had read the poem again, and liked it more. With each subsequent reading, new meanings sprang up. From insignificant little actions, a sensuous portrait emerged. What a romantic! Imagine being able to die such an artistic death.

Was I amazed, then? Maybe.

I pulled him up for such rash thoughts but the devil in me shouted in glee. I pretended to caution him, yet I kept stoking the fire. I did not allow him to forget. When his enthusiasm burned too brightly, I pretended to douse it.

It was a strange situation.

The whole affair might not have taken such a turn but for two (for him) unfortunate incidents. First, his brother, his only family, died. That shook him. Then on top of that, his girlfriend became schizophrenic and was put away.

Just when he needed my stabilising presence, I left for Calcutta. It was an official trip. I could have delayed it. I did not.

I returned two weeks later.

He was dead.

Though I had worked to undermine him, the news came as a blow. Without him life became lusterless. Like so many others, I was now a vegetable. I could bear it no longer.

So here I am, once again on my rocky bench over the river. Watching for the last time the lights of the town and the shimmering water. There is no moon.

Soon I will press this weapon to my head. And end it in the way, I suppose, Francisco Lopez Merino did. Δ

END OF THE ROAD, headlined *Asiaweek*, its decidedly rationalist cover story on the Royal Bengal Tiger, written by Delhi-based Ravi Velloor. "Let's Accept That There Is No Way Back For Asia's Big Cats..."

Worldwide, there are perhaps 7,000 tigers in the wild. Poachers have suddenly taken to killing them. Why? For their bones, a valuable ingredient in Chinese potions. Says Peter Jackson, chairman of the World Conservation Union's Cat Specialist Group: "It's my belief that the end of the tiger is in sight, possibly within ten years."

But does it really matter? Species come and go. Some, like the dinosaurs, have been outstandingly successful, reigning for nearly 200 million years. But in time the evolutionary bell tolled for them too. The average life of a species is no more than a million years, so *Panthera tigris*, stalking about since the early Pleistocene, has certainly had its run. Survival of the fittest is the golden rule of this planet — ask the ghosts of the mammoth, the mastodon, the ground sloth, the sabre-toothed tiger, the woolly rhinoceros. The tiger will leave the stage anyway: poachers' bullets are simply hastening its exit.

If species didn't die out, the world would be in real trouble. So it is encouraging to be told by the emotion-fuelled zealots of Greenpeace, as well as by numerous less-militant activists, that a new species becomes extinct every half hour.

Now it is the tiger's turn to face its karma. We mourn its passing the way we do a grandparent who has lived a long and good life. For the last half-dozen millennia the planet has been dominated by a species so young as to be still in the earliest stages of evolving. We are the *Tyrannosaurus rex* of the Holocene. Enjoying our ascendancy are slave species: cattle, sheep, pigs, dogs, cats. The brown rat does amazingly well in our sewers and restaurant kitchens. When *homo sapiens* passes from the scene, others will have their turn.

If the tiger is useful enough, humans will intervene to save it. The camel, the llama, the ferret and the guinea pig were extinct in the wild before anyone recorded their presence in it. The horse, the dog, the yak and the water-buffalo have all but disappeared in their natural habitats.

...nature has written the tiger off. Let it go.

THE BUDDHIST POPE'S *S* travails at the hands of the Celestial Empire is described in a *Times of India* editorial of 20 April 1910, titled "Tibetan Affairs", and recently reprinted in the paper's "Archives" section.

The Dalai Lama has returned to Darjeeling. He has announced that he has no present intention of making his way to Peking in order to lay his memorial at the footsteps of the Throne. Therein he is wise.

A correspondent has furnished *The Times* with the decree of deposition pronounced against the Dalai Lama and this betrays

sentiments towards him which are calculated to make Peking decidedly unhealthy as a place of residence. In this we are told that the Buddhist Pope had always enjoyed bountiful favours at the hands of the Throne, and it was his duty rigorously and devoutly to confine his attention to religious questions. On the contrary, "since he assumed charge of the Treasury and other secular matters pertaining to the Government, he has displayed unbounded pride, extravagance, licentiousness, insubordination and unruliness." The despatch of Szechuen troops to Tibet is justified by the need of maintaining order and protecting trade marts, and upon the arrival of these troops to Dalai Lama "left for destination unknown." Thereupon orders were given to the Imperial Residents to bring him back, and make due provision for his "security and good behaviour." Not appreciating these kindly offices on his behalf, the Dalai Lama continued his flight to India. The decree proceeds to inquire how, being the titular head of religious affairs, dare he thus once again leave his post without authority.

The Chinese Government is, therefore, forced to the conclusion that "the Dalai Lama is crafty, full of deceit, unstable in his allegiance, ungrateful for the favours he has received at our hands and unfaithful to the public trust confined in him."

We shall never know the whole truth of the causes which led to the Dalai Lama's reinstatement by China, and to his almost immediate revolt and flight. But a correspondent, signing himself "Uszdzang", writing in *The Fortnightly Review*, gives an account of the extremely oriental intrigues which makes instructive reading.

A TYPOLOGY OF EXPATRIATES (living in equatorial latitudes) was presented in the April 1993 issue of *Mirror*, the newsletter of United Nations Women's Organisation.

In Hyderabad or Timbuktu,
Or Mandalay or Kathmandu
There is a certain similarity
— A vulgar, rhythmic regularity —
A kind of dreadful deathly sprue
Of misty myth and déjà vu...

Such masters of deception
That we meet at each reception:
"Old hands" talk of yesterdays;
"Anthros" hype the native ways.
In no time flat I've heard their gripes
And classified the ex-pat types!

The women talk about their cooks
And give each other knowing looks
As if to say: "I understand
Why locals eat with their right hand."
While husbands smugly sip their booze
And wager on the coming coups

Some have it on their mind
That life is just a petrol line
In which they wait their turn at pump
While contemplating native rump.
They talk a lot of ration cards
And stocks of gas in their back yards.

Others sing a song of dread:
"The power grid will soon go dead."
How will they live without AC
And Ice cubes in their luncheon tea?
They need a genie to be cool,
(And a thousand gallon tank of fuel).

A common type I've met of late
Is quick to quote the exchange rate.
This special monumental bore
Knows the rate at every store.
He even knows what silver bars
Are worth in terms of SDRs.

Now when it comes to social rank
It's pride of place to the Fund and Bank
These Janizaries of Development,
Always humble and so eloquent;
They know what's good for goose and gander
When to punt and when to pander.

Some ex-pats are simply dull
— A perfect vacuum in their skull
No thoughts of higher things there are
While they watch their VCR.
They reject the intellectual
And Count instead post differential.

LITTER IS A STATUS SYMBOL argues Broughton Coburn in a letter to Summit magazine of Fall 1992. He questions the popular notions of "eco-tourism" as they appeared in articles carried by the magazine.

I feel that recent international focus on garbage along trekking trails is an unfortunate distraction from the fundamental environmental issues.

Litter is not an ecological problem, it is an aesthetic problem, and then only in the eyes of foreign visitors. It is difficult to find substantial examples of trail litter having caused air or surface water pollution or habitat destruction. Indeed most residents of developing countries do not regard litter as a problem of any kind. Among poorer people, litter is a status symbol which labels them as consumers of expensive packaged products. Along trekking trails in Nepal, the status of nutrition, drinking water, as well as deteriorating forests and pastureland are the real problems and

priorities. When mountaineers or trekkers hire helicopters to remove litter, as was done recently from Makalu basecamp, resource-poor villagers in need of assistance feel bypassed by what they see as bizarre insanity of wealth — not a very ethical consequence of eco-trekking.

An eco-tourist purchasing one Tibetan carpet in Kathmandu contributes significantly more environmental damage than what they mitigate by carrying litter — from surface water pollution caused by the dyeing and washing process, and from many hundreds of gallons of water consumed in manufacturing a single carpet. The yak cheese market in Kathmandu (largely dependent upon foreigners) has been directly linked to overgrazing and deforestation in the Langtang Valley.

I also pick up litter, but I try to keep the rhetoric, issues, and priorities straight.

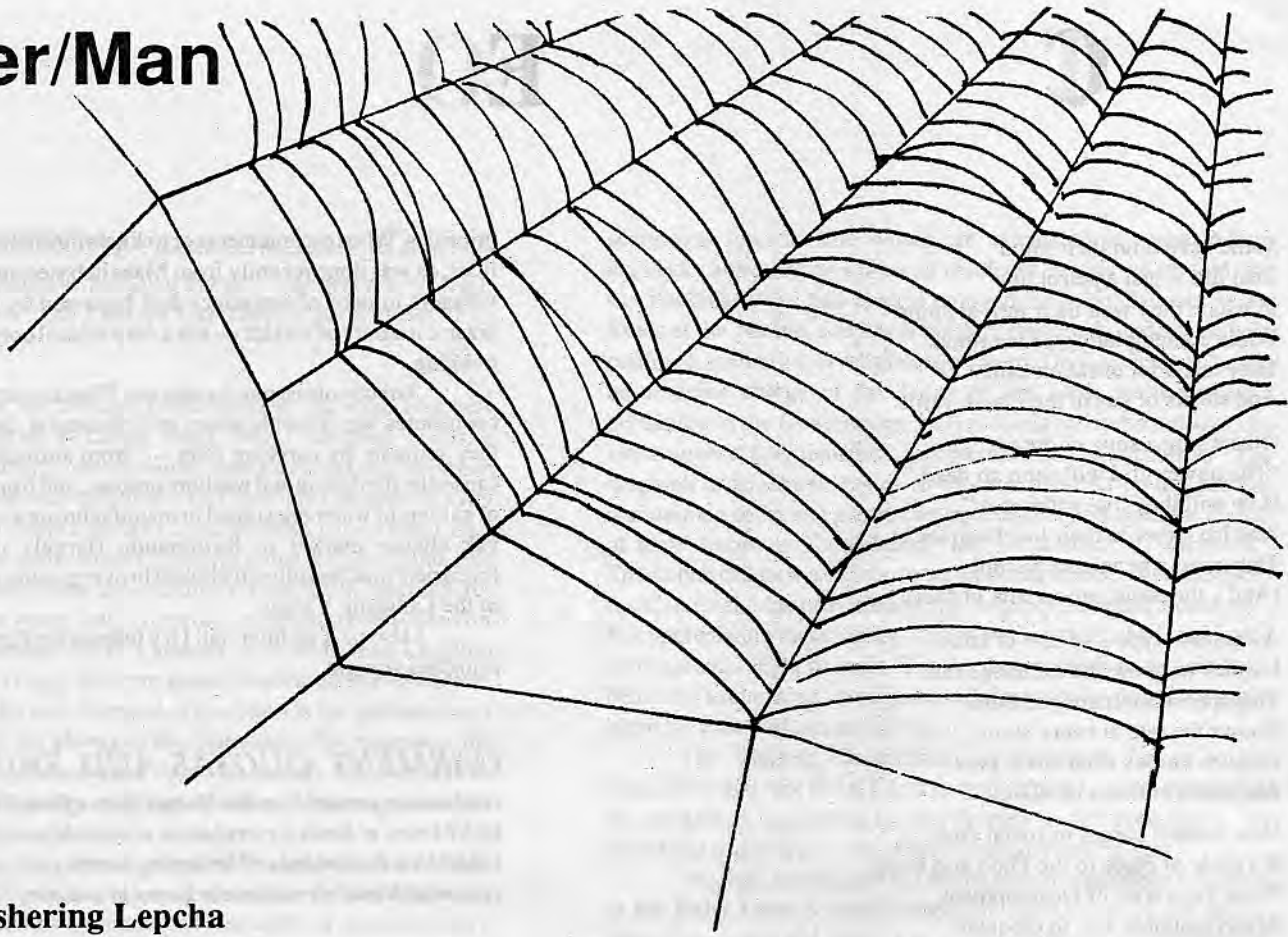
GARMENT QUOTAS AND SHIPMENTS of readymade garments to the United States from Nepal, as listed in ECONews, a limited circulation economic review published by USAID in Kathmandu. The listing forms part of an exhaustive review of Nepal's readymade garment industry.

