There may be more women than men in Nepal, but their numbers hardly match up outside the census report. Only 172 out of 575 Constituent Assembly members are women, there has never been a female chief justice, and the current cabinet has only two women ministers.

It doesn’t stop there. We have also denied our daughters a shot at being Nepali. Our parliament passed a law in 2006, on par with international covenants, that women could pass on their citizenship to their children, only to be ‘amended’ – so long as their husbands are Nepali citizens. As a result there are at least 4.3 million people in Nepal who don’t have papers and can’t get an education, job, or own property.

Despite the immense challenges women face – at home, on the street, at their workplace – it is not all bad news. Women all across Nepal have overcome discrimination, violence, abuse, and family disapproval to set examples for everyone. Read our Women’s Day special feature to find out more.
A t a time when all 365 days in the calendar have been ‘booked’ for the international-day-of-this and the international-day-of-that, 8 March has lost a lot of its lustre.

In a society like Nepal where patriarchal values are so entrenched in the ‘men-stream’ culture, every day should be International Women’s Day. The first thing we have to change in this country is the absurd decision to declare 8 March a holiday only for women. This year it is a Saturday, but International Women’s Day should be marked by striving even harder for gender equality in the workplace.

Nepal’s underdevelopment is a direct result of culturally-sanctioned gender discrimination. Superimposing district-wise data for female literacy over the figures for extreme poverty, malnutrition, child marriage, maternal and infant mortality gives us an almost perfect match. Nepal’s poorest districts (east-central Tarai, mid-western mountains) are also where female literacy is lowest, where the caste system is most entrenched, and where other forms of inequality and discrimination thrive. Nepal’s dramatic progress in reducing maternal mortality in the past 15 years is the result of the doubling of the national female literacy rate in that period.

It is absurd that for a country with such progressive legislation on gay, lesbian, and transgender rights, we seem to be regressing in women’s issues. Out of 21 ministers sworn in last week in the new cabinet headed by Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, only two are women and there isn’t a single Dalit. The titles of articles in this newspaper over the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters.

The war on women, Rape for ransom, apartheid, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters.

Sushil Koirala, only two are women and there

and where other forms of inequality and discrimination thrive. Nepal’s dramatic progress in reducing maternal mortality in the past 15 years is the result of the doubling of the national female literacy rate in that period.

It is absurd that for a country with such progressive legislation on gay, lesbian, and transgender rights, we seem to be regressing in women’s issues. Out of 21 ministers sworn in last week in the new cabinet headed by Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, only two are women and there isn’t a single Dalit. The titles of articles in this newspaper over the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters, the past two years say it all: Nepal’s gender apartheid, Rape for ransom, Slaughter of our unborn daughters.
Macho nationalism

A Nepali man can marry anyone and his child will be Nepali, but if a Nepali woman marries a foreigner her child can be denied citizenship

In 2006 Nepal passed the Citizenship Act, which guaranteed Nepali citizenship to children born to a Nepali mother or a Nepali father. This move fulfilled/satisfied international covenants, was lauded internationally, and seen as a victory by Nepali women’s rights activists. However, in 2012 the Constituent Assembly members drafted a new provision, which stated that Nepali citizenship would be granted only to those who can prove that their mother and father are Nepali citizens.

An estimated 4.3 million Nepalis lack citizenship rendering them stateless. They cannot register birth, buy or sell land, acquire passports, open bank accounts, go to high school examinations, register to vote, or even get a mobile phone card without citizenship papers.

Arjun Kumar Sah, 24, was born in Nepal to a Nepali mother and Indian father and has lived in the country all his life. When Sah turned 16 he applied for citizenship, but was told that he couldn’t because his father is not Nepali. When the Citizenship Act passed, Sah went back to apply through his mother’s name but was denied again. Early last year Sah filed a writ in the Supreme Court against Nepal’s Home Ministry, District Administration Office, and the Prime Minister’s Office demanding citizenship through mother. The SC asked them to furnish reasons why Sah was denied citizenship, but nine months later Sah hasn’t got a reply.

If a Nepali man marries a foreign woman, their children get citizenship based on descent. However, when a Nepali woman marries a foreigner, their children can only get naturalised citizenship. The role and identity of a woman appear not to matter. A Nepali man can marry anyone and his child will be Nepali, but if a woman marries a foreigner her child can be denied citizenship.

Deepthi Gurung is a mother of two daughters. She wants to register their birth so they can become citizens, but every time she is at the local ward office or at the Chief District Officer’s (CDO) office, they ask her to identify the father. The father abandoned them when they were young and Gurung raised her children herself. The CDO has the sole authority to decide who gets citizenship.

Most Nepalis denied citizenship live in the Tarai where marriages across the open border are common, especially among the underprivileged. The state’s suspicions and ultra-nationalistic fears about Indian men marrying Nepali women and claiming citizenship are at the root of the discrimination.

The number of stateless Nepalis is growing every year in a chain reaction because parents without citizenship are bearing children. Stateless Nepalis are vulnerable to threats, extortion, and exploitation every step in their lives. They become victims especially when they want to migrate to work, as many do, because of the doors for proper jobs and education are shut in their own country.

Nepal’s Citizenship Assembly is supposed to draft a new statute within 2014 and this is the right time to set right this historical injustice and the state’s violation of the human rights of its citizens. The place to start is to treat all Nepalis are equal: children of Nepali fathers and Nepali mothers should have equal right to citizenship. Nepal’s officialdom as well as elected members of the CA should get over their paranoia over Nepal losing its sovereignty because Indian men marry our women. The third order of business is to dilute the dictatorial and arbitrary powers vested on the CDO over citizenship by forming independent citizenship committees. Then there are the cultural norms of our patriarchal society where parents are reluctant to let daughters inherit property, which has a bearing on the citizenship debate.

The 4.3 million stateless Nepalis, many of them women, never bothered to apply for citizenship papers because the district capital is so far away, or they are intimidated by the cumbersome process, and are not aware that it is their right to have the papers. But the real root of the citizenship problem lies in our macho nationalism.

Stateless in their motherland, #563
Macho nationalism.

State of limbo, #590

Mother country, #608
State of Limbo, #556
Stateless in their motherland, #563
FROM CABIN 16-17

The couple is protesting the brutal murder in 2004 of their son, Krishna Prasad Adhikari, a 16-year-old schoolboy who had nothing to do with the conflict.

The killing cannot be considered ‘political’ just because the perpetrator was a Maoist. The ruling by the Supreme Court as well as OHCHR’s own handbook on application of the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission to Nepal under international standards both indicate that there is no option but to apply the criminal justice system on such cases.

Even if the legality and process were unclear to some, all the Adhikari’s demand is: our son was murdered, we want justice, and having been inhumanely treated by the police and state, we want an open wound on the body to be healed, that the only way to get justice

The newly formed parliament is slowly taking up the matter, the topmost levels of bureaucracy is exercised. One can make out that police has not shown due diligence and is lagging in investigations. Well-known civil society activists have been unconcerned, never bothering to visit Cabin 16-17 of Bir Hospital where the Adhikari couple is kept under intravenous medication and protein-feed.

Neglect of the demand for justice will leave a permanent open wound on the body and the cumulative pain of the victims can rise to explosive proportions over time – just remember the events, Bhai u bhabhna, Tami u Tamiadisappearances, Daromba and Madi mass killings, and the names, Muna Sunar, Muktha Adhikari, Guru Prasad Luintel, Arjun Bahadur Lama, Dekendra Thapa.

The international community is duty bound to support any society that is challenged on human rights and democracy. While engagement with constitution writing or the day-to-day conduct of politics would be considered interference on sovereign affairs, not so actions to protect human rights and pluralism.

The ability and commitment of the police, state administration, politicians, and rights activists, that they are unwilling to take food in the absence of arrest and credible prosecutions against the accused.

