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VOL. 2 NUMBER. 09

**NOW!**

NOT TO BE SOLD SEPARATELY

# extras

**THE NOW! SPECIAL 8-PAGE PULL-OUT**

**iMAGINGSiKKim**  
**100**  
**YEARS**  
**OF MANGAN**

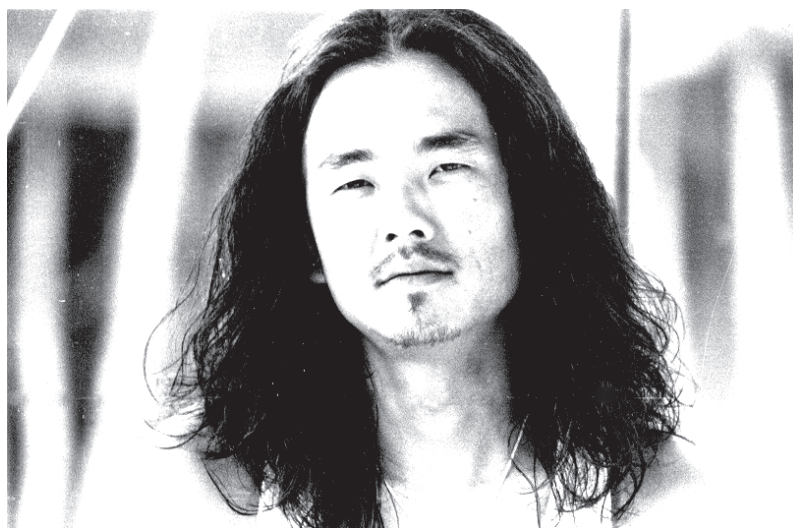
**A**zad Bhutia knew he was going to be a photographer since he was 10 years old. Simple. There was nothing else he wanted to do as much. So, when a family member gifted him a camera, he spent hours taking pictures of landscapes, village life, faces and whatever else. So it is not surprising that this young man, with an unusual name, is creating a space for himself at the national level.

Today, his pictures grace magazine covers, he's collaborated on photography books with well-known lensmen and one look at his collection of photos and you know the man is well on his way to creative and material success. And he's still very young. In fact, in the year 1998, an NDTV programme gave him the sobriquet of being the youngest professional photographer working at the time!

The journey has been far from easy. It was impossible to convince his mother that photography could ever be considered a serious profession. In college in Darjeeling, he would spend all his pocket money on buying film and then in processing. In secret. In the meanwhile, his skill as a designer led him into another direction. Designing bags and other handicraft items, which were supplied to shops in Kalimpong, Kathmandu and Thimpu.

"My mother did not really want me to do this either. It was as if all my education had been in vain. What was the point if I was working with tailors all night, I might as well have not studied, is how she

## Return of the Native



**Despite a name that means "Free," this young professional wants to return to his roots. Azad Bhutia is working on several projects at present and intends to continue doing so, but he wants to shift his base to Sikkim. The return of this professional photographer should help bring the profession out of its infancy and breathe some fresh ideas into the arts scene here. NOW! features what Azad has been up to these past years and what he plans for a future in Sikkim...**

saw it," he remembers.

But the pull of the visual medium was too strong. With around Rs. 40,000, which he had saved from his designing work, he left for Delhi. It was 1996 and he had no definite idea about how he should go about realizing his dream.

"I had a friend, Jigme, who was studying at NIFT. He in-

troduced me to Ciril Parker, the photography teacher at the institute. But nothing came of it," he tells us.

Soon the money was all but over. It was time to leave. Nothing was working out and Azad decided to come back to Gangtok. But destiny obviously had other plans for him. In what seems to be an unbelievable

turn of events, on the very last day of his stay in the city, Azad ran into a friend.

"He was working at Platinum Modeling Agency. One of the biggest in Delhi. He asked me if I wanted to assist photographers at the studio, and did I!" he exclaims.

Here he worked for a year and a half. It was a time when

he assisted nearly every big name in fashion and glamour photography. From Prabuddha Das Gupta to Rony Kaula, Hamesh Dhingra and SR Qureshi.

"I learnt a lot at this time but now I wanted to do my own stuff".

By now he had made enough contacts to venture into the unpredictable world of the "freelancers".

Now, he was charging up to Rs. 15,000 a day for portfolios. Ms. India Neha Dhupia, actor Jimmy Shergill and model Michelle [who starred in the music video "Dhum Pichak" by Euphoria] were some of his early clients.

"Over the years I have worked with all the well-known models, did lots of fashion spreads, but I was again feeling restless, wanted to do some other things," he says.

So he turned to product photography. His photograph for the 1999 Mc Donald campaign was nominated for an international award. Although it did not win, it got him a lot of accolades.

By the next year he had moved to cinematography. Two Tamil films, the names of which he can't remember and two films on Indian spirituality shown on National Geographic Channel were some of these.

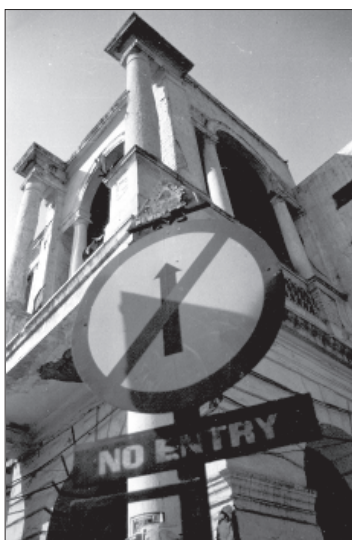
So what future plans?

"I'm working on a book on Tibetans settled in India and how influences of the place they have settled in are making Tibetans lose their distinct identity," he informs. "After this, I plan to do a book on lightning, which is one of my favourite subjects," he adds.

All this after he has just finished collaborating on a book titled "Rain" for which twenty-five of the best photographers of the country have given their interpretations on the theme of rain.

I'm tired just talking to this guy. He's so full of ideas and enthusiasm. Anyway, for now Azad Bhutia plans to keep returning to the good ole hometown and make a base here. "I have a girlfriend who works in the power department. So, I guess I'll be here a lot of the time."

