

Apost

"Hamro Patrika"

Norge-Nepal foreningen
Postboks 155
3001 Drammen

MEDLEMSKONTINGENT:

Enkeltmedlem	kr 100,-
Familie	kr 150,-
Organisasjon	kr 300,-
Postgirokonto:	0802 420 2438

Program for møtet torsdag 5. desember 1996:

- * Foredrag ved Harald O. Skar: Bilateralt samarbeid Norge-Nepal, i forbindelse med at Nepal nylig er gitt status som "programland" i norsk bistandspolitikk.
- * Foredrag ved Roar Vestre: Lamaenes rolle i Tibet.
- * Hem Gurung forteller om dagens politiske situasjon i Nepal.
- * Jigme Drugpa spiller bhutanesisk folkemusikk.
- * Salg av bøker, bager og andre varer.
- * Kaker, kaffe/te og utlodning.

Inngangspenger kr 20,-

*Velkommen
i Norge-Nepal foreningen!*



हाम्रो पत्रिका
HAMRO PATRIKA & VARAVIS
ORGAN FOR NORGE-NEPAL-FORENINGEN

Nr. 4, desember 1996

**Velkommen til møte
i Norge-Nepal foreningen
5. desember 1996, kl. 19.00
i Lektorenes Hus, Wergelandsveien 15, Oslo.**

Fellesmøte med Den Norske Tibetkomite

Harald O. Skar: Bilateralt samarbeid Norge-Nepal
Roar Vestre: Lamaenes rolle i Tibet

Hem Gurung forteller om dagens politiske situasjon i Nepal

Bhutanesisk folkemusikk ved Jigme Drugpa

NORGE-NEPAL FORENINGENS STYRE:

Navn:	Adresse:	Tlf. jobb	Tlf. privat
Marit Kleppa (leder)	Skøyenvn. 97, 0375 Oslo	22 31 36 91	22 52 10 31
Nikolai Arnø (kasserer)	Fossekallen 32, 3034 Drammen	32 24 64 13	32 81 86 39
Kirsten I. Greiner (red.)	Landingsvn. 84, 0767 Oslo	Faks og tlf: 22 14 11 01	
Ingela Flatin (sekretær)	Tangenavn. 204, 1450 Nesoddtangen		66 91 29 08
David Durkan	Lars Muhles vei 10, 1300 Sandvika		67 56 56 34
Tove Cecilie Kittelsen	Waldemar Thranesgt. 32, 0171 Oslo		22 46 48 02
Cathrine Reid	Bjerkebakken 78 b, 0756 Oslo		22 73 39 09
Shiva Km. Sitaula	Øyavn. 46, 1900 Fetsund		62 88 15 23
Harald Olav Skar	Øvre Smestad vei 16 c, 0378 Oslo	22 17 70 50	22 92 19 74
Sigrun Eide Ødegard	Schultz gt. 7, 0365 Oslo		22 56 79 86

PERSONER MED VERV UTENFOR STYRET:

Roy Friis (revisor)	Peiskrokvn. 8, 1482 Nittedal	22 93 71 04	67 07 69 08
Yngve Gauslå (valgkomité)	Gamlelinja 31 b, 1254 Oslo		22 62 22 96
Thrond Berge Larsen (valgkomité)	Dannevigsvn. 12, 0463 Oslo		22 71 98 73

Takk....

.....til Wenche Fossum og Dyre Vaa Sætre som nå forlater styret. Wenche har sittet i styret i fem år - hun har klistret utallige frimerker på HP'er og det har aldri vært nei til å ta i et tak. Familien Fossums storslåtte gave (nepalesiske klær, ryggsekker, putetrekk osv.) til foreningen, har vært trekkplaster i våre lotterier og bidratt til å bedre foreningens økonomi. Dyre går også ut av styret denne høsten etter en kortvarig suksess som kasserer. Vervet lot seg vanskelig kombinere med mye reising i jobben. Dyre var pådriver for å søke Norad om støtte til foreningens brosjyre om Nepal. Stor takk til både Wenche og Dyre!

Marit Kleppa

Takk....

.....til Marit Kleppa som på årsmøtet i oktober gikk med på å sitte som leder ett år til. Hun hadde opprinnelig besluttet å ikke stille til gjenvalg, men etterkom foreningens sterke ønske om hennes fortsatte lederskap.

Styret

Styret ønsker alle foreningens medlemmer, HP-lesere og andre Nepal-interesserte en fin jul og et godt nytt år!

STYREMEDLEMMENE:

Marit Kleppa (54): Førstebibliotekar i Stortinget. Har vært i Nepal fem ganger som turist, både med Den Norske Turistforening og på egen hånd. Medlem av foreningen siden 1988. Marit har sittet i styret fire år, hvorav tre som leder.

Nikolai Arnø (62): Elektroingenør i Drammen Kraft. Vært i Nepal som turist to ganger. Medlem av foreningen siden 1987, sittet i styret to år og vært kasserer siden sommeren 1996.

Kirsten I. Greiner (31): Studerer statsvitenskap hovedfag; internasjonale miljøforhandlinger med vekt på klima, ozon og nord-sør problematikk. Studier innen samfunns- og ressursgeografi, samt markedsføring. Vært én gang i Nepal som turist. Medlem av foreningen siden 1989. Sittet i styret tre år, hvorav knappe to som redaktør.

Ingela Flatin (24): Jobber for tiden som lektor på Nesodden Videregående Skole. Cand. mag. fra USA, filosofi med matematikk og geologi som støttefag. Hovedfagsstudier i naturforvaltning ved Norges Landsbrukskøyskole i As. Feltarbeid i fem måneder nord for Kathmandu. Medlem av foreningen og sekretær i styret fra oktober 1996.

David Durkan (47): Arbeider i sportsbransjen. Vært i Nepal atten ganger som turist og turistleder. Medlem av foreningen i omtrent ti år. Har tidligere sittet i styret et par år, og er innvalgt igjen oktober 1996.

Tove Cecilie Kittelsen (34): Studerer sosialantropologi hovedfag. Vært i Nepal seks ganger, senest i forbindelse med hovedfagsprosjekt blant tharuene i sørvestre Nepal. Medlem av foreningen siden 1989. Innvalgt i styret november 1995.

Cathrine Reid (31): Jobber i legemiddelindustrien. Utdannet innen jus og eksportmarkedsføring. Vært i Nepal én gang som turist. Medlem av foreningen 1993 og innvalgt i styret oktober 1996.

Shiva Km. Sitaula (27): Studerer informatikk (cand. mag.) i Oslo. Opprinnelig fra Biratnagar i Nepal, men har tilbrakt flere år med skolegang og studier (bachelor) i Kathmandu. Kom til Norge i 1993. Medlem av foreningen 1996. Innvalgt i styret november 1995.

Harald Olav Skar (48): Arbeider som forsker ved Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt, NUPI, hovedsakelig innen feltene utvikling, bistand og regionale konflikter. Phd i sosialantropologi. Jobbet flere år i Peru. Har de siste årene arbeidet med bl.a. demokratiseringsprosessen i Nepal og besøkt landet mange ganger. Innvalgt i styret november 1995.

Sigrun Eide Ødegard (29): Studerer sosialantropologi og skriver hovedoppgave bl.a. om tharuene og deres etnopolitiske organisering. Deltatt i forskningsprosjekt med NUPI og nepalesisk forskningsmiljø om demokratiseringsprosessen i Nepal. Har gjort feltarbeid i den vestlige delen av Terai i Nepal og besøkt landet som turist. Innvalgt i styret november 1995.

Årsberetning Norge-Nepal foreningen

09.11.1995 - 31.10.1996

Styret:

Leder: Marit Kleppa *
Kasserer: Dyre Vaa Sætre (t.o.m. april 1996) *
Nikolai Arnø (f.o.m. mai 1996) *
Sekretær: Wenche Fossum *
Redaktør: Kirsten I. Greiner
Styremedlemmer: Tove Cecilie Kittelsen
Shiva Sitaula
Harald Olav Skar
Sigrun Eide Ødegård

* Personer på valg i år

Det har vært avholdt 5 styremøter og 5 medlemsmøter.

Medlemsmøter:

14. desember 1995

Fellesmøte med Den Norske Tibetkomite. Tibetaneren Gendun Rinchen holdt foredrag om sine opplevelser som turistguide, politisk fange og flyktning i eksil. Salg av tibetanske varer og mat.

90 personer tilstede. Invitasjon til møtet i HP 1995:5

8. februar 1996

Arkitektene Trine Helle og Dag Norling holdt lysbilde- og videoforedrag om Nepals arkitektur.

31 personer tilstede. Invitasjon til møtet i HP 1996:1

14. april 1996

Festmøte (seks år siden revolusjonen) med servering av daal bhaat. Maten ble tilberedt på Marit Kleppas kjøkken, med Basudha Gurung som sjefskokk og Kirsten Greiner Sigrun Ødegård og Marit som assistenter.

Noragric-studentene Sushila Nepali og Indra Mamamdhar holdt foredrag om sitt feltarbeid i Nepal: biodiversitet og forvaltning av skogsressurser.

Lysbildeforedrag om landsbyen Mohoriya (Kaski-provinsen) ved Olav Myrholm. 42 personer tilstede. Invitasjon til møtet i HP 1996:2

12. september 1996

Gry Ottesen, sosialantropologi-student fra Bergen, fortalte om humor i munke-/nonneklostre i Nepal.

30 personer tilstede. Invitasjon til møtet i HP 1996:3

31. oktober 1996

Årsmøte: Gjennomgang og godkjenning av årsberetning og regnskap. Valg. Ingela Flatin, tidligere NLH-student, holdt foredrag om sitt feltarbeid nord for Kathmandu: om livssituasjonen og bruk av naturressurser i landsbyen Okhrene som ligger i et naturreservat.

20 personer tilstede. Invitasjon til møtet sendt ut på eget ark til foreningens medlemmer.

Annonsering av møter: Møtene er offentliggjort i HP og i U-landstavia, bortsett fra invitasjon til årsmøtet 31.10.96 som ble sendt medlemmene på eget ark.

Hamro Patrika: Det er utgitt tre numre av HP hittil i år. På grunn av alt arbeidet med ny brosjyre, kommer HP 1996:4 i slutten av november. Kirsten Greiner har også i år gjort en utmerket jobb som redaktør. Vi har fått mye ros for bladet.

Brosjyre: Norad har gitt foreningen kr 25 000 i støtte til utarbeiding av brosjyren om Nepal. Mye arbeid er nedlagt for å få den ferdig i år. Brosjyren vil sendes alle medlemmene og legges ut for salg til andre. Prisen er foreløpig ikke fastsatt.

Annen virksomhet:

- Teigar ungdomsskole hadde i vår besøk av to lærere fra Gandhaki Boarding School. De ble tatt imot og vist rundt i Stortinget av Marit Kleppa.

- Det har kommet mange henvendelser til foreningen. Marit Kleppa har besvart dem og gitt mye informasjon om Nepal.

Medlemmer og kontingentinnngang: Enkeltmedlemmer og familier: 150
Organisasjoner: 12

Etter å ha sendt ut mange purringer på kontingent for 1995 - med begrenset respons - har styret konsentrert seg om å få inn penger for 1996. Nedgang i antall medlemmer skyldes at vi har ryddet opp i medlemsregisteret og slettet flere som hverken har betalt kontingent eller hatt kontakt med foreningen på lenge. Vi satser på økt interesse og medlemstall når vår nye brosjyre kommer ut.

Foreningens økonomi: se regnskapet.

For styret 28.10.1996
Marit Kleppa
Leder

*Beitun Heim
for foreningen*

NY ADRESSE: Norge-Nepal foreningen
Postboks 155
3001 Drammen

Årsregnskap for Norge-Nepal foreningen

Regnskapsperiode 6.10 1995 - 22.10 1996.

Inntekter	1995	1996
Kontingenter	8630,00	16900,00
Beverning	3054,00	3884,00
Tilskudd	0,00	0,00
Renter på Postgiro	209,88	138,26
Salg	0,00	995,00
Inngangspenger	150,00	1475,00
Loddsalg	2165,00	3873,00
Diverse	550,80	0,00

Sum inntekter	14759,68	27265,26
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Utgifter	1995	1996
Porto gebyrer	4755,50	3959,50
Rekvisita	1408,56	155,50
Beverning	2052,40	4003,90
Lokalleie	3750,00	4400,00
Gaver bøker	896,00	1448,00
Trykking av HP	12009,50	4674,00
Diverse	1556,50	983,00

Sum utgifter	26428,46	19623,90
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Resultat	-11668,78	7641,36
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Balanse	1995	1996
Kasse	2455,10	616,50
Postgiro	5742,80	15222,56
Sum eiendeler	8197,90	15839,06

Gjeld	0,00	0,00
Egenkapital	8197,90	15839,06
Gjeld og egenkapital	8197,90	15839,06

Regnskapet revidert
27.10.96 Roy Friis
Reidun Heien
Mr. Tømsen

Referat fra medlemsmøter

Tredve personer fant veien til møtet 12. september, der sosialantropologi-studenten Gry Ottosen fortalte om humor i munke-/og nonneklostre i Nepal. Gry ga en strålende framstilling i kåseriform og latteren satt løst hos tilhørerne. Dessverre ble det ikke tatt notater fra foredraget og det har ikke lyktes oss å oppspore Gry innen HP gikk i trykken - derfor intet referat.

Årsmøtet gikk av stabelen 31. oktober. Årsberetning og regnskap ble godkjent. Wenche Fossum og Dyrre Vaa Sætre gikk ut av styret. Marit Kleppa blir sittende ett år til som leder. David Durkan, Cathrine Reid og Ingela Flatin ble valgt inn som nye styremedlemmer, sistnevnte som sekretær. Tyve personer var tilstede, deriblant foredragsholder Ingela Flatin. Ingela studerte "Natural Resource Management and Sustainable Agriculture" ved NLH og gjorde i den forbindelse fem måneders feltarbeid i Nepal. Hun serverte et solid foredrag med lysbilder attåt, og vi lar ingela selv fortelle hva det gikk ut på:

Bevaring av naturressurser eller utvikling..... eller begge deler?

Tilfellet Okhreni landsby, Nepal

I min hovedfagsoppgave undersøkte jeg livssituasjonen i en landsby, Okhreni, som ligger midt inne i Shivapuri Watershed and Wildlife Reserve, et naturreservat som ligger ca. 12 km nord for Kathmandu.

