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FREE

नेपाली आवाज



Still Waiting

ANUP KAPHLE

16 YEARS AFTER THEY WERE FORCED OUT OF THEIR COUNTRY BY A DICTATOR, MORE THAN A HUNDRED THOUSAND BHUTANESE REFUGEES IN NEPAL CONTINUE TO WAIT FOR A SOLUTION TO WHAT HAS BECOME ONE OF SOUTH ASIA'S WORST REFUGEE CRISIS. **11 »**

Plastic jerrycans, marked with the names of its owners, are lined up by 2PM to collect water at this communal water tap in the Khuduna Bari Bhutanese Refegee Camp in remote eastern Nepal. The water runs for an hour or two at 3PM. Photo: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

AIDS REPORT

**मृत्युसंग लड्दै, चेतना छर्दै
बाकी जीवन अरुका लागी**

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

एक समयमा आफ्नै परिवारका लागि पनि बोझ बनेका नरेशलाल आज सबैका प्रिय बनेकाछन् । सानै देखी लागु औषध दुर्व्यसनको लतमा फँसेका उनको रगतमा एचआईभी पोजेटीभ भएपछि उनी आफ्नै परिवार भीत्र तिरस्कृत जस्तै भएका थिए तर आज त्यस्तो छैन ।

०५४ सालदेखि एचआईभीसंग लड्दै आएका ३६ वर्षीय नरेशलालले अहिले बाकी जीवन खुशी साथ विताई रहेका मात्र छैनन्, समाजउपयोगी काम गरेर अरुको निरश जिवनमा समेत खुशीयाली ल्याएकाछन् । जिवनको अन्त्य र मृत्युको पर्याय मानीने एचआईभी लागेपछि जिवनका सबै सपना र चाहना अन्त्य हुन्छन् भन्ने धेरैको सोचाई छ । तर, नरेशले यस्तो सोचाई भएका एचआईभी संक्रमितहरूलाई एकत्रित गरी मृत्युको आतंक भित्र सुन्दर जिवनको खोजी गरिरहेकाछन् । २०५८ सालमा पुर्वाञ्चल क्षेत्रमै पहिलो पटक आफुलाई एचआईभी संक्रमित घोषणा गर्दै संक्रमितहरूको हक अधिकारको पक्षमा आवाज उठाउदै सार्वजनिक भएका नरेश भन्छन् “सुरुमा संक्रमित भन्दा मानीसहर टाढा भाग्थे अहिले, माया र सम्मान गर्छन् ।” उनको प्रयासबाट अहिले पुर्वाञ्चल भरी नै संक्रमितहरू संगठित बन्न पुगेकाछन् ।

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Dr. Govinda in US



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किरात प्रदेशमा किचला

पश्चिममा वर्गीय संघर्षको नारा दिएर सफल भएका माओवादीलाई पूर्वमा प्रभुत्व जाउन पहिल्यैदेखि “जातीय” नारा चर्काउँदै अएको विद्रोही राई-लिम्बूहरूलाई साथ लिनु परेको थियो । जातीय स्वायत्तता र आत्मनिर्णयको अधिकार अर्थात् छुट्टै किराँत राज्यको सपना देखाएर माओवादीले खम्बूवान राष्ट्रिय मोर्चा र लिम्बूवान राष्ट्रिय मुक्ति मोर्चा हात लिन सफल भए । तर अहिले यही क्षेत्रमा राई र लिम्बु स्वायत्तताका लागि किचलो खडा भएको छ **16 »**

Digital Himalaya



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Op- Ed

One of the dynamics of the late 20th century and early 21st century politics has been the import of democracy in third world countries. However, democracy (in the purest, most liberal sense) has succeeded in only a handful of countries around the world. The reasons behind democratic failure can only be evaluated by reviewing historical, social and economic factors. **18 »**

Vol.2, #19.

A New York minute, it is said, can be a lifetime. New York has now been home to Nepali Aawaz for a year! Our first issue was published on October 8, 2005 and modestly distributed in a few east coast cities. Today, the newspaper is still distributed modestly, but to over 10 cities across in the United States. And Nepalis and others across the world take the time to download and read the paper's PDF version from our website regularly.

Officials of a royal dictatorship to former prime ministers and current ministers and deputy prime minister of a democratic Nepal, personalities leading the fight for sexual minority groups to the voice of ethnic minorities, Nepali students and immigrants who have made new homes in countries far from home and Nepalis who were forced to leave their homes, artists and athletes, are just a few of the people who have found space in these pages. Naturally, the paper has had a political overtone; it would be difficult not to, at a time of such intense political movement in Nepal and an unforeseen heightened interest in Nepali politics from all quarters. But we hope to be able to give more space to other issues in the year ahead, particularly the environment, information and technology, and Nepali students studying away from home.

In July this year, for the first time in its 24 years, the annual Association of Nepalis in the Americas convention, the largest international gathering of Nepalis, had an official media because a media company had managed to establish itself here; Nepali Aawaz. In the several decades that Nepalis have been living here in the US, a formal newspaper had never been published although community newsletters were common and many had come and gone. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the unquestioned support of our friends in Nepal who take time out from their busy life of a full-time journalist to send us news and in-depth reports. Anushil Shrestha in Kathmandu and Ananda Koirala in Eastern Nepal, namely, along with our early contributors Anup Prakash, Bhushan Shilpakar, Dr. Pradeep Bhattarai, Preena Shrestha and Subel Bhandari, Birat Media, Safal Media, R.B. Distribution and Budhi Katel. Other volunteers-students and Nepali journalists in exile- in various parts of the world have also helped tremendously. Our cover story on the Bhutanese refugee crisis in this issue, by Anup Kaphle, and the chronicles of Nepali students working in Ocean City (Vol.1, #18), by Bibek Bhandari, are both great examples of contributions by Nepali students in the US who aspire to become writers and journalists. Moonlight Records Inc. NY, our publisher, also deserves credit for its effort to ensuring the Editorial team's work sees the light of day by continuing to publish the paper and agreeing to distribute it for free to ensure maximum readership despite near nil revenue and countless advertisement payment defaulters. But we are grateful to the thousands of readers we have earned.

A lot happens in a year and anniversaries and year ends make for great excuses to muse over them. Not to undermine other important issues, but one particular thing that struck us the most was perhaps the fact that this year Nepal was the top 19th country contributing to the International Student body here in the US. We went up on the charts despite the fact that the fees for student visa was increased by over a \$100 in 2004.

This struck us so much that we decided to find out just how many of us have been coming here over the years, as students or otherwise. You will see glimpses of our research as a special feature in the diaspora section. While in this issue we are only able to publish numbers, we hope in the coming issues we will be able to explore what those numbers represent, in terms of academics, jobs, incomes, political inclination and the rate at which they return home or make new homes here amongst other things. While those who have come before have helped create the Nepali community as know it now, It is the student body of today that will truly shape the Nepali community of tomorrow here in the US for three reasons: they are arriving in greater numbers than ever before, they are pursuing a diverse area of studies or work as opposed to certain waves such as 'IT' or 'Business Management' that we have seen in the past. And finally, they have the advantage of being half adapted to the lifestyle and culture of the West, be it the popular culture or the fact that one has to put in endless hours of work along with college and slog through summer breaks to make ends meet, or half-heartedly pursue a Mater's degree in case one fails to secure an H-1 visa during their OPT. We could be wrong, but either ways we look forwarding to exploring the Nepali student community in the US this year. Their future, after all, will play a large role not just in the Nepali diaspora but also at home in Nepal.

To wrap things up, we admit Nepali Aawaz has been published on time only sometimes. But we can proudly say that we have always presented crucial issues timely, every time. This issue of Nepali Aawaz is five weeks past its print "deadline," and our plans of publishing a Nepal edition almost seven months behind schedule (and counting!) since the promotional issue in April. But here we are now, in your hands or on your screen. We are still a fortnightly paper but we'll refrain from promising strict publication timelines. And we apologize to the many Nepali communities and student groups that have requested for copies of the paper for distribution in their areas but haven't received them, sometimes we just can't afford the shipping and handling. We do, however, promise to keep this publication free of cost for our readers and give them a reason to continue picking up a print copy or reading it online as they have in the past. And we promise to continue to offer this unique experiment and effort for and about the Nepali diaspora that did not exist before 8 Oct. 2005. As best as we can, for as long as we can. We thank you reading us during our first year and wish you all happy holidays!

Kashil
 Editor, Nepali Aawaz. Dec. 06, NY.



Like nothing before: Nepali Aawaz published its Vol. 1, issue 1 (top) on 5 Oct. 05 and Vol. 1's last issue (below), #18, on 30 Sept. 06.



Days in Nepali History

This issue's 'days in history' are some of the news stories from Nepal published by The New York Times between 15 October and 15 December through the 1980s.

Everest Attempt Set Back

(15 Oct. '81)

"Three members of a North American medical research team gave up an attempt to reach the summit of Mount Everest today because of winds, the Tourism Ministry reported. Radio reports from the team said the climbers had returned to Camp 5 at 26,300 feet but would try again tomorrow. The three are Chris Pizzo of San Diego, Chris Kopczynski of Spokane, Wash., and David Jones of Vancouver, B.C." (Reuters)

Nepal Enters the Space Age

(8 Nov. '82)

"The son of King Birendra of Nepal spoke with Prince Charles of Britain today through a communication satellite earth station linking Nepal with the outside world. Britain provided about \$1.2 million to help build the station, which replaces the high frequency radio system used since 1964." (UPI)

A New Little Bear In Nepal

(6 Dec. '83)

"Evidence of a new species of a "very agile" small bear has been found in Nepal by an expedition from the Woodlands Institute of Spruce Knob, W. Va. In a telephone call Saturday from Nepal to Woodlands Institute headquarters Dr. Daniel Taylor-Ide, the institute's director, and Dr. Robert L. Fleming Jr. reported finding "substantial" evidence of a new species of small bear, workers at the institute said." (UPI)

500 Are Detained by Nepal

(5 Nov. '84)

"About 500 people were detained today for taking part in a meeting organized by the outlawed Nepali Congress Party in Bharatpur, sources in the party said. More than 150 were still being held late today, the sources said. All political parties are banned in Nepal." (AP)

Carter Vacationing in Nepal

(18 Oct. '85)

"Former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, arrived today for a vacation that will include a trek to the Himalayas and possibly a trip to the base of Mount Everest. They are to spend 13 days in Nepal." (UPI)

Note: The Carter Centre has accepted the invitation of Nepal government and the Maoists to observe the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections, which is to be held in June '07.

Nepal Prince Warns Of Threat to Wildlife

(4 Dec '86)

"The brother of King Birenda warned today that a paper mill that China helped build threatens rare crocodiles, dolphins and the fabled Bengal tiger.

"Prince Gyanedrnra, head of a non-profit trust to protect the environment, warned that the pulp mill could pollute the Nayrani River and endanger a nearby royal reserve - once a hunting ground for the British rulers of colonial India.

"Despite the warning, King Birenda is scheduled to inaugurate the plant Thursday in the presence of China's Minister for Light Industry, Yang Bo.

"The Prince called on the Government to take "urgent appropriate measures before it is too late" to protect the Gharial crocodiles, Gangetic dolphins and Bengal tiger. (UPI)

Transplanted Nepalese Rhinos Breed

(16 Dec. '88)

"Tiny footprints recently led wildlife officials to a baby rhinoceros, the first calf born to a herd transplanted to this swampy area from another part of Nepal to preserve them.

"We had initially not expected a baby so soon here when we put the rhinos for the first time in this jungle," said Krishna Man Shrestha, the jubilant warden of Royal Bardia Wildlife Reserve.

"Thirteen rhinoceroses have been transported to the Bardia reserve since 1986 from the Chitwan sanctuary, 220 dusty miles to the east, because naturalists feared it was too risky to leave the endangered animals in just one area where a single epidemic could wipe them out. The move was made with the assistance of the World Wildlife Fund.

"The reserve, 406 miles southwest of Katmandu, Nepal's capital, is similar to Chitwan. (AP)

In Quotes

"...When you want to eat, in the Green Zone you have to go through Nepal..."

- **Robert Young Pelton**, author, *Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror* (Crown, 2006), giving examples of multinational workers of private security companies hired to run various aspects of war in Iraq. The Green Zone is the fortified palace in Baghdad where an American base is being built and much of the government and diplomatic work is conducted, amongst other things. Pelton was debating the issue of private security contractors in Iraq with Doug Brooks, president of the International Peace Operations Association (an association of private security contractors), on the Brian Lehrer Show on 31 Oct. 06, on WNYC, New York Public Radio.

"The cost has been dear. Thousands of innocent Nepali citizens have lost their homes, their families and their lives; all due to the conflict they neither caused, participated in nor ultimately understood. Now, there is a ray of hope."

- **America-Nepal Friendship Society**, quickly looking back and ahead at the 11-year-old Maoist movement and seemingly its end after they agreed to a peace deal with the Seven-Party Alliance led government.

"We expresses its sincere gratitude towards the people of Nepal, the civil society, and all domestic and international political forces who endeavored to realize this historic signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord. Political leaders and the political forces of Nepal have proved that

they are mature enough to settle any political differences through a peaceful dialogue."

