



GOPEN RAI

Old Boys Club

Just as outmigration of Nepali youth is a safety valve that lets the government off the hook to find jobs for them at home and the money they send home is the country's economic lifeline, this year's elections served as a political safety valve.



BORDERLINES
Chandra Kishore

Economic frustration can easily turn into political unrest, and the election of various independent, excluded and previously outlawed individuals has helped release some socio-political tension.

There were many ups and downs with implementation of the 2015 Constitution, but it did channel accumulated grievances through political representation for those left out in the past.

To be sure, the established parties still hold sway. Proof of this was the election of Sher Bahadur Deuba as leader of the Nepali Congress (NC) parliamentary party, which paves the way for his sixth

term as prime minister.

But the elections in 2022 also allowed Nepali voters to vent their fury, and bring in the likes of Balen Shah in Kathmandu and Rabi Lamichhane in Chitwan.

The polls have even provided new political space for former Madhes separatist C K Raut, and for the indigenous Tharu community of the Tarai to carve a separate political identity for their Janamat Party.

Just the presence of these personalities and parties will not be enough to bring meaningful change, but their representation is the first step in righting past wrongs.

The Constitution may be flawed and incomplete, but it has recognised Nepal's ethno-cultural diversity to a limited extent. There is a difference between diversity and division. Nepal's ethnic, linguistic, and religious mosaic is in fact our nation's social capital, our cultural wealth.

The role of elected representatives now is not to try to meld, but manage this medley. Nepalis are now politically astute, and

cannot be pushed around. The goal of the new Parliament must be to broaden this awareness so it translates into inclusive and equitable progress.

Deuba defeated Gagan Thapa to lead the NC party by the vote count, but he lost at the moral level. Gagan has rightly gauged the national mood for generational change not just within the NC but in the other old parties. He has shown that internal party democracy is necessary to safeguard Nepal's democracy.

Unlike Deuba, there were no rivals for Pushpa Kamal Dahal and K P Oli from within their parties because they sidelined all potential adversaries long ago. But the Maoist and UML parties are already feeling the aftershocks of Gagan Thapa's challenge to Deuba. Many young turks are thinking: if he can do it, so can we.

The rise of the RSP and RPP in the November elections also show that there is a socio-political churning afoot in Nepal. There is disenchantment in a section of the electorate with federalism, republicanism, and secularism —

the three pillars of the 2015 Constitution. The rout of Madhes-based parties which were at the forefront of the federalism struggle was a rude awakening.

**MANDATES,
MIGRANTS AND
MALAISE**
EDITORIAL
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Nepal now needs a stable government that can deliver. But the NC needs support from smaller parties, which means more backroom deals. A NC-UML coalition, on the other hand, would make them too dominant and drown out new voices.

The Nepali people in their wisdom have sent a strong message to the established parties: you may continue to be in power, but your days are numbered. Voters also reaffirmed their trust in the democratic system to give voice to those historically deprived of it, and the main parties will disregard this at their own peril. 🇳🇵

Chandra Kishore is a Birganj-based political commentator. This is his second monthly column BORDERLINES in Nepali Times.

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Mandates, migrants, malaise

Nepalis had much to look forward to in 2022. The pandemic had abated, tourism was picking up, and the second series of elections under the federal system were set to take place.

Barely two months into the year, Russia invaded Ukraine and the war hit Nepal's struggling economy hard. A steep rise in the petroleum import bill further depleted state coffers and widened the trade gap. Political disarray led to ministerial mis-steps and delayed government response.

Local elections in May consolidated the coalition, but the strong showing of the independents in federal elections shook the established parties. But Prime Minister Deuba is ignoring the national mood and defying pressure from within his own party for a change of guard by trying to secure a sixth term in office.

A recap of the year that was, through the front pages of *Nepali Times* in 2022:

Pollution and exploitation

Nepali Times' first issue for 2022 carried an image of brick kilns spewing smoke. That, combined with vehicular emissions and open burning, meant that Kathmandu residents were breathing the dirtiest air in the world.

Garbage piled up on the streets of the capital even as the rivers and mountains were ravaged by illegal quarries and sand mining. The country plunged headlong from a Covid pandemic into a dengue epidemic.

A year plagued by disasters and political crises, but also hope for the future

Climate breakdown

The year saw worsening impact of the climate crisis. COP27 in Egypt agreed on a Loss and Damage Fund, but failed to agree on a more ambitious emission target.

But Nepal's leaders cannot blame global warming for everything — many of our problems predate the climate crises. More than to save the planet, Nepal must reduce petroleum imports to save its economy from collapse.

Migration

Nepali Times continued its coverage of the hopes and sorrows of Nepali migrant workers overseas, and added its voice to calls for compensation for the abuse and deaths of workers who built World Cup infrastructure in Qatar. But now, even students are leaving in droves with many of them taking this path to emigration.

New blood

The local election in May and federal and provincial polls in November indicated that many Nepalis are fed up with established parties. Rapper-engineer Balen Shah became mayor of Kathmandu, while young professionals were elected to the federal parliament. Traditional politicians will try to trip up the new entrants, but their very presence in legislative positions provides a glimmer of hope that democracy may finally deliver.

Shristi Karki

20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Power Corrupts Absolutely

Over 15 years after the end of the Maoist insurgency in 2006, most Nepalis (including many former guerrillas) are now convinced the war was just a means to an end and they were cannon fodder for leaders who just wanted to get to power. Except for the first CA election in 2008, the Maoists have fared badly in every election, including November. Yet this has not dissuaded Pushpa Kamal Dahal from staking his claim to be prime minister again.

Excerpt of the editorial published in *Nepali Times* 20 years ago this week on issue #124, 20-26 December 2002:

Baburam Bhattarai in an interview with a right-wing Moonie paper this week thinks his revolution is on track, and following with historical inevitability the scientific tenets laid out by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. But Comrade Laldhoj also thinks that reports of Khmer Rouge atrocities are "exaggerated", that true democracy can be found in the Maoist base areas of midwest Nepal, and that the very parliamentary parties whose grassroots leadership his revolution has decimated are now his allies in the fight for republicanism.

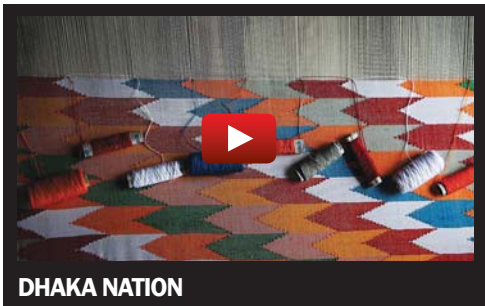
There is a sense of déjà vu when we read this end-justifying-the-means argument. We saw it all before in revolutions that started out well because they were rooted in the peoples' wrath, but ended up engulfing their nations in the genocidal tragedies. Everything that takes us to Year Zero can be justified no matter how inhumane, or brutal.

It is revolution by default, where the destruction of a nation's fabric is so complete and the people so brutalised that even if everyone loses, the party wins. The rationale is the Leninist notion of a vanguard party that leads because only it knows the way. But violence generates its own logic, and once it is used to propel leaders to power they will perpetuate that power through the same means. Whoever controls the killing apparatus governs.

We were building democracy in this country from the bottom up when all this started. It was not working too well in Kathmandu, but it was beginning to show results in many of the 4,000 villages. It was a more humane process because it believed in building, and not in destroying. Of course it would take time, but our revolutionaries were in a tearing hurry.

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

ONLINE PACKAGES



DHAKA NATION

Traditional dhaka fabric has been part of Nepal's unofficial national dress for decades, and is now becoming a fashion item. The embroidery is no longer restricted to the ubiquitous *tapi* — today it is used in saris, shawls, wedding jackets, cushion covers, tote bags, and even shoes. Subscribe to our YouTube channel for more original multimedia content.



HORSING AROUND

Join our video team on a visit to the Wind Horse Stables and take a ride on one of the magnificent equus. Learn how horses bond with humans who ride them, and how they have mood swings just like people. Watch the video on our website.

OVERSEAS STUDENTS

This article about emigrating students is full of interesting and sad information ('Nepal's hard working students overseas', Sonia Awale, #1140).

