

ECS NEPAL

THE NEPALI WAY

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One voice / Fabric of society / A passage back in time / Vivaha Panchami / Onwards and upwards

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JANUARY 2012



One Voice

For decades, the comedy duo of Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansa Acharya have entertained and informed its loving Nepali audience.

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40 **PACKETS OF TRADITION**
Making Masala during Tihar is an act that ties tradition to a community.

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Artists are increasingly taking art out of the gallery and to the public.

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A craft shop strives to revisit and promote traditional Nepali craft.

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EVERY DROP



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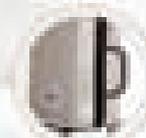
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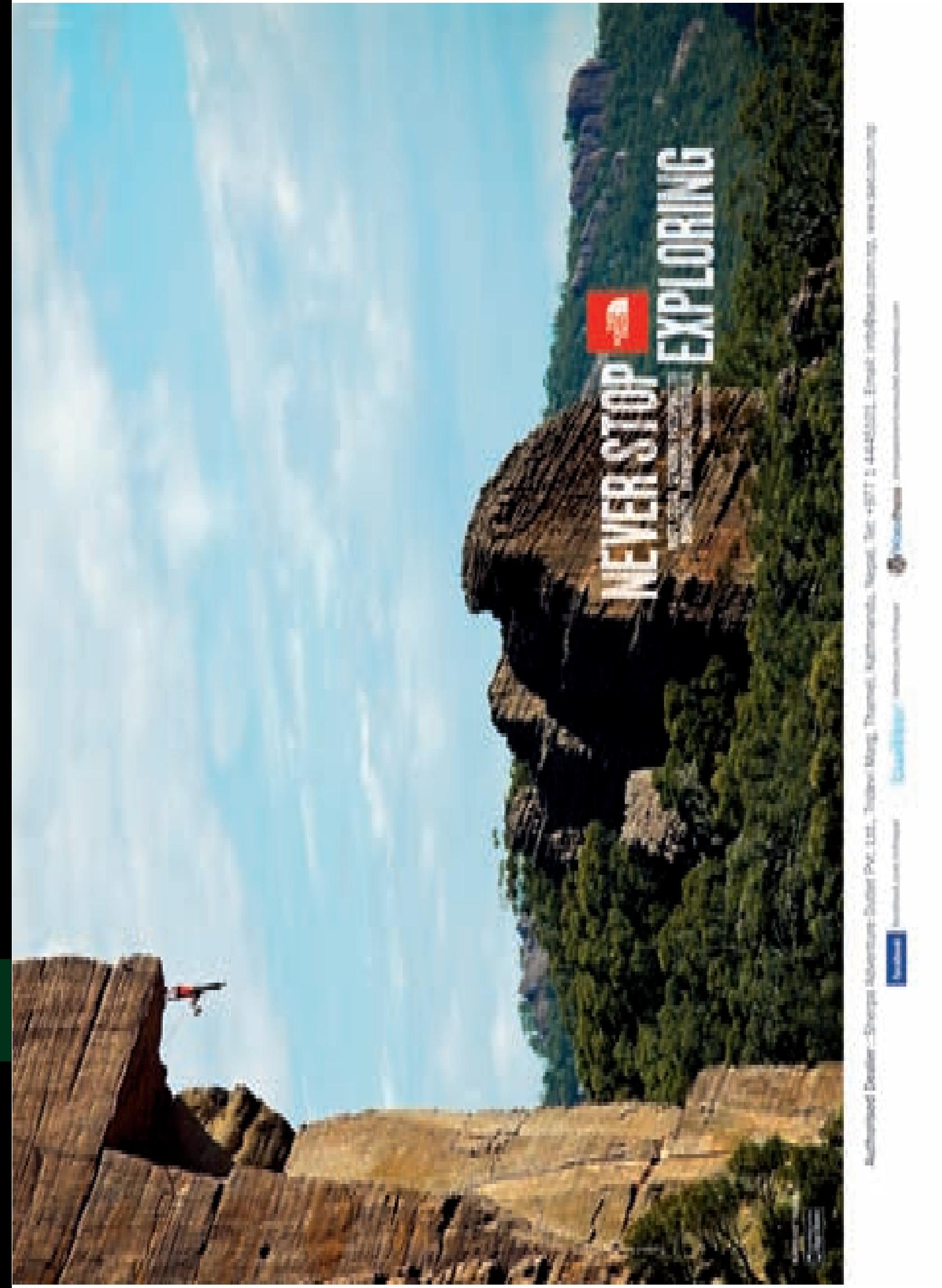
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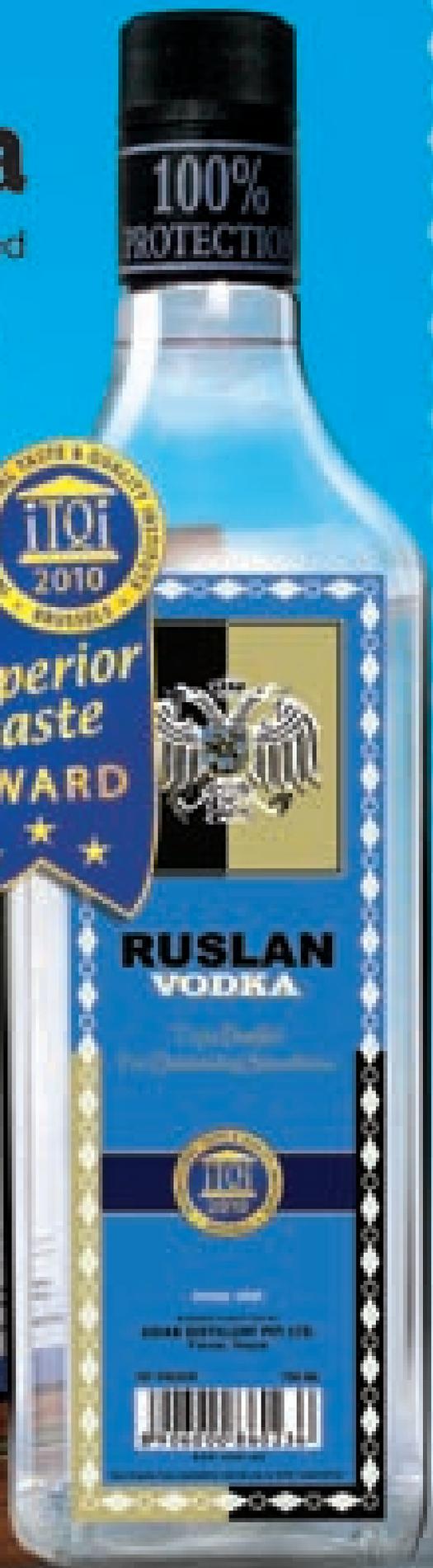
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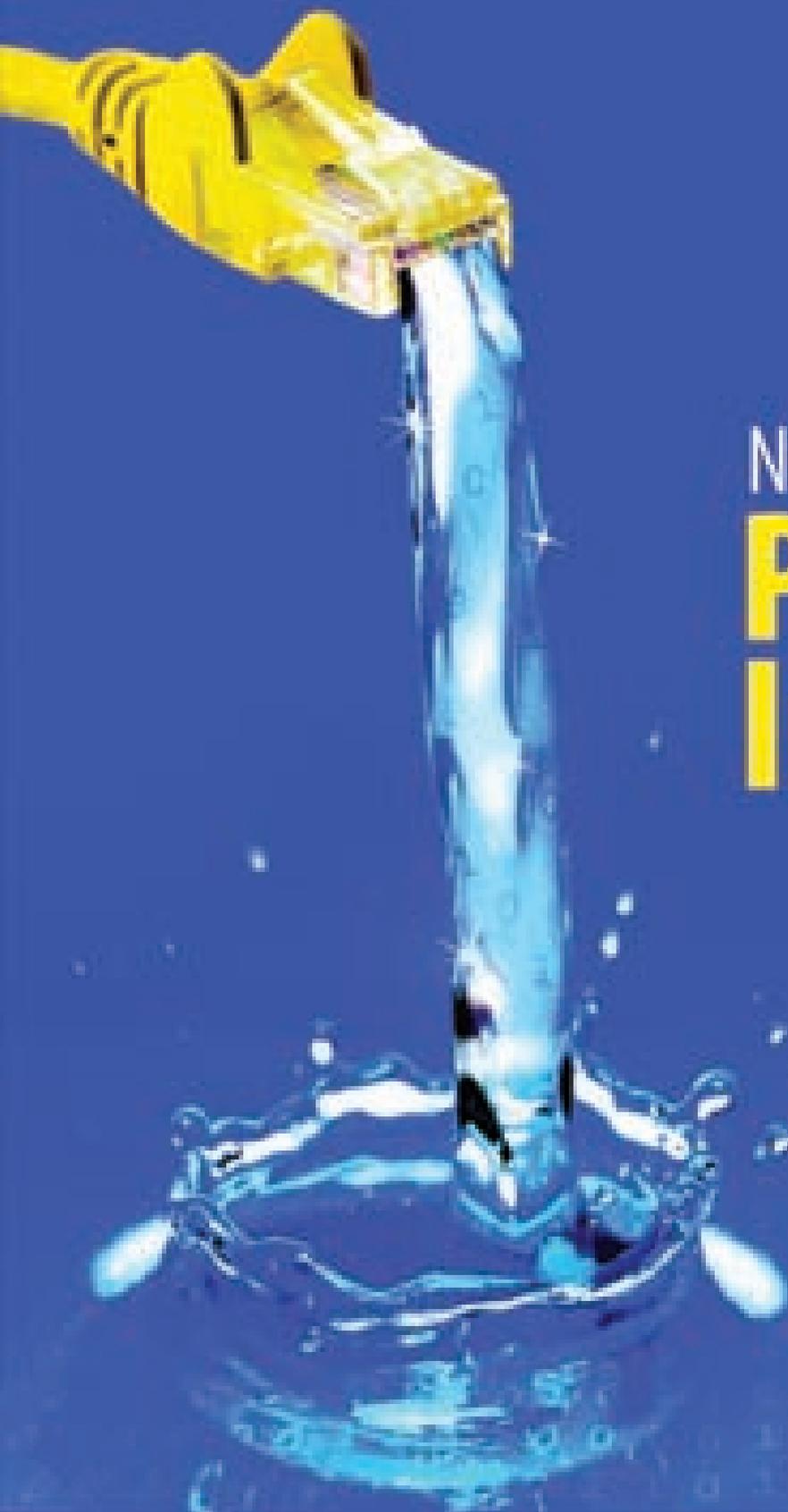
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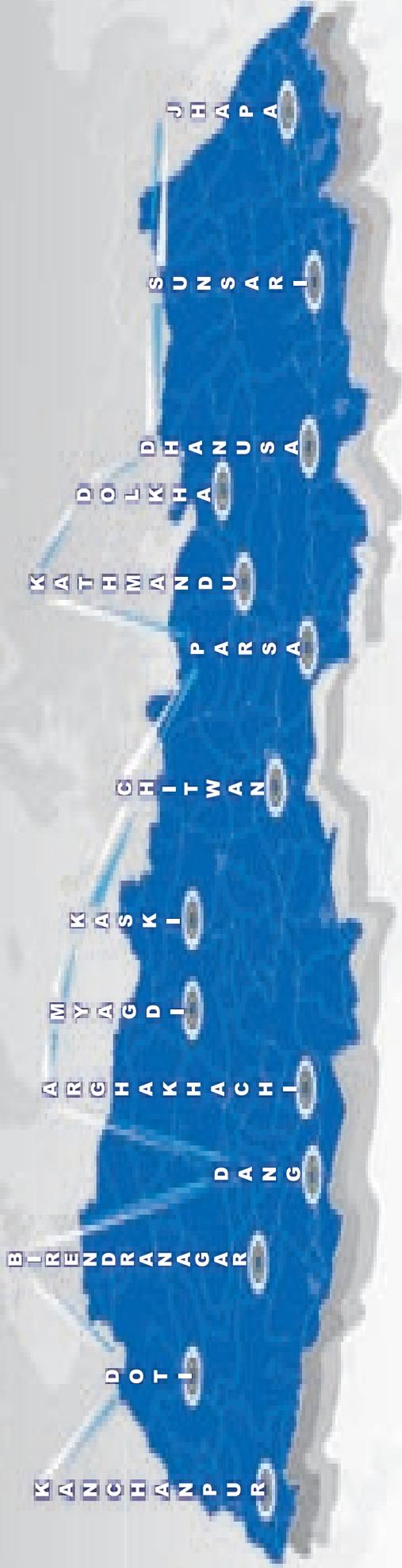


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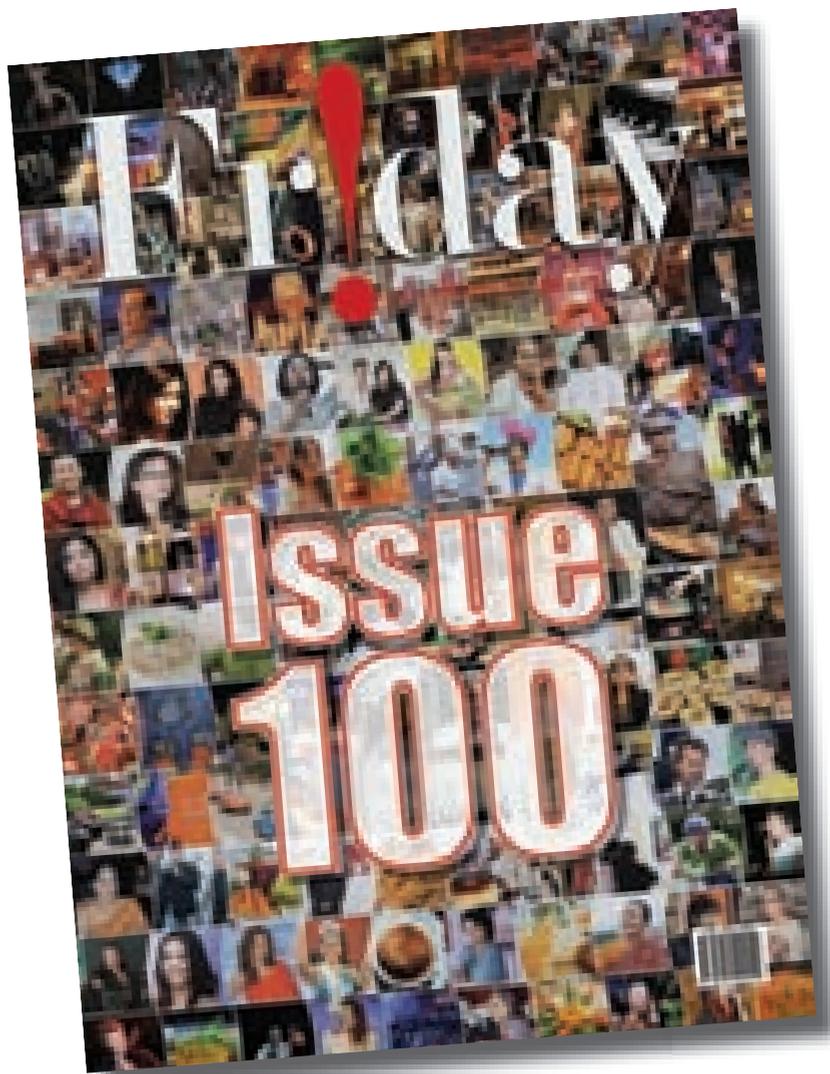


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COVER STORY

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Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansa Acharya's comedic acts have long been the voice of and for the lay Nepali.

By Prawn Adhikari



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Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansa Acharya

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Some do it for fun, some to conquer; others apparently do it for enlightenment.

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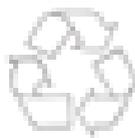
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Publisher: ECS MEDIA PVT. LTD.
Managing Editor: SUNIL SHRESTHA
Director, Editorial & Marketing: NIRPENDRA KARMACHARYA
Group Editor: ANIL CHITRAKAR
Sr. Manager, Editorial & Marketing: SUDEEP MAN SHAKYA
Manager, Editorial & Marketing: NEERAZ KOIRALA,
CHARU S. MALHOTRA
Manager, Editorial & Promotion: NILADRI S. PARIAL
Legal Adviser: HIRA REGMI

Contributing Editor: DON MESSERSCHMIDT
Consulting Editor: DINESH RAI
Assistant Editor: UTSAV SHAKYA
Editorial Co-ordinator: LIZBETH LUCKSOM
HR Executive: PRAGYA POKHREL
Editorial Enquiries: editorial@ecs.com.np

Design Executive: MANJESH MAHARJAN
Assistant Design Executives:
DIPESH MAHARJAN, ANJAN ALE

Design Assistants: SUNIL MAHARJAN,
SMRITI SHRESTHA

Web Developer: MANISH SINGH

Sr. Photographer: DASH B. MAHARJAN
Photographers: HARI MAHARJAN, UMESH
BASNET, SUYESH RAJ SHRESTHA,
RABINDRA PRAJAPATI

Assistant Manager, Sales & Marketing:
BIJENDRA PRADHAN, ANGIAS MANANDHAR
Sr. Sales Executive: SACHIN TAMRAKAR

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Ad Enquiries: ad@ecs.com.np

Admin Executive: SHRUTI SINGH
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ECS SERVICES

Director: RAM DEVI SHRESTHA
Tusal, Maharaigunj, Kathmandu, Nepal
442.6439, ecs@infoclub.com.np

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CHIVAS





COMEDY IS KING

Throughout human history people have always resorted to humour as one refuge that has always worked to convey the most unpopular messages, and in the most repressive political systems. In Nepal humour has its special place too and while many people think they have mastered the art of comedy, few are actually good at it. Like people all over the world, Nepalis enjoy political satire and the people who have mastered this art are Madan Krishna and Hari Bansa. They have become household names for the past four decades. They are still the leaders and way ahead of the curve. During the thirty years of the partyless Panchayat system, when there was one state owned radio, one English and Nepali broadsheet daily newspapers each, no TV and phones were sold in the black market, Madan Krishna and Hari Bansa were out there mostly at night on the open traditional stages, the “*dabali*”, across the valley to perform. The people today enjoy political freedom and we must take this chance to thank these amazing individuals for all they have done. Let us hope people do not take freedom of speech for granted now that we have it. The Nepali people have paid a heavy price for it.

Many of these traditional spaces – the *dabalis*, where the MaHa events took place are under threat of encroachment and need to be preserved. Perhaps MaHa can help us with a campaign to do this. The two have greater credibility in society than any politician alive today. In this issue of ECS NEPAL we are also featuring some other people who you have to get to know much better. They are not the kind of individuals whom you see in the evening news or the morning papers, but are the ones who help Nepal stay the course. They are determined, they are skilled and they love this country and care about it.

They are leaders in their areas of work and many look up to them. Please take time out to meet them.

If there is one thing that is common to all human beings globally, it must surely be the love of good tasty food. Anyone who has been following the masterchefseries, must also realize that food cooking, the utensils, the kitchen and everything that goes with cooking are all going to make up a huge part of new economy. The key ingredient that makes up the food industry; and in fact, a large part of trade across the globe for thousands of years is spices. People sailed all over the globe for spices and bought and sold them for such a high profit margin that it remains a lucrative business to be in. Can you imagine your food without any spices? We are going to take a close look at spices for you this month.

As we start the New Year 2012 we need to stay optimistic. We need to understand and internalize the fact that the environment, the economy and social challenges are here to stay for a while. Human beings are perfectly capable of solving them as long as we are ready to unite and tackle them collectively for the greater good. At ECS NEPAL we shall do our part to make the New Year as special as possible. Whatever you are doing this year, we hope you make some time and space for the Nepali way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anil'.

Anil Chitrakar
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Situated in Bhaktapur, Hotel Heritage is the very first deluxe hotel of this town and the first real boutique hotel in Nepal. Built in the traditional architecture of the Kathmandu valley, some pieces such as the marble and stone floors are from a 400 year-old palace. Every one of the 25 rooms is decorated in a unique style balancing contemporary comfort with ancestral design. 11 of the rooms offer deluxe comfort in a classic Nepalese ambience. The other 14 rooms are decorated in the same exquisite taste and are only slightly smaller.

The hotel quality is enhanced by the beauty of its two gardens. The bigger of the two, the Chakha front garden is used for parties and cultural events while the smaller Kumari garden is more private and is the perfect place for those who prefer intimacy. Inside the hotel, the Kutumba restaurant provides both international and Nepalese cuisine, à la Carte and in a buffet style. All ingredients used in its kitchen are organic and are mostly sourced from local producers. Prices start at US \$100.

Sagarmatha Apartments

Located in the safe and convenient neighborhood of Sanepa-2, Sagarmatha Apartments has a unique setting with a combination of different size service apartment units. They range from from single and two bedroom apartments to budget and luxury accommodations, for those seeking either short or long term stay in Lalitpur. All the service apartment units have soft carpet flooring.

Sagarmatha Apartments' features include fully serviced and fully furnished apartments, provision of a babysitter on demand, complimentary breakfast, grocery shopping on request, complimentary newspapers, free weekly laundry services, complimentary mineral water, a snacks and cookies shop, cable TV, around-the-clock on-site security, emergency backup power, internet connection, fire detection and fighting system.

Christmas and New Year Scheme from FedEx



Everest De Cargo Pvt. Ltd., Licensee of FedEx Express for Nepal since 2002, has launched a special festive scheme for the upcoming Christmas and New Year 2012 under which all the gift shipments booked at FedEx Service Centers will be provided with a special discount of up to 50%. The scheme will be applicable in all three FedEx Service Centers at Kantipath, Kamaladi & Pulchowk and valid till 7th January 2011.

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SHIRLEY BREDAL KTM

Scandinavian high-end design is now available in Kathmandu. Shirley Bredal KTM is designed by Danish designer Shirley Bredal and is a recognized brand in Scandinavia and other European countries. The collection has received large interest from the press. It has been featured in Vogue Bambini and Collezione. The collections from the store are an eco-friendly line, focusing on natural fibers and safe Azo-free dye. Many of the designs are finer hand knits, while others are stitched - all in vintage inspired design with a modern fit. The store is launching its Autumn Winter collection now. It is open 7-days a week



from 12-6.30 pm. Shirley Bredal KTM is located in Thamel, on the first floor of Funky Buddha Restaurant, next to Vashali hotel. For further information, log on to www.shirleybredal.com. (Nimma Adhikari)

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Marmot available in United Brands

Text By NIMMA ADHIKARI

Marmot, one of America's top outdoor brands, is now in the market. United Brands Pvt. Ltd is the sole authorized distributor of Marmot and Lowe Alpine in Nepal. The company aims at providing qualitative and durable products at affordable price and ensures comfort in its product's use.

The genuine Marmot products are guaranteed by United Brands since it is the only authorized distributor of Marmot for Nepal. This company, which deals with outdoor clothing and sporting goods was founded in 1973 by two students from the University of California. In the span of 38 years, the company has expanded its services and distributes its products to over 44 countries. It has received numerous awards for its quality, one being the Backpacker magazine's Editor's Choice for their Oracle jacket.

Marmot has been recognized the world over for manufacturing sleeping bags, tents and down jackets in the

outdoor sector that makes camping and trekking much more easier. Apart from these, Marmot also specializes in bags, pants and T-shirts and other items necessary for outdoor activities. Winter wear like jackets and jumpers are also available at United Brands. The products used for outdoor activities are quite different from the regular ones. This is because outdoor activities require enthusiasts to stay out in extreme weather conditions. These products are made up of breathable fabrics : they are water and wind-proof, and lightweight. Marmot focuses on the quality of the product and at the same time is widely acclaimed for its relatively low price. The products manufactured by Marmot are the best for trekkers,



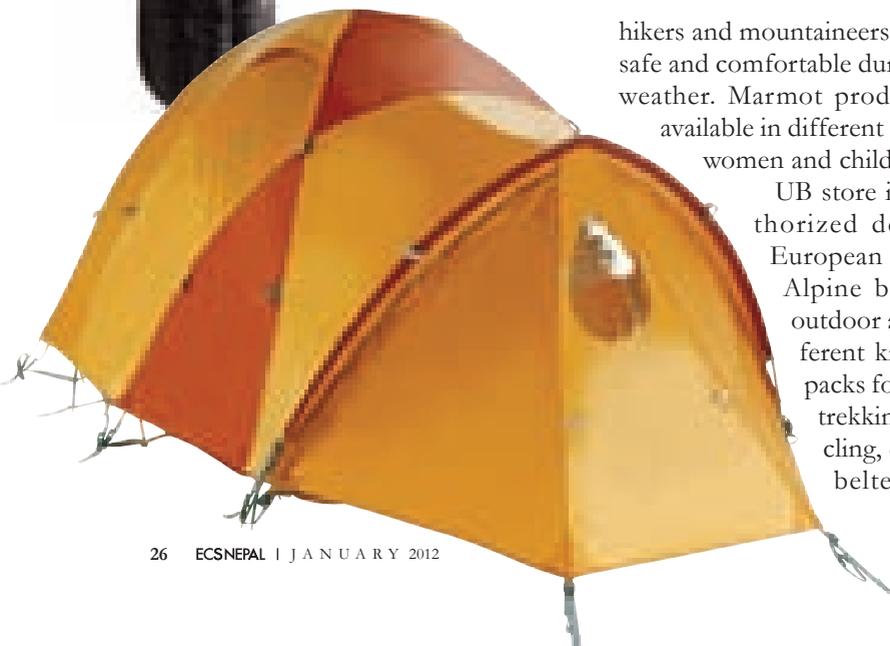
Marmot has been recognized the world over for manufacturing sleeping bags, tents and down jackets in the outdoor sector that makes camping and trekking much more easier.

hikers and mountaineers to keep them safe and comfortable during any harsh weather. Marmot products are also available in different sizes for men, women and children.

UB store is also the authorized dealer of the European brand, Lowe Alpine bag packs for outdoor activities. Different kinds of backpacks for expeditions, trekking, hiking, cycling, day travel and belted backpacks

are available at the store. Understanding the difference between the bodies of men and women, Lowe Alpine bag packs are especially designed exclusively for different genders according to their requirements. Backpacks with creative load organization system, both internal and external are available which are especially designed for people who like to organize their load differently in different compartments. All sizes of Lowe Alpine backpacks from 15 to 95 liters-capacity are available.

United Brands is located at Tridevi Marg in Thamel, opposite the Himalayan Bank. ■



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Christmas Cake Mixing Ceremony

A Christmas cake mixing ceremony was performed on 18 November at the Everest Hotel. The Christmas cake mixing ceremony is held a few months prior to Christmas and is a formal traditional announcement of the arrival of the cherished festival.

A traditional Christmas cake is prepared by mixing rich dry fruits like apricots, figs, prunes, raisins, tutti-frutti, black currants, different nuts, orange peels, ground cinnamon, cardamom, cloves along with

wine and other spirits. These ingredients are mixed and kneaded and then stored for ageing. The aged ingredients will again be blended with the cake batter to make traditional Christmas cake and other celebratory goodies.

A Christmas cake is not a simple pastry; an elaborate preparation is done at least a month before the date that involves members of families bonding together and sharing the joys and happiness the festival brings along. (Nimma Adhikari)

AWON's Christmas Bazaar



Active Women of Nepal (AWON) organized their annual Christmas Bazaar to raise funds for disadvantaged girls and sustain their school libraries among other welfare programs. Clad in colorful attire and talking their hearts out, small clusters of people managed to constantly gush in, making the fundraiser event a grand success. The one-day Christmas Bazaar was filled with stalls of more than 100 vendors exhibiting a variety of clothing, candles, carpets and

textiles, paintings, brass and metal ware, sculptures, photographs, felt products, tree decorations, jewelry and much more.

