

READ

VOL. 2 | No. 2 | Issue 5 | April-June 2009

NRS. 15/-

EDUCATION FIRST

A call for good Samaritans



It's a different
feeling being
around writers
one admires

**WHAT KTM IS
READING**
Zooming in on
readers

FICTION
Endless wait

READING
The hows and
the whys of it

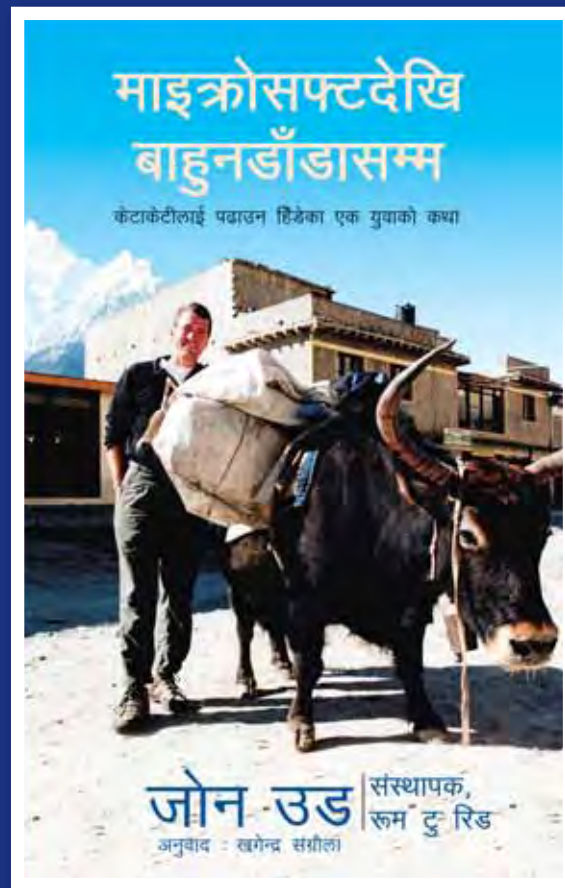
**THE READING
HABIT**
Hooked on doing
homework of a
different kind

BOOK BYTE
Devendra Raj
Panday talks
about books

Feature
Banking on
"The Daily
Drucker"



AN INSPIRING READ



If you have bought "**Microsoftdekhi Bahundandasamma,**" you've played a part in helping to establish schools in rural Nepal. Thank you for your good gesture.

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On the cover: Gagan Thapa in a photo session for READ by Dipankar Kasaju (cybernepal.com.np) on Wednesday, 14 Jan. 2009

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Dear reader,

First, apologies—apologies for not being able to bring this issue out in time.

It's hard bringing out a magazine, without any financial backing. Harder still, without a dedicated team. And we have neither.

Yet READ has come out, thanks largely to you—you who kept inquiring about the new issue, to the point of embarrassing us. READ has come out thanks to our contributors, without whose support we wouldn't have been able to fill the pages. READ has come out thanks to



Basu Kshitiz



Bikas Rauniyar



Dipankar Kasaju



Min Ratna Bajracharya

Min Ratna Bajracharya, Bikas Rauniyar, Dipankar Kasaju and Basu Kshitiz—wonderful people who have obliged our request to take photos and do illustrations for the magazine without flinching. It is thanks to them that our magazine looks as good as it does. We are grateful to them all—for supporting a good cause, which incidentally is the subject of the cover story of this issue.

In one of the earlier issues we had carried a review of "Leaving Microsoft to Change the World." It's a memoir of an exemplary American who left the highly rewarding job at Microsoft and its attendant luxuries to provide the light of education to Nepali underprivileged children. His story was so moving and his work so commendable that we thought of publishing the book in Nepali and running a campaign called Education First to complement or acknowledge what he was doing. Once the book was published, we requested Gagan Thapa, a young political leader and now a member of the constituent assembly, to lead the campaign. The campaign has done a few fund raising programs, but the campaign really hasn't got going. So in order to drum up

support for the campaign, we asked Gagan Thapa to write a cover story on the importance of giving.

In an attempt to make us empathize with children who don't get equal access to opportunities solely because they were born somewhere else or into dalit families and help them in whatever way we can, Gagan Thapa asks us to question ourselves: what if we were born in a remote

village? what if we had no books to read while we were growing up? what if we had got no opportunity to go school?.

In "How I came to books," writer and editor Sanjay Upadhyia reminisces about his childhood spent around books. In "How and why read," Don Messerschmidt, Associate Editor of ECS magazine, writes that we read mostly for pleasure and knowledge and at times to learn about style. "Rubbing shoulders with writers" is a short report on one of India's most successful events, the Jaipur Literature Festival.

Apart from these, there are an excerpt from a novel-in-progress by a writer who goes by the pen name Mauntara, reviews of "The Six Brothers" and the much-talked about book by Fareed Zakaria, "The Post-American World," which explains the rise of India and China, plus other regular tidbits.

Happy reading,
Ajit Baral
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How I came to books

A Nepali journalist currently based in the United States, [SANJAY UPADHYA](#) has worked for, among other organizations, "The Rising Nepal," "The Times" (London), "Inter Press Service" and "Khaleej Times" (Dubai) and has reported from the United Nations headquarters in New York City. He has appeared frequently on BBC World Service television and radio as a commentator on Nepali political affairs and written hundreds of commentaries and analyses in English and Nepali. His book, "Raj Lives," was published by Vistar, India.

For me, reading came a close second to writing. Well, sort of.

Living abroad as children of a diplomat, my three siblings and I found school offering its usual mix of struggle and sustenance. Then there was homework—and not the kind you brought from school.

No matter how grueling the day, Father used to make the older ones copy a couple of pages from the encyclopedia each evening before going to bed. Although not a welcome undertaking, we knew it had to be done. A daily dose of paternal reprimand was just too high a price to pay.

For some reason, I started out with countries and famous people, picking the particular subject for the evening at random. It did not take long for the slog to reveal its splendor. Words, sentences, paragraphs seemed to flow in some inexplicable harmony. The mechanics that established this order were elusive at the time. Yet each turn of the page tended to emit a sonorous ring, as the fingers gripped the pen and pushed on. Subject and style moved almost in lockstep.

It would be a while before I finished reading my first book, a biography of Benjamin Franklin. The man's colorful persona, coupled with the fascinating diversity of his scientific and political accomplishments, was riveting. At the time, the fact that Franklin helped draft the U.S. Declaration of Independence mattered less to me than his authorship of anonymous essays for a publication run by his brother, who saw nothing much in young Ben.

On Fridays, Father would take us to bookstores and make us pick our reading for the week. Biographies had become my favorites. Mostly, his suggestion would prevail. Reading acquired its own scope, schedule and steadiness.

Back in Nepal as a sixth-grader, after eight years abroad, I found myself struggling with Nepali right from the alphabets. The preoccupation kept me away from the English volumes that graced Father's study. Still, browsing the titles and authors' names on the spines neatly arrayed across shelves provided much-needed solace.

For much of high school, my reading was confined to the curriculum, barring one area. Keshav Raj Pindali's and Bhairav Aryal's books introduced me to the wonderful genre of humor and satire. The elegance with which the amalgamation of words, sentences and paragraphs transcended language was inspiring. These writers' use of alliteration, puns and other literary devices added amusement.



I would return to English books only after the SLC exams. That made the extended wait for the results less excruciating. Fyodor Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment" and "The Brothers Karamazov," in particular, were captivating. In these novels, the flaws of human beings are juxtaposed well with their ability to endure hardship. The short stories of Anton Chekhov, W. Somerset Maugham and Guy de Maupassant brought out the redeeming value of the seeming ordinariness of another era. These men more or less rounded off world literature for me. The other classics, I would later relish on the screen, big and small.

In college, I was lured by phantasmagoria. Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" and "Shame" cast the subcontinent's history in often hilarious terms. With greater solemnity, M.M. Kaye's "The Far Pavilions" and "Shadow of the Moon" offered deeper excursions into the colonial era. Travelogues brought alive foreign lands and amplified new perspectives. V.S. Naipaul's "Among the Believers," in particular, was prescient in its exposition of the ferment in the Islamic world and its wider impact.

By now, I had zeroed in on the autobiography. U.S. presidential memoirs conveyed the ultimate sequence of decisions, responses, proclivities and prejudices that shaped major world events. The early presidencies, beginning with Harry S Truman's, were covered by Father's collection. The American Library provided the later ones. John F. Kennedy, felled by an assassin a year after I was born, left a gaping hole in my exploration. Arthur Schlesinger's "A Thousand Days" and William Manchester's "Death of a President" provided deep insights into a presidency immortalized by hope as well as tragedy.

