Restoring relationship

Delhi might invite Gen Katawal

In what might be a clear indicator of revival of traditional relationship between the Indian and Nepal army after nearly 34 months of chill, government of India is considering inviting Chief of Army Staff, Gen Rukmangad Katawal to Delhi very soon. According to information available from Delhi, Gen Katawal would be invited for the platinum jubilee celebration of the National Defense Academy (NDA) at Dehradun next month. The government of India is however, yet to decide on holding investiture ceremony to confer the honorary title of the General of the Indian army to COAS Katawal. There are no official words available yet on Gen Katawal from Delhi, but the government of India is under pressure from its army to restore traditional relationship with the Nepal Army in the wake of its repeated commitment to democracy and rule of law. Delhi had suspended supply of all arms and ammunitions to Nepal army it had been supplying throughout, following the royal takeover.

Delhi’s visit will follow that of his Indian counterpart to Kathmandu in which he will be conferred the title of the honorary general of Nepal Army. Indian authorities were said to be divided on whether to invite Gen Katawal only for the NDA celebrations or also for the investiture. But Nepali side is said to be insisting for both. The army headquarters in Kathmandu refused to say anything more on the subject except for the comment, “an army chief’s visit if and when it takes place will be a matter of public knowledge.”

“Yes, we are hoping that the suspended tradition and the age-old ties of the two armies will be restored,” a senior official in the Prime Minister’s office in Kathmandu said.

There are no official words available yet on Gen Katawal from Delhi, but the government of India is under pressure from its army to restore traditional relationship with the Nepal Army in the wake of its repeated commitment to democracy and rule of law. Delhi had suspended supply of all arms and ammunitions to Nepal army it had been supplying throughout, following the royal takeover.

Despite Nepal Army’s silence on the matter, there are clear indications that it values its traditional ties with the Indian Army a lot. Sources in the Defense Ministry say there are some invitations already extended to the army chief from other friendly countries of the Asian region including China; but the army headquarters believe that, “India as the first country for the chief’s visit will be ideal.” However, PM Koirala as well as the defense establishment is also keen that the investiture ceremony should resume soon.

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Prachanda's demands

It is clearly an added headache for PM Koirala's since the Communist party of Nepal - Maoists (CPN-M) categorically demanded his ouster as leader, if he failed to fulfill all their demands "now". The demands, put forward by Maoist Chief Prachanda, barely 72 hours before the session was to begin on November 18, included declaration Nepal as a republic state, adoption of proportional representation system of election, review of implementation of the comprehensive peace accord and reallocation of major portfolios to different coalition groups.

The price fixed by the Maoists for non-compliance is not too difficult to guess. A peaceful protest from the streets with the help of civil society is aimed to push for the formation of a new interim government and parliament with an enlarged share to the Maoists. That means Maoists are no longer keen to extend support to Koirala's government.

In a concept paper that Prachanda circulated on behalf of his party on November 15 among leaders of the other political parties, he categorically demanded that Koirala must fulfill these demands immediately or face the risk of losing their party's support. The threat comes in the wake of a new built alliance between the Maoists and the CPM-UML parties that together will have 167 members against 135 odd members of the Congress which heads the ruling coalition.

Prachanda's concept paper also demands initiation of the Security Sector Reforms (SSR) process immediately so that the Maoist guerillas could be introduced in the National Army, something that the latter has been resisting firmly. Maoists are clear that the election in itself without their demands fulfilled would be meaningless and they would not be part of it. They were clearly opposed to the Congress party cornering major portfolios and would now want a larger share in the government if they are to join it.

The message was clear - from a position of back-seat driving, they would now want to occupy the driving seat using the UML strength to dialogue the Congress leadership.