The world community would help.

The international human rights, accountability, and aid agencies were quite involved in matters of human rights and democracy. They supported the National Human Rights Commission, forensic investigations, investigation teams such as Doramba, visiting Bardia to study the disappearance of Tharu youth by the state security, and so on.

Could it be that the aid agencies and embassies believe they would be perceived as ‘playing politics’ in showing concern for the

with constitution writing or the day-to-day conduct of politics would be considered interference on sovereign affairs, not so actions to protect human rights and pluralism.

The ability and commitment of the police, state administration, politicians, and rights activists, that they are unwilling to take food in the absence of arrest and credible prosecutions against the accused.

The world community would help.

The international human rights, accountability, and aid agencies were quite involved in matters of human rights and democracy. They supported the National Human Rights Commission, forensic investigations, investigation teams such as Doramba, visiting Bardia to study the disappearance of Tharu youth by the state security, and so on.

Could it be that the aid agencies and embassies believe they would be perceived as ‘playing politics’ in showing concern for the

human rights matters on low burn.

If true, this is unfortunate.

The people are looking for growth and prosperity, but they also know that any attempt at economic growth conducted in the absence of rule of law, human rights, accountability, and activation of criminal justice system will not be sustainable.

There is direct line from Cabin 16-17 at Bir Hospital to a prosperous Nepali future.

DIRECT LINE: The Adhikari couple is being starved through intravenous medication and protein feed in Bir Hospital since they began their fast-unto-death in October 2013.

Adhikarir? They may think that the Maoists will derail the constitution-writing, but the need for justice for wartime excesses by either side must be investigated and prosecutions carried out.

Nepali society, especially after being placed back on the democratic track by the November 2013 elections, is not so feeble that it cannot stand up for justice and challenge the positioning of the Maoists and state security forces, including the Nepal Army, on transitional justice. Besides, what kind of constitution do we expect to be written if the drafters cannot even stand up to those who have raped, murdered, disappeared, and tortured? However, the lack of international concern about the Adhikari problem has little to do with worries about the constitution-writing and more with fatigue about human rights in Nepal. In the end, it is the Nepali people who should be up to the fight for justice (and they are) but a little bit of interest of the world community would help.

Energised by the need to move on to revive development and economic growth, the major donors and embassies seem to be putting human rights matters on low burn. If true, this is unfortunate.

The people are looking for growth and prosperity, but they also know that any attempt at economic growth conducted in the absence of rule of law, human rights, accountability, and activation of criminal justice system will not be sustainable.

There is direct line from Cabin 16-17 at Bir Hospital to a prosperous Nepali future.

DIRECT LINE: The Adhikari couple is being starved through intravenous medication and protein feed in Bir Hospital since they began their fast-unto-death in October 2013.

Adhikarir? They may think that the Maoists will derail the constitution-writing, but the need for justice for wartime excesses by either side must be investigated and prosecutions carried out.

Nepali society, especially after being placed back on the democratic track by the November 2013 elections, is not so feeble that it cannot stand up for justice and challenge the positioning of the Maoists and state security forces, including the Nepal Army, on transitional justice. Besides, what kind of constitution do we expect to be written if the drafters cannot even stand up to those who have raped, murdered, disappeared, and tortured? However, the lack of international concern about the Adhikari problem has little to do with worries about the constitution-writing and more with fatigue about human rights in Nepal. In the end, it is the Nepali people who should be up to the fight for justice (and they are) but a little bit of interest of the world community would help.

Energised by the need to move on to revive development and economic growth, the major donors and embassies seem to be putting human rights matters on low burn. If true, this is unfortunate.

The people are looking for growth and prosperity, but they also know that any attempt at economic growth conducted in the absence of rule of law, human rights, accountability, and activation of criminal justice system will not be sustainable.

There is direct line from Cabin 16-17 at Bir Hospital to a prosperous Nepali future.

DIRECT LINE: The Adhikari couple is being starved through intravenous medication and protein feed in Bir Hospital since they began their fast-unto-death in October 2013.

Adhikarir? They may think that the Maoists will derail the constitution-writing, but the need for justice for wartime excesses by either side must be investigated and prosecutions carried out.

Nepali society, especially after being placed back on the democratic track by the November 2013 elections, is not so feeble that it cannot stand up for justice and challenge the positioning of the Maoists and state security forces, including the Nepal Army, on transitional justice. Besides, what kind of constitution do we expect to be written if the drafters cannot even stand up to those who have raped, murdered, disappeared, and tortured? However, the lack of international concern about the Adhikari problem has little to do with worries about the constitution-writing and more with fatigue about human rights in Nepal. In the end, it is the Nepali people who should be up to the fight for justice (and they are) but a little bit of interest of the world community would help.

Energised by the need to move on to revive development and economic growth, the major donors and embassies seem to be putting human rights matters on low burn. If true, this is unfortunate.

The people are looking for growth and prosperity, but they also know that any attempt at economic growth conducted in the absence of rule of law, human rights, accountability, and activation of criminal justice system will not be sustainable.

There is direct line from Cabin 16-17 at Bir Hospital to a prosperous Nepali future.
It’s a six! Ncell Nepal Premier League, the first of its kind cricketing event is all set to take place in April. The tournament is being organised by Cricket Association of Nepal in partnership with Zohra Sports Management and is sponsored by Ncell. Six teams will compete in T20, 50 overs, and two-day formats played over two months.

Bottoms up Shree Mahakali Wine recently launched Qassion Mead Wine in the market. “The wine is made from the Muscat Hamburg grapes and sweetened with fresh orange blossom honey,” reads the press release.

Dream ride United Traders Syndicate, the sole authorised distributor of Toyota vehicles in Nepal, has announced the launch of the 11th Generation Toyota Corolla. “The new Corolla comes with an all-new exterior and interior design,” read the press release.

Re-appointment Former Miss Nepal Sadichha Shrestha will continue as Everest Bank’s brand ambassador after the bank renewed her contract for one more year.

Spreading wings Turkish Airlines will now fly to Rotterdam, Netherlands making it the airline’s 244th destination. Introductory round trips start at 99 Euros.

Ncell Beach Cricket 2014 What’s your strategy?

14–15 March & 21–22 March, Riverside Spring Resort

Start packing your gears for the most happening annual corporate beach cricket tournament. Participation through invitation only.

Ncell. Here for Nepal www.ncell.com.np

Turkish Airlines will now fly to Rotterdam, Netherlands making it the airline’s 244th destination. Introductory round trips start at 99 Euros.
Deep in the rainforest of Brazil’s Atlantic coast, there is a sudden rustle in the canopy high above. There are flashes of orange in a golden blur against the dappled sky above. They look like birds, but are actually a family of the endangered golden lion tamarin monkeys foraging on the tops of the trees.

Luis Paulo Ferraz peers through a pair of binoculars and identifies the family, he knows the individual juveniles and their parents by name. As the Executive Secretary of the Golden Lion Tamarin Association, it is his responsibility to protect this marmoset species, which has been rescued from the brink of extinction.

The frolicking tamarins remind Ferraz, who spent three years in Nepal in the early 2000s, of the red pandas that are also canopy dwellers in the Langtang National Park. “There are similar challenges to saving them,” he says, “if you want to save the flagship species you have to save its habitat and in doing so you preserve a lot of other living things.”

The tiny squirrel-sized animals are endemic to southeastern Brazil, but only five per cent of the Atlantic rainforest that used to be their habitat remains today. The species nearly became extinct, its numbers plummeting to less than 200 in the wild 30 years ago. Today, thanks to a model conservation effort, the monkeys have rebounded to 1,700, but clinging to shrinking forests north of Rio de Janeiro. There are another 500 tamarins in zoos around the world and there is a program to reintroduce some of them back into the wild in Brazil.

