

B post

"Hamro Patrika"

Norge-Nepal foreningen

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NORGE-NEPAL
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kr. 100,-

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MEDELSKONTINGENTEN.

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Program for møtet onsdag 17. april 1996:

■ Foredrag ved Sushila Nepali, Bavitra Shrestha og Indra Mamamdhar som alle studerer bærekraftig jordbruk og forvaltning av naturressurser ved Noragric på Ås. Sushila forteller om lokale mønstre for utnyttning av skogsprodukter (andre enn trevirke for brensel) i Udayapuar-distriktet hvor hun gjorde sitt feltarbeid. Bavitra tar for seg jordbruket og dets innvirkning på forvaltning av vannressursene i et nedslagsfelt nær Kathmandu og Indra forteller fra sitt feltarbeid om biodiversitet i Siklis i Pokhara-distriktet.

{Sushila Nepali, Bavitra Shrestha and Indra Mamamdhar, studying natural resource management and sustainable agriculture at Noragric (Ås), will give a presentation on their field work in Nepal. Sushila did her field work on local patterns of non-wood forest products utilisation in Udayapuar district. Bavitra focuses on agriculture and its impact on watershed management close to Kathmandu, while Indra is studying biodiversity in the Siklis area, Pokhara district.}

■ Lysbildeforedrag ved Olav Myrholm. Vi følger en familie i landsbyen Mohoriya i Kaski-distriktet gjennom ti år: deres daglige sysler, økonomiske og sosiale forhold samt endringer i landsbyen, naturen og landskapet - framskritt og tilbakeslag. Olav bodde i Mohoriya i forbindelse med studier og har senere besøkt landsbyen med jevne mellomrom.

■ Dal-bhat (ca. kr. 50,-), kaffe/te, utlodning og trivelig samvær for å markere seksårsdagen for revolusjonen.



Nr. 2, mars 1996

**Velkommen til festmøte
med dal-bhat**

**i Norge-Nepal foreningen
17. april 1996, kl. 19.00**

i Lektorenes Hus, Wergelandsveien 15, Oslo.

Foredrag:

Glimt fra nepalesiske studenter feltarbeid i
Udayapuar, Siklis og Kathmandu-området
- bærekraftig jordbruk og forvaltning av naturressurser.

Lysbildeforedrag:

En familie gjennom ti år - vi følger en
familie i landsbyen Mohoriya i Kaski.

NORGE-NEPAL FORENINGENS STYRE:

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Hamro Patrika er Norge-Nepal foreningens medlemsavis som utkommer fire-fem ganger i året. Forespørsler angående avisen og foreningen kan rettes til styremedlemmene.

Styret ønsker foreningens medlemmer og andre Nepal-interesserte en riktig god sommer!

MØTET 8. FEBRUAR 1996: ARKITEKTUR I NEPAL.

Trettien personer fant veien til Lektorenes hus for å høre Dag Nordling og Trine Helle fortelle om arkitektur i Nepal. Blant tilhørerne var Bjørn Korsvoll, Nepals konsul i Norge. Foreningens styre satte pris på hans deltakelse og håper på et tettere samarbeid mellom konsulatet og foreningen i årene som kommer.

Dag Nordling pekte i sin innledning på at Nepals arkitektur ikke kan sammenfattes i én tradisjon. Det er mer tale om et sammensatt bilde, der et mangfold av kulturelle tradisjoner, sosiale mønstre, næringsveier, klimatiske forhold (tropisk til arktisk) og topografi gjennom årene har bidratt til utvikling av variasjon. Dag valgte å fokusere på arkitekturen til tre folkegrupper: newarene, gurungene og sherpaene.

Newarenes arkitektur.

Omtrent 10% av Nepals befolkning er newarer som har gjort seg bemerket bl.a. gjennom sitt høyt utviklede håndverk. Newarene er tradisjonelt buddhister, men er nå i en overgangsfase mot hinduismen. Opprinnelig er de bønder og håndverkere. Handel er en viktig næringsvei og newarene lever i dag hovedsakelig i tette urbane samfunn. Mallaene som hersket i Nepal på 12-1700 tallet var newarer, men da en annen folkegruppe erobret landet, gjennomgikk det gamle newar-samfunnet en gradvis forvitring.

Dag viste lysbilder fra Kirtipur med sin urbane bebyggelse i jordbrukslandskapet og fra Bhaktapur som er en "tett", godt utnyttet og bra bevart by med befolkningstetthet høyere enn Bombay. Bildene illustrerte et karakteristisk trekk ved newar-arkitekturen; at bebyggelsen går i ett med landskapet og nærmest virker som naturlige elementer i det. Husene er laget av oppspadd tegl som er brent på stedet. Newar-bebyggelse kan være organisert etter kaste og ofte ser man mat som henger til tørk i de trange gatene - et tegn på at dette er jordbruksfolk. Med bl.a. tysk bistand har Bhaktapur lenge vært under restaurering for å reversere forfallet som har pågått de siste hundre årene. Torget i byen bærer preg av tilknytningen til jordbruket. Her foregår både tresking og tørking av ris like ved den tradisjonelle vannposten. Store vannbassenger, slik som i Bhaktapur, er meget karakteristisk for newar-byer. Det er også møblering av gater, torg og inngangspartier med altre og statuer.

De typiske newar-boligene er byhus i mange etasjer, enten enkeltstående, sammenkjedede eller som leiegårder. Husene er vertikaldelte slik at en familie benytter etasjene fra gateplan til tak. I første etasje, som vanligvis er åpen ut mot gaten, finner man småbutikker, lagre og håndverksvirksomhet. En trapp opp ligger lager og soverom, mens tredje etasje er familiens oppholdsrom. Kjøkkenet er plassert helt øverst (4. etg.), noe som kan være en ulempe ved f.eks. bæring av vann. Men samtidig vernes dermed kjøkkenet mot urenheter både i praktisk og religiøs forstand og man kan lettere følge de foreskrevne ritualer forbundet med tilberedning av mat. Newar-husets etasjer er så og si organisert etter tilgjengelighetskarakter; jo mer intimt, jo høyere opp.

Newarenes håndverk preger arkitekturen. Spesielt Bhaktapur-newarene er kjent for sin vakre og omfattende treskjæring som kommer til syne på bl.a. vinduer, karmer og pilarer. Trekarmene i murveggen settes inn mens man murer - de nærmest bakes inn og skaper inntrykk av at vinduet rett og slett gror ut av veggen. Patan er spesielt kjent for nydelige, detaljerte metallarbeider som dekorerer f.eks. bygninger. I et utvidet arkitekturbegrep kan

man si at newar-husene fungerer som stumtjenere for det daglige virke: farget garn er festet til husveggene, ris henger overalt og på gateplan ligger leirpotter. Folk har en naturlig omgang med de mange religiøse statuene som de klatrer på eller hviler seg til. Gamle helligdommer, som pagoder o.l., er et vanlig syn i newar-byer. Utenfor pagoden i Bhaktapur tørker folk korn på terrassene og barna leker under elefant- og løvestatuer. Newarene sies å være opphavsmenn til pagoden som senere har spredd seg til resten av Asia. Stupaen, med den runde kuppelen, stammer fra indiske buddhistiske kretser. Bodnath er et eksempel på denne formen. Senere har også de mer klokkeformede stupaene dukket opp.

Newarene hadde en svært rik arkitektur som det ville kreve stor innsats å bevare. Mye forfalt etterhvert som newar-kulturen forvitret. Den nyere bebyggelsen er mange steder oppført i gammel stil, men det finnes også endel eksempler på totale brudd med tradisjonell byggestil. Kathmandu er en raskt og planløst voksende by der man nærmest har gitt opp forsøket på bevaring av gamle bygninger og tradisjonell arkitektur.

Gurungenes arkitektur.

Gurungene utgjør 1,5% av Nepals befolkning og preger områdene innunder Annapurna. De antas å ha kommet fra Tibet for omtrent 1000 år siden. Tradisjonelt levde de av svedjebruk og jakt, men gikk gradvis over til mer intensivt jordbruk og fedrift etterhvert som de ble bofaste i landsbyer for 3-400 år siden. Gurungene deltok også i karavanetrafikken mellom India og Tibet, der handelsvarer som ris, ull og håndverksprodukter ble transportert. Typisk for gurungenes bosteder er deres terrasserte jordbruksland som minsker avrenning og erosjon og som skaper et fantastisk landskapsrom. I nyere tid preges gurungenes områder også av trekkingturismen som er synlig i form av "te-shops", spisesteder og gjestehus.

Karakteristisk for gurungenes arkitektur er tettvokste landsbyer ved dyrkede terrasser. Hele dalsidene er arkitektur. Jordbruket er ofte marginalt og dyrkingsmetode og vekster er tilpasset klima og jordsmonn. Ris dyrkes på de varmeste og mest stabile områdene, bygg der intet annet vokser godt. Landsbyen er organisert etter langsgående terrasser og ferdselsåren ligger mellom husene. Det tradisjonelle gurung-huset er rundt i formen og inndelt i to rom; et siderom fungerer som lager og midt i huset er oppholdsrommet med ildsted. Huset har ingen pipe, noe som resulterer i mye røyk på hemsene. Men røyken har en funksjon idet den impregnerer huset og holder insekter borte. Foran huset er en overbyggd terrasse - et viktig oppholdssted fordi husets få vinduer gir lite lys inne. Spesielt i monsun-tiden er terrassen av stor betydning. Husets tradisjonelle stråtak er sjelden helt tett og jord-gulvet inne kan bli gjørmete. Terrassens guiv er imidlertid steinlagt og tåler dermed regnet.

Tidligere bygget gurungene hus av strå med leire rundt, noe som var en enkel konstruksjon. Det tykke stråtaket var lett å legge og det isolerte godt. Husets runde form hadde to fordeler: det var energieffektivt (kreves mindre energi for å varme opp et rundt rom) og det tålte vær og vind godt. Dagens gurung-hus er bygget mer etter inspirasjon fra India og newarene. De mange pensjonerte gurkha-soldatene er forholdsvis velstående og bringer med seg byggeskikker utenfra. Husene er lange, større, dyrere og mer forseggjorte. Latriner er ikke uvanlig. Stråtaket byttes ut med steinheller og de gamle leirveggene er nå av stein. Husene har fremdeles få vinduer. Jordgulvet inne og den steinbelagte terrassen er også bevart. Dagens gurung-hus er rektangulære i formen, noe som krever mer brensel til oppvarming.

Sherpaenes arkitektur.

Sherpaene, som er buddhister, kom fra Tibet for 400 år siden og bosatte seg i høytliggende områder i Nepal. De driver jordbruk og handel og er aktive i ekspedisjonsturismen. Sherpaenes arkitektur i de to landene er forskjellig, noe som bl.a. har med tilpasning til ulike klimaforhold å gjøre. I og med at Tibet ligger i regnskyggen av Himalaya, har sherpa-huset her flatt tak som også fungerer som terrasse. I Nepal har sherpa-huset skråtak med skikkelig tekking (f.eks. steinbelagt), noe som er mer praktisk i monsunklimaet på sørsiden av Himalaya. Nepal-sherpaene henter sine kulturelle impulser mer fra Tibet enn fra Nepal. Klostrene er med visse modifikasjoner bygget etter samme prinsipper som de i Tibet: et hovedhus og en innebygget, men åpen, klostergård som brukes f.eks. ved seremonier og festivaler. Klostrene er imidlertid adskillig mindre enn i Tibet og gjenspeiler at det kulturelle tyngdepunktet ligger nord for Nepal.

Sherpaenes områder preges av stupaer, bønneflagg og steiner med inskripsjoner og bønner. Slike religiøse markeringer finnes ved elvekryssninger, fjellpass og utsiktspunkt - steder der et nytt landskapsrom åpner seg, der det er fare, der noe forandrer seg og der man passerer et naturfenomen eller en endring i naturens karakter. Sherpaenes stupaer er en rund kuppel på firkantet basis. Sett ovenfra blir dette en sirkel og en firkant - en form med religiøs symbolikk.

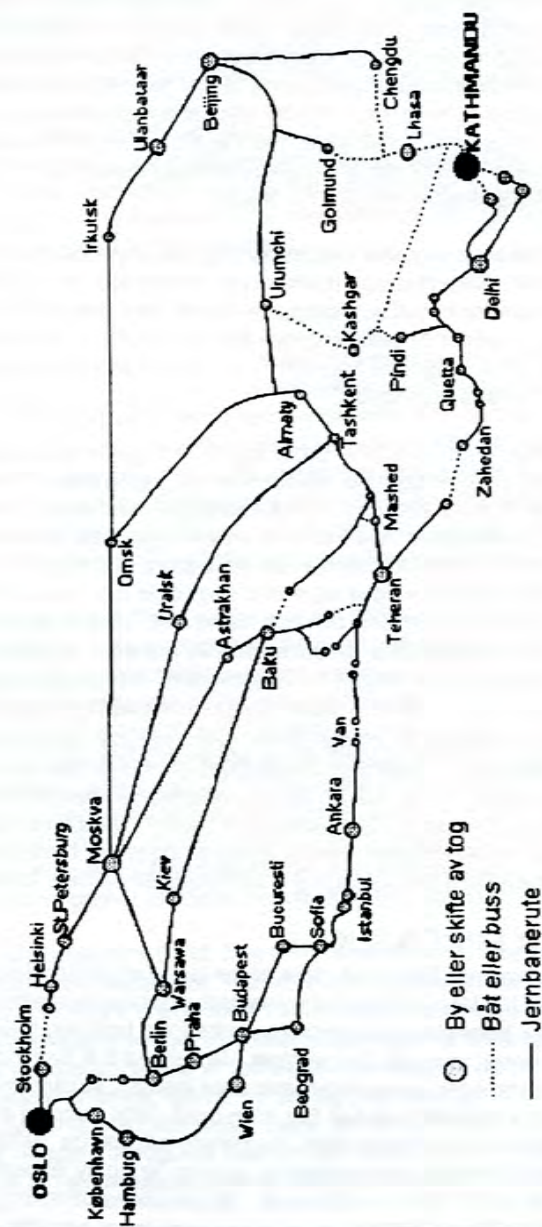
Sherpa-"byen" Namche Bazar ligger i en sydvendt hesteskoformet skråning. Husene er bygget i rekker og ligner således en gurung-landsby. Men det kalde klimaet i Namche har bidratt til store sydvendte vindusåpninger som slipper inn solvarme. I høyereliggende sherpa-landsbyer enn Namche finnes ingen tette husklynger som hos newarene. Det marginale jordbruket tillater ikke slike store bosettinger. Sherpa-husene er rektangulære og har stor fasade med vinduer mot syd. Ofte ser man utskjæringer i vinduer og karmen av tre, dog av mindre omfang enn hos newarene. Svart maling på muren rundt vinduene er vanlig. Muligens bidrar dette til oppvarming av muren. Husene står gjerne i bratt terreng og den nordlige delen er bygget inn i skråningen. Nordveggen ligger således inntil jorden og er dermed uten vinduer. Første etasje, med husets inngang, er forbeholdt dyra som fungerer som varmekilde for etasjen over. Der (2.etg.) er sherpaenes oppholdsrom med ildsted og soveplasser. Eldstemann i husholdet har sin helt spesielle plass ved ildstedet. Huset kan være inndelt i flere rom og de mer velstående sherpaene påkoster seg eget kapell-rom. Bakveggen uten vinduer benyttes til lagring. Veggen er full av hyller der alle eiendelene oppbevares i trekister, messingkrukker og andre innretninger. På grunn av husets skråtak er takterrasse lite gunstig og enkelte bygger dermed terrasse ut fra andre etasje.

SKOLEPROSJEKT.

Avslutningsvis bød Trine Helle på en video om et prosjekt i Nepal. Nepals regjering, UNESCO, UNICEF og Norad samarbeidet om prosjektet som tok sikte på å utdanne kvinner til lærere i grunnskolen, endre folks holdning til jenters utdanning og øke elevtallet blant jenter, spesielt i fjerne strøk. Norge bidro til bygging av infrastrukturen, deriblant skolebygninger og elevinternater med kjøkken, studierom, sove- og oppholdsrom. Det blir undervist i vanlige fag, men også dans, søm og andre praktiske emner som jentene har bruk for i sitt lokale miljø. Byggingen pågikk fra 1976 til 1993 og underveis ble det også foretatt utbedring av bygningene, oppgradering av laboratorier og man satte igang et opplæringsprogram i vedlikehold. Bygningenes utforming følger i stort monn den tradisjonelle arkitekturen og lokale materialer er benyttet. ■■■

"ALLE VEIER FØRER TIL NEPAL."

Landeveien til Nepal er langdryg for oss nordboere, men du kan velge blant utallige reiseruter med tog:



○ By eller skifte av tog
..... Båt eller buss
—— Jernbanerute

De fleste foretrekker nok likevel luftveien som går adskillig raskere, dog avhengig av flyselskap og tilfældigheter. Her følger en liste over enkelte selskapers rimeligste ruter, med priser oppgitt for et tilfældig utvalg. Prisene, innhentet september 1995, gjelder tur retur i høysesongen oktober-november og ligger antakelig noe høyere enn i andre perioder.

