

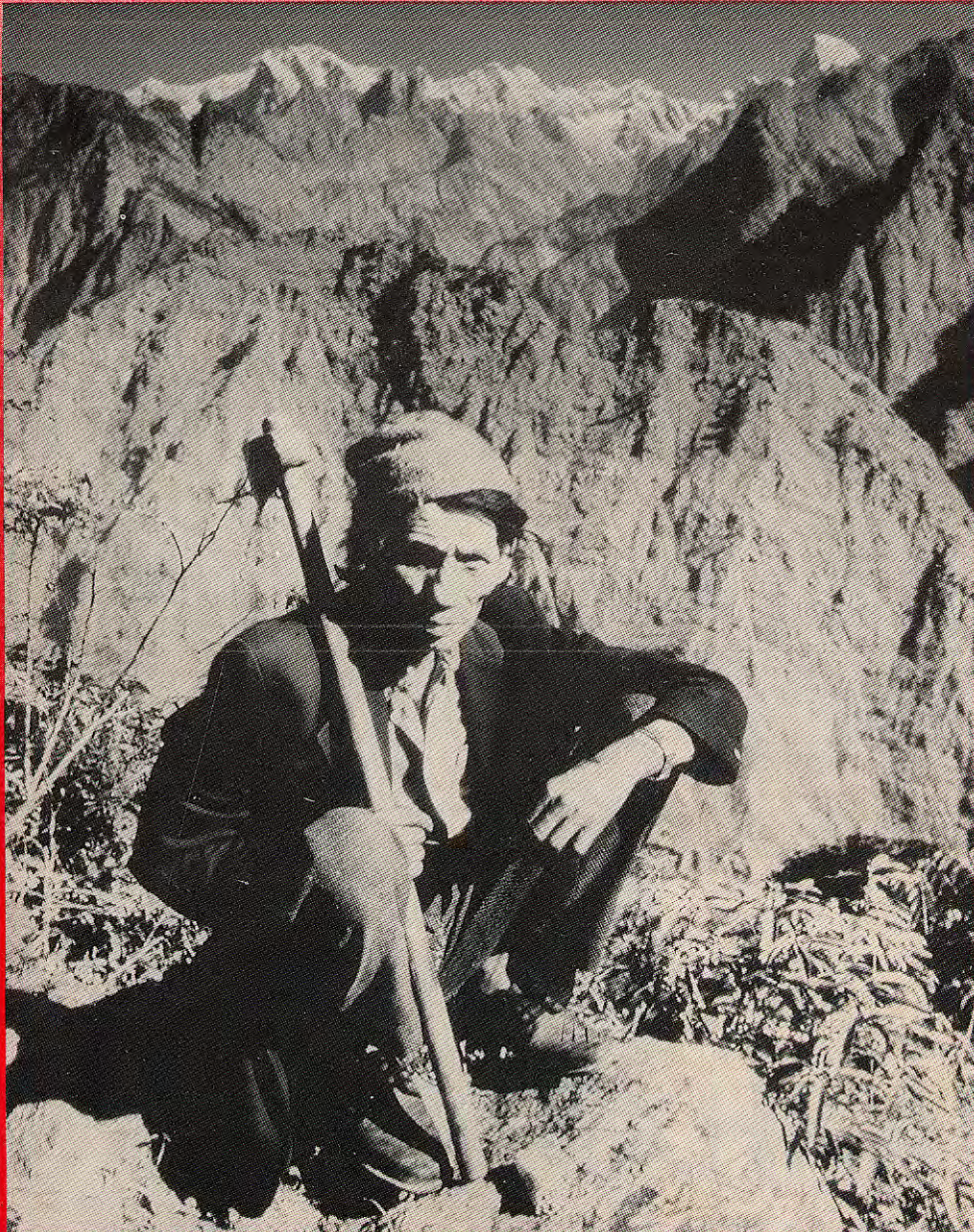
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Vol 7 No 1

HIMAL

HIMALAYAN MAGAZINE

axing chipko



Slave Wages in Trekking • No One's Indigenous Here



WWF World Wide Fund For Nature
(formerly World Wildlife Fund)
International Secretariat, 1196 Gland, Switzerland.

Outside the industrialised west, no-one has to be told to respect their elders. It's simply the way society is organised.

Which is why WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature tries to work with older people in the villages of the rainforests. With WWF's help, they learn to teach the younger members of their communities about conservation.

In Kafue Flats, Zambia, it's Chief Hamusonde (93).

Chief Bakary (78), is our man in Anjavimihavanana, northern Madagascar.

In Ban Klong Sai, Thailand, we invoke the Venerable Papisro Bhikkhu, seventy-three year old chief Buddhist monk.

This isn't just expediency, it's how WWF believes conservation projects should be run.

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"Uncle" Prom (68), another of our Thai community leaders, tells us that he frequently gets scolded when he starts telling people in the market that they should leave the forests alone. But he gets results.

Uncle Prom and his fellow villagers recently managed to prevent a new logging concession, and set up a community forest where tree felling is now forbidden.

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You only have to look around you to see that the world still has an awful lot to learn about conservation.



**HE'S JUST ABOUT OLD ENOUGH
FOR OUR TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMME.**

COVER

8 Axing Chipko

by Manisha Aryal

In Uttarakhand today, Chipko is spoken of in the past tense.

For all that it might have developed into, Chipko as a definable movement got wound up too quickly, its energies sapped by excessive adulation.

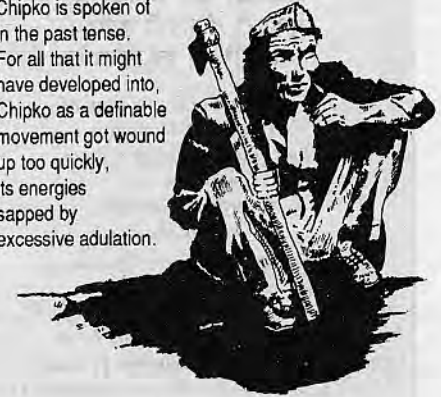


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A Garhwali in Joshimath, Uttarakhand

Picture by Bikas Rauniar, 1993.

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MAIL

Appreciate *sangeet-sadhana*

Himal is appreciated for devoting a whole issue on music (*An Ear for Music Nov/Dec 1993*). The interview of guru Krishna Narayan Shrestha was singularly good.

I hope *Himal* continues to search out people like Shrestha — people that have spent long years in *sangeet sadhana* — and lets them speak through its pages.

Sunita Subba

Dhobighat, Lalitpur

Let the Pope Not Come to Nepal

Edgar Metzler, responding to Saubhagya Shah's article "The Gospel Comes to the Hindu Kingdom" (*Mail, Nov/Dec 1993*) talks about human rights for individuals. His church may have lofty ideals, but the real world where we live sees racial fights, ethnic cleansing and religious battle every day.

The Himalayan people are, and have always been, deeply religious. One sees it in the mountains, the valleys, along the trails and in the streets. A place so rich in religious diversity, and the missionaries want the Nepalis, the Tibetans, the Lepchas, the Bhutanese and the Ladakhis to worship a God from Jerusalem and his bada-pujari from Rome?

I, my children, my parents and my grandparents live in one house in Nepal. We have neither social security cards, nor health insurance. And words like neurosis and psychosis are alien to us. We share our problems with our friends and relatives and our dhami, jhakri, bijuwa, lama, shasthri and amchis take care of our spiritual and medical needs. We are hospitable to foreigners and they turn around and say our Himalayan souls need to be saved?

Why should a Western missionary or a local converted Christian come to my village to save my soul? The only things

that are endangered in Nepal (and need to be saved) are the wild animals. My Nepali soul is not at all endangered and even if it is, why should I give it to the Vatican or the Protestant church to save?

Don't tell me my belief in gods and goddesses, rimpoches and bodhisattva is wrong! Don't tell me that the 33 million gods, goddesses and reincarnations that my parents, their parents, and their parents' parents have believed in do not exist. Don't tell me worshipping idols other than a cross leads to hell when so many Christians are fleeing the Churches in Germany and elsewhere! We have our Pashupatinath, our Padmasambhava and our Allah; I do not need the Pope from the Vatican.

Unlike Christians, we have never tried shoving our religion down other people's throats. And unlike in Christianity, we have decentralisation in our Gotterhimmel. The Panchayat government might have failed, but in spiritual world, decentralisation functions well. Hindu gods and goddesses accept other gods because every god has his or her own area of discipline. When I want riches, I pray to Laxmi; if I want strength, I pray to Hanuman.

Metzler says Christian compassion expresses the love of god. So does Hinduism's. And Buddhist Lamas go far to pray day and night not only for their own souls, but also for the whole of mankind. Take my mother, for example. She has, in her prayer room, statuettes of Hindu gods and goddesses along with pictures of Saibaba, Rajneesh, Dalai Lama, Kumari, Padmasambhava, Jesus and St. Michael. And of course, the Nepali King, who is considered incarnation of Vishnu, and the Queen. It seems very strange that Jesus does not like other gods near him when he cannot tackle every thing himself, either. If Christianity really preaches religious

अस्त्युत्तरस्यां दिशि देवतात्मा
हिमालयो नाम नगाधिराजः
पूर्वापरी तोयनिधी बगाह्य
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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tolerance why doesn't the Christian God tolerate other gods near him?

One day, when the western missionaries are gone, the poor, ill-informed and illiterate Nepalis, who have been lured by preachers out to establish a Bible belt in the Himalaya, will realise that discrimination does not end with religious conversion. One can only try to imagine their plight then, when they realise that they have lost their culture, their ethnic identity and their spiritual rituals.

I am glad that Nepal was a sequestered kingdom till recently with monarchy as the watch dog of religious protectionism. If the rajas and maharajas of Nepal had let the Western monks and missionaries do what they pleased, we wouldn't have had the splendid cultural and religious legacy in the form of paintings, temples, shrines and pagodas, today. If the Christian-culture had been allowed into the country, Kathmandu would have a Christian church tower taller than the Bhimsen Stamba, or a cathedral on Swayambhu Hill.

The executive director of the United Mission to Nepal talks about "the true followers of Jesus". Let me ask where the true followers of Jesus were when millions of Jews were exterminated in the Holocausts in Germany, Poland and elsewhere? If the Whites of Rhodesia and South Africa, who practised apartheid, were the true followers of Jesus? And the Serbs who raped the Croats? And the old Nazis? Were all of these true followers of Jesus? What about the Conquistadors and the Inquisitors and their atrocities? Didn't they, too, do it all in the name of Christ?

Basic human rights get abused when you try to impose your religion through persuasion to peace loving, friendly hillfolk by dangling carrots — the promise of scholarships, schools, dispensaries, mission hospitals, modern infrastructure, shattered marriages (look at the divorce rates in Europe and the US), including the worst sort of pollution, the pollution of the mind.

Collecting dollars in the name of religion by using pictures of Third World children and women in tattered cloths has become a big business in the Western world. These are pasted on Litfass pillars, banks and other strategic places. But, according to an article in *Der Spiegel*, not even half of what

organisations like the Caritas, Missio and others collect is actually transferred to accounts abroad. Most of the money remains in Europe to cover high administrative costs. All this and Edgar Metzler says "...to suggest that social service is only a means to convert, is a distortion of the example of Jesus and the teaching of the Bible".

Social service without any strings attached would indeed be wonderful. But when foreign countries give aid to a poor country like Nepal, it is always with strings attached and the Catholic and Protestant missions are not any different. The force behind all this altruistic piety is the Vatican or the Church.

I have served in the army in Hong Kong, Singapore, Brunei and United Kingdom. Now, the more I live in Europe, the more I am convinced that Christians are only skin-deep. The white race feels superior to the brown and black races. I see racism in Europe in everyday life and open hatred and intolerance towards people of other skin-colours, cultures and religions. Look at the recent mushrooming of video-parlours and the imitators of Rambo and his aggressive creed, gang-rapes, bone smashing horror, sadism, sex and drugs. All this garbage is an import from the Western world, where people compensate their lack of ethics, morality and love with consumer goods and money.

I'd rather that the Pope did not come to Nepal and kissed the Nepali soil at Tribhuvan International Airport.

*Susil Tamang
Rheinfelden, Germany*

Glory to God

What the tone, the negative nuances and misleading assumptions Saubhagya Shah's article suggested, is not a reflection of missionary reality.

I have worked in Nepal for ten years now — eight years in United Mission to Nepal and two years in King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (with Annapurna Conservation Area Project) — and I can honestly say that I neither came here to convert multitudes, nor to make money or a career. I came to Nepal to serve the people, which, I believe, brings glory to God.



I stand for the truth and feel free to share from my experience of it as I try to expose lies, evil or darkness — whether in myself, others, or society. That this might lead others to change their worldview, or adopt another religion, is just as much their responsibility as mine. This, for me, is meaningful exchange.

Looking back, what I learned in the past ten years here have changed my life and I, too, may have influenced others in changing theirs.

*Ben van Wijhe
Pokhara*

Proselytisers

I enjoyed Saubhagya Shah's article on missionaries. Here is some additional information that I thought your readers should know.

An organisation called the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) has been working in Nepal for a long time now, and their parent body, the Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT), has its office in Sanepa, Kathmandu. In 1993, WBT published two reports: about their missionary and Bible translating work in "the foothills of the Himalaya". As expected, "Nepal" was not mentioned anywhere in the document.

The WBT has been working in Nepal among the Sunwar and the Jirel since 1967. They were kicked out in 1976, only to return two years later on tourist visa. On 13 December 1992, they introduced the New Testament in Sunwar language in the "capital"; they did not write "Kathmandu". A Swiss woman and a German woman were in charge. The document does not give a clue as to which villages they live and work in.

Just recently, a report on Jirels and the New Testament that is ready for them came out. Again, this document mentions only Jiri (not Nepal). Two other women, also a Swiss and a German, have been living here since 1970; they too had to leave Nepal in 1976.

Indians in Latin America protested against them frequently. The cultural and religious imperialism of SIL/WBT there is well documented. They were expelled from several countries.

*G. Hansel
Dusseldorf*

False Prophets

Two issues of reading *Himal* (Sept/Oct 1993 and Nov/Dec 1993) and it inspired me

to get into the teachings of the Christ.

In Bible, the book of the books, I came across, *Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things, which you hear, and have not heard them* [St. Luke 10/23-24].

It felt like I was reading a revised version of the Bhagwat Gita. For isn't this what Lord Krishna, revealing His *Biswarup* to Arjun, says before the Mahabharata War?

Ye love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil [Luke 6/35], reminded me of the Karma Yoga of Gita.

Further, *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleaned, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them* [St. Matthew 11 - 15]. Didn't Ram and Krishna do the same long before Western civilization was born?

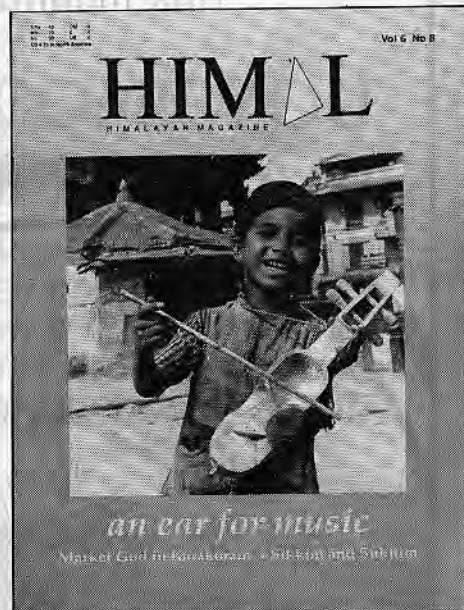
All things are made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made [St. John 1/3]. Hindu and Buddhists believe that "God is everything and everything is God" which is reflected in practice in everyday life.

Amazing similarities, but I got frustrated when I read, *Jesus came and said to them All Authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...* [St. Matthew 18/20]. Not recognising similarities in a religion leads to destruction, in the same way that the soil gets destroyed when a foreign sapling is planted.

"Authority" and "Command" is what attracted people away from Hinduism towards Buddhism as a religion based "on earth peace, and good will towards men". Emperor Asoka practised this to maintain his huge empire without any bloodshed or malice among nations after witnessing the horrors of the Kalinga war.

Christianity does not seem to have learned the "live and let others live" philosophy of the Buddhist cult. And they do not seem to have learned their lesson from Hinduism's mistakes.

Expressions of Matthew [Chapter 23] like, *hypocrites, fools and ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a came,*



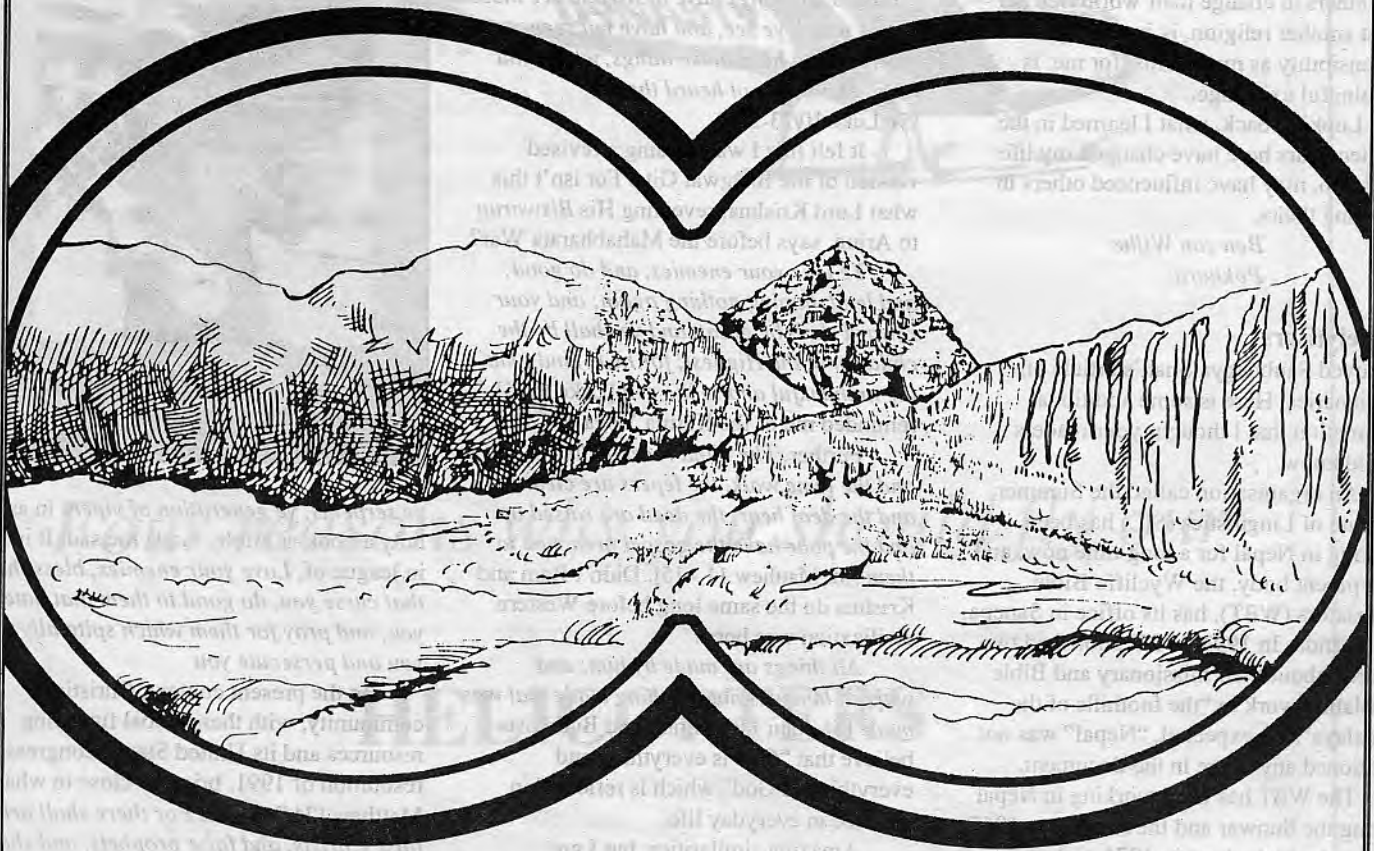
ye serpents, ye generation of vipers in as holy a book as Bible, made me sad. It is not in league of, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you and persecute you

In the present context, Christian community, with their global financing resources and its United States Congress resolution of 1991, bring us close to what Matthew [24/24] said, *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders: insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.* Lord Vishnu, according to Hinduism, is believed to have walked the earth many times in human form, in the history of this world. Hindus, therefore, do not have problems with "incarnations" and most of them could easily have accepted Christ as an incarnation of Vishnu. But how can a son of a god also be his incarnation? That cannot be; he can only be a sort of an "Acting God".

Each religion is a revelation of God, given in a particular cultural, and geographic context; we have to learn to go beyond the words. When Christianity started, Christ's preachings were relevant to the geography, history and culture of West Asia, whereas in South Asia, Buddhism was already 600 years old, and today all roads physically "lead to Rome".

Christ, at one time, had said, *"Think not that I come to destroy the law or the prophets; I come not to destroy but to fulfil"* [Matthew 5/17]. Mixing religion with

This mountain* is not going to come to you ...
You have to go to it !



So, we will take you there. And make it a thoroughly
enjoyable experience too !

* Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest), the world's most famous and highest mountain altitude 8848 m.
Trekks can go up to the base camp. Fly to the nearest airstrip in Lukla. Trek 15 days. Other
famous peaks in the neighbourhood -- Lhotse (8516m.), Makalu (8463m.), Cho oyu (8201m.),
Gyachungkang (7952m.), Nuptse (7855m.), Pumori (7161m.), Amadablam (6812m.)



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development and politics will disturb the peace and tranquillity of any country. Are the various Christian communities in Nepal following the teachings of the God that they have come to tell Nepalis about?

Christ also said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" [St. Matthew 12-25]. Simply stated, division brings weakness. The Malla Kings of the Valley might not have seen this but Prithvi Narayan Shah saw the risk of Christian colonisation. Why shouldn't he when, to the south of his Hindu Kingdom, the Christian Europeans had already started to arrive as traders?

If the Christians in Nepal (both expatriates and local) want to serve the country and its poor as per the teachings of the gospel, they should do so by sticking to *as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also so to them like wise* [Luke 6:31].

Huta Ram Baidya
Tripureswor, Kathmandu

Stagnancy and Conversion

I would like to supplement the responses to Shah's article (*Mail*, Nov/Dec 1993) by providing my insights into the issue. I do this, not with any sense of superiority but as an insider.

Having suffered trauma and depression for nine years in the hands of devout Hindus, I sought solace in another religion. Some South Indian Protestant Christians advised me that I put myself totally at God's mercy and accept the salvation offered by Him (through His death on the cross). No one told me of Jesus as the saviour; I read about Him. There was no question of being coaxed with monetary benefits; my family was moderately well-off. I have been a convert since 1972 and conversion did not

mean a step-up to a luxury. Christianity, led to expulsion from home, to imprisonment, and family tragedy.

While I cannot deny that some have converted to Christianity to gain materially, "conversions" of people like the senior bureaucrat's son Shah mentions, are exceptions. If one sees Nepali Christians against the backdrop of the situation in Nepal during the Panchayat era, the prejudices against them in the Nepali society, a year long prison sentence the *Muluki Ain* prescribed for the convert and six years for the agent, etc, statements that conversions are results of incentives like free medical treatment, scholarships, employment, or even a change of clothing or a meal become grossly unjustified. Real life stories of people like Bir Bahadur Rai of Okhaldhunga, who was tortured to death by the police because of his belief, are stories of courage. The dangling "carrot" that Shah talks about can keep someone on it only till it lasts. The moment hardship strikes, such a convert bolts.

Nepali history books, in glowing terms, talk of the expulsion of the "Capuchins along with 57 converts" in 1769 by Prithvi Narayan Shah, the father of the modern Nepali Nation. Whether the Italian priests really invited the English to intervene on behalf of the Malla Kings is, as Shah states, mere suspicion. There is evidence that the Capuchins helped negotiate peace between warring towns of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur and gave free treatment to all who sought it. The Malla Kings of Bhaktapur and Kathmandu gave the priests a decree of liberty of conscience, which included the freedom to preach and practise one's religion.

By expelling the Capuchins, Prithvi Narayan drove out more than he realised — scientific medical care, education, a challenge to the caste system which has

hindered development till now, and new ideas so vital for progress; he proved himself less progressive than the Malla Kings. (This aspect of Prithvi Narayan's rule, from a developmental perspective, has never been analysed by historians.)

Roughly 180 years later, when different missionaries were allowed to enter the country, it was with the understanding that they would work within the confines of the preventive clause Shaha talks about. Since different governments put in similar prohibitions, it is very clear that the authorities knew what was to be expected of a missionary — that in addition to rendering other services, his mission would also be to preach the gospel. The missionaries' fundamental human right was denied when a ban was imposed on his religious activities.

After the 1950's, the missionaries who were in development work did so with the reasoning that Jesus did not only preach, he also healed. By being involved in social work, (mission hospitals and schools), and in the political conditions existing in Nepal, missionaries complemented the Nepali church, which does not have the wealth to support such large-scale social work.

The missions, over the years, developed protocols which would satisfy both the Government and the church. They could worship with the Nepali church but not interfere in its affairs. Missionaries went in when invited, but did not take up leadership roles.

Being both a missionary and a development worker, it has but been natural that a missionary, when in his/her home country give emphasis to missionary work and when in Nepal to development projects. No harm is intended, as the beneficiaries are the people of Nepal, but the policy has resulted in duplicity and 'confidentiality'.

By deliberately avoiding interference in church affairs, however, the missions did

They Don't Know Their Himals

Himal has been forced (we hope temporarily) to discontinue its 'Know Your Himal' column because our very capable columnists have all gone on to pursue ever-higher studies in the United States. It seems, though, that 1994 is no better than 1860 when it comes to knowing himals. We present here an excerpt from a letter dated 12 January 1860 by G. Ramsey, British Resident in Kathmandu, to H.L. Thuillier, Deputy Surveyor General of India in Calcutta regarding the latter's request for the names of peaks and other geographical locations in Nepal.

... In fact, these people are quite impracticable, and I have found it so impossible to obtain from them any satisfactory information regarding (or even names of) localities which are *actually in sight*, including

conspicuous snow peaks and ranges seen from the Residency, that it is quite hopeless to expect them to give a correct account of other spots which may be at a distance and hidden by intervening mountains.

Nepali churches a lot of good — the Nepali congregations were prevented from being dependent on foreign money or influence. The church contextualised the Gospel in its own way and any visitor to a worship session on Saturday (not Sunday as in most other parts of the world) cannot but be touched by people sitting on the floor, singing Nepali hymns based on folk tunes, and using indigenous liturgies.

Intercaste marriages are the rule rather than exceptions with the Nepali Christians — Devkota and Shrestha, Wayiba and Thapa, Jirel and Ghale, Neupane and Rai and they are usually conducted with the bridegroom wearing labeda suruwal and topi the bride in red or green sari. Shah's interviewees were probably the wrong people, if he believes otherwise.

Contextualisation gets deeper as one goes out of Kathmandu to remote churches. Many congregations have farmers or office workers as their pastors and makeshift thatch huts for worship 'halls'. In short, if the missions had to pack up and leave, the Nepali church would still continue.

