The kings are dead, long live the King

MIN BAJRACHARYA

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King Gyanendra after his crowning at the Naasal Chowk on Monday, June 4.
I MAY DIE, LET MY NATION LIVE ON!

That is a line by the late King Mahendra that was turned into a patriotic song. Words particularly prophetic in a week when two kings died in a conflagration that nearly engulfed Nepal's entire royal family. Yet this does come as a surprise to those who see only the shadow of death that presently covers the country: the institutions of democracy have failed. Confusion prevails among commoners about this mass murder of their sovereign. This was an act, but respected cemeteries in a country of multitudinous creeds, faiths and languages. The morbidity of one symbol that held this diverse country together. The Nepal royals lost their authoritarian edge in 1960 when King Birendra stepped up to the woes of the regime of absolute power and became a constitutional monarch. He learned to govern in this new role, and genuinely believed that he would use Nepal's uniqueness to spread its democratic transition and development agenda. In the past eleven years, he played a lowkey but effective role, providing continuity to a land going through the stress of change, a neardeath country pushed into a headlong slide with little preparation.

We treated authoritarianism for 30 years, it didn't work. Parliamentary democracy was seen as the only alternative to bring social and economic progress. Unfortunately, the major political challenge that took over were not able to bring about social and party interest, and wasted a full decade in factional fighting and corruption in high places. We experimented with every permutation of political combinations between the left, centre and right, but the country fell even lower into an abyss of insufficiency. It allowed the Maoists to band forth with surprising speed and regionally in the name of a constitutional monarchy. King Birendra was correct to feel, as a political prince, and became a caretaker in a country of our people's democracy that had held it make easy for his son Dipendra to follow, but Dipendra was in no mood to abide by the codes of the Baghban. It may not be on his son's behalf. Nepal, it is said, is a ‘left-side’ state—so that is spectacularly misremembered and only kept standing through periods of stress because of the resilience of its polity. This has perhaps to do with the fact that Nepal is the oldest nation state in South Asia. All this created a smoke screen over a fact that Nepal was a union from 1947, but Nepal was united by King Gyanendra's nineteenth anniversary in the mid-1950s. And so, even with this catastrophic decimation of our country's parliamentary democracy had held. Ganga Prasad Kunwar is today still prime minister, the army remains in the barracks, and the successor to the throne has been chosen by the Prime Minister and ruling party. King Gyanendra has not yet admitted his son's death. Perhaps the knock on the head of the Parmanu has done him some good. In an interview with a national newspaper, King Birendra called for a referendum in 1980 in the wake of a students' agitation. But he went on to sign the Panchayat constitution which guaranteed him the freedom to write and publish this tribute, apart from ensuring other liberties. Perhaps the knock on the head of the Parmanu has done him some good. Indeed, King Birendra called for Nepal to be declared a Zone of Peace. It is a paradox of history that he himself was destined to fall as a Zone of Peace, if there was ever a price to pay, he ultimately paid it with his own life and the lives of his immediate family members.

The unpredictability of the future is frightening. King Birendra was a link with the past. He offered a reassuring continuity with the hoary traditions of an age that was fast fading away. He carried the duality of a god-king and a constitutional monarch with nary a trace of contradiction visible in his demeanour. The unpredictability of the future is frightening. King Birendra was a link with the past. He offered a reassuring continuity with the hoary traditions of an age that was fast fading away. He carried the duality of a god-king and a constitutional monarch with nary a trace of contradiction visible in his demeanour.

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Between grief and anger

What exactly transpired on Friday night at the royal palace, and when will we know?

King Gyanendra has been on the throne for the second time in his life. He was crowned king at the age of four by the last Rana prime minister in 1950 and was king for a few months before Shah Dynasty rule was restored in 1951.

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The Valley of Halla

If you were to dig up the foundation of each house here, only hearing and rumor would be kept up here. There’s not a city of hearing and rumor where we have not dug out. In a house or in a country, and where hearing and rumor would be kept up here, only hearing and rumor would be kept up here. There’s not a city of hearing and rumor where we have not dug out.