Apart from the alluring stalls, there was B-Boying, a jumping castle and other entertainment to engage children in the Kids' Zone. The raffle ticket winners were announced by AWON President Pamela Poon who shared, "It is actually amazing that this is happening. Everyone goes away happy. There's this Christmas spirit and everyone is all smiles."

Three Days of Himalayan Odyssey

Indian Culture Centre organized Himalayan Odyssey, a three day event on Himalayan Pilgrimage: Mountains as Stories, Rivers as Tales across two different venues – Bal Mandir and Patan Durbar Square from 2 to 4 December.

In his inaugural remark at the opening ceremony, the Venerable Ngawang Tenzin Jangpo, talked about the religious dimension through the teachings of Padmasambhava. H.E. Jayant Prasad, Ambassador of India to Nepal, also addressed the audience. "There is heavy

borrowing from each other in this part of the world," said Prasad, in terms of language and culture. He quoted the poet Kalidas and gave a detailed geographical background of the Himalayas.

The three-day festival of mountains also featured a photo exhibition titled "Divining the Mountain" at NAFA Gallery. Photographs by Mani Lama, Thomas L. Kelly and a few other Indian photographers were on display. (Nikita Tripathi)

The PPP Project



GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) GmbH in partnership with Gorkha Tea Estate (GTE) and TeeGeschwendner (TG) organized an event on the "Private Public Partnership for Organic Tea Promotion in Ilam" on 21 November in Kathmandu. Through the PPP Project, Gorkha Tea Estate (GTE) has been able to capacitate over 200 smallholder-farmer households towards attaining future market security. The smallholder-farmers are fetching almost double (NPR 45-50) the market average rate for a kilo of green leaves. Chief Guest Mr. Jhalanath Khanal said, "A successful organic initiative like this one should not just be scaled up in the tea subsector but also be replicated in other agriculture subsectors," referring to the PPP project.



The Nepali partner of the project, GTE is a private company established in 1994 in Fikkal, Ilam for the production of high quality orthodox tea. Similarly, TG - one of the biggest tea retailers in Germany with about 25% of the specialized tea trade - is the German partner. GTE is the first IMO (Switzerland based) and EU certified organic tea in Nepal. Partners of the PPP Project - GTE's Chairman Mr. Udaya Chapagain, TG's Managing Director Mr. Thomas Holz and GIZ's Program Manager Mr. Horst Ammann spoke on the occasion. The event was followed by a tea tasting session hosted by Mr. Thomas Holz.

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My beautiful memory of Nepal
include your beautiful scarf.*

-Tashi Karmayang (tashi.karmayang@hotmail.com)



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Surya Nepal Asha Social Entrepreneurship Awards

ChangeFusion Nepal organized a ceremony on 21 November at Hotel Yak & Yeti to award the Surya Nepal Asha Social Entrepreneurship Award (SNASEA) to five social entrepreneurs. The winners were shortlisted from 66 applicants; ventures were visited to verify all relevant information and documents.

The winners include Ram Sapkota (Mountain Delights Treks and Expedition and Tukee Nepal, Jyamrung), Sabita Maharjan (Kirtipur Hosiery, Kirtipur), Shyam Badan Yadav (Kalash Milk Industry, Dhorey Village, Parsa), Vijaya Development Resource Centre's (VDRC, Nawalparasi) and Chhahari Services (Kathmandu). The winners will get a cash prize of Rs. 1 Lakh each from Surya Nepal Private Limited along with the opportunity



to network through ChangeFusion Nepal. Each of the winners will have to disclose how the funds will be used and the money will be handed over by ChangeFusion Nepal. Updates on each of the winning ventures will be regularly posted on ChangeFusion Nepal's social media sites as well as on their official website.

World Elephant Polo Championship



The 30th World Polo Championship was held from 28 November to 2 December 2011. Various teams from Nepal, England, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Mongolia and Denmark competed against each other. The World Elephant Polo Association (WEPA) was founded 27 years ago by James Manclark and the late Jim Edwards in Nepal. Since then, the World Polo Championship has been held each year in Nepal by Tiger Tops, Chitwan National Park in Meghauli.

International celebrities including Steven Segal and Ringo Starr have also participated at the sporting event in earlier championships. The sport has now transformed into a world series that requires both spirit and skill. The welfare of the elephants is prioritized as much as the success of the game. The sport supported by the WEPA has a format that is similar to horse polo. In the game, four elephants compete over two 10-minute chukkas on a pitch one-third the size of a horse polo pitch. The elephants in the game are controlled by the mahouts, while the players seated on their backs play with extra long polo sticks. (Nimma Adhikari)

People in Change



Maki Gurung's People During Change rises up to the challenge of blending modern art with "Nepalipan" without any compromise. First of all, the oil-pastel on traditional Lokta paper is a double dose of textures. The paint seeps out the coarse surface of the heavy paper leaving behind bright impastos and smooth transitions pushing the subject into the center of the frame. At times, you will be convinced the paper must be dyed to display such natural colors, but it isn't. Against solid backgrounds, an oasis of colors ripple across the portraits, accentuating the undercurrents, like an infrared filter tapping into the visceral anguish that is ablaze.

Political commentary adds to the Nepalipan. Interest in the welfare of

the state should never shy from voicing concerns and Maki Gurung excels here too. "Art is political", it says on a small introduction to the exhibition, alluding to the inspiration behind the art work. There are texts and prose that accompany the art (courtesy of an associated act of Maki's) verbalizing the suffering of the deprived and the oppressive routine of the deprived.

A prime example of balance – from the finest details to the extensive activism, the medium and the message – everything is bracketed in a conscious and passionate approach that leaves little to distract the viewer from the exhibition's real message. (Nischal Oli)

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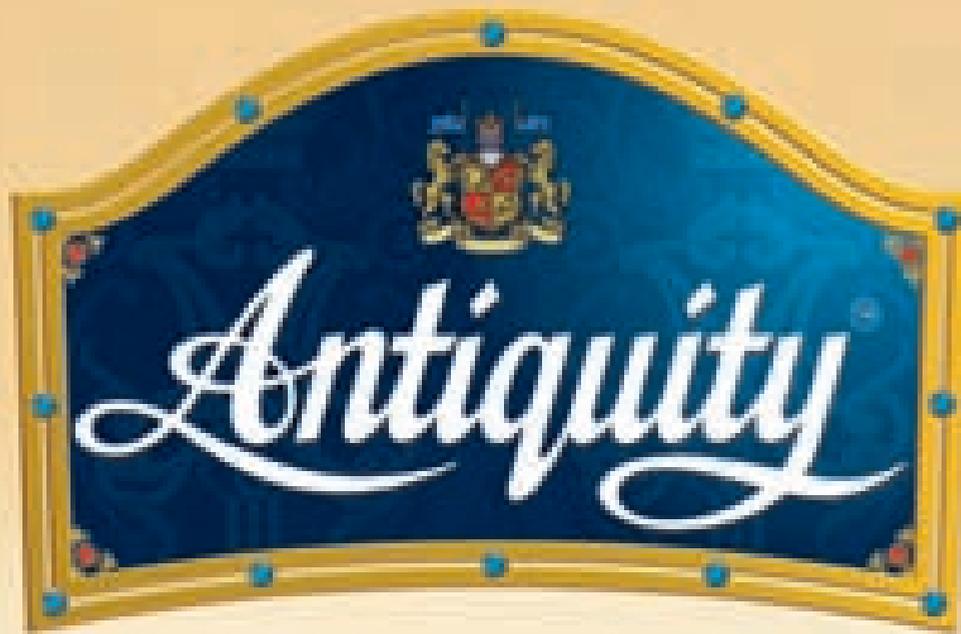
CG Electronics Pvt. Ltd., a leading consumer electronics company of Nepal, has been the market leader for the last 30 years in its segment. This premier name in style and functionality in the electronic industry has now positioned itself as a frontrunner in the increasingly competitive electronics market in Nepal by being awarded the ISO 9001:2008 certificate. The company received this certificate for offering its consumers world class electronic products made under strict quality controls as well as for its efficient sales service.

CG Electronics gives special attention to its after sales services, added to which, they also have introduced toll free numbers for their customers to contact them from anywhere in Nepal. It has not only made the lifestyle of the consumer better but also, their life a whole lot easier. CG Electronics deals in products like LED TVs, LCD TVs, CRT TVs, DVD players, home theaters, refrigerators, washing machines, microwave ovens, air conditioners, vacuum cleaners, chest freezers, mobiles, rice cookers, irons, inverters, lightings, batteries, monitors, UPS, et cetera. (Nimma Adhikari)



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Documenting Music Heritage

Challenges and future directions for Nepal, a UNESCO sponsored symposium on preserving historical heritage kicked off with an introduction by UNESCO Country Representative Axel Plathe, Minister of Federal Affairs Gopal Kiraty and Ambar Gurung of the Nepal Academy of Music and Drama. After briefly discussing the importance and intangibility of cultural inheritance, the podium was cleared for scholars who were invited to present their papers. The first session, moderated by Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi, brought on stage international participants who elaborated on their

personal experience, providing for a global perspective on challenges and fruitful efforts in preserving traditional music and instruments. The second session, moderated by Bhim Nepal, comprised of Nepali scholars and leaders in the field of conservation. Their papers simultaneously accentuated the wealth of Nepali traditions while delving into the obstacles that are prevalent in conservational undertakings. Both sessions were followed by a rebuttal from the moderator with an endnote by Til Bikram Nembang, Chancellor, Nepal Academy.



Philanthropic Art



Visual artist Kapil Mani Dixit collaborated with the Help Nepal Network in an effort to raise funds for the nonprofit organization Help Nepal. The U.S. trained artist auctioned nearly 20 of

his works and all proceeds generated from the auction will go to Help Nepal's school construction project.

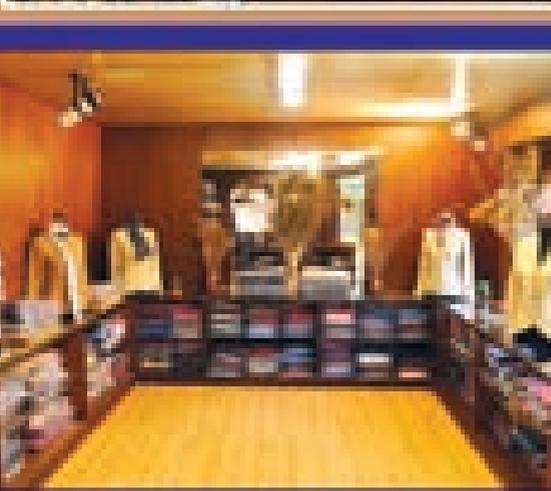
Help Nepal Network is the largest network of Nepalis from all over the world based in Kathmandu. The organization aims to encourage Nepalis over the world to provide assistance in health and education sectors of rural Nepal. The organization gets help from nationals living in Australia, Austria, Sweden, Saudi Arabia and U.S.A., among others. (Pawas Manandhar)

Cake mixing at Yak and Yeti



Yak and Yeti hotel organise its very own cake mixing on 2nd of December, first taste of festivities before Christmas. 15 staff members of the 5 stars hotel were asked to become cook for a few minutes and mix together on a table the 21 first ingredients of the Christmas cake recipe. Based on the original recipe of the traditional British pudding, the bakery chef of Yak and Yeti Mr Pratap Mohan Dhaubhadel added his own

personal touch, playing with the spices and their amount: "it is a Yak and Yeti special from the recipe to the people who are involved to make it". But the 65 kg of cake will not be tasted before 3 weeks, the first mix being just of dry fruits, spices, sugar, caramel, butter, rum and beer needing to marinate for quite a while. It took less than 15 minutes and lots of fun for the participants to complete their task. Now, all have to be patient till the final baking.





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* Early Bird Winners are requested to collect their gift hampers from ECS Media office, Kathmandu.

Your overwhelming response has encouraged us to extend submission deadline till 24 February, 2012

* For detail terms & conditions, visit www.healthylife.com.np

what's on

things to do this month

Booze and Blues

Date: 7 January (Saturday)

Time: 3 pm onwards

Venue: House of Music, Thamel

If you've got the blues and want to drain it out of your system, with a little help from some Booze and Blues; House of Music is the place to be. Feel the Blues music cleanse and refresh your mind and body relaxing you to the fullest, of course with the glass of your favorite drink beside you. Live performances by the likes of Ashes & Nekhvam and Double Trouble are all set to make this Saturday evening a very bluesy one.

Entry: Rs. 150

MUSIC AND PARTIES

Winter Breakdown

Date: 14 January (Saturday)

Time: 1 pm onwards

Venue: iClub, Durbar Marg

Dance and Groove to electro or hip-hop music at iClub at the Winter Breakdown party hosted by Shadow Gurlz and SANK events this January. The event will feature some of the best commercial houses and upbeat-RnB music, for all the dancing shoes round the city. With music from the likes of DJ Nir, DJ Joy and DJ Ray, the party is all set to break-it-down winter style.

Entry: Rs. 300 for advance purchase, Rs. 999 at the door

FAIR AND EXPO

Family Fair

Date: 14 January (Saturday)

Time: Noon onwards

Venue: Hotel Malla, Thamel
4418385, 4410320, 4410966

The Family Fair is a family event packed with activities, a first for Hotel Malla. There will be competitions, magic shows, and face painting; to top that cuteness, Shirley Bredal Kathmandu will showcase their collection. Parents looking to spend some time with their kids will definitely admire the setting and the event.

MISCELLANEOUS

Les De Festivités at IST

Date: 29 January (Sunday)

Venue: IST College premises, Dillibazaar
4434185

On 29 January 2012 International School of Tourism and Hotel Management will welcome the new comers students of the season with various events featuring dance, music, drama, Mr. and Miss Fresher Competition (talent hunt) and other forms of entertainment. Also, to mention: a well-catered meal will be provided to all the invitees. The event will be held within the college premises itself with an estimated audience of more than 300.

Ekphrasis

Date: 4 February (Saturday)

Time: 5 pm to 8 pm

An amalgamation of art, fashion and theatre, Ekphrasis is an avant-garde movement that hopes to exhibit the artistic performances of the people involved. The event, organized by Silence Entertainment, is the brain child of Milan Rai, a Nepali artist. Embracing various forms of art, the event will be built around performance art by actors, models, sculptors and poets.

English Training Course

Date: 5 January

Morning Session: 7 am to 8.30 am, 8.30 am to 10 am

Evening Session: 5 pm to 6.30 pm

Venue: CareerMaster, Pulchowk, Lalitpur
5524891

Learn the secrets of International Standard English communication skills from in the 12 days executive English training program hosted by CareerMaster. The course is preferred by many professionals and is said to be the right course for the Go-ahead Professionals. If you are not comfortable with using English language while communicating at your workplace, then this course is just the thing you need to

impress everyone with the quality of your English communication.

Cost: Rs. 6,500

RSR Beach Volleyball Tournament

Starting Date: 13 January (Friday)

Closing Date: 15 January (Sunday)

Time: 7:15 am onwards

Venue: Kurintar, Chitwan

5544263, 5546696

The annual Volleyball tournament organized by Riverside Spring Resort is back again. The event will take place on the white sands of the Trisuli River on the banks of Kurintar. At a distance of 102 kilometers from Kathmandu, the resort is a popular getaway for families, corporate groups, student groups and tourists alike. Eight corporate teams participated in the tournament last year, including leading banks, corporate houses, hotels, insurance companies and other institutions. The tournament is held every year to promote building friendly ties between corporate organizations and team-building. Supported by the Nepal Volleyball Association, the tournament is also open to individuals representing an organization. Each team will need to consist of three members. A two-night-three-day event is also scheduled to be followed by a pool party on Saturday. This open event seems to be the perfect escape for anyone looking to spend some time outside the bustling city.

Cost: 30,000



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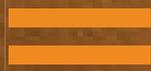
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PLACE

Towards the growing mountains

Picturesque villages and the magnificent Mt. Gauri Shanker make a trek to Kalinchowk worthwhile.

Text By KAPIL BISHT

As you alight from the bus in Dolakha, the immensity of Mt. Gauri Shanker rises in front of you like a great wall. A white serrated wall of peaks forms the backdrop to the trek to Kalinchowk. A dirt road runs up to Kalinchowk and to villages beyond it. Sporadic buses and jeeps work this route, crammed with passengers. This form of travel is advisable only if you are either physically unfit to trek, or if your destination is beyond Kalinchowk. The trek is at times rigorous and even monotonous for some stretches, but the scenic delights are not available to those confined in a vehicle.

An hour from the town of Dolakha, the trail passes through picturesque villages. The biggest building in these villages is often a monastery - a colorful structure, standing out amidst neatly raked fields. Prayer flags blow in the wind. A novelist would ask for nothing but a room in these little houses only to spend hours gazing at the mountains each day before penning a complete sentence.

There is only one house between the last village on the trail and Kalinchowk. Otherwise, only pylons that run along the trail remind you that people have been through this place. The trail from here onwards is a bit dreary as the forest shields the mountains from view only to reappear occasionally framed by trees and branches. Wind plays amongst the trees and dry pods of seeds whirr in the wind.



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Those who start out from Dolakha around mid-day reach Kalinchowk usually in the evening, just in time to see the mountains glow in the sun's last light. The sinking sun drags away the light from the refulgent mountains, turning them into silhouettes. Lights come on in the village below. Above, the sky glitters with stars.

To the north of the tiny village of Kuri, which is another name for Kalinchowk, looms a dark hill. On its peak is the shrine of the Kalinchowk Bhagwati, a venerated deity and sister of the equally revered deities of Kavre's Palanchowk Bhagwati and Kathmandu's Naxal Bhagwati. The climb

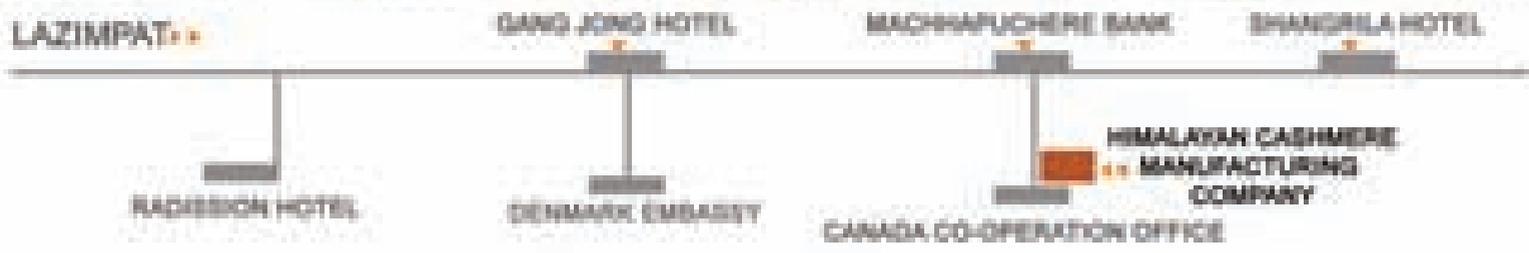
to the shrine is tiring, but the view from it is spectacular. If tradition is adhered to and the shrine is climbed from the western side, then you have to climb an iron staircase that spans a narrow but deep crevice. However, there is a less frightening path from the eastern side. The shrine, devoid of an idol, is a simple collection of bells hanging from wooden bars and a heap of rusty tridents. A small pit symbolizes the deity, into which you place your lamps and mutter your prayers. Some of your prayers seem to be answered as you rise to your feet and to look at the mountains glistening in the sun. ■

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Time to teach

Meet Christine Stone

Text By PAT KAUBA

Sitting with Christine Stone is like sharing moments in times pages; immersed in helping fellow man, with faith in the above; shared through a softly animated voice. Now in her 70s Christine's slight-frame is packed with energy. She shared her extraordinary life one chilly evening as her companion *Nirmaya*, a Scottish Border Collie, cuddled into her lap. Around Sanepa's streets she is known as 'the woman with the dog in the basket' zooming by bicycle between appointments.

"If I were to look in my planner, I can tell you I am booked for the next year". Christine is an educator, teacher to all levels; prepares curriculums; writes children's books; consults for government and private schools; helping just about anybody who asks. She knows Nepal like the back of her wizened hands, living

here 30 years. Amazingly Christine has traversed those years without salary, only by donations and gifts—mostly from patrons of the Church of Scotland, where she is a member.

Christine has donated her life to teaching, calmly fueled by belief that it's God's wish. Yesterday she gave training to teachers from remote Doti District, while tomorrow she's training at the British Council. Rich, poor, privileged or not means little; Christine comes with perspective and humor that can only come from a life lived.

teachers in Nepal. She applied, prayed and... got the job.

Christine first went to Gorkha District for five years at a government school, then another five in Pokhara Gandaki Boarding School. She reminisces that her best experiences were reading to students evening-time. In Nepal nobody ever read stories, but with a stack of Ladybird books Christine ignited fires. By the end she was reading classics like *Les Miserables*; even teachers asked her to read to them too.

In the last few years *Room To Read*, an INGO promoting libraries for children,

While doing her degree in Physics in Bristol University Christine was surprised to start finding a love for God and his gift of life.



ECS Media

Her own childhood started in Hong Kong to an army dad and loving mother before World War II. As the Japanese advanced Christine and her mother were put on a boat and dropped onto a random Australian beach. Dad was captured in Singapore in 1941, spending the war under brutal conditions, building the *Bridge Over The River Kwai*. When the war ended the family reunited, but soon sent Christine to a Christian girls school in Cyprus, which she detested more than any prison.

While doing her degree in Physics in Bristol University Christine was surprised to start finding a love for God and his gift of life. She became a follower and after her degree read an advertisement by the United Mission for

has commissioned Christine to create Nepal's first children's books with characters like Tommy Tempo, Rishi Rickshaw and Birke Bagh. Teaching lessons like: sharing, consideration for others and winning is not everything. Presented with illustrations by artists like Ajay Thapa; a child Christine read to many years ago.

Forty years has taken Christine on various journeys: Scotland teaching troubled children; remote Tristin d'Akuna Island between South Africa and South America, where boats only came thrice a year; Ethiopia, Nepal and more than text allows.

Christine recognizes that her window to set up a life back in Scotland gets smaller, yet she comes with the buoyant outlook that she's doing what she's meant to; happy with her simple room, hot water bottle and loving *Nirmaya* for company.

Kind, humble and giving, Christine Stone's life seems the fullest. She is a testament to the value of life lived for others. ■

Pat Kauba is a freelance storyteller with a love for teachers. Contact him at patkauba@gmail.com.

Packets of tradition

Preparing Masala for Bhai Tika can be a wholesome activity that links people with their community.

Text By UTSAV SHAKYA

A packet of *masala* is a treasured part of the *Bhai Tika* ritual during the Hindu festival of Tihar. Gifting an assortment of dried fruits to the brother by the sister at the end of the ritual – which celebrates the bond between brothers and sisters – is a popular tradition. Its popularity is not so surprising; besides being delightful in its taste and interestingly varied in texture, the contents of a masala pack have many health benefits.

There are exact references in Nepal's cultural history how this tradition came to be but the reasons might be more practical than one would think. One idea takes into account how brothers walk long distances to partake in the *Bhai Tika* rituals with their married sisters. The tradition of gifting masala could have started as a caring sister's healthy, snack pack for her brother as he made way back home. Another idea is that the ritual was borne out of the single reason that masala helps with digestion.

The tradition however, like many others is changing. In older days, people

For one, the shopping takes you to the busiest, traditional marketplaces in Nepal – places like Makhan Tole, Ason Bazaar and Indra Chowk in the older section of Kathmandu.

would take the trouble of shopping for the ingredients themselves. There are entire shops in places like Makhan Tole and Indrachowk dedicated to selling everything that goes into a good packet of masala. Today, for a range of prices corresponding to the extravagance of the assortment and packaging, readymade masala packs are available at modern department stores.

This year, my sister and I accompanied our father to a shop in the same building as the Akash Bhairab temple in Indra Chowk to shop for the good stuff. The owner promptly took out a checklist of ingredients and marked them as my father – who's consistently prepared great masala over the years – listed out what we needed. A young assistant filled

up a polythene bag for us in no time with cashew nuts, raisins, walnuts, dates, coconut, almonds, cardamom, candy sugar (*mishri*), cinnamon, pistachio, dried apricots and dried figs, tweaking the traditional offering by adding candies, mints and chewing gum. For the other stuff, we shopped in a few more shops in the jam packed Makhan Tole, behind the Basanapur Durbar Square.

After a hard morning's work, packaging done and munching on some extra roasted cashews, I looked up the benefits these things had. There's quite a few: figs, apricots and raisins are rich in calcium and phosphorus, essential for healthy bones and teeth while the folic acid in apricots and raisins contribute, along with Vitamin B12, to the development of red globules in our blood. As a good source of fiber, what was in my masala, would also maintain my digestive system and prevent constipation.

Personally, as someone who looks forward to the packet every year and who was recently initiated into shopping for one, I'm all for the older tradition of preparing masala at home. For one, the shopping takes you to the busiest, traditional marketplaces in Nepal – places like Makhan Tole, Ason Bazaar and Indra Chowk in the older section of Kathmandu. Bustling with activity – old shops and new, shoppers (also old and new), roadside vendors and maddening traffic, these locations come closest to what shopping in the older days must have looked like. Two, it keeps you connected to a community of small shops, perishing in the wake of mall culture. ■



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Art for the people

An increasing number of people are taking art out of the galleries and to the public.

Text By BENJAMIN GRAHAM

In the beginning, I would walk into the middle of the *bahal* (courtyard) with a backpack full of art supplies and the kids would come running,” Sharareh Bajracharya says. “Paint supplies were more difficult to manage, so we made a lot of collages with whatever we could find.”

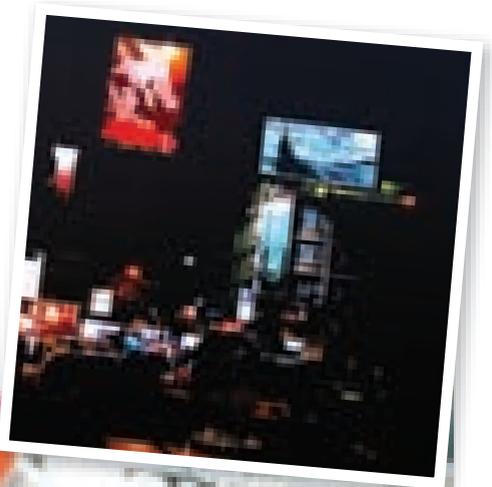
That was two years ago, when Bajracharya was still a student at the Kathmandu University Center for Art & Design (KUArt). Today, she’s a professor at KUArt and the small project she started as

a student is now the Neighborhood Arts Center in Yatkha Bahal.

Six mornings a week, children ages 5 to 14 gather in a rented room that opens into the bahal. Bajracharya hands out supplies and gives the students a few instructions, but she mainly encourages them to be creative. For her, the art is not the point, it’s a means to an end. With three separate degrees in education, Bajracharya identifies herself primarily as an educator, not as an artist. Yet in her opinion, Nepal’s education system

could use a lot more art. “Art is basic. It helps kids right where they’re at,” she explains. After she had been running the Neighborhood Arts Center for a few months, some of the parents asked if she could help the children with their homework after school, and leave the art for before school. “It was a mess,” she says of the experience. “There were students in third grade who couldn’t

That was two years ago, when Bajracharya was still a student at the Kathmandu University Center for Art & Design.





