DEEPAK THAPA

It was one of the many strikes organised by Leftist tea garden workers just after the Gorkhaland Movement had ended in 1988, when the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was just settling in. A former tea planter was managing a garden near the Nepal-India border and had his share of worker problems. The planter, now living in Kathmandu, says that the man who came to negotiate on behalf of his workers was none other than today's Maoist supremo, Prachanda.

Implausible as it may sound at first, the planter may be right, for exchanges between the commu- nists of Nepal and India have a long history. The first instance would be the famous 1947 Bratagar Jute Mills strike. That was when the legendary Ratan Lal Brahman (better known as Mahila Bapai, who later represented Darjeeling in the Lok Sabha on a CPI-M ticket) is known to have journeyed down in support of what probably was the first-ever workers' strike on Nepali soil. Later, in 1949, there was Ajoychandra Singh repre- senting the then-unidenotified Communist Party of India in the Central Organisational Committee of the also-unidentified Communist Party of Nepal.

Contacts between the young Nepali radicals of the Jhapa move- ment of the early 1970s and the more mature comrades of the CPI (Maoist-Leninist) in India, who were well into their Naxalite movement, is well documented. Neeter to the present, before the launch of the 1990 anti-Panchayati movement, Left luminar- ies from India, M Farooqi of the CPI and Harkishen Singh Surjewala of the CPI (M) were in Kathmandu to endorse the teaming up of the United Left Front and the Nepal Congress Party. The point of recounting all this anecdotal informa- tion is the interest Nepal's Maoist movement has suddenly received in the Indian press with the breakdown of the ceasefire and imposition of emer- gency. While credit goes to the Indian media now for devoting so much column space and air time to an insurgency that has by and large ignored for the last six years, it has not been able to resist the usual Indian establishment line of saying the hand of its pet neta, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), in all kinds of trouble in Nepal.

And so, now, it is the ISI hand-in-glove with the Maoists. Whereas, in fact, the historical links of Nepal's political parties—and the Maoists are no exception—have always been with their southern counterparts. As put succinctly by Dr Harika Gurung in a recent issue of Himal South Asian: "There is a general misconception that the democratic side is seen to be India-centric, and the Left Sino-centric. In reality, both democratic and com- munist ideologies came to Nepal through India. If the Nepali Congress was nurtured in Banaras, the com- malties of the Left opposition are beholden to Churu Mazumdar of Bengal."
UNCIVIL WAR

Look at it every which way and it becomes apparent that even if the Maoists are wiped out, the government will still have to tackle the same political cause that the insurgents represent. To do so, it must not only fight a war, it also needs to unleash development on a war footing. Unfortunately, this government seems incapable of multi-tasking.

Stepping back, the Maoists gave up on parliamentary democracy within a constitutional monarchy and dedicated itself to the violent overthrow of both. In the beginning it seemed that the comrades truly wanted to undo everything they had striven to, to disarm themselves and the grassroots again. But it gradually became clear that their resort to violence was only a shortcut to power rather than a means of societal transformation.

The underground group has murky links to the international revolutionary movement (see p. 6), and wanted to carry on where Mao Tse-tung left off. It is one of the fundamental tenets of revolutionary movements that they are not to be destroyed before it can be rebuilt. But many revolutions have floundered because violence becomes an end in itself, breeding more and more violence until the revolution devours its own children. Can a political system be so rotten that only a violent struggle to destroy everything and rebuild from scratch is the solution? Or are there other lessons to be learned from the Maoists’ challenge to democracy.

Meanwhile, the democracy warriors were becoming freedom’s greatest enemies. As soon as they were elected to power, they proceeded to undo everything they had strived for, to discredit themselves and the system they fought to put in place. Their incessant bickering, their mindless plunder, and the sidelining within political parties of just about everyone who had integrity, vision and commitment paved the way for the Maoists’ challenge to democracy.

And so, the Maoists disawowed the democratic space they had gained four years earlier. Their decision was so wrenching that it split the ultra-Left parties, some of which were not convinced about the timing or the justification for the move. The Maoists disavowed the democratic space they had gained four years earlier. Their decision was so wrenching that it split the ultra-Left parties, some of which were not convinced about the timing or the justification for the move. Their incessant bickering, their mindless plunder, and the sidelining within political parties of just about everyone who had integrity, vision and commitment paved the way for the Maoists’ challenge to democracy.

Prachanda know this? If so, why is he taking the nation in that direction? Does he know that vegetarian French food is absolutely terrible, the fact that I do not drink becomes a definite disadvantage. Despite this, though, I am glad that my first peep into the western world is through the French window.

Apart from their apolline, almost parrot-like voices, Nepali Bahuns and academicians from the North of France have one other thing in common—their love for ideas that transcended time and space. They do not let considerations of pragmatism restrict them to the “done” ways of doing things. Perhaps it is for this reason that the seeds of the French Revolution were first sown here—in the coal mines of northern France. Like the coal mines we visited in Arensburg, or the 없는 one of a once-flourishing steel industry in the ghost town of Denheim, almost all this region’s smoke-stack industries are now closed. The French tried it is cheaper to import coal and steel from Africa and Asia than to produce either here. In any case, close to 75 percent of electricity consumed in France comes from their own nuclear power plants. But remarkably, even such large-scale closure of factories has not destabilised the job market. That is because the city of Lille invested in culture—a university, art galleries, museums, theatre and the like. That gave a fillip to tourism and created more jobs in the service industries than were lost through the closure of the various mines and factories. As a result, this region has a cultured and cosmopolitan ambience and on weekends fill up with visitors from the cold country across the Channel.

People boast proudly that the South of France may have better weather, but the smiles on Gaulic faces along the Belgian border are sunnier.

The ideas we are exploring in seminar halls are far from the grim realities of our daily lives that they are either visionary or plain nuts. How many of us, for instance, are ready to believe that we can change the orientation of our nation-state from “national security commitments” to “human security consciousness”? In functional terms, that shift would entail that nation states would start disbanding their military forces and setting up armies of teachers, health workers, artisans, artists, writers, poets and philosophers. A dream no doubt, but one worth having. The propedeuse to all great transformations is a dream. Our main preoccupation at all the sessions has been trying to come up with ways and means to resolve conflict. Nation-states are agents of conflict, as are organised religion and obsessive individualism. But these are all harsh facts of modern life. We cannot wish them away, we can only do the next best thing—reform existing institutions or set up new ones that engage with and mediate between conflicting agents to work for the least unacceptable terms of conflict resolution.

The state as a large whole itself needs to be reformed, its institutions need to concentrate on facilitating and enabling, rather than controlling and regulating. This requires an important change: focusing not only on popular democracy, but on functional democracy. We all know the democracy we have been practising all these years has not been functioning optimally, yet we keep repeating the stale apologia of Winston Churchill that “nothing better has been devised”. It is time we moved away from that and tried to conceive of something new, something better, that we can put into practice. How long can our academics and thinkers continue to hide their intellectual lethargy behind the so-called “liberal” hedge of “western domination”? If they do not hurry, they are other Hommein and Osama waiting in the wings to cash in on the popular dissatisfaction with western values. The need to reform religions is no less pressing. After all, religion is politics with cold desires or dead prophets as leaders. It might be desirable to simply abolish religion, but that, too, is unlikely to happen anytime soon. So the only option for us is to have platform for inter-faith dialogue, and inter-religious parlia-ments where criticism is not consid-ered heresy. Unless liberal clerics themselves take the lead in initiating such changes, their own more obscurantist colleagues will make them irrelevant. Saint Agnieszka from India brought home this point so forcefully that silence, and not applause, greeted his talk.

