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THE NEPALI WAY

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The fourth kingdom / A Walk into the heritage / A Nepali Show / Peace Corps of the Half Century

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The fourth kingdom



Kirtipur is the valley's best kept secret with plenty of history and culture to offer.

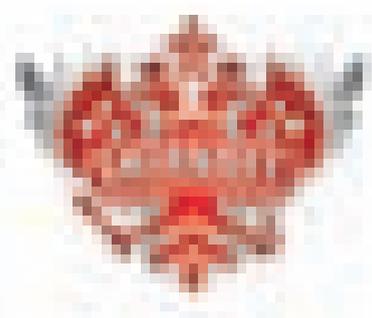
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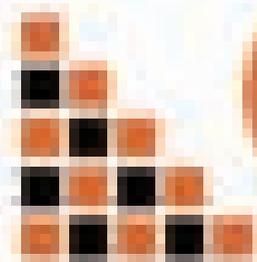
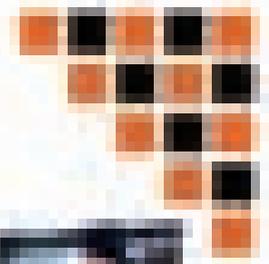
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A writer enjoys the earthy charms of Pokhara's newest resort.



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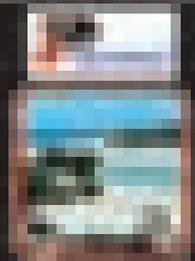
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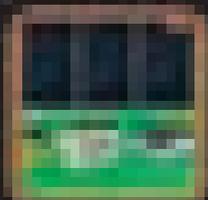
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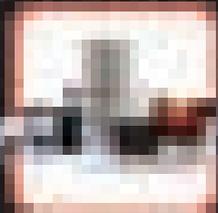
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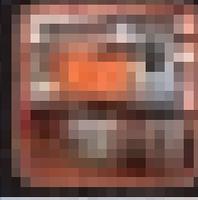


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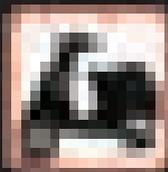


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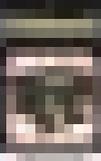
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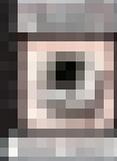
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The fourth kingdom should be the first choice to engage in the country's fantastic unification history.

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By Don Messerschmidt

ON THE COVER

The cover shot is of a deity built in the Shikhar style. It lies in the Bagh Bhairab temple premises in Kirtipur.

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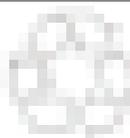


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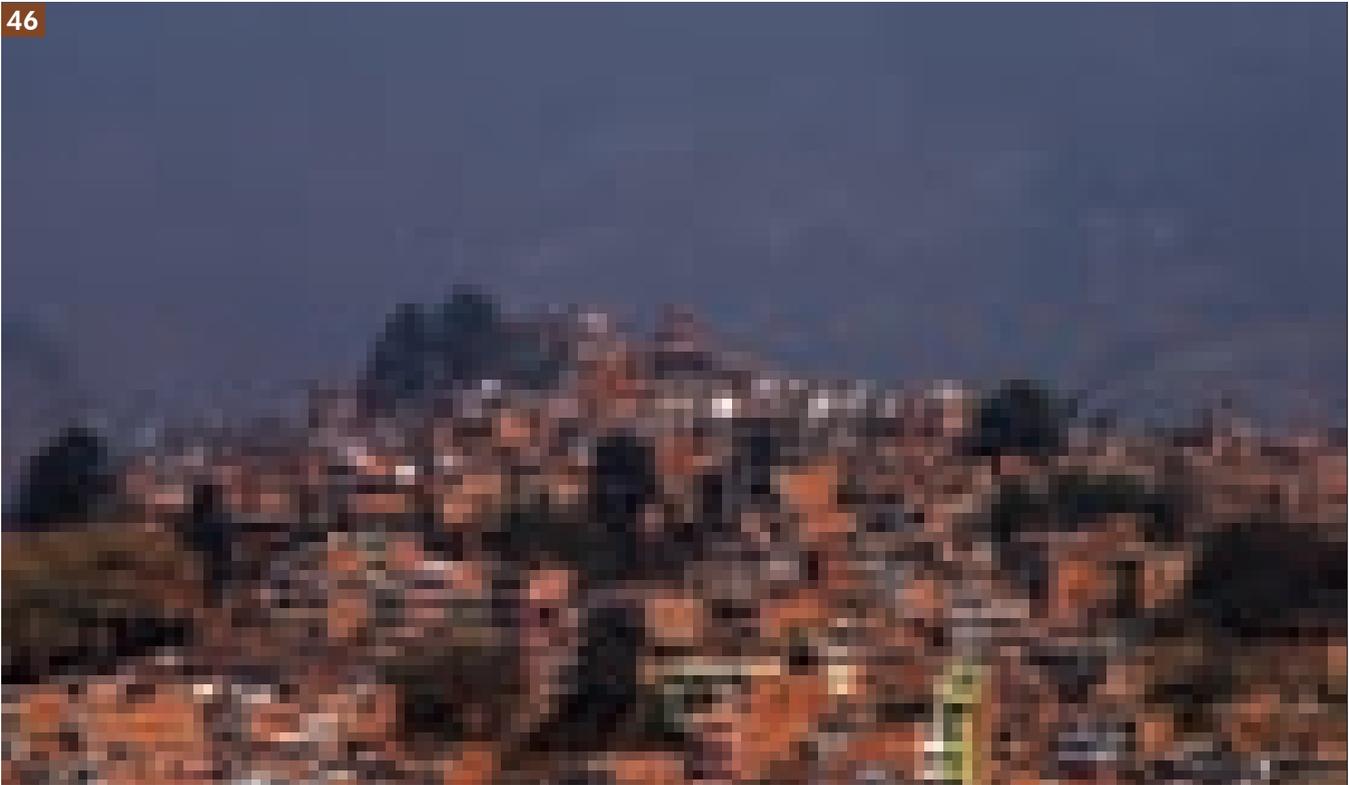
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HARVESTS OF HOPE

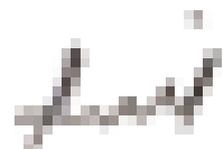
The season for hope and a good harvest is here upon us. As Nepali farmers reap the benefits of their hard work all summer, you can see hope in everyone's eyes. This country may be going through an endless political transition, and stability is probably an illusion, the common man and woman seems to take everything in stride. The farmer does not have the luxury to wait and see. They do not wait for the rains to stop, or for the sun to shine. The winter crops and vegetables must now go into the ground so that spring will be just as fruitful. The early result of the latest census shows that we are now 26.6 million Nepalis and that we are growing at about 1.4 percent per annum. The census puts the population of Kathmandu at 1.7 million.

In this issue of ECS we take a really close look at the citadel city of Kirtipur. If you have not been to this great historical city and walked around, and engaged with the local people, you can be sure that you are missing a key piece of the Nepali mosaic. From its strategic location overlooking the Kathmandu valley, the beautiful monuments, the agro centered lifestyle, and the glorious history all make it a great place to go to and spend time. Being the location of the last stand taken against the Gorkhali invasion, the city has since paid a very heavy price of neglect for the past two and half centuries. Today, the people of Kirtipur know that they have outlasted the conquerors. There is a great future for Kirtipur.

Through this issue of ECS, we also get to walk around the picturesque Junbesi village in east Nepal and in the true spirit

of bringing out the Nepali way, we give you a taste of Sherpa and Thakali food. When asked why they love Nepal, many often respond that it is the people; but deep inside, I think it is the food that you have with the people. It is the combination of the two that does the trick. The choice to go trekking to Solu Khumbu and Thak khola areas must surely have something to do with the good food that is served in these regions.

Poetry is not the first thing that comes to people's mind when they think of Nepal. Reality is that there is a very vibrant literary community in this country who are composing, reciting and publishing all the time. In this issue we feature a young, promising poet, and to show that ECS cares for all sections of Nepal society, we feature people and personalities you have to engage with to get to know the Nepali way a little deeper. We also have our regular features to introduce you to various art form and the artists who keep our towns as a living heritage. This is besides the wonderful images from all over the country. Whatever you are planning on doing in the coming month, we hope you set aside some time for the Nepali way.



Anil Chitrakar
Group Editor
anilchitrakar@gmail.com

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MARKET

Sunday Pranzo



Hyatt Regency Kathmandu introduces Sunday Pranzo at Rox Restaurant. "Pranzo" is Italian for "lunch" and the new menu comprises Italian specialties in a combination of both buffet and silver service. On the menu is a selection of vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes, such as Italian antipasti, soups, cheeses and breads, pasta dishes, risottos, pizzas,

the chef's selection of main courses and a dolce display (dessert buffet) of individually portioned delights. The menu for Sunday Pranzo will change each week, with the vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes offered during silver service according to guests' preferences and requests from the menu displayed on the table.

Rox Restaurant and Bar is the hotel's signature outlet and is located over three levels. It features a show kitchen with a wood-fired oven and serves traditional home-style southern European cuisine.

Sunday Pranzo will be open from 12:00 noon to 3:30pm, every Sunday at the Rox Restaurant for

NPR 1800 plus taxes (24.3%) per person. For bookings, please call +977 1 4491234 Ext: 5241.

New Boutique Hotel Unveiled in Boudha

While stakeholders in Kathmandu shied away from investing in new hotels in the last decade, Hotel Tibet International proudly re-opened its doors after putting in 5 years of painstakingly intricate design work in 68 rooms of international standard to meet the challenges of the modern day traveler.

Located in Boudhanath, Hotel Tibet International prides itself as a true boutique hotel offering unparalleled services to its discerning guests. "Fine Nepalese hospitality with a touch of Tibetan warmth" - is the hallmark tag line and true to it, this Tibetan concept hotel is backed by an unsurpassed *Norbulinka Stupa View Breakfast Terrace, Shangrila Kitchen* - a fine Tibetan & Chinese restaurant, *Shangrila Dining* - consisting of three deluxe private suites to provide an intimate private dining, a concept *Yak Bar* with an outdoor Alfresco patio, *Shambala Tea Garden* and not the least, the time honored - *Shambala Spa*.

Guests who have been here are awed by its intricate architecture. The detailed Tibetan paintings and wood carving befits



an authentic heritage. Providing all modern amenities, the hotel is also backed by an efficient system of two standby generators, state of the art water filtration system guaranteeing 24 hrs hot water, a smoke detector fire alarm and dosing system and camera surveillance. All of these allow more peace of mind while retiring for a much deserved good night's sleep in fine, uncompromising linen sheets. One would be surprised if one-time guests do not return for a repeated experience.

Contact details:
Hotel Tibet International Pvt. Ltd., Tel: +977-1-4488188, Email: info@hoteltibetintl.com.np, Website: www.hoteltibetintl.com.np

Souvenir Shop

Souvenir Shop, a sister concern of Exclusive Textiles, had its inception on 1 August in Thamel. Like Exclusive Textiles, Souvenir Shop deals with home furnishing items and accessories; and, to the shoppers' delight, it has added clothing items and footwear for women as well.



All the items in Souvenir Shop are imported from India except the Pashmina, which is a genuine product of Nepal. The store provides handmade bed covers, cushion covers, table covers, napkins and mat sets. A shopper looking for an alternative to bulky quilts will be pleased to find colorful Jaipuri cotton quilts that are light in weight, plus, they are very warm.

Designer kurtis with a blend of silk and *chikan* of export quality is one of the attractions of Souvenir Shop along with Jaipuri jootis and wall hangings. The shop has a large variety of block print kurtis and pashmina stoles, scarves, mufflers and the like. Beside these, they also have a wide range of viscose shawls that will fit in just about anybody's budget.

This shop strives for quality and that is what it provides. To those who are inspired by handwork and to those, for whom home is the best place to hang around, Souvenir Shop is the ultimate destination. (Nimma Adhikari)

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Two Aid Supply Flights from FedEx to UNICEF



In response to the famine in Somalia, FedEx Express, a subsidiary of FedEx Corp delivered approximately 91 metric tons (200,000 pounds) of high-nutrient food to Nairobi, Kenya. The charitable initiative was organized in collaboration with UNICEF with the aim of offering life-saving assistance to severely malnourished children in south and central Somalia.

To complete the large-scale humanitarian mission, FedEx used a Boeing 777F aircraft. The relief aid shipment coincides with the company's announcement to donate an additional 777F relief flight. Together the loads will treat over 6,000 severely malnourished children and provide fortified food for 4,000 families for two weeks.

United Brands



America's top outdoor brand Marmot has arrived in Nepal and United Brands is the authorized dealer for the distribution of the original Marmot products. United Brands has introduced the Marmot bags, tents, sleeping bags, pants, T-shirts and all the products required for all kinds of outdoor activities. The product though being internationally recognized for its good quality is priced relatively low as compared to other brands and is affordable by all.

Its products are best for trekkers, hikers and mountaineers to keep them safe and comfortable during their outdoor activities at a reasonable cost. Winter wear such as jackets and jumpers are also available to keep warm in the cold.

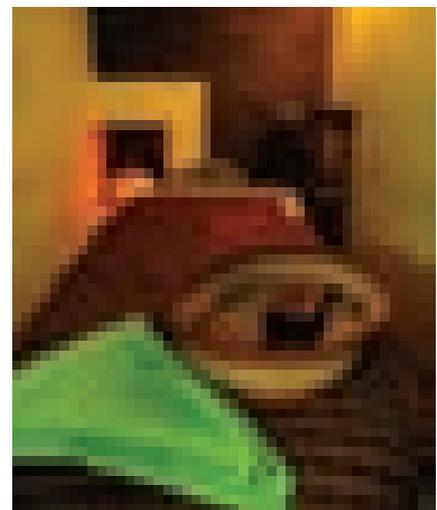
UB store is also the authorized dealer of Lowe Alpine bag packs for outdoor activities. Different kinds bag packs for expedition, trekking, hiking, cycling, day travel and belted bag packs are available at UB store. Understanding the difference between the body shape of men and women, Lowe Alpine bag packs are especially designed exclusively for different genders according to their needs and requirements. Bag packs with creative load organization system, both internally and externally are available which are especially designed for people who like to organize their load differently in different compartments. All sizes of Lowe Alpine bag packs from 15 liters to 95 liters capacity are available.

Interested retailers in Kathmandu or other regions of Nepal can contact for more information regarding Marmot and Lowe Alpine products themselves since the cost for bulk purchases will be relatively low. (Nimma Adhikari)

Himalayan Healers

Himalayan Healers Nepal is an extension of the Himalayan Healers project, first created in USA in 2004. According to Robert Buckley, it is the first professionally qualified massage therapy training program in Nepal and the only program in Nepal that is able to offer internationally recognized qualifications for massage therapy training.

More importantly, the training has always focused upon providing guaranteed employment and providing "somatic therapy" for students via their training. The idea was to focus primarily upon helping Nepali students recover from a variety of traumas, be it the generational trauma of "untouchability", or the emotional and physical traumas of domestic violence, human trafficking, or sexual abuse.



Over the years, the school has arranged many guest teachers (some of them literally world famous in the spa community), all of whom have offered "training of trainers" for the Nepali students and staff, completely for free. Through the process of "somatic therapy" throughout the 500 hours of professional massage therapy training, each student gains a new set of skills and significant income. The school also provides a professional, safe massage therapy service at an affordable price.

The school has the provision of a profit-sharing structure for its staff, and it provides 0% interest student loans for the training with guaranteed employment. Several titles like "Top 28 Most Relaxing Spas in Asia", by CNN, "Socially Responsible Spa of the Year", by Asia Spa Association, "#1 Philanthropic Cause in Asia", 2010 by Asia Spa have been awarded to this massage therapy school via Himalayan healers, USA. The official centers for the school are located at Hotel Ambassador (Lazimpat), Club Himalaya (Nagarkot), The Borderlands and Manang.

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AWON Christmas Bazaar



play host to their annual Christmas Bazaar for all to visit, enjoy, peruse and buy. Food stalls and games will make it as much for the young attendees. Take the entire family between the hours of 10 am to 4.30 pm to enjoy a selection of local goods and tickets are NRs. 100 for adults while children below 12 years

The folks at AWON are adding some extra cheer this Christmas season. Saturday, December 3rd, 2011, the organization will

can enjoy a 50% discount on the ticket.

Contact: 98510 22363, 9808125764, 9841 531172

Hand-washing Campaign

With the aim to motivate and mobilize millions to wash hands, a global hand washing campaign was recently launched at Hotel Yak & Yeti. The campaign was supported jointly by public bodies such as Ministry of Physical Works & Planning and Ministry of Health and Population, INGOs such as UNICEF Nepal and WaterAid, and private organizations such as Laxmi Bank. The launch was a buildup to the Global Hand Washing Day, observed worldwide on 15 October.

The slogan of this campaign 'Sabun, Pani ra Haat or 'Soap, Water and Hand' was introduced during the event, and so was the promotional song for the campaign. The benefit of hand washing and the



need for its nationwide practice was stressed upon. It was informed that along with the celebration of the Global Hand washing Day, there shall be ongoing programs all over the country to promote hand washing as a crucial means to combat water-borne diseases such as diarrhea, especially in the rural areas.

(Yukta Bajracharya)

Declaration for Green Economy and Sustainable Mountain Development

150 policy makers, scientists, and development experts from the world's mountain regions gathered for the Kathmandu Declaration on Green Economy and Sustainable Mountain Development hoping to ensure a place for mountain systems - in particular in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region - in current global discussions on the environment, economy, and sustainable development.

The declaration was the outcome of the three-day International Conference on Green Economy and Sustainable Mountain Development jointly organized by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Kathmandu from 5 to 7 September. The conference included participation not only from the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, but also from Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, North America and Europe. President of the Republic of Nepal, Dr Ram Baran Yadav, inaugurated the three-day conference. Dr R.K. Pachauri, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), delivered the keynote speech.

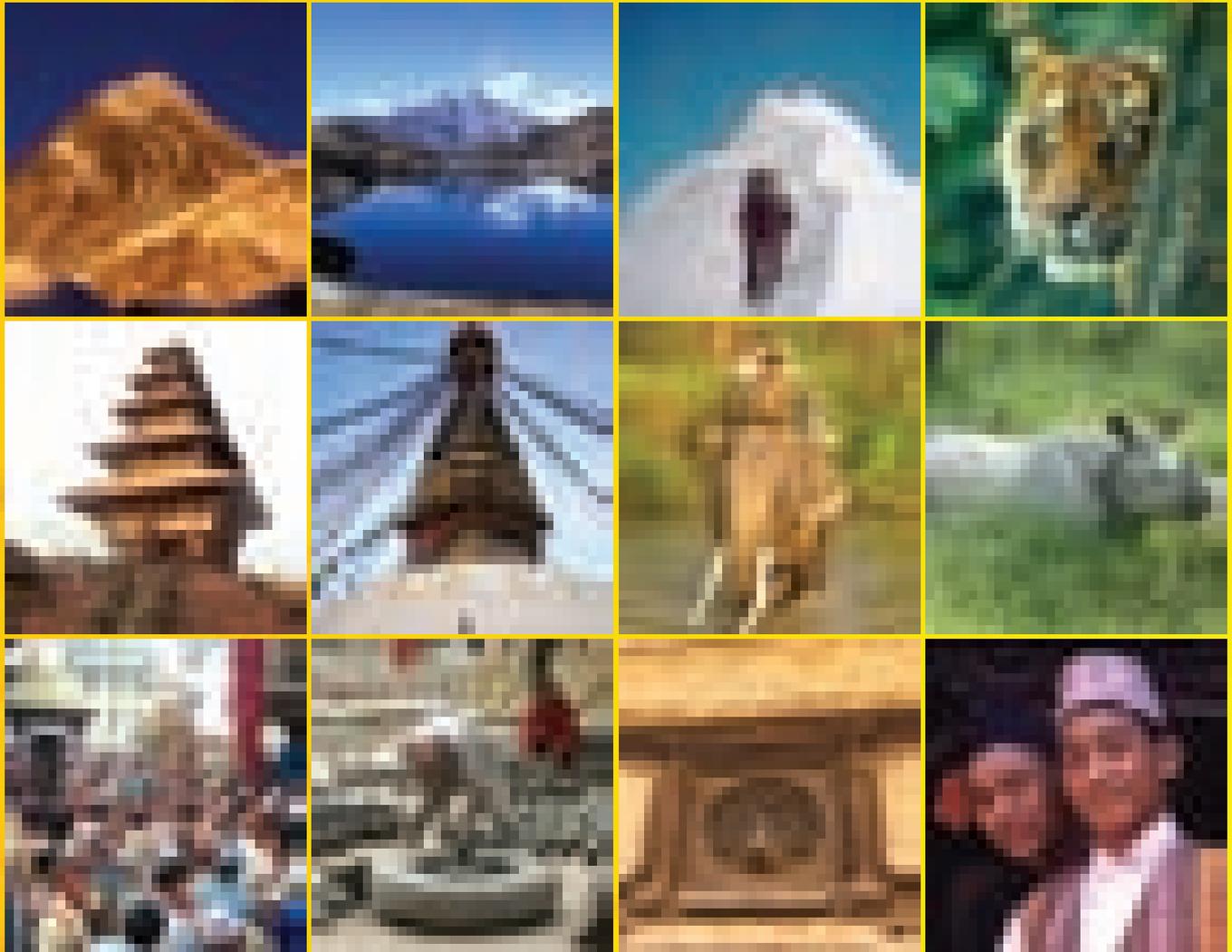
'Green economy' refers to promotion of a low-carbon economy in the framework of sustainable development. Mountainous developing countries already have low-carbon economies, but they also have an extremely high incidence of poverty. The challenge in mountain regions is to keep these economies low carbon while promoting their sustainable development.





GORKHA BEER

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The Village Opens

An initiative of SAARC Business Association of Home Based Workers, The Village Café opened at Pulchowk in the presence of an expectant crowd. The café, a traditional Newari eatery, serves the best of *yomarees*, *baras*, *chataris* and *kwatis*.

Speaking at the official opening, President of SABAH Diwakar Chand said, "The Village hopes to be a forum for home-based workers and a platform for them to showcase their skills. Its main feature is that it gives an opportunity for women home based workers to main their livelihood while



it also harnesses our rich culture." The Village Café not only serves Newari cuisine but also traditional accessories as well as clothing created by the home-based workers in Nepal. (Pawas Manadhar)

Pride in Local

Bhaktapur Craft Paper (BCP) organized the award ceremony of the 3rd National Greeting Card Design Contest at Bhaktapur Craft Paper Ltd. The eight best designers of the contest, open to artists and designers living in Nepal, were chosen by a jury and were awarded with prize money of Rs. 5,000 each and job offer or contractual work for the best designer.

The event featured a workshop on Nepali paper by senior artists and academicians like Sharada Chitrakar, Rabin Kumar Koirala, and Chandra Shrestha. BCP took its form in 1981 as a project launched by UNICEF which aimed to improve the

quality of life of Lokta harvesters and paper makers in rural areas by providing them with employment opportunities. Its success and recognition led to the establishment of Bhaktapur Craft Printers, now incorporated as Bhaktapur Craft Paper Ltd.

BCP was established with an objective to invest major part of its profit in community projects like health and sanitation, employment, and welfare. With workers themselves as shareholders, BCP has been providing necessary training in grooming the local talents and helping them help themselves socially and economically. (Shristi Ale)

Texts and the City



In a photography exhibition Texts and the City inaugurated at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Satish Sharma explores the relationship between city dwellers and the eye-catching visual texts that surround them in the consumer-based cities they live in.

An Indian photojournalist, Sharma, through his photographs highlights the capitalism-driven citizens that we have become. He has captured various texts – on billboards, T-shirts and shops – in his 44 photographs. One of his interesting photographs captures the wall of a school in Kathmandu which has the words 'English Speaking Zone' painted on it while another photograph has a woman resting at the door of a temple with a bottle of Coca Cola by her side. The exhibition features photographs from Kathmandu, Canberra, Mumbai, and Pondicherry.

The exhibition runs through 17 October. (Yukta Bajracharya)

Handwritten signature
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what's on

things to do this month

Art for a Cause

Date: 20 November (Sunday)
Time: 10 am to 1 pm
Venue: Bal Mandir, Naxal
4444289

The DREAMS team is organizing an art competition in order to raise funds that will go into providing food, shelter and medical treatment for stray animals. The event also hopes to involve students from all age groups to sketch, paint and show their devotion to art and love for nature. This fun competition is also aimed at the growth of artistic expression in children and to promote visual arts created by children

ART AND THEATRE

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MUSIC AND PARTIES

Mukti and Revival Vol II

Date: 11 November (Friday)
Time: 7 pm onwards
Venue: The Factory, Thamel
9841405190 9813517127
After the success of folio.music.session Vol I, folio.music.session is back with its second volume with bands like Last One Standing and Mukti and

Revival. This rocking event will also host an after party.

Tickets: Rs. 300 for advance purchase, Rs. 500 at the door

Tribute to Floyd

Date: 12 November (Saturday)
Time: 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm
Venue: Army Officers' Club, Sundhara

Brace yourselves for a rocking Saturday evening this October. 'A Tribute to Pink Floyd' a cover concert of the legendary pioneers of rock, Pink Floyd will be staged by a line of incredibly talented and experienced Nepali musicians. The event, apart from providing endless entertainment, plans to provide for the financially disadvantaged students and give them an opportunity for quality education. Pulse Events Management, the organizer, will be contributing ten percent of all the ticket sales and 100 percent of the venue charge for the noble cause. So, gear up and get ready to sway to the rhythms of some of Pink Floyd's classic numbers and have a great time.

KCM Inter-College Music Competition

Preliminary Dates: 17 November (Monday) and 15 November (Tuesday)
Final Date: 26 November (Saturday)
Registration Deadline: 10 November (Monday)

Time: 11 am onwards
Venue: Fun Park, Bhrikuti Mandap

Get ready for the 8th KCM Inter College Music Competition. The contest, which will feature 35 participants from Bachelor and +2 level colleges, will feature innumerable international hits as well as self-composed songs by the bands. Contestants will be judged on the basis of grades awarded by the jury as well as by ticket voting. Each band gets to play two songs

– including a self composed song – with 25 minutes to perform. Five bands are expected to be from out of the valley.

Registration Cost: Rs. 4,000

Ticket Cost: Rs. 50 (preliminary rounds), Rs. 100 (final)

MISCELLANEOUS

Ultimate Cocktail Challenge

Date: 11 November (Friday)

Time: 4 pm onwards

Venue: Moods Lounge and Bar, Tripureshwar
2100137

La' Intoxica Ultimate Cocktail Challenge – a cocktail making competition organized by Outbox Pvt. Ltd. in partnership with Cocktails and Dreams will have 50 participants who will be judged by a jury of some fine cocktail experts and mixologists. The competition will be followed by a party and there will also be other feature food and drink stalls for non-participants who attend the event.

Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival

Opening Date: 8 December (Thursday)

Closing Date: 12 December (Monday)

Venue: To be announced

5542544, kimff@himalassociation.org, www.kimff.org

This annual competitive film festival organized by Himal Association brings together a great collection of international and local movies. Highlighting mountains in different lights and addressing a range of issues, the festival also includes galleries and archival footages, lectures, etc. This year, 38 films have been selected in the international category; the Nepali entries are under review. Once the event is over, KIMFF gets on the road to screen select movies across the country.

Entry: Free

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LIVING IN NEPAL

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PLACE

Allure of the hills

The most important Sherpa village in the country is a worthy detour on the trail to Everest Base Camp.

Text By UTSAV SHAKYA

I was unable to sleep that first night in Junbesi, Solukhumbu. It wasn't the altitude; Junbesi falls in lower Solukhumbu at 2700m. It was the stuffy sleeping bag which had me wide eyed, listening to the sounds the wooden house made as its parts adjusted, sighed cheerfully and readied itself for another day. The sounds relaxed me; I finally fell into a peaceful slumber.

Junbesi lies on the junction of the Everest trail and the trail to Thuptenchholing monastery. The village also falls on the Pikey - Dudhkunda trail. Tourist traffic has been detoured since then. The Maoist insurgency wreaked havoc on the trails to the village, causing tourist traffic to be detoured elsewhere. Scenic beyond imagina-

tion and filled with hospitable Sherpas, the place bears no remorse of losing tourists. This I suspect is because those who live here have measured the pros and cons of being a tourist destination.

The word that came to mind while I strolled around the village, with narrow pathways guiding me easily to wherever I needed to go, was idyllic. Monsoon had translated charmingly into intermittent light showers throughout the day and this in turn resulted in misty, inky blue evenings – the same color as Mount Numbur in the background. The romance of this quaint village permeated the cool mountain air, ushering locals into their cozy kitchens. There they would spend the rest of the evening, hearty conversations

carrying well into the night as the women stood by shyly, serving bowls after bowl of the delicious Sherpa stew – Shyakpa and refilling cups with home brewed apple *rakshi* (liquor).

The villager and its residents appear too modest, considering Junbesi is *the* most important Sherpa village in the country. One of the reasons for this is because it is home to the oldest monastery in the Solukhumbu region, the 17th century Junbesi Monastery. Inside it is a 6m tall statue of the Buddha, with precious collections of sacred scriptures such as the Kyanjur and the Tyangur.

The landscape is amazing, the village has no dearth of clean, family-run lodges and the food is great. Getting there, even if your pockets are not deep enough to charter a plane, is not a big deal. You can trek in from Salleri, the district headquarters (4 to 5 hours) and or from the airport down at Phaplu (4 1/2 hours), the latter being a most scenic hike through alpine forests and along snow fed rivers. To add some culture into your trek, go during the festivals of Dumje (January) and Nyungne (May).

Junbesi, much like the night sounds of the house I was lodging in, is a village in transition; vibrant, eventful and adjusting to place itself in changed times. Many of its residents now live outside and are doing exceptionally well for themselves. Most give back generously to their community, one of the things that have allowed Junbesi the luxury of remaining idyllic. ■





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Shyakpa

A simmering, delectable Sherpa broth

Text By PRIANKA RAUNIYAR

Home bound with a book on a rainy day, I craved for something warm to satiate my hunger. Simple to make, healthy to eat and a ‘comfort’ food that I only recently came across - “*Shyakpa*” is perfect for the occasion. It is essentially a flavourful stew with crunchy leafy veggies, fresh chunky meat and soft dough strips stirred in. Like most Nepali dishes though, this Sherpa delicacy, that most people who try once can’t get enough of, is passed on to the next generation through word of mouth and adapted according to one’s palate. There is no ‘one’ recipe but a myriad variations and this flexibility adds a touch of uniqueness each time you try it.

“It’s an everyday food for us back in Solukhumbu,” recalls Ngawang Lakhpa, who owns a tiny secluded cave-like restaurant in Boudha. He headed to Kathmandu, like most, for a little more income to fend for his family and secure a better future for his kids. Though he didn’t serve *Shyakpa* as a regular item on his menu, he made a bowl for us while chatting about his ancestors, kids, child marriages and the clear running water from the Himalayas. His fond memories of the dish and home led to an evening hour conversation over a glass of *chhyang* (home-brewed liquor from fermented rice) first. As the steamy homemade stew made way to our table, Ngawang gave us a quick recipe that I remember at the tip of my fingers. Add some ragged swatches of flattened wheat flour dough to a sauté of veggies and meat, pour in some water and bring the lovely cloudy broth to a boil. Put in some salt and pepper (if you like) and Tada! *Shyakpa* is ready to be savored. It’s expensive and to some extent monotonous to have *daal bhaat* for most meals in the mountains. So, *Shyakpa* is a preferred alternative and staple among Sherpas, he claims - a soup you’d enjoy in the cold wintry nights at higher altitudes cooked generally with locally and readily available yak meat and potatoes.



The flour sheets used in the recipe are pulled out from softly kneaded dough and made into flat strips, that’s how Thenthuk got its name: “Then” means “pull” and “thuk” for “noodles”.