The threat to the blonde monkeys isn’t as much from predators or poaching, but loss of habitat. What remains of the rainforest is fragmented and the animal’s gene pool is shrinking. And while the Amazon gets all the attention and resources, funding to save the coastal jungles and the pressure on land are serious problems.

“If it is so difficult to fundraise for the tamarin, imagine what it must be like to raise money to save frogs,” explains Ferraz, who says the monkey is an umbrella species whose protection will help safeguard what is left of Brazil’s Atlantic rainforest.

The tamarins are now on Brazil’s R$20 currency notes and conservationists are lobbying to get the monkey nominated as the official mascot of the 2016 Rio Olympics. The Association needs to generate awareness so that it can raise money to build migration corridors for the animals to connect the fragmented Atlantic forest. A new highway now threatens to cut the Poço das Antas Biodiversity Reserve in half and there is a proposal to build forested bridges above the road so the tamarins can pass.

“The Association needs to generate awareness so that it can raise money to build migration corridors for the animals to connect the fragmented Atlantic forest. A new highway now threatens to cut the Poço das Antas Biodiversity Reserve in half and there is a proposal to build forested bridges above the road so the tamarins can pass.”

Says Ferraz: “In Brazil and Nepal, the challenges are the same: how to use the celebrity status of the flagship species to save enough of the habitat to protect the ecosystem and preserve biodiversity.”
HOMEMAKERS TO HEROES

Common women with uncommon passion to help others are awarded

When Shrijana Singh Yonjan started Celebrating Womanhood Navadevi Awards in 2002, it was more a fashion program where the who’s who of Kathmandu Valley gathered for a night of entertainment. Twelve years later, it is one of the most awaited award ceremonies which recognises the extraordinary achievements of ordinary Nepali women from Surkhet to Solukhumbu. From literary geniuses to athletes with disabilities, more than 100 women have been rewarded in the past decade. The award recipients have not only fought gender stereotypes, but earned the respect of local communities through their dogged determination and altruism. The women also get the opportunity to build networks with fellow awardees and potential investors.

Among this year’s rewardees were Parbati Dagora, a former Kamaiyaa turned activist, and Meena Kharel who established Women Development Centre in Chitwan. A special ‘citation’ was presented to a 13-year-old rape victim, who despite objections from her family and neighbours, fought for justice and successfully put her perpetrator behind bars.

KESHARI THAPA
Daughter of a British Gurkha soldier, Keshari Thapa was born in Malaysia and spent her youth in Hong Kong. When she was asked by a relative to look after Gyan Chakru School, a special school for the visually-impaired in Dharam, she couldn’t refuse the offer and returned home. For the past 21 years, Thapa has been the principal at Gyan Chakru which currently has 100 students from 23 districts. Her former students now hold influential posts both in the government and private sector. “The school is my family now and I live for the children,” she says. Her own family lives in Kathmandu.

LAXMI BHUSHAL
Laxmi Bhushal from Kathmandu had always wanted to act, so despite fierce disapproval from her family, she joined Radio Nepal in 1966 as a voice artist for a children’s program. Back then, a lot of people spoke ill of me just because they didn’t like a woman working in radio,” recalls Bhushal, who was disowned by her family. Today, the 64-year-old hosts agricultural programs on radio and has also appeared in popular Nepal series Hiyo Aaja Ka Kura and Meri Basai. Says Bhushal: “My shows are my life-long friends. I’ll continue doing them for as long as I am healthy.”

AND THE WINNERS ARE ...

Meena Kharel, Women’s rights advocate, Chitwan
Nanda Devi Kunwar, Chairperson of Madhumalati Community Forest Group, Kalai
Kalpana Karki, Secretary of Mahila Sirganshesh Parkash, Sindhupalchok
Parbati Dagora, Chairperson of Aama Samuha, Kanchanpur
Ritu Gyamdan, River guide, Rasuwa
Keshari Thapa, Educator, Dharam
Laxmi Bhusal, Radio presenter and actress, Kathmandu
Radio Udayapur, A radio station run by women under 30, Udayapur
Malakwarp Malahi Samuha, A women’s group fighting against discrimination towards HIV patients, Malakwarp
EVENTS

UNDERSTANDING GENDER, an exhibition of the work of both male and female artists to celebrate International Women’s Day.
8 March, Image Ark Gallery, Patan Darbar Square

Dual worlds, an exhibition of the works of artists Anil Shahi and Sujan Dangol.
Runs till 7 March, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babarmahal

I disappear, attend the launch of writer Prawin Adhikari’s new book The Vanishing Act, (see page 13 for review).
7 March, 5 to 7pm, Nepal Academy Hall

Help the helpless, ride with Pushkar Shah and hundreds of others to raise money for Kuti Dada Higher Secondary School, Dolakha; there’s live music by Jyovan Bhuju, and a lucky contributor will win a Bangkok trip.
8 March, 8am onwards, Patan Darbar Square

DINING

The spoken word, listen to Kathmandu’s top slam poets and later join them for an open mic session.
8 March, 1 to 3pm, Vaja Guest House, Bhaktapur

The use of spaces and lines, an exhibition of the work of Alexander Rosenkranz, artistic, conceptual work using photographs and video loops of Kathmandu.
7 to 9 March, The City Museum, Darbar Marg, alexanderrosenkranz.com

Spray, meet upcoming street artists who will show you their studios and guide you around town for a tour of their works. 8 March, 9803752694

Barista Lavazza, the newest addition to the Valley’s European inspired coffee-culture cafes serves excellent mochas and lattes, don’t forget to try their grilled chicken sandwich.
Jawalakhel

Busi Bee, head over for live rock and pop performances in English, Nepali and Hindi, indulge in their beer and pizzas to waste the night away in good fashion.
Lakeside, (061)462640

Capital Grill, this American style diner offers a large assortment of appetisers and entrees to suit everyone’s tastes.
Bhatbhateni

Hotel Shangri-La, traditional Nepali cuisine with cultural show. Rs 999, every Thursday, 7pm onwards, (01)4412999 ext 7520/7515

Reggae Night, get a load of jah music from Chari Amilo Kala Samuha every weekend.
Rs 200, 28 March, 6pm onwards, Base Camp, Wramsikhel

Kripa Unplugged, young Nepali musicians and seasoned veterans give an acoustic rendition of their favourite songs. http://www.youtube.com/user/KripaUnplugged

Starry Night BBQ, catch Ciney Gurung live as you chomp on your meat stick.
Rs 1,299, 7pm onwards, Fridays, Shambala Garden Café.
Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999 (Ext. 7520/7515)

SPRAY, meet upcoming street artists who will show you their studios and guide you around town for a tour of their works. 8 March, 9803752694

MUSIC

Waterfront Resort, head to this eco-friendly resort to make your stay right in front of Phewa Lake.
Sudi Height, Pokhara, (61)466 303/304, 9801166311, sales@waterfronthotelnepal.com

Shangri-La Village Resort, set amidst peaceful surroundings with a breathtaking mountain view, landscaped gardens, water bodies and a relaxing ambience.
Gharipatan, Pokhara, (61)62222, (01)4412003, shangrilavillage@gmail.com

Barah Jungle Lodge, the first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park, spa, boutique guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, including a suite with a private swimming pool.
Andrauli, West Chitwan, www.barahijunglelodge.com

Himalayan Wellness Centre, a one-stop centre for a relaxed mind and a healthy body inside the Park Village Hotel.
Budhanilkantha, open all week, 9801066661, www.himalayanwellness.com.np

GETAWAYS

The spoken word, listen to Kathmandu’s top slam poets and later join them for an open mic session.
8 March, 1 to 3pm, Vaja Guest House, Bhaktapur

The use of spaces and lines, an exhibition of the work of Alexander Rosenkranz, artistic, conceptual work using photographs and video loops of Kathmandu.
7 to 9 March, The City Museum, Darbar Marg, alexanderrosenkranz.com

Spray, meet upcoming street artists who will show you their studios and guide you around town for a tour of their works. 8 March, 9803752694

Barista Lavazza, the newest addition to the Valley’s European inspired coffee-culture cafes serves excellent mochas and lattes, don’t forget to try their grilled chicken sandwich.
Jawalakhel

Byanjan, stands out among the countless establishments on Lakeside for its crisp interiors, quite ambiance and of course, the food.

