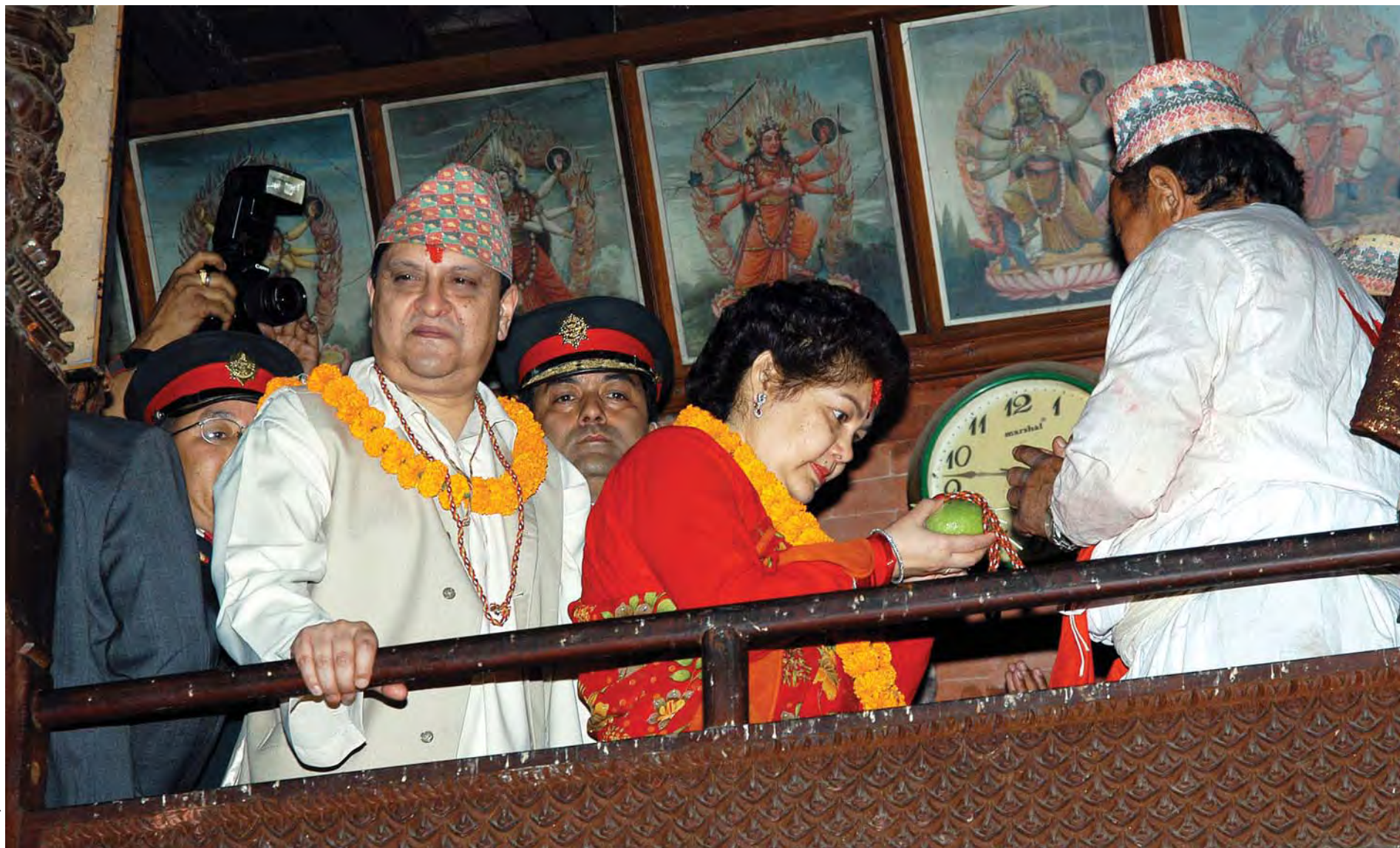


Courage & Conviction

newsfront

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King Gyanendra and Queen Komal at Navadurga temple in Bhaktapur on October 26, the full moon day that marks the end of Dashain celebrations.

Koirala promises

But will international community trust him?

■ **nf correspondent**

The past few days have seen GP Koirala intensifying his meetings with diplomats as his rating in their minds plummets. Diplomats may not find Koirala's key message very convincing when he declared, "I can hold election on the new schedule and I can get Maoists around to do it."

But Koirala faced a lot of queries and doubts from the diplomats', mainly regarding his government's failure to maintain the law and order situation and the government's loss of face due to repeated postponement of elections. Despite their insistence for an early election, the diplomats were candid that no free and fair election could be conducted in the prevailing law and order situation. British Ambassador, Andrew Hall, current Chair of the European Union embassies in Kathmandu, shared EU members' concern over increasing violence in Terai by the emerging armed groups, continued abductions and the uninterrupted

extortions by the Maoists.

Koirala's meeting with the diplomats, the first after his rise in power, comes at a time when credibility and legitimacy of his government is being questioned. For a change, he did not meet the Indian Ambassador this time as he clearly understands India's attitude and message - the last one which delivered by Shyam Sharan, on

Koirala's meeting with the diplomats, the first after his rise in power, comes at a time when credibility and legitimacy of his government is being questioned.

behalf of Indian Prime Minister, Man Mohan Singh. But interestingly, Koirala met Chinese Ambassador, Zheng Xianglin twice within a week, first at his daughter Sujata Koirala's residence in Mandikatar, and the second time at the PM's residence in

Baluwatar. While China has officially stated that election should take place at the earliest, of late, it has given clear message of its distaste over the increasing 'meddling' of India and the United States in Nepal.

Both Ambassador Xianglin and Prof Wang Khongbe, a Chinese expert on South Asian affairs currently in Nepal have been encouraging Nepalis to take independent initiative to solve their own problems without depending on outside forces. China, sources in the PMO say, has left it to the people of

Nepal to decide on the fate of monarchy, but with a subtle warning that the issue needs careful consideration, and that a hasty declaration of 'republican Nepal' could be detrimental to the national interest. Caution was the word that

Chinese used while advising Maoist leaders as well.

The meeting and discussion over 'Republican agenda' with the Chinese diplomat followed 'unofficial messages' from the South that India would have no problem if Nepal's parliament chose to go republican now. But the official stand conveyed by Shyam Sharan was different who said it is for the people of Nepal to decide, implying that only an elected Constituent Assembly should be doing that.

Apart from the British Ambassador Hall, it is believed, German Ambassador Franz Ring and US Ambassador Nancy Powell have warned against any hasty steps on deciding the fate of monarchy. They all said it is for the people to decide and a peaceful situation must exist so that people can express their mandate based on their political belief. Koirala assured all the diplomats that he is keen to hold elections at the earliest, and if everything goes well, he can do it by March end. ■

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UNMIN for enlarged role

■ nf correspondent

The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) is clearly seeking, not only an extended tenure beyond January 22, but also an enlarged role for itself. This was made evident by UNMIN Chief and UN Secretary General's special representative Ian Martin at New York on October 26.

"Expectations among Nepalis are high as to what UNMIN can do," he said, "I do my best to encourage the parties to keep the overall process on track and offer UNMIN's advice as requested, we do feel constrained by an expectation that we should interpret our mandate narrowly and we ask ourselves – as concerned Member States ask us – whether Nepal is making full use of the supportive capacity of the United Nations."

Despite these indications, there are hardly any indications about UNMIN being given the enlarged role if the mood of the ruling coalition partners is any indication. "We are certainly in favour of UNMIN getting an extended tenure, may be one more year, but not an enlarged role," an influential cabinet minister told newsfront.

The 15-member Security Council supports UNMIN's extended tenure in Nepal, but needs the formal request of the host government for it. Martin



File by Bhaswor Ojha

told media representatives in New York the government and the leaders of the seven parties, including the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), have indicated their support for an extension of UNMIN. "Security Council members in discussion yesterday made very clear that they would give sympathetic consideration to a request from the government if such a formal request is made," Martin disclosed.

Martin's suggestion for a review of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is also being seen as part of its demand for an enlarged role. He repeated a call in the Secretary-General's report for the parties to take stock of the CPA and its implementation with a view to strengthen it. He quoted PM Koirala as having endorsed the idea of a review of the CPA.

Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, in his latest report on Nepal says the country is at crossroads. Mr. Martin explained that the immediate cause was demands by the Maoists that Nepal's legislature – not the Constituent Assembly to be elected – immediately declare the country a republic, and that the electoral system be fully proportional, both in contradiction of previous agreements.

"This crisis is not just the consequence of those two demands but also stems from growing mistrust amongst the parties to the peace agreement that we have seen in recent weeks," he said, blaming failures on both sides to make good on commitments and agreements that have been made in the peace process.

Martin made it clear that the UNMIN also felt handicapped by the absence of exit strategy. The current cantonment of Maoists and restriction of army to their barracks were intended to be temporary measures but these have now continued for some 11 months with no end in sight. "A prolonged stay in cantonments of thousands of mainly young people living under difficult conditions and lacking clarity about their future is not sustainable," he said, adding "It also leaves UNMIN with no exit strategy from its arms monitoring role."

Keeping with tradition

■ nf correspondent

Notwithstanding the GP Koirala led government's hostility and indifference towards royal security, King Gyanendra strictly maintained the traditions and rituals of the King as in previous years sans fanfare. He visited Shaktipeeth in and around Kathmandu on the Maha-Asthmi day besides receiving the Prasad from Gorkha palace, the ancestral house of the Shah dynasty in Gorkha, on the Phulpati day.

But all through, he avoided a confrontational attitude with the government in general and PM Koirala in particular who of late has been acting like the King even on religious matters. In a brief address to the nation on Vijaya Dashami day, King Gyanendra invoked Goddess Durga, the symbol of Shakti, "To inspire us all to forge ahead on the strength of national unity and reconciliation through the establishment of sustainable peace in the country." He also extended best wishes to all the Nepalis and Hindus living in the country and abroad for happiness and prosperity. The message which

came at a time when political parties are inching towards a republican line, however, did not provoke any hostile response from the political parties as in the past. King Gyanendra also offered Tika to all those who chose to pay respect to him in Narayanhiti palace.

