

Bpost

"Hamro Patrika"

Norge-Nepal foreningen
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MEDLEMSKONTINGENT:

Enkeltmedlem	kr 100,-
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Program for møtet 23. april 1998:

- * Lysbildeforedrag v/Ola Brekke om utfordringer og erfaringer i forbindelse med investeringer i Nepal. Brekke arbeider i Statkraft og har tilbrakt flere år i landet. Statkraft kjøpte opp deler av nepalesiske Himal Power Limited, og har deltatt både på investor- og utbyggersiden i prosjekter i Nepal.
- * Kaffe/te, kaker og utlodning.

*Velkommen
i Norge-Nepal foreningen!*



हाम्रो पत्रिका

HAMRO PATRIKA & VARAVIS

ORGAN FOR NORGE-NEPAL-FORENINGEN

Nr. 2, mars 1998

**Velkommen til møte
i Norge-Nepal foreningen
23. april 1998 kl. 19⁰⁰
i Wergelandsveien 15, Oslo**

**Lysbildeforedrag v/Ola Brekke
fra Statkraft:
«Investeringer i Nepal»**

Neste møte blir 17. september 1998

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

God sommer!

Referat fra medlemsmøtet 26. februar 1998

Omtrent 65 personer var tilstede på daal bhaat-møtet i februar. Chandika Olsen sto for matlagingen, med god hjelp fra bl.a. Anuradha Gurung. Resultatet var nydelig! Øystein Berg viste lysbilder fra sin reise i Nepal høsten 1997 - en selvorganisert tur til Langtang Himal, Nagarkot og Chitwan. Berg delte med oss gleder, frustrasjoner og problemer han og turkameratene møtte underveis. Lysbildene holdt bra kvalitet og foredraget var ikke uten en god porsjon selvironi om mangelfull kulturkunnskap. Humoristisk fortalte han om mangler både på utstyr og erfaring, og om usikkerhet, misforståelser og hendelser som «førstereis» trekking turist.

Nepals ambassadør på Norgesbesøk

I midten av mars var Nepals ambassadør Singha B. Basnyat på besøk i Norge. Basnyat ble utnevnt til ambassadør ved Nepals London-ambassade for ti måneder siden og skal inneha stillingen i fem år. Han har doktorgrad i political science fra Colombia University. I løpet av Norgesoppholdet var Basnyat i audiens hos Kong Harald og deltok i flere møter, bl.a. med Statkraft og UD. Norge-Nepal foreningen v/Anuradha Gurung møtte Basnyat under en mottakelse på Grand Hotel. Tilstede var også ambassadørens kone, prinsesse Jotshana Basnyat, samt Bishwa E. Paneru (attache ved Nepals ambassade i London), generalkonsul Bjørn Korsvoll med sin kone Berit Korsvoll, Magne Berger Nilsen, og representanter fra vårt kongehus, UD og NORAD.

NYTT FRA NEPAL

Splittelse av Nepals største politiske parti

Kathmandu, 17. februar og 4. og 10. mars 1998 (*The Kathmandu Post*, *The Rising Nepal* og *Explore Nepal Weekly*) - Splittelsen innen CPN-UML er nå et faktum etter at 46 representanter har søkt Parliament Secretariat om å bli anerkjent som et eget politisk parti. Denne utviklingen umuliggjør enhver sjanse for kompromiss mellom de to stridende sidene innen CPN-UML. Den største siden, omtalt som CPN-UML eller bare UML, ledes av det tidligere CPN-UML's generalsekretær Madhav Kumar Nepal og hans allierte Khadga Oli. Minoritetsfraksjonen som framsatte krav om et nytt parti, ledes av Bamdev Gautam. Den nye partiets navn er Communist Party of Nepal Marxist-Leninist, på folkemunne omtalt som CPN-ML eller bare ML. ML har allerede etablert komiteér i over femti av Nepals distrikter.

Fraksjonen trengte godkjenning fra 40% av medlemmene for å gjennomføre en formelt sett lovlig splittelse. Det gamle CPN-UML har totalt 101 parlamentarikere, hvorav 89 i Representantenes Hus. Gautam's minoritetsfraksjon krevde støtte fra minst 41 representanter som alle måtte bekrefte sitt ønske om eget parti overfor Parliament Secretariat. Lederne av de to fraksjonene, Nepal og Gautam, har vært uenige i lang tid.

Det tidligere CPN-UML var det største partiet i Representantenes Hus. Det ble etablert i 1990 etter sammenslåing av to kommunistiske partier; Manmohan Adhikari's Nepal Communist Party (Marxist) og Madan Bhandari's Nepal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist).

Politiske kommentatorer forventer at UML vil bevege seg mer i retning av det politiske sentrum og i liten grad kritisere USA og India. ML forventes å finne fotfeste lenger til venstre og vektlegge nasjonalisme og kommunistisk ideologi, samt være kritiske til USA og India. ML kritiserer også Mahakali-avtalen som ble inngått med India og ratifisert under den NC-ledede koalisjonsregjeringen i 1995. ML ønsket at CPN-UML skulle anerkjenne mangler ved avtalen, og at partiet skulle erklære USA som en «imperialistisk makt» og India som en «regional hegemon». Minoritetsfraksjonen framsatte også krav om 40% representasjon i partiets sentralkomité, noe majoriteten ikke ville godta. Disse sakene har vært nevnt som mulige årsaker til splittelse av partiet, men få er i stand til å gi en fullgod og troverdig forklaring på splittelsen. Man snakker nå om en «mystisk kraft» eller «usynlig hånd» som arbeider bak kulissene og bringer fram partisplittelser for å hindre at ett parti skal få nok makt til å dominere den politiske scenen. Det er foreløpig usikkert om UML eller ML vil framstå som hovedopposisjonspartiet til den sittende regjeringen.

Den politiske nøkkelrollen fra RPP til Koirala

10. mars 1998 (*Explore Nepal Weekly*) - Girija Prasad Koirala, president i Nepal Congress, står nå overfor nye muligheter med hensyn til politiske koalisjoner. Etter splittelsen av CPN-UML er ikke allianse med Thapa's RPP-fraksjon eneste mulighet lenger. Koirala kan nå arbeide for en egen mindretallsregjering, gå i koalisjon med Chand's RPP-fraksjon, eller velge en allianse med UML eller ML. «Koirala sitter på nøkkelen til eventuelle endringer. I går var han avhengig av statsminister Thapa, idag er alle partier i Parlamentet avhengige av Koirala», uttaler en politisk kommentator. «Chand vender seg mot Koirala for å svekke sin rival Thapa. Thapa er på sin side avhengig av Koirala's støtte for å bevare lederrollen for sin RPP-fraksjon. Madhav K. Nepal's UML trenger Koirala's velsignelse for å slå til mot Gautam's utbrytergruppe ML. Og ML behøver Koirala's støtte for å konsolidere sin posisjon i rivaliseringen med UML.» Over natten har den politiske scenen blitt svært gunstig for Koirala som gjerne vil lede en ny regjering. Han møter imidlertid utfordringer fra egne partifeller som er misfornøyde med hans lederskap. Idet Koirala eventuelt entrer statsministerstolen, vil hans interne rivaler (bl.a. K.P. Bhattarai) sette igang kampanjer mot ham.

RPP, som tidligere var tungen på vekstskålen i nepalesisk politikk, har altså mistet sin nøkkelposisjon som følge av UML's splittelse. For ikke lenge siden ble også RPP splittet (Thapa-fraksjonen og Chand-fraksjonen). RPP forespeiles i dag svært liten innflytelse i den politiske utviklingen, spesielt uten gjenforening. NC kan nå som helst fjerne statsminister Thapa hvis han ikke føyer seg etter Koirala's ønsker.

Maoistenes herjinger fortsetter

Deukhuri 17. februar 1998 (*The Kathmandu Post*) - Maoister satte nylig fyr på kontoret til Small Farmer's Development Project (SFDP) i Kabhura i Salyan-distriktet. Møblene ble knust og prosjektets papirer brent. Også i Chiura i Mulkhola VDC brente maoister SFDP's dokumenter nylig. De stjal samtidig statsborgerskapspapirer, penger og eiendomsskjøter. I Nipane VDC fikk en bonde frastjålet sin risavling som senere ble delt ut til lokalbefolkningen. I Kapilakot VDC rapporteres det om skyting mellom politi og maoister.

Etter funn av bomber nær offentlige distriktskontorer, er det enkelte steder forbudt å bringe med seg bager til offentlige kontorer.

Merverdiavgift skaper kaos

17. februar 1998 (*Explore Nepal Weekly*) - Introduksjonen av merverdiavgift (VAT; Value Added Tax) i Nepal, har resultert i økte priser og kaos i markedet. Forretningsfolk er uvillige til å samarbeide og offentlig ansatte vet ikke hvordan VAT-reglene skal implementeres, eller de er ikke istand til å gjennomføre tiltaket. «Det virker som om ingen vet hvordan situasjonen skal håndteres. På skattekontoret finnes ingen til å besvare spørsmål fra forretningsfolk og enkelte ganger er det ingen tilstede for å registrere skattebetalerne. Usikkerhet og misforståelser fører til verbal krig mellom tjenestemenn og næringslivet», sier en forretningsmann. Større handelshus ignorerer VAT'en.

Selgere av oljeprodukter har stengt sine butikker, og prisene på konsumvarer øker mens økonomene i finansdepartementet prater om gunstigheten av merverdiavgift. VAT ble introdusert på bakgrunn av utenlandsk press, spesielt fra Verdensbanken, som delvis knyttet framtidig bistand til etablering av VAT.

Nepals økonomi

Kathmandu, 17. februar (*The Kathmandu Post*) - Nepal Rastra Bank har offentliggjort den økonomiske statistikken for de første seks månedene av skatteåret 1997/98. Her følger enkelte punkter:

- * Totale inntekter opp 4,6%. Totale utgifter opp 8,1%. Utgiftene til utvikling opp 0,5%.
- * Budsjettunderskudd på 3065.3 millioner rupies, hvorav 67,5% er finansiert med lån fra utlandet.
- * Totale lån og gaver fra utlandet opp fra 1,993.8 millioner rupies til 2,585.1
- * Nasjonal urban konsumprisindeks opp 3,2%, mot 10,4% samme tidsrom i fjor.
- * Total handel med utlandet opp 8,9%, mot 25,5% i fjor.
- * Total eksport opp 11,9%, mot 24,7% i fjor. Total import opp 8,1%, mot 25,7% i fjor.
- * Handelsunderskuddet opp 6,7%, mot 26,0% i fjor.
- * Eksport til India som andel av total eksport opp til 31,0%, mot 23,5% i fjor.
- * Import fra andre land enn India som andel av total import opp til 72,3%, mot 69,3% i fjor.
- * Beholdningen av utenlands valuta tilsvare seks måneders import.

Nepal's nye transit-rute

26. februar 1998 (*The Kathmandu Post*) - Nepal ligger inneklemt mellom India og Kina, og er avhengig av India for tilgang til havet. Siden 1978 har riktignok Bangladesh sørget for havnemuligheter, men Bangladesh og Nepal skilles av en liten stripe indisk territorium. Adgang til havet via Bangladesh er dermed også begrenset av India. Så langt har Nepal vært avhengig av indiske havner, spesielt Calcutta som er den nærmeste. Calcutta er overbelastet og lider under forsinkelser pga. ombygginger, og har i perioder gjort nepalesisk handel svært vanskelig.

Etter flere års diskusjoner om en alternativ transit-rute, fikk imidlertid Nepal mulighet til å benytte Kakarbhitta-Phulbari-Banglabandh-veien til Bangladesh fra september 1997. Transit vanskeligjøres av India's sikkerhetstiltak, men man forventer at ruten vil bli mer effektiv og permanent etterhvert. En positiv følge har vært å bringe Bangladesh nærmere Nepal. Bangladesh arbeider nå hardt med å oppgradere veier og havner for å møte nepalesiske behov. Det er beregnet at nesten 20% av Nepal's import og eksport vil flyttes fra Calcutta og Haldia til Mongla.

Tøff tid for bankene

Kathmandu, 26. februar 1998 (*The Kathmandu Post*) - Prithvi Bahadur Pandey, president i Banker's Association of Nepal, er bekymret for usunn konkurranse i bankvesenet. Han ønsker bl.a. at Sentral-banken skal gripe inn med strenge tiltak. Etter 1990 har antallet banker og finansselskaper økt kraftig, men utenlandske investeringer har ikke vokst i samme tempo på grunn av politisk instabilitet. Med landets skjøre politiske situasjon er mange prosjekter forsinket eller lagt på is. Finansieringsinstitusjonene betrakter rett og slett risikoen ved langsiktige investeringer som for høy. Hvis ikke nye lovende prosjekter initieres og den politiske situasjonen stabiliseres, vil det innen kort tid være få aktuelle investeringsområder i Nepal. Pandey ser ikke lyst på Nepal's økonomiske utvikling. Han peker på et stort potensiale i landets vannressurser og turisme, som han mener ikke er tiltrekkelig utnyttet i en helhetlig nasjonaløkonomisk strategi. «Turisme-sektoren er essensiell for den nasjonale økonomien, men hvem skal ta tak i forurensningsproblemet som stadig forverres og påvirker turismen negativt?»