Item Description	1991 quota (in dozens)	1993 shipments
340 male cotton non-knit shirts	229,801	226,881
341 female cotton non-knit blouses	766,002	348,722
347/8 male/female cotton non-knit trousers, breeches and shorts	537,149	534,228
342 female cotton non-knit skirts	141,852	8,956
640 male artificial fiber non-knit shirts	109,111	106,944
641 female artificial fiber non-knit blouses	250,470	238,270

"TIBETAN REARVIEW." A sampling from a regular cartoon column by Gyatso, which appears in the Tibetan Review of April 1993.



Spider/Man



Dorjee Tshering Lepcha

A certain recluse took his seclusion to its utmost to absolutely shun fellow beings. However, he could not kill his inherent compulsion to talk. He desperately wished there was someone or something to talk to.

He used to be, during his gregarious days, a teacher, and that was what he was good for. He thought that he would teach something to something to speak—maybe an animal, or bird or even an insect. He knew how difficult an endeavour it would be. Nevertheless, his search began for a possible candidate.

Parrots and mynahs he found rather stale and dull and bereft of reason who inevitably ended up in a cage, after all the cleverness in imitating human sounds. (He had an uneasy suspicion of kinship with these birds). He ruled out dogs and cats also because the one he knew to be too servile and the other overly self-willed. Besides, his resources were too slender to feed these ravenous beasts.

Finally he noticed that his house, due to lack of cleanliness, offered him with a wide variety of spiders. He had a great respect for them and they reminded him of glorious things such as how Robert Bruce regained his confidence to win the war; and how these creatures concealed the mouth of a cave by spinning a thick web to save the Prophet from his pursuers. There is talk that he was later betrayed by the lizard, but that's another story.

He chose a fairly young spider and set about the arduous task of educating the web-spinner. Days passed, weeks and months. Their incredible zeal made them oblivious to time. He thought that he would not indulge in regular normal conversation with the insect unless it really became worthy of being talked to and stood up to its benign myth. So till then, there were lessons, lessons and lessons.

At last the spider appeared for the examinations and got through with flying colours. The teacher just could not believe his own

powers to teach. And now, since the spider had graduated and was fluent in human speech, the teacher thought that it was time for their first conversation.

"Hello, Spider! How old are you?"

"Hello, sir. My name is not spider. And we don't count our age."

"Now that you can talk to humans, do you find yourself emancipated?"

"It was amusing learning your language. I am quite pleased today that I can communicate with you."

"That's fine. Well, tell me something about your past."

"We were born sixty five brothers and sisters. It was under your bed that we saw the light of the day. Then we ate our mother..."

"Wait...wait, wait. What are you talking about? You don't eat your mother."

"Of course we do," the spider looked at him incredulously and then continued, "There were altogether thirty three sisters. I was the luckiest to have managed to copulate with seven of them. All of them have been eaten by my sons and daughters. Other sisters too, got eaten. For that matter my brothers are also dead. You trampled two of them. Twenty were flushed down the toilet after they were brushed off the walls along with their dwellings. By the way, you ate one with your soup last night."

The man suppressed something in his throat.

"Well. That's it. I don't know about the others. About myself, you know everything now. Oh! Please wait a second, sir. My webs are shaking. Yes, there! A fly. My favourite, good. Sir, may I go for my dinner? I have to know more about you also. Sir!... Sir!... Where are you going? Are you angry with me?"

△



ANSHU PRASAD

As a schoolboy, he had decided he was an introvert: later in the course of his maturing, he revised this analysis to "mildly schizophrenic." This had an immensely adverse effect upon his literary ambition: they never took off. As a result, a morbid sense of insignificance grew in him. To mitigate his predicament, he started a game. He would write long, florid, tasteful (to him) letters and send them to far away imaginary addresses, with the sender's name and address, too. Obviously, they returned. But that was the purpose of the whole exercise: he achieved some sort of sense of importance when the postman came to his doorstep to deliver letters. But while, initially the letters returned, after sometime, they mysteriously stopped coming back. When several letters were thus lost, his sense of abandonment was complete. One afternoon, with no one around to romanticize the tragic act, he took a strange poison and without any fuss, died.

Only one man, also with a smothered literary bent, rued his death — the postman. Every night, by the pale light of a kerosene lamp, he would take out the dead man's letters and pour over them for hours. At the slightest indication of any interruption, he would tuck those exquisite (to him) pieces away. But sadly he will never get to share the experience with others, for he is torn between two fatal choices: to publish them in the writer's name or his own.

Dorjee Tshering Lepcha

Dead letters

The Queen Ant

Two kids, a boy and a girl, were excitedly playing a game they had just invented. One of them would make a small mound of dust on the ground, wait for a while, hurriedly bare his/her buttocks, fart right into the dust mound to blow it flat and score points. The time one took in waiting for the fart was also computed by orally counting one, two, three, etc., and deducted from the final score. (They had been practising at home to summon fart at will). Then the other would take his/her turn.

Just a couple of yards away, a queen ant in dishevelled regalia, with an anxious retinue, watched the game from the rim of the anthill with dread.

Dorjee Tshering Lepcha



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One Man's Himalayan Bookshelf

There are too many books. But there are too few that are worth reading.

by Bill Aitken

Recently, the author Ruskin Bond voiced his dismay at the lack of Himalayan literature. After we discussed this void in Mussoorie, I walked home and moodily viewed my own collection of titles.

What is probably the very first book I bought — from a pavement book stall in Calcutta in 1960 — has been the most cherished. Swami Pranavananda's gun-toting guide to the Mansarovar pilgrimage overcomes all the quaint *desi* usage to spellbind by its authentic capturing of the glory of the abode of Shiva. By contrast, Sven Hedin's more professional and ponderous findings lacks the vital dimension of winged inspiration.

It was only when I returned to Delhi, where my bookshelf is more expansive, and browsed through my titles of eminently worth-keeping books that I realised Ruskin's pronouncement required some modification. There are too few *good* books on the Himalaya. And there are all too many leaden-footed expedition leaders' accounts that fulfil a sponsorship contract and fit in an appendix that lists the high street stores which provided long johns and tinned tuna to the expedition.

So can we narrow down the problem to an absence in Himalayan literature of authentic feelings about the great range? (Ruskin's own book about the Mussoorie foothills *A Tree Grows in Dehra* has just won India's most prestigious literary prize, in the English language section.) This categorisation provides a clue as to why, from the literary point of view, so many books do not seem to be worth the paper they are printed on. The foreign egos

breezing through mountains that are sacred to millions of Asians are blind to anything but their route to the summit. They are here not for darshan of the Mother Goddess, but to achieve a point plotted on a career graph. As an example of this tendency to append literature to the main job of topping out, when Chris Bonnington and Friends climbed Changabang in Garhwal, this most beautiful peak in the world hardly merited a write-up. The peak-weary Bonington had included an amanuensis in the party to crank out the obligatory post-expedition blurb, padded with interviews with the climbers' wives.

Changabang's dignity was restored by the ensuing Boardman-Tasker *Shining Mountain*, which went on deservedly to win a literary prize. Even so, the technical climbing details and the urge to bandy psychological jargon as the climbers lay strapped in their hammocks is hardly designed to make lay readers fork out rupees for what mountaineers consider a classic. And here is the crux of our literary ascent. Who decides when great mountaineering skill translates in long literary shelf-life?

In the Himalayan Club library (now housed in the India International Centre in Lodhi Estate, New Delhi) the policy in the face of a barrage of expeditionary titles is only to keep those of assured literary pedigree. (When one says "policy" one really means finance for the price of niftily produced glossies. Any librarian will think twice about acquiring what seems to the layman a treatise on how to dangle as many coloured ropes as

possible on a rock face.)

For a minimum definition of mountain literature, we can safely say it is not more and more about less and less. Soaring thoughts commensurate with the range that inspires them are no doubt helpful, but the classic echoes an author's gifts as much as the numinous loom of the peak. For example, Walt Unsworth's *History of Everest* is magical despite its reference format. He has been consumed by the subject and managed to make the ugliest of faces beautiful by his furious research. On the other hand Kenneth Mason's *Abode of Snow*, considered the definitive spread of objective wisdom on the Himalaya, lacks fire. You refer to it when you have to, but are never tempted to dip in to give your mood a lift and stimulate that ache for the distant mountains.

The Himalaya being an emotive entity, it is probably outside the scope of polite Englishmen to produce literature about it, and for real flavour perhaps we must turn to Bengali or Nepali accounts. But Harka Gurung's *Vignettes of Nepal* marches alongside Kenneth Mason in providing immaculate geographical information delivered in the cautious professorial prose designed not to arouse passions. It's a bit like wading through Elizabeth Hawley's expedition debriefings that list how many Spaniards or South Koreans achieved the summit of Sagarmatha without falling off.

When I survey the shelves of the Himalayan Club collection, I am convinced that Ruskin's despair is unfounded. It is true

that almost all the works smack of the colonial "first white foot" syndrome. But to balance the imperial posturing of Fanny Bullock Workman—rich, lugubrious and indefatigable—who recorded the mysteries of Nun-Kun and the Karakoram but added to them with her vobule pen as she went along, there is Lady Canning, who crossed the Rupin Pass from Kinnaur to Uttarakhand as wife of India's first viceroy. One senses Canning's sheer enjoyment of the mountains and her sketches catch the high magnificence of the Sutlej gorge. Canning sent her letters to Queen Victoria and recently Charles Allen has edited them. Incidentally, the latter, like John Keay, has written rattling good accounts of the eccentric Himalayan explorers. Modern British authors, it turns out, do not exercise the patronising tone inherent in pre-war accounts.

I would agree with Ruskin on one point. Garhwal, perhaps the loveliest of mountain areas, has had very little homage paid to her by way of literary tribute. Inevitably the mountaineer passes through and what seemed a classic like Frank Smythe's *Valley of Flowers* has settled into the lesser slot of erstwhile best-seller.

Feminine Literature

Shipton and Tilman neatly illustrate the divide between the feminine and masculine way of looking at the Himalaya. The first was content to enjoy and explore in foreplay while Bill, I fear, was not just the confirmed misogynist all his square Alpine Club buddies make him out to be. I detect a pent-up macho maniac of the sort I used to read about in the *News of the World*, thirsting to become intimate with the object of his desire. Shipton's accounts of Nanda Devi are full of relish, whereas Tilman's more clinically accurate recollections forever give off the hint of a poker rammed up his rucksack.