Aeroflot:	Oslo-Moskva-Kathmandu	kr. 5.750,-
Air India:	Oslo-København-Delhi-Kathmandu	kr. 6.500,-
Kuwait Airlines:	Oslo-København-Kuwait-Delhi-Kathmandu	kr. 7.600,-
China Airlines:	Oslo-Amsterdam-Bangkok-Kathmandu	kr. 8.210,-
Lufthansa:	Oslo-Frankfurt-Karachi-Kathmandu	kr. 9.700,-
Singapore Airlines:	Oslo-København-Singapore-Kathmandu	kr. 9.875,-
British Airways (BA):	Oslo-London-Delhi-Kathmandu	kr. 10.190,-
SAS:	Oslo-København-Delhi-Kathmandu	kr. 10.190,-
Thai Airways:	Oslo-København-Bangkok-Kathmandu	kr. 10.500,-
Air France:	Oslo-Paris-Delhi-Kathmandu	
Bangladesh Biman:	Oslo-London/Amsterdam-Dubai-Dhaka-Kathmandu	
China Southwest Airlines/CAAC:	Oslo-København-Beijing-Kathmandu	
KLM:	Oslo-Amsterdam-Delhi-Kathmandu	
Pakistan International Airways:	Oslo-København-Karachi-Kathmandu	
Qatar Airlines:	Oslo-London-Qatar-Kathmandu	
Royal Nepal Airlines (RNAC):	Oslo-London-Dubai-Kathmandu	
RNAC og BA:	Oslo-London-Amsterdam-Dubai-Kathmandu	
Royal Nepal Airlines og KLM:	Oslo-Amsterdam-Dubai-Kathmandu	

Flyplassavgiften (ved avreise fra Nepal) er Rs. 600 til SAARC-land og Rs. 700 til andre internasjonale destinasjoner.

Visum kan ordnes ved ankomst: - 15 dager, US\$ 15 (én innreise)
- 30 dager, US\$ 25 (én innreise)
- 30 dager, US\$ 40 (to innreiser)
- 60 dager, US\$ 60 (flere innreiser).

Turistvisum kan forlenges for US\$ 1 per dag for opphold i totalt fem måneder av et år.

Innenriks har Royal Nepal Airlines flyvninger til trettisv steder (tjue ni av rutene flys hele året). For flyvninger til Pokhara, Lukla og Bharatpur, kontakt: Tourist Sales, Head Office, Kantipath (tlf. 22 65 74 el. 22 07 57). For innenriks-flyvninger til andre steder, kontakt: Domestic Sales Office, Tebehal, New Road (tlf. 22 34 53 el. 22 44 97). Flyplassavgift ved innenriksflyvninger er Rs. 50. □□□

K.I.G.

(Takk til Olav Myrholm som bidro med disse opplysningene.)

TOURISM TRENDS IN NEPAL			
Tourist Arrivals By Purpose of Visit 1991 vs 1992			
Purpose	1991	1992	%Change
Holiday	177,370	237,711	+34.0
Trekking	42,308	35,166	-16.9
Official	37,274	20,967	-43.7
Business	14,601	31,765	+117.6
Pilgrimage	9,103	7,219	-20.7
Conference	5,441	815	-85.0
Others	6,896	710	-89.7
Totals	292,995	334,535	+14.1

Trekking Destinations By Number of Trekking Permits Issued			
Area	1991	1992	%Change
Annapurna	39,107	42,553	+8.8
Everest	11,862	12,325	+3.9
Langtang	9,603	9,457	-1.5
Misc.	1,012	4,830	+377.3
Others	4,186	4,025	-3.8
Totals	65,770	73,190	+11.2

KEEP SPRING NEWSLETTER

NYTT FRA NEPAL

Nyhetene er basert på informasjon hentet fra diverse nyhetsgrupper på Internet. Materialet er fritt oversatt og bearbeidet av K.I. Greiner.

"Folkets krig" i Nepal.

Kathmandu 28.feb - 12 mars (Independent Vol. VI, No. 2 og 3) En radikal kommunistgruppe har annonsert "folkets krig" mot Nepals demokrati, med det tvilsomme mål å omforme kongedømmet til en republikansk, kommunistisk stat. Det ett år gamle, maoistiske Nepal Communist Party (NCP) plasseres langt ut på venstre fløy i politikken. Partiet mobiliserer nå sine tilhengere, spesielt i distriktene Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Dailekh, Banke, Gorkha og Baglung i vest og i Kabhre, Sindhupalchok og Ramechhap i øst, for å angripe lokale politistasjoner, skoler, kontorer, banker og bolighus. Ifølge rapporter har de skadet over 200 personer i de vestlige delene av landet. Tredve hardt skadede får behandling på et sykehus i Kathmandu. En mann ble påført alvorlige hodeskader da en gruppe maskerte militante tvang seg inn i boligen og angrep familien med kniver. I Simjung gjorde en bevæpnet gjeng, ledet av en lokal rektor, store ødeleggelser på Save the Children Fund's kontor. Lignende rapporter kommer fra Sindhuli-distriktet der maoistene ranet Agricultural Development Bank. Politiets reaksjoner er foreløpig lite effektive fordi "terroristene" stadig skifter skjulested og opererer i vanskelig og ulendt terreng. Nylig ble seks "folkets krigere" drept i et sammenstøt med sikkerhetsstyrker vest i landet.

Mens alle lederne for Communist Party of Nepal (CPN), inkludert B. Bhattarai og P. Bhusal, har gått i dekning, kritiseres "folkets krig" av andre kommunistiske fraksjoner. En utbrytergruppe fra Samyukta Jana Morcha (SJM) misliker opprinnelsen til "folkets krig" og trekk ved den, men mener det er naturlig at folket "gjør opprør mot føydalherrer, byråkrater og reaksjonære som undertrykker dem". Det mest forvirrede partiet er hovedopposisjonen CPN-UML. Samtidig som de ber regjeringen stoppe alle "undertrykkende tiltak" mot folk i de påvirkede distriktene, kritiserer de maoistenes væpnede offensiv som ukonstitusjonell og lite passende. Mange undres over våpenmengdene i de fjerne åsene der folk hovedsakelig driver selvbergingsjordbruk. Flere antyder "støtte utenfra".

Deubas regjering prøver nå å finne en løsning på krisen ved å søke politisk samarbeid og konsensus. I begynnelsen av mars inviterte Deuba representanter for alle de store politiske partiene til sitt kontor. Hensikten var å utarbeide en strategi for å stoppe den væpnede terror og drapene som alle de frammøtte partiene fordømte.

800 bhutanesiske flyktninger stoppet på vei fra Nepal til Bhutan - nesten 500 av dem fengslet av indisk politi.

Kathmandu 24.jan.(AFP), 28.jan.(Reuter), 24. og 27. jan. og 2. og 27.feb. (Nepal Digest, Internet) 14 - 20.feb. (Independent, Vol. V, No.50), 28.feb.-5.mars (Independent, Vol. VI, No.2) og 6.-12. mars (Independent, Vol. VI, No.3).

Indisk politi har nylig fengslet nesten 500 bhutanesiske flyktninger som var på vei fra flyktningeleire i Nepal til sitt hjemland. Med deres arrest er det totale antallet nepali-bhutanesiske flyktninger i indisk forvaring kommet opp i 766.

En gruppe på 150 skulle marsjere fra Øst-Nepal, via en flik av India, til Thimphu hvor de ville be kongen om tillatelse til å vende tilbake til landet. Bhutan ba India om å stoppe flyktringene på grensen. India, som ser Bhutan som en bufferstat mot Kina, etterkom anmodningen og arresterte de 150 da de entret Vest-Bengal i India i midten av januar. Forholdene i fengselet skal være kritikkverdige og flere av bhutaneserne er syke.

I slutten av januar stoppet indisk politi ytterligere 300 bhutanesiske flyktninger som var på vei over Mechi-broen i grensebyen Kakarvitta i sørøstre Nepal til Panitanki i India. Flyktingene appellerte til den indiske regjeringen om å la dem passere og om betingelsesfri løslatelse av de 150 nylig fengslede. Da India nektet å etterkomme kravene, besluttet flyktingene å forbli ved Mechi-broen i protest.

Den tredje gruppen som marsjerte mot Bhutan omfattet nesten 350 personer og ble arrestert av indisk politi på grensen mellom Nepal og India i slutten av februar. Imens har flyktingene på Mechi-broen holdt stand i over en måned (pr. 27.feb). Med kalde netter, ingen husly, lite mat og vannmangel, øker helseproblemene. Flyktingene fortsetter imidlertid sine protester og krever betingelsesløs frigivelse av de nå nesten 500 fengslede. Korridoren til Bhutan gjennom India er fremdeles lukket for dem. En talsmann for den indiske regjeringen sier at flyktingene som oppholder seg på Mechi-broen ikke får komme inn i landet og at India har til hensikt å bevare sitt gode naboforhold til Bhutan.

De 500 flyktingene i indisk fengsel holdes i forvaring for brudd på Indian Penal Code's (IPC) del 144 som forbyr forflytting av grupper på mer enn fire personer. IPC 144 ble iverksatt i midten av januar i påvente av marsjene. Mange av de arresterte har fått sin sak opp til høring i retten og alle er gitt mulighet til løslatelse. Betingelsen er imidlertid at de undertegner frigivelsesdokumenter der de lover å avstå fra ordensforstyrrelser. Så langt har de fleste nektet å undertegne dokumentet.

Flyktingene marsjerer mot Bhutan i et forsøk på å returnere til hjemlandet under Menneskerettighetserklæringens paragraf 13 og 20 som omhandler "the Right to Return to One's Own Country" og "the Right to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association". Marsjene er organisert av Appeal Movement Coordinating Council of Bhutan i protest mot Bhutans behandling av bhutanesere med nepalesisk opprinnelse. Tidligere bodde 218.000 etniske nepalesere i Bhutan. Mange ble forfulgt etter at man i 1990 iverksatte en "en nasjon, ett folk"-politikk som i praksis gjorde nepali-bhutaneserne statsløse og tvang dem til å forlate landet. Flyktingeleirene i Nepal huser i dag omtrent 100.000 bhutanesere av nepalesisk avstamning. Seks runder med samtaler på høyt nivå mellom Nepal og Bhutan har så langt mislykkes i å løse problemet.

Saken vies stadig større oppmerksomhet i det indiske samfunnet og grupper i India har demonstrert til støtte for flyktingene. Ministeren for Vest-Bengal har i et brev til sin statsminister Rao bedt ham om å løse problemene før India mister kontroll over situasjonen. Saken gis nå raskt et mer internasjonalt preg. Flyktingene på Mechi-broen fikk nylig besøk av den finske utenriksministeren og Nederlands ambassadør til Nepal. Presidenten i Amnesty International, som også har besøkt Nepal, oppfordrer til økonomisk og kulturell boikott av Bhutan inntil landet gjør fremskritt på menneskerettighetsfronten. En representant for FNs høykommissær for flyktninger (UNHCR), J.E.Larson, var nylig i Asia for å observere flyktingeproblemet. Larson startet turen i Bhutan, men sykdom hindret ham i å reise til områdene de fleste flyktingene kommer fra. Værforholdene forsinket Larsons ankomst til Nepal, der han skulle besøke flyktingeleirene i sørøst. Besøket ble imidlertid kansellert under henvisning til stramt avtaleprogram. Etter ett døgn opphold i Nepal, reiste Larson til India hvor han etter sigende er på ferie. UNHCR har sagt seg villig til å finansiere flyktingeleirene i Nepal i ytterligere tolv måneder, men understreker at FN-finansiering av opphold av mer permanent karakter ikke er aktuelt.

Den syvende nepalesisk-bhutanesiske samtalerunden om flyktningsproblemet står snart for tur. Nepal ønsker helt klart ikke å bli sittende med horder av statsløse bhutanesere. Nepals utenriksminister, P.C.Lohani, uttaler til Independent at "vi vil fortsette bestrebelsene for å løse problemet, men de fundamentale målene er dessverre forskjellige. Vi ønsker flyktingene tilbake til der de kom fra, mens Bhutan vil ha dem der de er i dag." Bhutan hevder at de nepali-talende bhutanesiske flyktingene dro til Nepal fordi de ønsket å reise hjem. Flyktingene på sin side betrakter Bhutan som sitt hjem og hevder de ble tvunget til å forlate landet med voldelige midler. Nepali-bhutanese oppfattes antakelig som en potensiell trussel for den tibeto-bhutanesiske ledelsen i Thimphu. Nepal insisterer på et felles tiltak for å vurdere hvem som er genuine flyktinger og har oppmuntret Bhutan til å akseptere deltakelse fra organer med anerkjent kompetanse på området. Thimphu avviser dette inntil man har bestemt hvem som tilhører hver av kategoriene man tidligere er blitt enige om.

Nepal ønsker at New Delhi skal spille en aktiv rolle, men India prøver å distansere seg fra saken som de mener er et anliggende mellom Nepal og Bhutan og derfor må løses bilateralt. Indias ambassadør i Nepal sier at Nepal og Bhutan må finne en fornuftig ordning på problemet. "Som en tredje part kan ikke India blande seg inn, gitt våre utenrikspolitiske hensyn. Vi vet ikke hvorfor flyktingene kom hit eller hvorfor de drar tilbake." Nepals utenriksminister, P.C.Lohani, vil ikke kommentere de nylige arrestasjonene under henvisning til at de er Indias indre anliggende. Men han stiller seg spørrende til at flyktingene ble arrestert under forsøk på å vende tilbake til hjemlandet, mens de fikk fritt leide over indisk territorium da de flyktet fra Bhutan (KTM Post, 23.jan.) Ved å nekte fritt leide tilbake mot Bhutan, kritiseres India nå for å stille seg på Bhutans side i striden.

Nepal har ikke felles grense med Bhutan. Flyktingene entret Nepal via India, hvilket gjør India til første mottaks- og asyl land. Det er på denne bakgrunn Nepal mener at saken må løses på trilateral plan med India som deltaker i løsning av problemet.

Mange er bekymret for at ulike grupper i India bruker flyktingene kun som politisk ammunisjon for å fremme egne interesser. Flyktingenes problemer kan lett overskygges av andre regionale saker, bl.a. den nåværende spenningen i området mellom Vest-Bengal og resten av India og frykten for at de etniske nepalesernes bevegelser kan bidra til potensiell utvidelse av en nepalesisk nasjon.

Nepal vurderer nå å ta opp saken i internasjonale fora og institusjoner. Å bringe flyktningsproblemet opp på internasjonalt nivå støttes av nepaleseren R.K.Mainali (tidligere minister i CPN-UML) som mener Indias handlinger i seg selv har bidratt til en slik utvikling.

De planlagte samtalene mellom Nepal og Bhutan er, etter anmodning fra Thimphu, foreløpig utsatt til april i år. Selv om få tror at de vil gi dramatiske resultater, er Thimphu nå på defensiven takket være de bhutanesiske flyktingenes beslutning om å returnere hjem i grupper.

Den ellefte Panchen Lama savnet i Tibet.

Beijing 19.jan (Reuters). Gedhun Choekyi Nyima (6), reinkarnasjonen av den tiende Panchen Lama (død 1989) og Tibet-buddhismens nest viktigste munk, er savnet sammen med sin familie og andre munk. Vestlige menneskerettighetsgrupper er bekymret og Amnesty International frykter at de holdes i forvaring av kinesiske myndigheter som også har fengslet en abbot og over femti munk i forbindelse med striden om reinkarnasjonen av Panchen Lama. Seks-åringen og hans familie har vært savnet i åtte måneder etter at Dalai Lama identifiserte gutten som reinkarnasjonen i mai i fjor. Beijing mener utvelgelsen er ugyldig og i strid med en 200 år gammel avtale som krever at Kina må godkjenne alle

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senior-lamaer. I november innsatte Beijing en annen seksåring som den offisielle ellefte Panchen Lama. Kinesiske tjenestemenn fastholder at Nyima er i sikkerhet i Tibet, men nekter å gi mer detaljerte opplysninger. Menneskerettighetsgrupper og tibetanske aktivister har uttalt at gutten og familien ble fraktet til Beijing i høst og ikke er sett siden.

NSP truer med å forlate koalisjonsregjeringen.

Kathmandu 21.jan (South China Morning Post). Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) truer med å forlate koalisjonsregjeringen hvis ikke "Terai-folkets problemer løses innen tre måneder". Terai-baserte NSP hevder at partiets valgkretser er underrepresenterte i den offentlige forvaltning og at mange Terai-innbyggere ikke er gitt papirer på sitt statsborgerskap. Partiet krever bl.a. at den nepalesiske hæren skal rekruttere flere fra Terai. Selv om NSP beslutter å forlate regjeringen, har de to gjenværende partiene (NC og RPP) 105 av 205 seter i parlamentet og dermed fremdeles majoritet.

Koirala vil kjempe om ledervervet i NC.

Kathmandu, 31.jan. (South China Morning Post). Tidligere statsminister G.P.Koirala har offentliggjort at han stiller som kandidat til presidentvervet i Nepali Congress (NC), en posisjon K.P.Bhattarai har hatt i to tiår. Valget er satt til 31. mars i år. Koiralas beslutning sender dønninger langt inn i den fraksjonspregede koalisjonsregjeringen og vil antakelig både øke stridighetene innen NC og svekke regjeringen. Mange er bekymret for at Koirala skal utfordre statsminister Deuba.

Flytende nepalesisk valuta?

New Delhi, 6.feb. (Reuters). Nepal er under press for å koble sin valuta fra den indiske rupien etter at sistnevnte har nådd nye bunn-noteringer. Kursen på den indiske rupien er flytende i forhold til internasjonale valutaer, mens den nepalesiske er knyttet til den indiske. I dag er valutakursen fastsatt til 160 nepalesiske rupier for 100 indiske. De siste ukene har vært ustabile for den indiske rupien og derigjennom også for den nepalesiske som siden august har falt 15% i forhold til amerikanske dollar. Den indiske rupien ble underlagt frie markedskrefter i 1992 og holdt seg stabil i tre år før siste ukers fall. Kathmandu kan nå enten endre den nepalesiske rupiens verdi i forhold til den indiske eller frigjøre sin valuta fra Indias. Å endre dagens system (frigjøre) kan medføre prishopp på forbruksvarer som igjen kan gi problemer for Nepals koalisjonsregjering. Forretningsfolk advarer om at næringslivet kan påvirkes negativt når valutamarkedet blir usikkert. India er Nepals største handelspartner og fast kurs sørger for en viss sikkerhet m.h.t. prisstabilitet på import fra India.