Lakeside

BUSY BEE, head over for live rock and pop performances in English, Nepali and Hindi, indulge in their beer and pizzas to waste the night away in good fashion.
Lakeside, (061)462640

Capital Grill, this American style diner offers a large assortment of appetisers and entrees to suit everyone’s tastes.
Bhatbhateni

Hotel Shangri-La, traditional Nepali cuisine with cultural show. Rs 999, every Thursday, 7pm onwards, (01)4412999 ext 7520/7515

Reggae Night, get a load of jah music from Chari Amilo Kala Samuha every weekend.
Rs 200, 28 March, 6pm onwards, Base Camp, Wramsikhel

Kripa Unplugged, young Nepali musicians and seasoned veterans give an acoustic rendition of their favourite songs. http://www.youtube.com/user/KripaUnplugged

Starry Night BBQ, catch Ciney Gurung live as you chomp on your meat stick.
Rs 1,299, 7pm onwards, Fridays, Shambala Garden Café.
Hotel Shangri-La, (01)4412999 (Ext. 7520/7515)

Shastriya sangeet, dabble in the magic of Hindustani classical music.
30 March, 3pm onwards, Kirateswor

Getaways

Waterfront Resort, head to this eco-friendly resort to make your stay right in front of Phewa Lake.
Sudi Height, Pokhara, (61)466 303/304, 9801166311, sales@waterfronthotelnepal.com

Shangri-La Village Resort, set amidst peaceful surroundings with a breathtaking mountain view, landscaped gardens, water bodies and a relaxing ambience.
Gharipatan, Pokhara, (61)62222, (01)4412003, shangrilavillage@gmail.com

Barah Jungle Lodge, the first eco-jungle lodge of Chitwan directly overlooks the Chitwan National Park, spa, boutique guest room, individual and two-in-one private villas, including a suite with a private swimming pool.
Andrauli, West Chitwan, www.barahijunglelodge.com

Himalayan Wellness Centre, a one-stop centre for a relaxed mind and a healthy body inside the Park Village Hotel.
Budhanilkantha, open all week, 9801066661, www.himalayanwellness.com.np
For connoisseurs of all ages and persuasion, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory presents a free music education programme.

1. Master classes and workshops by James Miley and team from Williamette University, USA, on guitar, piano, bass, drums, wind instruments, and improvisation. 24 to 28 March, 2014, 8am to 9pm

2. Training for music teachers by Mike Nord, music educator at Williamette University. 25 to 28 March, 8am to 9pm

3. Fusion beat, a concert where east meets west. 28 March, Patan Darbar Square, free entrance.

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, (01)5013554, info@katjazz.com.np, www.katjazz.com.np

THE RIGHT NOTE

ROCK, RIDE, RUN

Join professional and amateur outdoor athletes from Nepal and around the world to hit the mountains. Run, climb, or bike through trails, rocks and downhill slopes.

- If that isn’t enough, you can take part in dyno competitions, slack-lines, ice-axe pull-ups, flying fox, mini zip-line, rappelling, mud run, and an auto expo.

Plenty of music, food, and booze to keep you busy as well as gear and cycle stalls to tease your restraint.

Himalayan outdoor festival 22 March, Hattiban Resort, Pharping

WOMEN ROCK

All your favourite divas on the same stage, singing in the same voice against domestic violence.

Women in concert, 8 March, 7 to 9pm, Lainchaur Ground
If women are to play an equal role in politics, change needs to take place at the grassroots level. That was the main lesson from Tuesday’s seminar (pic, right) on ‘Electoral System and Women’s Representation in Nepal: Need for Reform?’ organised by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Demo Finland, UN-Women and Embassy of Finland.

Representatives from political parties, civil society, and Constituent Assembly members shared their views on how to ensure women’s equal participation in Nepal at the day-long session.

In an opening session, Under Secretary of State from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Anne Sipilainen said that Nepal has a good reason to be proud of having 30 per cent of women representation in the Constituent Assembly.

Former Chief Election Commissioner Bhajraj Pokharel advocated that women should be given more opportunities to participate in local development processes. “By grooming them at the local level, they can learn to compete with men as equals and then go on to represent at a national level,” explained Pokharel.

Having achieved almost 50 per cent of women’s representation in parliament under the Proportional Representation (PR) system, Finland sets a great example for others to follow. Female politicians in Finland have also enjoyed appointments in key positions including Tarja Halonen who served as president from 2000-2012. In contrast, only 10 women made it to Nepal’s second CA under direct elections.

“One of the biggest challenges is overcoming society’s patriarchal mindset, which often results in discrimination towards women,” said Finnish politician Heidi Hautala, who is a member of the Green Party. “There also needs to be consistent efforts to train female politicians. Hence, less focus should be on campaigning and more on ensuring that women have the skills to design sound policies when serving for office and the authority to enforce policies.”

The session also noted the importance of legislative measures like the temporary quota system in giving the under-represented sex a chance to run for elections. Strict enforcement of such measures will ensure that equally competent women are made visible and heard and send a
strong message to society to embrace female leaders. However, there are several barriers that limit women from actively participating in politics Hautala pointed out. Even today in the villages, boys go to school, while girls have a hard time breaking out of the confines of the four walls of their home. This is in stark contrast to Finland, which places a heavy emphasis on education. All Finnish children are entitled to free pre-primary education. A good first step for the Nepali government would be to provide equal access to education, so that women can be informed. She also thinks that there should be more investment in the quality of secondary and tertiary education and men should shoulder the household responsibilities equally.

“Women need to believe in themselves and believe they are equally capable,” said Hautala. She recounted a visit to the community forestry where the female guides failed to speak up even though they had a rich knowledge of the forests. “The women were not used to having their say and felt that their voice didn’t matter.”

Lack of financial resources is another limiting factor that prevents women from taking part in elections. Political parties prefer to spend resources and funding on male candidates over female ones. As IDEA regional director for Asia and Pacific, Leena Rikkila Tamang suggests, state funding could go a long way in giving women the much-needed financial support.

“Nepal has already pioneered in the region for having 33 per cent female representation in our first constituent assembly, which is not a bad position to be in however, the fear is to maintain and upgrade,” explained Khimlal Devkota of UCPN (Maoist), one of the speakers at the seminar.

To celebrate Finnish women’s journey to equality, the National Council of Women of Finland has produced an exhibition called ‘100 Years of Women’s Voices and Action in Finland.’

In 2006, Finland celebrated the 100th anniversary of a pioneering parliamentary reform that introduced equal political rights for women. The new law, passed on 1 June, 1906 made Finnish women the first women in the world to become members of parliament.

The exhibition presents various historical milestones and photographs that feature women in various spheres of society, from homes, offices, social work, and politics. One of the features is a gallery of remarkable Finnish women, leading up to the country’s former president, Tarja Halonen.

Says IDEA Gender Program Coordinator Deepthi Khakurel, “Nepali women can reflect on Finnish women’s struggle and be inspired from this exhibition.”

1 WOMEN AND WORK
The White Ribbon Union pressed for 10 per cent of female representation in the police force. This picture shows participants of the 1939 women’s police force.