Across the Atlantic, Winston Churchill's "Great Contemporaries" treated famous and infamous personalities in pieces that, when reassembled, afforded a fuller understanding of their characters and complexities. I later found microscopic analyses of protagonists weaved into a larger narrative in Henry Kissinger's books. His three-volume White House memoirs, together with the seminal "Diplomacy" represent a powerful admixture of prose and perspective. The growth of the memoir as a genre of its own in Nepal since the 1990s should certainly help us understand ourselves better.

Reading has become a matter of work as well as pleasure for me. Often, the distinction is blurred. I am still enthralled by the chorus of words, sentences and paragraphs as they traverse varied cadences. When it is time to turn the page, I sometimes pause to ruminate on how it all began.



Kath's quest

Ajit Baral

Kath used to draw the flora and fauna of the places she traveled to and take notes of them, sitting usually on a chautari, and children and adults would mill around her and look with wonder at a *gagri* or a goat being formed, magic-like, on paper **BY ANUP REGMI**

Very few children stories have been written in Nepal. And those that have been written, many comment, are preachy and therefore unappealing to children. Worse, they have been produced carelessly—without giving any thought to either aesthetics or design. And that's what struck Kath White, an Australian illustrator and a novelist, when she came to Nepal first on a Churchill Fellowship in 1984 and then, a few years later, to work for the United Nations Mission's Adult Literacy Program. She says, "There weren't many books for children to read in Nepal. The few that were there, were mostly books of religious stories, which were poorly illustrated, and didn't show the Nepali way of life."

So she wanted to do something about it. And finally she did, by bringing out a nicely produced picture book called "Kanchi's [sic] Quest" (Ekta Books, 2006).

"Kanchi's Quest" is the story of Kanchi's search for a fictional plant, called *limi*, which is fast disappearing. In her search for the *limi*, she journeys from the subtropical Tarai, to the hills and mountains, and sees rhinos and peacocks, snow leopards and mountain goats, and the *sal* and rhododendrons, and finally discovers the plant, which when she comes near it, smells of heavenly scent. Kanchi's journey is meticulously illustrated, giving readers a vivid sense of our geography, flora and fauna.

A longtime resident of Nepal, Kath used to draw the flora and fauna of the places she traveled to and take notes of them while traveling in the country, sitting usually on a chautari, and children and adults would mill around her and look with wonder at a *gagri* or a goat being formed, magic-like, on paper. This note taking and drawing came handy when she sat down to paint in words and pictures Kanchi's search for a fictional endangered species.

Kath was born into a poor family and her parents were illiterates. However, her father knew the importance of learning and used to tell her stories at night, illustrating them on brown paper. Her parents would also take her and her siblings to galleries on Saturdays, and encourage them to draw. The eldest of her brothers was very good at drawing, and he would ask her to draw and read out stories to her.

Being very poor, her parents couldn't afford to buy books for their children. But once a week, a moving library, built on a cart, called Heather-ton Traveling Library, would come to her neighborhood, lending a book for a penny. And she used to borrow many books from the library and read. Later, she took a drawing course.

Kath put her drawing and story telling skills to good use when she worked as an Adult Literacy Consultant. She initiated "Pipal Pustak" series for neo-literates. The objective of the "Pipal Pustak" series was to impart practical skills, and knowledge to neo-literates. She says, "People might be illiterate, but they are knowledgeable about many things and have interesting experiences that might be useful to others." The "Pipal Pustak" series documented stories about people's courage and kindness, moments of happiness and sorrow, told by the people themselves. The series was honored by UNESCO in 1996.

The "Pipal Pustak" Series has long discontinued, and Kath no longer lives in Nepal, but still she longs to tell the simple but beautiful stories of the Nepali people. Today she is at work on another illustrated book, which will be a kind of sequel to "Kanchi's Quest" in which she will explore the rich cultures of people living in the Tarai, hills and mountains.



Finding the way

John Wood comes to Nepal frequently, with loads of books. He sends money collected from good Samaritans to build libraries and schools and provide scholarships to girls. But he has no self-interest in doing all these. Nor is he guided by patriotism. He is only driven by good faith and the conviction that every child on this earth has the right to read books and access knowledge and information **BY GAGAN THAPA**

Like thousands of middle-class families, our family came to Kathmandu in search of better opportunities. So we were not well off, and we had to stick to the hardships out.

When I was in school, I used to get two pairs of school uniforms and a pair of shoes, whose toe ends would soon wear out from kicking small tin boxes lying, dead-like, on the dusty road. My clothes and shoes rarely lasted till the end of the year, and I would eagerly wait for Dashain, to get a new set. My demands for clothes would put financial strains on my parents, and the situation would get complicated when one of us fell sick. Our mother, who managed the household, would cut down the intake of meat that we used to have on Saturdays, to make up for the unexpected expenditure. At those times, I used to feel that I was the most unfortunate child on earth.

In college, I became active in student politics and started to travel to different parts of the country. My understanding of the world increased. I had first-hand experience of the lives of thousands of people who barely survived on a morsel of food and who had nothing decent to wear. I also came to know about a countless number of children who couldn't afford to go to school. Seeing them, I felt I was not as unfortunate as I had thought myself to be. Seeing them, I felt how unjustified I was to resent my not getting to eat meat every Saturday. Seeing them, I felt that even the two sets of uniform that I used to get each year were a mark of luxury. And seeing them, I began to question

myself—What if I had been born into an indigent family or in a remote place? If I had, wouldn't I have expected some kind of help in order to get equal opportunities in life? Of course, I would have. So shouldn't I do unto others as I would have others do unto me? I should. Sadly, I hadn't done anything for others.

I could have given schools in my locality books that were lying unread on my shelves. I could have funded, in later years, the schooling of any of the children playing on the streets or doing dishes in a hotel just across my house. But I didn't do any of these things, not because I didn't have the wherewithal but because I lacked the inspiration—a fact that I realized after reading "Microsoftdekh Bahundandasamma," the Nepali translation of "Leaving Microsoft to Change the World" by John Wood.

In February last year, Khagendra Sangroula, the translator of the book, called me, asking me to come to his house. I was busy with the Constituent Assembly elections, trying to get nominated for the election. But I went to his house anyway, and was met by Ajit Baral and Niraj Bhari, the publishers of the book. They asked me to speak on the book during its release. I didn't know the writer, but Khagendra Sangroula was a kind of a guru to me, and I couldn't turn down his request. And like an obedient *sishya* I accepted the request.

So I found myself with the book in my hands, but the elections and my future were on my mind. So I decided to run through the book quickly, give

perfunctory comments on it and be done with it.

However, when I started to read it, I was hooked just a few pages into the book.

"Microsoftdekh Bahundandasamma" is the story of John Wood, an American who left a high-ranking job at Microsoft, giving up all the benefits that came with the job, just so that he could provide books to schools in remote villages in Nepal. He got the inspiration to provide books to schools after he came across a school that had in its library only a handful of books, and they were therefore so precious that they had to be locked up in a trunk, lest they be damaged. While growing up, John had taken books for granted, but here in Nepal were children who had no access to books. That fact stung John so deeply that he decided to make providing books to needy children his life-long vocation.

John Wood comes to Nepal frequently, with loads of books. He sends money collected from good Samaritans to build libraries and schools and provide scholarships to girls. But he has no self-interest in doing all these. Nor is he guided by patriotism. There is neither a *khel* of foreign aid nor a conspiracy to make Nepalis dependent on his act of charity. He is only driven by good faith and the conviction that every child on this earth has the right to read books and access knowledge and information.

Here was John Wood helping Nepali children—children, living hundreds of miles away, with a

● READ.COVER STORY

different skin color, language and culture. But I hadn't done anything for children that I shared everything with.

Naturally, I didn't have the courage to look at John Wood eye to eye, when it was my turn to speak at the book launch. I was praising him for what he was doing but the words of praise were gnawing at my heart. When it was John's turn to speak, I felt as if John Wood was standing tall, literally, among us—purportedly civilized, cultured and educated Nepalis—and taunting all of us, for not doing anything for others. This feeling made me uneasy for a few more days.