RNAC-skandalen - nok en gang.

Kathmandu 24.feb (Reuters). Et regjeringssopnevnt panel, Commission for the Prevention of Abuse of Authority (CPAA), mener G.P.Koirala (NC) er uskyldig anklaget for økonomiske uregelmessigheter og korrupsjon i forbindelse med Royal Nepal Airlines (RNAC) -skandalen. Koirala var beskyldt for å legge press på flyselskapets ledelse, slik at denne ga en kontrakt til London-baserte Fare Ltd. eiet av Koiralas bekjentskaper. Avtalen, der Fare Ltd. ble hovedsalgsagent for RNAC i Europa, resulterte i et tap på US \$ 214.000. I fjor mottok CPAA en rapport fra den daværende kommunistregjeringen angående saken. Rapporten konkluderte med at Koirala påvirket beslutningen i favør av Fare. CPAA legger imidlertid skylden for tapet på flyselskapets ledelse.

Helikopter styrtet.

Kathmandu, 25.jan. (South China Morning Post). Fem personer ble skadet da et helikopter styrtet under landing nord i Nepal. Det russiskbygde helikopteret, eiet av Nepal Airways, fraktet byggematerialer fra Sør-Nepal til Sotong.

Arkeologer stadfester Buddhas fødested.

Kathmandu feb. (Reuter). En gruppe arkeologer rapporterer å ha gjort funn under et gammelt tempel i Lumbini og hevder at dette er stedet der Buddha ble født for mer enn 2.500 år siden. Arkeologene fant en minnestein på toppen av syv lag med steinblokker. Steinene er datert til tiden rundt keiser Ashoka som styrte mye av det indiske subkontinentet og som besøkte Lumbini i 249 BC. Buddhistisk litteratur forteller at Ashoka plasserte en minnestein på steinblokker ved Buddhas fødested. Buddhas mor skal ha badet i en hellig dam og deretter gått 25 skritt før hun fødte. I dagens Lumbini ligger en dam omtrent så langt fra der arkeologene fant minnesteinen. Om det er samme dam som Bhuddas mor badet i, har ingen funnet ut av ennå.....

Kvote-avtale om kleseksport til Kanada.

Kathmandu, 23.jan. (South China Morning Post). Nepal og Kanada har undertegnet en avtale om kvoter for nepalesisk kleseksport til Kanada de neste fem årene. Den årlige kvoten er satt til 700.000 skjorter, 200.000 bluser og 131.000 bukser. Avtalen tillater seks prosent årlig økning.



NYE PEDAGOGER NR. 1 - 96

På skole ved Nepals utpost

I den vestligste delen av Terai - Nepals lavland og det som regnes som landets utpost - driver den private organisasjonen BASE en storstilt alfabetiseringskampanje.

BASE er i dag Nepals største private organisasjon, og den eneste som driver en slik form for alfabetiseringskampanje. Mens de fleste av distriktenes skolekontorer holder liv i 30 til 40 klasser, driver BASE flere hundre.

Det hele begynte blant tharuene, som inntil malariaen ble utryddet på 50-tallet, levde relativt isolert i et område hvor ingen slo seg ned frivillig. De var nasjonalt sett lite integrert, og utgjorde en marginal gruppe, både økonomisk og politisk.

Malaria-utryddelsen på 1950-tallet betydde slutten på isolasjonen og begynnelsen på tharuenes sosio-økonomiske nedgang. Som ledd i myndighetenes nepaliseringspolitikk av dette jungellandet

som grenset til storebror India i sør, gikk det en enorm strøm av folk fra fjellområdene til det som skulle utvikle seg til å bli landets kornkammer.

Skole kun for de utvalgte

Den enorme popularitet og betydning BASE har fått i lokalbefolkningen, kan best forstås i relasjon til Nepals sosiohistoriske bakgrunn.

Nepal består av mange etniske grupper med egne språk og ulike religiøse og

kulturell bakgrunn. På slutten av 1700-tallet erobret landets «Harald Hårfagre», Gorkhakongen Prithvi Narayan Shah, de mange etniske baserte småstatene, og kongedømmet Nepal, der kongen anses som en reinkarnasjon av hinduguden Vishnu.

Kastelov

I 1854 ble kasteloven Mulki Ain innført. Dette var en lov som ytterligere

forsterket den lagdelte samfunnsmodellen basert på hinduisme, i og med at den delte befolkningen inn i kategorier basert på grader av rituell renhet. All politisk og religiøs makt var forbeholdt kategorien «gjenfødt kaste» *twice-born*, bestående av preteksten *brahminiene*, og krigerkaster *chhetriene*.

Alle andre kaster og etniske grupper ble plassert i kategorien *matwalis*, som betyr alkoholdrikkende. De alkoholdrikkende var igjen inndelt i dem som kunne, og dem som ikke kunne være slaver. Tharuene tilhørte den alkoholdrikkende delen som også kunne være slaver. Kasteloven, med sitt rigide regelsystem for kasters «utfoldelse» ble opphevet i 1963, men systemet er fremdeles svært tilstedeværende både i praksis og i folks bevissthet.

«Tharuene er dumme fordi de spiser så mye ris», er en velkjent frase blant høystene. Dilli Chaudhary, lederen av BASE, forteller hvordan han måtte kjempe for å få gå på skolen. «Du er tharu, du har ikke noe på skolen å gjøre», sa lærerne.

Utdanningsmakt

Kunnskap er makt, og det grunnleggende for enhver endringsskapning, er å spre kunnskap ut til massene, som i Nepal lenge var avskåret fra all boklig lærdom.

Før innføringen av demokrati i Nepal i 1990, var det forbudt med etnisk baserte organisasjoner. Man valgte derfor å gi organisasjonen det generelle navnet BASE (Backwards Society Education) med undertittel Tharu Education For Transformation.

Og det er akkurat «transformation» det hele dreier seg om, for som BASE ser det, er mangel på utdanning hovedårsaken til mange av de problemene tharuene i dag står overfor, blant annet

fordi de så lett ble lurt av «clever people».

«Bestefaren min mistet all sin jord til en brahmin som lurte ham til å under-tegne et papir han ikke visste hva dreide seg om», fortalte Dilli. «Dette og liknende episoder skjedde utelukkende fordi vi tharuene ikke kunne lese, og det er noe jeg ville forandre med BASE».

Barn og kvinner

Hovedfokus til BASE er på de barn og kvinner som ikke har, eller aldri har hatt anledning til skolegang. BASE har drevet NFE-klasser (Non-Formal Education) siden 1985, og støtte fra DANIDA (Det danske statlige organ for bistand, underlagt utenriksministeriet) gjorde det mulig å øke antallet klasser fra 80 til 612 på 6 måneder.

Kveldsklasser

Min gode venninne og informant på 18 år, kommer fra en jordløs tharufamilie, og som nummer tre i en søskenflokk på 8, har hun aldri fått gå på vanlig skole. Takket være arbeidet hun har på et lokalt sykehus, forsørger hun familien, og sørger for at 4 av de yngre søsknene får sin skolegang. Kveldsklassene til BASE har imidlertid gjort henne i stand til å lese seg frem til 6. klasse, og hun har nå håp om

å fullføre 8. klasse.

Min erfaring fra disse kveldsklassene, er at det sosiale betyr mer enn det faglige. Det er et møtested for kvinnene, og alle jeg snakket med påpekte hvor *ramailo* (hyggelig) det er i kveldsklassene. Klassene hadde en god stemning der latteren aldri var langt unna, og det sosiale aspektet er kanskje en av de viktigste grunnene til at så mange av dem som begynner i BASE-klassene også fullfører.

Få avhoppere

I forhold til de kommunalt drevne kveldsskolene, er andelen avhoppere fra BASE-klassene svært lav. Mange av kvinnene uttrykte også stor glede ved det de nå faktisk hadde lært: «Før kunne vi verken lese eller skrive, og vi visste ikke om våre rettigheter. Hvis vi solgte grønnsaker i basaren, ble vi ofte lurt. Nå vet vi mye mer og er ikke redd for andre lenger», hevdet de.

Den tredje sektor

I Norge diskuteres det om hvorvidt enkelte velferdssoppgaver bør overlates til andre aktører, som for eksempel de frivillige organisasjonene. Dette

oppfattes ikke nødvendigvis bare som positivt. Kritikere frykter at økt frivillig engasjement vil fremme ulikheter i samfunnet ved at disse frivillig baserte velferdsgoder blir skjevt fordelt. En annen kritikk er at «den tredje sektor» vil virke undergravende på staten.

Dette er en kritikk som også brukes mot de private organisasjonene i Nepal. BASE har blant annet blitt kritisert for å være partisk siden den jobber med utgangspunkt i tharuene. Det er ikke bare tharuene som er «backwards», hevder kritikere. BASE har derfor startet klasser blandt andre «backwards» kaster og grupper i den vestlige delen av Nepal.

I Nepal har det ikke vært noen tradisjon med å bringe velferd ut til massene, noe den partikularistiske kasteloven er et godt eksempel på. De private organisasjonenes initiativ fyller derfor heller et vakuum det offentlige selv ikke er i stand til å fylle. At skolegang er noe «alle» har rett til, på tross av kaste og sosial rang, er de fleste enige i. I Vest-Nepal har man oppnådd dette ved å ta skjene i egen hånd!

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Sand Banned

The Environment Protection Council has decided to ban the extraction of sand from the Bagmati River near Guheshwori in view of the environmental degradation and loss of public and private property caused by river sand extraction. The Council also formed a task force to recommend alternative sources for sand and to reform existing rules and regulations. Source: The Rising Nepal NCS Nepal No.2, 1995



Nepals gatubarn

När Nepals fattigdom skördar sina offer så faller de svaga först, och svagast bland de svaga är barnen.

Många lockas eller tvingas in i prostitution och för dem som lever sitt liv på gatan kommer drömmen om en varm säng oftast att förbli just en dröm.

På en trappa intill souvenirståndet på Durbar Square sitter Sanu Thapa.

Han har tjockt, mörkt och lite spretigt hår. Han drar handen genom lugnen samtidigt som han lite nonchalant låter överläppen glida upp i ett snett halvleende. Ögonen är bruna, blicken som sammet och i vänsterörat sitter en silverparla.

Sanu ser ut som urtypen för en blivande strandgäddare som bidar sin tid genom att njuta av livet och sola sig stark.



Geeta är sju år och har gått två år på Sunkoshi. Innan hon kom till skolan arbetade hon hos en familj. Hennes bror bodde i två år med fadern i fängelset... Som ett av åttio barn som tvingats leva inlåsta med sina straffade föräldrar i Nepal.

Men skenet bedrar. I Nepals huvudstad Kathmandu finns ingen strand. Sanus liv är ingen njutning och så snart solen har gått ned så fryser han i månens sken. Han är ett av Kathmandus 10 000 gatubarn.

- Jag brukar sova i en koja som jag bygger av lastpallar. Förut kunde jag bo i det lilla templet där men nu är jag för stor, säger han och pekar mot ett litet tempel vars innandöme inte ser mycket större ut än en hundkoja.

Sanu är 15 år och har till skillnad från sina kamrater bland gatubarnen sin pappa i närheten. Då och då bor han hemma men pappan är ofta full och han har en ny fru som Sanu inte gillar. När Sanu kommer hem sent så låser de och vägrar att öppna.

- Det är kallt att ligga ute och det är gott om vilda hundar. Ibland kommer polisen för att slå oss. Jag är snabb och de kommer aldrig att få tag i mig, men min kompis Bidu har fått mycket stryk. En gång tog de honom med till polisstationen och höll honom inlåst i fem dygn när de försökte klara upp ett knivmord.

Lever på souvenirer

Sanu går inte i skolan men drömmar om att bli privat-chafför och vill därför lära sig engelska. Redan nu kan han en del och det märks att han är stolt över varje ord.

- Jag får pengar genom att sälja lite smycken till turister och lite genom byggjobb då och då. Det är så jag försörjer mig, säger han.

När några av de äldre souvenirförsäljarna som samlats på trappan börjar antyda att rika turister brukar köpa

sexuella tjänster av gatubarnen kniper Sanu ihop lapparna och tittar ner på sina skor. En av hans kompisar hämtas fram och de äldre ber honom berätta vad han varit med om.

Men när inte heller han vill tala tar de själva vid. Flera av

- de svagaste av de svaga

dem skriker i mun på varandra.

En av halsbandsförsäljarna berättar att det alltid är västerländska män som kommer och att de bara bryr sig om pojkar. Han säger att barnen får mat, en varm dusch och en säng. I gengäld får de onanera åt männen.

Det gestikuleras och stämningen är hätsk. Det talas om en schweizare som brukar komma till torget och hämta upp några barn som får komma och bada nakna i hans swimmingpool. Sanus kompis Sunil Pandey pekas ut som en av de badande. Han säger inget men skakar sakta på huvudet. Ett ögonblick ser det ut som om han ska börja gråta.

Kidnappas till Indien

Liksom i flera andra länder där fattigdomen är stor har många nepaleser det svårt att göra livet dragligt för sina barn. Det är bara 75 procent av alla barn som börjar skolan och många faller ifrån bara efter några år trots att de första fem åren egentligen är obligatoriska.

Särskilt illa är det för flickor som prioriteras lägst i alla lägen och på många håll anses det fortfarande meningslöst att kosta på dem någon utbildning.

Många flickor utnyttjas också grymt som prostituerade i grannlandet Indien. Det uppskattas att omkring 7 000 flickor varje år säljs, kidnappas eller lockas över gränsen och tas till bordeller i Bombay och Calcutta.

Nu är de ungefär 100 000 och det är inte ovanligt att så unga flickor som tioåringar tas över gränsen för att sedan skickas tillbaka till Nepal med aids.

Skola för gatubarn

Det finns de som försöker göra något åt gatubarnens situation och som arbetar med utbildning som det viktigaste

verktyget.

Sudrashan Pradhan är en av dem. Han driver privatskolan Sunkoshi som är som vilken annan privatskola som helst med det undantaget att 30 av skolans 168 elever är före detta gatubarn.

- De barn som saknar anhöriga som kan ta hand om dem bor på skolan och det är inte alltid lätt att komma från gatan och börja inordna sig i skollivet, säger Sudrashan.

Ibland händer det också att barnen sticker men till 90 procent fungerar det och de stannar. Sudrashan berättar om en flicka som rymde sju gånger för att hämtas tillbaka varje gång och som nu trivs på skolan.

I fängelse med pappa

Geeta Podes vita blus är nystruken men kragen hänger en aning på sned. Håret är mörkt och kortklippt, ögonen stora och bruna och i det försiktiga leendet syns två glugor.

Hon är sju år och har bott två år på Sunkoshi. Innan hon kom till skolan arbetade hon, från tre års ålder, i hushållet hos en främmande familj.

När hennes pappa Akal Bahadur Poda 1989 dömdes till tio års fängelse för stöld och smuggling av antika gudastatyer ställdes hennes mamma ensam med Geeta, då ett år gammal, och den två år äldre brodern Gokul. När mamman två år senare dog till följd av sjukdom stod barnen ensam. Storebror Gokul fick flytta in i cellen hos pappa Akal och blev därmed en av de kring åttio barn som runt om i Nepal tvingas leva inlåsta med sina straffade föräldrar.

Tungt arbete

Men för lilla Geeta var situationen ännu värre. Eftersom endast söner får bo med sina fäder i fängelse kunde hon inte följa med sin bror. Några nära anhöriga fanns inte så pappa Akal kunde inte göra

annat än att via ombud från fängelset hyra ut henne. Hon kom till en familj där hon mot mat och tak över huvudet fick börja bära vatten, hämta ved, diska och göra andra av de tunga hushållsbestyr som är viktiga för nepalesiska flickor och kvinnor. Hon stod lägst av alla i den nya familjens hierarki, behandlades illa och riskerade att när som helst bli ivägkörd till ett liv på gatan.

Alla på Sunkoshi som har en bakgrund som gatubarn eller näst intill stöds ekonomiskt av någon hjälporganisation. I Geetas och hennes bror Gokuls fall heter organisationen United Mission to Nepal (UMN) och är en av de allra största med deltagare från en mängd kristna organisationer i 18 länder, däribland Sverige.

I Nepal är det sedan 1962 förbjudet att diskriminera någon på grund av kast. Men traditionens makt är stor och det hinduiska kastsystemet styr fortfarande mycket av det sociala livet.

Eftersom Geeta och Gokul är av kasten Poda vilken är bland de lägsta i kastsystemet har rektorn Sudrashan Pradhan ändrat deras efternamn, och därmed deras kast, till Matangi.

- Poda har en mycket dålig klang. Det är den kast som sveper liken och en Poda har en stämpel som är svår att bli av med. Namnbytet kommer att underlätta för barnen i framtiden.

Läkardröm

Purushottam Nepali arbetar för UMN och han har en annan förklaring till namnbytet:

- Skolan lever på avgifter från föräldrarna till de barn som inte är gatubarn. Om de fick reda på att det gick en Poda i klassen så skulle de ta barnen till en annan skola. Kasten är så låg att en Poda inte blir insläppt på en restaurang och vill du forolampa någon så kan du säga "Du uppför dig som en Poda".

Geetas högsta önskan är att bli sjuksköterska och Gokul är inne på samma linje.