Bistand til Nepal

Kathmandu, 17. februar 1998 (*The Kathmandu Post*) - Tyskland har nylig besluttet å gi 26 millioner D-mark i gave til Nepal. Pengene skal gå til urban utvikling, biogass-prosjekter, familieplanlegging, Middle Marsyangdi Hydroelectric Project og Malekhu Dhading Besi-veien.

Nepal's myndigheter har også undertegnet en avtale med United Nations Development Program (UNDP) som innebærer 2.5 millioner US\$ til implementeringen av Micro Enterprises Development Program (MEDEP). Industridepartementet har ansvaret for MEDEP som støttes av flere industrier, organisasjoner og offentlige institusjoner. Hensikten med prosjektet er å begrense fattigdom ved å hjelpe lav-inntektsfamilier i rurale områder til å etablere små foretak.

PLAN i Nepal

Kathmandu, 25. februar (*The Kathmandu Post*) - For tjue år siden startet PLAN et utviklingsprogram for 200 familier i Sitapala i Kathmandu. I dag har det hele vokst til en stor støtteorganisasjon. PLAN International/Nepal, etablert i 1978, støtter nå utviklingsprogrammer som sørger for 30.000 barn i elleve distrikter i Nepal. Organisasjonen forbereder utvidelse av programmene til andre distrikter, hovedsaklig midtre og vestlige regioner. PLAN har nylig etablert et prosjekt i Bajhang - et distrikt som ikke dekkes av andre hjelpeorganisasjoner.

Amerikanerne om menneskerettigheter i Nepal

30. januar 1998 (*U.S. Department of State: «Nepal Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997»*, utgitt av Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 30. januar 1998) - Siden 1990 har Nepal utviklet seg til et mer åpent samfunn med større respekt for menneskerettighetene, men myndighetene har ikke gjennomført alle grunnlovsparagrafer som er aktuelle i denne forbindelsen.

Nepal har avholdt fire valg siden 1990 og internasjonale observatører betrakter disse som forholdsvis frie og rettferdige. Maoistenes «people's war» har resultert i bombing, tortur og drap (sivile og offentlige tjenestemenn) i 27 av 75 distrikter. Politiets reaksjon på «people's war» medførte tilfeller av unødvendig maktbruk mot fanger og andre personer. Politiet bryter menneskerettighetene på flere punkter, bl.a. ved å bruke tortur som straff og pressmiddel. Politiet anklages for å ha drept ubevæpnede sivile og fanger. Myndighetene undersøker sjelden anklager om politivold og gjennomfører sjelden sanksjoner mot polititjenestemenn. Myndighetene benytter tilfældige arrestasjoner og forvaring. Forholdene i fengslene er dårlige. Grunnloven stadfester uavhengige domstoler, men i praksis ligger de under for politisk press og korrupsjon. Lang varetekt og store forsinkelser før rettsaker kommer opp, er et problem. Myndighetene legger fremdeles noen restriksjoner på religions- og ytringsfriheten. Lavkaster og kvinner lider under omfattende diskriminering. Salg av kvinner og jenter, vold mot kvinner, tvungent arbeid og barnearbeid er fremmeder alvorlige problemer. I juli 1996 vedtok Parlamentet å nedsette en permanent menneskerettighetskommisjon med mandat til å undersøke brudd på menneskerettighetene. Kommisjonen er foreløpig ikke etablert.

Kronprins til Tyskland

Kathmandu, 4. og 10. mars 1998 (*The Rising Nepal og Explore Nepal Weekly*) - Kronprins Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev var i mars på Tysklandsbesøk i forbindelse med Visit Nepal Year 1998. En rekke mottakelser sto på programmet. Formålet med besøket var å fremme turismen til Nepal. Kronprinsen besøkte verdens største reiselivsmesse i Berlin, der Nepal var representert.

Tiger i Nepal

17. februar 1998 (*Explore Nepal Weekly*) - For hundre år siden talte verdens tigre omtrent 100.000, i dag er tallet mellom 5.000 og 7.500. Den bengalske tigreren, konsentrert i Bangladesh, India, Nepal og Bhutan, antas å utgjøre 3.000 til 4.700 individer. Nepal huser nesten 300 tigre, hvorav 100 voksne (70 hanner og 30 hunner). Landet har avsatt 14% av sine skogsområder til ville dyr.

Trekking in Nepal Himalaya - ny udgave

Lonely Planets klassiske trekkingbog er netop udkommet i sin 7. udgave. De første bøger var af svingende kvalitet med alt for få oplysninger. Men bogens forfatter Stan Armington har med denne udgave virkelig gjort en pragtbog med oplysninger om hele Nepal. Trekking in Nepal er absolut de 189 kr. værd, den koster.

Lonely Planet: Trekking in Nepal, 425 sider masser af gode kort og fotos. Gode informationer om trekkingforberedelse. Fås i boghandlen.



Til Nepal - ny bog fra Norge-Nepal Foreningen

Norge-Nepal Foreningen har udgivet en lille flot bog om Nepal med udgangspunkt i deres informationshæfte fra 1987. Der er kapitler om alt fra politik, historie og fattigdom over klima og miljøproblemer til turisme og praktiske råd med adresser og telefonnumre.

48 sider med farvebilleder og kort. Kan købes hos Kirsten Offersen ved henvendelse på tlf. 3142 8377.

Kilde: Nepal Vision

POLITICAL PUS

NOTHING BETTER EXPRESSES the state of Nepali politics than the question on everyone's minds these days: What next? A dysfunctional right-centre coalition government has just survived a no-confidence motion brought against it by an equally dysfunctional left-right opposition. Since Nepal's current "hung Parliament" has unsuccessfully tried every permutation possible with its collage of parties and fratricidal factions within parties, a sense of ennui shrouds the land. If there is one thing that Nepalis seem to be united on today, it is in the feeling that somehow, something, somewhere, will give.

This round of political drama started when Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa, heading a clumsy coalition of left-wing rightists, right-wing centrists and regional opportunists, got wind of several far-right MPs of his own party secretly bolting over to his archrival within the party, Lokendra Bahadur Chand, to team up with right-wing communists to bring him down. In a lightning move, which took even his own coalition partners by surprise, he recommended dissolution of Parliament "since there is no possibility of it providing a stable government" and the holding of fresh elections.

Within hours of Thapa exercising his constitutional prerogative, the collage of far-right rightists, right-wing communists and, strangely, far-left communists were knocking at the gates of King Birendra's palace asking him to exercise another constitutional prerogative that gave them the right to call for a special session of Parliament whose dissolution the prime minister had just recommended. The plot then started thickening.

Faced with contradictory constitutional claims, King Birendra decided to seek the legal advice of the Supreme Court, an action which has precipitated a political churning, the fallout of which will be evident in the days ahead. This move by the monarch was a break from the past when he had simply followed the advice of two previous prime ministers to dissolve the house and hold fresh election - although in the second instance when the

prime minister was heading a minority government, the Supreme Court had overturned the monarch's action and reinstated the parliament. This time, King Birendra was seen as playing favourites against left-wing rightists and right-wing centrists, giving credence to the belief of some that the right and left extremists have often served as Trojan horses for the Palace.

It has been remarked that when politics wobbles, politicians elsewhere prepare for elections while in Nepal they begin to prepare legal briefs. All of January, the country was at a standstill as lawyers aligned with different political factions debated in court which of the constitutional provisions had primacy - the prerogative of the prime minister to recommend dissolution or the right of a quarter of the MPs to call a special session of the House whenever they feel the urge. Sacrificing professional integrity to the winter winds, lawyers who had previously argued for the right of the prime minister now argued against it, and vice versa.

Far-right MPs wanted to team up with right-wing communists to bring down a clumsy coalition of left-wing rightists, right-wing centrists and regional opportunists.

In a divided verdict in which senior judges over-ruled their own previous judgement, the Supreme Court recommended that the King ignore the advice of his prime minister and call a special session of the House to debate the no-confidence motion. The latest twist to the story is that Prime Minister Thapa, whose political guile has served him well since the Panchayat years, survived the no-confidence motion and now continues to clock in at his office at Singha Darbar, the secretariat.

The (not-so-) United Marxist Leninists, which forms the main leftist opposition, despite being united in the vote against the gov-

ernment, has split vertically since its party congress in January. The primary causes for this were a severe personality clash at the top, the Mahakali border river treaty with India, seats in the politburo, and arcane Marxist jargons used to cloak all these issues. So deep were these animosities that practically no communist MP thought it worthwhile to attend Parliament (and sit with comrades) during the debate on the no-confidence motion in the special session they themselves had called for.

Having survived the no-confidence motion, Prime Minister Thapa quickly retracted his earlier recommendation to dissolve the parliament "since there is no possibility of it providing a stable government". He now said, "The situation has changed."

In these disturbed times, when coalitions are made and governments formed, only with the thought of earning corrupt income and ruling the roost during election time, all the primary actors seem to have emerged as losers. Thapa has kept his prime ministerial position, but finds himself confronted with a split in his already small party. His backer, Girija Prasad Koirala of the Nepali Congress, finds his hopes of heading a coalition government receding as fissures within his own party deepen.

The communists gambled

and lost. Not only their hopes of getting their hands on the levers of the government but also their credibility as a responsible democratic force within the parliamentary system has crumbled. Indeed, it is widely believed that disappointed cadres of the UML have begun to drift towards the "people's war" of the Maoists as the only other alternative that is ideologically satisfying to them.

By failing to address constitutional contradictions, the Supreme Court, the legal profession, as well as the Kathmandu-based cognoscenti and journalists have failed to inspire hope or provide societal leadership. King Birendra, who has till now played a more or less correct role as constitutional head, has, by ignoring the advice of an elected parliamentary prime minister, allowed himself to get drawn into the vortex of politics. He would have done well to keep out of it.

Because the middle ground in Nepali politics is today incapacitated by self-inflicted wounds, the extreme left and the extreme right can be trusted to clamour louder and more aggressively in the days ahead. ▲

-Dipak Gyawali

1998 MARCH

HIMAL 11/3

Nepali Cart Before Horse

by Shyam Shrestha, editor of the Nepali-language left monthly Mulyankan.

Himal
Sept/Oct. -97

Managers of the newest leftist insurgency in South Asia, Nepal's Maobadi are exploiting the failure of the state by putting their reliance on degenerative violence rather than organisation.

When the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) declared a "People's War" in February 1996 and attacked police posts in some areas in the Nepali hills, it came as a surprise to many. After all, the United People's Front, the political organ of the CPN (Maoist), was still involved in constitutional politics. And although the Front had boycotted the 1994 general elections, its strong showing in the first election held in 1991, where it emerged as the third largest party in parliament, had had people believe that the extreme leftists would not actually act upon their rhetoric of armed revolt.

This is the second Maobadi rebellion in Nepal. The first was the "class-enemy annihilation campaign" of 1971, carried out by the Coordination Centre, the embryonic organisation of what was to become the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist). Also known as the "Jhapa Movement", after the southeastern district where it was centred, this short-lived uprising was influenced by the Naxalites in Naxalbari, just across the border river of Mechi. The rebels went on a gruesome spree, chopping off the heads of some local landlords before they were brutally suppressed by the then Panchayat regime. (The CPN (ML) merged in 1991 with the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist) to become the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), which is the dominant partner in Nepal's ruling coalition at the moment.)

The present-day Maobadi, who accuse the ruling communist party of being revisionist and reactionary, are well aware of what happened to that earlier revolt. Their armed operations indicate they have refined on the shortcomings of the Jhapa Movement in that their actions seem more coordinated, with the central leadership retaining overall control.

The Maoists are active in eastern and central Nepal, but the epicentre of their movement is the two contiguous districts of Rolpa and Rukum in the western mid-hills. This area is served neither by roads nor development activities. This poverty-stricken area is inhabited by Magars, a very 'backward' ethnic group which continues to be sustained through migrant labour in India. A region ruled historically by feudal princelings, the area even today retains a medieval relationship between the rich and the poor a classic setting for Maoist activity.

Over the 18 months of armed struggle in which close to a hundred people have been killed, it is true that the Maoists have succeeded in carving out a distinct political identity. But it is one that is based more on isolated acts of violence and the bravura of a few devoted cadres rather than on the revolutionary upsurge of an oppressed people.

