

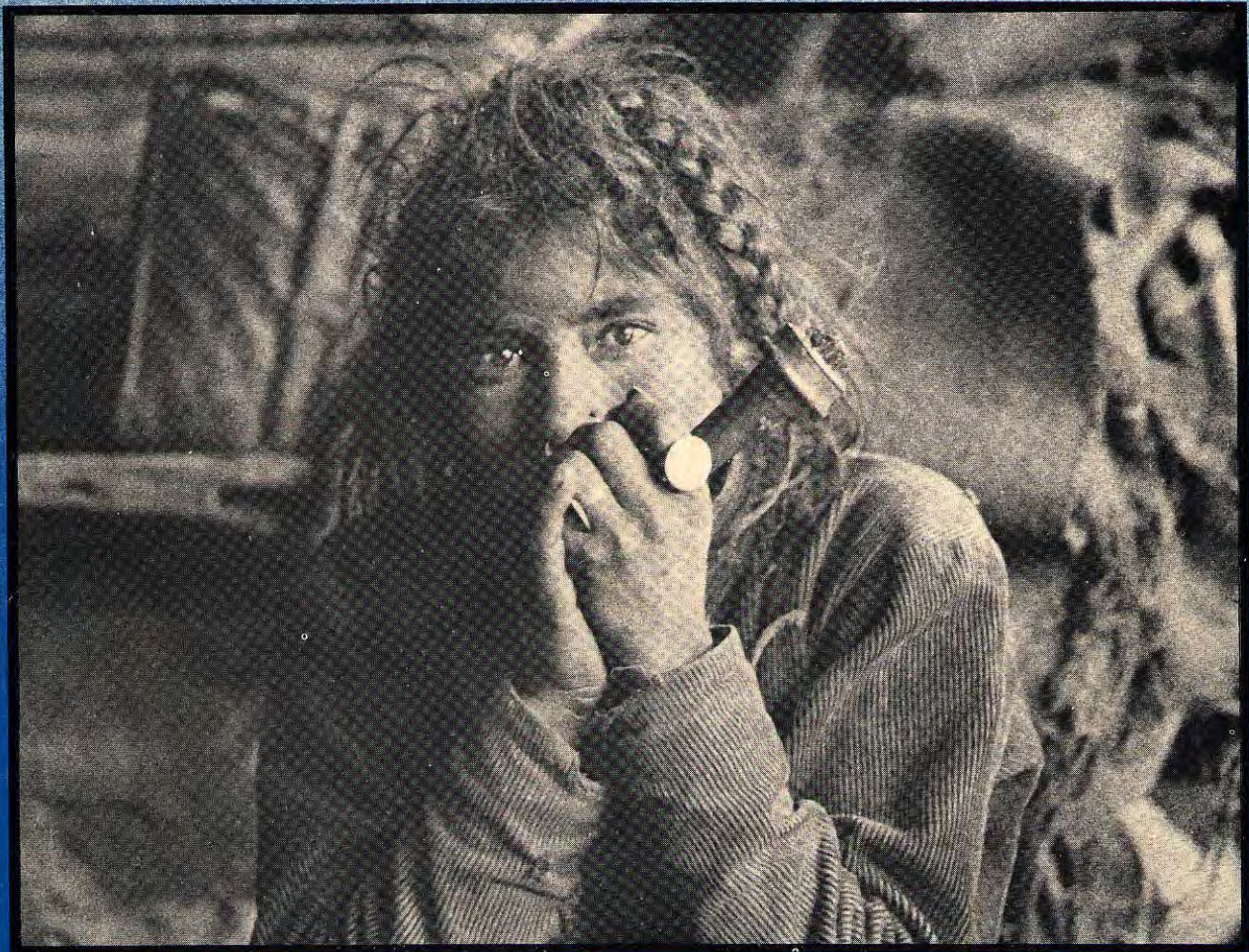
NRs20 IRs12 U\$6

ISSN 1012-9804

NOV/DEC 1989

HIMAL

FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT



DEVELOPMENT REFUGEES

"MARLBORO" TIBET

SMALL BUSINESS

SUNGDARE

GOITRE PREVENTION

RESTAURANT BOYS

WHICH WITCH?

COVER

3 Development Refugees

- 5 "Voices From Baliapal"
- 7 Kulekhani Diaspora
- 8 Will They be Displaced?
- 11 Missing Tribals



FEATURES

- 15 "Guns on Ice"
- 16 Summits Are Lonely
- 17 Chipko Poet
- 22 Goitre and Cretinism
- 24 Tibet's "Marlboro" Country
- 27 Small Business

DEPARTMENTS

- 12 News in Brief
- 18 Photo Essay: Restaurant Boys
- 21 Interview: Toni Hagen
- 25 Parks and Wildlife: Spiny Bable
- 31 Reviews: Migration
- 33 Abstracts
- 36 Abominably Yours

VIEWS

- 28 Goitre Prevention
- 29 Eighth Five-Year Plan

HIMAL

Vol. 2 No. 5 Nov/Dec 1989

अस्त्युत्तरस्यां दिशि देवतात्मा
हिमालयो नाम नगाधिराजः
पूर्वापरो तोयनिधी वगाह्य
स्थितः पृथिव्या इव मानदण्डः

The Abode of the Gods. King of
Mountains, Himalaya
You bound the oceans from
east to west

A northern yardstick
To measure the Earth
- Kalidasa (*Kumara Sambhavam*)

Edited and Published by
Kanak Mani Dixit
for Himal Associates

Kesang Tseten
Associate Editor

Manjushree Thapa
Picture Editor

Advisory Panel

- M. Abdhullah, University of Peshawar, Peshawar
- Adlai Amor, Asian Forum of Environmental Journalists
- Anita Anand, Inter Press Service, Rome
- Kinley Dorje, Kuensel Weekly, Thimpu
- Harka Bahadur Gurung, Kathmandu
- Corneille Jest, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris
- Prem Shenker Jha, Commerce, New Delhi
- Bharat Dutt Koirala, Nepal Press Institute, Kathmandu
- Ram Chandra Malhotra, International Fund for Agriculture Development, Rome
- Hemanta Mishra, King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, Kathmandu
- David Sassoon, Earthpost, New York
- Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah, Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Kathmandu
- Donald Shanor, Columbia University School of Journalism, New York
- Ambica Shrestha, Nepal Business and Professional Women's Club, Kathmandu
- Vidya Stokes, Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, Shimla
- B.G. Verghese, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi
- Brian Welsh, The Holos Centre, London

Cover picture by Kevin Bubrisky shows a woman from Rara.

HIMAL (ISSN 1012-9804) is published six times per year by Himal Associates, P.O. Box 42, Lalitpur, Nepal. Tel: 523845. Copyright 1988. Please turn to page 10 for subscription information.

Special acknowledgement to Pradyumna Kumar Kotta for technical assistance.





MAIL

AGAINST THE WEST

There is a tendency among the Indian intelligentsia to blame the West for anything and everything that turns out to be bad. Mr. Siddiq Wahid's article, "Riots in Ladakh and the Genesis of a Tragedy," is no exception.

The article conveniently blames agents of the British Raj and western scholars for the recent violence in Ladakh. The writer thereby gives a clean certificate to both the state and the central government on the matter. That more than 40 years have passed since the British left India seems to be of no significance to the writer.

Wahid may well be right in his interpretation (though he fails to substantiate it), but if the western scholars were so wrong in their interpretation, where were the presumably innocent Indian scholars hiding? Why did they not offer their correct interpretation?

It is dangerous to blame others for one's own mistakes and carelessness. In the long run, it does more harm than good. With his ill-concealed prejudice, the writer has shown that he is just another scholar with a deep-rooted prejudice against the west.

*Niraj B. Shrestha
Kathmandu*

NEPAL-CENTRIC HIMAL

Himal, it appears, has not only shifted its base of operation from New York to Nepal but also its priorities in reporting. Recent issues have zeroed in on Nepal. This focus on Nepal has in turn resulted in thinning out other reportage of the Himalaya that should be within the scope of **Himal**. Sikkim, Bhutan, Pakistan, and Tibet are covered inadequately and irregularly. This is not what **Himal** promised its readers.

Further proof that **Himal** is becoming more and more Nepal-oriented is its

liberal use of typical Nepali terms such as daalbhat, doko, khasi, chautari, chiura, khaja, matwali, dhindo, gundruk, and many more - and then, too, without explanation.

It should not be surprising if discerning and disappointed readers start calling your bimonthly **Nepal Himal**. Would you like that?

*Basanta Thapa
Kathmandu*

KATHMANDU ISN'T ALL

It is heartening that **Himal** has moved from New York to Kathmandu. However, in doing so it seems to have developed a tendency to see Nepal with Kathmandu eyes. In particular the section *Dam News* (Mar/Apr and Jul/Aug 1989) caught my attention. The Mar/Apr issue had the headline "Kulekhanis let Kathmandu Down," and in the article says, "...meet the expectations of Kathmandu's electricity demands...," "...rationing in the valley was ended...," and "...Kathmandu residents could forget about load shedding..." While Kathmandu did suffer, other towns and cities suffered much more. In fact, the NEA was switching off supply outside the valley in order to supply Kathmandu.

I think writers, especially writers for **Himal**, should constantly bear in mind that Kathmandu is not Nepal. **Himal** should do its bit to eradicate the "frog in the pond" syndrome which afflicts people living in Kathmandu.

In the past, this Kathmandu-centred thinking has meant that Kathmandu received a disproportionate share of the country's resources. Although it is the capital, there is no reason for everything to be concentrated in Kathmandu. The sites, for example, of the Teaching

Hospital, the Foundry Project, the soon-to-be built conference centre, or even Tribhuvan University, in one of the regional towns would have decreased the strain on Kathmandu's infrastructure and, at the same time, helped in building up the economy of other regions. This trend should be reversed for the good of Kathmandu and Nepal.

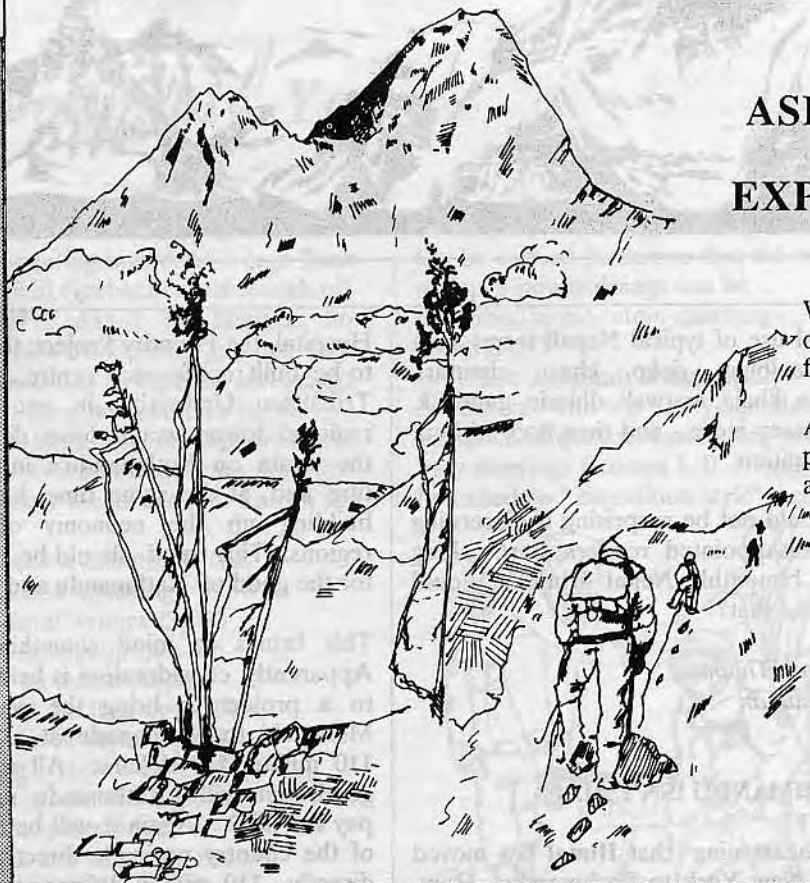
This brings to mind something else. Apparently, consideration is being given to a project to bring the waters of Melamchi to Kathmandu at a cost of 110 million US dollars. All well and good, but will Kathmandu residents pay for this? Again it will be the rest of the country paying directly or indirectly. 110 million dollars could go a long way, and it should not subsidise mismanagement in Kathmandu.

Himal has provided pleasurable reading. However, expressing views and being informed are not ends, only means. Decisions are being made that will have a large impact on the lives of people in this region, e.g. Karnali and Arun III to name but two. These decisions should not be left to a handful of bureaucrats and politicians. I am not suggesting **Himal** sponsor a crusade, but it could encourage people to actively participate in influencing decisions and policies, perhaps by organising lectures, seminars, public meetings, even though these fall outside the normal purview of a newsmagazine.

*Girish Kharel
Butwal*

We invite readers to comment, criticise or add to information appearing in this magazine. Letters should be short and to the point, and are subject to editing. Send mail to:

PO Box 42, Lalitpur Nepal



ASIAN TREKKING INVITES YOU TO AN EXPERIENCE WITH NATURE

We take you through natural trek trails to places of unending beauty and into contact with the friendly mountain people and their gentle living.

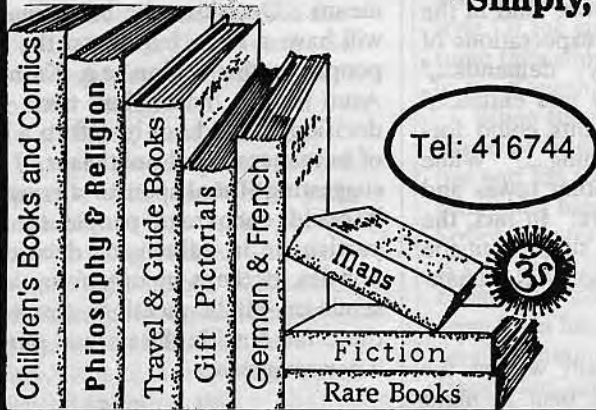
An experience you will never forget with our professional team to attend to all your trekking and tour arrangements with quiet efficiency.



P.O. Box: 3022, Keshar Mahal, Thamel
Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: 412821, Telex: NP 2276 HOSANG

"Simply, The best book store in Nepal, perhaps Asia."

- authentic customer statement



Tel: 416744

Featuring

- Quality Stationery • Classical Cassettes • Film Sales & 1-day Developing • Fine Teas • Fine Teas • Handicrafts • Gemstones • Post Cards • Posters • Worldwide Book Shipping • Mail & • Telegram Service
- Friendly and Helpful Staff where Browsing is Welcomed!

TIWARI'S PILGRIMS BOOK HOUSE

Next to Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel,
Open Daily 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.
For Children and Adults' Books Visit: Sales Counter at Blue Bird Supermarket, Tripureshwor (Open-8 am to 8 pm)



TIME OUT-IN KATHMANDU

the perfect water hole;
you will love it.

BHUGOL PARK, NEW ROAD, KATHMANDU

Development Refugees

In their rush to make development happen, planners and developers sometimes forget, or push to the side, people who just happen to be in the way.

Rameswar Choudhary points to a mark where the Rapti washed away almost two ropanis of his land. Tourist brochures may call it Asia's best managed park, but to him, it poses a direct threat to his livelihood. So successful was the USAID-sponsored malaria eradication that Chitwan's population jumped from 36,000 in 1950 to about 100,000 in 1960. Today, Chitwan has a population density of 117 persons per sq km.

In 1964, the Land Settlement Commission removed 22,000 people from the area to create what is today the Royal Chitwan National Park. They were resettled on the River Rapti's northern bank, which forms the park's natural boundary.

Older Meghauli residents remember the bitterness that was caused by the resettlement. Today, they are only allowed to their onetime home for 15 days a year to collect elephant grass, an indigenous building material. Since they otherwise have no access to fuelwood, villagers admit to entering the park illegally for deadwood and grass. For their extra energy needs, they catch the driftwood which float down the Rapti each monsoon.

Or take the case of Mansabdar Khan. He is a Muslim who was moved to Sagarhawa village 12 years ago because his house came under Lumbini Master Plan Area, a multimillion-rupee plan to develop the environs of Mayadevi's Temple. Mansabdar calls himself a "refugee" because he has never really settled in his new home, with its significantly lower yield, its fuel shortages and because the community is predominantly Hindu.

Meanwhile, closer to the capital at Chobar, Man Man Singh (see Himal prototype issue) and other members of his community were hopeful when they heard a cement plant was going to be set up near their home. Jobs - finally, he



Kevin Buhiski

The need to save Shivapuri's forest cover has driven these Tamangs to push city thelaas

thought. And his sons did find employment at the plant. Then, ever hungry for limestone, the plant bought a huge tract of land that included his farm and house. Man Man Singh had no choice but to move further uphill to begin a new life on Chobar Danda, but he had not escaped the painful reminder of his misfortune. Today, as he sleeps, he breathes cement dust.

According to HMG's Environment Impact Study Project, Himal Cement's emissions at the time - before the factory's subsequent expansion - were 450 mg per cubic metre. By comparison, the emission limits for similar factories in West Germany and India are about 120 mg and 250 mg per cubic metre. And rumours are about that the plant may further expand. So Man Man must look for a new place again.

Man Man Singh and the Meghauli villagers share some thing: their problems were caused by development projects aimed at "high social benefits," for the uplifting of someone or other but, apparently, not for them.

These cases are all too familiar instances of developers aiming at the "larger good," but in the process, overlooking or undermining those often most directly affected. And there are many such development projects --

hydro-projects, roads and wild life parks -- that come with a mission to deliver benefits and instead move the lives of people a step or two back, creating "refugees" -- people who are physically displaced or whose lives are severely disrupted by the implementation of these projects. Often no adequate compensation - the least that could be done - is even made.

Most development projects need to acquire forest or farm land, villages, towns, rivers and lakes, on which many depend for their livelihood. Thus large numbers of people are displaced from their homes, or their use of resources is markedly curtailed.

If it were only change, it would be understandable. After all, development needs to go on; and there is often no other way but for some to be inconvenienced for the good of many. But what is reprehensible is when these "refugees" - (physical or metaphorical) - are inadequately compensated, if at all, or, when they find themselves in far worse straits than before "development" touched them. The result is that a few are made to bear the burden for a sometimes abstract notion of the "larger good." This then is one ugly facet of development.

As far as parks and "refugees" go, the "Rara experience" is a familiar one

to most people in the development field. About 200 people were removed from Chapra and Rara villages up in the mountains to establish the proposed park. While that is in itself not bad, they were settled in the sweltering heat of the Nepalgunj plains. No one knows with certainty what happened to them. Some apparently went to work on the highway, others might have succumbed to the heat, malaria, or simply, the pains of such a drastic change. Others are said to have returned to the Rara area, and now continue their broken lives outside their traditional milieus. Even in this day of mega-tragedies, the Rara experience serves to underscore the human distortions caused by well-intentioned attempts to change someone else's environment.

Jamling Tamang, 50, of Dhunche looks despondently at what was once a wheat field. "I thought we would have a sort of a zoo here with animals in cages with the coming of the Langtang National Park. But it's we who have been put behind bars. In cages! Look at that wheat field! It's become a playground for wild boars!" He was referring to the Langtang National Park, an area of 1710 sq km, directly north of Kathmandu.