It will definitely be something to look forward to, because, as he promises: "I am going to do a lot for the local talent here. Hold exhibitions and promote their work outside the state."



### NICE MOVE, BAD PLANNING

The new order from the Finance Department making the Pay & Accounts Department in all districts the sole issuer of cheques for projects came into effect on 31 July. Cheque books were recalled from all the works departments. From now on, all bills of even these departments will be settled by P&A. This move to decentralize sounds good on paper, and will, in all probability, work well in the future. But in its present form it is causing a lot of heartburn among contractors and suppliers. Apparently, no system is yet in place at P&A. Bills sent by departments are piling up with no answers on how long the clearing process will take. The department shrugs it off as teething problems, but for those who have huge payments blocked and are losing large amounts as interest money, it's more like a bad toothache with no immediate hope of an extraction.

### GURU MIRACLE

The Guruji from Sudunglakha, is attracting them by the hordes. News of his supernatural powers brings in hundreds of hopefuls each day. None seem to be immune to his miracle making ways. Not even the big and mighty. Recently a delegation of very important people from the Rajdhani made it a point to visit the Guruji on Janamasthami. The day was just right to meet the self-proclaimed Avatar of

## BAZAAR BUZZ

Krishna. Apparently, the first few who ventured into his domain got quiet a mouthful from the Guruji. "How am I supposed to work if you people crowd me like this?" he shouted. The crowd was quite frightened. After all, he's on record claiming he can destroy Sikkim if pushed too hard. But of course, he was much milder with our man at the top. Wonder why he chose to visit? What miracles could he be hoping for? According to some, turning everyone into an OBC was quite a miracle in itself!

### BUILDING BLUES

Last week we wrote about how happy Salman Khurshid was to get the Sangram Bhawan as dowry for the alliance. But we may have spoken a little too soon. The tug-of-war over the building is continuing and the debate over who the building really belongs to is not yet over. While Bhandariji, in his inimitable style, thinks it is his to do what he wants with it, dissident Sangramis are claiming that this building "made with the sweat and tears" of all Sangramis should remain with what they claim the "original party", which apparently has not "merged" with the Cong I. Confused? Never mind. All however agree on one thing. OP Bhandari, OSD, should keep his

opinions to himself. It's none of his business after all, and he just makes the government look a little too keen over the matter.

### SHARE MONEY

If you want to travel by 'Taukey' taxi to Deorali or Tadong, you can board one at the stand below Titanic. But taxis are not allowed to wait here, only to quickly stop and pick up those standing there. That is the rule for most of the taxis. However some of the cabwallahs are singled out for special favour and can wait as long as it takes to fill up the cab. According to disgruntled drivers, these are the ones with the right contacts. There seems to be some truth in this as many have witnessed this discriminatory behavior and heard snide remarks being passed regularly. Will the SP try and 'Traffic Control' this one?

### MOST FAVOURED CHANNEL

What SC TV could not do, Nayuma definitely can. After all, who can dare raise a voice against this Sabse Tez local channel. While VCD parlours and SCTV were forbidden from showing any new release on their cable channel, Nayuma flouts all rules with impunity. New films are shown the first week of their release. While this keeps the consumers quite happy, movie hall wallahs are fuming. Ask them why they don't complain, and they look bemused. Kisko? Kahan??



## UPLINKING MEDICAL CARE

### STNM logs on to the telemedicine backbone

#### a NOW! REPORT

Expert opinions of specialists at AIIMS, New Delhi, and Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Chennai, are now available to local patients along with access to the latest infrastructural gadgets at the disposal of these institutes. All this, without the added expense of travel and boarding at the metros. This has been made possible with the latest addition to the facilities available at STNM Hospital - Tele-Conferencing and Tele-Medicine.

Tele-conferencing enables doctors from STNM to hold discussions with specialists from the two institutes and helps them make more considered diagnosis of cases which come to them.

The mood at STNM is obviously upbeat. The Medical Superintendent, Dr. Hitler Pradhan, while talking to NOW! said that the new facility was indispensable for Sikkim since its small size denies it the facilities of specialists and sophisticated equipment. "We bridge this gap with tele-conferencing and can now claim to be able to provide patients here the latest in diagnostics and referrals without their having to leaving the State."

Dr. Pradhan is also convinced that the new facility will keep his doctors abreast with the latest developments in the field of medicine without having to attend long seminars and workshops away from Sikkim.

"The advice of specialists from bigger hospitals will also help us decide better on where to refer patients in case they need to be sent out for treatment," Dr. Pradhan added.

Also on the anvil are plans to increase the telemedicine footprint to include all the district hospitals. Connectivity with more hospitals, not only within India, but also abroad is also being worked on.

While speaking to NOW! a Doctor who attended the 11-12 August training programme on telemedicine said that they held an interactive session with the doctors at AIIMS, Delhi, and found the possibilities of this new feature very promising in Sikkim's context. He further revealed that they have already sent the ECG report of a volunteer to Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences for expert views. Although still in the trial stage, doctors here are convinced that once teleconferencing becomes fully operational by later this year, both, the doctors and patients of Sikkim, will benefit from it.

## Mind games

Plans are afoot to play games with your Mind. More like providing sports for your mind actually. "NOW! Mindgames," an attempt at bringing quality quizzing to local quizzers is scheduled for Thursday, 28 August. The event, sponsored by the Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, will see school and college level teams wrack their brains to answer questions posed by Parnab Chakraborty, a journalist by profession and a quiz-master by passion who is a well known face in the national level quizzing scene.

Familiar to the hills as the quiz-master of the prestigious Telegraph Quiz held in Darjeeling each year, Parnab [as do the organizers] hopes that the NOW! Mindgames becomes a regular feature for Sikkim, too.

Although the second terminal examinations is schools around the State has limited the number of participants, the event should still prove exciting enough given that this would be the first time that real quizzing makes a debut in Sikkim. Although entries to the inter-school quiz is limited to, well, schools, the next session is an open round open to all - schools, colleges, professionals or any quizzing duo. Registrations can also made at the venue [Community Hall] on the day of the quiz itself [28 August, Thursday] between 10 AM to 11 AM. Anyone with a quizzing bent of mind is invited to choose whether they want to participate or just watch Sikkimese minds play some games.



