

HIMĀL

THE SOUTH ASIAN MAGAZINE



**The price of
our daughters**

October 1998 • 11/10



Probably the best beer in the world.

Ka
A
D
Con
Afsa
Bee
Mar
Mit
Prab

S
Sa
Av
R
Ch

M
Aj
Tel: +880-2-81

Media Sal
Trans
2nd
Zi
Tel: +92-21-56

Himal is p
GPO Box
Tel: +977-1-5
hir
http

Library of Co
Imagesetti
Printed at J
Tel: +

HIMAL

THE SOUTH ASIAN MAGAZINE

Vol 11 No 10 October 1998

Editor

Kanak Mani Dixit

Associate Editor

Deepak Thapa

Copy Editor

Shanuj V.C.

Contributing Editors

Afsan Chowdhury DHAKA

Beena Sarwar LAHORE

Manik de Silva COLOMBO

Mitu Varma NEW DELHI

Prabhu Ghate NEW DELHI

Marketing

Suman Shakya

Anil Karki

Sambhu Guragain

Awadhesh K. Das

Administration

Anil Shrestha

Tripti Gurung

Roshan Shrestha

Layout

Chandra Khatiwada

Marketing Offices

Ajoy Biswas Dhaka

Tel: +880-2-812 954, 911 5044 (fax)
office@drik.net

Media Sales Representative Karachi

Trans Indus Media (Pvt) Ltd

2nd Floor, Haroon House

Ziauddin Ahmed Road

Karachi 74200

Tel: +92-21-567 0081, 567 0085 (fax)

tim@xiber.com

Himal is published and distributed by

Himal Inc Pvt Ltd

GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: +977-1-522113, 523845, 521013 (fax)

himalmag@mos.com.np

http://www.himalmag.com

ISSN 1012 9804

Library of Congress Card Catalogue Number

88 912882

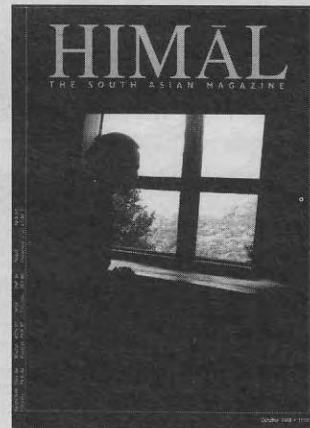
Imagesetting at Polyimage, Kathmandu

Printed at Jagadamba Press, Kathmandu

Tel: +977-1-521393, 536390

Cover: Maya (not her real name) was sold by her first cousin along with her blood sister when she was 15 to a Nepali-run Bombay brothel. She worked as a prostitute for two years and then got herself married to the Madam's nephew in order to escape sex work. Six years later, Maya came back in her home village in Sindhupalchowk District of Nepal with her husband whom she left to return to her parent's house. She is now the happily married second wife of a local communist activist.

Picture: Usha Tiwari.



Cover

12 Deconstructing Gita
by John Frederick



20 South Asia's sex trade myths

24 My sister next?
by Naresh Newar

30 Among the sand dunes of the
India-Pakistan Border...
by Hasan Mujtaba

Departments

3 Mail
Krishna's Corner

6 Commentary
In God's name
Ready to act
Fatwa fury
Killing fields of Kilinochchi

32 Briefs
Meena is the message
Good marks for tolerance
Sinhalese are sick of the war
Sikkim treasure
A costly nuclear addiction



36 Feature
The Taliban and the Hazaras
by Michael Semple



42 Mediafile

Opinion
45 The triumvirate of inaction
by Karin Heissler
51 Dam insecurity
by Himanshu Thakkar

Review
57 AIDS in Nepal
reviewed by Stacy Leigh Pigg

62 VOICES

60 Abominably yours,

Bhutan and

The three le coverage of printed in the familiar ring asserted that capable of a objectively; in the camp nor genuine whole refuge consequent up the mes fault becau has failed t economic p people and political tent and co

Most pe visited or v refugee ca convinced people wit they have there are p have no co than Bhuta for the mo political a homes and expatriate tended pe in Bhutan worked o in the cam unanimo

Vajra (literally--flash of lightning), is an artists' condominium, a transit home for many, providing a base during months of hibernation and creative inspiration. Its isolation, graphic splendour and peaceful ambience, make an ideal retreat from the clock of pressure.

Ketaki Sheth
Inside Outside

I stayed a week at the **Vajra**, by which time I had become so fond of it that I stayed another.

John Collee
The London Observer



in Kathmandu, the Vajra

Swayambhu, Dallu Bijyaswori, PO Box 1084, Kathmandu
Phone 271545, 272719 Fax 977 1 271695

WE ONLY
THE BO
OF INDIA



Bhutan and Nepal

The three letters protesting Himal's coverage of Bhutan that were printed in the August issue had a familiar ring to them. It was asserted that no Nepali journalist is capable of approaching Bhutan objectively; that many of the people in the camps are neither Bhutanese nor genuine refugees; and that the whole refugee affair, and the consequent failure to clear up the mess, is Nepal's fault because democracy has failed to deliver economic progress to its people and because its politicians are incompetent and corrupt.

Most people who have visited or worked in the refugee camps seem convinced that the people with whom they have interacted there are people who have no country other than Bhutan, and who simply yearn, for the most part without any political agenda, to return to their homes and fields. I know several expatriates who have spent extended periods working as teachers in Bhutan, and who subsequently worked on curriculum development in the camp schools, and this is unanimously their view. The

opposite view seems to be held exclusively by those people who have never visited the camps, and have no intention of ever doing so.

I do not know anyone who knows anything about Nepal who is not worried by the current state of economic and political affairs in that country. In *Human Development in South Asia* (OUP, New Delhi,

1997), the late Mahbubul Haq compiled a "Human Development Balance Sheet" for each country in which 'human advance' is compared with "human distress". For Nepal, on the "distress" side, Haq recorded that two-thirds of all under-five deaths are due to malnutrition, that the adult female literacy rate is the

region's lowest, and that per capita income is also the region's lowest. On the "distress" side for Bhutan, however, he also recorded that Bhutan has the region's highest crude death rate, highest maternal mortality rate, highest under-five mortality rate, and the lowest GDP per capita.

Let us acknowledge that both

countries are poor, and that both countries have problems.

Over the summer, Amnesty International issued at least five Urgent Action appeals arising from cases in Bhutan and Nepal. Two of them are headed "torture/fear of torture" and are concerned with the arrests of Bhutanese citizens inside Bhutan on the grounds of suspected membership of the Druk National Congress (DNC); one of them is headed "imminent extradition" and is concerned with the case of the DNC leader, Rongthong Kuenley Dorji; two of them are concerned with the 'disappearances' of two Nepali citizens in the context of police actions against Maoists in west Nepal.

Let us acknowledge that there are political tensions and human rights concerns in both countries: should Himal turn a blind eye to those in Bhutan?

I do agree that much of the Nepali media coverage of Bhutan has been lazy, and too quick to resort to simplistic analyses. But the notion that Himal is "always geared to the good and beautiful and godly about Nepal" is frankly laughable, and suggests some highly selective reading. As a magazine that aims to address and cover the whole of South Asia, Himal should analyse Bhutanese affairs in the same way



KRISHNA'S CORNER



The roof of the world.



Mt Everest . 8848 m . 29 may 1953

A roof for the world.



Hotel SHANGRI-LA . 82 Deluxe Rooms. 1st july 1979



SHANGRI-LA

KATHMANDU

Your private paradise in Nepal

LAZIMPAT. G.P.O. BOX 655. KATHMANDU. NEPAL - TEL : (977.1) 412999 - FAX : (977.1) 414184 - TELEX : 2276 HOSANG NP

that it exam
other coun
That is the
its coverag
judged.

Michae
School o
London

Watching

Reading th
Lumbini"
shocked b
referred t
place of th
being Nep
However,
understar
the writer
concentra
problem n
of the Ma
Lumbini.

What
the hypo
historian
the prese
briksha c
site origi
with a ro
around it
on one s
suggests
site as a
to show
layers an
findings
"marker
visitors.
be a reas
tion as t
be done
site and
attention
Lumbini

Lam
Develop
who sai
marker
absolute
born in
that thi
announ
and NH
against
phone o
NHK Fu
that the
discuss
of ancie

that it examines the affairs of the other countries of the Subcontinent. That is the measure against which its coverage of Bhutan should be judged.

Michael Hutt

School of Oriental and African Studies
London

Watching Lumbini!

Reading the report "Digging up Lumbini" (June 1998), I was shocked by the subtitle, which referred to the fact that the birth-place of the Buddha, "far from being Nepal's pride, is a disgrace". However, I gradually came to understand the feelings of the writer, Sangeeta Lama, concentrating as she does on the problem relating to the excavation of the Mayadevi Temple in Lumbini.

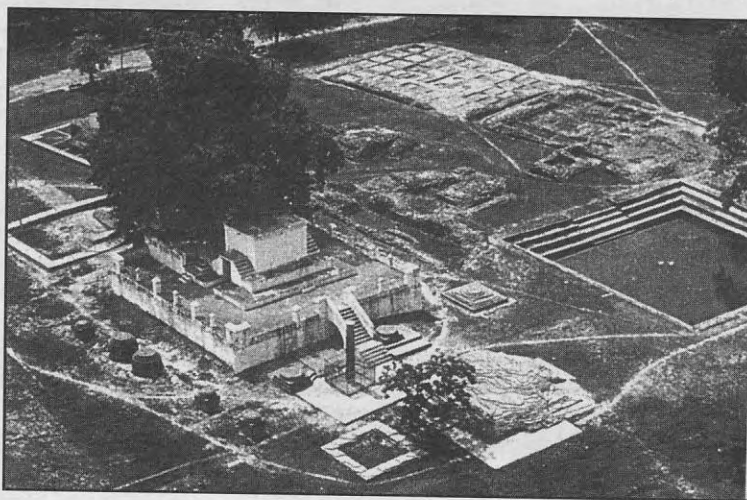
What was most interesting was the hypothesis proposed by cultural historian Sudarshan Raj Tewari on the presence of a *briksha chaitya* at the site originally, a tree with a rock colonnade around it and an altar on one side. He also suggests keeping the site as a living museum to show the excavated layers and other findings including the "marker stone" to visitors. This seems to be a reasonable suggestion as to what should be done at the nativity site and deserves urgent attention from the Lumbini Development Project.

Lama refers to a Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) official who said after the discovery of the marker stone, "We finally have absolute proof that the Buddha was born in Nepal." Now I understand that this was the source of the announcement made by NHK Radio and NHK TV back in January 1996, against which I made a protest phone call to NHK Tokyo as well as NHK Fukuoka. We know, of course, that there has been continuous discussion about two possible sites of ancient Kapilavastu: Tilaurakot

in present-day Nepal and Piprahawa in present-day India. The wrong information seemed to come from the confusion between the Kapilavastu debate and the Lumbini excavation.

As far as the story about Japanese architect Kenzo Tange is concerned, I believe the information given by the Japanese Buddhist Federation that he would not be able to travel to Nepal but was willing to provide advice from Japan is correct, though it may not have any effect on the nature of Lumbini Project.

I appreciate the article by Lama, especially for her pointing out the important role which could be played by a committee for Lumbini that is situated at the United Nations in New York. We sincerely hope that the Lumbini Project will take sound steps in the days ahead under the guidance of the United Nations, while the Lumbini Devel-



opment Trust, the Japanese Buddhist Federation and the Department of Archaeology work together towards a common goal.

I sincerely hope that the Lumbini Garden will remain Nepal's pride forever. All persons who are concerned with the future of Lumbini must keep a close watch on the Lumbini Garden so that nothing inappropriate or unrepresentative comes up on the site, as Lama herself cautions.

Shin-ichi Takahara
Professor of Buddhist Studies
Fukuoka University

Firemen from Russia

We are not sure why we received this letter from the President of the Association of Fire Heraldry in St Petersburg, but are including it here in the hope that readers have a better idea than we do. Editors.

Dear Mr Editor,

The Association of Fire Heraldry would like to declare you its honorary member. We devise decorations, stripes, cap-badges, etc, for the Russian Fire Service. We're also engaged in the study of historical Russian rewards, emblems of fire-stations, tie-slides, rings and cuff-links with fire symbols, as well as decorations and cap-badges. We're interested in getting information about your country's fire medals, decorations and cap-badges. We're also interested in establishing contacts with collectors of decorations in your country. Are you able to provide

us permanent aid by gathering such materials in your country independently, through your friends or through officers of fire departments? Can you supply our information to the news media? We'll be very grateful to you for small financial aid, too, since we're in need of funds to keep up our work.

Being a member of our Association, you'll be enabled to obtain information on today's fire heraldry in Russia (badges, cap-badges, medals, stripes, etc) at first hand. As an honorary member of the Association, you'll be presented with an Honorary Diploma and a silver badge "For Services". We'd like to present them to you personally, or to your representative.

Sincerely yours,

Vladimir Nedelski

President of Association of Fire Heraldry
PO Box 257, Saint Petersburg, 191025,
Russia

PAKISTAN

IN GOD'S NAME

BY NOW, Pakistanis are used not only to governments coming and going, but also to their using religion to shore up diminishing popularity. Benazir Bhutto's father did it, as did Zia-ul-Haq. The trick did not work for either, but rather contributed to shattering Pakistan's structures of civil society. Now, Gen Zia's protégé and political heir Mian Nawaz Sharif is following his mentor's footsteps. The latest "noisy brandishing of faith", as an American magazine put it, is Sharif's attempt to introduce Constitutional Amendment 15 ("CA 15"), which would ostensibly make the "Supremacy of the Quran and Sunnah" (Islamic traditions) the "supreme law" of Pakistan.

Sharif claimed in Parliament that he had taken the decision to introduce Islamic law by "the power vested in me by Almighty Allah". His contention that he has got where he is by Allah's blessings may be acceptable, but trying to project himself as a representative of the divine is taking it too far. "Islam is my faith, religion and belief. I have never used it for any political gain," the prime minister told a convention of religious scholars and activists in Islamabad last month. Ominously, at that same meeting, Sharif urged his audience to "counter the forces opposed to the proposed amendment", and added now that he had done his part, it was up to those in the audience to do theirs.

CA 15 places the Federal Government under "an obligation to take steps to enforce the Shariah". This includes, according to Article 2 of the bill, promoting the principle of "*amar bil maroof and nahi anil munkar*" (to prescribe what is right and forbid what is wrong). Thus, the government would be able to declare any action 'wrong' and ban it – or declare an act 'right' and enforce it. For example, wearing headscarves or growing beards, as the Taliban have done in Afghanistan.

The prime minister's protestations of honourable motives have failed to win converts even among the religious political parties, even though they can hardly oppose the introduction of the Shariat (Islamic law) openly. They suspect Sharif's political agenda and are loathe to give him credit for the 'Islamisation' of Pakistan. Meanwhile, despite an earlier constitutional amendment ("CA 14") bulldozed through by Sharif, which disallows dissent from the Treasury Benches in parliament, CA 15 has been privately opposed

by many of his own party members. A few brave souls have even blasted it publicly and are attempting damage control by trying to make changes in the bill to make CA 15 more acceptable.

But a religious bill by any other name is still a religious bill. It will threaten women and it will threaten religious minorities, both groups already vulnerable under existing circumstances. As much in danger are the liberal-minded groups, which have opposed Sharif's ill-advised moves, such as last year's brinkmanship with the judiciary, his appointment of fellow Punjabis to key posts, and his arbitrariness in unilateral decisions on many major issues. The prime minister's open call to the religious parties to "launch a movement to force those opposing it [CA 15] to retreat and repent for their mistake" was nothing less than shocking.

Even more explosive than the impact on women or minorities is what the implementation of a rigid set of Islamic codes will mean in the inter-sect tussle that has become the hallmark of Pakistani society. The dangers of trying to define one straight and narrow path were well chalked out 45 years ago by a judicial commission set up to examine the anti-Ahmedia riots of 1953. "Keeping in view the several definitions of a Muslim given by the *ulema* (religious scholars), need we make any comment except that no two learned divines are agreed on this fundamental" reads one of the most quoted passages in the 387-page report of the Commission comprising Justices Munir and Kayani.

Since then divisions between Pakistan's sects have grown even deeper. Tensions have been aggravated by armed militancy, which today is the handmaiden of dogmatic belief systems. Sectarian rivalry has become so fierce that gunmen are posted outside mosques to try and prevent bomb-attacks or ambushes and targeted killings of religious militants by rival sects have become common.

In the middle of this flammable situation, the introduction of CA 15 has the potential to wreak havoc. In its application to the personal law of any Muslim sect, the proposed bill envisions the expression "Quran and Sunnah" as meaning the Quran and Sunnah as interpreted by each particular sect. But given the level of intolerance and militancy that is extant, and a situation where the interpretation of one sect is hardly likely to be accepted by another, there are possibilities of sectarian war being sparked by the most innocuous of events.

Before the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947, Mohammad Ali Jinnah had

emphasised his colour, last a citizen's privileges and of CA 15 w national a founder. M that a repo brought o Kayani can lowed to b

NEPAL

REA

THE NEP

its monso inter-party ever seen, overtook only a few fight, whi ish-funde local self-

No, th battling a hind the l to make o nationwic the fact th local-level ties after vailing in Marxist-L splinter p Leninists provision with the

Even the requ main opp its utmos larger iss Governn seemed legislator

There significant a hefty v three year committ 33 meeti articles v – quite u have bee The

emphasised that everyone, "no matter what his colour, caste or creed is first, second and last a citizen of this state with equal rights, privileges and obligations". The application of CA 15 will take Pakistan further from this national aspiration as expressed by its founder. Meanwhile, it is a sign of the times that a report as bold and honest as the one brought out in 1954 by Justices Munir and Kayani can neither be commissioned, nor allowed to be made public, in today's Pakistan.

NEPAL

READY TO ACT

THE NEPALI Parliament is winding down its monsoon session amidst the most rowdy inter-party squabble the Lower House has ever seen, reminding one of the bedlam that overtook the Uttar Pradesh state legislature only a few months ago. The cause of the floor-fight, which left some furniture and a Danish-funded mike system as casualties, was a local self-government bill up for passage.

No, the honourable members were not battling about the philosophical issues behind the landmark bill, which has the ability to make or break the system of governance nationwide. Their bickering was limited to the fact that one article allowed members of local-level councils to switch political parties after elections. This was against the prevailing interests of, particularly, the United Marxist-Leninists (UML) which feared that its splinter party, the recently formed Marxist-Leninists (ML), would stand to gain from the provision. (The ML is presently cohabiting with the Nepali Congress in government.)

Even though the governing coalition had the required majority to pass the bill, the main opposition UML was determined to do its utmost to block it; hence, the fracas. The larger issues emanating from the Local Self-Government Act, which was finally adopted, seemed to be far from the minds of the legislators.

There is no doubt that the Act is most significant, and not only in terms of its size – a hefty volume of 268 articles, the result of three years of work by experts and House committees. It was sent to the House after 33 meetings in committee where some of the articles were adopted through separate votes – quite unlike the consensus decisions that have been the rule.

The Act, which now only requires King



CHANDRASEKHAR KARKI

Parliament marshals survey damage.

Birendra's automatic assent, is extremely 'trusting', for want of a better word. If it is implemented in the spirit that it has been drafted, there is no doubt that it will bring about a social, administrative, political and economic turnaround nationwide as it liberally grants authority to district, municipal and village councils over an array of economic, legal and administrative matters. This devolution of powers is very welcome as far as it goes, but no one really believes that the centralised administrative structures of the country and those who are ominously termed the "power centres" will allow the Act to be applied in full.

And that is the danger, for partial application of the Act will result directly in the distortion of the polity. Till now, it has been national-level politics that have been affected by corruption and malfeasance, but the fear is that a half-hearted implementation of the Local Self-Government Act will spread the rot through the districts and towns, right down to the grassroots. The traditional balance of power would then be shaken loose, and there would be nothing better to replace it with.

Partial implementation of the Act would, in short, provide power without responsibility to locally elected executives and representatives all over the country. For example, local-level councils may now collect taxes and decide upon a dozen different types of conflicts. But then, there are no mechanisms to make the local authorities answerable for their action, the way there are with the civil service. In fact, the local authorities have been coddled to the extent that as long as the jail term is not of more than three years, they may not be removed from their seats or posts even if they have been tried and jailed for criminal offences! This provision was added to the bill in the later stages of its preparation, and the intention is clear.

THE EXPLORE NEPAL



BHOJAN GRIHA P. Ltd.

भोजन गृह

One of the finest and exclusive Nepali restaurant that serves authentic traditional cuisine. Located within the heart of Kathmandu, Dilli Bazar, the building almost 150 years old of prominent aristocratic family has been restored meticulously and converted into fascinating restaurant with intricate decor, subtle setting and comfortable ambience within nostalgic atmosphere... ..

Traditional folk music and ethnic dances are performed in full costume each evening by the local artist over savory meals.

Bhojan Griha is open for both lunch and dinner 7 days a week. Please check out our special traditional Nepali festival menu served during major festive days. Special discount for local resident and expatriates.

For reservation contact :

Bhojan Griha

Phone : 416423, 411603, Fax : 977-1-243250
E-mail : explore@mos.com.np



Koshi Tappu Wildlife Camp

24 Bedded Safari Tented Camp

Koshi Tappu Wildlife Camp – the very first luxury 24 bedded safari tented camp within Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve offers a unique experience to view almost 400 species of birdlife and some very rare wild games on the most peaceful and relaxing setting found anywhere in Nepal.

Still unexplored and remote, the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve First gazetted back in 1976 was mainly established to protect the last of the remaining rare wild water buffaloes. The reserve extends 175 sq.km. to the north long barrage that spans the Koshi river. The vast expanse of water created by the barrage, marshes, lagoons, mudflats and arable land that lie around it offers an outstanding wetland which has favored to create one of the best and finest bird sanctuaries in Asia.

The camp consists of 12 large deluxe safari tents with comfortable twin beds has simple but modern toilet amenity including hot and cold shower facility. The restaurant with fully stocked bar is located centrally on the thatched 'Golghar'. Simple but tasty Nepali and western cuisine is served.

We have special Festival Offer for local residents. For further information and reservation contact :

Koshi Tappu Wildlife Camp

P.O. Box : 536, Kamaladi
Kathmandu

Phone : 247078, 247079, 248942
Fax : 977-1-224237, 243250

12



Kantipur Temple House

(Towards the dusk, under faded light of setting sun, stands alone in a corner silhouette of Kantipur Temple House in deep slumber. Only the windbell chimes softly against the gentle summer breeze chanting 'Om namo Shiva...')

A unique property has been created within the heart of Thamel, Jyatha tol for visitors who have always appreciated and loved the art and culture of Kathmandu Valley. Kantipur Temple House as its name signifies, has been built with typical architectural blend of ethnic Newari Temple at the very center of cultural environs of Thamel Tol which is the heart of Kathmandu where the royalties and religious patrons across the centuries have built lavish palaces, ornate temples and curious street shrines.

Constructed few years ago, Kantipur Temple House has 32 rooms all delicately furnished in true traditional decor with simple modern amenities, cosy restaurant, open roof top terraced garden which over looks the famous Swyabhunath Temple perched top of hillock on the western front and an magnificent views of Royal Palace against the back drop of mountains beyond the northern horizon. A real cultural experience.....

For instant reservation or enquiry contact :

Kantipur Temple House

Jyatha Tol, Post Box 536
Phone : 250131, 248942
Fax : 977-1-243250, 224237

AUSTRIAN AIRLINES

One of the major airlines of Europe starts direct flight from Vienna, Austria to Kathmandu, Nepal from 24th September 1998 with Airbus (A310 – 324) With 213 seat configuration (195 Economy and 18 Grand class). The flight will arrive in Kathmandu at 1040 hrs. and will depart 1200 hrs. reaching Vienna at 1900 hrs. the same day! (The return flight is via New Delhi but for technical landing only as there is no traffic rights from Kathmandu/Delhi/Vienna)

Austrian Airlines has excellent connections for both Europe and USA – west coast destinations from Vienna with impeccable in flight services. For further details and inquiries contact :

Austrian Airlines

P.O. Box 536, Kamaladi
Kathmandu, Nepal
Phone : 241470, 247078
Fax : 977-1-243250, 224237
E-mail : explore@mos.com.np

SUMMER SCHEDULE						
EFFECTIVE FROM 24th SEPT. 1998						
FLTNO	DAY	FROM	TO	DEP	ARR	
OS4444	Thursday	KTM	VIENNA	1200	1900	
OS4446	Saturday	KTM	VIENNA	1200	1900	
WINTER SCHEDULE						
EFFECTIVE FROM 28th OCT. 1998/1999						
FLTNO	DAY	FROM	TO	DEP	ARR	
OS4444	Thursday	KTM	VIENNA	1300	1900	
OS4446	Saturday	KTM	VIENNA	1300	1900	

Even m
public wi
overween
thorities.
are not sp
for five ye
cil out of

The fe
rivalries
level admi
now be tr
the partie
the bill at
see subst
ferred to
of cours
decentral
that now
the new
structure
unwieldy

This i
a fait acc
ability no
bears can
provision
and 'funde
failed to
ety and
tion that
(which v
by the dr
have cor
Nepal w
since Ne
time, the
to advan

BANGLA

FATWA

TASLIM

about t
Salman
the fatw
gone A
fatwas a
ety, use
that are
ardly im
down p
control

At t
is still
Having
ther an

Even more worrisome is the fact that the public will find it hard to obtain redress for overweening or illegal actions by local authorities. This is because redress procedures are not spelt out in the legislation. Waiting for five years to vote an erring official or council out of power is hardly an efficient answer.

The fear is all too real that the inter-party rivalries which have brought the national-level administration to a near standstill will now be transferred countrywide. One reason the parties fought so keenly for and against the bill at the monsoon sitting was that they see substantial power has now been transferred to local authorities. While this is of course the very philosophy behind decentralisation, the fear for the moment is that now party-based politicking will swamp the new system and make *all* political structures, and not just at the national level, unwieldy.

This indulgent Act of Parliament is by now a *fait accompli*. But because it will in all probability not be allowed to be applied in full, it bears careful watching in the days ahead. The provisions are clearly the result of an idealised and 'funded' law-drafting process, which has failed to consider the realities of Nepali society and politics. Instead, a piece of legislation that would be ideal for, say, Nebraska (which was, in fact, one model considered by the drafters) has been crafted. There would have come a time, not far in the future, when Nepal would have been ready for the Act, but since Nepalis have now had it gifted before time, they will just have to be alert in using it to advantage. △

-Rajendra Dahal

BANGLADESH

FATWA FURY

TASLIMA NASREEN returned to Bangladesh about the same time the more celebrated Salman Rushdie received a semi-reprieve from the *fatwa* issued against him by the long-gone Ayatollah Khomeini. These kinds of fatwas are a vicious form of controlling society, used by clerics traumatised by changes that are beyond their control. These are cowardly instruments on intolerance which cow down politicians and the bureaucracies they control.

At the moment of going to press, Taslima is still in hiding back in her home country. Having come back to Bangladesh with her father and cancer-ridden mother, she has obvi-

ously been moving from safe-house to safe-house, avoiding vigilante action. Four years ago, it was the same fanatic thought-police which hounded her out of the country. Now, after lying low during Taslima's exile in the West, the religious extremists of Bangladesh are at it again, baying for Taslima's blood.

That their country has been devastated by one of the worst floods of the century has not diminished the fanatic energy to avenge what is thought to be blasphemy committed. For these men, nature's ravages do not spell as real a threat to their supremacy in society as the one posed by a female daring to show sympathy to a minority community. How much does the noose Taslima faces have to do with her being a woman? We do believe that the male Salman Rushdie, howsoever grand a writer he may be, would not have whipped up as wicked a reaction as the female writer, who, by some snide accounts, is only a "mediocre writer".

Writing skills are hardly of consequence in the case at hand. The issue is whether an individual can be denied her fundamental rights merely because her views challenge a religion's orthodoxy. It is also banal to treat the whole affair as one which harks back to the medieval times; this is the here and now. It is clear that modernisation of technology does little by way of enhancing thought, which is why humankind has been continuously and meticulously updating its talent for brutality.

Then there are those who manipulate issues to feed their vested interests. In this case, it has been India's Bharatiya Janata Party, and to some extent, the West. Salivating when confronted by a Muslim woman who would question her own religion, the overtly Hindu BJP, while in the opposition, pushed sales of Taslima's novel *Lajja* (Shame) by translating and distributing thousands of copies. This immediately made her an accomplice with the enemy in the eyes of many clerics. As for the West, while some of the countries deserve due credit for offering asylum to a persecuted individual, the racist lobbies got active in further painting Islam in the devil's pigment. A classic case of the fundamentalist food chain sustaining itself.

A last word on the Bangladesh government's response to Taslima's arrival. It chose to remain mum even as the world was witness to protestors being chased away by the Dhaka cops. When it did break the silence through Foreign Minister Abdus Samad, it pleaded that the "case should be considered from an humanitarian angle". Ideally, there wouldn't have been any doubts on that count,

but knowing that fanaticism and humanitarianism do not really jell, we fear for the life of Taslima Nasreen.

SRI LANKA

KILLING FIELDS OF KILINOCHCHI

TWENTY-SEVEN lorries flying Red Cross flags wended their way on 30 September through the thick Tamil Tiger-held Vanni jungles of northern Sri Lanka into government military territory. The lorries were not carrying medical supplies or food. Instead, 600 or so decomposing bodies made up the convoy's macabre cargo. These were the remains of soldiers that had been handed over to the Red Cross by the rebels following a bloody battle in northern Sri Lanka some days before.

For a government which had been claiming that the civil war was 95 percent won, September's fighting was a debacle. After a two-day siege, the Tamil Tigers captured Kilinochchi, a key military base in the northern battlefield; the Sri Lankan military had to be content with a consolation prize – the capture of Mankulam, a rebel-held town some kilometres south of Kilinochchi.