When the insurgents trained their guns on the rural elite, and those identified as 'informers', they found favour among sections of the rural populace in the areas where they operate. However, it is significant that Maobadi have had negligible influence on Nepal's sizeable urban working class.

Gory Glory

The rise of the Maoist movement can be attributed directly to the failure of the leaders of the 1990 People's Movement to respond to the hopes of the masses. Despite the expectations engendered by the Movement, which ushered in democracy, not one of the several governments that have held power since then has done anything to deliver the rural peasantry, making up the bulk of the population, from the exploitative land relationships existing in the villages.

The marginalised peasantry thus finds it convenient to vent its anger at the local landlords and rich peasants the class immediately above it and the one that represents to it the state with all its shortcomings. The Maoists have exploited the situation by attacking this very class in the name of "People's War". If the militants do not invite extreme repression and avoid having to fight stronger forces of suppression, their insurgency is likely to grow and continue for some time to come.

In that sense, the Maoists' most visible achievement in the first phase of their "People's War" has been the establishment of the politics of armed struggle. However, it seems they have

over-emphasised violence, and in the process have forgotten the fundamental tenet of Marxist thought regarding its use. Doctrinally, Marxists opt for violence only as a last resort when all other ways to seek social progress have failed. Violence can only be a reaction to attempts by the ruling class to wipe out the peaceful struggle of the people with state terror. Mao, too, upheld this Marxist concept of using violence only to end violence.

Nepal's Maobadi, on the other hand, seem to understand the application of violence quite differently. They plead that armed action is a must from the very beginning of the struggle; it is something which can be applied at any time and at any place. There is no need to concentrate this highest form of struggle on concrete situations. The principle of armed struggle is accepted absolutely and a cult of violence propagated, with the Maoists boasting of the number of violent incidents and glorifying in the unnecessary deaths of their heroic cadres. "War, war, and war! From the beginning till the end!" is their battle cry.

And thus it is that the taking away of life has become acceptable and commonplace. In a country where earlier even five deaths would have created a nationwide distress, today, even as scores die, the polity refuses to be shaken out of its somnolence. In February 1997, Maoist-related violence had already been relegated to single column space in newspapers even as the leadership declared the start of a "second phase of operations" at the end of the first year of the "War".

Naive Revolution

There have been blunders aplenty by the Maoist leaders over the past two years. Most important was the inability to judge if the people were prepared for armed revolt. Even in the impoverished areas where there has been enthusiastic popular support, the militants did not work to educate the masses, nor to prepare them for the struggle to come. There was no thought to whether the public would be able bear the reprisals that were to follow soon enough. What the Maoists presented, therefore, was a sure recipe for anarchy, and a people in poverty are now doubly burdened by terror, perpetuated by the revolutionaries and the police. The leaders' impatience to get on with armed struggle may have also lost them a voice in Kathmandu's political arena. For when they went underground with their well-established political organ, the United People's Front, the Maoists forfeited the avenue to apply political pressure above ground even as they continued their underground campaign. The Maobadi also made the mistake of lumping together everyone who disagrees with them. So, they have attacked both "class enemies" and those who do actually speak their own language. This has led to their political isolation, and also affected their public image.

On occasion, the Maoists have also displayed extreme naivete, such as when they raided the rural branches of the government-owned Agricultural Development Bank and destroyed loan records. The goal was to "liberate" poor villagers of their loan commitments, the Maoist leadership seemingly unaware that banks maintain copies of their records outside the branch office, too.

Indulging the Revolutionary

The Maoist movement has now publicly moved into its second phase, and it has been marked by revenge killings of those involved in doing away with real or suspected Maoists. As part of this agenda, both policemen and local exploiters have been killed. The plan is to generate an atmosphere of statelessness whereby they can easily step in and take over the administration. To some extent, this plan has succeeded. In some areas, people live under a twin administration the government's and the Maoists'. This was greatly evident in the poor voter

turnout in the local-level elections earlier this year in districts like Rukum, Rolpa and Jajarkot. The Maoists had announced a boycott, threatening to kill those who won the elections, and so in 42 village centres no one even dared file nominations. Elections could not be held in more than 70 village centres.

While such scare tactics may have succeeded in creating an aura of unquestioned authority around them, the Maoists do not sense that their revolutionary militancy and armed revolt also can be used, and is being used, by the former autocratic forces for reviving their lost powers. Although police action has killed 26 party militants, only one leader of significance has lost his life till now. The State's strategy seems to be to keep the militancy at a controllable level, while not finishing it off entirely by decimating the leadership just yet.

The Maoist bogey is thus kept alive as the government goes about reviving the much-hated Public Security Act which was used with such devastating effect by the Panchayat regime before 1990. The government is also using the Maoists as the pretext to enact an Anti-Terrorist Act, although there is stiff opposition to it. These acts would give wide-ranging powers to the police, the army and the intelligence agencies, which, because of Nepal's peculiar political arrangement, would mean ultimately power to the Royal Palace.

It is likely that until these legislative measures have been successfully implemented, the government will strive to keep Maoism alive in the hills, by continuing its crackdown on the grassroots cadres while giving free play to the top leadership. As soon as it gets the powers it is seeking, a violent suppression of the Maoists can be expected. They will be indulged no more.

Holier-than-thou

The Maoists are isolated today due to their own policy of regarding all those who criticise them or who disagree with them as enemies. This holier-than-thou attitude could be their undoing, through sheer isolation. They seem not to have grasped the significance of the fact that even though practically every left group in Nepal has protested the violent repression of the Maoist movement, not one has indicated support for the "People's War". The Maoists have a false sense that they are on the right track only because of the abject failure of mainstream parliamentary politics over the past couple of years. This cumulative failure includes the signing away of Nepal's hydropower options to India, the horse-trading to maintain coalition governments in power, the outright corruption of those who till a few years ago used to call themselves revolutionaries and democrats, and the inability to give a new push to development activities even as market forces move in to take over the hinterland. This failure makes the Maoists all the more self-righteous and vociferous, but they are making their own mistakes. Nothing in their activities indicates that the Maobadi are trying to involve the local populace. They are taking to shortcuts and sloganeering rather than trying to raise the awareness level of the people to that of the leadership. The public is not being prepared to act for itself.

Mao Zedong's direction was that the revolutionary leadership should wait patiently until people are ready for action. Meanwhile, they should constantly educate the people and do whatever possible to arouse and prepare the masses for struggle. No action, howsoever well-intentioned, should be initiated until the people are prepared to follow. This is Mao's famous "mass line", and without this the "People's War" is bound to degenerate into a war without the people.

An objective and conscious revolutionary movement is not possible and a revolutionary theory to suit the country cannot be developed without understanding how Nepali society and the class struggle is developing. Nepal's Maobadi of today are moving ahead in the blind hope that all will turn out well once a class struggle has begun. ■

Losing Altitude

Another round of political instability is rattling Nepal, adding to the kingdom's gloomy prospects. Floods followed by unusually cloudy and chilly weather have hurt crops, the currency has devalued and the carpet industry that accounts for much of Nepal's foreign-currency revenues is in recession.

Just when Nepal should be concentrating on luring tourists and boosting its carpet exports, its politicians have brought down the fourth government since 1994. Economists estimate that new elections will cost the exchequer 1 billion rupees (\$17 million), and that political parties will spend an equal amount wooing voters. That much spending could stoke inflation.

Other factors are also fuelling concerns about price rises. Heavy monsoon rains and cold weather have damaged rice and wheat production, muddying the fields and delaying sowing cycles. Agronomists estimate that rice production will fall 4%, and wheat production 2%. One agronomist, Prakash Bir Tuladhar, says that means Nepal may not achieve its goal of 5.6% GDP growth for the year ending in July.

Moreover, the Nepalese rupee has fallen 12.2% against the U.S. dollar in the last three months, along with the Indian rupee; both have felt the impact of the financial crisis in East Asia. (The Nepalese rupee is tied closely to the Indian rupee, reflecting landlocked Nepal's close trade ties with its neighbour.)

Devaluation has made imports more expensive and added a hefty \$98 million in repayments due on government overseas borrowing of \$2.3 billion, according to an official of Nepal's central bank.

So far, however, devaluation has failed to boost exports. In fact, exports of hand-knitted woollen carpets and ready-to-wear cotton garments, which earn \$240 million a year, or 60% of the country's foreign-exchange revenues, have fallen because of both industries' inability to

compete with South Asian rivals.

Nepalese carpet exporters are sore at their Indian counterparts. They accuse Indians of trying to hurt the image of Nepalese exports by deliberately exporting sub-standard synthetic carpets to Nepal and then re-exporting them overseas bearing the prized Nepalese trademark. Nepalese exporters have called on their government to take immediate action—which it hasn't. Declining overseas orders have led to the closure of nearly 1,000 small carpet makers, and 300,000 workers—60% of the industry's total—have lost their jobs.

Traders, meanwhile, are up in arms over a 10% value-added tax, implemented in November. Some have taken to the streets in protest. Outgoing Finance Minister Rabintra Nath Sharma was banking on VAT revenues to pay for his 62-billion-rupee (\$1.1 billion) budget, Nepal's largest-ever. Opponents say the tax will discourage imports and government collection will fall short. That may already be happening: For example, some economists point out that in the last six months the government has spent 12% less than budgeted on development.

But one Finance Ministry official says the picture isn't so bleak. In the first half of fiscal 1997-98, foreign grants rose 51.6% from a year earlier. (But during the same period, foreign loans have fallen, to \$169.7 million from \$376 million.)

Some additional help is on the way. Earlier this month the International Finance Corp., an arm of the World Bank, agreed to invest \$24 million in the 36-megawatt Upper Bhote Koshi hydroelectric project, which will increase power generation in Nepal by 10%. That still leaves three other projects stalled, but it's one silver lining amid the new-year gloom.

■ Kedar Man Singh

Tynn luft og klare tanker - Et møte med Ganesh Gurung

Himalayas tynne luft renser tankekanalene. Kongedømmet Nepal har derfor fostret mange klart-tenkende mennesker. Men vi må likevel få spørre oss om hva det er som får en høyt kvalifisert mann til å forlate sin attraktive direktørstilling, og i stedet jobbe for Utviklingsfondet? Det er nemlig det Ganesh Gurung, Utviklingsfondets kontaktperson i Nepal, har gjort.

- Det utslagsgivende er ærligheten, utviklingsmålene og at Utviklingsfondets representanter er jordnære utlendinger å samarbeide med, sier Ganesh, når vi møter ham i hovedstaden Kathmandu. Han legger videre til at han kan identifisere seg med både de personene som jobber i Utviklingsfondet, tankegangen til organisasjonen og saken. På nyåret vil han kutte ut noen av sine mange konsulentengasjement, men vil fortsette for Utviklingsfondet.

DER MENNESKENE ER

Det kan ikke være pengene eller andre fordeler som driver ham til dette samarbeidet. Utviklingsfondet betaler en brøkdel av hva andre som er interessert i samarbeid med ham frister med. Ganesh forlot i sin tid en attraktiv direktørstilling ved New Era Instituttet i Kathmandu, til fordel for den virksomheten han nå driver.

- Jeg er ikke noen skrivebordsadministrator, jeg vil ikke drive med papirarbeid, men være der menneskene er.

Ganesh har en solid bakgrunn for å kunne gjøre dette. Han er utdannet sosialantropolog, og arbeider med programmer og prosjekter som dreier seg om sosial utvikling. Som frittstående konsulent for Utviklingsfondet, har

han vært til stor hjelp både overfor nepalesiske myndigheter, og blant lokalbefolkningen. Han har nettopp fått i havn en avtale med nepalesiske myndigheter som vil gjøre det lettere for Utviklingsfondet å operere i landet.

GURUNG-FOLKET

Ganesh Gurung er 42 år gammel og er gift med Durga. De har to barn, Minami som er tolv år, og Ujwal på ni. Både Ganesh og Durga er av Gurung-folket, en minoritet i det hinduistiske kongedømmet Nepal. Gurung-folket bor i det gigantiske åslandskapet sør for Annapurna og Manaslufjellene. Ganesh kommer fra landsbyen Akrang, i Syangja-distriktet i Sentral-Nepal.

Allerede som barn var Ganesh opptatt av forbedringer som skjedde i landsbyen, men for å skaffe seg utdanning og arbeid, flyttet han fra gården i Akrang til Pokhara og hovedstaden Kathmandu. Han tenker ofte tilbake på oppveksten, og forteller blant annet om grunnen til at Akrang fikk så flotte tomater. En nabo hadde fått tak i en plante som bar store, fine tomater. Den var plantet i den lille hagen bak huset hans. I kveldsmørket forsvant det adskillige tomater i ubudne smågutthender, og noen av foreldrene så sitt snitt til å redde frøene unna. Snart hadde de flotte tomatene spredd seg i hele Akrang. Forbuden frukt smaker best, og eksempelets makt er stor. Folk må våge litt for å oppnå forbedringer, mener Ganesh.