The ceremony in the palace went off without the traditional security arrangements by the government.

While none of the politicians affiliated with the current regime, senior officials from the security agencies and bureaucracy went to the palace, former Prime Ministers Surya Bahadur Thapa, Kirtinidhi Bista, Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Marichman Singh were among the senior politicians paying their respect to the King. Ex-army, civil and police officials and a large number of youths also joined the ceremony in the palace. "We told the King that his role is not yet over. The country is facing a big crisis because of increasing interference of the external forces and current political parties surrendering to them," a college teacher from Kathmandu who went to the palace said.



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Newsbrief

Strange bed-fellows

Politics makes strange bed fellows. Look at Congress leader, Shekhar Koirala and the Maoists. Shekhar now proposes that the government headed by his uncle G P Koirala should be ready to go to the polls even without Maoists participating in it.

Shekhar, who was a key negotiator along with Home Minister K P Sitaula, is clearly dejected with the Maoists after they insisted on a proportional representation model of electoral system in place of the mixed system agreed earlier.

Sitaula who continues as the Home Minister largely because Maoists wanted him apart from some invisible reasons despite his failure to maintain the law and order situation in the country is however, silent on the Maoists' demands. That would mean that Shekhar and Sitaula might part company as for Sitaula there are more important quarters to turn to continue in the chair.

Maoists are anticipating that the government is also contemplating the option of using force against the Maoists in case they decide to launch another movement and disruptive activities.

More friendly

It seems Maoists honeymoon with the Congress is over. It is inching much closer to its new tactical ally, the CPN-UML. While the Maoist top two, Prachanda and Baburam were absent from the tea-party organised by both Nepali Congress and the UML on October 26 and 27, the number of attendants from the Maoist party in the UML reception was more, and politically significant.

KB Mahara, the high-profile Maoist leader chose to go only for the UML hosted reception. Pampha Bhushal, Dev Gurung and Hishila Yami also attended it. No senior leaders except Khimlal Devkota, a Maoist parliamentarian, attended the Congress hosted reception.

As Maoists and the UML are trying to forge a kind of unity among the left parties in favour of proportional representation system during the parliament session, Maoists' greater presence in Balkhu Durbar was understandable. But one just shudders, in days of very short-lived political equation, how long will the two go together?

Long queues

The hike in petroleum price is no respite for fuel consumers. Petrol pumps still have notices saying there is no petrol. During the supply hours, there are still long queues of vehicles. Gas agencies continue to take more than a week to deliver the gas cylinders at home.



The reason being in spite of the fuel depots and the government with monopoly over distribution of fuels, hiking the price, it has not been able to pay the arrears to the Indian Oil Corporation; the amount of which has now crossed Rs 6 billion record level.

51 Crores spent

A whopping Rs. 51 crore was spent for the election preparation that proved to be a non-event during the past 16 months. Altogether Rs. 28 crore was spent this year against Rs 23 crore last year, according to the election commission sources. The EC compiled the data and made it public after the election were indefinitely put off for the second time early this month. The donor community provided equipment and other logistics in the form of assistance for the election purposes through the commission worth Rs.54 crore during the period.



Season of festivals

The Bluebird organised various events with theme, Season of Festivals. The occasion marked the 1st anniversary of Bluebird Mall and 23rd Anniversary of Bluebird department store. The month long event which began October 10 covers the major festival months.



On 18th October, Bluebird Mall organised a fun filled event – food festival with live concert where artists: Nima Rumba, Nalina Chitrakar, Preeti Kaur, Dharmendra Sewan & Ciney Gurung performed. The magic show, balloon artist and face painting were enjoyed by the children and adults alike.

Wielding stick!

■ nf correspondent

Despite PM GP Koirala's hopes for an understanding with the Maoists that will end the political deadlock, its chances are remote as positions are getting hardened both within the Nepali Congress and the Maoists, according to the insiders. Maoists now fear the worst as its most trusted Congress leader Shekhar Koirala has gone to the extent of suggesting that the government should be ready to hold the polls to the constituent assembly even without the Maoists, as a last resort.

Shekhar was in fact echoing something that Shyam Sharan had suggested to PM Koirala when visited Nepal early this month as a special envoy of Indian PM Man Mohan Singh. In fact, there is a vocal section within the Nepali Congress which has been criticising the PM of having surrendered too much to the Maoists. Shekhar's turn around, many think, could be a tactical 'stick' that the PM is trying to wield at the Maoists now, under pressure from the majority in the party.

It is less due to the warning from the Congress side but more due to confusion within the Maoist party top brass that has blighted the prospect of any flexibility on its two latest demands of declaring Nepal a republic right away and switching over to the proportional representation electoral system. For the time being, Maoist leaders have abandoned



the idea of quitting parliament en bloc in deference to the request from the seven parties as well as the international community. "We are not going to leave the parliament," said Deb Gurung, party's senior leader, insisting "We will use parliament as a forum to press our demands."

But the Maoists' explanation that they had agreed on a mixed electoral system only if the elections were to be held in June last has not been bought by the international community. In fact, key international players including India have warned Maoists that they would be losing international recognition as well as the good-will that Maoists have earned in the past two years of peace process. In fact, the prospect of Maoists losing this recognition has held the hands of the leadership from accepting pressure from their lower cadres that they 'must go for a decisive battle'.

A senior Maoist leader told

newsfront that the leadership is neither in a position to ignore the international opinion nor the pressure from its cadre. That's why it cannot give up both the demands it has raised. "All that we can do is either create a division within the seven parties when the party resolutions are put for voting, or boycott the session blaming both the Congress and UML as allies of regressive forces," the source said.

Maoist chief Prachanda who has so far been able to maintain a balance between the party hardliners and the international community has of late been saying that 'nationalism and independence of the country' are under threat. According to the Maoist sources he is increasingly moving closer to the hawkish trio: Baidya-Gajurel and Badal, who have criticised the party line of 'too much surrendering to the external pressures.'

Price hike fuels crisis

■ Madhusudan Poudyal

After almost six months of disrupted and inadequate supply, the government has finally raised the price of petroleum products from 6 to 22 percent drawing protests from the student wings of seven political parties aligned with the coalition government.

The price hike which the government now says is irreversible was carried out as the nation was celebrating Dashain. The Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has raised the wholesale price of petrol by Rs.6 per litre, bringing its current rate to Rs.73 per litre while kerosene price has been increased by three rupees. Similarly, diesel price has been increased by Rs.300, and cooking gas (LPG) by Rs. 200 per cylinder. With the latest decision, the price of diesel per litre stands at Rs.56, Kerosene at Rs.51 and LPG cylinder Rs.1100. NOC says the increase in the price is a natural fall out of the increase of the fuel in the international market.

The NOC has accrued a loss of Rs.11 billion for unprofitable business during the past five years. And with arrears to the Indian Oil Corporation running to over six billion rupees, it was cutting down its supply to Nepal. "Because of this, NOC was not able to provide fuel to its consumers," NOC chief Digambar Ojha told newsfront, adding, "We know it was an unpleasant decision."

The United Nations Development



Programme (UNDP), says the soaring prices are threatening the prospects of millions of Asia's poor and forcing them further into poverty. A report released in Bangkok on October 25 says, "As oil prices climb, the impact on the poor may presage worse to come." The report - Overcoming Vulnerability to Rising Oil Prices: Options and the Pacific, said that oil prices have tripled over the last four years with the price approaching US dollar 90 per barrel. "This has meant that the Asia and pacific region has had to pay an additional bill of almost 400 billion dollars for imports compared to the amount spent in 2003. This is 20 times the annual aid flow to the region," said Hafiz Pasha, UNDP Regional Director for Asia and Pacific at the launch of the report.

Joint front of the student organisations in Nepal going for the movement however blame corruption and mismanagement in NOC for the

current mess and said the price hike was unjustified. Although the students wing of the ruling coalition and their allies have asked the government to roll back the price, or face a mass-protest, the government insists that the decision was taken after due consultation with the political parties including the Maoists.

"The decision to hike the price had the consent of all the parties in the government and their allies," said Purushottam Ojha, Chairman of NOC and Secretary in the ministry of supplies. According to Ojha, the parliamentary committee was also apprised of the decision beforehand. Maoist leader Dinanath Sharma has warned that Young Communist League (YCL) cadres would be mobilised to put pressure on the government to annul the price hike decision. They also hope that in case there is a protest movement, the left parties would be joining it.



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Point to Ponder

For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

- Nelson Mandela

License to kill

Journalist Birendra Saha's whereabouts is not known for nearly a month now. Fingers are pointed towards Maoists for the crime. But there has been no word from the government as well as the Maoists as yet over Saha's face. The federation of Nepali journalists (FNJ) has been routinely raising the issue, but it is clearly lacking in zeal and motivation in pressing for his release.

During his meeting with the FNJ representatives, Prime Minister G P Koirala reiterated that his government would not make any compromise on the issue of press freedom. Is FNJ satisfied with what Koirala said? Just because this abduction has taken place under a 'democratic regime' does not make it a lesser crime. Koirala got away with his assurances and nobody in this country hopes that K P Sitaula as Home Minister will ever act against the criminals.

It is a shame that the civil society did not find it an issue worth sitting on Dharna for a couple of hours. For the individuals who are known as civil society leaders in the country today, the issue of kidnapping of a journalist does not quite merit spending a couple of hours on Dharna. They appear equally reluctant to demand Saha's release and warn the Maoist leaders to put pressure on their cadres.

Maoists' commitment to press freedom and democracy while claiming the credit for success of the movement against 'Royal authoritarianism' is increasingly appearing more tactical in nature. Same may be said about the civil society if it condones, through its silence, the heinous crime. It is also a challenge to the FNJ that what they are doing in this case is not enough, and the seriousness of their protest does not match the intensity during the previous occasions, especially in the post 2002 October period, against similar or other crimes.

Maoist party's latest stance that it is not going to take responsibility for the kidnapping as it was not a centrally authorised or instructed move makes the issue much more complicated. Not for one single case, from Madi massacre to the kidnapping and killing of many individuals, have the Maoist leaders ever admitted that they were centrally authorised or instructed.

