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# Fully charged

The people of Kathmandu do not need to be told that they breathe some of the dirtiest air in the world. Diesel trucks, buses, cars and motorcycles emit toxic exhaust into the very air we breathe.

But unlike elsewhere, the outrage has not reached a critical mass where public pressure would force policymakers to act. A government that bans cigarette smoking in public, or analyses the breath of drivers for alcohol should be even more committed to strict emission tests and a strategic public transport policy. But it is not.

However, tax rebates on electric vehicles have suddenly made the price of plug ins competitive with diesel SUVs in the same class. A drastic drop in the price of lithium ion batteries and an increase in their energy density mean electric cars are more affordable and have longer range. Next week's NADA Auto Show will include eight electric car brands and six electric two-wheelers.

"The tax structure has made the most difference in Nepal," says Shurid Ghimire of Kia Motors in Kathmandu. "We cannot bring in our Niro model fast enough to meet demand."



However, to make a real dent on air and noise pollution in Kathmandu, Ghimire says the 800,000 fuel burning two-wheelers in the Valley have to be gradually replaced with battery scooters. In addition, the Nepal Electricity Authority can invest in a network of fast charging stations across the country, and encourage night-time charging when power demand is low.

This has to go hand-in-hand with an investment in public transport, leading to a direct improvement in public health by reducing emissions. "But to make a real difference, we can leapfrog to electric public transport," says environmental activist and Chair of Sajha Yatayat, Bhushan Tuladhar. "In the long run, this is beneficial both economically and environmentally for Nepal."



INSIDE  
**ELECTRI-CITY** PAGE 8-9

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# JAISHANKAR RETURNS

The overnight visit to Nepal by India's Minister for External Affairs S Jaishankar was an effort to reboot relations with Nepal, deeply wounded by New Delhi's five-month border blockade in 2015. India never acknowledged it as a blockade, and effectively pushed the narrative that it was an internal Nepal problem. But the truth eventually got out.

A BJP leader for the first time has publicly acknowledged it was a "foolish thing" to do. During a visit to Kathmandu last month, senior BJP leader Subramaniam Swami was quoted as saying the blockade had been carried out "on the advice of bureaucrats", and that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was now addressing the "hurt feelings" among Nepalis.

That could have been what Jaishankar was trying to do in Kathmandu, with Pashupati *chandan* conspicuous on his forehead all day Thursday. In meetings with Nepali leaders across the political spectrum, his



RSS

message was that India wanted to re-establish a "new era of partnership" with Nepal. That is a desirable sentiment, and Nepal should respond in kind. After all, we can choose our friends, but not our neighbours.

If resetting ties was the intention, however, perhaps Jaishankar was the wrong person to send to Kathmandu. Nepal's public sphere and the press this week were replete with references to his previous visit here exactly four years ago. Nepal had just suffered a devastating earthquake, and the government was trying to fast track the new Constitution even though it did not satisfy the demands of Madhesi activists. Ensuing violence in the Tarai claimed 56 lives.

We know now that Jaishankar was rather blunt in his sometimes heated meetings with

**A state may be weak, but it must compensate for its smallness with smarts.**

Nepal's leaders, who refused to listen to his suggestion to postpone the Constitution by two weeks. Soon after he flew back to New Delhi, border checkpoints with India were sealed. The blockade lasted till January 2016 – imports of fuel, food and essentials stopped, as did earthquake relief.

Jaishankar's return this week was for many a bitter reminder of 2015. A hashtag campaign on the Nepali Twittersphere did not exactly go viral, but got irreverent shares. Jaishankar brought a message from Prime Minister Modi to Nepal's Prime Minister KP Oli that said he wanted India-Nepal relations to reflect the 'closeness and affinity' between the two peoples.

The message added that leaders of the two countries trust each other, and they should build on this to complete past cooperation agreements that are languishing. They should move ahead in the spirit of mutual benefit. Oli reportedly reciprocated the sentiments and promised to work together to restore ties.

What was left unsaid was New Delhi trying to get public support for its actions in Kashmir from the neighbourhood. In fact some Indian outlets misleadingly reported that all of India's neighbours had done so, when they hadn't. If they value stability in Nepal, BJP leaders in India must also refrain from trying to pressure Nepal on its secular Constitution. We crossed that bridge, and there is no going back.

Although the formal reason for this visit was a meeting of the Nepal-India Joint Commission, attention throughout the two days was elsewhere. For example, the bilateral Eminent Person's Group that presented its report last year recommending reform in ties and amendments to the 1950 Rana-era, India-Nepal friendship treaty is still in limbo.

It is also not in Nepal's national interest to keep rocking the boat, and irritating New Delhi. It may be tempting at election time, and Prime Minister Oli did cash in on anti-Indian sentiment after the blockade for his landslide in the 2017 elections, but he more than anyone else, should know that this is counterproductive. Leaders in Kathmandu never really made an effort to understand India's security sensitivities, and its need for regulating water from our rivers.

Nepal's strategy in dealing with its larger neighbour should be guided by pragmatism, and not petulant stubbornness. We should do our homework before negotiations and work in the spirit of give and take. On the other hand, Indian leaders must also realise that heavy-handedness has never worked. Under-handedness also does not because ultimately it will hurt India.

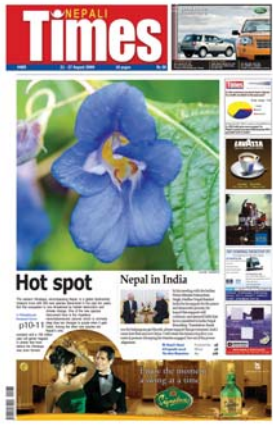
India's rulers may have behaved like boors in the past, but our own nationalistic bravado is not backed up by an ability to stand on our own feet. A state may be weak, but it must compensate for its smallness with smarts. We must fix our domestic issues ourselves, and understand Indian concerns to negotiate for the concessions we need.

## 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

*The factional fighting in the NCP this week has seen a re-alignment. Sound familiar? Here is the Backside column by the Ass from Nepali Times #465 of 7-13 August 2009:*

'JNK now thinks he's waited long enough and is making his move against MKN and KPO. In so doing, he is either knowingly or unknowingly playing right into the hands of the Mau Mau, who can only get into govt if they manage to split the Eh-Malaise. The party is already running parallel district committees with pro and anti-JN cliques. With Upadro Yadav and Jhallu both speaking Maoist lingo, it is pretty clear what PKD meant by "strategic offensive" before he jetted off to the Woolwich Town Hall.

PKD is off to Moscow, where he will meet Comrade Vladimir Ilyich in his mausoleum. But a pilgrimage to Georgia to pay respects to Uncle Joe's birthplace was scrapped because Russia is massing troops for another putsch into Georgia. It's a good thing PKD has gone to the Land Where Communism Collapsed. Maybe it'll be an eye-opener.'



## ONLINE PACKAGES



PANCHA KUMARI PARIYAR

Pancha Kumari Pariyar is our guest in this month's edition of Lightroom Conversations. Growing up dirt poor, Pariyar faced discrimination because of her caste and gender. Watch her talk about translating her pains into words and recite one of her favourite poems *Baadai, Chhori ra Ma* (Cloud, daughter and me). Story: *page 11*.



POISONOUS AIR

Every motorcycle in Kathmandu Valley poisons the air we breathe. And there are 800,000 of them. Unlike smoke from diesel trucks, the gas pollutants in two-wheeler exhaust, including carbon monoxide and nitrous oxides, are invisible. Electric scooters are cleaner. Story: *page 8-9*.

### TOURISM MINISTER

This is nothing new. ('Unusual appointment... extraordinary tasks', #972) From RNAC to NAC, the national carrier has undergone numerous management changes. As soon as the airline starts turning a profit, the old BODs and employees exert political pressure to get their jobs back. The circle then repeats again. No one can keep the wolves away. The only solution is freeing the airport, airline, and tourism board of civil servants, and privatise them.

*Pravaran Mahat*

■ Good to see *Nepali Times* asking the Right Questions. Sad to see such Predictable Answers that will most likely end in very little change.

*Alex Ferguson*

■ Is Nijgadh really necessary for Nepal? Focus on what is feasible. Nepal will never be a 'hub'; even Indian airports struggle to develop into hubs beyond the immediate neighbourhood. Focus on improving TIA.

*Leguwa Khola*

### SUVS

My only question (which always arises when I read such well investigated articles) is: what do we do now ('Driving Nepal deeper into debt', Ramesh Kumar, #973)? People will get angry, call for action on social media and may even write an op-ed. However, there is nothing we can do legally to stop or punish.