The most daunting task is trans- forming individuals from being consumers obsessed with their own rights, to global citizens aware of their responsibilities towards the world, and the diversity of cultures and species that make it. It is very difficult to wean individuals away from juvenile ideas of patriotism and make them grow into citizens of the world conscious of the common suffering of all humanity. But it is not such a new idea. It dates back to “Vahdevdas Kutumkhwa”—the planet is one family. In the end, that is what really matters. The political lines drawn on maps are arbitrary. The sky, the water, birds and bees and the curve and bounds of nature do not recognise human boundaries. We have drawn those lines, and we can cer- tainly erase them from our consciousness.
We have been saying that the Maoist problem cannot be solved through You cannot search 1,000 innocent people and trouble them because you fine. But you cannot conduct searches wantonly, just because you want to. Involved in “cordon-and-search” operations in a particular place, that is what we are seeing. People may be killed in combat but no one can kill the society? Couldn’t the government have said the civil rights were being disregarded? I told the prime minister yesterday (Monday) that if you continue to misuse emergency powers we will be forced to take a serious decision. That means you won’t support the emergency. You are using it to come back here. We do not have to use it in this way. We only need to use it for a particular purpose, we have a very rich vocabulary. What is the word we use? (Laughter)

You could use one to send a message…

I cannot think of one now. But if the government begins to misuse its power, there would be a need to have such a method of functioning. Such a method of functioning has led us to believe that the government may not be able to perform. We will decide on future actions based on how the situation develops.

Do you have reports that this is happening? We understand your party is monitoring the emergency. We have heard that unarmed Maoist supporters were killed in Dang. Non-violent protesters have been killed. In Kathmandu. In Samtib, a porter was killed. In Kavre an ordinary citizen was killed. Besides, many workers from other parties, including the UML, have been killed. Their homes have been destroyed. People may be going to be made to suffer unreasonably. Can you subject common people to that only on the basis of suspicion? If you are accused in “cordon-and-search” operations in a particular place, that is fine. But it is not conducting searches unnecessarily, just because you want to. You cannot search 1,000 innocent people and trouble them because you need to. We are seeing that. People may be killed in combat but no one can kill the unarmed, or those who have been taken prisoner or those who surrender.

Before going into the assessment, first of all I would like to ask some basic questions. What has been your assessment of the emergency? What is the word we can use? (Laughter)

We have not been given reasonable answers. Our position is that if the army needed to be deployed, the decision of the National Security Council would have been enough, there would have been no need to impose emergency rule. If the intention was to ban the Maoists, the TADO ordinance would have been enough. So why did the government opt for the emergency? Again, if the emergency is only at the controlling the Maoists, as we have been told, why is nothing being given away, why is there such a lack of transparency, why has the civil rights of people and political parties been suspended? How can the government continue so that the emergency is aimed just at the Maoists and not at other sections of society? Can’t the government have said the civil rights of people have been suspended only for the Maoists or their supporters? Can’t we have been focused more? Our position is clear; even the Maoists cannot be killed indiscriminately. People may be killed in combat but no one can kill the unarmed, or those who have been taken prisoner or those who surrender.

Will the nationwide emergency be necessary? For the last two weeks are an outcome of the Maoists’ megalomania, and their over-ambition. We can predict that the army will be able to control them now by suspending the TADO ordinance. But I am curious about what next? No doubt, the main cause of the problem is not only the Maoists but the successive governments that have been forced after the formation of the multiparty system in the country. I have closely watched the situation of the people in the western hills of Nepal. Not one government effort to ameliorate the economic condition of the people has been successful there. The people are either forced to live with a half-full stomach or go to India to work as seasonal labourers. Nepotism and corruption have engulfed the country and people’s sense of morality and hope. The Maoists’ populist sloganeering attracted the people. But it is a universal phenomenon that people revolt against widespread corruption and injustice. Why the government needs an emergency to check corruption? I am studying rural sociology overseas and have been reading lots of development theories. But I cannot understand why they do not work in my country, and why I always have to be alert to corruption? I replied that the government needs an emergency to check corruption. Are you missing targets and hoping for better? You are aware of the situation. People may be killed in combat but no one can kill the unarmed, or those who have been taken prisoner or those who surrender.

Min Bahadur Bhandari

MIN BAJRACHARYA
morning, clean the house, prepare the food for cooking (though not actually cook it, since she is a ‘lower caste’ and her orthodox Brahmin employers do not allow her to touch cooked food), clean the dishes and do all the laundry. By the time she goes to bed, it is almost 11PM.

There are five people in the family they live with, apart from her sister who is two years younger than Shanti. It is, though she calls everyone in the family by family name—maa, baa, daadu and didi—it is normal for Shanti to go around or speak of them in that manner, because she makes a mistake.

A little caution and Shanti reveals more. These days the distinguished professor has even started touching her here and there when he is alone with her. Shanti’s younger sister is luckier as a kind-hearted Canaan woman has been sponsoring the child’s education for the past year at a nearby school. Shanti also wants to go to school, but her employer refused to let both sisters off.

Shanti does not receive any money for the work she does, and no one from her family in Karranepalanchowk district come to see her.

For all that, Shanti and her sister are much better off than many other political leaders. Thirteen-year-old Maja, who comes from a village near Pokhara, has been working in a civil servant’s house in Lalitpur for the last three years. She has to do the daily chores in Kathmandu, and according to the next-door neighbour, something more even.

The nightly drip, drip of press releases about the actions of the military, does not mean Shanti is being ignored. When she answers the door at her employer’s people and in the home. The monthly 3500 she receives for the work she does, and no one from her family in Karranepalanchowk district come to see her.

For all that, Shanti and her sister are much better off than many other political leaders. Thirteen-year-old Maja, who comes from a village near Pokhara, has been working in a civil servant’s house in Lalitpur for the last three years. She has to do the daily chores in Kathmandu, and according to the next-door neighbour, something more even.

As for the military, such fine points are not the concern of soldiers. The main condition imposed upon journalists is that they are not allowed to go.

By the time she goes to bed, it is almost 11PM. Perhaps we cannot eliminate child labour immediately. But that is no reason to stop trying.
is no place to grow up

legally, the organisation bears all the costs. The abused child is then brought to a centre maintained by CWIN and kept there for a maximum of three months, while ways are found for the child’s normal return to society. Last year, CWIN rescued 28 children, 20 of them girls, in this way. A majority were being physically tortured. But these are only the reported cases, and we will never know that fate of many others. Bimal Thapa of CWIN puts it bluntly, “We will never be able to fully eliminate child labour, but at least we can try and do something about it.”

Then there is the Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre (LACC), which aims to provide free legal services, especially to women and girl labourers working under dangerous conditions, and also has a telephone helpline. But Dr Shanta Thapalia of LACC says that although in many cases the court decides in favour of the abused and grants compensation, hardly anything happens in practice. “In principle we are able to provide justice to the victims, implementing it is however another difficult task,” she says. After a lot of hue and cry by international bodies like the ILO and UNICEF, the government has also started showing some interest. It is said to be in the process of ratifying the ILO’s Convention No 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999). At the “Best Practices Conference” held in Washington in May 2000, the Nepali government announced its commitment to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by immediately implementing its programmes of action to remove children from intolerable situations and provide for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

That sounds enthusiastic, but nothing much has really happened. Which is not at all surprising, since even existing laws have not been acted upon. The Labour Act may have made child labour illegal, but so far there has been no recognition that this practice exists, and no official study has been conducted to find out how many children are working as child labourers. The truth is that no matter how many organisations come up to help unprivileged children, no matter how many international covenants the government signs, no matter how many surveys are conducted, no matter how many measures are announced to check the working conditions of domestic child labourers, this modern-day slavery may not end unless civil society wakes up and refuses to take any other child unto its service. No matter what justification is given for the practice, there is no really reasonable excuse to rob children of their future.

