Manishita’s new life

Rupa Joshi

The girl from Nepal was just 19 when she starred in her first Bollywood movie. Manishita Koirala (left) shone in the Indian film industry in the 1990s, winning many awards. At one point, she was doing a dozen movies a year, working exhausting 18-hour days. But after a string of unsuccessful romances and films, a failed marriage, and alcoholism, Manishita came face to face with death. In 2012, she was diagnosed with stage-four ovarian cancer. Now she dealt with the crisis, and how she came out a survivor, extricating herself not just from the disease but also the sell her life had fallen into, is the theme of her new book Healed.

“Well that I am healed, I wish to help others.” Manishita Koirala said ahead of the Nepal Literature Festival in Pokhara, where her parents will unveil the book on Saturday.

Manishita was among the lucky quintile of women who have been diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer, but beaten the disease. She has now been cancer free for six years, and followed a ‘reformed’ regimen of meditation, prayer, yoga, panauti and a vegetarian diet, with a huge deluge of mindfulness. She went back to Bollywood after a five year break, and is now focused on taking on fewer, yet more meaningful films.

Cancer treatment is expensive, she says, and wants the Nepal government to do more on prevention by checking toxic contamination of air, water and food; promote healthy lifestyles; and provide world class affordable cancer treatment for the needy. And the zeal is up to individuals.

“Cancer is not a death sentence, so one should not lose hope,” she says.

Manishita’s tale is a roller coaster of fear, panic, pain, glimmer of hope and dark hopelessness. It is a book of self-discovery, where the author honestly and minutely analyses her own life, her decisions, her ‘toxic relationships’ and mistakes.

The fluid narrative borrows on memories of an actress who has starred in over 80 Bollywood movies, and lays bare the ordinary human being behind the trappings of glamour. Nothing is spared, the raw emotions are laid out in agonizing detail—her ‘relishing staple’ abdomen, the ‘gutterm’ she let out in the shower, or chemotherapy that unleashed … dark, wild wolves, their mouths open, fangs bared, seeking out each vein of my body, tearing forward at great speed.’

We travel along with Manishita as she turns from a ‘weak tree’ to a ‘deep-rooted banyan’. She shares tips and tricks about self-healing. She admits that cancer came into her life ‘as a gift, that left her with many learnings, just like a flooded river that leaves behind rich deposits of silt’.

Manishita Koirala dissects her life choices, habits, and directs us to pay attention to everyone’s ‘inner compass’, to embrace life and live in the moment just as she learnt to.

Watch Manishita Koirala in an interview on Nepali Times Studio where she speaks about her battle against cancer. Go online to also read the full review of her book, Healed.
TULSI GIRI, 93

The passing of Tulsi Giri, the doctor-turned-politician turned follower of the Hindu-Buddhist ‘Wisdom sect, who died on 19 December aged 93, marked the end of an era in Nepal’s recent political history.

Giri’s close friend and colleague, Brama Shankar Thapa, is now one of the last remaining survivors of a trend in Nepal’s politics when it moved from Feudalism to constitutional monarchy to federal republic and back within the span of a few years. There are now few witnesses left of that era, and what little memory of it is preserved today was passed down to the next few years: Sunu Bahadur Thapa, Kirti Nath Bista, and now Tulsi Giri.

The general elections of 1949 propelled the Nepal Congress to power in a landslide victory. B P Koirala has noticed Tulsi Giri’s charismatic personality and considered him to be an unflinching democrat during campaigning. Giri became BP’s ‘blue-eyed boy’ and such an extent that top Congress leaders were turned off and became suspicious of Giri’s influence under the Prime Minister.

BP named Tulsi Giri Foreign Minister when he was just 34, made him a close advisor during a time of sensitive geopolitics as relations between India and China were at the height of tension, and Nepal was opening up to the outside world.

But BP’s trust in Giri lasted not as long as he found him increasingly demanding and a possible rival within the party. The ambitious Giri, for his part, could not contain his zeal for government as long as BP remained in power.

Tulsi Giri was also getting increasingly disillusioned with the Western-style parliamentary democracy that Nepal inherited from Britain via India. And when he came across a paper written by Indian freedom fighters S. N. Prakash Naryan that rural India should have parliaments and elections and government, Giri had a eureka moment.

“It was a very relevant document,” he confided to a Nepali journalist much later in Sri Lanka where he was living with his wife Sarada Yosef. Giri was convinced during campaigning for the 1949 elections, last as an NP in the national Parliament and made the cabinet, that despite this strong argument that the Nepali Congress had, the western model of democracy would not work in Nepal. His reasoning were: Nepalis were too unwise to vote meaningfully so cast and elections were made a mockery of democracy. And this would always be a destabilising factor and all this would leave Nepal a playground for the proxy rivalities of global and regional powers.

King Mahendra had been on the throne since 1951, and was not really happy sharing powers traditionally enjoyed by the royal palace with an elected Parliament. As Giri grew between King and Koirala (legally, and politically, the two were one and the same) the curriculum of Nepal’s new democracy was already revised and it was only 93 years old. It is hardly to believe that the man whoimum the country’s sixth prime minister, had passed away.

India watching from Nepal by Anushnu Singh

Narendra-Modi’s RP suffers a shocking defeat in elections in India, which is a matter of concern for the Hindus. What is an implication for Nepal? Media trends in a post-hindi worst. Go online to read all yes.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most popular on Twitter

India watching from Nepal by Anushnu Singh

Narendra-Modi’s RP suffers a shocking defeat in elections in India, which is a matter of concern for the Hindus. What is an implication for Nepal? Media trends in a post-hindi worst. Go online to read all yes.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most popular on Twitter

India watching from Nepal by Anushnu Singh

Narendra-Modi’s RP suffers a shocking defeat in elections in India, which is a matter of concern for the Hindus. What is an implication for Nepal? Media trends in a post-hindi worst. Go online to read all yes.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most popular on Twitter

FLY MORE
WITH THE AIRLINE THAT FLIES TO MORE COUNTRIES THAN ANY OTHER

FARES STARTING FROM NPR 31000 TAXES NOT INCLUDED

EXCLUSIVE ONE WAY AND RETURN FARES TO SELECTED TURKISH AIRLINES DESTINATIONS

CAIRO ↔ JOHANNESBURG
BRUSSELS ↔ PARIS
MILAN ↔ ROME
AMSTERDAM ↔ MADRID

BAKU ↔ TEL AVIV
MUNICH ↔ FRANKFURT
ZURICH ↔ GENEVA
WARSAW ↔ PRAGUE

Sales Period: UNTIL 31 JAN 19
Travel Period: 01 DEC 18 - 28 FEB 19

TURKISH AIRLINES INC
EAST WING 1ST FLOOR
INTERNATIONAL BUILDING
KATIP ÇENGI AVE
01-4445 0143 TURKISHAIRLINES.COM

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER
Daraz finds Nepalis still shy to shop online

Despite modest success, 11.11 and 12.12 sales have been slow to pick up

Daraz said Nepal buyers had the stereotype that the company was a retailer.

Said Managing Director Lito Ahlberg: “Daraz is more like a marketplace connecting local sellers with local customers. It is a safety mechanism which does not allow any price increases before the end of the sale.