Contrary to Shah's conclusion about the "link" between the missions and the Nepali church, there is "separation" between them. It is perhaps deeper than both sides ever imagined or wished it to be — this was over the issue of persecution during the Panchayat regime. As one Nepali Christian after another was being dragged into prisons or courts, missions were adopting policies of "low profile". As one Nepali Christian leader after another went all out and pleaded with the American Senate, the British Parliament, or the Amnesty International, the non-Nepali missions chose to remain quiet. The fear of expulsion was so big that except for some expatriates who remained behind bars with Nepali believers, and some others who dared visit Nepali Christians in prisons, their "identification with the suffering brethren" was limited to prayer.

Nepali church leaders have started asking why, after so many years of 'low profile' the missions, now that the political setting is more democratic, want to adopt high profile. Even while acknowledging the fact that different Western churches and Christian organisations have aided the Nepali church (mainly in areas of theological education), the church feels proud that it survived without the latter's help.

Shah's call to the missions to lay all the cards on the table should be taken

seriously by the Nepali Government which, by now, should have realised that for the missionary and the Nepali Christian, social and spiritual work go hand in hand. For, as Shah says, it was Matthew 18:20 as the "single most powerful ideological injunction" which "gives Christianity its essential missionary character."

Should material assistance a missionary brings along with him be sought and his basic human rights — his right to talk about his religion be denied? (Why do we seek conversion so zealously in other areas of life and shun it when it comes to religion? Education "converts", and progress implies conversion to a better state. Why this wish for stagnancy only in religion?) Should an institution like caste, which even the country's constitution condemns, be maintained at all costs? Are the missions really dismantling 'the religion and rituals of Nepal's multicultural population' when most of the conversions have taken place through the agency of the Nepali church? Besides, as Shah asks, "Is Hinduism so weak that it has to be protected from de facto secularism with a Hindu Kingdom armour?"

No religion should be given such an armour. And I can only emphasize Metzler's opinion and share Shah's scepticism regarding *Kanchan's* bold editorial: Whether Nepal will go through a metamorphosis within ten years should Christianity be welcomed is a moot question. Salvation, according to the Bible, is for sinners like me. When it come to others in this country, it could well be "through the holy gospel and the development mantra" — for the two are inseparable aspects of the Christian witness.

Ramesh Khatri
Nepal Bible Ashram,
Kathmandu

Threat, Not from Within

When the total Nepali identity is under threat, it was disturbing to see Gopal Gurung's letter (*Mail*, Sept/Oct 1993) on Mongol identity.

However, P. Timilsina's reaction to Gurung's vicious targeting of the Nepali ethnic groups (*Mail*, Nov/Dec 1993), was extremely thoughtful. As Timilsina says, the threat to us Nepalis, irrespective of ethnicity, in matters of culture, tradition, identity and right is not from within.

If we do not come together now, we

may soon become minorities and be classified in our own country as "Native Nepalis" like the "Native Americans" in the Americas.

N. Acharya
Dillibazar, Kathmandu

Mahabharata Heroes

In "Who Cares for Humla" (Sep/Oct 1993), Tsewang Lama places Rais within Tibeto-Burman group of language and people. This is wrong.

The Kirants are the indigenous people and the heroes of the Mahabharata war. This generation of linguists have to try to establish Kiranti as separate language.

Sagar Chandra Rai
General Secretary
Kirant Rai Association,
Kathmandu

The Anti-Drowning Sherpa

Have you, with "The Anti-Mosquito Gurkha", on a new brand of bug repellent, (*Briefs*, Sept/Oct 1993), started a series on products with strange names?

If you have, this is my contribution,



The Anti-Drowning Sherpa — a life-jacket I saw near Tuxtla Gutierrez in Mexico.

Christoph Ruhland
Hagelberger, Berlin.

Readers are invited to comment, criticise or add to information and opinions appearing in *Himal*. Letters should be to the point and may be edited. Letters which are unsigned and/or without addresses will not be entertained. Please include daytime contact telephone number, if available.

Follow-up

Comrade Gonzalo, Are You Still With Us?

Himal carried the article "The Paradoxical Support of Nepal's Left for Comrade Gonzalo" by **Stephen L. Mikesell** in its **March/April 1993** issue. In late November, the international press reported that Abimael Guzman (Comrade Gonzalo) had exchanged his bushy beard for a trim moustache, and had apparently shed his ideology as well. While the rebels accuse the government of torturing and drugging Guzman, other Peruvians think that the spirit of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) Maoist guerrilla movement's leader has been truly broken. Given the relevance of Guzman for many in Nepal's Left, *Himal* asked research scholar Mikesell to provide a follow-up commentary.

THE *New York Times* reports that, from jail, Comrade Gonzalo is calling for the Shining Path "guerrillas to suspend the war, and to the government to start peace talks". Elements of the US Left in New York City say that these were the words of a man desperate to get out. Committee members of the Shining Path say it is "a dirty trick by the government". The Peruvian authorities admit to having isolated Gonzalo and of providing him only with selected information that showed that the Shining Path was being destroyed. In return for each of his conciliatory statements, the Government is gradually improving his prison conditions.

The Shining Path movement has big problems: mass desertion by cadres, loss of its means and resources, and, with eighty percent of its leaders dead or jailed, a leadership crisis which threatens to divide the party. As for Peruvian society, the *Times* reports that "...the fear has been lifted from this country, which has endured 27,000 deaths and US\$ 24 billion in damage from the revolution... peasants are cautiously returning to abandoned villages. In the rich farming region north of Lima, farmers and ranchers are restoring estates long considered lost in 'red zones'. And a new generation of young middle class Limenos is discovering the sidewalk cafe".

The newspaper fails to mention that the great bulk of the deaths were of peasants and Indians indiscriminately killed at the hands of the Government in a continuing war of genocide against them. While peasants may be returning to villages, it is because they had fled after being caught in the middle of a war that made a bad situation intolerable. The war against the Shining Path was being used by the government to destroy all popular alternatives, not only to the government's programme (which is basically collaboration with and capitulation to international financial interests), but to the Shining Path's revolutionary programme. Any popular initiative and any peasant village not organised into guerrilla columns was left exposed to the full force not only of the government, but of the Shining Path's zealous retribution for "collaboration".

While the great bulk of the Left in Peru and elsewhere was disenchanted with the Shining Path's sectarianism and killing of its leaders, this does not mean that the government's suppression of the Shining Path is the Left's victory. The restoration of estates to landowners in a system that was known only for extreme exploitation (both of people and the environment) now leaves peasants more exposed than even before. This is a hollow victory. And this "young middle class" which is rediscovering the coffee shops in a peasant society is similar to the fifth column that is being created in every developing country of the world, including Nepal, by international banks and agencies to expand the programmes of multinational corporations, to twist the local institutions, and to milk the indigenous peoples, their lands and resources.

If Gonzalo's capitulation signifies anything hopeful, it is the possibility that human struggle against oppression may be freed of the legacy of Lenin's programme of centralised party control over struggle, of his "revolution in one country", and an obedience to doctrinaire interpretations of Mao by his epigones. There is a need to recognise the international character of capital, as Marx did, and that national struggles, from a global perspective, can easily be isolated and destroyed — more so in victory than in defeat. There is a need to recognise that strategy of struggle must begin with the situation that people find themselves within, not with ideology.

Approaches such as that of the Shining Path had efficacy when class struggle could still be framed in terms of national struggle. Theoretically and practically, they denied the inexorably global character of capitalism and the need for a truly international and non-sectarian approach to revolution. A centralised party meant that in the face of failure, revolutionary objectives were diluted with reformist ones by a leadership that subordinated the needs of the working class to their own personal survival, while victory meant the establishment of new ruling classes, often as intolerable as the old.



Gonzalo's capitulation hopefully reflects a new wind blowing among the Left of Latin America, as was expressed in a declaration coming from a conference in Nicaragua last year. This evolving view recognises the legitimacy and necessity of many alternatives to itself. Rather, the Left must work side by side with them, each coordinating and allying with the others, but also each maintaining its independence.

Comrade Gonzalo's transformation should have lessons for Nepal. It would be dangerous to assume that because he was defeated, the "other side" won. Gonzalo was fighting what up to now has been called 'development' — development in Nepal that makes a few people rich at the expense of 18 million peasants; ravishing the environment; the unforgivable sacrifice of 200,000 women to Bombay and Calcutta; and accepting the continuing bondage of nine million others; building an international debt that turns our people into international bonded labourers and our statesmen into international beggars; and the sellout of people and resources to a progressively corporate control of the world.

The question is how to make a movement for change that in the true spirit of Marx and countless true prophets and revolutionaries, starts with people, not ideology — be it Mao's Thought or Market Theory, a movement that encourages and builds upon a wealth of alternatives emerging from the people, one that recognises and confronts the international character of capital and of the state by building an international community of peoples rather than dividing them so tragically. And finally, one that disposes of Lenin's centralised, dictatorial model of a party — and likewise the bureaucratic, expert-financed, finance-dominated and command-oriented practice of 'development' — and makes democracy both the means and the goal. By democracy, I mean in substance, not this plutocratic sleight of hand of representative democracy: collectively based on strong grassroots organisations and with the focus of decision-making and accountability at the bottom, not the top.

Axing Chipko

Chipko is not a movement, it 'was' one. Its energies sapped by excessive adulation, the movement wound up too quickly. For a while, though, Chipko came tantalisingly close to providing for a corner of South Asia, socio-economic development through a paradigm that was self-developed.

by Manisha Aryal

Uttarkashi woman

MANISHA ARYAL

The world knows it as the Chipko movement — the most successful environmental mass action of the South, in which simple hill villagers fought big business. There was feminist romance in mountain women hugging trees to save them from the plainsman's axe, daring him, "chop me before you chop my tree." The Leftist nirvana of idealistic little-folk fighting rapacious capital also seemed to have been attained, as did the Gandhian's vision of non-violence, self sufficiency and khadi. The overall package was good enough to bring awards to the leaders on the Chipko front, grist for academic papers and books, and raw stock for journalists from far and wide.

Yet, the movement was much more than what has been written about it, and also much less. For a while, from early to the late 1970s, Chipko brought unprecedented energy and direction to Uttarakhand — the Kumaun and Garhwal poor-cousin hill districts of Uttar Pradesh state. Hill peasants saw possibilities of cooperative action, uniting against timber merchants and political bosses, and exploring the employment potentials in the hills. Certainly, Chipko was more than an absolutist environmental wave that was only concerned with trees.

However, the strengths of the movement were exaggerated, while at the same time its facets were watered down for easy consumption in South Asia, Europe and North America. Complex relationships in the *mouffisil* were presented by writers only as heroic stand-offs between good village men/women and big, bad business/government. Soon after Chipko got name recognition, scholars and journalists ascended Uttarakhand — a convenient bus ride away from Delhi — and helped some Chipko leaders define their message and their image.

Historically, more than other parts of the Himalaya, the Uttarakhand hills have been oriented towards village-based activism. The villages of Kumaun and Garhwal have been resource-poor, but rich in savants and sages, and have provided leadership for India at the national level. On the flip side, however, Uttarakhand continues to export menial labour to the Indian plains. Unlike the economy of neighbouring Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand's economy remains a lowly extension of the plains. Totalling just eight districts of Uttar Pradesh's 62 districts, there is also little political incentive for the state and central politicians and bureaucrats to try and appease the hill men and women, however demanding they may be.

For all that it might have developed into,

Chipko as a definable movement got wound up too quickly, its energies sapped by excessive adulation. While study of the movement has become de rigueur in universities in India and abroad, within Uttarakhand itself Chipko is spoken of in the past tense. Before it collapsed into itself, Chipko came tantalisingly close to providing, for a corner of South Asia at least, socio-economic development through a paradigm that was self-developed.

One reason that Chipko disappeared quickly might have been because it was so diffuse, meaning different things to different constituencies. Some of the lost momentum is obviously due to the egos of the key personalities, inflated to bursting point and made super-sensitive by reporters, academics and urban environmentalists. No movement can sustain its spirit at the level of internecine anger and jealousy that has been present in Nainital, Almora, Chamoli, Tehri, Uttarkashi, Dehradun and Delhi.

Learn from Chipko

For whatever it was and was not, Chipko did provide a momentum and legitimacy to environmental and social activism for all of India. The real and perceived heroics of the hill people of Uttarakhand provided energy to others. While the conditions specific to Uttarakhand hills, obviously, are not to be repeated elsewhere, it finds a certain kind of revival in the Appiko movement in Western Ghats, the Narmada Bachao Andolan of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, and in the Chilka lake in Orissa.

Chipko has, however, singularly failed to provide a catalytic charge in other parts of the Himalaya. The forest dwellers of the Indian Northeast, the much coddled state of Sikkim, resource rich Himachal, violence prone

Darjeeling district and war torn Kashmir, all have distinct cultural, historical, economic and political underpinnings that have given rise to different brands of protest. None, however, has been able to nurture a Chipko-like grassroots effort.

Perhaps it is in the adjacent hills of Nepal, east of Uttarakhand — where grassroots activism is most remarkable for its absence — that Chipko's legacy can be best applied.

Centuries of Rana autocracy having dovetailed into three decades of an unrepresentative Panchayat regime, Nepali society's potential for grassroots activism was never tried in the modern era. With democracy's arrival in 1990, the country immediately got embroiled in party politics all the way to the rural level. The last three years have seen the attention and energy of village based leaders diverted and sapped by the demands of the party political machines. Rural Nepal, which contains the largest chunk of the populated and destitute midhills of the Himalayan region, has still to learn to look away from donor organisations, international agencies, government bureaucracy and political parties, and into ways of developing from within. And Chipko, certainly, has some lessons.

The Defining Moment

To understand Chipko, its success and swift debilitation, one must look back to how and where it began and the personalities who were involved.

Forest-based activism was not something that suddenly sprang up in the hills in the early 1970s. As early as 1906, when the Chandribadni forest near the town of Tehri was being surveyed to bring it under the Reserved Forest category, there had been an angry backlash in the villages. In 1930,



The hills were just a bus ride away

BIGAS RAUNIA

Forest Policies and the Seeds of Discord

Uttarakhand has had a long involvement with forest protests, whose latest incarnation was Chipko. Villagers have been reacting primarily to policies of the State, either the hill durbar, the Lucknow authorities, or the government in New Delhi. The following description of forest policies in Kumaun and Garhwal is culled from social historian Ramchandra Guha's book Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya (Oxford University Press, 1989).

To accommodate the demand for strong timber with which to build the Indian railway network, in 1864, the colonial Government set up a Forest Department. In its wake came the Forest Act of 1865, which asserted the State's monopoly over forests. A comprehensive all-India act was drafted 13 years later, under which forests were divided into two categories: Reserved, to enable timber production, and Protected, where the villagers could exercise their haque-haquoos.

Tehri Garhwal: Commercial exploitation of the forests in Tehri Garhwal started in the 1850s, when an Englishman got a lease for IRs400 per annum and began felling deodar trees and floating them downriver. Fifteen years later, the North Western Provinces government negotiated a lease of all the forests for IRs10,000 per annum. According to an 1888 report, from 1869 to 1885, the Yamuna woods exported 6.5 million railway sleepers. As the State exploited the woodlands for commerce, the villagers' access to the forest declined.

The leased forests reverted back to the control of the Tehri Durbar in 1925. During the first three years of World War II, over 1.5 million cubic feet of timber was exported for use in the front (over 20,000 trees were exported annually from the Tons Valley alone) and over time forests became the largest (single) item of revenue for the Durbar. Extensive rules were made, wherein the villagers had to ask for permission even to pluck oak leaves.

Kumaun: The management of Kumaun forests, on the other hand, began with the setting out, in the early 1800s, of the village rights of grazing, cutting trees for timber and collecting firewood; this was welcomed by villagers who saw the rules as a method of addressing the inter-village feuds. Small blocks of Reserved forest to supply fuelwood and timber to Nainital and Almora administrative centres and Ranikhet Cantonment were to be set up with sal woodlands used to meet government demand. A detailed survey of hill forests, and site selection for sawmills and roads were commissioned. On 17 October 1893, it was declared that all unmeasured land in Kumaun Division was District Protected Forest (DPF) and placed under control of the District Commissioner. In 1903, the Kumaun DPFs were divided into two classes: Closed and Open Civil forests; the villagers could exercise their rights only in Open forests while the Closed forest was considered important for regeneration.

In 1911, there was another settlement of forest and extensive reserves were carved out of the DPFs with 7500 sq km of forest in Kumaun declared Reserved. The practice of burning the forest floor for fresh crop of grass was banned within a one mile radius of the Reserved forest, and an elaborate system was invented for exercising the villagers' haque-haquoos. For example, the number of cattle a family could graze and the amount of firewood and timber that a villager could collect was specified. With substantial areas being taken away from their control and handed over to the Forest Department, the villagers felt their rights were being unfairly encroached. While the increase in size and the strength of the forest bureaucracy led to better control on lopping and grazing, it also

meant that the demand for *begar* (forced labour) was increased.

In 1921, the Kumaon Forest Grievances Committee to look into the grievance of the hill people. It recommended that control of forest revert back to the District Magistrate, with the condition that protected trees could not be felled without permission and forest produce would only be used for domestic purposes. Another recommendation was that the villagers be given free hand on the Revenue Department forests. With no monitoring, massive deforestation occurred in the mid-1920s in the Civil forests. When this was realised, the lands were transferred to Van Panchayats.

A few years of commercially working the Kumaun forests, and the monetary yield outdid the state's expectations. Between 1910 and 1920, the number of resin channels rose from 260,000 to 2.1 million. With the capacity of 64,000 cwt of resin and 240,000 gallons of turpentine, production was far exceeding the Indian demand and export possibilities to United Kingdom and South East Asia was explored. Three large resin processing centres were established in Tanakpur, Hardwar and Kathgodown where the Sarda, Ganga and Gaula rivers entered the plains. Five thousand chir pines were felled annually and for the Forest Department its wartime activities was justification enough for the state control of the commons.

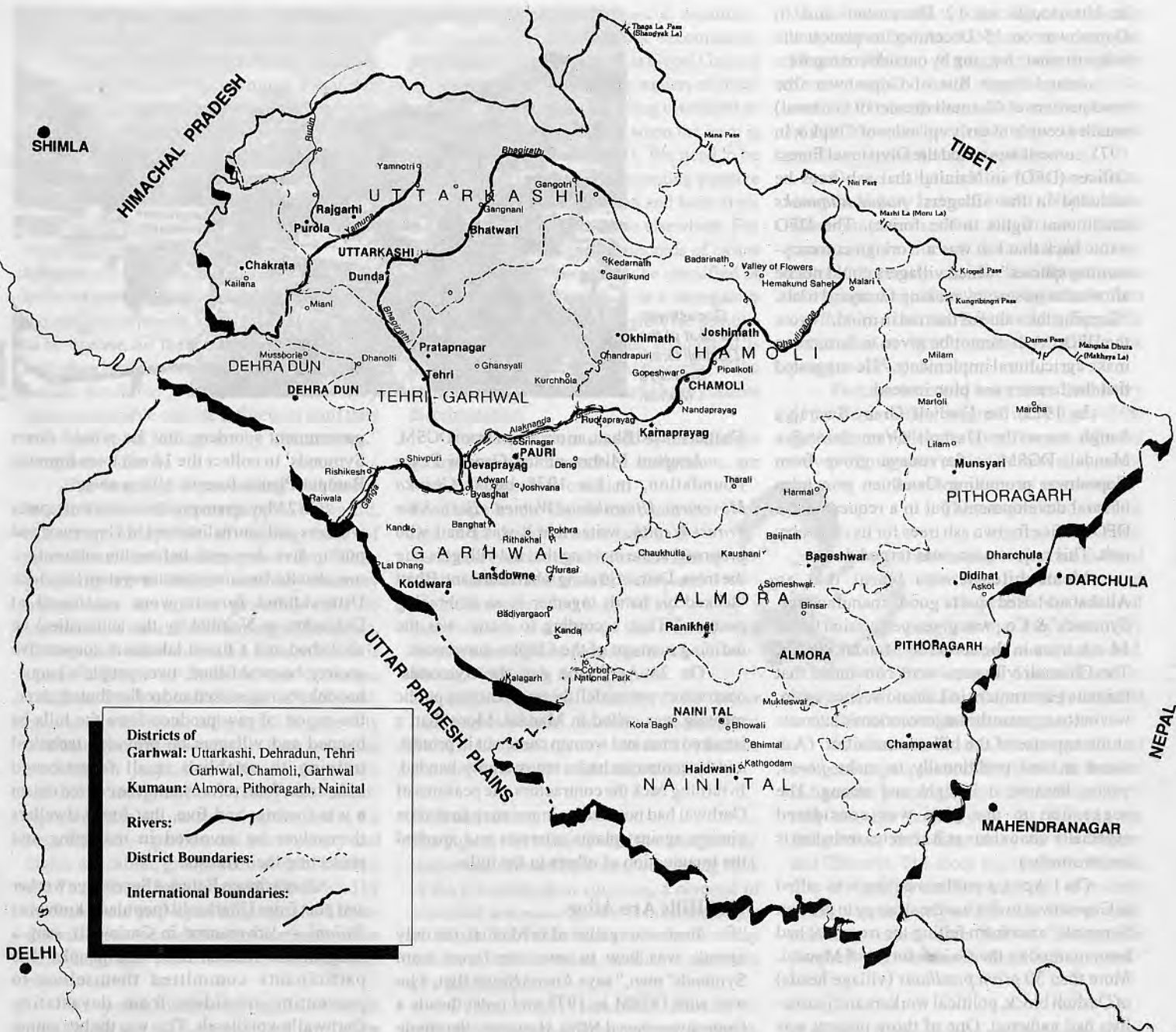
As early as 1916, J.C. Nelson, the Forest Settlement Officer, in Gharwal District's Forest Settlement Report, wrote that for the villagers, forest management meant that "...the government was taking away their forest from them and robbing them of their own property."

Nelson wrote, "The notion seems to have grown up from the complete lack of restriction or control over the use by the people of waste land and forest during the first 80 years after the British occupation. The oldest inhabitant therefore, and he naturally is regarded as the greatest authority, is the most assured of the antiquity of the people's right to uncontrolled use of the forest; and to a rural community, there appears no difference between uncontrolled use and proprietary right. Subsequent regulations — and these regulations are all very recent — appear to them as gradual encroachment on their rights, culminating now in a final act of confiscation... (My) best efforts however have, I fear, failed to get the people generally to grasp the change in conditions or to believe in the historical fact of government ownership."

The history of forest protests in Uttarakhand, thus, notes Guha, started with the state believing it necessary to usurp a previously non-existent 'right' of the Government to forest and wasteland. The Government believed that the forest belonged to *them* and the hill villagers regarded all forests within village boundaries as village property. This started a conflict of interests which was to become the legacy of Uttar Pradesh hills."

"And Chipko," adds Guha, "was but the latest in a series of movements against the State's encroachment on their rights, its long standing denial of their moral and historical claims on the produce of the forest."





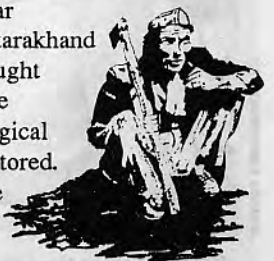
villagers in Tiladi protested the encroachment of their rights to the forest, contrasting it to the extravagant spending of the Tehri durbar. Seventeen died in a police firing, while many more drowned in the Yamuna while trying to flee. This incident, which came to be known as the *Tiladi kand*, has had an important resonance for forest movements in the years to come.

A reading of the literature and clippings of the newspapers of Rudraprayag, Karnaprayag and Dehradun indicates that the stage was being set for Chipko in the mid-1960s. The obvious degradation of the

environment was also playing its part in developing awareness. Increasing frequency of landslides, drying up of water sources and other trends were alerting the villagers to the fact that forests were not an unlimited resource. All over Uttarakhand, in gatherings large and small, the reference point of the growing movement came to be trees. The fact that outside forces — plains-based contractors, business and bureaucracy — were razing their forests provided the seed of anger in students, political workers and village elders. By the late 1960s, the villagers had started to organise

themselves and to insistently question the state government's policies.

The Alaknanda topped its banks in a 1970 flash flood that devastated fields and property far downstream. The Uttarakhand inhabitants were brought head-to-head with the realisation that ecological balance had to be restored. Demonstrations were held in Purola on 11 December 1972,



in Uttarkashi on 12 December and in Gopeshwar on 15 December to protest the indiscriminate logging by outside contractors.

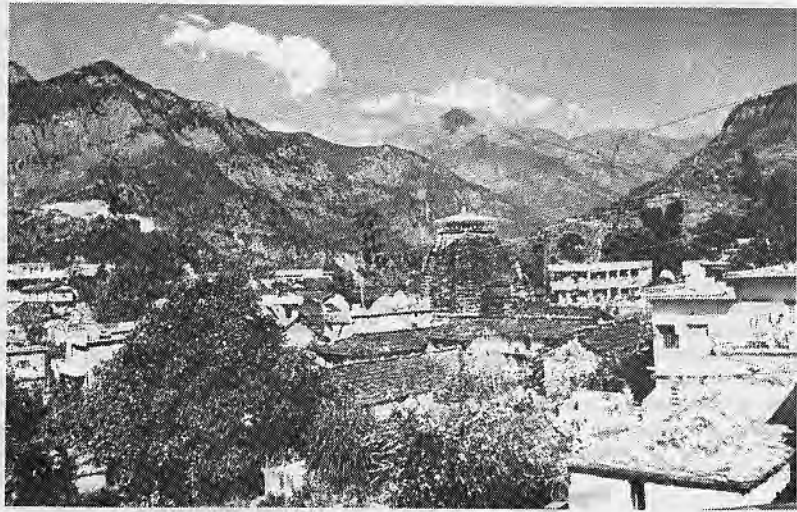
Anand Singh Bist of Gopeshwar (the headquarters of Chamoli district of Garhwal) recalls a couple of early episodes of Chipko. In 1971, some elders asked the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) in Nainital that ash trees be included in the villagers' *haque-haquooks* (traditional rights to the forest). The DFO wrote back that ash was a "foreign currency-earning species" which villagers could not be allowed to misuse by making farmyard tools. "Keeping the value of the tree in mind," wrote the DFO, "Ash cannot be given to farmers to make agricultural implements." He suggested that the farmers use pine instead.

In 1973, the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh (now the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal, DGSM, a Sarvodaya group from Gopeshwar promoting Gandhian principles of rural development) put in a request to the DFO's office for two ash trees for its carpentry unit. This request, too, was turned down.

Meanwhile, it was learnt that an Allahabad-based sports goods manufacturer, Symonds' & Co., was given permission to fell 14 ash trees in the forest of Mandal village. The Chamoli villagers were convinced that the state government in Lucknow, once again, was out to appease the larger economic interests at the expense of the hill communities. (Ash wood is used traditionally to make *juwas*, yokes, because it is light and strong. The suggestion to use pine was considered especially obnoxious as it secretes resin and is not as sturdy.)

On 1 April, a public meeting was called in Gopeshwar to discuss the strategy to prevent Symonds' axes from felling the trees that had been marked in the Gaindi forest of Mandal. More than 30 *gram pradhans* (village heads) of Dasholi block, political workers and journalists had gathered. One of those present was

Gopeshwar:
The seat of the
Dasholi Gram
Swarajya
Mandal



B. RAJNAR

Chandi Prasad Bhatt, an organiser from DGSM.