- **Sanjaya Parajuli**, President, Alliance for Democracy and Human Rights in Nepal, USA, referring to the popular April Uprising that brought to an end King Gyanendra's failed coup and the agreement between the Seven-Party Alliance led government and the CPN (Maoist).

"We strongly urge the government and the Maoists to honestly implement the Accord. We would also urge the civil society and the international community to be vigilant, to monitor the progress, and to put pressure on the government and the Maoists to implement the Accord, in case they try to deviate from the provisions mentioned in the Accord."

- **Anand Bist**, President, The Nepalese Democratic Youth Council in USA, warily welcoming the peace deal between the Maoists and the Seven-party based Nepali government.

"Only by looking into our past mistakes and drawing lessons from them will we be able to carry on this light to a further height and make the light permanent and more powerful."

- **Tek B. Gurung**, President, United Nepalese Democratic Forum, New York, on the recent signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accords between the Seven-Party Alliance led government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

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Special Report

Nepalis on the move: Studying abroad

Kashish Das Shrestha

"Study Abroad" has become a social phenomenon in Nepal, an industry that thrives on sending Nepali students to foreign countries for higher education, primarily for undergraduate studies. But the industry and the flow of students severely lack oversight and monitoring; everyone knows more and more students are leaving the country, but

no body knows how many are coming back. The political unrest in the country has largely contributed to the trend maturing into the norm, but perhaps an exodus like this was inevitable in any case for a generation that has grown up on satellite television.

Sometime in the beginning of this century, even middle-class parents

and older relatives had decided that there is very little future in Nepal. So, the best option they thought, for the young ones were to leave the country for better education for a better job in a better country. Of course, you cannot undermine the Nepali student's desire to compete in a global market and reach out for the best academic options

they have. For these or whatever other reason(s), an increasing number of Nepalis have been traveling abroad for their higher education. Below is the trend in which Nepali students have been traveling to the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Figures from India is cited in the data below for reference only and not comparison.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

In 1994, there were approximately 3 Nepali students coming to the US per day. According to *Institute of International Education/ Opendoors* Nepal ranked #19 in the list of leading countries from which international students came coming the US in 2005/06, i.e. approximately 16 students per day. India ranked #1.

2005/06: 6,061 students, approximately at the rate of 16 students per day. 1,200 students more than 2004/05. Ranked #19 in the list of leading countries from which international students come to the US. (From India: 76,503 students, or approx. 200 per day)

2004/05: 4,861 students, approximately at the rate of 13 students per day. Ranked #23 in the list of leading countries from which international students come to the US, 10.9% increase from 2003/04. The total number of international students in the US was 565, 039.

2002/03: 4,384 students, approximately at the rate of 12 students per day. The total number of international students in the US was 572, 509.

2000/01: 2, 618 students, approximately at the rate of 7 students per day. 1,892 of them came for Undergraduate studies, 609 for Graduate studies and 117 for others.

1999/00: 2, 411 students, approximately at the rate of 6 students per day.

1998/99: 2, 358 students. **1997/98:** 1, 697 students. **1996/97:** 1,400 students. **1995/96:** 1, 219 students.

1994/95: 1, 264 students, approximately at the rate of 3 students per day.

AUSTRALIA:

The visa process for Australia has become a bit difficult for Nepali students, since all the application documents have to be sent to Delhi. But the prospects of getting a good education, and perhaps more importantly a permanent residency in Australia has provoked many Nepalis to head down under.

2005: 1,271 students, approximately at the rate of 3 students per day. This was the second highest number of Nepali students to arrive in Australia since 1994. That figure is also only 7 students more than 1,264, the second lowest number of students from Nepal going to the United States in fiscal years between 1994-2006.

2004: 1,049 students (From India: 20, 716 students, approximately at the rate of 56 students per day)

2003: 1,255 students **2002:** 1,507 students **2001:** 1,326 students **2000:** 1,266 students **1999:** 1,079 students **1998:** 1,041 students **1997:** 1,145 students

1996: 1,079 students **1995:** 665 students **1994:** 328 students. (From India: 1,539).

NEW ZEALAND:

The number of Nepali students going to New Zealand has been relatively low, probably because many students continue to prioritize North America, the United Kingdom and Australia as their primary options (although several "study abroad" institutions have been sending Nepali students to countries such as Cyprus). Of all the countries where Nepali students travel to for their higher education ever year, New Zealand probably still has one of the lowest influx rates.

2005: 5 students (India: 60) **2002:** 9 students (India: 380) **2001:** 8 students (India: 135) **1999:** 7 students (India: 20) **1998:** 6 students (India: 12) **1997:** 1 student (India: 14)

Sources:

United States data: Institute of International Education/ Opendoors.

Australia data: Australian Government, AEI- International Education Network.

New Zealand data: "Managing International Student Numbers at New Zealand Public Universities and Polytechnics. Report to Ministry of Education. 2004." Dr. Learne Smith and Professor Allan Rae. Massey University.

Note: The approximate rate of students arriving in a country per day is the result of the total number of students per year divided by 365 and tabulated by Nepali Aawaz and not the sources listed above.

Special Report

Nepalis on the move: A look at immigration trends

A recent report titled 'America at 300 million' published by TIME (30 Oct. '06), said that of the 300 million people in America, 13.1 million, or 4.4% are Asians. Of that 13.1 million Asians, its anybody's guess how many are Nepalis. It is believed that Ganga Bahadur Mali was the second Nepali to have come the United States several decades ago. But who was the first? Even the Nepali embassy was not able to provide that information. But Nepal's flag can be seen in a hallway in Berkley College in San Francisco, in a scene in the critically acclaimed movie "The Graduate," which was released in 1967 and presumably filmed in 1966. So perhaps one of more Nepali student had arrived in Berkley by the mid 60s, since it is common for colleges to display the flags of countries that make up their International Student body. It should be noted that in 1820, the entry of one immigrant from India was recorded. And while India's immigration trend, published for general reference, might seem much higher than that of Nepal's, its population is also significantly higher than that of Nepal's. While we hope to collect and publish more detailed statistics on the Nepali community in our future issues, here is a glimpse at a recent immigration trend for the US.

NEPALI IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED TO THE US PER FISCAL YEAR:

During our research for this data, we could not verify if the following numbers included the Diversity Visa a.k.a DV lottery winners.

2004: 2,842 people, of which only 479, or approx. 16% of immigrants, were employment based preference. (India: 70,116, of which 38,443 or approx. 54%, were employment based).

2003: 2,099 **2002:** 1,138 **2001:** 949 **2000:** 617 (India: 42,046) **1999:** 453 **1998:** 476 **1997:** 447

1996: 431 **1995:** 312 (India: 34,748)

NON-IMMIGRANT NEPALIS WHO VISITED THE US TEMPORARILY IN FY 2004:

During our research for this data, we could not verify if the numbers represent only individual visitors or if it also includes a single person's multiple visits.

As foreign Government Officials: 226 (India: 2,079)

As temporary visitors for business: 1,468 (India: 116, 237)

As tourists: 3,899 (India: 239, 632)

As transit aliens: 821 (India: 19, 883)

As treaty traders and investors: 5 (India: 260)

Total: 10,327 people (India: 611, 327. Asia: 7, 828, 316. Total: 30, 781, 330).

WHERE THOSE NON-IMMIGRANT NEPALIS ENTERED THE US FROM IN FY 2004 (PORT OF ENTRY):

New York: 2,173 **Miami:** 353 **Los Angeles:** 2,007 **Honolulu:** 111

Newark: 265 **Chicago:** 452 **San Francisco:** 841 **(Total:** 10, 327)

AGE OF THOSE NON-IMMIGRANT NEPALIS WHO VISITED THE US TEMPORARILY IN FY 2004:

Under 15: 450 **15- 19 years-old:** 565 **20-24 years-old:** 1,259

25- 34 years-old: 2,626 **35- 44 years-old:** 2,374

45- 64 years-old and over: 2,644

NUMBER OF NEPALIS GRANTED ASYLUM IN THE US:

Possible factors for a spike in the number of asylum seekers and grantees after 2000 can also be attributed to the fact that Maoist conflict in Nepal intensified at around that time. The number of political asylum seekers have jumped in the last few years.

1997: 3, approx. 0.018% of the total number of asylum grantees. (India: 884. Asia: 8,664. Total: 16,221).

1998: 17 **1999:** 13 **2000:** 17, approx. 0.07% of the total number of asylum grantees. (India: 642. Asia: 7,696. Total: 22,852.)

2001: 19 **2002:** 69 **2003:** 143 **2004:** 183, approx. 1.27% of the total number of asylum grantees. (India: 130. Asia: 2, 444. Total: 14, 359)

Diaspora

Baag Chaal at Rubin Museum



Top: A lifesize Baag Chaal in session at the Rubin Museum of Arts in New York. Bottom: Tigers and Goats smile for the camera. Photos: AMERICA-NEPAL FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY.

A unique event took place in New York on 2 Dec. The Rubin Museum of Arts in association with the America- Nepal Friendship Society hosted a lifesize version of the popular Nepali board game Baag Chaal ('Baag' means Tiger and 'Chaal' move), a strategic game in which 4 Tigers and 21 Goats play against each other.

Several dozen children and adults arrived to take part, first cutting and coloring their tiger or goat masks, and listening to the rules. The goats win if they surround the tigers and the tigers win when they capture five goats. While 20 of the goats are placed outside the board at the start of the game, all the four tigers are placed in the four corners of the square. The goats can only be placed on one of the free junctions of the board and after all the goats have been placed on the board they may be moved from their position to any adjacent junction following any straight line. The tigers may be moved along any of the lines to an adjacent junction and may capture one goat placed on an adjacent junction by

jumping over it and following a straight line and landing on the next junction adjacent to the position occupied by the goat. Two players move the goat and tiger pieces alternately like Chess. It is believed the games originated in the Himalayas many years ago, when shepherds played it by scratching the game board on a flat surface to pass their time.

Participants were also given a complimentary pass to the fabulous exhibitions at the museum. Rubin Museum of Arts primarily focuses on arts from the Himalayan region and their collection also includes many ancient stone, metal and wood crafts and thankas from Nepal, Bhutan, India, Tibet, China and Mongolia. The 70,000 square-foot Museum is located at 150 West 17th Street, New York, and a must visit for Nepalis here in New York. You can visit the museum for FREE every Friday evening after 7PM. On other days, the admission fee is \$10/adults, \$7/Seniors, students and artists with IDs. For more information about Rubin Museum of Arts, Rmanyc.org.



Dinesh Tripathi talks HR



Advocate Dinesh Tripathi speaks in Texas.

The National Annual Convention of National Lawyers Guild, USA convened in Austin, Texas, on 18 October for a five day convention. Advocate Dinesh Tripathi of the Supreme Court of Nepal was one of the international guest speakers in the event. He has been an active representative of Nepal's human rights situation here in the US for sometime now, as he has been regularly speaking about the country's track on the subject in various colleges and international events. "The will of the Nepalese people must prevail above all things," he said during the Austin event. "The U.S. legal community should be aware of U.S. foreign policy in Nepal. The fate of the Nepali peoples must be decided by the Nepalese themselves, not by the politicians in Washington, D.C., London, Delhi, Beijing or somewhere else. Establishing a people's republic

in Nepal is the only meeting point in Nepali politics."

He added, "We need a total restructuring of Nepali polity, society, and government. Mere cosmetic changes are not enough. The international civil society and the legal community should come forward to express their support and solidarity to the Nepali people. There is a strong need to end the culture of impunity that is deeply rooted in Nepal." Other international guests at the convention included speakers from Japan, UK, Canada, Belgium and Venezuela amongst others. The National Lawyers guild is the umbrella organization of US lawyers, Law academics and judges. Dinesh Tripathi was also recently invited to speak at an event at the New York University and The New School in New York.

Nepal Study Group formed in NY

Nepal Study Group held its first meeting on 19 Nov. at the New School in Manhattan. The recently formed group's main idea is to "convene a regular forum on Nepal in NYC, to have serious dialogue on burning issues in Nepal and then share its deliberations with public at large," said Ashok K. Gurung, Director of India China

Institute and Faculty, The New School. The first meeting focused on the subject of interim constitution in Nepal, with speakers Prof. Andrew Arrato and advocate Dinesh Tripathi. The group hopes to have similar meetings and forms every 6 to 8 weeks on burning issues in Nepal and then share its deliberations with public at large.

Got News?

Email us news or information and photos about all things Nepali from your community.

info@nepaliaawaz.com

Diaspora

Nepalis run NYC and Philly



Prerana Shrestha, after completing her first ING NYC Marathon . Photo: HELPNEPAL.NET

New York City marathon is perhaps one of the most well-known marathons. Not just in the US but all over the world. Held on the first Sunday of every November, this was the 37th year for the 26.2 miles (42km) marathon that snakes from Staten Island to Brooklyn to Queens and then Manhattan, ending at Tavern on the Green in Central Park. Of the 37, 954 participants who finished the race this year, including the famed athlete Lance Armstrong, one of them was Nepali student Prerana Shrestha. Two weeks later, on 19 Nov., two more Nepalis ran another 26.2 mile route, Sworupa Khadka and Raksha Pant took part in the annual Philadelphia Marathon. The three participants were not merely testing their physical endurance, but more importantly raising funds for the Help Nepal Health Post project in Haripurwa VDC, Sarlahi, a conglomerate of villages with approximately 13,000 people that does not have a health post yet.

