

NEPALI Times

#980

4 - 10 October 2019

16 pages

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DIWAKAR CHETTRI

TASTE OF NEPAL

Special *Nepali Times* Holiday Edition celebrates Nepal's culinary heritage. Our reporters fan out across the country to sample well-known and obscure delicacies that are the ingredients of a rich and diverse food culture.



- Dasain once more page 2
- Much more than dal bhat page 4
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जय होस

Nepali Times wishes its readers and partners a joyful Dashain holiday. The paper will take its annual break, so the next print edition will be on **Friday, 18 October**. But for fresh daily content, follow us online on: nepalitimes.com

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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

DASAIN ONCE MORE

It is once more that time of year when Nepalis eat, drink, and make merry in family reunions. Dasain is what binds the Nepali world, together with our shared history and culture. The festival has transcended religion to become a time for society and the nation to unite in common celebration, and revive our collective hope for the future.

Dasain is said to have its origins in a proto-Hindu harvest festival, the myths about the victory of good over evil and the goddess impaling a water buffalo came much later. With the monsoon over, paddy fields turn from green to gold, the clouds start blowing from west to east again, there is a nip in the air, and the hills are deep green. The snow mountains come out, shiny with new snow.

In recent years, as more and more Nepalis travel overseas for work, study or to emigrate, the diaspora Dasain is a stark reminder of how family members endure prolonged periods of separation. With more than 15% of Nepal's population living and working abroad, the flights into Kathmandu are full of Nepalis coming home for the festival. Kathmandu itself empties out as people go home to their ancestral villages.

Dasain has always had an escapist character. It is a time when people can forget their daily struggle against unemployment, inflation, shortages, corruption and the lack of basic services. Those problems can wait, while we re-establish family ties, and perhaps even reaffirm a hope for the future, holding out in the belief that things will get better. However dark the clouds are, the sun will come out -- Dasain gives us a booster shot of optimism.

But, we have to admit, the weeks leading up to Dasain this year did not give us much reason to hope. Ruling party hotheads attacked and beat up self-styled royalist Gyanendra Shahi for having ridiculed Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism Yogesh Bhattarai. Police just stood by. Minendra Rijal of the Nepali Congress was roughed up by NCP goondas in Tanahu. NCP co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal regularly threatens the opposition in his public speeches, while Information Minister Gokul Banskota does not even try to hide his disdain for a free press.

But perhaps nothing indicates the state of impunity and lawlessness in this country more than the rape charge against House Speaker Krishna Bahadur Mahara this week. Prime Minister Oli and Dahal

probably realised how seriously this would affect the NCP's public image, and acted swiftly to instruct Mahara to tender a written resignation, which he did reluctantly and in ambivalent language. Predictably, the woman who accused the speaker of unspeakable crime has been 'persuaded' to retract her complaint.

The Prime Minister seems to be fully aware of the level of disillusionment among Nepalis about the party to which they gave a two-thirds majority in Parliament. Oli himself is having serious health issues, the government had failed in service delivery, it has a dismal record of non-performance, and Nepalis every day negotiate infrastructure that is in a dangerous state of disrepair.

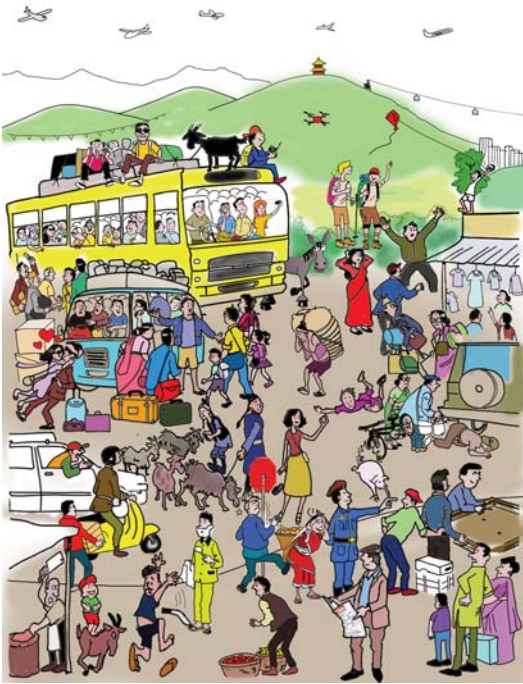
None of that had particularly worried the prime minister's office, but the Mahara scandal appears to have seriously rattled the NCP, and forced it into crisis mode. By taking prompt action to force the Speaker out, Oli is showing belated decisiveness. The government shutting down for holidays will provide Oli some respite, but ultimately the prime minister will be tempted to reshuffle his cabinet -- an age-old method for Nepal's rulers to buy time to defuse a crisis.

This time, things may have gone a bit too far for a reshuffle to resolve. The rot goes to the top. When tycoons have access to Oli's parlour at Baluwatar or his hospital bed in Singapore, one has to question how much the collusion between contractors and the government is hurting the country. Roads never get repaired, bridges never get built, national pride projects are a national shame.

Nearly half-way through its tenure in office, Prime Minister Oli will have to do some serious thinking over the holidays. How is he going to make up for lost time and get this government machinery cranked up? If he has not been able to govern and perform in the past two years, it is unlikely he can get anything done.

Oli is probably banking on the visit to Kathmandu by Chinese President Xi Jinping later this month to lift his stature and nationalist credentials. There will probably some grandiose announcement, perhaps of the trans-Himalayan railway.

Being the wily politician that he is, Oli will not have to be told that people are looking for immediate and tangible hope that tomorrow will be better than today. This Dasain, most Nepalis will be trying not to think about tomorrow.



DIWAKAR CHETTRI

As the crisis deepens, the prime minister will be tempted to reshuffle his cabinet – an age-old method for Nepal's rulers to buy time.

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

In his column, *State of the State*, ten years ago in issue #471 of 25 September-10 October 2009, C K Lal analyses the evolution of the Dasain festival:

Ironically, those who gave Dasain pan-Nepal acceptability - the Janjatis of the mid-mountains from the east and west - have begun to call for its boycott. Within the British and Indian Gurkhas, the lahures kept the faith through their own secular celebrations of religious festivities such as Dasain and Tihar.

Thus they kept in touch with the idea of Nepal and Nepalis rather than their own ethnic particularities. As long as these indefatigable fighters continue to serve abroad, Dasain celebrations there will retain their secular character. It may not be politically correct to say so in these times, but Dasain is indeed the 'national' festival of Nepal, and it has an international face.



ONLINE PACKAGES



EXOTIC ETHNIC EATS

Whether it is lichen drenched in pork blood or tea brewed with salt and butter, our reporters have captured Nepal's it all on video. Follow them to ethnic kitchens for mouth-watering Nepali delicacies and learn how to prepare them. Story: [page 14-15](#).



THARU ESCARGOTS

You can easily learn how to cook snails from Manju Chaudhary. Watch her forage for snails and cook them in flavourful spices. Chaudhary also recounts the Tharu community's lores surrounding the dish, and tells you why it is beneficial for health. Story: [page 13](#).



NIBHA SHAH

In her Lightroom Conversation column this month, Muna Gurung speaks with poet Nibha Shah about her guerrilla days, her belief in Marxism and what she thinks of the Maoist leadership today. Listen to her recite some powerful verses. Story: [page 11](#).



GOURMET TREKKING

Trekking diet in the mountains need not be limited to *dal bhat tarkari* anymore. Watch this video to see how one trek organiser offers delicious and nutritious food during Himalayan hikes. Story: [page 5](#).

JUNG'S DECENDANTS

Your story ('Jung Bahadur's destitute descendants', Gopal Gartaula, #979) the word 'destitute' is used incorrectly. This is a middle class family, and it is an insult to them and to other Nepalis who work hard and live modest lifestyles to call them 'destitute'. The article implies that 140 years after Jung Bahadur's demise, we expect his descendants to have opulent lifestyles. Should all Ranas be affluent by default?

Sophiya Shrestha

■ Yamji Pratap has a lot of valuable information, and has been doing ancestral *shrada* after a break of many years.