Kvalitetsutdanning er mangelvare i Nepal, og derfor tilbringer Ganesh så mye tid han kan sammen med barna sine for å hjelpe dem med utdannelsen. Slik får han lært dem mye utover den snevre repeterende nepale-

siske skolegangen. Dette er en forlengelsen av det gode liv i Akrang, slik han selv opplevde livslang læring på terrassen hos besteforeldre, onkler og tanter. Derfor planlegger han nå at familien skal flytte tilbake til landsbyen for en periode. Der vil familien bruke tiden sammen med «de gamle».

U-FONDET HAR VALGT RIKTIG

Ganesh vil tolke folks handlinger og væremåte og være en sosialdetektiv for å finne frem til utviklingsprioriteringer og utviklingsretninger. Hans etniske engasjement er minimalt. Det vil være et feilslag i forhold til landets viktigste oppgaver, mener han. Renhårig myndigheter, et byråkrati som fungerer effektivt og deltakelse i lokalpolitikken, er viktige mål for Ganesh. Det beste og kanskje det aller viktigste, er å arbeide på lokalplan med konkrete tiltak som kan bygge bro mellom og etniske grupper. Lokal organisering er veien å gå for å unngå makten til mellommenn og pengeutlånere som kontrollerer priser og tar skyhøye renter.

- Utviklingsfondet har valgt riktige prosjekter i Nepal, med satsing på bl.a. bevisstgjøring blant lokalbefolkningen og spare- og lånegrupper, hevder Ganesh. Han avslutter med at dette er det beste som kan gjøres for små innsatsmidler i Nepal i dag, - med stor virkning på sikt. Han gleder seg til samarbeidet videre. ■

Olav Myrholdt, styremedlem i Utviklingsfondet

Kilde: U-nytt

LOKAL AGENDA 21 I NEPAL

Utviklingsfondet har nylig startet samarbeid med en ny organisasjon i Nepal, - Namsaling Community Development Centre (NCDC).

I denne artikkelen gir Olav Myrholdt, styremedlem i Utviklingsfondet, oss noen inntrykk fra en evalueringsreise hos NCDC i november.

Den ble foretatt sammen med Dyrre Vaa Sætre, prosjekt-koordinator for Asia.

Øverst på en åskam lengst øst i Nepal ligger en rekke med forseggjorte trehus malt i glade farger og med fantasifulle treutskjæringer. Gamle oljekanner omgjort til orkidépotter henger fra takskjegg og gesimser og gir inntrykk av et sted hvor innbyggerne har tid, ro og fred, og et godt liv med sans for estetikk. Gårdene som ligger spredt nedover solsida på åsen blant risterasser, frukttrær og bambus forsterker inntrykket av et harmonisk lokalsamfunn. Plassen heter Namsaling. Ilter telefonringing bryter idyllen - telefon her? Der er jo ingen ledning her, timevis fra nærmeste veg? Ved nærmere studium er det ikke bambus alt som stikker over mønet: ei antenne på toppen av butikken, et solpanel, ledninger og ei blid dame som bestyrer Namsaling community telephone.

Telefonen er installert av Namsaling Community Development Centre, en NGO som har drevet i flere år i tre kommuner rundt Namsaling i Illam distrikt. Følg telefonledningen videre til

butikkens bakrom, og muligheten for å treffe NCDC's generalsekretær bak datamaskinen er der, men den er liten. Hom Nath Adikhari, lærer og politisk aktivist som har måttet tåle mye, er mest ute i felten og lytter og snakker med folk. Partipolitikken ble for trang og trasig, voldsbruken for heftig, og sammen med andre i lokalsamfunnet opprettet han en fredelig, uavhengig organisasjon som faktisk gjorde noe med problemene som politikerne i det nyvunne demokratiet for noen år tilbake bare snakket om. Med klokhet, smidighet og stor kjennskap til lokale behov og interesser, har NCDC bygd seg opp til en slagkraftig organisasjon som nyter stor respekt og tillit, både hos myndigheter og lokalbefolkning.

Idyllen Namsaling skjuler både gleder og problemer. For det første at man har klart seg så bra. Takket være NCDC er det bedre kommunikasjon, bedre helse, sikret vannforsyning, og forbedrede jordbruksmetoder. Men idyllen er tilsynelatende: NCDCs feltundersøkelser viser at det er betydelige økonomiske og helsemessige problemer, og utflyttingen til lavlandsområdet mot India har vært stor. I Øst-Nepal er det mye vann, så det er grønt overalt, og det er avlinger overalt: intensivt og risikabelt: det er bratt og erosjonsutsatt. I tillegg til sjølforsyningsdrift er det stor produksjon av mjølk, kardemomme, ingefær og grønnsaker for salg til lavlandet i Nepal og India. Gode priser på disse markedene er et være eller ikke være for den tette befolkningen. For NCDC er det vesentlig at grunnlaget for videre utvikling må sikres, og NCDC ser på disse utfordringene som en helhet: jordbruk, helse og miljø henger i hop. Markedene kan vanskelig styres fra åskammen, men å sikre jorda og vannet, folks helse, organisere varetransport og kommunikasjon, og styrke kreativitet

og kunnskapen i jordbruket er oppgaver NCDC har vist at en NGO kan gjøre noe med. For et par tiår siden var skogen her så og si nedhogd, vannet dårlig og sviktende og sykdomsfrekvensen høy. For mange var det ikke noe valg, men bare å flytte fra høyden til lavlandet. Nye familier fra enda lenger inn i fjellet har smått om senn flyttet inn etter de som først reiste. Lavere befolkningstetthet er derfor ingen forklaring på det "grønne" Namsaling. Heller ikke at de som kom inn var fra andre befolkningsgrupper, eller at politiske endringer førte til mer velstand. Snarere er det innbyggernes samarbeid om fellestiltak som har vært utslagsgivende, sier Chabilal Chapagain, NCDC's president, og tidligere ordfører i kommunen.

Metodikken, understreker Hom Nath Adikhari, er det viktigste, i små grupper i grendene kommer folk sammen og diskuterer konkrete problemer som angår dem. Kanskje er det usikker vannforsyning som er det viktigste, kanskje er det konflikter i bruken av skog og trevirke. Noen tradisjoner for slikt samarbeid fantes tidligere, men det meste er blitt borte med utvandring og forandringer i befolkningsstrukturen. «Vi har måttet finne opp et nytt forvaltningssystem, og ulikt kommunal forvaltning deler vi ikke opp utfordringene i kategorier, men ser alt under ett, slik bøndene gjør det», sier Hom Nath. «Vi kaller det miljøplanlegging, og i realiteten er det slik at det er miljøproblemer vidt definert, som gjør at folk lider unødig her». Arbeidet til NCDC er systematisk og grundig dokumenterende, og utfra den solstrømdrevne datamaskinen trykkes det fram statistikk og paidiagrammer som viser hvor problemene er og hvor innsatsen må styrkes. Samtalerunder og aktiv lytting, kombinert med absolutt gjensidig tillit har

The Porter's Burden

by Kanak Mani Dixit

THREE RAGGED LABOURERS, hailing from the hills of far-west Nepal, haul a drum full of truck diesel up from the Lakadi Bazaar depot in Shimla. On the 15 km trail up from the Gaurikund bus stop in Garhwal, a Nepali 'kandiwala' carries his 2000th pilgrim up to Gaumukh, where the Ganga has her source. He earns ninety rupees for the effort. On the Lamjura Pass, the high point on the trail to the Khumbu in east Nepal, a 44-year-old Rai man is in the middle of a ten-day haul with a load that is more than twice his own weight.

Every day, tens of thousands of Nepali porters in the middle hills carry excruciating loads on their spines, for the *sahu* merchants, for trekkers and mountaineers, and for development agencies. Hundreds of thousands more heave the basket as part of their daily household chores, fetching water, firewood and fodder.

Carrying goods on the back with the help of a tumpline (*namlo*) is the most ancient, and taxing, of human labours. While the loads carried by the Nepali porter are the heaviest anywhere in the world, the feat is doubly impressive when one considers his diminutive size and body weight. Himalayan back-loading is also distinctive because it is a continuous, unremitting activity, unlike, for example, the stevedore's momentary toil.

Watch the Nepali porter, otherwise called a *bhariya* or *dhakrey*, on the trail as he grunts and sweats his way up a 50 degree switchback. Spine bent to receive the basket, hands clutching the *namlo* which distributes the load over his vertebrae, the muscles of the neck, calves and thighs taut—this is how they carried goods 15,000 years ago, before there were pulleys, levers and wheels.

Bhariya-work is a holdover from the evolutionary past of humans, a heritage which every other hill society has discarded for more modern forms of haulage. In the central Himalayan hills, the Nepali peasant's *namlo* remains firmly in place as a stark reminder of the region's economic history and geography.

As botanist Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha points out, porters have moved millions upon mil-

lions tons of goods up and down the central Himalayan mountains over millennia. The sheer volume of physical pain and mental suffering that has been expended on these mountain trails over the centuries is massive. And yet, this way of life and work has attracted scant attention from social scientists and development workers in Nepal and elsewhere.

Hard Livelihood

On August 3-4 in Patan, Himal organised what turned out to be the first-ever meeting on the subject—"Hard Livelihood: Conference on the Himalayan Porter". Worldwide, no more than a handful of researchers have taken an interest in the subject, and almost all attended to share notes and express strongly-held views.

Much of what emerged from the conference was new and surprising. Participants learned why collective bargaining has not worked for Himalayan porters, why Sherpas are better on the job in high altitudes, and how the philanthropic tradition of maintaining *pati* and *chautari* rest-stops for porters has died out. They also learned that modern transportation in the form of Tata trucks, Russian jeeps, Canadian Twin Otters and, lately, Mi17 helicopters, were engaged in wresting cash income from families surviving at subsistence through portering. And they learned that supposedly porter-friendly suspension bridges were actually taking away jobs as yaks and mule trains took over.

One paper suggested that backloading was part of hominid evolution, and that it probably promoted "upright bipedalism" in humans—why we walk on two feet. A neurosurgeon's report held out the possibility of using the *namlo* as a physiotherapy aid for those with degenerated upper spines. Another researcher was of the view that, despite the spread of roadways, portering would remain significant for at least 30 percent of the Nepali hills beyond 2015.

Most importantly, it became clear that, economically as well as symbolically, the carrying of other people's loads for an income is more than anything else a manifestation of hill

poverty and the failure of the Nepali state to be responsible for its underclass. These mountains would 'develop' only when the *namlo* was finally separated from hundreds of thousands of Nepali *thaplos* (foreheads). The eradication of portering would indicate that the country was finally making progress.

Riding the Porter's Back

Every hill family, other than the few well-to-do which are able to hire others to do the lugging, porters. The daily trudge to the spring or water spout, is portering, as is carrying a year's supply of salt from roadhead to homestead, which may take as long as a week, or carrying kerosene or corrugated sheets for the hill market *sahu*. Trekking is the only business that offers porters the chance of some form of upward mobility—graduating from low altitude porter to cook to *naike* to *sirdar*. The stratospheric reaches of portering are occupied by the high altitude porters, mostly Sherpas, who assist *sahibs* in achieving summits.

Backloading, for all its ubiquitousness, is not visible in the country's economic statistics. It is a commentary on how Nepali planners plan that this activity has no profile in national programmes, other than what benefits percolates down through general 'village development' programmes. Pitamber Sharma, an economist with ICIMOD in Kathmandu, agrees that portering's contribution to the economy goes unacknowledged. "While portering is contributing to about a third of household income of marginal families, it is economically invisible," he says.

Why does human-back portaging survive in Nepal when it has disappeared elsewhere? In the Indian Himalaya, the need for human carriers was reduced drastically after the Border Roads Organisation went on a highway-building frenzy following the 1962 war with China. The high cost of roadway construction, meanwhile, has prevented Nepal from developing a large network. As late as 1991, it had only 8328 km of roads of all types, which meant a density of 3.5 km per 100 sq km in the hills. Above and beyond the lack of roads, the precarious humans-only bridges of the gorge country denied access to beasts of burden.

The chief reason Nepali porter is, of course, that they are poor, across the breadth of the country. Take the example of Prem

Bahadur, from Rolpa district of west Nepal, who says he has been carrying pilgrims to Kedarnath for 49 seasons. He is a 'kandiwala' who carries on the back. Speaking to Dehra Dun-based researcher Ramamurthy Sreedhar, Prem Bahadur said he had taken up portering to supplement his family's income as the fields did not provide enough. He said: "I am cursed



CLIMBING TOTE M

SHARAD RANJIT

to carry human beings. I have carried thousands to the house of god, but bhagwan still will not see my plight."

