Women leaders seen, but not heard

As the struggle for supremacy in Nepal’s politics enters a new and uncertain phase with the session of the restored Lower House on Sunday, noticeably absent are the country’s women politicians.

Whether it is about the no-confidence vote that Prime Minister K P Oli may face in the Parliament he dissolved, or the tactics his party rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal may use, or speculations about NCP members switching sides, or even the kingmaker role being played by the NCP Sher Bahadur Deuba, female leaders are nowhere in the picture.

“If the leaders of both factions had handled their disagreement in a logical and appropriate manner, the party wouldn’t have been divided in the first place,” says NCP MP Uttam Pandey. “As is the norm, there is more finger-pointing than an acknowledgement of weakness from all sides concerned.”

Pandey, who has been outspoken on gender rights and development matters in parliamentary committees, says that women and a new generation of leaders need to be given a chance.

“It would be great if leaders had an understanding that it is not in anyone’s best interest for them to hold on to office after having already become chief executive and the chief of party once,” he says, directing his statement at male leaders who want to be prime minister again, despite having held the post multiple times before.

Female leaders say they are often sidelined in political discourses if they disagree with the male bigwigs. Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP) leader Saras Girish Joshi says the current political crisis is rooted in infighting within the NCP.

“Why should Oli have to resign?” Girish asks. “I have been victimised by party politics, so I understand very clearly what he is going through.”

Girish had been dismissed from the Janata Samajwadi Party-Nepal in July last year when she refused to vote for a constitutional amendment bill following the Lajja Devis deposition in India in July last year. She said she received little support from male colleagues in her party.

“I had to take a stand on my principles,” she says. “Women cannot take for granted that they will be heard through regular channels. So they have to step out of the box and raise their voices.”

While women’s representation in politics is a popular topic for discussion, female leaders have open and often public derision and ridicule from their male counterparts. They range from doubts about political competence to disparaging language and misogynistic attacks on their appearance. This is in turn informs public opinion of women in leadership, perpetuating a vicious cycle that disempowers their social and political platforms.

“Female leaders and women’s issues are used as convenient political tools during campaigns and movements, but we are relegated to the sidelines as soon as it comes to decision-making,” says Pandey.

“Women are also actively involved in politics, but female leaders are only considered dedicated so long as they agree with the positions of their respective parties. When they dare express any form of disagreement, their masculinity and femininity are questioned and they are considered to be pushing the ‘feminist’ agenda,” Pandey adds.

Girish and Pandey acknowledge the increasing participation of women in politics yet against the backdrop of an environment that is not conducive for women to air dissenting opinions.

That Nepal had a female president before even the United States has been rare for much back-peddling, and the country may boast of having one of the largest female representations in Parliament. But, much of it is still confined to tokenism.

Shresta Karki

Two decades of debate on female migration page 4

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Holding up the whole sky in Jumla page 14-15

Everyday as if it is Women’s Day EDITORIAL PAGE 2

Watch 4000+ Exclusive Contents, Reality Shows, Movies, Nepali & International Series, Comedy Shows, Education and Much More on Xvod
During the 2015 earthquake, it was the women who kept the households alive through their labors. As the nation rebuilt homes, new studies show that women-headed households have fared far better during the economic crisis caused by the pandemic.

Given the chance, Nepali women have also time and again proved their usefulness in leadership positions. At the local elections in 2017, Nepalese women had constituted two mayors in which women were voted both chair and deputy. In most municipalities, deputy mayors are required by law to be women if the mayor is a man.

Mai Kantika Shrestha, Secretary General of the National Federation of Women’s Organisations (NFOWO) and vice-mayor Aparna Subedi, the head of the NCP have together improved education, farming, nature conservation, and now Covid-19 management in Jumla. The chief standing men of the NCP in Kalimreng should be ashamed of themselves.

Imagine what we could achieve if the Jumla and Hinalsedep model was replicated in every part of Nepal’s 736 municipalities, 17 cities, and the Central Government. Only 3 in the 25-member Cabinet are women, and women in politics are still largely confined to the kind of ceremonial roles seen in the cabinet, except for President Bidya Devi Bhandari.

We must boast of having one of the largest female representations in Parliament but few have a say in matters of importance. We need to encourage female politicians who dare to stick to principles instead of just scrutinizing them for just being women.

Similarly, 80% of Nepal’s labour force are female but they continue to be restricted to the ‘underpaid’ sector. We have to utilise their full potential and promote equality at home and in the workplace for women to gain economic independence.

International Women’s Day on 8 March must not be limited to women and unions. We need to strive for gender equality in every sphere of life and at every day of the year. It is a need we have to pay special status to the doubly discriminated women from Dalit and other excluded groups, as well as gender minorities who identify themselves as women.

Nepal’s progress in public health, education, and nutrition is significant. The ownership and delivery system which is the same to a large extent in both the urban and rural areas. There are plenty of examples of advanced women’s health programs which have been successful in many parts of the country.

We hope that our women researchers and medical professionals will come forward to take the lead in these programs.

We are halfway to the goal of 2030, which means we need to work harder than ever. The message to the women of Nepal is that women’s voices must be heard. It is time to give women a voice.

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

In 2001, six years ago this week, the Arunachal Pradesh referendum was one of the major events in Nepal, and it was a victory for the people of Nepal. The referendum was held on May 5, 1995, and it resulted in the secession of Arunachal Pradesh from Nepal and the establishment of the independent state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The referendum was held in response to the growing tension between Nepal and India over the status of Arunachal Pradesh, which both countries claimed.

The referendum was a major event in the history of Nepal and it had a significant impact on the country’s political landscape. It marked the end of a long-standing dispute over the status of Arunachal Pradesh and it paved the way for the establishment of the independent state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The referendum was not without its controversies, however. Some in Nepal have argued that the referendum was not held in a free and fair manner, and that it was influenced by external forces.

Despite these concerns, the referendum was widely seen as a positive step for Nepal and it paved the way for the establishment of the independent state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Ultimately, the referendum was a significant event in the history of Nepal and it had a lasting impact on the country’s political landscape. It marked the end of a long-standing dispute over the status of Arunachal Pradesh and it paved the way for the establishment of the independent state of Arunachal Pradesh.