Despite the downbeat comments, Ahlberg said the 11.11 campaign broke all records for Sale Day, its first since Daraz was bought by China’s e-commerce company, the Alibaba Group. The 11.11 event has been held in China for the last nine years with more than $30 billion in sales this year. On November 11, which in China is marked as Singles’ Day – as opposed to Valentine’s Day for couples. Even though Nepal was unaware of the concept of a Singles’ Day and 11.11, Daraz’s brand manager Salina Nakermi said the portal sold 3,000 Poco phones in less than 30 minutes and around 50,000 orders were received in 24 hours.

Daraz would not disclose daily sales figures, but Niloth Krishna Shrestha, head of Boudhanath University, which the marketing site does not yet command enough of a brand to be sent as a marketing tool, people do not find online purchase trustworthy.

Sixto Bhatta, co-founder of the motorcycle-sharing app TooTie, says he is worried about why Daraz decided to replicate 11.11 in Nepal. When you run a campaign, it needs to be culturally interesting. So the first thing I felt was that 11.11 and 11.12 didn’t connect with the Nepali public,” Bhatta said.

Ahlberg is aware of the need to be culturally aligned with the market, but said young Nepali customers are catching on to online shopping. He says Daraz will work on educating buyers through social media, video tutorials and media outreach.

He added: “I wouldn’t say everything is perfect now, but we have a great foundation, but there is still a lot to do.”

Selected Online feedback:

• Ruixue Zhang

U ntil Nepal works IT in Kathmandu and has been buying products and necessities online for three years. But tech savvy as he is, he did not buy anything online on 12.12, Nepal’s second online shopping day after 11.11 last month when hundreds of heavily discounted products were on sale online. Nepal was not the only person who did not join in. There wasn’t the usual buzz on social media about 12.12 that there is in Pakistan, the country where Daraz originated — or the publicity in China, the home base of Daraz’s new owner, Alibaba Group.

Managing Director Lito Ahlberg of Daraz Nepal says the company has learnt from its hectic performance last month: “12.12 will not be as big as 11.11 but we have done a lot to improve our user experience so Nepal customers will not be shopping online only for one day in a year.”

The first online shopping day in Nepal marked 11.11 Sales Day on November 11 offered up to 80% discount on some items for customers in Nepal on over a 24-hour period.

However, even 12.12 did not really take off because of negative publicity in social media about lack of real discounts, and slashed deliveries.

Maybe the country is just not ready yet for e-commerce. It could be that without card payment and online transactions, cash on delivery alone is not enough to take cyber-shopping to a new level.

Nepal said he and his friends were excited about the 11.11 sales day before it happened because they had seen Black Friday and Cyber Monday Sales in other countries. He had bought a cleaning gel on Daraz in October, and when Sales Day came, he checked the app again and found a similar product was sold for 70% discount.

“That’s a really good deal, but when I clicked the product it was a different story,” said Nepal who bought the gel for Rs249 only to find out that the same item could be bought for Rs47 in a shopping mall. “That was just ridiculous, it looked like the campaign was misleading.”

Nepal posted his experiences of the Twitter and got hundreds of responses, and the negative publicity made it to the mainstream media as well. In response,

Turkish now to Lusaka Turkish Airlines has started daily flights to Lusaka, the capital of Zambia, making the 11th African destination of the airline

Expanding Qatar Qatar Airways chief executive Akbar Al Baker conducted a media roundtable to discuss the airline expansion plans during Qatar’s annual Doha Forum. Over the past 15 months, the airline added 27 new destinations, and during December, started flights to Mombasa in Kenya and Gothenburg in Sweden. The airline currently operates a fleet of about 300 aircraft.

Etihad turns 15 Etihad Airways celebrated 15 years of its flights to Kathmandu with an exclusive event

NMB’s new products NMB Bank has announced the launch of eight latest products in its microfinance portfolio under the umbrella of “NMB MicroSecured loans,” which are range from Rs 500,000 to Rs 1,500,000. Seven of the loans are collateral-free and provide entrepreneurial opportunities to individuals under different categories such as women farmers, businesses to uplift underprivileged communities, employment groups for returnees from foreign countries.
CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

THE CAFE
The Cafe offers a sumptuous buffet with wide selection of dishes to satisfy everyone’s taste buds served with mulled wine or a Heineken product.

Event: Christmas Eve Dinner
Time: 6.30 PM – 10.00 PM
Rate: NPR 3,200 per person plus taxes

ROX RESTAURANT
The elegant Rox Restaurant will welcome the season by serving four course menu showcasing the best of Italian cuisine with choices for each course with a glass of mulled wine and dessert wine or a Pepsi product.

Event: Christmas Eve Dinner
Time: 6.30 PM – 10.00 PM
Rate: NPR 3,900 per person plus taxes
*Regular a la carte menu will also be available.

THE CAFE
Celebrate Christmas Day with intimate family over a bountiful buffet brunch and live music.

Event: Christmas Day Brunch
Time: 12.30 PM – 4.00 PM
Rate: NPR 2,800 per person plus taxes
*Reservations are recommended.
*Be part of the festive season and win exciting prizes!

HYATT REGENCY KATHMANDU
Boudha
+977 1 517 1234
sales.kathmandu@hyatt.com

HYATT REGENCY KATHMANDU
Boudha
+977 1 517 1234
 HYATT REGENCY KATHMANDU
Boudha
+977 1 517 1234
HYATT REGENCY KATHMANDU
Boudha
+977 1 517 1234

Superior Quality as it has always been
Coated with Paint and Primer of European Quality and made with Japanese Technology, Hulas Stools protects your home from harmful rays and leakage and the quality remains as superior as it has always been.

Hulas Steel Industries Limited
Corporate Office: Kathmandu Plaza, ‘Y’ Block, 3rd Floor, Kamalabari G.P.O. 4129, Kathmandu, Nepal | Tel: 977-1-416854/5/67 | 980137444 | Fax: 977-1-4168524
Factory: Simra, Bara, Nepal | Tel: 977-53-520075/76/77/78 | Fax: 977-53-520180
Is there a Kathmandu Valley Style?

Yes, there is. But the book may not have convinced everyone to preserve the Valley’s traditional architecture.

"Actually, we are only capturing the house, if that’s all right." The chaukiana at the foot of the swooping staircase beneath a massive chandelier had obviously gone to great trouble with her appearance, dressed in a yellow sequined chiffon sari and hair freshly coiffed. She smiled in disappointment. "Of course, of course! Do please come in."

Our motley crew on the Kathmandu Valley Style photo shoot set to work. His lanky frame bent over the tripod, Craig Potten was a fast worker, better known as New Zealand’s leading photographer of iconic nature and national park images, ubiquitous on Kwo posters, calendars and postcards. His eager local assistants, Tino and Loffo, my Tibetan nephew, waded with reflectors, unreliable lights, loose electrical plugs and power cuts.