"As a first time marathoner, participating in the ING NYC Marathon was a fascinating experience for me. It felt like I was part of a big celebration of life and the goodness in people." She further said, "I would urge everyone to take up personal challenges to support noble causes and not be discouraged by initial hurdles. With good training and discipline, any Nepali can achieve great feats and use these as mediums to support charities close to their heart, if I could, anyone can."

Prerana is a PhD candidate in Neuroscience at The Rockefeller University in New York. She graduated from Bates College in 2003 with a

Bachelors of Science degree in Biological Chemistry. She also serves in the executive committee of International Nepali Biomedical Society (INBS). Prerana (874B) is a member of SEBS-NA and an Alum of Adarsha Vidya Mandir High School. Raksha works in McKinsey & Company's Asset Management Research Practice in New York. Raised in Thailand and the Philippines, Raksha graduated from Bryn Mawr College in 2002 with an Economics major/Math minor. Raksha and friends also launched "Badi ko Sathi", a non-profit with the goal of educating Badi children and raising societal awareness about the Badi plight in western Terai. Sworupa works as an Assistant Operations Manager at Mellon Financial Corporation in its Consulting and Investment Solutions group. She graduated from University of Bridgeport, CT in 2001 where she served as a President of The Himalayan Club, a student organization. She is also the founding member of XMA (Xavier's Mary's Alumni Association). She has been actively involved in the organization of various social and fund raising events/activities in the New England and tri-state area.

The foundation fund for the health post was first raised during the Help Network's MaHa US Tour during the summer. But the \$10,760.90 was still \$8,000 short for the construction of the proposed 13-bed Health Post. Through their efforts, Prerana, Sworupa and Raksha have managed to raise an additional \$6,000. Contributions can still be made at Help Nepal Network's website www.helpnepal.net.

Gambu on the go



Gambu Sherpa gets the crowd to work the dance floor. Photos: CHANDRA PRAKASH SHARMA

Gambu Sherpa, an active member of the Sherpa Kyidug Scoeity- NY, and the United Sherpa Association, has been on the move lately. [Full disclosure: He is one of the founding members of this publication]. On 14 Nov. he represented Nepal at the 2nd annual event celebrating South Asian heritage in New York at the Gracie Mansion, the historical Mayor's mansion of New York. He performed his fusion pop songs alongside other South Asian artists. Present for the event was Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. On 28 Oct., along with Sangdorje Sherpa

and several other local artists, Gambu Sherpa also performed at his 'Sherpini Didi Night.' The concert, organized and promoted by Moonlight Records [Full disclosure: Moonlight Records is the publisher of this publication], was the official launch party for his albums Saannani Vol.1 and Sherpini Didi. Guest singers included the pop singer Meera Rana also, and present for the show was the Nepali film actor Rajesh Hamal and Ambassador to the Permanent Mission of Nepal to the UN, His Excellency Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya.



Top: Meera Rana and Sangdorjee Sherpa perform. Below: Ambassador Madhu Raman also takes to the dance floor.



Diaspora

A conversation with Dr. Govinda Prasad Thapa

When police officers in Nepal retire, they are often well decorated. But perhaps not many are decorated the way Dr. Govind Prasad Thapa was. 31 years ago, his Bachelors in Arts (1972) from a college in Deradhun, India, had enabled him to enter the Nepal Police force as an Inspector. When he retired in March this year, he retired as the Additional Inspector General of Police. And apart from the medals and honors, he had also earned a Ph.D (Department of Public Administration, 2002), Masters in Public Affairs (2000), Masters in Arts (English literature, 1984), Bachelor's in Law (1992).

Dr. Govinda, now the Chairperson of Centre for Security and Justice Studies, Nepal, came to the United States on the invitation of United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, to make a presentation during the launch of 'Combating Serious Crimes in Postconflict Societies: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners.' Other speakers at the event included Jacques Paul Klein, Former Chief of United Nations operations (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Liberia) and Major General David C. Ralston, Former Chief of Staff for Operations and Intelligence, Kosovo Force (KFOR) and one of the authors of the handbook. He had come to New York and participated in an interaction program with the Nepali community, an event organized by Langhali Association USA, in Queens. He also spoke to Nepali Aawaz.

You recently presented a paper on post-conflict situation for Nepal. Is it natural for crime to spike up like it has in Nepal post-April Uprising?

Yes, and its not a new phenomenon. We have to learn from other countries who have gone through similar times. We have to find things that are relevant and see how it can be adapted to our situation. For example, a post conflict situation with a weak government, a state of general confusion, is a breeding ground for criminal gangs and crime in general, and often the security forces themselves would be involved, as we have seen in a few cases in Nepal too. The background of the conflict might be different, but there are many similar trends in criminal psychology.

You were a police officer during the 1990's people's movement and you witnessed the recent April Uprising also. What do you remember from

the movement in 1990?

I was posted in various district offices at the time, between 1988-1992, in Rautahat, Bara, Bhaktapur. And in 1990, I was an S.P at the D.I.G's office in Morang, Biratnagar. You know, the movement then was for a multiparty democracy so crime rate after the movement was different. But this time, the situation is different, we have an armed insurgency, so the actors are different.

Yes, but what about the way the police handled the two movements, 1990's and this April's?

Oh, it was very high-ended this time, the use of violence I mean. Back then, in 1990, we wanted to use minimum force and ensure minimum destruction generally. We generally tried to be as least violent and forceful as possible. I mean, sure there were incidents back then also, but this time it was like the two sides, security forces and the protesters, were enemies. It was as if the security forces were trying to make sure that those who came to protest today should not be able to return the next day. Personally, I was not happy with what happened in the April protests. I even made a few public comments in the media about it.

What was the reaction?

There were those in the force who agreed and there were others who were disgruntled about a retired officer making comments. But I had said in my farewell event at the force, just because I retire as an active police officer wouldn't mean I stop working in the areas of security forces, that I would be quite active in sectors related to policy making and such.

You were an active police officer during the government's first reaction to contain the Maoist movement; Operations Kilo Sera and Romeo. Both of them essentially gave the security forces a bad name and scored sympathy points for the Maoists.

Conflicts like these are natural social phenomenon and we must recognize that. But we chose to reject those notions instead, not address the deep rooted causes they started. We thought we could quell it by using force, we didn't take any lesson from countries that shared similar history, we acted haphazardly. And in order to hold ground, both sides went over board. Also, the police were neither properly

trained and nor were there any solid policies to handle these kinds of situations.

State security can never afford to make mistakes because those mistakes kill. I was the S.S.P at that time and I had repeatedly said at the Police Academy that, like a game of soccer, we play to win but don't play foul. Of course, this was an armed confrontation and people would surely be caught in the crossfire. Beyond that, any deliberate acts of framing, intimidation, and such only gives birth of more rebellion against the state. We must fight, but play by the rules. As far as Operation Kilo Sera and Romeo goes, we could have done better. We should have done more research and case studies. We are paying too high a price at the cost of lives, its been an expensive learning experience.

Why do policemen go on recurring arresting spree of guys with long hair and people of sexual minority groups?

[laughter]. When I look at policing in Nepal, I find it very regimental and army like, even the way they are made to look with the short hair cut and everything. And then they use the fear of psychology. So when they see someone of a different style, they get the wrong impression.

Do you think its possible that in the 70s, hippies in Nepal had long hair and were perceived as being trouble makers and so that psychology just stayed on?

Could be. We have not been able to police according to time. They did in my time too, round up guys and get their hair cut. And again, human rights is key to policing. Police don't make the effort either, they look for easy ways out, you know, for example beat the first suspect and get a testimony. So there is still very little effort made in understanding things like human rights.

What about the repeated arrests and attacks on the 'metis', the sexual minorities?

Police has been blatantly brute about this case. And the Blue Diamond Society (BDS) has time and again filed complaints about the brutality its members have faced at the hands of the police. One time, the valley D.I.G, Kathmandu's S.P, and a few other officer went to the Blue Diamond Society and met with victims and spent time talking to them. So the relationship between the



police and the BDS improved, and then soon enough the brutality repeated. And its not even in their jurisdiction to arrest homosexuals or others from sexual minority groups.

So what happens next?

A long term system, or policy has to be set. Its a vicious cycle right now. Even with prostitution. You can't raid all the places all the time. And often, the house owners are untouched where are the people who are working there are victimized, you know, arrested and prosecuted. And they were victims to being with in the first place, that's how they land up in brothels or as prostitutes.

You've drafted many policies and made many recommendations. Your presentation at the DC event was a setup-by-setup guideline on how to maintain security in Nepal today. But what impact do these things really make?

Well, you know its tough to get things done. I myself have made so many recommendations but nothing gets done ever.

How do you change that?

Well, the security councils in Nepal are monopolized by the Police and the Army. This also create a gap between civilians and the security forces. We have to introduce more academics into this group. We have to start offering security policy courses in colleges. Right now, academic qualifications hardly account for anything in the force. Anyone with a BA degree may apply for the position of an Inspector in the force, and while awards and medals account for 15 points or more while being reviewed for promotions, additional academic qualifications don't account for even a single point. How can you have people who studied about the world 20-30 year ago heading a force for today? But if we have a mix of academics and members of the security forces, I believe it will make a huge difference in how policies are drafted and implemented.

Diaspora

Mandira Sharma receives Int'l HR honor

Every year, the international organization Human Rights Watch honors three people for their commitment and contributions to defending human rights in their respective countries. This year's honorees for this international recognition included Mandira Sharma, lawyer and co-founder of the human rights group Advocacy Forum, for her work in exposing disappearances and indiscriminate attacks against civilians in Nepal. Verónica Cruz, who fights for the right of rape victims to receive the safe abortion they are entitled to under Mexican law, and Arnold Tsunga, who takes legal action against the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in Zimbabwe were the other two honorees.

As state brutality against peaceful pro-democracy protesters grew in late 2003 and intensified in early 2004, volunteers wearing the distinct blue jacket marked "Human Rights Workers" dotted the streets of Kathmandu. But this sector had been growing steadily since the People's Movement in 1990, fighting for social issues such as gender rights and clamping down on human trafficking, to name a couple. With the start of the Maoist conflict, the young sector found itself busy monitoring and documenting a bloody movement. And on 1 Feb. 2005, immediately after King Gyanendra announced his coup on a televised speech, the roles of many human rights organizations dramatically heightened as Nepal's status in various global freedom and rights index slipped. HR defenders like Mandira Sharma became perpetually busy.

Mandira worked for years with Center for Victims of Torture. In 1999, she went to University of Essex, London, on a scholarship and earned a Masters in Human Rights Law. It was there she realized how important international networking and pressure can be as to prevent human rights abuse. In 2001, she started Advocacy Forum.

During the discussion program at Columbia university you talked about the impact that international recognition and notice can have in countries like Nepal.

I think there are several reasons this happens. First, there is the question of aid Nepal gets from the international community. Then there is the fact that government officials have to be answerable when they go on international visits.



Mandira Sharma at Columbia University before a discussion program started. Photo: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

Could it also be that sometimes they just don't know what the organization is, but when they get a letter from an "international organization" it creates a psychological pressure?

Yes, I think that also has a hand, it definitely creates a psychological pressure. And it helps us a lot in the sense that when a body like Amnesty of Human Rights Watch send a notice or a letter for the same cause we are fighting, it makes our fight more legitimate in a way.

So how have you managed to make the most of this?

When we attended a conference in Geneva in 2002, we were quite shocked that some state representatives actually didn't even know where Nepal was, when by that time the Maoist conflict in our country had become quite bloody and dangerous. So I had resolved that we really needed to work towards making Nepal's case in the international arena.

And how does one do that?

We decided that we would make sure Nepal's case is heard so we filed at least 20 habeas corpus cases in the supreme

court every day. And 10 cases of "disappearances" at the UN offices. And we weren't making this up, there were enough such cases happening every day for us to report. We realized that was the best way to get the attention Nepal needed. By the way, not even a single case of disappearance has been tried in the Supreme Court yet. Not even one.

You met with senior US officials during your visit to Washington DC. What was your message?

The American government has a pretty good relationship with the Nepali army, it provides arms to them. So the American government can do a lot to ensure human rights in Nepal by implementing preconditions such as respecting human rights, investigating abuse of human rights, and just generally making a point that human rights is a key issue.

You are a married woman, and your work entails you to be on the filed often.

I know, its not easy, but it's amazing how much women can do only if people don't stop them from doing it. They don't even have to do anything special for us, just don't stop us from doing it, that's all. I've been extremely lucky that I have a very understanding husband, and I am not sure this would be possible if we lived in a joint family. It does get a little tough with my son sometimes though.

How old is he? How does he handle you being busy all the time?

He is just 12. He has grown to be quite good at handling my working life although he has his occasionally fits about me not spending enough time with him. But he understands that my work is important. I take him to the field sometimes with me, so he has seen a lot. It's funny, but when he talks he subconsciously makes social issues a part of his life, like when he talks about what he wants to do. And then he does small things like putting aside books and clothes he does need for donation.

