Being a country of stark inequalities, relief and rehabilitation four years after the 2015 earthquake has also been unevenly distributed. Particularly vulnerable have been excluded groups, women, senior citizens, and children who need extra support.

Even among female survivors, it was single women-headed households, widows, divorcees, or those ostracised by in-laws who were worst off. Of the 412,371 households affected by the disaster, more than a quarter were headed by single women, and 2,000 were freshly widowed by the earthquake.

They face challenges in renewing land titles lost in house collapses, in-laws who refuse to hand over a dead husband’s property, or even getting citizenships for children born after fathers died in the earthquake. All this has added to the economic burden for women who have lost breadwinners.

A UN Gender Equality Update states that women’s duties increased after the earthquake: they were spending four-five hours a day cleaning the debris, and it took them three more hours to get water than before. Many had to check on children as they went about their daily work, delaying chores. Women were found to be less aware of the steps they needed to take for aid.

Women of all categories faced these extra burdens, but the impact was most deeply felt by single women who for the most part started rebuilding much later than others, as our profiles of women in this issue of Nepali Times show. Many women did not know how to work the system, and had vital documents like citizenship or birth and marriage certificates needed to claim compensation or share of property.

“Often, married women’s in-laws were unwilling to identify them in front of government officials, because they were scared that the women would get their documents and demand their share of property,” says Upana Rana with Women for Human Rights (WHR). Without these documents, land and property remained with their husbands’ families.

The NRA (National Reconstruction Authority) has identified 9,024 single women above the age of 65 in its ‘vulnerable’ category, and is verifying their identities and giving them Rs50,000 more to help rebuild homes. The government’s Single Women Security Fund is also supposed to help with education, training, income generation, and relief, but many do not know about it.

“There is not much awareness about this facility especially among earthquake-affected women who need it the most,” says Bipana Dhimal of Ondam. Adding to the problem is that after the country became federal, the fund’s district level structure were dismantled putting even more rural women out of its reach.

Sewa Bhattarai

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3/4TH OF THE SKY

While a debate about equal citizenship rights for women raged in Parliament last week, women who survived the earthquake are quietly and bravely struggling against deep-rooted prejudices to rebuild homes and carry on with their lives.

On International Women’s Day, this illuminating by NidhiK Shrestha shows where Nepali women are today: their responsibilities have increased and so have their capacities and achievements. But they continue to face impediments from all sides, most glaringly from the state.

Since the mid-1990s female literacy in Nepal has doubled, and this has brought far reaching changes that have ultimately empowered women. Employment and property ownership rates, and maternal and neonatal health have dramatically improved community forestry and irrigation. It won’t be far fetched to say that much of the credit for ground level development, despite the absence of local government for 20 years goes to women. And now that we have local governments it is the women who are standing up to corrupt male constituents in some municipalities.

To sum up, not everything is rosy. Juggling their dual roles of breadwinner and primary care giver in homes and raising children has increased their burden. This inequitable distribution of work is more prominent in urban areas where women have both careers and homes to make. Men and society in general have been slow to accept these changes, and see the economic benefits of shared responsibility at home and offices.

Among victims of the earthquake, women were more affected. There are an estimated 2,000 earthquake widows and 50,000 single women disabled in the disaster. In lack of reliable support, reconstruction and survival has been more difficult for them as reported in this article (page 6-7). But despite these shortcomings, women are going boldly forth where men have gone before in rebuilding lives and homes. We have produced some of the finest female doctors, pilots, engineers, builders and teachers and historians in the last few decades (page 6-7, 21, 22). But despite the fact that for the first time FNC is headed by a woman and, and 80% of Nepal’s labour force is female (one of the highest proportions in the world) women continue to be restricted to ‘informal sectors’.

Though there are higher numbers of women in politics today than ever before, these are still very few in leadership positions. Despite women heading all three organs of the government, the legislative, judiciary and executive at one point, there are still too few actual decision-makers to exert enough influence. This has led to situations like the current citizenship debate, where a male MP this week said providing citizenship to the children of rape victims ‘will encourage rapists’.

Glory, higher literacy has not led to behaviour change among males in our conservative culture that sees women as an inferior gender. Given opportunity, women have proved themselves time and again and proved their skills and competencies.

The responsibilities of Nepali women have increased and so have their achievements, but they continue to face impediments from all sides, most glaringly from the state.