RAINED OUT: The Rusty Nails in MG Marg last Friday. Rain put the intended street-rock out of business with just a couple of tunes (soundchecks!) for the Gangtokians to go home with. a NOW! pic

## 'n da band PLAYED ON....

{Dedicated to ma fren "Yougal", "Viku'da n Co.}

### "FOOT STUMPIN MUSIC"

Groovy blues, Elements of Jazz  
Down da dunes, funkyd up tunes  
"ROCK N ROLL SOUL"...

hammered bass, high end notes  
played 'em rite, played em tight  
absolute illusion, "SHININ ON"....  
groovin' motion, "RUSTY NAILS"

Heavy rain, down the drain  
never mind, da acoustic train  
runnin' high through the fret's  
out to amaze, "PURPLE HAZE"  
extraterrestrial, extraordinary  
"SOME KINDA WONDERFUL"  
absolute illusion, groovin motion  
4ever, "SHININ ON".... "RHYTHM MACHINE"  
"RUSTY NAILS"

- V-VEK (Gtk) -

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# rajdhani

WHAT THE CAPITAL'S BEEN UP TO



by NIGEL CASHMORE

Niche marketing has come of age. On 22 August, last Friday, Style, a boutique stocked exclusively with men's wear, opened shop at the Hotel Golden Pagoda complex here at MG Marg. Days when brand-names appealed only to women are long gone. The men-folk are as finicky about their apparel nowadays and "Style" is targeted at striking that chord of vanity in the Gangtok men which softens their pockets to spend on brand-names, and, well Style.

While speaking to NOW!, the proprietor Anand Thirani, explained that "Style" deals exclusively in men's-wear and boasts perhaps the largest collection of such apparel in Gangtok. Enter the ergonomically designed space and you are greeted with a happy mix of denims and formal wear. The people behind "Style" have not limited their clientele to any age-group. The shop is stacked with ready-made garments for the teens, the young professionals and tasteful older generation.

As Mr. Thirani takes us around "Style," the range is truly wide. While all the regular denim brands and styles are available, also on display are the carefully casual rows of "Exile" jeans. These denims with an aesthetically appealing worn look, torn in the right places should be a hit with those youngsters who don't have the patience to wear their jeans down. Then there are bandanas and T-shirts.

For the more somber dresser there is the John Players range. Stitched from 100% cotton, the fabric of this shirt range is specially imported from Italy. The shirts category is stacked with such names as ITC brand, Thomas Scott and Positive.

Mr. Thirani further informs that he will soon be bringing in a consignment of winter-wear to ensure that Gangtok fashion soars as the mercury drops.

Prices at "Style" are industry standard. But then, whoever said that smart dressing comes cheap?

## THE RED-EYE SYNDROME RETURNS



### Whip those shades out, CONJUNCTIVITIS is in the air

by ANAND OBEROI

It's that time of the year again. Conjunctivitis, which always seems to appear at this time is troubling Gangtokians again. More than 100 cases have been reported at STNM over the past week. An equal number are visiting private doctors for treatment.

According to doctors here, Conjunctivitis is the infection of the Conjunctiva, it can occur in any age and any time but it mainly comes in an epidemic form involving many people during hot, humid and rainy season.

"There is definitely a rise in Conjunctivitis this season. I have had many children coming here with this problem" says Dr. HK Chhetri, Pediatrician.

"There are many bacteria and viruses normally found as commensal organisms in our body so whenever a suitable environment is found in our body they become pathogenic, so

similarly in eyes also these conditions apply and usually we see many cases of Conjunctivitis in this season," adds Dr. Hitler Pradhan, Eye Surgeon and Medical Superintendent, STNM.

Conjunctivitis maybe viral or bacterial. It is mostly viral, which spreads quickly, is accompanied by redness, itching, burning and pain with very little thick discharges from the eye. It lasts for a specific length of time, usually 7-10 days, and then disappears. A person getting the same viral infection rarely gets it again immediately but may contract it after an interval. Bacterial conjunctivitis is sporadic in nature and does not spread as fast, except within the same household. Conjunctivitis is not an air-borne but is contagious.

So what can one do to reduce the risk of contracting the disease?

"If any body in the family has this infection then the family members should maintain per-

sonal hygiene. Towels and beds should not be shared. People who apply the medicine on infected people should wash their hands with soap. They should also avoid touching objects and things that the patient might have infected. The patients should not go out in public to large gatherings, offices and schools so that they do not infect others," advises Dr. Pradhan.

"If necessary, one can start antibiotic eye-drops like Sulphacetamide and Ciprofloxacin and oral Cetrizine to relieve itching," adds Dr. Chhetri. It is also helpful if one wears spectacles or dark glasses as it prevents photophobia and prevent it from spreading to others.

Both doctors warn that Conjunctivitis should not be neglected and treatment should be done by doctors because if the infection spreads to the cornea it may become serious causing damage to the eyes leading to loss of eyesight.

## ARMY SCHOOL TURNS 5



The Army School, Gangtok, celebrated its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Day here on 16 August with GOC 17 Mtn. Div., Maj. Gen. Deepak Anand, who is also the patron of the school, as the chief guest. The GOC was accompanied by his wife who gave away the prizes and trophies to the award winners.

The function, organized at the Defence Auditorium was attended by parents and senior officers of the cantonment and included a much-appreciated cultural programme by the students. A total of 165 children from nursery to class X participated in the programme staged to celebrate the heterogeneous culture of our nation.