Jeg levde tilsammen fem måneder i Nepal hvorav to og en halv måned i Okhreni, der jeg så på hvordan menneskene brukte naturressursene, og da mest på hvordan deres livssituasjon har forandret seg siden opprettelsen av reservatet. Okhrenis befolkning lever midt i skjæringspunktet mellom utvikling og bevaring av naturressurser. Det er mange aktører i Okhrenis situasjon. En aktør, Shivapuri Watershed and Wildlife Reserve Development Project (SWWRDP) - den nasjonale delen av reservatledelsen - prøver å hindre all utvikling i landsbyen på grunn av landsbyens antatte negative effekt på reservatet. Dens mål er en endelig utflytting av Okhreni. En annen aktør, Shivapuri Integrated Watershed Development Project (SIWDP) - den FAO sponsede delen av reservatledelsen - prøver å binde utvikling og bevaring av naturressurser sammen ved å oppmuntre til aktiviteter som gjør befolkningen mindre avhengig av naturressursene. Denne organisasjonens mål er en «harmonisk» sameksistens mellom reservat og innbyggere. En tredje part er de ikke-statlige organisasjonene (NGOene) og da især en organisasjon, Plan International, som har gitt store ressurser til landsbyen både i form av penger og materialer til utvikling av landsbyen. Plan har som mål å utvikle landsbyen sosialt og økonomisk.

Resultatet av disse tre aktørenes forskjellige mål, da i tillegg til landsbyens egne mål, er en tilstand av forvirring i landsbyen. Jeg vil si at denne forvirringen er symptomatisk for det som i dag skjer innen såkalt bærekraftig utvikling. Dårlig gjennomtenkte prosjekter blir forsøkt satt ut i livet fordi de inneholder mange begreper som «people's participation», «integrated development» og «sustainable development» i saksdokumentene, i virkeligheten er disse begrepene intet annet enn floskler. Situasjonen i Okhreni og en eventuell løsning av den vil, etter mitt syn, gi en pekepinn på om «bærekraftig utvikling» er mer enn et luftslott.

Ingela Flatin

Pitfalls of Nepal's Democracy

by Anirudha Gupta

HIMAL South Asia August 1996

Nepalis are justifiably proud of their multi-party democracy which they claim to have achieved after a long struggle against an unjust, apathetic and authoritarian regime. In the political lexicography of post-partyless-Panchayat Nepal, the great change of 1990 and the attainment of multi-party democracy have become conterminous, although it is debatable how far that transformation involved different regions and sections of the population.

According to some impartial observers, popular participation in the Movement for Restoration of Democracy was more or less restricted to the capital, Kathmandu, and a few other cities. The rural masses of landless and subsistence farmers remained largely untouched. The cry for *bahudaliya* (party-based) against *nirdaliya* (partyless) democracy was elitist in class content, although it was to receive unprecedented response from the poorer strata of the urban population later on. To that extent, 1990 signalled the beginning of mass politics in the country.

However, the change was more significant because of the ideological conviction of the Nepali elite and intelligentsia that a

political system controlled by Narayanhiti Royal Palace could never bring about structural reforms in the Nepali economy and society. In other words, a system that does not allow mobilisation of popular energy on the basis of organised public opinion cannot be expected to work for the benefit

The politics of jobbery, intrigue, and patronage has invaded every walk of life.

of the masses.

Back in 1972, Nepal's well-known political scholar Rishikesh Shaha had written: "Political parties are the only effective means of formulating and presenting to government the demands of different sections of the people in the determination of policy and selecting candidates for public office. Thus, they serve as indispensable instruments of popular representation in the government and legislature. The partyless system is a traditional system which cannot serve the needs of modern development."

Party politics of sorts certainly existed within the Panchayat system, but since parties in the sense of "an extension of politics in the modern form" were banned, such politics degenerated into factional intrigue, leg-pulling and personality clashes among the ruling Panchas.

Autocracy and Medievalism

Such a state of affairs was clearly unacceptable to the upcoming Nepali elite and intelligentsia, partly because it smacked of autocracy and medievalism and partly because

of a deep-rooted conviction that a full-fledged party-based parliamentary system alone could meet the desperate needs of a poor country.

It was thus that multi-party democracy came to be associated with a multiple of hopes and ideas. First, that it could make Nepal modern. Second, it brought accountability in government functioning. Third, it would usher in the processes of political modernisation for national reconstruction and development.

Today, more than half a decade after the 1990 movement, and four "people's" governments later, are any of such "hopes and ideas" closer to fulfilment?

One fact is crystal clear: open, competitive politics in a parliamentary system has not ensured political stability. Nor has it brought about any end to factional politics as was seen in the Panchayat era. If anything, infighting and intrigues among factions have come to involve a larger number of people. Neither have personality clashes and unbridled lust for power seen the end of the day. G. P. Koirala's Nepali Congress government fell because of personal rivalries among its top three leaders. The Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) was toppled because of a marriage of convenience between the Nepali Congress and the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), and the Communists, for their part, are leaving no stone

untuned to encourage defection and pull down the present coalition government.

Nor has multi-party politics made public accountability any better. In 1980, newspapers widely reported the mysterious disappearance of a ship carrying tens of millions rupees worth of goods which had been chartered by some of Kathmandu's biggest import-export business houses. The incident pointed at connivance at the highest levels of the Panchayat hierarchy, in which somebody somewhere made a great deal of money. Many such misdeeds of the Panchas (politicians of the Panchayat) gave rise to the belief that the partyless system placed corruption "on the high pedestal of a new value of national life and culture".

But, if the Panchayat regime placed corruption on the high pedestal of "national culture", the multiparty system has gone a step further and popularised that "culture". In June 1996, a government-appointed panel named 175 business houses and commercial banks suspected of having sent out of the country two billion rupees worth of foreign currency against letters of credit without any goods having been imported. Several politicians and high government functionaries are suspected to be involved in the scam. This is just the latest in a series of corruption scandals that are appearing with an all-too-depressing regularity even as Nepal grapples with democratic politics.

The trouble is that Nepalis had, and still harbour, exaggerated hopes on the capabilities of a transparent parliamentary system in removing corruption and associated evils. It

CORRUPTION IN PANCHAYAT



7

CORRUPTION IN DEMOCRACY



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is an open question why they could not see the ubiquitous criminal-politician nexus in India's much-boasted "largest democracy in the world" and understand that Nepal was but a short hop away for such tendencies to register their presence.

Democracies of any type might be less oppressive than autocratic systems, but they also carry a built-in propensity for corruption, nepotism and dirty deals in public life. The only difference is that whereas such scandals under a dictatorship usually lead to its fall, in democracies they are treated as non-events. How else can the continuing faith in democratic governance be explained?

In Panchayat times, it was believed that i) a lack of political commitment of the government and ii) a lack of proper understanding by the foreign aid donors about the "dynamics of poverty" were the chief causes of Nepal's deep-rooted economic, social and cultural stagnation. But the introduction of "participatory democracy" and its accompaniment of political commitment, populist rhetoric and greater appreciation by external donors has changed nothing.

Kathmandu, nowadays, is awash with literature, sponsored and published by foreign foundations, suggesting ways and means for achieving democratic governance and poverty alleviation. Some recommend the Scandinavian model of the welfare state, others draw attention to pro-poor intervention in health and education, while yet others call for a bottom-up approach and decentralised decision-making. This is the new vocabulary Nepali politicians are learning by heart while the politicised members of the intelligentsia, on the other hand, find it useful to attach themselves to the NGOs who pay them enough to construct new houses in the capital's congested suburbs.

Parasitic Elite

Who or what has benefitted, then, from Kathmandu's new dispensation? Definitely not the country's productivity, which has been registering a continuous decline. Nor members of the peasantry, who keep losing

land, or whatever they own, to landlords and moneylenders. A 1991 World Bank report showed that 5 percent of the landowners control 40 percent of the cultivable land, while 60 percent own about 20 percent. Attempts to redistribute land in the Rapti Valley and elsewhere in the Tarai have failed, while the lack of access to resources has resulted in unequal distribution of assets of all kinds.

There has been no change in the behaviour of Nepal's politicians, and instead there has sprung up since 1990 in Kathmandu a whole new class of parasitic elite.

Observes a Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies (NEFAS) study published earlier this year: "The behaviour and attitude of the people are characterised by greed, corruption, inefficiency, rent-seeking and mismanagement of resources under their control while the poor which comprise a vast majority have virtually no participation in the process of governance even after the restoration of democracy (emphasis added)."

"Give! Give!"

Democracy is a halfway house between dictatorship and mobocracy. It is a device which a minuscule political class uses to abort popular revolution, which was also the case in Nepal in 1990. This class claims to act on behalf of the people in order to deceive—only, unlike erstwhile despots, members of the class are seldom caught. As for multiparty competition, little difference can be found in the practice and precepts of the political parties to give meaning to such competition.

The Congress wants democracy but refuses to set up its own house on a truly democratic basis. That became evident once more in the recent election for party presidency, which was an eyewash merely to re-establish the preserves of its top lead-

ers. "We too are democrats," boasted an RPP minister who was once a member of the notorious Back-to-the-Village Campaign in the old days, which was used to intimidate recalcitrant followers to toe the Panchayat line. "But," he qualified, "unlike the Nepali Congress, we keep nationalism in our soul." When I asked a top Communist leader about this, he replied, speaking for his party, "All we seek to achieve is a perfect symbiosis between democracy and Nepali nationalism."

Where lies the difference? Yet, the parties keep fighting and denouncing one another in a free-for-all competition for power. "I am more and more convinced," wrote Abigail Adams to her husband John Adams, later President of the United States, in 1775, "that man is a dangerous creature; and that power, whether vested in many or a few, is ever grasping, and like the grave, cries 'Give, give!'"

Hence, MPs of all shades and parties support the move to "give" themselves brand new, imported cars for personal use, with import duties cancelled. There had once been a similar offer made by the Panchayat government of Marichman Singh to the political and administrative officialdom, hoping to entice them into supporting him.

That was the government against which the people had revolted in 1990.

Meanwhile, the politics of jobbery, intrigue, and patronage has invaded every walk of life. Seeing the free-wheeling ways and loot of state resources by their political bosses, officials and others who run important institutions too have become lax, irresponsible or acquisitive. Government employees seldom go to their offices, teachers refuse to teach, and students prefer to stay outside classrooms. The Sixth Plan, it is said, failed because planning itself had taken a holiday. "Will the Eighth Plan succeed?" I asked a member of the present Planning Commission. "It may or it may not," he answered, "for, as yet, half the members do not read the papers they find on their table, and the other half do not understand what they read."

Meanwhile, Nepal's external benefactors are happy. For they see what they want to see: a fledgling democracy sincerely at work in alas a very poor country! ▲

A. Gupta, who teaches political science at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, is author of *Politics in Nepal* (1964).

World Heritage Sites Face Neglect

◆ NCS Nepal No. 4, 1995

Seven national landmarks face removal from the UNESCO World Heritage Site list due to gross neglect. The seven sites include the three Durbar Squares of Bhaktapur, Patan and Kathmandu, as well as Pashupati, Boudha, Swayambhu and Changunarayan.

The paper reports quoting a former official at the Department of Archaeology that Nepal was warned a few years ago to improve conservation efforts. Department officials, however, denied the claim.

Source: *The Kathmandu Post*



Nepal ny spioncentral

Landets strategiska läge lockar underrättelsetjänster

Kilde: DN 9.2.96 i Nepal Nytt (Sverige-Nepal Föreningen)

Av
TORBJÖRN PETERSSON

KATMANDU

Nepal, ett litet land i Himalaya som brukar räknas som ett av världens fattigaste, håller på att bli en strategisk knutpunkt i ett säkerhetspolitiskt spånt område. Placeringen mellan Indien och Kina ses av många bedömare som en buffertzon. Spioner från flera länders underrättelsetjänster antas ha etablerat sig i landet och spionaffärer har redan avslöjats.

Mest känd är upptäckten av att ett mediokert hotell i Katmandu fungerade som spioncentral. En av gästerna, som bott på hotellet en längre tid, ringde regelbundet samma telefonnummer till en ökad terrorist i Mellanöstern. Också hotellets ägare var inblandad i affären.

En annan gång greps en känd indisk terrorist på flygplatsen i Katmandu med ett stort antal olika pass.

Båda gångerna fick Pakistan skulden för att ligga bakom spionaget, enligt nepalesiska journalister som DN talat med.

– Det är lätt att operera från Nepal. Parterna i Kashmirkonflikten i Indien och de tamilska tigrarna på Sri Lanka kan använda Nepal som bas för sin verksamhet. De ser alla ut som indier och indier behöver inte visa några papper för att komma in i Nepal, säger en utländsk säkerhetspolitisk bedömare i

Katmandu.

Han hävdar att alla länder i regionen, inklusive Kina, och alla framstående västländer har spioner placerade i Nepal.

Förblir buffertzon

Kina – som sett till att bygga Arniko Highway som förbinder Tibet med Katmandu – skulle för övrigt i teorin lätt kunna göra ett nytt Tibet av Nepal och invadera den lilla monarkin. Men de flesta av dem som DN talat med tror att Nepal förblir en buffertzon mellan jättarna Indien och Kina och att landet på lång sikt till och med skulle kunna dra ekonomiska fördelar av sin strategiska position som en handelslänk mellan Kina och Indien, om länderna beslutar börja samarbeta.

Nepals egen officiella hållning är att nationens band är lika starka med Indien som med Kina. Men kulturellt råder det knappast något tvivel om att Indien står Nepal närmare. Många unga nepaleser med rika föräldrar skickas till Indien för att studera. Och fortfarande återfinns tiotusentals gurkhasoldater i den indiska armén. Det finns hela byar i Nepal som byggts upp med lönen och pensionerna som dessa soldater tjänat i Indien.

Relationerna med Indien karaktäriseras dock av en hel del hat. Den marxistiska regeringen, som avsattes i Nepal i höstas, kom till makten efter en kampanj som underbyggde antiindiska stämningar. Liksom i andra länder i regionen är det i Nepal lätt att vinna väljare genom att kritisera Indien, som har en så uppenbar makt över sina grannar.

Beroende av Indien

– Men det är inte särskilt praktiskt för Nepal att sätta sig upp mot Indien när beroendet är så stort. Vad skulle till exempel hända om båda länderna utvisade varandras medborgare? För Nepal vore det förödande om tiotusentals gurkhasoldater skulle återvända till Nepal och ställa till med kravaller för att deras regering handlat så att de blivit av med sina välbetalda jobb i Indien. Gurkhas skulle kunna ta makten i Nepal och demokratin skulle vara ett minne blott, beskriver en journalist i Katmandu ett möjligt scenario.

De fem år som gått sedan demokratiörelsen segrade – och som resulterade i att kung Birendras enväld förbyttes i ett styre av demokratisk modell – har kännetecknats av politisk oro.

I slutet av september förra året tvingades den regerande koalitionen med de kommunistiska marxist-leninisterna att avgå efter ett misstroende-votum i parlamentet.

Då hade marxisterna bland annat genomfört en reform som syftade till att bygga upp byarna på landsbygden. De hade också i den kontrollerade radion sånt sånger som uppmanade folket att gå med i klasskampen.