THE SURVIVOR

Sama Bhujel is among 23 survivors of the tragic Air Bangla flight crash in Kathmandu’s airport last week. Flying in a medical attire, she glowing like the four candles she lit. She offered a warm微笑 and stood at the door to welcome the people who thronged to help with her family and patients. Page 7-8

THE TERRORIST

The tragedy of post-monarchical Nepal continues (‘It’s crime not to call it terrorism’, Kunda Gupta, #49). All those who thought that it was a good idea to usher in a multiparty system bear some blame for the results of their actions. The parties formed a government that is nothing more or less than organised crime families constantly vying for power. Whatever the shortcomings the monarchy may have had, it is difficult to believe that the present system is an improvement. The descent into lawlessness and chaos was easy to predict and is impossible to deny. It is unlikely the situation would improve under the current Danny Birch

TALENT TWEETS

The tale of a child who lost his family at the age of 6 – Nishal Prakash Jha. He was only 3 when the earthquake destroyed his home. His father’s body was never found. He is now a computer science student at IIT Delhi. #9

Nepal Times @NepalTimes

The terror attack on Bhaktapur’s high of death; 10 people were killed by the terrorists. #Nepal #Terak

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HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY
Nepal’s better halves

At the current pace of feminisation, Nepal may well have to institute affirmative action for men

Last week, women engineers and managers in power utilitised from across South and Southeast Asia gathered in Kathmandu for their first ever conference. They came from Afghanistan, Vietnam and countries in between.

It is the small details that give you the big picture.

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Mid-term report
Nepal Rastri Bank has released a mid-term report of the budget for the fiscal Year 2019-20, and the news is not good. As expected, Nepal’s economic problem is not lack of money but its inability to spend it. Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatiwada presented a capital budget of Rs 1.6 billion in Parliament last year, but he said on Tuesday that the government has been able to spend less than 20% of it. He now wants to decrease the interest rate and banks will have to reduce their deposit rate to a maximum of 4% by the end of this fiscal year.

Enhanced Services
Qatar Airways unveiled its enhanced February service at the ITB Berlin Trade Fair 2019, which is the world’s largest travel and tourism trade fair. An (1) departure from 6-10 March, all airlines will be able to interact with Qatar Airways’ latest products and services, including hospitality. A large Nepali delegation from the trade fair is also in Berlin to promote Qatar 2022 with a target of doubling tourist arrivals to 2 million next year.

Michelle in Nepal
Michelle’s Tourism Expo Nepal has been inaugurated in Tia. The show provides a range of tyres for commercial and passenger vehicles and two wheelers. Tripura transport, though driven by Shyamal Pratap, will distribute these products.
Nepal’s transition to peace needs justice

In January Nepal extended the tenures of two transitional justice commissions which have so far failed to deliver.

HARRIET LAMB and RABINA SHRESTHA

At the International Alert, a global peacebuilding organisation, we often point to Nepal alongside South Africa or Northern Ireland as a country working through a peace process successfully, proving that peace can be won large.

Of course, all these countries are still beset by tributaries and the peace is far from perfect. In Northern Ireland, for example, today Brexit threatens the peace agreement, while in South Africa entrenched economic apartheid persists. But the plans have fallen silent, and stayed silent. Given that globally, half of all peace deals fall apart within 5 years, that is quite an achievement.

Recently, International Alert and our partner Forum for Women, Law and Development (FILD) held a meeting in Nepal to discuss the transitional justice challenges, and the problems of the lack of funds and commitment by the government.

The victims of sexual assault, rape, torture, for example, have not received any support – no recognition that they are victims, no interim relief, no compensation. That is deeply demoralising for the victims and International Alert has been calling on the Nepali government to support a gender-responsive transitional justice process.

These initiatives desperately needed substantial funds with matching political will to ensure progress. The wounds of war cannot be healed if they are not properly addressed. If the Nepali government seems lukewarm to prioritise these issues, the victims’ groups are full of gritty determination. People are more than ready to mobilise and find the truth, support victims to receive compensation and find new work or to mourn their loved, lost ones. To be more effective, the civil societies and victim groups must come under one common platform to take the transitional justice advocacy ahead.

Nepal still has an opportunity to move forward the transitional justice process constructively in the coming months and to address truth, justice and reparation for victims. But this week needs the Government of Nepal to start up, and it needs donors to commit. If we want peace to last (and who does not?) then it needs long term, patient investment.

Which is why the long time frame of the US Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act is so vital. The bi-partisan Act was passed overwhelmingly through the House of Representatives on 28 November. If it passes the Senate, it commits the US Government to invest in 15 countries (five already at war, five fragile) over 10 years, with coordination across all government departments from USAID to the military. Too often, governments lose interest in countries once the crises are past. NGOs are left with one or two-year projects sputtering to an end and no donors in sight to continue investing in building everyday peace. That is to ignore the evidence and misread the public.

Evidence shows that peacebuilding is effective, and also cost-effective. Every $1 spent on peacebuilding saves $16 in the costs of war, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace. A 2018 global poll undertaken by International Alert with the British Council found the public strongly favours ‘dealing with the reasons why people fight in the first place’ and ‘supporting societies to deal with conflict peacefully’, as effective means of creating long-term peace.

So in 2019, the community of peacebuilding organisations will be pushing for the US Act to be passed into law, for other governments to adopt the approach, and for concrete progress for victims in Nepal as another building block of lasting peace.