*Pravaran Mahat*

■ Yes, citizens and taxpayers need to know where the budgets are being spent. Keep it up.

*Mohan Singh*

### INTER-ETHNIC MARRIAGES

This is a complex subject, but the writer has given a fresh perspective that few have ever thought about ('Nepal is turning into a nation of hybrid identities', Sanghamitra Subba, #973). Great reading.

*Prakash Kumar Subedi*

## WHAT'S TRENDING



### Bon Voyage

by *Sonam Choekyi Lama*

There is more to Dolpo than the ink-blue waters of Phoksundo Lake. The remoter valleys of Nepal's most remote region hide ancient monasteries and the culture of the Bon faith, which preaches the worship of nature. See our complete multimedia package online.

Most reached and shared on Facebook



### Driving Nepal deeper into debt

by *Ramesh Kumar*

Government SUVs drive along roads that are in poor shape because the budgets to repair them have been spent on expensive cars. In the past three years, federal and provincial governments spent a massive Rs250 million on buying SUVs. Read the investigation at [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)

Most popular on Twitter

### Kashmir and Kathmandu

*Editorial*

India's message on Kashmir should be heard loud and clear in Kathmandu. It is in Nepal's interest that a future conflict over Kashmir should be prevented at all costs. The hard-hitting analysis was read in the tens of thousands and sparked a vibrant online debate.

Most visited online page

### Nepal is turning into a nation of hybrid identities

by *Sanghamitra Subba*

In a country where the Prime Minister married across the ethnic divide, a new wave of such unions is producing an even more multicultural Nepal. But this increase in inter-ethnic marriages is blurring cultural distinctions, complicating job quotas.

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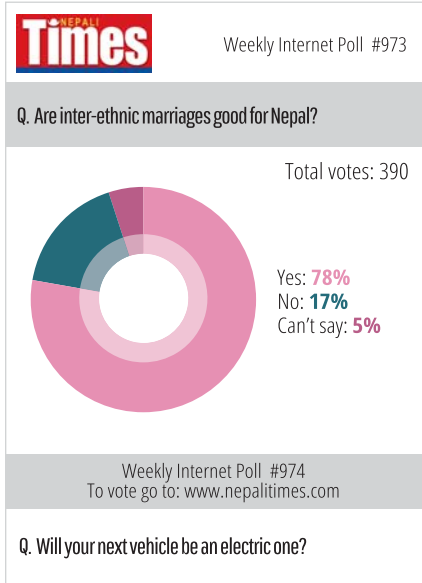
## QUOTE TWEETS

**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
Nepal's roads this monsoon are in an even worse state than last year. This may be an absolute majority government, but it has been an absolute failure in service delivery.

**Sumitpant** @120Sumitpant  
Bamboo plantation along the road will only solve this kind of landslides problem.

**Nepali Times** @NepaliTimes  
Bandana Rana has risen from local campaigner to a policy-making role on gender rights.

**Mohna Ansari** @MohnaAnsari  
The first Nepali elected as Vice Chair of the #CEDAW committee. She speaks her insights for policy making in #UN treaty body



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# Nepal by night

We have undersold Kathmandu Valley’s nightlife, but not in the way you might think

Many visitors to Nepal complain that there is not much to do after dark besides go to their hotel rooms to watch tv. But Kathmandu has a different kind of vibrant nightlife, people just don’t know about it yet.

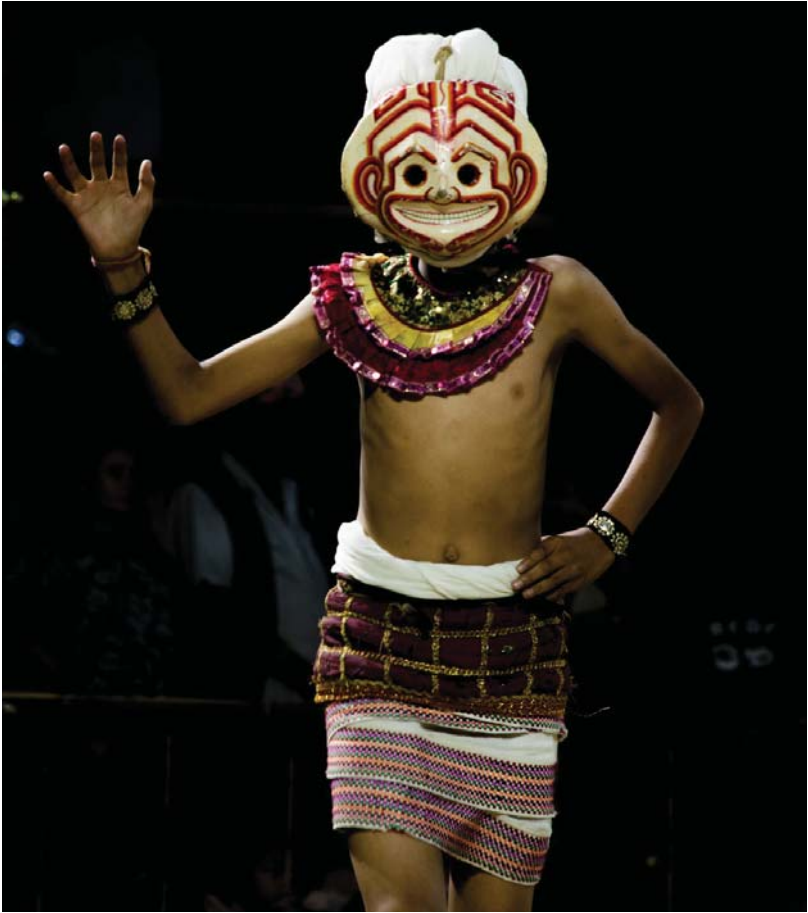
We should be able to offer tourists and locals heritage walks by moonlight, dining under the



1/2 FULL  
Anil Chitrakar

stars, and night market shopping experiences at the sites of Nepal’s monuments. That would be one way to increase the time and money visitors spend here. Managed properly, this could be a real opportunity to extend visitors’ stays, enrich their experience and increase revenue from tourism, which is falling even as tourist numbers rise.

In inner city Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan, bhajan groups are active all night, all year long. Night walks along the alleyways of the old town yield a unique experience of this culturally vibrant valley. It is a myth that Kathmandu goes to sleep early. In fact, it is a city that never sleeps. Devotional music, or the masked Mahakali Dance in Bhaktapur (*pictured*).



MONIKA DEUPALA

Of course, the street lights need to work. Potholes need to be fixed, garbage managed, food and water quality assured. Designated parking and making narrow lanes vehicle-free would help. Emergency vehicles would

be on standby. Electric two or three wheelers could help people commute to parking areas.

Mahendra Shakya, who now operates a chain of hotels called the Heranya — including one at Patan Durbar Square — says, “We have a

world-class city. What we really need to upgrade is the third-class services and infrastructure for the visitors.”

CCTV and visible patrols by the police will be needed. We may even require a night court for trouble-makers. All these would result in more jobs and will be worth it because we can boost the revenue of the local governments. We can do a baseline and report trends in increased revenue in the days to come.

During the Rana days there was actually a night curfew. The city has finally come out of regular power outages and we may soon have a bit of power surplus to push for increased demand. NEA should spend some of its profits re-investing in street lighting for additional revenue. After all, late night is when demand is lowest.

Sajha Yatayat can run special bus routes to and from heritage sites to tourist hubs like Thamel till midnight. Imagine the ride from Thamel to Bhaktapur on a well lit road in a clean electric bus, minus the traffic at Ratna Park, Maitighar and Koteswor.

The million dollar question is whether the local people, businesses, heritage site managers, security agencies and local municipal governments are ready for these longer work hours. It really means changing

from a 10-5 job to putting in two shifts. One could argue that creating twice as many jobs would be welcome in a country where we desperately need employment.

Not just visitors, Nepalis who work hard all day would love to spend the evenings at these beautiful sites over a beer, momos or to browse in a book store. With more and more women joining the workforce, people will be cooking less and less at home.

Heritage sites are already attracting visitors at night for the *arati* at Pashupati and Janakpur, the Nava Durga and Asta Matrika masked dances in Bhaktapur and Patan, the Indra Jatra in Kathmandu and so much more.

The monuments and dabalis or raised platforms for performances would come to life with cultural performances. We could have sound and light shows. The key is how we bring these places to life year round with the best services and infrastructure.