En västerländsk observatör beskriver emellertid marxisterna som "européiska socialdemokrater" mer än som marxister, och menar att just den egna beteckningen "marxister" var en av anledningarna till att Nepals maktelit skrämdes och "såg till att få regeringen fälld".

– Jag är övertygad om att

Nepal nu behöver politisk stabilitet för att människorna ska känna trygghet och veta i vilken riktning landet är på väg, sa den avgående premiärministern Manmohan Adhikari då en ny koalition tog vid.

Populär kung

Officiellt har kung Birendra ingen politisk roll, men eftersom regeringarna faller med

täta mellanrum så kan kungen komma att återta makten. Kungen kan då säga att han givit demokratin en chans och fråga vad gott den fört med sig. Det är vad många misstänker, menar en utländsk bedömare.

Å andra sidan är kungen extremt populär, särskilt sedan han avsåg sig den politiska makten. Det är svårt att finna någon kritisk röst. Där-

emot är drottningen i högsta grad impopulär, beroende på ett envist rykte som gör gällande att hon under demokratiörelsen för fem år sedan gav militära order att meja ned demonstranterna.

Det kunde ha blivit en upprepning av vad som skedde på Himmelska fridens torg i Peking året dessförinnan om kungen inte stoppat aktionen. Det har också bidragit till att öka hans popularitet. ■

Ga blaffen i egne regler

KLASSEKAMPEN
23.3.96

■ Norad ga blaffen i egne retningslinjer da de gikk inn med 230 millioner i subsidier til norsk vannkraftprosjekt i Nepal. 83 prosent av verket Khimti I er eid av norske selskaper.

■ – Vi har fått beskjed fra Norad om å legge lista for hva som er akseptabelt miljømessig lavere når det gjelder prosjekter i u-land, sier rådgiver Svein Terje Båtvik i Direktoratet for Naturforvaltning.

AV CARSTEN THOMASSEN

RETNINGSLINIENE for norsk bistandsvirksomhet står det at i alle prosjekter skal miljøkonsekvensene utredes. Utredningen skal ikke lages «av selskaper med økonomiske interesser i et prosjekt». Regelverket ble innført i 1993.

Til tross for dette klare regelverket, godkjente Norad utredningen av miljøkonsekvensene for kraftverket Khimti I på elva Khimti Khola i Nepal. Utredningen ble gjort av Norconsult som delvis er eid av Statkraft. Statkraft eier 73 prosent av selskapet Himal Power Ltd. som eier Khimti I. Utredningen ble behandlet av Norad, Norges Vassdrags og Energiverk (NVE) samt Direktoratet for Naturforvaltning i 1994.

Norad ga 230 millioner kroner til Himal Power Ltd. og dermed også de norske eierne av prosjektet. Ved siden av Statkraft har Kværner og ABB en eierandel på fem prosent i Himal Power Ltd. Dette går fram av undersøkelsebrevet *NorWatch* har gjennomført.

To brudd

Retningslinjene slår også fast at «hvis det er planlagt flere prosjekter i et vassdrag, skal de samlede miljøkonsekvensene av prosjektene vurderes, selv om den norske støtten bare går til ett av disse.» Rådgiver Svein Båtvik i Direktoratet for Naturforvaltning opplyser at planene for enda ett kraftverk på Khimti Khola, Khimti II, var referert til i sakspapirene, men at det ikke var foretatt noen som helst analyse av de samlede

miljøkonsekvensene.

– Det virker som om Norads retningslinjer ikke er verd mye i praksis. Dette gikk da også fram av en evalueringsrapport som kom i fjor høst som viste at miljøkonsekvensene ble utredet i bare en firedel av Norads prosjekter, sier Båtvik.

Båtvik sier behandlingen av Khimti I er et klart brudd på Norads retningslinjer.

– At vi ikke har kommentert dette er en glipp fra vår side, sier Båtvik.

Taus minister

Bistandsminister Kari Nordheim Larsen ønsker ikke å kommentere saken hennes kontor henviser til Norad med begrunnelse at det dreier seg om interne retningslinjer for Norad. Dette til tross for at retningslinjene gjelder for

hele bistandsvirksomheten och er slått fast i publikationer fra UD.

Kontorsjef Dag Larsson i Norad viser til at kontrakten for miljøutredning-ene ble inngått i 1992.

- Dette var nesten ett og et halvt år før de nye retningslinjene kom på plass. Planene for Khimti II ble utarbeidet etter at miljøstudien for Khimti I ble iverksatt, påpeker han.

Norads endelige klarsignal for prosjektet kom likevel ett år etter at de nye retningslinjene var trådt i kraft.

Lavere standard

Khimti I er et relativt lite elvekraftverk. Miljøkonsekvensene er ifølge Norad og DN begrenset. DN fremmet likevel en rekke kritiske merknader til planene.

- Vi var i tvil om vi skulle godkjenne planene, men sammenlignet med andre kraftverk vi har vært borte i, var dette bedre, sier Båtvik. Hovedankepunktet til DN var manglende lokal deltakelse i utformingen av prosjektet. Også dette er satt opp som mål for norsk bistandsvirksomhet.

Han sier videre at DN har fått beskjed fra Norad om å legge lista for hva som er akseptabelt miljømessig lavere når det gjelder prosjekter i u-land.

- Dette er ting Norad har tatt opp i flere møter med meg per-

sonlig. Det har vært klart at de ønsker en lavere miljøterskel ved utbygging av vannkraft i u-land, sier Båtvik.

Han viser til at DN i flere tilfeller har påpekt at Norad har gitt støtte til vannkraftverk som ikke ville blitt godkjent i Norge.

Norad ønsker ikke å kommentere Båtviks uttalelser.

- Jeg kjenner ikke grunnlaget for dem, sier Larsson.

Ber miljøeksper-tisen ligge unna helhetlig analyse

NORGES Vassdrags- og Energiverk (NVE) ber Direktoratet for Naturforvaltning (DN) om å ligge unna spørsmål som ikke er spesifikt knyttet til miljøaspekter ved Norad-prosjekter i fattige land.

- Vi har ved flere anledninger fått kjøpt fra NVE for å uttale oss om spørsmål NVE mener ligger utenfor vår kompetanse, sier rådgiver Svein Terje Båtvik i DN.

Når Norad går inn med støtte til vannkraftprosjekter i sør, ber de NVE om uttalelser til flere sider ved prosjektet. NVE ber i sin tur andre fagmyndigheter om uttalelser på spesifikke områder, som for eksempel analy-

sen av miljøkonsekvensene. DN blir rutinemessig koblet inn for å uttale seg om miljøkonsekvensene. Denne uttalelsen blir redigert inn i NVEs sluttrapport til Norad.

Ved flere anledninger har DN påpekt spørsmål som lokal deltakelse i prosjektet, konsekvenser for folk i utbyggingsområdet, sosioøkonomiske spørsmål og tekniske sider ved prosjektet. Dette vil NVE ha en slutt på.

Avklaring

DN ber i et brev til NVE fra 19.9.94 om en avklaring av disse prinsipielle spørsmålene. De mener at DN har rett til å uttale seg på andre områder enn de direkte miljøkonsekvensene, og går sterkt i mot en praksis der man ikke forsøker å se på delområdene i en helhetlig sammenheng.

DN krever slutt på den praksis at NVE redigerer deres uttalelser om Norad-prosjekter og viser til at de følger Norads egne retningslinjer for utredninger av miljøkonsekvenser.

Avklaringen kom i et brev fra 14.10.94 hvor NVE i klartekst ber DN ligge unna andre saker enn de direkte og sekundære miljøeffektene. «For at en slik (thorings)prosess skal være rasjonell og faglig forsvarlig må uttalelsene fra hver enkelt institusjon begrenses til område(r) som hver enkelt har faglig kompetanse og ansvar for. Hver og en av de institusjoner vi rådspør kan ikke utføre en full og samlet vurdering av prosjektet. Dette er NVEs ansvar. ■

Stora kunskaper

Kanskje kan den rika og ekspanderende dataindustri blåsa liv i Nepals foråldrede jordbruksekonomi og formå landet å stappa in i dataåldern utan att, som utvekklingen hitills foreskrevet, først ta sig ige-nom industrisamhället.

Ett sådant språng skulle vara möjligt, tror optimisterna i branschen, som Allen Tuladhar, VD för dataföretaget Unlimited software.

- Omvärlden känner inte till att Nepal har stora kunskaper inom mjukvarusektorn. Många unga nepaleser åker till Indien för att studera. Hälften av dem pluggar datakunskap. Inom tre fyra år kommer Nepal att ha tusentals välutbildade dataingenjörer som vill ha jobb. Det gäller för oss att ta vara på dem och ge dem kvalificerade jobb så att de inte flyttar utomlands, säger Allen Tuladhar.

Nepal räknas som ett av världens fattigaste länder, med en BNP på under tusen kronor per person och år. Den siffran säger emellertid inte hela sanningen eftersom 90 procent av invånarna fortfarande lever utanför det kontanta samhället.

Växer snabbt

Bönderna odlar sitt ris och sina grönsaker på terrasserna i Himalaya utan att deras produktion någonsin kommer in i räkenskaperna. Befolkningen - i dag cirka 20 miljoner - växer snabbt, samtidigt som Nepal inte förfogar över särskilt mycket naturtillgångar som kan exploateras industriellt.

En växande mjukvaruindustri skulle kunna lösa en del av problemen och ge Nepal en internationell konkurrenskraft, något som landet aldrig haft under den globala industrialismen.

- Ekonomiskt har vi haft två inkomstkällor, turism och mattillverkning. Båda har gått upp och ned och inte varit något man kunnat lita på. Mjukvaruindustri kan bli ett bestående sätt för Nepal att få in välbehövlig västvaluta, säger Allen Tuladhar. Företrädare för dataindustri tror att Nepal kan följa Indien i spåren och utveckla mjukvara för europeiska

och amerikanska företag. Visst är det ett offensivt och ambitiöst mål, mer hur det ska gå till i praktiken?

Världsklass

- Självklart blir priset det vi kan konkurrera med i första hand, säger de dataföretagare som DN talat med. Men priset är bara en av faktorerna. Vi måste få tillfälle att visa köparna att nepalesiskt mjukvarakunnande håller världsklass, för det gör det - men det är det få som vet utanför landets gränser. Därför behövs ett genombrott, efterlyser entusiasterna.

Allen Tuladhar. Förresten är Nepal ett för litet land för att andra än vi själva ska kunna utveckla mjukvarusektorn lönsamt här.

Lång väg

Utan en växande hemmamarknad med en hård konkurrens kan Nepal aldrig börja exportera sitt kunnande. Först därefter kan exporten ta riktig fart. För även om landet redan levererar mjukvara till Japan i liten skala så är vägen lång tills målet är nått att kunna utmana länder som Filippinerna och framför allt Indien. Det erkän-

Foto: TORBJÖRN PETERSSON



Nepal satsar på mjukvaran

En salig blandning av heliga män, flåtade korgar och modern elektronik

Av TORBJÖRN PETERSSON

KATMANDU

I Katmandus gränder är kampen hård om turisternas dollar. Försäljare trängs med haschlangare, heliga män, cykeltaxikillar och vandringsguider.

Kvarteren är fyllda av mattaffärer och resebyråer som arrangerar allt från expeditioner till de höga bergstopparna, till vilda flottäventyr och bussresor till Tibet.

Men runt om i stan växer en ny sorts verksamhet också fram - vid sidan av mattorna och turisterna - som allt fler hoppas

Avisartikkel daterat 23.11.95, i Nepal Nytt (Sverige-Nepal Föreningen)

ska ge Nepal ekonomisk tillväxt på 2000-talet.

Sovande kor

Skytarna på husväggarna skvallrar om att Katmandu är på väg att bli "on line". Företagen heter saker som Computer information systems, Innovative computer systems, Unlimited software och Space age.

Ingångarna till dessa kontor kan blockeras av kor som ligger och sover eller av ett berg med flåtade korgar som någon ställt ifrån sig. Invändigt sitter unga killar och stirrar framför skärmarna precis som på andra håll

i världen. Väggarna är tapetserade av reklamaffischer från Apple, Microsoft och IBM.

- Bill Gates har sagt att han vill förlägga en del av utvecklingen av mjukvara till Nepal, säger Sharada Gauchan hoppfullt.

Hon är VD för Innovative computer system och en av få kvinnor som nått en ledande befattning i Nepals näringsliv.

Nedåt gatan finns 50-60 andra datafirmor som öppnat de senaste åren i takt med att hoppet vuxit. Totalt finns över 150 dataföretag som säljer allt från utbildning till importerade IBM-datorer.

Tibet's Pilgrim Refugees

KATHMANDU — The world of refugeedom tends to be divided between political exiles and economic migrants, even though the dividing line between the two is often blurred. However, there is one other type of refugee that is unique to South Asia, the pilgrim refugee.

This term may best describe the Tibetans who every year continue to brave the Chinese military dragnet along the Himalayan rimland, surmount dangerous High Himalayan passes, and get exploited by rapacious middlemen, as they escape harsh conditions in the high plateau for the spiritual embrace of their Dalai Lama.

According to records at the UNHCR refugee agency in Kathmandu, the flow of Tibetan pilgrim-refugees has averaged 2500 to 3500 annually in recent times. The set procedure is for UNHCR to hold the refugees in a halfway house in Kathmandu before transferring them to Dharamsala. There are many more who are said to head directly to India without bothering to contact the UNHCR. They descend through the middle hills of Nepal and wend their way through the plains of Uttar Pradesh and up to Dharamsala, and the smoothly functioning reception machinery of the Tibetan government-in-exile.

It is not always that easy, however, for the Nepali Government has blown hot and cold on this continuing flow of Tibetans. Nepal's geopolitical compulsions—that of the need to balance India's overwhelming presence with good relations with Beijing—has made Kathmandu succumb to Chinese whims on the matter.

As tensions rise in Lhasa, such as in autumn 1995 when the Chinese administration was celebrating the 30th anniversary of the founding of Tibet Autonomous Region, the flow swells. At the same time, so does the pressure from Beijing on Kathmandu authorities to accost and send the Tibetans

back across the frontier. In UNHCR parlance, this process of send-back is known as 'refoulment'.

The nominally pro-Chinese Left Government was in power in Kathmandu during the period of the 30th anniversary celebrations in Lhasa. At a meeting of district administrators held in the town of Pokhara, an instruction was issued to crack down on those infiltrating the high passes. The most-used routes are in Mustang and Manang in central Nepal, and the Nangpa La trail into Namche Bazaar in eastern Nepal. The populations of Nepal's northern areas have been friendly to the refugees, and the idyllic valley of Junbesi that lies between Kathmandu and Namche Bazaar is where many rest and recuperate before continuing to Dharamsala. It is a different matter, however, when the refugees confront administrators.

The present coalition government in Kathmandu has dealt with the situation gingerly. It has issued a go-slow order to the outlying district administrators. What is interesting is that Nepal has no reason to be defensive about its humanitarian attitude towards the Tibetan travellers. These, after all, are docile pilgrims, not firebrand militants.