Harriet Lamb, (C) of International Alert and Rabina Shrestha, Manager of International Alert Nepal.
Learning about teaching

Prakriti Kandel

With her long blonde hair and Nordic looks, Helen Ekland looked like many of the other Norwegians sitting in a café in Patan this week. Guests in adjoining tables couldn’t help eavesdropping because as they heard her speak, colloquial Nepal.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the Norwegian speaks better Nepal than most young Nepalis whose mother tongue is degraded by TV, education and Facebook short cuts. Born in Gorha’s Arjapal village to a missionary teacher, Ekland played gudhas and dhamdhya with

neighbourhood children and went to school with them.

“I was just like every other kid, but an albino one,” she jokes in chaste Nepali. Ekland grew up listening to conversations between her father and local teachers, and was in awe of how articulate and knowledgeable they were. Village teachers in Nepal in the 1960s were gurus in the true sense, they were community leaders, problem solvers and idea generators. Even though Helen left to go back to Norway with her family, her love for Nepal never diminished. Eventually, it brought her back.

She found her calling in education and became a teacher herself. She taught English at Mahendra Bhawan School in Kathmandu, and worked in education with various organisations.

Growing up listening to her father’s colleagues in Gorha left a deep imprint in Ekland’s mind, which is why it was inevitable that the PhD dissertation she completed last year is about the lives of 12 teachers in Nepal.

The most exciting part about teaching in Nepal for Ekland is the opportunity to raise and build people. “The first priority is loving and valuing children, recognising their potential and helping them reach theirs,” she says. “The subjects in class are secondary.”

The values are more important than the content or method. She believes in treating every child as a book themselves, and connecting their understanding with the topic at hand.

During her work in the late 1990s in rural Nepal, Ekland found that essential sense of commitment which she had admired as much as a child in Gorha was missing among younger teachers.

“All the different teachers I spoke with knew about the problems. For instance, all of them knew why the children were dropping out. But they were not doing anything to solve the situation; simply waiting for a donor program to come and fix things,” she recalls.

She worried that teachers were losing confidence, and this is what led to her PhD topic of documenting the life histories of a dozen teachers to find out where they derived their motivation and value systems from.

Not surprisingly, Ekland found that their struggles as children, their own early teachers, financial and domestic hardships, were all intimately connected with how they perceived their role as teachers.

Ekland’s conclusion is that the solution to the crisis in the quality of education is not another foreign-funded program implanted into Nepal’s school system that teachers feel alienated with, but a homegrown effort to restore the passion she saw among teachers in Gorha as a child 40 years ago. She believes that teaching pedagogy must acknowledge the local and cultural experiences of teachers to help them become confident and feel ownership of their jobs.

Ekland is now associate professor at the University of Agder in Norway, and says she often borrows ideas she learned in Nepal to implement in her other motherland to see if teachers in Norway can also be as passionate about their profession.

“My work represents the immense respect I have for Nepal’s teachers and what they have taught me,” she says. “Of course, not everything about Nepali culture is perfect, but Nepali language and values are not inferior, and can teach us many important ideas.”

“धर शालिनि नै विवेक शालिन्सको आधार। विद्या
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the world make education sage for all"

संचार तथा प्रसारण विभाग
Meet these three self-motivated teachers

Sarala, Rabina and Sita are three of 12 teachers that Helen Eikeland profiled in her PhD thesis. Their stories are a part of her attempt to understand how local and cultural experiences impact their role as teachers.

Sarala

Sarala is a model teacher in her district now, but her own education was possible because her father helped her pass through difficult times. Her mother had poor health, so as the eldest among eight siblings, Sarala had to do many hours in their home.

Sarala’s father believed education was the most important element that would enable her to stand on her own feet. There were multiple times Sarala wanted to quit so she could manage the heavy workload at home, but her father never let her, even if she failed.

Marriage, at 19, brought more hardships. But with her father as an anchor she battled depression and continued studying, even if that meant she had to get up at four in the morning to fetch water, clean the house, and then go to class. She ultimately passed SLC and got a job as a teacher.

In the beginning, Sarala taught in the same ways she had received education with harsh consequences to discipline the children. When some Scottish volunteers questioned why all teachers carried sticks in the classroom, Sarala answered that it was impossible to discipline children without them. But the school’s principal later introduced child-friendly policies. Sarala attended an 11-day training run by UNICEF and participated in learning activities, which deeply impressed her. She no longer had to revert to draconian methods like squeezing children’s fingers or verbally threatening them, but could foster learning in a fun way. “If we can play and learn, why can’t the children? I started looking forward to trying it out in my own classroom.”

With a strong support from her principal, Sarala has implemented most activities like job charts, group seating and news sharing. She now enjoys an even closer bond with her students. When she was sick one day, the children came to visit her with biscuits.

Now of Sarala’s colleagues were impressed by the newer child-friendly methods during the training. But Sarala’s belief in child-friendly teaching is strong. She is proud of her accomplishments and says, “I imagine how it would have been if we had the chance to be taught like this.”