Subodh Shumsher Rana

EVEREST CLEAN-UP

Everest region is getting cleaner ('Everest fights back', Alton C Byres, #979). Spread the positive news not the negative

Nischal Tiwari

WHAT'S TRENDING



Jung Bahadur's destitute descendants

by [Gopal Gartaula](#)
81-year-old Yamjit Pratap, sixth generation descendant of Jung Bahadur Rana lives in a simple rented flat on the banks of the Manahara River in Kathmandu. Unlike better-off Ranas, he lives in penury with his wife, 'Queen' Narayani. Visit [nepalitimes.com](#) for video and join the discussion.

Most reached and shared on Facebook

Most commented

Everest fights back (against garbage and bad press)

by [Alton C Byres](#)
Everest has been called 'The World's Highest Garbage Dump', but international media has missed the good news: the trail is clean now, and is about to be cleaner. Every visitor can now volunteer to take down 1kg of trash back to Kathmandu for recycling. Go online to read full story and watch video of the cleaned up trail.

Most popular on Twitter



Born in Nepal

by [Sewa Bhattarai](#)
Birth is still a life or death issue in Nepal, despite progress in maternal survival. Go to our website for field reports from Bajura and Nawalparasi districts in Western Nepal.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

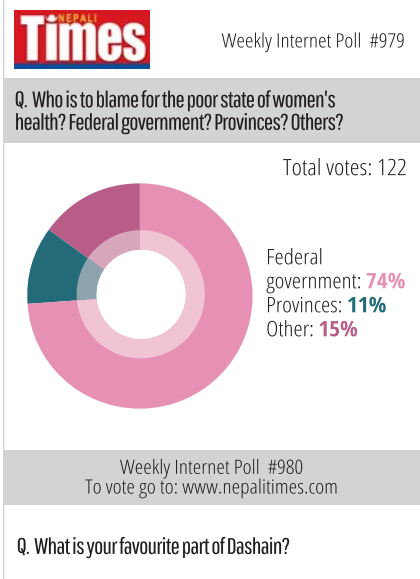
Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
The sixth generation descendant of Jung Bahadur Rana, 81-year-old Yamjit Pratap lives in a simple rented flat in Kathmandu with his wife 'Queen' Narayani but they still use courtly language of Nepal's royalty.

Astha Wagle @WagleAstha
Quite short but nevertheless an interesting read! History through the lens of contemporary @NepaliTimes

Mark Pickett @DrMarkPickett
How much land did the descendants of those from whom JB plundered it receive?

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
#Everest has been called 'The World's Highest Garbage Dump', but international media has missed the good news: Sagarmatha National Park is cleanest since tourism began in 1960s. Every visitor will be asked to take down 1kg of trash.

Livinglife @Nepali_heart123
Only bad news is highlighted by the media. No wonder only negativity is spreading amongst the people



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TURKISH AIRLINES

Time for Masterchef Nepal to spotlight the country's diverse, delicious food culture

prabhu BANK

BIZ BRIEFS

Turkish Sports Awards

Turkish Airlines and United Nations Alliance of Civilizations created a joint platform 'Sport for Peace Awards', signing the collaboration on 24 September at the United Nations Headquarters, New

York. Both parties agreed to encourage and support sports since it encourages peace, tolerance, mutual understanding and empathy that helps to reach the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Shampoo from Marico

Marico is introducing Livon sulphate and paraben-free shampoos and conditioners for the first time in South Asia. Now available in Nepal, Livon features a combination of coconut oil and amino acid instead of sulphate.

New Himalaya Airlines

Himalaya Airlines remakes its brand identity with a new logo sporting a soaring eagle amidst Himalayan peaks. The air

carrier launched its new corporate logo during a press meet held at Hotel Royal Singi on 29 September.

Highway Assurance

Hyundai Highway Assurance Program with free Hyundai vehicle Check-up Camps at various points in the highway is being organised to facilitate Hyundai owners driving back home to celebrate Dasain. This free check-up camp is scheduled for 3-6 October (10am-6pm).

Golf Tournament

Prince Bhandari won the title of World Tourism Day Cup Golf Tournament at Gokarna Golf Club. Playing with 18

handicap, Bhandari scored 40 stableford points to win the trophy and a trip to Thailand with accommodation courtesy of Thai Airways. Wangchen Dhondup, Tashi Tshiring and Tashi Dong were tied for the best gross score with 35 stableford points, Dhondup won the gross, scoring 19 on the back nine.

prabhu BANK



PHOTOS: RESPONSIBLE ADVENTURES

Satisfying trekker appetite for adventure

Sanghamitra Subba

An assortment of French cheeses, appetisers and wine sit atop a stately table adorned with a purple tablecloth against the backdrop of snow-capped Himalaya and clear blue skies.

For the locals and travellers nearby more used to the *dal bhat* trek staple, this is a sight to behold. Tibetan bread and simple dishes dominate meals above 3,500m, but for an increasing number of trekkers, eating well goes with walking well.

One of the agencies is Responsible Adventures which has since 2007 been a pioneer of 'gourmet trekking', elevating hiking cuisine from modest meals to epicurean delicacies.

Owner and certified foodie Raj Tamang wanted to give a new dimension to his boutique treks when he moved to Nepal from Singapore in 1988. He had a vision for trekking that involved delicious and nutritious food.

Despite having no professional culinary education, he learned from people he met from around the world, experimented with continental flavours, improvising with ingredients and creating palatable dishes with local foods.

All the trekking chefs at Responsible Adventures are trained by Tamang himself, and they have learned to make Thai red curry with local ingredients, hummus with whatever is available, and rough and tumble cakes on the go.

Trekkers have learnt to always expect the unexpected in Nepal, but one aspect of the experience that remains constant is the piping hot ayurvedic drink that is given to trekkers every morning. According to Tamang, this elixir of water, turmeric, honey, apple cider vinegar and lemon has anti-inflammatory and energising properties that power trekkers throughout the day.

Besides this magic concoction, every meal is a surprise and trekkers only know what they will be eating when it is served. Breakfast might be cereal and porridge sprinkled with chia or flax seeds, nuts and honey, and roti or chapati with organic peanut butter. And while other trekkers have the option of mostly hard-boiled eggs and a cup of watered down tea, clients of Responsible Adventures get eggs to order and hot cups of freshly brewed coffee.

The smell of ground coffee beans at the break of dawn on the banks of Phoksundo Lake (*pictured above*) beckons even the heaviest of sleepers towards the French press. Then come waffles with goji berries

at 4,000m, which is probably a world altitude record.

For lunch and dinner, clients may get maki sushi with avocado and topped with sweet potato, which could easily be mistaken for salmon. Other menu items include mac n'cheese, pasta, pizza, Thai curry, falafel, soup and even desserts like apple pie or cake.

A cheese platter featuring Danish blue, camembert and brie, and cold meats, olives, local proteins dressed with cream and mustard sauce, and salads packed with super foods are also served.


"We work hard to provide our clients with a Rolls-Royce experience at the price of a Toyota Corolla," says Tamang.

Responsible Adventures' boutique treks are customised according to the trekkers' fitness levels and preference, but each one, despite having the same route, offers a completely different experience.

Tamang also takes hikers to a hidden gem in eastern Nepal that is off the beaten trek. Although he wished to keep the location a secret, fearing the arrival of hordes of tourists, he reveals, "That place is real Nepal, a Nepal that existed before trekking."

in Tamang calls his treks glamping (glamorous camping) which means that even in remote areas, there are showers, toilet tents, kitchen and sleeping tents. Other memorable treks include paragliding from Mardi Himal to Pokhara, jamming with Polish trekkers in Upper Dolpo, and arranging traditional Gurung dresses for a group of Singaporean girls.

Such luxuries do not come without challenges. Responsible Adventures faced an egg mishap when a mule carrying a trip's load of eggs fell into the Bheri River. A client's unexpected allergy was thankfully discovered on time.

Each trek is a discovery, and although there is no gain without pain, Tamang tries to make it as memorable as possible: "All the trekkers have to do is walk and enjoy the scenery, observe and absorb the beautiful environment around them." 