Saha, according to the findings of FNJ and other human rights groups, was kidnapped by the Maoists and the worst is being feared. There are no accounts available whether he is alive. Nothing has been stated about the torture he had to go through in the hands of the kidnapers. Although the issue was raised in parliament, the government chose not to take the matter seriously. Both Koirala and Maoist Chief Prachanda will be held accountable if they do not ensure Saha's release, or at least inform the nation about his whereabouts. Nepal should not turn into a dangerous place for journalists to work in.



Letters

Deceitful power mongers

The Maoists' relentless demands and behavior strengthen the claim that, after all, the king had sized them up right. It appears he was justified not to believe in a 'peaceful solution' to the Maoists' movement. Even if the monarchy is thrown out, and a republic declared, we can be sure now that the Maoists will not stop until they get all they ask for. It's about time for the SPA to make a hard decision. Are they going to continue to play to the Maoists' tune, or are they going to tune them up? Their promise to the people was to mainstream the Mao-ists, not Mao-ism!

The SPA has given up more than enough to provide the Maoists a 'safe-landing,' and we have had enough excuses in the name of 'transition period.' Now we want a legitimate peace process based firmly on truth and justice. Let the Maoists leave parliament if they want to. Brave Nepalis should not cower down in front of threats from unscrupulous and deceitful power-mongers!

■ Satyajeet Nepali
Kathmandu

Human rights ignored

Uday Pariyar's article that addressed issues of oppressed Dalits was a candid analysis of the existing disparity, exploitation and rampant Brahminism. It is very important for us to have policies to address those problems. Otherwise, empowering neo-Brahmins will hardly solve the ailment that has been plaguing this society for centuries.

Pariyar is also rightly critical of the NGOs, local government and other human rights groups for maintaining total silence when a couple was discarded by their families and the society, for having an inter-caste marriage. This must be an eye opener for the donor communities since the NGOs and right



groups prefer to poke their nose in for political causes, but ignore human right issues when it involves Dalits and those in the lower rungs of the society.

■ Sudha Khati
Anam Nagar, Kathmandu

Media responsibility

'Terai problem and the media' by Chandra Kishore Jha (newsfront Oct 1-7) was a very balanced and objective piece. While the author warns about the growing fissiparous and divisive tendencies visible in the Nepali society, he also cautions media that it has a role not to encourage those trends.

As we watch the media trend in the country today, vastly divided along communal and ethnic lines, Jha suggests that the media should not be divided into the hills, Madesh, Brahmin or Janajati categories. This should be realised by the media in the country today.

■ Mihir Kumar Jha
Dilli Bazar, Kathmandu

Koirala King?

Newsfront's interview with Isabella Tree on Kumari festival is so revealing that it speaks volumes about the Kumari tradition and its relevance in the society in a vivid manner more than any good books written on the subject so far.

But it is shocking that while the institution needs to be understood, modernised and continued, dragging the tradition into politics is a shame. The instance of Prime Minister Koirala going to Kumari for a Darshan was a brazen act of politics, as he never bothered to visit there as a PM in the past. What does it mean? Has Koirala turned into a believer now? Or was it just an attempt to establish himself as the King?

■ Ramesh Baidya
Lagankhel, Lalitpur

Spiritual Corner

Milarepa, the cotton clad one

Born in the village of Kya, Ngatsa in Tibet to a prosperous family he was named Mila Thöpa, which means, a joy to hear. When his father died, Milarepa's uncle and aunt took all the family's wealth. At his mother's request Milarepa left home and studied sorcery. While his aunt and uncle were having a party to celebrate the impending marriage of their son, he took his revenge through his power.

Knowing that his revenge was wrong, Milarepa set out to find a Lama and was led to Marpa the translator. Marpa proved to be a hard task master, and before he would teach him, he had Milarepa build and then demolish three towers, a back-breaking task. When Marpa still refused to teach Milarepa he went to Marpa's wife, who took pity on him. She forged a letter of introduction to another

teacher, Lama Ngogdun Chudor, under whose tutelage he began to practice meditation. However when he was making no progress, he confessed the forgery and Ngogdun Chudor said that it was vain to hope for spiritual growth without the guru's approval.

Milarepa returned to Marpa, and after practicing very diligently for 12 years Milarepa attained the state of Vajradhara (complete enlightenment). He is said to be the first to achieve this state within one lifetime. He then became known as Milarepa, which means the "Mila, the cotton clad one." At the age of 45, he started to practice at Drakar Taso (White Rock Horse Tooth) cave - 'Milarepa's Cave', as



well as becoming a wandering teacher. Here, he subsisted on nettle tea, leading his skin to turn green, hence the greenish color he is often depicted as having in paintings and sculptures.

Pyenzhangling Monastery, also known as Pelgye Ling Gompa, is a small Tibetan Buddhist monastery in a tiny village called Zhonggang, Tibet that is consecrated to Milarepa. It is built around the cave where he once lived. It was destroyed but has now been rebuilt and decorated by Nepali artisans. This is one of many caves associated with Milarepa between Langtang and Jomolungma.

Milarepa is famous for many of his songs and poems, in which he expresses the

profundity of his realisation of the dharma with extraordinary clarity and beauty. He also had many disciples, which include Rechung Dorje Drakpa, Gampopa or Dhakpo Lhaje. It was Gampopa who became his spiritual successor who continued his lineage and became one of the main lineage masters in Milarepa's tradition.

"If you do not acquire contentment in yourselves, heaped-up accumulations will only enrich others.

If you do not obtain the light of inner peace, mere external ease and pleasure will become a source of pain.

If you do not suppress the demon of ambition, desire for fame will lead to ruin and to lawsuits"

- Milarepa

Failed 'Heroes' ? : GP Koirala, Madhav Nepal and Subash Nemwang

More mess in the Third World means more business, budget and jobs.



■ Saubhagya Shah



Bhaskar Chit

Thinking past the Nepali 'post-conflict'

The farce called the constipated (oops, constitutional) assembly election would not have been more than a lame joke had it not also been a fraud as well, arguably the most brazen since the millennium bug and the Mahakali scam. In the former, technology firms warned the consumers that if they did not buy their latest software and gadgets, the computer systems across the world would go kaput at the stroke of midnight, thereby causing the global economy, defense systems, health networks, transportation and the internet would go haywire to usher in Stone Age II. Thankfully no such pangs accompanied the birth of the 21st century, but the sting operation earned billions for the scaremongers.

The Mahakali caper was of a different tack, but of the same nature. Left to right, politicians here had gone in overdrive to sell the Mahakali deal. The proposal to sign off the western boundary river to India was touted as the biggest bonanza to ever befall the country that would earn a cool billion dollars per year. A decade after the midnight deal in parliament, Nepal is yet to see a penny from the sell off. Nevertheless, the southerly wind from the deal has filled the sails and coffers of many politicians that dominate the political landscape today.

The ongoing constituent assembly (CA) mess is a remix of both these earlier scams. On the one hand, the people were bombarded for a whole year with dire warnings by the political parties, donors, and the willing media that if the CA elections were not held on Nov. 22, the earth would literally crumble and heaven would fall. On the other hand, should the election take place, it would fulfill every wish and every need that Nepalis had ever thought of...so abundant was the promise.

Experts, expertise

The transitional movement was recognized as another money spinner and career booster as international crisis firms and professionals who had made their names and fortunes in Somalia, Afghanistan, Timor or other similar human tragedies descended upon Nepal to set up shop in partnership with local subalterns. The first

order of business was to establish the demand that could then be supplied by the expat experts.

Using some convenient methodologies, it was first established that Nepalis in general were seriously deficient in their knowledge of the whole constituent assembly phenomena. Such a glaring civilisational gap could only be filled by the superior knowledge embodied by the experts. Thus came the various versions of the voter education programs from donors and INGOs in whose name millions of dollars were raised and millions of rupees disbursed, thousands of educators, TOTs and trainers mobilized to teach the ignorant masses how to do election come Nov. 22.

The ignorant masses perhaps might just want to ask the experts why suddenly there is no constituent election after all this education and awareness raising? That is, if they have not already left the scene post-haste in their favorite getaways: the formidable fleet of satellite-hooked 4 by 4s and shiny helicopters. The sovereign people might also want to know why so much resources and effort was poured into a half-baked project whose completion was not ascertained or even intended. Talk of teaching accountability.

The 'post-conflict' industry in Nepal has temporarily been thrown off-gear by the cancellation of the elections. All those contracts, projects, budgets streams, networks, and careers are in disarray. But not for long, we can be sure that the resilience and resourcefulness of this highly adaptive industry will soon come up with another inspiring sales banner to continue its good work as has been the case for the last fifty years.

More than anything, the present election fiasco is an inevitable failure of a faulty paradigm whose basic premise starts not with the innate intelligence of the people but their ignorance. Many of the assumptions that inform the intervention in Nepal are politically chic, but analytically dubious. The continued substitution of objective assessment and adherence to logical policy implications by normative homilies and ideological sermons is at the root of the present impasses, whether it be the donors or

their recipients. In the absence of critical analysis, the liberal-radical consensus on Nepal appears to have become a victim of its own group think.

King and PR

For example, when the current ruling circle and its external guarantors have already decided in principle to make Nepal a republic after Nov. 22, what substantive difference does it make if the republic is declared by the parliament today to save the country from another likely bloodletting? The sovereign parliament that changed national identity from Hindu kingdom to secular state and confined the King to virtual house arrest in one stroke last year should have no constitutional or legal obstacles in going republic to fulfill the deepest aspirations of the Nepali 'people' today. To pose the same question differently, what benefits will the country accrue by keeping the much vilified monarchy another 25 days? Ditto for the wrangle over the proportional representation system.

An election is an act of selection and representation by the people within an agreed upon framework. To make the democratic election meaningful, the competitors must agree on the fundamental norms of the electoral game. This includes the consensus on the purpose, method, and willingness to accept and abide by the result of the elections.

In the context of the CA elections, none of the three criteria were ever met satisfactorily. Whether it was the constituency redrawing controversy or the proportional system, there was a wide divergence of positions on the actual modality of conducting the elections.