As I later found out, I was not alone in feeling uneasy about our not doing anything for others. A few days after the launch Ajit and Niraj came to me with a proposal to do something to complement, or in appreciation of, what John Wood was doing in Nepal. The proposal was to run a campaign, called Education First, to build schools in areas that had none. They had already decided to donate Rs. 70 (by matching Rs. 35 that would go to John Wood as royalty) from the sale of each "Microsoftdekh" to the campaign to get it rolling, and they wanted to organize events to raise more money, for which they sought my help. I agreed to help in whatever way I could, without thinking for a second, as I knew that what they were trying to do was noble

But although I became part of the campaign, I still had no moral authority to request others to contribute money to the campaign, because I

hadn't contributed anything yet. And I dearly wanted to make a contribution, but I had a limited source of income. However, I realized that I could always cut down my expenses and give the amount saved to the campaign. For example, I could drink a fewer glasses of tea and make five fewer mobile calls and save about Rs.1000 per month. With that money one could send a girl to school. So I decided to

Canadian company, Capital Planning Solutions, Inc. So far Rs. 1824000 has been collected. This amount will go towards building Shree Balkalyan Rastriya Primary school (see box).

But why this particular school, you may wonder. In our discussion, Room to Read had suggested that we help this school. We went to see the school in

About the school



Existing class room



New building under construction

Balkalyan Rastriya Primary School is located in Madi of Chitwan district, three hours' bus drive away from Narayangadh. The school has just two rooms. With tin roofing and wooden planks for walls, the rooms look more like sheds than anything else. Rain wafts and wind gushes through the wooden planks, so whenever there is heavy rain or wind, the school has to be closed.

The school has 54 students up to standard three, but only three teachers. Of the three, one has been working voluntarily for over a year now in the hope of ultimately being a salaried teacher. The students come from very poor and dalit families.

The school management sought help from government bodies to build a proper building, add more classes and recruit new teachers. But not much has come out of it.

So Room to Read decided to construct a new building for the school. The building when completed will have six solidly built rooms. There will be a library, which will be set up by Room to Read. And classes will be run up to fifth standard.

reduce my expenses and give Rs. 1000 per month to the campaign.

But initiating the campaign wasn't going to be easy, as we had other priorities and we were not sure how we should we go about it. The good thing was that we had expressed firm commitments to it. We organized a fund raiser in Kathmandu, in association with Sangeeta Thapa and Pratima Panday of the Infinity International and with the sponsorship of DHL and Himalayan Bank. We raised Rs.170500 (see box for the list of contributors) during the program, and we got so encouraged, we did another fund raiser in Chitwan, in association with Narayangadh Lady Jaycees and collected Rs.127260. We also had Rs. 462240, as proceeds from the sale of "Microsoftdekh". And Room to Read, the organization that John Wood founded, provided Rs.1064000 (\$14000) to the school with the support of a

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Gagan Thapa and John Wood at the CSR event

Madi, Chitwan, a place which was living with the wounds of war. After seeing the school and talking with the teachers and local people, we thought the school really needed help. And that's how we decided to help this school.

Room to Read will help build the school in cooperation with the local community, as we have no expertise in it. The school will cost around 30 lakh. The community will provide free labor, sand, stones and wood, as it cannot make any monetary contribution, and the local Village Development Committee has already contributed land to the school, but the school is still short of around Rs.1200000. The school committee has requested the District Education Office and VDC for further support. But any support to the school is welcome.

The good thing is, the construction work has already started. And we are glad that the small bit that we did will ensure that at least a few pupils will study in a school with a better infrastructure. We will however not bask in the glow of this achievement and put an end to the campaign. The campaign must and will go on.

What is Education First?

Initiated by the FinePrint Book Club Foundation, Education First is a campaign to establish at least one school in each of the five development regions. The main aim of the campaign is to provide education to disadvantaged children, but it also seeks to do much more—to spread the spirit of giving, across Nepal, a spirit that transforms in ways both concrete and intangible, the lives of countless people who are underprivileged because they were born in a certain area or into a certain

Contributors of the CSR program

No.	Contributors	Amount
01.	Himalayan Bank Ltd.	50000/-
02.	Nepal Britain Society	50000/-
03.	United Finance Limited	13000/-
04.	Gagan Thapa	12000/-
05.	Shekhar Golchha	11000/-
06.	Sushma Joshi	10000/-
07.	Sasin Joshi	10000/-
08.	Deepesh Pradhan	10000/-
09.	Kiran Raj Joshi	2000/-
10.	Linda M. Sherpa	2000/-
11.	Ms.Prema Paudyal	500/-
	Total	170500/-



Fund raising program in Chitwan

class or caste.

The campaign inspires us to help out in whatever capacity we can—irrespective of our income- and skill- levels, or our time available. It inspires us to work for the benefit of others (and in the process,

promote humanism), to ensure that people have a chance to live out their dreams. The campaign seeks to demonstrate that citizen activism and service can be powerful agents of change, that we, even as individuals, can do great things—lift spirits, touch hearts.

How was Education First conceived?

Many of us don't have the heart of a Mother Teresa to devote our whole life to the service of the people. Neither do many of us have billions of dollars as Bill Gates has to give to charity, to change the lives of masses of disadvantaged people. But we can still make a difference in other people's lives in our own small ways. This realization about our potential, driven home by John Woods in his book was what led us to start the Education First campaign.

Why we started Education First

We started the campaign to drive home the importance of people's coming together, the values of giving over receiving and the importance of reaching out to people to change their lives and thereby change our corner of the world. We want to cultivate a culture of giving by rallying privileged Nepalese to help others. We also want to show through this campaign that to make a positive change we first need to be the change we seek.

Why Education First is important

Imagine what and where you would have been now had you been born in a remote village of Nepal and hadn't had access to any kind of education. That's too scary a thought to imagine, right? But the sad reality is that thousands and thousands of children are living out the prospect that you and I feel too frightened to even imagine. Wouldn't you want to do something for these children who haven't enjoyed the kind of privileges you have? This is where Education First comes in, to prod you into action that will make a difference in the lives of the underprivileged children.

Most of us reading this probably haven't had to struggle to get an education, but imagine how hard it is to get an education for the millions in Nepal who have to struggle just to survive. The modern world, for all its blessings, is also inequitable, and we who live in islands of relative wealth amid a sea of poverty can sometimes forget the unfortunate. The modern world is also unstable and unsustainable: we the fortunate have the resources to cope with such a shifting world and roll with the changes, but the unfortunate among us do not even have the opportunities to gain a foothold in such an unstable world, much less dream of extracting benefits in the future from such an unsustainable world. We thus need to make at least our corner of the world more equitable. And the best way to do that is to invest in education.

9 Ways to make a difference

Education First tries to unite our innate urge to help others. It's our effort to seek out what each of us regardless of our income, available time and skills can do something useful for others. Here is how you can help Education First (The dates of events will be announced later. Please contact Anup at 4255500).

1 Buy merchandise

You are what you wear. Buy a range of t-shirts and caps and you won't just wear an attitude, but also make a difference. The proceeds from the sales will go to Education First.

2 Dinner with Gagan Thapa

It's a once in a life-time-opportunity to meet the young charismatic leader Gagan Thapa and chat with him about life and politics and much more over dinner. The opportunity has come knocking at your door. Don't let it slip by.

3 Public speaking course

The way you speak makes a difference to where you end up in life. Would Barack Obama have become president without his oratory skills? Learn public speaking skills from the master speaker Gagan Thapa.

4 Buy a book

You can buy a copy of "Mircsoftdekhi." Benefit by reading one of the most inspirational books to have been published in Nepal. More importantly, help a cause: Rs 70 from the sale of each book goes to Education First.

5 Concert

We will stage various concerts in order to raise money. You can buy concerts tickets. The money will go to the campaign. Listening to music will never again feel so good.

6 Donate money

You can donate money—it could be Rs.100 or more—to Education First. You can hand over the money to us or send it directly to 001-01802740019, Book Club Foundation, Himalayan Bank Limited, Thamel, Kathmandu.

7 Lottery

Buy a lottery ticket and give yourself a chance to win fabulous prizes—and in the process help a great cause.