Dhunche's Pradhan Panch, Chewang Dhingdup, says everyone was a bit fuzzy when rumours started that a national park was going to be established right at their door-step. Nobody knew what one was. And then, three years later, people said, "The national park is set up." But just what was set up, and where, no one knew. Yet another year passed before the park boundary was drawn. And then the Langtang folk knew - because they were in it.

Conceived in 1970, its boundaries demarcated six years later, the Langtang National Park was established to protect the habitat of birds and animals such as the snow leopard, musk deer, and boar, among others. It encloses 16 village panchayats of Rasuwa, Nuwakot, and Sindhupalchowk districts, a population of some 30,000, who depend on the park for fodder and firewood.

"We thought the park would bring in development. Instead, it introduced a lot of new rules. 'Don't touch firewood, don't light medang (a torch made of the inner shavings of pine trees), don't use Pangling wood for roofing, don't kill boars.' Just don'ts and don'ts!"

Now, these people are being pestered by bears and boars. "Pestered" is hardly right: there are many "bhalukorey" people (people scarred by bears) in Rasuwa. Boars are regarded as the scourge of crops. And there are many bear-and-boar tales, like the one about the father of the Syabru Pradhan Panch, who was gored to death by a wild boar.

"We are a jungle people. We cannot survive without the jungle," says Gyal-sang Ghaley of Timmurey. "We need a lot of firewood to protect us from the cold, and we need Medang. But the officials put limits on our firewood, and we aren't allowed to cut 'green trees.' Can we get Pangling and Medang from dried wood, I ask you?"

Nima Tamang, another Timmurey resident, complains: "We're told to kill crop-marauding boars, but without guns! That is like trying to kill a tiger by holding onto its tail!"

"When the park was being set up, they went around and destroyed all the baits and traps. Now no one is alive here who knows how to do these things," says Damey Tamang of Bridim.

Now the traps and baits are built by novices. "Instead of boars, buffalo and sheep are trapped," said the RP mem-

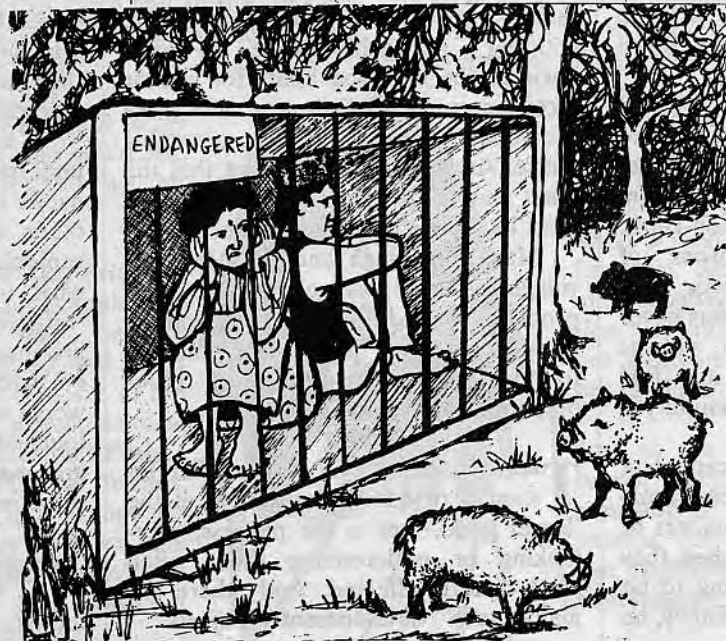
ber. "The traps even got some cows, but the matter had to be hushed up because of legal complications."

Gazing at this "playground of the boars," Jamling Tamang sighs, "This national park has done nothing but cause mischief since it was established."

When they expressed their disgruntlement, the park warden suggested that people build stone walls to keep the boars out, and use GI sheets to replace Gobare Salla as building material. In response, officials visiting the area are often challenged with the question. "Janata pyaro ki janawar pyaro....(Do you care for people or for animals?)"

Director of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Department, Vishwanath Upreti, sees the problem being rooted in the ignorance and low literacy of the people in the area, but he admits that there is not adequate funding or personnel to spread the conservation message.

Talking to these people, one senses resentment toward what is ostensibly a development effort but one from which they feel they derive no benefit. Many Langtang-bas go as far as wishing they could be relocated elsewhere. As Nima Tamang put it, "What good is this National Park that is green with trees one cannot cut and teeming with wild boar we cannot hunt?" While not technically so, these people are "refugees" in that they, too, are victims, to some extent, of development.



As important as compensation is - since that is the only remedial measure for people so "touched" by projects- the traumatic experience of a person or community facing such an upheaval cannot be underestimated. More than just being in a new environment, more often than not, these displaced people find themselves significantly worse than before.

As ecologist Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha points out, "The functioning of rural societies and their farming systems have acquired an equilibrium through ages of trial and error. To externalise decision to exert influence in

their system one would need careful thought..."

Frequently, development refugees are directly the result of improper implementation. Often compensation is delayed, and peasants are trapped in no-man's land, waiting and unable to find a new livelihood. Complaints about delays as long as a decade have been registered, as in the cases of the Mahendra Rajmarg, Ring Road Plaza at Tinkune in Lalitpur, and housing projects at. Neither has compensation been made to some for land acquired for the Ring Road and the Taragaon Project. This acquisition occurred more than 10 years ago.

Although the Land Acquisition Act (2034-1977) requires that payment of reasonable compensation be made to displaced persons, the experience is

otherwise. For instance, the land at Satdobate in Lalitpur district was acquired to develop the Ring Road plaza. Peasants were evicted from their land years ago, but have yet to receive compensation, and it looks doubtful now that the project will be implemented.

What is incredible is that those evicted were compensated Rs.16,000 per ropani (5476 sq feet) for land that would fetch Rs.600,000 or more in the market. Similarly, the evacuees of the Dallu housing project in Kathmandu district, whose land was acquired to build low-cost housing, were compensated Rs.8,000 per ropani against a market value of Rs.300,000. Equally unhappy are the displaced families of Chepawa (Pokhara-Baglung Road Project) and Lamachaur (Irrigation Project), who feel their land and homes

have been snatched away "almost free of cost" - so nominal has been their compensation.

Other complications have been triggered by slothful administration. For example, the Land Acquisition Act stipulates that the government must promptly transfer the land from the original owner to the organisation or project, but because it is seldom done promptly the original owner's name remains in the Land Registry. As a result, the displaced person must continue paying the land tax long after the government acquires his property.

Sometimes these lapses provide an easy avenue for fraud. For instance, unscrupulous land owners may succeed in selling their property again to innocent buyers because of delays in the property transfer. Thus, they get away with two

"Voices from Baliapal"

-- Panos Features

The 70,000-strong community of Baliapal, south of Calcutta, has been mounting a sustained campaign against government plans to evict them from their fertile farmlands in order to build a missile testing range.

The community's efforts are also the subject of an award-winning documentary, *Voices from Baliapal*, by film-makers Vasudha Joshi and Ranjan Palit, which had its European premiere at the Ecovision '89 Festival in France earlier this year.

Ever since the proposals came to light in 1984, the local community has used a combination of blockades and direct action to deny officials access to the area and thwart attempts to carry out eviction plans.

As Joshi explains: "One of the most striking things about their campaign is that it's based on non-violent, Gandhian principles. And this is very embarrassing for the Congress-I Party because they revere Gandhi as their founding father."

Most observers believe that moving people to accommodate a project is not bad in itself and often necessary, but they are unanimous in saying that

the government has a poor record in rehabilitation.

In the film, villagers cluster around the camera to affirm their determination to hold on to their homes. "To us, this land is like gold!" exclaims an elderly farmer. "How can they expect us to give it up?"

Others deride the government's offer of compensation: "Would they give up their birthplace if someone offered them money?" demands a young man.

A group of women show steely resolve: "We're prepared to die if need be - they'll have to drive the bulldozers over us."

And they seem ready to back their words. On several occasions, the villagers blocked incursions of military vehicles by forming human barricades - with women and children in the front ranks. When the first vehicle approached, lookouts blew conch shells and beat drums, and within minutes thousands of villagers were mobilised.

Repeated government efforts to convince people of the advantages of "relocation" have not swayed the local community. Last year, villagers unceremoniously destroyed the foundations of a "model village" built by the authorities.

Voices from Baliapal impresses the viewer with the courage of its subjects. Last year, it won India's National Award for the Best Film On Social Is-

sues. The Ministry of Information, which generally airs all such award-winning films on state television, failed to do so with *Voices from Baliapal*.

As Palit points out: "They simply will not show controversial subjects on state TV. Nevertheless, the film has been seen widely in India, at local film festivals and through screenings by other groups of activists. Joshi and Palit are particularly pleased. "Baliapal has had a fair amount of press coverage," Joshi says, "but when people see a film, it just comes across much more clearly. What's going on in Baliapal can give a lot of strength and inspiration to other movements."

To fund the film the two used their savings, loans from friends, and they also managed to sell copies of the film to voluntary groups working on similar issues.

The glitzy Bombay film industry, which prefers to turn out escapist romantic epics, offers little help to India's 20 or so film-makers who take on social issues. "They take a very condescending attitude towards us," says Palit.

Undismayed, he and other like-minded directors are hoping to set up an independent association that would co-ordinate funding appeals and distribution, "and generally give us the chance to sort out our problems together."



Speaking for Kulekhani's Diaspora

by Jagdish Pokharel

In Nepal, the public and the Government alike have had little experience with projects that involve considerable displacement of people. The Kulekhani Hydroelectric Project was one of the first. Before proceeding with much larger projects such as Karnali and Budhi Gandaki, it is urgent that we learn the lessons of Kulekhani.

When talk of a dam or reservoir began in the late 1960's Kulekhani was already reeling from the fallout of Rajpath, the highway into Kathmandu, which took away the jobs of porters and merchants alike. At first, these people ridiculed the notion that Kulekhani khola - dammed - could inundate their khet and bari. But they had underestimated the technological strength and administrative capacity of the state machinery, and disbelief gave way to fear and uncertainty as bulldozers arrived and evacuation notices were posted.

In 1985, I studied the situation of Kulekhani valley's people -- primarily Tamangs, and some Magars, Newars, Bahuns and Chettris. Today, those displaced by the project are, by and large, worse off than when they were in Kulekhani. Most have moved to poorer land around Hetauda, lost their previous societal standing, been separated from their relatives and communities, found no use for their traditional skills, and are dispirited and nostalgic for their old hillsides. In short, they are miserable, and they are convinced others have benefitted at their expense.

In all, the project displaced 3,500 people and acquired 4,015 ropanis of land, 450 houses and 50 ghattas -- modest in comparison to projects in India, Indonesia, or Brazil, but sufficient to highlight the suffering caused by displacement.

When the land acquisition began, Tamang women of Markhu village stood up in militant opposition. To them, their land was everything, and the compensation money, they feared, would go only to men.

They reasoned rightly. The stories of damages caused by the false sense of security when men suddenly acquire a big sum of cash are many. One gullible young Tamang who received NRs. 65,000 lost all of it at the casino in Kathmandu within months, and then wound up as a dishwasher in the capital. Two individuals with entrepreneurial ambitions but little experience bought a truck and soon went bankrupt. Many succumbed to gambling and drinking.

The wisdom with which Kulekhani residents spent their compensation money depended on the extent of their exposure to the world outside and to market economies. The few who were used to handling money and had family contacts outside the valley were quickly able to parlay their lump sum amount into sound investments elsewhere. Those whose loss was the greatest were people with a deep attachment to the land, such as the Tamangs and Magars, the less educated and more community-oriented tillers of the soil.

Deeply flawed was the whole plan for resettlement and compensation. The villagers were shown remote forest land in Bara, which they were to reject. But they were not given another option. With only rumours to guide them, and the approach of the planting season, most peasants panicked. They took the cash, and headed south for Makwanpur. Word reached Hetauda before them, and overnight land value shot up five to six times. Left to rehabilitate themselves, the villagers turned to rapacious middlemen, or they wasted large sums on travel. No effort had been made to train, counsel, or otherwise prepare these hill folk for the severe physical and psychological dislocation they would experience.

Worse off are those who settled in Chisapani, southeast of Hetauda. Their monetary compensation bought them inferior land which can only sustain one crop per year. These people are still finding out the best ways to farm this unfamiliar land they bought.

Who should have looked after the people of Kulekhani? The project agreement shows it was the Electricity Department which should have resettled the displaced households, but it lacks the administrative and technical expertise necessary for the task. Naturally, as the project coordinator, its primary goal was to complete the project on time, with the least extra expenditure. In the absence of special agreements, the Department could not count on Government agencies dealing with housing or forestry to help.

Clearly, the cash compensation policy implemented in Kulekhani was designed to incur the least financial burden on the Government. The policy implicitly, attended to the interest of the majority (national) population, while ignoring that of the local population of Kulekhani. The question of equity in sharing benefits and costs was never addressed. The compensation was too small for the sacrifices made. The outcome is unjustifiable and immoral.

Privately, many officials showed keen concern for the displaced people, but they did not or were unable to help. This was perceived as negligence by the affected people, who became enraged. But unchannelled rage was of little use. The traditional village headmen were disregarded by project authorities, and the resettlement committee was composed of politicians and administrators, whom the peasants distrusted. An attempt to organize a sit-in returned from the capital dispirited.

There are lights in Kathmandu, but the people who paid for it are scattered in dark, desolate settlements in Makwanpur. Perhaps when they switch on their lights at dusk, urban dwellers should spare a thought for those who were forced to give up their roots. It is still not too late to help them. ▽

J.C. Pokharel is pursuing a doctoral degree in Environmental Planning and Resource Management at MIT in the United States.

Will they all be displaced?

Damn the dam, says the opposition. If built, Tehri Dam in Garhwal will submerge the homes of 86,000 people. The decision is the Supreme Court's.

by Kesang Tseten

Work on the controversial Tehri Dam continues as opposition to it mounts. Meanwhile, thousands of would-be refugees, caught in mid-air as it were, await their fate, which lies in a Supreme Court verdict.

In the face of widespread support, the arguments of the dam authorities sound increasingly hollow. Though the Supreme Court's acceptance of the petition gave greater legitimacy to the opposition, at least five years have passed since then. Work on the dam has dragged on for a decade with little chance of meeting the 1997 dead-line. Most hurt are the 86,000 people, whose homes are to be buried under the reservoir. Caught in the middle, they have no choice but to endure these long disruptions and uncertainties until the Court decides, or something else gives.

Meanwhile, present-day Tehri town is a place with a death sentence. All construction work and development projects have been stopped since 1969. All monies earmarked for the town have been diverted to the new Tehri town. Thus, the Tehri people find themselves split between two bad homes, one long neglected, the other remaining unfinished.

Even the windfall in jobs that the Tehri people had been hopeful for did not materialize. According to the Cultural Survival Journal, not a single engineer from Tehri has been employed, and cheap labour has streamed in from Bihar. Instead of a boost, more people have had to be accommodated, the town facilities shared among many more, and prices have shot up. The crumbling town now supports double the population it had in 1969.

New Tehri, near completion, is like a ghost town, with schools but no residents. The traditional hillside homes have been supplanted by box-like concrete structures in identical pink and blue lines, a "brutal monument to the folly of modern Indian architecture." The town also lies above 4,000 feet above the old town, and is thus colder.

Residents are grumbling that Tehri - as the new district headquarter - will be filled with government buildings, courts and employees. These could not be relocated elsewhere as all the towns in the region sit on hill-tops, except for Tehri, which will be submerged.

A journalist who recently visited said, "People just don't want to move to Tehri." According to him, the town can accommodate 20,000, but the remaining 66,000 rural "oustees" have nowhere to go. The government has reportedly been unsuccessful in acquiring land for the vast majority who will be displaced, namely the farm people. Another critic said that, at any rate, the town would be filled with only those who have the money.

The proposed dam lies in the Tehri valley in the Garhwal region of Uttar Pradesh. It entails the building of a 260.5 m-high rockfill dam across the Bhagirathi River just 1.5 km downstream of the ancient town of Tehri, at the confluence of the Bhagirathi and Bhilangana rivers.

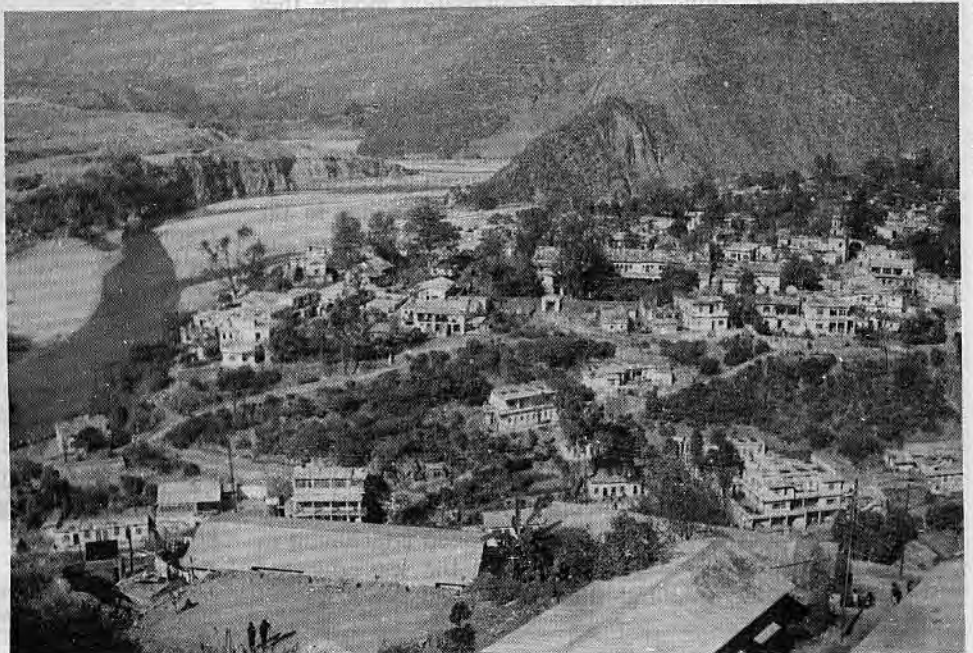
According to its proponents, the power crisis and the huge requirement

for irrigation made the harnessing of the Ganga Valley urgent. The absence of a storage dam in the valley, they said, resulted in a loss of 6 million acre-feet of water. The Tehri Dam could turn this "colossal waste" around to spur the state's industrialisation with the added hydropower as well as expand its irrigation system. Tehri had been selected for commissioning the first out of three storage schemes. Its reservoir, extending 45 km into the Bhagirathi valley and 35km into the Bhilangana (a water spread of 42.5 sq km), would impound 2.62 million acre-feet of water. The dam would have on completion an installed capacity of 2400 MW of hydropower.

The only disadvantage, according to dam authorities, is that the dam would submerge the town of Tehri, 25 villages, "partially submerge" another 72 villages, and 1600 ha of the region's richest farmland. But the project was considered economically viable despite the high cost of resettling 86,000 people.

The proposed dam, which would be the world's fifth largest if built, was anything but straightforward. It gave birth to a protracted battle between the developers and those who believed the behemoth project posed potential hazards to both human lives and the environment which far outweighed its purported benefits.

The ongoing project faces an increasingly formidable opposition, composed of passionate supporters with some compelling arguments. At the core of this opposition is the Tehri



Tehri town awaits its fate.