More seriously, even after the elections dates were fixed, some of the contestants continued to state that they would not be obliged to abide by the results if it was not to their liking. The experts refused to take into account this danger signal and continued to send back rosy reports to New York in order to keep the game going. Is the UN too worried about the complications here? Perhaps not. More mess in the Third World means more business, budget and jobs. A cursory glance back at history shows that

wherever UN has stepped in, it tends to stick around for a decade or longer.

Last but not least, there was lack of sincere agreement on the purpose of the election itself. For some, CA election was intended to be a rubber stamp to legitimise the 2006 regime change. For others, the CA result would have been the measure by which to take stake their claim on state power and resources.

Power to the parties

None of the players in the game had actually wanted the people to exercise their 'sovereign' reason to express what they really wanted. In a preemptory move, the parties had already decided what the new Nepal would be: federal, republic, and pseudo secular. The CA was gamed to extract popular consent, not open up informed choices. Thus, even if the CA election were to be held as scheduled, it would not have been more than a costly ritual because the most important substance had already been preordained through an unelected process. That is why the sky did not actually fall when the election was finally cancelled and except for some perfunctory tears in some quarters, nobody is ruing the day.

Contrary to claims, the CA elections and the rest of the political process is not intended to empower the people through reason and information. It is, on the contrary, designed to infantilise them by playing upon their worst fears and emotions. The rule of law is being substituted by fear where insecurity, suspicion, and virulent populism have become the primary ruling instruments.

The nation is literally being made to live from minute to minute in bated breath as it awaits its fate outside the gates of Baluwar and Singha Durbar while those inside wheeling and dealing, day and night, in perpetually extending sessions. The emotional blackmail serves two functions: buys borrowed time for the regime while reducing popular expectations of the political process to abysmal nil. The sum total? National destabilisation and societal demoralisation.

(Dr. Shah is Program Coordinator for Conflict, Peace and Development Studies, TU.)

Troglodytes stalk

an interview with Dr. Thomas A. Marks

Dr. Thomas A. Marks has recently seen his latest book, *Maoist People's War in Post-Vietnam War Asia*, published in Bangkok (White Lotus Press). Here, he responds to questions forwarded by the Nepali Perspectives Group. This is an abridged version of the complete interview.

Do you think Nepal is at a point where the Maoists have overwhelmed the system?

The Maoists have not yet overwhelmed the system, but they remain committed to doing so.

Let us first be gloomy: The monarchy has been marginalized, leaving the contest a SPAM affair, with only the "M" (Maoists) understanding armed politics. Maoist thugs run rampant, yet NA has been banished to the barracks by the simple expedient of the CPN(M) packing the regroupment camps with under-age fillers and training cadre, even as the Maoist hardcore leads the "Young" Communist League (YCL) in the streets.

The police are the front line but deploy according to the whims of the highly controversial Home Minister, as does the police reaction force, APF. SPA itself is torn by factionalism, with the legal left as bereft of leadership as NC. No effort has been made to mobilize the people against their tormentors. International actors, though forming a brake of sorts on the Maoists, are as much a part of the problem as the solution, having colluded in the negation of the state's capacity to enforce law and order.

Now, the "bright" side: The illusion of Maoist strength results from state ineptitude (and haplessness). In reasonably fair and transparent elections, the Maoists stand to lose badly. They know this but cite nefarious schemes at work, not least by the UN! The security forces, whatever their flaws, remain intact, and the Maoists have failed in their central aim of incapacitating them. The political class, its lackluster leadership notwithstanding, includes younger elements who could add much were they to break through their cultural straitjacket and cease functioning as lapdogs. The Nepali people are now on the verge of open rebellion against their Maoist tormentors and demand leadership.

What are some of the dimensions the Maoists are using to undermine the state? Are you able to draw parallels between what the Maoists are doing in Nepal and what, for example, Sendero Luminoso did in Peru?

In the first five years (1996-2001) of their people's war, the Maoists aped *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path). Thus they emphasized violence, with terror and guerrilla war eliminating the human and institutional rallying points of the system – stripping away the human glue that held the system together. They went to main-force warfare after 2001, mimicking in structure the forces of the state. The state, bowing to foreign voices, refused to mobilize local forces and thus ceded control of the countryside.

There, a counter-state was built with new economic, social, and political forms (necessarily proto-fascist, to include school prayers to the



Failure of the Nepali state to use democracy, imperfect and corrupt though it was, for mass mobilization against the Maoist assault made royal direct rule inevitable. This, in turn, provided the opening for a decisive Maoist shift to the united front approach.

martyrs of the revolution). Fellow travelers were mobilized into ethnic and "student" bodies. Agit-prop was central to fortifying new cultural norms – hence revolutionary will – through song, dance, and new vocabulary. Internationally, global fellow travelers entered the picture, to include the leftist groupies who are in the forefront of the "struggle against globalism." India dusted off the failed approaches of its Sri Lankan adventure (and its Northeast campaigns) and allowed its legal left to implement its revolutionary fantasies at Nepali expense.

Failure of the Nepali state to use democracy, imperfect and corrupt though it was, for mass mobilization against the Maoist assault made royal direct rule inevitable. This, in turn, provided the opening for a decisive Maoist shift to the united front approach. Simultaneously, the charade of the regroupment camps was used to negate state armed capacity even as the YCL street goons ensured that the Maoists' own violence continued.

It is here that we see the finesse of the Maoist approach. In Peru, in a comparable situation, Shining Path erred by failing to cultivate allies and continuing to emphasize violence. Its brutality mobilized its own demise. Peruvian peasants, led by the very Quechua-speaking Indian communities that had comprised the initial Shining Path base of support, rose up in the late 1980s. The revolutionary endeavor was swamped in a hostile sea of humanity.

On the topic of Sendero Luminoso, what did the government do right in Peru that successive governments in Nepal seem incapable of replicating?

As Shining Path persisted in mistakenly emphasizing violence, Peru of the Fujimori era countered with political mobilization that gave capacity to the state's armed response. As democracy expanded, micro-development and local defense gave it the strength needed to end the threat of Maoist dictatorship. If one examines other cases of success against Maoist challenges, this is the key.

No Nepali government has implemented even the basics of the successful strategy followed elsewhere against Maoism. Perhaps most embarrassing, the Nepali security forces actually claim they secured a victory of sorts by "forcing" the Maoists to negotiate. This is inaccurate. The Maoists simply emphasized a different line of operation as appropriate to the strategic situation in 2006 (as they would put it, to the new correlation of forces). For its part, SPA inability to see past its struggle with the monarchy to the larger strategic peril in which it was placing itself is now quite on display.

Many of Nepal's "ultra liberal democrats" belatedly seem to have realized the Maoists cannot be trusted and should not be appeased. The Maoist-orchestrated postponement of CA elections drives the last nail in the coffin for Maoist apologists. Do you have any reactions to this?

The question goes to the heart of the challenge faced by Nepali democracy. The Maoists have never wavered in their goal or their strategy for achieving it. Their goal, as they have stated repeatedly, is a people's republic. Their strategy, they have trumpeted, is people's war. Their means, they do not keep secret, are embodied in the mobilization of a mass base to overwhelm the state. Only the operational art of their strategy has been altered to respond to situational realities.

That is, they have emphasized whatever approach is appropriate to time and place. Though too many in the Nepali political class remain ignorant of these fundamental Maoist war fighting realities – of armed politics, which is what insurgency is – many in fact have seen the light. Where they have continued to come up short is in turning understanding into a weapon by mobilizing the Nepali populace for its own defense.

What are your thoughts on the Maoists playing the nationalist card to counter Indian influence in Nepal? Do you see an imminent change in Indian foreign policy given India's own interim polls on the horizon and also that the whole world has borne witness to the failure of India's Nepal policy? Could you please expand your response to touch on India's bid to become a permanent member of the UNSC?

The UNSC bid is not particularly relevant to the immediate issues. Neither is India concerned about what the world thinks of the retrograde "Great Game" elements of its national security strategy. Much of the Indian political class lives in

Nepal



Indian strategy towards Nepal has repeated the mistakes of New Delhi's Sri Lankan gambit, a cock-up from start to finish for which Indian forces paid the price in casualties.

a parallel reality every bit as isolated as that occupied by much of the Nepali chattering classes. More germane is the apparent recognition in Indian ruling circles that they have "been had" by the supposedly now more modern, more urbane, more thoughtful Indian Marxists.

On the contrary, what the Indian left stands for has been put on display in its recent ideological anti-US posturing. Indian Marxism is an embarrassing remnant of a brutal ideology that collapsed under its own weight even as it battered itself senseless against its opponents, democracy and the market. Indeed, one simply cannot be a communist in 2007 without first having checked his brains at the cloak room. Yet, for the sake of power, Congress thought it could break bread and reason with the Indian Marxists, give them the lead even in Nepali matters. Both the government in New Delhi and Nepal are paying a bitter price, with the budding relationship between the world's two largest democracies, India and the US, the hound which has flushed the fox from the chicken coop.

Indian strategy towards Nepal has repeated the mistakes of New Delhi's Sri Lankan gambit, a cock-up from start to finish for which Indian forces paid the price in casualties. India, given its own Maoist challenge, must be keenly sensitive to the security implications of a Nepal sliding into chaos; worse, into a radical people's republic.

For their part, the Nepali Maoists thought they had a deal with New Delhi. Perhaps they did, but their own factionalism, which was papered over as long as "the struggle" sustained organizational unity, has now burst forth. India does seem to recognize the danger now posed by the CPN(M) troglodytes in the Maoist ranks, who are bent on a return to violence – even if with brickbats and spanners in the streets rather than long-barrel weapons. If the troglodytes are genuinely outraged at Indian perfidy, their apparent majority in the Maoist Politburo compels the Maoist "moderates" to be outraged as well.

It must be emphasized, though, that the terms ("troglodytes" and "moderates") are relative. The argument is not over the strategy of people's war but over which line of operation should receive emphasis. Prachanda and the so-called "moderates" feel it is folly to emphasize open confrontation at this particular moment, especially when *sub-rosa* violence (criminality and extortion) are proceeding quite nicely in moving the Maoist cause towards its objective. The troglodytes, however, feel pitched street battles are the route to victory.

