



How not to be a Sri Lanka

The crisis that is consuming Sri Lanka has sent warning bells ringing in Nepal. While sensational media headlines (some of them in the Indian press) have drawn too close a comparison between the two countries, there are parallels.

Nepal does not have the kind of debt burden that has forced Sri Lanka to default on its loans (*Page 1*). Ironically, it is Nepal's underdevelopment that cushions it from global upheavals. Politics may be in disarray here too, but at least we do not have an executive president, a prime minister and three other brothers who were ministers in government.

Nepal's disease may not be as severe as Sri Lanka, but the symptoms are the same.

For decades, Sri Lanka was the development model that the rest of South Asia strived to emulate. Its 95% literacy, equitable health care, a proficient bureaucracy were the envy of the developing world.

But even a well-educated public and effective social security system stand no chance against bad leadership, and can wreck a once-vibrant democracy. The rot in Sri Lanka started as far back as 1956, with ultra-nationalist leaders building vote banks with exclusionary ethnic politics.

The grievances of the minority community piled up, erupting in the anti-Tamil pogroms of 1983, and the inevitable slide to conflict. At one point in the late 1990s, a country half the size of Nepal and with two-thirds of its population had two civil wars raging at the same time: the ethno-separatist conflict in the north, and the ultra-Marxist JVP uprising in the south.

The JVP insurgency was crushed, but by the time the Tamil war came to a violent end in 2009 nearly 100,000 Sri Lankans had been killed. In comparison, Nepal's Maoists insurgency lasted a decade, and left 17,000 dead.

The precursors of Sri Lanka's current crisis lie in post-war politics and the rise and fall, and rise again, of the Rajapaksa family, its greed, ambition and drift towards authoritarianism. Sri Lanka's thriving tourist industry was destroyed in the deadly Easter bombings in 2019, and the pandemic wiped out what remained. Exports and remittances from its workers abroad slumped.

In addition, the Mahinda Rajapaksa in his previous stint had borrowed extravagantly

from China for grandiose infrastructure projects, and the Chinese were demanding their pound of flesh.

Another Rajapaksa brother as agriculture minister decreed overnight that Sri Lanka would go organic, and banned the import of agro-chemicals. Tea export and food production fell.

The Ukraine crisis could not have hit at a worse time. Fuel prices doubled in a space of weeks, and Sri Lanka had no foreign exchange reserves to pay for imports. Faced with a 40% inflation rate, a crippling shortage of food, cooking gas and fuel, peaceful protesters camped out in central Colombo.

Then, on 9 May the Rajapaksa brothers sent hired goons to drive out demonstrators from Colombo's seafront Galle Face promenade. The police stood by, and visuals of violence went viral on social media. Nine people were killed and scores injured as protests spread nationwide.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa stepped down, and his much-reviled brother President Gotabaya Rajapaksa swore in Ranil Wickremesinghe as prime minister for the sixth time, beating a record set by our own Sher Bahadur Deuba.

This could be too little too late. As long as the Rajapaksas cling to power, Sri Lankans fear that the nepotism, corruption, and mismanagement will continue.

The coming weeks are critical for Prime Minister Wickremesinghe, and he himself admits that things will "get worse before they get better".

Sri Lanka is an object lesson for us in Nepal about how short-sighted leadership, populism, and lack of accountability of elected despots and their dynasties can completely ruin a country that was once so full of promise.

Crises like these do not just happen overnight, they are the result of decades of mal-governance by leaders who neglect the needs of citizens. Democracy is supposed to fix that, but this is what happens when demagogues hijack the democratic process itself.

Nepal has a unique opportunity during this election year to find leaders that can take the country forward. That so many independent candidates have won local elections this week should be a wake-up call for Nepal's politicians to mend their ways or be swept away by public anger.

Nepal's disease may not be as severe as Sri Lanka's, but the symptoms are the same.



20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Lost and Found

Museums and galleries in the West have started returning Nepal's stolen religious objects after relentless campaigning by activists.

Now there is a challenge of safeguarding repatriated pieces in their original place.

Back in 2002, *Nepali Times* covered the return of a 200-year-old Dipankar Buddha stolen from Patan and tracked to a collector in Vienna. One of the first instances of a stolen idol being returned to Nepal.

Excerpt of the report by Kunda Dixit published in #94 17-23 May 2002 *Nepali Times* 20 years ago this week:

The gilded copper mask of the Buddha was in the custody of a family in Nag Bahal when it was stolen. It resurfaced when a well-known Cologne-based art dealer, Gallery Peter Hardt, tried to sell it to the Ethnographic Museum in Vienna this week for an asking price of 200,000 Euros (\$180,000).

The museum's curator, Dr Christian Schicklgruber, suspected that the Buddha image may be stolen and he checked with the Institut für Südasiens, Tibet und Buddhismus

of Vienna University.

Tibetologists at the university immediately sent a picture of the image on offer to Min Bahadur Shakya of the Nagarjuna Institute in Kathmandu, who confirmed that it was indeed a Buddha from Nag Bahal.

"I checked with three other stolen Patan Buddhas, and it was very clear that it was one of ours," an ecstatic Shakya told us. "We only hear about idol thefts, we rarely hear of stolen religious artifacts being recovered. It is a very happy day for us."

What saved the Buddha was some fast footwork between Schicklgruber at the Ethnographic Museum, the University and Shakya in Kathmandu. This evidence was sufficient to convince the Austrian public prosecutor to

confiscate the image on suspicion of being stolen property. A case against the German gallery has been filed in Vienna. Currently Austrian police are working with their German colleagues and the Royal Nepalese Embassy in Berlin to pursue the case.

From archive material of *Nepali Times* of the past 20 years, site search: www.nepalitimes.com



ONLINE PACKAGES



Nepal has over 100 ethnicities, each with its own food culture. As the identity, religion, ethnicity, and beliefs of the communities are intrinsically connected to food, it is imperative to understand and preserve Nepal's food culture, writes Prashanta Khanal of Raitane restaurant and author of recent book *Timmur*. Watch the video and read excerpt from book and profile on *pages 6-7*.



People with disabilities are already at the margins but even among those who are differently-abled, people with deafness or those hard of hearing are often invisible. Nepal's first PhD candidate from the deaf community is now campaigning to promote Sign language. Watch video online, and read up on this often ignored section of the society, their aspirations and challenges on *pages 10-11*.

AIRPORTS

It just opened, and it is already too small ('Bhairawa's new airport already too small', *Nepali Times*, #1111)? Didn't they know it would be small before the project even started?

Deepak Pradhan

- Oh, for goodness sake. Did no one know any engineers at the start of a project?

Jackie Taylor

- This is an airport born out of political leaders' need for popularity and votes. No plan has gone into this. Nepal's might not understand the technical stuff, but in time they will come to understand how unnecessary this airport was.

Ma Ho Nepali

- Who were the designers of the airport?

Sujala Pant

- There has to be a proper solution for this ('Building Nijgad, come what may', *Aria Shree Parasai*, #1111)! Also, has tCAAN studied demand for another international airport? News reports show that Gautam Buddha airport is having difficulty getting airlines to use the airpot. Not sure how they are going to convince others.

Raz Tuladhar

BALEN SHAH

The most encouraging thing I've read on Nepali Politics in a very long time ('Kathmandu's 'Balen Phenomenon', *Sarala Gautam*, www.nepalitimes.com).

Aleksandr Verkovsyn

- A book cannot be judged by its cover and your work is judged based on your final input. Best of luck.

AiMan Tamang

- I really loved reading this. People, whether they are in favour of or against Balen, should read it once.

Rakesh Parajuli

- I don't think this is an oped. This is a fact.

Ram Chamling

MARRIAGE

Good idea. Nepal will never achieve high enough economic growth to provide for its people anyway ('Why are some Nepali women not getting married?', *Anjana Rajbhandary*, www.nepalitimes.com).

Daniel James Murphy

- Interesting, and hopeful article. No one should be forced to marry. And every woman should be equal when it comes to financial issues, and how they want to live their lives.