Tom van Groenigen

■ Nepal's biggest export: unskilled labour. All our scholarship kids are asked to promise before going overseas that they will not abuse the conditions of their student visas.

Shirley Blair

■ Almost all of the money that students spend is earned back and sent to their family back home. So spending is not a big issue. If Nepal allows dual nationality, foreign PR and passport holders will have some purpose to invest and/or return to Nepal.

Harry Duke

■ The only way to square off this migration of foreign currency is to allow dual citizenship. The government must ensure those who leave return by enabling an environment for them to do so.

Jangeko Khalak

■ All the intellectuals who spend a whopping amount to gain education are still nowhere to be seen as far as developing Nepal is concerned.

Shiva G Limbu

KATHMANDU IMAGES

As an urban planner these satellite images of Kathmandu are alarming ('Kathmandu from space 60 years apart', Kunda Dixit, nepalitimes.com).

Amit Bhattarai

■ At present, the hills are covered in forests, but the valley is crowded with houses as far as the eyes can see. Although densely populated elsewhere, areas around the Malla-era palaces of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan are relatively more preserved.

Rb Kirati

■ The Army has occupied Tundikhel, Lagankhel and Tahachal. Government inaction has been the reason for unplanned urbanisation, encroachment of open spaces, and haphazard development of settlements on riversides and fertile land. The valley is currently suffering due to the government's unwillingness to follow a well-organised urbanisation policy.

Changa Aakashma

BERRY-PICKING

I am not an employer and have been visiting my "family" in Nepal twice a year for over 10 years ('Nepalis picking berries in Scotland', Manoj Bhusal, #1140). Nepalis are always welcome to Scotland. There is good Health and Safety, good pay and conditions.

Alan Roadnight

■ I would love to see Nepalis doing similar seasonal work in New Zealand. Most of their harvest employees are seasonal workers from the Pacific Islands.

Shawn Marie Duntz

■ Nepalis are working all over the world which at least helps their families.

Nawa Tamang

CLIMATE CRISIS

Read this insightful piece to find out why carbon markets are back at the centre of the climate discourse, and what it means for the battle against the climate crisis ('The human side of the climate market', Rastraraj Bhandari and Johan Nylander, page 10).

Bikesh Thami

NEPALI MIGRANTS

Thank you for sharing your sad and heartfelt story ('My uncle died in Qatar', Ramu Kharel, #1140). I feel for the migrants who suffered.

Slow Trekking

■ Looks like the whole of Kathmandu was out watching football.

Sunim Tamang

WHAT'S TRENDING



Nepalis pick berries in Scotland

by Manoj Bhusal

The UK's Seasonal Worker Scheme Opportunity provides migrant workers a chance to earn money as well as learn new farming techniques. Read about the experience of a Nepali picking berries in Scotland on nepalitimes.com. Also, read a companion piece on the UK application process to avoid being cheated.

f Most reached and shared on Facebook



Nepal's hard working students

by Sonia Awale

'Abroad studies' has become synonymous with emigration, with no incentive for students to return home. Nepalis are essentially enriching first world countries with student out-migration now costing the country more than what it earns from all its exports combined. Join the discussion online.

Most commented



18 December

Editorial

The final game of the 2022 FIFA World Cup on International Migrants Day on 18 December marked the end of a tournament built on the widespread abuse of migrant workers, with the win of an old favourite Argentina. But for many Nepalis, love for football was tainted by the blood, sweat and tears of compatriots.

Most popular on Twitter



Migrating to play football

Nepali Times

Read about the pressures and pleasures of an African football player who migrated to build a sporting career in Nepal, but was lured here under false pretenses. Visit our website for the full story.

Most visited online page

QUOTE TWEETS



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

#Argentina has defeated #France 4-2 in a penalty shootout to win the #WorldCup for the first time since 1986 and for the third time in total. Neighbourhoods in #Kathmandu had turned into mass viewing sites for the hotly contested final.



Bhushan Tuladhar @BhushanTuladhar

They say an urban street is a public space from where one can experience a city. These pictures of Nepali fans enjoying #WorldCupFinal on the streets of #Kathmandu clearly show what most people in the city were experiencing last night.



Nepali Times @NepaliTimes

Many bridges in Nepal are now nearing their design lifespan, and pose a reason for concern. These become particularly dangerous during festivals and pilgrimages when hundreds of people cross them at the same time.



Anil Pokhrel @anilpokhrel

An important area for us @NDRMA_Nepal to jointly work with relevant Ministries, Departments and other agencies to assess #StructuralIntegrity of suspension bridges from a multi-hazard perspective #resilientinfrastructure. @cdri_world @SwissAmbNepal @NepaliTimes





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“Look back, deal with our past

Shehan Karunatilaka, 47, is a Sri Lankan writer who won the Booker Prize this year for his novel *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*. He grew up in Colombo, studied in New Zealand and has lived and worked in London, Amsterdam and Singapore.

Seven Moons was published 12 years after Karunatilaka's first novel *Chinaman: The Legacy of Pradeep Mathew* and marks the first Booker win by a Sri Lankan author since Michael Ondaatje who got the prize in 1992 for *The English Patient*. He is also the first South Asian to win since Aravind Adiga in 2008 for *The White Tiger*.

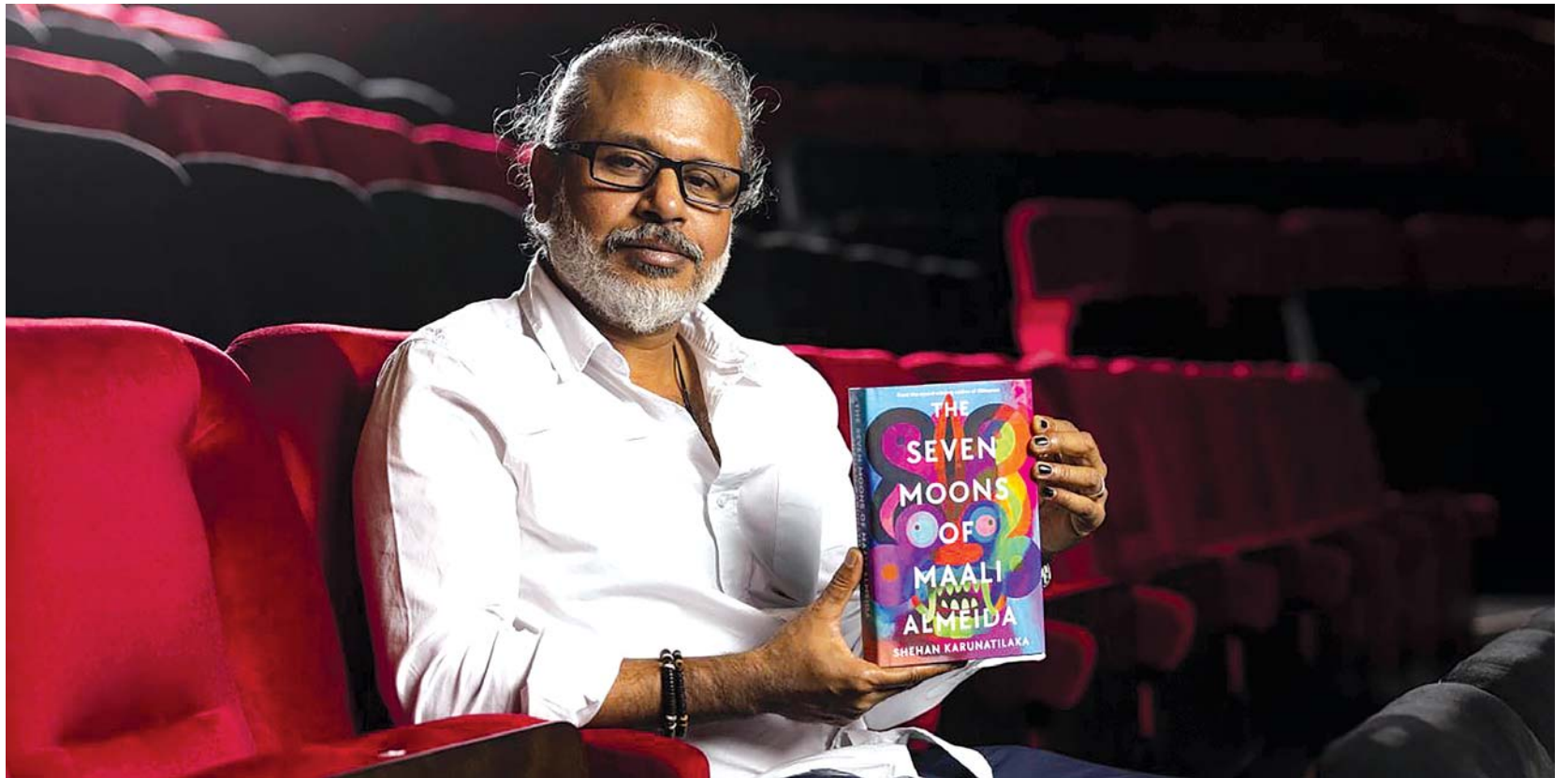
Set during the Sri Lankan civil war and narrated by a dead man, *Seven Moons* is a gripping story of lives caught in conflict. Part-murder mystery, part-political satire it is also a love story narrated in second person and set in an afterlife visa control office, as spirits and the living engage in their own violent tugs-of-war.