GOURMET TREKKING



Trekking diet in the mountains need not be limited to *dal bhat tarkari* anymore. Watch this video to see how one trek organiser offers delicious and nutritious food during Himalayan hikes.

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The superfoods of the Andes and the Himalaya

This Dasain, why not replace rice with the lost foods of the Incas?

Sonia Awale

The nutritious grain that mountain peoples of the Americas and high Asia cultivated were displaced by wheat and rice, but they are staging a comeback thanks to growing public consciousness about health.

Food items like pickled potato, roasted corn, tomato in curry and chilli paste are as Nepali as you can get. But few here know that these staples of our food heritage have their roots in the Andes, and were actually brought to Europe and Asia only in the last 500 years.

Now, there is growing demand for other lost crops of the Incas like amaranth and quinoa among urban Nepalis. These grains are high in protein, low in carbohydrates, gluten-free and rich in micronutrients and minerals.

In fact, amaranth and quinoa are healthier alternatives to rice, particularly for diabetes and hypertension patients. Another South American fruit, the gooseberry, is much sought after for its fibrous and antioxidant properties.

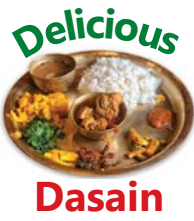
“We might cater to a limited market, but there is a growing demand for superfoods. In fact more and more of our customers prefer to eat quinoa instead



LI-BIRD

of rice,” said Roseeta Raymajhi of Fresh Shelf and Beverage in Baluwatar that has been supplying quinoa for two years.

The Incas grew a variety of crops and vegetables, exotic fruits, beans and tubers. But with the Spanish conquests, native crops were replaced with European foods



and many were lost. However with better understanding of their nutritional value, some of the lost crops of the Inca are being rediscovered.

Amaranth is now also cultivated in Nepal’s Jumla and Humla districts (*pictured above*), where the arid mountains have a similar soil and climate to the Andes.

Iron-rich amaranth leaves (*Jatta ko sag*) are eaten as a vegetable, and larger-scale amaranth cultivation in Doti and Achham districts cater to a rising demand in India.

“Many mountain crops like amaranth had been neglected but these are climate smart superfoods and that is where the future is,” explained Rita Gurung of LI-BIRD, the Pokhara-based agro-biodiversity research organisation.

She says the crops need commercial-scale production and an campaign to promote their nutritional value by recipe generation so that Nepalis will make them a regular part of their diet.

Just like the Andes, the Himalaya has its own superfoods like *chino* (Proso millet) and *kaguno* (Foxtail millet) which have similar nutritional value to quinoa, but very few know of their existence.

“We have so many highly nutritional foods, but we have abandoned them for processed and packaged foodstuff and vitamin capsules,” laments public health expert Aruna Uprety.

It has been over four years since Saurav Dhakal started Green Growth, an online shopping portal for organic produce in Kathmandu. He has seen gradual increase in demand for locally grown organic and nutrient rich produce, but says farmers have to be first convinced that there is a market for them.

“There are traditional recipes to all of our indigenous foods that we have to relearn and propagate,” Dhakal says.

This Dasain, let us replace rice with *kodo* (millet), *phapar* (buckwheat), *jau* (barley), *til* (sesame), *aalas* (flax seed) so that when we eat, drink and make merry, we also become healthier. 🍽️

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KATHMANDU

FRIDAY 25° 16° SATURDAY 25° 16° SUNDAY 24° 16°

Looks like we are headed for another muddy Dasain. Climate scientists have noted that the monsoon has been starting and ending late in the past 15 years. Higher surface temperatures means that condensation of water vapour does not take place according to schedule. A westerly is pushing a low pressure system towards Central Nepal and it will clash with a lingering moisture band from the Bay. Intermittent rain into the weekend in Kathmandu.

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Mutton Korma



Finely sliced steamed bandel with timur ko chapea



Rohini "Dolly" Rana

cookbook by Rohini Rana, who was born in Agra to the Indian royal house of Awagarh and married to Gaurav SJB Rana, who went on to become Nepal's army chief from 2012 to 2015.

"Growing up as the youngest sibling in one of the most beautiful hill stations in northern India I had an idyllic childhood. I was loved and, I admit, slightly pampered," recalls Rohini Rana, whom friends and relatives all call 'Dolly'. "Summers in Nainital were endless lunches and dinners with tables piled high with food."

Breakfasts were spent discussing the day's menu, with each member of the family picking a dish to cook. After coming to Kathmandu, Dolly adjusted quickly to the new Rana household, also bonding with the kitchen staff.

Her husband, Gen Gaurav Rana, is the great grandson of Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere Rana and is the seventh generation of the family serving in the Nepal Army. Dolly accompanied her husband on various military postings internationally, and to remote regions of Nepal.

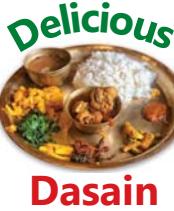
Dolly Rana wrote the first draft for her Rana cookbook while her husband was posted in Suparitar Army Base in Hetauda nearly 30 years ago, where they lived in an old Rana house in the middle of the forest. Many of the recipes in her book were perfected by her husbands' nanny, Chiniya Champa Didi, who started working at age 15 in the Baber Mahal palace, where her father was a retainer. Though her job was to raise the young Gaurav Rana, she was interested in cooking and learnt the dishes from other maids and cooks.

Rana cuisine incorporates and builds on the basic *dal bhat* staple of rice, lentil soup, meat and vegetables, adding a unique aroma and taste from the *jimbu* and *timur* that differentiate the Nepali rice dish from Indian food. While north Indian cuisine is noted for its rich and thick gravy, Nepali food comes with lighter *jhol*, dry *bhutta* and *kawaf*.

Dolly collected and documented recipes from Rana prime minister families, with each having a slightly different twist and taste to the basic dishes. The book will soon be published by Penguin Random House.

"It is very important to preserve the dishes for posterity because the cuisine is part of our heritage, and it is in danger of disappearing with the passing of generations," says Dolly Rana, refusing to divulge the exact recipes.

"You will have to wait for the book," she smiles. 🇳🇵



Food of the royals

Rana cuisine is a unique and delicate Nepali-Mughlai fusion

Nepal's Rana dynasty ruled for just over 100 years, building ornate neo-classical palaces with vast manicured gardens copied from Victorian England, while the aristocrats wore magnificent jewellery.

What the Ranas are less well known for is a cuisine that is a unique fusion of Nepali and Mughlai dishes from northern India. The recipes date back to influences of the *khansama* brought in from Lucknow by Jung Bahadur Rana after the Indian Mutiny in 1857. These Muslim chefs worked with the *baje* and *bajai* in the Rana palaces (although strictly not in the same kitchen), perfecting the fusion cuisine that evolved into the unique Rana flavour.

The recipes will soon be out in a new

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Medina, France

captivating singer-songwriter who released *Following Love* in 2017. Her songs are deeply occasionally influenced by her Caribbean touched with soul, swing and pop. She will be accompanied by Jiri Herrgott (keyboard), Bruno Schorp (bass) and Jiri (drums).

“I was so moved! The first time I heard her voice, I was blown away. Her swing, her scat, her humour, her soul, she's all in love! My Caribbean roots has been a big influence on my sound. It helps me to sing with my parents come from Guadeloupe and I want to dance out there! Everyone is dancing with their body.”



to the du

aiser of Cadenza Collective.

ive with its eclectic Afro-Funk tunes, and jazz undertones have defined the of Nepali jazz since its inception decades ago. With the bass, keyboard, and drums. The Blue Fret band has also incorporated a traditional Nepali jazz sound, combining the swing and jazz with the traditional spin of Nepali

tet composed of artists from Nepal and abroad, embodies the sound of modern jazz and Nepali music, giving life to a diversity of rhythms.

of international and national artists and music to the streets and halls of Kathmandu, sprinkling their magic between the holidays, sprinkling their magic.

“Having musicians from different backgrounds and brings cultural interaction and fusion of Nepali classical music with jazz is one of the biggest highlights of the festival itself is a very inspiring experience for visiting artists, Nepali musicians and all as the audience.” 🎉



al

g impression on younger musicians. His son is learning at Jazzmandu to pay tribute to his father and to a new generation of tabla players.