Lena Monika Gilbertsson

LOCAL POLLS

These elections are about nothing more than fat, greedy and corrupt getting/keeping their snouts in the trough of the public purse. ('Local polls, national impact', Editorial, #1111). Same as it ever was. To the ruling elite - Nepali citizens only matter for their votes

Alex Ferguson

ABSENTEE VOTING

Voting in national elections should be possible at embassies. ('We are treated like ATMs', *Hoang Chu*, nepalitimes.com)

Saral Israel

Times.com

WHAT'S TRENDING



Building Nijgad, come what may

by *Aria Shree Parasai*

As the date for a final Supreme Court ruling approaches, uncertainty once more shrouds the \$3.5 billion Nijgad international airport project. Despite its environmental cost, Nepal's politicians are united in supporting the big airport. Read the investigative report online.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook



Telling the story of Buddha's Lumbini

by *Sahina Shrestha*

The story of Siddhartha Gautam is much more than just of Lumbini alone. If Nepal is to holistically commemorate the Buddha's life, it has to have an integrated approach, and include other sites over the Greater Lumbini Area. Visit nepalitimes.com for the full story.

t Most popular on Twitter

Bhairawa's new airport already too small

by *Nepali Times*

Bhairawa International Airport was inaugurated on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti. But the new airport, with its small terminal and apron is already too small for widebody jets to be a viable alternative international airport to Kathmandu. Join the online discussion.

“” Most commented



Kathmandu's 'Balen Phenomenon'

by *Sarala Gautam*

Balen Shah is surging ahead in the vote count for mayor of Kathmandu. His strong showing suggests that not just the people of Kathmandu, but Nepalis in general will vote for alternative candidates given the choice. Follow us on our social media platforms for latest developments.

🔴 Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
Bhairawa's New Airport Already Too Small
Design flaws and bad planning limit Benefits of #Nepal's 2nd international Airport.

Dinesh @GoGreenDinesh
How can they be this incompetent? How? Int'l airport is not a joke.

Suman @SumanPradhan66
Easy fix: build a turnaround bay at runway 28. But the bigger problem is southern neighbour's refusal to grant approach privileges from west.

Dirghayu @Dirghayu08
No one considers it as an alternative international airport to Kathmandu....it's just just a regional international airport...

Surja Karki @SurjaKarki
Pokhara will also take some load till निजगढ comes into operation.

Krishna Joshi @krishna_joshi01
Based on high level/back of the envelope calculations this translates into ~1.5 flights per hour assuming 150 passengers per flight on average & the airport is open 24 hours. How many does TIA get right now? I say, let's do the 2M/year first & then see how it goes.

Nepali Times @NepaliTimes
#editorial How not to be a Sri Lanka
#Nepal's disease may not be as severe as #SriLanka's, but the symptoms are the same.

Bishow Parajuli @BishowParajuli
Indeed, prudent leadership actions will be the key!

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“The economy is in trouble, but no need to panic just yet”

Nepal is not Sri Lanka but the economic and political crisis in the island nation has lessons for us

Nepal's media has been rife with comparisons between Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Madhu Kumar Marasini, Secretary at the Ministry of Finance dispels doubts as Nepalis raise questions about the state of the economy.

Nepali Times: Is Nepal going to be a Sri Lanka?

Madhu Marasini: Nepal's economy cannot be compared to Sri Lanka. Nepal has historically mobilised enough resources to prevent itself from going bankrupt.

As of January, Nepal has foreign exchange reserves worth Rs11.71 trillion, while the national debt stands at about Rs40.5 billion, which means we are able to pay interest on foreign loans. Whereas, Sri Lanka's foreign debt obligations for this year is over \$7 billion against its foreign reserves at \$50.

The nature of foreign loans taken by Nepal is also different from Sri Lanka, in that Nepal hasn't taken out large loans or loans with high interest. Moreover, Nepal collects 23% revenue on its GDP, which becomes government spending.

However, what has happened in Sri Lanka has lessons for Nepal, what kinds of loans to take, to what extent tax should be exempt, and

the consequences of indiscriminate grants.

Why doesn't the government have policies to address foreign exchange reserves, lack of liquidity and inflation?

Nepalis living abroad sent significant remittances back home during the pandemic, this meant our foreign reserves remained unchanged compared to pre-Covid days not because our exports increased. So when the worst of the pandemic was over and economic activity resumed, imports surged to meet rising demand, putting pressure on our foreign reserves.

At present, we have discouraged the import of luxury goods to reduce the pressure on foreign reserves. Additionally, remittance accounts are now being given 1% more interest, and non-resident Nepalis can open remittance accounts by simply depositing \$1,000 virtually.

The hundi remittance network was shut off during the Covid lockdowns. Nepali banks have been encouraged to expand services abroad so that remittance can come through official channels. We are also discussing setting quotas for overseas Nepalis that enable them to obtain shares in companies that facilitate remittances officially.



As far as the liquidity of the banking sector is concerned, credit flow increased although deposits did not go up significantly and has exceeded Rs4.7 trillion, while the size of our economy is Rs4.26 trillion.

Demand for loans increased as economic activity picked up after the pandemic. The refinancing services provided by Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) also increased loans, whereas concessional loans also saw

a significant rise. We have proposed increasing interest rates on loans to reduce demand. Moreover, the local elections have increased public and private spending as well as the budget, which is expected to ease liquidity crises.

It would be better to set up stricter rules for loans now, lest Nepalis have to give up their property and livelihoods to the bank in the future due to bad debts.

Lastly, we have set a 6%

inflation target, but that will be challenging to maintain. Because inflation is not just unique to Nepal — it is the result of the disruption in the global supply chain. Demand has grown significantly in the wake of the pandemic, and has been exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine — particularly the price of fuel. Rising fuel prices have a domino effect, leading to an increase in transportation and industry costs, as well as commodity prices.

prabhu BANK

Arun-4

Nepal Electricity Authority and India's Sutlej Hydropower Corporation will jointly build the Rs79.12 billion Arun-4 hydropower project in eastern Nepal which will generate 2.14 billion units of hydroelectricity a year. As per the agreement, Nepal will get 21.9% of free energy from the 695MW project and 49% share ownership while Sutlej gets 51%, locals receive 10% and the general public 15%. The agreement was signed in the presence of Prime Ministers Deuba and Modi in Lumbini on 13 May. The two leaders also discussed building the much-delayed West Seti reservoir project in western Nepal from which India will get electricity and regulated water.

AnadoluJet to Milan

AnadoluJet, an affiliate of Turkish Airlines, has started daily flights from Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen airport to Milan Bergamo in Italy. Speaking at the Bergamo inaugural flight ceremony, Turkish Airlines Chief Commercial Officer Kerem Sarp said:



“AnadoluJet is a successful brand of Turkish Airlines and will not only contribute to the promotion of one of Europe's boutique and unique cities, but also provide new routes for an easy reach via Istanbul to many domestic and international destinations.”

Wildlife custodians

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Nepal marked its 29th anniversary on 19 May with a celebration of the doubling of the country's tiger population and zero rhino poaching. Three WWF Nepal Conservation



awards were given to Purnam Basnet, Basanta Pratap Singh and Nepal Knotcraft. It also inducted a new advisory board with Lisa Choegyal, Anil Chitrakar and Kunda Dixit.

Honda scheme

Honda has started a new scheme under which customers buying new two wheelers can get a cashback worth Rs100,000. Additionally, seven people will be chosen through a lucky draw to win Samsung A50 mobile phones and AMC coupons, and one will receive a cash prize of Rs700,000. The scheme is valid until May.

Shivapuri Clean-up

Clean-up Nepal with the European Union organised a litter clearing campaign on Shivapuri last week. There were 130 volunteers who brought down 153kg of waste.

Hyatt Casino Marina

City Hotel limited has signed a casino lease agreement with Rank Entertainment holdings, a conglomerate with over 15 casinos, for a outlet at Hyatt Place Hotel in Tahachal.

RayZR in Nepal

MAY Enterprises, the official distributor of Yamaha in Nepal has launched the RayZR scooter. It gives 58 kmpl in the 125cc segment and also comes with various parking, locative and rider friendly features.



Helping hands

Himalaya Airlines this week provided educational supplies including course books, notebooks, registers and stationary items to the 26 children that the non-profit Prayas Nepal supports. The children also interacted with the cockpit and cabin crew of the airlines.

iPhone winner

Nabeen Subedi is the winner of Salesberry's 'Shop and Win' scheme held last month. Subedi had shopped at the chain's Lalitpur branch and received an iPhone 13 Promax.