The latest wave of fighting began on 27 September when LTTE rebels attacked soldiers near Paranthan and Kilinochchi, two towns close to the northern peninsula. The peninsula was captured by government soldiers in 1995. But the area is isolated, with no road link to the mainland, and the government was forced to send supplies by air and sea. And

To the discerning Sri Lankan any good news is bad news, especially when reported by the state. Behind the hype always lies the gory truth.

since May last year, the government forces had been trying to secure a road through rebel-controlled territory in what has become the longest military offensive in the civil war.

Mankulam had been hailed for many months as the last rebel bastion on the roadway linking the Jaffna peninsula with the rest of the island. In reality, though, the "last rebel bastion" had now merely moved to Kilinochchi. How much further it is going to move is

a matter of conjecture, but what was blatantly evident during the last round of heavy fighting, and of greater significance than the rhetoric about battle victories, was that more than 1300 people were killed in one of the biggest and bloodiest battles in Sri Lanka's 15-year-old civil war.

Evident, that is, to everyone but Sri Lankans, for since June the government has begun censoring war reporting by the media. Both local and foreign correspondents are covered by the censorship although news organisations outside the country get around by filing stories using a dateline outside Sri Lanka. Most Lankans, however, know only what the government wants them to know, and what is churned out by the rumour mill.

To the discerning Sri Lankan, however, any good news is bad news, especially when reported by the state. For beneath the hype always lies the gory truth. The day after the first day of the September battle, the state-run print media hush-hushed the fighting and turned its gaze instead on how well Sri Lanka's electronic exports were faring.

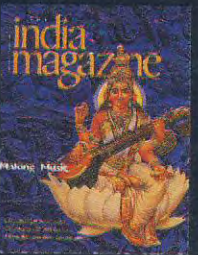
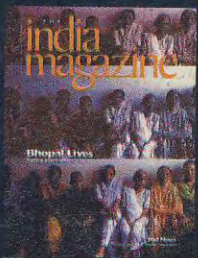
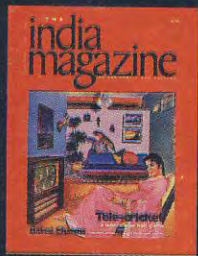
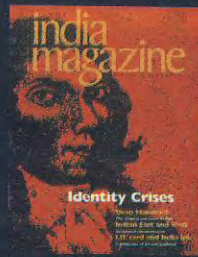
In the end, Colombo touted the loss of Kilinochchi as a "tactical withdrawal", and stressed the need to go ahead with its power devolution package as a way to end the ethnic conflict. The plan envisages amending Sri Lanka's constitution to give the nine provinces, including the one dominated by the minority Tamils, more power to handle their own affairs. The move has drawn criticism from many quarters, including the main opposition United National Party, whose support is vital if the plan is to be made law.

Ironically, though, some of the root causes for the ethnic conflict remain unaddressed even as the devolution package is discussed. In Sri Lankan schools, for instance, Sinhala and Tamil children are segregated, with little opportunity to interact. Government textbooks harp on the mythical glory days of yore and hardly deal with contemporary social issues. And even when they do, the ethnic conflict receives but a cursory mention.

In the wake of the fierce fighting in the north, the national hospital in Colombo sent home all but the most serious civilian patients to make room for wounded soldiers. For three days straight, the roads in the capital reverberated with the sirens of scores of ambulances ferrying the wounded and the dying. At the end of it all, with neither side willing to relent, those who survived the battle will just have to wait to fight another day.

Meanwhile, at the end of September 1998, on both side of the barricades, thousands of families grieved for their dead sons. Δ

Columbus didn't read it you should



Discover The India Magazine

SUBSCRIPTION

I would like to subscribe to
THE INDIA MAGAZINE for
 ONE YEAR (12 ISSUES)
 TWO YEARS (24 ISSUES)

The magazine should be sent to
me at the following address:

Name: _____

Address: _____

My cheque bank draft MO
 PO for Rs _____ + Rs 10
drawn in favour of

The India Magazine

is enclosed for cheques not drawn on a
Bombay bank.

To
10 PEARL MANSION, 5th FLOOR,
91 MAHARISHI KARVE ROAD, MUMBAI 400 020
TEL: 2069276, 2006669

Newsstand price	Rs 25 per copy	<input type="checkbox"/>
INDIA		
One year (12 issues)	Rs 180	<input type="checkbox"/>
Two years (24 issues)	Rs 335	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERSEAS (one year only)		
Airmail Pakistan	Rs 850 or US \$30	<input type="checkbox"/>
All other countries	Rs 1200 or US \$40	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seamail Pakistan	Rs 550 or US \$20	<input type="checkbox"/>
All other countries	Rs 600 or US \$25	<input type="checkbox"/>

Deconstructing Gita



Gita Danuwar (above) was sold in Bombay by a cousin. After nine years, she is back in her home village near Kathmandu. Although she has HIV, Gita hoes her terrace farm while her father weeds. However, most women and children enter prostitution not because they are 'forced', but because they have no alternatives. Family-based sex trade is an increasingly common response to poverty and a significant source of rural income.

*by John Frederick
photographs by Usha Tiwari*

This is a
atio
wor
'discourse'
of trafficking
non-gover
and gover
determines
lem, but i
reality, int
wasted, an

Today,
ject is no l
cial scient
journalists
the reality
they put i
ficking. A
organisati
discourse
trafficking
lar, are pu
standing g
everyday
trafficking

And,
seminar-w
ments ha
myths. Ho
tic pictur
emerges,
whether t
ing is not

This v
years tal
donor age
nalists a
Actually,
what 'traf
understa
Against t
of childr
putting t
from res
journalis

Each
own vari
course -
different
the forc
Bombay;
their fem
The Ind
domestic
with its v



This is an essay not only about the situation of the trafficking of girls and women in South Asia, but about the 'discourse' on this issue – the consensus view of trafficking that is presented by the media, non-governmental groups, donor agencies and governments. It is the discourse which determines what is to be done about the problem, but if the discourse does not relate to reality, interventions do not work, funds are wasted, and people continue to suffer.

Today, examination of 'discourse' on a subject is no longer the domain of abstracted social scientists. It has also been taken up by journalists, who, in this case, are questioning the reality, the balance and the effect of what they put in print and on film regarding trafficking. A few grounded members of donor organisations are questioning whether the discourse leads to effective measures to curb trafficking. Members of local NGOs, in particular, are pushing for a more realistic understanding of trafficking, bred both from their everyday experiences and from seeing anti-trafficking activities fall flat on their face.

And, finally, governments. Like the seminar-wallahs of the 'power-NGOs', governments have a lot at stake in maintaining myths. However, as a clearer and more realistic picture of trafficking and prostitution emerges, they too are beginning to wonder whether the prevailing discourse on trafficking is not off the mark.

This writer has spent the last couple of years talking with NGO workers, activists, donor agency staff, government officials, journalists and filmmakers about 'trafficking'. Actually, I have just listened, wanting to know what 'trafficking' meant to them and how their understanding transformed into action. Against this, I have placed the greater 'reality' of children and adults entering prostitution, putting together a picture as best as possible from researchers, field workers, investigative journalists and sex workers themselves.

Each country in South Asia has its own variation of the general trafficking discourse – each generalising 'the problem' in different ways. Nepal's discourse is based on the forced abduction of Nepali girls to Bombay; Bangladesh's is on the trafficking of their females to Pakistan and the Middle East. The Indian thesis focuses on in-country or domestic trafficking. Sri Lanka's is concerned with its women going to countries outside the

region, and is integrated with a larger discussion of migrant female labour. Pakistan is primarily concerned with the domestic abuse of its own women, and the trafficking discourse *per se* is unformed, focusing primarily on its women going to the Middle East.

Out in the international ether – the transnational media, foreign government bureaucracies and donor agency boardrooms – the matter of trafficking tends to be treated in simple and sensationalistic terms. Here, the discourse is adapted to international ignorance of the South Asian situation, coupled with the primary motivation to "sell it". Thus, Nepali girls in Bombay, Asian "camel-boys" in the Middle East, the Devadasi dancing girls of India, and a few other mediagenic groups dominate the international view of trafficking in the Subcontinent. This small, distorted picture obscures large, vital issues concerning South Asia's women and children.

Subcontinental myths

Every South Asian country's discourse is dominated by myths, supposedly typifying accounts of what trafficking really is. It is very important to see how far these myths correspond to what is actually happening as girls and women travel to join the sex trade.

Let us spin the Nepal myth first; it is the best known...

This is the story of a poor Tamang girl from Sindhupalchowk District, northwest of Kathmandu Valley. Her name has got to be Gita. Passive, fair-skinned Gita (they like them like that down in Bombay) emerges from her thatch-roof hut one day to buy some cooking oil for her mother. At the local shop, a swarthy stranger hands her a drugged pack of Frooti (the popular mango drink), and the next thing she knows she's blearily looking out a dirty bus window in Muzaffarpur, Bihar. A little confused, Gita is sure they had promised to get her a job as a nanny in Delhi. Another Frooti later, she wakes up in a filthy padlocked room in Bombay.

Despite the rows of suggestively positioned girls she sees on the sidewalk below, innocent Gita has no idea what's in store for her. When her snarling madam, the *gharwali*, brings in her first customer (a sickly, festering man who is convinced that sex with a virgin will cure his AIDS), she nobly refuses. In comes the goonda for her 'training'. After being raped 15 or 20 times a day for a week, Gita gets the

picture: she is supposed to be a sex worker. Finally accepting her fate, Gita begins work. She has to service 30 customers a night, is not allowed out to see Hindi movies (even though it is Bombay), and has no idea that she owes the detestable gharwali 25,000 (Indian) rupees for her purchase at 80 percent interest compounded daily.

Now the saviours appear. An inspired NGO leader, aided by cops with humanitarian conscience, beats down the door of the brothel and finds Gita hidden away behind a pile of tins. After a pleasant holiday in a government remand home, she is repatriated to Kathmandu. But alas, she can't go home any more because she is found to be HIV positive. Luckily for Gita, there is room in a shelter run by a charity, where she learns to embroider placemats and live her last days in dignity.

This is the basic Nepal myth. To be sure, there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of genuine Gitas out there, and their suffering is immeasurable. But does Gita represent the majority? Or is she part of a small fraction of the girls, boys and women subjected to prostitution, but who entered in less dramatic circumstances?

In Sri Lanka, the dominant trafficking myth has the poor Buddhist/Hindu/Christian girl spirited off to the Middle East to work as a domestic servant for a grouchy man wearing bedsheets. After being sexually abused by

the sons of the house, she loses her job, cannot pay off her debt to the evil agent, and ends up working in a bar in Qatar. (By the way, her 5-year-old brother is a camel boy, and we will not discuss what is done to him.)

In Bangladesh, it is the village maiden dragged across a hundred frontiers, raped by men in a variety of uniforms, who ends up a labourer in a Karachi fish factory for a few weeks before she is married off to a peasant in deepest Balochistan.

Again, all these myths are founded on a reality that cannot be ignored. But it is necessary to question whether in their excruciating detail they obscure a larger reality. Do the myths even obstruct effective action against trafficking? Overall, does the diversionary power of the present trafficking discourse mean that many more children and women are undocumented, uncounted, discounted? If so, it is time to change our understanding of trafficking in South Asia, to recognise these others – the unrecognised majority of those in pain – and to do something about their condition.

Reality check

What are the facts of trafficking? The truth is – after a decade of seminars, media investigations, research and committee reports – we really don't know. In some cases, we know where the trafficked girls come from, but not in all cases, especially in India and Nepal. We have not the vaguest idea of the numbers of girls trafficked. We do not know much about where they go, whether to large metros or industrial towns, or to what kinds of prostitution establishments. And we do not know who is responsible. In the last couple of years there has been some *bona fide* research and investigative journalism on the subject, but the picture is as yet blurry. Worst of all, we do not even know what the word 'trafficking' means any more. Maybe it is time to throw the word away.

It can be safely said that the girl-children of myth – those who are physically coerced or duped into prostitution across international borders without prior knowledge or willingness – are a small, very small, minority of all who enter prostitution. This activity alone is what the discourse generally calls 'trafficking'.

First of all, we must distinguish 'international' trafficking from 'in-country' or 'domestic' trafficking. Although it takes little skill to determine that vast majority of women and children are trafficked within their countries' borders (sometimes just down the hill to the truckstop), in-country trafficking remains a small part of what people understand by "traf-

ficking". "Report a on Prostitution that "more within the to another develops an ing record traffickers

Family i
The defin passing. ingly abo dragged tims of against t send the this coul ficking.

Soft t establish poor hou dowry bu 80 perce their fan probably Indian an home. T complici

In the comes ac ficking and beer the same can find many of childhoo all the g Sindhup export o

It is l is often to their l strangers they are bers or Asian ph pines, C of the E are routi els.

Traffi ily and t the resul cal mor bonded- there is reported sex in th



The men of Dubachaur Village in Nepal. A lot of the young women have gone to Bombay in the last two years.

ficking". In the Government of India's recent "Report and Plan of Action of the Committee on Prostitution", while it is clearly stated that "most of the human trafficking is done within the country from one State or region to another", the committee immediately develops amnesia and restricts itself to prescribing recommendations to halt international trafficking.

Family indebtedness

The definition should be made more encompassing. Children unwillingly and unknowingly abducted, drugged, duped or otherwise dragged to the brothels could be called victims of 'hard' or 'coercive' trafficking. Set against this are the children whose families send them to the brothels as wage-earners – this could be called 'soft' or 'family-based' trafficking.

Soft trafficking may occur because it is an established means of providing income to poor households, as well as of getting rid of a dowry burden. In northern Thailand, perhaps 80 percent of the girls send money home to their families. There is evidence that many, probably the majority, of the girls working in Indian and Bangladeshi brothels send money home. The family and community, thus, are complicit.

In the sex establishments of Bombay, one comes across enough indications of soft trafficking. Many, perhaps most, of the brothels and beer bars contain girls from the same state, the same region, often the same village. You can find Meghalayan or Tamil beer bars where many of the girls have known each other since childhood. You can find Nepali brothels where all the girls are from the same village in Sindhupalchowk district, well known for its export of prostitutes (*see story on page 24*).

It is known that recruitment of new girls is often done by older prostitutes returning to their home villages. They are not dragging strangers off the streets to Bombay, instead they are bringing over their own family members or neighbours. This is hardly a South Asian phenomenon – in Thailand, the Philippines, China, Cambodia and every country of the East, too, girls from the same village are routinely found working together in brothels.

Trafficking with the complicity of the family and the girl's fore-knowledge, may also be the result of family indebtedness – to the local moneylender or from an established bonded-labour situation. In Thailand, where there is better data available, it was recently reported that about 40 percent of girls selling sex in the north of the country were in pros-

titution to pay off their family debts. Family indebtedness is routine throughout the Subcontinent (with the state of Bihar at its centre), and it can be safely said that debt obligation plays a significant role in the soft trafficking of children here. What is interesting is that the question of family indebtedness does not form any part of the present trafficking discourse in any of the regional countries.

Evidence suggests that the various forms of soft trafficking are not only prevalent, but that they involve many more girls and women than hard trafficking. It is also clear that soft trafficking has become a widely accepted cultural practice and that more and more families knowingly and willingly send their children to brothels in response to their own poverty. This is not even a new phenomenon – many South Asian communities have been doing this for generations – but it is rapidly expanding as the poor get poorer. At the same time, it is making a crucial contribution to impoverished rural economies.

Evidence also suggests that many of the females who enter sex work are not trafficked into it – they enter because they have no alternative. What about a girl or woman who goes overseas as a migrant household worker, perhaps gets sexually abused by her employer, flees her job and resorts to sex work in desperation? Or the woman who is abandoned



Nepali and Tamil prostitutes in a Bombay brothel pose with social workers on Rakhee Day. On the wall, garlanded portrait of the late madam of the house.

by her husband and who must get into sex work to feed her children? Or a young woman whose parents have died or abandoned her, a street child? Selling sex may be her only way to survive. These women and girls are not trafficked – they certainly do not enter prostitution ‘voluntarily’, but somehow they are excluded from the prevalent trafficking discourse.

Thus, at present, the discussion of trafficked women limits itself to the victims of hard trafficking. As a result, the media focuses on these victims, donors direct their funds at these victims, and governments wax eloquent about these victims – to the exclusion of the majority of women in the sex trade. Why?

If a discourse – in this case, why and how children enter prostitution – is not in sync with the real world, why not just change it, one may ask. It's not that easy. Once embedded in the public and professional mind, the understanding of what trafficking is and is not is very hard to eradicate. There are a number of reasons for this.

For one, there is a strong tendency among all parties to simplify. The media want a strong yet simple story, one that readers and viewers can connect with. Many NGOs want to keep it simple because it facilitates their work – it is much easier to set up token prevention camps in the Nepal hills than to confront angry vil-

lagers whose income is derived from selling their girls. Donor agencies simplify the issues because of cultural ignorance (the project chief will have spent the last three years in Rwanda), and because they themselves must advocate and generate funds on an international platform (which, like the international media, wants spicy *masala*).

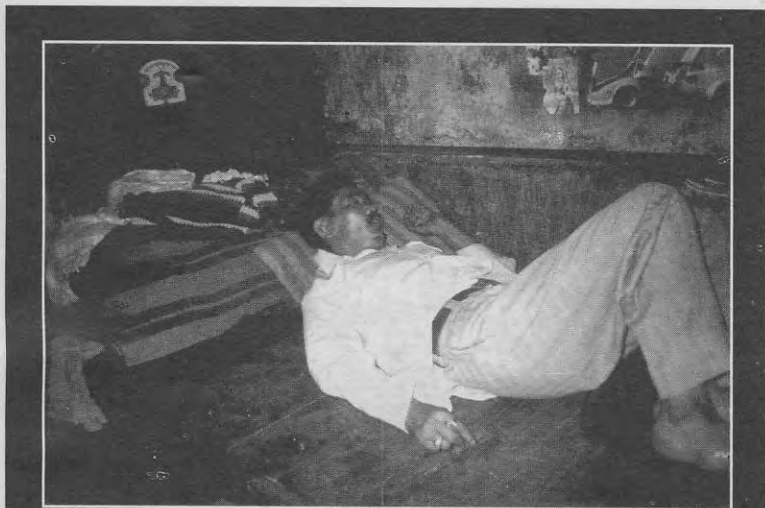
Frooti girls

The prevalent perception of trafficking is also explained by inadequate research. In all South Asian countries, scholars are handicapped by an extremely difficult subject and the lack of skills to break it open. This is compounded by pressure to conduct research quickly, save money, and get the facts to fit donor and government agendas. For example, much of the knowledge of how Nepali girls are trafficked to Bombay is based on one-shot interviews with sex workers. Did you ever wonder why there are only three or four versions of the same story (the drugged Frooti, they promised me a job in the city, I got lost on my way to the market, and so on)?

Every social worker knows that prostitutes are trained by their madams to tell these stories, and that they will protect their own families long before they will confess to a researcher how they really entered prostitution. They are hardly going to say, “Yes, my parents sent me down here to work in aunt Kamala's brothel, and my cousin Meena is there in the next room with a client?” So, the discourse accepts the lies, and denies, in this case, the existence of family-based trafficking.

The media, governments and donor agencies all demand numbers – of a group that is almost impossible to count. Researchers twitch at the thought of providing numbers and rightfully try to avoid giving them. However, the media, at least, cannot do without numbers, and so you see, for example, the same number of Bangladeshi women in Pakistan or the same number of Sri Lankan women in the Gulf repeated for years. No one knows where the numbers came from, and if a journalist adds or drops a zero, nobody notices. It's a number, a big one, and that's enough.

But suppose the correct facts are there (and in many instances, there are). Suppose a realistic picture of trafficking could be presented simply (and it can be). Suppose, ignoring uncountable numbers, we could determine proportions, that is, what groups or locations are hurt the most, what kinds of trafficking prevail (and we can almost do that today), and so on. Supposing these, why is a false discourse still perpetuated? Why do we continue to ignore the majority of the victims, and con-



Inside a brothel next to the Olympic Hotel on Falkland Road in Bombay just before midnight on a weekday. An inebriated Nepali client sleeps it off.

tinue to m
clusively
Why
cause all
tutes) hav
what keep
what peo
trast with

Media m
The med
keeping t
articles an
wins awa
descript
cousin to
other har
year, I wr
Times of
have mai
for gener
using ver
myth. Th
els” or so
of Nepali
an extra z
my bylin

NGOS
fine urba
visible gr
away from
ers rake
After all
to simple
can be to
village m
have bee
publish
assemble
mats. D
it, espec
the girls.

What
'develop
try will v
put. Sho
activities
instead o
difficult
highlight
Genuine
difficult.
again an
cannot h
have to s
numbers
terventio
lies sell
labourer
boy-pros

tinue to make token interventions based exclusively on the notion of hard trafficking?

Why is this discourse perpetuated? Because all the players (except for the prostitutes) have a stake in it. Paisa and power is what keeps the system operating, and this is what people want to hear, especially in contrast with children's suffering.

Media makes myths

The media has an immense investment in keeping the Gita myth alive. As innumerable articles and films attest, the Gita story sells, it wins awards. The story of a girl from a non-descript Deccan village who goes with her cousin to work in a Bombay beer bar, on the other hand, does not sell. I have tried it. Last year, I wrote a story for the venerable *Sunday Times* of London about Nepali villagers who have maintained family brothels in Bombay for generations. The *Times* rewrote the story, using very few of my words, into the Gita myth. They labelled it "Supermarket Brothels" or something like that, said the number of Nepali girls in Bombay was 400,000 (what's an extra zero?) and to my embarrassment put my byline on it. That's what sells.

NGOs have an investment. Excepting some fine urban radicals and the many superb, invisible grassroots NGOs who tend to be pushed away from the feeding trough, the lime-lighters rake it in with the dramatic Gita myth. After all, the myth has an immediate appeal to simple-minded donors, and interventions can be token: simulate results by conducting village meetings (just count the onlookers, all have been "made aware"), conduct trainings, publish brochures for the illiterate, and assemble a few sad girls in a cottage weaving mats. Donor representatives tend to love it, especially if they can come and gawk at the girls.

What about the donors themselves? Well, 'development' is an industry and any industry will want the most output for the least input. Should donor agencies decide to fund activities against family-based soft trafficking instead of hard trafficking, they would have a difficult time writing those donor reports highlighting 'interventions' and achievements. Genuine interventions are always extremely difficult, they will take years, and will fail again and again before they succeed. Donors cannot handle that. Like auto companies, they have to show quick profits, the profits being numbers of kids saved. For these reasons, interventions to save the children whose families sell them, to protect migrant women labourers, or to stem the immense amount of boy-prostitution in India and Pakistan, are just

not good for business.

Like everyone else, governments like the prevalent trafficking myths because they can be sold easily. Trafficked Gita makes for good sound bite on the podium, and the myth of the "evil trafficker" lays the blame on the other guy – for Nepal, it's India; for Bangladesh, Pakistan; for Sri Lanka, the Gulf states. Governments tend to reinforce the present discourse because it diverts attention from the underlying causes of prostitution that the governments are unable to address: rural and urban poverty, caste and gender discrimination, debt servitude, domestic sexual abuse, and unguided urban growth. Lastly, no politician is going to accuse his constituents of sending their own kids to the brothels.

When the discourse is not challenged, not revised, the results are serious and the damage far-reaching. Meanwhile, hard trafficking continues unabated. Because the response is misplaced and ineffective, the traffickers easily run circles around the plodding NGOs and inactive governments.

The prevailing discussion simplifies the concept of trafficking so as to place the blame on "criminal networks" run by evil mafiosi. Contrarily, what we know is that trafficking activities are primarily small, informal and decentralised. The big shots, cops and politicians may get a piece of the brothel profits



Inspector Prafulia Joshi of the V.P. Road Police Station in Bombay leads one of his periodic raids on a brothel in Falkland Road. The gharwali, Pushpa, unlocks the grill gate to let him in.

after the girls are installed, but large networks probably account for only a small percentage of trafficked women and children.

Unrecognised in the discussions, and thus ignored by most interventionists, in-country trafficking and soft trafficking continue to expand. Families, community members and money-lenders who profit from the sale of children are not touched (except when they are occasionally forced to listen to village lectures by NGO workers on the evils of trafficking).

In a word, the present discourse and the resulting interventions leave out most of the persons who are trafficked. Besides the likely majority that is willingly or unwillingly sold with family complicity, the discourse ignores females who are not children – as if adulthood suddenly makes a person willing. It also ignores children from geographical areas that are not targeted by interventionists, such as the 90 percent of Nepali children who do not live in Nepal's few "danger districts" such as Sindhupalchowk and Rasuwa. The discourse is also sexist – outside of Sri Lanka, with the exception of a few camel-boys, male children are excluded from the picture.

The present trafficking discussion and its attendant myths interfere with effective interventions, including the removal of children from brothels. Sex workers are strongly

against hard trafficking and child prostitution, and are potentially key figures in preventing both from spreading. Bungling media-drenched 'rescues' antagonise brothel communities, killing possible support from *gharwalis*, prostitutes and clients, increasing police pressure on already abused sex workers, and making research and AIDS interventions more difficult.

The accepted thesis obscures vital issues that do not fit within the narrow purview of 'trafficking'. The link between familial indebtedness in the village and the sending of girls to the brothels is well recognised in Thailand; in South Asia, with the exception of Bangladesh and the eastern states of India, it is never discussed.

Sri Lanka leads the challenge to the discourse on migrant labour: that sexual exploitation must be considered part of a wider range of exploitation of migrant workers; and that the word 'trafficking' should be more broadly applied, particularly to those exploited by usury or forced to work under horrible conditions.

Gita-style trafficking is 'democratic' – by its definition, any little girl is a potential victim. The fact is that any little girl is not. The simplified discourse ignores the social and economic oppression that results, for example, in the majority of Indian prostitutes being from tribal or scheduled castes.

The "anyone is a victim" image of trafficking suits governments well, because it obscures the extreme desperation of the rural poor – a desperation in which girls are knowingly sacrificed to be brothel wage-earners so that the family can eat or pay off the money-lender. It hides the fact that prostitution is increasingly becoming a vital and indispensable part of the South Asian rural economy.

Perhaps the greatest victims of the prevailing understanding of the sex trade are the girls and women who are not 'trafficked'. The Western discourse on "willingness to enter prostitution" cannot be applied to South Asia. Virtually no female in South Asia would choose a life of prostitution if there were alternatives.

The meagre discussion on trafficking in the Subcontinent ignores the vast majority of persons who end up selling their bodies: women or girls with children and no husbands; those who must feed parents or siblings; those fleeing sexual abuse and violence at home; and children separated from their families, floating alone in an urban environment.

In a sense, all these individuals have been socially trafficked. Compounding the pain of

these 'v
discours
titation
traffice
whores.
titutes
minimis
as well a
in dang
Harm re
the pres

The cli
The evil
evil pros
one thi
another
ment an
tress on
suffered
pure pu
anti-pro
NGOS ar
other ex
in which
ernmen
enforce
"brothe
on. The
of both
them to
to be lef

Absen
of the p
mention
generall
returns
AIDS, th
bringing
sible for
are off t
course r
– stereo
STDs or
workers
Den
lar guys
part, a m
South A
equatio
against
extreme

And
is predi
of the ch
the pain
the pain
who ent
routes, l
pain of



Young Bhutanese prostitute, Anita, is "rescued" by social workers in Bombay in August 1998. Fair skin and "oriental" looks like hers are prized by Indian clients.

these 'voluntary' prostitutes, the present discourse creates an opposition between prostitution and trafficking – those who have been trafficked are innocent victims, the rest are *whores*. It brushes aside the fact that few prostitutes can escape from sex work, and minimises their needs for health and security, as well as the needs of their children, so often in danger of entering prostitution as well. Harm reduction gets almost no space within the present discourse.

The client

The evil trafficker myth slides easily into the evil prostitute myth; preventing trafficking is one thing, but annihilating prostitution is another. The discourse encourages government and NGO actions that inflict more distress on women and girls who have already suffered enough. This could be 'illegalisation', pure punishment, such as the knee-jerk anti-prostitution legislation that some Nepali NGOs are trying to peddle. Or it could be the other extreme, legalisation (read regulation), in which sex workers are inflicted with government and NGO interference in the form of enforced health checks, confinement to "brothel districts", police registration, and so on. The existing discourse fans the emotions of both puritans and liberationists, urging them to action when the sex worker just wants to be left alone.

Absent from the discourse is the upper half of the prostitution equation: the client. If mentioned at all, the client is faceless, even if generally foul. On the one hand, when a girl returns to Kerala or Nepal from Bombay with AIDS, the blame is once again put on her for bringing AIDS home. Those primarily responsible for HIV movement, migrant mobile males, are off the hook. On the other hand, the discourse masks the real identities of the clients – stereotyping them as greasy old men with STDs or as ignorant, sex-starved construction workers.

Denying the fact that clients are just regular guys, and denying that prostitution is, in part, a male response to arranged marriage and South Asian mores take the men out of the equation – and makes enforcing measures against trafficking, child prostitution and HIV extremely difficult.

And, finally, while the prevailing discourse is predicated on pain – the genuine anguish of the child abducted into hell – it glosses over the pain of many more. It not only ignores the pain of many other children and adults who enter prostitution through less dramatic routes, but also ignores the everyday, life-long pain of the sex worker: the social rejection,

the shattered dreams, the abuse at the hands of clients, the dead-end at middle age, and the emotional scars from coldly imparting what should be an act of love – sex – to thousands of men.

Although the present trafficking discourse and its regional variations are definitely flawed, the discourse must continue. There is a positive value to myth-making, for myths are one form of intervention: they communicate. Issues must be simplified because media audiences, governments and donors think in simple terms. Funds must be raised, legislation enacted and issues communicated.