Chitrakar, who was one of the professors that helped Bajracharya develop her Neighborhood Arts Center, has used a variety of methods to work towards this basic goal.

sound out words. A lot of them had been pushed through to higher grades before they had actually learned what they needed to learn.” “I could never work in a school,” Bajracharya says. The focus is on the textbook, or “reciting,” as she calls it. The system helps advanced students stay ahead, but leaves those who are already behind, further behind. In her opinion, art addresses the whole child. “You can’t lie when you’re making art. Kids are allowed to be honest, and allowed to think outside of the box.”

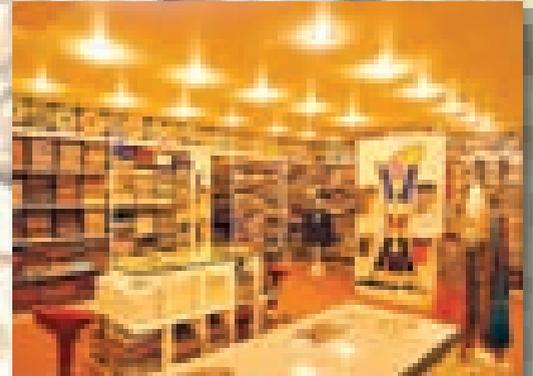
Bajracharya plans to develop an artist residency program in Yetkha Bahal in the future. Aspiring artists would act as volunteer teachers in the morning and after school, and would be able to use the space as a studio during the day. Like the rest of the arts center, she plans on paying for this out of her own pocket. While the art classes will help the students develop their creativity and sense of individuality, the residency program would expose the larger community to Kathmandu’s contemporary art scene as well. Sujan Chitrakar, program coordinator at KUart, shares Bajracharya’s aspiration to bridge the gap between contemporary art and the average Nepali. “Contemporary art is more about individuality and the ego, whereas



most traditional art in Nepal revolves around religion,” Chitrakar explains. His most recent project, entitled ‘Let’s Talk about Art’, directly addressed the minimal exposure the former kind of art garners. Chitrakar, who was one of the professors that helped Bajracharya develop her Neighborhood Arts Center, has used a variety of methods to work towards this basic goal. As part of his last exhibition, the artist attached a note card bearing his simple slogan to balloons and released them into the air. His hope was that a conversation about art would begin wherever the messages landed. “In school, they tell you this apple should be red and you need to stay in the lines. Teachers even expect your words to be the same,” he says. “Exposing regular people to art is empowerment. It allows a person, no matter how small, to express his or her own voice. It helps you to think differently, or at least independently.” ■

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Heritage under the sun

One of the longest standing monuments in Nepal, Kasthamandap has witnessed the rise and fall of several dynasties and cultures in Kathmandu valley.

Text By NIMMA ADHIKARI

Kasthamandap, meaning wooden pavilion is rumored to have been built out of a single tree. The tree, as the story follows, provided enough material not only for the structure of Kasthamandap but also for the *Singha sattal* and a *bihara* near the monument as well. There are no records that directly point to the date of the construction of the building but one of the *tamrapatras* inside the monument dates back to the 14th century Bikram Sambat (Nepali calendar). Some claim it to be the largest and the oldest building in Nepal.

There are several legends that speak about how the monument of Kasthamandap came to be. Saraswati Singh, the Executive Director of Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Museum Development Committee, shares the most popular legend. In the time of King Laxmi Narsingha, when the Matsyendranath *rath yatra* was in procession in Kathmandu valley, Kalpabrikshya took human form and came to the valley to witness the procession. One of the priests in the procession recognized Kalpabrikshya and captured him. When Kalpabriksha vowed that he would provide materials for the construction of a monument, he was freed. He then sent a large sal tree, the one used to build Kasthamandap.

Although there are variations of this legend, the only consistency remains with the concept of a single tree being used for its construction. The legend dates back to the 17th century but there are evidences suggesting otherwise. Apart from a *tamrapatra* inside the building dating back to 14th century, reference of Kasthamandap can be found in other handwritten historical documents dating back to as early as 12th century in 1143. “Kasthamandap’s purpose might have been more social than religious, even though the monument is surrounded by different avatars of Ganesh on each corner and a statue of Gorakhnath in the front,” says Dr. Rohit



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Although there are variations of this legend, the only consistency remains with the concept of a single tree being used for its construction.

Ranjitkar, the Nepal Program Director of Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust “If the ground floor is open, i.e. not closed with brick walls, then we categorize it as a mandap or sattal,” he adds. The entire structure rests on huge wooden pillars that certainly are not found anywhere near Kathmandu. There are porches in the building and Dr. Ranjitkar believes that they must have been used as a place to lodge travelers.

Singh and Dr. Ranjitkar agree that one of the reasons behind the monument’s popularity is because the capital city got its name from the monument. This piece of information backs the claim that the construction of Kasthamandap was completed much earlier than the 17th century. Historians claim that the city got its name some 500 years before the legend of the priest and Kalpabriksha circulated during the rule of Laxmi Narsingha.

Singh explains the other important feature of the monument. There are only three images of Gorakhnath in Nepal. The Gorakhnath being referred to is the same ascetic associated with King Prithvi Narayan Shah who had blessed him with victory over any land he stepped on. Gorakhnath is usually symbolized with a pair of feet but Kasthamandap actually enshrines a statue of him making the monument even more notable and extraordinary. Kasthamandap is also one of the largest and oldest wooden buildings and that too, a social building. That gives it a reason to be a topic of interest for people.

Heavy detailed carvings characteristic to Malla period architecture is absent here, allowing experts to date it to the early days of the same period. Dr. Ranjitkar believes that the monument has endured at least 8 to 10 major earthquakes and the monument we see today may or may not be the original design of the centuries-old Kasthamandap. ■

Beyond the Holy Border

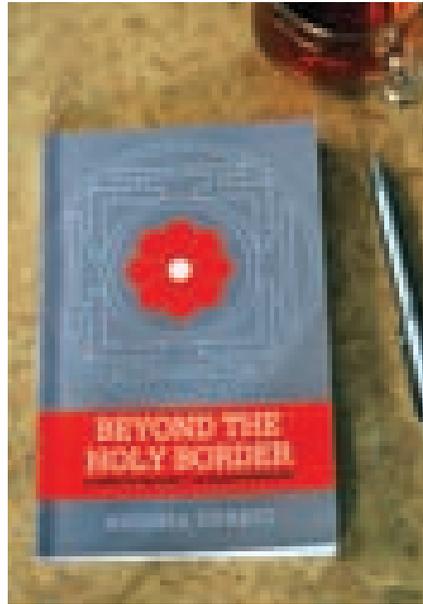
A Poet's Odyssey to Manasarovar

Text By BISHMA UPRETI

Here is the story of a trek through far west Nepal and into Tibet to Lake Manasarovar and to the foot of Mount Kailash. It is one of those rare (we wish there were more) true, insightful and personal trekker's tale by a Nepali. The writing is all the more interesting because the author is a poet.

Here's a snippet of his poetic prose: "Manasarovar! Oh, blue nature! We came here, reaching forward in enrapture. We were drawn here in fascination of your gracefulness and cordiality, bowing our heads to your beauty and elegance! Oh, you! the blue lake—Manasarovar!"

Like many such accounts, both the thrills (first sight of Lake Manasarovar



Upreti also speaks about the act of writing itself. While down in the hot Karnali river valley, he writes: "The more the day progressed, the hotter the sun grew. My impulses were triggered especially when I sweated profusely, drenching myself... I was the one who lived in a city and preached that we should toil and sweat. I was the one who used my writings to advocate hard work. Now I understood the real difference between talk and action."

Later, higher up, he tells a wise and learned Buddhist monk that "Writing is a fine thing. To write something true is finer still and to write a thing that people are not aware of yet is even better. I draw deep satisfaction from it; but at a time when money is all-important, writing doesn't bring in much of a living."

To which the monk responds: "What is money worth in itself? Who has taken money with themselves in death? A good name is greater. Money is a necessity but not the be all and end all. We also need respect and dignity."

Beyond the Holy Border is an interesting book, packed with some powerful images and feelings, written by a sensitive observer. I recommend it, especially for those bound in spirit or in fact to Manasarovar and Kailash. ■

Nonfiction. Fine Print Books, Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, Nepal, 120pp., fineprint.com.np, illus. Available in local bookstores.

The more the day progressed, the hotter the sun grew. My impulses were triggered especially when I sweated profusely, drenching myself...

and Mount Kailash) and the difficulties (steep trails, long weary days) are important to the story. So, too, is the hospitality of people met in villages along the way.

As a travelogue it also has personal and sometimes philosophical passages: "After recharging ourselves with new

energy, we spread along the hilly road. We were so carefree! We floated on the waves of delight, we flew on the wings of excitement..." And later, on a hard stretch: "Struggling upwards... I experience life; I feel alive. From a lofty stopping place... it is always refreshing to look back at one's own past, at one's deeds and slips."

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One voice

MaHa's satires have been instrumental in bringing forth the commoner's plights. It helps that they're also the country's most beloved actors.

Text PRAWIN ADHIKARI



Who is Dhruva Ram Pandit? He is a guileless simpleton who can't tell a straight story. After he finished "being employed for the day," he went home, washed his only pair of work clothes and set them out to dry overnight. He cooked, ate, cleaned up, woke up the next morning, cooked, ate, cleaned up and prepared to go to work. But his clothes were still damp. It was already ten o'clock in the morning. Dhruva Ram was running late for his work as a proofreader at Gorkhapatra Sansthan, the nation's only daily newspaper in Nepali, so he thought up a quick solution: iron his clothes dry, and then rush to work.

As he was ironing his trousers, the electricity went off. Load-shedding: never too far from a Kathmandu day. His mind – as he boasted to himself – was something

mercurial that morning. He pumped the kerosene stove into a hot roar, put a clean pot on the stove and stuffed it with his damp turtleneck. It felt strange to sit before a hot stove with something cooking in a pot and not take up a ladle to fold the turtleneck as if he were cooking a curry. So, he did – he stirred the turtleneck lovingly, as if he were sautéing two potatoes and half the length of a radish. Soon enough, the turtleneck was all done, nicely cooked and dry. Dhruva Ram was even more in awe of himself.

And he had cooked with such single-minded devotion to his morning's ruse that he forgot all about the electricity, which had returned like a sulking, lovelorn son, slinking out of the house one moment without permission, and thieving back in just as quietly, as if to evade a mother's wrath. When Dhruva Ram returned to his trousers, they were busily smoking – "*Pboos, pboos, pboos!*"

A hole seared right through the left seat. What is a man to do, but cover it up with a red heart-shaped cloth patch that read, "I Love You," a gift from a miffed college sweetheart?

Over their long career as a comedy duo, Madan Krishna Shrestha and Haribansa Acharya have given a larger number of distinct personas to the field of Nepali comedy than any other group of performers. Dhruva Ram is just one of their numerous characters, and although played by Haribansa in their landmark television series *Lalpurja*, it is a creation of the duo, of two minds so united in their worldview and artistry that they speak as one. During interviews they often slip into the first person plural. "We think," or, "We feel," or, "We are." On screen and stage they always play against each other: stingy father and moronic son, clueless landowner and

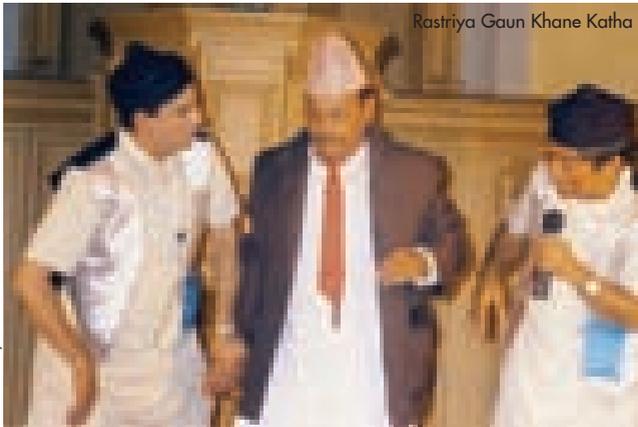




Bigyapan



Paralysis



Rastriya Gaun Khane Katha



Saraddha

Photos courtesy MaHa Sanchar

cunning tenant, smuggler and customs officer, politician and guard to the realm of the dead. Off-screen, in more intimate moments, they address the world as one voice. It is tempting to search for a chink in the facade, a breach through which discord might flood out. But, even if it exists, it is not there for the public to see.

The public instead sees two faces to one civic conscience, two bodies to one artistic idea. The civic conscience behind the art is as serious and thoroughly considered as the comedy acts and personae are an outlandish bouquet of buffoonery. Look around town these days and you'll see them on advertisements of all descriptions, promoting anything from a direct-to-home satellite television package to international money transfers. Rarely do they appear as the public figures Madan Krishna and Haribansha; more frequently,

The civic conscience behind the art is as serious and thoroughly considered as the comedy acts and personae are an outlandish bouquet of buffoonery.

the figures on the hoarding boards depict their various avatars from their long career. After the 2008 CA elections, a survey by the Election Commission showed that a lot of voters had learned about the difference between proportional and direct elections from watching their shows *Ama* and *Madan Babadur – Hari Babadur*. False moustache and a mole the size of a two-rupee coin, for instance, for Madan Babadur and Hari Bahadur's advertisement for Western Union: the latter stealing cash from the former's pocket, both grinning at the camera. Or, a head of silver hair for

the octogenarian matriarch, Ama, who intuitively understands the importance of voting, even at her ripe old age. The Western Union ad tells the people that Western Union can be trusted. But the trust really comes from the esteem the Nepali people invest in the MaHa duo.

It has been a long journey for these two men past their physical – and perhaps artistic – prime, from the days of stage performances against the establishment, to public service television acts. Satire is their primary preoccupation, and humor the sauce with which they spice the nour-

Maha Dohori



in 1990, they wore gags and blindfolded themselves, and performed for the first People's Movement. Soon after, the Panchayat regime was overthrown.

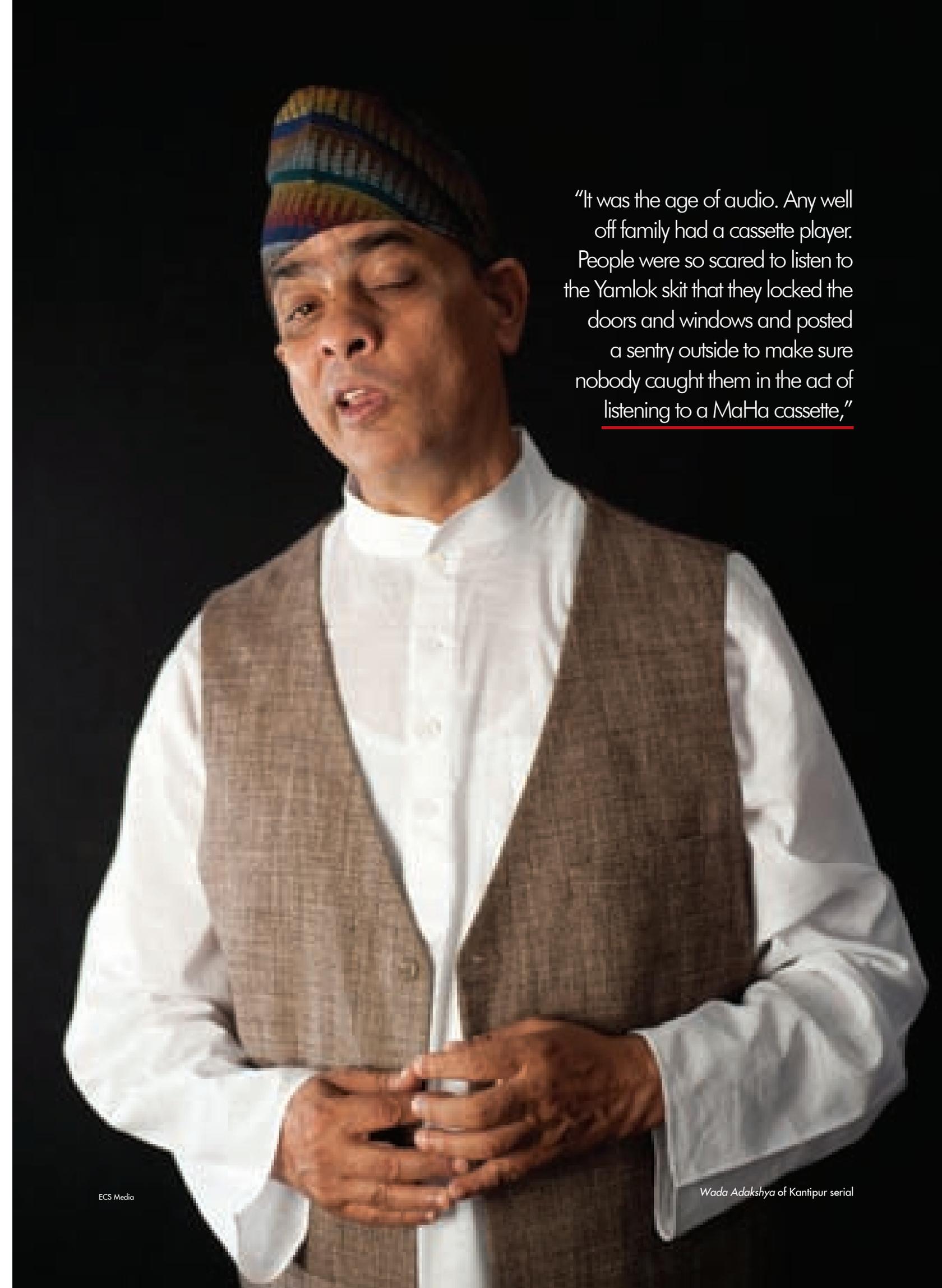
ishment of social messages. This has been their method since, in the early eighties, audio cassettes entered middleclass life in the urban centers of Nepal. Recordings of live performances of *Yamalok* sold so well that the MaHa duo could build houses and start families, rescuing them from the realities of desperation and depravity they so often deal with in their work. But, there was always risk involved in opposing a monolithic system like the Panchayat. "It was the age of audio. Any well off family had a cassette player. People were so scared to listen to the Yamlok skit that they locked the doors and windows and posted a sentry outside to make sure nobody caught them in the act of listening to a MaHa cassette," they say. Why can't you meet Kanun, Nyaya or Bikas in the streets of Kathmandu or villages of Nepal? Because, according to the skit, Law, Justice and Development have died and gone off to Yamalok – the

Lord of Dharma's realm where tally is kept of your karma and judgment passed, rewards or punishment dispensed.

How did these two men get to this point where they are a political consciousness representing a moderate, middle-path vision of compromise between extremes? True performers to the end, they have always perfectly timed their injection into any outrage: in 1990, they wore gags and blindfolded themselves, and performed for the first People's Movement. Soon after, the Panchayat regime was overthrown. In 2006, they came to the front not only as vocal dissenters, but also as the most trustworthy names to start a fund for injured demonstrators. Individuals from around the world contributed to the fund, without the bitter cynicism and accusations often reserved for public figures who step beyond the call of their vocation.

In May of 2010, the Maha duo was the main attraction at the Basantapur Durbar Square *dabali*, from where they addressed the Peace Rally: a crowd of people that had become fed up with the indefinite siege under which the UNCP-Maoists wanted to place them. In unequivocal terms, Madan Krishna outlined what he thought were the rights that all Nepalis had fought for. His technique consisted of rhetorical questions to which the throng – hundreds of thousands strong, packed into and radiating away from the Durbar Square – intuitively knew the answer which they shouted in unison. He asked those who agreed with him to raise their hands, and hundreds of thousands of fists and palms shot up in the air. The black-dotted swarm of heads and faces and eyes veiled behind raised arms and hard fists or open palms: if you had been there, witnessing both the moment and its significance, you would have felt a chill bolting down your spine; your pulse would have quickened. And you would have known that you had witnessed something so momentous that years later, recounting that moment for others, you could with confidence say that Madan Krishna's rhetorical questions that morning changed the shape of Nepali politics. The siege on the city was lifted the very next day.

After that rousing, honest speech, they shed their public personae and became Madan Bahadur and Hari Bahadur – two men for whom, ostensibly, ethnicity or caste have stopped having meaning, so that they are both called Bahadurs: the everymen of the hills. They attempted to make the tense crowd laugh. It was a strangely deflating moment, especially after their personal speeches which were light-hearted and thoughtful, provocative and prescriptive, emphasizing the basic humanity of those whom we put at inconvenience through our individual or political aspirations. Was there any need for levity that morning? The crowd knew that after a few minutes it would have to confront the batons and bricks of Maoist cadres trucked in from around the coun- ▶



“It was the age of audio. Any well off family had a cassette player. People were so scared to listen to the Yamlok skit that they locked the doors and windows and posted a sentry outside to make sure nobody caught them in the act of listening to a MaHa cassette,”

In his humor was the reflection
of the pains of a citizenry
forced to fight fellow citizens
with a differing political view.



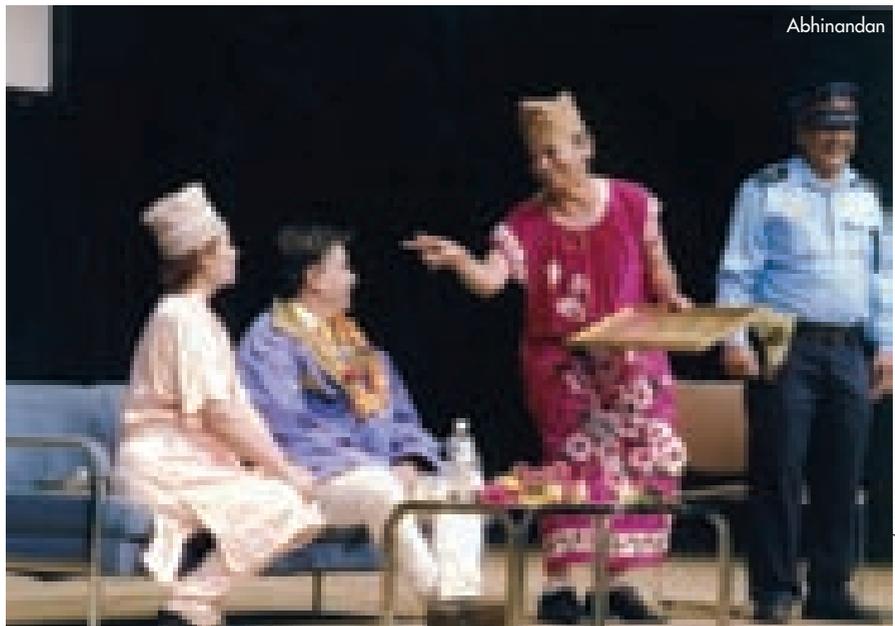
try to “bring Kathmandu to its knees,” to strike with overwhelming terror at the heart of the *sukila-mukila*, a clean-collared class that lumped together the urban blue and white collar classes because even the blue-collar workers in the city had become complacent. What help would come from laughing a little before going out to have your head busted?

“We never do anything without humor in it. It just wouldn’t work,” Haribansha says in answer. Humor is the MaHa duo’s basic trade. Be it running and diving into the dirt after a rooster in faster-than-life motion, or a father-in-law tickling an India-returned migrant worker (and, in the process, finding a strange spot that reveals a deadly affliction after a proper health check-up), or wearing a neck-guard to bed. “Whatever the subject – be it political, medical or environmental – humor shall be given the first priority,” Haribansha eagerly reiterates his point. But, why? Is humor really that important while delivering a message, say, about tolerance between ethnic groups? To articulate their larger point that people shouldn’t put too much emphasis on the divisive issue of ethnic identity when there is an absence of good governance, MaHa would have to create flat, exaggerated caricatures of different ethnic groups. How does that help? A contesting point could be made that their insistence upon aspirations towards a homogenized identity, as typified in their Bahadur avatars, is just as politically hazardous, because it discounts genuine grievances of many political constituencies. And it smacks somewhat of a constructed unity, which is always a lie – just as much as it was during the Panchayat regime – that we are all one, and that inherited differences don’t matter.

I am wrong, Haribansha explains why – “More than humor, pathos leads good comedic characters. If a character makes people laugh while he is crying, that is a stronger humor. That has more depth, more dimension.” That May morning in Basantapur, the crowd was laughing at Haribansha’s very personal frustrations about not being able to live the simplest life given to a citizen.



Salik

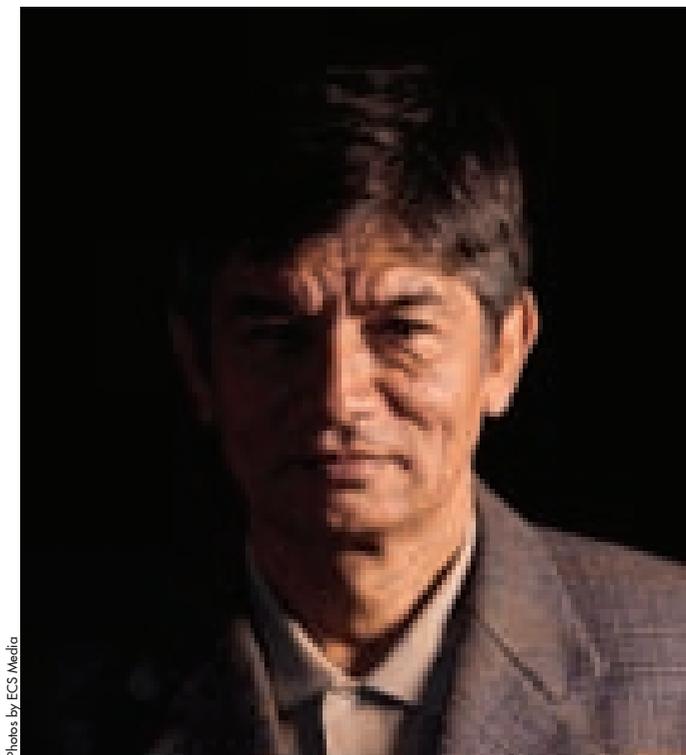


Abhinandan

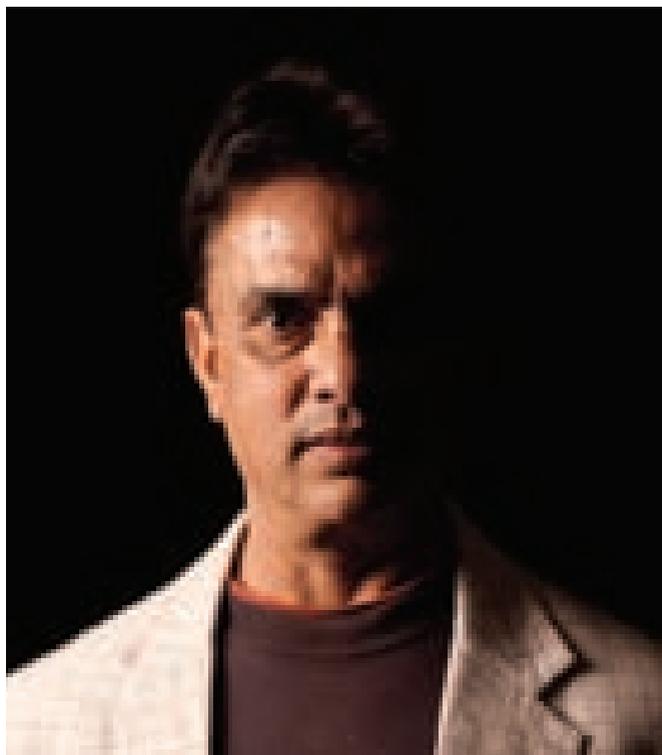
Photos courtesy Moha Sanchar

In his humor was the reflection of the pains of a citizenry forced to fight fellow citizens with a differing political view. This inflated his character from a flat caricature – the stock of most comedy – into a rounded figure of tragedy. What appears as comic is actually tragic at its core. Dhruva Ram Pandit, the loser-hero of *Lalpurja*, is easy to laugh at because he is tragic to his core.