What in your opinion of the UN role in Nepal?

UN activity has moved Nepal to the point that elections of sorts could be held. Unfortunately, the UN appears not to take seriously Maoist revolutionary aspirations. Nepali Maoism is led by individuals who have committed themselves to a revolutionary enterprise and thus see the world in the hackneyed, dangerous categories of Marxist-Leninism. In particular, they are after structural upheaval which will give them power and the organizational means to build utopia. We are dealing with a process that is similar to Mussolini's post-World War I fascist rise to power.



What is at issue is not, as the UN seems to think, a matter of, "What are the Maoists thinking?" This grants them the capacity to act outside their doctrinal matrix. Rather, we face: "How are the Maoists thinking?" In the answer one finds the inversion of categories that turns opponents into categories, justifies crimes as necessities of war, and claims that immediate, brutal, personal, terrorist murder is only self-defense against the flaws of the state (as reflected in poverty and any other category one chooses to measure in Nepal). Yet we witness no disquiet in UNMIN ranks as the Nepali populace daily suffers from the thugs and as the Maoists pay homage to icons representing the greatest mass murderers of all history. One shudders to consider if the same negligence would accompany the adding of Hitler's image to those of Mao, Stalin *et al.* Or Pol Pot perhaps?

Ironic it is that ultimately it was the UN, through UNTAC, that oversaw the rebirth of Cambodia after the shocking atrocities of the Khmer Rouge. One would think the lesson would have been learned. The Maoist movement in Nepal shares many structural and ideological particulars with the Pol Pot case.

What do you anticipate the Maoists will do next? It appears they are incapable of fighting and incapable of practicing democratic politics.

The Maoists are not debating goals or strategy but the implementation of their strategy (i.e., operational art). They have exposed

Confrontation indeed is inevitable. If the battle previously was between the forces of autocracy and democracy, it is now between parliamentary democracy and people's democracy. The first form of democracy is reasonably authentic; the second is a façade behind which lurks tyranny.

themselves to the world. On the one hand, it can be argued this is significant. They have been revealed for what they are, would-be fascists. On the other hand, it could also be irrelevant. It is, after all, facts on the ground that will determine the outcome. To the extent that Nepali democracy continues to wring its hands and expect the international cavalry to ride to the rescue, the Maoists will have a free hand.

Is confrontation between Nepal's democratic and Maoist forces inevitable? What steps would you advise Nepali policy makers to take today to meet and counter the increasingly radical, undemocratic Maoist line?

Confrontation indeed is inevitable. If the battle previously was between the forces of autocracy and democracy, it is now between parliamentary democracy and people's democracy. The first form of democracy is reasonably authentic; the second is a façade behind which lurks tyranny. Communism, especially of the Maoist variety, has never played itself out other than in tragedy, in any case, at any time.

Consequently, what must be done is quite clear – democratic capacity must be mobilized. And this capacity must have a self-defense capability. This need not be armed, but it must be robust enough to meet head-on the Maoist thugs. Maoist people's war must be neutralized by people's war of the democratic state. Ultimately, Maoist violence will only be swamped by a wave of outraged humanity. ■

GREAT LEADER irrelevant politician

If he fails, KP might have the last laugh about his friend. Even then, KP will not have much role to play in politics.

It is very difficult for me to write about Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. It is so because I like him. It is said that when a journalist starts liking a politician it becomes very difficult for him to remain objective.

Text books have prescribed many dos and don'ts for journalists. I never cared for a majority of them. Most of the failed journalists however become good professors of journalism. In any case ours is a country of preachers not doers. People know about everything except their own job. Having spent two decades as Nepal's most watched television talk show host I know for sure that journalism has got nothing much to do with truth! Journalism at its best can get closer to 'facts' not to the truth.

Fact is only a small component of truth. The amusing thing about 'truth' is - it exists either in mathematics or in Nirvana only. Many argue even mathematics can be manipulated. My relationship with Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, the only living founder of Nepali Congress, started much before I joined journalism. KP used to live in same area I grew up in. Many people in the locality and elsewhere would hesitate to talk with him as he was declared anti national element during Panchayat regime.

He was jailed for almost 14 years. His crime was his unfailing belief in democracy. I was attracted to him because of his innocent smile. He would sometimes give me a candy. Later in life I liberally consumed his whiskies. Once he told me - politicians are like a woman in bikini. What they reveal is tempting but what they hide is vital. I took this as a mantra and found very useful in my career.

KP never married but never claimed that he lacked the 'experience'. He loves to exaggerate the details of his encounters but I am sure most of those are imaginary. During April 1996 he told me, "I will give you a scoop but do not use it for at least 10 years. People talk about my relationships with women even these at this age of mine. Journalists of this city are basically idiots and thieves. Look at me, I cannot even stand properly. How can someone who can not even stand make his vital organ stand? But if someone believes I still can, why should I deny that?" This is just one side of Kisunji. I saw another totally different face of this man as Prime Minister in New Delhi in 1990 during the joint press conference with his Indian counterpart VP Singh. He was so firm and clear about Nepali national interests vis a vis India.

During the trip he took me to his suite in Rastrapati Bhawan where I saw at least two Indian cabinet ministers (one I remember was Sharad Yadav) touching his feet saying 'Pai lagu Kisunji'. There were quite a few Indian reporters and camera-men around but no one was surprised by that feet touching act. After a while KP laughed and told me, "Can you imagine what will happen in Nepali press if our Nepali ministers dare to touch the feet of VP Singh! Hell will fall on them!" There was an old guard who told me that KP is only head of the government he has seen who cleans his own shoes, toilet and makes his



■ Vijay Kumar

bed. His comments on occasions make KP look like a lightweight but his spotless record as a freedom fighter proves an entirely different point. Royal palace must still be holding papers that will prove that only KP refused to sign any papers bargaining for his release from the prison.

Once KP told me, "Forget about Girija Babu, even BP signed papers to come out." Unlike his friends KP never went on exile to India. He chose to struggle within the country. In course of time his leader BP Koirala too realised the vanity as well as political fee of carrying a struggle from India and returned home in the name of national reconciliation with King. KP fought most of his life for democracy and was chosen to be the Prime Minister by Ganesh Man Singh, to head the interim government after the 1990 people's moment. To his credit go the constitution of 1990 and the successful election of parliament.

But surprisingly he failed to get himself elected in 1991 election. Mark Tully wrote in BBC year book "I was saddened to see KP Bhattarai, one of the most remarkable politicians of South Asia, humiliated by the voters of Kathmandu." Later it became very obvious that KP's election team was so incompetent that his own campaign chief failed to turn up to vote for him on the election day! It also became very clear that GP Koirala was weaving a conspiracy within the party to defeat KP. That election was the beginning of his downfall. Following his surprising defeat, GP Koirala became the prime minister by default. Once in the chair GP expanded his resources like no PM has ever done in recent times and increased his grip over the party.

The supreme commander of 1990 peoples' movement Ganesh Man left the Congress party dejected and rejected and now KP has done the same. KP hardly has any character or qualification required of a successful leader in Nepal. He never cares to calculate in an environment where politics is largely run through back door calculation deals. Right or wrong KP has always done what he felt like at that particular moment. Do you think any calculating Nepali leader today dares to say that monarchy is still relevant?

Even Panchas, who sucked the country in the name of monarchy for 30 years are too scared to pronounce M word today. Important question is will Nepali Congress listen to its only living founder member? Certainly not. Will KP's stand affect real politics in Nepal? No. Will this apparently losing stand affect KP's thinking? No. He told me the other day, "I chose to live in prison for 14 years because I felt like doing so for the sake of Nepal's interests and democracy. There were times I felt I would never come out of jail. But I have never ever regretted what I stood for. And I will keep saying things which I feel are correct. I feel if we do not take things seriously now Nepal may even lose its identity and sovereignty, not just democracy for which I too have contributed a little."

KP believes that all happenings are predes-

tined. He sarcastically refers GP Koirala as, "my param mitra" and predicted, "God will not allow this man to leave with the kind of greatness which never was real."

Despite his utterances about women, whiskies and his book which I suspect will never be completed; KP is too soft to be a leader in current Nepali politics. These are times of national and international wheeling dealings. He simply lacks that killer instinct required to be a successful politician in Nepal. His sense of humor is too shuttle for society to understand and digest.