Should we, then, create new myths about the workers of the sex industry and how they got there? Yes, we should. Myths need not be untrue. They can reflect reality while performing their vital function of communication. But to function effectively – here to prevent and relieve the suffering of those drawn into prostitution – they must arise from a realistic, viable discourse. The present trafficking discourse has evolved from the myths, and that's the wrong way round.

To change the present understanding of trafficking, we have to admit to some ideas that make us uncomfortable. We have to admit that family-based prostitution is an increasingly common response to poverty and a significant source of rural income. We have to admit that the village moneylender contributes to children entering the brothels. We have to admit that most women and children enter prostitution not because they are trafficked, but because they have no alternatives.

We have got a lot of admitting to do, a lot of garbage to clear away, a lot of painful social facts to face. If interventions are predicated on garbage, their effectiveness will not rise above the level of the compost heap. If a national policy against trafficking is based on garbage, it will be a national policy of garbage.

To change the present discourse, to head it in a realistic direction, is not easy. It means that many – in the media, NGOs, governments and donor agencies – will have to bite the bullet. Fortunately, among a few activist groups throughout South Asia, a discourse is developing based on a realistic appreciation of how and why girls and women enter the sex trade. This discussion is as yet incipient, but it needs to be listened to, so that old thinking is replaced by effective action. ▽

J. Frederick is a South Asia-based writer specialising in gender and children's issues.

South Asia's sex tr

Nepal

Nepal was the original maker of the myth of trafficking in the regional and international community. Gita and her drugged Frooti established the precedent in South Asia for heart- and wallet-wrenching sensationalism. The persistence of the myth has put Nepal's discourse significantly behind that of other South Asian countries. While the majority of attention on trafficking is placed on several "danger districts", which happen to surround Kathmandu Valley, it is painfully obvious that these sparsely-populated districts cannot account for the large number of Nepali girls and women selling sex in India. Nepal has a number of maturing rural NGOs which have significant knowledge of trafficking patterns across the country, but their knowledge has generally been ignored because the trafficking arena is dominated by Kathmandu-based "power NGOs" and international donors in their thrall.

The perception of "trafficking" has evolved very little over the last decade. Among NGOs and government people, there is a strong denial of families' direct, willing involvement in selling their children; in general, families are

conceived to have been either duped or coerced by abject poverty. Those fighting trafficking almost universally deny that the girls involved may have prior knowledge that they are going to enter sex work. In-country trafficking is ignored, despite evidence from grassroots NGOs and international-NGOs that traffickers are "shopping" in the hills for girls to serve in the brothels of Biratnagar, Kathmandu and Pokhara.

Recently, the matter of migrant labour has entered the consciousness of Nepali discussants. As in Sri Lanka, there is concern that migrant women workers unwittingly enter prostitution. Unlike in Sri Lanka, the number of women migrants, their destinations and their level of welfare are still largely unknown. Filling the vacuum, the media are beginning to play "I was raped by my boss" tapes, which promise to monopolise the trafficking discourse, drowning out other significant issues of female migrant labour. As with Nepali girls' knowing entry into prostitution in Nepal and India, activists are mute about the Nepalis willingly seeking sex work overseas, despite public knowledge that for years Nepali women have been going for sex work in Hong Kong, Japan and Korea.

The sequence which begins below is from the tele-serial Raat, produced by Kathmandu's Maha company and broadcast over Nepal Television in 1992. This was a pioneering attempt by directors Hari Bansha Acharya and Madan Krishna Shrestha in using mass media to spread awareness about HIV-AIDS. Raat addressed the issue of "hard trafficking". But few subsequent media efforts have gone beyond this to look at the reality of family trafficking. Seven years after Raat, the caricature of the "Gita myth" endures.



Innocent highland lass.



Nasty men arrive in village.



Lass tricked into marriage.



Next thing, she's in a bus headed south.

Ind

In the la
ing to t
dia, alb
Intern
govern
versal 'I
opportu
to deve
entry in
NGOs fe
sensus
ists in,
to more
girls", a
ing and
begun t
labour
Bihar, a
traffick

Wh
ing are
planted
cussion
matter
years a
ing wor

extrade myths

India

In the last several years, the discussion relating to trafficking has evolved rapidly in India, albeit mostly within the media and NGOs. International donors and state and national governments still cling to the concept of universal 'hard trafficking'. India has had more opportunity than other South Asian countries to develop a viable, truthful picture of girls' entry into prostitution: neither the media nor NGOs feel obliged to agree to a national consensus on the problem. Journalists and activists in, say, Tamil Nadu or Bengal are inclined to more deeply assess the situation of "their girls", and create a local discourse on trafficking and entry into prostitution. Thus, we have begun to see serious consideration of bonded labour vis-a-vis trafficking in West Bengal and Bihar, and of caste marginalisation vis-a-vis trafficking in Karnataka.

While shrill screams about hard trafficking are still heard in India, they are being supplanted to an extent by awareness and discussion of soft trafficking, particularly the matter of willing family involvement. A few years ago, those involved in fighting trafficking would have trundled out the poor Bedias,

Rajnats, Banjaras and Devadasis as examples of naughty families who send their children into hell. Today, it is increasingly accepted that sending daughters to the brothels to send home rupees is, and has long been, a widespread response to rural poverty. In this, India's self-realisation is approaching the level of Thailand's seven or eight years ago, when Thai activists accepted that prostitution was a very common form of filial obligation.

Unlike the case in Nepal and Bangladesh, it is difficult for Indian activists to blame another country for forcing their children into prostitution. India is clearly not a major flesh exporter and thus, the Indian discourse has not flown the flag of raped migrant women workers as have Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and now Nepal. While migrant women workers are a growing topic of concern, they are discussed by the media, NGOs, international NGOs and government in relatively sober and realistic terms. In this, the Indian experience is similar to the present-day Sri Lanka discourse. Unlike in Nepal, Indian discussants are able to openly admit the very high proportion of tribals and scheduled castes in prostitution.



Entry into a Bombay establishment.



Evil madam, the *gharwali*, chews paan.



Traffickers collect money and run.



'Gita' is tortured, terrorised, broken in.

Sri Lanka

The unique problems of its women and children have created a variant discourse in Sri Lanka, much of which is the most refined in the Subcontinent. The country exports a major proportion of its women to foreign countries as domestic servants, and has done so for years. Concerns for these women, whose earnings provide a substantial share to the national economy, have given rise to solid research and to extensive coverage by Sri Lanka's generally sensible media. Articulate NGOs have emerged to advocate women's legal rights. For these reasons, Sri Lanka's trafficking discourse, while it includes the sexual abuse and prostitution of migrant women workers, leads the Subcontinent on the broader issues of migrant labour "trafficking".

Sri Lanka's trafficking discourse has also been informed by its regionally unique problem of having developed as a centre of sex tourism for boy prostitutes. Until recently, exclusive focus on this has diverted attention from female prostitution. Although prevalent, very little is known today about female prostitution in Sri Lanka; little research has been conducted and it has got minimal media coverage. (Similarly, and perhaps for the same reasons, Sri Lanka's AIDS discourse is quite undeveloped.)

Trafficking of boys to Europe by sleazy foreigners is a part of the discourse, but has never developed into a full-blown myth, such as Nepal's Gita myth. The war in Sri Lanka has been integrated into the trafficking discourse; along with "poor up-country" children, war orphans are trafficked domestically to Colombo and the seaside sex resorts. The numbers are not immense, and their significance is probably exaggerated when taken into account the many coastal village children who are drawn into the sex tourism industry.

While in the past Sri Lankans have been concerned with the abuse of young boys on their own turf by foreigners, a new area of concern has opened up recently. It is not a matter of trafficking, but of domestic child sexual abuse. All participants in the discourse – the media, NGOs, donors and the government – are now admitting that domestic paedophilia is a greater problem than, and a likely precursor to, sex tourism. The incidence of domestic child sexual abuse has been demonstrated by good research, which has been followed by efficient exposure in the media. The matter is being carefully addressed by NGOs, with the help of their Philippine counterparts, among others. While India is beginning to admit to the existence of domestic child sexual abuse, and Nepal and Pakistan generally still deny it, Sri Lanka has already created a solid discourse and is conducting effective interventions.

Bangladesh

For the last decade, the Bangladesh discourse has been dominated by the trafficking of its women across India to Pakistan, some also continuing on to the Middle East. The discussion has generally been quite muddled until recently. The media and fund-hungry NGOs have tried to present a myth of girls hard trafficked into prostitution in Pakistan and the Middle East, but this has been difficult to maintain for a couple of reasons. One is that "trafficking" is a difficult word to apply to an underground transportation system that has been established for decades, primarily to maintain labour movement and family contact between the former East and West Pakistans. People from both sides have moved in both directions for years, depending on economic opportunity, political pressure and family obligations.

The trafficking of those women from Bangladesh often with going to labour have a lot of tutes, c demand discour trafficking of Bang servitu prostit has not ficking tution. Banglad fielding ficking i fold pro

Bang domestic trafficking media c tem of d governr listened Moreov not imp cognisa more th in Bang from an

Pakistan

Pakistan discours reason – and has lence ag



She begins to service customers.



Reconciled to her fate.



Moment of truth: AIDS!



Gharwali evicts 'Gita' unto street.



Repair make

The other difficulties in creating a hard trafficking scenario are that the majority of those who move along the trafficking route from Bangladesh to Pakistan are adult women, often with children, and that the majority are going knowingly as labourers and end up as labourers, not prostitutes. Pakistan does not have a high demand for Bangladeshi prostitutes, certainly not one matching India's demand for Nepali prostitutes. Making the discourse even more difficult for the hard trafficking myth-makers is the high incidence of Bangladeshi women ending up in debt servitude in Pakistan. Thus, a simplified prostitution-victim discourse such as Nepal's has not been sustainable; the towering trafficking problem is bonded labour, not prostitution. In the last couple of years, however, Bangladesh's sophisticated NGOs have been fielding a refined discourse that defines trafficking in a broader sense to include the manifold problems of migrant women labour.

Bangladesh leads the region in including domestic bonded labour in its discussion of trafficking. Excellent research and some good media coverage have exposed the *tsukri* system of debt bondage, and middle levels of the government and some donor agencies have listened, even if they have not yet responded. Moreover, being a country like India that does not import sex workers, the discourse is fully cognisant of in-country trafficking. Perhaps more than any South Asian country, activists in Bangladesh are aware of where girls come from and where they end up in prostitution.

Pakistan

Pakistan has the least developed trafficking discourse of any South Asian country, for good reason – it has been primarily concerned with, and has taken very seriously, the issues of violence against the average woman. Pakistan's

extremely sophisticated women's rights NGOs have developed in response to the strictures of Muslim law and powerful local customary practices, behind which many incidents of female abuse are hidden.

With the dominant aim of addressing violence against women and the reluctance of the media and the government to openly discuss prostitution in any but abhorrent terms, the trafficking discourse is small and occupies relatively less space in media, NGO, donor and government agendas than in the other South Asian countries. The same can be said for the HIV/AIDS discourse. While female prostitution within the country is little discussed (although not denied), there is still an almost total absence of discussion on the highly-prevalent male prostitution, as is the case in India.

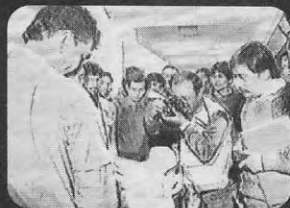
The trafficking scenario in Pakistan is generally typified by women (not necessarily girls) going to the Gulf States as migrant labourers, then being abused. In this, Pakistan's discussion shares much with Sri Lanka's. With Bangladesh, these two countries are expanding the trafficking discourse to address the wider problems of migrant women workers. Domestic, in-country trafficking into bonded labour (rather than prostitution) is a viable part of Pakistan's expanded trafficking discourse.

Small but capable research, some decent investigative journalism, and reports and interventions by NGOs and Pakistan's Human Rights Commission have clarified the picture of domestic trafficking in the country and brought the issue to the forefront. Thus in Pakistan, the hard-trafficking-for-prostitution discourse is relatively unimportant. It may become even more sidelined if the proposed reversion to Shariat takes effect and decreases the freedom of the average woman. Δ

-John Frederick



Repatriated to Nepal, makes a police report.



Media visits in hospital and makes big splash.



'Gita' is dead.



NGOs continue campaign. The End.



USHA TIWARI

My sister next?

The Melamchi river flows placidly through Sindhupalchowk district north of Kathmandu (above). Many girls from areas like this in Nepal are sex workers in Bombay, 2500 km away.

by Naresh Newar

Sindhupalchowk district, barely 20 km northeast of Kathmandu Valley as the crow flies, shares with Rasuwa District, to its west, the notoriety of being the pre-eminent exporter of girls to the brothels of India. Like so much other information on girl trafficking out of Nepal, the history of this export is apocryphal, there having been little in the way of serious research by dispassionate scholars.

Some of the Sindhupalchowk locals say

that the sex trade originated in the supply of Tamang and Sherpa girls of this region to the feudal Rana court of Kathmandu. Apparently, it was just a step away from serving as *bhitrini* (concubines) and *susaaray* (maid servants) to the "cages" of the Kamathipura red light district of Bombay. The antiquity of trafficking may be murky, but there is no doubt that there is profit in selling sex. That much is obvious from even a cursory look at some of the households of Sindhupalchowk's

villages
Talamara

There
day cont
Sindhupa
that the l
ply is evi
largest b
Sherpa, a
Sherpa a
names w
gin of the
Gupta an
Bombay,
there an
gharwalis
number
Bombay.
Nepali w
three key
House an

Unlik
Nepal, S
this parti
powerful
roost at
also bec
beit a se

"The
equally s
Chhetri,
has man
fickers"
several
neighbor
With th
is easy t
their dat

Tin roof

Ichowk
(Little B
river va
tin-roof
come fro
Until re
mon in t
proof of
rugated
source o
which h
apparen
in Bom
Sindhup

Start
of Melan
hill-wal
ment of
there, w
the rest

villages such as Ichowk, Mahankal, and Talamarang.

There is a trafficking network which today continues to supply young women of Sindhupalchowk to Indian cities, and the fact that the locals are fully engaged in this supply is evident from the names of some of the largest brothel owners in Bombay: Lata Sherpa, Mala Tamang, Kabita Sherpa, Anita Sherpa and Maya (Tamang) Chauhan – all names which indicate to a fair degree the origin of the women in Sindhupalchowk. Vinod Gupta and Sanjay Chonkar, social activists in Bombay, say that in addition to these top five, there are many other small-time Nepali *gharwalis* (madams) engaged in running a fair number of the hundreds of bordellos of Bombay. According to them, altogether 25,000 Nepali women work in the brothels of the three key red light areas of Kamathipura, Pilla House and Falkland Road.

Unlike other equally poor hill districts of Nepal, Sindhupalchowk has concentrated on this particular export trade. It has helped that powerful *gharwalis* from this region rule the roost at the Bombay end. Over time, it has also become an accepted social custom, albeit a secretive one.

"The family members of the victims equally share in the crime," explains Krishna Chhetri, a school teacher at Ichowk, which has many of what are known as "family traffickers". "Prostitutes who return home after several years in the trade encourage their neighbours to send their daughters to Bombay. With their ostentatious display of wealth, it is easy to convince the parents to part with their daughters," adds Chhetri.

Tin roofs

Ichowk is popularly known as *Sano Bumbai* (Little Bombay). From across the Melamchi river valley, in the afternoon sun, Ichowk's tin-roofs reflect a prosperity that is said to come from earnings of its women in Bombay. Until recently, when they became more common in the hills of Nepal, these tin roofs were proof of cash income (required to buy the corrugated sheets) and an indication of Ichowk's source of wealth, compared to poorer villages which had to make do with thatch. There was, apparently, a direct link between a daughter in Bombay and a tin roof above one's head in Sindhupalchowk.

Starting from the roadhead at the bazaar of Melamchi Pul, it takes over five hours' hard hill-walking to reach the closely-knit settlement of Ichowk. Indeed, the tin roofs are all there, with but a handful of thatch. However, the rest of the village is in bad shape: there is

no electricity, running water or a health care centre. The fields are poorly irrigated, and the maize and potatoes they produce are hardly enough to last the year.

Unlike the tourist region of Helambu up-valley along the Melamchi, the locals of Ichowk are openly hostile towards strangers. This is, obviously, the result of the unwanted attention it has received over the last few years from Kathmandu-based activist groups, suddenly woken up to the scourge of trafficking. When this writer arrived at Ichowk one June afternoon this year and started chatting with an elderly Tamang woman on her veranda a middle-aged man arrived to grill me with questions, while another man came with a register book and insisted that I write down my name and purpose of visit. There was no unpleasantness, but the incident showed the deep suspicion that Ichowk villagers have of outsiders.

Later, when the Tamang woman's husband arrived he explained that his two daughters had gone with his neighbour to the "Thulo Sahar" – big city, the term for Bombay. Shyam Karki, school teacher in the village, said that the old man often travelled to Bombay to collect money from his daughters. "There are many parents like him involved in sending their children to work in the Bombay brothels."

"Up to 200 families in this village have sold their daughters, mostly between 12-15 years old. At least 15 girls have left the village with well-known pimps in front of my very eyes. Obviously, the whole community knows where their girls are headed," says Karki. Everyone knows what is going on and what "Bumbai" signifies, from the elderly to the very young. "But they pretend as if they do not know," says Karki. "Some families feel the need to show concern, and they make noises in the village, even file a report with the police. But they wait some days before doing so, to ensure that the coast is clear."

Sashi Tamang, a 14 year-old girl rescued from Kamathipura and now living at the Kathmandu shelter home of Maiti Nepal, an NGO providing assistance to women, confirms parental involvement in trafficking. She even says that the girls leaving the village know precisely where they are going to end up. In the brothel to which she was sold by her own neighbour, Sashi remembers meeting at least 50 Nepali girls, a majority of them from Sindhupalchowk. "Most of them had come willingly. Even their own fathers had reached some of them here. But they never knew anything about all the suffering they would face in Bombay," explains Sashi.

Toni Hagen's Nepal

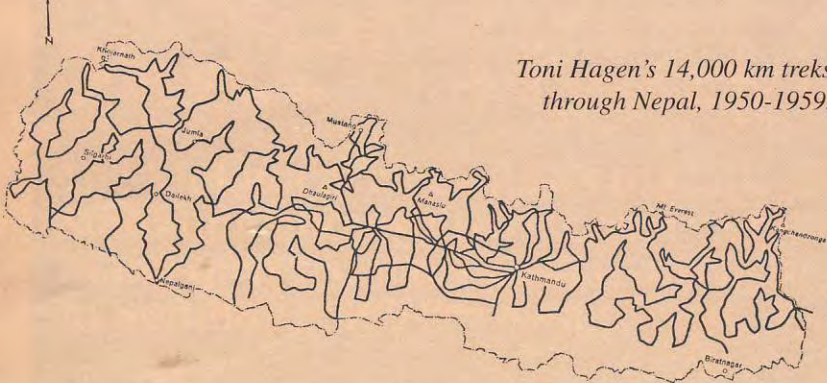
Himal Books, October 1998

Toni Hagen first set foot on Nepali soil in 1950, when Nepal was still 'forbidden' to outsiders. Starting from the Tarai plains, then still malarial, he traversed Nepal's populated midlands, and up to and beyond the high Himalaya. He walked a total of 14,000 km over nine years while carrying out the first-ever reconnaissance of the country for the United Nations.

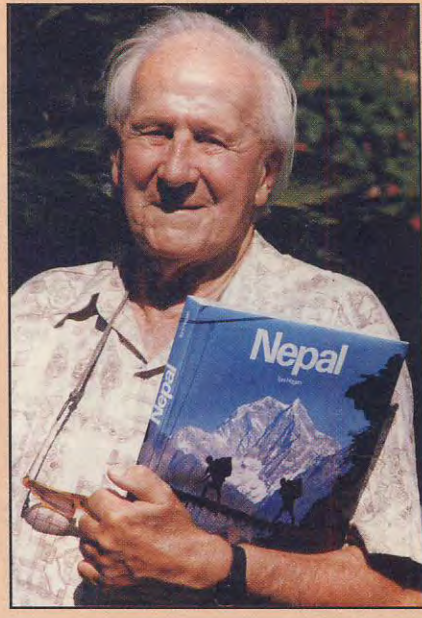
The Swiss geologist saw Nepal like no one had before him, and very few have since. He visited areas that are till today closed to tourists and observed so much of the country that has been overtaken by the march of time. With the meticulous mind of a scientist and the rendition of a storyteller, Toni Hagen first published *Nepal* in 1961. This, then, became the original book to introduce Nepal, in text and unmatched pictures, to the world as well as to the administrators of the newly awakened country.

Over time, as a development expert and a valued friend, the author has been returning regularly to these mountains, hills and plains. He has seen the country's transformation from a medieval-era state to a parliamentary democracy, and the population's rise from eight million when he first came to 22 million today. Toni Hagen has not been just a casual observer; he has continuously engaged in discussion on issues that affect the people, such as the merits of the prevalent development model, or questions of political evolution and ethnic assertion.

There have been others who have since studied more thoroughly certain areas and become better acquainted with various communities of the country, but Toni Hagen is undoubtedly still *the* expert of Nepal as a whole.



Toni Hagen's 14,000 km treks through Nepal, 1950-1959.



PHIL BJORCH-JARVAN

Toni Hagen's
Nepal: The Kingdom in the Himalaya
 revised and updated with
Deepak Thapa
 Fourth Edition, 1998
 Himal Books, Lalitpur, Nepal
 pp 251 (172 plates: 121 colour+51 b&w)
 US\$ 60 (including postage)

This 1998 edition of *Nepal* is the result of a unique transcontinental collaboration between the Swiss geologist-turned-development philosopher Toni Hagen and Nepali journalist Deepak Thapa, who is an editor of Himal magazine in Kathmandu Valley. This revised and updated Fourth Edition includes the original reports and photographs by Toni Hagen; at the same time, it brings the reader abreast with the changes the country has witnessed and the ideas that have evolved over the decades. An impressive amount of new information is collected in this edition, including up-to-date data and discussion on matters as diverse as history, development, tourism, agriculture, geography, ethnography, and the process of modernisation. The book ends with an essay looking ahead, maintaining that the country still has the potential to deliver a fine quality of life to its population.

The earlier editions of *Nepal* helped define Nepal to the world for the last four decades. The 1998 updated and revised edition will continue to do so for many years hence.

HIMAL BOOKS is the publishing wing of the not-for-profit Himal Association, Lalitpur, Nepal.

Mail order your copy of *Nepal* by sending us the following details.

Name _____

Address _____

My cheque/DD No.dated.....for US\$.....(____copies)
 drawn onfavouring **Himal Association** is enclosed herewith.

You can order your copy through **AMEX, VISA or MASTER CARD.**
 Mail/fax/email the following card details to
 Himal, PO Box 42, Lalitpur, Nepal/+977-1-521013/<himalmag@mos.com.np>.

Amex Visa MasterCard Expiry date Month Year

No

Signature _____

In Kri
 (which
 the distr
 old temp
 much re
 Sindhupa
 Nuwakot
 richly ad
 lies, arr
 elaborate
 spending
 (USD 15
 offerings
 NPR 15,
 ous spen
 "Bambai
 The I
 place wh
 come to
 from the
 uted for
 the tem
 promine
 in other

"H
 wa
 THE
 aware
 of an
 nalis
 one v
 in Hi
 bung

R
 G
 R
 F
 R
 R
 F
 R
 F
 R
 F
 R
 F
 R
 F
 R
 F
 R
 F
 R
 F
 R

In Krishna Chhetri's village of Palchowk (which provides the second half of the district's name) stands the 100-year-old temple of Shri Jai Bageshwari Devi, much revered by the Bombay veterans of Sindhupalchowk as well as the neighbouring Nuwakot district. Travelling from far afield, richly adorned women, escorted by their families, arrive here on Saturdays to perform the elaborate Hindu rite of Panchawoli. Lavish spending is in order, and up to NPR 10,000 (USD 150) is paid per buffalo sacrifice. Holy offerings are made to Bageshwari Devi, up to NPR 15,000, says Chhetri. All this conspicuous spending has the locals wide-eyed – it is "Bambai" that makes it possible.

The Bhageshwari mandir also serves as a place where sex workers and traffickers alike come to expiate their 'sins'. This is evident from the large sums that have been contributed for the restoration and upkeep of the temple. The names of contributors prominently displayed on the walls, unlike in other temples of Nepal, are primarily

those of women.

What is strange but perhaps natural is that the very young girls of Sindhupalchowk who have suffered at the hands of their brothel managers emerge over time as mirror images of their tormentors. These prematurely aged women, clearly, think nothing of entrapping more and ever more young girls from Sindhupalchowk into the maze of Bombay's sex trade. The very women who have been trafficked by their parents, or by middle-men (and -women), are more than willing, in the role of brothel managers and gharwalis, to encourage the export of more young women from Sindhupalchowk to Kamathipura and Falkland Road.

Mahendra Trivedi, an ayurvedic practitioner in Bombay and one of the first persons to begin a counselling service for Nepali prostitutes, says he has given up trying to change the attitude of the gharwalis. At one time, Trivedi helped start the Sanyukta Nepali Satya Sodhak Pidit Mahila Sangh, an organisation of prostitutes and brothel keepers promoting

"How much money do you want for your daughter?"

THE FOLLOWING is a transcript from the Emmy award-winning documentary, *The Selling of Innocents*, of an interview with a father and daughter by journalist Ruchira Gupta, who went undercover as someone wishing to 'buy' a girl. The conversation took place in Hindi, and the event was recorded at a Kathmandu bungalow by hidden camera.

RG: Please sit down. (To girl) What is your name?

Girl: Savitri.

RG: (To father) How many children do you have?

Father: Three.

RG: Boys or girls?

Father: Two girls and a boy.

RG: Can we take the girl to Bombay?

Father: Yes.

RG: How much money do you want for your daughter?

Father: Maybe...one and a half lakh.

RG: Are you joking? When you say "lakh" you must mean "thousand".

Father: Yes, one and a half thousand.

RG: OK, we will give you the money. (Counts money) Now can we take her to Bombay?



Father: Yes.

RG (to girl): Will you be able to do whatever you're asked to do? Any job?

Girl: Yes.

RG: Do you want to go to Bombay?

Girl: Yes.

RG: Do you know what to expect in Bombay?

Girl: I haven't seen it so I don't know.

Savitri's family is 'high-caste' Bahun (hill Brahmin of Nepal) from Nuwakot, a district north of Kathmandu. The father works as a bricklayer in the capital. Says Gupta, "I think he knew she was going to be sexually used but was also happy to let himself believe that she was going as a domestic." About his near-absurd willingness to come down from his asking price of 150,000 rupees to 1500, Gupta thinks it may have to do with the father's discomfort with the whole transaction. Savitri and her two younger brothers are at present being sent through school with support raised by Gupta.



Mystery !

Well, after all, what is this "Mystery" ?

Of course, it's the mystery of the hidden treasure that exists around the heart of Solu region, like the famous Mt. Everest and the great but yet undiscovered Manaslu. In addition to trekking and climbing, there are cultural treasures to explore, like monasteries, festivals, and various ethnic groups, all preserving traditional ways of life.

We are fully dedicated to giving you the best possible experience, which will provide a life-time of memories .

We can take you to this Land of Hidden Treasures, since we have been in this field for many years. Our satisfied clients return again and again.

For further details:



Himalayan Trek & Expeditions (P) Ltd.

P.O.Box: 13265, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: 255686, 250530, 252430, Fax: 977-1-255687,
E-mail: trek@gombu.mos.com.np

Place to come to if you want to feel pampered. Everybody is so friendly and there's nothing like a CLEAN FRESH TOWEL everyday !
Norma Monague
Calgary, Ab; CANADA

It is very good; it's well run, clean, has hot water and is of excellent value....all with bathroom. There is a great view over Thamel area from the top of this friendly hotel
"Lonely Planet" Nepal

It is often the LITTLE UNNAMED THINGS we do, that we are remembered most for.

.....Rooms are clean and comfortable and receive daily service. Room service, laundry service, luggage storage and safe deposit boxes are available.
FROMMERS Comprehensive Travel Guide



HOTEL GARUDA PVT. LTD.

G.P.O. BOX. 1771, THAMEL, KATHMANDU, NEPAL
TEL: 416776, 416340, 414766
FAX: (977-1) - 413614, 472390
e-mail: garuda@mos.com.np
URL: <http://www.travel-nepal.com/hotel/garuda/index.html>

How to avoid putting on weight during your next vacation.

When it comes to the topic of weight, climbers are rather sensitive people. They put on one teeny tiny extra gram, and suddenly they become severely depressed.

Which is why at Marmot, you might say we're constantly battling the bulge.

Take for instance our new Thunderlight jacket. It weighs in at a profoundly economical 20 ounces. And that's with the PitZips™, the roomy Angel-Wing movement™, and the big, helmetfitting, roll-up hood.

Constructed with solid 3 Ply Gore-Tex® fabric and reinforced in all the blowout-prone areas, it's guaranteed not to spring a leak, rip, tear, fall apart, or anything else that may ruin an otherwise perfect vacation.

Because up around 8,000 feet, you start to redefine what's truly important in your life.

To find out more, get a catalog, or for dealer information, call us:

(707) 544-4590. E-mail us:

Info@Marmot.com.

Or visit us on-line:

<http://www.Marmot.com>

The Thunderlight is a lightweight, weatherproof jacket constructed of rugged 3 Ply Gore-Tex® fabric with reinforced body and shoulders. And it weighs only 20 ounces.



© 1996 Marmot

Marmot™ For Life.

the welfare of children.

"The sex work local government meant to ease, and prostitution him, how come a prostitute doing more

The today to late 1980s gharwali urday, di Nepali so more, a gharwali organisat day than expanding more The Bom larger, an ply is as

N. New special i



Orbi Even there How

Soul Bang Bang

Red The

the welfare of Nepali sex workers and their children.