The GOC, in his address, called upon the students and teachers of Army School to further improve the academic standard of the school and make it the "model school" of Gangtok.

the only place for

*Pepe Jeans*

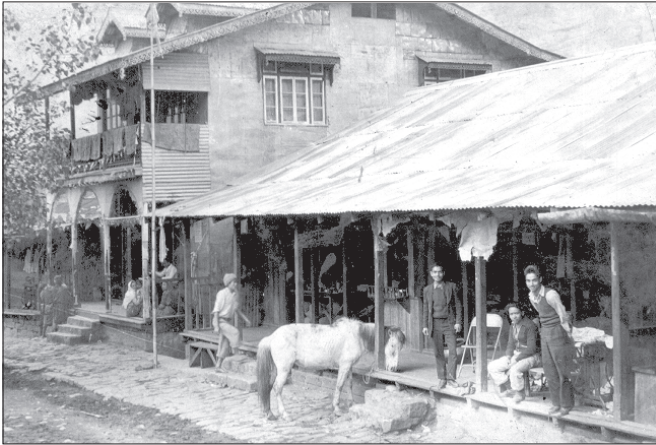
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## Glimpses of Mangan - 1903 to 2003

### CURTAIN RAISER TO MANGAN'S CENTENARY - I



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT -**  
 The Lower (Old) Mangan Bazaar as it stood in 1960 (pic courtesy Januki Pradhan).  
 The first goods carrier No. SKM 556 arrives (1965).  
 The podium set up at Mangan bazaar to celebrate the Chogyal's birthday on 4 April 1960 (pic courtesy Tholung House).  
 The patriarch of 'Raj Enterprise Family' Khyali Ram Singhi with his wife in Mangan in 1930.  
 Maghe Mela, 1970, at Lower Mangan Bazaar. (pic courtesy Tholung House)  
 Kulman Pradhan, now 94 years old, at his paan shop in 1965 (pic courtesy Januki Pradhan).

by DEEPAK SHARMA

In April 1918, when World War I was just ending, Rinzing Namgyal, the landlord of Mangan wrote this is his petition to the then Chogyal of Sikkim: "That Mangan is a Bazar opened by me in 1903 during the Tibet Expedition under the order of the late Political Officer Mr. J. C. White, C.I.E., and is situated at the junction of Lachen, Lachung and Talung Valley Road..."

That the Mangan Bazar which consists of two Kayas and one Newar shop which keep every kind of articles etc. requireable by the people and of a dispensary and an open post box opened by the State is frequently visited by the people from every direction."

The town has grown much from its above recorded humble beginnings as a tiny outpost in 1903.

Records reveal that the first Marwari shops in the region were set up by the forefathers of the present-day Mangan merchants, Amar Singhi and Jagat Singhi. Kalu Ram Singhi is mentioned by them as the person who took that first bold step. They inform that this ancestor brought the first commercial establishments to the region in the 1860s and even earlier along the old British road at Samartek above present-day Ringhim. Other early arrivals include a branch of Jethmull Bhojraj, the erstwhile government cashier, and the Newar family of Man Bahadur Pradhan, whose descendants are one of the more prominent families of Mangan now. The latter two may have set up shop in Mangan sometime around the turn of the century when the town was founded. Banechand Karan Singhi worked at the Jethmull Bhojraj enterprise in Mangan and later the family became partners in Mangan banking operations. Khyali Ram Singhi, the octogenarian patriarch of the Singhi family, now lives in Gangtok where the family has branched out into the ready-made garments business - Raj Enterprise. They are to this day referred to as Chotta Bank for their banking background in Mangan.

Sadly, much of the early history of the town has been lost in the mists of time. Information, culled from the memories of the older generation however, suggests that the town did not grow much till the fifties. Things started changing from that decade. The fifties marked a period of change and turmoil in the region. The old landlord-based system of governance and revenue collection was replaced by the bureaucratic system. Money was pumped in to set up a bureaucratic infrastructure after Mangan was chosen to be the north district headquarters. Land surveys were carried out and the present land revenue system was introduced. The construction of a motorable North Sikkim Highway was started by the Central Public Works Department and finally commissioned in 1962. The first motor-car to cross over the Rang-Rang bridge, a major engineering feat for the department at that time, was that of a CPWD engineer, one Mr. Bijlani. Oral history of the place suggests that the first private petrol jeep and commercial truck to undertake the journey belonged to the Tholung family. The advent of the motorcar marked the end of the colourful era of mules trains and mule tracks and ushered in development at a more rapid pace. To this day, rusted horse-shoes, steel brushes used for grooming mules and other articles that hark back to the old days can still be found if one were to sift through the overgrown remnants of the old mule track.

Through the fifties and sixties, seven Marwari enterprises were cleared by the Durbar to set up shop in Mangan. These were: Jethmull Bhojraj, Sreemulchand, Rama Shankar Babu, Brijlall Banwarilal, Jagat Singh Amar Singh, Champalal Malu and Birdhichand Malu.

The most enduring memories for the old-timers of Mangan Bazar remains the erstwhile Chogyal's birthday celebrations in Mangan. Celebrated on 4 April every year, this day was marked with much pomp and gaiety. The volleyball games played every evening between the locals and shopkeepers and the subsequent card games in the shade of the peepal tree are also remembered with much fondness by the old-timers.

This peepal tree also provided the canopy and stage for community celebrations. The older Manganites also recall fondly the times in the mid-seventies when artists brought in from Rangpo and Singtam would perform Ramlila there on the eve of Holi.

Mangan lost some of its sheen with the closure of Indo-Tibet trade in 1962.

The Merger of 1975 marks the next important milestone in the history of Mangan. Major investments by the Government since has changed the face of the town. Whereas earlier, single-storeyed wooden structures around the town square in the lower bazaar housed the shops, now, multi-storeyed concrete structures built adjacent to the highway have mushroomed as shopping complexes of the new age. Increased government investments and increased employment of local people in government and the influx of government employees has changed the character of the town. The nineties saw the setting up of a large number of shops in Mangan and present-day estimates put the number of shops here to some two hundred and fifty.

The year 2003 marks the Centenary Year of Mangan and the north-district headquarters stands at the crossroads again. The resumption of cross-border trade, the burgeoning tourist arrivals to north Sikkim [300% increase in the last two years], proposals for mega power projects to harness Teesta, the problems of the cardamom industry on which the town economy is based and the unplanned and unchecked growth of the town, all provide challenges that need to be addressed. The locals look ahead to the first decade of second hundred with hope and some trepidation.