Nepali music and traditional songs are a part of our identity, history and culture. It is our heritage. But it can only be preserved through the collaborative efforts of the government, media, fine arts education and programs



The Blue Fret

Led by the musical Suman Thapa, this Nepali band combines the traditional sound of the bansuri and sarangi with western tones and both English and Nepali lyrics. Its much anticipated debut album *Jiri Blues* was released in 2018.

“When music came through, it was hard to separate the western and eastern style, and the genres we experimented with. But the music incorporated all the elements and it worked. The versatility of the musicians, and the open mindedness to play what feels and sounds good has been crucial to executing this.”



Jooni Collective

Jooni Collective is the musical project of pianist and composer Abhisek Bhadra and vocalist Maria Fajardo. Now a quintet with Alessio Cazzetta on the guitar, Rajat Rai on the bass and Kiran Shahi on the drums, its music is a reflection of the diverse backgrounds and experiences of members.

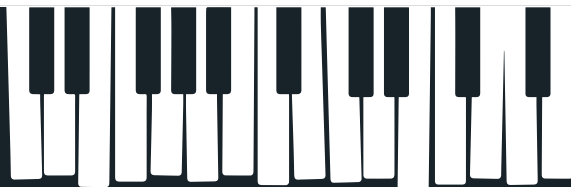
“Nepali music is a very rich tradition with a lot of variations. But the reason why most traditional Nepali music forms, specially Nepali classical music and jazz does work well together is that both forms of music are deeply rooted within the concept of improvisation. Same is the case for jazz and most folk traditions. Whether or not it blends seamlessly together or not simply relies on the artist's intentions and methods to achieve it.”



Cadenza Collective, Nepal's first jazz band, seamlessly blends jazz, Afro-funk and Nepali folk music with an eclectic, energetic sound. It not only pioneered jazz in Nepal but also experimented with it to create a completely unique form of jazz.

“Jazz has got better and has come a long way in Nepal, it has become a household word alongside other music genres. Besides guitar, bass, keyboard and drums, we have young musicians picking up horns (trombone, trumpet, and saxophone etc.) and quite a few jazz bands in the scene. It's looking good but we got to keep on pushing further.”

Cadenza Collective



JAZZMANDU 2019

CONCERT FOR YOUNG STUDENTS

12-1:30pm, 17 October

Alliance Française, Jhamsikhel

By invitation only

Jazzmandu kicks off with a free concert playing great music for young minds. The Concert for School Students continues Jazzmandu's long tradition of promoting music education and cross-cultural understanding. Interested schools and individual students can request invitations by writing to info@jazzmandu.org. Seating is limited. Gates open at 11.30 am, please be seated by 11.50 am.

GROOVIN AT UPSTAIRS

7-9pm, 17 October

Jazz Upstairs, Lazimpat

Ticket: Rs600

Cadenza Collective gather new and old friends for an explosive jam at the heart of Jazz in Nepal, Jazz Upstairs! Gates open at 6 pm. Seating is limited.

VALLEY JAMS

7-9pm, 18 October

Ticket: Rs600

Moksh, Jhamsikhel – Tropic Green

Jazz Upstairs, Lazimpat – Paul Tynan & Jake Hanlon / Palouse Forro

House of Music, Thamel – RSxT

Manny's Eatery and Tapas Bar, Jawalakhel – Faby Medina

Gates open at 6 pm and close at 7 pm. Seating is limited.

JAZZ BAZAAR

2:30-10pm, 19 October

Gokarna Forest Resort

Ticket: Rs1400

Get away from the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu and be surrounded by the lush, serene Gokarna Forest Resort and great music. Gates open at 1.30 pm and close at 7 pm. Seating is limited. A ticket does not guarantee a seat. No outside food or beverages allowed. No pets allowed. Free shuttle buses to Gokarna will depart every hour from 1 pm to 4 pm from outside Hotel Marco Polo in Kamal Pokhari, and will stop for pick-ups outside the Hyatt Regency gate in Boudha. Return shuttles will be available between 10 pm and 11 pm, with drop-offs at Boudha and Kamal Pokhari.

SOUNDS OF LATIN JAZZ

7-9pm, 20 October

Dhokaima, Patan

Ticket: Rs1600

Experience the sounds of authentic Afro-Caribbean and Brazilian Jazz. Gates open at 6 pm and close at 8 pm. Seating is limited.

JAZZMANDU MASTERCLASSES

11am-1:30pm, 22 October

Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Jhamsikhel –

Vocal & Instrumental Workshops

Free Entry

The Jazzmandu master classes are an opportunity for music students & jazz enthusiasts to interact with visiting musicians, share their experiences and stories and learn techniques and tips on various instruments and vocals. Seating is limited and not guaranteed.

JAZZ AT THE TEMPLE HOUSE

6:30-8:30pm, 22 October

Kantipur Temple House, Thamel

Ticket: Rs1600

An evening of Nepali classical music fused with Jazz in a rich and soulful ambience. International musicians share their musical ideas and energies with Nepal's top classical musicians and Cadenza Collective at the fabulous Kantipur Temple House. Gates open at 5.30 pm and close at 7pm. Please be seated by 5.45 pm. Seating is limited.

JAZZMANDU FINALE

5:30-10pm, 23 October

Hotel Yak & Yeti, Durbar Marg

Ticket: Rs1400

The Finale BIG JAM! Musicians from different bands come together on one stage to light up the festivities creating a high-energy, improvised musical treat. Gates open at 4.30 pm and close at 8pm. Seating is limited.

EVENTS

Fulpati

In the seventh day of Dasain, a holy *kalash*, banana stalks, *Jamara* and sugar cane tied with red cloth are brought to Hanuman Dhoka from Gorkha. The day is dedicated to Kalratri, the seventh form of Goddess Durga. Celebratory canons are fired in the air and formal ceremony begins shortly at Hanuman Dhoka.
5 October, Tundikhel

Maha Ashtami

Kali, the most fierce manifestation of Goddess Durga, is worshipped on the eighth day of Dasain. Animals like buffaloes, goats, roosters and ducks are sacrificed. In Newar communities, "Khadga puja" is celebrated to worship weapons.
6 October, Basantapur Darbar Square



Maha Nawami

On the ninth day of Dasain, official military sacrifices take place under gun fire salutes in Kot courtyard. Vishwakarma, the god of creation, is worshipped. Tools, equipments and vehicles are offered animal and fowl blood for safety and well being. This is the only day of the year when the Taleju Temple is opened up to public for worship.
7 October, Taleju Temple, Hanuman Dhoka

Bijaya Dashami

The tenth and main day of Dasain is when people receive blessings, tika and jamara from elders. It is the celebration of Goddess Durga's victory over Mahisasur and victory of Lord Ram over demon Ravan. The president of the country offers tika to the public.
8 October, Presidential Residence, Maharajgunj

Comics Launch

Virangana Comics Anthology: Issue 1 is a collection of comic shorts by 8 female Nepali artists about self love. Join the artists at the launch and engage in drawing and discussion sessions.
4 October, 4pm onwards, Alliance Française de Katmandou (01) 5009221



Art Exhibition

Visit Sundar Lama's exhibition of paintings, poetry and performances before it ends. Lama blends the three seamlessly to provide a show that you can't miss!
4 October, 10am-5pm, The Taragaon Museum, Boudha (01) 5178105

Open Air Cinema

Enjoy movie night at an open air cinema at the heart of Boudha. Call in to ask what movie is being screened that evening.
Every Monday and Thursday, 6:30pm onwards, LAVEE Residence, Boudha, 9808996175

Board Game Night

Bring your friends for a fun night of board games. Games will be provided but you can bring your own too!
10 October, 6pm-9pm, Baked n' Fresh, Jhamsikhel



Divine Debris

Meena Kayastha's "Divine Debris" features paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses on canvases made out of the rubble from the 2015 earthquake. The exhibition opens 2 October 5 pm onwards.
2-30 October, 10am-6pm, Dalai-La Art Space, Thamel (01) 4701436