Back in Kathmandu though, *Shyakpa* is popularized as “*Thenthuk*” and is easily available at most Tibetan eateries. The flour sheets used in the recipe are pulled out from softly kneaded dough and made into flat strips, that’s how *Thenthuk* got its name: “*Then*” means “pull” and “*thuk*” for “noodles”. I sat down with a bowl of chicken *Thenthuk* at a small but bustling Tibetan joint in Thahiti chowk. This one was richer in veggies - *palungo ko saag* (spinach), thinly

chopped carrots, raddish, a hint of tomatoes and garnished with coriander and spring onions accompanied by crushed pods of the aromatic *timur* on the side. Variety is the spice of city life they say, sprinkle some of it into the simple serving and you’re concocting your own little gastronomic adventure while the soothing essence remains intact as it rains outside and I wrap my palms around the hearty warm bowl and gulp down a delicious mouthful of *Shyakpa*. ■

TASTE THE FINEST IN FUSION

INTRODUCING ANTIQUITY BLUE IN NEPAL.



From scholar to diplomat

After seeing the world, a former ambassador is putting his knowledge to use.

Text By **KAPIL BISHT**

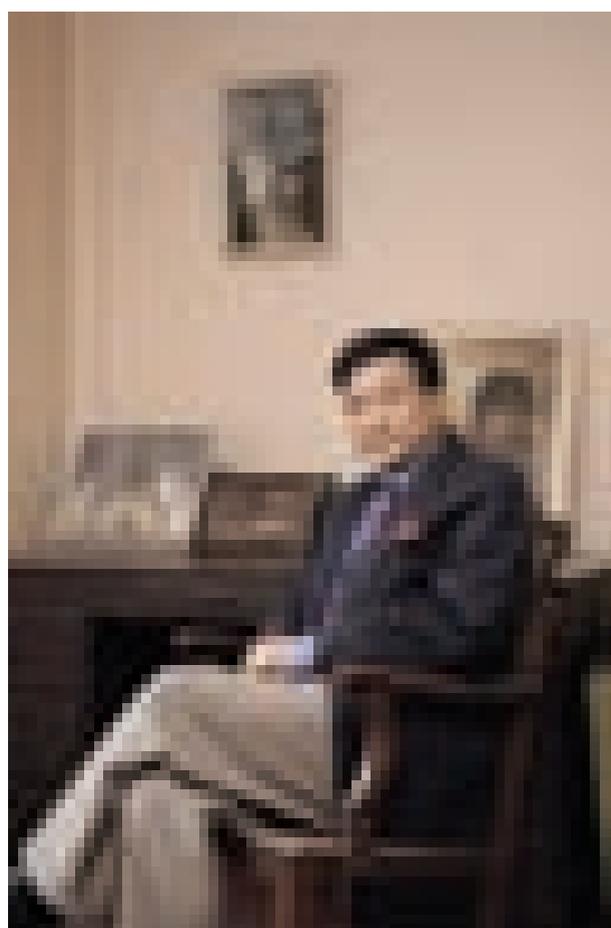
Dr. Durgesh Man Singh is a man of stellar academic background. In 1966, he graduated as a Bachelors of Arts from Tribhuvan University with a distinction. He topped the University exams that year. He enrolled in the Delhi School of Economics for a Masters degree in 1968. His performance in the first year of study earned him a merit scholarship. At the Delhi School of Economics, Dr. Singh was taught by some of the best contemporary academicians and scholars. He was taught for two years by Amartya Sen, the world-renowned economist and Nobel laureate. Among his other professors were Jagdish Bhagwati and Manmohan Singh, India's incumbent Prime Minister. In 1984, he completed his Ph. D. degree in Economics from the University of Florida. His dissertation for the degree, entitled 'Macro Econometric Model for Small Open Economy – Nepal', was a seminal work as it was the first macro-econometric model ever developed for Nepal.

After returning from the U.S., Dr. Singh began his career in the development sector. He was Senior Economist and Training Chief on Development Planning at the Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA). Later, he was appointed Senior Economist at the Agricultural Projects Services Centre (APROSC). Dr. Singh also served as an advisor to the National Planning Commission for three years. Then he became a member of the National Planning Commission, remaining in charge of economic analysis for over five years.

While he was at the Planning Commission, Dr. Singh had led numerous delegations to different countries. This was the beginning of his career in diplomacy, and in a way, a continuation of his grandfather's legacy. His grandfather, Sardar Gunja Man Singh, was a highly influential figure in Ne-

pal's diplomatic ties with numerous countries.

After serving as a member of the Official Summit Delegation to the SAARC Summit in Islamabad in 1989 and later as member of the Prime Minister's delegation to Male in 1991, he was appointed the first resident Royal Nepalese Ambassador and Head of the Nepalese Mission to the European Union in Brussels in 1992. There he emulated the achievements of his grandfather by formulating the agreement for cooperation between the Nepali government and the European Union. It was during his time in Brussels that he realized the importance of conserving heritage. "In Europe tourists want to interact with the locals. In



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He was Senior Economist and Training Chief on Development Planning at the Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA).

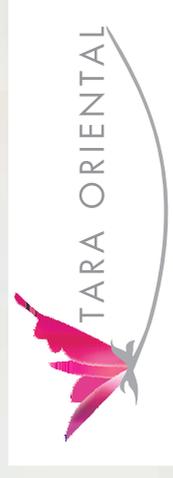
Nepal interaction is almost non-existent," he says. Now, he is using all his experience to help bridge this gap between tourist and the people. He has devised a concept where tourists would be encouraged to visit not just the large palaces but also the local neighborhoods. "Showcasing how people lived their lives in the old days should be our

theme, not just herding tourists around a palace. Kathmandu's old settlements are live museums. We must develop other facilities such as eateries and shops and ensure profits for its residents," he says. The economist and scholar, combined with the diplomat in him, surely will help bring tourists closer to Kathmandu's heritage. ■



|| I really love your scarf.
My beautiful memory of Nepal
include your beautiful scarf."

- **Tetsuko Kuronyang** (UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador)



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Kathmandu slammin'

Poetry Slam is making more people sit up and listen.

Text By NAYAN POKHREL SINDHULIYA

Started by an American Marc Smith in Get Me High Lounge of Chicago in 1984, slam poetry is a rather unconventional form of poetry. Unlike poetry's more conventional forms, slam poetry's focus lies in the performance aspect and a communication between the poet and the audience that is direct and spontaneous. When people ask me about slam poetry, I recite them Bhoopi Sherchan. Imagine Bhoopi under the Peepal Bot in Naya Sadak or a *bhatti* in Indrachok sipping his local *tharra* and reciting seamless poetry – poking fun at our national imagination and the flaws therein. To me Bhoopi personifies, quite brilliantly, what poetry slam could – and probably should – mean to Nepal. Singling out Bhoopi alone however would be a great injustice to numerous other poets, some identified, other unknown, who have produced remarkable poetry out of the gutter – be it in the streets during popular political protests or in the village

forests where spontaneous *dohori* often leads to romantic shenanigans and in some cases even marriages.

The US Embassy last December brought three renowned slam poets, Danny Solis, Karen Finnyfrock, and Matt Mason as part of their “Cultural Envoy Program” to Nepal. The Embassy collaborated with Quixote's Cove Bookshop in Jawalakhel to organize poetry reading, writing, and teaching workshops for students, teachers, librarians and the general public in Kathmandu, Biratnagar and Itahari. As a build up to this, Quixote's Cove organized Nepal's first ever slam poetry reading in India-Nepal Library as part of the latter's monthly Tavern Tales Series where the members of the bilingual independent Hip-Hop group Lyrics Indy (Yanik Shrestha, Aidray, and Gaurav Subba) performed with another poet Aditi Shrestha and I. There was much excitement within the poets and a euphoric audience. By the end of the next two weeks these poets formed “Word Warriors: A Slam Poetry

Group” along with few of the standout young poets who won Nepal's first under-21 poetry slam contest, marking yet another historic milestone in Kathmandu's vibrant and emerging creative scene. The Word Warriors have since performed in various venues in the capital – from casual pubs and bars to musical concerts, book launches, educational institutions, and commemorative performances to an ever increasing and passionate audience.

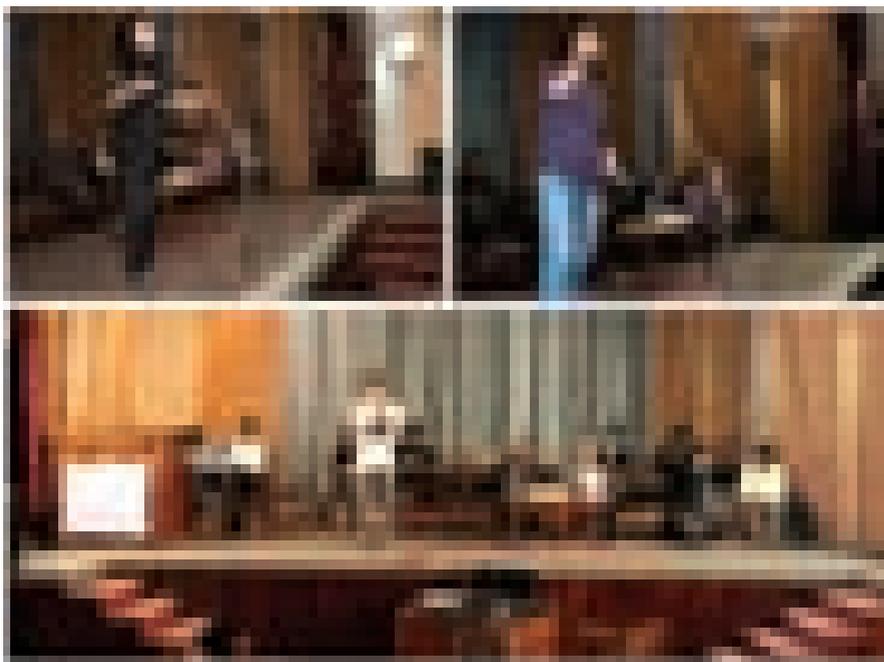
It is remarkable yet unsurprising that something like poetry slam would make such a strong ground in Kathmandu in less than a year. This says much about the city's recent struggle to cope with both, the grave socio-political turmoil of recent decades and an incredible wave of prosperity and material expansion in more recent years. While the national polity continues to remain in a state of eternal flux, a middle-class culture, albeit belatedly, is looking to explore and capitalize avenues beyond mainstream politics. Like some other forms of art, literature and music, poetry slam's sudden popularity therefore probably comes amid, and because of, the failure of national politics.

This is best reflected in the poems that the members of the Word Warriors have been performing around town. The most telling aspects of these performances have been the powerful socio-political commentary and the insightful perspectives on different fabrics of an ailing nation. The themes in their poems vary from alcoholism and patriarchy to caste hierarchy and the rural-urban divide, and from the torment of war and violence to the aesthetics of geography and the rustic charm. Some resent our broken and incomplete teaching system, while others dwell in the nostalgia of when things were better. Along with anger and frustration, rebellion and sarcasm, melancholy and nostalgia, there is also an incredible message of hope and longing for a better future.

A spoken word can sometime be more effective than an angry brick. Herein lies slam poetry's biggest potential for Nepal. ■

For information about performances and other queries join the group “Word Warriors: A Slam Poetry Group” on Facebook.

It is remarkable yet unsurprising that something like poetry slam would make such a strong ground in Kathmandu in less than a year.



Marked by numbers

In a time of nuclear living, the Newar ceremony of Jyab Janku celebrates age and togetherness.

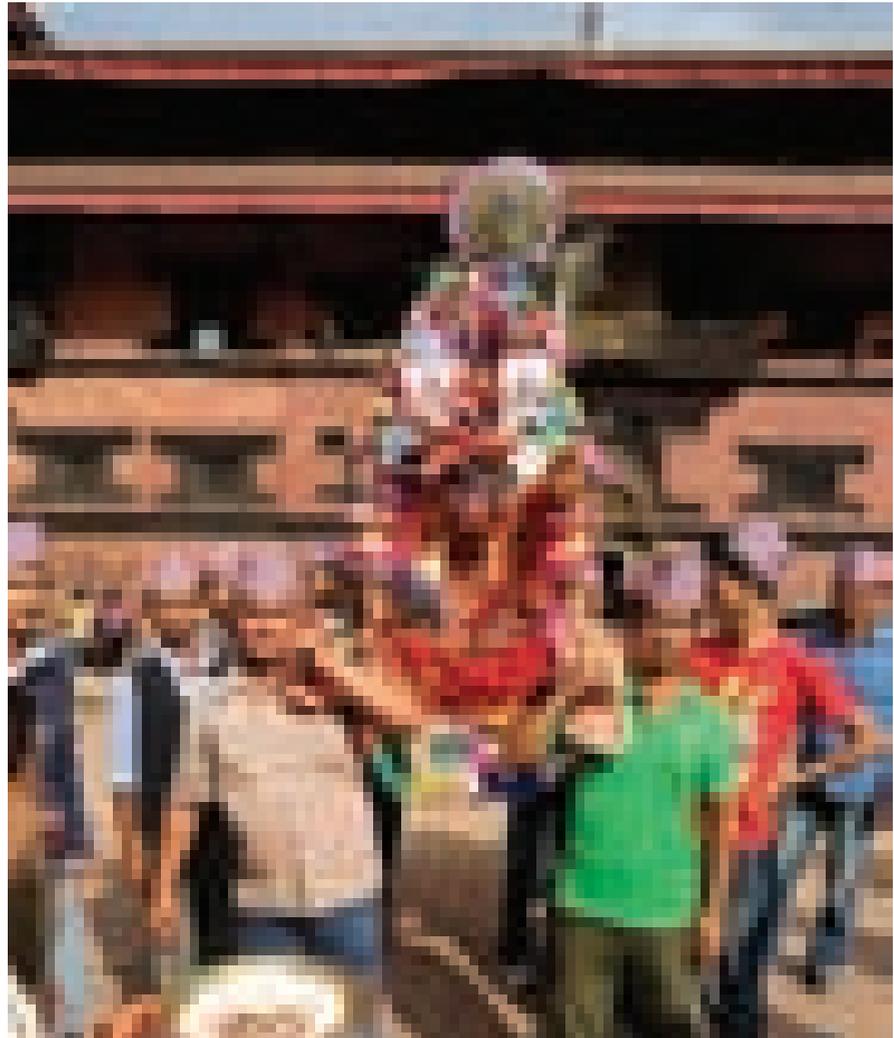
Text By UTSAV SHAKYA

She had forgotten her arthritis today; her knees easily folded before her, an easy smile resting on her face. Her grandchildren and great grand children crowded her room in a house in Patan's Tabahal, gathered there to celebrate her second *janku*, a celebration of birth, age, life and a loving family.

Widowed when her youngest child, my mother, was just a toddler, I had always seen my maternal *aji* – grandmother, wearing white and beige; an apple green blouse was the most color she wore. Standing in front of the mirror on the day of her *janku*, she stared at the widow in bridal red looking back at her. Quiet tears immediately wet her eyes.

The term *janku* can imply different things at different stages of a Newar's life. *Macha* (child) *janku* is the rice feeding ceremony for infants. *Jyab janku* on the other hand is a ceremony performed at a later stage in a Newar person's life, to mark one's longevity. There are five variations of this ceremony too. Bhimratharohan at 77 years, 7 months and 7 days old, Chadratharohan at 83 years, 4 months and 4 days, Devratharohan at 88 years, 8 months and 8 days, Divyaratharohan at 99 years, 9 months, 9 days and the last one when a person lives to see 105 years, 8 months and 8 days.

"A *janku* is celebrated at such defined ages for two reasons," says Deepak Bajracharya, a Newar *gurju* (high priest). According to Newar religious texts, the particular ages for the ceremonies mark inauspicious times in a person's life, times when even the smallest hurdle might pose a serious threat to one's life. The various rituals in the ceremony appease particular deities to help a person overcome these potential problems. Before modern medicine became readily available in the country, people would live to an average of 60 to 65 years. Reaching 77 and beyond therefore, equalled someone getting a new life. This is the second reason for a *janku*. The title of *thhakali*, a senior of the community, is bestowed upon the person after their *janku*, with some even considering them a living god (or goddess).



ECS Media

The various rituals in the ceremony appease particular deities to help a person overcome these potential problems.

It is certainly no fluke that ceremonies that mark birth and the later stages of a Newar person's life have a common name. The Newar community is predominantly Buddhist, although most of them celebrate major Hindu festivals with equal enthusiasm. With so many references to each religion in the other's holy texts, it is only natural that they share many commonalities.

As a Newar Buddhist, I myself have come across many philosophies about the meaning of life, my final interpretation being that life is but a journey from one stage (birth) to another (death), the body being but a vessel for an indestructible, travelling soul. ■

The author would like to thank Deepak Bajracharya for assisting with research on the story.

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The Tao of Travel

ENLIGHTENMENTS FROM LIVES ON THE ROAD

By PAUL THEROUX

Reviewed by DON MESSERSCHMIDT

Paul Theroux is one of the world's premier travel writers, the author of such titles as 'The Great Railway Bazaar: By Train Through Asia' (1975), 'The Old Patagonian Express' (1979) by train through North and South America; 'Riding the Iron Rooster' (1988) on trains in China; 'Ghost Train to the Eastern Star' (2008) retracing some of the 1975 trip; and many more. Theroux likes trains (and a lot more). But, did he ever ride the Janakpur or Darjeeling lines?

Theroux also has 28 fiction titles, most recently: 'A Dead Hand: A Crime in Calcutta' (2009). His 1981 novel, 'The Mosquito Coast', is one of my favorites. It was made into a film shot in Belize (Central America) in which the final conflagration (a horrendous explosion and fire) was staged with the pyrotechnic help of a contingent of Nepalese Gurkha soldiers stationed in that former British colony.

Theroux has also written the critically acclaimed 'V.S. Naipaul: An Introduction to His Work' (1972).

Theroux's 'The Tao of Travel' (2011) is a remarkable accomplishment, a gem of a book, one that every serious traveler and travel writer will want to own. That's no

overstatement. It's a 'must have' compendium of travel wisdom, a treasure trove of insight and ageless observations.

In the Preface, 'The Importance of Elsewhere', Theroux writes: "All my traveling life I have been asked the maddening and oversimplifying question 'What is your favorite travel book?'... Then, the travel narrative, he tells us, is "the oldest in the world, the story the wanderer tells to the folk gathered around the fire after his or her return from a journey. 'This is what I saw' — news from the wider world; the odd, the strange, the shocking, tales of beasts or of other people..." Never ending; seldom boring.

Early in the book we are introduced to Dervla Murphy's practical Rules of Travel. For example: "*Choose your country..., identify the areas most frequented by foreigners — and then go in the opposite direction.*" "*Mug up on history.*" "*Invest in the best available maps.*" "*Be cautious — but not timid.*"

Murphy is the brave Irish lady who bicycled from Ireland to India and Nepal in the early 1960s to work with Tibetan refugees at Pokhara. After that she made a career of cycling and writing the world. Her earliest books are 'Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle' (1965), 'Tibetan Foothold' (1966), and 'The Waiting Land: A spell in Nepal' (1967).

In 'The Tao', Theroux introduces us to thoughts on travel by such great litterateurs as Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Evelyn Waugh. Dickens is also there, and Isabella Bird, James Boswell, Sir Richard Burton and Lord Byron, Emerson and Hemingway, Pico Iyer and Flaubert, and others. Among the earliest are Sir John Mandeville, Marco Polo, and Ibn Battuta.

The vast majority of what Theroux quotes is from Western writers, with a sprinkling of others including South America's Gabriel Garcia Marquez, India's Vikram Seth, the Japanese Zen practitioner Bashō whose long walk across Japan resulted in a classic of 17th century Asian travel writing, and the 7th century Chinese Buddhist scholar and "ultimate



pilgrim" Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang) who journeyed to South and Southwest Asia and described the great Buddha statues of Bamiyan in Afghanistan (destroyed by the Taliban in 2001).

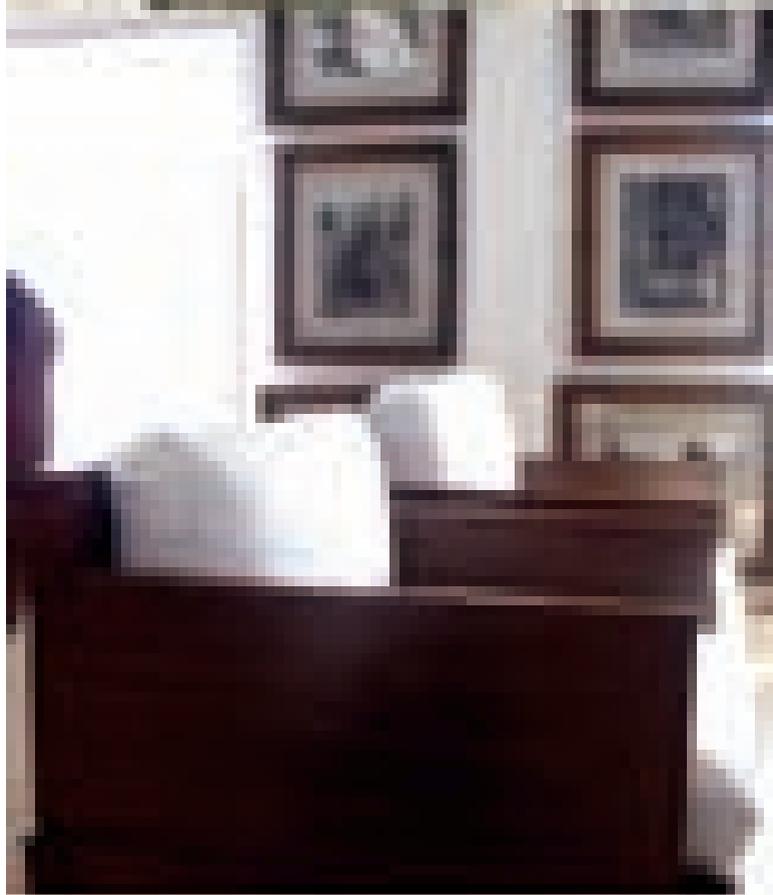
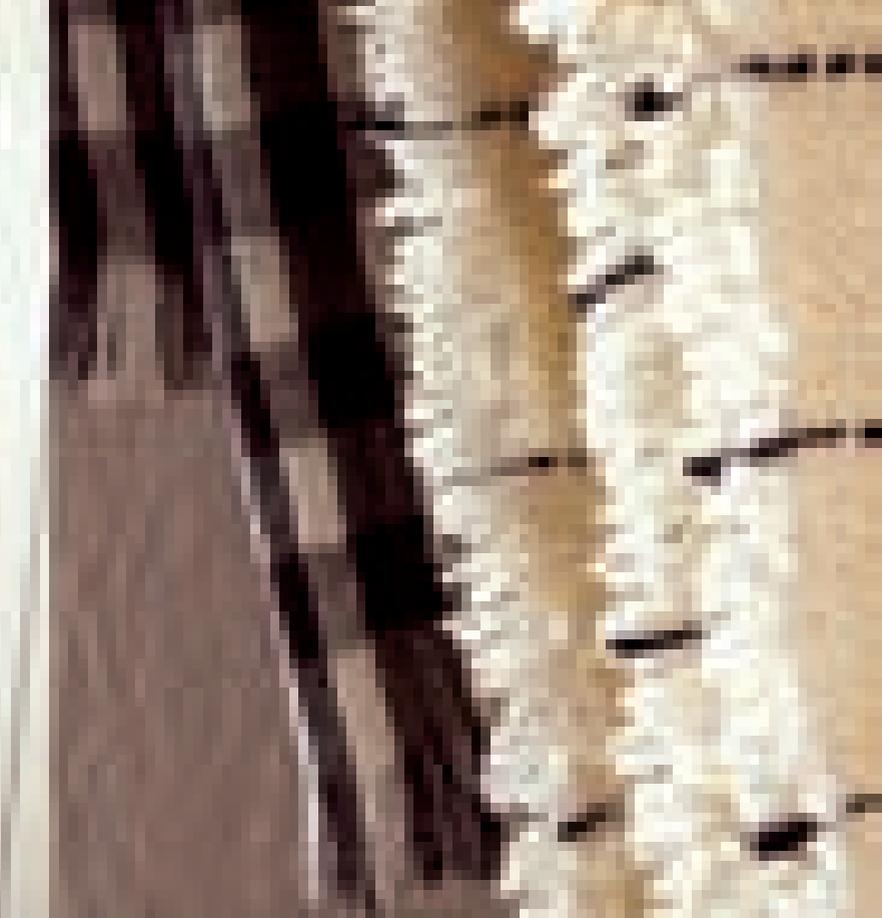
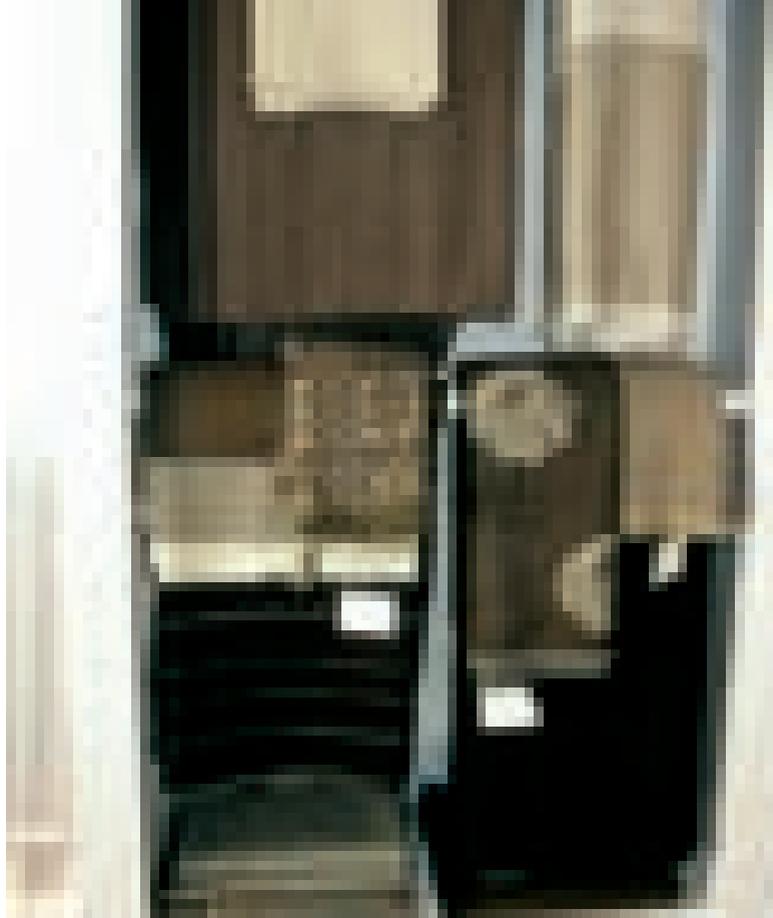
The most direct reference to Nepal in 'The Tao' is excerpted from 'The Snow Leopard', Peter Matthiessen's 1978 account of a scientific expedition and spiritual pilgrimage to The Crystal Mountain in Dolpa.

Theroux concludes with Five Travel Epiphanies based on personal experience. The first reveals a travel truism. Back in 1963, while boarding a plane in Italy, the young Theroux had no money to pay the mandatory departure tax. The stranger behind him in line saw his predicament and handed him twenty dollars. When Theroux said he'd like to repay the man sometime, the stranger replied: "*I'll probably see you again. The world's a small place.*" ■

'The Tao of Travel' (2011) was published—leather bound—in Boston and New York by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and is available on the Internet for up to US \$25. Ask your local book dealer to order it in for you. You can read more about Paul Theroux at www.paultheroux.com.

The reviewer is a contributing editor to ECS Nepal magazine, and can be contacted at don_editor@gmail.com.





1. **Minimalist Dining**

2. **Textured Wall**

3. **Art Wall**

4. **Patterned Panel**



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The fourth kingdom

Shy of media attention, Kirtipur, the historical fourth kingdom has its share of stories to tell.

Text By BENJAMIN GRAHAM



Modern residential buildings and historical, religious monuments stand shoulder to shoulder today in Kirtipur.

A troop of battle-weary soldiers, khukuris in hand, formed their regiment lines along the banks of the Bagmati River and faced the hill rising above them to the South. Clad in chain mail and carrying shields, the men marching up the steep incline, following their king, Prithvi Narayan Shah, only 34 years old at the time, and his top general, Kalu Pandey. Shah, who would later conquer and unify the territories that constitute modern day Nepal, must have been unimpressed by the small, unassuming fortified city at the top of the hill.

As they approached the stone wall, the general barked his orders. No sooner did the men fall into their positions that a volley of arrows and spears rained down from behind the embankment. Scattering under the heavy fire, the soldiers were no match for the villagers' army hunkered down on the other side. The day was December 4, 1757, and before it was over, the imposing Gorkha army would lose 400 men, including their general, and the Shah king himself would barely escape with his life.

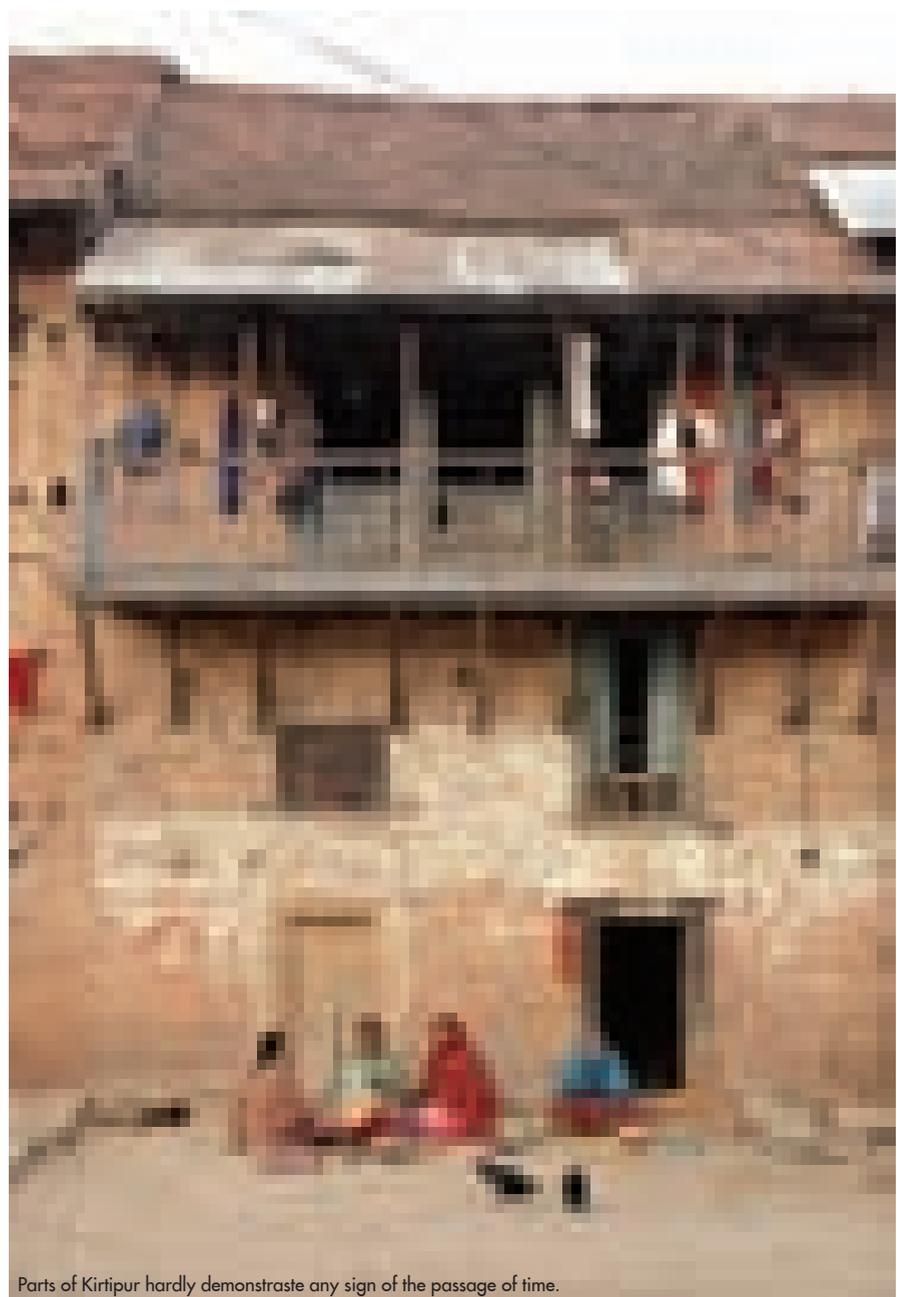
Today, I imagine the dejected king retreating down the hill as I cling to the back of my friend Raj's motorcycle, terraced fields whizzing by on either side of the narrow road. We are following the Bagmati River south and up to the base of Kirtipur's hill, where the crumbling remnants of the old walls mark the beginning of the city.