Anupam Mishra of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, in his 1978 book, *Chipko Movement: Uttarakhand Women's Bid to Save Forest Wealth*, writes that it was Bhatt who proposed at the meeting that the villagers hug the trees. Demonstrating what he meant, Bhatt "locked his hands together in an embracing posture." This, according to many, was the defining moment of the Chipko movement.

On 24 April, the day the Symonds' contractors were to fell the trees, another public meeting was called in Mandal. More than a hundred men and women came out in protest, and the contractor had to return empty-handed. In turning back the contractors, the peasants of Garhwal had notched an impressive first-time victory against plains interests and sparked the imagination of others in the hills.

The Hills Are Alive

"For those of us gathered in Mandal, the only agenda was how to save our forest from Symonds' men," says Anand Singh Bist, who was with DGSM in 1973 and today heads a Gopeshwar-based NGO. However, the ripple effect was felt beyond the Chamoli hills.

The day after pushing back the contractor and his men, Bist and a few other workers from DGSM visited the Forest Officer of the Kedarnath Division and demanded that the Symonds' deal with the Forest Department be cancelled. If not, the villagers were prepared for "direct confrontation" with the Department. The official said that he could not override the Lucknow

government's orders, but he would direct Symonds' to collect the 14 ash trees from the Rampur Phanta forests, 60 km away.

On 2 May, gram pradhans, students, party workers and journalists met in Gopeshwar and put up five demands before the authorities: one, that the forest contractor system (in which Uttarakhand forests were auctioned at Dehradun or Nainital by the authorities) be abolished and a forest labourers cooperative society be established; two, people's *haque-haquooks* be reassessed and redistributed; three, the export of raw produce from the hills be banned and villagers be provided technical training to establish small forest-based industries; four, reforestation be carried out on a war-footing; and five, that forest dwellers themselves be involved in managing and protecting their forests.

Ghanashyam Raturi, a Sarvodaya worker and poet from Uttarkashi (popularly known as *Sailani* — 'adventurer' in Garhwali), sang a song of the forests, trees and people. The participants committed themselves to preventing outsiders from devastating Garhwal's woodlands. This was the beginning of the Van Bachao Andolan, the movement to save trees, which increasingly came to be tagged simply 'Chipko'.

On 3 May, seven activists fanned out from Gopeshwar to spread the message and save the trees. Their first stop, naturally, was Rampur Phanta in Oukhimath Block, where Symonds had been directed by the Forest Officer. On 5 May, they organised a gathering at Oukhimath in which Kedar Singh Rawat, the Pradhan, declared that if Gopeshwar's villagers could save their forests, so could they.

That December, when the Symonds' agent arrived in the Shila Kharka forest in Rampur Phanta, he found, once again, the



Sailani: Singing the song of the forest, trees and people

JAYANTA BANDYOPADHYAY

villagers ready and waiting. With the slogan "Van jagey, vanvasi jagey!" (the forests have risen, the forest dwellers have risen), the Ookhimath villagers descended on Shila Kharka. Symonds' hired labourers flung their axes and ran to save themselves from the wrath of the forest dwellers of Uttarakhand.

Twenty five km from Joshimath, 680 hectares of the Reni Peng forest had been auctioned for IRs 4.75 lakh to one Jagmohan Bhalla, a contractor from Rishikesh. With the Gopeshwar and Ookhimath incidents fresh in memory, the contractors and the Forest Department officials lay in wait for the appropriate moment to move in.

The opportunity presented itself one day when most of the menfolk had gone to Chamoli, 70 km away, to receive compensation for land they lost up in Malari when the border with Tibet was closed in 1962. Thinking that they had got rid of the opposition, the contractors and the forestry officials, the latter in their official uniform, reached

Reni Peng with axes, labourers and rations.

The bosses had bargained without Gaura Devi, a Tolcha Bhutia widow, and other women of the village. When a young girl reported the goings on in the forest, these women hastened to the site and implored the party to spare the trees:

"This forest is like our mother's home. Please think about your children, and leave our trees alone." Their pleading is said to have so moved the labourers that they refused to lift their axes.

Lying within the watershed of the Rishiganga and bordering Tibet, Reni was considered not only ecologically sensitive, but politically so as well. When news of the women's activism reached New Delhi, Indian intelligence is said to have consulted with the Anthropological Survey of India about the Bhutias' involvement and whether there was possibility of an ethnic movement.

Ban the Logger

With the Garhwal hills becoming increasingly agitated for the forests, in April 1974, the Central Government set up a committee to investigate the impact of Himalayan deforestation. Virendra Kumar, a botanist from New Delhi, was named Chairman, and apart from government officials, the committee also consisted of local representatives. They were Govind Singh Negi of the Communist Party of

India, Govind Singh Rawat, the Block Pramukh of Joshimath, also with Leftist leanings, and the Sarvodaya Chandi Prasad Bhatt of the DGSM.

The Forest Department's stand before what came to be known as the Reni Committee was that the Reni Peng had a mixed deciduous forest and that selective felling of conifers was appropriate. They also insisted that felling three trees per two hectares did not cause soil erosion. The local activists responded that the actual number of trees the contractors cut always exceeded what was allowed by their permits.

The Reni Committee accepted that the watersheds were damaged and that tree felling, except for the haque-haooks of the villages, had to be stopped. Its report, completed in



The bosses had bargained without them: Gaura Devi (second from left) with other activists of Reni

duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forest, lakes, rivers and wild life and to have compassion for living creatures," stated Article 51A(g). "The State shall endeavour to protect

and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wild life of the country," stated Article 48A. While they might not always go by the Constitution's dictates, it seemed that the national-level politicians and bureaucrats, too, were behind what Chipko stood for.

शुक्रवाक ६ बृहस्पतिवार १५ दिसम्बर १९७७/३० गते मार्ग शीर्ष संवत् २०३४

नीताल कांड

**‘नी करि दी हालाँ हमरी निलाभी
नी करि दी हालाँ हमरो हलाल**

ल जनपद की जनता जनकारियों ने कहा था कि उनका कर लिया गया । गिरफ्तारी से युवकों को, लगभग कर लखनऊ गये एक आन्दोलन पूर्णतया बहिष्कृत होगा पूर्व इन लोगों ने अरुणपाल को लोगों के सामने, घन हठधर्मिता ने जिस तथा यदि उनके दो प्रतिनिधियों एक जापान दिया, जिसमें पहाड़ ए० सी० के टुकड़े

Special issue on the forest movement -- Headline in Nainital Samachar of 15 December 1977

1976, led to a 10-year ban on commercial felling in Reni. The ban also covered 1200 sq km of the upper catchment of the Alaknanda. The ban was extended for a further 10 years in 1985.

The declaration of the logging ban was a major victory for the Van Bachao Andolan. It was the high point of Chipko in Garhwal.

In 1975, responding to public pressure, the state government established the Uttar Pradesh Van Nigam, a corporation with the mandate to harvest trees itself rather than to auction them off. The expectation that the state would be more sensitive to environmental and village requirements than commercial interests was shattered however, when the Van Nigam resorted to sub-contracting out its jobs. Protest against the Nigam was to be a consistent theme of activism in the ensuing years.

Even as the Reni Committee recommended the ban on tree-felling in the Alaknanda catchment, the Indian Constitution saw its 42nd Amendment, which dealt squarely with environmental protection. "It shall be the

Kumauni Auctions

Word of Garhwali activism spread, and within months Kumaun, too, was drawn into the circle of protest. Protestors forced the cancellation of forest auctions in Nainital, Ramnagar and Kotdwar in 1974. When 18 students of the Parvatiya Van Bachao Sangharsh Samiti were arrested, there was a wave of demonstrations in Kumaun towns.

Around the time that the Chamoli hills were active, Sunderlal Bahuguna, who was the Coordinator of the Uttarakhand Sarvodaya Mandal, undertook a 120-day *padayatra* within the region. His march inspired a group of students to undertake their own 700 km *yatra*, from Askot in the eastern Kumaun, adjacent to the Nepali border, all the way west to Arakot in Himachal Pradesh.

The heightened political consciousness among students was most significant. While activists had raised their





M. ARYAL

Girida, the minstrel of Kumaun

voice against exploitation of forest labourers in the past, the yatra brought home to participating students — Kumaunis like Samsher Singh Bist and Shekhar Pathak, and Garhwalis like Kumar Prasoon, Pratap Shikhar and Vijay Jaddhari — the patent unfairness of forest policies and practice as far as the hills were concerned. The 1974 yatra has continued to serve as an inspiration to successive groups of activist students from Kumaun and Garhwal.

"We were influenced by Marxism," says Samsher Singh Bist, who was then the President of the Student Union of Kumaun University and today runs the Chetna Printing Press in Almora. The students mobilised against the contractors' exploitation of forest labourers, and understood more than others the need for small, forest-based industries in the hills.

In October 1977, a large demonstration was organised in Nainital by activists of Uttarakhand Sangharsh Vahini. (USV, which was then a loose group of *paharis* concerned about exploitation in the hills, later became the Uttarakhand Jana Sangharsh Vahini, a political party demanding that Uttarakhand be made a separate state). Kumauni poet Girish Tiwari (*Girda*) sang "*Vriskshan ka vilap*" (lament of the trees) for the demonstrators, giving an ecological twist to a 1926 poem by Gauri Dutta Pandey.

Several students were arrested in the demonstrations that were held in October in Nainital. When more than a thousand protesters surrounded the club house, where forest auctions were to be held, they were rescheduled for 28, 29 and 30 November.

On 26 November, the Provincial Armed Constabulary marched the Nainital streets in a show of force. Altogether 53 persons were arrested and police launched tear-gas on the

demonstrators. In the ensuing chaos, the club house was gutted.

The subsequent months saw sporadic demonstrations and lathi-charges in response all over Kumaun. On February 24, the whole of Uttarakhand remained closed in a *bandh* to protest the arrests in Nainital. In January 1978, some 300 villagers camped out in the Chanchridhar forest in Dwarahat, near Almora, and prevented a contractor from the Saharanpur Star Paper Mills from entering the woods. Later planned fellings were also successfully stalled by student activists of the Uttarakhand Sangharsha Vahini.

Tehri Pines

In Gopeshwar, the villagers did not have to resort to hugging the trees (the threat to do so was enough), and in Nainital the protests were mostly directed against auctions. In Tehri, however, the villagers engaged in more direct confrontation with business and authority.

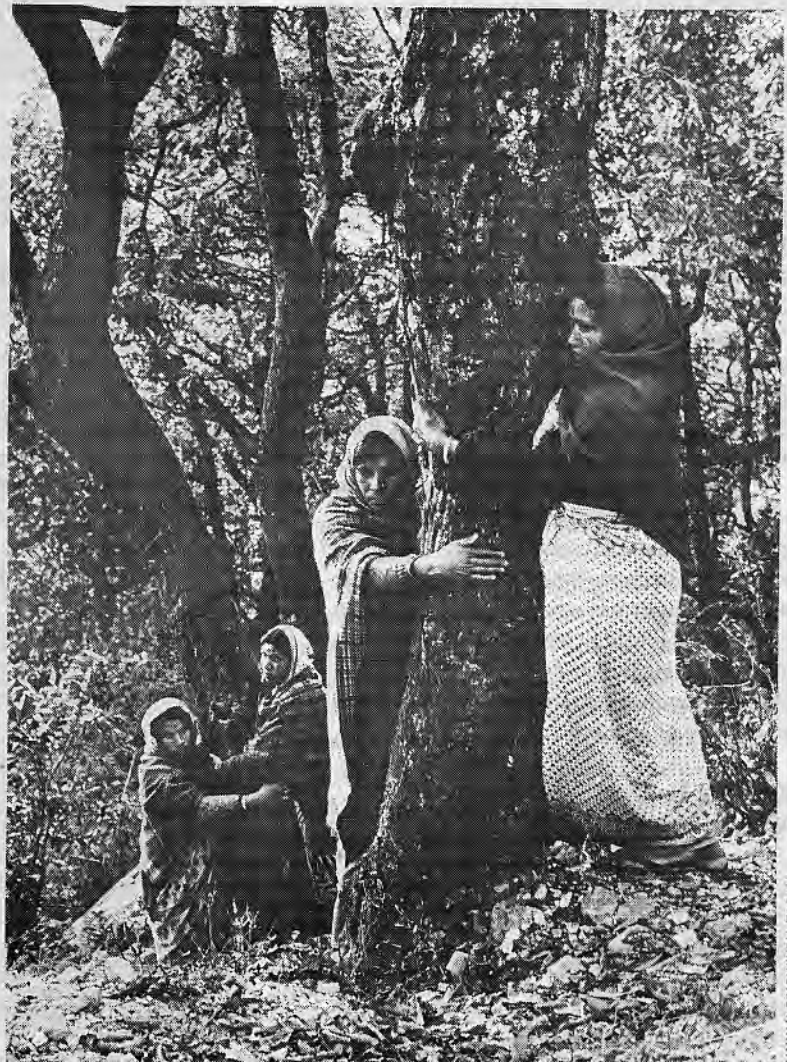
In early 1977, young activists in Tehri issued a pamphlet titled "Swan Song of the

Pines" to protest excessive resin tapping in Henvalghati, on the way to Rishikesh. On 30 May, a crowd of villagers went up to the Adwani forest, in the same locality, and pulled out the iron blades used by the tappers on chir pines.

"We were merely doing what the Forest Department was supposed to," recalls Dhoom Singh Negi, a school headmaster who went on to become a well-known member of the Chipko pantheon. "It was their responsibility to remove the blades if they were inserted too deep, making the pines bleed too much."

When 640 trees from the Adwani forest and 273 trees from the Salet forest were auctioned in the Narendranagar town hall, Bahuguna went on a fast and the atmosphere became quite tense. The villagers declared their intention to hug the trees to protect them from the axe.

The first confrontation in Henvalghati occurred on the first week of December 1977 in the Advani forest. On 5 December, village women tied *rakshya vandan* cords around the



Re-enacting
Chipko in
Tehri

BHAVAN SINGH/INDIA TODAY

tree trunks; the silken thread symbolised their determination to protect them. Negi fasted under a tree for five days, and the Henvalghati Forest Protection Committee issued a "Declaration of Rights" which equated the protection of the forests with the protection of the right to life itself.

A forest officer tried to convince the activist women of Tehri that tree-felling was an economic necessity, that it was good for the nation, and assured them that since it was being done scientifically, there would be complete regeneration. The women were unconvinced, for they had seen all that the resin-tapping contractors were capable of.

Recalls Swadesha Devi of Rampur village in Tehri, "We told him that the trees provide *mitti, pani and bayar* (soil, water and pure air). We would not let go of them."

Unable to convince the villagers, the contractors smuggled their Himachali labourers into the neighbouring Salet forest, where the first confirmed instance of the physical act of 'chipko-ing' is said to have occurred.

"The labourers were advancing on the trees, and there were very few of us in the forest. In desperation, I went and hugged the nearest marked tree," recalls Dhoom Singh

Negi. His activist friends quickly joined in the action, hugging whichever tree the labourers made for, until finally they were forced to depart.

Later, two truckloads of the Armed Police Constabulary were sent to Henvalghati to march the trails, but the villagers would not relent. Finally, the police and contractors withdrew, and the auction grants were subsequently cancelled.

There were similar cancellations elsewhere. In Ranichauri, Tehri Garhwal, a group of 200 villagers from Savli, most of them women, went into the Loital forest and tied silken threads around trunks that had been auctioned. Cancellation of the Loital auction is said to have saved some 9500 trees, including 300 oak trees.

Yet another battle was fought over Amarsar forest, near Kangar village, where about 750 trees were to have been felled by the Van Nigam. A group of high school students arrived with Negi and Pratap Shikhar and started to hug the trees, forcing the labourers to withdraw.

The villagers of Badiyar Garh, 22 km from Srinagar in Pouri, had learnt of the planned felling of 2500 trees in the Malgaddi woods. It

was here that the last, the longest and the most violent battle was fought against the Van Nigam. The villagers had sent a request to the activists in Henvalghati to come and help them save their forest. Kumar Prasoon and Vijay Jaddhari went to the area on 25 December 1978, a few days before the contractors arrived. They roamed the villages, spreading the Chipko message through folk songs sung to the tune of a harmonium.

Even as the contractors bribed some villagers to try and win support, the minstrel activists went from community to community, and survived by asking the villagers to contribute one *chapati* each for their meals. Soon, some of the forest labourers themselves were sharing their food with Prasoon and Jaddhari, and one woodsman even claimed that he would start a Chipko movement when he returned to his village in Himachal.

Once, recalls Prasoon, when Jaddhari was protecting a tree, a frustrated forest ranger snapped at two hesitant labourers, "Why are you waiting? Saw it, chop him down. This happens here every day!" As the labourers applied their saw to the trunk, the teeth ripped Jaddhari's pyjamas and left a mark. "*Hum ped katne aaye hai, aadmi katne nahi,*" (we have



PEMA WANGCHUK DORJEE

come to chop trees, not men) said one of the labourers as they flung the saw away.

On 31 January, a 50-year-old villager named Saroop Singh came running with a lantern in hand, shouting "Aaj Himalaya jagega, kroorkuladhabhagega" (the Himalaya will rise today, the cruel axe men will be chased away). He had just heard in the 8:45 radio news bulletin that the felling permits of Amarsar and Malgaddi forest had been cancelled.

First, there was the ban on commercial logging in Garhwal, then the voiding of auctions in Kumaun, and now cancellation of permits in Tehri. The Chipko movement had covered the whole of Uttarakhand. The harvesting of wood was down from 62,000 cubic meters in 1971 to 40,000 cubic meters in 1981. Chipko, a villager's movement, had ensured that indiscriminate commercial forestry was ended.

Then, in April 1981, Bahuguna went on an indefinite fast, demanding a blanket ban on felling of trees above 1000 m in the Himalaya. Even though an eight-member committee constituted to look into the demand did not feel the need to do so, the Central Government imposed a 15-year moratorium on commercial felling in the Uttarakhand Himalaya.

Media and Khadi

The 1972 Stockholm Conference on Environment heightened the media's interest on ecological issues and Chipko provided all the ingredients of a riveting story. The outside



Nainital Historian Shekhar Pathak

We were influenced by Marxism: Shamsher Singh Bist



B. RAJNIGAR

press, whether Delhi-based or overseas, took to it with alacrity. As journalist Mark Shepard wrote in the Fall 1981 issue of the *CoEvolution Quarterly*, "...I knew I had to write about Chipko. The more I learned, the more the story seemed like a near-perfect parable of the struggle of common people against big government and business — a struggle for the control of the natural resources, that underpin survival and well-being."

Like practically every journalist that has reported and mythologised Chipko, Shepard too wrote as if what he saw and whom he met alone made up the movement. History was centred entirely on Chandi Prasad Bhatt and DGSM, with nary a passing reference to others of Uttarakhand.

It was *deja vu* all over again 12 years later, when, in a Fall 1993 article in the *Whole Earth Review*, writer Brian Nelson wrote: "It is difficult to find out who started Chipko, or who is in charge of the movement today. There are no formal titles, no board of directors, not even any business cards... There is one individual, however, whose name is mentioned at least once in every conversation about Chipko. He is the constant presence, the overall coordinator if there is one. Chandi Prasad Bhatt is a tall, bearded man, with penetrating blue eyes and deliberate mannerisms. He is one of those rare individuals, who though remarkably gentle, somehow leave a deep and indelible impression on everyone he meets. He exudes a kind of controlled inner energy that is difficult to describe but easy to feel."

Such penetrating insights developed on the basis of all-too-brief interviews by parachutists might be automatically suspect, but they abound in the myth-making of Chipko's leadership. Indian journalists are as prone to glorifying selected Chipko superstars as Western ones. In an article entitled "The

Chipko Architect", journalist Veena Sandal wrote: "In certain circles he is known as 'the only true Gandhian after Gandhi'. Many address him as the 'Saviour'. Yet others call him a politician. Serene and unruffled in the midst of this controversy stands Sunderlal Bahuguna... He is the man who went to meet an applauding Kurt Waldheim, the then UN secretary general, with a bundle of firewood strapped on his back..."

Journalists who rush up from Delhi to do their Chipko story rarely spare the time to visit the sites of the forest protests and meet the villagers who fought the battles of the 1970s. It is much easier to make one person the fountainhead of the movement and not to get into detailed analyses of the complexities and contradictions which Chipko, like any movement, has aplenty.

The vernacular media of Uttarakhand is much more realistic about Chipko, but is also more vicious, enmeshed as the journalists are in local politics and personality clashes. Thus, while the Uttarakhand papers do cover issues at the ground level, stories of corruption, connivance with authority, international funding, etc. abound. And, unfortunately, one cannot expect much in terms of perspective or fairness.

Kumaun University Historian Shekhar Pathak notes that popular movements have never received a fair deal from outside interpreters. He cites the abolition of the *begar* system of forced labour in British Kumaun as an example. "It was the popular upsurge in the villages, rather than the initiative of a few leaders, that delivered the decisive blow to *begar*," he says. "But as time went by, the role of peasants and village activists got underplayed and it was (later) claimed that only God, Gandhi and Govind Ballav Pant were responsible for abolishing *begar* in Kumaun." (G.B. Pant, freedom fighter and

The Skeptic's Chipko

In a movement which gained its momentum in part because of the sheer potency of the word 'Chipko', who uttered it first and who first hugged a tree to save it have become matters of importance. There have been arguments, and some Chipko leaders have not been above posing with the trunk of trees for photographers.

Not everyone agrees that Bhatt was the first person to suggest the concept and use of the term 'Chipko'. Ghanashyam Raturi (*Sailani*), in a taped interview with Dehradun-based journalist Navin Nautiyal, claims that he was there first, in a song he says he wrote in December 1972 with the words "*Chipko pedo pe jangalo bachounda*" (Stick to the trees and save the forest). The song was later to become popular in the Tehri protests.

Not all claims by Chipko activists should be taken at face value, say others. H.K Singh of the Degree College in Gopeshwar, who is writing a book on the involvement of CPI workers in the forest movements of Uttarakhand, believes that nothing more than commercial motive inspired the crucial confrontation with Symonds' & Co. He says that Subedar Bachhan Singh Bist, the traditional Symonds' contractor and a Chamoli man, did not get the contract for 1973. For that reason, a meeting was called on 18 March 1973 (14 days before Chandi Prasad Bhatt is said to have come up with his ideas) to plan strategy.

"Bhatt was away at the time," says Singh. "The minutes of that meeting, which are with the Bist family, show that all the people attending threatened to stick to the trees and not let them be cut down if Symonds' brought in outside contractors." And the outsider, in fact, was another hillman named Jagdish Prasad Nautiyal, of Mussoorie.

To some, Chipko was an economic movement and nothing more. Forest cooperative societies and organisations like DGSM got involved in Chipko in order to promote small-scale cottage industries; student groups wanted to emphasize their birthright to hill country resources; and small contractors only desired to wrest contracts from the big businessmen of the plains. Nowhere in these motives does one detect the much-vaunted environmentalism that is said to have energised the villagers of Uttarakhand, which is what has made Chipko famous worldwide.

To say that Chipko was Gandhian and non-violent might also have been an embroidery. According to one version of the Reni

Peng incident, the Garhwali women turned back the contractors with more than pleas and persuasive words. *Down to Earth* magazine quotes villagers who say that the women set fire to the forest labourer's hut, threw stones, and gave a chase. A forest department worker was tied up. According to one version, the Tolcha Bhatia widow Gaura Devi who led the fight against the Symonds' contractors was put up to the task by a clansman who did not get a contract from the company.

While there is certainly a streak of female militancy indicated in this version of the Reni Peng incident, there are others who claim that the feminist mantle of Chipko is undeserved and that it was placed there by Delhi academics.

So, does Chipko begin with *Sailani's* poems? Or does it start with Bhatt's brainwave? Or does Chipko become Chipko only after Dhoom Singh Negi hugged the tree in Hervalghati? Are only the incidents in Chamoli to be called Chipko? Or does the name 'Chipko' also apply to the more political movements of Kumaun? Are the Communists to be allowed to call their involvement, Chipko? Can subsequent movements, such as against quarrying in Doon, also appropriate the name? Just choose your Chipko.



Bahuguna hugs pipal for the Smithsonian magazine

SMITHSONIAN

Independent India's first home minister, was a Garhwali.)

Two groups that suffered from mainstream media's search for politically correct icons to represent Chipko were the Uttarakhand Sangharsha Vahini and the CPI. Their role in the forest movement of Uttarakhand has gone virtually unremarked and is unknown to most outsiders. The media's appointed Chipko exponents were, as expected, the Gandhian Sarvodaya activists Bhatt and Bahuguna.

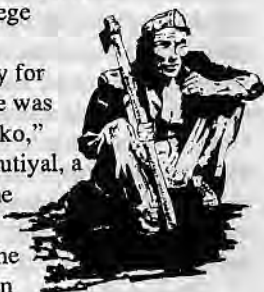
Says P.C. Tiwari, a lawyer in Almora and a worker with the Vahini, "We did not have khadi personalities like Bhatt and

Bahuguna. Ours was a completely political movement involving students and other young people. Our aim was to challenge the existing political system. And such an agenda naturally meant alienating the media."

For the CPI, the protection of the exploited *kataani shramik* (saw labourers), who received poor rations and inadequate compensation, was the motivating factor. An appeal issued in July 1974 read, "*Aa gaya hai laal nishan, van sampada ke luteru savadhan.*" (the red sign has arrived, beware you robbers of forest wealth). The workers of the Left wanted that: the forests be auctioned in smaller lots at prices not exceeding IRs 25,000; the

contractors whose blades left deep marks on the chir trees be blacklisted; small cottage industries based on raw materials found in the hills be established; and technical training for forestry-based work given to high school and college students.

"We were ready for everything, and there was violence in our Chipko," says Kamla Ram Nautiyal, a CPI member, now the Municipal Head of Uttarkashi town. "The media has never been



sympathetic to the Communist movement.”

As time works on the memory, the village activists and the more politicised facets of Chipko -- even though they were never that prominent -- have begun to fade from the public record. Even as Chipko becomes part of history, it becomes increasingly identified as the creation of Bahuguna and/or Bhatt. And the two men cannot stand each other.

Bhatt and Bahuguna

Goaded by supporters, their ire fuelled by opportunistic scholars and reporters, Chipko's Big Two have been engaged in a tussle over whose work is seen to be more important and who gets the most credit. The Bahuguna-Bhatt feud is all that many know about Chipko.

Bhatt was a difficult man to try arrange a meeting with. “If you had not come from as far as Kathmandu, I would not have met you. Who knows, even though you are a pahari from Nepal, there is no guarantee that you will understand Chipko.”

By lantern light, Bhatt pulls out yellowed copies of early-1970s issues of Dehradun's *Yugvani* weekly and the Rudraprayag *Aniket*. Poring over two-decade-old reports, he asks, “Show me where he (Bahuguna) is? Nowhere! You have to read the early papers to know the movement.”

He reaches in and brings out the first and second editions of the book *Uttarakhand Mein Ek So Bis Din* (120 days in Uttarakhand), by Bahuguna and points to where Bahuguna has deleted reference to Bhatt in the second edition. “He (Bahuguna) did not want the world to know that I was associated in any way with the movement.” Bhatt is bitter.

Ramchandra Guha, one of the academic chroniclers of Chipko who is with the Nehru Memorial Library in New Delhi, says he understands Bhatt's frustration. “You have to give credit to Bhatt as the originator of the movement. He might not be as sophisticated as Sunderlal, but you cannot distort history and take away due credit. He was the one who came up with the idea of Chipko, first.”