Maoists are also preparing to create a ruckus in the House asking the government to go for PR system and republican on the basis of passage of two resolutions of public importance by the House to go for PR system and republican in the basis of passage of two resolutions of public importance by the House to go for PR system and republican
Minister Moriarty

In what appears like a clear indication that the Bush administration is going to give continuity to its Nepal policy, James F Moriarty, former ambassador to Nepal, is being tipped as Deputy Assistant Secretary in charge of Nepal affairs.

Moriarty who left Nepal in July on completion of his tenure was to go to Dhaka as its ambassador, but a last minute change saw him catal-
pulate to a Deputy Assistant Secretary in charge of some South Asian countries including Nepal. This only indicates no US policy shift on Nepal as well as regarding the Maoists.

There have been no official words yet on Moriarty’s new assignment but reports indicate a new replacement will be found for Dhaka. Moriarty was the most hated diplomat as far as Maoists are concerned in Nepal, since he consistently raised the issue of atrocities and unlawful activities carried out by them in violation of the code of conduct.

US visa for comrades

In what came as a surprising flexibility in its earlier approach, the US embassy in Kathmandu has granted visa to three Maoist parliamentar-
ians to visit the US as part of the New Delhi delegation in United Nations general assembly.

Parliamentarian, Nandkishora Prasai is already in New York while Prabhakar Sharma aka Janardan Sharma, party’s deputy leader in parliament, and another parliamentarian Suresh Ale Magar have also been granted visa for the same purpose. Suresh Ale Magar had been denied visa to the US just two months ago by the embassy here.

However, Rohit Adhikary, ambassador designate for Malaysia against the Maoist quota was denied visa by the US embassy here.

The communist party of Nepal Maoists and its top leaders are on the US terrorist list, and that was cited as the reason for their earlier being refused the visa. But there are no words if the relative generosity in granting visa this time around to the Maoists is any indication that the US is hopeful that Maoists will change.

Prachanda, Bhattarai keen to visit US

Top Maoist leaders, Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai are very keen to visit the US. That they longed for a trip to the country they hate the most became obvious when they accepted an invitation from the World Bank to attend a programme in their headquarters in Washington DC.

Bhattarai who spoke on behalf of the party as well as its chief Prachanda about the Maoist party’s vision of economy in new Nepal so captivated the top World Bank (WB) officials that the duo were extended an invitation to its headquarters.

“We will love to be there if the US government gives us visa,” Bhattarai is said to have told a senior WB official. Now that there is an assurance from the WB to do their best to facilitate their trip to the US, the Maoists’ visit there in near future appears almost certain.

To the utter disbelief of the WB officials, Bhattarai told a top level meeting of the WB recently here that Maoists believed in creating job opportunities and expanding infrastructure in the country for which they would expect a role for the WB. Bhattarai also promised that his party would not put any hindrance to the WB activities and projects in Nepal.

The WB has promised to give $16 billion dollar assistance to Nepal particularly in the areas that the holdouts are committed to a labour sector reform which, among other things means, sweeping rights to the management to hire and fire labourers. That also means a reduced role for trade unions, something that the Maoists and other political parties may not be agreeable to.

No agreement

Despite their joining the political mainstream, the world community still seems reluctant to accept Maoist nominees as Nepal’s ambassador in some EU countries. None of the four Maoist ambassador designates has received the agreement, a formal acceptance of their appointment by the countries concerned.

Bijaya Dhami (Albania) and Pampha Bhusal (Franco) are among the prominent Maoist nominees for ambassadors. Along with four Maoist nominees, Shailaja Acharya, ambassador designate for Delhi is also waiting for the agreement.

New KUKL Chief

Janak Raj Shah has been appointed as the chairman of the Kathmandu Upatyaka Khanapati Limited (KUKL) with immediate effect.

Shah replaces Birendra Man Shrestha. The decision to appoint Shah was taken by the steering committee of the KUKL on November 15.

The meeting also appointed Mr. Dhuska Bahadur Shrestha as the coordinator for a committee that will oversee the transition management of the company including the transition management. Those in the board of directors of the KUKL include Suresh Baznet, Intra Man Singh Suwal, Rudra Prasad Gautam, Sashim Joshi, Kamilesh Kumar Agrawal, Dhurba Bahadur Shrestha besides the chairman, Himeshanda Vaidya will be the secretary of the company.
Criminal, who?