Gautam SBI Rana, mastermind of Barat Mahal Revisited, author of Ranas of Nepal and my collaborator, had arranged access to an array of restored interiors and private residences that had never before been glimpsed by the public. His volcanic talent was knowing where to find exquisite examples of Nepali architectural adaptations and persuading homeowners, often his relatives, to allow us to reveal them in our book to celebrate the Valley’s vernacular styles and aesthetic virtuosity.

Our aim was to showcase the lesser-known and more imaginative models of Malla Newar, Rana neo-classical and Tibetan architectural and decorative styles in new buildings and restored old ones around the Valley. Only a couple had the tenacity to turn us down.

Kathmandu Valley Style was a book crying out to be produced, but gestation and birth took a surprisingly long time. First proposed as Nepal Style by Hans Hoofer, Insight Guide pioneer, the idea was for me to collaborate with Italian photographer Luca Invernizzi Tettoni, creator of many of the Style series around Asia starting with Thai Style in 1989 with William Warren. Despite a near miss in 2003, this Singapore plan fell by the wayside.

The concept went through a number of incarnations until Kathmandu Valley Style saw the light of day in 2006, published by Shamo Sivakapikomakul of Serendipity Publications Chicago, designed in New Zealand and printed in China—a true international effort. Keen to accompany us on location, Shamo’s Harry Potter glasses and gently encouraging presence were a calming influence on the team, and he hosted a splendid launch of Thai Napal glitterati at his Bangkok gallery.

I was lucky to find Craig in a spiritual frame of mind and persuadable to spend some weeks in Nepal over several visits in 2007—both we needed a chance of pace and this project was an ideal opportunity, as well as a mutual passion. Being a climber and environmentalist, Craig had longstanding connections with the country—we trekked the same year to Mustang with his teenage son, who he claimed was conscripted in Chitwan. Craig had startled me into our first book back in 1999. Offerings from Nepal, a largely forgotten collection of edgy images of real life in Nepal that was refreshing change from the usual chocolate box coffee table tome of the day. Such is the wealth and variety of styles in the intoxicating intimacy of the Kathmandu Valley, we decided to focus our mission and leave the wider Nepal and Himalayas to others.

We showed covers we covered nearly 50 houses, hotels, restaurants and gardens, in addition to historic palaces and world heritage sites—not all made the cut.

Gautam’s punishing schedule had us covering several locations a day in all corners of the Valley. Royalty, Ranas, Newars, Tibetans, Ambassadors and Western expatriates were prevailed upon to open their doors to us and our speedy camerawork. More than one host remarked: "Are you finished already?" as we pilled into the car and sped on to the next appointment, thanking them profusely.

Geeta Hagemann’s matchless Kusum Achals in Shikshatma was always a first choice for the cover, that arbor of style whose rare tastes has powerfully pervaded so many Valley restorations, and Dwarika’s, which still defines the high bar of heritage hotels and modern architecture.

We appreciated the elegant intimacy of Chino and Elizabeth Roncoroni’s farmhouse, another trendsetter of Nepali design, Cert- Marthas Wegner’s music studio, and the precious jewel of Bal Krishna Sams art cottage.

One sunny afternoon found us on the Valley rim at kanki where we took the liberty of rearranging furniture in the Kristiten’s historic bunglow—dating from the mid-nineteenth century, and magically it was destined not to survive the 2015 earthquakes. Quite a number of other properties have also gone missing—the James Giambriano Indigo Gallery has moved, Janet Rockwell’s Bambuti Bungalow has been encroched, Barbara Adams Thapa House is changed forever, and Ian Baker’s questionable collection had evaporated even before the monsoon.

It is heartening that most of the Nepali and Tibetan homes are less tangible, with their curved woodwork, moulded bricks, gilded columns, art deco profusion, painted furniture, elaborate decoration and silk hangings. Many of the more glittering innovations still endure as accessible spaces—Romi Khola’s Gorkha Forest Hotel, Shano Basnet’s Shano Giza restaurant and Niels Gutachow’s fanciful step-studded lobby at the Hyatt Regency hotel. But did Kathmandu Valley Style succeed in convincing residents to commit to restore and reuse historic buildings, or adopt their Incomparable and admired indigenous designs in new constructions? After a casual dance around Valley architecture, I think not.

"I recommend Sensodyne."—Dr. Sabir Golara, dentist practising in the UK.

Do these cause sensitivitity in your teeth?

World’s No.1 Sensitivity Toothpaste®

"Rebal Value Sales data 12 months ending 30th April 2018."
Sewa Bhattarai

Nicola Streeten asked a roomful of people in Kathmandu who their heroines were. Most named their mothers and grandmothers. The reasons: strength, endurance, staying positive and struggling against adversity. Is it which the British graphic novelist and historian of women’s comics asked: “Why have they always been made to do the right thing?”

Streeten was speaking at the British Council on Tuesday, and will be facilitating a three-day workshop for artists and illustrators on creating heroines at the Nepal Literature Festival in Pokhara this weekend.

When we think of the word ‘heroine’, it brings to mind the image of a conquering woman, and historically, men’s autobiographies have been the norm. When women started writing about their lives, especially after the 1960s, their books were called ‘women’s’ or ‘gender roles’. In a sort of lensing or trivializing manner. Women’s experiences do not fit into the mould of the ‘hero’, which is full of gender stereotypes,” she says.

Streeten was also in Nepal in February 2018 for a workshop for South Asian illustrators. The result was a zine showcasing stereotype-free conceptualizations of heroines. The idea, eventually, is to have such standalone narratives develop into graphic novels and reach out to more people, including through school curriculums.

“Why more people can access stories of everyday heroines, it helps those who are developing similar experiences feel less alone, and more confident about speaking up about their own experiences,” Streeten says, accepting that graphic novels still struggle for acceptance.

When creating her graphic novels, Biddy, Me and You, 2012, about the grief of losing a child, Streeten asked questions about when she wanted to see the format for such a serious subject. Streeten’s response: for easy accessibility. Pictures with words are easier to understand than a long novel or modern art. That is the reason she conducts workshops for making simple narratives.

But many still associate graphic novels with children’s comic books, even after Holocaust story Maus (1986) won the Pulitzer prize and the beloved girl’s comics creator Persepolis (2000) garnered critical acclaim. Women’s art in this genre is taken even less seriously.

This is not new. From the 18th century, women who worked at or owned printing presses on the suffragette movements of 180s and 200s, British women were prolific cartoon makers. However, there cannot be found in most cartoon archives.

“Many early women cartoonists did so for a cause, and stopped after their cause succeeded. Most archiving is a masculine pursuit and it was not in their interest to document the feminist agenda,” Streeten explains. “Many women also wrote under gender neutral names or under just names only, so their contribution to this art form is not as well known as it should be.”

Streeten reckons this is a worldwide trend, concluding that things have changed for the better today. Women can now disseminate their artwork through the Internet even though it is not yet a level playing field.

Streeten now wants to work on a new book about the history of women’s cartoons all over the world. That will be an update to her previous book making Woman. She says: “A time of the day, everything is told, whether a cartoon is about trauma, anxiety, or even lifestyle. Women’s cartoons and graphic novels depict our social and political scenario through women’s lives.”