Sita

Daughters were generally not sent to school when Sita was growing up. But she received an education because of a Save the Children project which paid the fees of students from underserved families. Sita did well in class, and started teaching in the same school after completing her SLC. She involved herself in community development activities like forest protection and securing clean drinking water.

During the Maoist insurgency the police alienated the people by their heavy-handedness. The Maoists began to recruit from the women’s village committee, and Sita also joined. Today, she does not want to speak much about her war years, but after it ended she continued her education and received a Master’s in English.

However, after devoting 22 years to teaching and in spite of her qualifications, Sita is disillusioned that she does not have a permanent job. She has applied for positions, but only those that have political affiliation get the jobs. Sita has distanced herself from politics now because she does not believe in its power to change society, she is more convinced of the power of education.

She adds, “One of my students is a well known engineer in my district and I feel proud of that. I have had a job that has lifted people up.”

Rabina

Rabina’s childhood was steeped in hardship: her father was an alcoholic and her family had to make do on her mother’s meagre earnings. She went to be a domestic school was her dream, and wore plastic shoes when her friends wore leather.

At one point, the school’s fees increased and Rabina’s mother could no longer afford to pay. She was only allowed to stay on because one of her teachers convinced the principal, but she could not participate in house activities, and felt embarrassed.

Still, Rabina was never discouraged because she knew good education was her key to success. At home, her father would disrupt her studies, as she would study under an oil lamp after dark.

Through sheer perseverance Rabina passed SLC with a first division. She started volunteering in the school she had studied in, and became a teacher.

One of the proudest moments in Rabina’s life was when she dressed in a sari on her first day as an official teacher, and her students congratulated her with Erowo. Rabina remembers that aside from some teachers who inspired her and one in particular who allowed her to continue school, other teachers were not supportive of weak students.

Now, as a teacher herself, Rabina puts in extra effort for the students who are lagging behind. She tells her students not to be afraid to ask for help. She herself overcomes the scarcity of practical activities in the curriculum by including model-making, diagrams and other activities.

She is actively aware of problems that plague Nepali education, but she is convinced that many jobs are given based on connections rather than merit. She sees women teachers getting fewer opportunities to teach at the secondary level, and considers gender discrimination one of the biggest challenges.

The hardship Rabina grew up with as a child have shaped the values that guide her as a teacher now. She is currently starting a scholarship fund for economically disadvantaged children and those from lower castes.

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The earthquake destroyed her home, cancer took her husband, but Rupa Maharjan keeps creating deities

Pampa Nepali struggles against patriarchy to earn enough to give her children a home

Surviving the aftermath

Most of her family perished in the earthquake, but Namajju Prapjati finds hope in raising the next generation
There are an estimated 2,000 earthquake widows, and more than 50,000 single women whose houses collapsed in the disaster four years ago. Reconstruction and struggle for survival after the earthquake has been doubly difficult for the women because of the lack of a support system. Meet some of these brave women rebuilding their lives and livelihoods despite shortcomings.

SINGLE SOULS

Despite a life of hardships made worse by the earthquake, Ishwori Bhandari counts her blessings.

A 60-year-old single mother, Ishwori Bhandari counts her blessings. She lost her husband in the earthquake and is the sole breadwinner for her two children. Her biggest challenge is to keep her children in school.

Ishwori Bhandari is among tens of thousands of single women who have been disempowered by a patriarchal system that gives men the advantage in property ownership. The earthquake made this worse for single mothers and widows who needed land titles and house ownership certificates to get compensation. Single women like Ishwori Bhandari are particularly vulnerable because they cannot afford lawyers and have no family support.

Four years after the earthquake, Bhandari lives in a small tin shed she has constructed beside her destroyed house. "It is very difficult to get through the winter and now the rains will come," she says.

Still, Bhandari calls herself fortunate to at least have a shed. She is much better off than the really poor earthquake survivors who have rotted away.

"I saw one woman who did not even have a hut, she was living in a cave and could not walk," says Bhandari, who helped the woman by referring her to social workers. "She blessed me, and it is because of that blessing I am able to live an independent life despite the misfortunes."

Bhandari suffered a heart attack after the strong aftershock on 25 May 2013 and is an expensive and lifelong medication. She had broken her leg 20 years ago and walks with a limp because it swells from time to time.

She says: "I don’t want to be a burden on anyone. I want to live long and help others. I just wish my shed was warmer and did not leak."

- Sonu Bhattarai

nepaltimes.com
Events

Women’s Day Movie
The movie Snubukh is about a girl’s football team from Mogi, district, and how their journey of training and participating in a football match helps them find their passion for the sport. Director Bajajik Bhat will also be there for a Q&A session after the screening.
6 March, 6-8 pm, MB&I, Thamel, 986672744

Dali Discussion Series
The first discussion of the series will be about Persecution of Violence against Dalit Women and State Chatter. The key speakers will be Gauri Nanda and Prerna Kamal.
14 March, 3:30 pm, Moti Chour, Thapathali, 9811400227

Move4Women
An International movement highlighting the importance of gender equality in the media. You can join Move4Women in Nepal with your support this Women’s Day. 6 March, 6-8 pm, Bhikhyabasista.