Away from the heritage sites, we have our other monuments: the Himalaya. With little light pollution, visitors can watch snow mountains by starlight, the moon shining on the world’s highest peaks, wait for meteorite showers, and take time-lapse photographs of a world spinning on its axis. Nowhere else in the world are there nights like in Nepal. 🇳🇵

Anil Chitrakar is President of Siddharthinc







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# A true taste of Thailand

What makes one country's cuisine a global favourite, while another is confined to its borders? What defines the exotic in taste?

Thailand, like Nepal an ancient Asian kingdom never colonised, opened up to global mass tourism post-World War II. During the Vietnam War, it became the R&R spot of Indochina. Then visitors thronged its beaches and got a true taste of the country. That created the demand, and the Thai diaspora helped spread it around the world.

Why didn't the same happen to Nepali food? We may get into that some other time. But for now, let us concentrate on the Thai Food Festival happening at the centrally-located Hotel Annapurna on Darbar Marg. Opened last week by ambassadors



REETI KC



from Thailand, Burma and South Korea, with a spectrum of past Miss Nepals in attendance, the festival was off to a flying start.

"We have Chinese and Indian food but we should bring something different to our patrons. Not only the taste of the food but the culinary art of modern Thai food is also unique," says Raju Bikram Shah, CEO of Hotel Annapurna.

The Thai Food Fest will go on till 25 August, so there are still a few days left to sample the well known Tom Yum soup, Pad Thai (Thai style flat rice noodles with bean sprouts) and Som Tum (Thai style raw papaya salad). But Chef Paniti Chantayasakorn has flown in specially, courtesy of Thai Airways International, to also present less familiar dishes, like Lard Gai (spicy minced chicken with salad), Gang Keaw Wan Chicken Gai (authentic Thai green curry cooked in coconut milk), Kae Pad Krapow (stir fried lamb with Thai spice), Gang Keaw

Wan Veg (authentic Thai curry cooked in coconut milk) and Thong Muan, KleeB Lamduan and Sago in coconut milk as desserts.

"The dishes prepared are pure Thai, but I experimented with some local Nepali ingredients as well, like the eggplant in Thailand is like a small ball while in Nepal it is long. Also, the basil in Thailand is a little bigger," explains Chef Paniti, who first came to Nepal after the 2015 earthquake with UNICEF to raise money. She volunteered with relief and reconstruction in Chautara for a week and developed a connection with Nepal. When the opportunity to return arose, she could not resist. "I was actually busy, but when I got the invitation from Thai International to Nepal, I said I am going to go back."

Hotel Annapurna will be serving its a la carte menu until 25 August as part of the Thai Food Festival. 🇹🇭

Reeti KC

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Turkish Airlines Kathmandu has introduced special economy and business class fares to select destinations



in Europe and America. These fares are valid for travel until 30 September 2019 for tickets issued by 15 September 2019, and are subject to availability.

### Indonesian independence

On 17 August, a flag-hoisting ceremony was organised at the Office of the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Indonesia to mark the 74th Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of



Indonesia. Mr. Chandra Prasad Dhakal, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Indonesia in Nepal, hoisted the red and white flag.

### Himalayan 2

Nepal and Burma have agreed to advance preparations for the Himalayan 2 air route, which would shorten the flight time between Hong Kong and Europe, the Gulf, India and Nepal by up to 20 minutes. The route would traverse Nepal, overflying Surkhet, Kathmandu and Tumlingtar.

### Carlsberg Golf

The second series of Carlsberg Golf 2019 has concluded, with Bharat Bastakoti and Tashi Tshiring (Dong) finishing as net and gross champions. Bastakoti accumulated 38 points to become net winner of the second series, and Tshiring finished as the gross winner with 36 gross points. The tournament was played on a stableford format with ¾ handicap over 18 holes. 84 golfers participated.

### International Schools

The International School Award was awarded to 41 schools in Nepal by the British Council at a ceremony on 20 August 2019. This is the 7th year that Nepali schools are being recognised through the program, which is endorsed by the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development.

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The climate crisis is having an impact on the monsoon. Indian meteorologists have recorded an unprecedented number of extreme rainfall events in the past month — double such instances last year, when more than 150-200mm fell over a 24-hour period. Meanwhile, parts of northeast India and some sections of Nepal's mid-mountains have recorded below normal total precipitation so far. The monsoon is no longer following any rules, and is behaving in an erratic manner. In Nepal, there is a new monsoonal pulse passing through that will bring sharp bursts of isolated rain in the late afternoons and nights this weekend.



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with ISKCON four years ago after suffering bouts of depression, and finding that medications only made her drowsy and dull. “I started coming to ISKCON, and it changed my life,” she recalls. “We meditate by chanting the Hare Krishna



Maha Mantra. That cured my depression. We eat very simple food here, and practice good behaviour. All that has changed the way I think, and now I am full of a spiritual love for everything in the world.”

While Krishna appears as a full grown man in the Mahabharata, later texts furnished him with a childhood full of adventures, where he kills demons with superhuman powers. Others created thousands of gopini with whom Krishna flirts and dances. In the 12th century, the poem Gita Govinda introduced Radha as a heroine, after which

Radha-Krishna became a symbol of romantic love. Krishna is therefore revered today in all these forms: a teacher and philosopher, but also as a mischievous child and ardent lover.

The lover-boy image of Krishna seems contradictory, especially since traditional followers of Krishna are among the most austere sects in Hinduism, Vaishnavism. And yet, the most romantic and sensual Hindu scriptures are based on the frolics of Krishna with married gopinis. Why a deity is allowed — even celebrated — for having multiple romantic attachments is a question often raised today with retroactive judgement.

Krishna devotees see his intimacy with older women as spiritual, not physical. “Krishna is not a playboy. He is a god, not a human, and he took thousands of forms so that he could be with all the women simultaneously and give them happiness. Their union was not physical but spiritual,” explains Sucharu Mata of ISKCON Nepal.

Bhagwat Manjari Radhika Dasi, a religious leader in Itahari famous for recitations of the purana, accepts Krishna’s dalliances. “Krishna is that supreme being who shows us how to act best in any situation. We learn from him about about life’s duties, about childhood, and what lovers and husbands should be like,” she says.

Indeed, sensual bhajans about Krishna’s antics are still sung in our society, where romance and courtship are still repressed, especially for women. They accept the bundle of contradictions that Krishna has become: a man with thousands of lovers who preaches renunciation, and exhorts his cousin to go to war.

Krishna represents the Hindu world: nothing is as it seems and there is more than meets the eye. 🇳🇵



KUNDA DIXIT

## Krishna’s Kathmandu

Although Kathmandu is known as the abode of Lord Pashupatinath and Shaivism has deep roots here, as the eighth avatar of Vishnu, Krishna is a well respected deity as well. Krishna became popular during the Malla era 500 years ago, when kings like Siddhi Narsingh Malla commissioned Patan’s famous Krishna Mandir, where thousands of devotees will gather all day on 23 August, Krishna’s birthday.

King Siddhi Narsingh Malla is supposed to have seen Krishna in a dream, and built a temple at a spot where he found a statue of Krishna. The stone temple took years to construct, and the devout king

disappeared after the construction was completed in 1661.

Today the three-storey, shikhar style structure stands in Patan Darbar Square, repaired after structural damage in the 2015 earthquake. Its stone walls and columns are adorned with intricate carvings that depict episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

As for Siddhi Narsingh Malla, people believe he is still alive, still searching for his lord. “People say that when that bird on top of the serpent flies, then Siddhi Narsingh Malla will have died,” says the temple’s chief priest, Pratap Dhar Sharma, pointing to a tall statue of Malla’s grandson Yog Narendra Malla on the square, which has a golden bird on top of a guardian serpent.

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### KIA Soul EV EXI

**Price:** 5.6 million  
**Country of Origin:** South Korea  
**Battery Capacity:** 27kWh  
**Battery Type:** Lithium-ion polymer  
**Time to Charge:** Standard charge less than 5 hrs (6.6 kW / 100% state of charge) Fast charge 33 min (50 kW / 80% state of charge)  
**Features:** 3.5" OLED trip computer, 10.25-inch colour touch-screen display, regenerative breaking, Super Thrust  
**Range:** 212km  
**Colours:** Inferno Red, Sparkling Silver, Snow White Pearl, Cherry Black, Solar Yellow, Mars Orange, Gravity Grey, Undercover Green, Neptune Blue

### KIA Niro EV

**Price:** Starting at 6.7 million  
**Country of Origin:** South Korea  
**Battery Capacity:** 64kWh  
**Battery Type:** Lithium-ion polymer  
**Time to Charge:** 54 min to charge to 80%  
**Features:** UVO link w/ 7" touch-screen display, Supervision Metre Cluster with 7.0" thin film transistor (TFT) LCD trip computer, smart cruise, heated and ventilated seats, rotary shift dials, remote features, smart cruise control with Stop and Go (SCC)  
**Range:** 384km  
**Colours:** Snow White Pearl, Aluminium Silver, Gravity Blue, Platinum Graphite, Aurora Black Pearl



# PLUG

Electric car prices are competitive in Nepal. A wide choice of models is available.