On International Human Rights Day last week activists and media persons raised their voices against rights abuses in society. At the end of the day they went back to their cozy homes, and doubled again many gathered their families around them and ordered the 14-year-old “domestic help” to bring them tea and snacks.

Emergency fixes?

It took an emergency for the government to realise that machinery was not functioning normally. His Majesty’s Government has issued directives ordering its departments to work—which should translate into tap connections being fixed within 24 hours, the same with your water meter that has not worked for the past six months, and so on. To make sure that all happens, the government has ordered its employees in Kathmandu to be at their offices at 9AM (that is when they are supposed to be in anyway) and those in offices outside to come to work by 10AM. Late-comers will not be allowed to sign in and employees leaving the office premises during work hours will need to fill in a valid reason in a specified register and take permission from the office chief. Employees going in to vacant posts are required to report to duty within seven days and those who have been transferred have to be at their new posting within 15 days. Government service-holders won’t be allowed to take paid leave, except for mourning, maternity, etc, and they are to travel abroad only if the government needs to be represented by their department or to promote their department’s business and services. The only to-do missing from the government order was deciding whom one could approach if the new orders are not being complied with.

Celebrating Nyatapola

Bhaktapur’s landmark Nyatapola Temple has been standing for 300 years now and the municipality wants to celebrate that anniversary in style. The festivities are to include photo and painting exhibitions, symposium and conservation awareness building campaigns, all between 5-11 July 2002. Nyatapola was built in 1701 during the reign of King Bhupatindra Mali, and was among the few Bhaktapur monuments that survived the Great Earthquake of 1934.

Heritage sites

Nepal is trying to get two more mentions in the UNESCO World Heritage Site list. Tiharjosh, capital of the Shuya kingdom Kapilavastu (in today’s district of the same name), where Siddhartha Gautama spent his first 29 years, and Ramgram (in Nawaparasi district), where Buddha’s ashutthasthun, or last remains, lie, are the two likely new entrants on the list. The Lumbini Development Trust has had them on its own list of heritage sites and long wanted them included in the global list. The Trust requested enlistment in 1999, and last year’s archaeological dig findings suggesting that the Buddha was indeed born within modern Nepal’s borders is likely to help its request.

The Cheetahs have landed

The two “Cheetah” helicopters (a version of the Alouettes) (See “Where to cut,” NT #71)—India’s contribution to the government’s war effort against the Maoists—landed in Kathmandu on Tuesday. The Indian-assembled choppers are said to be able to perform at high altitude and can also be fitted with machine guns. Indian media reports that India’s assistance includes military hardware have not been confirmed or denied by the government so far.
The Maobadi and South Asia

The Maobadi and the ISM

The failure to identify the RIM connection with the supposed ISI link, which since the article was published just after the Indian election, should not disprove that the worker was trying to drive a point. Otherwise, how could the situation be so unnatural? The National Park is used by Nepal's Maoists as a training ground just as the Indian Himalayas have been used by Indian and Nepalese youths to train for terrorist operations.

One of the most powerful articles in the recent coverage is by S Raman, a former additional secretary with the Indian government, who writes in the Hindustan Times: “While there have been reports for many years of the Maoists receiving financial and material assistance from Pakistan’s Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) and the North Korean intelligence, they have not for any such weapons or explosives.

In the case of Outlook that was probably the first anyone had heard of the supposed ISI link in India, but since the article was published just after the Indian election, it would not disprove that the worker was trying to drive a point. Otherwise, how could the situation be so unnatural? The National Park is used by Nepal’s Maoists as a training ground just as the Indian Himalayas have been used by Indian and Nepalese youths to train for terrorist operations.

The North Korean angle in Raman’s piece is a new one (although Outlook had also tried to make a case of Chinese involvement). He does not provide any citation for the “reports” he mentions, although he does predictably pick on the much-vaunted interview given by Prachanda to an online magazine in early 2000 to support his thesis. “The ISI’s interest in helping the Maoists is due to the latter’s anti-India views. The Maoists have not only been demanding the abrogation of all treaties and agreements with India which, in their views, are irrational and harmful to Nepal’s interests, but also projecting the Indian Army as their next enemy after they defeat the ‘People’s Army’.

As an analyst in a neighbouring country, it is possible that Raman be unaware that almost all major political forces in the region have at some time or other called for a version of union with India! Or, that the perception that India is their next enemy after they defeat the ‘People’s Army’.

The India connection

The India connection is yet to be demonstrably proven, the Maoists’ contacts with ultra-left groups are no fewer and neo-communist groups have been strengthened after the 1990 founding of the Revolutionary International Movement (IRM), a forum of Marxist forces that could have been funded and trained by the Indian communists.

The police in Nepal believe that the contacts is not limited to extremist groups alone. They also have the support of a part of the Nepali diaspora in India, a fact demonstrated by the Amritesh Koirala case and the Uday Shanker Prabhu case. However, the Maoists’ India connection is not limited to extremist groups.

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The Indian media uniformly projects the official line.

Upon foreign policy and defence matters, the Indian media uniformly projects the official line.

T
he Indian media’s coverage of Nepal is a good example. The crescendos of criticism that nobody on the other side of the border wants to hear about are international and not allowed to swell in self-pity. It is time to try another tack. Let’s start with the papers and ignore our way for some critical contemplations.

Satellite TV and the Internet mean that no Indian journalist can hide behind the fact that Indian reporters file, that their responsibility essentially remains with them, and that their nation’s agenda. Regardless of how rapidly their international audience grows, their primary duty is to reside Indians.

Once that premise is perceptible, it becomes easier to get some perspective. As long as the panache enjoyed official Indian confidence as the corollary of the years that could maintain a semblance of equilibrium between the two Asian behemoths, Indian newspapers didn’t think Nepal policy was terribly newsy. But they did maintain correspondents and stringers just in case. For the impatient community tried to play its cards a little too cleverly, the editors back home long before that premise was perceptible. The editors back home were understanding all along that it really contained no news value; it’s just that the state of emergency and the Maoist...
Government spending has begun to increase, but most of the money is being used to pay recurrent expenses, says the Central Bank’s economic report for the first three months of fiscal 2001/02. Regular spending was up almost 30 percent compared with the same period last year, while on development programs grew very slow, at just over one percent. The Nepal Rastra Bank said regular spending was up because of payments of overdue pensions, medical allowances and increased expenditure on security.

The relatively static development spending resulted from slow approval and release of funds. Rejected collection was sound owing to the government’s effort to mobilize the volume of cash grants that it anticipated, resulting in a budget deficit of Rs 3.6 billion.

According to the National Urban Consumer Price Index, prices rose by 2.2 percent year-on-year, mainly up because of a rise in the prices of goods in the food and beverages basket, which were up by 3.8 percent compared to the 4.6 percent decline during the same period a year ago. Inflation would have been worse but was reined in by a drop in the prices of non-food in the category prices. The category prices in the food basket rose by 12.7 percent growth in the same period last year.