A top-down intervention in his story – an earthquake that flattens his ancestral home – leads him down a pathetic road of annihilation: home lost, land wrested away by a coniving tenant and his chorus of real-estate agents, drugged, robbed, jailed, thrown out of the cowshed that was his last and finally set to wander with his elderly mother, tainting with pain the into-the-sunset final shot ▶



Photos by ECS Media



usually reserved for heroic westerns or tales of requited romance. All along, he makes us laugh at him, because we recognize how his character has halved the distance between his story and ours.

If pathos inflates humor into the dimension of the tragic, what does rage do? Righteous rage is another fuel to MaHa's comedy. In *50/50*, one of MaHa's earliest works for the television, a customs officer who first seems upright and honest turns into a corrupt colluder to a gold smuggler who drops a brick – *of gold* – every time he is made to squat. MaHa's political outlook has been consistently forthright, riddled with middleclass morality, a landscape where Right and Wrong clearly delineate themselves, and thus create the space righteous rage occupies in the civic consciousness. This outlook was most recognizable to the Nepali middleclass, which was just discovering television in the mid-eighties when MaHa made the leap from audio cassettes and stage performances to television specials. The middleclass recognized

Two dreams, actually – that of the gold smuggler, and that of the petty bureaucrat, a collusion of aspirations for the upwardly mobile middleclass.

its rage reflected in *50/50*'s satire. But, the notion that the clean-collared bureaucracy was a dirty bunch of the corrupt and the greedy was not as easily digestible to the upper-crust of the society in the Panchayat era. Before airing *50/50*, the censor at Nepal Television refused to pass the program unless an alternative ending was provided, where, miraculously, the entire story turns out to be a dream.

Two dreams, actually – that of the gold smuggler, and that of the petty bureaucrat, a collusion of aspirations for the upwardly mobile middleclass. The story of Nepal between 1990 and 2002 is born precisely from this nexus. This prophetic strain in MaHa's work seems to be the punishment that goes on to seek its offense: the more vehemently

they make a comment on an unfortunate social reality, the stronger it seems to manifest itself. Back to *Lalpurja* – our hapless land-owning hero is forced to sleep with a neck-guard around his throat, because he rightly worries that he will be finished off in the night by his tenant if he forgoes caution. Soon after *Lalpurja* aired, a new land reform law was presented, failed, and the People's War started. Land and its ownership is the issue here: who should have the right over farming land? The absentee landowner, or, the family that tills it and tends to it? Today, with Dr. Bhattarai leading the government, the answer seems obvious: the farmer who works the land, of course.

But, watch *Lalpurja*, and that notion of justice and injustice is absolutely upturned.

An individual can – and often does – stand in defiance of his class definitions. For some, their footing proves too slippery to let them keep their standing within the limits of their politically defined class. Dhruva Ram’s land is valued at six million rupees, only a quarter of which he is legally obligated to give to his tenant-farmer Ghanshyam, the

mohi tenant-farmer, concocts a convoluted rococo of comedy that ensures total destitution and homelessness for the *talsing* landowner Dhruva Ram. Look around today, and you’ll find iterations of the same story echoing from hill to hill where muscled proletariats have expelled even poorer “class enemies” from their land and property because of caste or ethnic

difference, or for generational vendetta. Nearly all real-estate Mafioso who kill and threaten their neighbors to develop colossal gated communities are card-carrying revolutionaries, while landless squatters are evicted from their tent-slums to build parks dedicated to dead communist leaders. The most famous revolutionary these days is not a leader, but a Dr. Bhattarai’s lackey, a convicted murderer who killed not for political reasons, but out of pure caste hatred. MaHa’s offense was to dream up Dhruva Ram, a misfit and discredit to his land-owning, upper-caste stereotype. Their punishment is the perversion seen in politics today.

Over 32 years of partnership, Madan Krishna and Haribansha have made people laugh while actually teaching them: about tuberculosis in *Chiranjivi*, in which a greedy son in law waits for a tubercular elder to die. But, timely cure saves the elder, keeping him alive longer than the greedy son in law. *Raat*, in which a jovial guard on holiday from India turns out to have contracted HIV/AIDS after raping a Nepali sex-worker who sought shelter with him. *Bhakunde Bhoot*, in which a polythene bag full of garbage thrown in the streets keeps returning to the house until it is properly disposed of in a garbage container. *Pandhra Gatey*, in which a son insists upon getting married a day before his college girlfriend’s wedding, and in the process takes the family on a cross-country, pan-ethnic journey and a fight against the dowry system. *Dashain*, a meticulous record of the pitfalls of greed and ostentation during the festival as celebrated among the urban lower-middleclass. To their lasting credit, MaHa have even given Nepali culture the greatest moments of horror and suspense on screen: Haribansha’s rendition of a coming-of age ditty, “*Ghaas katney khurkera, aayo joban bureka... Kaslai diun yo joban?*” is still unsurpassed in its capacity to deliver terror into the hearts of a viewer. I used to waylay a friend in boarding school, hoarsely, slowly singing “*Ghaas katney khurkera...*” as he walked to ▶



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Comedy on Nepali television stations, sadly, is far removed from the biting wit and satire, humor and pathos that MaHa insist upon.

the bathroom in the night. He'd scream and run to the cocoon of his quilt, to emerge only in the morning to punch me in the gut.

Comedy on Nepali television stations, sadly, is far removed from the biting wit and satire, humor and pathos that MaHa insist upon. All is canned laughter and *tyaun...* of raised eyebrows, twitching noses and flailing hands. Every joke is a talking point on the topic *du jour*, lifted from newspaper headlines and repeated infinitely. A trend that perhaps started with *Twakka - Tukka*, a collection of short, not-very-funny jokes – has now degraded to episode long jokes with no punch line, no insight that the viewer hasn't already considered or confronted. Will real comedy – with satire and pathos – ever return? MaHa aren't holding their breath. They don't see how it is possible for good comedy to come out of the political chaos that reigns in the nation.

Nepal is a humorless nation right now. No group has the honesty to laugh at itself, and the laughter that comes at the expense of another group is crude, full of cruelty.

The decades old partnership is visible in their relationship in private. Madan Krishna, the levelheaded foil to Haribansha's persistent buffoon, hovers around impatiently, watching the interviewer more often than participating in the conversation. A year back, during another conversation, Madan Krishna had insisted upon balance between Ma and Ha when it came to representation in a possible comic-book. Haribansha speaks almost entirely in the first person plural. Haribansha leans forward to talk about leaving his old home at Comfort Housing in Budhanilkantaha, but Madan Krishna putters around asking if he should change into something more presentable for the photographer. Haribansha shows the

script for an upcoming stage show – pages filled with a scrawl so *personal* as to be illegible even to him – while Madan Krishna tries to email the duo's biography to the photographer. Haribansha finds time for small talk while Madan Krishna reminds him of the lunch waiting upstairs. I have a moment to myself in Madan Krishna's living room. I search the wall-to-wall shelves on one side, full of trophies and mementos, for a sign of their partnership. I can't find a single photo of Haribansha on the walls, neither a single trophy on the shelves made out to Madan Krishna alone. I wonder – What is Haribansha's trophy shelf like?

The kitchen is on the fourth floor. MaHa say their goodbyes and prepare to go upstairs. At the bottom of the stairs are warm slippers for the kitchen. Haribansha slips his feet into a pair, seems puzzled, switches them around. Madan Krishna turns around to watch. Haribansha grins like a child who has stumbled upon a mystery: no matter how often he switches the slippers from one foot to the other, they look odd, always on the wrong foot. He switches around the slippers once more. "If I wear it like this, it looks like they are both on wrong feet, like a child would wear them. So I switch them around, and they still look wrong. There is no right way of wearing them," he laughs. Madan Krishna, a few steps above him, smiles and nods, waits. "Then, there is no wrong way of wearing them," Haribansha switches slippers again. Finally, I recognize this person – a man so straightforward in how he sees the world that he delights in simply recounting his most mundane actions, and somehow infuses them with meaning, like a character from a fable whose every action translates into a moral. Like Dhruva Ram who, after he finished "being employed for the day," went home, washed his only pair of work clothes and set them out to dry overnight. He cooked, ate, cleaned up, woke up the next morning, cooked, ate, cleaned up. And, prepared to go to work. ■

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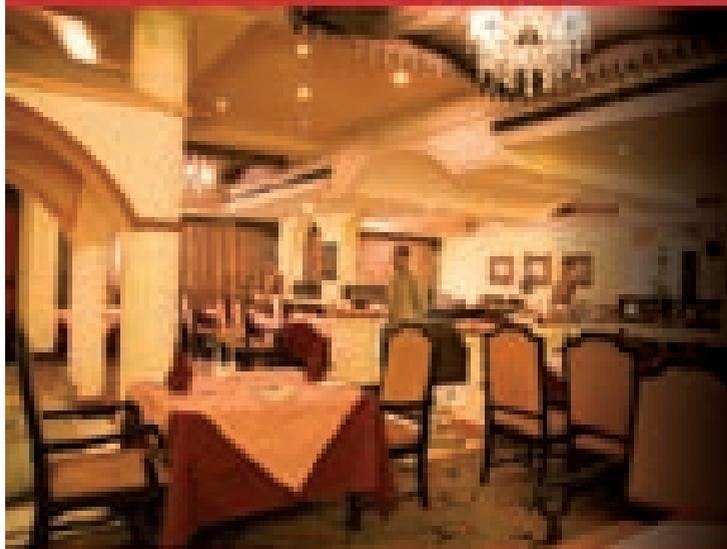
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Fabric of society

A truly Nepali fabric, 'dhaka' belongs to a different, charmed time in Nepal.

Text By NIRAJ KARKI

A friend of mine upon visiting Nepal remarked that we seem to have a national 'everything'. Animals, birds, weapons, dresses, games; we seem to have it all. Yet amidst this list, Dhaka fabric misses mention, despite being undoubtedly Nepali and defining Nepal more than any other fabric.

Recognized only as a shadow of its true self, today it is probably best known in the form of a Dhaka *topi* (cap) – a symbol and part of the face of Nepal and Nepali men. The *topi* is a mixture of elegance and tradition, and of national heritage, as it carries with it a legacy expressed with a simple headgear. And, there is the Dhaka ko *Khasto*, a shawl, a truly Nepali shawl.

Dhaka gives me this old romantic impression of Nepal maybe a hundred years ago – and I wasn't born a hundred years ago so I don't know – but it is this feeling, an impression of a more and truly cultured Nepal, bearing its own unique, untainted identity, unaffected by the waves of foreign influence in fashion and culture. Like old Nepali houses, like old timeless traditions, like old works of art that are scattered across Nepal – Dhaka belongs there. It belongs in ancient black and white and sepia toned family photographs of grandmothers and grandfathers, with her wearing a dhaka ko cholo and khasto and him wearing a dhaka ko *topi*. Nepal is a different place in many ways now and these days the fabric makes an appearance mainly at weddings; the fashion of bridegrooms dressing in full dhaka attire – *daura surwal* (tunic and leggings) and *topi* and *chatti* (slippers, yes) being quite popular. Being the choice fabric for such an important day does hint to the true significance of the fabric – significance steeped in history and art, a proud tradition and heritage, and well and truly, a symbol of Nepal. It was *the* fabric of Nepal. Its value may be a little tarnished due to neglect and the takeover by countless fashion trends, brands and

Like old Nepali houses, like old timeless traditions, like old works of art that are scattered across Nepal – Dhaka belongs there.

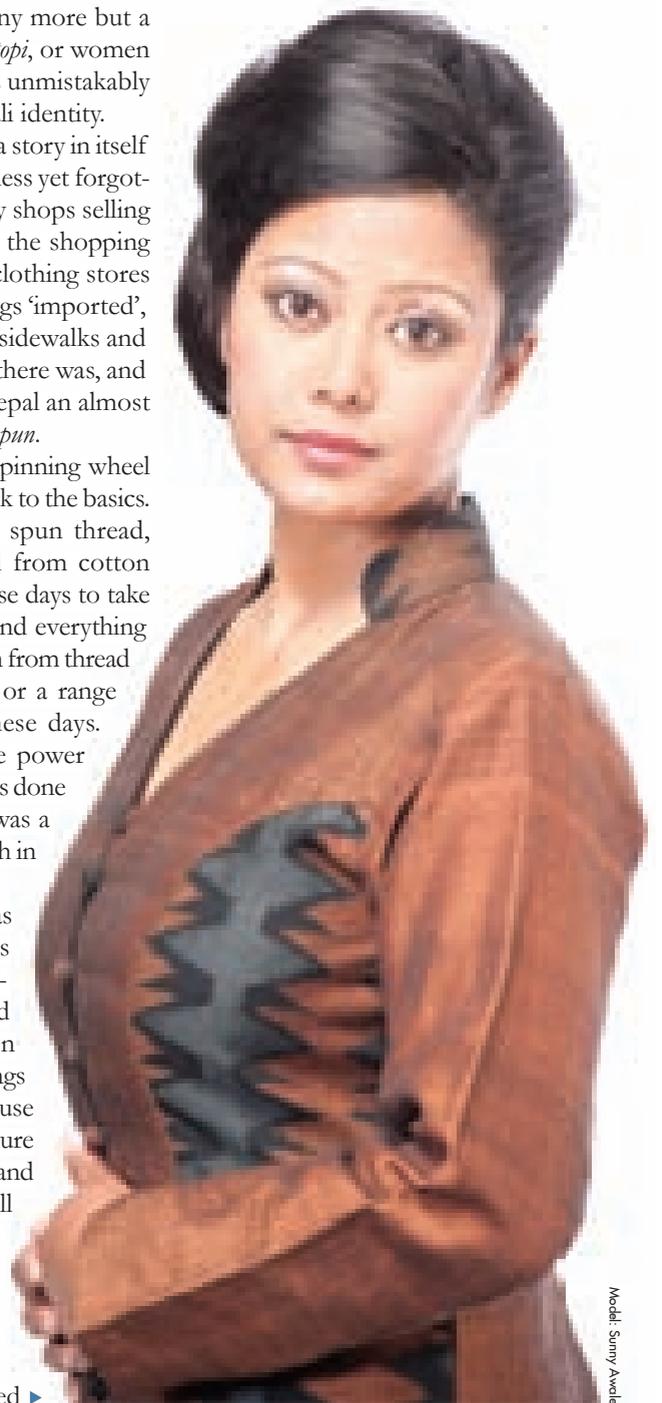
shopping centres and many more but a man wearing a *Dhaka ko topi*, or women in Dhaka attire will always unmistakably bring to surface the Nepali identity.

The history of Dhaka, a story in itself is part of an inherent timeless yet forgotten story. Before the fancy shops selling labels in Durbar Marg or the shopping malls, supermarkets and clothing stores that dress Nepal in all things 'imported', before the pedlars on the sidewalks and footpaths selling clothes, there was, and still is in some parts of Nepal an almost forgotten practise – *homespun*.

Charkebas, Taans – the spinning wheel and the weaving loom. Back to the basics. Cloth woven from hand spun thread, which in turn is sourced from cotton grown locally. It's easy these days to take for granted how clothes and everything else is made. Cloth is woven from thread that comes from cotton, or a range of synthetic materials these days. Before the advent of the power looms, when everything was done by hand, making clothes was a skilled thing to do and cloth in itself was valuable.

Dhaka in particular was more than just cloth. It was special, extra special. It featured colours, designs and prints, which while taken for granted today were things of significance then. The use of dyed threads, its signature patterns – all achieved by hand weaving required great skill and was extremely tedious. Today this makes it a part of the past; in the past, it was a thing of wonder.

The origin of dhaka goes back several hundred ▶



Model: Sunny Awale

ECS Media



Photos by ECS Media

years. Palpa and Tehrathum are the two most noted places regarding its origins, Palpali dhaka being a well-known product line in Nepal. However there are many places around Nepal that make dhaka products today with commercial production starting in Tansen, Palpa around 50 years ago. There is a little misconception about dhaka coming from the name of the place –the current capital of Bangladesh, which was, in times of the British regime in India, a place renowned for its textile production. The misconception seems to stem from the obvious – the name, and can be discarded given that the origins of the fabric are much older. Its origins can be better associated with women of the Rai and Limbu castes, who continue to make

it these days, their efforts dedicated to preserving the form of art and way of life that dhaka is.

Dhaka like most things has seen changes over time, and the methods of production involved in its making as well as the raw materials that go into it have changed slowly too. Originally made entirely by hand from mercerized cotton that was spun into raw yarn which in turn was dyed and then woven in hand looms called ‘Haate taan’, these days there are factories where everything is automated and instead of being made purely from cotton, synthetics such as polyester are used. There are trade-offs between the use of machinery and pure human effort for modern looms such as the Jacquard looms that boost productivity significantly.



It’s worth mentioning that there is *real* Dhaka and the *print* Dhaka. Later advancements in technology allowed for easier, cheaper and simpler means of production of types of fabric other than Dhaka that imitated the look of the original dhaka print. It was imitation in the form of flattery, and not a con, for the difference is obvious to anyone and everyone - patterns and prints in dhaka are woven into the fabric while the imitations had colour dyed into the ►



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If you need another reason to wear something made of dhaka consider that its usually women's groups who make it, supporting the craft in itself as well as their families.



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final fabric. There is a silent understanding now and both the real and the print are called dhaka, the latter a favourite in making things such as summer blankets, *cholo* (blouse), *bhotto* (the Nepali version of thermals) and many more.

The look of dhaka has demands both in Nepal and abroad. Nationally there are constant demands caused by the traditions associated with dhaka – festivals, religious and social occasions while for foreign markets, the fabric exudes a uniquely exotic and Nepali look making it an excellent product for export as traditional handicraft.

Dhaka is extremely versatile and can be used to make many things. Its use and export is not limited to clothing alone such as shawls but has been expanded into making ties and a whole range of cookware such as aprons, oven mitts and potholders as well as cases for mobile phones and such.

If you need another reason to wear something made of dhaka consider that its usually women's groups who make it, supporting the craft in itself as well as their families. Various groups helping and training each other is one of the ways dhaka is still here today. Its presence is here but only in traces and almost all the shops that sell dhaka in Kathmandu are concentrated in Indra Chowk, five minutes from Basantapur Durbar Sqaure.

The value of dhaka, for as much as part of Nepal and Nepali culture that it is, is in limbo, caught up in the odd change of fashion. It doesn't quite blend in with modern fashion due to its traditional impression but it is certainly of a greater potential than has been realized. But it is unique, it is Nepali.

So the next time you see dhaka – remember, it's more than a fabric – it's a piece of history, culture and tradition. Something old, and like so many aspects of our culture, it is in need of revival and recognition. So who is going to write to Prabal Gurung about using dhaka in his next set of designs? ■

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A passage back in time

The Chitrakars of Bhimsenthan

A chance invitation to a Newar home provides a journey back in time to a different Nepali era.

Text By UTSAV SHAKYA



Kiran Man Chitarkar with his father's camera gear.

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Imagine yourself taking a walk around Tundikhel in Kathmandu on a warm winter's day. The air is filled with the sound of birds chirping, a clock strikes eight in the distance. You can smell the trees and the earth, still damp from the morning's dew. The only sign of traffic is a young man on a bicycle peddling his way to work. Before you, the green expanse of

Tundikhel, where Nepal's former royalty liked to observe the nation's various festivals, fills you with a sense of grandeur as the historic Dharahara tower, built by one time Prime Minister Bhimsen Thapa (it is sometimes called 'Bhimsen's Folly'), looms over you. Behind the field, you see hills and behind them majestic snow-capped mountains. The sight makes you feel good about

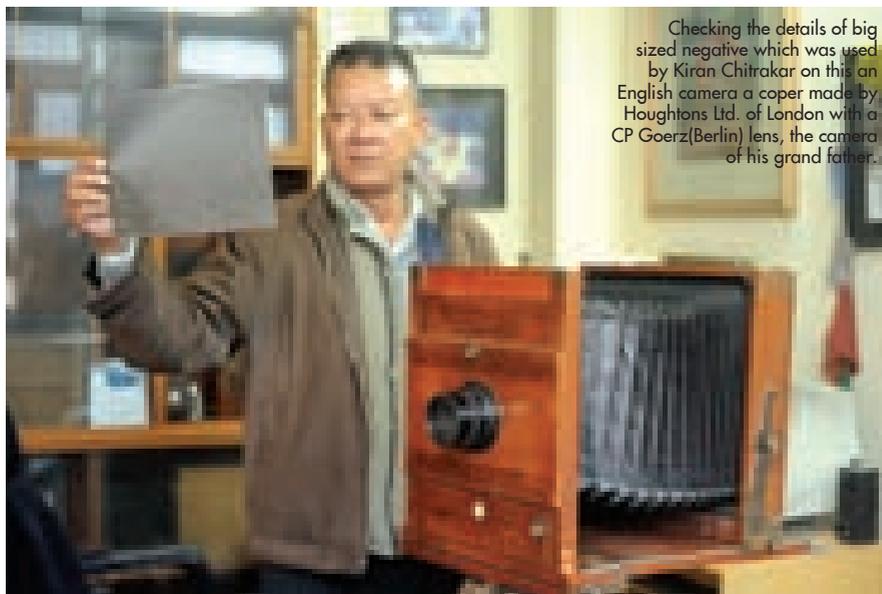
everything. You take a long breath and as the fresh air seemingly expands your lungs, you feel rejuvenated. But, stop...

Today, the same walk today will leave you quite literally breathless for a far different reason (from pollution). That first description was the Kathmandu of the fifties and sixties. Nepal had only just opened up to the world and people who had heard of

this romantic, utopian land started coming up. All that is nothing but a dream today, an old man's memory at best. That was the Kathmandu people loved to be in, to visit, to make a home of, not for work but because the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Kathmandu is breathtaking.

Born in the early eighties, I missed out on actually experiencing a lot of this beauty, though I have often heard about it around the dining table from my parents. A chance visit to the Chitrakar home near the temple of Bhimsenthan in Kathmandu, a few minutes' walk from the Basantapur Durbar Square towards Tahachal, became my unlikely passage into that almost mythic valley of yesteryear.

The name Chitrakar is a term that was coined early on in Nepal for the caste of people who made a living as artists. (*Chitra* is a work of art, a painting.) The ground floor of the Chitrakar residence houses the Ganesh Color Lab, established by Kiran Chitrakar's grandfather, Dirgha Man Chitrakar. The lab was originally in their old house, the country's first photo developing studio. A hole bored into the roof of their old house in Bhimsenthan (different from the present Chitrakar residence) served as the source of light. Dirgha Man is the son of Laxmi Lal, a renowned painter of his times. Prior to starting work for the royal family as royal painter and court photographer, Dirgha Man was involved with tra-



Checking the details of big sized negative which was used by Kiran Chitrakar on this an English camera a copier made by Houghtons Ltd. of London with a CP Goerz(Berlin) lens, the camera of his grand father.

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The name Chitrakar is a term that was coined early on in Nepal for the caste of people who made a living as artists. (*Chitra* is a work of art, a painting.)

ditional art forms such as scroll paintings, religious paintings and decorating important religious places, a customary practice of the Chitrakars. When the then Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher Rana set a trip to England and France in 1908, Dirgha Man was allowed to accompany him. The trip gave Dirgha Man a rare opportunity to compose paintings of the picturesque cities of Europe and also to study European art. The succeeding Prime Ministers, Bhim Shumsher and Juddha Shumsher J.B. Rana kept a large part of Dirgha Man's apparatus within the confines of the Singh Durbar where Dirgha Man worked until formally retiring at the age of 71.

Dirgha Man's son Ganesh Man Chitrakar learnt the art of photography besides painting from his father. Ganesh Man too followed into his father's footsteps at Singh Durbar, as a royal painter and court photographer. Ganesh Man is credited as being the first to take aerial photographs of the Kathmandu Valley in 1965 A.D and also

as the first person to develop color slides in Nepal. Ganesh Man's cameras are still in possession of his son, Kiran Chitrakar, also a court photographer who has accompanied King Birendra on royal visits abroad besides other official trips with dignitaries. Kiran today besides working as a photographer works at the state television channel's office and is working towards opening a museum to preserve the trove of history that is both, his heritage and responsibility.

"I would have donated the cameras and numerous artworks that belonged to my father and grandfather readily to the government if I trusted them in being competent enough to conserve it. But look at the condition of the present museums in Nepal being look after by the government," says Kiran of his wish to allow the public to view a piece of history through his family's possessions. Kiran is of the sentiment that such art cannot belong to a particular person and the public have a right to it as much as he does. But Kath-



Photos courtesy Kiran Man Chitrakar

Kiran Man Chitrakar with the late king Birendra and daughter late Shruti

PICTURES THAT SPEAK

Brushing away the dust on the cameras stored inside a glass case alongside framed pictures of his grandfather, father and himself amongst royalty and foreign dignitaries, Kiran says he would not mind displaying the photographs and antique cameras to serious enthusiasts. But one can perceive from the way he looks at and explains certain photographs that he has a deep connection with his inheritance. Kiran is not one to sell his inheritance for a quick buck.

If not anything, Kiran Chitrakar has worked towards uplifting his family's name. A winner of several medals including the 3rd SAARC Summit Medal in 1987 and Relief for Natural Disaster Medal in 1988, Kiran has covered national and international news and toured the world with the Heads of states. He has held exhibitions of his family's and his own work in numerous countries such as France, England, Japan, USA, Switzerland and Sri Lanka.

Talk however, eventually returns to the photographs, simply because you cannot ignore them in the Chitrakars' living room. They are everywhere you look! Transfixed on these timepieces, my mind wanders quite naturally to the years I thought I had missed out on. Temples, people in traditional Newari clothes, a Jyapu man carrying a *kharpan* on which he carries his trading

mandu's earthquake prone nature and the lack of any agency showing interest in providing a premise to portray this art has stalled Kiran's plans for the moment.

Three of the cameras used by Dirgha Man are prized possessions of the Chitrakar family today, souvenirs of the family's rich artistic history. They are i) the American R.B. Graflex, patented on June 1, 1927 by the former Graflex Corporation of Rochester with a Cooks Anastigmat Lens no. 21674, 6 1/2", 165

mm, f/25 ii) the British Camper made by Houhtons Ltd of London with a CP Goerz lens and accessories from Altrincham Thronton Pickard and iii) a camera with a German lens produced by Hugo Meyer & Co., no. 464181. Aristoplanat 1:7.7, foc 17 3/4". Ganesh Man used 1) Rolleiflex, Rollei, Franke & Heidecke of Braunschweig, Germany 2) Rolleicord, Rollei, Franke & Heidecke and 3) Ikonta M. Prontor-SV, No. 1231/1. Zeiss-Ikon of Stuttgart, Germany.

commodities, children playing in open spaces, landscapes of spaces that are today covered by a concrete jungle - nothing resembles the Kathmandu we see today. Kiran explains one particular picture of his grandfather, the only one he has that was taken by someone in a train station in Marseilles in Paris. The shot has been captured from the side and it shows a crowd of Nepalese in their traditional attire crouching on the streets. "The Nepalese as we know can get a little fanatic about their values. Because the

French were known to eat beef, the water there was deemed impure for the Nepalese to drink. So the entourage of people that accompanied Chandra Shumsher carried 300 *ghaitos* (traditional copper alloy vessel used for carrying water) of water from Nepal to France!" exclaims Kiran, a smile finally breaking on his face.