- Jag ska bli läkare, säger han, ovetande om hur lång väg den som är född Poda har

Läkardröm

av till ett lakaryrke som ett erkännande om lika värde.

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BARNEARBEID OG VESTLIG ARROGANSE

ELLEN SCHRUMPF

Den unyanserte fordømmelsen av alle former for barnearbeid i andre land og kulturer er uttrykk for sneversyn og sviktende kunnskap, mener Ellen Schrumph, førsteamanuensis ved Høgskolen i Telemark. Med hvilken begrunnelse vil vi pådytte andre folk den typisk vestlige oppfatning av barndommen som en arbeids- og ansvarfri fase av menneskelivet? Og hva skjer med familiene når barna mister arbeidet og inntektene?

Spørsmålet om barnearbeid har igjen vært oppe i norske medier. Redaksjon 21 viste nylig Erling Borgens reportasje fra en kaffeplantasje i Guatemala. Vi fikk se at indianerbarn plukket kaffebeholder, men reportasjen etterlot mange ubesvarte spørsmål. Hvor mye arbeidet barna, hva tjente de og hvilken rolle spilte lønnen i indianerfamilienes økonomi? Hvordan så barna og familiene på barnearbeidet, og hvilken plass har det i lokal indiansk barndomskultur og tradisjon? Debatten i studio, med representanter fra handel og kontor og Redd Barna, ga heller ingen svar på vesentlige spørsmål. Den var like perspektivløs og unyansert som Erling Borgens reportasje.

Det er ikke første gang barnearbeid diskuteres i norske medier. I forkant av Norway Cup sist sommer ble det

avslørt at barn i Norge skulle sparke på baller sydd av barn i Pakistan. Norway Cup-sjefen, Frode Kyvåg, sa straks nei til å importere disse fotballene. Den norske lægeforening gikk også inn for å stanse importen av medisinsk utstyr produsert av barnehender, og i høst satte Handel og Kontor i Norge i gang «Aksjon mot barnearbeid» med støtte fra LO og Bistandsdepartementet.

” I 1875 var omkring syv prosent av arbeidsstokken i norsk industri barn ”

I forordet til Informasjonsheftet «Aksjon mot barnearbeid» slår statsråd Karl Nordheim Larsen fast at 200 millioner barnearbeidere i verden blir frarøvet sin barndom. I stedet for å oppleve en trygg barndom i lek og på skolen, må barna arbeide. «Det er vår plikt å gjøre det vi kan for at alle verdens barn får være barn og får samme muligheter som oss», sier bistandsministren.

Her settes normen for den gode barndom: Barn skal få lov å være barn innenfor en egen barnekultur, og opplysningen av barna skal foregå i skolen! Dette er imidlertid en barndom og et barndomssyn som er historisk og kulturelt betinget. Det er barn-

dommen slik den er konstruert innenfor det moderne og vestlige samfunnet. Idémessig har den sitt utgangspunkt i opplysningstiden, men siden den gang har det funnet sted en universalisering og globalisering av dette synet på barndommen.

Andre barndommer blir betraktet som avvik fra normen. Dette er noe av bakgrunnen for at mediene stadig presenterer et svært unyansert og ensidig fordømmende bilde av barnearbeid i verden i dag.

En tilleggsforklaring er medienes forklærthet for ensidige og forenklede fremstillinger. Jakten på sensasjon veier oftest tyngre enn kravet til nøktern informasjon om ulike sider ved barnearbeidet. Barnearbeid blir gjennomgående beskrevet som slavearbeid og som resultat av fattigdom og tvang. Dette bildet er ikke bare unyansert og derved galt. Det formidler også en moraliserende og arrogant holdning overfor en annen barndoms-kultur enn vår egen.

” Her finnes mange vitnesbyrd om at barna følte seg stolte og betydningsfulle over å kunne bidra til familieøkonomien ”

Fordommer kan som oftest føres tilbake til mangel på innsikt. Et innblikk i vår egen historie kan i dette tilfelle bidra til innsikt og utvide vårt perspektiv på fenomenet barnearbeid.

Går vi tilbake til 1800-tallets Norge, var det vanlig at barn arbeidet. Endel barn arbeidet i industrien. I 1875 var omkring syv prosent av arbeidsstokken i norsk industri barn. Noen bransjer var svært barneintensive. I tobakksindustrien var f.eks. nærmere halvparten av arbeiderne barn, og i fyrstikkindustrien var hver tredje arbeider et barn.

Det var imidlertid langt flere barn i lønnet arbeid utenfor fabrikkene. De fleste, og særlig jentene, var i tjeneste, men barna arbeidet nær sagt overalt: ved klippfisketørring og fiskeforedling, som tomtearbeidere og sjauere, ved bevertnings- og skjenkesteder, de var bud og drev med handel på torv og i gatene, de hugget og stablet ved og var til og med omreisende linedansere, akrobater og ryttere. Svært mange barn arbeidet dessuten ulønnet hjemme i husholdet eller i foreldrenes næringsvirksomhet. Barn gikk også på skole. Men særlig på bygde var skolegangen begrenset, og skolen var tilpasset arbeidslivet.

For å forstå og forklare barnearbeid som historisk fenomen, må det settes inn i en større økonomisk og kulturell kontekst. Barnearbeidet var ledd i en familiekonomisk strategi, og barna bidro betydelig med sin lønn. Rundt 1880 tjente en gutt på Ulefos sagbruk omkring 200 kroner i året. En voksen sagbruksarbeider tjente 600 kroner. En familie med far og to sønner på sagbruket hadde en årsinntekt på omkring 1000 kroner. De to sønnene sto for nærmere halvparten.

Dette tilskuddet til familiens felleskasse betydde mye for barnas posisjon i familien og lokalsamfunnet. I

1950-årene samlet Edvard Bull inn et stort minnemateriale blant eldre industriarbeidere. Her finnes mange vitnesbyrd om at barna var stolte og følte seg betydningsfulle over å kunne bidra med sin lønn til familiekonkominen.

Men barnearbeid dreide seg om mye mer enn økonomi. En undersøkelse av barn i industrien viser at barnearbeiderne oftest ikke kom fra nød-stilte familier. De kom fra solid arbeiderklasse, ofte fra et skikt av arbeideraristokrater. Det var ikke nøden som drev barna ut i arbeid på fabrikkene. Barn skulle arbeide, og industri-barn ble ofte sett på som «privilegerte» fordi de tjente godt og fordi industriarbeidet var mer regulert enn mye annet barnearbeid. Gjennom arbeidet ble barna opplært i praktiske ferdigheter og til arbeidslivets kultur og sosiale roller i vid forstand. Det var lange tradisjoner for barnearbeidet. Helt fra tre-fire-årsalderen deltok barna sammen med mødrene og fikk gradvis opplæring i enklere arbeidsoppgaver. Ved åtte-ni-årsalder ble guttene med faren og deltok i hans arbeid, ofte som farens hjelpearbeider.

” Barn skal få lov å være barn innenfor en egen barne-kultur! Det er barndommen slik den er konstruert i vestlige samfunn ”

Barn og voksne arbeidet sammen. I industrien hadde derfor barna like lang daglig arbeidstid som voksne. Det kunne være både 10 og 12 timers arbeidstid. Men selve tidsopfatningen var en annen enn vår klokkestyrte tid. Arbeids- og sosialt liv gikk mye i ett. Det var et annet tempo i arbeidslivet, og der fantes mange «lu-

ker» hvor barna utfoldet seg i lek og moro. For barna selv, for familiene og i lokalsamfunnet var barnearbeidet en selvfølge. Den norske 1800-talls barndommen var en arbeidsbarndom for barn flest. Barnearbeidet var en livsform.

Det finnes mange paralleller mellom barnearbeidet i dag og barnearbeidet i vår egen historie. Det er økonomisk betinget, men bygger også på lokal kultur og tradisjon, det er familiebasert, og barna tilegner seg praktiske ferdigheter i arbeidets skole fremfor å sitte på skolebenken.

Det finnes selvsagt misbruk av barn i arbeidslivet i dag, slik det gjorde det før i tiden. Slavearbeid og misbruk må det internasjonale samfunn reagere mot. Men alt barnearbeid er ikke slavearbeid. Bildet må nyanse-res, og overleite aksjoner, som bol-kottaksjonene til Norway Cup og Den norske lægeförening, kan gjøre mer skade enn gagn.

Hva blir konsekvensene for barna og familiene deres når barna mister arbeidet og inntektene? Aksjonen til Handel og Kontor med støtte fra Bistandsdepartementet vitner også om manglende analyse og innsikt. Med hvilken begrunnelse vil bistandsministeren overføre den norske barndommen til alle verdens barn?

Det som i mediene blir presentert som et barnearbeidsproblem, er i virkeligheten et fattigdomsproblem. Bare ved å få bukt med fattigdommen i de landene der barn blir misbrukt, kan man få bukt med selve misbru- ket.

Dermed er det ikke sagt at alt barnearbeid vil forsvinne. Barnearbeidet er en integrert del av den kulturen det hører hjemme i, slik det var i Norge for 100 år siden. En ensidig fordømmelse av alt barnearbeid avslører sviktende kunnskap om andre kulturer – og om vår egen historie. ■



H.C. Andersen oversat og udgivet i Nepal

H.C. Andersen's eventyr er meget interessante at læse. De er både for voksne og børn. I september '94 udkom nogle af H.C. Andersen's eventyr på nepali. Eventyrene er oversat af Baykul Pathak og Madan Bahadur Nar-kami. Der er udvalgt 18 eventyr fra forfatterskabet, deriblandt de kendte: Kejserens nye klær, Prinsessen på ærten, Kærestefolkene, Nattergalen og Den lille havfrue. Bogen er let at læse og det er godt, at H.C. Andersen er blevet oversat til nepalesisk, da det kan være med til at skabe bedre kontakt mellem danskere og nepalesere.

Yangji S. Eliassen

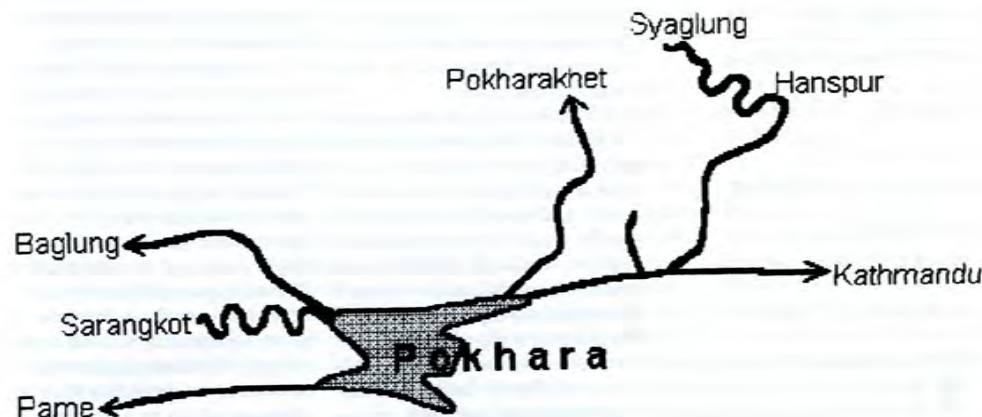
Nepal Vision
(Dansk-Nepalesisk Selskab)

Local Village Development Act: Pengebruk på veiprosjekter.

Mange av kommunene som mottok 500.000 Rs. (Local Village Development Act -midler) under den tidligere UML-regjeringen, har benyttet pengene til veibygging. I disse dager hakkes og graves det nær sagt overalt i Nepal. Vei betyr utvikling og nærhet til markeder for folk i åsene. Man kan imidlertid stille spørsmål ved både veienes plassering, kvaliteten på nykonstruksjonene og nytteverdien av dem. Det eksisterende veinettet i Nepal preges av akutt mangel på offentlig transport og sideveiene som nå bygges vil neppe kobles til det offentlige transportnettet i særlig grad. Som en dame sa da hun solgte meg appelsiner ved en nybygd vei nær Pokhara: "Den nye veien spiser åkre, støver oss ned og koster mange penger. Og buss går det ikke her. Hva skal vi med veien?"

I utviklingsøyemed synes dagens veibygging i Nepal overit. Den er kostbar, av laber kvalitet og vitner om mangel på helhetlig planlegging. Bedre transport kan ha mange positive sider, som i nødtilfeller der en rask jeeptur kan være avgjørende. Økt framkommelighet korter ned reisetiden til markeder og tjenester for de som kan betale og gjør det generelt enklere å frakte varer til landsbygda. Rundt de nye veiene kan man med letthet spore en tiltagende handelsvirksomhet. Men veibyggingen har ikke demmet opp for hovedproblemene i Nepals åser: den relativt sett synkende prisen på jordbruksprodukter som ris, hirse, mais og poteter. Å drive jorda i åsene bli stadig mindre lønnsomt, samtidig som knapphet på tilgjengelig jord og mangel på arbeidskraft, forårsaket av fallende barnetall og dyrere arbeidskraft, gjør det vanskelig å opprettholde et selvforsyningsjordbruk.

Olav Myrholm.



Nye veier nord for Pokhara

Because It Is There

Foreign Money, Foreign Advice and Arun III

by Bikash Pandey

HIMAL July/August 1995

The Arun project has been in gestation for eight years and will take another eight years to build, if and when approved. Better to build a basket of smaller schemes throughout Nepal, to produce the same amount of power in the same number of years.

The debate swirling around the Arun III project has been the first controversy about a major development project in Nepal. The democratic changes of 1990 allowed the public to speak up on matters on which they had remained silent for decades, and this dam project planned for the Arun Kosi river in east Nepal provided the first opportunity for

those who were concerned enough to question the mistaken developmental path that had led to a project such as this.

Since 1987, this one project has become synonymous with hydropower development in Nepal, as the government and donor agencies seemingly want to consider nothing else. Conceptualised as a 402 megawatt project at the outset, for a site known as Arun III (third of the six sites initially identified in the Arun Valley), the Nepali Government decided in 1992 to proceed with the first half of Arun III, to provide 201 MW of power. The final decision on funding this oversized "Baby Arun" has yet to be taken by the donors.

Internationally, the Arun opposition distinguishes itself by being a dam protest with a difference: clear alternatives have been presented that no one has been able to dismiss. In fact, the Arun controversy is not about opposing dams as much as it is about how foreign aid defines development priorities of aid-dependent countries like Nepal. It is about the conditionalities countries like Nepal must submit to in order to receive aid, and about how these conditions can inhibit real development of the country. The criteria being used by its critics to assess Arun will in future be used for other areas of development and foreign aid-giving in Nepal. In this sense, some new ground has been broken by the opposition. 17

Constitutional Guarantee

The first public attempt to question the Arun project was at a hearing organised in February 1993 at Hotel Kathmandu by the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) and ten other organisations. "In keeping with the healthy democratic atmosphere prevailing in Nepal, the promises of the Constitution both on the right to development and the right to information, as well as the exceptional dimensions of Arun III itself, it is appropriate that the project be discussed and debated openly with relevant information at hand," stated the organisers of the public hearing.

A panel of experts had questions ready for the officials invited, ranging from the environmental safeguards being followed to how equity was going to be ensured in rehabilitation. The hundred or so lay persons who attended wanted answers on why hydropower was so expensive in Nepal compared to neighbouring Bhutan, India and China; why all of rural Nepal must bear the burden of providing electricity to urban dwellers; and why Nepali engineers seemed incapable of developing small hydropower plants as a substitute to perpetual dependence on international contractors.

Only the representatives of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) arrived to take their seats at the podium, and their answers were limited to technicalities of the project. There

was no one to respond to questions on the issues of national hydropower policy, as the chairs set aside for officials of the National Planning Commission, the Ministry of Water Resources, and the Ministry of Finance remained empty.

Judging that the main problem lay in the absence of a coherent hydropower policy in the country, with the result that no serious thought would be given to smaller alternatives when a project like Arun was proposed, a group of Nepali professionals, some of whom had met for the first time at the February hearing, formed a group the following month called the Alliance for Energy.

In a series of white papers and newsletters over the next two years, the Alliance put forward its concerns regarding the high cost of energy from the Arun project, highlighted the risks to the national economy from investing in a single overwhelmingly large project, and laid out what it called the "alternative approach" to Nepali hydropower development.

Towards the end of 1993, the Arun Concerned Group, a coalition of human rights organisations, which included activists from the Arun river valley, was formed. One of the first actions of the Group was to file a case with the Supreme Court demanding information from the Ministry of Water Resources and NEA on the Arun project. In a ruling that will no doubt set a precedent for development debates of the future, the Court ruled that the Nepali public had a right to be fully informed about the details of development projects. It directed the government to make available to those who made the request a list of all the documents on the project. Only thereafter could it declare which documents were classified and could not be given out.

The World Bank

As the lead donor organisation in Nepal's power sector, the World Bank has been the project's chief defender. The Alliance first encountered the 'donors' in the form of the Bank's Appraisal Mission for the Arun project

at a stormy meeting in the Bank's Kathmandu office in May 1993. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the German Bank of Reconstruction (KfW) were also represented in the Mission, whose job was to collect information and appraise the latest developments on Arun. The members' attitude was that they would be happy to listen to alternatives the Alliance might present but it was not their job to answer criticisms on Arun III. The government of Nepal must do that.

After hearing the presentation on alternatives, Donal O'Leary, leader of the Mission and the Bank's Task Manager for Arun who had championed the project from the start, argued that there were not enough feasible small schemes in Nepal to produce the power of Arun, and certainly none were studied in enough detail to come on line before Arun. Secondly, he argued that capability within Nepal was limited and what was there could not be built up fast enough to supply Nepal's power requirements. NEA, O'Leary argued, did not have enough capable experts to be spread over a number of construction sites, and involving the private sector would only increase the cost of energy for the Nepali consumer, as it would have to take loans at commercial rates and also plan to make a profit.