Initially, this short day trip was born out of our collective epiphany that many people living in the Kathmandu Valley have never been to Kirtipur, despite its proximity and historical legacy. Out of the four antiquated kingdoms of the valley—Kirtipur, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur (Patan), and Kantipur (Kathmandu)—Kirtipur, far and away the smallest, is the only one that remains relatively untouched by tourism or development.

Swerving around a tight bend in the road, Kirtipur suddenly rises before us, its pointed roofs poking into the morning sky. Although we're only 5km from

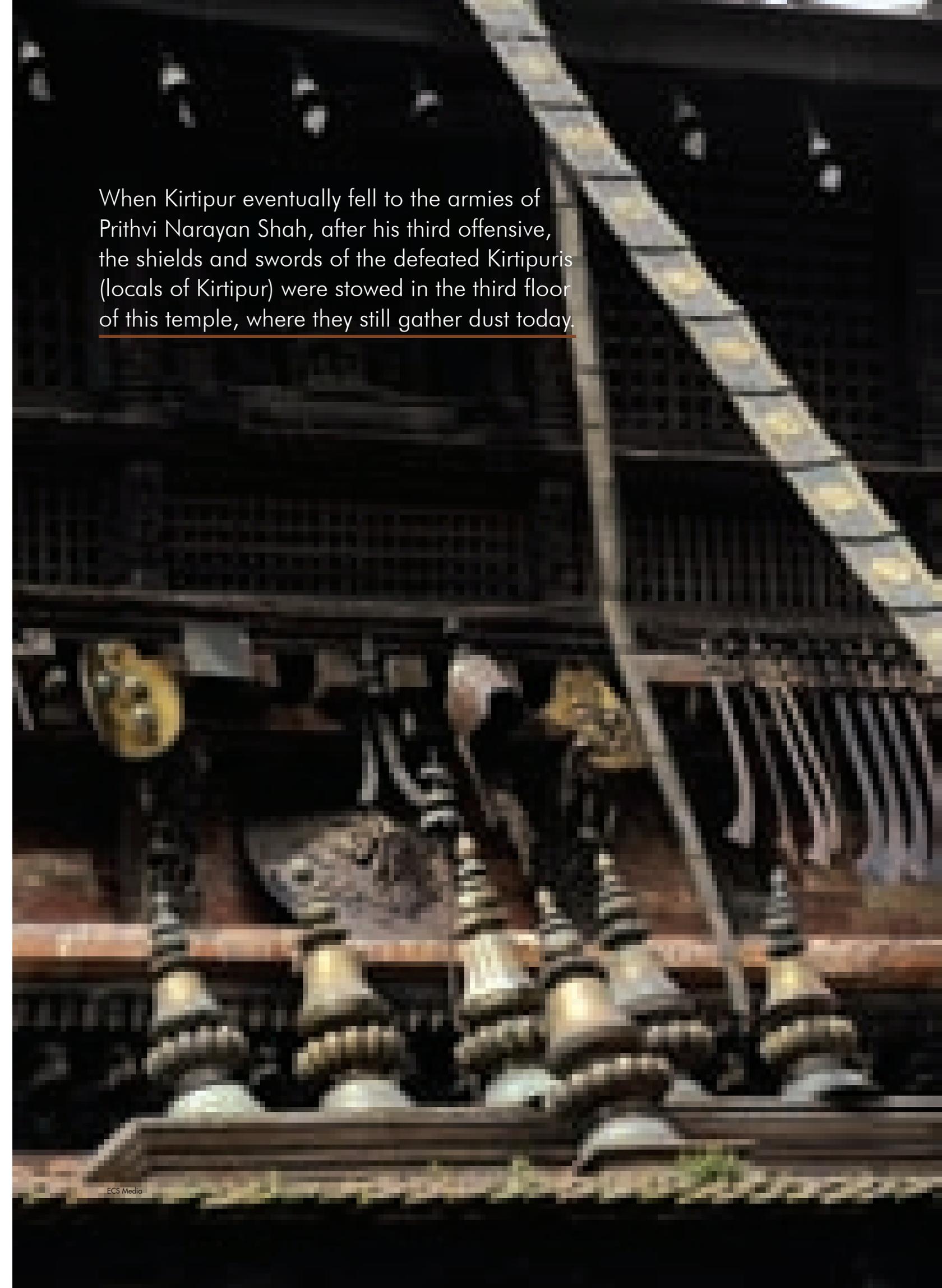
downtown Kathmandu, we've already climbed high above the ruckus of the city streets below. The hill itself, covered with houses stacked precariously on top of each other, is accentuated at the top by the terraced roofs of a temple. As we ascend higher, the concrete houses are soon replaced by traditional Newari homes—rectangular mud and brick buildings topped with tiled roofs.

There are only two attractions that regularly draw outsiders up to the top of Kirtipur, and both are temples. The three-roofed Bagh Bhairav temple dates to the 11th century and sits in an open courtyard full of smaller shrines and temples. When Kirtipur eventually fell to the armies of Prithvi Narayan Shah, after his third offensive, the shields and swords of the defeated *Kirtipuris* (locals ▶

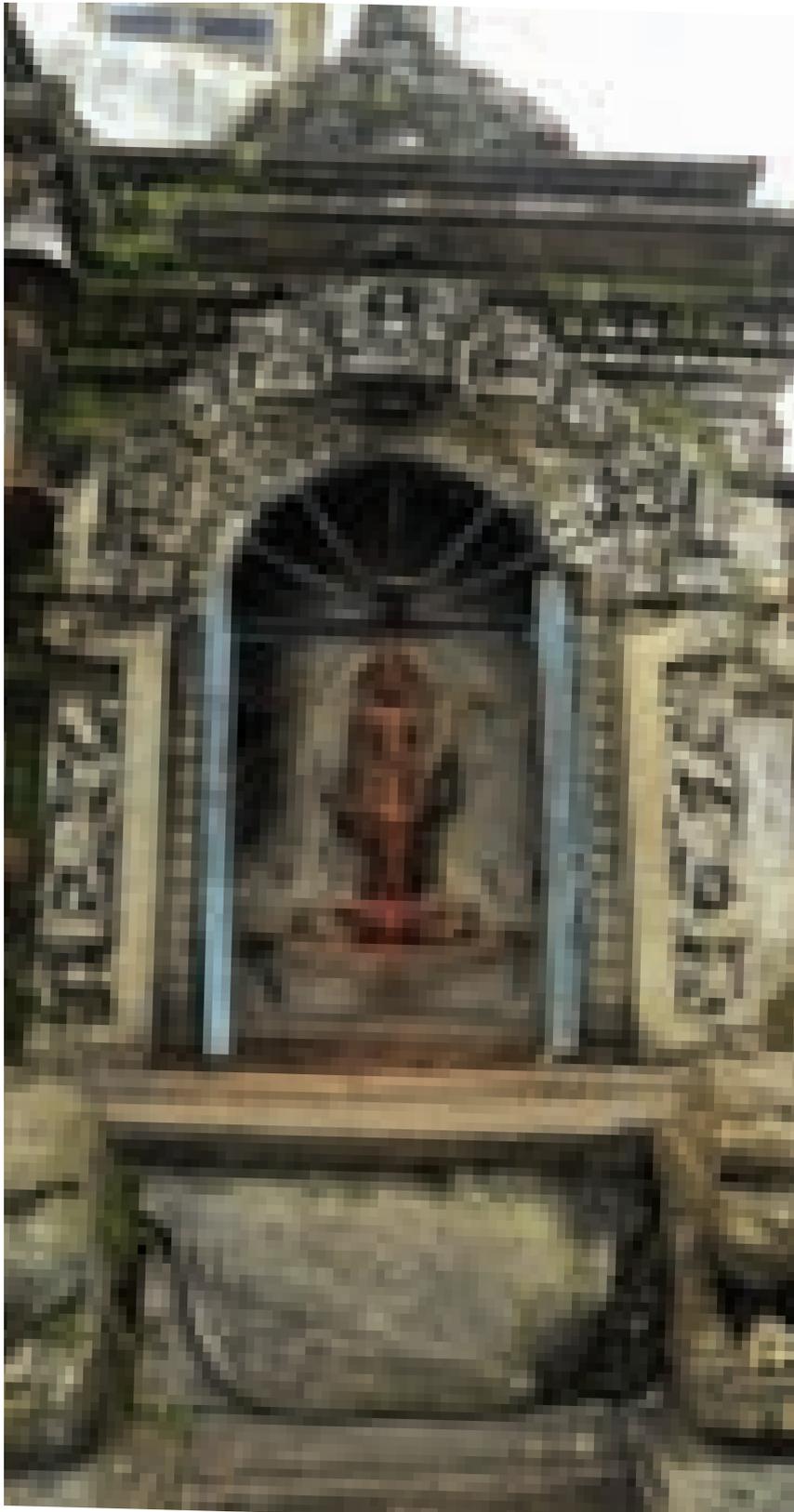


Parts of Kirtipur hardly demonstrate any sign of the passage of time.

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When Kirtipur eventually fell to the armies of Prithvi Narayan Shah, after his third offensive, the shields and swords of the defeated Kirtipuris (locals of Kirtipur) were stowed in the third floor of this temple, where they still gather dust today.



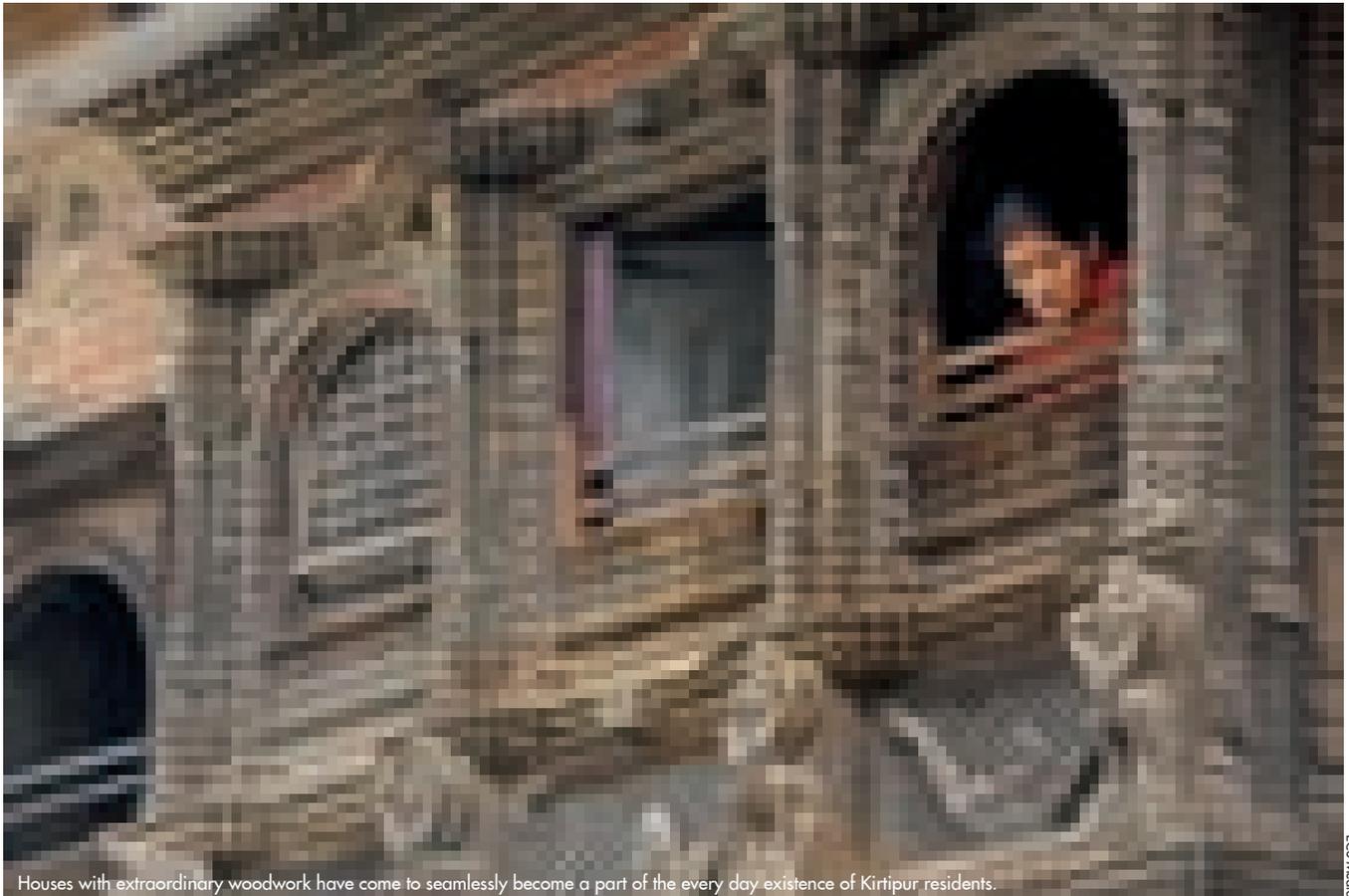
of Kirtipur) were stowed in the third floor of this temple, where they still gather dust today.

A couple of hundred meters further up the hill, seemingly resting on its apex, is the Uma Maheshwar temple. Dismounting our bike, Raj and I join a handful of tourists climbing the path up to the temple. Once through the gate, the view opens up to a 360 degree panorama of the Kathmandu Valley. The tourists snap a few photos, then turn and walk down the steps and down the hill.

The view itself is worth the trip, but Raj and I are interested in getting a little more historical context on the city. Descending back down the path, I follow my friend through winding backstreets swept clean and lined with little, blue trash bins. While there are a few kids kicking a football around, most people seem to be busy with work. Women hunker down over their handlooms inside hobbit-sized rooms, while others spread grain out with their feet on large Newari mats. Raj approaches a woman stringing red chili peppers from a window as if they were Christmas lights, but she says she doesn't speak much Nepali, only Newari.

I find myself wondering how a place so close to Kathmandu can remain so untouched by the city below. That's not to say there aren't plenty of people riding sleek new motorbikes or talking on expensive mobile phones. But compared to just down the hill, where concrete buildings and lines of traffic constitute the scenery, Kirtipur feels like another world. In fact, it is easy to imagine that not much has changed here since the first outsider, the Shah king, invaded the place in the 18th century.

After consulting a few locals who do speak Nepali, we stop by a small fabric store to talk with 59 year-old Bhim Kumar Rajbhandari, a smartly dressed man sitting cross-legged in the middle of his shop. Although he denies any sort of title other than shopkeeper, other Kirtipuris



Houses with extraordinary woodwork have come to seamlessly become a part of the every day existence of Kirtipur residents.

describe Rajbhandari as a sort of informal folk historian.

“I don’t know how far back my family has been living in Kirtipur,” he tells my friend and I, “I can count back maybe ten generations, then I lose track.”

I ask him how he feels about the Shah king, the man his forefathers fought off to protect their homeland. “Prithvi Narayan Shah...he was a great man. If he hadn’t come, we wouldn’t be able to say we’re proud to be Nepalis. There would be no Nepal,” he says, then pauses, “But the third time he attacked... there was foul play.”

Rajbhandari relates a story told to him by his father about how, after failing to conquer Kirtipur on two separate attacks, Prithvi Narayan Shah retreated to Nuwakot, an area just outside of the valley. Seeking refuge in a local’s house,

I ask him how he feels about the Shah king, the man his forefathers fought off to protect their homeland. “Prithvi Narayan Shah

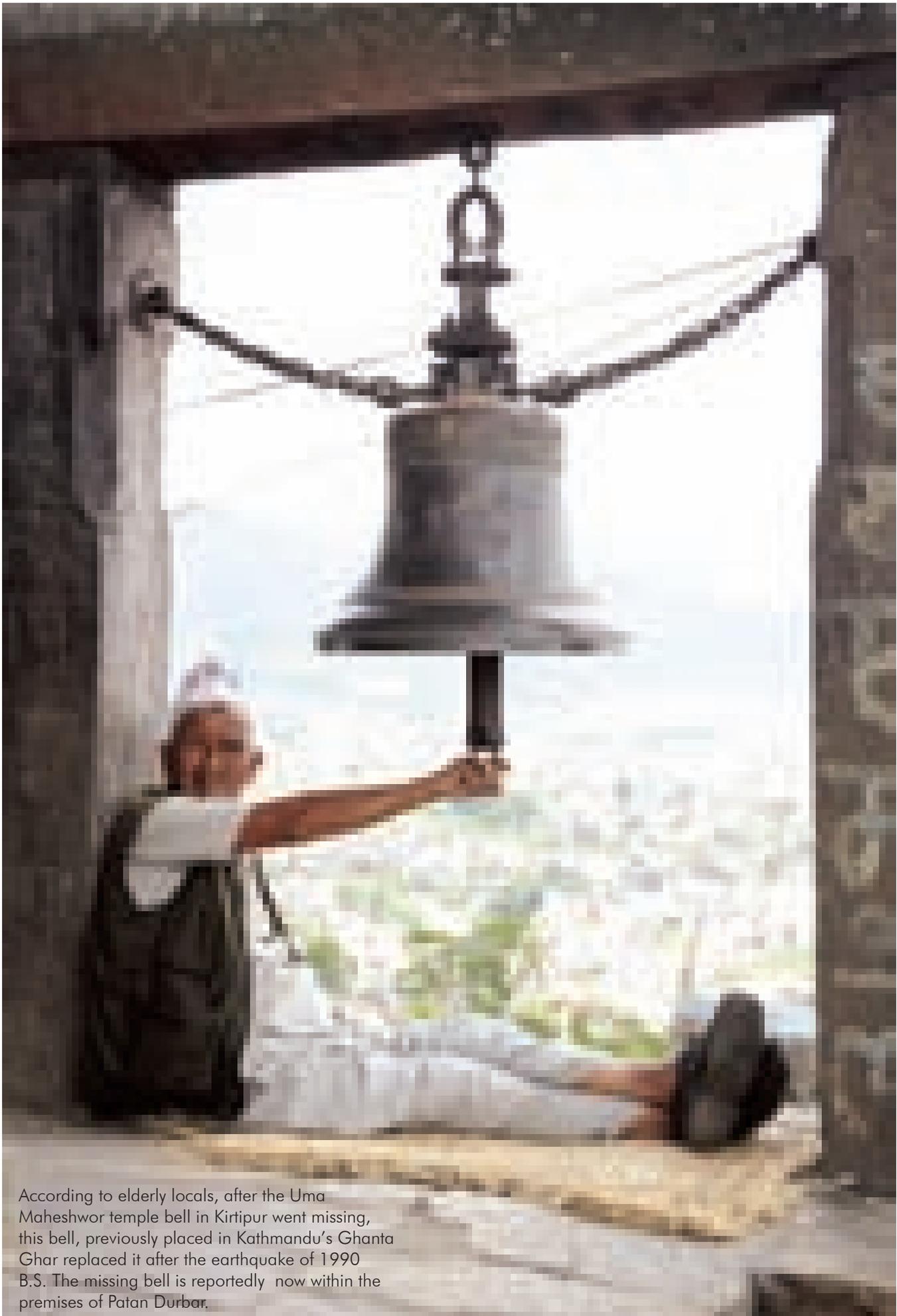
the king was offered dinner and a bed by a woman who didn’t know he was the king from Gorkha. Upon being served a platter of steaming rice, the King dipped his hand into the middle of the plate.

Yanking his burned hand back from the rice, his hostess scolded him. “You’re as foolish as Prithvi Narayan Shah,” she said, still unaware of his identity. Interested and caught off guard by her comment, the king asked her to elaborate on her comparison.

“Because, like you with your rice, the king is trying to defeat the walled city of

Kirtipur by attacking it head on, aiming for the middle. You try to eat hot food from the middle of the plate, but it is better to eat a little, very slowly, from the around the edge,” she explains.

According to Rajbhandari, this was all the inspiration Prithvi Narayan Shah needed. Over the ensuing nine months, his troops encircled Kirtipur and formed a blockade. The Gorkha armies cut the city off from the trade routes around the valley and those running from India to Tibet, “until not a single grain of rice was left,” he says. ▶



According to elderly locals, after the Uma Maheshwor temple bell in Kirtipur went missing, this bell, previously placed in Kathmandu's Ghanta Ghar replaced it after the earthquake of 1990 B.S. The missing bell is reportedly now within the premises of Patan Durbar.

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Once the city surrendered, so the history books read, the Shah king cut off the nose and lips of every man in Kirtipur. But Rajbhandari claims this popular story is a product of misinterpreted history.

“After their defeat, the Kirtipuris were ashamed. They used the phrase ‘Nakh katnu,’” he says. In Nepali, the phrase is used to express shame. Literally translated, it means to cut your nose. According to Rajbhandari, British explorers and soldiers in Nepal took the words literally, when they recorded the history of the Gorkha army’s conquest of the Kathmandu valley. In reality there was no mutilation, he claims.

Regardless of the historical proof supporting his stories, Rajbhandari is excellent at telling them. However, he informs us, if we want a real historian, we should go meet Sukha Sagar Shrestha, a local archeologist who lives just down the hill.

There are essentially two Kirtipurs: Kirtipur the historical city at the top of the hill, and Kirtipur the municipality. The municipality is home to roughly 50,000 people and includes the area of Chobar and a few neighboring villages, as well as the old city on top of the hill. Tribhuvan University, the first university established in the Kathmandu Valley, was built in Kirtipur municipality, below the old city, in 1959. Sukha Sagar Shrestha’s house is located near the base of the hill, where the old Kirtipur meets the new Kirtipur.

Shrestha, a wiry middle-aged man in matching trousers and shirt, has been an archeology fanatic since his days as a young schoolboy in Kirtipur. His studies have taken him all over Nepal, but he tends to spend most of his time now in his cluttered living room, which doubles as his library. A sofa against the far wall is stacked high with aging documents and bound pamphlets, many of which are his own work. Squeezing onto a bench, one of the few flat surfaces not covered with books, I ask Shrestha, in English, his opinions of Prithvi Narayan Shah and the historical legacy of Kirtipur. ▶

There are essentially two Kirtipurs: Kirtipur the historical city at the top of the hill, and Kirtipur the municipality.



The head of this stone elephant that guards the staircase of the Uma Maheshow temple is said to have been cut off during the invasion by king Prithvi Narayan Shah. Locals later renovated the monument to its present form.

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“Unifier or invader--it’s the words we use that make a man good or bad,” Shrestha says with a wry grin, “But the king and his army certainly weren’t the last outsiders to come to Kirtipur.”

Indeed, Kirtipur municipality has seen a surge in growth lately, comparable even to Kathmandu and Patan. The most recent influxes have been students and professors, many of whom find cheap housing down below the hill near TU’s campus. These new Kirtipur residents have earned the area a reputation as a bastion of intellectualism. Protests initiated by youth and

others associated with the university played major roles in the democracy movements of 1990 and 2006. But up the hill, past bits of the old city wall, Kirtipur proper has remained untouched. Or, almost untouched, Shrestha says.

“Many of us used to be land owners from the same Newari caste of farmers,” Shrestha explains, “But over the last few decades, everyone has sold their land to the university and other developers.”

While this hasn’t physically affected the old city, it has come at a cost, Shrestha says. In 2010, Kirtipur residents

padlocked the Central Department of Education of Tribhuvan University. The locals demanded that TU compensate them for the land the school bought in 1956, three years before the school was built. The Kirtipuris wanted TU to stand by a previous agreement ensuring that 40% of university employees would be hired from the local population. But to Shrestha, economic woes are only part of the issue.

“Many archeological sites have been lost in this whole development process,” he explains, picking up a manila folder and showing us a faded black and white photo. The image is too blurry to make out, but it appears to be a small mound of earth in a field.

Much of the fighting during the first two battles with the Gorkhalis took place on the flat ground below the hill,

“Unifier or invader--it’s the words we use that make a man good or bad, But the king and his army certainly weren’t the last outsiders to come to Kirtipur.”



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Photos By ECS Media



where the university was built, Shrestha says. “Soldiers didn’t always have time to cremate the dead, so they buried them with candlewicks in their mouths.” The candlewick acted as a substitute for cremation, and allowed the body to be burned and purified in the next life.

“20 years ago, there were many burial mounds down there,” he explains. “Unfortunately now, with immigration and construction, there are only a few left. TU’s College of Education was built on top of a particularly large grave.” Graves aren’t a common site in Kathmandu, especially 250 year old graves. Raj has work in the morning, so I decide to come back tomorrow by myself to see what I can find.

By the time I pull up in front of the library at Tribhuvan University the next evening, the doors are about to close. The few students mingling outside aren’t too familiar with any burial mound in the area, but they introduce me to the library’s guard, who is from Kirtipur.

Late afternoon quickly turns into evening as we ride up a winding path to the base of the hill. This time, rather than ascending to the city, we round a corner and park our bikes in front of a shop. A muddy stone path leads down to a small stupa erected by a river.

My sparse Nepali isn’t enough to ask the guard any significant questions about the four concrete edifices near the stupa that he points to, so I walk down for a closer

inspection. Apparently still in the process of being built, the gazebo-shaped structures have no inscriptions or markings except for a little red vermillion powder left from a puja ceremony. Two men pass by on their way to the stupa. Just to make sure I’m in the right place, I ask about the graves. They point to the concrete markers, just as the security guard had done, and continue walking.

The sun is nearly down. Other than a few kids throwing rocks off a nearby bridge, the only creatures around are a herd of water buffalo contently grazing on the long grass sprouting near the river bank. Like the city on top of the hill, the graves seem to be relatively unnoticed, even by the buffalo, and I get the notion that some in Kirtipur would like to keep it that way. ■

A typical Thakāli meal

Text By NEALE BATES (with ample help from Thakāli friends)



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If the article on Thakāli *khāna* elsewhere in this month's magazine has whet your appetite, here's more, with easy to follow recipes. Some of the ethnic 'Thakāliness' necessary for authenticity may be missing, but if there's no Thakāli restaurant around to feed you, it's a start.

Thakāli food is basically *dāl-bhāt-tharkari* – lentils, rice and vegetables, with *māsu* (meat)

for non-vegetarians. Most modern Thakāli restaurants, however, also offer *mo-mos* (meat dumplings) and *thukpa* (noodle soup). Sometimes buckwheat breads (like *chapātis* or pancakes) may be served with the basic curry and buckwheat finger chips (*kāchhyamba*) as an appetizer. Desserts include sweet curd or *phopké* (fermented rice).

A typical Thakāli meal looks, and cooks, like this:

APPETIZER

BUCKWHEAT FINGER CHIPS (KĀCHHYAMBA)

Kāchhyamba is a popular snack food, often served while restaurant guests are waiting for the main meal.

- Boil some water with a little ghee and salt to taste. Add buckwheat flour and cook into a thick gruel (called *dbedo*).

- After it cools down, mix it up with your fingers in a bowl then roll the stiff dough out in the palm of your hand to form finger size pieces.
- After they have cooled, fry them in hot oil, then serve with a hot tomato-and-*timur* relish.

MAIN COURSE

RICE (BHĀT)

Long grain white basmati is most popular, boiled and served slightly fluffy. Wash the rice at least twice in cold water before cooking. Save the second starchy rinse water to thicken the lentil soup.

LENTIL SOUP MADE FROM KĀLO MĀS (SPLIT URAD DĀL)

- Wash the lentils and boil with a little ghee (*ghiu*) and turmeric (*besar*). Modern cooks use a pressure cooker. For thickening, cook them using the starchy second rinse rice water.
- When done, transfer the lentils to an iron cooking pot and mash into a watery paste. By using an iron pot, the *dal*'s preferred slightly green color comes out.
- Add salt to taste, and a little shredded fresh ginger (*āduma*).
- The aromatic *jimbu* is added last, just before serving. Heat some ghee in a

metal ladle and quickly fry a small sprinkling of dried *jimbu* in it. Then raise the lid from the simmering lentils and jam the ladle into the soup in a flash. The explosive noise is called “*jhoin!*” in Nepali, and gives it a delicious aroma.

Some Thakālis say that adding *jimbu* to *dal* is more of a Brahmin/Chhetri custom. But, many Thakāli cooks I know do it. Back in the days when I first discovered the goodness of Thakāli *khāna* in the trailside *bhattis* of central Nepal, as soon as I heard that “*jhoin!*” sound and smelled the aroma of *jimbu* and ghee in the lentils I knew that dinner was about to be served.

Heat some ghee (*ghiu*) in a metal ladle, and quickly fry a small handful of *jimbu* in it. Then raise the lid from the simmering lentils and jam the ladle into the soup in a flash. The explosive noise is called “*jhoin!*” in Nepali, and gives it a delicious aroma.



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Jimbu (*Allium hypsistum*)



It is a herb in the onion family. It is collected in the high mountains, then sundried and stored for use. It can be purchased year round from the spice shops of Asan (in old Kathmandu), and is commonly found in Nepalese kitchens. In the northern districts of Manang and Mustang it is used to flavor meat, vegetables and pickle, but it is most commonly added to black lentil or bean soup to go with rice. When the *dal* (soup) is done, the cook fries some dried *jimbu* in ghee then adds the mixture in a flash – “*jhoin!*” – under the lid of the soup pot to infuse the lentils or beans with a pleasantly aromatic flavor.

SPICY FRIED POTATOES (TAREKO ĀLU)

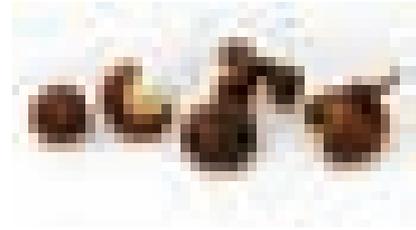
- Skin and boil potatoes (*ālu*) until about 90% cooked (they need to be a bit solid, not falling apart). Cool to room temperature, then slice them finger size (like French fries). ▶

Timur (*Zanthoxylum alatum*)

It is the dried outer pod of the berry of a tree in the prickly ash family. When crushed and added to relishes it exudes a pungent odor and tangy flavor that is the hallmark of Thakali *khāna*. The dried berries are dark brown in color. *Timur* is widely used to flavor vegetables, soups and gravies. It is common throughout South Asia and Tibet, including China's Szechuan province; hence, it is known outside

of Nepal as 'Szechuan pepper', though it is unrelated to black pepper or chili pepper.

Timur is the signature spice of Thakali food, though doesn't grow in Thak Khola. It is harvested in places like Dana (the Thakali salt traders' winter village, in Myagdi District) and shipped north to the kitchens of Thak Khola and to markets elsewhere.



- Heat oil in fry pan, add a little *methi* (fenugreek) and *besar* (turmeric); brown lightly. Use the turmeric sparingly, however, or it will turn the potatoes too yellow.
- Drop the potato slices into the hot spicy oil, add a little *chōp* (a chili and *timur* mix; below), finish cooking and serve hot.

SPINACH (SĀG)

One of the most popular spinach varieties in Nepal is broadleaf *rāyo ko sāg* developed on the Marpha Agricultural Farm in Thak Khola. Mustard greens (*tori ko sāg*) are also good.

- Heat some cooking oil in a large pan. Add a little fenugreek and turmeric, and brown it lightly.
- Meanwhile, wash and drain the spinach, then add it to the spiced hot oil in the cooking pan. It's important that the oil is not *too* hot. How hot? See below.
- Add salt to taste, and stir the spinach occasionally while it cooks. Don't overcook it, and don't put a lid on it.

My Thakāli friends say that the trick to retaining the distinctive bright green color of spinach is to cook it in an open pan with no lid. They also say to use turmeric sparingly; too much turns

the food yellow and gives it a slightly unpleasant flavor.

In the villages, Thakāli mothers and aunts prefer cooking with mustard oil, or fresh ghee. In modern restaurants, however, soybean oil is favored for its mild taste and no odor.

Thakāli cooks will tell you that attention to timing and the temperature of the cooking oil is crucial. How hot? You learn by experience.

MEAT (MĀSU)

Chicken, or goat (*matan* = 'mutton' on the menu).