Nearly all the kandiwalas Sreedhar encountered in the Garhwal *dhams* (pilgrim destinations) were from the poor western hills of Nepal. On average, a porter ferries 700 well-fed pilgrims for *darshan* every season, earning about NRs 7000. What he saves after expenses is his 'profit'.

"Because a porter by definition carries someone else's burden, portering has remained symbolic of an inherently exploitative arrangement," says Pitamber Sharma. "The true rural proletariat of Nepal is made up of those who porter for others."

Bishnu Bhandari of the International World Conservation Union (IUCN), who this spring conducted a day-long workshop of *bharyas* in north Gorkha, found that even the food they would save at home by joining a trekking group was part of the economic calculation of the peasants. Said one porter, "If I go carrying loads, at least I am eating as I go."

According to environmental activist Anil Chitrakar, "Portering is one of the few professions in the world where the more experienced you are, that is, the older you get, the less is the pay. Porters have neither insurance nor any political leverage. There is no pension scheme. They are on their own."

Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa, a Khumbu ecologist, calculated the income of porters after the helicopters sent porter incomes crashing in the Jiri to Namche route. He found that the average daily income of the porter was NRs 155, out of which he spends NRs 74 daily on subsistence. "It is no longer worth the pain, but they still continue to porter," says Sherpa.

One community which has historically been relegated to the portering life is the Tamang, living in the hills that surround Kathmandu Valley. Since ancient times, these people have been maintained as an exploited, unskilled underclass for use by Kathmandu's cultured urban classes. Ben Campbell, an anthropologist from the University of Manchester noted, "The strategic role of Tamang communities in central Nepal was as an underdeveloped reserve of labour power at the service of the central elites. Their marginal niche and subsistence economy were treated with neglect."

Even though the trekking industry now

provides work to many Tamangs, the Tamangs do not get rich from trekking, said Campbell. "Many of the villagers who go to carry foreigners' loads come back with little to show for their work, at most a few hundred rupees, some new clothes, or some stainless steel plates. The details may have changed but the Tamangs are still carrying loads to make profits for the Kathmandu elite."

What, No Union?

If the porters are at the bottom of the labour ladder and make up a rural proletariat, why don't they organise? These are the people who, after all, literally earn by the sweat of their brows. And yet, several factors conspire to ensure that Nepal's porters have no collective voice.

Overwhelmingly, the porters of Nepal are uneducated and unrepresented. Because the workforce greatly exceeds demand, they have little or no bargaining power. They are divided among themselves by region, ethnicity and caste. Furthermore, there is no 'factory floor' where porters can gather, which facilitates organisation. By its nature, portering is a solitary rather than collective assignment.

The advent of democracy in 1990 did see some scattered work stoppages called by the Trekking Workers' Association of Nepal, but organising efforts quickly fizzled out. The Rolwaling region and some villages elsewhere in the High Himalaya do guard their trails to ensure high rates from trekking groups, but this has not been feasible elsewhere in Nepal.

Even in Baltistan in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, where self-awareness of porters is much better articulated than in Nepal (and where pay scales are about ten times higher), collective bargaining is absent. According to Kenneth MacDonald, a University of Toronto researcher, "There are no unions or association of porters among the Balti, as collective identity stems from the village and kinships rather than from the occupation."

While trekking might see some collective bargaining before long, this is not even a remote possibility in commercial portering, which involves the heaviest loads and many times the number of porters engaged. No government agency or NGO has yet stepped forward as an advocate for the inhumanely exploited commercial porter.

From Dehydration to Hypothermia

The myth is that only plainsmen and tourists get acute mountain sickness. Not true, says Dr. Buddha Basnet, Medical Director of the Himalayan Rescue Association (HRA). Dr. Basnet says midhill porters venturing up the high valleys are equally susceptible. "The worst cases of altitude sickness--full blown pulmonary or cerebral edema--brought down to HRA's posts tend to be trekking staff."

By and large, hill porters are unprepared for the demands of high altitude travel. Encountering unique terrain of the high himals, they become disoriented and often suffer psychological stress. Symptoms of AMS are dismissed as *boksi lagyo*, witch's curse. Untreated bruises, lacerations and abrasions that are part and parcel of load-carrying lead to frequent infections. Porters suffer from hypothermia, caused by exposure to the elements without warm clothing, while they are also victimised by dehydration from drinking contaminated stream water and eating unhygienically on the trail.

"Even at high altitude, trekking is a 'hot weather activity'. Heat is as much a problem as cold, and it is important to get the message across to porters that they must drink plenty of fluid replacement," says Dr. John Dickenson, a pioneer of trekking medicine. There are places where the porter must be encouraged to carry a water canteen, even if this means adding to his load.

According to studies cited by Dr. Basnet, high himalayan populations such as Sherpas seem to enjoy physiological advantages over their midhill counterparts. As part of evolutionary adaptation, for example, Sherpas seem to have higher oxygen levels in their blood stream because they breathe ('ventilate') more. High muscle biopsies of Bhotiya populations show that they have a higher capillaries-to-fiber ratio than hill people. They also have less pulmonary artery constriction at high altitude than hill porters, who are therefore more prone to waterlogged lungs (pulmonary edema).

When a *dhakrey* stops his heaving and halts to catch his breath, is he following a cardio-vascular dictate or is he stopping to relieve pain? This is a question that researchers have yet to study, but the porter has other things on his mind... When University of Colorado scholar Nancy Malville asked a Rai porter on the Jiri trail, "Where does it

hurt most?", the quick reply was: "At the Lamjura Pass!"

Load and Body Mass

East African women typically carry loads equivalent to about 70 percent of their body mass (about 40 kg), and the heaviest baggage carried elsewhere using a tumpline seem to have been by the Canadian voyageurs, who transported heavy loads for short distances while portaging their canoes and goods from one lake to another. The average load carried by the voyageur, whose days are long past, was 80 kg.

Only in Nepal does the porter's toil continue. Unlike other load carriers, and even Olympic weight-lifters, the *bharyia's* exertion is sustained over days on end. The porter trail studied by Nancy Malville, which leads from the Jiri roadhead eastward to Namche, takes ten days of continuous carriage for a fully laden *dhakrey*. He returns in four days, to repeat the cycle. His total elevation gain over the route is 21,000 ft and total loss 16,500 ft.

Nancy Malville, assisted by her astronomer husband Kim, focussed her inquiry on the relationship between the porter's body mass and his load. She found that youngest porters (11-15 years) carried an equivalent of 135 percent of their body mass, and men in their sixties were still hauling goods of up to 60 kg, or 116 percent of their body mass.

Males in their late 20s carried the heaviest loads, 83 kg (182 lbs), in relation to their own size, equivalent to 159 percent of body mass. The heaviest load encountered was 108 kg (238 lbs), carried by a 44-year-old Rai trader, Bhim Bahadur Sunwar, who stood 146 cm tall (4'9") and weighed a mere 47 kg (104 lbs). Bhim Bahadur was carrying 228 percent of his own body mass.

Malville also reported that, overall, the heaviest loads (an average 160 percent of body weight) are carried by *dokay sahus*, merchant-porters who seek profit for themselves and hence have the strongest motivation. Porters hired by shopkeepers were routinely carrying 145 percent, while those doing 'self-portering', i.e. carrying goods for their own households, heaved the equivalent of their own body mass. "The normal value for non-commercial load carrying in rural Nepal seems to be 80 percent of body mass," says Nancy Malville.

Clearly, the Nepali porter would win the

gold in any Olympic competition if the criterion were load-to-body mass and endurance. While beefy weight-lifters can hoist carry heavier weights, they do not carry twice their own body mass. As Kim Malville says, "It is important to note that weight-lifters lift, and that, too, momentarily, but they do not transport!"

Rotors vs. Porters

The political and economic collapse of the Soviet Union has had a direct and reverberating impact on Nepali porters, for it made helicopters available to the Third World at cheap prices.

Over the last two years, Russian-made Kazan Mi17 helicopters, with the ability to lift up to four tons from a runway and three tons vertically, have devastated the portering market of the eastern Nepal hills. As the thudding rotors ferry food grains, construction goods and development material to far-flung outposts, whole villages lose their only source of cash income down below.

Technology and the market when they work together become an unbeatable combi-

nation, and perhaps going back may indeed be retrograde. However, in Nepal there has not even been the semblance of a debate as the copters wrest away livelihoods of thousands. The loud members of the Nepali Sansad's government and opposition benches have not found the need to address this issue, although it is subject for both the socialists of the Nepali Congress and the communists of the United Marxist Leninists.

What is the solution to this gruelling occupation, if it is not to be helicopters? The one cautionary note that Dibya Gurung and Tsering Tenpa made in their paper on "Women as Porters" is that there should be no misplaced charity. Just because porters issues are being highlighted does not mean that a simplistic solution be sought to abolish portering by fiat. The job is one that women and men have taken up because of economic necessity, they say, and the supposedly demeaning act of "carrying another's load" is academic as far as the porters are concerned. The focus, instead, should be to search for the interest of the porter—female, male and child—while generally working to develop the socio-economic status of the hinterland hill population.

There is no interim panacea to genuine development of the country taken as a whole, with the hills near and far taken along with prosperous Kathmandu Valley and the tarai. The moment the peasant has work that provides an alternate source of income, he will stop portering. Says Anil Chitrakar, "Portering is the starkest symbol of failed development after four decades of trying. Only when we have succeeded in removing the namlo from the thaplo, can we sit back satisfied that *bikas* has arrived in Nepal."

Until that time comes, we can, at the very least, notice the porter's burden the next time we pass him on the trail. Says Pitamber Sharma, "The sweat the porter expends is in the hope for a better tomorrow for his progeny. For his efforts, the Nepali porter is a hero. He deserves the respect that is his due."

Himal plans to publish in paperback the proceedings of Hard Livelihood: Conference on Himalayan Portering

Women as Porters

Portering as a money-earning proposition presents to women an escape from the drudgery of their village existence, their continuous unpaid labour, and their poverty. These apparent gains—hard cash, freedom, exposure and new confidence—are what portering can give them. And in reality, they have no other option, as no employment comes their way. Under these circumstances, they should be encouraged, especially since they have proved themselves capable of the labour required.

For women in the occupation, therefore, portering is an employment opportunity which they do not want jeopardised by well-meaning activists. Any action on their behalf must be taken only with careful forethought and sensitivity. However hard the life of women porters may be, it is one that they have chosen because they had no other alternative. But that does not mean that we should stop after telling the story...

- Dibya Gurung and Tsering Tenpa

HIMAL November/December 1995

Dead Porters don't Protest

The freak storm that hit the Nepal Himalaya from 9th to 10th earlier November saw prompt helicopter evacuation on an unprecedented scale coordinated by a government-tourism industry task force. It was a well-reported, commendable job. However, while reports are sketchy, it seems clear that porters, forming the lowest strata of the trekking trade, were neglected in the rescue operation.

Altogether 549 people were airlifted out of the mountains, of which 250 were foreigners and 299 Nepalis. It is a ratio of almost one-to-one, which itself indicates that something is amiss. On average, the client-to-porter ratio for organised treks in the high Himalaya is 1:4, which means that many more porters must have been left stranded or dead on the mountain than were airlifted out.

The fact that the number of Nepalis reported dead is almost twice that of foreigners is similarly illuminating. The government's figure on whose bodies have been found is 22 foreigners and 42 Nepalis. The Trekking Workers' Association of Nepal (TWAN) claims that many more Nepalis have died.

While the foreigners are normally well-equipped for eventualities up on the mountain, Nepali porters do their jobs with the hope that the weather will stay friendly while going over the pass. Only a handful of the more expensive trekking agencies are known to provide porters with the minimum required clothing and gear.

Inadequate clothing and equipment is the main reason so many Nepalis succumbed to the killer storm, says Padam Singh Ghale of Mandala Trekking. At one point, there were said to be fifty porters suffering from snow blindness registered at the Kunde Hospital above Namche Bazaar.

TWAN officers are indignant that their group was kept out of the task force, and that they were unable to board helicopters to ensure that porters were not neglected by the rescue effort. They also claim that there was discrimination in identifying and bringing back the dead.

This information is mostly anecdotal, but rings true. Dead bodies of foreigners were put into wooden boxes, while Nepalis were slipped into sacks. Initially, only the bodies of foreigners were brought to Kathmandu while the Nepali dead were said to have been dumped into rivers. "I've heard similar reports," says Ang Gyaltzen Sherpa, Trekking Director for Trans-Himalayan Tours, a group that lost 13 Japanese tourists and 10 Nepali staff in the disaster. "Most probably it would be Nepali porters whose bodies are being thrown away."