Movie Monday
March will continue with women in films by showcasing movies directed by women or with women subjects. The selection this week is the 1975 science fiction horror movie Alien. 17 March, 7-9 pm, Base Camp Outdoor Life Style, Jhankriwal, 9813188278

Music

Zumba
Celebrate International Women’s Day with a zumba routine. A certified instructor will introduce and guide the participants, and the cost will include a light lunch.
6 March, 5:30 pm, Baluwatar, 9813184270

Paint it Chrome
Beginners and advanced artists can both join to learn to express visual techniques to create simple objects on paper. Lucetta Tong will be your instructor for the day.
9 March, 6-8 pm, SBCC (including all supplies), Janaklal Medi Art Collective, Jawalihatt, 9815327012

Games evening
Learn chess with specially designed games that cover a wide range of activities, strategy, role-playing, skills, and comedy.
14 March, 5-8 pm, Alliance Francaise, Patan, 9813082277

April Rush
April Rush will perform live this Friday night. Create a memorable Women’s Day evening with friends, accompanied by good food and delicious drinks.
18 April, 7-9 pm, Copyright Restaurant and Bar, 9814020881

Women in Concert
A yearly concert of International Women’s Day for signing female musicians. The theme this year is singer-songwriter and the concert has a line-up of new singer-songwriters who will perform their original songs.
8 April, 2-3 pm, Arohagadapod

Udumbara
A musical event that will explore a variety of themes about us. Jain Shrestha Prashan (Bass), Memon Nishant (Guitar, Saxophone, Sanza, and Bail & Banj (Percussions)) for a unique, soulful, and soothing music.
8 March, 7-9 pm, Nightlife Club and Room, Nipponbel, 9815022027

Gangnam Gaabi Barbeque
Korean barbecue, grill and stir-fry food, a la gaagi, roasted in charcoal at night to add more sadness, different tastes and scent to the food.
10 April, Canker, Miranda, 9814047070

Dining

Sound Healing Meditation
Experience the healing power of singing bowls and learn meditation to help you relax your mind.
9 March, 5:30 pm, SBCC, 9813087770

Swing Dance Workshop
A workshop where beginners can join this workshop organized by Swing Academy Nepal to learn some Swing or Lindy Hop dance moves. This is an American dance form which has evolved with just music over the years.
9 March, 4-6 pm, Hotel Kongreza, Boudhanath, 9817701818

Night
This week’s Base Camp Music Festival will feature the folk band Night. The band makes music redesigned at lost Nepali instruments and create original sounds with a universal inspiration.
3-9 March, 8-10 pm, 500 m north of Skol, 9813087777

Saturday Night Live
LIVE BAND by the duos Rajeev Nepali and Paywal Lama. 3 March, 6:30-9:30 pm, World’s Lounge, Aran Choppa Park, 9815072264

Getting Away

Womenhood Package
This special 6-night package for complete relaxation and rejuvenation this March. The package includes a 60-minute massage of your choice, a 45-minute body scrub, a 15-minute express organic cleaner, shampoo, and scrub with a 10% discount.
14 March, 9-10 pm, Balan’s Ayurvedic Resort, Boudhanath, For bookings: 9817175345

Randan Retreat
A small, cozy retreat with Bird’s eye view of green terrace fields, dotted with white-painted houses.
30 March, 9813187777

Barahi Jungle Lodge
The first ever jungle lodge in Chitwan directly on the Chitwan National Park, Spa, boutique guest rooms, individual and two-near private villas, including a suite with a private swimming pool.
Sagarm, Chitwan, 9814062067

Balthali Village Resort
A small, cozy retreat with a bird’s eye view of green terrace fields, dotted with white-painted houses.
Pandin, Kavre, 9813187777

Chhimamale Village Resort
Adored with near trees, the Resort is an ideal destination for anyone seeking to escape the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu city.
Chhukha, 9814082171

OTHER PICK

Getaway

Gangnam Gaabi Barbeque
Korean barbecue, grill and stir-fry food, a la gaagi, roasted in charcoal at night to add more sadness, different tastes and scent to the food.
10 April, Canker, Miranda, 9814047070

Dining

About Town

Budda brings together Aastha Bathar and Taapsee Yenni again after her, and promises to be just as widely. This is the day where a woman caught in an extra-marital affair, who dines out with friends and worries the longer she gets out of it. The husband might miss her again, and an emotional scene. The movie is directed by Sayak Chakrin, with an outstanding cast and crew, including many talented stars such as the assured Kathik, under his set.
Sonia Awale

A s a child growing up in Bhaktapur in 1970s, Sunita Pradhanang saw first-hand how a German-supported project helped restore the architectural heritage of her hometown. The painstaking restoration ignited in the young girl a lifelong passion for cultural preservation.