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King Birendra’s 30-year reign

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Birendra’s 30-year reign

Dheng (Kathmandu) 6-14 June 2001

Obituary

Birendra’s Nepal: the once and forever kingdom

The last decade has seen the development of Nepal as a constitutional monarchy under King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah. This was the result of a long struggle for democracy in the country.

The last few days have seen the death of King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah, the leader of the constitutional monarchy in Nepal. This was caused by a gun battle inside the palace, where the king was killed along with his wife and other family members.

The government has declared a day of mourning in Nepal, and the loss of the king has been mourned by the people of Nepal and the international community.

The king was a symbol of authority and stability, and his death has left a vacuum that will be difficult to fill. The country is currently facing a crisis of leadership and uncertainty.

The government has announced a snap election, and the political landscape is expected to be turbulent in the coming months.

The king’s death has also raised questions about the future of the constitutional monarchy in Nepal. The country is now facing a choice between democracy and monarchy, and the outcome of this choice will determine the future of the nation.

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The loss of King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah is a great loss for Nepal and the world, and the country is now facing a new era of uncertainty and change.
The whole dangerous plan has been hatched by the Prime Minister and a handful of his hard-line anti-communist chelas to solve the Maoist problem by force and not through negotiations.

The army, aside from being considered the right arm of the Monarchy has up until now been largely untouched by the scandals which have rocked almost every other national institution. The Nepalese people in general think well of the army. This may change faster than we can imagine, if the government's plan goes ahead.

Then there is, one supposes, a kind of symbolic discrimination. The deployment of the Nepali Army in Maoist areas is a step in the right direction, because the Maoists are being confronted with the reality of their isolation and the force of the Nepalese people.

The army has always been a source of pride for the country, and its role in maintaining internal security is crucial. However, there are concerns about the way it has been deployed in the past.

The threat posed by the Maoists has been a major issue for the government, and the army's role in confronting them has been controversial.

The army has been criticized for its heavy-handed approach, which has led to civilian casualties and human rights violations. The government has denied these allegations, but the international community has raised concerns about the army's conduct.

The army's presence in Maoist-affected areas has been a source of tension, and there are fears that it could escalate the conflict. However, the army has been working to establish a presence in these areas and to provide security to the local population.

The army has also been involved in stabilizing the country's democratic process, which has been threatened by the Maoist insurgency. The army has been praised for its role in maintaining order during elections and other political events.

The army's role will continue to be crucial in maintaining peace and security in the country. However, there are concerns about its conduct and the impact of its presence on the local population. The government will need to ensure that the army's role is carried out in a manner that respects human rights and international law.
Just a week prior to his death, he had a candid look at the Unvanquished. The 58-year-old academic and sportsman had finished reading Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s book on the 2000 UN peacekeepers in Congo. Looking back, he said, “We have a lot of work to do.”

Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah, the late Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah, spent most of his lifetime buried in books or cooking. He was a gem of a person,” says 57-year-old Lalit Bikram Shah, his middle brother and a renowned sportsman.

Kumar Khadga was interested in development issues, which preoccupied him while he was with the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) at Tribhuvan University. Both Lalit and Neer remember an erudite and intelligent man who did not like to put on airs, or flaunt his royal status.

By all accounts Khadga was a liberal thinker, he was optimistic about democracy, but had grown increasingly frustrated with the way things were going in the country with political infighting, chronic instability and the lack of development.

His loss is irreparable because his full potential was never realised,” says Neer. “Maybe he could have contributed a great deal more if he had not been a royal relative.”

A keen sportsman, Khadga was the first Nepali to win a gold medal in the South Asian Games. He is survived by two young daughters, and his husband, who is undergoing treatment at the Birendra Military Hospital.

“Hardworking” is an adjective former instructors often use when talking about the late princess. In high school, she displayed a flair for sports that remained with her even on to finish her senior secondary education at Mayo College, where her mother Queen Aiswarya studied two decades earlier.