- Before cooking the meat, fry some chopped onion in hot oil until brown. But then, I'm told, some Thakāli cooks do not use onions. Your choice.
- Chop the meat into finger-licking size chunks and add the pieces to the hot oil (with the onions, if you use them) and fry lightly in some salt, chili powder, turmeric, ginger and cumin powder (*jira*) to taste. Add water if you want gravy with the meat. (Gravy is called *jōl*.)
- If you are using a commercial boiler chicken, add a little garlic paste and some tomato to flavor and thicken the sauce. *Khānasseurs* (my term) prefer '*lokal*' (local) chicken. It tastes better, and with it you need only use a little ginger (no garlic, no tomato).
- For goat meat, the cooking is the same but garlic is used mostly in winter, not in summer. Nobody told me why. Also note that timing is important, for if you add the garlic at the wrong time (too late), the meat may have a raw garlic taste.



For vegetarians: Cook carrots, cauliflower, peas, and green beans using basically the same spices as for meat (but go light on the turmeric).

DESSERT

FERMENTED RICE (*PHOPKÉ*)

To make this delicious but slightly intoxicating dessert you need some ferment starter (*marcha*). It is similar to Tibetan *chang* (beer) starter or Sourdough starter. A little softened baker's yeast will also do.

Thakālis prefer a white rice that is slightly sticky (but not as sticky as Laotian or Cambodian sticky rice). Pearl rice is okay.

- Wash the rice and throw out the first wash water. Then wash it again, this time stir-squeezing it a little with your hands to squeeze out more starch.

- Boil the rice; no salt. Do not overcook.

- After the cooked rice has cooled down put it into a glass or porcelain bowl and stir in the starter. Cover lightly and leave in a warm place for 2 to 3 days to ferment. (It is similar to making Sourdough, but takes a day or two longer).

- When ready to serve, warm a little ghee in a pan, add the fermented rice and a little sugar to taste, and fry it lightly.

- Serve warm in small cups, with dessert spoons.

Some Thakāli cooks fry tiny pieces of *chirpi* (hard yak cheese, the stringy variety), and serve the *phopké* over it, so that the two are eaten together. For special guests a little ghee is added to the warm *phopké*, to make it extra special.

CONDIMENTS

HOT CHILI PEPPER & TIMUR (*CHÔP*)

Chôp (rhymes with 'hope') is one of the most distinctive flavors in Thakāli cooking. It has only three ingredients: red cayenne chili powder (*kursani*), *timur*, and salt (*nūn*, rhymes with 'soon'). It is used as you would use chili powder, but the *timur* powder enhances the flavor.

FRESH TOMATO RELISH (*GOLBEDA KO ACHHĀR*)

This mildly fiery *achhār* "boosts the appetite."

- Fry small tomatoes (with skins on) in a pan with only enough oil to prevent sticking. Let it cool. If the skins fall off the tomatoes, leave them in the mix.

- Mash or blend the tomatoes with *chôp* (chili powder, *timur* and salt) to taste.

- Place a small dollop on the side of the plate of rice, then watch as your guests' taste it. They usually ask for more.

Traditionally, the tomatoes are mashed on a *silauta*, a flat grinding stone (mortar) with a pestle.



Each cook makes some slight variation to this simple recipe, paying particular attention to keep it hygienic and safe to eat.

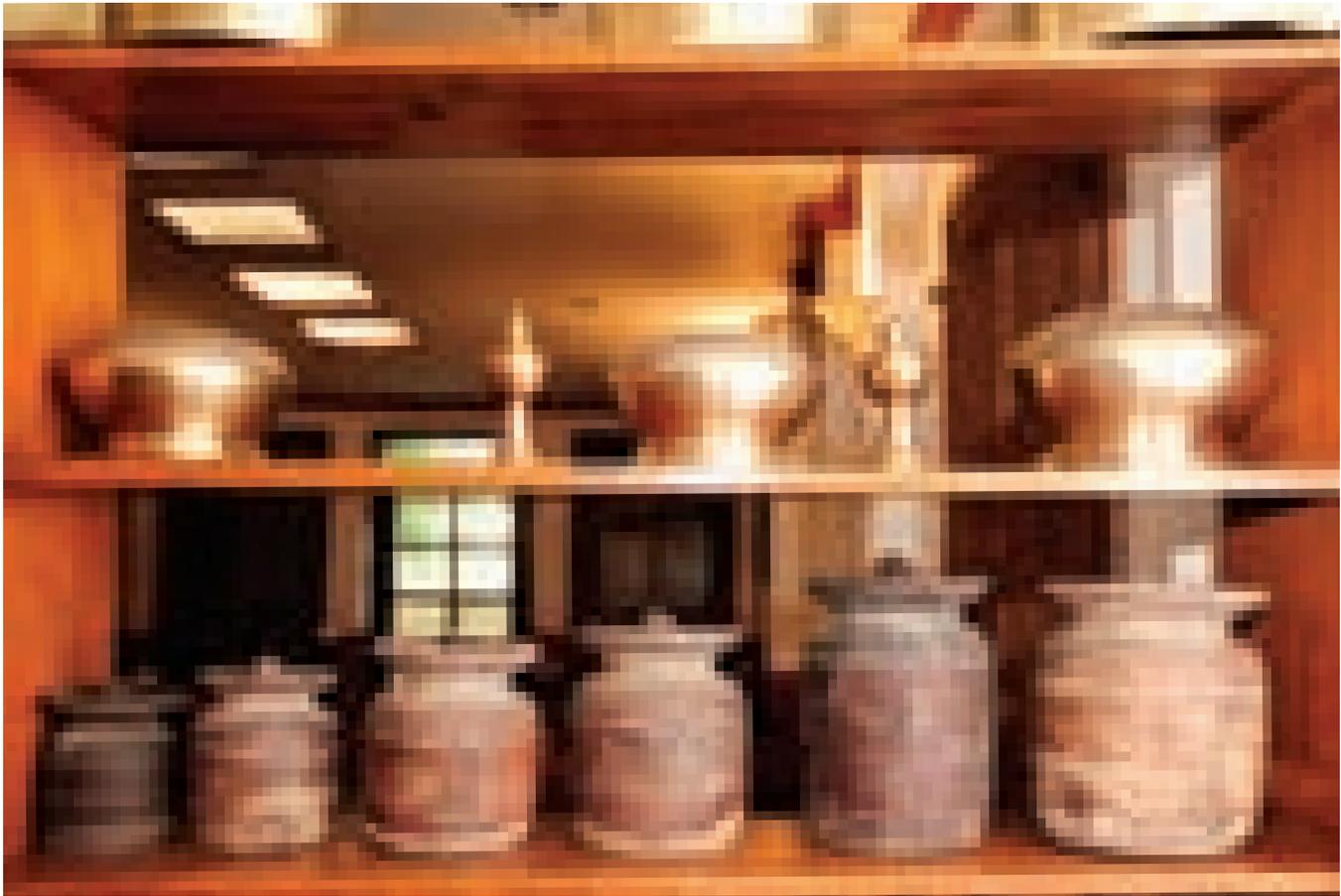
Nowadays, most modern cooks use an electric blender. Vary the amount of *chôp* according to how hot you want it. Each cook makes some slight variation to this simple recipe, paying particular attention to keep it hygienic and safe to eat.

And what's the difference between *achhār* and *chatni*? These two words are confusing and often used interchangeably. According to one Thakāli cook, *chatni* (chutney) comes from the Nepali word *chatanee* meaning 'taste on the tongue'. As

a relish it is prepared and served fresh. An *achhār*, on the other hand, is prepared ahead of time (sometimes by several months) and preserved in a glass jar until served.

FRESH WHITE RADISH PICKLE (*MULA KO ACHHĀR*)

This popular condiment is made from the long white radish called *mula* (or *dai-kon* internationally). Each cook has her own way of making this radish pickle to bring out the typical Thakāli taste. ▶



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Sea Buckthorn grows in the arid Thak Khola region of Mustang District. It is super rich in Vitamin-C, with high nutritional and medicinal values. Fresh lemon *tsuk* will also work.

- Skin and slice the white radish finger size then rinse and drain in a colander. Sprinkle a little salt on the slices to help draw out the water, then stir the pieces around with your hands, an action called *mula mucbné* or *acbhār molné* in Nepali.
- Dry fry some brown sesame seeds (*til*), and grind them into a fine powder.

My Thakāli friends insist on using brown sesame, saying that black sesame has the wrong flavor. Alternatively, some use mari-

juana seeds (*bhang ko bhū*) which has no narcotic effect but sure tastes good!

- To the fried sesame or marijuana seed powder add some salt and chili powder to taste, then a little sour paste called *tsuk*, a type of vinegar made from limes or other citrus fruit.

Some Thakāli cooks used *tsuk* made from the juice of Sea Buckthorn berries (*Hippophae rhamnoides*). Sea Buckthorn grows in the arid Thak Khola region of

Mustang District. It is super rich in Vitamin-C, with high nutritional and medicinal values. Fresh lemon *tsuk* will also work.

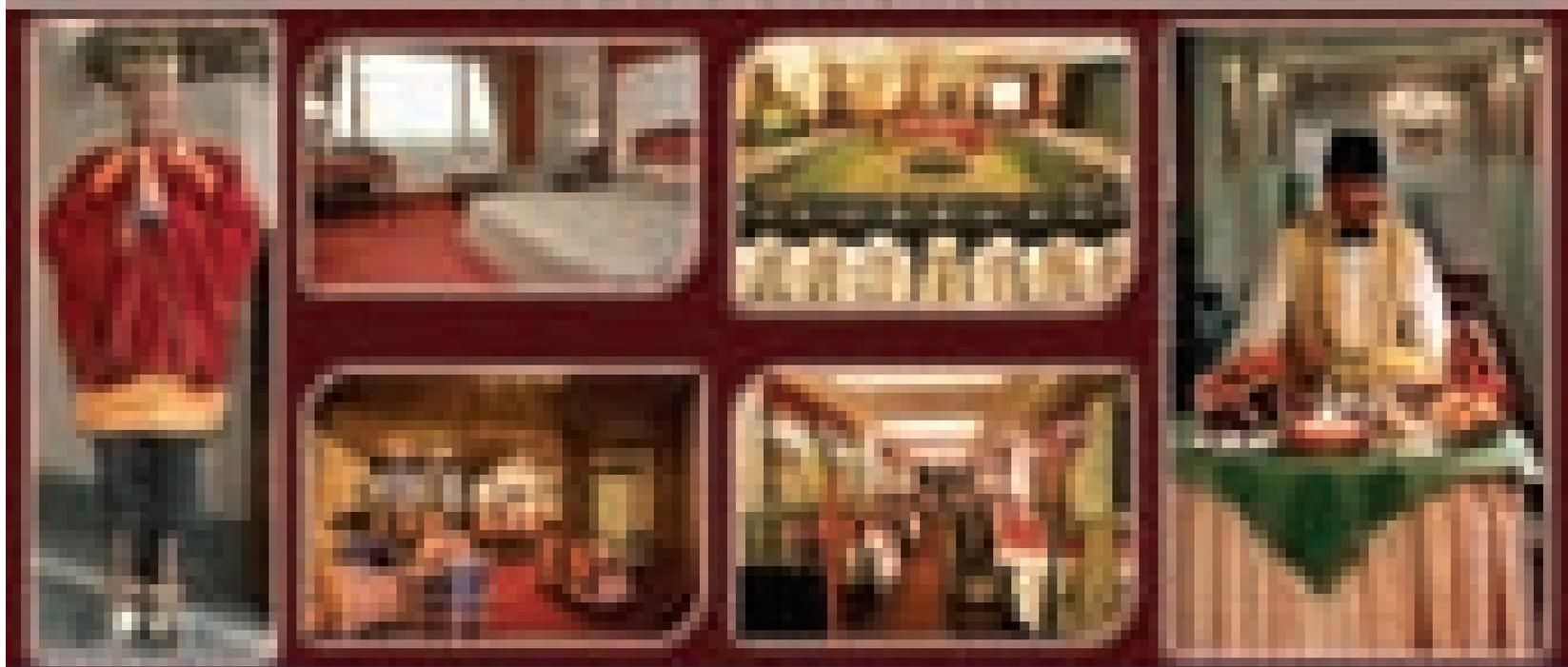
- Mix the spices and radish pieces together in a large bowl.
- In another pan heat a little oil with fenugreek and a little turmeric, and sprinkle some chopped green chilies (of a very hot variety) over the top. Then pour this mixture over the top of the spiced radish pieces. As you do so, it will sizzle and permeate down into the mix.
- Cool and serve as a pickle condiment with a rice dinner.

This meal, once it is prepared and served, will put a bit of 'Thakāliness' into your life. If nothing else, just knowing what all that goes into Thakāli *kbāna* and how it is prepared will enhance your appreciation of good food the next time you go out to eat in an authentic Thakāli restaurant. ■



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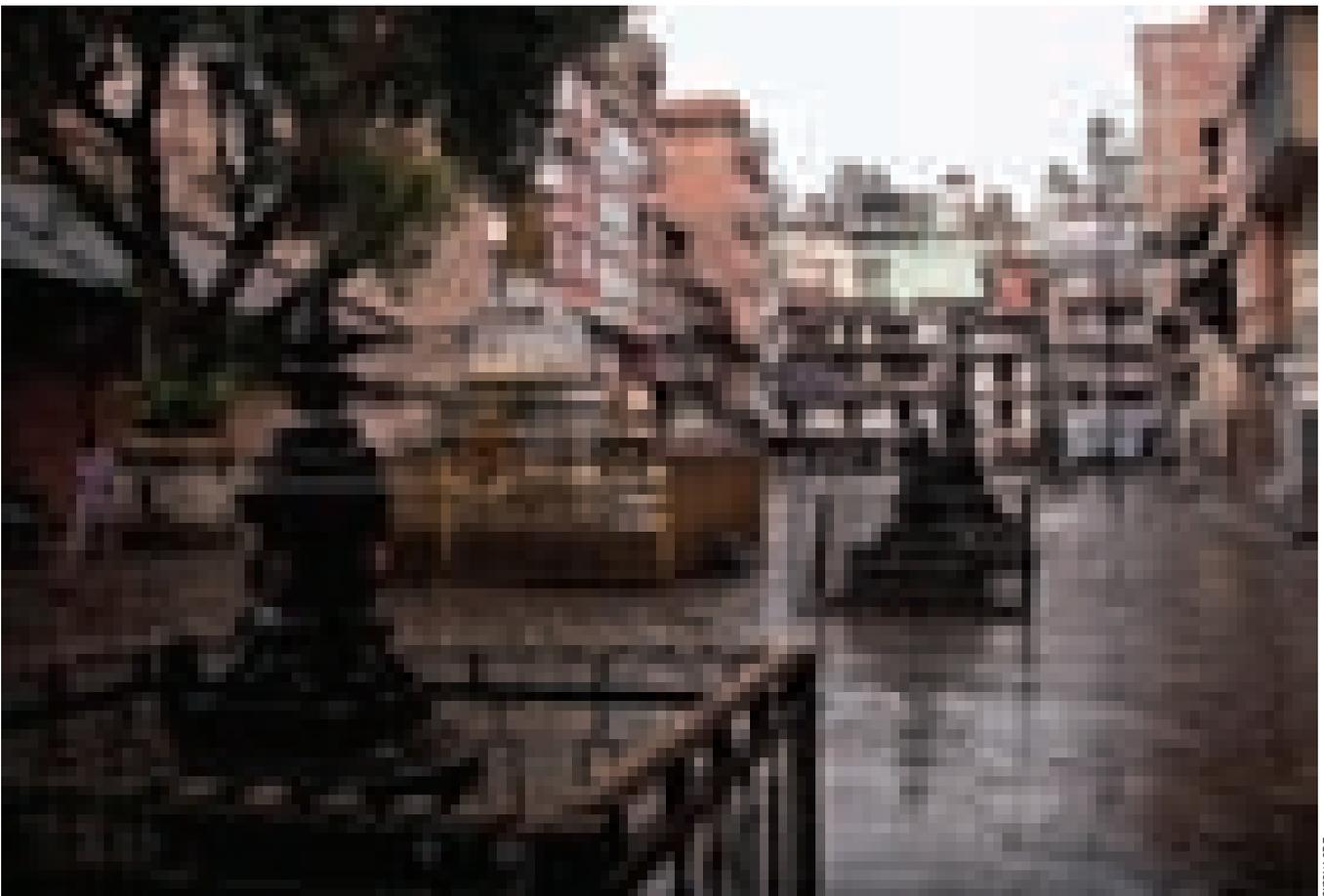
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A walk into the heritage

Kathmandu's Basantapur Durbar Square is home to more than royal palaces and temples.

Text By KAPIL BISHT



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Perhaps the two most important features, besides its people, of Kathmandu that give it lasting charm are the hills and mountains that surround it and the streets that run through it. The streets and alleys of the city, especially the ones that are concealed or forgotten, offer solace for

those who pine for the valley's glorious past. The richer structures of historical and cultural importance are off the frequented routes, exiled from view by taller buildings.

Some of Kathmandu's most brilliant works of architecture are not on the tourist guide's itinerary. This is a fact that

troubles Durgesh Man Singh, a former ambassador to the European Union. While he was in Brussels, he noticed that the most popular tourist attraction was the city's old square. Singh had grown up near and around bahals - traditional Newari courtyards. It saddened him to see these courtyards slipping into

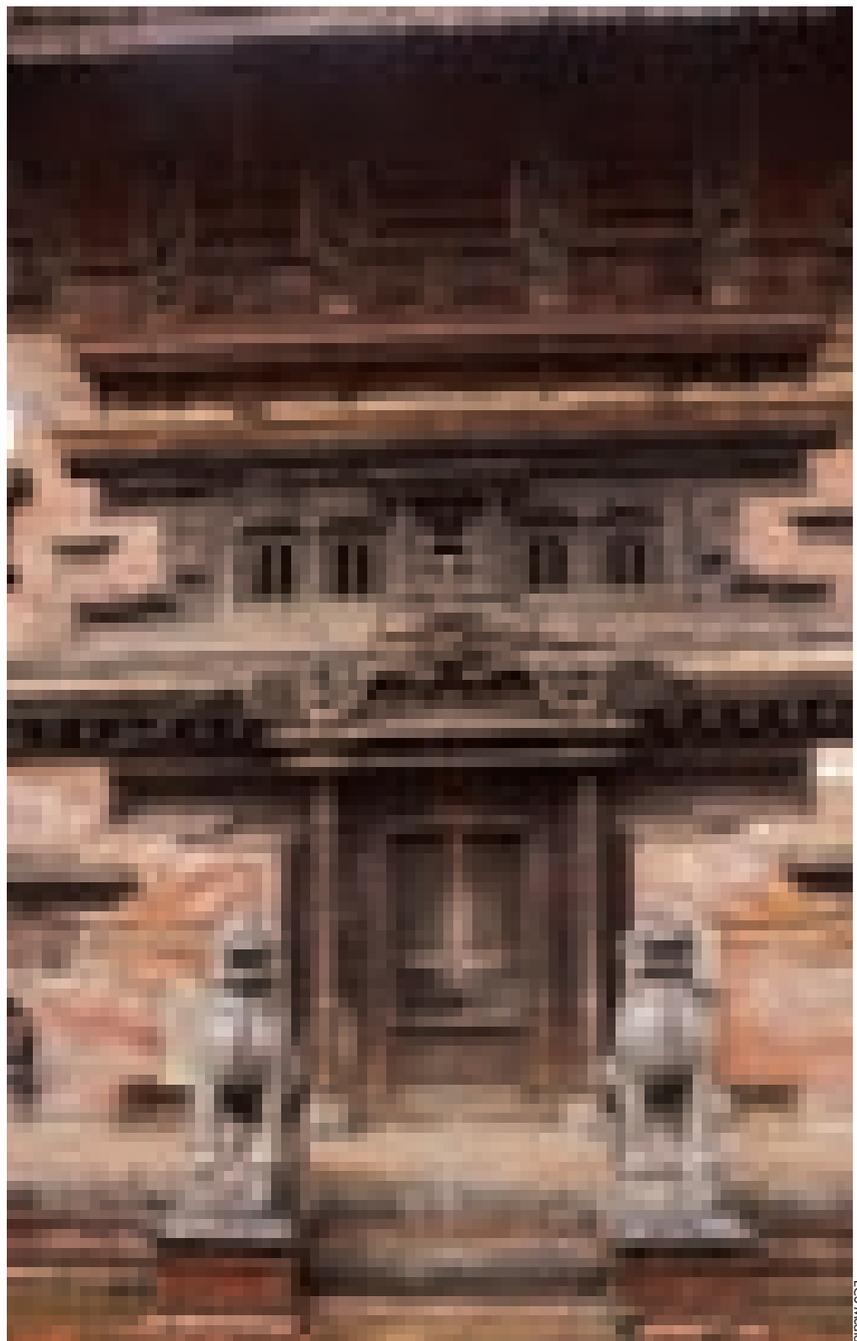
oblivion. What used to be the centre of social and cultural life had been reduced in many cases to parking lots. “Bahals have never received the kind of attention they deserve,” Singh laments.

Bahals were never grand sites. They didn’t have the majesty of places where kings lived or the intrigue of where royals were murdered. However, they have been much more stable than palaces and have preserved their heritage more successfully. “Experiencing Kathmandu’s heritage is every tourist’s aim. Our heritage is not just about kings, maharajas and prime ministers. It’s about the people,” says Singh. It is the common people’s lifestyle, and not just that of the rulers’, that Singh believes enriches and adds to the valley’s history.

Tourist guides in Kathmandu seem to have a penchant for size: the highlights of their tours are inevitably the biggest temples, squares and palaces. The Basantapur Durbar Square is one such place, where guides can be seen regaling enraptured tourists with stories that took place inside the palace walls. Singh feels sorry for these tourists. “Tourists have breakfast in their star hotels, and are driven to Basantapur. They spend some time in the square and go back thinking they have seen Kathmandu,” he says. He feels that a society cannot be understood or appreciated simply by visiting a palace or a museum. “There are so many artists, goldsmiths, sculptors, musicians in the periphery of Basantapur. Their lifestyle is just as interesting as that of any king.”

One of the sights that amazed Singh during his travels in Europe was the hoards of people that came to see the house in which the famous artist Ruben had lived. “Imagine how many houses of artists there must be in Kathmandu,” he told me. There surely are many houses of people versed in other esoteric arts and professions as well. More than just being houses, they are enclaves where ancient lifestyles and traditions find refuge. Singh believes ▶

One of the sights that amazed Singh during his travels in Europe was the hoards of people that came to see the house in which the famous artist Ruben had lived.



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It is a place where a tree smeared in vermilion and entwined with sacred thread is allowed to grow higher than the surrounding houses.



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that tourists seek such things. “Tourists are interested in the occupations that have been practiced by generations after generation, the family structures of such people, the style of their houses and other aspects of their lives that cannot be found in museums.”

Bahals are the ideal place to experience the local lifestyles. Within walking distance from Singh’s house are two of Nepal’s most famous bahals, Itum Bahal and Yetkha Bahal, the former the longest and the latter the biggest bahal in Nepal. He passionately feels the need to revive these ancient quadrangular courtyards, a visit to which reveals that the affection Singh has for bahals is not because of their proximity to his ancestral house, but because they bring him, and anyone who visits them, closer to a lifestyle, a time, a culture that is gradually getting remoter.

It is a place where a tree smeared in vermilion and entwined with sacred thread is allowed to grow higher than the surrounding houses. Women with traditional tattoos dry their hair in the sun. Daughters scrub the backs of their bathing mothers. It is so quiet, so detached, so immune to the cares of the boisterous world just a few paces away that you feel that its residents have preserved not just their lifestyle, but time itself.

The open space of a bahal is like an open-air theatre, with daily performances of culture and tradition. It is to such a performance that Singh wishes to see tourists coming. “My concept is to have tourists walk into the culture and heritage of Kathmandu.” An advocate of promotion of traditional lifestyle and customs, he is also aware of the challenges of reviving bahals. “There should be shops selling objects made by the local craftsmen; we also need restaurants. The locals don’t benefit if the tourists visit their neighborhood, but go to a five-star hotel for a cup of tea. The money generated from tourists must trickle down to the locals.” Singh envisions the revival of ►



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bahals as a place where people carry on the professions of their ancestors and benefit economically by preserving tradition.

The importance of bahals is not limited to being places where the past lingers. Itum Bahal was where Ganesh Man Singh, the doyen of the movement for democracy in Nepal, used to deliver his famous speeches. Though a revolution may have originated in a bahal, its appeal comes from its mythology and folklore. Itum Bahal was apparently built by Keshchandra, a failed businessperson, who received a huge amount of gold from a deity who took pity on him. Unable to carry the gold himself, he sought the help of a demon, Gurumapa, under the condition that he would provide the demon with a human

to feed on everyday. Keshchandra built Itum Bahal, but soon Gurumapa, who had been allowed to carry away any mischievous child, began abducting children at whim. Finally, Keshchandra convinced Gurumapa to leave his neighborhood for Tundikhel, promising demon a daily feast of buffalo meat and rice. Even today, locals slaughter a buffalo once a year, from which delicacies are prepared and carried to Tundikhel as an offering to Gurumapa.

An old, decaying wooden house in the vicinity of Itum Bahal is the source of a more romantic lore. The house is believed to be where Rajamati, a bewitchingly beautiful girl lived. The story of Rajamati, who supposedly had all the young men of the city in a spell, has been immortalized in a song. Tej

Ratna Tamrakar, an expert in monument preservation, says that the song was so popular that when Jung Bahadur Rana was asked by the British during his visit to England about his country's national song, his aide had promptly proceeded to sing the song about Rajamati.

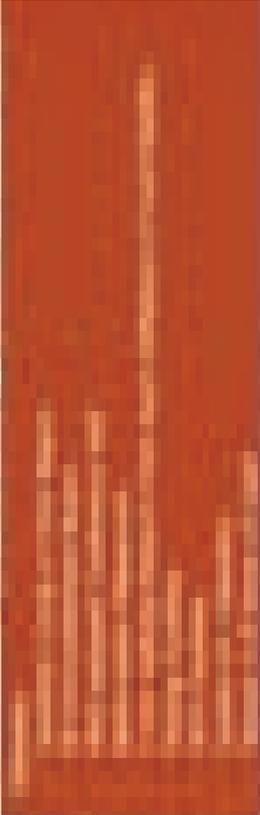
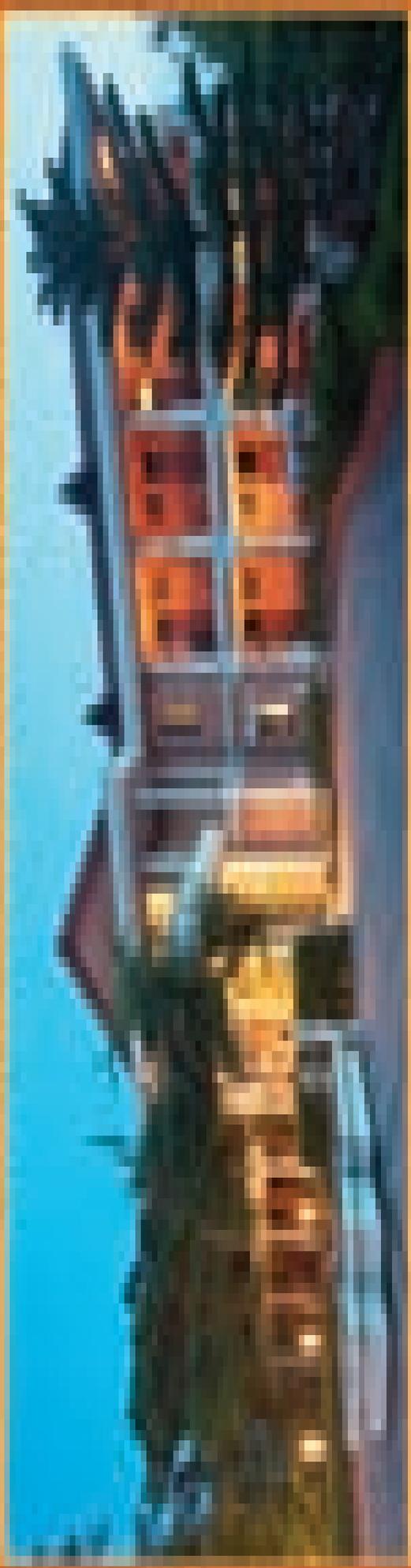
Bahals are glimpses into history. Bahals, and all the other structures in their vicinity, tease and entice you with their combination of age, history and mystery. Standing in them, one feels a surging fascination and a feeling that something wonderful lingered there, and that it would reveal itself if one were to wait. It was a feeling similar to what an admirer of the enchanting Rajamati must have felt standing under her window, hoping to catch a glimpse of her lovely face. ■



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A Nepali shave

The old barbershops in Nepal retain the charm of olden days.

Text By GREG HERBOWY



In Pokhara, the barbershops seem to be everywhere. The Lakeside neighborhood, the most popular tourist area in this popular tourist town, is like a hall of mirrors—a long, repeating sequence of businesses, all catering to the many foreigners that populate its streets. There are guest houses, trekking goods stores, and currency exchange counters. There are restaurants and bars. And there are barbershops. Barbershops whose idle barbers hail the scruffier specimens that shuffle past their doors. Barbershops whose services include eyebrow threading and eyeball massages. Barbershops offering old-fashioned, straight-razor shaves.

In Kathmandu, barbershops are a bit harder to find. But, after a long day's walk and some careful looking, they too seem everywhere, hidden in plain sight. There's one in Gyaneshwor—a closet of a shop, staffed by one old and one young man—

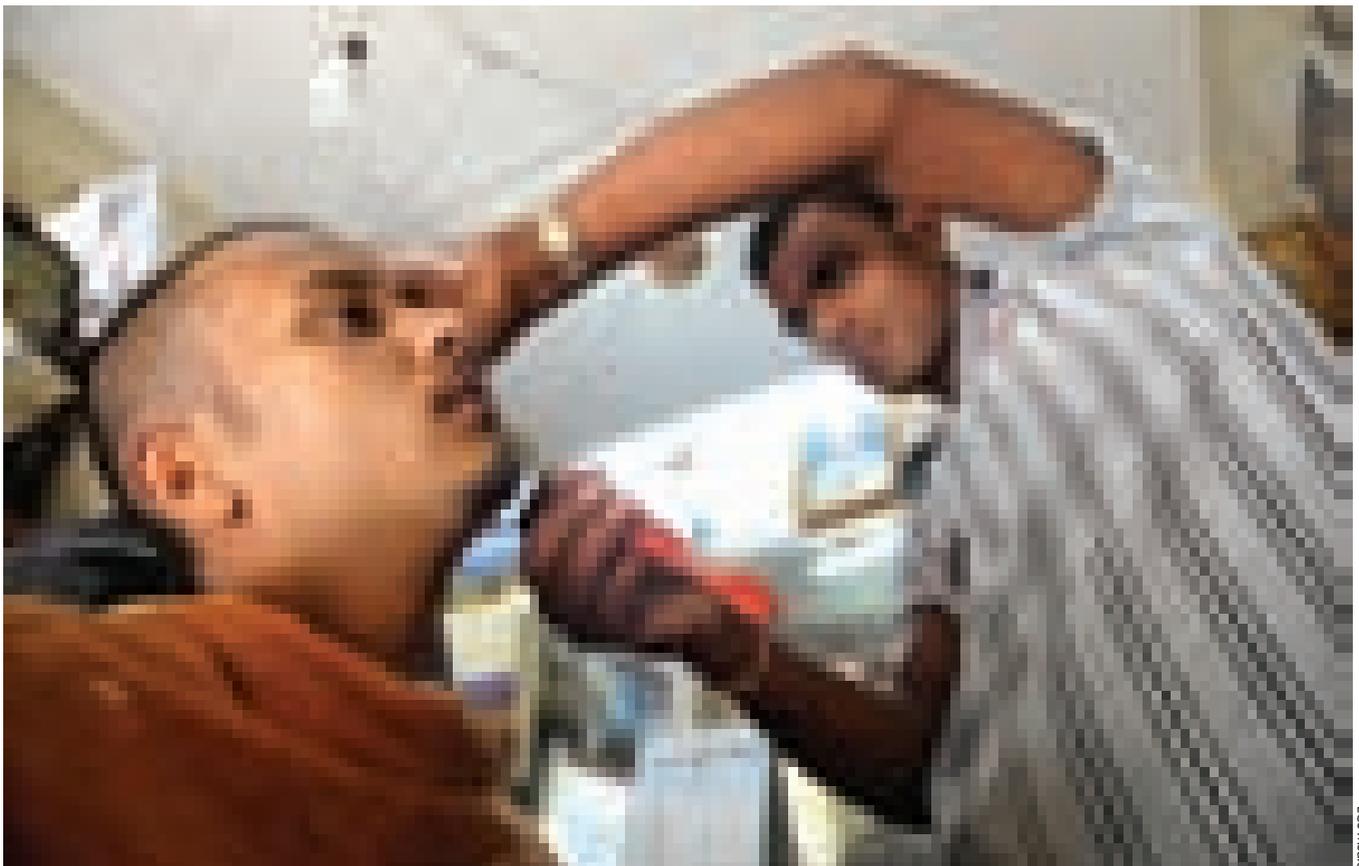
just next to the Bhairab Temple and a few doors down from the German embassy. There's another—larger, modern, and affiliated with the nearby Hotel de l'Annapurna (guests receive a discount)—tucked away on the second floor of a building in the upscale Durbar Marg district. There's a third, standing in the shadow of the immense Bhimsen Tower.