The Investment Plan for the NEA prepared in May 1993 with approval from the World Bank had Baby Arun coming on line in 2002, with over 100 MW of diesel-generated power filling the rising demand during the interim nine years. O'Leary's Mission defended this Plan as the most cost effective solution for power generation in Nepal, as also verified by the Least Cost Generation and Expansion Plan (LCGEP), an earlier exercise sponsored by the Bank which concluded that Arun provided the least cost energy addition to Nepal's grid.

The Mission members were forthright in stating that arranging financing for one large 200 MW project was a lot less work for them than arranging financing of a basket of ten 20 MW projects, which would mean

ten funding packages, ten panels of experts, ten detailed feasibility studies, and as many contractors. They argued that it takes six years to complete studies and to arrange funding for any hydropower project no matter what its size and four more years to construct it, thus there was little point in looking at small schemes. With Nepal's annual power requirement growing at around 25 MW per year, clearly, schemes of smaller than 200 MW capacity were of little interest to the appraisal team.

Interestingly, when the Appraisal Mission returned to Kathmandu for its next visit in September 1993, they had made one significant addition to the NEA Investment Plan. The new plan had the 100 MW (first phase) of the Kali Gandaki 'A' project coming on line in the year 2000, two years before Arun. It also acknowledged that Khimti (60 MW) and Modi Khola (14 MW) in the private sector would be on line before Arun III. This modified Investment Plan was based on a revised projection of annual growth in power demand from eight percent to ten percent. This represented a major reversal from a position the Bank had held as recently as May that no other hydropower scheme would be able to come on line before Arun. However, by nothing up the growth rate of demand, Kali Gandaki, Khimti and Modi were now presented as *complementing* Arun, rather than as alternatives.

The Arun opposition's dialogue with the Bank culminated in a meeting chaired by Joe Wood, Vice President for the South Asia Region, at the Bank's Headquarters in Washington DC on 28 June 1994. The meeting concentrated on the issues of alternatives to Arun, environmental mitigation and social equity issues and, finally, access to information and public participation. At the end of the day, Wood promised to take into account the issues raised by the NGOs. Thereafter, the NGOs also met with the major Executive Directors of the Bank, who are the ones that actually vote on projects once they are brought to the Board by the 18

Bank management.

The Staff Appraisal Report which was presented by the South Asia Region office at the end of August 1994 was disappointing. Wood's office had merely used the NGOs' reasonings to polish its own arguments and had not made any change in the strategy and investment plan of hydropower schemes for Nepal.

While in Washington DC, the NGOs also met and challenged Richard Stern, Director of the Bank's Department of Energy and Industry, on the Bank's LCCEP exercise. It was Stern's department which had provided the professional input to the South Asia office in analysing the best power investment for Nepal. It emerged that the Bank had actually done an internal comparative study in the summer of 1993 to compare costs of two plans, known as Plan A and Plan B. Plan A represented the investment plan as it stood with Baby Arun coming on line in 2002, and Plan B looked at a basket of six schemes in the 30 MW to 80 MW range supplying power to the grid till the year 2010, when Arun would come on line.

Evidently, the comparison was not at all conclusive, showing that in a high growth scenario, Plan A would be five percent cheaper for the country and in a low growth scenario, Plan B would be cheaper by the same amount; and this too after an arbitrary 20 to 40 percent cost addition was made to the smaller schemes to account for the "uncertainty" of less detailed studies. In May 1993, the Bank had favoured the lower (eight percent) demand growth scenario which would have proved Plan B was cheaper, but by September it had accepted the high growth (ten percent) scenario, which meant an immediate construction schedule for Arun.

Director Stern conceded to the Nepali NGO representatives that "to the limit of economic and scientific analysis my department is not able to recommend one plan over the other." So what did then determine which Plan the World Bank is finally pre-

pared to fund for Nepal? Said Stern: "Government of Nepal's strong commitment to the (Arun) project is the determining factor for the Bank's support".

Inspection Panel

Upon their return from Washington DC, the Arun Concerned Group filed the first-ever case with the Inspection Panel of the World Bank on 24 October 1994. The Panel is an independent body, newly established by the Executive Directors of the Bank, to investigate claims from people affected by the Bank funded projects on whether the Bank Management has followed its own Operational Directives and Policies.

The ACG claim cited violations, in the Bank's preparations of Arun III, of the Bank's Operational Directives and Policies on Environmental Assessment, Indigenous Peoples, Involuntary Resettlement, Disclosure of Information, and Economic Evaluation of Investment (Alternatives). Unfortunately, the Executive Directors clipped the wings of the Panel by limiting its inquiry to only the first three directives. The Bank's policy on disclosure of information, the Directors claimed, was evolving so quickly that it was difficult to judge violations; on the question of inadequate analysis of alternatives, they passed judgement that "the most appropriate alternative is ultimately a matter of judgement as to when enough information is available to make a prudent decision."

By not including the issue of alternatives in the authorisation of investigation by the Inspection Panel, the Executive Directors side-stepped the need to inquire into whether Arun represented the best investment in the power sector for Nepal.

The Panel finished its report and submitted it to the Executive Directors on 21 June. The report is said to be critical of the Nepali government's progress so far on rehabilitation and involuntary resettlement of those displaced by the access road to the dam site. According to reports, the inspectors have also criticised the Bank it-

self, for having failed to follow its own policy on resettlement by not supervising this component. The issue of alternative economic analysis, being kept out of the ambit of investigations, was left untouched by the panel.

The Bank management is now expected to pressurize the government of Nepal to take action on the issues of environmental mitigation and rehabilitation pointed out by the Inspection Panel so that the project can be taken to the Board of Executive Directors for approval sometime in October 1995.

All Those In Favour

Ram Saran Mahat, the Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission under the Congress government till October 1994 and arguably its loudest development ideologue, puts forward most clearly the position of those in Nepal who support the Arun project in its present configuration. His arguments are as follows:

International experts say this is best for us. All aspects of the Arun project have been studied to the greatest detail by renowned international experts who have found the project to be sound on account of risk from glacial lake outburst floods environmental issues, affordability and 'crowding out' of other sectors Arun provides the least cost energy for Nepal. The Bank's LCCEP studies in 1987, 1990 and 1994 have all confirmed this.

We need big power projects. Nepal has no choice but to develop large projects if it wants to supply urban centres, promote industrialisation, and export power. We cannot wait 50 years for Nepali capability to be built so that it can construct the large schemes we need today.

Money from donors is available. International sources have committed money for Arun and this money is not transferable to other projects, as alternatives have not been studied. Banks provide money on a project-by-project basis and do not give chunks of money to countries to spend at will. Donors are prepared to fund this project, we

cannot afford to lose the funding by asking a lot of questions on the project and proposing alternatives that are only theoretical. Endless protests by NGOs and the arrival of newly elected governments that want to review the project again and again might well result in 'donor fatigue'. Eighty percent of the funding of the project is in grant form and does not need to be returned. The terms of funding are too good to turn down. We cannot let go of the bird in hand in anticipation of two in the bush.

Across the political spectrum, similar sentiments continue to be heard. The Left government, while it did come to power full of scepticism about the project's appropriateness, has quickly joined the ranks of those who see no alternative to Arun. Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari reportedly said recently in Copenhagen: "The donors are ready to fund this project. We will proceed with it. We do not have a lot of choices." Pashupati SJB Rana of the Rastriya Prjatantra Party, a Minister for Water Resources under the Panchayat, has stated from a number of public platforms: "One has to think big to make progress in this world. If Prithvi Narayan had not thought big where would Nepal be today? We would do Karnali if we could get funding for it."

Neo-Gandhians of Nepal

The arguments of Mahat and his peers are quite coherent in themselves, and the dominant developmental culture finds them convincing if not compelling. It would be surprising if this were not so. After all, in Nepal, these same arguments—use foreign aid because it is there, ask the foreign consultant, do not ask the locals—have been used in almost 40 years of development to justify projects as diverse as the Prithvi Highway, the Marsyangdi Hydroelectric Project, the Narayani Lift Irrigation, and the Karnali Bridge.

Except for persons such as Devendra Raj Pandey, former Finance Secretary and subsequently Finance Minister in the hiatus after the people's

movement of 1990 (see "The Enigma of Aid", *Himal* Mar/Apr 1992), few Nepalis in or out of government have questioned the debilitating impact that foreign aid has had on the country's progress or asked if the prevailing aid and development paradigm can be challenged in favour of one that benefits Nepal more.

The Arun debate represents the first instance where the challenge is specific and asks the question, "Does Baby Arun in its present form represent the best use of aid money for the development of hydropower in the country?" The controversy challenges all political parties to look within themselves, to go back to their defining ideologies, and to provide answers on the path of hydropower development the country should follow—the prevailing approach or the "alternative approach".

When asked if the Arun project was not contrary to the Nepali Congress Party's ideology, which was Gandhian and in line with E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, Mahat clarified, "My leader B.P. Koirala believed in a Gandhian economy. I disagreed with him and have consistently argued that in today's world we will isolate ourselves with a Gandhian economy." As if to stress the point, the Ministry of Water Resources sent a fax on 8 February 1994 threatening to close down the Kathmandu office of the Intermediate Technology Development Group (founded by Schumacher in 1965), for suggesting to donors that they support small and medium hydro alternatives in place of the Arun project.

The Eggs in the Basket

The arguments against the project are that Arun puts the country in grave economic risk, and that the conditionalities are unacceptably severe and restrictive.

Risk to the social sector. Martin Karcher, former Division Chief for Population and Human Resources in the Bank's South Asia Region office resigned from the World Bank after 29 years of service because he objected to the Bank's handling of Arun.

He makes the following point: a large project like Arun only starts to produce power once it is 100 percent finished. A 90 percent completed project still produces no power. Imagine a scenario where in the stipulated eight years of construction the project might be 75 percent complete and have a 20 percent cost overrun (not an unusual situation, as Bank records show that 40 percent of the Bank funded schemes have significant cost and time overruns). With load-shedding building up, the government of that time will be under tremendous pressure to take resources out of whatever sector it can—health, education, rural transport—to complete this project, especially if this is the only major power plant under construction.

Risk to the national economy. Simply put, the danger is that of putting all eggs in one basket. Like other hydropower schemes in the deep Himalaya, Arun would also be under risk of being washed away by GLOFs and other kinds of sudden flood. From a national strategic point of view, it is dangerous to build a single large project at one end of the country. It becomes even more risky when by the time the Lower Arun and Upper Arun projects are completed, the Arun valley could be supplying over two-thirds of the power on the national grid. One flood of great intensity of the kind that has occurred in the Arun could wipe out the Nepali economy. A sound strategy requires dividing the power plants among a number of river valleys.

Riparian risks. An additional problem with the Arun project not shared by others in Nepal is that over 80 percent of the waters at the project site have their origins in Tibet. The 500 km stretch of the Pengqu (Arun) as it flows through Tibet provides numerous opportunities for irrigation projects to withdraw water. One such project, the Changsuo Basin Irrigation project inside the Qomolangma (Mt. Everest) Nature Preserve, meant to irrigate 9000 hectares, has been operational for the second dry season this year. A diversion across the Pengqu and the main canal have been

constructed; once the proposed 227 km canals of the distribution system are built, this one project alone can draw up to a third of the dry season flow of the Arun. China has reportedly applied to the UNDP for funds to develop this distribution network.

China has thus been actively planning to withdraw water upriver on the very river on which Nepal plans to place its only major power scheme. This is unacceptable risk, as there is not an international court where a lower riparian can contest the consumptive use of water by an upper riparian.

Risk of dooming the hydropower sector. The Arun project represents a serious threat to the future of hydropower development in Nepal because it will siphon funds away from other prospective investments. Arun is to be funded jointly by all four of Nepal's largest donors (the World Bank, ADB, the Germans and the Japanese) and will consume a very large part of what hydro money is available to Nepal in the coming decade. There simply will not be money for two parallel paths of hydropower development.

If the country does not begin to build small and medium hydropower schemes today, Nepali engineers and consultants will never get the opportunity to fully design and execute their own schemes. Nepali contractors will never get a chance to construct them, and Nepali banks will lose the opportunity to finance schemes supplying power to the national grid. This in turn will mean that hydropower produced in Nepal will never be competitive.

Conditionalities. Arun comes packaged with conditionalities which represent an insidious threat to the country's development and to its democracy. The two most immediate conditions, set by the Bank, are that NEA increase electricity tariff by a further 124 percent before Arun comes on line, and that the Authority take permission from the Bank before it builds power plants of more than 10 MW capacity.

Because of the size of project, the

conditionalities go beyond the hydropower sector and into the running of the Nepali economy as a whole. The bank has made 'structural adjustment reform' a precondition for Nepal to receive loans to build Arun III. If the Nepali government and NEA, for a whole host of potential political, economic and other societal reasons, cannot maintain managerial and budgetary discipline as detailed in the project financing and loan documents, then the Bank will slash credit flows to Nepal by half to one-third of current levels—and not just in the power sector.

If the electricity tariff is not increased as per the schedule set by the Bank, Nepal risks losing funding not only for Arun but all other sectors that the Bank funds—by up to two-thirds as a penalty. Similarly, if the World Bank is unhappy with the Ministry of Finance budget which is announced every July, ongoing funding for Arun can come to a grinding halt. Finance Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari's 11 July budget announcement for the financial year 1995/96 is a major test case. Will the Bank consider Nepal's development budget for this year (which has dramatically increased spending through direct rural disbursements and by initiating a host of new social welfare programmes) to be at variance with the Bank's reform programme?

According to the existing agreement (of June 1994) on the project, the cost of taking on Arun is that no matter which government comes into power, the real macro-economic policies of the country for the next decade will be fixed and tied to a reform programme, one that has been set by the Bank. Few governments would be willing to challenge the Bank, for fear of having funds withdrawn from the country's largest ongoing development project. Essentially, elected representatives who make up the Nepali government would not be free any more to evolve innovative strategies of development for the country. Their hands would have been tied by the Bank.

The Alternative Approach

The alternative approach espoused by the Alliance for Energy is based on the premise that hydropower should be cheap for the Nepali consumer and competitive to sell to India. Nepali engineers and workers should gain the capability to build power plants, the sector should use Nepali money, it should create jobs for Nepalis, and power projects should be spread out across the country.

Inexpensive kWh. There is only one way to make hydropower inexpensive in Nepal, to make it affordable to Nepali consumers, and competitive for sale to India. And that is to get Nepalis to build the plants themselves. In India, if the cost of installing 1 MW of hydropower crosses the NRs 10 crore mark, it is considered a risky investment. In Nepal, rates are routinely twice as high as this. In the case of Arun, it comes to NRs 27 crore. However, the Butwal Power Company, using Nepali engineers, has built the 5 MW Andhi Khola Project and the 12 MW Jhimruk at rates of NRs 5 crore and NRs 8 crore per MW respectively (1995 rates).

Decentralised hydropower development. The alternative approach envisions small hydropower schemes of less than 20 MW size built in a number of districts spread throughout the country. These schemes could be owned by private companies who would sell power to the national grid. They could also be owned by municipalities and districts which would generate power, consume what they need, and sell the remainder to the national grid. These decentralised producers would sell power to the NEA grid at a publicly announced fixed buy-back rate. NEA should make up the shortfall of what the private sector and the districts cannot build, but would otherwise concentrate on managing the national grid and distribution networks. This model has worked in all the major hydropower producing countries, including Switzerland, China and Norway.

Use Nepali money. As far as possible, these schemes would be

funded by commercial banks in the country or by the sale of national hydropower bonds in which Nepalis can invest. In the same way that Nepali engineering capability is not being used and thus is not enhanced within the prevalent paradigm of building large schemes through foreign aid, similarly, Nepali money is sitting idle when it could be used to develop hydropower in the country. Stagnant money that is presently merely helping increase real estate prices in Kathmandu Valley can easily provide the engine for hydropower development.

Hydropower must create jobs. The construction of hydropower schemes is an industry in itself. If a decentralised, labour-intensive hydropower strategy is employed, within a decade this industry could be employing as many as 35,000 people directly and 200,000 people in support activities. The added advantage is that workers would not crowd the cities, and they would be employed in rural areas all over the country.

District development. Imagine a situation where each of the 75 districts in Nepal received 72 crore rupees over the next eight years for hydropower development from the central government. With that much money, each district could develop its own hydro station of 7 to 10 MW. On average, a hydro scheme of this size will generate NRs 10 to 15 crore worth of electricity a year at present rates. If the initial investment were provided to the district on loan terms similar to what NEA receives, the repayment on this would be around NRs 7.5 crore each year and the rest would be income for the district.

The district would use the money it earns from electricity sales to the grid to electrify itself as well as to spend for education, health, roads and other development activities for which presently it depends totally on grants from Kathmandu. Hydropower is one of the few resources that mountain districts can sell to urban markets. Use of an investment equivalent to

what is proposed for Arun would enable all 75 districts to graduate "from being given a fish every day to learning how to fish". Because road connection is needed to build a hydropower scheme, this strategy will also provide the district with two pillars of the modern economy at one stroke—roads and electricity.

Where the Decision Lies

The final argument of Mahat and others who support the Arun project is that Nepal cannot afford to refuse money received on concessional terms, and that the donors will not agree to substitute alternatives that are not well studied. This supposedly clinching argument holds no strength.