Princess Shruti only recently became active in the public sphere, but interest in her had been growing for some time. As a college student at Mayo Girl’s College in India, she was once publicly criticised for lack of ‘royal etiquette’ when photographs of her with an Indian film actor were carried by various gossip magazines.

For 57-year-old Lalit, who is now mourning three deaths in the family—Kumar Khadga, his wife Sharada and the brothers’ mother, Bodh Kumari Shah, who died of a heart attack on Saturday.

Both Lalit and Neer remember an erudite and intelligent man who did not like to put on airs, or flaunt his royal status.

RAMYATA LIMBU

Princess Shruti and Prince Nirajan

HEMLATA RAI

Princess Shruti and Prince Nirajan

NEPALI TIMES OBITUARY
Falling for flats

Kathmandu’s apartment craze is catching on as a new surge in housing complexes tries to keep up with demand.

MINU HUMAGAIN

Kathmandu is known as the land of the temples and the palaces of the kings. The city cocoons itself within history. Patan, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, and most of the other towns in the Kathmandu Valley are no exception. But today, there is a new invention in the city: apartments.

The apartment boom has also stepped in where the government has failed. And the government has not even been able to fulfil its role of regulator. It lacks a proper building code, and no rules on safety features like fire-escapes are being implemented.

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The apartment craze has already reached the outskirts of Kathmandu, with apartment complexes being built at Suraj Apartment at Tangal, Maitidevi, Kathmandu, and Priyanka Apartment at Chabahil are the two complexes already in operation in Kathmandu. Half of the flats of Suraj Apartment are occupied by expat clients and are out of the reach of most Nepalis.

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Monsoon moods


DESMOND DOIG

It is time we discovered our New World. Monsoon moods are too good to waste. The monsoon was expected to fall on Kathmandu any day, the Indian plains had been scorching and still, they are just before the monsoons. I like to think we were the first hippies who hit Nepal. Sans henna we looked the part, so that we did. Together we were a quartet. There in the courtyard with our reams of kurtas and lungis and space under trees together for at least a month. But psychology was at work. A bedroom was a bedroom was a bedroom, and those four beds placed rather close together did suggest orgy. Elizabeth overcame remorse by taking a quick dash for her bed and bundling in under blankets, clothes and all. We were soon asleep. At some ungodly hour we were wakened by the most frightful din. The skies over Kathmandu were exploding. The monsoon had arrived. But where was Elizabeth? It was the Nepali dancer who saw her first and shouted, “God, she’s gone mad.”

Just singing, dancing in the rain...

By evening, the air suddenly turns humid, a smell of warm wetness swells up from the valley below. A yellow moon rises from behind a range of mountains, the Nepal vocabulary has at many onomatopoeic words to describe different kinds of rain: at midnight it turns from drizzly to heavier rain, then from that to a steady temperature. We had expected to thud down on Kathmandu any day: the Indian plains had been scorching and still, they are just before the monsoons. The monsoon was expected to fall on Kathmandu any day, the Indian plains had been scorching and still, they are just before the monsoons. I like to think we were the first hippies who hit Nepal. Sans henna we looked the part, so that we did. Together we were a quartet. There in the courtyard with our reams of kurtas and lungis and space under trees together for at least a month. But psychology was at work. A bedroom was a bedroom was a bedroom, and those four beds placed rather close together did suggest orgy. Elizabeth overcame remorse by taking a quick dash for her bed and bundling in under blankets, clothes and all. We were soon asleep. At some ungodly hour we were wakened by the most frightful din. The skies over Kathmandu were exploding. The monsoon had arrived. But where was Elizabeth? It was the Nepali dancer who saw her first and shouted, “God, she’s gone mad.”

THE NATION (Excerpted with permission from My Kind of Kathmandu, Harper Collins, 1994)
WEATHER

6 - 14 JUNE 2001

NEPALI TIMES

track has by now turned into a torrent. There is commotion on the trail as men and women shrouded in plastic and bobbing umbrellas get their hoes ready to move down to the paddy terraces for the transplanting.