The worst that was feared has happened. Journalist Birendra Saha’s death in the hands of this very same Maoist leadership, that claimed to be fighting for the revolution, is a clear indication of just how far the Maoists have deviated from the principles of democracy and peace. The Maoists, who claimed to want a peaceful transition to democracy, have now decided that no journalist should visit Maoist leaders, at the national or local level, if called for press coverage, since Saha’s death. This attitude on the part of the Maoists is reprehensible. If the Maoists are serious about their commitment to democracy and peace, they must immediately apologise and hand over the criminals involved in the Saha murder case to the Nepali government.

My creed is love

Muhammad Ibn ‘Arabi was a mystic, philosopher, poet and a spiritual teacher. Known as Muhyiddin (the revivifier of religion) and the Shaykh al-‘Ala’ (the great master), he was born in 1165 AD into the Moorish culture of Andalusian Spain, the center of an extraordinary flourishing and cross-fertilisation of Jewish, Christian and Islamic thought, through which the major scientific and philosophical works of antiquity were transmitted to Northern Europe. He was also renowned for his great visionary capacity and for being a supreme teacher. He travelled extensively in the Islamic world and died in Damascus in 1240 AD.

He wrote over 350 works including the Fusûs al-Hikam, an exposition of the inner meaning of the wisdom of the prophets of the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions, through which the major scientific and philosophical works of antiquity were transmitted to Northern Europe. Ibn Arabi’s spiritual attainments were evident from an early age, and he was renowned for his great visionary capacity and for being a supreme teacher. He travelled extensively in the Islamic world and died in Damascus in 1240 AD.

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The Left threat
Like radical Islam, communism is a dogmatic ideology that supersedes geographical boundaries.

Nearing his fourth year in office, there are very little achievements that the Indian prime minister can boast about. The recent fissures surrounding the civilian nuclear agreement with America is an elaborate example of the failure of the Congress led UPA government to impact political changes in a progressive direction. Clearly, the alliance with the Left parties has yielded in diminished returns for the Congress at both, the domestic and the international stage. But if the Congress wishes to move ahead in a progressive direction, it must like Indira Gandhi; sever its ties with the communists. It is imperative that the Congress ceases cooperation with the Left, so that it enables Congress to chart independent economic and foreign policies that aims to take India to the forefront of global politics.

CPI – M, have been maintaining that India should import gas from Central Asia as an alternative to the 123 Agreement with the United States. However; the trade route for the central Asian gas project cannot materialise without political stability prevailing in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The latest edition of the Newsweek described Pakistan as the world's most dangerous nation. It further reports that the ISI continues to maintain clandestine relations with Taliban and other Islamist fugitives in the hope of using them to wage Jihad in Kashmir in the future. Bhutto now under the threat of the Taliban and the Taliban, was a pivotal figure in aiding the Taliban storm to power in Kabul. Bhutto had envisioned a secure neighbour under the Taliban so that she could use southern Afghanistan as a strategic trade route to build pipelines to import gas from central Asia to help the ailing economy of Pakistan. Unfortunately, Bhutto's strategy backfired deviating from the liberal Nehruvian doctrine that helped shaped Indian foreign policy. Like radical Islam, communism is a dogmatic ideology that supersedes geographical boundaries. The continued failure of the Indian government to understand the nefarious schemes of their Left coalition partners to help the Maoist rise to power continues to remain ignored. The net result of this lackluster policy is a complete loss to the Marxists and the Maoists in India.

Maoists under the influence of the CPI – M suggests India has perhaps deviated from the liberal Nehruvian doctrine that helped shaped Indian foreign policy. Like radical Islam, communism is a dogmatic ideology that supersedes geographical boundaries. The continued failure of the Indian government to understand the nefarious schemes of their Left coalition partners to help the Maoist rise to power continues to remain ignored. The net result of this lackluster policy is a complete loss to the Marxists and the Maoists in India.