According to Guha, before Chipko became prize property, Bahuguna was given to praising Bhatt for his role in the movement. “He has called him the *mukhya sanchalak* (main organiser) of the movement.”

Anil Agarwal, environmentalist and editor of the Indian science magazine *Down to Earth* says that when he returned from studies abroad in the early 1980s, he found Bhatt abandoned in Gopeshwar, while Bahuguna was taking all the credit for a movement he had not started.

Bhatt and his supporters accuse Bahuguna

of pandering to the national and international media. Says one pro-Bhatt scholar, “The first place Bahuguna will visit when he goes to a new town is the press office; he survives on press reports.”

Whereas Bhatt is dour and tends to sound defensive, Bahuguna is suave and a quick study. “Are you comfortable with your hotel? If you are not, you can come and stay in my guest house,” he said to this writer, pointing to



Bahuguna

a tent on the side of his makeshift hut on the banks of the Bhagirathi river. He is camped here at the damsite of the Tehri project.

“You need not have wasted time waiting for me. If you had sent word, I would have come to see you,” he clucks. “Why don't you go and meet the Chief Engineer of the (Tehri) dam? He is much more important than a simple peasant like me.”

Bahuguna, too, pulls out newspaper clippings. But what he has to show is not evidence against Bhatt but a copy of Kathmandu's *Kantipur* daily. It has a picture of the three-tonne rock that destroyed the penstock pipe of Nepal's Kulekhani hydropower station this past summer. “The Indian papers did not carry this news; they suppress anything that might heighten the opposition to Tehri dam. This needs to be talked about.”

Bahuguna is a stringer correspondent for the UNI news agency. Quite early in life, he says, he decided to earn his living by “the most respected profession in the world”. Which, intentionally or unintentionally tends to flatter the interviewing reporter.

For journalists making the two-day trip to meet him, Bahuguna makes available, hard-

to-get background material — reports, “secret” government documents — as well as copies of his writings, and articles about himself.

Bahuguna is known for his international forays, and is a master at maintaining his image as a man of the people. He insists on wearing coarse *khadi*, so much so that that a European researcher was astonished when he arrived in India to find the indigenous cloth could be quite fine, too. Bahuguna, perhaps because he is a journalist himself, provides *masala*-- crisp quotes and useful anecdotes -- and takes account of the reporter's needs and deadline pressures. Tehri, which is Bahuguna's base, is much closer to Delhi than Gopeshwar, where Bhatt and DGSM are located. Bahuguna is conversant in English, is more photogenic and laughs easily, while Bhatt is prone to moods.

As the media applauds and thrashes personalities, the tolerance level of the Chipko leaders has become razor thin. Bhatt resigned from the board of Centre for Science and Environment in Delhi in June 1993, just after *Down to Earth* ran a Chipko story. “Pitaji is upset with Anil,” said Bhatt's journalist son Om Prakash. When reminded that the article was not written by Anil Agrawal he replied, “But it is *his* magazine.”

This writer was advised by journalists who know (for good reason, it turned out) not to tell people in the Bahuguna camp that she had been to Gopeshwar to meet with Bhatt.



Bhatt

Similarly, Bhatt was not learn that she had already met Bahuguna. When 13 Thai NGO representatives visited Gopeshwar in May 1993, Bhatt would not see them because their chaperone Vir Singh of G.B.P. University in Ranichauri is considered close to Bahuguna.

Bhatt talks appreciatively of writers such as the late H.C. Kala, Anupam Mishra and Ramesh Pahari, all of whom, it turns out, have written about his pioneering role in Chipko. Mishra, in his 1978 book, practically equates Chipko with Bhatt, and Pahari, Editor of Rudraprayag *Aniket*, is Bhatt's good friend and has always written glowingly about him.

Modern-Day Contractors

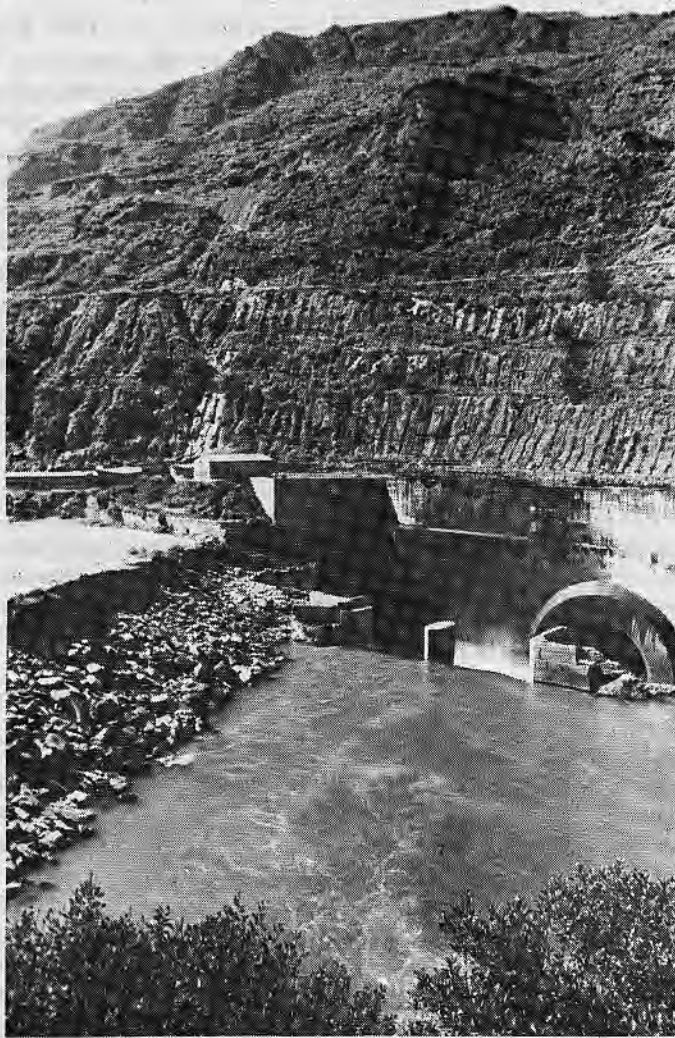
Bahuguna's public relations ability and international appeal and Bhatt's organising ability, put together, might have taken the people of Uttarakhand further than where they are today. Some, like Radha Bhatt of Laxmi Ashram in Kaushani, which promotes education of women, have tried to bring about a conciliation, but without success. Most are of the view that media's need to maintain tension and cultivate heroes, and the over zealousness of followers and hangers-on, has made the rift between the two so wide that it cannot be bridged.

It is likely that the two personalities would never have mixed anyway. "The media might have aggravated the situation, but it certainly was not the cause of (the rift)," says Shamsher Singh Bist. According to him, Bhatt had already stopped talking to Bahuguna in 1973.

"You cannot say that there was a split," exclaims an exasperated Bhatt. "When were we together to begin with? Both of us are happily working in our own areas."

While Bahuguna has been the vanguard in today's fight against the Tehri dam, Bhatt has been criticised for not showing support for the anti-dam activists. Says Dhoom Singh Negi, "We went to Gopeshwar twice to meet him. We sent him letters and he did not reply. When Bahugunaji and I visited him, Bhattji left us standing there and went off to attend a *mahila mangal dal* (women's group) meeting."

When asked to explain his silence on the anti-Tehri dam movement, Bhatt's answer sounds lame. "If I had gone, the media would



Tehri Dam Project, Bahuguna's lifeline

have focused on me. It would not have helped the movement. I do not believe in going to an area to take credit away. If we can do things separately, we do not have to be together."

Bahuguna, for his part, says, "I am a dynamic person. I do not want to remain stagnant. Do you see the Bhagirathi there (points dramatically to the river). I am like this river. If my Sarvodayi friends do not want to flow with the current, I cannot force them to."

Bhatt is today involved through the DGSM and the mahila mangal dals in reforestation and eco-development camps in Chamoli. These, he maintains, are the "*rachanatmak karya*" (creative works) required by hill society today.

Bahuguna is critical of Bhatt for going the NGO way. Calling NGOs "modern-day contractors", he says: "I do not want to be a contractor. People like us have to do more. NGOs segment the hill people. They try to bring development through foreign or government funds, which is never sustainable.

The community has to be empowered to do things by itself. Even the interest to plant trees should come from within the community, not through external agencies and guidance."

But how can you speak for village-based development when you are always travelling to Europe or North America, he is asked. Bahuguna replies that he does not want to remain aloof from what is happening in the rest of the world. "Developments that occur internationally affect what happens in this country. And it is not as if I go there on my own. They send me invitations because they want to listen to me."

There is continuing activism in the hills of Uttarakhand today, against the Tehri dam, for example, and against liquor licensing and limestone quarrying, and for better health care, education and women's rights. These, says Bahuguna, are what he and his "friends" need to support.

But That's Not Chipko

Ironically, for the man who proposed hugging trees as a strategy, Bhatt insists today that the Chipko movement did not require anyone to actually hug a tree. And what of those activists who actually hugged trees? They were not really part of Chipko movement, says Bhatt.

All of which sounds a trifle disingenuous, for in the past Bhatt has fully endorsed hugging, as when he wrote in *Hugging the Himalayas: The Chipko Experience*, published in 1978 by DGSM: "...the Chipko soldiers in 1973 took to the task of clinging to the marked trees in the Mandal forest, and later in Phanta-Rampur repeated the action."

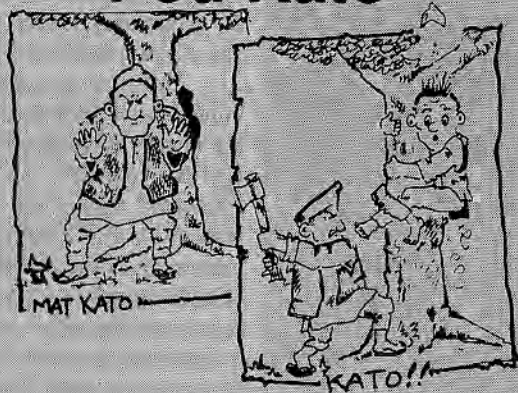
"Who told you we did not have to hug trees to protect them? Who says ours was not a movement?" retorts Swadesha Devi, the activist of Tehri. "I challenge anybody who says we did not hug. Not only us, but even our menfolk hugged the trees to protect them. Dhoom Singh Bhai did it in Adwani. When the forest ranger used his *aara* (saw) on Jaddhari, his trousers were torn and he was left with a scar."

When pressed



B. RAJNIGAR

"Ped Kato"



If there was a movement called Chipko to save the trees of Uttarakhand, let us not forget the *Ped Kato Andolan*, the short-lived but significant agitation to chop down the trees of Kumaun. The Andolan was begun in 1988 by activists of the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal, who felt that the villagers were being hurt by the Forest

Conservation Act of 1980. Many members of the UKD were arrested for cutting trees during 1988-89.

The Act decreed that no forest land could be used for non-forestry purposes without prior permission from the Central Government. The Dal maintained that the legislation was holding up development works in the hills. Bipin Tripathi, of the UKD, claimed recently that he and his colleagues had chopped down trees in 111 places. Nearly 4500 development schemes in the hills were held up due to environmental reasons, he said.

Ironically, only a decade earlier, the same Bipin Tripathi had led the struggle to save the Chacharidhar forests from the contractors of a Saharanpur paper mill.

"Ped Kato was not a movement," says historian Shekhar Pathak. "It was an emotional response to the misinterpretation of the 1980 Act. Requests for transferring a forest land for developmental purposes, even when it had no trees in it, had to be forwarded to the Central Government. This process was lengthened because of the state forest bureaucracy's inherent laziness." And the Chipko movement reaped the blame, for having given rise to the Act. The most imaginative response was to ped kato.

further about the pro-forest agitations in Tehri, Bhatt replies, "I do not consider *that* Chipko. There the word was not powerful enough. Not only did they physically have to cling to trees, but they also had to employ methods such as reading from the Bhagwat, going on fast beneath trees and getting arrested. There was a *byatha*, a story, behind the word — it was so powerful that it drove away the biggest contractor. These things to get attention cannot be called Chipko."

Anupam Mishra agrees with Bhatt. "Chipko was a movement born of unique circumstances," he says. "That it did not spread but remained localised in Chamoli is not the movement's fault."

"Just because *your* Chipko was finished and done with in 1974, you cannot say that the movement did not happen in other places," says Kumar Prasoona. "Ours (in Tehri), was an organised movement. We travelled the region, convincing people that trees had value. Many of us were arrested, but we always had enough left behind to continue with the work. When things got rough, Bahugunaji would come and do a fast."

Bhatt disagrees with this interpretation. "The Forest Department was already asking my advice about felling trees in different areas by 1975. When your demands have been met, and the authority is cooperating, protest for the sake of protest is foolish." He produces letters from as early as 1977 to prove his point. One is from the Divisional Forest Officer of Kedamath Division, H.C. Khanduri, informing Bhatt that the trees of the Malari forest were to be auctioned, asking him if the area was

ecologically sensitive and whether the auction should be stopped.

"The movement was not finished," says Bhatt, "it had only evolved."

Decline and Fall

As a group, Bhatt's Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal is considered by some to represent most faithfully the ethos of Chipko. That the DGSM seems to be a spent force is, therefore, the prime indicator of Chipko's weakening.

In an interview with this writer in November 1993, Bhatt said that all of DGSM's activities were funded with interest from the prize money he and DGSM have received (the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1982, the Indoman Trust Award in 1990, the Indira

Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar in 1991).

Reports of some scholars who have studied DGSM, however, tend to paint a depressing picture. One of these scholars is Pierre-Andre Tremblay, a French-Canadian anthropologist who is studying DGSM's role in organising Garhwali villagers. He visited Gopeshwar in October 1993. "At first, they were quite open," he recalls. He was told about the organisation's resin and turpentine unit, the tree nurseries, and the eco-development camps.

A couple of cancelled appointments later, Tremblay decided to visit the DGSM work sites himself. He reports of being shocked at what he saw. Other than the caretaker and his family, the resin and turpentine unit did not provide employment to anyone in the hills. The unit worked only three months a year, with the help of workers who came up from Lucknow.

"The DGSM's nursery is doing very badly and the eco-development camps are all state-funded," says Tremblay. When he asked for the date and the venue of the eco-development camp, Bhatt first cautioned Tremblay that the food in the villages would not taste good and the sanitary conditions were quite poor. When this did not deter the anthropologist, Bhatt said that DGSM had not been able to decide between two villages. "When I asked him which two villages, Bhatt said it was a 'secret' until it was decided."

While this does not say much for Bhatt's confidence in his own group, it might also indicate his wariness of foreigners. As he was meeting Tremblay, Bhatt turned to someone



Dhoom Singh Negi

M. ARYAL

else in the room and said in Garhwali, "You have to be careful with Westerners, you know. Who knows what they will write; it might harm us ten years from now."

If Bhatt's organisation is but a ghost of Chipko, Bahuguna, too seems today a holdover from a more involved past. Today, as he camps by the Bhagirathi river and agitates against the Tehri project, one cannot help but feel that without the dam he would be a man without a cause, a following, and an audience.

While Bahuguna gains much-deserved credit elsewhere for standing up against the Tehri dam, within Uttarakhand he seems to be strangely alone. Says Raghunath Singh Rana, a left-leaning Block Pramukh of Jakhnidwar village, one of the villages to be submerged by the Tehri Dam Project, "If Bahuguna understood what the people want, he would join us and agitate for maximum compensation for the land that is going to be submerged."

"How can I demand compensation?" says Bahuguna, "I do not even believe that the dam is going to be built." While his supporters in Delhi and Dehradun speak glowingly of "the memory of Gandhi and the voice of Ganga", Tehri and the New Tehri residents are handed out glossy booklets like the one titled, *Silyara ke sant ka asali chehara* (the true face of the saint of Silyara -- Bahuguna's



Bandyopadhyay

village), which claims that Bahuguna is anti-development and is protesting the dam only because he has his eyes on the Nobel Peace Prize.

In his work, which is more organisational, Bhatt comes into contact with bureaucrats and participates in Government committees. As a result, he is more sympathetic with authority than the idealistic Bahuguna. Because he is an NGO worker himself, a larger number of Delhi, Dehradun, Nainital and Almora-based NGO organisers also gravitate towards Bhatt. Bahuguna, meanwhile, has remained aloof from most other activities and NGOs.

Adopt a Leader

If the media took sides in the Chipko debate in order to make a good story, the partisanship among Delhi academics have had much deeper implications. The scholars have had a role in defining the battleground itself. The villagers agitated, but it was up to the Chipko scholar to interpret their movement, establish its antecedents, anoint a leader, and provide him with a vocabulary.

One academic battle of Chipko was fought in the pages of *Seminar*



Shiva

in 1987. Responding to what he considered was an overly pro-Bahuguna article by the academic couple Jayanta Bandyopadhyay and Vandana Shiva, social historian Ramchandra Guha wrote that Chipko was undergoing a mutilation, "its body torn in half as environmentalists lay claim to its heritage."

An issue later, Bandyopadhyay and Shiva had a response. "...Guha displays the blinkered vision of academics," they accused... The dynamism of movements does not exist in archives and libraries. It lives in peoples' space." They concluded that Guha's focus on personalities was "symbolic of the dominant view of external analysis based on fragmented reading of events and exclusive dependence on the printed word to reach the oral culture."



Guha

Saying it was the scholar couple's effort "to rewrite the history of Chipko from a sectarian perspective" Guha retaliated that Bandyopadhyay and Shiva's historical treatment of Chipko was "seriously vitiated by their partisan stance in favour of



Protesting mining in Doon Valley

J. BANDYOPADHYAY

Sunderlal Bahuguna” and that they painted “certain groups in the brightest colours, others in darker hues, and leave still others out of the picture altogether.”

Guha accused that the two had not bothered to “elicit the views and experiences of the participants in two of the three major groupings of Chipko.”

Bandyopadhyay, who has since had an acrimonious divorce and intellectual parting of ways with Shiva, today concedes that Bahuguna’s facility with media and researchers tends to produce biases in his favour. When he and Shiva began research on Chipko, Bandyopadhyay says, he had addressed letters to both Bhatt and Bahuguna. True to character, Bhatt did not respond, while Bahuguna did, and his letter was welcoming. Bandyopadhyay says that he got so involved with research in Tehri that he did not attempt to contact Bhatt again.

The Chipko fault line, it seems, is deeper than the gorge of the Alaknanda. It pitches academics, journalists, activists, villagers and leaders against each other. The situation is so tense, reported one job applicant at the G.B.P. Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, that when scientists are interviewed, they are likely to be asked which side of the Chipko debate they are on.

Guha does not quote Shiva in any of his works, while for her part, Shiva’s bibliographies contain no reference to Guha’s important works on history of social movements of Uttarakhand. Bandyopadhyay maintains today that Chipko was never a feminist movement as claimed by Shiva in her book *Staying Alive*, even though Shiva acknowledges his contribution at the front of the book. And

When the time comes, we will not be able to fight for our rights: Kumar Prasoon

Anil Agarwal does not think Shiva’s work warrants attention.

It is surprising how little time these scholars who have defined Chipko have actually spent in Uttarakhand hills, particularly during the critical years from 1973 to 1979. Guha’s field research in Uttarakhand was all of three weeks, and he met Bahuguna only once in 1983. Agarwal was away studying in the United Kingdom when the Tehri demonstrations were taking place, and Bandyopadhyay and Shiva started their research in the latter half of the 1980s and did not go beyond Tehri, Bahuguna’s home court.

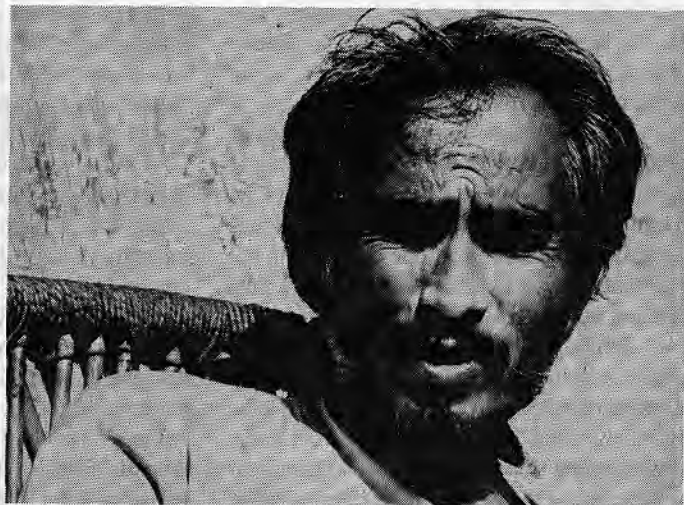
Guided by their academic support groups, Chipko’s acclaimed leaders have differing interpretations of the directions the movement has taken. Bahuguna says the movement became ecological after 1977, while Bhatt insists that it was an economic struggle from the start. The CPI member would define Chipko

as a movement to counter “exploitation of forest labourers and to set minimum wages”. Meanwhile, yet other academics, such as Shiva, insist that Chipko was the high water mark of rural feminism.

Activist to Project Director

Bahuguna’s criticism of NGO-based development rings true. Many of the leading activists of Chipko have, in fact, become NGO directors and coordinators. Bhatt’s DGSM, itself, is now a more passive NGO than a grassroots initiative taking organisation. All this means that the activists of Chipko, most of them now in their middle age or older have transformed themselves into managers of development projects. Under such a guise they are less likely to politicise society in order to bring change.

What Chipko activists lacked after the forest battles were won was leadership. “We



M. ARYAL



Anti-alcohol movement, 1984

S. PATHAK/PAHAR

had a meeting to discuss what was to be done after the moratorium was imposed on green felling," says Pratap Shikhar, who now heads a Jajal-based NGO, the Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan, which works in reforestation and drinking water.

Continues Shikhar, "The movement phase was over. We turned to Bahugunaji for leadership. I felt that we needed to work more with the people, win their trust so that they would fend for themselves." But Bahuguna, he says, would not listen. "Instead," says Shikhar, "Bahugunaji went for his Kashmir to Kohima march with Dhoom Singh Negi."

Kumar Prasoon, who writes occasionally for newspapers, says, "There is nobody in Uttarakhand that people can look up to; and there is nobody that the government responds to. With people involved in government-funded projects, the future of Uttarakhand looks bleak. The donors and the government money will buy us out and when the time comes, we will not be able to fight for our rights."

Samsher Singh Bist of Almora agrees with Prasoon. "The activism in Chipko got killed," he says. "The activists have all started projects and got lost in the project documentations and reports."

Some of the younger activists of Uttarakhand, meanwhile, are all too willing to give Chipko a well-deserved rest. "Uttarakhand today faces more important issues than the 20-year-old Chipko," says Pradeep Tamta, who stood as a Uttarakhand Kranti Dal candidate for the November 1993 Vidhan Sabha elections from Bageshwar in Almora. "Only when you have a house will you be able to decide how you want to decorate it. Unless Uttarakhand is a separate hill state, where we paharis can decide our own future, hundreds of Chipko and the hill society will still not develop. After all, how many trees can you chipko to?"

He says, "Policies have to be conducive to hill development, and that is impossible until Uttarakhand becomes a separate hill state."

P.C. Tiwari agrees with Tamta and cites the anti-alcohol movement of the 1980s to prove the point. "Our three slogans then were, against those who drank liquor, against those who made it and against those who sold it. We took care of the first two, but we failed when we came to the third. What could we do when the government itself was the biggest merchant?"

"Chipko died in 1980 with the moratorium," says N.C. Saxena, a prominent forester who is now the director of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Administration in Mussoorie. "This obsession with Chipko has

stifled other initiatives in Uttarakhand."

Such has been the stifling effect of the real and imagined Chipko that, 14 years after the moratorium was imposed, other issues of Uttarakhand have yet to be pushed through with any degree of success. While the contractor system was abolished, and the indiscriminate felling in the hills stopped, the much vaunted small-scale cottage industry has been a non-starter. Market penetration from the plains continues inexorably, and the hill people have not been able to tap economic wellbeing from their comparative advantage in, say, tourism or horticulture. The people have more control over the forest than before, but oddly enough, for a hill region so full of activists and leaders, there has been little rise in consciousness of the responsibilities that accompany the rights. While Van Panchayats of Uttarakhand are shown to visitors as examples of how well community-managed forest do and how green and lush they are, this has often been at the expense of Reserved forests which the villagers do not have rights to.

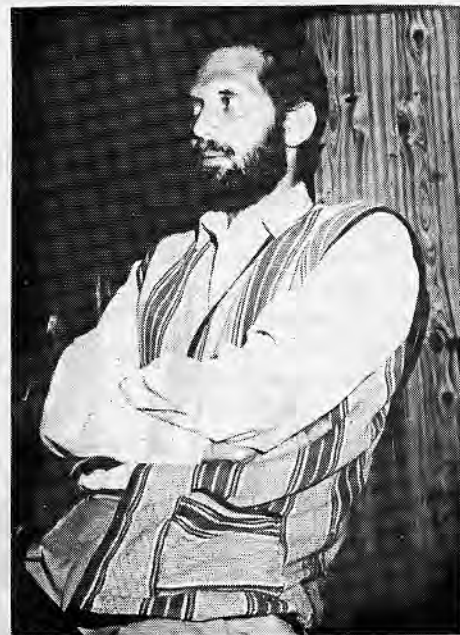
Chipko's legacy does not seem to have reduced the number of young Kumaonis and



...hundreds of Chipko and the hill society will still not develop: Pradeep Tamta

Garhwalis departing to the plains in search of employment. In fact their numbers increase every passing year. While the demands of the hill people decorate forest policies, they hardly are implemented on the ground. Meanwhile the Uttar Pradesh state government continues to dream of hydropower from dams constructed in this critical seismic zone.

Chipko's legacy might have been to prepare the ground for the demand for Uttarakhand state, but these efforts too have been stymied. As long as the hill people were fighting isolated commercial interests through

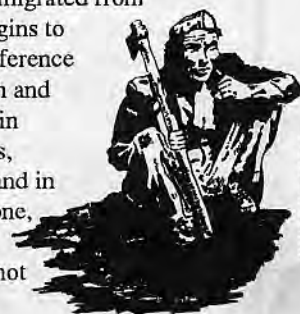


...the Government was the biggest merchant: P.C Tiwari

a movement that had a resonant title, the central and the state governments were willing to allow them the privilege. But when it comes to larger economic and political issues that are enmeshed in the demand for a separate Uttarakhand hill state, the power centres seem quite unwilling to rock the sluggish boat.