Amongst the pictures Kiran generously offers to show me are really classic old black and white ones that show Nepal's former kings and Prime Ministers busy at their fa-

vorite hobby - hunting. There are also some amazing inside shots of old palaces that no one else has today and without which one simply would never have a clue as to how the palaces of the country's formative years looked. The black and white adds a healthy dose of nostalgia. Monochrome tends to blend people in a lot of times but in group pictures of royalty and commoners, the royalty still stands out, with their posture, their attire and the stern, proud look on their faces; the origins perhaps of the great and growing divide between the rich and the poor in Nepal. Other pictures in Kiran's living room speak of his long-standing relationship to Nepal's former royalty. Because of his grandfather and father's close ties to the palace, Kiran too was very close to former royals. Pictures of him with royalty, local and foreign dignitaries fill entire walls.

For a Nepali person, the pictures tend to induce a feeling of pride, of belonging, of a connection that suddenly becomes evident through everything. These pictures should be quite easily the most honest depiction of the country. Mixed in with the flamboyance of the Rana regime, the hunting trips with dignitaries, the extravagant clothes and jewelry is the country's heart rending poverty, its culture and an unspoiled beauty that is almost sad since the observer now knows that Kathmandu and a lot of what we see of Nepal has changed drastically.

For the foreign eye, the pictures are a visual treat. More than a portrayal of the photographer's talent at his vocation, it is a stripped down look at what Nepal looked like outside the frame of postcards. Because more often than not, the pictures seem flawed by showing a little of what was not meant to be in the frame. This is the very quality that lets the Chitrakar's pictures stand apart. For people who live here, there are quite a lot of ways to connect to Nepal's heritage but for those of you who are just passing by; these pictures will paint you a better picture of where you have been. ■

Note: Many thanks to Mr. Kiran Chitrakar for graciously inviting and introducing the writer to his family and his family history.

For a Nepali person, the pictures tend to induce a feeling of pride, of belonging, of a connection that suddenly becomes evident through everything.



American president Jimmy Carter & Kiran Man Chitrakar.

Vivaha Panchami

A celebration of divine love

The epic love story and marriage of Ram Sita is re-lived every year in the very place the story unfolded.

Text & Photos By CHARLIE DAS UDASIN

Lord Rama held the mighty and lengthy golden bow in his hand, he knew it was something special, he stood tall in the palace of famed Lord Janak, ruler of Mithila. He knew the story of how no man had been able to pull back the bows tight string, let alone fire even a single arrow. He knew

that marrying the enchanted Sita, Janak's daughter, all depended on making this shot. Rama had met numerous "strong men", who had failed the test—he was nervous, under his confident persona. What was in his hand was no simple bow, it was the *Shiva Dhanush*, weapon of the mighty Lord Shiva, the God of

Destruction, entrusted into the care of the revered Janak. It was to be a way for Janak to know the correct man, the one who should marry his beloved, beautiful and virtuous daughter.

As Rama held the bow in his hand, he breathed a moment, then swiftly, he lifted the weapon, grander than himself, but



yet all within the flash of a second. With calm meditation, he had strung the bow, and, focused his mind. With one clean swoop he pulled back the string, the audience was frozen by the feat, under all his might and power, the bow doubled, and the arrow fired like a thunderbolt. As it exited the bow's arch, the weapon snapped into two, under Rama's unseen strength. In that moment, all those present, knew that the virtuous Rama was indeed bestowed with great powers, and was the one destined to marry Sita. The families of Janak and Dasaratha (Rama's father, ruler of Ayodhya), would now be joined in union. Two great empires were about to come together.

Now what has this great epic, of Hinduism got to do with us here in Nepal?

Simple really, Lord Janak, his daughter Sita, and their ancient Kingdom of Mithila, were all right here, within these borders, in the Tarai district of Dhanusa (Sanskrit for "bow"). The scene described above, happened in the uniquely constructed, mesmerizing temple, known as the Ram-Janaki *Mandir*. It happened during Sita's *Swayamvar*, a ceremony where the woman chooses her own husband. Each year since, in the month of November (-ish), the Hindu world comes together with love and fervor, for the festival of Vivaha Panchami, the celebration of this beloved couple's wedding day. For the people of India, Ram-Sita are not just a happy couple, they are the incarnations of the virtuous Lord Vishnu (Lord of the Gods) and his serene wife, Laxmi (the Goddess of Wealth).

Lord Janak himself is held in Hinduism as not just a king of lands, but as a divine guru, a master of Hinduism's practices. Even deities like Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu take council with him on different matters making Janakpur a place that all Hindu deities visit, to pay their respects.

ABOUT THE RAMAYANA

The Ramayana is held as India's first great epic tale. It is the story of Lord Rama and



Lord Janak himself is held in Hinduism as not just a king of lands, but as a divine guru, a master of Hinduism's practices.

his wife Sita, the tensions that love and other men's lust can bring, as well as the beauty of divine matrimony. The only other epic is the Mahabharata, written later and chronicling the tales of Lord Krishna, another of Vishnu's incarnations. The Ramayana has been accredited to the noteworthy sage Valmiki, and is believed to be from the 5th Century B.C.

Through its telling of Ram-Sita's tale of love and devotion, it gives people a guidebook on the correct behavior for husbands, wives, brothers, fathers, families, friends, as well as depicting how to deal with aggression in correct karmic ways.

In the tale, Rama's wife Sita is abducted by an evil demonic *rakshasa* king called Ravana, who through meditation, received a boon from the universal creator, Lord Brahma, making him immune to divine forces. This sees Ravana go on a vile rampage of lust and destruction,

defiling many a religious tenant. So the gods, unable to defeat Ravana directly, take human and animal forms. Enter Rama, his beloved brother Lakshman (the incarnation of Vishnu's snake) and Hanuman the monkey warrior from Kishkinda, son of Lord Vayu, the God of Wind, and considered as embodying elements of Shiva's power. Along with this merry band, the entire monkey army of Kishkinda, comes to Rama's side to rescue Sita, fighting Ravana's vast, dark army, after he stole her away to his Kingdom of Lanka (Sri Lanka).

The tale follows the exploits of Rama who quests for his wife, and Sita who remains devout to her husband while imprisoned and keeping her love safe. Ravana constantly tries to trick the devout Sita into giving herself to him, willingly but she sees through his illusions.

Hanuman becomes a central figure in her rescue, with his love for Rama be-

coming a shining example to all people, describing the meaning of selfless devotion. The powerful monkey warrior never takes a wife, keeping his love only for Ram-Sita, remaining a constant figure by their side.

When Ram-Sita left this plain of existence, they offered Hanuman to leave with them. Instead, Hanuman requested to stay on here, for as long as Ram-Sita are worshipped. That's why whenever the Ramayana is read in public, a red seat is kept empty for the warrior monkey; though unseen, he is always believed to attend.

JANAKPUR, NEPAL AND THE RAMAYANA

The Ramayana was not just India's first great epic saga, in fact it is Nepal's too. The story was re-written in the Nepali language, by Bhanubhakta Acharya, coinciding with a renaissance in the Nepali language.

The city of Janakpur shows the diversity that is a characteristic of the entire country. The streets, art and buildings are beyond comparison in all this land. Unique is the word. Walking through its streets instantly transports one to a place not so different from India's Rajasthan. The 52 constructed ponds and *ghats* are a wonder to behold architecturally, and amazing places to pay devotion to the sacred couple, especially when the colors of the rising sun shine bright. Nowadays there are probably more temples in Janakpur to the Ramayana characters, than there are inhabitants.



During the festival of Vivaha Panchami, the entire city heaves with crowds coming from every direction of the Hindu world, clamoring to pour out their love and respect. The temple of Ram-Janaki (the main one in the city), see the most traffic; it is the spot where Rama pulled the bow's un-moving string. Next to that is the temple where Ram-Sita were married, the queue gets long here, and for a devotional dip there is the Ganga *Sagar* (pond). In the olden days, these ponds were laced with gold, to help better transmit one's devotion to the other side.

On the day, *dahi* (curd) and *chiura* (beaten rice) are the *prasad*, or devotional

gift to eat. Both are devoured in vast amounts, laced with sugar. *Meeti*, the tantalizing milk sweet of India is offered at every corner, and next to those are stalls selling every form of religious picture and trinket. The essence of ripe oranges fills the air throughout.

I'm sure the beautiful capital of the once mighty kingdom has dwindled much through the centuries, but it still exists and gives one a glimpse into a time of myth, legend and fantasy; something that is difficult to find in our world, in this the era of science and fact.

SCIENCE AND ROMANCE

Some facts make the Ramayana story slightly difficult to argue on a divine level. In my opening scene, I paint the story of Rama with Shiva's mighty bow. Now okay,

THE JANAKS AND THE KINGDOM OF MITHILA

The Kingdom of Videha, commonly called Mithila, after its old capital, appears to have been first established more than 1000 B.C. Today the city of Mithila is known as Janakpur, in Dhanush District, of Nepal's Tarai. During its height it also encompassed Biratnagar further east in Nepal, as well as large swathes of India.

The Janak kings were seen not just as excellent warriors, and rulers, but also as strong sages, often given the title of RajaRishi or

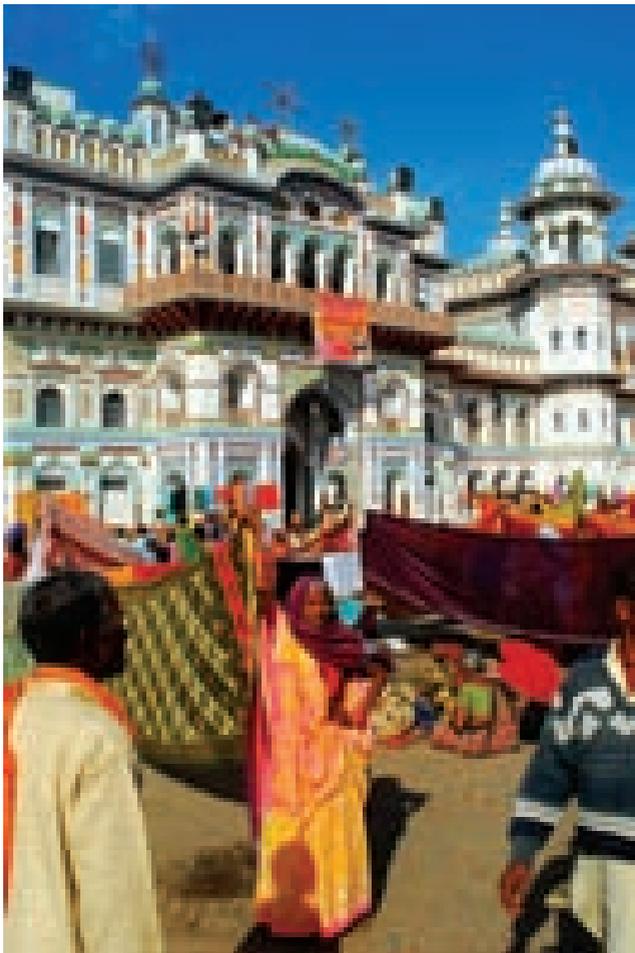
KingSage. Due to the vast amounts of meditation and services they had performed, they reached a stage of complete dis-attachment to all worldly things. The most famous RajaRishi is Seeradhvaj Janak, the father of Sita, also known by her family title as Janaki. Seeradhvaj Janak is so strongly recognized as a great sage, that Lord Krishna, in the Mahabharata (the only other Hindu epic), uses him as a prime example of Karma Yoga, or selfless service.

this can all be called just a very good story. However, if you travel 14 km outside of Janakpur, to the temple of Dhanusadam, you will find a strange scene. Within the temple is a length of molten earth, stretching for about 20m, as if a greatly violent explosion happened here, almost on par with the damage of a meteorite crashing to earth. Or, as the story goes, the arrow fired by Rama. N.A.S.A's scientists have been here to examine the scene, and the mystery remains.

Further east in the hillside town of Dharan, is a *dhuni* or religious fire established by Rama more than two and a half millennia ago. Religious ceremonies have been performed there every day since. Even today, it is run by an elderly Udasin Baba, sleeping in the jungle, in the trees at night, avoiding wild animals. It goes to show how long Rama-devotion has been in existence in this country alone.

Another story from the Ramayana is of Lord Hanuman, and the heroic leap he

Religious ceremonies have been performed there every day since. Even today, it is run by an elderly Udasin Baba, sleeping in the jungle, in the trees at night, avoiding wild animals.



made from the east coast of India, all the way to Sri Lanka, after hearing that Sita might be captive there. The tale goes that after first meditating, he made the jump in one great feat, flying safely over the vast expanse of nothingness. In the saga he succeeds, finds Sita, and brings her the message that her beloved Rama is looking for her, and not to lose faith. It is the moment that brings Sita great hope and strength. She refuses to have Hanuman take her out, for it would tarnish Rama's reputation for not saving his wife, himself. Hanuman escapes back to Rama with the news, but first sets Lanka ablaze, like the pesky monkey he is.

Now you might say, sure, that really happened. But on top of a Sri Lanka mountain, named Adam's Peak, is a footprint fused into the solid rock. Perhaps it is the footprint of the landing Hanuman?

RELEVANCE

The Ramayana provided people with a code of behavior, like Lakshman loyally following his eldest brother Rama, and his wife Sita, into exile for 14 years. After Rama had been tricked, by his stepmother, to relinquish his right over the kingdom of Ayodhya and to leave it. Lakshman follows, keeping watchful eyes for danger, loyally at his brother's side through thick and thin. Sita is held as the exemplary wife who follows her husband into exile, living with him and his brother as simple sages, giving up their limitless wealth. Ram-Sita, are seen as the personification of true love, and provide a code for all married couples to follow.

Now sure, many people can say all this is just fantasy. Even the creator of the movie epic *Star Wars*, George Lucas thought so, using it as the model for his hit series. A stolen princess Lea (Sita), a young prince Skywalker (Rama), his loyal friend Han Solo (Lakshman), with his even more loyal, hairy friend Chewbaca (Hanuman), the evil Darth Vader (Ravana) and the Ewok rebels (the monkey army of Kishkinda), who made Darth Vader's fall possible.

As stories go, the Ramayana is one of the world's most popular religious texts, incorporated into not just Nepal and India's culture and religion, but into vast swathes of Southeast Asian Buddhist culture. Rama's strength with the bow, and the unquestioning love in his relationship with the virtuous Sita have moved people for countless millennia, on a basic level, far removed from religion, but reflected in every love affair. ■

Charlie Das is an Udasin bhakta, with a deep love and devotion for this heavenly couple, and all that they embody. You can contact him at charliedasadasin@gmail.com.

Onwards and upwards

The quest for all things new

Text & Photos By PAT KAUBA





For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move. - Robert Louis Stevenson (Travels With A Donkey, 1879)

WHAT MAKES AN ADVENTURER?

It is an age old question, asked down through now long-forgotten ages. Is it muscles and pomp, or a recklessness with ones own life or with that of others?

I often wondered about these things as I grew up, reading books like *Swiss Family Robinson*, *Robinson Crusoe* and the adventures of little *Huckleberry Finn*. Until recently I can honestly say that I knew no better, within my child's mind, I would craft strong macho *Indiana Jones*-esque characters, resplendant with leather whip and widebrimmed hat. But, then I met Antonio, and well, this man I can say, is indeed an explorer, deserving of the title, and yet he carries no whip that I can see, and that only made me more curious.

I sit with Juan Antonia Sanchez, a lean, olive-skinned man, dark haired and clean shaved, we share coffee on a veranda over looking a chaotic Kathmandu street, cars and rickshaws battle for inches, and I can see this is not Antonio's natural environment. He's busy these day, like most of his days. He is between meetings as we talk, working on getting grants and teams organized for the next big exploration trip into the Himalayas. "Every journey I do has to be about exploration", he tells me, as a glint appears in his eyes. He hasn't been in Nepal that long, a year and a half and his company *Enlightenment Treks and Expeditions*, isn't that old, but he has not been wasting any time. Already he is starting to leave his print on these mountains.

KNOCKING TITLES OFF PEDESTALS

The next mission is taking him and the team back up to Rasuwa District, above Gosaikunda Lake; it seems they recently sniffed out a new "highest lake" of Nepal. He is beyond excited, and is off

soon, with the team, to take the official altitude readings, to confirm if it is really true. If so, it will mean that good old Tilicho Lake, sitting at 4,949m., will soon be pushed off its pedestal—literally. The answer will be with us shortly, once the weather is that little bit better for the task.

But Antonio is not stopping there, to rest on his laurels, he's already in talks with *National Geographic*, for an exploration grant, as well as joining the team, when they go to research and explore the areas of far-flung, far-western Nepal. They will travel on foot beyond the Annapurnas and Dhaulagiri (Putha Hiunchuli), beyond Jumla all the way to Humla, and Saipal, an area that claimed lives on the last exploration team that went that way, in the 1990's. It is a part of the country that is hugely unknown, even to its inhabitants. It is a part of our world that is still raw, wild and even uncharted, steeped in deep mystery and wonder—both natural and divine. There will be no shortage of great stories for NatGeo to show us here, as well as those in the outside world.

The Himalayas have long been fraught with dangers, it is the way of such mountains, they are not considered record setters for nothing. Every year sees tragedy on those high slopes, whether it is with novice trekkers, or experienced climbers, both local and foreign. Danger is hard to predict, there are too many factors to consider such as High Altitude Sickness, avalanches, rock slides and even just poor luck, such as slipping at the wrong moment. Then what happens in the event of injury? Helicopters are possible, but only to certain elevations. In the end, it is still always going to be a challenge between man and the mountains. ►



Another esteemed climber is Usha Bista, a lady above the rest, in the country, literally, and probably has more experience of Himalayan dangers than most of her male counterparts.

THE HUNGRY BUNCH

Antonio has been building a strong team of Nepali climbers, who are both aware of the dangers and equally hungry, to explore the unknown parts of their country. They are people who are well tuned-in, to the dangers of Nepali mountain exploration.

The team includes noteworthy climbers, like Chotemba Sherpa of Makalu, who since the age of 15, has worked his way up from being a porter, using deep determination and passion. He has been part of both Nepali Himalayan and French Alpine expeditions for a long time. To date he has notched 14 Himalayan peaks to his belt. Another esteemed climber is Usha Bista, a lady above the rest, in the country, literally, and probably has more experience of Himalayan dangers than most of her male counterparts. Three years before, she lost her thumb on the Hillary Step, while ascending Mount Everest; it was her first attempt. It had to be cut off due to frostbite, after she was left behind by her colleagues, as they continued on up to the top of the world. Thankfully a kind Canadian woman came along and helped her, slowly, back down. Since then she has been climbing peaks with gusto and determination, and not just here, but some of the worlds biggest peaks in Australia and Russia. On top of that she went back and scaled Mt. Everest and any fears she may have had.

As for the man at the wheel, he has his own long-line of credentials, well built since he left his home in Seville, in sunny Spain, many years ago. Antonio arrived to Nepal after seven years of cutting out new tracks, through South American rainforests, mostly in Columbia and Panama. Also, he has spent much time climbing and exploring around California's Sierra Nevada mountains. Then for fun he added healthy amounts of adrenaline packed motocross (driving special motorbikes over rough terrain), and bucket loads of mountain biking to his repertoire.



The team seems strong, definitely so as a group of individuals, they are thankfully aware of what lies ahead. Often we tend to forget how truly dangerous it can be up there, especially when what we see of the place are picturesque images of magical places. We rarely tend to think of the underlying currents of danger that exists when one truly 'goes off the beaten track'. There will be no aid posts or doctors to help in the event of mishap, they will be for the most part, on their own, with their own skills to depend on. Every single item of equipment and food has to be carried, and luxuries like hot washes and full meals will become a distant memory. But that is the life of explorers, it wasn't much better for Dr.

Livingston when he disappeared into the dark heart of Africa centuries ago, looking for the source of the River Nile. Exploration will still always be exploration, even in this, the 21st Century.

Ironically the team plans that once the far-western exploration project ends, they will raft down the mighty Karnali River, which runs not far from Jumla, all the way to Bardia on the Indian border. A wild glint appears as he says it, perhaps he can already feel the adrenalin rush of riding such a colossal amount of water. Why not? Better than walking back down, and it is always good to have a change in the mode that ones travels. It will be a hell of a way to wrap up the mission, and welcome respite on the

legs, which I am sure will be well worn out by then.

NO REST FROM ONE'S PASSION

When Antonio is not roaming the mountains, he keeps himself away in Pharping, a few kilometers outside of Kathmandu city, tucked in next to the mountains of the valley. Even there he has not been resting on any laurels, and has discovered a new hot-spring, known only to a few locals and unheard of within the valley. Antonio smiles as he tells how the locals go to boil their eggs in the water; it is that hot. When not busy with his passion for exploration, he keeps himself busy studying Buddhism with the numerous lamas, in the monasteries ▶



It will be an opportunity for people to get a concise set of teachings daily, as well as yoga, *pranayama* (breathing) and numerous other learnings, as they stay at the monastery.

now dotted around the area. And, he is about to start a new kind of trekking route from there, something else that is new in Nepal, moving away again from the conventional style.

Now, they have created a trekking package for people eager to learn. The idea is simple, even possibly enlightening (for some). The trek will start off with six days of Buddhist teachings, from the High Lama of the Chen Buddhist Centre, who is qualified to teach novice outsiders. Such a Lama is not easy to find, due to the total differences in cultures that exist between the east and west. It will be an opportunity for people to get a concise set of teachings daily, as well as yoga, *pranayama* (breathing) and numerous other learnings, as they stay at the monastery.

Then starts trekking and camping for six to seven days, up to the Tibet

border, towards Rasuwagadhi, following the new *Tamang Heritage Trail*. Never really moving beyond the 2000-ish m. mountains. It is aimed at being a trek that just about anybody, at any level of experience can both manage and enjoy. All along the journey the group will be accompanied by a learned monk, who will help keep the teaching going, and assist with practicing and perfecting, what has been learned. Upon their return, there will be another two days of teachings, with the High Lama, further perfecting the students learnings. This will give participants the opportunity to ask any new questions that have evolved since there time away. There will be also opportunities for lifesaving splashes in the nearby secret hot springs, before and after their jaunt up the mountain. Antonio emphasises his belief in the importance of fusing learning and

culture in a non-detrimental way. Even just finding a High Lama and centre capable of teaching foreigners such a grand subject as Buddhism has been a task for him, but a worthwhile one nonetheless, he says.

GETTING IT TOGETHER

As we talk more, I ask how the financing will happen. The hope is that the application to *Nat' Geo'*, will be accepted, it seems it will, he has gotten great feedback, but it will only cover part of the costs. The Trekking Association is on board, as is the Tourism Board, as well as just about anyone else he can think of, is supporting the far-western project. But still the numbers are coming up a little short and he is hoping it will all come together as the departure time gets closer. As for other projects in the future with *Enlightenment Treks and Expeditions*, Antonio will always aim at exploration and feels many other people with experience in mountain travelling will be interested in joining this style. So he aims to mold trekking and exploration in as many projects as possible in the future, getting groups of experienced climbers and trekkers to join and participate from abroad. Those who have a deep interest in doing more than just trek through the older, more established routes.

Thankfully it is still possible to find adventure in the world, and those willing to explore it. I wish Antonio all the best with his unceasing efforts that will help us understand our own part of the world better. It brings great comfort to know that even today such grand tasks are still possible, and that there still exists people with the steel and hunger required for such monumental tasks. "Onwards and upwards", as the old explorers call went, seems most fitting for this team and leader. ■

You can contact the Enlightenment team via their website info@enlightenmenttreks.com. Pat Kauba is a freelance writer and photographer with a respect for the questing of new discoveries. He can be contacted at patkauba@gmail.com.

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Thin Places Pt. 2

Pilgrimage to the Khembalung Caves

Text By ANN ARMBRECHT

Almost two decades ago, anthropologist Ann Armbrecht joined a group of Rai villagers on an arduous mountain pilgrimage to the sacred caves of Khembalung, in eastern Nepal. The story began in last month's magazine. Here, in the second and concluding part of the story, Ann continues and concludes the ritual journey after describing her close relationship with the women of Hedangna village.



Barun River Valley

I often joined the women in the fields in Hedangna, helping with digging and planting and cutting and carrying, doing whatever I could to create something in common for us to share. Though I was slower and clumsier, they welcomed the free labor and perhaps the novelty of having me around. During breaks in the work, when we were gathered on a rock or under a tree, the women, old and young, would reach for my hands and rub their fingers slowly across my skin. They would turn over my hand and feel the palm, pulling the fingers up close to their eyes, and they would comment to each other on how smooth and white it was. Then they would hold up their own hands and feet, which were tough and dark, next to mine and shake their heads. They lived by their hands, they would say, and I lived by my head.

The women in Hedangna want skin like mine. They want some padding in their lives, want to be able to stay in side for a while and let their bodies become smooth and white and soft. I went to Hedangna because I wanted skin like theirs. I wanted its thickness and its toughness, a toughness that seemed to be a sign of an internal strength, a thickening from the inside that allowed them to get by without a lot of external support. Their dark, callused skin enabled them to walk through their lives barefoot, enduring, not avoiding, the sharpness and the pain encountered along the way.

I was raised in a world where the answer to a problem or the solution to pain was always out there, around the next

corner, in the next place or next job or next year. I was educated away from my home, taught to believe there was more to be gained by moving forward than by staying put. I came to Hedangna, a community where people still farm their land their ancestors cleared eleven generations ago, because I wanted to learn what it took to stay at home. I wondered what life was like without the leather and the plastic. I came to Hedangna because I wanted to relearn what it meant to live from the inside, with my hands and my feet and my heart – because I wanted to remember what their ways of living have never let them forget. And as I climbed the rock face to the Khembalung caves, I found myself entering one of the thinnest places I had ever been.

Two hours after leaving the valley floor, the trail leveled, and we began to climb the final section through thick clumps of juniper. Spiky roots and sharp stones under the juniper bushes made me aware of my bare feet, by now used to the cold. While climbing, we had only been able to see the rock immediately ahead and the valley dropping out below. As we came over the last incline, the most sacred site in the upper Arun Valley – the Khembalung caves – suddenly loomed before us: an immense amphitheater carved out of the cliff with a torrent of water pouring from an opening at the top of the cave. Buddhists say Padmasambhava meditated here on his way to Tibet. Hindus say Shiva bathed here on the evening before his wedding to Parvati. Now, snatches from the high-pitched chants of the Chetri pilgrims drifted down from the base of the amphitheater.

We approached the cave from below, first stopping at a smaller stone cairn to hang offerings of narrow thin bits of colored cotton cloth. Then, in single file, we walked through the waterfall. Those before me stood directly under the torrent and drenched themselves in the freezing water. It was still drizzling, and cold. Already chilled, I skirted the edges, hoping no one would notice, and followed the others up the last rocky stretch and into the cave.

The air inside was cold and dry and laced with the sweet smell of burning juniper. Red and green, blue and yellow prayer flags brought by the Bhotes and attached to long sticks rose out of a pile of stones in the center of the cave. Smaller bits of cloth were attached to sticks or rocks. String candles, clumps of

wildflowers, red *tika* powder, coins, even a watch were placed haphazardly on the pile of stones beneath the prayer flags.

Until now, people had been quiet, focused on the trail and the destination. Once in the amphitheater, the atmosphere changed. There was work to be done, and everyone set out busily to do it. Two women pulled out clumps of string that they coiled into bundles, dipped in *ghee*, and lit as candles. One couple carefully placed a small tin trident below the prayer flags. A young man who had come on the pilgrimage to assist his mother sat off to the side, staring at the opening in the top of the cave through which the water flowed. There was no way people could have made this hole or the waterfall, he told me. It could only have been made by a god. That is why we had to give offerings. A middle-aged man who had moved to Hedangna from southern Nepal paused in his preparations to scan over the amphitheater. He had heard about this place for a long time, he told me, since he was young. “Now that we are finally here,” he said, “we have to take our time and make sure we do things right.”