Karunatilaka spoke with *Nepali Times* ahead of the 2022 Nepal Literature Festival in Pokhara from 21–25 December. Excerpts:

***Nepali Times*: How did winning the Booker feel?**

Shehan Karunatilaka: It was quite stressful and quite surreal. When the longlist was announced we were preoccupied with the economic meltdown in Sri Lanka, I was in the petrol queue and protests. So, that was a bit strange. You look at the longlisted books and they are all exceptional. They were not importing books at the time, so, I could not read them, but I did follow up on the book talks. My attitude then was you accept what you get, and the longlist is good enough. But I appreciated the fact that the book was now going to get a wider readership.

Coming to the final day, it is a 6-1 chance, and when my name was called out, it was pure adrenaline. I just made sure I had my speech ready and did the thing. It has been relentless since, but leading up to the Booker, I was just grateful for whatever bits of



BOOKER PRIZE FOUNDATION

fortune I was getting. But no, I did not dare expect that I would win.

Often the way death is woven in our stories is that it is a release into salvation, but your afterlife is rather bleak, bureaucratic. Even in death the spirits do not leave the land of the living, influencing actions, whispering, protecting.

When I realised that I was going to write a ghost story, I knew the basic framework was that of a murder mystery: a ghost has seven days to solve his own murder. But thinking about it more, it made more sense that after death, you would wake up more confused, in a waiting room with a piece of paper that you should stamp somewhere but the guy there has gone for lunch. This is something we have all been through in South Asian offices and, for me, this idea was absurd enough to keep me interested.

Every culture has an original sin origin story and for Sri Lankans it is the curse of Kuveni. I grew up with this idea that

has persisted for two thousand years. But when you look at the country, the resources, wandering around the landscape, it looks pretty blessed to me. We peddle both these ideas in this beautiful paradise isle.

So, when I was writing, it seemed to me that Sri Lanka is neither cursed nor blessed but simply disorganised. And the spirit world reflects that. There are these spirits, the victims of our previous conflicts that have not had resolutions are walking about, whispering thoughts into people's ears.

To me that is a possible explanation for our history of catastrophes. In the book I talk about 1989 but it is not like everything has been fine after. We have had Easter Attacks, the economic meltdown. I was not going for any effect in my writing as such, I was thinking more about how all of this made sense, what the reasons were: is it just human incompetence or is there something metaphysical and spiritual about them? That is the

idea I was playing with: Sri Lanka must be full of restless ghosts who have not had justice in their lives.

This is also a historical novel. Why is it important for Sri Lankans and Nepalis to remember the brutal parts of our conflicts?

In Sri Lankan literature, there is escapism but there is also brutal realism, like *A Passage North* by Anuk Arudpragasam shortlisted for Booker in 2021. The true story of what happened to Sri Lanka is much more gruesome than anything in literature, and I think we have a tendency as a nation to forget. I doubt if we are even being taught about the last 40 years in schools. This idea that bad things happened but we should now move on is convenient for people who can, but the trauma is there for those who lost loved ones and still have no answers. But, apart from a few documentaries and activists, it does not get mainstream.

You cannot just pretend these things happen because you would have thought after the 30 years of

war there would be no more racial divisions in Sri Lanka. It is not that we have not learnt anything, some media talk about it, but within five years there were tensions between the Sinhalese and the Muslims.

I think it is essential that we look back, deal with our past and learn. In Sri Lanka's case we see it, we go from catastrophe to catastrophe, we still vote in the same old men who got us in this position.

Why did you choose this setting and time for the novel?

As I grew older, I met people who grew up in Jafna, in refugee camps. My wife's family were in the plantations and saw some harrowing things during the war. In some ways, *Seven Moons* was also a reaction to my first book which was a light-hearted romp about cricket and drinking. So, in the early 2000s, I decided to write a ghost story where victims of Sri Lanka's wars speak. It was also motivated by the fact that I did not suffer in those times.

The obvious setting would have



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Electricity export

Nepal sold electricity worth Rs11 billion to India this past monsoon. Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) said 1.35 billion units were exported in excess of domestic consumption from 2 June to 18 December. Much of the surplus power was easted due to lack of transmission lines. But NEA executive director Kulman Ghising says in winter Nepal has to import power because of shortfall in generation. "The amount of electricity imports is expected to be less than exports and Nepal will soon become a net exporter," he added.

Ncell World Cup

Ncell hosted a live screening of the FIFA World Cup final between Argentina and France at Hotel De L' Annapurna in Kathmandu last week. Individuals from private organisations, banks and financial institutions, artists, media persons, Ncell customers and employees attended the event.



Meanwhile, the Ncell Woman Icon ICT Award worth Rs300,000 aims to acknowledge women's contribution in information technology and encourage a new generation of aspirants. Ncell will be handling the prize at the grand finale of the Nepal ICT Award at the Soaltee Hotel.

JICA-Dolma Fund

JICA has signed a \$10 million investment agreement with Dolma Impact Fund II which will be mainly utilised for equity investment in healthcare companies, IT startups, and renewable energy projects in Nepal. The investment will contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Civil-Nepal Telecom

Civil Bank and Nepal Telecom have agreed not to charge any fees when Nepal Telecom clients use Civil Bank's mobile banking app.

Honda Dasain

Seven individuals from seven provinces have been awarded Rs700,000 each under the 'Honda Dashain Shuva Lav' with Chandra Bahadur Thapa winning Rs1.5 million in a lucky draw.

Karda Triple X

Nepal Distilleries, manufacturers of the famous Khukri rum brand has introduced a new product of 40 UP 'Karda Triple X' in response to market demand. Liquors in the 40 UP category have lower alcohol content. Karda Triple X is available in 750 ml, 375 and 180 ml packaging.

Nexon range

Sipradi Trading with Tata Motors performed Nexon EV range test last week with Salim Shrestha from Kathmandu covering a range of 347 km. Fourteen of 34 participating EVs



managed to cover over 300km in the event. Tata Motors has also inaugurated an engine care camp for its petrol vehicles which will operate until 30 December. Customers can get 15% and 50% discounts on spare tires and engine parts.



Tata engine camp

Tata Motors has inaugurated the engine care camp which will operate until 30 December. Customers can get 15% and 50% discounts on spare tires and engine parts respectively.

NMB high interest

NMB Bank is offering a 9.133% interest in the 'Aapan NMB Bachat Khata' to encourage savings among its clients in the Tarai. The bank will also provide free debit cards, credit cards, dollar cards, DEMAT, MeroShare and CRN.

Flame Awards

Outreach Consulting Agency from Nepal has won 11 Gold and 1 Silver at the 2022 Flame Awards Asia held in New Delhi. Outreach was awarded in the Emerging Market Category of South Asia for their campaigns with Ncell and Sunsilk. The awards are given to the best marketing and communication projects across Asia.

and learn”

2009, the final phase of war, which is still part of heated debates over how many civilians were killed and whose fault it was. That would have also been quite dangerous. So, I took the idea to the 80s when I was a teenager and started reading about it, talking to people.

I spent a lot of time researching the unsolved murders and the different players and that informed a lot of characters and the set-up. Even though it is a fantastical work, most of the things happened, many characters were real.