MUSIC



Groovin' at Upstairs

Kick off Jazzmandu 2019 with an explosive performance by Afro-Funk, Nepali folk and jazz band Cadenza Collective.
17 October, 6pm onwards, Ticket: Rs600, Jazz Upstairs, Lazimpat, 9813544076

Jazz After Dark

Jazzmandu 2019 is just around the corner and in preparation, get into the groove of jazz at Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory's "Jazz After Dark", a nightly musical event by Nepal's jazz artists.
Every night until 24 October, 7pm onwards, Moksh, Jhamsikhel (01) 5528362

Changa Chait

Enjoy the festivities of Dasain with classical Nepali music and folk songs by local artists.
5 October, 12pm-7pm, Jagadol - A Wonderful Village, Gokarna



Dasain Fiesta

Celebrate Dasain with the dynamic Abhaya Subba and the Steam Engines.
5 October, 7pm onwards, Free entry before 11pm, Senate Club, Thamel

Dasain Rendezvous

Enjoy a dynamic performance by The Elements & DJ BLACK. Their upbeat and exciting songs will have you up and dancing in no time.
4 October, 4pm onwards, The Bohemian - Pie in the Sky, Paknajol, 9863050056

DINING

Dasain Beer Fest

The Yard by Oasis Garden is hosting a festival filled with kites, Chef-made barbeque and unlimited beer.
5 October, 12:30pm-7pm, The Yard, Sanepa (01) 5532965



Mr. Gimbap

Korean Gimbap is a dish made from steamed rice filled with veggies or meat and wrapped in seaweed. It is a combination of sweet, salty and umami flavours that will keep you wanting more.
11am-7pm, Near DAV School, 9818281368

Flat Iron Grill

Although this eatery is known for their sandwiches, their desserts deserve more recognition. From the cheesecakes to the eclairs, Flat Iron Grill offers the best of anything sweet.
7am-9pm, Hotel Ambassador, Lazimpat (01) 4413075



Fryday's

Fryday's fish and chips are the crispiest and most perfectly seasoned fish dish you can find in Kathmandu. Their homemade sauces and tartar sauce are deserving of an award.
8am-8pm, Jhamiskhel, 9808224159

Dasain Bhoj

Witness a live cultural performance, take part in a traditional Dasain pooja and enjoy a scrumptious feast at this annual bhoj.
7 October, 6pm onwards, Rs3500+, Yak & Yeti Hotel, Darbar Marg (01) 4248999

GETAWAY



Hotel Vajra

Beyond the service and the food, Hotel Vajra is an architectural marvel. With a painted Tibetan ceiling, wood and terracotta carvings, Pagoda style building and brick accents, the hotel is the pinnacle of traditional designs. And if you're there, ask Dev at the rooftop bar for his signature cocktail. You won't regret it!
Swayambhu (01) 4271545

Himalayan Deurali

Just 10km of aerial distance from the majestic Machhapuchhre Himal, you'll feel like you can just grasp the mountain from your room at Himalayan Deurali. The expansive property offers everything from a relaxing spa to continental food.
Nagdada, Kaski, 9852660250



Traditional Comfort

Traditional Comfort blends together the distinct architecture of traditional Newari designs and the comfort of modern amenities. The building's angled ankhi-jyaal windows and the hand-painted scenes of local life on the walls give guests a glimpse into a time before their own.
Kamalpokhari (01) 4410454

Mewa Khola Hill Resort

If you're ever in Taplejung for either a trek to Kanchanjunga or a visit to the holy Pathibhara Devi, Mewa Khola Hill Resort is the best place to stay. With clean and comfortable rooms, attentive service and breathtaking views, there is no better place to spend the night.
Taplejung, 9852660250



Marriott Hotel

Celebrate the reappearance of the sun and take a dip into Marriott's refreshing infinity pool. And if you're there for the food, the shrimp cocktail is a must!
Naxal (01) 4443040



Heranya | Heranya Yala | Heranya Laku
Uttar Dhoka, Lazimpat | 12th Century Courtyard, Patan | Durbar Square, Patan
Tels: 01-4412716, 98510 67168
info@hotelheranya.com | www.hotelheranya.com

OUR PICK

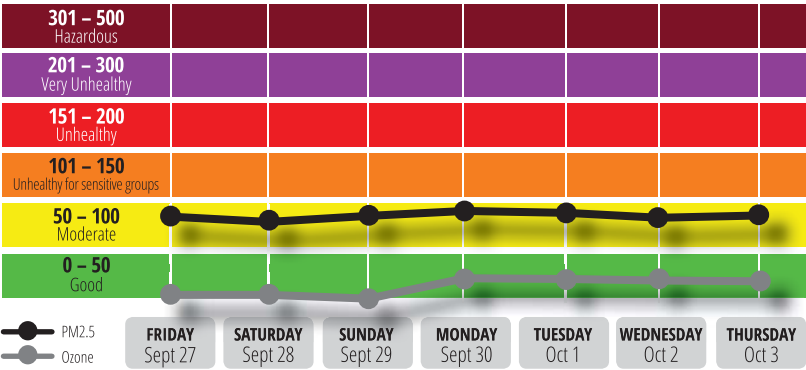


Opened in Kathmandu on 2 October

Batman's arch enemy Joker has always fascinated moviemakers, actors, and viewers. This movie starring Joaquin Phoenix leaves the Batman out as it focuses on a character study of the Joker. Emerging from the comic world, the movie has nothing funny about it. It has been hailed by critics as an illuminating dive into the psychology of violence.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

KATHMANDU, 27 September - 3 October



The impact of the Dasain exodus can already be seen in the improved Air Quality Index in Kathmandu. About one-third of Kathmandu's population travels to the districts during the holidays, and the reduction of traffic means there are less toxic gases and harmful particles below 2.5 microns in the air. Although there are still rush hour spikes, the daily averages were in the 'Moderate' Yellow Band all week.
<https://np.usembassy.gov/embassy/air-quality-monitor/>

Nibha Shah: Nepali poetry's *mansara*

Born in 1971 into an aristocratic Rana-Shah family in Kathmandu, Nibha Shah spent most of her early childhood in Kailali, and later in Achham, where she completed her SLC. Nibha's memories of her Kailali days are of running around barefoot with the children of Hari Pyari or Gobreni aama, a Tharu woman who raised Nibha. "We used to dig up field mice to roast and eat," she says, smiling. "I was closest to nature then."



LIGHTROOM CONVERSATION
Muna Gurung

The narrative of Nibha's jungle days as a Maoist cadre, and her time in jail, precedes her. It is with this lens that many define Nibha. So, I was not surprised when she warned me over the phone: "Just so you know, I'm a Marxist and I fought in the civil war. And before we speak, please understand the French Revolution, and read my articles." Her no-nonsense quality is both intimidating and charming, and although I read all of her work that I could dig up, I simply nod over the phone and say, "Yes, will do."

Nibha has published three books of poetry, *Inqalab Jindaabaad* (Long Live the Revolution, 2006), *Kalapani Ki Draupadi* (The Draupadi of Kalapani, 2009) and *Mansara* (Mansara, 2015), and is now working on a novel. She also writes non-fiction pieces regularly for local papers.

Her poetry is like fire—urgent and wild. And like fire, her poems are built to spit, pop, crackle, burn and then slowly engulf the reader. I am struck by the way her poems appear as songs sung over a loudspeaker, powerful and melodious. Her 2015 poem, 'Mansara', which Nibha tells me means "a free bird of the heart," rang in my head for days before the interview.

When we finally meet at Shilpee Theatre, I encounter a beautiful woman with a short pixie hairdo and eyes still and sharp. In this month's Lightroom Conversation, Nibha and I talk about how to be a poet, writing across genres, menstruation, revolutions, loss and the importance of teaching and learning how to love.