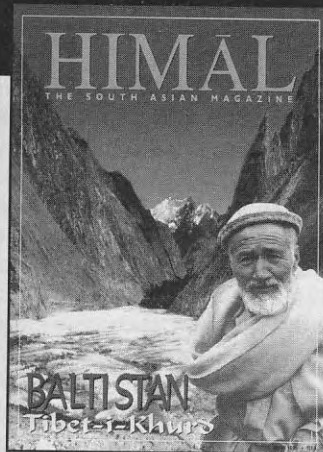
"The movement was begun to help Nepali sex workers unite against the corrupt police, local goondas and wicked clients. It was also meant to solve problems of illiteracy and disease, and to help those who wanted to leave prostitution," recalls Trivedi. According to him, however, now the organisation has become a base to expand the market for Nepali prostitutes in Bombay. "The Sangh is now doing more harm than good," says Trivedi.

The membership of the Sangh is down today to just 3000 from the 12,000 during the late 1980s. Until a decade ago, about 80 to 90 gharwalis used to attend meetings every Saturday, discussing matters of concern to the Nepali sex workers. This does not happen any more, and the main Tamang and Sherpa gharwalis in the executive committee of the organisation actually own more brothels today than ever before. "The gharwalis kept on expanding brothels on the pretext of providing more rooms to their girls," recalls Trivedi. The Bombay bazaar for Nepali girls is getting larger, and back in Sindhupalchowk, the supply is assured into the future. Δ

N. Newar is a Kathmandu-based journalist with special interest in human rights issues.

USHA TIWARI

The bus terminal at Melamchi Pul, where many of the girls from Sindhupalchowk begin their journey. The billboard at the back has been put up by an activist group and exhorts Nepali girls not to go abroad to sell their dignity. Simla Tamang (inset) is from Sindhupalchowk and was sold into prostitution by a neighbour when she was 17. She then ran her own business as a supplier of Nepali girls to Bombay and was subsequently jailed in Kathmandu for trafficking. She used political connections to get herself out in 1996, and is now back in business running a brothel on Falkland Road in Bombay.



Where else can you read these stories?*

Being Hindu in Modern Times (May 1996)

Hindu fundamentalism is like driving a car looking only at the rear-view mirror: one may be mesmerised by a glorious vista of the past but there lurks a tragic accident up ahead.

Tung", which caught the public's imagination in Naxalbari 30 years ago, has spread across the region.

The Best in Film (December 1997)

Documentaries have the power to force change. The public is ready to watch them. Documentaries just need to be given a chance.

Net Set (January 1998)

We gave them Rajneesh, they gave us Bill Gates. The Internet in South Asia must shed its exclusivist character.

Jinnah (February 1998)

Muhammad Ali Jinnah has been 'converted' by the nation be founded till he can no longer be recognised. Faking Jinnah has meant a lesser Pakistan.

China and Us (June 1998)

How should South Asia deal with a China which believes in its destiny to the predominant Asian power.

*Only, of course, in Himal.

Orbital Junk (June 1996)

Even as South Asia gets hooked on satellite television, there's nobody looking out for the public interest. How to get public television for the Subcontinent?

Soul Searching at 25 (September 1996)

Bangladesh may be all of 25 years old, but the Bangladeshi is still groping after an identity.

Red Alert (September/October 1997)

The philosophy of "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse

Among the sand dunes of the India-Pakistan border, there are human skeletons: Bangladeshis who got lost and died of thirst and hunger.

by Hasan Mujtaba

No documents. No visa. But parents, brothers and sisters are in Bangladesh," says Reema.

She was barely 14, ten years ago, when she was lured away by her aunt from her family village near Dhaka. Since then, Reema has been sold so many times, married so many times that she has lost count. She does not even remember the name of her village anymore, only that her father's name was Abdul. "After reaching Dhaka, my aunt told me to be prepared to go to Karachi, a big city with big cars, money and no hunger," she recalls.

This year's unprecedented floods in Bangladesh brought misery and destitution to millions of families. But for the *dalals*, middlemen who smuggle women from Bangladesh to Pakistan, there is good business in floods. Far from the Padma-Jamuna delta, in a Karachi which received below-average rainfall this year, the pimps are rejoicing. "Let the flood waters in Bangladesh subside a little. New batches of girls will be here," says Rahim, a procurer of girls in Ali Akber Shah village, a Bengali slum near Karachi's coast. For sure there will be more girls like Reema in the slums of Karachi next year.

Dalals like Rahim are at the end of a chain of human smuggling which still links the two separated parts of what was once Pakistan. Every year, thousands of Bengalis and even Burmese Arakanese girls (the Muslim Rohingya) are trafficked from Bangladesh, across the expanse of India, through the Thar desert into Sindh in Pakistan. Many are children when they arrive. They are forced into prostitution, sold or auctioned for marriages, or 'employed' as bonded labour. All this happens with the connivance of police and border security forces in all three countries.

A survey by Pakistan's Ministry of Interior indicates that there are two million illegal immigrants in Karachi alone. Out of these, 1.6 million are Bangladeshi migrants. An independent report by the Lawyers for Human Rights

and Legal Aid (LHRLA), a group which studies trafficking of women and children in South Asia, suggests that a large proportion of trafficked Bangladeshis are women. LHRLA estimates that there are more than 200,000 Bengali women in Pakistan. Says Zia Awan of LHRLA, "About 100 to 150 Bangladeshi women are smuggled into Pakistan as human cargo every day."

Memon Mohalla. On the sizzling hot night of 30 May 1998, the inhabitants of the Memon Mohalla locality in Hyderabad (Sindh) were shocked to see a young girl falling off the second storey balcony of a local *chakla*, or brothel. The Bangladeshi girl, Rabia, was attempting suicide. Earlier, she had been forcibly auctioned to the brothel owner, and had refused to service a customer.

Critically injured, Rabia was handed over to police custody and booked under Section 294 of the Pakistan Penal Code, which makes "illicit gestures and obscenity" cognisable offences. To avoid inquires about the injured girl from higher authorities and the press, the local police forced her to return to the brothel, which regularly pays them large sums of *bhatta*, or protection money. Says a sympathetic insider at the police station who did not want to be named, "The police threatened to book Rabia under the Foreigners Act, if not the more draconian Zina Ordinance." The Foreigners Act decrees a 10-year jail term, while the Ordinance, called "Enforcement of Hudood on Zina", introduced by the late dictator Gen Zia-ul Haq, runs as follows: "Zina, sex outside of marriage, is a crime against the state punishable by death by stoning, or up to 10 years of imprisonment and whipping up to 30 stripes and/or a fine."

According to Zia Awan, "The law makes no distinction between adultery and rape, and for both you need four witnesses, all of whom have to be male. If unable to prove rape, the court takes the victim's statement as

confession
punished.
and Burme
mon victi

Zia-ul
part been
neighbour
well-know
Colony. W
"mini-Bar
be in Dha
country, r
Bangla so
policemen
Meena

Zia-ul Ha
Noor-us S
stan". Sac
van throu
kistani Th
the dark b
of us who
kept them
arrived fr
rived nea
were fore
cape with
a shelter,
Sattar Ec
our shelte
less wom
bilitation
were traf

Sund
called Su
Machhar
The 'ava
to look.
touch he
most pos
the noto
his "pre

Buye
Bazaar
Middle-
self, "Th
cheaper
dia, fro
for a br
sister to
myself."
women
tribe in
the ide
now m
village,
To b
buy a b

confession of adultery, and so it is the woman who is punished." Together with Rabia, thousands of Bengalis and Burmese women, and even minor children, are common victims of these laws in today's Pakistan.

Zia-ul Haq Colony. Perhaps justice has in small part been served by the fact that the large Bengali neighbourhood in Karachi, which has developed a well-known red light district, is known as Zia-ul Haq Colony. Walking down the dilapidated byways of this "mini-Bangladesh of Karachi", one could just as easily be in Dhaka. Men and women wear clothes of the delta country, restaurant signboards are in Bangla script, and Bangla songs blare from roadside shops. Here, only the policemen seem non-Bengali.

Meena is from Sherpur in Bangladesh, now living in Zia-ul Haq Colony. She was married off to her cousin Noor-us Salam Sadiq, who offered her "work in Pakistan". Sadiq took Meena and 14 other women in a caravan through the Porbander area of Gujarat into the Pakistani Thar. Recalls Meena, "We crossed the border in the dark by foot. We were taken to a desolate place. Some of us who were pretty were sexually abused. We were kept there for a long time until another batch of girls arrived from India." After 10 days or so their group arrived near the Federal 'B' area of Karachi, where they were forced into the sex trade. Meena managed to escape with the help of neighbours, who deposited her at a shelter, one of many run by the social worker Abdus Sattar Edhi. "A generation of babies has been born in our shelters," says Bilquis Edhi, who looks after helpless women and unclaimed babies in the Karachi rehabilitation homes. "Those who were babies when they were trafficked are themselves mothers now."

Sundarta Bazaar. There is an ugly, narrow lane called Sundarta Bazaar – literally, Beauty Bazaar – in Machhar colony, a Bengali slum in the heart of Karachi. The 'available' women wear heavy make-up. "It is free to look. But you have to pay 50 rupees if you want to touch her," says a small-time pimp named Rahim. The most powerful pimp in the colony is Soni Dallal, wife to the notorious Sher Khan who claims to have given up his "previous job" to become an Islamic missionary.

Buyers and bystanders jostle each other in Sundarta Bazaar. Some strike deals, while others try to haggle. Middle-aged Muhammed Sajan mutters, partly to himself, "I'll get one from my village. That'll be relatively cheaper." He comes from the desert area bordering India, from the villager of Nagar Parker, and is shopping for a bride. He confesses his predicament, "I have no sister to barter, nor enough money to buy a bride for myself." Buying and marrying trafficked Bangladeshi women has become quite common among his Khoso tribe in Nagar Parker, says Sajan, which is how he got the idea of purchasing one for himself. There are by now more than a dozen Bangladeshi wives in his village, he says.

To barter a girl in the family in lieu of a bride or to buy a bride in cash are customary practices in many

parts of Pakistan. Earlier, northwest Pakistan and Afghanistan were the sources of women who were trafficked southward into the Indus plains. The 'customary sale' of girls and women from upcountry north, known as *walver*, has now been replaced by trafficked females from Bangladesh. Marrying and buying women from Bangladesh is the present trend, and is even considered 'macho'. A police official proudly tells the tale of purchasing, selling and reselling, and finally gifting a Bengali girl called Shahno to his friend in the feudal interior of Sindh province.

Rural Sindh and Punjab. The desert areas of Sindh and Punjab provinces bordering India are the biggest centres of trade in trafficked women. "We marry Bengali women because they are intelligent and have great poise," says Muhammad Saifal, a villager from the desert area of Khipro. The going rate at the auctions is upto PKR 120,000 (USD 2200), with the agent asking 6000 rupees commission on each sale, while the police get their customary take of '5 percent'. What the Bengali woman or girl gets from it is a husband or master. If she is lucky, he will be decent.

Fatima and her two teenage daughters Reena and Shivli were auctioned separately. Fatima managed to escape and approached the police at Dera Ghazi Khan, who sent her to a shelter at Sohrab Goth, Karachi. She has spent the last six months unsuccessfully trying to trace her daughters, who were bought by influential locals in Southern Punjab.

The women tend to be sold and resold several times. The 'traders' are always ready to carry out a transaction when a owner tires of a woman. "We live the life of total shame," says Laila, a Bengali sold to a family in rural Sindh. However, when asked if she wants to return to Bangladesh, her reply is emphatic: "No!" Obviously, repatriation is not a solution. "The problem does not end once they return to their homeland," says social worker Nazish Brohi. "Back home, they would have to deal with the inevitable stigmatisation. Many of them would have left unwed, and would be returning with a child. There would be no prospect of marriage or settling down. Who would want to go through it?"

And so, as long as poverty pushes Bangladeshi women out of their home country, and as long as there is the pull factor of Pakistani men on the lookout for women to own and exploit, this trans-continental trafficking of girls and women will continue.

Over in the desert of Thar, it is a common sight to come upon human skeletons among the sand dunes of the India-Pakistan border. These are those from the smugglers' caravans who got lost or died of thirst and hunger. Others could have just been abandoned. Many of the skeletons are tiny. They were children. ▽

H. Mujtaba is Senior Reporter with the Karachi-based monthly, *Newsline*.

Coverage of trafficking in this issue was supported by the Panos Institute

Meena is the message

NO SUPERHUMAN feats for her, no inter-galactic forays, and certainly no *dishum-dishum* crime-busting scenes. Ten-year-old Meena, the video cartoon character, is on a different, more arduous, mission. Perhaps an impossible one too. For she is out to change the mindset of South Asians about young girls, their rights and abilities.

Brainchild of the Kathmandu-based Unicef's office for South Asia, and seven laborious years in the womb, Meena was launched in late September, to coincide with the Week of the Girl Child. Even at launch, which was meant to have been SAARC-wide but was only partially so, it was obvious that the little girl character has a tough fight ahead of her.

This comes in the form of nationalist mind-sets among politicians and civil servants, and the question of national turf.

The reluctance in some quarters to go all-out with Meena is regrettable, for she has the revolutionary potential to change attitudes towards girls in the Sub-

continent. Meena is a unique public media project in the sense that her 13-part TV series about children's lives has been crafted to a great extent by children themselves. Over 10,000 children across the region were consulted for the venture, with changes and alterations tailored to the feedback by a "focus group".

It was obviously not the easiest of tasks to come up with a generic South Asian girl, and many intense sessions went into creating Meena, her brother

Raju, the pet parrot Mithu, and the other characters. Trying to simulate the South Asian terrain – made up of both mountains and plains – Unicef decided to go for a rolling landscape which could signify both. The clothing, architecture, and even the exact tint of reddish brown earth had to be geared to a "Generic South Asia".

Unicef's reason to opt for an animated cartoon was the medium's effectiveness in carrying across the development message, in this case, the rights of the girl. But animations are extremely expensive to produce, which was why it made sense to create a character who could be shared across linguistic and national boundaries. All you had to do was dub it in various language editions.

Besides the characters and props, there was also the challenge of coming up with a consensual South Asian point on the topics that Meena was to cover. The differing points of view on gender discrimination, for example, created a maze that had to be tackled before the script could even be

written. In a heterogeneous region, where politics, religion and culture are so often divisive rather than unifying factors, the creators of Meena had to walk the tightrope across various cultural sensibilities.

Fortunately, the Meena episodes have succeeded in that they do not preach. There is no overkill with didactic messages, even while there is frank exposition of troubling issues. The approach is one of entertaining the viewer even while raising aware-

ness through dialogue on diverse issues such as discrimination in education, preference for the male child, early marriage, dowry, sanitation, health care, HIV/AIDS and nutrition.

The fact that Meena took so long in incubation has to do, on the one hand, with the unwieldiness of any trans-national exercise. Even more, it has to do with the fact that it is as yet extremely difficult – other than at the level of mouthing declarations – to accomplish something concrete across the boundaries of South Asia. Regionalism, to that extent, is still a distant dream.

Little Meena's experience, indeed, may be seen as a gauge of the challenges ahead for those who seek a regional rapprochement. Here was a 'motherhood issue' if ever there was one – the rights of girls – and even then the countries which had met to make grandiloquent declarations on gender equality and rights of girls and young women, were not comfortable in jointly launching the project. Forget a common send-off for Meena, in one or two countries, the launch could even be considered lukewarm, according to Himel correspondents.

The expectation of those who have seen Meena's zest and her optimism on screen, is that she will succeed not because, but in spite of, the political and bureaucratic hurdles she will encounter in the months and years ahead. The day, hopefully, will come when public demand for this spunky child will become commercially viable and come on over the radio waves and satellite channels to impress an audience across mountain and plain.

On the strength of Meena's personality and the engaging medium of a moving cartoon, the series has the potential to chart new territory as a radical mass communications experiment. In the end, all one can say is: Give Meena a chance!



MISS
If eve
beaut
why
so th
da
early
M
Skin,
mistak
Miss
M
c
ev
accus
Nep
did
goes
the
WHO I
is a Une
his nam
The
tember,
Madanj
tion of T
and its
amount
away a
which h
Day for
The
about th
ing priz
hallowe
Boutros
French
chairma
ate Arch
The
was that

MISSING NEPAL:

If everyone can have beauty contests, then why not Nepal? And so they too paraded down the ramp in early mid-September, Miss Talent, Miss Skin, Miss Hair, and, if we are not mistaken, Miss Teeth, Miss Belly Button and Miss Toenail. The organisers of the event, a company called Hidden Treasure, were accused of hiding the real beauties of Nepal, but someone did say that beauty goes no deeper than the outer epidermis.



CHANDRASHAR KARKI

Good marks for tolerance

WHO IS Madanjeet Singh, and why is a Unesco-associated prize given in his name?

The award, announced on 24 September, goes by the name "Unesco-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence", and its substantial cash certificate amounts to USD 40,000, to be given away annually on 16 November, which happens to be the International Day for Tolerance.

The first thing that was significant about this very South Asian-sounding prize was the jury, composed of hallowed personages all: Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Inder Kumar Gujral, French Rabbi Ren-Samuel Sirat, and chairman of the group, Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

The second matter of significance was that this very South Asian-sound-

ing prize was this year shared by an institution in Pakistan and an individual in India: the Joint Action Committee for People's Rights of Pakistan and Narayan Desai of India. Archbishop Tutu announced that the two awardees had been recognised for their outstanding work in promoting peace and tolerance. He added, on behalf of the jury, "We believe it is a very powerful symbolic gesture on the part of Unesco to give the prize to laureates from two countries in a Subcontinent in which relations are tense."

The Joint Action Committee for People's Rights is an informal coalition of over 30 non-governmental organisations and individuals founded in 1990 to fight gender inequality, religious intolerance and "social violence". The Committee also

focusses on lobbying against the nuclear arms race.

Narayan Desai, born in 1924, has been an anti-nuclear activist and a tireless promoter of religious and ethnic understanding ever since the outbreak of communal violence in India shortly after Independence. He has been continuously active in trying to spread Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Gram Swaraj for decentralised political and economic decision-making. He has also been active in education.

At a time when the Indian and Pakistani establishments are not themselves showing much of an inclination towards practising tolerance and non-violence, it is good that Unesco has opted to divide a prize across the border.

Now back to Madanjeet Singh. It turns out, according to a Unesco press release, he is an "Indian artist, writer and diplomat, who serves as Special Adviser to the Director General of Unesco". It is Singh who contributed the money for the prize, which is why it carries his name.

Sinhalese are sick of the war

AMIDST THE gloom in Sri Lanka about the massive bloodletting in Mankulam and Kilinochchi in late September (see page 10), a small ray of hope emerged in the form of a public opinion poll which studied the attitude of the majority Sinhalese population towards the Tamil-Sinhala conflict. The survey, carried out by anthropologists and sociologists at the University of Colombo, covered 98 locations in all provinces of the country except the north. Altogether 2000 householders were interviewed, 1915 of them Sinhalese.

There have been opinion polls before this on the same subject, but the results have been suspect because the research methodologies were kept secret and there seemed to be partisan involvement in the exercises. This latest survey represented the first scientific, and transparent, attempt at gauging public opinion about the ethnic conflict; the team led by Siri Hettige of Colombo University's Department of Sociology, explained and defended their findings before leading scholars and journalists.

The survey results came as a surprise because there is the strongly promoted view that the Sinhalese masses are in favour of continuing the war as the primary way to defeat the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam. When asked, "Do you think military action alone can solve the problem?", only 21 percent said "yes". As many as 77 percent rejected the view that the on-going war is simply a terrorist problem to which there can only be a military solution.

In response to the question, "What steps should be taken to find a lasting solution to the ethnic problem?", only 6 percent favoured the government's twin-pronged military and political strategy of a "war for peace", and a bare 7 percent were for militarily defeating the LTTE. The respondents had a strong preference for non-military means of ending the conflict. A clear majority of 65 percent preferred non-military options such as a political solution (21

percent), policies devoted to ensuring equality (20 percent), amity and harmony (19 percent), integrative actions (4 percent) and confidence building (1 percent).

When the question was worded differently giving less emphasis to a lasting solution ("How do you think the conflict can be solved?"), a higher figure opted for the military solution - 33 percent. But even here, a much larger proportion of 59 percent preferred non-military means to end the conflict.

On the government's much-vaunted devolution package, even those who were for a non-military solution doubted that it would help solve the ethnic strife. While 24 percent expressed their scepticism about the LTTE's intentions, a larger proportion of 29 percent felt that the extent of devolution granted was not adequate, and that political gamesmanship and elitist impositions stood in the way of a solution. At the same time, as many as 61 percent agreed there were more opportunities for people to solve their problems under the provincial council system (only 34 percent did not agree).

According to Hettige, the survey results indicated that a majority of the

people were, in principle, in favour of devolution of power. However, he pointed out that the actual experience of politics in the provincial council system had made many people sceptical about the system in practice. A full 54 percent believed that waste of resources and corruption had undermined the effectiveness of the provincial council system.

When asked about the difference between the poll results which showed a great majority opting for non-military options and the politician's constant reminders to the contrary, Hettige observed, "The people at the grassroots have an understanding of the complexity of the situation. They have given honest answers, because they have no vested interests. They are more open-minded than those opinion makers who have vested interests. They also have no illusions about quick-fix solution."

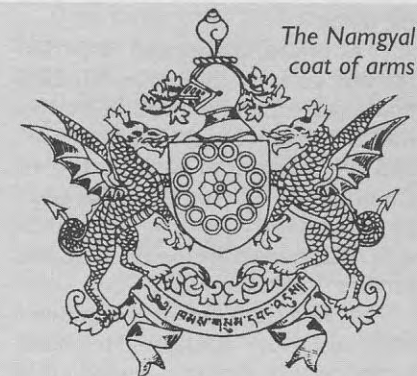
This is the best message of peace and reconciliation that the Sinhalese can give to Tamils who are isolated in the north and east and in foreign countries. The Sinhalese masses do not want the bloody war to continue, nor do they justify its continuation. They are prepared for accommodation. If the Sinhalese masses ever wanted the war, they no longer do so. It is clear, regardless of what the political bosses say, that the Sinhala people, at least, are not the obstacle to an end to the war.

-Jehan Perera

Sikkim treasure

TWENTY-THREE years after being dethroned by a controversial popular mandate that supported Sikkim's merger with India, the royal family of Sikkim remains in possession of property worth millions in the 22nd Indian state. Most of the old royal buildings, game forests and grazing lands for the erstwhile royal cavalry remain the property of the Chogyal family.

Since the late Chogyal, Palden Thondup Namgyal, refused to sign the Instrument of Accession to the Indian Union in 1975, Delhi has not



paid any compensation for the royal properties. At the same time, it has been unable to take possession of the properties legally. Successive state governments in Gangtok have asked the central government to resolve the

A costly nuclear addiction

"The Chashma Nuclear Power Plant is half finished and deserves to be left like that."

-Zia Mian, *The News*, 10 December 1995

THIS PITHY bit of advice from the Pakistani physicist fell on deaf ears. Almost three years down the line, having in the meantime tested nuclear weapons, Pakistan has just about completed the Chashma nuclear power plant on the banks of the Indus river. And to say the least, Chashma is in-built with all the dangers that prompted Mian to call for a stop to the project.

The Chashma reactor is a Chinese construct, and therein lies part of the fear. The Chinese are at best novices when it comes to building nuclear reactors. They have only one plant with a made-in-China patent: the prototype nuclear reactor at Qinshan (which incidentally has a computer control system that is French and key components manufactured in Japan). But incredibly, just 16 days after the Qinshan plant started producing nuclear power, Pakistan entered into a deal with China, instantly elevating it to the status of nuclear technology exporter.

Given this background, how safe

can Chashma be? Isn't it absurd to have trusted inexperienced hands with something as potentially deadly as a nuclear reactor? Already, there are problems at Chashma. A report (*Business Recorder*, 9 December 1997) from Karachi said that "serious cracks have developed in the edifice" of the plant. It went on to express fears from experts that the flaws in design and engineering might lead to "a disastrous incident like the Chernobyl tragedy".

It could be worse. Chashma is barely 30 kilometres from the city of Mianwali in central Punjab and on the banks of the river Indus. A leak would, to state the obvious, spell doom for the river and the populace dependent on it. Incredibly, as yet no environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the plant has been done. In fact, a report by the daily newspaper *Dawn* says that there have been concerns that the reactor site was chosen despite possible problems with earthquakes.

On economic grounds, too, the Chashma reactor fails the test. In-

creasingly, nuclear power plants are being seen as losing propositions, more so when compared to ordinary power plants. The World Bank and *The Economist* both believe that nuclear power is uncompetitive; indeed, the World Bank has not financed a single nuclear plant since the 1950s. No one is expecting any better returns from Chashma, which was reported by *The News* to cost an estimated USD 1 billion (the actual amount is one of those state secrets).

Chashma has a planned capacity to produce 300 MW of electricity. If it does, in fact, cost about USD 1 billion (without taking into account the money paid to China for nuclear fuel), this proves an expensive way of making electricity. For a billion dollars, it is now possible to build a natural gas burning power plant that is anywhere from three to six times bigger than the Chashma nuclear plant. Further, this comparison assumes that Chashma will actually work as efficiently as it is supposed to in theory. But predictability is hardly a trait associated with nuclear plants. Pakistan's other nuclear power plant, a Canadian-designed and -built reactor just outside Karachi, has over its nearly 30-year life produced only about a quarter of the power it was designed to.

Worse, what happens when Chashma completes its planned 40 years of life, and has to be taken out of service? The decommissioning of a nuclear reactor is a difficult and hazardous process, and no one really knows how to do it. It may easily cost 25 percent of the plant's original cost.

Even worse, what will be done with the intensely radioactive waste that Chashma will produce? The waste will remain dangerous for thousands of years, and there are as yet no long-term solutions. The United States spends hundreds of millions of dollars a year just trying to decide what to do with nuclear waste.

Even in the best of times, Pakistan's bank balance just cannot afford this kind of spending. Now, in an economic emergency ironically brought about by nuclear tests, the country could use some saving tips. Chucking Chashma is a good place to start.

problem amicably. Finally, under pressure from the present state Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling, the Home Ministry sent a four-member team to Sikkim in early September. Its mandate was to negotiate with the Chogyal's son, Wangchuk Namgyal.

Four days of negotiations later, the Home Ministry's financial adviser Pronob Roy said that the talks "were proceeding in the right direction", bureaucrat-speak for "no agreement". According to Roy, the discussions had concentrated on the modalities for settlement, rather than on "substantive issues". Apparently, the Indian government is willing to pay compensation only for buildings and arable land but not for the forests.

But what of the Instrument of Accession? Wangchuk Namgyal let it be known through a spokesman that he was determined not to sign the document. Unexpectedly, however, Home Ministry officials came up with their own interpretation: the signature on the Instrument of Accession may no longer be necessary, they said, because Sikkim's accession to India is a *fait accompli*.

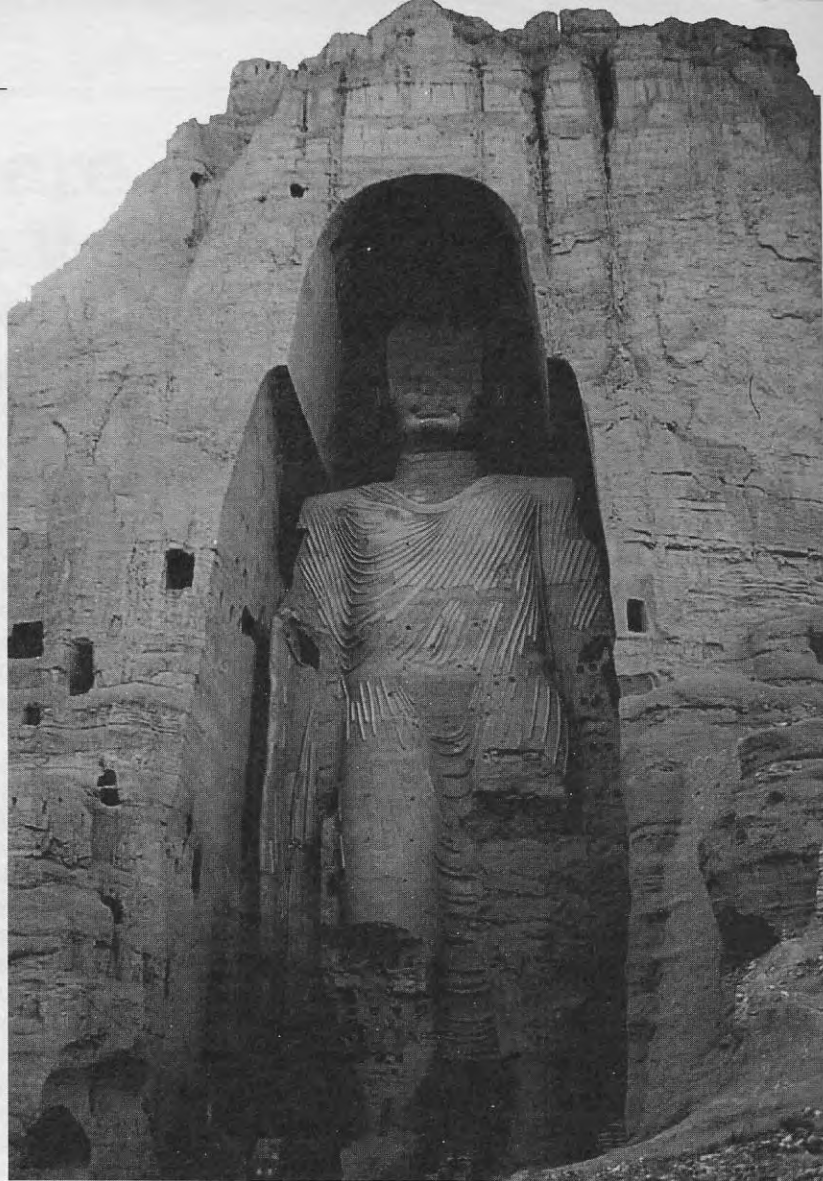
Six years ago, according to a state government official, the royal properties were assessed at INR 960 million (USD 23 million). The asking price would be much higher now, whether or not Wangchuk Namgyal wants to sell.