Online payment

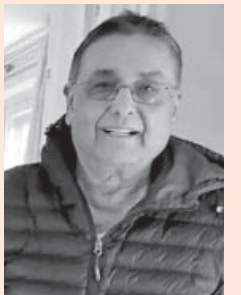
Global IME Bank and Nepal Clearing House have agreed to operate a QR payment facility for the first phase of the National Payment Switch Program. With this, government and semi-government bill payment, credit card bill payment, insurance fee payment, and share transaction payment will be available in its mobile banking app Global Smart Plus.

Everest Nepal Pay

Everest Bank has integrated NEPALPAY QR into its mobile banking app EBL Touch 24 where customers can scan and make payments through QR.

TR Upadhyay, 73

One of Nepal's most-respected chartered accountants, Tirtha Raj Upadhyay died on 13 May after an accident in Washington DC. Upadhyay, 73, was descending the stairs of a shopping centre in Clarksburg, Maryland, when he fell and suffered severe head trauma. He died 30 hours later. Upadhyay founded the TR Upadhyay & Co firm and was held in high regard for his professionalism and integrity. He was involved with the global consulting firm KPMG in the reforms of Nepal Bank Ltd and Rastriya Banijya Bank.



At present, there also seems to be little coordination between the Finance Ministry, the NRB and the National Planning Commission.

The Ministry of Finance, the central Bank and the Planning Commission have been holding discussions to assess the economy and find solutions to problems. We believed increased imports would mean increased economic activity, but our foreign exchange reserves could not sustain that. Additionally, we also could not have predicted global crisis such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

There were other inconsistencies in the economy. For example, there is a widespread misuse of loans, Nepalis have been taking out agricultural loans to invest in real estate. There has been increased spending in luxury goods, and instances of smuggling gold and silver to other countries. This created a perfect storm even as we were working on a long-term economic plan.

Has the government failed to curb uncontrolled debt?

In retrospect, it would be fair to say that Nepal's policies regarding credit flow have been liberal to the detriment of the country. Credit flow needs to be controlled, because the increase has not had a positive effect on product expansion or economic growth. There is excessive monetisation in Nepal, which the 2008 global financial crisis taught us is risky.

The agricultural credit that we prioritised and subsidised has been unproductive. Questions have been raised about NRB's capacity to oversee the payment of such loans. There is a need to increase the capacity to supervise and monitor credit flow.

How will the import control policy be effective when it reduces government revenue?

The NRB has urged banks to maintain discipline while distributing loans to make them accountable, and has suggested to tighten the import of luxury goods for the time being, not halt them altogether. The decision whether to stop or continue imports lies with the government, not the NRB.

What is astonishing is that the demand for imports and loans should decrease across the world as interest rates on loans increase, but that has not been the case in Nepal. Which is why we are thinking of employing financial tools and not just monetary ones. However, we are trying to find a middle ground, as there is the risk of a double whammy to the economy if both revenue as well as foreign exchange is lost.

What if imports continue to grow at the current rate while foreign exchange reserves go down?

The problem is not unsolvable. This monsoon, we will have upwards of 800MW of surplus electricity. This is an opportunity for us to transition to electric transport and industry.

Furthermore, as our ability to repay our debt increases, development partners will not provide grants but loans. This will further increase our national debt in the coming years. Failure to take advantage of our agriculture, hydropower and tourism sector to increase domestic production will indeed lead to another crisis in the near future.

Why has not there been any initiative to check tax evasion?

Ours is a liberal economy, and as such, the government always seeks honesty rather than control. Yes, the hundi network may have led to

low invoicing at customs. But due to VAT, those evading taxes will most probably be caught by the time they reach the market even if they are able to avoid paying tax at customs.

Nepal's tax rate, considering its GDP, is higher than other Asian countries. The system that is in place is working, and it is strong.

Shouldn't the government be more frugal?

I agree that the government has not been disciplined in its spending. But the expansion of our local governments has increased expenditure in recent years.

The Finance Ministry has issued an austerity policy against the establishment of new organisations, the operation of gatherings and seminars, foreign trips by authorities, and more. However, the onus of its implementation does not lie with the ministry alone, but with all government bodies.

If the budget cannot be implemented efficiently, doesn't it make sense to change our spending system?

Yes, the current system needs to be changed. While we prepare the budget, the focus now should be on completing existing projects rather than adding new ones that we lack manpower and resources to undertake.

However, ad hocism will prevent us from making improvements to our expenditure. Indeed, we had consulted with the other ministries and set a target spending of 10% of the budget every month after September this year, but no one followed through, and eventually, all the criticism fell on the Finance Ministry.

What does the forthcoming budget offer in order to tackle the current economic crisis?

Traditional budgets do not work in times of crises, and the forthcoming one will have to reflect that fact. We will need to begin with the effective implementation of federalism, in that we will decentralise expenditure so that provinces and local governments implement necessary projects. The finance minister is clear on this.

Secondly, agriculture, tourism, hydropower and entrepreneurship will be prioritised in order to increase domestic production, improve exports and discourage imports to stimulate the economy.

How will you dispel doubts about Nepal's economy?

The economy runs on confidence. Comparing our economy to Sri Lanka and perpetuating fear will get it into more trouble. The macroeconomic indicators of our economy remain positive.

The government is not in favour of creating havoc in the market by unnecessarily stopping imports and creating an environment where Nepalis have to line up to buy consumer goods. But Nepalis should begin buying Nepali goods, and should be disciplined enough to reduce the consumption of foreign luxury goods.

We have learned that the economy will not be sustainable unless we increase our capacity to produce. Moreover, our export is much less than import.

The economy is not in a favourable position, but there is no need to panic. We are not in a crisis, and we will not be in the future. The government's short-term policies haven't made the economy any worse. Our problems will not be solved overnight, but we have taken the initiative to find necessary solutions.

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12 YEARS
WARRANTY

FLAVOURS from NEPAL

Introduction to its diversity,
history and ingenuity

● Prashanta Khanal

Growing up in a family composed of two cultures, I learned to juxtapose the differing cultures of my parents through food, and understand and appreciate their contrasts. My mother's Newa community reveres alcohol and buffalo meat, which are integral to the culture and even offered to the gods. But my father's Brahmin community abstains from alcohol and buffalo meat as these are considered impure and socially unacceptable. The two societies celebrate festivals and rituals in different ways and have varied food traditions.

Despite these differences, my family embraces both cultures. I grew up blending the two food cultures and traditions together. Food is the epitome of culture, and in Nepal it has deep cultural and religious significance, being the defining feature of cultural identity.

Nepal has over 100 different castes and ethnicities, each with its own food culture deeply rooted within its own socio-ecological milieu. Because of its geographical variance, Nepal has a great variety of flora and fauna, including crops and animals that are raised for food, which in turn has led to variegated cuisine.

Many indigenous communities in Nepal have their own culinary practices that are largely defined by the environment they live in, the availability of resources, the state of the economy, and centuries of history.

But little is written about the wonderful variety of food cultures across these ethnicities, and Nepali cuisine is largely represented by a handful of recipes.

In addition to indigenous practices, migration, trade, and cross-border influences have also shaped Nepal's gastronomy. For centuries, Nepalis have engaged in trade between the Tibetan Plateau and the Gangetic Plains. While many of Nepal's valleys and mountains appear isolated, traditional recipes are a testament to the movement of people and cross-cultural exchanges.

The Tarai's food culture relates to North India as it is historically, geographically, and culturally contiguous. The food in Nepal's northern hinterland is closer to Tibet. Over the years, many Tibetan and Indian communities have also migrated to Nepal, bringing along their recipes.

Muslim communities, some of which came from Kashmir and Central Asia, have also blended their cuisines with local practices, customs, and ingredients.

In Nepal, food practices are linked to one's religion, caste, and ethnicity. Hindus from supposedly 'upper-caste' households categorise foods according to *chokho* (pure) and *bitulo* (impure).