Maali is a gay war photographer, and this serves a narrative purpose, reflecting the world of secrecy, surviving in a time of constant threat. How did he evolve as a character?

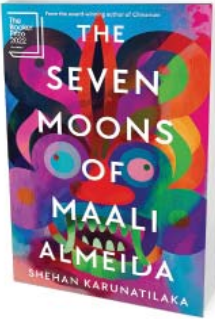
The LGBTQ+ community in the 80s was pretty much invisible, like in most parts of the world. Maali’s evolution is the result of many drafts, but the starting point was Richard de Zoysa who was a gay man and an actor, an activist brutally murdered in 1990. This hit the middle-class Colombo and we still talk about it. But the idea to make him a war photographer, as opposed to, say an actor, in the story meant that there would be a motive and that he would also deal with many factions.

I was looking at Maali’s motivation, and the fact that he could be more himself when he went to war-torn areas and engage with also his desires. With each page I wanted to question his actions and speech. Maali is certainly not a terribly likeable character but the build is that he

does something selfless for his loved ones in the end, get where he is coming from and his issues.

I started writing the book in 2014 and I suppose if I were to write the book now, I would be thinking more seriously whether it is possible for me to write a book from the perspective of a gay man. But I spoke to my friends who are gay and lived in those times, understand the pressures, the world. In the end, the book is also about a love triangle, and I think sometimes people in love behave badly to their partners regardless of their sexual orientation.

I would certainly consider this more carefully now. But there is also the fact that if novelists must stay in their own lane, I can only write about Sinhalese Buddhist middle-aged men. It is often interesting and liberating to write about people who are often different than us. But, of course, if I do it badly, I should be taken to task.



The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida
by Shehan Karunatilaka
Penguin Books, 2022
386 pages
Paperback: Rs560

Let the sky fall

In her debut novel, Pakistani writer takes a stand against injustice in a tale that travels from Lahore to New York

● **Ashish Dhakal**

Saba Karim Khan’s debut novel *Skyfall* begins like the book of Genesis: with a god. Like the Biblical All-father, Sherji too has put his words and intent to action – or, at least he thinks so – and out steps Rania. He is determined in his plot, inflated and Machiavellian. Yet, for the first six months, he is disappointed. Rania is a ‘misfortune’, his ‘grand trial’. Has her mother, Jahaan-e-Rumi, anything to do with it?

Jahaan-e-Rumi too has her own scheme. In a kind of balancing act, she picks up a pen and paper and writes: ‘She will be no stubborn, malevolent lunatic, but the fiercest girl in all the galaxies – a tempest, but never unkind.’

The scene shifts and we are whisked from Lahore to the Metropolitan Correctional Facility in Manhattan, where we find Rania is an inmate. The reason for this could be anything, but Khan does not dwell on them yet. In the cold, solitary, and sleepy pace of the prison, Rania thinks back to her past, growing up in Lahore’s famous Heera Mandi, the shadows of Kashmir, and falling in love.

There is an uncanny mix of hope and dread from the very first page, which goes on to characterise much of Khan’s novel. Here, Henry David Thoreau’s quote ‘The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation’ from Walden, and its famously misquoted addendum ‘and go to the grave with the song still in them’ is central.

Set in two seemingly disparate worlds, the novel moves fluidly across the walled city of Lahore, through the streets that switch identities every 12 hours, and later

in starkly different New York. The times are desperate and dangerous, and the book raises questions on freedom and autonomy, while, under the lights, music and memories become the bridge between the past and the present, East and West.

Rania herself grows up in two different worlds. Sherji, her father, a resolute fundamentalist, sends out her mother and sister every night to dance and sing for, and

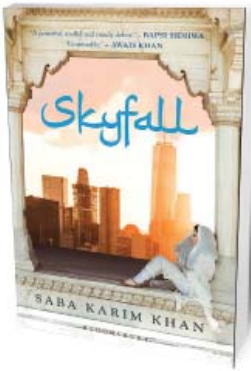
historic and beautiful setting, *mujra*, India and Pakistan, Pakistan and America. But under the surface runs a searing fire. *Skyfall* is indeed a love story, with even higher stakes. The self struggles not just for its own independence but for an entire country’s, against injustice and violence.

When Sherji finally sends Rania into the underworld because he is running out of money, it is strangely reminiscent of when God tells Abraham to sacrifice his prized son Isaac on Moriah. Things go well for Isaac, naturally, and Abraham is rewarded.

But as Rania fights the men who throw her around the room, slapping her and trying to kiss her, no angel appears, no Ram. Between the two thousand years that separate Sherji from Abraham, faith is no longer a leap into the unknown but calculated and capitalist, sentenced by men, and women, in blindfolds, the innocents always under the yoke.

Then later in detention, Khan pulls back the curtains on the delusions of the land of so-called freedom, as officers hurl questions at the racially profiled Rania that are leading to a conclusion drawn well before the interrogation. “Do you know the Quran by heart? Do you believe in jihad? Love jihad?” they ask. “Who forced you to fall in love with an Indian? Don’t you believe Hindus are non-Muslims?”

Skyfall is an entirely enthralling book: engaging and beautifully written, interspersed with Urdu verses, following the journey of a young singer from the *mohalla* half-way around the world. As one delves deeper, the reader reckons with injustices fuelled by cults and mobs, by governments and families. Saba Karim Khan teaches at New York University in Abu Dhabi and would have been at the Nepal Literature Festival this week, but had to cancel at the last moment for health reasons. 🇵🇰



Skyfall
by Saba Karim Khan
Bloomsbury, 2021
290 pages
Paperback: INR599

sleep with, rich customers to make money for his madrasa. By day, she works as a tourist guide. The past is wonderful while the present cursed, and it is in music and a young Indian Hindu boy Asher that Rania finds refuge while she loathes her abusive father and her own incapacity to help her mother and sister.

At the outset, the novel seems like a classic retelling of doomed romance. It checks all the boxes: violent families, star-crossed lovers, a




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IT'S TIME FOR AN UPGRADE



Dec 21st - Dec 24th

A mine of stories from Gurja

This hidden village in the shadow of Mt Dhaulagiri is a microcosm of rural Nepal

● Sonia Awale

In October 2018, Gurja Himal in one of the most inaccessible parts of Nepal, came to sudden world attention. A Korean expedition attempting to climb the south face of this magnificent peak in the Dhaulagiri massif was hit by an avalanche, killing nine climbers. Even so, very few know about Gurja Khani, a former copper mining village at the foot of 7,193m Gurja Himal. The nearest village of Lulang lies a full day's walk to the south across steep ridges and deep gorges, and from there it is another few days walk to the road from Beni.

'Such isolation has slowed the pace of change and built a community of resilient mountain people,' writes social researcher Joy Stephens in the first few pages of her new photo book *Gurja Khani: Hidden village of the Himalaya*

which is an intimate look at a forgotten people from a forgotten part of the country. It was the search for mineral ore that first drew Chhantyal miners to the Dhaulagiri area, and Gurja Khani owes its existence to the

discovery of copper lodes in the mountains. After the Indigenous Chhantyals came the Biswakarma metal-workers, forging a unique copper extraction partnership between the two. Before long, mining ceased

and villagers turned to subsistence farming and wage labour. But increasingly, youth are migrating to the cities or abroad. In one chapter, Belmoti Pariyar of Road of Life Homestay recites from her daughter's poem: 'Life is



PHOTOS: JOY STEPHENS

Style and substance

The Himalaya may be famous globally for the world's highest mountains and the people who climb them, but this 3,000km range has also evolved its own distinctive art and architecture. Kathmandu-based photographer Thomas L Kelly and author Claire Burkert have collaborated to document the elegance of the built environment of the Himalaya in a new edition of their coffee-table book, *Himalayan Style: Shelters & Sanctuaries* first published in 2022. 'Himalayan styles are not static, it is ever-evolving, absorbing the ideas of cultures within and outside the region,' writes Burkert in the Introduction.