Exports have begun tumbling in a big way: there was a decline by 0.3 percent to Rs 13.5 billion in during the first quarter of fiscal 2001/02 compared with the Rs 13 billion in the corresponding year-earlier period. Exports to India have also slowed down, and the overall trade deficit reached Rs 13 billion. Despite this, all foreign exchange reserves remain sound, thanks mainly to remittances from overseas: Rs 104.7 billion in October. However, the percentage of reserves in foreign currency is shrinking and now stands at 76 percent.

An airline with only one plane flying to over half a dozen international destinations? Before you snigger, consider the Metro-Nepal Airways, the Metro-Nepal Airline, L dear reader, after it sent one of its Boeing 757’s for its regular maintenance regime. Royal Nepal Air Lines has its bases in Kathmandu and Singapore, which then needs to be converted to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed. The entire banking System to comply with this directive. This will entail additional costs. We need to provide. The requirements are very detailed.

The second factor for this shift in preference is that due to consumerism has come to our region brands is becoming a shibboleth used in advertising.

Butwal Power Company, which is a division of the government of a loss-making public enterprise, whether operationally or financially. The privatisation process has to begin with making the enterprise attractive to people who must not be made bankrupt as the Indian carrier. Vain optimism perhaps, but even by his assessment Royal Nepal is not as much ‘bored’ and ‘dreadful’ as it is likely to cover this risk. This is perhaps indicates a need to build up onshore insurance institutions with sufficient financial capabilities to underwrite such risks, and hold a significant part of them in their books if needed.

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All in the family

Family feuds are perhaps the most overused subjects in storytelling. With good reason, if you look at businesses.

Let’s give a big welcoming hand to a new member of the board—my wife’s sister’s fourth husband.

**BINOD BHATTARAI**

Such stories are legion. The complexities relationships within families that so often include conflicts over family assets and businesses. Most of what we’re told in these stories is true, except the “and they lived happily ever after” endings, which are particularly rare when it comes to succession and endings, which are particularly rare.

Through over 80 percent of all businesses in the world are family-run operations—the number in Nepal might be closer to 95 percent—only 16 percent of them actually remain intact beyond the second generation.

This doesn’t have to happen, though. Or so says Roop, a consultant to help families find ways to ensure their business succeeds.

**Bino Jyoti**

remain successful “for ever after,” “Not all family operations have to be failures,” he says. “Some of today’s largest businesses began as family-run operations.”

We don’t have statistics on how many family businesses fail in Nepal, but a casual look around shows that there is a considerable rate of failure among businesses, which is not a sign of good health.

A sample of questions that followed a talk Paul gave in Kathmandu a few weeks ago also suggests that all is not well.

- How do you deal with in-laws working for you? (Paul says that has to be decided by the family, perhaps)
- What about women in family businesses. (Paul says it is not well)
- What about succession and endings, which are particularly rare?
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Two out of 200,000

Ganga and Jamuna are back and well. Dr BASANT PANT gives us a blow-by-blow account of this heartening medical advance.

The chance of its happening is one in 200,000. And yet it happened to Sandhya Shrestha and Bhuwan KC. The two conjoined twins were born at some point in the history. It was a nice human interest story, but few would have thought that some months later, the twins would also make medical history.

Soon after the birth, Sandhya and Bhuwan went through a difficult period. Sandhya was distraught because she did not even get to see her babies for some time. Meanwhile, the twins remained at the maternity hospital, cared for by a panellist of Dr Elshooor Apte and other doctors, nurses and auxiliary staff, worked hard to save their lives.

Since it was such an unusual case, people went out of their way to help the twins in the Singapore General Hospital, the nearest feasible location for separation surgery. Dr Upendra Dhepak helped prepare them for the trip with his vast experience and leadership. On 11 October, 2000, Singapore Airlines transported the five-month-old babies, their family and the medical team for free. There too, Ganga-Jamuna attracted much interest, and MN Shashian, Nepal’s Consul-General in Singapore mobilised the goodwill of the Nepali and non-Nepali Singaporean public to collect enough donations for the treatment of the children and the stay of their family in Singapore for as long as it took. Those who have followed the saga from the beginning are quick to point to positive attitudes and purely humanitarian gestures by leading businessmen, businesswomen, and other families, doctors, nurses and auxiliary staff, worked hard to save their lives.

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What’s next for the twins?

Now the responsibility for the well-being of the children rests with Nepali physicians. At present, paediatrician Dr Parash Mani Bhattarai, physiotherapist Dr Ravi Thapalia, speech therapist Captain Bhawani Pradhan, nurse Bindu Gurung and I, as a neurosurgeon, are responsible for the day-to-day care and treatment of the children. Ganga and Jamuna live at home and we visit them regularly. Our role is also to rehabilitate the whole family so that they can take care of their own children. Institutional responsibility for the children has been taken on by the Kathmandu Model Hospital, and more experts will come on board as and when the situation requires it.

As with the Singaporean team, the medical community here also needs the support of the Nepali people to treat Ganga and Jamuna. The role of the media in this case has been extremely important and creditable, seeing how much it did to generate interest in the case the world over. These children will need this support in the future as well. Right now, neither child has a skull on the top of her head—they are only covered by skin, and this needs to be fixed. We have six months to decide on when, how and where to cover this defect. This will be decided after careful discussion with the Singaporean team.

The night before I flew back to Kathmandu, I had dinner with Keith Goh and his wife. During the conversation Mrs Goh told me how stressed and overworked her husband had been all through the run-up to the surgery and after, and how she used to support him. It was then that I realised how many people are responsible for such a venture, but who are not in the public eye. Given how stressful the whole exercise was, I asked Keith Goh whether, given a chance, he would conduct such an operation again, and whether he would change his technique at all. “Certainly,” he shot back promptly, “I would certainly do it much better next time.” This, I think is the contribution of Ganga and Jamuna, and all those involved in giving them a brighter future, to medical science. The next time babies like them are born, they will have a better chance to be operated upon, and successfully, with all the experience of the past year and a half to draw upon.

I feel that all those who were and still are involved in this case are privileged, and this privilege has been given to us by these children and their parents.

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The old age boom

Ageing has become easier physically. The challenge now is to help older people maintain the quality of their lives.

Against the advance of time, many adults deny themselves even small indulgences in the belief that virtuous moderation will ensure a healthy old age. New recruits to the war against ageing receive some basic training. Body map references are used daily to target damage attributed to the enemy—a single process called "target damage attributed to the map references are used daily to recruits to the war against ageing to ensure a healthy old age. New aims are worthy. Vague ideas are expressed about the prevention of changes in the well being of old people. There are more of them, they are healthier and when they have a serious illness it is often their last. In the developed world, the evidence of gradual but portentous changes in the well being of old people is easy to find. In 1957, around one in seven US men aged 80 was disabled in some way. By 1996, this had halved. Clinical scientists began to describe the inevitable and growing numbers of "old" old men (but fewer old women) who did not deteriorate as expected. Community health studies showed that not only were old people becoming healthier, their experiences of illness were "compressed" into the last year or two of life. These improvements were the direct result of improved living standards and community measures to reduce vascular disease and discourage smoking. Benefits like these are built on decades of sound progress in economic development and public health medicine. They will not be unintentionally undone and are certain to continue to improve and maintain the health of old people for years to come.