-Subir Bhaumik

AFGHANISTAN

The Taliban and the Hazaras

text and pictures by Michael Semple



They issued me the last ticket to see the Great Buddha. Then they collected the stubs and the visitor's books and bundled them into the sacks of documents to be buried. The remaining staff of the Department for Preservation of Historical Monuments had orders to hide even some things as innocuous as the books that recorded the impressions of visitors from six continents about the monuments of Bamian. A potato patch will be the resting place for the archives documenting 20 years of war.

I was pleased to have a chance to wander round the Buddhas again. The rock-cut Buddhas of Bamian are cultural sites of great significance, and were once the centre of Afghanistan's mass tourist trade. In historical times, these Buddhas were targeted by

zealots. Their survival (including several friezes of original paint work) through the two decades of war is amazing. Once again, there is fear that zealous conquerors might just try to prove their anti-idolatri credentials by further destroying them.

At night there was an air of the Day of Judgement in Bamian, as the local people, the Hazaras, tried to guess how long it would be before the Taliban arrived. The sound of haunting nocturnal congregational prayers carried across the valley. The faithful feared that the Taliban would wreak revenge for 20 years of defiance and for their share of casualties in previous Hazara-Pushtoon fighting. This fighting had seen some of the civil war's bitterest encounters, and the locals prayed for deliverance. The

threat to the Bamian Buddhas is symbolic of the one hanging over much of the population of central Afghanistan.

I emptied my camera reel and headed for the security of Islamabad. My host, the head of the Department



One of the two famous full-length Buddhas of Bamian (above), and at its foot, Haji Sahib.

for Preservation of Historical Monuments, was loading his camera with woven Afghan personal belongings. He had done what he could for central Afghanistan's heritage. Haji Sahib to me, the agonist of the Taliban's arrival at the city of Bamian, had been over here before. He had thousands of relatives in the slaughter. He is a statelet of central Afghanistan, 20 years, tott

Tang am

Bamian to Afghanistan. Hazaraja 100,000 Hazara tr between 1 Hazaras w ern Allian Pushtoon south. Th by faction collapsed string of August. Northern self a nat but Iran mit the s alter the t velopmen Hazarajat by Ahme east, along Taliban t The reg economic near-fam

The Sharif in Hazaraja Taliban i ing supp and in a hunger. survived ing off th debt. A

for Preservation of Historical Monuments, was busy closing up his office, loading his *gelims* (the famous rough-woven Afghani rugs) and a few personal belongings into his jeep. He had done what he could to preserve central Afghanistan's share of the world's heritage. It was now time for Haji Sahib to return to his wife to share the agonising worry at the disappearance of their son, a lecturer in journalism at the University of Balkh in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, which had been overrun by the Taliban a week before. Haji Sahib's agony is shared by thousands of families, who fear that relatives in Mazar-e-Sharif may face a slaughter. As the Taliban close in, the statelet of the Hazaras, built up in central Afghanistan over the past 20 years, totters on the brink of collapse.

Tang amad, dar jang amad

Bamian town lies at the centre of Afghanistan's vast, mountainous Hazarajat region. It covers about 100,000 sq km and is home to the Hazara tribe, which claims anything between 1.5 and 4 million people. The Hazaras were prominent in the Northern Alliance that has been battling the Pushtoon-dominated Taliban of the south. The Alliance has been plagued by factional fighting and misrule and collapsed militarily in the face of a string of Taliban victories in July and August. Iran has been supporting the Northern Alliance and considers itself a natural ally of the Shia Hazaras, but Iran has been reluctant to commit the scale of assistance that might alter the turn of events. The rapid developments of the last few months left Hazarajat, with the pockets controlled by Ahmed Shah Masood in the northeast, alone in resisting the drive of the Taliban to conquer all of Afghanistan. The region is already crippled by an economic blockade which has led to near-famine conditions.

The Taliban capture of Mazar-e-Sharif in August had meant that Hazarajat was surrounded. It put the Taliban in control of the last remaining supply routes to the mountains and in a position to impose further hunger. The poorest of the area had survived by eating wild rhubarb, selling off their animals and entering into debt. A continued blockade meant

they could not buy food to tide them over the upcoming winter; the starvation could only get worse.

In the face of such overwhelming odds, the natural thing to do would have been to surrender. Personally, I had expected a rapid surrender once the fate of Mazar-e-Sharif was decided, and had hoped that this would at least serve to quickly bring down the price of grain. The Hazaras' sense of desperation, however, is summed up in their proverb: *Tang amad, dar jang amad* (He who is cornered must fight). What must have made Hazarajat contemplate such defiance?

If the Taliban achieve a military victory in Central Afghanistan, and if the Hazaras' main party, the Hizb Wahadat, melts away in front of them (as Afghan groups often do when confronted by certain defeat), then it will signal the end of a 20-year experiment in *de facto* regional autonomy. Whether the ultimate outcome is restoration of order and national integration (the optimistic view, at times communicated by the Taliban) or a new phase of civil strife (the catastrophic view espoused by many of the Hazaras in Bamian), the restoration of rule by Kabul in this part of Afghanistan will be of major historical significance.

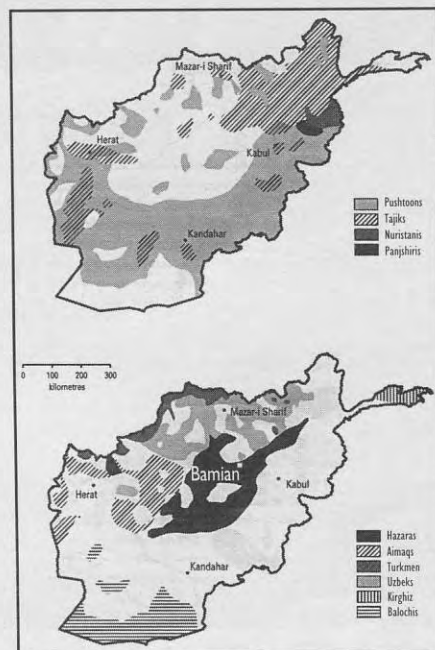
Often the long period of civil war

in Afghanistan has been depicted as a period of anarchy. This has hardly been the case in Central Afghanistan. There have been three phases to the conflict here. In the 1978-1983 period (i.e. immediately after the communist coup in Kabul and the subsequent Soviet intervention), popular local uprisings rapidly forced the communist government to abandon all district headquarters and retreat to the regional headquarters in Bamian. Meanwhile, a new Hazara political movement, Shura Ittefaq, emerged in the wake of the uprisings. It was headed by Agha Behishti of Waras and backed by the traditional religious leadership of the area.

The Shura was remarkably successful in quickly establishing a presence throughout Hazarajat and putting itself forward as the new regional government. However, during the 1983-1989 period, as the US and Pakistan, on the one hand, and Iran, on the other, poured money into the anti-Soviet *jihad*, there was a proliferation of armed groups operating in Hazarajat. They challenged the Shura Ittefaq's hegemony and a bitter civil war ensued that is still remembered in Bamian as the bloodiest phase of the conflict. The third phase (1989-1998) came as Iran put its authority behind a merger of the Hazara military and political groups under the banner of Hizb Wahadat (Party of Unity). Wahadat was able to take over the autonomy project that Shura had started.

After securing military and political allegiance of the numerous groups operating in the vast territory, Wahadat set about developing its regional government. It established district and regional level councils, with specialist departments for justice, security, communications, commerce, women's affairs, social welfare, health and education. When a coalition of mujahideen groups finally pushed the central forces of Najibullah out of Bamian, Wahadat built the headquarters for its regional government here, fast by the standing Buddhas.

Although the early popular risings had often targeted primary schools for their association with the communists, the expansion of access to education was an important part of the



Major ethnic groups of Afghanistan.

THE TALIBAN/PETER MASOODEN



EXPLORE NEPAL AT ITS BEST !

SEE YOU IN 1998

Nepal - a profoundly spiritual land, stretching from the pinnacle of Mount Everest to flat lands of Gangetic plains. A unique cross-section of human culture and natural habitat. Come in search of yeti or look for diverse flora and fauna or seek Nirvana amidst the ageold monuments.

Come to Nepal and discover a dreamland !



A World of Its Own

For more information write to:

Department of Tourism

Bhrikuti Mandap, Kathmandu

Tel: (977-1) 247037, 247039, 247041, 247580

Fax: (977-1) 227281

E-mail: tourism@mos.com.np

Internet location: <http://www.south-asia.com.dotn>

autonomy
departme
district le
tivate old
depending
primarily
Hazaras h
of acces
had prev
marginal
ters in th
was part
was plan

In co
there wa
female ed
helped in
teachers
from Ira
Hazaras
though t
educatio
versity in
team of l
sity was
Bamian's

Anot
gional a
the regio
ing thou
reopen t
New rou
ticular
which t
world's
inhospit
regional
also bus
strips, a
tain-top
tional ai
for Pres
Monum
forward
Bamian
nition t
merous
national
from th
archaeo
Valley is
mous c
Genghi

Along
of regi
tions, V
velopin
tially, i
patchw
ers who

autonomy project. Official education departments were established at the district level and they began to reactivate old schools and open new ones, depending on the resources raised, primarily from local taxation. The Hazaras had a strong sense that lack of access to education was what had previously left them politically marginalised and fit only to be porters in the Kabul markets. Education was part of the national revival that was planned.

In contrast to the Taliban areas, there was a significant expansion of female education under the Wahadat, helped in part by the recruitment of teachers from the refugees returning from Iran and from the educated Hazaras displaced from Kabul. Although the main focus was primary education, Wahadat also set up a university in Bamian. Until September, a team of lecturers from Balkh University was working on secondment at Bamian's fledgling university.

Another practical task for the regional administration was to service the region's infrastructure, conscripting thousands of men every spring to reopen the roads after the snow-melt. New routes were developed, in particular the road to Mazar-e-Sharif which traverses through one of the world's highest altitudes and most inhospitable terrains. The regional government was also busy developing landing strips, and levelling a mountain-top plateau as an international airport. The Department for Preservation of Historical Monuments was part of this forward-looking agenda of the Bamian government, a recognition that Hazarajat had numerous heritage sites of international significance. (Apart from the Gandhara Buddhist archaeological sites, Bamian Valley is the location of two famous citadels ransacked by Genghis Khan.)

Alongside the building up of regional civilian institutions, Wahadat also began developing its war machine. Initially, it was composed of a patchwork of local commanders who had emerged over the

years fighting other communities of Afghanistan and the communists. Since the fall of the Najibullah government, Wahadat gradually tried to fashion a conventional army, with commanders receiving commissions from the movement's leadership and conscripts from the districts. However, the army remained poor in resources, weak in command and control, and lacking in professional officers of proven quality. It would be safe to say that what victories it achieved were probably due more to desperation than military effectiveness or discipline.

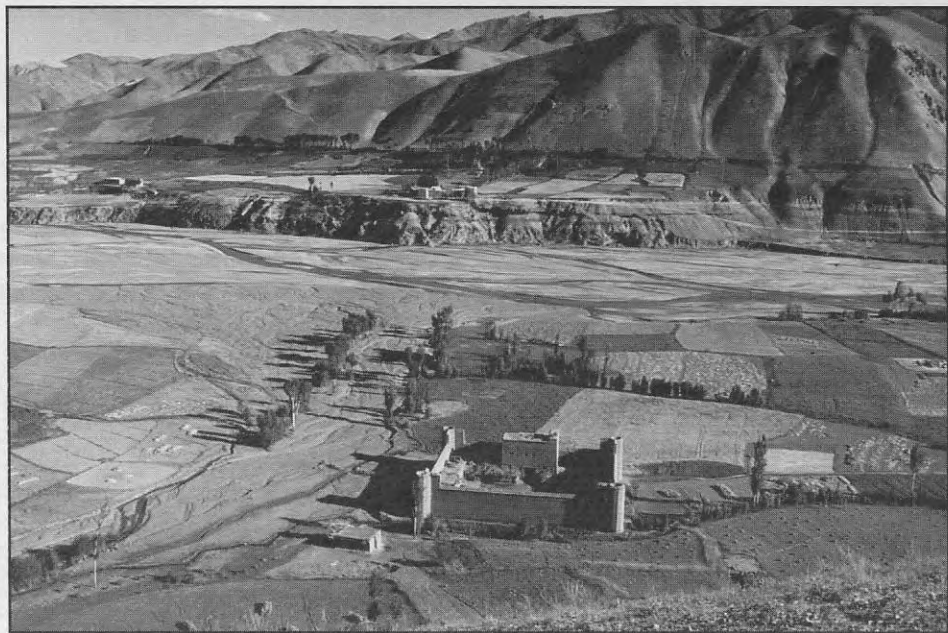
Hazara vs Kochi

Underlying the Hazaras' regional autonomy project was a long history of conflict in the area. Hazaras, thrown into a state of urgent activity by the news of the Taliban advances northwards, were mindful not just of the track record of the Taliban movement itself but also of the [ethnic Pushtoon] conquerors that had come long before. Hazarajat was only fully assimilated into Afghanistan in the 1890s by Kabul's Amir Abdur Rahman (r. 1880-1901) in a series of military campaigns. Hazara resistance to this integration was ruthlessly put down, and folklore abounds with tales of towers of skulls erected by the victo-

rious Amir. After the fighting was over, hundreds of members of the Hazara ruling castes, the *mirs* and the *syeds* were picked up by the Kabul forces and 'disappeared'.

Following the annexation, much of the fertile valley land at the base of the mountainous region was confiscated in favour of the Pushtoon tribes. Most significantly, in 1894, Abdur Rahman issued an edict granting rights over the pasture lands in the region to the Pushtoon nomad tribe, the Kochis, who had helped the Amir to conquer the area. For 90 years the Kochis exercised these rights in their annual migration.

If there is sectarian bitterness in Hazarajat, it is largely directed at the Kochis. In a classic case of agriculturalist-pastoralist rivalry, the Kochis are remembered for terrorising the peasants (backed by the Pushtoon administration), for strong-arm tactics in petty trade and money-lending,



Men and women making joint community decisions in Hazarajat (top).
Fortified Pushtoon farmhouse.

**ENJOY THE GLORIES OF WONDERFUL NEPAL
AND MYSTIC TIBET BY STAYING WITH US!**

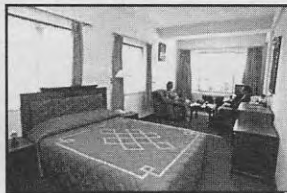


A brand new and also one of the finest three star hotels in Kathmandu. The Hotel Tibet (P) Ltd is very conveniently located in Lazimpat just behind the French Embassy and walking distance to all the major airline offices, banks, shopping centres, immigration office and Thamel.

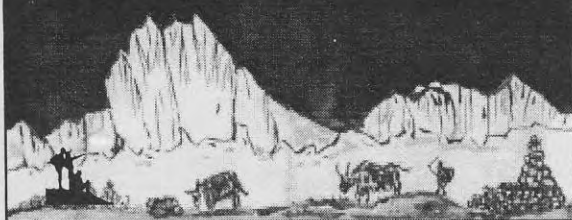
With well-appointed 55 rooms and suites having all the basic amenities for a deluxe class hotel, it is a perfect place for guests of every category - be it simply holiday, trekking, pilgrimage tours or visitors of the nearby embassies. We are here to provide them with full value for money and of course our personalised service to ensure repeat visits.

The Himalayan Restaurant in the lobby level serves fine Tibetan, Nepalese and Continental cuisine. The Lobby Bar where you can enjoy after a hectic day with your favourite drink while listening to soft music.

P.O. Box 7956, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 429085/86/87/88 Fax: 00977-1-410957
Email: hotel@tibet.mos.com.np
Internet: http://www.catmando.com/hotel-tibet



Explore Nepal with the Experts



With long experience in organising treks, we can advise on the best trek given the time of the year, the region and your budget. There is much more to trekking in the Nepali Himalaya than the main regions of Annapurna and Everest, like the regions of Dolpa, Mustang having a summer trekking season more like India.

Experience the highest mountains, friendly people and great hospitality on our trekking, rafting and wildlife expedition. Ancient temples and cities to be explored and fascinating culture to be experienced.

Treks organised for both individual and groups are usually conducted by Sherpa guides, who are famous for their mountaineering exploits on Himalayan Expeditions.

Footprint Treks & Expeditions

GPO Box 5084, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel/Fax : 977-1-258255

E-mail : sabina@footprnt.wlink.com.np

Visit us on worldwide web-http://www.catmando.com/foot/ptrek

**RECENT ARRIVALS
AT
MANDALA**

- Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of Kathmandu Valley:** Vol. I Text, Vol. II Plates, Mary Slusser, *Reprint Edition*
- Food, Ritual and Society:** A Study of Social Structure and Food Symbolism among the Newars: Per Lowdin
- Moran of Kathmandu:** Priest, Educator & Ham Radio 'Voice of the Himalayas': Donald A. Messerschmidt
- Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom:** The politics of culture in contemporary Nepal: Edited by Gellner, Pfaff-Czarnecka & Whelpton
- Dictionary of Nepalese Plant Names:** Keshab Shrestha
- The Arrow and the Spindle:** Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet: Samten G. Karmay
- Contes et Legendes de La Vallee de Kathmandou Nepal:** Keshar Lal
- The Nepalese Caitya 1500 years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley:** Niels Gutschov
- Tourism and Development Science & Industry Interface:** Ramesh Raj Kunwar
- Buddhism in Nepal (465 BC - 1199 AD):** Naresh Man Bajracharya
- Journey to Enlightenment the Life and World of Khyentse Rinpoche Spritual Teacher from Tibet:** Photographs and Narratively: Mathieu Ricard
- Power Places of Kathmandu: Hindu and Buddhist Holy Sites in the Sacred Valley of Nepal:** Photographs by Kevin Bubriski, Text by Keith Dowman



MANDALA BOOK POINT

P.O. Box No.: 528, Kantipath, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: +977-1-255444, 227711, 245570 & 249555
Fax: +977-1-255921
E-mail: mandala@csl.com.np

We accept

Visa, Master Card & American Express

and for fo
mately so
up as lan
style muc
still dot t
The re
Hazaraja
against c
tarily. The
nificant ac
were to b
store the
bought o
edicts of
Mohamm
ghanistan
Kochis co
20 years,
controlle
The panic
that histo
the Talib
more tha
The Haza
to be pil
as durin
Rahman.
The m
med up
woman
met in
Hazaraja
of roads
managed
ing wom
from Ira
She roa
claims t
eight loo
for Wes
promise
Kalashni
turn. El
mersed i
pect of
Pushte
now gra
once res
are now
and barle
to a sing
left of th
at the th
punishe
In W
one of
contem
master
years' o
Sohaila

Hazarajat update: 21 September

ON 13 September, just over a month after the capture of Mazar-e-Sharif and the United Nations' "last flight" out of Bamian town, the Taliban announced that they had captured Hazarajat's regional headquarters, advancing from the north. While the Hizb Wahadat forces retreated into the mountains, the Taliban continued their push through the region, establishing themselves along main routes and linking up with their forces on the eastern borders of Hazarajat in order to rule out any contact between Wahadat and remnants of the opposition near Kabul. The Taliban set about establishing a new administration in Bamian and the other conquered districts. Wahadat was left dreaming of the *deus ex machina* of an Iranian invasion, and wondering whether it has the stomach for guerilla war. The 20 years of autonomy are at an end.

In Hazarajat, the population has little option but to bow their heads and accommodate to the new administration. History and recent experience give them every reason to be terrified. The last time a Pushtoon-dominated army subdued Hazarajat a hundred years ago, the victory was followed by dreadful reprisals and a campaign of subjugation. This time round, both Amnesty International and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have released reports saying that they have collected extensive evidence of the killing of thousands of civilians after the battle for Mazar-e-Sharif.

It is entirely likely that the Mazar-e-Sharif massacres could be repeated in Bamian and the surrounding region, or even quieter, more discriminating, disappearances of people associated with the toppled local regime may take place. Once again, the international agencies, unwilling to be present on the ground in Hazarajat during the perilous transition (despite the Taliban's public invitations), have marginalised themselves by removing themselves. Would a Bosnian population have been abandoned in the same way?

and for forcibly acquiring land. Ultimately some of them set themselves up as landlords and their Pushtoon-style mud fortresses, now in ruins, still dot the Hazarajat countryside.

The reality of the civil war in Hazarajat is that it was directed against communism only momentarily. The Hazaras' first and most significant acts in their autonomy project were to bar entry to the nomads, restore the arable land that they had bought or grabbed, and repeal the edicts of Abdur Rahman and Sardar Mohammed Daoud (president of Afghanistan, 1973-1978) granting the Kochis control of the rangelands. For 20 years, therefore, the Hazaras have controlled these natural resources. The panic in Hazarajat now is the fear that history will repeat itself and that the Taliban advance means nothing more than a Pushtoon reconquest. The Hazaras fully expect their region to be pillaged in the days ahead, as during the conquest by Abdur Rahman.

The mood was summed up by one of the woman hoteliers I met in Bamian (yes, Hazarajat has its share of roadside *chai khanas* managed by enterprising women returned from Iran or Kabul). She roars defiance, claims to have killed eight looters in the war for West Kabul, and promises to again shoulder her Kalashnikov if the old rulers try to return. Elsewhere, people were immersed in deep depression at the prospect of becoming serfs again. In Pushte Ghorgurey, former tenants now graze their animals on pastures once reserved for the Kochis, and they are now able to plant rainfed wheat and barley on the hillsides. They point to a single decaying wall, all that is left of their old lord's fort, and tremble at the thought of how they will be punished for their audacity.

In Waras, despairing tenants of one of the big Pushtoon landlords contemplate what their returning master would demand in lieu of 20 years' of back rent. In Panjao, I met Sohaila, a woman educated in Kabul

who, as a literacy instructor, is the only earning member of two families. Her work at an NGO winter school last year saved her relations from starvation. She is terrified that the United Nations will be forced to abandon the education project for which she now works. But most impressive is Haji Sahib himself. He discreetly lets it be known that he has little hope of surviving a Taliban purge. But he repeatedly quotes Arnold Toynbee and laments that the coming changes defy "the spirit of the people"; he warns that peace cannot be achieved in this way. Military pacification, which does not address the old enmities underlying the struggle for the resources of the mountains, cannot be the way to enduring peace.

It is striking that the international assistance groups, which in July decided to make Hazarajat a showpiece for the United Nations' new "Common Programming" approach, could do nothing to allay the civilian



population's fears of an impending massacre. All international staff from the UN and most of the NGOs, plus most of the national staff, were pulled out of the area at the first sign of the Taliban advance. The Bin Laden affair has made them even more cautious about returning. The agencies' concern to take no risks with their own staff's security means that they are unable to play the kind of witness role that many in the civilian population expected them to. The international aid agencies are confined to a peripheral role while the Hazaras take their chances with their new rulers.

M. Semple is a community development worker based in Islamabad. He visited Bamian in August 1998.

Notification

While going through our book of accounts, its being observed that many Ministries, Govt. Departments, Corporations, International Organisations, Kuensel Agents and Private Firms have huge amount of outstanding payable to this Corporation. Kuensel being a commercial Corporation find it difficult to survive, if the payments are not received in time.

We therefore, request all our patrons to settle their outstandings immediately to obtain our services and credit facilities in future. Further, the Management has decided not to extend any credit facilities to the customers, who have old outstanding payable to us.

The Management
Kuensel Corporation

I have an aunty,
Aunty Monica.
When she goes shopping,
Oh so oo la la.

...or words to that effect, is a ditty that my niece used to sing way back, in her South Asian infant's lilt. Would she have sung it today, when 'Monica' has been hijacked by international media and connected with all kinds of associations, including White House nooks and crannies, stains on dresses, not to mention cigars? If only the Lewinsky-Clinton sexual encounter(s) had been just that wee bit less kinky, I think a whole lot of good would have come at the cost of one American president's prestige. Here we have, in South Asia, millions of young men and women entering marriage without even necessarily knowing what goes where. The level of sexual ignorance is astounding, and can only increase as middle class morality insinuates itself into the newly emerging classes. From the Lewinsky-Clinton case, in one blow, with the help of satellite television, teenagers and young adults the world over would have got to know the way of the birds and the bees. Instead, the White House twosome went and ruined what was a global opportunity for sex education by engaging in all kinds of activity but straight intercourse. No thanks to them, now sex is seen to be even dirtier than it was seen to be.

Don't believe a word of those **media commentators** the world over who start with the line, "If you have had enough of the Clinton-Lewinsky affair..." and begin to feed you the latest on the CTBT negotiations, the Euro's bright future, or the new discovery about the tse-tse fly - why for heavens can they not spell "setsi" the way it is apparently pronounced? Anyway, you can take my word that, from the monasteries of Bhutan to the tuna boats of the Maldives, no one will tire of Clinton-Lewinsky as long as there is salacious info to bite through. We might just as well cancel all openings, launchings, press events and releases all over the world until the Washington DC story runs its course. At no other time in history have events within the Beltway so mesmerised the entire globe. And everyone's talking sex. The week the Starr report was out, in India, both *India Today* and *Outlook* carried *swadeshi* sex on the cover.

Talking of monasteries of Bhutan, how unfortunate, this *Kuensel* report of **monks-turned-robbers**. Apparently, two gentlemen of the cloth, Wangdi and Karma, were arrested in mid-September as they were picking pockets at the Luger cinema hall in Thimphu. The part I do not understand in the news report is this last paragraph which tries to establish the clinching evidence: "Cooking pots found in the hotel room have led police to believe that this was not the first crime committed by the two monks." The link between possession of cooking pots and repeated criminal activity is in my mind as yet tenuous.



While on *Kuensel*, I direct your attention to the accompanying notice printed in the 12 September issue of the paper. It is shocking to note that a whole range of the paper's clients, from government offices to corporations, international organisations and others have outstanding dues. I hereby call upon all those who have not paid up to pay up. Bhutan needs all the media it has.

While the rest of us are coasting along with our own individual troubles, there is a major row going on that has the Western literati in thrall: the **Naipaul-Theroux spat**. If you didn't know it, Paul (*The Great Railway Bazaar*) Theroux found that Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (*House for Mr. Biswas*) had thrown away a book that Theroux had once presented to him. An angry Theroux started going back over their friendship and saw a series of slights over 30 years of friendship that he had failed to noticed earlier. Particularly when VS decided to go and get married to a Pakistani socialite and halted their friendship dead on its track, did Theroux see that he had been conned and duped all these years. And so Theroux decided to get even with a quickie memoir about their relationship, which he duly did (*Sir Vidia's Shadow: A Friendship Across Five Continents*), and hence the sensation. Why can't we have scrunchingly titillating tell-all controversies such as this among our own writers? The best we can manage is R.K. Laxman the cartoonist telling us why he likes to sketch crows.

Interesting, how the angle on the news differs from one's **continental vantage**. The discovery in central India of fossil remains from 1.1 billion years ago that are twice as old as any multicellular life ever found has been ascribed by Agence France Presse in its Washington-dated piece entirely to a German palaeontologist at the University of Tübingen, Germany. Meanwhile, Indian papers trumpet the fact that it was an Indian researcher who was responsible for the fossil datings. What is likely is that these two were collaborators in research and in an article they prepared for the *Science* magazine. There should be no problems in sharing the accolade, or am I counting without scientific nationalism?

I need more information than this to be further enlightened. The news report in *The Hindu* says only this much: there is a railway station at Gagaria near Munabao at the India-Pakistan border. The prime ministers of the two countries have decided to restore the rail link with Khokrapar on the Pakistani side, which was suspended after the 1965 war. Presently, a single train runs be-

tween B Khokrapar excited a a rail alte

Jinnah, w must be t was carri known I turned ou directing unfair wi him as a



Partition. monious the Akbar Meanwhil and how i because C me that o

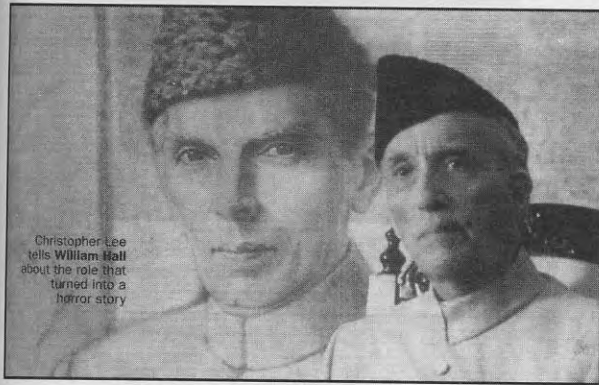
Oh, no!! Srinagar's one water 'major dri will doub they do.

The one th thumping all things once again deprived o to organis da Gama's dian gover tion and th ever since Abroad Ne sive nosta India's apa "India is m

When som leaders of

tween Barmer and Munabao. Gagaria, Munabao, Khokrapar, Barmer – names, all names. If I am to be excited about this re-opening of a line that will at last be a rail alternative to Wagah-Attari, then I want details.

Jinnah, which premiered the other day in Hollywood, must be the only film ever made to avenge a slight that was carried in another film. Prof Akbar Ahmed, the well-known Islamicist at Oxford, reportedly went on what turned out to be a painstaking odyssey of producing and directing *Jinnah* because Richard Attenborough was most unfair with the Quaid-e-Azam in his *Gandhi*, presenting him as a dour schemer who destroyed India through



Partition. I believe that Attenborough was indeed parsimonious in his treatment of the Quaid, and hope that the Akbar production is successful in seeking redress. Meanwhile, let me ask this of patriotic Pakistanis, why and how is the memory of the Quaid-e-Azam denigrated because Christopher Lee plays Jinnah? And do not give me that one about Count Dracula.