Says a government official who once served in the Border Administration Department of the Home Ministry: "Officially, we do not acknowledge that Tibetans are allowed safe transit to India through Nepali territory. But on practical terms that is what is happening, on purely humanitarian grounds."

"It is silly that we cannot even take credit for a good deed that is done," says a Tribhuvan University political scientist. But who will tell that to the Chinese?

- Suman Pradhan

HIMAL South Asia

March 1996

Bye, Bye Mumbai

OF THE 218 Nepali women who were "rescued" from the brothels of Bombay in February, 124 (only those who wanted to return home) have been brought to Nepal by a consortium of 37 Nepali NGOs. Picture shows the group after alighting from a Royal Nepal Airlines flight from Bombay on 19 July.

For all of the five months the women stayed in social institutions in Bombay and Pune, the Nepali government remained inactive, but it is now indignant at the initiative taken by the NGOs, which it is accusing of forming a "parallel government" for their efforts.

Housed in Kathmandu by the host NGOs, many of the girls are undergoing treatment for psycho-social depression while others are receiving training on various "income-generating skills". They have also been taking HIV tests and, and out of 12 girls taken in by one NGO, seven tested positive.

In the meantime, the girls have also been identifying the persons who sold them off in Bombay, and a few of these traffickers have already been arrested.

Human Rights Flavour of the Month

Rape for Profit: Trafficking of Nepali Girls and Women to India's Brothels

Human Rights Watch/Asia 1995

Review by John Frederick

This book is about tragedy, major tragedy. Unfortunately, *Rape for Profit* is also a tragedy, and not a minor one. The world listens to Human Rights Watch and HRW wasn't watching, it was dozing. The book will have impact, and will solidify an obsolete perception of the trafficking industry in Nepal.

The book is a competent summary of a handful of reliable data and a shovelful of questionable data and outdated conventional wisdom. You've seen it on TV, you've read it in Newsweek: poor Tamang girl from Nuwakot gets abducted to India and ends up an HIV-positive brothel slave. It is clearly a good story, it keeps selling. However, it is a portrait of trafficking circa 1989, and doesn't reflect the radical changes the trafficking industry has undergone since—changes we must be aware of if trafficking is to be confronted.

The onus must be put upon the researchers, who followed the well-worn path of journalists and production crews pursuing the human rights flavour of the month. They chose the usual sources for their information: the NGO's that show up at all the seminars. All are effective organisations, but all are Kathmandu-based. On-the-ground rural organizations such as SAFE, General Welfare Pratishthan, MANK, BASE, Tripura Sundari and DSS weren't consulted. Why? Because they don't speak polished English?

The researchers visited Kathmandu as usual, Nuwakot as usual, and border towns as usual. Wake up, folks. Trafficking from Nuwakot and the districts around the Kathmandu Valley still exists, but it is no longer the main show. Pressure on traffickers and increased market demand has spread girl collection all over the country, especially into the Western, Mid-Western and Far-Western Regions.

Check it out in Bombay. The majority of new girls are not Tamangs anymore—in fact a high proportion are from poor Bahun and Chhetri families. In Calcutta, too, there are fewer Tamangs; many are Bahun-Chhetris and Rai-Limbis funnelled through Dharan, one of Nepal's sin cities. The trafficking industry has aggressively evolved, and it is time to focus interventions beyond Nuwakot.

Sniffing for traffickers, the researchers went touring to three "border towns", one of which, Butwal, is nowhere near the border. But think a minute. No self-respecting trafficker is going to be hanging out in a border town, except for a 2 a.m. cup of tea on the way south with his prize. We don't yet know the trafficking hubs, but we can guess, and the towns selected by Human Rights Watch probably aren't high on the list.

If trafficking is to be stopped, we need to know where to stop it. We also need to know what causes it, "poverty" is a lazy answer. The vast majority of Nepalis are impoverished, but we don't see girls lined up hooking along the roadsides. To design intervention, we have to look further: at the pervasive discrimination against females, at the disruption of traditional

family structures, and at violence against women and girls in their own communities.

Rape for Profit's recommendations are limited to central government and police activities. They are viable recommendations, although neither party gets a medal for outstanding devotion to citizens' welfare. The only reference to community activities is negative: local opposition to anti-traffickers in Nuwakot. In Nuwakot, selling daughters is an established business—of course, there's opposition. In the other 90 percent of the country, trafficking is new and communities are angry. They can resist trafficking, especially with support.

UNICEF, with Nepali NGO collaboration, is promoting the establishment of a community-based sentinel system. Local NGOs are conducting legal education at the grassroots level, to empower communities to bust traffickers if the cops won't. Communities can't wait while first-world nations and the central government investigate, monitor, establish, accede to and ensure. Traffickers, sex-starved clients and HIV aren't waiting.

The scene has changed, and Human Rights Watch/Asia should have picked that up. *Rape for Profit* paints a horrific portrait of trafficking in Nepal. Unfortunately, the reality is far worse. The book prescribes New York solutions to the problem. Fortunately, grassroots solutions are possible. The researchers did a skilful, sensitive job of presenting the facts they collected. Wish they'd do the book again, and collect up-dated facts this time.

HIMAL November/December 1995

Indigenous Media: Bold Is Beautiful

When the disenfranchised of the world see that they, too, can be bold and beautiful, a positive self-image is created.

by Michael Wilmore

Switch on cable television in Tansen, a small town in the hills of central Nepal, and what do you get? If you are watching on Saturday afternoons you might see the town's weekly news bulletin, a comedy skit publicising diarrhoea treatment, or a programme on a recent Buddhist festival. You have tuned into Ratna Cable TV (RCTV), Nepal's (and possibly the region's) only community tv station.

In the face of the threat of media disenfranchisement many of the world's people have come up with a simple solution: produce it yourself. The idea seems improbable merely because 'we' (academics, journalists and politicians) have been brought up on models of a monolithic 'Media' founded on the strictly regulated legal frameworks of the Western nation state and cannot believe the audacity of those who have tackled the media industry head-on. But once one begins to look, examples of what anthropologists may call 'indigenous media' appear to be a near-universal phenomenon, rather than isolated examples of resistance to the hegemony of the state or transnational media.

There is space here to cite only a few examples. Yanomamo Indians in the Amazon produce videos to publicise environmental destruction by miners. Black trade unions in apartheid-era South Africa made audio cassettes of underground meetings to distribute to supporters. Australian Aborigines own and run satellite tv stations to broadcast programmes in their own languages. British football fans produce fanzines to celebrate their teams and pressure club owners to protect the interests of fans. In Nepal, RCTV makes news programmes that reflect the community's own concerns and interests rather than that of the Kathmandu-based national media.

Media commentators interested in the disequilibrium in the media balance of power have tended to focus on the threat from a spatially, economically and politically distant 'Global Media'. But, as the above examples show, indigenous producers are usually motivated by concerns that are closer to home. It is at the level of the nation or local community that interest and motivation appears to be most easily sustainable. It is also of crucial importance that the distribution system needed for these media is relatively low cost and require no access to the delivery systems monopolised by the state or transnational media. The varied forms that indigenous media take probably

explains why the phenomenon itself has, until comparatively recently, been overlooked, but what unites all indigenous media is that they are self-produced by those whose voices are absent from the established mass media.

It is important to draw the distinction between indigenous media which uses modern forms of production and 'traditional' folk media such as dance, song and story-telling. As one anthropologist stated after an encounter with a minority language video production crew in Papua New Guinea, it is precisely because of the appropriation of modern technology that indigenous media is potentially so powerful. When the disenfranchised of the world see that they, too, can be bold and beautiful, a positive self-image is created—one that may be difficult to dilute. The local base of indigenous media also allows for a vigorous dialogue to take place between consumers and producers of information, a dialogue lacking in the remote world of mainstream media.

Bazaar Bias

Inevitably, there are problems with indigenous media, and Tansen's local tv station can be taken as an example. The genesis of Ratna Cable TV goes back to a cable tv distribution system which grew out of the radio repair shop of Buddha Ratna Shakya and his family. Local broadcasts began in 1992, and RCTV's mix of local news, information and entertainment quickly became popular with the audience, which, at around 6,000 people, is almost a third of the town's population.

Soon enough came the Nepali government's order to cease broadcasting. With the backing of the municipality and mayor, Mr Shakya defied the order until the issue was resolved with the metamorphosis of the broadcasting arm of the company into Communication for Development Palpa, an NGO officially sanctioned by Kathmandu.

But bureaucratic wrangling of this sort is peripheral to the larger issue of finance which determines the sustainability of any such media. RCTV gets some revenue through the installation of cable tv to homeowners, the business from which the organisation grew, but the organisation still has to depend on donations of hardware and software from outside agencies. Once identified, indigenous media groups form an obvious target for the receipt of aid, but it needs to be questioned whether external funding threatens their greatest asset—independence.

Important issues are: who has editorial control, and, in the case of an expensive media like cable tv, who

watches? In Tansen, RCTV's constituency is largely urban and middle-class. The geographical limits of the cable network, and the fact that the volunteer cameramen are unlikely to venture into Tansen's rural hinterland, has led to a distinct bazaar bias which is recognised and regretted by the producers themselves.

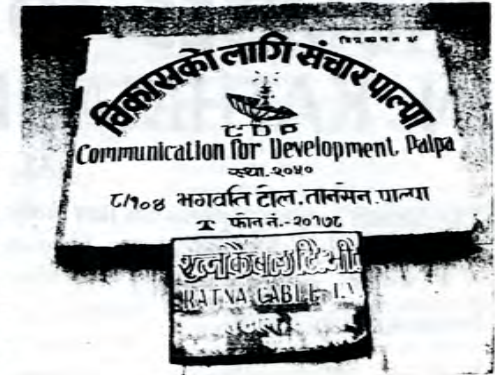
RCTV relies heavily on volunteers to produce its programmes and spend a considerable time filming news stories. There has been a decline in the number of volunteers, now that the enthusiasm of the initial years has waned. Broadcast time has been reduced to just one hour every Saturday from the earlier two hours, and a sizeable portion of the week's programming is taken up, not with locally produced programmes as was the case initially, but with Hindi "religious operas" and Nepali film songs. These are popular with the audience and cost nothing in terms of time and labour, but are typical of mainstream programming by Nepal TV and Doordarshan.

Finally, RCTV has tried to steer clear of controversy by adopting a strategy of not covering overtly party political events. However, its seemingly expedient policy of simply focussing attention on civic events has given the ruling Congress party politicians of Tansen Municipality extensive coverage and accusations of bias are occasionally, if rather mutedly, levelled at the organisation by other political parties.

Unhappy and Marginalised

To those commentators who despair in the face of transnational media's encroachment into almost every corner of the world, the tv phenomenon in Tansen shows that 'ordinary' people are quite capable of resisting this media and may not be willing to passively accept what they are given. But, equally, it shows that indigenous media producers should not be romanticised, becoming the late 20 century's equivalent of Rousseau's noble savage, albeit wielding a camcorder instead of a spear. The operators of RCTV are certainly not an oppressed minority!

In Nepal, however, the political landscape is moulded by the obsessions of the print and electronic media with national politics and the morals and mores of the Kathmandu social scene around which these dramas are played out. The majority of the country's population may



view this media marginalisation irrelevant compared to the daily struggle for survival. But to the educated, articulate and increasingly wealthy middle classes of Nepal's provincial towns, this marginalisation is acutely felt simply because it is apparent in the intimacy of their sitting rooms whenever they turn on NTV and radio or read a newspaper.

This marginalisation has been addressed in Tansen through compromise—fashioning a local medium to redress the perceived national media imbalance. In other South Asian communities, indeed throughout both the industrialised and developing world, the contradiction between the improving economic conditions and stagnant political power of the middle class may instead lead towards the cheap fixes of populist politics, scapegoating of minorities, or, at the very least, disillusionment with parliamentary democracy.

Indigenous media do not necessarily deal in utopian ideals of equality or aim in every case to be socially inclusive, but they are always, as Deborah Spitulnik, an American anthropologist working on indigenous media, has pointed out in a recent review of media research, "extremely potent arenas of political struggle." And it may be that that struggle is sometimes better played out in the virtual world of television than on the street.

HIMAL South Asia June 1996

Clean-up in Pokhara

NCS Nepal No.1, 1995

In Pokhara, the burgeoning tourist industry has brought its own share of pollution and garbage problems. In an effort to bring this to the notice of the concerned authorities, lodge owners, tourists, and local citizens organised a clean-up of the Phewa Tal lakeside area, one of the main tourist spots in Pokhara. Local residents collected plastic water bottles, plastic bags, and other unrecyclable garbage, and delivered it in bags to the Office of Tourism in Pokhara. A place for the disposal of such trash without burning was requested. Often, such garbage is burned or dumped into river gorges, creating a public hazard.



PROMISES TO KEEP IN KATHMANDU

The Nepali language press has just made a jump from the medieval to the modern era. It has a lot to learn.

by Ajaya Bhadra Khanal

Visitors coming to Nepal and expecting to feel the country's "pulse" by reading the English papers and magazines will find themselves sadly out of touch. For, unlike every other country of South Asia, where English holds more than a toehold, here the lingua franca of Nepali holds overwhelming command. The disproportionate influence of the small English press derives from the diplomatic community and the expatriate "development set" which makes its readership. However, it is the Nepali press which touches the lives of the people and plays a role in guiding national politics, in ways good and bad.

Nepal never underwent the legacy of British colonialism that placed English as the language of the educated elite. This is why, unlike in other countries of the region, English language, and by extension the English press, is peripheral to the interests of those who make political decisions and form public opinion. Unfortunately, Nepali language journalism, while wielding overwhelming influence in modern Nepali society, remains in its infancy and unable to play the responsible role required of it as the "fourth estate" of modern democratic society. Looked at another way, however, the development of Nepali language journalism has been remarkable, given the social conditions against which it has had to struggle.

Until 1950, Nepali society was predominantly illiterate, and only the upper castes in the hill areas and a handful of aristocratic families in Kathmandu knew how to read and write. The autocratic Rana rulers tried mightily to prevent the ordinary people from entering the world of the printed word. Only in the first few decades of the twentieth century did Nepali "commoners" begin to write and publish, and that too from the safe havens of Benaras, Shillong, Darjeeling and Dehradun, in India.

The first Nepali magazine to be published from Nepal, *Sudhasagar*, came out in 1898. "If, by any chance, the magazine closes down due to lack of your support, or due to few buyers, then not only will I suffer, you will also be put to shame," wrote the publisher in one desperate appeal, and his paper folded soon enough. The lament at lack of readership was to be a common refrain among editors for the next 90 years.