J. Bandyopadhyay

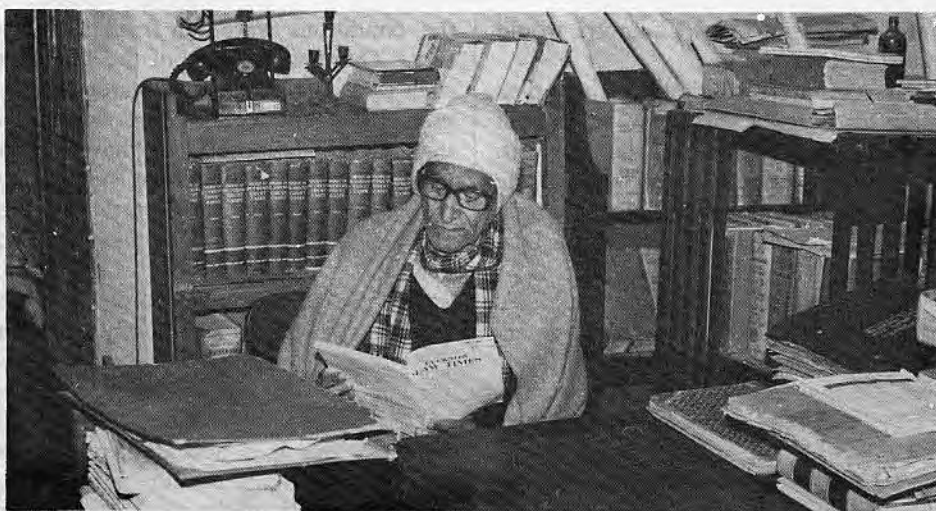
Bandh Virodh Sangarsh Samiti (the Anti-Tehri Dam Struggle Committee), made up of the people of Tehri, led by V.D. Saklani, and supported by well-known environmental activists, scientists and scholars of the region.

Opposition to the dam began in the late '70s mainly on the displacement issue. It was the hey-day of the Chipko movement, and the anti-dam resistance got its inspiration from it. For a while, the government responded by paying "very liberal" compensation to the would-be refugees. But the opposition gained impetus when the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology in Dehra Dun cautioned the project because of the seismicity of the dam site, and its potential hazards. Armed with a persuasive scientific critique, the opposition in 1983 took its protests from the streets to the Supreme Court of India.

Put simply, the anti-dam people argue that it is foolhardy, indeed criminal, to build a dam as high as the Tehri on a site that lies in an active seismic zone because of the potential hazards to communities up and downstream, and the possibility of a reservoir induced earthquake. They also argue that the silt-load of the dam would give it a useful life of less than half that officially estimated. Furthermore, the high cost of resettling 86,000 people, and the environmental impact wrought by landslides, flooding, and deforestation, dictated that the project be halted.

The Tehri Dam proposal, although conceived in 1949, was sanctioned only in 1972 by the planning commission. But lacking funding, all that was accomplished by the late 70's was a project report and some minor construction. The dam drew attention again during Gorbachev's 1986 visit to India when an atomic agreement fell through. As a substitute, the Soviets signed an agreement for the Tehri Dam.

In 1979, in response to growing outcry, the Department of Science and Technology was directed to form a Working Group to assess the environmental impact of the Tehri Dam. The team, headed by noted environmentalist Sunil Roy, "recognized the urgent need to harness the Himalayan waters for its potential energy." But their concern centred on the extensive deforestation, the location of the Tehri on a highly



Virendra Dutt Saklani - the Tehri crusader

seismic zone, the known instability of the hillsides, "all of which could have grave consequences for Tehri and the upstream and downstream communities."

The issues raised by the Working Group's interim report elicited a directive from the prime minister's secretariat that "there were grounds for concern," and it recommended that "the project be examined." In the end, because of powerful pro-dam lobbying, the Working Group did not recommend that the project be halted. Roy described his experience as "harrowing and distressing," saying he had "never encountered such an unbendingly dogmatic approach...to ensure continued work on the Tehri Dam whatever the cost to the environment and public funds."

Stated Roy: "From the outset I held the view that work should be halted on the Tehri Dam but lacked an adequate data base. Now, I consider this is essential as it is clear that the extensive environment recommendations will be largely ignored...." He added: "...there is enough national and international experience now to show that taking all factors into consideration, including the social and environmental costs, major water resource projects are no longer economically feasible."

Some similar concerns were expressed by the Soviet team that assessed the project. According to chief engineer Alexander Fink, the high seismicity of the Tehri Dam "fails to be adequately considered," and that the "design insufficiently ensures the reliability and safety of structures, especially considering the height of the dam

and the fact that a densely populated area lies behind it." His team's conclusion was that a new design would be necessary.

Although a new design might enable the dam to withstand a major earthquake, "the enhanced cost of the new structure may not be economically viable," says ecologist Jayanta Bandyopadhyay.

The siltation factor is another issue to contend with. Even the Soviets have not solved the problem of heavy sedimentation in their mountainous dams, and the sedimentation of Himalayan rivers is as high, said Bandyopadhyay. According to a study by Singha and Gupta, the siltation of the Bhagirathi River during 1978's heavy monsoon was 40 million tons per year. And according to the anti-dam petition, even if the siltation is 16.53 hectare metres per year per 100 sq km, the useful life of the dam is less than 50 years, and if it is higher - as claimed by the petition - the dam life could be less than 20 years.

Its final recommendation notwithstanding, the Working Group had been shocked by the intensity of the opposition to the Tehri Dam and the concerns raised by the local people. Its final recommendation, therefore, sowed dissent among Group members themselves, which was voiced by the group's chairman Sunil Roy. Their opposition was understandable. Not only were their homes to be submerged under 260 m. of water but the ancient city of Tehri on the River Ganga (Bhagirathi becomes the Ganga), on the pilgrimage

routes to Gangotri and Yamotri, would be lost forever.

By way of rehabilitation, the plan called for a new Tehri town to be built on a mountaintop south of the reservoir, and the acquisition of forest and private land for rural resettlement near Rishikesh and Haridwar in Dehra Dun and Sahampur districts. The "oustees" -- as they have been dubbed -- could, on the other hand, also take cash compensation. According to the Cultural Survival Journal, the government has already distributed money to one-sixth of Tehri town's population -- who accepted because of alleged intimidation. But they now ask what the money will be worth when the dam is completed.

While it might have looked alright on paper, the government has a dismal record in rehabilitation. Dams in India are said to have produced a half-million "refugees" -- left to fend for themselves. The Working Group had thus stressed that "even greater efforts be made to ensure that those being rehabilitated in distant sites receive all the facilities, and that immediate steps be taken to improve the condition of those already relocated."

Two rehabilitation sites visited by the working group -- Bhaniwala and Johra -- showed them that "despite the best efforts of the project authorities,

the conditions were far from satisfactory." There were none of the facilities such as a hospital, school, water supply, post office, temple, and approach roads that were supposed to have been provided. The local people -- "already among the most neglected in the Himalayan region" -- were deriving no benefit.

Little attention has been given to the break-up of village and family units. In the village of Khandal, for example, according to the report in the Journal, more than half of the village's 50 families who had accepted relocation were now unhappy in their new homes, the poor yield of the land, and water scarcity. Some had moved to cities or returned to their villages to face social ostracism by those who had stayed.

In his dissent, Roy wrote: "Apart from the dislocation of local lifestyles, the oustees are uprooted and, almost literally, scattered on a dust heap." He criticised the planners for not seeing the hill village as an "integrated entity," and that "village groups are broken up and the oustees thrust helter skelter into the cash economy."

In acquiring land for the new town, villages and farm land, the government has acquired some forest land, thereby violating its own conservation laws. Other villagers (who too need compensation), have also been removed by the

government, thus setting off a vicious cycle.

The 30-odd-km road linking present and future towns is a circuitous two-hour journey on a rugged mountain road. The Dam Authority did not succeed in buying land from villages (such as Baurori and Pipli) that had been included in the blueprint of new Tehri Town. Today, many Tehri school children have to travel a few hours daily to attend classes. And higher transportation costs have already increased the prices of milk, vegetables, and other items.

Given their situation, it is hardly surprising that the project has fueled so fierce an opposition. "What is being opposed," according to ecologist Bandyopadhyay, is "the wisdom of destroying the sustainable and perennial economy of the fertile valley agriculture and the displacement of thousands of villagers for a highly costly construction with a questionable life-span." All because of, in the words of Sunil Roy, "the undiminished drive for development without environmental consideration."

Charges the opposition: "The dam is an exercise in unconstitutional economics," and adds that to display "giganticism in the fragile eco-system of the Himalaya is nothing but to invite disaster."

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATE (SIX ISSUES)

	SOUTH ASIA	ELSEWHERE
INDIVIDUAL	NRs 110/IRs 65	US\$ 25
INSTITUTIONAL	NRs 300/IRs 200 (or equivalent)	US\$ 45 (or equivalent)

Personal checks are acceptable, bank drafts and money orders preferred. Send subscription orders and correspondence to:

In South Asia: P.O. Box 42, Lalitpur Nepal, or
Central News Agency, 23/90 Connaught Circus, New Delhi 110 001

In North America: M. Basnet, 4 So. Pinehurst Ave #6A, New York, NY 10033

In Europe: B. Welsh, Holos Centre 139-A, Battersea High Street, London SW1, UK
L. Debuck, Donaust. 38, D-4100 Duisburg 29, W. Germany
A. Odermatt, Winterthurerstr 112, CH-8006, Zurich, Switzerland

In Japan: Akio Horiuchi, Post Box 9, Kiyose, Tokyo, 204 Japan

In Australia: Indra Ban, 12 Norfolk Street, Paddington 2021, Sydney Australia

JOIN
HIMAL!

HIMAL is current.

It is readable.

And it is serious.

**It is indispensable
if you want to keep
in touch with the
region.**

Missing the Tribals for the Trees

In their mission to save forests, conservationists overlook forest dwellers

by Rajiv Tiwari

In a cruel environmental paradox, there is provision in Indian forest laws for conserving tigers and trees, but little thought for the tribal people who have lived in the jungles for centuries. Successive laws passed since the late 19th century, ostensibly to protect forests, have stripped away tribal rights over forest resources, impoverishing more than 50 million tribals.

Tribal leaders have protested against provisions in the Forest Conservation Act of 1984 - amended in 1988 - which threaten the already precarious livelihood of the country's poorest and most exploited group.

At a recent workshop on the rights of tribals and forest policies, many experts voiced the opinion that forest conservation and tribal welfare were synonymous. A government agency was to have handed in a report in October on a forest conservation strategy that is charged with insufficiently considering tribals' views.

The proposals precede a massive show of force organised recently in central India by environmental action groups which protested against policies that promote "destructive development." The protests centred on the huge Narvada Valley dam project, which is expected to displace up to one million people.

An official in the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes said that although there were an estimated 5,000 forest villages in India, the tribals living in them have no land rights. Because these villages have not been designated as "revenue villages," they are not eligible for government development funding. Basic social services such as schools and water have to be provided by the forest department, which views tribals as the chief source of environmental degradation and as a budgetary burden. And the department refuses to sanction any change in the tribals' status because, legally, forest land cannot be allotted for "non-forest" activities.



Uthara Crees

A Madhya Pradesh tribal

Ironically, as Indian "greens" demand better conservation measures, forest authorities appear to be placing greater restrictions on tribals. Consequently, tribals find it difficult to graze their cattle or pick fodder and fuelwood around their settlements. Also, forests continue to be turned over to industrialists who extract raw materials such as pulp and timber, helped by authorities and their promotion of fast-growing exotic commercial species.

According to Walter Fernandes of the New Delhi-based Indian Social Institute, "Everything that the tribal needs - such as fruit and fodder - has been declared as a non-forest priority. The forest department sees forests as plantations and not as a life-support system for the people living in them."

Fernandes has studied the way the tribals traditionally use their community resources in the dense jungle tracts of central India and believes that, left to themselves, they maintain a sound environmental balance.


However, with more than 15 million tribals displaced in the name of development, and the steady ingress of commerce into their native lands, the tribals have tragically become wage-earning partners in the destruction of their own habitat. Thus many activists

in India are beginning to question the usefulness of western prescriptions for ecological regeneration. They say that most industrialised countries have no experience in tackling the human dimension of the problem, since their forests are not inhabited by aboriginal settlers.

Fernandes, among others, holds that India's forests are community resources that cannot be handed over to corporations nor turned into sources of profits for individuals who have been awarded rights. Many well known Indian conservationists say that humans must be completely kept out of biosphere reserves crucial for maintaining an ecological balance. Experts are said to agree that no more than six percent of Indian forests need to be left untouched. With an estimated 23 percent of India's land area under forest cover, there is more than enough to apportion to the tribals, who are likely to take better care of them than do forest officials, according to Fernandes.

At present, the same tribal who fells trees for a timber contractor could be employed by the government to plant them. Critics argue that this is not sustainable and say that the forest department should not be allowed to monopolise the forests and to sublease them to industry. And no one contests the fact that there is an area of partnership between the forests and forest people.

If the government restores to tribals the right to collect minor forest produce, fuelwood, fodder and fruits, it may not need to allocate vast sums for "poverty alleviation programmes" that, in any case, seldom reach the beneficiaries, say experts. It remains to be seen if these concerns and suggestions find their way into the strategy being drawn up by the government committee headed by Duleep Mathai, vice-chairman of the National Wasteland Development Board. Officials say former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi intervened on behalf of the rights of tribals and asked the committee to include them in its plans.

But, as one official put it: "There is still a danger that the strategy might be hijacked by conservationists who can't see tribals for the trees." 

Rajiv Tiwari is a New Delhi-based journalist, and a regular contributor to Himal.

Protecting the Roof of the World

The plan to protect one of the world's unique ecosystems seems to be making progress.

In March this year, the 25,000 sq km Qomolangma Nature Preserve was officially established, and a task-force is due to submit its recommendations to HMG/Nepal for the proposed 3,000 sq km Makalu- Barun Conservation Project this coming spring.

When that happens, three parks south of the Himalaya - the Makalu-

Barun, the 1400 sq km Sagarmatha National Park, and the 1700 sq km Langtang National Park - will lie contiguous to the Qomolangma Preserve across the border, the latter under the overall authority of the Working Commission of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Its management bureau park is in Shigatse, with a branch office in Tingri.

Both the Qomolangma Nature Preserve and the Makalu- Barun Conservation Project are supported by US-based Woodlands Mountain Institute and various international donors



Kevin Bubricki

Nomads near the proposed contiguous parks

And Over Everest By Balloon

By the time the contiguous parks are a reality, hot-air balloonist Per Lindstrand might balloon-fly over it - and Everest, which is the point of the exercise.

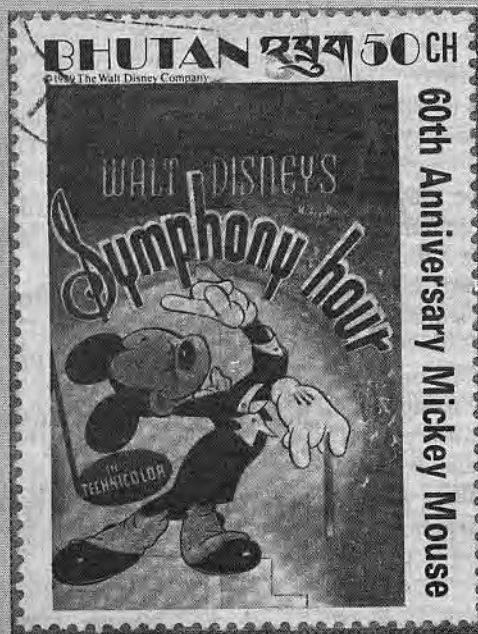
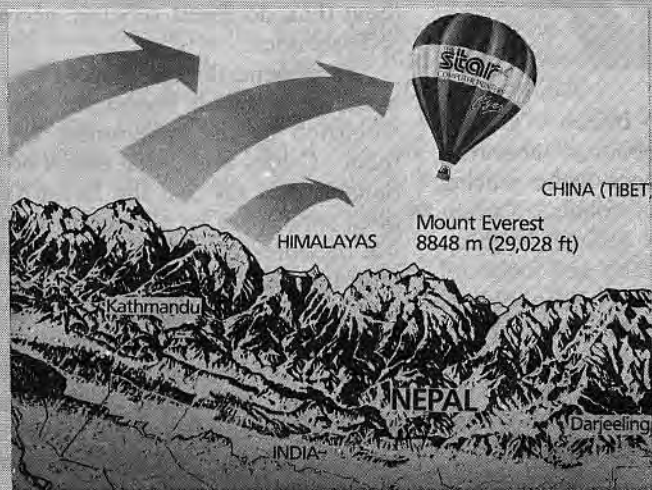
If successful, Lindstrand's balloon expedition will be the first to fly over the highest mountain in the world. Lindstrand has already staked a name in "The Guinness Book of Records" for his record-breaking transatlantic crossing - 4,948 kms in 31 hours 41 minutes - and for a hot-air balloon high altitude record.

The "Ultimate Ascent" or "Himalayan Challenge" by hot-air balloon is being organized by writer/journalist Peter Mason, whose *The Aerial Display Company*

specializes in aviation-related promotional, advertising and marketing services for some of Britain's leading business houses.

The brochure says nearly a quarter of a million cubic feet of hot air will be required to raise the balloon, built by Lindstrand's Thunder and Colt company, and christened "The Star Flyer." Instead of the normal payload of 11 crew members, the vehicle will carry three - a pilot, a co-pilot, and a cameraman - for the four-to-six hour cruise at 33,000 feet.

Barring hitches, the coming spring will see sponsor Star Micronics UK Ltd. beaming its high-tech advertising message emblazoned on the 91-foot-tall balloon to the highest and, possibly, least populated landmass in the world.



What's Mickey doing in the Land of the Dragon?

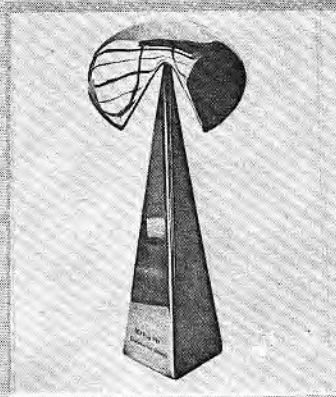
Sticking a stamp....er....sticking a place, that's what. In Bhutan's stamp-dusty!

The Himalayan kingdom of 1 million-plus, thought of as the most pastoral of places, is also noted for its slick, sci-fi, most....well....un-pastoral philately, including three-dimensionals of men walking on the moon.

Mickey Mouse-worship, in its 60th centenary, has infiltrated the Himalaya.

Award for ACAP

The Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) has been awarded the "1989 Award for Tourism and Environment" by the German organization, Deutscher Rieseuro-Verband, for its strategy to coordinate tourism with conservation of natural resources. The award is made to persons, organizations, or communities that contribute to environmental protection in tourist areas. Projects that serve as examples, rather than large or expensive ones, are selected for this prestigious prize.



More than 40 percent of the tourists who visit Nepal trek in the Annapurna Sanctuary, but benefits to the local population have been minimal. It was felt that tourism was stretching local resources and harming the culture. ACAP was estab-

lished in 1985 under the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation to address these and other problems.

ACAP established kerosene depots that trekking groups were required to use, and a "kerosene only" policy for the 26 lodges operating from Sinua to the Annapurna Base Camp. About 3000 litres of kerosene were carried into the region every 10 days to alleviate the pressure on the forests. Other programmes include fuelwood and fodder plantations, conservation education for locals and tourists alike, and local

management committees. There are also plans to install micro-hydroelectric plants throughout the area.