What was your childhood like?

I grew up in a small town in the village of Banglung. It's not easy growing up a girl child, I could just notice all these gender biases in my community.

Is that what triggered your current work?

Well, it was that too. But when I moved

to Kathmandu, the people's movement was just about starting and when that happened in 1990 I was working as a volunteer with a group of people who were treating and helping victims of state brutality during the protests.

Was there a defining moment when you realized you wanted to work as a human rights defender?

There was this really articulate student leader in our college, much like Gagan Thapa of the day, and he was just a fantastic leader and activist. He could mobilize people, hold mass meetings and you know, held a lot of potential. But one time, the police arrested him and tortured him. And we met him when he was released and I was just devastated to see what had happened to him, his personality had completely changed, he seemed dazed and couldn't quite do what he could before. And this just disturbed me, I mean it wasn't just that his life was devastated, but the country itself also lost someone with a lot of potential, it was a loss for his family and the community. So I was quite certain that I didn't want those incidents to repeat. I think that really pushed me to the path that I am on now.

You have been working in the human rights sector for almost 16 years. How has it transformed?

The changes have been quite distinct. Initially, in the early 90s, it was a lot of awareness raising, just about democracy and human rights and such. Then it soon moved into the area of reporting and monitoring, particularly when the conflict flared up.

And now?

Now we want to work towards getting justice and ensuring accountability. Of course these aren't easy demands to make. But we can begin with smaller cases that have been well documented, we're not even talking about going after big politicians and high profiled people. Let's just start with delivering justice to cases like Maina Sunwar. We have all the evidences, a whistle blower even leaked army documents proving that she was in fact arrested and killed in custody. The case got much international attention. But again, not a single disappearance case has reached the court. Impunity, social and economical injustice feed rebellion. Justice and accountability are preconditions to democracy and we have to make sure they prevail now.

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The Bhutanese refugee crisis is one of the biggest in South Asia. Over 110,000 of Bhutanese citizens, which accounts to approximately twenty percent of Bhutan's then total population, have been living in seven different refugee camps. And a recent decisions by the United States to grant asylum to a portion of the refugees has sparked off a new debate.

The story of Bhutanese refugees is tragic in every way. Unlike the refugees from countries like Sudan, Rwanda and earlier Yugoslavia, these people did not flee their country to avoid armed conflicts or civil war. The refugees from Bhutan were forced to leave their country because of the government's self-centered racist and ethnocentric policies. Bhutanese government responded with a negative attitude towards its citizens in southern Bhutan, where majority of these citizens, the Lhotshampas, speak Nepali language. Since 1990, Bhutanese refugees have been living in UNHCR funded camps in Nepal and India.

The conflict over the refugee problem is not new either. Dozens of rounds of multilateral talks between Nepali and Bhutanese government have failed, producing no consequences whatsoever. "Bhutan does not show any interest," said Teknath Rijal, Bhutanese refugee leader who has been constantly advocating for repatriation of the refugees. "They have tried to avoid the problem for too long now."

The Bhutanese and Nepali delegations have failed to reach any conclusions in fifteen rounds of talks in last 16 years. In the midst of rise in the conflict, the United States recently proposed to absorb 60,000 refugees over the period of three or four years. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Population Refugees and Migration Ellen Sauerbrey made the resettlement offer while attending the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR) Executive Committee meeting in Geneva.

"After 15 different governmental-level consultations between the two governments," Sauerbrey said at a briefing, "the United States has come forward and said we are willing to resettle a very significant part of this population."

But the Bhutanese are not solely



A young girl born and raised in the Khuduna Bari Camp spends a spring afternoon alongside older refugees in '05. Photo: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

happy about the offer. While many think that the offer is an opportunity for them to better their lives, other think that the offer jeopardizes the Bhutanese democratic movement.

According to Rijal, more than 30,000 refugees live in northern Indian states and Bhutanese government is planning to deport more Lhotshampas.

"The Bhutanese democratic movement should not be slaughtered in the name of resettlement," stresses Rijal. A group of forty refugees have started an indefinite sit-in protest in front of the UN House at Pulchowk last week demanding a durable solution to the protracted refugee crisis.

Refugees are upset because they feel that the resettlement proposal is being imposed upon them. Rijal has accused the United Nations High Commission for refugees and other foreign organizations of spending huge sums to create a rift among the refugees. "We appreciate the American initiative but the decision should be in hands of the refugees," he says. "They have stopped distributing rations and started playing politics."

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister KP Sharma Oli had made it clear that Nepal will hold

foreign minister level talks with Nepal next month to resolve the crisis. Oli has stressed the need for the respectful repatriation of the refugees, as he said that, Nepal will consider resettlement options only after Bhutan disagrees to take back its citizens.

TALKING POINTS:

Refugee Teknath Rijal has stayed a harsh critic of the Bhutanese indifference in solving the refugee crisis. Rijal, who currently chairs the Bhutanese Refugees Repatriation Committee, based in Kathmandu, has been continuously advocating for the respectful repatriation of the refugees. Aawaz's Anup Kaphle spoke to Rijal about his views on the issue and the current scenario and the future of the refugee problem.

What is your comment on the recent indefinite sit-ins started by some 40 refugees?

There is a division in response among the refugees about the recent developments in the refugee crisis. One group is open to the option of staying in Nepal or moving to America while another group strongly feels that they

should be allowed back into Bhutan. America's proposal to take in refugees has been welcomed by majority of refugees because in almost two decades, neither India nor Bhutan has shown any interest in solving this crisis. America has agreed to take refugees, but only 60,000 of them. There are 50,000 alone in India and Bhutan is preparing to banish more than 60,000 people. These people in the strike are anticipating some kind of response from America and the western governments relating to the situation of other refugees who will not be able to resettle abroad. They think resettlement of 60,000 in the US is not a durable solution; the only durable solution is repatriation.

Deputy Prime minister K P Oli recently met with Bhutanese Foreign Minister in Dhaka. Is Nepal showing eagerness for what has been called "fresh start" to resolve the refugee crisis?

Oli invited Bhutan to the table. But Bhutan refused the proposal and they never show interest. Nepal's efforts have gone in vain because of Bhutan's non-responsive attitude. Nepal is doing its best. They want to remove the refugee camps. They have also welcomed the

Nation

American initiative because they want to resolve the issue as soon as possible.

The refugees drafted a new constitution in July. What changes does it procure for the benefit of refugees themselves?

The refugees believed that the constitution made by Bhutanese government should be amended in certain criterion. With a motive to make the minority voice heard and change some of the clauses that affected lower class and poverty-stricken people, the constitution has been adjusted as such.

The Nepali government assured you of some immediate changes to break your hunger strike few months ago. What was the communication between you and the government?

The Nepali government supported my support and demonstration for immediate resolving of the crisis, in a written letter. They assured me that Nepal government would play a supportive role in solving the refugee crisis as soon as possible and help send the refugees back to Bhutan. They made numerous promises and assurances like this one in the past, but all in vain.

How do you analyze the role of UNCHR in solving the refugee problem?

The refugee problem has been lengthening for a while now. Bhutan does not want to sit in talks with UNHCR and the western powers continue to put Nepal in the rumor mill rather than applying pressure on India and Bhutan. In this context, UNHCR's tireless efforts to identify options to resettle the refugees abroad or send them back to Bhutan are deeply appreciated. They would like to dismantle the camps after solving the crisis but Bhutan shows no interest. If there is any progress made in this scene, it is because of UNHCR. We can't blame them for whatever is getting worse.

But we have perceived the resettling of refugees in America as a one-sided decision because we strongly feel that everyone should get to go home respectfully. There have been widespread reports that refugees have been threatened to have their relief packages discontinued and are forced to sign the resettlement forms under extreme circumstances. If this is true, then it is a sad story.

Don't you think resettlement will better the lives of these refugees?

Yes, to an extent. But like I said, it is



A refugee takes a quick break while spinning cotton at the Khuduna Bari Camp on a warm spring day in '05. Photo: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

not a durable solution. What about the fate of thousands of other refugees in India and those about to be kicked out of Bhutan?

You have been a strong critic of Indian government for its disinterest towards the refugee problem. Do you think they are not contributing in any kind to the development?

A couple of Indian delegations have visited Nepal and they have shown interest in supporting the repatriation process. We believe that the negotiations should not be limited to two parties only – India should join the talks with Nepal and Bhutan to solve this crisis. That's how the delegation feels too and they have expressed themselves in the Indian media. While on one hand, they show this enthusiasm and on the other hand the Indian government continues to remain speechless. Forget the rest, just the example that their diplomatic offices in Kathmandu refuse to allow refugee leaders to meet the officials or even accept their letters, clarify their intentions.

For us, there is no difference in Indian and Bhutanese attitude towards the refugees. They are playing games with the refugees' lives. We can understand India's politics from the fact that they allow refugees to enter Nepal through India but would not allow them to

return back to Bhutan through their country.

Do you feel Bhutanese refugee problem is not getting the kind of attention that Sudan or Rwanda received at a world level?

The Bhutanese refugee problem escalated in a time when Nepal's political situation was in no better shape either. The country was struggling in its own ways to stabilize their domestic problems. Nepalese were moving out of the country to take refuge or find jobs in India. Because of the political turmoil within the country and frequently changing government, Bhutan took advantage of this situation to avoid the problem. The world did not notice that. But we do appreciate their recent initiatives to come with options in resolving this problem.

Is there politics behind how were the refugee camps are situated?

Nepal did not take the situation seriously in the beginning. They are placed in the middle of the forest or in riverbanks, which in every way are dangerous to lives of people living in the camps. People die of being bitten by cobra snakes inside their huts, trees falling over their roofs, and coal [which they use to produce fire to cook] burning their houses. The laments and woes of these refugees cannot be exaggerated in any kind of writing.

Do you have a message to the US government, the UN or a specific lobbying group?

To all the people who adore democracy and human rights: we are determined to bring democracy to a nation where the monarch and his regime do not serve the interest of his subjects.

In a speech after winning the election in 2004, President Bush hinted that America would be committed in flourishing democracy around the world by removing tyrants from power. I was hoping that Bhutan would be in his list. I still have the hope that the world remembers Bhutan – a member of the United Nation that does not respect human right and freedom to its citizens. Jigme Sigme Wangchuk has committed a crime and he is being supported by the world by allowing resettling of the refugees rather than punishing the king. Bhutan's democratic movement should not fail because of America's interest in hastily solving the crisis.

Bhutan is a strong country – the people are able to flourish in their country, if given an opportunity. So, instead of taking a chunk of refugees to America, which would only be sweeping the dust under the rug, I hope that the world pressures on Bhutan to take in their people back. We should keep in mind those refugees who will not be able to benefit the resettlement package. Only then, it would be a long-term solution.

Entertainment

तयारी पर्वतिय चलचित्र महोत्सवको

Anushil Shrestha



Scenes from some of the many films and documentaries that will be screened in Kathmandu over the weekend.

७-११ डिसेम्बर मा हुने काठमाडौं अन्तराष्ट्रिय पर्वतिय चलचित्र महोत्सव २००६ मा यसपटक विश्वका २३ देशबाट आएका १३५ वृत्तचित्र तथा चलचित्रमा ५० वटा छानीएको छ। महोत्सव निर्देशक रम्यता लिम्बुका अनुसार आवेदन आएका नेपालीले बनाएका १२ मध्ये तीन वृत्तचित्र प्रदर्शनका लागि छानीएको छ। छानीएका वृत्तचित्रमा केशाड छेतेनको हामी कुनाका मान्छे, सुविना श्रेष्ठ र एलेक्स ग्यावेको द लाष्ट रेस र संगीता श्रेष्ठोभाको डान्सीड काठमाण्डौ रहेकाछन्।

धेरै पर्वतिय मुलुकहरूमा हुने गरेको यो महोत्सव हिमाल एशोशिएसनले सन् २००० बाट नेपालमा सुरु गरेको हो। हरेक दुई वर्षमा हुने सो महोत्सव यसपटक कमलपोखरी स्थित

रुसी सांस्कृतिक केन्द्रमा हुदैछ। महोत्सवमा सहभागी हुन यस पटक पनि धेरै विदेशी "पि(ल्म मेकर"हरु आउदैछन्। महोत्सवको प्रमुख उद्देश्य चलचित्र निर्माणको नयाँ-नयाँ शैली र विषय वस्तु वारे नेपालीहरूलाई जानकारी दिनु पनि रहेको आयोजनाका अध्यक्ष बसन्त थापा बताउछन्। भन्छन् "नेपाल र काठमाडौंलाई विश्वभर चिनाउने उपाय पनि हो यो। नेपालीले बनाएका फिल्म विदेशीले हेर्ने र विदेशी फिल्म मेकरहरूबाट उनीहरूको शिप सिक्ने अवसर पनि मान्न सकिन्छ।"

पाँचदिने यस महोत्सवमा छानीएका ५० चलचित्र बाहेक क्यानडाको वान्फ फिल्म फेस्टिबल २००५ मा देखाईएको उत्कृष्ट चलचित्रहरू समेत प्रदर्शन हुनेछन्। त्यस्तै द्वन्द्व