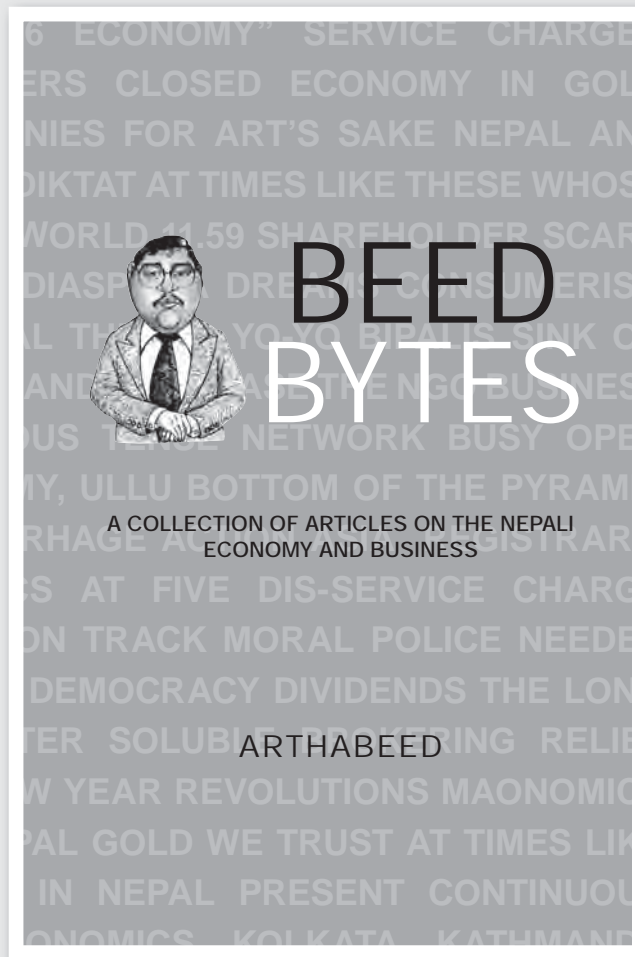
8 Fund raise

You can organize small fund raising events in your community, club, place of work or study and help Education First

9 Tell people about it

If you cannot do any of the things mentioned above, you can at least tell people about Education First and encourage them to be part of it.

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Silhouette



That day she wanted to look good and put on her favorite black dress, wrapped her neck with a red scarf with gold prints and threw a long coat over it **BY MAUNTARA**

As electronic waves disturbed her computer screen, Prachi knew her phone was about to ring, and it did. It was her hubby calling.

"Ya."

"Babe, are you done?" came Dev's voice.

"Almost."

"I'm on my way to pick you up."

"How long will it take you? I've an early morning shift tomorrow."

"I'll be there in half an hour."

"I'll take the office drop if you are going to be late."

"I said, I'm on my way. I won't be long."

"Ok."

Prachi wondered how long Dev's "won't be long" was going to be. He had the habit of arriving late. Sometimes it would be hours before he showed up. She could still remember the New Year's Eve just after their engagement.

Prachi's family was going out to celebrate the eve. But Prachi had wanted to celebrate it with Dev so she had stayed back home, waiting for him to pick her up.

She hated being dressy. But that day she wanted to look good. So put on her favorite black dress, wrapped her neck with a red scarf with gold prints and threw a long coat over it. She made it a point to pull back her hair because Dev always said she looked like Lara Croft when she kept her hair that way. She had no idea who Lara Croft was, but she knew that the comparison was meant to be a compliment

As she waited for Dev to pull into the drive-way, the phone rang instead and it was Dev's voice on the other end, telling her he was going to be late. The house was quiet. Prachi sat on the divan, tuning her ears to a Suzanne Vega song:

I'll never be you Maggie May

The one you loved and left behind...

Song after song wore off her anxiety.

It won't do...

...to stir a deep desire and long for you...

Suzanne Vega was still singing when Prachi opened her eyes. She had fallen asleep on the divan and it was 10:30 pm. Furious, she reached for the phone and, and as if on cue, it rang instantly.

"Prachi, I'll be there in five minutes. Can you wait for me outside?" Dev spoke nervously.

"Dev, it's too late. I'm in no mood to go," Prachi tried to not sound angry.

"Don't be a spoilsport now. It's not even eleven!"

Prachi picked her shoes and stood outside her gate in the December chill, shivering. But Dev was nowhere in sight. And it was only after what seemed like eternity that Dev swung his car around the bend. Prachi was so mad she didn't know what to say.

"My baby is quiet tonight! Ok, where do you want to go?" Dev put his finger on her chin.

Nowhere, Prachi wanted to say. But she mumbled softly, "anywhere."

After driving for a long time, they finally found a restaurant that was still open.

The restaurant was over crowded and Prachi felt uncomfortable. And as soon as they were seated and had placed an order, Dev excused himself and went to the loo, looking at his mobile which was vibrating. Prachi waited for Dev to come back, taking in the noisy crowd. The food arrived. It looked delectable but Prachi had no appetite.

Dev had been gone for almost twenty minutes. The food was getting cold, and she ordered the waiter to take the food away.

She got up and looked around for Dev. The crowd cheered HAPPY NEW YEAR!

A young man pulled the chair opposite her, sat on it and asked, "Do you mind if I sit down?"

You've already sat down Prachi wanted to say.

"It's a beautiful night, isn't it? I saw you sitting alone and thought you might like some company."

Unwanted attention from men always frightened Prachi. It was probably the reason she had taken to Dev so easily. He had never showered her with too much attention like some men did, or with too little. He had given her the right amount of attention.

The intrusion made Prachi more uncomfortable. But she gathered herself, beamed in a half-smile and said, "I'm with my fiancée."

And the man stole away.

When Dev finally returned, Prachi was so angry all she could think of was to go home.

The phone bell shook Prachi from her reminiscence. The receptionist said she had a visitor. Dev's "won't be long" was two hours long.

She pulled herself into the car and Dev put his hand lightly over her thighs. It was a quiet journey home.

Prachi set the table for Dev only. While Dev had his dinner, Prachi watched a soap opera that her mother-in-law was addicted to. The remote control was always by the elderly lady's side. By the time Prachi cleared the dining and the kitchen table, Dev had gone to bed. She quickly showered and slipped into bed next to him. He was fast asleep. She pressed herself close to his back and held him across his chest. As the tears welled up in her eyes, she heard herself say softly, "Why did you do this to yourself, Dev?"

"What babe?" Dev murmured

"I said, I love you." Prachi held him tighter as tears flowed down her cheek and then her earlobes before dripping on to the pillow. She wished she had a magic wand to undo everything, to heal what ailed him. But all she could do for now was hold him and long for what couldn't be—and sob herself to sleep.

(Excerpted from a novel-in-progress)

How and why we read

Reading for enjoyment is probably the main reason why most of us read **BY DON MESSERSCHMIDT**

Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body — Sir Richard Steele

“How to read?”, you ask. If we can read this, then don't we all know how to read?

Yes, maybe. . .

“What does ‘to read’ mean?” If it is merely deciphering words on a page, then lots of us can do that. But, are we readers? If we make a shopping list, or choose a greeting card, or post some note up on a bulletin board, or scan today's news headlines—does that make us readers?

The answer, obviously, is yes, to some degree. I know teenagers who say they read a lot—of comic books. Is that reading? If that's all they read, how well do they do on reading exams? I know a man who sits outside his shop during the day (when business is slow) doing nothing more than watching people pass by. Occasionally he reads a newspaper (but never a book or a magazine). Does that make him a reader?

When I was teaching a few years ago, my faculty colleagues asked me to run a seminar on how to write for professional journals in their subject. We set up a weekly meeting time and place, and all were invited to attend. The first week about a dozen showed up. We discussed professional issues and talked about the content and style of technical literature in books and journals. When I asked what they wanted out of the seminar, they said they wanted to be able to write for those journals. They seemed enthusiastic. Before we do that, I said, we all must become more familiar with professional writing. We must read some of those journals and books in our subject area. Then I passed out photocopies of a few articles to read, to start them out and prepare for the second session the following week. I asked them to be ready to discuss what they had read (the facts) and how it was written (the style).

But, alas, only a few showed up next week. I don't mean to be critical, but it was disappointing to realize that the assigned reading was apparently too much for those who dropped out. I got the impression that asking them to seriously read an assignment was a bit ‘over the top’, so to speak. They were content to learn a little by listening to me, but not ambitious enough to work at it by reading and analyzing the assignment themselves. Truth be known, very few were good readers; and, when they did “read” something, they often only skimmed the surface, avoiding the depths. They could all “read” by decipher-



ing words on a page, but they did not (and, perhaps, some simply could not) “read” for personal or professional enhancement.

Why read?

There are at least three reasons why.