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HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY
Two decades of debate on female migration

A look back at how we have come back full circle in 20 years about the ban on migration. Or maybe we never left.

The flight those before us had to pick to change the status quo on female emigration are no longer present. The recent proposal restricting travel for Nepali women was a chilling reminder that we are just going around in circles.

LABOUR MOBILITY
Upasana Khadka

Over the last two decades since this newspaper started covering the issue, the stories we tell are all the same: women bypassing restrictive policies and the risks that women are willing to take for a better life for themselves and their families.

The rationale for the Department of Immigration’s reactionary proposal showed that the response to exploitation and abuse of female migrants has not moved beyond knee jerk bans.

Going back through the Nepal Times archive to find references to the state trying to keep Nepali women from leaving the country under the guise of female mobility complexities of the issue:

It is the very first 4th prototype edition of this paper Jyami Khadka in her Women to Women column wrote about female immigration officials at Kathmandu airport arresting women passengers.

In its October 2001 issue, Nepal Times reported about women going to the Gulf to work. Nearly 1,000 women responded, with over 60% saying yes. Some of the responses are quite revealing (see screenshot).

In the 13th January 2001 edition, Nepal Times reporter Humalika Rai explained how the high profile suicide of Kushi Shrestha in 1999 after being sexually assaulted by her employer in the Gulf led to the ban of women going to the Gulf for foreign employment.

She quoted Linda Pasley of the Center for the Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions saying there were many foreign employment violations basic human rights, and hides its own women.

On 30 July 2004, reporter A P Rai writes an article titled ‘Migrant Agency and Women’s Power’ showed how abuse abroad had not deterred Nepali women from migrating for household work in the Gulf. He quoted Marya Goni who was sexually abused but was still migrating for work in Qatar. “I would never happen again, but look at the situation in our country’.

An article about an unnamed Martha who managed to escape from an abusive employer in Kuwait, said to be a lapse message to her family how she had been raped by an acquaintance in the village.

In 31 October 2008, Drishti Rai told the story of Kopila Rai who suffered abuse as a caregiver in Israel.

In an interview with Nepal Times dated December 2009 issue, Carolynn D’Rellie of the ESLP asked if there is a link between migrant workers and human trafficking.

She replies, “Absolutely, especially when migrant workers don’t get through official channels, they are vulnerable to forced labour. Buddhism attaches great importance to human rights, and hides its own poor women.”

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Another woman named Anita from Nepal who managed to escape from an abusive employer in Kuwait, said to be a lapse message to her family how she had been raped by an acquaintance in the village.

An article in the 28 May 2010 edition of Nepal Times mentioned Rochele Shrestha who recorded an immigration official at Kathmandu airport asking her for a bribe even though she had the required paperwork.

In an op-ed titled ‘Womanpower’, in the 23 March 2012 issue of the paper, Rabindra Mahato argued that despite the ban being lifted, women continued to travel via illegal routes. Although there had been a policy change, women had been intercepted at New Delhi Airport after Nepal asked India to stop women going to the Gulf on visa.

‘Even Slaves are Treated Better’ was the title of a joint report by Susudha Buddhakoti and Mitra Sharma in the issue of 6 June 2012 about how legalising individual contracts for domestic workers to directly arrange their employment with foreign employers puts women at risk while giving recruiters a free pass, and giving being identified or implicated in case of abuse.

In 13 September 2013 Birendra Rai and Sanjib Pandey reported in Nepal Times about Sita, a South Korean woman who was accused and expelled by officials at Kathmandu airport.

Rajita Adhikary reported in the 6 June 2014 issue of Nepal Times on the experience of women like Elimeya who was a victim of domestic abuse, and left for overseas work only to land an employer in Qatar who raped her. She returned to Nepal in 2011 with a baby.

In the 5 September 2016 issue, Om Arsha Rai reported on how traffickers sold uneducated and poor Nepali girls into Indian brothels had moved on to the Gulf and even East Asia. The 2015 earthquake made it even more vulnerable to trafficking.

In a report titled ‘Never Heard from Apa’, in the 27 January 2017 issue, Rai again reported on missing Nepali migrants who disappeared while working in the Gulf. We only wonder how long the government benefits from the money that migrant workers send home, but at what cost? in an interview with Nepal Times dated December 2009 issue, Carolynn D’Rellie of the ESLP asked if there is a link between migrant workers and human trafficking.

She replies, “Absolutely, especially when migrant workers don’t get through official channels, they are vulnerable to forced labour. Buddhism attaches great importance to human rights, and hides its own poor women.”

Buddha’s flight tracking system

As Nepal’s illegal airport with a fleet of 14 planes, Buddha Air has realised a Flight Operation Quality Assurance (FOQA) system that allows monitoring aircrafts’ performance. The plane uses ADS-B, AOC monitoring, and FDR’s that track 24 hours. Through this, the company is able to read the data performance of each flight and ensure performance.

Khuikur’s Music Nation

Nepal’s beating heart of music from Chautara has been the winner of the virtual music contest Khuikur Music Nation on 25 February at Basket Club, Chautara. The trophy is worth Rs 1.1 million. The virtual music contest had launched in December 2020 and was organised by Khuikur to generate social media.

Yest Golf Tournament

Yeti Airlines held a golf tournament at Sauraha Resort in memory of the late chairman Managing Director Ang Chandra Shrestha who died in a helicopter crash two years ago this week. Shrestha was an avid golfer.

Tributes to Mikhael Dafal
The Advertising Association of Nepal (AAN) has paid tributes to Mikhael Dafal, who died two weeks ago. Dafal was chairman of AAN in 2020. AAN president Samrat Bista was chairman of AAN president Samrat Bista.

SmartDoka recognised

Nepal’s top e-commerce company, SmartDoka, newly acquired by MGS Group has been recognised as the highest rated e-commerce app in Nepal by uTrust of uSofa Nepal.

Diljohnie’s VOD

Diljohnie TV has introduced uHD, a streaming video on demand service to its regular customers to watch Nepal’s largest library of films and series, including those for children.
The steadfastness of a long-distance runner

How a rescued child worker is racing to fulfill her dream of becoming an athlete

Drisha Shrestha

When 11-year-old Asha fled to Kathmandu from her hometown in Rolpa with a friend, her only wish was to earn some money to pay for school. Having lost her mother at a young age and with a father who was not supportive, she knew she would have to find her own education. But however attractive the bright lights of Kathmandu may have seemed from remote Rolpa, the reality of the chaotic and fast-paced capital was different.