Sanghami

With increasing awareness about the climate emergency and air pollution, many around the world have taken steps to reduce their own carbon footprints by flying less, being more energy efficient and switching to electric cars.

Till now, the cost of battery-powered vehicles meant that only the most committed bought them to make a green statement. But lithium-ion battery prices have come down from \$1,160/kWh in 2010 to \$171/kWh today, and are expected to be half that in the next five years. This has prompted big auto manufacturers to launch plug-in vehicles. The number of electric cars has doubled in the past two years – there are now five million electric cars in circulation

worldwide.

Nepal's dependence on imported petroleum is increasing every year, and with the completion of the 69km Motihari-Amlekhganj fuel pipeline it is clear the government expects fossil fuel use to grow. However, Nepal slashed taxes on electric vehicles five years ago, and since the duty on imported cars is more than 260%, it has put the cost of electric cars at par with similar petrol or diesel vehicles.

The batteries are now not just cheaper but have more energy density, meaning the newest electric SUVs give a range of 400-450km, enough to drive from Kathmandu to Biratnagar and still have lots of juice left.

Six new battery-powered car models and eight two-wheeler brands are making their



### Hyundai Ioniq Electric

**Trims:** Electric, Electric Limited  
**Price:** 5.3 million  
**Country:** South Korea  
**Battery Capacity:** 28kWh  
**Battery Type:** Lithium-ion Polymer  
**Time to Charge:** 4-5 (quick charging) - 9-10 (standard)  
**Features:** Electronic gear shift button , Supervision cluster with 7" color TFT LCD, Wireless charging (for phone)  
**Range:** 280km  
**Colours:** Ceramic White, Symphony Air Silver, Intense Blue, Black Noir Pearl



### Peugeot Partner Tepee

**Price:** 5.5 million upwards  
**Country of Origin:** France  
**Battery Capacity:** 22.5kWh  
**Battery Type:** Lithium ion  
**Features:** Rear-view camera with sensors, touch screen infotainment system, ground clearance of 200 mm, 6 airbags, hill assist system, cruise control  
**Range:** 170km  
**Colours:** Artense Grey, Bianca White, Onyx Black, Shark Blue, Intense Red, Aluminium Grey



### Mahindra e2oPlus

**Price:** Starting at 2.2 million  
**Country of Origin:** India  
**Battery Capacity:** 210-280Ah  
**Battery Type:** Lithium ion  
**Time to Charge:** 3 KW single Phase 16 Amp  
**Charger:** 6-7 hours & 10 KW 3 Phase 32 Amp Charger (0-80%): 1hr 35min  
**Features:** Smartphone-controlled features, GPS navigation system and a dashboard-mounted touchscreen, keyless entry, start/stop button, and regenerative braking.  
**Range:** 110km-140km  
**Colours:** Coral Blue, Wine Red, Arctic Silver, Solid White

### Audi e-tron

**Price:** 17.5 million  
**Battery Capacity:** 95kWh  
**Battery Type:** Lithium ion  
**Time to Charge:** 86km of range with 10min charge  
**Features:** Panoramic moonroof, 10.1" infotainment system, virtual cockpit system, smartphone interface with Wireless CarPlay  
**Range:** 328km  
**Colours:** Black, White, Grey

# More e-scooters for ch

Sonia Awale

Despite an initial lukewarm response, sales of electric two-wheelers have spiked in Kathmandu as commuters realise that their initial and running cost is much lower than petrol motorcycles.

If this trend continues, the shift from petrol bikes to battery-powered two-wheelers will help clean up Kathmandu's air pollution. Today, the more than 800,000 two-wheelers in the Valley are the main contributors of poisonous gases like carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, nitrous oxides and ozone.

These gases, combined with particulate matter from the exhaust pipes of motorcycles, account for most of our air pollution. People living along busy roads and commuters with long-term exposure to these pollutants can have

### NIU Series

NIU Nepal (Lithium ion battery)  
**N-Series (2,400Watt):** Rs254,000  
**M-Series (1,200Watt):** Rs229,000  
**N-GT (3,000 Watt):** Rs400,000



their life expectancy reduced by up to four years. In addition, motorcycles raise the noise level on city roads to dangerous levels.

A shift to electric two-wheelers would also reduce Nepal's dependence on imported petroleum. Indeed, electric scooter sales first picked up in the aftermath of the Indian Blockade in 2015, but once petrol was available again, sales tapered off.

"For a long time we had difficulty convincing customers to switch from petrol to electric scooters, but with tax breaks for battery vehicles, there has been an upsurge in people buying electric in the recent months," explains Subash Acharya of Bella Motors. With India committed to banning petrol two-wheelers by 2025 and China manufacturing only electric vehicles by 2030, Nepalis will have no choice but to buy electric, he adds.

It is now compulsory for electric two-wheelers in Nepal to be registered and their

### Terra Motors

**Eco Terra (Lead acid battery):** Rs115,000  
**Terra Acuto (Lithium ion):** Rs200,000





# EVs

ces are getting  
pal, and there is a  
f new models

itra Subba



## Hyundai Kona Electric

**Price:** 5.5-6.5 million  
**Country of Origin:** South Korea  
**Battery Capacity:** 39.2kWh / 64 kWh  
**Battery Type:** Lithium-ion polymer  
**Time to Charge:** 30 min (50kWh 80%) - 9h (3kWh 100%)  
**Features:** 7" LED supervision cluster, button-type shift by wire, smart key & push button start, 7" floating touch screen infotainment system, electric parking break with Autohold  
**Range:** 300km  
**Colours:** Chalk White, Dark Knight, Pulse Red, Ceramic Blue



## BYD e6

**Price:** 6.6 million  
**Battery Capacity:** 80kWh  
**Battery Type:** BYD iron-phosphate battery  
**Time to Charge:** Fast Charge 2h (80% in 45min) - home charge 10-11h  
**Features:** Regenerative braking system, cruise control, hill hold control, vehicle fault diagnosis system and hydraulic brake assist  
**Range:** 400km  
**Colours:** Black, White



debut at this year's NADA Auto Show 27 August–1 September. Says NADA President Sambhu Dahal: "The future of electric vehicles is very bright in Nepal and the response has been outstanding. With the world going electric, Nepal will soon follow."

Indeed, Kia, Hyundai and Mahindra have seen a surge in customer demand and cannot keep up. Some are taking orders for delivery in December. Says Suhridd Ghimire from Kia Motors in Nepal: "We are being flooded with inquiries for our Niro electric SUV and are rerouting vehicles made for the UK market here to keep up with demand. Because diesel SUVs are taxed so high, electric vehicles are now competitive."

And where customer preference goes, banks follow. Laxmi Bank is unveiling its electric vehicle auto loan scheme at NADA Auto. "Electric vehicles are becoming more appealing to consumers as tax on petroleum products increase. We hope our auto loan will make it feasible for consumers to go electric," says Bharati Pandey of Laxmi Bank.

Even luxury car manufacturers like Audi are coming to the market with the high-end eTron model which at Rs17.5 million will cost more than double the Hyundai Kona or Kia Niro. Mahindra's much smaller and affordable e2o Plus, with a price tag of Rs2.2 million, has dominated the Nepal electric car market for years, selling over 200 units.

Even if private car owners switch to battery-powered cars it will not make much of a dent on air reducing air pollution and the petrol import bill. "Only switching to electric public transport can Nepal hope to reduce its carbon footprint," says Bhushan Tuladhar of Sajha Yatayat, which is inducting 30 electric buses this year.