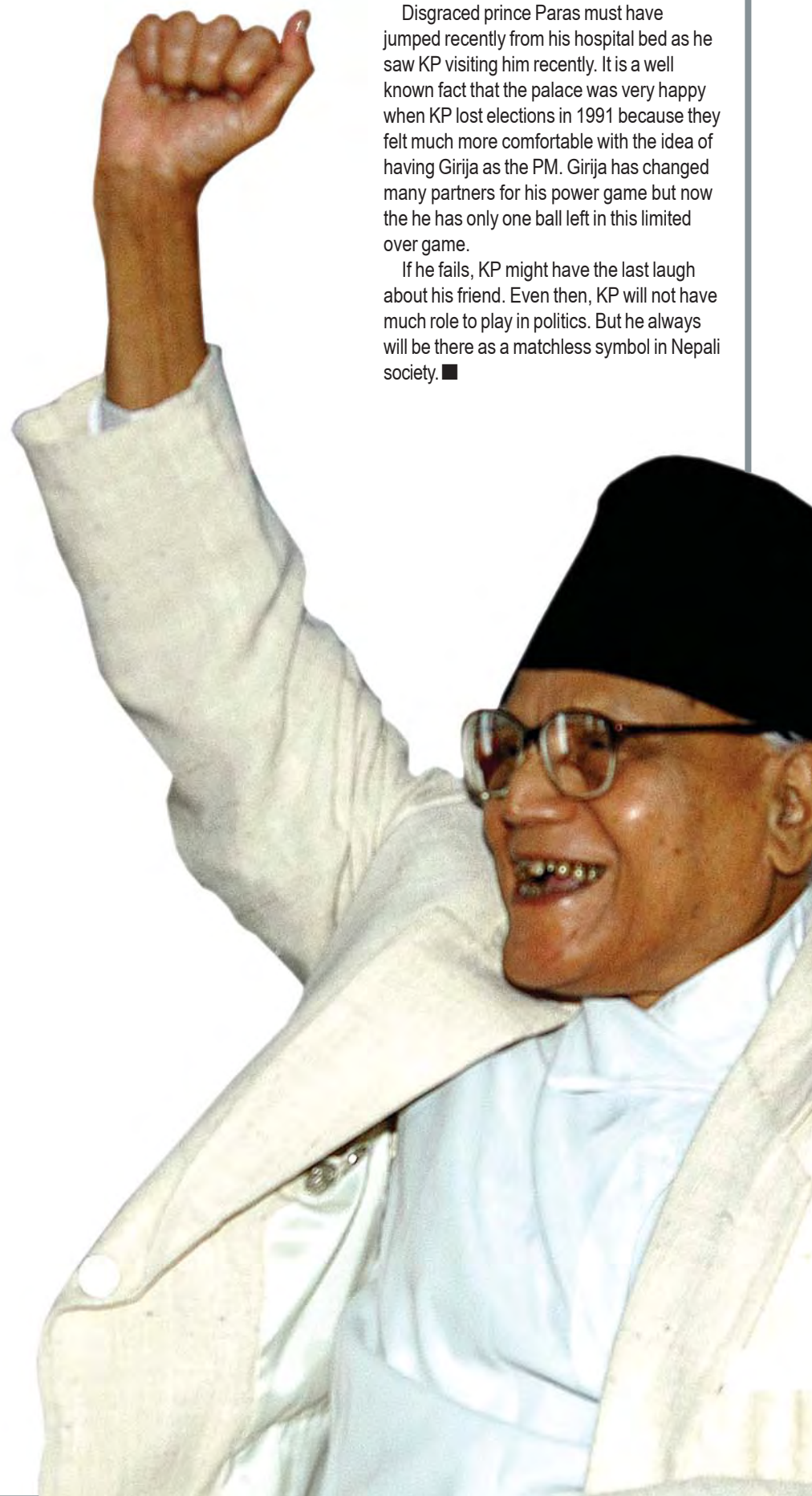
Despite my affection, I find him lazy and totally fatalistic and often self contradictory. Once I asked him why does he take things so lightly. He

became serious and replied, "Whether one pretends to take things seriously or not, nature has its own speed. End result of Nepali politics is always the same whether you run or stroll. Please do not mistake that I am a fatalist, I firmly believe that results are not in human hands, just the duty towards our respective conscience is in our hand." It has been a long time KP has become irrelevant in Nepali politics but still he will always be there as a unique symbol.

Here is a man who was jailed for 14 years by Kings because he chose to fight for human dignity. Who knows if he was not jailed that long perhaps his knees would have been strong enough so that he could walk himself today and participate in the national and international power games.

Disgraced prince Paras must have jumped recently from his hospital bed as he saw KP visiting him recently. It is a well known fact that the palace was very happy when KP lost elections in 1991 because they felt much more comfortable with the idea of having Girija as the PM. Girija has changed many partners for his power game but now the he has only one ball left in this limited over game.

If he fails, KP might have the last laugh about his friend. Even then, KP will not have much role to play in politics. But he always will be there as a matchless symbol in Nepali society. ■



Are we a democracy?

Political mudslinging in our country appears to be the rule rather than an exception.

In Nepal, political leaders instead of expounding on their own principles and platforms, spend more time indulging in mudslinging. Many leaders attack not only each other's issues, but also each other at very personal levels. Worse, at times political mudslinging includes a leader's personal life and his/her family. Such mudslinging or character assassination can become so ugly that it can cause the victims to be isolated from public activities. The dejected and humiliated ones may then have no choice but to distance themselves from their political parties.

In recent times, Nepal has been pivoting around politically charged disputes over abolishing monarchy and replacing it with a federal republican mechanism and keeping a ceremonial monarchy. Political leaders are clearly divided over the issue of whether to continue the monarchy or abolish it once and for all. With all the hyperbolic rhetoric coming from pro- and anti-republicanism, this debate has poisoned recent politics and has polarised Nepalis into two opposite extremes. This also started slander and character assassination from pro-republicanism people against the national leaders who opposed the idea of federal republic.

Character assassination, a particularly repugnant political tactic, has been employed extensively throughout the history of Nepali politics. Among many other prominent political leaders, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai has become the victim of this attack in contemporary Nepali political history.

Many anti-republicanism leaders including Bhattarai have been condemned for their pro-monarchical views by other leaders who are advocating and campaigning for a federal republican set-up. The campaigning against him has now degenerated from an earnest critique of his views to a pathetic attempt at character assassination.

Defaming Bhattarai may have given some people a despicable popularity among the public. If they think he neither possesses any power nor any ability to change the direction



■ Shirish Ranabhat

of the current political wind, why are they so afraid of his remarks? So what if he favors constitutional monarchy? If we are so ready to abolish monarchy, why not just do it? Bhattarai (and anyone else for that matter) has the right to have a different opinion. If we cannot respect other's views, we are authoritarian

and hypocritical.

Unfortunately, political mudslinging in our country appears to be the rule rather than an exception. It really is not an effective way to sway today's savvy voters, many of whom are very concerned about the direction this country is heading to.

In any democracy, freedom of speech and expression is vital. Democracies offer space to many voices expressing different or contrary ideas and opinion. Democracy also allows any citizen to publicly criticise unwise or tyrannical opinion of public figures or policies of

In any democracy, freedom of speech and expression is vital. Democracies offer space to many voices expressing different or contrary ideas and opinion.

authorities; and people have the liberty to express what they think and how they feel. In a democratic society, people have right to accept or reject. Why do then Nepalis, especially politicians tend to stoop down so and play dirty, instead of politely and logically rejecting their opponents' views? Is democracy here only a convenient term used just for vested interests? ■

(Writer is Ph.D, Executive Member, Nepali Janasamparka Samiti (NJS), USA and Coordinator, Policy and Research Department, NJS-USA)

Basic Operating Guidelines agreed to by Undersigned Agencies in Nepal

The Basic Operating Guidelines were signed by our agencies in 2003, allowing our impartial development work to continue during conflict. We republish these guidelines committed to respecting them and determined to focus on development activities that include the diverse groups that together constitute Nepali society. We remain impartial in the conflicts present in Nepal and look forward to their resolution through dialogue and understanding between all political and social groups. As Nepal moves towards elections to a Constituent Assembly our work will continue if the safety of our staff and their impartial work is respected by all Nepalis.

Based on principles agreed internationally and in Nepal, we the undersigned have adopted the following Basic Operating Guidelines for all development and, if necessary, humanitarian assistance in Nepal.

1. We are in Nepal to contribute to improvement in the quality of life of the people of Nepal. Our assistance focuses on reducing poverty, meeting basic needs and enabling communities to become self-sufficient.
2. We work through the freely expressed wishes of local communities, and we respect the dignity of people, their culture, religion and customs.
3. We provide assistance to the poor and marginalized people of Nepal, regardless of where they live and who they are. Priorities for assistance are based on need alone, and not on any political, ethnic or religious agenda.
4. We ensure that our assistance is transparent and we involve poor people and their communities in the planning, management and implementation of programmes. We are accountable to those whom we seek to assist and to those providing the resources.
5. We seek to ensure that our assistance tackles discrimination and social exclusion, most notably based on gender, ethnicity, caste and religion.
6. We recruit staff on the basis of suitability and qualification for the job, and not on the basis of political or any other considerations.
7. We do not accept our staff and development partners being subjected to violence, abduction, harassment or intimidation, or being threatened in any manner.
8. We do not work where staff are forced to compromise core values or principles.
9. We do not accept our assistance being used for any military, political or sectarian purposes.
10. We do not make contributions to political parties and do not make any forced contributions in cash or kind.
11. Our equipment, supplies and facilities are not used for purposes other than those stated in our programme objectives. Our vehicles are not used to transport persons or goods that have no direct connection with the development programme. Our vehicles do not carry armed or uniformed personnel.
12. We do not tolerate the theft, diversion or misuse of development or humanitarian supplies. Unhindered access of such supplies is essential.
13. We urge all those concerned to allow full access by development and humanitarian personnel to all people in need of assistance, and to make available, as far as possible, all necessary facilities for their operations, and to promote the safety, security and freedom of movement of such personnel.
14. We expect and encourage all actors concerned to comply strictly with international humanitarian principles and human rights law.