The domestic situation in Nepal is favorable and ripe to capture the Maoist movement in the near future but at all the genuine communist parties engaged in revolutionary practice know that the international situation is quite unfavorable to accomplish new democratic revolution to sustain it. However, Prachanda’s conclusion in his report to COMPOSA is the most important part of his report, a close read will magnify the eventual plan and aim of the Maoist movement in Nepal – “The enemy who is attacking our party especially its youth wing “YCL”, with whatever they find in their hands, has generated mass resentment against the enemies. And our mass line, discipline of our PLA and political line has gathered momentum to prepare the ground for the final insurrection. We are utilising this transitional moment to pass our base and consolidate it, to get rid of our own short comings and bring disillusioned in the enemy camp (Nepali Congress, RJP, RPP, MUF, Nepal Army and the monarchy) so that we can give a final blow and usher into the country a new democracy.”

India’s stature in global politics will be defined by its ability to domesticate its neighborhood and in conjunction with development of its economy. However, there are serious hurdles on both fronts to the Indian government. Nicolas Burns, the US under Secretary of State for political affairs, in his article, ‘America’s Strategic Opportunity with India’, in the latest edition of the journal Foreign Affairs has identified India as one America’s most important strategic partners in global affairs. To live up to such expectations, first, India has to curtail and confront the growth of communism and radical Islam in India and its neighboring countries.

As the Left’s continue to espouse sentiments of self determination, the likelihood of further ethnic confrontation and possible disarmament with the center evolving into seces- sion movements cannot be ruled out. Already, Nagaland, Mizoram, Andhra Pradesh (Telerganga) and more evidently Punjab in the past have all posed threats to India's unity and integrity. Therefore, should Nepal fall into the hands of the communist, Nepal will serve as a core state for further communists movements in South Asia directly threatening India’s national security.

As India strives to make gargantuan economic growth, it is crucial that India generates necessary energy fuel to meet the demands of its growing industries. The 123 Agreement can therefore provide India with a strategic advantage in Asia. However, as the Left continue to question the rationale of this deal, its feasibility and eventual implementa- tion of the 123 Agreement remains questionable.

However, India will have to seek other alternatives to meet the soaring demands of its economy for more energy. Some of these alternatives can be found in the rivers of Nepal. However, for the development of any realistic hydro power projects in Nepal, its essential that the threats and the democratic forces prevail in Nepal’s political uncertainty. For this, it is sacrosanct that the Maoists in Nepal and other members of COMPOSA are confronted and viewed at a similar level of policy and action. It is vital that the Indian state should be prepared to disrupt the Maoist movement in Nepal and other neighboring states, since the Maoist movement in Nepal is considered a “core state” for further Maoist movements in South Asia directly threatening India’s national security.
It can be considered as the epitome of contrasts as well as a citadel of learning.

Then a noble soul from Tanahu, the great poet Bhanu Bhatta Acharya, was mesmerised by the splendour of Kathmandu for its cultural and historical richness. The Kantipur of yesteryears has been transformed into a more cosmopolitan city. The city is now bustling with all kinds of vehicles and motor-bikes, which seem to be waiting in eternity for petrol. This is a small matter compared to the fact that the petrol shortage has been continuing for several months now without any foreseeable respite. Many vehicle owners return empty-handed after lining up for many hours and without tending to the call of nature. Yet, except for one-day protest organised by the taxi drivers recently, the people have remained extremely patient and accommodating.

One cannot help but appreciate Nepal’s commitment to law and order and their enormous faith in their government, a government that is virtually non-existent. One can also see scores of people taking their morning walk or jogging. Children and teenagers going to school appear quite energetic and happy. This certainly reflects that the Nepalis, especially the young, are fully prepared to face the present day challenges by pursuing education and maintaining good health for future progress and prosperity. Others are committed to the rule of law and believe that they will enjoy their full rights one day. First lesson learned: keep healthy and pursue your duties, and do not lose hope no matter what.