2 WOMEN AND THE DAILY ROUTINE
Women’s organisations have played a significant role in spreading information about healthy food, an important agenda of the 1950s the White Ribbon Union.

3 WOMEN AND THE DAILY ROUTINE
In the 1940s, chairwoman of the Finnish Gymnastics Federation Kaarina Kari drew up a plan for physical training of expectant mothers.

4 WOMEN AND WORK
In 1984 the Finnish airline Finnair employed its first woman co-pilot.

5 WOMEN AND WELFARE
Over 200,000 Finnish women were engaged in voluntary work in the Lotta organisation (the Women’s Auxiliary Services), which was active between 1921 and 1944 in the last war.

6 WOMEN AND WORK
Riitta Uosukainen, the Speaker of Parliament demonstrates her favourite Kalevala Jewelry.

7 WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY
Dr Maiti Friberg (1861 – 1927) was an important role model for Finnish women and an advocate for peace.

8 WOMEN AND WELFARE
A children’s home run by the Association of Kalevala Women.
The Oscars have come and gone, all the usual suspects have won, among them the widely beloved Frozen—a long overdue smash animation hit from the Walt Disney Animation Studio (not to be confused with Pixar which the Disney corporation acquired in 2006). And so this week I’d like to review this gently feminist, lovingly drawn film that breaks away from the usual Disney paradigm—putting forward a slightly different alternative to finding true love as the be all and end all.

Which is not at all to say that the film therefore robs us of a rather good love story—quite the opposite in fact. There are several charming, albeit unconventional, love stories in Frozen and one fairly straightforward one that will capture the hearts of every, even the very secret, romantics.

The story begins adorably with Elsa (Idina Menzel) and Anna (Kristen Bell), two little princesses who grow up playing together carefree in their oblivious childhood, watched over by their doting parents. When Anna, the youngest and the livelier, wakes up her older sister Elsa to play—the two sneak off to make use of Elsa’s magical powers which allow her to create ice and snow. In the midst of harmless fun, Elsa accidentally shoots some of her power into Anna, causing her to lose consciousness. The King and the Queen enter horrified and just in time to rush Anna to the benevolent Troll King delightfully called Grand Pabbie and played by the wonderful voice of Ciarán Hinds, who is able to save Anna but in the process causes her to forget the course of the evening’s events and the fact of her sister’s magical powers, which are deemed uncontrollable due to the incident.

The girls grow up and apart in a marvellously planned out montage where Anna cannot quite understand why Elsa is just not the same. When their parents die at sea during a storm their mutual alienation is complete.

There are many adventures that follow and personally I much preferred the second half of the film to the first, mainly due to the entrances of Olaf (Josh Gad) a hilarious carrot nosed snowman, a reluctant young man named Kristoff (Jonathan Groff), and his reindeer Sven (who doesn’t speak, but is delightfully drawn with a distinct personality) all of whom join Anna in a quest to save Elsa from herself and the eternal winter that she brings upon Arendelle in her distress after her magical powers are ousted at her very own coronation.

Frozen is a merry distraction for many adults even while it is a great teaching tool for the very young who are often fed with the honeyed spoon that encourages sickly happy endings with two lovers kissing. Instead of just pure sugar, though this particular film provides surprising turns of events, a lot of bursting into song (a bit too much for this writer’s liking), but more importantly portrays beautifully a very deep and real storyline that shows that the bonds between sisters, when nurtured, can be stronger than almost any other thing in life—a warming and worthy message to hang on to for Women’s Day.
The Vanishing Act: Stories

Prawin Adhikari’s debut set of nine short stories comprise of an array: there is The Boy from Banastaut and Fortune set in and around the author’s home village of Abu Khairani, others like The Game and Stamp and Signature depict the reality of life in the heart of Kathmandu, and some like The Case of Carolyn Flint and the titular The Vanishing Act relay the experience of a young Nepali man, inclined towards writing and observing, living abroad fresh out of college, susceptible to romance in every form.

As with most collections and with the short story form (which is a particular art on its own to perfect), some stories are weaker than others. That being said, most stories are really quite compelling, closely observed, and showing a genuine understanding of human nature and people’s motivations, a capacity essential to every writer. Even the weaker stories such as Mayapuri which tells the tale of a little boy’s yearning for a young bride has something particular to offer in its detailed description of childhood voyeurism and lust even as it deteriorates due to a slight self-indulgence on Adhikari’s part in the latter half.

The best stories are The Boy from Banastaut with its descriptions of an erratic school boy’s day tripping after bunking school, making his way to the banks of the Darsaudi River. His ambling walk there, the scenic rural and river setting, boyhood mischief, and group shenanigans are all charmingly described, crystallising the story in our imaginations. Fortune too is similarly strong due to Adhikari’s adeptness in portraying the evolution of a modest, quiet village that becomes a bustling concrete town due to the inflow of people to build a dam.

In both The Game and Stamp and Signature, we come across young couples in Kathmandu struggling to make ends meet - dealing with the minutiae of married life in the big city. The changing fabric of society in and outside of the Valley in this past decade is subtly enfolded into these narratives, the characters drawn in the stories becoming real and in some cases quite dear to us.

With a slight but welcome departure in style, The Case of Carolyn Flint and The Vanishing Act both deal with elements of the surreal and slightly magical, showing Adhikari’s range and the potential he has to use his words to portray not just the life of Nepalis and the diaspora, but to create riveting stories which have the ability to transcend a particular genre and capture a wider readership.

The compassion and intense observation with which these stories have been written, the fluidity of the writing, which is all the more astonishing for its occasional lapses, all go to show that Prawin Adhikari is at the threshold of a writing career with clear promise. ⭐️⭐️⭐️⭐️

Sophia Pande

NATSSUL

A s the most popular tourist destination in Nepal, Pokhara is a melting pot of food from across the globe. Walking along Lakeside leaves one spoilt for options and sometimes choosing what to eat can be quite exasperating.

When my friends and I decided to eat Korean food one evening, we took our chances and went into the first place we saw after stepping out of our guesthouse. We ended up in the dimly-lit Natssul Restaurant and Bar, which we later discovered is owned by a Korean couple.

The interior of Natssul is reminiscent of the establishments in Seoul’s Hongdae district. Soft music plays in the background, amidst black walls lined with photographs and art pieces – giving the whole place a very cool vibe. We felt like we were in Korea again and we were hopeful the food would be as authentic as the ambience.

In true Korean fashion, the restaurant generously provides customers free side dishes and tea, which are meant to complement the mains. The amount of free hors d’oeuvre is quite overwhelming though and one must be careful not to eat too much of the kimchi or fried bean sprouts before the food arrives.

A Korean staple is fried chicken (Rs 700), so we obviously had to try Natssul’s version. The dish, however, did not taste authentic at all. It was regrettable that the measly chicken pieces seemed hastily cut and navigating the bones was an unnecessary hassle. This would have been forgivable if the batter that the chicken was coated in was nice, which it was unfortunately not. Sadly nothing special about the bird.

Thankfully the other dishes were much better and Natssul’s rendition of bibimbap (Rs 480) could do no wrong. The great portion of rice, chunks of beef, vegetables, and egg that sizzles in the stone bowl looked almost too good to ruin by mixing – but that was what had to be done. The textures and taste of all the ingredients blended together and tasted great. The rice, however, tends to get crispy if the bibimbap is not mixed well so make sure you stir everything properly if you don’t like it that way.

Similarly, the bulgogi (Rs 500) at Natssul is equally satisfying. Served with fluffy white rice, the beef broth was the perfect dish to have on that cold rainy day at Lakeside. There was so much beef in the bulgogi, we had to all share to finish it. Eating the dish with rice alone seemed quite plain though, but thankfully there were many side dishes to go around the table.