Nanda Devi, the goddess of bliss, has been poorly served by her suitors. John Roskelley waited for ten years before he waded into a justification for his spat with Willi Unsoeld and Adams Carter, a somewhat futile effort since the world is hopelessly hooked to the romantic version of how Nanda Devi Unsoeld became one with her goal. The latest book on Nanda Devi is William Sax's sociological study on the cult that climaxes its cycle with the Rupkund passage. Sadly, this glorious opportunity is dismally sacrificed to the exigencies of a lumbering PhD demand.

Other areas are not so badly served. Kulu has had, in quick succession, the gifted pens of Penelope Chetwode and Christina Noble, while Ladakh drew poetic fire from Andrew Harvey and Helena Norberg-Hodge. Nepal has attracted international exposure and my favourites are those enthusiastic Japanese cartographers like Tomoya Iozawa, whose *Trekking in the Himalayas* ranks in my opinion as the sort of guidebook Leonardo would have written had his flying machine ever worked to get him here.

Possibly, the answer to Ruskin's prayer is even now being contemplated by more than one writer across the Himalaya. A selection of articles from the *Himalayan Club Journal* has been under consideration for a long time and, hopefully, this will depict the range according to the Club's brief "to extend knowledge of the Himalaya through science, art, literature and sport." A supplement to include lower and more colourful contributors to Himalayan lore like the "Great Beast" Aleister Crowley—an accomplished climber as well as poet (whose works are included in the *Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*)—could be edited by the inscrutable Yeti who lurks with literary gusto in the hind parts of *Himal*. ▽

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Himal at 25

Himal's prototype (Vol 0 No 0) was published in May 1987. This present issue is the magazine's 25th. A political scientist from the Jawaharlal Nehru University looks back and reviews the effort.

by Anirudha Gupta

How should one go about climbing a mountain? I found this useful tip in *Voices*, *Himal* Nov/Dec 1992, excerpted from *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*:

"...You climb the mountain in an equilibrium between restlessness and exhaustion. Then, when you're no longer thinking ahead, each footstep isn't just a means to an end but a unique event in itself. This leaf has jagged edges. This rock looks loose. From this place the snow is less visible, even though closer. These are things you should notice anyway. To live only for some future goal is shallow. It's the sides of the mountain which sustain life, not the top. Here's where things grow. But of course, without the top you can't have sides."

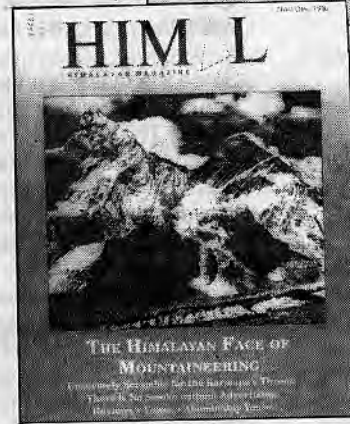
And as *Himal* started from the base camp in 1987, did the ascent look exciting?

The first few issues of *Himal* carry the doubts of a toddler. Not only does the editor appear unsure about what he proposes to be "development journalism", there are also those equally doubting Thomases who raise the cacophony: What earthly good could another journal in English do? Would *Himal* gradually gain circulation or would it just fold up and fizzle out? A writer from Washington DC: "Will you provide an aloof and objective perspective or will you aggressively help define

that elusive blend of 'environment and development' as your cover proclaims?"

What does the cover really proclaim? The editor was tinkering with it, and the caption "For Environment and Development" now read "For Development and Environment" with this explanation: "Has the E-word lost out to the D-word? Not really. We reversed placement only because 'development' is generic and covers the entire social, economic and environmental universe. However we continue to keep 'environment' because in these fragile, overpopulated mountains, the environment development nexus is more important than anywhere else" (July 1988). Did this make sense even to the editor himself?

So, with the Tourism Issue (Jul/Aug 1989), *Himal* strives for a new perspective. It shows its resentment at being advised in a patronising tone by the Delhi-based *South Asia Journal* that *Himal* should avoid "...the fads and fancies of the so-called environmentalists of the West." The rejoinder was telling: "...fads and fancies' are not limited to environmentalists in the West, and South Asian scientists and policy-makers too would do well to keep an open mind and do their home work. For it is not only journalists who are afflicted by intellectual laziness, nationalist blinders and an inability to look at others' points of view."



Does this also mean that *Himal* has begun to notice the mountain sides "where things grow"? It did take pride in the fact that its operation had shifted from New York to Kathmandu: "We have come home." The Sept/Oct 1990 issue quietly drops both D and E words altogether. Instead, we find a new caption: *Alternative bi-monthly*. Practical, perhaps, but dull. But by Jan/Feb 1992, *Himal* has discovered what it always wanted to be: a *Himalayan Magazine* covering the entire region from Khyber to Nathu La, from the Indus to the Brahmaputra.

Nepalcentric?

In view of its limited reach, *Himal* gives more space to Nepali affairs. But this has not made it a 'Nepalcentric' journal. The Jan/Feb 1990 and Mar/Apr 1991 issues provide wide coverage of Tibet, the mystic mecca. July/Aug 1992 devotes three quarters of its pages to developments in Bhutan, while also focusing on the plight of the Nepali-speaking Southern Bhutanese. The articles raised a storm in the magazine's Mail section in the issues to come. "You have tried to rewrite our history into your version, perhaps intending to give the world an illusory picture of Bhutan," fumes an official from Thimpu. A Dane accuses the editor of "being most unfair and biased."

The sides taken by the letter writers tend to reveal ethnocentric affiliations. A pity! For, observes Rajni Kothari in the Ethnicity issue (May/June 1992), "...the paranoia of the majority is matched by the paranoia of the minorities. They are pushed to the wall by the growing accent on numbers in a democracy." The problem of ethnicity obviously disturbs Prayag Raj Sharma. He warns of "an ethnic conflict of explosive potential, which could well engulf Nepal in future." This issue also carries an excellent essay on the ethnic mosaic of Nepal's *Pratinidhi Sabha* by Harka Gurung.

Wending my way through the pages of successive issues of *Himal*, I begin to wonder

Iodised Salt for the Nation's Health

Goitre and cretinism have always been a curse on the Himalayan region, but only recently have we been able to do anything about it.

It is a curse that came guaranteed with geography. Normally, humans get their supply of iodine, which is an essential 'micronutrient', from foodcrops. In the Himalayan belt, however, natural iodine in the soil gets washed away easily. As a result, foodcrops are low on iodine and the population does not receive the required dose.

It is iodine deficiency that causes goitre. If the deficiency is severe, cretinism results, characterised by mental retardation, deaf-mutism, and lack of muscular coordination. About 40 percent of the Nepali population is said to be afflicted with some degree of goitre. And it is estimated that four out of every thousand citizen shows symptoms of cretinism. Controlling the Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) is therefore one of the Nepal's gravest public health challenges.

Since 1973, a unique collaboration of private business and government has been actively engaged in battling the age-old endemic. His Majesty's Government, the Government of India, and the Salt Trading Corporation have been involved in iodising and distributing salt throughout Nepal's high himal, hill and tarai districts.

Salt is one condiment that *everyone* uses. And salt that is iodised is considered to be the most efficient way to get the iodine micronutrient into the diets of the country's far-flung communities. It has been Salt Trading's responsibility to ensure that all the salt distributed in Nepal is iodised.

And it has been working. Studies have shown that the incidence of goitre in Nepal has gone down considerably. Whereas 55 percent of the population

was afflicted in the 1960s, one study showed that the incidence was down to about 40 percent by 1985-86.

Because iodine tends to evaporate from salt that is in storage for too long, with the help of the Indian Government, Salt Trading has set up three iodisation plants, in Bhairawa, Birgunj and Biratnagar, so as to reduce the time gap between iodisation and consumption. These plants presently iodise up to a quarter of the salt that is distributed in the country, while the rest of the salt comes iodised from India.

Since the last three years, polythene packaging has been used, which eliminates the evaporation of iodine. The Ayo Nun is powdered iodised salt. Since the communities of the high himal prefer to use salt crystals rather than powder, Salt Trading recently introduced Bhanu Nun. This new brand uses iodised crystals of granular size.

We at Salt Trading are committed to ensuring even better delivery of iodised salt to Nepal's population and the introduction of Bhanu Nun is just one demonstration of this commitment. We are presently engaged in adding three more iodisation plants in the Western Tarai, and by 1994 Salt Trading expects to be iodising all the salt in Nepal itself.

In so doing, we will also proudly continue to be part of this unique experiment in bilateral cooperation between Nepal and India, whose goal is to eliminate IDD in Nepal by the year 2000. This is a programme which is directly helping to raise the standards of public health in Nepal, and saving hundreds of thousands from the curse of goitre and cretinism.

Together with the nation, we look forward to the day when goitre is virtually eliminated from these hills and plains.

Iodised salt is distributed by the Salt Trading Corporation Ltd. both in loose form and in one kg packets. Packet salt is available under the brand names Ayo Nun and Bhanu Nun. An Ayo Nun packet costs four and a half rupees. Bhanu Nun is distributed only in the remote areas at subsidised prices.

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if *Himal* has a counterpart in South Asia. Probably not; for, leaving aside the glossies, most magazines produced in India are either owned by industrial houses or newspaper chains, face no marketing hardships (as *Himal* apparently does) and having a ready readership for the kind of fare they present. Some exist purely to provide entertainment, others are politically overloaded.

India Today certainly occupies a unique place in Indian journalism, but it caters to too many impulses under a single cover to be able to develop a definite character. Comparatively, *Himal* comes close to *Seminar*, a monthly started by Romesh Thapar, whose issues carry a collection of essays on a particular theme.

Perhaps the closest comparison I can think of is *Transition*, a bi-monthly that Rajat Neogy used to publish from Kampala. In its carefully etched black-and-white presentation, *Transition* was a remarkable journal, addressing itself mainly to issues of the African continent. Neogy was ever-ready to explore new ideas and use them. But the axe fell in 1970; the magazine was banned and around that time Neogy too fell seriously ill. With *Transition's* demise, Africa quietly buried its Homeric age.

It was in *Transition's* Mail that great debates raged, and in *Himal's* Mail, too, I get a feel of the same. Some letters provoke

controversies, others lend greater depth to a certain theme. For example, a review of Dor Bahadur Bista's book *Fatalism and Development* (Jan/Feb 1992) whipped up a mighty debate. The gem to come out of this debate was in Bista's own defence of his book: "You know what I have been trying to do lately. I am trying to distract the worried and insecure upper-caste, upper-class Nepalis and draw their attention before they go to bed towards a grisly ghost in their own backyard."

Index Breakdown

What helps *Himal* to spread out a rich fare are its regular departments—Mail, Briefs, Voices and Reviews. One gets to know so many things; important, amusing or plain facts. The Jan/Feb 1993 issue provides an index of all the articles that have appeared in *Himal* to date. But a classified list of the topics covered would have been useful.

Subjectwise, *Himal* seems to have provided widest coverage to environment-related issues, in terms of articles and items in its regular departments. Next come, in the following order, 1) migration, demography and refugees; 2) economy, foreign aid and water resources; 3) mountaineering and tourism; 4) sociology and religion; and 5) women. Apart from country studies of Bhutan and Tibet, it carries articles on Doon Valley, Bangladesh floods, Himachal Pradesh, Tehri

Dam, Narmada Valley, and so on. The following issues are devoted fully to a single theme, not directly related to any of the above: Eating, Tarai, Hill Poverty, Democracy and Himalayan Herbs.