THOMAS L KELLY

This lavishly illustrated book combines photographs by Kelly with meticulously researched text by Burkert. The final product is a record of Himalayan design, style and culture across Pakistan, India, Bhutan, China and Nepal, some of which is disappearing and others are being revived. The first chapter features monasteries, dzongs, temples, palaces and houses of nobility that have outlasted their original purpose and found a new one. Patan Museum in Kathmandu Valley is a model of adaptive reuse of a historic structure. So is the 17th century house of a royal secretary in Ladakh which is now the Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation, and

the Tower of Trongsa Museum, a transformed watchtower of Bhutan's Trongsa Dzong. *Himalayan Style* has a chapter on the faith and rituals of the mountain people. Another chapter highlights building materials and technologies suited to the mid-hills and high Himalayas. But no book on the Himalaya is complete without the look into their trails and retreats that cater to tourists. Burkert notes that hotels and restaurants in the Tibetan town of Gyalthang in China's Yunan combine local design with Western elements adding to the comfort in a high-altitudes. Whereas the clean, simple design of a mountain resort 360 Leti in Kumaon in India marks a new direction for Himalayan architecture — something that Nepal's hotel architecture could emulate. But much of *Himalayan Style* is



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Children attend the local public school but most drop out. They have to help parents with household chores, herding and fieldwork. Baby-sitting is an after-school activity.

Ward chair Jhak Bahadur Chhantyal is ever occupied, pleading and cajoling people in his effort to improve life in the village. He ran as the Maoist party candidate in the elections and says he joined the Maoists because they represented change.

‘But I don’t believe we can realise our vision by force. First, we must win the minds of the people. In hindsight, the People’s War was not right,’ he

A glimpse into the changing lives of nomadic traders of Far Western Nepal

● Sahina Shrestha



HANNA RAUBER/OF RICE AND SALT

Barter trade has been an integral part of human civilisation, but over time, as people moved to cities, cash replaced kind.

Kathmandu Valley’s Newa traders prospered from a trans-Himalayan barter trade between Tibet and India. The yak caravans of Dolpo were immortalised in Eric Valli’s award-winning 1999 docudrama, *Caravan*.

Less well known are the Bhote Khampa migrant traders of Far Western Nepal, who were middle-men between Tibetan rock salt traders and grain-growing Nepali farmers from the lower valleys.

So little known were the Bhote Khampa that when Swiss social anthropologist Hanna Rauber came to Nepal in 1977 for ethnographic research, she struggled to obtain necessary letters from Tribhuvan University to begin her study.

One reason was parts of the region where she had planned to carry out research was a restricted area, but also because the ‘Khampa’ were mistaken for being Nepal-based anti-Chinese Tibetan resistance fighters at the time. Most people in Kathmandu did not understand that the Kh(y)ampa from western Nepal were totally different from the Khampa guerrillas from Eastern Tibet.

After finally getting their permits, Rauber and her research assistant Chakka Bahadur Lama met a group of Bhote Khampa people on their way to Bajura, travelling, observing and learning about their way of life.

Rauber’s book *Of Salt and Rice*,

Life and Trade of the Bhote Khampa in Far West Nepal is an important documentation of the lives of these nomadic traders half a century ago.

With genealogies going back six generations, Rauber traces the ancestry to one Khunu Samten who was imprisoned in Doti during the Rana period when Nepal was at war with Tibet.

At the time, governments sent letters to announce the purpose and places of battles. When one such letter written in Tibetan was received in the official court, no one could understand the language. So they asked Khunu Samten to translate it, and he was subsequently hired as an interpreter. When the war ended, he was awarded a hat and letter designating him as a leader of six migrant households who were the founding barter traders.

Over the years, newcomers joined the group, often individuals who were forced to flee their hometowns in Nepal due to economic and politico-juridical issues, forming a distinct ethnic group that mainly spoke the dialect of western Tibet.

Rauber describes Bhote Khampa as ‘chameleon traders’, who assimilated Hindu ways and customs in order to gain access to Nepali customers. They grew their hair into a *tupi*, abandoned polyandry, stopped eating beef and yak, and over time adopted Hindu caste names like Thapa, Bohora, Singh Thakuri, Karki, Khunwar, Bhandari or Bogati to upgrade their social standing.

While on the outside it may

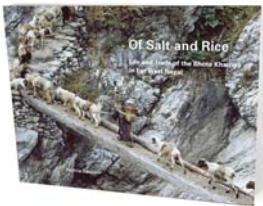
seem like a survival strategy, one cannot disregard how Nepal’s state mechanism has always treated indigenous minorities as outsiders and forced them to erase parts of their identities to ‘fit in’.

The Bhote Khampa had their distinct social organisation with rules of conduct, but whenever the community reached out to the government for support, their demands were rejected on grounds that they were landless.

When the group registered in 1991 with Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), the District Administration Office in Bajura registered them as ‘Bhote Khampa’.

Much like with Nepal’s other indigenous groups, the youth are abandoning old ways, and senior Khampa worry that their tradition, customs and way of life will be lost forever.

Hanna Rauber’s book is an important documentation of these nomadic Himalayan traders, their way of life captured at a cusp of change.



Of Salt and Rice: Life and Trade of the Bhote Khampa in Far West Nepal by Hanna Rauber
Ethnographic Museum, University of Zurich, 2022
192 pages
Hardback: Rs1,800

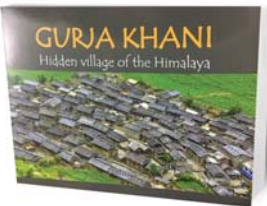
like a trek in Nepal, up and down, up and down.’ This is in essence life in Gurja Khani, beautiful but difficult.

When Belsara Biswokarma, 22, went into labour she bled profusely, passing in and out of consciousness. A junior paramedic in attendance could only do so much. Villagers then put her in a cloth sling between two poles to carry her to a health post in Lulang. But halfway up the mountain, she gave birth out in the open.

Amrita Biswakarma was abducted by her husband when she was 16, as per the common practice of ‘kidnap marriage’. After 13 years of marriage, Amrita is happy with three children, but is sad that her husband is once again leaving to work in Qatar.

tells Stephens.

The last few pages of the book are dedicated to the Chhantyal’s reverence for nature and ancestor spirits, and faith in Shamanism. They consider the 2018 Gurja Himal tragedy as the wrath of the mountain deity for humans defiling nature.



Gurja Khani: Hidden village of the Himalaya by Joy Stephens
Books Himalaya, 2022
120 pages

dedicated to the style of Kathmandu Valley and its various forms of art. The chapter also details the inner workings of some of the restored neo-classical Rana-era structures including the Baber Mahal Revisited and Garden of Dreams. Leslie Shackelford’s movable house and Taragaon’s modern Buddhist architecture-inspired design also make the cut.

But the readers will have to get until the very end for the main highlights. In the chapter on Bhaktapur is a section on the 18th century Kuthu Math which has been lovingly restored by German heritage specialist Götz Hagmüller who has lived there for the past four decades.

Kelly and Burkert painstakingly document the architecture and *objets d’art* from Kathu Math’s living spaces and stairways to metal idols, rugs and its elegant garden.

A chapter on Patan brings its

artisans to the fore, from skilled painters and stone carvers to a lost wax-casting master. The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) building gets a special mention. This book by non-Nepalis to remind Nepalis about the richness and treasures of Himalayan style and our way of life.