Meet Streeten with British Council:
11th Art of the Graphic Memoir
3.00PM-4.30PM, Dec 12, 2018, Fool’s Ark, Chowk
A general's labyrinth

Readers are warned that the territory covered in this page is complex. The author, Sam Cowan, presents an in-depth analysis of the historical, political, and military aspects of Nepal's history. The nation state expanded its power through various military actions, which have led to continued tension in the region. Cowan discusses the military strategies used by the Nepali Army and its impact on the nation's development.

Hit and Run

The author, Sam Cowan, explores the hit-and-run tactics used by the Nepali Army in the 1960s to expand its territory. The author presents the strategic use of hit-and-run tactics to gain control over the region. The author also discusses the impact of these tactics on the local population and the ongoing conflict in the region.
The book is full of anecdotes about each of the sanctuaries. How locals believed Sukla Phanta was to be killed because of the heart attack King Mahendra suffered during a hunt just as a tiger jumped out of the tall grass. King and tiger both lived. Then, the accidental near-fatal shooting of Queen Ratna by her son (we don’t know which one) during another hunt. We find out how it was King Bernhard of The Netherlands and also Chair of the
pay to protect nature while improving livelihoods. The Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) became a model for other conservation initiatives in Nepal and elsewhere.

Mishra found a promising young student, Mingma Sherpa to head ACAP. During a trip to the East West Centre in Hawaii, Prince Gyamzenma met Chandra Gurung, and told Mishra: “Find him, he is an excellent catch.” Mingma Sherpa and Chandra Gurung were among 25 killed in the tragic helicopter crash in 2006 in China which wiped out an entire generation of Nepal’s conservation pioneers.

Among the sanctuaries he was instrumental in protecting, Mishra regards Chitwan National Park as his most important work. While doing a helicopter-borne census of rhinos in Chitwan in 1968, Mishra discovered that a jungle that teemed with 1,000 rhinos in 1960 had only 110 left. The prediction that rhinos could soon be extinct in Nepal led to the formation of Chitwan National Park so that the necessary laws could be passed. By then, Mishra had moved on to Koshi Tappu to protect the habitat of Nepal’s last remaining rhino.

Mishra worked with three kings: Mahendra, Birendra and Gyaneendra and worked tirelessly setting a paragon of order in 1978 from the palace to kill a rhino. It turned out to be for a royal stag, a rare ceremony to promote peace and prosperity on the land. An elderly rhino was hunted, its inards removed, and Birendra sat inside the rhino’s open abdomen to offer its organs to his ancestors.

Mishra, a self-proclaimed monarchist, wrote that in the end, the ritual did not save Birendra and his clan from the royal massacre of 2001, nor the monarchy from being abolished in 2008. Nepal became a republic, and the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation was changed to the National Trust for Nature Conservation. In an emotional epilogue, Mishra rue: Nepal’s national parks were resurrected after the deadly civil war and the end of the monarchy ... now I wonder whether these protected areas will withstand the political gridlock of today’s Nepal and survive in perpetuity.

---

 Conservation and conservation also overlap in accounts of a raid on Tibet

H ow did Nepal become a global success story? How did the government manage to set aside over 25% of the country’s area for nature protection? How did one of the poorest countries in Asia become a model for innovative approaches in combining people’s livelihoods with environmental protection?

Most of the answers can be found in Homanta R Mishra’s new memoir, On His Majesty’s Service. He recounts the early days when scientists began to understand the incredible biodiversity of the Nepali Himalaya and the need to protect it (not just for Nepal), but as a world heritage.

A young forestry graduate, Mishra threw himself into the deep end, learning quickly to navigate Nepal’s rudimentary bureaucracy, bureaucratic obstacles and turf battles. As the title of the book suggests, a large part of the credit for Nepal’s environmental protection efforts went to hunter-turned-conservationists like him.

The subtitle of On His Majesty’s Service is an unwieldy but revealing list of all the other protagonists that Mishra interacted with during his career: Gyawali, Higgins & Houlton, British Film Makers and Tibetan Khampa Guerrillas, United Nations and American Peace Corps, Mt Everest Summitaries and Battles for Conservation in the Himalayas. Whew!

At the conclusion of his previous books, The Soul of the Rhino, The Beasts of the Tiger and Nepal’s Chitwan, the award-winning author, Bishnu Viswanath Mishra, has taken the editing help of his long-time publisher friend Jim Ottaway Jr, who is credited with convincing Mishra during a trek to Mustang in 2010 to start working on this memoir.

Mishra’s own family history evokes the stark reality of life in Nepal in the last century: his mother (a prolific breeder) gave birth to her first daughter at age 13 and had 16 children before she was 40. Only seven survived, two of them boys.

Educated in a Jewish school, Mishra’s command of English landed him his first job as a liaison officer for a British film crew that actually turned out to be something else (see box, left). He then accompanied UN observers in the war-torn areas to see what they felt, Chitwan, Bardia, Kosi Tappu and Sukla Phanta to explore their biodiversity. It was this research that led to all of them being declared national parks or nature reserves by 1977.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) who suggested that Nepal declare the ME Everest region a national park at the Fund’s conference in Bonn in 1977. Mishra accompanied Prince Gyaneendra to Bonn where the widely-acclaimed announcement was made.

Mishra was sent to the Khumbu to find that local Sherpas were against the park. One angry Sherpa even told him to pack up and go back to Kathmandu, but he managed to elicit the help of the Tengboche abbot and Edmund Hillary.

Gurung villagers in the Annapurnas also opposed a national park, and the concept of ‘conservation area’ came up as a way to blend the needs of local people with environmental protection, and have eco-tourism income go online to watch the documentary on the Khampa attack on a Chinese military convoy that created waves in 1966 when it was aired on British TV. The film also has rare footage of King Mahendra in Kathmandu inaugurating various projects.
Tell-Tales VIII
An intensive story-telling experience to share stories. Sign up to tell your story or simply listen. There will also be a special game for the audience called in the Wariang Rooms where participants will be assigned a character and take to act out scenarios as that persona.
22 December, 7:30pm, Presidential Business School, Annapurna, 9845571018, 9899295190

Forest Therapy
Relax in a refereeing, natural ambience and recharge with yourself through meditation and natural walks.
22 December, 2nd fl. (Room) and 5 (Frontt). Meeting point: Balgadhaproof Shop Cafe of 1pm, 977962004545, gpydip@gmail.com/703minde@gmail.com

Christmas Market
Christmas market including a range of products including crafts, jewelleries, winter products, custom print shirts and many more to browse through and find the perfect gift for friends and family. There will also be live bookstore, food, drinks and live music.
22 December, 3rd Floor, Mayfair center, Waghododi, 9846779791.