Forget what the guidebooks say. Visit Nepal in the monsoon. Get wet. See the denuded slopes burst with foliage as nature gives Himalayans one more chance at... helicopters squat grounded on the tarmac like wet dragonflies. But, surprise, the flight to Syangboche is called.

The pilot ducks, leaps and sidesteps the monsoon stratus. The Sun Kosi, swollen brown, plunges eastwards in a series of rapids. Red scars of recent... into mist half-way down in their journey to the valley below. The tops of mountains disappear into a dark ceiling of cloud.

Up here in Syangboche the air is more humid than Kathmandu. The next morning Mt Everest, the Lhotse-Nuptse wall, Thamserku and Kongde gather around like... are in full bloom, alive with butterflies and birdlife. The grass creeps up right up to the moraines and the snowline.

Everywhere, there is the sound of falling water: big waterfalls that thunder right across the Imja valley, little ones that gurgle behind every

Shangrila bend in the track to Tengboche, the deep drone of the Bhote Kosi, the deep drone of the Bhote Kosi, the deep drone of the Bhote Kosi, the deep drone of the Bhote Kosi. These rivers are older than the mountains and they have been slicing through the rising rock for 60 million years. Hydro-powered waterwheels churn... Monsoon is the time when the trekking trails mostly only have Nepalis on them. There is not a backpacking tourist in sight.

By ten in the morning, the first clouds are chugging up the Imja Khola—the forerunner of an ocean of clouds that can be seen lapping at the ridges below... falling steadily in that marathon-like pace of no-nonsense, long-term rain. It falls continuously into afternoon, all night and stops abruptly at dawn.

Mountains are like the centrefolds of girlie magazines. After a while, you wish they had some clothes on. Mountains look infinitely... falling steadily in that marathon-like pace of no-nonsense, long-term rain. It falls continuously into afternoon, all night and stops abruptly at dawn.

By mid-September, the sun returns. The dasain revelries begin, the buffalos are massacred at the Kot. The sky is navy blue and dotted with kites. At Kathmandu airport, the tourists start arriving again.
Do you know where your children are?

Guidance tips for parents:

- Keep the computer in a central family location, not in the child's room. The computer shouldn't be an escape for the child, but a family activity.
- Get to know your children's online friends. You wouldn't let them spend time with a new friend they met online, so don't let them talk to online friends they met online.
- Screen e-mail with all younger children. Many paedophiles find new friends and e-mail is often their first communication method. 
- Make sure they understand that they should never meet anyone in real life that they met online without parents in attendance, and that people online are often not honest about who they are. Don't ever send yourself into the chat to keep an eye on things. Don't respond to flaming (provocation online).
- Keep track of your children's e-mail and don't let them use a shared or unsecured e-mail account. If they do, make sure their passwords are strong and that they change them regularly.
- Be sure to check the computer's firewall settings and that any software installed is up-to-date.
- Help your children keep being online in perspective. Too many parents are worried about their children getting too much online time. Remember that most children spend loads of time with a new friend in the neighbourhood until they get bored and move on to the next.
Most public health initiatives in developing countries focus on controlling infectious diseases in the community. The morbidity and mortality caused by diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, and dengue fever justify such priorities. But another aspect of the public health system in nations with limited healthcare resources—hospital-acquired infection—has been largely ignored by the public, press, and funding agencies. Developing nations lavish their limited resources on hospitals, which in some countries consume over 50 percent of healthcare budgets. Regional or national tertiary care centers in these countries often receive generous funding from international organizations and organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. Many of these hospitals are also the locations of research institutions, and the fast-growing medical tourism industry helps fund these projects. The success of these grand projects is often not limited to the financial success of the hospital itself but also to the potential for attracting future business and investment. The emphasis on high-tech equipment and facilities is not always accompanied by the appropriate training of staff in infection control and infection management. The widespread lack of appreciation of the importance of hospital-acquired infections among care-givers and policymakers in developing countries is disheartening. The thirst for technology is not always accompanied by the necessary emphasis on effective infection control measures.