**Rinzing Namgyal established the town of Mangan in 1903. Apart from laying the foundations of the district headquarters, he has many other achievements to his credit.**

**READ MORE ABOUT THE 'PIONEER OF MANGAN' on pg7 of NOW!**

# LITNOW

## WHEN THE HILLS WRITE

# deserted -iii

by ARUN 'AERONUT' CHERIAN

All characters, locations, mutants and myself are fictitious in the story. The 7-UP mentioned is vampire urine and does not resemble the actual 7-UP in any way.

continued from last week

"Come on, you are my best friend remember," I said. "Not when I need blood," he growled, smiling a jagged smile of evil triumph.

"Not, if I can help it," I said, giving him a good hard kick in his groin. His grip loosened and he doubled over. Even vampires have groins, I realized. Giving him another kick in the same region, I started speeding away from him.

Vampires recover very quickly. Before I knew it, he was back on my tail.

I had to think fast. The only way you to kill a vampire is with some weapon, gold or silver or by driving a wooden stake through its heart or by stuffing garlic into its mouth. The only silver thing that I had was the filing in my tooth. Couldn't figure out how could use that as a weapon so I concentrated on the running.

I could hear him gaining on me.

I could run but I could not hide. I could not make a stand either. I knew he was too powerful for me. I checked behind me, he was gaining ground and would soon be upon me. Then, for a clumsy second, I slipped and landed straight into the omnipresent garbage dump.

He was over me in a flash and pinned me down.

With fingers gripped around a broken beer bottle and I lashed out, striking his head again and again and again till it was a messy pulp of flesh and blood. Nothing distinct could be seen except for a red glowing eye in

a socket.

Good thing people drink so much, otherwise I too would have become a vampire in the ensuing fight.

But soon muscles and tendons and veins joined together and a new eye grew in one of the sockets. He stood up once again laughing ghoulishly, revealing jagged yellow teeth dripping with saliva.

"It is no use resisting me, my friend. I am much too strong for you," he said. I tried kicking him in the groin but this time he was prepared and caught my foot and jerked it so that I fell down. His clawed hands took hold of my neck and sitting on top of me he growled. "Now you are not going to escape, my dear. Say your last prayers because I am going to give you the dark kiss".

Then, in the midst of mortal peril, I remembered that I had Wai-Wai in my pocket. My hands were relatively free and I took the packet out. He bent down and opened his mouth wide, allowing his saliva to drip onto my face. Just as he was about to deliver the promised "dark kiss", I stuffed the packet of Wai-Wai into his jaws.

For one moment he made an effort to take the packet out of his mouth but the garlic in Wai-Wai (and there is lots of it) started to take ef-

fect. His skin began to peel away slowly and began to decay almost immediately. Vampires are the undead, not the immortal. I pushed him away with the back of my hand and stood up while he lay writhing on the ground as his internal organs started to disintegrate and burn up. He was emitting loud cries of pain now clutching the part that was burning up and disintegrating. He caught my leg and cried out, "Why did you do this to me. I was your friend". The hand that caught also disintegrated and slowly everything burnt up into a nothingness. Then, with a great cry, the last of him burnt up and he died. There was no trace of him except a foul gas and his bones lying where he had been writhing about in agony. For a minute I prayed to god for having saved me from becoming a soulless vampire.

But my troubles were not over yet.

Soon bats began to fly their vicious circles around me and began transforming into vampires.

The old hag, no longer squint eyed, but with eyes like little balls of fire and the rest of the women at the theatre were no longer sniveling and the boyfriends no longer yawning and all the rest all stood around me in a circle chanting: "You have killed one of our kind. Now we shall kill you."

They started closing in on me.

There was nothing I could do but stand and suffer my destruction. Suddenly all of them leapt forward and with their claws and teeth ripped out the flesh in my neck and tearing chunks of flesh off me started feasting as I watched myself getting eaten up alive.

"Aaaaaaaaah!!!" I yelled as I felt a sharp whack on my face. Why were they slapping me when they could so easily just rip me apart and be done with it?

My friend was looking over me with a concerned look on his face as I opened my eyes. Everyone was staring at me. "You were yelling so loudly that I thought you were getting a fit or something," he said.

"Nah, just a bad night-

mare," I said.

The movie had come to an end and "The End" was flashing on the screen.

"Phew! I sure am glad that is over," I said.

Somehow something felt strange. I remember having said that before. We got out of the balcony and saw the people, I remembered having seen somewhere. No, not a déjà vu, more like a replay.

I said to Feroz, "Go get a taxi while I buy some snacks. I'll meet you outside the hall."

"Sure," he replied and disappeared into the crowd heading for the exit while I moved towards the snack counter.

It was when I saw the old hag hind the counter that everything fell into place. I tried to turn around. To run away. I couldn't. My legs force marched me to the counter and my lips mimed an order.

The only thing that still functioned outside the spell I seemed to be under was my brain. It signaled only one message - I was going to die knowing that I was going to die...

CONCLUDED

### Bookworm Asks CONTEST

Name the latest book by Arindham Chaudhury?

the winner [decided by draw of lots from all correct entries] wins a discount voucher worth Rs. 100 from Rachna Books and Publications

Last week's answer: Lewis Carrol  
WINNER: Pempa Tamang, Gangtok.



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28th August 2003, Community Hall

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# WOMEN NOW!

**Manita Pradhan was recently appointed the Chairperson of the Sikkim State Commission for Women. She essays many roles with relative ease. She is the mother of grown-up children, the Publicity Secretary of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front, active with the Cheli Morcha and assiduous about her social obligations. NOW! got her to shed some light on her new role and her beliefs.**

**Excerpts:**

**How do you feel about being appointed Chairperson of Sikkim State Commission for Women?**

I am obviously very happy. Although the commission was set up in November 2002, I have been appointed the first Chairperson of the commission. It is an 8-member commission and has quasi-judicial powers. It is quite a big responsibility given to me on behalf of the Sikkimese women. And the whole credit goes to the Chief Minister for giving this post to a political worker. This will go a long way in encouraging others to do more work.