Shree Barbershop, the sign says. And for no particular reason, it is here, after a razorless month spent trekking, rafting, and sightseeing in Nepal, that I decide to sit down for my first-ever old-fashioned shave.

The researching traveler can read all about getting a straight-razor shave in Nepal, both online and in guidebooks. It is something of a rite of passage among Western visitors to the country, which is unsurprising, as a shave from a Nepali barbershop has much to recommend it.

For one, a barbershop shave takes something that, in one's own hands, is a tiresome activity and turns it into a pampering. Few men look forward to a self-shave—a boring, uncomfortable, and messy routine that is even less appealing if the beard is more than a week ▶

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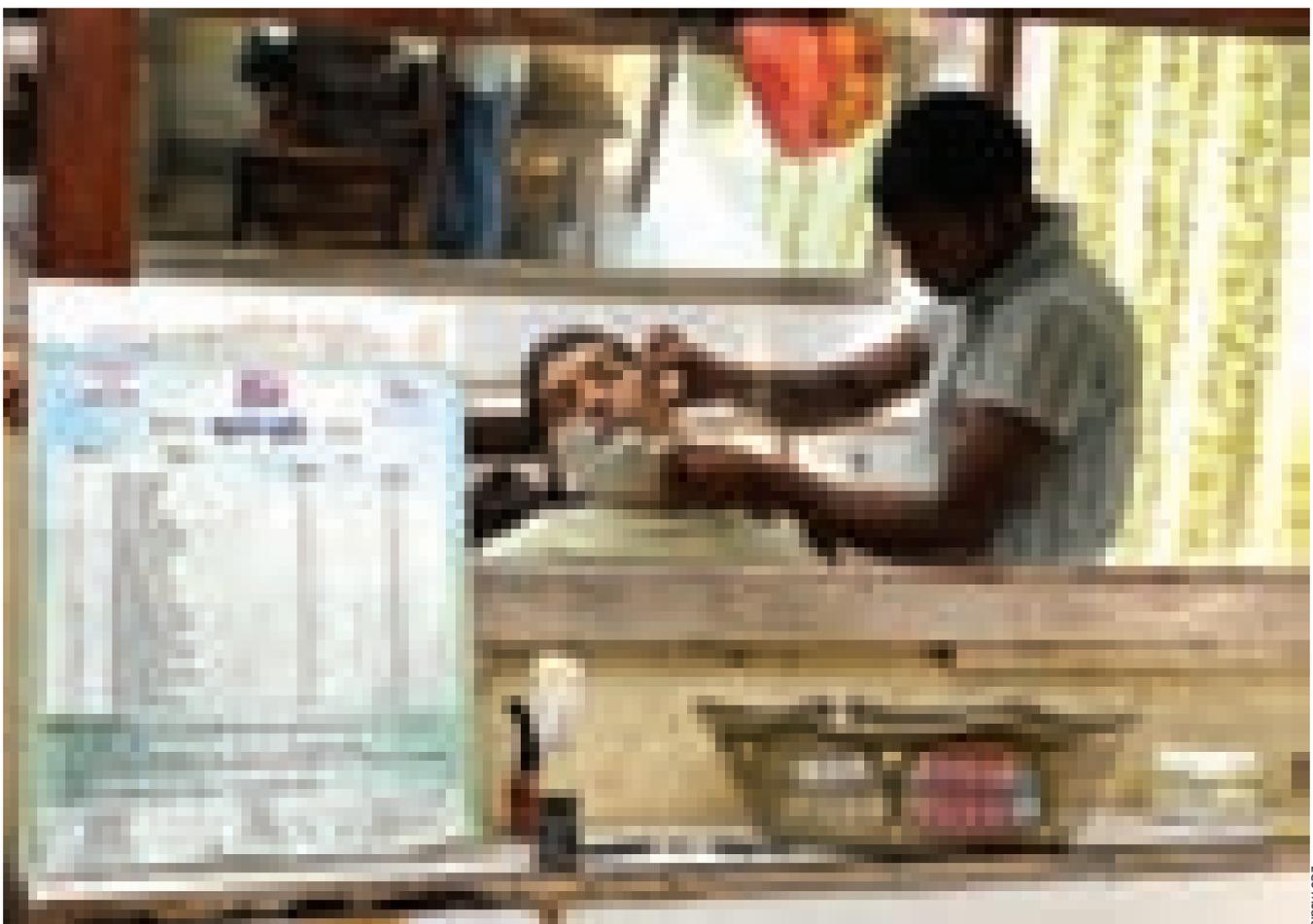
old. At that point, one's facial hair is long enough to clog a double-, triple-, or even quadruple-blade safety razor and requires multiple rounds of shaving, increasing the likelihood of abrasions and nicks. But a sharp, single blade cuts through all but the bushiest facial hair with ease. Wielded by a skilled barber, it is also gentler on the skin.

For another, submitting for the first time to a straight-razor shave, especially at the hands of a stranger, is a mildly thrilling exercise in trust-building. Head tilted back, neck offered to the blade, veins and throat bulging, the customer is very much at his barber's mercy. Thus has a daily chore not only become a treat, it has been transformed into a modest act of derring-do.

Finally, like much else in the country, a shave from a Nepali barber is attractively inexpensive. The cost barrier that might dissuade one from a shave in, say, New York, where old-fashioned barbershops are resurgent and can charge anywhere from \$15 to \$55 for the service, is nonexistent in a place like Kathmandu, where a shave begins at 50 rupees and tops out at around 150 rupees. With a price tag like that, what has the customer got to lose?

Shree Barbershop has the same run-down charm and clubby atmosphere of the barbershops I know from home. There is no peppermint-stick pole outside, but all the other totems are there: a few old photos on the wall, a yellowing poster advertising the various cuts a customer can request, a handful of older men planted on a worn-out bench, lazily chatting with each other. The only one among these men who speaks English tells me he worked at Shree for several

Head tilted back, neck offered to the blade, veins and throat bulging, the customer is very much at his barber's mercy.



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In the balmy, pre-monsoon weather of the past few weeks, my beard has been an hot, itchy burden and the shaving cream is a relief, cool to the skin.

years, but no longer does. He is freelance now, he says. He then points to a portrait on the wall of an elderly Indian man, around which hangs braids of flowers. This is the founder, he says. The shop has been open for a long time, he says. How long exactly, he doesn't know. Twenty, thirty years. Maybe more.

I settle into one of the shop's eight chairs and my barber—taciturn, mustachioed—quickly gets to work, wrapping my upper body in a bib. With a soft, knob-handled brush, he works the shaving soap into a lather and mops my

face with three coats of the foam. In the balmy, pre-monsoon weather of the past few weeks, my beard has been an hot, itchy burden and the shaving cream is a relief, cool to the skin.

The barber then takes a disposable Gillette blade from a box of five and fits it into a handle. Here, the modern-day Nepali shave departs from its forebears. Traditionally, a barber would employ a fixed blade, sharpened and stropped (that is, vigorously run up and down along a leather strap, to keep its edge straight) before each use. Tradition's

loss, however, is hygiene and safety's gain. With a new blade per customer, there is no need to worry about being shaved by infected or improperly honed razors.

The shave itself is surprisingly smooth, the blade grazing my skin with imperceptible friction, and efficient. The barber shaves my face twice, pausing between rounds to reapply lather. Once finished, he wipes away what's left of the shaving soap, at the same time feeling for any bristle he may have missed. Satisfied with the job, he takes a small block of alum from the counter and rubs it all over my chin and cheeks. It feels slippery and cool at first, then a bracing astringency sets in.

The next few steps are a blur, all cleansers and lotions and massaging. There is aftershave, an overpowering chemical musk. There is a paste-thick, bluish lotion, applied with vigor, particularly (and mysteriously) to my upper lip. Last comes a blast of talc. When the powder settles, the barber has removed the bib and I get my first good look at myself in the mirror.

No cuts, no razor bumps, no missed spots. For the first time since I entered the shop, the barber allows himself a smile.

I smile in return, pay up, and walk out a new man, looking more like the clean-cut face in my passport photo than I have in months. Though worth the wait, I regret not having gotten shaves throughout my time in Nepal. I could have had two, even three per week. Then again, that might've been habit-forming. Lord knows I couldn't afford this luxury back home. ■

Peace Corps Nepal at the half century

Edited by DON MESSERSCHMIDT

INTRODUCTION

2011 marks the 50th anniversary of what President Barack Obama recently called John F. Kennedy's "noble vision"—the American Peace Corps worldwide. The Peace Corps was founded when Kennedy became the 35th U.S. President in 1961. The first PC volunteers arrived in Nepal in 1962, and for the next 42 years, until 2004, 3,629 volunteers ("PCVs") served here in many capacities—as teachers; agricultural extension workers; fisheries, forestry and livestock experts; community development workers; health workers; and other endeavors. They were posted to communities all across the country, sometimes remote, sometimes with other volunteers, sometimes alone (but never lonely).

In this article we look at the past impact of the Peace Corps by a noted Nepalese diplomat, and at a current development activity sponsored by 'Friends of Nepal', a group of former PCVs. This article is the first installment of several that we will publish into 2012 featuring short essays by former volunteers reflecting on their Peace Corps experiences with fondness, admiration and thanks to their Nepalese friends and hosts.

We conclude with a story from Carrie-Ann Tkaczyk about the myth of the 'Baglung Pani Miss.' ■DM

WINNING FRIENDS, REALLY WINNING FRIENDS

Twenty years into the Nepal Peace Corps experience, in 1981, Nepal's (then) Am-



Peace Corps Volunteers, Group 2, arriving in Kathmandu in 1963

Photo by Don Reese

Twenty years into the Nepal Peace Corps experience, in 1981, Nepal's (then) Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Bekh Bahadur Thapa, spoke admiringly about the Peace Corps.

bassador to the United States, Dr. Bekh Bahadur Thapa, spoke admiringly about the Peace Corps. "As a student (in the USA) when President Kennedy announced the Peace Corps program," he wrote, "I was aware of the charisma and appeal it had. Soon thereafter, I went back

to Nepal and was instrumental in signing the Peace Corps agreement." When Dr. Thapa became Nepal's chief coordinator for all foreign technical cooperation he took the opportunity to visit PCVs in the countryside, including the village in Tanahun District where he was born.

“The overall effect of the Peace Corps begins with a dialogue at the people’s level, independent of both our governments. ... with the Nepalese people,” he said. Then, remembering a PCV English teacher he met: “There were not enough Nepalese who knew English or who could teach English, so the Peace Corps volunteers filled an important gap. But on another level, in the community, Peace Corps volunteers were winning friends, really winning friends. They came from afar to live within the community as one of our people, not beyond the means of the local community, sharing the level of poverty of the Nepalese village people.”

“What the Peace Corps volunteers did was extraordinary. For the average Nepalese, Americans were cut down to human size. And the impact of those volunteers who taught English, for example, was not only on the children, “but

on others at the local level who witnessed their lives and behavior.”

One volunteer he met was living in a hut with two Nepalese school teachers. “Inside the hut he had changed the living arrangement, the living environment. He had used essentially the same things that Nepalese use but had created more hygienic living conditions. The teachers picked up these habits and, in turn, taught them to the rest of the village.” Then he points out that if one of the big aid agencies was to attempt to replicate what that volunteer had done, “the first thing they would do is send a \$40,000 consultant to look at village sanitation” and more money to bring a project to implementation stage.

“But the Peace Corps is different,” Thapa concluded. “Things like these may be very small, but how profound an impact they make. They cannot be measured in economic terms.”

FRIENDS OF NEPAL

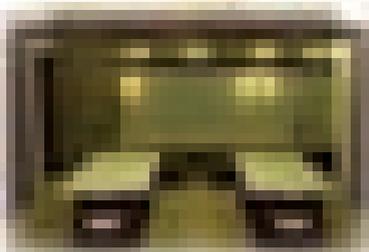
The last PCVs left Nepal in 2004. the last group was N-128. The usual explanation for closing was concern about the volunteers’ safety during the insurgency. Today, many ex-volunteers and concerned Nepalese want to see the Peace Corps return to Nepal. One of the organizations supporting this goal is ‘Friends of Nepal’. It was founded for staying in touch while continuing to help in the development of Nepal. FoN maintains an active website, newsletter and Nepal-oriented programs and activities. Its members support grass-roots projects that target vulnerable peoples and communities. FoN works in partnership with Nepalese NGOs on projects in health care, rural income generation, education, communications, and cultural preservation.

In the following essay, former volunteer Dave Carlson describes an activity that members of FoN are currently working on in the hinterland.▶



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The Friends of the 2011-12 Nepal Wireless Project

Text By DAVE CARLSON (PC NEPAL-3, 1964-65)

In 2002, at a time when there was little interest by the Nepal government and the private sector to bring information technology to the northwestern hill and mountain villages, a grass-root project was begun by Mahabir Pun when he was a teacher of the Himanchal Higher Secondary School in the small village of Nangi, in Myagdi District. The project's initial goal was to bring the Internet and telephone system to the school and village. That

was the birth of the Nepal Wireless Networking Project (NWNP). Since then, the NWNP has expanded well beyond Nangi by building small-scale infrastructures using wireless technology and the Internet in over 100 other village communities.

Today, the NWNP promotes educational opportunities, health care, job creation, local e-commerce, and general communication locally and abroad. The NWNP is now a movement that

leapfrogs the traditional constraints of isolated rural life by creatively connecting villages to 21st century information and communication opportunities.

Among the most recent organizations to help fund the NWNP is 'Friends of Nepal' (FoN), whose members are former Peace Corps Volunteer to Nepal. This year, in celebration of the Peace Corps' 50th anniversary, FoN is supporting NWNP development in two rural Nepal



Photo by Andris Björnsson

Rooftop wireless receiver in a Nepalese village, with Dhaulagiri Peak.

Jessica Schult with a village computer class



Photo by Kim Schull

The Keshavtar Community Information Center is being supplied with four computers, a network camera, and a LCD projector.

communities: Keshavtar in Tanahun District, and Shikha in Myagdi District.

KESHAVTAR, TANAHUN DISTRICT

In the central hill village of Keshavtar, Tanahun District, the project is creating a computer lab in the local high school and an information center for the entire community. The lab will house ten computers and provide training on computer hardware and software applications for students, unemployed youth, teachers and women's groups as a tool to promote career development. Villagers will be able to participate with on-line interactive educational programs such

as the Open Learning Exchange and the Nepal Research and Education Network. A rich array of learning/training materials will be available of a caliber not possible in any other way to this community.

The Keshavtar Community Information Center is being supplied with four computers, a network camera, and a LCD projector. It will be run and maintained by local the village Mothers Group. There, villagers will be able to exchange news and opinions, place advertisements to market products for sale, and engage in community affairs. The center will provide national and international call services, Internet access, video conferencing, as well as photocopying, document processing and photography services.

To make the facilities operational, a wireless networking link is being built from nearby Pokhara (30 miles distant) to Keshavtar. The connection requires installation of dish antennas attached to tall trees, as well as relay stations, solar collectors and network servers. FoN is supplying the many pieces of hardware required for this connection

and under supervision by the NWNP local villagers will complete the task.

SHIKHA, MYAGDI DISTRICT

The objective in Shikha village is to build a tele-medicine center at an existing health post that will link with two hospitals in Pokhara and Kathmandu via a network camera. FoN will supply the network camera, two computers with storage batteries, and other accessories.

The Shikha project will provide medical assistance to villagers and health training to rural health workers through its video-conferencing capabilities. In addition, the wired-up clinic is available to address the health needs of villagers in several neighboring communities.

In order to treat patients, health workers in the Shikha clinic will use the network camera to connect directly to doctors at the city hospital in Pokhara. Doctors there will be able to view and talk to patients about their health problems and the trained health workers at the Shikha clinic will assist the patients and follow up on the doctors' recommendations.

AN INNOVATIVE BUT INEXPENSIVE PROJECT

What is remarkable about the Keshavtar and Shikha projects is that the entire effort costs less than US\$18,000. By early 2011, FoN members and supporters had already raised \$7,000 and the community of Keshavtar raised \$4,000 on its own. The remaining \$7,000 is FoN's ongoing responsibility. The two projects are expected to be completed by December 31, 2011.

FoN looks forward to having a long relationship of support for the NWNP as it continues to expand the network to the hundreds of mountain villages eager to join this movement. In time, when the Peace Corps returns to Nepal, it will be welcomed into this partnership. ▶

Mahabir Pun and map of the Nepal Wireless Network



Photo courtesy unitednepalese.co.uk

For more information on about the 'Friends of Nepal' telecommunications project, visit the FoN website at www.friendsofnepal.com and nepalwireless.net. Ex-volunteer Dave Carlson can be contacted at carlson996@msn.com.

The 'Baglung Pani Miss'

Text By CARRIE-ANN TKACZYK (N-170, 1990-93)

Carrie-Ann Tkaczyk's has this advice for future Peace Corps Volunteers: "Avoid moving to a village where a volunteer preceded you." And, we might add, watch out for myths to come.

When I moved to Baglung Pani, Andy Walker was my own personal Freddy Krueger, popping into every conversa-

tion, and shredding my every deed. At each "good morning," people would point to the hostel next to the school and tell me, "Andy Walker built that. What are you going to build?" At noon, the woman who gave me tea would drill me with questions in rapid Nepalese and then announce, "You don't speak

now recognized as the Andy Walker look and I sighed. "Yes, I know" I said flatly. "You met the volunteer there."

"She is wonderful! Do you know the Baglung Pani Miss?" he asked, and before I could answer the man was off telling me about her perfect Nepalese, her sweet Gurung, her friendly nature, her wonderful singing voice, her skill with the children.

I sat up in my seat and beamed in anticipation of his delirious bubbling at discovering me. This was my moment vindication! When the man slowed enough for me to get in a word, I exclaimed, "I'm the Baglung Pani Miss!"

The man's smile faded. "Oh, no, you can't be the Baglung Pani Miss," he argued. "Your Nepali isn't good! You can't even speak Gurung."

"No," I said, at once indignant. "I am the Baglung Pani Miss!"

"That is not possible," the man replied, equally adamant. "She is just like a Nepali, but look at you. You are not!"

I took a deep breath, ready for battle when Andy Walker came to mind. I sank back down and nodded. "You're right." The man huffed in agreement and turned away. I stared out the window so that the man could not see how giddy I looked.

Who was I to trifle with the myth of the Baglung Pani Miss? ■

At each "good morning," people would point to the hostel next to the school and tell me, "Andy Walker built that. What are you going to build?"

as well as Andy Walker. He spoke Gurung too. When are you going to learn Gurung?" At dinner, I listened to my host family tell stories of Andy Walker's humor and wit. I gritted my teeth through the nightmare of comparisons until the remarks grew less frequent and trickled to the occasional. I made friends with those who never knew Andy Walker and soon with those who did.

About a year into my stay, I was taking a bus back home from a training in Kathmandu when an older Nepali man offered his seat and asked me where I was going.

"Baglung Pani," I answered. The man's eyes lit up with a look I



Photo by Carrie Ann Tkaczyk

Peace Corps Volunteer Ms Carrie-Ann Tkaczyk – the 'Baglung Pani Miss' -- with some students.

Carrie-Ann Tkaczyk was posted to Lamjung District where she taught English, trained teachers, and gave health trainings to women. The "Freddy Krueger" Carrie-Ann refers to at the start of this essay is a fictional character from horror films, a disfigured dream stalker who haunts his victims with fear and apprehension. These days Carrie-Ann is a teacher in Portland, Oregon, and enjoys hiking with her family in the nearby Columbia River Gorge. As a writer, she is currently working on historical fiction set in Nepal in 1990, the year democracy was declared. She can be contacted at kalirati@hotmail.com.

A pioneer peacebuilder in Nepal

Text By SUSAL STEBBINS COLLINS



Paula Green speaking at the South Asia CONTACT program.

Photo By Dilbhushan Pathak

Paula's trainings in Nepal ended when war broke out in 1996. That same year, she launched the CONTACT program in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA. She had been working with local people on peace and conflict issues for many years, not only in Nepal, Thailand, and other countries in Asia, but also around the world – in places like Bosnia, Israel and Palestine, Rwanda. In 1994, she founded the Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, a US based NGO, to further this work. As time went on, she realized that people facing conflicts in their home countries could benefit from learning from each other in a safe place, where they could have a respite from the dangers and stresses of violent conflict and speak more openly about problems and possible solutions. The CONTACT Program became a 3-week training and global peacebuilding community, built on a foundation of Paula's connections from all over the globe. Here Nepali civil society leaders joined with leaders from up to 40 other countries each year to concentrate on developing their peacebuilding skills and awareness. Since the US-based CONTACT program began, over 60 Nepalis have participated in it. They returned to their communities in Nepal with greater skill and resolve to build peace and use nonviolent principles to solve problems, and with personal connections to an international network of peace builders sharing experiences, insights, and inspiration.

One of the Nepali participants in CONTACT opened the door to a new era of Paula's work in Nepal. He invited Karuna Center to lead a workshop for

On December 7, Dr. Paula Green will launch the third South Asia CONTACT (Conflict Transformation Across Cultures) Program, a peacebuilding training for SAARC Leaders at Park Village in Budhanilkantha - the next vital effort in her 18 years of supporting Nepalis to transform conflicts and build cultures of peace.

Although Paula Green has never lived in Nepal, she is one of a number of global citizens who have developed a deep relationship and commitment to the country – and whose work has had a profound impact. Her work has reached thousands of Nepalis in every walk of life throughout the country - and radiates out in immeasurable ways to help resolve immediate crises

and to build positive working relationships and long-term strategies for peace at personal, community, national, regional, and international levels.

Paula's work in Nepal began in 1993. In the early 90s, Paula met Nepali women's activist and educator Stella Tamang while serving on the board of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. After they worked together in humanitarian efforts for Burmese refugees on the Thai border, Stella invited Paula to come to Nepal to facilitate trainings for women and indigenous groups. In these trainings, Paula helped local people speak openly, listen, and learn from each other - to overcome barriers, address conflicts, and identify strategies to solve the problems in their communities.

HURON (Human Rights Organization of Nepal) staff – to be held in the first week of April 2006. As fate would have it, this was a time when Nepal experienced its most powerful moments of nonviolent action – and Paula happened to be there, addressing those very issues. Paula smiles with amazement when she speaks of that time. “There we were, training human rights lawyers when the 19-day revolution started. The lawyers alternated between the workshop and the streets, returning to ask: ‘what do we do now?’ We explored nonviolent revolutions that had parallels to what was happening in Kathmandu: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, the Philippines, and others. We gave very practical training in nonviolence. That wasn’t the original plan, but that’s what was needed.”

After the 2006 HURON workshop, word about Karuna Center’s work in Nepal spread rapidly, and many invitations came. Paula returned to Nepal several times each year, working in partnership with several local organizations to conduct peacebuilding trainings. Karuna Center also expanded its consulting work, and in the past two years has trained about 75 political party leaders to strengthen skills in negotiation, leadership, communication, and peacebuilding, especially related to completion of the constitution and to achieving lasting peace in Nepal.

Recognition of the need to engage in regional issues to ensure sustainable peace in Nepal dovetailed with the experiences of South Asians coming to the annual CONTACT Program in the US. “When we had participants from different SAARC countries together in a CONTACT Program in the US, they spoke together about the conflicts, the erroneous stereotypes, and the separations that exist in the region. They found this very useful, but there were barriers of costs and visas for South Asians participants in US programs.” This called for a new strategy for South Asians: a CONTACT program in South Asia itself.



Paula presenting a certificate to Shikha Pathak, Program Director of Interface, Nepal and South Asia CONTACT participant. The two men in the background are Tatsushi Arai and Juan Diaz, both international conflict transformation experts and South Asia CONTACT workshop presenters.

Photo by Diljhuson Pathak

Paula returned to Nepal several times each year, working in partnership with several local organizations to conduct peacebuilding trainings.

Kathmandu was the perfect location as it was accessible from all the countries involved, there was a strong network of Nepali CONTACT participants, and Paula knew the city well.

The first South Asia CONTACT training was held in February 2010. Paula notes, “It was remarkable. It’s seldom that a person from Nepal meets a group of Afghans or Sri Lankans, and it’s impossible for Indians and Pakistanis to be in each other’s countries. The opportunity for forming a learning community is rare and vital.” South Asia CONTACT participants agree. One remarked, “*Since (South Asia CONTACT), I’ve changed direction. I am going to do something that embodies humanity and peace, reconciliation, and dialogue.... It changed my life, perhaps saved it. I’m still looking at environmental issues and natural resources, but within the context of peace, dialogue, and conflict transformation.*”

Paula comments, “For our December 2011 CONTACT Program, we hope to have all SAARC countries represented.

We will be focusing on critical issues of climate and resources, as well as historic issues of war that continue to plague the region. It is critical for South Asians to learn to manage their problems together, because as resources diminish, as climate change exacerbates, there are more survival issues. Communities either compete or cooperate, and we want to encourage as much cooperation for the common good as possible. We have to encourage people to find common denominators that join their countries and to act in ways that reduces suffering for everyone. As Martin Luther King said, ‘We must either learn to live together as sisters and brothers, or die together as fools.’” ■

The 2011 South Asia CONTACT program will take place December 7-18 in Kathmandu. For more information, go to www.sit.edu/graduate/18384.htm or e-mail contactprogram@sit.edu

(Susal Stebbins Collins is former editor of ECS Magazine and has previously served as Program Associate with CONTACT and South Asia CONTACT programs.)

Traveling with KIMFF

Text By RAMYATA LIMBU



Photo by Kapil Bhatt

Indrachowk, Doti - It's a cool, balmy evening. Dusk falls fast as a giant white screen is erected in Doti bazaar, Siligadhi. The cobblestoned square, lined with quaint whitewashed houses, is abuzz with inquisitive children. They

mill about as a small team of technicians position high wattage boom boxes on both sides of the screen and set a projector in place with quiet efficiency. *Gboomti Kimffa* or *Travelling KIMFF* (Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival)

has arrived in the far west. Indrachowk's inhabitants, Newar business people, whose families migrated from Kathmandu for trade some two hundred years ago, make up the bulk of the audience. Cadets from the nearby army garrison,

formerly a fort built during the Anglo-Nepal war, file in and seat themselves as dusk fades into darkness. A generator is turned on, its drone drowned out by the action unfolding on the screen as a young, adolescent Pooja struggles with her mother's preference for her younger brother. She leaves home, marries her school friend Rumi, becomes pregnant and dies after a difficult birth.

The women are moved by Pooja's plight and relate to her trauma. The film *Pooja* is also a lesson in reproductive health. Earlier in the day, the Doteli public crowds the district development hall to view films on subjects as diverse as climate change, conflict, and culture. It's clear that there is a dearth of entertainment in these parts and the moving image has the audience spellbound. In between screenings, the KIMFF team manages to visit Doti's famed Shaileshwari Temple before heading down to the plains of Dipayal, where the next day, a youthful crowd opts to see *Sick City* - a realistic and gritty depiction of the darker side of Kathmandu. Students from a school for children orphaned during the Maoist conflict request a screening of *Puneko Pant* - the story of a widow from Bajura whose husband was killed by security forces during the conflict. Their son, Pune, refuses to go to school. His only pair of pants is torn.

Leaving behind the humidity of Dipayal, we head for the cooler climes of Dadeldhura. We're fortunate to have booked rooms. The hotel is bustling with NGO activity. Fly-speckled pictures of Nepal's "Sundar Sudurpaschiim" (beautiful far west) adorn the hotel walls, including a picture of Dadeldhura's Amarghadi, a fort built by Amar Singh Thapa about 150 years ago, to ward off British forces. The fort, currently an army post, is open from 10 - 3 pm, except on Wednesdays. We make a quick trip. Devout Hindus also make it a point to visit Ugratara Temple on the outskirts of

The last time I visited the region, Khaptad National Park in the mid nineties with two friends, we flew into Bajhang from Nepalgunj and trekked up to Khaptad.

Dadeldhura. Buses, shops and local businesses are named after the goddess, the benefactor of the far west. The last time I visited the region, Khaptad National Park in the mid nineties with two friends, we flew into Bajhang from Nepalgunj and trekked up to Khaptad. Following a steep ascent to Doti, we joined seasonal migrants on an excruciating bumpy bus ride to the western border town of Mahendranagar. In the past fifteen years, the road has improved markedly and our trip in a Hiace van is for most parts quite comfortable. The road is black topped except for sections where huge swathes of rock, sand and mud have surged down in a landslide resulting in uneven stretches. The Indian Boleros, packed precariously with passengers, are more suited for this rugged terrain.

Roads connecting the far western districts of Baitadi and Darchula to the rest of the country mean that once operational airstrips dotting the western hinterland haven fallen into disuse and become grazing ground for cattle. The owner of Laxmi Lodge on the Airport Road in Patan, the former district headquarters of Baitadi, is reminiscent of the time when his hotel was packed with guests flying in from Kathmandu and Mahendranagar. It's at the request of local journalists that we're holding *Ghoomti Kimffa* in Patan, a quiet little bazaar some thirty kilometers from Baitadi's district HQ. They've assured us of a crowd. A mix of schoolchildren, civil servants and the general public line up outside the hall of the local Women's Development Office.

Toofan, a former Maoist fighter has also come to watch films. A strapping young man, Toofan runs a motorcycle repair shop, a job he had before the Maoists recruited him to make pressure cooker bombs and operate radio communications during the conflict. He appears disillusioned with current political developments, and, the news that Nepal has another Maoist prime minister means little.

Ghoomti Kimffa's last stop is Gokuleshwore Bazaar in Darchula. The small, dusty market on the banks of the Chameliya River is some 70 kilometers from Khalanga. We've decided to skip Darchula's district HQ's this trip owing to uncertain road conditions. Travelling to Khalanga via India would have meant smoother road access but also the unwelcome possibility of dealing with bureaucratic hassles. In Gokuleshwore we screen *Kuncha* a film about Darchula's Shaukha people. Every year, during the harsh winters, this community makes the arduous trip down to Khalanga via India (for which they have special permits). They return to their highland homes in the spring. Darchula's spectacular mountain scenery and the hardy lifestyle of the Shaukha people resonate with Gokuleshwore's audience, high school and college kids who have grown up in the region and are familiar with its hardships.

The resonance of shared joys, troubles and experiences was a commonality over the travels of the films in the villages. Even with films about alien topics, appreciation of KIMFF's travels proved that human experiences, in its most basic form, were the same the world over. ■

Thakali Dal-Bhat for 'Khānasseurs'

Text By NEALE BATES

They'll greet you warmly, treat you with the utmost hospitality and welcome you to their abode with a hot cup of tea and one of the most delicious cuisines in all of Nepal. The Thakālis of Nepal are famed for their warmth and most renowned for their food. So it is no surprise that the small ethnic group that originated from the steep Kālī Gandakī (Thak Khola) region prides in delicious, traditional food that has people licking their fingers.

—Yesha Malla, a writer and fan of Thakāli food

It may well be the best known culinary secret in the Himalayas: Thakāli ethnic food – Thakāli khāna, the choice of 'khānasseurs'.

I spent half an afternoon searching for the familiar red sign over the narrow doorway where my favorite Thakāli restaurant used to be, between Wimpy's King Burger and a jewelry shop on Kathmandu's upscale Durbar Marg. It had been awhile, and now I couldn't find it.