The time spent in the cave was not what I think of as spiritual. There were too many people, too much commotion, too much concern about this piece of string, that piece of cloth. I was too preoccupied with how we were going to get back down the cliff. But the cave was awesome. Now the voices and din echoed off its high ceiling, but I imagined what it would be like to be there alone, with only the sound of the wind and the torrent of water spraying against the rock. Outside, the ground dropped out abruptly and steeply, and all I could see was the Barun River, silver and silent, winding its way through the distant green meadows far below.

We finished at Shiva’s cave, walked down a narrow path through the juniper, around the ridge to a smaller cave set in the rock face. For Hindus, this is the cave where she is said to have bathed. For Buddhists, this cave is where Padmasambhava and his consort, Yeshe Tsogyel, are said to have stayed on their way from India to Tibet. We took turns crawling into a space that would hold only three or four at a time. The air was pungent from the burning butter. Light from string butter candles set on the floor illuminated exposed chunks of quartz crystals along the inside of the cave. The rest of the cave was in

shadows. Several red plastic bangles and a white cotton shirt sewn by a tailor in Hedangna had been placed amidst the usual bits of cloth and coins: offerings brought by a couple seeking a child.

Outside, more juniper was burned. One of the Brahmans chanted prayers for the well-being of our group; we tossed bits of uncooked rice into the juniper smoke, and the Brahman wiped the ashes on our foreheads as a blessing, a *tika*. We then began the descent. Not until we reached the dirt trail coming up from the valley floor, two hours later, did I begin to relax. I paused to pull my boots back on and followed the others back to the cave where we had spent the previous night. The women who had been unable to go to the sacred caves because they were menstruating sat by a smoldering, smoky fire. They added some wood to the coals to heat water for tea, and we snacked on roasted corn flour mixed with sugar. The two oldest women said they were too tired to continue north up the valley and that they would wait for us there. We packed our loads and set out once again.

The valley floor was brilliant green from the summer rains, and there was finally a bit of blue sky. The air on my bare feet that morning had dried the skin, and the raw parts felt less painful. With the climb to the caves over, I felt carefree for the first time in days. As we walked up the valley, one man speculated that the weather had turned because of the particularly strong dharma (spiritual practice) of someone in our group. The idea that sun and rain responded to our thoughts and actions reassured me somehow and made me feel less exposed in this vast landscape. We walked until early evening and spent that night in a huge open cave at 15,000 feet. The next morning we climbed the remaining few hours so that we could bathe in the headwaters of the Barun on the morning of the full moon.

The next evening, another cave, another long day walking in more misty rain. There had been confusion over a bag I had left behind with the grandmothers, who we discovered had decided to head home before us. One of the women reprimanded me for not taking responsibility for my own things. A man who had told me the previous day to leave the extra weight behind looked at me with disdain and said that he had told me he would carry the bag. I turned and walked off to the river’s edge to fill my ▶

water bottle. It was dusk, and the sky was still overcast. [AS] I stood on the banks of the Barun River, alone, I thought about how hard it was trying – trying to walk fast enough, to say the right thing, to understand the right way trying to get it right. In Hedangna, I had novels to read and a tiny room with a door I could shut, a door that, oddly enough, was what protected me from this start realization of my solitude.

For the past five days, these barriers had been stripped away, and this sudden and complete exposure made me acutely aware of the gap between my world and the world of my companions. I stared at the cold gray rapids thundering through the cold gray fog. Why was I here, alone, in the middle of nowhere? Why did I keep going out on my own into the wind and rain and the wet?

I inhaled the cold, moist air and searched the shadows beneath the Khembalung caves, searched the thick fir trees clinging to the edges of the valley floor. The mist moved swiftly and silently along the banks of the Barun. The silty river roared. Then the clouds suddenly opened and a shaft of light broke through the fog, turning the gray water silver, the black fir a deep green. An angular cliff appeared out of the clouds overhead. The red-gray granite, softened by the yellow evening light, was framed by the heavy dark clouds. And then, just as suddenly, the fog closed in again, and night fell.

I took a deep breath and turned to walk back to the cave to help prepare dinner. In the cave, a younger woman came over to tell me that they were all with their families and neighbors, that for them it was as if they had never left home. She said that they had forgotten that it was different for me, that sometimes, she thought, I must feel lonely or homesick, and that she hoped I was OK.

During the whole trip, I felt an ache in my chest, a longing that would not go away. I thought there must be a place, somewhere, where I could be held, here, no, on the inside. If only I could get to that place, I was sure the yearning would disappear. Now I realize that this feeling of aloneness is not something that ever goes away. It is always there, underneath the words spoken, inside my boots. It's what comes up in thin places. It's what you feel then the skin peels off your feet.

Three months earlier at a cremation in Hedangna, as we watched the burned

body float down the Arun River, the mother of the dead man held up her hand in front of me. It was cracked and dark. "We all feel love," she told me. "We all feel pain. We all bleed when we are cut. It is only the *mindbum* (oral tradition) that is different." The skin contains the blood, preventing it from spilling over; it creates the distinctions that enable us to live. But the skin can become too thick. It can keep us from seeing blood underneath, from sensing what Roberto Calasso calls the "connection of everything with everything, which alone gives meaning to life." It can keep us from experiencing the sacred.

"...in the moment I felt most alone I realized I was never alone. The sacred is always there waiting to wake us and be seen by us, like a tree waiting to greet our newly opened eyes."

We make pilgrimages to sacred places, but the places themselves are not inherently sacred. We enter the sacred when we let go of the fear of being exposed: Only when I gave up trying to hide what was inside did the boundaries between us begin to dissolve. And in the moment I felt most alone, I realized I was never alone. The sacred, as Calasso writes, is always there "waiting to wake us and be seen by us, like a tree waiting to greet our newly opened eyes." It is simply up to us to let ourselves see.

Having reached our destination, everyone was suddenly in a hurry to begin the trip home. Rice fields needed to be weeded, millet planted, houses looked after. We left early the following morning and walked twelve hours, over a 15,090-foot scree pass, and then descended steeply past grazing yaks and shepherds' huts. We walked on after dark for an hour, searching for a place to spend the night. Finally, ten of us crowded into a small empty bamboo hut. I had a mat, so I kicked away the cow and goat dung, spread it out on the dank floor of the attached livestock shelter, and tried to sleep. We again woke before dawn and started walking hard and fast until we reached another shepherd's hut where we stopped to drink some sour buttermilk. Since climbing to the cave, I had given up bandaging or even looking at my feet, but this time, I was no longer the only one limping. The women leaned heavily on walking sticks and groaned

with each step. We joked and laughter to keep our minds off the pain.

The trail continued to descend steeply. Yaks gave way to water buffalo and cows, and we began to meet shepherds from Hedangna. Finally, we could see the village, far down the ridge. We had been rushing, and now the women wanted to linger, to hold on to the remaining bits of time that were outside regular, routine time. We paused on top of the ridge to eat the last of our corn flour. One woman signed and said she was so happy up here, in the meadows and the mountains, that she didn't want to go home. Two women separated the tiny

wildflowers they had collected from the fields beyond Yangle Meadow to bring as gifts for friends who had had to stay home. Two others divided a bottle of water, taken from the headwaters of the Barun. The sun was beginning to set.

We began the last stretch, down and down. We came across leeches for the first time but were too tired to pull them off. An hour later we entered the edges of the village, in the dark. I was the only one with a torch and my batteries were dim, so our pace slowed to a crawl. The trail wound beneath thick clumps of bamboo towering over the stone and mud houses. People broke off from the group as we passed the narrow paths to their homes. Eventually, it was only the two oldest women and myself, walking down to the houses at the bottom of the village. We finally arrived, I dropped by pack and leaned it against the stone wall. Someone went inside to cook rice. The children gathered around, and I sat on the mud porch to unlace my boots. My socks were wet with blood. I carefully peeled them off so the air could begin the slow process of healing – and thickening – the exposed raw skin. ■

Ann Armbrecht is an anthropologist and educator, and the author of *Settlements of Hope* (1989) and *Thin Places: A Pilgrimage Home* (2010). This article first appeared in *Terra Nova* 3 (1), 1998, and is reprinted by permission of Ann Armbrecht and The MIT Press. Ann Armbrecht can be contacted at a.armbrecht@gmail.com.

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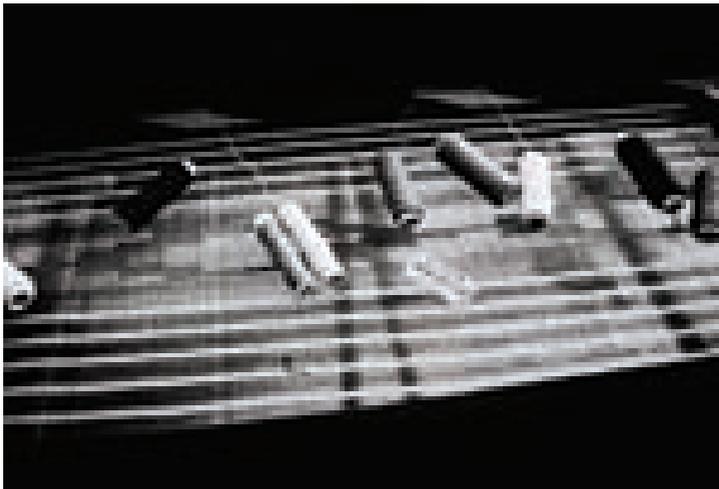
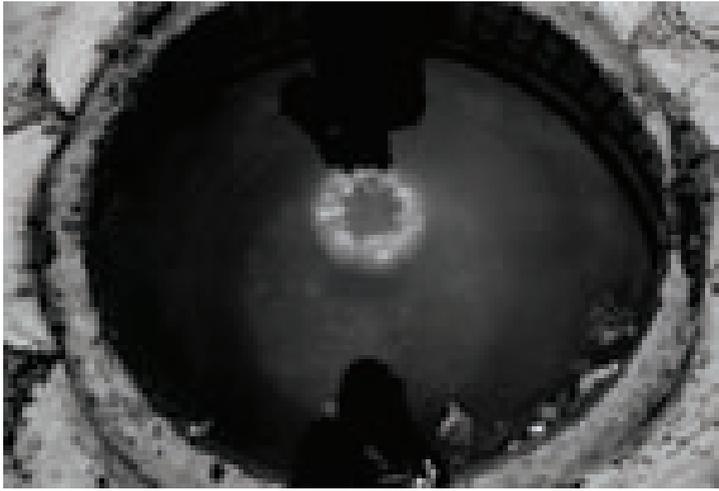
Text & PhotosBy PAT KAUBA



When sitting with the *old-timers* listening to tales regaled about pristine Nepal from 20, 30, even 50 years ago; I would feel remorseful, cheated, like I missed the best part of the movie. *'Oh I remember Snyambu when it was all rice-fields from Chetrapathi and you had to be home by nightfall or the leopards would get you'* or how about *'we used to swim in the Bagmati River when I was a child'*.

This is an ongoing project capturing glimpses of a disappearing time and land via the medium of black and white film. I always found this medium gives the connotation of age or olden days, whereas modern digital color gives a feeling of near futuristic viewing. My work doubles in reminding us of the beauty of ageless time, with a method that is also fast-fading—like the glimpses I grabbed. ■

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For the love of nature

Text & Photos By HARI MAHARJAN(ECS Media)

Nature was, is and will always be my favorite source of inspiration to read into myself, to understand myself and to create from that process. She is the friend I share my ideas with; a canvas upon which with the strokes of my brush, I paint my composition. I find solace in the myriad shades of the hours, as light plays with my friend, showing off all that she has to show.

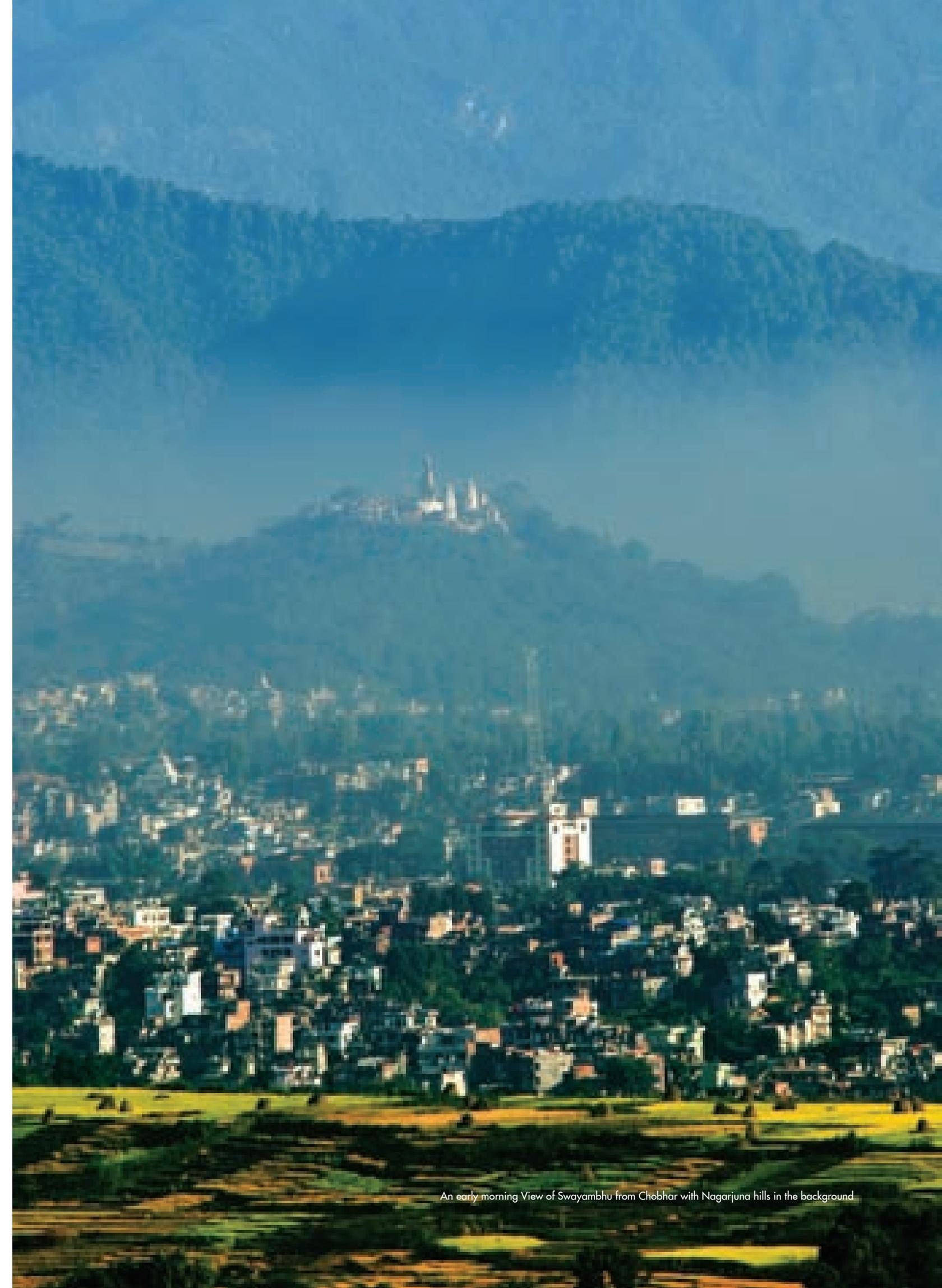
Nature is my muse when I need one, the best one there is for my artistic sensibilities. I bounce back ideas with her,

her responses captured in my instrument - always shy of getting it all, of understanding her fully and explaining her through my art.

Over the years, as I changed, transforming with the passage of each day, my surroundings remained the same. All of it changed by not changing at all, with only my perspectives - some sharpened, some dulled by the passage of times - changing. My love for nature however, remains, as buoyant, enthusiastic and exciting as a schoolboy's first love. ■



Late afternoon mood in Bardiya, Thakurdwara



An early morning View of Swayambhu from Chobhar with Nagarjuna hills in the background



Monsoon in Fewa Taal, Pokhara



An evening view of Jumla



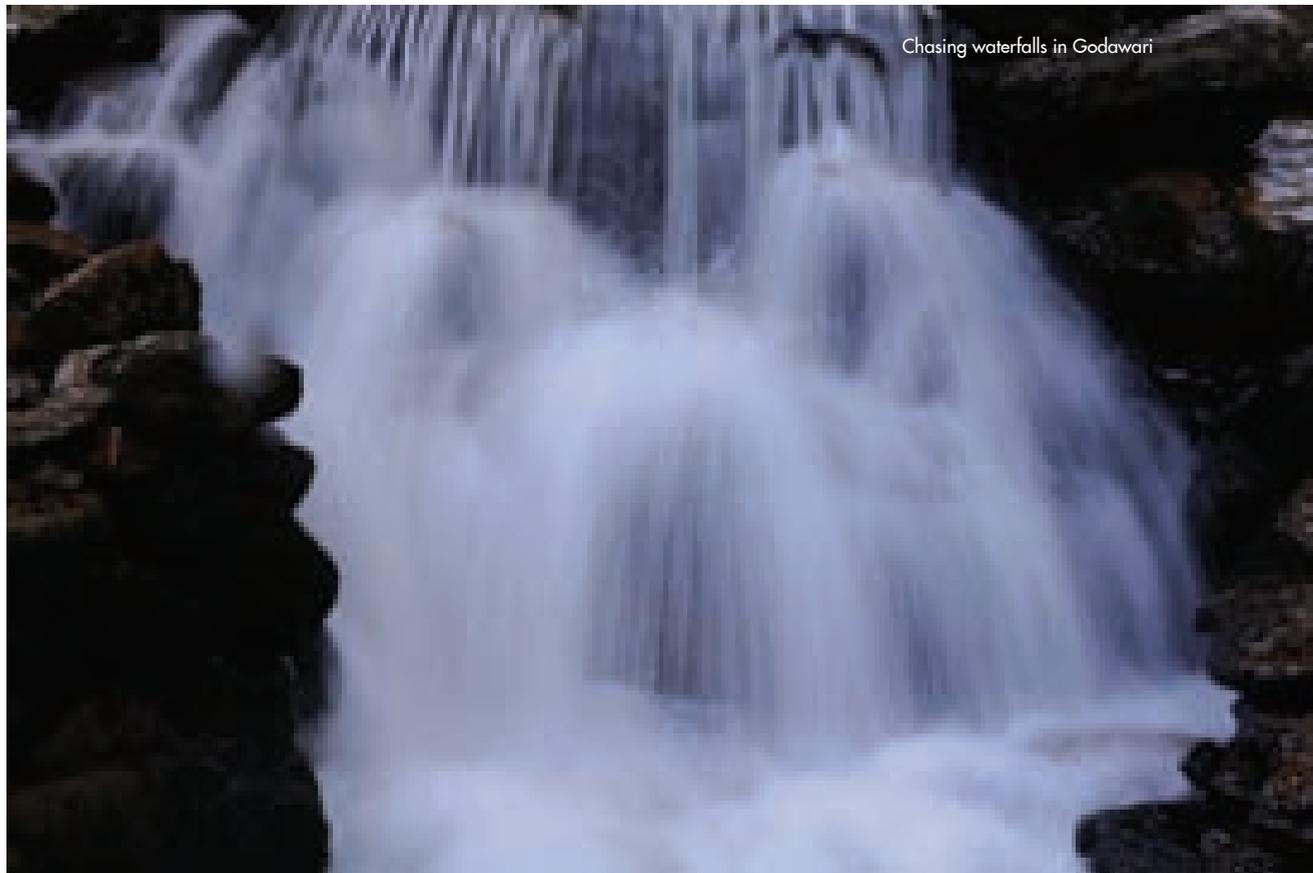
Capturing the night scene of Mount Numbur in Phaplu



The quiet Lubhu Village



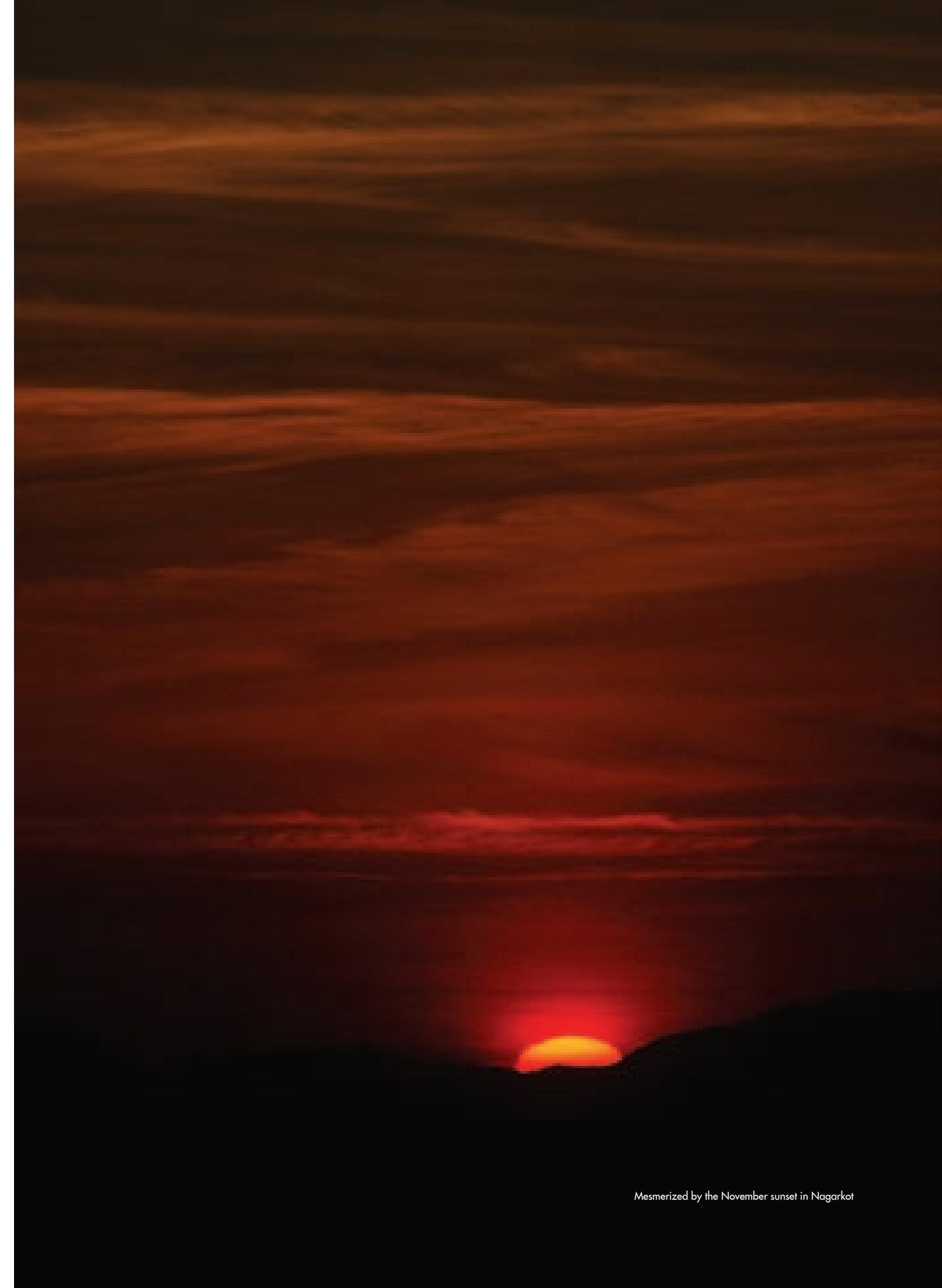
Bardiya sunset



Chasing waterfalls in Godawari



Tundikhel during early monsoon season



Mesmerized by the November sunset in Nagarkot



The Nepali Way

An ECS NEPAL photo competition

Food

If we were to exclude food from our conversations, half of the Nepali population would have no clue as to how to start a conversation. (“Khana khanu bhayo?” “Chya khanu bhayo?” etc.) Food is more than just nourishment for a Nepali though, it’s role in Nepali culture is honestly, quite major. Every Nepali ritual, from birth to death, requires distinct offerings of food. To ensure success, every undertaking starts with and ends with - a *sagun*.

First

Aakriti Karna
Kupondol, Lalitpur

A man sipping tea during heavy rains.

Second

Prabina Shrestha

University Road, Kuleshwor, Kathmandu

Breakfast - *Sel* and *gwaramari* are two of the most delicious local breakfast items. I miss them more now that I'm away from home and appreciate the man's skills even more after trying to make *sel* on my own this Tihar.



Third

Sushil Sthapit

Kupondol, Lalitpur

Juju Dhan, the popular milk curd from Bhaktapur, being sold on the street.

CONSOLATION

Kamal Shakya

Paknajole, Kathmandu

People from neighboring India come to pay their tribute during the annual Devghat Mela in Chitwan.



CONSOLATION

Umes Shrestha

Lalitpur

Traditional Newari delicacies - *sukuti*, *momo*, *aaila* and *chhyang* - at Lahana, Kirtipur.



Sumedh Shakya

Kupondol, Lalitpur

Garlic, an essential ingredient in a Nepali kitchen.



Ujjwal Gurung

Chundevis, Chakrapath, Kathmandu

Sanu Tamang, an 11-year-old student at Banepa, gobbles her meal to get to school on time, while her dog patiently waits for leftovers.



Tomoko Ueno Ghale

Shree Marga, Lazimpat, Kathmandu

An *achaar* vendor and his customers; all Nepalis seem to like a bit of hot *achaar* with their meals.



Sajana Shrestha

Kupondol, Lalitpur

Local bananas on sale on the Prithivi Highway.



Pradip Ratna Tuladhar

School of Creative Communications, Kupondol, Lalitpur

An offering made to the newly married bride from her parents marking her final feast at her own home, before leaving for her new home.

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CRAFT

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Dhukuti Celebrates Christmas



Dhukuti, the retail outlet and promoter of ACP organized an annual Christmas celebration program at its Kupondole showroom for their stakeholders, grass root producers, regular customers and staff on 4 December. The event focused on the promotion of various local craft products used for Christmas decorations such as straw wreaths, wooden windows and bells.

“Even though Christmas is not our festival, local handicraft is very popular among foreigners as well as Nepalese who celebrate Christmas,” informed Executive Director Mira Bhattarai. According to her, the small-scale producers from Thankot were surprised to see the use of their products, simple straw wreaths as decorative items. Dhukuti has been catering to Nepal’s handicraft industry since 1984.

7th Craft Competition 2011



The Federation of Handicraft Association of Nepal (FHAN) organized the 7th Craft Competition 2011 during the 9th Handicraft Trade Fair inside the venue itself. There were three categories of participation- paper items, silver jewelries and paubha paintings.

One day was given to the five participants who prepared paper items. Two days were allocated for the six participants preparing

silver jewelries and the ten participants painting paubha were given five days to complete their work.

Winners were announced on the last day of the fair, during the closing ceremony. Sundar Banjade was awarded with the Best Artist Paubha Award. The Best Artist Silver Jewelry Award went to Siddhant Shakya and Sabin Bhatta was given the Best Artist Paper Award.

KOH KAINED

KOH KAINED - the name implies the attraction the store has among its clients. Koh Kained was started a year before in November 2010. The store offers wide range of items from clothing to customized jewelry and furniture. Intricately woven cashmere shawls, stoles and scarves and knit wears are available in various styles that were designed for this fall.