A major part of ACAP's efforts are also geared towards income-generation and self-sufficiency for villagers. These projects, like others, rely heavily on local initiative and fund-raising. ACAP considers sustainability and peoples' participation as cornerstone of their approach.

The award comes at a time when ACAP is beginning to expand. In the next few years, ACAP will be tested more.

Another Solution to Flooding ?

President Francois Mitterand recently presented a flood control plan to aid Bangladesh in its battle against catastrophic floods.

It calls for more than 3000 km in embankments, multiple regulation, drainage and pumping measures, as well as a flood forecasting and warning system. This Pharaonic will cost seven billion dollars and employ an army of local handworkers and foreign experts over a period of 20 to 30 years.

Questions were raised in a prefeasibility study conducted by European engineering companies. How much of a set-back should embankments have to not appropriate too much private land? Should embankments be constructed manually, using local workers, or with mechanical means, and what about maintenance? But the most important questions have not been asked.

Although a lack of maintenance would have much

more serious consequences than the damage presently caused by floods, the need of the flood control project was not discussed. More over, public opinion, which opposes the project, was neither consulted nor heeded. The report detailed the damage caused by exceptional floods, but not a word was mentioned about the advantages of periodic inundations. Ostensibly concerned with floods, it failed to answer why the incidence of floods has recently increased. And the report had six meagre lines on environmental concerns.

Past international examples have proved that hydraulic measures have often had irreversible conse-

quences on the environment. The World Bank, whose record on ecological sensitivity is itself of dubious merit, has already refused to finance work with advantages as uncertain as they are in this project.

Criticism of the project includes the question as to whether the project will not create problems more serious than those it solved. Among the risks such a project runs are that without flooding, Bangladesh can become a desert. The fish, which constitute a major source of protein for the population, could disappear. Behind the proposed embankments, as behind already ex-

isting ones, water could stagnate, causing serious health problems. The high-yield varieties of rice to be introduced on a large-scale basis could replace the indigenous varieties that are suitable to existing conditions, forcing landless peasants into debt.

Instead, critics propose, perhaps the solution should not be limited to the boundaries of Bangladesh, ignoring the possibility of a regional river management. They claim that the start of yet another humanitarian project that benefits European enterprises at the expense of developing countries deserves closer scrutiny.



Flood-damaged road on Dhaka-Faridpur highway



The Potala: in for a US\$ 9 million face-lift

Tibet Tourism Down

Tourist arrivals to Tibet have plummeted from 43,000 in 1987 to about 3,000 this past year. Despite this, the authorities still seem hopeful, and recently launched a reported US\$ 9 million programme to repair the Potala Palace, residence of the Dalai Lama.

The slide in the number of tourists is attributed to martial law, which was put into effect in March this year, and to the requirement that only travellers in official group tours be allowed in. The twice-weekly flights between Lhasa and Kathmandu, started last year, came to a halt this year.

Many travellers are unhappy about being confined to groups, accompanied by an official guide. Considering that at least half of the 43,000 visitors in 1987 were individual travellers, the policy is turning many away.

Visiting Tibet now costs about US\$ 100 per person per day -- not including ingenious extras such as per-

mit charges. Also, many monasteries today are open to tourists but not to pilgrims and have, as a result, lost their special atmosphere.

Quick to recognize the outside world's interest in Tibet, monasteries and historic sites were reopened in the early 1980's, though critics charged that they were merely official showcases. The number of monks increased from a few caretakers during the cultural revolution to a few thousand now.

The common argument that Western tourism in the developing world distorts the local economy, creates unrealistic expectations among the populace, and corrupts the indigenous culture may have less relevance in Tibet.

If the presence of tourists encourages authorities to preserve and nurture some of the expressions of Tibetan Buddhism, however imperfectly they do so in the eyes of Tibetans, then tourism is a beneficial presence, say the present day Tibet-bound travellers.

-Tom Aston

Plant that Purifies

It may be hard to believe that the seeds of delicious and nutritious Soijan can be used to purify turbid and contaminated water. The flocculent has been put to this use in many developing tropical countries such as Guatemala, Sudan, Peru, Burundi, and Malawi.

Soijan (*Moringa Olifera*) is a plant whose seeds have properties that are useful to purify water. An American research group, ECHO - Educational Concerns for Hunger Organisation - and several researchers from the University of Leicester, the University of Burundi, and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), are studying the properties of this fast growing Moringa tree.

A pilot project conducted by Yayasan Dian Desa at Gedong village has proved that the Soijan seeds and pods, besides being of high economic value, also make good coagulating materials. Launched in 1986, with cooperation from GTZ, the project seeks to promote water clarification using the Moringa seeds. The local community has come to accept the practice after about three years. Villagers have planted Moringa trees and used its seeds to clean the village's only muddy pond, and fewer people are now reportedly suffering from water-borne diseases.

The same technology may be equally successful in

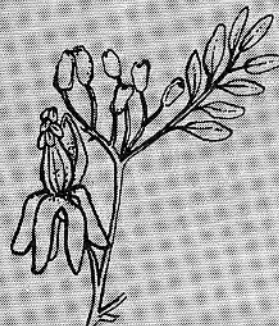
Nepal and the Himalayan region because access to safe, clean water is a distant prospect for 77 percent of the population. Rivers, shallow wells, and deep tube-wells are the main sources of drinking water for 80 percent of Nepalis who are living in villages. For three months during the monsoon, the water is turbid and mountain streams contain high amounts of silica and other suspended matters.

The technology is simple: First, peeled Moringa seeds are crushed and a solution is prepared with previously cleaned water. This solution is slowly poured into the container and stirred continuously, first by a minute of vigorous stirring, and then by five minutes of slow stirring in the opposite direction. The water is allowed to settle for an hour, during which most of the dirt and bacteria drops to the bottom of the container.

Moringa seeds may also help reduce the use of alum, or aluminium sulphate, to clarify turbid waters before any other treatment. Alum is a costly import, and is believed to cause Alzheimer's disease, according to a report in the respected science journal *Lancet*. The report said the risk of Alzheimer's disease was 1.5 times higher in districts where the mean aluminium concentration exceeded 0.11 milligram per litre concentration. The finding justifies greater use of natural water coagulants.

Moringa grows in the Terai, but worthwhile research may be conducted to find out what conditions would engender the plant's optimum growth and fruition. It may also be possible that other natural coagulants are in use in the Himalaya's remote villages.

-Prakash Khanal



Will it be Guns on Ice?

Will the glacial wilderness of Siachen stage war, or will it be where ibex and snow leopard roam?

by John Mock

The militarization of the Siachen glacier has attracted media attention only of late. Since the glacier lies in the most remote region of the Karakoram range, a year-round occupation of this Karakoram ice-giant was never previously attempted and the standard military strategy of occupying the heights has resulted in far more casualties from altitude than from gunfire.

The Siachen can be reached by foot through the Saltoro Valley, after a long, hair-raising jeep ride to Khapalu from Skardu, where Pakistan maintains an airfield. The Saltoro has traditionally been the avenue of access to the Siachen. Although the first European explorers did not cross the Bilafond La until 1909, local Baltis recount a history of cattle raiders from Yarkand (now in Chinese Xinjiang) crossing the Bilafond and the Siachen when the ice was less severe. This other route is from the Dansam Valley up the Bilafond glacier, and over the 18,000 Bilafond La into the Siachen basin. A few stone heaps and ruins of livestock pens along the Siachen's lateral moraines indicate that hardy Yarkandis may indeed have once exploited Balti herds. Some locals say Yarkandis and Baltis once engaged in polo matches here. Whoever they were and for whatever reason they came, they left a large pile of horned ibex skulls at the only grassy oasis in a wilderness of ice and rock, a place called Teram

Shehr or "Lost City," located where the Teram Shehr Glacier joins the Siachen.

Of even greater significance are extensive carvings chiseled into polished boulders across from Dansam village. Stylized animals, horse riders bearing round shields, ibex figures and Buddhist stupas, here, as in other parts of Baltistan, indicate an ancient traffic over the high passes. In 1909, on the first crossing by a European of the now Indian-occupied Gyong La, high above Goma village, T.E. Longstaff found a stone cairn. Certainly the approach up the Nubra valley to the Siachen snout was never customarily used, nor was Nubra ever entered via the Siachen. Early 20th century explorers encountered treacherously deep water and rapid currents in the summer, coupled with shifting quicksands.

Visitors to Nubra, reputed to be the most peaceful Buddhist valley in Ladakh, were travelers on the arduous Leh-Yarkand trade route. The route left green and fertile Nubra at Panamik, and led up to the desolate, bone-strewn Saser La. The harmonious coexistence of caravan trade and Buddhist establishments continued in Nubra from the heyday of the Silk Route, some 1500 to 2000 years ago, until the early 1950s when the Chinese Revolution reached Xinjiang and closed off the Leh-Yarkand route over the Karakoram Pass.

Nubra stayed closed to outsiders after that. A part of Ladakh, it continued its ancient ways. Not until Chinese troops began occupying traditionally Indian portions of Ladakh in 1956, culminating in the Indo-Chinese war of 1962, did India begin to take more interest in the Tibetan cultural zone of Ladakh and commenced a large military build-up. India first had to construct a road from Srinagar over the Zoji La to Leh, on which busloads of tourists and daily army convoys travel today.

Pakistan, claiming Muslim Kashmir, clashed with India in 1956 and 1971. These conflicts led to increased militarization on both sides of the cease-fire line, but the line was drawn only up to the great Karakoram glaciers. Beyond was a remote and inhospitable region, in which neither side saw reason to define its line of control.

Since Longstaff's exploration of the Siachen basin in 1909, and until 1947, only a handful of international expeditions ventured onto the Siachen, via Baltistan or via Nubra. And from 1956 to 1977, 16 expeditions have visited the Siachen, all from the customary Pakistani side.

In 1978, an Indian Army expedition led by Colonel Narindra Kumar, forged a route up Nubra onto the Siachen. Col. Kumar headed India's High Altitude Warfare School, formed as part of India's response to the Chinese incursion in Ladakh. With official approval, and the aid of more than 1000 meters of fixed rope, Col. Kumar's team reached the Siachen where they succeeded in making a second ascent of the 24,300 ft Teram Kangri II.

Curiously enough, this Indian expedition to territory assumed to be under Pakistani control, produced no discernible ripple in diplomatic circles. Perhaps the concerned Pakistani authorities were unaware of it; or perhaps they considered the Siachen open to only those willing to test their mettle against its great frozen heights.

After 1978, several more expeditions made it to the Siachen, again from the Baltistan side. In 1980, a second Indian Army expedition proceeded to climb on the Siachen, and again raised little fuss in diplomatic circles. But though India had begun to construct a more secure approach up Nubra, it still refused out-



Time Magazine



Hodney Jackson

side expeditions permission to enter via that route.

In 1981, the Advanced Mountaineering Course of the Indian High Altitude Warfare School, under the direction of Col. Kumar, elected to return to the Siachen with 15 instructors and 40 students. It was the largest single expedition ever to the Siachen. The Indians succeeded in traversing the Siachen on skis, visiting all the major passes, and climbing both Sia Kangri, (24,350 ft) and Saltoro Kangri (25,400 ft.)

This expedition drew more attention. The 1982 American Alpine Journal noted that the Siachen, previously considered part of Pakistan, was now also claimed by India. Pakistan claims that by 1982 the Siachen had become an important issue to India's Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Perhaps she was captivated by the curious identity of the name she shared with the Indira col on the northern Siachen border with China, or perhaps she sought to exert pressure on Pakistan and, indirectly, on her great

Asian neighbor and Himalayan rival, China. Baltis claim that Indian troops began appearing at this time in the Balti villages just below the Kondus and Bilafond Glaciers.

Pakistan continued to allow access to the Siachen during 1983, but in 1984, India became aware of a Japanese proposal to Pakistan for an expedition to the Rimo glacier, an eastern arm of the Siachen. In April, Indian troops occupied the Siachen to forestall any such moves from the Pakistan side. In May, Pakistan closed the area to expeditions. Serious fighting ensued that summer, but Indian forces remained on the western passes leading to the Siachen.

Col. Kumar, who appears to have largely initiated India's move on the Siachen, notified the A.A.J. editors that Saltoro Kangri and Sia Kangri, peaks above the west side of the Siachen, "are very much in India." In 1985, India published regulations for expeditions to the Siachen via the no-longer restricted Nubra valley.

The 1984-85 Himalayan Journal viewed all this as "part of the Great Game," a reference to the expansionist rivalry between the Russian and British empires, and the editor remarked that "proof of possession lies in climbing." The same author remarked in the 1986 Alpine Journal that it is now India which gives permission for Siachen expeditions, which "shows who's boss."

What will become of this remote wilderness region? Will it be guns on ice? Or will it be a place of peace, a place of solitude amid the Karakoram giants, a place for ibex and snow leopards to play out their lives, a place visited by the occasional mountaineering party for a few weeks or a month, a place where we take only pictures and leave only footprints. War here, like anywhere else, is a deranged use of technology and development. It might as well be fought in outer space.

John Mock directs the World College West Programme in Kathmandu.

Summits are lonely places

Stories abound about Sungdare Sherpa. Funny stories mostly, always to do with a man in inebriety. Amusing when he was alive, they aren't now. The five-time conqueror of Everest died on October 16 by falling - or hurling himself - in the river below his village Pangboche. The stories don't amuse now because Sungdare, from all accounts, died a distressed man. Whether distress caused his drinking, or drinking caused it, is uncertain.

Sherpas, and others who recounted the tales, derived vicarious pleasure from Sungdare's doings. He was Sungdare, five-time Everest summiter, the last two climbs with most of his toes missing. Few shared his glory; few deserved it more: the feats of a new generation of Sherpas such as Sungdare, Pertemba, and Ang Rita have dispelled all notions that Sherpas are only good high-altitude porters.

Having been up the world's highest point for more than his share, Sungdare could get away with some things. Introduced to a minister at the reception after the 1988 trinational expedition, Sungdare is alleged to have said, "So? Anybody can be a minister these days."

In Namche once, a drunken Sungdare admonished the game warden: "Don't you steal flowers - this is a national park." When a gleeful Sungdare was returning from his fifth summit, to an older Sherpa's entreaties to remain sober and not spoil things, he responded: "Oui, Oui. Oui, Oui."

There are other stories.

And yet, Sungdare couldn't tell his own story. A writer who spoke to Sungdare after his third summit was struck by the un-"storylike" account of his life and climbs. Sungdare spoke about starting as a mail-carrier for an expedition. He'd be dispatched to buy rum for the older Sherpas. He also spoke of his hope to be a sirdar, which had sounded incongruous, coming from a man who had thrice scaled Everest.



As a 22-year old trek "sherpa"

courtesy Mountain Travel

A traditional man at heart, Sungdare's life essentially stayed the same, despite the world of fame, celebrity-hood, media attention, and awards brought by his achievements. His knowledge of English was limited to words connected to climbing. On and off he was sought by cameras, reporters

from out-of-town, and conferred awards as prestigious as the Trishakti Patta, but Sungdare was ill-equipped to turn these to capital. When he died, he died a poor man, despite all these bestowments.

He was always short of cash, and often "borrowed" from his loyal friend Phurba Sonam. "It was my karma - a loan from my past life - to help Sungdare out," says Phurba. "I'd say, 'If I give you fifty or one-thousand rupees, you'll come back with an empty pocket.'"

"It is a great loss that he never had the education or the sophistication, for there was definitely something more to him, a sensitivity," said Robin Marston of Mountain Travel, Sungdare's onetime employer. As three-time climber Pertemba put it: "Every one sought him, but he didn't know how to talk to them."

Or as Sungdare himself, as a member of a tourism delegation to Hongkong, said about reporters: "Why do they carry on? I'm sick of answering questions about Everest."

Was his the frustration of a man from whom fame took away but from which he derived so little? Did that make him drink? Or, was "cultural drinking" to blame? As a sherpa friend said: "We Sherpas always drink - at weddings, deaths, picnics, gambling, and, of course, to keep warm. You get famous, and there's more people saying, 'Shay, Shay' with that last round."

After his third Everest ascent, which he barely survived, Sungdare spent more and more time and money drinking. But his drinking never hurt anybody. He was a good man, in the best sense of the word. And a courageous one. That night on South Col, coming down from his third ascent, Sungdare could have left behind the two foreign climbers. They had refused to listen to him and the other Sherpa. Against his better judgment, he stayed with them, and he alone survived. The decision cost him his toes.

"From then on, I knew he was a good man, a man of good heart," said Pertemba, who was the expedition Sir-dar.

A good man, a man of good heart. From a fellow Sherpa and climber as respected as Pertemba, this is a tribute.

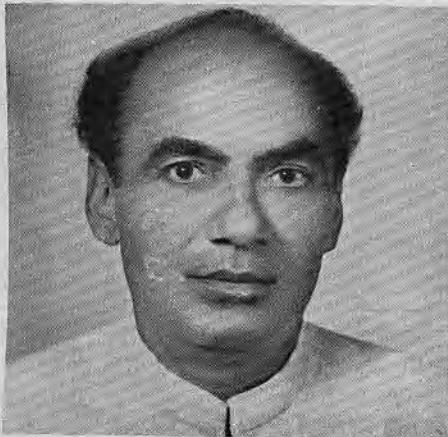
- K. Tseten

Chipko Poet and His Songs

In the remote forests of Uttarkhand, where Chipko activists battled to save trees from the axe, one voice strove for many years to bring them cheer and to boost their morale: Ghanshyam Raturi Sailani, writer, composer, and singer of Garhwali songs, and a social activist in the Gandhian tradition.

Sailani was born on 18 May, 1934 in Charigad village (Kebhar Patti of Tehri Garhwal district) to a priest family. Though learned in scriptures, the narrow confines of traditional religious practices could not contain young Sailani's rebellious and crusading spirit. When he learned that Gaur Das, a low-caste drum beater who provided his services at all the religious functions was, however, not permitted to observe the ceremonies at Sailani's home, Sailani went and read the scriptures in the home of Gaur Das. For his defiance Sailani was badly beaten by the village elite. He responded by joining the movement against untouchability in the princely state of Tehri, and by 1960, he was fully involved in the Sarvodaya movement.

It was during the anti-liquor movement in the late sixties when the capacity of Sailani's songs to mobilise and inspire the Garhwal villagers began to be noticed. By the following decade, Sailani was travelling extensively in Himalayan regions with the message that forests should be protected. He participated in several long foot-marches - "Padyatras" - to spread the message of the Chipko movement, and was often in the thick of several confrontation sites of the movement, or engaged



Singing against environmental degradation

in singing songs, once from the roof of a bus.

Sailani's songs urge citizens to take their future in their own hands by joining movements to save the forests and against liquor. His songs always celebrate the beauty of the Himalayas on one hand, while expressing deep anguish at the present conditions of disadvantaged people, especially women, in this harsh beauty. The songs also advocate progressive thinking and protest against narrow prejudices. Sometimes they are songs of joy and hope in the social movements in which he is fully involved; at other times they express the pathos of his peoples' tragic lives.

Sailani went to jail and experienced trials in the course of his life as an activist singer, and in recent years his health has deteriorated. A period of respite arrived when he was selected to represent India at Bangkok's international festival of songs dedicated to ecological awareness.