We also ordered japchae (Rs 450), a dish of glass noodles cooked together with black sauce and a myriad of other ingredients. Although it looked quite unappealing at first, the tangy taste of the black sauce was quite delicious, especially when paired with the noodles.

Korean food has managed to carve quite an identity in Nepal and there is no shortage of Korean restaurants around. While the authenticity fluctuates a lot, Natssul is – thanks to its owners - a place that is committed to be as true to Korea as possible. Not bad for an accidental find. ⭐️⭐️⭐️⭐️

Hariz Baharudin

How to get there: walk west along the Phewa Lake until you get near Basundara Park. Natssul is located on the right side of the road, with a big sign that is hard to miss.
Father of tropical medicine

W e now know that various species of mosquitoes transmit many parasitic and viral diseases. But Scottish physician Patrick Manson (1844-1920) was the first scientist to prove the link between mosquitoes and illnesses. In the 1800s, the English believed that the overpowering odour of sewage from the River Thames (similar to the stench from Bagmati River today), led to diseases like cholera, typhoid, and plague. Even scientists thought diseases were caused by misasma (bad smell). Manson’s discovery that mosquitoes transmitted the organism that caused filariasis (which may lead to elephantiasis or hatipaila in Nepali) was, therefore, nothing less than revolutionary. He was also the first person to hypothesise that malaria was caused by mosquitoes and not miasma.

Manson, who is considered the father of tropical medicine, started his career in Formosa, Taiwan where he studied filariasis. His seminal book, Tropical Diseases, is the bible in the field. Even after returning to the UK, Manson continued to pursue the discipline. He gave regular talks on the diseases encountered in the East. British medical personnel on leave in the 19th and early 20th century were made to attend his lectures. These were probably the first continuing medical lectures (CME) that doctors now have to participate in order to keep their medical certification up-to-date. The idea that learning about Manson’s experiences would help in the prevention and management of diseases in the ‘servants of the empire’. Diseases that are common in Nepal even today formed the basis of many of Manson’s lectures. They ranged from malaria, amebic liver abscesses, elephantiasis, typhoid fever to a whole host of other common problems such as worm infestations and other bacterial infections.

Regular trade, efficient administration, and agricultural production were severely hampered by tropical diseases. And the bureaucracy in the UK felt that tropical medicine was an essential component of British economic development in the tropics. Cynics called this ‘colonial science’.

Many of the tropical diseases of today were also present in Europe at the time of Manson. In fact, even William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was well aware of malaria in England. ‘He is so shak’d by the burning quotidian tertian that it is most lamentable to behold,’ writes Shakespeare in The Life of King Henry V. Fears especially malaria are described in terms of how intermittently they appear (tertian fever is a kind of fever in malaria denoting the fever appearance every 48 hours). But even if these tropical diseases were present in Europe at that time, the sheer scale of the problem in Asia and Africa was far greater. So even to protect British citizens serving in faraway places, the bureaucracy decided to take advantage of the wealth of knowledge and teaching skills of Manson.

In 1897 Manson was appointed the medical officer to the Colonial Office. A school of tropical medicine in London was established. With the Scottsman at the helm, tropical diseases were now properly studied and this enhancement of knowledge also helped people in the regions where the disease emanated in the first place. Clearly, Manson so revolutionised the understanding and teaching of tropical diseases that its positive impact is felt even today.
LOCKING HORNS WITH THE BJP

From the Indian capital through the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, rural India, and decrepit towns Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal is on a campaign roadshow. This is his first foray into the Hindi heartland ahead of next month’s general elections in India.

The AAP’s UP convenor Sanjay Singh declared war on the menace of three Cs – corruption, communalism, corporate. Then he made the surprise announcement that should BJP prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi contest from Varanasi, as is being speculated, Kejriwal should fight the Lok Sabha election from there as well.

Instantaneously, a deafening roar swept over the ground. Those sitting were on their feet, their arms held aloft, bursting out into that incomprehensible scream which unambiguously signifies approval and excitement. Late night, an eatery-owner, a self-avowed BJP voter for decades, thought it was audacious of Kejriwal to dare Modi and predicted it might alter the election scenario in UP in unforeseen ways.

Such predictions are based on the giant-slayer reputation that Kejriwal has acquired, having stumped a complacent Sheila Dikshit in her constituency. But then, Modi is no Dikshit. He looms over UP, dominating street-corner discussions and the public arena alike. There isn’t a corner from where Modi doesn’t stare at you, testifying to the lavish expenditure incurred on building him as the BJP’s mascot.

The AAP is trying to target social categories in the UP. It has won support of some of the urban middle class, but this has limited appeal in the Hindi heartland, which is still in thrall to primordial identities. In urban UP, a substantial section of the middle class has been demonstrating an inclination towards the BJP, buying as much into Modi’s development plank as into his Hindu persona, the memory of which never fades. Yet, among its legion of supporters there are many who say their voting decision will ultimately depend on the candidates whom political parties will field.

Despite having been projected as a middle class party, AAP’s appeal appears strongest among the urban lower classes/castes, the members of which still retain their rural roots. No wonder, the rhetoric of big business appropriating land, or the inflationary pressure on the economy arising from the government’s decision to pay a higher price to the Ambanis for extracting gas have special resonance for this category. But beyond these economic ideas, they are pulled to the AAP to provide corruption-free governance and smashing of the network of privileges. It won’t be surprising to find on the AAP’s list of candidates in UP a fair sprinkling of lower class/caste people.

The most astonishing aspect of AAP’s foray into UP is its appeal to Muslims, which is delighted by its attack on Modi. A team of AAP volunteers at a roadside kiosk outside Bareilly town claimed nearly 70 per cent of those who participate in the camps they hold belong to the Muslim community. There were other indicators as well – the reception accorded to Kejriwal was arguably the warmest in the Muslim-dominated Moradabad and the induction of Shia cleric Maulana Kalbe Rasheed and members of the Aligarh Muslim University Old Boys’ Association into the party.

Inclination, however, doesn’t necessarily translate into votes. In particular, Muslims rarely vote a party in large numbers which doesn’t have the support of one or two dominant Hindu castes in rural India or doesn’t stand a chance to vanquish the BJP.

It is to overcome the paucity of time, not to say of resources, AAP plans to risk fielding Kejriwal against Modi, believing the move could turn its admirers into voters. Yes, it could eat into the expanding BJP support base, but it could also fracture the anti-BJP vote to Modi’s advantage.

ashrafajaz3@gmail.com
THERE'S LADY EXCELLENCIES

There is so much hypocrisy in our society. Families want educated brides, but they can't be too educated. Just the right amount to be smart housekeepers.

MAHSHEE BINTE SHAMS
BANGLADESH

Being a woman is an asset in the diplomatic community. It allows for more 'humanity' and more direct communications.

MARTINE BASSEREA
FRANCE

Most of the colleagues we meet are men and we tend to overlook the aspect of male bonding. Of course, we as women tend to make parallel networks among ourselves, but it's still a challenge to be taken seriously.

RENSE TEEINK
EU

AYESHA SHAKYA

The new Nepal government has been heavily criticised for the lack of diversity in the cabinet, especially the fact that only two out of 21 ministers are women. But it is not just a problem in Nepal, the issue resonates globally.

Many countries which are considered to be very progressive, the representation of women in Nepal's diplomatic service reflects gross gender imbalance at all levels of government.

In contrast, there are more women diplomats in Nepal today than ever before. Five countries are represented in Kathmandu by female ambassadors: Denmark, Bangladesh, the European Union, France, and Thailand. In addition, the Nepal representatives of UNICEF and UNDP are also women.

Yet, despite their influence and seniority, the women envoys admit to facing gender stereotypes in their careers.

"Women are diplomatic and there are ways of expressing discrimination without saying it in words. If a woman is successful, it's regarded as an accident and not because you are qualified for it," explains Mmahshee Binte Shams, the new Bangladesh ambassador to Nepal.