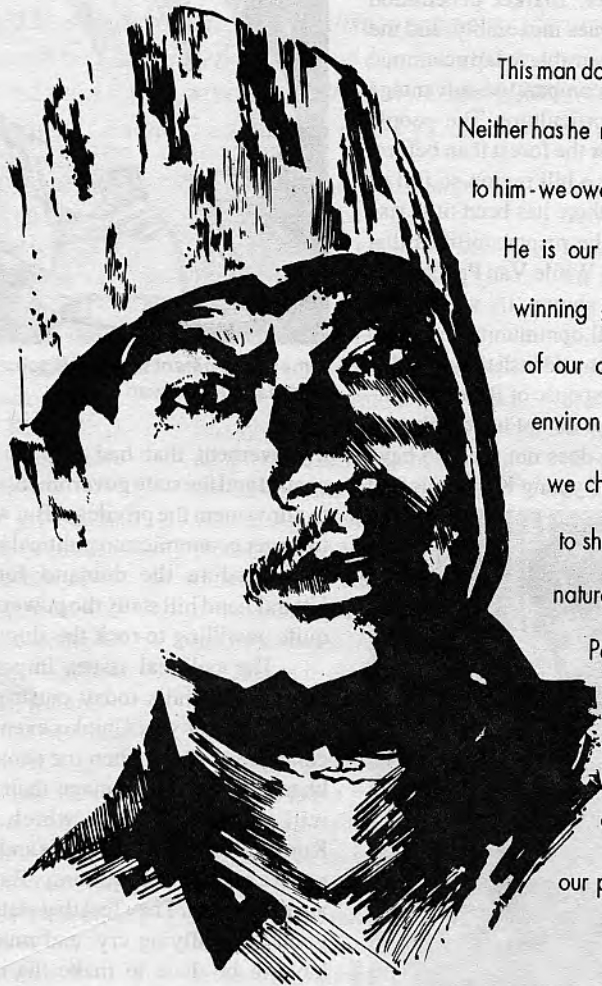
The political issues important for the Uttarakhand hills today outstrip the limited focus of what was Chipko even at its widest conception. Only when the people of Uttarakhand are able to manage their own affairs, will policies emerge which benefit the Kumaonis and the Garhwalis and lead towards a more sustainable economy. But then, others are not so sure. They feel that statehood is only good as a rallying cry, and much more will have to be done to make the hill economy resilient, which will mean more and not fewer interactions with the plains economy.


As for Chipko, it still exists. But it has migrated from the hills of its origins to seminars and conference halls further south and overseas. It lives in university courses, academic tomes and in articles like this one, which keep the controversy, but not the issues, alive.






Research for this article was made possible, in part, by a fellowship from the Panos Institute, London. The views expressed here are the writer's own.

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Portraits of Nepal

When he arrived in Nepal as a Peace Corps volunteer back in 1975, **Kevin Bubriski** noticed how often Nepalis used the word *dukkha*, suffering. In 1984, Bubriski returned with a 4 x 5 inch large format camera to document in photographic film the difficult lives of Nepalis.

What has emerged from his two years of travel is his book, **Portrait of Nepal**, a poetic collection in black and white of Nepal's peasantry living out their *dukkha*. The book packs more power in its 144 pages and 85 pictures than a stack of the glossier four-colour efforts on the book stacks.

Bubriski does not try to sell Nepal (or his book) by training his lens relentlessly on High Himalayan societies, rushing rivers, glistening snows, or temple eaves and monastery roofs.

Instead, we find a Chhetri patriarch of far Humla, Newar cousins in Jumla Bazaar, squatter families in Kathmandu, a Tharu peasant woman, and a priest at the Janaki Temple in the Eastern Tarai., all of them looking somberly into Bubriski's Toyo field camera. There is a rare bond between the photographer and the photographed. This book portrays Nepal, truthfully.

(Readers will recognise a number of images in the book, which have appeared over the last five years in the covers of **Himal**.

Captions to the pictures are taken from the book)



Portrait of Nepal
Chronicle Books
Paperback, US\$ 24.95
ISBN: 0 8118 0301 5

Dhana Sheela's Family, Limitang Village, Humla 1985

Dhana Sheela and her parents stand before the front door of the small house given to them by a wealthy landowning trader family in Limitang village. Her family subsists on food bartered for her father's smithing work and by their shared labor in the landowner's fields.



Tamang Father and Sons, Yarsa Village, Nuwakot 1984
 Yousing Lobsang Tamang, aged forty-two, stands proudly with his three sons, Dawa, Suku, and Pasang Tsering. Among orthodox Hindus of Nepal, sons are preferred over daughters for carrying on the family name and worshiping the family ancestors. The Tamangs and other hill people have accepted this attitude to some extent.



Rana Tharu Couple, Dekat Bhuli Village, Kanchanpur 1986
 This newlywed Rana Tharu couple in Kanchanpur show the persistence of Rana Tharu tradition in the wife's body ornaments, compared to the wristwatch and generic tee shirt of the husband.





Dan Bahadur and His Family, Syara Village, Humla 1985

Although Dan Bahadur Nepali is a proud veteran of the Indian army, in his village of Syara in Humla he and his family are regarded first and foremost as untouchables of the blacksmith caste. His worldliness is most conspicuously expressed by his ownership of the largest radio in the village. He is more literate and aware of the outside world than most of his fellow villagers, though many of them are trans-Himalayan traders who bring their herds of sheep from the snowy Tibetan plateau to the sweltering inner Tarai valley of Surkhet to the south.

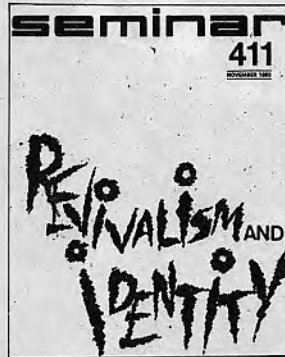
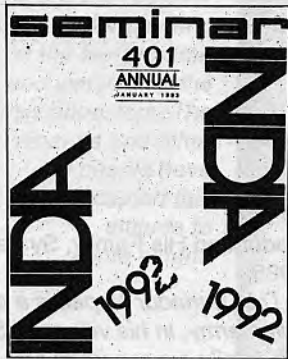
Gurung Schoolboys, Barpak Village, Gorkha 1984
These Gurung schoolboys of Barpak village are the sons of Gurkha British army veterans.



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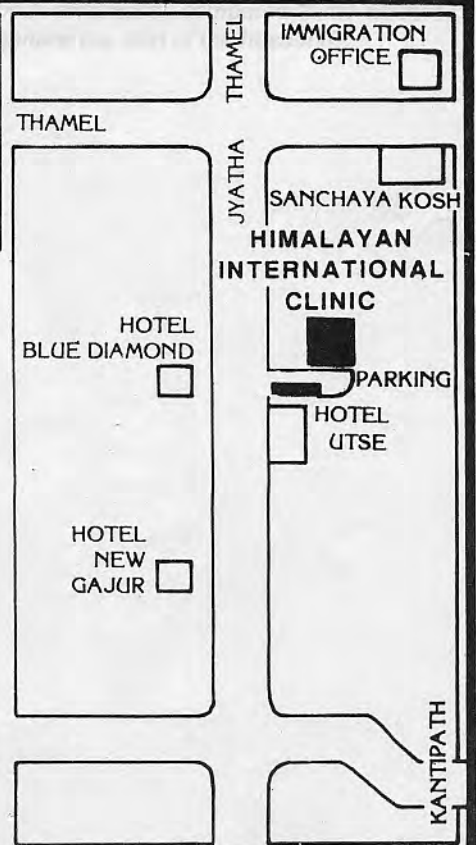
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Tenzing Gyatso on Saddam Hussein and German U-Boats

The Dalai Lama, more than any other present day leader in South Asia (he might be Central Asian, but for the moment lives in Dharamsala), continues to confound observers with his candour and use of logic. He is the un-political politician. In an interview with the New York Times Magazine of 28 November, however, Tenzing Gyatso charted further afield than in the past, speaking dispassionately on matters as diverse as Saddam Hussein, the Central Intelligence Agency, and sexual desire. What follows are excerpts from a remarkable interview with Claudia Dreifus.

On Saddam Hussein of Iraq:

...this blaming everything on him — its unfair. He may be a bad man, but without his army, he cannot act as aggressively as he does. And his army, without weapons, cannot do anything. And these weapons were not produced in Iraq itself. Who supplied them? Western nations! So one day something happened and they blamed everything on him — without acknowledging their own contribution. That's wrong.

The Gulf crisis also clearly demonstrated the serious implications of the arms trade.

On the CIA Support for Tibetan Guerillas:

I'm always against violence. But the Tibetan guerillas were very dedicated people. They were willing to sacrifice their own lives for the Tibetan nation. And they found a way to receive help from the CIA. No, the CIA's motivation for helping was

entirely political. They did not help out of genuine sympathy, not out of support for a just cause. That was not very healthy. Today, the help and support from the United States is truly out of sympathy and human compassion.

On Abortion:

When I was in Lithuania a few years ago, I visited a nursery and I was told, "All these children are unwanted." So I think it is better that that situation be stopped right from the beginning — birth control. Of course, abortion, from a Buddhist viewpoint, is an act of killing and is negative, generally speaking. But it depends on the circumstances. If the unborn child will create serious problems for the parents, these are cases where there can be an exception. I think abortion should be approved or disapproved according to each circumstance.

On his Weaknesses:

Laziness. For instance, sometimes, when I visit some Western countries, I develop an enthusiasm to improve my English. But when I actually make the effort to study, after a few days, my enthusiasm is finished. (Laughs.) That is laziness. Other weaknesses are, I think, anger and attachments. I'm attached to my watch and my prayer beads. Then, of course, sometimes beautiful women... But then, many monks have the same

experience. Some of it is curiosity. If you use this, what is the feeling? (Points to his groin.)

Then, of course, there is the feeling that something sexual must be something very happy, marvelous experience. When this develops, I always see the negative side. There's an expression from Nagarjuna, one of the Indian masters: "If you itch, it's nice to scratch. But it's better to have no itch at all." Similarly with sexual desire. If it is possible to be without that feeling, there is much peace. (Smiles.) And without sex, there's no worry about abortion, condoms, things like that.

On his Hobbies:

I like to let my thoughts come to me each morning before I get up. I meditate for a few hours and that is like recharging... I garden... gardening is one of my hobbies. Also, reading encyclopedias with pictures. (Laughs.) I am a man of peace, but I am fond of looking at picture books of the Second World War. I own some, which I believe are produced by Time-Life. I've just ordered a new set. Thirty books... Perhaps because the stories are so negative and gruesome, they strengthen my belief in nonviolence. (Smiles.) However, I find many of the machines of violence very attractive. Tanks, airplanes, warships, especially aircraft carriers. And the German U-Boats, submarines...



DAVID CAIRNS/TIBETAN BULLETIN

On 1 November, Tenzing Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, unveiled a life-size wax statue of himself at Madame Tussaud's Exhibition in London, reports the Nov/Dec 1993 issue of the Tibetan Bulletin.

Sculptor Jim Kempton worked on the wax statue for six months, "studying detailed measurements and photographs of every angle taken at a sitting in Scotland" in early 1993.

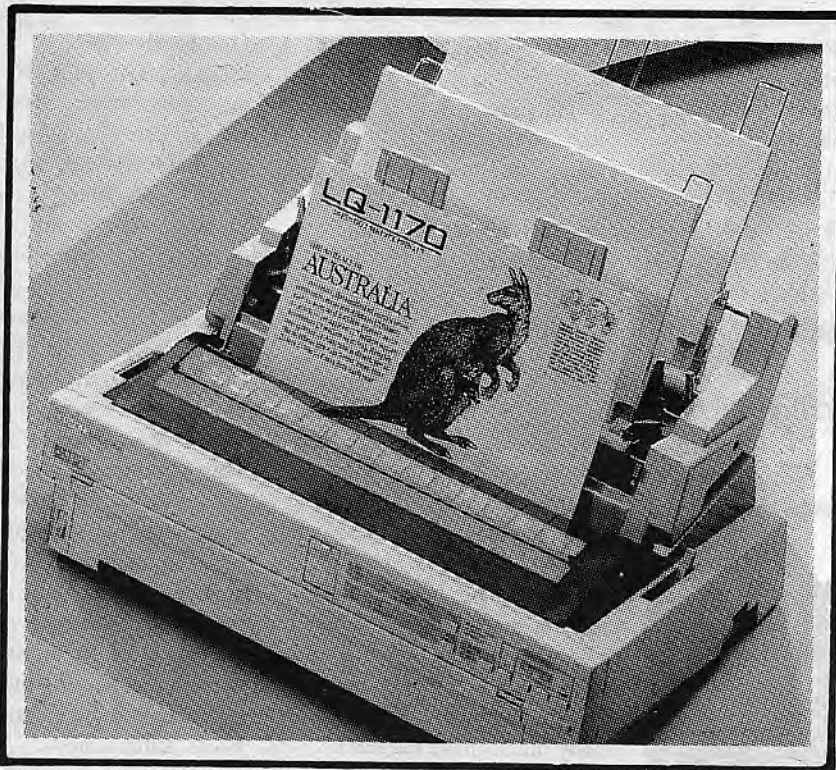
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Discussing the "Tinkering Approach" and the "Grand Plan"

Even as Himalayan studies in general picked up over the last few decades, Tibet remained a relative backwater in terms of research. Till recently, a conference on Tibet's environment was a rarity outside Dharamsala, and the agenda of the rare event would seem to have been dictated by one of the great Himalayan explorers — Sven Hedin, Robert Byron or Frank Kingdon-Ward. Exotic plants and animals — and more exotic humans — was as far as it could go.

Fortunately, things are changing. Today, as the Chinese industrial-bureaucratic machine tightens its grip over the remoter parts of the Tibetan ecosystem, there is a simultaneous rise of interest in the Tibetan environment among scholars, and a new emphasis on the value of scientific analysis. Two conferences on Tibet's environment, held in Paris and Stockholm in 1993, exemplify the trend.

Opening the conference "The Third Pole: The Environment and People of Tibet" in Paris in September, Robbie Barnett of the Tibet Information Network described the perceptions of Tibet's ecology held by different constituencies: the Western view, the view of the Chinese State, the often differ-

ing view of Chinese scientists, that of Tibetans in Tibet, and the traditional view as articulated by the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile. The latter two views are quite different, Barnett suggested, because the traditional view is no longer widely held within Tibet. While the perceptions differed, however, environment concerns offered the best possibilities for the various constituencies to work together, said Barnett.

Elmar Reiter of the University of Colorado described current research on the impact of the Tibetan plateau on global climate patterns, citing data from as far a field as the South Pacific and Siberia. His thesis was that the state of vegetation and snow cover on the plateau

have a significant influence on its albedo, or ability to reflect the sun's heat. This in turn determines summer temperatures over the plateau, affecting jet stream currents and monsoon winds. Anomalous snowfall in Tibet seems to affect not only these phenomena, but is also linked to the occurrence of the El Nino current off the west coast of South America and unseasonably cold and hot spells over Europe and North America. All this points to the undoubted importance of Tibet, both as a sensitive ecological zone as well as an observatory of climatic observations.

In another paper, Terry Cannon from the University of Greenwich in London filled in the details of the Chinese demographic expansion into Tibet, while Alexander Kiss of Strasbourg University proposed a vote for the Tibetans' right for their environment. In a somewhat rambling presentation, John Ackerly of the International Campaign for Tibet presented recent information on the 'nuclearisation' of Tibet, as well as development information

sustainability and environmental risk, while this writer sought to dispel the myth that deforestation along Tibetan rivers is causally related to increased siltation and flooding in downstream basins.

Sponsored by the French Government and organised by two relatively new NGOs, EcoTibet-France and Environment Sans Frontiere, the Paris conference was able to analyse environmental and development trends, but provided little in the way of a future agenda or practical solutions. That task was, in part, undertaken by the second conference, "Ecology, Development Trends and Transnational Impacts on the High Plateau", held in Stockholm in November.

Organised by EcoTibet-Sweden and the Swedish Tibet Committee, this meeting fielded papers, among others, on the environmental history and biodiversity of the Himalaya, development trends in Tibet, remote sensing versus the field-work approach to data collection, and sustainable development in Ladakh. The day-long conference was rounded off by a panel discussion on the viability of independent projects for sustainable development in Tibet.

It was clear that the question of Tibetan development involved two radically differing perceptions of the road to be taken. The conference discussed the "grand plan" and the "tinkering" approaches to development. The Chinese mega-project approach falls in the first category, whereas the needs of Tibet was seen to lie in small, participatory projects, such as for watershed management, education and health.

- Sanjeev Prakash



on food subsidies and the Yamdrok Tso Hydroelectric Project. Michael Thompson of the International Academy of the Environment presented a cultural view of environment and development in the Himalaya, outlining differing perceptions of nature,

Tibetan yak considers sustainable development

Ladakh on the Schedule

As ethnic assertion and demands for reservations and affirmative actions increase in the Himalayan region with the authorities being pressured to act, there will be myriads of complexities to untangle. Most difficult will be the problem of identifying those eligible for preferential status. Ladakh is a case in point. In January 1991, the Indian Government decided to extend Schedule Tribe status to most residents of Ladakh. The debate that has risen subsequently over identity, identification and group rights is instructive to all concerned over inter-ethnic and communal harmony in the Himalaya. The issue of scheduled tribe status for Ladakh was covered in-depth by Delhi University sociologist Smriti Srinivas in Frontline. What follows is an adapted portion of her piece in the magazine.

Scheduled Tribe status has been conferred on nearly all inhabitants of Ladakh (that is, both Leh and Kargil districts), except on groups such as Arghun Sunni Muslims (born of marriages between Ladakhis and Sunni Muslims from outside Ladakh, basically Kashmiris), Syeds and Khans. Syeds have been denied ST status presumably on the ground that they are 'ethnically' outside Ladakh; and in the case of Khans, the consideration was their high economic status (though ST status has not been denied to wealthy Buddhist families). The denial of tribal status to Arghun Sunnis is, however, a thorny issue locally and is a result of contradictions in Government policy.

Ladakh Muslim Association President Akbar Ladakhi does not agree with the recommendations made by experts on Ladakhi history to the

Registrar General in charge of Scheduled Tribes. Their definition of Arghuns as half-breeds (saying they had an identity of their own different from the other 'tribes' of Ladakh) is contradictory to the idea of a 'tribe' in the first place, he says. If the experts had adopted the criterion of naming the inhabitants of a region as a whole as eligible for tribal status, it would not have created bitterness. He adds: "By virtue of its geographical isolation and backwardness, the entire region of Ladakh is eligible for ST status."

It does appear to many that the denial of ST status to Arghun Muslims is not just, as other 'half-breeds' such as Dogra Arghuns (of mixed Ladakhi and Dogra parentage) and Nepali Arghuns (of mixed Ladakhi and Nepali parentage) have been given tribal status. This is partly due to the conflating of various

criteria for deciding on ST status. Some of the 'ethnic tribes' are accorded this status according to the region they belong to; for instance, Baltipa (people of Baltistan) and Purigpa (people of Purig). Other groups are declared tribal on the basis of some racial criteria; for instance, 'Botos' (a term indicating people of Mongoloid or Tibetan stock, locally having association with Buddhists and, therefore, not acceptable to Arghun Sunnis).

The land settlement of 1908 has been taken as a cut-off point for such designation, in which families have been defined as being "Arghun", "Balti", "Buddhist" and so on. The hybrid social situation has been simplified by the application of the criterion of naming the groups eligible for ST status and by deciding, when in doubt, patrilineally. Thus, if a person has a Kashmiri father or

grandfather and a Buddhist mother or grandmother, even if he has converted to Buddhism, he is denied ST status by virtue of his paternal descent.

It is not yet clear what benefits the ST status will bring to the Ladakhi people apart from the normal benefits of reservation in educational institutions, government jobs, scholarships, and so on. And it remains to be seen how far reaching the effects of the new status will be. It is true that more Ladakhis will be able to enter the mainstream of national life in the fields of education and employment and, therefore, have a greater presence and voice. The question, of course, is whether these benefits will be equally accessible to all sections of the population.

If ST status is given to all inhabitants of Ladakh, it would go a long way in creating an atmosphere of goodwill. This opinion was endorsed by a responsible section of the older generation in Leh. It was felt that first, given Ladakh's backwardness vis-a-vis the rest of India, some reservation policy for the whole area was necessary; second, given its vulnerable geo-political position, alienating sections of the population, howsoever advantageous in the Machiavellian internal politics of the nation-state, would be counterproductive.

The success of the new initiatives in Leh will depend



Mural in Ladakh's Thiksey Monastery. The bird, the snake and the boar signify three capital sins: desire, anger and ignorance.

STELLA SNEGO

on a combination of economic and cultural factors; the influence of regions such as Tibet, Central Asia and Kashmir in its political and social history (in matters of trade, pilgrimage and transhumance), which makes Ladakh a multcentred zone; the existence of various cultural groups — Shias, Sunnis, Buddhists (of various order) Christians and so on — speaking different dialects with shifting allegiances and cleavages; political interest at the local level and above, which often crisscross; and finally, the customary modes of life based on a political economy of which the Indian nation state is yet to have full control. All these factors make Ladakh a centre of various centripetal and centrifugal forces, throwing up questions about the success of the proposed decentralisation experiment, — the hill council.

Peace Conference in Shillong

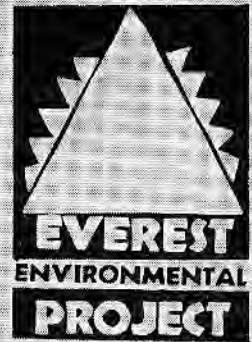
Shillong, once hailed as the "oasis of peace" in the strife-torn Indian northeast, is to host an international conference, 7-14 April 1994, to promote on ethnic harmony, reports the Calcutta Telegraph.

You are invited to consider mankind's deepest concerns, aspirations and challenges, and to share experiences of change and hope in difficult situations," states the invitation letter that has been sent to feuding Serbs, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia, to Blacks and Whites in South Africa, Israelis, Palestinians, Lebanese, as well as people from Manipur. Invitations have also been sent to Asia-Pacific

countries "where multi-racial populations are now living in peace".

Shillong is said to have been selected as the venue "since it offers easy accessibility to the clashing Nagas and Kukis in neighbouring Manipur, as well as the different tribes and minority groups in the Northeast who are up in arms against their respective governments".

Being organised by a group called Moral Rearmament, and supported by the Ramakrishna Mission and various Christian organisations, the theme of the conference is: "Learning to live together -- frontier of hope". Since foreign delegates will need restricted area permits to enter the Northeast, their applications will have to reach the conference coordinator by February.



Zapping Poop with Solar Power

The Everest Environmental Project, run by Himalayan rubbish expert Bob McConnell, is trying to transfer a solar toilet system developed in Taos, New Mexico, to the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute's training camp north of Darjeeling.

The project came out of a meeting between Ajit Dutt, Principal of HMI and McConnell at a mountaineering conference in Las Vegas (!) last year, according to the Project's newsletter. Talking to Dutt, McConnell found out that "HMI is host to 1,400 students a year. Each student spends ten days at the 14,600 ft high HMI Base Camp during training. At a pound of poop per day per student, the HMI has to deal with approximately seven tons of waste a year at its Base Camp."

In September, an architect from Taos, named Michael Reynolds, arrived at the Base Camp and set up the solar toilet prototype. It is designed to dry out and sterilize waste using "passive solar power". What is left is a sterile, dry powder which can be disposed of safely and easily.

If the toilet works, says McConnell, it could "revolutionise how waste is handled, not only in base camps but on trekking routes and in villages throughout the Himalaya."

The Project awaits feedback from HMI to confirm how the toilets work, as do we all.

Phoenix Journal

Will the *Himalayan Research Bulletin* rise from the ashes? Reflecting perhaps the lessening of interest in Himalayan studies in North American universities, over recent years the journal has lost some of its lustre. Shunted from one American university to another in search of patronage, the journal became less and less regular.

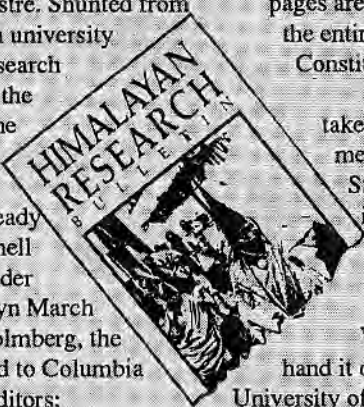
After a steady tenure at Cornell University under editors Kathryn March and David Holmberg, the journal moved to Columbia University (editors: Theodore Riccardi, Bruce Owens, Bill Fisher). In 1991, editorship was taken over by Ter Ellingson and Linda Iltis of the

University of Washington in Seattle. Apparently, the University did not come up with promised support, and only one issue has been brought out so far. Even that issue is not unflawed, as the bulk of its pages are devoted to printing the entire 1990 Nepali Constitution.

A decision was taken over the fall, at a meeting of the Nepal Studies Association in Wisconsin, to wrest the publication from the University of Washington and hand it over to the University of Texas in Austin. Barbara Brower, a geographer who has worked among the Sherpas, was appointed the new editor.

The survival or demise of the HRB in the coming year will also indicate the state of Himalayan studies in North America. In the past, European scholars were among the main supporters of HRB. Now, they have their own publication, the *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*, and author and reader loyalties are fractured. Perhaps a partnership between the Europeans and North Americans to publish one, regular, professional journal will be to everyone's good.

New subscription details:
Himalayan Research Bulletin, Geography Department, University of Austin, Texas 78712, USA
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 Institutions: US\$50
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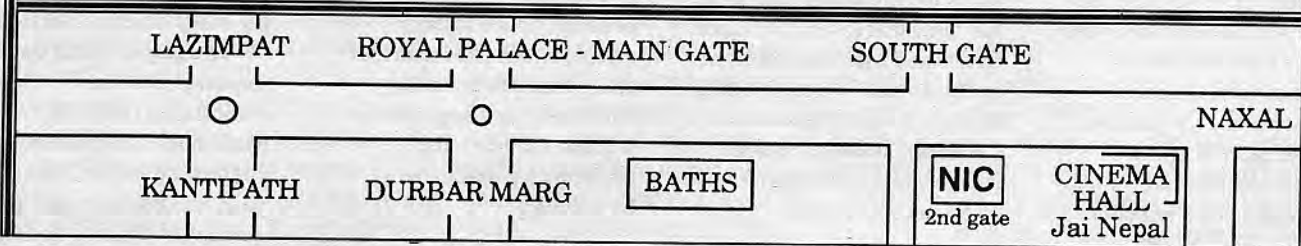
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V O I

Bhaktapur is a CLIMAX COMMUNITY of Hinduism, a witness to South Asian history, says Robert I. Levy, in Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal (University of California Press 1990), written with Kedar Raj Rajopadhyaya. But Bhaktapurians, too, are today headed for familiar shores, he says.

Whatever the shifting historical relation between caste and territorial units might have been, the conditions that allowed for the formation and development of little kingdoms allowed for the fulfillment of Hinduism's potentials for ordering a community. Such little kingdoms seem to have represented, to borrow a term from ecology, "climax communities" of Hinduism, where it reached the full development of its potentials for systematic complexity, and with it a temporary stability, an illusion of being a middle world, a *mesocosm*, mediating between its citizens and the cosmos, a mesocosm out of time...

This large aggregate of people, this rich archaic city, uses marked symbolism to create an order that requires resources — material, social, and cultural — beyond the possibilities and beyond the needs of a small traditional community. The elaborate construction of an urban mesocosm is a resource not only for ordering the city but also for the personal use of the kinds of people Bhaktapur produces. Or at any rate has produced. Some of our acceptable cultural ancestors tried to make doubt a method, and finally succeeded in freeing us, as they believed, from marked symbolism, succeeded in making the symbolic "only" symbolic. The people of Bhaktapur are beginning to desert their continent in the great divide for familiar shores.