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Dr. Donald A. Goldmann is Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and Professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases at the Harvard School of Public Health and has worked on improving infection control in many developing countries.
Reinventing Beijing

In their bid for the 2008 Olympics, the Chinese want to turn Beijing into a futuristic metropolis and business centre.

In their bid for the 2008 Olympics, the Chinese want to turn Beijing into a futuristic metropolis and business centre. (Guardian)

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A suitable prince

Excerpts from an interview with Subhas Chandra Nemwang, Chairman Public Accounts Committee

The judiciary of the People’s Government is simple and practical. All cases are disposed of at regular intervals. It respects the rule of law and acts as a strong shield for the common man. Everyone is equal before the law. The only difference is the status in society.

All I can say is that the prime minister should have been implicated based on the conditions imposed by the CIAA, but it will not be appropriate for me to say why this did not happen.

I have always maintained that those who were publicly implicated by the anti-corruption agency should be given strict punishment. The judiciary will not spare them.

“Married to democracy”

Excerpts from an interview with Sitou Naimaya, chairman of Nepal National Congress

Now is the time for women’s rights issues. I’m not saying anything new. I’ve been giving speeches on women’s rights for many years. It’s not the right moment to speak on this now. We discuss at the local level.

But now I think it’s right to discuss it on a larger platform. It’s time to talk about the rights of women.

Life in Maoland

Chairman Tarun National

Married to democracy? I did not have the time to marry. When could I have got married? Even when we were in exile, I had to work to make a living. I fought for democracy, don’t you think I’m happy now that the object of my desire has been realised. I married democracy.

“Dipendra: The royal palace is also concerned about the Crown Prince’s marriage. But many do not know where the crown prince’s heart lies. Crown Prince Dipendra is perhaps the first member of the Nepali royalty to break tradition and not be married even at 31.

The judiciary will not let him go. It’s a strict court. It will not let him go. It’s not a modern court. It’s not a modern judiciary.

There is no reason to worry for the Nepali people, who have a lot of faith in and respect for the royal family. But it’s a difficult situation for the crown prince. He’s been living in the UK for many years now. He’s not used to the Nepali way of life. He’s used to the British way of life. He’s used to being pampered.

We have to respect the wishes of the people. They want the crown prince to be married. The royal family also wants the crown prince to be married. But the crown prince himself is not interested in marriage. He’s not interested in marriage. He’s not interested in marrying anyone.

Deer-killer Colonel cleared

Excerpts from an interview with Surendra Thapa, retired Major

The problem with the royal family is that they want to please everyone. They want to please the people. They want to please the politicians. They want to please the military. They want to please the...
The NMBA championship is the only recognised national level international-class mountain bike championship in Nepal.

SALIL SUBEDI

Up to the finish line, it was a struggle for the leaders. "This is the first time I have felt a bit fairy, the way the road was going," said the winner of the senior division, John Thompson. The 46 competitors in the National Mountain Bike Championship were all keen to prove their skills on the track.

Chimmi Gurung, the chairman of the NMBA, said: "This is the last call, if anybody has any queries about the circuit and the race, please ask now.

The 46 competitors, from seven countries, waited for the shotgun to begin the fifth National Mountain Bike Championship. The contest, an annual event, began at Gairi Gaun, a deserted stone quarry on the southern flanks of the Swayambhu section of the Ring Road.

"Our objective is to promote mountain biking in Nepal. We want to attract a large number of domestic racers and turn them into professionals, and make Nepal an international mountain biking venue," says Umesh Rimal, a member of the NMBA.

Predictably, most racers lost their balance on the uphill, but there was plenty of opportunity to do so on the downhill, too. And this was shown to full advantage by thepedido racers. Thompson, who went onto win the senior’s title in just over an hour, enjoyed it thoroughly. "That’s how I got my energy. I loved each moment of this bond I had with the kids out there. And many thanks to Philippe who lent me his bike," he said, pointing to a French racer in the junior division who offered Thompson his bike when he saw him with a flat tyre near the circuit gate. But there were also other lucky factors in Thompson’s win. His nearest competitor, Chandra Bahadur Chettri, was barely a minute behind him—until, that is, he got a flat. "I was in the middle of nowhere. I was helpless," sighs Chettri.