I was in downtown Kathmandu after a prolonged absence, and where the Tukché Thakāli Kitchen used to be was a new building with no sign of anything Thakāli. Had KFC and Pizza Hut globalized the indigenous Thakālis out of business? Not likely.

Where had it gone? I asked a shop clerk who pointed up the street towards the palace. Someone else said go behind the palace to Uttar Dhoka (North Gate Street). So I set out walking, umbrella in hand, in a sprinkle.

By the palace West Gate I passed through a throng of Nepalese village youth lined up in front of the Foreign Ministry for passports, modern day "remittance men" (and women, a few) going to jobs in the Mideast, Malaysia and South Korea. As I hurried on the sprinkle became a downpour.

At the next corner I turned on to Uttar Dhoka road and walked east along the palace north wall. By now my flimsy umbrella was leaking, and I was dodging puddles. I soon spotted the welcoming



ECS Media

ochre-colored Thakāli Kitchen signboard across the street, but crossing was a challenge, through a jam of taxis, micros and motorcycles all honking their horns. By the time I reached the restaurant I was soaked, chilled, hungry and ready for a warm-up cup of tea followed one of Nepal's finest cuisines.

The Thakāli ko bhatti of the past

In his perceptive study of contemporary Nepalese urban culture, anthropologist Mark Liechty describes the modern restaurant as evolving out of early European haute cuisine, French for

'high cooking'. That's a good term for Thakāli khāna, high Himalayan cooking. According to Liechty, the first restaurants evolved from the inns, taverns and cafés of the past to become modern forms of consumer leisure. That, too, fits the history of Thakāli restaurants.

When I first trekked in central Nepal almost five decades ago, I discovered the Thakāli ko bhatti, a type of small, seasonal trailside inn. Every winter whole families came down from their villages in Thak Khola, Mustang District, to set up their temporary bhattis in warmer

places. The clientele was mostly traders, civil servants, Gurkha soldiers coming home on leave, and wayward Peace Corps Volunteers (like me). A Thakāli wife ran each bhatti (often with small children under foot), while her husband was off trading.

Thak Khola is a fertile valley on the upper Kāli Gandaki river north of some of the world's highest mountains, Dhaulagiri and Annapurna. In recent decades it has become a popular trekker's destination renowned for its amazing mountain scenery, comfortable guesthouses and great food.

Most bhattis were made of leafy branches and bamboo mats stretched over a sapling frame to look like an American Indian wigwam, just large enough to host a half dozen overnight guests up front and the Thakāli family at the back. Inside, shoes off, guests sat on colorful woolen carpets. Before dinner, we'd chat and sip warm dāru, a mild intoxicant reminiscent of saki. It dulled the aches and pains of trekking.

Dinner was always dāl-bhāt (lentils and rice), consisting of white rice with black lentil or bean soup (kālo mās or simi) flavored with an herb called jimbu. The vegetables were usually green spinach (sāg) and spicy potato (tareko ālu) served with a fiery hot tomato achhār (a relish) flavored with a pungent spice called timur. There was usually a curried meat dish (māsu), either chicken or goat. The steaming rice was heaped up on heavy brass platters with small brass bowls on the side for the lentils, vegetables and meat. We'd sit cross-legged on the floor and eat with our fingers.

Those old style Thakāli ko bhattis are a distant memory. Motor roads now criss-cross the hills and Thakālis have replaced their little inns with multi-storied roadside hotels and guesthouses, and modern restaurants in towns and cities.

Fortunately for the connoisseur, several enterprising Thakāli women run upscale Thakāli restaurants in Kathmandu and Pokhara, raising the quality of Nepali khāna to the highest levels of taste and popularity. The physical infrastructure has also changed with tables and chairs instead of woolen carpets on the floor, a wider variety of entrées, and professional waiters. Still, the basic Thakāli dāl-bhāt remains as good as ever.

“Thakāli food is basic simplicity – rice, lentils, vegetables, meats, and condiments, all transformed by some magical art into tastes that go far beyond the simple dāl-bhāt served up in the kitchens of other castes and ethnic groups.”

WHAT MAKES THAKĀLI KHĀNA UNIQUE?

To understand Thakāli khāna I interviewed people with strong opinions about Nepali cuisine in general and Thakāli cooking in particular. “What makes Thakāli khāna unique?” I asked. “How does it differ from what's served in other restaurants?”

A Thakāli friend went right to the heart of it: “It's the taste!” she said emphatically. “Thakāli food is basic simplicity – rice, lentils, vegetables, meats, and condiments, all transformed by some magical art into tastes that go far beyond the simple dāl-bhāt served up in the kitchens of other castes and ethnic groups.”

A non-Thakāli acquaintance was more philosophical. “I have two thoughts about Thakālis,” he said. “One, their places are really clean. And two, the food is simple and delicious – not simple yet delicious, but simple and delicious.”

Over dinner one evening another friend said, “It's not the food, it's the hospitality that stands out. Thakāli hospitality is unending service. You get food for value of money, and you are going to get good food. It's dāl-bhāt – part of the Nepalese cultural consciousness.”

“I'm just a Brahmin girl who feels comfortable in a Thakāli restaurant,” she went on, “for Thakāli food is like classic Brahmin food - high class, but they've simplified it.”

Then she speculated that “After the Thakālis were awarded the (trans-Himalayan) salt/rice trade commission by the Ranas during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they met the Ranas, Shahs and Thapas of Kathmandu and became ‘courtified’. They came close to these elite families and mimicked them socially.”

A Newar friend pointed out that Thakāli food is special because it is made with “northern mountain flavors,” especially *jimbu* and *timur*. The “magical art” of Thakāli cooking is largely based on using these two flavors, especially *timur*, he said, adding that “*dāl-bhāt* cooked in the Thakāli way is special because of what you get in flavor that you don't find in other places.”

He also noted that “The food is so good that civil servants posted to districts far from home typically seek out a Thakāli restaurant where they can eat on a daily basis. It's so popular that it is now being emulated by many other Nepalese, especially by we Newars.” That's saying a lot, since Newar cuisine is one of the best in Nepal.

Jimbu, is an aromatic herb in the onion family that grows wild in the high mountains. Dried, it is fried in ghee then added to the lentil or bean soup. *Timur* is a hot, tangy pepper-like berry with a pungent aroma. When used, the dried berries are crushed to release the flavor and give tomato, fried potatoes and some soups their distinctiveness.

WHAT IS AN AUTHENTIC THAKĀLI RESTAURANT?

These days in Nepal there are many restaurants with names that include the word Thakāli or Thak Khola, Tukché or Marpha (Thakāli towns). Only a few of them, however, are genuine Thakāli. So how do we sort them out? I turned to Thakāli restaurateurs for answers.

One said, “To know an authentic Thakāli restaurant from all others, you have to ask two simple questions: ‘Who owns the restaurant?’ and ‘Who cooks the food?’ If both answers are ‘Thakāli’ you're in the right place. If not, move on.”

Mana Sherchan started learning Thakāli cooking at age 14 from her mother, and she's been in the Thakāli restaurant business in Kathmandu since 1997. “Authenticity is important,” she told me. “We closely monitor, teach and control the quality, to assure that the cooking is truly Thakāli.” Mana's supervision, alongside that of Rekha Bhattachan, her business partner, gives the Tukché Thakāli Kitchen its authentic food and distinctive ambiance. “But when a ‘Thakāli’ restaurant is run by non-Thakāli cooks,” she said, “the essential ‘Thakāliness’ is not there.” Mana should know. A few years ago one of her non-Thakāli cooks quit to start his own “Thakāli” restaurant, but the ‘Thakāliness’ is definitely missing.

Sarita Sherchan, proprietor of the Pokhara Thakāli Kitchen, agrees. Both her ▶

restaurant in Pokhara and Mana's in Kathmandu stand out in part because they were among the first to open and because they consistently serve up great food. To compare and appreciate their full flavor, so to speak, I went to Pokhara to see and taste first-hand. That brief journey turned out to be a foodie's research outing of some note.

THE POKHARA THAKĀLI KITCHEN AND ITS NEIGHBORS

The Pokhara Thakāli Kitchen is located down lake at Gaurighat, southeast of the main Lakeside business center. It is easy to find, next door to the Trek-O-Tel, a popular hotel owned by another Thakāli, Bindu Sherchan Sakya. It's a great combo: fine food at the Kitchen, fine accommodations at the 'O-Tel'.

The entrance to the restaurant is up a narrow alleyway a few meters from Lakeside Road. The alley also has several small eateries, a pasta shop, a coffee shop, and a tiny place serving meat dumplings (*mo-mo*) and noodle soup (*thukpa*). Each is good for a light snack, but the best full course meals are served at the Thakāli Kitchen.

"While other Nepalese people cook with the same ingredients, the Thakāli taste is different."

My hotel of choice in Pokhara is Trek-O-Tel. The neighborhood is quiet, and the restaurants round about are good. Sometimes I have breakfast in the hotel restaurant, and sometimes I go out. One morning I went up the alley to the coffee shop seeking a wake-up cup of java, a fresh sweet roll, and a quiet place to begin writing this article.

Lal Man Pun, a Magar from Myagdi District, is the coffee shop proprietor. His father was a Gurkha soldier, but Lal Man opted to study hospitality and hotel management in Europe. He's now something of a Pokhara entrepreneur. He calls his coffee shop the Broadway Inn. Upstairs he rents rooms to budget-minded travelers. Downstairs, he serves coffee—Latte, Cappuccino, Espresso Macchiato, Double Tall Skinny, and the like; bold and tasty, from local beans grown in the hills around Begnas Tal, a lake a few miles southeast of Pokhara. It's marketed as 'Machhapuchhre Flying Bird' coffee, named after snow-topped Machhapuchhre Peak that hangs over Pokhara like..., well..., like a flying bird.

Finding an excellent coffee shop near a genuine Thakāli restaurant was, for me, pure luxury. To enjoy a fine meal

out in the evening and a cup of strong and authentic coffee the next day across the alley, gave me lots to write about.

Lal Man Pun's coffee got me thinking more deeply about the authenticity of genuine Thakāli *khāna*. I reflected on what Sarita, Mana, Bindu and others had told me, that while other Nepalese people cook with the same ingredients, the Thakāli taste is different. "Right timing, the right combination of spices, and appearance of the cooking oil are all important," I was told. "And a good Thakāli cook knows when and what to put in, and at what temperature."

Mana's husband, Nirjhar, suggested, "Maybe it's in the blood of the Thakālis." There's that "magical art" again, intuitive and culturally ingrained.

I also met an up-and-coming Thakāli entrepreneur named Sachin Tulachan who plans to open a new Thakāli restaurant in downtown Pokhara. Sachin told me that he'll follow strict guidelines about food, to assure authenticity. He'll feature organically grown vegetables, some from the farms of Thak Khola, he said, and meat curries from Tibetan goat (*chhyāngra*) and free

range chicken. No *khāsi* (lowland goats), and no tasteless commercial boiler chickens. In addition to the set meal of rice, lentils, vegetables, meat and *timur*-flavored *achhār*, he'll serve a traditional Thakāli soup over small pieces of *chirpi* (dried hard white cheese), and two types of light alcoholic drinks, one from fermented wheat (*umū*), served cold, and the other from millet (*kodo*), served warm, the *dāru* I used to drink in the trailside *bhattis*. And, it must all be cooked over a wood fire, he said.

PLACES TO BE-AND-BE-SEEN...

To succeed in the restaurant business, food presentation, ambiance and sociality are important. Anthropologist Mark Liechty says that these three elements define successful modern Nepalese restaurants. The ambiance of an authentic Thakāli restaurant refers, in part, to the ethnic décor. The two Thakāli Kitchens are decorated with traditional brass kitchen ware, pots, pans, platters, ladles and tea churns, and a ceremonial adobe *chulo*, a centerpiece symbolic of a traditional Thakāli household hearth.

Sociality and ambience, together, are all about a restaurant's clients and their

expectations. Modern urban restaurant culture in Nepal is about more than just serving and eating food, says Liechty. In the past, strict caste rules about commensality guided what, where, with whom and from whom one could take and eat food. That's fast disappearing in urban Nepal, and many modern restaurants, especially those run by Thakālis, are now considered "places to be-and-be-seen while eating special foods in an intentionally created ambience."

Thakāli restaurants are among the important places for office-going executives and class conscious young men and women from aspiring middle class families to be seen.

For today's upwardly mobile urbanites, the 'meaning' of food and eating out has become a statement of 'fashion' and a mark of one's socio-economic class identity (in place of caste). Thakāli restaurants are among the important places for office-going executives and class conscious young men and women from aspiring middle class families to be seen.

LOOKING BACK, TO THE FUTURE

Upon reflection, the *Thakāli-ko-bhatti* of old has come a long ways to meet, quite successfully, the expectations of a modern urban populace. Now go on out and "be seen" enjoying Thakāli *khāna*, one of Nepal's exceptional cuisines. If you join me some evening for Thakāli *khāna* I'll tell you more stories about authentic Thakāli culture and history. ■

Mark Liechty's study about the commodification of food in urban Nepalese society is a chapter in his provocative book 'Out Here in Kathmandu: Modernity on the Global Periphery' (Kathmandu: Martin Chautari Press, 2010). The three elements that define a modern restaurant are further discussed in Stephen Mennell's 'All Manners of Food' (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

Thanks to Amendra, Bindu, Mana, Nirjhar, Rekha, Sachin, Sarita, Sosti, Sribindu, Sushma, and other acquaintances for their insights into true Thakāli cuisine, for the hospitality I received at the Trek-O-Tel and in various Thakāli restaurants, and to Lal Man Pun for great coffee and a comfortable place for a writer to hang out in Pokhara. See more about the Machhapuchhre Flying Bird coffee he serves at nepaliorganiccoffee.com.

Don Messerschmidt is a contributing editor to 'ECS Nepal' magazine. When he's not in the kitchen or out to dinner, he can be poked at don.editor@gmail.com.

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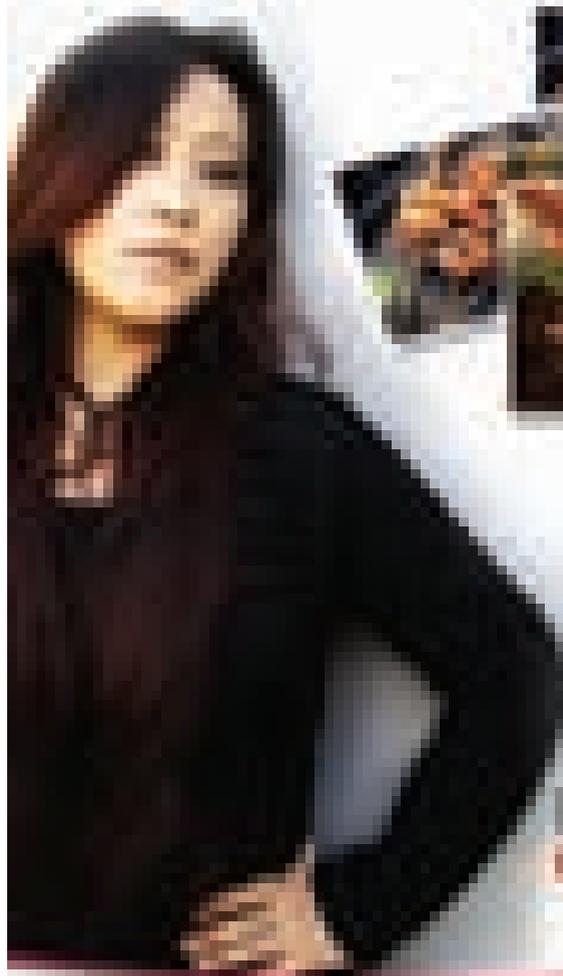


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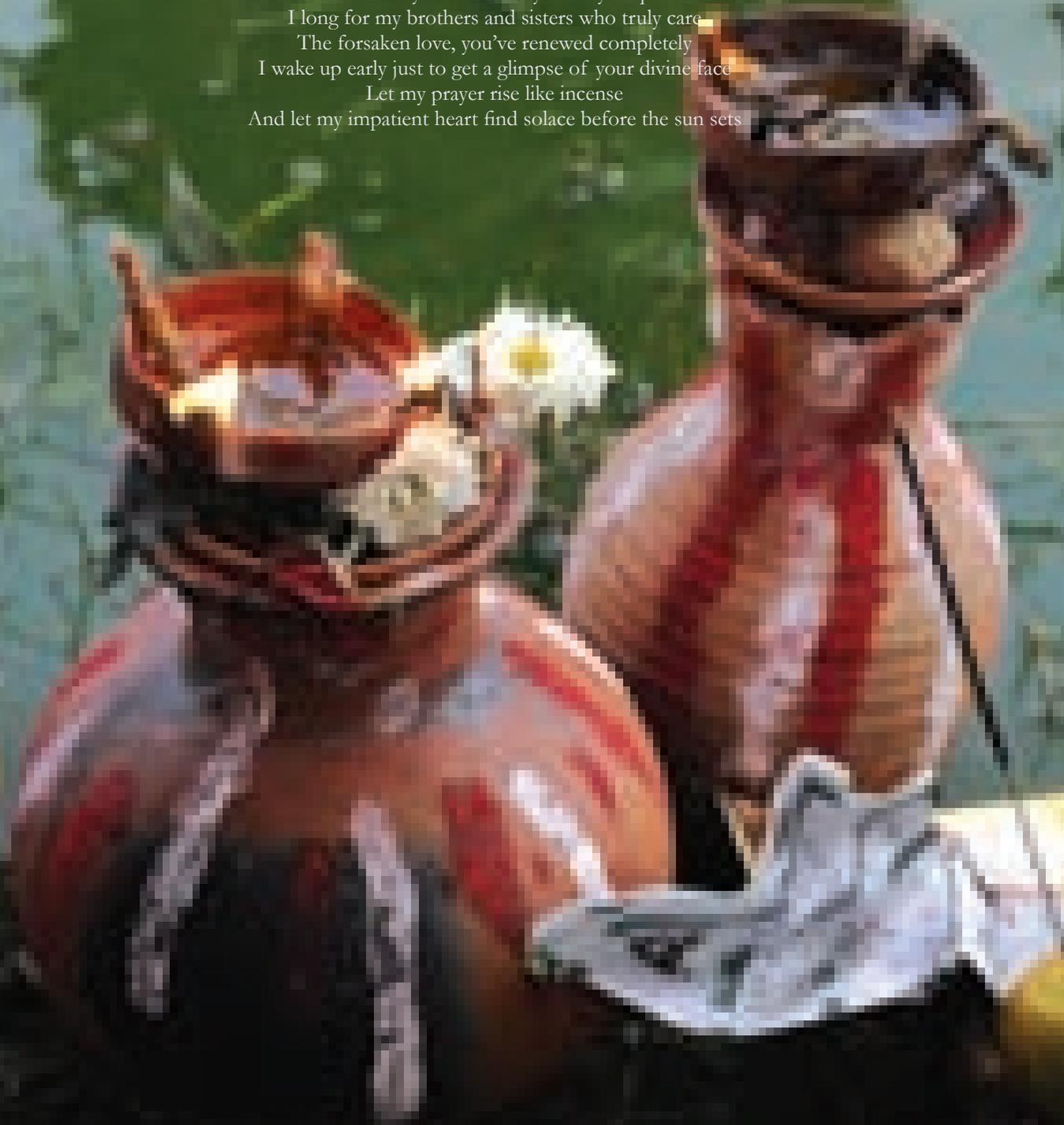
A grateful heart

Text By LIZBETH LUCKSOM, Photos By HARI MAHARJAN(ECS Media)

To you I offer my gratitude, to you I offer my prayer
Your nurturing spirit is most endearing
And I cannot help but bow down and surrender
I cannot escape your glory;
Neither can I stand your presence for long
Your light has strengthened me; your warmth has healed me
Even in my darkest days, your truth has shown me the way

It's the time of the year again and my heart rejoices incessantly
I let the crystal water kiss my parched skin
And lay my humble offerings at your gracious feet
I easily seem to forget the months of toiling and suffering
And thank Surya for his unconditional blessings

I cannot stand my own sins
Yet I believe you see me beyond my iniquities
I long for my brothers and sisters who truly care
The forsaken love, you've renewed completely
I wake up early just to get a glimpse of your divine face
Let my prayer rise like incense
And let my impatient heart find solace before the sun sets











VISUAL STORYTELLING

Living in the mist

The last nomads of Nepal

Text & Photos By KISHOR K SHARMA





“Women have no caste, flatbread has no head, and the Rautes have no houses,” says a man perched on a rock, pointing at a camp of cloth tents hidden in the mist. “You are duniya, the outside world, and we are the Rautes. We don’t have houses – we have camps.”

Only 127 remain in the foraging tribe of Rautes, from the western mountains of Nepal. Raut elders are convinced that their ancestral traditions will survive into the future. They don’t occupy the same place for long, they don’t grow crops, and they don’t work for outsiders. For a living, they carve household utensils out of soft wood and barter or sell them. But increasing deforestation has depleted the supply of wood the Rautes need. The government money they receive – one thousand rupees a month for each Raut – might seem useful now, but will likely increase dependence in the future.

“They have human sacrifices every twelve years! If you wander into their camp, they’ll enchant you and keep you prisoner!” Such are the tales told by villagers around the camp.

All hearsay, because nobody has seen any of it. The Rautes seem to prefer to remain hidden behind a shroud of mystery – perhaps to shield themselves from the influence of *duniya*. They don’t talk much, don’t like outsiders in their camp, and seek out isolated nooks for their enclosed world. Their life seems a conundrum: they endlessly wander along the boundaries of the world they have created. They roam like the clouds; they float across the landscape, free as the birds.

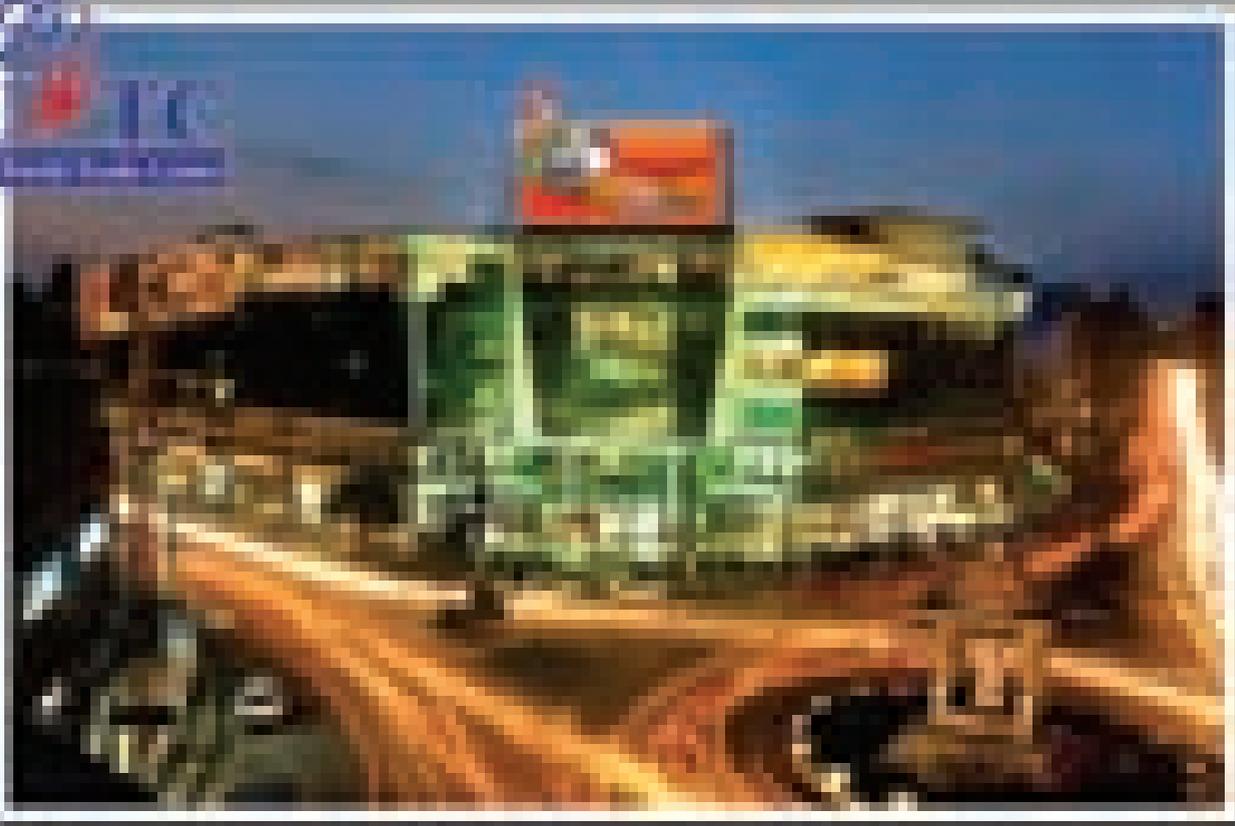
“The Rautes have no houses...” I remember. Perhaps I will meet them again, someday in the future, in another camp hidden in the mist. ■

This story was produced during a Masterclass with Mads Nissen organized by photo.circle. It has been published as a book ‘The Constant Change- 12 photo stories from Nepal’ and is being exhibited from 4th - 13th November at Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal.





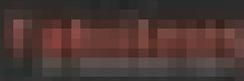




Partners:



Partners:



Partners:



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The Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources

A person is shown from behind, working on a large, intricate woven basket. The basket is made of light-colored fibers and features a complex, repeating geometric pattern. The person is wearing a dark, long-sleeved shirt and is seated on a wooden stool. The background is a workshop with various tools and materials visible.

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CRAFTS

100 CRAFT RIGHT NOW
102 REVIEWS: A courtyard full of craft
104 PLACE: Village craft
106 ART SHOP: Indigo Art Gallery

Photo by Niraj Karki

Modelling Buddha



A Handicraft Training Committee has been formed by the Youth Group of Buddhist Monastery that is focusing on training young artists to sculpt the head of Buddha in Accheshwor Mahabihar. The training started on 11 August and though it was meant to last for two months, the festivity of Dashain delayed it to further two weeks.

Pradeep Shakya is the trainer and helping the participants to master the facial

features of Buddha using plain clay. Since several granth clearly outlines the various expression of Buddha, a sculptor needs to meet the exact imitation using several mathematical tactics. Traditionally, there used to be a guru-chela relationship among the trainer and his students and it took up to four years to master the skill of sculpting the head of the Buddha. The coordinators believe that this training will help the participants save their time and learn the skill as well.

Accheswor Mahabihar has been credited to produce fine artists since its inception but recently there has been a decline in the number of artists willing to continue the profession of a sculptor, says Prashant Shakya, the coordinator for the Handicraft Training Committee. Hence, the committee took the initiative on preserving the cultural heritage and tradition of the handicrafts. (Nimma Adhikari)

Exports of Handicrafts Go Up by 11 %

In the fiscal year 2010/11, Nepal exported handicraft products worth NRs. 3.1 billion thus increasing the exports of Nepali handicraft products by 11.71 percent compared to the previous fiscal year.

According to Federation of Handicraft Associations of Nepal (FHAN), the exports' value was worth Rs 2.7 billion the previous fiscal year. Handicrafts products made from wood, metal, stones, papers make up a bulk of the exports. Similarly, cotton products, silk product and pashmina items were other products that saw high demand last year.

Besides Germany, China, Canada, Japan and UK, demand from the US dominated the international market of Nepali handicrafts.



Indonesia Invites Nepal to Business Expo

During a diplomatic reception organized by the embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Dhaka to mark the 66th anniversary of Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia, the ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia invited Nepali businessmen to attend 26th Trade Expo Indonesia to be held at Jakarta International Expo, Kemayoran - Jakarta in October.

The reception displayed Indonesia's variety of products like batik, songket,

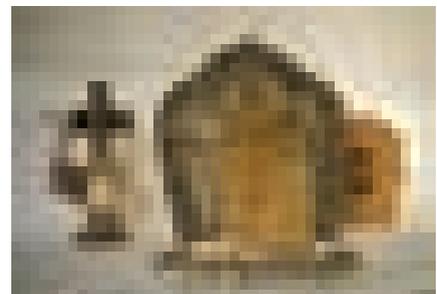
strategic industry, tourism promotion and education scholarship, cultural and arts performances and culinary skills and tradition.

The reception was attended by leaders of the state and government institutions, ministers, MP's, resident ambassadors of various countries in Nepal, Honorary Consuls, political party leaders, staff from the Indonesia Embassy in Dhaka and representatives from Indonesian Community in Nepal.

FHAN's Seminar in Dhulikhel

With the aim of promoting exports of Nepali handicrafts and their production, Federation of Handicraft Association of Nepal with Trade Promotion Centre organized a seminar from 26 August to 27 August 2011 in Dhulikhel. The discussion focused on the long-term problems and solutions of Nepali handicrafts' production, promotion, development and distribution both inside and outside Nepal.

Spokesperson for Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Mr. Chandra Kumar Ghimire inaugurated the program as Chief Guest and addressed the issues governing the handicrafts' sector of Nepal. The historical, cultural and occupational importance of Nepali handicrafts were also pointed out by Ghimire at the event.



Handicraft Emporium in Thamel

The Federation of Handicrafts Associations of Nepal (FHAN) recently opened Handicraft Emporium in Thamel's Narsingh Chowk. The emporium's location in Deva's Arcade, a traditional Newar styled building is suited to the purpose of promoting Nepali crafts in the market. The emporium is a collective outlet of nine different handicraft producers, who will be changing on a three-month rotation basis. Craft enthusiasts will now be able to find what they need conveniently without having to look for it in multiple locations.

For the first three months, the emporium has stalls by Bhaktapur Craft Paper, Cultural Handicraft Dolls, Lalitpur Handicraft Association, MQS Enterprises, Palanchowk Bhagwati Pashmina Industries, Rajib Handicraft Industry, Sana Hastakala, Swayambhu Ratna Dhakhwa and T-Muni Crafts. The products on offer range from silver ware to cloth dolls and the rental rate range is NRs. 6000-7000.

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A courtyard full of craft

Deva's Arcade in Thamel pays a worthy homage to the country's art and craft heritage.

Text By UTSAV SHAKYA

Turns out, early explorers to Nepal had spread a good word for the country. Its reputation as a Himalayan Shangri-la, the land of the furry yak and the abominable snowman, combined with its seclusion from the rest of the world until the 1950s, added to its irresistibility. The interest was understandable; several changes in the ruling dynasties and their impacts on various fields had resulted in a land of lush cultural, religious, artistic and architectural variety.

When Nepal finally opened its gates to the world, for foreigners it was akin to stepping into a newly discovered land.

Early travelers wrote volumes on their experiences, describing the people, their rich culture and the land itself in much detail. Even today, new travelers to the country still talk about feeling the same way. True travelers: those who will travel to *meet* a country and spend time and effort getting to know it are rewarded. The newness apparently, does not rub away with each passing year.

There are places though, that make it easy for these travelers. Deva's Arcade is such a place. A recent addition to the concrete landscape of Thamel's bustling Narsingh Chowk, the building stands testament to a generation of art and craft appreciators whose modern undertakings are inseparably intertwined with their heritage. According to Mohan Ratna Shakya, owner of Deva's Arcade, the arcade - a modern structure with Newar architectural elements incorporated - aims to promote Nepali art and craft. From *pashmina* stores and antique shops to an art gallery - Gallery at Deva's and a 9-section evolving handicrafts exhibition run by the Federation of Handicraft Associations of Nepal (FHAN) - the purpose of the building is quite apparent.

Already events are in full swing to encourage footfall in the arcade. The Gallery at Deva's, run by

Shakya's sons Prabal and Shishir Shakya, recently played host to Nepal's First Traditional Art Exhibition, which showcased works that spanned generations. Work by senior traditional artists shared space on the gallery walls with the work of newcomers. The participating artists were Deepak K. Joshi, Vijay Sarga Maharjan, Amrit Dangol, Shyam Krishna Maharjan, Mahendra Das Singh, Bal Krishna Maharjan, Raju Maharjan, Mohan Prajapati, Naresh Prajapati, Shree Bhakta Prajapati, Maheshwor Dongol, Binamra Dongol, Rakesh Maharjan, Shova Shakya, Surendra Silpakar, Ashwojit Maharjan, Pramila Maharjan, Saru Prajapati and Puja Shrestha. The result was a vibrant display of traditional styles of art; the older ones going by the book while the newcomers expectedly bending a few rules to come up with a body of art that felt more personal and markedly contemporary. FHAN inaugurated their large exhibition and trade space recently amidst a function attended by senior artisans, businesspersons and professionals related to the craft industry. Displays at their hall range from silver jewelry, *pashmina* products and *lhokta* paper items to traditional Nepali cloth dolls.