Oh, no!! Yet another major drive to restore the glory of Srinagar's **Dal Lake**! By now, the said lake must be the one water body in the world which has seen the most 'major drives' to restore its glory. As Dal Lake herself will doubtless agree, the more people shout the less they do.

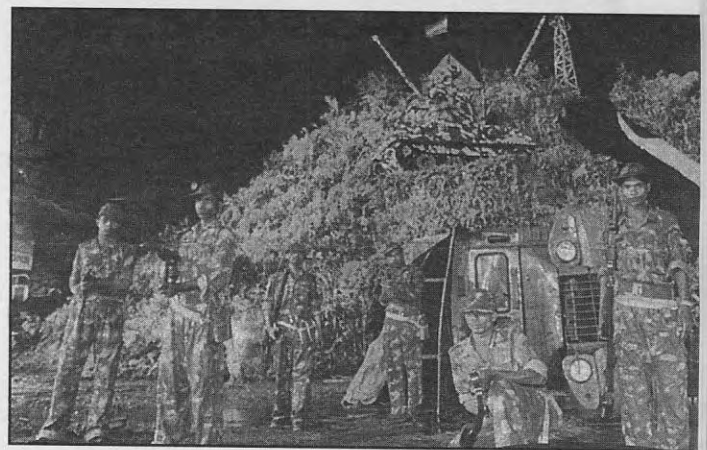
The one thing that defined India before it became a chest-thumping **nuclear adolescent** was its petulance about all things geostrategic. This huffiness became evident once again when the well-meaning Portuguese, long deprived of their South Asian colonial outposts, wanted to organise the 500th anniversary celebration of Vasco da Gama's 'discovery' of the sea route to India. The Indian government refused to participate in the celebration and the Portuguese have been scratching their heads ever since trying to understand why. Reports the India Abroad News Service: The Portuguese feel an "inoffensive nostalgia" for India and they were saddened by India's apathy. Said one member of Parliament in Lisbon, "India is much more than just Goa and Vasco da Gama."

When some raving **Hindu fanatics** who happen to be leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in India chose to

condone the rape of Christian nuns, obviously their **Islamic counterparts** in Bangladesh had to do something to keep up their end of the balance. What they did was to order the attack dogs on a woman who had come back to her country to be with her dying mother – Taslima Nasreen. That was not enough. Twenty-two clerics raised a stink against the Dhaka government for issuing a postage stamp to mark the anniversary of Princess Diana's death. They were displeased, said the clerics, because "[Di] was an adulteress and immoral woman. The release of the stamps in her honour has displeased Allah and hurt the sentiments of Muslims."

As self-appointed **monitor of photo captions**, I have a problem with the picture which purports to show a Delhi Pradesh Youth Congress activist "lying unconscious" after a lathi charge by police during a demonstration against the BJP government. This man on the ground is obviously hurt, but not unconscious. The muscles of a man who has lost his senses relax and no longer will the hand clutch the head as this gentleman's is doing. It is a small matter, but entirely of the kind which South Asia's editors all too often tend to overlook.

Siachen in Bengal. Pandals are dioramas of the Bengali Hindus (and a few others), the best of which show over-sized statues of Goddess Durga slaying the demon Mahisasur. The worst are modern-day pandals-gone-degenerate, tackling modern-day themes with a strong dose of chauvinism. And so I was horrified to read that one of the most "unique" pandals in Calcutta this puja season was a re-creation of the Indo-Pakistan frontier, a make-believe hillock peopled with gun-toting make-believe jawans, and make-believe sound of gunfire playing from a tape in the background. This is what happens when syrupy nationalism as propagated by the mass media gets imbibed by 'the masses', who then think of war even during the *puja* celebrations.



– Chhetria Patrakar

A social science journal featuring:

- research articles in economics, sociology, political science and other emerging disciplines
- scholarly commentary on topical developments
- in-depth reports on people's struggles
- regular columns by eminent social scientists
- book reviews
- weekly statistical updates on the Indian economy
- analytical review of company performances
- monthly review of the money market

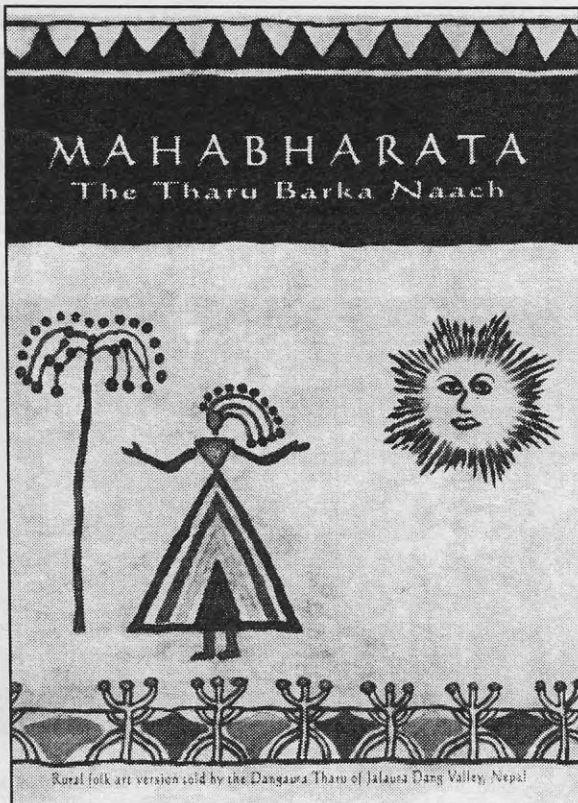
SPECIAL ISSUES

- Review of Political Economy
- Review of Women Studies
- Review of Labour
- Review of Agriculture
- Review of Industry and Management

Subscription Rates

Inland (including Nepal and Bhutan) (in Indian rupees)				Foreign (annual rates in US \$)					
	Six months	One year	Two years	Three years	Air Mail		Surface Mail		
					Institutions	Individuals	Institutions	Individuals	
Institutions	-	800	1500	2200	Pakistan, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka	80	50	65	30
Individuals	350	650	1150	1700	USA, Canada, UK, Europe, Japan,				
Concessional Rates					New Zealand, Australia and Russia	150	100	90	65
Teachers/Researchers	-	425	-	1150	All other countries	100	70	70	50
Students	-	300	-	-					

• Concessional rates are available only in India. To avail of concessional rates, certificate from relevant institution is essential.
 • Remittance by money order/bank draft/postal order requested. Please add Rs 14 to outstation cheques towards bank collection charges.
 All remittances to **Economic and Political Weekly**, Hirakari House, 284 Shahid Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400001
 Phone: 269 6072/73, Fax: (022) 269 6072, Email: epwl@shakti.ncst.ernet.in



The Tharu Barkha Naach
A rural folk art version of the

MAHABHARATA

Published by Himal Books
Edited by Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel

The timeless story of the Hindu epic
told in poetry by
**the Dangaura Tharu of Jalaura
Dang Valley, Nepal**

Distributed by
Himal Books
PO Box 42, Lalitpur, Nepal
Phone: +977-1-522113/523845
Fax: +977-1-521013
email: himalmag@mos.com.np

N ot s
of L
was at it
tan ma
region's
called s
Jigme Si
"to prom
in the c
caught r
guard. H
gotten t
fail to ac
the ongo
Lhotsha
Nepali o
been liv
ern Nep
their cor
Forty
the prec
rights in
everyone
been sub
Bhutan
on the
was pre
governm
50th Se
Sub-Co
Discrim
norities
3 to 28
lution

HMG, RGOB & GOI

The triumvirate of inaction and Bhutan's refugee crisis

When New Delhi and Thimphu fail to act, that's to their perceived benefit. When Kathmandu fails to act, that's to its detriment, and to that of the refugees.

by Karin Heissler

Not since 1991, when the exodus of Lhotshampa refugees to Nepal was at its peak, have events in Bhutan made such headlines in the region's press. It is true that the so-called sweeping changes, in King Jigme Singye Wangchuk's own words, "to promote even greater participation in the decision-making process" caught many Bhutan-watchers off-guard. However, it should not be forgotten that the announced changes fail to acknowledge, or even address, the ongoing plight of the over 93,000 Lhotshampa (Southern Bhutanese of Nepali origin) refugees, who have been living in camps in South Eastern Nepal since being expelled from their country.

Fortunately for the refugees and the precarious situation of human rights in the mountain kingdom, not everyone is convinced that there have been substantive changes within the Bhutanese polity. A draft resolution on the Bhutanese refugee problem was prepared by a coalition of non-governmental organisations for the 50th Session of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, which met in Geneva from 3 to 28 August 1998. While the resolution was ultimately withdrawn

owing to intense lobbying by the Bhutanese delegation to block its acceptance, a Chairman's Statement calling for "negotiation in good faith" was approved and read before the Sub-Commission on 19 August.

While the Chairman's Statement carries less weight than a resolution, it is nevertheless significant for several reasons. To begin with, it represents a consensus text, which means that it was negotiated and agreed to by all 26 experts who make up the Sub-Commission. It is also notable because it recognises the human rights implications of the Royal Government of Bhutan's resettlement policy on lands formerly belonging to the refugees. Finally, in his closing remarks, the Chairman called for further consideration of the Bhutanese refugee issue at the next (51st) session of the Sub-Commission in August 1999.

The Chairman's Statement hurts the Thimphu government on the international front and bolsters sympathy for the refugees. This has been a modest achievement for the refugees' cause, given the otherwise dismal picture. The stalemate in resolving the refugee crisis continues, meanwhile, due to the failure of His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMG) to come

up with a clear strategy for itself, coupled with the obdurate stand of Bhutan in the bilateral talks, India's silence, and the well-intentioned but weak pressure applied by the international community. A new strategy for resolving the Bhutanese refugee problem is clearly long overdue, but for reasons that will be made self-evident, at the moment the impetus for further progress in the Bhutanese refugee impasse rests almost entirely with Nepal.

For the moment, the Government of Nepal is alone in its attempt to find a solution to the refugee problem affecting the country's southeastern districts of Jhapa and Morang. To continue to profess faith that the bilateral talks with Thimphu will eventually lead to progress is futile. Instead, a complete change of course and a multi-faceted plan of action is recommended.

Officially, HMG must bring forward a draft resolution seeking United Nations' intervention on the Bhutanese refugee situation at the next session of the UN Commission on Human Rights which meets in Geneva in March 1999. Once the draft resolution is on the table, a debate will be generated which will create pressure on the Royal Government of Bhutan

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Send payment in local currency in favour of our subscription agent.

Country	1yr	2yrs	Local Subscription Agent
Bangladesh	BDT 480	900	International Book Agencies Ltd., 61, Motijheel C/A 2nd floor, Dhaka. Tel: +880-29-956 0584/955 1308
India	INR 420	800	Central News Agency Pvt. Ltd., 23/90 Connaught Circus, New Delhi 110001. Tel: +91-1-752 9385/777 0536
Maldives	MLR 360	700	Asrafee Book Shop, 1/44 Chandhane Magu, PO Box 2053, Male. Tel: +960-32-3424
Nepal	NPR 540	1000	Himal Inc. Pvt. Ltd., GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu. Tel: +977-1-523845/522113
Pakistan	PKR 480	900	TransIndus Media (Pvt) Ltd., 2nd Floor, Haroon House, Ziauddin Ahmed Rd., Karachi 74200. Tel: +92-21-567 0081-4 Fax: +92-21- 567 0085
Sri Lanka	SLR 480	900	Lake House Book Shop, 100, Sir Chittampalam, Gardiner Mawatha, Colombo-2. Tel: +94-1-432105/430581/430582
Elsewhere	USD 36 GBP 25	66 45	
Australia			Indra Ban, 12, Norfolk St., Paddington 2021, Sydney. Fax: +61-2-635 3207
Sweden			Empatum AB, Box 26159, 100 41 Stockholm. Fax: +46-8-141088
Switzerland			Edi Muhlemann, Mosliweg 11, CH-3098 Koniz. Fax: +41-31-971 8065
The Netherlands			Frans Meijer, Zwanenburgwal 278, 1011 JH Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Fax: +31-20-625 6690
U.K. & Ireland			Joti Giri (Ref: H), 221 Ashly Gardens, Emery Hill Street, London SW1 1PA. Tel: +44-171-582 9355
Germany			Suedasien-Büro, Redaktion 'Suedasien', Grosse Heimstr. 58, 44137 Dortmund Tel: +49-231-136 633
North America			Barbara Bella & Associates, 500 Sansome Street, Suite 101, PO Box 470758, San Francisco CA 94147. Fax: +1-415-986 7860

Subscribers sending payments directly to the Kathmandu office from countries other than Nepal and India should do so at the rate quoted for 'Elsewhere' by demand draft/ cheque in US Dollars/GB Pounds drawn in favour of 'Himal Inc. Pvt. Ltd.' at Circulation Department, HIMAL, GPO Box No. 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Note: Subscribers who wish to pay through AMEX, VISA or MASTER CARD can fax/e-mail the details directly to our Kathmandu office at +977-1-521013<himalmag@mos.com.np>. (For AMEX cards please include contact phone numbers also.)

URL: www.himalmag.com

The best gift you can give any book lover.

A monthly magazine which introduces a whole new dimension to the world of books in India.

IRB is more than just a magazine of reviews. It is a platform which constantly throws up ideas, even conflicting ones. Read **IRB** for its incisive, analytical evaluation of the latest in fiction and non-fiction or for its witty, decidedly tongue-in-cheek banter about the world of books and bookmen.

Newsstand price: INR 20/- per copy. Save 30% by subscribing.

1 year: INR 150/-

2 years: INR 250/-

3 years: INR 350/-

[Overseas: 1 year: US\$ 30/- (INR. 1050/-)]

Send in your cheques/drafts/money orders (add Rs. 10/- for outstation cheques) in favour of Indian Review of Books to

INDIAN REVIEW OF BOOKS

62-A, ORMES ROAD, KILPAUK, MADRAS - 600 010, INDIA.

TEL: 91-44-6412314 FAX: 91-44-6427484 E-MAIL: ewb.maa@sm1.sprintprg.ems.vsnl.net.in

(RGOB) to
sigent po
aware tha
seems qu
because M
played at

Also,
should c
inter-sta
tional Co
on the lin
of citize
UNHCR-ac
eastern M
to expose
sition tha
gees are
or elsewh
camps as

Final
articulate
rank to
pean Uni
North
capitals,
Beijing,
New De
voy mu
clear bri
two prev
mendatio
resolutio
Commis
man Rig
complain
to the I
Court of
Chairma
on the
refugees
before t
sion of
Commis
criminat
ties cou
tool.

No r
in the F
since th
held in
when a
identify
gees wa
fact, it
RGOB ac
matic vi
latter to
scheme
strength
that ma

(RGOB) to shift from its present intransigent position. Thimphu is very aware that its international position seems quite unassailable today only because Nepal's diplomacy has been played at such a low key.

Also, the Nepali government should consider referring a formal inter-state complaint to the International Court of Justice at The Hague on the limited issue of determination of citizenship of refugees in the UNHCR-administered camps of south-eastern Nepal. This process is likely to expose the inaccuracy of RGOB's position that the majority of the refugees are illegal migrants from India or elsewhere who have come in to the camps as free-loaders.

Finally, Kathmandu must send an articulate special envoy of ministerial rank to all European Union (EU) and North American capitals, as well as to Beijing, Moscow and New Delhi. The envoy must have a clear brief based on two previous recommendations: the draft resolution at the UN Commission on Human Rights and the complaint submitted to the International Court of Justice. The Chairman's Statement on the Bhutanese refugee situation read before the 50th Session of the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities could also be a useful lobbying tool.

No real progress has been made in the Bhutan-Nepal bilateral talks since the first joint ministerial talks held in Kathmandu in October 1993, when a categorisation scheme for identifying and classifying the refugees was agreed to by both sides. In fact, it is widely acknowledged that RGOB achieved an important diplomatic victory over HMG by getting the latter to agree to the categorisation scheme. Not only was it seen to strengthen the Bhutanese argument that many people living in the camps

were not Druk citizens (which it has asserted from the very beginning of the crisis), but it also enabled Thimphu to successfully hold up the negotiation process on four other issues. There is no doubt that the Bhutanese side has been the stronger negotiator in the bilateral talks.

The Government of India (GOI) has been tellingly silent on all negotiations on the Bhutanese refugee issue. This is interesting, for Article 2 of the 1949 Treaty of Friendship states that "the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations". Despite the fact that tens of thousands of Bhutanese refugees streamed through its borders in the early 1990s and today reside only an hour's drive from the Indo-



Lhotshampa refugees from the first wave in 1991 disembark in eastern Nepal after journeying through India.

Nepal border, India has thus far not exercised its right to offer advice, something that could have helped resolve the crisis. Why it has not done so has been the subject of much speculation and debate, although it is explicitly clear that India has taken sides with Bhutan for economic and geo-political reasons.

India provides substantial economic assistance to Bhutan. In fact, as a percentage of Bhutan's GDP, GOI's aid has been as high as 59 percent (1983/84). Similarly, India plays a large part in financing Bhutan's five-year plans. The New Delhi government is contributing almost one-third out of the total outlay of BTN 30 bil-

lion (c. USD 700 million) in the current Eighth Five-year Plan (1998-2003) of Thimphu. India has also committed an additional BTN 4 billion in development subsidies, and this year contributed 31 percent of Bhutan's budget.

Moreover, in spite of King Jigme's efforts to reduce economic dependence on India, the bulk of Bhutan's trade still remains tied to India. These economic ties obviously serve to strengthen the political alliance between the two countries, albeit at the expense of the human rights of the Lhotshampa and, in a different context, of the larger Druk population.

Bhutan's total hydro-electric power generation potential is over 40 billion kWh, and India has already signed a Memorandum of Under-

standing with it for planning and constructing various large-scale hydro-electric projects, and for receiving energy at a relatively low cost from them. Bhutan recognises India's need for electric power and is not averse to taking advantage of this dependency. In 1997, Bhutan increased the tariff for the sale of Chhukha power to India by 100 percent, from BTN 0.50 per unit to BTN 1.00 per unit. Over the past

couple of years, Bhutan has signed three major hydropower agreements with India: the BTN 15 billion Tala hydro project; the BTN 2.56 billion Kurichu project; and the BTN 4 billion Dungsam project.

Strategic reasons also underlie India's continuing silence. In 1965, Thimphu signed a joint defence agreement with India and agreed to deploy the Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT); the 1962 Indo-China border war underlined to Indian strategists the need for a friendly dispensation in Thimphu. The Indian Border Roads Organisation maintains the roads in Eastern Bhutan. This is because India is only too aware that

LAXMI PRASAD LUNTEL

Sherpa shepherded service since 1971

Trekking in the Himalaya? Trek with the Himalayan people. Trek with the Sherpa.

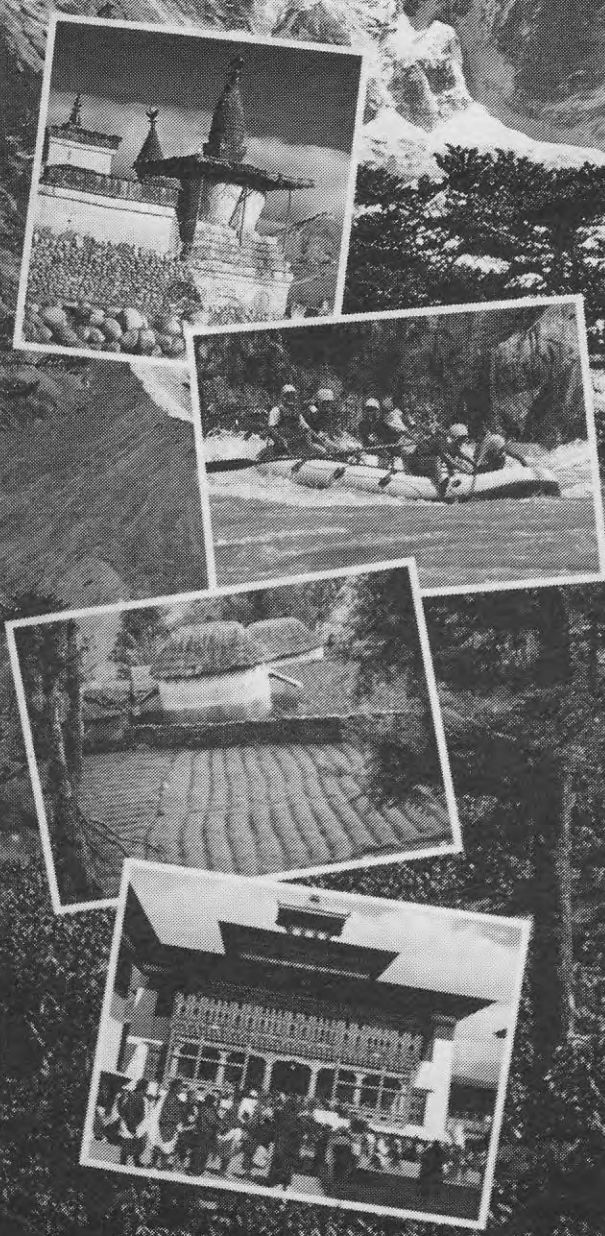
For us, trekking is more than business, it is an act of devotion. Because the mountains are sacred.

We organize an exciting variety of treks, mountaineering expeditions and adventure tours in Nepal, Tibet, India, and Bhutan. And all of them Sherpa shepherded. We also arrange special charter flights.

STS

Sherpa Trekking Service (P) Ltd.
Sherpa Travel Service (P) Ltd.

Kamaladi, G.P.O. Box 500
Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 220243/227312/222489
Telex: 2419 STS NP
Fax: 977-1-227243
977-1-470824



Arunachal
over which
has Bhutan

The ne
influence
tain a buf
the Hima
reluctant
cognisar
to gain in
would pr
nificant a
diplomati
all, India
Fernande
India's "p
and that t
nese thre
lems for u
And as a
mandu w
Indian se
the Chin

Toothless

While th
March 19
ing on th
Nepal to
would all
Bhutanese
any prog
tionee
"teeth" a
position
ernment
resolutio
of the E
face of
Thimphu
thoughts
In the m
ropean p
cial visit
ceived th
from the
Jigme ap
liamenta
refugee
of propo
interests

The
pears to
ing econ
ing redu
tance to
Thimphu
refugee
record.
Bhutan's

Arunachal Pradesh, the Indian state over which China claims sovereignty, has Bhutan on its vulnerable flank.

The need to keep in check China's influence in the region and to maintain a buffer state along this part of the Himalayan frontier makes India reluctant to criticise Bhutan. It is also cognisant of recent attempts by China to gain influence over Thimphu, and would prefer not to do anything significant and risk losing this important diplomatic and economic ally. After all, India's Defence Minister, George Fernandes, has said that China is India's "potential threat number one", and that the "underplaying of the Chinese threat could create a lot of problems for us [India] in the near future". And as a security analyst in Kathmandu writes, "No issue epitomises Indian security perception more than the Chinese threat."

Toothless pressure

While the European Parliament, in March 1996, passed a resolution calling on the governments of Bhutan and Nepal to come to a solution that would allow for the repatriation of the Bhutanese refugees, it did not yield any progress. That effort was well-intentioned, but it lacked the necessary "teeth" and hence failed to soften the position of the RGOB. The Nepali government did little to follow up on the resolution and, a year later, members of the European Parliament, in the face of meticulous lobbying by Thimphu, appeared to have second thoughts about their earlier position. In the meantime, a delegation of European parliamentarians paid an official visit to Bhutan, where they received the customary warm welcome from the Druk state machinery. King Jigme appears to have sent the parliamentarians back convinced that the refugee problem had been blown out of proportion by parties with vested interests.

The international community appears to have no intention of imposing economic sanctions and/or making reductions in development assistance to Bhutan as a way to force Thimphu to improve its stance on the refugee problem and its human rights record. As reported in *Kuensel*, Bhutan's only newspaper, 31 bilateral

and multilateral donors, financial institutions and NGOs have pledged almost USD 459 million to assist Bhutan in its Eighth Five-Year Plan. Therefore, at least over the short term, investment, engagement and development partnerships, rather than the threat of sanctions or the withdrawal of foreign aid, appear to be the international donor agencies' policy with regard to Bhutan.

According to expatriate sources in the Bhutanese capital, the RGOB has, in fact, already carried out a study of the worst-case scenario in the event of aid cuts. Apparently, it has concluded that it can do without donor money if human rights groups are successful in influencing the aid policy of the West. While it remains doubtful whether Bhutan can survive economically in the long run without massive amounts of foreign aid and assistance it receives annually, the mere fact that such a calculation was made reveals the resolute position of King Jigme's government on the issue of Lhotshampa refugees.

And so the Bhutanese refugee problem approaches its eighth year with no end as yet in sight. While the Chairman's Statement to the members of the United Nations Sub-Commission is a positive (and long-overdue) sign of international concern and support for the refugees, it is important that the momentum created from this development not be lost, as happened with the European Parliament resolution in the past.

Unable to count on India for the diplomatic muscle that might well force the Royal Government of Bhutan to soften its position on the Lhotshampa refugees, His Majesty's Government of Nepal has little choice but to devise a new strategy for its dealings with Thimphu. The three recommendations listed above may not yield instant results, but at the bare minimum they will move the issue into a wider arena, which is long overdue.

K. Heissler is a research associate on Nepal and Bhutan at the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre (SAHRDC) in New Delhi.

HIMAL

THE SOUTH ASIAN MAGAZINE

More than one reason why
Himal makes essential reading.

Himal has a list of aims, modestly stated, which has to contend with paranoid politicians, hidebound bureaucrats and millions of miles of barbed wire. It has on its side the virtues of readability and the absence of dogma.

Ramachandra Guha
The Telegraph, Calcutta

A most daring magazine venture.
Khushwant Singh

Provides more emphasis on regional issues than any other international magazine.
The News, Lahore

A magazine with a South Asian bias to counter the petty-nationalism and narrow geopolitical considerations of the region.
The Pioneer, New Delhi

The magazine that looks at all of South Asia as its beat.
Sunday, Calcutta

A regional magazine with an international outlook.
The Economic Times, Bombay

A very different magazine by definition and content.
The Sunday Times Plus, Colombo

Himal is literate and readable.
Tsering Wangyal, Tibetan Review

A magazine that caters to a very interesting niche.
Indian Printer and Publisher

With its broad and humane vision, the magazine helps capture the unity as well as the diversity of this unique part of our planet.
Javed Jabbar, Karachi

Journalism Without Borders

Himal, GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: +977-1-522113/523845/521013 (fax)
email: himalmag@mos.com.np
URL: www.himalmag.com



Shashi's Holidays Trekking (P) Ltd.

*Specialised in Adventure
Tours Trekking Planning.*



*Experience Nepal through
Shashi's Holidays*

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURS (P) LTD.

Telex: 2407 SAKO NP, Cable: SAKO, P.O. Box 4588 (in front of Rastriya Nach Ghar)
Ranipokhari, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: 227018, 248266, 252439 Fax: 977-1-227018, 228868



UPS offers door to door delivery service for packages and documents. More easy, economical and competitive alternatives for air freight world-wide.

Speedy, efficient and customs brokerage clearance. You can track your packages for instant delivery information through internet at www.ups.com for int'l packages and www.elbeenet.com for India packages.

Guaranteed, On time, Every time door to door.
No one can compete like we do.



United Parcel Service

Pradarsani Marg, P.O.Box: 4417, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: 230215, 241100, 241122, Fax: +977-1-225915
Thamel : 423300, Pokhara : 24010, E-Mail : noc@mos.com.np

As sure as taking it there yourself

In more
that led
first publ
events of
Dams (w
India in
mark a w
sibly Sou
large wat
the begin
large da
1940s.

What
formation
land, in
Bank cal
'stakeho
dams. Th
of the W
ety abou
growing
in gener
particula
cism of
dams ar
few mon
tivists h
had bee
ing the
then it w
dent co

The
resulted
membe
Africa's
Kader
make-u
sents an
resentat
The larg
to be re
preside

Dam insecurity

How a critically important South Asia-wide meeting on the future of large dams was scuttled because of the Government of Gujarat's influence over the Government of India.

by Himanshu Thakkar

In more ways than one, the episode that led to the cancellation of the first public hearing and other related events of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) that was to be held in India in September 1998, seems to mark a watershed in India's, and possibly South Asia's, experience with large water projects. This seems to be the beginning of the decline of the large dams era that started in the 1940s.

What is WCD? The process of its formation started in Gland, Switzerland, in April 1997 when the World Bank called a meeting of the various 'stakeholders' on the issue of large dams. The meeting itself was a result of the World Bank's increasing anxiety about somehow managing the growing criticism against large dams in general and the Bank's projects in particular. It also followed severe criticism of the Bank's review of 50 large dams around the world, published a few months earlier. At that time, activists had suggested that if the Bank had been really interested in reviewing the performance of large dams, then it would have set up an independent commission on the subject.

The process that was thus started resulted in the formation of the 12-member WCD, chaired by South Africa's Water Resources Minister Kader Asmal. The Commission's make-up makes clear that it represents an exercise to give balanced representation to various interest groups. The large dam industry could be seen to be represented by Goran Lindahl, president and chief executive officer

of Asea Brown Boveri. The same is true for Jan Veltrop, former chairman of the International Commission on Large Dams, as also Shen Guoyi, director-general of China's Ministry of Water Resources, which is today in the process of building the world's largest dam at Three Gorges. Then there's Thayer Scudder, a well-known consultant of the World Bank who deals with the social impacts of large dams around the world. The celebrated critic of large dams from South Asia, Medha Patkar, represents the voice of those millions who have been adversely affected by dam and reservoir projects.