Leadership is seemingly associated with masculine expectations so when a woman is seen to take charge, there are more than a few eyebrows raised. France's ambassador, Martine Bassereau, says that even in Europe it is a challenge for career women to prove that they are equal.

"Women are expected to prove themselves permanently without losing their feminine touch, their humanity, their elegance as well as entertain with panache," Bassereau told us. "Some people still believe that men are able to do the job better even if the women may have the same diploma and the same experience."

While there is proof that women in the workforce tend to be more productive, the movement to increase more gender diversity has flattened. Even in industrialised countries, women may enter the workforce in similar proportions where men outnumber women by a huge margin. Says Rensje Teerink, Head of the European Union delegation to Nepal: "The big challenge is still senior management positions. Women are very much under-represented in the European external service as far as managerial positions as well as head of positions are concerned.

Still, a quarter of European ambassadors being female is a great leap forward in the workforce.

Running the house

MINA SHARMA

From 12 women in the 1999 parliament to 197 after the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, Nepal had taken a great leap forward in achieving gender parity at the highest levels of governance.

Six years later, things have regressed. Out of over 6,000 candidates from 130 parties who registered for the First Past the Post race in November elections, about 600 were women. Only 10 won. A further 162 women made it to the assembly floor through the Proportional Representation system, giving them less than 30 per cent of seats.

While the number of women lawmakers has slumped, those elected remain just as passionate as their predecessors about making their collective voice heard and drafting a gender-friendly constitution.

ONSARI GHARTI MAGAR,
UCPN (MAOIST), ROLPA-2

Former Maoist guerrilla Onsari Gharti Magar was seven months pregnant when she fought in the battle of Pakhapani in Rolpa in 1999. Eleven days later, she gave birth to her daughter, while still recovering from injuries.

With an infant on her back, Magar went back to the field four months later and took part in the attack on Ghati Ghati police station. Magar is among the 10 women who secured seats in the parliament through direct polls. Last month, as the 46-year-old took the oath of secrecy as the vice chair of the CA, her journey from being a shy teenager to a fierce woman commander flashed before her eyes. She credits her success to her education, which was an immense struggle for her poor family.

"Education gave me the confidence to face the world and break the shackles placed on me as a woman from a marginalised community," admits Magar. She believes that unless women have the same access to education as men, they will not be able to compete with them.

The war is long over, but Magar says she needs to hold onto her fighting spirit more than ever in a parliament where men outnumber women by a huge margin. Says Magar: "Nepali society is steeped in patriarchy, but we are ready to fight for equality and ensure that the new constitution guarantees our rights."

SUSHILA CHAUDHARY,
NEPALI CONGRESS, DANG-2

Sushila Chaudhary has been active in local politics since 1997, slowly working her way to the top. Years of fighting for the rights of women and marginalised communities finally paid off when she won the CA elections last year.
Seven female foreign envoys in Kathmandu are in stark contrast to the under-representation of women in Nepal’s diplomatic service.

In the past, women had to be ‘more man than a man’ to succeed. Things are definitely changing. Gender equality is an interesting discussion, but it has not stopped me in my tracks.

In Denmark, there is no legal discrimination and no salary difference. Both spouses juggle work and family life together and responsibilities of parents are accepted in the workplace, creating a balance,” says Kirsten Geelan, the Danish ambassador to Nepal.

Women’s leadership style is different from men’s, so we don’t have to work like men. It is important for us to find our own role models, to get together to share experiences, and discuss challenges.

Although she now has to spend a lot of time in Kathmandu, the 43-year-old president of Laxmi Women Development, Savings, and Loan Cooperative, remains deeply committed to her hometown.

While party and government leadership has changed numerous times over the years, Chaudhary feels that women’s involvement and status in national politics is still appalling. “Party workers don’t attend our rallies because women are usually cash strapped and the cadre feel they won’t be well fed,” she says. “Women haven’t fared well in this country because we have been too tolerant of abuse and discrimination. Nobody is going to hand us our rights. We need to fight for it.”

On the other hand, Nordic countries fare far better than their counterparts mostly due to the implementation of social welfare policies, including one of the most generous and flexible parental leave system in the EU, which allows women to further their professional careers while balancing their family life.

“In Denmark, there is no legal discrimination and no salary difference. Both spouses juggle work and family life together and responsibilities of parents are accepted in the workplace, creating a balance,” says Kirsten Geelan, the Danish ambassador to Nepal.

Women’s leadership style is different from men’s, so we don’t have to work like men. It is important for us to find our own role models, to get together to share experiences, and discuss challenges.

“We have many women ambassadors in the EU, which allows women to further their professional careers while balancing their family life.

Men and women have stood shoulder to shoulder during the war and the democracy movements. They play just as important a role as men in development. And yet we continue to be sidelined. Our contributions can no longer be overlooked,” says Giri who was jailed for 19 days during the 2006 Janandolan.

Women’s leadership style is different from men’s, so we don’t have to work like men. It is important for us to find our own role models, to get together to share experiences, and discuss challenges.

“Men and women have stood shoulder to shoulder during the war and the democracy movements. They play just as important a role as men in development. And yet we continue to be sidelined. Our contributions can no longer be overlooked,” says Giri who was jailed for 19 days during the 2006 Janandolan.

Although she now has to spend a lot of time in Kathmandu, the 43-year-old president of Laxmi Women Development, Savings, and Loan Cooperative, remains deeply committed to her hometown.

While party and government leadership has changed numerous times over the years, Chaudhary feels that women’s involvement and status in national politics is still appalling. “Party workers don’t attend our rallies because women are usually cash strapped and the cadre feel they won’t be well fed,” she says. “Women haven’t fared well in this country because we have been too tolerant of abuse and discrimination. Nobody is going to hand us our rights. We need to fight for it.”

On the other hand, Nordic countries fare far better than their counterparts mostly due to the implementation of social welfare policies, including one of the most generous and flexible parental leave system in the EU, which allows women to further their professional careers while balancing their family life.

“In Denmark, there is no legal discrimination and no salary difference. Both spouses juggle work and family life together and responsibilities of parents are accepted in the workplace, creating a balance,” says Kirsten Geelan, the Danish ambassador to Nepal.

Women’s leadership style is different from men’s, so we don’t have to work like men. It is important for us to find our own role models, to get together to share experiences, and discuss challenges.

“We have many women ambassadors in the EU, which allows women to further their professional careers while balancing their family life.

Men and women have stood shoulder to shoulder during the war and the democracy movements. They play just as important a role as men in development. And yet we continue to be sidelined. Our contributions can no longer be overlooked,” says Giri who was jailed for 19 days during the 2006 Janandolan.

Although she now has to spend a lot of time in Kathmandu, the 43-year-old president of Laxmi Women Development, Savings, and Loan Cooperative, remains deeply committed to her hometown.

While party and government leadership has changed numerous times over the years, Chaudhary feels that women’s involvement and status in national politics is still appalling. “Party workers don’t attend our rallies because women are usually cash strapped and the cadre feel they won’t be well fed,” she says. “Women haven’t fared well in this country because we have been too tolerant of abuse and discrimination. Nobody is going to hand us our rights. We need to fight for it.”

On the other hand, Nordic countries fare far better than their counterparts mostly due to the implementation of social welfare policies, including one of the most generous and flexible parental leave system in the EU, which allows women to further their professional careers while balancing their family life.

“In Denmark, there is no legal discrimination and no salary difference. Both spouses juggle work and family life together and responsibilities of parents are accepted in the workplace, creating a balance,” says Kirsten Geelan, the Danish ambassador to Nepal.

Women’s leadership style is different from men’s, so we don’t have to work like men. It is important for us to find our own role models, to get together to share experiences, and discuss challenges.