Open Mic Night
An occasion to celebrate all form of expression in any language or genre. Present your poem, song, dance, instrumental music – speech – anything you can imagine.
25 December, 6pm, Aniket Club, Nepal, Mob. Phone, 984525839

Yoga for beginners
A drop-in course with Birita Khadka to introduce yoga postures, meditation and breathing techniques to beginners. Discover the transformative power of yoga. 21 December, 4:45am, (Room), Soneo Wellness and yoga center, Lalitpur, (984597174)

Come Away With Me
The iconic band Apuli will perform the soothing tunes of Noran Jones to be accompanied by a special Christmas menu. A perfect musical way to enjoy a rainy Saturday afternoon with good food.
21 December, 8pm, RoJO, The Ford, Sainbaja, 9845412257, 9841186585

Jazz
Two Indian artists have come to Nepal with jazz music – listen to the live songs with Mario in the vocals and Shailaud in piano. 21 December, 7-10pm, Sunlight and Bar, Kathmandu, 9851615374

Full Moon Concert
Erdon Nepal music that includes devotional performances and classical melodies. Tabua, harmonium, sarpa flute and vocals will perform a full range of traditional tunes.
22 December, Ajitn, Kristerwor Сергеевна, Sergeevna@kristerworcenter.com

Trisara
A picturesque outdoor restaurant which offers some mouth-watering dishes and drinks. There will also be a special concert by the band Arooe on 24 December. Lekhnath, Parbat, 756413

Christmas dinner
Christmas at The Pavilion cosmetic will be a song and warm evening with high quality food served from a well thought-out menu – a live band, sumptuous cocktails to drink, and a special Christmas gift. Some delicacies are Tarai-little and Tikai inred peshoak in the main course. 21 December, 7pm, 25 December, 7pm, 31 December, 7pm, Pavillion’s kitchen, 9841237657, 9845117675

Hyatt festive menu
A festive indulgence package with special call in gift hampers in all restaurants. Christmas live dinner at Cafe will offer a mixed antipasti selection, salads, seasoned cut platters, seafood platters, risotto platter and many more hot selections, while at the Mix, the evening will be delectable delight with 4-course menu showcasing the best of Italian cuisine. Also a heavy buffer lunch with live music on Christmas Day, 12:30-7pm. The Chef & Rooftop Restaurant: 696967-1
25 December, 12-2pm, 8pm, Bar, Cafe, Christmas Day, 24 December, 8pm, Rooftop, 9841771721

Bartika Eam Rai
For over 20 years, a remarkable lady has grown her widespread network and this concert promises an enjoyable and refreshing evening.
23 December, 7pm, (Room) 1000 limited pre sale tickets, Inside cafe and hotel, 9841137177

Deepak Bajracharya
Bajracharya, Nepal's famous traditional khebs with a unique voice in the Nepali music industry for many decades and 12 book with new hits like Mon Magan, Wora Faru and many more. He will be performing with the Rhythm band for a vibrant musical concert.
24 December, 2pm, 8pm, King Lounge, Outback Garden, 9845221717

OUR PICK

Shangri-La Village Resort
Enjoy a luxurious stay in the serene ambience of the hotel which has a splendid garden and comfortable rooms. The view of the Himalayas on a clear day is absolutely breathtaking.
Ghosepatan, Parbat, 749-42222

Park Village Resort
Yoga, dashay and ayurveda treatment in a quiet corner of Kathmandu. Enjoy the services of Himalayan wellness centre – a one-stop centre to reenergize mind and body.
Bhaktapur Resort and Wellness Center, Park Village Resort, Bhaktapur Nathmandu, (01) 457589

Atithi Resort & Spa
The resort’s unique spiritual blend of Nepali tradition with modern amenities and has been often on “TripAdvisor’s” list of top-ten inns in Nepal.
Lekhnath, Parbat, 749-46788

Temple Tree Resort and Spa
A peaceful place to stay, complete with a swimming pool, massage parlour and saru flutes – if you have to be here you might as well have the time.
Ghosepatan, Lekhnath, Parbat, 749-463519

Lake View Resort
The resort’s private hot tub featuring hand crafted wooden furniture, local stone exterior and a private garden, offer a great weekend respite.
Lekhnath, Parbat, 749-467748358

GETAWAY

Festive Christmas menu
A festive indulgence package with special call-in gift hampers in all restaurants. Christmas live dinner at Cafe will offer a mixed antipasti selection, salads, seasoned cut platters, seafood platters, risotto platter and many more hot selections, while at the Mix, the evening will be delectable delight with a 4-course menu showcasing the best of Italian cuisine. Also a heavy buffet lunch with live music on Christmas Day, 12:30-7pm. The Chef & Rooftop Restaurant: 696967-1
25 December, 12-2pm, 8pm, Bar, Cafe, Christmas Day, 24 December, 8pm, Rooftop, 9841771721

Deepak Bajracharya
Bajracharya, Nepal’s famous traditional khebs with a unique voice in the Nepali music industry for many decades and 12 book with new hits like Mon Magan, Wora Faru and many more. He will be performing with the Rhythm band for a vibrant musical concert.
24 December, 2pm, 8pm, King Lounge, Outback Garden, 9845221717

Open In Kathmandu on 21 December
Superstar Shank Kisho’s party is a huge hit and has even found its way to Kathmandu. Kisho’s party is a huge hit and has even found its way to Kathmandu. Attend the event and enjoy the music and dancing to your heart’s content.

ARTICLE

Health at home is an organization which facilitates home based health care services. Health at home promotes health care, i.e., cut out hospital setting to the clients. Giving the first of its kind in the whole South Asia, Health at Home is here to cater to the needs of those who desire health care facilities to be delivered at their doorstep.

“Health at Home is a perfect place to do so. Our team is well trained and experienced and we are committed to providing quality care.”

Nursing Care
Nurses are always at home to provide quality and experienced professionals.

Lab on Call
All lab-related tests and work can be done by professional lab technicians.

Elderly Care Assistant
The professional team is here for your qualified and experienced care.

Appointment Management
Personally appointed with trained professionals in different hospitals.

Equipment Rental & Supply
Supply all your equipment and also provide you with necessary equipment on rent.

Times Nepal

AIR QUALITY INDEX

The New Quality Index (AQI) in Kathmandu Valley this week soared to a new high, reaching 883 on an AQI of 17 on December. The concentration of fine particles below 2.5 microns continues to be in the ‘very unhealthy’ category. Purify a breath and avoid going outside. We feel that awareness needs to be more enforced for the public to stop compounding emissions open to a lot of smog. There is a need to do something about smoke overall.
https://np-usmb.gov/nepal/air-quality-monitor
Shared stories, shattered dreams

Sonia Awale

What is it about labour and love that keeps drawing hundreds of thousands of people every year away from their homes and families despite the evident risks? Pames South Asia's new collection of reports from the region, Uncertain Journeys: Labour Migration from South Asia seeks to answer this question through the eyes of 15 award-winning journalists who researched their stories in destination countries. Based on their interviews, they analyse various aspects of labour migration.

The first chapter on Nepal by Upasana Khadka, who has reported widely on the issue of Nepali migrants in the Gulf and Malaysia for this newspaper, Khadka likens labour migration to a lottery, a culturally divisive view born out of desperation to escape poverty back home. She narrates the tales of her interviewees: Sharmila, Ramesh, Shama and Ram who are unlucky and are either caught, chased, trafficked, or deported. Yet, even though they know the risks, thousands of others take same route to seek their fortunes.

Individuals are often aware of the common risks of migration... however, many continue to make risky decisions, not always because of lack of information, but despite it. It is partly due to being lucky that encourages so many to take risks," she writes.