The store also has kids wear along with home furnishings. The store also takes orders for customized jewelry and furniture to meet the demands and satisfaction of customers. Handmade and crafted home accessories made up of natural fibers are also available in Koh Kained. The special feature of Koh Kained is that it deals with varieties of products and has something



for everyone in store. However, its plus point comes with it choosing to use natural fibers and fabrics. It aims to draw aesthetic appeal towards its products and successfully does so by creating a line of beautiful products that clearly does not compromise in comfort or quality.

(Nimma Adhikari)

Terracotta Craft Exhibition

Mato Pottery & Craft held a two-day exhibition of terracotta craft starting 23 November at Pipal in Gairidhara. The exhibition aimed at generating youth interest and showing them that working with clay is a legitimate way to earn a living as well as a powerful way to express creativity. Terracotta artwork was available for purchase at the shop; ranging from tea and dining sets to classic Nepali-style clay lanterns. Also available were vases featuring intricate designs and life-like effigies of gods and people exemplifying the detail masters of this craft can produce.

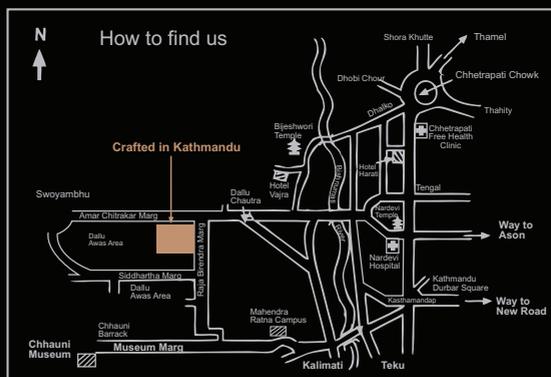
The event was organized by Shoba Rayamajhi of 1905 restaurant, who also participates in crafting clay pieces. She spoke lovingly of the art: “I have been working with clay for about four years now and I really wish I had more time for the craft. It’s my passion but I just don’t have time these days.” The Pipal shop also features other Nepali craft goods, from stained glass pieces to various lotions.

(Bhisma Thapa)

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Crafted in The Village

A café 'with a difference', The Village promotes locally produced handicrafts with much creativity and zeal.

Text By NIKITA TRIPATHI

The Village Café in Pulchowk is a place to be, a small yet well-managed place at that. Besides the café, it houses a huge collection of handicraft items that cater to a customer range that goes beyond expats. The items are displayed with as much creativity as it must have taken to make them - a bulletin board and a hanger by the front door with bags pinned to the board very decoratively.

The café is an amalgamation of both traditional and contemporary. Being a traditional Newari eatery, there are acrylic paintings of Newari women preparing various delicacies. The juxtaposition presents a contrast with Mithila paintings beside the wooden benches. The handicraft show room however is on the inside.

The product range available at The Village has been categorized into kitchen items, bedroom items, metal handicrafts and various apparels. According to WE (Empowering Women) member Jyoti Tuladhar, initially only items from SAARC countries were displayed but it has been a year since seventeen members

of SABAH Nepal have participated and their items are also on for sale now.

Rooms are small and items are stacked almost everywhere; the variety of items comes to one's rescue. As soon as you step inside, you see metal handicrafts on the left with the inside full of shawls, handbags, *thailis*, metal brooches, *potes* and small accessories. One cannot help but notice the cloth calendar on the right-hand side corner of the room. Everything inside the room is a traditionally-inclined form of creativity.

On the right is the room with various apparels from SABAH Nepal's October fashion show - Ananta: The Enchanting Weave. Dhaka is a prominent part of



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the items on display, but one can sort through items made from *allo* fiber, *raadi*, silk, cotton, hemp, bamboo and banana. Items in this part of the building include garbs like kurthas, dresses, bags, caps and gloves.

Two rooms upfront display bedroom items and kitchen items each. From bed-sheets to cushions and even fabric curtains and the bed are for sale. The curtains are priced at NRs. 1100 each. Apart from the cutlery sets in the kitchen section, aprons, organic tea, coffee, masala, juice, beans, lentils and hand-made wrapping papers are also on display.

The handicraft initiative at The Village provides a market for home-based female producers who otherwise would have no place to put their goods on display. The showroom in Lazimpat has been catering to this need for almost two years now and the showroom in Pulchowk has witnessed a growth in number of customers who initially only comprised of foreigners and a few UN staffs. ■



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Newari craft Revisited

A small initiative makes a big difference in preserving and promoting Newar art and craft.

Text By PRIANKA RAUNIYAR

Newa Décor, a small social venture started by two vibrant yet demure budding entrepreneurs Urmila Malakar Shrestha and Rita Shrestha, is an attempt at preserving traditional Newari wooden and metal craft. With the dwindling interest in the old and an unnerving charm for the new, Nepali craft needs the revival and preservation this venture strives for. Rita Shrestha believes, with this effort they are trying to bring the traditional and blend it in with the modern. It's a tough task but they are determined to take the little steps hoping to contribute in conserving a culture that they identify most with.

Newa Décor were selected as Change-Fusion Nepal's 2009 Fellows. This helped them gain some visibility and economic support since both the founders had a vision and the grit but not the financial ability to pull it off. Now, Newa Décor has

a retail outlet at Change-Fusion Nepal's shop at Babarmahal Revisited. The store holds products ranging from wooden crafted corner sets (known as *Tashi* in Newari), metal show pieces of gods and goddesses and smaller gift items like hand-carved pens and key chains along with Newari paintings and silver jewelry. Newa Décor is essentially working as a supplier at the moment, even taking orders over the phone. They customize your needs and provide unique ancient Newari designs collated and inspired by temples and the very few old Newari houses in the valley, especially around the durbar squares.

They customize your needs and provide unique ancient Newari designs collated and inspired by temples and the very few old Newari houses in the valley, especially around the durbar squares.



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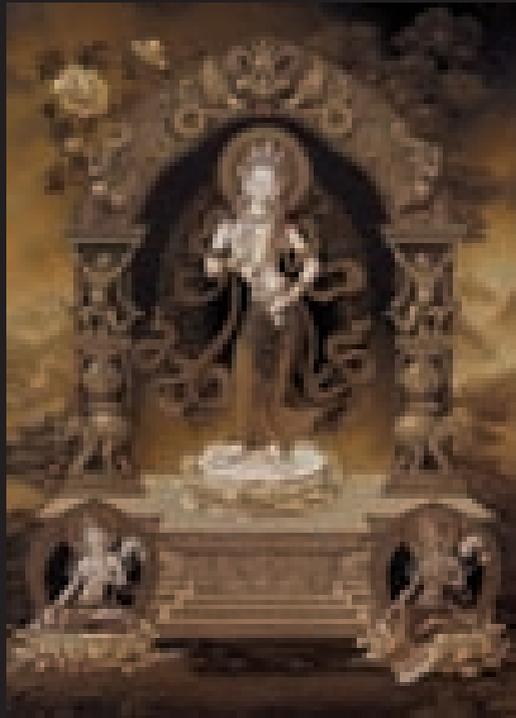
The *tashi* is one of the rare crafts that Newa Décor specializes in, remarks Rita. It is essentially a beautifully carved, wooden corner rack, which can be wall mounted in living or bedrooms to utilize the space to keep your books, showpieces etc. The holder is carved with either *mayur* (peacock) or *sala* (horse) motifs and their names derived accordingly as *Mekha Tashi* (Newari for peacock) and *Sala Tashi*. Back in the old days, these *tashis* were



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used to hold oil lamps and various religious metal statues. Similarly, the *Sukunda* which is again an essential Newari piece, is an intricately designed metal oil lamp that protrudes as a *dhyo* and has a small oil reservoir with a tiny spoon attached to add oil to a lit lamp. It comes in different sizes and is often engraved with images of the Ganesha and other gods. Enchanting yet extremely handy, the *sukunda* is one of the main sale items Newa Décor offers.

A social initiative, though in its very early stages, Newa Décor is trying to motivate local traditional artisans to preserve their ethnic identity and creative skills by bringing to fore elements of the Newari culture that would otherwise have frittered away to oblivion. It hasn't been easy she claims since we only had the drive to protect and limited knowledge or business expertise. But like with any project, though the risk of failure is present, the will to conserve and contribute even in the slightest way possible to uplift the craftsmen and allow these amazing skills to pass on to the new generation, should triumph. ■



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Sustainable Solutions

Sustainable alternatives to commercial clothing and accessories that might outlast the consumer

Text By EVANGELINE NEVE

For years now, the Roses' company, Wild Fibers, has been on an evolving journey to produce the best quality thread and fabric possible, using locally sourced, sustainable, wild growing plants. Wild Fibers had its inception in 1993, born of a desire to provide a quality alternative to cotton. Cotton, now grown all over the developing world, not only uses a large amount of chemical pesticides, but also the need for it pushes up prices which, understandably, causes it to be grown instead of food crops, and that usually in countries where food is scarce or in limited production.

Originally, their desire was to use hemp, and after setting up business in Nepal, they spread the word to villagers that they would buy their hemp. Only after stripping off the bark and beginning work on it did they find that as it had gone to seed already, it was too tough for clothing. With 44 tons of the wood and



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Another item they are extremely proud of is their new line of bags—as with the shirts, these might set you back a little more than your average local purchase, but count on them lasting forever.

no use for it, the company nearly ended up in the paper business—only to be saved by a coincidental encounter with a villager wearing an old jacket made from nettle. The wild and sustainable fabric long searched for was in hand.

It took several years of difficulties before the business became what it is today—a premier producer of natural nettle thread, which the Roses export, supply local producers with, as well as manufacture their own line of quality clothing. You can see a large variety of what can be made with this versatile plant at their showroom in Thamel Chowk, under the Yeti Airlines office. Rugs, towels, bags of all sizes, slippers—and much more. Their bestselling items are their shirts—blended with cotton and nettle and woven with a quality and strength that ensures your clothing might even outlast you. Another item they are extremely proud of is their new line of bags—as with the shirts, these might set you back a little more than your average local purchase, but count on them lasting forever.

Currently, there isn't a machine here capable of spinning nettles into a fine

enough thread for making cloth that is 100 % nettle—ironically because the tensile strength of the nettle thread is such that it breaks machines meant for cotton and wool. So Wild Fibers has ordered a custom built one, and when it arrives perhaps next year, it will take the production of nettle fabric in Nepal to a whole new level. As nettles grow wild all over Nepal, no cultivation or pesticides are needed, and villagers can benefit directly from gathering a product that will still be there tomorrow, and the day after, sustainably reproducing itself with no effort from them and without taking resources that would be used to grow food.

Something that struck me when speaking with the Roses was that here were people who put their money where their mouth was, so to speak, and instead of just preaching about the world's problems, had chosen to do something about it—in the form of a creative and profitable business. If more people did this, there'd be a lot more solutions around. ■

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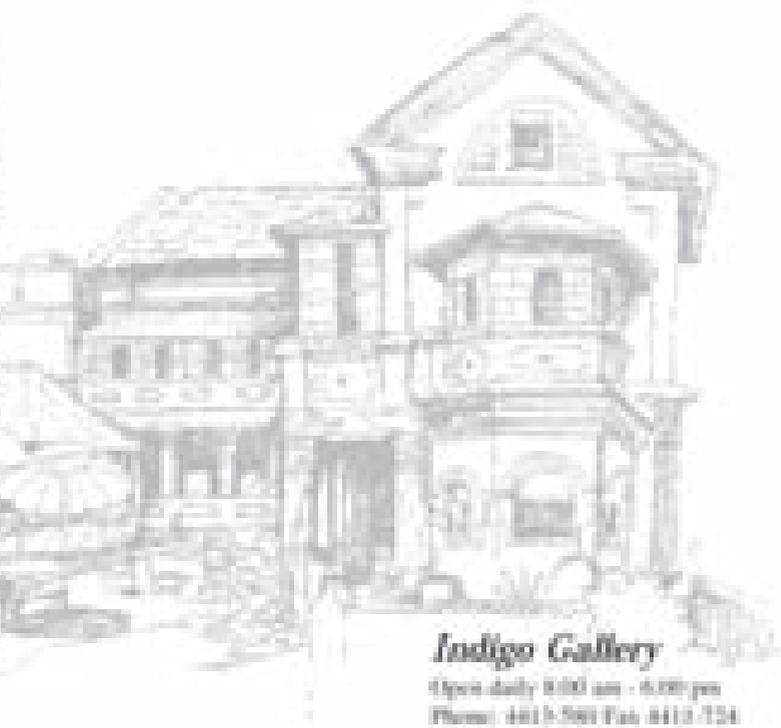
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TRAVEL



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Pokhara Street Festival



The Restaurant and Bar Association Nepal (REBAN) is organizing the 13th Pokhara Street Festival from 28 December for five days. There will be around 150 stalls from Fishtail Gate to Dihikopatan. The festival is organized annually at this time of the year to promote Pokhara and the neighboring areas during the off-season, when activities such as mountaineering, trekking, and rafting are not conducted.

According to the organizers, dances of different ethnic groups such as Gurung, Newars, Tamang, Magar and Tharu will also be featured. Various artists will also entertain the people with Nepali folk and dohori songs. Different activities such as tourist race, boat race, waiter race and other activities will be organized alongside the display of different handicrafts, home-made items and readymade garments.

Annapurna Base Camp to be connected



Internet service will soon be available at Annapurna and Machhapuchhre base camps in the Annapurna region, which at present is only available up to Chhomrong. Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) and Tourism Management Sub-Committee of Chhomrong have been preparing to expand Internet service in the area. The cost of expanding Internet service in the area is estimated at NRs 2 million.

Since a year and a half, four telephone lines of Nepal Telecom distributed via V-SAT technology have been the only medium of communication in the region. A tower with a wireless device will be erected at Chhomrong very soon. ACAP has already provided Rs 500,000 for the project and the sub-committee is chipping in Rs 300,000 while the remaining amount will be arranged locally.

Growth in tourist arrivals

Nepal welcomed half a million tourists via air until November 2011. A total of 501264 tourists entered the country via air during the first eleven months of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 according to Tribhuvan International Airport Immigration Office. The last eleven months have seen consistent growth in arrivals of international tourist to Nepal at an average of 21.5 percent which means around 1,518 visitors a day. A total 58156 tourists visited Nepal via air over the period of eleven months. There has been a healthy rise of 20.3 % in comparison to arrival figure of the same period last year.

Arrivals from India registered growth of 22.1 percent, Sri Lanka of 22.1 percent and Pakistan of 27.4 percent. However, tourist arrivals from Bangladesh witnessed a negative growth of 11.8% this year. Countries like China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea maintained the upward trend with 149.4%, 6.2%, 9%, 16.9% and 11.3% of growth respectively.

The Europe also maintained positive growth except for Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Arrivals from the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand also increased compared to the same month last year.

HAN and CHA come together

Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) and China Tourist Hotel Association (CHA) signed a memorandum of understanding valid for five years on the final day of the three-day World Congress of International Hotel and Restaurant Association (IHRA) on 30 November. HAN President Prasadha B. Pandey and CHA President HAN Ming signed the agreement in the capital.

The agreement focuses on promotion of tourism and hotel-restaurant industry in the two countries as well as to work together in developing and implementing programs and projects related to tourism and hotel-restaurant industry in Nepal and China. According to MoU, HAN and CHA will provide materials related to tourism promotion, especially related with hotel for distribution to agencies, tour operators, travel agents and individual tourists.

International Hotel & Restaurant Association's World Congress : An Overview

Text By MADHAV OM SHRESTHA

Hotel Association Nepal (HAN) successfully hosted the International Hotel & Restaurant Association's 49th World Congress in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28-30 November 2011 for the second time since the first one 26 years ago. The theme of the world congress was *Redefining Excellence in Standards for the Hospitality Industry*.

IH&RA is the only global business organization representing the hospitality industry worldwide. Recognized by the United Nations, the IH&RA monitors and lobbies all international agencies on behalf of the industry. The association brings together 300,000 hotels and 7 million restaurants and employs 60 million people, contributing USD 950 billion annually to the global economy. The IH&RA is a not for profit association.

DELIBERATION IN DIFFERENT SESSIONS

The 49th IH&RA World Congress has discussed few important issues of current world such as: The New Trend in Hospitality in 2011-2012, Climate Change Issues, Sustainability Forum and Biodiversity Emerald Hotels and Nepal Tourism Investment and Realities. Some of the eminent scholars and the experts who participated in the session were Dr. Ghassan Aidi, President of IH&RA, Mr. Frederic Pierret, Executive Director for Program and Coordination at UNWTO, Mr. Casimir Platzed, Vice President of IH&RA and Dr. Wolf Gang Weinz, Director of Hospitality Sector-ILO. Representing Nepal were Mr. Dipendra

Bahadur Chhetri, Vice Chairman of National Planning Commission, Dr. Yub Raj Khatiwada, Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, Dr. Ganesh Raj Joshi, Secretary of Tourism Ministry, Mr. Yogendra Sakya, National Coordinator NTY 2011, Mr. Dipendra Purush Dhakal, Former Tourism Secretary and Mr. Prachanda Man Shrestha, a tourism Expert.

All the sessions were quite interactive and various contemporary issues were raised, including the disclosure that the tourism industry contributes less than 2.5 of the total emission of Co2 worldwide and is still one of the major forces fighting the effects of climate change.

Another vibrant issue raised was that worldwide government's intention to raise taxes on tourism industry. One European country charges as much as 26% VAT but there are governments such as those of France, Serbia and Cyprus who accepted VAT reduction to a single digit for the hospitality sector and/or on the food business. There was a general consensus on the hope that the Government of Nepal would listen to HAN's plea to reduce VAT from 13% to 10%, because it uses more food items that are exempted from taxation.

Another important issue, the standardization of hotels was also discussed in detailed. It was found that only 26% have a system covering other tourist accommodation types. 26% also use it primarily for administrative purposes. In 53% of the cases, the hotel classification system has been devised by national public authorities with the involvement of the private sector. Nepal comes in this category. Since the classification procedure adopted by Nepal is outdated and keeping in mind



the discussions held at the congress, there is an urgent need to revise the procedure. IH&RA's Secretariat assured HAN that it would provide technical support if necessary for revising the classification system in collaboration with the government.

During the session entitled Nepal Tourism Investment & Realities, the Nepal side talked on the congenial environment in Nepal for international investment. All the speakers unanimously put forward the government's liberal policies, security system, friendly industrial environment and laws pertaining to getting back investment and profits for their home countries. Participants of the session were presented with a clear understanding of the investment opportunities in Nepal's tourism sector.

During the discussion, most participants and experts advocated that the tourism industry is an industry that can play a major role in the eradication of poverty. Global data regarding the opening of 10 hotels every day and 100 jobs by each hotel clearly shows its potential for economic development.

Hosting the IH&RA's 49th World Congress is indeed a great achievement for HAN and the country. With hard work, HAN was able to bring the event to Kathmandu in order to promote the country amidst the 30 participating countries. About 200 national and international, prominent hoteliers, experts, consultants attended the program. The positive impact of the event towards improving Nepal's image and bringing more tourists in the years to come will be proved in the coming days. ■

The author is Executive Director of Hotel Association Nepal (HAN).

One European country charges as much as 26% VAT but there are governments such as those of France, Serbia and Cyprus who accepted VAT reduction to a single digit for the hospitality sector and/or on the food business.

Sanctuary away from home

Shangri-la Village Resort, a boutique hotel in Pokhara, offers everything contemporary and Nepali, and does it quite effortlessly.

Text By NIMMA ADHIKARI

My father is from Pokhara, so when people ask me where I am from, for some reason that is what my answer is. However, I am a Kathmanduite, inside and out, and I know about Pokhara as much as a louse on one's head would know about someone else's head. For no apparent reason, I expected the Shangri-la Village Resort in Pokhara to be a cube-like building with a few exotic trees. I couldn't have been more wrong.

The resort is a 5-minute drive from the Pokhara Airport and Pokhara's famed lakeside strip of restaurant and souvenir shops is a mere 10-minute ride away. I was taken aback when I stepped into the lobby and then out of it to find my room.

The swimming pool is one of the other attractions in the resort. A waterfall connects it to a smaller pool and floating in the blue water, the view boasts of the peaks of the Annapurnas, Machhapuchhre and Dhaulagiri.

An open corridor leads to each room and the distance between the lobby and your room explains its title of 'a boutique hotel'. Clichéd as it may sound, Shangri-la lives up to its name as a heaven on earth. With beautifully landscaped gardens, exotic trees and even a decorative water

canal running through the resort, cube-like it was certainly not.

The resort has awe-inspiring architecture combined beautifully with an ethnic Nepali village-house appeal. Each room in the hotel is a deluxe room with an individual balcony that opens to great views giving it more of a community feel and less of a A-list hotel. The housekeepers clad in ethnic Gurung clothing greet the guests with warm smiles, making me realize I had been less than social for too long.

The swimming pool is one of the other attractions in the resort. A waterfall connects it to a smaller pool and floating in the blue water, the view boasts of the peaks of the Annapurnas, Machhapuchhre and Dhaulagiri. Other facilities at the resort are an open yoga center with closer views of the mountains and a gymnasium.

'The Sanctuary' is an open bar that serves a variety of drinks while 'The Trail's End' is an indoor bar with a snooker table. Next to the lobby is 'The Caravanserai', a buffet restaurant that offers international cuisine. A little ahead of just foods and beverages, the resort also maintains a small library right above the lobby.

All's swell and all's well with the Shangri-la Village Resort but I had this tiny problem with the TV in my room. The choices with the channels were not much and the available channels had poor reception. But then again I wonder, had the TV in my room had enough channels, would I have had a great time? It would have been pretty much the same as home I guess. Whoever goes out traveling to find home? ■■



A relentless adventurer

A person of the outdoors, Megh Ale of Borderlands Resort is a passionate campaigner for river conservation.

Text By PRIANKA RAUNIYAR

A naturalist, an adept rafter, active river conservationist and owner of one of the first adventure sport ventures in Nepal, Megh Ale is a well-known personality in the tourism industry. Having spent most of his life with nature, the Himalayan rivers are his passion. He started off as a rafting instructor and guide who would travel around the world during the summers and later established Ultimate Descents, a premier professional river expeditions organization in 1987.

From his experiences around the world, Megh realized how neglected and exploited the 6000 odd rivers in Nepal were. Along with like-minded river guides, he then formed the Nepal River Conservation Trust (NRCT) in 1995 to restore and protect them from further degradation. His organization coordinates with Nepal Tourism Board and the government, making policy suggestions and is in conversation to get a river legislation passed which will help identify which river should be used for what purpose.

Megh strongly reiterates that if tourism is considered the backbone of the Nepalese economy, then it's high time we start taking rigorous measures for preservation and promotion of this rich and valuable natural heritage.

He always believed (something that was verified later by Peter Knowles, a world-renown British expedition kayaker) that Nepali waters especially the Karnali (top 5 in the world) and the Bhoté Koshi (top 10) have the best rapids in the world for rafting and kayaking. In an effort to bring adventure tourism to the fore, Megh bought land from ten

farmers near the banks of Bhoté Koshi on the Arniko highway and created an eco-adventure hub rightly calling it Borderlands Resort as it's only 16kms away from the Tibet border. In Megh's words, "It's not a luxury resort but is basic and clean and mainly for adventure sports ranging from river rafting, kayaking, canyoning to off-beaten trek trails or a mountain bike ride." Apart from being an eco-tourism destination, Borderlands stays true to

An intense thirst for adventure, always on his toes to explore and conquer, and a few life-threatening experiences later, Megh is still fearless and enjoys the adrenaline rush.

Megh's ideology of community involvement for sustainable development and personal growth through adventure and self-reflection. In this light, they organize Professional Development Programs (PDPs) for corporate houses and Leadership programs for schools/colleges.

Megh is winner of the Ashoka Fellowship 2007 for his contribution to the preservation of the breath taking river inheritance of Nepal. The Bagmati River Festival is a huge celebration with a vision to keep the river clean. With events like cleanup campaigns, plays, plantation programs, Megh rightly thought that it would be easier to garner support and enthusiasm only by making the festival fun and enjoyable. Along with this, Megh lobbies to safeguard the Karnali, Bagmati and Seti rivers from excessive damming to produce hydro-electricity. He also suggested strategic ways to reduce ecological impacts on the rivers.

An intense thirst for adventure, always on his toes to explore and conquer, and a few life-threatening experiences later, Megh is still fearless and enjoys the adrenaline rush. Calm, soft-spoken and cheerful, he sees himself working with river conservation until his voice is heard. His wish is for Nepalis, not just the government, to change their thinking from merely taking pride in being the 'Bill Gates of water resources', to being participative and involved in preserving it for our future generations.



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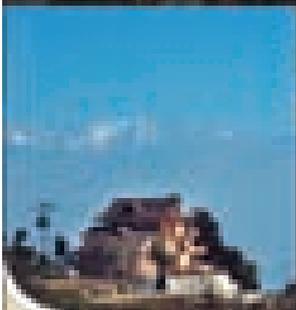
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Before you hit the road

Take note of a few pointers to ensure a safe and fun bike ride.

Text By NIKITA TRIPATHI

There is no better way to travel through the Nepali countryside than on a motorbike. Whether your journey is to culminate at a preset destination or whether you are touring to different places, taking in the sights and sounds of our beautiful country, the one and the most important thing is to be prepared. These tips from Pramod Shrestha 'Goofy' of Himalayan Enfielders will help you have a fun, safe journey.

1 Prepare your motorcycle: Have the bike checked and thoroughly serviced by an authorized mechanic to assure it is ready for the trip. Change the oil and filter on the motorcycle. Learn some basics about the functions of the different parts of the bike and carry along a basic tool-kit.

2 Check your wheels: Check the tires for any wear/tear and cracks. Taking off on a long distance trip with bad tires is just asking for a ruined vacation. Replace both the back and front tires if necessary. Make sure they are properly inflated, remembering that you will be carrying excess luggage.

3 Stay connected: Discuss your itinerary with friends and family members. Even if you are not certain where you will end up, giving someone a general idea of your whereabouts will ease their minds and allow them a general search point in case of an emergency. Keep a cell phone charged and easily available. This way you can check for messages when you stop for fuel, food or the night. Go over maps to select possible routes or destinations and mark petrol stations that fall on the route.



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Always wear proper riding clothes with protective pads in the back, elbows and knees. Gloves should fit well. Equip the motorcycle with removable saddlebags.

4 Gear up: Get yourself a well-fitting helmet; this essential piece of equipment can literally save your life. Always wear proper riding clothes with protective pads in the back, elbows and knees. Gloves should fit well. Equip the motorcycle with removable saddlebags.

5 Take a break: Every now and again have a decent break. Stretch regularly- it's important to do this regularly and to start before you begin to feel sore. Remove your helmet and have a bit of a wandering around. Recognize when

you're starting to feel a bit tired and stop riding.

6 Regular check up: Check the motorcycle over each morning before you head out. This is just for safety reasons. Mechanical failures happen to the best-maintained vehicles, so even if you believe everything is fine, go over it quickly to make sure.

7 Be flexible: If you come across something that strikes your interest, stop, explore and enjoy. That is part of the fun of a long distance motorcycle trip. ■

living
Tænz
YOUR TIME IS NOW

10 YEARS



Watch out for the Anniversary issue.

On stands this February!

ECS COURSES

In order to improve the skills and knowledge of your household staff, ECS offers the following courses this month. Please let us know if you are interested in enrolling your staff for these courses.