For enjoyment

For pure pleasure. For the fun of it. For entertainment. “No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting,” said Lady Montegu. Reading for enjoyment is probably the main reason why most of us read. Classic novels, history, poetry, essays, memoir and, yes, even the comics, can be read just for the joy of it. (But, the news?—now that's often more difficult to enjoy.)

We read in our leisure time, to relax and unwind after a busy day, to while away a lazy weekend afternoon, and to make good use of free time. Some of us carry a book in our pocket when we have a long ride to endure, or when we know we'll have to wait awhile for someone or something (in a queue at the bank, or while standing in line to pay the telephone bill). Avid readers read here and there and everywhere, in the midst of crowds or all alone in the shade of a big tree. “Reading is one of the great pleasures that solitude can afford you,” according to Harold Bloom.

Many books and articles in magazines are written for the sole purpose of entertainment. (And some are obviously written for the enjoyment of their authors, too.) It's great that we have the time and the interest, and can pass time reading just for fun. We all do it. Don't stop!



Basu Kshiliz

Bertrand Russell identified "two motives for reading a book: one, that you enjoy it; the other, that you can boast about it." Boasting about it is part of the enjoyment!

For learning

Why do we pick up the newspaper each morning? Why do we skim those magazines on display in newspaper and magazine shops? What do we seek to find in our professional journals and textbooks? Why are students assigned homework to read? 'To learn' something is the obvious answer. We read to discover new ideas, to gain knowledge and (for students) to pass the next exam. Learning is a major activity of the human species. Reading to learn is a great idea, though the inventor Henry Ford once commented to the contrary, that "Reading musses up my mind."

Some read to discover facts. We read a school textbook to learn the rudiments of physics, or math, or history, or... whatever. But a young student recently reminded me that she also reads to learn the language: English, in her case. When we read books in another language, we inevitably learn something about that language. If we want to learn English, or French, or Arabic, or Japanese, we'll achieve our goal faster if we read books and articles in that language.

Reading to learn makes students of us all. Young or old, we enter the learning mode when we read. Some will memorize the facts. Some of us, when discovering a new way to say something, will practice it to perfection in our spare time. We make analogies. We mimic. We cut and paste new thoughts or ideas on to what we already know. We build our professional expertise and enhance our lifestyle by adding incrementally to our mind's knowledge bank, by reading as well as by listening, watching and mimicking. And, by reading to learn,

we come away from the printed word with a taste of the power of new ideas, with enhanced understanding, new knowledge, and a greater appreciation for things. It's how we move forward in life.

If "knowledge is power" then we'll do well to heed the words of Ezra Pound, who said "Properly, we should read for power... The book should be a ball of light in one's hand." So, keep on reading, for power and for light! (especially during the long load-shedding hours).

For style

If you want to write well, then reading for style is also important. Whether you are a student, a teacher, a business person, or a professional at work in a busy office, or if you are running a household and keeping a family, you must (first) be a good reader if you want to be a good writer.

While working as a consultant, teacher, editor, and a writer and mentor to other writers, I am frequently asked "How can I improve my writing?" Lord Acton advised that we can "Learn as much by writing as by reading." And, I've said it over and again: A prerequisite to being a good writer is being a good reader. So, keep on reading!

By reading for style, I mean moving one step past the enjoyment and fun of it, and beyond the content and the facts, to discover how writers write what you read that you like. Just as a good writer must be a good reader, a 'good read' reflects a 'good writer.'

Writers often read what other writers write about good writing. The writing instructor, Ginny Wiehardt, has admonished us to "Read to develop your writing style. Read voraciously, and read broadly..." Sound advice.

If we want to be better writers, we need to figure out what it is about good writing (popular, technical, business or academic) that makes it 'good,' then mimic that good style or technique. I do not mean that we should plagiarize, which is the blatant theft without attribution of someone else's ideas (plagiarism is unethical and illegal in schools and in publishing). What I mean is that when you read something that you recognize as good writing, figure out what makes it work then try out the style in your own writing.

Here are two examples. Early in my reading/writing career I discovered that some of the best essayists bring their readers, in the end, right back to the beginning. They lead the reader full circle, to some important notion or thought or fact or allusion that the author introduced back at the start of the piece. This technique gives the reader a sense of closure and completeness.

I have also noticed that some writers start their articles, essays, or chapters in books with a brief but relevant quotation—from literature, poetry, art, history, or anywhere. As I read, I keep a notebook handy in which I write down potentially useful quotes (and their sources) to hold on to for the future. (I have a special file on my computer to store them.) For example, while researching the life of Lain Singh Bangdel, the renowned Nepali artist, I came across a great quote by Picasso (whom the artist had met in Paris): "Every child is an artist," Picasso said. "The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." I used this quote to start Chapter One of the biography, before launching into the story about Bangdel's talented childhood. Later, near the end of the book, in the chapter on Bangdel as an Art Historian and his studies of ancient Nepali stone sculpture, I quoted a wise observation by Kamal Mani Dixit: "Every stone speaks the history of Nepal." Pertinent and insightful.

There we have it, what a reader is and the three most important reasons for reading: for pleasure, for learning, and (for those of us who want also to be good writers) for discovering the elements of good style.

Now (to bring this essay full circle), ask yourself: Are you a reader, a really good reader? Then exercise the pleasure and the privilege, with enthusiasm!

The rise of the rest



The Post-American World
Fareed Zakaria
Penguin Books India, 2008

As leaders of the post-American world, China and India occupy most of Zakaria's attention. With their huge populations and high rates of growths, they are rapidly reshaping the world order. American policy makers have to make more of an effort to understand these mega-countries and devise ways in which to engage with them **BY ADITYA ADHIKARI**

An Indian immigrant to the U.S., editor of "Newsweek" and formerly "Foreign Affairs," graduate of the most prestigious American universities, Fareed Zakaria has penetrated the highest reaches of the American political establishment to a degree unprecedented for an immigrant since Henry Kissinger. In the process, he has thoroughly internalized the worldview of the American elite who continue to believe in America as the beacon of economic and political freedom and a model of emulation for the rest of the world. This is clearly reflected in "The Post-American World," where he seeks to explain the changing world order and its implications for the United States. However, while Zakaria retains his deep belief in the American way, his book is cautionary. Over the past decade, the US has failed to comprehend the vast changes occurring in the world, he argues, and has abandoned its core values in the realm of foreign policy. This failure has affected America's position as the leader of the world, and will continue to do so unless America makes fundamental changes to its policy direction.

Zakaria addresses the mindset of fear that has gripped America since 9/11. There is the fear of Islamic fundamentalists, who, in the American worldview, wants to destroy the very fabric of American society. Then there is the fear of India and China, and of jobs and livelihoods being lost to the two resurgent powers against whom it appears impossible to compete. These fears have led America to employ an aggressive and unilateral military action against Islamic fundamentalists and to establish economic barriers against India and China—actions that are reflective of America's isolationist and

paranoid mindset. Zakaria believes that the Islamic threat is over-stated, that the "rise of the rest," particularly of China and India is of much greater significance, and that American foreign policy should be much more engaged with the latter. The transition from a uni-polar world dominated by the US to a multi-polar one is inevitable, Zakaria thinks, but if America adopts the right policy instruments, the transition can work to America's benefit.

As leaders of the post-American world, China and India occupy most of Zakaria's attention. With their huge populations and high rates of growth, they are rapidly reshaping the world order. American policy makers have to make more of an effort to understand these mega-countries and devise ways in which to engage with them.

Of course, the China-India story is hardly new and reams of paper have been spent writing about it in the western world in the last five years. The rise of China and India is sometimes presented as an opportunity and celebrated, and at other times it is seen as a threat and reviled. But all see the rise as inevitable. No wonder Zakaria devotes 80 pages to summarizing the politics, economics and cultures of these two countries. But the arguments that he puts forth are all too familiar, as they have been much bandied about in liberal Western newspapers and magazines like "The New York Times" or "The Economist," or in popular bestsellers by journalists and editors of these magazines.

A major advantage China enjoys over India, we are told, is its strong state that can push through policies that can turn around its economy in the long

run. India, on the other hand, being a democracy, is constantly held back by the need to maintain fractious political coalitions and politicians who constantly bow to immediate populist pressures that are detrimental to overall growth. Although its state is weak and ineffectual, India has been able to sustain high levels of growth because it has a strong civil society—a vibrant group of "entrepreneurs, managers and business-savvy individuals." In addition, India, being a democracy, allows for the release and channeling of political dissents that will ensure long-term political stability. On the contrary, China's inability to deal with rising levels of dissent poses a major challenge to its state.