**So what exactly is the function of the commission?**

Our basic task is to look into offences against women in the state. We will compile information on instances of all offences against women, coordinate with the various State and district level cells for atrocities against women. Apart from this, we will be conducting in-depth studies on the economic, social, and health situations of women in Sikkim, assist, train and orient NGOs in legal counseling of poor women. As I have mentioned earlier, the commission has the powers of the civil court, which means it has the power to summon any person from any part of the country for examination and also the power to pass judgment.

**Are there many cases of**

**atrocities against women in the State as there is in the rest of the country?**

Well, maybe not too many, but last year, the commission took up several cases, mostly related to marital and property disputes. Some cases requiring intervention of Lok Adalat and District Court were forwarded to the concerned offices for taking necessary action from their end. I have not yet looked into the details of the matter.

**So, in a sense you are out of active politics now?**

How can you say that? Politics is not only about standing for elections but also about governance. In that way, I will always be active politically under the umbrella of the SDF party. Side by side I will work hard to prove myself in this commission in imparting justice. I am also the Publicity Secretary to the party, which means the work of all government and party matters and messages have to be spread to the grassroots. This includes distribution of party literature, etc. I am also very involved with the Cheli Morcha.

**You were Gangtok MLA in 1989...**

But I was in politics from much earlier. I joined politics in 1979. But after 1989 I was very disappointed with the SSP party. The party did not do much for women in the state. That way the SDF has done much more. We have a woman Speaker. Thirty-three per



cent reservation has been given to women in the Panchayats. The present government is much more committed towards women empowerment and is including them in all decision making.

**What do you feel about turning into an OBC?**

It is a very positive development. In one stroke, all divisions within the Nepali community have been removed. The NBC organizations have been demanding this for a long time. The Chief Minister tried to convince the Central government for 9 years to include the NBC's into the OBC category but he was not successful. However, at the state level he has been courageous enough to declare all the left out communities as OBC and give them the facilities.

**Lets talk about you? What kind of a person are you?**

I am very friendly, very accessible. I am told I'm a very strong person too. I take on every task head-on and give it my 100%.

Even at home I cook, clean, look after the garden and take care of every aspect of the house. At work outside, I'm equally hands-on.

**Your husband died in 1996? Were you strong then?**

I took my husband's death very badly. Things were easier for me earlier. He was extremely supportive of everything I did. But after the initial months of emotional difficulty, I decided to take control of things. I told myself that there were others who were much more unfortunate than me. I couldn't allow myself to indulge in self pity. I decided to work for others. Through the AK Shrestha Memorial Trust, we have been doing a lot of social service for the economically disadvantaged. I'm also very involved with the Spastic Centre.

**Are you religious?**

I am a follower of the Brahmakumaris. You can say I am a senior member of the centre having joined it when they had just started in Sikkim. It is their belief in compassion and relin-

quishing of material considerations that appealed to me. I try and live by those ethics and hope I can spread that message around.

**Has it been difficult managing both family and public life?**

Like I said, my husband was very supportive of my work and so have my children been. Now my children are away completing their studies and I have enough time to give towards my public obligations.

**What, in your view should women do to lead complete lives?**

I can't speak for everyone. We must each find for ourselves what we are comfortable with. But I think women should explore all the potentialities embodied in them. We should realize all our hidden talents, whatever they may be. Most important is that while we are busy with our day to day lives, we must remember to keep a sacred space for ourselves and never, ever, think of ourselves as the weaker sex.

## India's First All Woman Film Company

**A** need to create a platform for women film makers to express themselves in a male dominated environment as well as the desire to move beyond the commercial scene has given rise to India's first all-women film company, Firehorse Films. The company was founded by established filmmakers Venita Coelho and Deepti Datt.

They say, "The philosophy behind FireHorse Films is simple: women first. In the subjects we explore, in the films we make, in the technicians we choose to work with, always women first. Our goal is to become a self-funded, successful, commercial, film production company. We believe in success by the high standards that we set for ourselves. As such, we are an organization that will seek, always, to work with women professionals of the highest caliber. We be-

lieve in raising the standards. Not conforming to them.

"It became apparent, from our experience as women in the film industry, the kind of subject matter - social issues important to us as women - that we would want to explore through film, would not be received well by a largely male-dominated Indian film-finance world. Having considered the hard fact that there are no commercial film companies in India run by women, we concluded what we needed was to create our own platform.

"Our primary aim is to make commercial and documentary films of our choice, dealing with issues important to women, by women filmmakers. An official release informs that two such projects at FireHorse are *Monsters Under the Bed* and *Bombay Stories*. The former written by Coelho is based on her personal experience with paedophilia. The other film is a documentary by Datt,

on the reality of five women's lives in a small suburb of the city. *Bombay Stories* explores the status of women today in the different economic and class segments of urban, post-liberal, Indian society, as represented by a small suburb in Bombay.

Elaborating further on the company initiative they say, "We want to, both, directly and indirectly impact our industry by using part of the profits we accrue from FireHorse Film projects towards providing: a platform for women professionals in the Indian Film Industry; start-up funding and seed money towards developing and realizing projects by women filmmakers; and facilitating internships to encourage women filmmakers in the Indian film industry."

FireHorse Films will participate in and co-organise the Goa International Women's Film Festival. The event will take place from 6-8 March 2004.

# XFACTOR

NOW! EXTRA FOR THE YOUNG



a NOW! pic

2002. Winning the medal in his favorite back-stroke category, he says he was happy not only for winning the medal but also taking part in the meet itself which he says has "given him inspiration to perform even better in future championships."

Somnath's father has been his mentor and coach all along. Always encouraging, it was he who taught him to swim and backed him all the way.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Somnath is preparing for the Indian Public School Certificate, IPSC (Swimming Meet) coming up in the first week of September at the Yadav Yantra Public School, Punjab. "I'm practicing very hard, almost 4-5 hours everyday and hope to win a Gold Medal there," he says.