The Nepal Electricity Authority says it had surplus power this monsoon, and Nepal can stop import of electricity from India by 2021. If that is the case, the spread of electric vehicles will use locally available renewable energy instead of depending on imports. And the beauty of it is that the vehicles will charge at night when demand for power is lowest. 🇳🇵



## BYD M3

**Price:** 5.2 million  
**Battery Capacity:** 50.3kWh  
**Battery Type:** NCM battery  
**Time to Charge:** Fast Charge 1.5h - Home Charger (7Wh) 7.5h  
**Features:** 5-7 seater variant, multi-purpose vehicle (MPV) suitable for commercial purposes as well  
**Range:** 310km  
**Colours:** White



## MG ZS EV

**Price:** 5.0 million  
**Battery Capacity:** 44.5kWh  
**Battery Type:** Ultra high density ternary lithium battery  
**Time to Charge:** 30 min to 80% (Fast Charging Mode)  
**Features:** 8" HD touchscreen, push start ignition, high-end knob style electronic gear shift, key-less system, panoramic sunroof, cruise control, keyless entry and start  
**Range:** 428km  
**Colours:** Blue, Red, White

# leaner Kathmandu air

drivers need a license. However, customers now only pay 24% vehicle tax, the annual tax has been waived, and there is a 50% rebate on road improvement tax. Owners of e-bikes and e-scooters pay only Rs125 to renew their bluebook compared to Rs2,500 for petrol two-wheelers.

"A lot of my customers chose electric because of its low running cost," says Shyam Sapkota of Terra Motors, which has sold over 1,500 electric two-wheelers since 2014. He says an average user saves up to Rs45,000 a year over a petrol bike.

Suraj Joshi bought five NIU electric scooters for his staff at Real Time Solutions in Dhobighat, and says they were a great investment: "Electric scooters are very smooth for city rides, you don't have to spend on maintenance and energy consumption is very low."

With more regular electric supply, electric scooters can be recharged at night like mobile phones. They are also much lighter, reducing back problems and muscle stress, especially for

## Bella Motors

Bella Motors (All lead acid battery)  
**Bella T5 Sport electric motorcycles:** Rs210,000  
**Bella T3 Sport electric motorcycles:** Rs160,00  
**Deuro, Gloria, Carino and Aspro electric scooters:** Rs130,000  
**Dolce:** Rs 145,500



women and the elderly. Misconceptions about mileage and range often put off potential buyers, but electric motors give better torque and range has improved with newer batteries.

Says Pranayna KC of Eco Infinity, which sells the NIU brand in Nepal: "If you use electric vehicles your running cost stays in Nepal, and they will also not pollute the air we breathe." Despite positive growth, industry players say there is a long road ahead before the capital's petrol two-wheelers are replaced by electric ones. Better marketing, as well as more government incentives and policy clarity, will play a key role.

"Because of the sheer number of two wheelers, electric scooters should be the top government priority," says environmentalist Bhushan Tuladhar. Eight brands of electric two-wheelers will be launched at the Nepal Automobile Dealers' Association (NADA) auto show 27 August-1 September. 🇳🇵

## POISONOUS AIR



Every motorcycle in the Kathmandu Valley poisons the air we breathe. Unlike smoke from diesel trucks, the gas pollutants in two-wheeler exhaust, including carbon monoxide and nitrous oxides, are invisible. Electric scooters are cleaner.



EVENTS



**Krishna Janmashtami**  
Celebrate the birth of Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu. Witness the festivities of this auspicious Hindu day and join the worshippers of Lord Krishna.  
*All day, Krishna Temple, Patan Darbar Square*

Politics & Art

Myth of Sanctification: Politics, Aesthetics & National Dominion is a collaborative art exhibition between LASANAA@NexUs, Nepal and Waley Arts, Taiwan. Works by artists from Nepal, Taiwan and Pakistan will be showcased. The exhibition opens on 24 August at 4pm.  
*25-31 August, NextUS Culture, Pulchok (01) 5522393*

Nepali Play

“टक्कर बिहीन संसार” is a Garden Theatre Production inspired by Athol Fugard’s “Master Harold”... and the Boys. Watch the Nepali version adapted and directed by Satish Prasai.  
*23-30 August, 5:30pm (daily), 1pm (Saturday only), Kausi Theatre, Teku, 9860072909*



EU Film Festival

Immerse yourself in Europe’s heritage with the European Union’s Film Festival in Nepal. The annual event will screen 9 films over 2 days, from Italy to Denmark. The festival kicks off on 23 August at 6pm with the screening of King of the Belgians.  
*24-26 August, timings vary, Q’s Cinema. Rising Mall, Darbar Marg (01) 4429445*

Period Party

Normalise periods with Pad2Go’s Period Party. Listen to speakers share their menstruation experiences, play games and engage in discussions to help rid society of the period taboo.  
*23 August, 5pm-8pm, Bikalpa Art Centre, Pulchok*

Farmers Market

Spend the weekend shopping for fresh organic produce, Nepali handicrafts and superfoods. Munch on Utpala’s vegetarian dishes while you’re at it. Don’t forget to bring your own cloth bag!  
*24 August, 8am-12pm, Utpala Cafe, Boudha, 9801052333*



Art Saturdays

Learn how to repurpose pieces of wood, metal, clay and brick to create works of art. Bring a small piece of any material of your choice. Other materials and supplies will be provided. A resident artist will be guiding you through the interactive workshop.  
*24 August, 11am-2pm, Rs400 per person, Aaja Cafe, Chabahil*



Being Together

Classic Gallery presents Being Together, an exhibition by five young Nepali artists. Their paintings depict the struggles faced in contemporary Nepali society.  
*Till 10 September, 10am-6pm, Classic Gallery, Chakupat, 9841224753*

To Remember

Siddhartha Art Gallery presents To Remember, a mixed-media exhibition by artists from Iran. Inauguration on 28 August at 5:30pm.  
*29 August-4 September, 11am-5pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal (01) 4218048*

MUSIC



Sushant KC

Sushant KC, known for his hit songs “Maya ma” and “Muskurayera”, will be on stage. Sing along to his catchy melodies and relatable lyrics.  
*23 August, 7pm onwards, Rs1,500 per person, PRIVE Nepal, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 9801175022*

Freak Street Band

The Freak Street Band will be performing some of their new songs on Saturday afternoon.  
*24 August, 3-6pm, SASAA The Newa Restaurant (01) 4336770*

Bollywood Night

Dance the night away with the greatest hits of Bollywood. DJ Nish will keep the party going.  
*23 August, 6pm onwards, Darbar Cafe Music Lounge, Thamel, 9861246379*



Kathmandu Blues

The 20th Kathmandu Blues features renowned blues artist Ashesh Dangol, also known as Himalayan Hendrix. Savour a cocktail while you enjoy the best of the blues.  
*23 August, 7pm onwards, Places Restaurant & Bar, Thamel (01) 4700413*

Jazz and Beyond

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory presents Jazz and Beyond, a concert featuring KJC faculty and guest artists from Nepal, USA, Italy and Spain.  
*23 August, 7pm onwards, Rs500/Rs300 (for students with ID), Moksh (01) 5543554*

DINING



Le Mirch

At Le Mirch, bold and exciting flavours of Indian cuisine are subtly influenced by refined and sophisticated French fine dining. Gluten free and vegetarian options are available.  
*11am-12pm, Labim Mall, Pulchok (01) 5527437*

Octave

Octave is one of Kathmandu’s most happening places. With musical performances and some of the best sushi, Octave is the place to be.  
*2pm-12am, Darbar Marg (01) 4220569*



Buingal

With a variety of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options, Buingal has something for everyone. Give the vegetarian sekuwa a try.  
*11am-10pm, Maitidevi, (01) 4421393*

Zaika-E-Pakistan

Indulge in the flavours of Pakistan with dishes prepared by a chef from Islamabad.  
*29 August-7 September, 6:30pm-10pm, Fairfield by Marriott (01) 421799*



Utpala Cafe

Utpala Cafe, a monastery restaurant, is perfect for anyone looking for healthy vegetarian options. With their scrumptious buffet lunch, use of fresh produce and mouth-watering baked goods, this is one of the best eateries in Boudha.  
*7am-8pm (except Sunday), Boudha, 9801052333*

GETAWAY



Grand Norling

Enjoy a calm and relaxing stay at this hotel, which provides a spacious bedroom with adjoining bathroom, a large balcony with views of the golf course, monkeys and deer herds, and — not to forget — the garden.  
*Gokarna, (01) 4910193*

Lake View

Escape to Lake View Resort’s cosy wooden huts for a weekend of rest and relaxation. One of Lakeside’s oldest establishments, the resort features traditional, rustic designs and modern accents.  
*Lakeside, Pokhara (061) 461477 / 463854*



Bandipur Safari Lodge

While Bandipur is mainly known for its rich cultural heritage, it is home to a wide variety of wildlife. So go beyond the temples and explore the jungles of the town with the Bandipur Safari Lodge.  
*Bandipur, 9449597880, 08229-233001*