Sonia Awale



Himalayan Style: Shelters & Sanctuaries by Thomas L. Kelly and Claire Burkert
Mandala Publishing, 2022
304 pages
Hardback: \$49.99



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EVENTS



Tales of an explorer

Listen to the travel tales of well known explorer, mountaineer and environmentalist Mandip Singh Soin. 23 December, 4pm onwards, Nepal Tourism Board Auditorium

Nepal Literature Festival

Nepal Literature Festival in Pokhara brings together bibliophiles and writers again this year. Speakers include Alok Tuladhar, Amrit Subedi, Arnico Panday, Bhaskar Dhungana and 2022 Booker winner Shehan Karunatilaka. Also, check out the book special this week. 23-25 December, Pokhara (01) 4421641



Sundarijal Hike

Looking to take off steam? Join the 6-hour hike to Sundarijal and immerse in nature. Call for more details. 24 December, Rs700, 9846190957

Furry Christmas

This Christmas adopt a dog and spread the holiday cheer. Learn more about adoption processes for Nepali dogs at the KAT Centre. 25 December, KAT Centre Nepal, Budhanilkantha

DINING



Yala Café

Grab a stack of fluffy pancakes, well-seasoned Eggs Benedict or a country breakfast at Yala Café. With a cosy ambience and soul-warming food, Yala is the best way to kick start the day. Thamel (01) 4249602

MUSIC

Kpop festival

Listen to Kpop? Enjoy one of the biggest K-festival this weekend featuring fun stalls, taekwondo demonstration, games and music. 24 December, 11pm onwards, Bhrikuti Mandap, Pradarshani Marg

Christmas party

Head over to the Christmas party featuring live music, table packages, DJ sessions and gift hampers. 24 December, 6pm onwards, The Ai-La Lounge, 9801018681



Nabin Bhattarai

Take a trip down a musical lane with Nabin Bhattarai and the Atripta Band. 24 December, 7pm onwards, London Pub Kathmandu, Darbar Marg

Dino James

Enjoy rapper, singer, composer and storytelling sensation Dino James this week in his 'The beginning' tour. Buy tickets through Khalti. 25 December, 8pm onwards, Rs1500, Club Platinum, Darbar Marg



Sabin Rai

Sabin Rai performs this weekend at the opening of Turtle Lounge. 24 December, 6pm onwards, Turtle Lounge, Narsingh Chok, Thamel

Ventures Café

Stop by for the best fusion menu and local favourites. Ventures is also a great venue for beer connoisseurs. Baluwatar, 9851228014



New Orleans Café

Christmas Dinner with Turkey Specialties and Live Music. Lots of wines to choose from and Christmas Special warm Mulled Wine. Book Now. Thamel (01) 4700736

About Town

GETAWAY



Meghauri Serai

Relax with fine dining and a wildlife safari in Chitwan at Taj Safari's luxurious lodge this winter. Chitwan National Park, 9851218500

The Fulbari Resort & Spa

The ultimate getaway in Pokhara, Fulbari is far enough from the city to be at the centre of all that matters. Pokhara (061) 432451

Mount Princess

Surrounded by mountains and the forest, Mount Princess is a haven for nature lovers. Spend the morning sipping a warm cup of Nepali tea while taking in the breathtaking views. Dhulikhel (01) 490616



Newa Chén

This hotel is reminiscent of the gold era of the Malla Dynasty. The open rooms and courtyards embody the palaces of the family that once presided over the city. Kobahal, Lalitpur (01) 5533532

Balthali Village Resort

A simple and cosy retreat just beyond Kathmandu Valley, Balthali Village Resort is ideal for anyone seeking to get away from the humdrum of city life. Panauti, 9851087772



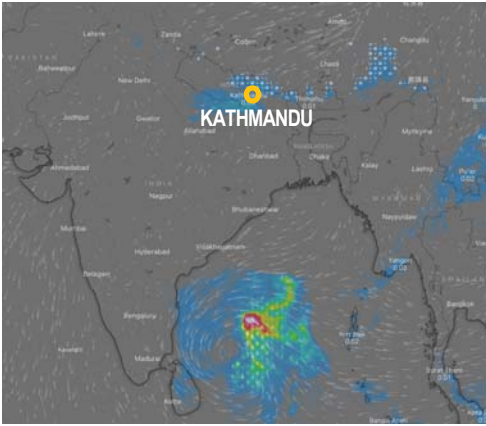
Sapporo Japanese

Experience delicious Japanese delicacies and drinks at Sapporo. Don't miss the homemade fresh noodles, ramen, udon and soba. Baluwatar, 9803445405

Radisson Christmas feast

Celebrate Christmas with loved ones at Radisson with the special holiday lunch and dinner. Call for more details. 24-25 December, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, 9851048331

WEEKEND WEATHER

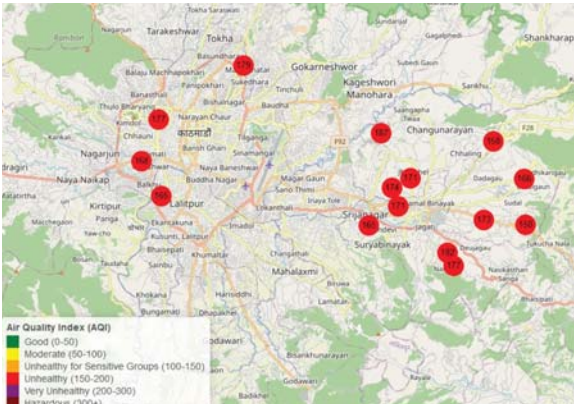


First Westerly

The first real westerly disturbance will slide rapidly across Nepal on Saturday, bringing snow to the higher slopes and some passing showers over the Mahabharat range. There may not be much by way of precipitation, but the system will bring down both the maximum and minimum temperatures considerably. The front will exit Nepal by Sunday and there should be sunnier weather after, which will raise the daytime temperature somewhat. After this week's winter solstice, the sun begins its northward migration, and the days will get longer.



AIR QUALITY INDEX



The World Bank's air pollution review released last week showed that even if South Asia's cities took all measures to improve their Air Quality Index (AQI), cross-border transportation of pollutants will still affect northern India and Nepal. As this PurpleAir map of Kathmandu Valley on Wednesday morning shows, the air is uniformly bad because fine suspended particles from vehicular emission and open burning are trapped by an inversion layer. With a westerly front forecast over the weekend, moisture droplets will add to the smog.

OUR PICK

Guillermo del Toro's *Pinocchio*, the 2022 stop-motion animated musical fantasy film reimagines the much-beloved story of the wooden puppet Pinocchio and his carpenter father Geppetto. In Italy, carpenter Geppetto loses his son Carlo to World War II, later making a new wooden 'son' out of a pine tree that he had planted in his son's memory. When the wooden puppet comes to life, and as Italy falls headlong into fascism, father and son must navigate newfound relationships, impending conscription, and the ravages of war. Featuring voices of Gregory Mann, David Bradley, Ewan McGregor, Cate Blanchett, Christoph Waltz, Tilda Swinton, and more.



सम्पत्ति विवरण समयमै बुझाऔं, जरिवानाबाट बचौं

- सार्वजनिक पद धारण गरेको व्यक्ति तथा राष्ट्रसेवकले आफ्नो व्यक्तिगत विवरण अद्यावधिक गरौं ।
- आर्थिक वर्ष शुरू भएको साठी दिनभित्र आफ्नो सम्पत्ति विवरण तोकिएको निकायमा पेश गरौं ।
- भ्रष्टाचारमा शून्य सहनशीलता अपनाऔं ।



नेपाल सरकार
विज्ञापन बोर्ड



In realms of the senses

We will not think of ourselves and fellow animals in the same way again

● Kunda Dixit

We have all been taught in school that human beings communicate through only five senses: touch, taste, sight, smell and hearing.

American science writer Ed Yong's spellbinding new book *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us* proves to us just how woefully limiting that definition is. It not only disregards other human sensory faculties, but also those possessed by the many species we share the planet with.

We refer to people who show a supernatural ability to communicate as having a 'sixth sense', but Yong weaves a fascinating tale of the scores of other ways that organisms perceive — charting their environment through echolocation, magnetic and electrostatic fields, vibration, air and water currents, and many other stimuli.

After reading *An Immense World*, we will not think of ourselves and fellow animals great and small in the same way again.

'Senses that seem paranormal to us only appear that way because we are so limited and so painfully unaware of our limitations,' Yong writes, describing the mantis shrimp's eyes that brim with 20 types of photoreceptors, allowing it to 'see' polarised light.

Other animals smell what they see, hear what they touch, and see the earth's magnetic field. They use one or many senses to make sense of their world, their Umwelt.

The dog we worship at Kukur Tihar sees its marigold garland and the vermilion as green and yellow because of its dichromatic eyes, compared to the human trichromatic vision. We know dogs can hear sounds in a frequency range inaudible to humans, but they are probably also able to detect seismic waves that precede earthquakes.



The dog's nose scoops up odour molecules, sniffing six times a second through nostrils with side-slits that allows it to smell even while exhaling. Dogs may even have inherited some of the infrared detection ability of their wolf ancestors.

Ed Yong talked to hundreds of scientists around the world doing cutting-edge research on sensory perception. Besides our five senses, we humans also have the sense of balance (equilibrioception), awareness of our own bodies (proprioception), as well as sensations of pain and pleasure.