Of the four largest donors who have committed money for Arun, Germany provides the only grant, amounting to around 11 percent of the entire cost of the project. This grant was earmarked by the Bundestag for the Arun project. However, consider the following exchange between MP Christoph Matschie of the Social Democrats and the German Parliamentary State Secretary of the Ministry for Economic Cooperation:

Question: If a decision is made not to support Arun III, is it possible to redirect the grant of DM 235 million of Germany for other development projects in Nepal?

Answer: On principle this is possible. Yet DM 23.5 million of the DM 235 million assigned for Arun III have been spent for engineering services. For the remaining DM 211.5 million, the replacement clause for the benefit of other projects is valid and binding by international law if the project is not realised. However, Nepal's limited absorption capacity should be mentioned in this context.

Clearly, the remaining DM 211.5

million is available for other projects as long as Kathmandu is willing to make a case. The warning to be heeded is that Nepal's absorptive capacity is so low that there is a danger the money would be frittered away in the absence of a large project like Arun to use it up completely.

The money from the two multi-lateral banks and Japan are concessional soft term loans. It is difficult to predict what the Japanese will do, but it is a fact that they have not yet committed in writing that they will provide money for Arun. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank lend Nepal money to a level they consider the economy is able to handle. Within this resource envelope, a certain level of investment is considered affordable for investment in the power sector, immaterial of which specific projects are included.

There is thus every likelihood that donors and financiers will continue to support Nepal's hydropower development even if the Arun project is turned down. So the decision, in a real sense, still lies with Nepal. If we are confident that we can develop the alternatives within the next couple of years, none of the money that is committed to Nepal need lapse or go waste. If we are not prepared to do the homework required for this, and expect that the donors will continue to spoon-feed us and prepare the alternative projects for us just as they prepared the Arun package, however, there is really little sense in rejecting Arun.

B. Pandey, an engineer who is a member of the Alliance for Energy, was till recently with the Intermediate Technology Development Group in Kathmandu.



They Sell Rhino Horns, Don't They?

Over 40 kg of rhino horns, worth over US\$ 1.2 million in the black market, is stacked away in a couple of storerooms in Chitwan amidst heavy security. How long should this day-night vigil continue?

In an interesting turn of events, some Nepali wildlife scientists now propose that these rhino horns, as well as other seized wildlife contraband such as musk and tiger bones, be sold in the open market for all they are worth, and utilise the income towards the protection and conservation of the very species whose body parts are being sold.

CITES, the international convention governing the trade in wild animals and plants, prohibits the commercial sale of any product from the rhino, which is listed as an endangered species. But Nepali wildlife experts and government officials alike are increasingly concerned over the growing stockpile of animal parts which have become an expensive nuisance.

"We aren't able to store them properly, and we can't get rid of them either," says one official who asked not to be named. A government task force that submitted its

findings in late May reported that the condition of the stored material is poor: the

hides stink, furs have disintegrated beyond recognition, and the rhino horns are under constant onslaught from parasites. The highly volatile musk kept in pouches have

lost much of their mass. While some of the stored cache is from natural animal deaths, most were confiscated from poachers and smugglers.

The task force wrote to the CITES secretariat in Switzerland early this year seeking assistance in deciding the fate of the stockpile. It also sought clear policy guidelines on what to do with future catches. CITES has not responded with satisfactory answers, and the matter hangs in limbo even as the contraband rots further.

Prior to the collapse of the Panchayat system in 1990, all confiscated animal contraband used to find its way to the Royal Palace. Asked as to what happened thereafter, government officials are evasive. As the stockpile of horns, bones, skin and musk has increased over the last five years of democracy, the problem has become critical enough to demand a procedure to

deal with these highly 'sensitive' products.

Says one of the Nepali wildlife specialists, none of whom want to be named because of what they propose is radical, "Selling the accumulated contraband would provide a massive one-time infusion of funds for conservation in Nepal, whose disbursement would be decided by Nepali specialists themselves rather than under the direction of donor agencies."

According to this lobby, the international community should not for the sake of philosophical purity ignore the plight of poor countries like Nepal, which should be allowed to explore every opportunity to boost its underfunded and ailing conservation efforts. "These were Nepali animals that were killed by poachers, and it is logical to use the income so that their death was not in vain," was the view of one expert. "The alternative is to destroy these valuable products on the altar of foreign sensitivities."

Pralad Yonzon, a wildlife biologist who recently returned from a stint as advisor in Vietnam, when asked to comment on the proposal, concedes that the issue is problematic. "There is no easy answer. As long as demand exists in Indo-China for tiger bones and rhino horn, poaching will continue. So, legalizing the movement of the rhino

horn being held by the Nepali authorities is one answer, as long as the trade is carried out by an authorised body under strict international supervision."

Yonzon admits that there is risk attached to any policy deviation: "If Nepal somehow devises a policy and secures international market for its horns, India is going to raise hell. Tomorrow, every horn seized in Taiwan will be reported to have Nepali origin. Besides, we cannot say that decisions taken in Kathmandu will not affect the well-being of the surviving rhino population from India to Indonesia."

Of the hundreds of rhino species that once roamed the earth only five species survive: the white and black African rhinos; the two-horned Sumatran rhino; the lesser one-horned Javan rhino; and the greater one-horned Indian rhino, of whom 1500 remain with about 400 in Nepal.

While from an economic and nationalistic standpoint, the sale of accumulated contraband might be an appealing idea, the diplomatic, political and public relations challenges of such a policy put on the Nepali government are enormous. "Getting cash in return for the stockpile would be tantamount to commercial use of the rhino horn," says Shyam Bajimaya at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, leader of the task force. "A better bargain would be sending some of our stocks to

Western museums to be used for educational purposes in return for funds for our conservation projects which urgently require support."

It is not even that CITES has been totally rigid about the disposal of illegal animal products, and there is a precedent to which the Nepali experts can point to. In 1994, succumbing to pressure from some member states, CITES did allow the disposal of contraband under certain conditions: that disposal should not adversely affect the status of the species in question; it should discourage the unregulated and illegal trade; and such a transaction should be devoid of commercial benefits.

These conditions are stringent, and Nepal would face an uphill task convincing other member states as well as donor agencies (which have a lot of clout in Kathmandu corridors) that there will be no negative fallout if it were to sell off its cache. The interna-

tional resistance to any such move would be immediate and enormous.

Some African countries, which together have much more clout than Nepal, once had harboured hopes of commercially exploiting their vast stockpiles of ivory. However, they were cold-shouldered in a 1992 CITES general meeting that was held in Kyoto, and the ivory remains shelved.

Yonzon feels that there is no harm for Nepal to at least float the idea of sale or exchange. A controversy would certainly erupt, but the need for change is pressing. "It may give us a bad name initially. But if we do our homework well we may even offer a new model to the world."

It is unlikely, however, that the officials of Nepal's wildlife bureaucracy will find the strength to stand up against the world, even for one point two million dollars.

—Akhilesh Upadhyay

Rhino Population in Nepal

Since the rhino census of 1987, which recorded 358 rhinos in the Royal Chitwan National Park, there has been a marked increase in the number of Nepal's Asiatic one-horned rhino population, currently recorded at 446-466 (Count Rhino 1994). Despite heavy patrolling by anti-poaching units, however, the rhinos are not free from danger. According to the warden of the Park, poachers have found new ways to get hold of these animals. Previously poachers would dig deep camouflage pits in the ground or lay snares to trap the rhinos, now they just shoot the animals as it is

quicker and there is less chance of being caught. Since the establishment of the Park in 1973, fifty-nine rhinos have been killed by poachers. Source: Kathmandu Post NCS Nepal No.4, 1994.



Market Forces on Everest

*Climbing Everest has become commercialised,
and you need more money to climb from the south.
So the climbers all go north.*

by Deepak Thapa

His Majesty's Government, taking into consideration the pressure on the environment of the Khumbu region and to lessen the pressure in the area and to conserve the environment, has decided to regulate the number and size of expeditions. So reads the official explanation for the decision taken in 1993 to restrict the number of members on mountaineering teams going to the Khumbu region, while limiting the number of teams on Everest itself, and to raise the royalty for climbing Everest from US\$ 10,000 to US\$ 50,000.

For quite a while there had been a clamour for a restrictive policy, including from Edmund Hillary, who had called for a five-year moratorium on Everest, although this would have been quite hard to achieve since the Chinese had no intention of closing the mountain from their side, international opinion notwithstanding. Thus, 'long overdue' was what many people concerned with mountains in Nepal felt about the change in the regulations.

The government's logic was simple. Instead of having a dozen or so teams paying ten thousand dollars apiece, if two or three expeditions paid fifty thousand each, the national treasury would still be receiving more or less the same amount. Mountaineering activities would be diverted elsewhere in Nepal to compensate for business lost from Everest by trekking agencies. The local economy would suffer a bit due to the absence of the hundreds of porters that swarmed up to Khumbu every climbing season (that was partly what the new regulations were designed to check), but would benefit from the increasingly popular policy of 'ploughing back' the revenue into the area earned from the peaks. And all would be well.

A rosy scenario, indeed! Unfortunately, mountaineering has not shifted to elsewhere within Nepal. It has instead shifted to Tibet. This past spring saw 11 expeditions tackle Everest from the northern side against only three from Nepal. (Of those three, two had to be billed 'clean-up' expeditions in order to get around the 'one-route-one-team' rule, since all three took the South Col route. The regulations clearly state: "Only one team shall be permitted to climb Sagarmatha by

each separate route in one season." But this being a 'policy matter' it can easily be circumvented by a cabinet decision. Why the council of ministers should be called upon to look into such inconsequential matters of deciding whether an expedition is a 'clean-up' or not, beats reason, since clean-up or otherwise, the US\$ 50,000 royalty has to be coughed up.)

The fact that there are more expeditions going to Tibet is lost on the Ministry of Tourism. It points out that there has been no decrease in the number of expeditions—around 100 every year—coming to Nepal over the last decade. Stagnation is better than decline.

When questioned why no effort has been made by the government to market other mountains of Nepal while Everest is being kept at bay, Prachanda Man Shrestha, Acting Director General of the Department of Tourism, threw the ball to private operators, saying that the private sector expects everything to be served on a platter. For their part, the operators throw the ball right back, retorting that all the publicity Nepal has received thus far has been due to their efforts and no thanks to the Ministry or its Department.

Everyone agrees that climbers cannot be forced to scale this mountain or that. If they want to climb Everest, does it do to offer a substitute mountain even if it is for free? Besides, it is certain that Nepal is losing out on the Everest market. For one thing, China's fee of US\$ 5500 for an Everest expedition is a sure draw even without considering the added charm of going to Tibet.

US\$ 45,000 or US\$ 13,000

Contributing to the declining numbers on Everest from the Nepali side, is the quite recent development of 'commercial climbing'. Since climbing Everest has become such a regular affair, corporate sponsors are becoming as scarce as yeti footprints. Most of the expeditions on Everest nowadays are 'guided climbs', operated like any other tour, with paying clients.

Commercial climbs go for the South Col route, which is booked in advance for years to come. The only way to get out-of-

turn permits is to don the clean-up garb. Tour operators cannot, for obvious reasons, afford to stand in line for years but that could not be helped till this year since it used to be assumed that the northern route was not viable for paying climbers because of the longer climb it entailed.

This spring, however, saw 19 clients put on the Everest summit by five different operators from the Tibetan side, while both commercial expeditions from the south were unsuccessful. Henceforth, more such expeditions can be expected to go north where there is no queue. As for the clients, unless they have a specific reason to go from the south, such as wanting to retrace the footsteps of Tenzing and Hillary or something else, it is a matter of simple economy to prefer Tibet. To take an example, a Germany-based operator is selling Everest climbs for US\$ 45,000 from Nepal and a mere US\$ 13,000 from Tibet.

Besides the steep royalty, climbing Everest from Nepal has other attendant encumbrances as well, like the garbage deposit and the more troublesome bureaucratic red tape. Kathmandu-based trekking agents complain of the stonewalling tactics of the Ministry of Tourism regarding issuance of permits, so much so that they claim it is easier for them to get a permit from Lhasa than from the Nepali authorities.

The operators are not happy with the 1993 regulations and remember being taken unawares when the announcement was made. No attempt was made to list their views on the matter, and it seems that the then Minister decided to go for the decision on the basis of a few environmentalist climbers who got his ear. A few of the businessmen even suspect a sinister vested interest in making it so difficult for climbers to climb in Nepal while China welcomes them with open arms. Keeping the mountain clean is fine, they say, but that can only be done with strict adherence to rules, which is not happening.

For the moment, trekking/mountaineering agencies do not have much to complain about. Mountaineering might not be picking up in Nepal but it is certainly growing across the border to the north, and it is mostly the Nepali operators who go

over to provide the services. The Tibetans do not have the required infrastructure to manage expeditions and so this aspect is still completely in the hands of Nepali agents. But the Tibetans are learning fast and very soon the Chinese are likely to come up with regulations similar to Nepal's that require a local handling agent. That will mean good-bye to Kathmandu's domination of the mountaineering trade in the plateau.

There remains one more legacy of the new regulations that has not been addressed. Kathmandu agents and their employees might be flying high for now but no one pauses to think about the hundreds of porters who have lost their seasonal livelihood of carrying loads up to the Everest Base Camp. On average, 250 porters are required by an Everest expedition and hundreds of porters from the lower hills have themselves earned cash income while providing stimulus to

business in Khumbu and the approach route. About this, everybody in the trade and in the government seems apologetic: it is not possible to please everyone at the same time. That is about as far as it goes.

HIMAL July/August 1995

Himalaya gossip

Mount Everest - Fatal Attraction

Enhver bjergbestiger vil vide, at Mount Everest ikke er verdens smukkeste bjerg, teknisk set heller ikke det sværeste at bestige og slet ikke den bedste klatretur. Men det faktum, at det er *det højeste* bjerg, gør det så specielt.

Siden den 13. Dalai Lama i 1921 gav englænderne den første tilladelse til at forsøge bestigning af Mt. Everest, har der været et mere eller mindre 'run' på bjerget. I 20'erne kom man ret tæt på toppen og ligeså i 30'erne. I 40'erne var der mere stille, men endelig i 1953 lykkedes det Hillary og Tenzing at nå toppen. Fra 1953 til 1975 lykkedes det kun godt 50 personer at bestige Mt. Everest. I perioden 1975 til 1988 nåede yderligere knap 200 toppen.

Attraktionen og prestigen er så stor, at i alt 548 personer har bestegt Mount Everest pr. juli 1994. 440 fra Nepal og 108 fra Tibet. Antallet af bestigninger er næsten

fordoblet fra 1990 til 1994. Herefter har der været en kraftig nedgang på grund af en forhøjet 'Peak Fee' og begrænsning i antallet af udstedte tilladelser. Langt de fleste (omtrent 70%) er kommet op på toppen ad 'normalvejen' via sydøstgraten fra Nepal.

I tilknytning til de mange bestigninger, har ca. 130 personer måttet lade livet under forsøg på at bestige 'den 3. pol'. De fleste er døde af kulde, laviner og udmattelse. Rekorden i antal bestigninger har Ang Rita Sherpa, der har bestegt Mt. Everest 9 gange uden ilt. Tæt herefter kommer Appa Sherpa, der har været 7 gange på verdens højeste bjerg.

Prisen for en Mt. Everest tilladelse er 70.000 US\$ fra Nepal og 8.000 US\$ fra Tibet. Deltagelse på en kommerciel ekspedition koster mellem 100-150.000 God fornøjelse.

Nepal Vision, 3. årgang nr.2
(Dansk-Nepalesisk Selskab)

The Himalayan Journal
Vols. 50 & 51, 1992-1993 & 1995
Harish Kapadia, editor

The Himalayan Club, Bombay
Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994
ISBN 0 19 563574 4/0 19 563734 0

The Journal brought out by the Himalayan Club (established in 1928 in Bombay) is an authoritative and reliable record of worthwhile events in Himalayan mountaineering. Among other articles, Vol. 50 contains biographical essays on Tenzing Norgay and other Sherpas who have made a name for

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themselves as climbers, under the title 'Tenzing Norgay and the Sherpa Team', a nostalgic piece 'Return to Everest' by George C. Band, of the 1953 Lord Hunt-led expedition, and an account by Hiromi Otsuka on the first ascent of Namcha

Barwa. Both volumes contain a chapter 'Expedition and Notes', giving short descriptions of climbing expeditions of the past year or so. Included are book reviews as well as memorial pieces on mountain lovers, climbers or others.

HIMAL September/October 1995 26

Mountain bride

text by Susan Roe
photos by Devendra Basnet

For four days the lamas perform prayers in the upstairs *lakhang* or shrine room. They rise at 5 am and haul the long bronze horns out onto the roof before the sun has crested over Yak Ghawa Kang — "mountain with the white forehead of a yak" as the northern peak of the Thorong La is locally known — and their blasting sounds echo off tall canyon walls. Goats stir, their feisty babies bounce around on unsteady limbs dancing to the rhythm of salt tea being churned in the kitchen below. The monks throw *torma* to the creatures of the unseen realms and for crows in the immediate one hovering nearby. Their chanting continues and pours out the open windows filling stone walkways and sunlit courtyards with sound. It is an early morning announcement, an auditory invitation



The small settlement of Kagbeni where Lhakpa lives is in lower Mustang. It borders the perimeter of a popular trekking route, the Annapurna Circuit.

of sorts which alerts the village that Lhakpa, the eldest daughter of the family living here, is rising to prepare for her wedding day.