His dream of someday winning a gold medal at the national level may or may not come true,

## SOMNATH CHAKRABORTY - Sikkim's Swimming Hope

# AQUA-LAD

by NIGEL CASHMORE

Winning medals in swimming competitions is rare for Sikkim, but Somnath Chakraborty, a 16 year old student of Tashi

Namgyal Academy, achieved just that.

He is the first swimmer to bring back a Bronze medal for the state from the North Eastern Games Sports Festival held at Tripura, Agartala, in November

but it certainly won't be for lack of trying. Somnath was one of the sportspersons felicitated by the State Government during the Independence Day celebrations held here at TNA on 15 August, last Friday.

## Sweet Nothings

MESSAGES FROM THE HEART

DEAR NAMRATA

I Miss you a lot.! Spare some time for me from your busy life. I love you.

ROBIN

DEAR PEMA

I miss you a lot. Lets get together some times. I am sorry about everything. I Luv u.

FROM ADW.

BALD HEADED HERMIT!

Khali Boss! Boss! Rest all naggin? Jaane kyon????

LOCO COCO!

HEY EARLY WOMAN!

Sometimes, alone, at night, I THINK (ABOUT YOU). I THANK (YOU). I STARE (AT YOUR PHOTO) AT THE WALL.

and then I THANK again.

This time, I thank GOD! for "YOU FOR ME" SERIOUSLY, EARLY MAN!

HEY LOCO COCO!

I thoutht. I thought. And I thought.

And then I realised... you're just another naggy old woman now! BlueDyedBoy!

HELLO PROFESSOR'P'

Kyon darte ho Buzz say? Nothing to hide but MIDlife crisis, am sure! Happy Belated Budday!

THE BUZZER!

OYE SHERRY!

U say, good grrrls go 2 heaven! BAD girls go evrywhere! Me says you travel 2 much!!!!

Have a great birthday! Who else, but Guruma!

## SCHOLASTICALLY ATTUNED



Chief Guest for the I-Day celebrations at Mangan, area MLA and Power Minister, Hissey Lachungpa, offers Rinkila a khada before handing over the BK Rai award.

### MANGAN'S RINKILA BHUTIA BAGS BK RAI AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Amidst the excitement of I-Day celebrations at Mangan choc-a-bloc with events to dazzle, was the simple function of handing over of the BK Rai Award to Rinkila Bhutia of Mangan Senior Secondary School for her exceptional performance in AISSE [CBSE class X], 2003. Rinkila logged in a consolidate percentage of 89.4 per cent [Mathematic- 98%; Science- 98%; Hindi- 79%; English- 78%; Social Studies- 94%] and topped the AISSE "State Merit List".

When NOW! caught up with a beaming Rinkila Bhutia after the awards ceremony, she credited her past and present teachers for having groomed her so well and made it possible for her to secure such high marks. Her parents, too, have always been supportive and she adds rather shyly that even she worked very hard.

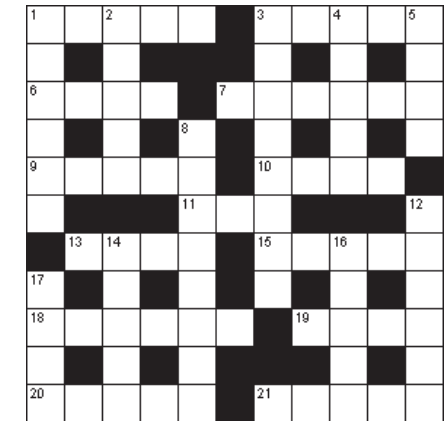
Asked to comment on her future plans and ambitions, Rinkila is very clear. She wants to study engineering after completing her senior secondary studies. The elder sibling, Rinkila is as affectionate towards her sister as she is diligent about her studies. She devotes half an hour every morning and two hours every evening to studies on an average and is currently the pride of Mangan.

## THE LITTLE CROSSWORD - 061

WINNER GETS FREE DINNER FOR TWO AT



Solve the crossword correctly. Rush it to Oberois (MG Marg) or NOW!, on or before Sunday and a lucky draw of all correct entries will decide who wins FREE DINNER FOR TWO at LITTLE ITALY. DEORALI SNACKS COUPONS TO BE COLLECTED FROM NOW! OFFICE



ACROSS

1. Wept
3. Not hollow
6. Egyptian river
7. Violin
9. Beyond what is usual
10. All time
11. Long-tailed rodent
13. Floating ice
15. Indian tent
18. Marked with rings
19. Timber
20. Eyeglasses

21. Line of people

DOWN

1. Ember
2. Very small island
3. Short dagger
4. Flat shelf
5. Animal
8. Headless
12. Interfere
14. Sudden forward thrust
16. Examine thoroughly
17. Weapons

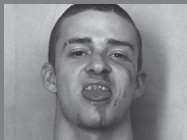
LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS: ACROSS 1. BASIC 6. AGITATE 8. CAPSIZE 9. USA 10. OOPS 12. PLUG 15. HOT 16. MOURNER 18. SHORTEN 19. SHAVE DOWN 1. BED CLOTHES 2. SWAP 3. CABIN 4. PILES 5. MANUAL 7. EXAGGERATE 11. PATROL 13. SMITH 14. TURNS 17. NASA WINNER: RAOUL T. THAPA, GANGTOK

MOVIES  
4 FREE

ONE CORRECT ANSWER TO THE FILM!  
QUESTION WINS 2 TICKETS TO

DENZONG

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Identify this pop-star about to make his debut in Hollywood

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

LAST WEEK'S ANSWER:  
Samuel L. Jackson  
WINNER: Raoul T. Thapa, Gtk.

**FACE of the WEEK**



**BIKASH SAMPANG.**

*the* **FUTURE is NOW**

**ARIES:** You will be in a position to join some higher education. Some may learn new languages etc. Business will be brisk and busy. Artists and musicians find great success. Cash flow will be maintained well. Political life will be good.

**TAURUS:** Some may decide to do undertake their own business. Business will be brisk and busy. Support from your elder brother is expected. Friends will come to support and help you. Expect a delay in resolving disputes.