Nibha Shah: It is like creating a child. You have to keep the baby inside you for months before it can come out into the world. 'Mansara' alone took me nine months to write. I had already come out of the jungle then, and I was in Mangalsen in Achham walking up a steep hill. There I saw a Chief District Officer and a porter walking the same path, but the two were vastly different. At that time, Hisila didi, who had just become the minister of tourism, had asked me to join her on a trip to Australia. I still did not have a passport, and I could have one made and gone, but I knew I could not leave. I had sweat, blood, fire on my mind—the beginnings of 'Mansara'—and I knew I had to keep at it. I had to keep sifting through thoughts and words, examine them, put them together. If a poem is easy on the ears, then you can be sure that it has taken the poet a long time to write it. It is a rule of nature: a poem needs time.

Muna Gurung: How did you take on this identity of being a Marxist?

N: When I think of it now, I was always a rebel. Growing up in Achham, we lived in a joint family with my parents, my uncle and aunt and my grandmother. I was the only grandchild in the house and I made sure they knew it. (Laughs). For instance, in Achham we still practice *chhau*. Granted, I had one of the fancier *goths* because I was from a Thakuri family, I still used to be terrified to sleep in it alone. We would see who else was menstruating at the same time and then share *goths* together. And mind you, Thakuris stayed in Thakuri *Goths* — castes never mixed. Once, I was alone in my *goth*. The friend I thought was coming did not come and I spent the entire night crying because the



MONIKA DEUPALA

old man next door was recently murdered, and I was certain his ghost was going to strangle me in my sleep. (Laughs). The next morning, I made up my mind to never return to the *goth* again.

M: How did that go over?

N: A war with my grandmother ensued. My parents were both educated and so were my uncle and aunts, they didn't care much. But my grandmother? She said *deuta lagcha*.

They used to call me *baamaa* in the village, and I never knew what it meant. They were calling me *Baampanthi*! I was a leftist to them even before I identified as one. When I was studying in Delhi in 1996, the relative I was staying with was an active member of the Marxist-Leninist student union then and her home was littered with all sorts of leftist literature. I read *Mother* by Maxim Gorky. Although he was writing about a Soviet society, I saw clearly an accurate parallel portrayal of the societies that I had lived in. I saw my mother, my aunts, my grandmother and how the system had oppressed them. I learned that everything a woman could do or could not do was not tied to sin but to the state. I had never seen a husband not beat his wife, and this includes my own father. Gorky's first chapter opens with one such scene, and I felt drawn to it because I recognised it. I discovered that the state oppresses people, that it has nothing to do with being fortunate, that there are rules that are made.

M: By men who run the state.

N: Exactly, and that is why the state is patriarchal. There are deeds, and if there are deeds there is property, if there is property there is a master and a slave. The slaves are the Tharus I grew up with in my own community, and those in power and control of the state believe in caste and hierarchy because it benefits them. I saw that what we were taught in the *Manusmriti*, about how certain humans emerged from the feet of god and therefore were lower than others, was total nonsense.

M: Did you ever have to confront that fact that you *are* by birth a

person of the state, and privileged in many ways?

N: (Smiles) No one has asked me this question before but it is something that I've been wrestling with and want to write about. Yes, I confronted it every day. In the party, they were suspicious: 'Why is this woman who has everything joining this revolution?' Some saw me as an informant of the state, or even a CIA agent. For the first 6-7 months I went underground, they would not give me anything to do, just menial tasks here and there. They were putting me on trial, and I had to prove to them that I was authentic and real.

So you see, I became a Maoist not out of necessity or poverty, but out of an awareness that something should change. And I do understand that no matter how much I rebel against the state, I am a Shah. I will always be theirs. If I say 'I give up this revolution', they will invite me back. By birth, I am a person of the state, of power. Later, when I was caught in Delhi in 2002 with three other Maoist party leaders and brought to Nepal, most of the officers at the border in Nepalganj were people who knew me because I had family in the army from Achham. When they handcuffed me, they said, "Eh, it's maiya." (Laughs).

M: Did you experience any physical violence in jail?

N: I was afraid they might rape me in Delhi or on the way to Nepal. But once I entered Nepal and saw that some of the men knew me, I knew they would not touch me. They tortured me verbally, called me all sorts of names, and we were blindfolded for a month and I did not know where I was, but I knew they would never physically abuse me. They could not.

M: And this privilege we speak of also seeps into your life as a writer.

N: Most certainly. Financial security is the most important thing for a writer. What will a couple of thousand rupees for a piece of article do? Nothing. My mother passed away in February and she left behind her land in Kailali and a bank balance for me. I am lucky, and this is something that she chose to give me not because I would have

been the rightful owner but because I am a woman. If I did not have this and the support of my family, we would not be sitting here talking. I would be in the streets, or I would be making bad literature because I would have to write carrying a calculator in my heart. A calculator cannot write poetry.

M: Who can write poetry?

N: No one can make a poet out of someone. Even the most powerful people cannot do that. If Prachanda wants, he can make his daughter, Renu, the Prime Minister of Nepal, or the mayor of Kathmandu, but let me see him turn her into a poet — never. Maybe he can hire someone to help her write, and she can be a poet in that way, but not a true poet. It takes a certain kind of person to be a poet. The heart that you carry when you are writing poetry has to be the softest. A poem has to be able to give you the experience of an ocean but through a single drop.

M: I want to go back to what you said about there being no questions for women. It's such a simple yet powerful way to devalue someone's existence.

N: Especially when it comes to their desires. I call a woman's desire a *bhirphool*, a flower that grows on a steep edge of a cliff. She cannot go near it, or touch it, let alone pick it to make a bouquet for offering. She can just look at it. And if she expresses it, she is called names or worse still, punished. Look at the *Ramayan*. What happens to Surpanakha when she expresses her desire? Her nose is cut off! A woman's love is sin, a woman's desire is sin, but a man's desire? It is always fulfilled, always acquired.

M: Histories and stories around us continuously confirm this. This is why the role of a poet is important.

N: Absolutely. As my mother's body was burning in Pashupati, a poem came to me: *I saw her giving birth to me, she was my mother / I saw her body burning in the pyre, I was a daughter*. My mother has the experiences of me being in her body, of my first touch, things that I do not have. Even at 40, or when I was away living my own life and principles in the jungle, she was still my mother. I heard that she took sleeping pills at night and she never once listened to the radio or watched the news for fear that she might hear of her daughter's death. What must have gone through her?

M: Do you regret it?

N: I do not think the mission was wrong. I just feel betrayed by the leadership. What kind of a guide was I following? What kind of a boatsman did I devote my life to? Someone who ferries across to safety and leaves us in the middle of the river... Someone always has to suffer, and in this case, it was my mother... or at least that is how I console myself.

M: You were in love, so you did what you had to do.

N: Without love, you cannot be a revolutionary. I was carrying bombs in my bags. I did not care if I died. I was young and stupid, but I was also in love with the mission of making Nepal into this beautiful country where food, health, clothes, homes would all be free and everyone would be equal. I was 22 years old, dreamy-eyed and heavily schooled by the Maoists. (Pauses). I wish someone would have schooled me on how to love, too.

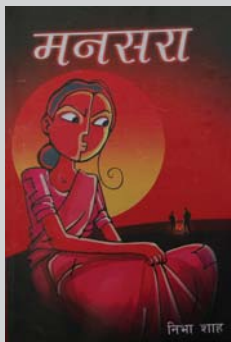
People do not know how to love. It has to be taught by parents, by the society and in school. No one taught me how to love my mother. I do not count the time that I spent with her

when she fell ill right before she passed away. Anyone will come see you when you are ill. It's when you are not ill, how are we treating one another? I was always running around like a train. I was the train car and I was also the driver, empty, rattling down some track of my own.

M: Sometimes people have love in them but they don't know how to express it, even in romantic love.

N: We do not communicate. We are not clear with ourselves or with each other. You know, before my mother passed away, I had this strange kind of pride in me. I felt like I had done something for the country and would look down at others and feel self-righteous, like they had done nothing but sit and eat, and that they were bourgeois and blind. I would not talk to many people and hardly expressed myself even to my friends. I smiled little. Once my mother passed away, I saw how useless all these things were. I began to open up. (Pauses). We look for things outside that are separate from nature when we should just be paying attention to nature, to the small, everyday things. Like the beak of a bird. Have you seen how small it is? And yet all the work it does to build a home, take care of its children— is there anything bigger than the love of that tiny beak? Do we need to look for god anywhere else? We are all hungry for love, because love is not taught to us.