The small settlement of Kagbeni where Lhakpa lives is in lower Mustang. It borders the perimeter of a popular trekking route, the Annapurna Circuit, and its worthy reputation as an intriguing stop-over spot is enthusiastically passed along the trail between foreign travellers. The crumbling fort which dominates the village skyline dates back to the 15th century and the tightly compacted construction of village homes give credence to the vil-

lage's name: Kag — literally to block or stop. Protection from the unending winds and harsh elements of this Himalayan environment is afforded here. Strategically located in the Kali Gandaki river valley, Kagbeni was and still is a major link on the famous Tibet to India trade route; daily horse and yak caravans thunder through its narrow walkways plying supplies up and down the valley's geographical thoroughfare.

People here are Tibetan in origin and their way of life and spoken language reflects this ancestral lineage. At one time, to more fully integrate the children into Nepal's national identity, small ones were given thoroughly Nepalese surnames while attending school. This practice has now stopped, but most people here have adopted the Nepalese ethnic names of Gurung, Lama, and Thakuri to fully illustrate their alliance. Tibetan Buddhism is the predominant religion here and it is deeply entwined in the everyday routine and ritual of daily life. Visitors are quick to notice the bone and web "protectors" hung over each doorway to ward off evil influences. Large *chortens* and *mani* walls are an integral part of village composition and even the colors applied for decoration to these structures represent the three Buddhist deities of Chenrezig (compassion), Jampelyang (wisdom), and Chanak Dorje (spiritual power).

A small but prominent *gompa* or village monastery is situated at the south end of the village and often it is the first thing one glimpses while striding up the Kali Gandaki from Jomsom. This *gompa* is the spiritual center of the village and many community ceremonies culminate here. On Saka Dawa or the Full Moon of the Fourth Tibetan Month, statues and religious texts are removed from the monastery and a procession forms to carry them around the village outskirts and nearby fields thus ensuring a

bountiful harvest and protection for the village from ill fortune in the coming year. Residents line the narrow walkways within the village hoping to touch their heads to the texts and obtain a blessing of direct transmission of the knowledge contained within. Westerners are rarely permitted entrance to the *gompa* at Kagbeni. A small handmade sign lamenting "IT IS NOT POSSIBLE" is pasted to the front door and this in itself expresses the community's concern over theft of artwork contained inside.

Life here centers around agricultural work and caring for large herds of goats and sheep. There are two growing seasons in Kag as opposed to upper Mustang where the harsh climate permits only one, and crops of wheat, barley, and buckwheat are nurtured from the land. An amazing system of irrigation channels has been constructed to drain water from the Dzong Khola and power the grinding wheels which produce flour and *tsampa* for the local people's use. Local plates and stomachs are filled with *dhiro*, the beaten buckwheat paste which is eaten with a spicy chili sauce and bits of meat while tourists usually prefer hot buckwheat pancakes or roasted brown bread served with honey, a perfect afternoon accompaniment to tea.

Marriages for the young people of Kagbeni are still mostly arranged by family. Prospective partners can be chosen only from certain villages within Baragong or the 12 small settlements along the river and surrounding valleys. Astrological calculations indicating a successful union are a prerequisite for such match-making and much formality in the custom still exists. Often the persons involved do not know their life partner before marriage and there is a great deal of shyness related to the whole process. Monks will come to the woman's home prior to the ceremony to perform

extended rituals of purification to bestow good fortune and future success for the couple joining their lives together. In true Tibetan style, much *chang* (beer) is prepared and a special evening meal of *thukpa* (noodle soup) is offered to the entire community at the bride's home the night before the ceremony begins. After much feasting and drinking, traditional songs are rendered with great emotion and enthusiasm late into the night. The bride however, does not participate and usually is hidden away, afraid to face the crowd.

Early the next morning, the groom's female relatives arrive to meet their new sister-in-law and to prepare her for the marriage ceremony and the journey to her new home. Gifts are displayed in an effort to win her heart — a shining silk blouse and bright new *chubba*, warm woolen Tibetan boots with delicately embroidered designs, carefully crafted gold earrings, multi-layered strands of turquoise and coral, a protective amulet, even a modern designed wristwatch has been procured, but she remains unimpressed. Sorrow from the thought of leaving her family and home overwhelms her and she remains stubborn and resistant. The in-laws must bathe and dress her and it is certainly no easy task. After much pushing and pulling, coaxing and convincing, she is finally fully prepared.

Upriver on the opposite side is the small village of Tiri, home to Norbu, the man Lhakpa's family has selected for her.

This village will soon be her new home. Ear splitting explosions of fire crackers bang against canyon walls and the distant drum beat slowly approaching announces the groom's procession. All on horseback and dressed in their finest brocade, they make an impressive sight and the villagers of Kag gather at the riverbank to watch their dramatic approach.

Arriving at Lhakpa's home, the groom and his family dismount. They are greeted with bowls full of *chang*; on the rim of each bowl three small dabs of butter are placed signifying long life, prosperity, and good luck. Inside, the guests are ushered to the family shrine room where the groom pays respect to his bride's relatives, bowing to each. The bride is brought out reluctantly and takes her place at the groom's side. Gifts of material goods and money are presented to the young couple and each is announced in a rather robust, town-crier style. The young woman, still reluctant to leave her family and home surroundings remains slumped in despair, her face buried deep in her sister-in-law's lap.

As departure time draws near, Lhakpa realizes she must finally bid her family farewell. Perhaps the saddest time of her life, she bows to her mother and father and bids each of her siblings a sobbing goodbye. As she is taken outside to where her horse awaits, the whole village gathers to escort her to her new home. She is lifted and placed on the horse but cries so hard that the groom's brother must ride behind her, holding on tight to keep her from tumbling off.

Again fireworks explode and the procession heads past the village mani wall, down the rocky slope of trail toward the river bed. A last cup of butter tea is presented to the bride and groom at the village's edge — respect and love accompany her on this short journey that will change her life in so many ways.

At the edge of Tiri they are waiting. Norbu's mother peers anxiously out of her window to catch sight of the new daughter arriving today. The village women have gathered with more *chang* to offer and branches of green foliage waving to welcome Norbu and his bride home. They sing ancient songs praising *dharma*, family, and life in the Himalaya, voices soar with the wind over water and rock and carry the wisdom and tradition that have survived change yet is a part of it.

It is Nilgiri now, the White Mountain, which she sees when she gazes downriver toward her old village of Kag. The mountain rises up sharp and pure, its peak like a diamond shining bright above the black river water running below. Every river rock and rounded *saligram* sing the song of familiarity for her from Kagbeni to Tiri. Tradition and change, the two seemingly opposites will forever continue to cycle on. ●

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In the Green

After vast areas of forest were cleared and wood prices rose steeply, people have now begun to plant *sissou* (*Dalbergia sissoo*) trees extensively in the terai region of Nepal. The attraction lies in the fact that every *sissou* tree planted can be sold for three thousand rupees after fifteen years, and for five thousand rupees after twenty years — for a tree that can be cultivated in its initial two years at two rupees per annum.

In Mahottari District, the Danish-sponsored Tree Foundation has assisted in the plantation of *sissou* and other cash crops on approximately 60 ha of land. In addition, the Foundation has reportedly distributed three hundred thousand seedlings for cultivation in the area.

Source: Kantipur



After 15 years



NCS Nepal No. 1, 1995

Khas of Chaudabisa

You wouldn't know it when you meet them today, but the Khas people of Jumla District are descendants of proud rulers of an empire that once stretched all the way from here to Kashmir, and from the Tibetan plateau to the inner tarai. The Khas are the progenitors of the Thakuri-Chhetri and of some of the hill Bahuns who traveled eastward to conquer the lands that would ultimately form the Kingdom of Nepal. The Nepali language, once known as *Khas-kura*, owes its origin to them, and the Khas also lent their style of adopting Thakuri and Chhetri titles to other ethnic groups of the Nepali hills.

Despite the accomplished past with which they are associated, this once-proud people today survive as a docile and unaware class relegated to an undeveloped corner of the country, exploited by those who know better, and burdened by an identity crisis that is unique in all Nepal.

As an anthropologist who has studied and written about the people of Nepal for four decades, I have over the past three years been doing 'applied research' amongst these Khas of Jumla. My work proceeds under the umbrella of the Karnali Institute, based in the Chaudabisa Valley, whose efforts have been geared to applying the theories of the social sciences and development studies to raise the social and economic conditions of the Khas community.

Working in Chaudabisa, it has become clear to me that sincere efforts to develop awareness, self-confidence and a sense of worth among backward populations immediately brings forth a reaction from the privileged classes. The more effective the development activity, the more virulent and reactionary is the response. For an academician who decided to try and practise what he preached, it came as a shock to learn that the political, economic and priestly forces are predetermined to join hands to prevent empowerment of the downtrodden. This happens because true development work has the effect of snatching away privileges and income that these forces have enjoyed without challenge for centuries.

The experience of the Karnali Institute will doubtless apply to other pockets that exist all over the Nepal Himalaya, where groups of people continue to suffer from the yoke of feudalism, and wherever efforts are being made to shake up the old and in order to bring in the new.

HIMAL May/June 1995

In northwest Nepal lives a group that is economically backward, socially oppressed, and psychologically pressured. The Khas of Jumla are a group that fell through the cracks of history.

by Dor Bahadur Bista

Chaudabisa

Chaudabisa valley used to come under a separate district called Tibrikot until some 12 years ago, but now it forms the eastern part of Jumla District. The area lies east of Jumla town, at the headwaters of the Tila and the Chaudabisa beneath Kanjinroba and Patrasri himals.

I was drawn to selecting Chaudabisa as the area for applied research because of an incongruous situation that exists here. The indigenous Khas live in absolute poverty even though their region itself is rich in natural resources and should be delivering a much higher standard of living. In fact, encouraged by the high demand for herbal raw material in the plains market, the locals were engaging in indiscriminate plunder of the very resource base which promised them a better future.

My interest also has a personal element, for my ancestors came from this area more than 300 years ago to settle down in the kingdom of Patan in Kathmandu Valley. I wanted keenly to gauge the distance that had developed between myself and this region of my *purkha*.

Jumla used to be the center of the powerful Khas kingdom of the western hills of Nepal from around the 14th century until the close of the 18th century. It is a region with interesting historic vestiges. Sinja,

which formed the northern part of today's Jumla district, has interesting archaeological remains, including records of the Khas kingdoms of yore. The earlier Khas kings were Buddhist (while the public was shamanistic) and employed lamas to keep their records in the Tibetan language. Subsequent infiltration of Hinduism led to destruction of much of these Khas records, although some are still available for scholars, scattered in monasteries and other repositories of Mugu, Humla, Dolpa and Daillek.

The Khas people were of pastoral nomadic background and were spread widely in many parts of present-day western Nepal. Their tribal character began to change from around the latter part of the 14th century when Brahmin pandits began arriving at the court of the Khas kings. The illiterate kings and courtiers with their rustic lifestyle must have liked the idea of a Hindu caste framework based on the principles expounded in *Manusmriti*, as this would give them a permanent high status based on birthright rather than on personal ability and competence.

The unravelling of the Khas empire accelerated with the seizure of the throne of Delhi by the Mughals, as more displaced Brahmins came up to settle in the Khas territory. More Thakuris and Chhetris had to be created as clients for the incoming Brahmins to cater to. That was the beginning of the end of the Khas people's collective strengths.

Agents and Profiteers

For a social scientist, Chaudabisa was also a place of interest because its nature had not been overly affected either by tourism or the negative effects of modernisation and its attendant material culture. Many other High Himalayan areas of Nepal such as Solu-Khumbu, Mustang and Langtang have been influenced beyond recall, but Chaudabisa provided laboratory conditions for the social sciences and development studies together to engage a region in genuine and long-lasting efforts at social and economic transformation. Hopefully, if the work here is successful, the model can be used with modifications in other similarly situated hill areas of Nepal.

In recent years, because of increased population, the local people have been pressuring the surrounding natural

environment. Part of the reason for the population increase is the success of child survival programmes in an area which did not receive family planning help, which was refused on grounds of political ideology. (Funds for the programme came from USAID, which could not allow family planning programmes under directives formulated by a Republican United States President.)

The agents and profiteers in the herb trade are lined up all the way from Delhi's Khari Bauli bazaar, across the border, and up to Jumla town. With a pittance of money, these people lure Chaudabisa's population into destroying the fragile natural base of their hillsides, uprooting herb plants roots and all.

The Khas have been exploited historically by all kinds of people, including government employees and local feudals, such as in their being forced to provide free labour. The first time the Khas of Chaudabisa recall receiving payment for work done was when King Mahendra made his famous trek to Rara Lake three decades ago. It was only then that the system of wage labour began to be implemented.

More than 30 years of educational programmes at the primary level and more than 12 years of secondary education have done nothing for the Khas. Education has not been meaningful.

Child marriage is a bane of Chaudabisa's Khas. It often leads to disenchantment when the bride and groom comes of age. About fifty percent of early marriages in Chaudabisa end in elopement of either partner, with the new husband being made to pay compensation to the former husband. Women suffer grievously from loss of status in the process.

Janajati Khas

The irony is that many Nepalis and most western scholars think that all Khas are Chhetri and that therefore they are not one of the so-called *janajati*, or ethnic, communities of the country. To be qualified as *janajati*, is the understanding, one has to have Mongoloid racial background and must speak a Tibeto-Burman mother tongue.

The fact is that a vast majority of the Khas have never been Hinduised, let alone 'Chhetri-ised'. Thus, while it may be true that today's Chhetri of Nepal branched off from the Khas, what has happened is that the descendants of the original Khas remained distinct, remote and deprived like other *janajati* groups of the country. The status of the Khas has dipped so low that the very term 'Khas' is today used by the upper classes as an insult. This is why the Khas people tend to style themselves

as Chhetri, even though the *tagadhari* (thread-wearing) Chhetris treat the Khas as low caste shudra.

The bulk of Jumla's Khas continue to live with their shamanic ritual practices, make alcohol at home, offering it to their deities, and drinking themselves. Nevertheless, due to historical and political reasons, their racial background disqualifies them from being called 'janajati'. All this has left the Khas with an identity crisis unique even in Nepal, and a total loss of self-esteem and self-confidence.

To be *janajati* in present-day Nepal is at least to have the ability to demand that mainstream society recognise the existence and rights of your tribe or community. While this right might have little use other than bring some peace of mind to ethnic activists, the Khas do not even have this on their side. They do not have an existence: their language is not even recorded in the national census even though they have a tongue that is distinct.

Fatal Legacy

Mostly, the problems of the present-day Khas of Chaudabisa reflects the exploitative traditions maintained to this day by the upper caste people of Jumla town, also known as Khalanga, and of the surrounding hills. Jumla town and Sinja retain the vestiges of the former exploitative feudal structure perhaps more than do most other hill regions of Nepal. This explains why the people here remain so poor whereas the region itself has abundant economic potential.

Some members of the sixteenth century converts to high caste are still struggling to maintain and assert their caste and class status. This, by definition, means the mistreatment of the Chaudabisa population, which is homogeneously Khas.

The Bahuns of Jumla continue to collect their dues of blankets, rugs, calves, goats, shanks of mutton, and cereal grains once a year from every household in Chaudabisa valley that has a death, a debilitating illness, a birth, or a marriage. They collect without having to provide any of the ritual services of a priest. Wedding, funeral, birth or illness, meanwhile, go on without the appearance of a priest. The Bahuns arrive in Chaudabisa at their convenience during fair weather. They visit their clients, collect the goods, and make them carry them to their homes in and around Jumla town.

Having lost this self-confidence and self-esteem over the course of centuries, the Chaudabisa Khas is willing to submit to this kind of exploitation. Having sunk to the lowest rung of the economic, cultural, religious and social hierarchy, there is little self-respect left. To the Jumla people, these

are the barbarous Khas, "*khas pawai*"—a term that is still in use.

In Chaudabisa, it is common to hear the locals go on and on: "*hami garib, hami dukhi, hami murkha*" (we are poor, we are hopeless, we are ignorant). Part and parcel of accepting their lowly position, they continue to wear filthy rags, and maintain dirty habits. It is this syndrome of absolute apathy that the Institute hopes to attack.

The fatalistic philosophy is insidious because it destroys optimism and the ability to take the initiative. Fate is blamed for anything that they do not get, even though they may not have worked for it. The locals do not want to work beyond the absolute minimum required. With the practice of the government providing money for all kinds of development work, Chaudabisa's people have found it easy to sit back and show even less initiative.

Chaudabisa does not represent an isolated pocket of exploitation: its situation is multiplied many times over in other Khas valleys of the Karnali region. Among this population, fatalism generates the view that one's entire life is a continuous present and is fated to be what it is. Instead, if the people could be persuaded to accept only the past as an important educator to provide guidance for future, and treat the so-called present as the

flicker of the moment that continuously moves along with the progression of our lives, we could probably have a healthy, future-oriented society led by optimistic political and cultural leaders. This, at any case, is the goal set by the Karnali Institute for itself in Chaudabisa.

At Cross Purposes

When the Institute landed in the midst of this caste- and class-ridden exploitative structure, it began work by trying to help the Chaudabisa Khas to learn to help themselves. The existing high school was expanded, health services were made regular, and training of locals began with carpentry and stonework classes. Two micro-hydropower stations were installed in the valley.

The Institute is spearheading efforts to help local people to become optimistic and look into a possibly prosperous future. Besides helping raise the living standards and educational level, the Institute also hopes to cleanse them of the ways of child marriage, cow worship coupled with cow starvation (and no milk at all!), and ill-treatment of women including the selling of wives.

Perhaps inevitably, the Institute and who I will call the "Jumla lords" are working



at cross purposes. The Institute is treated as a rival not only by these lords, but also some politicians who style themselves as progressive leftists. The Institute has had to face continuous attack from these forces, who feed contrived stories to population and do not miss an opportunity to put things in a bad light. Quite a few of the Chaudabisa locals were themselves initially suspicious of the Institute's motives, for they found it hard to comprehend why an outsider would want to help them without obvious benefit.