For instance, *kodo* (finger millet) is considered impure and abstained during religious ceremonies. Whereas for other groups, millet is a staple and also made into alcohol that is offered to ancestral deities. Alcohol and pork



consumption is a defining feature of non-Hindu ethnicities and the 'lower-castes'.

In a society stratified by caste and class, some food practices are used as a tool for discrimination and social exclusion. The upper-caste not only dictate the supremacy of their social norms but also their food culture. They look down upon those who eat pig and buffalo, and drink alcohol. What you eat has

historically defined class and vice versa. The Dalit are considered the 'lowest' in the caste hierarchy.

As with most cultures around the world, the social practice of eating together is at the centre of festivities and celebrations in Nepal. Kathmandu's Newa community celebrates numerous festivals and jatras (chariot processions or carnivals), and for each celebration, a *bhoye* (feast) is

an indispensable element.

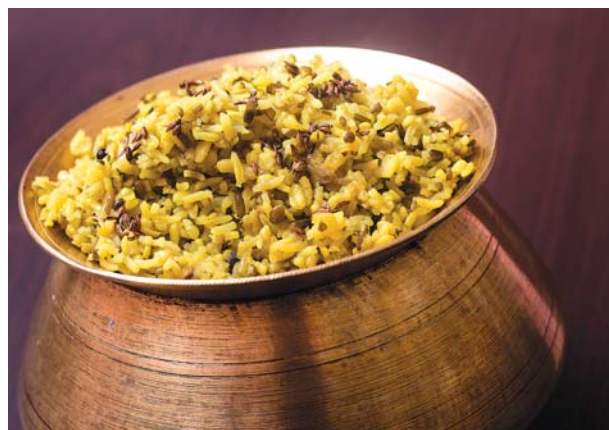
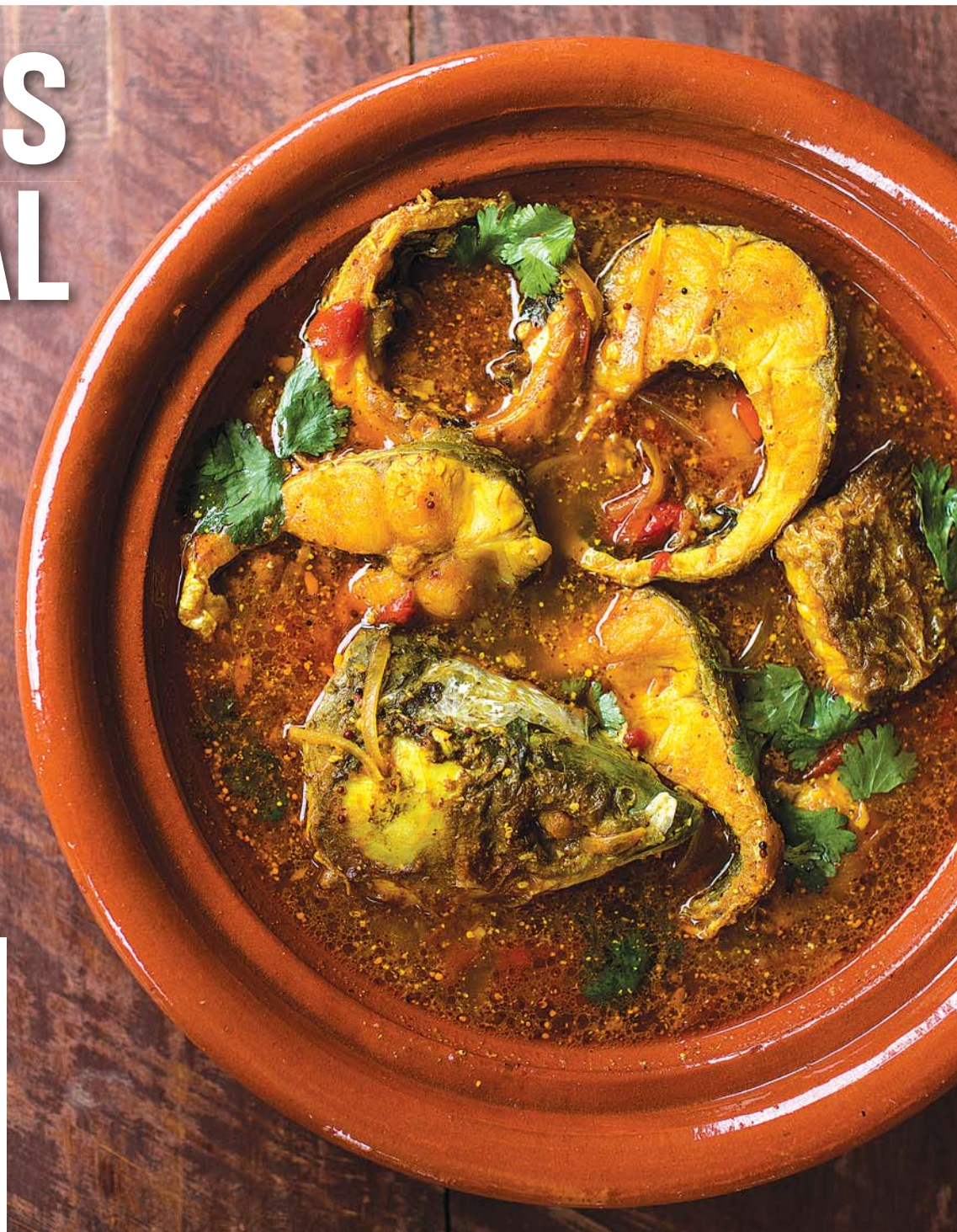
The largest Hindu festival Dasain, the Sakela festival of the Kirats, and many others are celebrations of planting and harvesting of crops that follow the monsoon cycle. In fact, monsoon shapes the ways of life in Nepal. Yomari Punhi, a Newa festival that involves eating *yomari* (a steamed rice flour cake filled with sweet molasses), and Nwagi, a festival

offering the new harvest to ancestral deities before consuming in many communities, are essentially harvest celebrations.

At times, precise delicacies are designated for specific festivals and they pay close attention to seasonally available produce. During the winter festival of Maghe Sankranti, varieties of tubers such as sweet potato, yam, and taro are consumed alongside ghee and processed jaggery in the belief that they prevent colds.

In recent decades, dal-bhat-tarkari, commonly referred to as *khana* (also the word for 'food'), has become a staple meal across Nepal. *Dal* is lentil or bean soup, *bhat* is cooked rice, and *tarkari* is cooked vegetable. The meal is at times accompanied by a meat curry and often eaten with a fermented or freshly-made *achar* as relish.

However, many mountain communities traditionally did not eat rice as a staple. Buckwheat, barley, and naked barley once





PHOTOS: NABIN BARAL AND GAGAN THAPA

made up the daily diets of the Sherpa, Tamang, and Thakali. The Newa, Magar, and Gurung consumed millet and maize as their primary staples. Apart from rice, maize, buckwheat, millet, and other grains are usually ground into flour and made into *roti* (unleavened flatbread) and *dhindo* (thick porridge). In the Himalayan region, *tsampa* (roasted barley or naked barley flour) is a staple and is usually eaten with *su-cha* (salty butter tea).

As rice has become more mainstream and commercially available, it has displaced other traditional and nutritious staple grains such as millet, buckwheat, barley, sorghum, and amaranth. Unfortunately, even many of the local rice varieties are being replaced by commercial varieties.

Foraging and hunting still contribute a significant portion to diets. In the mountainous regions where less fertile soil and harsh climates mean crops cannot support

residents all year round, foraging is essential to meet local needs.

The food culture of the Tharus is inextricably linked to rivers, ponds, canals, and swamps. In the mid-hills, along with fishes, *paha* (freshwater Himalayan frogs) are delicacies of the Magar and Gurung.

Insects, on the other hand, are only sparsely consumed now. Such indigenous foraging practices are regrettably disappearing.

Until recently, Nepalis ate meat occasionally, generally during festivals and celebrations. Buffalo meat is of particular importance to the Newa community. Many hill communities have a variety of pork-based recipes. Yaks, mountain goats, and sheep are reared for meat in the mountainous region. *Khasi* (castrated goat) and chicken are common and consumed by most communities.

Some indigenous groups traditionally ate beef, but cow slaughter was outlawed in the early 19th century by the Hindu

monarchy, and it remains proscribed today.