In the Kanchenjunga region, it is said, a helicopter landed and took off without taking in anyone, with the pilot saying, "There are only Nepalis here." Elsewhere, the going rate for helicopter evacuation was said to be US\$ 400 for the eight minute flight from Gokyo to Pangboche in Khumbu, and US\$200 equivalent for Nepalis.

The government has stopped counting bodies, and the trekking industry is almost back to business as usual. No one knows how many bodies of Nepali midhill porters strew the mountain passes, as most trekking agencies find it convenient not to report their dead. All across the middle hills, however, there will be men (and some women) who will never return to the homestead.

No one will be counting, either, when the spring thaw most likely reveals bodies all across the high passes of Nepal.

-Ramyata Limbu

THE SIREN SONG OF EVEREST

BY DAVID F. BREASHEARS

OF ALL THE ICY SLOPES ON Mount Everest, the Lhotse Face is not particularly difficult. A steep incline of hard blue ice, it slants 3,700 feet down the mountainside, requiring little more than competent skills on a fixed rope. I was astonished to hear that someone had just died there.

It was late afternoon May 9, 1996, during my tenth expedition on Everest. The radio call came from Jangbu Sherpa, the head of my camera-carrying team, who had come across an injured Taiwanese climber at Camp III at 24,000 feet. The climber, who had fallen into a crevasse, hadn't complained of serious pains. Yet as Jangbu and two other Sherpas helped him down the Lhotse Face, he collapsed.

"We think he's dead," Jangbu radioed.

I instructed Jangbu to feel the climber's neck for a pulse, to take off his glacier glasses and hold them right under his nose to see if there was any breath.

"No, he's dead."

Superstitious and unwilling to move the corpse, the Sherpas resumed their descent, leaving the body tethered to the fixed rope 1,700 feet above me. I decided to go bring him down. Ed Viesturs and Robert Schauer went with me. Ed, an American climber, was making his fourth ascent of Everest, his second without bottled oxygen. Robert, an Austrian cinematographer, was on the mountain



ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, LONDON

Snow business

Capt. John Noel, seen above during a 1922 expedition, paid 8,000 British pounds (nearly 350,000 current U.S. dollars) for exclusive photographic rights on the 1924 Everest expedition, but no one



ROBERT SCHAUER

reached the summit and two died in the attempt. Last year a film producer risked two million dollars on the author and his team (above), who made it to the top.

for the second time. They were part of a team under my direction making an IMAX film about climbing Everest.

It took us two hours to reach the body. Gasping for breath in the thin air, I kicked the points of my crampons into the slope and slumped back in my harness on the fixed rope to rest. My eyes were riveted on the figure dangling above me. I felt drained, overcome with sadness. The climber's eyes were wide open, his mouth agape, and his face ashen. I later learned he was Chen Yu-Nan, a 36-year-old steelworker from the city of Kaohsiung. When I reached to close his eyes, they had a look of bewilderment, as if from the shock of dying so suddenly.

A few days before in the Icefall, that gargantuan jumble of tilted ice blocks on the Khumbu Glacier, I had watched Chen and his companions as they gingerly placed their feet on the rungs of an aluminum ladder across a crevasse. Their awkwardness showed inexperience. Until recently, I had known most of the climbers on Everest, at least by reputation. They were part of the tightly knit community I had grown up in. But now the routes were crowded with amateurs and guided clients, some of whom had plunked down \$65,000 to be led up and down the mountain.

So much has changed since 1983, when I was part of a team transmitting the first video images from the summit. Back then our expedition was the only one on the South Col route. Last year 14 expeditions—French, Nepalese, Norwegian, Spanish, Swedish, and Taiwanese, among others—shared fixed ropes, camps, and a common obsession to reach the top. Base Camp, once a makeshift staging area at 17,600 feet, has been transformed into a bustling village of more than 300 people, packed with kitchen tents, dining tents, satellite dishes, boom boxes, VCRs, offerings of burning juniper, sputtering generators, and hundreds of prayer flags streaming in the wind. Up above at 26,000 feet, the South Col has been turned into the world's highest garbage dump, with more than a thousand empty oxygen bottles littering the snow alongside torn tents, abandoned stoves, and other refuse.

More than 150 people over the years, including many excellent climbers, have perished on Everest, tumbling from cliffs, being swept away by avalanches, or succumbing to exposure, exhaustion, or altitude sickness. Many of the bodies are still up there. In 1985 I collected body parts from two climbers I had known, who had died the year before. Their corpses had frozen solid on the mountain and shattered when they fell to the glacier below.

Last year was the most tragic. In the days that followed Chen's collapse, eight more climbers died in a storm, five on the south side and three on the north. Two were my friends Rob Hall and Scott Fischer, talented guides who knew the mountain well.

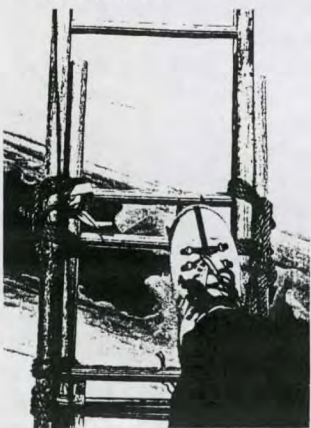
In a dark and mysterious way, the deadly nature of the place has only strengthened Everest's grip on the world's imagination.



ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

On the edge

Climbers in 1953 used aluminum ladders to cross dangerous crevasses (above). So, too, do modern climbers (bottom), who know that one false step could be their last. Yet it is that fatal attraction that increases the psychic reward. "Unlike any other sport," writes journalist Bruce Barcott, "mountaineering demands that its players die."



Because the dangers are so obvious, Everest has come to symbolize for many people the ultimate in personal ambition and achievement. Thomas Hornbein, who took part in the first American ascent, in 1963, describes climbing Everest as "a great metaphor for human striving." This explains, in part, why otherwise rational people will pay handsomely to tag the top.

Even veteran Himalayan climbers like myself can find ourselves firmly in the mountain's grip. The risk of death is enticing, because it reminds you that you are alive. "The fact that either you or one of your companions may have the possibility of dying," Sir Edmund Hillary once said, "... not only doesn't stop you doing it, but it's almost one of the things that keeps you going." But for me, it's also about the cold, the fatigue, and the challenge of good climbing. It's about the way snow crunches on a minus 10°F morning but squeaks on a minus 20°F morning. It's about climbing around a corner and seeing the pink granite of neighboring Makalu glowing in the first rays of dawn.

Everest has this immense psychic gravity that pulls you into its orbit. When George Leigh Mallory and the British reconnaissance team of 1921 set out to find a route up the mountain, it was no more than a set of coordinates on a map. The hulking monster they discovered came as a surprise. "Suffice it to say that it has the most steep ridges and appalling precipices that I have ever seen," Mallory wrote to his wife, Ruth. "I can't tell you how it possesses me." Three years later, climbing from the Tibetan side, Mallory and his partner, Andrew Irvine, disappeared into the clouds near the summit, never to be seen again. The pair were immortalized by the British press, adding a layer of mystery to the Everest myth.

By the time Tenzing Norgay and Hillary became the first climbers to reach the summit, on May 29, 1953, the Everest story had taken on the hoopla of an international race for the "third pole." Ten expeditions had failed, and 13 men had died. The year before, Tenzing and a Swiss climber had been forced to turn back just short of the summit. News of the British team's dramatic success was flashed to London just as the city was poised to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. "The Crowning Glory: Everest Conquered," the *Daily Mail* proclaimed.

Tenzing's son Jamling was part of our team. Despite his father's urgings not to take up climbing as a career, Jamling had grown up to be an experienced mountaineer and expedition organizer in Darjiling, India. But he had never climbed Everest, and he was determined to reach the summit as part of a lifelong dream and as a tribute to his father, who died in 1986.

I remember as a boy taking a book off the shelf in my family's apartment and turning to the famous photograph of Tenzing

"The party drifted out of camp towards us, not knowing if we had been successful or not. When [they saw] the thumbs up signal of success they rushed towards us and soon we were embracing them all, and shaking hands, and thumping each other on the back. It was a touching and unforgettable moment; and yet somehow a sad one too."

—SIR EDMUND HILLARY

standing on the summit. Something fused in my 11-year-old brain as I stared at the Sherpa's thick down suit and overboots, and the ice ax and flags he held aloft in exultation and triumph. I was struck above all by the unwieldy oxygen mask obscuring his face. What kind of place was this, I wondered, where a man needed to carry oxygen to survive?

Today I know the mountain as an environment so extreme there is no room for mistakes. After the May 1996 storm, members of our film team climbed to Camp III to help nearly a dozen survivors and later assisted with a helicopter rescue near Camp I. Now, back at Base Camp we were emotionally drained. As we attended an informal memorial for the lost climbers, the summit was flying its pennant-like plume of clouds from the jet stream. At night we lay in our tents listening to the wind on top roaring like a 747 on takeoff. When Jamling called his wife, Soyang, she was deeply worried about his going back up. Ed Vies-turs' wife, Paula, our Base Camp manager, was also afraid. She had listened in tears to Rob Hall's last radio calls from the summit ridge and knew that Ed would be climbing without bottled oxygen past the spot where Hall had died with bottled oxygen. Yet we all knew as professionals that we had obligations to make the film, and we were confident in our climbing skills. We agreed to go back.

Just before midnight on May 22, a dozen of us set out from the South Col, climbing by our headlamps and the dim light of the stars. Ed broke a trail for us in the knee-deep snow, a herculean effort. Because we were suffering from the physical effects of the thin air at high altitude, we hadn't slept for more than a few hours in the past three days or eaten more than a few crackers. Our bodies were dehydrated. Our fingers and toes went numb as precious oxygen was diverted to our brains, hearts, and other vital organs. Climbing above 26,000 feet, even with bottled oxygen, is like running on a treadmill and breathing through a straw. Your body screams at you to turn around. Everything says: This is cold, this is impossible. Two hours into the climb, we passed Scott Fischer's body. Later we found Rob Hall. We kept climbing. By 11 the next morning, we reached the top.

"We can't go any farther," Ed radioed happily to Paula.

As the others celebrated, Robert and I set up the 42-pound camera. Using my bare hands in the frigid air, I threaded the film through the intricate movement, then looked up to see the photograph from my boyhood coming to life. Holding his ax above his head, Jamling was striking the same pose his father had 43 years before. I was humbled to think of the many journeys I had made to this mountain inspired by that scene.

Several days later, at the bottom of the mountain, I rested on the trail in the rhododendron forest above Tengboche Monastery. In years to come, I knew, the lessons of the tragedy on Everest would be all but forgotten. Climbers would take the same risks, make the same mistakes, and some of them would die, as climbers have been doing for more than seven decades. But smelling the earth and the fragrant trees, I realized in the deep-

est sense my own good fortune. I had survived Everest once more. I wondered if I would be wise enough to stay away.

Six months later I agreed to make a film on Everest about the effect of high altitude on the body. I would climb the mountain again.

DAVID F. BREASHEARS has received four Emmys for mountain filmmaking. His 1996 expedition is the subject of a National Geographic book, *Everest: Mountain Without Mercy*, by Broughton Coburn, to be published in October.

National Geographic, September 1997

The auspicious city

Kathmandu like it was

by Kishore Lal Manandhar

You are wandering through central Kathmandu with temples to the left and right. You pass a courtyard here and a sunken water spout there. The quaint streets and colorful markets transport you back to an exotic past. What was the city really like in the days of yore?

Kathmandu has changed in the past few years. From a dwelling place delineated according to sacred designs, it is today a bustling metropolis. From the shopping and commercial activities concentrated around New Road, Dharma Path and Sukra Path to the office and administrative complex around Singha Durbar in the southeastern part of the city, the "suburbs" of Baneswar

and Tangal in the east, and Lazimpat and Maharajgunj in the north. Kathmandu is well on its way to becoming the political-administrative center and gateway to the nation. Amidst all this growth and rapid urbanization, it is sometimes hard to detect the old Kathmandu.

But, even behind the 20th century face of Kathmandu, there is another city. It is not the city of concrete dwellings, glitzy shopping malls or glassy facades but the Kathmandu of yesteryear - traditional homes, crowded shophouses, and narrow streets where businesses still spill onto the pavement. From New Road, if you walk up to the Supermarket and turn

north, you will reach Indra Chowk and realize that you have reached an older shopping area. The street leading northeastwards takes you to Asan where the shops have an entirely different look. The ironmongers and hardware outlets are not from this time. The quaint shops selling household edibles, spices, and medicinal herbs too have been around for quite sometime. Similarly, if you take the southwesterly route from Indra Chowk you will reach Maru, another traditional market area.