“One of my friends suggested we work in a brick kiln in Kathmandu like many other families from Rolpa. She said we could earn enough money to pay for school,” said Asha.

Carrying bricks and piling them up in basas regularly was not just tedious, but also difficult for the young girl. Asha started looking for other options that would at least allow her to study, and it looked like working at a restaurant would be better.

“I washed dishes, cleaned tables, and served the customers all day. I wanted to study but my employers would taunt me for not doing my job properly whenever I tried to make time for my books,” she recalls. For five years, she told all day in the restaurant, and read her best books into the night until fatigue lulled her to sleep.

Then one day, some women showed up at the restaurant where she worked. They identified themselves as representatives of a group called Shakti Samuha, a non-profit anti-human trafficking organization, and recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2013.

“Two women came to the restaurant and asked me (I would like to go with them. I told them I would go if they sent me to school,” recalls Asha. That day marked the beginning of a new phase of her life.

“This organization has not only provided me education but also given me a new perspective in life,” says Asha.

The Shakti Samuha was founded by the survivors of human trafficking and has been working to rescue girls and young women, and rehabilitate them.

It stepped up its activities after the 2015 earthquake and the pandemic to counter a spike in trafficking. In 2015 founder and trafficking survivor herself, Chetrimaya Tamang, received the Jero Award to End Modern Day Slavery Award from Hillary Clinton.

For the past two years, the shelter has been Asha’s home. Instead of waking up to a row of bricks or a pile of dishes and the feeling of a floor scrub clutched in her palms, she now stretches her legs, running four hours every morning.

The 18-year-old is one of the six athletes selected for the Exchange and Empower program 2021, by the Mira Rai Initiative, a nine-month intensive training for Nepali long-distance runners. Mira Rai is now a household name in Nepal and abroad for her ultra-marathon wins, and for the initiative to give young Nepali women like her the same opportunity to show their athletic spirit.

Asha still has time for her English language lessons and receives counseling to help her transition from a childhood of hardship.

“The women and girls in our organization have been through difficult times. From sexual exploitation and abuse to life-threatening working conditions. We work to provide them any kind of assistance needed from shelter support, education, skill-developing training to psychological counseling,” says Nisha Dulal at Shakti Samuha.

Since it began working with vulnerable women, Shakti Samuha has educated over 1,500 children and sheltered 1,627 survivors of trafficking, supporting them towards financial and emotional stability.

“We provide both educational and extracurricular help so that they have the opportunity to choose what they want to become in the future,” says Dulal. And that is how Asha stumbles upon her newfound passion in running.

In Grade 7, the course books demand a lot of Asha’s attention, but she makes sure to set aside the time to train to become a runner.

“I have had a difficult childhood. But my passion for sports and the opportunity to go to school has helped me overcome my past traumas,” she says.

As a grantees of the Mira Rai Exchange and Empower Program 2021, which has already helped 10 female athletes in last two years, Asha has found support for marathon training, education, and professional development. “We are very proud to see Asha doing what she loves and excelling at it. It gives us hope for so many others,” says Dulal.

While years of hard labour has given Asha a thick complexion, an inquisitiveness and zeal for learning blazed in her eyes when she spoke.

“There was a time when I could not even write my name or talk to people. I was afraid and did not understand why life would be like,” she says. “Now, I have people who are supporting me to fulfill my dreams. I think I’m going to keep running."

Some corners have been changed

Shakti Samuha: http://shaktisamuha.org

POWER OF ENDURANCE

Go online to watch video of Asha talk about her hard life working in brick kiln and a restaurant to pay for her studies, and how Shakti Samuha has helped with her education and open doors to a new life.

Khubiki

#GarvaKaSaathNepali
New book profiles 50 Nepali women who changed their lives and of those around them

Pratibha Tuladhar

**Here is a directory of 50 Nepali women from different walks in life in Nepal, a collaborative work by Bec Odhish, Sarita Gurung and Nimdiki Shampa-Durlash, with photos by Jessica Analys. 50 Women from Nepal comes with the claim to ‘change the way you see the world’, and it might if you give this book a chance.**

The authors ask six questions on repeat to 50 women from public and private spheres, some known names and some new, known, and many of whom have been profiled in this newspaper over the years. The questions range from what matters, to their inspirations to the one word that刻画s, and in answering those six questions, the lives of these 50 Nepali women unfold before us.

Kalpana Pradhan is a mother, and in her being a mother matters the most. Self-educated, she has written over forty children’s books in Nepal. But the life of a writer came to her by a fluke when she started writing stories for her own children, none of them written with the intent of a public eye.

The word ‘mother’ is uttered when we hurt, feel surprise or dismay. The term is loaded because of women like Pradhan, who fence their children from the world at crowded lalls in Patan. We also know this from Pratiksha Pradhan, who, as a teacher of Nepal, allows her students to sing and converse and get noisy in their classrooms as they learn, instead of disciplining them—variations of motherhood.

But motherhood is sometimes akin to sisterhood. Gita Rasali has spent her life dedicating it to fighting for justice for those affected during Nepal’s conflict. Her sister was sexually tortured and killed as a child soldier herself, and she has seen the darkest side of war. “My family’s grief changed the direction of my life. It led me to search for answers,” she says in the book.

IWD2021
5 - 11 March 2021 #IWD2021

The book, heavy in your hands, will keep you going as you read about how Anandita Shrestha Tamang has gone on to make vermiculture a lucrative business, as well as a gift for those around her. To read former Chief Justice Sushila Karki’s talk about integrity, fragility and the importance of women supporting other women, offer one of the greatest nuggets of wisdom.

The book displays sisterhood in women like Shashikant and Jeevika Rana, two young entrepreneurs who started the PadPaine campaign to support menstrual hygiene. There is the story of Sunit Thapa, who has hired women to make cloth bags, managing to displace plastic bags from major stores.

A farmer’s daughter, Jharna Tamang, who set up tea farms and employed others, says tea brings people together in sad and happy times. There is memory of poverty in the book, just as there is the story of perseverance—of women like Geeta Rimal, who has lost family members to poverty and pain, but has not given up raising a granddaughter alone. And there is the courage of Laxmi Chhetri, one of the first openly lesbian women in Nepal.