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 (munagurung.com). A longer version of this interview is online at www.nepalitimes.com.



Dear death

translated by MunaGurung

Dear death, I love you
I will continue to scatter poems in your path
pick them up as you walk to me—
when you are close,
bring a hurricane
and just like a hurricane plucks a twig
pluck me and take me away—

Dear death, I have no complaints
Because I love life, I love death
because you exist, life exists,
my beloved death, I love you—

NIBHA SHAH



In her Lightroom Conversation column this month, Muna Gurung speaks with poet Nibha Shah about her guerrilla days, her belief in Marxism and what she thinks of the Maoist leadership today. We also hear the poet recite some of her powerful verses.

nepalitimes.com



concrete like most hill towns. Tribhuvan Uniyal, Sharma’s journalist son, lives here with his wife and two children. Will they farm? His daughter wants to do fashion design.

Director Nirmal Chander Dandriyal is himself from Uttarakhand and his sensitivity to his protagonists shines through the film. He was born in Chennai, but began travelling to Uttarakhand more frequently around 2011. Seeing migration as a central issue he decided to make a documentary. Migration was not a new issue. But while it is seasonal in other states, in Uttarakhand it is

Moti Bagh

Vidyardutt Sharma, 88, stands in front of his blue-tinted two storey home, looking out into a 360 panorama of the Himalayan mountains. This is Moti Bagh, Sharma’s farm in Pauri district of the Indian state of Uttarakhand, which are ‘ghost villages’ from where inhabitants have migrated permanently.

“The mountains are dying,” says Sharma, who ploughs his land with oxen, plants seeds, hauls his own water and chops wood. Cooking a vegetable dish over a wood fire he says ‘upper’ caste people have left the villages and abandoned farming. The ‘lower’ castes do all the work. With the demise of farming, producers are now consumers, people want to work with the mind, not hands, scared of physical labour, he says.

“It’s easy to write books, but the challenge is to make a tomato seed grow,” Sharma adds.

With locals having migrated, most farmhands here are from Nepal. Helping Sharma on his farm is Ram Singh, who came here from western Nepal 18 years ago and never left. He is happy the children got to go to school, he has savings to send back to the larger family back home.

“Locals are jealous of me,” Ram Singh says with a toothy smile. When he first came, he and his family were called names and told to go back to Nepal. Now, he says, he is accepted. “I will have to return to Nepal one day or, maybe we will be made to go back,” he says.

Pauri town is 35 kilometres from Moti Bagh and built up in

permanent.

Moti Bagh became the location, a microcosm to the big picture. The story unfolds through the characters, without hectoring, lecturing, or a voice over of gloom and doom. The characters in the film are fresh and rooted in the environment, and Chander was able to shoot in different seasons, various stages of cultivation, and events such as marriages and wildfires.

Moti Bagh has been nominated for the Oscars and will be screened at the South Asian Documentary Film Festival in November in Kathmandu. 🇳🇵

Anita Anand

Moti Bagh, 2019
60 min
Hindi

nepalitimes.com

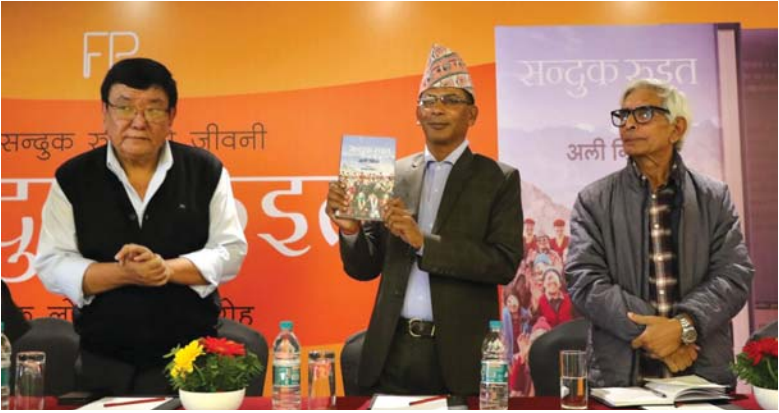
Go online to watch trailer.



LONG DISTANCE GOVERNANCE: PM KP Oli inaugurates Nepal Telecom’s 4G Services in all seven province by speaking to chief ministers of all seven province at once from Kathmandu on Wednesday.



RAGE AGAINST RAPE: Activists protest in Kathmandu on Tuesday, demanding the arrest of Krishna Bahadur Mahara who resigned as Speaker of Parliament following an allegation of rape. The victim later retracted her complaint.



EYE OPENING: The biography of noted ophthalmologist Sanduk Ruit was launched on Saturday by educator Top Bahadur Sharma, whose eyesight was restored by Ruit after 21 years of blindness.



CELEBRATIONS: Thai Embassy organised a festival of Thai food food and products at Hotel Shangri-La on Saturday. The Thai and German ambassadors are in the photo.

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Tharu escargots



ALL PHOTOS: EELUM DIXIT

Manju Chaudhary sinks her hand into a little pond and brings up a tiny, conch-shaped shell. Inside it is an even tinier water snail. When she has collected a handful she goes to the kitchen, where she boils them and cuts away the inedible tails. The rest she fries with her favourite spices and eats it with rice, sucking the flesh out of the shell.

Many in Nepal would look askance at this dish, but among the Tharus *ghonghi* snails are a delicacy. The indigenous Tharu people live along the southern plains, and despite different customs and costumes among sub-

groups, they share a love for snails. In fact, the Tharu are fond of eating all aquatic life -- from fish and fresh-water shrimp to exotic tiny crabs and clams.

"We harvest them ourselves from rivers and ponds," says Chaudhary, who is from Sunsari. "We had a pond near our home, and brought handfuls of snails from the river and put them in. They multiply fast, and there is enough *ghonghi* to last a year."


Snails are eaten as a hors d'oeuvre or with the main rice meal, and has a slightly

slippery texture, tasting like creamy mushrooms. In general, Tharu cuisine is known to be very healthy as it includes fresh leafy greens which are boiled and not fried, very little oil is used.

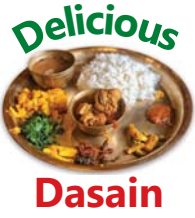
Full of proteins, snails are said to heal wounds and broken bones faster. However, *ghonghi* is not well known outside the Tharu community and many Nepalis are not even aware that snails are edible.

Now living in Kathmandu, Manju Chaudhary (*pictured above*) misses her childhood delicacy, and

relies on travelling relatives to deliver snails. A few eateries in Kathmandu are now trying to cater to people like Chaudhary by serving Tharu dishes, like Barghar restaurant in Kirtipur.

"The only time you get to enjoy Tharu food in Kathmandu is during the Maghi festival, when stalls provide this food in Tundikhel. But we want to offer it year-round," says Sitaram Chaudhary, one of the founders. Though the restaurant serves shrimps, crabs, and even clams, Sitaram notes that snails are the most popular item on the menu. 

Sewa Bhattarai



SLIPPERY SNAILS



You can easily learn how to make this exotic delicacy. Watch Manju Chaudhary forage for snails and cook them in flavourful spices. Chaudhary also recounts the Tharu community's lores surrounding the dish, and tells you why it is beneficial for health.

nepalitimes.com 



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Exploring Nepal's culinary

Dulled by *dal bhat*? There is more to Nepali cuisine than meets the eye.

Kedar Sharma and Kiran Sharma

It is said that food is eaten first with the eyes. But on our two-month food tour across Nepal recently, we felt that food may be first eaten with the ears. Delicious descriptions drew us to dishes even before we saw them.

We heard of many exotic dishes: milk buried underground for six months in Jumla until it fermented into yoghurt, meat marinated for a week before it is eaten in Kalikot, meat belonging to the entire community cooked in a single dish in Gulmi. Cake-like dishes made of rice, millet and other flour that are not known outside the districts they are eaten in.