Why is Bhaktapur the way it is? Much that exists in Bhaktapur is a result of its long history and its location in South Asia whose areal forms are the products of several millennia of creation and reaction. Thus one explanation of much that exists and goes on in Bhaktapur is historical and diffusionist. Yet, throughout its history Bhaktapur selected among and shaped to its own purposes the offerings of history and the inventions of its neighbours. Its growth and its day-to-day life were determined by its internal structures, tensions, and requirements, internal forces that influenced the city's response to history and environment. From the city's own point of view, "history" was only a disturbance for better or worse of its natural order, only a contingency to be dealt with until its effects became rejected or else transformed and worked out within the order of the city. When we consider the city's inner order it becomes possible to discern not only the effects of Bhaktapur's historical and areal character as a "South Asian" or "Hindu" city, but also its characteristics — in a different sort of classification — as one of a limited number of possible forms of human community, in this case an "archaic city"...

Thus, a kind of answer to "why is Bhaktapur the way it is", the problem of its particular form in comparison with other communities, is that when its economy and agricultural surplus and situation permitted, it grew into a city by making use of and transforming what it had at hand in the local settlements of the time. It was natural for its builders to assume that a community is a collection of people who share and are rooted in a coherent local world, and it was natural for them to make extended use of the powerful and relatively easy to craft marked symbols that small communities use for more restricted

purposes. Bhaktapur — like the other Newar cities — following Indian models, elaborated a long-established local culture, converting it into its civilized dimension in the simplest and most self-evident way. In this conversion to a city and a civilization marked religious symbols became elaborated for the special tasks of the burgeoning community. It worked for a long time.

Most of its precursors in type were long gone when Bhaktapur was founded. The kind of wealth that made them possible attracted barbarians and empire builders, and thus they contained the seductions to their own often violent transformations. South Asian communities held out longer than most. As they, finally, under long and intense pressures began their transformations, accidents of location and history, and eventually, of national Nepalese policy allowed Bhaktapur to drift on for a while, a witness.

PEOPLE MAKE A NATION, not states, writes Jason W. Clay in an article in Mother Jones of Nov/Dec 1990. He says it is necessary to redefine the relationship of the state to the nations within them.

There are about five thousand nations in the world today. What makes each a nation is that its people share a language, culture, territorial base, and political organization and history. The Kayapo Indians are but one nation within the state called Brazil. The Penan people of Sarawak are but one nation within the state called Malaysia. To the people of the nations, group identity matters more than state affiliation. The five thousand nations have existed for hundreds, even thousands of years. The majority of the world's 190 states have been around only since World War II. Very few nations have ever been given a choice when they were made part of a state.

Most of the shooting wars in the world today are fought between nations and the states that claim to represent them. With very few exceptions, these wars are not about the independence of nations, but rather their level of autonomy: who controls the rights to resources (land, water, minerals, trees), who provides local security, who determines the policies that affect language, laws, and cultural and religious rights.

Nearly all the international debt accumulated by African states, and nearly half of all other Third World debt, comes from the purchase of weapons by states to fight their own citizens. Most of the 12 million refugees are the offspring of such conflicts, as are most of the 100 million internally displaced people who have been uprooted from their homelands. Most of the world's famine victims are nation peoples who are being starved by states that attempt to assimilate them while appropriating their food supplies. Most of the destructive colonization, resettlement, and villagization programs are sponsored by states, in the name of progress, in order to bring nation peoples to their knees.

With Third World countries no longer looked on as proxies in an ideological war, the U.S. and other Western powers are pulling back on aid. That means cutting the umbilical cords of Third World elites. The consequent weakening of their power may unleash more

struggle between states and nations within them who sense an opportunity to win more control over their futures.

If nations and states are to find a peaceful coexistence, a system of decentralized federalism will have to evolve. By this I mean a political system that is built from the bottom up, one that gives autonomy and power to nation peoples, who in turn empower the state to act on their behalf.

Beyond this guiding principle there is no one model. Weak states with strong nations may break themselves into new states. Newly independent nations, after trying to make a go of it for a while, may decide it is to their advantage to be part of a larger political unit. Many nations may use independence as a negotiating stance and settle for more local control within a state. To date, because the political processes in most states are not open, the only way nations have been able to push for their rights is to take them by force. The next 20 years are likely to be bloody if the world cannot find a new and better way to answer the demands of its now emboldened nations.

There is a senselessness ABOUT OCCUPATIONS, which is in startling contrast to the supposed rationality of the participants, says Nigel Harris in "Tibet and Empire", Economic and Political Weekly of 25 September, 1993.

Tibet may be going to be as disastrous for China as Kashmir has been and continues to be for India. The threat is still only a small cloud in the distant sky, but too often in our times, these small clouds become typhoons.

History is so unfair. The Government has become much more liberal politically in Tibet and Economic Liberalism suits the instincts of the Tibetans perfectly. Yet the more tolerant the regime becomes, the greater the degree of overt discontent. After 34 years of occupation, there is more openly expressed hostility than ever before. Everywhere the portrait of Dalai Lama mocks Beijing — the officials know full well that this supposedly innocent religious identification is political rebellion; in some of the holiest places, 'Free Tibet' stickers appear mysteriously. Many young men now ape the Khampa red braid, woven into their uncut hair, and carry the sword; the Khampas were — not without CIA help — the most ferocious opponents of Chinese Rule. Now they stand, like Cary Grant on Main Street, laconic in supposedly deadly strength, or ride across the wide treeless landscapes, stetson pulled down over their eyes.

Each year, since the major confrontation in 1987, there is renewed agitation, usually led by monks, alarming the tourist trade (or inspiring some, who long for national independence, wherever it occurs) and fluttering the sleeping doves of Washington. ...

... Why does China want Tibet? Leaving aside all the historical claims (and the rubbish of all the 'sacred motherland, etc) which governments invent as they wish (in any case, it is an absurd principle that past practice should, regardless of circumstance, govern past arrangements,) it was reasonable before 1947 to be suspicious of British influence in Lhasa, and then and in the 1950s, Washington

might well have sought influence there. But not only has the technology changed — Washington can lay waste any area of the world without holding or influencing adjacent territories — the politics have become transformed. Neither the US nor Russia have any interest in Tibet. Only Delhi might try to continue the mischief of the great game, but even that is pretty unlikely — it has its hand full elsewhere. Holding Tibet is expensive, both in direct subsidies and the cost of civil administration. (Tibetans believe government officers in Tibet are paid three times what they earn in China proper) and of the military forces. Could it possibly be justified by the marginal gains of offsetting a remote Indian threat? The political costs abroad are also not insignificant. And holding it can only get more expensive, especially if those young men with Khampa braids decide the Dalai Lama's message of peace and talk is far too slow for their lifetime, and bombs must be thrown, guerilla raids organised and so on.

NEPAL PROVIDES US\$764M AID to Europe, says a press release dated 21 December 1993, which was not picked up by the Kathmandu media. The reference seems to be to the Arun III Hydropower Project.

In view of growing recession in Europe, Nepal has used its influence in the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other leading agencies to borrow US\$ 764 million in order to revive sick and dying hydropower industries and consulting firms in Europe.

The news has come just before the Christmas holidays begin in Europe and will definitely bring light and joy to many homes where there would otherwise have been a very dark and gloomy Christmas. It is also reported that in order to create jobs for Europeans, the Nepali Government, in a gesture of benevolence that befits the season of giving, will lay off a thousand of its own staff at the Nepal Electricity Authority.

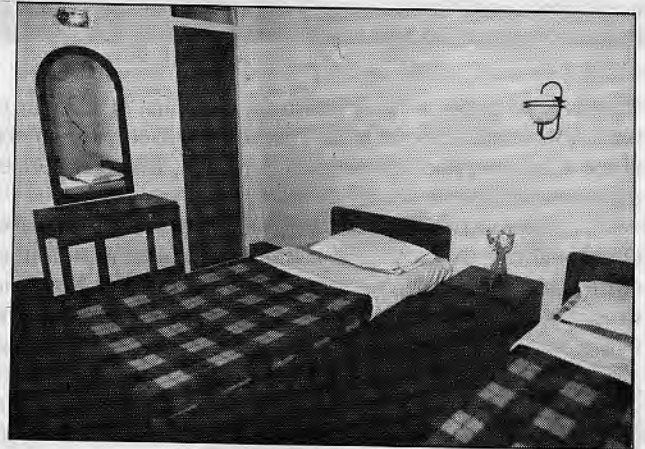
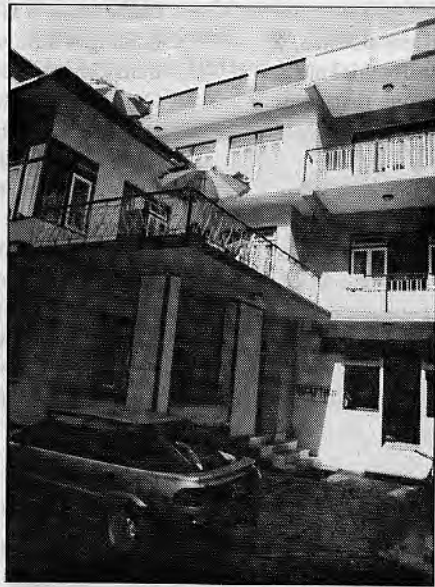
The US\$ 764 million aid package will be used over the next ten years to build a 117km road in eastern Nepal and a 201MW hydropower project at the end of it. Over 500 Nepali engineers currently employed by NEA will supervise and oversee the entire project; but will be paid about fifty times less than the European engineers Nepal is paying to do the job.

The US\$ 764 million aid package will be used to procure turbines, trucks, helicopters and equipment from a whole range of European companies who would otherwise face large lay offs or even closure. Senior Nepali government officials have also disclosed that if needed, the price of electricity in Nepal will be hiked up by as much as 65% if necessary in order to help the Europeans. Members of the cabinet and a section of the Nepali press have already begun a campaign to inform the Nepali public about the benefits to the nation of the potential price hikes.

As an indication of the seriousness of the Nepali government, it is rumoured that the Nepal Electricity Authority may sign contracts with European companies on January 27, 1994 even though the lending agencies do not approve the loan until March 1994.

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A Native by Any Other Name...



Are 'indigenous people' those who were previously known as 'tribals', 'natives', 'aborigines' or 'ethnic minorities'? What is the use of yet another term, and is it applicable to most of Nepal's communities?

by Rajendra Pradhan

One of the most sensitive exercises in multicultural study and discourse is the use of language and terms to describe communities that are yet to join the 'modern' world. Terms such as 'tribal', 'aborigine', or 'native' have received reviews both good and bad, depending on who uses them, when and where. They started out as descriptive terms used by the colonialists, white hunters, cowboys and anthropologists to describe more neutrally those otherwise known as 'savages'.

These three terms fell into disrepute as guilt and concern swept the Western-educated classes. To avoid being judged old-fashioned, conservative, totalitarian, or prejudiced, they have settled for the term 'indigenous', even though it is a bit fuzzy and it is not clear who is and is not indigenous. The new term was given respectability and international seal of approval by none other than the United Nations General Assembly, which declared 1993 the

International Year of the Indigenous People and has just declared the entire decade ahead as also being that of the Indigenous People.

The politically correct term in currency, thus, is 'indigenouness', and leaders of non-Western native populations all over the world are rallying around it. In the indigenous tide that is sweeping the arena of discourse, the subtleties which define native populations around the world are being lost.

In Nepal, too, representatives of the non-dominant hill and plain (in the case of groups such as the Tharu) communities have adopted the new terminology. To hear the ethnic leaders say it, groups such as, the Gurungs, Magars and Tamangs are no longer *matwali*, or *janjati* but indigenous (*adivasi*). At first glance, this seems quite appropriate, particularly as a political response to the reluctance of the Bahun and Chhetri elites to share power within the new democratic structures.

The Government vs. the Indigenous People(s)

The governments of South Asia are in a bind. With vocal support being expressed worldwide for indigenous peoples, they do not want to appear reluctant in endorsing the spirit. At the same time, they are concerned that recognition of collective rights, including the right to self-determination, self-government and autonomy, will lead to the unravelling of the nation state. And so, when the General Assembly discussed the subject prior to proclaiming an international decade to mark the cause of all who are indigenous, South Asian representatives mixed pious pronouncements with reservations.

The South Asian States were not exceptions, however. Throughout the United Nations system, while the indigenous people have received unprecedented support in terms of verbiage, there is extreme ambivalence about how far to go with it. This ambivalence pops up, for example, whenever the discussion turns to the troublesome final 's' in 'indigenous peoples'.

"Indigenous activists believe that only when they are recognised as 'peoples' and not as 'people' will their rights to self-determination and their protection under international law be upheld", says Jordana Friedman of organisation *Cultural Survival*. "Human rights is not just about the rights of individuals, but about the collective rights of communities".

The Governments, however, refused to go along, both at the Human Rights Conference in Vienna in June and at the General Assembly. Even when the Assembly agreed on 21 December to proclaim the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, the 's' was missing.

As Chief Ted Moses, of the Cree tribe, stated in his address to the Vienna Conference, "They have called us "groups",

"populations", "communities", "societies", "persons", "ethnic minorities", now they have decided to call us "people", in the singular.... They will call us anything but what we are, peoples".

The Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, established in 1982 under the Commission for Human Rights, is the focal point of the United Nations' activities in the United Nations. A unique body within the UN system for allowing the full participation by non-governmental representatives, the Working Group has made recommendations on the question of ownership and control of cultural and religious property of indigenous peoples. In July 1993, it completed a draft Declaration on the Rights for Indigenous People, an effort that had been slowed down by wariness of governmental representatives on the issues of self-determination, collective rights to territories, and the significance of treaties between Governments and indigenous groups.

The final draft Declaration contains explicit reference to self-determination, and the United States representative, speaking pretty much for all governments, said that it "could not accept the inclusion of self-determination as applying specifically to indigenous groups if it implies or permits full independence generally recognised under international law".

Not even the working group seems to have gone into the difficult proposition of defining 'indigenouness', however. Said one UN official, "The Group has left it to the people to define themselves as indigenous, and it works with whichever group presents itself."

"Participation in the Working Group," says one brochure, "is open to all who view it as an appropriate forum for their concerns, have historical continuity with societies that predate colonisation, conquest and nation states, and wish to preserve and develop their different identities". Here too, therefore, indigenouness remains a grey zone.

According to the United Nations, there are some 300 million indigenous people in the world in more than 70 countries. None of the UN material available comes to the aid of those who want to confirm the indigenouness of the ethnic groups of the middle-hills of the Himalaya. As far as the United Nations is concerned, they become "indigenous" if they make the claim and present themselves before the Working Group.

While some Nepali ethnic leaders have made claims to be indigenous, none are listed as having participated in the Working Group's work. From India, the Nagas are represented, as are the Chakmas of Bangladesh and Veddas of Sri Lanka. The Tibetans are variously identified by many Western activist groups as indigenous, but the Dharamsala government-in-exile has shunned the identification because, said one Tibetan official, "we feel that claiming indigenouness status will undermine our claims for nationhood and statehood". At the same time, the official conceded that Tibetan leadership did not mind being called 'indigenous' informally as long as it helped strengthen Western support for "the cause".

As for Bhutan, its government spokesmen have on occasion sought to garner international sympathy by referring to the Drukpas as the indigenous people of the country, but no such claims seem to have been made in the United Nations, where the term "distinctive national identity" is emphasised. - Kanak Mani Dixit



*Chepang boy:
Himalayan,
Indigenous*



However, there are pitfalls in the use of a term which gained usage in a context that is wholly different from what exists in the Nepali hills. Although its use is understandable, the Nepali

ethnic leaders should resist the urge to become a part of a currently fashionable worldwide indigenous peoples' movement. Why? Because that movement's focus is quite different and will not serve the purpose of most Nepali communities. Nepali leaders should develop another term that will more appropriately convey the attributes of the non-dominant communities of Nepal, and the challenges they face vis-a-vis the dominant groups.

Continued use of an alien term that is not a reflection of reality might mean wasted opportunity in shaking up the political and social systems in Nepal and forcing them to recognize the need to share power among communities and to treat them as social equals. Nepal's ethnic leaders must develop their own intellectual response to the question of Nepali multi-ethnicity, cultural pluralism and socio-economic development instead of blindly aping foreign ideas. The atavistic way the term 'indigenous' is being used in Nepal, reflecting the 'bhumi putra' (son of the soil) programs of many South and South East Asian nations, is hardly useful or healthy.

It is therefore important to discuss the issue of indigenousness critically, even at the cost of offending those who call themselves 'indigenous'. At the outset, we need to be clear who the 'indigenous peoples' are and whether the term is appropriate and relevant in all regions and all contexts. For a term that is inappropriate or irrelevant can weaken the very agenda that it proposes to define.

Indigenous and Marginal

In the minds of those who developed the term, the liberals in the West, 'indigenous' are those inhabitants of the rainforests, deserts and swamps, people who live in close communion with nature and far removed from the world of trade, commerce and machines.

In the Himalaya, those who come closest to the Western understanding of 'indigenous people' are probably the forest dwellers of the eastern Himalaya, the Mizos, Nagas, Monpas and others. The more numerous populations of the Himalayan region, from the Lepchas and Gurungs to Ladakhis and Baltis, can hardly be served by the term 'indigenous', as it does not denote their more 'advanced' conditions in terms of civilisational culture, sophisticated

trading links, and long-standing interaction with the outside world.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines 'indigenous peoples' thus :

"Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from populations which inhabited the country or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions. Self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of the convention apply."



According to this definition, the key criterion for identifying indigenous peoples are that a people be descendants of first-comers to a land, that they are differentiated from other communities, and that they identify themselves as indigenous. A fourth criteria is added by some other sources, that the subject population is marginalised in the country it inhabits.

The London-based organisation Panos says that there are 250 million indigenous peoples living in about 70 countries. These are known variously as "First Peoples, Indians, Natives, Aborigines, Nomads, Tribals, First Nations, Minority Nationalities (China) and Small Peoples (Russia)". According to Panos, the term is usually used more broadly, to also include "other marginalised groups such as the nomadic peoples of Africa."

In this definition, indigenous peoples include not only 'tribals' but also ethnic groups, (for example, the Minority Nationalities of China and the Small Peoples of Russia), so long as they are marginalised, i.e. at the periphery of society. At the same time, it is clear that Westerners and people of other "Higher Civilizations" (for example, the Chinese and Japanese, or the Hindus and Muslims of South Asia) are excluded.

Tribals and Adivasi

The term 'indigenous' was first used to denote the Native Americans of the Americas and the aborigines of Australia and New Zealand. In those countries, the autochthonous populations were conquered by Europeans, people of a different race, religion, language and culture. The natives were systematically decimated by the conquerors, either by

outright killing and murder, or by depriving them of their traditional lands, natural resources, and lifestyles.

Indigenous movements began in these countries, where the white establishment rules over the descendants of the original inhabitants. Native and Aborigine groups have risen to claim compensation from governments for ancestral lands and natural resources they contain. In a different context, the natives of Latin America organised themselves as indigenous peoples, to survive and to save their cultures from the power of autocrats, elite classes, developers and big business.

Indeed one of the major themes of the indigenous peoples movement everywhere has been the preservation of their cultures - an attempt to maintain social diversity not unlike the movement to preserve biological diversity. Thus, it is not coincidental that there is a simultaneous effort to preserve the rainforests as well as the cultures of the peoples living in these forests.

The differences between the so-called indigenous peoples and the colonisers or conquerors are much sharper in the Americas and Australasia than they are in South Asia, where, as a noted Indian sociologist Andre Beteille has pointed out, "It is generally very difficult to draw a sharp line of distinction between tribal and non-tribal communities on the basis of either race or religion or language."

Connotations and Confusion

To my mind, in the Himalayan region, 'indigenous peoples' do not exist. Or rather, they either exist everywhere or they exist nowhere. Indigenous peoples are a creation, an invention, of Westerners in search of a new term to replace the outmoded and derogatory terms 'native', 'tribal', or 'aborigine' — terms which the Westerners had invented to categorize peoples who were different from themselves, and which ended up being derogatory for that very reason. Therefore, requiring another value-free term, they came up with 'indigenous'; rather, they co-opted a term that was used in a specific context and applied to rainforest dwellers, and began to apply it loosely to refer to larger and larger groups.

Despite the current fashion, the term 'indigenous peoples' is as derogatory as the terms 'natives', 'tribals' or 'aborigines', because all these terms are *not* applied to Westerners or others claiming to be members of "Higher Civilizations". One can hardly imagine the English, the French or the Greeks calling themselves indigenous, or the Welsh or Scots.



Or, nearer home, the Rajputs and Brahmins of India or the Thakuris of Nepal, even though during the bad old days they might have been 'natives' to the colonisers.

Then why should the Magars, Gurungs and the Tharus of Nepal identify themselves as 'indigenous'? One possible explanation is that once a terminology has gained international usage, it is almost impossible for local groups to make themselves heard other than by using it. In practical terms, it probably provides the best slogan to come along, one which could be used with effect against the dominant elites and that comes with the seal of international approval. So, rather than go through the trouble of propounding another word or concept, the Nepali ethnic groups prefer to use the term 'indigenous' ('*adivasi*' in Nepali) which has negative connotations, ...that of being primitive, and uncivilized.

What's in a name, one might ask. It was the Bard, after all, who said that a rose by any other name does smell as sweet. But names carry meanings and connotations which are often subtle but significant and failure to understand them often leads to confusion.

In a seminar organized by the Nepal Janajati Mahasangh, the Minister of Housing and Physical Planning, Bal Bahadur Rai, "stressed the need to identify the 'adivasis' (indigenous people) and carry out research works on them", reported the *Rising Nepal* English daily in October 1993. He spoke of the need to "uplift the languages and cultures" on the verge of extinction. However, Minister Rai was careful not to categorically identify the indigenous peoples, lest some groups be left out and other groups which do not belong included.

The participants at an ethnicity conference held in Dharan in East Nepal a few months earlier, and attended by representatives of minority groups, expressed bewilderment as to the nomenclature they should use to describe themselves: tribal, janajati (roughly corresponding to 'ethnic groups'), *adivasi*, Mongoloid, Mongols, and indigenous. Further, which minority groups should be included and which excluded? For example, are the Newars an indigenous group? There is confusion about terminologies and behind the confused use of terms, a confusion about identities.

First Come, First Claim

Some of the groups claiming to be 'indigenous' today previously used to call themselves janjati. But that was when 'ethnicity' was the term in vogue. In a letter published in *Himal's* Sep/Oct 1993 issue, Gopal Gurung, the President of Mongol National Organisation, writes that



In the Himalaya, the indigenous people exist everywhere, or nowhere...

the use of the term 'janjati' to refer to the original inhabitants of Nepal, such as the Magars and Gurungs, is not accurate because the janjatis are not indigenous to Nepal (but rather nomads who fled India after the Mughal invasion of Chitor).

Gurung goes on to claim that the Mongols constitute 80 percent of the population of Nepal, all of them non-Hindus, and that they are the real indigenous peoples of Nepal. (That could be the subject of another discussion: are all non-Hindu Mongols? Are Tharus Mongols? And who are Mongols, anyway?) Given that 'Mongols' themselves are migrants to what is today Nepal, is indigenesness a matter of first come, first claim?

Many scholars believe that the Kirats were among the first migrants who came in from the north and east, while the Indo-Aryan Khas and Parbate came later from north-west and the south. The Mongoloid Kirats, speakers of a Tibeto-Burman language, intermingled with other groups, including the Indo-Aryan Khas. The descendants of the Kirats probably include all the Mongolian people speaking various Tibeto-Burman languages, such as the Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Thakali, Chepang, Dhimal, etc. The Ranas and the Shahas concocted their genealogy to claim Rajput origin whereas they were probably Khas and Magars who later intermarried with Indo-Aryan migrants.

The question, then, is who came first and from which direction and to which race they belong, or claim to belong. Tshewang Lama (*Himal*, Sep/Oct 1993) discusses pre- and post-Padmasambhava migrants into Nepal — the former, groups such as the Rai, Limbu and Magar and the latter, groups such as the Sherpas and Manangbas. Obviously, there are also different waves of migrants from the South. So where do we draw the line?

If claims are to be made on the basis of first come, then recent migrants will be discriminated against, as the examples of the bhumiputra movements in Maharashtra, Malaysia and Indonesia have shown. And in Nepal, the Mongoloid groups will seek to exclude the Chhetri and the Bahun, and the Pahadis will claim that the Madhesis are non-indigenous and non-Nepalis, and so on.

Affirmative Action

The need to have a criteria to identify the 'indigenous peoples' will gain sudden urgency when the State takes the initiative to help these groups financially or otherwise, for example by reserving jobs in the government offices or seats in educational institutions. This step may not be far off, especially if development aid is

BIKAS RAJNAR

tioned to positive discrimination (affirmative action) in favour of the indigenous people.

The government-owned *Rising Nepal* has come out in favour of such a move. It states in an editorial: "Where necessary, the indigenous population ought to be provided with all possible support as is found that they are usually lacking in inputs essential for progress and prosperity... *Backward* in many cases, they suffer from many disadvantages, in part due to *ignorance*... On certain occasions,

there might be need for outright welfare for the indigenous people... *Special facilities* ought to be opened for their education, health care and other basic necessities... The indigenous people should be *protected* when necessary from undesirable outside influences until they are capable of doing so by themselves." (emphasis added).

The language is patronising. All in one breath, it calls 'indigenous people' backward, ignorant, incapable of taking care of themselves, and needing protection. While preferring not to identify who they mean by indigenous, the editors probably refer to communities such as the Chepangs, Danuvars, Tharus and other so-called tribals for it is rather difficult to think of the Gurungs, Thakalis, Sherpas, and Newars as backward, ignorant, or helpless, although it is generally true that these groups, whether they are called matwalis or janjatis or adivasis or tribals, are often marginalised. (They are under-represented in the centres of power and at the central level — parliament, bureaucracy and higher education; groups such as Rais, Limbus and Tharus have been deprived of their land by the State. And the Nepali language and Bahun-Chhetri culture is so dominant that some of the other languages and cultures are on the verge of extinction.)

In any case, many poor Nepalis, whatever their origin, do need 'special facilities'. One might then ask why the 'indigenous people'

should be singled out for special treatment, particularly if indigenousness encompasses 80 percent of the population as Gopal Gurung claims? And why do the leaders of these groups insist on being classified as indigenous when the term is derogatory? We need to be careful in implementing positive discrimination and learn from mistakes made elsewhere. For example, in India, hundreds of castes and tribes struggle to be classified as 'backward', even though it is a derogatory term, so that they become eligible for positive discrimination from the state, although it is usually the more wealthy and powerful of the marginalized groups that benefit from positive discrimination.

Further, the claims made by the different groups calling themselves indigenous are bound to come into conflict.

For example, the Tharus can claim the right to all the forests and land in the Tarai; the Newars can claim the right to all the land of Kathmandu Valley and the income generated from Valley-based tourism and demand that Newari be made the official language in the Valley. Following this logic, the Gurungs, Magars, Sherpas and other 'indigenous people', as well as the dominant Bahun-Chhetri group should confine themselves to their traditional lands.

Balkanization

The logical extension of what the 'indigenous' leaders are demanding seems a reverting back to the pre-unification situation, a reversal of historical processes that led to the nation state of Nepal. The result would be what is today known as Balkanization, the dismemberment of a nation-state.

Perhaps this situation should be welcomed because in heterogeneous societies, one group (or a few groups) will always be

dominant over others, politically, economically and culturally. As independent countries, Magrat, Khasan, Kirat, etc., can negotiate directly with the donor countries, for aid. As small and homogeneous countries, the chances of direct peoples' participation in government and development may be greater.