Richard Torgen had a less dramatic, but very consistent ride. Suresh Dulal, who finished third, had three rough falls, but he managed to pull off a great performance. "It was a real challenge for me, but I managed to do it," said Dulal.

Whether that happens or not, the NMBA’s objective is to promote mountain biking in Nepal. We want to attract a large number of domestic racers and turn them into professionals, and make Nepal an international mountain biking venue," says Umesh Rimal, a member of the NMBA.

The first runner-up, Canadian John Thomson, was a different story. He finished in second place, but his ride was not as smooth as Thompson’s. "I had a lot of fun, but I was very disappointed," said Thomson.

The NMBA’s next challenge is to organise an international mountain bike championship in Nepal. The association is already planning to organise a similar event in 2002.

SALIL SUBEDI

Vital statistics

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A monument to an Indian princess

History is uncertain: it is a long time ago. Deupatan was either a flourishing city spread about the most holy shrine of Pashupatinath, or the sacred land waiting for a city. Certainly there must have been a settlement, a centre of pilgrimage already. The king, according to early travellers, lived near the temple where he worshipped daily. There was a palace on a mound above Pashupatinath. And a road led to distant Swayambhunath on its sacred hill. Tradition, legend, natural surmise, has a... by elevating them to Sakyas. After visiting Swayambhunath he sat upon the lion throne made by Viswakarman, and read from the Puranas to the large company of people who had gathered to do him honour.

What concerns us more is the coming of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka in the footsteps of his master. He raised or added to existing stupas wherever the Buddha had tarried or preached: four about the city of Patan, one on Swayambhunath hill, one at Baudhanath and one at Kirtipur. There exist other stupas that may be Ashokan, overlooked by historians and scholars both. One is on the hill of the thirty-two butterflies, not far... and a third to the north of Bhaktaphr. But even these are outside the limits of my concern with Ashoka's daughter Charumati. They merely substantiate the visit to the Kathmandu Valley of her forever famous father.

She must have travelled with him, and either it was love, a political arrangement or a strange fascination that had her married to a prince, Devapala, who is historically connected with Deupatan, near... in the palace above the temple and administering the township of Deupatan, or founding it together with Charumati. One fairly authenticated version of shadowy history has the impetuous Charumati—her beauty, her graces are left to imagination—deeply impressed by a display... princess begged her father to marry her to the young prince Devapala—handsome, courageous, himself possessed of mystic powers?

It was done, and Charumati remained in her new homeland, helping to found not just one new town, but two, because beside Deupatan she herself lavished patronage on a Buddhist settlement called Chabahil. There, inspired by her father, she raised and about it a vihara. Apparently, Viswakarman was sent by Ashoka to build the vihara, but the... to Chabahil.

There is still the strong sense of tantric mysticism that attracted Charumati to the place. Legend has it that a tantric was locked for days in religious contemplation in an inner shrine above... herself was aiding the tantric sage. And residents of the area are given to saying that they hear strange and often terrifying noises in the night, coming from the direction of a tantric shrine that stands beside the new highway that... in the solemn and darkest darkness of the night, sorcerers still meet to change metal into stone and water into burning oil.
**NEPALI WEATHER**

"YAK YETI YAK"

Sarangkot: 30-1929-1829-1930-1830-19

**Radio Sagarmatha**

Radio Sagarmatha
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Tel: +977-5-49680, 548681
Fax: +977-1- 530227
E-mail: radio@sagarmatha.org
www.radioagarmatha.org

**Radio Sagarmatha**

**NEPAL WEATHER**

The next couple of days will be extremely cloudy as the winds move in from the north. Thereafter the situation will improve as we get a break from the rains. However, expect thunderstorms and occasional heavy bursts of rain in the pre-monsoon showers.