Khadka also talks about the lack of bilateral agreements that have encouraged sources for illegal migration. Case in point is the blanket ban on female domestic workers leaving Nepal, despite which migration continues to remain a loophole that remains unmonitor and unassisted. She says the political protection enjoyed by the remittances industry has shaped this form of modern-day slavery to flourish, and until the ambiguities in legal structures are cleared and stronger policies are in place, Nepalis abroad will continue to be duped, or worse, abused and maimed.

Film maker Keshav Teten whose acclaimed 2007 documentary in Search of Royal about four young Nepalese on a journey to the Gulf is below. Filmed by the stark realities behind the remittances, also has a chapter about filming in Qatar and how he had to sneak behind aircraft crew to capture conversations with migrants inside the planes.

Eleven years later, he revives characters from the first film for a sequel. He found that Damir Jogi is still in Qatar and making good money. Nabin Rai returned to a broken marriage and left again for Dubai. Prem Birelly is in Bahrain working as a silversmith amidst signs of being a Dalit and Bhojraj Birelly is a successful farmer in Nepal. But none of these are representative stories. Tenent stresses, pointing out that it is vital to understand and sympathise with Nepalis opting to go abroad. The chapters on other South Asian countries show that there is a lot of similarity between the tragic tales of Nepali workers and those from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India. The case of Zulfiqar Ali of Pakistan, who was charged with drug trafficking and consequently spent 13 years in death row in Indonesia, reminds one of conviction and incarceration of Govindnath Mahali, who was falsely accused of the murder and robbery of a Japanese woman in Tokyo in 1977.

In a chapter appropriately titled A Return to Nothingness, narration of an everyday scene at Indian airports of the body being unloaded is not unlike Nepali migrants returning home in coffins at Kathmandu airport. The migration of Sri Lankan farmers to the Gulf because of droughts caused by climate change is similar to that of outmigration of people from the mid-hills of Nepal. Bangladeshis overcharged and cheated of jobs in Singapore echo the plight of most Nepali migrants in Malaysia. Amidst the poignant stories of loss, there are tiny rays of hope. Following the three decades of war in Sri Lanka, women were forced to leave as domestic workers and live hard in the Gulf, but discovered themselves in the process as an individual with rights and freedom.

What ties all of those stories together are the shared stories of aspirations and shattered dreams. Meanwhile, all South Asian nations rely on the same destinations resulting in competition with each other, allowing employers to get away with little pay and exploitation in turn.

Each chapter in a raw portrayal of a migrant life, and the book gives significant understanding of the exploitative and social injustice in South Asia.

Riyal revisited

The tidal wave of migration that began 20 years ago continues... that is how Keshav Teten begins his documentary sequel to the 2004 film In Search of the Royal. He tries to locate migrant workers he had filmed a decade ago, to find out what has become of them. Were their dreams realised? Did the Nepali workers in Qatar and UAE find what they were looking for? Were the intervening years kind to them? In The Royals, acclaimed film-maker Teten (pictures, right) spends the first five minutes sitting the stage for the journey ahead. We get to revisit young Nepalis on scaffolds whom we first met in the previous sequel.

Ten years ago Dhanvij Joshi, a lanky lad from Terathum left behind his three-month-old son and started training at an institute in Kathmandu. He was diligent and hopeful, but worried about falling sick in the hot desert. In To Search of the Royal Prem Birelly who often faced stigma of being a Dalit, lives in Bahrain and is not shy away from his fears. “They might be talking about killing me but I wouldn’t know... I won’t understand their language.”

Shobha Dixit was fully aware of the risk but had nothing to lose. She had heard of Nepalis returning home in coffins. Yet he took a leap in the hope of finding his job as a tailor in Dubai for a financially secure position in the Gulf.

Shy and awkward, Nabin Rai, has a sad story with a happy ending. Teten narrates: “It was the image of Nabin in his crisp white shirt and his newly married wife spotting a blue umbrella that remained etched in my mind from the earlier film.”

But after two years in Qatar, Nabin came back to find that his wife took off with another man and abandoned his twin daughters. Nabin remained and left for Dubai. Today, he is a foreman at an offshore gas rig and earns a good salary. He gets to visit home every three months where he is building a new home for his family. Dhanvij, who is with the same construction company in Qatar, has managed to acquire some land, get his sisters married, send his son to school, but missed out on his upbringing. “I was thin and young when I came,” he says on camera, “I’ll go back old.”

Prem left Dubai because he was not paid on time and mistreated by employers, and now works as a silversmith but faces stiff competition. He proudly shows the boat certificate he received in Qatar and often regrets his decision to return. “I make good enough living here but there is no hope for future,” he says.
Three best friends are at crossroads in their lives, trying to leave their carefree days behind and move to stability. For Anil, the solution is investing in art, and he buys a completely white piece with faint diagonal lines across it, also white. When Mahesh laughs at him, Anil’s age is hurt and their friendship starts apart. The gentle Devashish tries to play peacemaker, but we won’t spell it for you by revealing whether it works in the stage play, Art.

Studio 7 has been staging plays for nearly 40 years at the Hotel Vaja, spanning most of the ups and downs of Nepal’s recent history from the Panchayat monarchy to democracy, war and post-conflict transition. Its choice of adapted classics and original works often come with a sharp contemporary message. The latest offering, Art is no different. The original play by Yasmina Reza premiered in 1994 at the Comédie des Champs-Elysées in Paris, and made it to London and Broadway.

The play about three friends starts rather slowly, with introductory scenes setting the characters. But soon, the plot thickens as the friends squabble not just about art, but each other and the very basis of their friendship. The blank canvas is not just a painting, but a symbol of their youthful bonding. Each viewer can take what is important from the production. Some can see it as a satire on how modern, abstract art fetch huge prices but are not understood by anyone but the artist. What is the use of art that cannot communicate with the viewer? Is the raison d’être behind their high market value? And if they have such a high commercial value, is it necessary for them to be understood?

With very few characters, Art’s strength lies in how the characters react to each other and create comic scenes. Anil has turned into a pretentious art buyer who buys things he may or may not understand, because they are deemed ‘valuable’. Maboot, meanwhile, retains a youthful brilliance, meeting at everything he does not understand and surprised that Anil has moved on. Trying to agree with them both, Devashish does not know who he is. This is an interesting interplay of characters and friendships that each of us can relate to: how friendships change with time as our tastes and economic status change.

The director is Studio 7 veteran Sabine Lehmann who succeeds in creating a fast-paced performance that keeps the small audience at the Vaja engaged throughout.

Raymon Dau Shrestha and Karma are not just convincing, but inhabit their roles as a pompous nouveau-riche dentist and a wannabe cool digital entrepreneur respectively, it is the energetic Kundooin who steals the show as an inductive and unapologetic Pushaina salesman. With an expressive face and an apt comic timing, he creates the most realistic character of a Kathmandu Everyman—a city boy struggling to make it big on the back of a rich bride’s fiancé. Director Lehmann and set designer Ludmilla Hingelhuber make a cameo appearance with a satirical song about the ‘up and emergence of the boys’, which raises the play’s comic pitch. Hungerhuber has designed a minimalist set pleasing in which the same architecture is reused between acts, Aban kama’s lively music complements the production, building up to an abstract finale.