Milk and dairy products such as ghee, yoghurt, and buttermilk are essential in the cuisines of Hindu Khas-Pahadi, Maithil, Sherpa, and other mountainous communities, which historically followed pastoral traditions.

Fermenting, smoke-drying, and sun-drying are common in Nepali food culture, which probably came from the need to preserve food. Fermented *achar* is also an attempt to preserve food. Vegetables such as radish, cauliflower, *lapsi* (Nepali hog plum), bamboo shoots, and chillies are pickled and stored.

The Rais and Limbus ferment soybeans to make *kinema* and then dry it for later use. Gundruk (sun-dried fermented greens) and *masyaura* (sun-dried black lentil paste and taro leaf nuggets) are widely prepared for preserving greens for the dry season.

The Thakali sun-dry buckwheat greens and ground them to make *dhopra*, which is consumed as a soup. The Tharu preserve greens for the monsoon season when the fields are flooded and greens are scarce.

While in some communities, their economic prosperity and agricultural abundance have added richness to food; in others, limited crop diversity and the necessity for preservation have led to the development of unique delicacies and flavours.

A wide variety of spices, herbs, and flavouring ingredients used in cooking also reflects the richness of Nepali flavours. Mustard oil, ghee, and preserved animal fat have been used as cooking mediums and flavouring ingredients since ancient times. But today, the use of industrially processed sunflower and soybean oil is widespread.

Spices such as garlic, ginger, onion, coriander, cumin, turmeric, and chilli are commonly used across Nepal, but there are also many lesser-known spices and flavouring ingredients distinctive to communities or regions. The Sherpas use the whey dregs of buttermilk, known as *serkam*. They also ferment it to make *somar*, and milk cream to make *shosim*, both of which add a sharp pungent flavour to soups and *achar*.

In Nepal's western parts, *bhang* (hemp seeds) is widely used to make *achar*. The Tharu of the eastern Tarai use *aalash* (flaxseeds) to flavour curries and *achar*. *Timmur* and *jimbu* (aromatic wild Himalayan allium) are among the important flavouring ingredients in Thakali cuisine, and also commonly used by hill communities. The Kirat burnt ash from a rooster's inner feathers to use as flavouring to make a delicacy known as *wachipa* or *wamrik*.

Nepali cuisine is characterised by the one quality that distinguishes almost every facet of Nepali life: its diversity. With wide geographic variance, ethnic diversity, rich culture and heritage, Nepali food culture is intricately and extraordinarily unique. Nepal has managed to carve out a unique niche for itself, borrowing not just from its neighbours, but also cultures farther afield.

The identity, culture, religion, ethnicity, and beliefs of the communities are connected to food, it is imperative to understand and preserve Nepal's food culture. 🇳🇵

Excerpt from Prashanta Khanal's book Timmur: Stories and Flavors of Nepal.



Nepal has over 100 ethnicities, each with its own food culture. As the identity, religion, ethnicity, and beliefs of the communities are intrinsically connected to food, it is imperative to understand and preserve Nepal's food culture, writes Prashanta Khanal of Raithaane restaurant and author of recent book *Timmur*.

Recipe for Nepali culinary diversity

● Sahina Shrestha

In a country where *khana khanu bhayo* is an everyday greeting, dal-bhat is the default meal. So much so that there are even t-shirts with the words 'Dal-bhat Power 24 hour'.

And if rice and lentils is the staple lunch and dinner, momo is the ultimate afternoon snack. From the plains to mountains, dumplings are ubiquitous with variations in the filling and the sauce. But with over 100 ethnic communities, Nepali food is more than just dal-bhat and momo, and Prashanta Khanal's new cookbook *Timmur: Stories and Flavors of Nepal* highlights this culinary diversity. With selected recipes from 12 ethnic groups, the book collects some unknown and overlooked dishes from around the country.

Growing up in an intercultural family with a Newa mother and a Brahmin father, Khanal's tryst with food began early on (*Excerpt from book, left*). With working parents and a mother who strictly followed the Hindu dictum of not entering the kitchen while menstruating, the responsibility of cooking for siblings often fell on Khanal's shoulders.

"Coming from a multi-cultural family helped me understand Nepal's cultural diversity and the different food cultures," says Khanal. "My father's side of the family considers eating buffalo meat and alcohol a sin, my mother's side of the family offers them to the gods."

But it was in the early 2010s, upon returning from Indonesia, that he realised how vast the dimension of Nepali cuisine really is.

"In Indonesia I had come across *tempeh*, a traditional Indonesian dish made from fermented soybeans. When I came back to Nepal, I came across our own *kinema*, and that changed the way I looked at Nepal's cuisines."

In 2013, Khanal started thegundruk.com, a food blog reflecting his passion for Nepali culture and food. He has also written columns on food for *The Kathmandu Post* and is a partner in Raithaane, a restaurant promoting and preserving the Nepali food heritage.

Khanal who also works on environment and sustainability believes food should be sustainable as well. "Everyone should know how to cook and grow their own food," he says. At Raithaane, ingredients and produce are sourced from all over Nepal.

For those who have followed Khanal's work over the years, some of the content may look familiar. His initial idea was to collect recipes and publish them in an e-book format, but it was eventually turned into a book comprising over a 100 recipes.

Named after the 'Sichuan pepper' spice known for its unique aroma and taste, *Timmur* showcases the diversity in Nepal's gastronomy. The author travelled across the country to hunt down recipes and consulted friends and families to learn about ingredients and special dishes served in certain festivities and seasons.

In the introduction, Khanal delves into Nepal's ethnicities and finds the dots to connect them to each other, as well as with other parts of the world.

The chapters are separated according to ethnic communities: Newari, Rai & Limbu, Thakali, Tharu & Maithil, Sherpa, Tamang & Tibetan, Magar & Gurung, Khas

cusines, Author's Flavours, and a dedicated chapter to Achaar.

Each part begins with an overview of the culture and the author's connection with it. Every recipe has an introduction of the dish, giving the book a very 2000s blog-like feel. Not surprising, considering the author's background.

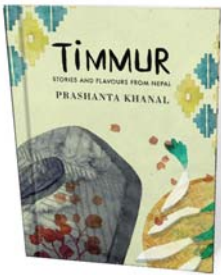
There are some hidden gems, others familiar or completely unknown. Ubahang Nembang has done a beautiful job with the minimalistic layout and illustrations, and Nabin Baral and Gagan Thapa's photography jump out of the pages looking mouthwateringly delicious.

The success of a cookbook depends on how easy the recipes are to follow. After spending a lazy afternoon cooking three dishes: *Rikikur* (savory potato pancakes), *Babar* (deep-fried rice flour roti) and *Rukh Kataharko Tarkari* (Jackfruit curry), this reviewer can attest that the recipes are beginner-friendly.

Those more used to selecting dishes based on the total cook time may be disappointed, as the book does not mention any. But Khanal proposes that readers and cooks use the book more as a guide than a checklist. "Cooking is about the experience, the feel," he says.

Some of the recipes do require specific methods, and bit of patience hunting for the right ingredients. But that is the beauty of cooking (and eating), exploring smells, tastes and textures one is not familiar with.