Kathmandu today is profoundly and sincerely. Coming from a village, he imagined it so brilliantly that it touched the hearts of many people, including the rulers and got his work done.

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Symbols of MIND

Thangkas are the expressions of enlightened minds...

Vijay Sarga Maharjan, 34, is an avid Phaubha Thangka painter. Newsfront talked with him recently about his passion which he says has changed his life.

What attracted you to Thangkas?
I was always interested in painting. I started painting when I was 14. I used to paint birds in which I specialised for three years. Then I moved on to Thangka. I learned Thangka from my Tamang gurus at Swoyambhu; and Prem Man Chitrakar and K.K. Karmacharya. Although monetary return was the motivating factor behind my decision to become a Thangka painter, now I can interpret it in a different way. I think I was attracted to the mind aspect of it. I don’t think there is any other art that expresses the functions of mind so vividly.

What difference do you see between Thangkas and other forms of painting?
I’d like to cite examples of Dalí’s works. Dalí’s works are mostly based on Freudian analysis that expressed the knots, neurosis of the mind; but in Thangkas, the different manifestations of mind are presented. Freudian analysed only the ‘sick’ people, so in his own words, he could not find a pool of precious resource that the world would look up to. Being a Thangka artist is a matter of great honour, and creates a lot of self respect in yourself.

Tell us about your favorite pieces of work.
Picture no. 1, the Phauba was done by me and by other students around 15 years ago. It depicts Anyakalavakteswara – the deity of compassion. In picture 2, the Buddha is depicted as radiating compassion; and lastly, the Kumari which I painted around five years ago. It is painted on plywood with water colours.

Do you think Thangkas are appreciated as much in Nepal as it is abroad?
No, we don’t understand the depth of Thangkas. Art critics here do not value it so much. They call it copy art.

Unfortunately, due to lack of education, interest and exposure, Nepalis have not learned to appreciate our own traditional unique art forms. Unfortunately, due to lack of education, interest and exposure, Nepalis have not learned to appreciate our own traditional unique art forms. Nepalis have not learned to appreciate our own traditional unique art forms. Nepalis have not learned to appreciate our own traditional unique art forms.

Thangkas are exported worldwide every year. Art forms depicting negative aspects of mind do not give you a good feeling. I personally would not want a painting, however famous or expensive, that depicts a confused or tortured mind hung on my walls! But Thangkas definitely generate a positive feeling no matter how ferocious the deity may look.

Why is it so?
Thangkas are the expressions of enlightened minds that could see the pictures of the deep layers of subconsciousness. These pictures help cleanse, purify sub-consciousness and it assists in opening up your super consciousness. The enlightened forms of mind are depicted through deities such as Hevajra, Vajrasattva, Chakrasambhava, Samantabhadra and many others. Carl Jung also held Thangkas and especially Mandalas in high esteem. He said it was the best technique to free mind of its neurosis.

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What do you think Thangkas are the expressions of enlightened minds...

Samantabhadra has a special significance with its two forms in unity. The blue male figure depicts emptiness and the white female symbolises clarity. An enlightened mind is basically a unity of emptiness and clarity.

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Lacking democratic leadership

Leadership has to be flexible and understand the context.

Ram Thapaliya

In Nepal the context for leadership has changed many times but the style of leaders and reaction of people and constituents to it is not changing. In Nepal, there is a long history of feudalism. The very complicated geography in Nepal made it very difficult, until modern times with improved communication, to govern the territories of the country under a single ruler. Over hundreds of years Nepal was governed by many small rulers of principlalities, landlords who owed allegiance to the kings and Hindu religious leaders, who maintained their power mostly by staying in favor of kings or other leaders they served. This describes a context repeated many times in Nepal’s history where the power of leaders is gained and maintained according to the leaders’ position and not due to their qualities and qualifications for the position. The right to leadership authority in Nepal, based on its geography, went to those who had the might of the border, the number and strength of the army, and so on. The context for leadership in Nepal increases with every passing day.