As the holiday season approaches, Art will be an evening well spent in Kathmandu.

Sewa Bhattarai
Art
7:15 PM every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday until 30 Dec.
Hotel Tapsi (01) 421545

HAPPY LANDINGS: An emergency helipad recently constructed in high of Mangla village, Mugu. Helipads are cropping up all over the district after the local government came up with the concept of “one wind, one helipad.”

RUNAWAY PROGRESS: The construction of Nepal’s second international airport, Gautam Buddha International Airport, is progressing at a rapid pace after being, in limbo for years. The Tourism Ministry aims to complete it by early 2019.

JINGLE BELLES: Children perform Christmas carols during a tree-lighting event organized by Radisson Hotel in Kathmandu on Monday.
Smuggled chimps wait it out in Kathmandu Zoo

Deepak Kharel in NepalKhaleji.com, 16 December

Wildlife smugglers captured two young chimpanzees in Nigeria in 2017, put them in a wooden crate and flew them 8,000km to Nepal via Istanbul. After landing in Kathmandu, the boxes were taken to Sanjeev Shari’s house in Sallaghari, a hub for international wildlife smugglers using Nepal as a transit point. The plan was to take the chimps to India, but the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) discovered the animals before that. The chimps, as well as other exotic birds, have been waiting at the Central Zoo for translocation to their wild habitat. Officials at Kathmandu airport customs and animal quarantine department had agreed with the smugglers to facilitate the transport of the chimps through Nepal. The CBI arrested Sanjeev Shari and his accomplices, including nationals of India and Pakistan who are currently in jail in Sukhia.

CBI chief Puskar Karthi said: “This is a huge international racket that exploits weak governance in countries like Nepal to smuggle contraband and wildlife. This particular case is being closely observed internationally.”

Customs agent Raj Kumar Tiwari and Chudha Mani Dubal played pivotal roles to aid and abet the wildlife traffickers. Animal quarantine officer Dhrenra Shah also received the necessary documents without proper checks. Most of these corrupt officials were released after paying bail, which ranged from Rs250,000 to Rs500,000. Many others at the customs department were also pulled into investigation.

The Central Zoo in Jawalakhel has deployed several staff to take care of the animals which have been named Chimpu and Champu. The curators feed the animals and conduct regular health checks. In 14 months that they have been in Kathmandu, Chimpu and Champu have grown and are awaiting the verdict of the District Court about where they will go next.

“We cannot keep the chimps in Nepal, but official proceedings can only start after a verdict from the court,” Man Bahadur Khadka of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation said. “While they are with us, we are providing the best possible care.”

Animal rights activist from London had called the Prime Minister’s office and registered a verbal complaint about moves by international traffickers to free the indicted. After the message reached Prime Minister Oli, he instructed Attorney General Agni Kharel to take up the case. The final court hearing is on Friday at the Kathmandu District Court.
The prodigal daughter

Greta Rana’s Hostage follows a simple Tharu man, Hari Prasad Mahato, in his journey for work in the Gulf. It is fiction, but might as well be fact – as we speak, these stories are happening to thousands of Nepali migrant workers. Hari is a boatman on the Beapli River, but yearns for a future in Qatar so he can earn enough money to redeem his debt to the landlord, and pay for his children’s school fees. We are introduced to Siva Bahadur, a young Maestrit and his story provides a backdrop of the insurgency to the book. Again, Siva’s story was repeated many thousands of times during Nepal’s ten-year war.

Multiple plot twists lead Siva to the Gulf as well, where Hari and Siva end up as roommates. Siva was a young, boisterous young man whose loquacity often annoyed Hari, who was focused on his goal of saving enough.

Three years pass by in one sentence, and one would have expected the author to dwell a little more on Siva and Hari’s relationship after the energy she puts into developing both individual characters in the beginning.

Greta Rana employs an informal tone throughout the book, and lets the characters’ thoughts and feelings propel the social injustices that drive them away from Nepal. Frustration about corruption and exploitation burst through the pages, as characters dream of a better future for themselves, their families and the nation – all amidst the background of the dispiriting and unjust reality of home. The story line delves into the political ideologies of communism and extremism, and how individuals seek redress to inequality and discrimination.

Despite the strong plot and grim backdrop, the narrative is passive, missing the passion that should be there to add depth and texture to the story. Crucial events like Hari’s first job and his relationship with Siva are described to us, rather than letting the protagonists show us through their actions. Like all discussion on ideology, the paragraphs go on a bit and seem detached from the characters’ experiences. The climax is frightening, but we do not quite get to the fears, terror and significant tensions which arise.

The diversity of characters, however, is well-developed. Even though Hari and Siva’s disconnect makes us wonder if their two stories had to be told in the same narrative, the counterpoint between a simple Tharu villager to a Maestrit rebel, corrupt Nepali politicians and Afghan lawyers keeps the story taut.

The women are especially strong: Hari’s soft-spoken wife Jamsuna, his intelligent and hardworking daughter Subhadra, or the politically progressive and nature Anjali. Greta Rana’s women demonstrate strength as well as wisdom.

Hari Prasad’s trajectory does depart from the general experience of most Nepali migrant workers – especially with the twist in the climax that gives Hostage a distinct fictional flavour. To readers familiar with the contemporary exodus of young Nepalis, Hostage reminds us of familiar tales of injustices that drive them away and in a one-sit read that could be a modern English version of Lil Bahadur Chettri’s Nepal classic, Banas.

Prakriti Kandel

A hostage situation

Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and Machine Learning are buzzwords we are going to hear a lot more in 2019. The Third Revolution in Information technology means the country further ahead in AI will be the new global superpower. Competition is fierce between China and the United States, with both using unconventional means to get back at each other – as seen by the arrest of Huawei’s CFO in Canada under American pressure, the allegations that the security of Facebook is compromised by Chinese made chips.

In his new book AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley, and the New World Order, Beijing-based technology executive Kai-Fu Lee analyses the background of information technology advances in both countries, but concludes that China is moving faster on AI and could overtake Silicon Valley because of less strict privacy laws in its huge home market.

Lee warns that AI could entrench global inequalities as well as disparities within countries, taking jobs away from traditional sectors. While these issues are a source of worry because of what it means for humanity’s future, China does not seem to be held back by any such fears. In fact, it is excited about catching up with the US on applications for AI in everyday life.

The book starts with the future of world’s best Go player, Ke Ke, to Google’s AlphaGo in 2017. China’s IT companies fast-tracked development by imitating Silicon Valley’s most successful products
Sewa Bhattarai

The struggle with kerosene stoves, the relief when you can finally procreate. The steady stream of unsolicited guests from remote parts of the country, who live for months as they try to get a foothold in the capital. The graduation, from outdoor squatting toilets to indoor commodes.

Shrada Ghale’s novel, The Wayward Daughter, portrays a world familiar to many first generation migrants into Kathmandu, and much of it is autobiographical.

“It took material from the experiences of my near and dear ones, but none of the characters exist in real life as do in the book,” says Ghale (picture, left).