Gorkhapatra, the grand lady of Nepali journalism, started as a weekly in 1901 serving as a kind of house-organ of the Rana rulers. Similarly, two other magazines, *Sharada* (1934) and *Udhyog* (1935), were established by

the Ranas, ostensibly to help improve the Nepali language. Political journalism began with the appearance of two weeklies in India which called for the overthrow of the hereditary autocrats: *Yugbani* from Benaras and *Nepal Pukar* from Calcutta.

Following the tradition of the last two, the publications that came into existence after the fall of the Rana regime in 1950 also took up political missions. The passion for reporting and editorialising on politics has never abated, and political coverage has remained the staple of Nepali newspapers ever since.

Limits of Public Expression

The years immediately after 1950 saw a mushrooming of newspapers, partially to cater to the burgeoning political parties, as most of the papers had partisan interests. In the midst of all this, some like the dailies *Samaj* and *Halkhabar* remained independent and garnered respect. Even though the circulation of these papers remained in the hundreds, they were instrumental in bringing about a measure of political awareness in a country which had just emerged from medievalism and was confronting modernity.

Survival through sales was very difficult in a country where there were so few educated—in 1955, less than 8000 Nepalis had completed secondary school education. It was but natural that most newspapers thus turned to the government for help, receiving subsidies and advertisements. A clear division between "pro-establishment" and "anti-establishment" newspapers arose as a result, a separation which remained firmly in place till the "second coming" of democracy in 1990.

During the intervening three decades, the "partyless" Panchayat system introduced by the present king's father, Mahendra, held sway. And for three decades, the evolution of Nepali journalism was inhibited under the weight of a system which only allowed "constructive criticism", which meant "you couldn't write anything about the monarchy," recalls Maniraj Upadhyaya, editor of *Samaj*.

Even during the Panchayat period, though, the press remained important, because its consumers were the few thousand readers, mostly Kathmandu residents, who could affect the political process and government decisions. After the return of the Nepali Congress leader B.P. Koirala from exile in India in 1977, some editors became bold enough to carry the heretic term "political party" in their columns, albeit always with the prescribed quali-

cation "banned". Some papers began actively promoting the restoration of multi-party democracy, at the cost of reprisals from watchdog agencies such as the Panchayat Policy and Investigation Committee. "Nepali newspapers deserve a large portion of the credit for keeping oppositional party politics alive during the Panchayat years," says editor of *Deshantar* weekly Shree Acharya.

While the private press was exploring the limits of public expression, the authorities were actively promoting government media. Says Bharat Dutta Koirala, presently Director of the Nepal Press Institute and onetime editor of the *Gorkhapatra*, "All training opportunities and investment were provided to the government papers, and the private media was seen as an adversary." Nevertheless, *Gorkhapatra*, though firmly a Panchayat organ, did occasionally provide reports on social and economic issues which held out the possibilities that were open for an independent broadsheet daily in a rapidly modernising Nepal.

Time of Transition

Just as it was impossible for King Mahendra's (and later King Birendra's) Panchayat system to keep the population isolated from ideas which would ultimately erode the system's legitimacy, Kathmandu's constant exposure to outside (Indian and overseas) media was bound to force the non-governmental press to try and test the limits. In the early 1980s, the weeklies began to come up with 'investigative' pieces and to run 'exposés', although they had to be taken with a pinch of salt. It all began when Surya Bahadur Thapa was forced to step down as prime minister and took up a vindictive crusade against what he called "extra-constitutional power brokers." An aggrieved Mr Thapa financed newspapers that regularly published stories against his opponents both in the government and outside of it. Sensational revelations of all kinds have since remained a regular feature of the weekly papers.

Around this time the readership numbers began to grow, and the concept of 'public' broadened to include a more diverse cross section of the society. The size of "media consumers" expanded from a few hundred of the 1960s, and a few thousands of the 1970s, to tens of thousands in the following decade. A growing readership also meant varied tastes, and newspaper content turned from pure politics to include literature, opinion, satire, sports, international news, crime, environment, and even society and culture.

Earlier, newspapers could make do without advertisement and large sales because overheads were low. However, the introduction of the offset press in the late 1980s and the sudden expansion of the Nepali market economy meant that the newspaper world, too, had to respond. The potential readership which had already been created with the spread of the government's school system suddenly became accessible with the ubiquitous "night buses" carrying newspaper bundles to far corners on newly built highways. (According to one estimate, by 1991 five million people could read and write in Nepali.)

While the "readership" had grown, the spread of radio and television, expanded reach of highways, growth of a middle class centred in cities and towns, as well as monetisation of the economy, also contributed to the rise of a "market" which the producers of goods and services

could access through the press. Readership and market meant the possibility, finally, of a commercial approach to media publishing. However, one element was lacking in this menu to prevent true expansion—democracy and the attendant press freedom, which was soon to come.

The modernisation of the country, increased aspirations, and exasperation with a top-heavy monarchical system all whittled away at the Panchayat superstructure, and in one swift people's movement amply aided by the media, the political system crumbled in the spring of 1990. Freedom of speech allowed the Nepali media to have the credibility it required to access the market, and for the first time business men started to show an interest in news papers as money-making enterprises. In February 1993, the first private Nepali and English broadsheet dailies were published by the Goenkas, a Nepali branch of the Indian

Express Goenka clan. This marked the entry of commercial interests into newspaper publishing, soon to be followed (in the last year) with a sudden rush of four more broadsheet dailies in the vernacular. In the growing market for information, the sudden shift of mainstream journalism from opinionated, partisan weeklies to dailies (which have to function more like dispassionate media) indicated a shift towards a quicker and more reliable source of news and views. Would the new dailies deliver?

Ring out the Old

Nepalis have long been accustomed to believing in texts without authors, the *smritis* and the *srutis*. In the transition from writing in Sanskrit to Nepali there was much that still depended on that tradition. This explains the marked difference in the way Western-educated and those who read and write only in Nepali tackle research—and journalism. The latter tend to be better at description, but poorer in research methodology, questioning and analysis. They tend towards stock responses and reliance upon what they have read and believed.

As important is the language barrier. Journalists writing in Nepali generally do not read English, which keeps them from accessing the world of learning available to the English-educated. Neither do Nepali readers have the advantage of reading newspapers and magazines in English, and as a result much of their understanding of the media's role in society can sometimes be second hand. In the case of young Nepali students of journalism, they can now get the "theory" in the classroom, but there are few examples of "good journalism" for rookies to emulate.

The Nepali reporter is also hampered by the inability to access 'facts'. Most information that can be sourced is still largely unreliable, whereas the Western value system expects news to have facts. Retrieval of information in Nepal is extremely difficult and has not been systematised. Since it is so difficult to get facts, the temptation to rely on rumour and fiction is that much greater.

The problem does not lie only with the professional journalist, however. There is a long way to go before even the new commercially-oriented dailies fit the role of

responsible media. To begin with, those who command the higher echelons of the media have not changed. The publishers and editors are still largely of the old guard who learnt and practised journalism in the Panchayat days and are found to be timid and reluctant to explore the outer edges of what media can achieve in a free society. While the younger lot of reporters seem to have the commitment and energy, the seniors fail to provide the required guidance and editing.

Neither do the newly emerged dailies seem too keen on conducting independent and objective journalism. In retrospect, many a publisher seems to have entered the field merely to support a political party or a power broker. These publishers also seem to regard their newspapers as loss-making entities set up merely to ensure profits in other sectors. With publishers operating in Kathmandu's circumscribed business and political world, the editors of the dailies have not dared unleash "investigative journalism" upon the top dogs of society—the mark of a truly independent press.

Perhaps the biggest loser in this incestuous relationship between the politician and the publisher/editor, besides, obviously, the public, is what is known in Nepal as the "working journalist." As a result, even capable journalists cannot presently be called "professional journalists."

Ring in the New

On the whole, the Nepali press has been singularly unable to transform itself from a partisan press of the Panchayat era into a strong and confident "fourth estate" providing the objective news, information, and analyses so important for a democratic polity. It has failed to lead the debate on national issues and instead willingly follows the motivated agenda of politicians, who prefer to highlight petty but emotive issues for their party's and personal advantage. There remains, therefore, a distance to travel before the Nepali media will begin to fulfil the role of a "national conscience".

However, things can only get better. To begin with, the new cadre of young writers and reporters currently joining journalism are career-oriented individuals of higher calibre than their predecessors. Secondly, the public itself is beginning to demand more from journalism than the partisan, political fare it has been receiving. As publishers and editors begin to realise that it makes economic sense to provide dispassionate, objective reports and reading, Nepal's media will change, and hopefully this will happen within the next few years.

Careful observers can actually see this positive trend in the making. Because dissemination of information is so much quicker through daily papers and because the very nature of the daily newspaper requires more professional reporting than that of weeklies which make no bones about their political bias, the public is beginning to form its opinion more on the basis of information and rational argument than on rumour and emotional party-leaning polemics. This is a change from the earlier, more ideological and impassioned times, and the political parties are the first to notice.

A striking example is how media reports helped temper the extremist tendencies within the mainstream Left. In late 1995, the minority government of the United



Marxist-Leninist (UML) called for a mid-term poll, expecting to come to power with a thumping majority in Parliament. The Nepali Congress opposition, meanwhile, wanted the House to be reinstated. The issue polarised the intelligentsia, and everyone waited keenly for the Supreme Court's verdict on the issue, for the government's decision had been challenged in court.

When the Court ruled against the UML, the party cadres were enraged, and the high command considered rebelling against the judgement. Nepal faced a possible extra-constitutional crisis, but the Left lion only roared, it did not act. One reason, many observers believe, is that the UML's area of manoeuvrability had been severely restricted by the daily blow-by-blow reporting on the affair reaching the far corners of the country through the dailies—particularly Kantipur. While interpretations of the Court's decision vary, the Left party found it impossible to overturn it through street action, which might have succeeded in the absence of the daily reportage.

There are many other indications that the Nepali language press is gearing up to meet the expectations that rest on it. While there are always the frustrations, the Nepali newspapermen and women are engaged in accelerated learning, they have the responsibility of bringing Nepal's media world into the modern era, and so far they have had only six years of freedom to try to achieve it.

While the journalist prepares for the next phase of the media's involvement in Nepali society, a nagging question remains. There have been debates in the fields of development and governance as to whether the 'Western' model can be transplanted willy nilly in Nepali soil. Similarly, some observers believe that younger journalists may be too quick to adopt 'Western' styles of reporting and writing. While these observers are unable to suggest what kind of system might be better, there is the American professor of media studies who told journalists in Kathmandu recently, "I don't know what type of journalism you should develop. But it should be your own."

With new newspapers coming up, young journalists are being trained and the society is demanding that together they fulfil their role in the new democratic setup. The practitioners of the press are trying—very hard—to fulfil responsibilities which, to them, are new. Sooner, rather than later, the Nepali papers and their "working journalists" will deliver. ▲

A.B. Khanal is Assistant Editor of the Everest Herald daily in Kathmandu.

The Apartheid of Caste

August 1996 HIMAL South Asia

THOUGH HINDU, THEY are not allowed to enter Hindu temples. They are traditional *khukuri*-makers, but are denied regular army service. Their children are sometimes not allowed to eat together with classmates at school, while their women cannot use community water taps.

South Asia's 'untouchable' castes have traditionally felt the pain and humiliation of being at the bottom of the social order. But in India and Nepal, where the Hindu caste system is most entrenched, they are increasingly speaking out against this socially-sanctioned apartheid.

In India, an estimated 15 percent of the roughly 900 million people are Dalits—'untouchable' castes whose traditional professions have for millennia been regarded as dirty by privileged Hindus. Twenty percent of Nepal's 21 million people are Dalits. Dalits were traditionally butchers, blacksmiths, tailors, cobblers or sweepers, and are considered 'untouchable' today even if they have other jobs.

The caste system has been legally abolished in both India and Nepal, but discrimination persists. Furthermore, Dalit efforts to organise and fight discrimination and official affirmative action policies are creating a backlash from the 'higher' castes.

"Our main give-away is our surname," says Dilip Pariyar, a Dalit from western Nepal. "The discrimination starts when you fill in your name while applying for a job, or renting a room." Many Dalits have shed

their traditional surnames other than the ones that they were born with. "Their parents did not want their children to experience the inhuman discrimination and humiliation that they themselves faced," he adds.

In rural Nepal, where discrimination is more blatant, Dalits are barred entrance into the homes of people in the higher social strata. In cities, they have difficulty renting rooms.

"Landlords think we will pollute their homes. In fact, they don't even allow us into their cow sheds because they think we will contaminate the holy animals. Dalits are ranked lower than animals," says Hira Viswakarma.

Moti Lal Nepali has changed his surname to the more generic "Nepali" to avoid being treated like an outcast. Nepali heads the Dalit Welfare Organisation.

"It is ironic that although we crafted the weapons that made Nepal what it is, we are denied regular military service," says Mr Nepali. "What's worse, we are Hindus, but are not allowed to enter Hindu temples." It's ironic that Dalits whose ancestors forged the traditional Gurkha knife, the *khukri*, for the armies of 18th-century kings that united Nepal are today in social limbo.

Dalit women suffer even more. Kamala Hemchuri says that women from underprivileged castes experience discrimination. "While trying to fetch water from the village tap, we have to face this humiliation daily, waiting for our turn, and we can only get near the tap when all the other women are finished."

She adds: "Our children in school are forbidden to drink out of the common water pitcher, and Dalits have to wash their own plates after eating in a public restaurant." This discrimination is not only shameful, but it prevents Dalits from getting jobs to augment their incomes and rise above the poverty trap.

"We cannot open restaurants, who would eat there? Same goes for dairy farm-

ing: Dalits are said to pollute the milk inside the cow's udder. There have been cases where the government dairy people have hesitated to accept milk from Dalit farmers." Because of this Dalit farmers are even refused special credit for livestock rearing from Nepal's Agricultural Development Bank.

Although Dalits form one-fifth of Nepal's population, their representation in the judiciary, civil service, politics and in technical fields is not proportionate. Nepal does not have official affirmative action programmes that India does.

Doubly oppressed

Nepal's official literacy rate is 40 percent, but it is only 10.7 percent among Dalits. Among women, the literacy rate is 3.2 percent. Of the country's two million Dalit women, only 20 have college degrees.

"The Dalit woman is doubly oppressed," says Durga Sob. "First she has to bear the

brunt of being an untouchable and then further discriminated as a woman."

Most Dalit children are undernourished. An average Dalit lives only upto 42, ten years below the average national life-expectancy rate. Disturbing as these figures are, most Dalits are not even aware that they are social outcasts. A recent study showed that although 90 percent of Dalits surveyed said they had encountered practices of 'untouchability', more than half did not see that as a problem.

Only 13.7 percent of Dalits interviewed said it was an injustice that had to be fought. Many Dalits feel that it is god's will that things are the way they are. In a sense, Dalits are perpetuating their own untouchability.

Moti Lal Nepali summed it up: "We have to make all Nepalis aware about casteism. But we have to start within our own community. That is the only way out of this *dal-dal* (swamp).