Do we really want this? Do we want to deny the history and tradition of a Nepal where all communities are descended from migrants from outside during different periods of history? Specially when these different waves of migrants have either intermingled or broken up to form the numerous ethnic/linguistic communities which today constitute the peoples of Nepal?

Perhaps we could learn from the history of the Newars, the 'original' inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. As is well known, different waves of migrants settled in the valley, some as elites others as commoners.

They assimilated with the original inhabitants, contributing to the rich cultural heritage. It could be said of these different waves of migrants that they came, they saw and they were conquered.

That is, until Prithvi Narayan Shah arrived with his troops which included not a few of these 'indigenous peoples'.

In other words, this whole question of indigenous peoples is a false problem because indigenous people do not exist in Nepal; or if they do, the majority of the Nepalis are indigenous, including many of the Bahuns and Chhetris. The more important problem is that of ethnicity and language and of poverty of the vast majority of Nepalis. It is to these problems rather than that of 'indigenous peoples' that we should direct our attention.



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An account of a Nepali woman confronting schisms in the community she visits, in her country and her own identity. US \$ 12 NRs 285



Rural Urban interlinkages. A study based on Nepalese-Swiss Development experiences. NRs 200



Water Nepal (in a new book format) Vol 3 No 2-3, October 1993 US \$ 5 NRs 100

Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalaya

Charles Ramble, Martin Brauen, editors
University of Zurich, 1993
Swiss Francs 28

This 441-page volume contains the edited proceedings of a seminar organised at the Ethnological Museum of the University of Zurich. The contributions cover a large subject area, often embarking beyond Tibet. They include the following — Shakti Yogamaya: a tradition of dissent in Nepal, by Barbara Nimri Aziz; hierarchy and complementarity in Newar eating arrangements, by Michael Allen; the social and religious identity of the Tibetan Bonpos, by Krystyna Cech; Muslim kinship and marriage in Ladakh, by Nicola Grist; Thang Stong Rgyal Pe, a Leonarde of Tibet, by Wolf Kahlen; charnel ground traditions in Tibet by Andrea Loseries; sacrifice among Newar Buddhists by Bruce McCoy Owens; Sanskritisation and environmental perception among Tibeto-Burmans, by Klaus Seeland; and Tibetan research in China by Tibetans and Chinese after 1949; by Eugen Wehrli.

Nepal, Past and Present

Gerard Toffin, editor
CNRS Editions, Paris 1993
French Francs 240
ISBN 2 222 04750 1

"The cultural heritage of Nepal is the result of centuries of changes and contacts with India and Tibet," writes editor Toffin. "Whether viewed ethnographically or historically, at any given moment, the various Nepalese ethnic groups appear as shifting and changing units". Twenty scholars, mostly French and German, analyse a variety of issues relating to tradition and modernity, and in doing so demonstrate the relevance of joint historical-anthropological approach to the study of this multicultural country.

Social Movements in India:

A Review of the Literature

by Ghanashyam Shah
Sage Publications India, New Delhi, 1990
ISBN 81 7036 213 X
IRs 225

This book evaluates a body of literature available on social movements in India from 1857 to the 1980s. Shah divides the extant studies into eight chapters based on the participants: peasant, tribal, dalit, backward, caste/class, women, students, middle class and industrial working class. In each of these chapters, comments on relevant issues — ideology, organisation and leadership regarding the movements are included. Issues of theoretical significance and major trends in different movements are highlighted. The gaps and weaknesses in the existing literature are pointed out and suggestions for future research are made in the conclusion. The book includes a useful bibliography in the end.

Le Palais et le Temple

La fonction royale dans la vallée du Nepal

by Gerard Toffin
CNRS Editions, Paris, 1993
French Francs 220
ISBN 2 222 05010 3

For the Newar of Nepal, the king was the centre of the collective ceremonial life and closely linked with the deities. Religious ideas, very much alive today in the form of rituals, were nevertheless the source of many conflicts: between the image of a divine king and his tutor gods; between the transcendental conception of the Brahmin priests and the Tantrism which allows the king to speak directly to the divine powers; and the conflict between the ancient social order which is concentrated in the autonomous royal cities and the modern political scene in which the

Newar hold a secondary place. Combining "the history of present and the ethnology of the past". Author Toffin "emphasizes particularly the analysis of symbolic logic and the political use of religion".

Parks, Peaks, and People

Lawrence S. Hamilton, Daniel P. Bauer, Helen F. Takeuchi, editors
East West Center Programme on Environment, USA, 1993

"Usually overly ambitious projects collapse when the donors withdraw, largely due to unavailability of nationals to carry on with the projects. Bhutan presents a unique opportunity to plan its conservation programme from the start." And "Bhutan has the opportunity to demonstrate to the world community several key case studies..." states a paper "Designing a Protected Area System in the Himalaya: The Bhutan Approach" presented by Mingma Sherpa, Sangay Wangchuk and Til Bahadur Mongar at an "International Consultation on Protected Areas in Mountain Environments" held in Hawaii's Volcanoes National Park in October 1991. Pralad Yonzon, in "Traditional Resource Use and Problems in Langtang National Park" writes, "...empowerment of indigenous people to enjoy rights and responsibilities for managing forest resources" might be an answer to maintaining biological diversity in Langtang. "Participatory land management programmes do not weaken land ownership and park management, but rather promote rights to use the productivity of the land in exchange for protection." "...programmes designed to protect or minimise the impacts of backcountry must become more action oriented, creative, and realistic if further degradation is to be prevented" write Alton C. Byers and Kamal Banskota in "Environmental Impacts of Backcountry Tourism on Three Sides of Everest". Stanley F. Stevens and Mingma Norbu Sherpa looking at indigenous people in Sagarmatha National Park and Annapurna Conservation Area Project say that if partnership between protected area managers and local people is strong, local residents might perceive protected areas as "opportunities, rather than misfortunes" and as "avenues to local development". Other papers looked at the Pamir, the Scottish highlands, the Australian Alps, etc.

Social and Political History of Nepal

by B.D. Sanwal
Manohar Publishers, Delhi, 1993
ISBN 81 7304 021 4
IRs 250

This 250-page book is divided into an introduction, part 1 with 12 chapters and 2 appendices, part 2 with 10 chapters and 2 appendices, glossary, bibliography and an index. Calling itself "a pioneering effort to examine the social conditions obtaining in a traditional society which is beginning to open up for change and modernisation", it examines (as social history) the "people", art and literature, society and religion, etc. of Nepal and "the Nepalese Personality" in its first part. The second part chronicles Nepal's political history from ancient periods to the present.

From the Roof of the World:

Refugees of Tibet
Dharma Publishing, Berkeley, 1992
ISBN 0 89800 241 9

This book, containing essays on Tibetan history, culture, and transmission of the Dharma, is most significant for a photographic essay of the refugees of Tibet. Included are images of the 1959 exodus, arrival in India, and "refounding of tradition in exile". There are also portraits of refugees, and a section on "master lamas and monks". All pictures are in black and white.

Discourses of Ethnicity, Culture and Protest in Jharkhand

by Susan B.C. Devalle
Sage Publications India, New Delhi, 1992
ISBN 81 7036 268 7
IRs 260

By locating South Bihar's tribal societies in their historical contexts, Devalle argues that "ethnicity cannot be understood unless issues of social differentiation, process of class formation, and the development of class conflicts are considered in the context of their articulation with process of ethnic differentiation." Drawing from current anthropological theories, on power and resistance, the author argues that the relations between processes of domination and subordination in Jharkhand have given rise to cultural formations of oppression and protest beyond the formal domains of power.

Eco-Crisis in the Himalaya Causes, Consequences and Way Out

Vir Singh, editor
International Book Distributors, Dehradun, 1993
ISBN 81 7089 158 2

This is a collection of 23 articles under three sub-headings, Mountain Development Perspectives, Multiple Faces of Eco-Crisis: Causes and Consequences and Crisis Management Initiatives: A way out. Some renowned thinkers of Himalayan issues express their views about tourism, conservation, biological diversity, ecology, participation, etc.

Humla to Mt Kailas:

A trek from Nepal into Tibet
by Stan Armington and Sushil Upadhyay
Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu, 1993
NRs 200

Stan Armington and Sushil Upadhyay trekked to Humla and Taklakot in July 1993, before the area was officially opened to tourists. This book results from their trek through Yari and Limi. The book contains 6 maps, "more accurate than most maps on Humla", the writers claim, using Global Positioning System and is fluidly written like, Armington's earlier book, *Treks to Mustang*.

New Social Movements in the South: Empowering the People

Ponna Wignaraja, editor
Vistara Publications, New Delhi, 1993
ISBN 81 7036 322 2
IRs 275

Part 1 — Conceptual Issues — contains five essays: "Rethinking Development and Democracy" by Wignaraja, "Latin America: A Society in Motion" by D Comacho, "Masses, Classes and the State" by Rajni Kothari, "Social Movements at the Periphery" by Samir Amin and "Social Movements and Democracy in Africa" by Mahmood Mamdani et. al. Part 2 — Illustrative profiles — contains 7 essays. "Survival and Democracy: Ecological Struggles in India" by Harsh Sethi, Ethnicity and Separatist Movements in Southeast Asia" by T.S. Encarnacion and E.C. Tadem, "The Palestinian Social Movement" by B. Serhan, "Swadhayaya: Values and Message" by R. Roy, "Building Counter-vailing Power in Nicaragua, Mexico and Columbia" by O.F. Borda, "Brazilian Crossroads: People's groups, walls and Bridges" by L. Landim and "Action Groups in the New Politics" by H. Seth.

Indigenous Management of Natural Resources

Devika Tamang, Gerard J. Gill and Ganesh B. Thapa, editors
HMG Ministry of Agriculture/
Winrock International, Kathmandu, 1993
This is the collection of papers presented in the Workshop

on Indigenous Management of Agriculture and Natural Resources held in Dhulikhel in June 1992. The objective of the workshop, editor G.B. Thapa states, was "to provide a venue for professionals to interact and share information with each other". "...More recently the Government, as well as major donor agencies, has recognised the value of farmer managed systems in the irrigation sector, and steps have been initiated in turning over public irrigation systems to farmer groups", he says. This has followed "the generation of data and information which allowed us to conclude that indigenous systems have been effective in the management of natural resources." 24 papers have been collected under three subheadings. Policy dimension, challenges and opportunities and an overview have been presented as Synthesis; Vegetable Production Practices of Kathmandu Valley *Jyapus*, *Buk* method of potato farming, Pest management, a case study of contractual arrangements in credit, land and labour, using *banmara* (*Eupatorium adenophorum*) as cattle-feed, etc. have been presented as Farm Resources. And *Chattis Mauja Irrigation System*, management of water resource in the Kharkhola basin, pasture management in high altitudes, and a case study of Jomsom on evolving forest policy in Community Resources part.

High Himalaya Unknown Valleys

by Harish Kapadia

Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1993

ISBN 81 85182 87 6

IRS 350, US\$ 30

This book chronicles Kapadia's treks and climbs in the Himalaya from 1969 to 1991. Most of the articles in this volume first appeared in the *Himalayan Journal* and three new articles have been added to them. These are stories of exploration, in Sikkim, Kumaon, Garhwal, Kinnaur, Spiti, Lahul, Zaskar, Ladakh and East Karakoram. "Now that Everest is climbed many times," he writes, "the future of mountaineering lies in these smaller peaks." The author writes of the "hidden valleys in the Indian Himalaya" that he trekked to, of exhilarating climbs, of crossing dangerous passes, of accidents, death and agony. The book contains 24 maps and 17 line drawings.

An Anthology of Short Stories of Nepal

Kesar Lall and Tej R. Kansakar, translators

Sahitya Guthi, Kathmandu, 1992

NRs 45

Jointly produced under "Know Your Neighbours" translation-publication project of Sahitya Guthi (Literature Foundation) and Toyota Foundation, the 22 Newari short stories collected in this volume look at religion, modernism, change, etc. Chittadhar Hridaya writes about the separation of Newar merchants leaving for Lhasa, Satya Mohan Joshi looks at a farmer caught between *guthi* obligations and social prestige and Laxmi Rajbansi tells of a family's longing for a daughter who has been married off, etc. Sahitya Guthi translates and publishes literary works from South Asian countries as a way of learning about each other's folklore and culture. The Project has also translated stories from Japan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka into Newari, Nepali and English languages.

Nepalese Textiles

by Susi Dunsmore

British Museum Press, London, 1993

£ 16.95

Illustrated with 100 colour and 80 black and white pictures, *Nepalese Textiles* records textile techniques, thousands of years old, examining manuscripts, stone carvings, etc. for earliest evidence of textile manufacturing. "Changing times," she writes, "bringing easier access to town by road and air, together with the arrival of factory made goods or plastic, do not inevitably bring decline of traditional

skills." New techniques are already developing with wider range of colours and yarns. "...textiles expressing identity with the nation or ethnic groups are still made and worn: the topi, or cap, as part of the national dress for men, the black and red cloth of the Jyapu women, the white and green embroidered shawls by Atpare Rai or the colourful blankets of the women from Dolpo." Dunsmore concludes that migration could be checked and additional source of income found if raw materials, technology and market linkages could be researched and basic infrastructure like healthposts, schools and water supply, improved. "Their wealth of skills and knowledge will ensure that the heritage of Nepalese textiles will be not only preserved but enhanced and enriched with every generation."

Les Dieux du Pouvoir (The Gods of Power)

CNRS Editions, Paris, 1993

French Francs 240

ISBN 2 222 04722

This 416-page book, in French, is on Hinduism and the Magars of central Nepal. The "Gods of power" are the Hindu deities of the caste peoples who conquered central Nepal in the 16th and 17th centuries. These deities were the guarantors of the new kings' authority and quickly became the symbols of prestige which the Magar tribal chiefs adopted in order to maintain some local power. By the will of their chiefs, the Magars, one of the largest Tibeto-Burman groups in Nepal, have converted gradually to Hinduism. However, they have succeeded in keeping their kindship system intact, and were able to turn several principles of the Hindu social order to their advantage.

JOURNAL OF THE NEPAL RESEARCH CENTRE

Vol 9, 1993

A. Wexler, editor

Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH

ISBN 3 515 06095 2

Robert Kostka in memory of Austrian mountain cartographer Erwin Schneider gave a lecture in Kathmandu in honour of his achievements. Extracts of his lecture on "The Problems of High Mountain Cartography", have been published here along with five other articles and a bibliography of publications in Nepal from 1984 to 1986. Ulrike Muller-Boker lists a number of wild edible and other useful plants used by Tharus of Chitwan and writes that the Chitwan Tharus have traditionally depended on wild plants collected from the forest for their livelihood. It is now coming into conflict with modern ecological and economic concerns. Michael Hahn studies the Sanskrit Metrics as studied at the Buddhist universities in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and Franz-Karl Ehrhard studies two *thob-yigs* (accession lists) of teachings of 'Ja'-tshon snying-po (1585-1656) and gTer-bdag gling-pa (1646-1714), which were found in a small monastery lying at the entrance of Chyangma, southeast of Jiri. Matthias Kuhle in "The Pleistocene Glaciation of the Himalaya and Tibet" writes, "The uplift of Tibet came to its Early Pleistocene end as a result of the burden of inland ice. This ensured the deglaciation of the plateau during the interglacial period as a continuation of the wasting begun by the lowland ice." And concludes that the "present extreme uplifts in Tibet are to be regarded as compensatory glacio-isostatic movements."

Tales of The Turquoise; A Pilgrimage in Dolpo

by Corneille Jest

Margaret Stein, translator

Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu, 1993

A Tibetan Nomad, Shungru Karma, who was Corneille Jest's companion when he travelled to Dolpo in 1961 "...was not only an excellent guide", Jest writes, "but also a natural story teller." Karma's stories became a part of

the twenty-day pilgrimage and the book is dedicated to Karma, to whom he owed his "understanding of the Tibetan spirit". The folk tales that Jest heard from Karma are "borrowed from the ancient fund of Indian folklore". However, "the cultural context and the details in the presentations are wholly Tibetan". The stories in Jest's books reveal aspects of Tibetan culture which are otherwise impossible to understand. The French edition of this book was published in 1985 by A.M. Metailie, Paris.

HIMALAYAN NOTES

Rasoul B. Sorkhabi, editor

Arizona State University, Bi-Yearly

US\$ 6/10 indiv/inst

While other Himalayan periodicals tilt towards the social sciences, the focus of this newsletter is on natural history and the earth sciences. Editor Sorkhabi, a geologist who has worked in the region, says this is an attempt to provide researchers and mountaineers with latest information. Write to: Department of Geology, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-1404, USA.

Agrarian Economy of the Central Himalaya

by H.C. Pokhriyal

Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1993

ISBN 81 85182 94 9

IRs 180, US\$25

Agrarian economy of the Central Himalaya is misunderstood, says H.C. Pokhriyal. He identifies "use of culturable area, irrigation potentiality and improvement in cropping pattern" as having potential of increasing agricultural production. Published data (since 1815) on land resource utilisation have been computed and presented with primary data collected through sample survey. Pokhriyal concludes that it is important to organise a new settlement, since "The present settlement, which will last up to the year 2004, was completed in 1965. It is observed that the present settlement is completely based on the agrarian relations established by the British and the Native regimes. Based on New concepts as have been developed in KUZA (1961), through the new settlement, a platform for transformation will be established."

Protest and Change:

Studies in Social movements

by T.K. Oommen

Sage Publications India, New Delhi, 1990

ISBN 81 7036 198 2

IRS 295

The ten chapters comprising this book are grouped into three parts. Part 1 deals with theoretical, conceptual and methodological issues in the analysis of social movements. Identifying the main issues in analysis and reviewing movement literature, Oommen goes on to examine specific methodological problems faced by analysts of on-going movements" In part II, social movements in India are examined in the macro context of the nation-state. In part III, the micro dimensions — internal dynamics related to emergence of leadership and led in social movements — are considered.

The Gurkha Connection:

A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British Indian Army

by Purushottam Banskota

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This 221 page work is divided into five chapters. Chapters 2-4 provide a detailed account of the Gurkha recruitment phenomenon viewed largely from the point of diplomatic history and chapter 5 provides a general assessment of the impact of recruitment on Nepal.

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.

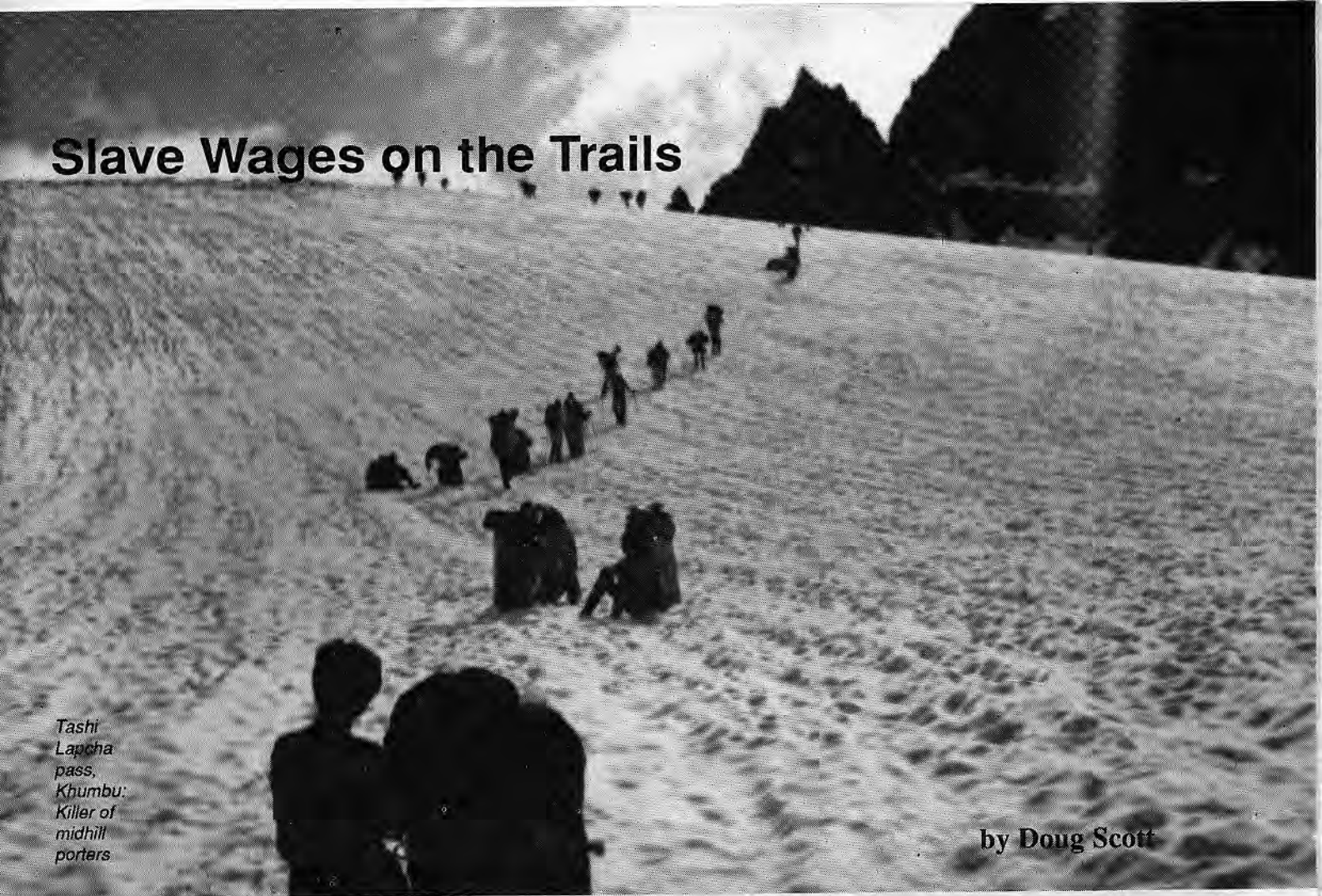
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Slave Wages on the Trails



Tashi
Lapcha
pass.
Khumbu:
Killer of
midhill
porters

by Doug Scott

The trekking industry exploits the hill porter, little realising that short-term greed invites long-term disaster. A minimum portering wage must be fixed. There should be more, not less, intervention by government in the trekking marketplace.

Thirty years ago, the first of those Westerners to have fallen under the spell of walking in the Himalaya remained behind to organise journeys for others. Among those who stayed back to make a living from providing such a service was Col. Jimmy Roberts, followed a few years later by Mike Cheney. Both men set standards which have been observed since by the better trekking companies.

There are now more than 200 trekking agencies in Kathmandu that sell treks throughout the Himalaya and Karakoram, and the number is growing. In the West, new agencies continue to set shop and they vie with each other in trying to attract Himalaya-bound mountain walkers. It has become a big business with few constraints. While there seem to be no bounds on the growth of the trekking industry, there is very little interest in regulating it.

But the alarm bells can be heard, all the way from the European Alps, where "Alp Action" is swinging into gear to curb the gross commercialisation and overcrowding, which

has led to pollution, acid rain and decaying forests; every other slope is strung with ski tows and lifts. In the free-for-all market economy of the Swiss cantons, greed on grand and institutional scale is ruining the things which all tourists want. It has been said that tourism destroys tourism, and this seems especially true with mountain tourism.

In the Himalaya, added to the spectre of a despoiled environment is the economic exploitation of the porter class—the carriers of loads who struggle at the bottom of the trekking business hierarchy. If trekking is to live up to its promise of bringing income directly to the villages of the Himalaya (and thereby helping relieve the environmental stress in these mountainsides), it is imperative that the porters of the Himalaya make more money for their labours. And the tourists, certainly, can afford the small extra cost this entails.

The High Mountain Tourist

The visitors once trickled quietly into Nepal. Now the climbers, trekkers and tourists move

in with armies of porters; the floodgates are opened and mass tourism has arrived.

Overcrowding on the popular 8000m peaks worries mainly those who knew the Himalaya when there were restrictions on access, and to those newcomers who are more discerning. The majority seem content just to be there, albeit some with as many as 50 other people plodding on the same route as themselves. Nowadays, on a good day during season, there can be more than a hundred people strung out on the South Col route on Everest.

Many of these people will not be mountaineers in the true sense of the word, for they have hired others to make decisions for them, to pass judgement as to whether it is right to continue or to retreat, to pick a route, to select a safe camp site, and more often than not to carry most of the load and complete the majority of the camp chores. This is the modern breed of high mountain tourist, who has bought his way on to the mountain rather than having earned his place by dint of serving a long apprenticeship.

The No-Pain-No-Gain Trekking Anti-Brochure

Trekking in the Himalaya has received a lot of publicity in Western media. Tour companies sell the image of a comfortable adventure without any stress or suffering, with the sahib cocooned from all contingencies and the unexpected. Perhaps the time has come to set out what it can really be like. In fact, it is probably a legal requirement to do so, now that the EEC Regulations are being applied to tourism across Europe. Here's how a new EEC pamphlet on Himalayan trekking might read if one were to try to introduce some degree of reality into the tour company brochures. There might actually be some good that will come out of this exercise.

If your normal destination is a package tour to Majorca, do think twice before signing up on our trekking holiday to Nepal. The snapshots of smiling trekkers, snow peaks, exotic temples and placid yaks, all bathed in strong sunlight are all true to life. But so are the mist, cloud, rain, snow, snowdrifts, mud, leeches, high winds, intense cold, and truculent yaks on a high, narrow trail.

Having arrived in Nepal, be prepared for tummy upsets — 90 percent of all tourists are so affected. Do be aware that your jabs do not give full immunity, and you may still come away with typhoid, malaria, hepatitis, and other interesting life-threatening diseases. Typhus, for instance, from beg bugs in the Kathmandu hotel, which will lay you up with fever for days on end but give you the most compensatory of hallucinations.

The political climate of the Himalayan country is no longer very stable. Your arrival might coincide with strikes, riots and all-day curfews, which can be restricting. The weather may delay the start of your trek by several days, because the distant airstrip is socked in by clouds. There is also no guarantee that your return flight from the hills will connect with your international flight in Kathmandu, so do not make any important appointments during the week after your expected return.

You may want to consider the implications of walking 10 to 12 miles daily, for days on end. All you have to do to alleviate tiredness is to look across at the porter who is staggering along barefoot, with 65 lbs on his back. The distressing thing is that there is always the chance that a porter will not make it. Each year, porters die from the excessive physical demands made upon them, humping high loads in bad weather, and at altitude.

Westerners, too, have perished over the years by trying to keep to trekking itineraries that were just too tight for

acclimatisation requirements. There are no exact figures. Also, no one wants to frighten you away.

Our trek leader will do his best to make life as comfortable as possible. In doing so, he will keep the locals away from your tent and campfire. As part of a somewhat insular group, you may or may not get along with your trek mates. Some young personable youth may hijack the trip and have you racing along at his pace, or the whole lot of you may develop a competitive spirit and become blinkered to all that is Nepal. There will always be someone that you cannot stand, and at such times you cannot wait for the trip to finish, to get back to the place where you last found love — home.

Do remember that evening comes early in the low latitudes of the Himalaya, and that by 7 p.m. it will be pitch dark. Be prepared for the constant smell of kerosene, including in your food. We try our best to provide waterproof tents, but they do get mistreated and may leak. Do bring your own closed cell foam mat, as the sponge mat provided could end up very soggy.