What followed is the recent publication of a collection of his songs entitled "Ganga Ka Mait Biti." Priced at only Rs. 15 this 116-page book is available from Sarvodaya Kuti, Uttarkashi, U.P., India. Accompanying the songs are brief summaries in Hindi of most of his Garhwali songs and there are also English translations of four songs.

To weave garments for barren earth
Plant new trees and make new forests.
To save the earth from impending danger
Come one come all and get together.
For forests are our life and soul
They are the sources of rivers all
Rains and springs are created in them
The soil, water and air are because of them.
Trees are blessed even by God
He came once to save them from the odds.
They are worshipped by mankind
Without considering their safety all
planning is blind.
Apricot, apple, walnut are their treasure
We derive from them fodder wood and water.
Once Uttarkhand was Heaven on earth
Where in deep forests, Vedas and Purans
took birth.
To drive away the ruthless cutters
Come on, come all and get together.
Now it has become our religion
To save the forests from destruction.

B. Dogra is editor of the Delhi-based News from the Fields and Slums (NFS), which provides news features from the grassroots in India.

RESTAURANT BOYS



Kevin Bubriski

Late at night in a Thamel restaurant, a few young boys wait for the last customers to pay, so that their day can end. Wrapped together in an old blanket, one boy sleeps on the shoulder of another, who stares silently at foreign customers. Two older boys hover near the main door, quick to clear away empty bottles and glasses. They become louder as they move chairs to the front room, not hiding their impatience at a customer who orders another coffee.

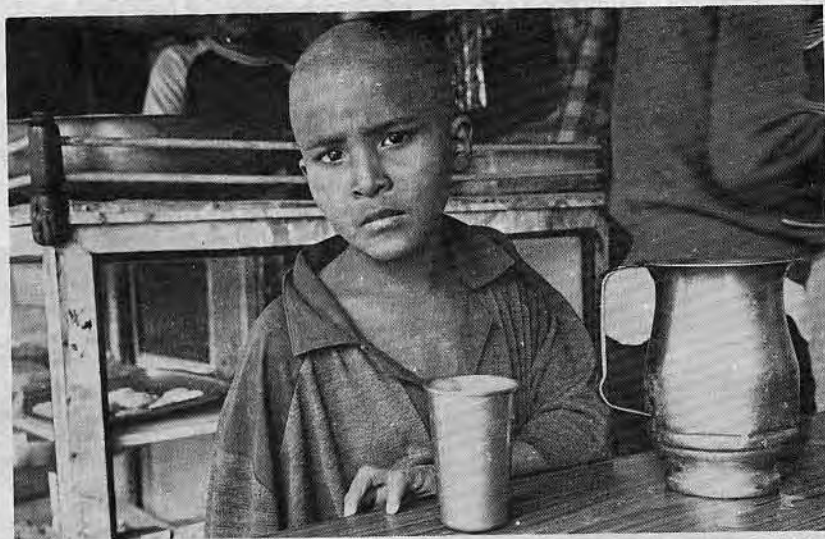
The restaurant is home to these boys: the benches will soon be their beds. They eat, bathe, make friends in the back rooms of tea-shops and bhojanalayas. About 7,000 boys live in Kathmandu in this way. They left their homes and families in the villages to live in the dregs of Kathmandu. They earn from Rs. 50 to Rs. 250 a month. The hours are long, the work dismal, but the restaurant provides them food and shelter.

"My name is Sonam. I'm 1 years old."

These boys are at the conjunction of many issues facing Nepal. Their migration at an age as young as 10 to earn reflects the dire situation of their villages. In addition, the law against their working is often a problem for them as it is for the restaurant manager: without the work they would burden their families. Restaurants see these boys as ununionized labour; and the boys have few choices. No one is concerned with legality. Their wages buy them clothes and "city things;" and some they send back home. According to Child Workers in Nepal, a non-profit organization, boys entering Kathmandu first seek out restaurant work. Many actually come to prefer their lives in Kathmandu.

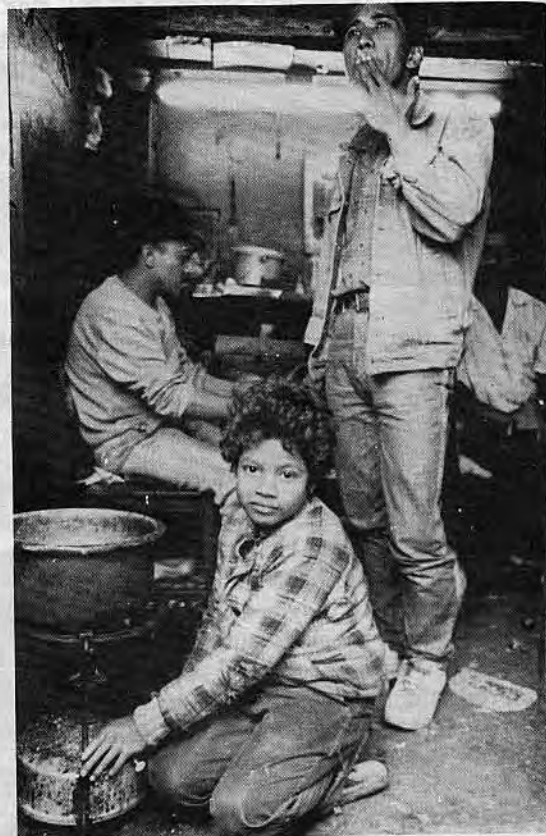
Clearly, there are no easy solutions. Meanwhile, vulnerable to managers' whims, and far from their families, these boys have only the scant money they make.

- by M. Thapa



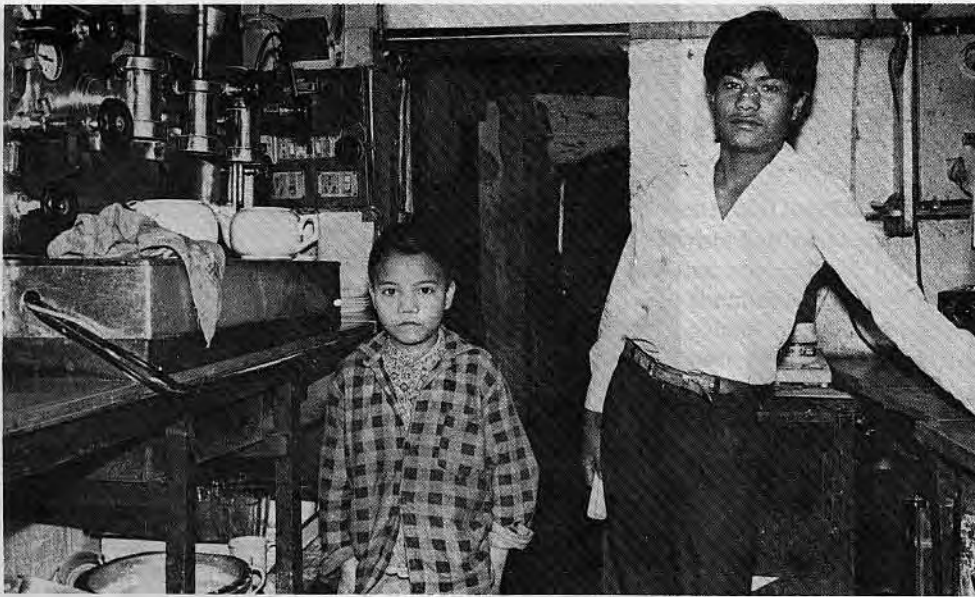
Kevin Bubriski

Before finding work at this tea-shop, Kanha spent five months begging on the streets near Pashupatinath. His labour earns him food and clothing, but no money. He says he doesn't know his last name. His sister, his only relative, has left him to get married.



Kevin Bubriski

Daan Narayan Shrestha says maybe he's 10 years old; he's not sure. He was sent to Kathmandu four years ago to make money; he returns home every Dasain.



M. Thapa

Man Bahadur Tamang, 10, and his brother, Dil Bahadur, moved from their uncle's house in Janakpur when the house was displaced by a road. Their sisters in Kathmandu arranged them jobs at this restaurant. Together, they earn Rs. 300 per month. Dil says he's beginning to like Kathmandu, although he didn't his first three years here. The brothers plan to return soon to Janakpur with the money they've earned.

The three boys in these photographs work together at a tea-shop. Nicknamed "Macha maarne Magar," Hom Bahadur Thapa Magar (top left), 14, works alongside the cook making "especial" tea and sweets. He came to Kathmandu two years ago from his village west of Narayanghat, and worked as a brick carrier at the new airport for one year. Madan Tamang (bottom left), the eldest son in his family, was sent by his parents two months ago to earn money. Six months earlier, he quit his studies in class III. He plans to work in this tea-shop for five months washing glasses. The shop-keeper says he runs away a lot. Ramiswar Tamang, 13, quit school in class II to come to Kathmandu on his own. They each earn Rs. 60 a month.



Kevin Bubriski



Kevin Bubriski



Kevin Bubriski



Kevin Bubriski



Kevin Bubriski

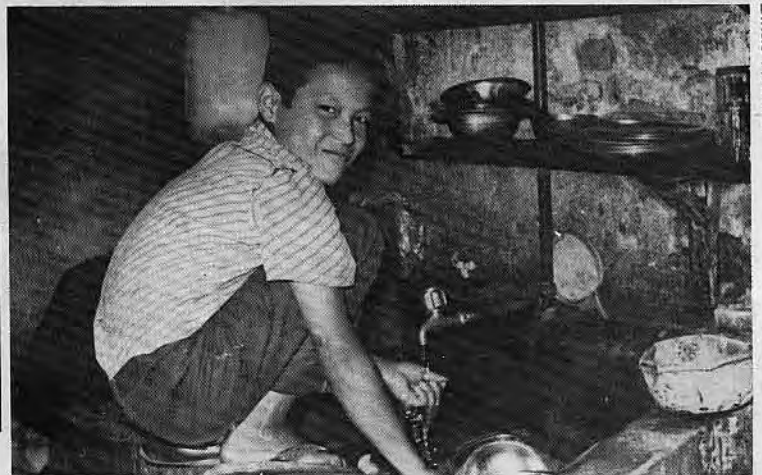


Kevin Bubriski

Samar Bahadur Tamang, 13, along with his brother, 17, work together at a cafe in Thahity. The cafe owner says the brothers worked on his farm in Nuwakot, but there was no future for them there. "Here in Kathmandu, they can make 100 rupees a month, and see the city as well."

Hom Lal Tamang, 11, arrived in Kathmandu two months ago with his father, who works as a cook for trekking groups. He says he'll be in Kathmandu for a few months - until his father returns from a trek.

Kumar Bahadur Shrestha, 11, was brought to the city by his father so that he could earn to help out his family. Kumar is a deaf-mute. He communicates through his brother, who also works at the restaurant. His brother explained that Kumar found Kathmandu "ramailo," and added that he wasn't afraid of living in the city.



Bikas Rauniar



M. Thapa

Badri Oda says he's 14. He's been in Kathmandu for two months, having run away from home "to travel for fun." He had no spending money, and so he worked to eat, and also to pay his way back home.

He said he didn't like Kathmandu at all, and that he would never live here. When he saves Rs. 1000, he will head home to his village in Trisuli.

Development planning in the Himalayas needs not just brains, but also strong legs, says Toni Hagen

Dr. Toni Hagen began his long march in the Himalaya in the fall of 1950 as a member of the Swiss Technical Assistance team that came to assess Nepal's developmental needs. Hagen has also spent time in the hills of Kumaon, Dehradun and Dharamsala in India, and in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In a total of 1860 days spent in Nepal, he was out for 1235 days in the unmapped hinterlands. By late 1958, and countless boots later, he had logged 14,000 kilometers in the mountains.

Hagen's maps drew the development path for Nepal, and his reports brought in much-needed developmental assistance. He produced the first comprehensive book on Nepal, which opened Nepal Himalaya to the West. Prior to Hagen's survey, very few Nepalis, let alone foreigners, had any idea what lay beyond the next ridge.

Hagen, recently in Nepal, spoke to **Binod Bhattarai**.

B.B.: What changes have there been in the Himalayan region between 1950 and 1989?

Hagen: The main changes are scarcity of land and increasing soil erosion. The problem is not Nepal's alone - it is the same in India. Forest cover in Nepal is half of what there was in the early 1950's. There is also more ecological awareness. But that is still a long way from doing something about it. Newspapers must continually hammer the concerns in their pages so as to create a pressure at the base. In your countries, the farmer himself must be made aware and this may take some time. Unless you build up pressure from the bottom, governments will not make any really important decisions.

B.B.: How would you describe the relations between aid-givers and aid-takers?

Hagen: These are general problems and not of the Himalayan region alone. As a

consultant doing evaluations of development projects all over the world, I have found one common flaw. In all the countries where agriculture is the major economic activity, the governments have embarked on policies that discriminate against the farmer. I don't know what it is like in Nepal.

B.B.: Has this got to do with the politics between the givers and takers?

Hagen: It has to do with both. The big donors want to get rid of their surplus, which is the worst kind of aid. This holds true for all times, except in emergencies when food has to be imported. And even in these cases, too much comes from outside instead of being purchased locally. If you calculate the cost of producing food in the West -- with all the high technology inputs involved -- a ton of wheat produced in Europe costs about 10 times that of producing a ton of rice in Nepal. This is sheer economic nonsense on the donors' part. But many countries on the receiving end also like this policy. So you see, the wrong policies of donors combined with the wrong policies of the governments add to the discrimination against the farmer.

B.B.: How would you rate Swiss Aid? The IHDP and the Jiri road in Nepal and the recently set-up six-nation International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)?

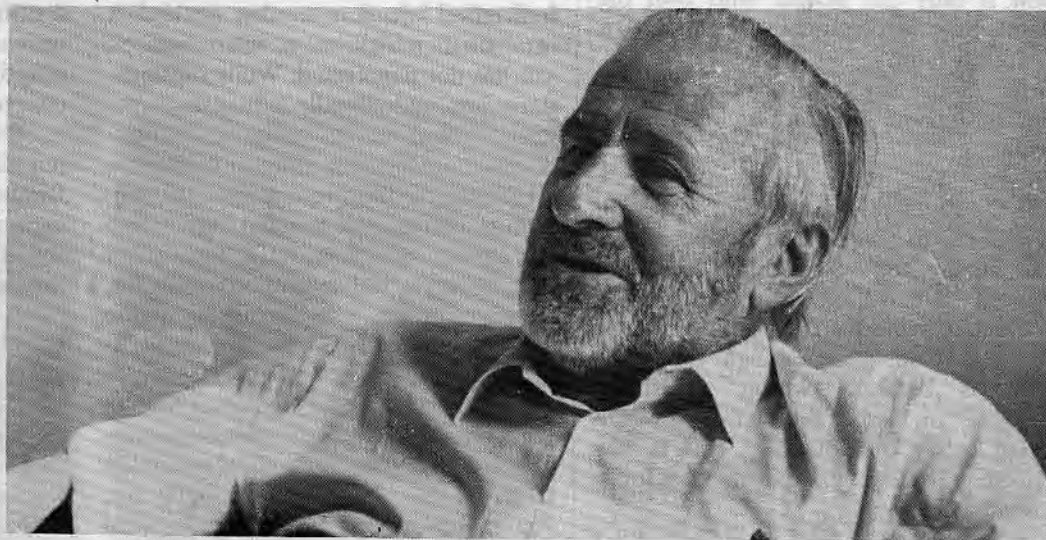
Hagen: I think the IHDP's approach

was not quite good. They wanted to do too much in too short a time. It has been imposed from the top instead of being built up from the base; it is very large, and also a project designed to ignore the government.

Before the project, investigations had revealed that the area produced enough food for only eight months of the year, so the major objective was to increase agricultural production. And the road was built to enable villagers to transport the surplus. But three evaluations of the project (in 1981, 1983, and the most recent one ordered by the Swiss parliament) have concluded that it is not certain whether agricultural production has increased, and even if it has, it may have resulted from other extension programmes being run in the area. I would say that the results of the project are meagre, compared to its high costs.

As for ICIMOD, I am not in favour of building new institutions. ICIMOD has excellent people. We know what has to be done, but what matters is doing it, not just writing about it. If you take their calendar of congresses and seminars all over the world where all the same people go telling the same things and meeting the same people, I wonder what use it can be.

I have also seen the problem in many African countries. There were always many institutions of agro-forestry but I never saw projects put into being with farmers. And if you take ICIMOD -- mountain development and Bangladesh -- what has Bangladesh in common with the Himalayas, what has



Binod Bhattarai

The man who paved the way for development in Nepal

the Afghanistan desert in common with the Himalayas?

B.B.: What do you think is the antidote to the big-money development disease?

Hagen: Not everybody will like to hear it but there is too much and too easy money available, with no coordination from the donors' sides. And the governments are no fools; I think they are right to accept money where they can get it. Why shouldn't they? But there is too much competition among donors for any coordination to be possible. If a donor says, "I am not going to finance this project because there are bad ecological side-effects," the other donor is ready and waiting outside.

B.B.: Where do development consultants fit into these big-money projects? Are they part of the aid-politics?

Hagen (laughing): I have been a consultant for many years. During my time, the UNDP was a very good institution. It was small compared to the UNDP today, and I could speak freely and they adopted my advice -- sometimes, not always. Some consultants are part of the politics, not all. There are some very honest ones. But if a consultant does not want to lose his job, he must praise development aid. If he becomes too critical, he is not liked by the big donors.

B.B.: You opened Nepal to the world. Did you foresee the tourist boom?

Hagen: Certainly not. At that time I thought tourism would be a source of income but could not foresee the boom and also the side effects that are seen today.

B.B.: Can we hold you responsible in some way?

Hagen: No, no, no. I opened up the world only to the natural beauty. And now if only the people who own big hotels have made something out of it, it is not my fault.

B.B.: Some say tourism's problem is not of income generation, but of distribution.

Hagen: Yes, that is the main problem. All the hotel prices here are very high compared to Switzerland -- where does the money go? Still, things have improved. When I asked for local beer in a hotel 10 years back, they did not have it. It was not good enough, they said. This is basically wrong. Greater reliance on local production would bring better distribution. This is why trekking tourism has advantages for a country like Nepal.

FEATURE

Staving off Goitre and Cretinism

by Shanta Dixit

It is through salt that the iodine deficiency endemic to the Himalaya - causing goitre and cretinism - can be tackled. If a permanent system of salt iodization and distribution were set up, the Himalaya would be rid of cretinism and other associated disorders. Yet salt, the all-important commodity, is hardly ever discussed at the national policy level.

Iodine is a trace element found in the soil. Through time, iodine has "leached" from mountains to plains and then to the sea. This leaching has given the soil of many highlands and flood-prone areas, including that of Bhutan, India, Nepal and Bangladesh, very low iodine content. As a result the quantity of iodine in food crops is very low. Being an essential micronutrient, a lack of iodine in the diet leads to Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) even if the diet is otherwise well-balanced.

Experts say some degree of goitre is present in more than one half of the population of Bhutan and Nepal -- its prevalence surpassing that of India and other neighbouring countries. Cretinism is characterized by mental retardation, deaf-mutism, and lack of muscular coordination, and it also occurs in perhaps one out of every 50 persons.

The eradication of goitre and cretinism today ranks as one of the most important public health in the Himalaya. In Nepal, the iodine supplement has normally been through salt. Iodized oil injection, another method, is used in high risk areas where iodized salt has not penetrated. While oil injections are undoubtedly effective, especially in preventing cretinism in newborns, the method is more of an interim measure. At the present level of technology, iodized salt remains the chosen vehicle to overcome IDD because of the country's transportation problems, consumer resistance, finance, and the dependence on *ad-hoc* foreign assistance programmes.