Cutting home from school every day, she would listen to her parents talk about customs and traditions, the importance of festivals and rituals in her Newari community. Pradhanang remembers persisting eden on why they celebrated sitthiakha, observed ghyu chaku sansi or gushed fumi jum. “In Newari families we live our culture. From the moment you wake up till you go back to bed at night, our daily lives revolve around our traditions, and as a child it fuelled my curiosity,” recalls Pradhanang, now 47, and Chief of the National Archives in Kathmandu.

Born and raised in a middle class family, Pradhanang grew up surrounded by the rich indigenous Newa culture and a father who cared deeply about keeping it alive. Her father died when she was 10 years old, but he left a lasting impression that has helped Pradhanang in her heritage work.

Achoring her SIC from a government school in Thimi, Pradhanang majored in archaeology and heritage as an undergraduate, went on to top her Masters and

teach Nepal Rhasa and culture to college students.

After a stint at the Nepal Heritage Society she worked at Lalitpur Municipality as an Archaeology Officer during which she worked to restore ancient waterwheels, prepare an inventory of the historic townships like Khotan, and revive the traditional cleaning of wells and water sources during sitthiakha.

All this knowledge stood her in good stead when the April 2015 earthquake struck, destroying many of the monuments that she had personally helped restore. Working in the World Heritage Division she coordinated with the Department of Archaeology, Nepal police and local community to rescue precious wood and stone carvings, and become figures of delight from the rubble. “The earthquake was a learning experience and an opportunity to rebuild many of our crumbling monuments,” says Pradhanang. “We have saved and are rebuilding nearly 200 heritage sites and it gives us a huge sense of achievement.”

Although Lalitpur and Bhaktapur have moved fast on restoration, Kathmandu is lagging behind because of disputes with contractors and a debate about whether restoration should follow traditional methods strictly, or use modern materials and methods.

Community ownership and responsibility drove much of the progress in the reconstruction of monuments in Patan and Bhaktapur, but the same cannot be said of Kathmandu, and this deeply saddens Pradhanang. “Kathmandu Valley is a living heritage and a vital part of our identity, we must work to preserve and rebuild using traditional techniques,” says Pradhanang, who says earthquakes have historically helped Kathmandu keep its architectural traditions alive. She thinks competitions between local and international groups have delayed Kathmandu Durbar Square restoration.

But she is happy that the model community-led rebuilding of Kathmandu’s Temple and the revival of Rani Pokhari with experts from Bhaktapur has now started after relentless pressure from local communities.

Pradhanang is glad her children are also interested in heritage and tradition, just as she was as a child. Her children often accompany her on site visits, and are curious to look at the creations of their forebears. “Archaeology is a field where we are constantly learning new things and where we get better understanding of the origin of our civilisation,” says Pradhanang, “but there is still so much to be discovered and preserved for posterity.”
Etched in our memory

Sauganga Darshandhari’s Stories is a collection of etchings inspired by moments from her life. Through her art, the Nepali visual artist and printmaker tackles themes like the human bond with nature, time as it has evolved since her childhood, and social evolution.

Darshandhari is a painter and artist who has a Master’s degree in printmaking. In Stories, she uses techniques she knows well—the etchings are initially carved into metal, then aquatinted, and finally transformed to print, which is the final work we see.

Most every piece features people who are having conversations or are immersed in nature. But all the faces are empty. “Giving a face would limit the experience to that particular person, but without a face, the character could be anyone,” explains the artist.

Darshandhari is deeply inspired by the joy nature brings to humans, and natural elements like birds, fish, latism, scenes, leaves, veins, features prominently. Clouds inspire many etchings and symbolize how transient moments of life are. We cannot hold clouds no matter how massive they are. Moments also melt away with time. The lotus is another recurring element. It is a flower that emerges from the water to bloom and Darshandhari uses it as a symbol of that struggle. Even though the artist uses ordinary objects in her etchings, her perspective and how she weaves the elements together create an almost fantasy-like feeling. In “Inwangsho Shilami,” the moon is pink and filled with vines against a midnight blue sky. Three-aged people in Nepal’s clothing are riding atop a gigantic white swan, journeying smoothly, a rendering of migration.

In “Thoramon,” the Nova does a top of the row of a ship with a woman ensconced in a giant space. Other ships are spread below it like fish, the purple splash adds to its mystery. "Mama ko Dukh" is a series that pays tribute to the artist’s mother and her childhood. “I grew up through the money in my mother’s shukh, which jingled with the sound of coins. Those coins do not have the same significance now as in my childhood because of paper money or credit cards,” Darshandhari explains. The shukh are present in varied styles and backdrops, telling stories of their own.

Traditional elements intermingle the etchings, from the chhakka and the women who wear the traditional architecture in the background. Traditional lotus pedestal brings the face of her persona, conveying the message that we must respect ourselves first.