The subjects best treated — and this is purely subjective — are tourism, Gurkha recruitment, foreign aid, hill poverty, Bhutan and mountaineering. From the point of view of overall production and technological excellence, I rate... But no, this will not do. Who am I to judge, unasked and uninvited?

Instead, I should end with an excerpt from the editor's note in March/Apr 1992: "A few issues older, we arrived at the conclusion that *Himal* is actually a mainstream publication after all, as far as the Himalayan region was concerned, because there is little else. So today, we are a 'Himalayan Magazine' of Himalayan society."

Someday, as *Himal* traverses the summit and looks down the sides, it may perhaps discover that the outer edges of this society reach the sea to the south and roll across the Pamir, the Changtang, and Mongolia to the north... ▷

A. Gupta is Professor of Political Science at JNU specialising in Africa and the Himalayan region. His book *Politics of Nepal 1950-60* has just been reprinted in paperback by Kalinga Publications (Delhi).

Back Issues of Himal

Vol.	No	Colour	Issue	Cover Story					
0	0	Green	May/1987	The Valley Chokes	4	1	Purple	Mar/Apr 1991	Tibetan Diaspora
1	1	Green	Jul/1988	Highlanders on the Move	4	2	Grey	May/June 1991	Troubled Waters
1	2	Blue	Nov/Dec 1988	Dharma's Changing Landscape	4	3	Orange	Jul/Aug 1991	Nepalis in Foreign Uniform
2	1	Red	Jan/Feb 1989	World of the Girl Child	4	4	Green	Sep/Oct 1991	Keeping Women Down
2	2	Purple	Mar/Apr 1989	Prosperous Himachal Pradesh	5	1	Red	Jan/Feb 1992	Weakening Spirit of Kathmandu
2	3	Orange	Jul/Aug 1989	An Obsession with Tourism	5	2	Purple	Mar/Apr 1992	What to do with Foreign Aid?
2	4	Green	Sep/Oct 1989	Changing Food Habits	5	3	Grey	May/June 1992	Ethnicity
2	5	Blue	Nov/Dec 1989	Development Refugees	5	4	Orange	Jul/Aug 1992	The Dragon Bites Its Tail
3	1	Red	Jan/Feb 1990	The Shangri-La Myth	5	5	Green	Sep/Oct 1992	The Stress of Change
3	2	Grey	May/June 1990	A Nepali Interregnum	5	6	Blue	Nov/Dec 1992	Himalayan Face of Mountaineering
3	3	Green	Sep/Oct 1990	The Tarai, A Backwater?	6	1	Red	Jan/Feb 1993	The Trade in Himalayan Herbs
3	4	Blue	Nov/Dec 1990	Hill Poverty	6	2	Purple	Mar/Apr 1993	Greater Nepal, Lesser Nepal

Some back issues are still available at Kathmandu bookshops and at *Himal's* office. Bound back issues up to Nov/Dec 1992 (some photocopied) in three volumes are available from *Himal* for NRs. 2000.



Himal Index now allows readers and researchers access to five years of *Himal* Magazine's output — articles in 23 issues till Nov/Dec 1992. The fully computerised index is available in diskette or printed form (WordPerfect 5.1), and has all tools for access and sorting, including: serial number, title, author, synopsis, keywords, date and volume number. The index uses UNESCO's CDS/ISIS library package. For further information or purchase of the Himal Index datafile, please write to or fax the Managing Editor, *Himal*.

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Something Gives in Tibet

What do Levi Strauss & Co. and the Dalai Lama have in common, which sets them apart from Chris Patten? Well, the manufacturer of blue denim and the monk in saffron are both against China receiving most-favoured-nation status from the United States, while the Governor of HongKong was in Washington DC lobbying for retention of MFN.

In May, as President Bill Clinton was about to decide on the MFN status, Levi Strauss unilaterally announced that it would suspend business in China to protest human rights abuses there. Some cynics saw this as an attempt by the company to boost its image among "politically liberal jean wearers", many of whom might actually be sympathetic to the cause of Tibet.

The Dalai Lama has, in the meantime, emerged from his Dharamsala eyrie to go on a publicity blitz, and he seems to



be gaining ground on Beijing. Tibet has always received sympathetic play in the Western media, but now the coverage is more broadbased, more politicised, and less quaint. Dharamsala's public relations spin-artists have never had it so good. "Optimism Spreads among Tibetan Exiles," was the headline used by the *Asian Wall Street Journal* as the pressure built on China.

There was a little bit of everything in the media to enliven Tibet coverage: from demonstrations in Lhasa (with the BBC South Asia Report managing a live interview with a tourist staying at the Lhasa Holiday Inn), to actor Richard Gere asking his Oscar night audience to send out energy in support of Tibet. American Vice President Al Gore met with the Dalai Lama in his White House office, and the President had five minutes free and "just dropped by to say hi". Meanwhile, the Canadian House of Commons debated Tibet, Chinese dissidents were coming around, and Taiwan was beginning to make cooing noises.

A European Commission

delegation of ambassadors on a fact-finding tour to Lhasa cut short its trip protesting the arrest of some Tibetans. Over the last couple of months, many major Western newspapers have carried editorials, and numerous articles like the one in the *Times* of London the "Envoy of Peace: Faith of the Dalai Lama".

Meanwhile, the Austrian Government set precedent and invited the Dalai Lama to attend the UN Human Rights Conference in Vienna, under the old cover of being a "religious" rather than "political" leader. The fact that he was not allowed to speak from the podium just made for better press.

Besides the Dalai Lama's power of persuasion, the Tibetans continue to use every available weapon in their arsenal, from dharma academics to celebrities to sand mandalas to kalachakra ceremonies — the latest of which was in Gangtok with Koo Stark in attendance as photographer.

In the end, Bill Clinton did agree to another year's extension of MFN status for China, but with conditions on a renewal a year hence (having to do with human rights, arms transfers to third countries and "overall significant progress in protecting Tibet's distinctive religious and cultural heritage"). Dharamsala seems to have taken the renewal in stride, secure in the knowledge that its friends in the US Congress had helped draft the legislation with longterm strategy in mind.

As the Chinese economy expands and as it seeks to firm up its ties with consumer nations of the West, something will have to give — and it can be either human rights within China generally, or Tibet. Beijing might find that compromising with the Dalai Lama is a less bitter pill than loosening the reigns on all of Chinese society.

In Kathmandu in early June, Indian legislator and staunch Dharamsala backer George Fernandes made a controversial foray across the border at Khasa. He agreed with a reporter that a "decisive" moment was at hand as far as Tibet was concerned. Fernandes had arrived straight from Dharamsala, where there had been the largest gathering ever on Tibet of Indian academics, poets and journalists. On hand were the likes of MPs Digvijay Singh, Ajit Singh and Rabi Ray; former Himachal CM Shanta Kumar; former Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey; journalist Nikhil Chakravarty; and so on.

Meanwhile, Nepal's headless Ministry for Foreign Affairs continues to quake under Beijing's glare, while the Kathmandu intelligentsia does not seem to care to relate the worldwide surge on Tibet to Nepal's own situation and interests. The Government has become stricter with Tibetan in transit. On 8 June, the Foreign Ministry issued a press release reiterating that "Tibet is an autonomous region of the Peoples Republic of China."

If it is true that Beijing is feeling the heat on Tibet, and something does give, then Levi Strauss, at least, can remain confident in the knowledge that Tibetans will always go for Levis.

Upcoming...

Consultation on Environment and Ecology in the Himalayan Region

28-30 August, Calcutta

This is an informal regional meeting of grassroots activists, organisations and concerned NGOs to discuss environment and ecology of the Himalayan areas of Nepal and India, to discuss implications for Bangladesh, to identify common issues, to work out practical action plan, and to mobilise resources.

Contact: Bhupendra Kishore, Service Civil International, K-5 Green Park, New Delhi 110 016. Tel: 664605



Lord Hunt, Sir Ed, Tengboche's Abbot tailed by a BBC sound man in the Khumbu.

As far as anniversaries go, one is used to the tenth, twenty-fifth and fiftieth. But it was the fortieth anniversary of the first topping of the Big Brow of the Sky that was celebrated during all of May, with a surfeit of television soundbites.

As Maj. Gen. Patrick Fagan, Chairman of the Mount Everest Foundation, told a Himal representative in London, "Forty years is a significant time frame in the British psychology and tradition, because 40 years

is the average man's working life and serves as a career milestone. Besides, the 40th anniversary of the ascent of Everest is also closely associated with 40th anniversary of the Queen's coronation. And the British have a protective attitude towards "Peak XV". It was our mountain, we discovered it."

Obviously, there was also concern that members of the 1953 expeditions might not be around for the fiftieth, in 2003. Expedition leader John

The Fortieth What?

Hunt is 83 and Edmund Hillary, 73.

On hand in the Khumbu in late March for a little pre-anniversary tete-a-tete (which provided footage for a BBC television programme for the anniversary week) were surviving members of 1953 expedition, including Lord Hunt, Sir Ed, George Bande, Michael Westmacotte, Charles Wylie and George Lowe.

After parties and receptions in Kathmandu, the members held a three day reunion camp at Lukla. On 2 April, Hillary and Hunt were feted by the Abbot of Tengboche Gumba, where they posed for TV against the Lhotse-Nuptse backdrop.

By 11 April, the septagenarians had departed Nepal, to turn up in late May in England for the real tamasha. The Royal Geographic Society, the Alpine Club and the Mount Everest Foundation teamed up

to organise a week-long series of slide shows, luncheons and conferences, one of which Queen Elizabeth II attended. Back in 1953, she had described the news of the success on Chomolongma, scooped by *Times* man (later woman — he changed sex), "as the best coronation present".

In their commemorative mood, the participants and organisers of the 40th anniversary celebrations preferred not to bring up the live issues of contemporary Himalayan climbing. Rather than vague denunciations of pollution and commercialisation of the Himalaya, which everyone knows of by now, it would have been more appropriate to use the occasion to debate the strategies of cleanup, mountaineering equity, and use of new equipment and techniques. Instead, all we got was a mushy retrospective.

Dipesh Risal

A Spiti Iconoclast

*Thought we would go far from the madding crowd.
Thought so the madding crowd too.
Thought Zaskar was a 'new discovered' land.
Thought so the madding crowd, too.*

Zaskar down. Ladakh down. Mustang Down. Manaslu down. Now it is Spiti's turn to submit itself to the voracious Tourism Beast. Delhi-based activist Shubendu Kausik, who penned the verse on Zaskar, is determined to raise a stink on Spiti.

As the formerly 'closed' valleys of the Himalaya are flung open to tourists, it seems that we are condemned to repeat mistakes endlessly. And how

could it be otherwise, when officials from Tibet, Nepal, India and Bhutan have never met to compare notes?

Spiti is a valley bracketed between Kinnaur on one end and the Kunzum La and Lahaul on the other. The road from Shimla and Kinnaur traverses the valley and travels onward to Lahaul, Rohtang La, Manali and beyond. The Valley has a population of about ten thousand and five major gumbas. Unlike Ladakh and Zaskar, Spiti had remained relatively isolated because it fell within the Inner Line. However, the area was opened in the Summer of 1992, and the "mad rush" began.