Occasionally, your equipment will go missing — a water bottle, umbrella, or trainers left at night outside tents. Talking of baggage, you may notice suddenly that the line of porters is not moving. There has been a porter strike, because the *sirdar* and the *naike* have colluded to rob the porter of a good portion of their dues. This is normal, but when it goes too far the porters will put their foot down, and their loads too. In short, only expect the unexpected, but bear in mind that overcoming physical and psychological obstacles is the only sure way to grow. No pain, no gain. A trek which is right for everyone is like packaged food, bland and safe.

—Doug Scott



This facet of tourism is set to expand rapidly as size of the financial gain becomes better known. More and more climbers will drop out of climbing for themselves in order to capitalise on the need of others to be guided up, what the Sherpas call, "the yak route" of Everest. This is only an extension of guiding in the Alps, which has a long and honourable tradition. But there are significant differences.

Everest is not in a resource-rich European country — it is in Nepal, which does not have the infrastructure to cope with the influx of visitors. Also, the Himalayan peaks are a lot higher than Mont Blanc, and potentially more dangerous. Climbers are often lured into a

false sense of security by the large number of other people around, but when the storm comes, it is every group for itself. Still, it is less of an adventure when so many other people are on the same massif.

The golden age is always in the past, unfortunately. We were so lucky, those of us who were climbing ten years ago, to have had the joyful experience of a whole mountain to ourselves. Regular non-commercial amateur climbers have expressed resentment at being there with so many others. They would prefer a return to the days of restriction and are prepared to wait their turn if it means peace and quite.

A Diminished Experience

The same observations must apply to those trekking along the Himalayan valleys, who will obviously much prefer not to have distraction of so many other trekking groups on their heels, or to be sharing campsites like the one in front of Tengboche Gumba with anything up to 150 others. They will resent going off into the surrounding woodland to find that so many others have already relieved themselves there. Mass trekking makes it difficult to enter into the spirit of the mountains and to appreciate the local people.

So a visit to the Himalaya is now a somewhat diminished experience due to the

sheer volume of visitors that have been tempted to take a holiday there. To suggest restrictions risks igniting a cry of elitism. Any Himalayan experience is preferred to none at all, is a valid argument. Yet, amongst Nepalis themselves and the foreigners resident in Nepal, there are calls for regulation of tourism and the market forces which drive it. The two things obviously threatened are, of course, the land itself and the culture and heritage of the people who work the land. What is less often remarked, but extremely urgent, is the continuing mistreatment of porters through low, discriminatory wages.

The visitor to the Himalaya is now aware that he must not pollute — he must burn, bash, bury or remove his garbage. The Himalayan Tourist Code is on everyone's lips, and there are declarations made every year at prestigious conferences about environmental consciousness. But these conferences never mention the one thing that every labourer in the trekking business really wants, and that is a fair payment for his labours. The porters of Nepal, including those that join trekking and climbing parties, represent a land that has been impoverished by increasing population, degraded environment and stagnant economy. More income in portering will have a significant impact on the economy and environment of large areas of Nepal's midhills.

After all, the only sure way to upgrade the environment is to improve the wealth of the average Nepali villager. Only then will households be able to afford fossil fuel, energy-efficient stoves, and desist from slash and burn on marginal lands. Only then will there be any chance at all of reducing the number of goats and sheep tearing up young saplings from the degraded hillside.

Porter as Underdog

It would be of good for the sake equity as well as environmental conservation if some of the sizeable profits from the tourism were to find its way down to the lowly porter. This, at the moment, hardly happens. Of the money the Western client pays his trekking agent, only 10 percent, at most, will go on the wages of the sirdar, cookboys, naika and porters. Usually, the percentage is much lower.

Unlike in Pakistan, trekking tourism in Nepal is almost completely unregulated. Here, we find market economy in the raw, manned by the Western agent shopping around for the lowest quotation, and the 200-plus agencies in Kathmandu so desperate for business that they will promise the earth and try to deliver as best they can (and maybe they will to the Western agent, but not to their own). The sirdar will be

given little to pay his staff, and only a small portion goes to the naika and the porters who work under him. The sirdars are not immune to ripping off the less fortunate, and it is very difficult to make an arrangement whereby he will pay the full amount allowed to the porters; he and the naika invariably collude to cream off a large percentage.

Two proposals would see us around the whole problem: fix a minimum wage for the porter, in excess of the wretched wages currently offered, and set a lower limit beneath which a trekking agency cannot quote.

The porter wages vary from place to place in Nepal, and is as little as NRs 110 per day in the Annapurna region. It is all a matter of supply and demand, unless there is group bargaining. The village porters of Beding in the Rolwaling Valley now organise themselves, so there is not the big clamour for work. Trekking agents have to pay more reasonable amounts — or take another trail which bypasses Beding. But this leads to antagonisms, and even fights. It would be much better if a rate were fixed nationwide, while at the same time allowing for variations according to area.

Such a system would solve a lot of problems, and Pakistan is the best proof of that. In the past, there were frequent arguments and porter strikes, but now every porter and Westerner knows that if he is going to Mount K2, for example, it is going to cost £80 to get a load up to Base Camp (at about £5 per day, half-pay during return, and allowances for food and equipment). The payment for the porters is thus engraved in stone, just as it is when you pay for your airline ticket, equipment, hotel, trekking agent's fees, and bus to roadhead.

Why should the agents and foreign visitors think things should be different when it comes to paying a porter? He is the most deserving of a concession, he who struggles with large, and uncomfortable loads, day-in and

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day-out, over awful terrain. Why should there be room for manoeuvre in saving money *here*, but not with airlines, Western companies and Kathmandu agencies? If trekkers and mountaineers cannot afford to pay the small extra percentage required for humane porter rates, they should resist the urge to travel in the Himalaya until they have raised sufficient finance for this.

It is a pathetic excuse — one that has actually been used — to suggest that the porters will spend the extra money they receive on alcohol or drugs, or that paying a basic wage of say £2 Pounds per day will lead to inflation in the hinterland. This is the sort of argument put about by local agents.

There must be a lower limit below which trekking agencies cannot quote. Under prevailing market conditions, that limit should be about US\$ 35 per trekker client per day. Only by charging the Western trekking company that much can the Kathmandu agent hope to provide proper service and still pay the workforce adequately. Presently there is, in effect, a down-limit of US\$ 20 per day because each trekker has to show that he spends that amount each day before he can get his trekking permit. Thus, a regulation meant to ensure that tourist spends enough hard currency while in Nepal has actually rebounded against the portering class.

Case for Intervention

There are precedents which prove that organised pressure can force organisations and groups to modify behaviour and control the market economy. Take for instance, the use of child workers in carpet manufacturing in India, which is being curbed due to the fear of Western boycott. Similarly, raising public opinion and awareness against ivory purchase has benefited the Asian and African elephants. Global ostracism and boycotts forced a power as strong as racist South Africa to ultimately dismantle the structure of the apartheid state.

In much the same way, it is necessary for individuals and groups to come together to ensure that the porters of the Himalaya stop being exploited, and that they get their fair share from the trekking trade. *It is only correct to help these men and women who are engaged in the most back-breaking profession in the world, for so little gain.*

One way would be for prestigious and reputable bodies in North America and Europe (such as "Tourism Concern" in Britain) to come together and endorse trekking companies that do not allow their agents in the Himalaya to exploit their labour. Similarly, in the Himalaya, creditable bodies must take matters

into their hands and provide the stamp of approval to agents who do well by their porters. This idea might appeal to the hard-working people at the Annapurna Area Conservation Project (ACAP) or the Kathmandu Environmental Education Programme (KEEP).

There is urgent need for trekking agencies to acknowledge that the greatest assets of the areas they exploit are the mountains and their inhabitants. To be disrespectful of this fact will ultimately create a barren and exploited wilderness which will offer little reward for the traveller or the profiteer. If this point is grasped and acted on, there will be



Setting standards: Mike Cheney (centre) and the hill carriers

some hope for improving the situation of Nepal's environment and of its porters.

It is not that the porters themselves are unaware of the Dickensian conditions under which they labour. When political and market conditions have allowed, they have given vent to their frustrations. Several trekking unions sprang up during the first year of democracy in Nepal, in 1990, to protect the interests of those working in the trekking industry. Some of these porter unions, giving vent to years of silence and deprivation, spoke radically. The Trekking Workers' Association of Nepal put 77 demands in front of the Minister of Tourism soon after democracy was achieved.

Whilst not all of these recommendations would appeal to Westerners, and indeed not to every Nepali, some of them were sensible and had in fact been voiced many times before. One suggestion was that foreign group leaders be discouraged from operating in Nepal so that there was more work for local trek leaders. Another demand was that porters and staff be supplied with adequate food, clothing and shelter by the local trekking agents. Porters should be trained in specialist activities such as using crampons as well as ascending and descending ropes. The majority of demands were to safeguard the welfare of the labourers in the trekking business.

Unfortunately, the past three years have seen little change in the conditions of the labourers. Those agencies that have the welfare of the porter at heart are few.

The first president of the Trekking Worker's Association, Norbu Ongchu, died on Dhaulagiri in the winter of 1989, when he was the sirdar of an American expedition. News of his death came back to the Sherpa Cooperative agency in Kathmandu, but it was many days before his wife, Shanti, big with child, knew of his death, even though they lived in Kathmandu. It was many months before compensation was paid. None would have been paid had not the widow's cause been taken up by interested foreign parties.

The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The emotional response of the union was to picket the Everest trail at Jiri. The tragedy of Ongchu's death had brought to a head mounting discontent from the years of exploitation of the labourers in the trekking industry. For several days in 1990, therefore, trekking on this trail ground to a halt. As things are, the only avenue for the porter is to withdraw his labour, or suffer in resigned silence. The latter is invariably what happens.

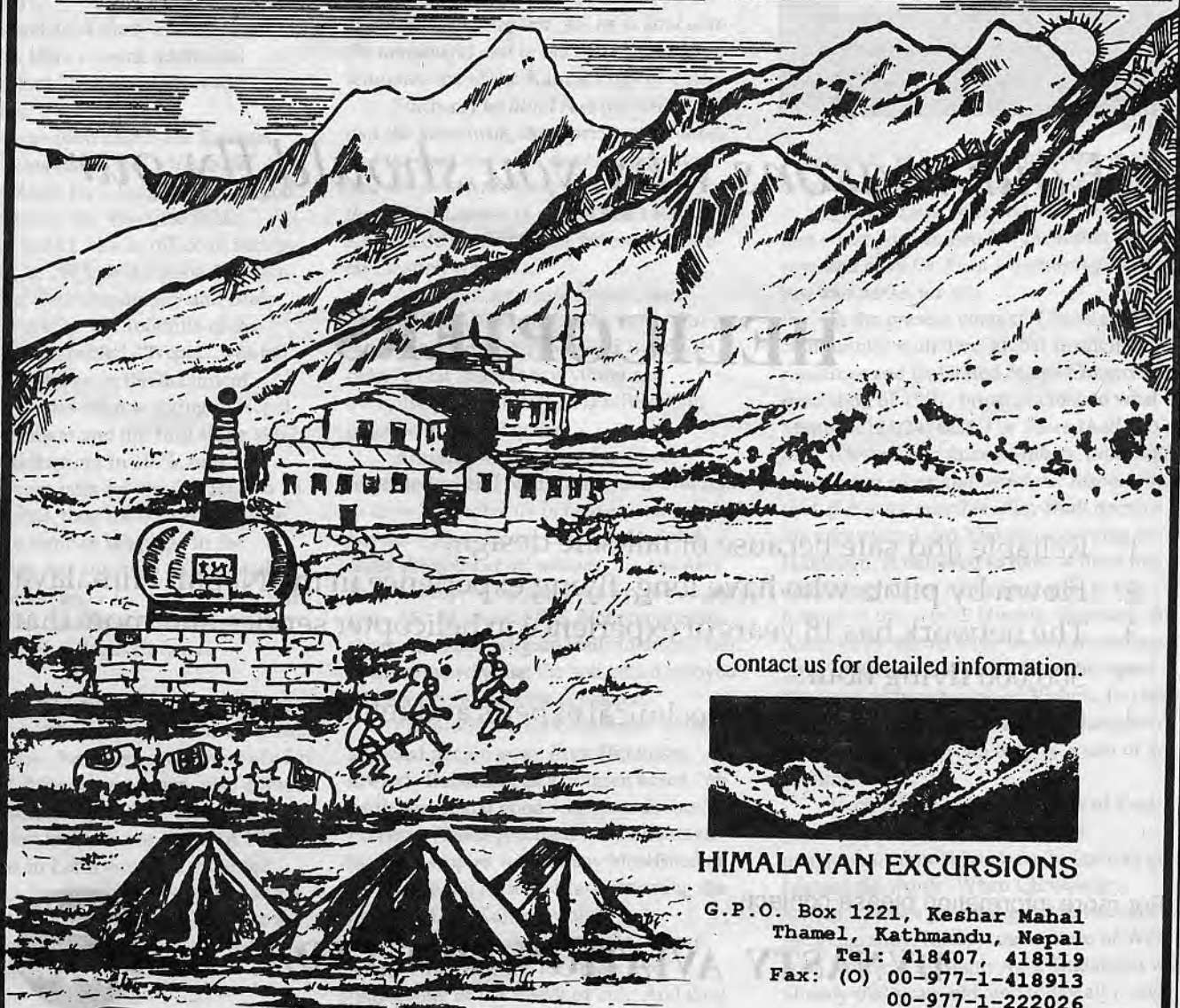
This interventionist policy will not immediately appeal to everyone. But one will do well to remember that even at the height of Thatcher years, the economy in Britain was regulated. There can never be a total free-for-all approach. Freedom requires that we accept responsibilities, and there should be eternal vigilance, otherwise the unscrupulous will take advantage and monopolise that freedom.

△

D. Scott has been climbing in the high mountains of Asia since 1966, in 35 expeditions which have brought him to Nepal, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bhutan and India. In 1990, at the request of some Sherpas, Scott helped start the Specialist Trekking Cooperative, which seeks to provide its staff and porters with adequate remuneration for their hard work. "There cannot be quality service on slave wages," maintains Scott, who says he takes his lead from the late Mike Cheney.

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The 1993 *Himal Index* makes accessible to readers and researchers information on articles that appeared in the last six issues of the magazine. A fully computerised Index of *Himal* is also available in diskette or printed form (WordPerfect 5.1). The Index contains details on *Himal's* total output to date — 29 issues (from Vol 0 No 0 through Vol 6 No 6). The Index has all the tools for access and sorting, using UNESCO's CDS/ISIS library package. For further information, please write to or fax the Managing Editor. (Departments such as Voices, Himalaya Mediafile, Abominably Yours and Abstracts, which appear regularly, are not included in the Index. 'Bx' in the list below refers to box-items within larger features.)

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678 ASpiti Iconoclast; Spiti/Tourism/Impact.
679 Selling Gift Rhinos; Rhino/Wildlife/Gift.
680 ADB One, NGOs Nil; Manila/ADB/NGOs.
681 Refugee Children Learn Better; Bhutan/Refugees/Children/Education.
682 Dirty Alps; Triexla/Alpine Tourism/Trash.
683 Goopy and Bagha by the Bishnumati; Studio Seven/Play
684 Nuke of the North; Uranium/Mining/Tibet/Dump.
685 How to Develop the Himalaya in Four Easy Steps; Prakash, Sanjeev; Development/Himalaya/Plans.
686 Pasang Lhamu; Risal, Dipesh;
Pasang Lhamu/Death/Mountaineering.

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- 687 On the Way Up; Dixit, Kanak Mani.
688 Refracted Images of the World Beyond; Singh, Chetan;
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689 Ranas Good, Ranas Bad...
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Ranas/Rana Regime/Panchayat/Politics.
690 Tanakpur on the Thames; Gyawali, Dipak;
Water Relations/Tanakpur/Ganga.
691 Unquiet Uttarakhand; Guha, Ramachandra;
Movements/Activism/Uttarakhand/Chipko.
692 Why I Write Economic History; Regmi, Mahesh C.;
Economic History/Writings/Motivation.
693 Faceless in History; Panjjar, Tej Narayan;
Tharus/Buddha/Origin/Tharus/History.
694 Sleuth, Monkand Consultant; Thapa, Deepak;
Ekai Kawaguchi/Chandra Shamsher/Advice.
695 Long Road To Gandaki; Tamu, Bhovar Palje and Tamu, Yarjung
Kromchhe;
Gandaki/Genology Pritivi Narayan Shah.
696 Whatever Happened to the "Golden Age"?
Onta, Pratyoush;
History Writing/Historians/Oral History.
697 How to Tackle an Act of God? Dixit, Ajay;
Kulekhan/Cloudburst/Floods/Calamity.
698 Tibet, the Air Cooler; Tibet/New Scientist/Theories.
699 When in Calcutta, Eat Momos; Momo/Calcutta/New Food.
700 Porters die on Larkya La; Basnet, Buddha;
Porters/Larkya La/Trails.
701 ICIMOD Gets New Head; ICIMOD/Institution.
702 Dalai Lama's Brother in Beijing; Dalai Lama/Dharamsala/Tibet/Beijing.
703 Tourism? Let Them See Rice; Tourism/Paddy/Rice Terraces/Banauae.
704 Dirty Alps: Alpine Refugees/Trash/Trieste.
705 Lichhavi Kal through Panchayat Kal with Rishikesh Shaha;
Deo, Arvind Ramchandra;
Panchayat/Nepali Politics/Transition.
706 Living Out a Refugee Welcome; Guragain, Gopal;
Bhutan/Refugees/Human Rights.
707 Giving Jugal its Due; Risal, Dipesh;
Jugal/Expeditions.

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- 708 Whither the Tsampa Eaters? Shakya, Tsering;
Tibetan Periphery/Culture/Economy
709 Building Blocks of Balti Ethnicity; Allan, Nigel J.R.;
Bx1: They No Longer Eat Barley.
710 Ladakh at Crossroads; Malyon, Timothy;
Ladakh/Communal Tensions/ Opinion
711 Who Cares for Humla...
Lama, Tshewang;
Bx1: The Name Bhotey.
Bx2: Tibetans and Tibeto-Burmans of Nepal.
712 Tourism's Predicament; Thapa, Manjushree;
Mustang/Tourism.
713 Whither, Indeed, the Tsampa Eaters; Ramble, Charles;
Buddhism/Indigenous Bon/Identity.
714 On the Way Up; Dixit, Kanak Mani.

- 715 Barefoot Amchis of Ladakh; Homewood, Stephen;
Ladakh/Traditional Medicine/Revival.
716 The Anti-Mosquito Gurkha.
717 Cry Wolf in Kathmandu; Shrestha, Bijaya L.
Pollution/Survey/Information.
718 Barkhor Down; Lhasa/Demolition.
719 Damburst! Qinghai/Dam
720 Formalised Peace on the Frontier; Sino-India Talks/Agreement/Peace.
721 Delay on the Chumbi Front; LAC Agreement/Deadlock/Effect.
722 Good News on Wood; Tarai Forests/Report/Timber.
723 Gospel Comes to the Hindu Kingdom; Shah, Saubhagya;
Bx1: Capuchin Capers; Missionaries/History.
724 Good on Description, Short on Analysis; Subba, Bhim;
Information/Statistics/Perceptions.
725 Run of the River Scheme; Beek, Steve Van;
Data/Rafting/White Water
726 ...Fairest of Them All; Aitken, Bill;
Himalayan Peaks/Beauty/Information.
727 Scott, Amundsen and Pasang Lhamu; Lieberman, Marcia.

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- 728 The Last Newar of Chuhadi; Riccardi Jr, Theodore;
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729 What is Nepali Music? Gurung, Kishor;
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730 The Goat and the Music God; Wegner, Gert-Matthias;
Bhaktapur/Musical Groups/Music God.
731 Where is Shastriya Sangeet? Sattaur, Omar and Wegner, Gert-Matthias;
Classical Music/Musical Missionaries/Court.
732 A Life of Music; Shrestha, Krishna Narayan;
Profile/Krishna Narayan Shrestha/Opinion.
733 Kathmandu, A Valley Fertile for Music; Grandin, Ingemar;
Bx1: Music as Message.
Kathmandu/Endowments/Musical Artistry.
734 The Sound of One Mind Working; Rothenberg, David;
Tibetan Ritual Music/Gyaling/Buddhism.
736 A Conspiracy Against Music; Darnal, Ramsharan (told to Sharma, Kedar); Profile/Ramsharan Darnal/Louis Banks.
736 Ancient Rhythms and Modern Messages; Malyon, Timothy;
Ladakh/Music/Tradition.
737 Loss of the Sarus; Crane/Tarai/National Geographic.
738 Out! Out! Potato Blight! Potato Blight/Farmers/Meeting.
739 What's Doing in New York? Dixit, Kanak Mani; New York/Events.
740 Save the Himalaya From Those Who Would Save the Himalaya Plans/Himalaya.
741 Taxol's Failure, Forest's Reprieve; Taxol/Forests/Taxus baccata/Cancer.
742 "Mountains Should Come First, Not Last..."; Rhoades, Robert E.; Mountains/Agenda/Development.
743 From Sikkim to Sukhim; Sinha, A.C.
Bx1: Fear of Big Sikkim.
Sikkim/Sukhim/Darjeeling/Nepalis/India.
744 Market God Introduced to Northern Areas; Hoffmann, Thomas;
AKRSP/Development/Chitral/Gilgit/Project.

Abominably Yours,

A close cousin of the *Homo erectus* is the *Homo obfuscatus*. Whereas the erectus stood up and moved out from Olduvai Gorge to build pyramids and hamburger chains, the obfuscatus got lost in the marshes. He is still there stuck on Foggy Bottom, breathing vile vapours.

You will immediately recognise an obfuscatus when you see one. All that leaded fossil fuel exhaust has regressed his brain. Reconstructed skulls at the Smithsonian show the holding capacity of the species' cranium has suffered considerably -- as if someone had pressed "Reduce 68%" on his genetic photocopy machine.

The father, mother and son Leakeys, paleontologists, and curators at numerous museums have long believed that the obfuscatus had joined the *Australopithecus* about 12 million years ago in a Darwinian dead end.

Not so, it turns out. Descendants of the obfuscatus still stalk the earth with us. They fill their bellies and reproduce and pass judgement, but it is only the specialist evolutionary biologist who can distinguish between the obfuscatus and the *Homo sapiens*.

Survival of the fittest is the rule, but it seems a lot of unfittest also hang around. They do this out of sheer spite, just so as to be able to thumb their noses at higher life forms who get to go to Oxford, Cambridge, Darbanga or join the Indian Administrative Service.

Obfuscatus gene pools survive in scattered crania around the world. Gene mappers are now busily trying to find the DNA sequence that determines whether or not humans turn out to be pompous morons. One of them (human gene mappers, not morons) is Professor Jantar MacMantar of the University of Leeds who gained notoriety a couple of years ago with his seminal work on fatalism among white Anglo Saxon males. Prof MacMantar is trying to discover links between present day delusions of grandeur in the obfuscatus with evolutionary wrong turns millions of years ago.

One obfuscatus trait for which Prof MacMantar has been able to isolate the chromosomes is the ability to know next to nothing about anything, but have the urge to give advice without being asked. It was not long before his cursor brought Prof

MacMantar to the heart of the Himalaya. He trolled me in the Internet. Here is a synopsis of our discussions in cyberspace.

MacMantar: *All over the world there are those who think they know more than others. But I have focussed my study in the Himalaya 'cause you have so many coming from outside who presume to tell the locals who they are, what stimuli they should respond to, and how. The Himalaya is crawling with obfuscatus.*

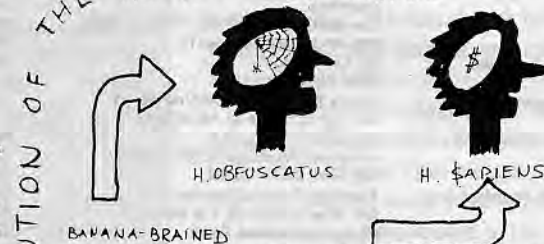
Me: *Now professor, that is a lot of conjecture. Send me proof, hard proof.*

MacMantar: *Coming right up. Here is something 'taja'.*

And he faxed me an op-ed piece in the *International Herald Tribune* of 2 December, 1993 by Paul Spencer Sochaezewski, described in the blurb as a "head of creative services of the World Wide Fund for Nature International".

Sochaezewski, who works in Switzerland,

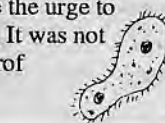
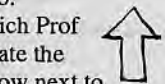
EVOLUTION OF THE HOMO OBFUSCATUS



BAKANA-BRAINED
BIPEDS



EIGHT-LEGGED
CRITTERS



describes descending on a village called Jangtiskha and meeting Gyeltsnen, a farmer:

It was an Aristotelian encounter. He looked at my Swiss Army knife, French backpack, Italian trekking shoes, American tent and Australian pants, complete with the Zippered Rhew that allow them to be turned into shorts, Gyeltsnen concluded that I was rich.

He was also quick to point out that he was poor. Gyeltsnen, an illiterate, was wearing home-spun clothes. His family's most important possessions were six cattle, assorted pigs and chickens, a house and his wife's turquoise jewelry.

"You are wrong", I said. "Your are not poor at all. You are rich." Gyeltsnen looked skeptical. "You are self-sufficient - not to mention the fact that the King provides your family with free medical care and your children with free schooling ... You have the most important things anyone can have, forests and clean fresh water. You also have a set of spiritual beliefs that provides psychological support however many lives you may have... And you have a family that stays together. People in the West do not have these things anymore. This forest, those prayer flags

SINGLE-CELL
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and your children make you a rich man".

The response from Gyeltsnen (more likely Gyaltzen) is a coup de grace although the insufferable Sochaezewski apparently does not recognise it as such:

"You can afford to travel in Bhutan. I cannot travel to visit you."

Prof MacMantar has scribbled this at the bottom of the fax: "You decide who is the Homo obfuscatus and who is the Homo sapiens. The writer from Switzerland who speaks new age drivel or the Bhutanese peasant with feet firmly in the ground and an economist to boot."

These mountains have seen too many like the learned Sochaezewski, who turbo-prop it up to the high valleys, provide unasked advice and distribute chocolates and and/or antibiotics to the peasantry. However, before you could say *Jai Bajarangabali* they have hopped on the flight back to Gland. The obfuscatus would lock Gyeltsnen in his Bhutanese time machine and throw away the key. But what of the mountain peasant? Not for him the luxurious sanctimony of the hit-and-run developer.

Sochaezewski would have Gyeltsnen believe that forest, trees and clean, fresh water have disappeared from the High Tatra or Tyrol, and that families are a thing of the past in Sweden. Because Gyeltsnen has children, education, public health, forests and a house, his life is said to be superior to that of Sochaezewski, who of course can have none of these goodies because he is from the Old West.

It is the patronising reference to reincarnation ("however many lives you may have") that gives the game away: the Northerner is keen to have it all in this life, while the Drukpa peasant is advised to live out his bad karma until he, too, is reborn as head of creative services in a leading INGO.

As any conspiracy theorist will tell you, here is the wedge in the door of popular western ideology. Impelement liberalisation, wait for the trickel-down, pay your Third World debt, remain satisfied with your Garment Quotas and don't apply for visitor visas.

Why do obfuscatory traits tend to surface in the Himalaya? Prof MacMantar replies: "The mellowness of the inhabitants is misread to mean wide-eyed appreciation of the interlocutor."





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