फ्लकाउने केहि चलचित्रहरूका साथै जापानीहरूले मनास्लु हिमाल चढेको ५० वर्षको अवसरमा विशेष प्रदर्शनी र कार्यक्रमपनि हुनेछ। भारतको सरकारी वृत्तचित्र निर्माण कार्यमा संलग्न नेपाली मुलका एनएस थापाले बनाएका चार पर्वतिय चलचित्रको प्रदर्शनीका साथै पर्वतिय भरियाहरूवारे छलफल, पुस्तक तथा तस्वीर प्रदर्शनी समेत हुने भएको छ।

नेपाल पर्यटन बोर्ड, चलचित्र विकास बोर्ड, काठमाडौं महानगर पालिकाका साथै केहि विदेशी संघ-संस्थाहरूको सहयोगमा सम्पन्न हुने महोत्सवमा २० लाख रुपैया खर्च हुने अनुमान गरिएको छ। दर्शकको बढ्दो चापका कारण ४/५ स्थानमा समेत एकै साथ न्युनतम शुल्क लिएर चलचित्र प्रदर्शन गर्ने तयारी भईरहेको छ

। यस महोत्सवमा छनौट भई प्रदर्शन हुने मध्ये दर्शक छनौटका आधारमा एक उत्कृष्ट चलचित्र छानीनेछ। हिमाल एशोशिएसनले सन् १९८७ बाट हरेक २ वर्षमा आयोजना गर्दै आएको दक्षिण एशियाली चलचित्र महोत्सवमा भने तीन वटा उत्कृष्ट चलचित्र छनौट गरी २५ सय, एक हजार र ५०० अमेरिकी डलर बराबरको नगद पुरस्कार समेत प्रदान गरिदै आएको छ। सो महोत्सवमा समावेश भई छानीएका १५ चलचित्रलाई ट्राभलिङ फिल्म साउथ एशिया भनेर विश्वका विभिन्न देशहरूमा वर्षभरी प्रदर्शन गरिदै आएको छ।

नेपालमा इब्सन महोत्सव

विश्व प्रसिद्ध नाटककार हेनरिक इब्सनको मृत्यु-शतवार्षिकीका अवसरमा राजधानीको गुरुकुलमा १५-२५ कात्तिकमा इब्सन नाटक महोत्सव २०६३ सम्पन्न भएको छ। रङ्गसंस्था आरोहणको आयोजनामा भएको दसदिने महोत्सवमा नेपाललगायत भारत, पाकिस्तान, बङ्गलादेश र नर्वेका रङ्गकर्मीहरूको सहभागि थिए।

एशियामा इब्सनका नाममा यस्तो महोत्सव बङ्गलादेश र पाकिस्तानले गरिसकेका छन्। आरोहणका निर्देशक तथा रङ्गकर्मी सुनील पोखरेलका अनुसार, महोत्सवमा दक्षिण एशियामा इब्सनका नाटकले पारेको प्रभावको समीक्षासँगै उनका चर्चित नाटकहरूको मञ्चन भएका थिए। तीन वर्षअघि इण्टरनेशनल थिएटर इन्स्टिच्युट (आईटीआई) ले नेपाल, भारत र बङ्गलादेशका रङ्गकर्मीको सहभागितामा र नेपालका रङ्ग संस्थाहरूको सक्रियतामा बाह्र वर्षअघि दश पूर्वी एशियाली देशहरूको सहभागितामा द वीग वीन नामक नाटक महोत्सव भएको थियो। तर, इब्सनको सम्झनामा विश्वभर भइरहेका महोत्सव-शृङ्खलाकै अर्को कडीका रूपमा नेपाली रङ्गमञ्चमा भइरहेको अन्तराष्ट्रिय स्तरको यो महोत्सव नेपालमा पहिलो हो।

सहभागी पाँच देशका रङ्गकर्मीहरूले इब्सनका दश नाटकहरू प्रस्तुत गरेका थिए। नेपालबाट सुनील पोखरेलको निर्देशनमा महान शिल्पी उद्घाटन नाटकको रूपमा रहेको थियो भने गुरुकुलकै पुतलीको घर तथा एम आर्ट थिएटरबाट वीरेन्द्र हमालको निर्देशनमा खुशीको मृत्यु मञ्चन भएका थिए। पुतलीको घर ले यसअघि एशियादेखि युरोपसम्म नाटक मञ्चनमा अलग्गै कीर्तिमान कायम गरेको छ। वीरेन्द्र हमालले भने इब्सनका तीन कवितालाई जोडेर नाटकको विषयवस्तु बनाए। भारतका चार नाट्य समूहले जन-शत्रु, देशद्रोही, प्रेतछायाँ र इब्सनलाई इब्सनसँग खाना खान निम्तो शीर्षकका इब्सनसम्बद्ध नाटकहरूको मञ्चन भएका थिए। मञ्चन भएका अन्य नाटकहरूमा नर्वेको जङ्गली हाँसको कथा, पाकिस्तानको दुश्मन र बङ्गलादेशको पुनरुत्थान रहेका छन्।

नाटकसँगै महोत्सवमा साङ्गीतिक समूह सुकर्मले इब्सनका नाटकमा आधारित साङ्गीतिक कार्यक्रम गरेको थियो भने इब्सन कार्यशालासँगै रङ्गकर्म सम्बन्धी चार पुस्तक सार्वजनिक गरिएका थिए। आईटीआई का नेपाल च्याप्टर अध्यक्ष तथा नाटककार अभि सुवेदी नेपाली रङ्गकर्मको इतिहासमा यस पटक भइरहेको महोत्सवले ठूलो



Photo: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

महत्त्व राखेको बताए।

आरोहणले आफ्नै प्रयासमा आयोजना गरेको महोत्सवका लागि नर्वेजियन दूतावास, बीपी कोइराला इण्डिया नेपाल फाउण्डेशन, एमएस नेपाल आदिले सहयोग गरेको थियो। गुरुकुलको रङ्ग

गमञ्चमा लगातार दश दिन ४५ नेपाली र ८७ विदेशी रङ्गकर्मीले अभिनय प्रस्तुत गरेका थिए। सुनील पोखरेल भन्छन्, "फरक-फरक देशका प्रस्तुति र शैली हेर्न पाउनु नेपाली रङ्गकर्मीहरूका लागि राम्रो अवसर पनि हो।"

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हडकड नेपाली कला मन्दिर तथा पीके कलेज, हडकड नेपाली विभागको संयोजनमा नेपाली विद्यार्थीमा नेपाली भाषा र साहित्यको अध्ययन र संस्कृतिप्रतिको अभिरुचि बढाउने उद्देश्यले ५ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको सभाहलमा महाकवि लक्ष्मीप्रसाद देवकोटाको जन्मजयन्ती मनाए। 'महाकवि लक्ष्मीप्रसाद देवकोटा जयन्ती २००६' कार्यक्रममा पीके कलेजका विद्यार्थीहरूले छात्रा सुप्रिया गुरुङद्वारा निर्देशनमा मुनामदनको एक अंश लाई गीति नाटकको रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरेका थिए। नेपाली कला मन्दिरका अध्यक्ष तथा हडकडमा नेपाली भाषालाई अध्यापन गर उउन संघर्षरत एकराज राईले 'जयन्ती कार्यक्रम : सन्दर्भ हडकडेली नेपाली समाजको स्थायित्व' का विषयमा बोल्दै देवकोटाको जीवनी तथा कृतीवारे प्रकाश पारेका थिए। हडकडका कवि साहित्यकार, शिक्षक, लेखक, पत्रकार तथा विभिन्न विद्यालयका विद्यार्थीहरूले कार्यक्रममा महाकवीको



जीवनी तथा आफ्ना सिर्जनाहरू प्रस्तुत गरेका थिए।

नया रूपमा द युनिटि



हडकड नेपाली कला मन्दिर तथा पीके कलेज, हडकड नेपाली विभागको संयोजनमा नेपाली विद्यार्थीमा नेपाली भाषा र साहित्यको अध्ययन र संस्कृतिप्रतिको अभिरुचि बढाउने उद्देश्यले ५ कार्तिकमा पीके कलेजको सभाहलमा महाकवि लक्ष्मीप्रसाद देवकोटाको जन्मजयन्ती मनाए। 'महाकवि लक्ष्मीप्रसाद देवकोटा जयन्ती २००६' कार्यक्रममा पीके कलेजका विद्यार्थीहरूले छात्रा सुप्रिया गुरुङद्वारा निर्देशनमा मुनामदनको एक अंश लाई गीति नाटकको रूपमा प्रस्तुत

गरेका थिए। नेपाली कला मन्दिरका अध्यक्ष तथा हडकडमा नेपाली भाषालाई अध्यापन गर उउन संघर्षरत एकराज राईले 'जयन्ती कार्यक्रम : सन्दर्भ हडकडेली नेपाली समाजको स्थायित्व' का विषयमा बोल्दै देवकोटाको जीवनी तथा कृतीवारे प्रकाश पारेका थिए। हडकडका कवि साहित्यकार, शिक्षक, लेखक, पत्रकार तथा विभिन्न विद्यालयका विद्यार्थीहरूले कार्यक्रममा महाकवीको जीवनी तथा आफ्ना सिर्जनाहरू प्रस्तुत गरेका थिए।

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एक समयमा आफ्नै परिवारका लागि पनि बोझ बनेका नरेशलाल आज सबैका प्रिय बनेका छन्। सानै देखि लागु औषध दुर्व्यसनको लतमा फँसेका उनको रगतमा एचआईभी पोजेटीभ भएपछि उनी आफ्नै परिवार भीत्र तिरस्कृत जस्तै भएका थिए तर आज त्यस्तो छैन।

०५४ सालदेखि एचआईभीसंग लड्दै आएका ३६ वर्षीय नरेशलालले अहिले बाकी जीवन खुशी साथ विताई रहेका मात्र छैनन्, समाजउपयोगी काम गरेर अरुको निरश जिवनमा समेत खुशीयाली ल्याएका छन्। जिवनको अन्त्य र मृत्युको पर्याय मानीने एचआईभी लागेपछि जिवनका सबै सपना र चाहना अन्त्य हुन्छन् भन्ने धेरैको सोचाई छ। तर, नरेशले यस्तो सोचाई भएका एचआईभी संक्रमितहरूलाई एकत्रित गरी मृत्युको आतंक भित्र सुन्दर जीवनको खोजी गरिरहेका छन्। २०५८ सालमा पुर्वाञ्चल क्षेत्रमै पहिलो पटक आफुलाई एचआईभी संक्रमित घोषणा गर्दै संक्रमितहरूको हक अधिकारको पक्षमा आवाज उठाउँदै सार्वजनिक भएका नरेश भन्छन् “सुरुमा संक्रमित भन्दा मानीसहर टाढा भाग्थे अहिले, माया र सम्मान गर्छन्।” उनको प्रयासबाट अहिले पुर्वाञ्चल भरी नै संक्रमितहरू संगठित बन्न पुगेका छन्।

हेटौंडा घर भएपनि पुर्वाञ्चलको धरानमा रहेर संक्रमितहरूको समुह स्थापना गरी त्रि। न्यशील नरेशको जिवनलाई यो रूपमा ल्याउनमा भने उनकै श्रीमती अञ्जनाको ठुलो हात छ। श्रीमानको जिवन बर्बाद भएको देख्न नसकेर उनले ०५७ सालमा नरेशलाई धरानमा पुनर्जीवन केन्द्रद्वारा सञ्चालित आवासीय उपचार केन्द्रमा ल्याएकी थिईन्। केन्द्रमा लामो समय रहेपछि नरेशले साँच्चै नयाँ जिवन पाए भने समाजमा हेपाहा प्रवृत्ति विरुद्ध उनी खुलेरै लागे। त्यसपछि नरेशले आफूजस्तै एचआईभी संक्रमितहरूसँग मिलेर २०५८, कार्तिकमा धरान पोजेटीभ नामक संस्था खोले। नरेश विगत ५ वर्ष देखि एचआईभीको बारेमा अरुलाई परामर्श दिँदै हिँडिरहेका छन्।

२०४७ सालमै विवाह गरेका नरेश र अञ्जनाका छोरी एलिसा र छोरा नीलेस छन्। १५ वर्षीया एलिसा र ८ वर्षीय नीलेस मावलीमा छन्। नरेशमा एचआईभी भेटिएपछि अञ्जनाले पनि आफ्नो रगत परीक्षण गरीन तर, उनमा एचआईभी भेटिएन। एचआईभी पोजेटीभ भएपछि सुरुवाती दिनमा परिवार र समाजमा टिकन निक्कै संघर्ष गर्नु परे पनि अहिले नरेशले कसैको तिरस्कार र दुर्व्यवहार सहनु परेको छैन। छरछिमेक सबैले उनलाई घृणा हैन, माया र सहयोग नै गर्छन्। नरेशको कथा र संघर्षको बारेमा विजयपुर मिडिया ग्रुप, धरानले किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुङ पुनर्जीवन केन्द्रसंग मीलेर नरेशलालको पुनर्जीवन नामक एक वृत्तचित्र पनि निर्माण गरेको छ।