Darshandhari also explores technology’s encroaching impact on human life. In “Time,” logos of social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WeChat replace eyes, and the twisted names of famous technology companies cascade down the face of the character. The story is in Darshandhari’s art, the interactions between elements, her use of colour and shape all integrate to convey ordinary stories from a unique perspective. She makes us think about various elements, from the beauty of nature to the influence of technology.

Rekha Kandel

Starter

Sauganga Darshandhari

Siddha Art Gallery, Baber Mukov Revisited Every 23 March

nepalitimes.com

Watch video of Darshandhari at the Kathmandu Triennale

BUNDESSTAG IN BAWANTAR: A delegation from the German House of Representatives led by Tobias Pfleger (centre) met with Prime Minister Oli at his office in Singha Barabari to discuss governance and economic development.

HELPING HAND: Indian Ambassador Manpreet Singh Punia on Wednesday signed an agreement with the Central Building Research Institute (CSIR), Roorkee for post-earthquake reconstruction of 72 educational facilities in Nepal.


HOWZAT: The Women National Cricket Team returned home this week after clinching second position in the Women’s World Cup Asia Region Qualifier in Thailand.

BELIEF BEYOND BORDERS: Buddhist devotees arrive in Bawantaur on Tuesday to observe Tibetan communities’ new year Gyppo Chosar.
The power and pull of Pathibhara
Hardship is supposed to be part of the package of a pilgrimage to this mountaintop shrine in eastern Nepal

Sewa Bhattacharai
in Taplejung

There is a belief that a pilgrimage to the mountain-top shrine of Pathibhara (right) is all it takes to have one’s wish granted by the gods. However, there is also a belief that if the journey is too easy, the blessing may not be granted.

Many kings and politicians in the past have been thwarted by weather or other obstacles from taking a helicopter to the shrine located at the summit of a monolith 3,800m high pyramid-shaped mountain in eastern Nepal.

Like other holy places in other religions, the hardships endured in the journey are as important as the act of worthshipping and sacrificing sheep at the shrine. It is not supposed to be easy.

Tourism Minister Rabindra Adhikari, Yeti Airlines founder Ang Tshering Sherpa and five others had flown in from Kathmandu to Teltandur on the morning of 27 February to inspect a proposed airfield. The weather was closing in, and angry dark clouds had enveloped the mountains to the north. There was talk about the weather getting worse, and the need to get back to Kathmandu. But after the helicopter took off, the group appears to have decided to make a quick trip up to Pathibhara (picture, right) shows Minister Adhikari with the high priest just before boarding his latest flight.

We will never know who proposed the side trip, but within ten minutes the chopper was on the helipad below the shrine. Soon after, the pilot radioed the tower at Sukhatar airfield that there was heavy snow and it was not possible to take off. The passengers waited it out inside the helicopter sipping tea, and waiting for the clouds to clear.

Information pieced together from conversations overheard by the temple priest suggests that one of the passengers suggested they take off because the weather enroute was fine. That turned out to be a fatal decision, the helicopter crashed into the cliff at Shree Bir a minute after takeoff.

Pathibhara was an animist Limbu shrine, but after the Gorkha conquest came to be revered by Hindus and Buddhists alike as a holy shrine. The temple is so called because the mountain is shaped like a path (a grain container). Local Limbus worship it as a place of power and purity. No matter how old the devotees, they are all guided by devotion to undertake the steep all-day climb up the road.

That Pathibhara temple is located so high and the trail is almost impassable during heavy rain or snow, many try to fly there, and helicopter companies offer quick round-trips from Sukhatar, or even Dharan.

It is not just the final climb – a foot that is arduous, the ride from Biramad to Funglung is no less difficult – it can take a whole day along narrow and serpentine mountain roads.

In the old days, people had to make a two-week trek from the plains, but with the road to Taplejung, the journey time was cut to three days. Now, an expensive and jittery jeep ride takes pilgrims up to Talli Pehdi. Many prefer to walk because the roller coaster ride on the jeep is not for the faint hearted. There is also a shortage of jeep, which means pilgrims returning prefer to walk back to Funglung instead of waiting.

From Talli Pehdi it is a long climb to Mathilko Pehdi, the roughshackle base camp for the final summit climb. Hundreds of pilgrims come into Limbu bazaars for the night. The hardships are part of the pilgrimage, and endured uncomplainingly by devotees.

Pathibhara gets over 850,000 visitors per year. Some even wake up at 2AM and walk with flashlights just to be ahead of the crowds. The forests are lush with oak and rhododendron, giving way to pine and alpine meadows. In a few weeks the rhododendron will be out in full bloom in many colours.

The majestic peaks of Jumla Himal and Mt Kanchanjunga accompany visitors throughout the climb, and the 360 degree view from the summit is stunning.

Even those who are not particularly religious are overwhelmed by a feeling of exhilaration by the panorama, the crisp cold air and the mysterious energy of the shrine that pulls many to it.