**GEMINI:** Some may go for an overseas trip. Business will be brisk and busy. Understanding with your family will be very good. Cash flow will be good. Expansion and increase of health and wealth is indicated.

**CANCER:** Political life will be very good. Some may purchase a new vehicle. Some may get good news from outstation. Some may go on a pilgrimage. Understanding with your spouse will be good.

**LEO:** Some may purchase immovable property. Expenses will prevail. Some may purchase a new vehicle also. Change of environment will give you mental happiness.

**VIRGO:** Business will be brisk and busy. Encouraging communication will be received. Cash flow will be very good. Ladies may purchase jewels and designer clothes. Students will study well. Professional may find some misunderstanding with their sub-ordinates. Career people find good improvement.

**LIBRA:** Some may get a job opportunity. Professionals will be brisk and busy. Students will study well. You will enjoy a good social status, popularity and prosperity. Family affairs will be settled amicably.

**SCORPIO:** Cash flow will be very good. Some may perform a religious function in their house. Mentally, a happy period prevails. You will be in a position to encash assets under litigation. Some may get a new job. Traders will enjoy a good turnover.

**SAGITTARIUS:** Business will be brisk and busy. Understanding with your spouse will be very good. Business expansion and wealth is indicated. Additional expenses are expected. Health will be stable.

**CAPRICORN:** Financial position will be good. You will be in a position to enjoy a good status and position. Expansion on your business is indicated. Expenses will be reduced. You will have a chance to socialize with your extended family.

**AQUARIUS:** Some may get a huge loan and expand their business. Business will be brisk and busy. Some may get a new vehicle. Some may decide on starting a new business activity also. Cash flow will be good.

**PISCES:** Some may get a huge loan and expand their business. Business will be brisk and busy. Some may get a new vehicle. Some may decide on starting a new business activity also. Cash flow will be good.

**Create Opportunities**

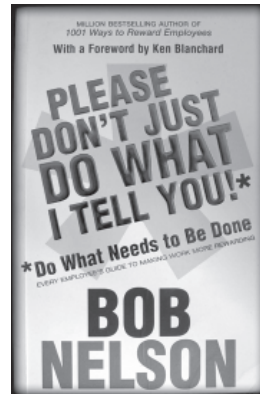
**W**ant to be a person who makes things happen? If you are, then this book is for you.

The book has a simple premise. You never need permission to do great work. Whenever you work, whoever you work for, management expects that you will always use your best judgment and effort to do what needs to be done for the organization to be successful. It is called The Ultimate Expectation.

Written in a simple and easy-to-read manner, the book shows employees how to reach for the sky and use initiative they never knew was there. The book is about fast-tracking or getting ahead by fulfilling an employer's ultimate expectation; that you'll figure out what needs to be done and take the initiative to do it.

The book suggests ways to save money, turn problems into opportunities, avoid the "blame game" persist when obstacles rise, among other things.

Written by Bob Nelson, bestselling author and founder



of Nelson Motivation INC, the book offers direct advice and interesting anecdotes about people who have taken the initiative and been rewarded.

"Please don't just do what I tell you! Do what needs to be done" is especially useful for those who are just starting out in their career and want to build a "Brand You". A special portfolio describing the opportunities

they have had and the skills they bring to the party. The book underlines how we can create our own opportunity, regardless of where we work or the job we do.

**Pages - 103; Price - Rs. 150**  
Available at **ALPHABETS,**  
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**HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX**

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**MOVIE REVIEW MOVIE REVIEW MOVIE REVIEW**

**If you're going to skip one film this year - make it "Gigli."**

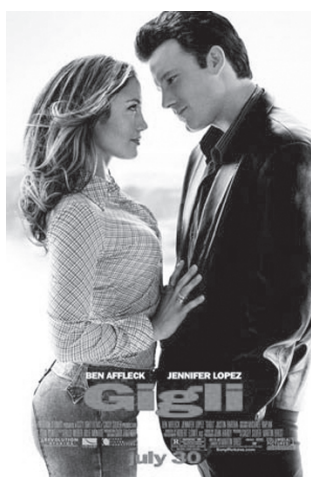
**B**en Affleck and Jennifer Lopez are small time enforcers who kidnap a mentally challenged man as a scare tactic to ensure their boss' boss escapes prosecution.

The problem with "Gigli" is it is a really bad film. If you're going to skip one film this year - make it "Gigli."

However not all the acting is to blame for the film's problems. Lopez is actually pretty good in her role. She comes off tough enough and brash enough to make her character work - however she's mismatched against Ben Affleck's "Gigli." Lopez overshadows her co-star completely.

Affleck is miscast in his role. Normally a competent actor (and an award-winning actor), he should have demanded the role be re-written more comedic than it was.

The resulting script has left his character too shallow, too meaningless and no chemistry with his



leading lady. And Affleck should have seen it as he knows what a good script should offer.

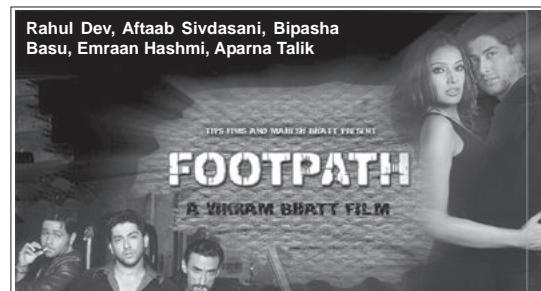
Then there are the problems with appearances of Christopher Walken and Al Pacino. Both actors appear in the film in seemingly "key" roles.

Yet neither of them ever appear to follow through on their involvement in the plot. Their participation in the film is less important than a celebrity poking his head out of the window as Batman and Robin climb by.

I can't recommend "Gigli" at all - it gets 1 star and is rated R for sexual content, pervasive language and brief strong violence.

**DENZONG**

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- ▲ **BAD BOYS - II**
- ▲ **S.W.A.T.**
- ▲ **TERMINATOR - 3**
- ▲ **PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN**
- ▲ **MATRIX RELOADED**

Movies for review provided by TASHIMOVIE CLUB