-Rupa Joshi

WATCHING THE WHEELS

text by Om Charan Amatya
photos by
Shambhu Manandhar

Potter Shyam Krishna Prajapati's day begins early in the morning. While the rest of Bhaktapur is still in deep slumber, Shyam Krishna is already up and on his way to worship at the shrine of Ganesh, the god of good fortune and success. Returning from the tem-

ple, he pays obeisance to the tools of his craft as he does at the beginning of each day. Then giving his potter's wheel a swift spin, he squats down to begin another round of his daily routine.

Shyam Krishna comes from a *kumha* (potter) family and lives at Kumha Twa, the potter's square in Bhaktapur. He started his career in pottery at the age of five by carrying lumps of clay for his father. The *kumhas* are the pottery professionals among the local Newar community.

The potters of Bhaktapur are specially renowned for their skill, and their creations are sought all over Nepal.

When we arrived at Kumha Twa, Shyam Krishna was busy kneading *dyo-cha* (black clay). He was stomping on it with his bare feet, adding water now and then to get the right consistency. Sometimes his feet would step on a pebble in the soft mud, and he would pick it out with his fingers and fling it away. After the clay is brought in from the fields, it needs to be kept away from the sun for a week so that it does not lose its moisture and pliability.

Motioning at us to sit down in the shed where he stores his articles, Shyam Krishna proceeded towards his potter's wheel. In the old days, the wheel was made of wood. Now, perhaps as a compromise to modern technology, he uses a discarded truck tire! His wife Harsha Maya has already placed a lump of soft clay on it. Taking a long stick in his hands, he gives the wheel a few swift twists, spinning

it like a top.

Shyam Krishna bends down to cup his hands around the soft clay, applying gentle pressure with his fingers like an expert sculptor. We watch in amazement as the clay suddenly rises up and takes shape. In an instant, a graceful water vessel is spinning on the wheel. Shyam Krishna takes a length of string and slices through the pot's base, his deft hands lifting the pot off the wheel at the same time. His wife puts it away with the others drying in the sun, before they are fired.

"So how's business?" we ask him. "It's not what it used to be," the old potter lets out a sigh. "People these days are going for plastic utensils. But it's not so bad. There's a kind of revival in pottery, even though not for the same reason as in the past. We are making new things like ash-trays and knick-knacks that people can use as decorations around the house. We don't make the traditional water and cooking pots so much. We also produce a variety of souvenirs for tourists."

Indeed, the potter's square in Bhaktapur is as much a tourist attraction as the clay products themselves. Visitors to Bhaktapur do not miss a tour of Kumha Twa to watch the potters practicing their ancient skills in the temple courtyard, as well as to admire the rows and rows of exquisite clay pieces drying in the sun.

In addition to the traditional household utensils — which range from tiny oil lamps to massive liquor vats — there are lovely candle-sticks, ash-trays, sacred images and masks, and elaborate flower pots. One of the most popular items is a flower pot shaped like an elephant, with a hollow in the elephant's head to plant the flowers.

Like manufacturers everywhere, Shyam Krishna is most worried about the supply of raw material. In the old days, the *dyo-cha* or black clay could be had for the asking. Most of the clay used to come from the village of Sipadol towards the south of Bhaktapur. The potters exchanged earthenware with the farmers for clay from their fields. Now, with the entire Kathmandu Valley in a building frenzy, and as more and more rice fields are buried under concrete, the potters can only watch their supply of clay disappearing under swanky shopping complexes and factories. Recently, Shyam Krishna was stunned to find a plot he used

to dig for clay advertised in the classified columns of a newspaper.

But he is not putting all his eggs in one pot, so to speak. The potter has a few pieces of ancestral land where he grows rice and other crops each season. His eldest son works as a mechanic in Kathmandu. Does that mean the younger generation is abandoning the family tradition? "Of course not," says Shyam Krishna, "they will continue with pottery, but mostly as a sideline. My daughter-in-law now helps me with the work."

Three of his daughters have already been married off, and the fourth one had her betrothal ceremony this past season. The youngest son is in school and is learning the art from his father during holidays. Shyam Krishna has a contented look on his face when speaking about his children — as if to indicate that he has discharged all his parental obligations by

making arrangements for their marriage or livelihood.

It used to be said that the children of *kumhas* could not recognize their own fathers since potters are off to market early in the morning to sell their wares and return home only late at night. These potters from Bhaktapur and Thimi can be seen on the streets of Kathmandu — carrying massive earthen vessels from a pole across the shoulder — usually before festivals.

As we sit talking, Shyam Krishna smells the fire in which the earthen vessels have been baking for the last few days — they are ready to be removed for polishing. He and his wife put out the fire, and begin retrieving the pots one by one from the ashes with a pair of pincers. We marvel at the finished products, a craft as old as civilization. For Shyam Krishna and his children who will carry on after him, it is another day at the shop.



Shangri-La 1995

Livsfarlig jakt etter honning

Når landsbyens innbyggere har feiret Buddhas fødselsdag i mai, drar honningjegerne av sted. Den lille gruppen av menn trenger dypere og dypere inn i jungelen, hvor det verken er synlige veier eller stier. Her ferdes man bare i flokk – alene går man seg vill eller blir revet i filler av bjørner eller andre av de ville dyrene.

Turen går skiftevis over Himalayafjellenes skarpe klippesteiner og gjennom dypt, blott mudder. Innimellom må mennene stoppe for å fjerne iglene som hele tiden setter seg for å suge blod fra føtter og ben.

Den sterkeste bærer en 50 m lang og 35 kg tung taustige av bambusfibrer på ryggen sin.

Alle har en såkalt *dokko* med seg – en kurv av bambus med gryter og store metallbeholdere som brukes til å oppbevare den dyrebare honningen i.

Mot kvelden slår den lille gruppen leir. De sitter sammen i ring rundt bålet og tenker på morgendagens farlige arbeid med biene, mens den veldige, svarte jungelnatten lukker seg rundt dem.

Fiendskap kan være livsfarlig

To ganger i året – vår og høst – drar gurunger i Nepal av sted etter de gylne dråpene.

Denne våren har fotografen Eric Valli valgt å slå følge med dem for å fotografere det farefulle yrket – et gammelt yrke som i århundrer har gått i arv fra far til sønn blant den lille

landsbyens innbyggere. Det er åtte jegerne i alt. Mani Lal er lederen deres. I de neste tre ukene bestemmer han alt med hard hånd: Nøyaktig når honningjaktene skal finne sted, og hvor lenge de skal vare. Det er også han som gir alle ordrene underveis og utfører alt det farligste arbeidet – å få bikakene løs fra klippene.

Det er fantastisk viktig at de er et godt team, og at alle virkelig trives og liker hverandre. Hvis det er en som er utilfreds, kan han finne på å gi de andre en dytt ned fra klippene.

Tar varsler av friske innvoller

Bal Bahadur, byens borgermester, er også med på turen. Han er en verdensmann som folk ser opp til. Ikke minst fordi han besøker regjeringskontorene i Katmandu, men også fordi han er eier av dalens eneste radio.

Tidlig neste morgen ofrer gruppens leder, Mani Lal, til jungelguden Pholo. Offergavene kan være alt fra et egg til ris, popkorn og en kylling som Mani Lal skjærer halsen over på med den skarpe kniven sin.

Pholo og de andre gudene skal velsigne jakten. Å være honningjeger er langt fra ufarlig, og å vekke gudenes vrede kan bety den visse død.

Både eggene og kyllingens indre blir nøye undersøkt. Ved det minste tegn på at gudene ikke er med honningjegerne, vil jakten straks bli oppgitt.

Men alt ser tilforlatelig ut, og

reisen går videre til *Kyumro Bir* «den bratte skrenten med klipper og reir». Det er bare en av mange skrenter der biene bygger sine enorme bo.

Jegerne peker på et sted oppe på skrenten – på noe som i Eric Vallis ukyndige øyne bare likner et stort, mørkt, halvmåneformet klippestykke.

Plutselig vibrerer den mørke overflaten, og med hamrende hjerte oppdager Eric Valli at «klippestykket» er tusenvis av summende bier som, lik en svart skjerm, svermer rundt en kolossal bikake. Selv på denne avstanden er de enorme biene et fryktinngytende syn.

Mennene går nærmere skrenten, og Mani Lal gjør tegn til Eric Valli om at han skal være musestille. Hvis biene oppdager at gruppen nærmer seg, er det ikke godt å vite hva de kan finne på.

Eric Valli, Mani Lal og enda et par av jegerne går langs den smale stien opp til toppen av klippene. Taustigen blir rullet ut og kastet ned over klippesiden.

Bikaker så store som et menneske

Mani Lal ber til gudene for enda en gang å sikre seg at de er på hans side før han forsvinner ut over skrenten og raskt som et ekorn klatrer nedover taustigen.

Fra nå av er den spinkle taustigen og en enkelt snor om livet alt som skiller honningjegeren fra den visse død. Under ham er det mer enn 100 meters fritt fall.

Langsomt, ganske langsomt nærmer han seg den veldige bikaken som er på størrelse med ham selv, fylt med bier som går til angrep i samme øyeblikk de blir forstyrret.

Medhjelperne, både på toppen av klippene og et stykke under Mani Lal, sørger for å holde taustigen inn mot klippene og styre den bort mot biene når Mani Lal gjør tegn til det.

Eric Valli har selv tatt med utstyr. Han må nærere Mani Lal for å fotografere ham i aksjon, og med et tynt, blått nylontau lar også han seg heise ut over kanten.

Nå blir det tent bål nedenfor klippene. Røyken skulle gjerne forvirre biene og få dem til å fly sin vei. Men det er ikke nok – vinden fjerner røyken før den kommer opp til boet.

Mani Lal gjør et stille tegn til medhjelperne sine oppe på klippene, og et øyeblikk etter blir en stor bunt brennende blader heist ned i nærheten av biene. Nå skjer det noe: En stor sverm av bier letter og avslører den klebrige, gylne bikaken.

Nektaren finnes i den øverste delen av kaken – den nederste er bicellene, der de store insektene holder til sammen med larvene og puppene sine.

Mani Lal har prøvd det mange ganger før og lar seg ikke anfekte av den uhyggelige og øredøvende larmen fra den kjempestore bisvermen.

Han arbeider raskt med de to stavene sine. Den ene stikker han inn i bikaken. Store stykker brekker av og velter ned i kurven, som han holder fast med den andre staven.

Honning som lammer

Han lar litt honning sive ut i hånden sin. En prikking i huden kan være tegn på at biene har suget næring i seg fra giftige blomster, og da kan det være direkte farlig å spise den. Hvis

man inntar bare den minste smule av en slik dårlig honning, svekkes synet, og man faller om og ligger i timevis, ute av stand til å gå.

Når kurven er full av bikaker – cirka 25 kg – kan Mani Lal endelig heise den ned.

En mengde innfødte har nå samlet seg til den rene honningfesten ved foten av klippene: Små boller dyppes i den gylne nektaren i kurven. Andre slikker den i seg, og så er det selvfølgelig noen som tar et stykke bikake og tygger på det som om det var tyggegummi. Andre igjen åpner munnen for å fange de liflige sote dråpene som drypper fra klippene. Mani Lal fester den delen av bikaken som består av biceller, til snorer og heiser den ned.

Broddene fjernes med pinsett

Imens lar biene sin vrede gå ut over fredsforstyrrelserne. Mani Lal er mest utsatt. Biene kravler overalt på bena, armene, leppene, øyelokk, ører og inn i hettens hans. De bøyer bakkroppen mot huden hans og stikker. Gjennom årene er Mani Lal blitt immun mot stikkene deres. Han arbeider seg ufortrødent videre bortover klippene mot den neste store bikaken.

Også nedenfor klippene svermer biene. Honningjegerne holder seg nær bålene. Likevel går biene til angrep.

Da Mani Lal, etter flere timers arbeid på taustigen er kommet ned på bakken igjen, begynner det store arbeidet med å fjerne alle broddene. En for en trekker han bienes giftige brodder ut med en pinsett.

Og det gjelder å passe på. Mani Lals hud er gammel og tørr og hovner ikke lenger av alle stikkene. Men de yngre medhjelperne hans har fullstendig opphovnete ansikter.

Mani Lals far var uheldig. Biene overfalt ham i tusenvis, og bistikkene rundt øynene

Populært vidundermiddel

Gamle hulemalerier fra Spania og India viser at mennesker rundt omkring i verden har høstet honning på den samme måten som gurungene i mer enn 12 000 år.

Det er de store, svarte honningbiene, *Apis laboriosa*, som produserer honningen i Himalaya. En enkelt bikake kan romme cirka 60 kg honning.

Gurungene mener selv at honningen kan helbrede alt mellom himmel og jord, og den står meget høyt i kurs.

Voksen blir solgt i Katmandu, blant annet til kunstnere, som bruker den når de skal støpe bronsestatuer etter den eldgamle metoden «cire perdue» – dvs. «mistet voks»: Et skall av voks modelleres over en leirkjerne og erstattes senere av metall.

Det blir imidlertid færre og færre bikaker i det området der gurungene lever. En gang kunne en enkelt honningjeger ta ned cirka 600 til 1000 reir i året – i dag er en høst på cirka 100 mer normalt.

gjorde ham blind for bestandig.

Bikakene, som iblant er to meter lange, må foldes på midten når de skal bæres hjem til leiren. Her blir de smeltet, renset og forvandlet til voks.

Det har vært en god høst for Mani Lal og folkene hans. Om kvelden samles de rundt bålet og presser den hvite innmaten ut av larvene i bikaken. Blandet med varm honning blir det en delikatess som alle får litt av.

Eric Valli blir hos jegerne, som i løpet av tre uker får høstet enda 40 bo, fylt med honning og voks – slik som de har gjort i århundrer. ■

Lekstuga för de rika

Bergsklättring i Himalaya blir allt farligare. Drygt 20 utländska alpinister förolyckades ifjol enbart i Nepal och experter varnar nu för världens tak som blivit till något av en lekstuga för rika och en kommersiell guldgruva för mindre seriösa företag inom bergsbestigning. "Högaltitudurismen" skördar allt fler offer.

Drygt 900 sk. proffsklättrare och 40 000 amatörer och vandrare åkte ifjol på äventyr till Nepal som har åtta av världens tio högsta bergstoppar och otaliga över 6 000 meter. Expeditioner som säljer platser för entusiaster tummar ofta på säkerhetskraven för att göra sig en förtjänst och användandet av ny teknologi leder till nonchalans och ökat risktagande. Ännu 25 år efter att Nepal öppnade upp sina jungfruliktande bergstoppar för bergsklättrarna finns det inte någon räddningstjänst i landet. Nepal räknas till ett av världens tio fattigaste länder. Kontrollen är minimal och avgifterna för de högre topparna är höga - 360 000 kronor per person för Mount Everest - gör att allt fler noviser med pengar på fickan kan utmana livsfarliga berg.