**NEPAL WEATHER**

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If bodies have voices

By NINA BHATT

art review

If bodies have voices

Kiran Manandhar’s poetic and romantic painter known for his splendid use of color and style, has taken a new departure. A recent stay in Tibet, traveling and leading workshops in painting has introduced a collage-like element to his work. His current exhibit at the Himalayan Art Gallery in Thamel incorporates in each painting a Tibetan prayer flag with a windsor and a wish-fulfilling jewel raising from its back.

At first glance, much like many western artists, he seems to be utilizing an artifact from a culture even more “exotic” than his own. A more thorough viewing indicates the boldness of his attempt. The dominant image, whether it is integrated into Kiran’s vocabulary of evocative color and expressive stroke or not, makes itself known throughout the exhibit. So close to Tibet’s borders, a flag of Tibetan origin is raised in the landscape of Kiran’s work.

These paintings are more contained than Kiran’s previous endeavors. Though drawn from the openness and power of the Tibetan landscape, there is a sense of enclosure that even Kiran’s color-rich palette and free flowing strokes cannot break free of. These new limits set on the artist’s freedom of expression allows for an honest, contemporary reading of place. The brooding figures of women or lovers that appear in many of Kiran’s canvasses are here as well, and their juxtaposition to the prayer flag adds a personal dimension. In #6 and in #26 we see these figures with the prayer flags. In one, a woman turns towards the flag and the viewer senses encounter; in the other, two figures, subtly engaged, seem not to notice the flag’s presence. Intimate and indeterminate, an emotional opening towards commitment and a troubled emotional entanglement, set the parameters of engagement with a wider world.

Kiran is persistent in his use of the Tibetan prayer flags. Whether the windsor fly above, or lie submerged, or even fail to enter into or modify Kiran’s abstract landscapes, their presence must be accounted for in whatever aesthetic conclusions the viewer may draw from his work.


Poet Wayne Amtzis’ photographic exhibition currently on display at the Siddhartha Art Gallery compels its viewers to acknowledge the difficult socio-economic circumstances that have elapsed. The drudgery of physical labor, moments of hope, the solitary mad women, dejected street vendors, and elders whose furrowed brows bear testament to their struggles to earn a daily wage.

What is remarkable about this ten year retrospective is the intimate engagement between the artist and his subjects. Those photographed are aware they are the subject of a photographer’s gaze. The people in the photographs are aware they are being photographed. The subjects tacitly acknowledge that a kind of intrusion is occurring, but somehow appear to recognize that this intrusion, with the sympathetic nature of this camera lens, must happen. Thus do the subjects engage directly with the viewer, unapologetically offering a piece of their troubled lives. This frankness reveals itself more the longer one spends on each photograph.

Take for instance, the Youth at Indrachowk (#9). This handsome boy is seated for a brief respite from his work as a porter. At any moment, his name will be called out to haul a load of goods. He is innocent, but his eyes have begun to ask “why me?” As viewers, we can weave an narrative as we move on to the young man in National Refrigerator, Gairidhara (#12). He seems to designate the future of the boy from #9. Yet a sense of determination still emerges in his face and eyes. This young man knows his life is hard, but he hasn’t succumbed to resignation and despair.

The people whose portraits appear in this exhibit are cornered by the walls and streets of Kathmandu. The barbed wire they hang to, the ropes they work over, are a testament to their struggles to earn a daily wage. With patient scrutiny, what emerges are highly personalized “voices” which convey narratives specific to each individual.

The serendipitous timing of the taking of these photographs (1985-1995) makes for disheartening political commentary. In today’s Kathmandu “democracy” has arrived. Civil sector groups and NGOs flourish; politicians wax eloquent while expatriate and local development wallahs continually reproduce new ‘agendas.’ Meanwhile, life for those depicted here remains unchanged.

As a complement to this exhibit, Amtzis will read at the gallery from his poetry collection, “City on his Back” at 4 PM on Sunday, June 3.

If bodies have voices

Kiran’s Windhorse

Kiran Manandhar, a prolific and romantic painter known for his splendid use of color and style, has taken a new departure. A recent stay in Tibet, traveling and leading workshops in painting has introduced a collage-like element to his work. His current exhibit at the Himalayan Art Gallery in Thamel incorporates in each painting a Tibetan prayer flag with a windsor and a wish-fulfilling jewel raising from its back.