While the author is the first to admit that his cook book does not represent the entirety of Nepali cuisine, it is a fine example of what Nepal has to offer, and perhaps a step towards having more than dal-bhat and momo represent Nepal in the world's gastronomic atlas. 🇳🇵



Timmur: Stories and Flavors of Nepal
By Prashanta Khanal
Fine Print 2022
297 pages
Regular hardback Rs2,500
Special hardback with slipcase Rs3,000

EVENTS



Wilderness First Aid
Planning a trip up the mountains this spring trekking season? You might want to join the Wilderness first aid course by the Himalayan Medics.
23-24 May, Course Fee: Rs9040 (01) 4433515

Human Books Fest
Participate in the Mid-Towners Human Books Fest organised by the Rotaract Club and listen to distinguished speakers at the event.
Registration link: <https://bit.ly/3PslpP7>
21 May, 10am-3pm, Rs100, Kantipur Dental college



Blood donation
Participate in RSTCA foundation's health camp and blood donation program, monitor your vitals and help save a life.
28 May, 8am-6pm, Nil Saraswatisthan, Lazimpot

5k Run
Ultra Runners Nepal is hosting 5k Kageshwori-Manohara run this Saturday. Register at <https://bit.ly/3G2d3uE>
21 May, Rs1,000, Kageshwori Manohara Park, Bhaktapur, 9843492123

Go local carnival
Promote Nepali brand and products, shop at Go local carnival by Brand Nepal this weekend.
21 May, 12pm onwards, Bhanimandal, 9808274924

DINING



European bakery
Is a loved one's birthday coming up, or need a just-because cake? Order from Baker's Den. Or get freshly baked doughnut, muffins, and bread.
Baluwatar, (01) 4422047

MUSIC

Himalayan flavor III
Head to Purple Haze rock bar and attend the Himalayan flavor III launching the 3rd CD compilation album of Nepali artists and bands Kaal Nude Terror and Chainov dogs.
28 May, 2m-5pm, Ticket: Rs300-500, Purple Haze Rock Bar, Thamel, 9817197022

Music concert
Take your family out to dinner at Hard Rock Café this Friday as they introduce budding new artists and yet to be discovered local bands.
20 May, 8.30pm-10.30pm, Sherpa Mall



Adele tribute
A fan of Adele's or of soulful music that speaks to your heart? Look nowhere and book a ticket for a tribute show at LOD for next week.
4 June, 3pm onwards, Thamel

Music classes
Sign up to learn Bansuri, Madal, Tabla and Western interments like Piano, Guitar, Drum, Bass, Saxophone and Violin at Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. Call for more details.
(01)5443554, 9813556945



Phiroj Shyangden
Spend your weekend with friends at Moksh this weekend where Phiroj Shyangden is performing live. Enjoy the music, foods and drinks.
21 May, 7pm onwards, Rs500, Jhamsikhel

Kunga
Craving some Chinese? Kunga will deliver. Don't miss out on the hotpot, peanut chicken and shredded potatoes.
8am-9pm, Boudha, (01) 4915117



Kotheys
A new go to place for mouthwatering Chinese street food. Don't miss the sweet and spicy noodles and Kothey mo:mos.
Pimbahal, 9886624633

About Town

GETAWAY



The Pavilions
Luxury eco resort with boutique villas, swimming pool, organic farm, restaurant lounge and bar. For refreshing morning walks, therapeutic and relaxing day-ins, authentic gastronomical experience and quiet nights.
Chisapani, Pokhara, (061) 694379

Bandipur Kaushi Inn
A small, rustic place to stay in the idyllic village of Bandipur, replete with cultural diversity and traditional architecture.
Bandipur, Tanahu, (065) 520083



Hotel country villa
Perched atop the Nagarkot hill and surrounded by lush greenery, Hotel Country Villa offers spectacular mountain views and inspirational sunrise and sunset. A relaxing retreat for those wishing to escape the pandemonium of the city.
Nagarkot (01) 4700305, 9851192106

Gaida Wildlife Camp
Bordering the rhino zone of the Chitwan National Park, the camp will allow one to reconnect with nature. Drive to Sauraha, and the Camp folks will take it from there.
Chitwan, (01) 4215409/ 4215431

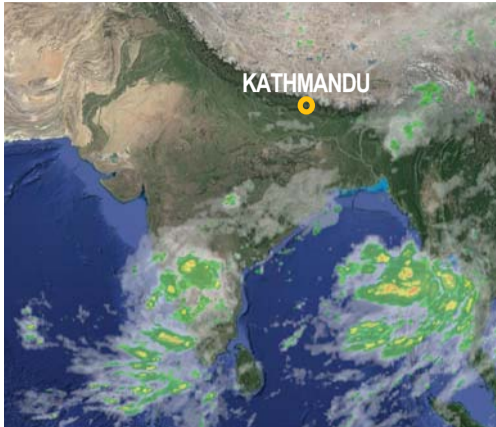
Newa Chén
A hotel that is reminiscent of the golden Malla era. The open rooms and courtyards embody the palaces from where the monarchs once ruled the city.
Kobahal, Lalitpur (01) 5533532



Achaar Ghar
Don't want to make lunch? Head to Achaar Ghar which has the best assortment of pickles prepared from recipes handed down from one generation to another.
Jhamsikhel, Pulchok, (01) 5541952

Taza Treats
For the best Syrian treats and delicacies in town, visit Taza Treats. Don't miss out on the baklavas.
Jhamsikhel, 9801114002

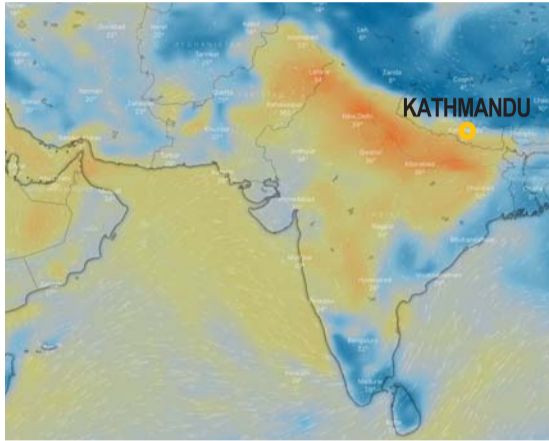
WEEKEND WEATHER



The forecast from the Dept of Hydrology and Meteorology is that the monsoon may be two weeks ahead of schedule. This means the rains from the Bay will arrive by the first week of June. The pre-monsoon showers will continue into this week and next, with convective cells sweeping across the mountains. The characteristic of this weather pattern is clear bright mornings, hot and humid afternoons with thundershowers in the evenings persisting into the night. Stormy conditions may prevail. Saturday and Sunday could see major cloud buildup and showers in the late afternoon in Kathmandu Valley.



AIR QUALITY INDEX



There is a gigantic dust cloud sweeping across the Arabian Sea and the Subcontinent that started out as a sand storm in Iraq. It picked up more sand over Iran and the India-Pakistan desert and satellite images show it now swirling across central India (*see image*). Prevailing winds from the west are keeping this away from Kathmandu for now, but up-valley breeze in the afternoons will suck the dust into the mountains in the coming days. Combined with the Valley's own suspended particles the Air Quality Index will be in the 'Hazardous' range, although passing showers will temporarily scrub the air clean.

OUR PICK



Netflix's *Our Great National Parks*, the 2022 documentary series narrated by former United States president Barack Obama, takes the audience to magnificent national parks around the globe. The five-part series explores the habitats and habits of some of the world's most isolated wildlife—spanning natural spaces across five continents including Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the Chilean Patagonia, Kenya's Tsavo National Park, California's coastline, and Gunung Leuser National Park in Indonesia.

कोभिड-१९ विरुद्धको खोप सरकारले निःशुल्क लगाइरहेको छ ।

अबैध रुपमा खोप बेच्ने र किनेर लगाउने दुवैलाई प्रचलित कानुन बमोजिम कडा कारवाही हुनेछ ।

कोरोना विरुद्धको खोप बेचबिखन भएको थाहा पाउने जो कोहीले स्थानीय प्रशासन, प्रहरी कार्यालय, पालिका वा स्वास्थ्य कार्यालयमा यथार्थ जानकारी गराउनु हुन अनुरोध छ ।

बजारमा लुकिछिपी बेच्न राखिएका खोपहरु नक्कली हुन सक्छन् ।

कोभिड संक्रमणबाट बच्नको लागि खोपको प्रयोग गर्नु आवश्यक छ ।

कोभिड खोप पाउन नसकेको छ भने

कोभिड खोप पाउनुको लागि



#SERIOUSABOUTBEER

WE PUT SERIOUS HOURS IN YOUR HAPPY HOUR.

Drink responsibly



PHOTOS: MONIKA DEUPALA

● Ashish Dhakal

Sitting cross-legged in the dappled light under a tree outside the Siddhartha Art Gallery, his hand resting on a knee and wearing a black baseball cap, Samridh Mukhiya says, “I am a conceptual artist.” Inside the gallery the walls are lined with canvases in which Mukhiya has sketched pieces plucked delicately from his consciousness. Black ink on white fields give the impression of freshness, the spaces between the lines are mysterious and inviting with leitmotifs: bubbles, wells, trees, machines spewing smoke in the air, geometric shapes, strings.