Other animals either have enhanced senses that we already know of, or means to perceive their surroundings that defy belief.

A rattlesnake uses its forked tongue to smell in stereo and turn its world 'into a map and a menu'. We know bats use ultrasound echolocation to intercept insects mid-air, but scientists have found they use Doppler compensation of radar signals to chase moths.

Whales use infrasound sonar to communicate with each other across vast oceans, greenback turtles return to the exact beaches where they were born navigating with the earth's magnetic field for precise geolocation. Migratory birds like bar-headed geese make nonstop trans-Himalayan flights memorising genetically-encoded magnetic maps. Sea birds also have an ultra-sensitive olfactory sense with which they steer their oceanic migration routes.

Elephants use infrasound rumbles to communicate with distant herds, but can also sense ground vibrations, listening with their feet to recognise individual fellow-elephants. The human sense of touch is so sensitive we can detect texture at a molecular level on surfaces. Like the peacock, the colours of the Impeyan pheasant (डाँफे) probably hide additional ultraviolet colours that we cannot see. The feather crest on its head is probably not just a mating ornament, but sensors that

'feel' the air, just like the filoplume of gliding birds act as anti-stall warning systems.

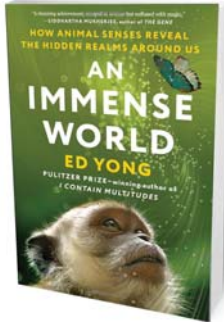
The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito can detect carbon dioxide, heat, and the odour that the human body gives off, a trait the dengue virus uses to propagate themselves.

Odomos creams do not drive away mosquito vectors, they only repel mosquitos after the taste receptors in their feet find DEET disgusting. The insect's eyes also send signals to its brain in time-lapse, so everything appears in slow motion, making it difficult to swat mosquitoes and flies.

Animals use receptors to make sense of the stimuli in their surroundings. Chemoreceptors in the nose and fingertips detect molecules that trigger smell and taste. Mechanoreceptors sense texture through touch. Photoreceptors make sense of light.

Eyes send electric signals to the brain through the optic nerve, and it is the occipital lobe that assigns wavelengths of light a colour. So, there is nothing really 'green' about a leaf, Yong explains: 'Colour, then, is fundamentally subjective.'

There is so much more awe and wonder in *An Immense World*. Ed Yong devotes his last chapter to how human activity in this bright and noisy world is threatening the planet's sensescape. His plea is to 'save the quiet and preserve the dark', advice that the government and tourism planners in Nepal may want to take to heart. 🇳🇵



An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us by Ed Yong
Penguin Random House, 2022
449 pages
Hardback: \$26

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THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE CARBON MARKET

Let us put beneficiaries at the centre of decarbonisation transactions so they are inclusive and fair

● **Rastraraj Bhandari**
and **Johan Nylander**

The 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) held in Glasgow last year created significant momentum on climate action, most notably through enhanced net-zero emission pledges, climate mitigation and adaptation finance targets, and revival of international carbon markets.

Since then, there has been much talk on how international carbon markets can play a role in the broader climate policy architecture, and whether or not they can serve as an instrument to tackle the climate crisis.

The global climate community remains divided on the matter. Proponents of market-based mechanisms argue that the scale of the climate action cannot be achieved without the use of carbon markets. Others argue that carbon markets simply aid to avoid the problem and help the polluters find a scapegoat to keep on polluting — while creating “green or carbon washing”.

This debate is not new and this is also not the first-time international carbon markets are at the centre of the fight against the climate crisis.

Under the Kyoto Protocol (the Paris Agreement’s predecessor climate treaty) international emissions trading was a key feature and developing countries would participate through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) which mobilised carbon finance at scale and helped diffuse advanced low carbon technologies in developing countries, incentivising the implementation of mitigation actions and transfer of climate

finance through the sale of carbon credits to developed countries.

At the same time, it was controversial for human right violations, quality of carbon credits being sold, and the eventual crash of the market in the mid 2010s, leading to reduced faith in international carbon market mechanisms such as CDM.

So why are carbon markets back at the centre of the climate discourse, and what does it mean for the battle against the climate crisis?

Carbon markets remain a popular instrument both for economists who have advocated their use as a cost-effective instrument to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions as well as policymakers who remain particularly appealed by its ability to generate revenue. They are less politically challenging, for example when compared to a carbon tax, and are a flexible instrument that can be designed to suit national circumstances and priorities.

They can be varied in scope, design and coverage, and they also exist in different forms. A simplistic classification of carbon market types includes domestic cap-and-trade systems (commonly referred to as an emissions trading system), and baseline-and-crediting mechanisms, including international carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and the voluntary carbon market.

There is a growing momentum to utilising both types of carbon markets, with many more jurisdictions adopting emissions trading system and a growing market for both Article 6 and the voluntary carbon market.

The carbon market is only going to increase as countries scramble to take advantage of instruments that can tackle the climate crisis without putting fiscal pressure on the economy.

Another demand comes from net-zero pledges which will require carbon credits to fulfill. However, carbon markets are not a panacea, and we need to ensure they are designed in a way that benefits the people and the planet.

The devil is in the details. While it seems inevitable that carbon markets will scale-up, uncoordinated efforts might do more harm than good. The value chain of carbon markets comprises multiple players across a broad range of layers which makes them difficult to navigate.

A focus on generating carbon credits to sell in the market without putting beneficiaries at the centre of the project design can create detrimental impact. This is a heated issue in the carbon market debate, particularly in regards to how countries and companies will account for the purchased credits. The challenges seen under the carbon markets in Kyoto Protocol, related to treatment of human rights and Indigenous communities, will need to be addressed.

A major controversy that has emerged concerns the export of carbon credits and how they will be accounted for. For example, if a corporation claims carbon credit for offsetting while the emission reduction will also be counted to the host country’s nationally determined contribution (NDC) in the Paris Agreement, it is a form of double claiming.

To counter this, some independent carbon crediting programs have proposed an approach where a company with voluntary net zero targets may choose to purchase carbon credits backed by national accounting or purchase units that represent a ‘contribution claim’, i.e., supporting the host country’s NDC by financing mitigation outcomes, but not claiming the emission reductions for its own

voluntary or net zero target.

Despite these technicalities and concerns that surround international carbon markets, it is inevitable that carbon markets will only grow. However, a ‘beneficiary centric’ approach to carbon markets is imperative.

Many of the world’s most important carbon sinks are on land inhabited by Indigenous communities. For the carbon market as well as Indigenous communities to flourish, the rights of those communities must be secured. It will be important to humanise the carbon market and ensure that beneficiaries can be put at the heart in market design.

But this is easier said than done. The discourse on carbon markets tends to be technical, rummaged by financiers, bankers, engineers and consultants. Given the technicalities around carbon markets, what it means to utilise a ‘beneficiary centric’ approach is tough to answer. Yet, it must be answered, thought through and implemented.

Efforts are underway, but conversations need to be more inclusive. Inputs from women, youth, and marginalised and vulnerable groups, including Indigenous communities will be critical despite their perceived lack of technical knowledge on this subject.

Environmental non-governmental organisations will have to play a stronger role to ensure accountability in carbon transactions, and governments and intergovernmental bodies will have to ensure carbon markets work in the highest level of integrity.

There are good examples for this: both the Article 6 rules adopted at COP26 in Glasgow and the Carbon Core Principles from the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market are ambitious. But humanising the carbon market will be difficult

— not just to implement and monitor, but also to decode.

Given the financial scale carbon markets can reach, they will have to play a part in funding climate adaptation and loss and damage above and beyond the international requirements for the carbon market’s contribution to adaptation. This is in addition to their role as a channel of finance for the countries hosting carbon crediting projects. Furthermore, carbon credits cannot only be looked at as a commodity for the buyers. Innovation and imagination are required on what can be done.

Carbon banks can be established which could provide low-interest micro loans to beneficiaries using carbon assets as a collateral. This needs to be complemented by financial contracts that cater for beneficiaries and help them retain a certain amount of carbon credits.

The agriculture industry accounts for almost one-fourth of global emissions, yet only around 2% of climate finance flows into it. Linkages between carbon markets and agriculture need to be strengthened and the financing needs to be scaled up such that not just farmers being impacted by climate crisis can be supported but also methane emissions from the agriculture sector can be brought down.