The peculiarities of the consumption and distribution of salt must be understood in order to better dispense it. In terms of consumer preference, Kathmandu's population prefers crystal

salt, while the Terai people use powdered salt, which is a more efficient retainer of iodine. In the high Himal and remote Mahabharat Lekh regions, those most likely to suffer from iodine deficiency prefer rock salts from the salt pans of Tibet, which cannot be iodized for logistical and technical reasons. While Tibetan salt comprises 5 percent of the salt used in Nepal, most of it is consumed by people living in zones that are hyperendemic in IDD.

Nepal's Salt Trading Corporation (STC) is a franchise that has been importing and distributing iodized salt throughout the country since 1973. The merit of the franchise is that the quality of salt and its distribution are centrally controlled and monitored, which is a more difficult prospect in India and Bangladesh. The drawback is that Salt Trading, as a profit-making entity, is responsive to market forces. Salt iodization requires subsidy and social commitment, both of which Salt Trading may not be able or willing to give. While the agency is considered to be more efficient than most government departments or individual businesses, its distribution system is constrained by insufficient funds. Therein lies the greatest obstacle to the spread of iodized salt in Nepal.

Initially, the iodized salt programme imported iodized salt from India, but because of the time lag between import, distribution and consumption, the plan proved ineffective. Much of the iodine evaporated in transit before the salt was ever used.

Today, Salt Trading has three iodizing plants - in Bhairahawa, Birgunj and Biratnagar. Because of its limited capacity and transportation bottlenecks, the STC is far from able to provide iodine to the whole country. While the total annual consumption of salt in remote areas is about 6,000 tonnes a year (annual consumption country-wide is 120,000 tonnes), between 1973 to 1988 only 14,300 tonnes of iodized salt had been sent to these areas. The gap in supply is met from barter trading with Tibet or by buying Indian salt from



Cretinism caused by severe iodine deficiency

individual traders. Thus, even though STC is theoretically responsible for providing salt throughout the country, this is not so in practice.

STC plans to have six iodization plants in the near future. But even if salt is iodized in Nepal, there is significant evaporation of the iodine by the time it is consumed. Iodized salt has a half-life of about nine months, and the salt supplies often languish in the godowns of Salt Trading and merchants for much of this period. In addition, the people of the remote hills, who are most prone to IDD, tend to stock their salt longer as they are further away from the road head.

One means of ensuring quicker turnover of salt is by packaging it in smaller packs of 1kg or .5kg using polyethylene, so that the iodine is retained. If all goes well, Salt Trading Corporation will soon have its own packaging plant. In addition to lining large bags and small packages with polyethylene, calcium carbonate will be added to make the iodine and salt bond more stable. This would double the iodized salt's life to about 18 months. There are also plans to increase the amount of iodine in the salt from the present 15 parts per million (ppm) to 40ppm or 50ppm. This is expected to counteract the evaporation that takes place during transit and storage.

Iodine Deficiency Disorders cannot be eradicated like smallpox or other infectious diseases; iodine fortification will always be required in the Himalaya because of the absence of an essential element in the soil. Therefore, questions of whether to iodize or not, and of cost-benefit are moot. All salt used in Nepal is required to be iodized, and optimally packaged. The most important question, therefore, is the affordability of optimally iodized salt. In Nepal it is transportation, not iodizing and packaging, that take up the bulk of the costs.

According to Salt Trading, packaging costs will raise the price of 1kg of salt from Rs. 2 to Rs. 4 in Kathmandu and other urban centres. Remote districts in Nepal are already paying from Rs. 8 to Rs. 12 per kg, even though a transportation subsidy is gauged according to how far the salt has to be carried. In the remotest areas of Humla and Darchula, even with a 40 percent subsidy, people pay an extremely high price for salt. With so much money spent on transport, there is no benefit in distributing non-iodized salt.

Since 1973, transportation subsidies for iodized salt have been provided by the Indian Government under an IDD eradication programme. The grant period ends in 1991, by which time STC hopes to create a comprehensive country-wide network of iodized salt distribution, as well as fully operational

iodizing and packaging plants. There may be delays in meeting the target -- and it is already too late to consider what to do after 1991. Will Nepal request a renewal of the grant, approach international agencies, or will bilateral donors pick up the tab? Whatever, the foundations built since 1973 should not be allowed to fall apart.

But for how long can Nepal depend on outside assistance and subsidy to distribute an essential commodity? No doubt Nepal's terrain poses a challenge. Indigenous, and more importantly, sustainable iodization and distribution systems have to be set up. Since iodized salt will be needed well into the future, foreign aid should not be expected to sustain such an indefinite programme.

One way of maintaining a permanent programme is to pass on the cost of transportation and iodization to the public. However, as even with subsidy, the people in the high Himalaya already pay far more than they can afford, given the level of their cash income. If the government could manage it, urban dwellers should be made to share the cost of iodized salt for rural areas. Until the government is capable of enforcing such an "equalising function" it must itself subsidise salt iodization and distribution, and consider it a part of the permanent government programme.

Shanta Dixit is an epidemiologist.



The changing face of Tibet's "Marlboro" Country

Once thriving, the Plateau's rangelands are beginning to be threatened by increasing human and livestock numbers.

Daniel Miller

The Tibetan Plateau is the most extensive high elevation region on earth, encompassing almost one million square miles of the People's Republic of China, about 20 percent of its total area. Of this, about 70 percent is grazing land.

The remarkable variation of the plateau's vegetation is attributable to its variation in altitude, temperature, and precipitation. Most of the landmass stands above 3,000 meters, with large areas above 4,000 meters. Little vegetation is found above 5,000 meters. Temperatures are low the whole year, with the possibility of snowfall any time. Growing seasons are short and vegetation is scarce.

It is the northeastern rangelands of the *Jang Thang* -- as the plateau is called in Tibetan -- that have long been regarded as about the best grazing lands in Asia. Many 19th century explorers to the region have written at length about its lush pastures, large herds of livestock, and the incredible wildlife. The "open range" of eastern Qinghai Province is true "Marlboro country" -- the snow peaks, sprawling mountain val-

leys watered by clear running streams and good grass, and cold, wind-swept steppes where a horseman can ride for hundreds of miles without encountering a fence.

This open range is the home of the legendary Golok tribesmen, among the best horsemen of Asia, their horses equally renowned. Although the Mongols are known as great horsemen, Tibetan tribes such as the Goloks galloped over and conquered the steppes at least 500 years earlier. Tibet in general was a horse-oriented society in which kings assumed their thrones as soon as they could ride a horse, supposedly at the age of 13. A "pony express" for sending dispatches across their vast territories existed almost 1,000 years before North America saw its first horses, with the coming of the Spanish.

Clearly, the rangelands of the plateau supported a pastoral culture for centuries, probably well developed by the seventh century, when Tibetan civilization began to expand. The survival of Tibetan pastoralism, based on extensive herding of *Nor* (*Nor* refers to the species, whereas *Yak* is the male,

and *Dri* the female), sheep and goat reflects well-evolved responses to markedly different range and environmental conditions.

The total number of *Nor* in China is estimated to be about 12 million, with most of it found on the *Jang Thang*. More than 30 million sheep and goat are sustained by these rangelands, where herds of thousands are not uncommon. *Nor* are a source of milk products, meat, hair, wool and hides, while Tibetan sheep wool is highly sought for carpet weaving -- about 3000 tonnes of wool.

But this state of pastoral well-being is being threatened. With the opening of the Tibetan Plateau and improved communication with the mainland of China, the traditional equilibrium of the pastoral system is under considerable pressure to support more intensive livestock production because of the demands that have been prompted by China's economic growth. This demand for more livestock products is now arousing interest in new technologies of livestock production. In fact, the introduction of incentives through the "individual responsibility" system in the late 70's did increase livestock numbers in some areas. But no one seems to be considering the carrying capacity of the rangelands. *Nor* has there been any attention given to improving range management techniques. The policies for destocking certain ranges have often not taken into account the flexibility inherent in the traditional management systems either. If well managed, and

some modern techniques incorporated, the plateau's rangelands can support a greater productive livestock population.

Also, the plateau's wildlife species are beginning to be threatened by increasing human population and livestock numbers. Presently, species such as Tibetan gazelle, wild ass, and blue sheep, and musk deer, are abundant. White-lipped deer (Thorold's deer) and red deer still roam the high forests and shrublands, and marmots and pikas (curiously, pikas are also found in the Rockies) are common in Tibetan grasslands. Many large raptors, predator of pikas, are also found in the eastern part of the plateau.



Uttera Crees

For centuries, the plateau supported a thriving pastoral culture.

In the more desolate valleys of western *Jang Thang*, there continue to be large herds of wild yak. Wild yak are huge -- a big bull standing almost two meters from the shoulders and weighing up to a tonne -- their horns large enough to serve as milk pails for early nomads. Tibetan antelope, too, are found in large numbers. Mongols believed a whip handle of antelope horn prevented their horses from tiring, and Tibetans used a pair as rifle "rests." The once-abundant Przewalski Gazelle are now found only along the northeastern shore of Qinghai's Koko Nor Lake, while Tibetan argalis share the mountain ranges with snow leopard and wolves. A wide variety of waterfowl and shore birds swarm the plateau's numerous lakes and marshes. Rockhill, who explored Tibet in the late 1800's, called the country around the upper Yellow River "the most wonderful hunting ground in Asia".

Apart from the pressures mentioned, there is also danger from hunting and commerce. Large numbers of

blue sheep are killed every year and shipped as meat to markets in Europe; musk deer are increasingly poached for the valuable musk, as are red deer and white-lipped deer for their velvet antlers. Knowledge of the numbers and distribution of wildlife, and that of the ecology of wildlife on the Tibetan Plateau, is sorely lacking.

Tremendous potential exists to improve the livestock productivity in the rangelands. But the dynamics of the pastoral ecosystem need to be understood, and for this, a much better appreciation of the traditional pastoral system is important. It is essential to consider the pastoralist's needs, and to include his participation when introducing any development. The best strategies are those that build upon the best aspects of traditional management systems, rather than impose new systems on them.

Much needs to be known about plant-animal interactions, and the effects of grazing in different rangeland types. Grazing management should con-

sider appropriate stocking rates and proper seasonal use of the range. Hay meadows, for instance, could be developed to supplement forage during the winter.

Foremost, really, is a need for eminently practical development interventions. Instead of introducing expensive tractors and forage harvesting machinery for the Tibetan Plateau, it may be more feasible to introduce horse-drawn mowing machines and technology that was widely used on range operations in the western USA not too long ago. On the other hand, remote sensing imagery could be valuable to analyze range vegetation and forage production, given the vastness and difficult accessibility of the plateau. The protection of wildlife, a vital resource of the plateau, must accordingly be considered in any range management programme. △

Daniel Miller is a rangeland specialist who visited the Plateau in 1988.

PARKS AND WILDLIFE

In search of the Spiny Babler

Ornithologist conducts the first successful study of the "primitive" bird in captivity.

by Sichendra Bista

The Spiny Babler, shrubland bird, shy bird, or love bird, is found only in Nepal. So, Nepal is as much the land of the Spiny Babler as it is of Mount Everest. And this Nepali bird has been hatched in captivity for the first time by a biologist-cum-ornithologist, Dr. Tej Kumar Shrestha.

Shrestha, an associate member of the Royal Nepal Academy for Science and Technology (RONAST), and last year's recipient of the Third World Award on Sciences (TWAS) for biological sciences, has been engaged in the detailed study of the Spiny Babler, and in particular its hitherto unknown hatching habits. He has surmounted all kinds of odds to continue his research,

including a lack of finance and physical facilities.

He has transformed an entire room of his home into a bird-

house, using branches, soil, grass and other flora to recreate a natural environment removed from people and noise. Meanwhile, the parent babblers were released in the Kakani forest 37 kilometers from Kathmandu with a metallic tag tied to their feet.

"There are social drawbacks in carrying out scientific research in our society. Ninety percent of our people are uneducated, such as my wife and



Shrestha created a "natural" environment in his room.

other family members who are urging me these days to rent out the room in which I am doing my research," lamented the 41-year old biologist, adding with a smile, "Bhoko petle kehi garna sakdaina. (Hunger pulls the human backward.)"

Earlier, Shrestha had tried to leave the baby Babler under the care of the Jawalakhel Zoo Administration, but it was reluctant to take on the respon-

Sichendra Bista



Ornithologist Shrestha



The "primitive" bird in captivity

Sichendra Bista

sibility. Shrestha had to put up with numerous complaints from his family members for using their home as a shelter.

At first, he caged the Spiny Babler, then later decided that the bird should be left free in a room 100 square feet that was converted into a bird-house. Shrestha said it was fortunate that the female had laid four eggs. He made a nest in which he placed the sky-blue eggs for incubation.

Shrestha is quick to say his is not the definitive research on the bird. "Financial constraints have made me unable to go on," he said. He has spent about Rs. 100,000 for "the cause," as he put it, part of it to video-film the hatching of the baby Babler.

The male and female Spiny Babler take turns to sleep so that one is always awake to protect the eggs until they are hatched. This generally takes 14 to 18 days except when it is cloudy, or in the case of a non-virgin female, when hatching might extend to 29 days. The babler hides its head to sleep for six to eight hours, looking like a ball of spiny feathers. Shrestha describes its nest as an "artful" work.

The Spiny Babler lives in dense shrub, which it is reluctant to leave. It likes to venture from the thick undergrowth in the early morning and begins to chirp, perched on a tree above the nest. Its intention is to attract and to advertise its presence within the territory, says Shrestha.

The male and female Babblers are affectionate to each other, joining their heads in sleep. Separation, or the death

of one partner causes the death of the other, according to Shrestha. He has been feeding the captive birds worms and insects from the Kakani forests, since in the wild the Spiny Babler only eats insects, grain, fresh wild fruit, and fruit juice.

The spiny outgrowth on the tips of the bird's feathers gave rise to the bird's name. It alone out of the 350 Babler species identified around the world has this "primitive" characteristic. According to Shrestha, the Tamangs are more familiar with the Spiny Babler, which is found all over Nepal and is quite abundant in Kathmandu Valley. They call it "Singare Jotma," or "the bird that adorns itself."

The President of Nepal Bird Watching Club, Hari Saran Nepali, believes the Spiny Babler might be found in Indian places such as Kumaon and Garhwal. But he is also proud that nobody has yet identified the Spiny Babler in India.

Nepali commends Shrestha's efforts to hatch the wild bird in captivity. Asked why foreign ornithologists showed little interest in his field of study, Shrestha said it was a long-term task requiring great effort. "Usually, foreigners desire a good reputation at lightning speed."

The babler's eggs were first discovered in 1969 by Lal Bahadur Tamang. In 1863, local hunters brought Sir Brian Hodgson four specimens of the bird. Sir Hodgson tried to observe the bird in the wild, but was not allowed to go outside the valley by the ruling Rana prime minister.

Characteristics of the Spiny Babler

local name: Singare Jotma (Tamang)
Kandhe Vyakur (Nepali)

scientific name: Turdoides Nipalensis
colour: greyish brown

significant physical traits: spiny outgrowth on its feathers, streaked breast, white eye-coverets

behaviour: shy, naughty, fearful
size: approximately 25 cm. (10 inches) in length with cross-barred tail
sound: pookil pookil pookil chupu chupu -- with an incessant burst of teer teer teer teer

habitat: dense lowland shrubs, mostly inhabits hilly terrain; abundant in Kathmandu valley

by Sichendra Bista

In the next 106 years, nobody identified the bird. During his travels in Nepal in 1948, Sir Dillon Ripley rediscovered it on his visit to Rechka village in Western Nepal, where he spotted a flock of seven Spiny Babblers. Pround, and Fleming and Fleming later conducted more detailed studies of the bird.

Fittingly, however, it is a Nepali ornithologist who is first to study the unique bird in captivity, a task Shrestha attends to, in spite of his domestic travails. ▽

Small and Successful

In a landscape strewn with tottering aid projects, Small Business Promotion Project sets an example

by J. Michael Luhan

Poor productivity continues to hobble the Nepalese economy in spite of three decades of experimenting with a variety of development strategies. During this period, the country's national output has risen an average of 2 percent annually, the lowest in South Asia, and even today, the industry (including construction) accounts for a mere 13 percent of the GNP. No doubt that the country's disadvantageous terrain and poor resource base are largely to blame, but it is also true that a lot of good money has been wasted on unfeasible aid projects that petered out about the same time as the donor's money did.

A bright exception is the GTZ-sponsored Small Business Promotion Project (SBPP), founded in 1983 as an outgrowth of the Bhaktapur Development Project (HIMAL, May 1987). In six years, the SBPP has exceeded virtually every one of its output targets, and established itself as Nepal's foremost business promotion center. In doing so, it has demonstrated the vibrance of small business as a sector of national development which might serve as a model for how aid can be channelled more productively.

Earlier this year, a comprehensive evaluation states that SBPP facilitated the establishment of more than 300 new enterprises (a 50 percent success rate among trainees), generated 1,500 new jobs, mobilized Rs. 25 million in capital resources, increased the value added of clients' businesses by an average of 40 percent, and published manuals, reports, and case studies on various aspects of business promotion.

Proof of the success of SBPP's approach is seen in the growing demand for its services by other agencies. Its promotional services division, created in March 1988, has trained field personnel from 21 NGOs, integrated rural development projects, HMG ministries and panchayat institutions, whose subsequent contribution to their own



SBPP training: stress on practicality programmes then increased the multiplier effect of SBPP. For example, Save the Children USA sent two extensionists from its field staff in Gorkha District for an SBPP "training of trainers" course in new business creation. Within a year they had established 25 women's credit groups of five to 10 members each in seven Gorkha panchayats.

"They definitely gained a lot of self-confidence, good skills, and an orientation to the enterprise sector, which they never had before," said Save Director Keith Leslie. "And they've been able to transfer that to the villagers, working with both illiterate women as well as more savvy entrepreneurs. There's a lot of potential out there for programmes that can provide loans of even Rs. 1,000."

SBPP's effectiveness appears to lie in the practicality of its training courses, and its emphasis on the basics of management, marketing, and finance. "In my college we just got theoretical courses which had no practical value," said Yadav Raj Gurung, an extensionist for Action Aid/Nepal, with a B. Comm from Darjeeling. "The SBPP training was more helpful because it was task-specific."

Because of SBPP, "income generation" has now become the buzzword for any integrated rural development project. It is not difficult to see why. Thus far, most efforts have been poorly conceived, entailing a one-shot training programme with no follow-up. Even the

highly lauded Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW) project, which was successful in organising small producers into collateral-free loan groups, neglected the marketing and technical support that makes productivity earn income.

The way SBPP typically operates is as follows: First, it identifies a homogeneous target group of 15-20 participants in a given location, such as unemployed graduates and SLCs, vocational trainees, retiring servicemen, etc.. It then conducts an Area Potential Study to assess the local resource base, existing industries, raw materials supply, market potential and other macro conditions. A Training Needs Assessment follows to tailor the training curriculum to the group's educational levels and interests, after which a New Business Creation course is staged. Each participant in the NBC designs a scheme for her/his planned enterprise, and is critically assessed.