At first glance, much like many western artists, he seems to be utilizing an artifact from a culture even more “exotic” than his own. A more thorough viewing indicates the boldness of his attempt. The dominant image, whether it is integrated into Kiran’s vocabulary of evocative color and expressive stroke or not, makes itself known throughout the exhibit. So close to Tibet’s borders, a flag of Tibetan origin is raised in the landscape of Kiran’s work.

These paintings are more contained than Kiran’s previous endeavors. Though drawn from the openness and power of the Tibetan landscape, there is a sense of enclosure that even Kiran’s color-rich palette and free flowing strokes cannot break free of. These new limits set on the artist’s freedom of expression allows for an honest, contemporary reading of place. The brooding figures of women or lovers that appear in many of Kiran’s canvasses are here as well, and their juxtaposition to the prayer flag adds a personal dimension. In #6 and in #26 we see these figures with the prayer flags. In one, a woman turns towards the flag and the viewer senses encounter; in the other, two figures, subtly engaged, seem not to notice the flag’s presence. Intimate and indeterminate, an emotional opening towards commitment and a troubled emotional entanglement, set the parameters of engagement with a wider world.

Kiran is persistent in his use of the Tibetan prayer flags. Whether the windsor fly above, or lie submerged, or even fail to enter into or modify Kiran’s abstract landscapes, their presence must be accounted for in whatever aesthetic conclusions the viewer may draw from his work.

Under My Hat
by Kunda Dixit

Thank you, Dr Tej

1980. The Karnali river at the Chisapani Gorge. It was the first time we dolphins saw a real scientist. Our cousins in the Narayani had introduced us to an earlier human wearing glasses, a big camera and a funny hat. But had given them the west. This said, they would jump and point his camera at the smallest movement of water. Our relatives couldn’t get to know him too well, because the dirty water from the beer factory and paper mill at Narayanghat forced them to move. When we came to Chisapani Gorge inside the Bardiya National Park, our mammalian proximity sense told us he had pitched camp near a big cliff and had bathed an old Tamil alpha. The two used to row upstream to reach the tranquil waters in the middle of the gorge. It was all very amazing for us. We jumped up for fresh air and looked around but we were too quick and he never saw us. We lied to him that he was quite a rare specimen—a Tibetan University trained zoologist harboured by over 20 international scientific organisations like the Institute of Biology UK, the Linnean Society of London, and the British Ornithologists Union. After about a month, we decided to surprise him. It was a beautiful rainy morning. "Doctor sahib, go home. Only one species wonders around Berhampur, the fishermen were telling Dr Tej Kumar Shrestha as they made their way upstream. Suddenly, one of us jumped right up in front of these four humans. The doctor almost fell off his boat with excitement. He took off his glasses and said: "It was right. There are Gangetic Dolphins (Platanista gangetica) in Nepal’s rivers."

One Great Leap Forward, Two Leaps Back

Teams for the opportunity to engage in research and conservation while being equipped with tools to work on the issue at hand by staying in a community and solving problems together. It is a unique role of the local governments in the eastern and western development zones in India. But which is the version of the conditional and unconditional aid?

8 July 2001

On a visit to the eastern part of Terai, Kunda Dixit

Imperialism: A Myth or Reality

Fifteen years have passed since the end of the Cold War. The new biodynamic politics of American imperialism may have decayed as the old ones seemed to have died. But their influence and impact are still audible today. The United States has lost its grandeur in the eyes of many, but it remains the most powerful nation on earth. The rest of the world is still dominated by the US, which is trying to maintain its dominance through various means. This has led to bipolarity and multipolarity in international relations.

Congress, FDI and the Farmers

There have been many debates about the role of FDI in the Indian economy. Critics argue that FDI is a tool of neoliberalism, which has led to the exploitation of Indian workers and farmers. However, proponents of FDI believe that it will bring about economic growth and job creation. The debate continues to rage on, with no clear winner.

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