“We have many women ambassadors in the EU, which allows women to further their professional careers while balancing their family life.

Men and women have stood shoulder to shoulder during the war and the democracy movements. They play just as important a role as men in development. And yet we continue to be sidelined. Our contributions can no longer be overlooked,” says Giri who was jailed for 19 days during the 2006 Janandolan.

Although she now has to spend a lot of time in Kathmandu, the 43-year-old president of Laxmi Women Development, Savings, and Loan Cooperative, remains deeply committed to her hometown.

While party and government leadership has changed numerous times over the years, Chaudhary feels that women’s involvement and status in national politics is still appalling. “Party workers don’t attend our rallies because women are usually cash strapped and the cadre feel they won’t be well fed,” she says. “Women haven’t fared well in this country because we have been too tolerant of abuse and discrimination. Nobody is going to hand us our rights. We need to fight for it.”

On the other hand, Nordic countries fare far better than their counterparts mostly due to the implementation of social welfare policies, including one of the most generous and flexible parental leave system in the EU, which allows women to further their professional careers while balancing their family life.

“In Denmark, there is no legal discrimination and no salary difference. Both spouses juggle work and family life together and responsibilities of parents are accepted in the workplace, creating a balance,” says Kirsten Geelan, the Danish ambassador to Nepal.

Women’s leadership style is different from men’s, so we don’t have to work like men. It is important for us to find our own role models, to get together to share experiences, and discuss challenges.

“We have many women ambassadors in the EU, which allows women to further their professional careers while balancing their family life.

Men and women have stood shoulder to shoulder during the war and the democracy movements. They play just as important a role as men in development. And yet we continue to be sidelined. Our contributions can no longer be overlooked,” says Giri who was jailed for 19 days during the 2006 Janandolan.
So long, Narayan

Sakolya, mysanasar.com, 5 March

While his contemporaries are known to either grill interviewees or bore the audience by talking endlessly, BBC Media Action’s Safta Sawal host Narayan Shrestha made a name for himself as the smiling, polite interviewer who got the most out of his guests. Having travelled to 85 districts in the country, he reached out to Nepalis who have been regularly neglected by mainstream media and made sure their stories were heard in Kathmandu.

Narayan Shrestha is now bidding farewell to his brain-child and will be recording the last episode at the end of March. “I have worked for seven years straight and sometimes I feel like things would never change. I want to take a break to study abroad and further my career,” he explains.

Shrestha was born in Ghyalchok, Gorkha where he attended a local government school. After SLC, he wanted to study science in college, but his family could not afford the fees, so he joined journalism instead. In hindsight, this proved to be a wise decision. He topped his college and won the Kantipur Journalism Prize. He then went on to work at Radio Sagarmatha and later became the host of Aanejhyar, a TV show about sustainable development. But it was Safta Sawal that made him a household face among Nepalis.

“Over the years, I have met all sorts of people - at the market, in the bus, while lining up for petrol - who recognised me and gave a lot of affection, feedback, and suggestions.”

From a young age, Shrestha was curious about the world around him. He wanted to understand administration, politics, development, policy-making and was keen to meet people, government officials, even prime ministers to learn more about his country. “While working for Safta Sawal, I found out how Nepal is truly run with Pashupatinath’s blessings,” he admits. “Streams are flowing downhill, but there is no one digging canals to irrigate.”

Although Shrestha isn’t quite sure how long he will remain out of the country, he still wants to maintain a connection back home. “Streams are flowing downhill, but there is no one digging canals to irrigate.”

End VIP culture

Prime Minister Sushil Koirala has expressed grave dissatisfaction over the ‘VIP culture’ of bringing the city’s traffic to a standstill for politicians, ministers, dignitaries, and their security entourage.

PM Koirala called on Chief Secretary Leela Mani Poudel after security forces stopped all vehicles while the prime minister was flying to Myanmar as part of the planned visit to the BIMSTEC Summit (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).

The meeting will deliberate on various issues relating to 14 priority areas identified under BIMSTEC cooperation, including trade and investment, energy, poverty alleviation, transport and infrastructure, agriculture etc and will take some key decisions to improve regional cooperation and make collaboration more effective and productive.

Nepal will assume the Chairmanship of BIMSTEC following the summit.
Lessons from Kiev
Jhalak Subedi, Nepal 2 March

Four months after demonstrators first protested against President Viktor Yanukovych and his paramilitary forces for refusing to sign on to EU policies, Ukraine's capital Kiev finally looks peaceful. But the conflict is hardly over: half the country is celebrating Yanukovych's ousting, while the other half is seething in discontent. And amidst all this, foreign forces are happily playing a geopolitical tug-of-war at Ukraine's expense.

Ukraine gained independence in 1991 after the Soviet Union fell apart. It was geographically the largest country in Europe with fertile agricultural land, untapped coal mines, industries, as well as the centre of a medieval Slavic civilization. Despite these opportunities, independence has been more of a burden. To its east is titanic Russia, whose rulers long for the Soviet Union. From the west, furthering its borders and influence, is the EU, more concerned about Vladimir Putin than about the financial crises among its members. Kiev, under direct influence from international powers, now looks like a war zone. Ukrainians are more than willing to tear their country along the Dnieper River and the only thing remaining for the power players is to provide impetus through bloodshed.

Nepal is no different from Ukraine because we too are caught between two equally proud and shrewd powers. And the recent violence is reminiscent of our own 10-year conflict and post-1990 upheaval. We know from our past experience that a country will never find peace as long as its leaders kowtow to foreign influence. Instead we can learn from Ukraine's other mistake: whenever a directly elected president tried to centralise power, the citizens handed back control to the parliament. This disproves the notion that a 'strong' president is needed in an unstable country.

Ukraine has continuously experimented with constitution writing and amendments, but it still isn't anywhere close to a prosperous nation. The lesson for us is that a constitution will not guarantee anything as long as the political elites are influenced by foreign powers and interpret the document to fit their purposes. Let's hope Nepal doesn't have to suffer like Ukraine. But for that to happen, our politicians need to look beyond the rat race for portfolios and lucrative posts.
The more asinine sex

Although us male asses are supposed to be from Mars and those of the female persuasion are supposed to be from Venus, space robots that have been looking under rocks on the surface of the Red Planet these past weeks have found no traces of primitive masculine life forms there. Perhaps if NASA’s quest for intelligent life in our current solar system had concentrated on Venus it would have met with more success. Anyway, the good news is that space scientists have now found proof of water on Mars, although no traces of it have yet been discovered in the Sanepa area.

Back here on Planet Earth we are getting ready to mark another Intergalactic Women’s Day and it is time to pay tribute to the longstanding struggle of women from all walks of life for equal rights with their not-so-better halves. If men can make complete asses of themselves, it is argued, then women should also have the right to make she-asses of their good selves. This is what gender equality is all about. Over the ages, in the arena of behaving like idiots, it was us men who enjoyed an unfair, but well-deserved, monopoly. But it was never pre-ordained by the Creator which sex should have more morons (although the Almighty seems to have a say on which morons should have more sex). So, if wimmin want to play catch-up with us chaps, they will have to take up some manlike hobbies, such as:

- Not just complain that you have a headache, but become headaches yourselves
- Learn how to not communicate and give the spouse The Silent Treatment
- Let your eyes rove all over the member of the opposite sex, taking time to closely inspect the front fender and the boot
- Use the Holi holiday to go on an all-out offensive against the other sex and blame it on the alcohol
- Treat anyone who has the nerve to overtake you on the Lajimpat uphill as a collective challenge to your gender
- When lost in a strange city, never ask for directions to prove that you’d rather be lost than found

These simple behaviour changes will allow even the most feminine woman to be as macho as the hairiest of us testosterone-filled numbskulls who are proud to call ourselves he men.