In order to better understand Kathmandu's layout, it is helpful to know how Nepalese view their city. For them, a city is more than the mere end result of the planned or chance juxtaposing of different environments (built and unbuilt) that are required to conduct the daily activities of life. For the Nepalese, the city is an integral part of the bigger universe or cosmic whole that surrounds them. Their city must be in constant cosmic balance, and the design process of creating a city must accomplish a successful interrelating and intertwining of physical and mythical space.

The ancient architectural theory of *vastu-vidya* (literally, science of gods' dwellings) underlies the physical structure of Newar townships. The west would recognize this as town planning principles. *Vastu-vidya* is said to originate in India and prescribes codes for the construction of palaces, temples, cities, and domestic dwellings in accordance with Hindu beliefs.

In one of the *vastu-vidya* manuals, the optimal city plan is depicted as a *mandala* (ancient mystic diagram depicting the cosmos) of 81 squares upon which is superimposed a circular

plan. Mandala patterns define the boundaries between sacred and profane space. Conceptually, these ancient architectural/urban design instructions provide the link between the physical world as we know it and the greater universe of creation that we are a part of, attempting to achieve a careful balance between the two. Thus, the Hindu building code has been aptly described as "spiritual" rather than "municipal".

In this context then, the Kathmandu Valley exists within an aura of sacredness. According to local legend, it was given to man by the gods themselves. In mythical times, the Bodhisattva Manjushree is said to have cut a gorge at Chobhar (at the southern edge of the Kathmandu Valley) with his sword, and let out all the water from the lake that covered the Valley, thereby opening it for settlement. As if in obeisance to him, the old city of Kathmandu is said to be shaped like Manjushree's sword, with the hilt at the confluence of the Bishnumati and Bagmati rivers.

It is difficult to discern ancient mandala patterns in the city structure of Kathmandu. The city, founded somewhere in the late ninth century, had modest origins and followed the simple Newar principle of living on high-lying land and growing crops in the lower (easier to irrigate) areas. Settlements sprung up as a result bounded by the Bagmati river to the south, the Bishnumati to the west and the Tukucha river to the east.

What can be discerned, however, is a ring of eight shrines delineating the cosmic boundaries of the city. In Kathmandu these *asta-matrikas* or eight mother deities are Brahmayani (Chandralakhu) inside the Narayanhity Royal Palace grounds; Rudrayani (Pasiko-

ajima), about 150 m east of the King Mahendra statue at Durbar Marg; Kauri near the shrine of Lord Ganesh in Kamaladi east of the Clock Tower; Vaishnavi (Lumadhi or Bhadrakali), 200 m east of the General Post Office past Martyrs' Gate; Varahi (Phibojima), 150 m downhill from the main entrance of the Army Headquarters; Indrayani (Naikha or Shikali-ajima) at Teku just before the bridge; Chamunda (Kanga-ajima) on the banks of the Bishnumati about 400 m west of Maruhity; and Mahalakshmi (Luti-ajima) on the eastern bank of the Bishnumati west of Chhetrapati. All the eight shrines are located along the Bagmati, Bishnumati and Tukucha rivers.

The asta-matrikas of Kathmandu (the town of Bhaktapur has its own ring of eight shrines) have been assigned the role of guardian deities. This function may have acquired more currency given the profusion of deity groups around settlements in the Valley - the five Narayans: Ichangu Narayan, Budhanilkantha, Changu-narayan, Bishankhu Narayan, and Sheshnarayan at Pharping; and the four Ganeshes: Ashokvinayak, Suryavinayak, Karyavinayak, and Jalvinayak. It was only natural then that the eight mother deities would be assigned the task of protection.

However, what is also true is that all the asta-matrika shrines are located along rivers and that the locations either were or still are cremation grounds. Luti, Kanga and Teku are still used for that purpose while the others have become unusable because of Kathmandu's expansion eastwards. In

fact, if we look at their ritualistic significance, these locations are used by Bajracharya priests to practice yoga or for the initiation of novices in the intricacies of yogic learning. The reason for choosing such locales is because of their sufficient distance both physically and psychically from the pomp and decadence of the city. As cremation grounds they also provide the right setting for detachment from the material world and the awareness of life's temporality required for a Buddhist priest's instruction.

In today's Kathmandu, the universe of the vastu-vidya architect has been supplanted by the modern day world. As long as Kathmandu was a self-contained city state, the wisdom and instructions contained in the vastu-vidya texts were sufficient to guide the proper and organized development of city space. But once the kingdom was made a part of Greater Nepal along with the other Valley kingdoms, Kathmandu became the crux of Nepalese power and politics. The development in the city of various durbars (palaces or mansions) and palace complexes was one result, for example, of the 104-year (1846-1950) Rana regime when tracts of vacant and arable land were transformed into mansions for the Rana aristocracy. Now pressures for development are making additional claims on Kathmandu's sacred land, and soon the historical layout of the city may well become a thing of the past.

Shangri-La
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Kvindernes nat

Af Susanne Kirk Christensen, MS Nepal 1992-1995

Kilde: Nepal Vision

Trommerne lyder udover landsbyen. Natten igennem. Det er kvindernes nat, Teej. Monsunregnen er slut. Jorden er våd og frodig.

I de sidste dage er kvinder draget afsted fra deres hjem til deres maiti - deres fars hus. Det har vrimlet med kvinder overalt på de smalle stier i de bjerge, som nepaleserne kalder "bakkene", skønt de flere steder strækker sig 1.000 meter over havet. Kvindernes i røde sarier, spraglede lungier og med guldsmykker i ørene, i næsen, om halsen og håndledet. For de gifte kvinder er festivalen et håb om lykke, velstand og drengebørn. For de unge, giftefærdige er det håbet om den perfekte ægtemand. På den første dag i festivalen tilbereder kvinderne sammen et festmåltid af det bedste husholdet formår: cirkelformede risemlskager bagt i olie, majsmandekager, ristede bønner og poppede majs, friske, mosede tomater med mynte og hvidløg, kager af linser, masser af ris, grøntsager i krydrede sovs og måske kødet fra en friskslagtet ged.

I olielampens skær

Mørket sænker sig. På gårdspladsen foran det lerklinede hus samles familiens kvinder - moren, de gifte og ugifte døtre - i skæret fra olielampen. Fra nabohusene kommer også en flok kvinder. Mændene holder sig lidt på afstand. Sangen og dansen begynder langsomt. Der grines og snakkes, men snart tager sangen over. I deres sange fortæller kvinderne historier fra den landsby, de bor i. Om de sørger og glæder de har haft året igennem. Om hverdagen hvor naturen altid spiller en rolle. Om livet og døden. Og især om hvor irriterende mændene kan være.

Sani Saras sang

Sani Sara synger sin sang om alle de opgaver, hun hver dag året rundt må tage vare på, mens hendes mand blot holder møde og spiller kort med de andre mænd i landsbyen.

"Jeg står op som den første og går i seng som den sidste. Jeg fejrer gårdspladsen mens solens stråler endnu kun er nået til de sneklædte tinder i den fjerne horisont. Hver dag bærer jeg litervis af vand hjem fra kilden. Min ryg gør ondt, når jeg kravler rundt i skovens træer for at skære foder til vores bøfser og køer. Min hals bliver tør af tørst, når jeg hakker ukrudt væk fra majsplanterne. Mine øjne svier og løber i vand, mens jeg i rogen fra ildstedet laver den mad, af hvilken jeg altid kun får resterne. Jeg har født

ham tre pigebørn og et drengebarn. Jeg fødte dem alle, men én dreng er ikke nok".

Kvindernes omkring Sani Sara klapper taktfast til hendes sang. Det er godt at få sagt tingene lige ud - i hvert fald denne ene gang om året.

Sange i natten

Tulu Maya's år har været et af de sværeste i hendes liv. Dybt berørt beskriver hun i sin sang, hvordan hendes søn på fem år blev syg og til sidst døde. I to dage sad hun med ham på skødet, mens hun så, hvordan han blev dårligere og dårligere. Den anden nat mistede han bevidstheden. Hun troede, han var død. Da han kom til bevidsthed lidt senere var hendes mand indforstået med, at det var på tide at opsøge landsbyens lama, den kloge mand. De betalte ham tre høns. Tulu Maya synger om, at det var en ond ånd, som havde besat hendes søn. De ofrede en ged, men måske var det ikke nok. Måske var det gudernes vilje, at hendes søn skulle dø. Tulu Maya's sang er stille og de andre kvinder lytter opmærksomt, medfølelse. Mange af dem har selv prøvet at miste et barn. Men ligesom livet i landsbyen går livet videre på godt og ondt, hvor det onde afløses af det gode, ligeså skifter kvindernes sange. Maya Tappa synger en munter sang om landsbyens problemer med aberne.

"Forst såede vi hvede, så såede vi majs".



"Men aberne kom og tog det hele" lyder omkvædet.

"Så plantede vi frugt - og fodertræer, men aberne kom og tog det hele".

Kvindernes synger med på omkvædet, og selvom sangen egentlig har et nedslående indhold, vækker omkvædet jubel. Langt ind i natten lyder kvindernes sange. De bedste bliver gentaget igen og igen. Siden midnat har de hverken spist eller drukket. Langsomt breder udmattelsen sig, og de går til ro.

Ren krop og sjæl

Endnu inden daggrøn vågner kvinderne, og som grå skygger i det tidlige morgenlys bevæger de sig ned til kilden. Denne morgen vasker de hele kroppen 365 gange. Hver afvaskning repræsenterer en dag i det kommende år. Dagen igennem fortsætter de fasten. De tilbeder guden Shiva og hans smukke kone gudinden Parvati. Ved midnat er den rituelle renselse fuldbetruet. Kvindernes er atter rene i krop og sjæl. Sani Sara, Tulu Maya og Maya Tappa vender tilbage til deres mænd, til deres landsbyer og de daglige gøremål. Ligesom gudinden Indra år efter år lader monsunens regn gennemvæde jorden, og gør den smuk, ren og frugtbar, således har kvinderne badet og rensat sig. Atter smelter billederne af den ideelle nepalesiske kvinde sammen til et: den rene sjæl og krop, den attraktive og den frugtbare bærer af mandens sæd.



Tilcho-søen og en let 6-tusinder

Af Bo Ulfhøj

Vi havde sat os i hovedet at forsøge at finde ind til den sagnospundne Tilcho sø, der virker så dragende, når man har læst Herzogs bog om førstebestigningen af Annapurna I. Det var i oktober/november 1979, og Annapurnaruten var stadig meget jomfruelig.

Vi var 8 danskere i alderen 21 til 50 år, der havde kæmpet os igennem det tropiske Nepals varme, men dejlige rismarker, og vi var nu endelig nået til Manang på Himalayas nordside. Her havde vi fundet en pragtfuld teltplads på toppen af den gamle tibetanske handelsmand Karma Phuntsoks hus. Udsigten var formidabel. Fra teltåbningen kiggede vi ud over Manangs flade tage med de mange bedeflag, der blafrede i vinden. For enden af byen ligger en stor gumpa (tibetansk buddhistisk tempel), og lige nedenfor glider Annapurna III's gletscher ned i en grøn gletschersø, hvis vand flyder videre ud i Marsyangdi-floden. Ude mod øst rejser sig de flotte Annapurna II og IV tinder, 7.937 m og 7.525 m, som farves røde i morgensolens første skær.

Smørthe, chhang og dæmoner

Vi sidder nede hos Phuntsok og hans kone og får en gang chhang (øl brygget på byg eller ris), og de mindre sarte prøver også den særtsmagende smørthe. Chhang'en er sød og stærk og er afgjort mere populær end smørthe'en, der vist er, hvad englænderne kalder „an aquired taste“. Chhang'en virker hurtigt, når fru Phuntsok lader den varme i en kedel inden serveringen. Tungen kommer på gлед, og selv med mit begrænsede tibetanske ordforråd, får vi en snak i gang. Om vi virkelig vil ind til Tilcho søen? spørger Phuntsok. „Det er alt for farligt, for der lever en dæmon i søen, og den vil ikke forstyrres af fremmede“. Drikke vandet kan vi heller ikke, for så vil dæmonen nedkalde alverdens ulykker

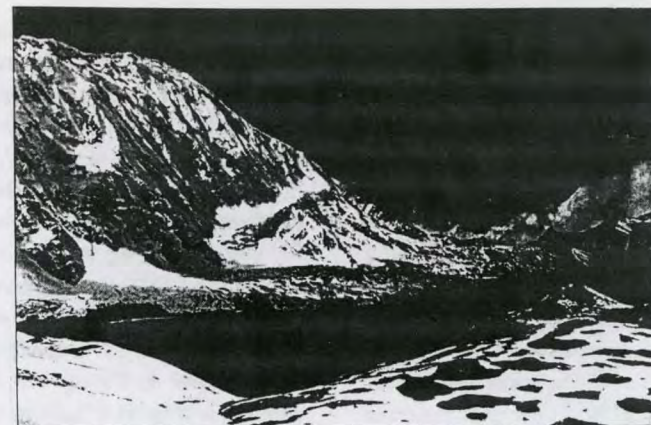
over os. Men vandet er alligevel helligt, så hvis vi velsigner vores pande, strube og hjerte (krop, tale og sind) med det, vil dæmonen ikke gøre noget. Ruten derind skulle være meget besværlig og bruges næsten ikke mere; det er nemmere at gå over Thorung passets 5.430 m. Phuntsok kender ikke stien og anbefaler os at få fat i nogle lokale i den sidste by Khangsar, som ligger ensomt i 4.000 m's højde på vejen derind. Vi skal dog først være med i Manangs store efterårsfest, hvor dæmoner, onde kræfter, dumhed og anden dårligdom drives ud. Phuntsok mente nu også, at vi kunne få brug for lidt beskyttelse.