Carbon markets have potential, but they need to be unleashed in a way that is inclusive and just. It is integral to put beneficiaries at the heart of any carbon transactions and rethink the overall goal of carbon markets in the first place. 📌

Rastraraj Bhandari and Johan Nylander, PhD, work in operationalising carbon market instruments, including Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and the Voluntary Carbon Market.





JITENDRA BAJRACHARYA/ICIMOD

Women of the mountains

Deputy Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) Izabella Koziell recently won the UN Women Rise and Raise Others Award. *Nepali Times* spoke to her about the importance of women in the climate space by empowering women to meet the challenges to the Himalaya by the climate crisis.

Nepali Times: You recently won the Women Rise and Raise Others Award. How does that validate the work that you have been doing?

Izabella Koziell: It's certainly a huge honour. I started my career in dryland Tanzania and was the only woman working for the program at that time. During my career, I saw how fundamental women are to building economies and maintaining agro-biodiversity. I later joined the British government and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) where ensuring gender equality was a priority. As ICIMOD implements its new 'Strategy 2030: Moving Mountains' we have really put women at the heart of the program because women are largely left out in the mountain regions, and we need their leadership to move forward.

Why is empowering women and women's leadership so important in addressing the impact of climate change in the Himalaya?

We all know we have a crisis on our hands. We need different kinds of transformational decisions as we move forward. Women bring diversity of thought and perspective to the table. I'm not saying that it should be only women making decisions, but we at least need that equality around the table given the challenges that we face.

What is science telling us about the impact of climate change on the Himalaya, and how is this affecting women?

The impact of climate change on the Himalaya-Hindu Kush mountains are really quite drastic. When we look at the science, we know that at a 1.5°C increase in global temperatures, there is going to be significant melting of the glaciers, snow, and permafrost. We also know that, at higher altitudes, 1.5°C will actually be 1.8°C since there is heightened warming at higher altitudes.

Women will be more affected by the increasing incidence of disasters that are associated with climate change. Biodiversity loss will disproportionately impact women because women rely on the harvesting of various plant species at high altitudes. Lastly, when it comes to mountain

economies, we know that the demographic of the mountains and high-altitude regions are majority women because men have out-migrated. However, many of the institutions and norms are not always geared to women even though women are left building their livelihoods in these mountain areas.

What are the priorities in ICIMOD's 'Strategy 2030: Moving Mountains'?

We have a new four-year plan that we've titled 'Embracing Change and Accelerating Action'. As a regional inter-governmental centre that has been in existence for almost 40 years in this region, we should play a really important role as we move forward to 2030. We have been working very hard on how we prioritise our projects because we are facing a set of unprecedented circumstances. We have decided to take our work forwards in three primary areas: the first is around reducing climate and environmental risks. The second will be on green and inclusive mountain economies. Our third focus area is looking at regional and global mechanisms for sustainable action.

How do we encourage young women to be climate leaders of the future?

From my experience, women are fundamental to climate leadership in the future, so I wholeheartedly encourage any young woman to keep at it. It takes a lot of determination and a lot of hard work. Out of that come resilience and strength that actually put women in a prime position to be leaders. The future has to look different. We need a lot of innovation and we need alternative thinkers. Women can bring that to the table alongside male colleagues.

What have you observed in Nepal so far?

Recently, I walked up Langtang Valley. I couldn't help thinking how difficult the circumstances remain for many of the communities that are left up in these regions. Of course, Langtang was particularly badly hit by the earthquake and avalanche in 2015. What struck me while in Langtang is that we really need action, and we need it now.

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Seriously funny political humour

When despots silence their citizens, the people retaliate by ridiculing rulers

● Kunda Dixit

The Soviets had just invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 to crush the Prague Spring pro-democracy movement. A year later, the Czechs were in the finals of the World Ice Hockey Championships against the Soviet team in Stockholm. The Czechs won 4-3, and there was wild jubilation at home. In response, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev sent a telegram to the Czech President: ‘CONGRATULATIONS STOP OIL STOP GAS STOP’.

There have been political jokes for as long as there has been politics, but they really prove their true value when free speech is stifled by authoritarianism or in times of crisis. Which is why many Stalin-era jokes are being revived after Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine. Like this one:

A Russian is entering Latvia, and his conversation with the border police goes like this:
“Nationality?”
“Russian.”
“Occupation?”
“No. Just visiting.”

Today, humour and satire have become an even more powerful means of resistance against oppression because they are lubricated by memes, TikTok and YouTube spoofs. Authoritarian leaders lack a sense of humour, and have sent stand-up comedians, cartoonists, and satire columnists to jail, or even had them bumped off.

Yet, humorists fearlessly pour scorn on the oppressive state. An exception is perhaps what used to be the world’s largest democracy next door, where virtually no jokes exist about Narendra Modi.

Academics are also not known for their sense of humour, but two sociology professors from the South Asian University in New Delhi, Sasanka Perera and Dev Nath Pathak recently published *Humour and the Performance of Power in South Asia*:



AJAYA JOSHI / NEPALI TIMES ARCHIVE

Anxiety, Laughter and Politics in Unstable Times with curated chapters on the role of political humour in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Nepal is not included, and a separate book may be needed to look at Nepal’s celebrity comedians during the Panchayat, Gai Jatra, Madan Krishna-Hari Bansha duo after 1992, Nepali cartoonists who defied military censorship after king Gyanendra’s coup in 2005, social media satire, and a controversial stand-up comedian.

Perera and Pathak’s book looks into the role of humour in theatre, folklore, journalism and social media serving as a force for regime change or safety valve in crisis times. This is serious stuff. What’s so funny, anyway?

Some of the chapters in the book are written by the two editors themselves, and others analyse the role of stand-up comedy in India, political cartoons, social media memes in Sri Lanka, and journalistic satire in Bangladesh.

The role of humour is to allow citizens

to let off steam, to poke fun at people who are no fun at all. And as a form of resistance, it makes citizens lose some of their fear of authority. Humour then can reach a critical mass, and draw more crowds into the streets.

As the pro-democracy and anti-war demonstrations picked up in April 2006 on the streets of Kathmandu, the turning point came when a student at Khula Manch stood up from a crowd with a paper crown on his head, and did a parody of king Gyanendra’s speech (*pictured*). The roar of laughter from those around him proved that the fear was gone. The king restored parliament a few days later.

Sasanka Perera is from Sri Lanka, and his chapter delves into the subversive internet memes challenging political power. Social media mobilisation drove people to the Galle Face Green in Colombo earlier this year in protests that finally brought about the downfall of the Rajapaksa brothers.

The book also delves into why some satire is inherently funny, while others are

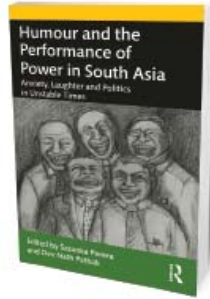
considered ‘hitting below the belt’. Racist repartees may have been tolerated in the past, but have been unacceptable in the age of social media pushback.

The book does look tangentially at Nepal in a chapter by Sandhya A. S. and Chitra Adkar who analyse how Nepali workers are the butt of ‘jokes’ and stereotyped as being simple hillbillies, an image reinforced by Bollywood. They also examine the Indian male gaze, and the perceived femininity of Gorkha security guards, drivers and domestic helpers from Nepal.

‘Jokes about Nepali men circulated among Indian users of digital media draw a caricature of the Nepali men as naïve, simple and at times imbecilic or intellectually inferior,’ the authors write, adding that Indian men have inherited this sense of intellectual superiority from the way the British looked at Nepalis pre 1947.

What the authors do not go into is how Nepali workers in India get back with their own jokes about Indian employers. What do you think the Nepali guards and gardeners are laughing about when the saheb and memsaheb are out?

Humour and the Performance of Power in South Asia is not a joke book, it is a book about jokes. Perera and Pathak have put together serious research on humour and satire as a coping mechanism and resistance in times of trouble. 🇳🇵



Humour and the Performance of Power in South Asia: Anxiety, Laughter and Politics in Unstable Times by Sasanka Perera and Dev Nath Pathak, eds. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New Delhi, 2022 208 Pages, ISBN 9780367564018, Paperback: £27.99, Hardback: INR995.00

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