Writing in *ANLetter*, a quarterly on Third World tourism from Bangalore, Kausik says, "The people of Spiti ought to prepare themselves for tourism before things get out of hand. They must make sure that if tourism is inevitable as it seems to be, its ill effects should be minimised, and its good effects (money, that is) should not be siphoned off by outside agencies."

Kausik has taken it upon himself to study tourism's impact on resources, lifestyles, economy and ecology of the valley. But he wants to do things differently: "I intend to collaborate extensively with individuals and organisations that have the information, knowledge or expertise that I might need as I

go along, but I want to work essentially alone and in my own way, which is characterised by down-to-earth informality, by freedom from strict schedules and, quite importantly, a freedom from accountability to any organisation or individual."

Kausik: "the funding source or sources will have to rely on my integrity, for I do not intend to have anything to do with accounts. All this might sound quite strange, even unreasonable, but that is how it is."

Grant-making agencies are rarely confronted with such audacity. But then, perhaps atypical proposals are what we need. To test his case, write to: S. Kausik, C-404 Somvihar Apartments, R.K.Puram, New Delhi 110022.



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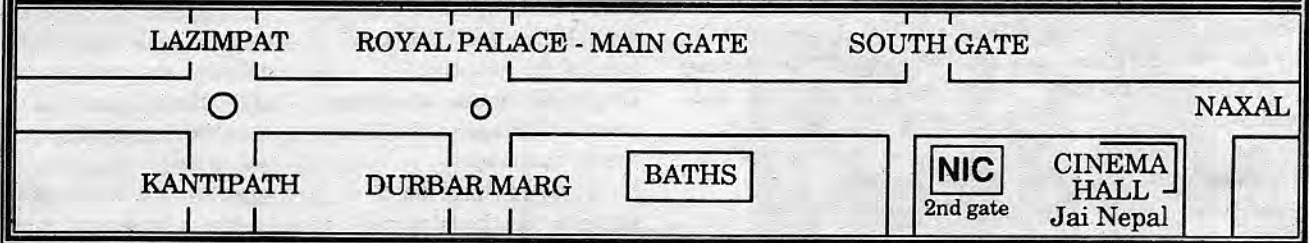
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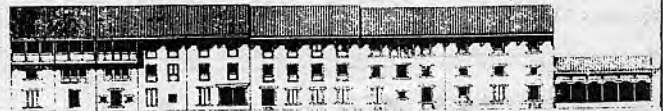
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Selling Gift Rhinos

The *Kathmandu Post* daily broke the story, but nobody else picked it up: more rhinoceros have been gifted and sold by the Nepali Government than have been poached between the years 1980 and 1992. So it turns out that while one hand of the Government goes about organising conservation and anti-poaching programmes, the other merrily goes about distributing rhinos.

Wildlife specialist Pralad Yonzon, who blew the whistle on the rhino scam, calculates that two rhinos a year have been exported during the two years of parliamentary democracy, "whereas the earlier average was 1.8". Asks Yonzon, who was recently inducted by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala into Nepal's National Environment Council, "Why should Nepal take the contract to stock wild rhinos in

zoos around the world, especially when the Chitwan rhino population is only 350 and the carrying capacity is 500 animals?"

The most recent deal-in-making is between the Nepali Government and the Stuttgart Zoo, which is said to have 'ordered' a female rhino calf of 18 to 30 months age from the Royal Chitwan National Park. According to sources in Germany, some Nepali and German collaborators have designed this export to appear as the theme exhibit for the coming Nepal Festival being organised in Stuttgart in July, after which the calf will be moved to the city's zoo.

If anyone was expecting CITES to stop Nepal's lavish gift-giving, past experience has shown that this international treaty prohibiting trade in endangered species has not restrained the Government. And

it has not always been altruistic gift-giving either — Kathmandu's vernacular weeklies have reported that the going rate for Nepali female rhinos in the past has been US\$ 150,000 each.

So the question arises whether Nepal is exporting rhinos to spread the gene pool of an endangered species internationally, as is sometimes claimed, or whether it is simply the money involved.

German zoos already have two female rhinos from Nepal, and there seems to be little need for Chitwan to lose one more. As far as genetic enhancement is concerned, "Nepal's rhino do not need any help," says Yonzon. The genetic vigour of the Chitwan rhinos (measured in terms of "heterozygosity") is high compared to other wild species, he maintains.

ADB One, NGOs Nil

Some 26 Asian and international activist groups were gathered in Manila during the first week of May to exert pressure on the Asian Development Bank, concerned about projects which they say bear heavy social and environmental costs. The occasion was the annual meeting of the ADB's governing body.

As expected, there was some name-calling. Said Jim Barnes of the Friends of the Earth (USA), "The ADB, the World Bank and the IMF are banks, they just pretend to be development institutions. There is a basic flaw in their structure. The ADB has some honest and well-meaning people, but we need to stiffen their spines."

So was the ADB put on the defensive? Hardly. The reason was that the groups that were gathered at the Bank's swank new premises to protest its policies have themselves got soft around the middle. Each has a pet project, does little homework on the many countries of Asia whose NGOs do not have international reach.

And so the Asian and international NGOs present in Manila stuck mostly to protest thermal power plants in the Philippines, deforestation in Indonesia, and commercial forestry in Bangladesh. One non-Nepali NGO representative did tentatively raise the question of Nepal's Arun III hydropower project, which has reached a critical stage in decision-making. But when a senior ADB official, a Pakistani, claimed grandiosely that "The Arun III is a project that will take Nepal into the 21st century," there people who could throw him a follow-up question were four thousand miles away in Kathmandu.



Baby rhino from Chitwan being mailed to Frankfurt Zoo in March 1990.

B. RAJNAR

Refugee Children Learn Better

The most forward-looking education in Nepal is being carried out today, not in the elite educational institutions of Kathmandu, but in the over-crowded and resourceless schools of Bhutanese refugees.

Some background:

Amidst the lethargy that afflicts primary education all over South Asia, Bhutan has emerged as an exception. While more than a hundred million children all over the Subcontinent go about their regimen of prescribed unimaginative rote learning, the children of Druk Yul are benefitting from "child-centered education". Innovative teaching and curricula that moves with the times might have been introduced in a handful of well-endowed schools in the other countries of South Asia, but in Bhutan they are being applied countrywide, under a programme begun in 1986 known as the National Action



Schoolkids at Bumthang, Bhutan.

Plan for Education (NAPE).

The programme was started as a joint initiative of the Department of Education and volunteer organisations from England, Ireland and New Zealand. Begun as a pilot project in a limited number of schools, and involving intensive teacher training, NAPE sought to promote "learning by doing",

providing resource materials in class, encouraging creativity, and promoting interaction among children. With the programme's initial success, it has now been extended countrywide.

Refugee schooling was initially begun in Jhapa by untrained teachers, mostly members of the Students Union of Bhutan, who picked up the curriculum and textbooks of the local Kankai Boarding School. But as qualified educators and school administrators fled Bhutan and arrived in the camps, they were appalled by the level of primary education in Nepal and worried about the step-down involved for refugee children, particularly those who had been exposed to NAPE.

"The situation in the local schools are dire. There is no comparison between education in Bhutan and the education I have seen in Nepali schools," says a British volunteer who has worked both in Bhutan and the Jhapa camps

"We were shocked with what we saw in Nepal," concedes Bala Sharma, the only woman among the 18 District Education Officers of Bhutan before she came out in January 1991. "We have found a

dramatic difference between recent arrivals who had undergone the new education and children who had arrived earlier."

With the help of the relief agencies UNHCR and CARITAS, Sharma and colleagues have set about trying to bring NAPE to the refugee camps — under excruciating odds. NAPE presupposes the availability of teaching aids, appropriate educational material, small class size, none of which is conceivable in the camps, whose educational programme lacks even a photocoppy machine.

Says Sharma, "We are trying our best to adapt to the circumstances, and it requires superhuman effort of our teachers." The maximum allowable class size in Bhutan is 35, she says, whereas in the camps teachers have to take classes of up to 100, and then too teach in shifts.

There are six schools in the refugee camps, and 23,000 students, with a three shift system in the largest three schools. Of the 300 teachers, 70 are "NAPE-qualified" from Bhutan.

In January, Sharma and Eilish Cummings — a volunteer trainer who has worked in Bhutan — organised a training programme come up with strategies adapt NAPE to refugee conditions. They discussed teaching over-crowded classrooms, adapting local materials as teaching aids, and utilising the inadequate textbooks available in the Nepali bookshops for innovative teaching. Sharma and other refugee educators are presently engaged in developing a syllabus and curriculum that follow Bhutan's NAPE philosophy — as far as possible.

Dirty Alps

The world's dirtiest mountains are not in Nepal's himals, in case you thought so after reading endless wirecopy out of Kathmandu. The Alps have that dubious distinction, particularly due to the filthy surroundings of Alpine refuges, which are huts used by climbers and hikers to bed down for the night. The piles of excreta and trash that are to be found next to these refuges are said to vie with legitimate mountains for height.

A conference on "Alpine Refuges in the Year Two Thousand", held recently in Trieste (Italy), provided occasion for handwringing. Said one participant, "The refuges

today dot the valleys and passes, and even some peaks in the Alps risk losing their original appearance forever."

Participants from the Alpine Clubs of Italy, Austria, Switzerland, France, Germany and Slovenia said they were committed to preventing "alpine tourism from becoming the tourism of waste". They signed a document proposing a new basis for running the refuges, promoting alternative energy sources, less use of tins and packets, and carry-out policies for trash. On the whole, the refuges are to be more "spartan".

There were 16 thousand trekkers in the Khumbu in 1992. And 40 million tourists visited the European Alps the same year. Who produced more trash?

Goopy and Bagha by the Bishnumati



Ludmilla Hungerhuber as Bagha and Sabine Lehmann as Goopy.

If the Himalayan region has anything on offer that can be called innovative modern theatre, it is to be found at the Vajra Hotel, the retreat by the Bishnumati River. A couple of times every year, the Vajra troupe known as Studio Seven

puts up performances that are an unselfconscious mix of Western drama, classical Sanskrit, and Newar modernism. The shows are directed by Sabine Lehmann.

Kathmandu's stage, which has long suffered from over-acted Nepali melodramas

at the Rastriya Nach Ghar, with only productions by expatriate Himalayan Amateurs (HAMS) for relief, reaches for sanity with Studio Seven. Most remarkable is the development of young Newar actors whose ability to change gears between classic dance and ribald humour is impressive. Particularly noteworthy is the versatile Rajendra Shrestha, who keeps the audience riveted with his presence alone.

In Autumn 1992, Studio Seven presented a rendition of a portion of the *Nepal Mahatmya*, about the mythical origins of Kathmandu Valley. Following *Nepal Mahatmya*, the troupe was casting around for its next production. It so happened that Lehmann's husband and fellow

player Sangpo Lama fell asleep while taping a Satyajit Ray retrospective on India's Doordarshan. The next morning, the family discovered that it had on videotape a full-length *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*, the lovable story about a bad singer and a worse drummer in ancient Bengal, who receive three boons from the King of Ghosts.