Yatri

Treat yourself to a relaxing spa treatment that includes a full body massage, body scrub, sauna and steam at Yatri Suites and Spa.  
*Amrit Marg, Thamel, 9802063086*



Milla

A quaint stay that combines both the old and the new, Milla Guesthouse is the perfect getaway for people who don’t want to go too far from the city.  
*Bhaktapur, 9851024137*



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OUR PICK

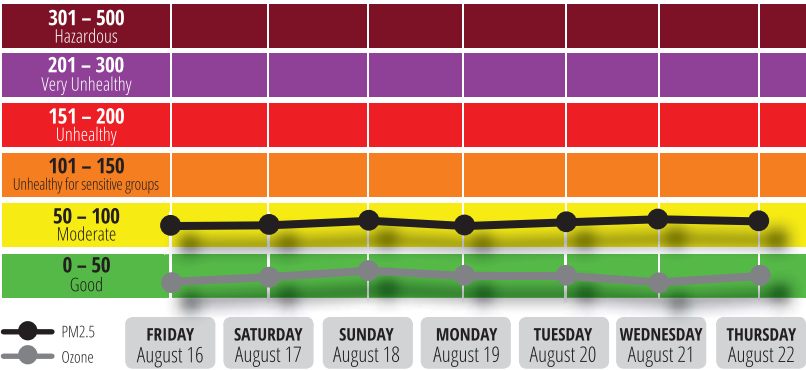


Opened in Kathmandu on 15 August

*Batla House* dramatises a real-life event: a controversial encounter between the police and terrorists, which was alleged to be fake. John Abraham stars as Sanjay Kumar Yadav, a character based on a real policeman involved in the case. Directed by Nikhil Advani and also starring Mrunal Thakur, the movie is a thrilling drama with plenty of plot twists.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 16-22 August



Enjoy the healthier air while it lasts. The daily average of the Air Quality Index has been in the yellow 'Moderate' zone throughout this week as measured at the US Embassy’s monitoring station in Phora Darbar. This is mainly due to rain showers and the afternoon breeze from the east, which have washed away suspended particles and also kept crossborder pollutants from blowing in. But as the monsoon tapers off, expect air quality to get steadily worse.  
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>



# Pancha Kumari Pariyar: Still She Rises

“When the stalks of rice grow taller, you must come back here again,” she says. “They move in the wind like waves in the ocean.”

Standing on the balcony of her home in Sano Gaun of Lalitpur, where poet Pancha Kumari Pariyar lives with her husband and their 8-month-old son, I am struck by the sight of green — that there is any left, and what respite even a small patch brings.



LIGHTROOM CONVERSATION  
Muna Gurung

Pancha Kumari’s poetry is much like that patch of green, a long deep breath in a literary scene dominated by non-Dalit voices. Born in 1979 in Buipa of Khotang, Pancha Kumari has published two books of poetry. Her first collection, *Sapana Ra Ankhaharu (Dreams and Eyes)*, 2005) includes poems written from 1998-2004 between Dharan and Kathmandu.

When her second book, *Juthi* (2013) was brought out by Sajha Prakashan, Pancha Kumari became the first Dalit woman to be published by Nepal’s oldest and most reputable publishing house. When asked if the name Juthi means anything, Pancha Kumari tells me it is the name of a low-caste Dalit woman. It was her friend, Raju Syangtan’s idea. “Raju bhai reminded me of the struggles I had to go through as a Dalit woman to arrive here. He said I should honour my journey by naming my collection after an ordinary Dalit woman, because I, too, am Juthi.”

She is a member of the Maoist party, and says she was drawn to the party’s ideals because she wanted equality for Dalits, Muslims and women. “I cannot say that the war benefitted individual lives and families, but on a larger political level the Maoists uplifted the Dalit community and made us more visible.”

In this month’s Lightroom Conversation, Pancha Kumari and I talk about writing through injustices and rising, winning in all sorts of life’s competitions, the importance of girlfriendhood, and the need to build healthy writing communities for women.

Pancha Kumari Pariyar: All I wanted to do was win.

## Muna Gurung: What was the prize?

**P:** Thin notebooks, small diaries, pencils, ballpoint pens — there would be so many I could barely carry them in my arms. I started writing in 4th grade and I would come first in class or in competitions within the school. But by 5th grade, I was competing at local and district levels. I wrote about the hurt I carried in my younger years, but more than the poems my focus was always about being 1st, 2nd or 3rd. I didn’t want to be any less. (Laughs)

## M: I relate — I do anything for free pens. But, can you tell me a little bit about the hurt?

**P:** In Buipa, we were bound to the *baalighare* system. I grew up seeing my parents and my brothers work for other people — tilling their land, harvesting their crops, doing all the field work. As Pariyars, we are musicians by caste, but we also made clothes. So, for a year’s worth of working on other peoples’ lands and making their clothes, they would compensate us with a few baskets of millet or corn, but never rice. And money? We never saw the face of it. I began working in the fields with my family when I was seven or eight years old. But my parents sent me to school. There, I was the only Dalit girl. Up until 4th grade, I was not allowed to sit on the benches with my peers. I would have to stand throughout the day. Some teachers who felt sorry for me would allow me to sit

on the floor, but otherwise I stood through all the subjects. How did I do it? Nowadays, I can barely stand for half an hour.

## M: Did your friends fight for you?

**P:** I walked to school with my friends. But as soon as we entered the classroom, they would not let me sit on the benches with them. In those days, my mind was sharp, and I even helped them with homework. But afterwards, over something small like touching their glass of water, they would hit me, spit on me. This was normal, everyday behaviour. I do not blame them, though. They were part of a larger system, and so they enacted the roles they were taught by the same society that allowed me to be treated as less than human.

## M: Did something shift in 5th grade?

**P:** I started sitting on the benches. You see, by the end of 4th grade I was already writing and being recognised as a smart student. There was something in me that said, whether I write about my pain or not, whether I sit on the benches or not, they will still scold me, call me names, hit me, tear my school notebooks, steal my pens. So, I made up my mind to always write about my pain and speak my mind.

## M: Were you scared that they might hurt you more if you wrote?

**P:** Never. What more could they do? Maybe kill me. But I was already living a life that was lower than that of an animal. And slowly, as I won more prizes in competitions judged by non-Dalits and Bahuns, it gave me the confidence to sit down with them.

## M: It validated your existence.

**P:** Exactly. Yet, I have always felt that if I had not endured the struggles of being Dalit, and therefore considered sub-human in this society, perhaps I would not have become a writer today. I would not have understood the importance of politics, either.

## M: Was there anything you read by Dalit writers or any writer that moved you to become one?

**P:** When I read Parijat’s *Naikape Sarkini*, I suddenly realised that not only was I Dalit, and therefore one of the lowest people in society, but I was also a Dalit woman, which made me different from a Dalit man. Parijat’s story is about a Dalit woman who works as a day labourer hauling sand from the river, and because she does not have enough clothes for the winter her body is so cold that even the sun cannot touch her. Later, we see her go home and take care of her disabled husband, who berates and mistreats her. I understood that the Sarkini was less powerful than a disabled Dalit man. Before reading the story, I hadn’t thought about the difference in gender within our community. I just saw us as a united group who suffered together. But I was wrong. There is a hierarchy, and it became clear to me that it wasn’t enough for me to just write for my people, I had to write for Dalit women.

## M: Do you find that you have reached Dalit women?



SIKUMARAI

**P:** I don’t know, but when I published *Juthi* in 2013, I invited all my friends and acquaintances from the Dalit community to the launch. It was a historic moment because in 100 years of Sajha Prakashan’s existence, my book was the first they had published that was written by a Dalit woman.

## M: What does your family say about your writing?

**P:** Buwa passed away when I was 10, so he didn’t get to read my work, and when I was pursuing my IA degree in Dharan, Ama passed away. She and I had been living with my brother then: he had a tailoring shop and I used to work for him. I call Dharan my literary home. It is where the writer in me took off. There were many readings, events and gatherings of writers that happened in those days. I wanted to attend all of them, but my brother would scold me: Why are you wasting your time on this nonsense? Focus on your course book, not novels!

## M: So clearly your brother did not read your work.

**P:** No. But in Dharan, once a month, the local newspaper, *Dharan Today*, would give out a box of Mayos instant noodles to the best piece of writing. That month, one of the poems I had submitted had won. So, I brought home a box of instant noodles. It was the first time that my brother didn’t scold me for writing. Maybe he thought, Oh, you can get to eat if you write. (Laughs) After that, if my brother scolded me, I would turn it into a poem. If my sister-in-law screamed at me, I would make a poem out of her anger. Slowly, they realised they couldn’t stop me and so eventually, they let me be.