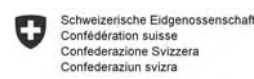
United Nations



European Commission



Danish International Development Assistance



Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC



Canadian International Development Agency



gtz

German Technical Cooperation



EMBASSY OF FINLAND KATHMANDU



SNV

Connecting People's Capabilities

Netherlands Development Organisation



Japan International Cooperation Agency



Association of International NGOs in Nepal

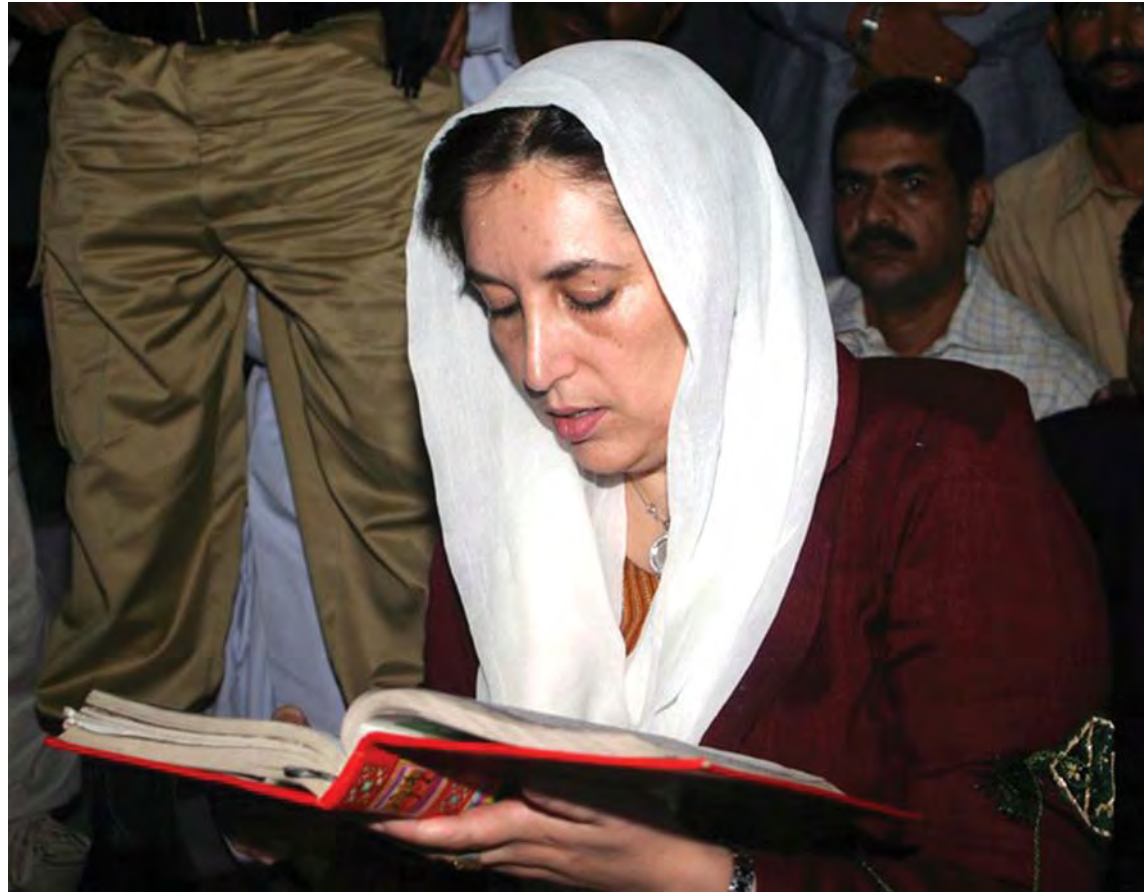
Emotional welcome for Benazir

Thousands of party faithful turned out to give an emotional welcome to former prime minister Benazir Bhutto on Saturday when she set foot on the soil of her ancestral village after eight years. Chanting "Jeay Bhutto", the People's Party supporters cheered and clapped as Ms Bhutto visited the mazar of her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in Garhi Khuda Baksh village.

Ms Bhutto waved from her bullet-proof vehicle to jubilant crowds, who were prevented from approaching the vehicle by security staff wielding AK-47s. A huge portrait of Mr Bhutto hung from a pylon, and green, red and black PPP flags fluttered as her convoy whipped up a duststorm. Ms Bhutto laid a shawl inscribed with Quranic verses and showered rose petals on her father's grave. She then sat beside the tomb for almost an hour, reading the holy Quran.

"I feel very sentimental. I was eager to visit the tomb of my father, the Quaid-i-Awam, and offer prayers," Ms Bhutto told reporters later. She was then driven to her family residence, protected by security officials in jeeps mounted with machineguns. "There is still a threat to my life, but Allah can protect everyone and I am not scared of these people (militants)," the PPP chief asserted. "I now feel better about my security."

Earlier, Ms Bhutto arrived in Sukkur from Karachi by aeroplane, adds Abbas Jalbani.



Hundreds of police and paramilitary troops were deployed at the airport for Ms Bhutto's first foray outside Karachi since last week's attack marred her return to Pakistan. Thousands of PPP workers and supporters had started thronging the Sukkur airport hours before the PPP leader's arrival, although the local party leadership had made no announcements about Ms Bhutto's schedule. Rumours were in circulation that the announcement of Ms Bhutto's arrival in Sukkur was a decoy and

that she had already reached Garhi Khuda Baksh or even that she may take a helicopter from Sukkur air-port. After the plane touched the tarmac, hundreds of vociferous workers gatecrashed into the airport after dismantling three tiers of security cordon thrown by police, the Rangers and the Airport Security Force.

Ms Bhutto's bullet-proof Nisar Khuhro-driven four wheeler — followed and preceded by identical vehicles and accompanied by 24 police vans, two jeeps carrying police high-ups

and two others carrying Rangers — left the airport for Garhi Khuda Bukhsh Bhuuto in a caravan of two to three thousand vehicles. The fleet kept on swelling as more vehicles joined it on the road to Larkana. Larkana DIG Muzaffar Shaikh advised Ms Bhutto to change her route because at the beginning of the road leading to Dakhan from Madeji, at least 5,000 people were waiting for her and the narrow turn was a security risk. Initially she refused but, after a 15-minute persuasion, she agreed to take the Gaheja-Ratodero link road. Benazir Bhutto said that the threat to her life, coupled with "poor security arrangements", made for her by the government could not keep her away from the masses as "I don't care about my life".

Talking to journalists accompanying her during the Karachi-Sukkur flight, Ms Bhutto said she was extremely happy to be able to return to her ancestral village and her constituency. "When I

announced my plan of return, I was told that I was endangering my life. Even President Musharraf advised me on TV that I should defer my homecoming. But I decided to face the threat and take the risk." She said that when she arrived in Karachi, three million people greeted her. "People want change." She added that for her, entire Pakistan was Larkana (her home town) and she would visit different parts of the country soon.

(Dawn)

Myanmar, more talk-UN

Envoy calls for more dialogue after junta and Suu Kyi meet

The United Nations envoy on Myanmar Saturday called for more dialogue after a rare meeting between the junta and Aung San Suu Kyi, saying that concrete progress would improve the regime's relations with the world.

Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has spent years under house arrest, held talks for the first time on Thursday with a senior junta official appointed to work with the opposition.

Ibrahim Gambari, the UN pointman on Myanmar, said he suggested the meeting when he visited the country to express international outrage over the junta's bloody crackdown on demonstrations. "This is only a first step," said Gambari, who is due back in Myanmar in the first week of November.

"This should lead to the early resumption of dialogue that will lead to very concrete and tangible results," Gambari told reporters in Tokyo after talks with Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda.

"I hope this process produces concrete results for the benefit of the people of Myanmar, and also improves the relationship between the government of Myanmar and the international community," he said.

Myanmar's junta has faced strong international condemnation since it crushed the protests, which were led by Buddhist monks and originally started in response to a sharp hike in fuel costs.

At least 13 people were killed, including monks and Japanese journalist Kenji Nagai, who was shot as he filmed a demonstration in the main city, Yangon.

Amid the outrage, the military regime appointed Labour Minister Aung Kyi to build ties with the opposition led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

Myanmar's state television showed brief footage of the meeting, a rarity in a country where Aung San Suu Kyi has



been under house arrest for 12 of the past 18 years.

"For us, we believe that dialogue is the only way out in (defusing) the present crisis and also in the future," said Gambari, who is on a six-nation tour of Asia.

Some observers, however, said the meeting was no more than a bid by the junta to deflect criticism.

"It was significant in a sense that at least the military and Aung San Suu Kyi held talks," said Chaichoke Chulsiriwong, an expert on Myanmar at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University. "But we have to remain cautious."

Gambari also held talks in Japan with deputy foreign minister Mitoji Yabunaka, who travelled to Myanmar to lodge a protest after the shooting of Kenji Nagai.

Yabunaka told Gambari that Japan was "worried about the situation in Myanmar regarding democratisation and human rights," a foreign ministry statement said.

(Despatch Online)

Maoists gun down 18 in Jharkhand

Maoists struck again in Naxalite-infested Jharkhand on Saturday when they gunned down 18 people, including the son of former chief minister and sitting Koderma MP Mr Babulal Marandi, and injured two at a cultural programme at Chilkhara village in Giridih district in the early hours of the morning.

"Armed Naxalites opened fire when the programme was on between 12.30 a.m. and 1 a.m. and killed 18 people, including Anuplal Marandi, the son of former chief minister Babulal Marandi," deputy inspector general of police Mr RK Mullick said in Ranchi.

The former chief minister's brother, Mr Nunulal Marandi, who was also present at the function, escaped unhurt. The injured were rushed to Giridih hospital. The victims were all between 18 and 25 years of age. Wearing CRPF uniforms, the Maoists attacked the victims, who were attending a cultural programme after a football match, much the same way they killed Jamshedpur MP Sunil Mahato and three others on 4 March in Bagudia village in East Singhbhum district.

"Our forces have cordoned off the area and are trying to locate the Naxalites," CRPF spokesperson said. A bomb disposal squad and dog squad are also accompanying our team, he added. Mr Marandi's party, Jharkhand Vikas Morcha-Democratic, has called a statewide bandh tomorrow to protest the gruesome killings and a delegation from the party will meet the Governor to demand the resignation of chief minister Mr Madhu Koda and the growing lawlessness in Jharkhand. Mr Koda, on the other hand, spoke to his Bihar counterpart to discuss a joint strategy to counter the Naxalites — the village where the attack took place is close to the inter-state border.

Mr Nunulal Marandi, brother of Mr Babulal Marandi, blamed the Giridih administration and police squarely for the massacre in Chilkhara village.

"We cannot understand why the police posted for the match were withdrawn soon after the prize distribution ceremony", he said.

(The statesman)

Heritage sites

Mesmerising Bhaktapur

■ Pramesh Pradhan



Rich in art and architecture, indigenous culture, colourful festivals and age-old traditions, Bhaktapur is truly a heritage city. Lying at an altitude of 1,401 metre 15 km east of capital Kathmandu, it is renowned for its monuments, architectural wonders and Newari lifestyle. Spread out roughly over seven sq. kilometers, it seems the least modernised among the three former Malla kingdoms of the valley.

Bhaktapur perhaps began as a collection of small farming villages in the 3rd century AD. It was a resting place between the older Tibet-India caravan trade route. It was once the capital of Nepal during the Malla period from the 12th to the 15th century. King Bhupatendra Malla is accredited for making major contributions to the city. The architectural development unfortunately came to a standstill after it was unified into Nepal in 1769. Several earthquakes devastated most of the art and architecture and the earthquake in 1934 demolished two thirds of its structures.