GOI says no

As the WCD geared up for its work, the commissioners collectively decided at their very first meeting that the Commission's first public hearing would be held in South Asia. This was, after all, a region which had seen both the construction of large projects as well as, lately, significant activism against such projects. The public hearings were to be held in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, the central Indian state through which flows the Narmada, the river which has been at the centre of dam-building and anti-dam activism this past decade. The WCD had titled the public hearing, to be held

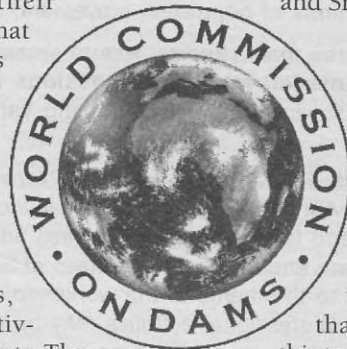
with the permission of the New Delhi government on 21-22 September 1998, "Water and Energy in South Asia: Large Dams and Alternatives".

Experts and activists from all over the Subcontinent had been invited to present submissions. These had come from the governments of Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as well as from the state government of Madhya Pradesh. Well-known proponents of big dams such as C.D. Thatte and Ramaswamy R. Iyer, both former secretaries for water resources of the Government of India, had also submitted their views. However, over half the submissions, largely critical of large dams, were from the affected people, people's movements, and non-government organisations belonging to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Initially, on 19 August, India's central government sent a letter welcoming the Commission to meet in India. Then, at the penultimate moment, on 10 September, the government wrote to the Commission stating that "we do not consider

this to be an opportune time for the visit of the World Commission on Dams" as "the issue relating to Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) is coming up before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India during this month."

Why this sudden *volte face*? Why the pretext of a Supreme Court hearing on one particular large dam



out of the thousands of large dams and alternative projects being built or planned all over South Asia which were to be the subject of the public hearing? Some answers can be found in the events that occurred in the three weeks between the two letters of GOI, one welcoming, the other not-so-welcoming.

A systematic misinformation campaign was launched in Gujarat by the various political groupings in the state, led by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. The claim was that the WCD was part of an anti-SSP, anti-Gujarat, anti-India and anti-Third World conspiracy. One politician even suggested that some members of the Commission were agents of CIA. An all-party meeting resolved that the entry of the WCD into Gujarat would be fought at all costs. As the WCD secretary general had written to the Gujarat government, some of the members of the Commission were to visit the Sardar Sarovar Project as part of their field visit to the Narmada Valley. The secretary general had also written that members would like to

hear the government's position on the issue.

The chief minister of Gujarat then announced that the WCD members would be arrested if they came to his state. He wrote letters to the BJP chief ministers of the neighbouring states of Maharashtra and Rajasthan (but not to Madhya Pradesh, where the BJP is not in power) requesting them not to allow the Commission in when it comes for public hearings or field visits.

On 9 September, a delegation led by the chief minister of Gujarat and accompanied by the central ministers elected from the state, including the home minister and till recently BJP president, L.K. Advani, met Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. They asked him not to allow the WCD to come to India. The following day, on 10 September, GOI wrote its letter to the WCD.

Upon receipt of the letter from New Delhi, the chairman of the Commission wrote to GOI, saying that the Commission would assure that there would be no mention of the Sardar

Sarovar Project in the events connected with the Commission, as it understood well the sensitivities involved and would not like to seem to be interfering with the ongoing Supreme Court case regarding SSP. Taking this assurance into consideration, the Commission requested the GOI to reconsider its decision. On the night of 11 September, the government wrote back saying that its decision was not reviewable, at which point the WCD decided to cancel its field visits, postpone the public hearing, and shift the venue of the Commission's public hearing. (It was later announced that the Commission would meet in Sri Lanka in December 1998.)

What is clear is that the central BJP leadership could not withstand the pressure mounted by its Gujarat counterpart, and decided therefore to take a decision that, besides being clearly undemocratic, has also embarrassed India internationally.

Reaching for the proverbial fig leaf, the National Planning Commission chief Jaswant Singh in his letter to the WCD pointed to the upcoming

Supreme C
Sarovar Pro
reason why
was withh
been pend
for over fou
Governme
parties to
ing of this
ber 1998.

The politi

There is n
ously pla
Gujarat wa
WCD's visit
age and di
ment, tho
majority i
having a p
to non-per
In particu
been vuln
away rise
commodi
and edible
ible oil is
in the stat
ernments

Howev

it was clea
was insecur
Project.
would pro
did not w
tion of th
insecurity
same time
ment was
tool in th
making s
unrepresent
hearing o

Thus,
ment wen
the WCD,
clearly re
making s
sion. Th
C.C. Pat
former ch
Narmada
B.G. Verg
members
Narmada
dividuals
dination
ment, an
to subst
governm

RCSS WINTER WORKSHOP 1999

The Colombo-based Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) invites applications from young South Asian professionals to participate in the 1999 Winter Workshop on **Sources of Conflict in South Asia: Ethnicity, Refugees, Environment**, to be held in Nepal on **March 6-16, 1999**. The workshop is organized with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung. The objective of the Workshop is to equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the concepts and approaches to the study of conflict, conflict resolution and conflict management in South Asia. The theme of the workshop is focused on conflict related to: a) ethnicity and religion; b) refugee and other forms of population movement; and c) resources, development and environment.

Activities are held in three main streams: lecture session, panel-discussion, and group work. The programme will also include **participants-led interactive sessions** in which the participants will be encouraged to undertake exercises of problem-solving nature by adopting various relevant techniques of negotiation, role-playing and simulation.

Nationals of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the age group of up to 40 years are invited to apply providing: a) full curriculum vitae including name, date of birth, nationality, sex, contact address (including telephone and fax numbers and e-mail address, if any), academic qualifications, current profession and experience; b) Name and full contact address of two referees; c) List of publications (copy of a recent publication preferably relevant to the theme of the workshop, if any, to be enclosed. If publication is not available, a brief description of current professional activities may be enclosed); and d) A statement in about 300 words stating future professional objectives and describing how participation in the workshop will be useful.

Letter of application with all documents should reach the RCSS **no later than November 30, 1998**. Early submission is encouraged. No prescribed form is necessary. *Scholarships are available for all selected participants to cover expenses including economy class airfare, cost of accommodation, food, etc. However, all participants will be required to pay a registration fee of US\$20.00 on arrival at the workshop venue.* Applications will be considered by an international selection committee.



Applications or queries should be addressed to:

Executive Director, Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, 2, Elibank Road, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka.
Tel: (94-1) 586201, 584603 Fax: (94-1) 599993 E-mail: edrcss@sri.lanka.net

Supreme Court hearing on the Sardar Sarovar Project on the Narmada as the reason why permission for the visit was withheld. But the SSP case has been pending in the Supreme Court for over four years now, with both the Government of Gujarat and GOI as parties to the case. No special hearing of this case took place in September 1998.

The political game

There is no doubt that the precariously placed BJP Government of Gujarat was using the occasion of the WCD's visit to get some political mileage and divert attention. The government, though it has a comfortable majority in the state assembly, was having a problem of credibility due to non-performance in several sectors. In particular, the government has been vulnerable because of the runaway rise in the prices of essential commodities, including vegetables and edible oil. The rising price of edible oil is a particularly volatile issue in the state, on the basis of which governments have fallen in the past.

However, more than anything else, it was clear that the state government was insecure about the Sardar Sarovar Project. Certain that any scrutiny would pronounce the project unfit, it did not want an independent evaluation of the project. Evidence of this insecurity was amply available. At the same time, even as the state government was busy abusing the WCD as a tool in the anti-SSP conspiracy, it was making sure that its case did not go unrepresented at the first ever public hearing of the Commission.

Thus, while the Gujarat government went about threatening to block the WCD, some of the people who clearly represent its position were making submissions to the Commission. These included people like C.C. Patel and Sanat Mehta, both former chairpersons of Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited, as well as B.G. Verghese and Vidhyut Joshi, both members of Gujarat government's Narmada Planning Group. These individuals have worked in close coordination with the Gujarat government, and their submissions are said to substantially support the state government's position. Thus, even

Medha's e-mailing list

The editors thought it might interest cyber-savvy readers to know who is on Medha Patkar's email list (Himal is) to receive announcements and pronouncements.



USHA TIWARI

From: "Medha Patkar" medhap@bom5.vsnl.net.in
 To: metaminor@altindia.com.mos.com.np, <amdnaik@bom3.vsnl.net.in>, <aoa@aoabhop.mp.nic.in>, <achyut@agragami.unv.ernet.in>, <wdm@gn.apc.org>, <aidwatch@peg.apc.org>, <bwref@gn.apc.org>, <kazimi@interlog.com>, <aleta@pop.igc.apc.org>, <aleta@irn.org>, <amit@igc.org>, <amrita@csec.ernet.in>, <ieibr@bgl.vsnl.net.in>, <anandp@giasbm01.vsnl.net.in>, <MiBuerker@aol.com>, <mdsaab06@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in>, <anitapd@aol.com>, <aleonard@essential.org>, <admin@anumukti.ilbom.ernet.in>, <akrspahd@ad1.vsnl.net.in>, <18007@stdn.irm.ernet.in>, <aravinda@unforgettable.com>, <cs@eecs.berkeley.edu>, <akothari@kv.unv.ernet.in>, <ashish@giasdl01.vsnl.net.in>, <ashvinshah@aol.com>, <aviva@irn.org>, <bsampath@glue.umd.edu>, <bsarwar@lakshmi.1hr-com.net.mos.com.np>, <bpandey@winrock.org>, <binasr@brd2.zaverchand.co.in>, <bittu@giasbm01.vsnl.net.in>, <hs@bothends.antenna.nl>, <bothends@gn.apc.org>, <bruce_rich@edf.org>, <vainer@novell.ippur.ufjr.br>, <cec@unv.ernet.in>, <cec@giasdl01.vsnl.net.in>, <keith@cedbom.ilbom.ernet.in>, <cieldlc@igc.apc.org>, <chetna@adinet.ernet.in>, <aibs@bom2.vsnl.net.in>, <cse@gn.apc.org>, <cse@sdlalt.ernet.in>, <dbeard@audubon.org>, <darryl@shakti.ncst.ernet.in>, <davidkadam@yahoo.com>, <admin@debi.ilbom.ernet.in>, <deb@edf.org>, <deborah_moore@edf.org>, <delforum@unv.ernet.in>, <vibha@dilip.ilbom.ernet.in>, <agnespsu@slt.lk>, <vivaswan@pn2.vsnl.net.in>, <drishti@ad1.vsnl.net.in>, <deena@tom.unv.ernet.in>, <ecologist@gn.apc.org>, <e-law-sl@ef.is.lk>, <admin@equations.ilban.ernet.in>, <fivas@online.no>, <foesweden@nn.apc.org>, <hotline@hyd1.vsnl.net.in.mos.com.np>, <nbaganesh@hotmail.com>, <g_nochur@hotmail.com>, <g_appa@lse.ac.uk>, <gautama@ilmas.ernet.in>, <glen@nutecnet.com.br>, <gef@igc.apc.org>, <hmander@vallabh.mp.nic.in>, <hemant@bom4.vsnl.net.in>, <himalmag@mos.com.np>, <cwwaterp@del3.vsnl.net.in>, <hbrody@compuserve.com>, <ipsag@maestro.com>, <indu.capoor@lwhahm.net>, <admin@chs.ilbom.ernet.in>, <inspire@md2.vsnl.net.in>, <zac@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in>, <ubcentre@del2.vsnl.net.in>, <jayant@rocketmail.com>, <jharana@del2.vsnl.net.in>, <jitendras@gsslco.co.in>, <morbeb@gn.apc.org>, <tongtong@gn.apc.org>, <jhender@austrical.com.au>, <pradeep@ncra.tifr.res.in>, <juliette@irn.org>, <paridhi@bom4.vsnl.net.in>, <kalpana@ks.ilbom.ernet.in>, <kalpana@ilbom.ernet.in>, <kamal@imsc.ernet.in>, <K.Malhotra@focusweb.org>, <kaval@pirg.unv.ernet.in>, <kshamar@pune.tcs.co.in>, <patwardhan@dnap.com>, <galsan@mci2000.com>, <admin@leo.ilban.ernet.in>, <lisadieger@hotmail.com>, <lJordan@igc.apc.org>, <lori@irn.org>, <ludall@firstnations.org>, <horses@igc.org>, <l.mehta@sussex.ac.uk>, <mabb@sanet.com.br>, <madhu@giaspn01.vsnl.net.in>, <nperreira@giasbm01.vsnl.net.in>, <mpadki@tiac.net>, <max@cse@sdlalt.ernet.in>, <meena@bby.ilbom.ernet.in>, <admin@anand.ilbom.ernet.in>, <milind.jog@uc.edu>, <miloon@unv.org>, <mishka@sungi.sdnk.undp.org>, <mitu@giasdl01.vsnl.net.in>, <md@essential.org>, <murush@giasdl01.vsnl.net.in>, <narendra@giaspn01.vsnl.net.in>, <nba@lwbq.lwbbs.net>, <nbertz@blue.weeg.uiowa.edu>, <umapan@giasbmc.vsnl.net.in>, <cornerhouse@gn.apc.org>, <nhemmady@du.edu>, <tiasia@sri.lanka.net>, <imadr@slt.mos.com.np>, <lk@cluster2.vsnl.net.in>, <ssmids@ren.nic.in>, <nity@del3.vsnl.net.in>, <oxfam@web.apc.org>, <oxfamng@bom4.vsnl.net.in>, <spadma@nrp.ilbom.ernet.in>, <parasv@bom3.vsnl.net.in>, <sparasuraman@hotmail.com>, <jehangir@giasbma.vsnl.net.in>, <pbond@wn.apc.org>, <patrick@irn.org>, <finance@evb.ch>, <pbw@pwa-ltd.com>, <prabha@irm.ernet.in.mos.com.np>, <adm@irm.ernet.in>, <sagrik@giasdl01.vsnl.net.in>, <pbidwai@pb.unv.ernet.in>, <sbhushan@giasdl01.vsnl.net.in>, <pchatterje@igc.org>, <prayas@giaspn01.vsnl.net.in>, <psi@nde.vsnl.net.in>, <rnaya@hptmail.com>, <rahu.de@bowiestate.edu>, <sharmila@osic.com>, <scrajan@hotmail.com>, <mgsant@rajni.ilbom.ernet.in>, <pils@pilsarc.unv.ernet.in>, <glorimex@bom2.vsnl.net.in>, <nikaran@hotmail.com>, <bhagwat@giaspn01.vsnl.net.in>, <ravi@innocent.com>, <dishaa@bom3.vsnl.net.in>, <roberto.ern@innovation.ch>, <ics@lwbq.lwbbs.net>, <ruchi@ruchi.wlink.com.up.mos.com.np>, <ajay@icimod.org.up.mos.com.np>, <spkumar@tc.umn.edu>, <nkd@iucaa.ernet.in>, <asha@lw1.vsnl.net.in>, <spostel@mtholyoke.edu>, <shahuja@amnesty.org>, <kamat@vms.cis.pitt.edu>, <sara@fac.irm.ernet.in>, <MRN@gnlmumbo.rpgms.ems.vsnl.net.in>, <havsi@hotmail.com>, <rajm@giasbm01.vsnl.net.in>, <simantinid@hotmail.com>, <slsle@isec.kar.nic.in>, <lele@socrates.berkeley.edu>, <dsc@lwhahm.net>, <admin@sparc.ilbom.ernet.in>, <shekhars@giasdl01.vsnl.net.in>, <sree@krec.ernet.in>, <shubhranshu_chaudhary@bbc.co.uk>, <smitu@lokayan.unv.ernet.in>, <yaten@giasdl01.vsnl.net.in>, <lmi.bby@lmi.sprintpg.ems.vsnl.net.in>, <poddar.seva@access.net.in>, <sm1@cucc.ernet.in>, <sudama@poboxes.com>, <sujit@giaspn01.vsnl.net.in>, <survival@gn.apc.org>, <nff@md2.vsnl.net.in>, <irmome@ad1.vsnl.net.in>, <uma.IRMA@etdc.irm.ernet.in>, <vachan@bom2.vsnl.net.in>, <vshiva@giasdl01.vsnl.net.in>, <venu@cfar.umd.edu>, <chariav@physics.iitd.ernet.in>, <bikanasi@hotmail.com>, <econet@giaspn01.vsnl.net.in>, <vchauhan@uncdel.ernet.in>, <admin@vak.ilbom.ernet.in>, <visthar@giasbg01.vsnl.net.in>, <walter@sid.unv.ernet.in>, <wcdpom@hotmail.com>, <xavier@birs.unv.ernet.in>, <yuva@giasbm01.vsnl.net.in>, <fopthai@hotmail.com>, <susdev@bom2.vsnl.net.in>, <sndilib@bom3.vsnl.net.in>, <rebelgrrlz@hotmail.com>, <pwills@global.co.za>, <callsource@new.co.za>, <brdavies@botzoo.uact.ac.za>

感動が違う、手作りが生きる。風のネパール

"Follow me up to Himalaya"



"We provide you all kinds of trek and tour arrangements in Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim."



NEPAL KAZE TRAVEL

G. P. O. Box 4529, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: 240393, 223194.
Fax: 249133. E-mail: nptrek@mos.com.np

"From beneath the rivers up to the mighty Himalaya, we take care of you with a new experience in the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal."

We believe in quality service.



TOKYO

Tel: 03-3228-5173

Fax: 03-3228-5174

E-mail: kaze@mp.dnsa.or.jp

OSAKA

Tel: 06-343-7517

Fax: 06-343-7518

E-mail: kaze-osa@interlink.or.jp

while the opposing that its presented.

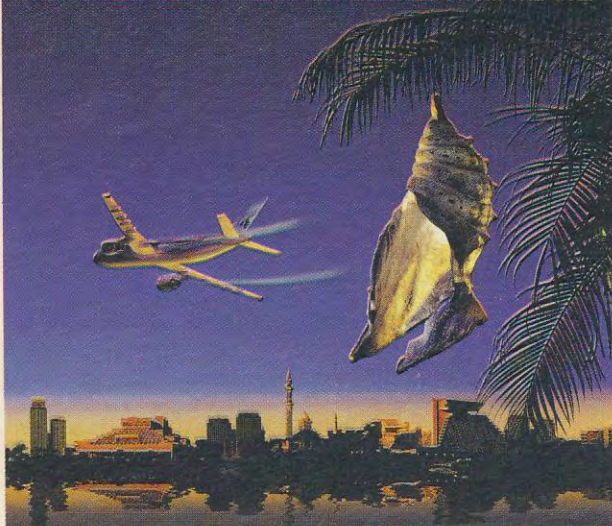
In fact, large dam exercise of the fact the mission of headed by Madhav C reportedly sions to the Asian org dams. Th from the Banglades

The G of the fir man to vi like the S ing the fo efforts we and other South As large dam suggested sions be known to dams lik Verghe

The sa sode is th on India' racy. As press stat ponemen

Pilg
Hun
repres
Europe
Hat
condit
charm
conver
Gar
Op

A NEW WORLD CLASS AIRLINE HAS EMERGED FROM THE GULF



NEW AIRBUS A300-600R AIRCRAFT

NEW ROUTES AND SCHEDULES

NEW DAILY FLIGHTS FROM DOHA TO LONDON HEATHROW

NEW FIRST CLASS AND BUSINESS CLASS SERVICES

NEW LIVERY & UNIFORMS

NEW LARGER SEATS

NEW INTERNATIONAL MENU

NEW ON BOARD BAR SERVICES

2 WEEKLY FLIGHTS TO MUNICH
CONNECTION TO MAJOR CITIES IN EUROPE
AND WITHIN GERMANY

Three weekly flights from Kathmandu
on Wednesday, Friday & Sunday
to Doha & London with convenient connection
to Middle East, Europe and USA.

QATAR AIRWAYS القطرية
Excellence in the Sky



For reservations or sales enquiries, please call your Travel Agent or Qatar Airways, Kantipath, Kathmandu. Tel: 257712, 256579; Fax: 227132
GSA: Zenith Travels (P) Ltd. P.O. Box 4163, Kathmandu, Nepal. Fax: 977-1-227132; Telex: 2414 Zenith Np
e-mail: Zenith@ktmpc.mos.com.np

while the Gujarat government was opposing the WCD, it was ensuring that its position did not go unrepresented.

In fact, how much importance the large dams lobby attaches to this exercise of the WCD was also clear from the fact that the International Commission on Irrigation Drainage (ICID), headed by former secretaries of GOI, Madhav Chitale and C.D. Thatte, had reportedly mobilised some 20 submissions to the WCD from various South Asian organisations supporting large dams. They included submissions from the ICID offices in India and Bangladesh.

The Gujarat government was one of the first to invite the WCD Chairman to visit Gujarat and see projects like the Sardar Sarovar Project. During the formation of the WCD, keen efforts were made by the World Bank and others to include members from South Asia considered favourable to large dams. The World Bank had also suggested to the WCD that submissions be invited from individuals known to support the concept of large dams like former journalist B.G. Verghese.

The saddest part of the whole episode is that it represents a black mark on India's much-ballyhooed democracy. As Chairman Asmal said in his press statement announcing the postponement of the public hearing, "The

Commission wanted to invoke the democratic traditions of India where public debate has been upheld as a fundamental principle of a free society." However, the BJP leadership showed that they would go to any length to suppress debate on the large dam projects on which they feel their political future depends.

The Commission's choice of South Asia as its first public hearing venue was because, in the words of Asmal, "the Subcontinent has had extensive experience with dams and the debates surrounding their planning and construction. Any Commission that does not make the effort to understand and learn from this experience would have little credibility in the eyes of the world." At the end of the episode, the WCD had concluded, rightly, that, "the turn of events in India showed the need for the Commission's work because it highlighted the highly charged issues associated with dams".

Lessons for WCD

In part, the governments in Gujarat and the Centre were able to get away with their misinformation campaign and the subsequent decision to cancel the hearings because the Commission itself had failed in its task of public information. The WCD had not created awareness in the media, and hence among the public, about how the Commission had been formed,

about its constitution and its mandate. This must be considered a serious miscalculation on the part of the WCD.

As it proceeds with its future work, including the upcoming December hearings, the Commission will have to understand that large dams are, above all, political projects. Any challenge to such projects is bound to lead to strong resistance from the established forces in society. And it will also have to proceed carefully, with the foreknowledge that public scrutiny of large water projects – as past instances of Sardar Sarovar in India, the Arun III in Nepal, the Flood Action Programme in Bangladesh and the Kalabagh project in Pakistan have shown – will, in all likelihood, not be very favourable to such projects.

The politicians, at least, have understood this point. The Commission, too, must come around to this understanding if it is to fulfill its mandate of evaluating the usefulness of large water projects, in South Asia and elsewhere. △

H. Thakkar is a former activist with the Save Narmada Movement and is presently an activist-researcher on water policy issues. He is also part of the South Asia office of the International Committee on Dams, Rivers and People.

What's New at Pilgrims? Two Sandwich Shops and an Art Gallery!

Pilgrims' Hatti Sandwich Shop

overlooking Nagpokhri

Hundreds of burgers and sandwiches representing the true taste and excellence of European recipes.

Hatti prides itself on the strictest hygienic conditions, best quality food, friendly and charming café, efficient service, and a convenient home-pack system.

Garden seating is coming soon!

Open daily 9 am to 8 pm. Telephone 415454

The Inner Eye Gallery

Exhibiting the works of renowned Nepali and Indian artists

&

The Hatti Sandwich Coffee Lounge

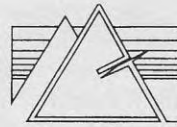
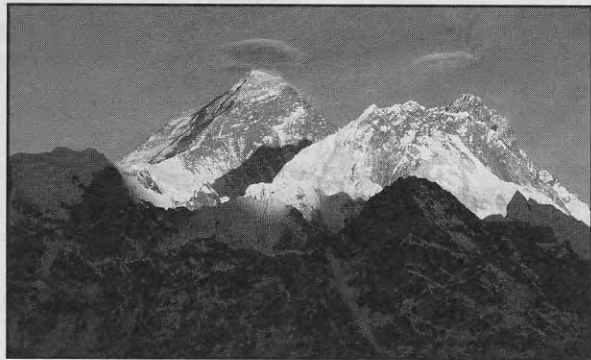
The perfect break after browsing the gallery and Pilgrims' huge collection of books and gifts.

Both in Asia's largest bookstore

PILGRIMS BOOKHOUSE, KOPUNDOLE

Open daily 10 am to 8 pm. Telephone 521159

The Top of the World is at your Feet
with
EVEREST TREKKING



Everest Trekking
G.P.O. Box 1676
Kamaladi, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 977-1-226358
Fax: 977-1-224031
email: ettashi@mos.com.np

*14 years of experience in
organising full scale expeditions,
guided climbs and treks
in the Himalaya.*

**FLY AROUND THE WORLD
THROUGH
TIKA TRAVELS AND TOURS PVT. LTD.**



- REMEMBER FOR**
1. Flight ticket for around the worldwide.
 2. Hotel reservation through out the world.
 3. Mountain flight & charter flight in domestic areas.
 4. Arrange trekking & white water rafting in nepal.
 5. Jungle safari in chiwan national park.
 6. Cultural tours in various part of nepal.
 7. Bus, car & van rentals.



Typical Newari Woman



Boudhanath

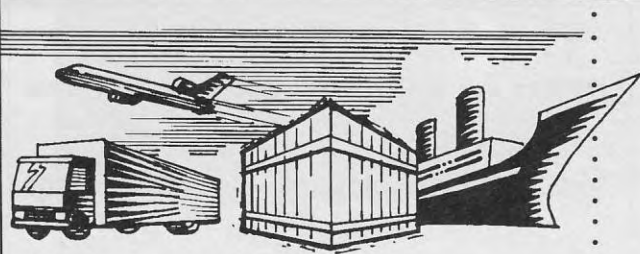
FOR DETAILS

G.P.O. Box : 9616, Kantipath, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: (Off) 00977-1-226189
Fax: 00977-1-246834
Email: anil@tika.mos.com.np
Internate: <http://www.catmando.com.np>



Tika Travel & Tours Pvt. Ltd.

TOUR OPERATOR, TRAVEL CONSULTANT
WORLDWIDE FREIGHT FORWARDER



**SPEEDILY,
SAFELY &
GUARANTEED.**

To send your precious goods
through air-cargo, air-sea cargo, sea cargo, air/sea-
mail (post parcel), packing and forwarding to any
destination in the world Speedily,
Safely and Guaranteed.



HIMALAYAN PACKERS & MOVERS

P.O.Box 3745, Jyatha, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Ph: (off) 249444, 253444, Fax: 977-1-224247
E-mail: himlal@movers.mos.com.np

Be

The An
AIDS R
of US-bas
prevention
chose the
under rev
that, in co
ern associ
AIDS, it is y
at risk - w

A pictu
AIDS can o
- girl-traf
face of A
made kno
through th
sensations
the Nepal

Seemi
canny res
to the cov
books, An
ently, als
Western
erotic, Ne
problem a
more poig
developed

Early
Nepal we
best, and
right hos
ties, simp
prevention
quently p
collective
of associ
mind. Th
understand
it is elite
'need' to
falsely co
merely h
people.

From
challeng
figuring
tional str
make an
get comm
carpet fa
labourer

Beyond behaviour change

The American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFAR), funders of US-based AIDS work and an AIDS prevention programme in Nepal, chose the cover picture of the book under review to highlight the fact that, in contrast to the earlier Western association between gay men and AIDS, it is young women who are most at risk – worldwide and in Nepal.

A picture of a girl on a book about AIDS can only mean one thing in Nepal – girl-trafficking. But it is also the face of AIDS itself as it has been made known to the Nepali public through the vicious blame-the-victim sensationalisation of prostitution in the Nepali press.

Seemingly unaware of the uncanny resemblance this photo bears to the covers of popular tourist guidebooks, AmFAR has, perhaps inadvertently, also played on stereotypical Western images of an exotic, and erotic, Nepal. This is the Asian AIDS problem as seen from the West – one more poignant tragedy in the underdeveloped world.

Early AIDS prevention efforts in Nepal were met with puzzlement, at best, and more often than not, outright hostility. For many communities, simply to be targeted for an AIDS prevention project is all-too-frequently perceived as an accusation of collective immorality, given the kind of association AIDS has in the public mind. This defensive reaction is understandable, for more often than not it is elite outsiders who decide who 'need' to know about AIDS while they falsely consider themselves to be safe merely because they are educated people.

From the perspective of NGOs, the challenge of AIDS prevention lies in figuring out how established international strategies can be carried out to make any kind of sense to their target communities. For how is a Nepali carpet factory worker, or a migrant labourer, or his wife, to understand

warnings about a mysterious sexually transmitted disease with vague symptoms appearing years after infection? Especially when few of the Nepalis infected with HIV will ever know what is making them sick?

AIDS in Nepal is the first comprehensive published work on the AIDS issue in South Asia to describe these challenges. At first glance, however, the book appears to be a promotional piece for AmFAR, written in a relentlessly optimistic tone of American can-do-ism. Author Jill Hannum

***AIDS in Nepal:
Communities
Confronting an
Emerging Epidemic***

by Jill Hannum
AmFAR/Seven Stories
Press
New York, 1997
USD 22.95



reviewed by Stacy Leigh Pigg

spent only a month in Nepal, rushing from place to place. For Nepalis and other readers familiar with Nepal, her trite clichés about beautiful, remote, impoverished Nepal are tiresome. The Nepali situation is packaged for international consumption through the eyes of a naive witness, fresh to the scene, recording what she is told.

Extensive quotes from individuals and NGO reports stand as unexamined evidence of the way things are (if a Nepali said it, it must be true, it seems). Lost in this format is any analysis of the complex politics of community development and the differences of class, caste and ethnicity that divide Nepalis when it comes to explaining why any development is so very difficult to achieve. Whose voice is heard?