Biological science, too, has its successes. Researchers identified molecular targets with the potential to slow or even arrest components of intrinsic ageing processes. One example will suffice. Antioxidant damage control and repair systems help contain the harmful effects of replication on the cell. With ageing, these systems become inefficient and their failures can trigger a cascade of damage leading to cell death. Chemists have synthesised compounds capable of mimicking the beneficial effects of some antioxidant enzymes but with up to 100 times their potency. Animal experiments tested these novel and highly potent compounds. They showed this type of agent could extend the life span of a laboratory animal by up to 20 percent. Of course, short term experiments like these do not establish such agents as safe for the duration of use that were likely if they prove to be effective "anti-ageing" drugs. More likely they will be first evaluated as drugs to prevent the complications of acute tissue damage after, say, a heart attack or stroke. Only later will they be tested for long-term use, probably as adjuncts to other life-style interventions.

Improved health of old people with added disease "compensation" leads to the conclusion that it is all to sustain a cult of youth and beauty, aimed to diminish the fears of the young and to postpone the prospect of wear out old age.

While the public remains fixed on the idea that old people are a burden, specialists in the care of the old must set out the broader picture. Healthy old people may not wish to live productive work. Compulsory retirement on grounds of age is already indefensible. Instead, we should develop opportunities that retain old people as net contributors to our prosperity. Much as molecular biology drives the pharmaceutical industry and the development of novel agents, so the computer industry has revolutionised the workplace. These two powerful forces must be harnessed together to serve the common good of old people.

(Implements)

(Lawrence Whalley is a psychiatrist and professor of mental health at Shrewsbury, University, Scotland. His book The Ageing Brain was published by Weidenfeld and Nicholson in July.)
Politics with a human face

by Boris Nemtsov

Politics with a human face

Without anyone noticing, Russia has become Europe’s most liberal country—least as far as taxes go. No one pays more than 13 percent in personal income taxes. People pay more willingly, state revenue is increasing. President Putin may be people’s idea of a liberal, but his policies are undoubtedly such. For reasons peculiar to Russia, his is a liberalism that dare not speak its name. I have opposed Putin in the past, and may oppose him again, but credit should be given where it is due.

Serious judicial reform is underway. Russia’s “third branch of government” is becoming less Leninist and less corrupt. Landlords have moved beyond the talking stage, with a Law Code near adoption. Labour relations are stabilising, the Duma approved a new Labour Code. Education on expenditure is to increase by 60 percent. Pension reform is under way. Russia has made a fair start to a low inflation society. These are privileges, and not all of them are Putin’s. Putin and his ministers know what needs to be done. Their problem in creating viable policies is that too many Russians want to live simultaneously under both market conditions and socialism. Blame our deeply ingrained traditional belief in miracles. This lack of a market mechanism has made Russia an island of miracles beloved of Russian politicians. Political parties are meant to run on programmes, not on the principle of whoever is elected, not then into government policy. But instead of the electorate choosing between parties and policies, Russian politics are ruled by a pendulum effect. People get sick of looking at the same faces in power, become disillusioned and demand change. Only the Communists seem to service. They retain the biggest faction in parliament and control 20 regions. Even more control is exercised at the muni-

Europe’s productive, while the US manages unemployment well

The EU is not just linked with US financial crises, but also with US production crises. Germany and France produce absolutely more dollars worth of output per hour worked than the US. So did Japan, with its inefficient service sector, was way below the US or Europe, as was the UK. How should we interpret this? One possibility is this: Europe’s labour market is a great problem. It is over-regulated and inflexible, and on top of that, expensive even at the current low level of the Euro. Why be surprised, then, that

Productivity or unemployment

European firms shy away from labour and operate in a capital-intensive fashion. With high concentrations of capital per worker, other things being equal, labour is less productive—whereas US firms tend to be labour-intensive (i.e., low productivity) countries outsource some tasks or offshore altogether. This is partially because restructuring in Europe is hard, and one readies in a whole business leaving Europe altogether. Consequently, the firms that remain are those with the most output gains in productivity.

That is a smart model, but there is a downside. Europe has high unemployment that workers and small productivity gain per worker or per hour, but significantly more employment creation. Much of America’s growth in the 1990s involved replacing the unemployed and welfare recipients. Europe’s growth, high, but nearly constant. Two different models, each with a downside. It would be good for Europe to get the best benefits of massive job creation and for the US to enjoy stronger productivity in addition to its mammal jobs machine. If there is a chance of either happening.

Europe does not stand much of a chance to emerge from unemployment trap rather in this recession or any time soon. Europe would need to make the economy with a bit of investment, cheap money, as can for everyone, and perhaps public works spending, hard in these days of strict accounting. The story will be good production, but low productivity. Europe was not thought to be part of the “new economy.” In the US there is recession and rising unemployment. The likely market recovery will not be strong enough to support production. New Europe, and the US will both alike.

On productivity, the news may be somewhat better. This is the first time the US shows productivity growth in a recession during which productivity normally turns negative. If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal time the US shows productivity growth in a recession (during which productivity normally turns negative). If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal time the US shows productivity growth in a recession (during which productivity normally turns negative). If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal time the US shows productivity growth in a recession (during which productivity normally turns negative). If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal time the US shows productivity growth in a recession (during which productivity normally turns negative). If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal time the US shows productivity growth in a recession (during which productivity normally turns negative). If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal time the US shows productivity growth in a recession (during which productivity normally turns negative). If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal time the US shows productivity growth in a recession (during which productivity normally turns negative). If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal time the US shows productivity growth in a recession (during which productivity normally turns negative). If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal time the US shows productivity growth in a recession (during which productivity normally turns negative). If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal time the US shows productivity growth in a recession (during which productivity normally turns negative). If this holds, and strengthens with recovery, as Federal...
Pakistan’s once-deterred military ruler has bought himself some time, opportunities, and risks.

Musharraf is an international pariah who had outstayed his country’s elected government and was forced to arrest Pakistan’s slide towards a “failed state” category. Hit by 9/11, his over 50-year reign. The long road to Mandalay

BANGKOK - Exiled Burmese human rights activists are losing patience with the slow progress made in 14 months of dialogue between the military government, the opposition, led by the defeated leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) Aung San Suu Kyi, and a special UN envoy. While visiting Rangoon, UN envoy and former UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar expressed frustration over the pace of the talks, but quoted as saying he was hopeful about “the eventual outcome” of his mission, pushing for human rights and democracy in a country oppressed by a military regime since 1988. Aung Zaw, editor of The Irrawaddy, an independent magazine that covers Burma, says, “It is very unlikely an agreement will be reached in the near future” as Suu Kyi’s Rai- zal’s views, nor do a lot of people inside Burma think the talks will produce anything significant such as mineweeping. In addition, there are continued reports of widespread human rights abuses, including extra-judicial killings and rape. But they aren’t so keen to free the other 1,500 or so political prisoners, many of whom are NLD activists, say.

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Not by force alone

Aruna, 5 December

Loose cannon

A Maoist leader who is in jail for running terror operations.

"We are not running terror operations. If he asks me anything, we will surely share our ideas.

Haven't you given him any advice?"

Now is following a one-track agenda. Security is only one aspect of it. Development and poverty alleviation about changes in our political, economic and social sectors. We have to prove that we can have a corruption increases during this emergency, we will soon be facing an even bigger problem.

Who fall below the poverty line. Corruption has become a major problem and has to be controlled. If should these development programs be carried forward? What must be done under the security programmes?

The government had earlier also made provisions concerning the development and security of the country. How agency is mobilised? What must be done in general? This problem will not be solved only through war. The

and see if it functions appropriately.

The Maoist forces could successfully overawe the barracks and all the army personnel there were killed. The extra magazines did not fit into the SMG, while the general purpose machine gun simply did not fire. Thus shortcircuited the Maoist a great stunt. The Maoist’s 

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You might be surprised to hear that nowadays teachers are being appointed using the tender system, and work, teachers were selected in just this manner for Birhakti Primary School in Madanpur Village Development Committee of Nanusub district.