Disturbing picture for a nascent democracy

The number of orphans and widows across Nepal increases with every passing day.

Chandrakishore Jha

In April 2008, in addition to the disappointments Nepal experienced on the political front, the months followed have been disappointing on many other counts as well. Many people have died even after the conflict ended. Hence the number of orphans and widows across Nepal increases with every passing day. In the name of people’s welfare, political parties are indulging in all kinds of destructive activities. Most disappointing, people in power are in their insensitive best towards peoples’ grievances.

There were lots of expectations from the Nepali people when democracy ultimately came in Nepal. There were lots of expectations from the Nepali people when democracy ultimately came in Nepal in April 2008. In addition to the disappointments Nepal experienced on the political front, the months followed have been disappointing on many other counts as well. Many people have died even after the conflict ended. Hence the number of orphans and widows across Nepal increases with every passing day. In the name of people’s welfare, political parties are indulging in all kinds of destructive activities. Most disappointing, people in power are in their insensitive best towards peoples’ grievances.

One striking example of this attitude from people in power was seen by all through the case of Umravati Saha, who recently had to cry in front of two most powerful men in Nepal, just to know the whereabouts of her husband who was kidnapped. This was on October 30, 2007, 25 days after late Birendra Sah was kidnapped. That heart rendering image of Umravati and her two little kids crying in front of Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist Chairman Prachanda, shown on various television channels and print media is still fresh in our memory. The picture was disturbing to say the least, because it looked more like a helpless bonded labourer paraded before a feudal lord, rather than an audience granted to an aggrieved individual by people’s leaders. Leadership has to be flexible and understand the context. Leaders have to do some homework in the advance so they can have more than one vision and strategy.

The main complication in the dealing with political leadership is that unlike in a business situation everyone in political party sees themselves as potential leaders. For political leadership development, there needs to be a new research on Nepal political leadership and the type of qualities in leaders that are best suited to leading the party and the nation. (Wilder is PhD, Crisis Management, a visiting professor at Tufts University, and TU, Conflict Peace and Development in Global Context)
Asean leaders ready to sign landmark charter

Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations gathered in Singapore on Sunday ready to sign a landmark charter giving legal status to the 40-year-old body and making strides in human rights.

With Burmese Prime Minister Thein Sein and Foreign Minister U Nyan Win attending and the delegates from the 10-member body staying at 11 different hotels, police designated “protected areas” giving authorities greater leeway to deal with possible security threats, demonstrations or other incidents.

Among the affected venues and a 550-metre perimeter around each are The Shangri-La Hotel where the 40th anniversary summit is taking place, The Raffles City Convention Centre site of a gala dinner and the Asian Civilizations Museum where a reception will be held.

Nearly 1,700 delegates from 43 countries are attending.

While the charter, a blueprint for an Asean economic community by 2015, and a document on climate change and the environment are highlights, diplomats said Burma is overshadowing the other issues after its bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in September.

Asean countries have made many commitments over the years, but have only implemented a third of them, said Professor Tommy Koh, Singapore’s representative on the task force which drafted the charter.

“This is not an acceptable record,” Koh said. “A key feature in the charter is the emphasis on developing a culture of taking our obligations seriously,” he added.

The secretary-general will be empowered to monitor compliance with Asean agreements and report breaches to the summit, he said.

Referring to critics who maintain that Asean is little more than a “talk shop, Koh said the charter will enable the grouping to play a bigger role in regional and global affairs.

Asean includes Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Burma.

The UN Secretary General’s special Adviser Ibrahim Gambari is scheduled to brief the East Asia Summit which includes the Asean countries in addition to China, India, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Police have warned against staging any outdoor protests after learning of plans by foreign students to do so on Monday.