Chham-festival i Manang

Næste dag fra tidlig morgen var munke og lægfolk samlede i gumpa'en og reciterede og sang bønner, ledsaget af rituel musik spillet på bækkener, store trommer samt de enormt lange kobberbasuner (dungchen) og trompeter lavet af menneskelårbenknogler (kangling). Der blev fremstillet torma'er (ofringer) af tsampa (ristet bygmel), smørthe og sukker samt en stor vredt udseende figur med strimler af tøj og trådnat. Den skulle bruges til at fange dæmonerne i. Hen på eftermiddagen samledes hele landsbyen i gumpa'en, og munkene trak i farvestrålende dansekostumer, masker og hatte. Til øredøvende musik, hujen og piften gik de festklædte i procession gennem byen. Forrest landsbylama'en, der velsignede med sin klokke og dorje (tordenkile). For at få del i velsignelsen stillede man sig så op langs husene med bøjet hoved og blev berørt af dorjen, hvortil der var bundet en klud med harsk yakoksesmør. Det var nærmest som at få slået hovedet ned i maven, når lama'en gned godt med smør ud i knolden på en.

Vild dæmonuddrivelse

På en festplads uden for byen ned mod gletscheren gik det så ellers løs. I vild dans hvirvlede munkene støvet op, og med bue og pil og dragne sværd truede man ad figuren. Et par vildt udseende krigere ladede deres gamle forlader og skød mod dæmonfælden. Det var bare med at komme af banen. Imens flød det med



Tilcho-søen, Nepals smukkeste? Foto: Bo Ulfhøj

chhang og rakshi (brændevin), og stemningen steg til kogepunktet. Det hele havde ikke meget med en buddhistisk ceremoni at gøre, men var tydeligt præget af den forbuddhistiske religion bön. Bön er en animistisk og shamanistisk (åndemaner) religion, som var udbredt over hele Centralasien og Himalaya-området, før buddhismen kom til i det 7. århundrede. Den findes stadig i afsides egne af Himalaya. Endelig sluttede det daglange farvestrålende ritual med afbrænding af dæmonfiguren under vild jubel. Lamaen som dårligt kunne gå selv efter store mængder chhang, delte nu chhang-ofringer ud til folket. Manangs land var for vinteren befriet for sine dæmoner, og vi kunne trygt begive os afsted mod Tilchosøen.

En hårrejsende sti

På en smuk klar morgen gik vi så ned i slugten ved gletscheren og ind langs en sideflod til Marsyangdi. I Khangsar fandt vi en køn tibetanerpige, som kendte søen. Hun havde familie i Jomsom ovre på den anden side af bjergene og benyttede sommetider ruten via Tilcho, når der var meget sne i Thorung passet. Efter Khangsar blev sporet hurtigt svært at finde. Under monsunregnen om sommeren sker der ofte store skred i den løse kalkklippe, der omgav os på begge sider. Vi måtte tit kravle rundt i løse sten op i tæt

ornet buskads eller springe fra sten til sten i floden. Da vi ikke kunne komme længere langs floden, kravlede vi op over en gruskrænt og videre ad en skråning med tørt brunt græs og edelweiss. I 4.300 m's højde blev græsset afløst af et mærkeligt månelandskab af eroderet kalkklippe. Vi traverserede nu et stejlt område (ca 60°) mellem bizzarre klippetårne. Det var sådan set let nok, for der var hugget trin i den bløde klippe, men for almindelige trekere, som de fleste i gruppen var, var det både nervepirrende og spændende. Men flot var det. Solen var ved at forsvinde bag „Den Store Barriere“ og Tilcho Peak, da vi nåede ned i en gryde ved en delvist frossen bæk. Her var græs og små tørre buske, så vi kunne varme os ved et godt lejrbrød. En formidabel flot og øde lejrplads i vildmarken 4.200 m oppe ved foden af Ganggapurna og Barrieren.

Nepals smukkeste sø

Der var +8° næste morgen, men så snart solen kom, faldt dunjakkerne, og vi begav os på vej over græsskrænterne og videre op ad en stejl moræneskrænt til Det østre Tilcho pas, 5.120 meter. To skridt op og glide et tilbage. 4.800 m, stoppe, puste - de fleste havde nu med Mt. Blanc højde sat højerekord. Pludselig lød en buldren: En kæmpelavine ovre på Barrierens nordside. Godt vi ikke lå derovre. Endelig oppe

i passet slog vi os lidt ned ved en ensom Lhato, en stenvarde med ofringer til guder og dæmoner. Ellers var her ikke spor af, at der havde været mennesker før os. En ½ km længere inde kunne vi pludselig se ud over søen: Et uendelig betagende landskab i mørkeblå, brune og hvide farver. Der var ikke en sky på himlen, som var så blå, at alle der siden har set billederne derfra siger, at det er løgn. Tilcho Peak, Barrieren og Rock Noir var altdominerende, og ude i søen var efterårets første isskruninger ved at danne sig. Søen er 7 x 2 km, så den er stor nok til at der danner sig bølger. Måske er det godt, at næsten ingen kender dette fredfyldte, men barske sted. Vi fik helt dårlig samvittighed over at komme og forstyrre dæmonen og trampe rundt i dens jomfruelige sne. Det var let at forstå, hvorfor tibetanerne i århundreder har fundet øde steder og huler i bjergene, for dér, i total afsondrethed og nøjsomhed i årevis at meditere. Karma, vores sherpasirdar, sagde, at vi var nærmere det vestlige buddhistiske paradisiske Devachen heroppe. Ang Dawa Sherpa og et par af os havde energi nok til at fortsætte de 200 højdemeter ned til søen (vi skulle jo også op igen). Vi foretog det foreskrevne ritual: Velsignede vores krop, tale og sind i søens vand ved at komme lidt vand på hovedet, struben og hjertet. Vi kunne næsten have forestillet os, at vi sad ved en grønlandsk fjord, da vi sad her ved en af Himalayas højeste og mest ensomme søer og spiste vores medbragte mad.

Hestevæddeløb som på Djenghis Khans tid

Året efter var jeg tilbage med en gruppe på 10. Denne gang var der stemning for en 6-tusinder. Turen til Tilcho gav os en eminent god højdeakklimatisering, så vi startede ved godt mod op mod Thorung passet. Vi havde været til hestevæddeløb i Manang forinden. Efter høsttid er der altid talrige fester. Hestene heroppe er små, stærke og langhårede mongolske heste og Manang-folket er fantastisk dygtige ryttere. Normalt er hestene fredelige, men i dagens an-

ledning havde man givet dem chhang at drikke, og de var helt ustyrlige. Det var som at være i Centralasien på Djenghis Khans tid.

Lejr i 5.400 m

Efter en lang tur i ødemarken hvor vi undervejs så Himalaya-antiloper, vilde yakokser og vilde får, slog vi lejr i 4.550 m i en dyb slugt før opstigningen til Thorung passet. 900 m op i den højde er for mange nok, så de fleste forsvandt efter passet ned mod pilgrimsbyen Muktinath. Vejret var i øvrigt ved at blive dårligt, men vi var alligevel 4 danskere og 2 sherpa'er, der slog lejr i passet i håb om bedre vejr. Vi havde kun det allermest nødvendige med os, resten havde vi sendt med ned til Muktinath. Der var ikke andet at gøre end at skrubbe ind i teltene og ned i soveposerne for at holde varmen og lige så stille hvile og vænne sig til den store højde: 5430 m, som nu var betragteligt mærkbar. Hen på eftermiddagen begyndte det at sne. Sove, lave suppe og the og spille skak - vi sløvede. Klokken syv lagde vi os til at sove tæt sammen 3 mand og 1 pige i ét telt. Jeg sov mærkeligt nok som en sten, indtil Annemette skulle ud kl. 11 og kom ind og meldte, at det var stjerneklart. En af gutterne lå og pustede, og en anden havde hovedpine og tog et par tabletter. Vi havde aftalt at starte ved 4-tiden, men da jeg vågnede igen var klokken fem. Det var med at få gang i lejren. Man tumler forvirret rundt og har svært ved at koordinere det hele i den højde, og alting går i slow motion. Endelig stod vi så ude i kulden med vores varme the og nød en fantastisk solopgang. Der lå nysne i passet, og det hele lå badet i orange lys.

Udsigt til Mustang og Tibet

Ruten op på Thorung Ri (Peak) var let nok at finde, og vi skyndte os over til bjergets fod og tog steigeisen på. Under den tynde nysne var et godt firn-lag, så jernene bed godt i. Ved et hvil i 5.800 m måtte vi tage afsked med én, der ikke orkede mere på trods af, at han ikke var syg. Hvilene blev hyppigere og hyppigere og støvler

og steigeisen tungere. Ved 6.000 m lagde vi os på nogle klipper og pustede. Det var næsten stille og solen bagte. Efter et kort stejlt stykke gik det herefter jævnt mod toppen. De sidste 20 m slæbte vi os op og kastede os endelig glade og lettede i hinandens arme. Dannebrog blev plantet og, vi fejrede, at vi alle havde sat vores højderekord: højdemåleren viste 6.200 m. Det var middagstid, og vi spiste lidt og fotograferede. Først efter 3 kvarter fik vi løsrevet os fra toppen. Her var sol og stille. Mod syd havde vi hele Annapurna Himalas nordside, og mod nord kunne vi kigge lige ind i Mustang og Tibet, hvor der var tørt, goldt og ugæstfrit.

Det blev en lang tur ned. Sneen var blev blød, og vi røg somme tider i til knæene, så da vi endelig havde fået brudt lejren i passet og havde 1.600 m's nedstigning til Muktinath tilbage var vi godt henne på eftermiddagen. Det var forlængst blevet mørkt, da vi helt flade og utmattede slæbte os ind til de andre i Muktinath men hvor var vi glade.



I 81 gentog Karma og jeg succes'en, og nåede op på Thorung Peak med 5 dansktrekkingammerater.

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Hepatitis major killer disease in Nepal

Kathmandu, Dec. 22:

One percent of the population of Nepal or about 200,000 people are Hepatitis 'B' carriers and Hepatitis 'B' is a major cause of cirrhosis and liver cancer in the country.

This was disclosed at a two-day workshop on Hepatitis that began here today.

Data from World Health Organization indicates that Hepatitis now ranks with malaria as the fourth most common cause of death from infectious disease.

As informed at the workshop at least five types of viral Hepatitis have been detected so far. They include Hepatitis 'A' and Hepatitis 'E' which are spread through food and drinks and enterically transmitted, and Hepatitis 'B', Hepatitis 'C' and Hepatitis 'D' which are spread through blood

and parenterally transmitted.

Hepatitis 'A' is highly infectious and is predominantly a disease of childhood in Nepal where almost everybody gets infected by the age of five, while Hepatitis 'E' spreads by fecal contaminated water is the commonest cause of jaundice in young adults.

About 20 to 25 percent of pregnant women infected with Hepatitis 'E' die of acute liver failure in Nepal. Drug addicts are found more vulnerable to Hepatitis 'C' and about 60 per cent of the drug addicts in Nepal are carriers of this virus.

Inaugurating the workshop, Minister of State for Health Brij Kishore Singh said as Hepatitis is a viral disease, prevention is the best method of controlling this disease.

Dr Santosh Man Shrestha of Liver Foundation Nepal described Hepatitis 'B' and Hepatitis 'D' as silent killers and said the patients with Hepatitis 'B' and Hepatitis 'C' do not develop jaundice but become carriers of these virus for a long period and they themselves may develop serious and fatal liver disease like cirrhosis and liver cancer.

He also said that the workshop will assess the situation of viral Hepatitis in the country and deliberate on the means of managing it specially the acute liver failure and the problem of emerging chronic liver disease.

The workshop is scheduled to present various suggestions to the His Majesty's Government for prevention of the spread of these viruses. *The Rising Nepal* 23/12-97