The school has financial problems and a serious shortage of teachers, and the villagers decided they had to do something about it. When the villagers decided the selected teacher would be from Madanpur, would be paid a minimum amount and be a

I do not like this (emergency) at all. I never wanted the emergency … the situation called for it.

For the cannons to be functional, they need. This is why schools in villages have

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The People’s Liberation Army

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The Maoist’s declaration of their second national convention early this year lay great emphasis on the military aspects of their struggle. Today’s events show that all that was written in the military activity was worthless. The military forces have all proved worthless, and are not in a position to support any new military strategy. Their entire war policy has been a failure.

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Village Development Committee of Nanusub district.

The “People’s Liberation Army”

foreseeable future. We have to wait and see if it functions appropriately.

People are saying that democratic rights will never return.

Do I not need to visit the current context that way. It all depends on how the government functions. We are now faced with a certain situation. It is not easy to be done when an agency is mobilised? What must be done in general? This problem will not be solved only through war. The government had earlier also made provisions concerning the development and security of the country. How should these development programs be carried forward? What must be done under the security programmes? It is the time right now to make some changes. The government must be able to win the minds of the people, and for that, it will need to initiate some programmes. Some fundamental changes have to be brought about and improvements will have to be made as and when required. There must be special programmes for people who fall below the poverty line. Corruption has become a major problem and has to be controlled. It increases now. We will not be facing an even bigger problem.

Earlier, when Girija Prasad Koirala was prime minister and wanted to deploy the army, everyone protested. Now when the army has been deployed, everyone says the king and the prime minister see

I do not think like that. I was not here at either time, so I cannot answer this question.

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Dang reportage

Loose cannon

The Maoist attacked the army in Dang and carried away over three cannons with them. Will the Maoists use these cannons against the army? The people wanted to know. The Maoists will use the Cannons. The cannons were a curse, not a boon to the Maoists.

According to army sources, the Maoists carried off over 80 munitions from the Dang barracks but they will not be able to use them. Although they took away the cannons, they were not able to fire their "bare plates," on which the cannons must be placed to be used. The Bare plates are suitable for firing.

For the cannons to be functional, they need to be fixed on to the plates before firing. If the plates are not fixed to the base-plate and then used, it will be uncontrollable, causing more damage to the people. The people if they think that it is their task. As the Maoists did not take out the cannons, the new Munition. The people are more than a worse tool for them. Forewarning, movie-style

Next to the barracks is a small village and broken. The Maoists had the "bare plates" stolen and fired on the barracks with their 303 weapons. When the firing started, the telephone in the signal room "rang. An affair

Maoist forces could successfully overawe the barracks and all the army personnel there were killed. The extra magazines did not fit into the SMG, while the general purpose machine gun simply did not fire. Thus shortcircuited the Maoist a great stunt. The Maoist’s 

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Tender to teach

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fter its success at the Asia Cup, the Nepali under-19 cricket team is all set for the big one: the Youth World Cup. Preparations for the World Cup have already begun, with the team in a closed camp at the Kirtipur Stadium. A lot is expected of the boys after their Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Under-19 Youth Cup victory here in Nepal in early October. Things are looking up for the future of Nepali cricket, but the question everyone is asking: will the juniors be as competitive when playing for a foreign audience at the World Cup in New Zealand in January?

Nepal, the only non-test-playing nation from Asia to have made it to New Zealand, will be pitted against Pakistan, England and Papua New Guinea in Group ‘C’. The team is going in with better preparations and significantly higher morale than it did in Sri Lanka last year, when it was the only International Cricket Council associate member to qualify. Even so, most cricket observers here feel the Nepali team’s chances for a better preparation and significantly higher morale than it did in Sri Lanka last year, when it was the only International Cricket Council associate member to qualify. Even so, most cricket observers here feel the Nepali team’s chances for a miracle are slim, to say the least.

The Nepal Cricket Association (NCA) has organised two phases of closed camps, the first of which began on 21 November, with 19 hopefuls doing their best. Their daily routine in the camp begins with fitness training in the morning, followed by batting and bowling practice at the nets till the noon. Assistant coach Suman Jung Thapa feels the team was allowed a longer rest than they should have been after the ACC trophy, which brought down their level of fitness.

"Two weeks would have been ideal," he explains adding, "A month-long rest means we will have to work a bit harder." But he’s happy with the effort the young cricketers are making to get back to their optimum training level. In addition to the usual coaching in batting, bowling and fielding, this time around the emphasis is on practice games. "These are vital for the boys, as it gives them a chance to play in match-like situations," says Thapa. Two practice matches were held against Sri Lanka recently. At the end of the first training camp, the Nepali team will travel to India on 16 December to play five one-dayers with local clubs there.

The junior side can use all the help they get, and the presence in the training camps of Sri Lankan bowling star Roy Dias, who coached them to victory in the ACC, gives them hope. In addition to Dias, former Sri Lankan paceman Ramesh Ratnayake and Indian fitness expert De Vasco are also in Nepal helping the team. Thapa is glad of the help, which he says is not only technical, but also improves the morale of the team. "There is lots of team spirit and the boys’ confidence has received a boost."

Since this is only their second time a Nepali national squad has made it to the Youth World Cup, the prospects of entering the super-league are distant. With regular test-playing nations like Pakistan and England in the group, the league matches will be a hard battle for Nepal. The only other team of Nepal’s calibre in this group is Papua New Guinea.

"Though Papua New Guinea is the obvious choice for an easy Nepali win, Thapa feels the chances of a good fight against England aren’t that bad either. "The English team is traditionally weak on spin bowling. We can exploit this to our advantage," he explains. If spinners Lakpa Sherpa and Shakti Gauchan can repeat their brilliant Asia Cup performances, Nepal can cause some interesting trouble for the English batting side. Bowling will be Nepal’s trump card as usual, and not only because of the spinners. With Blood Das, Manjeet Shrestha, Sanjum Bajracharya and Pramod Baral, Nepali bowling also has all-important variety. Skipper Das will spearhead the pace attack, aided by Shrestha and Barat. The New Zealand pitch favours medium pacers like Das and the others."

The downside is that it won’t be as easy for the batsmen. Although Gauchan and Kanishka Chauhan’s batting was admirable at the last tournament, they might find it difficult to adjust their batting to the seaming wicket they will be playing on next month.

Can the Nepali junior cricket team can repeat its Asia Cup performance at the Youth World Cup?

Nepali cricket

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Can the Nepali junior cricket team can repeat its Asia Cup performance at the Youth World Cup?

Youth World Cup Cricket was started in 1997 to provide a platform for budding cricketers. England won the first edition in South Africa. Two years later, India lifted the cup in Sri Lanka. Over the years, this tournament has become the platform for where talented young players make their way to senior teams. Blegder

Sudhi, Yuvraj Singh, who were part of the winning Indian team in 1999 now play one-day cricket for the country.

As for Nepal, the fact that the junior team show so much promise means that, hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, the national squad might chase its merits in the international arena. Title
CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Ismail Merchant, responsible for numerous adaptations of literary classics to celluloid, has come out tops with his rendition of VS Naipaul.

SUKOY DHAR

KOLKATA – What happens when an Indian Oscar-winning filmmaker adapts on celluloid a novel by a controversial Indian Nobel laureate on the immigrant Indian community in the Trinidad of the 30s? The outcome is sheer movie magic—a feast for the eye and mind of cinema enthusiasts across the world, a toast to the international film festival circuit and even a cue for many to plop into the history of the Caribbean islands.