नरेशकै जस्तो कथा धरानका गणेश राईको पनि छ। नरेश पछि पुर्वाञ्चलमा आफुलाई संक्रमित भएको कुरा सार्वजनिक गर्ने गणेशलाई सुईबाट लागुपदार्थ लिदा ५ वर्ष अघि एचआईभी सरेको थियो। नशाका लागि भित्तीको पुच्छर समेत डढाएर खाएका गणेश एचआईभीको शिकार भएपछि पनि निराश भएनन्। वरु अरु मानीसहर आफू जस्तै कुलतमा फँसेर एचआईभीको शिकार नहुन भनेर उनि समाजमा चेतना छर्न सक्रिय भए। धरान पोजेटीभका संस्थापक सचिव रहेका गणेश पुनर्जीवन केन्द्र, धरान मार्फत एचआईभी विरुद्धको अभियानमा लागेका उनी श्रीमती र सन्तानका साथ सामान्य जिवनयापन गरिरहेका छन्। तन्नेरी अवस्थामा सचेत हुन नसके कुलतमा फसेर जिवन बर्बाद हुने भएकाले स्कुल पढ्दै गरेकाहरूमा पर्याप्त चेतना पुऱ्याउनु पर्ने उनी बताउँछन्। आफुमा एचआईभी भएपनि अहिले निराश र हतास हुन छाडेको बताउँदै उनी भन्छन् “अब जति दिन बाँचिन्छ, सन्तोषका साथ बाँच्छु र अरुलाई चेतना छर्नमै समय खर्चिन्छु।”

रेडियोमा संक्रमितका आवाज

समाजमा निराश जिवन विताईरहेका एचआईभी संक्रमितहरूले अरु मानीस सरह काम गर्न सक्छन् भनेर धेरैले पत्याउँदैनन्। तर, विजयपुर मिडिया ग्रुप, धरानद्वारा सञ्चालित नयाँ गोरेटो नामक रेडियो कार्यक्रमका प्रस्तोता सिर्जना लिम्बू र मोहन सुनुवार उदाहरणका रूपमा देखिए। एक्सन एड, पुनर्जीवन केन्द्र, धरान, ईटहरी र दमक नगरपालिकाको सहयोगमा विजयपुर मिडिया ग्रुपले तयार पारेको यो रेडियो कार्यक्रममा एचआईभी संक्रमितहरूले आफ्ना समस्या, कथा ब्याथका साथै समाजमा एचआईभी/एडस विरुद्ध चेतना छर्ने काम गरेका थिए।

०६० सालमा सुरुभई दुई वर्ष सम्म लगातार सप्तकोशी एफ एम, ईटहरी, विराटनगर र कोशी एफएम विराटनगरबाट साप्ताहिक रूपमा प्रसारण भएको नयाँ गोरेटो एचआईभी संक्रमितहरूले आफै सञ्चालन गरेको दक्षिण एसियाकै पहिलो रेडियो कार्यक्रमा भएको पुनर्जीवन केन्द्रका निर्देशक कमल तिगेला बताउँछन्। समाजमा यस कार्यक्रमले पारेको सकारात्मक प्रभावका कारण केहि समय देखि स्थगीत रहेको यो कार्यक्रमलाई फेरी निरन्तरता दिन लागिएको तिगेलाले बताए। धरानका युवा पत्रकारहरूले विजयपुर मिडिया ग्रुप स्थापना गरी स्वयंसेवीको रूपमा एचआईभी संक्रमितहरूलाई रेडियोमा बोल्ने, अन्तरवार्ता लिने, स्क्रिप्ट लेख्ने प्रशिक्षण दिएर कार्यक्रम एत्पादन गर्ने गरेका थिए। ग्रुपका अध्यक्ष यात्रा थुलुङ समाज प्रतिको दायित्वका कारण पनि एचआईभी/एडस विरुद्ध नयाँ ढङ्गले



Photos: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

आफुहरू लागेको बताउँछन्। दुई वर्ष कार्यक्रम उत्पादन गर्दा हामीले आफ्नो भन्दा समाजको फाईदामा ध्यान दिएको बताउँदै उनी भन्छन् “आफुलाई एचआईभी भएको कुरा समाजबाट तिरस्कृत हुने डरले भन्न नसक्ने संक्रमितहरू रेडियो प्रस्तोताका रूपमा आउनु र समाजबाट सम्मानित हुनुले हामी उत्साहित भएका छौं।” कार्यक्रमका प्रस्तोता संक्रमितहरूलाई भने पुनर्जीवन केन्द्रले मासीक रूपमा पारिश्रमीकको ब्यावस्था समेत गरेको थियो जसबाट उनीहरूले आर्थिक सहयोग पाएका थिए।

रेडियो कार्यक्रमका प्रस्तोता सिर्जनालाई आफ्नै लागु औषधका दुर्व्यसनी श्रीमानबाट एचआईभी सरेको थियो। श्रीमानले बेलैमा आफ्नो रोगको बारेमा श्रीमतीलाई बताएर सुरक्षित बन्न नसकेका कारण संक्रमित बनेकी सिर्जना आफुलाई एचआईभी भएको थाहा पाएपछि जिउदा लाश सरह भएकी थिईन्। भन्छन् “उसले बेलैमा भनेको भए म सतर्क हुन्थेँ, तर नहुनु

भई हाल्यो अब अरु श्रीमानले ध्यान दिउन भन्ने चाहन्छु।” आफू संक्रमित भएपनि रेडियोमा काम पाएपछि भने आफ्नो र आफूजस्तै संक्रमितहरूको कथा-ब्याथा सुनाएर अरुमा चेतना छर्ने पाएकोमा सिर्जना खुशी छिन।

नयाँ गोरेटो का अर्का प्रस्तोता मोहन सुनुवार लाई भने साझा सुई प्रयोग गरेर लागु औषध सेवन गर्दा साथीबाट एचआईभी सरेको थियो। रेडियोमा आफै प्रस्तोताको रूपमा कार्यक्रम सञ्चालन गर्ने कुरा कल्पनामा पनि नसोचेको बताउने मोहन भन्छन् “रेडियोमा बोल्न थालेपछि मेरो जिवनमा ठुलो परिवर्तन आएको छ। कुना-काप्चाका गाउँघर सम्मका मानीसमा चेतना छर्ने पाउँदा खुशी लागेको छ।” रेडियो प्रस्तोता भएपछि मोहन र सिर्जनाले आफू नाममा गाउँ, सहरका धेरै स्रोताबाट पत्रहरू पाएका थिए। उनीहरू एचआईभी/एडस विरुद्धका विद्यालय र विभिन्न संस्थाले गर्ने कार्यक्रमहरूमा अतिथीका रूपमा समेत निम्त्याईने गरेका छन्।

किरात प्रदेशमा किचलो

Dambar Krishna Shrestha

पश्चिममा वर्गीय संघर्षको नारा दिएर सफल भएका माओवादीलाई पूर्वमा प्रभुत्व जाउन पहिल्यैदेखि “जातीय” नारा चर्काउँदै अएको विद्रोही राई-लिम्बूहरूलाई साथ लिन परेको थियो। जातीय स्वायत्तता र आत्मनिर्णयको अधिकार अर्थात् छुट्टै किराँत राज्यको सपना देखाएर माओवादीले खम्बूवान राष्ट्रिय मोर्चा र लिम्बूवान राष्ट्रिय मुक्ति मोर्चा हात लिन सफल भए। तर अहिले यही क्षेत्रमा राई र लिम्बू स्वायत्तताका लागि किचलो खडा भएको छ।

लिम्बूहरूको जातीय संस्था ‘किराँत याक्थुड चुम्लुङ’ को २५-२८ जेठमा कापामा सम्पन्न छैटौँ राष्ट्रिय महाधिवेशनले लिम्बूहरूले पूर्वमा छुट्टै स्वायत्त लिम्बूवान प्रदेश बनाउने माग गरेलगत्तै माओवादीका केन्द्रीय सदस्य तथा किराँत प्रदेश प्रमुख गोपाल खम्बू त्यसको विरुद्धमा देखिए। लगत्तै महिमा साप्ताहिकमा दिएको अन्तर्वार्तामा खम्बूले भने “सीआइडी र जर्नेलहरूले लिम्बूवानको कुरा उठाइरहेका छन्।”

राजधानीमा १८ असारमा माओवादीको किराँत राष्ट्रिय मुक्ति मोर्चा उपत्यका विशेष समिति तिले आयोजना गरेको भेलामा खम्बूले लिम्बूहरू किराँत प्रदेशमै अटाउने बताए। आफूहरूको वर्षौँ संघर्ष र बलिदानीबाट किराँत प्रदेश स्थापना भइसकेकोले छुट्टै लिम्बूवानको माग गर्नुअघि सोचनुपर्ने भनाइ उनको थियो। लिम्बूवान प्रदेशको माग गर्ने चुम्लुङले भने पूर्वका लिम्बू र खम्बू जनजातिले दाबी गर्दै आएका भूभागलाई मिलाएर सिङ्गे पूर्वी नेपाललाई किराँत स्वायत्त प्रदेश बनाउने माओवादीको योजनामा असहमति जनाएका छन्। ८ भदौमा चुम्लुङ विरुद्ध माओवादी नेता रामबहादुर थापा “बादल” पनि देखिएका छन्। धरानमा किराँत राष्ट्रिय मुक्ति मोर्चाको दोस्रो राष्ट्रिय सम्मेलनको उद्घाटन गर्दै बादलले पछिल्लो समयमा डलर खेती गर्ने विदेशी संस्था र राजतन्त्र पक्षधरले लिम्बूवान र खम्बूवानमा फुट ल्याउन खोजिरहेको आरोप लगाए।

चुम्लुङका अध्यक्ष अर्जुन लिम्बू माओवादी नेताहरूले गैर जिम्मेवार कुरा गर्दै र चुम्लुङको निर्णयको विरोधका नाममा अनेकौँ आरोप लगाउँदै हिँडेकोले माओवादी विरुद्ध नै लाग्नुपर्ने स्थिति आउनसक्ने बताउँछन्। भन्छन्, “खम्बूलाई पनि भेटेर हामीले त्यसरी गैरजिम्मेवार कुरा गर्दै नहिँड्नुस् भनिसकेका छौँ। तर अहिले बादलले समेत डलरको खेती गर्नेहरूले लिम्बूवानको कुरा उठाएर फुट ल्याउन खोजेको आरोप लगाएछन्। माओवादी जस्तो पार्टीका नेताहरूले यसरी विना प्रमाण लाञ्छना लगाउँदै हिँड्नु ठीक हैन।” चुम्लुङ जस्तो सामाजिक संगठनलाई बादल जस्तो जिम्मेवार नेताले लाञ्छना लगाएर समग्र लिम्बू समुदायको चित्त दुःखाएको उनले बताए। भने “हामीले लिम्बूवान खोज्दा माओवादीलाई के आघात पुग्यो? के अब लिम्बूवान स्वायत्तताका

लागि फेरि सशस्त्र युद्धमा जानुपर्ने?”

अहिले चुम्लुङ छुट्टै प्रदेशको निम्ति माओवादीलगायत अन्य राजनीतिक दल र नागरिक समाजसँग लविडमा व्यस्त छ। सो क्रममा किराँत राष्ट्रिय मुक्ति मोर्चाका अध्यक्ष भक्तराज कन्दडवा र सचिव श्री जवेगुसँग समेत कुरा भएको र अनौपचारिक कुरामा उनीहरूले लिम्बू समुदायको जनभावना विपरित आफूहरू नजाने बताएको लिम्बू बताउँछन्। राज्य पुनर्संरचनामा जाने भएपछि चुम्लुङले लिम्बूवान स्वायत्तताको कुरा बाहिर ल्याए पनि सुषुप्त रूपमा यो माग पहिलेदेखि नै गर्दै आएको थियो। लिम्बूहरूको आफ्नै भाषा, लिपि, संस्कृति भएकाले स्वायत्त हुनसक्ने अर्जुन लिम्बू बताउँछन्। भन्छन्, “राज्य नै टुक्रन सक्ने आत्मनिर्णयको अधिकार स्वीकार्छौँ भन्ने माओवादी नेताहरू चुम्लुङको घोषणाले किन तर्सिएका हुन्? हामीले राज्य टुक्र्याउँछौँ त भनेका छैनौँ नि!”