Born to artist Tek Bir Mukhiya who is renowned for his cover designs for many books by Sajha Prakashan – such as Parijat’s

Sirishko Phool and Devkota’s *Muna Madan* – Mukhiya, 35, admits, “I tend to use metaphors a lot.”

Indeed, the art in the exhibition range from representations of quantum physics to political allegory, from mental health to the zodiac. And the result is as diverse as it is concise, without a hint of self-indulgence – even in the surreal *Things I am grateful for*, which was completed in 2018 as part of the series *Mantra*.

A giant oval face with closed eyes is supported on both sides by two hands. The face is sliced like a clean loaf of bread, but it is unflinching and content. More hands, bonier, hold it up from below: one clutching withered flowers while another appears to be pulling at a loose fabric of skin.

But the drawing is not violent, representing instead people who have had



The imaginarium of Samridh Mukhiya

Artist explores the threads of consciousness in his latest exhibition at Siddhartha Art Gallery

presence in Mukhiya’s life.

“I wanted to show how, even with their own problems, people hold on to us and support us,” explains Mukhiya.

Elsewhere, a humanoid machine, complete with a dizzying assortment of cogs and wheels and four legs, looks at itself in a mirror, while its other hand carries a sleeping child.

Mukhiya explains that this is simple thought exploration of collective consciousness: “I wonder if in future humanity, instead of evolving, transfers its consciousness onto machines.”

The new pilgrim (2012) is more than a sci-fi study: it is also a commentary on present society where humans are encouraged to emulate machines and be mechanical and efficient.

Apparatus (2019), a charcoal on paper explores the deficiencies of systemic rote in education. In what looks like an old, black-and-white class photograph, students and teachers sit in rows, dressed in blazers. A spool of thread twists around them, like prison bars.

But here’s a twist: the students have nails and screws instead of heads. The heads of the teachers are hammers. This is a haunting piece that speaks for itself.

At once spiritual and scientifically curious, *Sapana* (2015) is reminiscent of the films by Terry Gilliam where the lines between fantasy and reality are blurred to the extent that one seamlessly blends into another. A sleeping figure’s mind wanders in fragments to a dreamscape as a gust of wind blows a flurry of leaves that loop around the canvas before finally settling on another tree at the centre.

So much is happening. In the right-top corner, a recently dispossessed bird takes flight with its eyes set on a floating well. A door opens as a cloud of smoke – or are they waves? – billow in the background. Bubbles fly about in silence, like atoms or little pockets of the universe.

Mukhiya explains, “The physical universe outside us is infinite, we can see only a small part. And if we pause and look within, we can see that the universe in us, which is our consciousness, is just as vast and endless.”

Mukhiya’s cerebral work is a testament to his lifelong fascination with life and the interaction between our consciousness and the socio-cultural stage. SAPANA is his 15th show overall and he is not trying to show life the way it is, giving shape to a creative process influenced by discourses on mental health, multiverses, memories. He was most recently part of the ‘Crème de la Crème 2020’ juried exhibition by Visual Arts Guild of Frisco in Texas.

“I think a lot, no matter where I am or what I am doing,” the artist confesses. “And I do not draw or paint to simply draw or paint. I look for a story, an idea, I create narratives, some of which take years to incubate until the right form appears.”

SAPANA is the result of this meditation, an explosive mix of strangeness and calm, like the notion of cosmological singularity or the Big Bang. 🇳🇵

SAPANA
by Samridh Mukhiya
Siddhartha Art Gallery
Baber Mahal Revisited
Monday- Friday, 11AM-5PM

TATA MOTORS
Connecting Aspirations

ALL-NEW H5

THRILL OF 170 PS POWER. COMFORT OF AUTOMATIC.

PANORAMIC SUNROOF

6 SPEED AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION

ESP TERRAIN RESPONSE MODES

BASED ON LAND ROVER'S LEGENDARY D8 PLATFORM



The eyes hear and the hands speak

Nepal's first PhD candidate from the deaf community campaigns to promote Sign language

● Ashish Dhakal

Arjun Shrestha is seated at a café with his wife Jamuna. His eyes take in everything: leaves swaying quietly in the breeze, a waiter shuffling past with a food tray, a sparrow alighting on a nearby chair.

Arjun, 39, has been deaf from birth. His family moved to Jhapa, and schooling became difficult. They finally came across Srijana Secondary School for the Deaf in Pokhara where Arjun began his formal education at the age of six.

No one in his family knew Sign

language. He used to communicate with his sister in home sign, and eventually with everyone through written communication.

All was well in school, he was making friends, learning and growing, but Srijana Secondary at the time had no provision for SLC. A hearing school helped him out, but again in 10+2 he did not have an interpreter.

In 2002, Arjun returned to Srijana Secondary as a teacher where he taught students like himself Sign language and English.

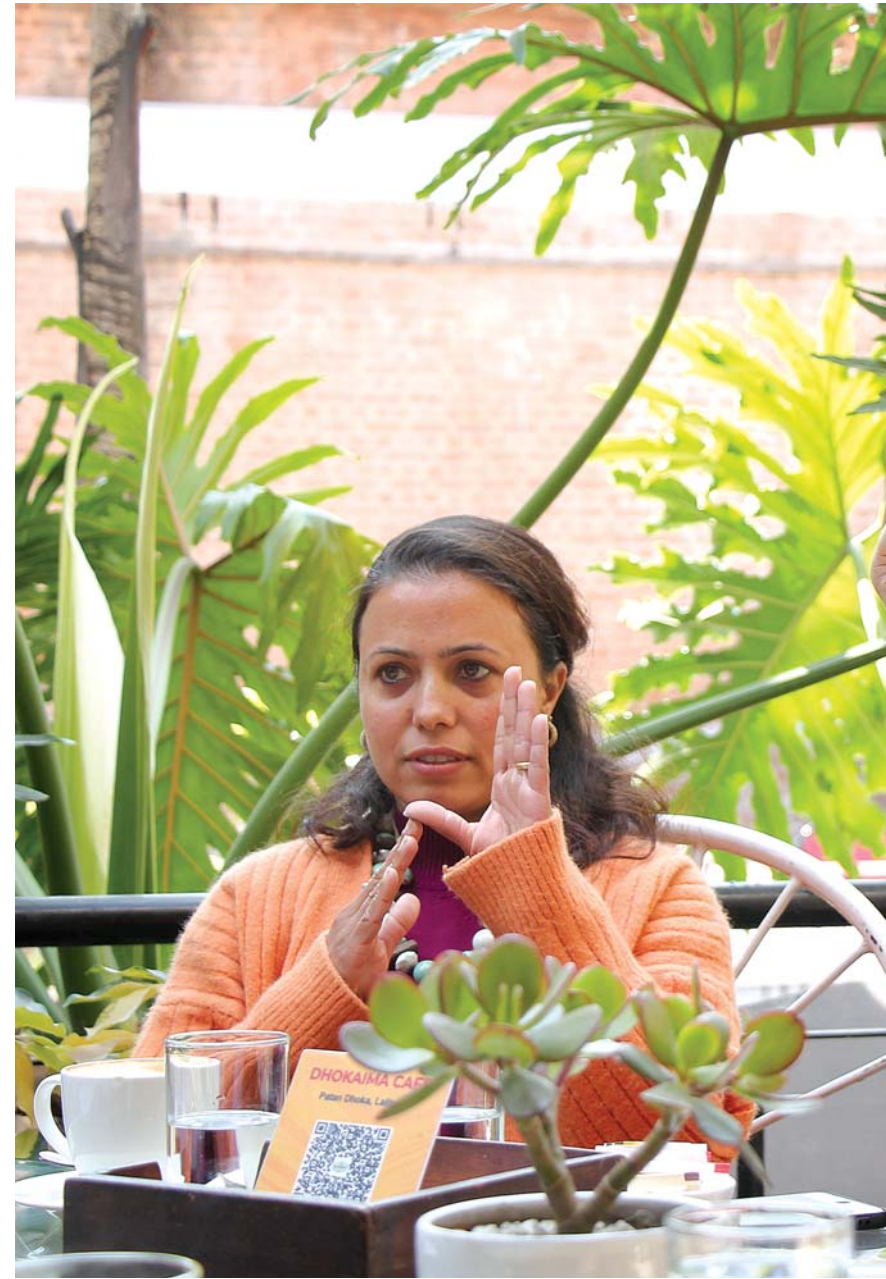
"My aim was always to help improve educational opportunities for the deaf and hard of hearing,

and working directly with children was a great start," Arjun signs through interpreter Akriti Neupane.