The stories that have been curated, range from that of the famous actress Kantini Manandhar to Sangita Magar, who calls herself a ‘survivor’ after her experience of having been through an acid attack. In the lives of women featured in the book, who are players, artists, writers, actors, activists, teachers, entrepreneurs, intellectuals, doctors, agriculturalists, climbers, journalists, politicians, pilots, you will see courage, courage and compassion as they build their lives before us so we can make ours.

Based on interviews that were transcribed and translated from different languages by a group of women, this is a book by women about women. The book has a very development document feel with its glossy pages, modeled after the international 50 Women: Who Will Change the World? You see the world, but the texture also gives the porports the effect it is expected to have on the reader.

Seeing women in control of their skills and lives is what makes us realize that independence matters. Each woman’s life in itself is actually a saga of the many lives she leads to evolve into the person she is constantly trying to become.
About women of women’s writing in the post-literary world of Nepal. Rather than see it as an extension of the patriarchal sphere, an area that is defined by the extent to which women are able to express themselves and their sexuality. These women have always been the voice of the silenced and the voice of the oppressed. They have always been the voice of the powerless and the voice of the marginalized. They have always been the voice of the voiceless.

This is a wonderful book, and I would highly recommend it to anyone interested in women’s writing in Nepal. It is a great read and a must-read for anyone interested in women’s issues, gender equality, and social justice.

Kamla Sujan

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Song of the Sun God

The Wayward Daughter, Shradha Ghale
Tsanglak Lhamo is a young woman who is torn between her duties as a daughter and her desire to follow her own path. She is torn between her family’s expectations and her own desires. She is torn between her love for the sun god and her duty to her family. She is torn between her past and her future. She is torn between her heart and her mind.

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The Poisonwood Bible

Barbara Kingsolver
The novel follows the story of five women from the same family who are sent to Congo to live with their missionary father. The novel explores the themes of race, gender, power, and identity.

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Women of Nepal

The book is a collection of essays and stories written by women from different parts of Nepal. It is a great read for anyone interested in women’s writing in Nepal. It is a great read for anyone interested in women’s issues, gender equality, and social justice.

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The Web of Our Own Lives

Maryann Thapa
This is a wonderful book, and I would highly recommend it to anyone interested in women’s writing in Nepal. It is a great read and a must-read for anyone interested in women’s issues, gender equality, and social justice.

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In search of language, losing in the imitation of the masters of every day life, and finding in it that approach to the land. If you read only one book in this list, make this - because it is the present and future of Nepali women’s writing.

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About women of women’s writing

Here are ten books to read as the world marks International Women’s Day.

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Rica Bhattarai

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March

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IWD2021
A taste of Nepal’s Rana past

New cookbook is a gastronomic flashback to the country’s royal culinary heritage

When a cookbook makes a reader drool, and just turning the pages gets the digestive juices going in anticipation, it means the content is a culinary masterpiece. Those conditions were fulfilled in Rohini Rana’s mouth-wateringly illustrated book Rana Cookbook: Recipes from the Palace of Nepal being launched this month in Kathmandu after being delayed for a year due to the pandemic. This lavishly illustrated collection of recipes from the House of the Rana has been worth waiting for.

Nepal’s Rana dynasty ruled for over 176 years, and is best known for ornate wedding cake palaces. These vast stone structures were influenced by neo-classical architecture of England and France that prime ministers Jung Bahadur Rana and Chandra Shumsher Rana were impressed by during their visits to Europe in different centuries.

The Rana era generally gets a bad press in Nepal because the rulers were replaced by the Shaha after 1956, and most of their achievements were airbrushed by later historians. Ranas were known for their luxurious lifestyle, sometimes bordering on decadence.

They wereriche, and the wasting and dining was of epic proportions. Rana cuisine was a distinctive fusion of Maghali dishes blended with Nepali preparations and ingredients. Some of the recipes were actually brought to Nepal by the Akhanga chefs brought in from Lucknow by Jung Bahadur Rana after the Indian Mutiny in 1857. Even though they were Muslim, they collaborated with the Hindu cooks in the Rana palaces to come up with a unique blend that can today be called ‘Rana cuisine’.

Rohini Rana was the daughter of Rajmata Anand Kumari of Avanaghat, one of the princely states of India’s Uttar Pradesh. It was a tradition in those days for Indian and Nepali nobility to intermarry, and she wed Gunwari 228 Rana, the great-grandson of Chandra Shamsher Rana, and who was Nepal Army chief from 2012-2015.

Growing up as the youngest sibling in one of the most beautiful hill stations in northern India, she had an idyllic childhood. I was loved, and I admit, slightly pampered,” recalls Rana, who is better known by her nickname, Dolly. “Summers in Nainital were endless lunches and dinners with tables piled high with food.”

Family members were such foodies that they spent one meal planning and discussing the next one. In Kathmandu, Dolly had to get used to life in a palace, and it was the common interest in food preparations that helped her blend right in. Gen Gunwar Rana is the seventh generation of his clan serving in the Nepal Army, and Dolly accompanied her husband on various UN peacekeeping and diplomatic postings abroad as well as to remote regions of Nepal.

It was when Gen Rana was posted to the Nepal Army base in Sukpur in Mauwampur in the 1990s that Dolly started working on her cookbook. She prepared many of the dishes herself from the training she got from her husband’s nanny, Chintiya Champa, whose father also worked in Luber Mahal palace.

Rana cuisine retains much of its Nepali heritage as a substrate on which are added the Maghali-inspired embellishments. So there is the basic tare, or sweet, cooked with uniquely Nepali spices like sug, sug or river that distinguish the Nepal staple from north Indian food. While north Indian cuisine is noted for its rich and thick gravy, Nepali food comes with lighter wet, spicy, sour, or spicy, back in Kathmandu, Dolly started collecting and documenting recipes from Rana palaces, and found that each clan had a slightly different variant of the basic preparations. Dolly believes that the culinary traditions of her ancestors is just as important to preserve as its monuments and historical landmarks.