माओवादीले जनयुद्धताका प्रयोग गरेका जाति मोर्चाहरूलाई खुशी पार्न ८ जातीय स्वायत्त राज्य घोषणा गर्ने क्रममा पूर्वी क्षेत्रका राई र लिम्बूका लागि किराँत स्वायत्त प्रदेश नामकरण गरेको थियो। माओवादीले जातीय स्वायत्तताको विषयलाई मूलधारमा ल्याएपनि मोर्चाले माओवादीलाई र माओवादीले मोर्चालाई एकअर्काको स्वार्थमा प्रयोग गर्दै आएको पाइन्छ। तर, जातीय मोर्चामार्फत् माओवादीमा मिसिएकाहरूले जातीय कुरा छाड्न थालेको जनजाति नेता कृष्ण भट्टचन बताउँछन्। भन्छन्, “तर पहिले जातीय कुरा गर्ने गोपाल खम्बूहरू अहिले माओवादीको वर्गीय भाषा बोल्न थालेका छन्। उनीहरूलाई पनि पहिले कांग्रेसले नारदमुनि थुलुङ, रामप्रसाद राईलाई जस्तै माओवादीले पाखा नलगाउला भन्न सकिन्न।”

माओवादी नेता देव गुरुङ भने किराँत प्रदेश माओवादीको प्रस्तावना मात्र भएकाले सधैं एउटै भइरहनुपर्छ भन्ने नभएको बताउँछन्। भन्छन्, “किराँत प्रदेशबाट लिम्बूवान अलग हुनै सक्दैन भन्ने छैन। छलफल र सहमतिमा निर्णय लिन सकिन्छ।” जातीय मोर्चाहरू पूर्ण रूपमा राज्यसत्ता स्थापना भएपछि विलय हुने बताउँदै गुरुङले भने “राज्य नै विलय भएर नयाँ स्वायत्त राज्य बनेपछि मोर्चाहरू आफैँ विघटन हुन्छ।”

उता चुम्लुङ जस्तै राईहरूको सामाजिक संस्था किराँत राई यायोख्खाले पनि लिम्बूवान जस्तै खम्बूवान स्वायत्तताको माग राख्ने भएको छ। यायोख्खाको आगामी मंसिरमा हुने राष्ट्रिय महाधिवेशनमा सो घोषणाका लागि छलफल भइरहेको बताइएको छ। चुम्लुङ जस्तै यायोख्खाको पनि माओवादीसँग कुनै प्रकारको सम्बन्ध छैन।

०५८ सालको जनगणना अनुसार खम्बूवान क्षेत्रमा कुल जनसंख्या १२४२४४६ मध्ये राईहरू



Photo: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

३१२८८३ रहेका छन् जुन २५.१८ प्रतिशत हुन आउँछ। लिम्बूवान क्षेत्रमा कुल जनसंख्या ७१४४५२ मध्ये लिम्बूहरूको जनसंख्या १८४८८१ रहेको छ जुन २५.८७ प्रतिशत रहन आउँछ। दुवै क्षेत्रमा अन्य सबै जातजातिको बसोबास रहँदै आएको छ। जनगणना अनुसार देशभरका लिम्बू जातिको संख्या भने ३ लाख ५८ हजार ३७८ जना छ।

खम्बू, लिम्बू: मोर्चाहरू कसरी बने

२०४६ सालको जन आन्दोलनपछि राजनीतिक दलहरू दलमाथिको प्रतिबन्ध हटेकोमा खुशियाली मनाउन व्यस्त भएका बेला लिम्बूवान मुक्तिमोर्चाले भने स्वायत्तताको मागलाई तीव्र पार्‍यो। १२ वैशाख २०४७ मा सो मोर्चाका अध्यक्ष वीर नेम्वाङले “राजाबाट फुट्टै लिम्बूवान स्वायत्तताको घोषणा हुनुपर्छ” भन्दै पर्चा समेत निकालेका थिए। त्यसबेला लिम्बूवान मुक्ति मोर्चाले उठाएका मागप्रति सरकारले चासो देखाएन। त्यसमाथि जातीय स्वायत्तताको चर्को नारा दिँदै पर्चा छर्नेमा एकलो वीर नेम्वाङ मात्र देखिए। धेरै जसो लिम्बूहरूले नै साम्प्रदायिक कुरा उठाउने भनेर नेम्वाङलाई साथ दिएनन्। विगत २० वर्षदेखि जातीय स्वायत्तताको माग गर्दै आएका नेम्वाङको माग र आन्दोलन आज पनि

पर्चा र विज्ञप्तिमै सीमित छ।

बहुदलीय व्यवस्थाको स्थापना भएलगत्तै त्यसअघिदेखि नै कार्यरत १५ वटा जातीय सङ्गठनहरूले काठमाडौँमा २२ वैशाख ०४७ मा बैठक बसी छाता सङ्गठन नेपाल जनजाती महासंघ को गठन गरेको थियो। यो महासंघ एक अराजनीतिक राष्ट्रिय संगठनका रूपमा स्थापित थियो। यसको भोलिपल्टै २३ वैशाख ०४७ मा काठमाडौँमै पहिलो जातीय मुक्ति आन्दोलनकारि राजनीतिक संस्थाको रूपमा “नेपाल राष्ट्रिय जनमुक्ति मोर्चा” को स्थापना भएको थियो। २०४८ सालको आमनिर्वाचनमा राष्ट्रिय जनमुक्ति पार्टी चुनावमा पराजित भयो। साम्प्रदायिक कुरा उठाउने, स्वायत्त राज्यको माग गर्ने राजनीतिक संगठनहरूले चुनाव लड्न नपाउने भनी राजनीतिक प्रतिबन्ध लगाएपछि खम्बूवान राष्ट्रिय मोर्चा (खरामो) जस्ता संगठन निर्माण गरी गोपाल खम्बूहरू हिंसात्मक आन्दोलनमा उत्रिए।

खम्बूको नेतृत्वमा जातीय स्वायत्तता र आत्मनिर्णयको अधिकारको माग गर्दै गठित खम्बूवान राष्ट्रिय मोर्चा (खरामो) १८ महिना अघि शुरु भएको नेकपा माओवादीको विद्रोहको आलोचनात्मक समर्थन गर्दै ७ साउन ०५४ मा रेडिकल एक्सन को नाममा भोजपुरको र सोलुखुम्बुको संस्कृत विद्यालयमा बम प्रहार गरी

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त्यस्तै २० पुस २०५६ मा लिम्बुवान अध्ययन मञ्चहुँदै ०५७ सालमा लिम्बुवान राष्ट्रिय मोर्चा जातीय स्वायत्त शासन र आत्मनिर्णयको अधिकारको माग गर्दै स्थापना भएको थियो। वामपन्थी राजनीतिबाट आएका ८० वर्षीय चन्द्रमान कन्दुवाको सल्लाहमा गठन भई ६० वर्षीय भक्तराज कन्दुवाले नेतृत्व गरेको सो मोर्चा खरामोसँग एकीकृत भई किराँत राष्ट्रिय मोर्चा (किरामो) का रूपमा नेकपा माओवादीसँग सहकार्य गर्दै युद्धमा समेत सामेल भयो।

माओवादी साठगाठ

देशका अरु भागमा आफैं अन्तर्गत जातीय समुदायहरूलाई संगठित गरेको भएपनि पूर्वमा र वायव्यत र आत्मनिर्णयको अधिकारको माग गर्दै आएका किराँत वर्कस पार्टी (खम्बुवान राष्ट्रिय मोर्चा) र लिम्बुवान मुक्ति मोर्चाले किराँत र राष्ट्रिय मोर्चा (किरामो) का रूपमा एकीकृत भई माओवादीसँग सहकार्य गर्दै आएको हो।

३२ असारदेखि २ साउन ०६० मा पाँचथरको याङनाममा भएको प्रथम एकता अधिवेशनले माओवादीका अध्यक्ष प्रचण्ड र डा. बाबुराम भट्टराईको उपस्थितिमा दुई जातीय पार्टीलाई पुनः एकीकृत गरिएको थियो। सो अधिवेशनले सम्पूर्ण किराँत प्रदेशका प्रमुख अर्थात् भूमिगत किराँत र राष्ट्रिय मोर्चाका अध्यक्षमा भक्तराज कन्दुवा (६१) लाई चयन गरेको थियो। कन्दुवा माओवादीको क्रान्तिकारी जनपरिषदका सदस्य तथा तेह्रथुम जिल्ला 'जनसरकार' प्रमुख पनि रहेका छन्।

०५८ असोजमा माओवादीकै पहलमा यी



Photo: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

दुवै जातीय मोर्चा किरामोका रूपमा एक भई माओवादीसँग सहकार्य गर्दै आएकोमा माओवादीसँग जातीय र नीतिगत मतभेदका कारण गोपाल खम्बु

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स्वायत्त 'जनसरकार' गठन गरी खम्बुलाई किराँत प्रदेशको प्रमुख तथा 'क्रान्तिकारी जनपरिषद' का सदस्य हुँदै केन्द्रीय सदस्यसम्म बनाएको छ।

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Op-Ed

A Red Nepal and a Crimson South Asia

SIDDHARTHA THAPA

Although war in one of the world's poorest countries makes little sense, the resurgence of leftist ideological warfare that epochs a quasi democracy dictated by the proletariat can only be seen to undermine the foundations of democracy in South Asia.

One of the dynamics of the late 20th century and early 21st century politics has been the import of democracy in third world countries. However, democracy (in the purest, most liberal sense) has succeeded in only a handful of countries around the world. The reasons behind democratic failure can only be evaluated by reviewing historical, social and economic factors.

Democracy is not indigenous to South Asia, however democratic principles have prevailed in South Asian societies for a very long time. One the most important facets of a maturing democracy is the connection between public reasoning and development of democracy. As Nobel economist Amritya Sen argues:

Public reasoning includes the opportunity for citizens to participate in political discussions and to influence public choice. Ballot can be seen as only one of the ways – albeit a very important way – to make public discussion effective, when the opportunity to vote is combined with the opportunity to speak and listen, without fear. The reach – and effectiveness- of voting depend critically on the opportunity for open public discussion.

In line with Sen's assessment of democratic evolution, the Nepali Maoists waged their people's war primarily aiming to re-engineer the roots of the foundation of an evolving democracy. Naxalites and other leftist rebel outfits in India have waged a bloody war aiming to topple the widely accepted form of democratic governance. The fact that India's successful absorption of democracy has indeed had a remarkable impact in South Asia, the resurgence of a leftist movement will only work as catalyst to dismantle the very foundation of democracy in South Asia.

The notion that democracy can only flourish if there is an opportunity for political discussions in (and the opportunity to speak and listen), without fear, is the most important dimension with which to scrutinize the leftist notion of democracy. Silencing of opinion makers through harmful

means, assassination of opposition leaders, forceful abductions of unarmed civilians, are only a few examples of the atrocities of leftists movement in South Asia (and Nepal in particular). A violent movement that stifles the peaceful process of public discussion (or dissent) does not qualify as progressive democratic evolution (the murder of Gansesh Chilwal and his deputy after they burnt effigies of the Maoist leader is an excellent example).

From a different angle, the Hindu caste system is an elaborate example of systematic disparities. Unfortunately, secularization has only worked to isolate the many minority groups within Hinduism – a phenomenon that Fareed Zakaria refers to as “the tyranny of the minority over the will of the majority.” Other religions have reaped the benefit

consists of one faction that fought and lost in elections and another to which the notion of the ballot is completely foreign.

Vital state infrastructure that had finally made its way into rural Nepal (electricity, telephone, education and road building) have succumbed to premature “deaths” with the rural population deprived of the fruits of democratic development. Consider for example, that the education system in areas such as Rukkum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Salyan has been virtually replaced by systematic indoctrination of the Maoist variety which does not really substitute for education as the rest of the world knows it. An entire generation of Nepalese have grown up in the hinterland, with knowledge of guerilla warfare and Maoist doctrine,



Photo: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

of the quota system and other privileges offered by governments with an aim to foster an inclusive society. But these benefits come at the expense of groups within the majority which may not align 100% with the majority views.

The leftist movements in South Asia have primarily concerted their effort to exploit areas of disparities – a viable political platform to ascend power but not necessarily sufficient to retain power. Likewise, the Maoists of Nepal, evoked the idea of ‘self determination’ for the mobilization of masses in their favor. However, such a fallacy can only instigate ethnic and communal violence that will eventually lead to the disintegration of the nation state.

Economic disparity has led to successive convulsions and the resurgence of leftist movements in South Asia. The ruthless leftist movements in South Asia, especially the Maoists of Nepal, have worked strenuously to dismantle the economic development achieved after introduction of democracy in 1990 – basically, the Maoist organization today

but no practical knowledge with which to make a living.

Economic autonomy, a market based on competitive consumer choices and minimalist government regulation are the cornerstones of an emerging democratic economy. However, leftist ideology (by its very ethos) is designed to dismantle the cornerstones of democracy and challenge economic development through economic stagnation. The intentional deceleration of free market economic progress is part and parcel with both Maoist rhetoric and Maoist tactics designed to bring the state to its knees.

The Maoists' have systematically uprooted local economies and devastated the supply of essential commodities. The lack of government response provided the Maoist guerillas the leverage and the audacity to run propaganda campaigns throughout rural Nepal, blaming the government for the poor state of the economy (while actively partaking in acts designed to run the economy into the ground).

The political implications of a possible Maoist victory in Nepal will

inevitably alter the dynamics of South Asian politics. More importantly, democratic ideals and institutions will be challenged. Nepal will serve as the core state for leftist ideologues throughout South Asia and the world.

Although the BJP and Congress in India will continue to sustain their popular support through the Northern and Mid-Western states, states plagued with Naxalites and violent communist movements will continue to gain momentum posing serious threats to Indian national security.

As nation states throughout South Asia, particularly India, fails to acknowledge the seriousness of the threat posed by a resurgent leftist movement, democracy in South Asia will fall victim to a negligent counter insurgency policy.