The book will appear as a two-dimensional caricature to any Asian reader, as it is a book about an American speaking to America about the world outside. Non-Americans should have no business reading it, but a large number of them will read it because of America's vast power. After all, there is pleasure to be derived from understanding what the elite of the most powerful country in the world think of the others. Like Thomas Friedman's "The World is Flat," this book is bound to be appreciated in India, for, though simplistic, it presents a flattering portrayal of the country. It is even likely that the Indian elite, lulled by the flattery, will even adopt some of Zakaria's observations as part of their self-perception. But it won't be so easy for us to share the enthusiasm, as, belonging to one of the 50 countries that, according to Zakaria, are "basket cases that need urgent attention," we feel that we are being thoroughly marginalized from the forces that shape world history.



Ajit Baral

Rubbing shoulders with writers

Every year, creative personalities from around the globe congregate at the Pink City Jaipur to soak in five days of literary extravaganza, the Jaipur Literature Festival. Here is a report of this year's festival **BY AJIT BARAL**

Since its inception in 2006, the Jaipur Literature Festival has established itself as the most successful of India's literary festivals. An annual fare, it draws writers, publishers, editors, and artists from around the world to Jaipur's Diggi Palace. This year, over 160 personalities from eleven countries came to the festival. These people read

from their works, participated in panel discussions, interviewed fellow writers from Jan 21-25, keeping the audience in thrall.

In the inaugural session Pavan Verma, the diplomat writer who has over a dozen books under his belt, lamented Indian writing in English's hogging an inordinate amount of media attention and talked about the need to translate literatures in different vernacular languages into English and into each other so that there is a greater appreciation and understanding of Indian literature. He was perhaps trying to hint that vernacular literatures and writers would get lesser attention in the festival. Vernacular writers, indeed, were underrepresented. And their sessions were poorly attended. No wonder Ashok Vajpayi said, "Whether anyone comes to our program or not is not important but what we write is."

The session with Gulzar, a celebrated Urdu poet, lyricist and film maker, was an exception. In the session entitled "Jugalbandi" with Gulzar, Pavan Verma talked about the poetry of Gulzar and the difficulty of translating his poems. The talk was followed by a conversation with Gulzar, which was interleaved with recitations, Gulzar reading in Hindi and Verma reading in English, with the audience wah, wah-ing.

In another session Vikram Seth talked about his books and writing (and his family too), sipping a glass of wine in front of a large crowd, taking the rein from the interviewer, the young writer Sonia Faleiro. Perhaps she was cowed down by the presence of the inimitable Mr Seth. The seasoned writer Pico Iyer, on the other hand, was never going to allow Patrick French, the biographer of Sir VS Naipaul, to dictate the interview in the session titled "The Biography of Sir VS. Naipaul." With Iyer posing intelligent questions, and French enlivening his answers with interesting anecdotes about Naipaul, the session was both captivating and enlightening.

JAIPUR LITERATURE FESTIVAL .READ ●

So was the conversation between the writer and former undersecretary general of the UN, Shashi Tharoor, and the executive editor of Tehelka, Soma Chaudhary. Tharoor was persuasive in his answers, but sounded a tad nationalistic, at least to our Nepali ears. Mesmerized by his good looks and eloquence, my colleague Niraj went to the extent of tugging Tharoor's coat to have the two books that he had bought on the spot signed by the author. But to his dismay, he got the following inscriptions:

For Niraj,
A son of Nehru's India
Best,
Shashi Tharoor
24/1/09

For Niraj,
Jai Hind!
Shashi Tharoor
24/1/09

Not all the sessions involved writers, though. In one session, Nadita Das talked about her directorial debut, Firaak, and in another, Amitabh Bachchan talked about



Ajit Baral

his film career, and his family and declined having said anything negative about the 2009 Oscar sensation Slumdog Millionaire.

Some sessions were on politics. For example, in the session entitled "Kashmir," the two Pakistani writers Daniyal Mueenuddin, who is touted as being the next Arundhati Roy, and Nadeem Aslam, the author of "The Wasted Vigil," among others, talked about the divisive politics in Kashmir. Our own writer Manjushree Thapa participated in a panel discussion on "Writing in the times of Insurgency" along with two other Indian writers who have written about or on insurgency.

The five-day free-to-all festival was packed with one-hour long sessions. And as many as four events were held simultaneously, in different venues. It was quite a feat, rushing from one session to another and getting something to put your bum on. And at the end of it all, one was bound to feel jaded.

But the pain was worth it. It is not often that one gets the chance to sneak up to writers you like and chat up with them, get their autographs and take a photographs or two with them.

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Shekhar Kharel



Bikas Rauniyar

A writer, journalist, filmmaker and photographer, Shekhar Kharel has master's degrees in English Literature (from Tribhuvan University) and Literature and Criticism (from the University of Greenwich, United Kingdom). He has worked for the Nepal Tourism Board, BBC Nepali Service in the United Kingdom and Nepal and "The Kathmandu Post". He speaks Nepali, Hindi, English, French and Spanish.

What is the last thing you read that made you laugh out loud?

A section in Jagdish Ghimire's "Antarmanko Yatra," where poet Madan Regmi plays a prank on poet Neer Bikram Pyasi. Regmi persuades Pyasi to go to the restroom to recite his poems. Ghimire's description of that scene is very vivid.

What books are currently on your bedside table?

"New Nepal, New Voice" edited by Susma Joshi and Ajit Baral and "An End to Suffering" by Pankaj Mishra.

What is your favorite word?

I love how the teenagers and youths

these days pronounce "Harip" and "Babaal." These words have been my favorite words as well.

Does music help or hinder your writing and reading?

It helps. A lot. I find respite in it.

At what hour of the day does inspiration strike?

Mostly late nights, when most of the people are sleeping. I need to create in solitude.

Favorite snack to eat while you're writing or reading?

Normally tea while reading/writing, and crispy snacks or fruits in between.

When were you the happiest?

I'm happy-go-lucky by nature.

What is the best piece of advice your parents gave you?

They have given me much advice, and they still do. All the pieces of advice they've given me are equally important to me as they come from their hearts.

Which book do you wish you'd written?

There are many. I wish I had written all the books by Khushwant Singh and Mark Tully; and I wish I'd written "Ghamka Pailaharu" by Dhannush Chandra Gautam.

Which novel would you give to your own children to introduce them to literature?

They are too young to read novels, at the moment. As they grow up, I'll give them "Animal Farm" by George Orwell, "The Old Man and the Sea" by Hemingway, and "Ghamka Pailaharu."

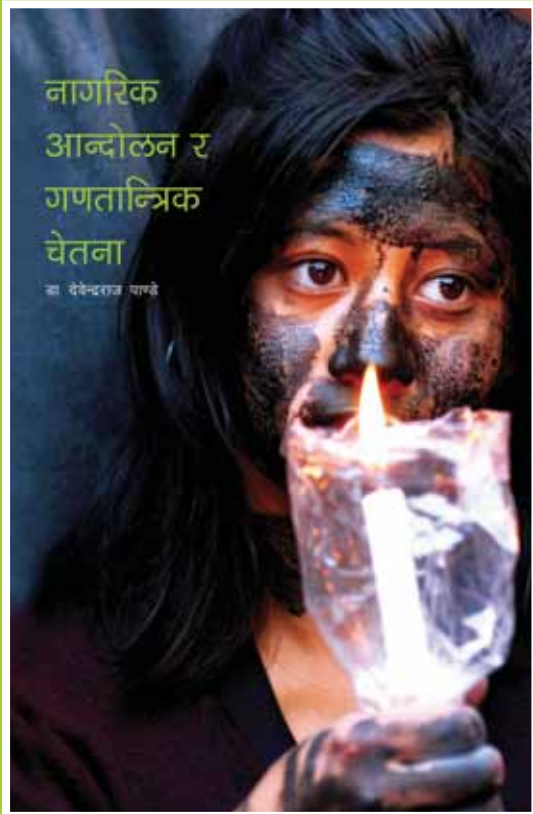
Do you keep a diary?

No. Never have. I've a hard disk in my mind.

Which is your favorite place in the world?

I love the mountains and the seas. They enliven me... I would say Manang/Mustang, southern Europe, Rajasthan and Kerala.