Studio Seven anglicised and nepalised the Bengali story, adapted Ray's lyrics, and wrote out a whole new score. Nine performances were put up during three weeks in April, all too few for the effort that went into the production. And therein lies the rub. Very few get to watch what is probably the best of Himalayan theatre over at the Vajra. Kathmandu folks by and large do not even know of Studio Seven, and there is as yet no means to bring productions like *Nepal Mahatmya* to a larger Valley audience. And how grand it would be to stage the Nepali story of Goopy and Bagha in Calcutta!

Nuke of the North

Now we know: Tibet has been used by Beijing for nuclear weapons research, uranium mining, dumping of radioactive wastes, and the placement of nuclear weapons.

The confirmation comes in *Nuclear Tibet: Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Waste on the Tibetan Plateau*, a 64-page report prepared by John Ackerly, Director of the US-based International Campaign for Tibet. Ackerly presents details of what till now has largely been heresay on China's nuclear programme and how it

concerns Tibet.

Ackerly reports that all of China's early nuclear bombs were built in the "Ninth Academy", a top-security research and design facility based in the Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai (Amdo).

On the whole, Ackerly writes, "There is little doubt that China's nuclear program has had an inordinate impact on the Tibetans, the Uyghurs and the Mongolians. From land appropriations, to nuclear fallout, to toxic and radioactive pollution

in rivers, lakes and pastures, the story about the ugly side-effects of China's nuclear programme is just beginning to emerge."

According to Ackerly, "Geological bad luck put the largest commercially-viable uranium deposits in the Tibetan plateau." Uranium continues to be mined in two main sites, which are in the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province and the Ngaba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan. The largest uranium deposits are actually said to be around Lhasa, but so far these have not been commercially mined.

The report says that the

stationing of nuclear weapons in the Tibetan region began in 1971, when a DF-4, China's first intercontinental ballistic missile, arrived in the Qaidam Basin. Nuclear missiles are presently said to be deployed at a minimum of three sites in Qinghai. Ackerly was unable to confirm the siting of land-based missiles in the Tibetan Autonomous Region proper. (When Beijing claims that Tibet is "nuclear-free", it is not referring to Qinghai, which falls outside the TAR.)

There have been no reported nuclear tests in the Tibetan region. These are done in Lop Nor, in East Turkestan.

What does the U.S. Federal Bureau of Information think is the ideal weapon for flushing out cult leaders from their hideouts? If you guessed the M16 rifle, stun guns or tear gas, you're no Dick Tracy. The FBI beamed **Tibetan religious chants** in high volume over the public address system at the complex where David Koresh and his followers were holed up in Waco, Texas. The droning of mantras continued all day long and till 3 in the morning, but Koresh seemed to be tuned off dharma and the experiment failed. Now that its secret weapon is out of the bag, the FBI must come clean and publish the research which made it conclude that chants which have served Tibetans well over a thousand years are good for flushing out kooky cultists. *Tibetan Review* reports that the G-men initially thought of serenading Koresh with a popular American country folk tune, but decided to go for the chanting, as it would be more annoying. Are we to laugh or to cry?

Bicycling ladies are part of a social movement, writes P. Sainath in *The Times of India*. The bicycle has brought freedom and mobility to thousands of women of Tamil Nadu's Pudukkottai district. The good women of Pudukkottai did not even care when once there was a shortage of ladies cycles; they hopped onto the cross-barred gents' with equal ease. "Cycling offered a way around male-imposed barriers," writes Sainath. Which leads one to the conclusion that the women of Chitwan District must be among the most liberated in all Nepal. This Inner Tarai, or doon, valley has a generation-old population of highly politicised and progressive homesteaders. And the women of Chitwan cycle as if there were no tomorrow. Pudukkottai and Chitwan should exchange notes.

More on the **neglected Indian Northeast**. *The Times of India* reports that Surendra Nath Dwivedy, Chairman of the Northeastern Council (the "high-powered nodal planning agency" for the region) has slammed the Union Home Ministry for stifling development activity through lack of attention. Dwivedy, who is also Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, said many projects had been held up due to the Centre's inaction, and the people of the Northeast were feeling frustrated. At a recent meeting of the

Council, representatives of the smaller states of the region wanted the 20-year-old Council to be given more power to allocate funds and to take up schemes within the outlays fixed by the Planning Commission.

The **mountaineering media** had a busy Spring climbing season, what with the fortieth anniversary of you-know-what, the deaths on Chomolongma, and the endless stories about trash and overcrowding on the mountain. Editors from Vietnam to the upper reaches of the Amazon never tire of mountaineering news, so if you're a Kathmandu stringer low on news, all you have to do is churn out more copy on trash and overcrowding on the mountain. Only two articles kept my eyes from completely glazing over, one a report quoting Bombay alpinist Sharavati ("Sharu") Prabhu (who climbs with Doug Scott), who wondered why the Indian Government was wasting one crore rupees per expedition on Chomolongma just to take the "yak route" and easy trudge to the summit. "Only in India do people still think it is a feat to climb Everest by the South Col," she said. In the other piece, Sir Ed Hillary got a mouthful from two Down Under summitteers, who felt that he was being awfully patronising as he went about bemoaning the loss of chivalry in the climbing of Chomolongma.

Ethnic cleansing is the term the 1993 *World Refugee Survey* uses to describe the treatment of "ethnic Nepalis" in Bhutan, according to a PTI report from Washington DC. First it was the International Herald Tribune that slapped the term on Bhutan in a headline, then the BBC World Service magazine, and now this. It must be enough to make the Thimphu Government, or its watchdog embassy in New Delhi, see red. With journalists resorting too quickly to the term to describe complex phenomena all over, the term is already losing some of its power to hold the reader.

And so to clarify matters, let us refer to the definition provided by columnist **A.M. Rosenthal** in a *The New York Times* article entitled "A Model: Ethnic Cleansing in Tibet". According to Rosenthal, *Ethnic Cleansing* comprises (in synopsis): removal of as much of the indigenous population as possible without destroying the native

infrastructure until it can be completely replaced; destruction of native civic and religious officials; destruction of most places of mass religious observation; banning of teaching of local language to maximum practical extent; strict regime of political repression, with usual methods of imprisonment and political persuasion; long-range introduction from cleansing nation of its own citizens until they can take demographic or economic control.

"We want only a few but **high spending tourists**. We are definitely aiming for upmarket clientele." That could have been the Director of Bhutan's Department of Tourism, or the Raja of Mustang. It was actually the Commissioner of Tourism for Arunachal Pradesh, S. Raghunathan. According to Debashish Munshi of *TOI*, the state bordering Burma, Tibet and Bhutan "abounds in snow white rivers, tall hills, lakes, ridges and valleys". It might be hard to attract tourists to Arunachal selling those attributes, which do apply to every other spot in the Himalaya as well. Anyway, Raghunathan has set a target of 500 foreign tourists for the current year, with an expected tariff of US\$ 200 per pax. And mark one for environment friendliness, Arunachal will not permit tourists to lug in plastic — "only bamboo baskets will be allowed to be carried. The tourists are expected to come in groups and stick to the main trails..."

A team of experts from Lucknow is in Ladakh **restoring gumbas**, says PTI, but only after they convinced the All Gumbas Association that they were not out to rob Ladakh of its artefacts. Apparently, a number of agencies had in the past carted out valuable thankas and manuscripts, while others had destroyed murals through ham-handed restoration. The lamas of Ladakh took some time to be convinced of the bona fide of the Lucknow-based National Research Laboratory for the Conservation of Cultural Properties, and its experts have now surveyed all the 40 odd gumbas of Ladakh and "convinced the lamas that not a single object would be taken away," according to the agency's Director.

Tibetologist Robert Thurman recently challenged a large audience of scholars of South Asia to reconsider the

significance of **Tibetan studies** for South Asian studies as a whole, reports a newsletter from Columbia University, New York. India's support for Tibetans in exile was "fitting", he said, "when we recall that Tibetans preserved and fostered Buddhism during the centuries when it had virtually disappeared from India." A treasure trove of Mahayana Buddhist literature in Sanskrit, meticulously preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations, awaited recovery. Such restoration should be a priority for Indian studies, argued the professor, because it is "the key to unlock the full splendour of Indian studies." Thurman warned that East Asian studies were outpacing South Asian studies in the US, and urged scholars to try and understand why.

More on Tibet as I turned on the BBC World Television. Not politics, not dharma, but **high fashion**. Wendell Rodericks, a dress designer, was busy unveiling his Tibetan Collection. Claiming to have received some sort of blessing from the Dalai Lama, Mr. Rodericks, as designers are wont to do, described your basic lama colours as "active yellows, maroons and browns... just the colours for the 1990s." There was even a "nuptial motif" on display on lissome bodies, and the narrator intoned on how fascinatingly the crepe tunics had succeeded in interpreting the Tibetan ambience. While appropriately carried away by the crepe tunics, fashion critic Ameeta Bajaj granted that "I don't think most of this fashion will trickle down to the market."

India Today reports that the major conduit for wildlife contraband departing from South Asia are **Paro and Kathmandu** airports. Illegal fur traders, of course, have long found safe haven in Kathmandu, where they can blatantly exhibit their wares right on Durbar Marg. Bhutan, apparently, is catching up fast as a favoured transshipment point. This has to do, apparently, with little controls, and the ease with which contraband can be smuggled into Bhutan from the Duars and Assam. Paro's direct airlink with Bangkok makes the airport especially attractive to traders who are emptying the Indian Northeast of wildlife.

— Chhetria Patrakar

How To Develop the Himalaya in Four Easy Steps



ACTION PLAN FOR HIMALAYA

The book proposes a technocrat's model for eco-development. It does not touch base with the villager.

Action Plan for Himalaya

*Himavikas Occasional Publication # 2
Govinda Ballav Pant Institute for
Himalayan Environment and Development,
1992; Kosi, Almora*

by Sanjeev Prakash

Even the bada sahebs of development community would acknowledge that development of mountain areas proceeds along a somewhat different course than that of the plains. What these differences are precisely is a matter on which there is less agreement. After plethora of reports around the "Rio process", including the *State of the World's Mountains* document and different country and subject-wise reports, those differences persist.

Part of this is because of differing perceptions of development itself: is development "human development" as defined by UNDP, is it weighed in terms of productivity and income, or is it calculated by substitution or supplementation of mountain subsistence by the market? Do these differences imply different goals or are they different ways of measuring the same thing?

The second reason is the differing perception of the various actors involved in the development of the Himalaya: scientists, planners, engineers, foreign donors and their consultants, the independent sector, local communities, etc. None of these, on their own, can define development for the Himalaya, yet all of them are involved in it in some way or the other.

The third is the often times admitted lacks and uncertainties of Himalayan data. In *Uncertainty on a Himalayan Scale*, M. Thompson, M. Warburton and T. Hatley suggest that the latter two are related — that the differences in data are caused by differing perceptions, notions, cultures, etc. of the constituencies involved. They argue that, under these conditions, two models suggest themselves: the Tinkering approach and the Grand Design. The first builds on what there is — facilitating and empowering people through new technologies, processes and institutions and if it goes wrong (as it sometimes will), it cannot cause much damage. The second seeks to supplant what exists with what "should be". If it goes wrong (as all things sometimes will), it can cause major problems, even disasters. And since perceptions of what "should be" vary, it will cause major problems for at least some people most of the time.