Ancient social structures that have so far provided moral guidelines through which societies across South Asia have evolved harmoniously will come under increasing threat from a resurgent leftist movement. The idea of ‘self determination’, as envisioned by the Maoists' in Nepal, aims primarily to warn India about the possible consequences that the Maoist can impose by destabilizing India's security.

Minority groups (Kashmir, Assam, Telganga) which have for long battled with the Federal government in Delhi will see in a Nepal, a benchmarking model through which a violent movement succeeds in addressing the needs of minority groups.

As India has sustained an economic growth of over 8% for the last six years, a leftist resurgence in South Asia will cripple markets for further economic growth.

Therefore, an immediate reversal in policy at the South Block and Race Course Road is required to contain the imminent threat posed by a leftist resurgence. The ultimate aim of leftist policies are to replace democratic institutions with proletariat setups, dictated by COMPOSA and PWG (amalgamations of South Asian leftist forces). The end result would be the erection of the Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) – a red zone that will stand against any and every notion of liberal democracy and market based economics as we know them today.

Siddhartha Thapa is a Political Science student in New York and an activist for the Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP).

Politics

Coalition government to be formed soon

ANUP KAPHLE

It was a decision possibly every Nepalese were waiting for to be made. A decade-long armed insurgency has finally come to an end after Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and the Maoist leader Prachanda signed the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) in a historic ceremony at Birendra International Convention Hall on November 21, 2006. The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists and the seven political parties had reached an agreement, two weeks earlier, on both political and arms management issues. Baburam Bhattarai, the notorious Maoist genius and second-in-command, has called the deal "the beginning of the end of monarchy."

According to the preface to the accord, both parties – the government as well as the Maoists – are to strictly adhere to the provisions of the previous agreements and the desires of the Nepali people.

The CPA includes ten special provisions on issues such as human rights, civil and political rights, socio-economic transformation and most important of all, arms and army management. On November 7, the leaders of the seven party alliance (SPA) and representatives of the Maoists had signed a six point agreement, which includes a settlement to all litigious issues about the country's political process and either side's weapons management.

In an interview with BBC on November 9, Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who goes by no de guerre Prachanda said, "Our experience has shown that we could not achieve our goals through armed revolution so we have chosen the path of negotiation and formed an alliance with the political parties."

With the negotiation, the Maoist guerillas and will be confined to seven military billets and 21 sub-divisions and their arms will be locked in designated billets only. Although the Maoist leaders will still have access to those locks, United Nations will have squads on duty on all seven stations, keeping a watchful eye through closed circuit camera and electronic sensor device. The Nepalese army has also agreed to leave equal number of arms and ammunition under U.N supervision.

About 35,000 guerilla fighters will be placed in 21 camps in seven of those designated billets while the members

of the Nepalese Army are supposed to stay in their barracks. Any kind of movement from either side will be monitored by a United Nations squad.

The CPA also put an end to the operation of a number of parallel institutions such as the people's court, people's liberation army and tax collection system that the Maoists conducted under their so called "people's government" in some of the remote districts in the country.

One of the most awaited decisions about the fate of monarchy in Nepal will be decided after the first meeting of the constitution assembly. The new coalition has agreed to nationalize all properties inherited by King Gyanendra through throne, which will be put in a trust for public welfare. King Gyanendra and the royal family own several businesses within the country including about 34,000 ropanies of land and some tea gardens. Although a major part of this royal property will be nationalized, his private property will still remain with him.

Maoist spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara has warned the government to remain careful against a coup attempt because the monarchy could take regressive steps against the carelessness of the political parties.

"The relation of the king with the Nepalese Army is not going to break soon with superficial reforms," he said in a press briefing in Pokhara.

The meeting has also decided to form a coalition government, headed by Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala, before December 1. However, a decision to build a new government will not be made until the guerillas are confined to their designated cantonments and both the Maoists and the SPA sign a Comprehensive Peace Accord that includes a permanent ceasefire agreement, a code of conduct and human rights accord, by November 16.

The interim government is hoped to have 23 members – five berths each for the Nepali Congress (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and the Maoists, and the remaining would go to other political parties. The total number of lawmakers in the interim parliament will be 330. NC, UML, NC (Democratic), Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Peoples' Front Nepal (PFN), Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP)

and Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP-both), will have their respective berths in the existing parliament. NC has 75 (including Upper House), UML 73, RPP 8, PFN

5, NWPP 1 and NSP 5 seats in the current parliament. Maoists will get 73 seats in the interim parliament. Similarly, the remaining 48 extra seats will be divided among eight parties, including Maoists, civil society and other smaller parties. However, the distribution of extra seats will be decided later.

The Constitution Assembly elections, which are expected to be held in June, will declare the 425 leaders, of which 205 will be elected from the existing constituencies on the first-past-the-post system and 204 will be nominated by political parties in proportion to the popular votes they garner in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. The remaining 16 will be nominated by the Prime Minister.

The move has been welcomed by international community and the foreign agencies working in Nepal are expected to receive a clearance from their respective governments immediately. United States agencies working in Nepal need a license from the Office of Foreign Assets Control and a clearance from the US State Department.

However, the United States will continue to keep the Maoists on its lists of terrorist organizations even if they join the government, according to The Kathmandu Post.

Calling for the abolition of monarchy and establishment of a peasant regime, the armed insurgency started in 1996 from rural areas in the country. Although the country is yet to witness how much the Maoists will strive to benefit the poor working class people, it is evident that Nepalese people have not given up hope, yet.

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Digitizing and Distributing Visual Footage from the Himalayas

Dr. Mark Turin

The Digital Himalaya project aims to develop digital collection, archiving and distribution strategies for multimedia anthropological information from the Himalayan region. Based at Cornell and Cambridge universities, the project began in December 2000. The initial phase involved digitizing a set of existing ethnographic archives comprised of photographs, films, sound recordings, fieldnotes and texts collected by anthropologists and travellers in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and the Indian Himalayas from the beginning of the 20th century to the present.

The five collections involved in the first phase of the project make use of a wide range of original recording media and were chosen for their historical value and their coverage of diverse geographical areas and ethnic peoples of the Himalayan region:

(a) the Williamson Photographic Archive: 1,700 photographs taken between 1930 and 1935 by the British Political Officer Frederick Williamson in Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan. Williamson's collection is now held in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, and includes a number of rare historic images.

(b) the Furer-Haimendorf Film Collection: over 100 hours of 16mm film from various parts of the central and eastern Himalayas filmed between 1936 and 1980 by Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, Professor of Anthropology at School of Oriental and African Studies in London. The films are supplemented by Haimendorf's detailed field diaries.

(c) the Naga Videodisc: part of Haimendorf's film archive overlaps with a large ethnographic collection relating to the Naga peoples of north-eastern India and parts of Burma, principally collected by five different anthropologists and travellers. These materials were compiled as an analogue videodisc in the 1980s, and included some 10,000 photographs, a large number of film and sound clips, and original fieldwork diaries and notes in an associated database. The videodisc is now technologically obsolete, and we hope to re-release it in a digital format.

(d) the Thak Archive: materials from a study of the Gurung village of Thak, central Nepal, including over 100 hours of film, more than 3,000 photographs, and continuous censuses and fieldnotes covering the period 1968 to the present, collected by Alan Macfarlane and Sarah Harrison.

research.

In January 2003, members of the Digital Himalaya team travelled to Gangtok (Sikkim) and Mustang (Nepal) with the purpose of returning usable digital copies of archival footage from the 1930s and 1960s to the communities concerned. While we

Himalaya website. Broadband Internet offers exciting ways of making such an archive available to a geographically diverse audience. In large parts of the West, however, and certainly in the Himalayan region, the bandwidth necessary to transfer large digital files with ease is still unavailable. Even if the appropriate hardware and software were in place, many of those who might like to view images of their own communities are not literate in English or familiar with the basic computer skills needed to search an online database. While the construction of a multilingual search tool remains a challenge, Digital Himalaya has implemented Nepali Unicode on the website and is continuing to explore the use of Unicode Tibetan.

More recently, Digital Himalaya has branched out into the digitisation of journals, texts and newspapers from the Himalayan region. We started out with Contributions to Nepalese Studies and Kailash: Journal of Himalayan Studies, for which all back issues are provided free of charge in PDF format as downloads from our website. After positive user feedback, we continued the project with other journals, including: Ancient Nepal, the Journal of Bhutan Studies, the European Bulletin of Himalayan Research, Peace and Democracy in South Asia, Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines, the Journal of the Tibet Society, and the Bulletin of Tibetology. Limited back issues of all these important regional journals are now online and freely downloadable. Some of the most interesting collections from the Himalayan region are not academic publications but rather journalistic, so we continued by digitising back issues of Himal, Nepali Times, Nation Weekly, Midweek and the Regmi Research Series. Most recently we have agreed to co-host Nepali Aawaz on our website.

Please visit Digital Himalaya at <<http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/>> and make use of the resources. We look forward to your feedback and comments.

Dr. Mark Turin is a linguistic anthropologist based at the University of Cambridge. He is presently conducting a linguistic survey of Sikkim at the request of the local administration, and will return to Nepal in January 2006 when he will be working on the Chintang and Puma Documentation Project (CPDP) based at Tribhuvan University.



A screenshot of Digitalhimalaya.com's homepage. The site hosts valuable and fascinating images and videos from the Himalayas.

(e) the Thangmi Archive: digital video, photographs and ethnographic data from the Thangmi communities of Dolakha and Sindhupalchok districts in north-east Nepal collected by Mark Turin and Sara Shneiderman from 1996 to the present.

Of the above five collections, three are finite, historical resources, while the latter two are collections that continue to grow. Depending on the success of this initial phase, the project may expand to include other high quality archives.

The project has three long-term objectives: (a) to preserve in a digital medium valuable ethnographic materials that are degenerating in their current forms; (b) to make these resources available in a searchable digital format to scholars and the Himalayan communities from which the materials were collected; and (c) to develop a template for collaborative digital cataloguing that will allow users to contribute documentation to existing collections and eventually link their own collections to the system, creating a dynamic tool for comparative

made use of laptop computers and high quality colour prints, it became clear during the field visit that DVD technology provided a powerful yet unexplored medium of exchange.

A DVD-based archive, functioning as a self-contained portable resource requiring neither Internet access nor a computer, is particularly suited to remote areas. Such an archive can provide access to non-literate users through controlled interactivity combined with high quality playable content using voiceovers in local languages. With the advent of small battery-operated DVD-Video players, it is possible to play DVDs in regions with no infrastructure or electricity supply, such as rural Nepal and Sikkim. Challenges remain, however, since the viewership of any DVD is constrained by limitations on the physical distribution of discs. Moreover, the pace of technological change suggests that DVD, in its current incarnation, has but a limited life-span. These factors make DVD a risky choice as a long-term archival medium.

High quality compressed films from the 1930s onwards can be freely viewed and downloaded from the Digital

Diaspora

Himalayan Community set to go high places

Established in June this year, the Himalayan Community is a non-profit organization devoted to preserve Himalayan culture, religion, and promote better harmony within the various ethnic groups that originate from the Himalayas. The idea to first establish this organization was sparked by the idea of hosting an event with H. H. Dalai Lama in New York sometime next year.

"The people of Himalayan origin are one of the fastest growing immigrant communities in New York," explains Lobsang Thinley 'Salaka,' the umbrella organization's president. Currently the Himalayan Community comprises of the United Sherpa Association, Mustang Kyidug, Walung Community of North America, Tamang Society of America, Yolmo Society of America, Gyalsumdo Sewa Sanstha, Manang Samaj, Gurung Community while there are on-going discussions with the Tsum Community, Dolpo Community and Nupri Association regarding their participation.

On 25 Nov. the Himalayan Community organized its first event, the 'Himalayan Live Concert 2006,' The organization had invited headlining Nepali pop stars Nima Rumba, Raju Lama (of Mongolian Hearts fame), Mingma Sherpa, Sindhu Malla, and the Tibetan sensation Tsering Gyurmey to perform at the event. Sure enough, the event held at a venue on 630 2nd Ave, New York, was a grand success. "The funds raised from this show will go directly towards the funds for our planned event with H.H. Dalai Lama," Lobsang explained.

In fact, the concert was so successful the Himalayan Community will be hosting a second round with more stars added to the bill; Nepali pop singer Sukmit Gurung and Tibetan singers Phurba T. Namgyal (from Minnesota) and Tenzin Woser (from New York). The concert will be held at the same venue on 23 Dec.

In 2007, the Himalayan Community hopes to organize a grand event on Buddha Jayanti, which they hope will find the participation of H.H. Dalai Lama. And then another musical extravaganza in the summer.



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Diaspora

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Top: Nepa Bhon, which also has a shop in the West Village, has a stall at Union Square, along with the Tibetan vendors Himalayan Vision, which has a couple of shops in New York including one in the Upper East Side. Below: An array of clothes most popularly seen in Thamel is on sale in Bryant Park near the fountain. Below (right): Tibet Kailash offers Tibetan attires and accessories at the Grand Central's Vanderbilt Hall. Wind Horse, another Nepali vendor's stall, is also in the hall. Photos: KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA



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