A petition was released however calling on the UN Security Council to bring “tangible results” in the national reconciliation and political reform process.

The document was signed by 3,626 people or 10 per cent of the Burmese nationals in Singapore. A group calling themselves the “Oversese Burma Patriots” said they want Singapore to give the petition to the council.

Public demonstrations against the Burmese junta have flared elsewhere, but police said Singapore’s prohibition against outdoor gatherings of more than four people without official approval is in full force.

(Bangkok post)
Altered states of mind

Similarly at 82% trance, recall of lost memories is easily accessible which is so useful to psychotherapy. This is called hyper amnesia while above 84% regression into childhood or past life is possible. These properties are not available to the common waking mind no matter how sharp or intelligent the person is. At around 80% the mind can control organic body functions like heart-beat, blood pressure, digestion etc. In all these are various levels of altered states of mind, many things are accessible which are not accessible to the mind in its humdrum waking state. When we go off in a tangent into a day-dream we are again going into another altered state of mind.

As we said earlier, there are many types of altered states of mind which are different from each other. For example, when we go off into sleep, we go through various levels of altered state. The first stage of sleep onslaught called the hypnagogic state is an altered state of mind which is different from the waking state. Actually the waking state itself is one state of the mind and is itself an altered state. It is not scientifically correct to say that the waking state is the normal state and all other states of mind are the altered states. Calling the waking state as normal and measuring all other states of the mind against it as altered state is based on conditioned ideas of what is normal and is thus scientifically unwarranted.

In another neuro-scientific language what is called waking state (what most people consider as the normal state) the brain emits beta waves. Beta waves are rays ranging from 13 hertz upwards. The normal waking state ranges from 13 hertz to 25 hertz. This is the waking state of normal alertness. Once the hertz increases towards 25 hertz and above, states of anxiety and stress begin. The higher the hertz go the more stressed out and anxiety laden the mind becomes. It becomes more distraught, tensed up and is unable to focus. From 8 hertz to 12.9 hertz is the alpha wave range. When the mind is calmly focused and relaxed, it begins to dip between 8 and 13 hertz. This is a relaxed but alert state. The state when the brain is emitting alpha waves is also called the super learning state because the mind is in a state where it can absorb vast amounts of information easily and quickly. Memory capacity is heightened. This is also the first stage of meditation and also the first stage of sleep onslaught.

Most meditators are normally at the lower levels of this frequency which means from 8 to 10 hertz. When a person is in this level of altered state, the mind is relaxed. This is a very good altered state for lowering blood pressure and relaxing the mind, making it free from all tension, anxiety etc. In this state, the mind tends to be positive and all negative thinking disappears.

Below 7.9 hertz to 4 hertz is theta wave state. This is a state of deep relaxation, deep meditation, increased memory and focus. This is a dream like state. When we are seeing dreams, the brain emits theta waves. This is also the state where creativity occurs. Einstein said that whenever he came up with a new theory, he used to go into a dream like state. Thomas Alva Edison also realised that he had in hand a new invention, just after waking up from a deep sleep. This is the theta state. Transformation or change can take place easily in the theta state. This is also the state of deep hypnosis when suggestions given by the hypnotiser are easily absorbed into the subconscious and thus changes in mental attitudes and behaviour are brought about.

Creative visualisation as used in Vajrayana produce theta wave states quickly with a little amount of practice provided there is concentration. It is in such a state that the mind is receptive to creative intuition and insights and to transformation. The elaborate Mandala meditation of Vajrayana is based on this principle. (To be continued)
Walt Whitman would have had a hard time here.

The idea of 'self' appears repugnant in the Himalayas. Much before the opening up of the nation to the outside world, long before the roads snaked in to shatter the charm of this collective self, self was a dreadful abuse. The whole population seemed to be living in an exquisite pastoral; a network of rural worlds defining the entire world as one big nation village. You belonged to a specific outer world that was all that mattered. What happens inside belonged to shamans and poets.