If for an instance visitors to Deva's feel like they have traveled back in time, they will not be the first to feel that way. Deva's is a treasure trove of art and craft that deserves a visit. ■

For inquiries:
Deva's Arcade, Narsingh Chowk, Thamel



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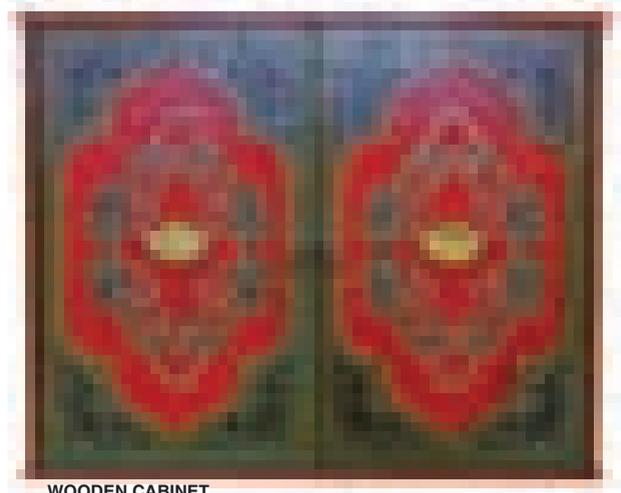


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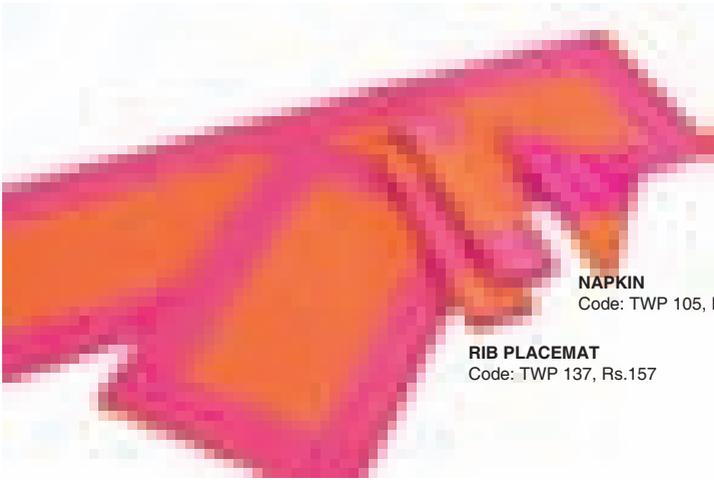
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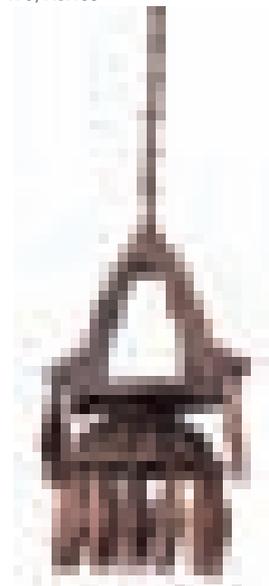
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Village craft

A 16th century village is the unassuming home of excellent woodcraft.

Text & Photos By NIRAJ KARKI

The next time you go to a temple, or any old historic building, spare a moment to look at the woodwork – look at the carved wooden figures, their intricate details cut and chiselled into the wood. Spare a moment, a good, long, worthy moment.

You would understand if you had any experience carving on wood – it's hellishly difficult. Of course, so is all art and woodwork is no exception – wood has its nature and working with wood too has its own methods. The skill and effort behind any woodwork is incredible and if you consider how intricate the details in some woodwork are, you would realize that we owe artisans a serious due.

A quaint Newari village in Lalitpur less than an hour's drive from central Kathmandu, Bungamati is home to some of the best artisans specializing in woodwork. Established in the 16th century, the village still has a timeless feel to it; the journey to the village itself is nothing short of spectacular once you leave bus Kathmandu. At the centre of the village, in a quiet courtyard is the temple of Rato Matsyendranath, and surrounding it are houses and makeshift workshops where the artisans are at work,

turning pieces of wood into works of art.

Walk around a bit and you come to more houses with people carving – the whole of the village is like a giant art center, creating art as the way of life. Most of what is made in Bungamati is woodwork, although there are a few artisans working with copper and some dabbling in making ornaments.

Seeing a finished work of art and seeing them being made are different things – very, very different things. In Bungamati, you have the happy chance of seeing them made. Mr Bhagya Ratna Shakya was working on a unique design – a wooden piece showing a 21 *Tara*, a story carved into wood. Equally interesting was the fact that he was carving on half of an old *dhikeki*, a traditional Newari mortar like wooden vessel in which rice is beaten. It is absolutely amazing, incredibly detailed and takes be-



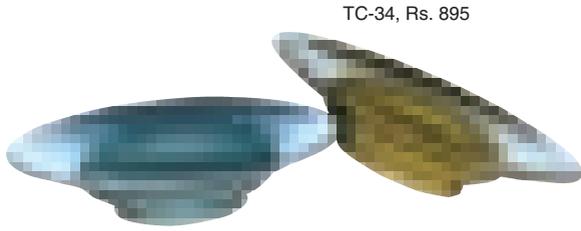
tween 2-3 months from start to finish, and is available for around Rs.25,000. Looking at the half-finished works of art around his workshop is enough to invite envy and take one's breath away. Ornate book covers, various designs of traditional statues including a *Phurki*, a long statue in the shape of a dagger, chests and so much more.

Quite sadly it is not often such works of art that decorate the halls of the affluent in Nepal, and most of what is made in all of Bungamati is actually sent abroad like Mr. Shakya's latest piece. In fact, most of the orders received are from abroad. The entire woodwork used in the making of the Nepal house in Russia inaugurated recently was made here in Bungamati at Mahankal Wood Carving, said the owner, as he worked on an order headed for Belgium.

Bungamati is also a learning center where even foreign students have come to learn the art of carving, from its masters. The skill of the artisans here is amazing; they can seemingly sculpt any design onto wood. Head over to Bungamati; experience the magic of a crafts village. ■



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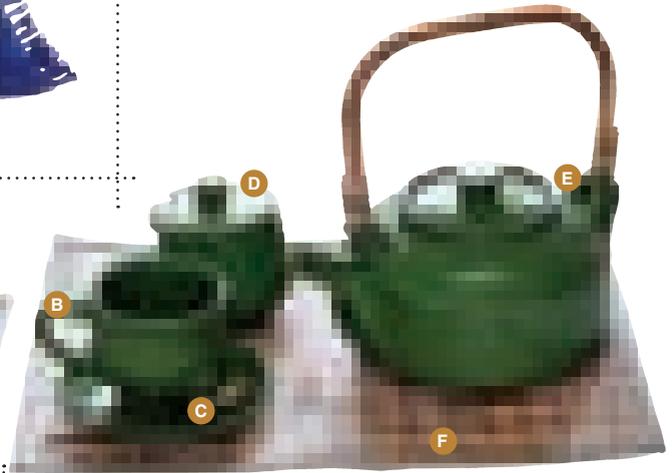


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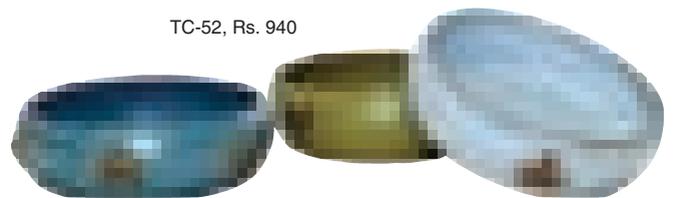
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Indigo Art Gallery

A small, enchanting showcase of the thriving medieval Nepali art

Text By PRIANKA RAUNIYAR



Photos by ECS Media

Anarrow wooden staircase from inside the premises of Mike's breakfast lined with posters of the unique exhibitions the gallery takes pride in, Indigo Art Gallery is aptly set in a quaint Rana house located in the heart of the city. The walk up leads to a corridor with small benches and cobbled brick floor where you could sit and admire the art hanging on the walls for hours. As you enter a room of aesthetically chosen exhibits, the deliberate organized mess is striking yet charming. From traditional

Newari Thankga paintings to cire perdue (lost wax casting) sculptures from Lalitpur to the art of repousse (beaten copper sheet metal), Indigo has been a front-runner in helping to preserve the vibrant heritage of Nepali art.

Newars, the chief ethnic artisan group, are adept at metal work, stone and wood carving and have received many accolades over time. It is this legacy that Indigo's Director James A. Giambrone wanted to preserve and foster when he established it in 1980. Since its inception, the gallery has helped local artists grow and find their niche. Encouraging and collaborating with young artists throughout the process from planning to supplying rare pigments to exhibiting and selling, Indigo plays an essential role in building a mutual partnership between the artist and the gallery.

Rabindra Shakya has been a curator at the gallery for 25 years. He believes that he learnt on the job about the kind of traditional art in demand, and now he uses his discretion to suggest themes of paintings adapted from their collection of books. Business was good some time back, but it's been slow of late he remarked. Since their regular clients are embassies and expats, he thinks the global recession has taken a toll on the sale of art as well.

The bright colored, intricate Thankga paintings of Manjushree, Ganesha,

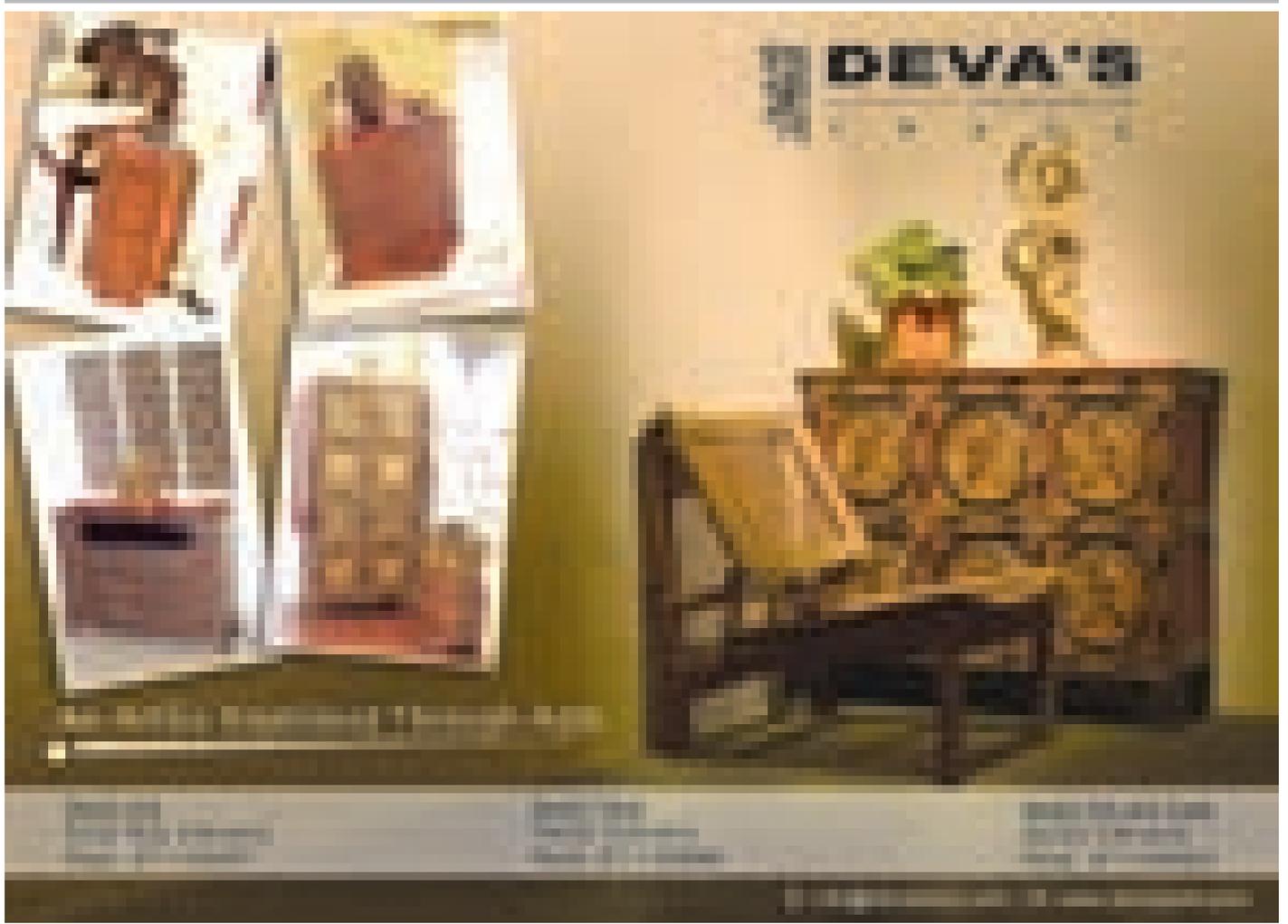
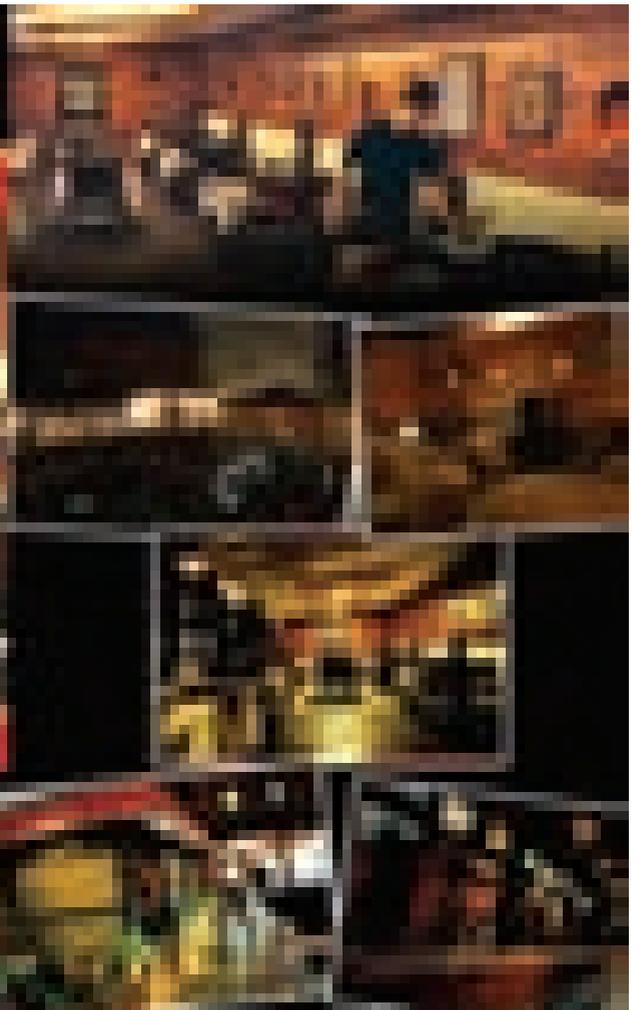
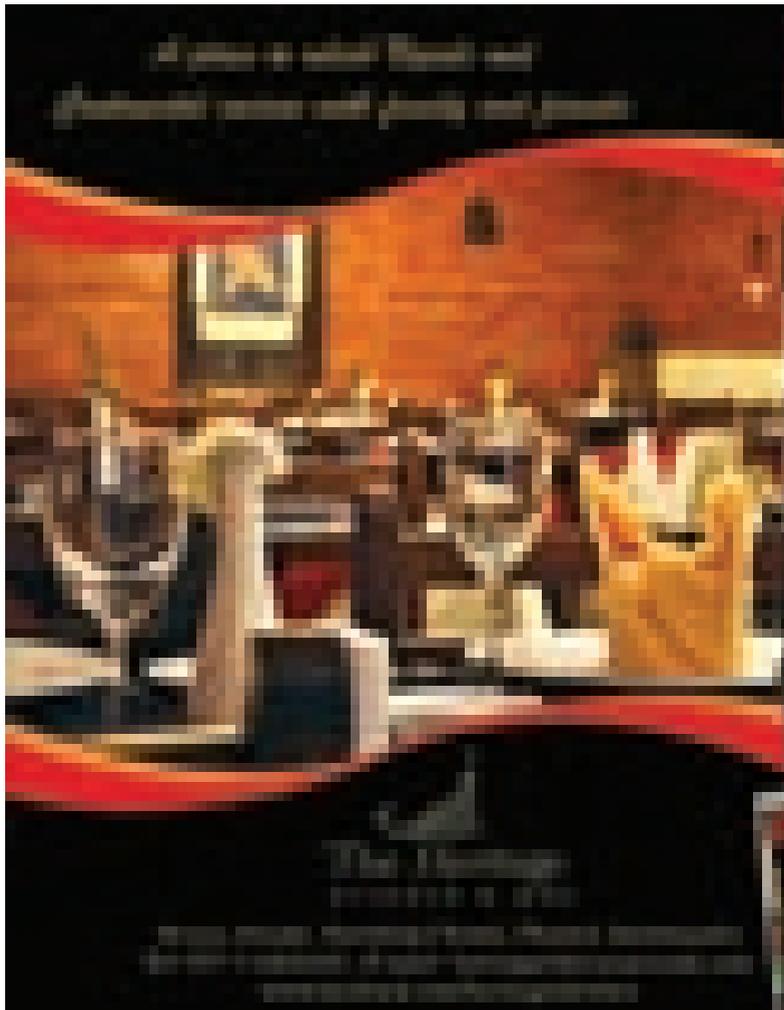
Green Tara and Buddha made with mineral pigments (raw stones grinded into a powder and mixed with glue) on display are mainly works of in-house artists like Gyan Bhakta Lama and Mukti Singh Thapa. His decades of experience with the indigenous bronze casters of Patan, aided James to showcase a select ensemble of copper and repousse artifacts carved by master Bhim Shakya and others. Along with these, the gallery has a varied set of charismatic pictures of people and places in Nepal taken by local and foreign photographers like Kishor Kayastha, Kevin Bubviski, Dan Miller, Thomas Kelly and the James himself. To add to the collection, the gallery also flaunts modern oil paintings, traditionally designed Tharu chairs and Tibetan carpets.

Indigo has periodic exhibitions on a variety of eclectic topics: photographs from Nepal and Tibet, monastic Mogul silks, charcoal drawings, carvings besides paintings. Regularly, Indigo also hosts lectures and slide-show presentations by scholars and conservationists that receive quite an interested audience. In many ways, the gallery represents medieval Nepali art to knowledgeable collectors and is a quiet recluse for art lovers. ■

Invitations are generally by email.
For more information:
indigo@wlink.com.np. Phone: 4413580



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The image features two lit candles in the center, with a large red ribbon banner draped across them. The candles are lit, and their flames are visible. The ribbon banner is red with gold trim and contains the text '2nd Anniversary Issue'. The background is dark with a bokeh effect of light spots.

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TRAVEL

110 TRAVEL NEWS

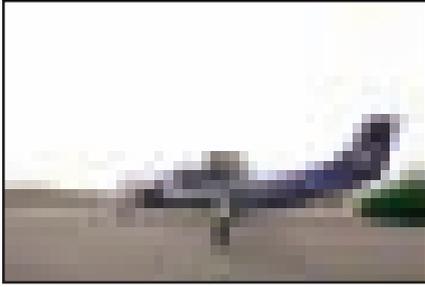
112 REVIEWS: Hypnotized by Temple Tree

114 PEOPLE ON THE GO: Going places

116 TRAVEL DIARY: The simple life

118 GOOD TO KNOW: The tyranny of Leeches

Buddha Air to Start Direct Flights from Pokhara to Bhairawa



Buddha Air will start direct flights between Pokhara and Bhairawa from 27 September with the aim to provide services to domestic tourists as well as Indian pilgrims going to Muktinath.

According to Buddha Air, tourists and pilgrims can only fly to Jomsom only from Pokhara, currently.

Similarly, Bhairawa airport lies at a distance of approximately 20 km from Sunauli entry point along Nepal-India border.

The airline is said to fly three times a week on the route. Initial plans are to deploy 18-seater Beechcraft 1990D on the route but Buddha Air is planning to operate 47-seater ATR-42 aircraft if passenger-flow increases later.

Buddha Air is also planning on operating mountain flights from Pokhara itself.

Fifteen Years of Avia Club Nepal

Avia Club Nepal, the pioneer in sports aviation and activities in Nepal is marking a decade and a half of its contribution to the tourism industry.

Since its establishment in 1997 in Pokhara, it has operated sightseeing flights of the Machhapuchre and Annapurna range for some 21,000 tourists. What started out as merely a couple of delta-wing ultra lights with open cockpits perfect for aerial photography, has transformed into a fleet of four ultra lights with one fixed wing-light aircraft, six paragliders and four motorized paragliders.

Avia Club now offers special ultra light flights over the valley of Pokhara and flights up the Seti and Mardi to the glaciers below



Photo by Priti Karki

the Annapurna range. Paragliding tandem jumps and aviation services like banner towing, flower showering, aerial filming, mountain search and rescue as well as scientific research are also conducted and Avia Club Nepal also runs the Flight Training School.

September Witnesses Increase in Arrivals through Flights



In the month of September 2011, tourist arrivals via airlines have gone up by 11 percent compared to the same period last year. According to the figures of Immigration Office at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), September saw the arrival of total 45,782 tourists.

The biggest rise includes arrivals from Sri Lanka which increased by 75.4 percent and China which went up by 66.6%. Similarly, the arrivals from Japan, Singapore and Thailand have also increased by 21.5 percent, 30.3 percent and 10.1 percent respectively. Arrivals from Malaysia and South Korea however, declined by 32.8 percent and 29.4 percent respectively.

While arrivals from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka increased by 24.5, 23.6 and 75.4 percent respectively, arrivals from Bangladesh decreased by 34.2 percent. Arrivals from Australia, Canada and USA have also gone up by 2.8 percent, 11.7 percent and 4.8 percent respectively.

Nepal at Uster Festival

The Embassy of Nepal, Geneva and the Non-Resident Nepali Association of Switzerland participated in the Uster festival in Zurich from September 3-4, 2011.

The two stalls, that projected the touristic attractions in Nepal and Nepali culinary preparations, attracted large number of people who inquired about various aspects of tourism and Nepali foods.

Speaking at the fair, Ambassador of Nepal to Switzerland Dr. Dinesh Bhattarai highlighted tourist attractions, cultural heritage, historic spirit of harmony, and tolerance in the country. He urged those present to work for projecting immense tourism potentials in Nepal and prospects it offers for investment and contribute to achieve the goal of receiving one million tourists in the Tourism Year 2011.

NRNA Switzerland President Dr. Binaya Shrestha, General Secretary Preetam Gurung, President of the Swiss Nepal Society Markus Ruckstuhl, NRN Representative from Australia Ranju Thapa, representatives of the Nepali Jana Samparka Samiti, other Nepali community organizations, friends and well wishers in Switzerland were also present on the occasion. The Embassy has been participating in major fairs in Switzerland and Italy with an objective of creating awareness about Nepal being the most desired destination and to encourage prospective tourists to visit the country. Europe remains a major tourism market for Nepal.

TAAN Elects New Executive Committee

A new executive committee under the chairmanship of Mahendra Singh Thapa was elected unanimously during the 33rd Annual General Meeting of Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal (TAAN) on September 5.

The AGM nominated Jangbu Sherpa as the Senior Vice President of TAAN. Rana Bahadur Khadka and Ambar Tamang were named 1st and 2nd Vice-Presidents respectively.

Similarly, Mohan Lamsal, Dil Bahadur Gurung and Anjan Thapa will be serving as general secretary, treasurer and secretary respectively. The AGM also elected Gopal Babu Shrestha, Ang Chhetar Sherpa, Janak Prasad Pandey, Ram Bahadur Nepal Chhetri, Karma Sherpa, Rajendra Prasad Subedi, Krishna Raj Bhattarai and Nima Lama as executive members.

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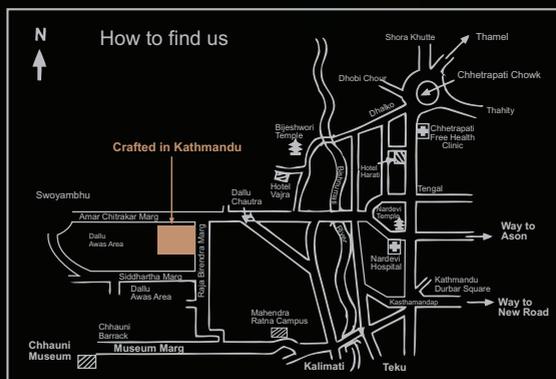


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Hypnotized by Temple Tree

Text & Photos By SRADDA THAPA



Sometimes a girl has to clear her head and Kathmandu offers little solace. Pokhara, thankfully, is just a thirty-minute flight away. A friend suggested I consider a place he'd recently visited and I choked at the price - \$160 a night? I politely informed him Pokhara boasts an overabundance of good hotels for Rs. 1000 or less per night, that too lakeside.

He promised Temple Tree was worth the buck. A tiny bit reluctant I gave Krishna Acharya at the hotel a call and was told that since they were completing construction work, there was a 50% discount. Between the dogs barking and cars honking in Kathmandu, paying half the rate to put up with a little tinkering wasn't going to be a problem.

Still wondering if I was going to regret splurging, I hesitantly stepped into the tastefully decorated lobby. While a smiling young man checked me in, a server offered a glass of chilled herbal tea – what a pleasant way to be welcomed in the summer heat.

Quality service that is friendly without being annoying is a catch in Nepal; the wait-staff are a real treat. A young woman ushered me past the reception and dining area, beyond the open space (with a fun bar to my left and a serene pool to my right) and I decided there would be no regrets.

The boutique hotel is a delightful step away from the 1990s umpteenth-



The creative chef has helped design the menu and takes great care in small details.

floors-of-cement-slabs-meets-glass excuse for a “hotel”. Chandan Kayestha, one of seven partners, told me they desired to step away from the overdone Newar theme to allude to the western region of Nepal. The Bandipur-inspired two-storey cottages are charming to say the least. Individually hand-painted temple trees on stucco walls remain and the climate controlled rooms boast of LCD satellite television and Wi-fi but you'll be too busy admiring the exquisite handcrafted wooden furniture and classy bathroom. To top it off, each room has its own balcony looking out onto the common area with a large temple tree as its main feature.

When the obligatory afternoon showers chase you from the pool, head over to the open-air restaurant as the hotel also has a world-class chef, Surendra Rana who returned from a successful career in the Middle East to contribute in his own way to the Nepal Tourism Year 2011 campaign. The creative chef

has helped design the menu and takes great care in small details. The mayo had a dash of spices that had you licking it off the potato crisps. The design of the salad paid tribute to Phewa Tal. The Fried Chicken had an extra crisp courtesy of corn flaked skin, and the list goes on.

Despite being just a two-minute walk from Lakeside, between the serene environment, delicious cuisine, and praiseworthy service I stayed cooped up – my room, balcony, pool, bar and two restaurants in house were more than I needed to rest and relax.

A spa was in the works and the suites were near complete when I left. Despite all the additions they have made, Temple Tree was a winner even when under construction. I'll be heading back to the city soon - only I'll probably venture little beyond the boutique hotel. ■■

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Going places

Thapa's journey of life reflects his sensibilities as a biker.

Text By NIKITA TRIPATHI

Some eight years ago, a friend asked Rabi Thapa “Why don’t we do a motor-cycle rally to Tibet?” Thapa, back then had already changed jobs a number of times, from working for Tiger Tops Mountain Travel Group of Companies, Temple Tiger to Himalayan Holidays.

Sacred Summits was registered in September 2003 and the second trip eventually followed, stretching as far as Sikkim, Darjeeling and Ladakh. Biking has been the top source of income generation for Sacred Summits now but there is more to the entrepreneur who started it, a man of many colors that a mere word as a “travel-enthusiast” cannot suffice to explain.

Thapa understands the urgency that biking needs in the tourism sector. According to Thapa, “a lot of interest has already been generated in other sectors, we have promoted ourselves in trekking, cycling, bungee-jumping but only selected few participate for biking trips”. Then the topic of the upcoming bike trip comes up, the Wild West Ride and he says, “Tourism in Nepal’s far west, in places like Mahendranagar and Dhankuta, has not been promoted yet.” So much has been talked about, heard of and seen in Pokhara and Chitwan that tourists would obviously want to explore other regions and when that is combined with biking, Rabi Thapa chips enters the picture.

Sacred Summits has organized biking trips to Mt. Kailash and Bhutan as well. Back then, bikes were rented from Thapa’s Austrian friends in Bhutan. But what Thapa really calls hardcore biking is their trip to Jomsom and Muktinath. In 2008, the road to Mustang opened and there is an entirely different story to it. The trip with a tentative plan to Tibet was changed after Tibet closed for Beijing Olympics. Bikers in all enthusiasm could not be disappointed and with a



little help from here and there, the road to Mustang was eventually opened for them and the locals alike.

When Thapa is not writing mass emails sitting in his office (the way he was when we entered his room) and organizing expeditions, he is involved in a lot of charity work. He is a trustee for Sherpa Heritage House, a ‘living’ museum working for the conservation of Sherpa traditions and is a part of Promise Nepal, a U.K-based charity organization working for the eradication of leprosy in Nepal.

His involvement in leprosy eradication goes way back, even before Sacred Summits was borne. A friend of his from U.K. whom he refers to as Dr. Maggie was doing a research on stigmatization within and outside leprosy colony and she asked him to work as a translator. Thapa and his friend “bought few pots and pans” and lived in a nearby hospital thrice, for a month each time.

He showed us pictures of Sewa Kendra Leprosy Relief Centre for which he often renders service and the people admitted there. “I am a mediator between the donors and the recipients,” he told us and it was easy to see, just the way he brings together all the many biking clubs here for regular biking trips that might come across as far-fetched for many.

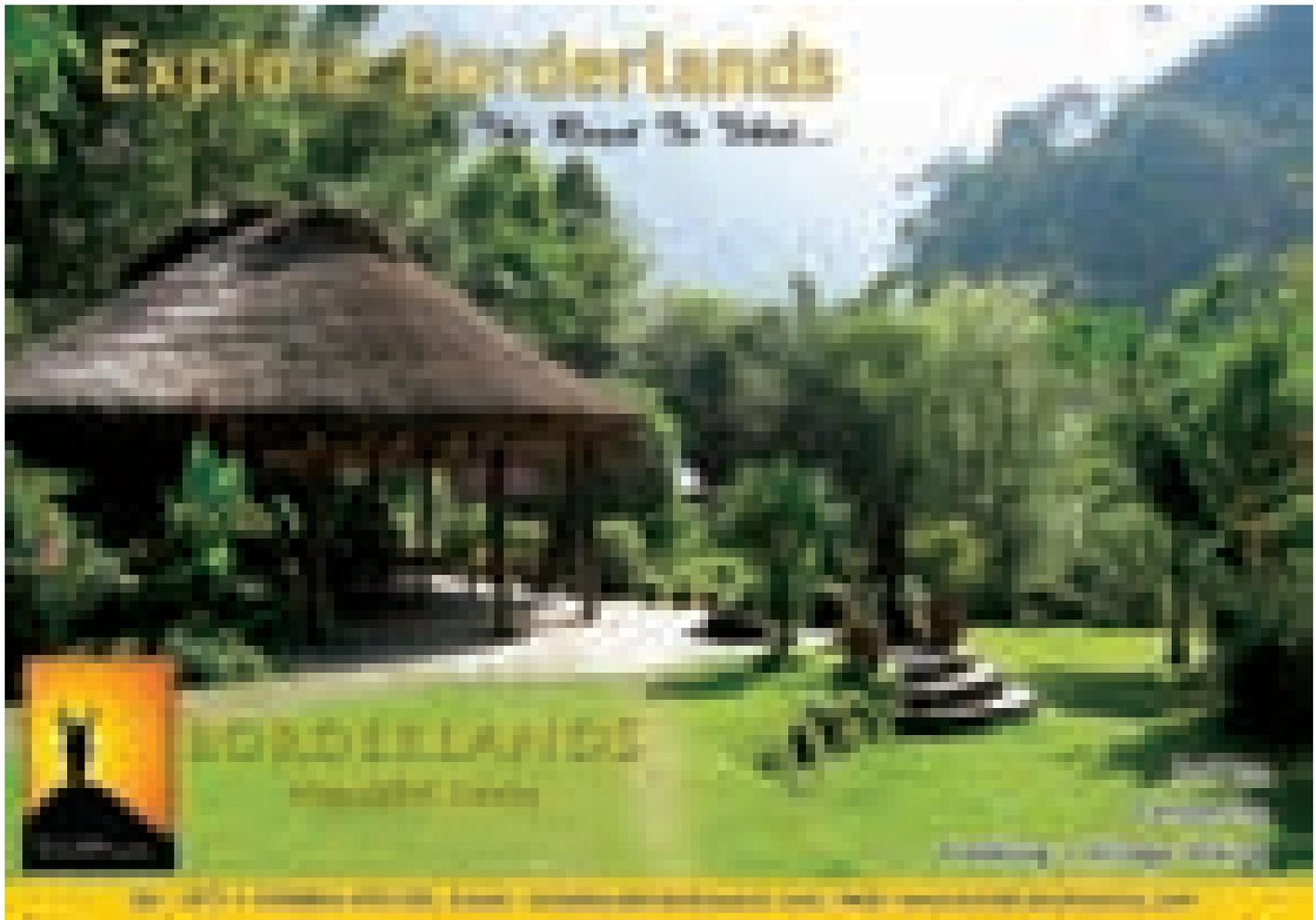
Thapa showed us around the Heritage Bar on the ground floor of the Sacred Summits’ office where people who eat and sleep and breathe biking can talk about their gears. On our way out, we saw an Enfield with a Delhi number plate and a “khairey” panting beside the bike. Oh, the places he will go, the places Thapa helps people go to.