Until the construction of Arniko highway linking China to Nepal, Bhaktapur remained distant from Kathmandu. Economically strong and independent, one still finds older generations in Bhaktapur who cannot understand the commonly spoken Nepali language. In the 80s, restoration and sanitation projects assisted by German government gave Bhaktapur a facelift and transformed it to a clean and perhaps the most organised city in Nepal. The city, still medieval in character in many ways, is the smallest among Nepal's 75 districts and the most densely populated city.

It is endowed with features like the spacious Durbar Square, the oldest temple of Changu Narayan, and the longest series of windows. The 16th century Datratreya temple lies in older and eastern part of the city. The square of Datratreya consists of some of the most spectacular presentations of woodcraft including a wooden museum, courtyards, narrow lanes, water wells and a Bhimsen temple.

Nyatapole (five roofed) temple dedicated to Tantric goddess Siddhilaxmi is the most proportionate example of pagoda architecture. This temple is perhaps the best known icon for Bhaktapur. Made in 1702, it is the tallest temple in Nepal which is constructed on five plinths, guarded by five pairs of guards and with five stories signifying the five cosmic elements. In front in the Taumadhi square, the centre of the city, are Bhairavnath (Shiva) and Tilmadhav Narayan (Vishnu) temples.

The 55 window palace is an example of architectural excellence and Sundhoka (golden gate), is an incredible piece of metal craft. Inside the guarded palace area, there are courtyards and a royal bath. Empty areas show from where images were stolen in and around the royal bath. The Bhaktapur Durbar Square also houses the Taleju bell, an octagonal wooden pavilion, a stone Sikhara temple of Vatsala and stunning images of Ugrachandi and Bhairav.

Delicious curd (jujudhau), men's black cap (bhadgaonle topi) and women's sari (haku patasi) are the specialties of Bhaktapur. Pottery making is another rich tradition. Artists in Bhaktapur have inherited a long history of craftsmanship that is still evident today. Bhaktapur is also a city of devotees. It is a great potpourri of medieval culture, traditions, festivals, dances and architectural masterpieces. Bisket festival (coinciding with Nepalese New Year) and Sapatu (Gaijatra) are the major celebrations in this city of friendly and hardworking people. An entrance fee is levied on visitors for cleaning, maintenance and improvement of the world heritage site and is well spent. Colourful open markets, open clay-pottery, weavers making handmade textiles, vegetable and crops drying out in sun and much more, makes it worthwhile to spend a weekend at least in one of those guesthouses dotting the main square.

(nte@mail.com.np)

Reincarnation

Hypnotic trance facilitates revivification of lost memories

■ Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche

Dr. Ian Stevenson has done a lot of research on such children and he has shifted fraudulent from the genuine. And he has come up with four huge volumes of genuine ones which he says cannot be scientifically disproved in any way. His four volumes are: Cases of reincarnation type: India; Cases of reincarnation type: Sri-Lanka; Cases of reincarnation type: Lebanon and Turkey; and Cases of reincarnation type: Thailand and Burma. He has also written another book - Twenty cases suggestive of reincarnation.

Then again there is the world famous psychotherapist Helen Wembach, who also used over 20 years of her own clinical work in hypnotherapy. She too claims that even though she herself is a Christian whose beliefs contradict the idea of reincarnation and her training in psychotherapy did not in any way prepare her for this; cases she dealt with for over 20 years, overwhelmingly pointed rather clearly at cases of former lives.

Hypnotic trance facilitates revivification of lost memories of this life especially those from birth onwards. Everything that the child sees, hears, smells, feels, remembers are stored in the subconscious/unconscious. These memories can be teased out into awareness through various methods like 'free association' in Freudian psychoanalysis, active imagination in Jungian analytical psychotherapy and hypnotherapy etc.

When Helen Wembach used hypnotherapy, which is a powerful tool to bring out lost memories entrenched stubbornly in the subconscious, she often found that her patients went further than birth into former lives. She also found that if memories and wounds of former lives were healed the effect was seen in this life's mental life. These are records that cannot be easily explained away; as actual mental and physical healings had also taken place.

I would like to recount the case of a multi-millionaire that Helen had dealt with. One of her patients was a millionaire who had suffered from strong pains in his right ribs. Being a millionaire, he had the best of doctors and his personal physician made him



go through all the possible checkups possible at the time in the States. Since no physical cause was found in spite of repeated tests of various kinds, his personal physician finally suggested that it could be of a psychological origin and he should try a psychotherapist as well. Then he met Helen.

Helen started digging up his subconscious mind to cull out some experience / event in his childhood which could be the cause of his excruciating pain. Many

Marshland Flowers

physical pains and pathologies originate in some traumatic experience in childhood. The purpose of all forms of psychotherapy, be it Gestalt psychotherapy, Freudian psychoanalysis, Jungian Analytical psychotherapy, transactional psychotherapy or hypnotherapy or their combinations etc., is to bring the traumatic experiences hidden in the recesses of the subconscious to conscious awareness.

In both Buddhism and all forms of psychotherapy, awareness is curative. If the root cause (usually traumatic experiences but also sometimes just plain old childhood confusions) is brought clearly in front, to be scanned by awareness, the process of being cured begins. As long as the root causes are hidden in the dark nooks and crannies of the subconscious mind, there is no chance that we can free ourselves from its grasp and all that it entails. That is why Smriti – Samprajanya (mindfulness and comprehension) is of the

utmost importance in the Buddhist path be it Sravakayana or Mahayana.

Even in the loony bin, a person who has flipped out begins to get cured only when he himself becomes aware that he has flipped out. The loony bin is an extreme case where people whose neurotic tendencies have become psychotic; but in society even amongst those who are considered socially acceptable, same neurotic tendencies found in the psychotic to an uncontrollable level, is to be found in a lesser or greater degree. Just like the lunatic we too can get cured or be freed of our neurotic tendencies, only as and when we become aware of them within us.

Thus awareness is curative and one of the purposes of most therapies is to bring the unconscious into awareness. This is called integrating the unconscious. The unconscious here means all the neurosis and complexes hidden within us. In Buddhist terminology, we can become free of our Klesha (emotional defilements) only if we are fully aware of the workings of the emotional defilements within us. That is why the Shasta (Master) prescribed living ones life in full mindfulness with comprehension - Smriti Samprajanya.

Going back to the story of the millionaire; while fishing for early memories of childhood, in a hypnotic trance, he suddenly slipped into a dungeon in the Roman period. He started wailing and crying, holding his ribs. When asked what was happening he described that he was in a prison in Rome and a Centaurian was towering over him and kicking him to death. When asked where he was being kicked, he pointed at the same ribs which had been causing him trouble since a long time. Thus he died being kicked on his ribs. When he was brought back to the present, he was commanded that he would remember the incident clearly even after he woke up. After he woke up from the hypnotic trance with full memory of the incident, it was found that he had 'miraculously' become free from the pain that had troubled him for such a long time.

(To be continued)

(Sridhar Rinpoche is a Vajrayana Master)



A grandmother in Mro village, Chittagong, Bangladesh

BY Sushma Amatya



Bhaskar Ojha

A football match between Nepal and Yemen at Dasharath Stadium, Kathmandu on Sunday. Nepal lost the second round world cup qualifying match by 0-2.

Astronauts Open Space Station's New Room

Astronauts the International Space Station (ISS) celebrated the grand opening of their orbital laboratory's latest addition on Saturday to christen the hub-like node dubbed Harmony.

The station's Expedition 16 commander Peggy Whitson and Italian astronaut Paolo Nespoli opened the hatch to the nearly 16-ton Harmony module at 8:24 a.m. EDT

Nespoli and Whitson wore protective goggles and masks inside the node to guard against any loose debris shaken free during the module delivery to the ISS. They also took air samples after floating into the new orbital room.

Harmony in space
Named by students in a NASA



The Italian-built Harmony module is visible on the upper right side of the image attached to the Destiny module of the International Space Station in this image from NASA TV October 27, 2007.

(1224 GMT), commemorating the event with a brief ceremony. "It's a pleasure to be here in this very beautiful piece of hardware," Nespoli said of the Italian-built Harmony node which he and his STS-120 crewmates aboard NASA's shuttle Discovery helped install during a Friday spacewalk.

contest, the Harmony node serves as the docking point for European and Japanese laboratories to be installed during future shuttle missions. "We think Harmony is a very good name for this module because it represents the culmination of a lot of the international partner work," Whitson said during the node's

christening. The school bus-sized connecting node was temporarily attached to the space station's Unity module on Friday and will be moved to its permanent position once Discovery leaves the ISS on Nov. 4.

"We're just getting it suitable so we can go in and get the work done," said ISS flight director Holly Ridings late Friday. "But [we'll] not actually do anything permanent in there so that it can be moved again."

Astronauts connected power and data lines to the Harmony module earlier today to power up its internal systems. They will then begin the busy task of replacing valves and removing more than 700 bolts that secured the module's internal components in place during Discovery's Oct. 23 launch.

"At one point, originally in the mission, it was not a requirement for us to go inside," Discovery's STS-120 mission commander Pamela Melroy said before the spaceflight. "And the crew said, 'No way! We want to go inside!' We were excited about that."

Melroy presented Whitson with a necklace bearing a Harmony module-shaped charm after the node was opened.

(space.com)

Branches and Batik

Life pulses through its intricate map created by nature. Veins of life, indeed are the branches that spread out, soar into the skies and reach out to the unknown. The basic idea of this painting arose at a time when I was trying to gather information on my ancestry. I was



fascinated by the fact that my family came from a certain culture and blended in with so many different cultures through marriage, travel, time and migration.

I would have called this painting, roots, but then did a rethink since it would have appeared contradictory. I have used acrylics and texture white yet again and a combination of complementary colours with red being highlighted, representing life.



■ Sanchita Sinha Roy

Batik Design from Ghana, Africa



I have been fascinated with resist techniques like Batik for a long time. This popular resist technique is known to be more than a millennium old and probably originates in ancient Egypt or Sumeria as historical evidence points out. Batik is found in several countries in West Africa such as Nigeria, Mali, Ghana and Cameroon, and in Asia in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Iran, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

(Sanchita, painter and writer, can be reached at: Cell - 00-919818803916 and sanchitasroy@gmail.com)

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