In 2011, he was offered a scholarship to study Linguistics and Deaf Education at Gallaudet University in Washington DC, where he realised how much more needed to be done for deaf education back home.

"When education programs for the deaf began in Nepal, we did not have a Sign language, and much was dependent on fingerspelling," Arjun continues.

The first-ever Nepali Sign language dictionary was produced in 1989 by the Kathmandu



From a quiet place



NDFN



and severe is between 60 and 80dB, while more than 80dB is considered profound hearing loss or complete deafness.

The 2011 census estimated that 80,000 Nepalis were deaf or hard of hearing, but K P Adhikari of the National Federation of the Deaf Nepal (NDFN) believes the number is higher.

"As hearing loss is an invisible condition, one

cannot immediately tell if an individual is deaf or hard of hearing," he says, "many people are left out in the census. The figure is closer to 300,000."

This would mean 1% of Nepalis have hearing impairment. Hearing loss can be congenital, or may result from severe illness or accidents.

"If someone is deaf by birth, it is also most likely

that they are unable to speak," says Adhikari. "In other cases, an individual may be able to make sounds but this doesn't mean they will be able to speak."

As children learn to form words and speak by imitation, he adds, an absence of hearing almost always means an absence of speech as well.

"There are options for speech therapy abroad, but this is expensive to bring to Nepal," he explains.

Sarah Giri (pictured) is an advocate for deaf rights, recounts that in many cases hearing impairment is seen as something to be "fixed", leading to a dehumanising experience for the deaf and hard of hearing.

"Sure, to certain extent, therapy can help children lip-read, but that alone is not helpful, and the same goes for cochlear implants," she adds. "True communication can happen only with Sign language."

Giri, who is culturally Deaf, is fluent in Nepali, Indian and American Sign languages. It was a challenge at first, she recalls, especially to train one's eyes to read the gestures, curves and angles. "To sign was not as difficult, but to become an expert reader of what is written in space, you do not get a second chance to read again, unless of course you ask the signer to repeat what they just expressed."

The worlds of the deaf and the hearing are far apart, but it can be broken by learning Sign language.

"It is only a different mode of communication, but

the government calls people who are deaf or hard of hearing disabled while there is nothing disabled about them. If we take the trouble to learn so many foreign languages, why not try a Sign language?" asks Giri, whose Deaf Art and Culture Society is working on leading Sign language learning in the Valley.

The popular system of language and communication which relies on sounds and words caters disproportionately to the convenience of the hearing, since they form the majority. But this is all the more reason why Sign language is important. The NDFN has produced a Sign language dictionary with about 5,000 entries, and also trains interpreters.

The NDFN trained 20 people last year, and another 16 beginners-level interpreters before local elections. It is developing a syllabus and aims to have one interpreter in every local government unit.

Giri adds that when there is no platform to communicate or express, it invites isolation in the world of the deaf.

"Helen Keller said blindness separates people from things, deafness separates people from people," says Giri. "But if you think about it, signs are not so different from how we use sound to talk. They are just different because in the world of the deaf, the eyes hear, and the hands speak."

Ashish Dhakal

अब
मासिक हिमाल
१ जेठदेखि बजारमा ।



हिमाल खबरपत्रिका

नपठी सुखै छैन !



हिमालमिडिया प्रा. लि.
पाटनढोका, ललितपुर



MAHENDRA SINGH LIMBU

Arjun Shrestha, a PhD candidate at the University of Birmingham, with his wife Jamuna in Patan before he left for the UK.

fluent in both Sign languages.

There is no exact count of the number of Sign languages in the world: each country often has its own version. The Indo-Pakistani Sign language is the most used with over 15 million signers.

Back once more in Nepal, he worked with the National Deaf Association on a new app that makes video materials for Sign language education.

Shrestha's current research focuses on the morphology of Nepali Sign language (NSL), looking into the formation and inflection of words and studying how the smallest units of meaning combine to form components in the language.

Communication is core to any language, yet Nepal's Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2017 does not explicitly mention Sign languages. It defines 'language' to include all forms of spoken, non-spoken and Sign languages.

The Act also has provisions to educate people with disabilities through more than one medium, which includes braille and Sign language, and to provide interpreter service to the persons who are deaf and who have sight and hearing disabilities.

There is not enough budget for interpreters, and even in families with a deaf member, other members do not have enough knowledge of Sign language to communicate.

The government's policy update that mandates a teaching license has unfair provisions for deaf and hard of hearing teachers, especially as hearing teachers are not required to have Sign language qualifications to teach deaf students.

“The government should give space and importance to Sign language and promote it culturally. We should conduct more research in the development of the language and train teachers and interpreters,” he signed during a recent interview before he left for the University of Birmingham where he is working on a PhD in Sign language Linguistics and Morphology, the first from Nepal’s deaf community.

'An MSc is not enough,' Shrestha wrote from Birmingham. 'My project team and supervisors – all hearing – have different Sign languages between them and use trans-languages in our communication. It is challenging but I am also enjoying my new experience.' 🇬🇧

BACKSIDE

Symbolic symbols

Ang Kami Sherpa just broke his own record to climb Mt Everest for the 26th time last week. Also aspiring to be in the Guinness Book is Prime Minister Deuba by being prime minister seven times (five down two to go) and have a wax figure of himself yawning installed at Madame Tussauds.

Hoping to get into the Guinness Book this week is the shortest man ever to summit Mt Everest. We already have Ghantaghar in Dharan officially listed as the world's fastest clock, and the CPN Maoist Centre has been recognised as the world's most rightwing Communist Party.

We can now reveal that Nepal's Election Commission is going to be on the Guinness Book for being the slowest ballot counters. This is a great national recognition that

does Nepal proud, and shows that our hard-won democracy is taking a great leap forward.

There have been calls to speed up the counting process so that Nepalis can get on with their busy schedules to enjoy two-day weekends. That would be a bad idea. After all, haste makes waste, and slow and steady wins the race. The Election Commissars have also wisely desisted from putting the names of parties and candidates on the ballot so as not to confuse voters. For The Ass, 13 May was a toss up between Shuttlecock and Cock.

To be fair, voters do have a right to be confused about ballot papers this time, there were just too many candidates. This presents a clear and present danger of the Election Commission running out of party symbols for future polls.

Since prominent symbols like Fountain Pen, Mango, Duck and Rabbit have already been taken by the 5-Party Cartel, we need more symbols so that in November voters can confidently stamp their Hammer and Sickle on the Swastika.

In order to enlarge the gene pool of election symbols, the Ass is inspired by Nepal's rich biodiversity to include the country's flora, fauna and sauna. The Uncastrated He-goat, Bull, Water Buffalo and Yak have already been conscripted.

To accommodate political parties that are missed out, we have assigned them the Scorpion, Yeti, Vulture, Porcupine, Snake, Snail and (the Donkey is pleased to announce) a Jack Ass delivering a back kick.

We have also included symbolic symbols like Handcuffs, Grenade (with pin attached) and Squat Latrine. The Family Party's symbol has been changed to a male prophylactic, and Bibeksheel Sajha gets Face Mask.

As more election results come in, let the best ass win.



The Ass

क्रम	सावक-१ जम्बल - कुम्भ	सावक-२ उपजम्बल - उक्कम्भ	सावक-३ बडा जम्बल	सावक-४ महिला बडा सदस्य	सावक-५ दलित महिला बडा सदस्य
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A promotional advertisement for the Tata Nexon. The main image shows a green Tata Nexon SUV driving on a road with a city skyline in the background. The Tata logo is in the top right corner. The text 'ALL-NEW NEXON' is prominently displayed in blue, with 'WITH 120 PS POWER' below it. Four inset images highlight key features: 209mm ground clearance, automatic transmission, powerful BS6 engine, and electric sunroof.





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