## M: Do you have a first reader that you share all your work with?

**P:** I had the best reader — my pen pal, Shanta Rai. While I was still in 7th grade in Khotang, I used to write to her. There was a radio program that connected people who were interested in writing. I

do not remember what we wrote to each other, but she always said she loved reading my letters. After Ama passed away, my brother tried to marry me off. I protested, left his home and rented a flat with Shanta. It was the best year of my life. She loved me so much. She would cook, do the dishes, clean the floors and all I had to do in return was read my poems to her. After I read to her, she would tell me which ones I should send to which magazines and competitions. And the ones she picked always got some recognition!

## M: I’ve always believed in the importance of girlfriendhood. It is the strongest and sturdiest kind of love a woman can get. I hope you write about Shanta ji.

**P:** I want to because I miss her. We had created our own little world that year. Shanta would bring rice and daal from her home. I was a tailor at my brother’s tailoring shop, which made me some money to pay for rent.

## M: We have to learn who to entrust with our work and when.

**P:** Exactly. Also, people can only give you the kind of feedback that they are capable of defined by time, space, their histories, knowledge — it does not mean what they are saying is what you need or should want to hear. But I have also had some really great experiences with sharing work, too. A few years back, I used to be a part of a circle of friends who met regularly. We were all women and we all wrote. In the group, there were five of us: Nibha Shah, Gauri Dahal, Sobha Dulal, Chandra Thane and me. We met in one person’s house, shared our work and received feedback. Then we would go to another person’s house the next time.

## M: I love that the five of you carved out this space for yourselves, and what a healthy way to write in this crazy city.

**P:** But we stopped! I do not even remember how or why ... we met 3-4 times, and then I guess life happened. We have husbands, families, and children. I mean look at me now. I used to write 3-4 poems a day, but now I have let 3-4 years pass by without having written a single new poem.

I have suffered some terrible physical ailments, and just life after marriage has become uneasy. My husband is Bahun, you see, and I am not really accepted in the family. And on top of that, now that I have an 8-month-old child, I don’t have any time. I wake up with him, and spend my entire day caring for him, then I fall asleep next to him. My life reminds me of that poem that Sulochana Manandhar didi wrote... what was it — something about naniko thangna...

## M: Yes, I love that poem, it’s called Grihiniko Kabita (Housewife’s Poem) and goes, ghaintokopanima / nanikothangna ma pani / kabitaharu jhuljhulgari janminchan... About how poems are born in kitchen corners, in water containers, in baby’s rags...

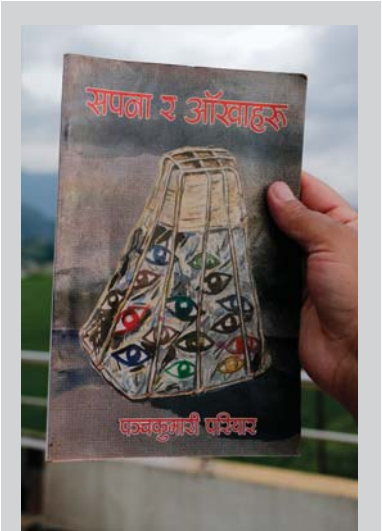
**P:** Yes, that one. I feel like that poem was written for me. I fully live in that poem these days. The

hours I would have otherwise given to poetry, I spend on my child and family now. But I try to stay positive. I tell myself that if I used to be the mother of my poems, I am now a mother of an actual human I created. (Laughs)

## M: That is such a beautiful thought. And also to remember that you come from a long line of artists and creators.

**P:** Yes, I have always believed that Dalits are one of the most artistic groups of people. We are divided into sub-groups with specifically artistic jobs assigned to us at birth: we are singers, musicians, tailors, cobblers... We have always been creators and engineers, and we have always created in the name of serving others. (Pauses). Maybe it is time to serve ourselves.

*Lightroom Conversation is a monthly page in Nepali Times on interesting figures in Nepal’s literary scene. Muna Gurung is a writer, educator and translator based in Kathmandu. For more of her work, visit munagurung.com.*



Cloud, daughter, and me  
Translated by Muna Gurung

On a moonlit night in a corner of the sky, I saw a cluster of white clouds like cotton, a cluster of warm clouds—many blankets were made some mattresses and a few pillows.

Suddenly, a voice pierced my quiet, my daughter woke up crying: “Ama, I’m cold—” I cannot cover my daughter with those blankets of clouds and my arms alone cannot keep her warm the moon is dimming the cluster of warm clouds is disappearing— I’m growing cold and she is like ice, snow.

The warmth of just a few moments ago — of blankets, mattresses and pillows — has grown cold with the night now, one by one, they slowly freeze, and die.

7 June, 2000



Pancha Kumari Pariyar shares the highs and lows of her poetry journey. She speaks out against the caste-based discrimination she has endured since childhood. She also recites one of her favourite poems, Baadal, Chhori ra Ma (Cloud, daughter, and me) from *Sapana ra Aakhaharu (Dream and Eyes)*, 2005). [nepalitimes.com](http://nepalitimes.com)





# Kathmandu to host international education conference

Now that most children across Nepal are enrolled in school, the government is working with private organisations to put more attention on improving the quality of education they get.

The latest activity in this public-private partnership is the second International Conference on Quality Education (ICQE) in Kathmandu, jointly organised by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology and Rato Bangala Foundation.

The conference will bring together policy-makers, district-level officials, teachers and researchers from around the world and Nepal at Rato Bangala School from 24 to 26 August.

The ICQE centres on Number 4 of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, which highlights the need to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities. It also focuses on the School Sector

Development Plan of the government.

Nepal also aims to graduate to middle-income country status by 2030, and the conference is expected to discuss the educational and human resource needs required to attain that standing. The conference steering committee consists of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Rato Bangala Foundation.

“We have worked hard to come up with 14 parallel sessions over two days and we are looking forward to the opening and having participants enjoy and learn from what the presenters have to give,” said Shanta Dixit, Chair of Rato Bangala Foundation.

The conference will feature 60 expert-led presentations, workshops and panels revolving around the theme ‘Ensuring Learner Centred Education’. Six central sub-themes, from Education Financing to Education for Sustainable Development,

will guide the sessions. Success stories on introducing quality education to district classrooms will also be featured. The chief guest of the opening ceremony is Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Giriraj Mani Pokharel.

Over 600 participants, including 300 public school teachers from throughout Nepal, are expected to attend. In addition, researchers, trainers, teachers and doctors from Singapore, the United States, India, China and Bangladesh will also participate. The involvement of public and private sector participants provides a forum for the bilateral exchange of ideas, reflections and pathways towards sustainable and inclusive quality education, the Foundation says.

Post-conference events will then be organised in each of Nepal’s seven provinces to ensure that child-centred quality education remains at the forefront of local government agendas and individual schools. Rato Bangala Foundation, which is dedicated to delivering high-quality training to schools across Nepal, with a special focus on government schools, will help ensure that such follow-up is timely and effective.

The Foundation plans to hold the conference every two years to provide continuity to efforts to improve the quality of instruction in Nepal’s schools. Ensuring sustainability and inclusion and raising the quality of instruction not only improves a child’s learning, but empowers the entire community of which the learner is a part.

The conference is made possible by the sponsorship of Ncell, Asian Development Bank, European Union in Nepal, Janata Bank and Business Oxygen Pvt Ltd. Further details are available at [www.rbf.org.np](http://www.rbf.org.np)



INDIAN EMBASSY

**LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR:** External Affairs Minister of India, S Jaishankar, met President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Wednesday during his two day visit to Kathmandu. Jaishankar visited Pashupatinath earlier in the morning.



KUNDAN ARYAL/TWITTER

**GODMAN:** Renowned spiritual figure Sadhguru meets Prime Minister KP Oli in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



NEA NEPAL

**HERITAGE ALIVE:** Reconstruction of the Bal Gopaleswor temple in Rani Pokhari begins. The temple is being rebuilt using Shikhara architecture, keeping with king Pratap Malla’s original style.



NABIN PAUDEL/RSS

**JET, SET, GO:** Prime Minister KP Oli, Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation Yogesh Bhattarai and International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) President Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu at a Conference of ICAO director generals for Asia and the Pacific in Kathmandu on Monday.