India-born, New York-based producer-director Ismail Merchant now banks in the rare response to his screen adaptation of The Mystic Masseur, one of the best-known novels of this year’s Nobel literature winner VS Naipaul and based on the Indian diaspora in Trinidad.

“We were apprehensive about obtaining the rights to the novel from Sir V.S. But then because of our reputation he entrusted us with the novel,” said Merchant, the Oscar-winning director-producer of the famous Merchant Ivory Production.

“The film brings alive the saga of the immigrant Indian community in Trinidad to the screen,” Merchant recalled. “I went on location-hunting in Trinidad and returned to London with photographs of Sir Vidia’s home, possible location and the Indian community there. Then I invited him and his wife Nadira to dinner at my London flat.”

“I cooked mackerel for him. I had brought chilli sauce from Trinidad. I put a little tomato and lime on it. But Nadira came into the kitchen and told me that Naipaul hated mackerel. Well, it was too late, and I took the platter in. Naipaul tasted it, looked at me and said it was splendid,” said a beaming Merchant, whose culinary skills are formidable.

“Making this film was one of the most pleasant of experiences,” said Merchant. “It was as if the whole island had turned up and the spirit of Naipaul was everywhere. There are great actors there in Trinidad and they were willing to contribute more than the script asked of them.”

Said screenplay writer Coryl Phillips, “When I read the book for the second time, I was convinced that it was a book which not only could be filmed, but was one that was rich in character, its comedy, and full of pathos.”

“The early novels of VS Naipaul, including this novel, had always held a special appeal for me as they seemed to depict a Trinidad that the author had some affection for. I felt it would be a challenge to adapt this novel for the screen,” said Merchant.

“We have started research on this project. Catherine Berge, who directed Merchant Ivory production Gaach three years back and Cary Phillips, screenplay writer of The Mystic Masseur are currently working on it,” said the maker of memorable screen versions as literary classics Howard’s End, Maurice and A Room With A View.

“However, Merchant’s next venture is a project based on a novel by Diane Johnson. Our next film is La Divine,” says the maker of some 46 feature films who has just completed shooting of Merci Dramee based on their original screenplay and set in Paris. Merchant, who on 19 November was conferred the New York State Governor’s Arts Award at Metropolitan Museum of Art in the Big Apple, marked his fortieth anniversary in film career in April this year with the release of another celluloid adaptation of literature, The Golden Bowl. Merchant is also saying with the idea of filming the recent works of such noted Indian authors as Sahir Ludhianvi.

(Vatsal Tharor and Anuradha Ghosh) (The Glas Palaces) (IPS)
**EATING OUT**

- **Pokhara.** 412999
  - The Everest Hotel
  - Flathead Beer and Steakhouse
- **Kathmandu.**
  - The Borderlands Resort
- **Sundays at the Godavari Village Resort.** 560675
- **Park Gallery, Pulchowk.** 522307
- **Shangri-La Village, Pokhara.** 412999
- **Jomsom Mountain Resort.** 492009
- **Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248999.**
  - Turkey and mulled wine, Rs 1,000 per head, 24 December.
  - X-Mas brunch, Rs 850 per head, 25 December.
  - Daily lunch and evening, six to 20 courses, from $19 per head.
- **Botega Restaurant**
  - Dolce vita: 20 person per night, all Western styles: www.botegarestaurant.com
- **Spa and Swiss Food**
  - Spiced pumpkin soup, grilled mackerel, a gratin potato and green salad
  - Rs 400 per person, 25 December.
- **Spa and Swiss Food**
  - Le Cafe des Trekkers
    - 11PM, 241163.
  - At Banu's, Kamal Pokhari, Wednesdays 6.30PM-8PM, Saturdays 1.30PM.
- **Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248999.**
  - Sunday lunch fondue, Rs 1,200 for two and raclettes, Rs 900 per head.
  - Mosiac.
  - Continental and Nepali food, friendly service. 480262, kodari@mos.com.np
- **Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248999.**
  - Swimming pool. Sundays, 11.30AM–5PM. Rs 750. Daily dinner fondue, Rs 1,200 for two and raclettes, Rs 900 per head.
- **Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248999.**
  - Mousse and other specialities. Solatee Crowne Plaza. 273999
- **Pokhara.** 412999
  - Special cake shop
- **Pokhara.** 412999
  - Christmas and Eve dinners Five courses at Chemin, Rs 2,500 per head, or Sunday Cafe Buffet with roasted turkey and mulled wine, Rs 1,000 per head, 24 December. X-Mas brunch, Rs 850 per head, 25 December.
- **Pokhara.** 412999
  - Christmas Eve dinner
  - Three-day Christmas at Hotel Blue Diamond, Rs 15,000 per person, all inclusive.
  - Six-course dinner on Christmas Eve, Rs 3,000 per person.
- **Pokhara.** 412999
  - Christmas Eve dinner
  - Saturdays and Sundays, 12 noon-6PM, Shivata Art Gallery, Pilgrims Book House, Kupondol.
  - Rs 600 per head, 22 December.
- **Pokhara.** 412999
  - Christmas Eve dinner
  - Rs 600 per head, 22 December.
  - Pleasure
  - Baths and massages.
- **Pokhara.** 412999
  - Christmas Eve dinner
  - Rs 1,800 per head, 24 December.
  - Pleasure
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Image and imagination

Photography and art meet again in Nepal, but in a rather more interesting manner.

Navin Joshi’s pictures, on display at the Park Gallery, Pulchowk, until 26 December, are an innovative and artistic blend of colour photography and subtle computer-assisted art. Joshi’s computer panels on photographs show the direction to take when the public is alert to heavy handed manipulations of photographic imagery by computer technology.

Most of Joshi’s photographs themselves use the traditional gamut of touristy and semi-touristy images from Kathmandu Valley, parts of the town, and the upper Kathmandu—its Buddhist faces, a Mustang darsa, people peering out of windows, elders contours themselves on the passport outside Patan Durbar. No complaint here, because the photographs’ originals are themselves very competent, but what Joshi does to them is what makes the joke. He sculpts his images in a professional scanner and then enhances one aspect or the other—the green of a skipping dhobi, the steam of a roaming horse—to bring out what we see as the soul of the image. Never overdose, the alterations give the pictures, printed on Kodak photographic paper, a dream-like yet almost imperceptible effect.

Conversely, photography often wonder why colour pictures do not carry the same depth of feeling as black and white photographs. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that by playing against each other exactly what is “real”, colour photography of landscapes and other subjects—all of which we have a surfeit of in Nepal—deny us the imagination that is required to read a picture, no matter how representative it might be. By enhancing the pictures to pinpoint the particular elements that draw him to photograph the tableau in the first place, Joshi gives us that space. When a picture looks almost too real, we are forced to re-evaluate what we expect out of a photograph, and in doing so, we look at it more.

Like children with a new toy, people the world over are over-doing computer manipulation pictures art (which often just delivers kitsch) and in photography (where much of it borders on the unsuitable). (See ‘Ethics in the age of digital photography’). Navin Joshi, on the other hand, seems to understand both the possibilities and the limits. He does not dash guilt Photoshop colours on pictures. Instead, his touch is light and delicate. It may be a touch of deep blue added to the sky above and beyond the packed and crowded wall of a Kathmandu dwelling, enhancing the colour markings placed by tourists on a pack of Tibetan mountain goats (chyangra), or getting just that right shade of brick-red to the façade of a Kathmandu palace. There is a tartan picture, where the green of a dhobi that hangs in the sun to dry is enhanced with a light shading of green that makes the entire picture stand out, and the same goes for a bundle of maize in another picture, and a wickerwork dhoko hanging against a painted woodboard wall in yet another.