We have always been told that Nepalis don't have names that correspond to breakfast, lunch and dinner, but have only meals and snacks (*khana* and *khaja*). However, the Tharu have names for five different meals, according to the time of the day they are served in. Communities that migrated most, especially Brahmins and Chhetris, had lost most of their culinary heritage. Yet in Baitadi, we saw that those who had stayed behind retained their original foods.

All of this led us to ask 'What exactly is Nepal food?' Is *dal bhat tarkari* the national dish? Are foods in Nepal original, and is there a commonality between the country's varied cuisines?

Bhat (steamed rice) cannot solely define Nepali food in a



KEDAR SHARMA

country where indigenous grains like wheat, corn, buckwheat, millet, barley and others are grown abundantly, and roasted and steamed into bread, boiled into porridge, or ground for storage. Any one of these can be taken as a staple food. Beyond that, lentils

form an essential part of our diet, though their cooking varies according to geography and ethnicity.

Vegetables are eaten Nepalwide, mostly fried, and sometimes boiled. Oil to fry them in, and turmeric for its colour and medicinal property, are essential to Nepali cuisine. Green leafy vegetables

Rai/Limbu

Pork meat is a staple of the Rai and Limbu communities in eastern Nepal. *Sargemba* (pictured), or blood sausage, is made by stuffing blood and seasonings into pig intestines, and then cut and fried before it is eaten. The pork curry *Yangben-Fakso* (left) is also unique, flavoured with a lichen called *yangben*, soaked in warm water and mixed with pork blood. It goes well with *chamre* (fried rice) and *kinema* (fermented beans).

Rai/Limbu cuisine is rarely found in Kathmandu, except for a couple of restaurants in Nakhipot and Baluwatar. Raitane Restaurant in Lalitpur promotes Nepali dishes and local ingredients, and includes a couple of these dishes in its menu.



BIKRAM RAI



बालबालिका माथि हुने हिंसा, दुर्व्यवहार, शोषण भएको, जोखिमपूर्ण अवस्थामा रहेको वा बालअधिकारको उल्लंघन भएको छ भने बाल हेल्पलाइनको पैसा नलाग्ने

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diversity

saag differentiate the Nepali thali from North Indian ones. *Gundruk*, *sinki*, *tama*, *kinema*, and other foods made by fermenting leaves, bamboo shoots, or beans are common across Nepali kitchens. So are dairy products like milk, yoghurt and buttermilk, and it is a tradition to flavour rice with a bit of *ghiu*.

As for meat, there is no uniformity. Some like pork and others buffalo, both forbidden by other communities. Nepali cuisine is lacking when it comes to dessert, and many communities do not even have the tradition of eating sweets. Nepal's most exotic dishes are not found in restaurants but eaten only at home.

While this preserves their taste, it also limits the dish to a small family group.

In this age of easily available packaged food, we are losing slow-cooked foods that once used to enhance the taste, smell and nutritional value of foods. Not just our recipes and cooking techniques, but our entire agriculture system has fallen prey to commercial agriculture, and many indigenous foods are not grown any more.

After our culinary journey across Nepal, our conclusion is that there is no standard 'Nepali food'. It is our duty to define, and refine, our ethnic dishes and preserve their originality. We need to get these dishes to restaurant tables around the world by cooking, eating and propagating them ourselves. Nepali food deserves to go worldwide. 🇳🇵

Delicious



Dasain

EXOTIC ETHNIC EATS



Whether it is lichen drenched in pork blood or tea brewed with salt and butter, our reporters have captured it all on video. Follow them to ethnic kitchens for mouth-watering Nepali delicacies and learn how to prepare them.

nepalitimes.com



MONIKA DEUPALA

Tharu

Tharus who live in the plains make use of all the ingredients around them, including aquatic animals like fish, snails, clams, shrimp and crabs. You name it and Tharus make a delicious dish out of it. They are also famous for eating healthy, with their staple grains and vegetables steamed or boiled.

It used to be that Tharu food was only available during the Maghi festival at Tundikhel. But Tharu restaurants in Kathmandu now provide the food all the year round. Barghar Restaurant in Kirtipur provides all the traditional Tharu delights, even crabs and clams.



AYESHA SHAKYA

Thakali

Though Thakalis live in Mustang where rice does not grow, Thakali restaurants have become synonymous with the typical Nepali *dal bhat tarkari*. That might be because they were historically traders and were exposed to foreign foods. The Thakali *thali* use Himalayan spices like *jimbu* and *timur*. They have also retained many indigenous dishes like *kanchemba* (pictured, left), fries made of buckwheat, which grows abundantly in Mustang. Thakali food needs to be branded and standardised so that it doesn't lose its originality, and the production of local ingredients can be promoted. Thakali food has come to mean tasty *dal-bhat-tarkari*, and spic and span Thakali restaurants can be found all over Nepal, and even abroad.

Newa

Newa cuisine is rich and varied. *Samye-baji* is the standard mid-day snack and also a festive delight, where beaten rice is eaten with many vegetables and condiments. Spicy potato salad, *bara* (lentil flatbread), beans, soybeans and marinated buffalo meat are popular accompaniments.

Almost every little alley in Kathmandu contains a Newari restaurant, serving *samye-baji*, *bara*, *chatamari* (rice bread), and other dishes. The choices range from low-end corner shops to high end outlets like Dwarika's Hotel in Battisputali.

KEDAR SHARMA



Sherpa

Sherpa cuisine is derived from Tibetan, and is designed for the cold harsh climate of the high mountains. *Rigikur*, a potato and buckwheat bread, is rich in butter and eaten with cheese sauce. *Shyakpa*, or meat soup, is consumed piping hot any time of the day. And *su chiya*, a unique salt and milk tea, is also had with dollops of butter. *Tasmpa*, a popular breakfast, is made by grinding grains like buckwheat, millet, wheat, or a combination of them, and is had with milk and honey.

Though Sherpa food is rarely found in most mainstream restaurants of Kathmandu, they are common in the Bouddha area. Newly opened Sherpa Cafe in Jhamsikhel caters to customers in Patan.

MONIKA DEUPALA

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Dasain Go-Slow

The news that China has closed the border and denied transit visas to 10,000 mountain goats and sheep from Tibet to enter the Feral Republic of Nepal this year has been greeted with dismay in some quarters. This is understandable given the irreversible setback this will create for national efforts to celebrate Nepal's national festival with the gusto it deserves.

As we all know, goats from the northern and southern neighbours have sacrificed their lives to safeguard Nepal's martial tradition that allowed us to fight off invaders and preserve our independence throughout history. Fried goat guts washed down with beer are an important guarantee of inertness over the coming weeks, and without adequate ungulate supplies Nepalis may actually end up doing something useful and important in the national interest.

This is why the semi-government National Institute for Lethargy and Inertia has moved swiftly to identify alternate sources of goat protein so that there is sufficient indolence and lassitude to go around this Dasain. Even so, we need special Vigilance Squads to patrol the corridors of power to carry out spot checks to make sure that no civil servants and politicians are sneaking into their offices to actually get some work done during Dasain. (If they are sneaking to their parliamentary chambers to indulge in other hanky pankies, that is fine.)

Senior ministers, secretaries, MPs, and ambassadors plenipotentiaries are not exempt from this crackdown. It has come to our notice, for instance, that the Home-away-from-Home Minister and the Health Hazard Minister are both busy catching up with a backlog of pending work in their official quarters. They were spotted during their commutes poring over piles of files. They will get a severe reprimand from the Crime Minister for spoiling ruling party unity by being workaholics.

Unless all members of the cabinet show strict discipline and consensus, the Chief Whip will be compelled to give them all a tongue-lashing for working overtime. And it will not just be lip service, you can be sure of that. Woe on such spoilsports, they hamper our efforts to bring the country to a standstill.

It's not that we are less lazy the rest of the year, but Dasain is when we can really wallow in sloth. Even though we know this, we sometimes lapse into exertion and toil. Vigilance, that is what is required. Vigilance against hard work. We have always underestimated the role laziness plays in non-violence and in ending wars. Making people too lazy to gouge the opposition with beer bottles should be the aim of all peace-building endeavours.

Having said that, it has just come to my notice that I am now too lazy to complete this column. May you all attain nirvana this Dasain: that state of perfect immobility and bliss.



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