Whose account prevails?

Still, *AIDS in Nepal* succeeds in presenting the current standard assessment by international experts of the social conditions that underlie the epidemic. Compiled out of reports submitted by AmFAR-funded groups, the book chronicles the grounded experience of these mostly elite-run organisations as they grappled with the local and ever-so-human face of the insidiously-linked problems of poverty and discrimination. By demonstrating that vulnerability to HIV infection is one of the very real implications of the steep grades of inequality, the book does much to compensate for the fragmented, sensationalist, and often flatly inaccurate reporting on AIDS that has dominated the Nepali press.

Intended to showcase what is known as the "community vulnerability approach" – the progressive cutting edge in AIDS intervention – the book is being handed out at international conferences as an example for NGOs around the world.

This is ironic, because AmFAR itself was seen by many critics in Nepal to epitomise the kinds of arbitrary decisions and misguided policies so often foisted on the country by out-of-touch foreign development donors. From its seemingly abrupt entrance in 1993 to its equally sudden departure in late 1995 – only two years into its stated three-year programme – AmFAR's initiative was surrounded by controversy.

In the early 1990s, not much attention was being paid to AIDS in Nepal. Government statistics showed only 114 persons as HIV-plus at the end of 1992. Most of those who had heard of AIDS thought of it as a foreign problem restricted to Africa and the West.

But the World Health Organisation had already identified South Asia as the new epicenter of the epidemic, and both the World Bank and USAID

Our Activities:

1. WORLD WIDE CARGO SERVICE
2. CARGO CONSOLIDATOR AND INTERNATIONAL FORWARDER
3. IN BOUND-OUT BOUND,
4. AUTHORISED CUSTOM BROKER OF HMG-NEPAL



SHANGRI-LA FREIGHT (P) LTD.

GPO BOX: 11829
THAMEL, BHAGWAN BAHAL,
KATHMANDU, NEPAL
PHONE : 424456/414657/424732
FAX: 977-1-424732
e-mail: sfl@wlink.com.np

"A COMPANY WITH RELIABLE SERVICE
AND COMPETATIVE RATES"



DISCOVER THE WONDERS OF NEPAL

MT. MANASLU ADVENTURE TREKS (PVT.) LTD.

SPECIALISES IN TREKS AND OTHER
ADVENTURES IN THE HIMALAYAS.

WE HAVE AN ENTHUSIASTIC AND PROFESSIONAL
TEAM OF PLANNERS AND GUIDES WHO WILL
GIVE YOU PREMIUM SERVICE.

WE ALSO OFFER WHITE-WATER RAFTING,
JUNGLE SAFARI, MOUNTAINEERING AND
ROCK-CLIMBING.

WE ALSO ARRANGE TICKETS AND OTHER TRAVEL
SERVICES FOR TREKKING IN PAKISTAN, TIBET
(INCLUDING MT. KAILASH), BHUTAN AND INDIA.



P.O. Box 15145
Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal
Call: +977-1-423542, 424632
Fax: +977-1-351155
Email: manaslutrek@wlink.com.np

"By far the best deal in the inexpensive range of hotels"

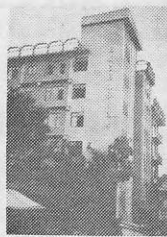
Frommer's Nepal.

**Kunsang's personal service matches four star
quality for a trusted and comfortable stay**



Features:

- on a quiet lane, situated conveniently in the heart of Thamel
- business and travel centre (e-mail, fax, private phones, trekking, rafting and safari)
- satellite TV, safety deposit, air-conditioning, elevator and luggage storage
- bath-tubs with 24 hr. hot shower, roof top garden and friendly staff



HOTEL EXCELSIOR (P) LTD

P.O. BOX 9432,
NARSINGH CAMP
THAMEL, KATHMANDU NEPAL
Tel: 411566, 257748, Fax: 977-1-410853
E-mail: excel@wlink.com.np
URL: <http://members.tripod.com/~HotelExcelsior>

Kathmandu's most reliable book

store on "Tibet related subject"

*Amazing range of books on Tibet
available at:*



Tibet Book Store

*Exclusive distributor & outlet for library of
Tibetan works & archives*

*Tridevi Marg, Thamel, Post Box No. 1485
Kathmandu, Nepal, Phone No. 415126
E-mail: nepcar@paljor.wlink.com.np*

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

- Dharma Books from Local & International Publisher
- Books On Tibet, Nepal, India & Himalayan Regions
- Travel Books • Maps • Cards • Incense • Music Tapes
- Stationaries, etc. • New releases added every week!
- Centrally located next to immigration office with parking facility opposite TBS!

**Visa, Master, JCCB Cards and
Worldwide Mail Orders Accepted.**

**Now welcome to Tibetan Handicraft Emporium
at Boudhnath, below Hotel Tibet International**

had decide
priority iss

"Pajeroaba

In 1993, M
with dono
grammes.
chose the
for its exp
as its visio
sources in
incidence
epidemic.
NGOs wou
work by s
discover v
munities.

With
coming fr
sen for th
their "tra
rein to co
about how
vention e
marked c
nor empl
tives, targ
ity and ou

AmFA

roots in t
that spr
American
with the
demic th
NGOs as
based gr
foot-drag
governm
against A
matic wo
grassroot
the impo
ernment
real poli
ment" s
so-called
those in
NGOs, s
Pajeros a
drives).

View
also dive
cial issu
publicly
as a dista
perverts
people"
scarce p
public
kind of

had decided to make AIDS in Asia a priority issue.

"Pajeroaad"

In 1993, Nepal found itself flooded with donor assistance for AIDS programmes. That same year, AmFAR chose the country as the laboratory for its experiment in AIDS prevention as its vision was to concentrate resources in a country with a low HIV incidence but high risk for a future epidemic. Its generous budgets to NGOs would kickstart AIDS prevention work by setting up local groups to discover what worked in their communities.

With only a few loose guidelines coming from AmFAR, 17 NGOs (chosen for their "potential" rather than their "track record") were given free rein to come up with their own ideas about how and where to target prevention efforts. This approach was in marked contrast to the standard donor emphasis on programme objectives, targets, reporting, accountability and outcomes.

AmFAR is an organisation with its roots in the activist self-help groups that sprang up from the efforts of American gay communities to cope with the first wave of the AIDS epidemic there. AmFAR planners see NGOs as dynamic, community-based groups that could do what foot-dragging, morally conservative governments never would in the fight against AIDS. But these somewhat dogmatic working assumptions about the grassroots commitments of NGOs and the impossibility of working with government transferred awkwardly to the real politics of the Nepali "development" scene, enmeshed as it is in so-called *pajeroaad* (the proclivity of those in development, including NGOs, to drive around in Mitsubishi Pajeros and other luxury four wheel drives).

Views of the AIDS problem itself also diverged. AIDS is an unpopular social issue. Though few officials will publicly admit it, AIDS is thought of as a distasteful problem of prostitutes, perverts and drug addicts, of "bad people" who are not worthy of the scarce public resources available for public health. Why should this kind of money be given to NGOs for

AIDS, when as far as anyone in Kathmandu could see, only a handful of Nepalis would die of it?

The view from AmFAR's New York office could not have differed more. AIDS was their problem, and it was real. AmFAR staff saw the fight against AIDS as a pivotal human rights issue as well as a health issue. What they had in dedication, compassion and zeal, however, they lacked in international expertise. In the words of one former AmFAR employee, people at the head office assumed that "working overseas was the same as working in the US, except in a different language". It was Elizabeth



B.P. MEMORIAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

Literacy class for school children run by an AmFar-funded NGO in east Nepal.

Taylor, AmFAR's celebrity sponsor, who pushed for the international programme in the first place. And when AmFAR as a whole lost some of its funding, the tiny international programme – then concentrated exclusively in Nepal and about to move on to Botswana – was the first thing to go. The NGOs and the communities they worked with were left in the lurch, scrambling to save their programmes.

AmFAR's programme, despite its flaws, brought state-of-the-art expertise in AIDS prevention work to Nepal at a crucial time. Its philosophy stood as an alternative to the then prevailing orthodoxy of condom promotion. AmFAR encouraged the groups to look beyond scare tactics and moralising about sexual restraint, to

the social conditions underlying people's vulnerability to HIV infection. It supported projects such as literacy classes that did not solely focus on AIDS prevention. It asked the NGOs to tailor their interventions to specific target populations thought to be most likely to be affected by HIV/AIDS and to look at what support these groups really needed.

AmFAR required its groups to justify their work not in terms of numbers of condoms distributed or posters printed but by what they learnt in the process of trying out programmes. It used project implementation as a form of on-going investigation of the societal factors implicated in AIDS. All this was in line with the most progressive wing of AIDS intervention expertise – something AmFAR's critics have not recognised.

More importantly, AmFAR forged a core of committed, knowledgeable people, most of whom continue to work in AIDS prevention efforts in Nepal. Several of the projects initiated under AmFAR auspices now serve as the template for other prevention programmes. By so visibly forcing the issue of AIDS on an otherwise complacent health sector, AmFAR arguably played a major role in creating an infrastructure with which Nepal can face the impending epidemic.

Politics of health

What AmFAR's book depicts as a hope-inspiring success story is more realistically a partial success story that contains a more profound lesson about the politics of health. The risk-vulnerability approach to AIDS endorsed by AmFAR correctly emphasises that effective AIDS prevention does not come the moment a condom goes on a penis.

Disease prevention has to take the shape of social reform. Efforts to teach about AIDS come up against the sheer reality of the social inequalities that effectively trap so many people in conditions where "awareness" will not save them and "individual behaviour change" is not possible. From this perspective, AIDS prevention begins to look more like political activism aimed at revolutionary changes to the status quo of class and gender relations.

Try us and see the difference !

We may not be the biggest but we provide the best service that a trekking company can provide.



Nepal Valley Trekking (P) Ltd.
G.P.O. Box 5535, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: +977-1-420704 Fax: +977-1-413707
E-Mail: nvt@wlink.com.np

ECO TREK
A leading TREKKING & TOURING company in the Himalaya



Offering a fresh, intelligent, environmentally sound approach to modern adventures since 1992.

Eco Trek's specialities all in one well trained staff, light equipment, highly reliable & personalized service

(Nepal, Tibet, including Mt. Kailash and Bhutan)
email: ecotrek@wlink.com.np
Fax: (00977 1) 413118 Tel: 424 112, 424 113
P.O.Box 6438 Thamel, Kathmandu

OM SHANTI



Emery Express Travels (P) Ltd.

Pako, New Road, Kathmandu, Nepal. P.O. Box. No. 11830
Tel: Off 229442, 220448 Res. 230307 Fax: +977-1-221726

Contact for : FLY / RLY / Bus / Package Tour.

A unique place for the perfect holiday



Hotel Bharat
And Taj Restaurant

Facilities

International telephone and call transfer • Air and bus ticketing • Sight seeing • Laundry service • Parking and camping • Fully furnished room with private bath, T.V.
special discount for groups rooms are at your choice
US\$ 4 to 25
Govt. tax. 10% extra.
We accept credit cards.

Phewa Lake Side, Pardi, Pokhara 17, Nepal
Tel: 61-26495



THE OTHER INDIA PRESS

New Release

When Corporations Rule the World
By David C. Korten

380 pp. (1998) Rs. 195

An alarming expose of the devastating consequences of economic globalisation and a passionate message of hope.

Order from:
The Other India Bookstore
Mapusa 403 507, Goa, INDIA
Email: oibs@bom2.vsnl.net.in
Fax: 91-832-263305

FLATFILE INVITES

CONTRIBUTORS TO SEND IN ORIGINAL ESSAYS, FICTION, POETRY, OTHER WRITINGS AND ARTWORK FOR PUBLICATIONS. MESSAGES SHOULD BE LEGIBLY TYPED ON SINGLE-SIDED FOOLSCAP. THEY WILL NOT BE RETURNED UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY POSTAL REQUISITES.

SEND YOUR PIECE TO:

Flatfile

RADHAMOHAN HOUSE, RELLI ROAD, KALIMPON 734301, DGHC, INDIA
TEL: (03552) 56014/55134
E-MAIL: MOLE@SIKKIM.ORG
DISTRIBUTED IN NEPAL BY PATAN DHOKA KITAPASAL



TIBET RESORT



A centrally located hotel offering traditional Tibetan hospitality. Well appointed guest rooms with multi channel TV, telephone and the only rooftop restaurant in the valley. Come and feel the warmth of TIBETAN hospitality

P.O. Box No. 101, Lakeside, Pardi, Pokhara, Nepal
Tel: 00977-61-20853, 24553, Fax: 00977-61-25206
email: sangpo@vishnu.ccs.com.np

ADVENTURES OF A NEPALI FROG

Adventures of a Nepali Frog
A travel adventure for children of all ages.



Rato Bangala Kitab

Patan Dhoka, Sridarbar Tole, Lalitpur
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 42, Nepal
Tel: +977-1-522614, Fax: +977-1- 521013

When the... into Nepal's... stitutional m... results are... politics com... of the de... Even the mo... velopment... catch-words... 'empowerm... the more ra... risk-vulner... intervention... shuffle of l... implement...

Even th... programme... or overcor... Nepal's clas... nity mobiliz... at present i... the elite, u... AIDS prev... poverished... so great th... AIDS work... population... about the...

The ran... vention st... debated... organisati... tain popu... ing define... the group... mation ab... being pre... ally moti... risk to th...

The A... among th... Nepal. If... of them a... begin to a... concepio... this part... ences an... the prob... AIDS wo... program... people t... leave un... that seve... actions c...

S.L. Pigg... thropolo... Burnaby

When this approach is injected into Nepal's development-oriented institutional mainstream, however, the results are mixed. Another kind of politics comes into play: the politics of the development business. Even the most socially uninspired development schemes play on the catch-words of 'poverty', 'gender', and 'empowerment'. Diluted in this way, the more radical implications of the risk-vulnerability philosophy in AIDS intervention tend to get lost in the shuffle of business-as-usual project implementation.

Even the most visionary AIDS programme cannot buck the system or overcome the contradictions of Nepal's class chasm. Radical community mobilisation is difficult to achieve at present in Nepal. The gap between the elite, urban-based advocates for AIDS prevention and the mostly impoverished people who are at risk is so great that it has been difficult for AIDS workers to convince targeted populations of the reasons to care about the risk of AIDS.

The ramifications of various intervention strategies have yet to be fully debated within the AIDS-related organisations in Nepal. How are certain populations, and not others, being defined as "targets" and are these the groups best targeted? Is the information about AIDS and its prevention being presented in a way that actually motivates people to reduce the risk to themselves and others?

The AmFAR-funded NGOs were among the pioneers of AIDS work in Nepal. If they made mistakes, some of them also found creative ways to begin to address the stigma and misconception that seem to accompany this particular virus. Their experiences are a stark illustration of the problem now being raised in AIDS work worldwide: prevention programmes that merely encourage people to change their behaviour leave unaddressed the social forces that severely constrain the range of actions open to them. ▽

S.L. Pigg is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, Canada.

What's happening in Sri Lanka?

**From business to leisure,
from how to make money
to how to spend money,
from who's hot
to who's not,
from business confidence
to corporate style,
in Sri Lanka...**

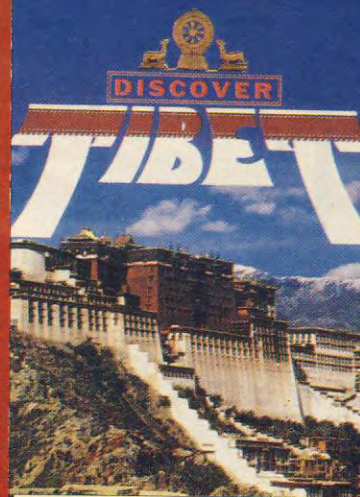
LMD

**Sri Lanka's business
and leisure magazine**

Monthly features include:

**Economic overview,
Stock Market review,
Interviews with
business leaders,
Management, Marketing,
Technology, Travel,
Cricket, Style,
and,
Share Indices,
Currency movements,
Tourist arrivals,
and a
Business Confidence Index
that tracks the
"confidence" of the nation's
business leaders.**

**LMD is published by
Media Services (Private) Limited,
238/5, Havelock Road,
Colombo 5, Sri Lanka.
Tel: (94-1) 502945/596089
Fax: (94-1) 596089
E-mail: imdmail@sri.lanka.net
Website: <http://www.lanka.net/LMD>**



**THE ULTIMATE
ADVENTURE
DESTINATION
&
THE HIMALAYAN
KINGDOM OF
NEPAL,
BHUTAN & SIKKIM**

Let TIBET TRAVELS & TOURS, the Leading Tour Operator in Nepal unfold for you the inner secrets & mysteries of these fascinating land, people & culture - so different from anything you have ever imagined.....

For details contact:



TIBET TRAVELS & TOURS (P) LTD.

P.O. Box 7246, Tridevi Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 249140, 250611, 250748
Fax: 977-1-249986 / 250747
E-mail: kalden@tibet.wlink.com.np
Website: <http://www.tibet-travels.com>

V O I

NEW YORK PARTY. *The sales pitch for the IAPAC Charity Ball, with its slogan, "Building a Bright Future for South Asian Americans", held at Metronome in Manhattan on 25 September, for USD 30 a ticket. ("Semi-Formal or Indian Attire only, please.") The organisation's name stands for Indian American Political Awareness Committee.*

Support IAPAC's efforts to help create a public voice for the South Asian American community! There are approximately 1.4 million South Asians in the US, possessing the 2nd highest median income and holding one of the highest numbers of graduate degrees of ALL groups in the US. There is great potential for the South Asian American community to wield more political and media power in the US, than it does currently. IAPAC seeks to promote awareness of legislative issues that touch South Asian Americans, as well as all Americans. IAPAC seeks to promote awareness of the South Asian American voice in the US. ▽

WATCHING THE MONITOR *is all that South Asians are doing while being robbed by their political leaders, reports Isa Daudpota from Islamabad while forwarding this excerpt from The Mind's I by D.R. Hofstadter and D. Dennett (Bantam Books). (In his email, Daudpota replaced "Pete" in the original with "Ahmed (Anand)").*

Ahmed (or Anand) is waiting to pay for an item in a departmental store, and he notices that there is a closed-circuit television monitor over the counter – one of the store's measures against shoplifters. As he watches the jostling crowd of people on the monitor, he realises that the person over on the left side of the screen in the overcoat carrying the large paper bag is having his pocket picked by the person behind him. Then as he raises his hand to his mouth in astonishment, he notices that the victim's hand is moving to his mouth in just the same

way. Ahmed (or Anand) suddenly realises that HE is the person whose pocket is being picked! This dramatic shift is a discovery; Ahmed (or Anand) comes to know something he didn't know a moment before, and of course it is important. Without the capacity to entertain the sorts of thoughts that now galvanise him into defensive action, he would hardly be capable of action at all. But before the shift, he wasn't entirely ignorant, of course; he was thinking about "the man in the overcoat" and seeing that that person was being robbed, and since the person in the overcoat is himself, he was thinking ABOUT HIMSELF. But he wasn't thinking about himself AS HIMSELF; he wasn't thinking about himself "in the right way". ▽

A VEGETARIAN FEAST *got Shoba Narayan to go study in the United States. Describing how she did it in an essay of "150-word or less" got Narayan an award from the New York Times. She is a freelance writer in New York City.*

India, 1986. At 18, I have just been accepted into Mount Holyoke College but the consensus in my family is that I shouldn't go. After days of pleading, the elders have relented. I am to cook them a vegetarian feast. It is a test, one they are sure I will fail. And in it lies my destiny.

I cut okra into long strips and fry it in mustard oil. I tease some spinach over a low flame, blend it into a smooth paste, and pepper it with asfoetida, baby onions and fried paneer. Tomatoes brew in tamarind water while I cook some red lentils and blend them into the rasam. I garnish with cilantro, mustard seeds and cumin.

I hover over virgin basmati rice, cooking it till each grain is soft but doesn't stick. Sweet butter turns into golden ghee. Dessert is a simple almond kheer with plump raisins, cashews and saffron. The feast ends with steaming south Indian coffee, with filtered

decoction, b
the bitterne

The elde
don't want
fight over t
tion. Grand

I can go

GENDER

*ing to a Co
Asian "Com
mandu 9-10*

In Bhut
men and w
to children
ests within
Bhutan; ev
this is not
ences. Nat
dowing eac
tions. Sten
differences
and comm
in certain
the nature
tween the
Bhutanese
are genera
and wome

As a B
influenced
all sentier
the Bhutan
Naturally,
tion betw
Bhutanese
joy the sa

C

E

S

decoction, boiled milk and just enough sugar to remove the bitterness.

The elders pick and sample, judiciously at first. They don't want to eat but they can't stop themselves. They fight over the last piece of okra, taste overtaking caution. Grandpa leans back and belches unapologetically.

I can go to America. △

GENDERS ARE EQUAL *in Bhutan, according to a Country Paper on Bhutan presented at the South Asian "Commemorating Beijing" conference held in Kathmandu 9-10 September.*

In Bhutan, there has always been equality between men and women. Bhutanese culture accords high value to children and women and protects their basic interests within society. There is no gender discrimination in Bhutan; even distinctions are seldom relevant. However, this is not to state that there are absolutely no differences. Nature has made the two sexes differently, endowing each with separate attributes and biological functions. Stemming from the biological and physiological differences, men and women have, in advancing family and community survival and progress, come to specialise in certain roles which are most suited to them. Such is the nature of the basis of any prevailing differences between the roles of a Bhutanese male and female. In Bhutanese society, which is still largely traditional, there are generally both common and separate roles for men and women.

As a Buddhist state, Bhutanese society is strongly influenced by the Buddhist precept of compassion for all sentient beings. Caste system does not exist among the Bhutanese, a majority of whom practises Buddhism. Naturally, there is no room for any form of discrimination between the two sexes. In addition, under the law, Bhutanese women have equal status with men and enjoy the same level of freedom.

Women in Bhutan enjoy equal rights in every facet of life. There are no barriers based on sex as far as their rights, welfare and development are concerned. Such a unique situation does not entail the Government to formulate any gender specific plans and programmes on a massive scale in order to enhance the general status of women. Women constitute half the population and it is the firm intention of the Royal Government of Bhutan to develop this important resource to its full potential and mobilise it effectively for the cause of community and the nation. △

THE VIOLENCE IN KARACHI *is more a civilisational problem than anything else, says Irfan Hussain in Making Enemies, Creating Conflict: Pakistan's Crises of State and Society (Mashal, Lahore, 1997).*

It is important to understand that the roots of conflict are no different in Karachi than they are in London or Lagos. Hatred, deprivation, frustration and envy are some of the universal seeds of conflict and violence that lie dormant to varying degrees in all human beings everywhere and throughout history. No individual or city or nation can claim a monopoly on the dark side of the human soul. What does differ, however, is the self-control an individual has on his passions, and the degree of discipline attained by a society. Individual actions depend on upbringing and genetics; social interaction is dependent on the level of civilisation attained by a society. In primitive societies like Pakistan, practices like *karo-kari* [honour killings] and blood feuds go largely unpunished, but in more evolved ones, they are neither tolerated nor condoned. Thus, while seeds and roots of conflict are the same everywhere, what differs is the soil and the climate that enable those seeds of hatred and envy to grow and flourish. In Karachi's case, hospitable factors have been provided by neglect, bad governance and prejudice, to name only three. △

Living as I do here on the roof of the Turd World, I am used to a lot of bull manure. But some of these sponsorship events are getting a bit out of hand. A Nepali climber is trying to set a world record climbing Mt Everest in 18 hours flat without using bottled oxygen. He is being sponsored by a Danish beer company which shall remain anonymous because they may decide to advertise in this magazine at some point, and I do not want the editor to be ticked off.

From where I sit on the Western Cwm (pronounced: "Budweiser"), I can see our Speed Climber finally emerge from beneath a bergschrund, a tiny black speck. Wait a minute,

this space) and franchises will soon be opened in other polluted capitals of the Subcontinent. Customers can breathe pure oxygen through nasal pipes. If this is how bad things have got, then our advice for the residents of South Asia's metros is simple: stop breathing.

Good practice for climbers aiming to climb Everest without oxygen. Besides lack of oxygen, one of the seriousmost urban ills for a long time which has been plaguing society is our lacking of robust sense of humour. Slowly slowly, to laugh we have been forgetting because of grinding poverty and daily hand-to-mouth struggle. Many doctors believing that best medicine is laughing, and even *Reader's Digest* supporting this famous dictum. Therefore also we are organising every year an International Laughter Festival, and soon to be opened Joke Bar in Delhi. Through tube in noses of gentlemen and lady customers we pump laughing gas instead of oxygen. We firmly believe that only when whole country starts heartily laughing, then we will have sustainable development and strong sense of nationhood.

Now, before the fhit hits the san about whether or not India and Pakistan did indeed explode atom bombs that they said they did, but as it turns out they did not, or actually they may have but they don't mind letting the rest of the world think they did not while they actually did, because as a matter of fact they aren't really bothered about what they do as long as their own people think they did, and since no one knows for sure anyway, least of all seismologists in Los Alamos who couldn't even detect a couple of grenades going off in their back pockets, we must start thinking about who in future is going to sponsor our underground nuclear tests.

In the age of advertising, a thermonuclear explosion is a made-for-television event. At a time when defence budgets are strained, selling

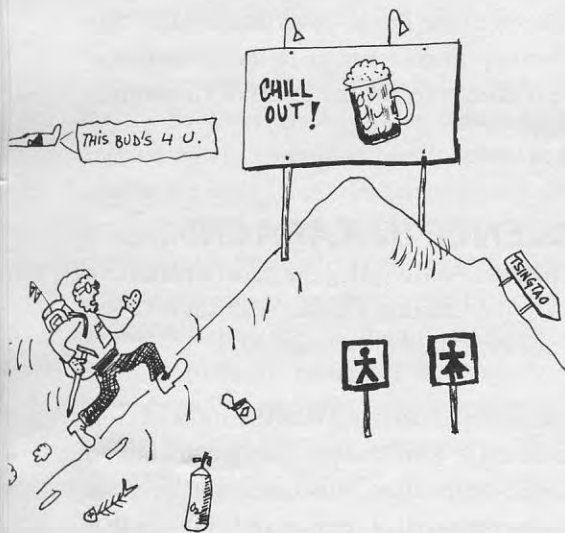
commercial advertising space during live coverage of the big bangs would be an innovative way to finance our nuclear deterrence without siphoning money away from essentials like the new executive jet for the prime minister, or from the new 350-room official residence for the chief executive.

To give credit where it is due, I must commend the advertising industry for coming up with this brilliant exposition of how to turn a nuclear weapons programme to peaceful use. But all this is now seriously jeopardised by the two countries threatening to sign the CTBT. For the sake of our national defence and the further growth of the advertising industry we cannot let that happen.

Just imagine the bonanza from future tests which can be timed for primetime viewing. Giant billboards at Pokhran and Chagai advertising Paan Parag and Kit Kat. Sponsorship cash could be spent on sprucing up Ground Zero so that it looks less like a shantytown on top of a sinkhole.

Besides coordinating their nuclear tests in future for maximum television ratings and commercial sponsorship, there are any number of areas where India-Pakistan nuclear co-operation can be extended. For example, they should go in for exchange of fissile materials, exchange each other's delivery systems. They should plan to set off tests in each other's territories, and ultimately, conduct joint nuclear tests beneath disputed areas like Kashmir or Hyderabad (Deccan). The generals from the two sides should have flag meetings and exchange a couple of kegs of Kingfisher and Murree Beers.

The India-Pakistan
Underground Hyper
Hungama and
Thermonuclear Tamasha is
brought to you by Nike.
Just Do It.



what is he doing? Just as I thought: he's taking a leak. All that beer sponsorship must be acting as a diuretic.

No mean feat having to unzip at this altitude, it is so cold that pee freezes even before it hits the snow, and the climber has to keep breaking off the thin yellow icicles from the tip of his salt shaker till the last drop. The trail up Everest is littered with yellow parabolic stalactites that point to the top. Our alpinist has his work cut out for him, but next time he should take on a vodka sponsor, and try to climb Mt Everest without the use of bottled beer.

Here comes news that Delhi has set up its first Oxygen Bar (sponsored no doubt by Bharat Oxygen Ltd which does not yet advertise in

Explore the paradise on earth!



Age-old culture, colourful festivals, highest mountain of the world, most preserved wildlife

parks, living heritage, birth place of Lord Buddha, only Hindu Kingdom of the world, most friendly people.....



An exotic land of Nature, Cultures, Adventures, Mysteries & Wonders-

nepal

अतिथिदेवो भव



Visit Nepal '98 - Secretariat

Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Singha Durbar, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: (977-1) 246185/226992/246024 Fax: (977-1) 227758

नेपाल भ्रमण वर्ष १९९८

E-mail: motca@mos.com.np / vny@mos.com.np Internet: <http://www.south-asia.com/visitnepal98>

Like Lightning, Luck Strikes Without Warning.



**Casino
Nepal**

Soaltee Compound
Tahachal, Kathmandu
Tel: 270244, Fax: (9771) 271244
E-mail: rdt@mos.com.np

**Casino
Anna**

Hotel de L' Annapurna
Durbar Marg, Kathmandu
Tel: 223479, Fax: (9771)225228
E-mail: casanna@mos.com.np

**Casino
Royale**

Hotel Yak & Yeti
Durbar Marg
Tel: 228481, Fax: (9771)223933
E-mail: royal@mos.com.np

**CASINO
EVEREST**

Hotel Everest
New Baneshwor
Tel: 488100, Fax: (9771)490284
E-mail: everest@mos.com.np

Website: <http://www.casinosnepal.com>

Nepal NPK Elsewhere USD 4/GBP 3
 India INR 50 Sri Lanka SLR 80
 Bhutan BTN 50 Pakistan PKR 80
 Bangladesh BDT 80 Maldives MLR 40