In such a world, the self becomes an elusive notion and the idea of exploring the infinite possibilities of the self are seen as shallow and self-indulgence. With the advent of modernism, the ideals of an objective scientific worldview seem to hold its sway in science, literature and journalism until today. You need the truth as seen through Galileo's binoculars and anything beyond western scientific learning became hoax.

Walt Whitman would have had a hard time here. (writer@yuyutsu.de)

FOR LOVE OF NATURE

interpretation on paper or canvas gives me that unparalleled deep sense of joy.

Sun, jungle, spring-scape and autumn leaves are my abstract creations where I've used rubber cement solution in place of wax to get that contemporary Batik effect.

I draw warmth, healing power from the sun. Jungle vibrates with that sense of wild abandon, an unbridled sense of freedom and profound mystery. I can lose myself in it and be the way I want to be. Spring-scape signifies life's beginning with its green young leaves, full of potential. Autumn leaves represent life's transitory nature. The vibrant colours of the leaves delight and soon wither away to be one with the soil, just like we all do. Nature is us, we are nature. (Sanchita's paintings are on sale. For details, contact the artist at: Phone: 00-91-9818803916 and sanchitasroy@gmail.com)

Spectrum of life

Children at play, Ilam, Nepal.
If you’re having a birthday bash or a holiday party, make sure to invite Nicole Kidman. The Australian actress, as it happens, gives the most spot-on gifts imaginable.

Jennifer Jason Leigh, who plays Kidman’s sparring sister in “Margot at the Wedding,” admired a pair of jeans in a magazine, and presto, one day the precise pair was in her hotel room. Her husband (and the film’s director), Noah Baumbach, got a “great” silver pen he uses all the time, and “a great bottle of wine.” And Chris Weitz, who directed Kidman’s Dec. 7 fantasy saga “The Golden Compass,” scored “lovely Frette sheets and, let me see, caviar. She gave me some very nice things, to me and my wife.”

No wonder Leigh admires Kidman’s “tremendous memory” and calls her “really generous. She’s really thoughtful. Very sweet in that way.”

Especially given her turn in “Margot,” which opened yesterday, as Leigh’s controlling, domineering and manipulative sister. Kidman’s Margot arrives from New York to attend her pregnant sister’s country wedding — and promptly casts aspersions on the nuptials. Ask Kidman, 40, if she’s anything like the mercurial and mean says Kidman, who’s still operating on Down Under time but looks perfectly neat in a snug, dark blue and green patterned frock. “I’m a boring interview now, an old married woman! Not a lot of controversy here. It’s a good life, though, and I’m really blessed in terms of the road that it has taken.”

This winter, Kidman has two potential hits on the horizon. After “Margot” comes “The Golden Compass.” Weitz’s lavish adaptation of the first book in Philip Pullman’s “His Dark Materials” trilogy, starring Kidman as the mesmerizing scientist Mrs. Coulter.

Kidman, Weitz says, “is very clever and intelligent, as Mrs. Coulter is. She has an allure, a power over people. But Mrs. Coulter, in our movie, is at heart a very damaged and borderline evil person, and that’s not true of Nicole. She’s very thoughtful and probably the most committed actress I’ve met.”

That commitment hasn’t always translated into big-screen success. She has had a series of misses since winning an Oscar as Virginia Woolf in 2002’s “The Hours.” Asked about her rather offbeat choices, Kidman breaks into rueful laughter. Despite starring in such flops as this summer’s “The Invasion” and 2004’s “Birth,” Kidman says she doesn’t dwell on her decisions or agonize over films that didn’t work.

Kidman inhales her roles deeply and “a great bottle of wine.” And Chris Weitz, who directed Kidman’s Dec. 7 fantasy saga “The Golden Compass,” scored “lovely Frette sheets and, let me see, caviar. She gave me some very nice things, to me and my wife."

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