The Minister and Sherpa reportedly flew to Pathibhara to inspect a proposed cable car up to the shrine. Perhaps the legends are right, and the gods of Pathibhara do not want it to be more accessible.
Monika Deupala

W

ith the white seat and a staircase slung around her neck, Samira Byanjankar was doing the rounds at Vishnu Hospital on Thursday, trying to save two of her own. She had saved a total of 16 last year and had set sights on 25 this year.

"We were so pleased when we entered Banglore for the first time," Byanjankar said with a smile at the end of her talk on the steps of the hospital. "It's been a very rewarding experience for me to see how the healthcare system is working in India."

Samira Byanjankar is still grieving for the four roommates she lost in last year's crash. They would have been medical interns like her today, and dreamt of becoming doctors. Go online to watch video and find out why Byanjankar is determined to dedicate the gift of life to her family and patients.

THE SURVIVOR

Monika Deupala

Kunda Dixit

One year after the horrific crash in Kathmandu of Buddha Air's Flight BS231, new evidence confirms the captain was mentally unstable and unfit to fly. But too little time was left to the relatives of the 51 who perished in a tragedy that was easily preventable if safety standards had been met.

Capt. Abhishek Adhikari was abusive, erratic and insolent even before the plane took off from Kathmandu to a flight to Kathmandu on 12 March, 2018 with 67 passengers and crew seated on the cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) obtained by Nepal Times shows that the mental state of the Captain was much worse than first indicated at the ATC (Air Traffic Control) tower, and that he should not have been allowed to pilot in the company. Actually he was more exasperated with her than that, he was excessively exasperated with her.

The transcript (read aloud) begins with conversation between ATC-442 Operations while still on ground in Kathmandu. In the cockpit, Capt. Adhikari is kicking his foot, and the female pilot has left the cockpit.

"I see you are kicking your foot, and the female pilot has left the cockpit," the voice on the recording says.

"Yes," Adhikari responds.

"It is not good," the voice continues. "It is not good for the crew."

"I know," Adhikari says.

"Do you think you can kick your foot and be on the same cockpit?"

"Yes," Adhikari replies.

="I see you are kicking your foot, and the female pilot has left the cockpit," the voice on the recording says.

="I know," Adhikari says.

="Do you think you can kick your foot and be on the same cockpit?"

="Yes," Adhikari replies.

Go online to watch video and find out why Byanjankar is determined to dedicate the gift of life to her family and patients.

Nepal Times
“Sir! Sir!”

The Accident Investigation Commission set up by the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation in January presented its report in containing the graph of the crash of a high speed jetliner. The report was presented to the Commission after following the Air Traffic Control lapse pointed out in the Internet on the day of the crash. This maneuver shows that the Captain Murali Sundan’s state of mind was much more unstable than first thought.

“Sir! Sir!”

The last flight path of the US-Bangla flight BS211 on 12 March 2018. Yellow boxes correspond to CVR times.

Internet and Digital TV
Unfair sex

Speech delivered by the Director General of the Department of Women, Children, Labour, Home Affairs and Animal Husbandry on the occasion of the Day of International Women. [Please check against delivery]

“Ladies, Distinguished Guests, Respectable Ladies and gentlemen, last and also the least, you gentlemen at the back talking loudly in your mobile phones are an utter disgrace to mankind.

Now that I have your undivided attention, allow me to begin my 25-service. As far as this Grandmillenium is concerned, and if it was up to us, we’d declare all 365 days in the year as International Days of Women. I think I speak for a majority of my all-male colleagues here on the dias when I say that we would not be doing justice to members of the female species if we celebrated today only once a year.

This is why we propose that henceforth every day be devoted to women except April. First, which as a token gesture, has already been set aside by the United Nations as the International Day for Men. Going by your tumultuous applause, I hereby declare that motion passed.

There is now a consensus in the scientific community that women hold up half the sky. In fact, if it wasn’t for us men holding up the other half, the sky as we know it, would fall. We must grudgingly admit that Nepalese women have taken great strides. Admittedly, those strides have not been as great as the strides we menfolk have taken but, hey, we’re not here to gloat. For example, we men have amassed a list of experience in vitally important activities such as managing, and making hilarious sounds by cupping our palms under our armpits. Allow me to demonstrate.

Now, show me one woman who can do that. The fairer sex has a lot of catching up to do to be at par with us of the unfair sex who are governed by the left hemispheres of our brains unlike women who are governed by the right hemispheres.

Men have had a head start in the race to make asses of ourselves. Women, therefore, have a lot of catching up to do, but given perseverance, commitment and determination they can be as (if not more) idiosyncratic as us. You will just have to try harder.

Ever since cave men showed manhood inwards with their mouths open, right down to the modern industrial age where men still haven’t learnt to sour toilet seats in an upright position during urinals and landings, us boys have been rightly called the stronger sex.

Some men may have their egos dented when they see women overtaking them in this march towards mediocrity, but there is nothing to fear. Both sexes now have equal rights to make hay woe of themselves.

After all, GDMs are an Equal Opportunity Employer.”