Phone: 442.6439, 98510.07.900

Email: ecs@infoclub.com.np or services@ecs.com.np to book a place.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Many excellent staff are registered with us, including cooks, guards, gardeners, maids and drivers. Our list is constantly updated. Interviews are carried at our office to help resolve language problems between our clients and the staff. If you are looking for efficient and reliable staff, please come and discuss your requirements with us and don't forget to register your staff with us before you leave.

INTERVIEW FEE: Rs. 1,500 PLACEMENT FEE: Rs. 2,500



NEPALI LANGUAGE CLASS FOR FOREIGNERS

ECS Services has been supporting foreigners to learn the Nepali Language (speaking, reading and writing) for many years. If you would like to learn or improve your Nepali vocabulary, please call us. Group or individual classes are available.

BASIC ENGLISH READING & WRITING

FOR HOUSEHOLD STAFF

Our clients and their staff often face problems when not communicating face to face. If your staff could read and write memos or notes, things could be easier for you. We present this reading and writing course that will enable your household staff to read notes/memos, write simple sentences, and take telephone messages. This will also help your staff to get employed after you leave. This is a two months course, 5 days a week, one hour a day. **FEE: Rs. 8,000**

BASIC ENGLISH LANGUAGE

FOR HOUSEHOLD STAFF

Our English class for household staff enables them to communicate with you in simple English. Language structures are taught along with vocabulary that is related to household matters (for daily use). Oral communication skills will be emphasized in this course rather than reading and writing skills. This is a one month course, 5 days a week, one hour a day. **FEE: Rs. 4,000**

NEPALI LANGUAGE CD

The revised ECS Nepali language CD is now available. It gives you the chance not only to listen but also to practice your Nepali along with the CD. We feel that this improved CD will help you learn the Nepali language more effectively. A booklet comes with the CD. **PRICE: Rs. 999 (including booklet)**

FOOD HANDLING & HYGIENE

FOR HOUSEHOLD STAFF

ECS is organizing food handling and hygiene course for your household staff. If you are unsure whether your staff is aware about hygiene then this is the ideal course. This hands-on class includes daily hygiene, importance of hand washing and preparation of fruits and vegetables. We will teach them the proper way of cleaning - tables, windows, kitchen floor and bathroom. We will also teach them how to take care of a refrigerator. We will discuss how illness is spread and why the corner and behind the door is important to clean. We intend this course to help your staff to clean the house properly. Two days course, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. **VENUE: Maharajgunj**

SPECIAL COOKING

FOR HOUSEHOLD STAFF

ECS cooking course is an opportunity for your maid or cook to improve his/her cooking skills. At the end of this course, participants will be able to work as a cook independently and can even organize a small party. The course content includes information on different food items for practical cooking and will also make them aware about kitchen hygiene. We teach them how to prepare Indian, Chinese and continental items, as well as basic Western cooking techniques like simmer, sauté, etc. We will also discuss how to organize a kitchen, to prepare menus, cutting techniques, steps for serving food during small and big parties. We will also teach them how to keep food and the kitchen hygienically clean. This course helps them improve their skills so your staff will not only serve you better while you are here, but they will find it easier to find a job when you leave. Duration of course: 6 weeks, five days a week and two hours a day. **VENUE: Maharajgunj FEE: Rs. 15,000**

MEXICAN COOKING

Participants will be able to cook the following items.

1. Chicken toco pie
2. Mexican tomato rice
3. Spicy vegetable casserole
4. Chicken breast cream tomato sauce
5. Avocado bean salad

DATE: 29th January 2012

TIME: 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm

VENUE: Maharajgunj

FEE: Rs. 1,200

ITALIAN COOKING

Participants will be able to cook the following items.

1. Spinach lasagna
2. Chicken breast with mushroom sauce
3. Pasta in tomato cream sauce
4. Cauliflower with caper sauce
5. Eggplant salad

DATE: 26th February 2012

TIME: 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm

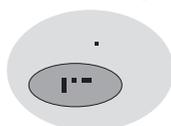
VENUE: Maharajgunj

FEE: Rs. 1,200



ECS

Maharajgunj, Kathmandu
Phone: 442.6439/98510.07.900
ecs@infoclub.com.np or
services@ecs.com.np
Office Hour:
11:00am to 3:00pm
(Monday through Friday)



ECS Services offers staff employment services (cooks, watchmen, gardeners, housemaids and drivers); courses for household staff (cooking and health); Nepali language for expatriates and English language for household staff. We hope that these services provided by ECS help make your life more comfortable.

Love your body, love your life.

Health Tips

Most of the times health problem occurs due to improper food consumption and lifestyle habits. With a little change in your daily habits and some simple natural home remedies, you can easily combat this condition and avoid the problem.

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Restaurant & Bars

CHINESE CUISINE

THE GHANGRI CAFÉ
Pulchowk Lalitpur
Tel: 5528703
Chicken Sumai Mo:Mo
Rs.70
Cordeu Blue Mutton Rs.150

CAFÉ DU TEMPLE

Patan Durbar Square
Tel: 5527127
Spaghetti Bolognese Rs.175
Temple Special Chicken
Rs. 225
Nepali Style Grilled
Fish Rs. 250

ITALIAN RESTAURANT

OLIVE GARDEN
Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat
Tel: 441818
Italian Cuisine
Gourmet Trout Rs. 800
Dinner 6:30pm onwards

Potato Cush Bara with
Peanut sauce -Rs 145

JAPANESE AND KOREAN CUISINE

KOTO RESTAURANT
Durbar Marg
Sakeyaki Rs. 290
Donburi Rs. 310
Tempura Rs. 260

FRENCH CUISINE DELICES DE FRANCE RESTAURANT

Thamel
Tel.4260326
Chicken Sandeko
Salad: Rs 290/-
Salmon with cream &
Wine Sauce: Rs 760/-
Mediterranean
Platter: Rs 580

CONTINENTAL CUISINE

CAFÉ DE PATAN

Patan Mangalbazar
Tel: 5537599
BlueBird Food Court
Tel: 4228833,
Ext. no. 4476
Newari Samay
With Chicken - Rs.175
Nepali Thali Rs. 190
With Buff Rs.150

Candles Restro Lounge & Cube

Kamaladi
Tel: 4438017
Chicken steak - Rs.200
Paneer tikka - Rs.150
Chicken sashlik -
Rs.220
Lamb steak - Rs.275
Murg makhani - Rs.250

COURTYARD RESTAURANT

Kamaladi
Tel: 4253056
Roasted Chicken Rs.195
Chicken Steak Rs.190
Mix Pizza Rs.220

DE' ORANGE RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

New Baneshwor
Tel: 478307
Open momo - Rs.100
Beakti fish - Rs.650
Chicken chausseur -
Rs.180
Corn cheese fritters -
Rs.195

JEANS LOUNGE & BAR

Basantapur
Tel:
4221324/4239256
Roasted chicken -
Rs.250
Fish and chips - Rs.200
Kathi rolls - Rs.60 -
Rs.130
Chicken tikka - Rs.170
Schezuan chicken -
Rs.280

JINGLE RESTAU- RANT & BAR

Teku Road
Tel: 4228078
Whole fried fish -
Rs.555
Whole roasted chicken
- Rs.855
Crispy potato - Rs.95
Green momo - Rs.135
Golden fried prawn -
Rs.425

NANGLO BAKERY CAFÉ

**BAKERY CAFÉ NEW
BANESHWOR**
Tel: 4488528
Chicken sizzler Rs 250
Chicken mo mo Rs 120
Taglatella at sungi Rs 190

C: Mo mo Chicken Rs 130

**BAKERY CAFÉ BOUD-
DHA**
Nepali lunch set Rs 240
Club sandwich Rs 225
Bandel tareko /
sandeko Rs 205

Margeritta Pizza Rs 165
Chicken Burger Rs145
Grilled fish
with rice Rs 250

BAKERY CAFÉ

PULCHOCK
Tel: 5010110
Buffet set lunch Rs 310
Chicken barbeque Rs 195

BAKERY CAFÉ TEKU
Tel: 4265987

BAKERY CAFÉ

TINDHARA
Fpaghetti alla
bolognes Rs 190
Masala dosa Rs 105
Mutton Mo mo Rs 160



THE EVEREST HOTEL

New Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Tel: 01 4780100

The Café- Lobby Level Coffee Shop

Executive Buffet Lunch:
Nrs 1100
Executive Buffet Dinner:
Nrs 1200
Saturday Brunch: Nrs 1200
Nasi Goreng: Nrs 650
Grilled Prawns: Nrs 1200
Crumb Fried Stuffed Mush-
rooms: Nrs 375

Far Pavilion Roof Top Indian Restaurant

Kakori Kabab: Nrs 725
Chandi Chowk Tikki: Nrs
525
Gosht Ki Biryani: Nrs 725

Mandarin Roof Top Chinese Restaurant

Crispy Fried salt & pepper
Duck: Nrs 995
Lobster in Mushroom & wine
sauce: Nrs 2150
Multi Flavoured shredded
Chicken: Nrs 625
Tibetan Gyakok (Veg or Non
Veg)
(Minimum order for 2 persons):
Nrs 1400

Bugles and Tigers Roof Top

Gurkha Bar
Kama Kazi: Nrs 520
FlatLiner: Nrs 595
Beer (Domestic): Nrs 475

Applicable taxes extra

FIRE AND ICE

Pizzeria
Thamel,
Tel: 4250210
Pizza's Spaghetti
Ice Creams

THAI CUISINE

**YING YANG
RESTAURANT**
Thamel, 4701510
Prawn Tempura-Rs 595
Chicken Satay- Rs 385

THIRD EYE RESTAU- RANT

Thamel, 4260289
Wrapped Prawn- Rs 595

TFC

Radisson Hotel
Lazimpat, Tel: 4411818
Congi Lamb Rs. 600
Seasame
Chicken Rs 500
Fillet Mignon Rs. 550

CHEZ CAROLINE RES- TAURANT

Mediterranean and French
food
Baber Mahal Revisited
Tel: 4263070 / 4264187
Salad Caroline Rs. 780
Pepper steak Rs. 785
Lamb chop Rs. 1295

Spicy corn - Rs.149
Tofu with black bean
sauce - Rs.119
Cold buff - Rs.239

WALTER'S RESTAURANT AND BAR

(Continental Gourmet)
BabarMahal Revisited
Tel: 4253337
Fried Salmon
With Cumin Rs. 850
Sea Food
Platter Rs. 950
Creper A La Goat
Cheese Rs. 550

KFC RESTAURANT

Durbar Marg
Tel: 4226287
Chicken bucket - Rs.699
- Rs.999
Zinger meal - Rs.279
Twister meal - Rs.269
Sundaes - Rs.69 - Rs.99
Krushers - Rs.69 -
Rs.129

RICE & BOWL RESTAURANT

Tripureswor
Tel: 4251678
Hakka Prawn Rs.550
Jambo Prawn Special
sauce Rs.950

Tian Rui Chinese Restaurant

Thapathali
Tel: 4243078
Crispy fried chicken -
Rs.549
Bong bong chicken -
Rs.279

HYATT REGENCY KATHMANDU

Taragaon, Boudha, Tel: 4491234

ROX RESTAURANT

Melting Chocolate:
NRs 750
Smoked Trout & Salmon
Cutlet: NRs 690
Prawn and Salmon Risotto:
NRs 1050
Skewers: NRs 1150-1450

THE CAFE

Pepper Steak:
NRs 800
Arabic Chicken Shishta-
wouk:
NRs 800
Japanese Pork Chop:
NRs 800

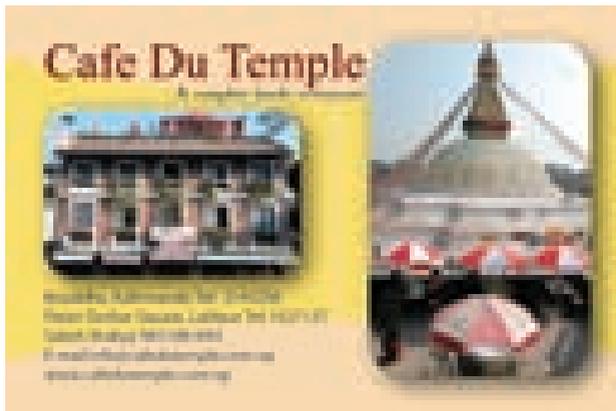


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EATING OUT



SOALTEE CROWNE PLAZA

Tahachal, Kathmandu, Nepal

<p>INDIAN Kakori Tel: 4273999 Extn: 6555 Kakori Seekh Rs. 750 Raan E Awadh Rs. 1575 Doodhiya Paneer Rs. 575 Lehsoni Methi Chilgoza Rs. 775</p> <p>ITALIAN Alfresco Tel: 4273999 Ext. 6123 Norwegian Salmon Rs. 1195 Australian Lamb Cutlet Rs.1195</p>	<p>Pizzas Rs.395 Chocolate surprise Rs.395</p> <p>CAFÉ Garden terrace Tel: 4273999 Ext. 6152 Prawn and Salmon Fantasia Rs.1295 Chicken Chutney Roll Rs. 550 Grilled Churrasco Steak Rs. 695 Bhujare Rs. 595</p> <p>BAR Rodi Bar Tel: 4273999 Ext. 6224</p>	<p>Red label Rs. 450 per peg Beer Rs. 350 Black Label Rs. 1000 per peg</p> <p>CHINESE China Garden Tel: 4273999 Ext. 6159 Corn Cream Rs. 400 Gin Chicken Rs. 575 Chicken Lung Fung Soup Rs. 275 Soya Wine Chilli Pomfret Rs. 1050 Sapo Chicken Rs. 600 Honey Pork Ribs Rs. 575</p>
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OR2K
Thamel
Tel: 4422097
Mint Lemonade Rs. 70
Stuffed Vegetable
Combination Rs. 290
OR2K Combo
Platter Rs. 310
Beautiful Antipasti
Platter Rs. 180

STATION BBQ
Jhamsikhel 552208
Shredded pork with spring
onion-500
Pork Chop-450
Burrito-350
Spicy whole Fish-700

**NEPALI AND
NEWARI CUISINE**
**BHUMI RESTRO
LOUNGE**
Lazimpat
Tel: 4412193
Mix Bara: Rs.90
Mix Chatamari: Rs.90
Choyela : Rs.100

BAITHAK
Babar Mahal Revisited
BabarMahal
Tel: 4267346
Feast Of Rana Maharaja
Normal Menu Rs. 1040
Royal Menu Rs. 1430
Delux Menu Rs. 1595

UTSAV
Durbar marg
Tel: 4430170
Samay Baji Rs. 450
Chicken Bara Rs. 260
Chicken Chatamari Rs. 310

CAFÉ & BAKERY
aCube Cafe
Sanepa, Lalitpur
9841218773
Safallay- Rs 80
Newari Khaja Set- Rs 80
Chicken tandori- Rs 300

Buzz Café & Bar
Baluwatar
Tel: 4429903
Buffalo wings – Rs.220
Mozzarella sticks – Rs.180
Momo – Rs.160
BBQ wings – Rs.280
Quesadilla – Rs.230

**Bu Keba The Organic
Village**
Bakhundole, Lalitpur
5524368
Buck wheat Pan Cake-
Rs 280
Mediterrain Platter- Rs 480

CAFÉ CHEENO
Krishna Galli
Tel: 2210423
Paneer Skewer Rs.475
Salmon Fillet Rs.875
Fish and Chips Rs. 475
Chicken Burger Rs. 250
Home made Veg/Non-Veg
lasagna Rs. 275/350

Café Dew Drops
Boudha Stupa
Tel: 4499593
Grilled chicken – Rs.400
Aaloo tama ko jhol –
Rs.125
Bandel ko maasu – Rs.350
Chara sandheko – Rs.200
Boeuf stroganoff – Rs.400

CUPPAS
Putalisadak
Tel: 4412492
Mocha frappuccino –
Rs.170

Blind love shake – Rs.150
Blended pineapple/orange
– Rs.75
Sandwich (chicken/ ham/
salami/ tuna/vegetable/
cheese) – Rs.100 – Rs.140

**D SQUARE CAFÉ & RES-
TAURANT**
Patan Durbar Square
Tel: 5545056
Prawn chili – Rs.350
Newari set – Rs.210
Rainbow trout – Rs.425
Thai chicken – Rs.170

DELICATESSEN CAFÉ
Durbar Marg
Tel: 4221331
Ham with cheese burger –
Rs.220
Chicken sizzler – Rs.430
Chicken Hawaiian – Rs.305
Chicken wings – Rs.280
Combo meal (king size) –
Rs.390

DHOKAIMA CAFE
Patan Dhoka
5522113
Grilled Australian Steak
Rs.1099
Grilled Shilake Mushroom
Rs. 359

**Flavors Café & Restau-
rant**
Boudha
Tel: 4498748
Pizza – Rs.300 – Rs.425
Pastries – Rs.25 – Rs.90
Organic coffee – Rs.50 –
Rs.75
Burger – Rs.200 – Rs.340

**Paradise Restaurant &
Café**
Boudha Stupa
Tel: 016209046
Chicken burrito – Rs.300
Paradise salad – Rs.250
Chicken stuffed – Rs.350
Paradise sandwich – Rs.290
Mocktails – Rs.160

(The) Almond Café
Putalisadak
Tel: 4412492
Almond Special – Rs.270
Mixed Pizza – Rs.280
Chicken Sizzler – Rs.255
Almond Soup – Rs.160

BAR AND LOUNGES
ABSOLUTE BAR
Hotel Narayani Complex,
Pulchowk
Tel: 5521408
Bandel Tareko Rs. 300.00
Chicken Chowela Rs. 300.00

ATTIC BAR
Tejbehawan, Lazimpat
4442615
Bacon Potato Roll- Rs 200
Chicken Wings with Hot
Garlic Sauce Rs 350

**BOURBON ROOM
RESTRO BAR**
Durbar marg,
Tel: 4441703
Nachos Grande Rs. 400
Grilled Pork Chops Rs. 400
Hot and Spicy Pizza Rs. 320

**CINNAMON GRILL
LOUNGE**
Jhamsikhel
Tel: 5521339
Chicken Rag Out Rs. 350
Grilled Pork Chop Rs. 425
Grilled Chicken Parmesan
Rs. 380

DEGGA RESTO LOUNGE
Kumaripati, 5008679
Mutton Fokso Tareko-Rs 90
Chicken Egg Bara- Rs 110

CAFÉ BROWN SUGAR
Jhamsikhel (Opposite British
School)
Tel: 5543003
Nepali authentic thali
Jogi bhat delight

CAFEREENA
Durbar Marg
Tel: 4231313
Som tom thai- 175
Kambo Chee- 365

**EATEMPUS THE EATING
LOUNGE AND BAR**
Anamnagar, 4221037
All kinds of BBQ- Indian
Continental and Nepali
ET Hot Wings and Mo: Mo

**FUNKY BUDDHA RES-
TAURANT & BAR**
Thamel
Tel: 47000919
Funky special local platter
Rs. 395
Padthi- Rs. 225 to 350

FOOD BAZAAR
Thamel, Kathmandu
Newari Khaja (Non veg)-
Rs.120, Beef Sizzler- Rs.200
Chicken Tikka Kabab-
Rs.250

**GARDEN COURT RES-
TAURANT AND BAR**
Tukuchamarga Gairidhara,
Kathmandu 4429207
Chicken Houro as one of the
speciality

HIMALAYAN CAFÉ
Boudha 6, Kathmandu
Chicken Biryani Rs.330
Cheese Pizza Rs.220
Veg Sandwich Rs. 140

HIMALAYAN JAVA
Thamel, Contact:4253956
Mixed Pizza: Rs. 285

Chicken Pasta: Rs. 180
Chicken Fajita: Rs. 160

JATRA
Thamel, Tel: 4700043
Sukuti Ko Achar Rs. 110
Sandwich Steak &
Cheese Rs. 360
Tenderloin Steak Rs. 220

K-TOO BEER
Thamel,
Tel No:4250440
Steaks365-955, Mexican
Chicken Fajita 440,
Apple Momo 220

**KILROYS OF KATH-
MANDU**
Thapathali
Tel No:4250440
Garlic + Ginger Sauteed
Prawns

**MANNY'S EATERY AND
TAPAS BAR**
Jawalakhel
Tel: 5536919
Fried calamai with basil
aioli Rs 399
Spicy buffalo wings Rs 399

**MOKSH LIVE RESTAU-
RANT & BAR**
Jhamsikhel
Tel: 5528362
Duck Breast Rs 650
Rainbow Trout Rs 550

**NAMBUDDHA RES-
TAURANT**
Kavre, 9851106802
shaitan served with garden
fresh vegetables and deep
fried kalamari – Rs 900

**PICASSO "ARTISTE DE
LA CUISINE"**
Jawalakhel, 5009076
BBQ Pork – Rs 650
Seafood Platter - Rs 800

**THAMEL HOUSE RES-
TAURANT**
Thamel
Tel: 4410388
Newari set Rs 850
Nepali set Rs 1000
Bara Special Rs 140

THE CORNER BAR
Radisson Hotel
Lazimpat Tel: 4411818

ZAIKA NEPALI CUISINE
Thamel
Tel: 4700972
Chicken Pizza Rs 270
Ham and cheese sanswich
Rs120

The details provided in the listings are tentative and are subject to change

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BOLD & BEAUTIFUL





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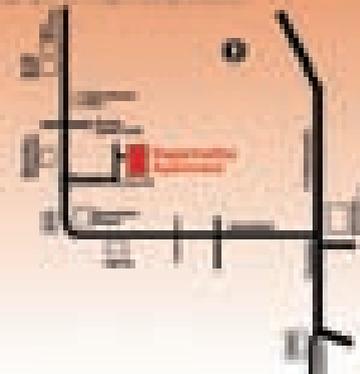
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Stories are a kind of thing, too...

Text By DON MESSERSCHMIDT

It is not just things that carry stories with them. Stories are a kind of thing, too. Stories and objects share something, a patina... Perhaps patina is a process of rubbing back so that the essential is revealed, the way that a striated stone tumbled in a river feels irreducible... (Edmund deWaal)

To uncover the patina of history from art objects, old stories and past lives is an engaging enterprise for writers. Surely Nepal harbors many great stories like the one here—stories that reveal tantalizing memories and essential characteristics of a family or community, stories that need to be researched and recorded now before ‘progress’ and modernization irretrievably erase them, for when that happens we are all losers.

I’ve been reading a lot of memoir lately, accounts of notable incidents in people’s lives. Some memoir is about people and some is about ‘things’. One that I recently finished is about one European family’s collection of fine old Japanese art objects called ‘netsuke’. It’s by Edmund deWaal and is written with great passion and personal involvement: *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance* (2010).

The hare (rabbit) of the book’s title is one of a priceless collection of 264 miniature netsuke sculptures from Japan dating to the 17th-18th centuries. Edmund deWaal weaves an intriguing tale of how they were acquired by an elite Russian-Jewish family called Ephrussi, then handed down over the generations, finally to the author himself as the great-great-grandson of the original collector.

The Ephrussis were merchant bankers who migrated in the 18th century from Odessa on the Black Sea to settle and grow rich in Paris and Vienna. There they became the financial equals to the more well known Rothschilds, elite European bankers and businessmen with whom they socialized.

Over several generations the Ephrussis built huge personal fortunes and gained great fame, all of which was lost in the Second World War.

When Edmund deWaal received the collection of tiny Japanese ivory



Photos courtesy of www.edmunddewaal.com

and boxwood carvings, he wanted to know how they had survived, who had touched and admired them, and who had protected them. He knew they had great value, for to connoisseurs netsuke is considered on a par with rare Fabergé glass and Meissen porcelain.

The Hare with Amber Eyes, however, is far more than a simple study in art history or beautiful carvings. And it’s more than the story of deWaal’s zeal to uncover a multi-generational biography.

Edmund deWaal is himself a noted European ceramicist, and a talented writer. His story-telling engages the reader, start to finish. Members of the Ephrussi family were noted for amassing a fortune and living well. They had a fervor for reading and collecting the best literature of their time. And they admired and accumulated great paintings and rare ‘objets d’art’, especially Japanese netsuke, ‘Japonisme’. All of this is detailed in the memoir. And though the Ephrussi family heritage was ultimately destroyed in the 1940s by war and anti-Jewish sentiment, not all was lost. The netsuke collection miraculously survived, and in

his book deWaal successfully rubs away the patina to reveal the essential story.

One of the exceptional parts of the story is how the two centuries old collection was safely hidden while the Nazis plundered Vienna’s Palais Ephrussi, then smuggled out piece by piece by a devoted house maid who wore a billowing apron with big pockets. All the more remarkable is deWaal’s globe-trotting research to recover his notable ancestors’ bountiful history. The result is a well-tuned memoir with the netsuke as its focal point.

I cannot help thinking at this point that there must be roughly equivalent stories hidden away in many Nepalese family archives, homes and former palaces. Maybe not netsuke, but some other story or thing waiting to be uncovered and rubbed clear to reveal the past, then brought to light in a good book! ■

The Hare with Amber Eyes by Edmund deWaal (2010; New York: Picador). See also www.edmunddewaal.com/theharewithambereyes.html, and www.edmunddewaal.com/hare_with_amber_eyes/hare_netsuke_gallery.html
Don Messerschmidt is a frequent contributor to ‘ECS Nepal’ magazine. He may be contacted at don.editor@gmail.com.



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Missing monuments

Text By ANIL CHITRAKAR

Nepal is home to many beautiful natural and man-made heritage sites that keep bringing many visitors to this country. Today, due to the attention these monuments are getting and the availability of financial resources, many are being cared for and have been restored. These range from the monasteries in the high Himalaya, the old Malla period palaces of Kathmandu valley and the Janaki temple in Janakpur in the terai. We sometimes get so obsessed with the monuments we see that we seem to forget the ones that existed in history but do not physically exist today. As an example we all see the Dharahara that stands tall near Sundhara. We seem to have forgotten that there was a second one that was destroyed in the 1833AD earthquake. The one we still have with us was shortened during restoration after the 1934AD earthquake.

Another such prominent monument that is missing can be “found” in the Bhaktapur Durbar Square. If we walk to the east end of the Durbar Square, one will come across a

pair of lions with a few stone steps leading up and then nowhere. It is a very strange piece of history that is just there in the middle of the big space. There is a book in the market called *Voyage of Nepal* first published in 1886AD - Around the World New Travel Journal in which there is a photograph and a sketch of the temple that should be behind the two stone lions and the steps. It was a three storey pagoda temple and the trident at the top indicates that it was probably a Shiva temple (Hari Shanker). It was a very beautiful structure made of bricks and carved wooden beams, struts and pillars. The question then comes to mind, why has it not been recovered and restored, given the fact that Bhaktapur seems to be doing really well in terms of generating revenue from tourism each day. What could be the reason for the oversight?

One obvious reason is that like the rest of Nepal there have not been local elections and hence there is no leadership that has a clear mandate to make a decision. Bhaktapur has seen its share of man-made and natural disasters. In 1349 AD Bhaktapur was de-

stroyed by the invading army from Delhi. It was also badly damaged during the two great earthquakes of 1833 and 1934AD. Given the fact that the city has done so well to conserve its heritage, there is no reason not to recover this temple as well. One challenge that might have to be overcome is that the temple is locally known as the *Lan Paungu Dega* - which literally means the road-obstacle-temple. There must be some reference in history when the temple was built to obstruct access to the main palace square.

There is another theory that the siblings in the other valley towns had the temple built in this odd location and hence local people do not want it back. It will be good to know the real reason as we restore the temple. As the country and the constitutional assembly debate the pros and cons of a federal system, the ordinary people are reminded of the rivalries that existed among the city states of the valley that existed in the 18th century. This rivalry is the principle reason why the valley could not defend itself against the invading Gorkhali army. ■

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