नागरिक आन्दोलन र गणतान्त्रिक चेतना

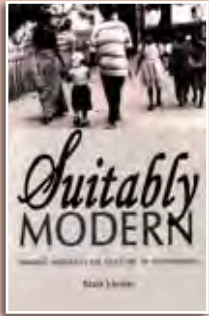


'म नोबेल पुरस्कार दिने समितिको मान्छे हुन्थे भने डा. देवेन्द्रराज पाण्डेलाई नागरिक आन्दोलन र गणतान्त्रिक चेतनाका लागि नोबेल पुरस्कार दिन्थे । अरू कुनै किताब लेख्न पर्दैपर्दैनथ्यो । किनभने उहाँले सात-आठवटा व्यवहार र सिद्धान्तका सम्बन्धसँग सरोकार भएका गम्भीर प्रश्नहरू यस किताबमा उठाउनुभएको छ । यस किताबले गम्भीर अध्ययन, गहन सैद्धान्तिक बहसको माग गर्दछ ।'

प्रदीप गिरी

मैले आफ्नो खुला जीवनमा सङ्गत गर्ने मौका पाएका देशका थुप्रै प्रतिष्ठित व्यक्तित्वहरूमध्ये अहिले पनि व्यक्तिगत रूपमा सबैभन्दा सम्मान गर्ने र मनपर्ने मान्छेको नाउँ लिनुपर्दा वाम खेमाबाट पद्मरत्न तुलाधर र गैरवाम खेमाबाट डा. देवेन्द्रराज पाण्डेको नाउँ लिन मन लाग्छ ।

डा. बाबुराम भट्टराई



Suitably Modern

Author: Mark Liechty
Price: Rs. 500 | Pages: 292
Publisher: Martin Chautari
Phone: 01-4102027 | 01-4238050
www.martinchautari.org.np

Written by Mark Liechty, Associate Professor of Anthropology and History at the University of Illinois at Chigago, Suitably modern sketches the historical contours of the emergence of the middle-class in Kathmandu, probes middle-class consciousness, and describes how a substantial segment of the urban population fashions and refashions itself as a class situated between the elite and the laboring masses through consumerism.



By the Way

Travels through Nepal's Conflict
Authors: Aji Baral, Bela Malik, DR. Pant, Jagannath Adhikari, Purna Basnet and Usha Tititkshu
Price: Rs. 200 | Pages: 122
Publisher: Martin Chautari
Phone: 01-4102027 | 01-4238050
www.martinchautari.org.np

By the Way is a collection of travel writings on Nepali Society amidst an armed conflict. The authors have traveled through and written about different ecological and social zones of the country that were, at one time or another, engulfed by armed violence. Though written from various perspectives, the writings share certain commonalities: each describes the reasons for the author's journey, the places visited and the Maoist activities in the area.



Kalchakra

Author: Bakhat Bahadur Thapa
Price: Rs. 175 | Pages: 203
Publisher: Ratna Pustak Bhandar
Phone: 4242077

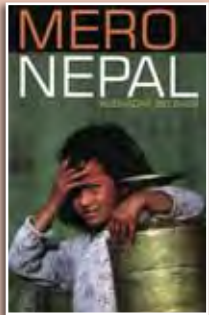
The story of a person who becomes rich through profiteering and the exploitation of workers, Kalchakra depicts the abject condition of poor people in a sympathetic and touching way. A devastating critique of corruption that Nepal is increasingly being enmeshed in, the book gives the message that those who are corrupt and exploit other people are condemned to live in unhappiness.



Jasko Jot Usko Pot

Author: Bimal Bhaukajee
Price: Rs. 165 | Pages: 134
Publisher: Ratna Pustak Bhandar
Phone: 4242077

It is a collection of 44 satirical essays on different topics. Some essays mock the political situation of the country while others ridicule the administration and our corrupt society. Still others like "Neta Nibandha" scoffs at leaders who follow misguided philosophy.



Mero Nepal

Author: Subhadra Belbase
Price: Rs. 250 | Page: 138
Publisher: Ekta Books
Phone: 4245787 | www.ektabooks.com

Mero Nepal describes a country in transition—politically and socially. The stories in the book portray the difficulty of surviving in rural areas, the treachery and debauchery and machinations of the upper classes and the repercussions of political tussles on ordinary people.



Flax-Golden Tales

An Interdisciplinary Approach to learning English
Author: Moti Nissani and Shreedhar Lohani
Price: Rs. 295 | Page: 496
Publisher: Ekta Books
Phone: 4245787 | www.ektabooks.com

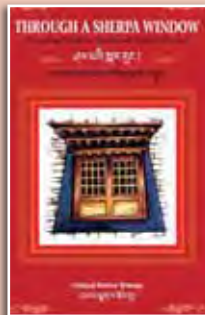
This book will particularly useful to people who want to improve reading, writing English. Book contains different reading material, instructional activities, commentaries, short essays which could be helpful for academic study.



A Widow's Gift

Author: Shanti Mishra
Price: Rs 190
Publisher: Pilgrims Publishing, Varanasi
Phone: 4700942 | www.pilgrimsbooks.com

A Widow's Gift is a story about child marriage and early widowhood. The book tells the story of Radha, a Brahmin child-bride who has to suffer a lot in the rigid orthodox Hindu community of her times when she is widowed early on

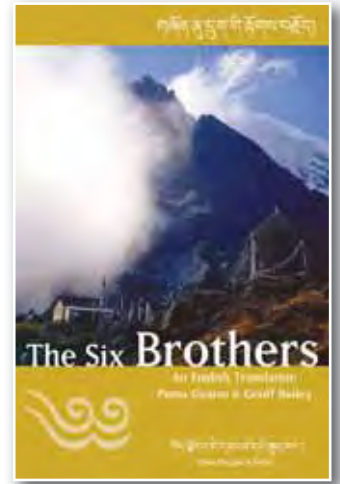


Through A Sherpa Window

Author: Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa
Price: Rs. 800 | Page: 210
Publisher: Vajra Books
Phone: 4220562 | www.vajrabooks.com.np

This illustrated book introduces readers to the history, material culture, spirituality and environment that shape the culture of the Sherpa—the people who're recognized for their conservation ethics and sense of environmental responsibility, and for their ability to skillfully adapt themselves in harsh, mountainous conditions.

Not lost in translation



The Six Brothers: An English Translation. 2007. Translated by Pema Gyatso and Geoff Bailey; Publishing Editor: Dobi Tsering Dorje; Tibet People's Press, Lhasa, Tibetan Autonomous Region

Based on the lives of six brothers, the story is an analogy of the six virtuous perfections of the Bodhisattvas. The story unfolds around the lives of the three older brothers, who are in the grip of worldly desires and attached to the fleeting pleasures of cyclical existence **BY MARK TURIN**

Translation is a notoriously thankless task: if accurate and fluid, the translator is essentially invisible and his hand is nowhere to be seen; if not, the translator is held accountable for the flaws. Frustrated with this absence and lack of recognition, the great Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges once quipped that "the original is unfaithful to the translation." Since I do not read Tibetan, I am not in a position to comment on whether Pema Gyatso and Geoff Bailey's translation accurately reflects the original text. What I can say, however, is that "The Six Brothers" is an elegant rendering of complex literary Tibetan into captivating and very readable English.

Based on the lives of six brothers, the story is an analogy of the six virtuous perfections of the Bodhisattvas. The story unfolds around the lives of the three older brothers, who are in the grip of worldly desires and attached to the fleeting pleasures of cyclical existence. The three younger brothers, who are in fact Bodhisattvas, continually try to persuade their older siblings to give up their lives of meaningless folly and to opt for the path of true enlightenment. In the course of their various life journeys, the older brothers end up in various degrees of trouble, which require the younger brothers to rescue them—an allegorical play on the true nature of a Bodhisattva. Eventually, the older brothers recognize the error of their ways, repent and begin on the right path.

This 230-page book comprises an English translation of the text (about 150 pages) followed by the original in Tibetan. In their preface, the translators humbly admit that it is "with some trepidation that we present this English translation" (page 1), as this text is considered to be one of the most exquisitely

written in the Tibetan language. As such, the epic is often referred to as the "mother" of all Tibetan poetry. While the authorship of the epic is unknown, scholars estimate that it was written six to seven hundred years ago. An interesting debate exists around the origin of the tale, discussed in brief in the book's introduction. Some commentators agree with the statement in the text's colophon that the narrative originated in India, that perhaps it was even written by the Indian Pandita Umapati, while others believe the text to have been composed by an unknown Tibetan scholar who lived in India for many years. As with all such epic narratives, the provenance of "The Six Brothers" is destined to be unknown, and competing narratives of its origin will continue to strive for authenticity.