Thinking about Thinking

The 1980s was a crucial decade for thinking about thinking on the Himalaya. Part of this brain activity was transmuted into two key institutions. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) was initiated in Kathmandu, and India began

an indigenous clone, the G.B. Pant Institute for Himalayan Environment and Development, in Almora.

Two alternate conceptions competed while the G.B. Pant Institute was being set up. The first involved a decentralised structure in each region of the Indian Himalaya, with networking facilities for planning and communication. The second wanted a hierarchical institution with a central office and branches in the other states. The first was the engaged scientist's approach, while the second, the interested bureaucrat's. It was the second model that won, shaping, in a sense, the future of the Indian Government's thinking on Himalayan development.

Now hang on to your Himalayan *topis!* For here comes the G.B. Pant Institute's *Action Plan for Himalaya*. It proposes clear links between research, demonstration and what it calls "extension/execution", and includes a matrix of actions, "existing" and "desired", for different constituencies.

As a contribution to the Himalayan development debate, this plan serves a purpose; as a basis for the eco-development of the Himalaya, it is something else. Nevertheless, it is useful if only because it offers an insight into the state of official thinking about the

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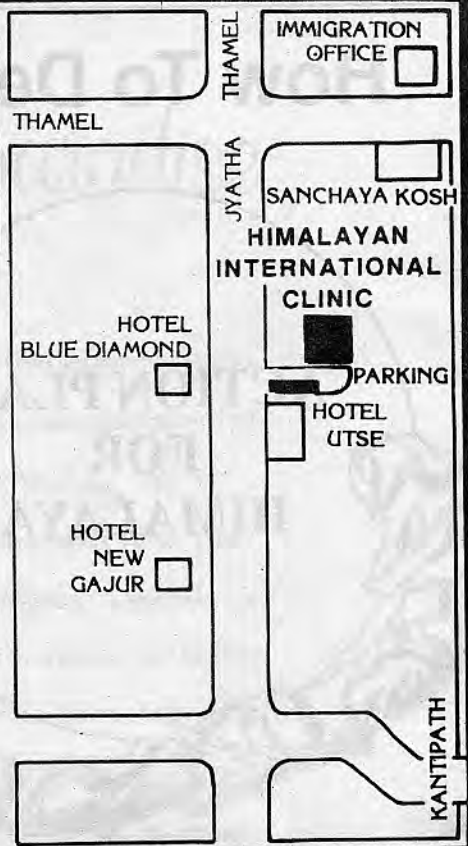
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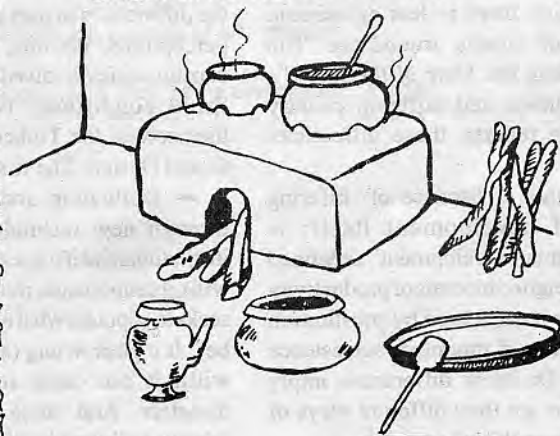
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Himalaya in India, today.

A typical excerpt:

One of the dilemmas being faced is the inevitable fact of the administrators (managerial staff) and the scientists (academic staff) working differently. It is, however, vital that they work as a team. At present this concept of partnership between the two types of institutions is completely lacking and this has further been aggravated by the prolific rise of the third Institution of a recent origin, the non-government organizations, which should have been the 'customers' of new technologies rather than becoming the 'creators' of technology and 'critics' of the government infrastructure. Their deviation from the main role of spreading the technology is creating and independency instead of inter-dependency."

On the prospect for people, the plan is equally dim. A section on roads:

Road alignments should be worked out on the basis of geo-technical feasibility instead of the desire of the people, which is more often put forward and emphasized to serve political motives.

A Technocrat's Model

Despite its sincere approach to problems of scale, and its delineation of potential income generation scheme, such as eco-tourism, horticulture, bee-keeping (which many a Himalayan village has waited so long for), the Institute's document is a technocrat's model for eco-development. Its failure is that even where its proponents see the relevance of the efficiency-equity axis, they do not realise that it is different cultures and perceptions that are the issues.

And efficiency for whom? What is efficient for the farmer may not be efficient for the government; both may be inefficient from the perspective of the businessman. This involves scale, but also ends and paradigms. To give a very bad example, a bulldozer is of no use to a hill woman who wants to chop an onion. An axe might be. Both can be used to fell trees, in different paradigms.

But the main problem with plans like this one by the GBP, and the Grand Design approach in general, is that it fails to recognise the wonderful creativity of the Himalayan people in nurturing their harsh environment, in husbanding their forests and terraced fields sustainably, in raising democratic institutions. True, this is not invariably the case, but reasons for this state of affairs is one of the critical areas institutes such as the GBP should be

examining. The well-known failure of many people's institutions cannot be used to justify the technocrat's approach, for isn't the Himalaya littered with the debris of failed technocratic projects?

The Action Plan would like to see people as passive recipients of its largesse, not as thinking interactors shaping their own destiny. The fact that "the people" become "critics", not because of genetic predisposition but because of actions such as the GBP proposes, is an idea that never seems to have entered the calculations of its designers. As such, the Action Plan is illiterate about the possibilities of the very people it presumes to plan for.

The third thing that the authors fail to realise is that it is the task of institutions as the GBP to interpret the will of the people, not of some abstract, supposedly "efficient" Western managerial model — specially now, when the pure techno-managerial model is in disrepute across wide parts of the world, and is held as the prime cause for the environmental crisis. If, when they are unleashed on the supposedly "innocent" people of the Himalaya, the results of such plans are criticism, counter-pressure and lawlessness, (what the authors term "political considerations"), it can hardly be surprising. For politics mediates the process of development as much as its discourse and the preparation of this plan is proof of that.

Nowhere is there a mention of transnational linkages, so vital in a region as important as the Himalaya. The assumption is that the Indian parts of the Himalaya function in isolation from Nepal, Bhutan or Tibet. Nor is there any sustained analysis of upstream/downstream linkages between mountain and plain, or within the mountain themselves. This, then, is a plan that basically sees the Himalayan environment in terms of abstract policies and seamless national boundaries, rather than in terms of forest and field, mountain and slope,

upstream and downstream, peasant and animal, all integral to the processes by which it survives.

More Litter

This is a document replete with current buzzterms such as "paradigm", "conflicts over natural resources", "sustainability", but in ways that escape their essential meaning. It also lists an impressive line of advisors, such as Madhav Ashish, M. S. Swaminathan, T.N. Khoshoo and K.S. Valdiya. One is forced to conclude that good advice might have been offered, but was not completely understood. And the merits of any document does depend on its authors, not on the quality of advice they might have been offered. This Action Plan fails to achieve what might have been its most basic goal: to articulate the Government's position on Himalayan development intelligently and purposefully.

This Action Plan will never be implemented on the ground. It is too simplistic for that. But it will mediate government thinking about the Himalaya, and may even fool a foreign donor or two. The mind-set it represents will simply exacerbate local resistance, causing more of the "problems" it ostensibly seeks to solve. Finally, it will add to the litter of information on the Himalaya: neither respected and credible, and completely non-biodegradable.

Which is a pity. For whether administrator or scientist, planner or activist, the Himalaya deserves better from us all. Just as the processes of subduction and uplift as well as of weathering and erosion have shaped the mountains, so top-down planning must be in alignment with bottom-up strategies in order to work. It is time that India's high planners incorporated the shocks and tremors of ground truth within their vision, uncomfortable though these will be.

S. Prakash is *Himal's* Consulting Editor.

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For further details, contact the Managing Editor, *Himal*, at 523845.

Pasang Lhamu

The celebrated death of a Sherpa woman climber on Chomolongma seems to have served the purpose of politicians and journalists far removed from mountaineering.

by Dipesh Risal



Overwhelming farewell.

1992 *Himal*, Mountaineering issue), the commemoration of Pasang Lhamu's achievement was significant. At the same time, however, it seemed that Kathmandu went overboard.

Tragic as her death was, there is general consensus among Nepali climbers that Pasang Lhamu was not a good climber. This was her fourth attempt on Chomolongma and the tenacity of purpose which eventually got her to top was to be admired. But as a climber, Pasang Lhamu's achievement was relatively modest. She was the seventeenth woman to climb Chomolongma, using the traditional South Col route.

Overkill of mountaineering achievement is not a particularly Nepali failing. It is an international pastime of the mainstream media everywhere, which the mountaineering journals keep a stiff-upper lip about. When Rebecca Lucy Stephens became the first British woman atop Chomolongma (a couple of slots after Pasang Lhamu), the hype which greeted her return to England bordered on the ridiculous. Only a little less grandiose was the glorification heaped on the Indian Women's Expedition on Chomolongma by the Indian press, even though the ladies seemed to have been helped to the top by a male "technical advisor". In this connection, the reported comments of Indian alpinist Sharavati Prabhu is worth considering. (See "Himalaya Mediafile", page 38).

But if the British and Indian achievements were merely momentarily overplayed, Pasang Lhamu's death was a cause celebre that preoccupied Nepal's national consciousness for more than a month, and in fact was not eclipsed even by the subsequent deaths of Leftist leaders Madan Bhandari and Jeev Raj Ashrit.

High Profile

Why did Pasang Lhamu's case get extraordinary play, against the background of Sherpa deaths generally being treated as footnotes even by the Kathmandu press? A string of sociological factors seem to be involved, and this writer concludes that it has had to do with, among other things: Pasang Lhamu's high public profile prior to the climb; the vernacular media's limited understanding of what makes mountaineering achievement; the need of the political establishment to nurture a national Nepali icon at a time when nationalism is at a low ebb; and both the Nepali Congress and Left opportunistically seeking political mileage by displaying

sensitivity to a *janajati*, hill ethnic, subject.

The extended and exhaustive coverage of Pasang Lhamu's death and her funeral at Swayambhu could also be read as indication that the Sherpa community has become economically significant and politically strong enough to exact such recognition in the nation's capital. To the extent, therefore, that an "ethnic" subject was getting wide play nationally, there was some good to come out of the tragedy.

By and large, Sherpa heroes have been inarticulate climbers who climb as a job. They have been content to let the Western climbers hog the publicity and the glamour of climbing. Past efforts by Nepali bureaucrats to peddle native climbers as personalities worthy of world media attention, such as in the case of the late lamented Sungdare Sherpa, have generally failed.

Pasang Lhamu represented a breed of "modern Sherpa" who had the ability to seek sponsorship (from San Miguel Beer/Nepal for her last two attempts), conduct media briefings, make appointments with Kathmandu dignitaries, and go public with news and controversy that would catch the public's fancy. She was probably the first Sherpa to use the press in the way that many Western climbers have long done, some of them with the help of media consultants.