After several months, a short follow-up workshop is held to solve the problems that trainees face in starting their businesses. For instance, if capitalization is lacking, loans of up to Rs. 200,000 can be had from the Complimentary Credit Programme with a payback period of 2-5 years. In sites covered by SBPP branch offices (Bairahawa, Bhaktapur, Butwal, Dharan, Narayanghat, Nepalgunj and Pokhara), small business consultants continue to assist trainees over a

nominal period of 3 months. For new industrial enterprises, technical experts can be deputised by the Technical Advisory Services to conduct short-term consultancies on production processes and machinery requirements.

While training and consultancy remain the core of SBPP's activities, the high demand for these services from other agencies has turned SBPP into an income-generating enterprise, which is not what it set out to be.

But while all these are impressive, SBPP is not without flaws. To begin with, the sector it addresses is both literate and asset owning, and generally found in urban areas where infrastructure already supports commercial activity. Also, a recent evaluation of consultancy services suggests that the current approach is unduly costly and not sustainable in the long term. Some may also question the accuracy of the assessment of SBPP. For instance, data on new businesses do not indicate how many survive and become profit-earning. (One industrialist in Narayanghat piled up a Rs. 2-million inventory of carpets, which was duly tabulated as "value-added" but remained unsold a year later). And the client repayment record on loans procured through the Complimentary Credit Programme fund has often been lower than for loans disbursed on straight commercial terms by bank branches in SBPP locations. Most tellingly, plans to privatise SBPP this year had to be shelved when GTZ realised the project, though generating income, was far from being self-sufficient, and had yet to come up with an effective cost accountancy system for its services.

But even the concerns raised reflect a serious preoccupation with the "bottom line" of sustainability, something altogether absent in most projects in Nepal. Considering the enhanced multiplier effect achieved by specialists, and its significant "payback," there seems to be a strong rationale for long-term subsidization by GTZ, HMG, or both, in much the same way that an institute of higher learning might be supported. In a positive light, SBPP's accomplishments show that small businesses should be accorded a higher priority from national planners. They may point to a therapy for Nepal's achilles heel.

J. Michael Luhan is a writer who lives in Kathmandu.

VIEWPOINT

Preventing Goitre in India

by Dr. C. Gopalan

An estimated 40 million people in India alone suffer from goitre. A large percentage of these are cretins, who are mentally or physically retarded. Far from being a "cosmetic" problem, goitre is a disease that retards health and productivity.

The endemic goitre belt in India stretches across the entire sub-Himalayan region from Jammu and Kashmir through Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, all the way to Arunachal Pradesh. Recent surveys also show endemic pockets in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar and Gujarat.



UNICEF / Datta 1976

Scourge of iodine deficiency

The cause of goitre was identified long ago as iodine deficiency. Prevention and control of goitre through the distribution of iodised salt has been well-known, and goitre was eradicated in the developed countries several decades ago through the application of this technology. India's own National Goitre Control Programme languished after a promising start. It failed to make a significant impact in many areas due to administrative incompetence, lack of coordination between the various agencies involved, and commercial and vested interests.

The Goitre Control Programme, with its coverage limited to a few hyper-endemic sub-Himalayan states, is in dire need of improvement. It is naive to believe that by merely extending the salt iodation programme to cover the entire country, the problem will be solved. It is still necessary to ensure that the salt produced by numerous manufacturers is in fact iodated.

In recent years, intensive efforts have been made to promote iodised oil injection as a strategy for control of endemic goitre in Asian countries. Those promoting this method recommend injections only as an *interim measure* till the national salt iodation programmes pick up, and then too only in areas that are hyper-endemic and "inaccessible." Even though this claim at first appears reasonable, careful examination reveals its weaknesses.

Iodised oil for injection is currently manufactured in France (China manufactures some for its limited use). Practically all the iodised oil being used in injection programmes in Asia is now being procured by international agencies from a commercial firm in France. The cost of this approach has been estimated to be about 35 times higher per head per year than the cost of the salt-iodation strategy. It must be remembered that the support of international agencies will eventually be withdrawn. Other conditions of the injection programme are that injections have to be repeated at least once every five years, disposable syringes are needed, as is considerable health manpower.

It would be impossible for poor Asian countries to sustain a national goitre control programme based on injections of iodised oil with their own resources. If the objective is to achieve self-reliance, it would be prudent for Asian countries not to allow themselves to be side-tracked, but to use their resources to strengthen the salt-iodation programme.

The argument that iodised oil injection programmes are being promoted only as a temporary measure could prove deceptive in the long run. Experience in some Asian countries that have opted for the injection approach shows that the salt-iodation programmes have considerably slackened, while the injection programmes have continued in their original strength.

Wherever a salt-iodation programme has been effectively implemented, its impact has been evident however hyper-endemic the area. The argument that iodised oil injections are appropriate to "inaccessible" areas (meaning sensitive frontier hill areas as far as India is concerned) does not stand scrutiny.

Moreover, there are really no areas that are "inaccessible" to common salt. A salt famine has never been reported even in the remotest communities. People in these areas know how to procure their salt and they do procure it; the problem is to ensure that the salt is iodated. In any case, it would be absurd to suggest that areas which are "inaccessible" to common salt would be more easily accessible to periodic massive injection programmes.

Dr. C. Gopalan is Director of the Nutrition Foundation of India.

Eighth Five-Year Plan: The same wine in the same bottle

By Madhukar S.J.B. Rana

The eighth Five-Year Plan ignores the devastating effect of the Indo-Nepal impasse on the economy. Is it possible to plan for the next five years pretending that the economy has been unaffected? Until the impasse ends, it is doubtful whether planning for more than a year at a time is meaningful, especially with regard to the fulfillment of basic needs. A divorce from planning and budgeting is a natural phenomenon in which unprecedented pressures can exist on price levels, revenue mobilisation, wage and salary levels, balance of payments, and the exchange rate, etc. The way the economy has been mismanaged, it would not be unreasonable to expect the GDP to slide for two to three years before it looks up again.

As an economic document, the planning dimensions lack hard-core analysis. There is no debate on the feasible growth rate of GDP and its consequences on savings, gaps in investment ratio and balance of payments, revenue, GDP ratio, ICRS, labour, capital and land productivities, etc. As a political document, it does not tell us how politics will itself be fortified to face the challenges. In particular, how will the bureaucratic and political absorptive capacities used to implement plans will still be made effective, efficient and honest? How will the government's deteriorating finances be arrested by measures other than the rhetoric of privatisation?

As a strategic document, the planning dimensions defeat its own purpose with its populist approach, which consists of am-

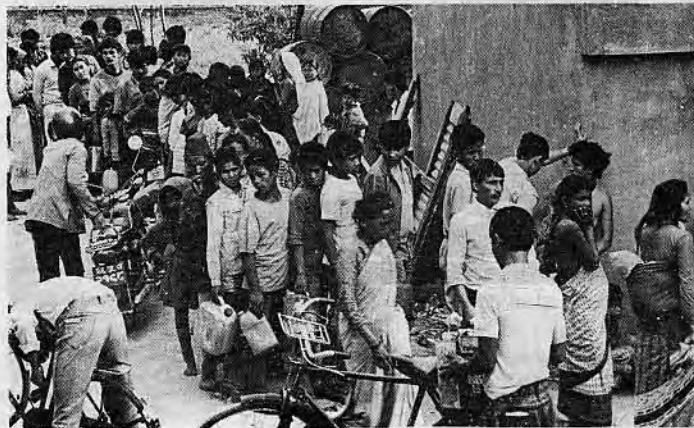
bitious objectives, spreading resources thinly everywhere, extolling state handouts for the poor, ignoring the need to give definite priorities to strategic and tactical goals, objectives, and means, ignoring issues of internal consistencies in planning and the need for trade-off and resolution of conflicts, providing for a cacophony of policies under the meaningless banners of "national," "regional," and "sectoral" policies.

As a macro-planning document, it fails to rise above the various sectoral plans and their programme budgets. It may have swallowed the data provided by the government: for example, that agricultural production has increased by 4 to 6 percent when there is no sign of the green revolution. Lastly, the inequities arising from HMG's refusal to reform its tax policies and systems, including the impact of deficit financing on the absolute poor, needs careful evaluation. A fiscal regime based on tax holidays and luxury imports, supported by recourse to monetarism, can hardly lead to self-reliant growth with equity, and is a doubtful strategy for development, as far as eradicating absolute poverty goes.

As for development goals, the directive principle of the constitution should suffice: to create a society that is just, dynamic, and free of exploitation. The following objectives have been proposed: eradication of absolute poverty by 2000 AD; moving up to the ranks of developing countries by 2000 AD; accelerating the growth in resource mobilisation for a greater self-reliant growth, and significantly improving the investment climate; population control; and removal of inequities.

It is essential for each objective to have time-bound targets to gauge the results of the planning exercise. These targets should be conceived as a hierarchy of responsibilities for each major echelon of decision-making. Key persons would then monitor the performance of those below without duplicating responsibilities. When planning systems develop, the leadership at different levels could possibly take on more responsibilities. But the need now is for selectivity and focus, keeping in mind macro-parameters for the upper echelon, and micro-parameters for the lower echelon to, as it were, manage by objectives and results.

Our development strategy isn't explicit. No econometric models of the economy are used to portray its structure and the effects of likely changes in various parameters and variables. Economic calculations are necessary but not sufficient. A strategy must be developed to cope with the inadequate



The Plan overlooks the impasse.

absorptive capacity and also inadequacies in political will. These strategic economic variables may be considered: land management; enhancing the Science and Technology base together with Research and Development capability in agriculture; cottage industries development; fertility control; employment creation, especially in the informal sector; and export promotion.

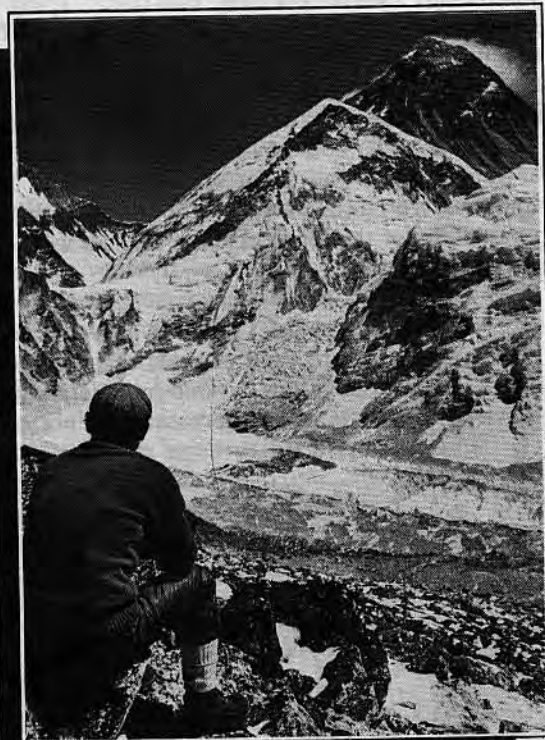
What about policies? There is need for the National Planning Commission to intervene to promote market mechanisms towards decontrol, delicensing, deregulation, and deconcentration. The investment climate needs to be radically ameliorated. The Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries President's speech on its 23rd anniversary and its Industry Commerce Patrika, July- August 1989, thoughtfully considers development strategy, taxation policies, and trade and industrialisation. It would be most beneficial for the NPC to digest these.

However, a warning is needed. The orientation of the FNCCI is presently limited to the needs of the formal, organised sector, and those of the micro-entrepreneurs of the informal sector have not really entered the FNCCI's perception. The FNCCI is also excessively given to the tax-holiday mentality, which tends to make it dependent on the government for its favours and patronage. Tax holidays are neither necessary nor sufficient for a broad-based private-sector development.

My primary arguments are : that the planning methodology has weakened over the years to a non-rigorous, populist statement of principles, which is proving to be counterproductive ; that since so many sectors have perspective plans (e.g., irrigation, forestry, agriculture, education, health etc.), it is doubtful that the NPC has been able to create a whole that is greater than its parts or to coordinate effectively through the derivation of internal consistencies; that the uncertainties of the present Indo-Nepal impasse make it foolhardy to plan for five years.

As for the admirable attempt to incorporate into the plan the employment variable, for long the 'yeti' or missing link, I would refer the reader to the 1981 ILO- ARTEP study on Basic Needs and Employment in Nepal. I would add that the employment problem, in terms of improper, under or non-utilisation of human resources, is so acute that it may be advisable to force the pace of urbanisation to make use of this potential. A rapid rate of urbanisation would create on its own a market for import substitution opportunities. Lastly, there is a crying need for thorough research on the role of the informal sector. I believe that these micro-entrepreneurs can be true nation builders, if given a chance to thrive and develop. △

Madhukar S.J.B. Rana is President of Management Association of Nepal.



OF MOUNTAINS AND MEN...

*trek ecologically
with Yangrima*



P.O. Box 2951, Kantipath
Tel: 225608, 227627
Telex: 2474 SUMTRA NP
Fax: 977-1-227-628

Explaining Rural Migration

NEPAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC
CHANGE AND RURAL MIGRATION

Poonam Thapa

Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

pp. 189, Price I.C. Rs. 190.00

Review by Dilli R. Dahal, CNAS, T.U.

Considering the facets of migration that are subtle and hard to measure, Sidney Goldstein (1976), a renowned migration expert, described migration as "a stepchild of demography." Notwithstanding, migration has remained a fascinating topic of research in Nepal for the last two decades. These studies are concerned, for the most part, with the large immigration into the Terai from the hills, which is the dominant stream of rural-to-rural migration in Nepal. The findings are simple: increasing population pressure and rural poverty in the hills have forced people to migrate either to the Terai or to India. Applying slightly more sophisticated statistical tools, Dr. Poonam Thapa has, in this book, also arrived at similar conclusions. She tries to explain how different economic and social conditions at the individual and household levels result in migration for some households, and not for others. She states that a better understanding of socio-economic relationships at these levels can predict hill-Terai migration processes in Nepal.

Of the book's eight chapters, the first three (61 pages) are devoted to clarifying her theoretical stance and the statistical packages used in the study. Chapter four is a historical analysis of agrarian relationships that shows the inequalities in land ownership among groups. Historically, according to Thapa, land ownership in Nepal is closely and systematically tied to the hierarchical caste framework: the higher the caste status of the family, the higher the land ownership of the family, and vice versa. This inequality of land ownership has generated migration potential within and between families, motivated Gurkha recruitment, and eventually led to land-reform programmes in Nepal. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 incorporate data gathered in the field, and an attempt to explain production

processes and socio-economic change at the household level; distinguish the characteristics of movers from stayers, and the permanent, non-permanent, and potential migrants; and, finally, delineate the consequences of migration in the hills as well as in the Terai.

Thapa's sample is relatively large: 527 households (sample population = 3042) in two hill districts (Lamjung and Syangja) and 975 households (sample population = 5858) in two Terai districts (Chitwan and Nawalparasi). It is curious, however, that her Terai sample is nearly twice as large as her hill sample, even though she herself notes that the ramification of migration is more acute in the hills than in the Terai. She has lavishly used concepts such as marginalization, pauperization and proletarianization to explain migration, and "weighted least squares (WLS)" categorical models to explain her data. To her, migration is a process of household sustenance, where internal demographic features (such as family size, age structure, sex distribution, education, generational depth, etc.,) and economic structures (such as land ownership, terms of tenure, debt, credit, market interaction, outside employment and other development activities) play the decisive role. In short, Thapa sets out to link migration with domestic production processes.

As a reviewer, I feel that the book is the product of a sincere effort, but one hurriedly published without properly assessing the technicality of key concepts, i.e. those used in the text to explain migration in Nepal. Though Thapa devotes so much of her time explaining how she analyzed the data, she never questions the quality and range of data she collected in the field. As noted before, migration is a complex phenomenon. It is difficult to assess why and how an individual or a family leaves his village of origin and moves elsewhere. Social and economic data collected in the field are more important to explain migration than her log-linear model.

Take her data on land ownership and the process of marginalization of the household. In Nepal, land is normally held in common by the household. However, recent (1964) legislation

restricting the size of land holdings has led many families to divide formal ownership among their members even though the land is actually under a unified common control. In order to analyze the way in which the land holding of a household increases or decreases over time, one needs to take recourse to detailed land records from the Mal (Revenue) Office. Reported figures on land holdings may be far less reliable.

Likewise, let us examine her concept of pauperization, which is also a relative concept. She mentions the "old standard of living" (p. 99), but does not provide data for comparison with the new standard of living. Her tables 5.2 and 5.3 (pp. 79 - 80) do not at all show changes in socio-economic classes and forms of tenure. These tables do not explain why a landowner in 1970 became a share cropper in 1979. Furthermore, a 10-year period is quite inadequate to assess changes in peoples' socio-economic status. Nowhere is longitudinal data provided for household size, remittances, intensity of land cultivation, and changes in tenure. There is also no data on family formation and growth.

Thapa attempts to show a positive relationship between the magnitudes of agricultural wage earners and the unemployed on one hand, and the intention to migrate permanently (p. 101) on the other. But how many families in such conditions, in real life, really migrated? As Thapa herself admits, her data groups at points of origin and destination were different households (p. 47). Given this constraint, it is difficult to establish whether or not the households in the hills indicating intentions to migrate did actually migrate.

The book contains a number of hypotheses which lack the supporting data to assess them. That is, the book is full of theoretical and statistical assumptions while lacking the data that would allow us to test these same assumptions. Nevertheless, the book is quite useful, as it reviews a large body of literature available in the field. Also, Thapa puts forth many propositions that need serious consideration. Some of these propositions could provide fresh insights for new researchers. ▽

Dilli R. Dahal is a sociologist with the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies in Kathmandu.

WE ARE THE BIGGEST BOOKSELLERS IN TOWN

Drop in at our showroom in downtown Kathmandu or write to us for our detailed catalogue. We carry a wide variety of publications of the Himalaya, including large selections on Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim. We also carry guide books and maps in addition to our regular selections on anthropology, commerce, management, language, folklore and politics. Through the Bibliotheca Himalayica, you have access to current and classical works on natural history and civilizations of Central Asia and the Himalaya.

Ratna Book Distributors Pvt. Ltd.
Publishers & Distributors, Bagh Bazar, Kathmandu Tel. 223026, 220501

The most fantastic range this side of the Himalayas!



Pasaal - Kathmandu's top shop for high quality home products and fun fashions. Linen, crockery, dharis, lamps stationary, toys, bric-a-brac and oodles more. Whatever you're looking for, Pasaal has a nice surprise in store for you. Drop in today for a great new shopping experience.



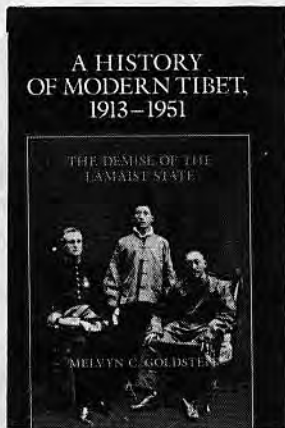
naya pasal
Sakya Arcade, Darhar Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal



**SUMMIT HOTEL
GARDEN RESTAURANT**

Kupondole Height, Lalitpur
P O Box 1406, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 521894, 524694
Fax: 977 1 523737
Tlx: 2342 SUMMIT NP

The Summit Hotel is famous for its warm and friendly atmosphere, efficient staff, excellent food, a delightful garden with swimming-pool and one of the best locations in town with a spectacular view.



A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951

by *Melvyn C. Goldstein*

University of California Press,
Berkeley, Ca

1989 US\$75-85 (unmarked)

This book claims to be a non-partisan account of the demise of the Lamaist State that was Tibet.