“The cuisine is part of our cultural heritage, and it is in danger of disappearing with the passing of generations,” says Rana. “This book took me three decades to prepare, three years to give it its final touches. It is a labour of love.” Indeed, that shows in the meticulously described recipes listed conveniently and delightfully under cavernous-sounding chapters: Dal/e, Khalti, Chara, Medhi, Haars, Jungali, Kasur, Luber, Chara, although it may now be illegal in Nepal to hunt some of three wild beings. There are also chapters on Dal, Bhuna, Takkat,
Rothi, Khane Kura, Achar, and to hit the sweet spot, Guliy. The book has a handy and neatly ordered list of recipes so that in the end you can make it easier to find what you want. The book was tested and tasted in Nepal, pages designed with exquisite food photography by Mamta Agrawal, only the printing was done in India. Ex-king Gyanjendra Shah, who was himself partly raised in a Rana household, writes in the preface: "I have to confess that I have learned quite a few things I didn’t know before I read this book. What’s more, I’m certain that I still don’t know all."

Rana Cookbook
Recipes from the Palace of Nepal
by Renu Rana
Penguin Random House, 2021
254 pages
EVENTS

Women’s Hike 2021
On the occasion of international Women’s Day, Let’s Hike and Adventure Events Nepal are jointly organizing a day hike to glamorous waterfalls from Sundarijal and ends at Budhanilkantha. 
5 March, 6.30AM

Pad Your Way
“Pad your way”, an awareness event that aims to overcome the stigmatisation associated with menstruation and promote Menstrual Health and hygiene management through interaction spaces with professionals and will be followed by a fundraising campaign for the donation of sanitary pads in an orphanage. Visit for more.
A March, 2022

Night Bazaar
Shop for handicrafts, antiques, accessories, local collectibles, silk and customised and custom orders and connect with a variety of vendors. Meet and network with entrepreneurs at the event organized by SMEs Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council Nepal.
6 March, 6pm, Hotel Motel Residence

Saturday Art Session
National Museum, in collaboration with Embassy Restaurant and Bar brings back its weekly Art Session this week. The three-hour session will be conducted by women artists introducing the cultural art form and in history. Register here.
6 March, 11:30AM, Embassy Restaurant and Bar

ONLINE ARCHIVES

The Women Led Hat Bazaar
This women’s day, a special women-led Hat Bazaar is being organized by NIKS Kathmandu Chapter and Kishma Mall. Visit and support Nepali women entrepreneurs. More on the website: 6 March
Myoka Museum Busaune

Marti Chautari
Watch Marti Chautari discussion sessions on topics ranging from feminism to gender equality. Sessions available on the MARTI Chautari Facebook page.

Crash Course
A behind-the-scenes tour of the Museum of Ima Water Tank, a crash course is a one-stop destination for educational material. Watch tons of articles, courses, and short videos.

Women of the World Week
As part of the Women and Girls programme, the British Council in partnership with the WOW Foundation, is organizing WOW Week 2022, an online series of art and culture programmes being held to build, connect, and sustain a global movement for a gender equal world.
Visit their website to watch sessions.
Live event subtitled for 6 March

DINING

Nani’s Kitchen
Nani’s is a well-designed fastfood restaurant showcasing the Rachhali Chana in its glory. The chef’s menu offers a diverse mixture of local and western cuisine. Website: www.nanihai.com

Yangling Tibetan Restaurant
Affordable, cozy and serves one of the juiciest meat platters amongst the dining options in Kathmandu. Yangling is both popular among tourists and locals. Location: Ring Road, (01) 457466

Chez Caroline
Chez Caroline has been serving delicious and freshly prepared food in a rustic and refined setting away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Chef Caroline and her team are here to offer a wide selection of British dishes with a modern twist as well as high-end sharing specialties. Caudex, Bhaktapur (01) 4581207

Bhojan Ghar
Open for business, Bhojan Ghar is the staple restaurant of the royal palace, Bhojan Ghar is now the imaginative renovation of the beautiful and bustling where traditional North Indian cuisine is served alongside a vast selection of 77 dishes on the menu. Contact: (01) 408623

French Creperie Kathmandu
A cozy French cafe on the corner of Thamel, French Creperie serves some of the finest crepes in the town. Phone: 021152008

AIR QUALITY INDEX
KATHMANDU, 26 FEBRUARY - 4 MARCH

 طويل
ONLINE ARCHIVES

Tasty
This is the time to boost your culinary horizon. If you want any type of meal that was made for minimal cost, it’s got to be. The family recipes and the mobile app has hundreds of recipes to choose from, and quick it’s how to achieve.

OUR PICK

Pick up with the sweet and basic panna cotta at 6am high school, a 99.5-year-old finds inspiration from her mother’s ice-cream bars and creamically delicious. It’s a smoothie that spoons itself into a white bowl, covered with a name plate and placed in the Netflix comedy, Moxy. Based on the magic of Jennifer Moxy, and directed by Amy D’Agostino.

THIS IS HOME

This is home
With traditional homes from countries around the world with Google’s “This is Home” virtual tour. Learn about the history and each house. Come and get a glimpse inside the different cultures with Google Street View.

Khole
A cycle of life
Sanjog Rai Mar 5 - Mar 10
Van Gogh Gallery
Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Kathmandu
Gamma gallery Time: 10am-7pm

बालबाल्लवीको माध्यम रहेको हिंसा, दुःखवाद, शोषण मात्र, जोखिमपूर्ण अवस्थामा रहेको वा बालाधिकारीको उल्लंघन मा बालबाल्ले भएको छ भने माथि हेल्पलाई नसको नल्लो अङ्गो।

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नेपाल सरकार
सरकार तथा सुचना प्रतिष्ठानले उल्लंघन र भयमा रूपमा प्रर्योगिता भएको बालबाल्लको सुचना तथा प्रसारण विभाग

[Contact Number]
Women moving Nepal’s climate activism

Young women in Nepal are working passionately to lead action on the climate crisis

Sewa Bhattachari

A generation ago, “climate change” was a foreign term in Nepal and there was very little understanding or awareness of it in the media and society. This added Hindu Rhandari, and it made her think about Nepal’s position as one of the most vulnerable countries to the global impact.

“When I started working on climate in 2014, I was an undergraduate student, and still didn’t know about these issues,” says Rhandari. “I was aware of the existence of climate change, but I think it was a bit overwhelming.” Rhandari is currently working for climate change advocacy as a team member at Climate Interactive.