By the time she had gained the summit, therefore, the Nepali press and television were closely following Pasang Lhamu's moves. And when she died on Chomolongma's cold upper reaches, and when her body could not be located for days afterwards, the heroics and the pathos were readymade for the press. Forever having had to write about Western climbers on Himalayan mountains, a newly reportage-oriented vernacular media of Nepal played the Pasang Lhamu story to the hilt.

Originally, Pasang Lhamu had planned to climb with the Indian Women's Expedition as the Assistant Leader, but when that post was not given to her, she decided to form her own expedition — the Nepali Women's San Miguel Everest Expedition. There were two other women in her team, Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa and Nanda Rai, and several Sherpa men. As her's was an all-Nepali team, she petitioned the Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation for a rebate on the climbing royalty, which currently stands at US\$ 10,000, but when only a 10 percent discount was offered, she decided to pay in full.

Her husband, trekking executive Lhakpa Sonam Sherpa, who accompanied Pasang Lhamu to Camp III (7300m), says the

team was not even allowed to take a walkie talkie set, because such sets are "controlled items" in Nepal. He says that the lack of such a set later hindered the rescue attempts.

First on Top

According to an interview given by Lhakpa Phuti to *Rajdhani*, a Kathmandu weekly, the original assault plan called for the women to try the summit together. But Lhakpa Phuti says Pasang Lhamu told her at Camp III (7300m) that she was in competition with the Indian Women's Expedition, which included a possible Nepali summitteer, Nimmi Sherpa. Hence, Pasang Lhamu would push for the summit on 22 April with the help of five male Sherpas, while Lhakpa Phuti could make her try on 26 April. It seems that Pasang Lhamu was determined to reach the top at any cost, and as the only woman on the team. This was her fourth time on Chomolongma, and the need to succeed this last time could have played a role in the later tragedy.

On 22 April, Pasang Lhamu did succeed in reaching the summit of Chomolongma, along with Pemba Norbu Sherpa and Sonam Tshering Sherpa. Three other men of the expedition also reached the top separately that day. As they began their descent, it is said to have taken Pasang Lhamu and her two friends five hours to make the South Summit, whereas for climbers in good form, that is a passage of about an hour. Since the team had left their night lamps at a cache lower down, they could not continue.

As night fell, Pasang Lhamu and her two partners were forced to bivouac on the South Summit. The next day, Pemba Norbu descended to Camp II to get oxygen supplies for Pasang. But the weather deteriorated and he couldn't make it back to the bivouac. Over the next few days, in worsening weather conditions, there were repeated attempts to reach the two stranded Sherpas, but to no avail. Finally, on 26 April, Lhakpa Sonam Sherpa returned to Kathmandu, giving up all hope of finding his spouse alive.

The rest of the summitteers, meanwhile, went back to Base Camp to recuperate. A Russian team approached them and offered to bring down the bodies partway if they were allowed to use the route prepared by the Sherpas. With approval of the Tourism Ministry in Kathmandu, the Russians found the body of Pasang Lhamu and brought it down to 8,000m. From there, a Southwest Face Korean expedition provided members and Sherpas to carry the body to Base Camp.

Setting Precedent

Never before had a body of a climber been evacuated from that high on Chomolongma (8750m). That the climber's body was brought back to the capital for national mourning and funeral rites at Swayambhu attended by thousands of Kathmandu citizens marked another first.

After this episode, other expeditions too are said to be feeling the pressure to bring down bodies of dead members which earlier would have been left at site. The body of Tenzing Norgay's nephew Lobsang Sherpa, who died subsequent to Pasang Lhamu on Chomolongma, has similarly been retrieved from 8,200m, and a Korean who died below the South Col was returned to Base Camp and cremated. A precedent of Himalayan mountaineering seems to have been set.

The Pasang Lhamu case has also highlighted the issue of whether Nepalis should be made to pay royalty for climbing their own mountains. Although the Kathmandu press made too much of the fact that the Tourism Ministry had refused to waive the royalty required on Chomolongma (it was, after all, a sponsored expedition), the issue is bound to come up in future as truly amateur attempts are made by Nepali climbers.

A suggestion to the Tourism Ministry Mountaineering Section as it starts thinking about making policy would be that Nepali expeditions, as long as they are fully funded by indigenous money (it is impossible to mount full-sized expeditions without sponsorship), be waived royalty. However, Nepali climbers too must stand in line with foreign expeditions, and the first-come-first served rule must continue to apply. Foreign funders and "technical advisors" should not sneak into such "Nepali expeditions" for a quick hitch to the top.

If the newspaper men and women of Nepal look back over their coverage of the Pasang Lhamu "event", they will find that their concentration was on a rousing nationalistic story rather than on a mountaineering drama. For all the hundreds of column inches devoted to Pasang Lhamu, there was no article which adequately presented historical, technical and psychological aspects of mountaineering.

And no one reported on Pasang Lhamu's climbing abilities. A Nepali mountain guide who was with Pasang Lhamu on her 1991 attempt recalls that she "used to walk five minutes and rest for fifteen minutes" while up on Chomolongma. He says she had

neither the technical skills nor the stamina for mountaineering. It is also stated that Pasang Lhamu was not good at going downhill on crampons. The row between Pasang Lhamu and French soloist Marc Batard in 1990 was said to have to do with the latter's belief that Pasang Lhamu was too slow and engaged too many Sherpas to help her along, which was why he refused to allow her to go beyond the South Col. Back in Kathmandu, Pasang Lhamu went public accusing Batard for discrimination against a woman and a native climber.

"Tenzing Sherpa"

In many ways, the posthumous popularity of Pasang Lhamu harks back to the feeding frenzy that accompanied the first ascent of Chomolongma by Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary in 1953. As Tenzing (then thought to be a Sherpa — he turned out to be from north of the border) arrived in Kathmandu Valley after a long trek from the Khumbu, he was swept off his feet, awarded the *Nepal Tara* medal, and hailed as a true Nepali hero, right up there on the pedestal with Amar Singh Thapa and Arniko the architect. But the moment Tenzing "defected" to India to join the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling, he was dropped like a pariah.

The Nepali establishment had gone overboard with Tenzing, and felt let down by him. The song "*Hamro Tenzing Sherpalay chadyo himal chuchura*" (Our Tenzing Sherpa has made it to the summit) quickly fell into disuse on Radio Nepal airwaves.

Pasang Lhamu also received a posthumous *Nepal Tara*. Her spirited sieges on Chomolongma have served to make the Nepali population generally more aware of mountaineering in the high himals. A sport that is so important to the national economy and which is the defining factor in the livelihood of the Sherpa community, has now received some recognition nationally as a result of her tragic effort.

It was probably because of the publicity generated by Pasang Lhamu that Nepal Television was present at Kathmandu's airport when Ang Rita Sherpa arrived from the Khumbu, having climbed Chomolongma for the eighth time. Certainly, something worthy of national celebration and recognition.

D. Risal is *Himal's* Know Your Himal columnist.

Abominably Yours,



The Third World is sinking fast and we must act quickly to rescue it from the fate of other Southern alliances such as the Non Aligned (which had nowhere to go after the whole world became unaligned), the Group of 77 (which actually has 124), and the Group of 15 (an exclusive club of snobbish poor nations with 17 members).

But the traditional means of propagating Third World ideals are now in deep disrepute. We could, for example, open an NGO to revive and propagate the grand designs of Nkrumah, Nasser and Sukarno, but NGOs have become un-chic ever since the BINGOs (Big NGOs) opened corporate headquarters to rival Xerox or IBM. And grassroots activism nowadays is meant only for Third World cows.

So a few of us down-but-not-out Southies have decided to keep the Third World flag flying by going commercial. We have incorporated "3-W", the new shopping destination for Third World knickknacks. Having tried and failed at imitating statism, bureaucratic centralism and the welfare state, we have adopted demand-side mercenary mercantilism. After all, liberalisation is the credo of the month in South Asia, according to Messrs Manmohan Singh, Mahesh Acharya and Om Bahadur Pradhan. The need of the hour is to cash in on the Third World before it loses all market recognition, or, alternatively, before someone else gets the idea.

So the next time you are in Kathmandu, ask the tempo to take you to Bhotahity. The third galli on the left, second doorway to the right, through the dank passageway and up the narrow wooden stairs. Welcome to 3-W, Store of Third World Trivia, registered, trade marked, and

with a license to operate from Balochistan to Nagaland.

Excuse me, kindly take off your shoes by the threshold to leave behind Kathmandu-specific detritus. But walking barefoot will expose you to dangerous Thumbtack Roaches that inhabit these inner gallis, so you'll have to buy these authentic Walangchung straw clogs in order to browse around our two floors of Third World Hardsell. Of course we accept major credit cards, what do you take us for, a tea stall on the trail?

Can I interest you in this sawed-off half-globe? The Northern Hemisphere has been thrunged out and sanded off to a fine finish. By simply eliminating the Northern Hemisphere, we have done away with the need to worry about the Most Favoured Nation status, import quotas, nasty multinationals, tourists who carry expensive cameras but ask stupid questions, trade imbalances, and *modern values* making inroads into serene Third World hamlets with high child mortality rates. Look at it another way. You will no longer have to fret about being refused a German visa, because Germany will not be there to give you a visa.

Henceforth, East, West and South are the three cardinal directions, and what used to be North is now empty space, a void. Our radical No North Concept (NNC) will be easier for you to explain by supplementing the half-globe with 3-W's New Third World Map, based on the Sembakuttiarachhi Projection. True, Australia and New Zealand remain with us in the South, but that is due to the vagaries of continental drift, and besides they can always serve as hostages.

(Sembakuttiarachhi was the Sinhalese Middle East labour contractor who expostulated that the Earth was flat on one side. It turned out he was right.)

And here's a four-colour New Third World Atlas, yet another offering from the 3-W stable of products. We took the standard National Geographic Atlas and ripped out all areas north of the 37th parallel. As no one has complained, we are convinced

that NNC is basically sound. A protest note and crude letter bomb did arrive from Ulanbataar, whose citizens understandably feel left out way up there in the north, but we were saved when the postman decided to take a peek.

This way please, to our T-shirt section, where assorted designs on soft cotton highlight the heritage and militancy of the southern latitudes. Third World First, says this one. Third World: We are Second to None, says that one over there. It will go well with this fashionable pair of Power To The People spectacles, which come with blinders at no extra cost. Power To The People serves the dual purpose of providing visual assistance to myopic Third World leaders, and keeping them from learning from their own and other people's mistakes, either on the right or left.

Over in this little room with computers and scanners, we make strategies for market expansion and product diversion. Mario here is a subversive economist from Huancayo and is looking into possibilities of marketing quinoa grain in northern Laos. U New, over there by the drawing board, is planning to miniaturise teak logs so they can be exported without pesky groups like Greenpeace blockading Mandalay. The egghead with dark glasses is Sotomomo, an Indonesian electronic engineer who is designing autopilot navigation for civilian airliners so that they never fly north of the 37th parallel.

And this is Lobsang Rumpus, our lama-in-residence who is developing the "3-W Peace and Harmony Facial Cream". With proper marketing, our cream will soon be used by the Maori and the Yanomami, the Zulu and the Limbu. It will succeed in spreading nirvana all over, like Pinatubo's dust, and will usher in disarmament in conventional weapons in the Southern Latitudes before the momos arrive.

Third World Globe



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