Born in 1969, Navin Joshi says, “I grew up surrounded by his father’s paintings. However, I wanted to forge a different path from that of my father, as I chose to specialise in applied art, rather than drawing and painting.” He adds, “I had a profusion of ideas, visions and thoughts, and I identified the camera as my initial sketch tool, and the computer as a means to achieve what I wanted.” Joshi has no problem with the fact that he is using the aid of the computer to bring photographic art to the public. “By my explorations of photography made me realise that every photograph is actually a manipulation, in framing, use of lens, filter, camera format, kind of colour film, and darkroom manipulation.” Joshi talks about Ansel Adams’ work and how he used techniques like dodging and burning extremely to achieve the effects he wanted. “Computer technology is my darkroom,” Joshi explains. “I am merely extending the arena of traditional manipulations.” Adams’ work is interesting, the example Susan Sonntag used in her revered essay “On Photography,” in which she discusses how photography seems to be over-valued and over-analysed even as societies become saturated with images. She asks how, when faced with the grandeur and overt realities of Adams photographs of Yosemite National Park, one cannot but be a little awed and stunned by the sheer of the original. One might ask something similar of Joshi’s work, or indeed, of much of the photography that the power of Nepal’s landscapes inspires, sometimes unfortunately, whether in tourism brochures or coffee table books. (Much of this photography has been manipulated, whether to heighten the eeriness, or to embellish the Himalayan icefields in the evening sun, or bring the jungles of Chitwan into your living room.)

Work like Joshi’s can function in two ways to save us from both the tchotchkes we so often have to suffer, and the other extreme, the faint delirium in the actual scene itself. Joshi’s “manipulation” is more obvious than that in Adams’ work, and far more artistic than virtually any tourist pictures. In scanning this fine line, Joshi forces us to think about the place of photography as an art form in contemporary Nepali society. Joshi’s work is obviously neither in the world of brash and paint nor in the world of cameras and darkrooms, as we understand them both. And the realisation of this difference makes us think about what photography can and cannot do and whether all we expect from it is justified. It reminds us always that we are, after all, looking at an image, at one of many possible representations of one person’s perception of reality.

(South Asian Colours: Prime Minister Deuba and the Maintenance Partnership’s Minister for Population and Environment HPL Singh speaks on land degradation, drought and sustainable land development, Tuesday, 11 December.)
I t is a matter of great satisfaction to learn from the national press that the mayors of Kathmandu and Pyongyang have just signed a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise the sister-city relationship between our great towns. That the long and arduous process to declare the two capitals sibling has finally borne fruit is indeed a cause for joy and a tale that has chronicled this decades-long negotiation process. We must view this as the beginning of a great new relationship. And we must learn from its counterpart north of the DMZ.

Greater Kathmandu Metropolitan Cosmopolitan City can on a civil war footing. There is obviously a lot that the Summit which, as we all know, is being undertaken here under the auspices of the SAARC leaders, will consider in the context of the ongoing preparation for the SAARC meeting. As anyone who has been there will tell you, Pyongyang is a city that boasts of strong stuff. And let me raise a toast at this point to the honourable mayors of both capitals and how he is going to implement them in the context of the ongoing preparation for the SAARC. Essentially, it is a supply and demand situation. Kathmandu has a surplus of alms-seekers and Pyongyang has a shortage. Let’s do an exchange. There is of course the real danger that the Mutts of Manadu while on a study tour north of the 38th Parallel will end up being served as Man’s Best Friend in Oyster Sauce. But this is a danger that they will have to live with for the greater cause of international solidarity. After all, it is a man-eat-dog world out there. There is no denying that some dogs will get away, others may have to surrender, and a fairly large proportion of our dogs will end up on the streets of Pyongyang and make them a friendly place once more.

But there is one aspect of Pyongyang that leaves a lot of people other than pundits and alms-seekers make their living from religion. But come time for a puja or a yagya, huge pieces of cloth with Ganudas and Ganeshas painted on them, specially coloured pots, cardamom from Guatemala, the store has it all. Run by 35-year-old Prakash, the shop is open round the clock, not because it is good for business, but because they consider it their obligation to society. “You never know who might need what, and when. We are open 24 hours, and people can always call for us upstairs,” says Prakash.

Although the rituals of the Valley’s diverse Hindu and Buddhist rituals. This diversity ought to be the norm in the multicultural and multilingual society. “You never know who might need what, and when. We are open 24 hours, and people can always call for us upstairs,” says Prakash. As anyone who has been there will tell you, Pyongyang is a city that boasts of strong stuff. And let me raise a toast at this point to the honourable mayors of both capitals and how he is going to implement them in the context of the ongoing preparation for the SAARC. Essentially, it is a supply and demand situation. Kathmandu has a surplus of alms-seekers and Pyongyang has a shortage. Let’s do an exchange. There is of course the real danger that the Mutts of Manadu while on a study tour north of the 38th Parallel will end up being served as Man’s Best Friend in Oyster Sauce. But this is a danger that they will have to live with for the greater cause of international solidarity. After all, it is a man-eat-dog world out there. There is no denying that some dogs will get away, others may have to surrender, and a fairly large proportion of our dogs will end up on the streets of Pyongyang and make them a friendly place once more. But there is one aspect of Pyongyang that leaves a lot of people other than pundits and alms-seekers make their living from religion. But come time for a puja or a yagya, huge pieces of cloth with Ganudas and Ganeshas painted on them, specially coloured pots, cardamom from Guatemala, the store has it all. Run by 35-year-old Prakash, the shop is open round the clock, not because it is good for business, but because they consider it their obligation to society. “You never know who might need what, and when. We are open 24 hours, and people can always call for us upstairs,” says Prakash. This diversity ought to be the norm in the multicultural and multilingual society. "This is the only shop of its kind around, and people come from as far as Siroyambho to Bhaktapur to make their purchases," says Prakash. Although the rituals of the Valley’s different communities seem to go strong throughout the year, the Amatyas knows better. “Sure the shop has established a name for us, we learnt all about this from our forefathers. And what’s more, it is our duty to continue providing this humble service to society,” smiles Prakash.

The shop specialises in Newari ceremonial items, as well as those needed for orthodox Hindu and Buddhist rituals. This diversity ought to be the norm in the multicultural and multilingual society. "This is the only shop of its kind around, and people come from as far as Siroyambho to Bhaktapur to make their purchases," says Prakash. Although the rituals of the Valley’s different communities seem to go strong throughout the year, the Amatyas knows better. “Sure the shop has established a name for us, we learnt all about this from our forefathers. And what’s more, it is our duty to continue providing this humble service to society,” smiles Prakash.

But during the months of Pauhsh and during Purneshhath, which comes around once in three years business goes down," he explains. As for profits, they aren’t as high as one might imagine, but the satisfaction the couple get out of their work is apparent in their glowing smiles. Prama Kumari Amatya, 75-year-old mother, leaves her son and daughter-in-law to take care of things, and can often be found basking in the sun outside the shop. From her long experience and wisdom, she realises the young couple—and anyone else who cares to ask—that contemporary Kathmanduites seem to be getting more, rather than less, devout. We’re willing to bet that will be the case as long as Hem Narsingh’s little shop of wonders is around.