Ena likhus

Olyckorna i Himalaya har blivit så vanliga att flera västambassader i huvudstaden Kathmandu skaffat sig egna likhus. Det är gamla och rutinerade alpinister och en rad

experter i Kathmandu som nu slår larm. Anledning är en svår olycka i november på Mount Pisang (6 066 m), som krävde elva människoliv, varav tio var tyskar.

De flesta klättrare som kommer nu saknar nödvändig skicklighet och ork men har tjocka plånböcker, säger Padam Singh Ghaley, en nepalesisk klättrare som nått Mount Everest topp tre gånger. Han talar nedlåtande om klättringen som ett "miljonärsnöje" och Everest som en ny "rikemantrofé" och anklagar även rutinerade alpinister för att ta med nybörjare på sina expeditioner för pengarnas skull.

En del betalar en halv miljon bara för att kunna skryta med något annat än en ny yacht eller en Picassomålning.

Ny klättringsteknologi och en mycket lättare utrustning, utvecklad främst inom det amerikanska rymdprogrammet har gjort klättrandet lättare. Även helikoptertransporter till baslägren som besparar deltagarna flera veckor av mödosam vandring, har fört även ganska svåra toppar i Himalaya

inom räckhåll för många som saknar tillräcklig erfarenhet.

Ingen sherpa med

Det var troligen ren överskattning av teknologin och värdsloshet som vållade den svåra olyckan på Mount Pisang. Expeditionen leddes av en känd tysk alpinist men han tog inte en enda sherpa med som vägvisare mot toppen och han lät alla elva alpinister nå toppen samtidigt. Det avgörande misstaget gjordes då man under nedstigningen länkade alla till samma rep. När en medlem halkade bara några meter nedanför toppen drog han med sig alla sina tio kamrater i ett fall på över 500 meter som ingen av dem överlevde.

Det var en olycka som knappast skulle kunnat hända för bara något år sedan, menar experterna "Högaltitudurismen" kallas fenomenet bland proffsen.

Dyrare

För snart tre år sedan tredubblade Nepals regering avgifterna för toppbestigning delvis för att komma till rätta med problemen. Men istället blev det bara mycket värre.

Sedan Nya Zeeländaren Edmund Hillary och sherpan Tenzing 1954 blev de första att bestiga världens högsta berg, Mount Everest, så har inte mindre än 450 nått toppen. Drygt 300 av dem bara under de senaste tio åren. 1992 nådde hela 31 man upp under en och samma dag. Antalet olyckshändelser och fall av svår höjdsjuka vid bara Everest har mer än fyrdubblats sedan 1987.

Miljardrullning

Hela bergsbestignings- och fjällvandringsindustrin gav i fjol Nepal en inkomst på över 1,4 miljarder kronor. Myndigheterna är därför mycket ovilliga att begränsa invasionen av utländska klättrare. De enda restriktioner som införts i Himalaya på senare år gäller avfall och utrustning som tidigare övergetts när expeditionerna avslutat sina försök att nå toppen.

Många ifrågasätter dock de ekonomiska effekterna av bergsbestigning: mycket lite av pengarna hamnar i de fattiga byarna. Varje helikopterflygning upp till baslägret berövar sherpas och bärare i genomsnitt 500 arbetsdagar. Uppköpen av ved och proviant utmed vägen drabbar de fattigaste i form av stora prishöjningar och erosionen i området tilltar.

Något drastiskt måste göras utan att utmaningsmomentet i klättringen försvinner, säger Elisabeth Hawley, brittisk Himalayaexpert som menar att världens tak inte längre tål påfrestningarna av den mänskliga invasionen.

Text: Bo Gunnarsson

An Appeal for Thame Monastery

Up in Khumbu, at 3,900 metres and standing guard over the village of Thame, is an ancient ochre-coloured monastery, tucked under a mighty rocky overhang. Little stone huts, where the monks live, cluster on the talus slope beneath the monastery.

While monsoon clouds swirl around in the valley, opening and closing the view of the surrounding snow mountains, 30 maroon-robed monks step out of their tiny quarters and assemble in the monastery courtyard for their annual Yame (summer retreat) prayer. This retreat coincides with the peak monsoon period, which is biologically the most active time of the year when even the most desolate highlands of Upper Khumbu become vibrant with greenery and life.

The Thame Gomba, established in 1667, is one of the oldest and most venerated monasteries of Khumbu. Gombas are an important source of spiritual guidance to the local communities and a major influence in shaping their attitude towards life, and the Thame Gomba is one of the pillars of the Buddhist faith as practised by Sherpas as well as a cultural treasure of incalculable importance.

The rich smell of burning incense, the guttural chanting of monks and the sweet monastic music permeates the ancient building. The strong

spiritual power of the place is palpable. However, a glance at the physical conditions of the monastery reveals bulging walls, leaning windows and decaying frescos. It is obvious that the inner spiritual strength of the monastery is no longer matched by its outer physical structure.

The monks accept that monasteries are always at risk of destruction by the four *jhungwa* (elements)—fire, wind, water and earthquake. Driving home this point, the monastery rests frantically on its ancient seat, dangerously predisposed to earthquake damage.

The Tengboche Gomba received welcome

have received high priority. Instead it is quietly decaying, unnoticed.

Timely action will save the valuable structure and its priceless relics. The challenge for the moment is reconstruction of the structure before the inevitable collapse. Superficial renovation will hardly stave off the danger, and the monks want to see the monastery restored with its original design and structural integrity preserved. The size of the project, unfortunately, is simply too big for the poor village monastic community to fund and manage.

Thame Gomba does not own any land, property or

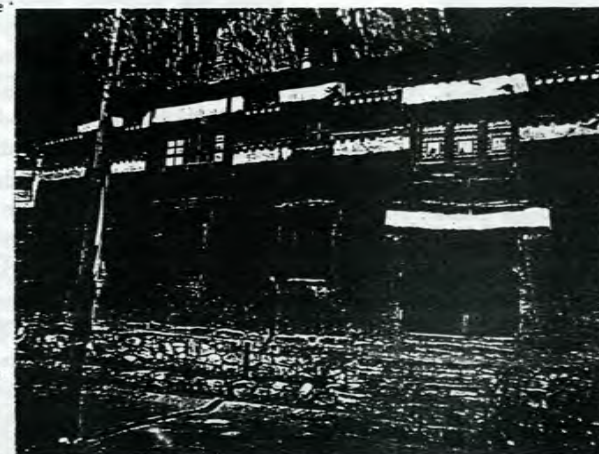
tery from this source, in fact, does not exceed NRs 10,000 (US\$ 200), mostly from visitor donations.

Thame village is located away from the main tourist trails of Khumbu, which is an advantage for religious application but hopeless in terms of generating tourism revenue. The resident monks are taught to have no attachment and no materialist ambitions. They have a different mission in life, and continue to invest most of their meagre personal savings in the upkeep of the important local religious traditions and festivals such as *Mani Rimdu*, *Dorsem*, *Yame* and *Ningne*.

The community of subsistence farmers in Thame valley, although limited by resources, education, political clout or contact with the outside world, has shown its eagerness to help the monastery in whatever humble way it can. But the support of the wider Khumbu community, the government, and national and international organisations and individuals is important if Thame Gomba is to regain its firm physical foundations so that it can continue to provide spiritual sustenance to Upper Khumbu.

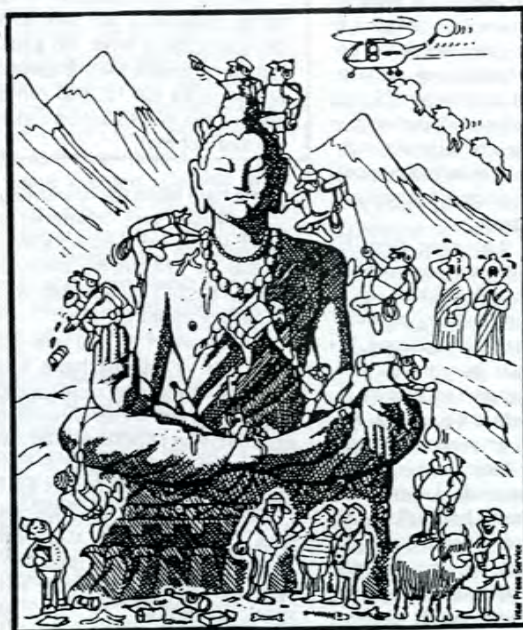
The Reincarnate Rimpoché and the monks of the Thame Monastery are anxiously praying for generous helping hands, for time is running out for this repository of a timeless tradition.

-Lhakpa Norbu



international support for reconstruction and renovation after it was destroyed by a fire in 1989. As one of the primary cultural centres of the Khumbu, Thame Gomba's rehabilitation too should

business. It does not collect taxes or demand obligatory support from the community, and is dependent entirely upon voluntary support and donations, which have remained stagnant. The annual income of the monas-



Nepalesisk nytår & Bisket Jatra festen

Af Birgit Nielsen

I år faldt det nepalesiske nytår d. 14. april, og det faldt tillige sammen med Bisket Jatra festen. Denne fest varer i ca. 9 dage og hører hjemme i Bhaktapur. Det er den eneste fest, der foregår efter den officielle solkalender, næsten alle de andre fester er baseret på den religiøse månekalender, og er derfor variabel år for år efter den gregorianske kalender. Ikke så langt fra hovedstaden samles folk i Sapana Tirtha med den hellige dam. Legenden fortæller, at en spedalsk i sin drøm fik det råd at bade i dammen, hvorefter han blev fuldstændig kureret. Dammen betragtes nu for hellig, og folk valfarter dertil for at bade. Derfra går man så videre til Bhaktapur til Bisket Jatra festen.

Mange fester på én gang

Samtidig foregår der et par andre små fester i nærheden. I Thimi har alle byens 32 veje hver sin guddom i et skrin med billede. Alle disse billeder anbringes i *khats* (=en bærestol på lange bambusstænger). Om aftenen pyntes disse khats, og billederne udstilles. Nogle kvinder bringer røgelsespinde og små offergaver rundt til alle byens gudebilleder. Men de fleste samles på pladsen foran Bal Kumari templet og synger et stort repertoire af folkesange, mens de hele natten skal holde liv i faklerne. Går de ud, er det et dårligt varsel for byen. Tidlig næste morgen begynder processionen. Khats bæres gennem de snoede gader i en fantastisk gudeparade, som ender ved templet. Her udspilles et drama med en Ganesh Khat fra en nabolandsby. Dagen slutter med ofringer.

Tungeboringsceremoni

Men festen i landsbyen Bode har endnu en attraktion: Tungeborings ceremonien. Hvert år

Nepal Vision Nr.2, 2. årgang, juli 1994

(Dansk-Nepalesisk Selskab)

melder en ung mand sig frivilligt til at faste i 24 timer, hvorefter han står frem på byens skueplads, mens en præst med et klæde holder den unge mands udstrakte tunge og med en syl gennemborer denne. Med tungen således fikseret, anbringes der yderligere brændende fakler på hans skuldre, mens den unge mand går rundt i byen i en times tid. Når han kommer tilbage, fjerner præsten sylen fra hans tunge, og såret fyldes med mudder fra tempelgulvet. På dette tidspunkt betragter man en blødning for et ilde varsel for landsbyens folk.

En skrækkelig brud

I Bhaktapur er Bisket festen i fuld sving på denne dag. Legenden fortæller om en konge, som var fast besluttet på at bortgifte sin datter. Hver dag blev hun gift med en passende ungersvend fra landsbyen, men den næste morgen blev denne mand fundet død under mystiske omstændigheder. Så alle var direkte bange. Når hans tur kom for. En skønne dag besøgte en ung prins kongeriget og hørte om de unge mænds lidelser. Næste dag var det hans værts søns tur til at gifte sig med prinsessen. Han tilbød at tage den unge mands plads. Prinsen blev gift med prinsessen, men han holdt sig vågen på deres bryllupsnat. Da så han to sorte træde, som udsprang fra prinsessens næsebor, de blev nu til kæmpeslanger, som var parat til at angribe ham. Men med sit sværd besejrede han dem med et slag. Næste morgen da tjenerne kom for at bære liget bort, blev de yderst forundret over at se prinsen i live. Kongen takkede brudgommen hjerteligt for at have reddet byen for sin forbandelse. Han beordrede en fest, hvor han hængte slangernes skamferede legemer ud på pladsen, så alle kunne se det. En sejrstolpe rejses hvert

nytår for at mindes begivenhederne. Guderne Bhairab og Bhadrakali og deres billeder anbringes i store vogne med træhjul. Ved Bisket festen trækkes disse vogne ved hjælp af tykke tove gennem Bhaktapurs gader. Det sker i 4 dage før nytårsdag. På den 4. dags eftermiddag til en åben plads i byens sydøstlige område. Her rejses en ca. 25 meter høj træstolpe med en tværstang, hvorfra der hænger to bannere, som når helt ned til jorden. De skal forestille de to slangedæmoner, som prinsen dræbte. Det er en vanskelig og farefuld opgave at få anbragt disse træstolper på plads i vognen, så sommetider må det udsættes til næste dag. Stolperne bliver der hele den næste dag - nytårsdag - og folk fra Bhaktapur og omegn kommer for at betragte synet og med

deres pander at berøre bannerne. Derefter begynder nedrivningen. Tovene løsnes, og der trækkes i stolpen fra alle sider, indtil den falder med et ordentlig brag ned over det sted, hvor den blev rejst. Dette symboliserer afslutningen på Bisket festen, men folket fester i endnu 4 dage. På den næstsidste dag sættes alle templernes rigdomme og billeder udenfor til beskuelse. Byens folk iført deres bedste klæder tager rundt og besøger dem alle på skift. Der ofres fugle og dyr, folk er glade og fester. Dette er nok den smukkeste dag i Bhaktapurs rituelle kalender. Til slut bringes billederne tilbage til templerne, og vognene bliver efterladt, hvor de befinder sig, indtil de ganske langsomt trilles tilbage til deres lade.

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Incomplete Revolution



The Challenge to Democracy in Nepal: A Political History

by T. Louise Brown
Routledge, London and New York, 1996
239 pages, £ 40
ISBN 0 415 08576 4

by S.D. Muni

Democratisation in Nepal has been a tardy and protracted zig-zag process. Since the fall of the Ranas in 1951, it has travelled from one triangular balance of mutually antagonistic and incompatible forces to another, from one partial and incomplete "revolution" in 1951 to another in 1990. T. Louise Brown, through her study *The Challenge to Democracy in Nepal: A Political History*, joins a large band of Subcontinental and Western scholars who have attempted to analyse and evaluate Nepal's march towards democracy. Her point of departure from other studies lies in the emphasis placed on the events of the people's "revolution" (Jan Andolan) of 1990 and thereafter, to which more than half the book is devoted.