The near-900-page volume takes in Tibet's modern history from the early years of the 13th Dalai Lama to the 1950s. It draws on a wealth of British, American, and Indian diplomatic records, firsthand historical accounts written by Tibetan participants, and extensive interviews with former Tibetan officials, monastic leaders, soldiers, and traders. From these Goldstein sets out to examine what happened and why.

Vanishing Tracks: Four Years Among the Snow Leopards of Nepal

by *Darla Hillard*

Arbor House/William Morrow,
New York

Elm Tree Books, London

1989 US\$24.95

This is a popular account of the first successful scientific effort to study the elusive, endangered snow leopard. Between 1981 and 1985, the team (three biologists, the author, and a small camp staff) radio-collared five snow leopards in Nepal's remote and rugged western Mugu District. They brought back the first detailed information on the habits and habitat of the big cats and their major prey, blue sheep, or bharal.

The book will appeal to those interested in natural history, and also to anyone interested in high adventure and the human aspects of a daring and difficult undertaking. There are portrayals of the team members, of the local Bhotia villagers, and of how it is to live in a

tented camp, through the Himalayan winter, for up to eight continuous months.

Escape from Kathmandu

Tor New York

US\$17.95 1989

As the critic of the Washington Post puts it, this book "is composed of tall tales from the hippie community, specifically the Nepalese-hippi-expatriat-mountain climbing community" in which "the city of Kathmandu is lovingly and convincingly depicted." The first of four linked episodes deals with the adventures of George Fergusson, an American living content and unambitious in Kathmandu, leading tourists on minor treks. Fergusson soon finds himself with a Buddhist monk named George "Fred" Fredericks. Together, they rescue a captured yeti from American academics; disguised in a baseball cap, anorak and sunglasses, Buddha, the yeti, is liberated from a Kathmandu hotel with the inadvertent help of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter. In the second tale, "Mother Goddess of the World" Fergusson is unwillingly roped into climbing Everest with spiritual guests, Mallory's long-lost, frozen body and a doggedly persistent documentary film-maker.

Corruption, Development and Inequality

Peter M. Ward, Editor

Routledge, London and New York
1989

This book contains eight essays on the broad question of corruption and development. Does corruption oil the wheels of progress, as some claim, or does it drag society back? The contributions presented in this book tilt towards the latter interpretation. Topics range from drugs and economic development in Latin America through second economy activities in the Societ Union to bribery and dependency in urban India and the distributional consequences of nepotism in Ecuador.

Himalyan Research Bulletin

Volume IX Number 1, 1989

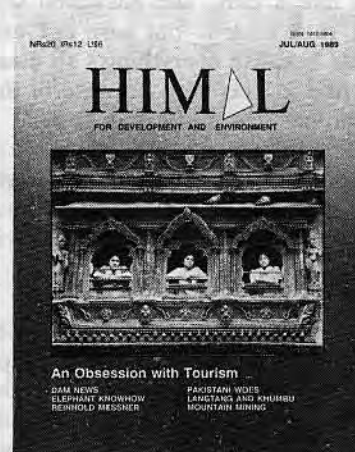
New York

The Bulletin published original articles, current news, short news, books reviews, reports of meetings, dissertation abstracts scholarly interest in all fields relevant to the Himalayan region. The latest issue is the first in what the editors promise is a series on spirit possession in Nepal. Most of the papers were first presented at the 17th Annual Conference on South Asia at the University of Wisconsin in 1988. The articles are as follows: "Possessing Power: Ajima and Her Medium" by Ellen Coon; "Spirit Possession and Ethnic Politics in Nepal's Northwest" by Nancy E. Levine; "Sprit Possession and Soul Guidance in a Gurung Death Rite" by Stan Royal Mumford. Two books are reviewed: "Tibetan Phrasebook: Tibetan Phrasebook Tapes" and Tibetan Thangka painting: Methods and Materials."

FOLLOWUP

An Obsession with Tourism (July/August 1989)

In early November, Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto announced that tourism would be given the status of industry in order to encourage its growth by providing incentives available to the industrial sector. Her government has set the target of one million tourists a year by the turn of the century. All tourism-related projects such as hotels, lodges and recreation centers would be granted the same facilities available to industrial concerns. Bhutto announced that Pakistan would welcome foreign private investment in the development of hotels. She said it was urgent to market tourism abroad to realize its full potential.



Summit Nepal Trekking
Kopundole Height
P O Box 1406, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 525408, 521810
Fax: 977 1 523737
Tlx: 2342 SUMMIT NP

- Specializing in:-**
- Mountaineering/Expeditions
 - Tailor-made Trekking
 - Unique Cultural Tours
 - Wild Life/Jungle Safaris
 - White Water Rafting
 - Personalised Services

Which Witch in Germany?

By Satis Shroff

Do they have witches in Germany? asked Pushpa S., a 26-year-old Nepalese woman from Dharan at a Nepalese get-together in the Wasserracker Strasse 1 in Freiburg, a university-town in south-west Germany.

It was an interesting question. I thought about the symbolic burning of witches during the fasting period of Fasnet in the Allemanie areas, and also about the recent exorcist trials, and said: "Yes, there are witches in Germany."

"Ever since I've come to Germany I've been bitten by a boksi (witch). And I also have nightmares when a boksi bites me." The Nepalese word for it is "aithan-paryo." When you're asleep and you have a heavy feeling on your chest and this heaviness increases, as though someone is placing weights on your rib-cage. Your breathing becomes heavy and difficult, you sweat and gasp and suddenly wake up, and find yourself drenched in perspiration. What you've had is an attack of "aithan." And very often a black cat darts from your bedroom.

Pushpa said, "When I've had an attack by a witch I have red patches where the witch bit me. And after some hours it becomes blue."

I asked if she had had such bites in Nepal.

"Oh yes," she replied, "I had it often in Dharan and Kathmandu." "What did it precisely look like?" I asked. "Was it like an insect bite?" I was thinking of Dharan's near sub-tropical climate, the air infested with tropical insects like mosquitoes.

"It looks like a bite," she answered sharply as if reading my thoughts, then added, "but here in Germany you have to look for insects because everything's so clean and sterile. It's difficult to find insects here because of the wanton use of insecticides and pesticides in urban areas."

She was right. In Nepal you only have to go into the Terai or to Chitwan and you'd see tigers, leopards, elephants -- and it's an entomologist's paradise.

The other guests at the Wasserracker Strasse 1 were a German-Nepali doctor couple. I translated what Pushpa said because Werner's Nepalese isn't that good, and asked him what he thought about it. He was of the opinion that it could be a psycho-somatic phenomenon because of the fact that Pushpa was new in Germany, didn't have friends, lived with her husband alone in a strange environment, and was unhappy because she didn't speak fluent German, and couldn't talk with ordinary Germans in the town of Kulmbach (Bavaria), where she lived.



In Nepal, Pushpa's problem with the boksi-bites would be no news at all, for every village has its own village shaman who takes care of psycho-somatic and religious "ailments", and treats the problems either by mantras, seances, herbal medicine, or in modern times, by the competent use of modern medicine.

It might be mentioned that in the 80,000 mountainous hamlets of Nepal there are at least 40,000 shamans and traditional healers who have been, or are being taught the basics of first aid. With the influx of tourists since 1950, Nepal's shamans have marched with modern times. The winds of change have swept Nepal, where once the shaman wasn't supposed to get rich and make a profit through his healing profession. Today, he blesses a life-saving electrolyte solution for the treatment of diarrhoea, and makes himself useful by selling ritualised anti-birth pills for a commission, thereby helping the government's family planning efforts. Moreover, the Nepalese shamans have been given an official status while also bearing the title "Practitioner of Traditional Medicine," and being trained in the applying of modern.

The village shaman is, therefore, gaining more importance and acquiring skills in the healing trade in the Himalayan kingdom. What is emerging is the welcome and useful combination of traditional and modern medicine.

I thought about an ethnologist I knew in Freiburg who'd written a thesis about Thakali-shamanism and had spent a few years in Nepal. She even had a Jhankri drum (dhangro) with her, but wasn't concerned with the healing aspect of shamanism, and didn't possess the ability to heal a patient. When I told everyone about the German expert on shamanism they all laughed heartily. Perhaps it was the thought of a western woman with a dhangro that provoked the laughter. There is a woman in England - Jill Purce - who uses chanting influenced by Mongolian and Tibetan shamanistic techniques for healing and transformation. A weekend course costs 59 Pounds Sterling.

And then Pushpa went on to say, "Even my husband has bites on his arms." Her husband, who's a food technologist, answered in the affirmative. Since it was a Nepalese evening, the main language was Nepali, but our conversation was studded with German words so that our German guests wouldn't feel uneasy and out of place.

Just as the Germans have a grillfest with steaks, wurst and beer, the Nepalese buffet consisted of: dal-bhat-shikar, rounded up with momos, and delicious aachaar. And there was soft Nepalese ethno-music accompanying the conversation and delicacies.

"I had an uncle in Nepal who first had dreams about shamans," said Pushpa S. She said the old experienced shaman of his village had died. Her uncle had begun to see the shaman in his dreams, but had dismissed the dreams. But the dreams became persistent. Whenever there was a shamanic seance in the village, her uncle would start shivering and shaking as if in a trance. The drums of a shaman would incite his quiverings.

Some time later, he'd seen the shaman in his dreams again. He said that the shaman had shown him where he'd hidden his shaman's paraphernalia: the dhangro (drum) and gajo (stick) were behind a certain bush, the headgear of porcupine quills in another place, and beside a big boulder by the rivulet were his malas and belts-with-bells, and nearby the brass bumba (jug) and his thumri, a wooden ritual dagger.

It was a call to Pushpa's uncle to be a shaman, and the younger man after the fashion of the layman's etiology, had asked his elders and neighbours for advice, and they had concluded that he should take up the mantle. So he went and collected the dead shaman's ritual objects and became a shaman.

I mentioned that I'd read a book written by an American named Larry Peters, who'd done a stint of shamanism in Tin Chuli in the outskirts of Kathmandu. Mr. Peters worked as an assistant Jhankri (shaman) and beat the dhangro, but said he did not believe in the spirit world to which the Jhankri, Bhirenda, was introducing him. He refused to enter a de riguer initiation psychosis. Sadly enough, when he and his son were seriously ill, they preferred the missionary hospital to the shaman. The son, however, died in the hospital. And Bhirendra the Jhankri was understandably not on speaking terms with Larry because of the breach of confidence (Vertrauensbruch).

The question is: would the boy have survived if the traditional healer had treated him? Perhaps the modern doctor should also learn to send his patients to a shaman when he gets baffled by certain symptoms. The shaman will then banish the cause of the illness, namely an invisible power that becomes active in the visible world, causing suffering and illness. For the shaman establishes contact with the invisible world and the earthly sphere, and forces the evil power that takes residence in human hosts to reveal their identities, ask them what they desire, and eventually make them promise to leave the somatic environment of their hosts. And that is traditional faith healing through a ritual.

Asked about life in a small German town, Pushpa S. said "Man-parey-na!" which means she didn't like it. She longs for the mountains of Dharan in Eastern Nepal, and she worries about her two children who are still in the small Himalayan kingdom.

In the meantime, Pushpa S. has been to a modern German doctor and has had blood and allergy tests, but her boksi-bites will be healed when she returns to Nepal forever this autumn -- and visits her local shaman.

Satis Shroff is a Nepali writer living in West Germany.

KNOW YOUR HIMAL: Langtang Lirung (7,245 m)



Langtang valley lies 30 km north of Kathmandu, close to Kyirong in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. To the north is the main crest of the Himalaya, the tallest peak of which is the 7,245 metre **Langtang Lirung**.

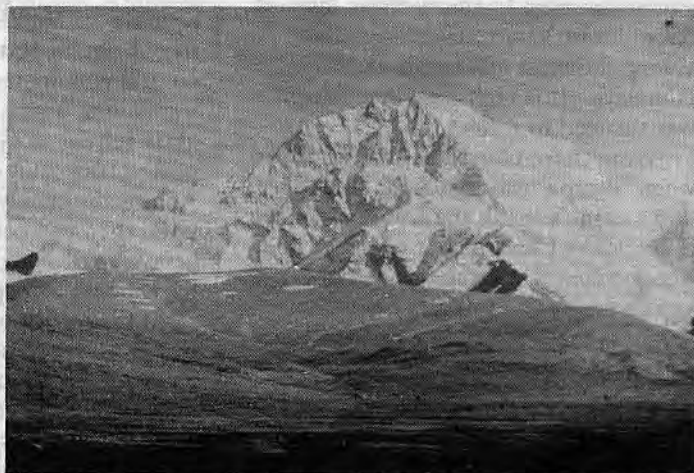
The first Westerner to enter the area was H. W. Tilman in 1949. He reconnoitered approaches from the south and east sides of **Langtang Lirung**. Next was Toni Hagen, who conducted geological surveys of the area in 1952.

The Langtang National Park, Nepal's second largest park, was established in 1967, enclosing 1,710 square km. There are 16 villages in the park, but most of the population lives in Langtang village. Decendents of Tibetans from Kyirong who mixed with the Tamangs from nearby Helambu, they speak a Tibetan dialect, and mainly herd sheep and yak.

Langtang Khola, which runs through the valley into Bhote Kosi, is fed by glaciers spawned by **Langtang Lirung**, Dorje Lakhpa, and other peaks. The Bhote Kosi Gorge, which was once an important trade route to Tibet, is now the main approach to Langtang Valley. Dense oak, birch, and pine forests, along with 1,000 plant species, 160 bird species, and 30 mammal species are found in the area.

The Langtang area was closed to mountaineering expeditions in 1966, and was reopened in 1978 to foreign expeditions with Nepali members.

- 1959 Autumn:** Japanese team makes an unsuccessful attempt up to the South-east ridge.
- 1961 Spring:** The leader and two members of a Japanese expedition perish in an avalanche at 5,600 metres.
- 1963 Autumn:** Two killed in an unsuccessful Italian attempt.
- 1973 Autumn:** Three Japanese climbers die on South-west ridge.
- 1978 Autumn:** First ascent by a Nepali and a Japanese via the West Ridge route.



Langtang Lirung from the base-camp of Shishapangma in Tibet

Jerome Edo

Abominably Yours,

Do you know who arranged the summit meeting between George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev last month off the island of Malta? The Sherpas. So said the *New York Times* and just about every American newspaper and magazine that I have been able to lay my paws on. Evidently, the diplomats and bureaucrats who do advance work for super-power meets are now known as "sherpas."

But wait a minute. Is this not linguistic hijacking? How can editorial writers 13,000 miles away expropriate the name of an entire ethnic group and use it to describe an element of super-power jockeying? Help! UNESCO!

Here is how the logic runs. Sherpas are high altitude porters who help the sahibs get to the top of Chomolongma. Diplomatic sherpas are advance teams who organize summit meetings so that sahibs -- Bush and Gorbachev -- can crow from the top of Malta, Reykjavik or Vienna.

There is enough confusion in the West about who the Sherpas are. So what's the point in adding this new twist to their background, is what I say. Outside of Nepal, most everybody thinks "sherpa" means "porter." Give these "people of the east" (Shar-pa in Tibetan) a break! In fact, the Sherpas' traditional trading acumen and the mountaineering bonanza of the last three decades have made Sherpas among the most affluent in the Himalaya. It is high time their image was spruced to reflect this.

Were there copyright laws infringed when "sherpa" was hijacked, I wonder? Did anyone consult the Library of Congress or the Chief Abbot of Tengpoche? Or is the reincarnate lama's linguistic authority limited to decreeing that the gumba be spelled with a "p" instead of a "b"?

Maybe the Sherpas themselves don't mind the howsoever tenuous link with super-power politics. Maybe I'm just a hair-splitting anthropoid? If that

is the case, may I suggest that the analogy be carried further so that the whole of super-power doings can be described in mountain-climbing vocabulary?

When a summit is logistically ponderous, with top-heavy agendas and complicated protocol and many preliminary meetings (camps I, II, III), it shall be called an "expedition-style" meet.



When there is little or no preparation, and very little sherpa support, Bush and Gorbachev will be going "alpine style." If the summit bid fails, then assume they slipped off south col down to the Kangshung Glacier.

When the leader of the "free world" has to be briefed in detail by his sherpas and has to carry little note-cards reminding him why he is meeting his Soviet counterpart in the first place, he is said to be climbing on "fixed rope," because his handlers don't want him to stray from his text. A quick about-face on oral commitments will be known as "rappelling" down from the summit in hasty retreat. If Gorbachev pulls unexpected tricks out of his bag, as the Americans lamely claim he did at Reykjavik, then you could say he let the belay slip, leaving Reagan dangling by his rope on an exposed face.

If the leader of a super-power becomes flustered and a bit muddled -- unclear, say, about whether a Sukhoi is a Russian bomber or a Japanese fish dish -- the spokesman can claim that his boss was not using oxygen. Or, he

could blame it on high altitude sickness -- any of the oedemas. As the brochure of the Himalayan Rescue Association cautions, negotiation should not go "too high, too fast."

A gailed summit meeting would open up large reservoirs of imagery. When the joint communique announces that "The monsoon arrived early," take it to mean that Eastern Europe percolated much earlier than expected. "Heavy winds at the top" would mean that the jetstream of public opinion was proving bothersome. A cry of "avalanche!" would mean washout, deadlock, accusation, recrimination, and total collapse of talks.

It is clear that the authentic sherpas have a thing or two to teach the phony sherpas about organizing successful seminars. They could hold training seminars during summer months when the Manang

Climbing School is rained in. Or better still, the next super-power summit could be held in the Khumbu. If you can meet in the middle of the Mediterranean on a ship, what's wrong with meeting on the highlands of landlocked, non-aligned, peace-zoned Nepal?

With peace on the offensive around the globe, what better place to meet than in the heartland of Himalayan Buddhism, under the sublime gaze of Padmapani and Avalokiteshvara. And think of the photo opportunities -- shaking hands with Ama Dablam and Khumbila for a backdrop. And to be able to discuss the dismantling of ICBMs to the beat of monastery drums, and after hours, to soothe the mind with chaang. It would actually do the world a lot of good if the next summit were held in Khumbu. Even I might make a guest appearance.



*In his book "Lost Horizon,"
James Hilton tells of the occasion
when a young girl left the
fabulous valley of Shangri-La
and was beset by the problems
and pollution of the world,
became very, very, very old in
an instant.*

*Nepal is like that Shangri-La.
It is peaceful and pollution
free.*

Let's keep it that way.



SHANGRI-LA

LAZIMPAT, G.P.O. BOX 655 KATHMANDU, NEPAL
TELEX : 2276 HOSANG NP TEL : 412999/410108
CABLE : SHANGRI-LA FAX : 9771414184

DESLA



Fastest Way to **LONDON**



Now the only direct flight to London is via Royal Nepal, departing every Thursday at 2120 hours, arriving in London at 0700 hours the next morning. The overnight flight saves you time on the ground, and invites you to enjoy select drinks and choice delicacies served by our attentive hostesses throughout the journey. Enjoy your way to London.

Royal Nepal
Airlines

For further details, please contact your travel agent or the local Royal Nepal office

Bangkok
233-3921-4

Calcutta
298534

Delhi
3321-572

Dubai
228308

Kathmandu
220-757

Hong Kong
3-699151/2

Singapore
225-7575

London
3834314

Frankfurt
(069) 250-106/7