Those who do not wish the Chaudabisa Khas well can be categorised into three groups. Firstly, there are the political leaders who are concerned that they might lose their influence in the area. Politics providing the fastest route to influence, it remains the most appealing vocation for many. Because I was seen as a 'democrat', both the extreme left and extreme right decided that they would lose their vote bank if the Institute's work became popular.

Secondly, there are the economic leaders who feel that their base of economic exploitation will be pulled away by any activity aimed at developing self-awareness in Chaudabisa. Thirdly, are the priests whose role in Chaudabisa society would

rapidly diminish if the people were to be educated. The priests, on the whole, work the most insidiously to undo the process of positive change.

Various stratagems have been used to poison the minds of the Chaudabisa locals against the Institute, including the spreading of a rumour that the research work was only a cover for propagating Christianity. The canard is also doing the rounds that the Institute will exploit and hurt the population because it favours a specific political ideology. One political candidate during the general elections in November campaigned to throw the Institute and its founder out of the Valley (he lost). Jumla's inhabitants are know all over to be avid litigants, and two cases have been filed in the courts against the Institute. One of them has been won by the Institute and the other is still being heard.

Things will not remain static in Jumla district forever, however. The Karnali Institute, plus several other organisations are committed to widening the horizons the people of Chaudabisa. The economic lords who used to exploit the labour and the valuable herbal resource of the region are watching intensely over a processing factory that has just been completed in Chaudabisa

by the Agricultural Development Bank's Small Farmers Development Programme.

The two micro-hydropower units that have been set up will change lifestyles and expand horizons as children begin to read in the evening, as mothers begin to use electric cookers, and as fathers get engaged in producing craft items at home.

Enrolment in the Chaudabisa schools has doubled over the last three years, and the number of girls attending classes is also up considerably. Plan International is supporting adult literacy classes at the high school during off hours. The Chaudabisa population is beginning to wake up to the possibilities that are open to them.

The overt and covert opposition of the Jumla lords notwithstanding, the Khas of Chaudabisa will have their day in the sun

D.S. Bista, author of the longtime classic *The People of Nepal* and the best-selling *Fatalism and Development*, spends his time between Chaudabisa and his home in Patan.

The King of Patan was at the city gates with a glittering entourage of welcome and a pomp of gifts. The Buddha was touched by the welcome but refused the gifts, accepting instead the offering of a poor old woman's handful of rice.

Seeing this, the King spent the next three months working as a lowly blacksmith and earned his living solely from this trade. With the money he scraped together, he made a humble offering to the Buddha. It was happily accepted and in a significant gesture, the Buddha elevated the caste of blacksmiths to workers of gold. Two hundred years later, when the daughter of the Indian Emperor Ashoka, herself a devout Buddhist, followed her mentor's footsteps and settled in the Kathmandu Valley, she erected the guardian stupas around Patan to give credence to the fact that the Buddha had lived there and preformed a miracle.

From that ancient time to the modern day, Patan, also called Lalitpur or The Place of Fine Arts, has been blessed by the patronage of artist kings and gifted princesses. During the medieval Malla times when the Valley was divided into city states, it was a Malla Princess who inherited Patan. I

like to think that it was she who molded the city into its exquisite form: boulevards, towering temples topped with gold finials, a perfectly proportioned palace, shrines renowned for their grace. These are the hallmarks of Patan's artistic bounty.

For the first time visitor, wandering among these glorious monuments can be overwhelming. Keep your eyes and ears open and remember that these buildings have been standing for centuries. Not everything can be known about them on the first visit, nor even the second. For now simply walk along, follow my lead and listen to my stories. This is the beginning of your experience, an adventure in architecture and design set on the mythological stage of Patan.

In Patan's Durbar Square, a wide, brick-paved boulevard separates the palaces on the one side, from the monumental temples which face them. Palace doorways frame ancient shrines with splendid artistry. Step into Sundari Chowk, the first palace courtyard. Through its doorway you will see an ornately carved royal bath crowded with stone deities and observed from above by latticed, carved, and painted windows. A stone bed graces the top of the stairs leading down to the bath. In ancient days, Malla Kings were anointed with oils and unguents made from Himalayan herbs while they sat in regal splendor on the bed. Their bathing was an act of purification, blessed by the images of the gods surrounding them. To visit Sundari Chowk is to step into an age which is gone. In mystical circles, it is said that this stone bed, like a magic carpet, can transport those that meditate upon it to the far away reaches of the soul.

Across the lane is a 16th-century temple to Krishna, the god of love. There are six doorways leading into its sanctum. Legend has it that following the death of a well-loved king, his six wives immolated themselves upon his funeral pyre. Their children commissioned this temple in stone to record this immortal act of love and devotion.

Nearby hangs a gigantic bell which in days gone by rang to announce special royal proclamations. Now it summons citizens to worship Taleju Bhawani, the Royal Household goddess, during the festival of Khadgajatra. This great bell, which was first sounded in 1736, is best viewed from

Mul Chowk, the former meeting place of Malla kings in Patan's palace. It is a vast courtyard where wind chimes tinkle and two gilt likenesses of the goddesses Ganga and Jamuna flank the golden entryway. In the middle of the square stands a gazebo for the gods. Animals destined for sacrifice are tied to the ominous wooden stakes in front of it while the gods are summoned inside to receive the offering.

Almost facing Mul Chowk, atop a granite pillar, sits the golden King of Patan, Yoganendra Malla. He was a pious king who allowed himself but one love in life — his son. Following the tragic death of the young prince, the king announced that he would exile himself into hermitage to meditate upon the untimeliness of death. Though his courtiers begged him not to leave them, his will remained fast. The only reassurance he offered was a vow that so long as his effigy remained bright and the golden bird that perched on top of its canopy did not fly away, King Yoganendra would one day return. Some three hundred years later, the people of Patan still keep a light burning in the palace window and a royal bed ready.

A glance away from the statue is a richly embellished, three-tiered stone temple. This too is dedicated to the love god Krishna. It was built by a 17th century Malla king who thought he saw Krishna in the act of love upon the spot where the temple now stands. Every inch of the facade is carved with scenes from the Hindu scriptures, illuminating the dark stone. It took a decade to complete and the golden Garuda with crystal eyes kneeling in obeisance to the shrine could well be paying homage to what has described as the most remarkable stone building in the Valley.

Further on, down cobblestoned alleys, down shrine and people and legend filled lanes, the explorer of Patan will find the magnificent Golden Temple. First time visitors are often so entranced by the glittering gold that they forget to examine the exquisitely crafted details depicting the life story of the Buddha. Recorded history dates this Buddhist monument at 1409, when it was completed following its commission by the Rajput princess Pingala.

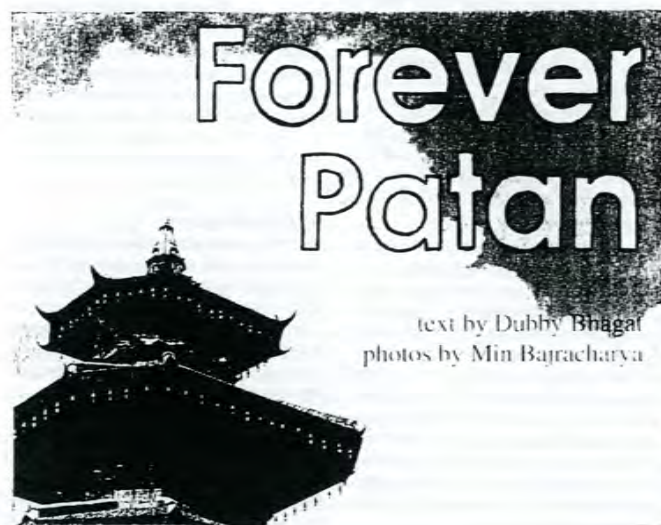
Patan's dedication to the ritual beliefs and artistic skills of the Kathmandu Valley has immortalized her in the annals of history.



Continue now along ancient paths, past wooden rest houses and dwellings, to the temple Khumbeshwar, with its five tiered, 13th century pagoda roof. Kings of the 10th century ordered the carvings which are strewn around the surrounding courtyard as if some capricious god had ordained a celestial game of dice using art instead of ivory cubes. Here too is a spring of clear water that begins in the Himalayan glaciers and is believed to be blessed by the gods. To bathe here in the full moon of the Nepalese month of Srawan is to earn exactly the same merit as a twenty-one day pilgrimage to sacred Mukthinath in northwest Nepal.

Twenty-one days is a long time indeed, much longer than the average tourist will stay in Patan, though certainly not long enough to learn all of her secrets. What you have seen should tempt you to return and explore the rich southern quarter where copper facaded temples dedicated to the Ocean of Compassion, elaborate coronation courtyards, and the shrine of 1,000 Buddhas await you. Patan's dedication to the ritual beliefs and artistic skills of the Kathmandu Valley has immortalized her in the annals of history. The timeless quality of her monuments has proven that while the outside world may be pushed and pulled by the juggernaut of time, Patan is indeed forever. ■

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Patan is forever. Four guardian stupas, placed at the cardinal points in Durbar Square, bear mute testimony to this. They are markers of the Buddha's historic 5th century BC visit to the Kathmandu

Valley. Heeding the suggestion of his disciple Ananda, the revered Guru made the journey from Lumbini, his natal home in the Himalayan foothills of Nepal. Legend tells of the Buddha's arrival at the head of a simple retinue.

The Flying Doctor

by Jerry Rolls



"The plane should come tomorrow," Hari was explaining patiently. "It left Nepalganj on time this morning but it had to turn back over Kalikot. The reported visibility there is only five hundred metres in this haze. But they'll try again tomorrow."

"But I want a char-ter hel-i-cop-ter." The Italian woman spoke each syllable distinctly, as if to a child. Hari resented her tone. "Please tell me if they can send a helicopter from Nepalganj for us."

"If the scheduled flights cannot make it, neither can the helicopter," Hari was getting tired of this.

"I can pay dollars. I have four thousand dollars to charter a helicopter. You must tell them that, now."

Hari looked out over the runway, at the kids playing soccer on the dirt strip, at the snow-capped mountains beyond, their outlines now blurred in the mist rising slowly from the Karnali. A couple of griffons circled idly, far below. He tried again.

"Madam, it doesn't matter how much money you have, I can't permit the helicopter to fly. Anyway, now it's gone to Jumla to pick up other tourists. You have to be patient."

The woman was not to be placated so easily. She took off her Gucci sunglasses to emphasise her mood. Rich bitch. Hari smiled easily at her.

"There is a child. A seek child. Very seek." Hari translated rapidly, 'sick' she means. He'd heard them say in town she was a doctor, and she came trekking to Nepal every year, always travelling with the same group of Sherpas from Khumbu. She used to hold impromptu clinics in the villages.

Today I geeve some medicine. The child get better." She gestured impatiently, gold earrings sparkling in the weak afternoon sunlight that filtered through the dusty windows and cobwebs of the control tower. "But tomorrow may get seek again. Need helicopter to fly to hospital."

Hari weighed this new information. There was a hospital in Simikot, but the doctor hadn't yet arrived, preferring the familiar food and culture of the scorching tarai to the uncertainties of existence up here among the Humli people. Hari didn't blame him. He couldn't wait to get out himself, to a cushy post at the international airport in Kathmandu. He deserved it. Two years in this freezing hellhole, he'd been very patient, he decided.

"But the situation is very normal now madam. There is no sick child. The Army helicopter can come in an emergency, but there is

no emergency now, and conditions are too dangerous to fly." Hari allowed himself a tiny smirk. This isn't Khumbu, lady, with eight flights a day whisking tourists back to Kathmandu.

The doctor's eyes flashed in anger. She placed her palms together, bowed low, in the kind of *namaste* foreigners make when they first arrive in Nepal. But she'd been here before. This wasn't culturally amusing.

"Thank you, kind sir, for spending your valuable time helping me." She stalked out, quickly followed by the other Italians in her party. They were all exhausted by the heat and dust of the Tibetan plateau, the flies and garbage of Kailash, and the grinding trek up the hill to Simikot from the Karnali, one kilometre below. Their flight back to Milan was the day after tomorrow, for God's sake, and they'd still got to get out of here, and then fan around in Nepalganj in temperatures of 43 degrees.

Traces of rain fell overnight, in answer to the villagers' rain dance performed a few days ago, on the now dry Simikot marsh. The winter barley was desiccating before the grains were fully formed, and even the marijuana which grew wild along the field edges was wilting in the heat, releasing a soft, sickly smell. The villagers had offered a goat to the rain gods, danced, beaten drums,

and partied all night. It had worked. In the morning the conifers on Raniban were covered in wisps of moist clouds, and you couldn't see down the valley to Kalikot. No way was the plane coming this morning.

A mournful crowd of would-be travellers were gathered at Hari's residence behind the control tower, drinking hot tea and peering hopefully through the mist. Hari had been on the radio from the tower since 6 a.m., confirming what everyone could see, the monsoon's arrival in Humli. Simikot was running low on rice, vegetables, eggs, sugar—you name it. Everything arrived from Nepalganj by air. But the weather had grounded all air traffic. He was sharing this news when a Sherpa from the Italian's camp came in. The sick child needed urgent medical attention, and the doctor had asked Hari to arrange a medical evacuation. The doctor would pay the costs, he added needlessly.

Hari went out to inspect the runway. The rain had barely wetted the surface, no problem there. Bloody woman, now he'd have to try and raise the Army base at Nepalganj. But he had contacts there, and maybe they could throw on a few bags of rice,

and maybe the sun would burn off the clouds. Maybe.

At 4 o'clock, the sun was shining brightly and Hari passed along the welcome news that a Nepal Airways helicopter had left Nepalganj with a load of rice for Simikot. The Army rescue mission would follow. The Nepal Airways helicopter would take passengers to Nepalganj, and their office was now open for ticketing. The Sherpas had already broken camp, and the Italians were joyfully planning the next stage of the journey. It would be tight, but they should now make the afternoon flight to Europe tomorrow. Sitting on the ground among the Sherpas' gear was a very dirty Humli woman with a large coral and turquoise necklace cradling a filthy blanket in which, presumably, was the sick child.

In a swirl of grey dust, the orange Nepal Airways helicopter landed. Rucksacks, *dokos* and bedrolls were quickly loaded and the passengers prepared to board, while a young policeman with a clipboard scurried about noting down their names. The Italian party boarded the Nepal Airways chopper; the doctor and her patient would travel in the Army copter which could now be seen as a speck in the sky down the valley.

Another dust cloud and the Nepal Airways was off in a rhythmic pulse of rotor blades. Yet another, and the Army chopper

settled in. The doctor, archly efficient in stretched blue blouse and matching Gortex pants, ushered the Humli woman and child on board and snapped her passport number at the little policeman. She could almost taste the espresso coffee she'd be sipping in the Lufthansa first class cabin tomorrow, after three weeks of sickly tea and trekker soup. Hari was standing by, chatting with the crew.

"Only one passenger permitted, madam." The Army doctor glanced up at the clouds drifting across the runway. "We will now be taking care of the child and her mother."

"No! I must go with them. I am doctor. She is my patient. I pay the charter." The taste of Humli dust that still hung in the air now masked the espresso.

"Madam, I am also a doctor, and we cannot take any more weight in this weather. We must be off now."

The Italian watched numbly as the rotor blades began to turn. She turned beseechingly to Hari.

"The plane should come tomorrow," Hari smiled at her.

J. Rolls is Chief Advisor to the Community Forestry Training Project of Danida in Kathmandu.

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Vel bekomme!

ONION GROUND MEAT -- Payajra Dhulo Masu

1 cup ground meat	1 tsp pepper	1/2 tsp salt
1 cup finely chopped onions	1 tsp cumin powder	2 TBS mustard oil
1 inch finely chopped ginger	1 tsp turmeric	1/2 cup water

Heat oil in a pan and add turmeric. Mix onions, ginger, pepper, cumin powder and salt and put it in the oil. Add meat and turn it over well. Fry until it becomes brown. Add the water and boil gently for a few minutes.

POTATO CURRY -- Alu-tarkari

10-12 potatoes (medium sized)

1/4 tsp turmeric

2 green chillies

1 clove garlic

1/2 cup yoghurt

2 TBS mustard oil

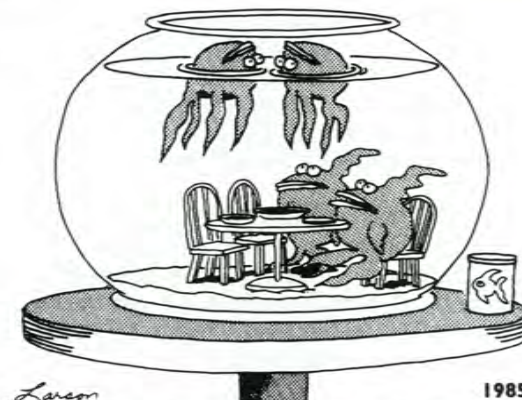
green coriander leaves

1 inch ginger

salt to taste

Boil potatoes, peel and cut into small pieces. Heat oil and add turmeric, chillies, garlic and ginger. Fry for 1 minute. Add yoghurt, potatoes and salt. Cover and cook gently for 4-5 minutes. Garnish with green coriander leaves.

* Note: If desired, water can also be added after frying potatoes. Boil for 5 minutes to give it the right consistency.



Larson

1985

"Well, the Parkers are dead. ... You had to encourage them to take thirds, didn't you?"

Provided by Albert Castellet Llerena <castellet@ic.upc.es>

from Indra Majupuria's JOYS OF NEPALESE COOKING, Lashkar (Gwalior), 1988.