A student of veterinary science, Rhandari began to see the linkages between climate change and what she was studying. “It’s something we need to pay attention to now.”

Rhandari’s work now involves using interactive tools and surveys, and workshops to teach people about the climate emergency and the role it plays in Nepal.

The organization has developed games that simulate scenarios of what could happen if emissions continue to rise. These games help people understand the issue, and it’s been a great way to reach out to young people.

She has engaged in education and engagement activities related to youth climate issues through workshops and courses. Her work has reached more than 1,000 students so far. She was also involved in the Himalayan Climate Initiative (HCI) which works towards creating awareness among the youth of the impact of climate change.

Rhandari says, “We are providing local level government fellowships to 60 fellows. They need to identify problems and design sustainable solutions.”

Rhandari and her colleagues work on projects to design strategies to implement the local government’s climate change policies. Their ideas are developed into projects to be implemented and funded by the local municipality.

One of these is the Himalayan Biodiversity Initiative, which supports women from lower-income groups to make and sell cloth bags to discourage the use of plastic bags, while also helping the creators of the bag understand the impact of the climate crisis.

“Public campaigns not just help make the issue visible in the media, but also remind people to think of climate issues,” says Acharya.

Sagarka Bhatta, who founded Power Shift Nepal, often leads such public campaigns. Educational programs about the relationship between climate change, city, gender, mountain and agriculture are some of the areas of their work. The participants are women aged between 16-24 who engaged in research on climate change policy, followed by activism.

“Power Shift Nepal has campaigned against oil drilling exploration in Nepal. We are also collecting signatures from environmentalists against increased taxes for electric vehicles.”

Such outreach programs and campaigns help raise awareness of climate issues among a larger audience, says Bhatta. Campaigns related to fossil fuel free urban space and how to transfer to renewable energy have been some of their latest activities.

With young women in urban centers stepping up activism and awareness, there is newfound hope that their work will help spread understanding on the issue.

In December 2020, the Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE) approved a Gender and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, which many activists marked as an achievement. But the work to change the way the issue is perceived and understood, and to raise Nepal’s voice in international platforms continues to be an uphill one.

Nepal’s Youth for Climate Action (NYCA) is one such voluntary group, a loose network of youths that works to make children and youth aware of climate change through research, advocacy and awareness programs. Their presentations called “Climate Talk” and a talk series called “Green Discussions” on Zoom, are recorded in schools and colleges, which gives students a platform to have a say in climate change.

“With a secretariat at Clean Energy Nepal, we work on zero funds. We often approach other organisations for financial support to organise conferences, etc.” says Shekha KC, coordinator of NYCA. “It’s not always easy, but our passion for the environment keeps us going.”

Sewa Bhattachari is completing her BSc in USAID Project, which is funded by USAID and implemented by the British Council.
Happenings

BETWEEN 9-5: Jobs, grocery shopping, socialising with friends and family, running errands before and after work, managing the household, keeping up with children’s needs, and more — most women are stretched for time and struggle to watch out for their own health and wellness.

EX-COMRADES: Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa and Communist Party of Nepal’s Kedga Bahadur Baskarkuma during the first round of talks between the government and the outlawed Biplav faction of the former Maoist party in Baluwatar on Wednesday.

TECH-WAVE
Sania Shah

Technology can offer what no partner or caring family member can: watching out for you 24/7 and reporting back every day with accurate, thoughtful information that makes you feel informed, confident and supported.

FITNESS TRACKERS
Women do not necessarily want to wear a clunky, square fitness tracker that was not made with the female body and nuanced behaviours and lifestyle patterns in mind. Wearable technology like fitness tracking bands, bracelets or watches can be as much of a tech-powered tool as a style statement, so naturally, this category of gadgets has seen a boom of new products and brands in the last few years.

Some ladies are happy with a no-frills device that counts their steps and monitors their heart rate, but others want more. Smart functions offered in these new innovative products targeted at women include measuring the body’s energy levels, monitoring sleep stages and blood oxygen saturation, a heart rate tracker, checking stress levels, and test massage-reading capabilities. These gadgets come with full-featured activity trackers that come in slim, stylishly designed bands with up to 7-day battery. Some of them are even swim-friendly and weather both rain and shine with no glitch or heating issues. All this, with band colour options like rose gold and pretty pastels!

The Apple Watch Series 5 and 6 are the high-end, premium models of this category of devices, with their versatile features and beautiful design. From an EEG app to a Brushie app, this watch comes with all kinds of cool built-in capabilities. The best part is, it looks equally good in the gym as it does at a dinner party.

The Fitbit is a more affordable, almost equally reputable brand, making it name as a leading fitness tracker with a wide product portfolio. The Fitbit Charge 4, Fitbit Zip, Fitbit Versa 3 and Fitbit Inspire 3 are all extremely advanced yet simple to use tools. While the Versa series is a health and fitness smartwatch with Alexa (virtual assistant) built into it, the Inspire 3 is just a nice fitness tracker that looks fancy but is easy on the wallet. The Zip is a wear-between-the-fingers model that suits older women. Fitbit products are synced with the Fitbit app that monitors everything from workouts and nutrition to stress and sleep. They come in colours like rose pink and cement white.

Meanwhile, Garmin, an American multinational technology company that specialises in GPS technology, offers 10 different series of products, including the fēnix (for runners) and Forerunner (for running). Vivofit (for fitness fanatics), Vivosmart (for casual, stylish, everyday use) and Venu (Apple watch rival) among others. They even have Vivosport (a model especially created for children). Lassie’s known but undoubtedly attractive wearables like the Polar Vantage M, score high in the women’s-oriented category with a wide range of customisation options and over 130 sports to choose from for accurate feedback. Those there’s Omma ring, an innovative fitness tracking finger ring designed for comfort and convenience, keeping your wrist free for bangles, regular watches and such accessories.

PERIOD TRACKERS
Unlike fitness bands and watches, period trackers do not do the work by themselves. You need to assist their Artificial Intelligence by entering personal information regularly to improve predictions and analyses. For women with irregular cycles, a period tracking mobile app proves especially useful because intuitive data-driven technology can help predict your next period, the ovulatory window, high fertility days, and even mood swings and PMS (premenstrual syndrome). For those with regular cycles, planning special holidays or trekking trips and pregnancy becomes extremely easy and precise.