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हिंसाविहीन समाजको हाम्रो आह्वान ।”

“लैङ्गिक हिंसा विरुद्ध हाम्रो आवाज:  
निर्माण गरौं सभ्य र समतामूलक समाज ।”



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An advertisement for Mahindra's electric vehicles. The background is a vibrant green with a stylized city skyline in yellow and white. At the top left, the Mahindra logo is displayed with the tagline 'Rise.'. At the top right, the AGNI GROUP logo is shown. The central text reads 'SOLUTION AGAINST POLLUTION' in large, bold, white letters, with a white plug icon at the end of the word 'SOLUTION'. Below this, a subtitle says 'Discover Mahindra's Range of eco-responsible Electric Vehicles'. Two cars are featured: a blue Mahindra e2o Plus on the left and a white Mahindra eVerito on the right. Both cars have their respective model names and 'ELECTRIC' branding. Below the e2o Plus is a small badge that says 'THE ALL ELECTRIC e2o Plus city smart'. Below the eVerito is a badge that says 'e VERITO'. At the bottom center, the slogan 'Drive Clean, Go Green' is written. In the bottom left corner, the AGNI ENERGY PVT. LTD. logo is present, along with showroom and service center information. In the bottom right corner, there is a circular 'ECO FRIENDLY' logo with a green leaf.

The advertisement features a family of four (father, mother, and two children) sitting on a brown sofa in a modern living room with a blue wall and white baseboard. The father is standing behind the sofa, making a heart shape with his hands. The mother is sitting in the center of the sofa, flanked by two children. A potted plant is on the floor to the left of the sofa. In the bottom left corner, there is a can of Asian Paints Royale Health Shield paint. The background is a solid blue color. The text is in Hindi and English. The Asian Paints logo is in the top right corner. The bottom of the advertisement has a purple banner with white text and icons.

asianpaints

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A white paint can with a green label. The label has the text 'royale HEALTH SHIELD' in white and green. The Asian Paints logo is on the side of the can.

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A circular icon containing a stylized atom symbol with three electrons orbiting a central nucleus.

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वास्नादार र  
दुर्गन्ध प्रतिरोधक

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\*शर्तहरू लागू हुनेछन् ।

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# Nepali folk songs move

The lyrics in traditional duets this Tij are about empowerment and social injustice

Reeti KC

Inside buses on their daily commute Nepalis are used to listening to familiar-sounding songs that feature alternating female and male voices, responding to one another, often cheekily.

Called *lok dohori* (people's duet) this genre originated with the Gurung community and its tradition of the *rodi ghar* dance halls. After a hard day of harvests on the terrace farms, young men and women challenged each other with duets in which the musical repartee had to come within 30 seconds.

"The *rodi* tradition had gone by the time we grew up in Gorkha, but our elders still sang the duets and we learnt it from them. We sang about love, happiness and sadness," recalls noted folk singer Harimaya Gurung. "But the songs have changed a lot. These days it is not as emotional as before."

Cultural historians agree that the commercialisation of the entertainment industry and the advent of YouTube and Facebook have cost Nepali folk songs their

cultural value. Still, every Tij festival folk singers come up with new numbers in which the lyrics delve into contemporary issues like migration, patriarchy or even corruption in government.

"We must change as the trend develops," notes folk singer Chandra Sharma of the National Folk and Duet Song Academy. "They may be commercial hits, but they have mostly added to the continued appeal of the *lok dohori* genre."

However, there are complaints about folk songs being too explicit or provocative, even obscene. Sharma admits there are some extreme examples, but his Academy has set standards and criteria for song lyrics.

The folk songs are changing in other ways, too. The popular and controversial song by Pashupati Sharma, *Lutna sake lut* (Loot all you can) was a satirical critique of rampant corruption, and became an anthem for frustrated Nepalis, especially when it was censored after the singer received threats from ruling party youth.

"These voices have brought positive changes. There are many songs about corruption, freedom for women, against caste discrimination and songs about the state of the country. That means folk duets are relevant and playing a constructive role in society," hit folk singer Badri Pangenji told *Nepali Times*.



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# beyond love and loss



## Changing Tij tunes

Tij is traditionally celebrated by women all over Nepal either for the long lives of their husbands, or so they can find good husbands. Dressed in red saris, red and green bangles, and other colourful ornaments, they sing and dance on the streets while thronging Pashupati and other temples to pray to Shiva and Parvati, the celestial couple.

Although some activists boycotted Tij because of its patriarchal overtones, today the festival's songs carry a message of gender empowerment and poke fun at the patriarchy, while at the same time promoting solidarity. However, as women get more educated, even that is changing. Many women just want to have fun with their female relatives and friends and do not want to sing only depressing songs about victimhood.

"People asked me why women were only singing about suffering because not all women suffer. This made me change my mind," says folk duet singer Chandra Sharma. "It seemed that women just want to let their hair down and make Tij their festival of sisterhood."

It's not only the content that is changing, male singers are also performing Tij songs, which would have been rare 20 years ago. For example, the 2018 Tij



PICS: MONIKA DEUPALA

## Message or entertainment?

New generation *lok dohori* singers who want to send a message sometimes find themselves up against traditional expectations. "I have sung songs with social content, but when I sing on stage I focus on romantic songs, because that is what people want to hear," says Kala Lamsal, a contemporary folk duet singer who recently released her Tij song, Patali.

Singer Mina Lama tries to find a balance. "It depends on the place and time," she says. "I prefer to sing songs that give a message as well as entertaining songs to sing with friends and family."

Generally, fans who attend a stage performance want fast-moving entertainment, says Lama. "People today want to dance and have fun. While there are people who listen to the lyrics, the crowd during festivals and *mela* (fairs) include more young people, who enjoy dancing."

song, *Motiram ra Jamuna* by Badri Pageni delivered the positive message about husband Motiram supporting his wife Jamuna when she gets elected in local elections. Because of her busy schedule, the husband begins doing all the household work:

*"Barsaudekhi nariharu le gare chulochauka  
Mahila le ni paunu parcha desh banaune mauka"*

"For years women worked in the kitchen station, Now, she need the change to build the nation."

Says folk singer Harimaya Gurung: "Tij is a festival of women but men also sing Tij songs. I think this is a good trend because it means they are supporting us women."

Reeti KC

### CHANGING TIJ TUNES



Tij songs are changing. Not only is the content expanding into social issues, male singers are also performing, which would have been rare 20 years ago.

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# Here's what's going on

Many readers wrote in this week asking for my frank assessment of the current political imbroglio. In the nationalist interest, please find below a highly classified confidential report coded with double-end encryption of goings on in the corridors of power which are shared with you on condition that you don't leak it to visiting foreign intelligence agency chiefs:

KPO had a secret pact with PKD to take turns being PM. Backstabbing being the name of the game among Nepal's rulers ever since Jang Budder, PKD harboured a sneaking suspicion that KPO had no intention of relinquishing his post. But, aware that the prime minister's other kidney was only functioning at 30% capacity, PKD bided his time, working with BDG and MKN to needle KPO.

Behind the scenes, KPO enticed 'Cloud Comrade' RBT to his side against Comrade Supercalifragilistic, who then carried out a surprise queenside castling to also lure away 'Leftist God' BDG and 'Jhal Gnat' JNK and other MKN loyalists, by dangling juicy carrots. Salivating, BDG and JNK fell for it, and before he knew it, PKD was isolated. Hence his outburst last week that he should never have agreed to party unity.

While Comrade Awesome was complaining about sour grapes, KPO took to the podium in the August House (since it is, after all, already August) to declare that he was hanging on to his primordial ministership till the next elections.

You should have seen PKD's face. But later that day when word spread that KPO had to go back to Singapore to have his kidneys re-examined, there were lots of high fives at PKD's war room in Perish Danda.

With me so far?  
Our atheist comrades are now hooked to the opiate of the masses. The god-fearing Commandante Awful set the tone some years ago by worshipping a water buffalo on the holy banks of the Kosi. Now, to appease St Marx and St Engels so he can make a Second Coming, PKD should emulate KingG and do a *panchabali* sacrifice of five creatures: a buffalo, a sheep, a goat, a duck, and a pumpkin. The Ass hopes not to make it to that list.

PKD once performed mass yoga in the wee hours on Tundikhel, doing the *anilombilom pranayam* by breathing in through his rightist nostril, and expelling it through his leftist one. He also agreed with Ram Dev that animal sacrifice was barbaric, but that human sacrifice was ok.

Nowadays, if Nepal's rulers cannot go to godmen, godmen come to them. The Sad Guru even presided over an all-party meeting at Balu Water this week ahead of Jay Shankar Bhole's visit. The Nepal Communist Party's transformation from Bol Bomb to Bol Bam is now complete.



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