Ms Brown's narrative covers familiar ground in the first half of the book, which deals with the period from the end of the Rana rule until 1990. The only significant change during this period was the resurgence of the monarchy in place of a decadent and discredited Rana system. In the interim, the monarchy struggled to keep the democratic challenge suppressed, by strong-arm methods as well as by political and ideological manoeuvres. Such manoeuvres included not only alliances with and support mobilisation from the remnants of the Rana's vested interests and stratified social structures and feudal institutions, but also from the Communist Party and its radical and extremist associates who did not want to see democratic forces, represented by the Nepali Congress, gain political ground in the Kingdom.

Not enough has been said about a unique feature of the Nepali situation, which is that the Communist movement spread and strengthened itself under the patronage of the monarchy. In order to blunt the ideological challenge posed by democratic forces, the monarchy had to wear the mantle of modernisation which, in a very significant manner, eroded its traditional social support and legitimacy, precipitating what Huntington describes as the "dilemmas of a modernising Monarch". The Nepali kings' attempts to create and sustain, by hook or

by crook, the Panchayat system since 1962, was geared to skipping this dilemma. This strategy, no doubt, lengthened the life of the assertive monarchy, but the king could not—and did not—resolve this dilemma forever. The king's failure in this regard led to the developments of 1990.

Ms Brown is able to neatly put this struggle between traditional and modern forces in the context of evolving socio-economic relationships. She also underlines the traditional and authoritarian character of the Panchayat system. But all this has been done by others and, at times, with even sharper focus and persuasive articulation of the inherent contradictions in the Nepali situation.

The conditions for the 1990 "revolution" were created by a curious combination of Nepal's internal and international developments. Brown has carefully identified and analysed the role of internal factors like the rise of the urban middle class, the collapse of the Panchayat system's credibility, and the coming together of anti-monarchical forces, particularly the Nepali Congress and the united Communists. Among the external forces, Brown mentions the end of the Cold War and the conflict precipitated between India and Nepal over trade and transit, the attempt to introduce work permits for Indians seeking employment in Nepal that ran counter to the provisions of the 1950 treaty between the two countries, as well as the import of Chinese arms by the Panchayat regime.

India's role was most decisive in the success of the popular movement, as it frightened the king and emboldened the democratic forces. Since 1960-62, in its strategy for political survival, the royal regime had exploited India's fears of the China card. However, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's decision to maintain a tough posture broke the Indian policy free from its 30-year-old defeatist syndrome. This stance greatly facilitated the collapse of the Panchayat system and the victory of Nepal's democratic front. King Birendra tried to dismiss the popular forces as agents of India, but in vain. The King also attempted to

mobilise all possible support within the Indian political system, from the Shankracharyas, the army generals who had led Gurkha soldiers, to family and personal ties with influential politicians and bureaucrats. But that did not help. Even Rajiv Gandhi's electoral defeat and the coming to power of the government led by Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, which was sympathetic to the King's regime in Nepal, could not reverse the momentum Mr Gandhi's policies had generated.

Superficial Differences

While Brown has discussed the moves and responses of the King and the democratic forces blow by blow, her treatment of the external factor is brief and superficial. No one can, however, disagree with her conclusions that the Jan Andolan of 1990 was an "uneasy compromise", it was not a "national movement" but an urban based middle-class uprising, and that "Democratic Nepal differs only superficially from Panchayat Nepal".

Indeed, the most critical question in Nepal's democratic struggle has been the truncated and incomplete nature of democratic revolutions. In 1951, the Ranas lost their credibility but they were not completely erased from the post-Rana power structure. Similarly, in 1990, the Panchayat system collapsed and the kingship surrendered to the democratic challenge, but vestiges of both remain in the parliamentary system. Even as a constitutional monarch, the King wields enormous powers and continues to strengthen his position as a key political player.

Why has this been so and who is responsible for not allowing a complete and lasting democratic victory? Brown should have attempted to answer this question and stated clearly that lopsided socio-economic and institutional development within Nepal and the self-proclaimed forces of stability and order from outside, particularly India, combined to force unethical compromises and provided a fresh lease of life and sustenance to the traditional forces in Nepal.

This being the case, the prospects for democratisation in Nepal depend not only on domestic institution-building (such as political parties) and changes in the stratified social hierarchy, but also on the presence of a regional and international atmosphere that is conducive and committed to democratic ideals. One hopes that the next stage of "democratic revolution" will start unfolding before long.

On the whole, Ms Brown's is a good and informative study based on reliable and relevant sources. However, the emphasis on chronological narrative, though useful as detailed reference, is at the cost of analytical insights and logical projections that could have helped enrich the study of emerging theories of democracy in the developing world.

S.D. Muni is Professor of South Asian Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi.

September/October 1995 HIMAL

Bøker....

Nepal-India Border Relations

Hari Bansh Jha, editor

CETS, Lalitpur, 1995, NRs 100

This is the result of a two-day international seminar held in Kathmandu on "Nepal-India Border Relations" in 1994. The book contains five papers presented by both Nepalis and Indians which identify and analyse the historical, sociocultural, economic and political relationships among the border inhabitants. The papers are by Ram Niwas Panday (historical perceptions), Gopal Singh Nepali (social relations), Hari Bansh Jha (economic relations), Parmanand (political relations), and Deepak Goel (cross-border crime).

The Rulings of the Night:

An Ethnography of Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts
by Gregory G. Maskarinec

University of Wisconsin Press, 1995

ISBN 0 299 14494 1, US \$22.95

Based on research dealing with fifteen shamans, Maskarinec attempts to explain the world of the blacksmith *jhantri* in the Sajarkot and Rukum districts of West Nepal. He empathises with these "low caste" peoples, and records a lifestyle that is often undervalued or ignored. Much attention is paid to documenting excerpts of shamanic chants. The researcher's extensive fieldwork with the ethnographic and linguistic details he includes help provide the understanding of the shaman's prayers and rituals and their other social roles.

Rafting Nepal: A Consumers' Guide

by Peter Knowles

Rivers Publishing UK, Surbiton

1994, NRs 280

After the unexpected success of *White Water Nepal*, a guidebook for both kayaking and rafting, the publisher was asked to produce a cheaper guide for the local rafting "consumer". Knowles has been exploring and running the rivers of the Himalaya since 1983 and was recently given the title "modern explorer" by the Royal Geographical Society (together with 19 others).

New Directions in Nepal-India Relations

by Rishikesh Shaha

Nirala Publications, New Delhi, 1995

ISBN 81 85693 53 6 IRs 65

This book looks at the changes in Nepal-India relations that have come about since the establishment of the multiparty system in Nepal. Shaha, eminent scholar and statesman, looks at some of the links the Nepali political parties have forged with their Indian counterparts and how they have been shaping the

present relationship between the two countries. The book also covers some of the issues of contention and the difficulty of the governments at resolving them in this new-found Nepali times of public accountability.

Over the Mountains

by Mani Dixit

Ekta Books, Kathmandu, 1995, NRs 175

Partly based on Nepal's historical past, this fictional work is about Nepali migration down through the centuries. It describes the ordeals poor mountain people endure which lead them to leave their ancestral land in search of sustenance.

The Quest for Health

Dr. Hemang Dixit

Educational Enterprise, Kathmandu, 1995, NRs 210

A study of Nepal's health field, this book begins with a historical analysis and eventually covers contemporary issues such as health rights, primary health care, hospital services, family planning, insurance, diseases, policy-making and medical research. Dixit provides statistics but cautions

Forests and Forestry in Nepal

by S.S. Negi

Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994

ISBN 81 7024 581 8, IRs 250

Negi, an Indian Forest Officer from Himachal, sees the forests of Nepal as unique in that they extend from the southern Gangetic plains to the alpine zone below the snow line in the north. The book discusses Nepal's forest types, their utilisation and management, forest products and their economic utility and also forest degradation.

Anthropological Roundup

This is a collection of 34 essays presented at an international seminar organised by the University of Sidney and the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies in September 1992 in Kathmandu.

The most outstanding feature of this book is the variety of topics it presents. This diversity illustrates the trajectory that the anthropology of Nepal has spanned in the last three decades, from its initial obsessions with caste, social structure, and religion to issues concerned with development, the nation-state, and the politics of culture. The essays collectively show how Anthropology as a critical discipline can contribute to a better understanding and perhaps resolution of Nepal's numerous societal problems. They also illuminate how theory and practice of anthropology must not be separated as they have so far been among its practitioners.

The papers on 'Anthropology of Resource Management' highlight the links between forestry and anthropology, providing useful insights into understanding the politics of development, local cultural practices, and social change in Nepal. While exploring issues such as indigenous and community forestry management and farming systems, writers have simultaneously pointed out the importance of understanding the gender dimension in the "eco-crisis" (Sumitra Gurung); the historical dynamics of environmental degradation (Om Gurung); and the labour and forest use strategies (Ben Campbell, Ephrosine Daniggeles). Papers under this heading, except the one by Om Gurung, however, focus on micro level institutions. Absent is a critical look at the relationship between international donor agencies, state policies, NGOs, powerful persons in the community, and the local users of natural resources.

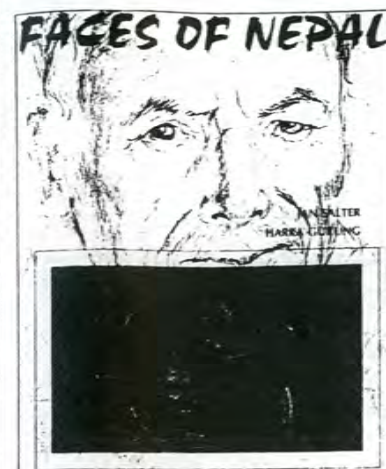
On women and gender, some of the common themes evoked are women's resistance, power, and the relationship between *shakti* (female form of transformative power), kingship and the state. Barbara N. Aziz presents a biography of a dissident and progressive woman in the Arun River Valley and critiques the patriarchal processes of history-making which have obliterated women's contribution. Aziz indicates the potential of both oral sources and biographical information to reconstruct something that has been sidelined. Julia Thompson delineates women's use of rituals and religious activities as forms of overt or covert resistance. Through a close reading of Swasthani textual and ritual traditions, Linda Iltis argues that *shakti* is evoked in rituals performed by

Anthropology of Nepal: Peoples, Problems and Processes
Michael Allen,
editor
Mandala Book
Point, Kathmandu
1994

women to empower individuals, families, communities, the king, and ultimately the state. Tordis Korvald and Bert van den Hoek also share Iltis' concern about female power, but in the context of Newar dance rituals.

The book also contains essays dealing with the nation-state, collective identity and action, and urban problems. A new form of collective identity known as *jana-shakti* and certain modalities of action have become widespread after the 1990 movement argues Vivienne Kondos. But increasing state control over local resources has disempowered local organisations according to Stephen Mikesell's close reading of Nepal's new local government law of 1992. State-subject relations is also highlighted by Kondos et al. in their analysis of industrial workers' political action and the state's

response. While the variety of topics discussed has certainly enriched the Anthropology of Nepal, there are remnants of "gatekeeping concepts", with Newar culture portrayed as the only culture of Kathmandu. Although topics such as musical genres, changing family patterns in urban areas, urban traffic behaviour, and actions of Bahun and Chhetri women are explored, there are at least six papers based on field work among the Newars of Kathmandu. In addition, essays (except Prayag Raj Sharma's) dealing with urbanism focus only on the towns of Kathmandu Valley and therefore leave the theoretical problem of conceptualising the relationship between old and new urban centres and processes of urbanisation unresolved.



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FACES OF NEPAL

by Jan Salter and
Harka Gurung

Published by Himal Books

"The 85 portraits in the book by Jan represent a mosaic of the Nepalese people. Most will find them of immense diversity. But bereft of particular ethnic ornamentations, the faces bear a common expression of forbearance...." says Dr Harka Gurung, whose meticulously researched and lucidly written text accompany the pictures by the well-known hand of Jan Salter in Faces of Nepal.

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New, Improved Bibliotheca

KANAK MANI DDIT

HIMALAYAN BIBLIOPHILES can rejoice-- Bibliotheca Himalayica is back! Connoisseurs who had despaired at the comatose status of the series have ample reason to be pleased with the publication of two new books in a 'modernised' format, *The Treasure Revealers of Bhutan* by Padma Tshewang et al. and *Development Studies* by Don Messerschmidt.

The series was conceived in 1969 by Hallvard K. Kuloy of Norway, who worked with UNICEF in India and Nepal from 1968 to 1979. As he told HIMAL, was a result of the fact that Kuloy had time to spare during his stint in New Delhi. "I did not play golf nor had a family to worry about, so I spent a good deal of time reading among the cool stacks of the Indian National Archives, and the somewhat warmer library of the Archaeological Survey of India."

Through a large circle of "witty, generous and knowledgeable friends", Kuloy was introduced to the wonder of Himalayan civilisations. Soon, he was preparing an anthology of old writings on Tibet and the Himalaya, but the material was so overwhelming that he abandoned the project. "I thought, why not reprint the books instead? That is how we first published Colonel Kirkpatrick's *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, which was an instant success." Kirkpatrick was followed by Sarat Chandra Das' *Jour-*

ney to Lhasa and Tibet and John Ware Edgar's very rare *Report on a Visit to Sikkim and the Thibetan Frontier*.

"In retrospect it is easy to see why we succeeded: we used better than average paper, found a good bookbinder, and we charged a modest price in relation to quality," says Kuloy.

When Kuloy was transferred to Nepal in 1972, he approached Ratna Pustak Bhandar, the Kathmandu publisher, and asked them to take up Bibliotheca Himalayica. "We were a bit wary at first, but it worked out because back then it was easier to sell specialised books on the Himalaya," says Govinda Shrestha of Ratna.

Bibliotheca Himalayica began to lose steam in the late 1970s. Himalayan overexposure resulted in a surplus of touristic publishing which cashed in on exotica, and scholarly works remained on the shelves. At the same

time, publishers from India learned that a market existed for long-forgotten books, and they started issuing reprints of their own. What Kuloy calls the "reprint avalanche" swept his pioneering series out of the market.

Never one to give up, during a visit to Kathmandu in 1993 Kuloy discussed strategy with Ratna. Recalls Kuloy, "The answer was cooperation between small publishers, not competition, and to bring our published material up to contemporary standards." Enter, EMR Publishing House, a collaborative effort of three Kathmandu-based publishers—Educational Enterprises, Mandala Book Point and Ratna. Together with a new lease of life, Bibliotheca Himalayica was also given a new look.

The newly energised Bibliotheca Himalayica plans to bring out three titles in the next few months, including the 'bestseller' of the series, Ekai Kawaguchi's *Three Years in Tibet*. The new volumes retain the Bibliotheca Himalayica trademark picture map of the region on its inside covers, but everything else is different. The sleek paperbacks are a far cry from their stodgy hardcover forbears. They are also more expensive, but the Western booklover, at least, does not seem to mind.

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