In 2021, period tracking is as quick and easy as remembering to use a sunscreen and moisturizing cream. At first, logging in symptoms and marking period days on the app calendar feels like extra work, but after a point, you get into the habit of it and also reap the rewards with automatic notifications and information personalized to your body’s patterns.

Chen, Fio, Apple Health, MagicGirl), Period Tracker, Glow and Eve by Glow make the list of apps that you can download without having to contemplate, carefully study or read reviews before installing them on your phone. While apps like Fio and Fio share knowledge and teach you about your body, Period Tracker and MagicGirl are perfect for teens and beginners who are trying to get a hold of the whole mess-free and stress-free management of period cycles. The Glow app is a fertility tracking app with high ratings, and Eve by Glow is the sister app that zooms in only on the period, sex life and Fitness tracking. For iOS users, there is always something special in store (plan intended), and thus, Apple Health, an app that covers the basics, is extremely free, and comes pre-installed in every iPhone under a pink heart icon. Who said technology can’t be cute, anyway?

GADGETS AND APPS FOR THE NEW AGE WOMEN

Wearables for women and period tracking apps that focus on female health

SHOT IN THE ARM: NCP co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal gets inoculated against Covid-19 at CNI Hospital in front of paparazzi on Wednesday.

GREEN ENERGY: British ambassador Nicola Palfit visits Nepal’s first industrial scale bagasse plant, Gandaki Uja in Kaski this week.

NORTH: Chinese ambassador Hou Yanqi with Sushil Gyawali, CEO of Nepal Reconstruction Authority (NRA) distributes health, stationery and sports items to students in the recently rebuilt Darbar High School.

SOUTH: Indian Ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra and National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) CEO Sushil Gyawali initiate the relocation of the Tate Maudhindirnath temple on Sunday.
Vagina could be a metaphor for ‘woman’, but not all woman identify with the vagina.

The assistant said that Bhagathitha’s late father had raped a woman in his “clan” which had been settled by two families but that his act of revenge had been to treat Bhagathitha the same way. It was not the man who was to be punished for his crime, but a woman close to him. So, between two men who had sexually attacked women, what we lost were two women, in a way that reduces them to owning vaginas. Instead of individuals with emotion and intellect. I use this term ‘reduce’ to denote the way the attackers acted.

Recently, I pulled out my copy of Naomi Wolf’s Vagina and read some parts that had been important to me when I read them some years ago. My friend who had gifted me the book had said: “Here’s your vagina,” when he handed it to me, letting the word step out of the boundaries.

Last month, we heard the term ‘vagina’ bandied about in public in Kathmandu, when Him Bista addressed a crowd of protesters. “Your vagina will vote you out,” she said, speaking just that sentence in English, mentioning the bowl towards Singh Darbar.

The crowd cheered at her fiery words, while the statement also gave way to contrasting social media posts and trolling, which often happens to women who are more vocal than not. This was also evidenced in the threats received by Sapana Sapkota and others as a backlash for their powerful words at the recent street protests.

Does the term ‘vagina’ represent people outside of the binaries? While the vagina has been synonymous to womanhood, being woman is not synonymous to having a vagina.

The first instance many of us are aware of the term is a swear word, used in public as a slogan for protest in Michigan, after legislator Lisa Brown was banned for using the term in the senate during a discourse related to an abortion bill. Protests followed later with some women carrying placards that read: “Vagina brought you into the world and vagina will vote you out.”

When Hillary Clinton was running for US presidency in 2016, we heard more debate along those lines with women arguing on different sides of the vagina. I am voting with my vagina; for Hillary Clinton, author Kate Harding had written, after the pass quoted above. Sarah Sanders as saying, “I don’t vote with my vagina.”

There have been other variations like “There’s no such thing as voting with your vagina” by Jessica Groes, where she argues why she would not vote for Hillary Clinton just because she is a woman.

I have been tempted to ask other women what they think about the use of the term, ‘vagina’. When I ask my mother to say the word in Newa, she refuses, calling it a swear word. I turn towards Sana Didi, who is helping my mother do the laundry and ask her. She goes into fits of giggles and says: “What is the use of saying it is a swear word? It is a curse word. Why is it we all use the word. But yes, it is also how I have a daughter, and how my daughter has a daughter now.”

Suburban Tales is a monthly column in Nepal Times based on real people in Kathmandu life.
The mayor of Chandanath Municipality and her deputy prove that elected women leaders are more accountable

Monika Deupala in Jumla

The more than 753 municipalities in Nepal are led by men and the deputy is required by law to be a women. Jumla is one of only two where both the mayor and deputy mayor are women.

And what a difference that has made. Mayor Kastika Sijawal of the Nepali Congress and Deputy Mayor Apsara Devi Neupane Mahat from the Nepali Communist Party have been working together ever since they were elected three years ago to deliver services and run an efficient administration.

This is all the more remarkable because it has happened in Nepal’s most deprived regions that has traditionally been steeped in cast division and patriarchy. Unlike the bickering male leaders in Kathmandu, the two women leaders from rival parties have worked hand-in-hand to expand the road network, and an acce electricity shortage, improve irrigation, and also to empower women with schemes to raise household income, address domestic violence and access to medical care.

Sijawal’s red brick home in Jumla speaks of comparative affluence, but inside it is different. The mayor is seated on the porch like extension of her house with her deputy next to her, flood covered with a shawl, and a yellow lark resting on her forehead. Yodday Mayor Sijawal was marking the seventh death anniversary of her husband, Munir Sijawal the district president of the Nepali Congress, who died in a plane crash in 2014. Sijawal was married young to a political family, and spent much of her adult life in this house. She had the chance to continue her education, unlike most women here, she was involved in lifting the status of women, and balanced that with motherhood and household care.

It was after the death of her husband that she was pushed into a more prominent political role, and was elected to be one of only two elected municipality heads in Nepal. Sijawal admits that being a woman helps her see things differently, and that there is tangible change.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor plan a lot of emphasis on roads because there is local demand for access, making it easier for villagers to get the sick to hospital, produce to market, and remove days of walking.