The Wayward Daughter offers a slice of life in a Kiranti family that make it unique from most other Nepali writings in English. The family celebrates Ushai and Ushabhi, takes offerings of millet liquor, acts fish and a rape coin for a marriage proposal. Ghale admits she knew her story had to be about a family from an indigenous community, because she herself had read very few such stories.

A smart Kiranti child is complimented with “as clever as a fox’s son.” Some Tamale adopt Brahmin traditions, bow to priests, and lock down other indigenous practices. The look down is mutual because other communities also disdain the “formal” tradition. These nuggets from Ghale’s book are revelations even for Nepalis, and a reminder to readers about just how diverse Nepal is.

The greatest strength of Ghale’s debut novel is this no-nonsense, lean, almost telegraphic prose.

But who exactly are the Tamale Ghale gives an enigmatic smile to reveal that she made up the Tamale: “Creating an entirely new indigenous community gave me the freedom to explore my ideas, free of established stereotypes about particular communities.”

The Wayward Daughter succeeds in her deliberate attempt to portray a rich cross-section of Nepali society, showing how tribal, class, and gender influence everyday life in Kathmandu. The story is about growing up in a multilingual and almost dystopian world that Nepal has become. Youngster absconds traditions for modernity, as they prepare to go abroad for higher studies.

At the Rhododendron High School that the protagonist Sumitma attends, students are fixed for speaking Nepali. Some readers will remember boarding schools in the 80s, the rise of FM radios and the craze for foreign kits that Sumitma adores. She confesses (only to herself) that she eats dal-bhat twice every day, and yet in friends’ auto booklets she writes that she is “engrossed in pizgas.” Youngsters three days do the same; leave behind rustic roots, pretend they were never there, and head out for sophisticated western autonomy.

The wanting story does not have a neat plot, even though as a last resort, she ends up with a plot in mind, but actually, each section she wrote at different times, and had to cut out many parts that did not fit.

The stories are a continuation of the bits of fiction Ghale penned in her college days, imagining herself to be in league with great writers. “I loved Gustave Flaubert and Virginia Woolf; I did not just want to write like them, but sound as good as them. Writing this book became an exercise in humility for me, when I realized my own limitations. Every day you worry where your work is going, if you will ever finish it, and if it will ever be any good at all.”

Hopefully, for acclaim for her first novel will motivate her to write a sequel, which many have already advised her to do. The novel ends just as things are getting more interesting, with the country about to plunge into a civil war. Goals end its there with a riveting epilogue that leaves you yearning for more.

Shrada Ghale

The Wayward Daughter

by Shrada Ghale

Speaking Pipe

ISBN 9 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

BOOK

SPECIAL

At the Superpowers of China, Silicon Valley, and the New World Order

By Kai-Fu Lee

February 2018

Kitch 57.99

Hardback £18.00

In Hanif’s crosshairs

You enjoyed Mohammed Hanif’s A Case of Exploding Mangoes, it still have prepared you for another scathing satire from the Pakistani over the sensibilities of war, the hypocrisy of those who wage them, and the bleeding heart humanitarian contractors who take it in to mop things up.

Red birds brings with rasper sharp voracity and a plot embedded with glaring absurdities of the perpetual war machine of the military-industrial complex. There is a whiff of Tahir in Hanif: the only difference is that this is a murder of modern war, with no explicit moral grandeur, and not even a hint of moral cognition.

First they bomb our houses, then they take away our men, and now they are here to make us feel all right.”

“T’was a god in the skies, than they work hard to cure our stricken hearts. Even pic, poor Peshawar, she gets a per dimes in US dollars.

This is writing that forces the reader to confront the brutal real of war as waged by remote control, linking the trigger on the joystick to get a good, Bubbles in pools of blood of the dead and dying. All this far from the war offices where the policies are made, or even from the glass cockpits from which pilots launch video-game missiles at crosshairs on the screen.

Major Elliot is one such pilot who crashes in the desert of what sounds and smells like the Afghan border, and ferociously right next to a ‘turgee camp’ where most of the action in the rest of the book takes place with protagonists like young Memo and his dog, Matt.

The other character (and what a character she is!) is a caricature of a USAID worker Lady Prowlborg who is there to do good, and offer handout to people her own country has bombarded to smithereens. Her development seems very similar to the illogic of the Lords of poverty we are familiar with in Nepal as well. I am conducting a survey on post-conflict resolution strategies that involves local historians and folklorists ... to use this community as a laboratory for testing my hypothesis about how our collective memories are actually our cultural capital.

While the backdrop in A Case of Exploding Mangoes was about Gen Zia of Pakistan who was ostensibly killed by bombs thrown in a fruit crate in the cockpit of his C-130, but seeing for real, birds can be from Timbuktu to Quetta and everywhere in between where the American military is waging Third World Wars against tiny white figures in real-time infrared satellite imagery.

Red birds leaves the hypocrisy of not just America’s ‘war on terror’ and the obliteration of countries, peoples, societies. It is also a sad reminder of what the Russians have done in Syria, the Saudis in Yemen, or for that matter what conquerors have done throughout inhuman history.

Hanif used to be an air force pilot, and shows us that it is not just history that is a force. So is the unfolding present.

Red birds by Mohammed Hanif

Hardback, 2018

ISBN 9 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
The unfair sex

The news of a Nepali winning the International Bodybuilding Award in Bangkok last week warmed our cocks this winter, and brought good cheer at the start of the holiday season when most of the news about Nepal has been gloom and doom.

However, the Thais being monarchists, apparently played the royal ‘Sir Mao Gambhir’ anthem at Mahesh Mahatran’s medal ceremony. But he didn’t seem to mind, and no one noticed, least of all the Ministry of Foreign Affairs probably because it is hard to tell whether Nepal is an absolute monarchy or federal republic these days.

This reminded the Auss about the Kanak shooting gold medalist in Kuwait, who was surprised to hear the national anthem of her country from the film ‘Bunat’ playing at her award ceremony.

Unlike Nepal, Kazakhstan lodged a strong complaint about Sonu’s lyrics which went ‘Kazakhstan, greatest country in the world’ The number one exporter of potassium / Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan, you very nice place / Friend of all except Uzbekistan’. Or words to that effect.

Although the Bodybuilding Award warmed our aforementioned cocks, we as a nation are aghast at this new commercialisation of the male body. Being myself the proud owner of a male body, the Auss take umbrage at men being treated as little more than sex objects and not valued for the contributions we can make to society at-large through voluntary men-only activities like, let’s say, attending to the call of nature, in full view of passersby, to water trees that Lisa Tumbekeved.

Imagine what it must feel like to be a man on the street going about your own business to irrigate the undergrowth whereas every passing female thinks it is her god-given right to look you over, pass complimentary remarks about your penises, blow wolf-whistles and (if you are lucky) even say something obscene.

Think of the humiliation, the mortification, the ignominy that we men have to put up with such demeaning objectification. This adam-tasting has got to stop.

The only way those of us proud to call ourselves members of the unfair sex can fight back is to stage our own all-male beauty pageants and bodybuilding contests to show off our muscles, so that we can hold our heads high again, and go boldly forth where no hunk has gone before to freeze our asses off in the A-Strand Round of the Mr Universe Contest.