ECS Media



Photo by Niraj Karki



The simple life

Karthali makes for a good weekend hike and retreat from crowded Kathmandu.

Text By DR RAVI SHANKAR

The truck groaned slowly uphill on the unpaved road disintegrating after the rains. For me and my American guest, Bill Burdick the small pickup was an unwelcome sign of the urban civilization and clutter which we were escaping momentarily. For the villagers of Karthali and beyond it was a sign of hard won progress reducing their travel times and bringing prosperity.

We were in the community lodge (Samudayik lodge) at the village of Karthali (around 1600 m). We started from Kathmandu around 9 am after a tasty breakfast of puri-tarkari. The bus was slow and the driver stopped to exchange notes with wayfarers. For Bill, it was a completely new experience. The white sandy beaches from where rafting expeditions started their journey were almost tropical. The river cut a deep gorge and the town of Barabhisce was only about 800 m high. The trail starts in the middle of the market and the stone staircases ensure you quickly gain altitude.

This was my third visit to Karthali and the weather was cloudy. On my previous visits during Dashain the weather was bright and sunny. The sun is an enemy on this trek where you exert a lot climbing over 700 m in two to three hours. You steadily gain altitude and the road to Tibet can be seen winding on the banks of the Sun Koshi. Small houses and fields flank the trail and during Dashain

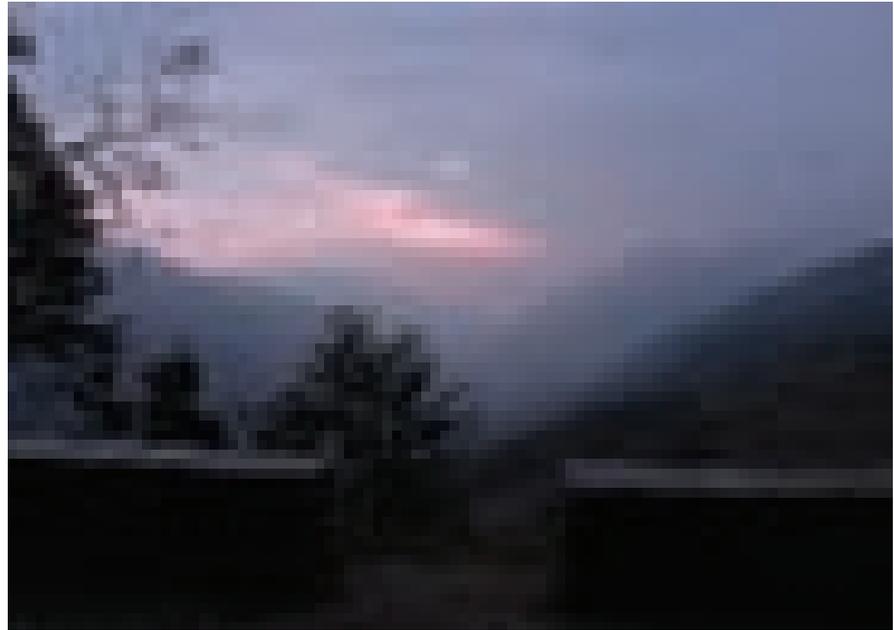


Photo by Dr. William Burdick

The trail starts in the middle of the market and the stone staircases ensure you quickly gain altitude.

swings set up on trees add to the festive atmosphere. The unpaved road leading to Bigu through the Tingsang pass (3200 m) intercepts the trail in places. Terraced fields and the Sun Koshi valley are on your right. The community lodge, a whitewashed structure is seen on a rise ahead.

There is a small grass grown trail to the lodge and on my first visit I predictably missed it! On my next visits I meet Sunil Rokha-ji who manages the community lodge on the trail and he led me to the lodge. The Karthali lodge was among the last to be completed in the Gauri Shankar trekking area and is in very good repair. The views

are superb and you see range after range of hills fading slowly into the distance. The lawn is green and inviting. The dining room, kitchen and store are on the ground floor and there are two bed rooms and a dormitory on the first. The relative absence of motor transport translates into peace and quiet and you can hear bird song and village voices carry a long way. Laxmi Rokha, Sunilji's wife turns out fresh, organic and tasty food and is a wealth of information about the area. There are clean toilets and solar heated showers. The lodge also has solar powered lights but these had developed a problem the last time I was there.





Imitating nature

Regent's latest modern printing facility, RegentHub Press, has taken nature's vibrant colors into account with its choice of the all-weather...



The tyranny of Leeches

Text By ALONZO LUCIUS LYONS

Trekking in Nepal's monsoon season (June through September) is usually given a pass by all but the most intrepid travelers. Naysayers point out that everything becomes soaked and stays that way, the world's highest mountains are shrouded in clouds that obscure their full splendor, and trails become treacherously slippery and often entail wading across streams and rivers. To make matters worse, hordes of leeches tyrannize the land above 4000 feet (1200 m) while mosquitoes may be a menace at lower elevations.

Nevertheless, a monsoon trek can be undertaken by enthusiastic adventurers who are not afraid of getting wet and meeting blood hungry leeches on their own territory. Although, rain and fog can be expected almost daily, cloudbursts usually do not last long—however, some last for several days. The air, scrubbed clean by precipitation, is cleaner and more oxygen-rich than it would otherwise be when smog from the Gangetic Plain reaches and even mars views up to the ramparts of the Himalaya.

Generally, more rain falls in the east of Nepal where the monsoon first arrives from the Bay of Bengal before moving westward. Clouds part occasionally to offer sensational vistas, and the mist everywhere has a haunting beauty. Waterfalls are roaring at this time, too. Flora is usually at its most colorful, and mid-elevation meadows are teeming with butterflies and flowers. However,

Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow,

- Percy Blysshe Shelley

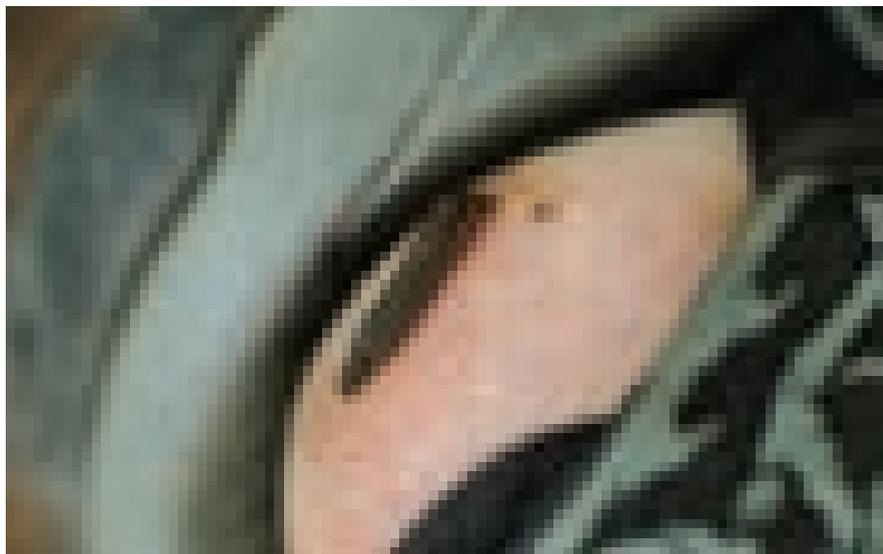


Photo by Dinesh Shrestha

They are hermaphroditic and deposit eggs in a cocoon after copulation and can exhibit advanced care of young not regularly seen in the phylum *Annelida*.

underneath the surface of it all lurk sanguivorous leeches that thrive during the wet conditions.

These jawed, terrestrial leeches (termed *Gnatbobdellida* of the suborder *Hirudiniiformes*) are sensitive to light and are attracted to movement, warmth, and by-products of respiration. They can drop from vegetation or “crawl” (by using suckers attached to each end of the body) up from the ground as well as attach from leaves or rocks, and find hosts by detecting shadows, mechanical stimuli of vibrations and heat, and chemicals (carbon dioxide and skin oils).

As ecto-parasites, they attach themselves by means of tiny teeth or sharp cutting edges. Although they feed off the blood of a host, a bite usually goes unnoticed because a concomitant anesthetic is released. They also disperse an anticoagulant (the peptide *hirudin* is in their saliva) to keep the blood flowing and eventually, will drop off once sated.

Dr. Peter Benton: Well, what about a sub-q insulin pump? Have you heard of those?

Nurse Practitioner: Something newer than leeches?

-ER (1994)

This may take twenty to forty minutes or longer, in which time the leech can swell several times in size.

A single feeding is enough to sustain a leech for several months and some burrow into the ground to survive long dry periods. They are hermaphroditic and deposit eggs in a cocoon after copulation and can exhibit advanced care of young not regularly seen in the phylum *Annelida*. Leeches are still used medically during recovery in some plastic and reconstructive surgery cases; they are useful in the drainage of pooled blood, especially to relieve venous congestion and maintain circulation.

A skilful leech is better far, than half a hundred men of war.

-Samuel Butler

To remove a leech that is attached to the skin, use the leading edge of a fingernail (or other flat object) scraped along the skin to dislodge the thinner, anterior end at the attachment site. Keep the wound clean. Other means of removal—such as pulling or using heat, salt, alcohol, or insect repellent—can cause the leech to release the contents of its stomach which contain bacteria and may infect the bite wound. Jawed leeches are not known to be transmitters of disease, however, the

resulting wound may bleed considerably. Control the wound with pressure, and watch for signs of infection later. Rarely, some people might have an anaphylactic or other allergic reaction to leech bites, and serious medical attention may then be required.

If embarking on a monsoon trek, certain items of equipment are essential: a waterproof backpack cover, sheets of plastic for porter loads, an umbrella, a hat with a brim, a walking stick, footwear with

If there's anything in the world I hate, it's leeches – filthy little devils!

-The African Queen (1951)

The best preventive to leech bites is to cover the skin. However, leeches often still find a way through clothing.

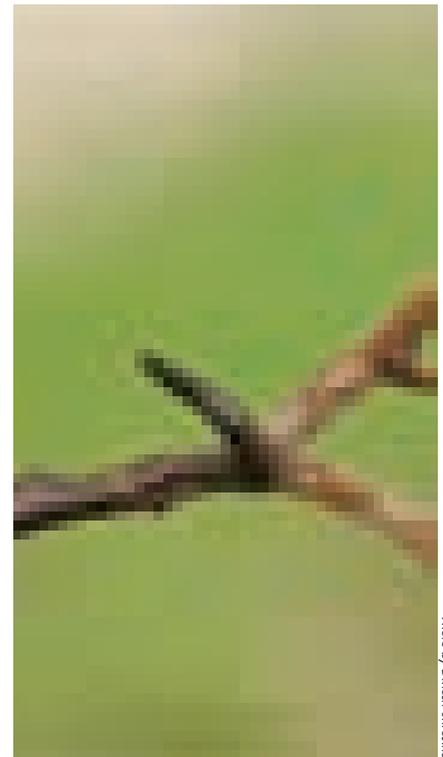


Photo by Dinesh Shrestha

I'm not one of those leeching sons of bitches. I want to earn everything I get.

-Dennis Rodman



Photo by Dinesh Shrestha

good traction and especially leech protection. The best preventive to leech bites is to cover the skin. However, leeches often still find a way through clothing. Some insect repellents also work for leeches, and boots, lower legs and exposed skin should be covered with the repellent. "Anti-Leech Oil," is available in some pharmacies and shops in Kathmandu and at the Kathmandu Environmental Education Office (KEEP) in Kesar Mahal, Thamel. Other options include eucalyptus oil, lemon juice, or smearing bath soap over dry skin and leech-proof socks could be worn over regular socks.



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

VEGETARIAN COOKING

Participants will be able to cook the following items.

1. Cinnamon pumpkin caramel custard
2. Panner kabobs with barbecue sauce
3. Creamy noodle casserole
4. Potato and vegetable pie
5. Broccoli tofu salad

DATE: 27th November 2011

TIME: 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm

VENUE: Maharajgunj

FEE: Rs. 1,200

CHRISTMAS COOKING

Participants will be able to cook the following items.

1. Stuffed roast chicken with gravy
2. Bake sweet potato mash
3. Christmas sugar cookies
4. Stuffed mushrooms
5. Whole cauliflower with avocado sauce

DATE: 18th December 2011

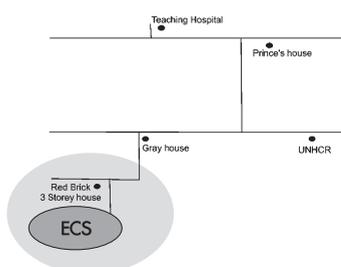
TIME: 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm

VENUE: Maharajgunj

FEE: Rs. 1,200

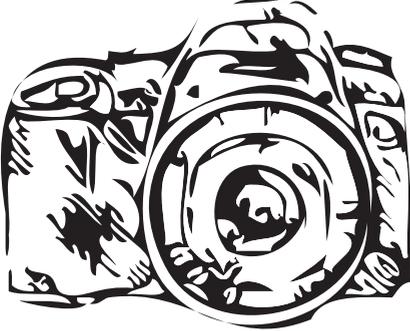
ECS

Maharajgunj, Kathmandu
Phone: 442.6439/98510.07.900
ecs@infoclub.com.np or
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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.

the
NEPAL
way



An ECS NEPAL
Photo Contest

Food is inadvertently and inextricably tied to the Nepali identity. What ingredients, meals and/or recipes do you identify with?

Theme for November: "Food"

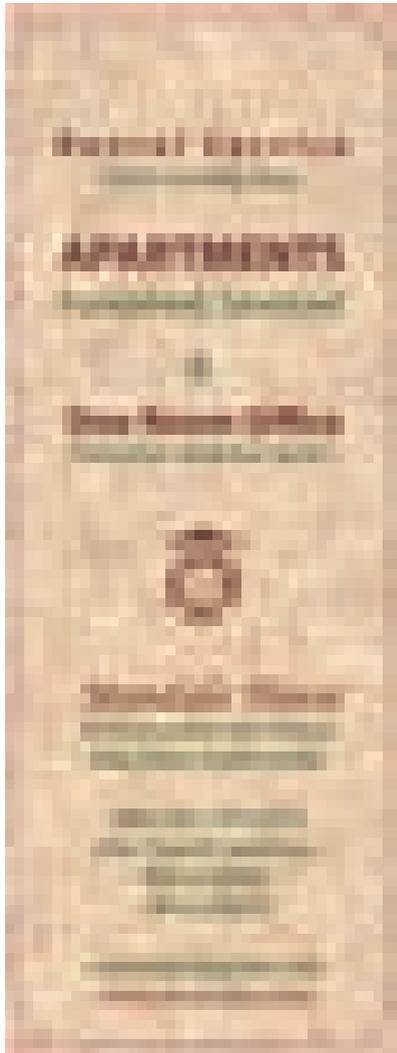
Submit your photos at www.ecs.com.np/contest for a chance to have your work published and win exciting prizes!

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Restaurant & Bars



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Pizza's Spaghetti
Ice Creams

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

THIRD EYE RESTAURANT
Thamel, 4260289
Wrapped Prawn- Rs 595
Potato Cush Bara with
Peanut sauce -Rs 145

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

CHEZ CAROLINE RESTAURANT
Mediterranean and
French food
Babar Mahal Revisited
Tel: 4263070 /
4264187
Salad Caroline Rs. 780
Pepper steak Rs.785
Lemon chop Rs. 1295

CAFÉ DE PATAN
Patan Mangalbazar
Tel: 5537599
BlueBird Food Court
Tel: 4228833,
Ext. no. 4476
Newari Samay
With Chicken Rs.175

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

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

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

FIRE AND ICE
Pizzeria
Thamel,

NANGLO BAKERY CAFÉ

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

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

C: Mo mo Chicken Rs 130
BAKERY CAFÉ BOUD-DHA
Nepali lunch set Rs 240
Club sandwich Rs 225
Bandel tareko /
sandeko Rs 205

BAKERY CAFÉ TEKU
Tel: 4265987

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

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

Nepali Thali Rs. 190
With Buff Rs.150

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

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Tel: 4251678
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Jambo Prawn Special
sauce Rs.950

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With Cumin Rs. 850
Sea Food
Platter Rs. 950
Creper A La Goat
Cheese Rs. 550

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Tel: 4422097
Mint Lemonade Rs. 70
Stuffed Vegetable
Combination Rs. 290
OR2K Combo
Platter Rs. 310
Beautiful Antipasti
Platter Rs. 180

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

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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
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BHUMI RESTRO LOUNGE
Lazimpat
Tel: 4412193
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Mix Chatamari: Rs.90
Choyela : Rs. 100

BAITHAK
Babar Mahal Revisited
BabarMahal
Tel: 4267346

Feast Of Rana Ma-
haraja
Normal Menu Rs. 1040
Royal Menu Rs. 1430
Delux Menu Rs. 1595

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

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Taragaon, Boudha, Tel: 4491234

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Skewers: NRs 1150-1450

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



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CAFÉ & BAKERY
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

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

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

ATTIC BAR
Tejbhawan, 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

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All kinds of BBQ- Indian
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ET Hot Wings and Mo: Mo

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Radisson Hotel
Lazimpat Tel: 4411818

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

GARDEN COURT RESTAURANT AND BAR
Tukuchamarga Gairidhara,
Kathmandu 4429207
Chicken Hour 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 Fagita 440,
Apple Momo 220

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

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

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Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur
Prawn In hot Bean Sauce
Rs.450
Pork Chop Rs 425
Chicken Satay Rs. 275

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

THAMEL HOUSE RESTAURANT
Thamel
Tel: 4410388
Newari set Rs 850
Nepali set Rs 1000
Bara Special Rs 140

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

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

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*Conditions Apply

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SAME LEGENDARY HERITAGE

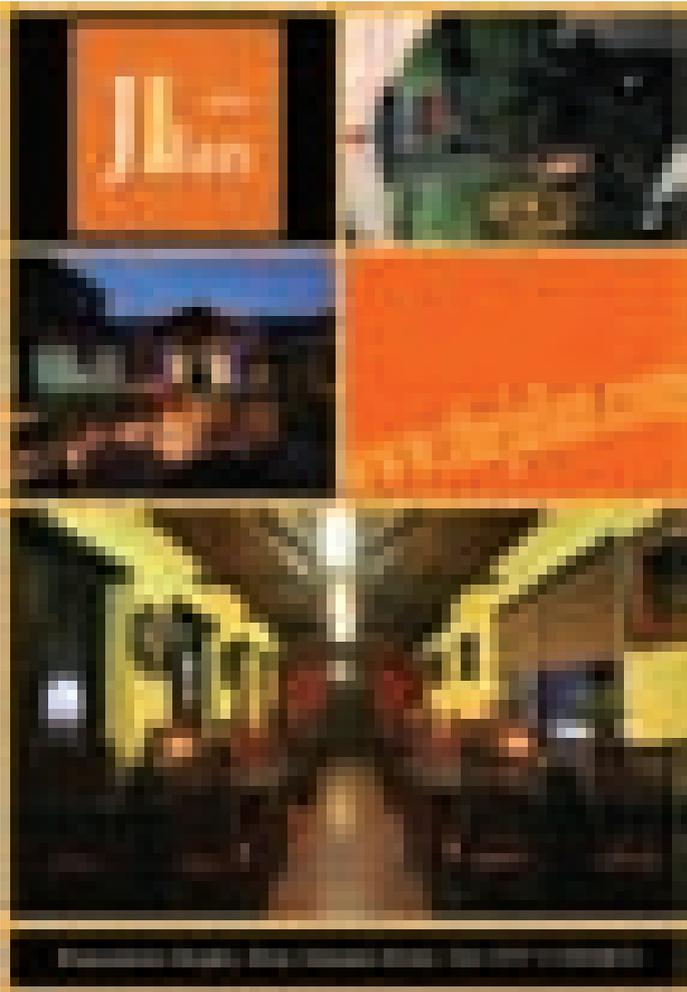
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**First Time in Nepal
100% Premium Grain Whisky**

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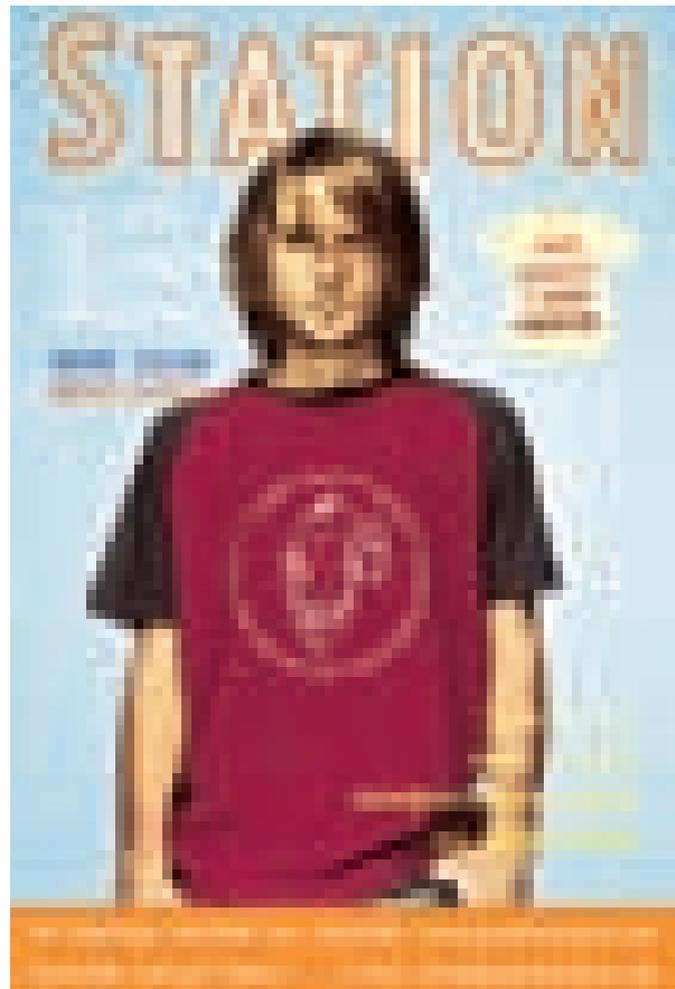
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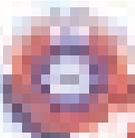
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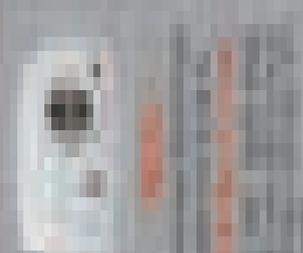
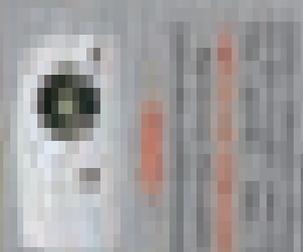
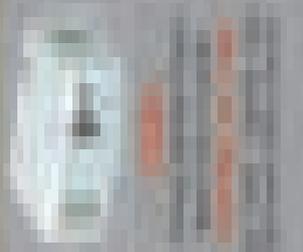
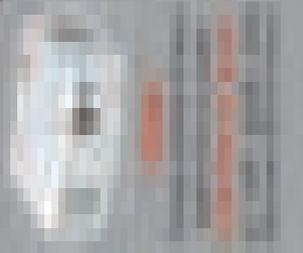
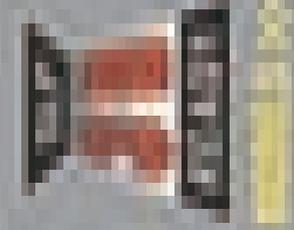


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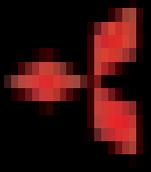
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MAKELABOR
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Going back to yesterday

WHERE MEMORY AND MEMOIR BEGIN

Text By DON MESSERSCHMIDT

"I can't go back to yesterday, because I was a different person then."
(Lewis Carroll, 'Alice in Wonderland')

Really? Are we so different that we can't go back? I don't think so. I am more inclined to believe actress Audrey Hepburn who once said that "...one should go back and search for what was loved and found to be real." That's where memory and memoir begin.

I recently returned to the village where I first lived in Nepal almost five decades ago. I wanted to recapture something of 'yesterday'. We writers do this sort of thing: revisit the past then write about it, though the memories may be blurred.

It was 1963, and doing village development as a Peace Corps volunteer was my thing. I was ambitious, optimistic, and idealistic. Living in village Nepal for two years was an adventure, a challenge. And while I gave a little of myself to the community, I gained far more in return. It changed my life.

Now, as then, Kunchha, Lamjung has a few shops and houses, a post office, a police post, and a school, and some wonderful folk of various castes and ethnicities. And though there's been some 'modernization', the changes seem more superficial than substantial. I saw one new concrete building amidst the very old mud brick ones that I remember. The house I once lived in apparently fell down; there's a smaller one in its place. Electricity is new, mobile phones are ubiquitous, and there is bus service now on a very rough road. Back in 1963 we walked to Kunchha two days from Pokhara and seven days more on to Kathmandu. Today, you can bus to or from Kathmandu in about seven hours, and arrive in time for tea.

I was posted to Kunchha with another volunteer. We defined ourselves as 'problem solvers'. Sometimes we helped the



district engineer who looked after trail, school and water system maintenance. For a few months we ran a smallpox immunization program vaccinating 25,000 villagers, mostly children. One spring when crops failed I conducted a district-wide food deficit survey after which an aid agency shipped in tons of rice and wheat. And we tutored several young men in English, each of whom went on to work in development or teaching. They're retired now and live elsewhere.

Today at Kunchha, as elsewhere across Nepal, the poor continue to eke out a difficult living from the soil, while the more fortunate tend to move on to better opportunities elsewhere, leaving their villages behind looking forlorn.

During my recent visit the local health post officer introduced himself. "I'm 'Rosey'," he said. I must have looked puzzled. "That's what you called me when I was a young school boy," he added. Ah, but of course. I'd forgotten! Now 'Rosey', too, is about to retire, he said. Time flies and memories blur.

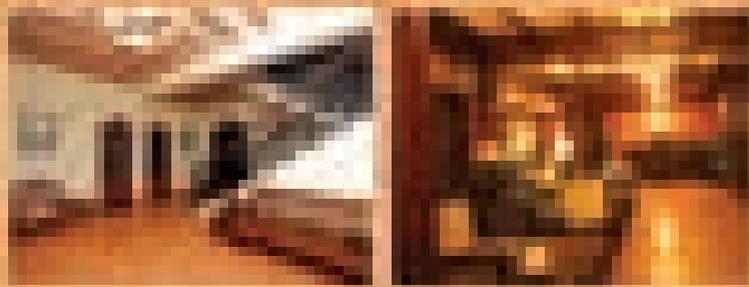
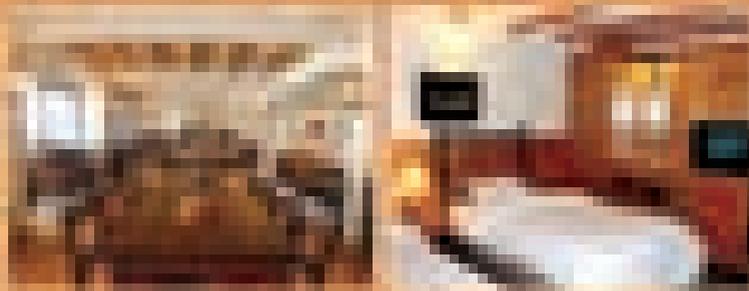
Memoirs can take various forms, from short essays to whole books. I kept a journal in Kunchha from which I might begin to craft a memoir (after I

correct several naïve misunderstandings that I recorded in a cramped handwriting). I've already published a few stories, one about a Himalayan-size thunderstorm, and another about the smallpox campaign. But there is more to tell... Like who's gone and what they left behind. How life was then, and how unchanged it seems now. And, not least, answering the inevitable question, 'So what?'

A memoir should tell who we were and what we learned back then, 'yesterday'. It should reveal something of the inner self and the context of change and personal development. For me, it was a time of discovery and transformation. It gave me perspective upon which to build a life... ■

"There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered." (Nelson Mandela, 'Long Walk to Freedom')

As an American Peace Corps Volunteer, Don Messerschmidt lived at Kunchha in the central hill district of Lamjung from 1963 to 1965. Afterward, he stayed on in Nepal for many years as a teacher, anthropologist, writer and development consultant. He can be contacted at don.editor@gmail.com, and he blogs at dmesserschmidt.blogspot.com.



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Office of the Election Commission

Text By ANIL CHITRAKAR



Photo By: Nareh Shrestha

As we walk past or drive past the large building that houses the Election Commission, we may want to remember history and the person who used to reside in it. The Election Commission is today housed in a beautiful building that was once the home of Bahadur Shumshere Rana, the second son of then Prime Minister Juddha Shumshere Rana. In 1934, Bahadur Shumshere, traveled to the UK to confer a medal from Nepal to King George V. On this trip he was successful in getting the British government to allow the Nepali government to open an embassy in London and he became the first Nepali ambassador to the UK. The choice of property was a good one as you can see when one visits London.

Following this landmark trip, in May of 1934, Sir Clendon Daukes arrived in Kathmandu to present his credentials to King Tribhuvan at the Gaddi Baithak as the British ambassador to Nepal. This was hailed as a bigger success than the Nepal – UK friendship treaty that

Chandra Shumshere was able to pull off with the British in 1923. Thus started a long and close relationship between the two countries; which were at war with each other between 1814-16. It is fascinating to dig into and get a closer look at the life and achievements of the man whose house is used by the election commission today.

Bahadur Shumshere was born in 1892AD at Jawalakhel Durbar, second son of Juddha Shumshere. During the 1934 earthquake he headed the “Nepal Development Board” which was responsible for restoring houses, temples and roads of Kathmandu valley. He was the first Director General of Nepal Bank established in 1938AD. He commanded 8000 Gorkha soldiers for 3 years to help British Government in Delhi during the Second World War. He then became Director General of Foreign Affairs after returning home. He was also the chairman of the constitution reform committee in 1947AD during the Prime Ministership of Padma Shumshere. He

was awarded with numerous medals and honours from both Nepali and British government for strengthening the relationship between the two countries.

Bahadur Bhawan, like so many other properties around town was nationalized after the end of Rana rule in 1950. For a while it was converted into the famous Grand Hotel. That is a different Heritage Tale... What would be good is to have a small area of this historical building dedicated to telling the story of this very illustrious personality. Today we need frequent elections in Nepal so that we can sort out the good politicians from the bad. We want to reap the benefits of competition between political parties instead of collusion for resources through the “all party” mechanism. The people want to be in charge. People in general seem to have had a good experience with their local elected governments and have started to miss them. The Nepali people have been practicing their right to vote for a long time now. The only problem is that elections are not regular, like so many other things in this country... ■

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