Jumla is connected to Surkhet via the Karnali Highway, the airport has been upgraded and the town’s stores and the houses are being rapidly replaced by multi-storey concrete structures. Like most other cities in Nepal, unplanned urbanisation is becoming a problem.

The once cobblestone streets of Khabang market are now asphalt, and there are motorcycles, Jeeps and three-wheel auto Rickshaws. Mayor Sijawal has plans to open a new track to Rara Lake, which will cut the three-day trek to three hours by jeep.

"The new roads have made life much easier," says Krishna Bahadur Bokaya, owner of an old tea house in the market who has witnessed Jumla’s transformation in the last 36 years. " Shopskeepers had to get porters to carry their goods all the way from Surkhet. Now it arrives at their doorstep."

Since road accessibility improved, the region’s very high maternal mortality rate has come down since mothers can be brought to the district hospital. Nine birthing centres have been set up, providing maternity services to more women from rural areas.

Women now come for follow-up check-ups and we refer them to Karnali Health Science Institution in case of complications," says Subha Bahadur Thapa, a nurse assisting at the Rokaya Beda Birthing Centre which has three beds in a birthing centre, with four health assistants doing the shifts.

Jumla is suffering from severe power cuts, since it is not connected to the national grid, and the municipality is working to complete two hydro-power plants. Some parts of the town still only get two hours of power a day, when everyone rushes to charge their mobiles and other appliances.

Some wards are already off the load-shedding schedule, while the completion of the feeder lines is also underway," says Sijawal, adding that she inherited a lot of unresolved issues from the past two decades.

As Sijawal talks, there is a whirl of spring in the air, although temperature at night is still below freezing in this town located at 2,500m elevation.

Jumla is the hub for the region’s biggest technical school that provides vocational education, PHOTO:Pratibha Ujjan

Mayor Kastika Sijawal

Deputy Mayor Apsara Devi NeupaneMahat
in Jumla

while another high school in the municipality, where Sejwalli used to be the principal, sprawls at the heart of town.

"There’s a lot more that needs to be done," says Deputy Mayor Mahal. While her brothers went to more expensive private schools, Mahal’s parents sent her to a government school. "The situation hasn’t changed. Parents still prefer private schools for boys," she says.

Since assuming office, Mahal launched a survey of government schools to ensure the incentives of free textbooks and lunch were effective, and supported enrolment.

"The number of students has actually gone up since we started regular surveys," says Mahal, but there is a budget constraint.

Lack of resources is also affecting expansion of the airport, and other infrastructure upgrades. Sejwalli’s dream project is to build a Ring Road to link remote settlements to the market in town and turn Jumla into a “smart city”.

"For me, a smart city is more about the consciousness to serve the people in need. It is about providing quality service to citizens, which requires every government worker to complete their duty," Sejwalli adds.

Some recent infrastructure development projects like the irrigation canals, and distribution of free seeds to single women farmers, have raised incomes. Under the Mayor Employment Program, there is technical training in machinery maintenance, skills development in dairy products, weaving Shaka, making potato chips and apple jam.

Together, the mayor and her deputy have been working as a bridge to make local women independent and work through interactions on Women’s Rights, Domestic Violence, Political leadership.

Sejwalli believes that the best thing about having women in leadership positions is that it provides other women access. "I remember the time when I used to wait for COOs at the gate, but now a woman in my municipality can come to me directly and talk to me. This has brought involvement and opportunity, as they are open to sharing their problems because they trust us."
Women are from Mars

Now that NASA has its Perseverance SUV and Ingenuity drone on the surface of the Red Planet, we will finally know if men are indeed from Mars. So far, after peering under every nook and cranny with its robotic arm, we have it on good authority that Perseverance has not found any evidence of intelligent masculinized lifeforms on Mars, which is another similarity the planet has with Earth.

However, the agency may need to shoot off another rocket to also figure out if women are from Venus. We will then finally know if there is true gender parity in the solar system.

What has shocked most people about the first panoramic photographs of Mars is how similar the terrain looks to parts of Planet Earth. In fact, shadows of the Mars buggy might as well have been taken at the Chahalai intersection.

The good news is that NASA has announced its probe has detected signs of water on Mars, although no traces of it have been discovered in Mangal Bazar yet.

Back here on Planet Earth, we commemorate another Intergalactic Women’s Day on March 8th to celebrate equality between women and men. Having had a head start, men have had an unfair advantage in enjoying the privilege of being Jack Asses. Women, too, should have the right to behave like Jenny Asses.

After all, women in this country have had a long way to go. There used to be zero female ministers in the interim cabinet in 1990. Compare that to the Oli Cabinet in which out of 25 ministers, two are women.

The question is, if 33% of civil service jobs are going to be given to females, what some of us broad-minded men going to do? After all, as Chairman Mao himself proclaimed, we men hold up the other half of the sky. What we in the Central Non-Working Committee of the recently formed All-Nepal Federation of Alpaka-Males and Dromes (Revolutionaries) want to know is, if men can be moronic where is the harm if women want to be as idiomatic as members of the male species?

Should we gays be getting worried that women are overtaking us in the march towards mediocrity? You bet. And what should gentlemen be doing about it? Kicking butt. Yes, men have no excuses but to start behaving in an even more obnoxious and loathsome manner than we already do. Comrade Hugo! Paat, we notice, has already got his balls rolling in this area.

All of us who wear Y-front undies must now reassert our manhood, and protect the bastions of Marxism-Leninism (Male) from feminism.

So, let this be a warning: we are not going to sit idly by while women outscore us in 10+2. We will also launch an agitation till jobs traditionally held by women are also reserved for men. Only through affirmative action can men also have a chance to prove themselves to be as good housewives and homemakers.

There is still hope. Kathmandu is getting its first male beauty parlour. At least there is a place now boys can go and get our blackheads squeezed by professionals without any danger of bits getting infected and erupting into pus-filled carbuncles and aunts.

So, in summary, we can conclude that women the world over have made a lot of progress in trying to be as idiosyncratic as men, but they still have a lot of catching to do. Women can also be from Mars if they try, and with Commonality, Opportunity, Perseverance and Ingenuity, we know they can do it.

The Ass

Panasonic

SUPER COOL SCHEME

Celebrating the people who make house, a HOME. FOR THE HOMEMAKERS.