The Tibetan original is divided into seven chapters, including an introductory salutation, and contains over 130 different kinds of metaphors, similes and synonyms, making it metaphorically rich and analytically complex. The first chapter introduces each of the six brothers and describes their various characteristics, and the remaining six chapters are each devoted to one of the six perfections, presented in the correct order of importance: generosity, ethics, perseverance, diligence, concentration and wisdom.

The translators suggest that their primary aim in preparing this translation was to aid those who wish to study Tibetan texts in tandem with an English translation, but I would go further and suggest that the text itself is interesting enough to be read by anyone with an interest in philosophy, morality or spirituality, even without understanding the Tibetan. Let us turn now to a few snippets of the text

of "The Six Brothers" and reflect on their astuteness and parsimonious formulation:

The fire of sorrow, which is fuelled by the sighs of beggars

Who have been sent away having had their hopes dashed,

Burns the tree of one's honour.

Ignorant ones who act like this, though alive, they are really dead. (page 33)

So, before the thief of old age

Steals your youthfulness,

You should independently take care

Of your own affairs. (page 57)

The moon, whose eyes were closed with loving smiles and

Who was drunk with nectar.

Slipped down the smooth surface of the sky

Falling into the sea. (page 86)

The critic and translator Norman Shapiro wrote that translation is "the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated. A good translation is like a pane of glass. You only notice that it's there when there are little imperfections—scratches, bubbles. Ideally, there shouldn't be any. It should never call attention to itself." From my perspective, the translators of "The Six Brothers" have achieved transparency—the text reads beautifully in English. Congratulations are thus due to the two translators for making this powerful and timeless Tibetan text available to a lay readership and for doing the job so well.

My most loved book

Anil Shah
CEO, Nabil Bank Limited

"The Daily Drucker," Peter F. Drucker

On the eve of New Year some years back I had made a resolution to enhance my professional and leadership knowledge-base. But I was worried that my resolution might get swept aside after a week, as so often happens with New Year resolutions. Thankfully, I stumbled upon a "knowledge mine"—"The Daily Drucker" by a revered management thinker, Peter Drucker. It was compiled to give some of the best bits of knowledge on a daily basis and I quickly realized that I had come across a great source of insights and decided to use those insights not just for the benefit of myself, but also for the benefit of the staff of the Nabil Bank—the bank that I had then just joined.

So in addition to reading, and learning from, a point, which was packed with erudition and motivation, each day, I decided to make the best use of the available technology and send an email every day to all the members of Team Nabil with Drucker's thought and insight for the day and a short "points to ponder" note on how the day's point was relevant to us and what we could do with Drucker's views on the topic of the day. All of us could have bought the book and read it, but the experience over the following 365 days, with Team Nabil going through a point a day was truly an interesting and stimulating experience. My sending emails was not an exercise in which I preached knowledge from my position of CEO, but a way of learning one idea at a time from the international management guru and then utilizing the learning to work and manage ourselves better.

I have read many captivating and enriching books, but the manner in which I read, learnt and shared what I learnt from "The Daily Drucker" is an experience that I will always treasure, making it truly my most loved book.

What Kathmandu is reading



Ajit Baral

Of late I haven't read as many books as I would normally have. Recently, I read "The Appu Trilogy" by Satyajit Ray and "Hitler ra Yehudi" by BP Koirala. Published incomplete, the latter talks about the world politics and ethnic (or racial) sensibility at the time of Second World War.

I am currently reading a collection of short stories by Uday Prakash, "Arewa-Parewa." I had read the two stories compiled in the book—"Warren Hastingka Sand" and "Aur Antamay Prathana"—before. But I am re-reading them because the writer writes uncommonly about common people. I like him immensely. So much so that I have translated his novella, "Mohandas," into Nepali. It is coming out shortly.

Yagnesh Pandit, Film Critic



Ajit Baral

I am reading "The Dharma Bums" by Jack Kerouac. It's a book about the beat generation and its lifestyles, which were essentially crude experiments that led to the cultural revolution of the Sixties in America.

"The Dharma Bums" is a cry for a great rucksack revolution—a revolution in which the American youth would take to the open road, leaving behind their homes, families and friends, to live the Buddhist way of life. The book inspired a whole generation of post-war Americans to seek spiritual knowledge and transcendental experiences.

It has made me nostalgic about my past. It has provoked thoughts. It has given me insights. And it has furthered my understanding. These varied experiences have made reading the book worthwhile.

Viplob Pratik, Poet



Ajit Baral

I usually don't get time to read on weekdays, but I try to read during weekends—for pleasure and for education. Currently, I'm reading "The Best of Satyajit Ray," a collection of twenty-one stories. Originally written in Bengali, the stories were translated into English by Satyajit Ray with Gopa Majumdar.

Satyajit Ray is a man of versatile talents. His versatility is on full display in the collected stories, which have a varied cast of characters: a carnivorous plant with a tremendous hunger, a man who suffers from bouts of forgetfulness, another man who is transported back in time just like that, an alien who lands up in a village...

Amod Bhattarai, Writer



Ajit Baral

Dr. Devendra Raj Panday

Devendra Raj Panday has actively participated in civil society activism in the whole of South Asia. Currently, he is Chairpersons of Rural Self Reliance Development in Nepal, Nepal South Asia Center and Transparency International Nepal. He is also a founding member of South Asians for Human Rights. He was the finance minister in the interim government of 1990.

A PhD in Public and International Affairs from the University of Pittsburgh, he has written many scholarly articles for national and international journals. Apart from helping to produce the first "Human Development Report of Nepal" in 1998, he has written and edited many books on development and democracy, the most notable of them being "Nepal's Failed Development."

When did you start to read?

My favorite reads were Hindi *jasusi upannyas* when I was in school and college. Later, I was introduced to writers like Prem Chand and erotic novels by the likes of Kushwaha Kant. However, I didn't read much Nepali and English literature, except those prescribed in the school and college syllabi. I started to get interested in non-fiction much later when I realized that I knew so little about the world and its ways, notwithstanding my PhD.

Which is your favorite children book?

Children books were not available when I was a child. However, I read and enjoyed Lewis Carroll later. I also enjoyed reading Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales. "Aesop's Fables" translated into Nepali as *Isapniti Katha* was part of our school curriculum. I enjoyed that too.

Which book are you reading at present?

I have just finished reading "The Billion Bottom" by Paul Collier and I am dipping into a book by Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, which has a somewhat pretentious title—"Fixing Failed States". I find it strange that bureaucrats like me who could not contribute much to development when in office are frequently hired as development consultants to work not just in their countries but also in other countries. So I wanted to know what the former Afghan bureaucrat Ghani had to say about his own country and Nepal, where he has worked as consultant.

What kinds of books do you usually read?

Mainly books on development, though I had enjoyed reading novels, both light and serious, as a student

in the US. I look at the meaning and value of development in the broadest sense of the term. So any good book—whether it's about economics, political science, psychology, sociology or even religion, history and biography—that is socially relevant interests me. I enjoy even books like "Jesus, CEO" and "The Geeta and the Art of Successful Management." I find useful development messages in Tagore's "Gitanjali."

On average how many books do you read a month?

I am not a voracious reader. On top of that I am fairly lazy. So take a guess.

Which books have influenced you the most?

For all my socialist pretensions, I have to say Adam Smith's "The Wealth of Nations." It has to be read together with his earlier book "The Theory of Moral Sentiments."

Who is your favorite international scholar?

Currently, Amartya Sen. He is not only an economist, but also a moral philosopher. From the past, economic historian Robert L. Heilbroner. Another of my favorite is educationist Paulo Freire.

Who is your favorite Nepali scholar?

Mahesh Chandra Regmi—together with Ludwig F. Stiller. In them, we had historians who mastered the art of "fusioning" the idea of development with their areas of specialization.

Any book that you would like to make mandatory reading?

Among the recent ones, "Collapse" by the University of California professor Jared Diamond. It describes how civilizations have perished in the past, and how we might save ours.



Devendra Raj Panday's most recent book, "Nagarik Andolan Ra Ganatantrik Chetana" (FinePrint, 2008), is a collection of articles and interviews on Nepali politics, and civil society and its movement. It also contains scholarly articles on Nepal's political economy published in national and international journals. Priced at Rs. 275, the book is available in all leading bookstores.

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